

Municipality of St.-Charles

Community Strategic Plan Proposal

PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO:

Denis Turcot, CAO
Municipality of St.-Charles
2 King Street East
St. -Charles, ON, POM 2W0

SUBMITTED BY:

Karen Jones Consulting Inc.
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September 9, 2024

Denis Turcot, CAO
Municipality of St.-Charles
2 King Street East
St. -Charles, ON, P0M 2W0

RE: Request for Proposal – Community Strategic Plan

Dear Mr. Turcot,

Karen Jones Consulting Inc. (KJCO) is pleased to submit our proposal in response to the Municipality of St. -Charles' Request for Proposal. At KJCO, our team brings a wide range of expertise in economic development, tourism, marketing, and business development, paired with a genuine passion for fostering community growth. We believe these strengths will be key to delivering an actionable and realistic Community Strategic Plan.

As one of Northern Ontario's leading business consulting firms, we are confident that our deep experience in economic development, communication, and strategic planning, coupled with our in-depth knowledge of the Northeastern region, uniquely positions us to create a successful and tailored plan for the Municipality of St. -Charles.

We understand the critical importance of meaningful community engagement throughout this process. Ensuring that the plan's goals, actions, and priorities reflect the needs and aspirations of the community will foster a strong sense of ownership and pride. With our collaborative, grassroots approach, we are confident that we can develop actionable strategies that align with the specific objectives of this exciting project.

Our proposed approach is detailed in the attached proposal. Thank you for considering our submission. If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to contact me at 705.493.4525.

We appreciate the opportunity to be considered for this project.

Yours truly,



Karen Jones-Gibbons, Ec.D
CEO
Karen Jones Consulting Inc.

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Executive Summary

Karen Jones Consulting (KJCO) is uniquely qualified to lead the development of a 10-year Community Strategic Plan for the Municipality of St. -Charles. With over 14 years of experience in municipal planning and rural development, KJCO has a deep understanding of the specific challenges and opportunities faced by rural Northern Ontario communities. Our approach is rooted in community engagement, ensuring that the voices of all stakeholders are heard and integrated into the plan. This collaborative process allows for a thorough assessment of community needs, leading to the establishment of a shared vision and priorities for the future growth and improvement of the St. -Charles region.

KJCO excels at crafting strategies that balance economic growth with sustainability while preserving the community's unique character. The team brings expertise in key areas such as business retention and expansion, economic revitalization, tourism development, workforce development, and investment attraction. These skills enable us to create comprehensive, actionable strategies that can be effectively implemented with the resources and capacities available to St. -Charles. Furthermore, KJCO has a proven track record of delivering measurable outcomes for similar municipalities, including job creation and enhanced community cohesion.

By choosing Karen Jones Consulting, the Municipality of St. -Charles will partner with a firm deeply committed to the prosperity of Northern Ontario. Our collaborative nature and focus on delivering a strategic plan that is both visionary and practical ensure we will provide the best possible framework for the municipality's future success.

Introduction

Background

St. -Charles is a charming, small community located in Northeastern Ontario, within the Sudbury District. Part of the larger Municipality of St.-Charles, this rural area is home to just over 1,000 residents and is renowned for its scenic beauty, featuring vast forests, lakes, and natural landscapes. The town is an ideal destination for outdoor enthusiasts and those seeking a peaceful, rural lifestyle. Offering a wide range of recreational and tourism opportunities, St.-Charles provides activities such as hiking, ATV riding, snowmobiling, wildlife viewing, hunting, and fishing.

Beyond its appeal as a potential tourist destination, St.-Charles is an inviting place to call home. Conveniently located between Sudbury and North Bay, the community offers the perfect combination of accessibility and seclusion, creating a peaceful, small-town atmosphere. The local economy is primarily supported by agriculture, forestry, tourism, and small businesses, with the surrounding natural environment playing a key role in driving recreational activities. With affordable home and lot prices, St.-Charles is an attractive option for new families, retirees, and first-time homebuyers. Its growing population reflects its status as both a tranquil retreat and a welcoming place to settle.

