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## Statement of Work

### Title

National Inuit Midwifery Framework: *Improving Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Care Service across Inuit Nunangat*

### Introduction

Pauktuutit is the national non-profit organization representing all Inuit women in Canada. Our mandate is to foster a greater awareness of the needs of Inuit women, and to encourage their participation in community, regional and national concerns in relation to social, cultural and economic development.

During Pauktuutit's engagement sessions on the proposed Distinctions-Based Health legislation, participants reported isolation and stress triggered by traumatic birthing experiences in health care centres in the south have led and contributed to mental health struggles among Inuit women before and after labour and delivery. Inuit traditional midwifery knowledge and practices must be integrated into health care service delivery in Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nunavut, and The Northwest Territories where Inuit predominantly live. Further, Inuit women's sexual and reproductive health is compromised by regulatory limitations that are neither trauma-informed nor culturally appropriate for Inuit. To address these inequities, Pauktuutit is committed to working with partners to develop a National Inuit Midwifery Framework that will serve as a roadmap toward the re-integration of midwifery services and education/training programs across Inuit Nunangat.

The National Framework will support systemic change in four key areas:

1. It will address the education and training needs of Inuit women to become midwives. This is critical to increasing the availability of Inuit midwives.
2. It will create a pathway towards the integration of traditional midwifery services into the delivery of health care through community clinics and hospitals and will act as a strategy towards reconciliation.
3. It will reduce anti-Indigenous racism experienced by Inuit women in southern hospitals and will prevent child abuse and child food insecurity that is often perpetuated when Inuit women are forced to leave their children behind to seek basic reproductive health services.
4. It will bridge the existing disproportionate sexual and reproductive health inequities experienced by Inuit women across Inuit Nunangat.

## **Background**

The current state of Inuit women’s sexual and reproductive health is a result of the unavailability, inaccessibility, and lack of trauma-informed sexual and reproductive healthcare services. For generations, Inuit women relied on local midwives who traditionally provided care. Giving birth to a child was largely a family-centered practice, where a community midwife or family member would assist new mothers in giving birth to their children. This has changed drastically toward a system that leaves Inuit women no choice but to leave their home communities, travel long distances away from their family and supports, often to an unfamiliar place to access the most basic of maternal, newborn, and infant health care. This is consistent with the legacy of government-forced separation of Inuit from their families and communities while simultaneously stripping Inuit of their cultural identity, values, and language.

Inuit women often experience anxiety, isolation and trauma when seeking reproductive and sexual health care outside of their communities, especially as they are often expected to leave well before their anticipated date of delivery, forcing them to spend significant periods of time away from their families. In these unfamiliar environments, they are often attended to by healthcare providers who do not speak their language and fail to understand Inuit cultural needs. Further, the Canadian Healthcare system is plagued with anti-Indigenous racism that has now reached an epidemic level manifesting in the disproportionate disparities in health equities and outcomes among Inuit, particularly women and children. Erroneous assumptions based on negative stereotypes are pervasive within healthcare settings and have frequently led to tragic consequences for many Inuit families.

## **Goals of the Project**

Pauktuutit has committed to drafting a National Framework on Inuit Midwifery to address the priority of Inuit women to give birth close to home. We are in the process of gathering necessary research and developing partnerships to identify a clear pathway toward re-integrating the full scope of Inuit midwifery services and education across Inuit Nunangat.

The goals of the National Framework are to:

- Address the education and training program needs of Inuit to become midwives. This is critical to increasing the availability of Inuit midwives to help ensure Inuit have access to safe and compassionate pregnancy, birth, and postpartum care.
- Create a roadmap for the integration of traditional midwifery services and Inuit-led birth and perinatal support services into the delivery of health care through community clinics and hospitals.
- Reduce anti-Indigenous racism experienced by Inuit in Canada’s health care system when they are forced to travel to hospitals in the south to give birth.

- Prevent child abuse and child food insecurity that is often perpetuated when Inuit women and gender diverse Inuit are forced to leave their children behind for basic reproductive health services.
- Close the gap in sexual and reproductive health outcomes experienced by Inuit women across Inuit Nunangat, compared to other women in Canada.
- Reduce the current strain on the maternity departments in southern regional hospitals.
- Reduce the exorbitant costs of medical evacuation and length of stays in southern regional hospitals due to childbirths.
- Provide good jobs for Inuit who wish to choose midwifery as a career and contribute to economic prosperity in remote communities in the North.
- Achieve concrete, meaningful, and lasting change to improve the safety and well-being of expectant moms (with low-risk pregnancies) and their babies, across Inuit Nunangat.
- Contribute to the path toward reconciliation with Inuit.

