

Memo
September 1, 2021



To: Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Council
From: Buy Social Canada

Recommendations for Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Indigenous Procurement Policy Developments Next Steps

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (Municipality) has taken multiple strides to demonstrate their commitment and to support the goals and ambitions of new relationships, engagement, and reconciliation with Indigenous communities and peoples. Over just the past few months the Municipality's commitments to Truth and Reconciliation included outreach and inclusion to Indigenous artists, recognition of Indigenous History Month, and naming of Kiyām Community Park.

The opportunity to further, long-term and significant economic and social value commitment to Truth and Reconciliation outcomes will be through the design and implementation of an Indigenous Procurement Policy.

The purpose of an Indigenous Procurement Policy will be to increase the number of contracts and the total dollar amount of contracts that the Municipality does with Indigenous owned businesses. The proposed Social Procurement program is supportive of these goals and contributes to these objectives. The development and implementation of an Indigenous Procurement Policy will further extend the capacity of the Municipality to leverage existing spending to achieve these goals.

Establishing the path, the engagement process, and meaningful metrics will be the first task of an Indigenous Procurement Task Force, the recommended staff resources and an Indigenous Procurement Consultant.

“Change like this is more than a Policy. Look for how you will measure it. Have a 5-year plan with annual actions and make sure you put this into peoples’ performance contracts. Need a detailed plan for the next year and plans to mature over time.” - Engagement participant

Indigenous Business Definition

The definition of Indigenous business in the policy will reflect the definition recommended for the Social Procurement program:

Indigenous Business - A business which is 51% or more owned, managed, and controlled by an Indigenous person.

An Indigenous Procurement Policy may include:

- Procurement strategies targeted to support Indigenous communities and businesses
- Set-aside program to direct contracts to Indigenous businesses under the Trade Agreement exceptions
- Inclusion of Indigenous participation evaluation criteria
- Defined goals, metrics, and reporting process

Implementation Strategy:

“The region is far along on the journey of industry doing business with Indigenous businesses. There is huge capacity in the region, with Indigenous businesses hiring more Indigenous employees than other business operators. Build on this wealth of capacity and practice.” - Engagement participant

We recommend taking the following steps, resourcing staff, and establishing a specific Indigenous Procurement Policy:

- 1) The first steps will be further engagement with Indigenous communities and businesses to assess opportunities to match demand opportunities with Indigenous business supply capacity. An engagement and participation strategy, which includes an Indigenous Procurement Task Force, should be designed collaboratively, and implemented.

“Community involvement and commitment. Let the surrounding Indigenous Nations and groups know the intentions of the procurement Policy and seek council with each Nation, and group's leaders and Elders. Having a committee with a few members from surrounding Indigenous groups to create the Policy would show that you are not only listening but hearing and understanding what we have to say.” - Engagement participant

- 2) Engage an Indigenous Procurement consultant to work with the local Indigenous communities and businesses to develop the Indigenous Procurement Policy and implementation plan. Buy Social Canada would be able to support this work but recommends an Indigenous person leads the project.

- 3) Work collectively with the local Indigenous communities and businesses and invest in resources and partnerships with other levels of governments to build business acumen and contracting capacity where needs are identified.

“Need to figure out how to create opportunities for businesses at all stages of maturity and size. The nature of the opportunities will dictate how successful it will be.” - Engagement participant

- 4) Work collectively and engage with Indigenous communities, businesses and associations regarding the procurement process design, opportunity identification, and establishment of meaningful metrics.
- 5) The Indigenous Procurement Policy should include a designation and objectives for a set-aside program and Indigenous participation evaluation criteria that complies with legal, trade agreement and local policy regulatory frameworks.

Given the strength and experience of the existing Indigenous business infrastructure and capacity, and the willingness of Council to further efforts of reconciliation and community building, the development of an Indigenous Procurement Policy, along with the supportive Procurement Policy and Social Procurement program, is a recommended next step.

Thank you and regards,

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Buy Social Canada