



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

NET ZERO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Issued by: The Town of Antigonish

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RFP Issued: July 31st, 2024

Responses Due: September 11th, 2024, before 2:00pm AST

1. OVERVIEW

1.1. About the Town of Antigonish

The Town of Antigonish (TOA) is in the northeastern corner of Nova Scotia (pop 4,656) and is an economic hub and service center for the rural communities surrounding it. With a diverse and growing population, TOA is a family-friendly town with lots of opportunities, access to quality education at all levels, recreation, sports and cultural activities.

TOA has pledged to become the first Net Zero Community in Canada. TOA owns and operates its own municipal electric utility (MEU) which uniquely positions the Town to address the climate emergency by making green infrastructure investments that will support increased energy demands while keeping energy rates affordable.

TOA has a proven track record of taking a leadership position in the fight against climate change through investments in renewable energy. Demonstrating commitment to this vision, TOA is an owner of the Alternative Resource Energy Authority (AREA) along with the Town of Berwick and Town of Mahone Bay. AREA owns and operates the 23.5MW Ellershouse Wind Farm and negotiates bulk procurement of clean energy on the wholesale market, on behalf of the three Towns and the Riverport Electric Light Commission.

Additionally, TOA has invested heavily in customer facing electrification and renewable energy programs including +9MW of community solar in partnership with the other AREA municipalities, over 100 electric vehicle (EV) charging points with other MEUs in the Maritimes, and a turnkey residential heat pump program that includes financing and ongoing customer care.

TOA is committed to helping both the provincial and federal governments to achieve emission reduction targets by decarbonizing its heating sector and improving climate resilience. As an economic hub for the region, TOA provides financial and environmental sustainability which is critical to enhancing community services that improve the well-being of all people in one of Nova Scotia's largest rural communities while assisting Nova Scotia to reach its renewable energy standard of 80% by 2030.

1.2. Document Purpose

This Request for Proposal (RFP) is seeking a qualified consultant to create a Net Zero Community Engagement Strategy and Implementation Plan.

Interested entities ("Respondents") are requested to provide detailed information on how they propose to engage with the Town on the strategy and plan. This includes delivery method, minimum Respondent qualifications and experience, methodology, budgeting, performance expectations, etc.

1.3. Project Background

TOA is racing to be the first net-zero emissions community in Canada powered by 100% renewable energy. To achieve this objective, it is focusing on large scale electrification initiatives including the Grid Modernization Project.

The MEU provides reliable and sustainable energy solutions to its residents and businesses, playing a key role in TOA's leadership in the fight against climate change. With a proven track record of investments in renewable energy and customer-facing electrification programs, the MEU has continuously evolved to meet the growing demands of the community. By investing in modern infrastructure and renewable energy sources, it supports the goal of reducing carbon emissions and promoting sustainable development.

TOA believes that electrification of customer heating and transportation, coupled with supplying 100% renewable energy, are the keys to achieving its net-zero goal. The MEU not only ensures the delivery of electricity but acknowledges its role in community engagement by educating the public on energy conservation, and supporting local initiatives aimed at creating a greener future for Antigonish. Central to the TOA’s strategy to achieve net-zero emissions, the MEU is leading efforts to integrate smart renewables, enhance grid resilience, and implement energy-efficient technologies. Through its dedicated services and innovative projects, the MEU exemplifies the TOA's progressive vision and steadfast commitment to achieving a net-zero future.

TOA has multiple ongoing green initiatives under its net-zero umbrella, including:

- Ellershouse Wind Farm
- Grid Modernization and New Substation Project
- Deep Energy Retrofit Feasibility Study and Capital Plan for corporate infrastructure
- Community District Energy System Feasibility Study
- Community Solar Garden
- HOME (Heatpump Options Made Easy) Program

For more details on all green initiatives, please visit <https://www.townofantigonish.ca/net-zero.html>

1.4. Timeline

Below is a list of milestone dates for the RFP. TOA maintains the right to adjust the schedule at its discretion.

| Event | Target Dates |
|---------------------------------|--|
| RFP Issued | July 31 st , 2024 |
| RFP Questions Due No Later Than | September 4 th , 2024 |
| RFP Responses Due | September 11 th , 2024, before 2:00pm AST |

2. RESPONDING TO THIS RFP

Interested Respondents are encouraged to answer this RFP with the requested information and documentation by the stated deadline.

