



## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

### Almaguin Highlands Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan Update

**Issued by:** Almaguin Community Economic Development (ACED)

**Issue Date:** March 27, 2026

**Proposal Closing Date:** April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026 at 4:00 PM

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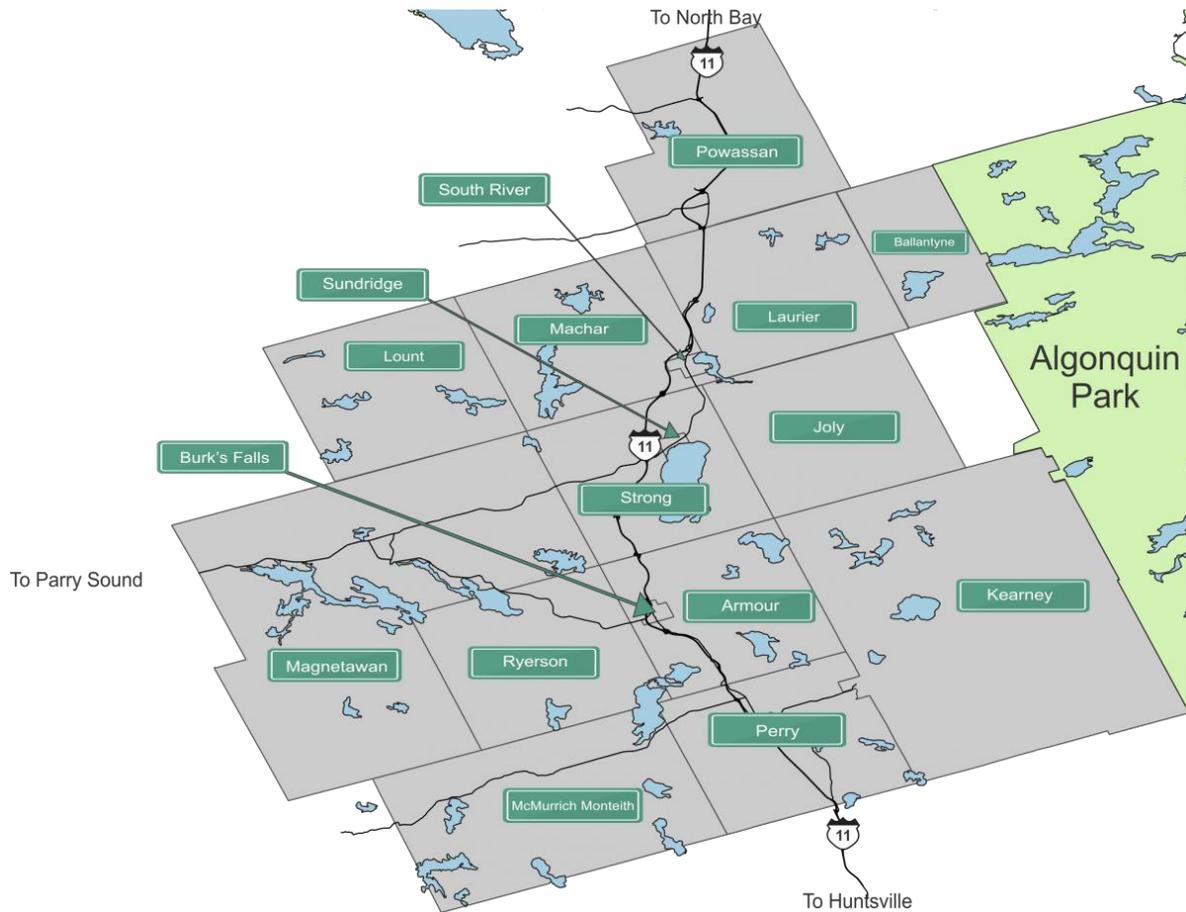
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## 1.0 Project Background

Armour Township, on behalf of municipal partners engaged in the Almaguin Community Economic Development (ACED) partnership, is seeking proposals from qualified consultants with expertise in regional economic development to update and refresh the Almaguin Regional Economic Development (RED) Plan, originally developed in 2018.



The existing RED Plan has guided strategic direction, collaboration, and investment decisions across the Almaguin region for several years. During that time, the region has experienced significant changes in market conditions, municipal capacity, governance models, funding programs, and community priorities. While the foundational direction of the RED Plan remains relevant, an update is required to ensure the strategy continues to be practical, inclusive, and aligned with current realities.

