



Food Hub Program Sector Briefing

Intake Closes December 11, 2026 | Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada | \$1 Billion Food-Link Fund

Prepared by
NORTHERN ARC PUBLIC AFFAIRS
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CONFIDENTIAL

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"The Food-Link Fund will help build the infrastructure we need to move food more efficiently."

Hon. Heath MacDonald, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
Food-Link Fund announcement, Ottawa | October 5, 2026

Dec 11 Food-Link Fund EOI deadline	\$25M Maximum per organization	50% to 60% AAFC share of eligible costs	10 Hubs Federal target by end of 2028
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Executive Summary

STATUS AS OF OCTOBER 23, 2026

Food-Link Fund Expression of Interest: open; 49 days remain before the December 11 close. AAFC's program pages have not changed since October 16.

FCC Agri-food Project Finance: open; 21 days remain before the November 13 close at 5:00 pm Pacific Time.

Strategic Response Fund food call, second window: not yet open. ISED says it will open later in the fall, with details shared before it opens.

Regional agri-food call for proposals: announced for fall 2026 by the regional development agencies; not yet launched.

On October 14, 2026, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) opened the first intake of the Food Hub Program, one of two programs under the \$1 billion, 10-year Food-Link Fund. The Fund was announced on October 5 by Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food since May 13, 2025) and Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure since May 13, 2025). The intake runs eight weeks and closes December 11, 2026 at 11:59 pm Pacific Time. AAFC may contribute up to \$25 million per organization over the life of the program, which ends March 31, 2037, at a normal cost share of up to 50% of eligible costs, rising to 60% when the majority of the applicant is owned or led by Indigenous Peoples, youth, women, visible minorities, persons with disabilities, or 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians.

The Food-Link Fund operationalizes the first pillar of the \$3.2 billion National Food Security Strategy that Prime Minister Mark Carney (Prime Minister of Canada since March 14, 2025) launched on June 11, 2026: competitive prices, choice, and affordability. The strategy names the problem directly. Five grocers account for about 75% of Canadian grocery sales, and many independent grocers depend on the distribution networks of the chains they compete against. The government has attached public targets to the fix: 10 food hubs established or expanded by the end of 2028, each showing lower average prices than the major grocers in its service area, funding for 20 to 40 hubs in total, and a 15% increase by 2030 in independent grocers buying from terminals or hubs.

The practical entry point is a single Food-Link Fund Expression of Interest filed through AAFC's online portal. AAFC retains food hub projects and invites the strongest to a full application, which must follow within one year of invitation. Three rules shape every file: the applicant's own financial contributions must be secured before an application is considered; total government funding cannot exceed 85% of project funding (100% of eligible costs for Indigenous applicants); and in this first year, costs are eligible back to June 11, 2026.

The field is wide. Processors, distributors, logistics firms, independent grocers, co-operatives, and Indigenous organizations can all compete for the same envelope, and the first round will decide which projects become the model hubs the government points to. Part One of this briefing covers the Food Hub Program and the federal instruments

that stack with it. Part Two covers the portfolios where positioning matters, and Part Three covers provincial, municipal, Indigenous, and international pathways.

WHAT MAKES CANADIAN FOOD HUB OPERATORS DIFFERENT

Named as the delivery mechanism. The strategy counts food hubs. Hub operators are the organizations whose results the government will report against its own 2028 target.

Competition is the policy. The Fund exists to give independent grocers, producers, and institutions an alternative to chain-controlled supply systems. Shared cold storage, aggregation, or trucking is that policy in physical form.

Institutional demand is built into the scoring. AAFC scores how a project helps regional supply chains serve schools, hospitals, and other public buyers.

Inclusive by design. Enhanced 60% cost share for majority underrepresented-owned or led organizations, a 100% stacking ceiling for Indigenous applicants, and recognized higher costs in northern and remote regions widen the field of strong applicants.

Food Distribution Content: Quantified

The federal case for food hubs rests on numbers the government published itself. Transportation accounts for about 7% of every dollar Canadians spend on domestically produced food, against 4.6% in the United States, and wholesale accounts for a further 9%. Outside urban areas, the strategy notes that wholesale options are limited, sometimes to a single distributor. Canada has more than 6,900 independent grocers competing against five chains that hold about three quarters of the market, and many of those independents buy through networks owned by their competitors.

