Federal Funding Decisions Briefing

How Federal Decisions Are Made | The Political Calendar | Engagement Strategy

Prepared by

NORTHERN ARC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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CONFIDENTIAL

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> *Canada's next chapter of growth starts with investing at home. The Canada Strong Fund will invest in key, strategic Canadian projects and companies, creating good-paying jobs, supercharging innovation, and keeping Canada competitive in a rapidly changing world.*
>
> **The Rt. Hon. Mark Carney, P.C.**
>
> Prime Minister of Canada
>
> Canada Strong Fund Announcement | April 27, 2026

3	$25B	60+	6 mo
Levels of Federal Decision-Making	Canada Strong Fund (Initial)	Active Federal Programs	Engagement to Reposition

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Executive Summary

The Government of Canada spends over $37 billion annually on procurement and administers more than 60 active innovation, funding, and capital programs across federal departments, regional development agencies, and Crown corporations. The federal innovation ecosystem, including IRAP, the Strategic Response Fund, the Regional AI Initiative, the Buy Canadian Policy, BDC Capital, and the full SR&ED tax credit architecture, represents the most comprehensive federal investment framework in the country's history.

Most Canadian companies interact with this system through digital portals. They complete online applications, submit through CanadaBuys, claim SR&ED credits through their accountant, and wait. They treat federal funding and procurement as an administrative process. It is not. Federal funding and procurement decisions are political decisions, made by Ministers and their staff, shaped by Deputy Ministers and program officers, and coordinated by the Prime Minister's Office. The gap between the published process and the actual decision architecture is where outcomes are determined.

This briefing explains how federal decisions are actually made. It describes the three levels of decision-making that govern every federal funding allocation and procurement award. It maps the political calendar that determines when engagement is effective and when it is wasted. It outlines the federal funding architecture at a strategic level, so Canadian companies understand what is available and how the pieces connect. And it explains what Northern Arc does: the political positioning at the ministerial, Deputy Minister, and PMO level that transforms a company from an unknown applicant into a strategic priority.

THE THREE LEVELS OF FEDERAL DECISION-MAKING

Level One: Political. Ministers set strategic priorities. Ministerial staff filter which files reach the Minister's attention. When a Minister's office understands a company's strategic value, that understanding flows through the department to every program the company touches.

Level Two: Bureaucratic. Deputy Ministers, ADMs, Industrial Technology Advisors, and program officers evaluate technical merit, manage intake processes, and recommend awards. A company known favourably at this level is positioned ahead of applicants that submit through digital portals.

Level Three: Central Agency. The PMO coordinates national economic strategy. Treasury Board sets expenditure rules. When the PMO understands a company is essential to national priorities, that understanding shapes how multiple departments treat every file involving the company.

All three must be aligned. A Minister may flag a company as important, but without bureaucratic assessment the file stalls. Both may be aligned, but without PMO coordination, multi-department stacking fails. Northern Arc aligns all three levels before applications are submitted.

THE POLITICAL MOMENT: WHY NOW

Prime Minister Carney took office in March 2025 with a mandate built on economic sovereignty, productivity, and industrial transformation. In the fourteen months since, his government has implemented the Buy Canadian Policy, launched the Defence Industrial Strategy, committed $2 billion to sovereign AI compute infrastructure, established the $25 billion Canada Strong Fund, and referred $126 billion in nation-building projects to the Major Projects Office. Minister Joly leads a reimagined ISED. Minister Solomon leads Canada's first AI ministry. Secretary of State Fuhr leads defence procurement. Minister Lightbound has restructured federal procurement through the Buy Canadian framework.

The first two years of any government are the window when new programs are funded, new priorities are set, and new relationships are established. After two years, budgets are committed, relationships are locked, and the government shifts from building to defending. Canadian companies that position now, during the first two years of the Carney government, will benefit from the full funding cycle. Companies that wait will be applying after the most consequential decisions have already been made.

