Request for Proposals

Evaluation Lead for Project Led by the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Proposals Due: Thursday, March 4, 2021 at 11:59 PM AST

Opportunity

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women (NSACSW) requires the services of an evaluator for a 27- month contract to lead the evaluation of a multi-partner project located in the Halifax Regional Municipality.

Background

The NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women (NSACSW) is seeking the services of an evaluator to support the evaluation of a multi partner project located in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). *Creating Communities of Care through a Customary Law Approach* (CCC) was developed to address "the lack of culturally-competent services or enhanced care for Indigenous and African Nova Scotian women who have experienced violence and those who may have come in contact with the criminal justice system as a result."

NSACSW has four community project partners: the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, the Association of Black Social Workers, the Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network, and the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia. The project aims to develop a suite of promising practices as a response to these gaps and build partnerships among relevant community and government organizations to develop effective and culturally sensitive supports to disrupt the cycles of violence which affect women and children in these communities. The goal will be to contribute to a National blueprint on innovative responses that will describe this non-traditional way of creating communities of care.

The CCC project is a co-investment between the provincial and federal governments and has received funding from Nova Scotia's *Standing Together* initiative and Women and Gender Equality Canada. NSACSW oversees the project which was initiated in 2019 and will run until June 30, 2023.

Evaluation Requirements

An evaluation plan has been developed as a guiding framework to learn from and understand this work, and highlights the following approaches:
- the evaluation will be collaborative in so far as the evaluation team will not be neutral objective outsiders but will work with *Creating Communities of Care* partners and stakeholders.
- the evaluation work will prioritize relationship building, enhancing, and supporting relationships that lie at the centre of work proposed for *Creating Communities of Care*.

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The NSACSW expects the evaluation lead to walk alongside the project for the next two plus years. This work will involve refining the evaluation plan based on the first year's work and developing a revised project plan in order to ensure a comprehensive and robust capture of the work of project partners to design and develop promising practices.

The promising practices being explored are:
- Support circles for women
- Supports to navigate the systems with which they need to interact
- Early victim identification and support
- Development and design of safe spaces
- Development of communities of practice and knowledge mobilization

The testing of these promising practices will contribute to the development of a blueprint tempered through a rigorous evaluation and meaningful survivor engagements which will unfold through a collaborative community of practice supported by the NSACSW. This community of practice will evolve and grow, but at its core will be the four community project partners undertaking the direct activities and sub activities required to implement, test, adjust and evaluate the promising practices.

This work is aligned with *Standing Together*, the province's plan to work with community organizations, groups, and experts to prevent domestic violence, help victims, and develop better supports. As part of this work *Creating Communities of Care* will "contribute to mapping the complex path toward the long-term prevention of domestic violence." The *Creating Communities of Care Project* is a signal investment under *Standing Together.* While there will be a discrete evaluation of the project, the evaluation framework for Standing Together aligns with the work proposed here. In this way, the evaluation will benefit from, and contribute to, the larger context and work being done across the province. The guidance of the evaluation will inform the framing of the project blueprint, ensuring it reflects evidence and learning from the project's efforts.

Several assumptions drive this project:
- Practices informed by Customary Law and Afrocentric principles will better serve women in the Indigenous and African Nova Scotian communities;
- Support circles, safe spaces and early identification are effective ways to animate these principles;
- Trauma-informed and responsive navigation will reduce the negative impacts of the system; and
- Partnership, a community of practice and knowledge mobilization, will trigger system change.

Project Overview

NSACSW expects the evaluation work to be informed by theory-driven evaluation, an approach that incorporates program theory into evaluation research. Program theory provides an explicit theory, or model, of how an intervention, such as a Project, a program, a strategy, an initiative, or a policy, contributes to a chain of intermediate results and finally to the intended or observed outcomes (Chen, 1990; Funnel and Rogers, 2011). This approach allows evaluators to examine, where possible, the factors that link the intervention and its results. Theory-driven evaluation addresses a weakness in evaluation research. Sometimes referred to as "black box" evaluations, traditional evaluations measure whether outputs were produced, or outcomes achieved but without paying attention to why a particular change occurred (or failed to occur). This process may find that the program works but having a well-developed program theory allow us to understand why and how it can then identify the elements of the program that need to be in place for it to work elsewhere, even if it needs to be developed differently in different contexts (Chen 1990; Funnel and Rogers, 2011). Theory-driven evaluation helps address the *why* or *why not* questions that arise out of summative and formative work.

