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Request for Proposals

For Strategic Advisor – NAN Education Department

Deadline: 12:00 PM EST – December 21, 2026

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Submission Deadline: 12:00 PM EST – December 21, 2026

Part 1: The Call Out and Submission Instructions

1.1. Request for Proposals – Strategic Advisor – NAN Education Department

The Request for Proposals (the "RFP") is an invitation by Nishnawbe Aski Nation ("NAN") to prospective, highly qualified applicants or consulting firms to provide high-level strategic, political, intergovernmental, and advocacy services as the Strategic Advisor to the NAN Education Department. The advisory services spans Education Jurisdiction and the Department's broader portfolio, including Education Partnerships, advocacy for Seven Youth Inquest, Languages and Lifelong Learning programs, Student Safety Initiatives, and other current or emerging departmental priorities.

The Strategic Advisor serves the NAN Executive Council, the NAN Chiefs Committee on Education (CCOE), the NAN Education Department, and the Lead Negotiator, and provides department-wide strategic advisory and advocacy support under the direction of NAN.

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, and Cree, Ojibway, and Oji-Cree are the three distinct languages spoken throughout the territory. 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.

Through this Request for Proposal (RFP), NAN is seeking to retain a Strategic Advisor to provide political and strategic advisory support to NAN Education's advocacy work on behalf of NAN communities.

1.3 Purpose

The Strategic Advisor is a department-wide strategic and political resource. Within

the Education Jurisdiction negotiation team, this role complements—but does not replace, direct, or duplicate—the Lead Negotiator. The following will apply:

Lead Negotiator Role: The Lead Negotiator leads formal government-to-government negotiations; directs negotiation-table strategy, caucus preparation, and technical coordination; manages the negotiation of NAN positions at the table; and provides information and updates on negotiations and the negotiation strategy with Canada to the NAN Executive, the Chiefs Committee on Education, NAN communities and others as needed.

Strategic Advisor Role: The Strategic Advisor provides department-wide political strategy, government relations, policy alignment, advocacy planning, executive briefings, and strategy development that will help move our priorities forward. The Strategic Advisor will conduct their duties in a manner that follows mandates given by NAN Chiefs-in-Assembly, the Chiefs Committee on Education, and NAN Executive, while also being accountable to the Director of Education and the Education Department team.

Education Jurisdiction Terms of Reference: Work affecting Education Jurisdiction must comply with the Education Jurisdiction team Terms of Reference.

NAN Education Department: Under the direction of the Director of Education and Program Managers (i.e. Education Jurisdiction, Education Initiatives, And Education Partnerships Program), the Strategic Advisor will coordinate advocacy and strategic advice across NAN Education including specific area needs including Seven Youth Inquest recommendations; Language and Culture; Lifelong Learning; Student Safety Initiatives; Education Jurisdiction; and any other initiative assigned within the NAN Education Department.

1.4 Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Strategic Advisor will include, but are not limited to:

- Provide government relations support, having experience in navigating federal and provincial programs, legislative and funding processes, and government relations, to ensure NAN is speaking to the right people at the right times, to align and support advocacy priorities.
- Provide strategic and political advisory services to further NAN Education Priorities, such as: Seven Youth Inquest, Education Partnerships Program, Student Safety, Languages, And Lifelong Learning, and other priorities as identified by NAN Education Department.

- Support the negotiation of sustainable, predictable, needs-based 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.
- Provide strategic and political advocacy that supports the completion of negotiations for the Education Agreement, Fiscal Agreement, Implementation Plan, and Interim Fiscal Transfer Agreement negotiations in a government not focussed on social policy.
- Participate in community engagement sessions, events and forums at the request of the Education Jurisdiction team, or Director of Education
- Support and maintain the establishment of constructive and productive relationships with the NAN Executive, NAN Education Department, First Nation stakeholders, and federal counterparts to ensure advocacy efforts can be successful.
- Maintain strict confidentiality, disclose any real or perceived conflicts of interest, and conduct all work in a manner that safeguards NAN's negotiating position.

1.5 Scope of Work

The Strategic Advisor will execute work across the coordinated functional areas as described in *Section 1.4.* Assignments will be approved through departmental workplans and, for Education Jurisdiction matters, carried out consistently with the Education Jurisdiction team

i. Provide advocacy and government relations support for the Education Department across various education initiatives. This work includes:

- Review and provide strategic direction on the Education Agreement, Fiscal Agreement, Implementation Plan, fiscal principles, negotiation records, mandates, and related materials.
- Identify risks, opportunities, leverage points, implementation issues, and decision points within the negotiation process.
- Provide advisory support in the development of advocacy strategies. Assist in government relations by identifying important government counterparts that NAN will need to engage with to successfully advocate for much needed investments in education.

- Provide options, briefing materials, position alignment and recommendations for consideration by NAN Education, the Executive Council, the Chiefs Committee on Education, and participating First Nations.
- Represent NAN at negotiation tables with Canada, at technical meetings, and future negotiation tables with Ontario, as directed by NAN.
- Provide advisory support for community direction, legal advice, fiscal analysis, education expertise, technical support, and NAN's overall Education priorities and Education Jurisdiction objectives.

ii. Provide ongoing advisory support to leadership and project coordination by:

- Providing input and recommendations to the Chiefs-in-Assembly, Executive Council, Chiefs Committee on Education, NAN Education Department, and other designated committees as requested through written briefings and updates oral updates.
- Coordinating work with the Education Jurisdiction team, NAN Education Committee, NAN Education Department, Chiefs Committee on Education, NAN Executive and other technical supports as required.
- Participating in preparatory meetings before NAN/Canada negotiation meetings to support timely, coordinated, and informed negotiation positions by providing strategic advice based on government priorities.
- Maintaining respectful and constructive relationships with federal negotiation counterparts, First Nation stakeholders, NAN leadership, and the NAN Negotiation Team.

