



Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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Request for Proposals For Education Jurisdiction Lead Negotiator

Submission Deadline: 12:00 PM EST September 18, 2026

Table of Contents

Part 1: The Call Out and Submission Instructions

- 1.1 Request for Proposals
- 1.2 RFP Background
- 1.3 Responsibilities
- 1.4 Contact Information
- 1.5 Scope of Work
- 1.6 Stakeholders
- 1.7 Timeline for Deliverables
- 1.8 Submission Requirements

Part 2: Evaluation and Awarding of Contract

- 2.1 Mandatory Submission Requirements
- 2.2 References and Past Performance
- 2.3 Applicants to Bear Their Own Costs

Part 1: The Call Out and Submission Instructions

1.1 Request for Proposals - Lead Negotiator - Education Agreement Negotiations – Education Jurisdiction Process

The Request for Proposals (the “RFP”) is an invitation by Nishnawbe Aski Nation (“NAN”) to prospective applicants interested to submit proposals to provide professional negotiations services and act as Lead Negotiator for the Education Jurisdiction process as NAN communities negotiate a Sectoral Self Governance Agreement - also known as the Education Agreement (or Final Agreement) with Canada.

1.2 RFP Background

Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) represents the political, social, and economic interests of 49 First Nation communities in northern Ontario, stretching from the Quebec border to the Manitoba border, and from the Hudson Bay and James Bay coasts to the 50th parallel. Thirty-four of these communities are remote and accessible only by air. NAN territory occupies approximately two-thirds of Ontario.

Cree, Ojibway, and Oji-Cree are the three distinct languages spoken throughout Nishnawbe Aski Nation. Within these languages, there are many dialects associated with each First Nation and region. The total registered population within the NAN territory is over 57,000 with approximately 65% being under the age of 30.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) and Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada signed the Framework Agreements on Governance and Education Jurisdiction on October 16, 1999. In December 2018, the Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) was signed by NAN’s Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler and the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development for Canada.

Thirty-seven First Nations within the NAN territory are in the process of negotiating an agreement for self-governance for education and these communities will have the opportunity to ratify the Education Agreement becoming Participating First Nation (PFNs) in the future education system. Fiscal negotiations have recently commenced as the Education Jurisdiction Agreement has been substantively completed.

Through this Request for Proposal (RFP), NAN is seeking to retain a Lead Negotiator to lead and represent NAN in Sectoral Self-Governance Agreement Negotiations with Canada for an Education Agreement, in accordance with political direction provided by the NAN Executive Council and the NAN Chiefs Committee on Education (CCOE). The Lead Negotiator will advance negotiations in a manner that upholds First Nations jurisdiction, inherent rights, treaty rights, community mandates, and the priorities of participating First Nations.

1.3 Responsibilities

Responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Lead and coordinate all aspects of negotiation strategy development for NAN's Education Agreement, Fiscal Agreement, Implementation Plan, and Interim Fiscal Transfer Agreement negotiations.
- Represent NAN at negotiation tables with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, related technical meetings, and future negotiation tables with Ontario, as directed by NAN Education Jurisdiction Negotiation team.
- Prepare negotiation plans, briefing materials, strategic options, risk assessments, and recommended positions for leadership consideration.
- Support the negotiation of sustainable, predictable, needs-based, and equitable funding models that are representative of NAN First Nations and that reflect the real costs for the delivery of a culturally grounded First Nations education system.
- Participate in community engagement session at the request of the Education Jurisdiction team.
- Support and maintain the establishment of constructive and productive relationships for the Education Jurisdiction team and process with First Nation Stakeholders, and federal counterparts for the benefit of the negotiations process in a way that remains respectful.
- Maintain strict confidentiality, disclose any real or perceived conflicts of interest, and conduct all work in a manner that safeguards NAN's negotiating position.

1.4 Contact

Additional information can be provided upon request regarding the scope of work and proposal requirements.

The deadline for RFP submissions is September 18, 2026.

All questions can be directed to: Bryan Achneepineskum
Education Jurisdiction Manager
Nishnawbe Aski Nation
bachneepineskum@nan.ca
www.nan.ca

1.5 Scope of Work

- Lead negotiation strategy and provide advice to the Education Jurisdiction negotiations team. This work includes:*

Request for Proposals for NAN Education Jurisdiction Lead Negotiator

- Review the status of the Education Agreement, Fiscal Agreement, Implementation Plan, fiscal principles, negotiation records, mandates, and related materials.
 - Develop negotiation plans, strategies, options, briefing materials, position alignment and recommendations for consideration by NAN, the Executive Council, the Chiefs Committee on Education, and Participating First Nations.
 - Identify risks, opportunities, leverage points, implementation issues, and decision points within the negotiation process.
 - Represent NAN at negotiation tables with Canada, at technical meetings, and future negotiation tables with Ontario, as directed by NAN.
 - Maintain alignment between community direction, legal advice, fiscal analysis, education expertise, technical support, and NAN's overall Education Jurisdiction objectives.
- ii. Support engagement with Participating First Nations by preparing materials that:*
- Translate complex legal, fiscal, and governance matters into accessible language for leadership, community members, and participating First Nations;
 - Support leadership and community understanding of the Education Agreement, Fiscal Agreement, Implementation Plan, ratification process, and the transition to a self-governing First Nations led education system;
 - Assist NAN and participating First Nations in confirming priorities, concerns, and direction to inform negotiation mandates and decision-making.
- iii. Provide ongoing negotiation leadership and project coordination by:*
- Providing briefings and updates to the Chiefs-in-Assembly, Executive Council, Chiefs Committee on Education, NAN Education Department, and other designated committees as requested.
 - Coordinating with the Legal Advisor, Education Expert Advisor, Fiscal Analyst, NAN Education Committee, NAN Education Department, and other technical supports as required.
 - Participating in preparatory meetings before NAN-Canada negotiation meetings to support timely, coordinated, and informed negotiation positions.
 - Maintaining respectful and constructive relationships with federal negotiation counterparts, First Nation stakeholders, NAN leadership, and the NAN Negotiation Team.

