

**REQUEST FOR SERVICES – TOURISM EXCELLENCE NORTH LEARNER EXPERIENCE DESIGN**

DATE ISSUED: **November 28, 2023**

NOTICE OF INTENT TO BID: **December 4, 2023, at 4:00 pm est.**

RFS CLOSING DATE/TIME: **December 15, 2023, at 4:00 pm est.**

FINALIST BIDDER INTERVIEWS: **Week of December 18, 2023 (if required)**

CONTACT PERSON: Gillian McCullough, Online Learning Coordinator, Industry Training. [TEN@destinationnorthernontario.ca](mailto:TEN@destinationnorthernontario.ca)

**INTENT TO BID INFORMATION**

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FIRM/BIDDER LEGAL NAME

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MAILING ADDRESS

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CITY POSTAL CODE

( ) ( )

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TELEPHONE FAX

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CELLULAR EMAIL ADDRESS

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SIGNATURE NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED PERSON

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DATE HST REGISTRATION NUMBER (if applicable)

**Intention to Submit Proposal/Questions**

To ensure you are apprised of any additional information that may be provided, please complete Page 1 and submit to [TEN@destinationnorthernontario.ca](mailto:TEN@destinationnorthernontario.ca) by **December 4, 2023 at 4 pm EDT**.

**Written questions (only)** may be submitted to [TEN@destinationnorthernontario.ca](mailto:TEN@destinationnorthernontario.ca). One consolidated response to all questions (without attribution) received by deadline specified above will be published to all bidders who have declared their intent to submit a bid. **Questions are to be submitted by December 4, 2023, 4pm EDT.**

## **A. Project Overview**

Northern Ontario Regional Tourism Organization 13, known as Destination Northern Ontario (DNO), is a not-for profit organization representing the tourism industry in Ontario's Region 13, Northern Ontario. The region is divided into three sub-regions with Destination Northern Ontario maintaining an office in each with its head office in Sault Ste. Marie and satellite offices in Sudbury and Thunder Bay. Core funding is provided by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Destination Northern Ontario's Pan-Northern structure allows for the development of innovative and nationally significant tourism programming that is tailored to and implemented at the local destination level. 100% of Destination Northern Ontario's expenditures support tourism growth in Northern Ontario. 75% of expenditures support local organizations, businesses, and partnerships, growing capacity in Northern Ontario. Just 10% of Destination Northern Ontario's core budget is dedicated to administration costs.

Destination Northern Ontario supports tourism growth by working within five mandated pillars: product development, investment attraction, workforce development and industry training, marketing, and all in partnership with industry. The overarching goal for the region is to achieve 10% of provincial tourism receipts.

DNO's Workforce Development and Industry Training pillar works from its Sudbury Office. In addition to Tourism Excellence North, the office also coordinates the Tourism SkillsNet North program which identifies, recruits and trains job seekers and matches them to tourism sector employers. The office also plays a critical role in execution of the annual Northern Ontario Tourism Summit.

Tourism Excellence North (TEN) is a suite of training solutions for Northern Ontario designed to strengthen the ability of tourism operations to respond to changes in the marketplace, adapt to quality visitor expectations, develop innovative experiences that raise the bar on visitor value and deliver increased returns for operations and the destination. TEN has also identified training priorities to assist the sector with recovery and resiliency post-pandemic and strategically guides investment into tourism development holistically over the long term. TEN is aligned to support priorities for tourism development in Northern Ontario as identified by Destination Northern Ontario through its various strategies and product plans including its 2020-2025 Workforce Development and Industry Training Strategy. TEN also supports and aligns with service quality enhancement and visitor experience priorities of both the federal and provincial governments.

Based on a solid foundation of research, experience and lessons learned from elsewhere, TEN incorporates training solutions for Operators and Communities/Destinations. Self-Assessment

Tools, Group Learning Experiences, On-line Learning, and Personalized Coaching are included. Links to the TEN website, training strategy and other relevant reports is provided in Appendix C.

