

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

ECE-2026-NAV

Project: Development of the Early Childhood Education Pathways Navigator Platform.

Issued By: Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan).

Funding Program: Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) – Sectoral Workforce Solutions Program (SWSP) – Building a Strong, Mobile and Sustainable Early Childhood Education Workforce.

Contract Value: Up to \$150,000 CAD (inclusive of all fees, expenses, and applicable taxes).

Contract Period: October 2026 to February 28, 2027.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) is seeking proposals from qualified consulting firms or individual consultants to design, develop, test, deploy, document, and transfer knowledge for the Early Childhood Education Pathways Navigator Platform ("the Platform").

The Platform is intended to serve as a national point of entry for individuals seeking information about education and career pathways in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) sector. Rather than functioning as a traditional searchable directory of programs, the Platform will provide a guided and personalized user experience that helps users identify the education, training, certification, and professional development opportunities most relevant to their circumstances and goals.

The Platform shall support informed decision-making by helping users understand not only what programs are available, but also why specific pathways may be most appropriate given their goals, experience, credentials, location, and desired timeline.



ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

Acronym	Definition
ACUFC	Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne
CCCF	Canadian Child Care Federation
CICan	Colleges and Institutes Canada
ECE	Early Childhood Education / Early Childhood Educator
EDIA	Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility
ESDC	Employment and Social Development Canada
LMI	Labour Market Information
PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition
RFP	Request for Proposal
SWSP	Sectoral Workforce Solutions Program
WCAG	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

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1. Overview

Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) is seeking proposals from qualified consulting firms or individual consultants to design, develop, test, deploy, document, and transfer knowledge for the Early Childhood Education Pathways Navigator Platform ("the Platform").

The Platform refers to the bilingual digital navigation solution that provides users with a personalized experience to explore education, certification, career-entry, and professional upskilling pathways in the Early Childhood Education sector. The Platform includes the user interface, navigation logic, recommendation engine, content architecture, reporting capabilities, and integration with CICan's underlying program data environment.

The selected respondent will be responsible for delivering a fully functional, production-ready solution, including all associated technical documentation, deployment, user testing, training, and knowledge transfer activities required to enable CICan to independently manage, maintain, and evolve the Platform following project completion.

The Platform is intended to serve as a national point of entry for individuals seeking information about education and career pathways in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) sector. Rather than functioning as a traditional searchable directory of programs, the Platform will provide a guided and personalized user experience that helps users identify the education, training, certification, and professional development opportunities most relevant to their circumstances and goals.

The Platform shall support informed decision-making by helping users understand not only what programs are available, but also why specific pathways may be most appropriate given their goals, experience, credentials, location, and desired timeline.

The Platform will:

- Ask users a short series of simple questions to identify their background, needs, goals, geographical location, and other relevant characteristics;
- Guide users toward learning, credentialing, employment-entry, and professional development pathways that align with their individual circumstances;
- Provide intelligent, personalized recommendations that connect users with relevant ECE education, training, certification, and upskilling opportunities;
- Support both entry into the ECE profession and ongoing career advancement for current ECE professionals;
- Leverage AI-enabled functionality, where appropriate, to enhance pathway discovery, improve recommendation quality, and personalize the user experience while respecting privacy and data governance requirements;
- Provide clear and actionable next steps that move users beyond information discovery and toward practical action, such as contacting an institution, exploring admissions requirements, registering for an information session, identifying credential recognition options, or generating a personalized learning plan;
- Present information through intuitive visualizations, comparisons, and pathway mapping tools that help users make informed decisions.

The Platform shall be designed to accommodate future growth, expansion of datasets, new user groups, and additional functionality while maintaining a consistent and accessible user experience across desktop, tablet, and mobile devices.

2. Target Users

The Platform is expected to support multiple user groups, including but not limited to:

Persona 1: Prospective Early Childhood Educators

- Individuals with no previous ECE education or professional experience who are considering entering the profession. This represents the Platform's primary target audience and includes learners from diverse backgrounds, including youth, career changers, newcomers, individuals from rural and remote communities, and members of equity-deserving groups, with particular attention to Indigenous, Black, racialized, and Francophone communities.

Persona 2: Current or Experienced Early Childhood Educators

- Individuals who already possess ECE education, credentials, and/or professional experience and are seeking to upskill, reskill, pursue specialization opportunities, obtain additional credentials, or advance their careers.

