

Strategic Planning Services

Request for Proposals
October 2025

Request for Proposal (RFP) for strategic planning services

Downtown Halifax Business Commission

November 2025

Introduction

Downtown Halifax Business Commission (DHBC) is seeking proposals from qualified consultants to facilitate and develop a new strategic plan to guide our organization over the next 4 years (April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2030). This plan will help focus our efforts and maximize our impact, as we seek to bring vibrancy and prosperity to the downtown, while maintaining the organization's ongoing relevance.

About DHBC

Mission: To passionately pursue a more vibrant and prosperous Downtown.

Vision: To become Canada's favourite Downtown

History: DHBC is a business improvement district (BID), primarily funded, by the 1,700 businesses and landlords in Downtown Halifax. Officially founded in 1987, through a membership vote, DHBC focuses on 4 primary areas: Advocacy, Placemaking, Marketing & Communications, and Membership Engagement.

The 9-person staff, led by CEO Paul MacKinnon, work under the strategic direction of a 15-person volunteer board of directors (who are business owners in the area), utilizing the \$2 million budget to be the go-to organization on all things downtown.

The current goals of the organization, as articulated in its 2023-2026 strategic plan, are to Attract Visitors, Increase Sales, Incite Investment, and Advance Organizational Excellence. This is done through the 4 focus areas, 70 individual programs, and a devotion to data-driven insights. Recently, DHBC enhanced its programming to produce an annual *State of the Downtown* report, as well as a new vision, *Downtown Halifax Vision 2030*.

Project background and goals

Like all not-for-profit organizations, DHBC has far fewer resources than it has ambitions or dreams. A strategic plan provides a necessary framework for the board and staff to direct their energies toward the most important objectives, utilizing the most effective strategies, and charting their progress against the most relevant and measurable outcomes. DHBC has always had an active strategic plan, and the current three-year plan ends March 31, 2026.

A facilitated process, with external stakeholder, member, board, and staff input, now needs to be undertaken to produce a 2026-2030 Strategic Plan, year one of which can be incorporated into the fiscal year 2026-2027 budget. It will be launched to the membership in June of 2026.

Scope of work and deliverables

The selected consultant will work closely with our Board of Directors, staff, and key stakeholders to produce a comprehensive strategic plan. The scope of work is expected to include:

- **Phase 1: Discovery and assessment**
 - Conduct a current state analysis, of the organization and the Downtown.
 - Facilitate internal and external consultations with staff, Executive Committee, board members, and other stakeholders.
- **Phase 2: Strategy development**
 - Facilitate workshops/retreats with CEO, Executive Committee, staff to define or refine our mission, vision, and values.
 - Guide the development of strategic priorities, goals, and measurable objectives.
 - Develop potential action/programs to achieve objectives.

- **Phase 3: Implementation and presentation**
 - Produce a final, concise strategic plan document, including a 2-page summary for external use.
 - Create a high-level implementation plan with assigned owners, timelines, and reporting metrics.
 - Present the final plan to the Board of Directors, for approval, in April 2026.

Consultant qualifications

Prospective consultants should demonstrate the following:

- Ability to work within stated budget parameters for this project (in the \$20,000 range)
- Experience in strategic planning, particularly within the not-for-profit sector.
- Strong facilitation, communication, and interpersonal skills.
- Proven ability to work collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders (ie, volunteer board of directors).
- Demonstrated experience in producing high-quality strategic plan documents and action plans.
- A strong understanding of our downtown/urban cores.
- A Downtown location is a benefit, though not required for eligibility.

Proposal requirements

Please submit a proposal that includes the following:

- **Proposed approach:** A detailed description of your methodology and a proposed work plan with a timeline that aligns with our stated deliverables.
- **Project team:** Introduce the consultant(s) who will be assigned to this project.

- **Budget:** A detailed, itemized budget, including fees, anticipated expenses, and a breakdown of the cost per phase.
- **References:** Contact information for at least two professional references from similar not-for-profit strategic planning projects.

Project timeline

- **RFP Release:** October 15, 2025
- **Deadline for Questions:** November 4
- **Proposals Due:** November 12, by 9:00am
- **Potential Interviews with Shortlisted Finalists:** TBD
- **Consultant Selection:** Week of November 17
- **Project Kickoff:** December TBD

Proposal submission and evaluation

- Proposals must be submitted electronically as a single PDF document to Paul MacKinnon, CEO, paul@downtownhalifax.ca
- The subject line of the email should read: "**Strategic Plan Proposal - [Consultant Firm Name]**".

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria. The final selection of the consultant will be made by the CEO and the Executive Committee of the DHBC board of directors:

- **Consultant Experience:** Relevant experience, particularly with not-for-profit organizations of a similar size and sector.
- **Proposed Methodology:** Clarity and effectiveness of the proposed approach and alignment with project goals.
- **Perceived value for budget:** Cost-effectiveness of the proposed fees and overall value for the project.

- **Project Team:** Qualifications and expertise of the assigned personnel.
- **References:** Strength of references and proven track record.
- Special consideration may be given to those firms that are located within DHBC's boundaries.

All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing to Paul MacKinnon, at paul@downtownhalifax.ca by November 4.

Terms and conditions

DHBC reserves the right to accept or reject any and all proposals, to enter into negotiations with one or more qualified consultants, and to modify or cancel the RFP process at any time. All costs incurred in the preparation of proposals will be borne by the bidder.