

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.

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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 October 1, 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.