As the Tourism Excellence North (TEN) program continues to maintain and grow its training offers and partnerships, Destination Northern Ontario (DNO) would like to ensure that the TEN program meets a high standard in both the training and mentorship provided to tourism operators. Destination Northern Ontario is seeking to hire a Training Specialist to design and develop a Mentorship Program for TEN.

For further information about Destination Northern Ontario, Workforce Development and Industry Training, Tourism Excellence North, and Tourism SkillsNet North go to:  
[www.destinationnorthernontario.ca](http://www.destinationnorthernontario.ca).

## B. Administrative Information

### 1. Definitions

This section defines the key terms used throughout the RFS document.

The Proponent, Northern Ontario Regional Tourism Organization 13, will hereinafter be referred to as “Destination Northern Ontario”.

The term “Bidder” is defined as “a firm or individual that submits or intends to submit a proposal in response to this Request for Services”.

The successful Bidder(s) will be referred to as “the Provider(s)”.

This Request for Services will hereinafter be referred to as an “RFS”.

The words “shall” or “will” are used to indicate a mandatory requirement.

The word “should” is used to indicate an optional requirement.

### 2. The Process

#### Closing Date, Time, and Location

Each Bidder shall deliver their proposal electronically. Submissions must be received by **4:00 pm EDT December 15, 2023**. (the “Closing Time”) [TEN@destinationnorthernontario.ca](mailto:TEN@destinationnorthernontario.ca).

#### Late Submissions

It is the responsibility of the Bidder to ensure that their proposal is received on or before the described date and time listed above. The Bidder assumes all risks of failure should

their proposal not be received in the prescribed time frame. Late Submissions will not be considered.

**Schedule and Timing of Project**

It is expected that the selection process will be completed on or about **December 20, 2023**. It is anticipated that the actual work would begin on or about **January 2, 2024**. At that time the firm will be required to work with Destination Northern Ontario to design a detailed plan for approval by the Destination Northern Ontario Board of Directors.

**Summary of Key Activities, Dates and Times:**

RFS Released – <b>November 28, 2023</b>
Intent to Bid Submission Deadline- <b>4:00 pm EDT., December 4, 2023</b>
Questions (if any) Submission Deadline – <b>4:00 pm EDT., December 4, 2023</b>
Question Responses Published- <b>3:00 pm EDT., December 13, 2023</b>
Deadline for RFS Submissions- <b>4:00 pm EDT., December 15, 2023</b>
Interviews (if required) - <b>Week of December 18, 2023 (if required)</b>
Selection/Engagement (on or about) – <b>December 20, 2023</b>

**Conflict of Interest**

Destination Northern Ontario reserves the right to disqualify any submission due to a conflict of interest. Each applicant must disclose any actual or potential conflict that may be occurring at time of bid or may occur during the course of the project. If an applicant fails to disclose an actual or potential conflict or where such a conflict cannot be resolved, Destination Northern Ontario has the right to terminate the contract. Any contract awarded as a result of this RFS will be non-exclusive. Destination Northern Ontario may at its sole discretion purchase the same or similar services from other sources during the term of the contract.

**Evaluation and Selection**

Evaluation of submissions will be performed by a committee formed by Destination Northern Ontario. Submissions will first be checked against mandatory criteria. Submissions not meeting the mandatory criteria will be rejected without further consideration. Submissions that do meet the mandatory criteria will then be assessed against additional

criteria. Destination Northern Ontario's intent is to enter into a contract with a single bidder, but only should they meet Destination Northern Ontario's criteria. Please refer to **Section G** for a list of criteria and their weighting.

### **Negotiation Delay**

If a Contract cannot be negotiated with a Bidder within a period of time satisfactory to Destination Northern Ontario, Destination Northern Ontario may, at its sole discretion, terminate negotiations with that Bidder and either negotiate a Contract with another Bidder or choose to terminate this RFS process and not enter into a Contract with any of the Bidders. Destination Northern Ontario may also at its sole discretion, send out a new RFS for this project should it be unable to negotiate a Contract with the successful Bidder or another Bidder.

