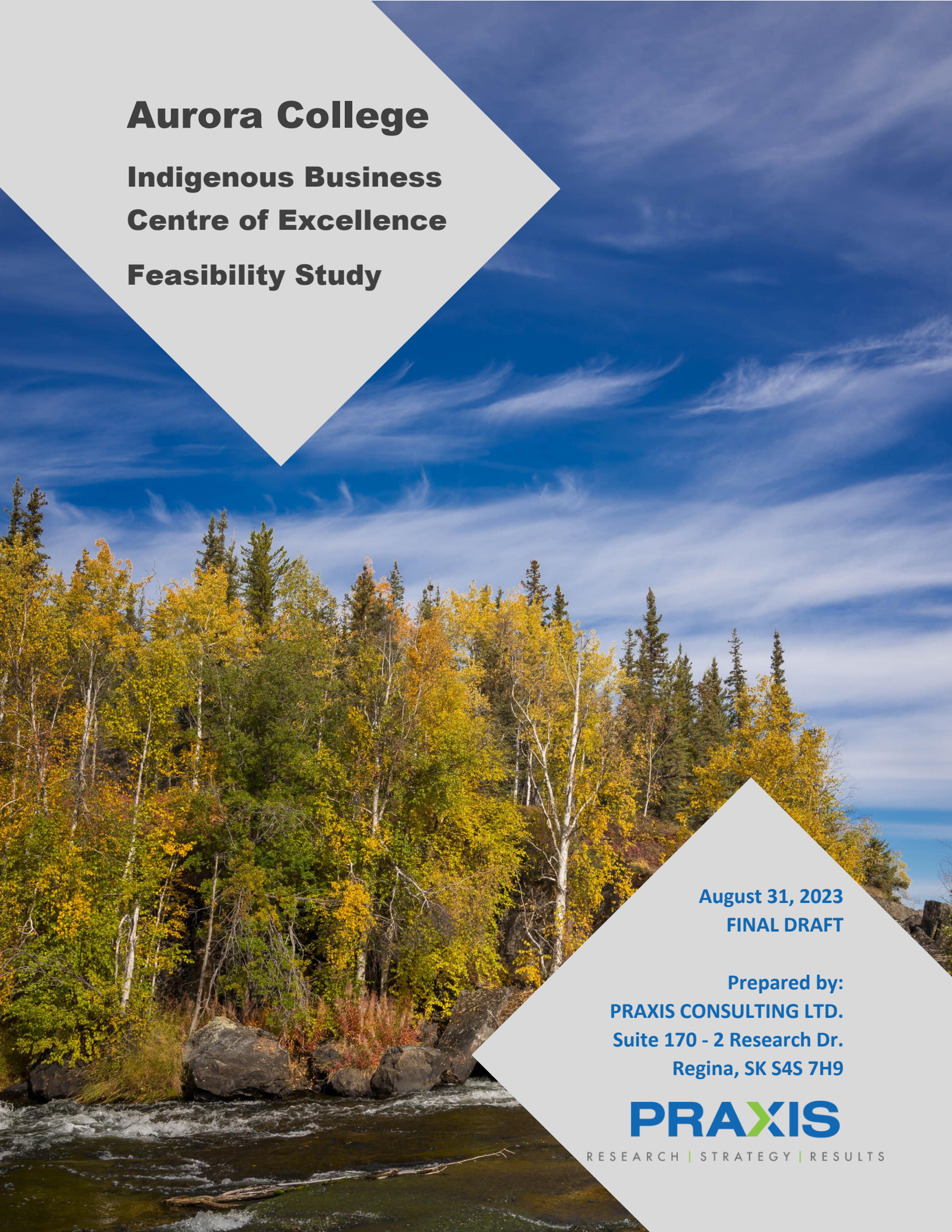
Aurora College

Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence

Feasibility Study



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FINAL DRAFT

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PRAXIS
RESEARCH | STRATEGY | RESULTS

This report was produced as part of a project funded by the Future Skills Centre (FSC), with financial support from the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.

FSC is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. We believe Canadians should feel confident about the skills they have to succeed in a changing workforce. As a pan-Canadian community, we are collaborating to rigorously identify, test, measure, and share innovative approaches to assessing and developing the skills Canadians need to thrive in the days and years ahead. The Future Skills Centre was founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint ADE, and The Conference Board of Canada

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LAND AND CULTURAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We respectfully acknowledge that Aurora College is situated on the traditional territories and homeland of the Dene, Inuit, and Métis peoples of the Northwest Territories. We are grateful to the many Indigenous peoples of the NWT for allowing us the opportunity to learn, work, and live on their lands. We are also deeply grateful for the generous sharing of Traditional Knowledge, wisdom, and ways of knowing, being and doing with our students and employees.

We respectfully acknowledge that Praxis Consulting is on the traditional lands referred to as Treaty 4 Territory, the original lands of the Cree, Dakota, Lakota, Nakota, Okibwe, Saulteaux, and the home of the Métis. We respect and honour the Treaties and are committed to moving forward with Indigenous Nations in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

Image Source: Aurora College

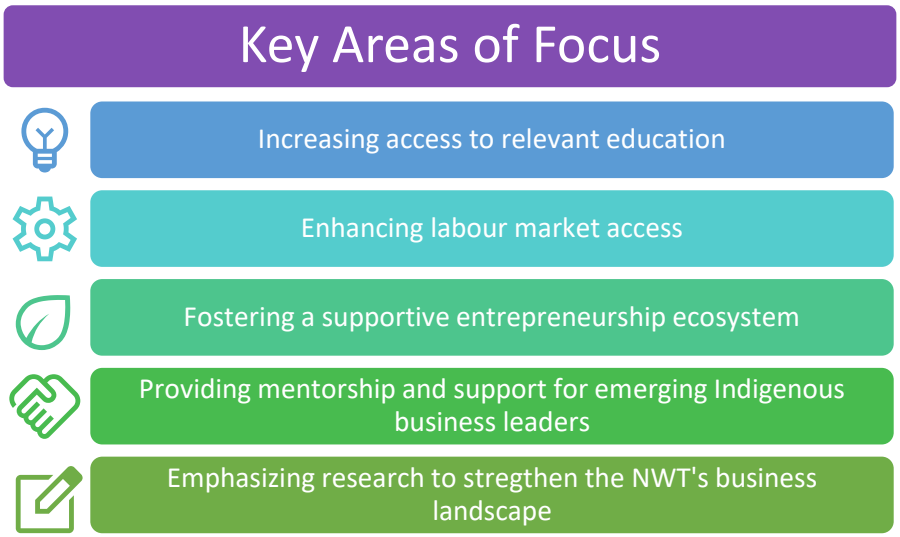
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a growing recognition of the long-standing inequities faced by Indigenous communities in business and education in Canada's North. Addressing these gaps and fostering economic growth and innovation in the region have become pressing priorities for policymakers and stakeholders. The Northwest Territories are witnessing an increasing demand for Indigenous business development capacity and skills, creating a clear need for a supportive ecosystem that empowers Indigenous entrepreneurs. With technological advancements enabling online learning and knowledge sharing, access to education and resources is more feasible than ever, making the study's exploration of continuing education and labor market access for Indigenous residents timely and relevant.

Project Background

With the support of the Government of the Northwest Territories through the generous funds of the Future Skills Centre, Aurora College commissioned Praxis Consulting (Praxis) to undertake a feasibility study to explore the viability of an Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence (IBCE) in the Northwest Territories (NWT) and beyond.

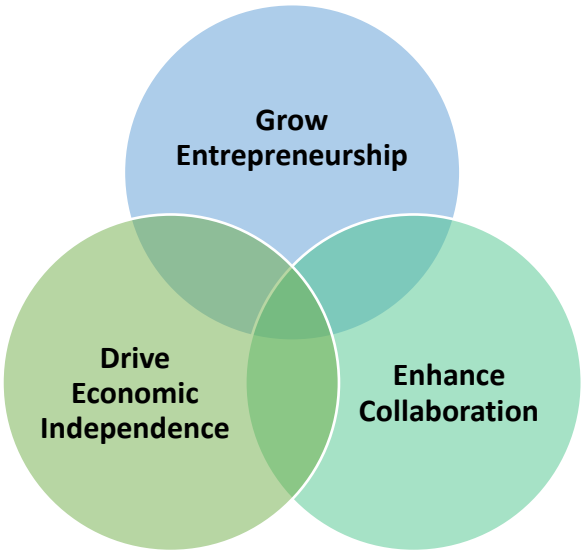
The study's main objectives focus on examining the need, exploring the opportunity, and determining the best model for a two-year proof of concept pilot project. Recognizing the long-standing inequities faced by Indigenous communities in business and education, the study aims to address gaps in Indigenous entrepreneurship and business development, stimulating economic growth and innovation in the North.



Vision of IBCE

The IBCE aims to provide Indigenous individuals and small businesses in the NWT with a clear path to entrepreneurship as a career, provide capacity building and upskilling opportunities, and facilitate connections to a network of other business supports. The IBCE recognizes that a broad range of existing supports are available in the region and understands the need to avoid duplicating services or competing for participants. By fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing amongst partners, the

IBCE seeks to amplify the impact of existing initiatives and strengthen the overall support system for Indigenous entrepreneurship.



The goals of the IBCE encompass promoting entrepreneurship as a viable career option, enhancing entrepreneurial networks and knowledge sharing, and driving Indigenous economic independence through empowering businesses, fostering diversification, and enhancing market access. By empowering Indigenous individuals and businesses, the IBCE seeks to foster economic growth, cultural preservation, and sustainable economic ventures within Indigenous communities.

Operating Model

The IBCE must establish an organizational structure that aligns with stakeholder goals and leverages its resources effectively. The recommended hybrid model combines centralized coordination with decentralized operations to deliver universal, high-quality services in the Northwest Territories and across the North. A central office located within Aurora College's Urban Campus in Yellowknife would manage overall operations, program development, partnerships, and planning. Regional satellite support centers situated strategically in each region, such as Inuvik, Yellowknife, and Fort Smith, would provide localized assistance, mentorship, workshops, and networking opportunities. Mobile outreach teams would travel to remote communities for personalized consultations and training. Technology, partnerships with existing organizations, and leveraging Indigenous knowledge and best practices are crucial for extending the IBCE's reach.

The IBCE’s governance structure should prioritize Indigenous representation, partnership engagement, consensus-based decision-making, transparency, regional representation, capacity building, and continuous engagement. Effective management of non-financial resources, including human resources, networks, partnerships, Indigenous knowledge, technology, and physical spaces, will be essential to the IBCE's long-term success and impact in promoting entrepreneurship and economic independence among Indigenous communities.

Critical Success Factors & Key Findings

A large body of research was amassed in the development of this study. Primary research included focus groups, informant interviews, and an online public survey. Secondary research included a literature review and web-based investigation. The research focused in four areas, all trying to better understand Indigenous entrepreneurship and growing Indigenous entrepreneurs.

- **a jurisdictional review** to understand what is known and how others are doing it;
- **an environmental scan** of the market and industry;
- **live engagements** with primary stakeholders and expert informants to develop and refine the IBCE concept; and,
- **a study** of key partner types needed for success.

The jurisdictional review included a literature review, an inventory of the primary Indigenous entrepreneurship and small business supports currently available in the NWT, and short case study reviews of five leading programs in Canada. The environmental scan used the Porter's Five Forces and PESTLE frameworks to understand the market forces that will affect the IBCE, and a SWOT analysis to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the IBCE concept against the opportunities and threats present in the NWT and throughout Northern Canada. The engagement-based research methods included multiple focus group sessions with Indigenous and non-Indigenous officials, business & community leaders, and entrepreneurs; seven in depth interviews with expert informants; and a publicly available survey receiving 112 responses. The research into understanding the types of partners and funders the IBCE should target as well as the strategies was done using desktop internet methods.

Image Source: Stock Image

Overall, eight critical success factors and key findings emerged:

- **Collaboration & Partnerships.** The IBCE should adopt a collaborative approach and seek partnerships.
- **Indigenous Lens and Cultural Relevance.** The IBCE must design its programs and services with an Indigenous lens.
- **Focus on Community and Traditional Economy.** The IBCE should recognize and support a community-oriented approach.
- **Flexibility and Accessibility.** The IBCE should offer flexible and practical programs.
- **Competition, Duplication, and Adding Value.** The IBCE must add value without competing with or duplicating existing programs.
- **Government Alignment and Funding.** The IBCE should closely monitor and align with government budgeting priorities in NWT.

Collaboration and Partnerships - The IBCE should adopt a collaborative approach and seek partnerships with various stakeholders, including other program providers, businesses, government bodies, and community organizations. Collaboration allows the IBCE to pool resources, tap into expertise, and offer a wider range of opportunities for participants. Strategic alignment and ongoing relationship management are essential to ensure successful and mutually beneficial partnerships.

Indigenous Lens and Cultural Relevance - The IBCE must design its programs and support services with an Indigenous lens, incorporating Indigenous knowledge, values, and ways of doing business. Embracing Indigenous perspectives and cultural preservation fosters community engagement and promotes meaningful educational experiences.

Focus on Community and Traditional Economy - Indigenous entrepreneurship in the NWT places a strong emphasis on social impact and community well-being. The IBCE should recognize and support this community-oriented approach, encouraging sustainable resource use and fostering collaborative relationships. Additionally, the IBCE should recognize the value of traditional knowledge and support Indigenous entrepreneurs engaged in sustainable and culturally respectful business ventures.

Flexibility and Accessibility - To address challenges in participant recruitment and retention, the IBCE should offer flexible and practical programs that accommodate various learning preferences and geographical challenges faced by Indigenous residents in the North. Program participation should be accessible and affordable, with minimal costs and financial supports to ensure maximum participation. Wherever and whenever possible, in-person interactions should be the preferred approach.

Competition, Duplication and Adding Value - The IBCE must avoid competing for participants or duplicating existing programs and services, focusing instead on collaborating with other providers and identifying gaps in services. By adding value through supplementary services and wrap-around support, the IBCE can ensure a comprehensive approach to participant needs and development.

Government Alignment and Funding - The IBCE should closely monitor government budget priorities in the NWT and align its objectives and programs accordingly. By aligning with government priorities, the IBCE can increase its chances of securing funding and support for long-term sustainability.

Entrepreneurship Promotion and Outreach - To capitalize on the region's entrepreneurial spirit, the IBCE should promote entrepreneurship as a rewarding career choice. Implementing a comprehensive communication strategy, including targeted marketing and community engagement sessions, will ensure potential participants are aware of the resources and services offered by the IBCE. Additionally, the IBCE should engage Indigenous youth in entrepreneurship at an early age, collaborating with regional educational authorities to develop culturally relevant curriculum materials.

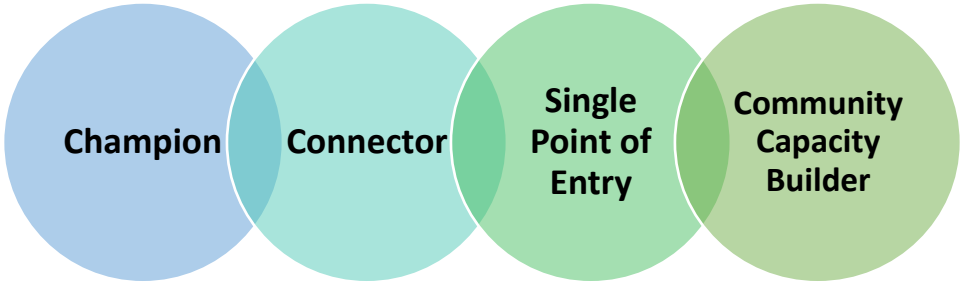
Differentiated Approach and Innovation - To stand out from competitors, the IBCE should offer unique and innovative support mechanisms, attracting participants seeking specialized assistance. The IBCE can prioritize innovation, cultural relevance, and holistic support by drawing inspiration from non-government Indigenous-led programs.

- **Entrepreneurship Promotion and Outreach.** The IBCE should promote entrepreneurship as a rewarding career choice.
- **Differentiated Approach and Innovation.** The IBCE should offer unique and innovative support mechanisms.

Feasibility Assessment

The feasibility of the IBCE could face challenges from the presence of numerous existing entrepreneurship programs and a relatively small pool of individuals seeking support due to potential factors such as low awareness or capacity to engage with institutionalized supports.

As the NWT already boasts a variety of resources and programs offered by academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and government initiatives promoting and supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship, direct competition with these providers would not be the most effective strategy for the IBCE. Duplicating services provided by others may not increase accessibility and could potentially harm the viability existing programs. Instead, the IBCE should aim to fill gaps and add value by filling the following underdeveloped roles in the NWT's Indigenous business ecosystem.



Champion of Indigenous Business Leadership: There is a need for a pan-territorial champion for Indigenous knowledge and business leadership. The IBCE could work with Indigenous governments, Indigenous Knowledge Holders, and Indigenous business organizations to harness and promote Indigenous business ways of knowing. By partnering with the Aurora Research Institute, the IBCE could advance Indigenous led research into business excellence and Indigenous and non-Indigenous government policy making.

Connector: While there is a range of available supports, there appears to be an absence of concerted promotional efforts among providers. As a connector, the IBCE could hold close relationships with a wide range of organizations and be able to harness the power of joint funding and combined networks to increase the awareness of entrepreneurship as a career for Indigenous Peoples across the North. Additionally, there is limited mentorship and coaching supports available to entrepreneurs. By connecting Indigenous entrepreneurs to the IBCE's network of resources and support providers, it could provide easy and direct access to invaluable experiential learning opportunities.

Single Point of Entry: Primary research indicates that those wanting to become economically self-sufficient report not knowing where to begin on the path of entrepreneurship and feel intimidated by the process of business creation. The IBCE could directly address these barriers by adopting an Indigenous led approach to engagement and support.

Support Community-level Economic Independence: There appears to be limited efforts targeted towards growing community-level economic development capacity of some of the NWT most financially dependant communities. The IBCE could harness the power of partnerships with economically advanced Indigenous nations in the North and across Canada to create specific programming and unlock resources to help lagging communities increase their economic independence.

Overall, the feasibility of the IBCE is strong if it can build a business plan around the Critical Success Factors and one or more of the missing business ecosystem roles described above.

Image Source: Stock Image

Recommendations for Next Steps

Detailed Planning Phase: The IBCE concept has proved viable and should be advanced for approval to move forward to the detailed planning phase.

Funding and Partnerships: Funding for the IBCE should be secured, including the $350,000 startup capital and $2,300,000 operational funding required for the two-year pilot. Collaborate with the Government of the Northwest Territories to address potential funding challenges and explore opportunities for third-party funding sources. Identify the third-party partners that align with the IBCE's vision and mandate and foster meaningful collaborations and innovation wherever possible.

Inclusivity and Indigenous Involvement: Engage the upcoming Indigenous Knowledge Holder's Council, as well as Indigenous governments and organizations in the detailed planning process. Incorporate their valuable perspectives and traditional knowledge to ensure the IBCE's initiatives are culturally relevant and inclusive.

Research Collaboration: Incorporate the IBCE's research arm with the Aurora Research Institute (ARI) to optimize available funding and research resources. This synergy will enhance the impact and effectiveness of the IBCE's research initiatives as well as the ARI.

Community Engagement and Support: Collaborate with all Indigenous nations in the NWT to identify specific needs and leverage the resources and knowledge available through the territory's leading economic development corporations. This approach will foster capacity-building and advance economic independence within Indigenous communities.

Image Source: Aurora College

INTRODUCTION

Through the generous funds of the Future Skills Centre and coordinated through Aurora College contracting Praxis Consulting (Praxis), a feasibility study was undertaken to explore the viability of an Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence in the Northwest Territories (NWT) and beyond.

Background and Context

This project involves conducting a comprehensive feasibility study to assess the viability of establishing an Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence (IBCE) and its potential integration within the NWT polytechnic university.

The feasibility study recognizes the long-standing inequities in business and education faced by people in Canada's North, especially Indigenous communities. These inequities place Northern residents at a disadvantage, hindering their well-being and impeding economic growth and innovation. By addressing the gaps in Indigenous entrepreneurship and business development and support, the study aims to grow capacity, stimulate economic growth, and encourage innovation in the North.

The study assesses various aspects, including increasing access to continuing education that is relevant and meaningful to Indigenous residents in the NWT and the broader Northern region. It also explores opportunities to enhance labor market access for Indigenous Northerners to business leadership positions, recognizing the importance of representation and inclusivity in decision-making roles.

Furthermore, the feasibility study examines the growing need for Indigenous business development capacity and skills, aiming to create a supportive ecosystem that empowers Indigenous entrepreneurs and promotes their success. The IBCE would serve as a focal point for collaboration among Northern industry, businesses, and the academic community, fostering knowledge exchange and synergistic partnerships.

Mentorship and support for emerging Indigenous business leaders are key focuses, nurturing their growth and providing guidance in their entrepreneurial journeys. Additionally, the study emphasizes the significance of research that supports the development and growth of Northern Indigenous businesses, generating insights and best practices to strengthen the region's business landscape.

Finally, the key objectives of the feasibility study include increasing access to relevant and meaningful continuing education for Indigenous residents in the NWT and the broader Northern region. It also aims to expand labor market access for Indigenous Northerners to business leadership positions and address the growing need for Indigenous business development capacity and skills. The IBCE would act as a focal point for collaboration among Northern industry, businesses, and the academic community, promoting knowledge exchange and cooperation. Additionally, the project aims to provide increased mentorship and support for emerging Indigenous business leaders while emphasizing research that supports the development and growth of Northern Indigenous businesses.

Objectives and Scope

The specific objectives of the feasibility study include:

- **Assessing** needs and gaps
- **Exploring** opportunities
- **Evaluating** business centre models
- **Engaging** stakeholders
- **Assessing** next steps

1. **Assessing Needs and Gaps:** The study conducted a scan of current Indigenous businesses and existing entrepreneurship program and support providers the NWT to determine the specific needs and identify gaps that an IBCE could address.
2. **Exploring Opportunities:** A detailed scan and engagement process was conducted in the NWT, along with an overview scan of Nunavut and Yukon, to identify potential opportunities for an IBCE. This involved assessing the demand and interest in supporting an IBCE across the three territories within the landscape of existing providers and identifying opportunities for partnerships.
3. **Evaluating Business Centre Models:** The study examined various existing Indigenous business centres and entrepreneurship support models that align with the needs and opportunities in the NWT and the broader North. Financial analysis was conducted to assess capital startup and operating costs. Additionally, potential funding sources were identified.
4. **Engaging Stakeholders:** A detailed internal and external engagement plan was developed, incorporating input from the Advisory Committee. This plan ensured community-level involvement through focus groups, surveys, letters of support, and key informant interviews to gather input and inform the project deliverable.
5. **Assessing Next Steps:** The study will evaluate the feasibility of moving forward with the IBCE as part of the transformation of Aurora College to a Polytechnic University. It will explore possible next steps and consider a proof-of-concept model for a two-year pilot IBCE, including scoping out potential third-party funding sources.

The IBCE would aim to ensure that Indigenous entrepreneurs have access to the necessary support and advice to achieve their business goals, including small business development and joint venture opportunities. Furthermore, the IBCE's development is expected to contribute to the creation of best practices that other Northern jurisdictions in Canada can adopt to support the viability of similar initiatives.

Methodology and Data Sources

Praxis employed several research methods to complete the feasibility work for the IBCE including:

Primary Research Methods	Secondary Research Methods
- Focus group facilitation - Online survey, data collection and analysis - Informant Interviews	- Environmental Scan - Background Document Review - Literature Review - Comparable Program Review - Business Registry Data Analysis

The primary research methods included a focus group of key stakeholders and informants, online surveys with entrepreneurs, students, faculty and other interested parties, and informant interviews with subject matter experts and key stakeholders. These methods aimed to engage stakeholders and gather qualitative and quantitative data for informed decision making. The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) methodology was used to ensure fair and inclusive engagement, with the level of engagement determined based on the goals set by the Advisory Committee.

A focus group made up of representatives of the Advisory Committee was formed and two video-conferenced sessions were held with the group. The panel was asked a series of questions similar to the online survey and informant interviews.

Online surveys were conducted to measure community needs, support for the IBCE, and future ideas. Statistical analysis using the SPSS software was performed on the survey data, including validity and reliability tests and analysis of demographic segments. The survey questionnaire was vetted through the Advisory Committee and the survey was hosted using the Qualtrics platform.

One-on-one interviews were conducted with key informants identified by the Advisory Committee. These individuals were located across the NWT and represented various stakeholder groups and subject matter experts such government officials, heads of First Nations economic development corporations and entrepreneurs. The interview questions were vetted through the Advisory Committee, and the interviews were conducted remotely via the Microsoft Teams platform.

In addition to primary research methods, secondary research methods were employed. An **environmental scan** was conducted to explore resources and models related to the IBCE from various sources, including territorial, circumpolar, provincial, Indigenous, and Canadian perspectives. A background document review was carried out to leverage existing data and avoid duplication of efforts.

A literature review was conducted to gather insights from academic research, industry reports, government publications, and scholarly articles and books, focusing on topics such as Indigenous entrepreneurship, business development, economic growth, educational models, best practices for business centers, and support services for Indigenous businesses.

Praxis reviewed the **background documents** on the College as well as the history and current context of the College. The documents provided by Aurora College included:

- N.W.T. Labour Market Information Resource Modules 1 – 6 (2022);
- Investing in Polytechnic Education in the Northwest Territories – Issue Briefing (2023);
- Aurora College Transformation Implementation Plan (2020);
- Aurora College Annual Report 2020/21;
- Aurora College Academic Plan 2021-2024;
- Aurora College Corporate Plan 2022-2023;
- Aurora College Transformation, Initial Areas of Teaching and Research Specialization for the Polytechnic University (2020);
- Aurora College Strategic Plan 2020-2023;
- Polytechnic University Facilities Master Plan;
- Aurora College Act;
- GNWT Shared Services Act;
- GNWT Financial Services Act;
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and,
- Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence Feasibility Study Advisory Committee Terms of Reference;

Furthermore, Praxis analyzed **business registry data** for the NWT to determine which business sectors in the territory were growing faster than the average. The Business Register, maintained by Statistics Canada, provided a comprehensive list of businesses in Canada based on various criteria such as income tax filings, payroll remittances, and revenue. Finally, a **comparable program review** in the NWT and across Canada were analyzed to identify operating model alternatives for the IBCE as well as potential partners.

Throughout the research process, Praxis prioritized Indigenous business and community engagement, ensuring respect for local cultural protocols, and conducting engagements in the spirit of collaboration. Close collaboration with the Project Coordinator and the Advisory Committee helped align the work plan, address project risks, and provide regular project updates. The research tools and protocols were reviewed and approved by the Coordinator and the Committee, and interviews were recorded with permission for reference. The final report derived key themes from the consultations, and the business registry analysis and demographic assessment provided insights into the local economy and identified strengths and weaknesses.

Constraints, Limitations, and Challenges

The success of any project is often influenced by a myriad of constraints, limitations, and challenges that can arise throughout its execution. In this section, we will explore the various factors that presented hurdles to the consultant's work during the course of the project. By examining these constraints and their impact, we gain a comprehensive understanding of the complexities which arose during the project's lifecycle.

Limited diversity in the backgrounds of survey responders. The survey did not receive as many responses as was expected despite extending the field time and several rounds of word-of-mouth and social media promotions. This posed a limitation on the accuracy of the survey as it potentially skewed

the data and findings, making it challenging to draw comprehensive conclusions that accurately represent the broader population.

Forest fires and flooding created scheduling challenges. Scheduling meetings with the Advisory Committee to conduct the focus group sessions and review project milestones created a schedule constraint. The fires also shifted the priorities of the Advisory Committee and other which added to delays in the project's approval process further constraining the schedule. Additionally, several of the planned informant interviews were cancelled or significantly delayed. This had a limiting factor on the depth and diversity of expertise Praxis was able to consult. Finally, the original project scope included in-person public consultations with Indigenous communities and stakeholders, however they were cancelled due to forest fire risk and community evacuations.

Scope changes and additions. There were several scope changes throughout the project's lifecycle such as a larger group of engagement with Advisory Committee participants than planned, additional working and project management engagements with Advisory Committee, the removal of and the late-stage addition of several informant interviews. While these changes were to the benefit of the project, they added additional complexity, extended the timelines, and compressed the time available to complete the final analysis and reporting phase of the project.

Geographic challenges. The vast and remote geographical expanse of the Northwest Territories presented a project limitation as direct engagement with Indigenous communities across such a large territory was challenging and resource intensive. The distances between communities resulted in logistical difficulties, increased travel costs, and limited opportunities for face-to-face interactions with potential participants. The initial workplan included several sharing-circle engagements with Indigenous communities, however due to some the other limiting factors described above, were removed. Some of loss in engagements was mitigated using video conferencing tools and the online survey.

Image Source: Stock Image

IBCE VISION

Concept and Purpose

The Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence would be a place that works everyday to advance Indigenous entrepreneurial and business excellence. It would provide entrepreneurs, small businesses, and all communities throughout the Northwest Territories with:

- an accessible path into entrepreneurship as a career through the delivery of business skills training, capacity building education, and mentorship & guidance;
- connections to the network of other business and entrepreneurial education, training, and supports available throughout the NWT (and Canada);
- community-level economic development capacity building resources and training; and,
- research into Indigenous business leadership and advancing Indigenous business excellence.

During the initial pilot phase, the IBCE could be run out of Aurora College, operating under similar terms as the College's Research Institute within the recently revised Aurora College Act[1]. From a governance perspective, the IBCE would be under Indigenous led government and align with the Government of the Northwest Territories' commitment to incorporating the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)[2] as well as several of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's 94 Calls to Action (TRC Calls) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)[3].

The IBCE would recognize that there is an existing spectrum of Indigenous government, Indigenous businesses, and Indigenous non-profits organizations throughout the region that provide similar educational, and skill building programs and does not intend to irresponsibly duplicate services or compete for participants. However, many of these organizations may be working in isolation and much of the wisdom, programs, and best practices they have developed might go unshared. The IBCE would work together with these organizations to expand their reach by being a connector within the ecosystem and advancing Indigenous economic independence and business development across the North in a more universal way.

[1] Aurora College Act (gov.nt.ca)
[2] joint_release-nwt_council_of_leaders_working_together_to_implement_the_united_nations_declaration_on_the_rights_of_indigenous_peoples.pdf (gov.nt.ca)
[3] https://sdgs.un.org/goals

Goals

The primary goals of the Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence (IBCE) encompass promoting entrepreneurship as a viable career option and fostering economic independence through empowering businesses, encouraging diversification across industries, and facilitating improved market access. By establishing stronger networks and facilitating the exchange of knowledge, the IBCE would aim to strengthen the overall support system for entrepreneurship on a broader scale. Specifically, its goals would be to:

Promote Entrepreneurship as a Viable Career. The IBCE would aim to promote entrepreneurship as a viable career choice mainly among Indigenous individuals. One of its primary goals would be to facilitate the transition of aspiring entrepreneurs from the idea stage to the successful establishment of their businesses. This would be achieved through targeted business skills training, capacity building education, and mentorship programs that equip individuals with the necessary knowledge, resources, and support to thrive as entrepreneurs.

Enhance Entrepreneurial Networks and Knowledge Sharing. The IBCE would seek to create a robust network of business and entrepreneurial supports throughout the region. It will connect Indigenous entrepreneurs and small businesses with existing resources, organizations, and funding opportunities available in the Northwest Territories and beyond. By facilitating these connections, the IBCE could enhance access to capital, markets, and expertise, empowering Indigenous entrepreneurs to scale their businesses and establish sustainable economic ventures.

Additionally, the IBCE would recognize the value of collaboration and the wealth of knowledge existing within various organizations across the North. The IBCE would foster collaboration and knowledge sharing amongst its partners by promoting the sharing of programs, best practices, and wisdom. Through this, the IBCE would help amplify the impact of existing initiatives and avoid the duplication of services, ultimately strengthening the overall ecosystem of support for Indigenous entrepreneurship.

Drive Indigenous Economic Independence by Empowering Businesses, Fostering Diversification, and Enhancing Market Access. The IBCE would aim to help advance Indigenous economic independence by empowering and strengthening Indigenous businesses while fostering diversification of economic sectors and enhancing market access. This comprehensive goal focuses on equipping Indigenous entrepreneurs with the necessary skills, knowledge, and support to effectively manage and grow their

businesses. Through tailored business skills training, mentorship programs, and access to resources, the IBCE would empower Indigenous entrepreneurs to build sustainable businesses, reducing dependence on external sources of income.

Additionally, the IBCE would promote the diversification of economic sectors within Indigenous communities, encouraging entrepreneurship across various emerging and underdeveloped industries that are aligned with cultural heritage and community strengths. By facilitating market access through connections with buyers and distributors, and advocacy for fair procurement practices, the IBCE would create opportunities for Indigenous businesses to thrive and contribute to economic independence at the individual and community levels.

Importance and Potential Impact

The Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence represents a crucial and timely initiative. By providing a clear and accessible path to entrepreneurship as a career, the IBCE would empower Indigenous individuals to take control of their economic destinies, fostering economic independence and reducing dependence on external sources of income. This initiative recognizes the untapped potential within Indigenous communities and aims to unleash it by equipping aspiring entrepreneurs with the necessary skills, knowledge, and support to succeed in the business world.

By strengthening the Indigenous business ecosystem through collaboration, knowledge sharing, and connecting with existing stakeholders, the IBCE would ensure that the impact extends beyond individual entrepreneurs, fostering a sustainable and vibrant economic landscape within Indigenous communities in the North and across Canada. Specifically, the IBCE aims to create the following impacts:

Increase Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Economic Independence. The IBCE's focus on providing accessible paths to entrepreneurship, business skills training, and mentorship would empower Indigenous individuals to pursue entrepreneurship as a viable career option. This leads to an increase in the number of Indigenous entrepreneurs, fostering economic growth and cultural preservation. By promoting economic independence through sustainable businesses, the IBCE would reduce dependence on external sources of income and strengthens Indigenous communities.

Strengthen an Indigenous Business Ecosystem and Collaborative Networks. The IBCE's collaborative approach and emphasis on knowledge sharing would create a stronger Indigenous business ecosystem. By connecting with various stakeholders, including government agencies, Indigenous organizations, and First Nations, the IBCE would facilitate the sharing of wisdom, programs, and best practices. This collaboration would enhance the effectiveness and reach of existing initiatives, foster an interconnected ecosystem, and promote entrepreneurship as a unifying force within Indigenous communities.

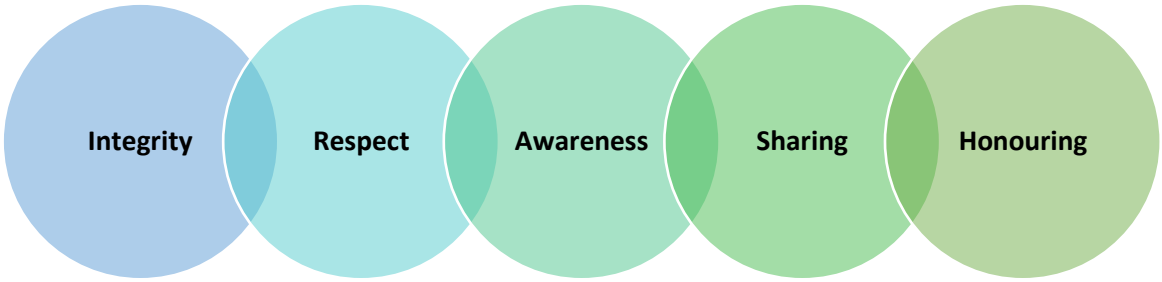
Enhance Access to Resources, Networks, and Inspiration. The IBCE's efforts to connect Indigenous entrepreneurs with resources, networks, and funding opportunities could have a profound impact. By providing guidance on accessing capital, markets, and expertise, the IBCE would enable Indigenous entrepreneurs to scale their businesses and seize growth opportunities. Furthermore, the success and impact of the IBCE's initiatives would serve as inspiration for other regions and organizations, fostering the development of comprehensive and inclusive support systems for Indigenous entrepreneurs across Canada.

Advisory Committee

As part of ensuring Indigenous leadership and robust engagement for the feasibility study, Aurora College formed an Advisory Committee. The Committee was comprised of primarily Indigenous representation. The Committee was essential in providing direction and recommendation for the project and engagement with community and stakeholders. A complete Terms of Reference for the Advisory Committee can be found in Appendix A.

The primary function of the Committee was to provide direction, support, and oversee the IBCE feasibility study. Committee members were selected as knowledge holders and subject matter experts. They were determined by their involvement and investment into Indigenous Entrepreneurship in the Northwest Territories. Membership included representation from Indigenous governments, Indigenous economic development corporations, Indigenous businesses, Indigenous training services, and the Aurora College School of Business and Leadership. The Committee also had observing members from the Future Skills Centre, Aurora College, and the Industry, Tourism and Investment Division of the Government of Northwest Territories.

The Committee is guided by five principles: **integrity** in their relationships; **respect** for their diversity and distinct Indigenous cultures; **awareness** of the rights, aspirations, and needs of Indigenous people; **sharing** of their knowledge within and beyond the network; and, **honouring** the wisdom all people bring with them.



The Advisory Committee was responsible for providing their subject matter expertise and lived experiences to the project. Members of the Committee helped to inform and guide Aurora College and Praxis as to the best practices for engaging community in NWT, resources and partners both potential and currently available, and guide the project in representing Indigenous peoples. The Advisory Committee was a step in the approval process for the project. The Committee provided insight and recommendations to the Aurora College team on project decisions.

The Advisory Committee reviewed and provided input for the research framework that guided the feasibility study. The Committee was additionally engaged through focus groups to share insights and provide knowledge on:

- key questions;
- potential program offerings;
- need and demand for business training and skills;
- current resources available;
- potential funding support;
- comparable programs in Canada;

- distinguishing features of an IBCE; and,
- engaging with Indigenous communities in the North.

Finally, the Advisory Committee generously shared their network of professional and personal contacts by bringing forward several key information holders that contributed valuable feedback and insight. Those identified were engaged through one-on-one interviews.

FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS

Evaluation of Feasibility

The concept of establishing the Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence in the Northwest Territories is based on a popular and essential idea of supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship and small business development. However, the feasibility of the IBCE faces various challenges due to the presence of many entrepreneurship programs in the region and a small number of individuals seeking support. Numerous academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and community-based entities offer Indigenous entrepreneurship resources, training, and programs in the NWT. Additionally, there are many government programs, both at the territorial and federal levels that aim to support entrepreneurial endeavors with training and funding. Furthermore, free, or highly subsidized Indigenous and non-Indigenous entrepreneurship programs and self-learning resources are widely accessible online, presenting a wealth of options for potential participants.

Gaps & Opportunities

- **Low awareness** of entrepreneurship supports available in the NWT.
- **No central organization** promoting Indigenous entrepreneurship and coordinating efforts of support providers.
- **Limited opportunities** for entrepreneurship coaching, mentorship, and practical experience.
- **Limited national academic research** into Indigenous business knowledge and practices.
- **Lack of community-level** economic development capacity building initiatives in the region.

Challenges

- **Existing supports** for entrepreneurs.
- **Potential competition** for funding.
- **Potential competition** for limited number of participants.

As a result of the abundance of existing providers offering various resources and programs to support entrepreneurship in the NWT, the success of the IBCE may face a challenge from this competition for funding and participants.

Because of the NWT's relatively small market size, duplicating services would not significantly increase accessibility or increase the number of Indigenous entrepreneurs in the region. In fact, it could harm the viability of already established providers. As a result, a direct competition approach would not be the most effective strategy for the IBCE to achieve its goal of growing and supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship. Instead, the IBCE could add significant value to the entrepreneurial ecosystem by linking current and future entrepreneurs to the array of services by available in the region, filling gaps in existing learning content, and positioning itself as a champion and thought leader for Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous business leadership, and Indigenous government led community-level economic development.

In addition to education and training offerings, the IBCE can provide valuable support to entrepreneurs by connecting them to mentorship, coaching, and internship opportunities. By connecting experienced and successful entrepreneurs and business leaders with aspiring ones, the IBCE can facilitate knowledge transfer, personal growth, and networking opportunities. Moreover, the IBCE can provide coaching services to entrepreneurs, helping them set clear objectives, develop essential skills, and overcome challenges in a structured and goal-oriented manner. Additionally, the IBCE can create internship learning opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs, allowing them to gain practical experience, build networks, and enhance their confidence in real-world business settings before venturing out on their own. Finally, the IBCE could provide professional business services by supporting businesses with fee-for-services actuarial and research initiatives.

In conclusion, the IBCE should adopt a strategic approach as a thought leader, business facilitator and net-benefit collaborator. Instead of competing with existing providers, the IBCE could leverage its connections to create a cohesive support ecosystem for Indigenous entrepreneurs in the NWT. By acting as a connector, the IBCE can establish partnerships with all levels of academic institutions, large and small non-profit organizations, Territorial and Federal government programs, and private businesses, streamlining the process for entrepreneurs to access the most relevant and impactful resources available locally.

Image Source: https://spectacularnwt.com/

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

The following section outlines the key recommendations for next steps in advancing the Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence concept. Building upon the viability of the IBCE and the valuable insights gained from the feasibility study, these recommendations serve as a roadmap to propel the initiative forward. By focusing on detailed planning, securing funding and partnerships, ensuring inclusivity and Indigenous involvement, fostering research collaboration, and engaging with Indigenous communities, the IBCE can forge a strong foundation for supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship and driving economic development in the region.

Detailed Planning Phase: The successful validation of the IBCE concept highlights the need to advance to the detailed planning phase with a comprehensive approach. Involving key stakeholders at this stage is crucial to ensure a collaborative and inclusive process. Foundational partners, including the Government of the Northwest Territories, Aurora College, the upcoming Indigenous Knowledge Holders Council, Indigenous organizations, and economic development corporations, should actively participate in decision-making. Engaging third-party providers of entrepreneurship training and support services will foster a well-rounded and robust planning process. This collaborative effort will help shape the IBCE's vision, objectives, and governance structure, ensuring that it aligns with the needs and aspirations of Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Funding and Partnerships: Securing funding is a critical next step for the IBCE's success. The organization should focus on obtaining the necessary $350,000 startup capital and $2,300,000 operational funding for the initial two-year pilot phase. Collaborating with the Government of the Northwest Territories will be essential. By identifying third-party partners that share the IBCE's vision and mandate, the organization can forge meaningful collaborations and foster innovation throughout its initiatives. Additionally, establishing a strong financial foundation will allow the IBCE to pursue its mission effectively and sustainably.

Inclusivity and Indigenous Involvement: The IBCE must prioritize ongoing participation from the Indigenous Knowledge Holder's Council, Indigenous governments, and organizations in its governance and management. This commitment to inclusivity will ensure that the Centre remains culturally relevant and Indigenous-led, embodying the spirit, intent, and actions advocated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (TRC Calls), and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG). Incorporating valuable perspectives and traditional knowledge from Indigenous communities will enrich the IBCE's initiatives and strategies, empowering Indigenous entrepreneurs on their journey to success.

Research Collaboration: The development of the IBCE's research arm should be in close collaboration with the Aurora Research Institute (ARI). This strategic move will help demonstrate the IBCE's research competency and optimize funding and research resources. With a specific focus on advancing Indigenous business excellence and thought leadership, the IBCE's research arm will generate self-directed research and engage in government policy and private industry research and development (R&D) projects. By fostering a culture of research and innovation, the IBCE can contribute to evidence-based decision-making and become a potential revenue stream for the organization.

Community Engagement and Support: When planning the community-level economic capacity building pillar of the IBCE, meaningful collaboration with all Indigenous nations in the NWT is essential to identify specific needs and leverage available resources. By engaging with Indigenous-led economic development corporations like Det'on Cho Management, Denendeh Development Corporation, NWT Métis Development Corporation, and successful national organizations like the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, the IBCE can foster capacity-building and promote economic independence within Indigenous communities. This community-driven approach will empower Indigenous entrepreneurs and foster sustainable economic growth throughout the NWT.

Image Source: https://canadiansme.ca/

JURISDICTIONAL REVIEW

Praxis undertook a detailed jurisdictional review which included a literature review to understand what the existing body of research says about the needs of Indigenous entrepreneurs and key factors for entrepreneurship development, and a comparable program review to map the landscape of existing entrepreneurship programs in the Northwest Territories and across Canada.

This review shows that there are a range of Territorial and Federal government programs as well as non-profit organizations in the Northwest Territories that offer a wide range of resources that align with the need of Indigenous entrepreneurs in the North. Although each have their own strengths and weaknesses, there are many common themes that run through each program, including Indigenous-led learning and business approaches, meeting people where they are at both physically and ability wise, and low physical and financial barriers to participation.

As Aurora College assesses the viability of adding to the spectrum of entrepreneurship and small business support offerings in the NWT and beyond with an IBCE, there are numerous factors and strategies to consider so that the IBCE could identify ways to make a positive contribution to the lives of Indigenous entrepreneurs and small business owners.

Literature Review

The financing of Indigenous enterprises remains a significant challenge, and collaborative approaches involving stakeholders such as financial institutions, government agencies, community organizations, and non-profit entities can bridge the funding gap and provide necessary capital and support to Indigenous entrepreneurs (Ketilson, 2014). Additionally, context-specific approaches to entrepreneurship support are needed in remote and Indigenous communities to address the motivations and aspirations of entrepreneurs while considering the distinct social and cultural landscapes and the impact of historical and environmental factors on these communities (Mason, Dana, & Anderson, 2008).

To better support Indigenous entrepreneurship, the IBCE should adopt a culturally relevant and community-driven approach (Baptiste, 2022). This involves integrating Indigenous knowledge, values, and traditions into programs and services, aligning them with the unique cultural contexts of Indigenous communities. Cultural sensitivity is crucial for making these initiatives effective and empowering Indigenous entrepreneurs while preserving their cultural identity and promoting self-determination (Baptiste, 2022). Efforts to decolonize higher education curricula involve inclusivity, engagement with the community, and offering culturally relevant services (McGowan et al., 2020). The IBCE could play a role in this process by creating a curriculum collaboratively with the communities it serves.

Indigenous innovation, which emphasizes sustainability, responsible resource management, and a holistic perspective of creative value for stakeholders, not just shareholders, is essential in supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship (Baptiste, 2022). Institutions like an IBCE could offer services and foster community-university collaboration for positive change through various strategies, including training, mentorship, forming partnerships, and engaging in economic activities (Baptiste, 2022; Fitzgerald, 2007). For instance, financial literacy education can empower Indigenous entrepreneurs by providing practical knowledge while respecting cultural values (Blue, 2019). Additionally, the IBCE could support Indigenous

youth in business education through mentorship programs and leveraging technology (Tulk, Doucette, & MacKenzie, 2016).

Community-based entrepreneurship plays a significant role in Indigenous communities, fostering economic development, self-determination, and cultural preservation (Murphy et al., 2020). Tailored support, access to capital, and entrepreneurship education enhance the capacity of these communities and recognize their strengths and aspirations (O'Brien, Cooney, & Blenker, 2019). To ensure success of the IBCE, it would be vital to engage with the community, prioritize cultural authenticity, and consider context-specific solutions in entrepreneurial practices (Willmott, 2014; Sengupta, Vieta, & McMurtry, 2015). Strategic partnerships are essential for the long-term success of Indigenous entrepreneurs, with a focus on community involvement, cultural protocols, and recognition of Indigenous rights (James & Victor, 2017). Understanding the unique characteristics and motivations of Indigenous crowdfunding campaigns and supporting industry development through partnerships are also significant for Indigenous communities (Parhankangas & Colbourne, 2022; Pengelly & Davidson-Hunt, 2012).

Image Source: Stock Image

Recognizing the limitations of existing innovation policy frameworks is crucial, along with addressing systemic inequalities, access to funding and resources, cultural bias, and the need for capacity-building initiatives (Tamtik, 2020). Sustainable and community-driven development strategies are vital considerations in supporting Indigenous businesses (Beaudoin et al., 2015; Willmott, 2014). Addressing challenges in Indigenous entrepreneurship involves several efforts, such as improving access to resources and capital, addressing market constraints and regulatory issues, understanding unique factors shaping entrepreneurial activities, promoting sustainable and culturally relevant business practices, and providing ongoing capacity building and support (Jongwe et al., 2020; Murphy et al., 2020). Introducing social innovation and decolonization requires overcoming resistance to change, power imbalances, resource constraints, and fostering sustained commitment and collaboration among stakeholders (McGowan et al., 2020).

Overall, to support Indigenous entrepreneurship effectively, it is crucial to embrace a culturally sensitive and community-driven approach, integrate Indigenous knowledge into education, and foster collaborations that prioritize Indigenous perspectives and aspirations (Baptiste, 2022; McGowan et al., 2020). Institutions like IBCE could play a pivotal role in providing tailored support and resources, empowering Indigenous entrepreneurs, and fostering sustainable and culturally relevant business practices (Murphy et al., 2020; O'Brien, Cooney, & Blenker, 2019). By recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by Indigenous communities, the IBCE could work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem in the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, and Nunavut (James & Victor, 2017; Sengupta, Vieta, & McMurtry, 2015).

Establishing centers to support Indigenous entrepreneurship brings many benefits to individuals and communities, promoting economic development and community pride (Baptiste, 2022). Transformative teaching that includes Indigenous perspectives in business education empowers students and challenges western/Euro-centric models (Berge, 2020). Programs, such as the Ch'nook Indigenous Business Education Initiative and the Stó:lō community in British Columbia, provide essential skills and knowledge to Indigenous entrepreneurs, driving economic self-reliance, cultural preservation, and revitalization (Colbourne, 2012, James & Victor, 2017).

Providing business resources to Indigenous entrepreneurs also leads to job creation, increased income, and community well-being (Dana & Anderson, 2014). Engaging polytechnics and innovative centres such as Aurora College and IBCE with communities could play a transformative role to the communities involved, fulfilling social responsibilities, and promoting community well-being and empowerment (Fitzgerald, 2007, Sengupta, Vieta, & McMurtry, 2015, Fortin-Lefebvre & Baba, 2020, Jongwe et al., 2020, Murphy et al., 2020, McGowan et al., 2020). Indigenous entrepreneurs would also benefit, providing skill development while preserving Indigenous values through combining traditional knowledge and business expertise (Pengelly & Davidson-Hunt, 2012, Sengupta, Vieta, & McMurtry, 2015).

In conclusion, supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship through institutions like the Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence (IBCE) requires a culturally relevant and community-driven approach. By integrating Indigenous knowledge, values, and traditions into programs and services, these institutions can align with the unique cultural contexts of Indigenous communities, empowering entrepreneurs while preserving their cultural identity and promoting self-determination. Decolonizing higher education curricula and engaging with the community are crucial steps to fostering inclusivity and offering culturally relevant services.

To effectively foster opportunities and address the challenges faced by Indigenous entrepreneurs, efforts must be made to improve access to resources and capital, understand the unique factors shaping entrepreneurial activities, and promote sustainable and culturally relevant business practices. Strategic partnerships and community engagement and participation play a pivotal role in supporting Indigenous businesses and fostering economic development, self-determination, and cultural preservation through the integration of Indigenous knowledge.

In establishing institutions to support Indigenous entrepreneurs, it is crucial to overcome historical marginalization and socio-economic disparities. The IBCE, despite potential obstacles like limited funding and capacity constraints, could play a transformative role by collaborating with Indigenous communities and providing faculty training. By addressing the specific challenges faced by Indigenous entrepreneurs, such as limited access to capital and market barriers, these institutions could contribute to the growth and success of Indigenous businesses.

Overall, through a comprehensive and culturally sensitive approach, the IBCE could support Indigenous entrepreneurship and work towards creating sustainable and prosperous economic opportunities for Northern Indigenous communities in Canada. Embracing collaboration, inclusivity, and cultural authenticity, the IBCE could build a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem that preserves Indigenous traditions, fosters economic growth, and empowers Indigenous entrepreneurs to shape their own future.

Comparable Program Review

Praxis conducted a scan of comparable programs within the NWT and Canada using the information available on the internet. The objective was to index all the main programs within NWT and identify select leading providers to analyze their strength and gaps. More than 20 national, regional, and local initiatives were examined with five representative programs described below.

Entrepreneurship and Small Business Programs in the NWT

Government Programs

Emerging Entrepreneurs Business Mentorship Program: The program is designed to support and encourage young and/or inexperienced Northwest Territories (NWT) entrepreneurs to acquire the necessary skills and business acumen to enable them to maximize their potential, improve their leadership skills, and become successful and profitable business owners. (https://www.iti.gov.nt.ca/en/EEBMP)

Northwest Territories Community Futures Association: The Community Futures Program is a community-based economic initiative delivered in each region by Community Futures Development Corporations. Counseling and assistance is available for entrepreneurs beginning or expanding a business. (https://www.iti.gov.nt.ca/en/services/community-futures-program)

Entrepreneur Support: This program provides funding to entrepreneurs and small businesses to help with start-up, business expansion, market and product development, capacity building, operational support, and film support. (https://www.iti.gov.nt.ca/en/SEED)

Micro Business: This program provides funding to licensed artists, crafters, filmmakers, commercial renewable resource harvesters, and small businesses who need a little bit of funding to get their projects to sustainability. (https://www.iti.gov.nt.ca/en/services/micro-business)

Business Intelligence and Networking: Under the Business Intelligence and Networking program, financial assistance may be available to assist with costs associated with attendance at seminars and trade shows to access information regarding new technologies or business opportunities. (https://www.iti.gov.nt.ca/en/services/business-intelligence-and-networking)

Northern Indigenous Economic Opportunities Program (NIEOP): Through the Northern Indigenous Economic Opportunities Program (NIEOP), CanNor supports greater participation by Northern Inuit, First Nations and Métis communities and businesses and enables them to pursue opportunities for employment, income, and wealth creation. (https://www.cannor.gc.ca/eng/1385486556734/1385486648146)

Entrepreneurship and Business Development (EBD): The Entrepreneurship and Business Development (EBD) Program is one of two program contribution streams of the Northern Indigenous Economic Opportunities Program (NIEOP). EBD assists Indigenous entrepreneurs and Indigenous businesses through project-based support for activities that help facilitate the establishment or growth of Indigenous businesses. (https://www.cannor.gc.ca/eng/1396123434848/1396123576050)

Non-Government Programs

Conseil de développement économique des TNO (CDETNO): Supports French-speaking entrepreneurs who want to start a business in the Northwest Territories. It also offers services in French to existing NWT businesses in areas such as strategic planning, communications, funding applications and referrals. (https://cdetno.com/en/services-2/entrepreneurship/)

Inspire: Tge flagship "Inspire" Program is currently being delivered in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. The program is helping young people start their own businesses, find gainful employment, or take advantage of further education opportunities. (https://www.smalleconomyworks.com/the-inspire-program)

EntrepreNorth: EntrepreNorth's flagship Cohort-Based Entrepreneur Growth Program offers 8-10 Indigenous and community-based entrepreneurs in Nunavut, Northwest Territories and Yukon the opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills and support to help take their businesses to the next level and create a positive community impact at the same time. (https://www.entreprenorth.ca/entrepreneur-growth-program.html)

Futurpreneur: This program helps aspiring business owners aged 18-39 launch successful businesses across Canada. (https://www.futurpreneur.ca/en/get-started/)

Indigenous Women's Entrepreneur Program (IWE): Launched in 2022, the IWE Program, in partnership with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), seeks to reduce barriers that Indigenous women face when starting or growing their business, and ensure that they have access to training, resources and capital they need to prosper. (https://nacca.ca/resources/iwe/)

Aurora College School of Business and Leadership – Office/Business Administration Program: Aims to equip students with the essential knowledge and skills for administrative careers in various sectors, including business, government, and non-profit organizations. Focused on preparing students for employment in the NWT, the program offers a one-year certificate or a two-year diploma. (https://www.auroracollege.nt.ca/program/office-administration/; https://www.auroracollege.nt.ca/program/business-administration/)

Aurora College School of Business and Leadership – Northern Leadership Development Program: Aimed at enhancing leadership practices for individuals working in "front line" positions in various industries. The program integrates best practice leadership models with the provision of a leadership mentor for each student over the course of an academic year. (https://www.auroracollege.nt.ca/program/northern-leadership-development-program/)

Select Leading Programs in Canada

EntrepreNorth

EntrepreNorth is a project based in Yellowknife that has a goal to empower Indigenous and community-based entrepreneurs across Northern Canada. Their programming offers support to help these entrepreneurs build sustainable businesses and livelihoods.[4] The main program they offer is called the Entrepreneur Growth Program. A group of eight to ten entrepreneurs from the Northern Territories are chosen to join a nine-month program to improve their businesses and make a positive impact on their communities.[5]

Participants meet online and in-person in Yellowknife, Whitehorse and Iqaluit. Throughout the nine month program, participants have access to many program offerings and experiences, including:

- Indigenous-Centered Business Education;
- Professional Coaching and Business Mentorship;
- Personalized Wellness Plan;
- Peer Support and Alumni Network;
- Networking Events and Opportunities;
- Northern Travel and Culture;
- Pitch Events; and,
- Other Perks and Benefits.[6]

Each year, a new theme is chosen, with previous themes being Land Crafted Products, On-the-Land Tourism, Circumpolar Fashion, Local Food Products, and Digital Creatives.[7]

The Entrepreneur Growth Program is fully funded, including travel, accommodations, and day-to-day living expenses. Participants are provided with additional funding of up to $5000 to support them in attending in-person gatherings across the Territories.[8]

[4] https://www.entreprenorth.ca/about.html
[5] https://www.entreprenorth.ca/entrepreneur-growth-program.html
[6] https://www.entreprenorth.ca/entrepreneur-growth-program.html
[7] https://www.entreprenorth.ca/entrepreneur-growth-program.html
[8] https://www.entreprenorth.ca/entrepreneur-growth-program.html

Strengths

- **Accessibility.** Fully funded with resources provided for travel.
- **Accessible Resources.** Provides a growing list of programs and funding services available to entrepreneurs across the North.
- **Robust Curriculum.** Curriculum is presented through four complete stages.
- **Networking Opportunities.** Opportunities with funders, investors, and the business community.
- **Delivery Method.** Both online and in-person parts.
- **Coaching and Mentorship.** Provided and encouraged.
- **Cultural Sensitivity.** Rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and being.
- **Track Record of Success.** Success is promoted through videos and returning Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Gaps

- **Accessibility.** Many eligibility requirements that may exclude several potential participants. The program only accepts eight to ten entrepreneurs per cohort.
- **Access to Capital.** Does not directly facilitate access to capital apart from the EntrepreNorth Funding Portal.

IBCE's Response

- **Accessibility.** The IBCE would work with organizations to expand their capacity and reach. Additionally, the IBCE is focussed on outcomes, not advancing any one program. It would always focus on the best interests of the individuals it serves by guiding them to the most appropriate solution to their needs.
- **Access to Capital.** The IBCE would support entrepreneurs by connecting them to funding sources that would support their learning and business development goals. At the community level, the IBCE's research and economic development pillars would be an ideal partner supporting Indigenous communities secure development and research capital funds.

Inspire by Small Economy Works

Small Economy Works is a well-known organization in Canada that focuses on teaching entrepreneurship and leadership skills specifically tailored to rural, remote, and Northern areas. Their main program, called Inspire, aims to bring inspiration to communities by offering entrepreneurial training that respects local culture and traditions. The program is currently available in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, and the Yukon.[9]

Inspire is designed to help participants gain important skills needed in the modern world. The program focuses on innovation, creative thinking, and fostering a growth mindset. It explores entrepreneurial leadership, community development, and teaches foundational skills that can assist individuals in reaching their personal and career goals. The curriculum is divided into three levels: Inspire, Innovate, and Initiate. It covers various topics such as:

- Entrepreneurial Growth & Wellness;
- Cultural Connections;
- Community Engagement;
- Design Thinking;
- Storytelling & Branding;
- Operations;
- Marketing;
- Finance; and,
- Professional Skills.[10]

The Inspire Program is offered directly by Small Economy Works, or in partnership with schools and community organizations. It can be accessed online or in-person. The program uses a digital Learning Management System and interactive workshops to enhance learning. Local instructors and entrepreneurs are involved to share their knowledge and experiences that are specific to the region or community. Participants also have the chance to connect with cultural and wellness advisors during the program to focus on their overall health and well-being.[11]

Each program aims to attract young Indigenous people from the three territories. However, it also accepts applications from individuals aged 18 to 30 who have a strong desire to make a positive difference in their communities.

[9] https://www.smalleconomyworks.com/the-inspire-program
[10] https://www.smalleconomyworks.com/the-inspire-program
[11] https://www.smalleconomyworks.com/the-inspire-program

Strengths

- **Accessibility.** Prioritizes Indigenous applicants, but also open to non-Indigenous applicants.
- **Robust Curriculum.** Support available for developing business skills, mentorship, financial resources, and professional services.
- **Cultural Sensitivity.** Culturally responsive and tailored to local community. Provides access to cultural wellness advisors.
- **Track Record of Success.** Over 300 people reach through 43 communities and more than 70% successful completion rate.

Gaps

- **Accessibility.** Program is limited to individuals aged 18 to 30.

IBCE's Response

- **Accessibility.** The IBCE would service individuals of ages by connecting to appropriate youth and professional services.

Indigenous Entrepreneurship Micro-credential – University of Northern British Columbia

The Indigenous Entrepreneurship Micro-credential is a fully funded program by the UNBC Continuing Studies and Hubspace,[12] in partnership with the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training, TC Energy, and the BC Oil & Gas Commission.[13]

The Indigenous Entrepreneurship Micro-credential is a 12-week program conducted online. It aims to teach Indigenous learners about the principles and practices of entrepreneurship and small businesses. The program consists of three courses: Building a Business, Customers and Competitors, and Finance and Human Resources. In each course, participants will learn basic knowledge and skills and how to apply them through self-guided learning and live sessions. Live sessions cover course content, group discussions, and feature a variety of guest speakers including successful Indigenous entrepreneurs.[14]

Knowledge and skills gained throughout the three courses include:

- experiencing/explaining the business planning process;
- generating business opportunity ideas;
- defining a business using business principles;
- analyzing markets;

[12] https://www2.unbc.ca/continuing-studies/courses/indigenous-entrepreneurship-micro-credential
[13] https://www2.unbc.ca/sites/default/files/sections/continuing-studies/csindigentrepreneurapplication.pdf
[14] https://www2.unbc.ca/continuing-studies/courses/indigenous-entrepreneurship-micro-credential

- core concepts for marketing plans;
- using platforms for finding customers/competitors;
- bookkeeping and accounting basics;
- using financial management platforms; and,
- staff management and team building.[15]

Strengths

- **Accessibility.** Fully funded and offered online for better reach.
- **Certification.** Provides a micro-credential certification.

Gaps

- **Accessibility.** Only accepts Indigenous learners.
- **Delivery Method.** Online delivery is a barrier in the North.
- **Course Content.** Designed like a university course and focused on high level concepts.
- **Coaching and Mentorship.** Does not offer or prioritize coaching and mentorship.
- **Unclear Practical Application**. Does not focus on applying what is learned.

IBCE's Response

- **Accessibility.** The IBCE prioritizes Indigenous entrepreneurs but would be open to all.
- **Delivery Method.** The IBCE would prioritize in-person engagements.
- **Course Content.** IBCE's courses would be based on Indigenous learning methods.
- **Coaching and Mentorship.** This is an area of priority for the IBCE.
- **Unclear Practical Application**. The IBCE would focus on tangible outcomes and practical knowledge application.

[15] https://www2.unbc.ca/continuing-studies/courses/indigenous-entrepreneurship-micro-credential

Kwebiz Indigenous Women's Entrepreneurship Program – Okwaho Equal Source & Queen's University

Kwe-Biz is a project by Okwaho Equal Source and Queen's University, "focused on helping Indigenous women succeed and build strong businesses."[16] Kwe-Biz has three main offerings: Business Accelerators, Business Workshops, and a Mentorship Program. They are led by Indigenous people and offered both online and in-person.[17] Together, these programs give ongoing support to entrepreneurs from the start-up phase to current businesses looking to grow.[18]

The Kwe-Biz Business Accelerator Program is a program designed and led by Indigenous people. It is a cohort-based program, customized to meet the needs of each group. The program covers topics such as Entrepreneurship 101, Small Business Enterprise, Finance for Business, E-Business, Branding and Marketing, and Procurement and Global Business.[19]

The Kwe-Biz Business Workshops are open to Indigenous women entrepreneurs to work on their business, learn new skills and network with other entrepreneurs. The workshops cover basic business topics and specialized topics, including marketing and sales, business pitching, financial literacy, and strategies for accessing startup funding.[20] The workshops are made for small groups to create a safe and inclusive environment, and allow participants to work at their own pace.[21]

The Kwe-Biz Mentorship Program provides Indigenous women entrepreneurs and business owners with access to professional mentorship at no cost. The mentors available in this program are professional business consultants who have the expertise to help entrepreneurs create strategies for growth and make informed business decisions to achieve their goals. The mentorship program is only available to Indigenous women living in Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory and Kingston.[22]

Image Source: https://spectacularnwt.com/

[16] https://www.queensu.ca/partnershipsandinnovation/news/kwe-biz-supporting-indigenous-women-entrepreneurs
[17] https://kwebiz.ca/
[18] https://www.queensu.ca/partnershipsandinnovation/news/kwe-biz-supporting-indigenous-women-entrepreneurs
[19] https://kwebiz.ca/
[20] https://kwebiz.ca/
[21] https://www.queensu.ca/partnershipsandinnovation/news/kwe-biz-supporting-indigenous-women-entrepreneurs
[22] https://kwebiz.ca/

Kwe-Biz is funded by WES Ecosystem Fund for Southern Ontario and supported by the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.[23]

Strengths

- **Accessibility.** Fully funded.
- **Robust Curriculum.** Wide range of offerings for different stages of the business journey, from beginner to advanced levels.
- **Coaching/Mentorship.** Offers no-cost mentorship.
- **Connected to Community.** Works closely with the local indigenous business community. Designed specifically to meet needs.

Gaps

- **Accessibility.** Only available to Indigenous women entrepreneurs and is limited to specific locations.
- **Program Size.** Program only accepts twelve entrepreneurs at a time.
- **Limited Networking Opportunities.** Networking opportunity limitations with funders or investors.

IBCE's Response

- **Accessibility.** The IBCE prioritizes Indigenous entrepreneurs but would be open to all.
- **Program Size.** As a connector, the IBCE is not limited to its own capacity and would work with individuals to find the best support for them.
- **Limited Networking Opportunities.** The IBCE would create professional networking and business development opportunities throughout the NWT.

[23] https://www.queensu.ca/partnershipsandinnovation/news/kwe-biz-supporting-indigenous-women-entrepreneurs

Futurpreneur

Futurpreneur is a national organization that supports entrepreneurs aged 18-35 across Canada through a range of services to help them start and grow their businesses. Their services include:[24]

- **Financing:** Providing loans and financial support up to $60,000.
- **Mentorship:** Connecting entrepreneurs with experienced mentors for up to two years who offer guidance and support.
- **Online Resources:** Offering access to various resources, tools, and educational materials to help entrepreneurs develop their business plans and strategies.
- **Workshops and Events:** Organizing workshops, seminars, and networking events to enhance entrepreneurial skills and foster connections within the startup community.[25]

Growth Accelerator is a program by Futurpreneur that helps young entrepreneurs who have been running their businesses for around 18 months to 3.5 years. Its main goal is to assist them in creating a new business plan for the next 3-5 years. Participants learn through real-life examples and connect with other young entrepreneurs across the country. The program focuses on marketing, operations, and finance, and consists of nine online workshops led by experts. There's also a strategy pitch competition in Toronto where participants can win up to $10,000 in cash awards. [26] Futurpreneur has a team dedicated to supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs and works closely with Indigenous organizations like NACCA, FPEGF, CESO/SACO Indigenous Services, and more.[27]

Strengths

- **Accessible Resources.** Provides financial support and access to various free resources, tools, and educational materials.
- **Coaching/Mentorship.** Provides coaching and mentorship to entrepreneurs for up to two years.
- **Cultural Sensitivity.** Team dedicated to supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Gaps

- **Availability.** Only available to businesses already financially supported by Futurpreneur running for between 1.5 and 3.5 years**.**
- **Delivery Methods.** Program is only delivered online.
- **Curriculum.** Focus on marketing, operations, and finance.
- **Objectives.** Objectives are not specific or clearly defined.

[24] https://www.futurpreneur.ca/en/about/
[25] https://www.futurpreneur.ca/en/
[26] https://www.futurpreneur.ca/en/growth-accelerator
[27] https://www.futurpreneur.ca/en/indigenous

Key Learnings

A hybrid governance structure is crucial for the IBCE's success. The research indicates that a blend of centralized governance within the IBCE with an independent collaborative working relationship with its partners would be the most appropriate approach. While internal governance ensures effective resource coordination and decision-making, external collaboration would allow the IBCE to fulfill its mandate through partnerships and shared initiatives. This hybrid model would enable the IBCE to leverage its internal capabilities while tapping into the expertise and resources available through collaboration, ultimately enhancing the organization's effectiveness and reach.

Programs and support offered by the IBCE must be designed with an Indigenous Lens. The research findings highlight the importance of developing programs from the ground up with an Indigenous perspective and under Indigenous leadership. Merely adapting non-Indigenous programs or course content is insufficient.

To effectively support Indigenous entrepreneurship, the IBCE would need to incorporate Indigenous knowledge, values, and ways of doing business. By embracing Indigenous perspectives, the IBCE could ensure cultural relevance, foster community engagement, and contribute to the preservation and promotion of traditional practices.

Indigenous businesses in the NWT exhibit a strong community focus. The research reveals that Indigenous entrepreneurship places a greater emphasis on social impact and community well-being compared to non-Indigenous business models. Indigenous entrepreneurs often aim not only to generate personal wealth but also to uplift their communities through social enterprise approaches. The IBCE should recognize and support this community-oriented approach, encouraging sustainable resource use, fostering collaborative relationships, and promoting the integration of traditional knowledge in business practices.

Program participation should be accessible and affordable. Research suggests that entrepreneurs typically have limited financial resources to allocate towards training and business growth support. To ensure maximum participation, the IBCE should keep program costs to a minimum and offer bursaries and other financial supports. Operational funding from third-party sources is needed to cover most or all the expenses associated with program delivery. This approach would make the programs more accessible and would enable the IBCE to support entrepreneurs who may face financial barriers to participation.

Government-led programs may not align with Indigenous training and support program delivery best practices. The research findings indicate that government-delivered resources often modify existing non-Indigenous entrepreneurship programs to fit the needs of Indigenous entrepreneurs. They often use colonial approaches to applicant screening and program delivery. To ensure cultural relevance and effective support, the IBCE should be cautious about adopting government-led programs without careful consideration of Indigenous training and support program delivery best practices. By drawing on the strengths of both government and Indigenous-led programs, the IBCE could develop a unique approach that aligns with the specific needs of Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Non-government Indigenous-led programs demonstrate greater innovation and cultural relevance. The research reveals that non-government entrepreneurship programs are more innovative and actively incorporate traditional Indigenous knowledge and business practices. These programs take a holistic

approach to capacity building, addressing mental health and social wellbeing, and recognizing the value of traditional knowledge and cultural practices. Drawing inspiration from these non-government programs, the IBCE should prioritize innovation, cultural relevance, and holistic support, ensuring that its programs and services meet the unique needs of Indigenous entrepreneurs in the NWT.

The IBCE must add value without duplicating existing programs or creating excessive competition. The research highlights the presence of similar Indigenous led entrepreneurship programs, such as the Small Economy Works and EntrepreNorth projects already operating in the NWT. Given the limited population and relatively slow economy, the feasibility of introducing another entrepreneurship program is challenging. Moreover, online services further increase competition in the market. To address this, the IBCE should focus on finding ways to collaborate with other providers and add value to existing programs rather than duplicating efforts. By identifying gaps, offering supplementary services, and fostering coordination among various providers, the IBCE could maximize its impact while avoiding unnecessary competition and redundancy.

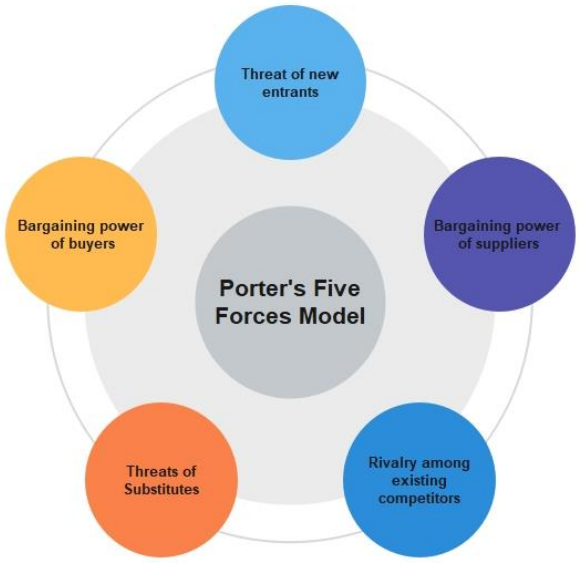
Image Source: https://spectacularnwt.com/

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

An environmental scan is a systematic and strategic process used to gather, analyze, and interpret information about the external factors that could impact an organization's business environment. During an environmental scan, data is collected from various sources such as industry reports, market research, government publications, academic studies, and news sources. The information is then analyzed to understand the current and future trends, emerging opportunities, market influences & competitive forces, and potential risks that could impact the organization's business model, market position, and overall success.

A multi-faceted approach using several strategic analysis tools to comprehensively assess the external business environment was taken. The Porter's Five Forces model examines the competitive forces influencing the entrepreneurship and business training and support industry in the NWT; the PESTLE analysis provided insights into the broader macro-environmental factors that will likely impact the IBCE; finally, a SWOT analysis enables the identification of the organization's market position and potential avenues for growth. By leveraging these powerful analytical tools, we gained a comprehensive view of the industry landscape and factors that must be considered when developing the IBCE's operating model and evaluating its feasibility.

Porter's Five Forces Industry Analysis



Porter's Five Forces is a model that identifies and analyzes five competitive forces that shape every industry and helps determine an industry's weaknesses and strengths. It considers the number and power of a company's competitive rivals, the potential of new market entrants, the power dynamics of a company's suppliers and customers, and the substitutability of a company's products. Forces are ranked as having a low, medium, or high influence.

Threat of new entrants	**Medium**
Threat of substitute products or services	**High**
Bargaining power of customers	**High**
Bargaining power of suppliers	**Low**
Rivalry among existing competitors	**Medium**

Threat of new entrants = Medium

While geographic barriers and high start-up costs usually discourage new entrants in the traditional education industry, the rise of online education and growing access to high-speed internet in Northern communities changes the game. The Canadian government's policies on educational licensing and accreditation could limit new entrants. However, these accreditations do not apply if the program is non-credit and provides certificates rather than credentials or degrees. A strong limiting factor for new entrants is the need for a strong understanding of the landscape of existing service providers and the ability to develop strong, reciprocal relationships. As the market is relatively well served by existing providers, new entrants will need to identify what demographic and/or geographic areas remain underserved and create courses not offered by others or supplements third-party training.

Aurora College's history, relationships with the NWT's Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments, partnerships with other learning organizations, and understanding of local cultures and regional issues provides a competitive advantage that is not easily replicated by new entrants.

Threat of substitute products or services = High

The advent of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) has revolutionized access to education. Platforms such as Coursera, edX, Udemy offer a variety of courses in entrepreneurship from prestigious global universities like Harvard, MIT, and Stanford. For example, Coursera offers an 'Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies' course from Harvard University. Moreover, there are several free resources available online, such as business mentorship programs, webinars, and workshops. Lastly, the Inspire (https://www.smalleconomyworks.com/inspire-nwt) and EntrepreNorth (https://www.entreprenorth.ca/) programs are two established and well funded Indigenous entrepreneurship programs operating within the NWT and cover much of the spectrum of services that entrepreneurs and small businesses are looking for.

Bargaining power of customers = High

Participants (students) have more options than ever when it comes to education. This is noticed particularly with the increase in targeted grants and bursaries for Indigenous and Northern learners and small businesses. They can choose to take online courses, attend physical institutions in the NWT and other provinces, or even travel overseas for their studies. This multitude of choices increases their bargaining power.

To counter this force, the IBCE would need to build loyalty and strong relationships with program participants, partners, and stakeholders. This could be achieved by:

- tailoring programs to meet diverse needs of entrepreneurs at all stages of the business spectrum;
- reaching remote learners through online platforms and local partnerships;
- partnering with established institutions to reduce competition and offer students more choices;
- assisting participants in accessing targeted grants and/or provide grants directly through the IBCE;
- acting as a connector to all entrepreneurship and business learning opportunities in the NWT; and,
- fostering a supportive community for graduates and establishing mentorship opportunities.

Bargaining power of suppliers = Low

In the context of Aurora College, suppliers might include faculty, learning platforms, technology providers, or educational material providers. The market size for these suppliers in the NWT, Yukon, and Nunavut is relatively limited due to the low population and remote location, making the suppliers more dependent on buyers. The IBCE could further increase its power over suppliers by collaborating with other program providers in the region to increase their buying power through joint procurement.

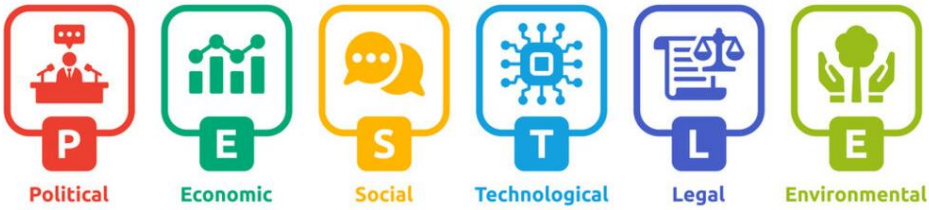
Rivalry among existing competitors = Medium

Given the remote and less-populated territories of NWT, Yukon, and Nunavut, the competition in the traditional education industry is relatively low. However, within the area of Indigenous entrepreneurship and business training and support programs, there are several existing organizations serving many of the same individuals and communities targeted by the IBCE. Furthermore, online education providers greatly increase the pool of competitors.

Because of the limited market size and presence of existing providers like Inspire and EntrepreNorth, the IBCE should not attempt to compete in the marketplace by offering similar services, but find areas that remain underserved to create new courses and programs. Additionally, the IBCE could further reduce competition by intentionally aligning its programs and learning content with the other providers previously mentioned.

Image Source: Aurora College

PESTLE Analysis



The analysis of the PESTLE factors (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental) provides an understanding of the external environment where the business entity is to operate.

Political

The political environment, including legislation and governmental policies, has a significant impact on education providers. The investment priorities can directly impact the IBCE. For example, if the government decides to heavily invest in broadband infrastructure in NWT, it will greatly enhance the IBCE's capability to deliver online education. Additionally, the support from the government for Indigenous education and local development initiatives could result in increased funding or partnership opportunities for the college, such as the 'Indigenous Languages and Education Secretariat' formed by the government of NWT. A 2023 commitment from the Government of the NWT to adopt the UNDRIP articles, particularly those related to meaningful participation of Indigenous governments in decision making and self-governance will influence the IBCE as well.

- **Government investment priorities** can impact IBCE's operations.
- **Broadband and telecom** increases reach.
- **Indigenous education funding** increases financial resources.

Economic

Economic trends in NWT can shape the market demand for the IBCE's services. If the Territory experiences economic growth, more businesses are likely to start up, increasing the demand for entrepreneurial education. Conversely, if there's economic downturn, people may prefer direct employment from a 3rd party over starting a business.

Additionally, if a large corporation were to establish itself in the region, it could create an influx of job opportunities, potentially decreasing the immediate demand for entrepreneurial education but increasing it in the long-term as people seek to climb the corporate ladder or create complementary businesses to service larger entity.

- **Economic growth** increases demand for entrepreneurial education.
- **Economic downturn** may lead to fewer small businesses and startups.

Sociocultural

The culture and social norms in the NWT can significantly impact the receptiveness towards entrepreneurial education. With a high population of Indigenous peoples, incorporating Indigenous knowledge and learning methods could increase the IBCE's perceived legitimacy and course uptake. Additionally, societal views on entrepreneurship can also affect demand. For example, if there's a strong culture of self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship, there would likely be higher demand for business and entrepreneurial education.

- **Incorporating Indigenous knowledge** and learning methods will increase the IBCE's legitimacy.
- **Societal views** on entrepreneurship influence demand for business and

Technological

The level of technology adoption and internet accessibility in these territories can directly influence the effectiveness of the IBCE's digital offerings. For instance, if broadband access is limited in certain areas, participants may struggle to participate in online learning, limiting the Centre's market reach. On the other hand, adopting cutting-edge educational technologies, such as AI-driven personalized learning or VR-based immersive learning, could greatly enhance the educational experience, drawing in more learners. Leveraging systems such as Aurora College's Learning Management System and IST Support would help reduce IT issues and potentially reduce costs.

- **Broadband access and technology adoption** impact effectiveness of IBCE's digital offerings.
- **Cutting-edge educational technologies** enhance the learning experience and attract more students.

Legal

Legal factors, such as changes in education laws, accreditation requirements, and online privacy regulations, can affect the way the IBCE operates. For instance, if stricter data privacy laws are enacted, it may need to invest in more secure data management systems for its online platforms, potentially increasing operational costs. Similarly, changes in accreditation requirements could necessitate adjustments in their course content or teaching methods.

Additionally, the creation of new course content and any intellectual properties generated by the IBCE would involve legal consultations.

- **Changes in education laws** and accreditation requirements can affect IBCE's operations.
- **Stricter data privacy laws** may require investments in secure data management systems.

Environmental

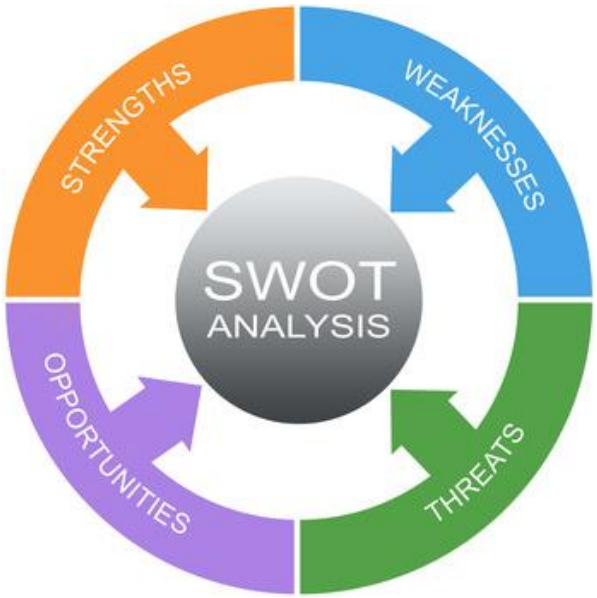
Geographical and climatic conditions in NWT can pose unique challenges for the IBCE. For example, severe weather conditions could disrupt in-person classes, making online education a more reliable option. Additionally, the increased frequency of forest fires and mandatory evacuations in Northern communities has the potential to disrupt course schedules and shift participant priorities.

Furthermore, there's an increasing societal expectation for institutions to implement sustainability initiatives. The IBCE should showcase its commitment towards sustainability, by incorporating green technologies in its facilities or integrating sustainability concepts in its courses.

- **Severe weather conditions** can disrupt in-person classes, making online education more reliable.
- **Forest fire evacuations** disrupt course schedules and shift participant priorities.

SWOT

The SWOT analysis is used to identify the organization's key strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats that it faces from the external environment. The results of the analysis can be used to develop a strategic plan that leverages the organization's strengths and addresses its weaknesses, while taking advantage of opportunities and mitigating threats.



Strengths

The strengths of the analysis identify the attributes that give the IBCE an advantage in achieving its mandate. By recognizing and tapping into these strengths, the IBCE could benefit from these opportunities.

- **In-depth Local Knowledge**
- **Tailored Programs**
- **Strong Local Partnerships**
- **Government and Community Support**
- **Networking Opportunities**
- **Procurement Support**
- **Expertise in Entrepreneurship**

In-depth Local Knowledge: Through Aurora College and the IBCE's future partners, it has profound local knowledge and understanding of the communities within NWT. This unique understanding extends to cultural nuances, regional issues, and local industry needs. The Centre can use this insight to design relevant, culturally responsive courses.

Tailored Programs: The Centre's program offerings are designed to align with the region's unique context. These include business training tailored to address local challenges and opportunities.

Local Partnerships: Aurora College has built partnerships with local businesses and governmental bodies. These connections can be leveraged for internships, guest lectures, and even job placements. They also provide an invaluable network for the college's business incubator and accelerator programs.

Government and Community Support: The emphasis on boosting Indigenous entrepreneurship aligns with government initiatives and community development goals, fostering strong support and potential funding opportunities.

Networking Opportunities: By facilitating networking events and collaboration opportunities, the organization can create a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurs and small businesses in the NWT, fostering innovation and growth.

Procurement Support: Offering procurement support for small businesses can strengthen their capacity to participate in government and private sector contracts, opening new revenue streams and fostering economic sustainability.

Expertise in Entrepreneurship: Drawing on experienced faculty and industry experts, the organization can provide high-quality entrepreneurship training, ensuring participants receive valuable knowledge and skills.

Weaknesses

The weaknesses part of this analysis looks at the weaknesses in the NWT's market and how they may pose a potential challenge to the IBCE's viability. Recognizing these weaknesses helps the IBCE work on reducing the risks and mitigating these potential challenges.

- **Competition from other institutions**
- **Instructor availability**

Competition from Other Institutions: The organization may face competition from other post-secondary institutions or training providers, requiring a strong differentiation strategy to attract learners.

Instructor Availability: Recruiting and retaining qualified instructors with expertise in Indigenous entrepreneurship and business development might be challenging, potentially affecting the quality and continuity of the programs offered.

Opportunities

The opportunities section explores the external factors that could benefit the IBCE's growth and success. Identifying these opportunities allows the IBCE to expand its reach and maximize potential.

- **Growing interest in Indigenous entrepreneurship**
- **Government funding initiatives**
- **Partnerships**

Growing Interest in Indigenous Entrepreneurship: The increasing focus on Indigenous economic development presents an opportune moment for the organization to advance its mandate to increase Indigenous economic capacity and capitalize on the rising demand for entrepreneurship training in the NWT.

Government Funding Initiatives: There are many large foundations, NGO and Governments offering grants and funding opportunities aimed at supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship and small businesses. These funds can be leveraged to enhance the organization's programs and services.

Partnerships: Collaborating with the government, community, and private organizations operating in the business and entrepreneurship support space will help avoid program duplication and lessen competition. The IBCE could also have the opportunity to fill a missing role within the NWT for a centralized body coordinating efforts among stakeholder groups and acting as single point of entry for anyone wanting to be an entrepreneur.

Threats

The threats section looks at external factors that could pose challenges or risks to the IBCE. By identifying these threats, the IBCE can develop strategies to mitigate and minimize their impact.

- **Economic instability**
- **Regulatory changes**
- **Changing industry trends**
- **Limited access to funding**

Economic Instability: Economic downturns or fluctuations in the NWT could impact the demand for entrepreneurship training and small business support, affecting the organization's sustainability.

Regulatory Changes: Changes in government policies or regulations related to post-secondary education or Indigenous business support could create uncertainties and affect funding prospects.

Changing Industry Trends: Rapid advancements in technology or shifts in business trends may require the organization to continually update its curriculum to remain relevant and competitive.

Limited Access to Funding: Fierce competition for government grants and funding may limit the financial support available for the organization's initiatives, hindering its expansion and growth.

Northwest Territories Business Statistics

The IBCE would pursue several objectives including closing the gap in business and education for many Northern residents particularly Indigenous peoples. It will increase Northerner access to business leadership opportunities, entrepreneurship, skill development, and collaboration with Northern businesses. The IBCE would increase support for Norther entrepreneurs, develop best practices for Northern jurisdiction, and build core skills for Indigenous businesses to succeed. As part of this process, Aurora College requires up-to-date market intelligence regarding which NWT industries are expanding and represent the most in-demand opportunities.

This economic analysis examines the Business Register for the Northwest Territories between 2015 and 2022 to identify the NWT strategic sectors, or industries that have outperformed the market average. Because of the large impact of Covid played in the Territory, the Business Register data for 2020 and 2021 was omitted from the data set.

Please refer to Appendix B for the full economic report.

Economic Insights

- NWT business counts across all sectors have been in decline since 2014 (historic high 1757) with the steepest decline occurring between 2020 and 2021. Business counts in 2022 had not recovered to pre-pandemic levels (1555).
- Covid had a major impact on the health of the private sector in the North, with the NWT seeing the loss of nearly 5% of its businesses between 2019 and 2022.
- The Petroleum industry continues to grow and is outpacing all other industries by at least 2 to 1.
- Technology based industries such as Manufacturing, Telecommunications, and Broadcasting are growing rapidly and are increasing the NWT's economic diversity and resilience.

Table 1: Top 10 Average Rate of Business Count Growth 2015 to 2019 and 2022

Top 10 Average Rate of Business Count Growth 2015 to 2019 and 2022	
Petroleum and petroleum products merchant wholesalers	38.6%
Clothing manufacturing	18.3%
Telecommunications	11.8%
Broadcasting (except Internet)	9.6%
Furniture and home furnishings stores	8.3%
Heritage institutions	7.7%
Transit and ground passenger transportation	7.4%
Amusement, gambling, and recreation	5.7%
Insurance carriers and related activities	4.5%
Truck transportation	4.0%

Honourable mention should also be given to Local, municipal and regional public administration and Aboriginal public administration, ranking 11th and 13th, respectively. Both of these sectors exhibited consistent positive growth and would represent relatively "target rich" environments for IBCE services.

Key Learnings

The market for entrepreneurship and business training in the NWT is relatively well-served by existing providers. This makes it essential for the IBCE to identify untapped demographic or geographic areas that remain underserved. Moreover, to stand out from competitors, the IBCE should offer courses and support services not currently provided by others or develop supplementary training programs that complement existing offerings. By focusing on unique and innovative support mechanisms, the IBCE could attract participants seeking specialized assistance and differentiate itself from other players in the market, despite its limited size. Additionally, the IBCE should refrain from trying to capture market share to establish a dominant position. Instead, the IBCE could position itself as a coordinator between various program providers, forging collaborations and partnerships to enhance the overall support ecosystem for Indigenous entrepreneurship and small businesses in the region. By acting as a facilitator and collaborator, the IBCE could leverage the strengths of existing programs while adding value through supplementary services and wrap-around support, ensuring a comprehensive approach to participant needs and development.

High competition, low market size, and low switching costs create potential challenges for the IBCE in participant recruitment and retention. Rather than engaging in direct competition with other providers, the IBCE should adopt a collaborative approach and seek partnerships with established institutions and organizations. By working together, the IBCE could co-design and co-deliver programs, pooling resources and expertise to offer a wider range of opportunities. This strategic approach can lead to a more effective and sustainable model, maximizing the impact of the IBCE's initiatives and reducing duplication of efforts in the market.

Government budget priorities in the NWT can significantly influence the IBCE's growth potential and funding availability. As a result, it is crucial for the IBCE to closely monitor government initiatives and allocate resources accordingly. By aligning its objectives and programs with the government's priorities, the IBCE could increase its chances of securing funding and support, ensuring the organization's long-term sustainability and success.

Promoting entrepreneurship as a career choice aligns well with the NWT's culture of self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship. By emphasizing entrepreneurship as a viable and rewarding career path, the IBCE could tap into the region's entrepreneurial spirit and attract participants who have a strong interest in starting or growing their businesses. By incorporating Indigenous knowledge and learning methods, the IBCE could further enhance its perceived legitimacy and attract individuals looking for culturally relevant and meaningful educational experiences.

ENGAGEMENT

Methods and Approach

A key objective determined in the research framework was inclusive engagement with the diverse communities in the Northwest Territories. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection was used to provide more opportunity for participation. The engagements aimed to get input on the business needs of the Territory, customer demand, current resources available, and the opportunities for a future IBCE.

This feasibility study engaged a variety of stakeholders and community members including Aurora College students and staff, government representatives, industry leaders, and community members. Engagement undertaken for this study included:

- A multi-session focus group engagement;
- Six in-depth informant interviews; and,
- A publicly available online survey distributed across the NWT.

Focus Group

Focus group sessions were conducted with various members the IBCE Advisory Committee. The focus group was held virtually through Microsoft Teams and on two separate occasions to account for committee member availability and provide more opportunity for participation. The focus groups were conducted in March 2023 and May 2023. Focus groups enable participants to share perspectives and to build on one another's contributions. Focus groups sought to encourage meaningful dialogue and inform on key aspects of the study. Focus group questions are included in Appendix C.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders and industry informants throughout the engagement process. Interview protocols and questions were reviewed and approved in advance by the Aurora College project sponsor and project manager as well as the IBCE Feasibility Study Advisory Committee. Interviews were conducted from May 2023 through July 2023 and were held virtually through Microsoft Teams. The interviews ranged in length from 30 minutes to one hour. Interview questions and protocols are in included in Appendix D.

Image Source: Stock Image

Community Survey

Survey questions were designed in consultation with Aurora College and the IBCE Advisory Committee. Input gathered in the background document review and the first focus group were used to refine survey questions. The survey was intended to determine demand and identify entrepreneurial needs and potential gaps in current offerings in the Territory. The survey was available through an online survey platform administered by Praxis. Praxis was responsible for all survey programming and testing. The survey was accessible via an online link and QR code found on the College's website and social media channels, the IBCE Advisory Committee members' networks, and partners of the College.

The public online survey was open from May 8 through May 26, 2023[28]. A total of 112 responses were received during the survey period. It should be noted that 45% of respondents self-identified as Indigenous and while respondents were able to self identify as being part of more than one group, roughly 50% were employees of Aurora College, 21% were entrepreneurs and business owners and 23% were interested community members. The relatively low number of responses from the main target group, Entrepreneurs and Business Owners may limit the validity of the findings.

A copy of the public survey questionnaire and data analysis can be found in Appendix E.

What We Heard

We received a wealth of insightful feedback throughout the engagement process. Input from interviewees, focus group participants, and survey responses were analyzed and consolidated into common themes and important insights.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders and industry informants throughout the engagement process. Themes are identified based on what we heard.

Supports and resources are available, but people are unaware of where to find the supports that they need. The informant interviews highlighted that there is a range of existing supports and resources available to entrepreneurs and small businesses in the NWT. However, a significant challenge faced by many individuals is the lack of awareness about where to access these resources.

The program should be flexible and focus on practical skills training. Flexibility emerged as a critical factor in designing the program to meet the diverse needs of participants across the NWT. Informants emphasized the importance of delivering practical skills training that aligns with the demands of the current business landscape.

- **Supports and resources** are available, but there is a lack of awareness.
- The program should be **flexible** and focus on **practical skills training.**
- The **traditional economy** is a key emerging industry.

[28] Surveys are recommended to stay in field for a minimum of two weeks. The time period was extended to provide a greater opportunity for responses and was extended by one week due to complications in the initial promotion of the survey.

The traditional economy is a key emerging industry. The informant interviews highlighted the growing significance of the traditional economy, including cultural industries, traditional crafts, and eco-tourism, as a potential driver of economic growth.

Exposure to entrepreneurship should be integrated into the elementary and high school curriculums. Informants stressed the importance of introducing entrepreneurship concepts at an early age. By integrating entrepreneurship education into the elementary and high school curriculums, Indigenous students can develop an entrepreneurial mindset, gain business knowledge, and foster creativity and problem-solving skills.

- **Exposure** to entrepreneurships should start at a young age.
- Consider supporting **community economic development** as an alternative model.

Place focus on economic development/economic development corps in communities. Informants emphasized the significance of community-level economic development to ensure sustainable growth and prosperity. This type of work is a different from the focus on individualism and entrepreneurship, though it is a noted gap in the NWT, where entrepreneurial and small business support is relatively already available.

Focus Groups

Focus group sessions were conducted with various members the IBCE Advisory Committee. Responses were collated into key themes.

Build programs on what already exists. The focus group sessions highlighted the importance of building upon existing resources and initiatives rather than creating redundant programs. Participants emphasized the need for the IBCE to collaborate with and complement the efforts of other Indigenous organizations, government agencies, and educational institutions that already provide entrepreneurship and business development support.

Mix general business and industry-specific training. The focus groups suggested that the IBCE should offer a balanced mix of general business skills training and industry-specific training. While general business skills are fundamental for any entrepreneur, participants highlighted the unique challenges and opportunities presented by specific industries within the North.

- **Build** programs on what already exists.
- **Mix** general business and industry-specific training.
- **Ensure** an Indigenous lens on all programming.
- **Establish** an alumni network.
- **Emphasize** direct on-site engagement.

Ensure an Indigenous lens on all programming. One of the key recommendations from the focus group sessions was to ensure that all programming delivered by the IBCE reflects an Indigenous lens. This means integrating Indigenous cultural values, traditional knowledge, and practices into the curriculum and program design.

Establish an alumni network. Participants stressed the significance of creating an alumni network to foster ongoing support and connections beyond the program's duration. An alumni network can provide opportunities for graduates to stay engaged with the IBCE, access continued mentorship, and participate in networking events. Moreover, it enables successful entrepreneurs to give back to the program by becoming mentors for new participants. This sense of community and ongoing support can contribute to the long-term success and sustainability of the IBCE, as well as facilitate peer-to-peer learning and collaboration among Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Emphasize direct on-site engagement with entrepreneurs in their communities. The focus group sessions emphasized the importance of providing direct on-site engagement with entrepreneurs in their communities. Recognizing the vast geographical expanse of the NWT, the IBCE should prioritize outreach efforts and travel to remote and underserved communities.

Online Survey

The survey intended to determine demand and identify entrepreneurial needs and potential gaps in current offerings in the Territory. Key findings are highlighted below.

There is a low level of demand and a high level of awareness for the service in the market. The survey found that more than a quarter of the respondents to the survey[29] (28.6%) have taken advantage of business development/support/services/program resources in the past. However, of those who have not accessed these resources in the past, the majority (79.5%) are aware of Aurora College. Although demand is currently low with high awareness, half (50.0%) of the respondents indicated an interest in accessing these resources within the next one to three years. Additionally, nearly another quarter (22.3%) indicate that they do not know what their interest will be in the upcoming years. This indicates that these services are being used by a small portion of the market, while there is a bigger interest in accessing these resources within the next one to three years, and an opportunity to provide accessible information to those who are unsure.

- **Low level of demand, high level of awareness** for the service in the market.
- **Preference** for short or intensive workshops, mentorship from industry professionals, and in-person formats.
- **Potential challenge** of participants paying for services.

[29] A total of 112 survey responses were completed between May 8, and May 25, 2023. Communication of the survey included providing survey information and a link on the Aurora website and through word-of-mouth with support from the Indigenous Advisory Council. All respondents were located in NWT, with half identifying themselves as an Indigenous person, and the same proportion identifying themselves as an employee of the Aurora College.

Majority of respondents prefer short or intensive workshops, advise/training from an industry professional, and in-person or mixed-format course structures that provide certificates/credentials. Among those who expressed interest in accessing resources within the next one to three years, the majority (67.9%) indicated a preference for short workshops (meaning workshops with less than one day of delivery). Furthermore, another two-thirds (66.1%) of these respondents showed a preference for intensive workshops (lasting one to two days). Additionally, over half (58.9%) of these respondents also showed a preference to support/services (e.g., training, advice, etc.) from an industry professional. For individuals interested in accessing resources in the next one to three years, nearly two-thirds (64.3%) of respondents prefer in-person programs. Additionally, more than half (58.9%) of interested respondents noted a preference for programs that offer a combination of virtual, in-person, and self-directed resources. Moreover, certification and credentials are important to nearly three quarters (71.4%) of interested respondents.

- **Basic business training** is the most desired content.
- **Potential need** for industry-specific resources.

Potential challenge communicating value to participants. Over one-fifth (21.4%) of the respondents indicated that they are not willing to pay for resources. Additionally, 37.5% of respondents are uncertain about their willingness to pay for resources.

Basic business training is the most desired content. The top five topics of interest indicated by respondents include (1) acquiring money to support a business, (2) developing business plans, (3) accessing legal and regulatory requirements of business, (4) marketing/promoting a business, and (5) bookkeeping.

Potential Need for Industry-Specific Resources. Among those who are interested in accessing resources in the upcoming years, nearly one quarter (23.2%) indicate preference of industry-specific resources. Specific industries indicated by these respondents include (1) construction, (2) education, (3) information and cultural services, (4) mining, oil, and gas extraction, (5) fishing and hunting, and (6) accommodation and food services.

Key Learnings

Low Demand and High Awareness of supports for entrepreneurs: The survey highlights that there is a high level of awareness and low demand for business development and support services in the market. Approximately one-third of respondents have already utilized such resources, and the majority of those who have not utilized these resources indicate that have had awareness of them. Half of the respondents expressed interest in accessing entrepreneurial resources within the next one to three years. This indicates that there is a growing interest in entrepreneurial services; however, there may be a lack of alignment with the current resources provided and the respondents' needs. This presents an opportunity for the IBCE to better understand the needs of potential participants. The IBCE should prioritize communication with the entrepreneurs in NWT communities regarding what resources should be provided by the IBCE to bridge this gap. Implementing feedback and engagement with the entrepreneurs through community engagement sessions and collaborating with local organizations to

understand the needs of the entrepreneurs will ensure that potential participants are aligned with the resources and services offered by the IBCE.

Offer flexible and practical programs: The IBCE should incorporate hands-on training, workshops, and real-world projects that allow aspiring entrepreneurs to apply their knowledge immediately. By offering a variety of program formats, including in-person and multi-modal options (i.e., in-person with online and self-comprehensive materials), the IBCE could accommodate various learning preferences and geographical challenges faced by Indigenous residents in the North.

The traditional economy is important: The IBCE should recognize the value of traditional knowledge and support Indigenous entrepreneurs seeking to engage in sustainable and culturally respectful business ventures. By integrating traditional practices and cultural preservation into the program, the IBCE could help nurture emerging traditional economy industries and ensure their preservation for future generations.

Engage Indigenous students in entrepreneurship at an early age: The IBCE should collaborate with regional educational authorities to develop age-appropriate curriculum materials and resources that align with Indigenous cultural values and traditions. By doing so, the IBCE could plant the seeds for a future generation of Indigenous entrepreneurs and business leaders.

Support community level economic development as an alternative: The IBCE could support the establishment of economic development corps within Indigenous communities, providing them with resources, training, and mentorship to identify opportunities and drive economic initiatives that align with their unique needs and aspirations. By empowering local economic development efforts, the IBCE could contribute to the self-sufficiency and economic resilience of Indigenous communities across the NWT. Additionally, the IBCE could foster collaboration with regional economic development organizations to leverage their expertise and strengthen the collective impact on Indigenous economic development throughout the region.

Do not duplicate services: By leveraging existing networks and partnerships, the IBCE could maximize its impact and avoid duplicating services. This collaborative approach can lead to a more cohesive and effective ecosystem of support for Indigenous entrepreneurs in the NWT.

Offer a mix of general and industry specific training and support: Incorporating industry-specific advisors and mentors who have expertise in areas such as construction, education, information and cultural services, mining, oil, and gas extraction, fishing and hunting, and accommodation and food services would be highly beneficial. These advisors can provide tailored guidance, insights, and connections relevant to the specific industries participants are interested in, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the program.

Ensure and Indigenous lens: The IBCE should embrace Indigenous ways of knowing, promote cultural preservation, and respect the diverse traditions and languages of Indigenous communities in the region. By doing so, the IBCE could create a culturally sensitive and inclusive learning environment that resonates with Indigenous participants and fosters a sense of pride in their heritage.

In-person and on-site learning is crucial, with accommodations preferred: On-site engagement can facilitate face-to-face interactions, personalized consultations, and workshops that directly address the unique needs and challenges faced by entrepreneurs in different regions. This approach is crucial for

building trust, understanding local contexts, and tailoring the program to the diverse cultural and economic landscapes of Indigenous communities. Additionally, providing on-site engagement can foster a deeper connection with participants, ensuring that the IBCE's support resonates and is relevant to their specific circumstances. However, a model that includes mixed delivery will be beneficial to minimize challenges such as geographic barriers. This may include providing in-person engagement with an online option or self-comprehensive materials for the participant to use on their own time.

Preference for short and intensive workshops with certifications: The majority of respondents prefer short (less than one day delivery) and intensive workshops (lasting one to two days), delivered in person or with a multi-modal approach. They also showed a preference for course structures that offer certificates or credentials upon completion. This insight suggests that the IBCE should focus on designing flexible and condensed training programs that provide tangible outcomes and recognized credentials, catering to participants' preferences.

Participant costs need to be minimal: Over one-third of respondents indicated uncertainty about their willingness to pay for resources (37.5%), with one-fifth (21.4%) expressing an unwillingness to pay altogether. This finding indicates that the IBCE may face challenges in participation depending on the resource cost to the participant. Providing various ways of payment, numerous resources of differing costs, and keeping costs/fees to a minimum will be crucial in addressing this challenge.

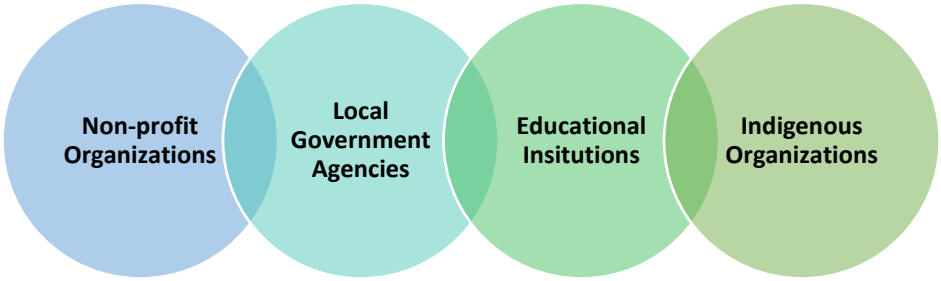
RELATIONSHIPS

The success of the Indigenous Business and Community Engagement concept relies significantly on fostering and maintaining strong relationships with various stakeholders in the Northwest Territories. As the IBCE would endeavor to boost Indigenous entrepreneurship and provide essential support to small businesses, it is crucial to establish a diverse network of community, public, and private partnerships.

This section of the report examines the key types of relationships that the IBCE should proactively cultivate to achieve its mission effectively. By understanding the importance of these collaborations and their potential impact on the overall success of the IBCE, the organization could strategically build towards sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships that will contribute to the growth and prosperity of Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses.

Community

Engaging with diverse types of community partners is vital for the IBCE to create a comprehensive and impactful approach to boosting Indigenous entrepreneurship and supporting small businesses in communities across the NWT. Collaborating with non-profits, local government agencies, educational institutions, and Indigenous organizations ensures that the IBCE's initiatives are well-informed, culturally respectful, and effectively address the needs of each community it's serving. These partnerships offer access to valuable insights, resources, networks, and funding opportunities that can enhance the IBCE's programs and contribute to the sustainable growth and prosperity of Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses in the Northwest Territories.



Non-profit Organizations. Non-profit organizations are dedicated to serving the needs of specific communities and advocating for social causes. Engaging with non-profits, particularly those engaged in supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses is crucial for the IBCE as they often have a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the community. These organizations can provide valuable insights into the needs of underserved populations and help the IBCE design programs that address underserved demographic, geographic, or training areas. Additionally, non-profits often have established networks and partnerships with other local stakeholders, making them valuable allies in reaching a broader audience and maximizing the impact of the IBCE's initiatives.

Local Government Agencies. Local government bodies, such as city councils and regional authorities, play a central role in shaping the community's development. Collaborating with them is essential for the IBCE to align its programs and initiatives with local development plans and priorities. Engaging with local government agencies can also open doors to potential funding opportunities, policy support, and access

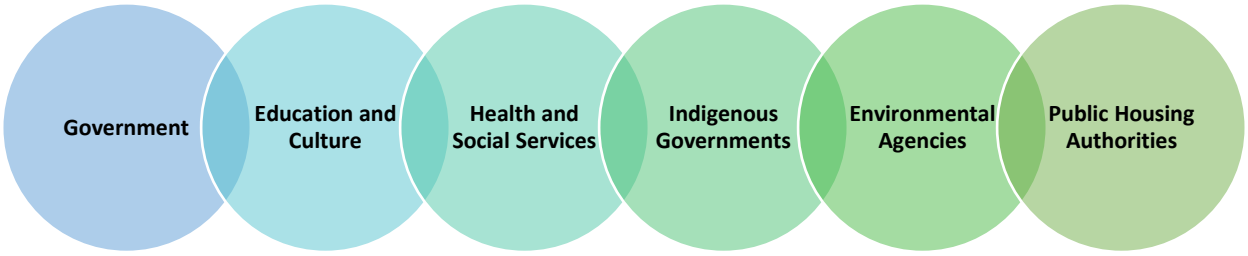
to valuable data and resources that can inform the IBCE's decision-making process and ensure the sustainability and relevance of its efforts.

Educational Institutions. Educational institutions, including schools and colleges, are critical partners for the IBCE in fostering Indigenous entrepreneurship and supporting small businesses. Partnering with other educational institutions would enable the IBCE to offer tailored entrepreneurship and business education programs that align with the needs of the community and do not duplicate or dilute the programs offered by others. By engaging with primary and high schools, the IBCE could create a pipeline of aspiring entrepreneurs and foster a culture of innovation and enterprise from an early age. Additionally, collaboration with universities can provide access to research and academic expertise, enriching the IBCE's programs with cutting-edge knowledge and insights.

Indigenous Organizations. For the IBCE, working closely with Indigenous organizations and tribal governments would be of utmost importance. Indigenous communities have unique cultural perspectives, knowledge, and aspirations that require culturally sensitive and community-driven initiatives. Partnering with Indigenous organizations ensures that the IBCE's programs would be respectful, relevant, and aligned with the needs and values of the Indigenous population. Additionally, such partnerships could facilitate the development of Indigenous entrepreneurship programs, offer mentorship from Indigenous business leaders, and create pathways for community members to access the resources and support needed to succeed in business ventures.

Public

Engaging with public partners broadens the IBCE's impact, enhances its resources, and enables a more holistic approach to supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship and small businesses in the Northwest Territories. By collaborating with various public organizations, the IBCE could design inclusive, culturally sensitive, and sustainable initiatives that address community needs while fostering economic growth and prosperity.



Government Partners: Local government bodies, Territorial or Provincial governments, and Federal government departments will be important public partners for the IBCE. Collaborating with local governments would allow the IBCE to work on community development projects, economic initiatives, and business support programs tailored to the specific needs of the region. Partnerships with Territorial and Federal governments offer access to funding opportunities, policy support, and the potential for collaboration on larger-scale projects that can have a significant impact on the community. Engaging with these government partners would ensure that the IBCE's initiatives align with public priorities and policies, maximizing their effectiveness and reach.

Educational and Cultural Partners: Public Educational Institutions and Public Arts and Cultural Institutions are essential partners for the IBCE's mission to foster entrepreneurship and support aspiring Indigenous entrepreneurs. Collaborating with other educational institutions would allow the IBCE to deliver tailored educational programs and initiatives that prepare students for entrepreneurship and small business ventures. Additionally, partnerships with cultural institutions provide opportunities for entrepreneurship in the arts and cultural sectors, preserving cultural heritage while encouraging economic growth. Engaging with these partners would enrich the IBCE's offerings and ensures a holistic approach to supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship and cultural development.

Health and Social Services Partners: Public health organizations and local social services and community development agencies are vital partners for the IBCE to address the holistic well-being of community members. Collaborating with public health entities would allow the IBCE to incorporate community health and wellness into entrepreneurship and business development programs, fostering a healthy and resilient workforce. Partnerships with social service organizations would enable the IBCE to address community needs and support initiatives that benefit vulnerable populations, ensuring inclusivity and equitable access to entrepreneurship opportunities.

Indigenous Partners: Indigenous governance bodies play a crucial role in ensuring that the IBCE's initiatives are culturally sensitive and aligned with Indigenous community development goals. Collaborating with Indigenous organizations would enable the IBCE to design programs that respect and support the unique perspectives, traditions, and aspirations of Indigenous communities. These partnerships would foster mutual trust and respect, leading to impactful initiatives that empower Indigenous entrepreneurs and promote sustainable economic growth.

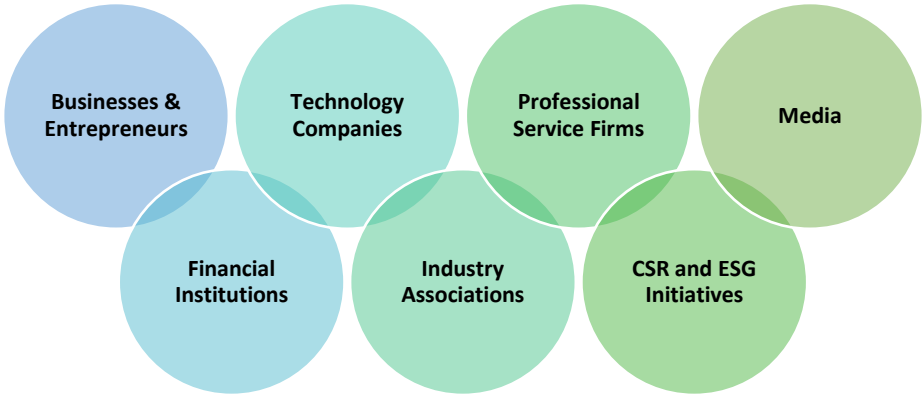
Environmental Partners: Environmental and conservation agencies are strategic partnerships for the IBCE to integrate sustainability principles into their programs. Collaboration with public environmental organizations would allow the IBCE to promote environmentally conscious business practices, supporting entrepreneurship in the green economy. These partnerships could contribute to the region's environmental stewardship and long-term sustainable development.

Housing Partners: Partnerships with public housing authorities are essential for the IBCE to support entrepreneurship and small businesses within public housing communities. Engaging with housing authorities would ensure that the IBCE's programs reach diverse and often underserved populations, fostering economic empowerment and social inclusion.

Private

Engaging with the private sector is crucial for the IBCE as it offers a wealth of expertise, resources, and innovation that can significantly enhance the organization's mission. Collaborating with businesses, tech companies, financial institutions, and other private entities provides access to real-world insights and market trends, allowing the IBCE to tailor its programs to meet the evolving needs of aspiring Indigenous entrepreneurs and small businesses. Partnerships with the private sector also foster an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem, enabling the organization to offer mentorship, networking opportunities,

and financial support crucial for startup success.



Businesses: Private companies of various sizes, from small startups to multinational corporations, represent a crucial category of private partners for the IBCE. These businesses can collaborate on initiatives related to entrepreneurship, business development, mentorship, and more. Engaging with businesses would provide the IBCE access to real-world insights and industry expertise, enabling them to design programs that align with current market trends and meet the needs of aspiring entrepreneurs. Partnering with businesses also opens doors to potential internship opportunities, mentorship, and even job placements for students and graduates. Moreover, businesses can contribute financially or through in-kind support, fostering a sustainable ecosystem that benefits both the organization and the broader entrepreneurial community.

Entrepreneurial Ecosystem: This category includes private partners such as business incubators, accelerators, venture capital firms, and other entities that support startups and entrepreneurs. Collaborating with the entrepreneurial ecosystem is essential for the IBCE, as these partners offer valuable resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities. By linking aspiring entrepreneurs with incubators and accelerators, the IBCE could provide access to valuable guidance and support during the early stages of business development. Additionally, connecting with venture capital firms can lead to potential investment opportunities for innovative business ideas. These partnerships cultivate a thriving startup environment, encouraging the growth of Indigenous entrepreneurship and facilitating the launch and success of small businesses.

Financial Institutions: Private banks, credit unions, investment firms, and other financial institutions represent another vital category of private partners. Engaging with financial institutions would be critical for the IBCE because these partners could provide essential financial support to both the IBCE and its participants. Whether in the form of business loans, investment opportunities, or financial management expertise, collaboration with financial institutions would enable the IBCE to equip entrepreneurs with the necessary tools to establish and grow their businesses. Additionally, financial partners may offer workshops on financial literacy, enabling entrepreneurs to make informed financial decisions and manage their businesses effectively.

Technology Companies: Collaboration with private tech companies would offer the IBCE access to innovative tools, technologies, and software that support business development and entrepreneurship. As technology plays an increasingly significant role in modern businesses, partnering with tech

companies ensures that entrepreneurs are equipped with the latest resources and knowledge. From digital marketing solutions to productivity tools and e-commerce platforms, these partnerships empower Indigenous entrepreneurs to leverage technology for business growth and competitiveness.

Industry Associations: Private industry associations and trade organizations are valuable partners for the IBCE in aligning programs with industry trends and needs. These partners offer valuable insights into specific sectors, allowing the organization to tailor entrepreneurship programs to meet the demands of various industries. Engaging with industry associations provides entrepreneurs with networking opportunities, professional development resources, and exposure to potential market opportunities. These collaborations foster a deep understanding of sector-specific challenges and opportunities, promoting innovative and sustainable business practices.

Professional Service Firms: Private law firms, accounting firms, marketing agencies, and other professional service providers offer expertise in legal, accounting, marketing, and other areas relevant to small businesses. Collaborating with these partners would allow the IBCE to provide entrepreneurs with essential services that are crucial for business success. Whether it's legal advice, accounting support, or marketing strategies, partnering with professional service firms enhances the capabilities of Indigenous entrepreneurs and helps establish a strong foundation for their ventures.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) & Environmental Social Governance (ESG) Initiatives: Private companies engaging in CSR and/or ESG can partner with the IBCE on social impact projects, philanthropy, or initiatives supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship and community development. Collaborating with these companies would allow the IBCE to leverage their resources and commitment to social causes to benefit Indigenous communities. CSR & ESG partnerships can lead to funding opportunities, support for scholarships or entrepreneurial initiatives, and the promotion of community development. These collaborations align the goals of private companies with the IBCE's mission, creating a positive social impact and fostering sustainable business practices.

Media Organizations: Private media outlets play a vital role in supporting the IBCE's initiatives by raising awareness, promoting events, and highlighting success stories. Partnering with media organizations provides valuable visibility and exposure for the organization's programs and the accomplishments of Indigenous entrepreneurs. These partnerships would enable the IBCE to effectively communicate its message and engage a broader audience, further enhancing the impact of its work.

Online Learning Platforms: Collaborating with private online education platforms would allow the IBCE to offer additional educational resources and courses to aspiring entrepreneurs. Partnering with these platforms expands the reach of the organization's programs, making educational materials more accessible to a wider audience. Access to online learning resources enriches the learning experience for entrepreneurs, fostering their professional growth and entrepreneurial skills.

Engagement Strategy

To foster meaningful and reciprocal relationships with partner organizations, the IBCE must employ an inclusive and strategic approach. The first step is to establish clear goals the Centre wants to reach though its partnerships and articulate the benefits each organization can expect from the collaboration. Through open communication, the IBCE could identify partner needs and strengths and find areas for mutual support and resources.

Involving partners in decision-making processes is a powerful strategy that fosters a sense of shared ownership and commitment in collaborative endeavors. It empowers partners, leads to more comprehensive solutions, encourages accountability, builds trust, and ultimately contributes to the success and sustainability of the partnership.

Regularly assessing the impact of joint initiatives and publicly acknowledging contributions will underscore the partnership's value. Remaining flexible and committed to cultural sensitivity ensures effective collaboration, allowing the IBCE to access valuable resources and enhance community impact while supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship and small businesses in the Northwest Territories.

- **Foster** diverse and strategic partnerships
- **Establish** goals
- **Articulate** benefits
- **Engage** in open communication
- **Create** shared ownership and commitment
- **Build** trust through transparency
- **Assess** impact regularly and acknowledge contributions
- **Encourage** innovation and remain flexible

Key Learnings

Relationship Building: The success of any partnership hinges on the foundation of strong relationships with stakeholders. Establishing and nurturing these relationships are based on core principles such as trust, respect, and reciprocity. Trust is the cornerstone of a successful partnership, as it enables open communication and collaboration. Respect involves acknowledging and valuing the perspectives, needs, and contributions of each partner. Reciprocity refers to the idea that partnerships should be mutually beneficial, where all parties contribute and gain value from the collaboration. Genuine engagement is essential to understand each partner's goals, motivations, and concerns, fostering a sense of shared purpose and commitment.

Strategic Alignment: To achieve its objectives effectively, the IBCE must align its partnerships with its strategic goals. This requires careful selection of partners based on their relevance and potential contributions to the organization's mission. Partners can be categorized into two groups: essential partners, whose collaboration is critical to achieving the core objectives, and relational partners, who may provide additional value and support. By ensuring that all partnerships align with the organization's overall strategy, the IBCE could focus its efforts on the most impactful collaborations, maximizing the potential for success.

Principle of Reciprocity: Successful partnerships are built on the principle of reciprocity, where all partners recognize the tangible and intangible benefits they bring to the collaboration. Each partner should understand what they can contribute and what they stand to gain from the partnership. This goes beyond transactional exchanges; it involves identifying shared goals, resources, expertise, and opportunities for mutual growth and advancement. By highlighting the value that each partner brings to the table, the IBCE could foster a sense of commitment and dedication to the long-term success of the collaboration.

Diversity of Partnerships: A diverse network of partnerships with various stakeholders would enrich the IBCE's capabilities and impact. Collaborating with a wide range of partners, such as businesses, government bodies, educational institutions, community organizations, financial institutions, and others, brings unique perspectives, expertise, and resources to the organization's initiatives. Diversity in partnerships can lead to innovative solutions, enhanced community engagement, and a more comprehensive approach to supporting indigenous entrepreneurship and small businesses.

Ongoing Relationship Management: Building and maintaining successful partnerships require continuous effort and investment. Regular and transparent communication is vital to keep all stakeholders informed about progress, challenges, and opportunities for collaboration. Recognizing and appreciating the contributions of partners fosters a positive and supportive atmosphere, encouraging further commitment to the collaboration. Additionally, flexibility and adaptability are crucial traits in relationship management. As needs and circumstances evolve, the IBCE must be ready to adjust its strategies and approaches to ensure the partnerships remain effective and relevant over time.

OPERATIONS

To provide the level of entrepreneurial supports and network activation desired across a wide and diverse geographic region as the Northwest Territories, the IBCE would need to carefully consider how it chooses to organize, govern, and manage itself and its resources.

Key questions such as what organizational model supports the IBCE's vision, how should power and decision-making authority be distributed, and how should resources be used need to be carefully considered in setting up the core operational elements of the IBCE.

Organizational Structure Considerations

The IBCE would require an organizational structure that aligns with the governance and operating goals of its primary stakeholders and takes advantage of the resources available to it through Aurora College. Key considerations that must be addressed in the organizational structure include the broad geographic distribution of the NWT's Indigenous communities and range of business environments; the importance of maintaining a clear mandate and universal access while encouraging community-level program diversity; and how technology and partnerships can be used to extend the IBCE's reach.

Based on these factors, a hybrid organizational model is recommended that combines centralized coordination and management with decentralized operations. This model is effective for delivering universal, high-quality services and support across the approximately 4,783,458 square kilometers of land that make up the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut.

Image Source: Stock Image

Centralized Coordination: The IBCE should establish a central office, preferably located in a strategic hub within one of the founding partner's physical locations, that serves as the headquarters responsible for overall management, coordination, and administration of the organization. This central office will house core teams responsible for program development, evaluation, partnership management, and strategic planning.

The logical choice for this location is somewhere within Aurora College's Urban Campus in Yellowknife, NWT. Not only would locating the IBCE within Aurora College makes financial sense, a portion of Aurora College's administrative staff and faculty's time would likely be allocated to the Centre's operation. Furthermore, the decentralized operational elements of the organizational model require a series of geographically distributed regional offices that can respond to more localized challenges and opportunities in more flexible and dynamic ways.

Distributed Operations: To extend in-person supports and connection to local partners across the vast geographic area of the NWT and beyond, the IBCE should set up regional satellite support centers, strategically located in each region. With the program starting in the NWT, Aurora College's three campuses are ideally situated to serve as the satellite support centres with a northern location in Inuvik, a central location in Yellowknife, and a southern location in Fort Smith. These satellite centers would serve as physical hubs with connections to Aurora's Adult Educators and Program Managers. They would be where entrepreneurs and businesses could access direct assistance, mentorship, workshops, networking events, and the many other potential programs and supports the IBCE could provide.

To help develop strong and reciprocal relations, third-party organizations that are involved in helping provide the IBCE's wrap around programming could be given the opportunity to use the satellite offices to deliver programing that falls outside the IBCE program but still align with the IBCE vision. This could be provided free of charge or at a break-even rate if costs become unsustainable.

Each satellite center should have a dedicated team of staff responsible for delivering localized services, connecting with local communities, and ensuring cultural sensitivity. However, those given the administrative, managerial, and academic responsibilities would not need to work for the IBCE on a full-time FTE basis. Initially each IBCE satellite centre could be staffed by Aurora's staff and faculty at minimal levels and the IBCE's FTE levels can scale with participant uptake and geographic growth.

Finally, mobile outreach teams that travel to more remote communities and provide on-the-ground support could be established. The teams would be based out of the satellite offices but could travel from other locations and consist of business advisors, mentors, and trainers who visit communities on a scheduled basis, offering personalized consultations, training sessions, and networking opportunities.

Technology and Partners: To augment in-person supports, the IBCE could leverage technology and digital platforms to provide virtual support services. This can include online training modules, webinars, video conferences, and virtual mentorship programs. By embracing digital solutions, the IBCE could reach entrepreneurs and businesses in remote or underserved areas where physical presence may be challenging.

Additionally, to maximize resources and avoid duplication of services, the IBCE would need to establish collaborations and partnerships with existing Indigenous organizations, government agencies, educational institutions, and community groups. These collaborations could help leverage existing infrastructure and networks, allowing the IBCE to extend its reach and provide comprehensive support without the need for additional physical office spaces.

By combining centralized coordination, regional satellite support centers, mobile outreach teams, virtual support, and collaborations with existing organizations, the IBCE could offer in-person supports throughout the NWT without the need for more than three regional offices. This structure would ensure localized services, cultural sensitivity, and broad coverage, enabling the IBCE to effectively support Indigenous entrepreneurship across the diverse landscapes of the NWT.

The IBCE's programing and delivery model could be expanded to the Yukon, Nunavut and beyond through additional partnerships and satellite offices once the IBCE has established itself in the NWT and is ready for scaling.

Image Source: https://www.australiangeographic.com.au

Governance Structure Considerations

The IBCE's governance structure is equally important to its long-term success. Key considerations, such as Indigenous representation, partnership engagement, consensus-based decision making, transparent governance, regional representation, capacity building, and continuous engagement need to be featured in the governance model's design. By connecting the IBCE to Aurora's governance structure similarly to the Aurora Research Institute, the Centre already has much of what it needs to align with the best practices outlined below. Additionally, Aurora College's tri-cameral governance structure and incoming Indigenous Knowledge Holders Council will ensure that Indigenous interests are well represented within the IBCE.

Indigenous Representation: The governance structure should prioritize Indigenous representation at all levels. This ensures that decision-making processes incorporate diverse Indigenous perspectives, values, and experiences.

Partnership Engagement: Partnerships with Indigenous organizations, community leaders, and stakeholders should be integrated into the governance structure. This can involve establishing advisory committees or councils that provide guidance, expertise, and input on the strategic direction and decision-making processes of the IBCE.

Regional Representation: The governance structure should include mechanisms to ensure equitable representation from different regions of the NWT. This can be achieved through the establishment of regional committees or representatives, where each region has a voice and an opportunity to contribute to the decision-making processes.

Consensus-Based Decision Making: Incorporating consensus-based decision-making processes allows for collaborative decision-making that respects and values the input of all stakeholders. This approach ensures that decisions reflect the collective interests and aspirations of Indigenous communities across the NWT.

Transparent and Accountable Governance: Implementing transparent and accountable governance practices builds trust and credibility. The governance structure should include mechanisms for transparency in decision-making, reporting, and financial management. Regular communication with partners and stakeholders, as well as periodic reporting on outcomes and progress, ensures accountability to the communities served.

Capacity Building: The governance structure should include provisions for capacity building among Indigenous communities. This can involve offering training and mentorship programs that develop leadership and governance skills, enabling community members to actively participate in the decision-making processes of the IBCE.

By incorporating these critical success factors into the governance structure, the IBCE could ensure that decision-making authority is distributed equitably, Indigenous communities are meaningfully engaged, and the organization operates with transparency, accountability, and inclusivity.

Management of Non-Financial Resources

The careful management and optimization of the IBCE's non-financial resources are critical to its success. Non-financial resources include both tangible assets like people or physical spaces, and intangible assets such as partnerships, organizational wisdom, or intellectual property. The IBCE's primary non-financial resources and key considerations in their management could include:

Human Resources: The expertise, skills, and knowledge of the team members involved in the IBCE's operations are critical. Identifying and securing qualified staff, trainers, mentors, and advisors who have experience in Indigenous entrepreneurship, business development, and cultural sensitivity is essential for delivering effective programs and support services.

Those employed to work at the IBCE on a full-time or part-time basis would fall under the Northern Workers Collective Agreement and may split their responsibilities between Aurora College and /or other organizations. Those working on behalf of the IBCE to deliver programming and other supports would be engaged on a contractual basis.

The following roles should be developed to oversee and manage the IBCE's operations.

- **Executive Director:** This full-time role would be based out of the head office. This leadership position would be responsible for overseeing the overall operations of the IBCE, setting strategic goals, managing partnerships, and ensuring the organization's mission and vision are achieved.
- **Program Manager:** This full-time role would be based out of head office. The program manager would be responsible for designing, developing, and managing the various programs offered by the IBCE. This role would involve identifying training needs, collaborating with stakeholders, coordinating program delivery, and evaluating program effectiveness.
- **Partnership and Engagement Coordinator:** Based out of head office, this part-time role would focus on building and maintaining partnerships with Indigenous organizations, government agencies, educational institutions, and community groups. The coordinator would collaborate with partners to enhance program offerings, leverage resources, and ensure community engagement and participation. This is an essential role that holds significant influence over the success of the IBCE program as a robust and responsive partner network is a core element in the delivery of the program's services.
- **Human Resources:** HR services would be provided in a similar way to how Aurora College and Aurora Research Institute rely on the Public Service Alliance Act for their HR support.
- **Administrative and Support Staff:** Based out of the satellite support centres, part-time administrative and support staff members would handle various administrative tasks, including scheduling, record keeping, communications, and logistical support for program activities and events. These roles may be filled by existing Aurora College staff working in the Inuvik, Yellowknife, and Fort Smith campuses.
- **Faculty, Instructors, and Facilitators:** The IBCE would require experienced trainers and facilitators who have expertise in delivering business skills training and capacity building programs. These individuals be engaged on a contract basis and would deliver workshops, mentorship sessions, and provide hands-on guidance to aspiring Indigenous entrepreneurs. Recruiting these individuals may be a challenge due to a limited number of qualified trainers in the North. Additionally, many of the

qualified individuals may be working for other entrepreneurial and business support programs in the region. This is why partnerships and avoiding program duplication is important.

- **Business Advisors and Mentors:** Based out of their homes or private offices, business advisors and mentors would provide personalized guidance and support to entrepreneurs participating in the IBCE's programs. These individuals would be engaged on a contract basis and would share their expertise, offer industry insights, and help entrepreneurs develop strategies for business growth and success. They would provide in-person services at the satellite offices and virtual supports from any remote location.

Networks and Partnerships: Building and nurturing relationships with key stakeholders, such as government agencies, Indigenous organizations, educational institutions, and industry associations, provides access to valuable networks and resources. Collaborating with these partners can lead to shared expertise, shared services, and increased reach and impact of the IBCE's initiatives.

Indigenous Knowledge and Best Practices: Leveraging the existing knowledge, research, and best practices in Indigenous entrepreneurship developed by the IBCE and its partners is crucial. Accessing resources such as reports, studies, case studies, and academic literature can inform program design, curriculum development, and delivery methods, ensuring that the IBCE's initiatives are evidence-based and effective. Additionally, developing strategies to preserve and protect traditional knowledge while promoting entrepreneurship can help maintain cultural integrity and promote ethical practices.

Technology and Infrastructure: Utilizing appropriate technological infrastructure, such as computers, software, online platforms, and communication tools, is essential for program delivery, virtual support services, and data management. Access to reliable internet connectivity and IT support is also necessary for seamless operations.

Physical Spaces and Facilities: Considering the physical spaces required for program delivery, training workshops, mentorship sessions, and networking events is important. Whether through the establishment of regional satellite support centers or partnerships with existing facilities, ensuring access to appropriate venues and amenities contributes to the effectiveness and convenience of the IBCE's operations.

The careful consideration and optimization of these resources is essential for delivering effective programs and support services.

Image Source: Stock Image

FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

The financial analysis section of this report in intended to provide a sense of the potential major capital and operating costs associated with IBCE. Because limited actual cost information was not readily available, a number of informed assumptions needed to be made. The estimated costs outlined below should be considered preliminary and could be off by up to 30%.

Overall, it is projected that a total of $343,000 is needed for startup capital and $2,318,000 is needed to fund the operations of the two-year pilot.

Capital and Operating Financial Requirements

Several assumptions were made to establish the financial projections as follows:

- **Wages and salaries** include the fixed cost of staff to support operations as well as expected contract costs for instructional staff. The main office will have a full-time Executive Director, a full-time Program Manager, a part-time Partnership and Engagement Coordinator, and part-time administrative staff. Human Resource services would be provided by the Government of the Northwest Territories through the Public Service Alliance Act similar to Aurora College. It is expected the Partnership and Engagement Coordinator and administrative staff would be reassigned from or shared with existing Aurora College departments. Faculty, instructors, facilitators, and mentors will be paid on contract per engagement. These costs were estimated to be three individuals at 25% FTE and would need scale up as the program expands. Payroll taxes include employer contributions for the Canada Pension Plan and employment insurance.
- **Office setup** is estimated to be $75 per square foot for leasehold improvements (2,000 sf for main office and 500 sf for each satellite office) as well as a total of $50,000 in furniture expenses as well as $20,000 in computer and IT equipment for all three locations.
- **Capital fixed assets** are assumed to include office furniture, and the website in the cash flow statement.
- **Advertising** is expected to include social media and leverage the existing network and connections of the College, in addition to traditional marketing channels.
- **Travel** is intended to cover internal travel between office locations and on-site program delivery.
- **Event hosting and workshops** includes engagement with prospective entrepreneurs through events and workshops.
- **Rent** is assumed to be $30 gross per square foot at each office location.
- **Inflation** is assumed to be 3% per year.
- **Renovation permits** are included in the one-time setup costs.
- **Shared costs** are assumed to include business licenses, library and IT subscriptions, and insurance.
- **Distance education technologies** are assumed to be in place and the IBCE would have access to this technology, and other educational space through the College in-kind.
- **Program enrollment** is expected to remain steady throughout the calendar year.

Startup Costs

One-Time Startup Costs	
	Cash Required for Startup
Capital Costs	
Fixtures and Furniture	$50,000
Office Renovations	$225,000
Computer and IT Equipment	$20,000
Soft Costs	
Legal and Other Professional Fees	$10,000
Advertising and Promotion for Opening	$30,000
Licenses and Permits	$2,000
Website Development	$6,000
Total One-Time Startup Costs	**$343,000**

Five-Year Operating Expense Projection

A five-year operating expense projection is a critical tool for financial planning, budgeting, and decision-making. It supports the organization in achieving its goals, maintaining financial stability, and ensuring long-term sustainability. Year-one costs are escalated by 3% annually.

Operating Expenses	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Variable Expenses					
Salaries and Contract Wages	557,090	573,803	591,017	608,747	627,010
Office Supplies	2,000	2,060	2,122	2,185	2,251
Advertising and Promotion	20,000	30,000	35,000	36,050	37,132
Travel	60,000	61,800	63,654	65,564	67,531
Legal and Accounting Fees	12,000	6,000	10,000	10,300	10,609
Event Hosting and Workshops	100,000	103,000	106,090	109,273	112,551
Website Expenses	2,000	2,060	2,122	2,185	2,251
Total Variable Expenses	**$753,090**	**$778,723**	**$810,004**	**$834,305**	**$859,334**
Total Indirect Variable Expenses	**$264,000**	**$271,920**	**$280,077**	**$288,479**	**$297,134**
Fixed Expenses					
Rent	90,000	92,700	95,481	98,345	101,296
Utilities (Heat, Water, Power)	28,500	29,355	30,236	31,143	32,077
Telephone and Internet	6,340	6,530	6,726	6,928	7,136
Total Fixed Expenses	**$124,840**	**$128,585**	**$132,443**	**$136,416**	**$140,509**
Total Operating Expenses	**$1,141,930**	**$1,176,188**	**$1,211,473**	**$1,247,817**	**$1,285,252**

Break-Even Analysis

Year-one breakeven sales analysis establishes a threshold for success and sets a clear target for revenue. As noted in the operational expense assumptions above, some expenses are assumed to be shared with the College and not included in the operational expenses for IBCE.

Cost Description	Fixed Costs ($)	Variable Costs (%)	
Indirect Variable Costs			
Variable Inputs		5%	$44,000
Direct Labor (Contracts)		25%	$220,000
Direct Fixed & Variable Costs			
Salaries (includes payroll taxes)	$557,090		
Supplies	$2,000		
Advertising	$20,000		
Travel	$60,000		
Accounting and legal	$12,000		
Rent	$90,000		
Telephone & internet	$6,340		
Utilities	$28,500		
Website maintenance	$2,000		
Event hosting & workshops	$100,000		
Total Direct Costs	**$877,930**		
Total Indirect Costs		**30%**	**$264,000**
Breakeven Income level	**$1,141,930**		

FUNDING STRATEGIES

The Indigenous Business Centre for Excellence's success greatly depends on funding from both public and private sources. Praxis undertook a review of potential funding resources available to support a program such as an IBCE in the absence if any legislative limitations.

Private Sector

Partnering with private sector companies and organizations allow access to additional financial resources and expertise. Collaborating with private sector companies can also create a pathway to economic opportunities and sustainable growth through meaningful connections and relationships.

These private sector funding opportunities include resource and energy companies, technology companies, and financial institutions. Resource and energy companies, including mining, oil and gas, and renewable energy, often allocate funding as part of a commitment to social responsibility and community development. Financial institutions such as bank and investment companies promote funding and education for financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills. Technology companies provide funding in education that drives innovation and progress. An example of a private sector funding program can be see detailed below.

Telus Indigenous Communities Fund

The Telus Indigenous Communities Fund launched in 2021 to provide flexible grant funding to Indigenous leaders and community. These Indigenous-led programs and initiatives support social, health, cultural, and community needs in Canada[30]. Access to education and resources as well as community building are key focus areas for the funding.

Flexible grants are provided to Indigenous organizations, not-for-profits, and community groups for up to $50,000. Eligibility for the funding includes supporting Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis, Inuit) within Canada and clearly addressing a pressing social or well-being need.

Government

The Federal and Territorial governments provide funding programs that support organizations, such as an IBCE, that work with Indigenous communities to boost economic development, capacity building, and cultural preservation. There are a number of the funding opportunities available with two being identified in more detail below.

IDEANorth

The Inclusive Diversification and Economic Advancement in the North (IDEANorth) program is administered by the Government of Canada through the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor)[31]. This program promotes economic development in the North to strengthen territorial economies and increase economic participation by Northerners. There are four streams implemented that cater to a variety of business needs.

[30] https://www.telus.com/en/social-impact/giving-back/community-grants/indigenous-communities-fund#spring-2023

[31] https://www.cannor.gc.ca/eng/1385477070180/1385477215760

Stream 1, Sector & Capacity Development, is most applicable to the IBCE. This stream focuses on advancing territorial economic growth and sector development. Eligibility for this stream includes:

- building capacity of organizations;
- providing support to northern industry organizations to strengthen their capacity;
- providing support to communities, organizations, and associations in delivering expert advice and training in economic and business development; and,
- research, consultations, and investments complementary to initiatives for skill development of Northerners such as gap or needs analysis and curriculum development.

IDEANorth uses a cost-sharing model. With not-for-profit organizations, CanNor can contribute up to 80% of eligible project costs to a maximum of $6 million. Government assistance can be stacked in this model to a maximum level of 100% of eligible costs provided by government assistance.

Community Training Partnerships

The Government of Northwest Territories (GNWT) offers a Community Training Partnerships funding program[32]. This program provides support for third-party organizations to deliver community and regional activities aimed at increasing skills development, in the labour market.

The funding from this program may be available for a variety of organizational costs such as wages, supplies, administration, and tuition. Program eligibility for group skills training includes:

- literacy and numeracy;
- workplace essential skills;
- life skills;
- employment readiness programs;
- pre-employment training courses; and,
- Skill-specific training programs.

Community Training Partnerships funding is provided to organizations for up to 26 weeks. This is to deliver local activities aimed at increasing skills development, including workplace essential skills. The available funding is dependent on regional budgets, available funding, and regional approvals. There is no maximum allowable funding.

Indigenous and Non-Governmental Organizations

Indigenous and non-governmental organizations (NGO) present valuable funding opportunities that contribute to the expansion of outreach and impact in Indigenous communities. Indigenous-led organizations such as Indigenous Friendship Centres and tribal councils may provide funding to support education within their communities. There are opportunities for scholarships and partnerships to foster economic capacity building at a community level.

NGOs, particularly those in the economic and community development spaces, can offer financial support to nurture economic growth and capacity building within Indigenous communities. Several

[32] https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/career-employment-and-training-services/community-training-partnerships

funding opportunities through foundations are available, one such program is highlighted in more detail below.

MasterCard Foundation EleV Program

The MasterCard Foundation launched the EleV Program in 2017 to partner Indigenous communities with post-secondary institutions[33]. The program is built on co-creation, listening, learning, respect, reciprocity, and commitment. The EleV program focuses on two strategic outcomes:

1. Indigenous youth access and succeed in transformed education and training systems reflecting Indigenous ways of knowing, being and learning.
2. Indigenous youth have access, opportunities, and can successfully transition to meaningful livelihoods.

A core pillar of the program lies in fostering strong relationships between Indigenous communities and post-secondary institutions to implement system-wide innovations through supporting initiatives, efforts, and ideas for transformative change. The MasterCard Foundation is investing $500 million through the EleV program.

Image Source: Stock Image

[33] https://mastercardfdn.org/elev/

RISKS

Risk Matrix

Using an evaluation matrix, the level of impact each risk could have on the organization has been assessed and ranked. The matrix measures a risks potential impact based on the likelihood of it occurring by its severity.

High impact risks are those that have a reasonable likelihood of occurring and would result in a substantial level of disruption to the operations or viability of the IBCE. Few risks typically fall into this category but their effect on the ability of an organization to continuing delivering its core mandate when they occur is significant.

Moderate impact risks are those that have a possible-to-likely chance of occurring and their severity is high enough to pose a challenge to the organization if they occurred. Recognizing and responding to the impact of these risks during the organizational development phase is very important. By building risk mitigation strategies to these relatively likely and impactful events into the fabric of an organization at this stage will significantly increase its ability to respond to the when they happen.

Low impact risks are those that mainly have little to no effect on the Centre or have a very low likelihood of happening even if the impact would be severe. Low risks are noteworthy but may not require a mitigation strategy as most best practices are designed to prevent these risks from ever occurring.

Method

Risks to the viability and long-term sustainable operation of the Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence were identified by the Consultant based on five categories:

- Strategic risk: Performance or decision errors, such as choosing the wrong partner or misjudging growth.
- Operational risk: Process errors or procedural mistakes, like poor partner engagement or a lack of communication.
- Financial risk: Events that threaten financial viability, including funder priority changes and lack of sustainable operational funding.
- Technical risk: Anything related to company technology or resource deployment, such as a security breach, loss of internet, or travel limitations.
- External risk: Events out of the IBCE's control, like floods, fires, natural disasters, or pandemics.

Each risk was then given a score of one-to-five on its likelihood of occurrence and severity to the IBCE if it happened. Likelihood levels from one-to-five were very unlikely, not likely, possible, probable, and very likely. Severity levels from one-to-five were negligible, minor, moderate, major, and catastrophic.

The scores for each risk were multiple to find its total risk factor. Those with a risk factor of 5 or below are Low Impact, those 6-12 are considered Moderate Impact, and any risk with a factor of 15 and above are High Impact.

Risk Register

Risk Identification		Qualitative Analysis		
Risk Name	**Category**	**Probability Low - High 1-2-3-4-5**	**Severity Low - High 1-2-3-4-5**	**Score Prob x Imp**
Natural Disasters	External	4	4	**16**
Inadequate Partnership Development	Operational	3	5	**15**
Staffing Challenges	Operational	3	4	**12**
Limited Funding Availability	Financial	2	5	**10**
Limited Access to Remote Communities	External	3	3	**9**
Insufficient Capacity Planning	Operational	2	4	**8**
Limited Access to Technology and Infrastructure	Technical	2	4	**8**
Lack of Community Engagement	Operational	2	4	**8**
Pandemics or Health Crises	External	1	5	**5**
Technology Failure	Technical	1	4	**4**
Cybersecurity Breaches	Technical	1	4	**4**
Regulatory and Legal Compliance	Operational	1	4	**4**

Matrix

			Severity				
			Negligible	**Minor**	**Moderate**	**Major**	**Catastrophic**
			1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Likelihood	**Very Likely**	**5**					
	Probable	**4**				**(16) Natural Disasters**	
	Possible	**3**			**(9) Remote Access**	**(12) Staffing**	**(15) Partnerships**
	Not Likely	**2**				**(8) Capacity (8) Technology Limits (8) Engagement**	**(10) Limited Funding**
	Very Unlikely	**1**				**(4) Tech Failure (4) Cybersecurity (4) Legal Compliance**	**(5) Health Crises**

Risk Consequences & Mitigations

High Impact Risks	
Risk	**Consequence & Mitigation**
Natural Disasters (16)	**Consequence:** Events such as fires, floods, or severe weather conditions can disrupt operations, damage physical infrastructure, and hinder the IBCE's ability to provide in-person support. **Mitigation:** Growing occurrence of forest fires and severe weather conditions across the North will require that the IBCE develop strategies to adapt how it engages with program participants during times of environmental crises. Additionally, the IBCE should develop a robust disaster preparedness plan that includes emergency response procedures, evacuation plans, and backup systems for critical infrastructure.
Inadequate Partnership Development (15)	**Consequence:** Challenges in building and sustaining partnerships with key stakeholders, such as government agencies, Indigenous organizations, and educational institutions, which can restrict access to resources, expertise, and networks necessary for the success of the IBCE. **Mitigation:** Implement a proactive partnership development strategy that involves ongoing relationship-building with key stakeholders. Engage in regular communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing to foster strong partnerships based on mutual trust and benefit. Special attention should be paid to identifying which foundational and strategic partners need to be most closely engaged with. Consideration should be given to including them in the IBCE development and governance.
Moderate Impact	
Staffing Challenges (12)	**Consequence:** Difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified staff members, trainers, mentors, and advisors with expertise in Indigenous entrepreneurship, business development, and cultural sensitivity. Inadequate staffing can hinder program delivery and limit the support services provided to Indigenous entrepreneurs. **Mitigation:** the IBCE should develop a comprehensive recruitment strategy that includes targeted outreach, competitive compensation packages, and a focus on attracting diverse talent. Actively engage with Indigenous communities, professional networks, and educational institutions to identify potential candidates with the necessary expertise. Additionally, it should implement effective staff retention strategies, such as providing ongoing professional development opportunities, a supportive work environment, and recognition programs. Foster a culture that values employee well-being, growth, and engagement.

Limited Funding Availability (10)	**Consequence:** Insufficient funding to support the operations and initiatives will hinder the delivery of programs and services, limiting the organization's ability to achieve its mission and goals. **Mitigation:** The IBCE must diversify its funding sources by actively seeking grants from all levels of Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments as well as private foundations, sponsorships from private sector companies, and partnerships through contribution agreements with organizations aligned with the IBCE's mission. Another funding strategy is to develop a comprehensive fundraising plan and cultivate relationships with potential private donors, agencies, and philanthropic organizations. The efficient and responsible management of funds is also critical. By replicating the financial management practices instituted at Aurora College such as budget monitoring, and regular financial reporting, and optimizing resource allocation the IBCE could ensure that value of every dollar raised is maximized.
Limited Access to Remote Communities (9)	**Consequence:** Geographical barriers and limited infrastructure may hinder the IBCE's ability to reach and provide in-person support to entrepreneurs in remote or underserved communities potentially limiting the organization's reach and impact. **Mitigation:** Leverage technology to bridge the gap and provide virtual services to entrepreneurs in remote communities by offering programs and supports through hybrid and online formats. Additionally, by fostering partnerships with local community organizations and leveraging the existing remote location delivery models of Aurora College when establishing the mobile delivery teams, on-the-ground support and engagement can still occur when regular access is disrupted.
Insufficient Capacity Planning (8)	**Consequence:** Inadequate planning for program demand, resource allocation, or staffing needs can lead to operational bottlenecks, overwhelmed staff, and challenges in meeting the needs of entrepreneurs effectively. **Mitigation:** Implement robust project management practices, including regular and thorough needs assessments of the market, and resource planning that is right sized for the program’s demand. By developing a scalable program delivery model that allows for flexible resource allocation to meet changing needs, the IBCE will further reduce the risks associated with limited operational third-party funding.
Limited Access to Technology and Infrastructure (8)	**Consequence:** Inadequate technological infrastructure mainly on the part of the programs participants, including reliable internet connectivity and access to appropriate software and hardware, may limit the ability to deliver virtual support services and access online resources, impacting the effectiveness of the IBCE's operations in remote and Northern communities.

	Mitigation: Support capacity building and infrastructure development in remote communities by securing funding or partnerships to improve internet connectivity and access to reliable technology. This can include initiatives such as expanding broadband coverage, establishing community technology centers, or providing mobile internet solutions to ensure entrepreneurs have the necessary tools for virtual support services and online resource access. The IBCE could directly or indirectly collaborate with existing technology providers, such as telecommunications companies or IT service providers, to explore innovative solutions tailored to the unique needs of Indigenous communities. This can involve developing affordable technology packages, offering technical support services, or leveraging existing community networks to enhance access to technology and infrastructure.
Lack of Community Engagement (8)	**Consequence:** Failure to actively engage with Indigenous communities and stakeholders, resulting in limited participation, reduced relevance of programs, and decreased impact on Indigenous entrepreneurship. **Mitigation:** Foster strong relationships with Indigenous community leaders, elders, and organizations through regular communication, consultation, and involvement in decision-making processes. Implement a community-centered approach that actively seeks input, addresses community concerns, and incorporates cultural perspectives to ensure the relevance and impact of the IBCE's programs and services.
Low Impact	
Pandemics or Health Crises (5)	**Consequence:** Outbreaks of diseases or public health crises, like pandemics, can significantly impact the organization's operations, disrupt program delivery, and limit the ability to engage with entrepreneurs in person. **Mitigation:** Follow the comprehensive crisis management and business continuity frameworks developed by Aurora College which relate to protocols for responding to pandemics or health crises. This plan should outline measures such as remote work arrangements, virtual program delivery options, health and safety protocols, and contingency plans for program modifications or postponements.
Technology Failure (4)	**Consequence:** The increasing risk of natural disasters and their effect on technical disruptions, system malfunctions, power outages, or loss of internet connectivity can hinder the delivery of virtual support services, access to resources, and the overall operations of the IBCE. **Mitigation:** Align the IBCE's IT processes with those of Aurora College including regular data backups, redundant hardware setups, and failover mechanisms to ensure continuity of virtual support services and access to online resources.

	In the event of extended power outages, program and support delivery through in-person contact will become critical.
Cybersecurity Breaches (4)	**Consequence:** Threats such as hacking, data breaches, or unauthorized access to sensitive information can compromise the integrity, confidentiality, and trust of program participants, partners and stakeholders. **Mitigation:** Replicate or be incorporated into Aurora College's cybersecurity measures, including firewalls, intrusion detection systems, encryption protocols, secure access controls, and software updates. Additionally, provide cybersecurity training to staff members to minimize the risk of breaches and unauthorized access to sensitive information.
Regulatory and Legal Compliance (4)	**Consequence:** Challenges in navigating and complying with applicable laws, regulations, and policies related to business support programs and Indigenous entrepreneurship, leading to potential legal and regulatory risks for the IBCE. **Mitigation:** Regulatory and legal compliance matters affecting the IBCE would be handled through the GNWT as a shared service similar to Aurora College and the Aurora Research Institute.

CONCLUSION

The establishment of the Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence holds significant potential for fostering a thriving ecosystem of Indigenous entrepreneurship and small business development. The concept of supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs is widely recognized as essential and aligns with the region's goals for economic growth and empowerment. However, the feasibility of the IBCE faces several challenges, including competition from existing providers and a relatively small market size. To address these obstacles, the IBCE must adopt a strategic approach, positioning itself as a connector and supporter rather than directly competing with established programs.

To enhance its impact and viability, the IBCE should focus on collaborating and forming partnerships with existing providers, academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and government programs in the region. This approach will create a more cohesive support ecosystem, streamlining the process for entrepreneurs to access relevant resources and support. By identifying gaps in existing programs and leveraging successful models of economic growth from economically prosperous Indigenous Nations across Canada, the IBCE can tailor its capacity-building training and educational content to meet the specific needs and priorities of each Indigenous Nation in the NWT.

Furthermore, the IBCE should actively engage with Indigenous governments, organizations, and communities in its detailed planning process. By incorporating Indigenous knowledge, cultural relevance, and community-level initiatives, the IBCE can ensure its programs and services are inclusive and impactful. Moreover, fostering mentorship, coaching, and internship opportunities for entrepreneurs will provide valuable guidance, support, and practical experience, empowering them to overcome challenges and achieve success. Aligning the IBCE's research arm with the Aurora Research Institute will optimize funding and research resources, enabling evidence-based decision-making and promoting innovation.

Overall, the success of the IBCE lies in its ability to collaborate, adapt, and leverage the wealth of resources and knowledge available within the NWT. By adopting a strategic and inclusive approach, the IBCE can become a catalyst for Indigenous entrepreneurship, championing the growth and prosperity of Indigenous businesses, and contributing to the overall economic development of the region. Through targeted support, community-level engagement, and research-driven initiatives, the IBCE has the potential to make a significant and positive impact on the lives of Indigenous entrepreneurs in the NWT, fostering a strong and sustainable future for Indigenous businesses in the territory.

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APPENDIX A: IBCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence Feasibility Study
Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

Purpose

The primary function of the Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence Feasibility Study (IBCE) Project Advisory Committee is to provide direction, support and oversee the study, funded by the Future Skills Centre and coordinated by Aurora College.

Project Summary

- This project aims to complete a feasibility study to look at the viability of establishing an Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence (IBCE) as part of the Northwest Territories (NWT) polytechnic university. General objectives of the feasibility study would focus on (1) need, (2) opportunity, and (3) best model for proof of concept (for 2- year pilot). It will be primarily focused on NWT with emphasis placed on a pan-Territorial approach (Yukon, NWT and Nunavut).
- The end date for the contribution agreement for Phase 1 ends June 30, 2023.

Background

- People in Canada's North face long-standing inequities in business and education, which puts northern residents at a disadvantage, especially Indigenous peoples. Closing gaps in Indigenous business development and support for research and business education for Indigenous business development will improve well-being and spur economic growth and innovation.
- The IBCE is put forward as a possible Northern support for Indigenous business development to help Indigenous entrepreneurs with business start-up, or expansion, partnerships and planning. The IBCE could provide the following:
  - Increased access to continuing education that is relevant and meaningful to Indigenous residents in the NWT and the North interested in entrepreneurship.
  - Ensure Indigenous entrepreneurs have access to business support and advise to help them reach their business goal including small business development and joint venture developments.
  - A focal point for collaboration of Northern industry, businesses and the academic community.
  - Increased mentorship and support for emerging Indigenous business leaders.
  - Increased attention to research that supports the development and growth of Northern Indigenous businesses.

Project Objectives

Complete a feasibility study to look at viability of establishing an Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence (IBCE) as part of the NT polytechnic university.

Specific objectives include:

- To determine needs in the NT, conduct a scan of the current Indigenous businesses and local businesses and subsequent gaps across the 33 communities in NWT.
- Determine opportunities in, detailed scan and engagement of NWT, and an overview scan of Nunavut and Yukon, including demand/interest in supporting an IBCE across the three territories.
- Determine models of Canadian and Indigenous business centres that fit with the needs and opportunities in the NWT, as well as the North more broadly. (Study will include financial analysis for other business centre models including costs for facility lease/rent & yearly, salary types/JD examples and/or salary level examples and would include options for operations and maintenance projections.)
- Develop an internal & external engagement plan to ensure community level input through focus groups, survey, letters of support and key informant interviews set up to inform the project deliverable.
- Set up a communications plan to inform community partners such as Chambers of Commerce, Indigenous Governments, Municipal Governments about study and input options including requesting Letters of Support.
- Determine possible next steps, including funding sources and whether a recommendation to proceed with a pilot IBCE should move forward as part of the transformation of Aurora College to a Polytechnic University. (This would be a board decision, and funding for model pilot needs to be a consideration.) **If** IBCE was to move forward, look at a possible proof of concept model for a two-year pilot IBCE model.

Summary of Activities

The key activities that the project will undertake and how they will enable us to meet the project objectives includes:

- Internal scan (within the Territory / North) and external scan;
- Proposed model(s) for IBCE;
- Proposed budget – estimated cost for delivery and execution;
- Recommendation.

The intended outcomes of the study are to review the feasibility study (Phase I) to proceed with and develop a plan to establish a 2-Year IBCE Pilot Project (Phase II) that would be put forward to the Aurora College / polytechnic university President and/or Board of Governors for consideration. The 2- Year IBCE Pilot Project would allow for proof of concept and would require recommendations arising from the Phase I Feasibility Study re possible third-party funding sources that could contribute to pilot study.

Committee Activities and Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Committee include, but are not limited to:

- Providing overall direction for engagement of NT communities.

- Providing advice and recommendations to the Project Coordinator and Project Researcher pertaining to the Feasibility Study as subject matter experts.
- Reviewing progress of the Feasibility Study to ensure it is representing the furthest reaching and best representation of Indigenous peoples.
- Requesting a small subcommittee to look at more detailed documentation for review and approval.

Committee Guiding Principles

Integrity in our relationships
Respect for our diversity and distinct Indigenous cultures
Awareness of the rights, aspirations, and needs of Indigenous people
Sharing of our knowledge within and beyond the network
Honouring the wisdom all people bring with them

Communication Methods

Due to the vast distance between members geographically, the primary and secondary methods of communication are outlined below:

- **Primary: Email** - all items relevant to the Advisory Committee should be sent to all members of the Advisory Committee.
- **Secondary: Teleconference or Videoconference** – this method will be utilized when decisions or other items need to be discussed more thoroughly. This will happen at least once a month until the end of Phase 1.
- **Tertiary**: Face-to Face – one meeting may occur, as required.

Decision-making Technique

The Committee will make decisions primarily by consensus, with deliberations continuing until agreement is reached. If the Committee cannot reach consensus on a particular issue, the Chair will present competing proposal to the Committee for adjudication.

Membership

The Project Coordinator and the Project Sponsor will facilitate the process of Co-chair appointment of the Committee. The Committee will be composed of up to 12 members, not including Project Coordinator and Project Sponsor. The members will be invited by the Project Coordinator, as determined by the involvement and investment into Indigenous Entrepreneurship in the Northwest Territories as knowledge holders and subject matter experts. Observing members will have input in committee discussions without a voting role.

The overall membership should reflect the diversity of the stakeholders to the greatest extent possible.
Membership categories will include the following:

- Indigenous Businesses
- Indigenous Governments
- Indigenous Training Services
- Aurora College School of Business and Leadership

Membership:

- Rebecca Connelly, VP of Strategic Engagement, Det'on Cho Corporation
- Mark Brajer, CEO, Tłı̨chǫ Investment Corporation
- Lena Black, Acting CEO, Yellowknives Dene First Nation
- Roy Erasmus Jr, CEO, Gwich'In Development Corporation
- Brian Wade, CEO, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC)
- Xina Cowan, Co-Director, EntrepreNorth
- Joyce Taylor, CEO, Business Development Investment Corporation (BDIC)
- George Kurszewski, Vice-Chair, Thebacha Business Development Services
- Loren Coutts, Program Head of Business Administration, Aurora College
- Misty Ireland, Indigenous Entrepreneur, Owner, Dene Roots
- Sharwyn MacPherson, Indigenous Entrepreneur, Owner, ATS

Observing Members:

- Selena Zhang, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Future Skills Canada (Project Sponsor)
- David Plamondon, Business Development Director Indigenous Engagement, Mitacs
- Melissa Cyr, ADM, Government of Northwest Territories – Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI)
- Heather McCagg-Nystrom, Vice-President of Community and Extensions, Aurora College (Project Sponsor)

Members will serve until June 30, 2023, renewable depending on project expansion.

Member Roles and Responsibilities

The Advisory Committee Co-Chairs are responsible for facilitating discussion to reach consensus on matters under consideration.

The Project Coordinator is responsible for vice-chair activities, supporting the activities undertaken by the Committee, such as meetings, that meets the project initiatives. This includes but is not limited to:

- Scheduling meetings
- Supporting the establishment of an agenda with the Committee Co-Chair
- Ensuring minutes are taken during meetings, reviewed at the following meeting, stored, and made available to staff
- Supporting the facilitation of discussion to reach consensus on matters under consideration
- Being the primary representative of the Committee to the Project Lead Organization.

Committee members are responsible for the following:

- Participating in Committee discussions and offering their views and expertise. *This includes observing members of the committee.*

- Reaching an informed consensus on relevant issues.
- Providing guidance to the Project Researcher for the Feasibility Study process and completion.

- Communicating the initiatives and advice of the Committee to members of their community and the wider NT community.

Meetings

Meetings will be held at least monthly, or at the call of the Co-Chair. Members will attend remotely.

A quorum of 50% of members is required for decisions requiring consensus. Any decisions made without quorum must be ratified by consensus once quorum is met.

Resources

The Advisory Committee will use their own emails and technology for planning and meeting. The Advisory Committee is supported by the Project Coordinator who provides administrative support for meetings and activities, as well as honorariums as required.

Timelines

The IBCE feasibility study project (Phase 1) ends June 30, 2023.

Amending the Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed as required and amended by the Co-Chairs upon the recommendation of the Committee.

Heather McCagg-Nystrom
Vice President, Community and Extensions

Jan 18, 2023
Date

APPENDIX B: BUSINESS REGISTRY ANALYSIS

Aurora College Indigenous Business for Excellence Feasibility Study

Business Registry Analysis Report

June 23, 2023

COLLÈGE AURORA COLLEGE
PRAXIS
RESEARCH | STRATEGY | RESULTS

Prepared for:
Aurora College

Prepared by:
Praxis Consulting Ltd.

Executive Summary

Aurora College is a public college delivering adult and post-secondary education programs at three campuses and through a network of community learning centres. Aurora College, while providing students with the support, skills and education required to achieve success in their careers, offers a variety of programs designed to meet the labour market needs of the North. Over the next several years, Aurora College will be transforming into a polytechnic university to increase access to quality post-secondary education for NWT residents.

Aurora College wants to assess the viability of including an Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence (IBCE) as part of its program offerings, determining the need for such a centre, the opportunities available to create a centre, and the best possible delivery model for a two-year proof of concept pilot project. The Centre will primarily serve NWT but will seek to be pan-Territorial.

The IBCE will pursue several objectives including closing the gap in business and education for many Northern residents particularly Indigenous peoples. It will increase Northerner access to business leadership opportunities, entrepreneurship, skill development, and collaboration with Northern businesses. The IBCE will increase support for Norther entrepreneurs, develop best practices for Northern jurisdiction, and build core skills for Indigenous businesses to succeed. As part of this process, Aurora College requires up-to-date market intelligence regarding which NWT industries are expanding and represent the most in-demand opportunities.

Main Assumptions

Using business registry data for all businesses in the Territory, Praxis determined which business sectors are growing faster than the Territorial average. The Business Register is Statistics Canada's continuously maintained central repository of baseline information on businesses and institutions operating in Canada. The Business Register maintains a complete, up-to-date and unduplicated list of all businesses in Canada that have a corporate income tax account, an employer payroll deduction remittance account, a GST/HST account, a T5013 partnership account, a registered charities account. Persons reporting any of the various types of business income on personal tax forms (T1) are also included on the Register (regardless of whether they have GST/HST or PD7 remittances.).

Summary of Results

Table 1: Top 10 Average Rate of Business Count Growth 2015 to 2019 and 2022

Top 10 Average Rate of Business Count Growth 2015 to 2019 and 2022	
Petroleum and petroleum products merchant wholesalers	38.6%
Clothing manufacturing	18.3%
Telecommunications	11.8%
Broadcasting (except Internet)	9.6%
Furniture and home furnishings stores	8.3%
Heritage institutions	7.7%

Top 10 Average Rate of Business Count Growth 2015 to 2019 and 2022	
Transit and ground passenger transportation	7.4%
Amusement, gambling and recreation	5.7%
Insurance carriers and related activities	4.5%
Truck transportation	4.0%

Honourable mention should also be given to Local, municipal and regional public administration and Aboriginal public administration, ranking 11th and 13th, respectively. Both of these sectors exhibited consistent positive growth and would represent relatively "target rich" environments for IBCE services.

Image Source: https://www.fortsmith.ca/

Introduction

Aurora College is a public college delivering adult and post-secondary education programs at three campuses and through a network of community learning centres. Aurora College, while providing students with the support, skills and education required to achieve success in their careers, offers a variety of programs designed to meet the labour market needs of the North. Over the next several years, Aurora College will be transforming into a polytechnic university to increase access to quality post-secondary education for NWT residents.

In the 1970s, the Adult Vocational Training Centre (AVTC) was established. In 1981, the Adult Vocational Training Centre (AVTC) was declared a college and renamed Thebacha College. In 1984, Arctic College was established with campuses in Fort Smith and Iqaluit. The college grew to include campuses in each region of the Northwest Territories. The mandate was to deliver adult and post-secondary education.

In preparation for Nunavut's establishment as an independent territory, Arctic College was divided on January 1, 1995. Nunavut Arctic College was established to assume responsibility for Arctic College's operations in Nunavut with remaining Arctic College facilities in the western Arctic renamed to Aurora College. The Science Institute of the Northwest Territories was amalgamated with Aurora College in January 1995 and was renamed the Aurora Research Institute. In 2018, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) made a commitment to transform the College into a polytechnic university. That process is currently underway with a goal of launching the polytechnic university in 2025.

Today, Aurora College three campuses and 21 Community Learning Centres in communities, , spread over more than 1.3 million square kilometres.

Aurora College wants to assess the viability of including an Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence (IBCE) as part of its program offerings, determining the need for such a centre, the opportunities available to create a centre, and the best possible delivery model for a two-year proof of concept pilot project. The Centre will primarily serve NWT but will seek to be pan-Territorial.

The IBCE will pursue several objectives including closing the gap in business and education for many Northern residents particularly Indigenous peoples. It will increase Northerner access to business leadership opportunities, entrepreneurship, skill development, and collaboration with Northern businesses. The IBCA will increase support for Norther entrepreneurs, develop best practices for Norther jurisdiction, and build core skills for Indigenous businesses to succeed. As part of this process, Auroara College requires up-to-date market intelligence regarding which NWT industries are expanding and represent the most likely consulting opportunities.

Methodology

Using Business Register (BR) data for the all businesses in the Territory, Praxis determined which business sectors are growing faster than the Territorial average.

BR is Statistics Canada's continuously-maintained central repository of baseline information on businesses and institutions operating in Canada. The Business Register maintains a complete, up-to-date and unduplicated list of all businesses in Canada that have a corporate income tax account, an employer payroll deduction remittance account, a GST/HST account, a T5013 partnership account, a registered charities account. Persons reporting any of the various types of business income on personal tax forms (T1) are also included on the Register (regardless of whether they have GST/HST or PD7 remittances.).

The major sources of information for the Business Register are updates from the Statistics Canada survey program and from Canada Revenue Agency's (CRA) Business Number account files. Included in the Business Register are all Canadian business which meet at least one of the three following criteria:

- Have an employee workforce for which they submit payroll remittances to CRA; or
- Have a minimum of $30,000 in annual revenue; or
- Are incorporated under a federal or provincial act and have filed a federal corporate income tax form within the past three years.

The data provided in these tables reflects counts of statistical locations by industrial activity (North American Industry Classification System), geography codes, and employment size ranges usually as of June 30 and December 31 of each year.

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is an industry classification system developed by the statistical agencies of Canada, Mexico and the United States. Created against the background of the North American Free Trade Agreement, it is designed to provide common definitions of the industrial structure of the three countries and a common statistical framework to facilitate the analysis of the three economies. BR Data is available at the 2, 3, 4, and 6 digit levels of aggregation. Due to small sample sizes, the NWT BR analysis was undertaken at the 2 and 3 digit levels of aggregation.

Results

Business Counts and COVID

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020, and began referring to it as a pandemic on 11 March 2020. The WHO ended its PHEIC declaration on 5 May 2023. The pandemic caused world-wide economic disruption and NWT was no exception.

Table 2: December Business Counts – Northwest Territories

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total, all industries	1,757	1,737	1,716	1,686	1,681	1,635	1,644	1,564	1,555

NWT Business counts have been in decline since 2014 with the steepest decline occurring between 2020 and 2021. Business counts in 2022 have not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. As such 2020 and 2021 have been excluded from the analysis and a separate calculation for 2015 to 2019 was undertaken.

2 Digit NAICS Aggregation

At the 2 Digit level of aggregation, the largest percentage gains were noted in manufacturing, Information and cultural industries, Arts, entertainment and recreation, Education, and Public Administration.

Table 3: Annual Growth Rates – 2 Digit NAICS Aggregation

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2022	avg	avg w/o 2022
Total, all industries	-1.1%	-1.2%	-1.7%	-0.3%	-2.7%	-4.9%	-2.0%	-1.4%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	-37.5%	30.0%	-7.7%	-8.3%	9.1%	-41.7%	-9.4%	-2.9%
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	5.6%	-13.2%	-3.0%	-3.1%	-25.8%	-43.5%	-13.8%	-7.9%
Utilities	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	14.3%	-25.0%	0.0%	1.0%	1.2%
Construction	0.5%	-3.8%	-3.5%	4.1%	-4.5%	-11.4%	-3.1%	-1.4%
Manufacturing	6.7%	6.3%	5.9%	11.1%	-10.0%	5.6%	4.2%	4.0%
Wholesale trade	0.0%	-14.9%	-5.0%	5.3%	-5.0%	376.3%	59.4%	-3.9%
Retail trade	1.6%	-2.1%	-5.8%	6.1%	-0.5%	-44.4%	-7.5%	-0.1%
Transportation and warehousing	6.8%	7.3%	-4.2%	-3.5%	-10.1%	-58.2%	-10.3%	-0.8%
Information and cultural industries	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	8.7%	0.0%	4.0%	2.9%	2.6%
Finance and insurance	-5.7%	2.0%	-7.8%	-10.6%	-4.8%	-5.0%	-5.3%	-5.4%
Real estate and rental and leasing	-4.3%	-6.7%	7.2%	-5.6%	-8.3%	3.9%	-2.3%	-3.6%
Professional, scientific and technical services	2.0%	2.6%	-5.7%	-5.4%	2.1%	-2.8%	-1.2%	-0.9%
Management of companies and enterprises	-20.0%	-10.0%	5.6%	-5.3%	0.0%	-5.6%	-5.9%	-5.9%
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	-19.2%	8.7%	2.3%	3.4%	-7.6%	-4.7%	-2.8%	-2.5%
Educational services	-5.9%	3.1%	12.1%	5.4%	10.3%	-25.6%	-0.1%	5.0%
Health care and social assistance	-7.3%	2.0%	-1.0%	3.9%	0.9%	-7.4%	-1.5%	-0.3%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	-4.5%	9.5%	17.4%	-3.7%	7.7%	-21.4%	0.8%	5.3%
Accommodation and food services	3.1%	-3.8%	-4.0%	3.3%	-1.6%	-12.2%	-2.5%	-0.6%
Other services (except public administration)	-1.2%	-7.4%	-6.7%	-0.7%	0.0%	-5.8%	-3.6%	-3.2%
Public administration	5.1%	0.6%	1.2%	3.6%	-1.7%	0.6%	1.6%	1.8%

Noting that the 2 Digit Aggregation is too broad for meaningful inference, analysis was undertaken at the 3 Digit level of aggregation. Industries with no business counts for a given year were excluded from the analysis.

3 Digit NAICS Aggregation

Utilities and Construction

Table 4: Annual Growth Rates – Utilities and Construction

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2022	avg	avg w/o 2022
Utilities	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	14.3%	-25.0%	0.0%	1.0%	1.2%
Heavy and civil engineering construction	18.5%	6.3%	-2.9%	3.0%	-2.9%	-27.3%	-0.9%	4.4%

Business growth within Utilities was highly volatile and averaged at 1 to 1.2%. Despite a steep drop in 2022, Heavy and civil engineering construction business growth was 4.4% after discounting 2022 counts.

Manufacturing

Table 5: Annual Growth Rates – Manufacturing

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2022	avg	avg w/o 2022
Clothing manufacturing	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	20.0%
Printing and related support activities	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	-50.0%	-2.8%	6.7%

Clothing manufacturing business counts surged in 2018 are remained relative flat since. Printing also surged in 2018 but stumbled in 2022. Removing 2022, Printing advanced at an average rate of growth of 6.7%.

Wholesale Trade

Table 6: Annual Growth Rates – Wholesale Trade

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2022	avg	avg w/o 2022
Petroleum and petroleum products merchant wholesalers	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	133.3%	47.2%	30.0%
Food, beverage and tobacco merchant wholesalers	-12.5%	-14.3%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	25.0%	5.3%	1.3%

Within Wholesale trade, strong business count growth was noted in Petroleum and petroleum products merchant wholesalers, Food, beverage and tobacco merchant wholesalers business count was more muted, averaging 1.3% after removing 2022.

Retail Trade

Table 7: Annual Growth Rates – Retail Trade

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2022	avg	avg w/o 2022
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	7.1%	-6.7%	-14.3%	8.3%	0.0%	7.7%	0.4%	-1.1%
Furniture and home furnishings stores	0.0%	-14.3%	-16.7%	20.0%	-16.7%	160.0%	22.1%	-5.5%
Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers	8.3%	7.7%	7.1%	-6.7%	7.1%	-6.7%	2.8%	4.7%
Gasoline stations	5.9%	-16.7%	6.7%	6.3%	-5.9%	43.8%	6.7%	-0.8%

Transportation

Table 8: Annual Growth Rates – Transportation

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2022	avg	avg w/o 2022
Air transportation	12.0%	3.6%	3.4%	-20.0%	-12.5%	38.1%	4.1%	-2.7%
Truck transportation	0.0%	26.7%	-2.6%	18.9%	-25.0%	9.1%	4.5%	3.6%
Transit and ground passenger transportation	14.3%	37.5%	-9.1%	-20.0%	12.5%	11.1%	7.7%	7.0%

Within Transportation, all components posted healthy business count growth with the exception of Air transportation excluding 2022.

Information and cultural industries, Finance, insurance, Real estate and rental and leasing

Table 9: Annual Growth Rates – Information & cultural industries, Finance, insurance, Real estate, rental & leasing

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2022	avg	avg w/o 2022
Broadcasting (except Internet)	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	16.7%	10.3%	9.0%
Telecommunications	28.6%	-11.1%	12.5%	33.3%	8.3%	-15.4%	9.4%	14.3%
Insurance carriers and related activities	-11.1%	-12.5%	0.0%	14.3%	25.0%	20.0%	5.9%	3.1%

Within Information and cultural industries, both Broadcasting and Telecommunications saw positive annual average growth of 9 to 14%. Insurance, after a weak 2015 to 2017, ending the analysis period in positive territory.

Education and Healthcare

Table 10: Annual Growth Rates – Education and Healthcare

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2022	avg	avg w/o 2022
Educational services	-5.9%	3.1%	12.1%	5.4%	10.3%	-25.6%	-0.1%	5.0%
Nursing and residential care facilities	-25.0%	16.7%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	3.1%	1.2%

Educational services suffered from a weak performance in 2022. Removing 2022, annual average growth was 5%. Nursing and residential care facilities, rebounded from a drop in 2015 to post growth of 3.1% and 1.2% after discounting 2022.

Arts, entertainment and recreation

Table 11: Annual Growth Rates – Arts, entertainment, and recreation

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2022	avg	avg w/o 2022
Heritage institutions	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	33.3%	-25.0%	4.7%	10.7%
Amusement, gambling and recreation industries	-8.3%	27.3%	28.6%	-5.6%	0.0%	-23.5%	3.1%	8.4%

Within Arts, entertainment and recreation, a high degree of volatility was observed within Heritage institutions. Despite this, both measures of annual average growth were positive. It was much the same in Amusement, gambling and recreation industries with drops in business counts in 2015 and 2022.

Public Administration

Table 12: Annual Growth Rates – Public Administration

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2022	avg	avg w/o 2022
Provincial and territorial public administration	1.4%	0.0%	2.8%	2.7%	0.0%	1.3%	1.4%	1.4%
Local, municipal and regional public administration	24.1%	2.8%	-2.7%	2.8%	-5.4%	0.0%	3.6%	4.3%
Aboriginal public administration	-2.6%	-2.7%	2.8%	10.8%	9.8%	2.2%	3.4%	3.6%

Public Administration, both measures of annual growth were positive for the 3 levels of government under consideration with growth more pronounced in the Local, municipal and regional public administration and Aboriginal public administration subsectors.

APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Aurora College
Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence (IBCE) – Focus Group Guide
March 2023

Vision

1. What questions are you hopeful this study will answer? What are you hoping to learn?
2. What programs do you think should be included in the program?

Determining Need

3. What do you believe are the business training needs in NWT?
4. Are there any priorities/people that are currently underserved? (Consider skills, demographics, geography, etc.)
5. What distinguishes the IBCE from the current business programming at Aurora College?

Current Situation

6. Do you believe business or industry will support the Centre? If so, how?
7. Where are community members currently accessing business training in NWT, Nunavut, and Yukon?

Customer

8. Who do you think will have the greatest interest in this program?
9. Do you see the training provided at the Centre as general business training, industry specific, or both?
10. How will the IBCE interact with Indigenous entrepreneurs? Is Indigenous entrepreneurship a focus of the IBCE?
11. Do you see the Centre as providing entrepreneurship educational programming such as courses or resources for entrepreneurs such as coaching or access to consulting services?
12. What percentage of training is anticipated to be directed to Indigenous entrepreneurs?
13. Do you have suggestions on how to assess the potential number of program participants or entrepreneurs interested?

Comparable Programs

14. Are you aware of any Canadian and Indigenous business centres in other jurisdictions that could be reasonable comparisons?

Funding

15. When thinking about the individuals who will participate in the program, what do you think will be their willingness to pay program fees?

16. Are you aware of any sources of potential third-party funding (Federal, Territorial, private) to support the proof-of-concept stage?

Other

17. How do we ensure fulsome engagement within NWT?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS

Aurora College
Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence (IBCE) - Interview Guide
May 2023

PREAMBLE:

Hi {insert}, my name is {insert} and I work for Praxis Consulting, a management consulting firm based in Saskatchewan. As you may know, we have partnered with Aurora College to help determine the feasibility of establishing an Indigenous Business Centre of Excellence (IBCE) and identify the critical success factors that will make the project successful.

Praxis is consulting with entrepreneurs, students, employers, and community partners to gain their insights and perspectives into the key needs and demand for a business and entrepreneur academic centre in the NWT that focuses on supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs and startups.

The vision is to create a centre that provides future, small and medium size Indigenous businesses with customized capacity building skills and knowledge enhancement training, entrepreneurial strategy coaching and advisory support, and innovative business acceleration offerings. The IBCE is different from the College's business program as the services and supports provided to each participant are based on their industry and business needs. Not all participants will access the same programming and/or services or to the same degree.

I have a few questions for you today and I expect our conversation to last approximately 1 hour. Is this still a good time for you?

- OK great…
- I'm sorry to hear that, we can focus on only the key questions and finish sooner if you have any time available now…
- OK, then let's reschedule while I have you, how does [suggest ASAP date & time] work?

Some points to note about our interview today:

- All comments and discussions from our various interviews will be summarized in an aggregate manner without the names of individuals attached unless we specifically have your permission to quote you. Please feel comfortable being as candid as possible with me today.
- With your permission, I'd like to record the interview. This is for Praxis' own internal purposes to verify any information needed as we summarize the interview findings. We will destroy the recordings once the feasibility study is complete. Do we have your permission?
- The College has requested we ask interviewees for their permission to share the interview recordings with the College. Do we have your permission?
- Do you have any questions for me before we get going?

Needs Analysis

1. What do you see as the NWT's key strategic industries? (Industries growing at a faster than average rate)
2. Do you believe there are new small businesses opening in these sectors or is growth contained to the big players?
3. What are some emerging sectors in NWT that will become key economic areas in 10 years?

4. In general, what gaps do you see in the entrepreneurial support environment in the NWT? Are there specific sectors that would benefit most from the IBCE?
5. What are the biggest barriers you see to starting a small business in the NWT?
    a. What are the barriers to accessing business and entrepreneur supports (awareness, process, low-availability…)
6. Where are individuals currently accessing entrepreneurial and small business support training? (types of programs, providers, designations/credentials)
7. To what degree does training need to be industry specific vs. generalized business training?
8. What training needs are underserved? (Concept creation & business planning, business financial literacy, marketing and communications, business strategy, etc.)
9. Do you believe there is a strong level of demand for this concept in the NWT from entrepreneurs and employers?
10. How willing do you believe industries in the NWT are to help fund programming and to what order of magnitude would be reasonable to assume?
11. How can the IBCE best attract Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses to the program?
12. (entrepreneur) What motivated you to start a business?
    a. What needs do, or would drive you to seek business development or support services?
13. (industry) What do you see as a common motivator behind entrepreneurs starting a business? (e.g. creating job opportunities in the community, see business opportunity, want further / deeper understanding of industry, etc.)
    a. Why would an entrepreneur seek business development or support services?

Demand Analysis

14. What would the Centre need to do to attract the interest of Indigenous business owners and entrepreneurs?
15. How willing do you believe individuals and small businesses are to pay for enrollment costs and certain fee-for-service offerings? Are you aware of any grants or subsidies businesses that IBCE programming may qualify for?
16. What level of experiential and skills capacity do you believe Indigenous business students and young entrepreneurs in the NWT processes? Or put another way, how advanced is their business acumen and entrepreneurial knowledge?

Measures of Success

17. What tangible outcomes are important? (micro-credentials/certificates, specific business acumens, facilitating access to capital, etc.)
18. What indicators might be considered for a successful business centre?

Closing

19. That brings us to the end of my questions today. Is there anything else you were hoping to share regarding this initiative?

If you have any questions or additional information you would like to share following this interview, please feel free to email Praxis directly.

Thank you again for sharing your input and ideas today.

COLLÈGE AURORA COLLEGE

APPENDIX E: SURVEY REPORT

PRAXIS
RESEARCH | STRATEGY | RESULTS

Aurora College: Indigenous Business Centre for Excellence

2023 Public Interest Survey Report

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Aurora College 2023 Public Interest Survey Report

Executive Summary

Aurora College Public Interest Survey

The Aurora College Public Interest Survey was conducted to inform the possibility of an Indigenous Business Centre for Excellence to support Indigenous Business Owners/Entrepreneurs. A total of 112 online surveys were completed among residents of Northwest Territories, the Yukon, and Nunavut in May 2023.

2 out of 3 Respondents Have Not Previously Accessed Resources

- Overall, more than a quarter (28.6%) of respondents have accessed business development/support/services/program resources in the past.

4 in 5 of Those Without Previous Access Are Aware of Aurora College

- Of those who have not accessed any business development/ support/services/programs in the past (65.2% of respondents), four-fifths (79.5%) are aware of Aurora College. Another 60.3% are aware of the Aurora Research Institute, and more than half (54.8%) are aware of the NWT Business Development Investment Corporation.

Half of Respondents Have Previously Participated in Intensive Workshops & Used Support/Services from an Industry Professional

- Of those who have accessed business development/support/ services/programs (online or in-person) in the past, half (50.0%) have participated in intensive workshops and used support/services from an industry professional.
- Another third (31.3%) of respondents have participated in short workshops, and a quarter (25.0%) have participated in semester-based programs and mentorship-based programs.

Half of Respondents Access Resources Through NWT Business Development Investment Corporation

- Of those who have previously accessed these resources, more than half (56.3%) indicate that they access resources through the NWT Business Development Investment Corporation.
- Respondents also indicate accessing resources through self-learning (43.8%) and/or Aurora College (31.3%).

2 in 5 Currently Attend In-Person Programs

- Of those who have previously accessed these resources, over two-fifths (43.5%) indicate that they attend through in-person programs.
- Another one-third (34.4%) indicate they attend virtually/ online with live programs.

1 in 2 Interested in Accessing Resources in the Future

- Half (50.0%) of respondents indicate that they are interested in accessing resources in the next one to three years.

Conversely, over one-quarter (27.7%) of respondents indicate that they are not interested in accessing these resources in one to three years. Another 22.3% indicate that they do not know what their interest will be in the upcoming years.

2 out of 3 Prefer In-Person Programs

- Of those who are interested in accessing resources in the next one to three years, over two-thirds (64.3%) prefer accessing in-person programs. Over half (58.9%) also indicate a preference for programs with a mix of virtual, in-person, and self-directed resources.

2 out of 3 Prefer Short Workshops

- Of those who are interested in accessing resources in the next one to three years, over two-thirds (67.9%) prefer short workshops (less than one day). Another two-thirds (66.1%) prefer intensive workshops (one to two days).
- Over half of these respondents also prefer access to support/services (e.g., training, advice, etc.) from an industry professional (58.9%).

2 out of 5 are Willing to Pay for Resources

- Two-fifths (41.1%) of respondents indicate that they are willing to pay for resources.
- Conversely, one-fifth (21.4%) indicate that they are not willing to pay for resources. Over one-third (37.5%) don't know if they are willing to pay for resources.

2 out of 5 Prefer the Payment Option of One Fee Per Session

- Of the respondents willing to pay for any resources, two-fifths (41.7%) prefer to pay one fee per session. Over one-third (36.1%) prefer to pay a one-time fee upfront, and one-third (33.3%) prefer to pay a monthly fee throughout the resource length.

Half of Those Interested Would Pay $100 to $500 for Intensive Workshops & $250 or less for Short Workshops

- Nearly half (47.8%) of respondents who indicate being willing to pay for resources say they are interested in an intensive workshop (one to two days) indicate that they would pay $100 to $500.
- Another 47.8% of respondents who are interested in a short workshop (less than one day) indicate that they would pay up to $250.00.

Topics of Interest include 'Acquiring Money to Support a Business,' 'Developing Business Plans,' and 'Accessing Legal & Regulatory Requirements of Business'

- The five topics of highest interest include 'acquiring money to support a business,' 'developing business plans,' 'accessing legal and regulatory requirements of business,' 'marketing/promoting a business,' and bookkeeping'.

1 out of 5 Prefer Resources to be Industry Specific

Among those who are interested in accessing resources in the next one to three years, over one-fifth (23.2%) indicate that they need to be industry specific. However, nearly one-third (30.4%) indicate that they do not need to be industry specific.

2 out of 5 Are Interested in Construction Resources

- Of those who indicate that the resources must be industry specific, two-fifths (43.6%) are interested in construction industry resources.
- One-third (33.3%) are interested in educational services.
- Other industries include information and cultural industries (30.8%), mining, oil, gas extraction (30.8%), fishing and hunting (28.2%), and accommodation and food services (25.6%).

2 out of 3 Feel Certification/ Credentials are Important

- Of those who report interest in accessing resources in the next one to three years, nearly three-quarters (71.4%) indicate that certification/credentials are important.

Methodology

In May 2023, Aurora College contracted Praxis Consulting as an independent third party to conduct an online survey to inform the possibility of an Indigenous Business Centre for Excellence to support Indigenous Business Owners/Entrepreneurs.

The questions summarized in this report were designed by Praxis in consultation with Aurora College. The survey instrument was programmed into an online survey platform and pre-tested to ensure the questions flowed efficiently and incorporated correct branching and skip patterns.

Survey Sample

A total of 112 online surveys were completed in between May 8th, 2023, and May 25th, 2023.

Aurora College targeted residents of the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, and Nunavut to respond to this survey. Communications from Aurora College included providing the survey information and link on the Aurora College website and through word-of-mouth with support from the Indigenous Advisory Council.

The sampling method used produces a non-probability sample. Margins of error cannot be applied to non-probability samples.

Praxis Consulting Ltd.
Incorporated in 1999, Praxis is Saskatchewan's largest locally owned management consulting and research firm. Praxis delivers consulting services in public, private, not-for-profit, and Indigenous sectors across Canada.

We specialize in community engagement and the collection of market research data for more effective decision-making. We have completed market assessment, customer, and public opinion research projects with a wide spectrum of private and public-sector organizations. Our work has been used in policy development, issue management, business planning, membership support, service quality management, community relations, public affairs, and advocacy.

Our team is comprised of lead thinkers in strategy and research. This dual lens allows us to ensure data is relevant to decision-makers from point of collection through to analysis and reporting. We work with decision-makers to make the most of research results to inform organizational strategy.

Aurora College Public Interest Survey Report

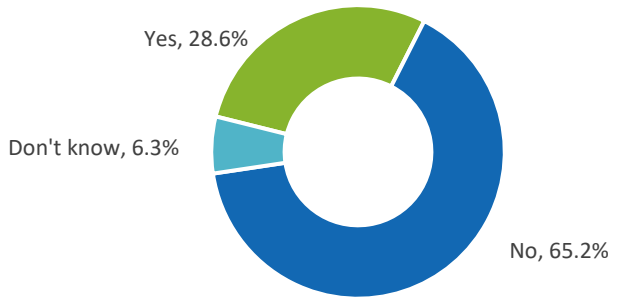
Survey Results

Previous Access

Q. Have you previously accessed any business development/support/services/programs? **(N = 112)**

- Overall, more than a quarter (28.6%) of respondents have accessed business development/support/services/program resources in the past.

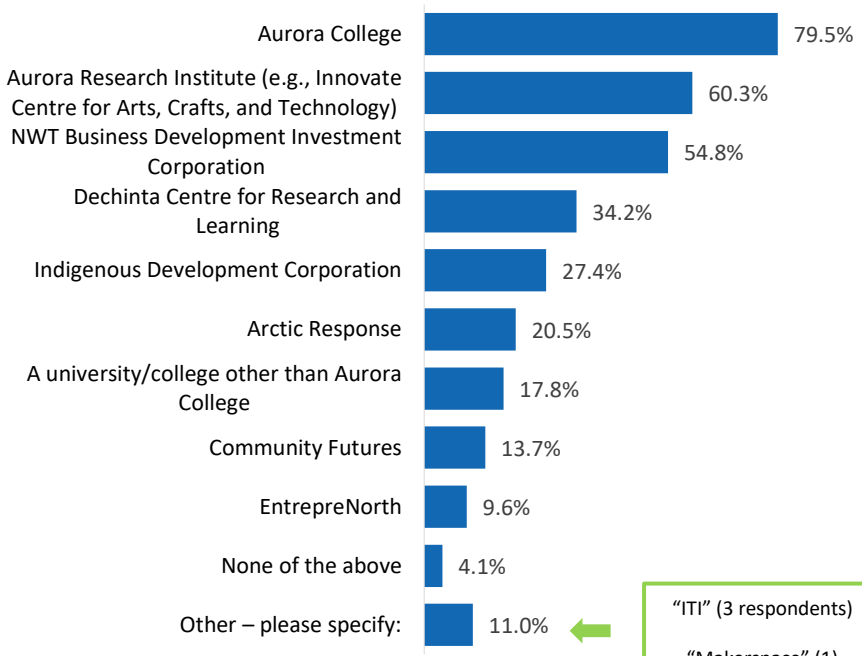
2 out of 3 of Respondents Have Not Previously Accessed Resources



Q. What business development/support/services/programs are you aware of? Please select all that apply. (N = 72; those who have not previously accessed resources)

- Of those who have not accessed any business development/support/services/programs in the past, four-fifths (79.5%) are aware of Aurora College.
- Approximately three-fifths (60.3%) are aware of the Aurora Research Institute, and more than half (54.8%) are aware of the NWT Business Development Investment Corporation.

8 out of 10 of Those Without Previous Access are Aware of Aurora College

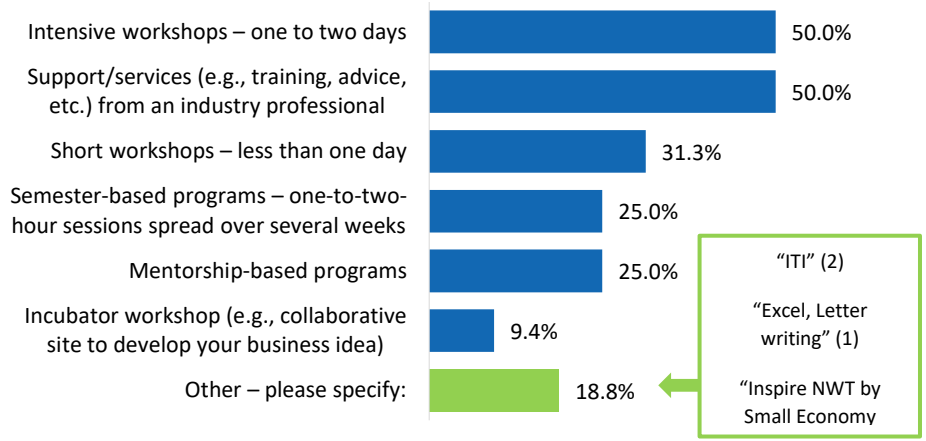


*Multiple responses allowed

Q. What types of business development/support/services/programs (online or in-person) have you participated in previously? Please select all that apply. (N = 32; those who have previously accessed resources)

- Of those who have accessed business development/support/ services/programs (online or in-person) in the past, one in two have participated in intensive workshops (50.0%) and/or used support/services from an industry professional (50.0%).
- A third (31.3%) of respondents have participated in short workshops, and a quarter have participated in semester-based programs (25.0%) and/or mentorship-based programs (25.0%).

Half of Respondents Have Previously Participated in Intensive Workshops & Used Support/Services from an Industry Professional

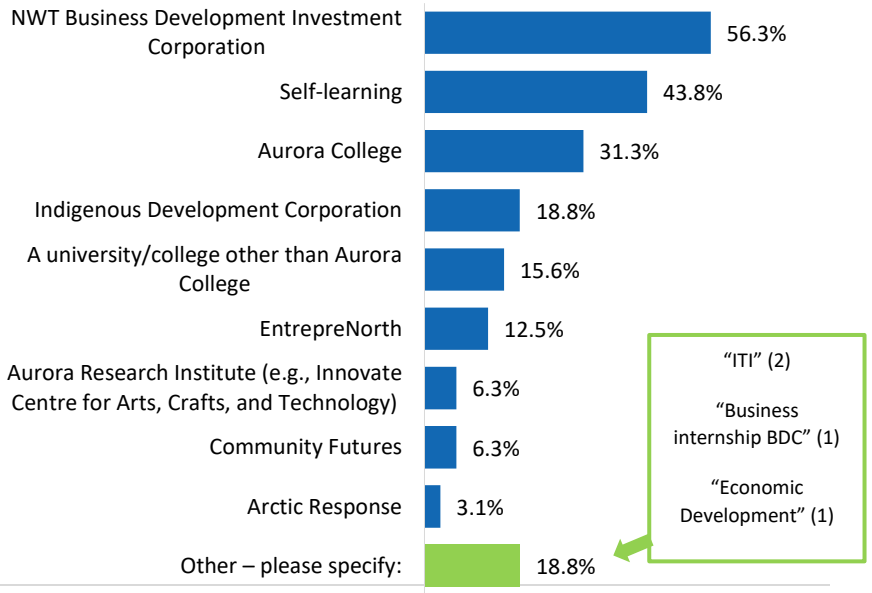


*Multiple responses allowed

Q. How do you typically access business development/supports/services/programs? (Please select all that apply.) (N = 32)

- Of those who have previously accessed these resources, more than half (56.3%) indicate they access resources through the NWT Business Development Investment Corporation.
- Respondents also indicate accessing resources through self-learning (43.8%), and/or Aurora College (31.3%).

Half of Respondents Access Resources Through NWT Business Development Investment Corporation

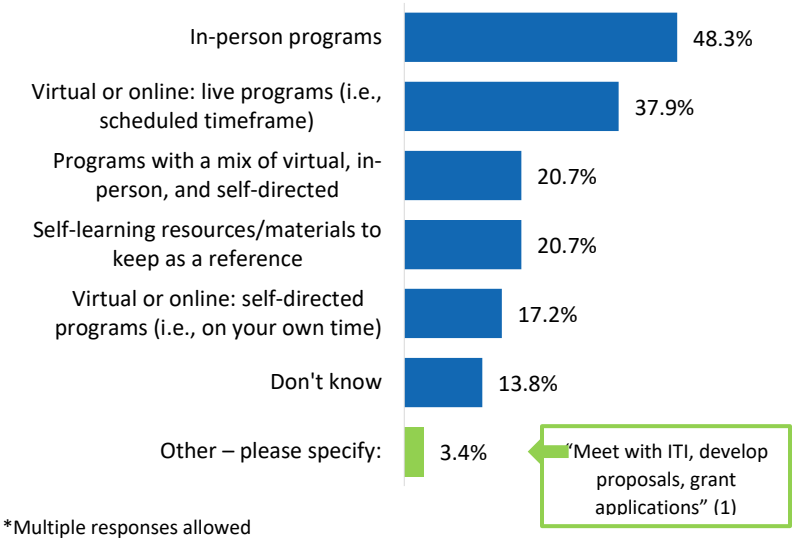


*Multiple responses allowed

Q. How are you currently attending these business/development/support/services/programs? (Please select all that apply.) (N = 29*)

- Of those who have previously accessed these resources, nearly half (48.3%) indicate that they attend in-person programs.
- Another 37.9% indicate attending virtually or online with live programming.

Half of Respondents Currently Attend Resources In-Person



*Multiple responses allowed

* Small sample size. Use caution when interpreting results.

Interest of Resources

Q. Are you interested in accessing any business/support/ services/programs opportunities in the next 1 to 3 years? (N = 112)

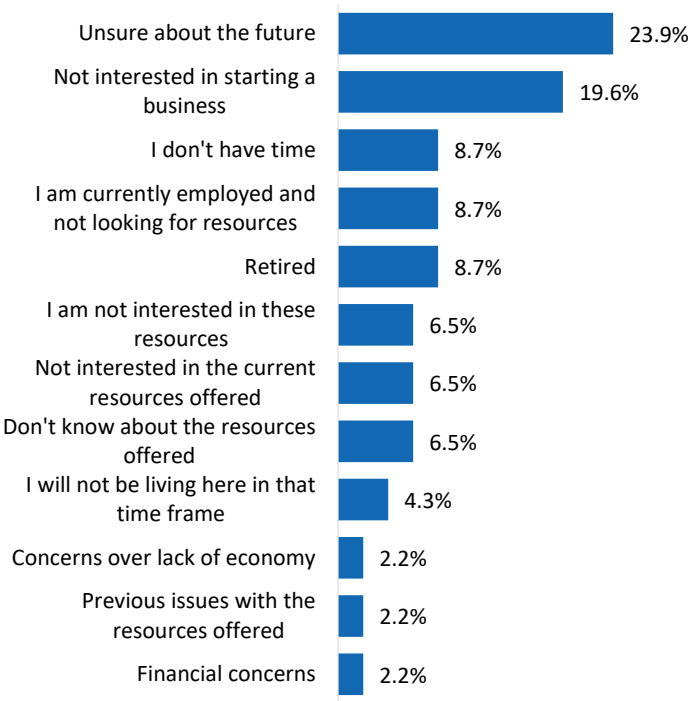
- Half (50.0%) of respondents indicate that they are interested in accessing resources in the next one to three years.
- Conversely, over one-quarter (27.7%) of respondents indicate that they are not interested in accessing these resources in one to three years. Another two-fifths (22.3%) indicate that they don't know what their interest will be in the upcoming year(s).

Half of Respondents Interested in Accessing Resources

Q. Why is that? (N = 46; Those who are not/don't know if they are interested)

- Of the respondents who indicate that they are not interested or don't know of their interest in these resources in the next one to three years, nearly one quarter (23.9%) indicate that this is because they are unsure about the future. Another one-fifth (19.6%) indicate that they are not interested in starting a business in the next few years.

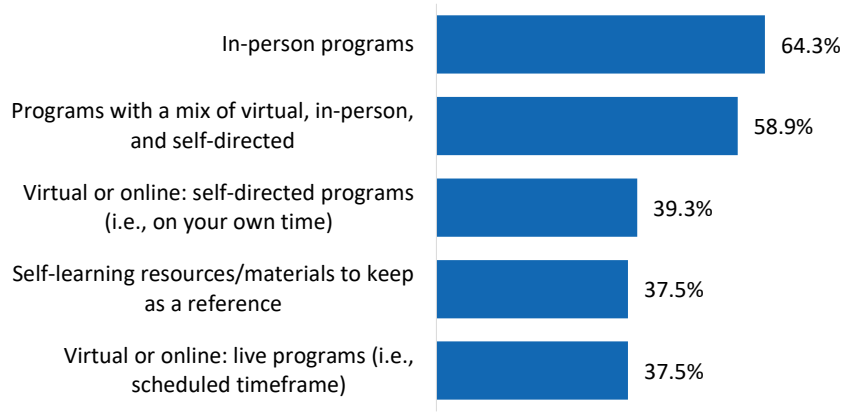
1 out of 4 Uninterested Respondents Are Unsure About the Future



Q. How do you like to attend business development/support/services/programs? (Please select all that apply.) (N = 56; Those who are interested in accessing resources in the next one to three years)

- Of those who are interested in accessing resources in the next one to three years, over two-thirds (64.3%) prefer to access in-person programs. Another 58.9% indicate a preference for programs with a mix of virtual, in-person, and self-directed resources.

2 out of 3 Respondents Prefer In-Person Programs



*Multiple responses allowed

Q. What types of business development/support/services/programs (online or in-person) do you prefer? (Please select all that apply.) (N = 56; Those who are interested in accessing resources in the next one to three years)

- Of those who are interested in accessing resources in the next one to three years, over two-thirds (67.9%) prefer short workshops (less than one day). Another 66.1% prefer intensive workshops (one to two days) and 58.9% prefer access to support/services (e.g., training, advice, etc.) from an industry professional.

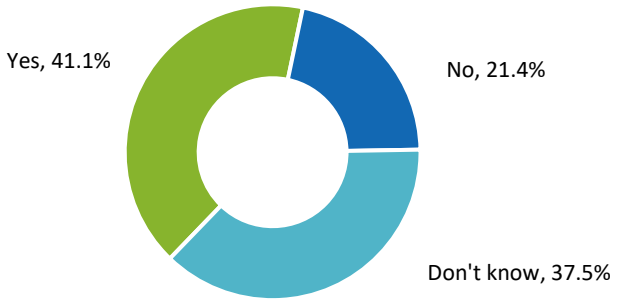
2 out of 3 Respondents Prefer Short Workshops

*Multiple responses allowed

Q. Are you willing to pay for any of the business development/support/services/programs listed in the previous question? (N = 56)

- Two-fifths (41.1%) of respondents who are interested in accessing resources within the next three years say they are willing to pay for resources.
- Conversely, one-fifth (21.4%) indicate they are not willing to pay for resources, and over one-third (37.5%) do not know if they are willing to pay for resources or not.

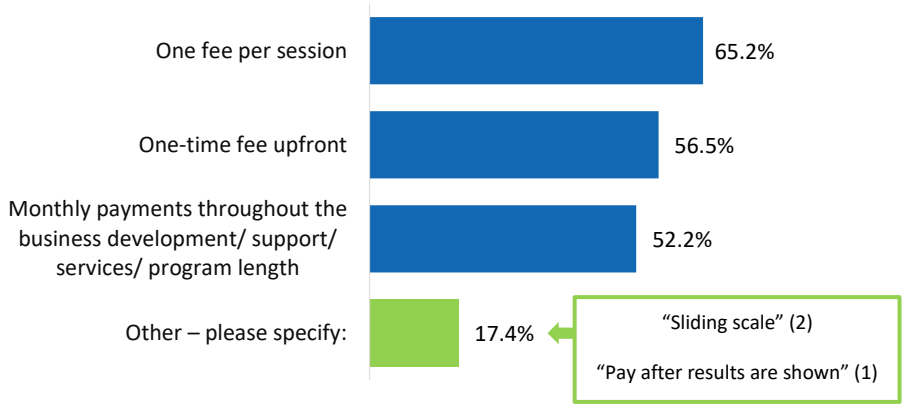
2 out of 5 are Willing to Pay for Resources



Q. What are your preferred payment options to access business development/support/services/programs that are offered over length of time (i.e., semester-based programs, mentorship-based programs, support/services from an industry professional spread over several weeks)? (N = 23*; those willing to pay for resources)

- Among respondents willing to pay for resources, the most common preference is one fee per session (65.2%), followed by a one-time fee upfront (56.5%), and a monthly fee throughout the resource length (52.2%).

2 out of 5 Prefer the Payment Option of One Fee Per Session

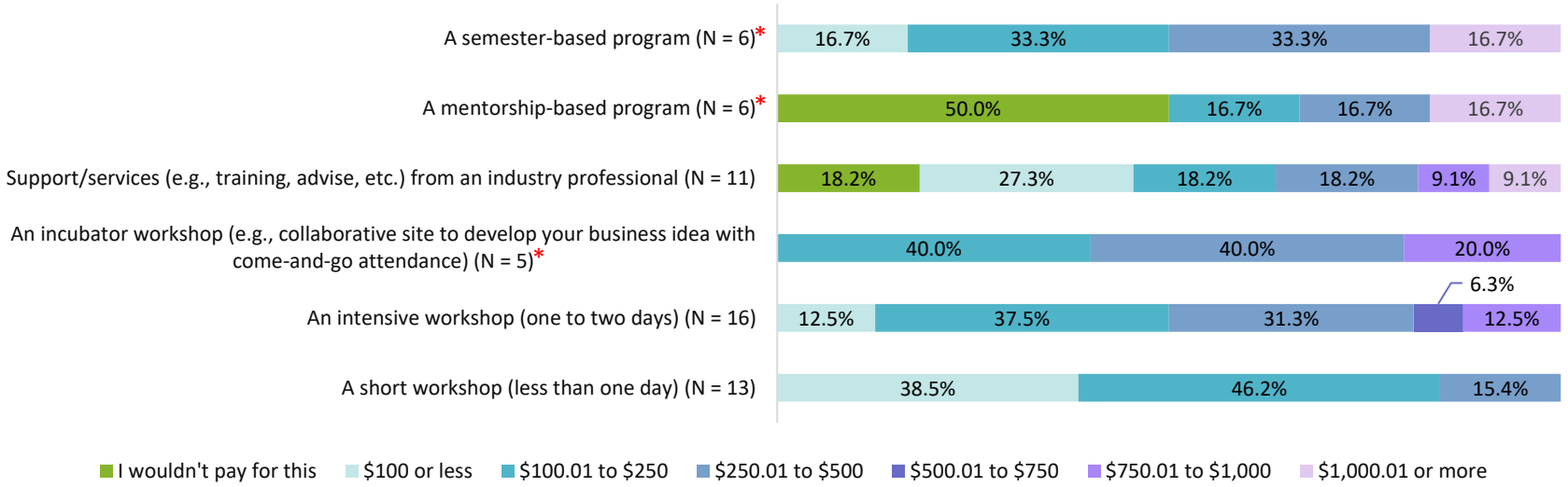


*Multiple responses allowed

* Small sample size. Use caution when interpreting results.

Q. In your opinion, how much would you pay to attend …?

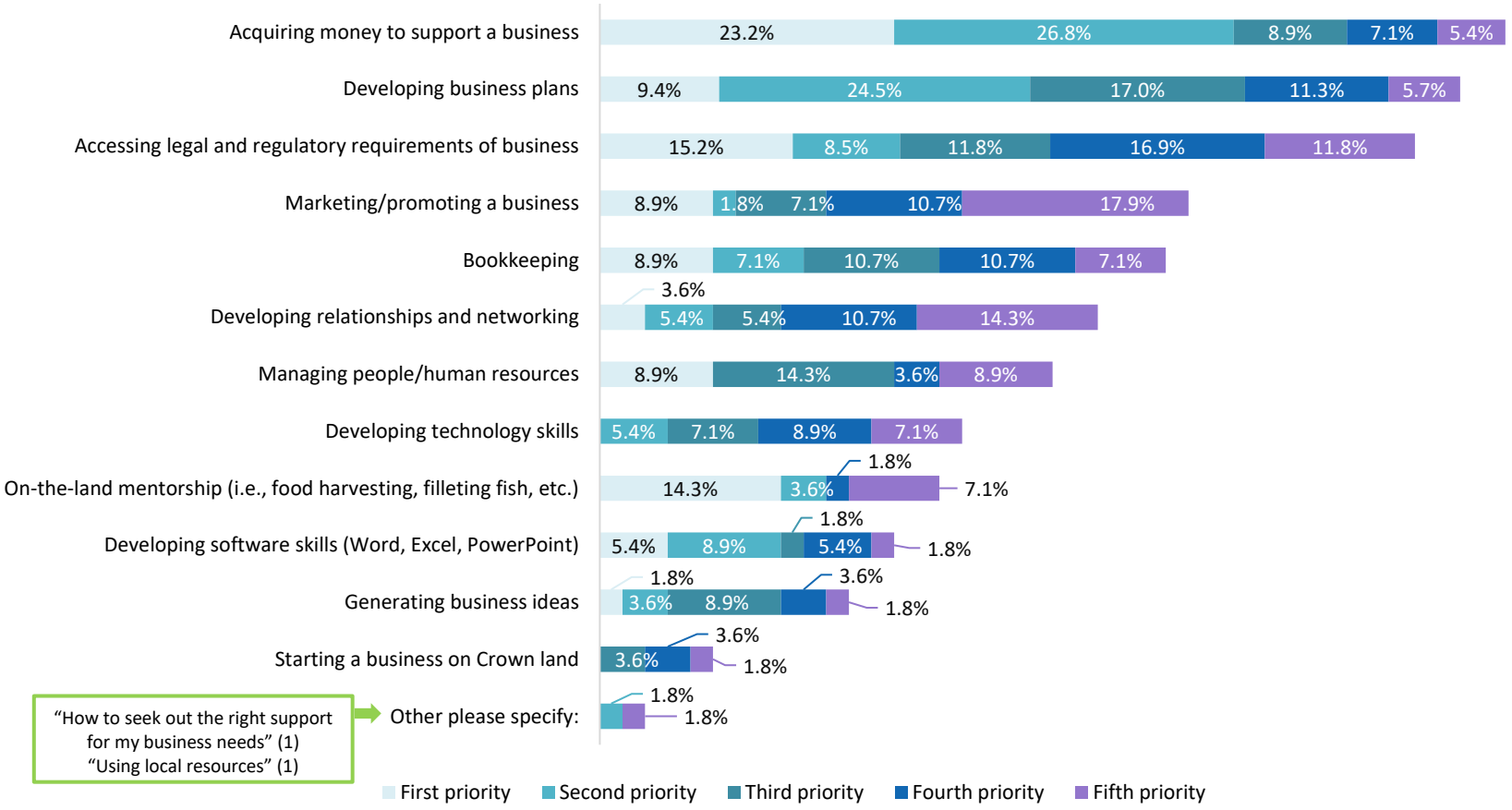
- Respondents who indicate that they are willing to pay for resources were asked how much they would pay for each resource they would be interested in.
- Nearly two-fifths of those who are interested in a semester-based program (16.7%) and/or are interested in a mentorship-based program (16.7%) indicate they would pay more than $1,000 for this resource. Additionally, 9.1% who are interested in support/services from an industry professional would also pay more than $1,000 for this resource.
- In contrast, half (50.0%) of those who are interested in a mentorship-based program, and/or two-fifths (18.2%) of those who are interested in support/services from an industry professional wouldn't pay for these resources.



* Small sample size. Use caution when interpreting results.

Q. Which of the following topics interest you most? (Please rank your top five topics of interest.) (N = 56)

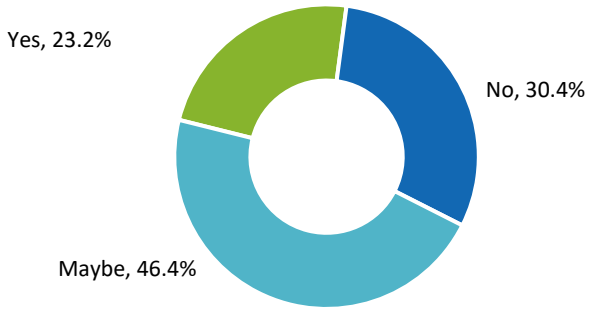
- Those who are interested in accessing resources in the next one to three years were asked to rank their top five interests from a prompted list of topics.
- Interest is highest for 'acquiring money to support a business,' with half of respondents (50.0%) indicating this topic as either their first (23.3%) or second (26.8%) highest topic of interest.
- Interest is also high for 'developing business plans' (9.4% ranking first; 24.5% second) and 'accessing legal and regulatory requirements of business' (15.2% ranking first; 8.5% second).



Q. Do training programs need to be industry specific? (N = 56)

- Of those who are interested in accessing resources in the next one to three years, over one-fifth (23.2%) indicate they need to be industry specific. However, nearly one-third (30.4%) indicate that they do not need to be industry specific.

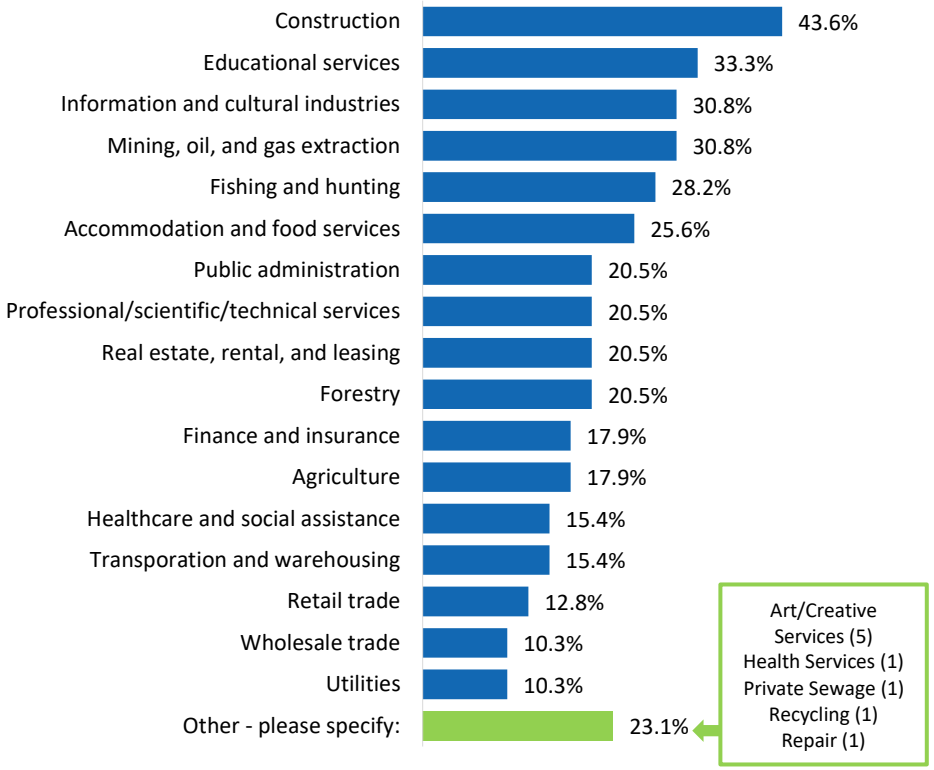
1 out of 5 Respondents Prefer Resources to be Industry Specific



Q. What specific industry business development/support/services/programs would you be interested in? (Please select all that apply.) (N = 39)

- Of those who indicate that the resources must be industry-specific, two-fifths (43.6%) are interested in the construction industry.
- One-third (33.3%) are interested in educational services.
- Other industries include information and cultural industries (30.8%), mining, oil and gas extraction (30.8%), fishing and hunting (28.2%), and accommodation and food services (25.6%).

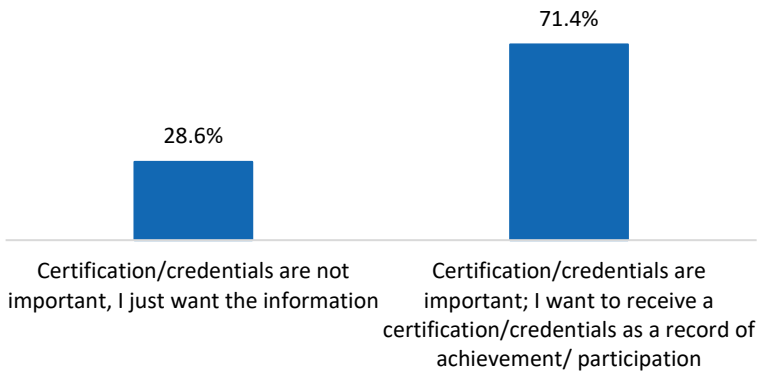
2 out of 5 Respondents Are Interested Construction Resources



Q. How important is certification and/or credentials to you? (N = 56)

- Of those who report interest in accessing resources in the next one to three years, seven in ten (71.4%) indicate that certification/credentials are important.
- Over one-quarter (28.6%) indicate that certification/ credentials are not important.

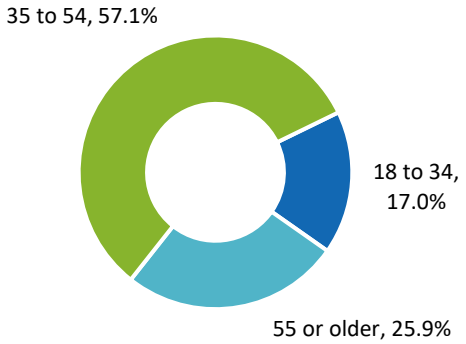
7 out of 10 Feel Certification/Credentials are Important



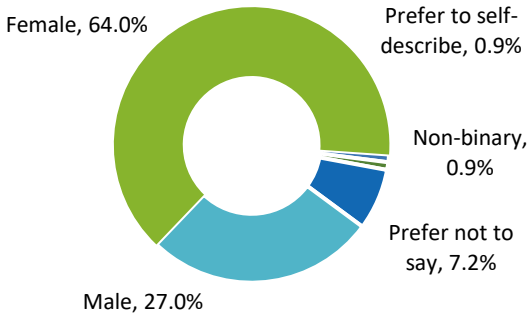
Appendices

DEMOGRAPHICS

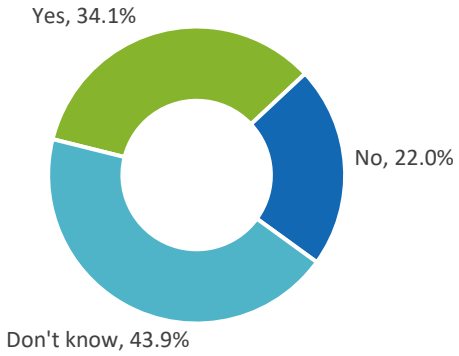
Age



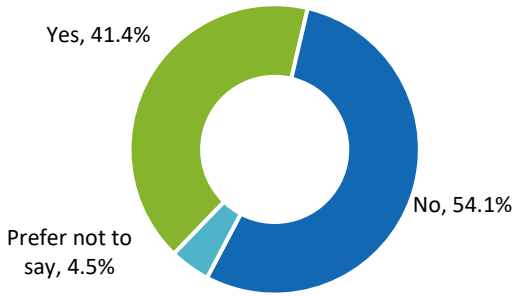
Gender



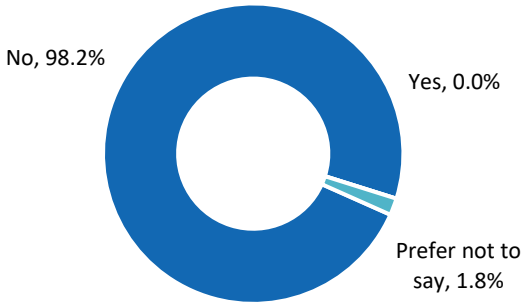
I intend to start a business in the next 5 years:



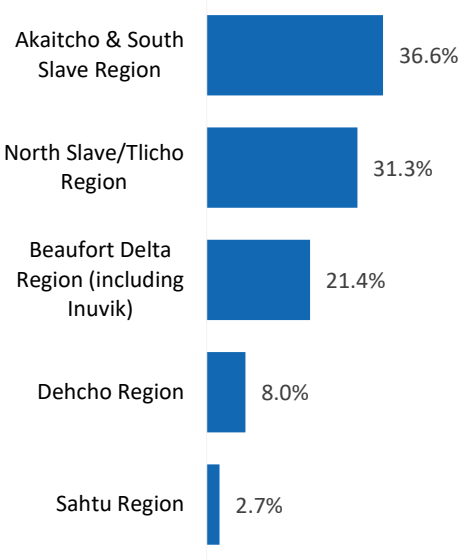
Dependents in Home



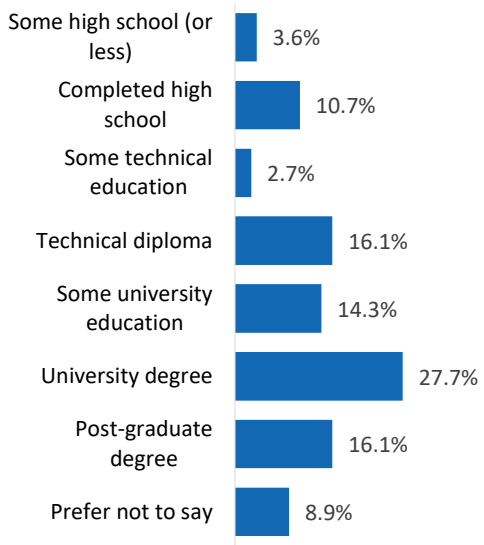
New to Canada



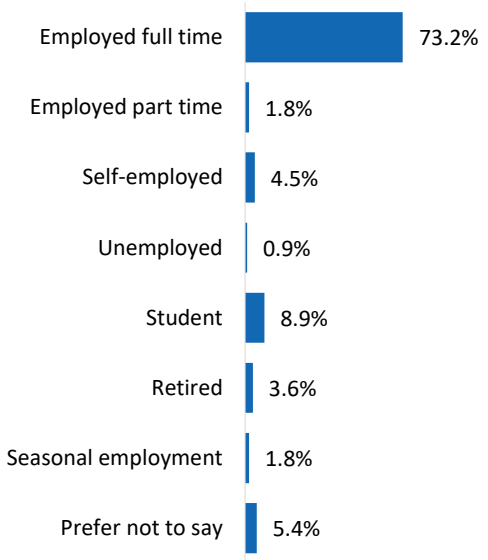
Location



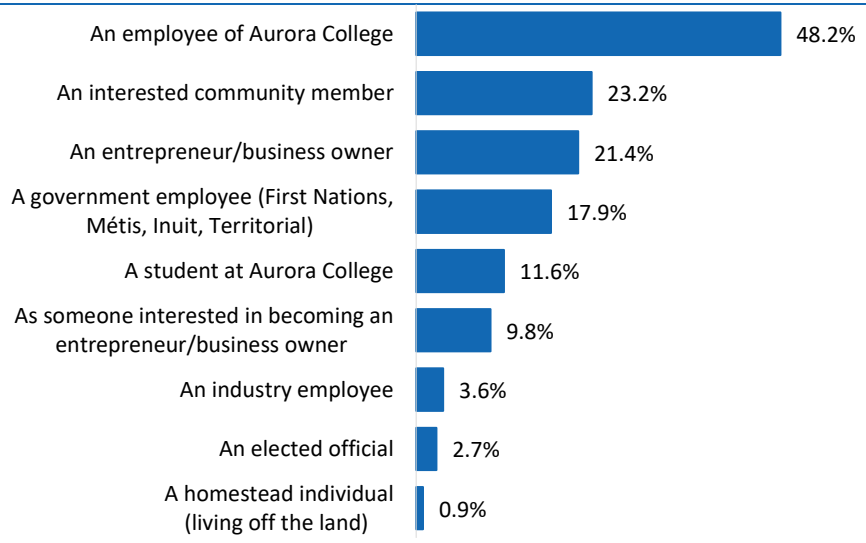
Education



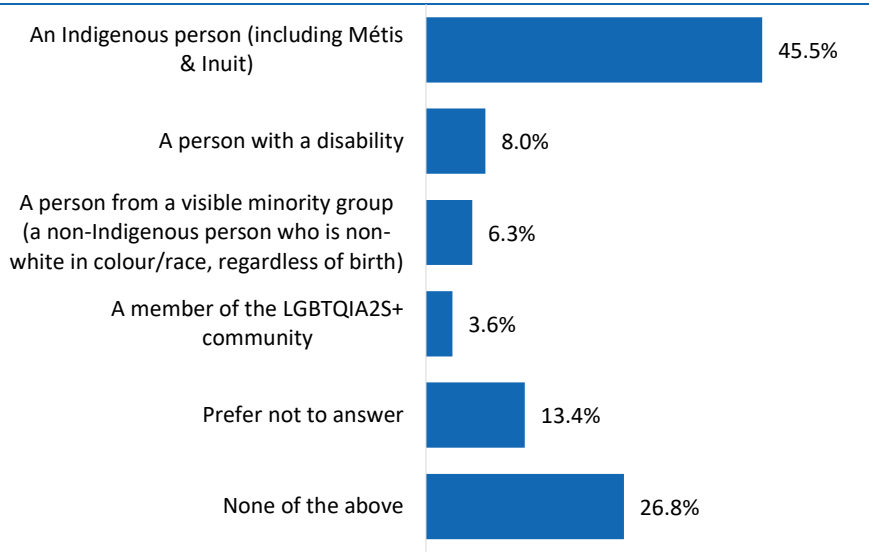
Employment



I am completing this survey as…



I self-identify as…



Online Survey Instrument

Please take a few minutes to share your voice!

We invite you to participate in our online survey, which is being administered by Praxis Consulting on behalf of Aurora College.

Your feedback is very important to us. It will help us inform the possibility of an Indigenous Business Centre for Excellence to support Indigenous Business Owners/Entrepreneurs.

This survey will include questions about your interest/opinion on possible support, programs, and services for starting a business or becoming an entrepreneur. It will ask about possible support/service/program topics, payment options, delivery of support/services/programs, and the importance of certification/credentials.

The survey will take no more than 7 - 10 minutes to complete. Please be as honest as possible. All responses to this survey will remain anonymous (no names attached) and will be summarized together.

1. **I am completing this survey as (please select all that apply to you):**

   An entrepreneur/business owner
   As someone interested in becoming an entrepreneur/business owner
   An industry employee
   A homestead individual (living off of the land)
   A government employee (First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Territorial)
   An elected official
   An employee of Aurora College
   A student at Aurora College
   An interested community member

2. **[If industry employee is selected…] What industry best represents your current work:**

   Mining, oil, and gas extraction
   Agriculture
   Forestry
   Fishing and hunting
   Utilities
   Construction
   Wholesale trade
   Retail trade
   Transportation and warehousing
   Information and cultural industries
   Finance and insurance
   Real estate and rental and leasing
   Professional, scientific, and technical services
   Educational services
   Healthcare and social assistance
   Accommodation and food services
   Public administration
   Other – please specify: **[text box]**

3. **[If '…interested in becoming an entrepreneur…,' 'a homestead individual,' 'a student…' or 'an interested community member' is selected] I intend to start a business in the next five years:**

   Yes
   No
   Don't know

4. **I am located in:**

   NWT
   Yukon
   Nunavut

5. **[If 'NWT' is selected] Please indicate your closest community:**

   Akaitcho & South Slave Region
   Beaufort Delta Region (including Inuvik)
   Dehcho Region
   North Slave/Tlicho Region
   Sahtu Region
   Other – please specify: **[text box]**

6. **Have you previously accessed any business development/support/services/programs?**
   - Yes
   - No
   - Don't know

7. **[If 'No' or 'Don't know' in Q6 is selected] What business development/support/services/programs are you aware of? Please select all that apply.**
   - Aurora College
   - Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning
   - Community Futures
   - Artic Response
   - EntrepreNorth
   - Indigenous Development Corporation
   - Aurora Research Institute (e.g., Innovate Centre for Arts, Crafts, and Technology)
   - NWT Business Development Investment Corporation
   - A university/college other than Aurora College
   - Other – please specify: **[text box]**
   - None of the above

8. **[If 'Yes' in Q6 is selected] What types of business development/support/services/programs (online or in-person) have you participated in previously? Please select all that apply.**
   - Short workshops – less than one day
   - Intensive workshops – one to two days
   - Semester-based programs – one-to-two-hour sessions spread over several weeks
   - Mentorship-based programs
   - Support/services (e.g., training, advise, etc.) from an industry professional
   - Incubator workshop (e.g., collaborative site to develop your business idea with come-and-go attendance)
   - Other – please specify: **[text box]**
   - Don't know

9. **[If 'Yes' in Q6 is selected] How do you typically access business development/supports/services/programs? (Please select all that apply.)**
   - Aurora College
   - Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning
   - Community Futures
   - Artic Response
   - EntrepreNorth
   - Indigenous Development Corporation
   - Aurora Research Institute (e.g., Innovate Centre for Arts, Crafts, and Technology)
   - NWT Business Development Investment Corporation
   - A university/college other than Aurora College
   - Other – please specify: **[text box]**
   - None of the above

10. **[If 'Yes' in Q6 is selected] How are you currently attending these business/development/support/services/programs? (Please select all that apply.)**
    - In-person programs
    - Virtual or online: live programs (i.e., scheduled timeframe)
    - Virtual or online: self-directed programs (i.e., on your own time)
    - Self-learning resources/materials to keep as a reference
    - Programs with a mix of virtual, in-person, and self-directed
    - Other – please specify: **[text box]**
    - Don't know

11. **Are you interested in accessing any business/support/services/programs opportunities in the next 1 – 3 years?**
    - Yes
    - No
    - Don't know

12. **[If 'No' or 'Don't know' in Q6 is selected] Why is that?**
    [Text box] > Skip to Q27

13. **How do you like to attend business development/support/services/programs? (Please select all that apply.)**
    In-person programs
    Virtual or online: live programs (i.e., scheduled timeframe)
    Virtual or online: self-directed programs (i.e., on your own time)
    Self-learning resources/materials to keep as a reference
    Programs with a mix of virtual, in-person, and self-directed
    Other – please specify: **[text box]**
    Don't know

14. **What types of business development/support/services/programs (online or in-person) do you prefer? (Please select all that apply.)**
    Short workshops – less than one day
    Intensive workshops – one to two days
    Semester-based programs – one-to-two-hour sessions spread over several weeks
    Mentorship-based programs
    Support/services (e.g., training, advise, etc.) from an industry professional
    Incubator workshop (e.g., collaborative site to develop your business idea with come-and-go attendance)
    Other – please specify: **[text box]**
    Don't know

15. **Are you willing to pay for any of the business development/support/services/programs listed in the previous question?**
    Yes
    No
    Don't know

16. **[If 'short workshops…' is selected in Q14] In your opinion, how much would you pay to attend a short workshop (less than one day)?**
    [Text box]

17. **[If 'intensive workshops…' is selected in Q14] In your opinion, how much would you pay to attend an intensive workshop (one to two days)?**
    [Text box]

18. **[If 'semester-based program…' is selected in Q14] In your opinion, how much would you pay to attend a semester-based program (one-to-two-hour sessions spread over several weeks)?**
    [Text box]

19. **[If 'mentorship-based programs…' is selected in Q14] In your opinion, how much would you pay to attend a mentorship-based programs?**
    [Text box]

20. **[If 'Support/services…' is selected in Q14] In your opinion, how much would you pay to access support/services (e.g., training, advise, etc.) from an industry professional?**
    [Text box]

21. **[If 'Incubator workshop…' is selected in Q14] In your opinion, how much would you pay to participate in an incubator workshop (e.g., collaborative site to develop your business idea with come-and-go attendance)?**
    [Text box]

22. **[If 'semester-based programs,' 'mentorship-based programs,' OR 'supports/services…,' in Q14 AND 'yes' to Q15 are selected] 'What are your preferred payment options to access business development/support/services/programs that are offered over length of time (i.e., semester-based programs, mentorship-based programs, support/services from an industry professional spread over several weeks)? (Please select all that apply.)**
    - One-time fee up-front
    - Monthly payments throughout the business development/support/services/program length
    - One fee per session
    - Other – please specify: **[text box]**

23. **Which of the following topics interest you most? (Please rank your top five topics of interest.)**
    - Generating business ideas
    - Managing people/human resources
    - Acquiring money to support a business
    - Bookkeeping
    - Accessing legal and regulatory requirements of business
    - Starting a business on Crown land
    - Developing technology skills
    - Development software skills (Word, Excel, PowerPoint)
    - On-the-land mentorship (i.e., food harvesting, filleting fish, etc.)
    - Developing business plans
    - Developing relationships and networking
    - Other – please specify: **[text box]**

24. **Do training programs need to be industry specific?**
    - Yes
    - Maybe
    - No

25. **What specific industry business development/support/services /programs would you be interested in? (Please select all that apply.)**
    - Mining, oil, and gas extraction
    - Agriculture
    - Forestry
    - Fishing and hunting
    - Utilities
    - Construction
    - Wholesale trade
    - Retail trade
    - Transportation and warehousing
    - Information and cultural industries
    - Finance and insurance
    - Real estate and rental and leasing
    - Professional, scientific, and technical services
    - Educational services
    - Healthcare and social assistance
    - Accommodation and food services
    - Public administration
    - Other – please specify: **[text box]**

26. **How important is certification and/or credentials to you?**
    - Certification/credentials are not important, I just want the information.
    - Certification/credentials are important; I want to receive a certification/credentials as a record of achievement/participation.

These last few questions are for classification purposes only.

27. **What are the first three digits of your postal code?**
    [Text box]

28. **What is your age?**
    - 18 to 34

35 to 54
55 or older

29. What is your gender?

Male
Female
Non-binary
Prefer to self-describe
Prefer not to say

30. What category best describes the level of education you have completed?

Some high school (or less)
Completed high school
On-the-land learning
Some technical education
Technical diploma
Some university education
University degree
Post-graduate degree
Prefer not to say

31. Which of the following best describes your current employment situation?

Employed full time
Employed part time
Seasonal employment
Self-employed
Unemployed
Homemaker/Stay-at-home parent
Student
Retired
Prefer not to say

32. Are there any dependents under your care in your household?

Yes
No
Prefer not to say

33. Are you new to Canada (less than 5 years residing in Canada)?

Yes
No
Prefer not to say

34. And finally, do you choose to self-identify as any of the following? Please select all that apply.

An Indigenous person (including Métis & Inuit)
A person with a disability
A person from a visible minority group (a non-Indigenous person who is non-white in colour/race, regardless of birth)
A member of the LGBTQIA2S+ community
None of the above
Prefer not to answer