Prior to providing their RFP response, Respondents can submit questions to TOA via **email only**. TOA will release all questions and answers to all interested Respondents via public procurement websites. Questions about this RFP shall be submitted to the email address on the cover of this RFP with a subject line that reads: “Net Zero Community Engagement Strategy & Implementation Plan.” All questions must be received by September 4th, 2024

Verbal discussion between TOA and a Respondent shall not become a part of the RFP unless confirmed by a written Addendum. The TOA shall not be held responsible for any misunderstanding by a Respondent.

After collecting responses to this RFP, the project team will review the responses as described below.

2.1 Proposal Submittal Date, Format, and Method

Responses to this RFP must be received no later than September 11th, 2024, before 2:00pm AST.

All responses must be submitted electronically in PDF format as an attachment to an email and sent to the email address on the cover. The subject line of the email should be: **“Net Zero Community Engagement Strategy & Implementation Plan.”**

Confirmation of receipt will be provided within one (1) business day. If this receipt is NOT received, please send a separate email to request confirmation or address issues with file delivery.

All official notifications and communications will be posted on public procurement websites and or made via **email only**. All costs associated with responding to this RFP will be borne by the Respondent.

2.2 Evaluation of Responses

Review and evaluation of responses submitted to this RFP will be managed by the project team. Responses will be reviewed based on a variety of factors, including, but not limited to:

- **Organizational Capabilities:** TOA is interested in proven, financially stable Respondents that have a strong track record of successfully developing similar strategies and an experienced team to provide innovative solutions and new ideas to the process.
- **Strategy Development Approach:** TOA is looking for a hands-on approach to the strategy development. Respondents should demonstrate their experience driving results quickly within a phased work plan. The overall quality, reasonableness, and efficiency of implementation plan for the strategy is important to TOA.
- **Schedule:** Respondents should demonstrate that they understand the major activities, milestones, and tasks associated with this study. Respondents should present these activities, milestones, and tasks in a clear study schedule with a risk mitigation plan to achieve the proposed schedule.
- **Community Benefits:** TOA will consider community benefits, including but not limited to generating sharable knowledge and support replication in other communities in Nova Scotia and enhancing social equity, reducing barriers to an equitable climate response as an optional enhancement to a Respondent’s proposal. Respondents may submit proposals with additional community benefit elements as appropriate.
- **Commercial Terms:** Respondents should clearly articulate their proposed commercial terms as part of their response. TOA is interested in clear, favorable and standardized contract terms with a preference for any payments made upon completion. Respondents should detail their proposed approach and methodology for risk mitigation, conflict resolution, and potential cost overruns.

At the discretion of the evaluation team, respondents may be invited to provide additional information and/or make a presentation to the evaluation committee.

2.3 Terms and Conditions

This RFP is not a contract offer and should not be construed as intent, commitment, or promise to acquire products or services presented by any Respondent.

TOA will not pay for any information herein requested, nor be liable for any costs incurred by Respondents. Based on Respondent submissions, meetings may be scheduled between Respondents and TOA in person and/or remotely to expedite the review, evaluation, and potential discussions about the strategy delivery method.

The Town reserves the right to conduct exclusive or concurrent discussions or negotiations with responsible and professionally qualified Respondents.

2.3.1 Proponent Qualifications

By submitting a proposal for this study, the Proponent represents that it has the competence, qualifications, and relevant experience to carry out the work and will employ the same experienced staff to perform the plan's requirements efficiently and safely. Proof of qualification will be required from the successful proponent which should have the following minimum qualifications:

- a. Letter of good standing with Workers Compensation Board of Nova Scotia.
- b. Proof of Commercial General Liability Insurance coverage.

2.3.2 Non-Discrimination

The Proponent shall comply with all applicable federal, provincial, and local laws, rules and regulations and best practices concerning non-discrimination in employment because of race, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, medical conditions, disability, or any other reason.

