



Business Development Program

Improving Your Competitiveness

How can the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) help?

To stay competitive in the global marketplace, your products have to meet global standards for quality and environmental management systems; employees need to be well trained; and marketing strategies have to be well thought out.

However, it can often be difficult to generate sufficient money from operations or to borrow from traditional sources for these purposes.

That is why ACOA provides financing in the form of interest-free, unsecured, repayable loans or provisionally repayable loans.

What costs are eligible?

Marketing: A marketing plan provides you with a thorough analysis of your products, services, competitors and potential customers. It helps you make sound decisions on what products, pricing and promotional strategies you need to succeed.

ACOA can finance up to 75 per cent of the costs of developing a marketing plan and of hiring a marketing manager to implement the plan over a three-year period. Other eligible activities include designing new labels and packaging, promotional materials, advertising, product demonstrations and participation at trade shows. Export-related activities can also be financed through provisionally repayable loans.

Training: Increasingly, the success of any business depends on the knowledge and productivity of its employees and management. Developing human resources is one of the best investments you can make to improve your competitiveness.

ACOA can finance up to 75 per cent of the cost of developing and implementing a human resources plan for your firm. Eligible costs include hiring human resource experts for up to three years to deliver a training package based on the needs identified in the plan. This includes training materials, seminar fees and wages during the time that employees receive off-the-job training.

Productivity / Quality Improvement / Environmental Management Systems: ACOA can finance up to 75 per cent of the cost of hiring consultants to develop and implement a productivity plan, a quality improvement plan or an environmental management system. Other activities eligible for financial assistance include obtaining a recognized quality certification such as the ISO designation and the cost of technical equipment required for improved quality, productivity and environmental management.

Consultant advice: Being competitive doesn't happen by accident. It takes thorough analysis and planning.

ACOA can finance up to 75 per cent of the cost of hiring a qualified consultant to:

- prepare a business plan or feasibility study;
- investigate licensing opportunities; conduct a venture capital search, a technology transfer search or;
- provide mentoring services to improve your business skills.

Selling to Government: Governments use a wide variety of goods and services, most of which are purchased from the private sector. If you are interested in selling to government, ACOA can help you identify contract opportunities as well as provide provisionally repayable financial assistance for up to 75 per cent of the costs associated with improving your ability to bid on and/or acquire public or private-sector procurement contracts or sub-contracts. The emphasis should be on new products or services rather than products already well serviced by Atlantic firms.

Environmental assessment

As part of its project assessment process, ACOA requires that all projects conform with the environmental guidelines set out in the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*.

How to get started

Contact the ACOA office nearest you.

New Brunswick: 1-800-561-4030

Prince Edward Island: 1-800-871-2596

Newfoundland and Labrador: 1-800-668-1010

Nova Scotia: 1-800-565-1228

Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation: 1-800-705-3926

ACOA Web site: www.acoa.gc.ca

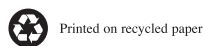
When re-ordering, please quote:

ISBN Number: 0-662-64635-5

Catalogue Number: C89-4/27-3-2001E

ACOA: 2005-08

ACOA is committed to protecting the environment of this region by promoting sustainable businesses and communities in Atlantic Canada.



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