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Request for Proposals:
Phase II – First Nations Supply Chain and Procurement Research and Analysis

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

You are invited to submit a proposal to the **Chiefs of Ontario (COO)** to undertake **Phase II of the First Nation Supply Chain and Procurement Research and Analysis** in support of the continued development of the First Nations Business Directory.

This Request for Proposals seeks a **consultant or consulting team** to lead a **comprehensive research study** examining supply chains, procurement systems, and demand-side dynamics affecting First Nations businesses in Ontario. The work will be research-focused and analytical in nature and will generate findings, analysis, and actionable recommendations to inform procurement participation, economic development outcomes, and future program and policy considerations.

Initial and foundational research undertaken by IFSD Advisors Ltd. (IFSD) during Phase I will be available to the successful proponent as a resource for completing the scope of work and deliverables set out in this RFP.

All work must be carried out in alignment with **First Nations data sovereignty principles**, including **Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP®)**.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- Chiefs of Ontario is advancing work to improve the economic visibility, accessibility, and participation of First Nations businesses in Ontario supply chains and procurement systems. This includes the maintenance and expansion of a centralized, verified database and publicly accessible Directory (First Nation Business Directory) of First Nations businesses, alongside supply chain mapping, procurement analysis, and engagement activities.
- The Directory is designed to:
    - identify, collect, validate, and maintain information on First Nations businesses in Ontario;
    - provide a publicly accessible, geographically mapped online platform for buyers and stakeholders;
    - support analysis of First Nations business participation in supply chains and procurement; and
    - operate in alignment with First Nations data sovereignty principles, including Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP®).

- Beyond serving as a registry of businesses, the Directory is intended to function as an analytical and strategic tool to support supply chain mapping, procurement analysis, policy development, and economic development planning

- As part of this work, COO requires a **consultant-led research study** to examine how First Nations businesses participate in supply chains, where barriers and risks exist, and what opportunities can be leveraged to strengthen participation in public and broader procurement opportunities.

- This research will support evidence-based decision-making and will inform future Directory enhancements, procurement engagement strategies, policy development, and economic development initiatives

- IFSD undertook Phase I to establish the research baseline. COO will provide the successful proponent with five deliverables, subject to applicable data access permissions.

- The Phase I materials comprise (A) the Literature Review and Environmental Scan, (B) the Business Directory Analysis, Supplier Classification and Subcontractor Assessment, (C) the Baseline Assessment and Data Gap Review, (D) the Strategic Focus Area Scoping Assessment and (E) the Phase II Research and Implementation Roadmap.

- At project initiation, the Consultant will confirm with COO which findings can be used directly, which require validation and what additional evidence is needed. Proponents should price the work required to complete Phase II using these materials as the starting point.

GOAL

- The purpose of this Supply Chain Research and Study is to **conduct a comprehensive analysis of supply chains relevant to First Nations businesses and communities** and to generate research-based findings and recommendations that enhance participation in procurement opportunities.

The study will:

- Extend Phase I and directory's supply chain mapping and procurement analysis to show how suppliers, subcontractors and buyers are connected across priority sectors and determine the future procurement environment in Ontario and Canada.

- Assess existing procurement policies, programs and practices to better understand accessibility and participation opportunities for First Nation businesses, including future state opportunities.

- Improve understanding of First Nation business capacity, sector representation, procurement readiness, barriers and supply chain participation to support evidence-based policy, program, procurement and economic development planning.

- Identify risks, barriers, capacities, and opportunities affecting First Nation participation in procurement and supply chain activities.

- Analyze procurement systems and buyer practices.

- Analyze evolving procurement trends across provincial, federal, municipal, First Nation, and private-sector markets, including future-state procurement scenarios related to made-in-Canada supply chains, one Canadian economy considerations, and changing trade and economic conditions.

- Integrate demand-side procurement insights and produce actionable recommendations to improve economic development outcomes.

- Strengthened foundations for long-term First Nation economic participation, procurement inclusion and economic reconciliation through the development, maintenance and ongoing expansion of a trusted Ontario First Nations Business Directory aligned with OCAP principles.

- Engage First Nations businesses, leadership, communities and organizations through outreach, consultations and information-sharing sessions to discuss short- and long-term supply chain plans, identify ways to address challenges and pursue opportunities, and raise awareness of Ontario's Indigenous Procurement Program and how businesses can access it.

SCOPE OF WORK

The Consultant will undertake a supply chain research and study focused on First Nations businesses and communities and will use the Phase I deliverables to confirm

priorities with COO, close evidence gaps and complete the detailed analysis described below.

Supply Chain Mapping and Analysis

The Consultant will commence comprehensive supply chain and procurement research and analysis, including:

- analysis of procurement trends;
- inventory of suppliers and subcontractors;
- analysis of information flows;
- analysis of infrastructure and service dependencies;
- current-state and future-state assessments;
- gap analysis; and
- Identification of risks, barriers, capacities, and opportunities.

