



Office of the
Auditor General
of British Columbia

August 2024

Final Report on the Examination of MNP's Administration of the Advanced Research and Commercialization Grant Program





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of British Columbia

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The Honourable Raj Chouhan
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Dear Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to transmit to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia the *Final Report on the Examination of MNP's Administration of the Advanced Research and Commercialization Grant Program*.

On April 8, 2024, the Legislative Assembly passed a resolution:

"...that, pursuant to section 13 (2) of the *Auditor General Act* (S.B.C. 2003, c. 2), the House request that the Auditor General undertake an examination of the administration of grants by MNP LLP under the Advanced Research and Commercialization Program and the Commercial Vehicle Innovation Challenge.

"And further that the Auditor General make public an interim report on the matter no later than 90 days hence, and make a final report public no later than September 1, 2024."

We released our interim report on June 26, 2024. This report satisfies the final report component of the resolution and concludes our work on this examination.

Michael A. Pickup, FCPA, FCA
Auditor General of British Columbia
Victoria, B.C.

August 2024



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A close up of a zero-emission vehicle being electrically charged.
Source: Province of British Columbia

Examination at a glance

Why we did this examination

- On April 8, 2024, the Legislative Assembly directed us to examine MNP, a professional services firm, in its administration of the Advanced Research and Commercialization (ARC) grant program.
- The ARC program – which includes the Commercial Vehicle Innovation Challenge (CVIC) – supports B.C.'s zero-emission vehicle sector. The Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation has had a contract with MNP to administer the ARC program since 2018.
- Earlier this year, a program applicant (referred to as Company A) alleged that MNP had conflicts of interest regarding its administration of the ARC program. The allegations also raised questions about the ministry's oversight of the alleged conflicts.

Examination approach

Our examination of MNP's administration of the ARC program focused on three questions stemming from the allegations:

1. Did MNP provide applicant advising services (e.g., grant writing) for ARC or CVIC applications?
2. Did MNP influence the ARC or CVIC evaluation process to promote its clients?
3. Did MNP use ARC or CVIC information to solicit clients for MNP's business services, such as applicant advising, assurance or accounting?

Our examination of the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation asked, in response to the allegations:

4. Did the ministry identify and manage conflicts of interest in MNP's administration of the ARC program?

We analyzed program documentation, reached out to all 99 program applicants, interviewed MNP and ministry staff, and re-performed key parts of the grant evaluation process.

We looked at ministry and MNP activity from Jan. 1, 2018, to August 1, 2024, to ensure we covered the program from its creation through to the ministry's response to the allegations.

Examination period: January 1, 2018 – August 1, 2024

Examination results

On Question 1:

No evidence that MNP provided applicant advising services for ARC or CVIC applications

- All 71 applicants who responded to our questions reported that MNP did not write their ARC or CVIC applications or provide any advice or support for their applications.
- No MNP grant-writing clients had hired MNP to write ARC or CVIC applications.
- MNP did not write, or offer to write, Company A's ARC or CVIC grant applications.

On Question 2:

No evidence that MNP influenced the ARC or CVIC evaluation process to promote its clients

- MNP was not responsible for scoring proposals or making funding decisions. This reduced the risk that MNP could influence evaluations to promote its clients.
- All decision points in the grant evaluation and approval process required and received ministry approval.
- The technical review panel scored Company A's proposal below the success threshold. The ministry rejected the project based on the panel's recommendation.
- Application instructions incorrectly implied that MNP had a role in funding decisions.

On Question 3:

No evidence that MNP used ARC or CVIC information to solicit clients for its other business services

- Sixty-eight of the 71 applicants who responded to our questions said MNP had never contacted them to offer grant-writing services.
- Three applicants, including Company A, responded that MNP had contacted them about grant-writing services. We found no evidence that MNP used ARC program information to contact them.
- No evidence grant administration team used program email to solicit clients for MNP.

On Question 4:

In response to the allegations, the ministry inquired with MNP to identify whether there was a conflict of interest for them to manage

- When the ministry learned of the allegations in February 2024, they worked with MNP and determined there was no conflict of interest.
- The ministry inquired further with MNP after the Legislative Assembly discussed the allegations in April.

Background

On April 8, 2024, the Legislative Assembly directed, by resolution, the auditor general to “undertake an examination of the administration of grants by MNP LLP under the Advanced Research and Commercialization Program and the Commercial Vehicle Innovation Challenge.”

