



The Town of Niagara-On-The-Lake

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Report:	CS-21-024	Committee Date:	August 30, 2021
		Due in Council:	August 30, 2021

Report To:	Corporate Services Advisory Committee
Subject:	Request for Proposal - New Town Website and Hosting – Evaluation & Selection Recommendation

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is respectfully recommended that:

- 1.1 Council direct Staff to award the contract to Upanup Studios Inc. for the development and hosting of a new Town website in the amount of \$81,450 + HST; and
- 1.2 the Lord Mayor and Clerk be authorized to execute all contract documents associated with this procurement.

2. PURPOSE / PROPOSAL

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval to award the contract for the development and hosting of a new Town website with the Selection Team's top Proponent, Upanup.

3. BACKGROUND

The Town strives to uphold customer service excellence and views the Town's website as another means to accomplish this goal by developing a creative and intuitive website that accurately captures the character of Niagara-on-the-Lake. A new Town Website will continue a culture of customer service excellence and further enhance communications delivery methods by providing a modern and intuitive website.

To support the Town's culture of customer service excellence and better serve the Niagara-on-the-Lake community, Town Staff is replacing the current website with a new and innovative site that includes a creative, intuitive and user-focused architecture that highlights the information users most want and need. The new website is intended to be engaging, easy to use and fully accessible, utilizing new and emerging technology to improve service levels and strengthen multimedia communication delivery methods.

In Fall 2020, a new funding stream was offered through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) called the Municipal Modernization Program. As part of the 2020

budget process, \$100,000 was earmarked from the one-time funding for a new Town website.

Report CS-21-004 Municipal Modernization Program Intake was approved at the March 22, 2021, Council Meeting and committed \$100,000 of that funding for the creation of a new Town website.

A project team was established and developed a Project Charter. This document helped define the Project and its core themes, provided the scope and tentative schedule, identified the project team composition and stakeholders, and served as the guiding document for the creation of the Request for Proposal for the Development and Hosting of a New Municipal Website.

The RFP process was endorsed by the Customer Experience Technology Committee on April 8, 2021:

Moved by Beckie Fox that the Customer Experience and Technology Committee endorse the new website RFP and recommend Staff proceed with the process.

Report CAO-21-003, Website Request for Proposal (RFP), was then approved in Council on April 26, 2021.

4. DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

Following Council's approval, Staff issued a Request for Proposal on the Town's eProcurement Website, notl.bidsandtenders.ca. The RFP was issued on April 27, 2021, and closed on June 11, 2021.

The Town received a total of sixteen (16) Proponent submissions.

A website Selection Team was created to evaluate the Proponent submissions. The composition of the Selection Team was decided upon to ensure the team would provide different perspectives that would address information technology, customer service and experience, front-line Staff and the public. The Town's Selection Team was composed of three (3) Staff members and one (1) representative of the Customer Experience and Technology Committee.

The Town conducted a robust RFP evaluation process, evaluating the proposals in the following stages:

- **Stage I – Mandatory Submission Requirements**
Stage I consisted of a review to determine which proposals complied with all of the mandatory submission requirements.

- **Stage II - Evaluation**
Mandatory Submission Requirements: This stage consisted of reviewing

the proposals to determine whether the mandatory technical requirements of the RFP were met.

Rated Criteria: This stage consisted of evaluating each qualified proposal on the basis of the rated criteria set out in the RFP Particulars and as per the table below.

Table 1: Rated Criteria

Rated Criteria Category	Weighting (Points)
Experience and Qualification	20
References	10
Ability to provide requested features and requirements	30
Methodology and Project Management Strategy	15
Subtotal	75
Pricing	25
Total Points	100

Proponents needed to score a minimum of 60% or 45 points overall on the technical proposal (subtotal) in order to proceed to the financial scoring portion (pricing).

- **Stage III - Pricing**

Stage III consisted of scoring the submitted pricing in accordance with the price evaluation method set out in the Pricing Form in the RFP.

- **Stage IV - Concurrent Negotiations and BAFO (Best And Final Offer)**

After completing Stage III, all scores from Stage II and Stage III were added together, and the Proponents were ranked based on their total scores.

