PICTOU COUNTY
Partnership

Pictou County Partnership
Request for Proposals (RFP)

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 qualified firms to co-develop an accessible, high-quality digital and AI skills curriculum that will build capacity across Canada's nonprofit sector. The curriculum will support organizations in adopting digital tools, strengthening data practices, and improving operational efficiency.

The successful contractor will collaborate with subject matter experts, industry stakeholders, and an academic partner to design a coherent, user-centered curriculum that reflects adult learning principles and real-world nonprofit context. By the end of the engagement, the project will deliver a complete set of modular training resources and supporting materials ready for national rollout.

This work is being undertaken at a critical moment for the nonprofit sector, where rising digital expectations, limited technical capacity, and resource constraints have created a clear need for practical, accessible learning tools. The resulting curriculum will ensure that organizations of all sizes can participate in digital transformation, adopt efficient processes, and strengthen long-term sustainability.

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 is that 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.

4. Project Overview & Objectives

Project Summary

The Pictou County Partnership is leading a national initiative to strengthen digital readiness and operational efficiency within the nonprofit sector. This project will develop a suite of accessible, modular training materials including digital literacy, data practices, AI readiness, and topics brought forward from 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.

Expected Outcomes
- A comprehensive, modular curriculum including written materials, exercises, tools, and guidance that is ready for training delivery.
- Curriculum that is accessible, inclusive, and appropriate for a broad range of nonprofit learners and digital literacy levels.
- Sector-wide benefits through open-access dissemination of a Digital Readiness Playbook informed by the curriculum and training.

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:
- Strengthen digital infrastructure and operational efficiency for at least 25 organizations.
- Build foundational digital and AI skills in at least 50 organizations through on-demand and coach-supported learning.
- Support national sector-wide knowledge sharing through an open-access Digital Readiness Playbook reaching 1,000+ organizations.
- Ensure training materials reflect real-world nonprofit workflows, constraints, and use cases.

Alignment With Organizational Strategies
This project supports the Pictou County Partnership's strategic focus on fostering resilient communities, strengthening key economic and social systems, and ensuring that local and national organizations have the tools needed to thrive in a digital economy. By building digital confidence and capacity in the nonprofit sector, the project contributes to broader community development, workforce readiness, and long-term sustainability goals.

Core Objectives
1. Co-develop an evidence-based, accessible curriculum in collaboration with SMEs and an academic partner. Anticipating 6-8 modules; exact modules to be determined based on community group consultations.
2. Ensure all curriculum materials follow clear learning pathways and align with expected program outcomes.
3. Apply iterative, user-centered development methods to validate and refine the curriculum.
4. Deliver a finalized curriculum package that can be integrated into future training, micro-credentials, or nation-wide sector capacity-building programs.
5. Adapt curriculum into a playbook format for ease of reference.

5. Administrative Requirements

For tendering, legal and billing purposes, the client is Pictou County Partnership. Submissions in response to this request for proposals assume acceptance of all terms described herein.

Vendors must be registered companies, with the legal authority to conduct business in the Province of Nova Scotia, or a Canadian Post-Secondary Institution. Any vendor proposed for this project must be legally entitled to work in Canada.

All proposals must be signed by an authorized representative of the submitting company. If any portion of the work will be outsourced or subcontracted, this must be clearly identified within the proposal, including the name and a brief description of the partner organization(s). All proposed costs must be all-inclusive and account for any outsourced work. Proposals must be submitted in PDF format.

6. RFP Schedule

Milestone	Deadline
Question Deadline	January 9, 2026, Noon
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
Vendor 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 firm will be responsible for co-developing a comprehensive, accessible curriculum in collaboration with subject matter experts, industry stakeholders, and the academic partner selected through a concurrent RFP. The contractor will guide the instructional design process, ensure alignment with adult learning principles, and deliver a complete curriculum package suitable for national deployment.

7.1. Project Scope
The full scope of services includes:
7.1.1. Project Planning and Discovery
- Participate in project kickoff and alignment meetings with the Partnership and academic partner.
- Review existing materials, research, sector needs assessments, and program goals.
- Develop a project plan, timeline, and communication framework.
7.1.2. Curriculum Design
- Facilitate collaborative, 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.
- Translate subject matter expertise into clear, structured learning modules.
- Define learning outcomes, module pathways, and assessment strategies.
- Apply adult learning, accessibility, and plain language principles.
7.1.3. Content Development
- Produce curriculum content including instructional text, exercises, assessments, use cases, and facilitator notes (as applicable).
- Ensure materials are relevant to nonprofit organizations with varying digital literacy levels.
- Create templates, worksheets, or tools that support practical application.
7.1.4. Integration With Academic Partner
- Collaborate with the academic partner to ensure content quality, coherence, and rigor.
- Incorporate accessibility guidance, instructional design feedback, and credentialing requirements (if applicable)
7.1.5. Testing and Iteration

- Participate in pilot testing or usability review sessions.
- Integrate feedback from nonprofit learners, SMEs, and academic reviewers.

