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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Research, Engagement and Report

for the project

Resilience of Indigenous Peoples' Traditional Food Systems in North America

Commission for Environmental Cooperation

2025

I. Overview

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) is requesting proposals from prospective consultants related to the completion of an Indigenous-led project pertaining to Indigenous food sovereignty. Specifically, the consultant would be expected to: complete a research report on the state of Indigenous Peoples' traditional food systems across North America, participate in the engagement of Indigenous Peoples, and complete a final project report.

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) was established in 1994 by the governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States through the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, a parallel environmental agreement to NAFTA. As of 2020, the CEC is recognized and maintained by the Environmental Cooperation Agreement parallel to the new Free Trade Agreement of North America. The CEC brings together a wide range of key actors, including the general public, Indigenous Peoples, youth, nongovernmental organizations, academia, and the business sector, to seek solutions to protect North America's shared environment while supporting sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations. Find out more at: www.cec.org.

The CEC's Council, its governing body, approved the project entitled *Resilience of Indigenous Peoples' Traditional Food Systems* as part of the Operational Plan for 2024, with the purpose of better understanding the current state of Indigenous Peoples' traditional food systems in North America, support the revitalization of networks and relationships among Indigenous Peoples to foster knowledge exchange and partnerships, as well as promote the respect of Indigenous resiliency and leadership in policies and decisions affecting Indigenous Peoples' traditional food systems.

This project is led by the CEC's Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) Expert Group, an Indigenous advisory body comprised of Indigenous individuals from Canada, Mexico and the United States mandated to provide advice to the CEC and its Council on how to integrate TEK into CEC activities. The CEC Secretariat will facilitate this project's implementation under the direction of the TEK Expert Group. For a complete description of the project, including tasks and related budget, please visit the CEC website at: <http://www.cec.org/wp-content/uploads/project-description-food-systems-en.pdf>.

II. Terms of Reference

A. Overview and Scope

Food security is one of the major global challenges facing humanity today. The climate crisis and the depletion of natural resources have put an increased strain on food production. Therefore, promoting and ensuring diverse and sustainable food systems that contribute to human well-being and avoid the deterioration of nature are now more than

ever top priorities. The food systems of Indigenous Peoples have existed for thousands of years and are recognized for being sustainable and respectful of nature. While Indigenous Peoples have demonstrated resilience and leadership in maintaining their traditional food systems, most North American Indigenous communities face traditional food system shortages and crises. Through the activities below, the CEC will support the greater inclusion of Indigenous leadership and Indigenous Knowledge (IK), often referred to as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), in activities and decisions affecting Indigenous Peoples' traditional food systems. The project will examine Indigenous rights, knowledge systems, and the roles of youth and women for three food systems:

- Wildlife harvesting
- Agriculture
- Fishing and aquatic species

The main objectives of this initiative will be to:

- 1) Better understand the current state of traditional food systems of Indigenous Peoples in North America;
- 2) Support the revitalization of networks and relationships among Indigenous Peoples across North America to foster knowledge exchange and partnerships; and
- 3) Raise awareness and promote the respect of Indigenous resiliency and leadership in policies, activities, and decisions affecting Indigenous Peoples' traditional food systems.

The project's activities will include:

- a) A Research Report on the state of Indigenous Peoples' traditional food systems across North America, including an overview of these systems, examples of strategies for maintaining these systems, challenges, and opportunities (note: the report will not be exhaustive but will provide a snapshot that includes proportional representation in all three countries);
- b) Community exchange visits with a select number of Indigenous communities; and
- c) A final project report with a summary of activities, findings, and recommendations, including possible areas of work for the CEC on supporting Indigenous Peoples' traditional food systems.

The project aims to explore and document examples of Indigenous Peoples of North America maintaining their traditional food systems, with the inclusion of considerations related to gender, youth, and elders. A secondary aim of the project is to revitalize transboundary Indigenous networks and relationships across national borders. The research will prioritize key food systems of Indigenous Peoples, including wildlife hunting, agricultural practices, and aquatic species harvesting. The project will explore the challenges Indigenous Peoples face in maintaining their traditional food systems, as well as the strategies and resilience they demonstrate to preserve these systems.

