17 June 2024
What we want from the Wordworks website

A. An accessible resource centre for open source early language and literacy materials, programmes, and learning opportunities

1. Wordworks is one of the only organisations in South Africa that has developed **open source multilingual early language and literacy materials, programmes and training courses** focussed on the needs of children under eight years old. With the integration of Shine's materials, our combined resources will constitute a unique and important offering for all children under ten.
2. At its core, the website should be useful to **adults who work with, teach and care for children under ten years of age**.
   a. Wordworks' theory of change is based on the fact that early language and emergent literacy is built through **interaction between adults and young children** and exposure to print in both formal and informal contexts.
   b. Wordworks' goal is therefore to **resource and build the confidence of adults** in a position to build early language foundations.
   c. Wordworks has a strong **redress agenda**, and so it is important that our website design is developed with a keen awareness of the context, needs and skills of adults living and working in under-resourced and marginalised communities, speaking all SA's languages.
   d. The adults we are targeting include **a range of lay, volunteer and paraprofessionals, as well as (relatively low status) professional** people based in homes and communities, ECD centres, in the early grades of primary school and in the allied child care professions. These include
      i. Parents, grandparents, caregivers
      ii. Home-based carers, playgroup and educare facilitators, assistant and aftercare practitioners
      iii. Grade RR - Grade 2 teachers, teacher assistants, learning support teachers, after school practitioners including tutors
      iv. Primary health care and social workers, home visitors, occupational-speech- & physio-therapists
   e. Depending on their role, these adults will be looking for **different levels of resourcing**: information, inspiration, ideas and resources; classroom and intervention programmes; and/ or skills training courses.
3. The website should also serve those **systems**, **structures and organisations** whose mandate is to train and/or support these adults and to improve their care for and work with children.
   a. Wordworks strategy for expansion is based on a **train the trainer** model that recognises that while we can aim to reach individual adults with light resource provision at scale, this is not a sustainable model of development.
   b. For this reason, **Wordworks partners with a growing network of organisations** (NGOs, the district and provincial departments of education, schools, etc) that **train their own teams (and their networks)** to use our programmes and materials to ensure a strong and sustainable early language and literacy component within their own programmes of work, with roll out models, adapted as required for their constituencies.

For a representation of how the resource hub would map users to resources and learning opportunities, see the table that follows.

THE WEBSITE USER	SECTOR	**WHAT WORDWORKS WILL OFFER** (note pink highlight indicates a gap in our provision)			
		INFO, INSPIRATION IDEAS & RESOURCES	**EARLY LANGUAGE & LITERACY PROGRAMMES**	**SKILLS TRAINING / PERSONAL/ PROFESSIONAL COURSES**	**PARTNERSHIP, TRAINING OF TRAINERS** that work with the listed website users
THE WEBSITE USER (that works directly with/ cares for children) Trainers of these users also use the website, and are in purple highlight cells	*In addition to reaching the adult users listed directly, we aim to reach the systems of each sector through partnership.*	*Can be used independent of Wordworks programmes*	*For use in-classroom or for intervention. Come with implementation materials*	*Comes with training materials/ workbooks. Some facilitated some LMS, some accredited.*	*Provided with outlines/ facilitator guides / presentation packs/ participant materials*
		ACCESS: *Easy view/ download from site;* *Option of purchase from catalogue.*	ACCESS: *Sample view/ download. Full access requires sign up. Option of purchase from catalogue where relevant. Associated training incentivised.*	ACCESS: *Requires proof of materials purchase, and individual registration.* *Once trained, access to CoPs and materials updates.* **Notes** ** SACE accredited* ***LMS ready/ in dev* *^ CoP available after training*	ACCESS: *Requires organisational partnership agreement, registration and annual organisational reporting and renewal. Access to CoPs and materials updates.*
	HOMES & COMMUNITIES	**Resources**	**Home learning programmes**	**WW online courses for parents**	**NGO trainers**
Parents, grandparents, caregivers		🧑0-9 Stories Songs/rhymes Games Activities	🧑 R **TIME** 🧑 1 **TIME** 🧑 RR - 2 **Storytime with SHINE**	*We do not have online direct learning for parents. Consider integration of Wordworks App, other?*	Trained and resourced to train the users 🧑 0-2 **EWC** 🧑 3-4 **EWC** 🧑 R **TIME** 🧑 1 **TIME**

