

Request for Proposals

REMOTENESS SECRETARIAT

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Nishnawbe Aski Nation

Nishnawbe Aski Nation ("NAN") is a political territorial organization ("PTO") representing 49 remote First Nation communities. The NAN territory encompasses James Bay Treaty No. 9 and the Ontario portion of Treaty No. 5, a landmass covering two-thirds of the Province of Ontario, spanning 210,000 square miles. The total population of membership of NAN First Nations, including on and off reserve members, is estimated to be at least 45,000 people. As a PTO, it is NAN's responsibility to support communities in advocating for their rights as First Nations rights holders. Each NAN First Nation is unique in their needs and priorities, including its' geography. Many NAN First Nation communities are remote and do not have year-round road access, which impacts the accessibility and availability of vital health and social services.

Lack of access to health and social services is a historical and ongoing issue for members of NAN First Nations. This lack of access, coupled with discrimination in the delivery of First Nation Child and Family Services ("FNCFS"), has negatively impacted the quality of life of First Nations in NAN territory. NAN has consistently advocated for its members' access to health and social services since its inception in 1973.

Stemming from the unique perspective of NAN's remote communities and the increased cost of delivering on-reserve FNCFS programming due to factors related to remoteness and inaccessibility, NAN successfully intervened in First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada et al. v. Attorney General of Canada (for the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada). NAN sought intervention status to ensure that any reform of the FNCFS program would require the development of a remoteness quotient, a mathematical and statistically informed percentage by which to multiply a First Nation's funding based upon how remote that Nation is, to address deficiencies in remoteness funding.

POSITION OVERVIEW

Following robust negotiations with Canada and the Chiefs of Ontario ("COO"), the Final Agreement on Long-Term Reform of the First Nations Child and Family Services Program in Ontario (the "Ontario Final Agreement") includes an evidence-based Remoteness Quotient Adjustment Factor ("RQAF") jointly developed by NAN and Canada. The RQAF represents a first-of-its-kind, First Nations-sighted, evidence-based methodology for estimating the increased costs associated with remoteness and will be applied to adjust funding for First Nations under the reformed FNCFS

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program. The Ontario Final Agreement uses the RQAF to account for the significantly higher costs of delivering FNCFS in remote, northern, and fly-in communities and upwardly adjusts funding to account for a First Nation's 'remoteness'.

The RemSec was developed by NAN, COO, and Canada during the negotiations and is embedded in the Ontario Final Agreement under Part XI (reproduced below as Appendix A to this job description). The RemSec is intended to serve as a centre of expertise responsible for studying the impacts of remoteness experienced by First Nations and FNCFS Agencies in Ontario and developing best practices to account for these impacts. The RemSec is required to work collaboratively with the Ontario FNCFS Data Secretariat (described in Part X of the Ontario Final Agreement), the NAN-Canada Remoteness Quotient Table (described in Part XI of the Ontario Final Agreement), and the Ontario Reform Implementation Committee (described in Part XIV of the Ontario Final Agreement). The RemSec may also collaborate with independent bodies such as Statistics Canada, or organizations both inside and outside of Ontario, including the First Nations Information Governance Centre, insofar as these independent bodies would contribute their expertise to further refine and support the work of the RemSec to develop and share best practices and disseminate remoteness-related research and tools among First Nations and FNCFS Agencies in Ontario.

Scope of Work

As described in the OFA Part XI – Remoteness Research and Related Items, RemSec will serve as a primary centre of expertise on the impacts of remoteness experienced by First Nations and FNCFS Agencies in Ontario. RemSec will be responsible for coordinating and supporting data collection, accumulation, analysis, and research efforts regarding the measurement, systematic implications and associated operational costs of remoteness across the province. RemSec will work closely with NAN-Canada Remoteness Quotient ("RQ") table in developing Remoteness Quotient Adjust Factor ("RQAF") methodology to support the delivery of equitable FNCFS services. RemSec will also liaise with NAN-Canada RQ table to inform Ontario Reform Implementation Committee ("ORIC") on various remoteness inputs. By applying strong negotiation skills, RemSec will lead information-sharing agreement(s) with the Indigenous Services Canada ("ISC") to receive access to and use of ISC remoteness adjustment data. Throughout its term of appointment, RemSec is expected to collaborate and work effectively with independent bodies, including the recently established FNCFS Data Secretariat – Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences ("ICES"), Statistics Canada, First Nations Information Governance Centre ("FNIGC"), NAN First Nations and FNCFS Agencies to share best practices and disseminate remoteness-related research, analytical tools and methodologies.