Due to resource constraints, this project is not intended to serve as a full rewrite of the RED Plan. The intent is to build on the existing framework, update the analysis, reassess priorities, and refine actions so that they remain achievable, valuable to all participating municipalities, and supportive of long-term regional sustainability.

For the purposes of this project, the Almaguin region includes the municipalities located within the Almaguin Highlands region, as illustrated in the accompanying map, with specific focus and

attention on municipalities that are currently participating in ACED's regional economic development service model.

## 1.1 Almaguin Economic Development Context

Economic development in the Almaguin Highlands has long been supported through collaboration between municipalities and regional partners. Over the past decade, local municipalities have increasingly recognized the benefits of working together to advance shared priorities, leverage limited resources, and undertake initiatives that would be difficult to accomplish individually.

In 2018, this collaborative approach resulted in the creation of the Almaguin Regional Economic Development (RED) Strategic Plan. The RED Plan was developed to align the priorities of municipalities and regional partners, reduce duplication of effort, and provide a coordinated strategy for economic development activities across the region. Since its completion, the RED Plan has helped guide initiatives related to business support, workforce development, regional marketing, tourism promotion, and investment attraction. ACED exists today under a joint service agreement between existing partners and is administered by the Township of Armour.

During the past several years, the economic development landscape in the region has continued to evolve. Changes in labour market conditions, demographic trends, municipal capacity, and available funding programs have created both new opportunities and new challenges for the Almaguin Highlands. At the same time, Almaguin Community Economic Development (ACED) has continued to work with municipal partners to deliver regional services and advance collaborative initiatives that support local businesses, communities, and economic growth.

It should also be noted that for various reasons, including financial and political, several municipalities have chosen to withdraw their participation in ACED while others have joined. While most municipalities see value in collaborative economic development efforts, concerns with contribution formulas and governance/organizational structures have affected ACED's operations over time.

While many of the priorities and actions identified in the 2018 RED Plan remain relevant today, there is a clear need to review and update the strategy to ensure that it reflects current conditions and continues to provide meaningful value to participating municipalities. Updating the RED Plan will allow the region to reaffirm shared priorities, update key economic insights, and refine action items so that they remain achievable and beneficial to communities across the Almaguin Highlands.

The updated RED Plan will continue to support a coordinated regional approach to economic development while providing practical guidance for municipalities and partners as they work together to strengthen the economic future of the region.

## 2.0 Project Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this project is to deliver an updated Regional Economic Development Plan that:

1. Updates and validates the strategic direction established in the 2018 RED Plan, rather than replacing it;
2. Reflects current economic conditions, labour force realities, demographic trends, and municipal capacity;
3. Ensures that recommended actions demonstrate clear and equitable value to municipalities of varying size and capacity;
4. Enhances value propositions that encourage municipal participation and/or senior-level government investment in regional economic development; and
5. Explores and evaluates potential organizational and governance structures that may support the long-term delivery of regional economic development services.

The updated plan should be practical, focused, and implementation-ready — a document that municipalities can see themselves in, support financially, and use to guide decision-making.

## 3.0 Scope of Work

The following scope outlines the minimum requirements for this project. Proponents may recommend refinements or enhancements, provided the core intent of a plan update (rather than redevelopment) is maintained.

### 3.1 Review of Existing RED Plan and Supporting Materials

The successful proponent will conduct a thorough review of:

- [The 2018 Almaguin RED Plan](#);
- [Background studies, data, and reports](#) used to inform the original plan; and
- Relevant local economic development strategies, studies, and initiatives completed since 2018.

The review should identify:

- What remains relevant and effective;
- What requires updating or recalibration; and
- What gaps or emerging issues should be addressed through the update.

### 3.2 Updated Situational Analysis (Staff-Supported)

An updated situational analysis is required. However, this phase is intended to be collaborative and efficient, with ACED staff providing support in data collection, background research, and local intelligence wherever possible.

The situational analysis should include, at a minimum:

- Updated demographic and population trends;
- Labour force and workforce availability analysis;
- Key economic drivers and sector considerations;
- Municipal capacity and service delivery realities; and
- External factors influencing regional economic development.

Proponents are expected to clearly outline how staff involvement will be incorporated to avoid duplication of effort and to maximize value.

### 3.3 Engagement and Validation

Targeted engagement will be required to validate findings and test updated priorities. Engagement should be purposeful and proportionate to the scope of a plan update.

This may include:

- Municipal elected officials and senior staff;
- Economic development partners and service organizations;
- Key sector representatives or employers; and
- Funding or program delivery stakeholders, where appropriate.

