



Request for Proposal (RFP)

Growing the Maple Syrup Industry in Nova Scotia

October 2020

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1. Background to the Project

The Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia (Association) is a provincial association founded in 1973 whose membership consists of current or potential producers in Nova Scotia or any associated representatives who are approved by the Board of Directors and have paid their annual membership fee.

The Association has an annual paid membership currently averaging 50 members operating in Nova Scotia. It is managed by a six-member Board of Directors who meet several times a year and host an annual general meeting (AGM) of the Association in January.

In 2019 the Association embarked on a strategic planning exercise and adopted the completed plan at their AGM in January 2020. The strategic plan can be referenced on the Association's website: www.novascotiamaplesyrup.com .

The work specified in this document addresses key objectives of the strategic plan. Priorities identified in the strategic plan are:

1. Build capacity within MPANS
2. Enhance marketing and Agri-tourism
3. Assure a quality product
4. Improve producer education and technology transfer
5. Develop extension support

2. Focus of the study

The main objective of this initiative is to implement specific key priorities of the *MPANS 2020 Strategic Plan*. A comprehensive, complimentary work plan has been developed to achieve the objectives guided by MPANS' mission to develop, expand and improve the maple industry in Nova Scotia.

The goals of the work plan are to achieve the following:

1. Create new and more permanent revenue streams that allow MPANS to maintain a dedicated/compensated staff person to provide leadership and sustainability.
2. Action a financial and membership strategy aimed at providing direct extension and learning opportunities to a larger more diverse membership.
3. Develop and implement a marketing strategy that anticipates the need to develop new markets.

3. Scope of the work

To assist in the implementation and successful outcome of key elements of the strategic plan, the Association wishes to engage a contractor to provide expertise on specific aspects of the work plan. The work is expected to be carried out over a period of approximately eight months.

The contractor will be responsible to the Board of Directors of MPANS through its designated steering committee.

The contractor will examine the current status of Association activities, investigate opportunities for future activities and provide analyses and recommendations including options for implementation.

Regular reporting is required through updates, a draft report and final report, a presentation to the membership at the Annual General Meeting (January 2021) and other consultations with the Steering Committee, Directors and membership as required.

Meetings will be held in Cumberland County unless other locations are agreed upon. It is recognized that public health restrictions may necessitate communication by electronic means.

The study includes the following requirements:

Governance

The contractor will evaluate the governance model of the Association and prepare recommendations in a written report for measures to enhance board performance.

- Engage with MPANS Directors to obtain an understanding of their current model, resources, operations, and membership.
- Conduct a literature and jurisdictional review of association models that could be adopted by MPANS.
- Provide recommendations to the MPANS Board of Directors to enhance their performance, gain efficiencies, encourage leadership and to promote sustainability of the Association including revenue generation sources such as, potentially, a levy on product sales that will allow MPANS to have permanent expertise in the form of a project coordinator/executive leader.

Capacity Building

Working with members of the Board of Directors, the contractor will identify options for

enhanced participation in the Association.

- Engage current membership and non-members to assess their needs, gain an understanding of how to get them involved in MPANS and identify barriers that prevent them from joining.
- Identify current policy that may act as a benefit (example access to assistance programs such as funding for hurricane relief, adherence to Best Management Practices) or a barrier for growth.
- Describe learning opportunities for maple producers at entry and experienced levels and recommend priorities, content and an implementation plan for the development of a training program related to the Best Practices manual of the Association and international maple production standards.
- Determine requirements and potential sources for extension support.
- Investigate potential revenue sources for the Association including but not limited to membership growth, adjustments to membership fees, support from government programs, fees for service, a levy on maple product sales, and private sector support including maple equipment suppliers.
- Provide recommendations on revenue sources including financial projections.
- Identify the activities of the Association requiring staff support and describe the roles, responsibilities, potential costs, sources of financial support and terms of engagement for potential staffing.

