

2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT





Business link is a government funded non-profit that has been helping Alberta small businesses start and thrive since 1996. We provide one-on-one coaching and advice, market research, access to experts, training and education, and specialized support for Indigenous entrepreneurs, immigrant entrepreneurs, and Black youth.

Mission

Business Link helps Alberta small businesses start and thrive.

Vision

Every Alberta small business has access to a hub of resources, knowledge, and connections.



BUSINESSLINK

25th ANNIVERSARY

2021 Marked Business Link's 25th anniversary. Business Link was founded in 1996, as the result of a partnership between Economic Development Edmonton, the Government of Canada, and the Government of Alberta. A lot has changed since 1996. Take a journey with us!

1996



We were founded under the name "The Business Link Business Service Centre" as a one-stop resource centre for small and medium-sized companies.

2001



We updated our logo to give The Business Link a new feel. The logo included 3 connected rings paying tribute to the 3 levels of government involved (municipal, provincial, and federal) and the collaboration between them to create "The Business Link."

Business Link launched the Indigenous Business Services Program.

2003



Business Link entered a partnership with Western Economic Diversification Canada (now Prairies Economic Development Canada) that brought in funding to allow us to expand services.

2016



Business Link celebrated 20 years! As part of this celebration, we unveiled a new logo and featured clients from the previous 20 years.

2011



We moved! Business Link moved our head office in Edmonton from the Beaver House location to our current office space on 100th Street.



Business Link, along with funding from Western Economic Diversification Canada and the Government of Alberta, launched a 3-year Mobile Business Incubator Project in rural Indigenous communities along highway 881.

2018



Business Link launched the Immigrant Entrepreneur Program (now Immigrant Entrepreneur Services) through funding received from the Alberta Government.

2020



Business Link launched COVID-19 recovery programs and supports for Alberta entrepreneurs. We launched the Resilient Recovery Program (RRP), Peerpreneur (still running!), started offering all our advisory services and workshops virtually, and started offering on-demand resources for entrepreneurs.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The years that follow the global pandemic will forever go down in history as “the great comeback.” Every country, industry, and business has had to change something over the past two years. It hasn’t been easy for anyone, and tough challenges are still present in most businesses.

Being a business owner is not for the faint of heart whether you’re dealing with staff changes, new product launches, increasing your online presence, or implementing new technology or processes—and the list can go on and on.

We are here to support Alberta small businesses through thick and thin and help as many of you as we can to weather the storm and come out greater on the other side.

At Business Link over the past year we as well have gone through our fair share of changes. Change to some can be fear-inducing; but to others it can be a breath of fresh air and something that is needed to grow and expand.

The changes that have been brought to our organization over the past year were something we needed to do to grow and expand. The board of directors felt that in order for Business Link to continue serving its clients in the best way possible, we needed to expand and update our program offerings. As well,

we needed to find a leader with experience to lead our organization into its next stage.

In order to continue to grow our organization and provide leadership to the amazing staff of Business Link while fulfilling our clients’ needs in the business community, we hired Paul Cataford to be our new Executive Director.

Paul is someone that comes to the organization as a highly regarded senior executive within the North American business community. He brings 30+ years of experience leading teams of all shapes and sizes. He’s been a leader at private companies, public companies, crown corporations, and non-profits. We are extremely grateful to have Paul as the leader of Business Link and look forward to his fresh insights, infectious energy, and business leadership experience.

In the fall of 2021 we partnered with Digital Main Street to bring an amazing new program to businesses across Alberta. The Digital Economy Program, which received funding support from our partners at the Government of Alberta and Prairies Economic Development Canada, helped hundreds of businesses create digital storefronts and access local digital marketing expertise to help them get their businesses equipped to sell and market online.

Another important program milestone we achieved in 2021 was securing a multi-year agreement with the Government of Canada to help deliver a portion of the Canada Digital Adoption Program. This program alone will allow us to help tens of thousands of businesses over the coming years to become better equipped online.

Here at Business Link we would be nothing without our amazing staff that continues to serve thousands of businesses every year. Thank you for your dedication to making an impact on your local communities. Each and every one of you is a valued member of the team.

