

The Neighbourhood Group

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Peer Pathways: Elevate to Permanent Employment

Project Consultant

Request for Proposal (RFP) Number: TNG-08-2025-PEERS001

Issue Date: September 2, 2025

IMPORTANT DATES

Issue Date of RFP	September 2, 2025
Deadline for Candidate Questions	September 9, 2025
Responses to Questions	September 12, 2025
Bid Submission Date	September 19, 2025
Notification of Preferred Candidate & Contract Award Date	September 30, 2025
Consultant begins work	October 6, 2025
Completion of External Review of Peer Programming	February 2025
Completion of internal audit of peer programs	May 2025
Completion of Feasibility Study for Learning Hub	October 2026
Work Completed/Final Reporting	December 2026

Website: [The Neighbourhood Group](#)

1.1 INVITATION TO VENDORS

This Request for Proposal (the “RFP”) is issued by The Neighbourhood Group Community Services (TNGCS). It invites prospective candidates to submit a proposal for the opportunity to audit TNGCS’ peer programs and scan those of counterpart organizations to assess their pre-employment capacity. Additionally, they will lead the exploration of the feasibility of an external peer program resource hub. The goal of this project is to understand how peer work can serve as a pathway to permanent employment, enhancing the economic mobility of individuals with lived experiences of poverty, settlement, mental health challenges, and substance use. The successful candidate will produce a report with recommendations on how to ensure peer work is a transferable qualification for permanent employment, including insights on the viability of a resource hub.

This RFP sets out the requirements for the candidates’ proposal and specifies the evaluation criteria and selection process for this phase. Candidates must demonstrate a thorough understanding of the requirements. The objective in issuing this RFP is to obtain the best overall value, considering quality, service, cost, and other relevant factors.

1.2 TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1.2.1 Terms of Agreement

The Term of this Agreement shall commence upon the contract award date, or such date as may be agreed between the parties and continue until all requirements are met and deliverables are approved by TNGCS, unless terminated earlier. TNGCS is under no obligation to extend the scope of the work or engage the vendor for any subsequent work.

1.2.2 Candidate Responsibility

In the event the selected candidate fails to accept the contract award, TNGCS reserves the right to accept the next qualified bid or any bid which meets the RFP specifications.

TNGCS reviews all bids that are completed and received by the deadline. It is the responsibility of the candidate to obtain clarification of any terms or conditions contained in the RFP. Candidates may direct questions or seek additional information in writing by e- mail on or before the deadline for questions to Serena Nudel, Director of Community Programs at TNGCS, serena.nudel@tngcs.org. Candidates may not contact individuals employed by TNGCS or on the Board of Directors concerning matters regarding this RFP. Answers to questions from all candidates will be responded to all candidates who contact us.

All costs incurred in the preparation of the proposal is the sole responsibility of the candidates. All supporting documentation submitted with the proposal will be retained by TNGCS and not returned. Please do not submit confidential material. Candidates may request a debriefing after the contract is awarded but based on volume of requests TNGCS cannot guarantee a personal response or debriefing.

TNGCS reserves the right to request clarifications from candidates and this may take the form of an interview. TNGCS reserves the right to negotiate price and work schedule amendments with the successful candidate. Successful candidates will respect privacy policies and other applicable policies of TNGCS, which will be included in a contract. TNGCS reserves the right not to accept the **LOWEST** or **ANY** proposal submitted.

PART 2 – PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND DELIVERABLES

2.1 COMPANY DESCRIPTION

TNG Community Services Overview

The Neighbourhood Group Community Services (TNGCS) is a longstanding social service agency that delivers community, anti-poverty and health programs to over 47,000 people across Toronto annually. Our vision is a resilient, inclusive society where opportunity, empowerment, and social and economic justice lead to a better quality of life for all. With more than 900 staff and the support of over 600 volunteers, our programs and services address the most pressing issues in our society: poverty, homelessness, mental health, unemployment, social isolation, substance use, conflict, violence, youth alienation, and the settlement of newcomers.

TNGCS is an amalgamation of Central Neighbourhood House (founded in 1911), Neighbourhood Link Support Services (founded in 1975), Kensington Bellwoods Legal Services (founded in 1982), and St. Stephen's Community House (founded in 1962). We joined forces to holistically address city-wide issues, provide comprehensive services to our participants, and work most effectively with our funders, donors, volunteers, and community members to build a healthier, more vibrant Toronto.

Peer Program Overview

For the past 20 years, TNGCS's peer program has supported individual development while strengthening the broader system by providing opportunities for skill development and meaningful employment. Peers are people with lived experience of homelessness, substance use, mental health challenges, settlement and poverty who are employed to support service users with their ability to relate to their struggles, build trust and deliver programs with an empathetic approach. Peers are typically former program participants seeking employment in a supportive and familiar environment as a stepping stone to long-term, permanent work. Most are hired in the programs they recently participated in and, therefore, have relevant personal experience with service users' day-to-day barriers and struggles. At TNGCS, early examples include peer workers with our perinatal newcomer program, peer interpreters with our women's settlement program, and a specialized peer leadership program in our youth services department.

