



Halifax

Regional Centre for Education

**RFSO #4283
Fraud Risk Assessment**

To: All Bidders

Date: April 30, 2026

From: Nancy Rideout, Purchasing Manager
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The bid documents shall be amended, and new drawings and clauses added, and shall become part of the contract documents as follows:

Proponent Questions:

1. *Background - What is the precipitating need for the Fraud Risk Assessment services*

Response:

The HRCE has initiated this RFSO to engage qualified professionals in a comprehensive Fraud Risk Assessment (FRA) as a proactive measure to strengthen its fraud risk management. The FRA's purpose, as described in the RFSO, is to identify areas potentially vulnerable to fraud, evaluate the effectiveness of current controls, and recommend improvements across departments. This initiative is driven by HRCE's commitment to safeguarding public resources and ensuring robust internal controls in its operations. By undertaking a system-wide fraud risk assessment, HRCE aims to detect and mitigate any fraud risks early and maintain the integrity of its financial and operational processes. The RFSO underscores that experienced proponents are sought to deliver best-value FRA services in line with HRCE's requirements, reflecting the organization's proactive approach to fraud prevention and oversight.

2. *Scope - while this is a standing offer for fraud risk assessment, what is the intended scope of application across schools, supporting functions, and administration?*

Response:

The standing offer is intended to cover fraud risk assessment services across the entire HRCE organization, including individual schools, supporting functions (departments), and central administration. Section 9.0 "Scope of Work" specifies that the FRA should span the entire

organization by department, with special focus on areas handling funds or assets, ensuring no critical process or fraud risk domain is overlooked. In practical terms, this means any HRCE site or unit – from school-level operations to administrative and support departments – may be subject to FRA engagements under the standing offer as needed. Furthermore, as noted in the RFSO, HRCE reserves the right to add additional schools or offices to the contract at its discretion (e.g. if other HRCE sites or even other Regional Centres for Education require similar FRA services) at the same pricing and terms. The scope is organization-wide and flexible, allowing HRCE to utilize the FRA services across all relevant areas of its operations, however focus should be given to Central Office business processes.

3. *Previous Work - Are there previous approaches or deliverables that you can reference to best guide your expectations for this project (and who completed this work)?*

Response:

A similar exercise was performed by a local CPA firm in 2020.

4. *Locations - what is the preference for local (Halifax/Atlantic) versus broader (Canada-wide) team members (and for risk assessment delivery)?*

Response:

Preference will be given to local organizations. Proponents should note that the work will involve on-site activities “where feasible”, such as fraud awareness workshops or process walkthroughs conducted at HRCE sites. Travel and disbursement costs are recognized separately in the pricing schedule (with travel limited to within Nova Scotia unless otherwise specified). Therefore, if a proponent’s key team members are not local to the Halifax area, the proposal should account for travel to HRCE facilities for critical meetings or site visits.

5. *Budget - Is there an anticipated budget of hours or dollars for this exercise (on an annual basis)?*

Response:

HRCE has not set a fixed annual budget or hours for this standing offer. The RFSO is structured as a standing offer with work on an “as needed” basis, and thus any volumes or values provided are estimates only. In fact, the RFSO explicitly states that the volume of work and frequency of services under the standing offer are not guaranteed and are subject to change. The Schedule A – Price Form reiterates that the estimated quantities/frequency are for information and may vary; “The HRCE does not guarantee the volume of work assigned to the successful proponent as part of this standing offer.”. Proponents should therefore propose their pricing (rates/fees) in accordance with the Price Form and be aware that actual expenditures will depend on HRCE’s requirements over the term. Any engagement of services will align with HRCE’s budget availability and priorities at HRCE’s sole discretion.

