



PRINCE'S CHARITIES CANADA  
LES ŒUVRES DE BIENFAISANCE DU PRINCE AU CANADA  
NIWIJWAAGAN NIWIIDOSEMAA MINO-MUSKIKI



**POE** | Prince's  
Operation  
Entrepreneur

## **Putting Canadian Veterans on the Front Lines of Innovation, Growth and Prosperity**

**Submission regarding the 2018 budget cycle request to the  
Standing Committee on Finance**

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## Executive Summary

Empowering veterans to succeed in entrepreneurship is crucial to achieving advances in productivity and competitiveness at the heart of Canada's Innovation Action Plan. Canada's veterans are an untapped source of vast entrepreneurial potential. Over **5,000 veterans are released each year** across the country. Their unique skillset primes them to keep contributing to Canada by driving growth and productivity as owners of small and medium sized businesses (SMEs). Critical to the Canadian economy, small businesses create jobs, support communities, and produce innovative ideas.

**Prince's Operation Entrepreneur (POE)**, a program of Prince's Charities Canada, is the only program in Canada that gives veterans and transitioning members of the military the skills and guidance they need to start their own businesses. In only five years, POE has cultivated a national presence and helped over 1,800 members of the military community move along the path of entrepreneurship.

Our support makes a proven difference: POE has led to the **creation of over 200 sustained, successful small businesses with 25% of these businesses grossing over \$100,000 a year**, while nearly half are located in areas where unemployment is significantly higher than the national average.

POE's model is tested and ready to scale. While POE works closely with the Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada, **we receive no consistent operational funding**. The government can unleash the potential of POE by increasing its financial contribution, expanding the scope of services offered to ensure the success of veteran-owned businesses including the creation of programs tailored to women veteran entrepreneurs.

**Collaborating with POE will help the government accomplish its goals and create a lasting impact in the lives of veterans and their communities.** Creating partnerships with third-party organizations to lead and pilot innovative projects for veterans is a stated goal of the government. With our network of businesses, universities, and civil society organizations, POE is uniquely positioned to implement the government's commitment. We have developed a proven model to help veterans reintegrate into civilian life, become successful entrepreneurs and drive growth that will power Canada's future.

## Empowering veterans to integrate, innovate and create jobs

The impact of POE is clear. Reintegrating into civilian life is not simple after decades of service. POE helps members of the military community build confidence as well as successful businesses. It also helps them cope with issues that might be barriers to engaging with their communities. 74% of Boot Camp participants in 2017 were medically released. Half – **53% – of those suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**. For those medically released, 97% credit POE with helping them by providing skills that enhanced their personal resiliency.

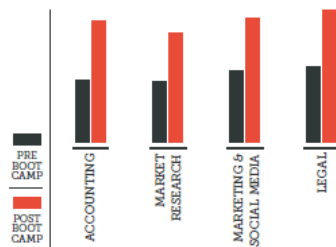


*"The expertise of our professors and the broad range of topics that encompassed every aspect of business gave us insight into what we will need to know, and increased our odds of succeeding in our entrepreneurial endeavours."*

**SOCIAL IMPACT**

For anyone wanting to start a business, there's a lot to learn. **We instill confidence in participants** by redeploying their transferable military experiences and by building on business basics.

**BUSINESS SKILLS PROGRESSION**



**Medically-released military**



Those with a physical or psychological injury often have a more challenging journey back to civilian life.

**Entrepreneurship can provide the employment flexibility they need to come back to the workforce.**

**74%**

of 2016 boot camp participants were medically released

**53%**

indicated they suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

For those with PTSD, 97% said **POE provided positive benefits**, including skills and abilities related to personal resiliency.

**Invest to leverage and scale a proven platform**

POE works closely with Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), however, we receive no consistent operational federal funding. POE currently receives project funding from Economic and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA). Partnership with the federal government is needed to unlock the national potential of POE to help accomplish the goals of this government towards innovation and growth.



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**We are asking the Government of Canada to invest \$5 million over five years (\$1 million per year) to:**

1. Grow the location and frequency of workshops and boot camps to serve areas in need, such as smaller communities, cities with large veteran populations, and the North.
2. Develop a program that supports women veteran entrepreneurs in the unique challenges they face in starting their own businesses.
3. Deepen ongoing support including a growth stream to ensure long-term success, via targeted programming focusing on specific industries and international business.
4. Create a “Buy-Veteran” brand that identifies products from veteran-owned businesses and encourage public support, both domestically and internationally, based on the success of a similar model in the United States.

**Helping veterans transition from military service to civilian life is a stated goal of the government.** We believe that veterans, as a priority economic group, deserve support to build their livelihoods after putting themselves at great risk for their country. POE helps throughout this transition, providing the 10% of veterans who chose entrepreneurship with skills and confidence that can help them reintegrate into civilian life and cope with the challenges. Our program also contributes to rehabilitation from issues of mental health – another stated goal of the government – by showing veterans all they are capable of and creating a community of support.

**Enhancing career transition services for veterans is a stated goal of the government.** The impact of POE is felt throughout hundreds of communities across Canada, as veteran entrepreneurs build new jobs for themselves and employ others. With consistent government funding, POE will be able to host more one-day workshops and week-long boot camps in more places. POE will leverage its own network as well as that of Prince's Charities Canada to expand its reach into other underserved areas.