## **Scope**

This is an open call to individuals, firms, or organizations to provide a comprehensive proposal to assist in the creation of a National Inuit Midwifery Framework. The deliverables will be developed under the guidance of, and in partnership with Pauktuutit and the project Working Group. We strongly encourage the submission of proposals from Inuit or Indigenous organizations.

The selected consultant/organization will be responsible for the following tasks:

- Conducting a comprehensive literature review of on Inuit midwifery practices and historical perspectives, and an eco-scan of Inuit-led perinatal and birthing services and supports, as well as an analysis of current challenges and barriers that exist to accessing these services.
- Analyzing data collected during the National Inuit Midwifery Forum that Pauktuutit hosted in March 2023, to inform the creation of the Framework.
- Engaging with key stakeholders, including Inuit communities, midwives, healthcare providers, government agencies, and Inuit and Indigenous organizations.
- Formation of Inuit Midwifery Working Group to oversee the development of a National Midwifery Framework.
- Developing a draft National Inuit Midwifery Framework that integrates cultural safety, traditional knowledge, and contemporary healthcare standards.
- Facilitating consultations and workshops with stakeholders and Working Group to gather feedback and refine the framework.

- Producing a final version of the National Inuit Midwifery Framework, including implementation strategies, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms.

The consultant/organization shall deliver the following key deliverables:

- Interim report outlining the literature review findings, data analysis, and preliminary framework concepts.
- Draft National Inuit Midwifery Framework for stakeholder and Working Group review and feedback.
- Finalize National Inuit Midwifery Framework incorporating stakeholder and Working Group input and recommendations.
- Implementation plan with clear strategies and outlined responsibilities for rolling out the framework.

Interested consultants/organizations are invited to submit their proposals addressing the following:

- Company/consultant profile, including relevant experience and qualifications in Inuit health, midwifery, and community engagement.
- Approach and methodology for developing the National Inuit Midwifery Framework.
- Proposed timeline, budget, and team composition for the project.
- Examples of similar projects or initiatives successfully completed.

### **Timeline**

The duration of this work will be from July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 – November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024

- Bids will be accepted until June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### **Pauktuutit's Roles and Responsibilities**

The primary contact at Pauktuutit for this project is Emily Ophus, Health Policy Manager. Pauktuutit commits to provide the information and materials necessary to complete the work and will respond to requests for information in a timely fashion.

Pauktuutit will provide a decision by June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

### **Confidentiality, Privacy and Copyright**

The successful applicant shall not disclose to any party any confidential information gained or resulting from activities undertaken under this project, nor shall the applicant disclose any information concerning Pauktuutit or their affairs where such information is obtained through this Project.

Pauktuutit and the successful applicant will agree to publicly and mutually acknowledge and accord appropriate credit for each other's contribution in this project, including any products developed and disseminated as a result. Both parties will come to an agreement on how credit is attributed, depending on the nature and degree of each organization's contribution.

It is understood that Pauktuutit retains ownership of any and all materials and intellectual property created, designed, or produced as a result of activities undertaken by the successful applicant when awarded this project.

It is understood that the successful applicant will generate original work for this project.

### **Proposal Instructions**

- Applicants must submit their company name, and confirm their incorporation, references, and/or portfolio;
- Submit by email to eophus@pauktuutit.ca;
- Word format or PDF;
- Estimates/budgets must remain firm September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024
- No payment will be made for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of a proposal in response to this RFP;
- No costs incurred before receipt of a signed contract can be charged to the proposed contract;
- Travel that may be required will be separate from this scope of work budget and will be paid for by Pauktuutit; and,
- Pauktuutit reserves the right not to award a contract as a result of this RFP.

### **Budget**

The proposal must:

- Include a detailed budget not to exceed \$70,000 including HST and that demonstrates that the objectives and deliverables for the project can be met;
- Indicate the billing rate;
- List any other expenses that might be applicable; and
- Total bid MUST include 13% HST tax.

### **Rights of the Organization**

Pauktuutit reserves the right to:

- Enter into negotiations with one or more bidders on any or all aspects of this proposal.
- Accept any proposal in whole or in part.

- Cancel and/or re-issue this requirement at any time.
- Award one or more contracts.
- Verify any or all information provided by the bidder with respect to this requirement.

**Contact Information**

Please direct the application to:

Emily Ophus, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada  
520 – 1 Nicholas St. Ottawa, ON K1N 7B7  
eophus@pauktuutit.ca  
613-238-3977