Part One: How Federal Decisions Are Actually Made

Every federal program publishes eligibility criteria, application guides, and evaluation frameworks. These documents describe the formal process. They do not describe how decisions are shaped. The formal process is the last step in a decision that has already been influenced at multiple levels before an application is submitted. Understanding this distinction is the difference between companies that access federal support and companies that apply and wait.

The Political Level: Ministers and Their Offices

Every federal department is led by a Minister appointed by the Prime Minister. The Minister sets strategic priorities for the department, approves significant funding allocations, and represents the department in Cabinet. But Ministers do not read every application. They do not evaluate every file. Ministers rely on their staff to filter what reaches their desk and to frame how files are presented.

A typical Minister's office includes a Chief of Staff, a Director of Policy, a Director of Communications, and several policy advisors organized by portfolio area. When a company approaches the federal government through a digital portal, none of these people are aware of the application. The file enters the bureaucratic intake process, is assessed against published criteria, and moves through the department's standard workflow. The Minister's office learns about the file only if it reaches a decision threshold that requires ministerial approval, which for most programs means only the largest awards.

When a company is positioned at the political level before submitting an application, the dynamic changes. The Minister's office understands why the company matters. Policy advisors have been briefed on the company's strategic value: the jobs it creates, the technology it develops, the regional economic impact it delivers, the national priority it advances. When the file reaches a decision point, the Minister's office is not encountering it for the first time. They are confirming a decision that has already been shaped by their own assessment of the company's importance.

This is not improper. Ministers are elected to set priorities. Their staff are hired to identify which companies, projects, and investments advance the government's mandate. The companies that benefit from political positioning are the ones that help the Minister demonstrate results: job creation announcements, innovation milestones, export wins, and regional economic impact. The company's success becomes the Minister's success. Both benefit.

The Bureaucratic Level: Deputy Ministers and Program Officers

Below the Minister, every department is run by a Deputy Minister and a team of Assistant Deputy Ministers, Directors General, and program officers. These are career public servants who manage intake processes, conduct technical assessments, and recommend funding allocations. They are the people who read applications, evaluate eligibility, score proposals against criteria, and prepare briefing notes for ministerial decision.

The bureaucratic level operates on two parallel tracks. The formal track follows published processes: applications are received, assessed, scored, and ranked. The informal track operates through relationships: companies that are known to the relevant program officer, ITA, or ADM receive guidance on how to strengthen applications before submission, insight into what the department is looking for, and advance awareness of upcoming intake windows and program changes.

THE ITA RELATIONSHIP: HOW IRAP ACTUALLY WORKS

IRAP illustrates the informal track. The published process says companies apply online and are assessed against innovation criteria. The actual process is relationship-driven. Each company is assigned an Industrial Technology Advisor who knows the company's technology, understands its R&D capacity, and works with the company to develop project proposals that align with IRAP's objectives. Companies that build the ITA relationship access higher funding levels, faster processing, and multi-project continuity. Companies that submit cold through the portal receive standard treatment.

The ITA does not just assess applications. The ITA shapes them. A company that engages its ITA early receives guidance on how to frame its R&D project, what expenditures qualify, how to position the project within IRAP's priorities, and when to submit. The application that arrives is not a cold submission. It is a proposal that the ITA has already assessed favourably. The formal evaluation confirms what the informal relationship has already determined.

This pattern applies across the federal system. RAII funding flows through regional development agencies where program officers guide applicants through intake. SRF consultations happen before formal applications are submitted. BDC relationship managers assess companies before lending decisions reach committee. In every case, the companies that engage early and build relationships access better outcomes than companies that submit applications without prior engagement.

The Central Agency Level: PMO and Treasury Board

The Prime Minister's Office coordinates national economic strategy. The PMO does not administer programs, but it sets the priority signals that flow through every department. When the PMO identifies AI sovereignty, industrial transformation, or defence readiness as national priorities, departments allocate resources and staff time accordingly. Programs that align with PMO priorities receive faster interdepartmental coordination, smoother Treasury Board approvals, and stronger ministerial support.