1.6 Contact Information

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

Submission Deadline: December 21, 2026, at 12:00 PM EST
Direct all inquiries and submissions to:

Sherry Britton
Director of Education
Nishnawbe Aski Nation
100 Back Street, Unit 200
Thunder Bay, ON P7E 6T7

Email: sbritton@nan.ca

Website: www.nan.ca

1.7 Stakeholders and Governance Process

The Strategic Advisor will follow NAN's governance and management structure. Access, authority, approvals, and reporting will be determined by the applicable direction and/or mandate, departmental workplan, and Terms of Reference.

- **Executive Council and Chiefs Committee on Education:** Receive direct political counsel, mandate briefing binders, and strategic recommendations.

- **Lead Negotiator and Education Jurisdiction Negotiation Team:** Coordinate political advocacy with approved strategy. The Lead Negotiator retains negotiation-table authority; the Strategic Advisor supplies external political analysis, executive support, and authorized government-relations activity.

- **Director of Education, Education Jurisdiction Manager, Education Initiatives Manager, And Education Partnerships Manager and Program Leads:** Set assignments, validate program evidence and priorities, approve workplans and messaging, receive progress reports, and coordinate Education Partnerships, Seven Youth Inquest funding advocacy, Languages and Lifelong Learning, Student Safety Initiatives, Education Jurisdiction, and other departmental work.

1.8 Schedule of Deliverables

Deliverables will correspond with the negotiation cycle and reporting milestones set out under the Education Jurisdiction process:

Item	**Deadline**
Initial NAN Education Department review for political and advocacy needs assessment - Gather information and background data to begin initial assessment of NAN Educations current position and identify advocacy needs and gaps, recommendations for next steps - Create political and strategic action plan that establishes a path for NAN	First 30 days of start date

Education to advocate and escalate issues.	
NAN Education Advocacy Strategy - Coordinate with NAN Education to provide strategies and political recommendations such as political windows, funding opportunities and avenues to escalate issues that will help further NAN Educations priorities and needs. - Work with each team manager to identify current gaps and needs for advocacy strategies that focus on changes to government policies.	Ongoing – as needed to complete advocacy needs
Nation to Nation Governance scan - Working with our fiscal analysts for education jurisdiction, identify other First Nations in Canada that have similar Governance model and identify any precedence or political leverage potential that exists and can be included in our strategy.	April 1, 2027 or 60 days after start date
Assembly preparation and advocacy - Preparation of political options papers for FN leadership to enable informed decisions by the leadership. - Provide oral presentations to NAN leadership as requested	As requested
Creation of a multi-year Strategic Pathway and Political Advocacy Plan - Create a roadmap and plan that guides NAN Education through the Political landscape and has tools and recommendations that will outline steps to achieve goals milestones and priorities for NAN Education.	September 1, 2027

1.9 Submission Requirements

Proposals must contain the following components:

1. Background and Overview

Full contact details for the designated Strategic Advisor and lead firm (if applicable). Proposed organizational approach, availability for meetings in Thunder Bay, NAN communities, Ottawa, and Toronto, and a method for managing multiple program assignments, approvals, confidentiality, conflicts, and reporting without duplicating the Lead Negotiator or program leads.

2. Cover Letter and Resume / Corporate Profile

Provide a cover letter and resume(s) for the primary Strategic Advisor and supporting personnel, detailing relevant experience in First Nations politics, government relations, education systems, cross-program advocacy, dedicated funding strategies, and sectoral jurisdiction. This section of the submission should not exceed 10 pages.

Applicants must demonstrate the following minimum qualifications and competencies:

a) **Educational Background:** Degree in Public Policy, Law, Indigenous Studies, Political Science, Education Policy, or demonstrated experience working in, and creating change through political advocacy and government relations.

b) **Professional Track Record:** Minimum of 3–5 years of progressively senior experience in government relations, political advocacy, public policy, strategic funding, or education systems work directly within or alongside First Nations governments or political territorial organizations. Senior experience with complex, multi-program portfolios are preferred.

c) **Demonstrated Subject-Matter Knowledge:** Comprehensive understanding of s.35 of *The Constitution Act,* and the *Indian Act*; as well as of First Nations education funding, intergovernmental accountability, youth and student safety, language revitalization, lifelong learning, partnership governance, and northern and remote cost realities.

d) **Cultural Competence and Northern Realities:** Lived knowledge of Nishnawbe Aski Nation's distinct governance systems, Treaty No. 9 and the Ontario portion of Treaty No. 5, linguistic diversity, community protocols, and remote northern realities, including fly-in access, infrastructure constraints, and high living costs.

3. Written Strategic Submissions

Proposals must address the following areas:

a) **Political Strategy:** Provide an example of how you have designed and executed a political strategy to overcome federal or provincial bureaucratic gridlock during an Indigenous negotiation or policy process.

b) **Community-to-Assembly Political Consensus:** Outline the framework you will use to help the Chiefs Committee on Education and Executive Council build consensus among diverse First Nation leadership to carry unified resolutions through the Chiefs-in-Assembly.

c) **Rights and International Frameworks:** Detail your knowledge of legislation, Treaties, and human rights declarations such as UNDRIP, *The Constitution Act*, the *Languages Act*, and TRC Calls to Action and how they can be turned into intergovernmental advocacy narratives to secure equitable, needs-based funding.

d) **References:** Provide references that attest to your abilities for providing effective political advocacy and government relations strategies to a First Nation community or organization.

3. Financial Proposal: Provide a detailed fee structure, proposed retainer or milestone billing schedule, estimated travel expenses, and preferred payment arrangements.

Direct all inquiries and submissions to:

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