



**NORTHEAST
COMMUNITY
NETWORK** NECN
RCNE
**LE RÉSEAU
COMMUNAUTAIRE
DU NORD-EST**

The Northeast Community Network

Is issuing a

Request For Proposals

**For a Consultant to undertake an Agri-Food Land Assembly project in
the Cochrane District**

July 6, 2018

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1.0 Introduction and Background

The Northeast Community Network (NeCN) seek proposals for a new exciting initiative within the NeCN's Agricultural Steering Committee. The NeCN invites proposals from a qualified Consultant to undertake a Cochrane District Agri-Food Land Assembly project.

The goal of the project is to promote Agri-Food business growth, leverage private investment and enhance job creation by marketing Private and Crown owned land for Agri-Food development and facilitating agricultural business expansion or start-up in the Cochrane District.

Background

The project will address the challenge faced by agricultural land buyers and seekers when searching and locating suitable agricultural land parcels in the Cochrane District. The NeCN, municipalities, regional agricultural advisors, and organizations in the Cochrane District regularly receive agricultural land purchase inquiries yet struggle to search and identify parcels or communicate with the landowner. Beef Farmers of Ontario and OMAFRA's Northern Livestock Project have suggested a private agricultural land assembly as a solution. Southern Ontario, Western Canada, Quebec and U.S. farmers have growing interests in the region's agricultural potential, and the region is witnessing the settlement of Mennonites, new cash croppers, new college agriculture programs, and some new or expanding livestock farms. The good agricultural conditions, vast undeveloped land, abandoned farmland, and affordable land costs relative to Southern Ontario, are reasons the Cochrane District is poised for greater agricultural development if the region can work together to facilitate agriculture land searching.

Furthermore, the Ontario Government's mandate letter, the Northern Growth Plan, and the Northern Ontario Agriculture, Aquaculture and Food Processing Sector Strategy, all commit to agri-food development priorities. The project directly responds to those government priorities and takes needed leadership for regional agri-food development.

ABOUT the NeCN

The Northeast Community Network (NeCN) is an incorporated not-for-profit founded in 2008 that promotes and implements collaborative economic development projects, research, and support for forestry, mining, agriculture and tourism sectors. Integrating municipalities, First Nations, local economic development, and the private sector, the Network undertakes regional projects to strengthen the economic landscape of Northeastern Ontario.

In 2006, municipalities located in the North Claybelt banded together to access government funding. Although the bids for Model Forest Designations were unsuccessful, the communities recognized the value of regional collaboration in community economic development efforts. By 2008, all communities within the Cochrane District expressed interest to join and the NeCN incorporated thereafter. Today, the following municipalities are members and appoint a representative to the Board of Directors: Mattice-Val Côté, Opatatika, Val Rita-Harty, Kapuskasing, Moonbeam, Fauquier-Strickland, Smooth Rock Falls, Cochrane, Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson, and Timmins. 5 Community Futures Development Corporations and 2 Indigenous communities are also NeCN members.

The NeCN currently employs 1 full-time and 1 part-time employee funded by FedNor and the other NOHFC for the delivery of NeCN's Tile Drainage and Land Clearing program. The NeCN relies on working committees comprised of internal and external resources to advance projects. For more information visit the NECN website at: <http://necn-rcne.ca/>.

1.1 Target Audience

These are the target audiences for the portal, in this order of priority:

- a. **Existing regional farmers or future farmers:** – Those who are farming in the District and may expand or divest its farming operation and non-farmers looking to start a farm.
- b. **Newcomer farmers** – Those who are living in other cities/Southern Ontario/towns in Central Canada who are considering relocation, expansion, or new farm start-up.
- c. **Cochrane District non-farming land owners** – Those who live and own undeveloped parcels of land, or own inhabited parcels of land.
- d. **Other** – This group includes Economic Development Officers, Land Use Planners, Realtors, and both municipal and provincial government.

2.0 Required Qualifications

Proponents shall detail their qualifications and experience, as well as that of each of their critical team members. Proponents are required to demonstrate the following capabilities in their proposals:

1. Experience producing land inventory projects and maps.
2. Experience in agri-food sector initiatives.
3. An understanding of marketing to new and existing farmers and a grasp of land tenure models.
4. Demonstration of the ability to complete the project.

3.0 Scope of Work

The Partners seek a Proponent to produce a privately-owned agricultural land assembly project for the Cochrane District by working with the Northeast Community Network's member communities. This includes defining a model and approach to land data identification and collection in order to then conduct research with property owners to understand their willingness to sell, rent, or develop productive agricultural lands. The Proponent work's with the NeCN to define and research both potential private and public agricultural lands, and conduct primary research with the owners of these lands.

