ALBERTA INNOVATES

FIND YOUR FUTURE PROJECT

SCALE-UP AND GROWTH WAYFINDING PROJECT

Phase 2 Report - *Prioritization*

June 30, 2023

IMPACT ACTION LAB
Ideas. Insights. Impact.

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ABOUT THE IMPACT ACTION LAB (IAL)

The Impact Action Lab, at Alberta Innovates, partners with the ecosystem to amplify and activate the collective economic and societal impact of research and innovation investments. The IAL is made up of impact experts that help move from ideas to actionable insights. We are creative in iterating fit-for-purpose approaches to effect real change and scale impact. The IAL works with organizations to enhance their capacity by incorporating performance and impact management systems to demonstrate their value and generate benefits to their communities.

ABOUT ALBERTA INNOVATES

Alberta innovates is the province's most comprehensive research and innovation agency. From funding to commercialization, we are Alberta's innovation engine. We foster and accelerate research and innovation to benefit citizens and drive economic growth.

Our total managed portfolio impact is $1.2 billion in value encompassing 1,320 active projects. Alberta Innovates works across sectors to fund, partner and enable entrepreneurship throughout the province. The corporation operates in 11 locations with more than one million sq ft of industrial testing and lab facilities and 600 acres of farmland. Alberta Innovates employs 589 highly skilled scientists, business and technical professionals and has an annual operating budget of $250 million.

One of Alberta Innovates strategic focus areas in Technology Entrepreneur Ecosystem development. Network connectivity is a key to growing ecosystems and Alberta Innovates fosters it through the interconnected programs it delivers such as the Ecosystem Development Program, Regional Innovation Network Program, Technology Development Program and the Scale-up and Growth Program.

FOREWORD & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



As the province's largest research and innovation agency, Alberta Innovates supports technology and knowledge-based entrepreneurs to bring innovations to market. Small to Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) benefit from our coaching, community and capital to advance and scale their innovation outcomes.

In the last 5 years we have connected with over 3,000 Alberta Technology companies providing support and navigation services. This number increases significantly when including the Regional Innovation Networks (RINs) that collectively form the Alberta Innovation Network (AIN). There are many ecosystem support organizations working every day to improve the prospects of Alberta entrepreneurs. However, the number of entrepreneurs we need to service continues to grow. Now, more than ever, it is essential for us all to work together to ensure entrepreneurs can find the right support at the right time to start and scale their enterprises.

In February 2022 we launched the Find Your Future project to shine a light on wayfinding across the province. The ability to diagnose entrepreneurial problems and match entrepreneurs to the right support at the right time is no simple task. We launched the Find Your Future project to focus on next steps to help the AIN, the RINs and the many ecosystem support organizations work more fluidly together on navigation to maximize the outcomes of the entrepreneurial investment that is being made.

I'd like to thank Kathryn Graham (Executive Director, Impact Action Lab) and Reesa John (Director, Fund and Fellowship) for launching the Find Your Future initiative and providing their council during Phase-1 and Phase-2. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Simon Raby who has run important consultative processes across the province these past 18 months to surface, synthesize and help us converge on a set of priorities for next steps. I am thankful to all the community members who provided their valuable input into Phase 2. This voice of the community will help shape the next initiatives to be taken to improve wayfinding across the province.

Thank you for reading, and for continually championing Alberta entrepreneurs.

Carla Otto

Executive Director, Entrepreneurial Investments

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Welcome to the Find Your Future Project. Championed by Alberta Innovates, with support from the Impact Action Lab, this project seeks to enhance the connections between entrepreneurs and ecosystem resources in an entrepreneur-centric way, to promote collaboration in solving scale-up and growth challenges and creating future Alberta ecosystem opportunities.

Specifically, this report focuses on wayfinding supports required for technology-based startups and scaleups and the prioritization of the actionable insights that emerged from the Phase-1 exploratory stakeholder analysis. The prioritization process was supported by the Alberta Innovation Network (AIN), with a set of consultative focus groups being held with RINs and their member organizations.

Focus group participants confirmed the findings of the Phase-1 report, with RINs experiencing all of the constraints previously outlined. In addition, stakeholders reported there being limited time and resource to develop local wayfinding solutions. This precipitates the need for the AIN to continue its investment in this process, with strong leadership from Alberta Innovates.

The top three prioritized actionable insights were: navigator learning curve, communication and transparency, and needs assessment. While presented separately here, these priorities are mutually reinforcing.
The next step will be to develop detailed work plans for these priorities as part of Phase-3 implementation.
We thank you for your continued engagement and look forward to working with you as we execute on these priorities.