Known as one of Northern Ontario's hidden gems, St.-Charles provides the ideal blend of natural beauty and community spirit. As a rural community, it places great value on preserving its natural environment while pursuing sustainable growth. Residents take pride in their heritage and traditions, which are often celebrated through local festivals, events, and volunteer initiatives. While St.-Charles faces common rural challenges, such as access to services and economic diversification, its resilience is evident in the commitment of its local government and engaged citizens, all working together to ensure a vibrant future.

Karen Jones Consulting Inc. (KJCO) is proud to submit this proposal to the Municipality of St.-Charles for the development of a Community Strategic Plan. KJCO's goal is to provide clarity, establish direction, identify priorities, and guide the Municipality with a proactive and responsible 10-year plan to best serve the community.

Deliverables

KJCO possesses a deep understanding of Northern Ontario, particularly Northeastern Ontario, and is dedicated to developing a realistic strategy centered around partnerships with Council, senior management, and community representatives. A key focus of this initiative will be fostering **open communication, collaboration, and engagement**, which are essential for gaining stakeholder insights and ensuring buy-in. The proposal outlines how these priorities will be achieved. Throughout the process, KJCO will implement the following deliverables to address both the short- and long-term needs of the Municipality:

- **Situational Analysis.** A thorough assessment of the Municipality will be conducted, including a review of the previous SWOT analysis, the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan, current processes, adjacent municipalities, and past stakeholder engagement to build upon previous efforts.
- **Community Profile Analysis.** Census data, asset inventories, demographic information, and gap analysis will be reviewed to gain a deeper understanding of the community's makeup and assets.
- **Engagement Process.** KJCO will conduct group working sessions with Council, Senior Management, community stakeholders, businesses, and residents to gather feedback and insights. This engagement will help identify opportunities, processes, and actions for improvement.
- **SWOT and Gap Analysis.** The data collected will guide the development of an updated SWOT and Gap Analysis, ensuring that the framework remains relevant and timely.
- **Action Oriented Community Strategic Plan.** KJCO will create a Strategic Plan that offers a clear decision-making framework, aligning Municipal decisions with the approved strategies and goals.
- **Communications Strategy.** A comprehensive communications strategy will accompany the Strategic Plan to ensure that information is clearly articulated and effectively disseminated within the Municipality.

These deliverables will collectively ensure that the Strategic Plan is both actionable and aligned with the community's evolving needs.

Approach

KJCO's processes and methods are rooted in a balanced approach that actively engages stakeholders throughout the planning process. By combining comprehensive community research with rigorous analysis, KJCO develops priorities, strategies, and actions that are grounded in realistic, relevant, and data-driven insights. The approach to creating the Strategic Plan for the Municipality of St.-Charles will emphasize research and engagement that captures emerging regional trends and significant shifts, such as the rise of culinary and agri-tourism, broadband internet and natural gas expansion, housing development, and new business opportunities. Through this strategic planning process, KJCO will facilitate dialogue with municipal leaders to uncover new opportunities for enhancing performance, decision-making, and operations.

The strategies and actions proposed will naturally evolve from the identified priorities through a process of research, engagement, analysis, and discussion. KJCO will take an innovative approach to developing the Community Strategic Plan by blending forward-thinking solutions with community-driven strategies, uniquely tailored to the needs of rural Northern municipalities. This will include exploring renewable energy options, implementing eco-friendly tourism strategies, and ensuring that all demographics—from youth to seniors—play an active role in shaping the community's future.

By adopting a holistic, sustainability-focused framework, KJCO will ensure that the community grows in a way that preserves its natural beauty and cultural heritage. Combining advanced data analytics, fostering local innovation, and prioritizing sustainable growth, KJCO will deliver not just a strategic plan but a comprehensive roadmap for a resilient and prosperous future. This innovative approach will help the Municipality remain adaptable and competitive in a rapidly changing world.

About Karen Jones Consulting Inc.

