



Simcoe Muskoka
**Workforce
Development Board**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

from

Simcoe Muskoka Workforce Development Board
for Qualified Consultants to Prepare a
Muskoka Labour Market Environment Scan, Assessment
and Recommendations

Submission Opening Date:
August 27, 2018

RFP Closing Time:
September 28, 2018
4:00 PM

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1. Background: Simcoe Muskoka Workforce Development Board

SMWDB is a community directed, non-profit corporation located in Barrie, Ontario, 1 of 26 local planning board areas funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). SMWDB acts as a neutral broker, sourcing, conducting and distributing local labour market research as well as engaging and facilitating community stakeholders in workforce development activities.

To remain in touch with the needs and issues of each community, SMWDB conducts community consultations and an annual employer survey to provide forums to hear concerns and to assist in finding grassroots solutions to specific employment and training challenges in different employment areas.

With broad public involvement, SMWDB provides analysis of training needs and acts as a local voice to governments on existing training and adjustment programs as well as providing direction on the need and design of new programs or services to ensure equitable access to marketable skills for a changing economy.

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2. The Environmental Scan, Assessment and Recommendations

Today, Muskoka employers are finding it challenging to find the quantity and quality of employees that they need to maintain existing operations, and expand, putting existing jobs at risk, and limiting the development of new, high-quality employment opportunities. Under the direction of the successful proponent, this project will allow SMWDB and its partners to research and explore new concepts and approaches to improving workforce sustainability in the District of Muskoka, by convening directly with the working age population to understand systemic barriers and opportunities to fulltime, meaningful, and sustainable employment. According to Statistics Canada, in 2016, out of a total working age population of 50,765 only 16,135 (31.7%) individuals worked full time and year-round, 3% below the Ontario average, and household incomes averaged at \$67,880, \$6,407 below the Ontario average.

Muskoka's workforce has a lower participation rate and income level in comparison to Ontario, however due to the strong presence of seasonal residents, the cost of living remains high, highlighting the critical need to address this emerging issue.

With many employers unable to fill jobs, we must respond to this workforce challenge to ensure Muskoka residents are able to become and stay employed by giving the working age population a say in shaping the response to this issue. We will explore the unique complexities of working conditions in the District of Muskoka with current and future working-age Muskokans who will benefit from gaining/retaining meaningful employment. Job seekers face many challenges including seasonal employment, dispersed geography with limited access to employers via public transit, access to affordable housing, low wages, limited access to post-secondary training, and at times inflexible working conditions. These challenges are contributing to low household incomes and a low participation rate in the workforce. Many employers are looking to hire, however existing job seekers do not have the necessary skills, in particular for higher wage and skill jobs.

The results of the Environmental Scan, Assessment and Recommendations will form the basis of future workforce strategy and action plan development and implementation.

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3. Key Deliverables & Considerations

The Muskoka Labour Market Environmental Scan, Assessment and Recommendations will include the following deliverables and considerations in the final report:

- Review existing information and background reports related to the workforce and labour market in the District of Muskoka.
- Relate to youth and working age population (15-65 years of age)
- Identify and provide an in-depth understanding of the full scope of barriers and challenges faced in entering and remaining in the workforce
- Explore the unique complexities of working conditions in the District of Muskoka.
- Identify motivating factors for youth to find and retain local/regional employment in the short and long (15+ years) term.
- Assess and draw conclusions regarding gaps and expectations between working age population and employers.
- Assess and draw conclusions regarding the need and opportunity to utilize Soft Skills Solutions[®] (An SMWDB program)

Specifically:

- Develop and employ focus groups and surveys to understand the environment.
 - Minimum of 8 working age focus groups
 - Minimum of 3 youth-led focus groups (empower youth with an existing best practice “train the trainer” model). A staff person is available to assist with the training aspect of this component.

Note: In addition to gathering empirical data, anecdotal responses should be recorded and included in reports where deemed relevant.

