



## HR Essentials Program

### Guidelines

#### Program Objective

The Atlantic Canada Aerospace & Defence Association (ACADA), with the support of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), is providing Human Resources (HR) support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the Aerospace, Defence, and Security industries across Atlantic Canada to address core workforce development challenges .

ACADA's **HR Essentials Program** ("the Program") is designed to assist Atlantic Canadian SMEs address key workforce development challenges - including recruitment and selection for mid- and senior-management roles, retention and workplace culture and the fundamentals of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB).

#### Eligible Companies:

To qualify for the Program, companies must meet the following criteria:

##### 1. **ACADA Membership:**

- The company must be an active, paid member of ACADA in good standing, prior to approval.
- Any outstanding payments to ACADA (i.e., membership or event fees) must be paid in full.
- Eligibility is limited to Industry Membership, Category A only.

##### 2. **SME Definition:**

- The company must meet the definition of an SME, having fewer than 500 full-time employees.
- All incorporated SMEs in one of the four Atlantic provinces (Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island) may apply. Additionally, the SME must have significant operations, such as facilities and/or offices, along with most of its workforce be located/situated in the Atlantic region.

##### 3. **New Projects:**

- Only a new HR project is eligible for funding.
- If the company has previously received funding, it must demonstrate **incremental progress or HR outcomes** from the earlier project.



#### HR Essentials Program Guidelines

- Reapplication for the same project or similar work without clear progress will not be considered.

#### 4. Multiple Applications:

- Members may apply for multiple ACADA funded programs.
- ACADA reserves the right to limit approved applications to a single SME to ensure equitable distribution of funds among applicants.

#### 5. Project Cost:

- The maximum project costs eligible for support is **\$11,250**
- If the SME agrees to a project budget exceeding the Program funding maximum, the SME will be responsible for any additional costs.
- The project must have a **minimum cost of \$3,000** to qualify for consideration.

#### Preferred Service Providers

For the 2025 - 2027 Programs, ACADA has identified a group of Pre-qualified Service Providers with specialized expertise to support participating SMEs. These firms were selected through a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process administered by ACADA, based on their relevant experience, qualifications, and demonstrated capacity to assist SMEs. These Service Providers bring specialized expertise to help companies strengthen competitiveness, build capacity, and achieve long-term success.

The list of Preferred Service Providers for the 2025 - 2027 HR Essentials Program (in alphabetical order) are as follows:

1. DiversityNL
2. Ethree
3. MC Advisory
4. UptreeHR
5. Venor

For more information on the Preferred Service Providers, use the following link: [2025 - 2027 HR Essentials Preferred Service Providers List](#).



## HR Essentials Program Guidelines

**Please Note:** While ACADA has reviewed the credentials of participating Service Providers, we do not endorse or guarantee the quality, performance, or outcomes of their work. SMEs are solely responsible for selecting the Service Provider that best meets their business needs. ACADA assumes no liability for the services delivered, nor for any results arising from the projects.

### Projects Assisted

Projects eligible for funding under the Program assist SMEs with implementing tools, strategies, and training to enhance workplace culture, retention, and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) efforts through dedicated consulting support. These projects may include:

- Development of HR Policies and Processes (onboarding, interviews)
- Workplace Culture Measurement Tools and Activities
- HR Program Development (e.g., rewards programs)
- Training programs/sessions
- Recruitment for Mid-level or Senior-level Roles
- DEIB Policy and Commitment Development
- DEIB Education Series and Training Programs
- Development of DEIB Calendar of Events
- Other deliverables discussed with individual SMEs (to be approved by ACADA)

Each application will include a Statement of Work (SOW) from the Service Provider, developed with the SME and approved by ACADA during the application process.

### Application Process

Interested SMEs may apply to the Program by completing the [online application form](#). The application will be reviewed through a competitive assessment process. **Applications must include the following** to be considered:

- Company outline
- Company history
- Project information
- Need for project
- Past or current initiatives related to the project
- Benefit to company
- Competitive advantage



#### HR Essentials Program Guidelines

- Measurable outcomes
- Preferred Service Provider information
- Service Provider statement of work (SOW) for the project (including project scope, timeline, and budget)

The main criteria for evaluation will be **benefit to the company, and addressing key workplace challenges through improved workplace culture, recruitment and retention practices, employment capacity, and/or other benefits** brought by the project.