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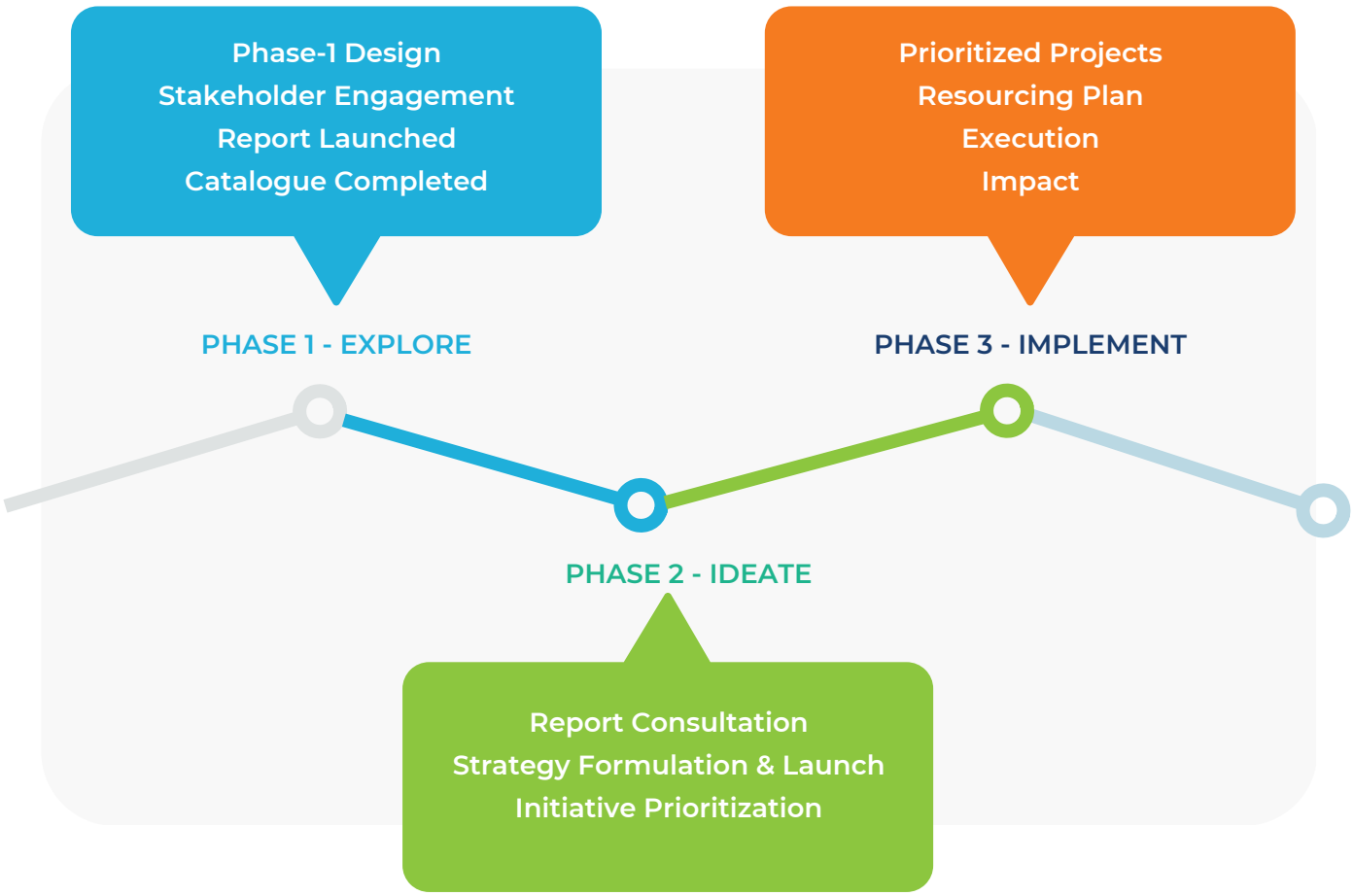
1. INTRODUCTION

The vision for the "Find Your Future" Wayfinding Project is to enhance the connections between entrepreneurs and ecosystem resources in an entrepreneur-centric way, to promote collaboration on solving scale-up and growth challenges and creating future Alberta ecosystem opportunities.

In September 2022 Alberta Innovates relased a report as an output from Phase-1 of the Wayfinding Project, subsequently presenting the findings via a 1-hour webinar[ii]. The Wayfinding study located a number of constraints and proposed a set of actionable insights. Since the launch we have received some excellent feedback at a local, regional and national level. We continue to be impressed by the ingenuity and innovative approaches being taken to support entrepreneurs across the province.

We are now in Phase-2 of the Wayfinding Project. The outcome of this Phase-2 report will be a Wayfinding Strategic Action Plan, including goals, desired outcomes, and recommended actions to drive a Phase-3 implementation plan. Phase-2 will be completed by the end of June, 2023, with Phase-3 running from April 2023 to March 2024.

