



## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

### Transfer Data Lab Consultation and Implementation

**CLOSING DATE:**

May 21, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST)

**CLOSING LOCATION:**

The Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT)  
Suite 1902, 180 Dundas Street West  
Toronto, ON M5G 1Z8

**PREPARED BY:**

The Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer

**CONTACT:**

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**MAIN (CORPORATE) WEBSITE:**

[www.oncat.ca](http://www.oncat.ca)

**STUDENT-FACING WEBSITE:**

<http://www.ontransfer.ca>



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## ONCAT Overview

Established in 2011, the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT) was created to enhance academic pathways and reduce barriers for students looking to transfer among Ontario's public colleges, universities, and Indigenous Institutes.

Working with our network of Ontario's 45 colleges and universities, Indigenous Institutes, students, government, guidance counsellors, as well as other stakeholders provincially and nationally, ONCAT is building a culture and understanding of transfer so that students can pursue a more seamless and affordable postsecondary education.

Alongside our members and stakeholders, we do this by:

- developing and maintaining the student-facing website ONTransfer.ca, used to connect current and prospective students to transfer opportunities;
- supporting and funding academic projects aimed at creating and expanding credit transfer pathways and improving our understanding of student mobility and the student transfer experience;
- engaging Ontario's regions and communities through facilitated groups;
- collecting credit transfer data and sharing resources; and
- hosting events that bring together credit transfer experts from across the province.

ONCAT is funded by the Government of Ontario.



## Invitation

ONCAT is seeking a qualified firm to consult on and build a research data lab and corresponding policies to collect, organize, store, and protect a variety of data sets with varying levels of sensitivity.

Currently, ONCAT depends on partner organizations to house sensitive data sets or store sensitive data in secure offsite servers. The planned Transfer Data Lab (TDL) will provide ONCAT with the ability to securely store data sets with varied levels of sensitivity so that we can acquire, share, and link key data sets. In addition, ONCAT will have the ability to provide TDL access to partners interested in transfer research and data enhancement projects.



## Project Overview and Objectives

This TDL will allow ONCAT to have unique access to, analyze, and link varying data sets on-site. The TDL should be designed to allow ONCAT to export data expediently and securely, including cyclical reporting and responses to special requests from partners and institutions.

In addition, the TDL has the potential to operate in a cost recovery basis through future research partnerships and institutes interested in accessing and analyzing student mobility data. The data linkages that could be created would lend themselves to student mobility/achievement research more broadly, creating an opportunity for ONCAT to become a central hub for educational policy research in the province.

Given this external interest and ONCAT's objective to enhance transfer knowledge, the ONCAT TDL would be intended for ONCAT researchers and external partner use. To sustain the TDL, ONCAT will explore a fee structure using [Statistics Canada's Fee Structure](#) as a reference.



## Scope of Work

### Phase I: Collaborative Needs Assessment

The successful candidate will complete a thorough internal needs assessment to determine the requirements related to the TDL's:

- Physical Design
- Information Technology and Network
- Training
- Maintenance
- Policies
- Reporting

To complete this assessment, the successful candidate will:

- review similar research data lab and data centre requirements and policies, including Statistics Canada's Steps to Establish a Research Data Centre (RDC);
- conduct ONCAT employee interviews; and
- conduct ONCAT IT service provider interviews.

Please complete and include the following chart in your proposal to ensure you submit and identify all the necessary requirements for Phase I.

Determine Requirements	Assessment Capacity	
	Yes	No
Physical design		
Information technology, hardware		
Information technology, software		
Network requirements		
Training		
Maintenance		
Policies		
Reporting		
Assessment Requirements	Yes	No
Review similar research data lab and data centre requirements and policies including Statistics Canada's Steps to Establish a Research Data Centre (RDC)		
Conduct interviews with ONCAT employees		
Conduct interviews with ONCAT's IT service provider		



## Phase II: Research Data Lab Design and Implementation

The successful candidate will design, present, and implement the TDL requirements identified in **Phase I**. This includes, but is not limited to, the TDL's:

- i. **Physical design, information technology (hardware/software), and network requirements.** To ensure satisfactory level of security, value for money, and to satisfy ONCAT procurement requirements, the successful candidate will present three data lab design options for ONCAT consideration. Once the data lab design is selected, the successful candidate will consult with ONCAT to procure the required hardware, software, and any other elements related to the TDL's physical design. In addition, the successful candidate will support the construction of the TDL.
- ii. **Staffing and training requirements.** The successful candidate will provide training for ONCAT employees to manage the TDL, which will include:
  - TDL Training and Guide
  - Guidance on how to complete TDL reporting
  - Privacy and confidentiality requirements to maintain security of the labIn relation to staffing, the successful candidate will provide an overview of responsibilities related to managing the TDL and suggestions for ONCAT staff assignment of administrator roles, reporting roles, and so forth.
- iii. **Maintenance and security auditing requirements.** The successful candidate will understand and document daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual maintenance requirements. The candidate will identify any external maintenance and support required so ONCAT can plan to have these controls in place. In addition, the successful candidate will recommend the frequency and type of security audit required to maintain the integrity of the TDL. ONCAT expects that any updates to the hardware and server will be accessible and managed on an internal basis.
- iv. **Policy requirements.** The successful candidate will create policies to manage the governance, controls, and privacy of the TDL. The required policies will be identified as part of the collaborative needs assessment (**Phase I**) but may also include:
  - Policy that provides guidance around data classification and any requirements to anonymize or encrypt data using industry standards.
  - Internal ONCAT policies for data security and privacy, including necessary legal documentation for employee 'sign-off.'
  - ONCAT TDL statement on respecting privacy and protecting confidentiality.
  - A TDL code of conduct for ONCAT users.
- v. **Reporting requirements.** The successful candidate will support the build and creation of the initial reports to manage and track the privacy and access to the TDL. Once created, these reports will be generated by ONCAT staff.



