

How to Procure Adventurous Training Your CO Will Sign First Time

A brief-building tool for junior officers tasked with standing up a unit AT serial.

Who this is written for

You are a Captain or a Lieutenant (Junior Officer). You are the Adjutant, or the Training Officer, or the Operations Officer. You inherited the AT serial as an additional task with a six- to twelve-week lead time and no handover. The first three providers you searched online look the same. The brief lands on the CO's desk in three weeks. The CO will challenge every fact in it.

This pack is built for that situation. It will not run the procurement for you. It will give you the structure to do it in less than half the time, and it will give you material you can adapt directly into the document the CO signs.

If you are the CO or OC reading this over the Junior Officer's (JOs) shoulder: it is a procurement framework, not a marketing piece. It is written by former ADF leaders who have stood up AT serials from the inside and run them from the outside. The criteria below are the criteria you would apply.

What you get from this pack

1. A six-criterion decision matrix for evaluating any AT provider. Use it to score your shortlist.
2. A shortlist scoring rubric you can apply to three providers in about an hour.
3. Three ready-to-adapt brief sections for the document you put in front of the CO: the scope of work, the risk and governance framing, and the outcomes statement aligned to your training intent.
4. A worked example showing the rubric applied to three illustrative providers.
5. A proof-point appendix showing what good answers to each criterion look like in published material.

The pack is vendor-agnostic. Apply it to whoever you shortlist, including Keltus. If the framework is honest, it is useful for any AT procurement you run for the rest of your career.



How to use this pack

You have three jobs to do, in this order.

Job 1

Scope (about 60 minutes). Use the six-criterion framework in Part One to decide what you are actually buying. Most failed AT serials fail at the scoping stage, not the delivery stage. The scope drives everything that follows.

Job 2

Shortlist and score (about 90 minutes). Use the rubric in Part Two to score three providers against the six criteria. You only need three. If your fourth candidate scores below 60% on the rubric you would not have shortlisted them anyway.

Job 3

Adapt the brief (about half a day). Use the three templates in Part Three to draft the scope of work, the risk and governance framing, and the outcomes statement. The CO will still want to read the document themselves and challenge it. The point is that the document holds together under that challenge.

A working JO can finish the pack in a day. A JO under genuine time pressure can finish it in half a day if they accept the templates as written.



Part 1 The six-criterion framework

These are the six criteria your CO will apply to any AT provider you put in front of them, whether they say so or not. Score every provider against the six. Write the score down. Bring the scoring sheet to the brief.

Criterion 1

Practitioner credibility

The question to ask: Have the people designing and running this program done this work inside the ADF, at scale, before they stood up the company?

What good looks like:

- Named former ADF leaders on the delivery team, with rank, unit and role at separation stated plainly
- Direct AT experience inside Defence, not adjacent leadership consulting or generic outdoor recreation
- Experience in training development, and/or capability rebuild work inside Defence
- Continuing currency in the technical disciplines they deliver

What weak looks like:

- Veteran ownership claimed without outlining their ADF experience Marketing language about “former operators” or “elite operators” without a single named unit or role
- Adjacent claims (former special forces, former combat arms) used to imply AT depth that the team does not actually have
- Civilian outdoor recreation expertise as the dominant credential, with a thin defence layer added

Why this criterion sits first:

Soldiers form an opinion of any external provider in the first hour of contact. If the lead instructor cannot speak the unit's language, the rest of the program is fighting that first hour for the next four days. This is the single criterion most likely to determine whether your soldiers come back saying the program was useful or call it a school camp in DPCU.

Score it 1 to 5:

- 5= named former ADF AT practitioners on the delivery team, with role and unit, and demonstrated doctrine or capability work.
- 3 = veteran-owned with adjacent defence experience but no named ADF AT roles.
- 1 = civilian operator with no genuine ADF practitioner depth.

Criterion 2

Capability-aligned program design



The question to ask: Does the provider design programs around defined behavioural outcomes, or around activities?

What good looks like:

- A stated program design methodology with a recognised structure (ADDIE, the experiential learning continuum, or similar) explained clearly
- Programs articulated by what they develop in the participant (composure under pressure, communication under load, decision-making in uncertainty), not by the activity catalogue
- Pre-activity, during-activity and post-activity facilitation described, not just the activity
- Evidence of structured reflection (debriefs, learning workbooks, observable behaviour reporting), not “we’ll have a chat at the end”
- Explicit alignment to your unit’s training intent and continuum, not a fixed catalogue product

What weak looks like:

- Program brochure organised around activities (abseiling day, white water day, expedition day) with no methodology underneath
- Generic “leadership and resilience” language without behavioural specificity
- Marketing copy about “transformative experiences” or “unlocked potential”
- No evidence of a structured learning model
- Identical program offered to a corporate sales team and an infantry section

Why this criterion matters:

Your CO will ask “what does this actually develop.” If you cannot answer in twenty seconds, the brief stalls. A doctrine-aligned provider gives you that answer ready-made; a non-aligned provider makes you invent one.

