
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Mohawk Council of Akwesasne

Biocultural Framework for Cornwall/Akwesasne Remedial Action Plan For the MCA Environment Program

Issued February 18, 2025

1. Introduction

The **Mohawk Council of Akwesasne** is inviting proposals from consultants to establish and administer the development of a Biocultural Framework through community engagement for the St. Lawrence River Area of Concern (AOC) at Cornwall/Akwesasne.

The St. Lawrence River Area of Concern (AOC) at Cornwall/Akwesasne is a multi-national impact area which requires a solid understanding of the geographical and political complexities of these jurisdictions. In this AOC, there are governmental organizations, Indigenous organizations and communities, and industry partners undertaking a coordinated effort to address identified environmental challenges through a Remedial Action Plan (RAP).

1.1. Background on the Remedial Action Plan

The goal of a Remedial Action Plan (RAP) is to restore and protect beneficial uses in the Areas of Concern within the Great Lakes basin. AOCs are geographic areas where human activities have caused, or are likely to cause, impairment of beneficial uses or the area's ability to support aquatic life.

The United States and Canada, in cooperation with state and provincial governments, agreed to develop and implement RAPs in a 1987 protocol within the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. Each RAP is meant to embody a systematic and comprehensive ecosystem approach to restoring and protecting beneficial uses and serve as an important step toward virtual elimination of persistent toxic substances.

Remedial Action Plans have been developed and are being implemented in all 43 AOCs including here on the St. Lawrence River. The mechanisms responsible for the loss of ecological integrity in these areas are identified in the first step of the RAP process. Plans of action are then designed to systematically rejuvenate these areas to a level which meets both government and public expectations. These restorative measures use an "ecosystem approach" which considers not only land, air and water degradation, but also the loss or restriction of human uses in the upper St. Lawrence River.

Remedial Action Plans are the cumulative, ongoing product of cooperation among federal, provincial, state and local governments and communities. All courses of action must first be ratified through public consultation within the Area of Concern. This sustained interaction between public and government representatives not only encourages public awareness and education - it is essential for the sustained management of a successfully implemented RAP.

Public participation is an important and necessary component as it serves to inform the public, improve the plan by gaining information and advice from the public, gain support for plan implementation, and provide a mechanism for accountability to the public. The St. Lawrence River RAP process provides a channel for informed and continuous public participation on all aspects of the planning process including: goals, problem identification, planning methodology, public involvement program, technical data, remedial action alternatives, plan recommendations, and plan adoption.

1.2. Areas of Concern

The St. Lawrence River at Cornwall and Akwesasne was designated an Area of Concern (AOC) in 1985 by the International Joint Commission (a bi-national agency supervising transboundary water quality and water levels in Canada and U.S.), under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement between Canada and the United States. Areas of Concern are lakes, bays, and rivers on the Great Lakes / St. Lawrence River system where human activities have significantly damaged the quality of the environment. Currently, there are 12 such designated areas on the Canadian side of the Great Lakes, 26 in the United States, and 5 that are shared by both countries. The St. Lawrence River Area of Concern at Cornwall / Akwesasne and Massena/Akwesasne is one of these bi-national areas. In each Area of Concern, government, Indigenous, community, and industry partners are undertaking a coordinated effort to address identified environmental challenges through a Remedial Action Plan (RAP).

1.3. Why Are We an Area of Concern?

The St. Lawrence River (Canadian section) was designated as an AOC because a review of available data that indicated water quality and environmental health were severely degraded. Cornwall, the urban centre in the AOC, has been a hub of industrial activity for more than 100 years. This legacy led to contamination issues in local waters affecting the aquatic environment. Contaminants also enter these waters from upstream sources via Lake Ontario and from the air. Other issues leading to its designation included development along the shoreline, and water flow changes that altered the natural features of the St. Lawrence River. A map of this RAP AOC location is provided below:

