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**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**GMIST Community Capacity  
Program Development**

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**July 13, 2022**



**Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism  
(GMIST)**

P.O. Box 130  
Rocky Harbour, NL A0K 4N0



## **Request for Proposals GMIST Community Capacity Program Development**

### **Organization Background**

The Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism (GMIST) is a non-profit organization based in Rocky Harbour, Newfoundland and Labrador that is dedicated to supporting the tourism industry through sustainable development. Since 2003, GMIST has trained over 2,500 tourism professionals from across Canada. Recently, GMIST was awarded a contract to research, develop and deliver skills training programs to tourism operators, workers and communities in Atlantic Canada and beyond. One component of this skills training is the creation of a new program focused on building community capacity. The community development program is the focus of this Request for Proposals (RFP).

### **The Situation**

The last few years have been particularly challenging for the tourism sector. Many organizations, operators and communities are re-evaluating their priorities and looking closely at their overall well-being, as well as strategies for survival and stability in uncertain times. Many communities have experienced a range of changes, including, but not limited to: businesses closing or downsizing, changing workplace dynamics, citizens moving in or out, varying and fluctuating levels of comfort in activity participation and citizens feeling disengaged and/or isolated. As the realities of a post-pandemic world unfold, it is more important than ever for communities to understand how they can be their own agents for change.

Across the Atlantic region over the last several decades, there has been a fairly structured approach to community development. In general, communities have had varying levels of success and have encountered numerous challenges in advancing their development efforts. Often the community development process has entailed utilizing outside expertise to design and lead a community plan based on perceived gaps and opportunities. While this approach has been successful for some communities, others have been challenged to implement action plans or achieve their desired results for numerous reasons.

GMIST is seeking a new approach, one which recognizes the uniqueness of each respective community and recognizes that tourism should support community well-being, rather than viewing tourism as the way to resolve economic struggles. Through the development and delivery of this new program, GMIST is seeking to change the traditional viewpoint to instead look at tourism as an asset for community development. In other words, if a strong community is a good place to live as well as a good place to visit, how can tourism support and complement community?

GMIST is proposing that it will curate a cooperative space(s) within communities to discover their pathways to enduring success. Specifically, the new GMIST program will have a primary focus on assisting

communities and practitioners to draw upon and build on their strengths using an asset-based approach. The program will work to enhance citizen's skills across a variety of subject areas which will enable them to begin to chart their own routes to success. GMIST is looking to the future with a goal to help facilitate a culture of community wellbeing for everyone across the life course.

## Assignment

GMIST is seeking to answer two questions with this new program: how can tourism be an asset to community well-being and secondly, how can we become more community-centred while embarking on development projects and initiatives? There are four interconnected pieces that when woven together can lead to community-led sustainable change on a hyper local level. These elements will help to shape the framework for this new GMIST program:

1. Embarking on a learning journey through an asset-based lens and incorporating other strengths-based practices with four hyper local communities in four regional centres (16 in total – note that this is subject to change upon further consultation).
2. Training of practitioners, systems leaders and commissioners at the institutional level.
3. Supporting local citizenship stewardship and financial sustainability for grassroots efforts.
4. Considering broader regional implications for working in a more asset-based/place-based way.

While each of these components has merit, it is the combination of all four that leads to sustainable change on a hyperlocal community scale. Currently, these approaches are not joined up. GMIST, through its partnership with the preferred bidder, will work with participants from 'test and learn' sites in participating communities with a view to experimenting with optional ways to resolve this dilemma.

The program will be grounded with the community as the primary unit of change as opposed to any external resource. GMIST believes that three pillars must be in place to develop this program:

1. Training in strength-based principles and practices that enable more collective citizen-led activity in hyper-local communities; this includes citizens, practitioners and systems leaders.
2. Development and implementation support.
3. Economic and sustainability support.

Through ensuring that all three pillars are integrated into program design, GMIST and its partners plan to test the assumption that these three together contribute to better community well-being, safety and economic outcomes than either one or two of them in isolation. The intent of this program is not to create a map to success, but rather to serve as a compass to guide and support communities as they explore and discover their own paths to success. To that end, a community asset-based approach will be the primary ethos for the program.

