Pictou County Partnership
Request for Proposals (RFP)

Academic Partners - Nonprofit Digital Capacity Curriculum Initiative
Date Issued: December 1, 2025

Submission Deadline: January 12, 2026, Noon (Atlantic)

1. Introduction & Purpose

The Pictou County Partnership is issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) to invite accredited academic institutions to serve as the academic partner for the Nonprofit Digital Capacity Curriculum Initiative. This national initiative will deliver high-quality, accessible digital and AI literacy training to nonprofit organizations across Canada, strengthening the sector's operational efficiency and long-term sustainability.

The successful academic partner will collaborate closely with the curriculum development contractor, subject matter experts (SMEs), and industry stakeholders to ensure pedagogical integrity, academic rigor, accessibility, and alignment with adult-learning best practices. The partner may also support credentialing, research integration, evaluation frameworks, and knowledge translation activities as appropriate.

This partnership role is essential to ensuring that the curriculum is evidence-based, inclusive, reflective of nonprofit realities, and suitable for deployment at scale—including potential alignment with micro-credentials or continuing education certification pathways.

2. About the Pictou County Partnership

The Pictou County Partnership leads economic development by advancing business growth, workforce retention, and community collaboration—delivering measurable results that keep talent, investment, and opportunity rooted in our region. Our vision states "Pictou County is a rural region where people, businesses, and communities build a thriving economy that benefits everyone".

Our 2026–2031 Strategic Plan positions Pictou County for long-term, inclusive prosperity through three interconnected pillars: Partnership for Growth, Inclusive Community Growth, and Strategic Stewardship. The plan focuses on attracting and retaining people and businesses, aligning community and economic priorities to strengthen quality of life, and ensuring our organization remains trusted, capable, and impact-driven. Together, these pillars provide a clear roadmap for building a vibrant, resilient, and welcoming region where all can thrive.

3. RFP Regulations
    1. The Partnership reserves the right to reject any or all proposals or parts thereof, and the lowest price will not necessarily be accepted.

    2. All proposals shall be and remain irrevocable unless withdrawn prior to the designated submission deadline. No adjustments to submitted proposals will be allowed. However, vendors may withdraw their proposals prior to the closing date and time for submitting proposals. After the closing date and time, the proposal is binding on the vendor. Incomplete proposals will not be evaluated.

    3. Late proposals will not be accepted.

    4. The vendor must be prepared to include in the contract for services any oral or written representations, undertakings or guarantees that are made prior to the final agreements, including the complete response to this RFP or parts thereof.

    5. No fees or other payments will be made to the successful Proponent for any costs incurred in preparing and submitting proposals or participating in the RFP process.

    6. The RFP and its support documents must be considered proprietary and confidential.

7. The selection of any vendor by the Company as the preferred vendor shall not constitute a contract between The Partnership and the vendor.

8. Any contractual relationship to be established between the parties will be governed by the provisions of the agreement.

9. The Partnership may at its discretion:
   a.   Select any one proposal
   b.   Select more than one proposal with specified services provided by different vendors
   c.   In selecting a proposal, not choose the lowest price, or
   d.   Reject all proposals and, in so doing, develop additional evaluation criteria

10. To ensure a fair and transparent process, all responses to questions submitted to the Partnership for clarification will be posted on the Partnership website www.pictoucountypartnership.com.

11. The Partnership reserves the right to enter discussions with the preferred vendor to arrive at mutually satisfactory terms and conditions if such vendor's proposal does not entirely address the requirements and desires of the Partnership. Accordingly, any mutually acceptable terms and conditions as agreed between the parties will constitute a modification to the preferred vendor's proposal. Modifications may address matters such as product offerings, substitutions and alterations to the proposed product offerings, changes in configuration and terms of procurement.

12. The tentative start date for services has been set for January 23, 2026.

13. All charges for carrying out each method of service outlined in this proposal call must be clearly identified.

14. Each proposal should include the name and title of one individual who may be contacted if further clarification of the proposal is required.