The line that survives in defence brochures is “when pressure increases, people do not rise to the occasion. They fall to the level of their training.” The strength of a program design comes from how seriously it takes that idea inside the methodology, not from how well the line is quoted on the cover.

Score it 1 to 5:

- 5= stated design methodology, behavioural outcomes, structured facilitation, alignment to your training intent.
- 3 = some methodology language but light on behavioural specificity.
- 1 = activity catalogue with marketing wrapper.

Criterion 3.

Safety governance posture'



The question to ask: Is the provider's safety system watertight enough that the CO can sign the risk acceptance without underwriting it themselves?

What good looks like:

- Activities delivered in alignment with the Australian Adventure Activity Standards (AAAS), stated plainly with the standard named
- Formal risk assessments produced for each activity and each site, not generic templates
- Named instructor qualifications (relevant outdoor leadership credentials, current Working with Vulnerable People clearances where applicable)
- Public liability and professional indemnity insurance limits stated as a number, not "comprehensive cover"
- Evidence of safety management systems written for other defence formations (governance frameworks, standard operating procedures, site-specific operating procedures)
- Layered safety systems (instructor ratios, safety supervisors, medical cover, emergency response plans)

What weak looks like:

- "Safety is our priority" with no specifics
- Insurance described in adjectives instead of numbers
- AAAS mentioned without naming what the alignment actually means in practice
- Generic risk assessment templates re-used across activities and sites
- Instructor qualifications described as "highly experienced" without listing the credentials

Why this criterion matters:

If the safety system has a hole, the burden falls on you and your training cell to underwrite it, and the risk acceptance ends up on the CO's desk with their name on it. A provider that has already written governance frameworks for other brigades is a provider that has done the thinking; a provider that has not, is a provider that will lean on yours.

Score it 1 to 5:

- 5= AAAS alignment named in plain language, insurance stated in numbers, instructor credentials listed, governance frameworks demonstrably written for other defence formations.
- 3 = AAAS mentioned, insurance acknowledged but not quantified.
- 1 = generic safety claims with no specifics.

Criterion 4

End-to-end delivery load



The question to ask: What does the provider take off your plate, and what do they leave on it?

What good looks like:

- Provider owns planning, equipment, logistics, accommodation, catering, medical cover and qualified facilitators as a package
- “Fully supported and outsourced” delivery model stated explicitly
- Single point of contact who runs the program end to end
- Defence formations supported at scale (at least one engagement of 50+ personnel in published material)
- Clear demarcation of what the unit retains (training audience selection, training intent, integration with the broader continuum) and what the provider runs (everything else)

What weak looks like:

- Activity-only delivery with the unit expected to manage planning, logistics, accommodation and risk
- Provider expects the unit’s training cell to write the risk assessment or the SOP
- No flexible cost-reduction options presented (e.g. you doing your own catering and organising your own transport)
- No published evidence of having delivered a program of comparable scale to yours

Why this criterion matters:

You already have a full plate. Your training cell already has a full plate. The reason a unit outsources AT is to get the leadership and resilience outcomes without losing two staff weeks to a procurement-and-logistics workload. A provider that hands you a draft scope and a draft risk frame is reducing your workload; a provider that asks you to write those is increasing it.

Score it 1 to 5:

5 = end-to-end delivery, single point of contact, published evidence of comparable scale.

3 = activity delivery plus partial logistics, with some workload retained by the unit.

1 = activity-only delivery with the unit running everything else.

Criterion 5

Named precedent at scale



The question to ask: Have they done work of this depth and scale for another formation, and will they let you name it?

What good looks like:

- Multiple named ADF formations in published material, with engagement detail (units, scale, duration, outcomes)
- Engagements at brigade or sub-unit scale, not just team-of-six command days
- Diversity of engagement type (direct delivery, capability rebuild, supervisor qualification, governance development) demonstrating depth
- Willingness to put you in contact with a previous defence client for a reference call

What weak looks like:

- Single named engagement, light on detail
- “Trusted by Defence” with no formations named
- Corporate logos prominent and defence engagements vague
- Refusal to facilitate a reference call

Why this criterion matters:

When the CO asks “who else uses them,” you need a named formation, a named scale, and a named outcome ready. “They have worked with Defence” is not enough. “They rebuilt 7th Brigade’s resilience training capability, qualified their safety supervisors, and wrote their governance framework” is enough. The difference between those two sentences is the difference between getting the brief signed and not.

