

Programme Director, Daara Initiative

Employer	Equinexus Partners Ltd, the lead organisation responsible for Daara's delivery, with control over programmatic and financial decisions.
Programme	Daara, a programme supporting African organisations to strengthen their institutions and contribute to improvements in foundational learning, delivered by Equinexus Partners with its consortium partners.
Location	Remote, with an eligible base and a required Nairobi presence to be confirmed before advertising.
Contract type	Full-time, fixed-term, aligned to the funded programme period.
Reporting & Accountability	Based within Equinexus Partners, reporting day-to-day to the Consortium Steward (Equinexus CEO) and accountable to the Steering Committee for programme delivery and outcomes.
Strategic accountability	Accountable to the Steering Committee for programme delivery through agreed governance arrangements. Partners contribute to recruitment, objectives and performance review. Any required Committee concurrence follows the approved framework; Equinexus retains employer responsibilities.
Works closely with	• Consortium Steward and partner leaders • Technical leads and programme operations • CFO and Finance and Grants Manager • Foundation programme officers; participants and alumni
Duration	Aligned to the three-year programme, with appointment and end dates confirmed against the executed grant and recruitment timetable.
Travel	Regular regional travel across Anglophone and Francophone Africa, including programme residencies and consortium meetings.
Remuneration	Competitive, within the approved programme budget. Range to be confirmed before advertising.

Background

Daara is a Gates Foundation-supported initiative working with African organisations to advance foundational literacy and numeracy. It connects institutional strengthening,

leadership practice, technical expertise and evidence use so that participating organisations can pursue their priorities and contribute more effectively to government-led education reform.

Previously incubated under Better Purpose, Daara enters its next phase under the leadership of Equinexus Partners. Equinexus holds overall responsibility for programme delivery and control over programmatic and financial decisions, working with consortium partners through agreed governance arrangements and delegated responsibilities.

Earlier phases, implemented by Better Purpose and shaped with participating organisations, established a peer community and practical experience on which this phase will build. The consortium will maintain continuity while refining the offer through input from participants, alumni, and government.

The consortium brings complementary responsibilities:

- Equinexus Partners: lead organisation, with overall programmatic and financial control and accountability; programme integration and institutional strengthening.
- QEDA: foundational learning, technical leadership and implementation expertise.
- eBASE Africa: monitoring, evaluation, research, learning and evidence architecture.
- LARTES-IFAN: leadership in research, political dialogue and Francophone integration across all three strands.

Daara will operate as a single integrated programme across three cohorts, combining a 12-month Academy experience with a defined alumni offer. Support will respond to each organisation's context, existing strengths and agreed priorities. Funded implementation and appointment dates remain subject to the executed grant and confirmed programme schedule.

Purpose of the Role

The Programme Director leads the day-to-day coordination and integration of delivery across independent consortium partners. They do not exercise hierarchical authority over partner organisations or their staff, but work through agreed responsibilities, decision rights and escalation arrangements. They translate the approved investment design and consortium decisions into a single coherent programme with clear responsibilities, realistic schedules, coordinated resources, and measurable outcomes.

The role is accountable for programme integration, partner delivery performance, the participating organisation's experience and timely resolution of delivery risks. The Programme Director connects institutional strengthening and foundational learning

expertise, evidence use and government engagement around each organisation's priorities. The Consortium Steward provides strategic stewardship, senior relationship engagement and support on escalated matters. Technical leads retain authority for quality and integrity within their agreed domains. The Programme Director exercises operational authority within Equinexus's approved delegations and the consortium's governance framework.

The Programme Director may take delegated delivery decisions, require agreed progress information and initiate corrective action. Material changes to scope, budget or partner commitments follow the agreed approval route. Financial commitments, contract signatures and grant amendments remain subject to authorised signatories and reserved decision rights.