Redevelop the novascotiamaplesyrup.com website by providing the following elements:

- Robust links to resources for membership including: the international maple production handbook (soon to be published as a web document), International Maple Syrup Institute standards and resources, research centers at University of Vermont, Cornell University and Acer Centre in Quebec; Technical information, training opportunities, and other information from maple associations and other agencies in Canada and the USA
- Members only section: MPANS business: minutes, notices, list of members; industry news; and government program announcements
- Forum for membership; exchange of ideas, communication, equipment marketplace
- Ecommerce portal: negotiate link to farmers' market network as pick up venues for online orders for producers not equipped to provide access at the farm gate

In the redevelopment of the website the contractor will consult with the Board of Directors and its representative. Working together with the Board the contractor will solicit advertising support for the website from equipment suppliers, packers and others to be identified in the process.

Marketing and Agri-tourism tasks

The contractor will explore options to expand markets for Nova Scotia maple products in both local and export markets.

- Explore partnerships to further advance projects by leveraging expertise and investment with provincial and federal Departments (example: Communities, Culture and Heritage; ACOA's Accelerated Market Readiness Program; NSBI; Taste of NS), and other local businesses (Acadian Maple, major producers).
- Investigate Agri-tourism opportunities (maple trail, social media development and promotion, influencers).
- Provide an analysis of marketing opportunities and recommend priorities.
- Enumerate sources of potential financial support for recommended marketing initiatives for the Board of Directors to pursue.
- As part of the redevelopment of the novascotiamaplesyrup.com website provide the following elements:
 - Consumer information including nutritional benefits, public maple events and activities, recipe links, photos from the maple woods both contemporary and historic and media releases

Consultants are encouraged to propose alternative and creative approaches to the scope of work that meet or enhance the deliverables, and which maximize the outcome.

4. Guidelines for the submission of proposal

1. Qualifications and methodology

Consultants must demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the local and global maple industry, experience in the development of marketing strategies and an understanding of governance issues in non-government organizations.

Interested parties are invited to submit proposals that address the project deliverables listed in the previous section.

Proposals must include the following information:

Project Approach/Methodology - Include a complete description of the Consultant's proposed approach and methodology for the project. This section should convey the Consultant's understanding of the proposed project.

Work Plan - Include all project requirements and the proposed tasks, services, and activities necessary to accomplish the scope of the project defined in this RFP. This section of the proposal must contain sufficient detail to convey to members of the evaluation team the Consultant's knowledge of the subjects and skills necessary to successfully complete the project. Include any required involvement of Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia producers

Project Schedule - Include a project schedule indicating when the elements of the work will be completed. The project schedule must ensure that any deliverables requested are met.

Payment Schedule - Include an expected payment schedule for the work to be performed under contract. Include milestones for progress payments and final payment.

Outcomes and Performance Measurement - Describe the impacts/outcomes the Consultant(s) propose to achieve as a result of the delivery of these services including how these outcomes would be monitored, measured and reported to the Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia.

Risks - The Consultant must identify potential risks that are considered significant to the success of the project. Include how the Consultant would propose to effectively monitor and manage these risks, including reporting of risks to the Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia.

Deliverables - Fully describe deliverables to be submitted under the proposed contract.

Project Management

Project Team Structure/Internal Controls - Provide a description of the proposed project team structure including any subcontractors.

Experience of the Consultant Indicate the experience that the Consultant and any subcontractors have in the following areas:

- a. Experience guiding governance and capacity development;
- b. Experience developing a market strategy

References - List names, addresses, telephone numbers, and fax numbers/e-mail addresses of three (3) business references for the Consultant and briefly describe the type of service provided. By submitting a proposal in response to this Work Request, the vendor and team members grant permission to the

selection committee to contact these references and others, who from the selection committee's perspective, may have pertinent information.

Identification of Costs - Identify all costs in Canadian dollars, including expenses and HST, to be charged for performing the services necessary to accomplish the objectives of the contract. The Consultant is to submit a fully detailed budget including any expenses necessary to accomplish the tasks and to produce the deliverables under the contract.

