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Request for Proposals: Chiefs of Ontario Regional Emergency Measures Liaison Services

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

You are invited to submit a proposal for Chiefs of Ontario Regional Emergency Measures Liaison Services.

The Chiefs of Ontario (COO) are seeking a qualified consultant to serve as the **Chiefs of Ontario Regional Emergency Measures Liaison** (the Liaison) for a 15-month term. The Liaison will report to and operate between the Office of the Ontario Regional Chief, the Political Territorial Organizations (PTOs), and First Nation community leadership. The Liaison will provide dedicated, consistent coordination capacity during a critical period in the transition from bilateral to multilateral emergency management (EM) agreements in Ontario.

The position will deliver four core functions:

1. Support the tripartite Multilateral Emergency Management process involving COO, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), and the Government of Ontario through Emergency Management Ontario (EMO)

2. Help First Nations navigate and connect to emergency management supports

3. Build linkages between federal and provincial departments and programs that can support communities building EM capacity

4. Provide real-time coordination support and advocacy on behalf of First Nations during active emergencies

In addition, the Liaison will support COO's alignment with the COO Emergency Management Advocacy Work Plan 2026 in a complementary capacity. A separate position, funded outside of this contract, carries primary responsibility for executing the Work Plan in full.

Please add this page to the front of your proposal.

REQUEST FOR CONSULTANT PROPOSALS

Submission Deadline: December 4, 2026, 12:00 p.m. ET

Legal Name:

Address:

Telephone Number:

Email Address:

Send Proposal to:

Attn: Office of the Ontario Regional Chief
Chiefs of Ontario
468 Queen St. E – Suite 400
Toronto, ON M5A 1T7
Email: orc@coo.org

The proposal must be submitted as a PDF file to the Chiefs of Ontario. The proposal must be received by the Chiefs of Ontario no later than the deadline date. A proposal submitted in any other manner or late may be disqualified.

The proposal shall be irrevocably open for acceptance and binding on the Consultant for fourteen (14) days after the Submission Deadline date.

The interested candidate's proposal must include the following:

- A demonstration of their expertise in emergency management, intergovernmental relations, and coordination with First Nations leadership, communities, and organizations in Ontario
- A work plan in alignment with the project deliverables outlined below within the timeframe of January 4, 2027 – March 31, 2028.
- A proposed budget for the completion of the work with a budget schedule not to exceed $130,000 CAD for the 15-month term.
- Travel and meeting costs will be reimbursed.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

First Nations in Ontario, the Province of Ontario through Emergency Management Ontario (EMO), and the Government of Canada through Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) are working together to advance a new multilateral emergency management service agreement. This agreement aims to support the capacity and self-determination of First Nations, formalize First Nations-led emergency management, and clarify the roles and responsibilities of all partners across all four pillars of EM: prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

The Multilateral Emergency Management Framework

ISC is pursuing multilateral agreements in each province and territory to transfer emergency management service delivery to First Nations. In Ontario, this work is advancing through a tripartite process involving First Nations partners, the Province of Ontario (EMO), and the Government of Canada (ISC). First Nations partners include individual First Nations, Tribal Councils, and regional organizations such as Nishnawbe Aski Nation and Grand Council Treaty #3.

The transition is governed by two primary bodies:

- **Leadership Table:** Composed of First Nation leadership at the local or aggregate level, such as Treaty areas and Tribal Councils, alongside leadership from ISC and EMO. The Leadership Table provides strategic direction, endorses the work of the Technical Working Group, reviews options and recommendations, and is responsible for resolutions.

- **Technical Working Group (TWG):** Composed of First Nation technical experts, including Directors of Emergency Management and EM Coordinators, community-level experts, and working-level staff from ISC and EMO. The TWG scopes the EM landscape, develops the building blocks of the multilateral framework, carries out the workplan, and briefs the Leadership Table.

First Nation governing councils remain the ultimate decision-making authorities for their communities. TWG members provide advice, support, and recommendations to these councils.