**Helping women entrepreneurs grow their businesses is a stated goal of the government.** POE is uniquely positioned to help accomplish this. While women constitute 15% of the Canadian Armed Forces, they represent nearly 25% of POE participants. With consistent funding from the government, POE will expand upon its proven model to build a program to help women transitioning from the military start a successful business. Many women leave the military to find balance between their careers and their family lives. Entrepreneurship is not a nine-to-five job – POE will give women veterans the tools and support they need to run a successful, flexible business.



**Increasing productivity and changing communities**



**In the military community, POE:**

Introduces entrepreneurship as a second career option

Provides the skills and tools to create a business roadmap

Creates a community of veteran entrepreneurs

Offers the chance to explore an idea

Maximizes the likelihood of success with ongoing support



Developed as a program of Prince's Charities Canada in 2012 to address a gap in entrepreneurship resources for transitioning military, Prince's Operation Entrepreneur (POE) is the only program of its kind in Canada, filling a much-needed void in the transitioning employment landscape. We offer the men and women who have served our country with the education, tools and resources they need to build confidence, develop networks and start their own successful businesses. Our vision is to make a positive impact on Canada's economy and society by supporting transitioning military personnel through the power of entrepreneurship.

POE has grown from one standalone business boot camp to becoming a **national, bilingual program**. The program is built around four key offerings:

1. **One-day workshops** held on military bases across Canada introduce entrepreneurship as a second career option to veterans and transitioning members of the military.
2. **Seven-day boot camps** held on university campuses every summer offer the chance to explore an idea and build a business roadmap
3. **Ongoing support** including business coaching from staff Entrepreneurs-in-Residence and other tools and resources to maximize the success of participants' businesses.
4. **A hub for veteran business promotion, with the Canadian Veteran Business Directory**. Creates a community of veteran entrepreneurs that can support one another and reinforce each other's success.

**A commitment to mental health outcomes.** More than two thirds of our boot camp participants are medically released, many with mental health issues that can make being a self-directed business owner a good fit. The program was designed to create a supportive community for those who could find transition to civilian life challenging. POE helps them find meaning and connection through a challenging and meaningful second career.

**A community of military entrepreneurs.** We are building a vibrant community of military entrepreneurs by offering ongoing support including short-term coaching services by our Entrepreneurs in Residence and skills, the Canadian Veteran Business Directory and training tools such as regular webinars and pro bono legal support.

POE is itself a budding Canadian export: its success has since inspired Prince's Charities Australia to launch their own version of the program, The Prince's Lead Your Own Business.



**Success story**

**Helping to solve problems in an increasingly complex world**

A year before his retirement in 2014, Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Steve Day attended a week long POE boot camp in Regina, SK. There he was able to build a concrete business plan for his strategic risk advisory firm, Reticle. Boot camp showed him the gaps in his knowledge and planning that needed to be filled for his business to succeed. Three years on, Reticle has grown to 10 full-time positions and as many as 35 additional staff and subject matter experts on over 40 completed projects, and built a training and innovation facility. Reticle helps clients navigate today's highly ambiguous, networked, and complex global environment. In its three short years, Reticle's client list has expanded to include universities, national infrastructure organizations, national security agencies, media firms, international charitable ventures and major financial institutions.



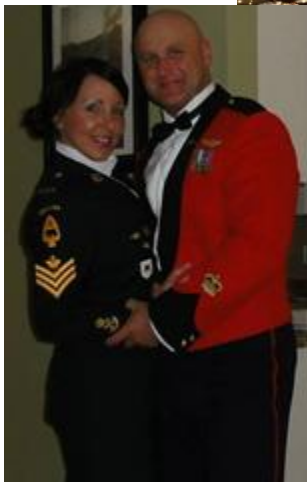
POE is recognized for its outstanding support to entrepreneurs. In 2016, it won a **Startup Canada Entrepreneur Support Award.**



**Success story**

**From motor oil to olive oil**

A former Army Supply Technician for 15 years including serving in the Royal Canadian Dragoons, Tracey Dean developed a taste for quality olive oil and vinegars after being posted to Trapani, Sicily. The result was The Urban Gourmet, a now flourishing olive oil and balsamic vinegar store in Pembroke, Ontario. In 2014 Tracey was the grand prize winner of POE collaborator Futurpreneur Canada's Live Your Dream contest. In addition to being an active POE volunteer – working to foster the next generation of veteran entrepreneurs – Tracey serves on the Pembroke Economic Development Advisory Committee working to revitalize the downtown core and positioning the town as a regional economic hub.





## Leveraging lasting relationships

POE was inspired by one of the world's greatest charitable entrepreneurs, HRH The Prince of Wales. Key to POE's enduring success is its deep network of supporters and collaborators. Our diverse funding base includes leading corporations, foundations and governments, in addition to generous individuals from across the country.

### Founding Partners



### Sponsors



### Supporters + Donors



### Successful partnerships for regional development

POE has received funding for 2016-2018 from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA). With a high concentration of veterans and unemployment rates higher than the national average, Atlantic Canada is ripe for veteran-entrepreneurship to make its impact.

The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency is about building a vibrant economic future for Atlantic Canada. Its support since 2014 has allowed POE to deliver 11 Introduction to Entrepreneurship workshops in Halifax (NS), Oromocto (NB) and St John's (NL) and promote these workshops at Second Career Assistance Network (SCAN) seminars.





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## Conclusion

Prince's Operation Entrepreneur is confident we can build on our success of the past five years to help the government accomplish its goals of supporting veterans in their transition, fostering and scaling small businesses, and driving national growth and productivity.

**To accomplish these goals, we are asking the Government of Canada to invest \$5 million over five years (\$1 million per year).**