

February 2, 2024

Request for Proposals:
“Ending HIV in Ontario” Campaign
Market Research Partnership

Deadline for Submissions: 5 pm, on February 16, 2024.

1. Overview

Background

The Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN) is a non-profit organization, funded by the HIV and Hepatitis C Programs at the Ontario Ministry of Health. We're a node of collaboration; our work brings together partners from across the HIV and public health sectors, with the goal of improving the lives of those living with and at-risk of HIV in Ontario.

Together with a committee made up of representatives from AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs), Priority Population Networks (PPNs), and other partner organizations and experts, the OHTN is embarking on a **multi-year public- and sector-facing awareness campaign** that will promote messages related to HIV prevention, testing, treatment (including ‘treatment as prevention’) and ongoing care.

We are currently seeking a market research agency to partner with who can lead an initial phase of research that informs our creative and strategic approach.

Strategic Priority

We are requesting proposals from market research agencies who can provide evidence-informed best practices for effectively reaching and measurably impacting our audiences (audiences identified further below). Agencies with prior experience working in the HIV or public health sectors, or with our target audiences, will be prioritized.

The “Ending HIV in Ontario” campaign will advance the **four priorities** set out in the Ontario Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS (OACHA) *HIV Action Plan to 2030*:

1. Reduce the number of new HIV infections in Ontario;
2. Reach the 11 per cent of people living with HIV (PLHIV) in Ontario who are undiagnosed and link them to testing and treatment, and help them overcome barriers and remain engaged in ongoing care;

3. Reach the 13 per cent of people diagnosed with HIV in Ontario who are not on treatment, and provide the supports they need to stay engaged in treatment and ongoing care (and thus, improve their health and, where possible, achieve sustained viral suppression); *and*
4. Reduce stigma, discrimination, and other barriers to optimal health, and promote the idea that a person who is undetectable cannot transmit HIV (often referred to as “undetectable = untransmittable” or “U=U”).

Timeline

February 2024:

- OHTN and partners to hire a market research agency.
- OHTN to begin consultations.

March 2024:

- Selected agency to complete an initial report of key market research insights.
- OHTN and market research agency to present the report to campaign partners for discussion.

April – June 2024:

- Test messages and sample creative developed by OHTN, partners and vendors.

June – August 2024:

- OHTN to work with a creative agency on campaign strategy, creative materials and media buys.
- Campaign to launch publicly in Fall of 2024.

2. Project Details

Project Description

Starting in 2023, the OHTN and partners began initial work on an Ontario-wide awareness and education campaign that will promote best practices in HIV testing, prevention, treatment and ongoing care. The “Ending HIV in Ontario” campaign will be driven by Ontario’s efforts to meet the **UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets** (that say by 2030, 95 per cent of people infected with HIV should be diagnosed; 95 per cent of those diagnosed should be on treatment; and 95 per cent of those on treatment should have an undetectable viral load).

The Campaign will prioritize reaching the **populations in Ontario that are at increased risk of HIV** and where we are still falling short in diagnosing HIV, preventing HIV and other sexually transmitted blood-borne infections (STBBIs), treating those who are living with HIV, and ensuring they remain engaged in care (and, if possible, achieve a sustained undetectable viral load).

The key populations are:

- Gay, bisexual, two-spirit, and other men who have sex with men;

- African, Caribbean and Black communities;
- Indigenous communities;
- Newcomers;
- People who use drugs; and
- Cis and trans women, including those from the communities above, who face systemic and social inequities, and are more likely to be exposed to HIV through sexual or drug-using partners.

The Campaign will also reach health care practitioners who work with the aforementioned populations.

Project Goals

The Campaign will be developed and conducted in alignment with the key strategies described in the OACHA Action Plan to 2030, including those related to health equity, population-specific approaches, and cross-sectoral collaboration. It will focus on increasing awareness of HIV prevention tools; the importance of timely, guideline-based HIV testing; and the importance of engaging and retaining PLHIV in care and on treatment.

While goals will evolve over time, the initial campaign may aim to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of testing among populations at increased risk of HIV; and help members of these populations understand how to access testing modalities (e.g., self-testing and Point-of-Care Testing) available in their region. In particular, we wish to reach individuals who have never before tested for HIV.
- Help providers who may encounter patients at risk of HIV, or who are living with HIV and are undiagnosed, better identify the symptoms of chronic and acute HIV infection; and educate these providers on how to refer a patient to appropriate testing services.
- Reinforce the importance of the “status-neutral” approach that directs people to the right services after testing, including: PrEP, PEP, condoms or other forms of prevention for those who test negative but are at high risk; and rapid warm referrals for additional assessment and treatment for people who test positive.

Target Audiences

Based on the goals outlined above, Cycle One of this multi-year campaign will pursue two target audiences:

- Communities across Ontario at increased risk of HIV, outlined above.
- Health care providers who have opportunities to prescribe and/or promote HIV combination prevention tools to patients, diagnose HIV early and/or identify undiagnosed HIV, and ensure people who are diagnosed with HIV are successfully engaged in care.

Over the course of Campaign development, the project team will continue to narrow-down target audiences.

3. Submission Guidelines

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

The OHTN and partners will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria:

- Company experience, particularly regarding with in the HIV or public health sectors, or in reaching our priority populations.
- The quality of the proposal and the relevance of the approach outlined, as well as examples provided.
- Overall cost and ability to meet the timeline outlined above.
- References.

Budget Information

Please submit a proposal that includes a total budget between \$150,000 – \$200,000 CAD.

We encourage bidders to provide a proposal that clearly outlines their budget. We also encourage bidders to provide multiple cost tiers, representing different levels of engagement that your agency can offer. We will ultimately select the agency that presents the most compelling and cost-effective bid, within the range we have presented.

Guidelines for Bidders

The OHTN will accept bids for this project until 5 pm, on February 15, 2024. Please submit a proposal that:

- Outlines your firm's approach to market research
- Highlights relevant experience and provides samples of relevant work
- Identifies your ability to meet timeline and scope
- Breaks down your rates and different cost options
- And includes references.

We require all bidders to clearly represent their subcontracting intentions. All documents must be prepared and signed by those authorized to do so. All costs must be listed in CAD. Further terms are subject to development pending the selection of a bid.