**Request for Proposals to Provide Services**

Creating a Municipal Civility & Anti-Harassment Strategy

Proposal submission deadline @ 4:00 p.m. ET

on Thursday, March 20, 2025

# Context

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) is issuing this request for proposals (RFP) to develop a comprehensive strategy to support AMO and its member municipalities to promote civility and respect for municipal officials (current elected officials, election candidates, and municipal staff). The strategy will include identifying resources, tools, and education to support AMO members.

The political environment that Ontario’s municipal officials operate in has changed and continues to change. AMO is seeking an organization that will help us take a leadership role to addressing and hopefully turn around incivility, harassment and threatening behaviour and language that is increasingly prevalent in municipal politics and service delivery in Ontario. Our ideal proponent is a forward-thinking, innovative, and committed organization to help us provide municipally elected officials and staff with the tools, resources, and training to foster civility and combat harassment.

The important role of municipal councils in Canada’s political landscape is a longstanding priority of AMO’s work. In recent years, one of our member priorities has been to advocate for strengthened accountability measures that support appropriate conduct and behaviour of those elected to council. This work has primarily progressed through policy and advocacy work related to *Municipal Act* accountability mechanisms, namely Municipal Codes of Conduct and Integrity Commissioners, and through education programming for Council members.

In 2022, the AMO Board of Directors approved two four-year projects: the Healthy Democracy Project and the Workforce Development Project. The objectives of both these projects align around strengthening municipal governance and the value and interest of municipalities as a critical order of government and a destination for meaningful careers. Each project identified declining civility, challenging workplace relationships, toxicity, harassment, and discrimination as issues that negatively impact municipal governance, the number and diversity of Council candidates, and municipal employee recruitment and retention.

We are now looking to advance these priorities through the Healthy Democracy Project and Workforce Development Project with something additional, significant, and different. We are looking for a strategy that will resonate with our members and those in community.

## Problem Scope

When considering civility and toxic and harassing behaviour, AMO considers the following dynamics:

* Council member – Council member: Elected officials and their interpersonal relationships
* Council member (or candidate) – municipal staff: Elected officials or candidates and their working relationships with municipal staff
* Council member (or candidate) – residents: Elected officials or candidates and their interactions with residents, whether at official municipal events or meetings, at community events, or online
* Municipal staff – residents: Municipal staff and their interactions with residents when providing municipal services

There are two key areas to examine regarding where incivility, and harassing and threatening behaviour can manifest and affect municipal officials:

* Online/social media interactions: primarily citizens posting to or about Council members, candidates, or municipal staff
* Interpersonal interactions: harassment, discrimination, threats, and intimidation (including physical violence)

The successful proponent will conduct research, develop a strategy, and identify resources so that AMO can support our members with:

* Avoiding harassment;
* Coping with harassing behaviour (resilience strategies; how to take care of oneself in person and online);
* Supporting individuals who experience toxic and harassing behaviour (bystander/allyship strategies; how colleagues can support each other);
* Improving enforcement using existing mechanisms (municipal Codes of Conduct, Integrity Commissioners, policing, advocating for provincial and federal legislation);
* Building partnerships and supporting a culture shift where incivility and harassment are not acceptable.
* Promoting and celebrating positive relationships, community building, and conflict resolution.

## Organizational Overview

AMO is the most influential municipal public policy and advocacy organization in the province. AMO is non-partisan and we play a critical role in the policy and democratic landscape in Ontario. Our mission is to support and enhance strong and effective municipal government in Ontario and to promote the value of the municipal order of government as a vital and essential component of Canada’s political system as well as the social and economic sustainability of Ontario.

AMO works to make municipal governments stronger and more effective. AMO is a membership-based organization that represents municipal governments (i.e. councils) in Ontario. With AMO’s leadership, Ontario’s 444 municipalities work together to achieve shared goals and meet common challenges.

AMO is governed by a 47-member board providing equitable provincial representation through seven caucuses that represent the different regions, population sizes, and governing structures of Ontario’s municipalities.