Import dependence compounds the distribution gap. Canadians rely on imports for 88% of the fresh fruit and nuts and 72% of the vegetables they consume. The Ontario Food Terminal, the only facility of its kind in Canada, moves nearly 2 billion pounds of fruits and vegetables a year to about 5,000 registered buyers. The strategy's answer for regions that cannot support a full terminal is the commercial food hub: a node that collects product from many producers, stores and processes it, and delivers it to stores, restaurants, institutions, and consumers at a lower cost per unit.

COMPOUNDING ADVANTAGE: BUY CANADIAN AND PUBLIC DEMAND

AAFC scores applicants on reasonable effort to source project materials and services from Canadian businesses under the Buy Canadian Policy. On the demand side, the strategy commits the federal government to use its purchasing power through the National Food and Beverage Procurement Strategy, and the National School Food Program is now permanent at \$216.6 million a year from 2029-30. A hub that can supply institutional buyers scores better at intake and carries a more durable revenue base after it.

THE COMPETITIVE GAP: WHY DECEMBER 11 MATTERS

The Food Hub Program is open to a wide field: Canadian-incorporated processors, distributors, logistics firms, and independent grocers, along with co-operatives, industry associations, municipal entities with a commercial operating model, and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis organizations. Most serious applicants will clear eligibility.

AAFC states that projects with the greatest potential benefit receive priority, that meeting every criterion creates no obligation to fund, and that the Minister retains discretion based on wider public policy considerations. During the competitive intake, program staff cannot comment on individual proposals. The first round sets the template the program will be measured against.

Your competitors can apply for the same \$25 million. The question is whose file is understood before December 11.

How Federal Decisions Are Actually Made

Program guidelines describe eligibility criteria and application processes. They do not describe how decisions are made. The gap between formal process and actual decision-making is where opportunities are won or lost.

The Three Levels of Federal Decision-Making

Political Level: Ministers and Ministerial Staff. Ministers set strategic priorities for their departments. Minister MacDonald shapes how the National Food Security Strategy is delivered and which projects come to represent it, and the Food Hub Program guide states plainly that the Minister retains final discretion. Minister Robertson oversees the Food Terminal Fund, and Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry since May 13, 2025) oversees the Strategic Response Fund food call. Ministerial staff filter what reaches the Minister and shape how issues are framed. When a Minister's office understands that a project represents strategic value, that understanding flows through the department.

Bureaucratic Level: Deputy Ministers and ADMs. Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers manage departmental operations and evaluate technical merit. At AAFC, program officials assess each file against published criteria: alignment with program objectives, capacity to deliver, quality and completeness, and alignment with federal priorities. A technically sound file that aligns with departmental priorities receives favourable evaluation. The bureaucratic level ensures that political interest translates into defensible decisions.

Central Agency Level: PMO and Treasury Board. The Prime Minister's Office coordinates across departments and ensures alignment with the government's economic priorities, and Treasury Board sets the rules for how contribution funding is approved and managed. The Prime Minister launched the National Food Security Strategy personally. When the PMO understands that a hub is helping deliver the strategy's affordability and competition targets, that understanding shapes how multiple departments approach the file.

Why Alignment Matters

These three levels must be aligned for significant outcomes. A Minister may express interest, but if officials do not see technical merit, the file stalls. Officials may recommend support, but if the Minister's office does not see political value, the file sits. Both may align, but if the PMO holds different priorities, interdepartmental coordination fails. Most organizations engage only with program administrators who process applications. Northern Arc ensures that when a file reaches a decision point, the political level has already identified the project as strategically important, the bureaucratic level has assessed it favourably, and the PMO understands how supporting it advances national priorities. The application becomes confirmation of a decision that has already been shaped at every level that matters.

Part One: Federal Funding and Financing Programs

The following programs are the ones genuinely relevant to food hub, distribution, and aggregation projects. Each figure below is drawn from the delivering department or Crown corporation.

Food Hub Program

What It Funds. The Food Hub Program supports the establishment, expansion, or modernization of food hubs that enhance the storage, aggregation, processing, and distribution of food, and the regional infrastructure, equipment, and logistics capacity that connect local producers to markets. Eligible activities include equipment to collect, aggregate, store, test, process, pack, sell, distribute, or transport food; construction, expansion, retrofit, or modernization of facilities; digital infrastructure including supply chain management, e-commerce, and point-of-sale platforms; feasibility studies and supply chain mapping; and food safety, traceability, grading, labelling, producer onboarding, and market development. Indigenous applicants may also pursue capacity building, risk and assurance, and traditional knowledge activities.