7.1.6. Finalization and Handover
- Deliver final curriculum materials, version-controlled and formatted for implementation.
- Provide clear documentation, curriculum maps, and recommendations for deployment.

7.2. Core Requirements

The selected firm must meet the following mandatory requirements:

Accessibility
- All materials must comply with accessibility standards commonly used in education
- Content must be written at a clear, plain-language level suitable for diverse learners.

Quality and Alignment
- Curriculum must align with the program's high-level goals and expected outcomes.
- Materials must integrate academic partner guidance and reflect nonprofit sector realities.
- Learning design must incorporate adult learning principles and user-centered design.

Collaboration and Reporting
- Attend regular project meetings and provide monthly status updates.
- Maintain version control and clear documentation of revisions.
- Collaborate effectively with SMEs, the academic partner, and project staff.

Standards and Compliance
- Follow Pictou County Partnership branding, style, and accessibility guidelines.
- All content must follow evidence-based instructional design practices.
- Ensure confidentiality of program materials and stakeholder information.

6.3 Deliverables

The contractor will provide the following deliverables:

Curriculum Package
- Complete set of modular curriculum materials (e.g., written content, activities, assessments, case studies).
- Facilitator notes, if applicable.
- Templates, worksheets, or tools that support real-world application.
- Curriculum map outlining module sequencing, learning outcomes, and alignment with program goals.

Documentation and Support Materials
- Instructional design documentation and rationale.
- Accessibility documentation for all materials.
- Version-controlled content repository or structured file system.

Testing and Feedback Integration
- Summary of pilot feedback and how revisions were applied.
- Final revised curriculum ready for national deployment.

Handover Requirements
- Source files for all curriculum content.
- Transfer of all intellectual property, including editable documents and templates.
- Final report summarizing work completed and recommendations for future updates.

All intellectual property, source files, digital assets, and associated licenses must be fully transferred to the Pictou County Partnership upon project completion, granting the Partnership full ownership and control.

8. Ownership & Intellectual Property

All intellectual property, source files, documentation, and related assets produced under this contract will become the sole property of Pictou County Partnership upon project completion. Full administrative access and control must be granted to the organization.

9. Pricing Requirements

All proposals must include a clear and comprehensive breakdown of all project costs. Vendors are expected to provide transparent, itemized pricing that reflects the full scope of work and all deliverables. Proposals must include:

Detailed Cost Breakdown
- Hourly, fixed-fee, or milestone-based pricing model(s), with clear explanation.
- Costs associated with subcontractors, consultants, or third-party contributors.
- Licensing fees, subscriptions, or premium tools required for development (if applicable).
- Distinction between one-time project costs and any recurring or ongoing fees.
- Optional add-ons or value-added services, priced separately from core deliverables.

Pricing Clarifications
Vendors must clearly identify:
- Whether pricing is fixed, hourly, blended, or milestone-based.
- All assumptions used to develop the pricing model (e.g., number of revisions, SME availability, expected meeting frequency).
- Any known constraints, limitations, or exclusions associated with the proposed cost (e.g., caps on revision cycles, content formats not included).
- The total project cost, inclusive of all fees, taxes, and third-party expenses.
- An itemized list of deliverables, including the cost associated with each major component (e.g., module development, testing, documentation, handover).

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

Vendors are encouraged to describe any additional services, enhancements, or innovations they can offer beyond the minimum requirements. Include estimated value and 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.

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	• Demonstrated experience in curriculum development, instructional design, or digital skills training. • Proven track record working with nonprofits, public sector, or capacity-building programs. • Strength and relevance of past work samples or portfolios.	25%
Quality & Clarity of Proposal	• Completeness, clarity, and professionalism of the submission. • Quality of writing, structure, and adherence to RFP instructions. • Ability to clearly articulate deliverables, processes, and assumptions.	20%
Understanding of Project Goals	• Demonstrated understanding of nonprofit digital readiness and adult-learning needs. • Ability to translate the program's high-level goals into a coherent curriculum strategy. • Evidence that the bidder understands the importance of accessibility, sector constraints, and real-world application.	20%
Project Approach, Methodology & Workplan	• Strength and suitability of the proposed methodology for curriculum co-development. • Clear approach to collaboration with SMEs, industry partners, and the academic partner. • Practicality of workplan, timeline, risk management, and feedback integration processes. • Integration of user-centered design, accessibility, and iterative validation.	15%
Pricing & Value Add	• Overall cost-effectiveness relative to proposed scope and deliverables. • Transparency and detail of pricing model, assumptions, and limitations. • Value-added offerings that enhance program impact without inflating costs.	15%
Team Qualifications & Capacity	• Credentials and expertise of the proposed team members. • Adequate staffing, availability, and demonstrated capacity to meet timelines. • Inclusion of appropriate specialists (e.g., instructional designers, accessibility experts).	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.

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 vendor.

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14. Submission Instructions

The following is to be used to prepare a proposal for 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: 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 "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 vendor will be selected and notified no later than January 22, 2026.

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