GMIST is seeking a bidder to co-create an educational program that will procure and develop a range of skills which are transferrable to the citizens within the participating communities. It is anticipated that the program will be delivered in both a face-to-face and online format. The bidder, GMIST and other identified partners will co-create a learning program that will include:

- Engaging partners in the co-creation of the learning journey.

- Development and delivery of the training program over two intakes. (Note that a provision will be in place to evaluate the first offering before allowance to move into delivery of second intake).
- Provision of financial modelling and governance.
- Provision of evaluative framework. Specifically, GMIST is looking at the development of new community metrics around well-being that will better serve communities moving forward.

The successful bidder will work closely with GMIST to develop the pilot for the program which will be launched and tested with a pilot group of community participants from the selected communities January/February 2023. GMIST plans (note that this may change based on consultation) to work with participants from four hyper-local communities in four regional centres across Atlantic Canada (perhaps even outside region); a total of 16 communities. The learning journey will run for a 12-18 month period for each cohort. It is intended that these initial participating communities will become learning sites which provide valuable insights to GMIST which will allow simultaneous learnings for both GMIST and the communities. It will also enable learnings to be proliferated outward on a regional scale and to assist other communities in working in a more asset and place-based way. By utilizing these sites to test and learn, communities will have a collaborative space to experiment with ideas and concepts, and will be able to evaluate options to approaching community development and resolving issues. The second program intake selection is anticipated to begin in fall 2023 with program start date in early 2024.

The training program presented by the successful bidder will provide the basis for structuring the core program. The bidder must also provide suggestions for supplemental programming pieces such as learning modules, mentoring programs, subsequent practitioner training and networking and ongoing evaluation and research as part of the overall training plan. As part of the proposal, bidders may also suggest additional program components for consideration such as effective governance/stewardship modelling. The support of learning and testing sites will allow GMIST to evaluate the impacts of this asset-based, community centred approach and implement supplemental or complementary programming for future intakes.

For the purpose of this program, a community is defined as a group of people holding common characteristics living in the same place, such as a neighbourhood within a city, a town or a village, with a population of 1,000 - 3,000 people. There will be a selection process for this program and GMIST will seek specific communities which have the following characteristics:

- A commitment to community development.
- Open mindedness.
- A level of readiness (as defined by the research from this program).
- Willingness to work in a cooperative environment (i.e., focused on we not me).
- Citizen engagement within the community as well as with the larger region.
- An established circle of connected citizens through various established community groups and organizations; could be a combination of formal and informal associations.

GMIST will coordinate the community selection process in consultation with its partners and the bidder. Interested communities will be provided with background information about the intended learning journey to ensure that there are realistic expectations about time and citizen commitments, support structures and program flexibility. Participants in the program will be invited to partake in a learning journey whereby all parties will have an opportunity to learn and create with the common goal of improving community

wellbeing. GMIST will communicate to prospective participating communities that it does not have all of the answers or a magic bullet to apply to ensure effective community development, but is rather inviting communities to participate alongside GMIST and its partners to explore a new approach to community development through this learning journey.

In addition to the community-based program, there will be a parallel offering for support agencies such as community organizations, NGOs, government agencies that will train them on asset-based community development in support of the learning sites. Learning about an asset or strength-based approach will be a fundamental building block to developing the program and will be woven throughout the program. Additional subject areas to be covered over the course of the 12-18 month learning journey include, but are not limited to:

- How to apply asset-based approaches within community development.
- Effective community engagement.
- Efficient and equitable decision making.
- Conflict management.
- Community and project management.
- Effective communication methods and tools.
- Utilizing the skills and assets of community citizens to achieve collective goals.
- Developing realistic action plans and identifying necessary resources.

## Key Bidder Skills

As noted, the ethos of the training program shall be rooted in asset-based community development with various blended learning modules that suit the needs of the communities and participants. The selected bidder will have expertise in asset-based community development programming utilizing demonstrable adult education principles and practices. The bidder must have demonstrated expertise in blended program design and delivery (both in-person and online programming) and have experience working with partners. Experience working in the fields of community development and sustainability, or a relevant combination of similar subject areas, is essential for the selected bidder. In addition, experience with the development and delivery of learning modules and materials suitable for practitioners working in institutions and various levels of government is a critical component of this overall program. Experience working within the tourism and hospitality industry would be an asset.

