



REQUEST FOR BID

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) invites all interested parties to submit bids for requirements stipulated below:

DOCUMENT NUMBER:	RFQ2026-27-30 WhatsApp Business API Solution
RFB ISSUE DATE	23 July 2026
RFB CLOSING DATE AND TIME:	31 July 2026 @11:00am
RFB VALIDITY PERIOD	90 Days (from RFQ closing date)
DESCRIPTION	Provision of a WhatsApp AI-enabled omnichannel communication platform for SAQA, including implementation, integration, and support services.
PERIOD	12 months
RESPONSES/SUBMISSIONS	All responses/submissions should be sent to rfq@saqa.org.za
ENQUIRIES	Please direct all enquiries to: Phumudzo Silimela Email : PSilimela@saqa.org.za

SECTION 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. SAQA, as mandated by the NQF Act, seeks to enhance stakeholder engagement, service delivery, and operational efficiency through digital transformation initiatives aligned to its ICT strategy.
- 1.2. This initiative aims to leverage modern communication technologies to provide accessible, real-time interaction channels for stakeholders, including applicants and partners.
- 1.3. The adoption of an AI-enabled WhatsApp platform will support the automation of routine enquiries, improve service turnaround times, and enhance user experience across SAQA services.
- 1.4. The solution will enable a scalable and secure communication ecosystem that aligns with government digital transformation objectives and compliance requirements.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1. To appoint a qualified service provider to design, implement, and support a WhatsApp Business API-based AI solution that enables automated, real-time communication between SAQA and its stakeholders.

3. SCOPE OF WORK

The appointed service provider will render the following services:

3.1. Platform Implementation

The service provider will implement a WhatsApp Business API solution ensuring that the platform is fully configured for operational use within SAQA. This includes setting up and verifying a dedicated WhatsApp business number that SAQA Communications Department will provide, which will serve as the official communication channel. The solution must also support omnichannel communication capabilities, enabling seamless interaction between stakeholders and SAQA systems through a centralized platform.

- Implement a WhatsApp Business API solution via an approved provider with South African implementation footprint
- Configure and verify a dedicated WhatsApp business number
- Set up omnichannel communication capabilities

3.2. AI Chatbot Development

The service provider will develop an AI-powered chatbot with natural language processing (NLP) capabilities to facilitate intelligent and automated interactions with users. The chatbot must be capable of responding to frequently asked questions, reducing manual workload on staff, and guiding applicants through various processes in a structured and user-friendly manner.

- Develop an AI-powered chatbot using NLP capabilities
- Automate FAQs and enquiry handling
- Provide guided user journeys for applicants

3.3. Integration Services

The solution must be integrated with Microsoft Azure services and SAQA's internal systems to support secure and efficient data exchange. This includes enabling real-time functionality such as status updates and document processing. The integration must also ensure that all uploaded documents are securely stored and managed in compliance with applicable standards.

- Integrate with Microsoft Azure services (OpenAI, Blob Storage, APIs, Functions)
- Integrate with SAQA internal applications and databases
- Enable secure document upload and storage

3.4. Process Automation

The service provider will implement automation capabilities to streamline key processes and improve efficiency. This includes enabling automated assistance for application submissions, providing real-time status updates, and supporting document validation and screening. The solution must also allow for escalation of complex queries to human agents when necessary to ensure continuity of service.

- Automate workflows such as:
 - Application submission assistance
 - Status tracking and notifications
 - Document validation and screening

- Enable escalation to human agents

3.5. Reporting & Analytics

The solution must include reporting and analytics tools to give SAQA visibility into system usage and performance. These capabilities will support monitoring of user interactions, identification of trends, and continuous improvement of service delivery based on data-driven insights.

- Provide dashboards for:
 - Usage metrics
 - User interactions
 - Operational performance

3.6. Compliance & Security

The service provider must ensure that the solution complies with all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements. This includes adherence to the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) and government ICT standards. Robust security measures must be implemented to protect all sensitive data and always ensure secure communication and processing.

- Ensure compliance with:
 - POPIA
 - Government ICT standards
- Implement secure data handling and encryption

3.7. Training, Support & Maintenance

The appointed service provider will provide training to internal developers, ongoing support and maintenance to ensure the solution remains functional, secure, and aligned with SAQA's operational requirements. This includes monitoring system performance, resolving issues, and performing updates and enhancements where necessary.