Figure-1: Wayfinding Phases



2. PROJECT APPROACH & DESIGN

Significant investment is being made to provide acceleration and global connection services for Alberta entrepreneurs. A portion of investment is being allocated to services targeting scaleup and growth stages of the entrepreneurial client journey [iii]. The success of accelerators and other entrepreneurial support programs depends on a number of factors, not least their connectivity to the Regional Innovation Networks (RIN), Alberta entrepreneurs and the stakeholders in the local support ecosystems in which they operate.

To ensure that high potential Alberta entrepreneurs can access appropriate entrepreneurial support at the right time and in the right place, *Find Your Future* aims to convene an ongoing conversation on provincial and local navigation and wayfinding processes along with championing actionable insights. In addition to creating awareness for stakeholders about the 'lay of the land' of Alberta entrepreneurial support, this information will increase awareness across incumbents and those new to the province, helping to promote Alberta's global entrepreneurial reputation.

In so doing, *Find Your Future* aims to create new connections between entrepreneurs and ecosystem resources, along with identifying challenges and future opportunities for development.

Project Questions

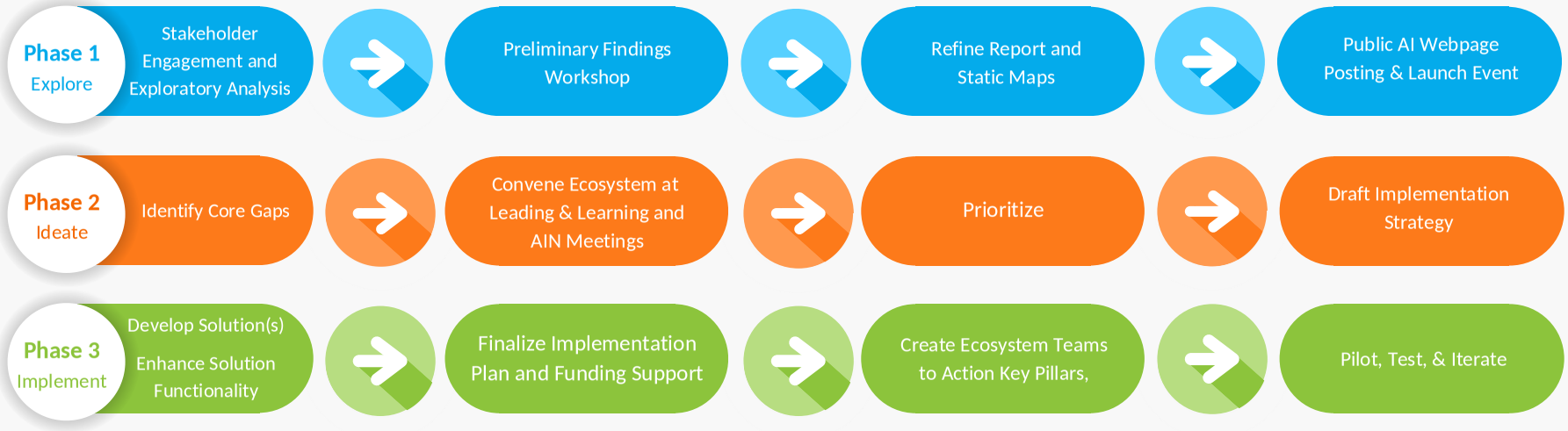
The Find Your Future project seeks answers to the following questions:

- Which support organizations participate in the entrepreneurial ecosystem?
- What resources are available to entrepreneurs through said organizations along the client journey from ideation to scale-up and growth?
- What ecosystem weaknesses / gaps need to be filled?
- What ecosystem strengths / opportunities can be leveraged?
- How can the ecosystem be visualized to encourage entrepreneurial self-directed access and navigation?
- How can we use the resources we create to mobilize stakeholders to solve economic development challenges and enhance a socially vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem?

Project Phases

The Find Your Future project is broken into three distinct phases. We outline these phases in Figure-2 and provide a description below.

Figure-2: Find Your Future Project Phases



Phase-1: Wayfinding Current State & Gap Analysis

Phase-1 a) engaged stakeholders[1] across the entrepreneurial support ecosystem through a set of semi-structured interviews, b) catalogued existing ecosystem players and resources, c) built a set of initial static maps, and d) made these maps available on the Alberta Innovates website. This exploratory process identified the current constraints in entrepreneurial wayfinding and led to a set of eight actionable insights.

Phase-2: Wayfinding Future State

Phase-2 engaged stakeholders across the entrepreneurial support ecosystem in an ideation process that led to the prioritization of actionable insights for future entrepreneurial navigation and wayfinding system enhancements. This report details these solutions.