Duties and Responsibilities:

Following the approval and implementation of the Ontario Final Agreement, NAN and Canada, by way of the NAN-Canada Remoteness Quotient Table, are required to establish the RemSec. As a result, the NAN-Canada Remoteness Quotient Table is seeking qualified, reputable, and experienced individuals to serve as the initial at-large members of the RemSec.

The Responsibilities of the Remoteness Secretariat will include:

- Oversee and monitor the implementation of the OFA as it pertains to the implementation, refinement, and development of best practices of the RQAF and its applicability to the FNCFS funding streams for a meaningful and proper adjustment.
- Work with the NAN-Canada Remoteness Quotient Table to further refine and update the RQAF Methodology (Which can be found at Appendix 10 of the Ontario Final Agreement)
- Coordinate and support data collection, accumulation, analysis, and conduct research regarding the measurement, implications, and associated costs of remoteness in Ontario.
- Make recommendations on potential adjustments to the RQAF and/or how to study 'remoteness' to the ORIC, based on its own research and input from COO, NAN, Canada, and other independent organizational bodies it collaborates with.
- Be a center of expertise on the impacts of remoteness experienced by First Nations and FNCFS Agencies and serve as an advocacy voice across sectors, including but not limited to health, education, and community safety.
- Support Program Assessment work, review reports, and issue Program Assessment Opinions.
- Actively participate and provide feedback on the Ontario Final Agreement Program Assessment process.
- Share best practices and disseminate remoteness-related research and tools among First Nations and FNCFS Agencies in Ontario.
- Provide reports to the Ontario Reform Implementation Committee.
- Publish reports following the implementation of the Ontario Final Agreement from the lens of remote communities and how the RQAF is making a real difference in funding.

Meeting Location and Frequency:

Until the RemSec has been developed, the location and frequency of meetings are to be determined. Depending on the requirements of its founding members, both in-person or virtual attendance will be accommodated.

Remuneration:

Remuneration will be discussed during the development and implementation of the RemSec and in collaboration with the NAN-Canada Remoteness Table

Term of Appointment:

The Term of Appointment will be discussed during the development and implementation of the RemSec, in collaboration with the NAN-Canada Remoteness Table.

Confidentiality and Conduct:

The RemSec's Terms of Reference will be discussed during the development and implementation of the RemSec, in collaboration with the NAN-Canada Remoteness Table. The confidentiality agreement for the Ontario Reform Implementation Committee, set out in Appendix 7 of the Ontario Final Agreement, is reproduced below as Appendix C to this job description to illustrate what the confidentiality agreement for the RemSec could look like. The hired candidate fully understands and explicitly acknowledges that all deliverables and data produced during their term of appointment are the sole and exclusive property of NAN. Under no circumstances may any collected data be utilized, disclosed, or reproduced for purposes outside the scope of this work. Any breach of this confidentiality will result in either immediate termination, legal action, financial penalties or a combination of all.

Additionally:

- Members of the RemSec will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement before their appointment.
- Members of the RemSec must uphold the integrity and confidentiality of any discussions and documents that occur during and following their appointment.
- Members of the RemSec are expected to act in accordance with the Terms of Reference that may guide their appointment and any additional protocols adopted by the ORIC.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility and Anticipated Timeline

The RFP is open to qualified individuals, consultants, independent professional contractors, and firms with a demonstrated track record of working with First Nations communities and/or FNCFS Agencies. Eligible candidates, i.e. individuals or organizations, must possess advanced expertise in data analysis, community-led research, experience asserting Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession ("OCAP") principles, and developing costing models, specifically accounting geographical remoteness.