Persona 3: Employers and Sector Organizations

- Employers, sector organizations, and workforce partners seeking education, training, credentialing, and professional development opportunities for current or prospective employees, as well as information on workforce development pathways within the ECE sector.

3. Scope of Work and Technical Requirements

3.1 Core Deliverables

The successful respondent will be responsible for the following deliverables.

Deliverable 1: Discovery, Solution Design and Technical Architecture

The respondent shall:

- Conduct project initiation and requirements validation activities with CICan;
- Review available datasets, database structures, code, business requirements, and desired user journeys;
- Develop a proposed information architecture, user flow, solution architecture, and technical design;
- Produce wireframes, mockups, and functional specifications for review and approval by CICan;
- Recommend technology components required to support current and future Platform functionality.

Deliverables shall include:

- Technical architecture document;
- Functional requirements specification;
- User journey maps;
- Wireframes and design prototypes;
- Implementation plan and development roadmap.



Deliverable 2: Platform Development

The respondent shall design and develop the Early Childhood Education Pathways Navigator Platform.

The solution must:

- Be developed using Microsoft-based technologies and/or technologies compatible with the Microsoft ecosystem;
- Be capable of residing on CIGCan-managed infrastructure and servers;
- Integrate with Microsoft Dataverse, Dynamics, Power Platform environments, or comparable Microsoft-supported solutions;
- Incorporate a responsive user interface optimized for desktop, tablet, and mobile browsers;
- Support secure communication between the front-end interface and the underlying data environment;
- Allow CIGCan to administer, update, maintain, and customize the solution without ongoing third-party support;
- Be designed to support future expansion, additional datasets, additional user groups, and expanded functionality.

Deliverables shall include:

- Fully developed platform;
- Source code and configuration files;
- Database connection and query functionality;
- Administrative interface and content management capability;
- Deployment-ready production environment.

Deliverable 3: Pathway Recommendation and Decision-Support Engine

The respondent shall configure the Platform to interact with datasets provided by CIGCan.

The Platform must:

- Query and retrieve information from approved data sources;
- Generate pathway recommendations based on user inputs and business rules;
- Support structured and dynamic data querying;
- Accommodate ongoing updates, additions, modifications, and removals of records;
- Present information in an intuitive manner through structured results pages;
- Support data visualization using charts, graphs, tables, and comparative displays where appropriate.

CIGCan will provide datasets, supporting documentation, and existing Python code deemed necessary to support Platform functionality.



Respondents may identify and propose additional external datasets that could strengthen the user experience. Access to relevant supplementary datasets will be considered an asset.

Deliverable 4: User Experience and Interface Design

The respondent shall lead the design and development of the user interface in collaboration with CIGan.

The user experience shall:

- Provide a guided navigation experience rather than a static program directory;
- Present an equivalent user experience in English and French;
- Follow CIGan's visual identity, branding standards, and style guides;
- Support accessibility, usability, and intuitive navigation across all user groups;
- Present recommendations, pathways, comparisons, and next-step guidance through clear and engaging interfaces.

CIGan will provide:

- Branding and visual identity materials;
- Required graphic assets;
- Translation services and translated content;
- Access to user-testing participants.

Deliverable 5: User Testing and Optimization

The respondent shall plan, facilitate, and document user-testing activities.

Responsibilities shall include:

- Development of a testing methodology;
- Facilitation of prototype and usability testing sessions;
- Collection and analysis of user feedback;
- Identification of improvements and refinements;
- Implementation of approved adjustments prior to launch.

Deliverables shall include:

- User testing plan;
- User testing reports;
- Findings and recommendations;
- Final optimized user experience.



Deliverable 6: Accessibility, Privacy and Security Compliance

The Platform must:

- Comply with WCAG 2.0 Level AA accessibility requirements;
- Follow privacy-by-design principles;
- Limit the collection of personal information to that which is demonstrably necessary for the intended purpose;
- Ensure that personal information is collected by lawful and transparent means;
- Protect user data through industry-standard security practices;
- Support CICan's privacy policies and governance requirements.

Where user data persistence is required, the Platform shall provide secure passwordless access through:

- Time-limited, single-use authentication links delivered to verified email addresses;
- Automatic expiration following use or after a defined period;
- Protection against unauthorized access;
- No exposure of personal information within authentication links.

Deliverable 7: AI Functionality (**Optional**)

Respondents may propose artificial intelligence functionality where it provides meaningful value to users.