Phase-3: Wayfinding Solution Implementation

Phase 3 will engage stakeholders across the entrepreneurial support ecosystem to create and pilot entrepreneurial navigation and wayfinding enhancements.

Phase-2 Objectives

Since the Phase-1 report launch, time has been given to the ecosystem to review and discuss the findings in the context of respective Regional Innovation Networks (RIN). On launch of Phase-2 of the Wayfinding project there was a need to hear from RINs and their stakeholder members on the actions that should be prioritized and resourced in the coming year(s).

The purpose of Phase-2 is to clarify constraints, agree on priorities and confirm targeted outcomes for Phase-3, which will lead to the design and launch of targeted Wayfinding initiatives.

The Wayfinding project team entered Phase-2 with the following questions:

- To what extent do the constraints identified in the Wayfinding Phase-1 Report represent the constraints experienced by the wider ecosystem and are there regional differences?
- In which order should the actionable insights presented in the Wayfinding Phase-1 report be prioritized? What, if anything, is missing?
- Taking each insight in turn, which objectives and initiatives should be invested in?
- Based on the priorities identified, conduct a deeper dive into the further actions stakeholders would like to see taken over the next 12 months? Where do stakeholders believe development time/resources should be targeted?

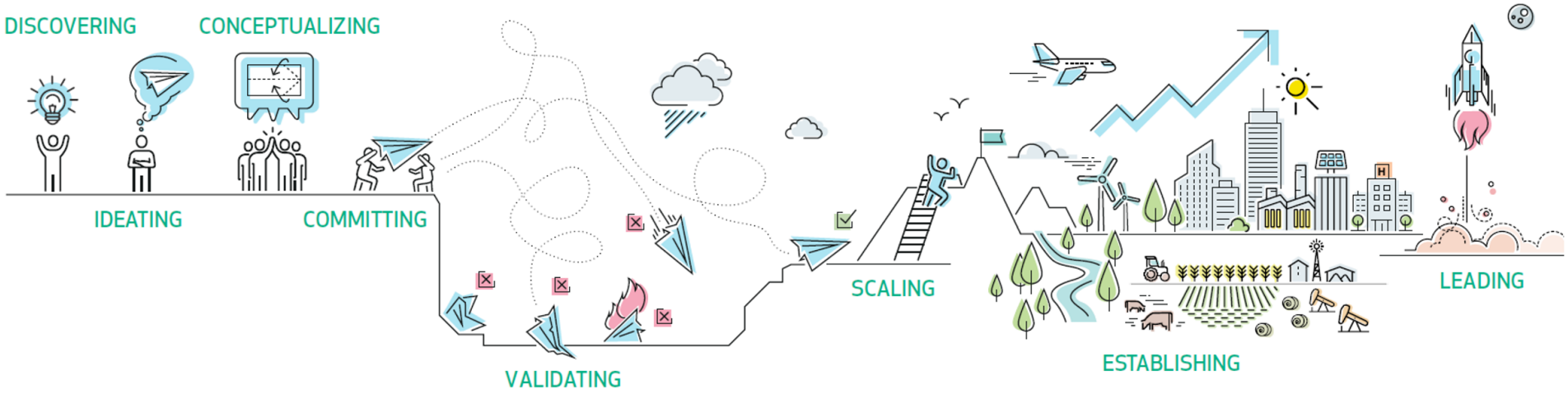
The target client for the focus group discussions in this phase exists on the client journey between Committing and Scaling (detailed below). These phases of development include both startups and scaleup tech companies. For now, we do not include those before the Committing stage.

Focus Group Design

The project team addressed the above questions through a set of consultative focus groups with RINs in the Alberta Innovation Network (AIN). The findings of this consultative process are included in this Phase 2 Wayfinding Stakeholder Prioritization Actionable Insights and aim to (re-)energize and align representatives of ecosystem support organizations on the key wayfinding initiatives.

[1] We use stakeholders here to describe representatives of entrepreneurial support service organizations as well as the users of these supports - the entrepreneur. Phase-3 initiative design will include consultation with entrepreneurs.

Figure-3: Alberta Innovates Client Journey



3. FIND YOUR FUTURE: KEY PRIORITIES

Introduction

A set of focus groups was conducted in March 2023 with the support of the Alberta Innovation Network (AIN) and Regional Innovation Networks (RINs). RINs work with a cross section of ecosystem stakeholders and play an essential role in the successful implementation of wayfinding initiatives. Each RIN supported the coordination of focus group meetings, assisting with the recruitment of attendees. In total, 64 representatives of ecosystem support stakeholders participated in the focus groups across eight RINs. Participation was diverse[v], with RINs helping to convene conversations including RIN managers[vi] and representatives[vii] from: Community Futures; Post-Secondary Institutions (PSI); Specialist Programs; Economic Development; Alberta Innovates, National Research Council (NRC); PrairiesCan; Government of Alberta; Not for Profit enterprises; and experienced business leaders.