Our peer program develops employability skills, improves access to good wages, strengthens mutual support networks of people with lived experience, and recognizes lived experience as a qualification for employment. The peer model at TNGCS has been replicated across departments and today we currently employ close to 300 peer workers on an annual basis in the following areas: Urban Health and Homelessness Services (UHHS), Newcomer Services, Children and Youth, Childcare, and our Food Bank. Crucially, we embrace the adage "nothing about us without us" by giving participants the opportunity to meaningfully shape and guide programs that serve their very communities – keeping our services relevant and suited to evolving needs.

2.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

TNG Community Services has been funded by the Metcalf foundation to deliver an 18-month program titled Peer Pathways: Elevate to Permanent Employment will address sector-wide challenges with

peer employment. Although lived experience is recognized as a qualification for work in the non-profit sector, the transferability of peer roles is limited, hindering transitions to stable employment. Peers gain valuable work experience, but many do not possess the requisite qualifications to advance to permanent roles, even internally at TNGCS where we accept equivalency for educational credentials, provide training and recognize lived experience. This limits economic mobility and access to stable, decent work.

Without shareable resources and a structured framework that supports peer advancement into permanent employment across sectors, our ability to scale and share a proven framework with counterparts is limited. We aim for our analysis to explore how peer work can best prepare people for work in a range of sectors, not only social services environments, and how peer employment can be universally legitimized as a qualification for work. We aim to explore how peer work can be better recognized and enhanced to be transferrable qualification for permanent employment, and to assess the viability of a resource hub that strengthens peer program capacity across the non-profit sector. We aspire to create equitable pathways to employment by enabling people with lived experience who face systemic barriers to secure meaningful work experiences that lead to enduring, gainful employment.

The Peer Pathways: Elevate to Employment project will include:

- A comprehensive internal audit of TNGCS' peer program across departments. This will include a needs assessment to evaluate our capacity to prepare peers for permanent employment. We will conduct interviews with current and past peers and a focus group and visioning session with Senior Leadership and program leads
- An environmental scan assessing the pre-employment capacity of peer programs across various organizations, including social service agencies and other sectors. As part of this scan, the Canadian peer certification standards and best practices will be reviewed to assess their impact on individual career advancement
- Feasibility study of an e-learning hub to share resources and build non-profit sector capacity to deliver effective peer programs

2.3 SCOPE OF SERVICES AND KEY DELIVERABLES

Key deliverables include:

1. Conduct Comprehensive Internal Audit:

- Develop audit framework and tools (interview guides, focus group protocols, etc.) in collaboration with TNGCS project leads
- Conduct interviews, focus groups, questionnaires with current and former peers
- Facilitate focus groups and visioning sessions with senior leadership and program leads
- Data analysis: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats

2. Conduct an External Review

- Outreach to partners and counterpart organizations
- Review Canadian peer certification standards and other relevant literature
- Conduct interviews/focus groups and/or send questionnaires to partners
- Integrate findings, identify best practices, emerging programs

3. Assess feasibility of a Learning Hub

- Conduct stakeholder interviews (staff, other organizations, government)
- Research existing e-learning platforms and digital content

- Identify and connect with potential partners in technology delivery
- Analyze feasibility: cost, demand, scalability

4. Prepare a final report with findings and key recommendations

2.4 STAKEHOLDERS

TNGCS anticipates that to complete the deliverables outlined in Section 2.3, the selected candidate will work with TNGCS Project Leads, Senior Leadership Team and program managers/leaders. The work will also require engagement with current and past TNGCS Peers. TNGCS has formed partnerships with many organizations that offer peer programs. These partnerships will be leveraged in order to conduct the external review. Project partners include: The Shelter Sector Pipeline Project, CAMH, UHN, Fred Victor, Inner City Health Partners, Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre, St. Felix Centre, LOFT Community Services, Good Shepherd, Homes First, Access Alliance, Flemington Health, the 519, Jarvis Collegiate Institute, Westview Centennial Secondary School

PART 3 – SUBMISSIONS AND EVALUATION

3.1 Evaluation Overview

Candidate proposals will be scored based on qualifications of team, quality of plan, and pricing. An interview may be requested to clarify information in the proposal. Evaluation will include a reference checking component and references are requested.

Scoring Component	Weight as % of Combined Rated score
Candidate/Candidate Team Qualifications and experience (including similar work for other organizations)	30%
Quality and completeness of project plan	30%
Understanding of working from an antiracist and equity lens	20%
Pricing (Based on a formula of lowest bid cost divided by candidate bid cost multiplied by 20)	20%
Total	100%

3.2 Submission Requirements

Please include:

1. A cover page with Candidate information (name, address, website, contact information)
2. A summary of Candidate/Team qualifications
3. A proposed project plan and schedule of work (see dates on the cover of this RFP)
4. Project pricing showing labour, expenses, taxes, total and the per diem rates for team members (Maximum bid is \$32,000)
5. Contact information for two professional references with brief description of the relationship

3.3 Submission Instructions

Please submit proposal by mail or by e-mail in PDF format.

For mail, please use "TNG-08-2025-PEERS001" c/o 349 Ontario Street, Toronto, M5A 2V8

For e-mail, please use Subject: "TNG-08-2025-PEERS001" to serena.nudel@tngcs.org