B. Description of Services

The consultant shall coordinate with the CEC's designated point of contact to accomplish the following:

Deliverable	Description	Timeline	
Activity 1	<p>Research Report The Research Report will document the state of Indigenous Peoples' Traditional Food Systems in North America. The Consultant will compile existing literature, reports and strategies regarding the use of IK pertaining to Indigenous Peoples' food systems throughout North America. The report will not be exhaustive. In collaboration with the CEC, key issues and communities will be identified for the research report.</p> <p>The Research Report will examine how IK, wisdom, and practices of Indigenous Peoples are applied to decisions concerning their traditional food systems in North America. This report will also help define the main topics to be addressed and communities to be engaged during the Indigenous engagement (Activity 2).</p>	March – June 2025	
	Subtask 1.1	Draft Research Plan	April 2025
	Subtask 1.2	Meet with the CEC's Project Team, including the TEK Expert Group, for additional scoping and methodology direction	April 2025
	Subtask 1.3	Submit draft Research Report for review and revisions	June 2025
	Subtask 1.4	Submit final Research Report	June 2025
Activity 2	<p>Cross-Community Engagement and Exchange Visits The Exchange Visits will identify, engage and bring together one Indigenous community, nation or tribe per country to foster dialogue about traditional food sovereignty and to support transboundary networks.</p> <p>All three communities, nations or tribes will host an exchange visit. Exchange visits will include representatives from each respective community, at least one member of the TEKEG, one CEC Secretariat representative and the consultant. If budget is available, one youth or non-staff community member could also participate in the exchange visits.</p> <p>Hosting communities will be asked to:</p>	June –October 2025	

Deliverable	Description	Timeline
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> convene meetings with relevant leadership and community members, including youth, women and elders; organize a learning and observation event related to the harvesting, preparation and care for traditional food systems; and participate in the remaining two exchange visits. 	
	Subtask 2.1 Engage the Project Team, including the TEK Expert Group, to identify and engage one Indigenous community/partner per country	June 2025
	Subtask 2.2 Collaboratively develop Exchange Visit plans with hosting community/partner	June – October 2025
	Subtask 2.3 Participate in exchange visits and facilitate dialogue among participants	June–October 2025
	Subtask 2.4 Conduct interviews with participants, as appropriate	
	Subtask 2.5 Prepare summaries, recordings, analyses and recommendations to be included in Final Report (Activity 3)	
Activity 3	Final Research Report The final report will compile and analyze Activities 1 and 2, as well as include analysis and recommendations on how the CEC and other key actors can better support and respect Indigenous Peoples' Traditional Food Systems across North America.	October–November 2025
	Subtask 3.1 Engage with the Project Team on the structure and format of the Final Report	October 2025
	Subtask 3.2 Submit draft Report for review and revisions	November 2025
	Subtask 3.3 Submit Final Report	

C. Periodic Reporting Requirements

Throughout the project, the consultant will work in close collaboration with the CEC point of contact and the TEK Expert Group to gather information to support delivery of the work. However, the consultant shall report only to, and receive direction only from, the CEC designated Staff.

The CEC Secretariat will forward draft deliverables to the CEC's point of contact, the TEK Expert Group and Government Leads, for their review and comment. The CEC Secretariat

will arrange teleconferences with the consultant, the TEK Expert Group, CEC designated staff, and other experts on an as-needed basis. The goal of these meetings will be to present the products and assess progress on the project.

The consultant will prepare short monthly status reports that summarize the following:

- progress in the previous month;
- current status;
- anticipated progress in upcoming month;
- potential problems, with description of and reasons for any delays; and
- actions that should be taken by the CEC Secretariat to facilitate the project.

These reports are to be sent to the CEC designated staff by the first Monday of the following month, by e-mail.

The consultants will work in their own offices.

