

Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire Area

Call for Interest for Expert Supports

The Regional Assessment Working Group (Working Group) is seeking Expressions of Interest from individuals and organizations interested in supporting the Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire Area (Regional Assessment).

1. Context and Purpose

In February 2020, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada (Minister) announced that a regional assessment is to be undertaken in the area centered on the Ring of Fire mineral deposits in Northern Ontario. The regional assessment applies to an area described as the Ring of Fire, also known as Kawana 'bi 'kag by many First Nations, and to the traditional territories of the First Nation Partners who may be impacted by development in the Ring of Fire and surrounding area, and who hold and exercise Aboriginal and Treaty rights protected by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

On January 20, 2023, a co-led RA process was launched between the Government of Canada, Matawa member First Nations, Mushkegowuk member First Nations and Weenusk First Nation. This included establishing a Working Group with representation from 15 First Nation Partners and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC). The First Nation Partners include: Aroland First Nation, Attawapiskat First Nation, Constance Lake First Nation, Eabametoong First Nation, Fort Albany First Nation, Ginoogaming First Nation, Kashechewan First Nation, Long Lake #58 First Nation, Marten Falls First Nation, Missanabie Cree First Nation, Moose Cree First Nation, Neskantaga First Nation, Nibinamik First Nation, Webequie First Nation and Weenusk First Nation. Matawa and Mushkegowuk Councils are also active members of the Working Group providing administrative, logistical and technical support.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire was approved by First Nation Partners and the Minister on January 20, 2025. As per the TOR, the Working Group is established to conduct the Regional Assessment and the representatives consist of community members from all First Nation Partners and representatives from IAAC, who have diverse expertise or experience relevant to conducting regional assessments or knowledge of Indigenous and First Nations context, including the context of the First Nation Partners' communities and customs.

The purpose of the Regional Assessment is to provide information on key priorities of importance to the First Nation Partners and the Government of Canada in the assessment area and provide an analysis of the potential positive and negative effects, including cumulative and interactive effects, due to possible development activities throughout the assessment area. The Regional Assessment will also identify and provide recommendations on how the potential cumulative and other effects may best be managed to avoid adverse consequences, enhance positive ones and how (and by what governance body or bodies) the follow-up steps would be determined and initiated.

Section 9 of the TOR states that the Working Group will seek information and advice from several Expert Supports from Indigenous Peoples and organizations, government and non-government

organizations and the public who have knowledge or experience to inform the Regional Assessment.

2. Importance of Involvement of Elders and Knowledge Holders

The involvement of Elders and knowledge holders from First Nations Partners in the Regional Assessment is critical. As per section 9 of the TOR, the Working Group will seek knowledge, perspectives and the unique and important information and advice from First Nations Elders and knowledge holders. First Nations youth, women, men and community members, both on and off reserve, will also be included by each First Nation partner through mechanisms they deem appropriate and effective.

The Working Group will ensure opportunities are provided for First Nation Partners' community members to share information, knowledge and perspectives relevant to the Regional Assessment, in a collaborative manner that respects and values customs, ceremony, and their relationship to the land. The Working Group will ensure that opportunities exist for respective knowledge holders and land experts to collaborate in a complimentary manner with the Expert Supports throughout the conduct of the Regional Assessment.

Therefore, First Nation Partners' community Elders and Knowledge Holders and community members will be part of a process specific to them and this process will be administered by First Nation Partners. This current call out is intended to reach experts external to First Nation Partner communities, including but not limited to Expert Supports who have or may currently be working with individual First Nations on other studies and/or initiatives.

3. Selection Process for Roster of Expert Supports

The Working Group is responsible for establishing the roster of Expert Supports through a public call for Expressions of Interest recommendations by Working Group members.

The Working Group will review and evaluate the applications and recommendations received to establish a roster of Expert Supports. The Working Group will prioritize Indigenous experts and/or individuals who have previously worked with First Nation Partners. The Working Group will also rely on their existing networks to identify and engage potential Expert Supports based on their respective needs. The list of Expert supports as agreed to by the Working Group will be chosen to meet the needs of their respective communities and can be used as a resource for First Nation Partners individually or collectively, as needed throughout the conduct of the Regional Assessment.

Individuals and/or organizations selected, may participate as Expert Support for one or more of the fifteen First Nation Partners. For example, should a number of Working Group members have a common objective or topic, they can choose to select a common applicant with relevant experience.

Participating as an Expert Support will not restrict any individual's or organization's participation in other activities undertaken by the Working Group, nor their ability to make separate submissions related to the regional assessment in the Ring of Fire area and/or any other project(s) undergoing

an assessment by IAAC. Expert Supports must remain unbiased through their involvement in the regional assessment.