The transition follows firm timelines. The multilateral partners have committed to ratifying and refining new agreements by **September 30, 2027**. Current bilateral agreements expire on **March 31, 2028**, at which time the new multilateral agreement(s) will be fully implemented. (As determined by government)

The COO Emergency Management Advocacy Work Plan 2026

In 2026, COO developed an eight-phase Emergency Management Advocacy Work Plan to address longstanding systemic gaps in First Nations emergency management in Ontario. The Work Plan is designed to produce an evidence-based, community-validated advocacy strategy for submission to federal and provincial governments. Its

phases span system mapping, structured interviews with First Nations and municipal partners, joint analysis of findings, an Affected Chiefs Roundtable, a Joint Chiefs and Municipal Leaders Forum, and the production of a final "What We Heard" report and joint COO–AMO advocacy strategy, with a final submission deadline of March 31, 2027.

A dedicated position, funded separately and outside the scope of this contract, carries primary responsibility for executing the Work Plan in its entirety. The Liaison retained through this RFP will support that work in a complementary capacity, facilitating information flow between the Work Plan process and the multilateral table, connecting Work Plan findings to intergovernmental partners, and ensuring COO's advocacy positions are well-positioned to influence the multilateral agreement before the September 30, 2027 ratification deadline.

A Gap in Coordination

The draft Terms of Reference and the Multilateral Emergency Management framework both identify the need for a dedicated resource to bridge the TWG and the Leadership Table, ensuring a continuous and structured flow of information between leadership, communities, and working groups. At present, no single resource within COO holds this responsibility. Technical experts, PTO staff, and community leaders carry multilateral work in addition to existing duties. During emergency season, these same individuals are often focused on active response. As a result, information flow is inconsistent, and communities may not receive timely updates on decisions that affect them.

Navigating a Complex System

First Nations seeking EM support must navigate a complex network of federal and provincial programs, including ISC's Emergency Management Assistance Program (EMAP) streams (Capacity Enhancement, Non-Structural Mitigation, FireSmart, and Response and Recovery), Health Emergency Management (HEM), provincial programs delivered through EMO, and funding from other federal departments. Many communities, particularly those with limited staff capacity, face barriers in identifying the right program, contact, or funding stream. The Liaison will serve as trusted point of navigation for leadership and EM staff.

From Reactive to Proactive

ISC's national risk-based approach marks a shift from reactive response funding to proactive preparedness and mitigation. Tools such as the region-owned Highest Risk Communities List will guide seasonal planning and direct resources, including EM Coordinators, to where they are most urgently needed. For this shift to succeed, high-risk communities must be central to negotiations and planning. The Liaison will help ensure these communities are informed, engaged, and connected to available supports before an emergency occurs.

Respecting Self-Determination

The multilateral framework is grounded in community-led engagement, flexible Nation-specific approaches, and recognition of First Nations as full and equal partners. The Liaison, operating under and accountable to COO and the Office of the Ontario Regional Chief, will reinforce these principles by supporting First Nations voices within the multilateral process.

The work also responds to the Office of the Auditor General of Canada's 2022 recommendations on emergency management in First Nations communities, which call for EM service agreements that include all First Nations, increased support for First Nations-led approaches, and the definition and monitoring of comparable, culturally appropriate services.

OBJECTIVES AND KEY DELIVERABLES

The successful bidder will be expected to:

1. **Support the tripartite Multilateral Emergency Management process**

- Serve as a dedicated link between the Ontario Regional Chief, the TWG, and the Leadership Table, ensuring a continuous and structured flow of information
- Provide strategic advice on the tripartite process to the Office of the Ontario Regional Chief
- Prepare briefing materials, summaries, speaking notes, and updates for the Ontario Regional Chief and COO leadership
- Support the tracking of progress against the multilateral workplan and transition milestones, including the September 30, 2027 ratification deadline
- Support the co-development of the umbrella agreement, annual workplans, and operational annexes, including Request for Assistance processes and service standards
- Attend and represent COO at TWG and Leadership Table meetings as required, and meet with community leadership as directed
- Liaise with key and strategic First Nations on behalf of the Ontario Regional Chief