The objective is not to re-consult broadly, but to ensure the updated plan reflects current priorities and experiences regional buy-in. Engagement activities should be focused and efficient. It is anticipated that consultation will primarily occur through targeted interviews, small stakeholder meetings, or virtual engagement sessions coordinated with ACED staff.

### 3.4 Update of Strategic Priorities and Action Plan

Building on the existing RED Plan framework, the consultant will:

- Review and refine strategic pillars, goals, and priorities;
- Update and re-prioritize action items;
- Ensure actions are realistic, scalable, and clearly beneficial across the region;
- Identify opportunities to strengthen collaboration and shared investment; and
- Align actions with potential funding programs and partnerships.

Action items should:

- Clearly articulate value to participating municipalities;
- Consider differing municipal capacities;
- Include high-level implementation considerations; and
- Support the case for sustained or expanded regional participation.

### 3.5 Organizational and Governance Structure Review

As part of the update, the consultant will investigate and assess potential organizational structures for delivering regional economic development services, such as:

- Municipal service corporations;
- Shared-service or inter-municipal models;
- Non-profit or hybrid delivery structures; and
- Other relevant governance approaches.

This review should outline:

- Advantages and limitations of each model;
- Alignment with the Almaguin context;
- Implications for funding, accountability, and participation; and
- High-level considerations for future decision-making.

This review is intended to provide strategic considerations rather than a detailed governance implementation plan.

### 3.6 Final Deliverables

The final deliverables will include:

- An updated Almaguin Regional Economic Development Plan;
- A concise executive summary suitable for Council and funding audiences; and
- A presentation of findings and recommendations to ACED and municipal partners.

## 4.0 Information and Instructions

### 4.1 Definitions

Each company receiving this Request for Proposal (RFP) will be referred to as a respondent. A Respondent's proposal in response to this Request for Proposal will be referred to as a proposal.

### 4.2 Closing Date and Time

Proposals must be received by the Director of Economic Development before 4:00 p.m. local time on April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

The Township of Armour will not accept submission of any proposals after the closing date and time.

### 4.3 Proposal Submission

Respondents will be required to submit their proposal electronically via email to [director@explorealmaguin.ca](mailto:director@explorealmaguin.ca). Please include “Almaguin RED Plan Update” in the subject line. It is recommended that proposals be submitted on the day of the submission deadline (April 17, 2026).

Proposals received via email before April 17, 2026 will be securely retained unopened until the submission deadline has passed. Proposals that reach the Township of Armour after the closing date and/or time will not be accepted.

### 4.4 Proposal Contents

Proposals must include the following components, each in appropriate detail:

- An overview of the consultant submitting the proposal, along with an overview of any other firms which will be taking part in the work on behalf of the primary Respondent, and their legal/contractual relationship with the prime firm.
- An overview outlining experience in projects similar to the one requested in this document, including references that outline previous projects of a similar nature that have been successfully completed. This will include the client names and contact information including telephone numbers. The Township of Armour reserves the right to contact these references where appropriate.
- Resumes of the Project Manager and any other staff proposed to be working on the project. The resumes should identify achievements relevant to the project at hand.
- An indication of the Respondent’s understanding of project scope and requirements, including how each of the specific requirements will be performed.
- A suggested timetable for completing the project. Proposed meeting dates, other key events and major project deliverables should be identified on the project timetable.
- A breakdown of all project costs, excluding taxes.
- Respondents may include any additional information regarding their firm and/or services that may prove beneficial to the evaluation of the proposal. These would be provided in the form of appendices.

### 4.5 Pricing and Additional Work

The Respondent will provide a Guaranteed Maximum Price for all project work and shall abide by the price stated. No further payments beyond the contract amount will be made for any additional services required to provide a satisfactory deliverable. If additional requirements are requested by the Township of Armour beyond the original scope of work described in this RFP, the cost of these services would be negotiated between the Township of Armour and the company that has been selected to perform the work. Any additional work will only be undertaken based on a request in writing from the Township of Armour.

#### 4.6 Invoicing

Respondents are to include an overview of their invoicing expectations in their RFP. Invoices should clearly state the work performed. It should be noted that the Township of Armour's standard terms of payment are net thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the invoice.

#### 4.7 Changes to the Proposal

Respondents may not make modifications to their proposals after the proposal submission date.

#### 4.8 Township's Internal Use of the Proposal

The Township of Armour may reproduce the Respondent's proposal and any supporting documentation for internal use.