1.6 Stakeholders

The Lead Negotiator will work directly with NAN's Education Jurisdiction Team and the NAN Negotiation Team, including the Legal Advisor, Education Expert Advisor, Fiscal Analyst, NAN Education Committee, NAN Education Department, and other technical supports. The Lead Negotiator will also work with Participating First Nations, First Nation leadership and community members, Education Authorities, Chief and

Request for Proposals for NAN Education Jurisdiction Lead Negotiator

Councils, administrators, the NAN Education Director, the Executive Council, the Chiefs Committee on Education, Canada, and other parties identified by NAN.

1.7 Schedule of Deliverables

Comprehensive review and understanding of the negotiation record, Terms of Reference (TOR), existing mandates, and table history, including introductory leadership engagement and information sessions with participating First Nation communities in NAN Territory to be completed by:	Oct 31, 2026 Or within one month after start date
Development of negotiation strategy that takes into consideration the Education Agreement, Fiscal Transfer Agreement, and Implementation Plan, Communications and Engagement Plan, Workplan, and Timelines — compiling core interests, table strong language, risk mitigation strategies, and recommended negotiation positions for the table to be completed by:	Nov 31, 2026, or Within three months of start date.
Comparative review and understanding of negotiated education jurisdiction, sectoral self-government, and implementation frameworks and agreements across relevant First Nations and Canadian tables to identify strategic precedents, best practices, and innovative drafting options to be completed by:	Jan 31, 2027 Or within four to five months of start date.
Completion of First Draft of the Fiscal Agreement	March 31, 2027
Preparation of table options papers, refined mandate resolutions, and leadership briefing packages to support Participating First Nations, Chiefs/Leadership Councils, and Education Jurisdiction Working Groups in mandate approvals and ratification pathway planning to be completed by:	January 31, 2028
Completion of the Final Draft of Education Jurisdiction Package: • Education Agreement (Final Draft) • Fiscal Agreement (Final Draft) • Implementation Plan (Final Draft)	March 31, 2028
Final Negotiation Outcome, Table Transition, and Knowledge-Transfer Report: Delivery of the final negotiated outcomes report, including unresolved table considerations, transition strategy to self-governed education jurisdiction, and a comprehensive table briefing/knowledge-transfer package for NAN leadership and the emerging First Nations Education System to be completed by:	End of Fiscal March 31, 2029

Submission of Final Project Due: *Timelines may be extended/adjusted based on community engagement and other external factors.	End of Fiscal March 31, 2030
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1.8 Submission Requirements

All proposals should contain the following information:

- Cover Letter and Resume
 - Outlining the understanding of the project objectives and requirements and a statement of participation interest from the firm.
 - Resume that describes past relevant positions and/or projects you have led or supported, skills, references,
- Background and Overview
 - Name and contact information for the Lead Negotiator, any supporting negotiation team members, and any other internal or external resources;
 - Financial Terms with payment schedule and preferred payment method.
- Experience
 - **Track Record of Agreements:** Provide case examples or summaries of past sectoral self-governance, land claims, or Regional Education Agreements (REAs) you have successfully brought to completion.
 - **Sample Negotiation Frameworks:** Provide summarized or redacted copies of strategic plans, mandate-tracking tools, or risk-analysis documents you created for previous First Nation or Crown negotiation tables.
 - **Community Engagement Strategy:** Provide a written approach as to how you plan to incorporate input from local leadership, Elders, knowledge keepers, parents, and educators into the negotiations.
 - **Community-Up Mandate Structure:** What process will you use, or what steps will you take to ensure that the negotiation mandate is driven from the grassroots community level up to the PTO, rather than being imposed from the top down.
 - **Chiefs-in-Assembly Protocol:** Provide a written summary of the strategy you will use for presenting negotiation updates, navigating political debates, and securing formal consensus resolutions during PTO Chiefs' assemblies.
 - **Opt-In/Opt-Out Frameworks:** Examples of how you have structured agreements that allow individual communities within a collective to opt into specific educational jurisdictions at their own pace.

Part 2: Submissions Review and Awarding of Contract

2.1 Mandatory Submission Requirements

NAN will review submissions to determine which proposals comply with all the mandatory submission requirements. If a proposal fails to satisfy all the mandatory submission requirements, NAN may issue the applicant a notice identifying the deficiencies and providing the applicant with an opportunity to correct the deficiencies. If the applicant fails to satisfy the mandatory submission requirements within this period, its proposal will be rejected.

2.2 References and Past Performance

In the evaluation process, NAN may include information provided by the applicant's references and may also consider the applicant's past performance or conduct on previous contracts with NAN or other institutions. In addition, NAN, in its sole and unfettered discretion, may disqualify an applicant who has previously been, or is presently, involved in litigation, arbitration, or any other dispute resolution process or quasi-judicial process in which it is taking a position that is adverse in interest to NAN.

2.3 Applicants to Bear Their Own Costs

The applicant will bear all costs associated with or incurred in the preparation and presentation of its proposal, including, if applicable, costs incurred for interviews or demonstrations.