- Provide training and collaborate with internal software development team
- Provide ongoing support and system maintenance
- Monitor system performance and resolve issues
- Perform updates and improvements

4. SERVICES LEVELS AND APPLICABLE PENALTIES

Service Area	Minimum Service Level	Target	Penalties
System Availability (Uptime)	Platform must be available and operational during business and extended hours	≥ 99% uptime per month	5% of monthly service fee for each 1% below target
Message Delivery & Response Time	WhatsApp messages must be sent and received without delay	≤ 5 seconds response time	5% of monthly fee per repeated non-compliance instance
AI Chatbot Response Accuracy	Chatbot must provide relevant and correct responses to user queries	≥ 85% accuracy (based on QA sampling)	5% of monthly fee for sustained underperformance
Incident Response Time	Acknowledge and respond to system incidents	Within 2–4 hours of logging	5% of monthly fee per delayed response
Incident Resolution Time (Critical Issues)	Resolve system outages or major failures	Within 24 hours	10% of monthly fee per incident exceeding SLA
Integration Availability	Integration with SAQA and Azure systems must function without disruption	≥ 98% availability	5% of monthly fee per failure impacting operations
Security & Compliance	Ensure secure handling of data and compliance with POPIA	100% compliance required	Immediate escalation + possible contract review
Support Availability	Provide technical support during business hours with escalation support after hours	08h00–17h00 support + on-call escalation	5% of monthly fee for failure to provide support
System Maintenance & Updates	Planned maintenance must not disrupt services during peak hours	Scheduled with prior notice	2% of monthly fee for unplanned disruptions

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The bid will be evaluated in two (2) stages:

- a) Stage 1: Administrative requirements
- b) Stage 2: Price and preference points.

5.1. STAGE 1: ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Bidders must ensure that all standard bid documents are signed, and the Central Supplier Database (CSD) report or Unique Number or Supplier number from the CSD is attached to the proposal.

NB: BIDDERS ARE TO COMPLY WITH THE RFQ SPECIAL CONDITIONS

5.2. STAGE 2: PRICE AND PREFERENCE POINTS

All bidders that have passed the administrative requirements will be evaluated in terms of the 80/20 system prescribed by SAQA in line with PPR 2022 as follows:

- i. **80** Points for pricing.
- ii. **15** preference points for the company that has at least 51% black ownership.
- iii. **5** preference Points for the company that has at least 30% black woman ownership.

NB: Bidders must submit the certified B-BBEE Certificates copies/Sworn Affidavits indicating ownership percentage to claim the preference points.

PRICE SCHEDULE

- 5.3. Bidders to provide pricing for evaluation purposes.
- 5.4. The quoted rates will be applicable for the duration of the contract, including escalations for the following years.
- 5.5. SAQA will be requesting the goods through an email request, and the successful bidder should be able to deliver within 1 week.

NAME OF BIDDER	
Bid Number	RFQ2026-27-30 WhatsApp Business API Solution
Price for the Provision of a WhatsApp AI-enabled omnichannel communication platform for SAQA, including implementation, integration, and support services for a period of 12 Months.	
Total Price inclusive of all applicable taxes	

6. RFQ Special Conditions

- 6.1. Bidders should submit the recent National Treasury (CSD) Central Supplier Database's report.
- 6.2. Bidders are required to submit an original or certified copy of the B-BBEE certificate or Sworn Affidavit as per the B-BBEE Act. The SANAS Logo should be visible on the B-BBEE Certificate.
- 6.3. Bidders must complete, sign, and submit the attached SBD 4 and SBD 6.1 forms.
- 6.4. The proposal and required documents must be submitted using the PDF format only, through email to rfq@saqa.co.za
- 6.5. In Instances, where brand names are mentioned, SAQA will accept equivalent items that have similar specifications.
- 6.6. The National Treasury's General Conditions of Contract (GCC) will apply and is enforceable on this RFQ.
- 6.7. The RFQ will be evaluated in terms of the 80/20 system prescribed by the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act (PPPFA).

7. PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

- 7.1. In this clause, the words "personal information", "processing" and "responsible party" have the meanings ascribed to them in the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (Act No.4 of 2013).
- 7.2. SAQA will comply with the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (Act No.4 of 2013, (POPIA) by lawfully processing personal information submitted by bidders in accordance with the conditions of lawful processing as set out in POPIA.
- 7.3. All bidders must comply with their obligations as set out in POPIA for which they are a Responsible Party before sharing any information with SAQA.
- 7.4. SAQA will not be held liable for any non-compliance with the provisions of POPIA or unlawful processing or sharing of information by a bidder.

BIDDER'S DISCLOSURE

1. PURPOSE OF THE FORM

Any person (natural or juristic) may make an offer or offers in terms of this invitation to bid. In line with the principles of transparency, accountability, impartiality, and ethics as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and further expressed in various pieces of legislation, it is required for the bidder to make this declaration in respect of the details required hereunder.