The Proponent will work closely with the NeCN Agri-Food Steering Committee and the NeCN Regional Project Coordinator.

Proponents must consider the following elements in their proposals:

1. Incorporate a preliminary on-site meeting in the Cochrane District to confirm work plan, deliverables, schedule, and follow-up meetings.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of best practices and research methodology for surveying property owners and analyzing primary data.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of required travel within the region to capture necessary information.
4. Provide a detailed work schedule that addresses the following:
 - Agricultural land identification methodology and mapping;
 - Address confidentiality issues in working with GIS mapping software and property owner contact information;

- Provide tools to guide municipalities in agricultural land assembly research and land inventory update;
- Workshops to provide landowners and farmers knowledge and tools to better evaluate land tenure options;
- Ways to publicly promote agricultural land opportunities and monitor agricultural land developments;
- Attend project closure meeting (teleconference is acceptable).

Proponents must also specify how they will report regularly on their progress throughout the course of the project.

3.1 Reporting Requirements

As indicated in the Scope of Work, the successful Proponent shall be required to attend 6 meetings with the NeCN, including an initial kick-off meeting, consultation and planning meetings, a mid-project update and a final report meeting. In addition, the Proponent commits to communicating regularly with the Project Coordinator and/or NeCN representatives as needed throughout the project.

3.2 Key Deadlines

The Partners anticipate the following timing for the project:

Registration and Questions:	July 20, 2018
Proposal Closing Date:	July 31, at 2:00:00 PM EST
Proposal Evaluation and Selection:	August 2018
Contract with Proponent:	August 2018
Project begins:	September 2018
Project completed:	December 2019

4.0 Proposal Submission and Content

4.1 Submission Guidelines

The Northeast Community Network shall receive proposals until 2:00:00 PM (Eastern Standard Time) on the Proposal Closing Date in Section 3.2. We will not accept proposals after that time and they will be returned unexamined. Your proposal package must include ONE printed copy AND a PDF version of your proposal on a USB drive that is fastened to the front cover of your printed document. Send proposal packages to:

Attention: Mr. Antoine Vézina
 Northeast Community Network, Chair
 130 Spruce Street, South, Suite 1
 Timmins, ON P4N 2M5

Proponents are solely responsible for ensuring that their proposals are delivered as required. Delays caused by internet service outages will not be grounds for an extension of the Proposal Submission deadline.

4.2 Registration and Questions

Any qualified firms planning to submit a proposal in response to this RFP should register by e-mail no later than the Registration date indicated in Section 3.2. Firms that do not register may not receive addendums to the RFP document. Register to the attention of:

Antoine Vézina
Chair
Northeast Community Network
Antoine.vezina@timmins.ca

Forward any questions concerning this RFP via email to the contact address in this section. Please note that we will only accept Proponent questions via email, and we must receive them prior to the Registration date indicated in Section 3.2. In the event that a question(s) results in refinements to the RFP, we'll send clarification to those Proponents who completed the registration process. Decisions to extend or vary the proposal submission date may be made at the sole discretion of the NeCN.

4.3 Requirements of the Proposal Document

Proponents must prepare clear and concise proposals **no longer than 10 pages**, plus appendices where necessary. Use letter size paper with one inch borders all around. Use 12 point font, single line spacing and left justification. Note that your proposal may be printed out on non-color, letter-size printers and format your document accordingly.

As the NeCN shall be studying several proposals, the task of comparing them will be easier if all proposals follow the same general format. Proposals shall align with these guidelines:

Section 1: Introduction

- Company Name
- Number of years in Business
- Website
- Company Address
- Project Leader name, email and phone number

Section 2: Personnel, Experience and Qualifications

- Describe your firm's relevant experience in developing surveys, agri-food initiatives, and land assembly projects of a similar nature that you have completed within the last five years. **For each project described, provide a link to the website at which we may see more information.**
- Include names, educational credentials, and professional qualifications of no more than five key project team members. Identify any subcontractors and include their relevant experience. Describe, in a sentence or two for each team member, how his or her experience **directly relates to this project**. You may append detailed resumes as Appendices, if you wish.
- Indicate your contingency plan in the event one of these team members is no longer able to participate. Any changes to the team as proposed will not be permitted without the written approval of the Partners.

Section 3: Work Plan and Related Details

Include, in table format, a work plan describing the main tasks to be undertaken, as per the Scope of Work. In this section, identify any additional tasks you feel are necessary to complete the project.

