



**Request For Proposal  
Consulting Services  
Needs Assessment - “Charting The Future”**

Deadline to submit April 26, 2024

Submit to:

Barbara Weeks, CEO

Prince Edward Island Business Women’s Association

barb@peibwa.org

# 1. Introduction -

Prince Edward Island Business Women's Association (PEIBWA) is seeking proposals from experienced and qualified consulting firms to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to aid the organization in planning for the future needs of women owned businesses on PEI. This assessment is critical to identify the gaps between the current state and desired outcomes, enabling PEIBWA to make informed decisions and prioritize improvements and lead the way to a comprehensive strategic planning process in the coming months. We want to ensure that we have the tools and staffing requirements needed to grow the organization and service all diverse groups identified on PEI. Growth in membership, coaching and providing our members with the best tools to grow and succeed in their businesses.

As an organization, we believe a needs assessment for women business owners involves a thorough examination of the various challenges, barriers, and opportunities they face, with the ultimate goal of identifying support mechanisms, resources, and strategies that can promote their success in the business world. PEIBWA wants to be able to offer programs that women entrepreneurs and professionals need to excel in their respective fields. We want to be the top provider of business services, mentoring and coaching for business women on PEI. The landscape for women business owners has been evolving, yet certain unique obstacles remain prevalent, alongside new opportunities for growth and innovation.

We need to understand the specific challenges that women business owners face in starting and scaling their businesses. This could include access to capital, gender bias in business and financing, balancing business and family commitments, and limited access to networks and mentors. We need to determine if there are specific areas where women business owners require more support or training, such as financial literacy, digital marketing, strategic planning, or technology adoption. Analyze the current support ecosystem, including women-centric business associations, networking groups, and mentorship programs, to identify gaps and areas for enhancement. Explore new market opportunities that women business owners are uniquely positioned to capture, considering trends like sustainable business practices, social entrepreneurship, and digital transformation. We need to examine how current policies and regulations impact women-owned businesses and identify areas where changes could foster a more supportive environment and how the work we do in particular can help them achieve success.

As women entrepreneurs, we face different challenges. Work-Life Balance and the need too address the unique challenge of balancing business responsibilities with personal and family life, particularly in cultures with traditional gender roles. Explore flexible working

arrangements, support services, and the role of societal attitudes in facilitating a better balance.

We need to understand and consider the barriers women business owners face in accessing new markets, and discuss strategies for overcoming these, such as leveraging e-commerce and digital platforms, and participating in trade shows and business expos focused on women entrepreneurs. Provide recommendations to policy makers and formulate recommendations for policy changes that could better support women-owned businesses, such as tax incentives, procurement policies favoring women-led enterprises, and support for childcare.

### **1.1 Purpose of the RFP**

The purpose of this RFP is to solicit proposals from various consulting firms, conduct a fair and extensive evaluation based on criteria listed herein, and select the candidate who will best fulfill the needs of the organization.

The needs assessment for women business owners should culminate in a comprehensive report that not only highlights the key challenges and opportunities but also provides actionable recommendations for stakeholders at all levels, including government bodies, financial institutions, business associations, and the entrepreneurs themselves. The goal is to create a more equitable and supportive business environment that acknowledges the unique needs of women business owners and actively works to dismantle the barriers to their success.

### **1.2 Background**

The Prince Edward Island Business Women's Association has an Island-wide mandate to educate and empower women to succeed in their business endeavours.

PEIBWA is a member-based non-profit corporation, registered under Part II of the *Companies Act* in Prince Edward Island. Established in fall 1993, it is the only women's business association with an Island-wide mandate in the province and has a membership of 450 women entrepreneurs and business professionals. PEIBWA provides advisory services, training, opportunities for development, and connections with other women in business.