The resolution followed allegations that MNP had conflicts of interest in its administration of the Advanced Research and Commercialization (ARC) program, which includes the Commercial Vehicle Innovation Challenge (CVIC).

The resolution directed the auditor general to make public an interim report no later than 90 days from the resolution (issued June 26) and a final report by Sept. 1, 2024.

Examination approach

This final report provides information and findings on MNP’s administration of the ARC program. We examined whether MNP had actual conflicts of interest in three areas, based on the allegations that led to the April 8th resolution. We asked:

1. Did MNP provide applicant advising services (e.g., grant writing) for ARC or CVIC applications?
2. Did MNP influence the ARC or CVIC evaluation process to promote its clients?
3. Did MNP use ARC or CVIC information to solicit clients for MNP’s business services, such as applicant advising, assurance or accounting?

This report also provides information and findings on the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation’s oversight role. We asked, in response to the allegations:

4. Did the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation identify and manage conflicts of interest in MNP’s administration of the ARC program?

What we did not examine

Our examination focused on whether MNP had actual conflicts of interest related to the allegations. We did not examine:

- the overall effectiveness of MNP’s management of conflicts of interest;
- work done by the ministry and MNP during the contract solicitation and procurement phases in 2017 and 2018; or
- MNP’s administration of other B.C. government grant programs.



Advanced Research and Commercialization grant program

CleanBC is a government strategy to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and meet the province's legislated GHG reduction targets. The implementation of the strategy involves several ministries.

In 2018, the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation launched CleanBC's Go Electric initiatives to help reduce transportation emissions in the province by about one-third by 2030.

The Advanced Research and Commercialization (ARC) program is a Go Electric initiative. It supports research and economic development in B.C.'s zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) sector. The ARC program includes the Commercial Vehicle Innovation Challenge (CVIC).

As of March 25, 2024, the B.C. government had committed \$50 million for the ARC program.

Roles and responsibilities

On March 1, 2018, the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation entered into a contract with MNP – a national professional services firm – to administer the ARC program. The ministry and MNP have renewed the contract five times since 2018. Their current agreement expires March 31, 2028, or when all program funds have been allocated.

According to the contract, the ministry provides program oversight and direction while MNP performs the day-to-day administration (e.g., running funding calls, marketing and outreach, and program administration).

MNP receives a fee for its services based on the number of funding calls. The contract states that MNP can receive a maximum fee of \$2,933,750. From March 2018 to March 31, 2024, the province paid MNP \$1,442,192.41 for its services.

MNP's administrative fees per year

Fiscal year	MNP administration fees *
2018/2019	\$119,184.32
2019/2020	\$22,208.68
2020/2021	\$303,673.80
2021/2022	\$224,972.25
2022/2023	\$333,560.11
2023/2024	\$438,593.25
Total	\$1,442,192.41

* Includes disbursements to contractors and GST.



Funding calls

There have been four funding calls for grant applications since the program launched: ARC 2018, ARC 2020, ARC 2023 and CVIC in 2023 (see Results of funding calls). All funding calls were to support projects in B.C.'s ZEV sector.

The three ARC funding calls totalled just over \$15 million of potential funding for pre-commercial research and development, commercialization or demonstration activities in B.C.'s ZEV sector. Government has allocated an additional \$4.5 million for ARC funding calls.

The CVIC funding call had \$20 million available for projects to advance ZEV technologies toward market readiness and commercialization. CVIC has an additional \$10 million available for a second funding call scheduled in 2025.

The ARC and CVIC funding calls used a two-stage application process. Applicants first submitted an expression of interest (EOI). Selected applicants were invited to submit detailed proposals.

As of March 2024, the program had approved 32 of 98 applications from ARC 2018, ARC 2020 and CVIC, with grants totalling just over \$29 million. Decisions are pending on 20 of 53 applications for ARC 2023.

