

ACTION PLAN
1996-98

ATLANTIC CANADA
OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECTION 41

OF THE *OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT*

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Action plan 1996-1998

SUMMARY

ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

Responsible individual

Norman Spector, ACOA President

Principal measures planned

The 1996-98 Action Plan is a continuation of last year's plan. The Agency's efforts are concentrated in the area of economic development in Atlantic Canada. In the course of conducting its regular business, ACOA will continue to work with key economic players in the region and play a front-line role in economic development activities in the communities throughout the region. This includes support to Francophone economic activity particularly with Francophone SMEs, young and women entrepreneurs, and Francophone organizations involved in economic development. The Agency will also continue to work and build on progress made to date relative to Francophone representation on the CBEDs, CBSCs and the regional development organizations.

Last year, the Agency demonstrated its willingness to help minority-language groups develop economic development strategic plans (e.g., Port au Port region of Newfoundland) and could assist other Francophone regions which determine that they require such plans. This year the Agency is committed to the implementation of l'Association régionale de la côte ouest's (ARCO) Economic Development Plan for the Port-au-Port region of Newfoundland. It is also committed to work on the development and implementation of a community economic development plan with the Francophone community in Prince Edward Island. In Nova Scotia the action plan of the Acadian Entrepreneurship Working Group will be finalized. Work is being undertaken in New Brunswick to explore the opportunities for the development of French language products and services in the computer and information technology sectors.

The extent of the Agency's funded assistance committed to responding to the minority-language communities is very much dependant on the applications submitted by the communities themselves. ACOA's assistance to the Francophone communities last year is indicative of the types of activities which could benefit from financial support during the 1996-98 fiscal-year.

NOTE: Please refer to action plan for other proposed measures

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Preamble
(statement of intent: grounds, goals of proposed measures)

ACOA is committed to the objectives of Section 41 of the Official Languages Act of:

- a) enhancing the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada and supporting and assisting their development; and
- b) fostering the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society.

The 1996-98 ACOA Action Plan builds on gains achieved in the previous years and on the feedback received from the community. The Agency's activities for the implementation of the OLA's Section 41 in the 1995-96 fiscal-year, are listed in the progress reports attached as Annex A. This illustrates the Agency's commitment to the economic development of the minority language communities throughout the Atlantic region.

The Agency's coordination group for the implementation of the OLA's section 41 has been in place for over a year and has proven to be a very effective tool for the implementation of Section 41 for ACOA. This group has a representative from each of the regional offices, from Head Office along with the national coordinator. Some regional offices have also structured a working group for the implementation of Section 41 within their individual provinces.

The Agency has developed over the years a strong partnership with other federal departments and the Atlantic provincial governments for the delivery and cost-sharing of programs designed to improve the environment for economic growth. This partnership is perhaps best exemplified by the COOPERATION Program which is an important part of ACOA activity and involves cooperation with all levels of government, the private sector and institutions.

ACTION PLAN
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECTION 41
OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

Part 1. General Information

1. Identification of institution (complete address including Internet)

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
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Web site: [HTTP://WWW.ACOA.CA](http://WWW.ACOA.CA)

2. Brief description of institution's mandate (include, if relevant, programs of interest to the official-languages minority communities)

ACOA is the federal government's agent for economic development in Atlantic Canada. It was established in 1987 to strengthen the region's economy by boosting job creation and earned income. It works with its partners throughout Atlantic Canada to develop and implement effective policies and programs designed to promote business start-ups and expansion, with a particular emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises. In addition, ACOA is actively involved in the development of national policies, to ensure that the interests of the Atlantic region are taken into full consideration.

The Agency's principal corporate objectives of growth in earned income and opportunities for employment are guided by the following six strategic priorities:

- - Entrepreneurship Development
- - Trade
- - Innovation and Technology
- - Tourism
- - Business Management Practices
- - Access to Information and Capital

ACOA links its strategic priorities to its clients through an array of programs, or service lines. These programs include:

- BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (BDP), designed to help SMEs establish, expand or modernize by offering access to capital in the form of interest-free, unsecured repayable contributions.
- ACF EQUITY ATLANTIC INC. addresses the deficiency in venture capital availability in Atlantic Canada. ACF is cost-shared equally by ACOA, Atlantic provincial governments and chartered banks.
- COMMUNITY BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (CBED) is a grass-roots action by members of a community to improve their economic conditions. ACOA helps by making its resources more accessible and by forging links and partnerships among private and public sector stakeholders.
- CANADA BUSINESS SERVICE CENTRES (CBSC), located in all four Atlantic provinces, provide business-related services and products to SMEs and aspiring entrepreneurs in the region.
- COOPERATION PROGRAM consists of comprehensive, federal/provincial, cost-shared programs designed to improve the environment for economic growth.
- ADVOCACY AND COORDINATION AND PROCUREMENT: The advocacy function is advanced through the corporate procurement strategy which attempts to bring more government contracts and industrial benefits to the Atlantic region. ACOA's procurement efforts will place more emphasis on SMEs in the space and high-technology sectors, and on off-shore contracts related to international development.
- NON-CORE ACTIVITIES vital to the general economic health of the region are undertaken by the Agency and include the Canada Infrastructure Works Program (CIWP), Base Closure Adjustment activities, Borden-Cape Tormentine redevelopment programs, Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (TAGS) that assists communities in leveraging development project investments and in developing long-term employment opportunities for displaced fishers and fish plant workers.

3. Officers responsible (senior official, national and regional coordinators)

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4. Period covered by action plan

The Action Plan covers the period from April 1, 1996 to March 31, 1998.

Part 2. Identification of community needs

5. Means used to identify needs of official-language minority communities at national and regional levels

The needs of the official language minority communities were identified through both direct consultation with Francophone community organizations and through participation of ACOA Head Office and regional offices in multi-departmental consultations and meetings. ACOA has a strong active association with the various minority language groups throughout Atlantic Canada. ACOA officials held bilateral meetings with Francophone communities and organizations to determine specific goals and objectives. ACOA also relies on its extensive network of district offices which enables full and effective participation to programs by communities in their home regions.

ACOA participated in minority language community consultations organized by the Department of Canadian Heritage in the four Atlantic provinces which were held as follows:

- Prince Edward Island (Summerside), November 14 & 15, 1995
- Newfoundland and Labrador (St. John's), December 1, 1995
- New Brunswick (Moncton), December 6, 1995
- Nova Scotia (Halifax), November 28, 1995

ACOA Activity Reports on the implementation of the OLA's Section 41 for the initial part of the 1995-96 fiscal-year were made available during the course of the above consultations.

In Newfoundland, the Francophone communities' working paper entitled, Plan de Developpement Global, was distributed and discussed among participants at the December 1, 1995 consultation. The plan contains the social, cultural, educational and economic development goals of the communities.

Agency personnel consulted with both regional and Head Office officials from the Department of Canadian Heritage (Official Languages Support Programs).

- **Other means:** As part of its policy leadership role in economic development, ACOA has put together over the years a strong network and strong partnerships to meet its corporate responsibilities. In its relations with the private sector, ACOA deals directly with corporate executives of firms, industry associations, business organizations, institutions and the academic community. ACOA also deals directly and continuously with provincial government leaders and officials. The ACOA Regional Vice-Presidents are members of the four Atlantic Federal Regional Councils which bring together heads of key federal departments; three of these Councils are chaired by ACOA Regional Vice-Presidents. ACOA is thus able to access and bring together leaders throughout the region from both official language communities to focus on a common shared economic

agenda while being particularly sensitive to the different needs of each official language community. In addressing the needs of its primary clientele, the Agency deals on an ongoing basis with a large number of Francophone entrepreneurs who take advantage of its programs. The Agency also works in partnership with organizations such as le Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick, the Joudrey Centre in Nova Scotia, l'Association régionale de la côte ouest in Newfoundland, la Société de développement de la Baie acadienne in Prince Edward Island and regional economic development authorities, commissions and boards providing a wide range of services to Francophone entrepreneurs.

6. Principal needs identified at national and regional levels

- Principal economic needs identified in Atlantic Canada centred around the need to develop SMEs by Francophones with a special focus on youth and women.
- The need to access funding for Francophone-owned SMEs and organisations involved in Francophone economic development.
- The need to have Francophone representation and to maintain their representation on economic development organizations such as the Regional Development Authorities, the Zonal Boards, the Canada Business Development Centres and the Canada Business Service Centres.
- The need to access computerized infrastructure and the electronic highway for youth and adult training; for access to Internet in the French language; for school and community centres involved in training; and for distant education.
- The need to develop and/or implement regional economic development plans for those regions requesting this.