## **3. Proposal Preparation**

### **Signed Submissions**

The Bidder must ensure that their submission includes the Cover Page of this RFS, signed by a person(s) authorized to sign on behalf of the Bidder.

### **Irrevocability and Validity of Submissions**

By submission of a clear and detailed written notice, the Bidder may amend or withdraw their proposal prior to Closing Time. After Closing Time all Submissions become irrevocable, the property of Destination Northern Ontario and will remain open for acceptance for a period of ninety days from Closing Time. By submission of an Expression of Interest, the Bidder agrees that, should the Expression be successful, the Bidder will enter into a contract with Destination Northern Ontario.

### **Bidders' Expenses**

Bidders are solely responsible for their own expenses in preparing a Proposal and for subsequent negotiations, if any. Destination Northern Ontario will not be liable to any Bidder whether Destination Northern Ontario accepts or rejects a submission, for any claims, whether for costs or damages incurred by the Bidder in preparing their submission, loss of anticipated profit in connection with the Contract or any other matter whatsoever.

Any Bidder may be required to meet in person or by telephone with the Destination Northern Ontario Selection Committee to explain details of the submission and the Bidder will be responsible for all costs of their attendance and the attendance of any of their representatives.

### **Liability for Errors**

While Destination Northern Ontario has taken considerable care to ensure an accurate representation of information in the RFS, the information contained in the RFS is supplied solely as a guideline for Bidders. The information is not guaranteed or warranted accurate, nor is it necessarily comprehensive or exhaustive. Nothing in this RFS is intended to relieve Bidders from forming their own opinions and conclusions with respect to the matters addressed in this RFS.

### **Firm Pricing**

Prices will be firm for the entire Contract period unless specifically stated otherwise.

### **Sub-contracting**

Using a sub-contractor (who must be clearly identified in the Expression) is acceptable. This includes a joint submission by two or more Bidders having no formal corporate links. However, in this case, one of these Bidders must be prepared to take overall responsibility for successful performance of the Contract and this should be clearly identified in the Expression of Interest.

## **4. Additional Terms and Conditions**

### **Acceptance and Rejection of Submissions**

This RFS should not be construed as an agreement to purchase goods or services. The lowest priced or any Expression of Interest will not necessarily be accepted, and Destination Northern Ontario is not bound to enter into a Contract with any Bidder.

### **Right to Amend or Cancel**

Destination Northern Ontario reserves the right in its sole discretion at any time, and for whatever reason to, by addendum, modify, amend, or otherwise change this RFS.

### **Contract**

Notice in writing to a Bidder that they have been identified as the successful Bidder and the subsequent full execution of a written Contract will constitute a Contract for the goods or services, and no Bidder will acquire any legal or equitable rights or privileges relative to the goods or services until the occurrence of both events.

### **No Public Announcements**

Bidders will not make any public announcement or have any communication with the media in connection with this RFS without the prior written consent of Destination Northern Ontario.

### **No Promotion of Relationship**

Bidders will not disclose their relationship with Destination Northern Ontario for

promotional purposes, including by means of verbal declarations and announcements through any medium whatsoever.

#### **Proprietary Information Notice**

This RFS contains proprietary and confidential information of Destination Northern Ontario, which is provided for the sole purpose of permitting the Bidder to respond to this RFS. In consideration of the receipt of this RFS, the Bidder agrees to maintain such information in confidence and not to reproduce or otherwise distribute this information.

#### **Assignment of Intellectual Rights**

All work carried out as a result of this RFS will be the exclusive property of Destination Northern Ontario and will be surrendered to Destination Northern Ontario immediately upon completion, expiration, or cancellation of the project. Destination Northern Ontario will own all rights, title, and interest in all intellectual property rights, including copyrights, patents, trade secrets and trademarks in any work created that is paid for by Destination Northern Ontario.