2.3.3 Laws of Nova Scotia

Any Contract resulting from this Request for Proposal will be governed by and will be construed and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the Province of Nova Scotia and the Town of Antigonish. The successful Proponent shall abide by all relevant provisions of the Nova Scotia Labour Code.

2.3.4. The successful bidder is required to maintain insurance at these levels at least one (1) year after completion of the project. Depending on the complexity of the project, the successful Proponent may be required to provide valid coverage for a longer period within reason, to allow the Town to become aware of any negligence on the part of the consulting firm.

2.3.5 Each Proponent and the successful Proponent shall defend, indemnify and save harmless the town, its officers, agents and employees from any and all claims, demands, suits, actions or proceedings of any kind or nature whatsoever, including Workers' Compensation claims, in any way resulting from or arising out of this agreement; provided, however, that the Proponent need not indemnify or save harmless the town, its officers, agents and employees from damages resulting from the sole negligence of the town's officers, agents and employees.

2.8. Right to Accept or Reject any Submission

TOA reserves the right to waive any informalities or to reject any or all quotes based on: changes to the approach to the work, required bid submissions, organizational and perceived liability considerations, the financial suitability of proceeding with the execution of the work, individual tenderer's level of experience, available personnel and equipment, the Owner's perception of the impact of performance on similar projects, or potential performance problems in keeping schedule targets. The Town reserves the right to omit portions of the work should it be deemed necessary for overall financial reasons.

3. SCOPE OF WORK & DELIVERABLES

The following scopes are considered preliminary and subject to change. The following section is based on initial scoping of the Net Zero Engagement Strategy & Implementation Plan details. The plans detailed in this Scope of Work are not intended to be all inclusive or prescriptive and should be used as a guide to the basics of the project and the desired deliverables.

TOA welcomes suggestions, recommendations, technologies, methods, approaches, appropriate or applicable industry best practices, and further details from Respondents on the work and deliverables to be performed as part of their response.

3.1 Scope of Work

3.1.1 Project Launch

The project launch will consist of kick-off meetings for internal staff and project consultants to review background documentation and confirm objectives, schedule, and work plan plus key performance metrics.

3.1.2 Understanding the Local Context

Analyze the local context to understand the complexity of pursuing a Net Zero community including the human capacity required, planning, policy making, and capital resource planning.

3.1.3 Identifying Stakeholder and Analysis

Identify key stakeholders, both internal and external to determine engagement messages and methods. As some engagement has already taken place with prior projects, it will be important to identify continuing risks and unresolved concerns to understand stakeholders' motivations, concerns, goals, and amount of influence.

3.1.4 Determining Key Messages

Ensure accurate information is created and delivered in the right framework. Lack of understanding and limited literacy about energy production and use, as well as financial, environmental, and technical concerns require tailored responses.

3.1.5 Selecting Public and Stakeholder Engagement Channels

Adopt a needs-based approach to develop messaging and choose which channels to deliver the message. Develop specific tools and techniques using a matrix to select the best method to engage with the specific stakeholder group.

3.1.6 Implementation Plan

Develop an integrated implementation plan reflecting the information gathered in the previous steps. Determine the tasks and who will perform them as well as resources needed, and timelines.

3.2 Deliverables

3.2.1 Net Zero Community Engagement Strategy

The successful proponent will be responsible for developing a comprehensive strategy to engage the community in net-zero initiatives, building capacity for existing and future green initiatives. Ensuring the strategy aligns with goals of energy affordability, GHG emissions reduction, and a clean, inclusive economy.

3.2.2 Brand Development

Creating a strong brand for TOA's net-zero strategy, develop a mission and vision statement, logo, marketing collateral, photographs and videos and website content for the strategy.

3.2.3 Communication Engagement Strategy

Develop a complete Communication Engagement Strategy utilizing tools such as focus groups, online surveys, interviews, workshops, pop-up events, social media, and other online platforms to ensure ongoing community engagement to build internal and external capacity.

3.2.4 Implementation Plan

Outline steps, timelines, and resources required to implement the strategy. Provide regular progress reports and final presentations to TOA and recommendations for maintaining ongoing engagement with the community.