Treasury Board, under President Shafqat Ali, sets the expenditure management rules that govern how all departments spend. The Directive on the Management of Procurement now incorporates the Buy Canadian Policy framework. Treasury Board also oversees the regulatory processes that affect how quickly departments can move from approval to disbursement. A company whose file has been flagged by the PMO as aligned with national priorities experiences a smoother path through Treasury Board processes than one that has not.

For companies seeking support from multiple departments simultaneously, stacking IRAP with RAII, layering procurement with innovation funding, combining BDC capital with non-repayable contributions, central agency coordination is essential. Without it, departments treat each application in isolation. With it, departments coordinate to ensure the combined federal response is coherent, efficient, and aligned with the government's strategic objectives.

Why Portal-Only Engagement Loses

A company that interacts with the federal government exclusively through digital portals, submitting applications on CanadaBuys, filing IRAP proposals online, claiming SR&ED through its accountant, is competing against companies that have done all of that and have also built relationships at every level of the decision-making chain. The portal company's application is technically complete. It meets eligibility criteria. It is assessed fairly against published evaluation factors. And it loses to the company whose Minister's office has already flagged the file as strategically important.

WHAT THE PORTAL COMPANY MISSES

Pre-submission guidance. Program officers guide known companies on how to frame applications. Portal-only companies submit without this guidance and are more likely to miss scoring opportunities.

Priority treatment. When intake volumes are high, files from known companies with ministerial or ADM awareness move faster. Portal-only applications join the standard queue.

Multi-program coordination. Companies known across departments benefit from coordinated multi-program support. Portal-only companies manage each application in isolation and miss stacking opportunities.

Political context. Every federal funding decision has a political dimension. Ministers approve significant awards. Companies with ministerial awareness receive approvals framed as strategic wins. Portal-only companies receive approvals as administrative processing.

The Compounding Effect

Federal engagement compounds. The first IRAP contribution opens a relationship with the ITA. The ITA relationship facilitates larger IRAP contributions on subsequent projects. IRAP success validates the company for RAII consideration. RAII funding demonstrates regional impact that strengthens the case for SRF. Each program accessed builds a track record that makes the next application stronger, faster, and more likely to succeed.

Political relationships compound in the same way. A ministerial office that has seen a company deliver on an initial project is more likely to flag the company for additional support. A Deputy Minister who has briefed the Minister on a company's success is more likely to prioritize the company's next file. The PMO that has used a company's story to illustrate program effectiveness is more likely to support the company's engagement with other departments.

Companies that start early build compounding relationships. Companies that wait start from zero every time. The six-month engagement with Northern Arc is designed to create the foundation that compounds: the political relationships, the bureaucratic positioning, and the PMO awareness that transform every subsequent federal interaction from a cold submission into a priority file.

Part Two: The Federal Funding Architecture at a Glance

The federal funding system is not one program. It is an interconnected architecture of non-repayable contributions, repayable financing, venture capital, tax credits, procurement preferences, and trade support instruments. The following provides a strategic overview of the four pillars that matter for Canadian companies. Northern Arc's sector-specific briefings provide detailed program-by-program analysis for procurement, technology and AI, and defence companies.

Innovation and R&D Programs

Program	Type	Range	Status
IRAP (NRC)	Non-repayable	$75K–$10M/project	Continuous; ITA-driven
RAII (RDAs)	Repayable/Non-repayable	$250K–$5M	Open to Dec 2028
Strategic Response Fund	Repayable contribution	$10M+ (min $20M project)	Continuous
AI Compute Access Fund	Non-repayable subsidy	Up to $300M total	Open
NGen Supercluster	Non-repayable (consortium)	$50K–$20M	Challenge-based
Mitacs	Non-repayable	$15K–$60K/intern/yr	Continuous
NSERC Alliance	Non-repayable	$20K–$1M+	Continuous
ElevateIP	Non-repayable (IP)	Varies	Continuous

These programs are designed to stack. A technology company can combine IRAP non-repayable contributions with RAII funding through its regional development agency, layer Mitacs internships for R&D labour cost subsidies, and position for SRF if the project exceeds the $20 million total cost threshold. Northern Arc's Technology and AI Sector Briefing maps the full architecture and identifies the combined $10 to $25 million target for qualifying companies.