- Clearly describe the experience of a cross section of Muskoka’s working age population with:
 - Awareness of employment opportunities available
 - Finding employment
 - Keeping employment
 - Skills development
 - The types of employment available
 - Advancement
- Conduct 2 roundtables with employers to share back research and assess opportunities and solutions.

Propose a minimum of 5 new and innovative actionable solutions to engage the working age population in existing workforce opportunities and prepare youth for future opportunities and retention in the regional workforce.

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SMWDB/Consultant Meetings

It is SMWDB's expectation that the selected proponent will meet with our team in-person at least twice prior to the launch of the consultations to review the consultant's plan and discuss the youth train-the trainer model. We also anticipate one teleconference or online meeting to discuss research tools and how the consultant will be identifying and engaging participants through surveys and discussion guides.

Interim and Final Report

To meet other future funding deadlines, an interim written report of findings will be due by Wednesday, November 2nd, 2018. A final written report to SMWDB will be required by January 31st, 2019.

Design

The project final report will reflect a professional design with quality images, an attractive cover page, practical layout, and content in a clear, easy-to-read font. The final report will be provided to SMWDB in electronic PDF form and two (2) printed and bound hard copies.

Delivery

The consultant will compile a draft document that will be forwarded by email to Simcoe Muskoka Workforce Development Board for review and feedback. The consultant will make all necessary revisions to the draft and, on approval by SMWDB, will be finalized.

Due to the short overall project timeline, the successful proponent will be required to submit bi-weekly project updates to the designated SMWDB project manager, Rob Shepard: rob@smwdb.com. These may be by e-mail and will not have to be formal in nature.

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4. Terms of Reference

Research with this population will address questions such as:

- Resident perspectives on the nature of job opportunities in Muskoka
- What are the barriers to becoming and staying employed?
- How do we engage youth in the workforce and keep them engaged?
- What supports are needed for the unemployed/underemployed to re-enter the workforce and obtain meaningful employment?

The community involved expects to get a better understanding of the workforce's perspective on how all parties can move forward to address the emerging workforce issue in Muskoka to ensure that meaningful, full time employment opportunities remain and increase in the region. The research obtained will assist in forming the basis of a strategic action plan to help Muskokans obtain meaningful employment and stay employed, while addressing the labour challenges facing businesses in Muskoka.

Actions related to programming and services will be identified as a result of this research.

There are a number of local and regional stakeholders who will provide various types of assistance as needed to contribute to the success of this project. These informal partners are expected to provide additional insight on barriers and opportunities, space for meetings, connections and communications to employers, youth and the working age population.

The project will culminate by convening members of the working-age population (including those on Employment Insurance and Ontario Works), employers, and related stakeholders to determine feasible practices to support the development of a more prosperous workforce in Muskoka.

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5. Proposal Budget

Budget Proposals must clearly detail a summary of project costs including a proposed payment schedule, cost breakdown by item or actions required to complete the project, billing rates, and hours for key personnel involved in the assignment. The maximum budget for the project cannot exceed \$42,000.00 CAD, excluding taxes. All out-of-pocket expenses will be the responsibility of the consultant and should be included in the calculations.

Additional funds are available for the following requirements and will be administered by SMWDB based on invoices submitted by the successful proponent: These will include but not restricted to:

Food and venue fees for:

- Working Age Focus Groups (6)
- Youth-led youth Focus Groups (3)
- Employer Roundtables (2)

Printing costs associated with the above activities

Please note that project payments will be staged in accordance with project milestones. Please submit your proposed payment schedule as part of your submission.

6. Proposal Timeline

Proposals must clearly detail a proposed timeline that includes project initiation, key milestones, and project completion. **The project completion date and final report must be submitted not later than 4pm on February 28th, 2019.**

7. Proposal Requirements

The proposal must include:

- Name, company name and experience of the consultant in doing this type of project
- Any name(s) and qualifications of team assigned to develop the project, including their roles and estimated time allocation for each person
- Workplan, timelines, budget
- Minimum three (3) references

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- The proponent must submit three (3) bound hard copies of their proposal as well as a digital copy of the same document in PDF format via e-mail by the stated deadline.

