

# Navigating Complexity: Achieving Procurement Success for the RCAF

### Project at a glance

**Client:** Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF)

**Project:** Future Aircrew Training (FAcT) Program

**Value:** CAD \$11.2bn

**Professional services deliverables:** Strategic Objective Discovery; Structured Criteria Development; Weighting; Sensitivity and Testing; Procurement Design

**Software deliverables:** AWARD<sup>®</sup> configuration, training and support



### Project summary: Supporting one of Canada's largest procurements

The Future Aircrew Training (FAcT) Program, led by the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), supported by Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) and Industry Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), is a comprehensive initiative to modernize and renew the aircrew training services of the Royal Canadian Air Force. The program includes essential training for pilots, air combat systems officers, and airborne electronic sensor operators, as well as training aircraft, simulators, courseware, infrastructure, maintenance, facility management, and site support services in three training sites. With a contract value of CAD \$11.2bn over 25 years, this long-term initiative ensures the continuity of high-quality training.

Through the FAcT Program, Canada aims to uphold its commitments under the "Our North Strong and Free" defence policy, reinforcing Canada's NATO and NORAD obligations and maintaining a combat-ready air force.

### Background: What the RCAF was looking for

The RCAF chose to partner with us after observing our proven track record on high-stake projects like Canadian Surface Combatant and Future Fighter Capability. Recognizing the depth and rigor we brought to these complex defence procurements, they sought our expertise to ensure that the FAcT Program could benefit from similar analysis and insight.

"AWARD<sup>®</sup> ended up being the proven tool needed."

i. Photo by Canadian Defence Review



### Key challenges AWARD<sup>®</sup> & the team needed to address

#### 1. Need for rigour & accuracy

The FAcT Program presented a level of complexity that demanded advanced skills and carried a huge amount of risk given the contract value and scale of the project. They were seeking an external assurance partner to test, refine, and rigorously validate each aspect of their procurement approach. This trusted third-party review and validation of their methods and processes was crucial to ensuring they made informed decisions which could be justified and defended if needed.

Our reputation for delivering transparent, reliable assessments made us an ideal fit to meet their need for methodical testing and assurance, ultimately helping to drive a successful and defensible procurement process.

“If we were to be challenged, all the bid evaluation information is captured in the AWARD<sup>®</sup> tool and is retrievable.”

## 2. Managing one of Canada’s largest defence procurements

Over the past decade, the Department of National Defence (DND) has delivered critical procurement programs exceeding CAD \$1bn, with the FAcT Program ranking among the largest. This large financial investment required careful oversight and strategic planning to optimize spending while meeting stringent defence objectives.

“Given our complex bid evaluation framework, the program team, distributed across the country, needed a rigorous tool to capture all aspects of the evaluation along the way. Without the AWARD<sup>®</sup> tool, this would have been very difficult.”

## 3. Achieving Value for Money, considering socio-economic benefits & operational needs

The high cost of the FAcT program demanded careful scrutiny of the overall approach to assessing cost. It was critical

to the RCAF that its bidder selection was based on costing information that was of high maturity and reliability.

Furthermore, they wanted to ensure that every dollar spent contributed to high-quality, relevant outcomes in aircrew training, balancing budgetary pressures with the essential requirements of Canada’s defence and Industrial Technological Benefits and Indigenous Participation policies.

The resulting FAcT evaluation design was constructed specifically to force Bidders to back up bold claims with objective quality evidence.

## 4. Complex requirements & geographic scope

The FAcT Program encompassed training infrastructure across three major locations, including aircraft, hangars, training centres, accommodations, and state-of-the-art training systems and simulators. This program required a streamlined solution that could bring trainees from a foundational level to ‘Wing Standard’, encompassing diverse, complex components across multiple facilities in different locations.

## 5. Adapting tools to meet program scale & complexity

Historically, PSPC and DND had used spreadsheets for their procurements or managed documents, scoring, and reporting manually. These

methods were no longer adequate for managing the scale and complexity of the FAcT Program, necessitating a shift towards more robust, efficient tools that could streamline and add rigor to the process. The AWARD<sup>®</sup> software ensured that the evaluation was conducted rapidly and securely while avoiding the procedural errors that can often occur with manual processes.

## 6. Ensuring transparency & accountability

Given the high-profile nature of the program, Canada needed to implement a highly transparent procurement process. They sought an evaluation design that allowed for creative, innovative solutions while demanding evidence to raise Canada’s confidence that those solutions would meet the RCAF’s need and could be delivered successfully for the proposed price.

Provenance of estimates and substantiated performance claims were essential in ensuring that the successful bidder would be held accountable for their proposal in a level playing field against equally substantiated competition.

