



**Request for Proposals:  
Strategic Planning Consultants**

Response due by **September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 4:00pm**

C/O Executive Coordinator, Jessica Gilmore, [jessicag@keys.ca](mailto:jessicag@keys.ca)

*Kingston Employment and Youth Services Inc. (aka KEYS Employment and Newcomer Services) is seeking proposals from experienced consultants or consulting firms to guide and conduct a comprehensive strategic planning process.*

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**Organization Profile**

Founded in 1983, KEYS Employment and Newcomer Services is a registered charity that empowers individuals and strengthens communities through inclusive employment, entrepreneurship, and newcomer services. For over 40 years, we have supported people of all ages and abilities at every stage of their career journey; from youth exploring their first job, to professionals re-entering the workforce, to newcomers building a life in Canada.

Our services are grounded in a deep commitment to equity, community engagement, and freedom of choice. We work closely with three core groups:

- Job Seekers: providing career coaching, job search support, skills training, and employment readiness services.



- Newcomers to Canada: offering English language instruction, settlement assistance, and connection to community resources.
- Employers: supporting workforce development through recruitment assistance, training programs, retention strategies, and small business support.

KEYS is guided by a clear vision: helping individuals realize their full potential within an economically and socially vibrant community. This vision is reflected in our ends statement: Connected People, Decent Work, Inclusive Communities.

We operate from our main office in downtown Kingston, with additional service locations at a Newcomer Services Hub in Kingston and two satellite offices in Gananoque and Sharbot Lake. Through collaborative partnerships and a client-centered approach, KEYS continues to play a vital role in building a resilient, inclusive, and thriving local community.

### **KEYS Strategic Planning Process: Proposed Phases and Deliverables**

KEYS envisions the strategic planning process unfolding across three key phases, with each phase resulting in a summary report capturing insights, progress, and next steps. The consultant will be expected to guide the process in a collaborative, inclusive, and outcomes-driven manner.

#### Phase 1: Discovery and Engagement

The consultant will conduct foundational research and engagement activities to inform the strategic planning process. Deliverables from this phase will include a summary report of findings and recommendations to shape the direction of the plan. Activities could include (but are not limited to):

- Organizational Review: Conduct a review of KEYS' history, vision and end statements, programming, and past strategic plans.
- Stakeholder Engagement: Conduct interviews, surveys, and focus groups with a wide range of stakeholders, including staff, Board Members, community partners, and service users.
- Environmental Scan: Analyze internal and external factors influencing KEYS' work, including community needs, community trends, policy and funding landscapes.
- SWOT Analysis: Assess KEYS' current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.



- Benchmarking: Compare KEYS to organizations with a similar mission to identify the best practices and areas for growth and/or development.

*Note: Proposals should demonstrate, where possible, how the consultant will incorporate outreach to Indigenous people and communities and accountability to truth and reconciliation principles throughout the engagement and planning process.*

### Phase 2: Strategic Plan Creation

The consultant will facilitate the creation of a clear and actionable strategic plan, aligned with KEYS' vision and responsive to stakeholder input and environmental context. Deliverables will include both a mid-point progress report and a draft strategic plan for Board approval. Activities will include:

- Facilitated Workshops: Guide strategic planning sessions with the leadership team and Board of Directors to refine the vision, define priorities, and build consensus.
- Strategic Framework Development: Support the development of the plan's key components, including:
  - Shared vision and goal alignment
  - Strategic priorities and SMART goals
  - Objectives, strategies, and specific tactics
  - Defined outcomes and measurable indicators
  - Roles and responsibilities for implementation
  - Timelines and resource/personnel allocation
- Progress Report: Provide a progress report at the mid-point of this phase to validate direction and ensure alignment before finalizing the plan.