Please complete and include the following chart in your proposal to ensure you submit and identify all the necessary requirements for Phase II.

	Design Capacity	
Design Requirements	Yes	No
Physical design		
Information technology; hardware		
Information technology; software		
Network requirements		
	Presentation Capacity	
Presentation Requirements	Yes	No
Three (3) preliminary data lab options		
	Implementation Capacity	
Implementation Requirements	Yes	No
Physical design		
Information technology, hardware		
Information technology, software		
Network requirements		
	Staff and Training Capacity	
Staff and Training Requirements	Yes	No
TDL training and guide		
Guidance on how to complete TDL reporting		
Privacy and confidentiality requirements to maintain security of the lab		
Overview of responsibilities related to managing the TDL		
Suggestions for ONCAT staff assignment of administrator roles, reporting roles, and so forth.		
Other training documentation		
	Maintenance and Security Auditing Capacity	
Maintenance and Security Auditing Requirements	Yes	No
Understand daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual maintenance requirements		
Document the daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual maintenance requirements		
Identify any external maintenance and support required		
Recommend the frequency and type of security audit required to maintain the integrity of the TDL		
	Policy Capacity	
Policy Requirements	Yes	No





Create policies to manage the governance, controls and privacy of the TDL		
	<b>Reporting Capacity</b>	
<b>Reporting Requirements</b>	Yes	No
Build and create reports to manage and track privacy and access to TDL		

### Phase III: External User Integration

The successful candidate will enhance the TDL to allow external users (i.e., non-ONCAT employees) to access and use the physical lab securely. To complete this phase, the successful candidate will:

- complete external partner interviews, including but not limited to postsecondary staff and researchers;
- design and configure access for external users;
- identify and create policies for external users, including but not limited to:
  - a policy that outlines the terms and conditions for external users to access and use the TDL, including security screening requirements;
  - a policy that outlines the process for ONCAT staff to vet all information removed from the lab including statistical results and all notes and documents to ensure any potential risk to confidentiality is substantially mitigated;
  - a TDL contract and code of conduct;
  - a data sharing agreement that defines contractual arrangements for acquisition of files, terms and conditions around updates, storage, usage, and disposal at the end of a project;
  - application form for external parties to request access to the ONCAT Data Lab; and
  - a policy that provides guidance to ONCAT for making decisions about requests from individuals or organizations seeking access to the ONCAT TDL;
- enhance maintenance requirements and guidance as needed;
- recommend any additional hardware/software required to maintain confidentiality and security of data, including enhanced tracking and audit reporting capability for external users; and
- create or adapt training materials for external users.

Please complete and include the following chart in your proposal to ensure you submit and identify all the necessary requirements for Phase III.

	<b>External Integration Capacity</b>	
<b>External User Integration Requirements</b>	Yes	No
Complete external partner interviews		
Identify and create policies for external users		
Design access for external users		



Configure access for external users		
Enhance maintenance requirements and guidance as needed		
Recommend any additional hardware/software required to maintain confidentiality and security of data		
Create or adapt training materials for external users		



## RFP Submission Information

### Key Dates

RFP Release Date	March 30, 2021
Deadline for Questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Via <a href="mailto:inquiry@oncat.ca">inquiry@oncat.ca</a></li> </ul>	April 16, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. EST
Questions and Answers Posting Date <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Answers will be posted @ <a href="https://oncat.ca/en/open-rfps">https://oncat.ca/en/open-rfps</a></li> </ul>	April 22, 2021
Proposal Deadline	May 21, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. EST
Interviews by Teleconference or Videoconference	Week of May 31, 2021
Notice of Award	Week of June 7, 2021

### Proposal Submission Requirements

Proposals must, at minimum, contain the following:

- Contact information for the respondent.**
- Description of the proposed approach (Maximum: 750 words).** This should include a description of the organization's business principles and approach to developing a data lab, including principles and roadmap.
- Detailed work plan (Maximum: 1,200 words).** The work plan should describe activities that are specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic. Include a timeline of major tasks and milestones.
- A detailed budget.**
- Qualifications of the respondent (Maximum: 750 words).** To provide the requested services, the respondent must demonstrate capability, capacity, a history of successfully completing similar complex projects, and related experience. Confirm the availability of individuals in the proposal.
- Applicants' resume(s) or biographies outlining relevant experiences.** Include a listing of the staff to be assigned to this project and their respective qualifications, experience with engagements of this scope, including resumes, and their role in those past engagements.
- Two successful case studies of research data lab consultation and creation** (ideally with not-for-profits or provincially / federally funded organizations).
- A statement of understanding** on any confidential issues for this project and disclosure concerning any perceived or potential conflicts of interest.