Procurement Pathways

Pathway	Type	Size Range	Timeline
Buy Canadian Policy	Bid preference	$5M+ from June 15	In force; threshold drops June 15
SMB Procurement Program	Set-aside /	TBD by sector	Spring 2026

Pathway	Type	Size Range	Timeline
	streamlined		launch
ProServices / TBIPS	Pre-qualified pool	Below CKFTA threshold	Quarterly refresh
Innovative Solutions Canada	Grant + procurement	Up to $150K (P1) / $1M (P2)	Rolling
Defence Investment Agency	Strategic partner	Multi-year, $M+	Framework summer 2026

On June 15, 2026, the Buy Canadian Policy threshold drops from $25 million to $5 million, expanding the pool of contracts where Canadian suppliers receive structural scoring advantages by an order of magnitude. The SMB Procurement Program launches in the same window. Northern Arc’s Procurement Sector Briefing maps the full architecture including supplier registration, ProServices pre-qualification, and the $5 to $25 million contract pipeline target.

Tax Credits and Capital

SR&ED: 35% refundable federal ITC on first $3M qualifying R&D (CCPCs), plus provincial credits that stack: Ontario 10%, Alberta 20%, BC 10%, Quebec 14% (30% on first $3M). **CTM ITC:** 30% refundable federal credit on clean technology manufacturing equipment, effective January 2024 through December 2031. **BDC:** Growth and Transition Capital ($1M to $100M), venture capital funds (Industrial Innovation VC II $200M, Deep Tech, Climate Tech $1.15B, Growth VC $1B), and advisory services at subsidized rates.

BDC is excluded from the combined non-repayable funding target but represents a parallel capital stream available to every qualifying Canadian business. Most companies have never explored Growth and Transition Capital or BDC Advisory. The first step is a conversation.

International and Export

Trade Commissioner Service: Over 160 cities worldwide, market intelligence, qualified introductions, in-market support at no cost. **EDC:** Export credit insurance, financing, bonding for international expansion. **CanExport SMEs:** Up to $75,000/year non-repayable for export market development (current intake closes May 29, 2026). **IRAP International:** Up to $600,000 for bilateral R&D collaborations with international partners.

Part Three: The Political Calendar

Federal engagement is not only about what you do. It is about when you do it. The federal government operates on cycles: fiscal year cycles, budget cycles, program intake cycles, and political cycles. Companies that understand these cycles position their engagement for maximum impact. Companies that ignore them waste time and resources engaging at moments when the system is unreceptive.

The Federal Fiscal Year and Budget Cycle

The federal fiscal year runs from April 1 to March 31. Budgets are typically tabled in February or March, announcing new programs and funding for the following fiscal year. Main Estimates, which detail departmental spending, are tabled around the same time. Supplementary Estimates, which authorize additional spending, are tabled in the fall and winter.

For companies seeking federal funding, the budget cycle creates two critical windows. The pre-budget window (September through January) is when departments prepare their budget submissions and the Department of Finance reviews them. Companies that are positioned during this window can influence which programs are renewed, expanded, or created. The post-budget window (April through August) is when new programs are stood up, intake processes are designed, and the first applications are received. Companies that are positioned during this window are first in line when new funding flows.

THE SPRING ECONOMIC UPDATE 2026: WHAT IT MEANS

On April 28, 2026, the Government of Canada tabled the Spring Economic Update. Key announcements include: the $25 billion Canada Strong Fund as Canada's first sovereign wealth fund; six pillars of the forthcoming national AI strategy; $103.8 million over five years to establish the Defence Investment Agency as a standalone entity; confirmation of the Small and Medium Business Procurement Program launch; and over $126 billion in nation-building projects referred to the Major Projects Office.