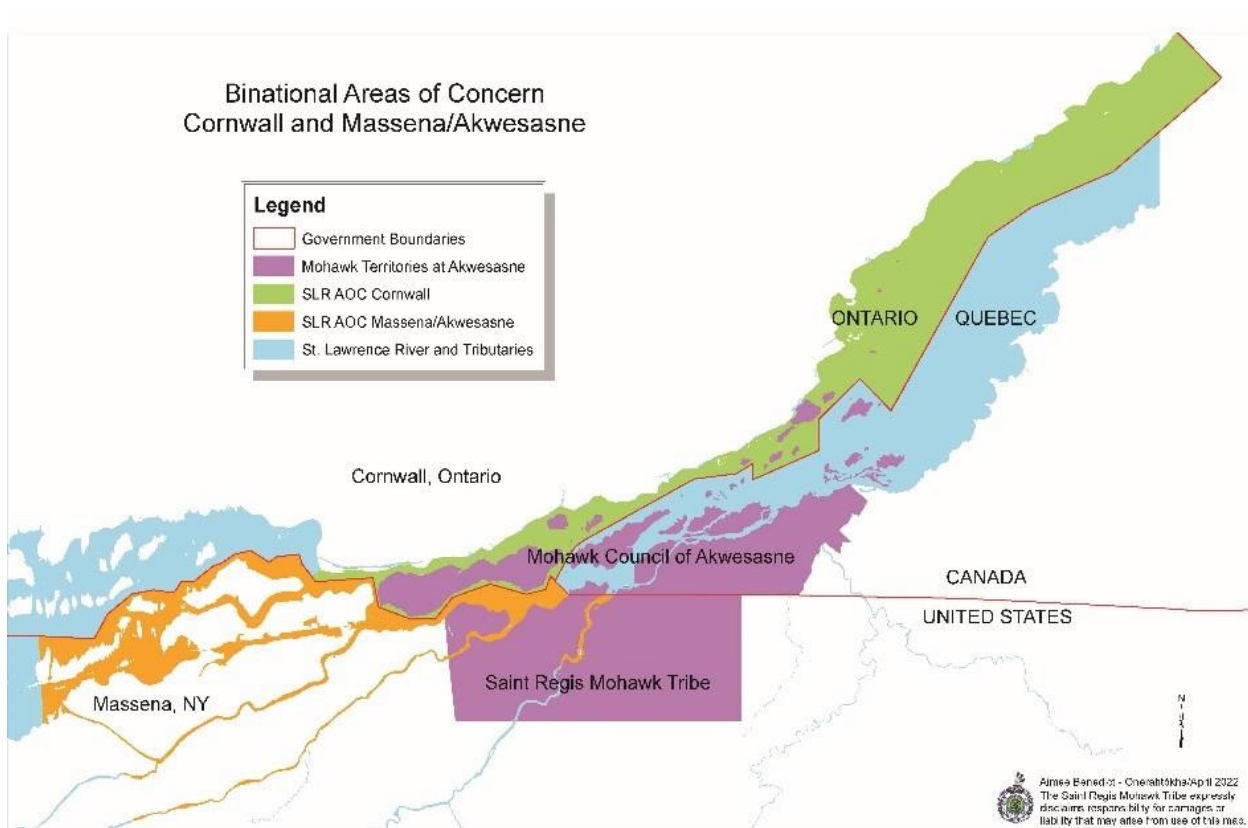


Figure 1: Map - Northern and Southern Akwesasne Areas of Concern

For more information please visit: <https://stlawrenceriverrap.ca/>

2. Objective

The objective of the Project is to inform and further develop the Remedial Action Plan in the St. Lawrence AOC (Cornwall/Akwesasne) to include Indigenous perspectives, considerations, and criteria in relation to how we assess the health and status of our Area of Concern. The consultant must have a familiarity and working knowledge of the community, customs and culture of Akwesasne.

The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, RAP stakeholders and partners wish to develop Biocultural Beneficial Use Impairment Criteria using an appropriate Indigenous Biocultural Framework. The Biocultural Framework should be developed using Indigenous community profiles (specific to Akwesasne), outreach and the coordination of engagement sessions including the development and documentation of the processes. This work will involve outreach and interviews with the community of Akwesasne to utilize a community centred and culturally appropriate approach in deciding the directionality of the Remedial Action Plan.

The MCA Environment Program incorporates traditional healing values into our work, and it is to be understood by the consultant that they will be required to connect to the lands in a spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental way to fully understand the importance and impacts of the work. The Project is to be undertaken in a manner that will ensure the active participation of the Akwesasne community in the collection of community knowledge. The consultant, in conjunction with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's Remedial Action Plan Environmental Services Manager and the RAP Coordinator is to develop and administer a Biocultural Framework for the AOC at Cornwall/Akwesasne that reflects the interests and concerns of the Akwesasne community in relation to the Remedial Action Plan and associated Beneficial Use Impairments in order to:

- Address data and knowledge gaps in the RAP Criteria within the AOC;
- Maintain a liaison with the community;
- Improve sharing of information between the community and the affiliated parties to this RAP;
- Provide additional mechanisms for resolving any concerns that arise during the work;
- Ensure an efficient, fully informed Biocultural Framework is developed; and
- Improve the understanding and approval of the Biocultural Framework by the community.

