

ACSA COR MODERNIZATION

Phase One: Listen and Learn Engagement

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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Executive Summary

In the fall of 2024, ACSA launched the first phase of the Certificate of Recognition (COR) Modernization Project, Phase 1: Listen and Learn. The engagement sought to learn the broad motivations to pursue certification among diverse stakeholders; what is currently working well; what needs to change in the COR and Small Employer Certificate of Recognition (SECOR) programs; common program impacts; and what success in the modernization of COR and SECOR program would look like.

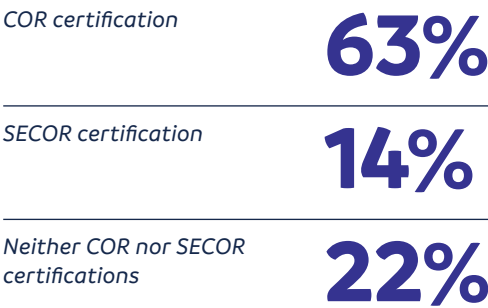
From October 6, 2024, to January 31, 2025, the engagement heard from 931 stakeholders, including:

- ACSA automatic members (past and current COR and SECOR holders, and those seeking COR/SECOR certification),
- ACSA associate members,
- Health and Safety representatives (including peer, internal, and consultant auditors),
- Regional Safety Committee and Industry Association members,
- Business owners and executives (from a range of company sizes), and
- ACSA board members and staff.

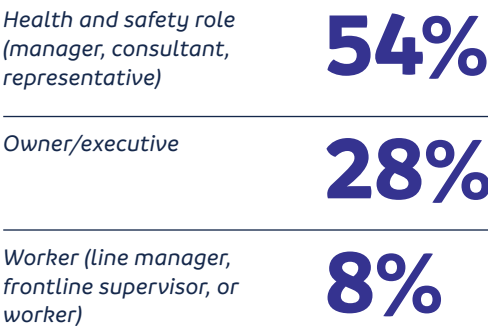
In terms of how we communicated to stakeholders about Phase Listen and Learn, we established a communication goal at the development stage of the project to support an inclusive and effective engagement process by generating awareness of and encouraging participation in the COR Modernization Project. To accomplish this, we developed and executed a comprehensive, multi-tactic communications plan that closely aligned with the engagement plan. This plan aimed to increase awareness of COR Modernization and its goals while promoting active participation in engagement activities in Phase Listen and Learn.

To connect with these diverse stakeholders, a wide range of engagement techniques were applied, enabling stakeholders to participate at a time, location, and pace convenient to them. These techniques included in-person sessions at the 2024 ACSA Conference, and online sessions, in-depth interviews, an online survey, and activities on a virtual engagement platform.

Rich details from respondents, including individual certification details



Top survey respondent primary titles or roles in their organization



(n=537)

Generally, feedback and insights from stakeholders covered both COR and SECOR programs together. In some instances, during conversations or through targeted survey questions, differences between the COR and SECOR programs become pronounced. These differences are notable in the discussion and questions about program strengths, areas of change, and successful modernization.

Below is a high-level summary of what we heard by the key engagement questions. The next steps in COR Modernization include critical academic research, examining incident data in relation to key aspects of the COR and SECOR programs, and leveraging an industry working group to provide a fulsome review of engagement results, a technical review, and academic results to produce modernization recommendations.

Decision-Making Key Findings

Across all stakeholder groups and engagement techniques, the top motivations for obtaining and maintaining COR and/or SECOR certification were bidding requirements, safety and injury prevention, and financial benefits. It is important to note that these top motivations were consistently mentioned by those holding COR or SECOR certification.

Through the interviews, online, and in person sessions, important nuances were captured around those motivations for obtaining and maintaining certification, notably:

- Supporting the development and continuous improvement of their organization’s safety programs,
- Demonstrating safety as an important organizational value and fostering a culture of safety,
- The commitment to safety having a positive impact on their organization’s reputation, and
- Reassuring stakeholders that their organization is up to date and compliant with the relevant legislated requirements and/or best practices.

The stakeholder survey captured primary resource challenges when first becoming certified and then those challenges faced in maintaining certification.

- “ To demonstrate our commitment to ongoing safety.”
- “ Provides structure and helps us stay compliant with client needs and with industry best practices.”
- “ Safety is prioritized at our organization.”

Interview and session attendees indicated the primary reasons to maintain certification included:

- To meet client needs, either at the bidding stage or as a requirement of their contract(s),
- To access WCB rebates,
- To contribute to employee attraction and retention, and
- For the overall peace of mind and/or guidance regarding safety practices.