Part 3. Action plan contents and timetable

7. a) Measures (regional and provincial) proposed by the institution to respond to community needs

Building on the foundation established during the previous years, ACOA will continue to work with key economic players in Atlantic Canada and play a front-line role in economic development activities in communities throughout the region during the course of 1996-98. Since ACOA's financial assistance programs are application driven, the extent to which the Agency responds to the Francophone communities needs is greatly influenced by applications submitted by the communities. ACOA will assist the Francophone communities through its program activity as well as its coordination and advocacy role and its human resources to achieve, where possible, the above needs. Throughout Atlantic Canada, ACOA will:

- Work in cooperation with other federal and provincial departments and agencies and with groups representing the official minority-language communities to meet the needs of the Francophones in the region.
- Advocate and coordinate work under its economic development leadership mandate, including that of economic development for official minority-language communities.
- Support Francophone economic activity particularly with Francophone SMEs, young and women entrepreneurs, and Francophone organizations involved on economic development. This will be done through the Agency's programs identified in Question 2 above.
- Continue to work and build on the progress made to date relative to Francophone representation on the CBEDs, CBSCs, and the regional development organizations.
- Promote and support human resources training and entrepreneurship development.
- Support the development of a Francophone electronic highway.
- Ensure that its external communications adequately addresses the needs of communities.
- Build on the gains achieved in the last year in regard to regular consultations with official minority-language groups, particularly in the development of the Agency's Action Plan for the implementation of OLA's Section 41.

Examples of specific activities on a province-by-province basis to support the above include:

- In Newfoundland, ACOA will assist in the implementation of l'Association régionale de la côte ouest's (ARCO) Economic Development Plan for the Port-au-Port region of Newfoundland. Because of its depressed economy and lack of economic diversification, this region is a priority for the Francophone community of Newfoundland & Labrador as well as ACOA.
- In Prince Edward Island the Agency will work with the Francophone community in the development and the implementation of a community economic development plan.
- The ACOA Nova Scotia office will work with the Francophone communities on key initiatives in the entrepreneurship area, development of cultural industries and in community economic development.
- ACOA, through ECBC in Cape Breton, will explore ways of providing financial assistance for the non-educational portion of the facility with representatives of Le Centre communautaire et scolaire de Sydney.
- The ACOA New Brunswick office will pursue the exploration of opportunities for the development of French language products and services in the computer and information technology sectors. The May 1996 conference at the Shippagan Campus of the Université de Moncton brings the various players involved in this field of expertise to help identify such opportunities.

7. b) Proposed means by which the institution will inform the official-languages minority communities of its programs and services

The Agency will inform the official-language minority communities of its program and services through on-going, regular consultations with economic development organisations. ACOA takes full advantage of internal resources within ACOA to consult and liaise with the private sector and visits regularly with clientele in Francophone areas of the Atlantic region.

Continuing on last year's success in providing the ACOA Action Plan to the Francophone community, ACOA will again, in the next two years, pursue a pro-active distribution of its Action Plan to the those Francophone organisations with an interest in economic development.

The ACOA Home Page on the Internet is being developed and will include information on ACOA programming and services along with the 1996-98 version of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Section 41 of the OLA.

8. Measures proposed to evaluate success of expected results

In order to be responsive to the needs of the community, the Agency will seek ongoing feedback through its network of offices, committees, contacts and partners.

In addition, as part of the formal consultation process with minority language groups, ACOA will seek feedback from the Francophone community groups regarding its services and programs.

ACOA Newfoundland will develop an evaluation framework to be used in assessing the achievement of intended results in relation to the Agency's Action Plan.

In Nova Scotia, an accountability plan will be prepared and results monitored on a quarterly basis during the course of the year.

9. Financial and other resources dedicated to completion of action plan

ACOA will continue to avail of its programming resources, both financial and human, to support the Francophone communities and the Action Plan. These expenditures are dependent upon the level of activity generated by the communities themselves and the projects submitted to the Agency by local entrepreneurs.

Part 4. Communication plan

10. Measures proposed by the institution to publicize action plan and report on achievements inside and outside the institution

Continuing on last year's success in providing the ACOA Action Plan to the Francophone community, ACOA will again this year pursue a pro-active distribution of its Action Plan to Francophone organisations with an interest in economic development. The Action Plan will again this year be made available to all ACOA employees. As indicated in item 7, it will also be made available on Internet.

As part of its regular communication strategy, ACOA will continue to inform client groups of both official-language communities about programs, policies and regulations related to economic development in Atlantic Canada. A proactive approach will be used on an ongoing basis to furnish information, undertake promotion and invite participation in economic development by clients of the official language groups and regions.

The Agency will continue to develop and to nurture its extensive network of contacts and partnerships.

Part 5. Signature

Senior project officer

Date