



Long Term 2 RFP

Agricultural Impact Assessment Questions and Answers

Version 1

November 13, 2024

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Document Change History

Version	Reason For Change	Date
1	Long-Term 2 RFP: Agricultural Impact Assessment Questions and Answers	November 13, 2024

Questions and Answers

The IESO has received a number of questions related to an Agricultural Impact Assessment. The following questions and answers have been prepared in conjunction with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and, Agri-business and are intended to provide preliminary clarification on the Agricultural Impact Assessment requirements in the LT2 RFP and the LT2 Contract. Capitalized terms used but not defined in this Q&A have the meaning given to them in the Market Rules, the LT2 RFP, the LT2 Contract, and the Preliminary Connection Guidance Document.

This document may be updated based on stakeholder questions and feedback pertaining to an Agricultural Impact Assessment.

1. Agricultural Impact Assessment

1.1 What is an Agricultural Impact Assessment?

An Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) is a technical study that identifies potential impacts from non-agricultural land uses on agriculture. For energy procurement, there are two main parts of an AIA.

Part one considers ways to avoid potential impacts (e.g., prevent impacts, where possible, through project location process that considers options outside prime agricultural areas and lower priority soils, if necessary). An initial evaluation of possible alternative locations and their potential impacts will be provided to municipalities via the AIA Pre-submission Filing Requirement and reflected in the Municipal Support Confirmation [LT2(e)PF-MS100 and LT2(c)PF-MS100], and the comprehensive assessment of the project impacts will be provided in the final AIA itself.

Part two considers strategies to minimize potential impacts (e.g., keep impacts to a minimum by incorporating specifics in the design of a project or operational plan) and approaches to mitigate potential impacts (e.g., adopt measures to reduce the severity of impacts such as noise, dust, and traffic). This is reflected in host municipality attesting to having received an AIA completed to their satisfaction.

1.2 Who prepares an AIA?

It is the responsibility of the Proponent/Supplier to provide a completed AIA for the review of the municipality. Proponents may choose to retain the services of a consultant firm or professional to prepare the AIA report for their project. AIAs are typically prepared by professionals knowledgeable in Ontario's agri-food sector. Professionals involved in the development of an AIA should have experience and credentials commensurate with the scale and complexity of the proposal. Individuals with technical, agricultural, and land use planning expertise and credentials may prepare an AIA. For more information, please refer to page 10 of the draft AIA Guidelines available online:

www.ontario.ca/page/agricultural-impact-assessments

1.3 What types of methodologies are involved in preparing an AIA?

Methods and data sources for preparing an AIA can vary depending on the type, nature, scale and extent of a project. Initially, study data sources and information can begin using desktop methods (e.g., aerial imagery, soil mapping, etc.). Once this remote information is gathered, it is recommended to engage with local agricultural and rural landowners, farm and agribusiness operators and rural community members. Knowledge generated from consultation along with on the ground observations (e.g., windshield surveys) will provide important information to inform the AIA.

Depending on the project, fieldwork may be limited to multiple observation surveys of the study areas, which may be undertaken at different stages of the growing season. If the project involves a site that will be rehabilitated back to agriculture (e.g., via a decommissioning plan), then soil sampling will be needed to document pre-disturbance conditions to establish a baseline for rehabilitating areas that will be disturbed.

1.4 Can elements of an AIA be scoped or streamlined?

Depending on the type, nature, scale and extent of a project, an AIA will vary in the details and amount of information provided in order to satisfy the host municipality. As an AIA must be prepared to the satisfaction of the municipality, any scoping or streamlining of elements should be confirmed with the host municipality.

Subject to municipal discretion, elements of an AIA may be scoped to be proportional to the type, complexity, and scale of the project being proposed. For example, avoiding PAAs may not be feasible for projects which are inextricably linked to agriculture and therefore the process for evaluating alternative locations could be streamlined.

The scope of an AIA should also be proportional to the degree or magnitude of impact the project is anticipated to have on agriculture. For example, a minor or negligible impact may not warrant as detailed analysis or as many measures to minimize and mitigate. This may be more likely for projects where fewer adverse impacts are identified through the AIA, or for projects which can demonstrate a high degree of compatibility with agricultural uses (e.g., by establishing or enhancing a symbiotic relationship). Projects of this nature may be supported by scoped AIAs documenting beneficial impacts. This may include projects which are located on farms and are integrated into agricultural activities on that farm or farm operations in the area, including, but not limited to: managing agricultural source materials, utilizing agricultural feedstocks, offering opportunities for flexible forms of continued agricultural production, improving erosion risks or other soil conditions, generating byproducts such as soil amendments, heat or CO₂ that are primarily utilized by surrounding farm operations, etc.

1.5 Who reviews an AIA?

For the LT2 RFP, AIAs are to be completed to the satisfaction of the municipality. The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Agri-business (OMAFRA) is not an approver of AIAs. Ministry staff may, however, provide technical support to municipalities and proponents to facilitate a consistent approach for the completion of AIAs.