### Phase 3: Implementation Support and Follow-Up (Optional)

Following the delivery of the final strategic plan, the consultant will offer limited, time-bound support to assist KEYS with early implementation efforts and to ensure continuity between planning and action. This support is intended to guide KEYS during the initial rollout and establish frameworks for measuring progress. Activities may include:

- Implementation Roadmap: A high-level roadmap outlining suggested timelines, responsible parties, and resource considerations to support plan execution.
- Leadership Check-ins: Facilitate follow-up meetings (e.g., at 3- and 6-month post-plan approval) with the KEYS team to:
  - Review implementation progress
  - Address emerging questions or challenges



- Refine priorities or timelines as needed

### **Timeline**

The term of engagement (without implementation support) is from October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025, until March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026, with the following major milestones as described below:

- RPF Issued: August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025
- Proposal Deadline: September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025
- Consultant Selection Finalized: October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025
- Project Start: October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025
- Strategic plan finalized: March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026
- Implementation Support provided until up to 6 months post plan finalization

### **Budget**

While a fixed budget has not been established for this project, cost will be considered as part of the selection process. Proposals should include a detailed fee structure that encompasses all services, incidentals, and HST. Consultants are encouraged to provide a breakdown of costs and any optional add-ons or phased approaches that may offer flexibility.

### **The Ideal Consultant**

We are seeking a consultant or consulting team who brings not only strong experience in strategic planning, but also an understanding and alignment with our organizational values, culture, and the communities we serve. We recognize that no one may embody all of the qualities listed below, and we encourage consultants with shared values and relevant experience to apply.

The ideal candidate will:

- Demonstrate deep respect for, and experience with, stakeholder engagement
- Value co-design and collaboration
- Understand the nuances of the non-profit and charitable sector, including the constraints and opportunities that shape strategic planning in community-based organizations



- Bring knowledge of our service areas and sectors, including employment and newcomer services
- Be familiar with the communities we serve, including Kingston, Gananoque, Sharbot Lake, and surrounding rural areas, and show sensitivity to the lived realities of people navigating employment barriers, migration, and resettlement.
- Demonstrate cultural humility and accountability, especially in engaging with Indigenous communities and integrating Truth and Reconciliation principles throughout the process
- Align with KEYS' values of integrity, inclusion, collaboration, accountability, and commitment to equity and community well-being.

### **Proposal Evaluation Criteria**

All proposals will be evaluated by a selection committee composed of KEYS staff members and members of the Board of Directors. The committee will assess proposals based on the criteria outlined below, with consideration given to both the quality of the proposal and the consultant's alignment with KEYS' values, priorities, and goals.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Weight</b>
Qualifications of the Consultant <i>Relevant experience, sector knowledge, and ability to lead inclusive, outcomes-driven processes.</i>	25%
Work Plan <i>Clarity, feasibility, alignment with KEYS' timelines, and thoughtfulness of approach.</i>	20%
Quality and content of proposal <i>Overall presentation, completeness, attention to detail, and ability to address RFP requirements</i>	15%
Equity, Inclusion and Community-Based Lens <i>Demonstrated an understanding of and commitment to equity, inclusion, cultural humility, and meaningful community engagement.</i>	25%
Cost <i>Overall value and clarity of pricing, and justification of cost relative to scope.</i>	15%



## **Instructions for Applicants**

All applicants are required to submit a proposal, 10 pages maximum (excluding cover page and appendices), outlining how you/your firm will undertake this project, including activities, timelines and pricing, along with an organizational or professional profile, or CV to [jessicag@keys.ca](mailto:jessicag@keys.ca) no later than September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 4:00pm.

Any questions regarding this RFP may be submitted to [jessicag@keys.ca](mailto:jessicag@keys.ca). Shortlisted consultants may be invited for a brief interview or presentation. Consultants will be selected by a committee made up of KEYS staff members and Board of Director members, based on overall budget, scope of proposal and project feasibility, consultant qualifications and firm capability, and applicants' alignment with our goals and knowledge of the sector.

KEYS is committed to an inclusive, barrier-free selection process. We will provide appropriate accommodation for applicants with disabilities. To obtain a copy of this RFP in an alternative format or to request any accommodation, please contact us directly through [jessicag@keys.ca](mailto:jessicag@keys.ca) or by phone at 613-546-5559 ext. 364. Information received relating to accommodation requests will be addressed confidentially.