#### 4.9 Errors and Omissions

The Township of Armour will not be held liable for any errors or omissions in any part of this RFP. While the Township of Armour have used considerable efforts to ensure an accurate representation of information in this RFP, the information contained herein is supplied solely as a guideline for Respondents. The information is not guaranteed or warranted to be accurate by the Township of Armour, nor is it necessarily comprehensive or exhaustive. Nothing in the RFP is intended to relieve Respondents from forming their own opinions and conclusions with respect to the matters addressed in the RFP.

Should a Respondent find omissions from or discrepancies in any of the proposal documents or should they be in doubt as to the meaning of any part of such documents, they should notify the Director without delay. If the Township of Armour consider that a correction, explanation or interpretation is necessary or desirable, an addendum will be issued and posted on the Township of Armour's website.

No oral explanation or interpretation will modify any of the requirements or provisions of the proposal documents.

#### 4.10 Addenda

If required, addenda will be posted on the Township of Armour and Almaguin Community Economic Development Websites: [www.armourtownship.ca](http://www.armourtownship.ca), [www.explorealmaguin.ca](http://www.explorealmaguin.ca).

It is the Respondent's responsibility to ensure all addenda have been read and noted.

#### 4.11 Respondent Expense

Any expenses incurred by the Respondent in the preparation of the proposal submission are entirely the responsibility of the Respondent and will not be charged to the Township of Armour.

## 4.12 Acceptance or Rejection of Proposals

The Township of Armour reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to waive formalities as the interests of the Township of Armour may require without stating reasons.

Notwithstanding and without restricting the generality of the statement immediately above, the Township of Armour will not be required to award and accept a proposal:

- When only one (1) proposal has been received as a result of the current Request for Proposals;
- Based on price (IE: the lowest price);
- Where the costs of all proposals are significantly higher than the budget for the project.
- When all proposals received fail to comply with the specifications or proposal terms and conditions;
- Where a change in the scope of work or specifications is required; and/or
- Where the proposal documents do not state a definite work schedule and a submitted proposal is based on an unreasonable work schedule.

The Township of Armour will not be responsible for any liabilities, costs, expenses, loss or damage incurred, sustained or suffered by any Respondent by reason of the acceptance or the non-acceptance by the Township of Armour of any proposal or by reason of any delay in the acceptance of a proposal except as provided in the proposal document.

## 4.13 Proposal Award Procedures

The Director of Economic Development will notify the successful Respondent of the award within by April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026 Meeting unless otherwise communicated.

Notice of acceptance of the proposal will be by telephone and written notice.

Immediately after acceptance of the proposal by the Township of Armour, the successful Respondent will provide the Township of Armour with any required documents within fourteen (14) calendar days of the date of notification of award.

#### 4.14 Responsibility for Damages

The successful proponent shall be responsible for all loss, damage, or injury to persons or property arising from the negligent acts, errors, omissions, or willful misconduct of the proponent, its employees, agents, subcontractors, or anyone for whom it is legally responsible in the performance of the services under this Request for Proposals and any resulting agreement.

The successful proponent agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the Township of Armour, Almaguin Community Economic Development, and their respective elected officials, officers, employees, agents, and representatives from and against any and all claims, demands, losses, costs, damages, actions, causes of action, or expenses, including reasonable legal costs, arising out of or attributable to the negligent acts, errors, omissions, or willful misconduct of the successful proponent, its employees, agents, or subcontractors in connection with the performance of the services, except to the extent caused by the negligence or willful misconduct of the Township of Armour, Almaguin Community Economic Development, or their respective representatives.

The successful proponent shall promptly notify the Township of Armour of any claim, demand, incident, or circumstance that may give rise to a claim under this section.

#### 4.15 Protection of Work and Property

The successful Respondent will provide continuous and adequate protection of all work from damage and will protect the Township of Armour's property from injury or damage arising from or in connection with this work. The successful Respondent will make good any such damage or injury.

#### 4.16 Character and Employment of Workers

The successful proponent shall ensure that all personnel assigned to the project are qualified, competent, and able to perform the services in a professional and respectful manner. The Township of Armour may require the removal and replacement of any assigned personnel whose conduct, performance, or qualifications are reasonably considered unsatisfactory, provided such replacement does not impair the successful completion of the services.

#### 4.17 Regulation, Compliance and Legislation

The successful Respondent will ensure all services and products provided in respect to this proposal are in accordance with, and under authorization of all applicable authorities, municipal, provincial and/or federal legislation.