For Canadian companies, the Spring Economic Update signals where the government intends to invest over the next 12 to 24 months. Companies that position now, while these programs are being designed and the first intake windows are opening, will be established when the funding flows. Companies that wait until programs are fully launched will be competing against applicants who shaped the intake process from the inside.

When Ministerial Offices Are Receptive

Ministerial offices are not equally receptive at all times. The most productive engagement windows are during the first 18 months after a Minister is appointed (when they are building their file, looking for success stories, and open to new relationships), after a budget has been tabled (when new funding is available and Ministers are looking for projects to announce), and during regional tours and trade missions (when Ministers are actively seeking companies to feature).

Engagement is less productive during budget preparation periods (when ministerial offices are focused on internal departmental priorities), during election periods (when Ministers are campaigning rather than governing), and during Cabinet shuffles (when ministerial offices are in transition and files are being handed off). Parliamentary recesses (summer and winter) can be productive for relationship-building, as Ministers and their staff have more flexibility in their schedules.

Election Effects and Cabinet Shuffles

The Carney government took office following the April 2025 election. The next federal election must be held by October 2029. Typically, the most productive period for federal engagement is the first two to three years of a government's mandate, when new priorities are funded and new relationships are established. The final 12 to 18 months before an election shift to a caretaker dynamic where new commitments slow and existing programs run on autopilot.

CABINET SHUFFLES: RISK AND OPPORTUNITY

Cabinet shuffles change ministerial portfolios. When a new Minister is appointed to ISED, PSPC, or a regional development agency, the new Minister brings a new Chief of Staff, new policy advisors, and new priorities. Companies with relationships limited to a single ministerial office risk losing their positioning overnight. Companies with relationships across both the political and bureaucratic levels retain their positioning regardless of who holds the portfolio.

Cabinet shuffles are also opportunities. A new Minister needs success stories, needs companies to announce, and needs to demonstrate impact quickly. Companies that are positioned to be the new Minister's first announcement capture attention and establish relationships at the most receptive moment in the ministerial cycle.

How Northern Arc Navigates Timing

Northern Arc monitors the political calendar continuously. We track budget preparation timelines, program intake windows, ministerial schedules, and political developments that create or close engagement opportunities. When a budget is tabled, we assess which new programs align with our clients' capabilities and position for first-mover advantage. When a Cabinet shuffle occurs, we assess the implications for each client and re-engage the new ministerial office immediately. When election timing approaches, we ensure clients have established the bureaucratic relationships that persist regardless of political change.

The current political calendar is exceptionally favourable. The Carney government is 14 months into its mandate. New programs are being stood up. New funding is flowing. Ministerial offices are receptive to new relationships and looking for companies that demonstrate impact. The $25 billion Canada Strong Fund, the national AI strategy, the expanded Buy Canadian Policy, and the Defence Industrial Strategy are all in their implementation phase. The window for first-mover positioning is open now and narrows with each passing quarter.

Why Canadian Companies Are Positioned Now

The Government Has Built the Architecture. The Carney government has assembled the most comprehensive federal investment framework in Canadian history. The Buy Canadian Policy restructures $37 billion in annual procurement spending. The Sovereign AI Compute Strategy commits $2 billion to Canadian digital infrastructure. The Canada Strong Fund creates a $25 billion sovereign wealth vehicle for strategic Canadian investments. IRAP, RAII, SRF, NGen, BDC Capital, and the full SR&ED tax credit architecture are all active and accepting applications. The architecture exists. The question is which companies will use it.

The Political Alignment Is Exceptional. Prime Minister Carney has made economic sovereignty his defining mandate. Every major policy announcement reinforces the same thesis: Canada must invest in Canadian companies, buy Canadian products, and build Canadian industrial capacity. Ministers are evaluated on their ability to deliver results against this mandate. Companies that align with the sovereignty, productivity, and innovation narratives that define this government receive political support that transcends any single program. This level of political alignment between government priorities and private sector opportunity is rare. It does not persist indefinitely.