Any AI-enabled functionality must:

- Clearly demonstrate user benefit;
- Respect privacy and data-minimization principles;
- Comply with applicable Canadian privacy legislation;
- Align with CICan's AI Strategy, governance framework, and organizational policies;
- Be transparent and explainable to users and administrators.

Examples may include:

- Personalized pathway recommendations;
- Natural language search and discovery;
- Recommendation refinement;
- Content categorization and tagging.



Deliverable 8: Documentation, Training and Knowledge Transfer

The respondent shall provide sufficient documentation and training to enable CIGan staff to independently operate and maintain the Platform.

Deliverables shall include:

- Technical documentation;
- System architecture documentation;
- Data integration documentation;
- Administrator guides;
- Maintenance procedures;
- Training sessions for designated CIGan personnel;
- Knowledge-transfer workshops;
- Complete source code and configuration documentation.

Upon project completion, CIGan shall retain full ownership of all Platform deliverables, configurations, custom developments, documentation, and intellectual property created under the contract.

3.2 Minimum Technical Requirements

The proposed solution must:

- Be hosted within CIGan's technology environment;
- Be Microsoft-based or fully compatible with Microsoft's cloud and data ecosystem;
- Support integration with Dataverse, Dynamics and Power Platform environments;
- Be responsive across modern browsers and devices;
- Support bilingual content management and display;
- Support data querying and reporting;
- Present information through tables, visualizations, and dashboards as required;
- Enable future enhancements without significant redevelopment;
- Support role-based administrative access;
- Be scalable, secure, and maintainable.
- Allows users to securely access their saved data and previous queries through a time-limited, single-use link sent to their verified email address, without requiring a password. The link must expire after use or a defined period and must not expose personal information in the link itself.

4. Deliverable Acceptance Criteria

The purpose of the Deliverable Acceptance Criteria is to establish clear standards for the review, revision, approval, and acceptance of respondent deliverables. All deliverables shall be reviewed by CICan and project partners as appropriate. No deliverable shall be considered accepted until written approval has been issued by CICan.

4.1 Deliverable Acceptance Standards

Criteria	Description
Completeness	The deliverable addresses all relevant requirements, approved user journeys, functionality, documentation, and testing obligations.
Functionality	Approved functions operate correctly and consistently in the agreed environments.
Accuracy	Findings, analysis, and recommendations are supported by evidence and accepted research methodologies.
Accessibility	The platform and deliverables meet the accessibility standard specified in the RFP.
Security and Privacy	The deliverable satisfies the approved security, privacy, consent, and data-handling requirements.
Usability	Representative users can complete the priority user journeys and understand the recommended next steps.
Scalability	CICan receives the access, documentation, training, and technical assets required to operate and enhance the platform.

4.2 Deliverable Review Process

1. Submission: Respondent submits deliverable electronically.
2. Review: CICan reviews deliverable against acceptance criteria.
3. Consolidated Feedback: CICan provides written feedback.
4. Revision: Respondent addresses comments and resubmits deliverable.
5. Approval: CICan issues written acceptance.

5. RESPONDENT QUALIFICATIONS

The successful respondent shall possess the expertise, experience, and organizational capacity necessary to develop the ECE user platform.

5.1 Mandatory Requirements

Mandatory Criterion	Requirement
M1. Minimum Organizational Experience	The respondent must demonstrate a minimum of five (5) years of experience delivering digital platforms, web applications, portals, navigators, or similar technology solutions.
M2. Experience with Relevant Projects	The respondent must provide descriptions of at least three (3) projects completed within the last five (5) years involving the design, development, and implementation of user-facing digital platforms, portals, or navigation tools.
M3. Organizational Capacity	Demonstrated ability to complete the assignment within the required timeframe and budget.

5.2 Asset Qualifications

The following will be considered assets:

- Experience working with organizations in the education, training, workforce development, skills development, credentialing, or career pathways sectors;
- Experience designing solutions for diverse user groups and supporting inclusive, user-centred experiences;
- Experience working on projects serving diverse populations, including equity-deserving groups, newcomers, Indigenous Peoples, official language minority communities, or other underrepresented populations.
- Experience developing bilingual (English and French) digital products;
- Experience incorporating artificial intelligence or advanced recommendation functionality into user-facing digital solutions;
- Experience conducting user research, usability testing, and iterative product design.



6. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

6.1 Proposal structure and content

Proposals must contain sufficient detail to permit a comprehensive evaluation. The proposal shall consist of four sections.