The Town invited the top Proponents for a presentation of their proposals and a demonstration of their proposed product. The RFP allowed for up to a maximum of three ranked Proponents to be invited to demonstrate their product, with a final round for the top Proponents to submit their Best and Final Offer (BAFO). Submissions were given a final score based on the information received during the demonstration.

- **Stage V - Final Contract Negotiations**

Stage V consisted of final contract negotiations to bring to Council for final decision.

After following the RFP process, as detailed above, and extensive deliberations by the website selection team, Upanup Studios Inc. (Upanup) was ranked the top-scoring Proponent, scoring a final 97 out of 100 points.

Scoring for all of the Proponents who met the minimum threshold is as follows:

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Vendor	Final Scoring	Proposed Price (Pre-Tax)	Annual Hosting Fees
Upanup	97	\$63,250	\$6,000
Mad Hatter Tech Inc	90	\$59,925	\$8,840
eSolutions Group	87	\$88,995	\$14,000

As part of the RFP process, Proponents could provide optional pricing for web services that they felt would be a value-add to the Town. These items were identified as optional pricing to allow the Town flexibility to add enhanced website products while helping to ensure that the Bid Prices came within budget. Optional pricing for enhanced services from Upanup totalled \$12,200.

Upanup is recognized as an expert in digital solutions for local governments with extensive experience in Municipal website design and creation that includes the Towns of Blue Mountain, the Town of Collingwood, Townships of King and Clearview, City of Penticton and City of Abbotsford. The company holds multiple international awards. Upanup has:

- 300+ websites with 40+ Municipal website projects in its portfolio
- 150+ Clients
- 80+ Design and branding projects
- 10+ User experience specific projects
- 80+ international awards

Upanup outlined extensive projects and offered a number of references showing significant Municipal experience, clearly demonstrating an understanding of the Town's requirements.

The Request for Proposal (RFP) related to this project was in conformance with By-law No. 4701-14 as consolidated by By-law No. 4701A-18 to enact a Policy for the Procurement of Goods and Services for the Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

5. Strategic Plan

- Create a Culture of Customer Service Excellence**
 - Define, support and acknowledge customer service excellence
 - Support staff by providing comprehensive training
 - Use technology to improve levels of service
 - Other
- Strengthen 2-Way Communications**
 - Develop education plans to inform residents
 - Create a communications matrix
 - Strengthen communications delivery methods
 - Other
- Not Applicable**

6. OPTIONS

- 6.1 **Option 1:** Award the contract for the development of a new Town website to Upanup in the amount of \$81,450 + HST. **(As recommended)**
- 6.2 **Option 2:** Cancel the Request for Proposal. **(Not recommended)**

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Town's approved Capital Program has an upset limit budget of \$100,000 for the development of a new website, funded from a one-time Provincial Modernization Grant of \$725,000. Ongoing annual hosting fees will arise once the new website is live and will be considered in future Operating Budgets. Current yearly hosting fees for the Town's existing website amount to \$2,150 and will increase by \$3,850 to \$6,000. The first year of maintenance will be considered in scope of the project budget and funded through the Modernization Grant.

The pricing proposal includes all features as outlined within the scope of the RFP, including development and implementation of the Website, Web Hosting, all training and documentation and optional pricing for the development of a Municipal App as reflected below.

Part A - Project Phase	Cost
Implementation	\$63,250
Part B - Hosting	
Year 1 Maintenance, Support and Hosting	\$6,000
Part C - Optional Municipal App	
Initial Build	\$5,000
Monthly Maintenance (\$200/month)	\$7,200
Project Total	\$81,450
Total (inclusive of 1.76% tax)	\$82,885

The price falls within the allotted project budget with a positive variance of \$18,550 (pre-tax).

8. COMMUNICATIONS

Upon Council's approval, Staff will publish the award of the RFP and communicate the decision to all Proponents through the Town's eProcurement platform, Bids and Tenders.

Staff will then communicate with the successful Proponent and begin the website development process.

Additional communication will be forthcoming as it relates to public engagement and transitioning to the Town's new website.

9. CONCLUSION

Staff recommend that Upanup be awarded the Website RFP based on an extensive and robust evaluation process. Upanup has shown they can develop and hosting a new, modern and user-friendly Town website.

Respectfully submitted,



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Director, Corporate Services



Marnie Cluckie, MS.LOD, B.ARCH, B.ES
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