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4.   Project Overview & Objectives

Project Summary

The Pictou County Partnership is leading an initiative to strengthen digital readiness and operational efficiency within the nonprofit sector. This project will develop a suite of accessible, modular training materials focused on digital literacy, data practices, AI readiness and other topics as identified by industry stakeholders. The curriculum will be co-created with subject matter experts, industry stakeholders, and an academic partner to ensure it is accurate, practical, and aligned with adult learning principles.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to create high-quality, user-centered curriculum that enables nonprofit organizations to confidently adopt digital tools, streamline internal processes, and build long-term digital and AI capabilities.

Purpose of the Academic Partnership

The academic partner will provide specialized expertise in adult learning, pedagogical design, curriculum validation, accessibility, and evaluation. This ensures that the curriculum meets academic standards, reflects best practices in instructional design, and is adaptable for use in micro-credentialing or continuing education environments.

Expected Outcomes
- Curriculum that demonstrates academic integrity, clear learning pathways, and measurable outcomes.
- Alignment of curriculum materials with adult learning principles, accessibility standards, and nonprofit sector realities.
- Optional support for credentialing pathways, program evaluation, and research-informed design.
- Strengthened national impact through evidence-based recommendations and validation.

Target Users or Beneficiaries
- Nonprofit organizations across Canada, with a focus on small and medium-sized organizations.
- Staff, volunteers, and leadership teams seeking practical, accessible digital skills training.
- Sector intermediaries, funders, and partners supporting digital transformation efforts.

High-Level Goals
The deliverables under this RFP will lead to the following:
- Ensure quality, accessibility, and coherence across all curriculum modules.
- Integrate evidence-based frameworks and academic rigor to support national credibility.
- Contribute to a Digital Readiness Playbook accessible to over 1,000 organizations.
- Support learning pathways that reflect real nonprofit workflows and constraints.

Alignment With Organizational Strategies
This partnership directly supports the Pictou County Partnership's strategic commitment to resilient communities, workforce readiness, digital capacity-building, and cross-sector collaboration. The initiative advances Canada's nonprofit sector toward digital confidence and long-term organizational sustainability.

Core Objectives
1. Provide academic oversight and validation of curriculum materials.
2. Ensure that learning pathways, outcomes, and assessments reflect strong adult-learning design.
3. Contribute evidence-informed guidance on accessibility, evaluation, and pedagogy.
4. Collaborate with the curriculum contractor and program team to finalize materials.

5. Administrative Requirements

For tendering, legal and billing purposes, the client is Pictou County Partnership. Responding to this RFP indicates acceptance of all terms.

Eligible proponents must be accredited academic institutions legally entitled to operate in Canada. Proposed personnel must be legally able to work in Canada.

All proposals must be submitted by an authorized representative. If subcontractors or research assistants will be involved, this must be identified, including their roles and costs. All proposals must be submitted in PDF format.

6. RFP Schedule

Milestone	Deadline
Question Deadline	January 9, 2026

Milestone	Deadline
Deadline for Proposal Submissions	January 12, 2026, Noon (Atlantic)
Vendor selection and notification	January 22, 2026
Contract negotiation period	January 22, 2026 – February 3, 2026
Project kickoff meeting	February 10, 2026
Contractor submits detailed project plan	February 17, 2026
Project start date	February 23, 2026
Project completion date	July 15, 2026

7. Scope of Work

The selected academic partner will contribute expertise in pedagogy, accessibility, evaluation, instructional design principles, and curriculum alignment. The partner will collaborate directly with the instructional design contractor and stakeholders to ensure academic quality.