Through our policy development, business services, conferences, and education programs, AMO provides municipal councils and officials with tools to succeed, and programs to help maximize the effective use of scarce resources.

At a high level, AMO’s key activities include:

* Undertaking policy development and analysis as the basis for advocacy with the Province and outreach to other organizations.
* Utilizing a task force approach by topic/issue, which involves officials from member municipalities with different expertise as needed; this extends our reach with members and increases organizational capacity and access to expertise.
* Meeting monthly with members of Provincial Cabinet on specific matters (through our legislated Memorandum of Understanding); opportunity to influence government policy before it goes to Cabinet.
* Informing and educating elected officials through annual conferences, symposiums, webinars, and educational workshops.
* Developing and marketing innovative and beneficial services to the municipal sector.
* Communication systems for timely conveyance of information; weekly AMO Watch File.

## AMO’s Healthy Democracy Project

AMO’s [Healthy Democracy Project](https://www.amo.on.ca/healthy-democracy) promotes the value and importance of municipal governments in Ontario's political system, including the importance of diversity of leadership and perspectives. The Project builds on AMO’s 2021 -2022 **We All Win** campaign and works to:

* Attract more diverse candidates to municipal office.
* Support elected officials to be equity-informed leaders.
* Promote more respect for the people engaged in democratic processes.
* Encourage greater participation in local democracy and an increase in voter turnout.
* Promote greater civic engagement and greater awareness of the role of municipal government.

The Healthy Democracy Project is guided by an Advisory Group, which provides strategic advice on the project’s direction, research, and initiatives. The Group includes previous and current elected officials, AMCTO, OPSBA, candidate support organizations, and national equity-focused organizations.

## AMO’s Municipal Workforce Development Project

AMO launched its [Municipal Workforce Development Project](https://www.amo.on.ca/about-us/programs/municipal-workforce-development) to identify and implement actions it can take alongside its partners to support municipalities with their workforce challenges. Ontario’s municipalities rely on over 235,000 employees from a variety of professions and fields to build and maintain local infrastructure and deliver local services that residents rely on every day.

Over the course of 2023 and 2024, AMO conducted stakeholder engagement and strategic planning to develop a roadmap of actions it will take to support municipalities with employee attraction and retention. This work was guided by an Advisory Group comprised of senior municipal administrators, municipal staff associations, post-secondary associations, and representatives from OMERS (the municipal defined benefit pension plan administrator) and CUPE (the labour union representing the largest number of municipal workers). One of roadmap priorities is to: “protect municipal employees from abuse and harassment and promote respectful civic engagement.”

## Scope of Work

AMO’s Municipal Civility and Anti-Harassment Strategy is to affect positive change on Ontario’s municipal democratic environment. As indicated, AMO is seeking services to support its leadership in a space that we believe will be ground**-**breaking and influential.

You will enable us to support our members in an increasingly polarized and toxic political environment. The expertise and experience you bring to the table will help us in demonstrating the impact, change**,** and support for our members in a meaningful and measurable way.

The successful proponent will:

**Research & engagement**

* Work with AMO staff to refine goals and objectives for this project and refine key research questions and problem statements
* Conduct a literature review/environmental scan of Ontario, Canada, and other jurisdictions on the subjects of: promoting civility and preventing harassment in local government to support common understanding of the problem, its scale, strategies and solutions to address the problem
* Engagement with the various stakeholders impacted by incivility in local government or working to address harassment and toxicity
* If deemed necessary, create a research plan for primary research and engage in surveys or other engagement, with the support and coordination of AMO staff, to supplement secondary research

**Strategy development**

* Provide a detailed report for AMO’s internal use with the information and data from the environment scan and primary research
* Recommend measurements to determine change and impact of strategies and tools
* Identify potential partners, resources, tools, and services for AMO’s consideration and pursuit
* Work with AMO staff to develop a public-facing document that outlines the findings from research and recommendations for AMO as an association and municipalities, Council members, candidates, and municipal staff

**Deliverables and Timelines**:

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| **Deliverable** | **Deadline** |
| Project Workplan | Mid April |
| Research Findings report  | End May |
| Recommendations and draft strategy  | End of June |
| Final Strategy review and public facing document | Early August |
| Final Strategy  | September |

AMO values and relies on the working relationships with our consultants. Key to the success of this project will be our relationship with the successful firm. Regular meetings and updates will be required.