The Timing Is Narrowing. The first two years of a government mandate are the most productive for federal engagement. Programs are being designed. Budgets are being committed. Relationships are being established. After two years, the dynamics shift: budgets are locked, program officers are managing existing portfolios rather than building new ones, and ministerial offices are less receptive to new relationships. The Carney government is 14 months into its mandate. The window for first-mover positioning is open. It narrows with each quarter.

> **THE COMPOUNDING ADVANTAGE**
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> Federal engagement is not a transaction. It is a compounding relationship. The first IRAP contribution validates the ITA relationship. The ITA relationship facilitates larger contributions. IRAP success validates the company for RAII consideration. RAII funding strengthens the case for SRF. BDC engagement deepens over multiple financing rounds. Political relationships at the ministerial level deepen as the company delivers results that Ministers can announce.
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> Companies that start now build a foundation that compounds over the full government mandate. Companies that wait two years will start from zero at the moment when the government's receptiveness to new relationships is declining. The gap between early movers and late entrants widens every quarter.

What Northern Arc Public Affairs Brings

Northern Arc exists to align political will with bureaucratic process. We ensure that when federal funding and procurement decisions are made, our clients are positioned at the ministerial, Deputy Minister, and PMO level. This is not application preparation. This is not grant writing. This is political positioning that determines whether your company is known to the decision-makers who shape how programs are administered, how files are prioritized, and how funding flows.

Hon. Kent Hehr, P.C., LL.B., Principal. Former federal Cabinet Minister. Kent served in Cabinet and at the Cabinet table, where federal funding, procurement, and regulatory decisions are made. He understands how ministerial offices evaluate files, how the PMO coordinates cross-departmental priorities, and how political positioning transforms a standard application into a priority file. The three-level decision-making framework in this briefing is drawn directly from Kent's experience inside the federal decision-making apparatus. His relationships span the current Cabinet, the senior public service, and the PMO.

Abed Harb, Managing Partner. Eight years in Ottawa including the Prime Minister's Office and Senior Advisor to multiple Ministers. Abed understands how ministerial offices process files, how Deputy Ministers receive and act on political direction, and how to navigate the bureaucratic decision chain from program officer to ADM to Minister. His network includes current ministerial staff, senior officials across ISED, PSPC, and the RDAs, and decision-makers within the PMO.

> **THE NARRATIVE WE ADVANCE**
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> "This is a Canadian company that strengthens Canadian economic sovereignty. It creates Canadian jobs, develops Canadian intellectual property, and delivers capability that reduces Canada's dependency on foreign suppliers. Every federal dollar invested in this company stays in Canada, compounds through the Canadian economy, and advances the priorities that this government was elected to deliver."
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> This framing transforms a funding application from one of hundreds into a file that Ministers

and their staff prioritize, that Deputy Ministers flag for accelerated processing, and that the PMO recognizes as aligned with national priorities. Northern Arc builds this narrative for every client and ensures it is understood at every level of the decision-making chain.

What We Do

Position your company within the federal investment narrative so Ministers and their staff understand your strategic value before applications are submitted.

Engage ministerial offices, Deputy Ministers, and the PMO to ensure your company is known at every level of the decision-making chain.

Ensure awareness across the relevant departments, agencies, and Crown corporations so that when funding and procurement decisions are made, your file has been assessed favourably at the bureaucratic level.

Introduce your company to the officials, ITAs, and program officers who administer the programs mapped in this briefing and in our sector-specific companion briefings.

Advise on political timing, program sequencing, and narrative framing so your engagement with the federal government compounds over time.

Flag new program announcements, intake windows, budget implications, and political developments that create opportunities or require repositioning.