A logic model is the first step in the development of a theory-driven evaluation and the logic model for the Project is included in Annex A. The new evaluator's task will involve refining the evaluation plan based on the first year's work and revised project plan. To further refine the theory of change, the evaluator will hold workshops to identify assumptions and develop more specific evaluation questions framed around the particulars of the Project.

The Project evaluation will tell the Project story using three types of evaluation: developmental, formative, and summative.

Developmental evaluation constitutes the main approach to the evaluation design. It is well-suited to evaluations in a complex context and focussing on learning rather than measuring outcomes and assuming a stepwise process to achieving them. In developmental evaluation, evaluators facilitate learning and sensemaking rather than report on measurements and findings. The developmental evaluation will answer the following evaluation questions:
- What principles drive this initiative? Are they clear? Actionable? Being followed?
- Are the principles leading to desired outcomes?
- What needs to be learned going forward?
- How is what we are learning informing our actions?

A formative evaluation focusses on process and implementation. It will take place annually and will measure progress towards achieving outcomes and producing outputs. This evaluation work will contribute to the Project's success by identifying what is working and what might need to change (Chen 1996; Kellogg, 1998). The evaluation team and Project stakeholders will collaborate to assess ways in which their work is moving toward achieving outcomes and to identify ways to fine-tune the work and facilitate improvement. This part of the evaluation can also identify system barriers to Project success. The formative evaluation will answer the following evaluation questions:
- What is working well? What needs to be changed?
- What challenges has been overcome? What others need to be addressed?
- What factors have facilitated the Project's successes?
- Is the Project implementation in line with the Project objectives?

- To what extent is the Project implementing the following principles: evidence-based, survivor engagement, trauma- and violence-informed/responsive and cultural safety.[1]

A summative evaluation of the program will focus on outputs, short-term outcomes and addressing the questions "what worked and what didn't?" (Chen 1996; Kellogg, 1998). This piece of the evaluation work will report on whether the Project did what it set out to, produced the outputs and achieved the short-term outcomes expected. The summative evaluation will answer the following evaluation questions:
- To what extent has the Project achieved its planned outcomes?
- To what extent has the Project been effective?
- Did the Project achieve its specific objectives?

The following principles guide this evaluation and align with how *Creating Communities of Care* has been developed and how it is expected to unfold. These principles will guide decisions about how and what to evaluate. Key principles and concepts for this evaluation will include:
- *Etuaptmumk* (Two-eyed seeing)
- Participation and collaboration
- Critical Anti-Racist values
- Gendered and intersectional lens
- Cultural sensitivity and humility
- Methodological and process rigor
- Rigor and trustworthiness

The evaluation will incorporate a variety of research methods to ensure adherence to principles described above. The methods will include traditional social science data collections tools such as surveys, interviews, and focus groups. In addition, the evaluation will adopt research tools better suited to addressing the complexity of the context in the Project is working. This will include forms of narrative research that are better suited to understanding complexity than mainstream methods. The narrative approaches will include story circles and kitchen table conversations. Key to both will be inclusion of survivors in both story-telling and making sense of what the stories mean. In this way, the narrative research privileges the interpretation of those who tell the stories over the researcher/evaluator.

The evaluation of the project will use a participatory approach that is informed by both a gendered and intersectional analysis. The evaluation will adopt principles associated with culturally sensitive research, and these principles will be articulated by Project partners. Developmental evaluation will constitute the main approach to evaluation design. It is well-suited to evaluations in a complex context and focussing on learning rather than measuring outcomes and assuming a stepwise process to achieving them. The evaluation will include more traditional formative and summative aspects to assess whether the program did what it set out to do and achieved planned outcomes.

Participatory evaluation requires that Project stakeholders be more than sources of data about the Project. It requires that they contribute to design, implementation and interpretation of the evaluation and the data it generates. A participatory approach produces better results and more buy-in from Project stakeholders (Burke, 1998; Bruce, 2011; Cousins et al. 1998).

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[1] *Principles are described in A Guide for Developing your Project Implementation Plan for the Gender-Based Violence Program of SWC.*

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The evaluation will be conducted using gendered and intersectional lenses. A gender-based approach requires that the evaluation assume that gender plays a role in how people experience any Project, program, or policy (Status of Women Canada, 2018). The evaluation will place gendered experiences at the forefront. Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how people's identities compound to create unique experiences of discrimination (Crenshaw, 2016; Hill Collins, 2016). Both a gender-based and intersectional approach are attuned to the power dynamics that will affect both how and why the Project is (or is not) effective as well as the dynamics among relevant partners and stakeholders.