Part A – Organizational Information

The proposal shall include:

- Legal organization name;
- Organizational profile;
- Mailing address;
- Website;
- Primary contact information;
- Number of years in operation.

Part B – Technical Proposal

Maximum Length:

- Twenty (20) pages excluding appendices.

The Technical Proposal shall include:

- **Understanding of the Assignment.** Demonstrated understanding of:
 - a. Project objectives, scope and deliverables,
 - b. User personas and their journeys,
 - c. Integration requirements with CICan's Programs Data, datasets, APIs, and Microsoft-based environment.
- **Workplan.** Including:
 - a. Deliverables;
 - b. Detailed Schedule for each deliverable;
 - c. Milestones;
 - d. Resource allocation.
- **Risk Management.** Identification of:
 - a. Risks;
 - b. Challenges;
 - c. Mitigation measures.
- **Team Structure.** Including:
 - a. Team members;
 - b. Roles and responsibilities;
 - c. Qualifications;

d. Availability.

Part C – Supporting Documentation

The proposal shall include:

- **Team Resumes:** Resumes for all proposed personnel.
- **References:** A minimum of 3 references from relevant projects completed within the last 5 years.
- **Project Samples:** A minimum of 1 relevant platform developed.

Part D – Financial Proposal

The Financial Proposal shall include:

- Fixed-price budget;
 - The maximum budget available for this assignment is: **\$150,000 CAD**, inclusive of all fees, expenses, and applicable taxes.
- Detailed budget breakdown;
 - The budget can only include the following categories:
 - Professional Fees: Labour associated with project delivery.
 - Technology and Software: Collaboration platforms, survey tools, analysis software.
 - Applicable Taxes.
 - The respondent shall submit a fixed-price proposal that includes:
 - a detailed breakdown of the hourly rates applicable to each proposed activity.
 - the proposed hourly rate and estimated hours for each team member.

6.2 Artificial Intelligence Disclosure

Respondents shall disclose any material use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in the preparation of:

- Proposal content;
- Technical submissions;
- Methodologies;
- Sample materials

Disclosure shall identify:

- AI tools utilized;
- Purpose of use;
- Extent of AI-generated content;
- Quality assurance measures applied.

The successful respondent shall remain fully responsible for the quality, originality, accuracy, and integrity of all submitted materials and deliverables.

7. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

7.1 Proposal evaluation process

Proposals will be evaluated using a two-stage process.

Stage 1 – Administrative Review

Pass / Fail. The proposal will be reviewed for:

- Completeness;
- Compliance with submission requirements;
- Mandatory requirements;
- Required documentation.

Only compliant proposals will proceed to Stage 2.

Stage 2 – Technical Evaluation

Criterion	Maximum Points
General Organizational Experience	20
Relevant Projects Experience	20
Clarity and Feasibility of the proposed approach	15
Quality of the proposal	15
Team Capacity and Qualifications	15
Workplan and Risk Management	15
Total	100

7.2 Minimum Technical Threshold

To be considered for award, a proposal must achieve a **minimum Technical Score of 70** out of 100 points.

7.3 Scoring Guide

Proposals will be scored using the following rating system:

Description	Rating
No evidence provided	0
Poor	1
Limited	2
Acceptable	3
Strong	4
Exceptional	5

7.4 Evaluation Committee Requirements

The Evaluation Committee shall consist of a minimum of three (3) appointed CICan staff members. Evaluation Committee members shall evaluate proposals independently prior to participating in a consensus review process.

7.5 Interviews

CICan reserves the right to conduct interviews or presentations with shortlisted respondents. Where interviews are conducted, additional scoring criteria may be applied and documented by the Evaluation Committee.

8. PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Payments shall be issued following the contract signature and following satisfactory completion and written acceptance of deliverables. The payment details will be discussed and included in the contractual agreement.

Invoice Requirements

Invoices shall:

- Reference the contract number;
- Reference the applicable deliverable;
- Include supporting documentation as required.

Payment will be processed following receipt of an acceptable invoice and written approval of deliverables. No payment shall be made for deliverables that have not been formally accepted by CICan.

9. PROCUREMENT CONDITIONS

9.1 Right to Reject

CICan reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to reject any or all proposals received in response to this Request for Proposals. The issuance of this RFP does not oblige CICan to award a contract.

9.2 Right to Negotiate

CICan reserves the right to negotiate with the highest-ranked respondent regarding:

- Scope of work;
- Deliverables;
- Timelines;
- Budget; and
- Contract terms and conditions.