Top challenges for securing certification

Meet documentation requirements **50%**

Staff time required to gather and submit documentation **36%**

Top challenges for maintaining certification

Staff time required to gather and submit documentation **51%**

Meet documentation requirements **45%**

Top reasons to continue to maintain certification

Bidding requirements **75%**

Demonstrating safety standards are being met **63%**

Workers Compensation Board (WCB) rebates **57%**

(n=439) Respondents with current COR/SECOR or lapsed COR/SECOR certification

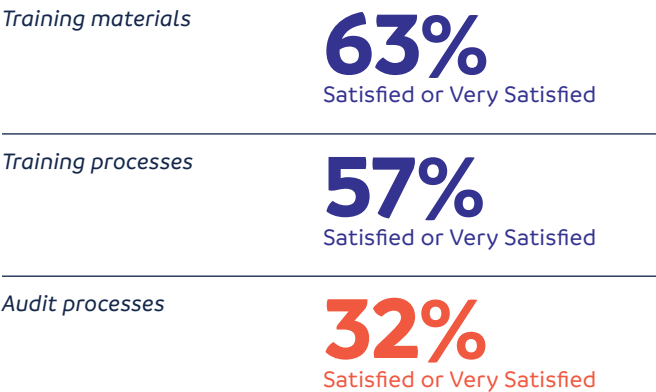
Processes Feedback

The stakeholder and staff survey collected satisfaction ratings for key COR and SECOR processes, training materials and processes, certification material and processes, maintenance year processes, and audit processes.

Overall, survey respondents for both COR and SECOR were most satisfied with training-related processes and least satisfied with audit-related processes.

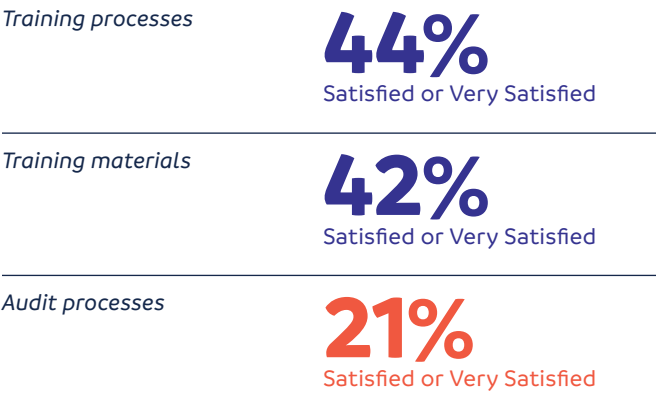
COR and SECOR stakeholders were least satisfied with the audit processes.

COR Stakeholders satisfaction with our training-related processes



(n=341) Respondents with current COR or lapsed COR certification

SECOR Stakeholders satisfaction with our training-related processes



(n=77) Respondents with current SECOR or lapsed SECOR certification

Regardless of certification type, COR or SECOR, stakeholders appreciate the training processes and materials. Additionally, the lower satisfaction scores for audits may reflect the desire for more support during the audit process or for a more streamlined approach for audits. Additional details regarding what stakeholders shared about changes to audits are noted below.

What is Working Well

Interviewees and session attendees highlighted what was working well, overall, in the certification programs, for both COR and SECOR. For many stakeholders, the key strengths included:

- **The programs are a solid base** and ensure a minimum standard for a health and safety programs,
- **COR and SECOR help to create a culture of safety** that, in turn, supports continuous improvement and accountability,
- **COR and SECOR audits work well** by validating health and safety programs for clients and staff, and the three tools – interviews, documentation, and observations – validate each other, and
- **The programs facilitate legislative compliance.**

Additionally, many interviewees and session attendees highlighted another key strength, the WCB/PIR rebates.

- “ *The program is a recognized standard and understood as a requirement that covers the basics.*”
- “ *...becomes a part of the culture of safety.*”
- “ *Offers opportunity for feedback for continuous improvement of our safety program and practices.*”

COR's top key strengths

Health and Safety related programs with a strong focus on injury prevention, ensuring high safety standards

9%

Audit platform/system is user-friendly and easy to use

9%

(n=341) Respondents with current COR or lapsed COR certification

SECOR's top key strengths

Training courses, content and requirements (general)

18%

Health and Safety related programs with a strong focus on injury prevention, ensuring high safety standards

12%

(n=77) Respondents with current SECOR or lapsed SECOR certification

The differences between the strengths for COR versus SECOR is likely connected to in the way SECOR holders currently manage their audit process and online document submission compared to COR holders with the recent roll out of MyAudit platform for COR holders.