Proposal details must be summarized in the attached Statement of Work form attached to the proposal. In particular, each of the separate tasks requested in this Request for Proposals must be costed and scheduled

5. Time Frame

The following deadlines will guide the development of proposals and the completion of the work:

Proposals due (electronic version):	November 13, 2020
Contract awarded:	December 11, 2020
Startup meeting:	Week of January 4, 2021
Progress Reports:	Scheduled as agreed at startup meeting
Submission of draft report	August 31, 2021
Submission of Final Report:	September 30, 2021

Proponents are advised that access to maple producers may be limited during the period of the maple season, typically February to mid-May. Due to the uncertainties of current and future public health restrictions the annual general meetings of the Association may or may not be held in January 2021 and January 2022. If possible, the consultant will be introduced at the AGM in January 2021 and requested to present the final report to the membership at the January 2022 AGM. Alternatively, the final report may be presented at an outdoor event for the membership in October 2021.

6. Evaluation of Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated strictly in accordance with the requirements stated in this solicitation and any addenda issued. The evaluation of proposals shall be accomplished by the steering committee, which will determine the ranking of the proposals.

7. Budget

The budget of this project will not exceed \$80,000 (including HST)

8. Project Contacts

The contact for this RFP and the project will be:

Kevin McCormick
789 Rodney Road, Springhill, NS B0M 1X0
(902) 694-0145
Email kevinmccormick@seasidehighspeed.com

Questions about this RFP should be directed in writing to the individual listed above. All consultants who intend to respond to this RFP should notify the project contact to ensure that all RFP amendments and responses to questions are distributed to all respondents.

9. Other Administrative Requirements

The following terms will apply to this Request for Proposals and to any subsequent contract. Submission of a proposal in response to this Request for Proposals indicates acceptance of all of the following terms.

a. Right to Amend

The Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia reserves the right to amend or supplement the RFP, giving equal information and cooperation by way of issued addendum to all proponents as a result of any such amendment.

b. Rejection of Proposals

The Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia reserves the right to reject or accept any or all proposals. Proponents may be eliminated from consideration for failure to fully comply with the specifications of this RFP.

c. Proponent Incurred Costs

All costs incurred in the preparation and presentation of the proposal shall be wholly absorbed by the proponent.

d. Proposal Submissions

All copies of proponent proposals shall become the property of the Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia. Material, data and information accessed or provided by the Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia and used in

the preparation of the proposals is confidential and the property of the Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia.

Three hard copies of the proposal or an electronic copy in pdf format will be submitted by the given deadline. It is the responsibility of the proponent to confirm that their proposal has been received by the stated deadline.

e. Acceptance of Proposals

The RFP neither expresses nor implies any obligation to enter into a contract with any proponent submitting a proposal or proposals.

Subsequent to the submission of proposals, interviews and negotiations may be conducted with some of the proponents, but there shall be no obligation to receive further information, whether in writing or oral, from any proponent. The Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia shall not be obligated in any manner to any proponent whatsoever until a written agreement has been duly executed relating to an approved proposal.

f. Evaluation of Proposals

All acceptable proposals will be evaluated by the steering committee and the right is reserved to make an award based directly on the proposals submitted or to negotiate further with one or more proponents.

g. Validity Period

Proposals must be open for acceptance for at least 30 business days after the closing date. Upon acceptance, prices will be firm for the entire contract period unless otherwise specified.

h. Acceptance of Terms

All of the terms and conditions of this Request for Proposal are assumed to be acceptable by the proponent and incorporated in its proposal.

i. Agency Disclaimer

The Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, for any reason. In addition, the Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia may cancel this RFP, reject all the proposals, and seek to do the project through a new RFP or by other means.

Award of a contract by the Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia is subject to approval of applications for funding to the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency to support this study. Both agencies have confirmed that they will consider requests for funding for an acceptable proposal recommended by MPANS.