

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
#CAP 2012-001**

**GUIDE TO DOING BUSINESS WITH GOVERNMENTS IN
ATLANTIC CANADA**



COUNCIL OF ATLANTIC PREMIERS' SECRETARIAT

SECTION 1: SUMMARY OF KEY INFORMATION

ISSUE DATE: February 9, 2012

**CLOSING DATE FOR VENDOR RESPONSE:
February 23, 2012, 4:30 p.m., Atlantic Standard Time**

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PLEASE READ THE RFP VERY CAREFULLY TO ENSURE ALL REQUIREMENTS ARE MET.

2.0 ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

The following terms will apply to this Request for Proposals and to any subsequent contract.

2.1 REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL TERMINOLOGY

BUSINESS DAY	Any day other than Saturday, Sunday or statutory holiday.
CONTRACTOR/SUPPLIER	The successful proponent to this RFP who enters into a written contract with the Council of Atlantic Premiers.
RFP	Request for Proposals.
ASDT	Atlantic Supplier Development Team
SECRETARIAT	Council of Atlantic Premiers' Secretariat
PROPONENT/VENDOR	An individual or a company that submits, or intends to submit, a proposal in response to this Request for Proposals.
MUST/REQUIRED/ SHALL/WILL	A requirement which must be met in order for the Proposal to receive consideration.
SHOULD/DESIRABLE/MAY	A requirement having a significant degree of importance to the objectives of the Request for Proposals.

3.0 GENERAL CONDITIONS

3.1 STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS

This Request for Proposals is subject to the Procurement Practices (April 2010) of the Council of Atlantic Premiers' Secretariat.

This RFP will be conducted in accordance with the Atlantic Procurement Agreement and its Regulations.

3.2 MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

This Request for Proposals may contain mandatory requirements. **Proposals not meeting all mandatory requirements will be rejected without further consideration.**

3.3 CONDITIONS RIGHT TO AMEND

The Secretariat reserves the right to amend or supplement the RFP, giving equal information and cooperation by way of issued addendum to all proponents as a result of any such amendment.

3.4 PROPOSAL INFORMATION

Material, data and information accessed or provided by the Secretariat and used in the preparation of the proposals is confidential and the property of the Secretariat.

3.5 CHANGES TO PROPOSAL WORDING

There will be no changes in the wording of the proposal after submission and no words or comments shall be added to the general conditions or detailed specifications unless requested by the Secretariat for purposes of clarification.

3.6 VENDOR INCURRED COSTS

All costs incurred in the preparation and presentation of proposals in any way whatsoever shall be wholly absorbed by the Vendor.

3.7 INDEMNITY

The vendor will indemnify and save harmless the Secretariat from and against all claims, demands, losses, damages, costs and expenses made against or incurred, suffered or sustained by the Secretariat at any time or times (either before or after the expiration or sooner termination of this agreement) where the same or any of them are based upon or arise out of or from anything done or omitted to be done by the vendor or by any servant, employee, officer, director or subcontractor of the vendor pursuant to the contract.

3.8 ACCEPTANCE OF PROPOSALS

The Council of Atlantic Premiers' Secretariat is not bound to accept the lowest price or any proposal of those submitted. Proposals will be assessed in light of the evaluation criteria.

Subsequent to the submission of Statements for Proposals, interviews and negotiations may be conducted with some of the proponents, but there shall be no obligation to receive further information, whether in writing or oral, from any proponent. The Secretariat shall not be obligated in any manner to any proponent whatsoever until a written agreement has been duly executed relating to an approved proposal.

3.9 EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

A committee formed for that purpose will evaluate all acceptable proposals. The right is reserved to make an award based directly on the proposals submitted or to negotiate further with one or more proponents.

3.10 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Proponents may be requested to demonstrate financial stability during the evaluation process.

3.11 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Proposals may contain additional information. If alternative solutions are offered, submit the information in the same format as a separate proposal.

3.12 ACCEPTANCE OF TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Unless otherwise stated by the proponent, all terms and conditions of this RFP document are assumed to be accepted and incorporated in the proponent's submission.