3. Scope of Work

A one-year contract will be awarded to the chosen consultant.

The consultant will develop a Biocultural Framework for the Cornwall/Akwesasne AOC (also referred to as “the Project”). This process will involve a review of existing data, establishment of a working group, facilitation of community engagement sessions, conducting of interviews, management of communications and advocacy work on behalf of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne.

The Biocultural Framework developed by the chosen consultant should reflect the interests and concerns of the Akwesasne community in relation to the Remedial Action Plan and its associated Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs). The six key aspects of the Project will include:

- i) Data review and analysis;
- ii) Interviews and Community Engagement;
- iii) Evaluation of past and current information, actions, studies, monitoring efforts and reports;
- iv) Identify and develop recommendations to address Biocultural data gaps
- v) Dissemination of data to various audiences (such as, but not limited to Council, the Akwesasne community, the St. Lawrence River Restoration Council, Environment Climate Change Canada, and Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks).; and
- vi) Produce a final report which includes a summary of engagement and recommendations

This Scope of Work (SOW) outlines the requirements for completing the Project. During this time, the successful candidate will be required to undertake the following work:

i) Data analysis and review

The nature of the work will include but is not limited to:

- Attend one (1) planning meeting needed to facilitate overview of required matters and decision making. This session may be online or in person.

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- Attend field work as needed, from time to time. The successful candidate should be prepared to accompany MCA Environment Staff in outdoor field work at a minimum of three (3) occasions over the duration of the contract;
 - The proponent should participate in the related RAP field programs to familiarize the candidate with the protocols involved in collection of data. Opportunities may arise during field work to conduct interviews and engage with the community;
 - Assist the MCA Remedial Action Plan Coordinator as needed including responding to emails, and attendance of up to four (4) general RAP meetings which will require in person attendance;
 - Conduct a review of related Remedial Action Plan records, past reports, and other information pertaining to environmental matters obtained from Canada, the United States, the Provinces of Ontario and Québec other First Nations, and other sources;
 - Conduct an evaluation of information collected to generate relevant questions for the interviewing phase of the Project; and

ii) Interviews and Community Engagement

The consultant should conduct interviews after a Kick-Off meeting with the MCA RAP Coordinator, and Environmental Sciences Officer has occurred. The consultant will specify methods for conducting the interviews (e.g. in person, telephone, in writing) and the questions to be asked.

Individuals to be interviewed may include, but are not limited to: current or former owners or occupants of any lands impacted by the Cornwall/Akwesasne AOC, individuals with specific knowledge of past activities on the aforementioned lands, parties potentially affected by contamination, and non-First Nation government officials (e.g., environment officers, public health officers), elders and community members knowledgeable about the resources and traditional use activities. The results of interviews and community meeting discussions shall be summarized in the Interim and Final Report.

- Attend one (1) Interview kick-off meeting with the Remedial Action Plan Coordinator, Environmental Management and others as needed prior to commencing the interviews;

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- Conduct community meetings and interviews with members of the Akwesasne community documenting the cultural harms caused by the environmental damages on the St. Lawrence River including possible remedies related to land use, remediation, mitigation, or further research which should be conducted;
 - Facilitate a minimum of three (3) Community Engagement sessions (1 per District) to help inform the RAP process, engage the community in the RAP Process, understand and respond to the concerns of the Akwesasne community;
 - Conduct a minimum of ten (10) interviews for the purpose of qualifying individuals for the Biocultural Working Group with members of the Akwesasne community (functions to help inform the RAP process, engage the community in the RAP Process, understand and respond to the concerns of the Akwesasne community); and
 - Interview planning should provide for the applicable translation costs, to provide the information as required in Kanien'kéha to align with our community's directive to ensure translation services are provided to our members when needed.

iii) Evaluation of Information and Reporting

- Provide a description of areas requiring further study (e.g., species to analyse for contaminants, locations which require additional sampling or remediation, etc.) and the rationale for such recommendations;
- Provide Indigenous perspectives and considerations to inform the assessment of the statuses of, and outstanding actions required in delisting the following Beneficial Use Impairments:
 - BUI 1: Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption
 - BUI 3: BUI 3- Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations
 - BUI 4: Fish Tumours or Other Deformities
 - BUI 8: Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae
 - BUI 13: Degradation of Phytoplankton and Zooplankton Populations
 - BUI 14: Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat
- Provide Indigenous perspectives and considerations to determine if the following Beneficial Use Impairments have been appropriately delisted or if they require further consideration:

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- BUI 2: Tainting of Fish and Wildlife Flavour
 - BUI 5: Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems
 - BUI 6: Degradation of Benthos
 - BUI: 7 Restriction on Dredging Activities
 - BUI 9: Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption, or Taste or Odour Problems
 - BUI 10: Beach Closings
 - BUI 11: Degradation of Aesthetics
 - BUI 12: Added Costs to Agriculture or Industry
- Establish a Biocultural Working Group consisting of individuals from the Northern and Southern portions of Akwesasne, including peoples of diverse backgrounds and knowledge systems;
 - Define the Terms of Reference in relation to the Biocultural Working Group;
 - Attend a minimum of six (6) Biocultural Working Group Meetings (online or in person);
 - Chair a minimum of four (4) of the Biocultural Working Group sessions;
 - Develop Biocultural Delisting Criteria for the Remedial Action Plan at Cornwall/Akwesasne that focuses on closing knowledge and scientific data gaps, delivering cultural remediation projects, and addressing community concerns in report format;
 - Work closely with partners involved in the Remedial Action Plan for the shared AOC at Cornwall/Akwesasne (i.e. the River Institute) working collaboratively to complete any actions required, such as:
 - Responding to emails;
 - Soliciting feedback from partners;
 - Attending site visits;
 - Reviewing existing data and reports from partners and providing feedback;

The successful candidate will be required to produce the following reporting deliverables:

- Prepare a Data Agreement Template that can be altered and used for various needs of the Environment Program;
- Prepare a Terms of Reference document for the Biocultural Working Group;

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- Assist in report writing, using the Biocultural Framework developed in this Project. This report writing will be done in conjunction with the RAP Project Coordinator;
 - Prepare an Interim Report outlining the results of the findings and clearly identify actionable items, recommendations of areas which require further assessment, and areas of interest as guided by the community. If applicable, the report should describe tasks that could not be performed due to limiting conditions and recommend measures to fill resulting data gaps; and
 - Prepare a Final Report with recommendations based on a review of commentary received on the Interim Report.
 - Prepare and submit a separate document containing a work program, schedule, and estimated budget for implementing recommendations contained in the Final Report.

iv) Dissemination of Data to Various Audiences

- Provide insight and expertise to the various RAP groups into cultural dimensions and considerations in relation to the RAP and how those can be applied in a way that informs actions required to delist the criteria above from both scientific and cultural dimensions;
- Assist with development of correspondence to various audiences (community, stakeholder, RAP partners, etc.) pertaining to questions regarding research processes, criteria, actions, availability of funds, and feasibility and suitability of studies, monitoring, surveys, etc.;
- Attend a minimum of six (6) General RAP meetings (meetings with stakeholders and partners to specifically discuss any RAP matters pertaining to MCA and/or the Akwesasne community); and
- Attendance to at least one District Meeting in each district (three (3) total).

Proposed changes to the development of the Biocultural Framework or deviations from the Scope of Work should be communicated to the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's appointed Environmental Services Manager in writing and must be accepted by the Environmental Services Manager before commencement of the project. No work is to be undertaken which is additional or supplemental to or in substitution of the work specified unless approved by the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's appointed Environmental Services Manager.

The consultant may recommend additional “Value Added” work which will be accepted at the discretion of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne. The proposal submission should include details of the additional work recommended and the costs, detailed in a manner which is separate from the costs included in the scope of this proposal.

4. Evaluation of Information and Reporting

Upon completion of the Biocultural Framework work plan, the consultant shall prepare and present to the RAP Project Coordinator, the Environmental Science Supervisor and the Environmental Services Manager an Interim Report outlining the results of the findings obtained in the records review, data analysis, community meetings and interviews. The Interim Report will clearly identify actionable items of actual or potential remediation, recommendations of areas which require further assessment, and areas of interest as guided by the community. If applicable, the report should describe tasks that could not be performed due to limiting conditions and recommend measures to fill resulting data gaps.

The Interim Report should have a Conclusions section describing:

- Whether or not evidence supports that further testing, monitoring, surveys, or remedial actions are advised;
- What steps have been taken to bring each “Not Impaired” BUI to that status, and how the research conducted included Akwesasne;
- How each BUI reached its current status, detailing which processes occurred;
- Optional conclusions may include additional data, key findings, or notes.