The selected candidate must be prepared to work in a demanding, politically sensitive and highly collaborative environment. The OFA is an agreement in effect from May 29, 2026, until March 31, 2034.

RemSec shall be in effect from the date the contract is signed, until the end date as determined by the NAN-Canada RQ table, to provide support on remoteness issues.

All proposals shall include the following information:

- Qualifications: provide a description of the proponent's education, any affiliations with professional bodies, capabilities/experience with respect to policy development and implementation, engagement, strategic planning and the development of briefing materials.
- Experience: outline your experience working with First Nations people and communities. Provide a description of your experience with geographic remoteness.
- Knowledge: provide an overview of your knowledge of child welfare, child and youth mental

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health, and First Nations social priorities and governance.

Evaluation Criteria:

Proposal Requirements	Maximum Points
Qualification: Education, experience, skills, abilities in policy development.	20
Experience working with Federal and Provincial governments.	15
Experience working with people and communities that experience geographic remoteness.	15
Experience working with First Nation communities.	20
Total possible score.	70

Relevant Qualifications & Skills:

Ideal candidates will demonstrate a combination of academic training, professional experience, and cultural competency relevant to the RemSec's mandate. Specifically, candidates should possess:

- An advanced degree in economics, public policy, social work, Indigenous studies, or a related field, or equivalent lived and professional experience grounded in First Nations contexts.
- A minimum of 5–10 years of experience working with First Nations organizations or communities, with a strong understanding of the unique circumstances of remote and northern First Nations (preferably within NAN territory).
- Demonstrated knowledge of First Nations cultures, governance, and rights, including Indigenous legal traditions, jurisdiction, and self-determination.
- Experience in governance, oversight, or advisory roles (e.g., boards, committees, tribunals), including participation in consensus-based or distinctions-based decision-making processes.
- Strong understanding of remoteness as a cost driver, including northern infrastructure, transportation (e.g., fly-in/ice road access), supply chains, and regional service delivery challenges.
- Experience with funding models, cost analysis, or resource allocation methodologies, including the ability to assess cost-of-living pressures, subsidies, and funding formula impacts.
- Familiarity with data interpretation and evidence-informed decision-making, including the ability to assess quantitative and qualitative inputs in funding determinations (e.g., remoteness indices or adjustment factors).
- Experience in policy analysis or development in an Indigenous, intergovernmental, or public-sector context.
- Demonstrated ability to evaluate proposals, assess needs, and make reasoned recommendations or determinations regarding funding or program design.

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- Strong judgment, integrity, and independence, with the ability to contribute to fair, transparent, and defensible decision-making processes.
- Ability to work collaboratively in multidisciplinary settings while respecting First Nations perspectives and community-specific realities.

NAN's Rights and Reservations

NAN reserves the rights, at its sole discretion, to cancel, amend, postpone or re-issue this RFP at any time prior to finalizing contract without the liability to any candidate. NAN also reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals, to waive any formalities or irregularities in the proposals received, and to negotiate terms and conditions with one or more candidates. This RFP does not commit NAN to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Proposals are due by September 10, 2026, at 5:00 PM EST. NAN will send email reminders for application calls. Please note that the selected applicants will be screened by NAN and interviewed by members of the NAN-Canada Remoteness Quotient Table.

All proposals must clearly identify the name of the proponent. The subject title must read: "RFP for Remoteness Secretariat."

- Proposal submissions shall be sent by email to Asheley Wilson, A/Director, Social Services Strategic Advancement, Nishnawbe Aski Nation.
- Proposal submissions shall be emailed to awilson@nan.ca

Thank you for your interest. All proposals will be reviewed; however, only successful applicants will be contacted.

