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Greenbelt Foundation

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Request for Proposals – Program Review of Natural Asset Inventories Used to Support Municipal Natural Asset Management in Canada and Ontario

Introduction

Over the past 5 years the Greenbelt Foundation has shared a common goal and supported leading organizations and experts in Canada to support natural asset management (NAM) by local governments. *Municipal natural assets* refer to the stock of natural resources or ecosystems that a municipality, regional district, or other form of local government could rely upon or manage for the sustainable provision of one or more local government services and climate resilience.

There are numerous ways for local governments to manage natural assets and an urgency to address aging infrastructure and ecosystem decline. The Municipal Natural Asset Initiative (MNAI) uses methodologies and tools rooted in standard asset management plans and practices, refined through pilot projects and other initiatives. In a recent initiative, the *Municipal Natural Asset Acceleration Project*, over 30 Canadian municipalities applied MNAI's guidance, tools and resources to complete natural asset inventories.

While we have focused on mainstreaming NAM in the Greenbelt and Greater Golden Horseshoe Region (GGH), we recognize that the approaches, tools and lessons learned across the country contribute to success here. Establishing best practices or norms and standards for NAM is part of this work. Progress could see a rapid acceleration in municipal natural asset management planning.

The goal of this exercise is to conduct a program review of the methodology, tools and resources developed by MNAI that provide guidance to municipalities in completing natural asset *inventories*, and that were used in the *Municipal Natural Asset Acceleration Project*. The program review will 1) assess the effectiveness of the MNAI approach to guide creation and use of natural asset inventories 2) identify potential areas of improvement, and 3) inform the emergence of national norms and standards for municipal natural asset inventories.

The program review will be conducted with the municipal participants in the *municipal Natural Asset Acceleration Project*.

Background

“Natural assets” are the stock of natural resources and ecosystems that yield a flow of benefits to people. “Municipal natural assets” are relied upon or managed by local governments for the sustainable provision of one or more municipal services. Natural assets such as aquifers, forests, streams, riparian areas and foreshores can provide municipalities with vital services equivalent to those from many engineered assets. Emerging evidence shows that identifying, measuring and managing natural assets as part of an overall asset management strategy can save capital and operating costs and reduce risk. Local governments are finding that natural assets are resilient and adaptable to climate change. With effective monitoring, maintenance and rehabilitation now, natural assets can provide service and add value for decades in ways that many engineered assets cannot match.

MNAI developed a framework/ process for municipalities to complete natural asset inventories, a necessary first step to enabling NAM. Advisory services are provided through guidance materials and webinars; a series of templates determine a municipalities’ ‘readiness’ to conduct inventories and create an inventory; and an inventory dashboard and summary report provides municipalities with tools to continually expand and enhance their inventories and a road map utilize inventories in asset planning and decision-making.

An opportunity now also exists to develop a national standard for the methodology to complete municipal natural asset inventories. Early considerations include understanding what value or impact a standard may have on NAM and key elements to include in a standard.

Vendor Requirements

The Greenbelt Foundation is seeking expertise in conducting a program review of MNAI’s current approach to natural asset inventories. The chosen supplier will have:

- Extensive experience and demonstrated success in conducting program review processes.
- Extensive experience and success in designing program review processes to capture pertinent insights from stakeholders and enable proper analysis.
- Knowledge of municipal governance and asset management processes.

Scope of Project

1. The review will consider 30 Natural Asset inventories recently completed by the MNAI team.
2. Evaluate how natural asset inventories can support awareness and understanding of the value of municipal services provided by natural assets.
3. Evaluate how natural asset inventories are, or may be, integrated into municipal asset management and financial planning and decision-making and consider



whether municipalities across different provinces have the same experience with the MNAI approach.

4. Assess participants' views on whether the inventory project or approach supports improvements to:
 - Municipal decision making
 - Environmental and climate outcomes
 - Municipal finances
 - Public service delivery
5. Provide insights into understanding the need, benefits and key elements of developing norms and standards to guide NAM in municipalities.

Activities and Deliverables

- Review of project materials and interview with MNAI and Greenbelt Foundation.
- Draft survey and interview design for review by Greenbelt Foundation and MNAI
- Survey and interview municipal participants in the *Municipal Natural Asset Acceleration Project* to further assess the efficacy of the MNAI approach and potential results on service delivery
- Applicant can advise on other aspects of program review based on experience.
- Draft findings and recommendations for review by project partners.
- Finalize findings and recommendations for MNAI, Greenbelt Foundation and participating municipalities.

Project Timeline

The project will complete no later than December 10, 2021.

Project Budget

Proposals are anticipated with an approximate budget of \$20,000.

Proposal Requirements

Interested parties should submit proposals including the following information:

- Understanding of the project scope and requirements.
- Description of the candidate's or team's strengths and experience, relevant to this project.
- Description of proposed approach to organizing and managing activities. Proponents may suggest changes to the approach outlined in this RFP based on experience if they believe better outcomes will be achieved.
- Identification of software platform, if any, that may be used to conduct the program review.
- Roles and hours of each team member (if more than one).
- Project timeline.
- Proposed budget.



- Bio(s) and CV(s).
- Three relevant references.

Any questions and completed proposals should be directed to:

Thomas Bowers
Interim Director Research and Policy
Greenbelt Foundation
tbowers@greenbelt.ca

Proposals must be received by email no later than 5pm Friday, October 8, 2021.

It is recommended that proponents request a confirmation of receipt email.

Background Materials

See MNAI website (<https://mnai.ca/key-documents/>) for inventory examples. The 30 within the scope of this project are not published.