Changes or Improvements

During interviews, sessions, and on the engagement platform, COR and SECOR stakeholders alike provided recommendations for changes or improvements to several areas from training to auditing:

- **Certification training needs to include** more training opportunities, professional development courses for auditors, and simplified training material language.
- **ACSA communications improvements**, including things like using less jargon-based language, improving awareness of feedback options, and ensuring the website is up to date.
- **Ensure the certification process improves accountability** and supports the growth of safety culture.
- **Auditors' submission improvements**, ensuring there is consistency between auditors for comments and scoring.
- **Enhance the peer auditor process**, ensuring peer audits are rigorous, aligned with industry between the peer auditor experience and organization, and consider the potential role of ACSA in peer auditor assignment to organizations.
- **Ensure audit questions are straightforward**, not repetitive, and allow for the selection of 'not applicable' to questions.
- **Adjust the audit interview questions and volume of interviews**, for example, by making it harder to prepare employees for interview questions and reducing the number of required audit interviews to reflect the size of the organization.
- **Make the program adaptable**, based on company size or number of employees, industry, or nature of the site or organization, and/or level of risk.
- Lastly, **ensure psychological health** is a component of a health and safety program.

“Bad communications for updates.”

“Too generalized for each industry.”

“Interview questions are repetitive and should be a grade 6 reading level.”

“Inconsistent quality of peer auditors.”

“Incorporate psychological hazards.”

Interestingly the top two changes noted by survey respondents for COR and SECOR were the same: improve, simplify and/or change the audit process to be less time consuming and/or easier to complete, and reduce repetitive/redundant questions, sections and/or modules.

Top 3 changes to COR suggested by survey respondents

Improve, simplify and/or change the audit process to be less time consuming and/or easier to complete **24%**

Reduce repetitive, redundant questions, sections and/or modules **9%**

Improve or change the interview process in general **9%**

(n=341) Respondents with current COR or lapsed COR certification

Top 3 changes to SECOR suggested by survey respondents

Improve, simplify and/or change the audit process to be less time consuming and/or easier to complete **23%**

Reduce repetitive, redundant questions, sections and/or modules **17%**

Improve or change documentation-related requirements, make it easier to submit documents **17%**

(n=77) Respondents with current SECOR or lapsed SECOR certification

Where COR and SECOR survey respondents differ is for COR, the interview process needs to change and/or be improved while SECOR respondents require document requirement changes.

Program Impacts

The majority of stakeholders highlighted COR/SECOR certification overarching impacts related to:

- Facilitating access to clients, client work, and the ability to bid on projects,
- Creating and/or supporting a safety culture, including enhancing accountability and continuous improvement, and
- Costs, in terms of positive financial impacts and negative impacts on company time to address certification processes.

“ Access to clients and their work.”

“ More bidding opportunities.”

“ Positive impact on culture and continuous improvement.”

“ Keeps companies accountable – accountability is built into the system.”

“ Financial benefit – lower or no lost time due to accidents.”

“ Time loss on resubmissions and with repetitive paperwork.”

Top 3 impacts of COR

Increased bidding opportunities

72%

Improved worker health and safety

60%

Access to the WCB rebate

60%

(n=537) Multiple selections allowed

Close to three-quarters (72%) of survey respondents indicated COR certification is important or very important (4 or 5 out of 5) to an organization, most often because they considered it beneficial in ensuring high worker safety standards and prioritizing workplace safety (40%).

Just over one quarter of respondents (26%) indicated COR was not at all important or of lower importance (1, 2 or 3 out of 5) as it is viewed as a box to check off, by demonstrating compliance and/or meeting regulatory standards in general (13%).

Top 3 impacts of SECOR

Increased bidding opportunities

43%

Improved worker health and safety

38%

Access to the WCB rebate

33%

(n=537) Multiple selections allowed

Survey respondents were also asked to rate how important SECOR certification is to an organization, where 40% of respondents selected important or very important (4 or 5 out of 5), primarily because they considered it beneficial in ensuring high worker safety standards and prioritizing workplace safety (25%).

Just over one quarter of respondents (28%) indicated SECOR was not at all important or of lower importance (1, 2 or 3 out of 5) because the SECOR certification is not required, necessary and/or mandatory for my organization (11%).