92. To support the mandate of the Ontario FNCFS Data Secretariat in measuring First Nations child and family well-being in a holistic way, ISC shall make best efforts to conclude an umbrella information-sharing agreement with the Ontario FNCFS Data Secretariat in order to facilitate the access to and sharing of the data described in paragraph 91(b). The departmental data available to be shared would include Ontario-specific data on all the service areas identified in the ISC Departmental Results Framework. Subject to limitations outlined in paragraph 285, ISC and the Ontario FNCFS Data Secretariat shall seek to include access to individual-level data from the Indian Registration System in the information-sharing agreement.

PART XI – REMOTENESS RESEARCH AND RELATED ITEMS

Purpose

93. The purpose of this Part is to account for remoteness issues in Ontario, including the increased costs associated with remoteness, and to establish or continue processes for ISC to engage with representatives of remote First Nations in Ontario for that purpose. The increased costs associated with remoteness impact remote First Nations, the FNCFS Agencies that serve them, and the children, youth, and families of remote First Nations.
94. Notwithstanding the Ontario application of this agreement, the Parties recognize that research and collaboration with remote communities as well as organizations—nationally and internationally—may be utilized by the Parties to ensure evidence-based best practices are derived to address issues of remoteness in Ontario.

The NAN-Canada Remoteness Quotient Table

95. The Parties recognize the unique challenges and increased time and expense required to deliver child welfare services in remote communities. Canada and NAN shall continue the NAN-Canada Remoteness Quotient Table, where they will work collaboratively to address policy and technical issues of remoteness, including the increased costs associated with remoteness, in Ontario. Canada and NAN shall revise the Terms of Reference for the NAN-Canada Remoteness Quotient Table to reflect this Final Agreement.

96. The work of the NAN-Canada Remoteness Quotient Table will continue to be First Nations-sighted and evidence-based, and may include continuing the development of and updating the initial NAN-specific Remoteness Quotient work, the RQAF, and other NAN-specific approaches to addressing remoteness issues and accounting for the increased child and family services costs associated with remoteness that impact NAN First Nations and the FNCFS Agencies that serve them. The NAN-Canada Remoteness Quotient Table may also seek to collaborate with Statistics Canada to further develop the Index of Remoteness. It may also collaborate with organizations such as the First Nations Information Governance Centre that have expertise relevant to the modelling or measurement of program costs in NAN communities. For clarity, such work shall not involve ISC providing greater remoteness adjustment funding within the Initial Funding Period than that provided for in paragraph 33.
97. The Ontario Reform Implementation Committee shall consider input from the NAN-Canada Remoteness Quotient Table, including any modelling and research undertaken by the NAN-Canada Remoteness Quotient Table, with respect to how remoteness issues are addressed under the Reformed FNCFS Program in Ontario.

Ontario Remoteness Secretariat

98. The NAN-Canada Remoteness Quotient Table shall establish an Ontario Remoteness Secretariat, which will be a centre of expertise on the impacts of remoteness experienced by First Nations and FNCFS Agencies in Ontario. The incorporating documents of the Ontario Remoteness Secretariat will set out its governance structure.
99. The Ontario Remoteness Secretariat shall work collaboratively with the Ontario FNCFS Data Secretariat described in PART X – ONTARIO FNCFS DATA SECRETARIAT.
100. The Ontario Remoteness Secretariat shall be responsible for:
- (a) coordinating and supporting data collection, accumulation, analysis, and research efforts with respect to measurement, implications, and associated costs of remoteness in Ontario; and

- (b) sharing best practices and disseminating remoteness-related research and tools among First Nations and FNCFS Agencies in Ontario.
101. In this work, the Ontario Remoteness Secretariat may collaborate with agencies such as Statistics Canada, or organizations whose work includes Ontario such as the First Nations Information Governance Centre, insofar as they have expertise relevant to the costs of remoteness in Ontario.
 102. The Ontario Remoteness Secretariat may inform input on remoteness issues provided by the NAN-Canada Remoteness Quotient Table to the Ontario Reform Implementation Committee.
 103. If necessary, ISC shall make best efforts to negotiate an umbrella information-sharing agreement with the Ontario Remoteness Secretariat in order to facilitate the access to and sharing of ISC data related to the measurement of and adjustment of funding for remoteness in Ontario. The Ontario Remoteness Secretariat will facilitate the access to and sharing of child and family services data related to the measurement of and adjustment of funding for remoteness in Ontario with ISC and other agreed upon parties, such as Statistics Canada or the First Nations Governance Information Centre.
 104. ISC shall provide \$13.5 million over the Term of this Final Agreement to support the NAN-Canada Remoteness Quotient Table and the Ontario Remoteness Secretariat, the allocation of which shall be determined at a later time.