Focus areas will include, subject to data availability and scope feasibility:

- food security;
- fuel supply chains;
- logistics; and
- on- and off-reserve businesses.

Research will include consideration of local, provincial, national, and international supply chain risks, barriers, challenges, and trends, where relevant, to contextualize findings related to First Nations businesses in Ontario.

The analysis will include a sector-specific supply-chain review, including supplier mapping, product and service profiles, data flows, assurance requirements, and relevant policy, legislative, economic, and trade considerations that may affect Ontario supply chains and First Nations business participation.

Where relevant, the Consultant may consider the potential implications of emerging provincial and federal policy directions, including Bill 5, Bill C-5, made-in-Canada supply-chain priorities, and Canada–United States trade and economic-security arrangements.

Demand-Side Procurement Research

The Consultant will engage public and private sector buyers to assess and incorporate demand-side procurement elements, including:

- exploration of communication mechanisms;
- exploration of automation options; and
- pathways for low-dollar-value procurement opportunities not published on formal procurement platforms.

Demand-side research will include analysis of longer-term procurement trends and needs across public and private sectors, including emerging sectoral demand and shifts in procurement practices that may affect future opportunities for First Nations businesses.

The Consultant will work with COO to identify the buyer information and procurement opportunities to incorporate into the Directory and map, and document how the proposed features would support access to low-dollar opportunities for smaller First Nations businesses.

Legal, Privacy, and OCAP Alignment

The Consultant will apply findings from legal review work undertaken for Directory data collection to ensure compliance with privacy, procurement, and OCAP-aligned data use practices.

Integrated Analysis and Case Studies

The Consultant will:

- conduct a comprehensive analysis of supply chains relevant to First Nations businesses, including food security, fuel supply, logistics, and on- and off-reserve linkages;
- integrate demand-side procurement insights from stakeholder engagement to identify opportunities for improving economic development outcomes; and
- Synthesize findings and provide actionable recommendations to enhance participation in public and broader procurement processes.

The Consultant will conduct in-depth pilot case studies with up to six (6) verified First Nations businesses (an initial three, followed by up to an additional three) to assess economic opportunities, market positioning, and alignment with procurement processes.

Case studies will leverage data from the Directory, Statistics Canada, and the Conference Board of Canada to analyze local economic activity and identify opportunities for business growth, capacity-building, and skills alignment.

The research will test how the Directory data can be integrated with procurement processes to optimize economic development outcomes, improve sales realization, and enhance collaboration between buyers and First Nations businesses.

The analysis will include consideration of future-state procurement and supply chain scenarios, including how procurement systems and demand may evolve over time and the implications for First Nations business participation and capacity development.

The consultant will engage with public and private sector professionals to understand business needs, map procurement and operational processes, and identify ways the portal can facilitate efficient contract execution with First Nations businesses. The consultant will develop Document insights to guide refinements in portal functionality and alignment with market requirements.

Case studies will include deeper analysis of local economic activity and market opportunities, including examination of demand channels, regional economic conditions, and factors influencing business growth and sales realization.

OBJECTIVES AND KEY DELIVERABLES

The Consultant will deliver the following, aligned with approved activities and reporting requirements:

- a Phase II work and engagement plan linking outstanding questions to methods, data sources, participants and milestones;
- sector-specific supply chain maps and analysis and an updated supplier and subcontractor inventory documenting information flows, infrastructure dependencies and regional linkages and current and future states;
- gap analysis and identification of risks, barriers, capacities, and opportunities;
- documented findings from engagement with public and private sector buyers;
- integrated supply-side and demand-side analysis;
- pilot case study summaries for up to six verified First Nations businesses;
- synthesis of findings and actionable recommendations to enhance participation of First Nations businesses in public and broader procurement processes;
- research summaries and materials to support knowledge dissemination and reporting.
- engagement findings documenting buyer requirements, sourcing practices and opportunities, including low-dollar purchases;
- research and stakeholder engagement to analyze businesses listed in the Directory, including differentiation between verified and unverified entries.

- recommendations to inform potential enhancements to Directory functionality, training and capacity-building initiatives, and policy or operational improvements supporting regional, provincial, and national economic opportunities.
- a final report integrating supply and demand findings, lessons learned and an implementation roadmap that identifies priority actions, proposed leads, timing and measures of progress for Directory enhancements, supplier development and buyer engagement, and

Research outputs will include:

- analysis of the current state of First Nations business participation in supply chains and procurement, identification of desired future states, and assessment of gaps (Gap Analysis) between current and future conditions, along with findings, policy-relevant recommendations, and a research-informed roadmap of initiatives to support economic development outcomes.
- an assessment of First Nations business capacity, including infrastructure, skills, financing, and workforce readiness, and a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analytical framework to synthesize findings.
- synthesis of findings, best practices, and lessons learned into reports or tools to inform policy development and future program design

METHODOLOGY

The Consultant will propose a methodology consistent with the approved scope of work, which may include:

- review of Phase I evidence and targeted updates to address unresolved questions;
- document and data review;
- qualitative and quantitative research approaches;
- engagement with First Nations businesses and procurement stakeholders; and
- application of OCAP-aligned data governance practices.