To our clients, thank you for choosing Business Link as a trusted advisor and resource to help start, grow, and stabilize your business. We are here to support you and value each and every small business owner we get the pleasure to work with across the province of Alberta.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to give a big thank you to the Government of Canada, specifically, Prairies Economic Development Canada and Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada, and the Ministry of Jobs, Economy, and Innovation at the Government of Alberta, who are all valued partners of Business Link providing us with funding to carry out our various programs and services.

On behalf of the board of Business Link, we look forward to continuing to serve small business owners across the province of Alberta and are super excited to see how we can continue helping you move your business forward in the coming years.

Regards,

*Clinton Senkow
Board Chair, Business Link*

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am humbled and privileged to have been selected by the Business Link Board of Directors to take on the role of Executive Director to lead an organization which has contributed so much to Alberta over the last 25 years. Just last year, Business Link recorded over 38,000 touchpoints and serviced over 250 communities.

The fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, marked the first full 12 months that we have all had to manage during a global pandemic. We are all thankful to our first responders and health care workers. We are also thankful to our small business owners and entrepreneurs, many of whom struggled to keep their businesses open while still providing important services such as restaurants and food production, retail goods, and services such as hair salons, car repairs, and home improvement. Never in the past 25 years have small business owners and entrepreneurs had to deal with and adapt to so much, so suddenly. COVID impacted the way we work and provide services. We have all had to adapt and find new ways to reach out to one another, communicate, and transact.

“All of us benefit from a healthy and vibrant small business and entrepreneurial community – it’s what makes Alberta such a wonderful place to live.”

In dealing with these changes and in working with the Governments of Canada and Alberta we have successfully launched:

- the Digital Economy Program, aimed at providing digital transformation support to business owners
- the Canada Digital Adoption Program (CDAP) Grow Your Business Online Grant, which provides \$2,400 to businesses in Alberta that want to grow their eCommerce capabilities and online presence with new digital tools

Use of our downloadable guides, educational videos, and online business plan builder have increased through the pandemic, allowing our clients to access the information and help they need on-demand. We also expanded our specialized services team, already serving Indigenous, immigrant and new Canadian entrepreneurs, to include Black youth through the ANZA program.

For the rest of 2022 and the first three months of 2023, we will continue to evaluate new services and resources and ways to make our current offerings more effective and relevant. The need for Business Link has never been greater and our mission continues to help small business start, thrive, and become more resilient.

All of us benefit from a healthy and vibrant small business and entrepreneurial community – it’s what makes Alberta such a wonderful place to live.

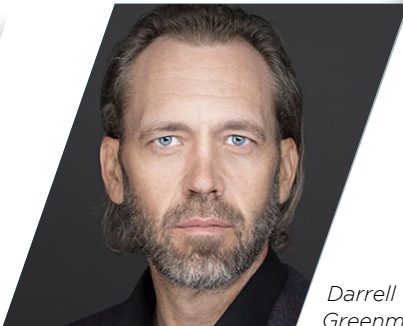
On behalf of our board, our employees, and the community we serve, we would like to thank our funders - the Government of Canada, Prairies Economic Development Canada, and the Government of Alberta, Jobs, Economy, and Innovation, for their support. We would also like to thank our board members who continue to step up when the organization most needs it. And finally, we would like to thank our team which continues to amaze everyone with their commitment, energy, and passion for Alberta’s small business owners and entrepreneurs.

*Paul Cataford,
Executive Director, Business Link*
*Paul joined Business Link as the
Executive Director in April 2022*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



*Clinton Senkow,
Board Chair*



*Darrell
Greenman*



*Rolando
Inzunza*



Marie Soprovich



Kim Orlesky



*Michael
Oshry*



*Bev Therrien
Government Representative
and Board Observer*

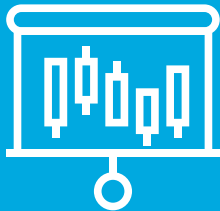


*Alisa Laliberte
Government Representative
and Board Observer*



Drew Tetz

HOW WE SUPPORTED ALBERTA SMALL BUSINESS



OVERALL HIGHLIGHTS

In the 2021-22 fiscal year we supported nearly **38,000** aspiring and established Alberta entrepreneurs