ECD practitioners: Home-based carers, playgroup and educare practitioners, assistant and aftercare practitioners	ECD	Resources	ECD practitioner programmes	WW online courses for ECD practitioners	NGO trainers DBE officials Tertiary lecturers
		🧑0-4 Stories Songs/rhymes Games Activities	*WW does not have a language programme which practitioners can access and implement independently. Is it appropriate at this age?*	*WW does not have online direct training for ECD practitioners. Consider integration/ of Wordworks App, LMS, other?*	Trained and resourced to train the users 🧑0-2 EWC 🧑3-4 EWC
School-based practitioners: Grade RR - Grade 2 teachers, teacher assistants, learning support teachers, after school practitioners including tutors	**EARLY GRADE**	**Resources**	**Classroom and intervention programmes**	**WW online courses for school-based practitioners**	**NGO trainers Dept heads DBE officials Tertiary lecturers**
		🧑5-9 Stories Songs/rhymes Games Activities	**Classroom programmes** 🧑RR**Little Stars** 🧑R **STELLAR**	**Teachers train to use classroom programmes^** 🧑 **Little Stars**** & 🧑 **STELLAR***/**	Trained and resourced to train the users
			Parent education programme 🧑FP **HSP** 🧑 R **TIME*** 🧑 1 **TIME***	**Teachers train to train parents ^** 🧑FP **HSP***/** 🧑 R **TIME*** 🧑 1 **TIME***	
				🧑 **Teachers prof dev** (FP) Language and early literacy foundations*	
			Tutor / after school intervention programmes 🧑R 1 2 **RSRW SHINE** *(need to buy readers)* 🧑R 1 **TIME**	**Tutors/ assistants/ afterschool practitioners train to use intervention programmes ^** 🧑 R 1 2 **RSRW**** **SHINE** 🧑R 1 **TIME**	

Primary health care & social workers, home visitors, occupational- speech- & physio- therapists	ALLIED CHILD SERVICES	Resources	Programmes	WW online course for allied child professionals	Tertiary lecturers
		👧0-9 Stories Songs/rhymes Games Activities	👧0-2 EWC 👧3-4 EWC 👧R 1 TIME	*WW does not have online direct skills training for allied child professionals.*	

B. A showcase of Wordworks contribution to early language and literacy and a case for involvement with us

    a. We anticipate that the resource centre will generate interest beyond those who will directly utilise the materials, programmes and training courses. We see it as a **demonstration of the nature and importance, scope and strategy, of early language and literacy** work.

    b. We anticipate that the website will be sought after by those working in the **support systems**, **structures and organisations that manage, train and support** adults in different roles with children, that **research and evaluate** programmes, and that make **policy, programme and funding decisions** in the sectors where we work.

        i. Some may specifically be seeking early language and literacy solutions, and as such finding our site should not be difficult. For them, the resource centre itself will provide much of what they need, though it will be important for them to be able to easily **cross reference our offerings with reflective programme reports and external evaluations**, reach and impact statistics, partner information and testimonials, clarity on partnership models, costs, roles and responsibilities and reporting requirements.

        ii. Others may hold a broader development agenda. They will not find the resource centre immediately useful though it should stand as a demonstration of our contribution. They may be seeking interventions that build families, early childhood development, integration between schools and community. We need to work out how to **draw them to our website in the first place and how to make the case for early language and literacy** as a vehicle for and contributor to development. They may find it helpful to find evidence of the different **models of work** that we have used in different contexts and with different partnerships.

    c. So, in addition to the resource centre, the website needs to present a **convincing case** for Wordworks quality and track record as well as our accountability, and present **easy mechanisms for these users to connect** with senior Wordworks staff in order to take up conversations about programme and/ or funding partnerships.