Where a person/s are listed in the Register for Tender Defaulters and / or the List of Restricted Suppliers, that person will automatically be disqualified from the bid process.

2. Bidder's declaration

- 2.1 Is the bidder, or any of its directors / trustees / shareholders / members / partners or any person having a controlling interest¹ in the enterprise, employed by the state? **YES/NO**

- 2.1.1 If so, furnish particulars of the names, individual identity numbers, and, if applicable, state employee numbers of sole proprietor/ directors / trustees / shareholders / members/ partners or any person having a controlling interest in the enterprise, in table below.

Full Name	Identity Number	Name of State institution

- 2.2 Do you, or any person connected with the bidder, have a relationship

¹ the power, by one person or a group of persons holding the majority of the equity of an enterprise, alternatively, the person/s having the deciding vote or power to influence or to direct the course and decisions of the enterprise.

with any person who is employed by the procuring institution? **YES/NO**

2.2.1 If so, furnish particulars:

.....

2.3 Does the bidder or any of its directors / trustees / shareholders / members / partners or any person having a controlling interest in the enterprise have any interest in any other related enterprise whether or not they are bidding for this contract? **YES/NO**

2.3.1 If so, furnish particulars:

.....

3 DECLARATION

I, _____ the _____ undersigned,
 (name).....in
 submitting the accompanying bid, do hereby make the following
 statements that I certify to be true and complete in every respect:

- 3.1 I have read and I understand the contents of this disclosure;
- 3.2 I understand that the accompanying bid will be disqualified if this disclosure is found not to be true and complete in every respect;
- 3.3 The bidder has arrived at the accompanying bid independently from, and without consultation, communication, agreement or arrangement with any competitor. However, communication between partners in a joint venture or consortium² will not be construed as collusive bidding.
- 3.4 In addition, there have been no consultations, communications, agreements or arrangements with any competitor regarding the quality, quantity, specifications, prices, including methods, factors or formulas used to calculate prices, market allocation, the intention or decision to submit or not to submit the bid, bidding with the intention not to win the bid and conditions or delivery particulars of the products or services to which this bid invitation relates.
- 3.4 The terms of the accompanying bid have not been, and will not be, disclosed by the bidder, directly or indirectly, to any competitor, prior to the date and time of the official bid opening or of the awarding of the contract.
- 3.5 There have been no consultations, communications, agreements or arrangements made by the bidder with any official of the procuring

² Joint venture or Consortium means an association of persons for the purpose of combining their expertise, property, capital, efforts, skill and knowledge in an activity for the execution of a contract.

institution in relation to this procurement process prior to and during the bidding process except to provide clarification on the bid submitted where so required by the institution; and the bidder was not involved in the drafting of the specifications or terms of reference for this bid.

- 3.6 I am aware that, in addition and without prejudice to any other remedy provided to combat any restrictive practices related to bids and contracts, bids that are suspicious will be reported to the Competition Commission for investigation and possible imposition of administrative penalties in terms of section 59 of the Competition Act No 89 of 1998 and or may be reported to the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) for criminal investigation and or may be restricted from conducting business with the public sector for a period not exceeding ten (10) years in terms of the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act No 12 of 2004 or any other applicable legislation.

I CERTIFY THAT THE INFORMATION FURNISHED IN PARAGRAPHS 1, 2 and 3 ABOVE IS CORRECT.

I ACCEPT THAT THE STATE MAY REJECT THE BID OR ACT AGAINST ME IN TERMS OF PARAGRAPH 6 OF PFMA SCM INSTRUCTION 03 OF 2021/22 ON PREVENTING AND COMBATING ABUSE IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT SYSTEM SHOULD THIS DECLARATION PROVE TO BE FALSE.

.....
Signature Date

.....
Position Name of bidder

PREFERENCE POINTS CLAIM FORM IN TERMS OF THE PREFERENTIAL PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS 2022

This preference form must form part of all tenders invited. It contains general information and serves as a claim form for preference points for specific goals.

NB: BEFORE COMPLETING THIS FORM, TENDERERS MUST STUDY THE GENERAL CONDITIONS, DEFINITIONS AND DIRECTIVES APPLICABLE IN RESPECT OF THE TENDER AND PREFERENTIAL PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, 2022

GENERAL CONDITIONS

1.1 The following preference point systems are applicable to invitations to tender:

- the 80/20 system for requirements with a Rand value of up to R50 000 000 (all applicable taxes included); and
- the 90/10 system for requirements with a Rand value above R50 000 000 (all applicable taxes included).

To be completed by the organ of state

(delete whichever is not applicable for this tender).