### **C. Expression Content and Format**

The following format and sequence must be followed in order to provide consistency in Bidders' responses and to ensure that each Expression receives full consideration. Submissions must be on American standard letter size paper and all pages should be consecutively numbered.

1. Title page: include title of RFS, Bidder's name, contact person, address, telephone number, e-mail address and signature.
2. Completed questionnaire.
3. Resume detailing qualifications and experience.
4. Statement of fees or anticipated remuneration.
5. Supplemental Information as requested in this RFS.
6. Files are to be submitted in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format either by email (no email larger than 4MB) or through an on-line file sharing website such as DropBox.

### **D. Detailed Project Information**

As the Tourism Excellence North (TEN) program continues to maintain and grow its training offers and partnerships, Destination Northern Ontario (DNO) would like to formally develop a Quality Assurance process to ensure the TEN Learner Experience remains at a high standard. Having all TEN courses – whether created in-house or by a third-party – go through a Quality Assurance process will ensure a consistent result. Among other benefits, a formal Quality Assurance process works to ensure excellence in:

- Course design

- Course delivery
- Accessibility
- Innovation
- Continuous Improvement

To date, TEN has worked to ensure a high-quality Learner Experience in terms of the following categories:

- Breadth of training (e.g., targeting specific training products, targeting specific learner profiles – such as Operators and Community representatives)
- Meeting Learners where they are at in terms of delivery (e.g., online learning, in-person learning, downloadable tools, adult learning standards etc.)
- Meeting the recognized needs of the industry (e.g., workforce training and development)
- Technical support (e.g., TEN website, TEN Learning Management System, TEN Customer Relationship Management database software), and
- Quality of curriculum and content

However, standards have not yet been formally developed to ensure the Learner Experience remains high-quality. Formal standards are especially important when the Learner Experience is sometimes being determined by an external contractor (e.g., when DNO contracts out curriculum development).

In addition to the aforementioned categories used to ensure a high-quality Learner Experience, TEN would now like to add the lens of accreditation standard(s). Accredited organizations devote time and resources to recognize their strengths and identify areas for improvement, create accountability for themselves, and, importantly, align themselves with a recognized standard that gives approval of quality educational standards.

While seeking actual accreditation under an accreditation agency may not be an immediate outcome, TEN would like to take action to understand applicable industry accreditation standards, identify areas for improvement, and layout forward planning so TEN can ultimately provide the best possible Learner Experience.

A better understanding of accreditation standards and processes will help TEN set high-quality standards, which in turn will improve the Learner Experience, their performance and, ultimately, grow their trust in TEN as an educational institution. As well, setting a high-quality standard will give TEN a competitive edge in the tourism training space.



## 1. Summary and Objectives

Destination Northern Ontario wishes to engage qualified professional services to design a learner experience. In order to meet accessibility standards, the project will strive to take Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach. This will require research along with the addition of tools like closed captioning and ensuring a wide variety of communication and learning methods are used.

## 2. Scope of Work

In order to address the above Detailed Project Information, DNO would like to complete the following work:

Note:

1. The proponent is required to have a thorough understanding of the TEN program, in terms of types of training offers, types of Learners, overall goal of TEN program and the larger tourism landscape within Northern Ontario.
2. All work will be done with input from and oversight by WDIT Senior Coordinator and TEN Online Learning Coordinator.
3. Needs Assessment and Exploratory Process:
  - a. Meet with WDIT Senior Coordinator and TEN Online Learning Coordinator
  - b. Explore current course design process
  - c. Identify strengths and weaknesses of current design process
4. Quality Assurance Process  
Creating a Quality Assurance Process will require creating processes and/or criteria for the following areas:
  - a) Course design
  - b) Course structure
  - c) Learning Outcomes
  - d) Visual Consistency
  - e) Research / Subject Matter Expert input
  - f) Documentation
  - g) Use of digital assets
  - h) Accessibility
  - i) Course delivery
  - j) Constructive feedback / pilot phase
  - k) Selection of course instructor
  - l) Continuous improvement
  - m) Innovation