7.1. Project Scope The full scope of services includes:
   7.1.1. Project Planning and Alignment
   - Participate in kickoff and planning meetings with project staff and the curriculum contractor.
   - Review project goals, existing research, sector needs assessments, and draft curriculum frameworks.
   - Provide a workplan outlining academic contributions, review cycles, and key milestones.
   - Attend in person discussion between subject matter experts and industry representatives at a location in Pictou County. Industry representatives will be appointed by Pictou County Partnership.
   7.1.2. Academic & Pedagogical Guidance
   - Ensure modules follow sound adult-learning principles and accessibility standards commonly followed by post-secondary institutions.
   - Advise on curriculum pathways, sequencing, learning outcomes, and assessment strategies.
   - Provide input on instructional best practices suitable for diverse nonprofit learners.
   7.1.3. Curriculum Review & Quality Assurance
   - Conduct structured reviews of draft curriculum materials.
   - Ensure clarity, inclusivity, and academic coherence across modules.
   - Support integration of research-based evidence, evaluation frameworks, or sector-relevant studies.
   7.1.4. Accessibility, Plain Language & Equity
   - Ensure content aligns with accessibility requirements and equity-oriented pedagogical approaches.
   - Provide recommendations for inclusive design and diverse learner needs.
   7.1.5. Evaluation Support
   - Recommend evaluation tools, learner feedback mechanisms, or indicators.
   - Assist with interpreting pilot testing insights and shaping revisions.
   7.1.6. Credentialing or Continuing Education Pathways (Optional)

- Explore potential alignment with micro-credentials or continuing education units.
- Provide guidance on academic documentation requirements (e.g., learning outcomes, assessment frameworks).
  7.1.7. Final Review & Handover
  - Conduct a final academic review of all curriculum materials.
  - Provide written recommendations and validation summary.

7.2. Core Requirements

The selected Academic Partner must meet the following mandatory requirements:

Accessibility
- Ensure all curriculum materials meet accessibility standards commonly followed by post-secondary institutions.
- Ensure guidance and recommendations align with plain-language principles.

Quality and Alignment
- Demonstrated academic rigor in curriculum review.
- Alignment with project objectives, learning outcomes, and nonprofit sector realities.
- Evidence-based, adult-learning–centered guidance.

Collaboration and Reporting
- Attend regular check-ins and provide timely academic review cycles.
- Maintain transparent communication and documentation.
- Collaborate effectively with the curriculum contractor, SMEs, and project staff

Standards and Compliance
- Follow the Partnership's branding, style, and accessibility guidelines.
- Adhere to evidence-based instructional design and academic integrity principles.
- Maintain confidentiality of project materials.

6.3 Deliverables
The academic partner will provide the following:

Academic Review and Guidance
- Comprehensive review of curriculum drafts at agreed-upon stages.
- Academic recommendations for structure, clarity, pedagogy, accessibility, and evaluation.
- Feedback integrated into revision cycles.

Documentation and Support Materials
- Written evaluation notes or formal review reports.
- Curriculum quality assurance summary.
- Recommendations for credentialing or micro-credential alignment (if applicable).

Final Handover
- Final validation report confirming academic review completion.
- Documentation of all academic contributions.
- Transfer of any intellectual property associated with project work.

All intellectual property and academic contributions must be fully transferred to the Pictou County Partnership upon project completion.

8. Ownership & Intellectual Property

All intellectual property, documentation, research materials, and related assets produced through this partnership will become the sole property of the Pictou County Partnership. Full administrative access and control must be granted.

9. Pricing Requirements

All proposals must include a complete and transparent breakdown of all fees. This includes:

Detailed Cost Breakdown
- Hourly, fixed-fee, or milestone-based pricing
- Costs for faculty, staff, research assistance, or subcontractors.
- Any institutional overhead or administrative fees.
- Option services priced separately.

Pricing Clarifications
Proposals must clearly identify:
- Pricing model and assumptions.
- Restrictions or exclusions.
- Number of review cycles included.
- Total project cost inclusive of all fees and taxes.

The Pictou County Partnership reserves the right to request clarification on any pricing elements or to negotiate pricing adjustments as part of the evaluation process.

10. Value-Added Services

Academic institutions may propose additional contributions such as:

- Research integration or knowledge translation.
- Micro-credential or continuing education alignment.
- Learner evaluation frameworks or long-term study opportunities.
- Additional academic reviewers or faculty expertise.

Include estimated cost (if applicable).

11. Bidder Qualifications

Proposals must include the following information in the order outlined below to support a consistent and thorough evaluation process.

1. Business Name and Contact Information

Provide the legal business name, primary contact person, mailing address, email address, and telephone number.

2. Company Background and Relevant Experience

Include a brief overview of the organization, years in operation, areas of specialization, and experience delivering curriculum development, instructional design, or digital capacity-building projects—particularly within the nonprofit or public sectors.