9. A **description of the outcome monitoring and evaluation plan**, including a list of tools to track process, output, and outcome measures for each component of the project.
10. **Technical definitions** if required.

## Communication

All communication, such as requests for additional information and/or clarification, should be directed in writing by email to <mailto:inquiry@oncat.ca> with “ONCAT Transfer Data Lab” as the subject line.

All such RFP-related inquiries must be received no later than April 16, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. EST. ONCAT will attempt to provide any assistance or additional information of a reasonable nature that may be requested by interested vendors.

## Submission Process

1. Please review all sections of this RFP carefully and follow all instructions. Incomplete submissions will not be considered.
2. Alternative approaches and/or methodologies to accomplish the desired or intended results of this procurement are solicited. However, proposals that depart from or materially alter the terms, requirements, or scope of work defined by this RFP will be rejected.
3. All costs associated with developing or submitting a proposal (including a potential interview) in response to this RFP and/or in providing any additional information, which ONCAT considers necessary to evaluate the Proposal, shall be borne by the vendor. ONCAT assumes no responsibility for such costs.
4. All proposals should identify the vendor proposed team of professionals, including those employed by subcontractors, if any, along with respective areas of expertise and relevant credentials. Agencies should also provide a delineation of the portion of the scope of work for which each of these professionals will be responsible.
5. Vendors are required to submit one (1) electronic copy of their Proposal to:  
[inquiry@oncat.ca](mailto:inquiry@oncat.ca).
  - Please ensure the subject line reads as follows: “**ONCAT Transfer Data Lab: [Company Name]**”.
  - ONCAT will accept Proposals on or before the closing date and time of May 21, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. EST.
  - Proposals shall be irrevocable for any reason for a period of not less than sixty (60) calendar days following the closing date.

All Proposals submitted to ONCAT under this RFP document become the property of ONCAT. ONCAT can decide to not proceed with these activities.



## Evaluation Process

The evaluation process will include several steps. ONCAT reserves the right in its sole discretion to defer presenting any award or to cancel this proposal process at any time without providing reasons for such cancellation. ONCAT is funded by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU), and as such, services provided by a vendor is contingent upon ONCAT's continued funding from MCU.

### **Stage 1. Proposal Submission Components**

Proposals will be reviewed for the submission components (Section 5.2) and general compliance with the submission proposal requirements. Submissions that do not meet the mandatory requirements will be disqualified.

### **Stage 2. Evaluation Ranking**

The Evaluation Committee will evaluate and rank the written Proposals to identify the top-ranked candidate(s) to be invited to the interview stage.

If there is a tie between two or more top scoring candidates, the tied candidates will be invited to an interview to break the tie.

### **Stage 3. Interview(s)**

The top-ranked candidate(s) will be invited for an interview. Interviews will be conducted by phone or Zoom. The candidate with the highest score after the interview will be asked for references.

References may be contacted. Reference checks will be kept confidential.

### **Stage 4. Negotiation**

Prior to award, ONCAT may negotiate changes to the scope of services (including pricing to meet budget) with candidate identified in Stage 3 for the "best value" option.

### **Stage 5. Notice of Award**

The successful candidate will be notified in writing. All unsuccessful candidates will be notified after a final agreement has been executed.



## Evaluation Criteria

Applicants should clearly meet all the criteria listed below:

Proposal Evaluation Criteria	Percentage
<p><b>OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF CANDIDATE AND DEMONSTRATED RESULTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our evaluation will include an assessment of your experience as it relates to the requirements within this RFP, evidence of past performance, quality and relevance of past work, references, and related areas.</li> </ul>	40%
<p><b>APPROACH TO THE REVIEW</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our evaluation will rate the overall approach and strategy described/outlined in the proposal and the candidate's capacity to perform the engagement within the specified timeframe (prior experience in meeting timelines will be factored in here).</li> </ul>	30%
<p><b>BUDGET APPROACH/COST EFFECTIVENESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our evaluation will investigate your budget framework; candidates must demonstrate an effective and efficient delivery of quality services in relation to the budget allocation. ONCAT expects the allocation is reasonable and appropriate.</li> </ul>	20%
<p><b>QUALIFICATIONS OF PERSONNEL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our evaluation will include an assessment of the qualifications and experience of your managerial team, staff, subcontractors, and related personnel.</li> </ul>	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>