Confirming the Current State

Focus group participants were asked "To what extent do the constraints identified in the Wayfinding Phase-1 Report represent the constraints experienced by the wider ecosystem and are there regional differences?" The overriding conclusion was that focus group participants agree with, and experience all the constraints identified in the Phase-1 report, depicted in Figure-4.

Figure-4: Wayfinding Constraints



Participants were also overwhelmingly supportive of Phase-2 of the Wayfinding project.

> **"Excited to see something happening. [Wayfinding] is not just an issue for our RIN, it is every RIN".**

All RINs are taking a proactive stance towards network development, reaching into the local entrepreneurial support ecosystem and building productive working relationships with and across stakeholder organizations. The focus groups revealed that RINs are at different stages of maturity, and this often relates to the turnover and tenure of core RIN core staff and extended steering committees. RINs are investing the majority of their time in generating awareness of Alberta Innovates programs and direct client support with core customer acquisition and channel tactics including: Branding (does our brand resonate with our target audience?); website (what platform do we have an appropriate landing page and site for our RIN?); social media (how do we engage our clients using digital media?); and, events: (what events will engage our audience?)

With the majority of time being invested in the above activities, there currently remains limited time for RINs to invest in wayfinding strategy and tactics:

> "This [Find our Future project] is our Wayfinding work. We are always talking to other managers on how we could improve Wayfinding…we have brainstormed ideas but have not landed on specifics. We are looking at Alberta Innovates to propose a solution, this is not only an issue for our RIN".

Given the above, it is essential that support for initiatives that target the improvement of wayfinding are resourced and supported by Alberta Innovates. These findings agree with the Alberta Technology and Innovation Strategy[viii], by helping entrepreneurs navigate the system and ensuring supports are responsive to entrepreneurial needs.

Table-1: Wayfinding Actionable Insights - Priorities

Priority	Actionable Insight	Importance
1	Navigator Learning Curve	HIGH
2	Communication & Transparency	HIGH
3	Needs Assessment	HIGH
4	Accessible Services	MED
5	Entrepreneurial Data Profile	MED
6	Scale-Up Journey	LOW
7	Marketing	LOW
8	Scale-Up Fellows	LOW

PRIORITY 1

PRIORITY 1: ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTORS
Accelerate the Navigator Learning Curve

Objectives

The general consensus was that accelerating the Navigator[x] Learning Curve was the most important actionable insight to improve the efficacy of the Alberta entrepreneurial ecosystem. Stakeholders reiterated the importance of building strong social capital[xi] between navigators and entrepreneurs. Investing in the navigator development can help the ecosystem build greater resilience by nurturing ecosystem memory[xii] and reducing the reliance on long term ecosystem champions, opening up the navigator role to additional brokers of knowledge, talent and investment[xiii]. Entrepreneurial ecosystems rely on entrepreneurial actors to foster connections. It is noted that the more actors that participate in the ecosystem, the greater value that is generated[xiv]. Overall, there is a desire to stay more current with the resources available and develop the Alberta entrepreneurial ecosystem, not only individual regions.

Initiative Considerations

- **Open to all:** When exploring the options to improve the navigator learning curve, stakeholders agreed that any program should be inclusive, open to private and public sector individuals.

- **Design for occasional navigators:** Stakeholders acknowledged the differing needs of occasional navigators who spend 10-20% of their time on navigation, and habitual[xv]navigators who spend upwards of 80% of their time helping entrepreneurs find the right support at the right time. The conclusion was that there are a greater proportion of occasional navigators than habitual navigators.

  > *"I like [the idea of] Navigator training. I am an occasional navigator. You have change and people turning over. it's important to develop occasional navigators. We have to be careful not to create bottlenecks [in the wayfinding system]".*

- **Develop an ecosystem navigator training program:** Stakeholders agreed that the immediate priority to improve the wayfinding learning curve is to improve the onboarding and orientation process. Stakeholders recommended that a Navigator program should deliver inclusive, accessible and practical learning and development opportunities that foster an engaged network of navigators who help to align entrepreneurs and innovators with the latest education, intelligence and funding support. Potential inspiration could be drawn from other organizations on a similar path[xvi].

- **Build a navigator network:** Stakeholders indicated the opportunity for navigation to become a wider movement to augment existing ecosystem initiatives, helping to generate greater visibility to the expertise that exists across the province, and to strengthen ties. Given the interconnected nature of ecosystems, stakeholders shared the value of being inclusive with service providers and that greater levels of collaboration would help to alleviate any bottlenecks in the Alberta entrepreneurial support ecosystem.