2. **Help First Nations navigate and connect to EM supports**

- Serve as a central point of contact for First Nation leadership and EM Coordinators seeking support on behalf of the Ontario Regional Chief

- Help communities identify relevant programs, funding streams, and service providers, including EMAP streams (Capacity Enhancement, Non-Structural Mitigation, FireSmart, and Response and Recovery), HEM, and provincial programs
- Disseminate plain-language tools and guidance on available EM supports to First Nations leadership and EM staff
- Prioritize outreach to communities identified as high-risk under ISC's national risk-based approach, including those on the region-owned Highest Risk Communities List

3. **Build linkages between federal and provincial departments and programs**

- Build and maintain working relationships with ISC, EMO, and other relevant federal and provincial departments
- Map service providers, mandates, capabilities, and existing service standards in support of the Bilateral to Multilateral Agreement Structure Workbook
- Support discussions on aligning funding sources beyond EMAP, including HEM and other departmental programs
- Connect communities building EM capacity with training, planning, and mitigation resources

4. **Provide real-time coordination support and advocacy during active emergencies**

- Support communication between affected First Nations, PTOs, ISC, and EMO during active emergencies
- Help leadership escalate urgent needs to the appropriate federal, provincial, or First Nation contacts
- Share timely situational updates with the Office of the Ontario Regional Chief and the Chiefs of Ontario
- Contribute to post-event lessons-learned exercises to inform future planning and policy
- Remain available outside regular business hours, including evenings and weekends, during wildfire, flood, and other emergency seasons

5. **Support alignment with the COO Emergency Management Advocacy Work Plan 2026**

- Maintain familiarity with the Work Plan's eight phases, deliverables, and timelines
- Facilitate information flow between the Work Plan lead position and the multilateral governance tables
- Connect Work Plan findings and recommendations to relevant federal and provincial partners
- Support the positioning of Work Plan outputs, including the final "What We Heard" report and joint advocacy strategy, for submission to the TWG, Leadership Table, ISC, and EMO ahead of the September 30, 2027, ratification deadline
- Coordinate with the Work Plan lead on engagement activities that intersect with multilateral discussions or intergovernmental relationships

6. **Engagement and reporting**

- Support community-led engagement on the multilateral agreement process alongside PTOs and community leadership, as requested
- Report regularly to the Ontario Regional Chief, Leadership Council, and Chiefs Assembly as required.
- Support the preparation of annual progress reports for the multilateral partners
- Track and report on performance measures, including: meetings attended and briefings prepared; communities and PTOs engaged; navigation and referral requests received and resolved; new federal and provincial linkages established; emergency events supported with real-time coordination; and instances where Work Plan findings were successfully connected to multilateral partners or intergovernmental contacts
- Deliver a final report at the conclusion of the contract term

Interested consultants should submit a comprehensive proposal that includes:

- A detailed methodology and work plan to meet the project objectives within the specified timeline
- The consultant's qualifications and relevant experience, including experience working with First Nations leadership, communities, and organizations in Ontario
- A description of the consultant's knowledge of First Nations governance, rights, and community structures in Ontario; federal and provincial EM programs including EMAP; and advocacy and policy processes relevant to First Nations in Ontario

- A detailed budget breakdown.
- Experience / References from similar First Nations projects or clients

WORKING RELATIONSHIP

- This contract will be supervised by the Office of the Ontario Regional Chief.
- The Consultant will work alongside and meet regularly with the Office of the Ontario Regional Chief and the Chiefs of Ontario.
- The Consultant will work collaboratively with the PTOs, First Nation leadership and EM staff, COO Policy, Strategic Advocacy, Government Relations, and Health units, the TWG, the Leadership Table, ISC Ontario Region, EMO, and municipalities as required.
- The Consultant will coordinate with the Chiefs of Ontario position responsible for leading the COO Emergency Management Advocacy Work Plan 2026, while carrying a complementary rather than primary role in relation to that work.
- The Consultant will respect the authority of First Nation governing councils as the ultimate decision-makers for their communities.
- The Consultant will maintain confidentiality on all information received in the course of the contract.