Unique clients served through advisory services: **4,080**

- **7,218** inquiries responded to
- Client Satisfaction: **3.9/4**

Website visitors: **103,644**

Market Research Support: **465** market research inquiries fulfilled with **425** unique clients

17,800+ subscribers on our email marketing list



PROGRAMS

Peerpreneur: 10 cohorts with **88** total participants

- Overall satisfaction **3.6/4**

Export Readiness Program:

- **11** new clients into the program
- **75** total hours of coaching

Digital Economy Program:

- 968 businesses served through Digital Service Squads across Alberta
- 754 businesses served through ShopHERE
- 1,329 attendees for Level Up Webinar Series
- We have 19 program delivery partners operating Digital Service Squads that cover every part of the province



ON-DEMAND RESOURCES AND TOOLS

Resource Downloads: **8,617**

Video Views: **15,974**

Interactive Business Plan Builder Accounts: **1,027**

Business Plans Started: **974**

Support Local AB Business Directory Listings: **1,326**

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Business Link Education and Training

- 4 virtual events with **238** attendees
- 45 Webinars with more than **3,633** attendees
- 9 Workshops with **345** participants



ORGANIZATIONS WE WORKED WITH

Alberta Women Entrepreneurs
Anderson Self-Employment Program
ATB Entrepreneur Centre
Calgary Public Library
Central Alberta Economic Partnership
Community Futures

Digital Main Street
Microbusiness Self-Employment Program
MNP Self-Employment Program
Momentum
NAIT
Pixel Blue College

SPECIALIZED SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS



INDIGENOUS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Unique clients served through advisory services: **370**

Businesses created, maintained or expanded: **67**

The Indigenous Made Campaign was officially launched in 2021. The initiative helps Indigenous businesses showcase their products and services to the general public, with the goal of increasing awareness. We're proud to support incredible Indigenous entrepreneurs across Alberta and celebrate the cultures and various contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada.

Business Link strives toward diversity and inclusion in every aspect of the organization. Our Specialized Services team is made up of Indigenous Business Development Services, Immigrant Entrepreneur Services, and the ANZA program servicing at-risk Black youth.

IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEUR SERVICES

Unique clients served through advisory services: **421**

Number of participants in education and training initiatives: **4,095**

ANZA

ANZA Entrepreneurship Ecosystem is a collaborative model between the African Canadian Civic Engagement Council (ACCEC), Edmonton Police Service (EPS), Startup Edmonton, Business Link, TD Canada Trust, and other stakeholders with shared values to spark a new beginning for Alberta's Black youth interested in business.

The first cohort of ANZA Program started in October 2021, running to April 2022 with 6 participants completing the program.

WHAT OUR CLIENTS HAVE TO SAY

“

I would use Business Link again, as the advice was great and I was also provided some very good resources which will help as we move into our new venture. Thank you.

”

CLIENT SUCCESS STORIES

KEMET ADVANCED MANUFACTURING LTD

**Business owner:
Moréniké Eniolá Oláòsebìkan**

“

Very helpful, got my information that I have been struggling to find for WEEKS, and helped me solve a problem that I have talked to at least a dozen different people from about as many organizations, and no one could give me a straight answer, but they did, and VERY quickly! very VERY satisfied! Awesome work!

”



Moréniké Eniolá Oláòsebìkan is the CEO of Kemet Advanced Manufacturing Ltd, whose long-term goal is to provide facilities to African countries that are experiencing extensive medication insecurity and medication shortages. Kemet is currently focusing on a pilot facility in Edmonton. This pilot is a sandbox for the R&D of modular manufacturing facilities and processes alongside a proprietary app that allows them to understand and digitize medication supply chains.