C. An integrated system that rationalises and supports Wordworks support operations, enabling efficient and affordable growth in our reach and delivery

Website functionality (as per ToR)	Some thoughts

a. **Registration / sign up forms** connected with automated creation of user profiles for the Resource Hub and the LMS, **integrated with a CRM** (like Salesforce) and **mailing platform** (like Mailchimp)	Our **'customer' relationships** have always been remarkably strong in WW, and have been highly valued by partners in NGOs, schools, ECDs, and communities, particularly in the WC where we developed and piloted our programmes. However, they were strong because we were small and local for many years, and this is no longer who we are.
	An evaluation conducted after Covid (when we took much of our training into online forums) showed that partners were missing the personal touch that we were no longer able to sustain. This is becoming even more of a challenge as the organisation grows, noting that in the post Covid period, we have moved into a new strategic phase, under new leadership, which prioritises larger and national reach.
	It is worth noting that up until a few years ago, Wordworks had moved away from offering direct teacher training, choosing to work instead by training trainers at NGOs and the DBE at district and provincial level. At the level of data, this meant we were only responsible for the **relatively small number of trainers' data**, relying on partner organisations to provide their teacher training data to us.
	A number of factors have meant that we now combine system work with individual teacher training: There is a growing demand for teacher training for early grades as they are integrated into DBE. Online training is affordable at a national level. We now have our Grade RR (most) and Grade R (all) classroom programmes available in South African languages and have developed associated LMS courses, with the Grade R course accredited by SACE
	The takeaway is that direct teacher training could offer a huge area of growth for Wordworks, **increasing the amount of user data we need to manage exponentially.**
	We put in place a number of **communication strategies** to mitigate the loss of personal relationship: regular e-mailers, whatsapp groups, email follow up to materials orders, and online community of practice meetings to complement training. While they are not the same as face to face communication, we believe there is a future in these types of strategies. However, our systems are **not sustainable or scaleable** - communication about, feedback from and particularly individual user profiles are not integrated, or automated by system or by department.

b.	**Events management system** including calendar, booking system with notifications (like Calendly), payments and feedback on events. Attendance registration system at events needs to feed into CRM (like Salesforce), and feedback to the User dashboard which links to the partner dashboard.	Yes please. Comments with respect to communication strategies above not being sustainable or scaleable apply to advertising of events, registration, confirmation. Comments below about mediating as part of relationship management will probably also apply.
c.	**E-commerce:** The Website, Resource Hub and LMS all need E-commerce functionality to accept payment. Resources need to accept payment for electronic material and print (including shipping costs). The Website needs to accept donations and tie into a donor management system incorporating CRM (like Salesforce) and mailing platform (like Mailchimp).	We will also need to enable payment for some **events**. We need to consider that our capacity to hold stock is limited (financially and space-wise). At the same time we have to keep print costs as low as possible, clearly only possible with large print runs. We have managed this by printing in bulk at specified times of the year. This would require a calendar feature. Print scheduling works when the resources are tied into a training cycle or with partners, but is not great for customer experience of public sales. **Do we institute dual systems, continuing with scheduled bulk printing but adding in a more expensive print-on-demand option.**
d.	**User dashboard** showing activity pulled from CRM (like Salesforce), as well as relevant content like:, upcoming related events, accessed materials, other related material to be accessed (including for purchase), face-to-face training or events completed, LMS lessons	A website based **user dashboard** would put the onus on users to maintain accurate personal data, automatically track and reflect back their engagement with website resources and WW events, guide them to engage with relevant resources, training and CoP opportunities, and empower them to select the type of contact they would enjoy from us. I imagine we would have to **mediate this feature**, but believe it would be positive for both WW and our partners in that this would create a **protocol for relationship management**. I'm not sure what **interface** WW would have with the dashboard, but it would be important for our staff to be able to access, discuss and work into (appropriate) aspects of the user dashboard in engagement with users as required