Knowledge and Experience

Since inception in 2010, KJCO has played the lead role in a variety of economic, tourism and strategy initiatives that have ranged in size and scope for rural and urban communities in the region. KJCO offers a proven track record working with a variety of municipalities and sectors in Northern Ontario, a solid background in business development, a robust network of public and private partnerships, an understanding about rural economic development, and the ability to build lasting partnerships. KJCO also has a wealth of experience in the following areas:

Developing partnerships	Identifying key stakeholders
Developing innovative programs	Facilitating consultations & focus groups
Adhering to timelines	Delivering public presentations
Maintaining budgets	Engaging with stakeholders and industry

KJCO works collaboratively to develop a Strategic Plan that creates enthusiasm, sparks interest and increases confidence within the community and among key stakeholders and partners. With first-hand knowledge and understanding of Northeastern Ontario, KJCO brings a unique perspective and professional background in the areas of ten core disciplines.

1. Strategic Planning
2. Marketing Communications and Brand Development
3. Tourism Product Development and Implementation
4. Business Retention + Expansion
5. Community Development
6. Investment Attraction
7. Business Planning
8. Event Management
9. Training & Facilitation
10. Project Planning

Located in North Bay, KJCO works directly with municipalities, non-profit organizations and private-sector businesses on strategic plans, marketing strategies, business planning, communication plans, funding, branding strategies and product development initiatives. KJCO welcomes the opportunity to work with the Municipality of St.-Charles on this initiative and is confident in its abilities to meet the specific needs of the municipality. KJCO has extensive work experience with municipalities, not-for-profits and private enterprise.

With economic development, marketing, stakeholder engagement and partnership development experience, KJCO brings together the disciplines and expertise required to support the requirements, and action items identified in the proposal. KJCO is committed to developing a Strategic Plan that sets the region up for success and new opportunity.

Meet Your Project Team



KAREN GIBBONS, BBA, EC.D
CEO

LEAD TEAM MEMBER

Karen Jones- Gibbons is a business consultant with a specialization in economic development. Karen utilizes creativity, leadership, and teamwork to design and execute business and economic strategies to achieve desired results. Karen specializes in key aspects such as marketing communications, economic development, market research, training/facilitation, strategic planning, funding applications/proposal development, and business planning. Karen is also a Business Retention and Expansion Consultant and a TEN Specialist. With direct experience with business training and facilitation, Karen is passionate about helping business thrive.



NICKI SCHIEWE
CONTENT STRATEGIST

Nicki is a content strategist, with a specialization in product development and regional tourism. Nicki was responsible for the development and creation of the Destination Northern Ontario Boating Product Development Team and Boating Strategy. Nicki has an extensive background in education, fundraising, public relations, marketing and research. Having worked in non-profit, tourism and arts communities, Nicki's diverse background makes her able to put project ideas into reality. She has a Masters in Environmental Studies from Lakehead University with a focus of Tourism and a Post Graduate Certificate in Public Relations from Humber College. Nicki has recently developed a tourism micro-credential professional course for Ontario and Northern Ontario with Lakehead University.



KIM KNIGHT
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Kim is a highly creative graphic designer who has been developing innovative designs for clients across a range of industries for over 20 years. From logos and branding, marketing collateral and social media, to strategic plans and technical reports, Kim has the expertise to create stunning visuals for any medium and type of project. Her strategic approach, attention to detail and ability to create fresh concepts have been key elements of success in ensuring her designs resonate with target audiences. Kim received her diploma in graphic design from Durham College.



FRANK GIBBONS
CFO

Frank is a qualified Information Technology and Operations Specialist with over 20 years of experience. His background enables him to provide IT management services to clients while he draws on his project management experience to guide the internal and financial operations of the company. Frank is committed to managing Karen Jones Consulting Inc. projects and IT requirements while providing dedicated support services to clients. He holds a three-year Computer Programmer Analyst Diploma from Canadore College and held a Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) designation.

Corporate Experience



KJCO has been involved in a range of projects in economic development, tourism and investment sectors. Project work includes strategic planning, downtown revitalization, event management, business development and BR+E. Over the past fourteen years, the team has worked with Municipalities, Indigenous communities, tourism operators, Destination Marketing Organizations, Ministry representatives and Regional Tourism Organizations. This experience has included hands-on management such as operating a nonprofit organization-Laurentian Ski Hill Snowboarding Club to working on strategies to advance organizations and combat challenges and obstacles within Northern Ontario's landscape. KJCO has developed a variety of strategies, business plans, branding material and marketing collateral for public and private clients in a variety of sectors.