Results of funding calls

Funding call	EOIs submitted	Proposals submitted	Applications approved	Funding available	Funding committed
ARC 2018	25	6	5	\$1,500,000	\$1,100,856
ARC 2020	40	20	18	\$9,000,000	\$8,283,040
ARC 2023	53	20	Pending	\$5,000,000	Pending
CVIC	33	13	9	\$20,000,000	\$20,000,000
Total to date	151	59	32	\$35,500,000*	\$29,383,896
CVIC	—	Planned for 2025	—	\$10,000,000	—
ARC	—	Additional funding to be announced	—	\$4,500,000	—
Total committed				\$50,000,000	

* In March 2024, the ministry and MNP signed a fifth modification to their contract that allocated an additional \$4,500,000 to the ARC program, bringing government's total commitment to \$50,000,000.



Defining conflict of interest

Two definitions of conflict of interest apply to MNP's administration of the ARC program.

The contract between the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation and MNP contains a conflict-of-interest clause:

"The Recipient [MNP] will not, during the Term, perform a service for or provide advice to any person, or entity where the performance of such service or the provision of the advice may, in the reasonable opinion of the Province, give rise to a conflict of interest between the obligations of the Recipient to the Province under this Agreement and the obligations of the Recipient to such other person or entity."

MNP, as a registered member of the Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia (CPABC), must adhere to the CPABC code of professional conduct. The code defines conflict of interest as:

"...an interest, restriction or relationship that, in respect of the provision of any professional service, would be seen by a reasonable observer to influence a registrant's judgment or objectivity in the provision of the professional service."¹

¹ Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia, CPABC Code of Professional Conduct (August 2023) (p. 10).



The ARC program supports the zero-emission vehicle sector in B.C.
Source: Getty Images



Our findings related to MNP

What we examined

In April 2024, an applicant to ARC 2023 and CVIC (“Company A”) publicly alleged that MNP had contacted them to write grant applications, for grant programs it administers, in exchange for a 20 percent “success fee”. In essence, Company A implied MNP was running a kickback scheme by approving grant funding for its clients in exchange for the success fee while rejecting applications from those who refused to participate.

Company A also suggested that MNP used ARC program information to recruit clients for its grant-writing services.

If MNP engaged in the alleged activities it would violate the conflict-of-interest clause in its contract with the ministry and likely CPABC’s code of professional conduct because it would be inappropriately benefiting from its position as program administrator.

We examined the alleged conflicts of interest by focusing on whether MNP provided advising services for ARC or CVIC applications, influenced the evaluation process to benefit its clients, or used ARC program information to solicit clients for its other business services.

We did this by answering three questions:

Question 1: Did MNP provide applicant advising services (e.g., grant writing) for ARC or CVIC applications?

We found no evidence that MNP provided applicant advising services, including grant writing, for ARC or CVIC applications.

Ninety-nine applicants submitted 151 applications to ARC or CVIC funding calls. We reached out to all ARC and CVIC applicants and asked them:

- Did MNP write your ARC/CVIC application(s)?
- Did MNP provide advice or support for your ARC/CVIC application(s)? If yes, in what way?

Seventy-two per cent of the applicants responded to our questions (accounting for 92 per cent of applications that were approved or pending).

None of the applicants – including Company A – reported that MNP wrote their ARC or CVIC applications or provided any advice or support for their application, aside from general administrative support. See Appendix A for more information on our applicant outreach.

We also reviewed every engagement letter MNP had signed with clients for grant-writing services since it began offering this service in 2023. We found that none of MNP’s grant-writing clients had hired MNP to write or provide assistance for ARC or CVIC applications.



What happened in the case of Company A?

MNP did not write, nor offer to write, Company A's ARC or CVIC grant applications.

MNP offered to assist Company A with two grant applications for programs that MNP did not administer. Both parties agreed that MNP would waive its upfront fees and instead charge a fee contingent on the client's success in the grant program. In the end, MNP assisted Company A with one application for a grant program that was not administered by MNP.

When MNP initially contacted Company A about grant-writing services, Company A had already submitted its ARC and CVIC expressions of interest as well as its detailed proposal for CVIC. Company A hired MNP for grant writing after its CVIC proposal was rejected.

Question 2: Did MNP influence the ARC or CVIC evaluation process to promote its clients?

We found no evidence that MNP influenced the evaluation of ARC or CVIC applications to promote its clients.

MNP has clients across a wide range of services (accounting, auditing, financial modelling and digital services). Since the ARC program launched, 23 MNP clients have submitted 33 applications (25 to ARC and eight to CVIC). Ten MNP clients received funding.

We found that MNP's position as ARC program administrator (as opposed to grant decision-maker) significantly reduced the risk that MNP could influence the process in favour of its clients. All decision points required ministry approval and MNP had no role in evaluating or scoring grant applications.