Approved applicants will be advised of their acceptance to the Program and once accepted, may commence the project with the Service Provider.

#### Onboarding and Project Execution Process

1. Service Provider Selection and Development of SOW
  - Service Providers will be promoted as preferred Service Providers for the Program from which the SME may select for their project.
  - The SME will work with the Service Provider to develop a detailed SOW outlining the project scope, deliverables, timelines, and budget.
  - An application along with the SOW will be submitted by the SME to ACADA for review and selection.
2. Agreement and Onboarding
  - Upon approval, the SME will enter into a written agreement with ACADA, which outlines expectations of roles and responsibilities, as well as program guidelines, timeline, deliverables, confidentiality, and compliance requirements.
  - Projects may only commence upon confirmation of approval from ACADA.
3. Execution & Reporting
  - Service Providers will deliver services in line with the approved SOW.
  - The SME agrees to provide project updates and reports as requested by ACADA to ensure the project remains aligned with Program objectives and reporting requirements.
  - Any changes to the scope or timeline must be approved by both the SME and ACADA in writing.
  - Upon projection completion, the Service Provider will provide ACADA with a final report outlining work completed aligned with the approved SOW.



#### HR Essentials Program Guidelines

#### 4. Payment for Services

- Payment to the Service Provider is due only upon project completion and receipt of completion documents and program survey from the SME.
- ACADA will review the submitted documentation and once verified, will process payment to the Service Provider for the eligible costs of project.
- Following payment to the Service Provider, ACADA will issue an invoice to the SME for their respective contribution toward the total project cost, which will be due upon receipt.
- ACADA reserves the right to request additional documentation from the SME and Service Provider, if required.

### Program Timeline

#### 1. Application Period:

**December 11, 2025 – January 16, 2026**

- SMEs may apply to the Program during the above-noted application period. However, please note, that if the volume of eligible applications exceeds the available funding, the Program may close earlier than the stated deadline.
- We strongly encourage applicants to submit their application as early as possible to ensure consideration.
- ACADA reserves the right to reopen the application intake in the future, subject to the availability of funding.

#### 2. Review Completion and Selection Date:

**January 23, 2026**

- The approval and selection will be finalized no later than January 16, 2026. If ACADA is able to approve applications in advance of this time, notification may be done earlier.
- Projects may only commence upon confirmation of approval from ACADA.

#### 3. Project Completion Deadlines:

**March 31, 2026, or March 31, 2027**

- Project completion deadlines are set to align with funding requirements, with some projects required to be completed by March 31, 2026, and others by March 31, 2027.
- SMEs may apply to either timeline based on their project needs and the schedule specified in their approved Statement of Work.
- Funding is subject to the availability of annual budgets for each fiscal year ending March 31.



## HR Essentials Program Guidelines

### Terms of Incentive

- **Cost-Sharing:**

Approved projects will be cost-shared between ACADA and the SME. The maximum project cost eligible for support is \$11,250, with the SME responsible for 35% of the total cost.

**Example:** For a project with a total cost of \$10,000, the SME's portion would be \$3,500.

- **Eligible Costs:**

Service Provider consulting fees, whether billed hourly or on a project basis, are the only costs eligible under the Program. Any other costs are ineligible, unless specifically reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis. In addition, only project costs clearly outlined in the approved SOW and agreement will be considered eligible for funding.

- **Payment Process:**

Upon **project completion**, ACADA will pay the Service Provider for the eligible costs outlined in the approved SOW and project agreement. ACADA will then invoice the SME for their 35% share of the project cost, which will be **due upon receipt**.

- **Project Incompletion:**

If the project is not completed for any reason, the SME will be required to pay 50% of the total costs billed up to the point of projection completion.

### Status Reports and Completion Survey

Applicants will be required to provide status reports over the course of the Program, to ensure progress and alignment with project objectives. Upon completion of the project, participants in the Program must complete ACADA's Program report and survey.

### Contact

Any questions or concerns must be directed to:

**Darren Machado**

Regional Project Manager

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