

# HFR-TGF Indigenous Peoples Information Session on the Request for Proposal (RFP)

## Timing & Location

### Event Purpose

Two virtual Request for Proposal (RFP) Process Sessions were held on Zoom on June 5th (English) and 6th 2023 (French) to share information about the RFP process with Indigenous peoples already engaged in the HFR Project. The objective of each session was to share information on the RFP process and to answer questions.

- **June 5, 2023**  
**English Indigenous Peoples Information Session on the RFP**  
4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- **June 6, 2023**  
**French Indigenous Peoples Information Session on the RFP**  
4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

## In Advance of Meeting

### Pre-Webinar

An RFP Summary document was provided in advance of the sessions to all Indigenous communities, organizations, and entities the HFR Project Team is currently engaging with. This information provided a foundation for the discussion at each session. The objective of each session was to share information on the RFP process and to answer questions received from the participants.

On May 10, 2023, the Indigenous communities, organizations and entities received an email that included:

- RFP Summary
- How to receive funding under the Community Participation Funding Program
- Prepopulated Funding Application
- Description of the event including date and time and specific information on how to register for the English and French sessions
- Zoom registration links

Thirteen participants attended the June 5th English webinar, and one participant attended the June 6th French webinar.

The RFP Summary document that was sent to Indigenous communities, organizations, and entities was also made public on VIA HFR's website along with the English and French recordings of the webinars and the presentation. These can be found at [Summary of the High Frequency Rail Request for Proposals - High Frequency Rail \(hfr-tgf.ca\)](https://www.via-rail.ca/en/summary-of-the-high-frequency-rail-request-for-proposals).

## Question and Answer Period

The following questions are representative of all questions and responses during both June 5 and 6 2023 Webinars.

Question	Response
<p>Will bidders be able to engage directly with Indigenous communities to support their preparation of the technical submission requirements, including the Indigenous Participation Plan (IPP) and other engagement plans?</p>	<p>The RFP’s Technical Submission Requirements outline what information bidders will be expected to provide in their proposals. Your input at this stage helps inform us what requirements should be included and will contribute to proposal evaluation and the selection of the bidder invited to develop the Project during the Co-Development Phase. This includes what information should be provided by bidders as part of their proposed Indigenous Participation Plan (IPP) and engagement plan.</p> <p>As part of the Government of Canada procurement process, contact restrictions are put in place to ensure bidders receive equal and fair access to information while protecting individuals, officials, and organizations from being burdened by numerous information requests. Further information on the do-not-contact list for the RFQ was provided in the RFQ details notice. For the RFP phase, the Government of Canada will identify people and organizations that bidders must not contact. It is anticipated that these individuals will include elected officials, including Chief and Council from Indigenous communities and elected officials from municipalities (Mayors and Chairs) and provinces (Premiers, Ministers, and MPPs). As such, Indigenous individuals who are not on the do-not-contact list – such as business owners or representatives from community organizations - may be contacted by bidders during the RFP phase.</p> <p>It should be noted that the bidders’ proposal IPPs will be expected to outline how, should they be selected to develop the Project, they propose to assist VIA HFR in fulfilling its duty to consult and, where appropriate, accommodate Indigenous peoples, while creating mutually beneficial socio-economic development opportunities for Indigenous communities, businesses and individuals on a scale appropriate to the size and scope of this Project. Individual engagement plans will be created in collaboration with Indigenous communities and organizations during the Co-Development Phase of the Project, which will follow the RFP phase.</p>