While the primary language of delivery for the program will be in English all public training documents and evaluation reports must be translated in English and French. While bilingualism (French/English) would be ideal it is not a requirement for this project.

GMIST is open to proposals from a single bidder or from a consortium of bidders. If there are multiple partners, proposals should clearly outline the contributors and their respective roles in the design and delivery of the program, as well as their relevant experience and expertise. GMIST retains the right to contact partner organizations for further information/discussion and/or to request contributions from portions of more than one proposal to create the overall program.

GMIST retains the right to extend this option to a second delivery of the program, with agreed upon revisions, in 2024. Upon final program delivery to GMIST, all non-proprietary tools, resources and curriculum will be solely owned by GMIST.

## Scope of Work

1. **Initial briefing with GMIST** – Immediately following award of the contract, the consultant will meet with the GMIST project team (virtually) to review the proposal and expected outcomes. (5% level of effort)
2. **Program development plan** – The consultant will propose a draft program outline to GMIST for review and feedback based on the parameters provided in this RFP and during the above noted briefing. The outline must include a timeline for the course development process, an overview of core program elements, learning objectives, proposed delivery methods and course timelines. The development plan must also describe the level of participation (e.g., time commitment, effort) required from participants and partners as applicable. (10% level of effort)
3. **Program design & deliverables** – The community development program will be 12-18 months in duration and is envisioned as having a blend of learning approaches, including online and in-person components as follows:
  - Introduction: Course overview and pre-work (online).
  - Core training: Multi-day in-person peer-to-peer group learning session (anticipated duration: 3.5 days).
  - Continued learning: combination of in-person and online opportunities .

The consultant may provide an alternative course format, but the learning path must be clearly articulated in the course design. There is a requirement for course flexibility recognizing the unique attributes of each community and the consultant should address this in the course layout. In addition, given current COVID situations, potential options if in-person programming needs to be moved fully online must be included

The proposed pilot program must include:

- Learning objectives.
- Descriptions of program components and program layout (phases, modules, etc.)
- Proposed delivery methods and schedule for each component or phase.
- Suggested facilitators/presenters, including their respective areas of expertise.
- Proposed course materials (e.g., handouts, handbooks, resource suggestions) in draft form.
- Overall program structure with optional/flexible items identified and described such as optional modules and coaching sessions. It is envisioned that while the program will have a framework with some core elements, there will be a level of fluidity woven into the structure to allow participants to follow the path that best sets them up for success.
- Community well-being metrics.
- Any suggested subject items in addition to those noted in the above Assignment section (30% of effort).

4. **Delivery of Program**– Delivery of the first offering to selected communities and participants over 12-18 months (with option for 2<sup>nd</sup> delivery). (45 % level of effort, with much higher % in the second offering)
5. **Evaluation plan** – The proposal must outline a robust evaluation plan for this project. It is anticipated that learning from the first offering would heavily influence any potential updates for the second offering. The evaluation plan will include key check-in points with participants after each phase of program delivery to gather and collate feedback from participants regarding the course content, program flow, time allocation and course layout. It must also include evaluations from the GMIST team and the course facilitators to ensure a thorough review is completed. (10 % level of effort)

## Budget

The total budget for this project (design, delivery of 2 offerings, evaluation and all travel related costs) is not to exceed \$500,000 CAD, exclusive of taxes. Expenses associated with travel must be based on the Canadian federal per diem (daily) rate and the number of days required to complete each scope of work element. All proposals must include a detailed breakdown indicating all costs associated with the program development and delivery components. Note that all work must be completed by February 1, 2025.

## Timelines

*Proposal due date:* Proposals must be received in Word and PDF format via email to [info@gmist.ca](mailto:info@gmist.ca) by 5:00 pm AST August 3, 2022

*Project Award:* Successful bidder will be notified no later than 5:00 pm AST August 17, 2022

## Question or Clarifications

Please direct any questions or inquiries via email to [info@gmist.ca](mailto:info@gmist.ca).

## Project Lead

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