We examined the four key steps (listed below) in the evaluation process to see if MNP influenced – or tried to influence – the process to benefit its clients. We found no evidence that it influenced – or tried to influence – the process, and we confirmed that MNP and the ministry followed the process as prescribed.

Step 1: Initiating the funding call

According to the contract, with ministry approval, MNP identifies funding call objectives, expectations, standards and evaluation criteria and uses them to draft requests for expressions of interest and requests for proposals (see ARC and CVIC evaluation process).

We found no evidence that MNP influenced the development of evaluation criteria to benefit its clients. We found that MNP and the ministry collaborated to establish evaluation criteria. We also confirmed that the ministry approved the requests for expressions of interest and requests for proposals before their release.



Step 2: Screening applications

According to the contract, MNP must provide an initial screening of applications to ensure they meet the mandatory criteria outlined in the requests for expressions of interest. The mandatory criteria focused on project eligibility and whether the:

- expression of interest was complete and comprehensible to allow for proper evaluation;
- applicant was eligible (e.g., a private entity registered in Canada);
- proposed project was eligible (e.g., complete within three years, and B.C. based); and
- funding request was eligible (e.g., project costs incurred in Canada, applicant contributing correct amount, no ineligible activities).

We found no evidence that MNP influenced the evaluation process by improperly screening its clients' applications.

We re-performed mandatory screening for the 25 expressions of interest that MNP clients submitted for ARC 2018, ARC 2020 and ARC 2023. We found that MNP appropriately screened applicants to ensure they met the criteria outlined in the requests for expressions of interest. We found no instances of MNP inappropriately advancing its clients.

For CVIC, MNP and the ministry together conducted an enhanced screening of expressions of interest rather than sending proposals to a technical review panel. The ministry explained this approach was to give as many applicants as possible the chance to submit full proposals.

The enhanced screening looked at whether projects met CVIC's scope and didn't have major gaps in information. We compared MNP and ministry scores for the eight expressions of interest submitted by MNP clients and found no evidence that MNP influenced the enhanced screening process to benefit its clients. We also found the ministry made the final decisions on which applicants were invited to submit full proposals.



Step 3: Facilitating the technical review

According to the contract, with ministry approval, MNP establishes a technical review panel – referred to as an advisory committee in the contract – to review and evaluate the expressions of interest and proposals. The technical review panel makes recommendations for the ministry's approval or rejection.

The contract states that, as a starting point, MNP should consider appointing technical review panels with representation from: the ministry, municipal government, the public, and the clean energy sector. MNP cannot be a member of the technical review panel.

We found no evidence that MNP influenced the expression of interest or proposal evaluations at the technical review stage.

We reviewed program documentation and found MNP assembled the technical review panels in consultation with the ministry. This mitigated the risk that MNP could choose technical review panel members who would favour MNP clients for funding approval.

We also reviewed scoring workbooks for all technical review stages, and confirmed MNP did not score any of the expressions of interest or proposals.

In the technical review stage, MNP facilitated meetings for panel members to discuss and compare their scores. We found no evidence that MNP attempted to influence technical review scoring at the panel meetings. We interviewed a sample of technical review panel members who all confirmed MNP served as a neutral facilitator and did not score applications or provide an opinion on projects that were under consideration.

We reviewed meeting notes for all technical review panel meetings and found ministry staff attended all meetings as technical review panel members. Ministry staff confirmed that MNP did not attempt to influence the technical review panel scoring at the meetings.

Lastly, we compared all technical review panel rankings with the lists of recommended projects that MNP sent to the ministry for approval. We found that MNP sent the rankings from the technical review panel to the ministry unchanged.