What It Does Not Fund. An applicant whose primary business is not operating a food hub must propose a project that expands the existing network of food hubs and their distribution systems. Construction or equipment that only increases a processor's production capacity or a retailer's capacity is not eligible as a standalone project, and the program does not fund food purchases. Administration is capped at 10% of eligible costs (15% with rationale for Indigenous recipients in northern and remote regions).

Funding Terms. AAFC may contribute up to \$25 million per organization over the life of the program. Contributions are non-repayable where benefits accrue broadly rather than primarily to the recipient, and repayable where a for-profit recipient is primarily increasing its own profits or value. Repayable contributions carry no interest, are normally repaid over up to 10 years, and repayment normally begins one year after project completion. Funded equipment must be retained for at least two years after completion.

How Files Are Scored. AAFC assesses alignment with program objectives (more distribution infrastructure, more competition and local food, stronger supply chains, a more resilient food supply), the applicant's capacity to manage the project and operate without continued program support, the quality of the application including quotations

behind the budget, and alignment with federal priorities: the National Food Security Strategy, Buy Canadian sourcing, underserved groups and regions, food waste reduction, and institutional markets.

What Northern Arc Does. Position the project with Minister MacDonald's office and AAFC senior officials as a delivery vehicle for the strategy's 2028 hub target. Advise on framing so the Expression of Interest speaks directly to the published assessment criteria. Prepare the first draft of the full application alongside your team once AAFC issues an invitation; your team supplies the financial and technical detail and finalizes the submission.

Target and Timeline. Up to \$25 million per organization, at 50% to 60% of eligible costs. Expression of Interest by December 11, 2026; future intakes over the life of the program.

Food Terminal Fund

The Food Terminal Fund, delivered by Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada, supports the development or expansion of a select number of large wholesale markets and distribution centres. It shares the Food-Link Fund Expression of Interest: projects that meet the terminal criteria are transferred to the department for follow-up. The strategy targets a federal funding agreement with Ontario on the Ontario Food Terminal by the end of 2026 and construction of two additional terminals under way by the end of 2028. For most hub operators, the Terminal Fund matters as a future anchor: a hub that can aggregate supply for, or buy from, a new regional terminal strengthens both files.

What Northern Arc Does. Advise on which stream a project fits before the Expression of Interest is filed, and position terminal-scale projects with Minister Robertson's office and the department.

Target and Timeline. Project-scaled; no per-project ceiling is published. Expression of Interest by December 11, 2026.

FCC Agri-food Project Finance

Farm Credit Canada launched its \$1 billion Agri-food Project Finance initiative on September 14, 2026 with a 60-day Expression of Interest window. It is specialized debt financing for projects that conventional lending treats as too complex. FCC lists two project types as in scope: value-added agri-food processing and manufacturing, and value-added agri-food supply chain and logistics. It seeks projects with total capital costs between \$25 million and \$500 million (or more) and generally expects to provide \$10 million to \$250 million per project, without being the sole capital provider. Primary agricultural production, AgriEnergy projects, and infrastructure not directly tied to value-added processing or manufacturing are out of scope. FCC will respond to proponents within 30 to 45 days after the window closes. A large hub with a processing, packing, or logistics component, financed partly through a Food Hub contribution, is the kind of capital stack this initiative was designed to complete.

What Northern Arc Does. Ensure FCC and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food understand the project as a strategy-delivery file, and advise on sequencing the FCC and AAFC processes so the financing plan behind the Food Hub application is credible.

Target and Timeline. \$10 million to \$250 million in debt financing per qualifying project. Expression of Interest closes November 13, 2026 at 5:00 pm Pacific Time; FCC expects to consider further projects as the initiative evolves.

Strategic Response Fund: Food Call

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada opened a Strategic Response Fund call for proposals on June 22, 2026 for large-scale food processing, food-grade packaging, supply chain, and manufacturing projects, drawing on \$350 million in existing SRF funding with contributions from \$10 million to \$50 million. The first intake closed August 4, 2026. ISED states that a second window will open later in the fall and that details will be shared before it opens; as of October 23, 2026, no opening date had been published. For a hub with a substantial processing or packaging investment, the SRF is the large-ticket complement to the Food Hub Program, subject to the 85% stacking ceiling.

