

Alberta Innovates (AI) is a public agency corporation that is arm's length from the Government of Alberta. Through a suite of programs and services for entrepreneurs, small-medium size enterprises (SMEs), researchers and investors, AI has created an innovation support system that is a one-stop shop to develop knowledge-based industry clusters and encourage Alberta's entrepreneurial culture.

## Technology Development Advisors (TDA)

Our Technology Development Advisor (TDAs) program is the foundation of our business development services. TDAs provide confidential front-line business and technology development coaching to small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) in technology or knowledge-based industries to help grow and diversify the Alberta economy.



The TDA acts as a proactive connector and navigator for SMEs to access Alberta's Innovation System programs and services. As part of Alberta's innovation community, TDAs connect entrepreneurs with business and professional support services, Provincial and Federal Government programs, colleges, universities, non-profit and industry contacts. TDAs provide information on Alberta Innovates programs and work alongside Regional Innovation Network (RIN) partners to create an integrated, collaborative innovation system.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**What do TDAs do?** A TDA offers recent and relevant business advice and a connection to the innovation system. A TDA focuses as much on the business as the technology. They will not write your business or marketing plan or grant application, but can provide insight into market analysis, business planning and investment readiness. They may give advice on technology development, finance, lean manufacturing, regulations and certifications, market/industry assessment or locate a piece of equipment that will facilitate product development. Through their deep industry networks, they can facilitate connections to valuable resources.

**What types of clients do TDAs work with?** TDAs work with knowledge or technology-based small-to-medium size enterprises (SMEs). They focus on established SME's using technology innovation as a high growth strategy to enter new markets and export. SME's should have a minimum viable product, be in the final stages of validating the solution and demonstrating to initial users, a founding team and seed capital. Typically, TDAs do not work with very early stage clients unless that company has a high potential concept or is developing an advanced technology.

**What should I expect when working with a TDA?** TDAs work with clients on a long term basis to build meaningful relationships, through coaching and mentoring. They often work with clients on specific technology or business innovation projects throughout the life cycle of the product or business. TDAs use a coaching/mentoring process that requires clients to demonstrate a willingness to actively work on their business, showing progress by improving market readiness and uptake.

**How is a TDA different than an ITA?** The National Research Council has a network of Industrial Technology Advisors (ITAs) across the country. While our advising services are similar, ITAs have a scientific background and typically focus on technical advancement and growing internal capacity of a firm while TDAs have recent and relevant senior business experience and focus on the steps to growing a successful technology business. TDAs work closely with ITAs to coordinate services, though the programs are separate.

**What is a RIN and how does the TDA function within these groups?** There are eight Regional Innovation Networks (RINs) in Alberta: Grande Prairie, Lloydminster, Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge and Fort McMurray<sup>1</sup>. Each RIN is made up of like-minded public organizations passionate about helping small business innovate and grow. Local RIN partners collaborate to provide support services and programs that benefit their community such as business education, research and development, design services, and rapid prototyping. The TDA works with the local RIN to ensure clients receive the support, advice and access to resources they need. For more information, see [Regional Innovation Network](#).

**What is AIN?** Collectively, the RINs share resources and collaborate to form the Alberta Innovation Network (AIN). Further information on all the services, events, funding and more provided by the AIN can be found on a self-serve web portal, [connectica.ca](http://connectica.ca).

**How many TDAs are there?** There are TDAs across the province; Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Lloydminster, Grande Prairie, Edmonton (2), Calgary (3) and Fort McMurray. TDAs are assigned geographically, though in some cases, they are assigned by technology type. Contact [intake@albertainnovates.ca](mailto:intake@albertainnovates.ca) to be connected with a TDA.

**What are vouchers and how do I get one?** Alberta Innovates has several direct industries funding programs including the Mirco-Voucher and Voucher programs. These programs invest in high potential/high growth technology or knowledge-based companies with novel innovation. Our investments have a separate and robust due diligence process (similar to a bank) and the investment portfolio is actively managed and balanced. Unlike a bank, we have a higher risk tolerance, thus our return on investment is measured by increased revenues, exports, job creation and the benefits to Alberta. Investment clients should expect to provide a high degree of financial and business planning documentation, as you would provide a bank. While requirements to receive an investment from AI are high, for every \$1 invested for the people of Alberta, these companies increase revenues by \$5.20, receive \$28.22 in follow-on investment and have a positive effect on job growth and economic diversification.<sup>2</sup> AI investments are highly competitive.<sup>3</sup>

**Do TDA's help write applications to funding programs?** No.

**Do I have to have a TDA to apply to funding programs?** No, though the TDA acts as an in-person validator to the investments team tasked with the accountability framework, due diligence and investment decisions. Working with a TDA can be beneficial to the client, through their expertise and experience these senior business advisors can help to identify gaps in business planning and market assessment. While the TDA is an integral part of our team, investment decisions are made by a separate investments branch.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on Regional Innovation Network, see <https://fund.albertainnovates.ca/Fund/CommercializationServices/RegionalInnovationNetwork.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Alberta Innovates TechComm ScoreCard 2017

<sup>3</sup> For more information on Entrepreneurial Investment Direct Industry Funding Programs, see <https://fund.albertainnovates.ca/Fund/CommercializationServices/IndustryFundingFormsandGuidelines.aspx>