Research activities will include engagement with First Nations businesses, Economic Development Officers, representative organizations, business owners, First Nations economic development experts, and buyers to validate findings, analyze verified and unverified Directory entries, identify best practices for connecting procurement needs with verified business information, and situate the Directory within the broader economic and procurement ecosystem.

Research will include a literature review and secondary research to assess existing peer-reviewed, policy, and practitioner research related to public sector procurement,

supply chains, First Nations business capacity, and participation opportunities for First Nation businesses, and to identify data and evidence gaps relevant to this study.

The Consultant should review relevant best practices for small, remote, rural, and Indigenous communities. The Consultant may also conduct interviews with supply-chain experts, procurement professionals, economic development leaders, and think tanks to inform the analysis.

Where appropriate, the research may include consultations with procurement experts and academic specialists to support the research and help identify procurement trends, challenges, opportunities, and future supply-chain needs.

DEADLINES

The term of the work is as follows, aligned with project workplan timelines:

- **Year 1:** Jan 2027 to March 31, 2027.
- **Year 2:** April 1, 2027, to February 1, 2028.

Submission Deadline: December 7th, 2026 at 5:00 PM EST

MANDATORY PROPONENT REQUIREMENTS

To be considered for evaluation, proponents must demonstrate that they meet the following qualifications:

- **First Nations experience.** Experience on at least five projects valued at more than **$500,000** each, working directly with First Nations governments, political organizations, institutions, communities, or economic development organizations in Ontario or comparable Canadian jurisdictions.
- **Relevant research experience.** Demonstrated experience conducting research focused on economic development and supply chains in a First Nations or Indigenous context.
- **Research and First Nations data governance.** Experience using data and First Nations engagement to support research, handling confidential information, and following First Nations data governance requirements, including OCAP® principles where applicable.
- **Team expertise and capacity.** The team must have experience in First Nations policy, economic analysis, procurement, supply chains and research. It must be able to build on existing work, fill research gaps and deliver practical recommendations on time and within budget.

- **Evidence of qualifications.** Proponents must provide brief descriptions of relevant completed or ongoing assignments. For each assignment, identify the client or organization, dates, scope of services, role of the proponent and proposed team members, and relevant outcomes. COO may verify the information through client references.

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 the fee quote, but specify where HST is applicable. The fees quoted should be the applicant's best and only price. The estimated cost is the estimated hours multiplied by the hourly rate. All travel expenses must be included in the Proposal Fee Schedule.

Work Components	**Estimated Hours**	**Hourly Rates**	**Est. Cost (Hours times Rates)**	**Est. Time Completion**
Please fill per your project proposal				
Please fill per your project proposal				
Please fill per your project proposal				
Total Cost & Completion Dates				

The estimated budget for Phase II is **$550,000 to $700,000 CAD**, excluding HST. Proponents must submit a firm price that includes all professional fees, subcontractor fees, travel and other expenses.

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 and explained with the Professional Fee schedule.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION

COO will review proposals against the mandatory proponent requirements. In evaluating qualifying proposals, the Evaluation Committee may shortlist qualified proponents and request interviews and presentations.

Proposals must include:

- Demonstrated understanding of the scope;
- Experience with analytics and reporting tools;
- Experience with Indigenous organizations;
- Clear methodology and work plan;
- Proposed budget and timeline;
- Relevant projects and examples of past works,
- CVs and references.

RECEIPT OF PROPOSALS

Please replicate this on the front of your proposal.

Submission Deadline: December 7th , 2026, at 5:00 PM EST

Packages to be clearly marked:
"RFP: **Phase II Supply Chain, Procurement Research and Analysis**

Legal Name:	
Address:	
Telephone Number:	
Facsimile Number:	
Email Address:	

Send Proposal to:
Economic Development Sector
Attn: Arvind Sharma, **Director of Economic Development**
Chiefs of Ontario
468 Queen St. E – Suite 400
Toronto, ON M5A 1T7
Email: Arvind.sharma@coo.org and Nima.nikouie@coo.org

A proposal must be submitted as a PDF file by email 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 Facilitator for fourteen (14) days after the Submission Deadline date.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

All submissions must include:

- Project overview and methodology;
- Detailed work plan;
- Fee schedule and budget;
- CVs and references.

COO RESERVES THE RIGHT TO:

- Reject any or all proposals;
- Negotiate with one or more proponents;
- Accept any proposal in whole or in part;
- Cancel, modify or reissue this document at any time;
- Verify any information provided.