Score it 1 to 5:

- 5= three or more named ADF formations with engagement detail at brigade or sub-unit scale.
- 3 = one or two named engagements with reasonable detail.
- 1 = generic “Defence experience” with no named formations.

Criterion 6

National footprint and scale flexibility



The question to ask: Can they deliver where you need them, at the scale you need, on the dates you have?

What good looks like:

- National delivery capability stated, with specific regions or ranges where they have run programs
- Demonstrated ability to scale from a 12-pax command team day to a 100+ pax multi-day program
- Activity diversity matched to your geography (sea kayaking on the coast, canyoning in alpine country, climbing and abseiling in suitable terrain)
- Genuine flexibility on dates, not “we deliver in March and October”

What weak looks like:

- Regionally bound provider with one delivery base
- Single activity specialism (e.g., abseiling only) being shoehorned to fit your training intent
- Inflexible scheduling that forces your unit calendar to bend to theirs

Why this criterion matters:

Your unit calendar moves. Your geography is fixed. A provider that delivers nationally and scales between command-team and unit-scale serials is a provider you can re-use for the next training cycle without re-running the procurement. That has compounding value across two posting cycles.

Score it 1 to 5:

- 5= national footprint, demonstrated scale flexibility, activity diversity matched to geography.
- 3 = regional delivery with some flexibility.
- 1 = single base, single specialism, inflexible scheduling.



Part 2 The shortlist scoring rubric

Score each shortlisted provider against the six criteria. The maximum score is 30. The minimum score for a defensible recommendation to the CO is 22 (an average of 3.7 per criterion, with no individual criterion below 3).

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Criterion	Provider A	Provider B	Provider C	Notes
1. Practitioner credibility	_/5	_/5	_/5	
2. Doctrine-aligned program design	_/5	_/5	_/5	
3. Safety governance posture	_/5	_/5	_/5	
4. End-to-end delivery load	_/5	_/5	_/5	
5. Named precedent at scale	_/5	_/5	_/5	
6. National footprint and scale flexibility	_/5	_/5	_/5	
Total	_/30	_/30	_/30	

How to score honestly

A provider scores a 5 on a criterion only if their published material gives you a defensible answer with named specifics. Marketing language without specifics is a 2, not a 4, no matter how well written. If you cannot find an answer to the criterion on their website or in their capability statement, score it on a 1 and ask them the question directly. The answer to that question is itself a data point.

The two veto criteria. A provider scoring below 3 on Criterion 1 (Practitioner credibility) or Criterion 3 (Safety governance posture) does not progress, regardless of total score. These are the two areas where the CO will not accept a soft answer.



Part 3 The brief sections

Take these templates and adapt them. The bracketed prompts are inputs you supply. The unbracketed text is structure you can keep or refine. Every line is written to survive the CO's read.

Section A

Scope of Work

(lift directly into your brief)

Scope of Work — [Unit] [Activity] [Date Range]

Training audience

[Number] personnel from [unit/sub-unit], comprising [breakdown by rank or role if relevant]. The audience is the [command team / sub-unit / specific cohort] preparing for [force generation phase / posting cycle event / pre-deployment block / cohesion event].

Training intent

To develop [composure, judgement and decision-making under pressure / team cohesion across recently re-formed command groups / leadership behaviours under controlled stress] in support of [unit training continuum / formation training narrative / specific operational preparation requirement].

Behavioural outcomes sought

1. [Outcome 1, e.g., command teams demonstrating effective communication and shared decision-making when conditions deteriorate]
2. [Outcome 2, e.g., individuals applying stress-management techniques under genuine fear and uncertainty]
3. [Outcome 3, e.g., junior leaders sustaining situational awareness and clarity of intent across the team under load]

Provider responsibilities

End-to-end delivery, including planning, qualified facilitators, equipment, logistics, accommodation, catering, medical cover and emergency response, in accordance with the Australian Adventure Activity Standards. Provider to deliver pre-activity briefing, during-activity facilitation, and structured post-activity debriefs. Provider to issue a post-activity report covering observed behaviours and recommended follow-on activity.

Unit responsibilities

Confirmation of training audience, confirmation of training intent and behavioural outcomes, integration of activity into the unit training plan, and command oversight of the activity.