Core Responsibilities

1. Programme Strategy and Integrated Leadership

- Translate the theory of change, grant commitments, and consortium decisions into a coherent delivery strategy, maintaining a clear connection among activities, participant priorities, and intended outcomes.
- Maintain one integrated workplan that links accountable owners, dates, dependencies, budgets, staffing, and evidence requirements across all tracks and partners.
- Use evidence and delivery experience to recommend adaptations. Prioritise, defer or resequence work through the agreed decision process when commitments exceed available capacity or resources.

2. Consortium Coordination and Partner Performance

- Build trusted working relationships with partner leaders and delivery teams, respecting organisational autonomy while holding agreed programme commitments visible. Agree and monitor partner deliverables within approved scopes. Address underperformance through timely discussion, documented corrective action and agreed escalation or remediation routes. Encourage partners to resolve routine disagreements directly. Where a disagreement remains unresolved or affects wider programme delivery, facilitate resolution through the Operational Delivery Group and escalate material matters to the Consortium Council in line with the agreed dispute-resolution procedure.
- Apply agreed decision rights fairly; do not commit another partner's staff, resources or additional work without agreement. Distinguish core subaward responsibilities from separately commissioned delivery.

- Ensure that English and French operate as equal working languages across the programme, with interpretation, translation and contextual adaptation planned and budgeted from the outset. Key meetings, decisions, participant communications and programme materials must be accessible in both languages at the same stage of delivery.
- Monitor the quality and timeliness of bilingual delivery and address any disparity in how Anglophone and Francophone partners or participants access information, influence decisions and experience the programme.

3. Mobilisation and the Participating Organisation Journey

- Take operational ownership of the handover from Better Purpose and the interim Secretariat. Verify usable records, data permissions, relationships and outstanding commitments, and assign owners to residual gaps.
- Lead a phased mobilisation plan and evidence-based readiness reviews. Coordinate the completion and testing of delivery arrangements before recommending progression to the next phase.
- Oversee the full journey from sourcing and application through selection, onboarding, assessment, tailored support, learning, application, completion and alumni transition. Apply approved selection criteria, conflict safeguards and decision routes.
- Ensure each organisation has clear participation expectations, a named coordination contact, and a single integrated support plan. Coordinate technical assistance, residentials, virtual learning, coaching and peer learning without duplicating assessments or reporting.
- Maintain a complete 12-month calendar for each cohort, including activities that span grant reporting years. Test English- and French-language pathways, monitor participant burden and engagement, and act on feedback or withdrawal risks.

4. Governance and Decision Support

- Lead the Operational Delivery Group and prepare integrated programme, finance and risk information for the Steering Committee, in collaboration with operations and finance colleagues.
- Present clear recommendations, options and consequences for decisions; distinguish approved commitments, agreed directions and unresolved matters.
- Maintain decision, risk, issue and action registers, ensuring decisions are communicated and implemented. Resolve routine dependencies near delivery and promptly escalate reserved or unresolved matters.
- Support the Daara Network Advisory Council, and other agreed participation mechanisms so that participant and alumni perspectives inform programme decisions.

5. Grant Management and Programme Resources

- Serve as the principal operational programme contact for the Gates Foundation within Equinexus's agreed donor-engagement arrangements, coordinating strategic or material matters with the Consortium Steward.

- Lead accurate and timely narrative reporting, reconciling progress, expenditure and forecasts with finance colleagues and explaining variances, learning and corrective action.
- Work with the CFO, Finance and Grants Manager and operations colleagues to implement applicable grant requirements, including partner reporting, expenditure restrictions, safeguarding, data and Global Access obligations.
- Oversee the programmatic purpose, appraisal and results of approved organisation-specific support and AI-related activity. Apply the grant's agreed mechanisms and approval limits; secure specialist input for responsible AI design, data use and delivery.