What Northern Arc Does. Monitor the second window, engage Minister Joly's office and the delivering regional development agency, and ensure the hub and SRF files tell one consistent story.

Target and Timeline. \$10 million to \$50 million for qualifying large projects. Second window expected later in fall 2026.

Food Security Fund and REGI Agri-Food Funding

The strategy added two regional instruments delivered through the regional development agencies. The \$150 million Food Security Fund, created under the existing Regional Tariff Response Initiative, supports food-related small and medium-sized businesses and food-system organizations expanding domestic processing, production, storage, distribution, and delivery to communities. A further \$150 million in new Regional Economic Growth through Innovation (REGI) funding supports agri-food processing and innovation projects with contributions up to \$10 million. On June 25, 2026, the agencies announced that they will launch a call for proposals in fall 2026 to distribute these funds; as of October 23, 2026, the call had not yet opened. For-profit recipients of regional development funding typically receive repayable, interest-free contributions, and this funding counts toward the 85% stacking ceiling on a Food Hub project.

What Northern Arc Does. Introduce the project to the relevant agency's regional leadership and position it with the responsible Minister's office as a regional food security priority.

Target and Timeline. Up to \$10 million under REGI agri-food funding. Regional call for proposals expected in fall 2026.

BDC Assessment: Lending, Capital, and Advisory

Lending Products. BDC equipment and working capital financing can carry the inventory and equipment build that a new hub requires, and BDC Commercial Real Estate Financing (terms up to 25 years) is the route for buildings and land. Non-repayable federal programs, the Food Hub Program included, do not fund land purchase, business acquisition, or real estate; agricultural land routes through Farm Credit Canada.

Capital and Equity Products. BDC Growth and Transition Capital provides flexible, quasi-equity financing for organizations scaling operations ahead of cash flow, useful for bridging the period between capital outlay and AAFC reimbursement.

Advisory. BDC Advisory Services in operations and growth planning strengthen the readiness profile AAFC assesses under capacity to deliver. BDC products sit outside the Food Hub contribution and are evaluated as complementary; Northern Arc introduces the relevant BDC desks in Month 2 onward.

Tax Measures

The federal Productivity Super-Deduction lets businesses write off a larger share of new capital investments immediately, which materially improves the economics of hub equipment and facilities. Hub operators with genuine process or systems development work may also claim SR&ED: 35% refundable on the first \$6 million of qualifying expenditures (doubled from \$3 million in Budget 2025) and 15% beyond, plus provincial credits. We include these for completeness; claims are handled by your tax advisors.

Key Dates and Deadlines

Program	Deadline	Status
FCC Agri-food Project Finance	November 13, 2026, 5:00 pm PT	Expression of Interest open
FCC response to proponents	30 to 45 days after close	Following Expression of Interest review
Food-Link Fund (Food Hub Program and Food Terminal Fund)	December 11, 2026, 11:59 pm PT	Expression of Interest open
Food Hub Program full application	Within 1 year of invitation	By invitation after Expression of Interest
Strategic Response Fund food call, second window	Later in fall 2026	Not yet open; details before opening
Regional call for proposals (Food Security Fund and REGI agri-food funding)	Fall 2026	Announced June 25; not yet launched
Ontario Food Terminal federal agreement	End of 2026	Strategy target
10 food hubs established or expanded	End of 2028	Strategy target

Part Two: Federal Departments and Positioning

The goal is not only to apply for programs, but to ensure that when a file arrives at a decision point, decision-makers already understand why the project matters.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

PRIORITY: HIGH | Minister: Heath MacDonald | Mandate: National Food Security Strategy, Food Hub Program

Why They Care. AAFC owns the strategy's hub target and will be judged on it. Daniel Gobeil (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food since September 25, 2026) represents the Minister on the file and spoke for the department at the Food-Link Fund launch.

What Northern Arc Does. Establish an early relationship with Minister MacDonald's office and senior AAFC officials, and pursue a ministerial touchpoint where a project can stand as an example of the strategy working.

Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada

PRIORITY: MEDIUM | Minister: Gregor Robertson | Mandate: Food Terminal Fund

Why They Care. The department delivers the terminal side of the Food-Link Fund and needs regional hubs that feed and draw from new terminals.