Over the past fourteen years, KJCO has been involved with facilitating and planning with municipalities, small business, government stakeholders and non-profit organizations. Municipal clients have included but not limited to, Town of Parry Sound, The Township of The Archipelago, West Parry Sound Economic Development Collaborative, City of North Bay, Municipality of East Ferris, City of North Bay, Almaguin Community Economic Development, Village of Burk's Falls, West Nipissing and the Village of South River. This experience has created a solid understanding of the challenges and obstacles within the Northern Ontario landscape, partnership opportunities, and sustainable organizational growth.



Please accept the following references:

Dave Gray, Director of Economic Development, ACED
705.571.1564 director@explorealmaguin.ca

John Fior, CAO, Township of The Archipelago
705.746.4243 ext.303 jfior@thearchipelago.on.ca

Clayton Harris, CAO, Town of Parry Sound
(705) 746-2101 ext.215 charris@parrysound.ca

The following provides a summary of three relevant projects in which KJCO has played a lead role.

Township of The Archipelago

KJCO worked with the Township of The Archipelago on the development of a Strategic Plan to guide the community's growth. The process involved engagement with stakeholders, internal and external analysis, market research, priority setting and the development of a Strategic Plan. The primary objective was to develop a practical plan that would assist the Council and Senior Management in making informed and effective decisions.



Municipality of East Ferris

KJCO partnered with the Municipality of East Ferris to create a Strategic Plan aimed at directing the community's future development. The process included extensive stakeholder engagement, a thorough analysis of both internal and external factors, in-depth market research, and the establishment of key priorities, all culminating in the creation of a comprehensive Strategic Plan. The overall goal was to create an actionable plan that could support Council and Senior Management decision making.



Town of Parry Sound

KJCO collaborated with the Town of Parry Sound to update their existing Strategic Plan focused on shaping the community's long-term development and growth. The approach involved community consultations, focus group sessions, survey development and ensuring the existing strategic priorities aligned with the identified needs. This goal was to update the plan post-pandemic and provide a re-refresh in a forward-looking Strategic Plan.



Proposed Work Plan

The following provides details on how priorities will be met in relation to the development of the Community Strategic Plan for The Municipality of St-Charles. This includes a thorough analysis of the current landscape, engagement with key municipal representatives and community members as well as the development of the final Strategic Plan that will highlight key priorities, actions, and timelines to ensure a balanced approach.

Phase One: Review and Assessment Situational Analysis	
Deliverable	Scope of Work
Work Plan Development and Project Launch	Refine/review preliminary workplan and develop criteria of information needed.
Report and Documentation Review	Review and examine existing research, studies and reports to gain a thorough understanding of history, constituents and assets. Review policies and procedures, by-laws, OP and external communication tactics and messaging to assist with the identification of future priorities and opportunities.
Best Practice Review	Review best practices from other jurisdictions to identify opportunities and synergies.
Stakeholder Identification	Identify key stakeholder groups such as Council, Senior Management, funding partners, strategic partners, community residents, businesses, non-profits, clubs and organizations, etc. This will be done through research and support from the Municipality.
Phase 1 Summary Report	Develop a summary report documenting the progress made and information collected.

Phase Two: Stakeholder Engagement	
Deliverable	Scope of Work
Committee Workshop(s)	Committee Workshop development, scheduling and facilitation. Host working group session(s) with Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee, Council, Senior Staff to gather feedback about strategic direction, communication strategies, initiatives, opportunities, innovative service offerings and current gaps within the community.
One-on-one Interviews	Interview development, scheduling and facilitation. Conduct interviews with internal stakeholders to garner additional feedback to assist in the development of the Strategic Plan if required. Develop questions/schedule and conduct telephone interviews with identified leads.
Survey Design & Development	Develop a survey that will capture information from community residents, clubs/organizations and businesses including but not limited to current perceptions of region, opportunities, challenges, communication methods, community assets, and marketing opportunities. Distribute survey to key stakeholders identified in phase one via email, social media channels, news releases, newsletters and any additional distribution channels identified by the Steering Committee. Work with stakeholders to share the survey information. Conduct follow-up to encourage completion of survey to ensure a positive response rate.
Town Hall /Special Meeting	Create presentation materials inclusive of handouts that showcase engagement results, progress made and next steps. This may be a public meeting or a special meeting of Committee and/or Council.
Phase 2 Summary Report	Develop a summary report documenting the engagement results.

