

Request for Proposals (RFP): Indigenous Research Framework and Ethics Consulting Service

Issued by: Research Manitoba

Date: June 30, 2026

1. Background

Research Manitoba is developing an Indigenous Research Framework to guide how we support, fund, and engage in Indigenous-led and Indigenous-informed research across the province. The Framework will articulate high-level principles, commitments, and approaches that reflect our organization's role as a funder and align with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and OCAP principles.

The Framework is intended to be strategic, relationship-based, and high-level. Research Manitoba recognizes that many Indigenous organizations, government, post-secondary institutions, and research partners have already developed important frameworks, protocols, policies, and governance approaches related to Indigenous research. Rather than creating a singular or prescriptive model, the intent of this work is to respectfully acknowledge, learn from, and where appropriate align with existing work, while making space for distinctions-based and community specific approaches.

Research Manitoba seeks to ensure the Framework reflects Indigenous worldviews and priorities while respecting the diverse governance structures, jurisdictions, rights, and authorities of Indigenous partners across Manitoba and beyond.

In parallel, Research Manitoba, through the RITHIM (Research Improvement Through Harmonization in Manitoba) initiative, is reviewing how Indigenous research ethics are understood, supported, and operationalized within the provincial research system. These discussions are sensitive and complex, involving areas where perspectives, responsibilities, and jurisdictional interpretations may differ among institutions, communities, and rights holders. This work must therefore be informed by Indigenous expertise, careful relationship-building, and respectful dialogue.

2. Purpose of the RFP

Research Manitoba is seeking proposals from qualified Indigenous consultants or consulting teams to:

- Support the ongoing engagement and co-development of Research Manitoba's Indigenous Research Framework.
- Provide strategic, cultural, and relationship-based guidance to ensure the Framework remains respectful, adaptable, and responsive to the diversity of existing Indigenous research approaches and governance models.
- Advise on sensitive and complex issues related to Indigenous research ethics within RITHIM, including areas where policy expectations, institutional practices, or jurisdictional responsibilities may not be fully aligned.
- Support the development of an education framework for Indigenous research ethics for applicants, reviewers, and institutional partners.
- Support the co-development of an Indigenous Identity Policy (potentially in collaboration with other partners).

3. Scope of Work

The successful consultant(s) will work closely with Research Manitoba's leadership, Board, and staff, and may include the following activities:

Framework Development Support

- Provide advice on scope, structure, and positioning and implementation approach for the Indigenous Research Framework.
- Help ensure the Framework reflects Indigenous priorities and values while recognizing and making room for existing Indigenous research frameworks, protocols, and governance approaches developed by partner organizations and communities.
- Participate in and/or facilitate engagement sessions with Indigenous researchers, organizations, governments, communities and Knowledge Keepers.
- Draft, framework documents.

Strategic and Political Navigation

- Advise on approaches to navigate sensitive issues and maintain respectful, balanced relationships with Indigenous governments, organizations, institutions, and researchers.
- Support communication and engagement strategies that emphasize clarity of purpose, mutual respect, and recognition of diverse Indigenous perspectives and governance approaches.
- Advise on how Research Manitoba can appropriately position its role as a provincial funder within a broader ecosystem of Indigenous-led governance and institutional responsibility.

Indigenous Research Ethics (RITHIM)

- Provide advice on how Indigenous research ethics considerations should be appropriately positioned, supported, and governed within RITHIM, in ways that uphold Indigenous rights and respect existing community and institutional processes.
- Support the development of a policy, guidance, or operational approaches related to Indigenous research ethics, including practical approaches for navigating areas where expectations, authorities, or interpretations may differ across partners or jurisdictions.
- Support the development of an education framework for RITHIM applicants and reviewers to strengthen understanding and implementation of Indigenous research ethics principles and practices.

Indigenous Identity Policy Development

- Lead or support the development of an Indigenous identity policy that respects Indigenous self-determination, community accountability, and distinctions-based approaches, while helping prevent misrepresentation.
- This work may be done in collaboration with partners.

4. Deliverables

- Advisory support and facilitation throughout the engagement and drafting process (September 2026 – March 2027).
- Written recommendations and/or summary memos on key issues, alignment opportunities, governance considerations, or implementation approaches as required.
- Strategic advice regarding alignment and interoperability with existing partner frameworks and policies where appropriate.

- Draft the;
 - Indigenous Research Framework;
 - RITHIM indigenous research ethics guidance/policy documents;
 - Indigenous research ethics education materials/framework;
 - the Indigenous Identity Policy.