6. *Can HRCE clarify whether client contact or site visits under Clause 2.20 will be limited to references or projects relevant to this RFP, and whether advance notice will be provided to the Bidder to address confidentiality and client relationship considerations? Is HRCE's intent to exercise this clause in relation to clients that engage the winning proponent under the standing offer, or does HRCE intend to contact or visit clients of bidders during the evaluation stage as well?*

Response:

Clause 2.20 of the RFSO (Section "Right to Contact Clients or Others") gives HRCE the discretion to contact or visit any client of the Bidder without the Bidder's permission or assistance. This is a standard due-diligence provision intended to allow HRCE to verify a proponent's past performance and experience. In practice, HRCE will exercise this right primarily during the evaluation stage, to contact references or other clients for whom the Bidder has performed similar work (especially those relevant to fraud risk assessment services) in order to confirm experience and quality of performance. The clause is not limited only to the references explicitly provided by the Bidder; HRCE may reach out to any past or current client organization if deemed pertinent to the evaluation. The RFSO does not require giving advance notice to the Bidder for such contacts, given the wording "without permission or assistance." However, HRCE will handle any client contact or potential site visit with appropriate professionalism and regard for confidentiality. Generally, this clause is invoked as part of the proposal evaluation process (i.e. pre-award). Post-award, during the standing offer term, HRCE would typically engage directly with the successful proponent (and any clients within HRCE or other approved public sector bodies that choose to use the standing offer) rather than contacting the proponent's other clients. In summary, Clause 2.20 empowers HRCE to independently verify bidder references and past work as needed during evaluation, and HRCE will do so judiciously in line with the RFSO's terms and any applicable confidentiality considerations.

7. *Section 4.1: Could HRCE please define "public sector environment"? For example, are municipalities, school boards, hospitals, agencies, or Crown corporations considered "public sector"?*

Response:

In the context of this RFSO, "public sector environment" refers broadly to government and public-sector organizational settings. This includes government departments at any level (municipal, provincial, or federal), as well as publicly funded agencies and entities such as school boards and educational institutions, health authorities or hospitals, Crown corporations, and similar public bodies. Essentially, any environment where the organization operates within the public sector (including the broader public sector) would satisfy the requirement for experience in a "public sector environment." The RFSO's evaluation criteria specifically ask for at least two years of experience conducting Fraud Risk Assessments in a public sector environment, so experience with clients like municipalities, regional education centres (school boards), government ministries, health care institutions, or Crown agencies would all be considered relevant public-sector experience. The intent is to ensure the proponent is familiar with the public sector's operational context, regulatory requirements, and challenges (e.g. government operations and handling confidential information as noted in the RFSO).

8. *Section 2.5: could HRCE provide more information about “Innovative Proposal”? Is it evaluated separately?*

Response:

Section 2.5 of the RFSO invites bidders to include an “Innovative Proposal” as part of their submission. An Innovative Proposal is defined as any new or innovative process or solution the proponent suggests that could be beneficial to HRCE, beyond the standard requirements. The RFSO requires that if provided, this Innovative Proposal must be presented separately in the bidder’s proposal and would only form part of the contract if specifically agreed to by HRCE (i.e., it is not automatically accepted when the main proposal is accepted). Regarding evaluation: the **Innovative Proposal is not assigned a separate point score in the published evaluation criteria (Section 2.10). However, HRCE reserves the right, under its discretionary evaluation powers, to consider a bidder’s innovative ideas as part of the overall best-value assessment. In other words, while there is no fixed weighting for an Innovative Proposal, a strong innovative element could enhance the proposal’s attractiveness in HRCE’s view. It will be evaluated qualitatively at HRCE’s sole discretion. To clarify, the Innovative Proposal is evaluated as a component of the proposal’s value-add and only implemented contractually if mutually agreed outside the core standing offer agreement. Bidders are encouraged to propose innovations, but these will be considered separately and are not scored separately in the initial evaluation.

9. *Can HRCE confirm its intended use of this standing offer (i.e., whether it is primarily for one organization-wide FRA or for multiple FRA engagements to be issued on an as-needed basis during the one-year term)?*

Response:

HRCE intends to use this standing offer to support one primary Fraud Risk Assessment during the one-year term. The standing offer may also be used to issue additional FRA engagements on an as-needed basis, subject to HRCE requirements and available funding. This RFSO may be leveraged by additional RCE’s in the Province and/or CSAP.