3.3 Project Schedule

| Event | Target Dates |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Project Launch | September 30 th , 2024 |
| Understanding the Local Context | October 28 th , 2024 |
| Identifying Stakeholders and Analysis | November 25 th , 2024 |
| Determining the Key Messages | January 31 st , 2025 |
| Draft Plan and Brand Launch | February 28 th , 2025 |
| Selecting Public and Stakeholder Engagement Channels | March 31 st , 2025 |
| Create an Implementation Plan | June 30 th , 2025 |

3.4 Innovative Methods and Value-Added Services

Given the vendor’s experience, the vendor may have additional product or service offerings that are aligned with the Town’s net-zero objectives. Vendors may include areas beyond the scope of this RFP that provide added benefit to the Town’s net-zero strategy. Proponents are encouraged to present any value-added services, innovative methods, or cost saving opportunities that could be applied to the scope of work above to achieve the project objectives.

4. INFORMATION TO SUBMIT

Respondents should provide clearly written submissions that are well laid out with straightforward procedural and commercial information. The submissions shall describe the products and/or services being offered by the Respondent to meet ’s project goals stated in this RFP. Each Respondent must clearly demonstrate how its products and/or services meet the project objectives and relevant industry standards and requirements.

All Respondent information will only be shared with the evaluation committee and NOT shared publicly or with other Respondents.

The Town recommends that Respondents organize their submission in the format, and order of information, described below.

COVER PAGE

Each proposal must include a cover page that includes “Net Zero Community Engagement Strategy and Implementation Plan”, business name, primary address, contact person, and contact information.

SECTION I: Company Background and Qualifications

Respondents should provide a summary of no more than ten (10) pages of background information about its company in this section. Responses shall include:

- Company history and description of Respondent’s capabilities in providing the proposed products and services.
- Organizational background and relevant experience.
- Brief bios of the key team members who would work on the projects. Respondents should highlight their team members’ education, qualifications, certificates, and professional work experience that is relevant to the proposed project.
- Three (3) reference projects where the Respondent provided similar products or services to those being offered by the Respondent to TOA in response to the RFP. Reference projects should be in Canada with contact details for the appropriate project personnel.
- List, and brief description, of potential subcontractors and/or partners, along with description of how the Respondent has worked with these parties in the past.

SECTION II: Engagement Approach

Respondents should describe their overall strategy and approach to being a proactive partner to support development and deployment of this project.

Respondents should describe the ongoing support, management, and resources that would be provided to the Town, including any unique value-added products or services that they wish to highlight.

Respondents are free to suggest new and innovative ways to engage with the Town on this project as part of their RFP submission.

SECTION III: Bid Price

Pricing entered shall be on the following basis:

- a. All prices are in Canadian dollars (CAD) and inclusive of all applicable duties and taxes except HST, which shall be itemized separately where indicated.
- b. The successful Respondent shall provide and be responsible for all costs associated with the professional services, equipment, labour, materials, supplies, delivery, insurance, taxes (except applicable HST, which shall be itemized separately), site visits, travel, ancillary expenses, disbursements, overhead, and all other costs and fees necessary to deliver the Services within the proposed timeline and in accordance with Section 3. Scope of Work and Deliverables

Respondent should provide lump sum pricing for both the Base Bid and any Optional Value-Added items identified in their Proposal, including all expected project components. The Base Bid items should be priced in accordance with the assumptions outlined in Section 3 Scope of Work and Deliverables.

| Scope Category | Services Proposed | Price |
|----------------------|---|-----------|
| Describe: | Describe: | \$ |
| | Describe: | \$ |
| | Describe: | \$ |
| | Describe: | \$ |
| | Describe: | \$ |
| | Describe: | \$ |
| | TOTAL BASE BID PRICE: | \$ |
| | HST: | \$ |
| Optional Value-Added | Describe: | \$ |
| | Describe: | \$ |
| | Describe: | \$ |
| | TOTAL OF OPTIONAL VALUE-ADDED ITEMS: | \$ |
| | HST: | \$ |

Respondents should clearly articulate their commercial terms. TOA’s preference is that payments are made upon completion of the study. All assumptions must be clearly documented and explained.

Bid Price Scope of Work information will only be shared with the evaluation committee and NOT shared publicly or with other Respondents