REQUIRED SCHEDULE WITH MILESTONES

Date	Milestone
October 2025	**Co-development of the workplan and agreement framework by the multilateral partners**
January 2026	**Engagement and drafting of the new multilateral agreement(s)**
January 4, 2027	**Contract award and kickoff meeting with the Office of the Ontario Regional Chief**
January 18, 2027	**Finalized work plan and communication protocol between the Technical Working Group, Leadership Table, Political Territorial Organizations, and First Nation communities**

February 1, 2027	**Initial inventory of federal and provincial emergency management programs, contacts, and service providers completed**
February 15, 2027	**Outreach to high-risk communities begins**
April 4, 2027	**First quarterly progress report (Q1) submitted to the Office of the Ontario Regional Chief**
July 4, 2027	**Second quarterly progress report (Q2) submitted to the Office of the Ontario Regional Chief**
July 4, 2027	**Mid-term review with the Office of the Ontario Regional Chief**
September 30, 2027	**Ratification and refinement of the multilateral agreement(s)**
October 4, 2027	**Third quarterly progress report (Q3) submitted to the Office of the Ontario Regional Chief, including lessons learned from emergency events**
March 31, 2028	**Expiration of current bilateral agreements and full transition to the new Multilateral Agreement(s)**
March 31, 2028	**Final report submitted, including performance measures and recommendations for continued support of the multilateral transition**

Note: The multilateral partners set the transition milestones. The Consultant's work plan must align with these dates, particularly the proposed September 30, 2027 ratification deadline.

PROFESSIONAL FEES

Applicants are to complete the Fee Schedule as fully as possible by replicating the table below in their proposal. Do not include HST in fees quoted but specify where HST is applicable. The fees quoted should be the applicant's best and only price. Estimated cost is the estimated hours multiplied by the hourly rate. All travel expenses are to be reimbursed based on agreed to outreach and travel.

The Fee Schedule for this specific project should not exceed **$130,000. CAD**.

Work Components	Estimated Hours	Hourly Rates	Est. Cost (Hours × Rates)	Est. Time Completion
Multilateral Process Support				
First Nations Navigation and Coordination				
Federal and Provincial Linkages				
Real-Time Emergency Coordination				
Work Plan Alignment and Support				
Engagement and Reporting				
Travel and Engagement Expenses (estimate only)				
Contingency Rate				
Total Cost & Completion Dates				

Additional points for applicants to consider:

- The Consultant must commit to a firm price for the entire contract. No increases during the course of the contract will be allowed. All subcontractors' fees must be included in the quoted fees.
- Expenses should be estimated.
- Travel estimates should account for TWG and Leadership Table meetings, PTO offices, and First Nation communities across Ontario, including fly-in communities in Northern Ontario.
- Applicants should identify any equipment, IT, or communications costs required to provide real-time emergency coordination, including after-hours availability.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

All submissions will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Quality of the proposal
- Capacity of the applicant to undertake the project
- Demonstrated experience working with First Nations leadership, communities, and organizations in Ontario
- Knowledge of First Nations governance, rights, and community structures in Ontario
- Knowledge of federal and provincial emergency management programs and the multilateral process
- Familiarity with advocacy and policy processes relevant to First Nations in Ontario
- Appropriateness of the project budget and timelines

COO RESERVES THE RIGHT TO:

- Reject any or all proposals received
- Enter into negotiations with one or more applicants on any aspect of the proposal
- Accept any proposal in whole or in part
- Cancel, modify, or reissue this document at any time
- Verify any and all information provided in the proposal

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

All submissions must include the following:

- Cover Letter
- Detailed work plan with all deliverables accounted for
- Completed fee schedule of estimated budget in alignment with deliverables

- CVs and References

RECEIPT OF PROPOSALS

Packages to be clearly marked: **"Regional Emergency Measures Liaison Services"** by December 4, 2026, 12:00 p.m. Eastern Time (ET).

Please submit electronically to the Office of the Ontario Regional Chief at orc@coo.org. Submissions received after the stated deadline will not be accepted.

Selection of consultant will be awarded by December 14, 2026.