Successful Modernization

Lastly, all stakeholders were asked to share their vision for a successful COR/SECOR modernization. At a high level, during interviews, sessions, or on the engagement platform, most stakeholders indicated that a successful modernization would include:

- Technology enhancements, including the use of AI, tablet, and phone apps, more user-friendly platforms that are accessible to multiple users that include off-line capabilities,
- Enhanced safety culture in organizations reflected across all levels of the organization,
- A certification program that will be flexible; adaptable and customizable by industry and/or organization type/size; and,
- Streamlined and simplified audit process and requirements.

“ Multi-use auditing platform with task specific responsibilities for all levels with auditor review functions.”

“ Not a complicated scoring system.”

“ Adapting and following academic research.”

“ The audit program and instruments are built with future improvements in mind (a living program).”

“ Meaningfully credible, promotes continuous improvement, applicable to different industries.”

Interesting differences emerged with survey respondents regarding successful modernization for COR or SECOR. COR survey respondents noted the need for more industry specific content and improved audit process while SECOR survey respondents focused on process improvements from standardization and audits to documentation processes.

Top 3 ways COR will be successfully modernized

Improved or simplified auditing process to make completing audits easier in general	16%
Access to audit platform/system that is user-friendly and easier to use and/or navigate	10%
Incorporate more industry specific options, content and/or resources	9%

(n=341) Respondents with a current COR or lapsed COR certification; multiple themes recorded

Top 3 ways SECOR will be successfully modernized

Streamlined or standardized operational processes in general	16%
Improved or simplified auditing process to make completing audits easier in general	13%
Improved documentation processes, making submitting documents easier	12%

(n=77) Respondents with a current SECOR or lapsed SECOR certification; multiple themes recorded

When considering modernizing SECOR and COR programs, 49% of survey respondents feel that there are specific industry trends or challenges that should be considered (n=537).

Trends or challenges to consider when modernizing the COR and SECOR programs

More industry specific options, content and/or resources	13%
Integration of a safe work environment, facilitation of the culture of safety resulting in improved worker safety overall	12%
Using and adapting to the latest technological trends and integrating technology into the process to improve the process and outcomes overall	9%

(n=262) Respondents that indicated there are industry trends or challenges to be considered; multiple themes recorded

Conclusions and Considerations

Overall, this engagement report demonstrates and reinforces a key set of stakeholder conclusions about the COR and SECOR programs:

- 1 Safety is important and it requires buy-in from all levels of an organization.** This support and endorsement in turn creates demand for certification and increased awareness. Nonetheless, SECOR could benefit with more promotion to raise awareness and increase participation amongst smaller organizations.
- 2 The COR and SECOR programs are doing a job that is essential.** Stakeholders noted how COR is critical to ensure health and safety standards are maintained and improved in their organizations.
- 3 Stakeholders also identified a set of key changes that COR and SECOR could benefit from.** At a high level, these suggestions are focused on ensuring COR is keeping pace with best practices in the industry, and the idea that COR would benefit from the ability to customize by industry and/or organizational needs. In terms of SECOR, the changes will make the program more relevant and streamlined leading to reduction in time commitment and costs.
- 4 Stakeholders noted that many COR holders recognize the need for COR to evolve and modernize.**
- 5 A component focused on mental health and safety is recognized as a gap** in the COR/SECOR framework.
- 6 Importance of the Partnership in Injury Reduction (PIR) Rebate,** supporting organizations to meet Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) standards and therefore being compliant with Jobs, Economy and Trade (JET) Ministry was consistently highlighted across all stakeholder groups.

Throughout the engagement, stakeholder feedback regularly noted a set of key issues that ACSA should consider during the COR and SECOR modernization process.

- 1 Audit standardization** – the audit process and tools should be streamlined to improve process efficiency and create a uniform experience.
- 2 The peer audit system should be reviewed** to determine ways to improve or enhance this process, ensuring the peer audit process is relevant and valid.
- 3 Explore the idea of an advanced COR or 2.0 level,** to addresses the need for COR to meet the needs of specific industries and/or at a national and international level.
- 4 Consider new or innovative training models** and explore how to provide incentives to encourage people take COR or SECOR training.
- 5 SECOR – determine ways to increase awareness** and the overall profile of SECOR, through communications and marketing, with a focus on growth and incentivization with the goal of increased program participation.
- 6 Promote awareness of and access to assistance for internal auditors** during the audit process, as currently, there is a perceived barrier to asking for help.
- 7 Overall perceptions, positioning, relevance** of COR, SECOR, and ACSA can be enhanced with stakeholders through improved marketing and communications.
- 8 Complexity or size of organizations variations should be better accounted for** in the program modernization, as currently, COR is not a one size fits all program.