	completed and started with progress, related LMS courses to be accessed, and related community forums (ideally somehow tied to existing Whatsapp groups).	We could build website processes into our online training and whatsapp support engagement as an investment into much needed **sector online literacy,** with the pay off for us of improved **accuracy** of our records; the strengthening of **user agency** due to a bigger picture understanding of our offerings and their location within them, the **alignment of services to expressed interest** and, one hopes, the **saving of administrative time** in the long run. It would be a big win if we could find a way to **tie new tech to WhatsApp groups** where our users feel very comfortable.
e.	**Partner dashboard** that groups individual users, and tracks activity in the LMS and Resource Hub.	Remembering that Wordworks partners are organisations/ structures that train to use and/ or train on our programmes in their own contexts. Just to note that the **partner dashboard** would need to track **all** activity by users grouped, not just LMS and Resource hub but also attendance at events. We would need to consider whether all users grouped with a partner have access to this dashboard, or only a representative.
f.	**A dedicated donation page** using website form integrated with a payment gateway (like PayFast), CRM (like Salesforce) and mailing platform (like Mailchimp) with a successful donation loop.	We have a very poor track record of raising funds through our website and have **tended to focus on landing large grants through direct engagement with donors.** It would be important to link this type of donor data (that doesn't come through the website) into the CRM and mailing platform so that established donors are in automatic receipt of communication beyond the minimum reporting required. It is important, however, that we **try to leverage the website and our mailing system** to run campaigns to encourage individual once-off, monthly and annual (tax cycle) contributions. We might also want to **run campaigns** for (for example) materials sponsorship (materials cost is the single biggest block to scaling programmes - particularly those that require materials per learner, such as TIME). We could run these campaigns through the website, social media and targeting people through our database. Serious thought will have to be given to whether or how we target our resource centre / LMS user database and if we are going to **segment strategically**, how this would be done. There is very limited capacity for planning (and especially for executing) campaigns, however and so **automation of such campaigns** will be essential.

Q & (the start of) A arising from the document

Q: Is it useful to understand Wordworks partners as organisations that participate in Training of Trainers courses and go on to train others on Wordworks programmes?
A: Yes, it's a helpful distinction, but it does need to be a bit more nuanced. I have tried to use language that allows for a range of roles for partners - from implementation to training. EG there are small partners who do not train others on programmes. For example, an NGO may simply use our tutor programme in one after school centre. So, they train to USE the programme. In a slightly bigger organisation, one staff member might come to WW training and then in turn train her colleagues. A larger structure may send their entire training team for WW training and then all go on to train many practitioners to use the programmes at many centres.

Q: Is the ECD / programme cell in the first table intentionally blank?
A: Yes, we have intentionally not provided a language classroom programme or intervention programme for the 0-4 children, which practitioners can access and apply. (Though of course there are many activities, stories, songs and rhymes etc that we offer.)

We have felt a classroom language programme would be too formal for the age group, and that it is again, too soon to identify children for intervention. Very young children need to learn language through natural interaction with their families at home, and with practitioners in ECD spaces. What *is* needed therefore is for those adults to be conscious and skilled to integrate rich language throughout the day.

The SA ECD sector has developed many excellent accredited ECD learning programmes which are being used in ECD centres by trained practitioners. However, what we have identified as a gap is the specific development of the awareness and skills of these practitioners to give space to language development within these programmes.   (EG The activity might be drawing but do you take time to really talk to the child about their drawing, do you show genuine interest, make eye contact and listen, do you ensure there is a to-and-fro engagement, do you 'add words' that enrich the conversation, do you repeat back to the child using more complete sentences, do you affirm their ideas and work).

The EWC programme was developed to engage practitioners in a series of hypothetical contextual conversations that make them aware of the myriad ways they can naturally build language foundations. It is not a programme that would work for practitioners to access independently.
WW strategy has been the training of trainers with cascaded reach to practitioners. This remains a very strong strategy as practitioners can then be met by local trainers, tuned into their contexts, and able to modify training models accordingly. Nonetheless, I am saying we should explore the creation of direct online learning opportunities for practitioners who are not within reach of these training organisations, versioning the EWC content, using a similar methodology: present a contextualised example, discuss, trying out another example.

A similar argument can be made, also for the EWC content, with respect to parents.. but their online access would be even more difficult.

Q: Will Wordworks consider hosting other resources, programmes and training relevant to the mission of building early language and literacy?

A: It feels in the spirit of this project, and it is something Shine was interested in us exploring. Wordworks is already training on a Lifeskills classroom programme in the Western Cape as we believe it contributes strongly to language development and aligns strongly to Stellar. I believe it would be important for us to consider this very carefully before embarking on it, but that we should be set up technically for this to happen in a next phase. We would need to look carefully at criteria for partnerships of this kind - alignment of approach with respect to; language learning theory, training and development, models of reach, scale, sustainability. We would also need to align on issues of licensing, access criteria, feedback, language and other versioning, version controls. Clearly contracts would need to be in place.