Question	Response
<p>How will Indigenous perspectives inform the route? How can we work together to identify the best route?</p>	<p>VIA HFR will be the Government of Canada entity responsible for the duty to consult and, where appropriate, accommodate Indigenous peoples.</p> <p>To understand Indigenous perspectives and help determine the most appropriate route, VIA HFR will lead the consultation and engagement process with Indigenous communities throughout the planning, design, and co-development phases of the HFR Project. This will involve opportunities for Indigenous peoples to participate in early planning discussions and to include their perspectives and knowledge.</p> <p>The federal impact assessment process will also involve consultation with Indigenous communities, organizations, and entities on the alignment, potential impacts and appropriate mitigation measures. Indigenous knowledge provided is also a factor that must be taken into account during any impact assessment of the proposed project and will also help inform the overall planning and design of the Project.</p>
<p>What are the expectations for an alternative means assessment and determining the preferred alignment with Indigenous peoples?</p>	<p>The HFR Project is currently in the procurement phase and does not yet have a defined route. The Project presentation displays a conceptual route that links Toronto to Québec City via four other cities, including Peterborough, Ottawa, Montreal and Trois-Rivières. This conceptual route was developed as a reference point for comparing ‘<i>alternative means</i>,’ this involves assessing alternative routes and route methods (for example, rails, trains, and electrical lines). VIA HFR will continue to seek input from Indigenous communities, organizations and entities throughout all stages of the HFR Project to encourage participation and input, and the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge.</p> <p><i>Note: “Alternative Means” are the various technically and economically feasible ways which would allow a designed project and its physical activities to be carried out. In the context of HFR, this could include different routes or different transportation methods, as examples.</i></p>

Question	Response
<p>How will you consider the feedback provided on the RFP Summary document; how will it inform the development of the RFP?</p>	<p>Your feedback will have an impact by ensuring that the perspectives of Indigenous peoples are reflected in the RFP. Your community’s participation is essential to the success of the proposed HFR Project.</p> <p>We are providing representatives from Indigenous communities, organizations and entities who attended the June 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> webinars with the opportunity to validate the notes taken during the Q&amp;A sessions. We will further summarize the feedback received on the RFP Summary in a “What We Heard” report which will describe how Indigenous input influenced the RFP document.</p> <p>We will ensure these steps are completed before the RFP is issued. Decisions about the content of the RFP will be made by Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) which manages procurement for the federal government. Transport Canada (TC) and VIA HFR will support PSPC as advisors in this process.</p>
<p>How will Indigenous peoples be invited to participate in the procurement process?</p>	<p>From the beginning of the procurement process, VIA HFR engaged Indigenous communities, organizations and entities whose treaty areas and traditional territories may be affected by the HFR Project. Our objective is to ensure that Indigenous communities, organizations, and entities understand the HFR Project, have access to procurement and employment opportunities and have an opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions on the different phases of the Project.</p> <p>The RFP webinar is the most recent initiative to listen and hear Indigenous perspectives and incorporate feedback. Meetings are now underway with individual communities and organizations when requested on topics of interest, including the RFP’s technical requirements and evaluation approach.</p> <p>Throughout the procurement process, VIA HFR will continue to invite Indigenous communities, organization, and entities to participate and provide valuable feedback.</p>

Question	Response
<p>How will our Nation be able to influence who is chosen by the RFP process, beyond just providing input to these terms and criteria?</p>	<p>Indigenous peoples are encouraged to influence the RFP process by providing feedback on the RFP Summary until July 10th. This feedback will be incorporated into the RFP, which will then be used to evaluate the potential private sector partners. We are happy to meet with Indigenous communities, organization, and entities to receive feedback. Alternatively, written comments can be provided.</p> <p>Due to the Directive on the Management of Procurement, and other Federal regulations and legislation related to procurement, there can be no direct influence on the selection of the private partner. Potential private partners will be selected based on the terms of the RFP exclusively.</p> <p>The actual evaluation of bidders and selection of the private-sector partner will be performed by PSPC. To maintain the integrity of the procurement process, there are limited officials within PSPC that have access to all of the submissions that will be received. PSPC evaluators will closely assess bidders against the written RFP evaluation criteria, which informs the selection of the private sector partner. This is one of the reasons we are seeking and strongly value the contribution of Indigenous peoples' perspectives now, to inform the development of the RFP.</p>