#### 4.18 Cancellation

The Township of Armour reserves the right to cancel this RFP at any time prior to the execution of a written agreement, without liability or obligation to any proponent.

Any agreement resulting from this RFP may be terminated by either party for cause upon written notice if the other party breaches a material term of the agreement and fails to remedy the breach within ten (10) days of receiving notice.

The Township of Armour may also terminate any resulting agreement at any time, without cause, upon providing ten (10) days' written notice to the successful proponent. In such case, the Township shall pay for services satisfactorily performed to the date of termination.

#### 4.19 Freedom of Information

Information submitted in response to this RFP is subject to applicable access to information and privacy legislation. Respondents should identify any information in their submission that they consider confidential, although the Township of Armour cannot guarantee that such information will be exempt from disclosure.

#### 4.20 Insurance

The successful Respondent will, throughout the term of the contract, obtain and maintain in force a General Liability Insurance of not less than \$2,000,000 (per occurrence) inclusive, to indemnify and hold harmless the Township of Armour against any liability for property damage or personal injury, including death which may arise from the Respondent's operations under this contract; and/or the successful Respondent will be required to provide Professional Liability Insurance coverage in the amount of not less than \$2,000,000.00 per occurrence.

#### 4.21 Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

The successful respondent will be required to submit to the Township a valid WSIB Clearance Certificate stating that all assessments the proponent is liable for under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act have been paid. A WSIB Clearance Certificate shall be provided upon awarding of the contract and prior to commencement of the project.

#### 4.22 Confidentiality Understanding

The successful Respondent and its employees may have access to information confidential to the Township of Armour.

This information may include, but is not limited to:

- terms of this agreement
- business methods and systems
- contractual terms
- pricing
- personal information, etc.

Subject to disclosure by force of law, the successful Respondent agrees that it and its employees who have access to this information will not either during the term of the agreement or at any time thereafter reveal to any third party any of this confidential information or use in any way, whether on the successful Respondent's behalf or on behalf of any third party, any such information.

The obligations of this section survive the expiration or termination of this agreement indefinitely.

#### 4.23 Ownership

The information, reports, documentation, plans, etc. that are a product of this award by the successful Respondent, including any relevant supporting documentation, will become the exclusive property of the Township of Armour. However, intellectual property, such as specific tools, templates, processes, etc. that the Respondent has provided as part of the deliverables for this project, remains the property of the Respondent and the Respondent is free to use any of such material in other contexts and with future clients.

### 5.0 Submission Requirements

Proposals must include the following:

- Proponent contact information;
- Description of relevant experience and qualifications;
- Demonstrated understanding of the Almaguin context and this assignment;
- Proposed methodology and work plan;
- Project timeline and key milestones;
- Detailed fee proposal, excluding HST; and
- Identification of any assumptions or exclusions.

Submissions must be received by April 17, 2026. Late submissions will not be accepted.

## 6.0 Evaluation Criteria

To ensure fair evaluation of all proposals, The Township of Armour will implement the following evaluation expectations and criteria:

<u>Understanding of Project</u>	25 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstration that the needs of the RFP are understood and will be met; any features or advantages uniquely proposed by the Proponent which have not been identified in the Project Requirements.</li></ul>	
<u>Proposal, Methodology</u>	40 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quality of the proposal, including level of detail, project plan including schedule is clear, comprehensive, and manageable.</li></ul>	
<u>Breakdown of Costs</u>	20 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Breakdown of costs is itemized, reasonable and within budget.</li></ul>	
<u>Experience with Similar Work</u>	15 Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstration that the proponent has valid experience with similar projects including working with municipalities, rural branding, marketing and promoting regional destinations, etc.</li></ul>	
<b>Maximum Points Available</b>	<b>100 points</b>

ACED reserves the right to interview one or more proponents as part of the evaluation process.

## 7.0 Anticipated Timeline

- RFP Issued: March 27, 2026
- Deadline for Questions: April 10, 2026 at 4:00PM
- Proposal Submission Deadline: April 17, 2026 at 3:00 PM
- Award: April 29, 2026
- Project Start: May 4, 2026
- Submission of Draft RED Plan: August 7, 2026
- Submission of Final RED Plan: September 11, 2026

## 8.0 Contact Information

All inquiries and submissions related to this RFP must be directed to:

**Courtney Metcalf**

Director, Almaguin Community Economic Development

director@explorealmaguin.ca

705-349-2710

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By submitting a proposal, proponents acknowledge that they have read, understood, and agreed to the terms of this Request for Proposals.