Provide a Gantt chart or similar tool to indicate your projected timeline for each task in the context of the whole project.

Indicate whether you plan to incorporate any value-added elements to your approach, e.g. deliverables that are not specified in the RFP but that would enhance the final product.

Section 4: Detailed Budget

We will not be releasing a budget range for this project.

Propose in writing an **absolute upset cost limit** along with a payment schedule (include all costs, travel, taxes, etc.) quoted in Canadian dollars. Your budget must include:

- Each of the line items (tasks) listed in the Scope of Work, plus additional items as required and described in your proposal work plan.
- The per diem or hourly rate of each team member assigned to each task.
- The number of hours or days it will take to complete each task, and the subsequent total cost of that task.
- HST on fees.
- Travel expenses, if applicable.
- Other expenses as deemed necessary.

The NeCN reserves the right to adjust costs of proposals to reflect imbalances or discrepancies as well as to disqualify bids that, in the opinion of the committee, do not demonstrate sufficient resources and costs to adequately complete the project requirements. The budget must demonstrate the Proponent's understanding of the cost factors.

Section 5: References

For each of the projects you mentioned in Section 2, provide the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the client so we may contact him or her with respect to getting a reference for your firm.

4.0 Evaluation Criteria

All proposals will be evaluated according to the following guidelines.

Evaluation Criteria	Weighted Score
Experience and Qualifications	20%
Quality of sample reports, surveys, maps, etc. identified in Section 2	30%
Work Plan	20%
Total Project Costs	30%
Total	100%

The NeCN will accept only complete submissions. Interviews with Proponents may be held, in part, to enable us to gain assurance that the Proponent understands the requirements of the RFP. The NeCN may select or reject any or all proposals and is not bound to accept the proposal with the lowest price.

The NeCN may verify references to assist with the selection process.

6.0 Additional Conditions

The Northeast Community Network is administering the RFP process of behalf of its members.

6.1 Confidentiality

Confidentiality of records and information relating to this work shall be maintained at all times. All correspondence, documentation and information provided by the NeCN to any Proponent in connection with, or arising out of this RFP or the acceptance of any proposal:

- Remains the property of the NeCN;
- Shall be treated as confidential;
- Shall not be used for any purpose other than for replying to this RFP, and for fulfillment of any related subsequent agreement.

All correspondence, documentation and information provided to the NeCN by any Proponent in connection with, or arising out of this RFP, and the submission of any Proposal will become the property of the NeCN, and as such, are subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information Act (MFIPPA), and may be released, pursuant to the Act. The Proponent's name at a minimum shall be made public on request. Because of MFIPPA, Proponents are advised to identify in their Proposal material any scientific, technical, commercial, proprietary or similar confidential information, the disclosure of which could cause them injury.

Any information in the Proponents' submissions that is not specifically identified as confidential will be treated as public information. All correspondence, documentation and information provided to the Evaluation Team may be reproduced for the purposes of evaluating the Proponent's submission to this RFP.

NOTE that materials supplied in response to the RFP become a record of the NeCN and are subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The NeCN takes the position that such

materials are not supplied in confidence and form part of the records made generally available upon request to the public.

6.2 Conflict of Interest Statement

In its Proposal, the Proponent shall disclose to the NeCN any potential conflict of interest that might compromise the performance of the work. If such a conflict of interest does exist, the NeCN may, at its discretion, refuse to consider the Proposal. If, during the Proposal evaluation process or the negotiation of the Agreement, the Proponent is retained by another client giving rise to a potential conflict of interest, then the Proponent will so inform the NeCN. If the NeCN requests, then the Proponent will refuse the new assignment or will take such steps as are necessary to remove the conflict of interest concerned.

Proponents are cautioned that the acceptance of their Proposal may preclude them from participating as a Proponent in subsequent projects where a conflict of interest may arise. The Proponent(s) for this project may participate in subsequent/other NeCN projects provided the Proponent(s) has (have) satisfied pre-qualification requirements of the NeCN, if any, and in the opinion of the NeCN, no conflict of interest would adversely affect the performance and successful completion of an Agreement by the Proponent(s).

6.3. Non-collusion

A Proponent shall not discuss or communicate, directly or indirectly, with any other Proponent or their agent or representative about the preparation of the Proposals. Each Proponent shall attest that its participation in the RFP process is conducted without any collusion or fraud. If the NeCN discovers there has been a breach of this requirement at any time, the NeCN reserves the right to disqualify the Proposal or terminate any ensuing Agreement.