Interested consultants must submit their proposal by the deadline: 4:00pm on September 28, 2018 to:

Susan Laycock
Executive Director
Simcoe Muskoka Workforce Development Board
18 Alliance Blvd. Unit 22
Barrie ON L4M 5A5
Office: 705.725.1011
Toll Free 1.800.337.4598
Cell/Text: 705.817.9916
E-mail: susan@smwdb.com

Please note that all submissions received after the deadline will not be considered. Hard copies submitted will not be returned in the event that a submitted proposal is received after the deadline.

If a proponent requires clarification on any information in this RFP or has any other questions, they should address inquiries to Rob Shepard (rob@smwdb.com) in a timely manner before the submission deadline. SMWDB is not responsible for inquiries lost due to any failure of electronic/digital communications. Proponents are encouraged to contact the SMWDB representative if they do not receive a timely response to an inquiry.

8. Proponent Selection Process

All eligible proposals will be judged on a rating scale with the following criteria:

- Proponent's overall understanding of the goals and outcomes of the project
- Qualifications and experience of the Proponent as they relate to the project requirements
- Qualifications and experience of team members (if any) proposed by the Proponent
- Demonstration of a clear understanding of the project budget and timeline requirements
- Overall clarity and readability of the Proponent's submission

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All proponents must agree to an interview by members of the selection committee if requested. This may be held in-person, by telephone or online (Skype or other application) as mutually agreed between SMWDB and the Proponent.

9. Additional Information

If the Proponent believes that additional business interviews or other community collaboration activities are necessary to generate information that will enhance the outcome and value of the final project outcome, a detailed recommendation is to form part of the proposal.

10. Miscellaneous

a) Proposal Expenses: Any risk, cost and expenses incurred by each Proponent in, or arising from, the preparation of Proposals or any associated presentation, discussions or negotiations, shall be the sole cost and expense of the Proponent. SMWDB shall not under any circumstances be responsible for the payment or reimbursement of the same.

b) Conflicts of Interest: Any material familial, social, financial, commercial or other interest that the Proponent (or any director, shareholder, employee or representative of the Proponent) has with any employee or representative of SMWDB (or any contractor of the SMWDB) should be disclosed in your Proposal. Such disclosure will generally not of itself disqualify a Proponent but must be frankly and honestly disclosed so that proper safeguards can be employed to avoid any actual or perceived unfairness or bias.

c) Confidentiality: Any information provided by, or obtained from, SMWDB in connection with this RFP, and the terms of any contract ultimately entered into, is confidential information held for the benefit of the SMWDB and shall not be disclosed or released by the Proponent (or used by the Proponent for purposes other than responding to this RFP) without SMWDB's express written consent.

d) Freedom to Contract: SMWDB is not obliged to accept any of the Proposals submitted in response to this RFP and may terminate this RFP process at any time without notice. SMWDB is not obligated to accept the lowest bid.

e) No Legal Rights Created: Without any limitation to or by the foregoing, nothing in this RFP or in any communications, discussions or negotiations made or entered into pursuant to this RFP or in any further statements or information made or provided by the SMWDB or its representatives give to any Proponent any legal rights whatsoever

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and in particular, no contractual obligation, duty of care, duty to inform or any other obligation is imposed upon the SMWDB. Any liability of the SMWDB to a Proponent arising out of this RFP or any Proposal hereunder, including any contract negotiations,

whether in tort, contract or otherwise, shall be limited to the sum of \$1,000 in the aggregate for any and all causes and claims. In no event, shall SMWDB be liable or otherwise responsible for claims for lost profits or any indirect or consequential losses of any kind.

f) If, due to circumstances beyond the control of SMWDB, it becomes necessary to revise or extend the contract closing date, SMWDB will exhibit due diligence in contacting the successful proponent and negotiating any revision that may impact the proponent.