Phase Three: Community Strategic Plan Development	
Deliverable	Scope of Work
Communications Strategy	Develop a Communications Strategy to guide key messaging and engagement that generates public input, buy-in and interest through the implementation of the Strategic Plan.
Strategic Plan Development, Edit & Design + Council Presentation	Develop Plan that guides direction, establishes framework, supports decision making process, offers recommendations and provides implementation schedule with key performance indicators and measurements of success. Implementation schedule will be based on achieving goals identified and include recommendations and actions to address identified priority areas. A final presentation to Council will be delivered following completion of the Plan

Project Management

Workplan & Schedule

KJCO has assembled a work plan that provides a road map to advance the development of a Community Strategic Plan, guide the engagement of key stakeholders and creation of a communication strategy to guide successful implementation. KJCO can adjust the proposed project timeline to meet needs if required.

Project Start	Due Date
Project Launch Meeting	Week of September 30, 2024
Meetings and status updates with Steering Committee	Bi-weekly updates and monthly in person meetings throughout project duration
Phase 1	November 15, 2024
Phase 2	January 17, 2025
Phase 3	March 28, 2025
Project Wrap-up	March 28, 2025

Project Team Roles

Team Member	Role
Karen Jones-Gibbons	Karen will be the lead team member throughout the project including face-to-face interaction during focus groups, consultations, presentations, meetings and partnership development.
Kim Knight	Kim will lead all creative design work and will work with the team members to finalize visuals.
Nicki Schiewe	Nicki will be actively involved throughout the project including participation during meetings and part of the engagement process, while working collaboratively with Karen and the team on all aspects of the project.
Frank Gibbons	Frank will play a supporting role by managing the operational aspects related to the project, such as managing project timelines, deliverables, contractual terms and invoicing.

Milestones for Completion of Work

Milestones	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Estimated Hours	Team Members
Project launch, workplan review, status updates, committee meetings & project management	x	x	x	x	x	x	20	Karen, Nicki
Phase 1	x	x					60	Karen, Nicki,
Phase 2		x	x	x			75	Karen, Nicki, Kim,
Phase 3				x	x	x	90	Karen, Nicki, Kim,
Total Hours							245	

Budget

Activity	Estimated Time	Fees
PHASE 1		
Work Plan Development and Project Launch	10	\$2,000
Report/ Document Collection & Review	15	\$3,000
Best Practice Review	10	\$2,000
Stakeholder Identification	5	\$1,000
Phase 1 Summary Report	20	\$4,000
Subtotal	60	\$12,000
PHASE 2		
Survey Development	10	\$2,000
Survey Distribution & Data Input	5	\$1,000
Telephone Interviews	15	\$3,000
Focus Group Sessions	25	\$5,000
Phase 2 Summary Report	20	\$4,000
Subtotal	75	\$13,000
PHASE 3		
Compile Information & Strategy Development	20	\$4,000
Communication Strategy*	30	\$6,000
Draft Revisions	10	\$2,000
Design & Finalize Strategy	30	\$6,000
Subtotal	90	\$18,000
PROJECT ADMINISTRATION		
Presentations, Meetings & Project Updates	20	\$4,000
Subtotal	20	\$4,000
Subtotal	245	\$47,000
HST		\$6,110
Total Consulting Fees		\$53,110

TRAVEL COSTS		
Mileage will be billed at CRA rates of \$0.60/km Number of estimated in-person daily trips: 8 trips @ 176 km return from North Bay Per diem rate of \$50/day applies	\$844.80 + \$400	\$1,244.80

*Event Marketing & Promotion related expenses for collateral, social ads, print, advertising, etc. will be quoted as part of the Communication Strategy development process and billed back at direct costs within the \$5,000 line-item budget.