What Northern Arc Does. Position terminal-scale and terminal-adjacent projects with Minister Robertson's office.

Farm Credit Canada

PRIORITY: HIGH | Crown corporation reporting through the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food | Mandate: Agri-food Project Finance

Why They Care. FCC is building a new lending capability and has said it will use the first window to understand industry demand.

What Northern Arc Does. Engage FCC so the project is understood as a strong candidate within the first cohort.

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada

PRIORITY: MEDIUM | Minister: Mélanie Joly | Mandate: Strategic Response Fund food call, REGI

Why They Care. ISED is using its largest industrial fund to build domestic food processing and supply chain capacity.

What Northern Arc Does. Position larger projects for the second SRF window and align the narrative across departments.

Regional Development Agencies

PRIORITY: HIGH | Minister: varies by agency | Mandate: Food Security Fund, REGI agri-food funding

Why They Care. Each agency delivers regional food security funding and has a regional Minister who sets priorities; in the Prairies, that is Eleanor Olszewski (Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience and Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada since May 13, 2025).

What Northern Arc Does. Introduce the project to regional leadership and the responsible Minister's office.

Federal Engagement Summary

Department / Agency	Minister / Lead	Relevance
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada	Heath MacDonald	Food Hub Program; strategy delivery
Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada	Gregor Robertson	Food Terminal Fund
Farm Credit Canada	Crown corporation	Agri-food Project Finance
Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada	Mélanie Joly	Strategic Response Fund food call
Regional Development Agencies	Varies by region	Food Security Fund; REGI agri-food funding

Part Three: Provincial, Municipal, and International Pathways

Provincial Cost-Share. Provinces deliver agri-food cost-share programming under the \$3.5 billion, five-year Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, and a successor agreement is being negotiated to begin in April 2028. Provincial money counts toward the 85% stacking ceiling and, like every other contribution, must be secured before the Food Hub application is considered, so provincial commitments need to be in place early. Quebec-based applicants must also obtain the required authorization under Quebec's M-30 Act before signing a federal contribution agreement.

Municipal Partners. AAFC lists municipal administrations among recognized funding sources, and provincial, territorial, and municipal agencies with a commercial operating model or private sector partner are eligible applicants in their own right. Municipal land, buildings, or co-investment can anchor a hub's financing plan.

Indigenous Applicants. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, governments, and organizations are eligible, may stack government funding to 100% of eligible costs, and may claim additional cost categories. AAFC's Indigenous Pathfinder Service helps Indigenous applicants navigate the program.

International Markets. International pathways are secondary for most hub projects. Where a hub aggregates product for export, CanExport, Export Development Canada, and the Trade Commissioner Service can support market development without affecting the domestic Food Hub file.

Why Canadian Food Hub Operators Are Positioned to Succeed

The Strategy Measures Itself by Hubs. The government has committed publicly to 10 hubs established or expanded by the end of 2028 and to lower prices in their service areas. Every credible hub project helps the government meet a target it set for itself.

The Government Has Named the Gap. The strategy documents retail concentration, limited regional wholesale options, and high transportation costs. A hub that addresses them is answering the government's own diagnosis.

The Customer Base Is Built In. Institutional procurement, the National School Food Program, and Buy Canadian sourcing are written into the assessment criteria, giving hubs a public demand anchor alongside independent grocers and restaurants.

The Capital Stack Is Available. A Food Hub contribution, FCC project finance, regional development funding, provincial cost-share, and BDC lending can be layered on a single project within the 85% ceiling.

POLITICAL VALUE: WHY SUPPORTING FOOD HUBS IS A WIN FOR GOVERNMENT

The Prime Minister has made food affordability and security central to his agenda. A funded hub delivers what government most needs to show: lower prices outside the major chains, more Canadian food on Canadian shelves, and regional jobs.

When Minister MacDonald or the PMO needs proof the strategy is working, the projects Northern Arc positions are the ones they should be pointing to.

What Northern Arc Public Affairs Brings

Northern Arc exists to align political will with bureaucratic process, so that when federal decisions are made, our clients are already understood by the Ministers, officials, and central agencies who make them.

Hon. Kent Hehr, P.C., LL.B., Principal. Our Principal, Kent Hehr, served as a Cabinet Minister in the Government of Canada. He sat at the Cabinet table where funding decisions are approved, policy directions are set, and departmental mandates are shaped. He understands, from direct experience, what makes a Minister's office take notice of a company, what makes a Deputy Minister's team prioritize a file, and what makes the PMO see a company as aligned with national priorities.