Using these lenses leads to the following evaluation questions:
- What is the Project doing to address discrimination at the intersection of identities?
- How do participants' identities (e.g., gendered, racialized) shape their experiences of participating in the Project?

The Project evaluation will also implement principles associated with culturally sensitive evaluation. This approach acknowledges that marginalized populations have not traditionally benefited from evaluations that draw on Western/European ways of knowing and privilege outside evaluators with no stake in the communities in which programs are being implemented (Chiunard and Cousins 2007; Delornier et al 2003; Fletcher 20"03; Worthen et al. 1997). Some of the principles of this approach are embedded in the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* and have been further elaborated by the First Nations Information Governance Centre in their guideline for researchers.

Taking a culturally sensitive approach leads to the following evaluation questions:
- To what extent has the Project adopted culturally appropriate principles and practices?
- How do these principles differ across communities?
- How has the use of a culturally grounded approach impacted the Project and/or benefited those participating in it?

Confidentiality

The evaluation lead will be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement with the client and may be asked to do so with community partners as well.

Deliverables

Over the duration of this contract, the deliverables for the evaluation will include:
- Reviewing and tweaking, if necessary, the existing evaluation framework,
- Developing a workplan that is approved by NSACSW for implementing the framework over the duration of the project,
- Building cooperative relationships and meeting regularly with project partners. Client expects at least semi-annual meetings with each of the partners plus an annual meeting which includes all of the partners.
- Employing a culturally sensitive approach which acknowledges that marginalized populations have not traditionally benefited from evaluations that draw on Western/European ways of knowing,
- Collaborating with the project team on any sensemaking activities,
- Facilitating regular workshops with project stakeholders to explore how evaluation can

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support their work. These workshops will be required to create a space of learning, reflection, and action.

- Submitting annual and final reports as per the project agreement.

Deliverables, Milestones and Payment Schedule

Progress payments will be made in accordance with the schedule indicated below and will be released upon receipt of documents for each reporting period.

Scheduled Payment Date	Period Covered	Deliverables and Due Dates
Upon Signing	April 1, 2021–March 31, 2022 30% of total agreement	
	April 1, 2021-March 31, 2022	Evaluation Workplan Due June 30, 2021
April 30, 2022	April 1, 2021-March 31, 2022 20% of total agreement	Annual Evaluation Report Due April 15, 2022
April 30, 2023	April 1, 2022-March 31, 2023 20% of total agreement	Annual Evaluation Report Due April 15, 2023
July 30, 2023	April 1, 2021-June 30, 2023 20% of total agreement	Draft Final Evaluation Report Due July 15, 2023
August 30, 2023	April 1, 2021-June 30, 2023 10% holdback	Final Approved Evaluation Report Due August 15, 2023

Eligibility

Applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Evaluator, researcher, or organization with a background in evaluating community located initiatives that use a collaborative approach.

- Experience working with Indigenous and/or African Nova Scotian community organizations will be considered a definite asset.

- Experience with gender-base analysis.

- Residence in, and ability to work in Canada for the duration of the evaluation.

- An acceptable Nova Scotia partner if the applicant is not resident in the province.

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Proposal Requirements

Proposals must include the following:

- Demonstrated understanding of the project's purpose and deliverables.

- A work plan describing the approach to implementing the evaluation with milestones/timelines, key personnel who will contribute to the evaluation, and supports required from NSACSW and its project partners.

- Specific information on how data will be collected, based on the expectation that the evaluator will be willing, able, and well-suited to work with the partners on how, and by whom, data will be collected.

- A detailed description of the proposed team including team member roles, experience, and qualifications, as they specifically relate to this project. CVs and resumes should be included when appropriate to demonstrate experience or skill level. Given the length of this engagement, information on how continuity will be achieved for the duration of the contract is required.

- A detailed budget which must include any and all travel for the team.

Budget Considerations

Proposals with budgets in excess of $100,000 (not including HST) will be considered to be outside the scope of this project.

Proposal Submission

Proposals must be submitted via Research Nova Scotia's online submission portal, Jura. Follow the link below to create an account, select the opportunity, and upload all proposal requirements. Additional details available in submission form. All materials must be submitted prior to deadline noted in this RFP.

      Researchns.smartsimple.ca

Proposal Assessment Criteria

The following are mandatory requirements. Proposals not meeting these criteria will receive no further consideration during the evaluation process.

- Applicants must possess an acceptable level of experience or the qualifications to successfully complete the project and biographies/CV must be provided for key personnel.

- Proposals must meet budget requirements.