9.3 Proposal Costs

All costs associated with the preparation and submission of a proposal shall be borne exclusively by the respondent. CICan shall not be responsible for any expenses incurred by respondents during this RFP process.

9.4 Confidentiality

All proposals submitted in response to this RFP shall be treated as confidential and used solely for evaluation and contract award purposes. Respondents shall clearly identify any proprietary or confidential information contained within their submissions.

9.5 Conflict of Interest

Respondents shall disclose any actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest that could affect their ability to perform the assignment objectively.

9.6 Intellectual Property

All occupational analyses, competency frameworks, validation findings, implementation guides, reports, presentations, tools, templates, methodologies, and related deliverables developed under the resulting contract shall become the exclusive property of Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan).

Upon project completion, CICan shall retain full ownership of all Platform deliverables, configurations, custom developments, documentation, and intellectual property created under the contract.

The successful respondent shall not publish, distribute, or otherwise use project materials without prior written authorization from CICan.

9.7 Contract Award

The contract will be awarded to the respondent whose proposal provides the best overall value to CICan, taking into consideration the evaluation methodology described in section 8.

9.8 Cancellation

CICan reserves the right to amend, suspend, cancel, postpone, or reissue this RFP process at any time without liability.

9.9 Records Retention and Audit Requirements

CICan shall retain procurement records, evaluation documentation, correspondence, award recommendations, contracts, amendments, invoices, deliverables, and related project documentation in accordance with organizational records management policies and applicable funder requirements. The successful respondent shall maintain supporting documentation associated with the assignment and shall make such documentation available for audit purposes upon request.

10. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The successful respondent shall maintain regular communication with CICan and project partners throughout the assignment.

10.1 Project Meetings

The respondent shall participate in:

- Project kick-off meeting;
- Monthly progress meetings;
- Validation planning meetings;
- Ad hoc meetings as required.

Unless otherwise agreed, meetings shall be conducted virtually.

10.2 Deliverable Review Process

All deliverables shall be submitted electronically and reviewed by CICan. Review Process:

1. Submission.
2. CICan Review.
3. Consolidated Feedback.
4. Revisions (if required).
5. Final Approval.

No deliverable shall be considered accepted until written approval has been issued by CICan.

11. OFFICIAL LANGUAGES AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

11.1 Official Languages

The platform shall provide fully bilingual English and French functionality. This includes navigation, onboarding questions, filters, recommendations, calls to action, system messages, error messages, help content, and administrative functionality. The English and French versions shall provide functionally equivalent user experiences. CICan will support with the translation of the content from English to French.

11.2 Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA)

The respondent shall demonstrate how EDIA principles will be incorporated into:

- Requirements gathering
- Persona and user-journey development
- UX/UI design
- Content and plain-language development
- Platform testing

Particular consideration should be given to:

- Indigenous communities;
- Francophone communities;
- Rural and remote communities;
- Newcomers;
- Racialized populations;
- Persons with disabilities.

The resulting platform should reflect the diversity of Canada's Early Childhood Education workforce and support equitable workforce development practices.

11.3 Indigenous Engagement Requirements

Where Indigenous engagement activities are undertaken, the respondent shall demonstrate culturally appropriate engagement approaches that respect Indigenous protocols, knowledge systems, and community priorities. Engagement activities should promote:

- Meaningful participation;
- Relationship-building;
- Reciprocal knowledge exchange;
- Respect for Indigenous perspectives and priorities.

The respondent should demonstrate experience engaging Indigenous communities, organizations, and stakeholders where applicable.

12. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

12.1 Submission Requirements

Proposals shall include:

Part A – Organizational Information.

Part B – Technical Proposal.

Part C – Supporting Documentation.

Part D – Financial Proposal.

12.2 Submission Method

Proposals shall be submitted electronically in PDF format to: ecepathways.parcoursepe@cican.org

Subject Line: Submission–ECE-2026-NAV

12.3 Submission Deadline

Proposals must be received no later than **11:59pm EST on October 19, 2026**. Late submissions will **not** be considered.

12.4 Questions and Clarifications

Questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing to: ecepathways.parcoursepe@cican.org

Subject Line: Questions–ECE-2026-NAV

Questions must be received no later than **11:59pm EST on October 12, 2026**. Responses may be shared with all respondents to ensure fairness, consistency, and transparency.

END OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

ECE-2026-NAV

Development of the Early Childhood Education Pathways Navigator Platform

Building a Strong, Mobile and Sustainable Early Childhood Education Workforce