3.13 VALIDITY PERIOD

Proposals **must** be open for acceptance for at least 90 days after the closing date. Upon acceptance, prices will be firm for the entire contract period unless otherwise specified.

3.14 PROPOSAL SELECTION

Once a decision has been made, the successful vendor will be notified by the Secretariat. The committee will treat all proposals with strict confidentiality.

3.15 NEWS RELEASES

Vendors shall not make news releases concerning the RFP or the awarding of the same without the written consent of the Secretariat and then only in coordination with the Secretariat.

3.16 CONFIDENTIALITY AND SECURITY

3.16.1 This document, or any portion thereof, may not be used for any purpose other than the submission of proposals.

3.16.2 The vendor must agree to maintain security standards consistent with security policies of the Secretariat. These include strict control of access to data and maintaining confidentiality of information gained while carrying out their duties.

3.16.3 Information obtained by the vendor as a result of participation in this project is confidential and must not be disclosed without written authorization from the Secretariat.

3.17 CONTRACT CANCELLATION

The contract may be cancelled for, but not limited to, the following reasons.

If the contractor:

- defaults in the observance of any of the conditions contained in the contract or specifications;
- has become insolvent;
- has committed an act of bankruptcy.

If the Secretariat:

- cancels the budget allocation for this particular project.

3.18 NEGOTIATION DELAY

If a written contract cannot be negotiated within thirty (30) days of notification to the designated vendor, the Secretariat may, in its sole discretion at any time thereafter, terminate negotiations with that vendor and either negotiate a contract with another vendor of its choice or choose to terminate the RFP process and not enter into a contract with any of the vendors.

3.19 CONTRACT FOR SERVICES

Written notice of acceptance of a proposal by the Secretariat, and the subsequent full execution of a written contract, will constitute a contract for the services. No proponent will acquire any legal or equitable rights or privileges relative to the services until the occurrence of both such events.

3.20 COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS

The vendor shall give all the notices and obtain all the licenses and permits required to perform the work. The vendor shall comply with all the laws applicable to the work or the performance of the contract.

3.21 DEBRIEFING

Unsuccessful proponents may request a debriefing meeting with the evaluation committee following execution of a contract with the successful proponent.

4.0 SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

4.1 NUMBER OF COPIES

Each proponent can submit a copy of their proposal by electronic mail to Brad Hodgins, Regional Coordinator, at bhodgins@cap-cpma.ca , on or before, February 23, 2012, 4:30 p.m., Atlantic Standard Time.

Late proposals will not be accepted and will be returned to the proponent.

The proponent will not change the wording of its proposal after closing and no words or comments will be added unless requested by the Secretariat for purposes of clarification.

5.0 QUESTIONS AND INQUIRIES

All inquiries related to this RFP are to be directed by electronic mail to the following address(es):

Kim Murphy (Chair, ASDT)
NS Economic & Rural Development & Tourism
Procurement Services
murphyki@gov.ns.ca

Brad Hodgins
Regional Coordinator
Council of Atlantic Premiers' Secretariat
bhodgins@cap-cpma.ca

All responses to inquiries will be made in writing, therefore the proponent must include a contact name, email address, or fax number on all correspondence.

All questions and responses will be made available to all proponents one (1) week before the closing date.

For proponents seeking information on the RFP in the French language, please contact the New Brunswick member of the ASDT by email at celeste.savoie@gnb.ca.

6.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

6.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

A wide range of goods and services are produced in Atlantic Canada by small- and medium-sized enterprises. These businesses are active—and in many cases are leaders—in strategic sectors of the economy, including aerospace and defence; environmental industries; information and communications technology; life sciences and biotechnology; and ocean technology.

The public sector purchases billions of dollars in goods and services from virtually all of these sectors, and many more, every year. However, there are businesses in Atlantic Canada who are not selling to the public sector because they are unsure of how to access these opportunities; feel intimidated by the size of the public sector market and its regulatory requirements; or do not think they can be competitive.

In an effort to address some of these concerns, the Atlantic Supplier Development Team (ASDT) was established in 2008 by the Atlantic Procurement Coordinating Committee (APCC) under the auspices of the Atlantic Procurement Agreement.