10. *How does HRCE anticipate issuing work under the standing offer (e.g., direct purchase orders, mini competitions among qualified vendors, or rotational allocation)?*

Response:

As identified in Section 1.3 of the RFP, the HRCE reserves the right to award the contract to one or more service providers who submit work for this RFP. The intent is to award one service provider. If awarded to more than one service provider, the award rationale would be based on the highest scoring vendors during the evaluation phase.

11. *Where multiple service providers are awarded a standing offer, how will HRCE determine which vendor receives a given FRA engagement?*

Response:

As advised in the above question, The intent is to award to one service provider. If awarded to more than one service provider, the award rationale would be based on the highest scoring vendors during the evaluation phase.

12. *Question regarding the Exemption of Mandatory WCB Coverage due to industry:*

Response:

Proponents are required to comply with all insurance and coverage requirements as outlined in the RFSO. Where a proponent is legally exempt from mandatory WCB coverage, HRCE will consider such exemptions on a case-by-case basis, provided satisfactory evidence of exemption is submitted.

13. *Our company does not operate automobiles. We can provide non-owned automobile insurance. Is this sufficient for your purposes?*

Response:

Yes, non-owned automobile insurance is acceptable for this RFSO.

14. *Section 9.0 notes that “there is one (1) Fraud Risk Assessment that would be required to be completed for the identified term.” Can HRCE confirm whether this refers to a single FRA engagement during the term, or a minimum baseline FRA with the possibility of additional FRAs?*

Response:

HRCE intends to use this standing offer to support one primary Fraud Risk Assessment during the one-year term. The standing offer may also be used to issue additional FRA engagements on an as-needed basis, subject to HRCE requirements and available funding. This RFSO may be leveraged by additional RCE's in the Province and/or CSAP.

15. *If additional FRAs are contemplated, will they be scoped similarly to the initial assessment or tailored to specific schools, functions, or risk areas?*

Response:

Scoped similarly to the initial assessment.

16. *Is the FRA expected to be organization-wide across HRCE, or focused on selected schools, departments, or processes?*

Response:

The standing offer is intended to cover fraud risk assessment services across the entire HRCE organization, including individual schools, supporting functions (departments), and central administration. Section 9.0 “Scope of Work” specifies that the FRA should span the entire organization by department, with special focus on areas handling funds or assets, ensuring no critical process or fraud risk domain is overlooked. In practical terms, this means any HRCE site or unit – from school-level operations to administrative and support departments – may be subject to FRA engagements under the standing offer as needed. Furthermore, as noted in the RFSO, HRCE reserves the right to add additional schools or offices to the contract at its discretion (e.g. if other HRCE sites or even other Regional Centres for Education require similar FRA services) at the same pricing and terms. The scope is organization-wide and flexible, allowing HRCE to utilize the FRA services across all relevant areas of its operations, however focus should be given to Central Office business processes.

17. *Can HRCE clarify whether the FRA will primarily address central / headquarters functions, individual schools, or both?*

Response:

The standing offer is intended to cover fraud risk assessment services across the entire HRCE organization, including individual schools, supporting functions (departments), and central administration. Section 9.0 “Scope of Work” specifies that the FRA should span the entire organization by department, with special focus on areas handling funds or assets, ensuring no critical process or fraud risk domain is overlooked. In practical terms, this means any HRCE site or unit – from school-level operations to administrative and support departments – may be subject to FRA engagements under the standing offer as needed. Furthermore, as noted in the RFSO, HRCE reserves the right to add additional schools or offices to the contract at its discretion (e.g. if other HRCE sites or even other Regional Centres for Education require similar FRA services) at the same pricing and terms. The scope is organization-wide and flexible, allowing HRCE to utilize the FRA services across all relevant areas of its operations, however focus should be given to Central Office business processes.