# Response and Selection Details

This document acts as a guide for interested companies for the submission process. AMO will manage the process and will also collect and evaluate all RFP responses. We will be responsible for all communications regarding the RFP, as well as ensuring that all the required information for the RFP is received.

All responses to this RFP will be treated in a confidential manner.

All expenses associated with proposals are the responsibility of the respondent (consultancy firm). This RFP is not an offer to enter into an agreement with any party but rather, it is a request to receive proposals from respondents interested in providing the service specified herein. AMO reserves the right to reject any proposal, in whole or part, and/or to enter into agreements to provide services with any party.

This process may include follow-up meetings for exploration and clarification on submissions.

In addition to factors outlined above, in your submission, you will need to consider and demonstrate your approach to the following:

* **Research**: Your research approach and how you will conduct research that will be relevant to the context of AMO as an organization and its membership. This can include multi-jurisdictional, actions by comparable membership associations, academic institutions, community organizations, and civil society groups. Findings will be summarized.
* **Strategy Development**: What will be your approach to developing a strategy that has not been undertaken before? What insight and information will you be seeking through the strategy? Where will you seek information and from whom/which organizations? Findings will be summarized.
* **Final Strategy**: Demonstrate how your research and strategy development will be developed into a clear, concise, and actionable plan for AMO to support its members.
* Include your approach and timelines for the above.

**Questions:**

* Questions to be received no later than 4:00 p.m. ET March 6, 2025, via email at: membershipRFP@amo.on.ca.
* AMO will consolidate all questions and answers in one document and circulate to proponents and post on AMO’s website by 4:00 p.m. ET March 10, 2025.
* Proponents must confirm receipt of RFP question and answer document in their submission.

## Scope and Specification

Your response to this RFP should include:

**Part A**:

* Project scope and summary of anticipated timeline for work to complete.
* Approach to work, project management and engagement (staff and stakeholder, etc.).
* Identification of key staff and role to lead and oversee the project.
* Past project summaries with references (3).

**Part B**:

* Cost summary of project including suggested payment schedule linked to deliverables.

## Key Dates

* RFP issued: February 20, 2025
* Questions/clarifications due for response: March 6, 2025, 4:00 p.m. ET
* Responses to questions circulated and posted: March 10, 2025, 4:00 p.m. (at latest)
* Full RFP submissions due: March 20, 2025, 4:00 p.m. ET
* Evaluation and interviews (if necessary) to be scheduled

As a not-for-profit, member-based organization, costs are an important consideration to AMO.

## Project Timelines

**Date RFP Issued:** February 20, 2025

**Submission Due Date:** March 20, 2025, 4:00 p.m. ET

* Email submissions to membershipRFP@amo.on.ca.
* Submissions will be in two Parts as per the RFP: Part A and Part B Deliverables:
* Note: Only electronic submissions in English will be accepted.

**Submission Length:** up to 15 pages

**Project Start Date:** Mid April 2025

**Project End Date:** September 2025

## Selection Criteria

Selection of a firm will be based on, but not necessarily limited to, the following:

* Ability to provide expert advice and insights pertaining to research required to create a thoughtful and innovative the strategy.
* Relevant communication and strategic planning experience and expertise related to the political and municipal environment.
* Ability to provide competitive fees for the type of services required.
* Understanding of non-profit membership associations and ability to support staff with advising the AMO Board of Directors.
* Ability to provide quality service and be responsive in dealing with AMO staff throughout the project.