Melanie and Chesare Francine are Principal Owners of Beachi Neechi, a family-orientated beach volleyball facility with multi-business avenues. The facility Yékaw 4b° (Sand) Dome and a not-for-profit organization will support programming for various beach recreational sports to ensure accessibility to all. Beachi Neechi strives to increase Indigenous representation in beach volleyball and create a safe place for all treaty people to coexist harmoniously in the sport.

BEACHI NEECHI

Business owners:
Melanie and Chesare Francine

THE CORNER CO-WORKING AND CO- WAREHOUSING

Business owner: Mark Eaton



The Corner Coworking offers shared & private office space as well as warehouse space, for new and growing local businesses in Cochrane, AB. They serve startups and individuals, established companies and teams looking to work in a professional environment around other motivated businesses and business owners.

Mark originally hails from Australia, but Cochrane has been home for more than 10 years. The Corner Coworking, like many businesses, had to wade through significant challenges throughout COVID. Mark's advice: "Diversify, don't just tweak what you do. You need it to bring in a whole new type of customer, plus it helps to protect your revenue and cash flow."



Violets is owned by two friends in Edmonton, Alberta. The shop is a curated selection of homewares and giftware with a strong design focus. Violets focuses on supporting like-minded people and businesses, curating a diverse vendor list by striving to uplift and support underrepresented groups in their craft while using sustainability practices wherever possible. Simply put, they carry really cool stuff.

Before they even met, both Danielle and Robyn dreamed of opening their own shop. “We left our part-time jobs at the same time and knew we wanted to keep working together. It was a natural transition.”

“We came to Business Link after seeing a strategist at the ATB Entrepreneur Centre. Amy, who helped us at the time, let us know that Business Link was a great resource for obtaining financial and market information on other similar businesses, so we were really eager to have access to that. It helped us understand our finances and further build and guide our business plan.”

VIOLETS

**Business owners:
Danielle Ferchoff and
Robyn Smart**

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION as of March 31, 2022

	2022	2021
ASSETS		
Current assets	\$ 5,292,315	\$ 3,456,359
Tangible capital assets	\$ 20,385	\$ 63,986
	\$ 5,312,700	\$ 3,520,345
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities	\$ 5,103,135	\$ 3,041,859
Net assets	\$ 209,565	\$ 478,486
	\$ 5,312,700	\$ 3,520,345
	\$ 2,022	\$ 2,021
REVENUE		
Other grants	\$ 7,294,368	\$ 851,495
Federal government core funding	\$ 901,669	\$ 924,669
Provincial government core funding	\$ 850,000	\$ 850,000
Fees for services and materials	\$ 112,989	\$ 51,197
Sponsorships	\$ 5,238	\$ 15,115
Other revenue	\$ 4,613	\$ 973
	\$ 9,168,877	\$ 2,693,449



	2022	2021
EXPENSES		
Grants paid out - Digital Economy Program	\$ 3,765,607	\$ -
Contracted services	\$ 2,946,859	\$ 113,977
Salaries and benefits	\$ 2,138,898	\$ 1,942,273
Rent	\$ 136,032	\$ 139,683
Advertising and promotion	\$ 91,313	\$ 199,979
Memberships	\$ 62,571	\$ 58,568
Amortization	\$ 50,250	\$ 32,611
Office	\$ 45,328	\$ 11,024
Training	\$ 42,893	\$ 26,969
Professional fees	\$ 42,393	\$ 45,488
Telephone and internet	\$ 38,123	\$ 28,607
Equipment maintenance	\$ 32,611	\$ 58,316
Website and database support services	\$ 24,808	\$ 103,707
Insurance	\$ 7,978	\$ 6,560
Client outreach	\$ 4,305	\$ 3,516
Travel	\$ 3,824	\$ 11,737
Bank charges and interest	\$ 3,705	\$ 1,898
Bad debts	\$ 300	\$ -
	\$ 9,437,798	\$ 2,784,913
Income (Loss) from operations	\$ (268,921)	\$ (91,464)
Gain on disposal of tangible capital assets	\$ -	\$ (3,550)
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES	\$ (268,921)	\$ (87,914)

Excerpted from the audited financial statements available on our website at:
businesslink.ca/2021-2022-business-link-financial-statements