Duration

[Number] days, conducted [date range].

Location

[Region / specific site if known].

Activity format

[Single-day / two-day / multi-day / expedition style] using [training mediums, e.g., abseiling, canyoning, sea kayaking, climbing] selected to deliver the behavioural outcomes above.

Funding line

[Account / cost centre]. Estimated total cost: [figure]. Provider quote attached at Annex [letter].

Section B

Risk and Governance Framing

(lift directly into your brief)



Risk and Governance Framing

Provider safety standards

The provider operates in accordance with the Australian Adventure Activity Standards (AAAS) for [activity types]. Activities are delivered by qualified instructors holding [outdoor leadership qualifications and currency], supported by appropriate instructor-to-participant ratios, layered safety systems and medical cover.

Insurance posture

Provider holds public liability insurance to a limit of [\$ figure] and professional indemnity insurance to a limit of [\$ figure]. Certificates of currency provided at Annex [letter].

Risk assessments

Activity-specific and site-specific risk assessments produced by the provider, reviewed against [unit IPRR or equivalent risk paperwork], and signed off by the unit safety officer prior to commencement.

Layered safety systems

[Brief description of instructor ratios, safety supervisors, medical cover, communication and emergency response arrangements.]

Governance precedent

The provider has delivered comparable training for [named formations]. Governance documentation produced for those engagements is available on request.

Residual risk

Following the controls described above, the residual risk to participants is assessed as [low / medium] and is judged acceptable in the context of the training outcomes sought. Risk acceptance authority [as per unit standing instructions].

Section C

Outcomes Statement

(lift directly into your brief)



Outcomes Statement

This program is designed to develop specific behaviours that contribute to [unit] capability under demanding conditions. The training is not a recreational activity; it is a structured experiential learning program built around the experiential learning continuum (Experience, Reflect, Generalise, Apply) and aligned to the unit's training intent.

Capability outcomes for the participant

- Composure and stress regulation under genuine physical and psychological pressure
- Communication and shared situational awareness when conditions deteriorate
- Decision-making and judgement when information is incomplete and consequences are real
- Team cohesion through shared challenge in unfamiliar environments
- Leadership behaviours under load (presence, clarity of intent, support of teammates)

Capability outcomes for the unit

- Observed behavioural data on individuals and teams under controlled pressure
- Strengthened command relationships within recently re-formed groups
- A reset point in a high-tempo cycle where teams reconnect with collective purpose
- A post-activity report contributing to the unit training narrative

Evaluation

Outcomes will be evidenced through structured debrief outputs, participant workbook entries, and the provider's post-activity report. The unit will integrate this evidence into [individual development discussions / unit after-action review / next training cycle planning].

Part 4

Worked example



The shortlist (illustrative).

Provider A

A national outdoor recreation operator with 25 years in the corporate adventure market. Veteran-founded but the founder served as a non-commissioned officer in a non-AT trade and now runs a civilian outdoor business. Strong on logistics, light on defence-specific design.

Provider B

A veteran-led leadership consulting firm. Three named former officers on the team. Programs run as classroom-led leadership intensives with one outdoor element bolted on. Strong on facilitation, light on AT delivery depth.

Provider C

A specialist AT provider founded and operated by former ADF leaders who wrote AT doctrine and ran AT inside brigades. Programs designed using ADDIE and the experiential learning continuum. National footprint. Multiple named brigade-scale engagements.

Part 4 Worked Example Cont.



Scoring (illustrative)

Criterion	Provider A	Provider B	Provider C	Notes
1. Practitioner credibility	2/5	3/5	5/5	A is veteran-owned but not a former ADF AT practitioner. B has former officers but their depth is in leadership consulting, not AT delivery. C has former ADF leaders with direct AT and capability-build experience.
2. Doctrine-aligned program design	2/5	3/5	5/5	A organises its catalogue by activity. B has structured leadership facilitation but the AT is bolted on. C uses ADDIE and the experiential learning continuum cleanly and maps to unit training intent.
3. Safety governance posture	4/5	3/5	5/5	All three meet AAAS at the floor level. A has good outdoor recreation safety systems but no defence-grade governance precedent. B is light on AT-specific safety systems because AT is not its primary delivery. C has written governance frameworks for at least one brigade.
4. End-to-end delivery load	4/5	3/5	5/5	A delivers logistics well at activity scale. B expects the unit to manage logistics around its facilitation. C delivers end-to-end including planning, equipment, logistics, accommodation and catering, evidenced by a published 138-pax eight-day program.
5. Named precedent at scale	2/5	2/5	5/5	A has corporate clients but light defence precedent. B has named corporate and government clients but only one defence engagement. C has at least four named ADF formations, including a brigade resilience capability rebuild.
6. National footprint and scale flexibility	4/5	3/5	4/5	A has the strongest national operational base. B is regionally bound to the east coast. C has national delivery and demonstrated scaling from 12 to 138 personnel.
Total	18/30	17/30	29/30	