- a) The applicable preference point system for this tender is the 90/10 preference point system.
- b) The applicable preference point system for this tender is the 80/20 preference point system.
- c) Either the 90/10 or 80/20 preference point system will be applicable in this tender. The lowest/ highest acceptable tender will be used to determine the accurate system once tenders are received.

1.3 Points for this tender (even in the case of a tender for income-generating contracts) shall be awarded for:

- (a) Price; and
- (b) Specific Goals.

1.4 To be completed by the organ of state:

The maximum points for this tender are allocated as follows:

	POINTS
PRICE	80
SPECIFIC GOALS	20
Total points for Price and SPECIFIC GOALS	100

1.6 The organ of state reserves the right to require of a tenderer, either before a tender is adjudicated or at any time subsequently, to substantiate any claim in regard to preferences, in any manner required by the organ of state.

80/20

or

90/10

$$Ps=80\left(1+ \frac{Pt-P_{max}}{P_{max}}\right) \text{ or } Ps=90\left(1+ \frac{Pt-P_{max}}{P_{max}}\right)$$

Where

Ps = Points scored for price of tender under consideration

Pt = Price of tender under consideration Pmax = Price of highest acceptable tender

POINTS AWARDED FOR SPECIFIC GOALS

- 4.1. In terms of Regulation 4(2); 5(2); 6(2) and 7(2) of the Preferential Procurement Regulations, preference points must be awarded for specific goals stated in the tender. For the purposes of this tender the tenderer will be allocated points based on the goals stated in table 1 below as may be supported by proof/ documentation stated in the conditions of this tender:
- 4.2. In cases where organs of state intend to use Regulation 3(2) of the Regulations, which states that, if it is unclear whether the 80/20 or 90/10 preference point system applies, an organ of state must, in the tender documents, stipulate in the case of—
- (a) an invitation for tender for income-generating contracts, that either the 80/20 or 90/10 preference point system will apply and that the highest acceptable tender will be used to determine the applicable preference point system; or
 - (b) any other invitation for tender, that either the 80/20 or 90/10 preference point system will apply and that the lowest acceptable tender will be used to determine the applicable preference point system, then the organ of state must indicate the points allocated for specific goals for both the 90/10 and 80/20 preference point system.

Table 1: Specific goals for the tender and points claimed are indicated per the table below.
(Note to organs of state: Where either the 90/10 or 80/20 preference point system is applicable, corresponding points must also be indicated as such.
Note to tenderers: The tenderer must indicate how they claim points for each preference point system.)

The specific goals allocated points in terms of this tender	Number of points allocated (90/10 system) (To be completed by the organ of state)	Number of points allocated (80/20 system) (To be completed by the organ of state)	Number of points claimed (90/10 system) (To be completed by the tenderer)	Number of points claimed (80/20 system) (To be completed by the tenderer)
At least 51% black ownership		15		
30% black woman ownership.		5		

DECLARATION WITH REGARD TO COMPANY/FIRM

4.3. Name of company/firm.....

4.4. Company registration number:

4.5. TYPE OF COMPANY/ FIRM

- ☐ Partnership/Joint Venture / Consortium
- ☐ One-person business/sole propriety
- ☐ Close corporation
- ☐ Public Company
- ☐ Personal Liability Company
- ☐ (Pty) Limited
- ☐ Non-Profit Company
- ☐ State Owned Company

[TICK APPLICABLE BOX]

4.6. I, the undersigned, who is duly authorised to do so on behalf of the company/firm, certify that the points claimed, based on the specific goals as advised in the tender, qualifies the company/firm for the preference(s) shown and I acknowledge that: i) The information furnished is true and correct; ii) The preference points claimed are in accordance with the General Conditions as indicated in paragraph 1 of this form;

iii) In the event of a contract being awarded as a result of points claimed as shown in paragraphs 1.4 and 4.2, the contractor may be required to furnish documentary proof to the satisfaction of the organ of state that the claims are correct;

iv) If the specific goals have been claimed or obtained on a fraudulent basis or any of the conditions of contract have not been fulfilled, the organ of state may, in addition to any other remedy it may have –

(a) disqualify the person from the tendering process;

(b) recover costs, losses or damages it has incurred or suffered as a result of that person's conduct;

(c) cancel the contract and claim any damages which it has suffered as a result of having to make less favourable arrangements due to such cancellation;

(d) recommend that the tenderer or contractor, its shareholders and directors, or only the shareholders and directors who acted on a fraudulent basis, be restricted from obtaining business from any organ of state for a period not exceeding 10 years, after the *audi alteram partem* (hear the other side) rule has been applied; and

(e) forward the matter for criminal prosecution, if deemed necessary.

.....
SIGNATURE(S) OF TENDERER(S)

SURNAME AND NAME:

.....

DATE:

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ADDRESS:

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