The final conclusions include a table which consists of, at a minimum, clear sections that denote:

- BUI Number;
- BUI Name;
- Current Status;
- Evidence, past actions completed to meet criteria;
- If criteria is to be proposed it will be proposed next to the existing criteria;
- Current Delisting Criteria for the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe and the MCA;
- How were the criteria met by the adjoining St. Lawrence AOC (Akwesasne/Massena) managed by the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe?;
- Actions Required which affect or directly relate to the AOC within Akwesasne.

As part of the conclusions, the report shall describe and recommend methods to reduce the level of uncertainty (e.g., reducing the harms or fear of engagement as described by the Biocultural Framework) and provide a rationale for proposing such methods.

The Final Report will be completed by the consultant following a review and comment on the interim report by the Environmental Services Manager and/or Environmental Science Supervisor.

Depending on the results of the study, the RAP Coordinator may specify that the consultant submit, under separate cover, a proposed work program to conduct additional work or other measures recommended in the report, including timing, scope, and estimated cost.

5. Project Management

The Project Management Team is composed of:

- Claire McFaul, Acting Environmental Services Manager, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne
- Britney Bourdages, Environment Program Supervisor, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne

The Project Management Team is responsible for:

- Reviewing and evaluating the project proposals according to established criteria and ensuring an efficient and cost-effective Project;
- Selecting a qualified consultant to prepare the Project components;
- Overseeing the management of the contract, including decisions on changes to the Project work program, schedule, or budgets proposed by the consultant;
- Providing the consultant with information as it relates to the project, responses to consultants' questions about the content or preparation of the Project, and assistance in facilitating access to sites, contacts, data and information, or locations;
- Organizing meetings with the exception of the working group meetings (which are to be organized and facilitated by the consultant);
- Reviewing the Interim Report and providing comments to the consultant;
- Accepting the Final Report and developing a plan for future action, if necessary;

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- Project administration, such as responding to invoices, receipts, change of work orders, etc.; and
 - Sharing communications with the consultant.

The consultant is responsible for:

- Maintaining communications with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's Environmental Services Manager throughout the contract;
- Providing copies of all correspondence to the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's Environmental Services Manager;
- Preparing the minutes of the Biocultural Working Group Meetings and providing minutes to the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's Environmental Services Manager within one month of the meeting's occurrence;
- Advising the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's Environmental Services Manager of the discovery of an immediate health and safety hazard associated with a site and identifying temporary emergency measures, if necessary, to eliminate or control these;
- Completing specified work in keeping with the project schedule, recognizing potential effects of weather or other extenuating circumstances;
- Informing the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's Environmental Services Manager if changes to the work program, schedule, or budget are considered appropriate or necessary;
- Providing a digital copy of the Interim Report to the RAP Project Coordinator;
- Preparing for, and attending, meetings with the Project Management Team, Chief and Council and community as required, to present and discuss the report;
- Responding to revisions to the Interim Report recommended by the Project Management Team; and
- Preparing and delivering a digital version of the Final Report to the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's Environmental Services Manager.

6. Project Schedule

A proposed timeline for completing the following milestones should be identified in the proposal:

1. Preliminary/Kick-off meeting – must be completed within the first three weeks of awarding contract
2. Records/Data review
3. Strategic or Planning Meetings
4. Community Meetings
5. Interviews
6. Submission of Interim Report – must be received no later than six months after awarding the contract
7. Presentation of Interim Report to Chief and Council and Community
8. Submission of Final Report – must be received no later than one year after the contract is awarded.

7. Insurance, Health and Safety

The successful bidder on the proposal is required to carry Worker's Compensation Insurance and a minimum of \$1,000,000 comprehensive general insurance including bodily injury, property damage, third party liability coverage for activities performed by the consultant resulting in an accident involving a third party, and professional liability insurance against errors and omissions. Neither the Government of Canada, nor the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne shall be responsible for bodily injury or property damage caused by the employees of the successful bidder.

8. Special Considerations

The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne acknowledges that unforeseen circumstances may arise, potentially impact project timeline and completion. The consultant may identify emerging issues and report their impact on the project timeline.

9. Disclaimer

- 9.1. All information distributed in connection with this RFP is confidential and is to be used for the sole purpose of completing submissions and for no other purpose unless prior written consent has been provided by the MCA. All material and information distributed will remain the property of the MCA to be used at their discretion.