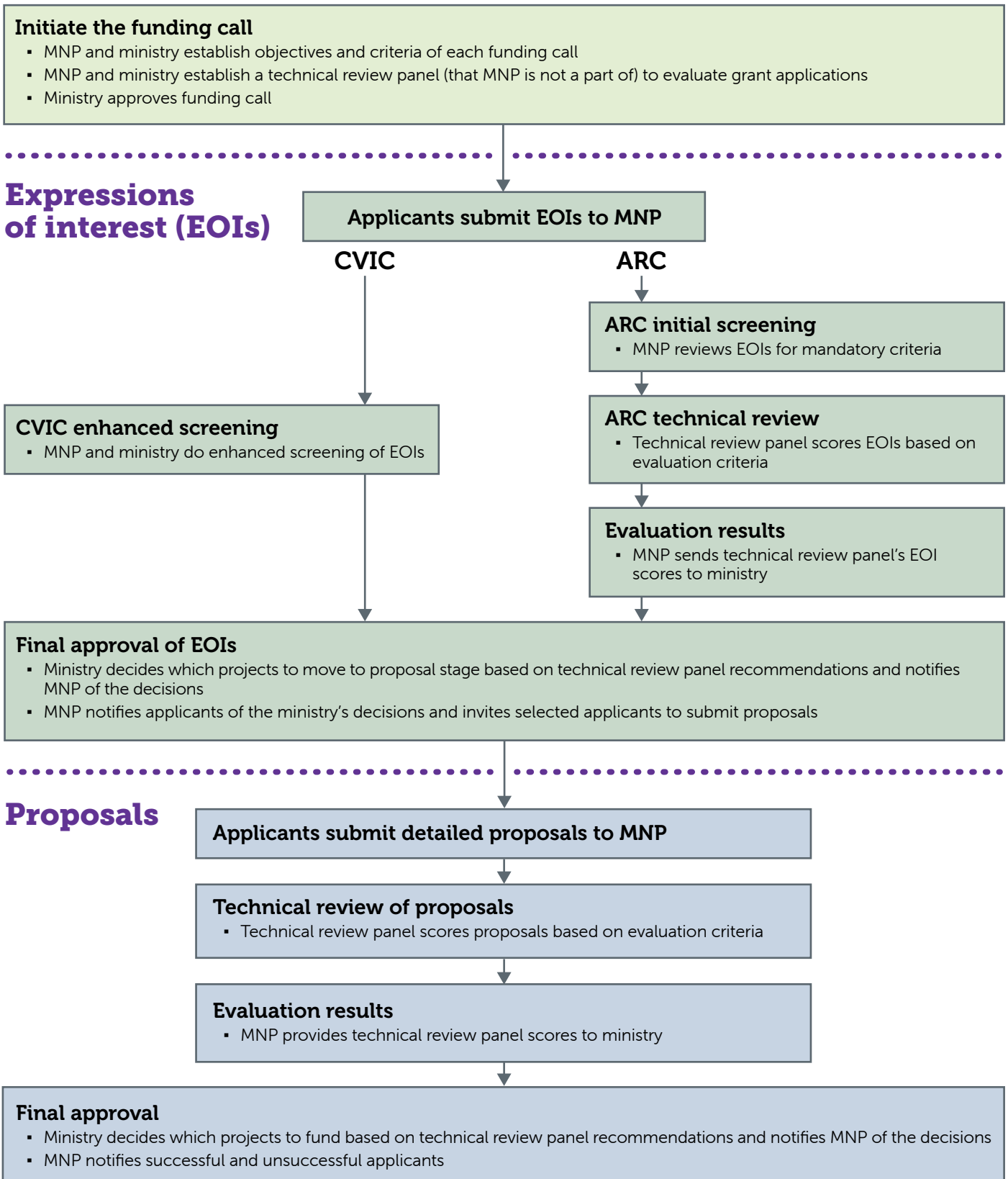
Step 4: Seeking final approval

According to contract and program documentation, MNP must receive ministry confirmation for approved projects before notifying applicants of funding decisions.

We reviewed program documentation for all funding calls and found the ministry, not MNP, explicitly approved which projects would receive funding. MNP notified the successful and unsuccessful applicants, as instructed by the ministry.



ARC and CVIC evaluation process



What happened in the case of Company A?

We did not find any evidence that MNP attempted to influence the ministry's decision to reject Company A's CVIC proposal or that discussions between Company A and MNP about grant writing had any impact on its ARC or CVIC applications.

- **For the ARC application,** MNP passed Company A through the mandatory criteria screening. The technical review panel independently reviewed Company A's expression of interest and the ministry selected Company A to submit a detailed proposal. Company A's proposal, along with 19 others, are awaiting final funding decisions.
- **For the CVIC applications,** MNP and the ministry passed Company A's two expressions of interest through the enhanced screening. The technical review panel independently reviewed the one proposal Company A submitted and scored it below the success threshold. The ministry rejected Company A's project based on the technical review panel's recommendation.