- n) Review schedule
- o) Mentorship

5. Accreditation Standards:

- Taking into consideration the TEN training program, complete research on applicable general accreditation standards for education in Northern Ontario, Ontario and Canada (as applicable);
- Taking into consideration the TEN training program, complete research on the feasibility and cost of TEN being accredited through a third-party review program;
- Create an internal review program that TEN can use to ensure its training quality;
- Complete research on the feasibility and cost of TEN being subjected to an external review program;
- Complete research to propose a certificate system for TEN Learners that is aligned with industry standards; and
- Complete research to determine and set KPIs that propose to measure the impact and success of the accreditation process on the TEN program and its Learners.

6. Define the TEN Learning Experience:

Taking into consideration #1, define the TEN Learner Experience. As part of defining the TEN Learning Experience, and in alignment with DNO and WDIT's Ministry objectives, also define:

- TEN Goals and Objectives as it relates to the Learner Experience
- Define a General Outcome for TEN Learners

7. Create plan for TEN Training to remain in tune with industry needs and trends (both tourism industry and education/training industry).

DNO suggests the following pieces be considered:

- Complete research to determine how TEN training benefits its Learners;
- Research and present how TEN training fills a gap in training in the tourism sector;
- Research and present plan for TEN Training to stay in tune with the tourism and education industry needs and trends.

8. Outline and recommend steps the TEN program should take in order to meet the needs of and align with post-secondary education, particularly in regard to micro-credential program partnerships and developing and delivering curriculum at a post-secondary level.
9. Identify what organizations TEN can partner with at the post-secondary level to develop and/or deliver core skills gap courses using the updated 2014 Master Inventory List.

### 3. Remuneration

It is anticipated that remuneration will be determined upon the successful negotiation of a contract based on the engagement plan. Bidders are asked to include a statement of fees and/or indicate anticipated remuneration in their submission.

### E. Check List

- Cover Page or Letter
- Completed RFS Questionnaire
- Resume detailing qualifications and relevant experience.
- Statement of fees or anticipated remuneration
- Three references
- Additional supporting documents

### F. Request for Services Questionnaire

The application and information disclosed in the application below will constitute a submission to answer the Request for Services by the applicant in designing the Tourism Excellence North Mentorship Program for Destination Northern Ontario commencing **December 20, 2023**, upon Destination Northern Ontario's successful negotiation of a Transfer Payment Agreement with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Submission of this questionnaire along with all additional information, letters of support, financial statements and year end reports as required will complete this RFS. Any mandatory information not included in this application will deem the application unacceptable and therefore rejected.

This completed RFS form must be returned electronically to:

[TEN@destinationnorthernontario.ca](mailto:TEN@destinationnorthernontario.ca) by 4:00 pm, December 15, 2023.

All applications become the property of Destination Northern Ontario for selection. Any and all conflicts of interest must be clearly stated in the area provided.



**Provide a full list of staff, titles and how long they have been with the organization (if applicable).**

Please provide copies of other training or curriculum and samples of work undertaken to support this application.

**Has your organization ever entered into an agreement with a government ministry or agency?**

Yes

No

**If yes, with whom?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Were all reports completed on time and in good order?** \_\_\_\_\_

Please give contact information for this project as a reference noting the person may be contacted for further information as required.

**Please state the largest project (dollar value) that you have been responsible for.**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Are you in good financial standing with all levels of government?**

Yes

No

**Are there any outstanding amounts owed to any level of government?**

Yes

No

If yes, what is the amount(s)?

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

To which government body is this owed? Is the debt in good standing?

Do you have any true or perceived conflict of interest in applying for the position?

Yes

No

If yes, please elaborate.

If any conflict of interest, true or perceived, that is unstated arises this application and any contract that may or may not be signed becomes null and void.

