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Algonquin Park, Almaguin Highlands, Muskoka & Parry Sound
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Expression of Interest: Small Business Accreditation Program Framework

The Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport established 13 Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) in the province to identify and implement regional priorities in an effort to foster more strategic marketing of Ontario's tourism regions.

RTO12, also known by its consumer-facing name “Explorers’ Edge,” is a not-for-profit agency that is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. The RTO12 geographic area includes Algonquin Park, the Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule, Muskoka and Parry Sound. The mandate for RTO12 is to provide regional leadership and strategic planning, to develop strong marketing and collaborative partnerships, and to contribute to workforce development and skills training.

RTO12 is seeking to hire a consultant to research and develop a small business accreditation pilot program framework. The intention of the framework and program is to allow small businesses to access the expertise of the Regional Tourism Organization (as it relates to marketing and communication), Muskoka Community Futures (as it relates to business development) and Muskoka Community Network (as it relates to technology and website development) on a subsidized fee for service basis. The first pilot program is intended to focus on seasonal tourism operators to enhance the sustainability of the business. The outcome of the 10-12 month accreditation program is to develop businesses that have a common set of skills, knowledge and assets, and are market ready

The expected outcomes of this initiative are:

- The creation of an accreditation program framework that draws on the programs and services of the three participating partners
- An outline of the costs associated with the program and the resources required to assist participating businesses to complete the accreditation program. This could include branding review, professional marketing materials, core business upgrades, technology infrastructure, etc. Timelines involved in the execution of the program
- Regional small business feedback on the applicability and value of the program
- Recommendations of a Brand for the accreditation program including creative design ideas
- Marketing Strategy to promote successfully accredited businesses

Explorers’ Edge invites interested parties to provide an Expression of Interest (EOI) to create a Small Business Accreditation Pilot Program framework.

The EOI also requires the applicant to articulate and demonstrate:

- Your knowledge of the Regional Tourism Organization, Muskoka Community Futures and Muskoka Community Network
- Your enthusiasm for the uniqueness of this project and why you believe you can make it successful.
- Your successful delivery (including measurable results) of regional small business engagement projects.
- Your proposed budget based on the development of a framework and regional outreach to stakeholders and small businesses.

Please forward all documents and request for further information to James Murphy at james@explorersedge.ca (705) 706-1649 on or before Tuesday, February 17, 2015.

Note: Submitting a reply to Explorers' Edge does not automatically guarantee that your company will be receiving future correspondence during the process.