

Who is SmartStart Early Learning?

SmartStart is a *successful national network* of NGOs and partners that is realising quality, affordable early learning for all children aged three to five. We aim to reach 1 million children annually by 2030 — focused on the two-thirds of children from the 40% of households receiving least income. We are achieving this by *scaling a network of and building a platform for providers, achieving specific ecosystem transformations with governments and partners, and promoting early learning as a priority societal cause.*

SmartStart has extended quality access to, and demonstrated on-track early learning outcomes for, excluded children; established a trusted network serving 80,000+ children weekly (~10,000 practitioners supported by 14 partner organisations); constructed key parts of a platform for population-scale; and supported development of government's first national early learning strategy. This yields momentum among social investors as SmartStart scales in SA — and beyond.

Job title	Data Systems, Quality & Governance Specialist
Nature of time commitment	Full-time
Modality & Location	Johannesburg- (Hybrid) or Possible Remote work based on skill scarcity for candidates located in South Africa
Nature of contract	Indefinite
Duration & Timeframe	ASAP
Job grade (Paterson framework)	D Lower
Remuneration	R 780k – R 1.02m pa negotiable depending on profile plus eligibility for 5-15% performance bonus determined annually
Manager	Head of Sense-Making, Data & Analytics
Number of vacancies	One (1)

Child Safeguarding Policy

Any and all applicants must adhere with the SmartStart Child Safeguarding Policy which has been developed in line with the International Standards for Child Safeguarding which provide a benchmark for organisations working with children.

In terms of this Policy, SmartStart will not employ anyone whose name is on the National Child Protection Register or who has been convicted of a criminal offence involving a child.

111 - 113 Oxford Road, Saxonwold, Johannesburg, 2196
Private Bag X777, Houghton, Gauteng, 2041

T 011 268 5959 | E hello@smartstart.org.za

NPO No.: 54-752 NPO | REG No.: 2015/075926/08 | PBO No.: 930/049/914



 SmartStart South Africa
 SmartStart South Africa
 @smartstartsa

www.smartstart.org.za



Data Systems, Quality & Governance Specialist

Job Specification

Purpose

SmartStart is committed to improving early childhood outcomes in South Africa through a scalable social franchise model. The Data Systems, Quality & Governance Specialist will play a central role in strengthening the organisation's data systems and processes to support effective programme delivery.

The role is primarily responsible for ensuring the quality, consistency, and usability of data across SmartStart. The incumbent will lead efforts to improve data tools, streamline data workflows, and embed good data practices across teams. They will also support analysis and dashboard development to enable timely insights, while helping build internal capacity for data use and governance.

Location in Hub Organisation

- Line Manager: **Head of Sense- Making, Data & Analytics**
- Job grade (Paterson framework): **D Lower**
- Manages: N/A





Key Responsibilities

Data Governance and Quality Assurance

- Design, operationalise and oversee the data governance function within the organisation.
- Enable and support data governance processes, including data availability, accessibility, integrity, quality (including accuracy, consistency, and reliability), usability, security, and compliance (in collaboration with IT and legal teams).
- Assist with regular data cleaning and quality checks to ensure high data integrity
- Develop and maintain documentation, SOPs, and metadata to support consistent and high-quality data management.
- Design data quality dashboards and set up regular monitoring and review alerts.
- Work within the organisation to enhance data literacy, improve existing data processes and workflows and support future data process design and development.
- Work across teams to roll out data quality improvement plans, design processes to collect missing data or improve data accuracy.
- Facilitate cross-functional collaboration to improve data practices, including onboarding sessions, governance workshops, and learning events.
- Conduct assessments of key data assets and identify potential risks or gaps, including data process mapping.
- Coordinate and lead data governance efforts, including defining data ownership, steward roles, and accountability structures across operational teams.
- Support product stewardship for key data platforms, ensuring alignment between data processes, user needs, and platform functionality.
- Lead or support change management processes for data tools and structures, ensuring stakeholder alignment and minimising disruption.
- Monitor data hygiene and escalate discrepancies to the relevant team members.