Monitor the political calendar, Cabinet dynamics, budget preparations, and ministerial priorities to position your company ahead of changes before they are announced.

Engagement Timeline and Deliverables

Northern Arc’s engagement follows a structured six-month timeline designed to build the political relationships and bureaucratic positioning that transform federal engagement from transactional to strategic.

Months 1–2: Assessment and Foundation. Deep dive on the company’s capabilities, federal funding history, and strategic positioning. Map the relevant programs across innovation, procurement, tax credits, and capital. Produce the company-specific Federal Opportunities Briefing Note that becomes the foundation document for all engagement. Initiate contact with the relevant ministerial offices and begin the ITA and RDA relationship-building process.

Months 3–4: Active Engagement. Advance ministerial engagement to ensure the company is known at the political level. Coordinate with program officers on current and upcoming applications. Begin positioning for multi-program stacking. Explore BDC advisory and lending products. Identify procurement pathways. Pursue early-stage conversations to explore what a pilot pathway might look like.

Months 5–6: Acceleration and Conversion. Convert ministerial awareness into active file support. Coordinate multi-program stacking across departments. Ensure applications are framed within the political narratives that accelerate processing. Position for ongoing engagement beyond the initial six-month term as the compounding effect takes hold.

Investment and Expected Return

Northern Arc Public Affairs works on a monthly retainer of $10,000 plus applicable taxes. The initial engagement period is six months. The agreement includes a 30-day termination clause, meaning either party may cancel at any time with 30 days notice. After six months, the agreement continues month-to-month.

A six-month initial engagement totals $60,000. The target depends on the company's sector, size, and federal funding history. For technology companies, the combined target is $10 to $25 million in federal innovation support. For manufacturers, the target is $5 to $25 million in federal procurement revenue. For companies with both technology and manufacturing components, the targets stack. The engagement cost is a fraction of the federal support that positioned companies access.

Federal engagement compounds. Each program accessed, each relationship built, each political success delivered creates the foundation for larger and faster outcomes over time. The six-month engagement is the foundation. The compounding returns extend for years.

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

Federal funding is not a one-time event. IRAP projects renew annually. RAII intake runs to December 2028. SR&ED credits are claimed every tax year. Procurement contracts refresh on multi-year cycles. The national AI strategy will create new programs in 2026 and 2027. The Canada Strong Fund will begin investments in 2027. Budget 2027 will announce new priorities and new funding.

The foundational work of the first six months creates relationships and registers the company across the federal system. Ongoing engagement maintains and leverages those relationships as new windows open and political priorities evolve. Engagements typically extend 6 to 18 months as the compounding effect takes hold and federal support deepens.

Conclusion

Federal funding and procurement decisions are not administrative processes. They are political decisions, made by Ministers and their staff, shaped by Deputy Ministers and program officers, and coordinated by the Prime Minister's Office. Companies that understand this, that build relationships at every level of the decision-making chain, and that position their capabilities within the political narratives that drive this government's mandate, access federal support that portal-only companies never reach.

The Carney government has assembled the most comprehensive federal investment framework in Canadian history. The Buy Canadian Policy, the Sovereign AI Compute Strategy, the Canada Strong Fund, the Defence Industrial Strategy, and the expansion of IRAP, RAII, SRF, NGen, and BDC Capital together represent an unprecedented commitment to Canadian economic sovereignty. The architecture exists. The political will is there. The timing is favourable.

The question is not whether your company qualifies for federal support. Most Canadian companies qualify for multiple programs simultaneously. The question is whether your company will be positioned at the ministerial, Deputy Minister, and PMO level when decisions are made. Whether the officials who administer the programs know your company before your application arrives. Whether the Ministers who approve significant awards understand why supporting your company advances the national priorities they were appointed to deliver.

Northern Arc provides the political positioning that answers those questions. The six-month engagement builds the foundation. The compounding effect extends for years. The window is open now.

Northern Arc Public Affairs looks forward to partnering with your company to capture the federal support that your Canadian capability deserves.

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