Abed Harb, Managing Partner. Our Managing Partner, Abed Harb, served in the Prime Minister's Calgary Regional Office and as Director and Senior Advisor to multiple Ministers. He spent eight years navigating federal decision-making at the highest levels. He understands how the PMO coordinates national economic strategy, how ministerial offices evaluate requests, and how to ensure alignment across departments.

What We Do

Ministerial Engagement. We engage the Ministers responsible for the files that matter to this sector: MacDonald at Agriculture and Agri-Food, Robertson at Housing and Infrastructure, Joly at Industry, and the relevant regional development Minister.

Deputy Minister and ADM Engagement. We engage the senior officials who evaluate technical merit and make recommendations, ensuring they understand each project and its alignment with departmental priorities.

PMO Engagement. We maintain dialogue with the Prime Minister's Office to frame our clients' projects as delivering national priorities: affordability, competition, and food security.

First-Draft Application Preparation. We prepare the first draft of federal applications alongside your team. Your team supplies the financial and technical detail, we shape the narrative and positioning, and your organization finalizes and submits.

THE NARRATIVE WE WILL ADVANCE

"[Your company] is building the regional food infrastructure the National Food Security Strategy was written to create. It connects local producers to independent grocers, institutions, and communities through shared storage, aggregation, and distribution that no single small business could build alone. Every load it moves is food that did not have to travel through a supply chain controlled by the largest retailers, and every customer it serves is proof that competition lowers prices. When the government reports on its first 10 food hubs, [Your company] is one it will be proud to name."

Engagement Timeline and Deliverables

Months 1 to 2: Foundation and the December 11 Window. Deliver a tailored federal opportunities briefing identifying every program the organization qualifies for, with a sequenced engagement strategy. Advise on the Food-Link Fund Expression of Interest ahead of December 11 and, where a processing component exists, the FCC Agri-food Project Finance window before November 13. Initiate contact with Minister MacDonald's office and the relevant regional development agency, and open the BDC conversation.

Months 3 to 4: Building Momentum. Advance from introduction to substantive engagement with ministerial offices and AAFC officials. On invitation, prepare the first draft of the full Food Hub Program application alongside your team. Position larger projects for the second Strategic Response Fund window, and pursue Food Security Fund or REGI agri-food funding through the regional agency.

Months 5 to 6: Consolidation. Ensure the project is understood across Agriculture and Agri-Food, Housing and Infrastructure where relevant, Industry, the regional agency, and FCC. Build PMO-level understanding of the project as a strategy success story. Monitor future Food Hub intakes and the successor to the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

Investment and Expected Return

Northern Arc Public Affairs works on a monthly retainer of \$12,500 plus applicable taxes. The initial engagement period is six months, providing sufficient time to deliver a tailored federal opportunities briefing, establish ministerial relationships across all relevant portfolios, position for priority programs, and build PMO awareness. The agreement includes a 30-day termination clause, and after six months it continues month to month.

A single Food Hub Program contribution can reach \$25 million over the life of the program, and FCC project finance can add \$10 million to \$250 million for qualifying projects. Beyond direct funding, federal recognition makes private capital easier to attract, strengthens credibility with producers, grocers, and institutional buyers, and positions an organization for opportunities that never reach a formal application process.

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

Federal engagement is not a one-time event. The Food Hub Program runs to 2037 with future intakes, the strategy's targets will be reported publicly, and ministerial staff will turn over. Maintaining awareness, reinforcing positioning as new parameters are set, and adapting to policy change all require sustained presence.

Conclusion

The Food Hub Program is the government's most direct instrument for breaking the grip of concentrated grocery supply chains, and it opened on October 14 with up to \$25 million per organization on the table. It sits inside a \$3.2 billion strategy whose credibility now depends on getting real hubs built and lowering prices in their communities by the end of 2028.

The gap is not eligibility. A wide range of organizations qualify. The gap is positioning: whether the Minister's office, AAFC officials, and the PMO already understand a project as part of the answer before the December 11 window closes and the first round is decided. With 49 days left, that work has to start now. Northern Arc Public Affairs looks forward to partnering with organizations ready to build the food hubs this strategy was written to deliver.

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