2. Agricultural Impact Assessment Interaction with the LT2 RFP and LT2 Contract

2.1 Which proposals require an AIA in the LT2 RFP?

Per the June 6th 2024, ministerial letter jointly issued by the Ministry of Energy and Electrification (MOEE) and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA), and the August 28th ministerial letter issued by the Ministry of Energy and Electrification, a Proponent with Project Sites located in whole or in part in Prime Agricultural Areas must complete an AIA to the satisfaction of the municipality. (Note: as per the June 6th ministerial letter ground-mounted solar projects are prohibited in Prime Agricultural Areas).

While the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 defines what could, in principle, constitute a Prime Agricultural Area, the boundaries of any particular Prime Agricultural Area are designated by the applicable municipality or Northern planning board's Official Plan. Lands that do not fall within the jurisdiction of a municipality or planning board would not be included in an Official Plan and thus would not be designated as a Prime Agricultural Area.

2.2 When does an AIA need to be completed and what evidence is required by the IESO?

Part one of an AIA, considering ways to avoid potential impacts, is actioned during the site selection process which occurs prior to proposal submission. An initial evaluation of possible alternative locations and their potential impacts will be provided to municipalities via the AIA Pre-submission Filing Requirement and reflected in the Municipal Support Confirmation [LT2(e)PF-MS100 and LT2(c)PF-MS100], and the comprehensive assessment of project impacts will be provided in the final AIA itself. As part of site selection, therefore, Proponents should evaluate, and retain the evidence of the evaluation of sites outside of Prime Agricultural Areas, or on lower-priority soils, where applicable so that the Proponent may provide this evidence to the municipality in satisfaction of these requirements.

As part of preparing a proposal for submission the Proponent will ask the municipality to confirm via the Municipal Support Confirmation that the Proponent has provided the municipality with evidence on alternative locations in a manner acceptable to the municipality, and as informed by OMAFRA guidance. Additionally, a Proponent is required to declare via the Proponent Information Declarations and Workbook [LT2(e)PF-PI100 and LT2(c)PF-PI100] that they have provided the municipality with evidence of alternative locations in a manner acceptable to the host municipality. A Proponent is required to submit the Municipal Support Confirmation and the Proponent Information Declarations Workbook as part of their proposal submission.

While a Supplier may choose to complete an AIA at any point, subject to individual business decisions, the final AIA is required to be completed by the Supplier and reviewed by the municipality within 18-months of contract execution. The Supplier will be required to confirm to the IESO that an AIA has been completed and reviewed to the satisfaction of the municipality via [Exhibit S: Form of AIA Confirmation Certificate, as set out in section 2.12 (a) of the Draft LT2(e) Contract, and section 2.13 (a) of the Draft LT2(c) Contract.]

2.3 Will the IESO review an AIA?

No, the IESO will not review, or receive any information on the content of, an AIA. The Supplier will be required to confirm to the IESO that an AIA has been completed and reviewed to the satisfaction of the municipality via [Exhibit S: Form of AIA Confirmation Certificate, as set out in section 2.12 (a) of the Draft LT2(e) Contract, and section 2.13 (a) of the Draft LT2(c) Contract.]

2.4 What happens in the event of an unsatisfactory review of an AIA by the municipality?

Municipalities will determine whether the AIA was completed to their satisfaction. In doing so, they may be informed by OMAFA guidance or any local considerations which they may deem to be relevant.

Municipalities may have established standards or guidelines which are used for deeming an application complete for development proposals. This is often an iterative process, where, applicants, or their agents, are provided feedback so they can remedy any deficiencies that the municipality view necessary to address for technical studies.

Proponents/Suppliers are strongly encouraged to consult with municipalities early on their expectations for the two parts of the AIA. Further, as a best practice it is recommended Proponents/Suppliers build in sufficient time for municipalities to receive the AIA report and review the material contained within it. Some municipalities may elect to have an AIA peer-reviewed and understanding that aspect will help planning of the overall project timelines.

In the event that the municipality is not satisfied with an AIA and does not issue [Exhibit S: Form of AIA Confirmation Certificate, as set out in section 2.12 (a) of the Draft LT2(e) Contract and section 2.13 (a) of the Draft LT2(c) Contract] this will constitute a Supplier Event of Default [as set out in section 2.12 (b) of the Draft LT2(e) Contract, and section 2.13 (b) of the Draft LT2(c) Contract.]

3. General Questions and Resources

3.1 Who can I contact with questions about agricultural-specific considerations for the LT2 RFP?

For more information, or to speak to a Ministry staff person, please reach out to the Agricultural Information Contact Centre (AICC) at 1-877-424-1300 or ag.info.omafa@ontario.ca

The following additional resources may also be helpful:

[Prime agricultural areas](#)

[Specialty crop areas](#)

[Agricultural Impact Assessments](#)

[Story map](#) for evaluating alternative locations for non-agricultural uses

[Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas](#)

[Agricultural information atlas \(AgMaps\)](#)