PRIORITY 2

PRIORITY 2: ENTREPRENEURIAL NETWORKS
Enhance Communication and Transparency

Objectives

The second most important actionable insight discussed by stakeholders was to enhance communication and transparency. Labelled "aligning on common language and wayfinding tools" in the Phase-1 report, stakeholders placed a greater importance in Phase-2 on the target customer and the value inherent in clear and transparent communication in shared ambition, agendas and actions all found to increase the information flows between regional actors[xvii]. There is a need to continually champion simplicity in terminology, by appraising current and future programs and resources through an equitable, diverse and inclusive entrepreneur and innovator lens. Greater clarity is to be driven through four levels - the entrepreneur, the enterprise, the evolution of the enterprise, and the ecosystem.

Initiative Considerations

- **Introduce Ideal Entrepreneur Profiles**: Stakeholders proposed the introduction of a set of common Ideal Entrepreneur Profiles (IEPs). These IEPs could inform the development of program launch packages by Alberta Innovates and regional actors, along with strengthening program level value propositions, in particular, for BIPOC and immigrant entrepreneurs.

- **Define common language:** Stakeholders spoke to the importance of aligning on common language. For example, stakeholders shared the use of the client journey (maturity of the enterprise) and technology readiness level (TRL) (maturity of the technology) in the ecosystem, which can cause confusion as to how they align. At a more fundamental level, there is a persisting lack of clarity as to how innovation is defined.

  "Another major issue is producing a solid definition for innovation."

- **Announce project funding awards**: Stakeholders shared the desire for greater clarity on programs that are funded by Alberta Innovates, ideally via a central portal. Without this knowledge, regions are left to take the materials that are available and reorient them for their own entrepreneurial audience. This can be a time-consuming process, and there are not always the resources to deliver effective marketing collateral and campaigns.

- **Explore tools that support communication:** Focus group participants indicated that the level of collaboration with and between RINs has increased in recent years. There is an opportunity to continue to enhance communication to support collaboration by moving beyond traditional marketing assets (e.g., websites):

  ""A RIN intranet. A dashboard with search options, chat options. The entrepreneur's data profile. All tools in one place. Easy connectivity. Video meeting platform integrated. Speeds up entrepreneurs' access to resources. Who's who in the zoo. [It becomes the] day-to-day RIN operation platform".

PRIORITY 3

PRIORITY 3: ENTREPRENEURIAL SUPPORTS

Design a Common Needs Assessment

Objectives

The third most important actionable insight considered by stakeholders was a common needs assessment tool. A common needs assessment tool would support the navigator learning curve (Priority 1), increase the flow of information and transparency [xviii] (Priority 2), champion accessible services (Priority 4) and integrate to the entrepreneurs' data profile (Priority 5). An effective needs assessment would place the focus on the entrepreneur, enabling service providers to identify ambitious high potential entrepreneurs. It would also help entrepreneurs to diagnose gaps to be resolved as they progress along the entrepreneurial journey, and would encourage service providers to align their services to help resolve said gaps.

Initiative Considerations

- **Deepen the client journey:** Stakeholders recommended the client journey be enhanced to both deepen the collective understanding of each venture development phase, identifying key practical entrepreneur deliverables to gain traction and progress along the maturity model.

- **From starting to scaling:** Stakeholders shared how the current client journey is not detailed enough when it comes to scale-up and growth phases of enterprise development. Developing a more granular understanding of these phases would help to foster understanding of the resources and supports available for scaling up.

  > *"[our analysis shows] we do a great job with start-ups, but the scale-up and growth supports are not there. We need to build a continuum of support".*

- **Local vs provincial:** Stakeholders alluded to the fact that without a common needs assessment they have to create their own. While potentially valuable at a local level, a proliferation in approaches to needs assessment can drive confusion among services providers and entrepreneurs across the RIN network.

  > *"We hit a lot of constraints in 3 years including incomplete needs assessment, so we implemented our own approach".*

- **Design with technology in mind:** Stakeholders reported the value of updating the client journey to incorporate a process of needs assessment. Stakeholders also suggested that the needs assessment could inform an entrepreneur's data profile, helping to track an entrepreneur's journey through the support ecosystem, as their needs are met. This could also help to provide greater transparency as to the support provided.

PRIORITY 4

PRIORITY 4: ENTREPRENEURIAL ACCESS

Make Services More Accessible

Objectives

Stakeholders advocated that services should be more accessible. While the lifting of COVID restrictions has led to the return of in-person events, there is further development that can take place to remain open to entrepreneur requests "beyond the 9 to 5". It cannot be assumed that all entrepreneurs are created equal in regard to their ability to access resources in the ecosystem, with many entrepreneurs needing to overcome systemic barriers to participate. For example, internet access and connectivity are linked to start-up rates[xxi]. Increasing the number of onramps (or access points) to the ecosystem will enhance participation rates[xxii].