PART XII – FIRST NATIONS EXERCISING INHERENT JURISDICTION OVER CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

105. For the purposes of this Part, the definition of First Nation in PART III – DEFINITIONS does not apply.
106. A First Nation in Ontario that is funded to exercise jurisdiction in the delivery of some or all aspects of child and family services pursuant to a self-government agreement, a treaty arrangement, a coordination agreement under *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and*

SCHEDULE A

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

MEMBERS AND ATTENDEES OF THE REFORM IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

WHEREAS the Chiefs of Ontario, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and Canada (the “**Parties**”) entered into an agreement that resolves all outstanding issues in the *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada et al. v. Attorney General of Canada File No. T1340/7008* proceedings related to the reform of the FNCFS Program in Ontario, resulting in the Final Agreement on the Long-Term Reform of the FNCFS Program in Ontario dated February 26, 2025, and the related order, **XX**;

AND WHEREAS the Parties to the Final Agreement on the Long-term Reform of the FNCFS Program in Ontario require Members of the Ontario Reform Implementation Committee and non-Member attendees at Ontario Reform Implementation Committee meetings (“**Members and Attendees**”) to preserve the confidentiality of the information which is disclosed to them for the purposes of fulfilling the Ontario Reform Implementation Committee’s mandate and wish to set out in this agreement the rights, obligations, and sanctions with respect to the disclosure and use of their confidential information (this “**Confidentiality Agreement**”);

NOW THEREFORE, the below signatories hereby agree as follows:

1. This Confidentiality Agreement reflects the requirements of the Parties to the Final Agreement on the Long-term Reform of the FNCFS Program in Ontario and the ongoing commitments of Members and Attendees to confidentiality.
2. The content of the discussions of the Ontario Reform Implementation Committee or information shared during its meetings, including but not limited to any proposals, documents, and/or suggestions, shall be kept confidential.
3. Members and Attendees shall not share any information or content obtained during meetings of the Ontario Reform Implementation Committee or related discussions with the public, third parties, or the media. Without limiting the generality of this provision, this includes the dissemination of information by way of live streaming, social media, electronic means, or by way of the physical sharing of documents.
4. Members are permitted to share information with their political leaders, officials, technical staff and advisors, and such other persons as agreed upon by the Committee, to the extent necessary to fulfill the mandate of the Ontario Reform Implementation Committee and keep those individuals informed of the progress in implementing the Final Agreement on Long-Term Reform of the First Nations Child and Family Services Program in Ontario. These additional people must be made aware of and agree to abide by the provisions of this Confidentiality Agreement.

5. Members and Attendees are free to publicly share their own aspirational views on the long-term reform of the FNCFS Program in Ontario, provided that nothing is shared in relation to the discussions, meetings, decisions, or other interactions of the Ontario Reform Implementation Committee.
6. Members and Attendees shall promptly return any information provided to them in the context of their role as a Member or attendee upon request of the Parties, upon their replacement, or upon the termination of their participation.
7. Members and Attendees shall keep all information or documents in their control and possession secure, accept full responsibility for the confidentiality of the information, and take every reasonable step to prevent unauthorized persons from examining and/or copying this information.
8. The terms of this Confidentiality Agreement survive the termination of each Member's membership and each Attendee's participation.

By executing this Agreement, the signatory represents their ongoing commitment to confidentiality and that any infringement by them of these provisions may be grounds for legal action. They further understand and accept their ongoing responsibilities and commitments set out above relating to confidential information.

Signatories:

Date:

Name:

Date:

Name:

Date:

Name:

Date:

Name:

Date:

Name:

Date:

Name: