



Comprehensive Solutions for the Spruce Grove Business Ecosystem



CAMPUS
INNOVATION
CONSULTING GROUP

Submitted by: Campus Innovation
Consulting Group (CICG)
(Chris Lerohl MBA, Rick Davidson)

Submitted to: The City of Spruce
Grove (Jodi Fulford & Dave Walker)

August 29, 2024



Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
1. PROJECT CONTEXT	6
1.1 OBJECTIVES.....	6
1.1. METHODOLOGY	6
2. BUSINESS LANDSCAPE ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN.....	8
2.1. ECONOMIC AND MARKET CONDITIONS	8
2.2. LOCAL BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM ENGAGEMENT	17
3. INCUBATOR FRAMEWORKS AND ECOSYSTEM SCAN	21
3.1. COWORKING INCUBATORS.....	24
3.2. VIRTUAL INCUBATOR / ACCELERATORS	28
4. CHALLENGES, COMPANY PROFILES, AND NEEDS	31
4.1. BUSINESS SURVEY.....	31
4.2. COMPANY TYPES AND SPECIFIC NEEDS.....	32
5. RECOMMENDED PROGRAMS.....	34
5.1. CREATION OF AN EARLY-STAGE BUSINESS SUPPORTS PROGRAM	34
5.2. ENTREPRENEURIAL START-UP SUPPORT, EDUCATION, AND TRAINING PROGRAM.....	37
5.3. MENTORSHIP, NETWORKING AND LEARNING PROGRAM.....	39
5.4. FUNDING AND LOAN PROGRAMS	40
5.5. EDUCATION FOR YOUTH PROGRAM (LONG TERM HORIZON)	42
5.6. OPERATIONAL AND REGULATORY CHALLENGES PROGRAM.....	43
6. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY.....	45
7. CONCLUSION.....	46
7.1. STRATEGY	47
APPENDIX A: PRIMARY RESEARCH – ROUGH TRANSCRIPTS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH SPRUCE GROVE BUSINESS OWNERS.....	48
APPENDIX B: PRIMARY RESEARCH – ROUGH TRANSCRIPTS FROM CCBA AND EDAC MEETINGS	68
APPENDIX C: GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF PRIMARY INTERVIEWEE BUSINESS DEMOGRAPHICS.....	78
APPENDIX D: BUSINESS STATISTICS TABLE	79

Tables and Figures

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF COMPANIES IN INDUSTRIES	12
TABLE 2. LOCAL ENTITIES.....	17
TABLE 3. ALBERTA INCUBATORS	23
 FIGURE 1. CHART BASED ON ANALYSIS OF THE BUSINESS DIRECTORY PROVIDED BY THE CITY OF SPRUCE GROVE.....	 14

Executive Summary

Campus Innovation Consulting Group's (CICG) scope for this project was to explore establishing a "Business Incubator, Accelerator, and Enhanced Business Services Program" for Spruce Grove, aimed at fostering entrepreneurial growth and sustainable business development. The initiative evaluates the feasibility of a physical incubator and business support program. It also considers the effectiveness of a broad versus industry-specific strategy to support startups and early-stage businesses, guiding future city actions with well-informed recommendations.

This report synthesizes four months of research, including primary and secondary sources, to analyze the needs of Spruce Grove's business community and the broader Alberta business support ecosystem. It encompasses surveys and interviews with local business owners and incubator staff, aiming to inform strategic recommendations for supporting startups and early-stage businesses in Spruce Grove.

Spruce Grove's Economic Growth and Business Environment Overview

- Spruce Grove, near Edmonton, surpasses provincial economic growth rates.
- Targeted efforts improve the business environment and attract investments.
- Population and labor force growth outpace Alberta averages.
- Developments like the Civic Centre boost local prosperity.
- Competitive real estate and strong community support business expansion.
- Strategic location and infrastructure enhance regional hub status.
- Retail sector set for growth with demographic advantages.
- Office market shows signs of post-pandemic recovery.
- Despite slight business number decline in 2022, growth potential remains.
- A broad, general strategy is favored for the diverse business ecosystem.

Key Strategies for Entrepreneurial Support: Incubators, Accelerators, and Business Support Programs in Alberta

- Business support programs, including incubators and accelerators, support entrepreneurship and growth.
- Incubators provide holistic, innovation-focused support; accelerators target rapid, competitive scaling.
- Program effectiveness varies by mentorship quality, network strength, and startup alignment.
- Successful models offer mentorship, networking, financial resources, affordable leases, and startup support.
- One key benefit of business support programs generally is networking and community, useful for businesses at all stages.
- Collaboration with local entities and chambers of commerce is vital.
- Coworking incubators cater to sectors like tech and social enterprises, offering flexibility.
- Community collaboration and diverse business models ensure financial stability.
- Virtual and hybrid models increase accessibility for startups.

- Alberta's examples show a variety of incubation approaches, emphasizing the need for customization.
- Emphasis on supporting home-based businesses is important.
- Spruce Grove could benefit from implementing tailored entrepreneurial support systems.

Insights into Spruce Grove's Entrepreneurial Challenges and Opportunities

- Primary research from Spruce Grove businesses informs business support program benefits and functions.
- 28 of 42 business owners chose Spruce Grove for its supportive community and low competition. Many feel that community is one of their largest needs.
- Many lacked prior business experience or conducted minimal market research.
- Key needs include startup support, skilled labor, marketing, and easier access to funding.
- Challenges identified: licensing, permits, and navigating regulatory processes.
- Industry cluster approach not recommended due to the absence of concentrated sectors.
- Identified business types: small commercial/retail, home-based, startups, each with unique needs.
- Coworking space currently not a priority based on market analysis and demand.
- Home-based businesses need virtual support and flexible access to resources.
- Prioritize startup support, regulatory navigation, and training for entrepreneurs with limited business experience.

Key Recommendations: Strategies for Enhancing Business Support in Spruce Grove

To optimize support for Spruce Grove's diverse business landscape, research suggests adopting a comprehensive strategy that caters to the needs of commercial spaces, home-based businesses, and startups. A business support program, open to all entrepreneurs, including targeted mentorship and training, particularly in marketing and business strategy, is recommended. A proposed "Early-Stage Business Supports Program" (EBSP) should collaborate with existing entities like incubators for shared success. The EBSP should be guided by communication between local entrepreneurs, business leaders, and city representatives; the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) could be a useful starting point, with an entrepreneurial focused subcommittee created in future years. Financial support from the City of Spruce Grove to help access funding, grants, and sponsorships is essential, with a hybrid model favored over a physical space to ensure flexibility and accessibility for all entrepreneurs.

To ensure the success and sustainability of startups in Spruce Grove, the proposed business support program, led by a dedicated Program Lead, will offer a comprehensive suite of training and mentorship focused on essential business skills such as marketing, financial management, and legal considerations. By leveraging partnerships with proven external programs like SMARTStart and incorporating diverse learning formats including workshops and speaker series, the program aims to cater to varied entrepreneurial needs. Risk mitigation strategies include regular feedback collection and maintaining strong organizational commitments, with

performance measured by session attendance, participant feedback, and the diversity of educational content.

The EBSP aims to foster entrepreneurial growth through mentorship, leveraging partnerships for support. Initiatives include tailoring education for various business stages and collaborating with organizations like Startup TNT to enhance funding access. A dedicated Program Lead will manage these programs, ensuring their relevance and sustainability. Risk assessments focus on maintaining program quality and securing funding. The long-term strategy includes youth education, potentially in partnership with local educational institutions, to nurture future entrepreneurs. This comprehensive approach seeks to build a robust business ecosystem in Spruce Grove.

Enhancing the Spruce Grove business environment involves streamlining permitting processes and optimizing the city's website for better accessibility. Implementing a Program Lead can significantly improve the efficiency of navigating city regulations, acting as a bridge between entrepreneurs and permitting departments. Continuous feedback collection from business owners will be essential to adapt and refine these processes. Key performance indicators, including web traffic and user satisfaction, will measure the effectiveness of these improvements, aiming for a more supportive and accessible framework for local businesses.

See *Early-Stage Business Support Program: Implementation* for an outline of a proposed implementation strategy.

1. Project Context

1.1 Objectives

This project aims to create a solution for Spruce Grove's business ecosystem through a comprehensive approach.

The City's Corporate Strategic Plan 2023-2025 includes a proposal to establish a "Business Incubator, Accelerator, and Enhanced Business Services Program." The City is committed to nurturing growth in its business environment and wants to develop a solution that supports entrepreneurship and sustainable growth. Based on the proposal, the city seeks to determine the best course of action for supporting startups and early-stage businesses in Spruce Grove.

There are two primary objectives of the project:

1. Determine if setting up a physical incubator location aligns with the city's overall goals, or if a different approach would be more suitable. It considers a range of additional services and programs, including mentorship, funding opportunities, technical resources, and ways to access the market.
2. Explore whether a broad, general strategy or a more focused, industry-specific approach would yield better results. In essence, this report acts as a guide for the city's future actions. It aims to offer a well-informed recommendation based on a comprehensive analysis.

1.1. Methodology

This report is the culmination of a months-long process of data-gathering, research, and analysis. The research team conducted secondary and primary research, discussing and engaging with local entities and organizations throughout the process.

There were two primary research streams: one aimed at understanding the needs and perspectives of (generally recently-opened) business-owners, and another at understanding the business support ecosystem in Alberta more broadly, including the operations and takeaways of incubators and innovation networks based in similarly sized communities to Spruce Grove.

The first stream was a scripted survey of business-owners and stakeholders in the Spruce Grove business community.¹ This mainly took the form of phone calls and (to a lesser extent) emails based on business directories from the City. This data was supported by in-person meetings with the Economic Development Action Committee (EDAC) and the City Centre Business Association (CCBA), both of which include many business-owners as members.² Ultimately, 42 business-owners were interviewed. Of these, 14 identified as female owners and 3 as indigenous owners. A complete transcript of these interviews can be found in Appendix B.

¹ See Appendix B.

² See Appendix C.

The second stream of primary research included a series of interviews with staff at incubators in Alberta. This work intended to gain insight into the different current approaches including their challenges and successes. The transcript of these interviews can be found in Appendix A.

Secondary research was also conducted to ground the recommendations and statements in this report in existing research, and to enrich the analysis of the primary data we collected. Some of this secondary research particularly informs section 2, where we draw on existing reports on Spruce Grove's business landscape and place its current situation in context of broader historical economic and demographic trends in Alberta. Secondary research was also conducted to support and illuminate the analysis of the primary research and the formulation of subsequent recommendations, including to determine realistic strategic options for Spruce Grove. Much of this secondary research looked into the different incubator, accelerator, and co-working space models that are commonly used in Alberta, Canada, and internationally.

2. Business Landscape Environmental Scan

Before looking to strategic direction, we will outline the current business environment with particular attention to needs identified in the landscape based on our research. Beginning with an analysis of general market conditions and trends, we will then discuss existing entities in the Tri-Region (Spruce Grove, Stony Plain, and Parkland County) and their engagement with the market, creating a jumping off point for section 3, where we discuss the concept of the business incubator and its extant manifestations in Alberta.

2.1. Economic and Market Conditions

Spruce Grove is a dynamic city located approximately 11 km west of Edmonton. It is experiencing faster economic growth and development than broader provincial trends, fueled in part by a concerted effort from its Economic & Business Development team to create a vibrant business environment. The city's strategy emphasizes supporting entrepreneurs, facilitating business expansion, attracting new investment, and connecting businesses with valuable resources. This multi-faceted approach aims to foster a strong business community that not only generates employment but also supports local services through tax contributions, ensuring an affordable, sustainable community with a high quality of life.

Recent developments in Spruce Grove reflect its commitment to economic expansion and diversification. Multiple new commercial and industrial projects are underway for both relocation and expansion in Spruce Grove³. Furthermore, the Spruce Grove Civic Centre, a significant community development, is set to include two arenas, a library, a theater, gallery and studio spaces, showcasing the city's investment in infrastructure and community amenities.⁴

These projects, alongside a range of new residential developments, highlight Spruce Grove's growth trajectory. Furthermore, testimonials from local business owners underscore the city's advantages, including its central location, competitive real estate prices, comprehensive retail and educational facilities, and supportive community atmosphere. These attributes make Spruce Grove an attractive destination for businesses and residents alike, poised for continued growth and prosperity.

2.1.1. Demographics

Population Growth

Spruce Grove's population growth has been steady, and above the provincial average. In 2022, the population of the City estimated at 40,842, making it the 12th highest in the province. The population increased by 3.06% compared to the previous year and saw an overall increase of

³ <https://www.investsprucegrove.ca/business-climate/new-development>

⁴ <https://majorprojects.alberta.ca/details/Spruce-Grove-Metro-Ballpark/4356>

11.8% over the last five years.⁵ During the same five-year period (2017-2022), Alberta's population at a whole grew by only 5.9%.⁶

Labour Force

In 2021, 20,595 people were active in the labour force, an increase of 6.71% in the preceding five years. Spruce Grove's labour force has grown at a faster rate than Alberta, which saw an increase of 3.6% during the same period.⁷ At the same time, Spruce Grove's unemployment was at 10%, an increase of 28.2% during the same period;⁸ both of these figures are higher than the provincial average, where 2021 unemployment sat at 7.8% and saw a 6.4% decrease over the preceding five years.⁹

Median Family Income

Spruce Grove had a median family income of \$120,000 in 2020. This figure indicates a slight year-over-year increase of 0.67% and a 3.02% increase from 2016-2020.¹⁰ Annual inflation per Consumer Price Index in Canada during the same period averaged around 1.7% according to Stats Can,¹¹ indicating that family income growth is about 1% lower than inflation. Despite this decrease in family economic power when inflation is taken into account, Spruce Grove remained in the top sixth of municipalities in Alberta by median family income in 2020; the median of municipalities in the province sits at \$99,000.¹²

2.1.2. Retail and Office Market Analysis

Spruce Grove has emerged as a vital regional hub in Alberta, strategically located within the Greater Edmonton Region, and serving a large trade area population. Its advantageous position is bolstered by exceptional access to major transportation routes, competitive property taxes, and city-wide fibre optic connectivity, making it an attractive destination for businesses and residents alike.¹³

⁵ <https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/spruce-grove/population/#/?from=2018&to=2022>

⁶ [Alberta Economic Dashboard | Population \(quarterly\)](#)

⁷ [Alberta Economic Dashboard | Employment](#)

⁸ <https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/spruce-grove/#/>

⁹ [Alberta Economic Dashboard | Unemployment rate](#)

¹⁰ <https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/spruce-grove/median-family-income/#/?from=2016&to=2020>

¹¹ [Consumer Price Index Data Visualization Tool \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)

¹² Note: \$99,000 is not the median income across Alberta, but the median of municipal medians of family income. [Spruce Grove - Median Family Income \(alberta.ca\)](#)

¹³ <https://www.investsprucegrove.ca/>

Regional Consumer Retail Market Penetration

Spruce Grove's retail trade area effectively captures a regional market, drawing customers from beyond its primary and secondary trade areas, including communities like Whitecourt, Edson, and Hinton. Spruce Grove contains multiple business areas, including the City Centre, the tri-leisure/business park area, and the area south of the highway. The City Centre area is the hub for individual consumer retail and is also the area localized to the City Centre Business Association. Retail and commercial businesses outside of this area may not have access to the same sorts of supports.

Furthermore, the individual consumer trade area is characterized by a younger, family-oriented demographic with higher average household incomes compared to Edmonton. This demographic profile supports a vibrant retail environment.¹⁴

Retail and Office Market Growth

The individual consumer retail market in Spruce Grove, valued at \$2.4 billion, shows growth potential in sectors like Grocery, Automotive/RV, and Restaurants.¹⁵ The evolving retail inventory focuses not just on quantity but on the mix of retail offerings.

There is a total office inventory of around 416,000 square feet, with a higher-than-average vacancy rate partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This suggests a gradual recovery and absorption of new space. The forecast indicates a demand for approximately 117,000 square feet of new office space by 2031.¹⁶ This demand aligns with historic growth patterns and supports development in various community nodes.

Opportunities for New Retailers

There are market gaps that new retailers, especially in Home Furnishings, Fashion, Full Service Restaurants, and Toys & Hobbies, could fill, capitalizing on the demographic profile and population growth.¹⁷

¹⁴ FMB architecture interior design planning, "Retail & Office Market Analysis City of Spruce Grove", March 2022, The City of Spruce Grove. [Spruce Grove Retail-Office Market Analysis 2022 FINAL 04-12-2022 web.pdf \(investsprucegrove.ca\)](#)

¹⁵ [Spruce Grove Retail-Office Market Analysis 2022 FINAL 04-12-2022 web.pdf \(investsprucegrove.ca\)](#)

¹⁶ [Spruce Grove Retail-Office Market Analysis 2022 FINAL 04-12-2022 web.pdf \(investsprucegrove.ca\)](#)

¹⁷ [Spruce Grove Retail-Office Market Analysis 2022 FINAL 04-12-2022 web.pdf \(investsprucegrove.ca\)](#)

The city is expected to grow its retail space by an additional 1.1 million square feet over the next decade, with developments like Easton and Creekside Commons poised to capitalize on this demand.¹⁸

Furthermore, many of the companies interviewed commented that the rent in Spruce Grove was affordable and offered flexibility in term length.¹⁹

2.1.3. Major Projects

In 2022, Spruce Grove experienced significant growth in major capital projects. The total value of these projects reached approximately \$2.1 billion, marking Spruce Grove as the 18th highest in the province in this regard. This value represents a substantial year-over-year increase of 63.7% and a remarkable increase of 1,210% over the past five years. Such growth positions Spruce Grove as the 16th fastest growing municipality in Alberta.²⁰ In 2022, there were 727 permits issued with a value of \$180.4 million, both representing an 18% reduction from the previous year.

2.1.4. Key Industries in Spruce Grove

Spruce Grove boasts a diverse industrial landscape (table 1), highlighted by significant sectors such as Construction with 161 companies, Health Care and Social Services hosting 110, and a vibrant Retail sector divided into Hobby, Media, General Merchandise (114 companies), and Home, Food, Automobiles, Personal Care (99 companies). Other Services including Repair, Personal Care, and more contribute with 125 companies, illustrating the city's comprehensive service offerings. Additionally, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services are well-represented with 90 companies, showcasing Spruce Grove's innovation and technical expertise.

¹⁸ [Spruce Grove Retail-Office Market Analysis 2022 FINAL 04-12-2022 web.pdf \(investsprucegrove.ca\)](#)

¹⁹ See Appendix B.

²⁰ <https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/spruce-grove/major-projects/#/?from=2018&to=2022>

Table 1. Number of Companies in Industries

Number of Companies in Industries²¹	TOTAL
Accommodation and Food Services	93
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	31
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	12
Arts, Sports, Entertainment, and Recreation	28
Banking, Finance and Insurance	51
Construction	161
Education	42
Health Care and Social Services	110
Holding Companies and Managing Offices	2
Information	16
Manufacturing - Chemical, Fuel, Paper, Plastic, Wood	6
Manufacturing - Electronics, Furniture, Machinery, Metal, Transportation, Misc.	25
Manufacturing - Processed Food, Textiles, Clothing	3
Mineral, Oil and Gas Extraction	6
Other Services - Repair, Personal Care, Laundry, Religious, etc.	125
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	90
Public Administration	11
Real Estate and Rentals	40
Retail: Hobby, Media, General Merchandise	114
Retail: Home, Food, Automobiles, Personal Care	99
Transportation and Warehousing: Couriers and Messengers, Warehousing and Storage	3
Transportation and Warehousing: Private and Public Transportation, Oil and Gas Pipelines, Sightseeing	29
Unclassified	16
Wholesalers	50

²¹ Numbers based on business directory provided by the City of Spruce Grove to our research team.

With the limited number of businesses, an industry-cluster approach may not be the most effective strategy due to the lack of critical mass needed for such ecosystems to effect synergies and thrive. Instead, support mechanisms should be oriented towards general business assistance that benefits a wider range of enterprises. This includes providing broad-based services that address common challenges faced by most businesses, such as financial management, marketing, operational efficiency, and IT, to foster a supportive environment conducive to growth and sustainability for all, rather than focusing narrowly on cluster development.

Number of Businesses

The number of businesses in Spruce Grove showed a decrease in 2022. The total number of businesses recorded was 1,056, a decline of 8.17% from 1,150 in 2021.²² This trend was not unique to Spruce Grove as Statistics Canada's report on business openings and closures across Canada for December 2022 highlighted a widespread decrease in the number of active businesses across provinces and industries, marking a significant period of successive declines for the first time since data became accessible. The professional, scientific, and technical services sector, followed by construction and other services, led this decline. Factors contributing to this downturn included rising policy interest rates, global price increases due to geopolitical events, and inflationary pressures, which collectively impacted businesses' operations and expectations.²³

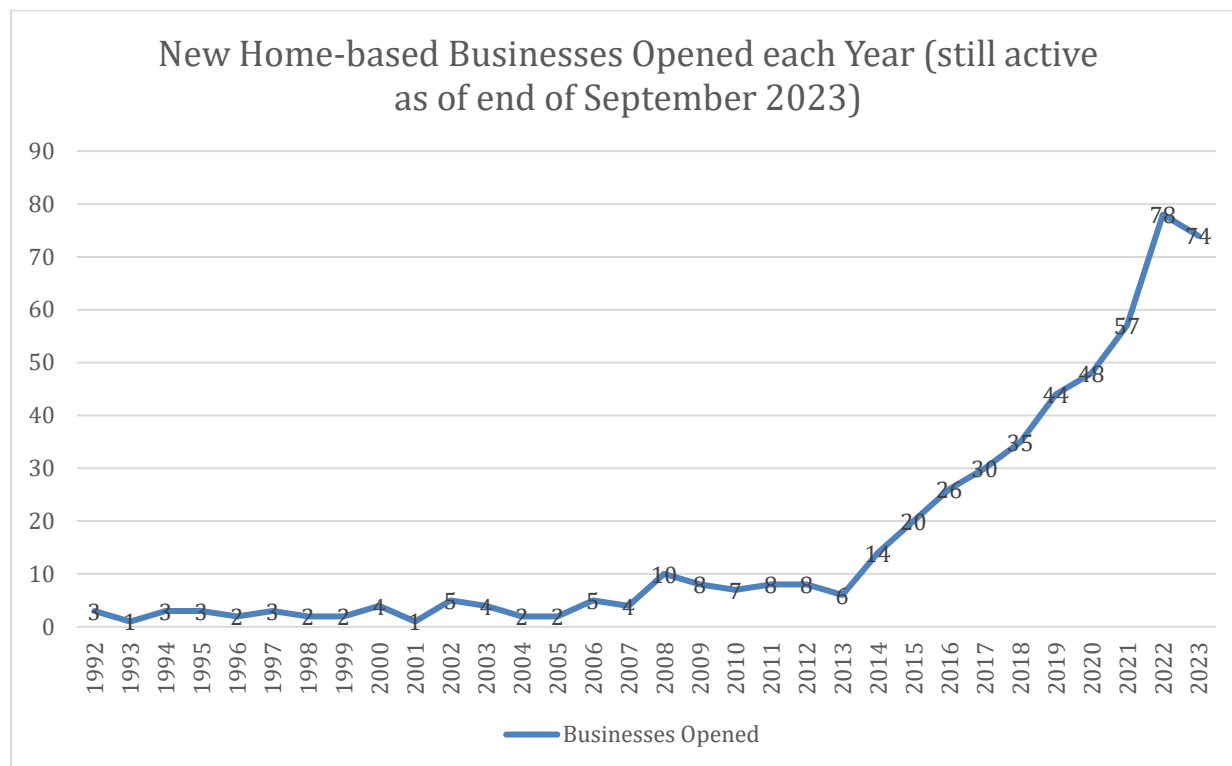
2.1.5. Home-based Businesses

There are as many home-based businesses active in Spruce Grove as brick-and-mortar business; any business initiative from the city would benefit from considering some of the particulars of this market. About 500 of 1200 active businesses in Spruce Grove are home-based, many of these being non-retail/commercial businesses that do not make use of a commercial office or storefront. The majority of currently active home-based businesses opened in the last few years (figure 1).

²²<https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/spruce-grove/number-of-businesses/#/?from=2018&to=2022>

²³ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230328/dq230328c-eng.htm>

Figure 1. Chart based on analysis of the business directory provided by the city of Spruce Grove.²⁴



CEBA Repayment Impact

The impact of the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) repayment deadline on businesses in Spruce Grove is likely consistent for businesses across Canada. Many businesses accessed the CEBA loan, with a significant portion yet to start repaying at the deadlines (December 2023 or January 2024). For example, a survey conducted by the Surrey Board of Trade indicated that 60% of its members who received a CEBA loan experienced challenges in paying it back.²⁵ Nearly 900,000 businesses received CEBA loans across Canada during the pandemic.

The majority of those who have repaid their loans did so by utilizing existing cash resources, lines of credit, or employing cost-saving measures, and only a few sought additional loan refinancing through financial institutions.²⁶ The smallest businesses, especially those with 0-4 employees, were the most likely to miss the repayment deadline. This situation underscores the recent

²⁴ Note: this same business directory was used to create a contact list for the primary research seen in Appendix B. Based on these interviews, it appears that businesses who moved locations were required to restart the business license/registration process. As a result, the numbers above may include a small number of businesses that actually had an earlier start date.

²⁵<https://www.peacearchnews.com/local-news/ceba-loans-repayments-affecting-surrey-businesses-survey-indicates-7297283>

²⁶ <https://www.cfib-fcei.ca/en/research-economic-analysis/small-business-debt-ceba-fall-update>

financial strain on small-and-medium-sized businesses, which includes most home-based businesses, further exacerbated by high interest rates, inflation, and increased labor costs.²⁷

2.1.6. *Summary, Key Points*

1. Strong Growth and Development Indicators

Spruce Grove has experienced significant growth, with a 44% population increase from 2011 to 2021, showcasing a thriving community poised for continued expansion. It is crucial to meet the continual need for diverse housing options and infrastructure development to continue attracting a broad workforce and supporting industrial growth. This population surge, alongside other factors, plays a crucial role in driving economic development, with projections suggesting a near doubling by 2059. Employment trends also reflect the city's economic vitality, demonstrating resilience, with an expected 10% growth by 2028.²⁸

2. Leveraging Economic Foundations for Future Growth

Spruce Grove's strategic economic initiatives, underpinned by a business-first approach and robust infrastructure, including a fibre optic network, provide a fertile ground for investment and business expansion. The city's vibrant retail sector and the presence of over 1,269 businesses indicate a thriving economy ready to leverage existing strengths for broader opportunities.²⁹ Targeted development in key sectors such as agri-food, energy, manufacturing, and logistics, aligned with regional strategies, further amplifies its competitive edge, positioning Spruce Grove for sustained economic growth. While there's a focus on attracting new businesses, ensuring the retention and expansion of existing businesses is equally if not more important.

3. Industrial Development and Future Potential

Reimagining Spruce Grove's industrial land use can unlock immense economic potential. The current underutilization of these lands presents a major opportunity to innovate and repurpose them for higher efficiency and greater output. By viewing these spaces through a new lens—focusing on intensification and smarter use—we can anticipate and mitigate future land shortages for employment. This proactive approach not only paves the way for sector growth but also catalyzes broader economic development, making Spruce Grove a model for sustainable industrial innovation.

²⁷<https://retail-insider.com/retail-insider/2023/08/canadian-business-associations-rally-to-extend-ceba-repayment-deadline-amid-looming-crisis-interviews/>

²⁸ The City of Spruce Grove, "Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2028"

²⁹ The City of Spruce Grove, "Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2028"

Conclusion

Spruce Grove's robust economy, marked by strong growth and strategic initiatives, is poised for sustainable development. Emphasizing diversification, infrastructure, and sectoral growth, the city tackles challenges head-on, enhancing quality of life and amenities. Focusing on expanding its tourism economy, fostering startups, and revitalizing the City Centre, Spruce Grove's strategic approach ensures a thriving, dynamic future. With a solid foundation and forward-thinking strategies, its economic outlook is highly positive, signaling continued success and expansion across various sectors.

2.2. Local Business Ecosystem Engagement

2.2.1. The Local Landscape

There are a number of organizations in the Tri-Region involved in the business ecosystem. This includes municipal offices and committees, business associations, non-profit organizations, and for-profit stakeholders. In this section, we overview a few of these key players to help understand the business ecosystem landscape.

Table 2. Local Entities

ORGANIZATION	PURPOSE/FOCUS	SYSTEM	LOCAL REGION
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE	Economic advice, business representation to government	Municipal advisory committee	Spruce Grove
CITY CENTRE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION	Advocacy and support for local businesses	Non-profit business association	Spruce Grove City Centre
GREATER PARKLAND REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE	Advocacy and support for local businesses	Chamber of commerce	Parkland County
EDMONTON REGIONAL INNOVATION NETWORK	Innovation services, support, funding, programs	Regional innovation network (Alberta Innovates)	Greater Edmonton Area
COMMUNITY FUTURES (CAPITAL REGION)	Programming, services for business, particularly in regional communities	Non-profit, part of wider AB and Canadian network	Greater Edmonton Area
ALBERTA WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS	Incubator, serving women entrepreneurs	Non-profit virtual incubator	Alberta

Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC)

The EDAC of Spruce Grove advises the city, particularly the economic development office; committee members include established entrepreneurs in the region and provide a valuable perspective to government.³⁰ It is worth keeping in mind that, because EDAC includes both established business owners and city councillors, as well as members of the public, they are well-positioned to provide support to business solutions in Spruce Grove. EDAC offers a useful existing channel for communication between business and the city, however it is worth keeping in mind that as an organ of city governance the committee will inevitably be associated with the broader governing structure, and other business stakeholders should be consulted and drawn upon. When we met with EDAC in January 2024, multiple members expressed interest in being business mentors, and were already involved in informal mentorships.³¹

³⁰ [Economic Development Advisory Committee - City of Spruce Grove](#)

³¹ See Appendix C.

City Centre Business Association (CCBA)

The CCBA serves the City Centre of Spruce Grove, who's area includes over 170 active businesses. They have worked with the City of Spruce Grove on an Area Development Plan, which has redeveloped Columbus Park and some of the main streets of the City Centre area.³² They also organize events, such as a summer market series and business anniversary celebrations. We spoke with them and were able to ask many of the business owners on the board the survey questions from our primary questionnaire.³³ Some of the businesses we surveyed by phone were in the City Centre area, and more still were aware of it but were located outside.³⁴

The Greater Parkland Regional Chamber of Commerce (GPRCC)

The GPRCC was created in 2020 as an amalgamation of the formerly separate chambers of Spruce Grove, Stony Plain, and Wabamun.³⁵ This non-profit advocates for business interests in the region. They make use of the Alberta Chambers of Commerce's Chamber Platform, including their online marketplace called Chamber Market. They also offer professional development sessions and networking events. Based on our survey of Spruce Grove businesses,³⁶ those who were or had been members generally reported not having made much use of the programs provided by the chamber that are mentioned above.

Community Futures (Tri-Region, Leduc, Brazeau County)

Community Futures Capital Region (CFCR)³⁷ is one of 27 local offices of Community Futures Alberta, a network of non-profits connected to the national Community Futures Network of Canada. Community Futures Alberta is funded through PrairiesCan. CFRC serves a wide region of which Spruce Grove is only a small part. They provide loans for startups, as well as programming, including educational 'business 101' such as how to build business plans and how to build financial statements. Most of their clientele are specifically coming to them for their loan programs, as they form stronger client-relationships compared to bank business loans. For example, CFRC allows clients to have multiple loans at any time.

CFCR has programs targeting members of underserved business-owning demographics, such as women and young people. They have offered some programs which serve youth entrepreneurs

³² [Area Redevelopment Plan – Spruce Grove City Centre Business Association; https://connect.sprucegrove.org/city-centre-area-redevelopment-plan;](https://connect.sprucegrove.org/city-centre-area-redevelopment-plan) [https://www.sprucegrove.org/media/4056/city-centre-area-redevelopment-plan.pdf;](https://www.sprucegrove.org/media/4056/city-centre-area-redevelopment-plan.pdf) <https://www.sprucegrove.org/media/5347/business-improvement-area-tax-bylaw.pdf>

³³ See Appendix C.

³⁴ See Appendix B.

³⁵ <https://greaterparklandab.chambermarket.ca/about>

³⁶ See Appendix B.

³⁷ [Get In Touch | Contact Details For Community Futures Capital Region | Community Futures Capital Region \(albertacf.com\)](https://albertacf.com)

since 2014. These are geared towards providing business essentials to high school students, however a more recent initiative is working with youth at a Junior High level.³⁸ They offer some networking events workshops, bootcamps, a demand-based one-on-one advisory service. They connect members to resources, like Business Development Bank of Canada. They serve very diverse clients in both home-based businesses as well as long standing companies in a variety of industries. In our interview with them, CFGR mentioned that they feel there is a gap in the realm of education in business and mentorship activity. There could be more room for connections to people and experts.

Edmonton Regional Innovation Network (ERIN)

ERIN is “a coalition of organisations in the Edmonton region that support innovation startups and enterprises.”³⁹ They are part of a wider initiative by Alberta Innovates to support collaboration and growth of Alberta companies and promote conversation and cooperation between stakeholders and organizations.⁴⁰ ERIN is the network (RIN) that includes the Tri-Region, and may be a valuable resource when considering strategic direction for the business landscape in Spruce Grove. Although they have not yet been very active in the Tri-Region, their 2022-2025 Strategic Plan indicates a desire to work with local communities.⁴¹ At the very least, they have a community initiatives program, with a public-facing application.⁴² Our interview with the Calgary RIN, who have recently helped pilot a locally-run incubator in Cochrane, suggested that ERIN might be interested in a parallel initiative.⁴³

Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (AWE)

AWE is a non-profit organization that provides services, programs, and support to women-owned businesses across the province of Alberta. They are discussed in further detail in section 3.1.3.

2.2.2. Summary

Many of the stakeholders and organizations in the local business landscape offer supports, programs, and avenues for communication between municipal entities and business owners, among other government and organizational stakeholders. However, when compared to other communities in Alberta of similar size and economic situations, there are potential gaps in the

³⁸ [YETI | Community Futures Capital Region \(albertacf.com\)](https://www.albertacf.com/yeti/)

³⁹ [Edmonton Regional Innovation Network \(edmontonrin.ca\)](https://edmontonrin.ca/)

⁴⁰ [Regional Innovation Networks - Alberta Innovates](#)

⁴¹ [ERIN StrategicPlan_V1.pdf \(squarespace.com\)](#), p. 9.

⁴² [Community Initiatives — Edmonton Regional Innovation Network \(edmontonrin.ca\)](https://edmontonrin.ca/community-initiatives/)

⁴³ Appendix A.

landscape for further supports. For example, although there are programs offered and business networks available, few of these have managed to make wholistic impressions on the local business community or generate meaningful interest in programs even from certain market sectors or demographics. The next section will discuss some examples of incubator frameworks in order to offer some potential models and comparison points for Spruce Grove's situation.

Based on our survey of Spruce Grove business owners, it seems that there may be a gap in awareness about regional programs. While some were aware, most were not, and the use of outside services is quite limited and low. Many of those surveyed were Chamber members; although there were also some complaints about the high cost to join and lack of services from Chamber, however these complains are not uncommon for local chambers.⁴⁴

Although some businesses surveyed were part of the CCBA, that association is restricted to the City Centre BIA, and there seems to be no equivalent association for the business park or other regions.

⁴⁴ See Appendix A.

3. Incubator Frameworks and Ecosystem Scan

There have been many initiatives which have aimed to create structures, spaces, and programs to support entrepreneurship and business growth. In the contemporary landscape, the concepts of the business incubator and the business accelerator have become dominant frameworks for such initiatives. The incubator concept tends to be non-competitive and longer term, helping businesses to develop in a wholistic way with a focus on innovation, while accelerators tend to be focussed on scaling and growth for startups, operating in a shorter timeframe.⁴⁵ There is a varied spectrum of models for both, and other similar models with overlapping functionality, operating in the private and public sectors. In the next sections we outline some common features of these programs before discussing different approaches through the use of examples from the Alberta region.

Accelerators

Business accelerators are designed to support startups by providing resources to enhance performance and increase the likelihood of success. They typically offer a range of services, including mentoring, networking opportunities, and sometimes funding. They tend to offer a relatively rapid and immersive experiential learning in a limited timeframe (3-6 months), and often take on a cyclical, cohort-based structure.⁴⁶ The success of these programs depends on various factors, including the quality of the mentoring provided, the strength of the network they can offer, and the specific needs of the startups they serve.

Studies have shown that accelerators can have a positive effect on startup development, including accelerating the time to reach key milestones like venture capital funding, acquisition, and customer traction.⁴⁷ However, this effect is not universal and tends to be stronger in top-tier programs. Some accelerators may not significantly impact startup development and can even be harmful in some cases, for example where companies become reliant on the subsidized services and material support offered, or where animosity builds towards city/larger organizational interference in business.

Incubators

Incubator structures have different strengths and weaknesses which lead them to have varied circumstances in which to be deployed. Variables include the physical facility, management structure, scale, infrastructure, and programming.

⁴⁵ [Accelerating growth: Startup accelerator programs in the United States | Brookings](#); Juanita Gonzalez-Uribe, Michael Leatherbee, “The Effects of Business Accelerators on Venture Performance: Evidence from Start-Up Chile,” *The Review of Financial Studies*, Volume 31, Issue 4, April 2018, Pages 1566–1603.

⁴⁶ [Accelerating growth: Startup accelerator programs in the United States | Brookings](#).

⁴⁷ [Oxford Academic - Effects of Business Accelerators on Venture Performance: Evidence from Start-Up Chile](#)

Incubators vary in the way they deliver their services, in their organizational structure and in the types of clients they serve. Incubators frequently help entrepreneurs prepare plans and proposals, assist them in making contacts to find financing, and assist participants to obtain purchasing discounts through volume buys. However, most incubators themselves are not investors. Generally, assistance provided is in the form of services and indirect supports. Highly effective incubators have specific goals, including diversifying rural economies, providing employment and transferring technology from universities and major corporations. Incubator clients are at the forefront of developing new and innovative technologies, creating products and services that improve the quality of lives in communities around the world.

The more successful incubators and accelerators usually provide the following services.⁴⁸ The hierarchy reflects their relative importance to a startup's immediate needs and long-term success.

A) Mentorship, networking and learning opportunities

One significant benefit incubators can provide is the opportunity to meet and collaborate with other like-minded entrepreneurs. This occurs organically, as business-owners meet at events and at coworking spaces, and also through networking and deliberate social programming. Peer-learning is important; it can be valuable to speak to and hear about others going through similar experiences and journeys. Mentorship by more established business owners and stakeholders, either through extended one-on-one programs or lunch-and-learn events and keynote talks, can help newer business-owners get a better grasp of their situation and give them the opportunity to ask questions and learn skills and ideas that are particular to their situations.

B) Access to financial resources

Incubators may also offer access to venture capital (usually a combination of private funds and outside capital invested by business angels), venture capitalists or local institutions and companies. In general, incubators target early stage, sometimes pre-seed money and start-ups to try to bring them to the next financing round. A Spruce Grove incubator could help attract Alberta based capital that are willing to invest in Spruce Grove based companies.

C) Affordable leases

Business incubators often provide flexible, affordable, and smaller office leases, usually at or below market rates and options to grow into the rented space. It can reduce the operating costs for the new business during its critical early stages.

D) Entrepreneurial start-up support, education, technical support, and training services

Entrepreneurs usually lack organizational, management and legal skills. Incubators guide entrepreneurs through the necessary steps that a newly founded company must take. They provide professional services such as accounting, legal advice for incorporation and taxation issues, and formulating ownership and employee option plan structures. In addition, incubators

⁴⁸ The list below is a synthesis of our analysis with that of: Humaira Irshad, "Business Incubation in Canada: Literature Review & List of Business Incubators in Alberta and Canada." Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development: Rural Development Division. June 2014.

provide valuable management coaching support, helping entrepreneurs develop and apply leadership and management skills.

E) Access to physical resources

A key feature of most incubators is the provision of common logistical support items. Incubators offer office space, meeting rooms, furniture, utilities, bookkeeping, desktop publishing, printing, telephone system, mailbox, a computer network, 24-hour security and other amenities to do with physical infrastructure and real estate. Some of the support services can be subcontracted to other local entrepreneurs who specialize in that industry.

F) Working with Existing Entities

Many of the successful case studies below emphasize the importance of working with local entities. These almost always include the local Chamber of Commerce, and often include broader programs and networks such as SmartStart and Community Futures.

The following examples from the Alberta region show different models for incubators. Some of them (Leduc, St. Albert, Airdrie, Seed) are localized in similar-sized cities to Spruce Grove – these are useful case studies when considering if and how to set up an incubator in Spruce Grove. Others (YYM, Community Futures, AWE) serve broader regions, some of which might include Spruce Grove and may even be useful partners, whether introducing a new incubator or working with existing ones to expand programming in the local region.

Table 3. Alberta Incubators

INCUBATOR	YEARS IN OPERATION	FOCUS	SYSTEM	COWORKING / VIRTUAL	SMART START	LOCAL REGION
LIGHT HOUSE	5	Coworking space	For-profit	Coworking	Yes	Leduc
NORTHERN ALBERTA BUSINESS INCUBATOR	35	Mixed use	Independent Non-profit, originally city-run	Coworking	No	St. Albert
AIRDRIE ENTREPRENEUR COMMON	29	Programming	City-run non-profit	Virtual	Yes (created it)	Airdrie
ALBERTA WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS	28	Women entrepreneurs	Independent non-profit	Virtual	No	Alberta
SEED	No Longer In Operation	Coworking space, programming	City-run non-profit	Coworking	Unsure	Beaumont
INNOVATE COCHRANE	3	Accelerator, somewhat established businesses	City run non-profit	Coworking	Yes	Cochrane

3.1. Coworking Incubators

Various Forms of Coworking Incubators

Coworking incubators come in various forms, catering to different industry sectors such as tech startups, creative arts, social enterprises, and biotech firms, among others. These incubators may offer specialized equipment, workshops, and mentorship tailored to their target industry's needs. Additionally, some focus on social impact, supporting businesses aiming to address social, environmental, or cultural challenges. The diversity in coworking incubators reflects the broad spectrum of entrepreneurial endeavors, providing a supportive ecosystem tailored to specific industry requirements and community goals.

Coworking Business Models

Coworking incubators adopt varied business models to sustain their operations and support their members. Some operate on membership fees, offering different tiers of access to their space and services. Others may take equity stakes in resident startups, aligning the incubator's success with that of its companies. Additionally, sponsorship or partnerships with larger corporations, government grants, and service-for-fee models contribute to their financial sustainability. These diverse models reflect the need to balance community support and collaboration with the financial realities of running an incubator.

Typical Offering

A general coworking incubator typically offers a suite of resources essential for startup development. These resources often include shared office spaces conducive to collaboration, high-speed internet, access to meeting and conference rooms, and basic office amenities. Overhead costs include leasing of the space (vary depending on size and location), utilities like power and water (often a few thousand dollars annually depending on size). Renovations can vary widely, possibly tens of thousands, based on initial space condition. Equipment investments might range from \$5,000 to \$50,000. Employee salaries depend on roles and the level of programming provided to tenants. IT needs could be \$2,000 to \$10,000, marketing around \$1,000 to \$10,000, and fundraising efforts might require \$5,000 to \$20,000.

Success is Not Guaranteed

Coworking incubators often face risks such as financial instability, insufficient long-term funding, and challenges in maintaining a strong network of mentors and resources. Additionally, the competitive landscape can make it difficult to attract and retain high-potential startups. Many fail due to a lack of clear differentiation, inadequate support services, or the inability to create a sustainable business model that balances the needs of startups with operational costs. These factors underscore the importance of strategic planning, robust funding, and continuous adaptation to the evolving needs of startups for incubator success.

For a coworking incubator to truly thrive and sustain its support for startups, securing long-term funding of at least 10 years is crucial. This stability allows for strategic planning, development of comprehensive support services, and the cultivation of a strong startup community. Shorter funding periods can lead to operational challenges, making it difficult to maintain consistent service levels, invest in necessary resources, or plan for future growth, ultimately impacting the incubator's ability to support its startups effectively. In addition, a strong governance model allied to active participation of local business leaders is a critical success factor.

3.1.1. Alberta Coworking Incubator Analysis

In the following section of our report, we'll delve into an analysis of coworking incubators located throughout Alberta. This examination aims to understand the varied models these incubators employ, the range of services they offer to startups, and their impact on the local entrepreneurial ecosystem. By comparing their strategies, successes, and challenges, we aim to glean insights that could inform best practices and highlight opportunities for Spruce Groves initiatives.

The Light House Cowork (Leduc)

Organizational Structure: The Light House is a for-profit coworking space in Leduc which offers access to a variety of workspaces. They have operated for five years, and currently have seventeen businesses renting private office space, as well as more virtual members. They were close to breaking even in early 2024, and aim to be ramping up to earn a profit in the near future.

Offerings, Target Market, Engagement: They organize monthly lunch-and-learns.⁴⁹ Their membership fees for private offices range from \$550 to \$1100 per month based on size, while their open coworking space lounge ranges from \$80-190 per month depending on usage by clients. They offer daily access for about \$20 per day to this coworking space. They also have a few dozen virtual mailbox members who pay \$35 per month. They've benefitted from corporate sponsors.⁵⁰ The Light House partners with SMARTStart in the local region to offer incubator-style mentorship for new businesses; eleven businesses graduated their eight-month program last year.⁵¹

Takeaways: The Light House emphasize the importance of one-on-one mentorship programs. SmartStart operates in various communities around Alberta, but currently not in Tri-Region; there is currently some interest in a partnership with Spruce Grove to bring their existing, successful programs to the region. The Light House told us that coworking success is based on connections;

⁴⁹ [The Light House Cowork \(leduccowork.ca\)](https://leduccowork.ca)

⁵⁰ See appendix A.

⁵¹ [Leduc-Wetaskiwin - SMARTstart Your Business](#)

having in-person shared workspaces is vital for networking, particularly for home-based businesses.

Northern Alberta Business Incubator (NABI) (St. Albert)

Organizational Structure: NABI⁵² is a St. Albert-based non-profit mixed-use incubator started in 1989, with a mandate to support entrepreneurship and help local businesses grow and scale. They were started by the City of St. Albert and were closely associated with the municipality for almost three decades. NABI stopped receiving funding from St. Albert in 2018, and has since been operating primarily through membership revenue / rent; they are self-sustaining but have thin margins. They own the building in which they are currently operating out of, which was partially funded by the City of St. Albert and the province of Alberta. They have about 90 member companies currently, of which about half are “in-residence” with a physical office, and the other half are virtual members.⁵³ They currently have two full-time, on-site staff, although they are hoping to expand their roster.

Offerings, Target Market, Engagement: There are a limited number of tech companies at NABI, with a greater number of service companies, including professional services and health/wellness. Membership fees range from \$50 to \$3000 per month, with one of the primary factors being square footage.⁵⁴ Current members largely make use of the affordable office space, however NABI wants to change the mindset from “cheap rent” to more service and growth offerings. This partly comes from a desire not to compete with commercial real estate. NABI has therefore recently been moving towards providing more program offerings, rethinking their target market so as to attract service companies that want to grow and scale in more of an accelerator fashion.⁵⁵

Takeaways: NABI has stopped offering networking events partly due to building layout and staff turnover. There had also been a lack of attendance by members, and these sorts of events only work in the evenings. Of note, 56% of their members are women owners. In our interview with NABI, they recommended targeting home-based businesses to help them grow. They suggest including amenities that would help accommodate the needs of home-based entrepreneurs who might need to balance domestic and work lives; for example, coffee shop, bakery, and babysitting/daycare services.

⁵² [Home » NABI](#)

⁵³ See Appendix A.

⁵⁴ For more information on their membership structure, see: [Offerings » NABI](#)

⁵⁵ See Appendix A.

Innovate Cochrane

Organizational Structure: Innovate Cochrane is a city-run non-profit accelerator founded in 2021. They moved into a dedicated building in the fall of 2023. The station (their location) is one-third visitor centre with some town staff where, for example, people can buy train tickets. There is a 200 square foot space for the accelerator, which can house twelve companies. Innovate Cochrane focuses on companies that already have a reasonable market, have a minimum viable product, and are shown to be scalable.

Role of the Calgary Innovation Coalition: Innovate Cochrane being piloted by the Calgary Innovation Coalition (CIC), one of eight Regional Innovation Networks funded by and partnered with Alberta Innovates.⁵⁶ CIC themselves has over one-hundred member-organizations. Their regional innovation network includes the surrounding areas, many of which they didn't have strong ties with previously. Part of their strategy is to increase engagement in those areas. The CIC found that local rural businesses feel more comfortable dealing with local experts rather than city experts; many didn't know that Platform Calgary existed nor understood the support services that were accessible to them, despite being within the supported area. CIC sees supporting local, regional incubators as a way of making rural businesses feel more comfortable participating in programs. Their plan is to expand this pilot program into other centres around Calgary.

Offerings, Target Market, Engagement: Innovate Cochrane charges \$1,000 for companies to be involved for a one-year program, including space, internet, etc. Aside from the office space, Innovate Cochrane offers business programming. This takes the form of events, for example the monthly innovator series, Jade Alberts' "founders coffee," innovation showcases with local companies, and engagement with high school students. Platform Calgary⁵⁷ is helping them with programming, including some events as well as their early-stage customer 101 program, called Discover. They also offer SMARTStart programming. Unlike some of the others on this list, Innovation Cochrane focusses on somewhat-established companies that are already past the point of ideation.

Takeaways: They are seeking federal funding through PrairiesCan. The mayor wants them to be sustainable, however our contact at Innovate Cochrane thinks this is likely not going to happen.⁵⁸ They are relatively new, and very new to having their own space, so it is worth keeping in mind that their model is not necessarily tried-and-true or proven to be sustainable at this time. The Edmonton Regional Innovation Network (ERIC) ERIN is also looking to support this type of model; they are the equivalent organization operating in the Tri-Region.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ [Regional Innovation Networks - Alberta Innovates](#)

⁵⁷ [Platform Calgary | Calgary's Home for Innovators](#)

⁵⁸ See Appendix A.

⁵⁹ [Edmonton Regional Innovation Network \(edmontonrin.ca\)](#)

Seed: Coworking and Flexible Office Space (Beaumont)

Organizational Structure: Seed was launched by the city of Beaumont in 2019. This coworking space with various incubator features was run by Beaumont Economic Development until it became defunct during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Offerings, Target Market, Engagement: Despite trying to appeal to all businesses, and particularly the home-business market, Seed was only able to attract six members.⁶⁰ It boasted affordable office space with 24/7 access, good internet, workshop and networking programs, and various on-site amenities.⁶¹

Takeaways: This incubator failed due to lack of sustainability of programming, according to a NABI interview. They only had six members, mainly from the local Chamber of Commerce, a result of a flaw in the design of the incubator. This is in spite of the fact that there were over 1200 businesses in operation in Beaumont at the opening, including many home-based businesses.⁶² The number of businesses in Beaumont is comparable to Spruce Grove and may be an indicator that the size of the business community is insufficient for a coworking incubator.

3.2. Virtual Incubator / Accelerators

Virtual Incubator / Accelerators

A virtual incubator operates online, offering startups geographical flexibility and digital access to mentorship, resources, and networking opportunities. Without the need for a physical presence, it caters to entrepreneurs everywhere, leveraging technology to provide workshops, webinars, and one-on-one support sessions. This model is particularly advantageous for businesses operating in the digital domain or for founders seeking flexibility. It underscores the evolving nature of business support systems in the digital age, providing a cost-effective, inclusive solution for startup development and growth. Virtual incubators generally require a lower budget and less maintenance, although the lack of a physical space and interaction mean that certain types of activities and services are restricted.

Hybrid Approach

A virtual incubator, enhanced by a hybrid approach, combines online accessibility with the strategic use of physical spaces for networking and meetings. This model offers entrepreneurs flexibility and digital resources, such as mentorship and webinars, alongside opportunities for in-

⁶⁰ See Appendix A (NABI interview).

⁶¹ [Businesses in Beaumont have a new hub to operate from | La Nouvelle Beaumont News \(thebeaumontnews.ca\)](#)

⁶² [Beaumont launching first local business incubator | La Nouvelle Beaumont News \(thebeaumontnews.ca\)](#)

person connections through existing venues. It provides a comprehensive support system, accommodating the digital and personal interaction needs of startups, making it a versatile option for fostering business growth in today's dynamic entrepreneurial landscape. The Airdrie incubator is an example of a virtual incubator with a hybrid approach. It is also crucial with virtual incubators to promote and build awareness, and to try to make services and programming as accessible as possible.⁶³ The networking afforded by both in-person and online meetings and workshops is a key outcome of these sorts of programs, offering the opportunity for peer-to-peer learning, potential collaboration, and community-building.

3.2.1. Alberta Virtual / Hybrid Incubator / Accelerator Analysis

In the next section of our report, we provide an analysis of various virtual and hybrid incubators and accelerators across Alberta. This exploration aims to uncover the unique strategies and offerings that these programs provide to startups, focusing on their adaptability in combining online and in-person support mechanisms. By examining their structures, successes, and challenges, we seek to extract valuable insights that could shape future directions and enhance the effectiveness of business support ecosystems in Spruce Grove's entrepreneurial landscape.

Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (AWE)

Organizational Structure: This non-profit organization "connect[s] women with access to capital, training and workshops, business advising, and [...] loans programs"⁶⁴ across the province. AWE have been operating for more than 28 years, supporting hundreds of $\geq 50.1\%$ women-owned businesses.

Offerings, Target Market, Engagement: They also provide 3-month cohort accelerator-style programs like Strategic Edge and Bold Leadership. NextStep to Success is a program for indigenous business owners.

Takeaways: As an incubator not restricted to one physical location, AWE would make sense as a potential partner for Spruce Grove. Their success over the past three decades may provide important insights for programming sustainability, and their experience could help to inform programming for a potential incubator. On the other hand, their focus on women entrepreneurs and lack of physical restrictions means that their model may not be as directly applicable to Spruce Grove.

Airdrie Entrepreneur Common (AEC)

⁶³ Humaira Irshad. "Business Incubation in Canada: Literature Review & List of Business Incubators in Alberta and Canada." 2014.

⁶⁴ [Our Story | Women entrepreneurship program — Alberta Women Entrepreneurs \(awebusiness.com\)](http://www.awebusiness.com)

Organizational Structure: The AEC is a non-profit organization established in 1995. They are operated by the City of Airdrie Economic Development wing⁶⁵ alongside Community Futures Centre West.⁶⁶ They founded the SMARTStart program, which many other incubators in this region use.

Offerings, Target Market, Engagement: AEC offers SMARTStart and AdvanceSMART programs, which they started.⁶⁷ They also provide assistance with the usage of digital tools, for example online marketing. They launched their own program in 2022, called “Discover” program, which was licenced from Platform Calgary. Platform Calgary originally trained AEC’s Discover trainers, and Airdrie added additional material and training including testing for feasibility. This program operates both in-person and virtually, focussing on customer discovery.

Takeaways: AEC applied to Alberta Innovates for funding as a non-profit, as any business can apply for the program. Airdrie doesn't have a lot of tech-based companies, however the program is now pulling local companies into the ecosystem that are tech-based to try to foster growth in this area. In our interview with AEC, we learned that most of their programming is geared towards attracting home-based businesses, as this market is more able to attend sessions – this is particularly true of the Discovery program, which deals with customer discovery tactics. As the founders of SMARTStart, and having operated for almost three decades, AEC is an incubator success story. They have shown how programs can succeed through a virtual hub. They also show how the city can be involved, lending credibility and resources, and still operate at arms length from the city itself as much as possible.

⁶⁵ [City of Airdrie - Invest in Airdrie.](#)

⁶⁶ [Your Rural Business Development Partner | Community Futures Centre West \(albertacf.com\).](#)

⁶⁷ [SMARTstart - Airdrie Entrepreneur Common - Airdrie AB \(airdriecommon.ca\)](#)

4. Challenges, Company Profiles, and Needs

4.1. Business Survey

This section delves into the primary research results from the interviewed companies. By analyzing the distinct challenges and successes local startups and entrepreneurs encounter, the research distinguishes between the benefits and functions of incubators and accelerators. This foundation of direct insights from Spruce Grove's business community informs our understanding of where targeted support can most effectively catalyze growth and innovation.

Our survey of 42 business owners⁶⁸ indicated that 28 respondents who opened independent businesses in Spruce Grove had already been living in Spruce Grove or the Tri-Region. Aside from preexisting proximity the most-cited reasons for starting a business in Spruce Grove were very little competition for the business they are in (10 respondents), access to affordable lease space (8 respondents), and the feeling that the community supports local businesses (9 respondents).

About half of surveyed business owners had no prior experience or training. Most interviewees had never had a business before their current venture. Only two business owners conducted market research to determine if they had enough of the right type of customers or whether customers wanted their product and service in Spruce Grove. Many cited anecdotal evidence as part of the decision making process to start their business, had done some searching for similar businesses online, or had met with other entrepreneurs. Many interviewees stated the research they did was mainly to find low priced office lease space.

The following is a summary of the key feedback we heard from the primary research in terms of priority needs:

1. Entrepreneurial Start-up Support, Education, and Training Services: Points out staffing challenges, particularly in finding skilled labor, and underscores a significant need for marketing support and knowledge.
2. Mentorship, Networking and Learning: A call for mentorship and industry-specific training programs.
3. Access to Financial Resources: Emphasizes the critical need for easier access to funding, capital, and investments.
4. Community and City Support: Suggests enhancing the use of the city's website beyond licensing, improving business visibility through advertising, and advocating for the city's proactive role in attracting businesses. It also mentions the importance of promoting local businesses through awards or recognitions
5. Operational and Regulatory Challenges: Highlights include difficulties with licensing and permits, alongside offering navigational support through processes.

It is worth noting that a need for, or shortage of affordable lease options was not generally communicated.

⁶⁸ See appendix B.

4.2. Company Types and Specific Needs

To enhance our analysis and develop tailored recommendations, it's crucial to consider the different types of companies and their distinct operational models that require assistance in Spruce Grove.

Adopting an industry cluster approach in Spruce Grove is not recommended as an effective strategy due to the current absence of a pronounced cluster in any specific sector. Cluster theory posits that concentrating an industry in a geographic areas provides economic multiplier effects through agglomeration of skill sets, enhanced knowledge and learning, and a supportive ecosystem. The lack of a concentrated industry cluster suggests that efforts would be better directed towards fostering a general business support environment that can serve a broader range of sectors, encouraging diverse growth and development across all types of businesses within the community.

That being said, based on primary and secondary research we identified three general types of businesses including:

- Small commercial and retail businesses,
- home-based businesses,
- and startups.

Each of these have unique needs and challenges. This segmentation will enable a focused discussion on the specific requirements of each category, ensuring that our strategies are effectively aligned with their goals and market dynamics.

4.2.1. *Small Commercial and Retail Businesses*

For smaller commercial and retail businesses who have recently opened, incubators offer specialized support in navigating the complexities of the retail environment. They provide critical market insights, access to prime retail spaces, and tailored mentorship to enhance customer engagement and sales strategies, ensuring these businesses thrive in competitive marketplaces.

Based on the Retail and Office Market Analysis report in March 2022 and the primary research in Spruce Grove, establishing a coworking space does not emerge as a current priority. The findings suggest that the market conditions and the demand for such spaces are not sufficiently strong at this point, indicating other areas may require more immediate focus and resources for business support and development in the community.

4.2.2. *Home-based Businesses*

Home-based businesses benefit from incubators that offer virtual support mechanisms, including digital marketing expertise and online networking opportunities. Such incubators help them scale operations without the need for a store front lease, focusing on maximizing online visibility and efficiency from a home setting.

As there are a significant number of home-based businesses in Spruce Grove, we recommend flexible programming that accommodates their unique operating styles, including online access to resources and temporary access to physical meeting spaces. This flexibility allows them to leverage the benefits of both virtual and in-person interactions, catering to their diverse needs for growth, networking, and client engagement.

4.2.3. Startups

Startups require incubators that deliver a comprehensive ecosystem of support, including access to seed funding, mentorship in product development and business strategy, and networking opportunities with investors and industry experts. Incubators for startups focus on accelerating growth and helping navigate the early stages of business development.

Given the primary research indicating many startups in Spruce Grove possess little to no business experience (25 respondents), it is recommended to prioritize startup support, guidance on navigating regulations, and offering training and mentorship programs. This approach will equip new entrepreneurs with the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully launch and grow their businesses in a supportive ecosystem.

5. Recommended Programs

Based on the primary and secondary research conducted, Spruce Grove can provide support services to all the types of businesses identified. Businesses with commercial space, home-based businesses, and startups all require support to help them succeed.

The variety of businesses within Spruce Grove dictate that the programming offered should be open to all entrepreneurs rather than focus on specific industries. The mentorship program can provide more industry specific advice that is tailored to each mentee.

The primary research revealed that the majority of entrepreneurs who started their business within the last three years have limited business education and would benefit from general business strategy. Specific business strategy needs include marketing, advertising, and target market.

The City of Spruce Grove can improve their existing business support systems and implement an incubator program to support companies with the following:

1. Creating an Early-Stage Business Supports Program
2. Entrepreneurial Start-up Support, Education, and Training Services
3. Mentorship, Networking and Learning
4. Access to Financial Resources
5. Education for Youth
6. Community and City Support; Operational and Regulatory Challenges

5.1. Creation of an Early-Stage Business Supports Program

Our findings suggest the creation of a business support program in Spruce Grove will greatly benefit the early stage and small-to-medium sized business communities with a focus on supporting startups through tailored training and mentorship, networking, access to financial resources, and navigating regulations. This Early-Stage Business Supports Program (EBSP) could either operate separately from the City or follow a similar path to the Cochrane Business Incubator. In the near future, it seems reasonable to begin by collaborating with the Economic Development Advisory Committee, which, although associated with the city, provides a channel for communication and collaboration with local business. It is recommended that a business development specialist be employed within the Economic Development department to run the EBSP, including administration, programming, communications, and data collection. The EBSP should also work in partnerships with established incubators to leverage existing resources, shared learning and success.

5.1.1. *Establishment of an Entrepreneur Advisory Group*

To help guide the process for the establishment and continued operations we recommend the involvement of an advisory board of business leaders and entrepreneurs to address local

challenges and promote growth, including regular involvement from city representatives to ensure alignment with economic development goals.

Emphasizing the inclusion of independent entrepreneurs as primary stakeholders will be paramount, alongside representatives from various business regions, municipal bodies, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, and other relevant organizations. Success will depend on the willingness of existing organizations and agencies to participate.

Members of the Economic Development Advisory Council would be a good foundation for the advisory board as they are established business owners in the City of Spruce Grove therefore have valuable regionally appropriate knowledge to offer. In the first year or two of operation, it may make sense to begin with EDAC fulfilling the entrepreneur advisory group role by themselves. A future entrepreneur advisory subcommittee could be created in the future with additional representation.

5.1.2. Organizational Feasibility

The establishment of the EBSP will require funding from the City of Spruce Grove along with resources and non-profit grants to support the new organization whether external (like Airdrie Entrepreneur Common) or internal to the City Administration (like Cochrane Business Incubator). Either way long term funding should be sought / allocated as the business model of incubators are typically not self sufficient. Determining the business model for the EBSP is an important initial step for the City of Spruce Grove. As previously mentioned, partnerships with other existing incubators can alleviate the initial challenges.

To ensure the sustainability and success of the Program, seeking grant funding and sponsorships are essential. These financial supports can alleviate initial and operational costs, allowing the EBSP to focus on providing quality services to startups without financial constraints. Government grants can offer non-repayable funds, dedicated to innovation and economic development. Sponsorships, on the other hand, can come from private sector partners interested in fostering an entrepreneurial ecosystem, providing both financial assistance and opportunities for valuable industry connections.

It is important to not become fully reliant on grant funding as program priorities shift and change over time, creating risk of funding not being renewed.

5.1.3. Independent vs a Division of the City of Spruce Grove

If the City of Spruce Groves prefers to pursue the EBSP as an independent entity we recommend hiring a small, dedicated team including a program manager, administrative support, and a specialist in mentorship, training, and marketing. However, this may be a more difficult solution to implement, particularly as a pilot venture. More realistically, if the EBSP is an internal program of the City of Spruce Grove, leveraging existing resources may be possible to reduce the cost. In this case, we recommend that the Team Leader be an internal employee of Spruce Grove's Economic Development department. Note that having EBSP as part of city administration may

lead to cultural conflicts with the more independent style of entrepreneurs, however it is likely a better option overall, especially to pilot the program. Partnering with other incubators can delay the need to hire some of the specialist and keep overhead costs down until a dedicated team member is needed.

5.1.4. Hybrid Model

Additionally, **we do not recommend the development of a physical incubator at this time**, however, this should be continually assessed as the market and needs may shift over time. If the need arises in the future, we recommend considering the support of private coworking spaces rather than municipal funding of a facility as success is not guaranteed based on other examples in the province. We also would recommend taking into account the particular needs of, for example, home-based business owners, who might be more likely to benefit from a physical space – provided that adequate functionality is accounted for.

We recommend leveraging venues such as City Hall or the Leisure Centre to provide free or low-cost meeting spaces for network gatherings, ensuring accessibility, and convenience for participants. Virtual meetings options should be provided to ensure flexibility for the entrepreneurs that are being supported.

5.1.5. Risk Assessment

While the proposed business network offers significant potential benefits, it is essential to consider potential risks and challenges. These may include initial resistance to change, resource constraints, and the need for ongoing engagement to sustain participation and momentum.

Key risks for Spruce Grove in starting a business services program include potential financial strain due to high initial and ongoing operational costs, the challenge of securing sustained funding, and the difficulty of attracting and retaining high-quality startups and mentors. Additionally, aligning the EBSP's goals with local economic development objectives and ensuring it meets the diverse needs of its entrepreneurs could pose challenges. Ensuring the Program's offerings remain relevant and competitive in a rapidly changing business environment is also critical.

5.1.6. KPIs and Measurement

To evaluate the effectiveness of the EBSP, key performance indicators (KPIs) will be established, including the number of entrepreneurs and organizations engaged, and the level of involvement from stakeholders and board members. Additionally, measuring participant satisfaction and the number of mentorship hours provided can offer insights into the EBSP's value and effectiveness in supporting entrepreneurial success.

A survey should be conducted of businesses coming into the Program with yearly updates from the companies. KPIs should also focus on the broader social and economic value of the EBSP including the number of startups graduated, jobs created by graduated companies, survival rate of startups after graduation, amount of capital raised by startups, and revenue growth of

graduated companies. Other community benefits can also be considered such as greater diversity of services available, and overall community growth.

5.1.7. Summary

The creation of a regional innovation/business network in Spruce Grove holds significant promise for fostering economic development and supporting the growth of local businesses. By implementing the proposed strategies and initiatives outlined in this report, the City of Spruce Grove can play a pivotal role in facilitating collaboration, innovation, and prosperity within the community.

5.2. Entrepreneurial Start-up Support, Education, and Training Program

The Early-Stage Business Supports Program should collaborate with partner organizations to provide regular education and training programs tailored to the needs of entrepreneurs in the City of Spruce Grove. Priority topics identified through market research include marketing, advertising (digital and traditional), social media, as well as other essential skills such as accounting, bookkeeping, taxes, HR, management, and legal considerations, among others. 17 of our entrepreneur-interviewees identified generating awareness for their business / brand as a priority. Programs for education and support will aim to equip entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills necessary for long-term business success.

5.2.1. Programming

The EBSP must offer comprehensive programming in various formats to meet diverse business needs, recognizing that entrepreneurs have distinct learning preferences and schedules. This approach should include workshops, seminars, and mentorship sessions that cater to different stages of business development, ensuring that every entrepreneur, regardless of their business model or sector, can access the support and education they need to thrive. It may be worth paying some particular attention to the needs and preferences of home-based business owners, many of whom have family priorities and may prefer online or hybrid programming.

External programs such as SmartStart should be considered, as they have had success in other regions and offer a proven system to assist new entrepreneurs to reach success and sustainability of their business.⁶⁹ We heard in our discussions with other communities using SMARTStart that there is a gap in the realm of customer discovery. There are a few ways that we could address that gap, including facilitating access to educational programs in the region for creating business model canvases, product market fit, or entrepreneur roadmap. It may also be useful to connect

⁶⁹ See section 3.

with/boost existing programs offered by Community Futures, ERIN, AWE, and the Greater Parkland Regional Chamber; those currently offered seem to be underutilized.

That being said, programs such as SmartStart should not be the only programming offered. Programming for entrepreneurs at the EBSP should feature “Lunch and Learns” and speaker series, showcasing successful regional entrepreneurs and service providers that provide greater context to local business leaders. These events are crucial for educating entrepreneurs, offering them firsthand insights into overcoming challenges and leveraging opportunities within the market. Engaging with successful figures and experts not only delivers valuable learning experiences but also fosters a community of collaboration and inspiration among participants.

5.2.2. Feasibility

The Program Lead should oversee the development and execution of diverse entrepreneurial programs, with administrative support ensuring smooth operation. This leadership will ensure that the offerings are well-organized, meet the varying needs of businesses, and are delivered effectively. The collaboration between program coordination and administrative support is key to providing a structured yet flexible learning environment for entrepreneurs.

Programs such as SMARTstart can help provide the backbone of the program, offering a cost-effective solution for the EBSP.

5.2.3. Risk Assessment

Staying Relevant: To mitigate the risk of program irrelevance, regular surveys will be conducted after each training session to gather feedback and ensure alignment with the evolving needs of the business community.

Commitments from Organizations: Ensuring commitments from partner organizations to deliver training is crucial for the success of the program. Clear communication and collaboration agreements will be established to maintain consistency and reliability.

Priority of Regular Training Sessions: The Program Coordinator will prioritize organizing regular training sessions on a variety of topics from different organizations, ensuring a diverse and comprehensive educational offering for entrepreneurs.

5.2.4. KPIs and Measurement

Session Delivery: The number of education sessions delivered will be tracked to assess program activity and engagement.

Attendance: Attendance figures per session will provide insights into participation levels and program effectiveness.

Survey Feedback: Survey results from attendees will offer valuable feedback on the quality and relevance of the training, guiding future program improvements.

Organizational Involvement: The number of different organizations delivering training sessions will indicate the breadth of partnerships and the diversity of educational content offered.

5.2.5. *Summary*

In summary, by offering customized education and training programs, the EBSP aims to empower entrepreneurs in Spruce Grove with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in their ventures. Through strategic partnerships, flexible delivery methods, and ongoing assessment, the program seeks to address the evolving needs of the business community and contribute to economic growth and sustainability in the region.

5.3. **Mentorship, Networking and Learning Program**

5.3.1. *Customized Services Offering*

To enhance entrepreneurial support in the City of Spruce Grove, we propose that the EBSP offers mentorship opportunities. Mentors would indicate their areas of expertise and the number of mentees they can accommodate. Mentees would provide information about their company, themselves, and their top needs. Pairings would be manually facilitated by the Mentorship Coordinator, with engagements lasting 12 months+ to allow mentors to assist a wider variety of entrepreneurs. The Threshold Impact Venture Mentoring Service⁷⁰ is a great example that could be replicated, in addition to those covered in section 3. In order to allow for a wider range of beneficial pairings, diversity should be kept in mind when building a roster of mentors, reflecting the diversity of business types, identities, and backgrounds in Spruce Grove.

5.3.2. *Feasibility*

It would be sensible to make use of existing networks to find mentors. Some potential strategic partners for consideration are included below. The role of the partners is to offer local mentors that can share best practices and support to early-stage entrepreneurs.

Economic Development Advisory Council: EDAC currently boasts three local established business owners willing to offer mentorship to multiple mentees. Further volunteers and referrals can be solicited from this group. Their collective role as Entrepreneur Advisory Group to the business services program will synergize well with their individual roles as mentors.

Alberta Women Entrepreneurs: This organization provides mentorship to female and female indigenous entrepreneurs, serving as a valuable resource for targeted support.

Greater Parkland Regional Chamber of Commerce: Engagement with the Parkland Chamber could yield potential mentors from their network. However, the Chamber serves the entire greater

⁷⁰ [Home | University Of Alberta - ThresholdImpact Venture Mentoring Service \(thresholdimpactvms.com\)](https://thresholdimpactventures.com/)

parkland region therefore members are not all in Spruce Grove. Additionally, only Chamber members with established businesses would be a good fit.

SMARTStart: SmartStart (smartstartyourbusiness.ca) has an extant network of mentors. The EBSP can work to partner with SmartStart to leverage their mentors. The mentorship service has clear eligibility requirements and a structured program for both mentor and mentee. They have found success in communities in Alberta that are similar to Spruce Grove.

Research Additional Resources: The EBSP should explore additional mentorship resources from Edmonton Unlimited, provincial incubators (ERIN), and other business assistance organizations to enrich the mentorship pool. Regional mentors are the top priority. However, expanding into other areas to supplement the mentor pool reduces wait times for mentees and brings a broader knowledge base.

5.3.3. Risk Assessment

Potential risks include ensuring an adequate number of qualified mentors and maintaining ongoing acquisition efforts. Generating awareness of the mentorship service will be crucial to drive adoption and usage, although primary research suggests strong interest among local business owners.

5.3.4. KPIs and Measurement

Key performance indicators include tracking the number of mentors registering, mentees signing up, and scheduled meetings between mentor and mentee.

5.3.5. Summary

In summary, implementing a mentorship program tailored to the needs of City of Spruce Grove entrepreneurs holds significant promise for fostering business growth and development. By leveraging existing resources and actively engaging with stakeholders, the EBSP can play a pivotal role in facilitating meaningful mentorship relationships and driving entrepreneurial success in the region.

5.4. Funding and Loan Programs

5.4.1. Customized Services Offering

The Early-Stage Business Support Program can take ownership of the “Funding & Loan Programs” section of the investsprucegrove.ca website, with the aim to increase awareness and accessibility to funding opportunities. This includes assisting Spruce Grove entrepreneurs in accessing funding at various levels of government and financial institutions, facilitating participation in regional innovation programs, and providing support for small business loans and grants.

The EBSF should also collaborate with organizations like Startup TNT to attract investment capital to the region.⁷¹ Establishing a referral network can significantly enhance access to funding for local startups, connecting entrepreneurs with potential investors. This partnership could serve as a crucial bridge, leveraging organizations like Startup TNT's expertise and networks to fuel the growth of Spruce Grove's burgeoning business ecosystem.

5.4.2. Feasibility

The Program Coordinator will oversee funding opportunities, guiding local entrepreneurs through funding processes and deadlines, and facilitating sessions on grant writing. Additionally, maintaining and nurturing referral network relationships is crucial, ensuring a continuous and updated exchange of information and opportunities within the funding ecosystem.

5.4.3. Risk Assessment

Data Timelines: Maintaining the timeliness and accuracy of funding data is crucial to the success of the program. Regular updates and an effective process will be needed to mitigate the risk of outdated information.

Awareness Campaigns: Without regular promotion and communication efforts, entrepreneurs may overlook valuable funding opportunities. To address the risk of underutilization, ongoing awareness campaigns will be conducted to promote the availability and benefits of the funding services offered.

5.4.4. KPIs and Measurement

Funding Received: Funding received by companies.

Promotional Efforts: Monthly email newsletters promoting the Funding & Loans service and highlight available opportunities.

Education Seminars: Quarterly education seminars to enhance entrepreneurs' grant writing skills and empower them to effectively pursue funding opportunities.

Effectiveness Measurement: Survey seminar participants to gauge the effectiveness of the program in meeting their needs and supporting their funding endeavors.

Application Submission: The number of entrepreneurs submitting applications for grants and loans will be tracked to assess the program's impact on facilitating access to funding.

Website and Newsletter Analytics: Website traffic and newsletter click-through rates will be monitored to measure the usefulness of the information provided and the effectiveness of communication strategies.

⁷¹ [Startup TNT](#).

5.4.5. Summary

In summary, by offering access to funding services, the EBSP aims to empower Spruce Grove entrepreneurs to access and leverage available funding opportunities effectively. Providing this ongoing support will educate, inform, and support existing and future entrepreneurs, and therefore foster a thriving business ecosystem in the region.

5.5. Education for Youth Program (Long Term Horizon)

5.5.1. Customized Services Offering

While many of the other programs in this report provide support to business owners at various stages of their journeys, there is a potential gap in school programming.

One possible approach to this would be something like a Junior Achievement Program to provide opportunities in schools for entrepreneurship experience and learning sessions. This could be done in collaboration with local secondary school divisions, either as a for-credit program or even to facilitate talks with local established entrepreneurs.

One other potential way of engaging younger entrepreneurs would be to engage with potential partners in the post-secondary space. The Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) has a small campus in Spruce Grove with limited program offerings. In the longer term, the City of Spruce Grove could explore a potential partnership to offer business programs, in a similar vein, albeit at a more advanced and in-depth level, than the Junior Achievement Program mentioned previously.

5.5.2. Feasibility

Our primary research⁷² suggests that a majority of new business owners in Spruce Grove had been living in the region prior to opening their businesses. It is therefore reasonable to predict that investing in education opportunities for younger community members will contribute to a stronger business ecosystem long-term. It may be valuable to engage with Community Future's Youth Entrepreneur Training Initiative (YETI) program, which operates in a broad region that includes the Tri-Region.⁷³

NAIT's Spruce Grove campus currently focusses on construction-related programs; it therefore might be advisable to begin a programming partnership with a construction-focused business/entrepreneur addition to the current programming. This might include connecting students with the many independent construction business-owners based in Parkland County. There are more businesses in construction than any other category, according to data provided by the City of Spruce Grove.⁷⁴

⁷² See Appendix B.

⁷³ [YETI | Community Futures Capital Region \(albertacf.com\)](https://www.albertacf.com/yeti)

⁷⁴ See Appendix E.

5.5.3. *Risk Assessment*

These educational programs would require the collaboration of educational organizations in the area. It would therefore be essential to be able to bring a mutually beneficial and realistic plan to the table. Curriculum changes and additions tend to take time to complete, this sort of project would require a consistent and sustained effort on behalf of the city.

There are a number of school divisions in the Tri-Region, so it may require some maneuvering to spread the programming across divisions. NAIT's existing facilities in Spruce Grove are minimal. Significant additions to programming may require additional facilities; this should be taken into account when ideating potential programming and in discussions with NAIT.

5.5.4. *KPIs and Measurement*

Overall performance metrics would include the number of participating organizations/schools as well as the number of student-participants. Course evaluations could be used to gauge student engagement and educational quality. In the long-term, surveys of new Spruce Grove business owners could ask respondents whether they took advantage of any of these opportunities before starting their businesses, and whether or not those experiences were helpful in their entrepreneurial journeys.

5.5.5. *Summary*

As aspiring young entrepreneurs get older, they will be able to bring skills and experiences gained here to their ventures, leading to higher overall business literacy, interest in business, and success. Although it would fit within a longer timeline than many of the other proposed initiatives in this section, investing in entrepreneurial education and support at all levels will help contribute to a robust, sustainable, community-oriented, and ultimately thriving business ecosystem in Spruce Grove.

5.6. **Operational and Regulatory Challenges Program**

5.6.1. *Customized Services Offering*

Of the business-owners that responded to our survey,⁵⁰ those who mentioned permitting and licencing (12 respondents) generally reported frustration in their experiences (9 of the 12 respondents). Most of those surveyed had opened business in the last 3 years, so they are referring to the current or recent systems. Commonly cited issues were lack of a central person to help guide them through the process and inability to access a staff member who would help.

The website investsprucegrove.ca currently shows very little traffic, despite the presence of many useful resources for business owners. We believe that some design optimization paired with adequate oversight and a promotional campaign might help with this. One way to improve the design would be to ensure that the website displays well on mobile devices. Another way would be to ensure that users can access the resources available with as few clicks as possible.

Incorporating the program coordinator as a facilitator for city permitting processes can significantly streamline the journey for startups navigating the complexities of regulatory compliance. By acting as an intermediary between the entrepreneurs and the city's permitting departments, the coordinator can help expedite applications, clarify requirements, and reduce bureaucratic hurdles, ensuring a smoother path to business operation. This role is crucial in demystifying the permitting process and fostering a more business-friendly environment within the incubator ecosystem.

5.6.2. Feasibility

The EBSP Program Coordinator would act as a business liaison for companies accessing the City of Spruce Grove. This coordinator would have the systemic knowledge and centralized authority necessary to ensure a smoother experience for business-owners. Their success may depend on the ability to integrate with existing systems, and the willingness of other city staff to work with this new position.

5.6.3. Risk Assessment

One potential risk with changes to the licencing and permitting system, as well as the website, is to ensure that it continues to adjust and improve, and that a city staff member is ensuring that things are running smoothly on an ongoing basis. This could be addressed by having a dedicated employee for dealing with website management. This same employee could help with promotion and programming.

5.6.4. KPIs and Measurement

It will be important to continue to collect feedback from new business owners to understand how the current system does or does not support them in their journeys to get their businesses up and running. This could take the form of a survey or online feedback form, as well as having an employee periodically reassess the success of the situation. A service analysis can also be undertaken to assess service metrics and targets related to key city processes used by entrepreneurs.

One important metric for considering the success of the changes to the website design will be the amount of web traffic, which is currently quite low. Surveys can also be used (including a potential built-in feedback form in the website) to collect data on user experience on an ongoing basis.

5.6.5. Summary

Improving the digital infrastructure and customer service offered by the City of Spruce Grove will support and expedite the permitting process for existing and prospective entrepreneurs. Having one employee position to centralize liaison duties and help business owners navigate city processes would help encourage engagement with city support services and maintain a positive relationship between the city and the business community at-large.

6. Implementation Strategy

Alongside the current document, another called *Early-Stage Business Support Program: Implementation*, was submitted to the City of Spruce Grove by CICG. While this report includes research, analysis, recommendations, and strategy, the accompanying document is more oriented towards the initial practical implementation of these recommendations, particularly the Early-Stage Business Support Program (EBSP). Please consult *Early-Stage Business Support Program: Implementation*, for a more thorough outline of a recommended implementation strategy.

In our implementation strategy, we identify and overview four components that we consider crucial to the successful launch of the EBSP. First, we outline the role of a business development specialist to coordinate and manage the program, covering administrative, communications, programming, and data gathering/analysis roles. We then discuss recommendations for programming, using the SMARTStart program as the vanguard. Thirdly, we discuss partnership development, reinforcing the importance of bringing in other local stakeholders and establishing a collaborative approach early on to ensure success and sustainability. Finally, we discuss a series of recommended tools, including a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, Artificial Intelligence (AI) to increase productivity, and a Cloud-Based storage system for documentation.

7. Conclusion

In summary, our comprehensive assessment recommends the establishment of an Early-Stage Business Supports Program (EBSP) in Spruce Grove without a dedicated physical space, with potential for physical expansion as dictated by community needs, feedback, and thorough cost analysis. This strategic initiative is in direct alignment with the City's overarching goals, specifically targeting the stimulation of economic growth and innovation, as outlined in the findings of this report.

The identified beneficiaries, primarily entrepreneurs and startups, necessitate a comprehensive array of support services encompassing mentorship, training, and networking opportunities. Furthermore, both existing early-stage enterprises and prospective startups stand to benefit from the EBSP, thus contributing to the cultivation of a thriving economic ecosystem.

Given the diverse industrial landscape of Spruce Grove, the EBSP's design mandates flexibility to cater to varying business stages and models. Nevertheless, particular emphasis should be placed on nurturing early-stage enterprises, with a preference toward retail and service-based ventures.

Budget allocations should be guided by meticulous cost analysis to ensure the financial sustainability of the initiative. Success will be gauged through the attainment of specific metrics such as startup survival rates and job creation figures.

It is imperative to acknowledge potential risks, including financial constraints and stakeholder engagement levels. To mitigate these risks, a proactive approach involving diversified funding sources and continuous program evaluation is recommended.

If the EBSP is kept internal, the oversight and management of the implementation and ongoing operations fall under the purview of the City of Spruce Grove's Economic Development Department. This would be beneficial in that it would ensure access to all departments and resources of the city, including its expertise and network. It is crucial that vigilant monitoring is upheld to safeguard the Program's role as a dynamic catalyst for economic prosperity within the community.

Concluding our assessment, we recommend establishing a network of business support programs and services based on needs, feedback from business community, and cost analysis. This aligns with the City's strategic goals, fostering economic growth and innovation based on the findings in this report.

The needs assessment identifies entrepreneurs and startups as primary beneficiaries, requiring a blend of services, including mentorship, training, networking, and access to funding. Existing early-stage businesses and future startups can benefit from the EBSP and contribute to a vibrant economic environment.

Based on the variety of industries in Spruce Grove, the Program's design must be flexible, accommodating diverse business stages and models. This includes making use of both ind. However, the focus should be on early-stage businesses with a bias toward retail and service-based businesses.

Cost analysis will guide budget allocations, ensuring financial sustainability. Success will be measured through specific metrics like startup survival rates, job creation, and revenue growth.

Risks include financial constraints and engagement levels, with mitigation strategies involving diversified funding sources and continuous program evaluation.

The City of Spruce Grove should oversee implementation and monitoring, ensuring the EBSP remains a dynamic contributor to Spruce Grove's vibrant economic landscape. A dedicated business development specialist should be employed to run the program, helping with planning, communications, administration, and tracking of data.

7.1. Strategy

Given the current absence of a strong industry cluster in Spruce Grove, a broad, general strategy for the proposed business incubator is advisable. This approach allows for the inclusion of diverse business models and sectors, maximizing the incubator's reach and impact within the local economy. Tailoring support services to a wide array of entrepreneurial needs ensures that the incubator remains a versatile and invaluable resource for fostering economic growth and innovation in Spruce Grove.

Appendix A: Primary Research – Rough Transcripts from Interviews with Spruce Grove Business Owners

Why did you choose to start your business in Spruce Grove? (Pros/Cons COSG offers? Target Market? Need in marketplace? Proximity to home/COSG Resident? Growth potential?)

- Opportunity. No competition when they decided to open the business. During construction another competitor opened just before them. Owner is a resident of COSG for 12-13 years, is aware of a local consumers of their product.
- Lives in COSG, 7 minutes away from store. Easy and convenient location for owners. Stays in community. Offers retail in store sales and farmers markets. Working on setting up ecommerce store to expand market.
- Local resident. Worked in retail in other COSG businesses and saw how the population supported local vendors/businesses. No local businesses in COSG that offer similar products, not much competition.
- Clients live in Stoney or Spruce. Rent/Lease was the most affordable. Less overhead.
- No other competition, lives in Stoney Plain. Too much red tape in Stoney. COSG was also not good but there was more commercial space available. Owns three other businesses all in the Tri-Region and has a lot of insight due to experiences from all four businesses.
- No competitors in the area when they opened business. Resident of COSG.
- Pre existing business that the owner purchased in April 2023. Stoney Plain resident.
- Loves COSG, believes it's a community that supports new and local businesses. Resident of COSG.
- Resident of Stoney Plain and found a place with good rent. Around Jan 2021.
- Owner lives in Leduc. Owner was looking to purchase a catering and food service business. Opportunity presented in COSG.
- Worked at competitor company and wanted to keep the same clientele list while becoming owner/operator. All employees and owners live within the Tri-Region so it's also a convenient location.
- Moved business from Edmonton to COSG. Both business partners live in COSG or parkland county. Most employees are out that way. Location is beneficial for employees and rent is cheaper than Edmonton, shorter commute.
- Owner lives here.
- Near where owner lives.
- Owner lives here
- Owner lives in Stoney Plain.
- Have stores in Edmonton. Wanted to expand into surrounding communities. Not residents of COSG.

- Company has been here for 15-16 years, bought an existing practice and expanded it. Population to number of competitors was underserved when owner started. That's what made it attractive
- Opened COSG in 2022, their second location (first in Edmonton).
- Business started 30 years ago with 2 partners. Now has 4 locations.
- 45-year-old business in COSG.
- Decided overnight to open a business. Was already in private practice, was making good money for employer. Looked at spots in Edmonton, Spruce was more feasible. Consulted a friend about non-compete clause
- Lots of research, traveled BC and Alberta before deciding on COSG 3 years ago.
- Only one in the company, not many of them in western Canada. Worked for some other competitors before opening. Was already living in Spruce, found a space, opened it.
- Owner started the business 29 years ago, moved from BC, COSG was where we wanted to locate.
- COSG has been home for years. When we did market research about opening the company, we discovered that other cities of similar size had multiple competitors, and there were not many (enough) non-specialty products in the city.
- Owner was living here, made sense.
- At the time I thought it was a missing element to the city. Would not have opened in the city of Spruce Grove, based on my experience since opening.
- Owners live in Spruce Grove, close to Edmonton, where most of our clients are.
- Live in Spruce, had been working and commuting in Edmonton. Helping local community.
- Owners live in COSG for 25 years. Business since 2006.
- Owner worked in COSG for 10+ years. Natural fit to open business where I already knew people, already had a client base.
- Noticed a gap in the community. I know a lot of other people, have a network. I am from here.
- Bought business 24 years ago, was working and living in Spruce Grove. Moved from the city centre to the industrial area.
- I'm from around here.
- Business is a sister company to another local company. Closer to home, was located in Edmonton prior. Don't know if it was the best idea in retrospect.
- Opening in October, just noticed a niche.
- It's a franchise, opening here in 2010, I took over in 2019. I lived here before.
- Previously owned business in Spruce for 25 years. Had other businesses, but that was main focus. Closed, not sold eventually, partly because selling the building so selling seemed illogical.
- On my second business in Spruce Grove. Left a job, now back in Spruce and working independently again
- Third business in COSG.
- About to buy sixth business, serial entrepreneur.

What would you say is the best thing about owning a business in Spruce Grove? What would make owning a business here better? (internet service, cell service, access to labor; other items) Are you hearing anything from other businesses in Spruce Grove about the business environment here? (Formal education, certificates, online courses, accounting/bookkeeping, management?)

- Big challenge used to be highspeed internet. We lost businesses in Spruce who left for Edmonton because of slow internet. I've heard from businesses that its hard to find talent and bring it here. We've become more of an attractive place to be. Things have gotten a bit better now I think. We were having trouble finding labor period, but those things are maybe getting better. I don't think there's tons of turnover. Theres a bit, not as bad as it used to be
- Getting staff in (business?) advocacy for spruce grove was hard. Supply chain was also a big issue when I was involved. Trimunicipal are and business licensing has been a huge issue
- Some challenges that started when I moved here 10-12 years ago, are no longer issues. I had to move around the city because I had such bad internet at work. Finding workers used to be a problem. Spruce Grove, west Edmonton has become a more open area. Theres a market to tap in on, there are lots of people moving from the east coast (incl myself, many family etc.) Seems like we're on an upswing, but we need to capitalize on that. I'm finding that cost of labour has gone up a lot, but clients don't want to pay more

Did you conduct any research before starting your business? (Anecdotal, Market Research, Interviews, Discussions with other entrepreneurs, etc?)

- No research but used past experience working in industry. Noticed that COSG drove to Edm for the product because there were no local retail suppliers.
- Did some research in Edmonton, rent prices and travel time was prohibitive. No locations suitable in Stoney Plain.
- Anecdotal research from working at retail stores in COSG.
- Looked only in Stoney and Spruce Grove. Aesthetics of the location were important: hardwood floors, comfort for services. No barebones.
- Talked to two competitors in COSG but no other research was conducted.
- Chose lease based on landlord who is fantastic. He's on site, lives in COSG, is on site all day.
- Full market research for city and loan company. Justify the need for the business in COSG. Used Wetaskiwin as a comparison.

- Reviewed company financials to ensure business was good before purchasing business. General market within the area. Comparisons to similar stores in West Edmonton. Inventory, stock, pros/cons.
- Anecdotal conversations with local residents. How they spend their money. No formal research was conducted.
- Checked out listings for commercial lease/ownership opportunities for parkland county, stoney, spruce until found one that was affordable. Was a Parkland County Chamber of commerce board member at the time and saw that lease properties were very high. No other research.
- Checked sales, neighborhoods, offerings. Was looking for businesses all around but this one was the best opportunity at the time.
- Similar businesses around the city. Looked at COSG and Stoney Plain. Discussed with other entrepreneurs that are in the similar market, about the industry and owning a business.
- Just looking for lease. Needed a specific space: Just an office space with an open bullpen style. Needed for their style of business.
- Personal services business. Looked for similar offerings and there wasn't.
- Looked for affordable rent and short-term lease. Found a sublease. To measure how well it would work. Ended up purchasing commercial bay and moving within a year.
- No Research, just searched for leasing. Lived in area so they were aware.
- Experienced in business, there must have been some research.
- No, people didn't do research then.
- Market research: looking online, seeing what's around in the local community, looking at what's in other communities. Physically visiting competitors in similar sized communities, seeing their spaces, chatting with them.
- No.
- Comparing to local pubs and restaurants, except chain.
- Looked at what's around of similar business.
- On my own, doing my business plan. Wanted to see how saturated our community already is.
- No
- Yes, in Spruce and Stony, found a great lease space.
- I am from COSG. I took time to understand the demographic, knew there weren't this kind of store around.
- Took over a failing business, fix it. Not the same type of research required.
- Worked at competitor then they closed. Opened my own business since I understood the market.
- Just found land and moved.
- Opening in October, just noticed a niche.
- No. I took over, it was a franchise.
- Visited business they wanted to be like. Samples their products, got an idea of size, location, feel, number of staff. Talk to owners. Where they got equipment. On connect logistics, province wide, looking to get into Sask soon.

- Didn't do research outside of existing experience. Our clients all over the province. Main clientele is in the county and those neighboring. More convenient for locals, more of a personal touch.

***What business/entrepreneur education or experience do you have?
(Formal education, certificates, online courses, accounting/bookkeeping, management, past start ups, etc?)***

- Business partner has business management education and was an area manager for another company.
- Started multiple food service business for over 30 years both in BC and AB. Experience in entrepreneurship. Other locations were easier to open than COSG.
- Zero experience, first business.
- Degree in Bcomm. 15 years experience as executive assistant.
- Self taught. No business education.
- No, lifetime of working retail and service jobs. First business.
- Previously a contractor who had to deal with financials of running his business.
- No formal training in business. Previously worked in healthcare, covid and politics pushed away from healthcare.
- Direct Sales consultant. Licensed in Financial industry since 2005. No biz degree, no formal training. Parents owned businesses, learned from them.
- Hotel and restaurant management degree. Second business, both in food service.
- First business for both partners. No formal training.
- Some small business courses. Worked in industry, moved up the ranks, then took over company from owners. Experience is from working in all areas of the industry.
- SAIT business admin diploma.
- Attended but didn't finish Marketing diploma. First business.
- Entrepreneurial with multiple other businesses.
- Accounting background, had worked as an accountant for 20 years.
- No education, have been a business owner for 14+ years in different in different avenues. Owns multiple businesses now.
- Prior businesses
- Little bit, SG is a big town, big needs for family are already there. Checked out competitors, not much but lots in Edmonton.
- Nothing
- A few businesses, this one is the primary one. I've been in the industry for 40 years, worked for other companies and been involved in the running of businesses.
- None.
- No. I had a history in community development, working with recreational services (city, outdoors recreation).
- Has a farm out of town
- 4 interviewees replied "No".
- None

Have you had a previous business or startup? If you had a past startup or business, what was the business, where was it located, and did you sell or close the business? If you did sell or close the business, what were the reasons for doing so?

- Opened other businesses.
- Still running another one
- Prior businesses, yes 5 or so years ago. Food service and photography. Did a program in graphic design.
- No, most of those are static. Business partner owns another business that they still own.
- No. I still work out of town, doing other jobs.
- Multiple that were bought from previous owners.
- Farm still running.
- Owned a salon, still do hair. Do farmers markets, consigs.
- 6 interviewees replied "No".

What challenges/pain points did you experience in your start up journey in CSG that you would want to warn future entrepreneurs about? (Costs/Expenses, License Registration, etc? Anything that CSG did well or poorly during this process? Did you receive any support from CSG regarding these challenges?)

- Biggest challenge was COSG building inspectors (to approve permit) during the construction phase did not line up with third party plumbing inspector. We were told to buy one sink but the plumbing inspector had them remove and replace it with a touchless sink. Adds cost and delays launch. Electrical inspector didn't have an issue. Permits were fast/online to acquire. Landlord is approachable, no issues there.
- Doing the research on landlord and location. City's relationship with the landlord. Other businesses with landlord had similar issues with the city.
- Nothing at the moment. Happy with the COSG EcDev team. Jodi's networking and bring her connections to the city are valuable.
- About 2 months before opening. Difficult dealing with COSG because they said they didn't need a development permit but then she had to apply once she knew that it was required (6 week delay). Would be nice to have a conversation with a person or for COSG to provide a process/flow chart showing the steps/stages with contact info/department involved. No issues with contractors landlord.
- Getting answers from city, not having inspections completed on time. Signage rules/regulations on the building are a money grab and unfair to business owners. COSG makes it hard to do business. City fines, licenses, costs. Red tape experience. Fire inspection caused grief and money and didn't make sense: exit walkway was off by code and required owner to take down framing, Fire Rated blanket required because serving

alcohol even though there was no open fire/flame in the facility. Plumbing and electrical inspectors were okay.

- Old mayor (Stewart) was helpful with the process. COSG was confused because my company was the first of it's kind and required different regulations. Delayed the process of opening. Lots of options at the time. Pricing of lease is going up.
- None with the city.
- Permitting process, business license. Took a long time to get answers. Did not delay opening doors. Cash flow for ongoing running. No issues with inspections.
- Economic and business and development website. Just had a look, its not updated, needs to be updated. There is not new to spruce grove networking or social events. If a new business starts, is not from the area, there's not much publicity. CSG seems to be much friendlier to big businesses than small businesses, 3 or more acres of land.
- Business license delay. Ongoing challenge with many business owners. Zoning of the building was for commercial sales not professional services. Took 4 months before they issued the business license. Licensing department. Resolution was only once they found a zoning document. No other problems/challenges just the business license department.
- No real challenges. COSG is easy to deal with. Inspector came to check on grease trap as previous owner didn't install one. Health Inspector. No reno or improvements to facility just a small paint job.
- Biggest challenge dealing with planning and development area of COSG. Difficult to get answers to questions regarding business licenses. No way to get the info. In person visit to the department wasn't helpful. City employee kept referring owner to the website rather than helping in person. Confusing and difficult. Delayed opening by approx a week. Also had challenges with inspections. Online application process allowed them to pull permits for things that shouldn't be able. Business owner was able to pull the permit when only a master electrician should be able to do. Ended up having to reapply for the permit, pay the first contractor and had to get another contractor. Incurred additional costs. Prices are high for landlords/leases. Trade friends, tried to choose local.
- Landlord issues. Renovations contractor that didn't apply for proper permits.
- Home based business. Chose her house. Didn't know about advertising limitations. Leases are very expensive. Finding the info for health code info. Researching.
- Lower rent due to property taxes are raising the cost for landlords. Water and sewage prices, more expensive than stoney plain.
- COSG poorly allowing businesses to advertise. Signage on his own property permit is required and ongoing fees (monthly). Would want a 4x8 foot sign to help people find them. Wants to help people know where they are located. Business license was super simple and easy. After relocating two bays away from first license. Sent email to COSG about moving, asked how to change the address on the portal. No one got back to him. Communication lacking. First time walked in the office and the staff was friendly and process was simple.
- Cost/quotes for permits/licenses/fees. Quoted one price and it was three times as much. Didn't delay opening but it tripled the costs. Quotes were received over the phone.
- Marketing Needs. Exit signs requirements and handicap railing in bathroom. No delay to store opening.

- You have to learn everything on your own, Weak at financial stuff, figure out as you go. 5 years in, finally figured out. Incubator would have been very helpful if they were brand new. Hired an accountant, bookkeeper Accountant mentor said: hire people
- Grew so fast, lots of growing pains. Got an accountant but not a bookkeeper at first. Had to learn to outsource skills they don't have. Not about having enough money, its about cashflow. The family had experience in relevant industries, but the business aspects were lacking. Market dipped in the season, had too much inventory. Then they have too much demand and not enough product. Had to learn how to manage that. Solution: seeking other people in the same industry, learning from them
- There weren't many issues then. Not much red tape, a much simpler process.
- Staffing is the biggest challenge.
- Finding support and resources. Finding support within peer groups.
- Getting people to come here, getting recognition. There's nothing around to promote small businesses. High cost. Just a reminder call, saying your business license is due. Thought there would be support.
- Yes, most businesses have challenges. Some competitors have spent 5-10 years in the business, know what they're doing. They have money for social media promo, push their business. For me, I started with a minimum investment (loans). No support.
- Figuring out marketing, how to make myself known to people. Most people haven't heard of us.
- Typical stuff. We're not a typical business; although our office is in Spruce Grove we only work on site (no public office). Things were pretty seamless and the city did their due diligence.
- That there is no manual, I didn't know what I was doing, lots of calling people.
- A lot of hidden costs that aren't intuitive. Marketing, day-to-day expenses of running the business. We adapted to these within the first year of operation. Another thing is understanding how many people want free things, sponsorships from you, how you're going to budget to how to give back to the community while also remaining sustainable.
- I had few resources to build my first business up. I hardly dealt with the city as I was taking over a business.
- The way city view works. The website makes it very difficult to work with two people with a partnership. Its not easy to manage between multiple people. Not really responsive. "We don't care, do it through the website."
- Permits were brutal. It was so slow, took 7 months and cost me an extra 100k because I had to wait. Had problems because of the colour, which is what delayed in.
- Learning curve, how to deal with inventory. Consignment takes a bit more work with retail.
- None.
- On thing that affected us a lot was the economic cycles. When Albertans were rich they bought lots of new products, when they were poor, they bought refurbished products. We tried to change or focus to match the situation.
- Want to figure how to get something into Spruce grove: maker spaces, entrepreneurial spaces, peer meetings, often social/networking things. having places for intermixing/cross-pollination in an entrepreneurial environment is a great way to make

new things happen and connect people with others who can help expand on their ideas with their own expertise and network.

- Work with lots of people who are starting businesses. I've seen the best financial plans of my life, but the businesses can still fail because of external situation. People who embrace the community, get involved, get supported by the community as well
- Need to find peer groups for advice, entrepreneurial peer groups are valuable for learning things that you don't know. They might not know how to market, but they know how to do something else. Everyone has their specialties, you have to find your unique abilities, then identify people (either internally or externally) who can help with your weak points. Lots of young entrepreneurs try to figure out how to do everything, I did too. I figured out years later that I shouldn't be trying to do everything. One other important early thing to figure out as an entrepreneur is to figure out what your core values are. Your business values should be aligned with who you are as a person, will make your work is easier. Networking is key

Have you used any business services offered by the City of Spruce Grove, such as the website <https://www.investsprucegrove.ca/business-resources> ?

Where is the first places you search for help when you need it?

What search terms might you use on google when something critical needs to be done in your business and you're freaking out? How frequently does this happen?

How do you access innovation services?

- Seven businesses responded with "No"
- No have not used any. Always search online first. Google search. Economic Development website should be more prominent on the COSG website.
- Only used it to renew business licenses.
- Have used the DEP and didn't find it provided any value. The program marketing appeared to offer funds/in kind work by UofA students but all the students did was conduct an audit of the website and provide suggestions. Felt it did not provide any value and felt misled.
- Only for permit/license which is pretty cut and dry process.
- Don't have the time to use the website to get answers. Called the Planning and Engineering department and got a Voicemail that says return phone call will be in 3-5 business days. Owner expects to receive services for fees paid (licenses/permits). Entrepreneurs are customers of the city and doesn't feel like they are valued.
- No, rather go to the downtown office to use services. City Hall, reception directs to the right dept.
- No have not used the website.
- Only used it for the permit. Prefers phone and email to get help.
- Just for renewing license.
- No have not gone to the website.

- Yes. Invest Spruce Grove Community Board, affiliated with Chamber of Commerce for new businesses.
- No just the license renewal.
- Not sure, looked at a website that showed all the available leases in the city. Liked that.
- Just renewing business license.
- No idea. Used it for license for sure.
- Know its there, haven't used it.
- I don't believe so, business partner might have but I don't think we've explored. Business connections are the first line of support. Use internet for facts, go to my connections for more hands-on knowledge.
- No, been to website but information is not valuable to me. Google, many times a day.
- Didn't know about it.
- Not yet.
- I believe so; digital marketing program with a UofA student. That was beneficial. They tell you how to do it, things like SEO.
- No, business partner may have.
- No, used their online portal for licensing etc. and that's it.
- I haven't had a reason to

What are your biggest needs as a business owner? (Workforce, Funding, Training, Education, Mentorship, Support, etc?)

- 1. Consistency of sales volume, promotions. 2. Funding challenge is big at the beginning but now it's more stable. 3. Want to offer more food options, looking to serve ready-made products. Workforce is NOT an issue currently.
- Funding, hiring more people (family based business), Social Media, website, ecommerce, promotion/ads.
- When starting up: Branding, marketing, who is the market?, digital marketing and/or physical ads. Marketing is current challenge, but owner is confident with Social Media management.
- About 2 months before opening owner had difficult dealing with COSG because they said they didn't need a development permit but then had to apply once they discovered it was required (6 week delay). Conversation with a person or a process/flow chart showing the steps/stages with contact info/department involved. No issues with contractors landlord. Workforce assistance: finding good employees, qualified, education, expertise for service specific. Funding: Expand space, improving decor, capital equipment, hiring, training local customers.
- Manpower/hiring finding staff (except Indeed.ca). Need workforce constantly and doesn't know where to find local employees. Mentorship/Training/Education.
- Security, Finances to hire, Cash Flow/Funding,
- Awareness. Advertising is too expensive. Support for brick and mortar stores to help locals become aware of the store.

- Cash Flow challenge. Customer volume. Competing vs box stores. Customer retention. Understanding quality and pricing.
- Employees/workforce. Something on COSG website that provides FAQs for new entrepreneurs. List the steps it takes to start a business. Clearly defining the zoning of commercial lease spaces. "Before you sign a lease, check the zoning for a business permit."
- Traffic and awareness. Business is located behind the tracks and many people don't know it's there. Signage could be helpful. Most customers are regulars. Grants for small businesses. Would appreciate training/support/mentorship.
- Economy, maintaining pricing to be reasonable and costs and profit. Workforce, when new employees are needed, there are not many applicants.
- Workforce is set. Financially stable. Reduce Spam email and phone.
- More clientele. Word of mouth is best for business model/service. Ads only work if people understand the service. Awareness.
- Advertising, traffic, awareness. Seasonal business. Sandwich signs, physical advertising.
- Advertising marketing. Physical and digital marketing.
- Marketing. Not sure, trying to figure out how to bring people in.
- Biggest need: financial statements, Having a mentor would be great. How to read a spreadsheet, read financial statements and books. Had trouble thinking like an accountant.
- Competition: When opened, there were only 2 main competitors in town, that has tripled which makes it harder to be competitive. Poaching is a big problem, competitors offer better contract percentages. Mentorship is important Jan J - "Its like we go into business with no business training"
- None.
- Free resources, help with our website in particular. I have some web-design experience, but this kind of work is always put on the back-burner. Funding, free manpower would be the most useful. If there was a program where for a few hours a month, someone could update your website for you, that would be helpful.
- Finding a storefront. Have not had one before.
- Trying to get people in the door.
- Funding; gov't interest is lower, . Don't know where to start for business loans, not sure if my business is eligible.
- We're dealing with the same things as so many businesses; the cost of running (equipment, for example), have gone up astronomically. We've downsized in 2019, grown since. The forecast seems to be good; we're trying to hold the line before needing to expand more.
- Client base turns over every 12 month, so need to keep attracting new people.
- Just continued support from the community, consistent engagement.
- I don't think the city are the people to help with business, they should stay as far out as possible. Governmental systems have a tendency to allow both greed and a lack of meaningful and effective action to go unchecked.
- Not a lot at the moment. I have good access.
- Not too many issues.

- Keeping up with social media, could use help. Bookkeeping. Exposure, promotion.
- People coming in the door.

What are the top three areas you need help with personally in your entrepreneurial journey as a business owner? (Courses, training, etc?)

- Two interviewees did not reply: N/A
- A couple of us women in business have chatted, have similar goals and similar caliber, networking is great. We've got different associations and events; some of them are good and some are stagnant. Someone to facilitate connections and collaborations between businesses would be great, so that its not as much on the business owners themselves to build community.
- Funding, tech support (who to go for repairs etc – business who I know, finding space (storefront). Business coaching.
- Promotion, trying to get people in the door.
- I avoid paying for outside mentorship, I use what I learned from school and Youtube etc.
- Trying to figure out advertising and marketing (have zero experience). Ideally, I would like to be able to network up with AHS, get in touch with people who can't access it.
- Things are going ok. We've been open for 2 years.
- Originally maybe helping to understand hidden costs, but every business is different. Understanding the work required and financial investment.
- Not things that the city can, or would do the best job of provide(ing).
- Nothing at this moment.
- Don't know that I can answer that.

Question for only EDAC members: Would you consider becoming involved as a mentor to early-stage companies? Would a monthly meetup with early-stage companies work? Like a Mastermind series with potential guest speakers on business topics?

- People from different cultural backgrounds (globally) are coming and wanting to start businesses. They need help navigating their business situations, how to work in the city centre of Spruce Grove
- I thought that the mentorship from more experienced businesses is a great idea, Semiretired or retired business owners would add a lot of value to young entrepreneurs
- I want to help 5000 entrepreneurs grow their businesses. I try to help young entrepreneurs for free already who walk in. I'd be happy to be involved in mentoring

What assistance/services/support do you think that the CSG should provide that can help all businesses?

What do you wish you had more of in the ecosystem?

What do you need less of in the ecosystem?

What types, if any, of training are needed in the region?

Who provides innovation/entrepreneurship services in the region?

What services are currently lacking in the region? Why do you say this?

- COSG is supportive for them. Included in marketing programs, halloween, fall fest, downtown CCBA. Would like more word of mouth/brand recognition/advertising space. Open to training/learning opportunities available to them. All areas of training subjects would be good. Running own social media & marketing, looking to offload that to employees.
- Marketing/promotions for Downtown. Process of improving downtown. No lights on the trees cuz they are too young. Create attractions and draw in downtown to compete with century crossing. Newer buildings/stores. Downtown revitalization.
- Owner said registration was slow, no response after 45 days. Lease to open was 4.5 months. 3-month delay from COSG permit office. No clear process. Permits were confusing and unclear. Communication improvements/speed would be the most important. Entrepreneur shouldn't have to chase down each person/department. Clear path, requirements, and process. City/Businesses working together to create awareness for COSG businesses. Downtown Business Association does lots for core but non downtown businesses need that support as well.
- COSG does a good job, has seen them helping other businesses. Social media posts through the city. Knowledge about the projects ongoing in the city. Awareness of new buildings that company can bid on the projects to offer quotes/products. City permits, public knowledge. COSG to support local. Not aware of what permits are approved by the city. Recently set up an office, sublease, simple, Acheson doesn't require business license. Opportunities to digital board advertising, partner with the city, make them more affordable. Business licenses education, steps and processes, which space is available and suites you. Taxation codes/regulations, etc. Ecommerce sales and marketing.
- Lease rents are so high, reducing/subsidizing costs to business owners. Could incentivize home based businesses to move into commercial spaces. Idea of an incubator similar to NABI would be good but doesn't fit all business types since her business has AHS requirements for cleanliness, etc.
- Improve turnaround time on permits. Create a workflow, process, for new business owners with contact information. Busy Entrepreneurs don't have the time to navigate website, needs someone to provide assistance when needed.
- Tax breaks to the downtown businesses.
- Effective low cost advertising and awareness training. Could the COSG help local brick and mortar stores.
- Brand awareness. Support and acknowledge from the city. Marketing education.

- Clearly defining the licensing/permit/zoning.
- Advertising. Billboards on highway, radio, flyers.
- COSG could be more present on social media featuring different businesses. Digital marketing is most beneficial for their business.
- Existing clientele.
- Awareness. Subsidies, assist entrepreneurs. Lower costs of leasing.
- Cut down on the cost of everything because it trickles down to the business owner and therefore the consumer. If consumers stop shopping then the businesses close down. Make the city a more attractive place to do business and shop.
- Advertising opportunities. Billboards, buses. No development permits needed so the costs were reasonable.
- Events that are available to all business not just the city centre. Awareness and marketing.
- Would attend marketing courses if it fits in schedule. Full time student.
- WEBSITE: Goes on the economic one linked off the the site. Concerns are heard by the city pretty well, there's usually a resolution. Concerns usually go to economic development. They know who to contact
- Permit process is too long. New online portal is way btetter (than previous?)
- Permits: lots of people say "we cant open yet, we don't have a permit"
- Sometimes the walk through inspection they say something different than what they had said before
- There is a need to improve the process, additional inspectors have been hired. People will never all be happy with it
- In the city's defense (permit), they've introduced a new system that tried to making the permitting faster although some businesses state that it didn't help
- Lots that should be done different. I hear of new businesses trying, there's lots of difficulties. Just moved last July from an old location. I know what the new person had to go through in the building that I left, it's a lot. If aspiring business owners aren't persistent, its easy to walk away from the challenging process. COSG needs somebody hands-on to help new businesses, to walk them through. When you work with the city, on a city-view thing, they should have a liaison to help new business owners. We want small businesses here, they are the heartbeat of industry but the communities do not do a lot to say "welcome." The COSG systems for new businesses are not user-friendly, its easy to be sent to different departments and get lost in the process. An example: when I was moving last year. Needed to get a new business license with change of address. Didn't need a development permit because the space was already deemed fit for retail and there were no renos required. When I went on the city-view website, there was no option I could see for "moving locations" if you weren't starting a new business. I had to phone for assistance to find how to deal with this, was told to apply for a new business license.
- More reaching out to local businesses. We have business awards but something more public than that to feature and promote local businesses. To help promote local consumers to shop at local businesses. Maybe making finding leases, getting a space easier to find, there doesn't seem to be any centralized info. Realtors have to dig across

many different places to find info. There's multiple developers around. As we're looking for new locations, it's a challenge to sort out where to go for info.

- Getting a business license, why you need one. Getting a license is difficult, the lady who answers the phone is angry and not supportive. We need more support for small businesses. Training facility in Spruce Grove, making it more visible that we are not that far from Edmonton. Rent-an-office place for small businesses, there isn't really an option that's affordable and good. There are some small spaces available, but the landlords won't improve them (there's no pride of ownership). Space is a big issue particularly for service businesses, because we can't rent space on the main level.
- Having your business on one of the billboards, for about three months. Something to help out a little that wouldn't break the bank.
- Training, even if less expensive than third party mentorship.
- Promoting local small businesses, rather than big chains, or corporate dental offices. Finding resources to get the business name out there. Grand opening had social media posts, etc. but that's it. Training programs are good.
- No. Honestly I think the city's doing a pretty good job. Part of why people are attracted to the community is because the city's been fair, for ex on taxes etc. I haven't had to deal with it, but fellow business owners with business properties report that the city's been quite reasonable.
- When I had the lease space, I really struggled finding people for permits etc. Was unfamiliar with the process, how to get permits, how to get inspections. Would be smoother if there was a go-to person who can tell you where to go and who to call. I found the business license process very easy, but they could provide more support with other things. It was challenging to find the people I needed.
- Biggest thing is to reduce costs: taxes etc. make the biggest difference. Property taxes seem quite high, it makes it hard to get a storefront sustainable when you're starting out. A lot of distributors don't like online stores, so its essential to have a storefront in retail. Our customer demographic likes to physically be at your store rather than ecommerce.
- They should, if anything, stay out and not try to bring in their imaginative ideas. I do support city initiatives but and I don't feel that most people in the city have bad intent, but I think that it would be more effective to work with, for example, the Parkland Chamber of Commerce, which – although not without flaws – is ultimately led by businesses who are in the trenches and understand the needs better (and are already supporting business). When we moved from downtown to the industrial sector, it was frustrating to deal with city people as it was as if we were starting a new business from scratch. I think there should be a more meaningful relationship with the chamber, don't reinvent the wheel. Ask the chamber, don't just dictate to them. When I was on council, felt like an uphill battle to promote business interests.
- Nothing at this moment.
- If they to be growing bigger, they need to update the permit office. I've heard from lots of people about the issues they've faced. To wait 7-9 months to get a permit is crazy.
- No.
- I don't know, fairly happy here.

If the city offered training/programs, what delivery method would you prefer: In-person meetings, virtual training sessions, prerecorded online courses, physical incubator space for entrepreneurs, paper learning materials (books/pamphlets/documents) etc.

Would you travel to greater Edmonton to take advantage of these programs/services?

- In person is best option for owner even if it's in COSG or Edmonton. In person networking. Willing to travel. Physical resources through mail and virtual are secondary options.
- In person environment promotes learning. Tangible physical books/resources is beneficial. Would make time for programs in incubator space. Networking with other entrepreneurs is good.
- Prefers In-person meetings, sessions, courses. Willing to travel to Edmonton for training.
- Depending on the program: Would prefer in person learner or over phone. Prefer to stay in Stoney or Spruce, avoids Edmonton.
- Only time available is online, virtual, documents for training. Running three businesses doesn't give me a lot of free time.
- Virtual training sessions due to limited time.
- Short online courses, non-virtual. Learn at your own pace. Short manageable chapters/sections. Travel to edmonton for worthwhile courses that address his needs.
- In person is best but time challenges. Online course self paced learning.
- In person training is best so that questions can be answered. Willing to attend. Yes would travel to Edm.
- Virtual training sessions and or pre recorded video online courses. Would be willing to travel to Edmonton to attend valuable training.
- Would attend if info was valuable. In person is best but realistically pre-recorded video content would be best for schedule. Self paced learning.
- No not interested, our industry is quite small.
- Social media training. Networking, marketing. Prefer in person, is flexible. Would be willing to travel to Edm.
- Would attend. Paper learner, documents and books.
- Pre recorded online courses.
- In-person. Yes to greater Edmonton.
- Incubator space, online (NOT prerecorded).
- Not for myself, in our industry we wouldn't need access to an offsite office like a incubator.
- In-person. Greater Edmonton
- I'm more of an online person. More interactive, like Zoom is preferred.
- Online resources, using training sessions actually slowed my process down because I needed to wait for training.
- Every business is different, universally useful training is hard. It would have to be at a high level. Online would only be useful to some people, as lots of small businesses have

families and they're always being interrupted when at home. In-person training would be more useful and lead to better engagement.

- No
- I like online because I'm introverted, but also learn better in person. Hybrid would be great.
- In-person.
- 4 interviewees did not answer: N/A

Are you aware of, or have you used any services like [NAIT JR Shaw BBA](#), [UofA Entrepreneurship & Innovation](#), [MacEwan Ventures](#), [NABI in St Albert](#), [Edmonton Unlimited \(downtown\)](#), [Business Link](#), [Community Futures Network of AB](#), [ATB Entrepreneur Centre](#), [Futurpreneur](#), [BizConnect](#), [ERIN](#), [Alberta Innovates](#), [EO Edmonton](#), [Canada Startups.org](#), [Action for Healthy Communities](#), etc

What is your overall awareness of available innovation services in the region?

- Not aware of any of these services. Will be doing google searches for entrepreneurial services.
- Community Futures in Stoney Plain.
- None of the ones above. Member of other groups: Womanition, GPCC Greater Parkland Chamber of Commerce, Edmonton Dollar club, BX networking group,
- None. Chamber may have reached out, it could have been a BNI/BX group that meets monthly for lunch to network.
- Don't use any of these services.
- Community Futures in Stoney Plain. Would be willing to use the features/services.
- Aware of some of the services but haven't used any of them yet.
- No not aware and have not used.
- Heard of some of them but have not used them. Meetings with Edm Global and AB Innovates but never used the services.
- Not aware.
- Not aware and have not used them.
- Aware of Community futures, Alberta innovates but haven't used them.
- No and haven't used them.
- Full time student at MacEwan.
- Canada Job grant, federal program that pays a third of wages for first year of training
- No, barrier has been needing access to funding, but not qualifying
- Enrolled in CFIB, for their HR support
- Have looked into Community futures for a previous business, low awareness.
- Canada Startups, get emails. 30% awareness of programs. My impression is that.
- I need to do more research. 60% awareness of programs.
- No. Probably pretty low awareness of programs.

- No, I'm probably the worst person to talk to about this – I don't do any promo or media or outreach (that's all outsourced or based on referrals/word-of-mouth).
- Business link, they've really helped with my business plan.
- Currently using business link, because bureaucracy requires. I am aware of a number of these and have used some.
- No, not aware.
- 4 Interviewees replied "No".
- 8 Interviewees didn't reply: N/A.

Are you a member of any CSG associations? CCBA, Chamber of Commerce, networking groups, etc?

- Wanted to be a Chamber of Commerce member but expenses are high. Determining if it's worth it. Silver \$975/year. Pewter \$180/year & NFP \$125/year: 1 voting rep, access to educational ops, website, biz directory. CCBA invites us to participate in their events: Fall festival, Grove plaza, asked for input from the local businesses. Moonlight Madness. Downtown businesses had challenges due to construction on Macleod ave.
- Aware of them but haven't had the chance to join. Willing to pay membership for the benefits.
- Womanition, GPCC Greater Parkland Chamber of Commerce, Edmonton Dollar club, BX networking group,
- None
- Base level Chamber member. May not continue using it cuz it's not providing a lot of value for him.
- Greater Parkland Chamber member, downtown CCBA. Chamber offers health insurance, lowest package.
- Chamber of Commerce member. Guessing the lowest rate. Not sure what impact they've had on the business. CCBA involved with the downtown stamp program.
- Member of Chamber of Commerce. Not sure she used it to the full benefits. Marketing is a weakness for her. Lowest cost.
- Member of Chamber. CCBA but isn't a member. Not really aware of what the CCBA does and how to become a member if any.
- Chamber of commerce (\$42/month). Not 100% sure what they offer. Mainly guidelines.
- CCBA on email newsletter and involved in promotions or games/ads.
- No
- Part of Chamber last year but unsure if he will resign this year. Unsure about the value and services they offer. Didn't feel any help/assistance. Would value marketing/awareness from them. Attended the trade show with Chamber, but it was dead. Spring 2023 and booth cost.
- Considering becoming a chamber member. Not sure about how they can benefit the business. Received an info package.
- Don't think so.

- Had been member of chamber of commerce till 3 or 4 years ago (when they amalgamated with Stony Plain). Didn't agree with amalgamation, so left. CCBA: believe in that 100%. Was there from the beginning.
- CCBA, parkland and Atchison business association. Pretty basic member, of Chamber of commerce. Networking and business awards is the extent.
- Chamber Member, BMI, BX. Had trouble with finding how to join CCBA. Networking, mentorship. Sometimes mentorship.
- Used to be. Got zero use out of the chamber. Didn't see any recognition Chamber fees are 800 a year.
- No.
- Parkland chamber, not CCBA. No benefits aside from the grand opening event.
- Possibly chamber, not sure We had a booth in the Canada day park, have done some events.
- Tried to join CCBA, but we are not in the city centre.
- Just bowed out, was member for a year. Didn't see any benefits.
- Before we moved, took over sign printing business, CCBA. Chamber yes. CCBA: no use, too much influence of landowners vs businesses. Chamber is run by businesses, has been beneficial. Have seen them merge into Parkland. Greed and selfishness. When the business revitalization is over, 80% of local businesses will be gone.
- No, was part of something but was too many emails. (might have been parkland chamber). They didn't help me. Should do something about that railroad track if they want to build a residential area. That will be useful for business, the traffic there gets plugged up. Its growing fast but some of the roads aren't designed for growing.
- CCBA, ribbon-cutting ceremony. Not much, other than that.
- Chamber, its beneficial. They're involved, always asking and checking in, many events.
- 7 Interviewees didn't reply: N/A.

Do you self-identify as a part of any marginalized group or underrepresented population? Yes, No, or Prefer not to Answer?

Yes: 8 interviewees

No: 20 interviewees

Prefer not to answer or No Answer provided: 12

If yes, how do you identify? (Nationality, orientation, immigrant, refugee, minority, etc?)

- Immigrant from Phillipines, minority
- Metis
- Indigenous
- Lebanese
- Native
- Latinx
- Métis
- Females x 16

If yes, do you feel that CSG is tolerant or welcoming to your population?

- Decline to answer
- They are
- Yes
- Tolerant
- No
- Yes
- No
- I think so
- Yes

Appendix B: Primary Research – Rough Transcripts from CCBA and EDAC meetings

City of Spruce Grove City Centre Business Association Meeting Notes – Jan 17th, 2024

Why did you choose to start your business in Spruce Grove? (Pros/Cons CSG offers? Target Market? Need in marketplace? Proximity to home/CSG Resident? Growth potential?)

- Back on Track Chiropractic: Angela
 - Has 17 staff
 - Been here for 15-16 years, bought an existing practice and expanded it
 - Population to # of chiropractic, Spruce was underserved when she started. That's what made it attractive
- The Pretzel Shack: Anna
 - (Opened in 2022 2.5 years old)
 - Came to Canada with Husband 9welder, she's a pharaoh y tech). 5 years ago
 - They started in Edmonton, she worked at the pharmacy
 - Then stony Plain, was hard to find work - being from a different country made it hard to work
 - Started selling baking at farmers market, were successful and people asked if they would start a bakery
 - Traveled around a lot, looked at German bakeries
 - Asking people how they do things, where they get things from
 - Read all the books from the German bakers' school
 - Just opened a spruce grove location (2nd) in May
 - 6.5 staff
- Main Street – Law Laura
 - 45 people, four locations
 - Growing pains
 - I started with frank working with another lawyer. He went full time, and she was part-time, 30 years ago
- Laberge engraving – Pauline
 - 45-year-old business with 1 staff
 - Graph, diamond graph, can do anything
 - lots of problems getting good staff
 - Research
 - Involved with chamber of commerce
 - Put a lot of work in
 - Got contacts
 - Got roped into CCBA board of directors

- Daring Greatly Psychology – Cherise
 - 7 staff
 - Decided overnight to open a business. Was already in private practice, was making good money for employer.
 - Looked at spots in Edmonton, Spruce was more feasible
 - Consulted a friend about non-compete clause
 - Finding 60k to build, somehow did. Construction began day it opened. Quit job 3 days later
 - Took 90% of clients from old job. Within a few months had a full case load.
- RavenWolf brewery – Jan K
 - (less than 3 years old!!!) with 16 staff
 - Lots of research, traveled BC and Alberta
 - Visited business they wanted to be like. Samples their stuff, got an idea of size, location, feel, number of staff. Talk to owners. Where they got equipment.
 - MICROBREWERY and TAPROOM
 - RICK: How they found their customers?
 - The customers were already there, the craft brew industry was exploding, making it easier to get started. Legislation change made it easier for small breweries
 - Research too a year.. Including how to market, where to source equipment. Inquiring about potential clients
 - On connect logistics, province wide, looking to get into Sask soon
- Cera Tech 3D Dental Lab with 6.5 staff – Jason
 - Not a dentist, they make teeth
 - Only one in the company, not many of them in western canada
 - Worked for some other labs and implant-specialists (doctors)
 - Got into teaching - NAIT was looking for a instructor, taught crown and bridge for 9 years
 - Meanwhile, tech changed, everything became digitized
 - I wanted to learn digital
 - Was already living in spruce, found a space, opened it
 - Didn't do research outside of existing experience
 - Suppliers would throw themselves
 - Our clients are dentists all over the province
 - Main clientele is in the county and those neighboring
 - Started as a crown and bridge lab
 - More convenient for locals, more of a personal touch

What challenges/pain points did you experience in your start up journey in CSG that you would want to warn future entrepreneurs about? (Costs/Expenses, License Registration, etc? Anything that CSG did well or poorly during this process? Did you receive any support from CSG regarding these challenges?)

Angela – Back on Track Chiropractic:

- ∅ you have to learn everything on your own
 - Weak at financial stuff, figure out as you go
 - 5 years in, finally figured out
 - Incubator would have been very helpful if they were brand new
 - Hired an accountant, bookkeeper
 - Accountant mentor said: hire people

Jan J - city councillor, founder of RavenWolf brewery

- ∅ Grew so fast, lots of growing pains
- ∅ Got an accountant but not a bookkeeper at first
 - Thought they could bookkeep themselves, made a big mess
 - Had to learn to outsource skills they don't have
 - Not about having enough money, its about cashflow
- ∅ The fam had experience in relevant industries, but the business aspects were lacking
 - Market dipped in the season, had too much inventory
 - Then they have too much demand and not enough product
 - Had to learn how to manage that
- ∅ Solution: seeking other people in the same industry, learning from them

What are your biggest needs as a business owner? (Workforce, Funding, Training, Education, Mentorship, Support, etc?)

Pauline – Laberge engraving

- ∅ Biggest need: financial statements
- ∅ Having a mentor would be great
- ∅ RICK: if there was a series of programming offered
 - How to read a spreadsheet, read financial statements and books
 - There was nobody when she started, who could explain it
 - Had trouble thinking like an accountant

Cherise – Daring Greatly Psychology

- ∅ Competition:
 - When opened, there were only 2 main practices in town
 - 15 psychologists
 - 40-50 psychologists now
 - Being specialized is the way to continue being competitive
 - Trauma, military etc.
- ∅ RICK: Health is 3x the business compared to any other in Spruce
- ∅ Poaching is a big problem, competitors offer better contract percentages

- Train students who become registered psychologists, can provide supervision
- Growing the best and next gen of psychologists, mentorship is important
- Nathan volunteered as a director

What assistance/services/support do you think that the CSG should provide that can help all businesses?

- *What do you wish you had more of in the ecosystem?*
- *What do you need less of in the ecosystem?*
- *What types, if any, of training are needed in the region?*
- *Who provides innovation/entrepreneurship services in the region?*
- *What services are currently lacking in the region? Why do you say this?*

Angela K – Back on Track chiropractor:

- ⊘ WEBSITE: Goes on the economic one linked off the the site
- ⊘ Concerns are heard by the city pretty well, there's usually a resolution
 - Concerns usually go to economic development. They know who to contact

Janet Hanson - Executive assistant, looks after directors (CCBA)

- ⊘ WHAT happens when business have a need? (<Rick)
 - Our main job is to be the liaison between the business and the city
- ⊘ She reaches out to different business

Laura – Main Street Law

- ⊘ permit process is too long
- ⊘ New online portal is way better (than previous?)
- ⊘ WEBSITE
 - Doesn't let you have two locations

Pauline - Laberge engraving

- ⊘ Permits: lots of people say "we cant open yet, we don't have a permit"
- ⊘ They needed to open

Cherise – Daring Greatly Psychology

- ⊘ Sometimes the walk through inspection they say something different than what they had said before
- Dave Walker, Director of Economic and Business Development
 - ⊘ They have certain business responsibilities, inspections are necessary
 - ⊘ They find quite often a lot of the problems have to do with contractors.
 - Recent case: business owners complain that contractors are working on other jobs
 - ⊘ There is a need to improve the process, additional inspectors have been hired. People will never all be happy with it
 - ⊘ (AFTER question about WHERE people GO with challenges) The job (of economic development) is to regulate, to ensure everything conforms to the bylaws.

Jan J - city councillor, founder of RavenWolf brewery (less than 3 years old!!!)

- ∅ In the city's defense (permit), they've introduced a new system that tried to making the permitting faster
 - Pauline says: it didn't help
- ∅ CHALLENGES: went to economic development of the city
 - There was no business like this in the industrial area, only other brewery is commercial, not manufacturing
 - Was difficult to communicate
 - Chamber of commerce is helpful too

Are you aware of, or have you used any services like [NAIT JR Shaw BBA](#), [UofA Entrepreneurship & Innovation](#), [MacEwan Ventures](#), [NABI in St Albert](#), [Edmonton Unlimited \(downtown\)](#), [Business Link](#), [Community Futures Network of AB](#), [ATB Entrepreneur Centre](#), [Futurpreneur](#), [BizConnect](#), [ERIN](#), [Alberta Innovates](#), [EO Edmonton](#), [Canada Startups.org](#), [Action for Healthy Communities](#), etc?

- *What is the overall awareness of available innovation services in the region?*

Laura – Main Street Law

- ∅ Canada Job grant, federal program that pays a third of wages for first year of training

Cherise – Daring Greatly Psychological Services

- ∅ barrier has been — needing access to funding, but not qualifying
 - RICK: HAVE you Heard OF COMMUNITY FUTURES?
 - No

Jan J – RavenWolf brewery

Enrolled in CFIB, for their HR support

City of Spruce Grove Economic Development Advisory Committee Meeting Notes – Jan 30th, 2024

Have you had a previous business or startup? If you had a past startup or business, what was the business, where was it located, and did you sell or close the business? If you did sell or close the business, what were the reasons for doing so?

- Charlene
 - Husband and I owned computer business in Spruce for 25 years. Had other businesses, but that was main focus. Closed, not sold eventually, partly because selling the building so selling seemed illogical.
 - Retired a year
- Bruce
 - On my second in Spruce
 - First was construction management consulting
 - Was headhunted by major hotel chain operation. Left the company, now back in Spruce and working independently again
- Tyler
 - Third business
 - First business was rural wireless internet with Jodi H, goal was to develop and then sell to a bigger player, which we did
 - Also was building my own
 - Mainsrteet Law is the third and ongoing businesses. Never shut any down
- Don
 - About to buy sixth business
 - First business failed because I was young (early 20s), people I got into business with (investors/those with money) who were “con artists”.
 - Do your due diligence on who you partner with, be diligent about the financial side of things
 - Second business started as a rescue for the first one; we ran out of cashflow, we tapped out on our resources so we sold to a bigger player. Took their brand and built it up in western can before moving on later
 - First 15 years of my, 30 year career was playing around with my entrepreneurial dreams, trying to make them work within other peoples businesses. I dind’t like that
 - Not all businesses allow employees to be creative and entrepreneurial. I try to allow that in my own businesses now.
 - Most recent 15 years now on my own company
 - Doing multimillion dollar deals, buying companies in eastern Canada.
 - Young entrepreneurs should learn what their unique abilities are

What would you say is the best thing about owning a business in Spruce Grove? What would make owning a business here better? (internet service, cell service, access to labor; other items) Are you hearing anything from other businesses in Spruce Grove about the business environment here? (Formal education, certificates, online courses, accounting/bookkeeping, management?)

- Charlene
 - Big challenge used to be highspeed internet. We lost businesses in Spruce who left for Edmonton because of slow internet.
 - Over the course of the 13 years this committee has been going, we've talked about it. We've recently got it as of a year or two ago
 - I've heard from businesses that its hard to find talent and bring it here. We've become more of an attractive place to be.
 - Things have gotten a bit better now I think
 - We were having trouble finding labor period, but those things are maybe getting better
 - RICK: turnover?
 - I don't think there's tons. Theres a bit, not as bad as it used to be
- Kelly
 - Getting staff in (business?) advocacy for spruce grove was hard
 - Supply chain was also a big issue when I was involved
 - The city:
 - Trimunicipal are and business licensing has been a huge issue
 - (Carter: we've solved that in the last few months)
- Bruce
 - Some challenges that started when I moved here 10-12 years ago, are no longer issues. I had to move around the city because I had such bad internet at work
 - Finding workers used to be a problem
 - Spruce Grove, west Edmonton has become a more open area. Theres a market to tap in on, there are lots of people moving from the east coast (incl myself, many family etc.)
 - Seems like we're on an upswing, but we need to capitalize on that
 - I'm finding that cost of labour has gone up a lot, but clients don't want to pay more

What challenges/pain points did you experience when you started your business?
(Costs/Expenses, License Registration, etc? Anything that CSG did well or poorly during this process?
Did you receive any support from CSG regarding these challenges?)

- Charlene
 - We were a small business, only 7 employees.
 - On thing that affected us a lot was the economic cycles
 - We sold and fixed computers. When Albertans were rich they bought lots of new computers, when they were poor, they bought refurbished computers. We tried to change or focus to match the situation
 - As the general population's knowledge about computers increased, our help was less needed. We started to be much more sought after again during covid.
 - We sold our business in covid as well
- Kelly
 - First company was an internet search engine that I started as a teen, sold when I went to uni in 2000.
 - 8 years ago I started a consumer 3d printing business. Raised the capital, we were pushing and present in the business media.
 - Part of rodman's accelerator in Toronto
 - Was offered a 1mil cheque, was told he would have to put work above all else. Chose to put family first and declined, folded within a couple months
 - I decided to stay somewhat small
 - Had so many meetings with Toronto investors, it didn't go well.
 - Didn't match my needs, but I see the benefits of those programs
 - I've been running ponderosa ever since.
 - I'm a mathematician; doing financial statements drove me crazy because they are essentially made up. There are different styles of investors, everyone thinks they are shark tank these days
 - It's important to find a niche, look for niches.
 - With tech: don't try to be FaceBook, create something that breaks the cycle
 - We help newer tech businesses; try to guide them towards manageable, good-looking goals
 - App devs that come to see us are mostly local. People from all over, but lots from here. I still have business connections in Toronto.
 - There are a lot of people here who have a lot of ideas. Having an accellorateor where they could et those resources would be hugely helpful
 - (cont'd after #10's comments)
 - Want to figure how to get something into Spruce grove: maker spaces, entrepreneurial spaces, peer meetings, often social/networking things.

- I know at least four businesses that came out of hacklab Toronto; having places for intermixing/cross-pollination in an entrepreneurial environment is a great way to make new things happen and connect people with others who can help expand on their ideas with their own expertise and network.
 - My business came out of a place for intermixing. Without it, I would never have been able to start my business
 - The Chamber (Parkland?) helped me meet someone to help
- Bruce
 - On my second in Spruce
 - First was construction management consulting
 - Was headhunted by major hotel chain operation. Left the company, now back in Spruce and working independently again
- Victor
 - Commercial real-estate, leasing
 - Work with lots of people who are starting businesses
 - I've seen the best financial plans of my life, but the businesses can still fail because of external situation
 - People who embrace the community, get involved, get supported by the community as well
 - We're the fastest growing community in the area
 - I helped someone who recently sold a business after 12 years to get started (after they moved from a different country)
- Tyler
 - Third business
 - First business was rural wireless internet with Jodi H, goal was to develop and then sell to a bigger player, which we did
 - Also was building my own
 - Mainstreet Law is the third and ongoing businesses. Never shut any down
- Don
 - Some things that I've done that have worked very well:
 - Need to find peer groups for advice, entrepreneurial peer groups are valuable for learning things that you don't know. They might not know how to market, but they know how to do something else. Everyone has their specialties, you have to find your unique abilities, then identify people (either internally or externally) who can help with your weak points
 - Lots of young entrepreneurs try to figure out how to do everything, I did too. I figured out years later that I shouldn't be trying to do everything
 - One other important early thing to figure out as an entrepreneur is to figure out what your core values are. Your business values

should be aligned with who you are as a person, will make your work is easier

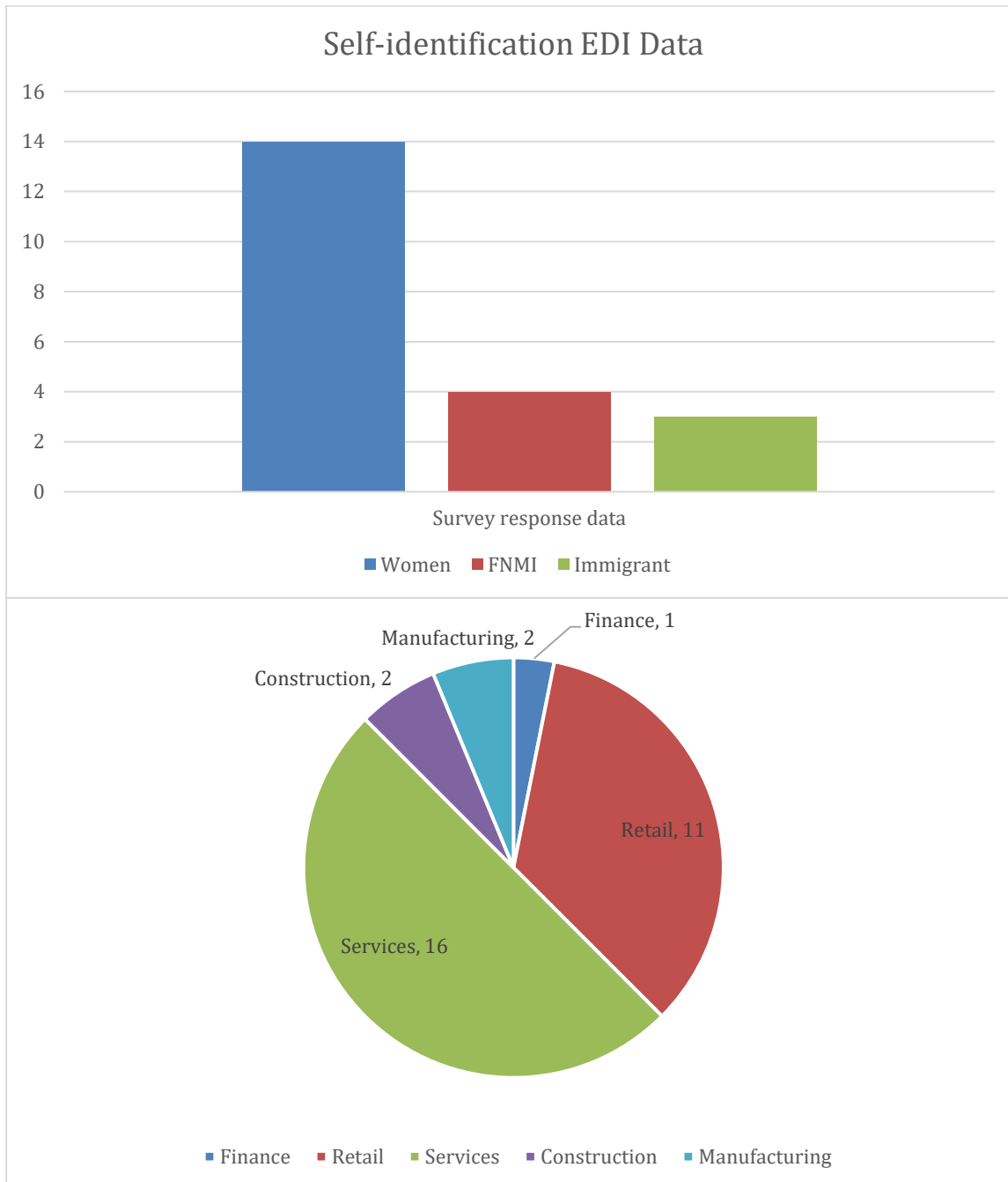
- Networking is key

Would you consider becoming involved as a mentor to early-stage companies? Would a monthly meetup with early-stage companies work? Like a Mastermind series with potential guest speakers on business topics?

- Victor
 - People from different cultural backgrounds (globally) are coming and wanting to start businesses. They need help navigating their business situations, how to work in the city centre of Spruce Grove
- Tyler
 - I thought that the mentorship from more experienced businesses is a great idea
 - Semiretired or retired business owners would add a lot of value to young entrepreneurs
- Don
 - I want to help 5000 entrepreneurs grow their businesses
 - ***I try to help young entrepreneurs for free already who walk in. I'd be happy to be involved in mentoring***

Appendix C: Graphic Representation of Primary Interviewee Business Demographics

The following show some graphic representations of demographic information of the business-owners interviewed in Appendix B, above.



*Note: not all respondents stayed until the end of the interview, and therefore not all were asked to self-identify. Additionally, business types only cover 32 of 42 respondents, as some data business data was ambiguous.

Appendix D: Business Statistics Table

INDUSTRIES	TOTAL
Accommodation and Food Services	84
<i>Banquet halls and catering staff</i>	2
<i>Full-Service Restaurants</i>	66
<i>Lodging</i>	4
<i>Snack & Non-alcoholic Beverage Bars</i>	11
<i>Travel trailer campsites</i>	1
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	15
<i>Employment referral services</i>	1
<i>Furniture cleaning services</i>	1
<i>Land maintenance services</i>	2
<i>Miscellaneous business assistance services</i>	4
<i>Miscellaneous support services</i>	2
<i>Office management services</i>	1
<i>Private detective agencies</i>	1
<i>Telephone solicitation services</i>	1
<i>Travel services</i>	2
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	3
<i>All Other Miscellaneous Crop Farming</i>	1
<i>Nursery and Tree Production</i>	2
Arts, Sports, Entertainment, and Recreation	20
<i>Galleries and museums</i>	1
<i>Gymnasium (gym)</i>	10
<i>Independent entertainers</i>	2
<i>Musical theater companies or groups</i>	1
<i>Nature Reserves</i>	1
<i>Recreational Clubs</i>	3
<i>Specialty gambling facilities</i>	2
Banking, Finance and Insurance	32
<i>Commercial banks</i>	7
<i>Consumer Lending</i>	3
<i>Credit Unions</i>	1
<i>Financial Transaction Processing</i>	2
<i>Insurance Agencies and Brokerages</i>	9
<i>Real Estate Credit Lending</i>	2
<i>Trust, Fiduciary, and Custody Activities</i>	2
Construction	106
<i>All Other Specialty Trade Contractors</i>	9

Commercial and Institutional Building Construction	4
<i>Drywall and Insulation Contractors</i>	6
<i>Electricians and Wire Installation Contractors</i>	10
<i>Finish Carpentry Contractors</i>	4
New Single-Family Housing Construction (except Operative Builders)	23
<i>Other Building Equipment Contractors</i>	2
<i>Other Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction</i>	1
<i>Painting and Wall Covering Contractors</i>	1
<i>Plumbing, Heating, and Air-Conditioning Contractors</i>	8
<i>Poured Concrete Foundation and Structure Contractors</i>	2
<i>Power and Communication Line and Related Structures Construction</i>	1
<i>Residential Remodeling Contractors</i>	7
<i>Road/Street, Highway and Bridge Construction</i>	3
<i>Roofing Contractors</i>	4
<i>Siding Contractors</i>	1
<i>Site Preparation Contractors</i>	12
<i>Water and Sewer Lines and Treatment/Storage Structures Construction</i>	8
Education	33
<i>Academic Tutoring and Exam Preparation Services</i>	3
<i>Driver Education Schools</i>	1
<i>Educational Assistance Services</i>	3
<i>Elementary, middle and high schools</i>	15
<i>Fine Arts Schools</i>	3
<i>Miscellaneous Schools and Instruction</i>	3
<i>Sports and Recreation Instruction</i>	5
Health Care and Social Services	100
<i>Children services</i>	1
<i>Chiropractors' clinics</i>	5
<i>Dentists' clinics</i>	25
<i>Doctors of optometry clinics</i>	7
<i>Doctors of podiatry clinics</i>	1
<i>Family planning clinics</i>	1
<i>Freestanding ambulatory surgical and emergency clinics</i>	3
<i>Medical labs</i>	1
<i>Miscellaneous health care providers</i>	5
<i>Miscellaneous residential care clinics</i>	1
<i>Nursery schools</i>	10
<i>Nursing homes</i>	1
<i>Offices of All Other Miscellaneous Health Practitioners</i>	11
<i>Physical, occupational, speech therapists and audiologists' clinics</i>	2
<i>Physicians' clinics</i>	22
<i>Rehabilitation hospitals</i>	1
<i>Senior homes (without nursing care)</i>	3
Holding Companies and Managing Offices	2
<i>Offices of financial institution holding companies</i>	1
<i>Offices of miscellaneous holding companies</i>	1

Information	15
Cinemas	2
Sound Recording Studios	1
Manufacturing - Chemical, Fuel, Paper, Plastic, Wood	4
Commercial Gravure Printing	3
Cut Stock, Resawing Lumber, and Planing	1
Manufacturing - Electronics, Furniture, Machinery, Metal, Transportation, Misc.	15
All Other Miscellaneous Manufacturing	1
Dental Laboratories	3
Fabricated Structural Metal Manufacturing	2
Industrial Process Furnace and Oven Manufacturing	1
Machine Shops	2
Other Metal Container Manufacturing	1
Sign Manufacturing	4
Turbine and Turbine Generator Set Units Manufacturing	1
Manufacturing - Processed Food, Textiles, Clothing	3
Breweries	1
Retail Bakeries	2
Mineral, Oil and Gas Extraction	5
Dimension Stone Mining and Quarrying	1
Drilling Oil and Gas Wells	3
Support Activities for Oil and Gas Operations	1
Other Services - Repair, Personal Care, Laundry, Religious, etc.	108
Animal care services	1
Automotive washing and polishing services	2
Beauty Shops	18
Business organizations	11
Car exterior and interior restoration	6
Car quick lube shops	4
Car repair shops	10
Civil liberties organizations	1
Coin-operated laundry and drycleaning services	2
Commercial and industrial machinery and equipment restoration and support	2
Community clubs	3
Electronic and Precision Equipment Repair and Maintenance(Unclassified)	2
Entombment services	1
Furniture restoration shops	2
Household type appliance repair services and support	1
Manicure and pedicure salons	8
Men's and boys' hair cutting shops	4
Miscellaneous personal and household goods restoration and support	1
Miscellaneous self grooming services (except hair, nail, facial, nonpermanent makeup, nonmedical diet services)	10
One-hour film developing and printing labs	1

<i>Pickup and drop-off sites for drycleaners and laundries</i>	1
<i>Political action committees (PACs)</i>	1
<i>Religious societies</i>	12
<i>Weight loss centers</i>	3
<i>Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</i>	73
<i>Accountants' (except CPAs) services</i>	8
<i>Accountants/CPAs offices/private accounting practices</i>	3
<i>Animal hospitals, clinics, and veterinarians</i>	22
<i>Architects' offices</i>	1
<i>Art (graphic and commercial) services</i>	1
<i>Attorney Offices/Private Practices</i>	11
<i>Building inspection bureaus</i>	1
<i>Business Management Consulting Services</i>	1
<i>Computer-aided design (CAD), engineering (CAE), manufacturing (CAM) systems integration design services</i>	2
<i>Custom consulting services</i>	3
<i>Draftsmen's offices</i>	1
<i>Engineers' offices</i>	2
<i>HR consulting services</i>	1
<i>Landscape architects</i>	1
<i>Language interpretation/translation services</i>	1
<i>Mail advertising services</i>	1
<i>Miscellaneous Management Consulting Services</i>	1
<i>Miscellaneous Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</i>	5
<i>Photographic services</i>	3
<i>Research-Devmt In Biotechnology (Except Nanobio)</i>	1
<i>Scientific and technical consulting services (except environmental)</i>	1
<i>Tax services</i>	2
<i>Public Administration</i>	10
<i>Fire Protection</i>	2
<i>Legislative assemblies</i>	7
<i>Police Protection</i>	1
<i>Real Estate and Rentals</i>	31
<i>Car Rental Agencies</i>	3
<i>General Rental Centers</i>	3
<i>Landlords of Nonresidential Buildings (except Miniwarehouses)</i>	2
<i>Landlords of Other Real Estate Property</i>	2
<i>Landlords of Residential Buildings and Dwellings</i>	3
<i>Miscellaneous Commercial and Industrial Machinery and Equipment Rental and Leasing</i>	1
<i>Office Equipment Rental and Leasing</i>	1
<i>Other Activities Related to Real Estate</i>	1
<i>Real Estate Agencies and Brokerages</i>	10
<i>Residential Property Managers</i>	1
<i>Truck, Trailer, Bus and RV Rental and Leasing Agencies</i>	4
<i>Retail: Hobby, Media, General Merchandise</i>	106

<i>Retail: Home, Food, Automobiles, Personal Care</i>	79
<i>Grocery Stores and Supermarkets</i>	6
<i>Home Improvement Stores</i>	3
<i>New Car Dealerships</i>	4
<i>Paint and Wallpaper Stores</i>	1
<i>RV Dealerships</i>	2
<i>Transportation and Warehousing: Couriers and Messengers, Warehousing and Storage</i>	4
<i>Couriers and Express Delivery Services</i>	1
<i>Farm Product Warehousing and Storage</i>	1
<i>Other Warehousing and Storage</i>	1
<i>Postal Service</i>	1
<i>Transportation and Warehousing: Private and Public Transportation, Oil and Gas Pipelines, Sightseeing</i>	17
<i>Crude Oil and Petroleum Pipelines</i>	3
<i>General Freight Trucking, Local</i>	2
<i>Motor Vehicle Towing</i>	4
<i>Specialized Freight (except Used Goods) Trucking, Long-Distance</i>	3
<i>Taxi Service</i>	5
<i>Unclassified</i>	13
<i>Unclassified Establishments</i>	13
<i>Wholesalers</i>	29
<i>Brick, Stone, and Related Construction Material Merchant Wholesalers</i>	1
<i>Construction and Mining (except Oil Well) Machinery and Equipment Merchant Wholesalers</i>	2
<i>Electrical Apparatus and Equipment, Wiring Supplies, and Related Equipment Merchant Wholesalers</i>	2
<i>Fish and Seafood Merchant Wholesalers</i>	1
<i>Hardware Merchant Wholesalers</i>	1
<i>Industrial Machinery and Equipment Merchant Wholesalers</i>	6
<i>Motor Vehicle Parts (Used) Merchant Wholesalers</i>	2
<i>Motor Vehicle Supplies and New Parts Merchant Wholesalers</i>	1
<i>Other Commercial Equipment Merchant Wholesalers</i>	1
<i>Other Construction Material Merchant Wholesalers</i>	3
<i>Other Grocery and Related Products Merchant Wholesalers</i>	2
<i>Other Miscellaneous Durable Goods Merchant Wholesalers</i>	2
<i>Packaged Frozen Food Merchant Wholesalers</i>	1
<i>Paint, Varnish, and Supplies Merchant Wholesalers</i>	1
<i>Plumbing and Heating Equipment and Supplies (Hydronics) Merchant Wholesalers</i>	1
<i>Recyclable Material Merchant Wholesalers</i>	1
<i>Service Establishment Equipment and Supplies Merchant Wholesalers</i>	1