3.1 Government Expert Supports

A similar roster of Government Expert Supports, made up of representatives from a number of federal departments and agencies, will be identified. The Government Expert Supports will also be available to work with First Nations Partners individually or collectively, as needed throughout the conduct of the Regional Assessment.

4. Expert Supports Role and Responsibilities

The Expert Supports chosen by the Working Group will work closely together with the First Nations Partners throughout the conduct phase of the Regional Assessment. The Working Group will seek assistance from Expert Supports on a number of activities and deliverables, including but not limited to the following:

- Assisting with information and data collection related to priority areas;
- Identifying and providing the use of scientific information to ensure it complements traditional knowledge;
- Reviewing documents and providing feedback on literature relevant to the Regional Assessment;
- Identifying and evaluating information and knowledge gaps and recommended approaches to address these gaps;
- Gathering, interpreting, and analyzing relevant data and information, conducting analyses and informing recommended solutions;
- Assisting with drafting sections of the report;
- Attending engagement sessions in-person in central locations (e.g. Timmins, Thunder Bay and Toronto) or virtually with the Working Group and potentially other members of the public;
- Participating in technical advisory sessions on particular topics of interest to the Working Group, providing input and subject matter expertise where relevant; and
- Travelling to Partnering First Nation communities and/or different destinations in Ontario for engagement and advisory activities.

5. Timing of Activities

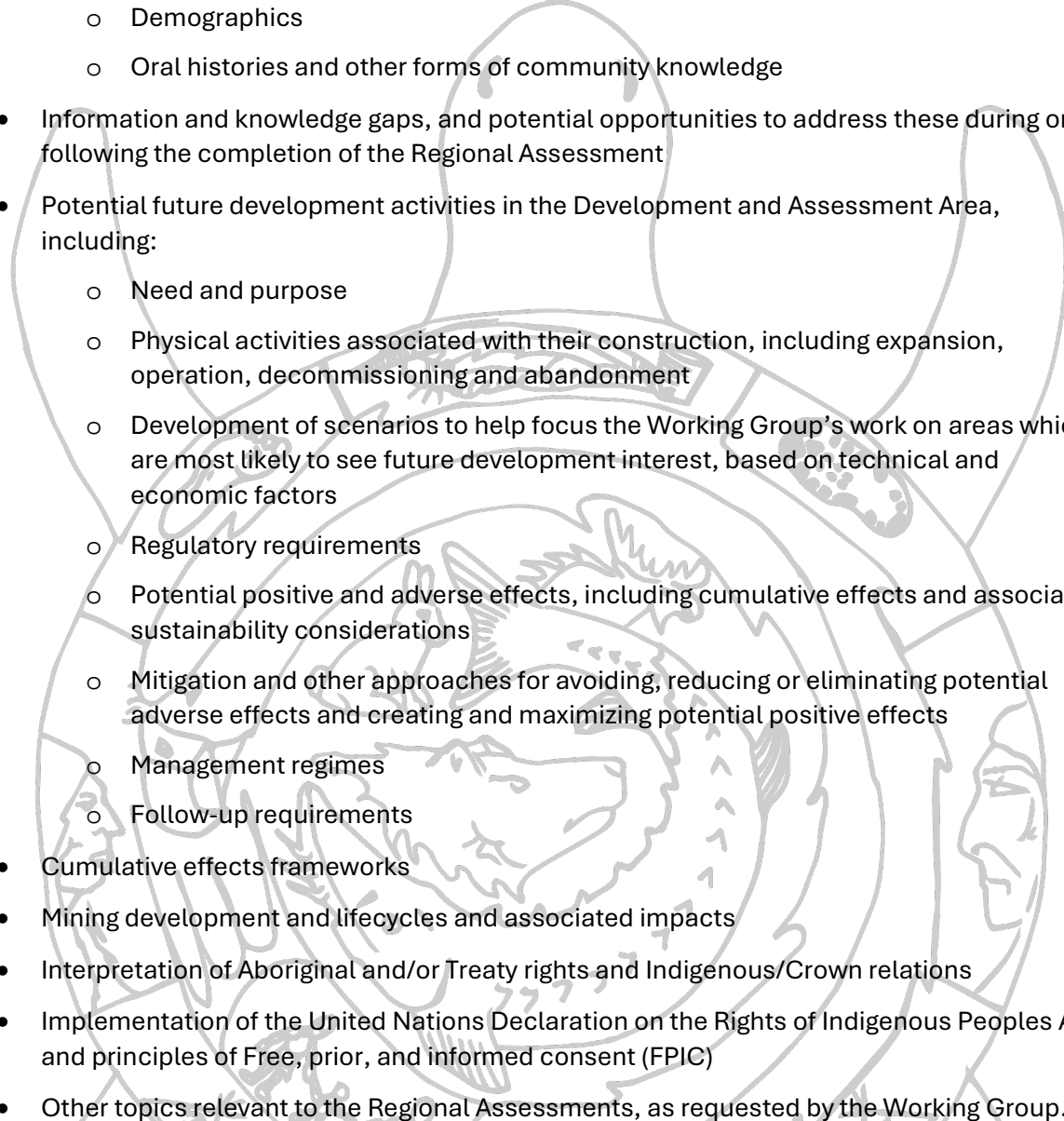
Activities may vary through the conduct phase based on the needs of the Working Group and the experience and availability of the Expert Supports selected.

Upon selection of the Expert Supports, a more detailed workplan will be developed between the Working group and Expert Supports to reflect specific activities and timelines.

6. Topics

Expert Supports will provide information and advice to the Working Group on the priority topics and activities identified by individual First Nation Partners. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Environmental, health, cultural, spiritual, and social and economic conditions, including, but not limited to:
 - Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat
 - Marine Fish and Fish Habitat (including species at risk)
 - Aquatic environment, including but not limited to the following watersheds, listed alphabetically, that are included in the assessment area:
 - Abitibi River
 - Attawapiskat River Coast
 - Ekwon River Coast
 - Kenogami River
 - Lower Albany River Coast
 - Missinabi River and Mattagami River
 - Moose River
 - Northeastern Lake Superior
 - Upper Albany River
 - Western James Bay Shoreline
 - Winisk River Coast
 - Avifauna (including birds, bats, and associated species at risk)
 - Protected and Special Areas (established and proposed)
 - Invasive species
 - Peatlands, Forests, and other relevant ecosystems
 - Local geology and hydrology that includes uplands and/or lowlands
 - Visual Aesthetics / Viewscapes and Acoustic Environments
 - Physical and Cultural Heritage (including structures, sites or things of historical, archaeological, paleontological, or architectural significance)
 - Health and Spiritual Wellbeing
 - Communities
 - Economics of interior and coastal First Nation partnered communities, including regional economies

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- Demographics
 - Oral histories and other forms of community knowledge
 - Information and knowledge gaps, and potential opportunities to address these during or following the completion of the Regional Assessment
 - Potential future development activities in the Development and Assessment Area, including:
 - Need and purpose
 - Physical activities associated with their construction, including expansion, operation, decommissioning and abandonment
 - Development of scenarios to help focus the Working Group's work on areas which are most likely to see future development interest, based on technical and economic factors
 - Regulatory requirements
 - Potential positive and adverse effects, including cumulative effects and associated sustainability considerations
 - Mitigation and other approaches for avoiding, reducing or eliminating potential adverse effects and creating and maximizing potential positive effects
 - Management regimes
 - Follow-up requirements
 - Cumulative effects frameworks
 - Mining development and lifecycles and associated impacts
 - Interpretation of Aboriginal and/or Treaty rights and Indigenous/Crown relations
 - Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and principles of Free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC)
 - Other topics relevant to the Regional Assessments, as requested by the Working Group.

7. Payment for Services Rendered

The involvement of Expert Supports will be administered by the individual Working Group members, which include but is not limited to, oversight of contracts, deliverables and invoices. Billing rates and contract terms will be determined by the Working Group members in conjunction with the selected Expert Supports. IAAC can provide templates and logistical support as needed.

Individuals, organizations, and communities who apply through the call of interest for Expert Supports may still apply for funding through IAAC's Participant Funding Program to support their involvement in the conduct phase of the Regional Assessment and/or any other project(s) undergoing an assessment by IAAC. However, if they are retained as an Expert Support through a community, they cannot provide the same comments on the same project or regional assessment. In cases where an Expert Support selected is receiving funding through other contribution

agreements administered by IAAC, the Working Group will work with the individual(s) to ensure that the services rendered are not duplicative.

8. How to Apply

To apply for this call for interest, please complete the EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM the overview of studies table and email it along with a copy of the relevant Curriculum Vitae/Resumés of individuals who will be engaged as Expert Supports to: regionalrof-cdfregionale@iaac-aeic.gc.ca

The deadline to apply as an Expert Support is April 17, 2025.

9. Next Steps

The Working Group will review all applications received. At the conclusion of the review, the Working Group will communicate next steps with the successful applicants. It is anticipated that the roster will be set and communicated in the spring of 2025.

Contact information

For inquiries about this Call for Interest for Expert Supports, please contact regionalrof-cdfregionale@iaac-aeic.gc.ca.