PEI Business Women's Association provides direct services and programming, including regular skills-building workshops/sessions; an annual Symposium with local and national participants; networking opportunities; 1-1 mentorship; microgrants, and business advice to some 500 members, as well as non-members and community partners. It partners with provincial, regional and national stakeholders including Women's Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Innovation PEI, the Community Business Development Corporation, provincial chambers of commerce, the Startup Zone, and others. It recently collaborated on the Atlantic Canada Women in Growth Partnership with the other three Atlantic provinces, a multi-year project delivered with almost \$2 million in funding from the

Women's Entrepreneurship Strategy Fund. With \$475,000 in funding from the Workforce Integration Fund, PEIBWA successfully offered an ambitious range of pandemic-related programming for women entrepreneurs, including PEI's first business accelerator, first business incubator, specialized 1-1 business coaching, and training to sell online. It subsequently developed an empowerment program targeting underserved business women under 30, and PEI's first Pitchfest for women entrepreneurs.

With only 12.7 percent of all PEI private sector businesses majority owned by women, there is still critically important development work to be done. PEIBWA engages in education and social action for increased services and support for women in business to impact women's economic equality, which, as a principal determinant, has a direct impact on women's health. PEIBWA is recognized and valued as a strong community partner and voice for women across the province, bringing an economic impact lens to diverse activities and projects. As part of its 30th anniversary celebration this past year, PEIBWA has been developing a historical record of the female trailblazers who have already carved their own place in the province's history and economy despite societal gender norms that encouraged them to play diminished roles. By documenting these remarkable women, new generations of PEI women will be inspired to pursue their own goals and ambitions as entrepreneurs and business leaders and take their rightful place in the community.

The organization is governed by a board of directors that represents women entrepreneurs and women in business from across the province. In March of 2024, the Board hired a new Chief Executive Officer with the required skills to guide the organization forward. Barbara Weeks is the new CEO and brings a wealth of business experience managing teams and organizations. The awarded consulting group will be working closely with the CEO on this project.

### **1.3 Scope of Work**

The selected consultant will be responsible for:

- Working closely with the CEO on objectives of the assessment which need to include the following;
- Conducting four focus groups: the BIPOC community, women with disabilities, the 2SLGBTQAI+ community, and community/government stakeholders.
- Developing a survey for women in business and women entrepreneurs, including those identifying as women, to assess current challenges and support needs.
- Conducting community engagement sessions in Souris, Montague, Stratford, Charlottetown, Cornwall, Summerside, Abrams Village and Alberton.
- Conducting one-on-one conversation with women in leadership and one virtual community conversation.

- Analyzing the information gathered and identifying recommendations, for inclusion in the final report, that can be used to inform policymakers and service agencies as they create programs and support for women in business.
- Identifying gaps between current operations, services, or practices and the desired state.
- Delivering a detailed report outlining findings, recommendations, and implementation considerations.

## **2. Proposal Submission Guidelines**

### **2.1 Proposal Deadline**

Proposals must be submitted by April 26, 2024, at 5:00pm. Review committee will deliberate and award a tender by May 6, 2024. Project needs to be completed by August 2, 2024.

### **2.2 Submission Format and Instructions**

Proposals should be submitted in PDF format via email to [barb@peibwa.org](mailto:barb@peibwa.org). The subject line of the email should read "Proposal for Needs Assessment Consulting Services - [Your Company Name]".

### **2.3 Proposal Contents**

Proposals should include the following sections:

- Executive Summary
- Firm Overview and Qualifications
- Approach and Methodology
- Project Timeline
- Team Composition
- References
- Cost Proposal

## **3. Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Firm's experience and qualifications in conducting needs assessments.
- Clarity, comprehensiveness, and innovativeness of the proposed approach and methodology.

- Feasibility of the project timeline.
- Qualifications of the proposed project team.
- Cost-effectiveness of the proposal.
- References and past performance.

#### **4. Terms and Conditions**

- PEI Business Women's Association reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals.
- The selected consultant will be required to sign a contract detailing the scope of work, deliverables, timeline, and payment schedule.
- All proposals must include a statement indicating the consultant's acceptance of the terms and conditions outlined in this RFP.

#### **5. Contact Information**

For any inquiries regarding this RFP, please contact:

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