## 7. Understanding what’s important & necessary

The program faced the challenge of integrating advanced technologies and proven instructional practices to create effective, adaptable training

models. Balancing hands-on training with simulation and classroom instruction was key to producing successful pilots equipped for real-world operations. The procurement process needed to be set up to consider and determine what this balance should be and enable the team to navigate thousands of technical aspects which were seemingly of equal importance. Great care was taken to determine the appropriate depth and volume of evidence required from bidders to demonstrate compliance – without imposing undue effort onto bidders.

## 8. Coordinating widespread evaluation efforts during COVID-19

With over 100 evaluators located across Canada and the complications resulting from COVID-19, PSPC faced significant coordination challenges in conducting the evaluation. Managing evaluations remotely while maintaining consistency and rigorous standards added a layer of complexity, making the need for a highly coordinated, online process even more critical.

## How AWARD<sup>®</sup> & the Commerce Decisions expertise supported Canada

“Whether on or off-site, the staff at Commerce Decisions did a great job working alongside the Canada team.”

### Assurance and transparency at every step

Commerce Decisions experts supported Canada throughout the evaluation design and testing. The end-result was a comprehensive assurance report that documented the entire procurement design process, ensuring that the process, criteria, weights, and Value for Money approach was rigorously tested, analyzed, and validated. This report not only served as a record of the design process but also provided PSPC with confidence that Canada would select its best possible outcome, reinforcing the integrity of their approach.

“AWARD<sup>®</sup> provided a single and holistic view of the truth.”

### Rigorous testing for a stronger evaluation

From scoring range analysis to sensitivity testing, AWARD<sup>®</sup> helped fine-tune the evaluation methods, ensuring they were robust enough to identify the low risk/high confidence solutions based on bidder submissions. Detailed reports on weighting methodologies offered transparency and clarity, ensuring all stakeholders were aligned on how decisions were made.

### Empowering supplier collaboration and feedback

AWARD<sup>®</sup> facilitated the seamless sharing of draft documents with suppliers, creating a controlled feedback loop. This transparency helped strengthen the procurement process, enabling Canada to gather insights and refine their approach with direct input from qualified suppliers.

### First-of-its-kind Cloud Configuration for Canada

AWARD<sup>®</sup> was the first solution to be deployed in a cloud configuration for a Canadian client, allowing for remote collaboration, configuration, training, and support. This innovation provided Canada with greater flexibility and access throughout the evaluation process.

### Strategic insights driving procurement success

With expertise in strategic objective discovery, weighting, and procurement design, Commerce Decisions experts ensured the entire process was aligned with Canada’s goals in multiple domains: Capability, Financial, Indigenous Benefits, and Industrial Technological Benefits. This strategic approach, supported by comprehensive testing and analysis, helped ensure that the evaluation would deliver the best possible outcome for the FAcT Program by striking the right overall balance of Value for Money.

## A robust, single version of truth

AWARD® enabled seamless global collaboration by distributing work across the world, allowing teams to work simultaneously in the same environment regardless of location. This web-based platform provided a single view of the truth, creating a centralized hub where all activities were tracked and managed. Nearly every aspect of the process was conducted online, with the only exceptions being offline consensus briefings. Non-scoring Subject Matter Experts and the independent Fairness Monitor were provided with appropriate access during the evaluation process. This approach ensured that all steps and decisions were transparent and traceable, offering a comprehensive view of the entire evaluation journey up to the final decision. AWARD® was highly effective in capturing and visualizing the process, ensuring consistency and clarity throughout.

### Further feedback from

**Louis Saucier, Program Manager FAcT,  
Directorate – Air Simulation & Training, RCAF:**

“Solid. Powerful. Comprehensive. Rigorous.”  
*(AWARD® in 4 words)*

“I could see **value in AWARD® and the support** provided by the Commerce Decisions team being used **across DND** so that project teams all have the same **rigorous approach.**”

“The Commerce Decisions team **helped us to see through the mess** and agree on consensus of what good looks like. We were able to **filter from around 50 criteria to 20 criteria** out of thousands of requirements.”

“Commerce Decisions helped us through all the steps of making sure we didn’t dilute bid evaluation amongst too many criteria. The team **understood what was very important for the Air Force.**”

“It would have been **hard to do** this efficiently and in a secure environment **without the AWARD® tool.**”

“The Commerce Decisions team increased the level of sophistication and refinement of the FAcT bid evaluation to the required level. Something we would **not have been able to do without them.**”

“Without the help of Commerce Decisions who conducted sophisticated sensitivity analysis, **we could not have noticed the vicious effect of the weighting.**”

**Commerce Decisions AWARD® - Empowering Procurement Excellence**  
Get in touch to speak to the team about your next project, [here](#).

## About Commerce Decisions

Commerce Decisions provides the market-leading AWARD® software and expert consultancy to support the effective planning, preparation and execution of procurements. For over 20 years AWARD® has been trusted globally across government, defence, transport and infrastructure. AWARD® has been proven to empower procurement excellence by shortening time to contract, improving value for money, and reducing risk.