D. Quality of Deliverables

The consultant will be responsible for providing deliverables of **publishable quality (i.e., copy-edited prior to submission) in English** and, when applicable, for the technical review and editing of the materials. Technical review and style correction required to ensure the quality of the materials will be the responsibility of the consultant. The consultant will submit to the CEC Secretariat all written material (including complete drafts and final reports) in Microsoft Word, following the format of the CEC's [Report Template](#) if applicable, or in another format approved by the CEC, and adhering to the precepts of the [Guidelines for CEC Documents and Information Products](#), as supplemented by the CEC's English [Style Guide](#). Supporting documents for tables, figures and maps will be submitted with the report in their original file format (e.g., Excel or ArcGIS). Note that all amounts shall be presented in metric units. The CEC Secretariat will be responsible, when applicable, for translation, printing, publication and distribution of products from this activity.

Upon delivery by the consultant of reports or other materials under the project, the CEC will require a 15-business day period to review the document(s), notify the consultant of any potential issues or errors, and return the document(s) to the consultant for appropriate corrections, at no extra cost.

In all cases, contract payments will be withheld if products submitted to the CEC fail to fulfill the quality and formatting requirements specified above. If the consultant neglects to make the required corrections or if, following corrections, a deliverable remains unsatisfactory, the document shall be edited or revised by a third party designated by the Secretariat, the cost of which shall be deducted from the consultant's fees at a pre-agreed rate.

E. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of conveying someone else's original expression or creative ideas as one's own and can be a violation of copyright law. Neither intentional nor unintentional

plagiarism is acceptable to the CEC. The consultant must follow good scholarly methodology in preparing reports and deliverables under the contract, including systematic referencing in footnotes or in-sentence references, for any secondary sources, quotations, data, etc., that do not originate with the author. Sources for tables and figures reproduced from other literature must be given in a “Source” attribution immediately below the table or figure. Failure to properly reference the source of such borrowed material constitutes plagiarism and will be considered a breach of contract. Similarly, in conducting the work required under this Contract, the Consultant shall notify the Commission of the extent to which it has used generative artificial intelligence, if any, (e.g., ChatGPT) when producing deliverables for the Project and the extent to which generative artificial intelligence has been instrumental in the performance of the Services.

For further information, see [Guidelines for CEC Documents and Information Products](#). In addition, for every written deliverable submitted, the Consultant must use iThenticate software, or an equivalent software approved by the Commission, to validate the written product in question and must forward the plagiarism review results to the CEC at the time of document submission. Contract payments will be retained if products do not fulfil these requirements.

III. Requirements and Proposal Evaluation

A. Mandatory Requirements

To be eligible for further consideration, all consultants must fulfill the following basic requirements.

1. In-country Ability

The consultant, as well as all their personnel and subconsultants, must reside and be authorized to work legally in Canada, Mexico or the United States of America. If travel is required, the consultant must possess valid documentation to travel and comply with sanitary regulations/ restrictions within the three countries.

2. Key Personnel

For the purposes of this RFP, the term "consultant" may refer to either a group or company or a single individual.

If a proposal is submitted by a group of individuals or institutions, a “lead” consultant should be designated to take responsibility for ensuring overall coordination, the coherence of activity outputs, and the integration of information and ideas.

3. Qualifications Required

The consultant must be fluent in spoken and written English; proficiency in Spanish is desirable and preference will be given to consultants fluent in both Spanish and English.

The consultant must have previous experience working with Indigenous Peoples of North America.

4. Proposal Submission

Prospective consultants should refer to the **Terms of Reference (Section II)** of this document) for more detailed information on the project and the services to be provided. Prospective consultants are requested not to reiterate the Terms of Reference in their submissions but are invited to suggest modifications to enhance the proposal, if applicable.