Please include a minimum of three references to support your organization's RFS application.

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Name (Print)

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Signature

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Date

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Name (Print)

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Signature

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Date

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Name (Print)

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Signature

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Date

## G. Submission Evaluation

Evaluation of Submissions will be performed by an evaluation committee. Selection of service providers will be achieved through a formal evaluation process. Submissions will first be checked against mandatory criteria. Submissions not meeting the mandatory criteria will be rejected without further consideration. Submissions that do meet the mandatory criteria will then be assessed against the additional criteria listed below or in any addendum or addenda to this RFS. Additional consideration will be given to submissions that demonstrate a high level of professionalism, innovation, and perceived commitment to the project.

The following are the mandatory requirements:

The submission must:

- a) Be submitted electronically (PDF/MS Office formats preferred) by 4:00 pm EDT December 15, 2023. No single e-mail shall be over 4MB. Drop Box or another file sharing service can be used for files larger than 4MB.

The submission formatting requirements have been developed to ensure all selection members are able to receive a full package with minimal administration. Please contact, [TEN@destinationnorthernontario.ca](mailto:TEN@destinationnorthernontario.ca) if you have any questions regarding this element of the RFS.

- b) Be accompanied by a cover letter/email certifying the accuracy of all information contained the submission and acknowledging your offer of services according to the terms set forward in this RFS.
- c) Include responses to all aspects as outlined in **Section F**. Please cite each aspect in framing responses and provide clear and concise responses.

The response should be clear and concise. The submission will be evaluated on the content. Repeating wording from the RFS will not constitute a response. Rather, the Bidder should explain the steps that will be taken to achieve the goal of the RFS.

### 1.0 Aspects to be Addressed

- a) Provide a completed RFS Questionnaire per Section F.
- b) Provide required documents.
- c) Provide any additional information that you believe will be helpful in assessing your capabilities.



d) Provide at least three references.

**Criteria will be scored as follows:**

Criteria	Weight
Credentials, professional knowledge, expertise	30%
Demonstrated experience and ability to meet requirements as evidenced in Expression of Interest responses and work samples, qualifications and expertise as supported by quality of client references	60%
Thoroughness of submission	10%

**Bidder Qualifications and References (total 30 points)**

1. Organization Experience and Qualifications – 25 points
  - a) The submission must identify all members of the Expression of Interest team (including subcontractors if applicable) and their relevant skills, qualifications and experience, the amount of time each team member will devote to the project, roles/responsibilities, and team structure.
  - b) Knowledge of Northern Ontario’s tourism industry and the marketing of Northern Ontario must be demonstrated.
  - c) The submission should provide evidence of the Bidder’s recent (in the last three years) experience and demonstrate the team’s experience in working together on similar projects.
2. Northern Ontario - 5 points
 

Preference will be given to firms/individuals that operate in or demonstrate experience in Northern Ontario and that represent Northern Ontario stakeholders.

**Management Description (total 60 points)**

3. Experience and Ability – 40 points
  - a) The submission should demonstrate the Bidder’s experience to enter into an agreement with Destination Northern Ontario.

- b) The submission should also provide evidence of the Bidder's ability to undertake a service agreement with Destination Northern Ontario.
- c) Should the Bidder already be known to Destination Northern Ontario through a service contract, past or present, or through a partnership initiative, relevant experience, outcomes, and performance shall be considered.

4. Quality of Organization – 20 points

- a) The submission should clearly indicate organizational excellence.
- b) In addition, Bidders should be able to demonstrate a successful track record of delivering similar projects on schedule and within budget.
- c) Grading will also reflect Destination Northern Ontario, Sub-regional and Sector capacity assessment where applicable.

**Thoroughness of Expression (total 10 points)**

5. Document Quality – 5 points

The Expression of Interest document should have all questions clearly answered in a concise manner.

6. Supporting Documents – 5 points

Relevant supporting documents are attached.