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The following criteria will be used to evaluate proposals that satisfy the mandatory criteria:

Factor	Value
Expertise of Applicant(s) Profile of key personnel – CV demonstrating qualifications and years of experience, adequacy of staff resources to complete the project; record of competence in undertaking similar work; anticipated level and type of involvement of key personnel in project.	20
Project-Specific Expertise Research and evaluation experience and expertise in the application of a participatory approach that is informed by both a gendered and intersectional analysis. The evaluation will adopt principles associated with culturally sensitive research, and these principles will be articulated by Project partners.	40
Overall Approach Proposed Clear and appropriate approach to implementing the process; adequacy of proposed work plan to address project objectives; recognition of potential challenges and strategies to overcome these challenges.	40

Short listed applicants may be asked to provide references who can speak to their capacity to complete this work and/or be invited to meet with project partners prior to a final decision being made.

Enquires During the RFP Phase

All enquiries during the proposal request phase shall be submitted in writing by March 4, 2021. Answers to questions will be provided on ongoing basis and will be issued as addenda if required. We will do our best to provide responses as quickly as possible but please allow up to 24hours for a response.

Direct enquires regarding this RFP must be sent to:

<div align="center">Leslie Power, Research Nova Scotia via email <u>Leslie.Power@researchns.ca</u></div>

Proponents are permitted to communicate only with the person identified above. Non-compliance with this condition during the proposal request phase may result in disqualification of the proponent's proposal. Proponents shall promptly examine all documents and addenda comprising this RFP and shall report any errors, and seek clarification of apparent errors, ambiguities, or other problems. It is the proponent's responsibility to avail themselves of all the necessary information to prepare a compliant proposal in response to this RFP. The Review Committee is under no obligation to seek clarification of a proposal from a proponent.

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APPENDIX A – LOGIC MODEL

| Annex B | Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women- | CREATING COMMUNIITES OF CARE THROGUH A CUSTOMARY LAW APPROACH- | Results Framework Version 02 March 31, |

GBV Survivors are better supported across sectors

External influences (Social, economic, cultural)

Long Term Outcomes (Community Impact)

GBV survivors from urban African Nova Scotian and Indigenous communities in the Halifax region receive more effective and culturally-relevant care and support;

Beneficiary populations have increased trust and confidence in mainstream government systems

Customary Law and Afrocentric Approaches to survivor support are more fully understood and embraced and a blueprint of these promising practices is completed

Community and Government systems become more responsive and sensitive to needs of beneficiaries;

Intermediate Outcomes (changes in (Behaviour)

Increased capacity to implement culturally-competent supports and practices is built.

Better understanding of what supports are working for survivors is achieved in partner agencies.

An innovative and effective culturally grounded engagement methodology is developed.

Stronger policy for intervention and advocacy has emerged.

Knowledge mobilization takes place: a deeper understanding of violence and its impacts on women from historically marginalized communities is shared

Capacity for attention to survivor engagement and better communication among stake-holders and service-providers is built.

Short Term Outcomes (Changes in Attitudes, beliefs, skills)

Enhanced safe spaces are used regularly by survivors. Cultural trust-building activities are regularized and enhanced.

More effective and targeted support and advocacy for individual navigating govt and community systems is provided.

Principles of Afrocentricity and Customary Law are used to develop key approaches

Policy gaps in Govt and community systems are better understood.

A more holistic and integrated knowledge of family violence among beneficiary communities is developed.

Networks and Partnerships are Created

Knowledge is engaged through survivor voices and stories

Outputs What Can you Measure?

Trust-building activities and safe spaces.

Promising Practices are identified, tested and evaluated.

Early triage and support mechanisms for individual survivors.

Sociocultural programs and events for survivors developed within appropriate cultural contexts.

Support Circle processes with individual survivors.

Policies which consider needs of beneficiary communities.

events, presentations, videos, and/or blog posts for knowledge mobilization and dissemination.

Established mechanisms for stakeholders to communicate regularly and effectively.

Evaluation of Project is developed and completed

Activities What are you Doing?

Develop enhanced safe spaces specific to partner organizations.

Design and test a Systems Navigation and Advocacy plan for individual victims of violence

Development and delivery of Information sessions on topics of critical interest.

Develop a program of sociocultural activities specific to partner organizations.

Implement the Engagement Methodology of Support Circles grounded in Customary Law and Afrocentricity

Develop policies with system partners.

Develop a series of Public Events and two-way knowledge sharing with beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Build a community of practice.

Support evaluation process and Organize regular feedback from

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