3. Portfolio of Similar Work

Provide links or attachments to past projects demonstrating the organization's capacity to develop high-quality curriculum, learning materials, or sector-specific training. Examples should clearly indicate the vendor's role and outcomes achieved.

4. Qualifications and Experience of Key Staff

List all team members who will be assigned to this project, including their qualifications, certifications, and relevant expertise (e.g., instructional design, adult education, accessibility, digital transformation, AI literacy, project management).

5. Team Composition and Roles

Provide an overview of the project team structure, including roles, responsibilities, and estimated level of effort for each team member. Identify any subcontractors and their respective contributions.

6. Project Approach and Methodology

Describe the proposed methodology for planning, designing, developing, testing, and finalizing the curriculum. The description should include:

- How the project will be planned, executed, monitored, and delivered.

- Approach to collaboration with subject matter experts, industry partners, and the academic institution.

- Methods for applying user-centered design, adult learning principles, and iterative development.

- Risk and issue management plan, including mitigation strategies for potential delays or challenges.

- Dispute resolution process outlining how conflicts or disagreements will be addressed.

7. Proposed Schedule and Timeline

Provide a detailed timeline of major phases, activities, milestones, and deliverables. Include key assumptions and dependencies (e.g., availability of SMEs, feedback cycles with the academic partner).

8. Detailed Budget and Pricing Breakdown

Submit a full cost breakdown aligning with the Pricing Requirements section, including fixed, hourly, or milestone-based estimates; subcontractor costs; licensing fees; and any optional services.

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12. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated using the criteria and weightings outlined below. The Pictou County Partnership will assess each submission for its alignment with project goals, quality of approach, demonstrated expertise, and overall value to the organization and the sector.

Criteria	Description	Weight
Organizational Experience & Portfolio	Experience with adult learning, curriculum review, micro-credentials, nonprofit training, or digital skills education.	25%
Quality & Clarity of Proposal	Completeness, clarity, professionalism, and alignment with instructions.	20%
Understanding of Project Goals	Understanding of nonprofit digital readiness, accessibility, and adult-learning needs.	20%
Project Approach, Methodology & Workplan	Suitability of proposed academic review process, feedback integration, collaboration plan, and pedagogical rigor.	15%
Pricing & Value Add	Transparency, cost-effectiveness, and meaningful value-added offerings.	15%
Team Qualifications & Capacity	Expertise and availability of proposed faculty and staff.	5%

Cost will be considered as part of the evaluation, but the contract will not be awarded solely on the basis of the lowest price.

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13. Notification of Proponents

Pictou County Partnership may request clarification or meetings with respondents during the evaluation process. The organization reserves the right to negotiate the scope and pricing with the selected partner.

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14. Submission Instructions

The following is to be used to prepare a proposal for Academic Partner - Nonprofit Digital Capacity Curriculum Initiative. Your response must include details and commentary indicating how you propose handling each deliverable of this project.

1. Proposal submissions must be addressed Pictou County Partnership, Attention to Maxine MacLean, and delivered in one of the following manners:

By Courier, Mail, or In Person:	Email:
Attention: Maxine MacLean Pictou County Partnership 151 Provost Street, Unit 202 New Glasgow, NS B2H 2P6	Maxine.maclean@pictoucountypartnership.com Subject: Academic Partner - Nonprofit Digital Capacity Curriculum Initiative

Please provide three paper copies of the completed proposal if a proponent submits a paper submission.

2. If any clarification on specific requirements is needed, please contact Maxine MacLean via email at Maxine.maclean@pictoucountypartnership.com or call (902) 771-1112.

3. Proposals must be submitted in a sealed envelope or via email and clearly marked "Academic Partner - Nonprofit Digital Capacity Curriculum Initiative."

4. Proposals are due no later than noon (Atlantic) on **January 12, 2026.**

5. No submissions will be opened until after the closing date and time.

6. Regrettably, late proposals will not be accepted.

7. It is anticipated that the successful partner will be selected and notified no later than January 22, 2026.

8. All proponents will be contacted and informed of decision.