Data Analysis and Insights Generation

- Conduct data analysis to support strategic decision-making and programme improvements.
- Respond to data requests from programme teams and leadership.
- Conduct routine data checks to ensure data integrity.
- Identify patterns and trends in data and provide clear summaries for different audiences.
- Support the preparation of data insights briefs and reports.
- Create, enhance and support the use of interactive dashboards and analytics tools to improve data-driven decision-making across the organisation and network.

Supporting Organisational Learning and Adaptive Strategy

- Assist with enabling teams to leverage insights for learning and programme improvement.
- Contribute to rapid experimentation by supporting data collection and analysis processes.
- Support the delivery of basic data literacy training across the organisation to improve data engagement and interpretation.
- Support teams to improve data capturing, quality assurance and related processes.
- Translate data insights into accessible formats for programme teams and leadership.





Research and Evaluation Support

- Support the Senior Data Analyst and Research team with research design, data analysis, and interpretation.
- Assist in co-conceptualising and co-creating research and evaluation questions, studies, and terms of reference.
- Provide input into research reports and recommendations.

Key Person Specifications

Essential Skills and Experience

- **A minimum of a Bachelor's degree in Statistics, Social Sciences, Economics, Mathematics, or a related field.**
- At least 6-8 years of experience in data analysis, data management or a related field, including experience where you have had ownership over the data process, and demonstrable leadership experience.
- Strong quantitative and analytical skills
- A curious approach to technology, with interest and experience working across multiple tools to solve organisational challenges.
- **Excellent knowledge of and ability to work with SQL databases.**
- **Experience with data visualisation tools (e.g., Power BI, Tableau).**
- Ability to summarise data insights and communicate findings to non-technical audiences.
- **Experience in managing and working with large datasets.**
- Strong attention to detail and accuracy.

Desirable

- Knowledge of statistical principles, especially relating to designing and running randomised control trials.
- Experience working in a social impact or nonprofit context.
- Proficiency in Excel and at least one statistical tool (e.g., Stata, R, SPSS).
- Familiarity with survey software (e.g. SurveyCTO), CRMs (Microsoft Dynamics), and Azure.
- Basic knowledge of data process mapping and workflow optimisation.
- Knowledge of automation using code and/or workflow tools (Make.com, Zapier, Power Automate etc.)

General Knowledge & Understanding and/or Skills & Abilities

Behaving & Learning

- Behaving trustworthily: being reliable, accepting, open, congruent (ie. integrity)
- Learning curiously, incl. learning how by doing differently
- Clear curiosity (asking questions, questioning assumptions, doing differently, trying things)
- Track record of learning
- Openness to & appetite for feedback
- Familiarity with and curiosity about
- Societal scale
- Systems doing-and-thinking
- Design thinking & iterative designing
- Driving to succeed
- Commitment to SmartStart's purpose and social justice internationally
- *Advantageous:* experience in, or familiarity with, early learning, ECD, education, public health, etc.





Relating & Adapting

- Building trusting relationships
- Playing role(s)-across-contexts adaptively
- Creating the conditions for and facilitating people's thinking *diversely* and doing good work *together*
- Co-building & communicating coherence unendingly
- Reprioritising continually

Developing Self

- Acknowledging one's own relative strengths (& weaknesses)
- Seeing & navigating rhetoric vs reality
- Navigating ambiguity
- Coping with stress caused by the above

Developing Systems Doing-and-Thinking

Seeing, synthesising, sense-making and influencing

- the big picture / story, incl. emergent phenomena
- the relations between wholes & parts
- patterns across space and over time
- feedback loops (circular causation)
- boundaries and working across them appropriately

Sophisticated problem-solving, incl. distinguishing complicated from complex problems & contexts

- scan & synthesise disparate sources of information
- if complicated: sense-analyse-respond
- if complex: probe-sense-respond