The ASDT includes representatives from the following:

- Council of Atlantic Premiers' Secretariat
- Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Government of Nova Scotia
- Government of New Brunswick
- Government of Prince Edward Island
- Government of Canada (Office of Small and Medium Enterprises)

The goal of the ASDT is to help Atlantic Canadian firms supply quality goods and services at competitive costs to the public sector through the sharing of best practices and collaborating on regional supplier development initiatives.

The ASDT has identified education and outreach as a vital pillar for achieving its objectives. With this in mind, the ASDT committed to a reciprocal arrangement to host an *Atlantic Provinces Reverse Trade Show* in a major centre in each of the four Atlantic provinces. These events provided a forum for businesses to learn about the goods, services and construction needs of public sector entities and explore the public sector as a potential market.

At all four events, businesses overwhelmingly responded that they felt their attendance at the event could generate business for their companies. Not surprisingly, most businesses were more familiar with the procurement processes and supply opportunities within their own province and often had little knowledge of cross-jurisdictional opportunities with the other Atlantic governments.

The purpose of this Request for Proposals is to develop the design and bilingual content for a *Guide to Doing Business with the Governments in Atlantic Canada*. The guide will be a comparative document detailing the similarities and differences between government procurement in the Atlantic region. This resource will help vendors, wherever their location, to better understand and navigate the procurement processes of the four Atlantic governments and the Canadian Government and access supply opportunities. The ultimate goal of the guide will be to better prepare Atlantic Canadian businesses for bidding on public sector procurement opportunities, thereby strengthening their competitiveness in the public sector market.

6.2 SERVICES REQUIRED

The ASDT is interested in developing a guide that will target businesses in three categories:

1. **Potential Vendors** (Vendors who have never sold to the public sector market or who have sold to one, but not all four Atlantic Governments or the Government of Canada) – Our research indicates that some businesses feel that selling to the public sector is too complex, or they are more comfortable selling to their home province and have not explored other public sector markets.
2. **Existing Vendors** – Our experience tells us that existing vendors may not always be up to date on current policies and procedures that affect the way we do business.
3. **Lost Vendors** – Sometimes an experience that would otherwise be good can be diminished due to miscommunication, or a lack of experience or knowledge regarding the expectations of both parties.

The guide will help de-mystify public sector procurement and encourage businesses to explore this market both within and outside of their home province. It will ensure that our existing vendors have readily accessible, current information that will help them continue to meet the expectations of their public sector customers and excel in this market.

The guide should be a plain language document written in an easy-to-read, step-by-step format, that will ensure all critical information and differences in procedures are outlined in a clear and concise manner to reinforce the public sector as a lucrative market for doing business.

The guide should include the following:

- Information on the procurement processes of all four provinces and the Government of Canada
- Business registration processes
- Joint procurement
- Links to resources of the Government of Canada, and programs and services that can help businesses explore new markets
- Procurement policies
- Public tenders and where to find them (i.e., on-line tendering sites)
- Marketing to government
- Types of bid solicitations
- Procurement contact information

The allocated budget for this project is up to **\$12,000**. The preferred work start date is February 27, 2012 and preferred work end date is March 31, 2012.

The proponent will be expected to communicate with the members of the ASDT in Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island to gather information on public sector procurement. Travel will not be required as this can be done through telecommunications and e-mail.

6.3 PROJECT TASKS AND DELIVERABLES

The key project tasks and deliverables are to:

- review all necessary background material to get acquainted with the different procurement policies and process for each province and the Government of Canada;
- prepare a work plan with key dates and deliverables;
- consolidate the information to identify similarities and differences of doing business with the Atlantic provinces and the Government of Canada;
- create tables and matrices of information for easy comparison – include “Did you know?” boxes for quick reference;
- develop a short list of “What We Buy”;
- include information on programs that support small- and medium-sized businesses (including links);
- provide an English and French version of the guide (minimum 8-10 pages in length per version);
- provide draft guide for review; and
- deliver the final guide.

6.4 PROPONENT /ASDT RESPONSIBILITIES

Proponent Responsibilities:

- The proponent shall meet with the Chair of the ASDT (either in person or by phone) within five working days following contract award, in order to receive direction and guidance, review the proposal, outline progress, identify difficulties, and present preliminary observations.