6.4. The NeCN's Rights Relative to the RFP

This RFP does not constitute an offer of any nature or kind whatsoever by the NeCN to the Proponents. The NeCN does not bind itself to accept any proposals and may proceed as it determines, in its sole discretion, following receipt of the proposals. The NeCN reserves the right to accept any proposal in whole or in part or to discuss with any Proponent, different or additional terms to those envisaged in this RFP or in such Proponents proposal.

The NeCN has the right:

- To cancel the RFP at any time without liability whatsoever to any Proponent;
- To reject any or all of the proposals;
- To accept any or all of the proposals;
- If only one proposal is received, elect to accept or reject it;
- Not to accept the lowest fixed fee amount;
- To alter the schedule; RFP process, procedures or objective of the project or any other aspect of the RFP, as it may determine in its sole and absolute discretion; or
- To negotiate with one or more Proponents to reach a final agreement for the services.

It is the nature of this RFP process that this RFP and/or the proposal in response to the RFP will not constitute a binding agreement, but will only form the basis for the finalization of the terms upon which the NeCN and the chosen Proponent will enter into a final agreement (the "Agreement"), and does not mean

that the proposal is necessarily totally acceptable in the form submitted. After the selection of a proposal, if any, the NeCN has the right to negotiate with the Proponent and, as part of that process, to negotiate changes, amendments or modifications to the proposal without offering the other Proponents to the right to amend their proposals.

6.5 Proponent's Cost

All costs and expenses incurred by a Proponent related to the preparation or presentation of its proposals shall be borne by the Proponent. The NeCN is not liable to pay such costs and expenses or to reimburse or to compensate a Proponent under any circumstances.

6.6 Delays

The NeCN shall not be responsible for any delays or costs to the Proponents associated with any reviews or the approval process.

6.7 Funding

The award of any contract shall be conditional upon approval by the NeCN Board.

6.8 Payments

Payments to the Proponent shall be on a monthly basis upon an invoice being submitted by the Proponent to the NeCN. All payment terms shall be net thirty days.

6.9 Errors and Omissions

It is understood and acknowledged that while the RFP includes specific requirements, a complete review and recommendation is required. Minor items not herein specified but obviously required shall be provided as if specified. The Proponent shall satisfy himself/herself as to the extent of the work required and shall provide all services required to complete the intent of the project. Any misinterpretation of requirements within this proposal shall not relieve the bidder of the responsibility of providing the services as aforesaid.

6.10. Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

The successful Proponent shall supply proof of good standing with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board with all invoices prior to the commencement of work.

6.11. Influence

No person, company, corporation or organization shall attempt in any way, either in private or in public, to influence the outcome of any NeCN purchasing or hiring process. Any person, company, corporation or organization that attempts to influence the outcome of any NeCN purchasing or hiring process shall be disqualified, and the person, company, corporation or organization may be subjected to exclusion or suspension from this or other works with the NeCN.

6.12. Billing Summaries

The Proponent shall provide a breakdown before its first invoice detailing all work. The breakdown shall be approved by the NeCN Executives. Every invoice shall include a running total of the current amount, the amount billed to date, the amount to complete, and the original upset limit. Each invoice shall reference the purchase order provided for these works.

6.13. Indemnity

The Proponent agrees to indemnify and save harmless the NeCN and the Members from any claim or demand arising as a result of the performance or non-performance of this contract by the Proponent, and without limiting the generality of the foregoing.

6.14. Contract Preparation

The Proponent shall be responsible for preparing the first draft of the legal agreements, which shall be subject to the review and approval of the NeCN Board. Once the form of Agreement is agreed to by all parties and their counsel, following execution by all parties, the NeCN will issue a purchase order to the Proponent.

6.15. Proposal Payment

There shall be no direct payment for the preparation and submission of proposals or to attend interviews in response to this request for proposal.

6.16. Negotiations

The NeCN may award the Agreement on the basis of initial offers received, without discussion. Therefore, each initial offer should contain the Proponent’s best terms/information, including all required documentation as listed.

The NeCN reserves the right to enter into negotiations with the selected Proponent. If the NeCN and the selected Proponent cannot negotiate a successful agreement, the NeCN may terminate the negotiations and begin negotiations with the next selected Proponent. This process will continue until an agreement has been executed or all Proponents have been rejected. No Proponent shall have any rights against the NeCN arising from negotiations.

6.17. Authorization

LEGAL NAME OF COMPANY: _____
NAME: _____
AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE: _____
ADDRESS: _____
TELEPHONE NO.: _____ DATED: _____

These terms of reference shall be signed and bound or accompany the submitted proposal. For further information regarding the Request for Proposal please contact the individual listed in Section 4.2.