The recommendation language (illustrative)

Following review against the six-criterion procurement framework (see Annex A), Provider C is recommended. The provider scores 29 of 30, with the strongest scores in practitioner credibility, doctrine-aligned program design, safety governance posture and named precedent at scale. Providers A and B do not meet the practitioner credibility threshold required for this audience and are not recommended. Provider C's published material has been verified against the framework criteria and a 20-minute scoping conversation has been completed; a draft scope of work is at Annex B.

That paragraph is the entire recommendation. The CO either signs or asks one or two questions. The framework, the scoring and the worked annex carry the rest of the brief.



Part 5

Proof-point appendix

For each criterion, here is what a strong answer looks like in published material. Use this as a checklist when scanning a provider's website or capability statement.

Criterion 1, practitioner credibility. Look for: named former ADF leaders, with rank and unit at separation, doing the actual delivery (not just on the advisory board); evidence of doctrine, training development or capability work inside Defence; current technical credentials in the disciplines they deliver.

Criterion 2, doctrine-aligned program design. Look for: an explicit methodology (ADDIE, experiential learning continuum, structured experiential learning); programs articulated by behavioural outcomes; pre-activity, during-activity and post-activity facilitation described; a named structured reflection tool (workbook, debrief framework, observable behaviour reporting).

Criterion 3, safety governance posture. Look for: AAAS alignment named, not implied; insurance limits in dollars; instructor qualifications listed by name; governance frameworks demonstrably written for other defence formations; layered safety systems (instructor ratios, safety supervisors, medical cover) described concretely.

Criterion 4, end-to-end delivery load. Look for: explicit "fully supported and outsourced" framing or equivalent; single point of contact described; published evidence of a comparable-scale engagement (50+ pax, multi-day, remote location) where the provider ran logistics, equipment, accommodation and catering as part of the package.

Criterion 5, named precedent at scale. Look for: three or more named ADF formations in published material; engagement detail (unit, scale, duration, type of work); diversity of engagement type (delivery, capability build, supervisor qualification, governance development) showing depth.

Criterion 6, national footprint and scale flexibility. Look for: published reference to engagements in multiple states or regions; activity diversity covering the geography (sea kayaking, climbing, canyoning, expeditions); demonstrated scaling between command-team and unit-level serials.

If you want to test the framework, apply it to Keltus's own published material at keltus.au. Apply the same rigour to every other provider you shortlist. The framework is the test, not the brand.

What to do next

You now have what you need.

The framework, the rubric, the brief sections, the worked example.

Three honest next steps:

1. Run the framework on your top three providers this week. A working hour each. Score the rubric. The shortlist tightens itself.
2. Adapt Section A, B and C into your unit's brief format. Half a day. Take the templates verbatim where they survive and edit where they need to. The CO does not need them to read as Keltus voice; they need to read as your unit's voice with your unit's specifics.
3. Book a 20-minute scoping conversation with the provider you score highest. A scoping conversation that produces a draft scope of work cuts another working day off your timeline. That is the single highest-leverage thing you can do once your shortlist is tight.

If you want to scope your serial with us, you can book a 20-minute conversation directly at keltus.au/contact. We will use the time to understand your training intent, identify where AT would add value to your continuum, and outline a draft program option you can adapt into your brief. That call is not a sales pitch; it is the same scoping conversation we have with every defence enquiry, and it is designed to leave you better-equipped whether you engage Keltus or not.

If you do not engage Keltus, the framework above is yours to use anyway. It is the framework we would want a JO to apply to us, and it is the framework we apply to ourselves when we are deciding whether we are the right provider for a particular unit.

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Good luck with the brief.

About this pack

Written by Keltus, a specialist provider of leadership and resilience training for the ADF, founded and operated by former ADF leaders. Keltus has supported the 7th Brigade resilience training capability rebuild, qualified safety supervisors for the 1st Brigade, delivered command team cohesion training for the School of Military Engineering, and run an eight-day program for 138 soldiers of the 1st Battalion Royal Gurkha Rifles on North Keppel Island. We work with formations to design, deliver and sustain AT capability that aligns to defence training intent, in accordance with the Australian Adventure Activity Standards and supported by qualified former-ADF AT practitioners.