5. Consultant Qualifications

Proposals are invited from Indigenous consultants, Knowledge Holders, or Indigenous-led organizations with:

- Demonstrated expertise in Indigenous research governance, ethics, engagement, and relationship building.
- Experience working with Indigenous and non-Indigenous institutions on sensitive policy, governance, or systems-change initiatives.
- Strong facilitation, diplomacy, and consensus-building skills.
- Experience navigating complex or evolving jurisdictional and ethical considerations.
- Understanding of the Manitoba research, institutional, and Indigenous governance landscape (preferred).

6. Timeline

Proposals due: 4:00pm CST, August 10, 2026

Anticipated work period: September 2026 – March 2027

7. Budget

- A detailed budget should be submitted outlining consultant fees, engagement costs, and travel (if applicable). Research Manitoba anticipates this work may be delivered in phases and may involve collaboration or cost-sharing opportunities with partners, particularly for the Indigenous Identity Policy component.

8. Proposal Submission Instructions & Response Framework

Instructions to Applicants

- Proponents are asked to submit a clear, concise, and complete proposal that directly responds to the requirements outlined in this RFP. Proposals should:
 - Follow the structure and headings provided below
 - Address each section fully and in the order presented
 - Be written in plain language and avoid unnecessary jargon
 - Provide concrete examples and evidence where possible
 - Demonstrate cultural competency and relevant experience (particularly in Indigenous engagement, where applicable)
- Proposals must be submitted in PDF format and include all required sections. Incomplete submissions or those that do not follow the requested format may be disqualified or receive lower evaluation scores.

Required Proposal Structure (Response Framework)

All proposals must include the following sections and headers and provide the required information identified (suggested page lengths have been provided):

A. Executive Summary (1 page)

- Overview of your organization and proposed services
- Summary of your understanding of the project
- Key strengths and differentiators

B. Organizational Profile & Relevant Experience (2 - 3 pages)

- Overview of your organization
- Relevant experience delivering similar work
- Experience working with Indigenous communities, organizations, or initiatives (if applicable)
- Brief summaries of 2–3 comparable projects

C. Understanding of the Project (1 - 2 pages)

- Your interpretation of the purpose and goals of this RFP
- Key considerations, challenges, and opportunities
- Awareness of cultural, community, or contextual factors

D. Proposed Approach & Methodology (4 – 6 pages)

- Detailed description of how you will carry out the work
- Proposed methods, tools, and frameworks
- Approach to engagement, collaboration, and communication
- Risk identification and mitigation strategies

E. Indigenous Engagement & Cultural Competency (2 – 3 pages)

- Approach to culturally respectful and meaningful engagement
- Demonstrated understanding of Indigenous protocols and perspectives
- Strategies to ensure inclusion, reciprocity, and ethical practices
- Any partnerships or collaborations with Indigenous organizations or advisors

F. Project Team & Governance (2 pages)

- Key personnel and their roles
- Relevant qualifications and experience of team members
- Organizational structure and accountability mechanisms

- Inclusion of Indigenous team members or advisors (if applicable)

G. Work Plan & Timeline (2 - 3 pages)

- Phases of work with key milestones and deliverables
- Estimated timelines for each phase
- Dependencies and critical paths

H. Budget & Cost Breakdown (1-2 pages)

- Detailed budget (fees, expenses, etc.)
- Assumptions and pricing structure
- Any optional or additional services clearly identified

I. References (1 page)

- At least 2–3 client references for similar work
- Include contact name, organization, email, and phone number

J. Appendices (Optional) (not to exceed 10 pages)

- Resumes or CVs
- Case studies
- Supporting documents

9. Evaluation Considerations (for Transparency)

Proposals will be assessed using consistent criteria, including:

- Quality and clarity of the proposed approach
- Relevant experience and demonstrated expertise
- Strength and composition of the project team
- Cultural competency and approach to Indigenous engagement
- Feasibility of timelines and work plan
- Value for money

General Guidance for Strong Proposals

To support fair comparison, applicants are encouraged to:

- Be specific and avoid generic responses
- Clearly link experience to the requirements of this RFP
- Demonstrate impact (outcomes, not just activities)
- Provide realistic timelines and budgets



- Show alignment with the values and objectives of the commissioning organization

10. Submission

Submit proposals electronically to:

Melinda Sears

Director Finance & Corporate Services, Research Manitoba

Email: Melinda.Sears@researchmb.ca

Deadline: 4:00pm CST, Monday, August 10th, 2026