Proposals must be organized as indicated below and include the following information:

1. Knowledge and Understanding of Work

- Provide brief background information relevant to this project that will serve to demonstrate the consultant's experience and subject knowledge (in the North American context):
 - Environmental and public policy;
 - Indigenous knowledge systems;
 - Indigenous histories, cultures and priorities
 - Indigenous rights and law;
 - Climate change;
 - Conservation;
 - and international relations.
- The statement should address desired results; guidelines (parameters within which results are to be accomplished); resources (human, financial, technical, or organizational support available to help accomplish the results); and other aspects deemed applicable by the consultant. The purpose of this statement is to demonstrate not only the consultant's general and specific familiarity with the subject area, but also to highlight writing skills.

2. Organization, Qualifications and Experience of Project Team

- Identify organization of Project Team, including project manager and country team leads for Canada, Mexico and the United States where relevant;
- Provide a summary of qualifications and experience for each team member (including alternates) and any other relevant information (e.g. language proficiencies).

3. Allocation of Time (Hours) and Costs by Task and Team Member

- For each member of the project team, provide a detailed breakdown of assigned tasks, hours worked, and labor costs;
- Identify any other direct and indirect costs;
- Clearly identify total hours worked under and the total cost (including taxes) of this project.

4. Optional: Added Value Within Identified Budget

Annex A: Letters of Recommendation and References

- Two letters of recommendation from previous assignments—one of which must be from an Indigenous government, Indigenous organization, or Indigenous community.
- Details and contact information for three or more references.

Annex B: Resumes for Each Team Member

- Resumes for all project team members;

Annex C: Examples of Previous Work

Provide two samples of previous work

Annexes D.1 and D.2: Declaration of Acceptance and Impartiality and Independence for Contract

- A copy of the completed and signed CEC form must be provided. Annex D.1 is used when the consulting entity is an individual and Annex D.2 is used when the consulting entity is an institution or company.

B. Other Information to be provided.

Potential consultants are encouraged to submit any additional information that they believe will assist the CEC Secretariat in the evaluation of their proposal. However, the proposal should not exceed six (6) pages, exclusive of applicant resumes, samples of previous work or corporate brochures.

C. Type of contract to be used for these services.

The CEC Secretariat intends to use its standard time-based contract for these services. A sample is available upon request.

D. Selection procedure

The consultant deemed best qualified will be selected on the basis of a competitive process, in accordance with sections 2.5-2.7 of the [CEC Consultant Services Procurement Manual](#).

Proposals that the CEC Secretariat determines to be complete will be evaluated by the CEC Secretariat according to the following criteria.

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Point Rating
Understanding of project requirements	10
Understanding of Indigenous Peoples' history, culture, rights and priorities	10
Suitability of the proposed approach and work plan	20
Consultant's experience and qualifications and competency of key personnel, including experience working with Indigenous Peoples of North America	40

Consultant's ability to show analytical capabilities and effective writing	10
Adequacy of budget	10
<i>Total</i>	100

E. Estimated level of resources required.

The maximum budget for this activity is C\$80,000.00 (Canadian dollars), including professional fees and expenses. The CEC will cover travel, accommodations and *per diem* expenses (meals and allowances) for any travel associated with this project. Any reimbursable expenses detailed in the CEC standard contract should be made available upon request.

For universities and nongovernmental organizations, note that the CEC accepts that overhead be charged for administration and other indirect costs up to 15% of the total value of the contract.

If the proposal was presented by a consultant established in Mexico, the applicable value-added tax will be 0%, in accordance with Article 29, section IV, paragraph a) of Mexico's *Value-Added Tax Act*, as these are technical services that were engaged from abroad.

If a currency other than Canadian dollars is used in the proposal, the consultant should indicate the total cost in Canadian dollars as well as the currency of choice, for comparison purposes, detailing the exchange rate used.

F. Financial and Other Confidential Information

For this proposal, the CEC Secretariat will not require the submission of any confidential information, nor will the CEC Secretariat require information regarding insurance, bonding financial status, or company ownership.

G. Deadlines for Proposal Submission and Decision

The proposal, including all relevant attachments, must be received by the CEC Secretariat by **5:00 PM EST on March 17, 2025**. Proposals submitted after this deadline will not be considered.