Incorrect instructions for applicants

We found that the instructions for applicants – in the requests for expressions of interest and requests for proposals that MNP drafted and the ministry approved – provided inaccurate information about who was responsible for funding decisions.

The applicant instructions for ARC and CVIC said MNP reserved the right to accept or reject any expression of interest or proposal for any reason, and that final funding decisions rested with the technical review panel. As noted, MNP facilitated the evaluation process but did not make funding decisions. The technical review panel scored projects and made recommendations but did not make funding decisions. The ministry made the final decisions about which projects to fund.

These instructions could incorrectly lead applicants to believe MNP had authority to decide which projects would receive funding.



The ARC program is part of a government initiative to reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions.
Source: Getty Images



Question 3: Did MNP use ARC or CVIC information to solicit clients for MNP's business services, such as applicant advising, assurance or accounting?

We found no evidence that MNP used ARC or CVIC information to solicit business for its other services, such as applicant advising, assurance or accounting.

We reached out to all ARC applicants and asked: "Did MNP ever contact you to sign up for their grant-writing services?" Sixty-eight of the 71 applicants who responded said MNP had never contacted them to offer grant-writing services.

For the three applicants (companies A, B and C) who said that MNP had contacted them to offer grant-writing services, we found no evidence that MNP used information from the ARC program to contact them.

- MNP contacted Company A due to their large social media presence and area of business.
- MNP discussed grant writing with Company B, an existing MNP client, during an annual client meeting.
- Company C reported they'd had contact with MNP about grant-writing services. However, they were unable to provide additional information. The timing of the contact – prior to 2020 – was before MNP added grant writing to its list of services.

We also looked at all correspondence in MNP's ARC program email account – more than 5,200 messages – and did not find any evidence that the MNP grant administration team attempted to solicit business for MNP's other services.

MNP's policies and procedures to prevent information sharing

MNP has several different teams that provide distinct services – such as accounting, assurance and advisory (e.g., grant writing, data analytics, and consulting). In 2022, MNP formally segregated its grant administration work from other MNP lines of business.

We reviewed MNP's policies and found it had a confidentiality policy for the whole firm. It also had a confidentiality policy for the grant administration team that prohibited grant administration staff from sharing ARC and CVIC applicant information with the firm's other staff. The grant administration policy forbade the team from seeking out "any information on past, present, or prospective clients of the firm" beyond the grant administration practice.

The firm-wide policy suggested restricting access to client files to authorized team members only. We found that this hadn't occurred with the grant administration files. Approximately 170 MNP staff outside of the grant administration team could access the files, including staff who provided grant-writing services. However, as noted, we found no evidence that unauthorized staff used ARC program information to solicit business from applicants.



What happened in the case of Company A?

Three MNP team members who worked in business areas separate from the grant administration team contacted Company A to solicit its business between Oct. 13, 2023, and Feb. 26, 2024.

We did not see any evidence that MNP contacted Company A based on information from its ARC and CVIC applications. Instead, MNP staff reported accessing Company A's contact information through its public profile.

The first MNP team member contacted Company A because its business aligned with the team member's portfolio. The second team member reached out because they followed Company A on social media and thought they'd be a good client for MNP. Once Company A demonstrated interest in grant-writing services, the third MNP team member became involved in the discussions.

Actual vs. perceived conflicts of interest

Actual conflicts of interests exist when someone is in a position where they could be influenced by conflicting interests.

Perceived conflicts of interest arise when, to a reasonable observer with all relevant facts, it appears that someone is in a position where they are being influenced by conflicting interests, regardless of whether an actual conflict exists.

In this case, a reasonable observer with all relevant facts about MNP's administration of the ARC program would be unlikely to perceive a conflict of interest. However, ARC and CVIC applicants did not have all relevant facts and information.



Our findings related to the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation

What we examined

The conflict-of-interest allegations raised questions about whether the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation allowed MNP to operate a kickback scheme. They also raised questions about whether the ministry ignored or dismissed the concerns when they arose.

Question 4: Did the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation identify and manage conflicts of interest in MNP's administration of the ARC program?

We found evidence that the ministry did work to identify whether there was a conflict of interest to manage by inquiring with MNP when the allegations arose.