## Scoring

Submissions will be scored in a two-phase evaluation:

* Phase one scores Part A of the submission.
* Phase two scores Part B of the submission—price evaluation.

For vendors to proceed to price evaluation, proponents must achieve a minimum score of 60 out of 75 for Part A of their submission.

The successful submission will be selected based on the combined score from initial overall scoring and then onto Parts A and B if successful.

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| **Minimum Qualifications** | **Scoring** |
| Research, engagement, and deliverable requirements | Pass/Fail |
| Pricing proposal | Rate 1-10 |
| Management proposal | Rate 1-10 |
| Technical response requirements (tools) | Rate 1-10 |
| **TOTAL** |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Point Rated Criteria** | **Points** |
| **Part A** |  |
| Organizational profile, experience, and qualifications | 15 |
| Team experience with strategy interventions, and positive solutions in political/public/municipal environments | 15 |
| Approach to research and recommendations development | 20 |
| Approach to strategy development | 20 |
| Approach to project management and working with AMO staff | 5 |
| **Part B** |  |
| Cost of summary of project | 25 |

## Confidentiality

All documents and information obtained by proponents in connection with this Request for Proposal are the exclusive property of AMO and therefore must be treated in strict confidence and not be used for any purpose other than to respond to this Request for Proposal and to fulfill the obligations of any contract, which may be subsequently awarded.

As well, information contained in this Request for Proposal, or acquired by the proponent in further negotiations, either in writing, orally, or through observation relative to the operation of AMO organizations, is considered strictly confidential. Except for use in the preparation of proposals, information concerning AMO organizations cannot be used or disclosed in any way without prior written approval.

## Rights and Reserved by AMO

* Request written clarification or the submission of supplementary written information or in person meeting in relation to the clarification request from any Proponent and incorporate a Proponent’s response to that request for clarification into the Proponent’s Proposal
* Adjust a Proponent’s scoring or reject a Proponent’s Proposal on the basis of information provided by a proponent pursuant to AMO exercising its clarification rights under this RFP process and other relevant information that arises during this RFP process.
* Waive formalities and accept Proposals which substantially comply with the requirements of this RFP.
* Verify with any Proponent or with a third party any information set out in a Proposal.
* Disqualify any Proponent whose Proposal contains misrepresentations or any other inaccurate or misleading information.
* Select any Proponent other than the proponent whose proposal reflects the lowest cost to AMO or the highest overall score.
* Cancel this RFP process at any stage without award.
* Cancel this RFP process at any stage and issue a new RFP for the same or similar goods and services.
* Accept any proposal in whole or in part.
* Discuss with any Proponent different or additional terms to those contemplated in this RFP or in any proponent’s proposal.
* If a single Proposal is received:
	+ reject the Proposal of the sole Proponent and cancel this RFP process or
	+ enter into direct negotiations with the sole Proponent.
* Reject any or all Proposals in its absolute discretion.
* Negotiate in respect of any term or condition proposed by the Proponent in its Proposal, whether a business or legal term or condition or otherwise
* And these reserved rights are in addition to any other express rights or any other rights which may be implied in the circumstances.

## Other Terms and Conditions

* Any contracts with successful proponent will be governed by the laws of Ontario.
* Scope of services may be refined during negotiation of the contracts.
* AMO is not to be considered an employer to the successful proponent nor to such proponent’s personnel or staff for any work or services.
* The proponent agrees to avoid any conflict of interest in the performance of its contractual obligations, disclose to AMO without delay any actual or potential conflict of interest that may arise, and comply with the requirements imposed by AMO to resolve the conflict of interest. AMO organizations may immediately terminate the agreement, upon giving written notice to the proponent, if in the reasonable opinion of AMO organizations; it is not possible to resolve the Proponent’s conflict of interest.
* No act or omission by AMO organizations will be construed by the Successful Proponent as a renunciation or waiver of any rights or recourses for any breach by the successful proponent of its obligations set out in this RFP and in the Contract, unless the AMO organization provided the successful proponent with an express waiver in writing.