6. Adaptive Management, Risk and Quality Assurance

- Maintain a live view of delivery, partnership, financial, safeguarding, data and reputational risks, with named mitigation owners and escalation triggers.
- Agree and apply quality and acceptance standards with technical leads, respecting their domain authority while resolving cross-track inconsistencies.
- Ensure named safeguarding and data-protection responsibilities, participant reporting routes and incident-response arrangements are active and tested. Escalate concerns through designated procedures.
- Create conditions for problems and adverse findings to be raised early. Initiate corrective measures and use the appropriate authority route to pause activity where readiness or required controls are inadequate.

7. Evidence, Learning and Continuous Improvement

- Work with eBASE and other technical leads to operationalise the results framework, baseline and follow-up measures, data-quality checks and evidence standards for organisational progress, evidence use and government contribution.
- Lead integrated performance and learning reviews that result in documented decisions and adaptations, incorporating participant and alumni feedback.
- Protect the integrity of monitoring and evaluative judgement, including access to adverse findings and non-conflicted review. Support independent evaluation arrangements without determining evaluators' conclusions.
- Prepare the first-year stage-gate evidence and recommendations, distinguishing early progress from outcomes that require a full cohort cycle, and documenting conditions for continuation or adaptation.

8. Track 3: Government Partnership and Sector Contribution

- Hold programme-level accountability for Track 3 delivery, working with designated technical leads and the Consortium Steward to connect participating organisations' capabilities with relevant government-led priorities.
- Ground engagement in country context, validated demand and existing institutional relationships. Support organisations to lead their own contributions and avoid promising access, funding or policy influence.

- Coordinate agreed interfaces with FLIGHT and other relevant platforms, making each relationship's purpose, owner and intended contribution explicit.
- Represent Daara within agreed mandates and coordinate government-facing work across the participant journey, tracking evidence of contribution rather than relying on meeting counts or senior access.

9. Secretariat Leadership and Performance

- Lead the programme Secretariat and line-manage designated direct reports within the approved staffing structure, setting clear objectives, manageable workloads and regular performance reviews.
- Work with Equinexus to recruit and onboard approved programme roles, establish interim cover for any gaps, and plan a clear transition from interim to substantive responsibilities.
- Coordinate operations, finance and specialist support through agreed functional relationships. Partner personnel remain managed by their own organisations; programme commitments are managed through agreed delivery arrangements.
- Model integrity, respect and constructive challenge, and ensure staff have the support and development needed to deliver effectively.

10. Operational Oversight and Commissioned Delivery

- Work with programme operations colleagues to maintain proportionate systems for scheduling, logistics, records, procurement administration, participant communication and delivery tracking.
- Translate participant and programme needs into scoped assignments with technical leads. Coordinate specifications, delivery schedules and acceptance criteria with procurement and finance colleagues.
- Keep technical advice, commercial selection and approval of additional work appropriately separated. Apply transparent procurement, value-for-money, conflict-of-interest and recusal procedures.
- Review programme expenditure, commitments, forecasts and capacity with finance colleagues; recommend corrective action while preserving financial control and authorised approval responsibilities.

11. Knowledge, Communications and Alumni Contribution

- Coordinate agreed knowledge products from commissioning through technical review, publication and dissemination, with named owners, resources and realistic schedules.
- Ensure publications and communications reflect evidence, acknowledge participant and partner contributions, and comply with consent, confidentiality, attribution, and applicable Global Access requirements.
- Develop the alumni proposition with alumni and partners, clarifying ongoing benefits, responsibilities, duration, and any paid contribution options before commitments are communicated.
- Create practical routes for organisations to share learning and contribute to later cohorts and the wider field of foundational learning.

Experience and Qualifications

- A postgraduate qualification in education, international development, public policy, management or a related field, or equivalent relevant professional experience.
- Substantial progressive leadership experience in African education or development, including responsibility for multi-country, donor-funded programmes of comparable complexity. Evidence of responsibility and results matters more than a particular job title.
- Demonstrated ability to mobilise programmes, integrate partner workplans and budgets, manage interdependencies and deliver through organisations outside the candidate's line-management authority.
- Experience of organisational strengthening and institution-level change, including working with senior leaders and teams to translate learning into organisational practice.
- A record of managing donor relationships, narrative reporting, programme resources, risks and corrective action; experience working effectively with finance, grants and procurement specialists.
- Experience of government and education-system engagement in African contexts, with sound judgement about institutional relationships, political dynamics and locally led reform.
- Experience leading diverse teams across Anglophone and Francophone contexts. The Programme Director must be bilingual, with full professional proficiency in spoken and written English and French.