Initiative Considerations

- **Asynchronous learning:** Stakeholders noted the restrictions placed upon entrepreneurs in accessing support services during normal working hours. Entrepreneurs are busy starting and scaling their enterprises. Building a solution that allow entrepreneurs to access the requisite information asynchronously, outside of normal working hours will be important.

  "Today's attendance shows how important asynchronous learning is for the ecosystem. Programs currently force entrepreneurs to make time in their already busy schedule.

- **One source of truth:** Stakeholders surfaced the multitude of information sources entrepreneurs are currently directed to. The quantity of information is perceived as overwhelming and hard for entrepreneurs to decode. Stakeholders recommended that future initiatives consider how to consolidate and coordinate the sharing of program information, events, and beyond.

- **Adopt technology**: Stakeholders pointed out that the ecosystem should be seen as a leader in the application of the new technologies it espouses to entrepreneurs, applying this thinking to overcome the wayfinding constraints.

  "We work with a lot of tech companies. We have not made use of AI and the potential is really high…It would be valuable to have an integrated platform that you can search on, put in your criteria and an AI based search system provides a fit to your requirements".

PRIORITY 5

PRIORITY 5: ENTREPRENEURIAL DATA

Build an Entrepreneurial Data Profile

Objectives

While the general consensus among stakeholders was that technology cannot serve as a direct replacement for face-to-face contact, they were broadly supportive of the creation of an entrepreneurial data profile. The sense was that this could function much like a Digital ID. If executed well, this tool could provide significant benefits to accelerate the entrepreneurial journey through greater service provider integration across and beyond the province, enhancing trust between providers and building greater community[xxiii]. While stakeholders did acknowledge the positive step taken by Alberta Innovates to open up their Client Information System (CIS) to all RINs, there was a lingering sense that this does not go far enough.

Initiative Considerations

- **Alberta entrepreneurs:** Stakeholders recommended that the entrepreneurial data profile view entrepreneurs as Alberta clients, no matter where they access the ecosystem. This would allow entrepreneurs within regions to access support outside of the region. Stakeholders alluded to the fact that they do not have local solutions to satisfy every entrepreneurial need.

- **Generate visibility of the client journey:** Stakeholders highlighted the value of a client tracking tool that incorporates the entire client journey. Indeed, the ability to tag entrepreneurs against a common progression or maturity model appeared popular, helping to understand the prior support the entrepreneur had received and the journey they had experienced to date:

  > *"It is currently very difficult to measure progress in tech companies. We include progress at a program level - did someone complete a program - we can measure this. This speaks to the common needs assessment. There isn't currently a holding place for the credentials, programs, stages they have gone through".*

- **Build a digital adoption plan:** Stakeholders requested that any new tool that is introduced should have its own adoption plan, with effective integration to daily work and with appropriate support. Stakeholders also spoke to the importance of data privacy, and that concerns would need to be addressed so as not to hamper adoption.

  > *"Whatever system is introduced it has to be one that is used on a regular basis. If we can integrate to one system it becomes a recurring part of the workflow".*

4. CONCLUSION

The Find Your Future project aims to improve the connections between entrepreneurs and ecosystem resources leading to increased entrepreneurial actions and enhanced outcomes. This report outlines a set of priorities for the development of wayfinding solutions. These recommendations will now inform Phase 3 – Implementation.

Moving forward, the Entrepreneurial Investment team at Alberta Innovates will continue to consult with ecosystem stakeholders. The wayfinding action plan will remain a living document as we build and deploy solutions that are fit for purpose and ready to be embraced by the ecosystem.

As we consulted, it was humbling to meet so many passionately engaged stakeholders across the province. While there is lots to accomplish, we enter the implementation phase of the wayfinding project with an extremely positive outlook.



APPENDIX A:
PARTICIPANT ORGANIZATIONS

ADVISORS/ CONSULTANTS	GOVERNMENT	FUNDERS
Biohubx	Government of Alberta	Alberta Innovates
Founder Peer Guidance	Economic Development - various	NRC-IRAP
Innovate Calgary	**PSIs**	PrariesCan
InterGen	University of Calgary - CDL	**Networks**
Collision Spaces / Convenors	Keano College	APEX Alberta
Community Futures - various	University of Lethbridge	Central Alberta Regional Innovation Network (CARIN)
Platform Calgary	Medicine Hat College	Calgary Innovation Coalition (CIC)
Underrepresented Groups	Mount Royal University	East Central Alberta Regional Innovation Network (ECARIN)
Rural Women Entrepreneurs in Technology (RWEIT)	Olds College	Grand Prairie Regional Innovation Network
BIPOC Foundation	Portage College	Edmonton Regional Innovation Network (ERIN)
North West Aboriginal Association	Red Deer College	Regional Innovation Network of Southern Alberta (RINSA)
Catapult Startups, Immigrant Services	Red Deer Polytechnic	Wood Buffalo Regional Innovation Network (WBRIN)
		Alberta South West Regional Alliance

Note: A selection of RINs did invite entrepreneurs, however their identifies have been protected.