Ministry's initial inquiry

The ministry conducted an initial inquiry between Feb. 28, 2024, and March 5, 2024, after Company A brought forward allegations of a conflict of interest to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation's staff.

The ministry worked with MNP to understand its grant-writing services and success fees to determine whether a conflict of interest existed. The ministry did not request or receive documentation in support of MNP's explanations or conduct additional work to understand MNP's conflict-of-interest policies and procedures.

After discussions with MNP, the ministry concluded that there was no conflict of interest in MNP's administration of the ARC program with respect to Company A.

Inquiry re-opened

The ministry re-opened its inquiry following questions raised in the Legislative Assembly on April 2, 2024. The ministry went back to MNP for more information about its grant-writing services, its involvement with Company A, and to discuss new information regarding the allegations.

The ministry's inquiry did not reach a conclusion prior to the Legislative Assembly's April 8th resolution directing the auditor general to undertake this examination. The ministry applied interim measures to the administration of the ARC program pending results of the examination.



About the examination

Upon direction by the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, we conducted this examination under the authority of section 13(2) of the *Auditor General Act*.

We used our understanding of the conflict-of-interest allegations related to MNP's administration of the ARC program to design and perform procedures to produce our findings. The findings from our examination are the factual results of the procedures we performed. This examination report is not an audit or assurance report and accordingly we do not express an audit opinion or assurance conclusion.

The procedures we conducted include document analysis of material obtained from the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation, the minister's office, MNP, MLAs from the three opposition parties, and the applicant who raised the allegations. We also interviewed program management at the ministry and MNP, reached out to all ARC program applicants, and re-performed application screening using the program's mandatory criteria.

Our office applies the Canadian Standard on Quality Management, and we have complied with the independence and other requirements of the code of ethics issued by the Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia that are relevant to this examination.

Report date: August 22, 2024



Michael A. Pickup, FCPA, FCA
Auditor General of British Columbia
Victoria, B.C.



Appendix A: Applicant outreach

How we reached out

We reviewed applicant information and found that 99 unique applicants submitted 151 applications over the four funding calls. We attempted to contact all applicants who submitted ARC or CVIC applications to obtain information about their application experience.

We reached out by phone in early May to the contact number listed on the application. Where an applicant had submitted multiple applications, with different contact numbers listed, we contacted the most recent first and other numbers as necessary. In instances where the contact person asked us to direct questions to another person, we contacted that person.

For applicants we reached by phone, we asked four questions (see below) and recorded the answers. We also asked for any other feedback about MNP's administration of ARC that the applicant wanted to provide. For applicants who we could not reach by phone, we sent the same four questions to the applicant by email at the contact email address provided on the application. We asked the applicant to fill out the questions and return them to the OAG by email. We also gave them the option to arrange a follow-up call with us if they had any additional information they wanted to share.

We sent a follow-up email to applicants who did not respond to our first email request in early June, and reached out again by phone to any successful applicant who hadn't responded.

Who we heard from

Overall, 99 applicants submitted 151 applications. We received responses from 71 applicants who had submitted 109 applications. The responses covered:

- 29 of 32 (91 per cent) applications that received funding;
- 19 of 20 (95 per cent) applications with decisions pending; and
- 61 of 99 (62 per cent) applications that were unsuccessful.



What we learned

Overall:

1. Did MNP write your ARC/CVIC application(s)?
 - None of the 71 respondents reported that MNP wrote their ARC or CVIC applications.
2. Did MNP provide advice or support for your ARC/CVIC application(s)? If yes, in what way?
 - 13 of 71 respondents reported that MNP provided advice or support for their ARC or CVIC application but in all cases they reported that it was the grant administration team answering general application questions.
3. Did MNP ever contact you to sign up for their grant-writing services?
 - Three of 71 respondents reported that MNP had contacted them about grant-writing services. The other 68 reported that MNP had not.
4. Has your organization used MNP for any business services such as grant writing, consulting, accounting, assurance? If yes, what services and when?
 - 13 of 71 respondents reported they either were or had been MNP clients.²
 - 12 of the 13 used MNP for services other than grant writing.
 - One of the 13 (Company A) engaged MNP for grant-writing services for grants not administered by MNP.

² While only 13 respondents confirmed they had been past or existing clients, after reconciling the survey results with MNP's client lists, we identified a further 10 past or existing MNP clients, bringing the total to 23.





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