Knowledge and Professional Practice

- A strong understanding of foundational learning and how civil society organisations contribute to government-led education improvement.
- Practical understanding of institutional change, adult learning, organisational diagnostics and tailored implementation support.
- Confidence using MEL evidence, budgets and risk information to make decisions and explain trade-offs.
- Commitment to safeguarding, ethical conduct, responsible data use and the agency of participating organisations.
- Ability to commission and assess specialist advice, including responsible AI support where relevant to approved programme objectives. Programme management credentials and experience with foundation grants are useful assets.

Leadership Competencies

- Systems thinking and execution: connects strategy, participant experience, resources and evidence, and turns decisions into sequenced action.
- Partnership leadership: builds trust, influences across organisational boundaries and addresses underperformance fairly.
- Judgement and accountability: makes timely decisions within authority, explains trade-offs and escalates matters requiring wider approval.

- Cultural and political understanding: works respectfully across languages and contexts, recognising where local knowledge should guide decisions.
- Integrity and learning: welcomes challenge, reports difficult findings honestly and changes course when evidence warrants it.
- People leadership: sets clear expectations, develops colleagues and manages pressure without allowing unrealistic workloads to become routine.

Success Measures and Initial Priorities

Objectives will be agreed with Equinexus, with input from the Steering Committee and partners, under the approved governance framework. Targets will align with the final grant results framework and the Programme Director's actual appointment date.

Assessment will consider delivery, contribution to outcomes and the quality of management decisions.

- Mobilisation and readiness: an integrated, resourced workplan; a verified handover and residual-action register; functioning delivery forums; and tested participant pathways and controls, with evidence supporting readiness decisions.
- Participant experience: clear expectations, coordinated and proportionate support, comparable English- and French-language access, timely resolution of concerns and progress against agreed participation and completion targets.
- Institutional outcomes: verified progress against organisations' agreed priorities and grant measures, including institutional capacity, evidence use and contribution to government-led work.
- Partner delivery: commitments met or renegotiated transparently, dependencies resolved, corrective actions completed and material issues escalated in time for action.
- Evidence and adaptation: credible reporting, independent judgement protected, learning translated into decisions and a well-supported first-year stage-gate assessment.
- Resources and team: delivery managed within approved resources and delegations, material variances explained, assurance findings addressed, and staff responsibilities and workloads kept realistic.

During the first 90 days in post, priorities will be to establish the delivery baseline, resolve inherited handover and authority gaps, agree a deliverable programme schedule and activate integrated performance reviews. Readiness testing and cohort preparation will follow the confirmed programme stage. Pre-appointment responsibilities remain with the designated interim owners; any inherited delays will be recorded, and the recovery plan agreed.

Why Join Daara

This is an opportunity to lead a substantive, African-led partnership that connects institutional development with foundational learning and government-led reform. You will work with organisations bringing their own expertise and ambitions, and help make their collective programme coherent, useful and accountable.

The role will suit a leader who combines strategic judgement with disciplined implementation, values partnership and is willing to make difficult delivery choices openly. Success means participating organisations can demonstrate progress on priorities they own, supported by a consortium that delivers reliably and learns from evidence.

How to Apply

Send a curriculum vitae and a cover letter of no more than two pages to hr@equinexuspartners.com by [application deadline to be confirmed]. Describe your experience of integrating a multi-partner programme, addressing a difficult delivery or accountability challenge, and supporting institutional change. State your English and

French proficiency and availability. Equinexus Partners welcomes applications from candidates across Africa and the wider region and is committed to fair and inclusive recruitment.