Proposals must be submitted via e-mail to

Marcela Orozco,
Head of Unit, Advisory Groups and Private Sector Engagement
morozco@cec.org

The proposal format must be in Adobe PDF format. Once the proposal has been submitted electronically, the CEC will confirm receipt within three business days.

The CEC Secretariat intends to select the consultant and notify the applicants within a reasonable period following the proposal submission deadline.



Annex D.1 - SCHEDULE D (Individuals)

DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE, IMPARTIALITY AND INDEPENDENCE FOR CONTRACT

I, the undersigned,

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

ACCEPTANCE

hereby declare that I accept to serve as a consultant in the subject contract.

IMPARTIALITY AND INDEPENDENCE

(If you accept to serve as a consultant, please check one of the two following boxes. The choice of which box to check will be determined after you have taken into account, inter alia, whether there exists any past or present relationship, direct or indirect, with any of the Parties to the Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA) or their Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) representatives, Secretariat staff, and/or third parties involved in the performance of this contract, whether financial, professional, familial, or of another kind and whether the nature of any such relationship is such that disclosure is called for pursuant to the criteria set out below. Any doubt should be resolved in favor of disclosure.)

I am impartial and independent with respect to the ECA Parties and their CEC representatives, CEC Secretariat staff, and third parties involved in the performance of this contract, and intend to remain so; to the best of my knowledge, there are no facts or circumstances, past or present that need be disclosed because they are likely to give rise to justifiable doubts as to my impartiality or independence, and that may constitute a conflict of interest.

OR

I am impartial and independent with respect to the ECA Parties and their CEC representatives, Secretariat staff, and/or third parties involved in the performance of this contract, and intend to remain so; **however**, I wish to call your attention to the following facts or circumstances which I hereafter disclose because they might be of such a nature as to give rise to justifiable doubts as to my impartiality or independence, and that may constitute a conflict of interest. Where facts or circumstances exist that might give rise to the latter such doubts, I may set out measures I intend to take to mitigate or eliminate any doubts regarding my impartiality and independence, and/or a possible conflict of interest. (Use separate sheet and attach.)

Date: _____

Signature: _____



Annex D.2 - SCHEDULE D (Companies or Institutions)

CONSULTANT’S DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE AND IMPARTIALITY AND INDEPENDENCE FOR CONTRACT

I, the undersigned,

Last Name: _____ **First Name:** _____,

acting as the legal representative of _____

ACCEPTANCE

hereby declare that _____ accepts to serve as a consultant in the subject contract.

IMPARTIALITY AND INDEPENDENCE

(If you accept to serve as a consultant, please check one of the two following boxes. The choice of which box to check will be determined after you have taken into account, inter alia, whether there exists any past or present relationship, direct or indirect, with any of the Parties to the Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA) or their Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) representatives, Secretariat staff, and/or third parties involved in the performance of this contract, whether financial, professional, familial, or of another kind and whether the nature of any such relationship is such that disclosure is called for pursuant to the criteria set out below. Any doubt should be resolved in favor of disclosure.)

_____ **is impartial and independent** with respect to the ECA Parties and their CEC representatives, CEC Secretariat staff, and third parties involved in the performance of this contract, and intend to remain so; to the best of my knowledge, there are no facts or circumstances, past or present that need be disclosed because they are likely to give rise to justifiable doubts as to _____ impartiality or independence, and that may constitute a conflict of interest.

OR

_____ **is impartial and independent** with respect to the ECA Parties and their CEC representatives, Secretariat staff, and/or third parties involved in the performance of this contract, and intends to remain so; **however**, I wish to call your attention to the following facts or circumstances which I hereafter disclose because they might be of such a nature as to give rise to justifiable doubts as _____ impartiality or independence, and that may constitute a conflict of interest. Where facts or circumstances exist that might give rise to the latter such doubts, _____ may set out measures it intends to take to mitigate or eliminate any doubts regarding my impartiality and independence, and/or a possible conflict of interest. (Use separate sheet and attach.)

Date: _____

Signature: _____