18. *If the FRA includes schools, is HRCE able to provide an indicative list of schools or categories of schools (e.g., high schools vs. elementary) to be included?*

Response:

An indicative list of schools or categories of schools will be provided, where applicable, at the time of engagement. Proponents should not assume that all schools will be included.

19. *Should proponents assume physical site visits to schools, or does HRCE anticipate that components of the FRA may be conducted remotely?*

Response:

If required, the visits can be coordinated and conducted remotely.

20. *Does HRCE have an expected level of effort (e.g., duration, approximate timeline, or resource intensity) for the FRA engagement(s)?*

Response:

HRCE has not set a fixed annual budget or hours for this standing offer. The RFSO is structured as a standing offer with work on an “as needed” basis, and thus any volumes or values provided are estimates only. In fact, the RFSO explicitly states that the volume of work and frequency of services under the standing offer are not guaranteed and are subject to change. The Schedule A – Price Form reiterates that the estimated quantities/frequency are for information and may vary; “The HRCE does not guarantee the volume of work assigned to the successful proponent as part of this standing offer.”. Proponents should therefore propose their pricing (rates/fees) in accordance with the Price Form and be aware that actual expenditures will depend on HRCE’s requirements over the term. Any engagement of services will align with HRCE’s budget availability and priorities at HRCE’s sole discretion

21. *Are the deliverables listed in Section 9.0 expected for each FRA engagement, or only for the initial assessment?*

Response:

The deliverables outlined in Section 9.0 apply to the initial Fraud Risk Assessment. Deliverables for any additional FRA engagements will be defined in the applicable call-up.

22. *Does HRCE have any preferred frameworks or standards (e.g., COSO, ACFE, public-sector guidance) that proponents should align to, or is methodology left to the proponent’s discretion?*

Response:

HRCE does not prescribe a specific framework or standard. Proponents may propose methodologies they deem appropriate and aligned with public-sector best practices.

23. *Will HRCE provide existing documentation such as prior fraud risk assessments, internal audit reports, policies, or risk registers to leverage as inputs?*

Response:

HRCE will provide relevant existing documentation, where available and appropriate, to support the FRA engagement.

24. *Will HRCE assign a central project sponsor and coordinated access to department leaders to support timely interviews and workshops?*

Response:

HRCE will assign a primary point of contact and facilitate coordinated access to relevant department leaders to support the engagement.

25. *Will pricing in Schedule A be used as a fixed price per FRA, unit rates to be applied depending on scope, or indicative pricing subject to further scoping at call-up?*

Response:

Pricing in Schedule A will be used as the basis for pricing FRA engagements and may be applied depending on the approved scope of work at call-up.

26. *If additional FRAs are issued during the term, will they be priced strictly at the Schedule A rates, or can scope-based pricing adjustments be considered with HRCE approval?*

Response:

Pricing in Schedule A will be used as the basis for pricing FRA engagements and may be applied depending on the approved scope of work at call-up.

27. *Are proponents expected to include different pricing assumptions based on the size or complexity of the entity being assessed (e.g., single school vs. organization-wide)?*

Response:

Proponents are not required to include separate pricing assumptions based on size or complexity. Scope variations will be addressed at the call-up stage.

28. *Can HRCE clarify the expected governance structure for the FRA (e.g., involvement of senior management, audit committee, or board)?*

Response:

The governance structure will be determined by HRCE based on the scope of the engagement and will likely include involvement from senior management and other relevant stakeholders.

29. Who would typically act as HRCE's primary point(s) of contact for FRA engagements?

Response:

A designated HRCE staff member will serve as the primary point of contact for each FRA engagement. At this juncture, contact will be with Director, Financial Services.

RFSO# 4283 - End of Addendum #1

PLEASE SIGN BELOW AND RETURN WITH BID DOCUMENTS:

Signature

Company Name