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- 9.2. Proponents will not be compensated or reimbursed for costs incurred in preparing proposals.
- 9.3. The MCA reserves the right to:
- Accept or reject any or all proposals
 - Waive any anomalies in proposals
 - Negotiate with any or all Proponents
 - Modify or cancel the RFP
- 9.4. Proponents may withdraw their Proposal at any time prior to the Proposal closing time by submitting a written withdrawal letter to the contact persons listed.
- 9.5. All Proposals are irrevocable for a period of (60) business days from the closing date.
- 9.6. Ownership of Proposals: All Proposals, including attachments and any documentation, submitted to and accepted by the MCA in response to this RFP become the property of the MCA.
- 9.7. Conflict of Interest: Proponents shall disclose in their Proposals any actual or potential Conflict of Interest and existing business relationships it may have with the MCA, its elected officials, appointed officials or employees.
- 9.8. Local Preference: Preference shall be given to local Proponents where quality, service, and price are equivalent.
- 9.9. Confidentiality: The Proponent covenants and agrees that neither it nor its employees shall divulge, publish, or otherwise reveal either directly or indirectly any knowledge, information or facts disclosed to the bidder by reason of this Request for Proposal. All information furnished to the bidder by the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (the "MCA") is confidential and shall remain the sole property of the MCA and shall be held in confidence and safekeeping by the bidder for its sole use.

10. Submission of Proposal

The RFP shall be submitted to Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's Environmental Services Manager by 4:00pm on March 4, 2025:

NAME: Claire McFaul, A/Environmental Services Manager

ADDRESS: 101 Tewesateni Road, Akwesasne

EMAIL: claire.mcfaul@akwesasne.ca

Proposals received after 4:00 pm, March 4, 2025, will not be considered.

The proposal should include:

- The amount of hours budgeted for Sections i), ii) , iii) and iv) of the RFP Scope of Work;
- The hourly wages of staff expected to work on the proposal;
- A detailed and itemized description of the individual tasks to be performed, including rationale, deliverables, and caveats;
- A profile setting out the consultant's qualifications and experience with projects of a similar nature, including contact names and phone numbers for references on the identified projects;
- The personnel to be assigned to the project (i.e., name, qualifications and experience) and their individual roles and responsibilities within the project;
- Proposed schedule outlining the relative timing of all project events;
- Project budget and fee schedule (i.e., hourly rates of assigned personnel, disbursements and travel costs) of all activities to be undertaken;

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- The total cost for completing the project. Please note that Akwesasne is Tax Exempt and will not reimburse fees related to taxes;
 - The Proposal may also include a separate section with “value added” options and associated costing that may be added on the Project that the consultant would like to include for consideration. This may include, but not limited to new technologies, analysis tools, etc.

Personnel changes will not be allowed without valid justification and concurrence of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne’s Project Management Team.

Any questions regarding the preparation of the proposals should be directed to the **Mohawk Council of Akwesasne’s** Environmental Department Project Management Team to ensure the openness of the bidding process, answers to specific questions will be forwarded to all participating bidders.

11. Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Criterion	Weight
<p>1. Firm: Demonstrates experience to satisfactorily perform the work and to work effectively with First Nations.</p>	10
<p>1a. Project Team: The number, qualifications, and experience of personnel to be assigned to the job are clearly outlined and appropriate for the project. Team members have experience working with First Nations.</p>	10
<p>2. Project Understanding and Proposal Quality: The depth and detail of the submission indicates understanding of the scope, complexity, and time constraints of the job. The proposal adequately addresses all task and deliverables outlined in the SOW. The proposal is well-written and clearly organized and presented.</p>	30
<p>3. Approach and Methods: The work program is appropriate for the project and will produce the desired results. Technical methods essential to addressing the SOW are appropriate, logically organized and sequenced, and have been well described. Limitations and alternative methods, if necessary, have been included in the proposal.</p>	15
<p>4. Schedule: All tasks described in the Scope of Work (Section 3) are included in the schedule and adequate time has been allocated to each task. The proposal explains how delays will be handled. The proposed schedule is realistic and is clearly presented in the proposal.</p>	10
<p>6. Cost and Budget: Total cost of the work and the proposed fees have been presented in detail, showing staff time and charge out rates for each task item. The proposal demonstrates appropriate management, delegation of responsibility, work plans, scheduling and cost control, reporting, and quality control.</p>	10
<p>7. Professional Fees and Expenses: Cost of this proposal relative to the cost of other proposals received. The lowest of any tender need not be accepted.</p>	15
<p>Total</p>	100