- The proponent shall provide bi-weekly email reports on progress, including challenges in data collection.
- The proponent shall provide one electronic copy of a Draft Final Guide in an agreed-upon format on or before March 31, 2012, and shall meet with the Chair of the ASDT to review this draft and receive guidance.
- The proponent shall provide one electronic copy of a Final Guide in an agreed-upon format, incorporating any changes suggested by the ASDT within two weeks following presentation of the Draft Guide.
- Deliverables must be acceptable to the ASDT for contract terms to be met and the contract concluded.
- Any invoices submitted for services rendered must include a detailed breakdown of the work completed to support the amount that is invoiced.
- All work submitted is the property of the ASDT.

ASDT Responsibilities:

- Consultations with the proponent.
- Providing briefing and background information to the proponent on the procurement practices within the four Atlantic provinces and the Federal Government.
- Providing logos and guidance around their use.
- Addressing concerns that may arise.
- Reviewing and providing feedback to the proponent on draft submissions.
- It is at the sole discretion of the ASDT to determine if revisions are necessary and which content remains in the document.

7.0 PROPOSAL CONTENT & REQUIREMENTS

Instructions: Proposals should include a table of contents, be based on the following format and include a response to each requirement/instruction in the order in which it is asked. It is helpful to the evaluation committee if the corresponding section headings are utilized in your submission.

7.1 MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

- a) Submissions must be received in their entirety by the time and date indicated.
- b) Submissions must be signed by an official of the company who is authorized to sign on behalf of/and bind the company to statements made in their submission.

7.2 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- Demonstrated expertise with the public procurement process.
- Experience designing and developing communications materials.
- Experience writing plain language documents.
- Work will begin immediately upon signing of contract.

7.2.1 COMPANY BACKGROUND

Provide a brief summary of the history of your company, including years in business, number of staff, location, etc.

7.2.2 PROJECT PLAN

Outline steps, timing and level of effort to complete the work.

7.2.3 COMPANY REFERENCES

Proposals should include names and contact information of former clients and associates for whom similar or relevant work has been performed, presented as references, as well as a description of the work completed.

7.3 PRICING

The allocated budget for this project is up to \$12,000.

- Prepare a fixed price for your proposed services. Provide appropriate details to support these figures, including estimates of the work effort and a breakout of expected expenses.
- Payment will be made upon submitting invoices with supporting documentation in a form satisfactory to the Secretariat.
- Payment schedule will be determined upon signing of contract.
- Work will begin immediately upon signing the contract with the Secretariat. The anticipated start date is February 27, 2012 and the preferred completion date for this project is March 31, 2012.

7.4 APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

This section should contain any additional information pertinent to the proponent's response. All materials submitted as appendices/attachments to the proposal should be clearly indicated in the Table of Contents. Material not so documented by the vendor will be considered as extraneous information. This list of attachments should also contain a brief description of the attached material, including what information can be gained by the evaluation team from its examination of the material.

8.0 EVALUATION PROCEDURE

A Committee, made up of representatives from the ASDT, will evaluate all proposals. The accepted proposals will be used as the basis for selecting the successful proponent(s). The evaluation of proposals will be based on the criteria listed below. The process will include a review and check of the information contained in the proposals.

8.1 EVALUATION CRITERIA

For ease of evaluation, respondents are asked to prepare a written response in the following format:

- Qualifications and understanding of the requirements.
- References (minimum of three) and resumés for each of the proposed resources.
- Project plan that outlines the sequence of events, milestones, timing and resources required to successfully deliver the project.
- Financial proposal, including a cost summary based on the deliverables required and the resources assigned to the project. Please provide the resource name, position, per diem rate and number of days that they will be assigned to the project. Please provide a fixed price for each phase of the project.

Proposals will be scored on the following criteria:

REPRESENTS 100 POINTS OF TOTAL SCORE		
Qualifications	35	
Project Plan	35	
References	5	
Price	25	
TOTAL	100	Points

Determination of best value may not result in the lower cost being accepted.

This Request for Proposals does not ensure proceeding to enter into a contract(s). The Secretariat reserves the right to proceed or not to proceed with a contract(s) pursuant to this Request for Proposals.