ENDNOTES

[i] Alberta Innovates (2022) "Scale-Up and Growth Wayfinding Scan & Analysis", Phase-1 Report. Download here: https://albertainnovates.ca/app/uploads/2021/08/Nascence_Scale-up-and-Growth-Program Wayfinding-Phase-1-Report.pdf

[ii] Phase-1 webinar here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gkPJIrFfhA

[iii] Alberta Innovates Client Journey (see Figure-3), based on the Startup Commons Startup Development Phases.

[iv] The Client Journey aligns with the Startup Development Phase model, and is modified with the permission of Startup Commons. See: startupcommons.org/startup-development-phases.

[v] Appendix A provides a record of those organizations that participated in the focus groups. Presence at the focus groups from ecosystem support organizations that represent BIPOC and underrepresented groups was limited.

[vi] Various titles are used across the RIN network for the core RIN resource, including: program manager; manager; operations specialist; network coordinator; and, coordinator.

[vii] The variation in stakeholder participation varied across RINs. Aside from RIN Managers, representatives from PSIs were most common through advancement, centres/institutes, and special initiatives. Community Futures and Economic Development Agencies were also well represented.

[viii] See "Goal 4: Optimize Alberta's technology and innovation ecosystem" In: Government of Alberta (2022) "Alberta technology and innovation strategy (ATIS): a strategy to strengthen Alberta's technology and innovation sector". Accessed from: https://open.alberta.ca/publications.

[ix] The weighting assigns a score based upon 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th collective order of choice (decided through consensus within each focus group) and also takes account of focus group attendance levels.

[x] 'Navigators' in this context play similar roles to Dealmakers (Feldman & Zoller, 2012) and Ecosystem Builders (Startup Commons, 2023).

[xi] Feldman, M. and Zoller, T. (2012) "Dealmakers in Place: Social Capital Connections in Regional Entrepreneurial Economies", Regional Studies, 46:1, 23-37.

[xii] We define ecosystem memory here as stored information from an ecosystem's history that can be brought to bear on present decisions (Walsh and Ungson, 1991).

[xiii] While representatives of government agencies continue to play an important role in navigation, there is potential to involve a greater proportion of former entrepreneurs and individuals from the private sector including (but not limited to) accountants and lawyers.

[xiv] Government of the Netherlands (2021) "Strategy to Strengthen Research and Innovation Ecosystems", Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy.

[xv] The distinction between occasional and habitual navigators refers to the proportion of time an individual has to dedicate to wayfinding activities, including, understanding program provision, building relationships and connecting entrepreneurs. If we were to assign a proportion, an occasional navigator may spend 5-10% of their time on wayfinding activities, while a habitual navigator would spend upwards of 40%+ time on wayfinding activities. This is important context to consider.

ENDNOTES

[xvi] Startup Commons runs an Ecosystem Development Academy (startupcommons.org) and Kauffmann (EshipSeries) proposes a job description and curriculum.

[xvii] Theodoracki, C., Messeghem, K. and Rice, M.P. (2017) “A Social capital approach to the development of sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems: an explorative study”, Small Business Economics, 51; 153-170.

[xviii] Spigel, B. and Harrison, R. (2018) “Towards a Process Theory of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems”, Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal, 12(1): 151-168.

[xix] See: Raby, S.O., Huq, J-L and Freire-Gibb, C. (2021) “Leading to Scale: The Design, Delivery and Impact of SME Leadership Development Programs”, Growth Compass Report supported by Alberta Innovates.

[xx] “Their positions within social networks, their internal capabilities, their perceived legitimacy as entrepreneurs, and their personal characteristics will affect their ability to draw on the resources available in an ecosystem” In: Spigel, B. and Harrison, R. (2018) “Towards a Process Theory of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems”, Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal, 12(1): 151-168.

[xxi] Audretsch D.B. and Belitski, M (2017) "Entrepreneurial ecosystems in cities: establishing the framework conditions," The Journal of Technology Transfer, Springer, vol. 42(5), pages 1030-1051, October.

[xxii] Kauffmann (2019) “Defining an Ecosystem” In: Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Playbook 3.0.

[xxiii] Theodoraki, C. (2019) “How to Build a Sustainable Ecosystem: The Relevance of Governance and Cooperation”, ICSB Gazette, Issue 37, October 14, 2019.


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