



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**BUSINESS LINK LAUNCHES PILOT MENTOR PROGRAM FOR ASPIRING AND ESTABLISHED SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS IN ALBERTA**

*New Initiative to Facilitate Knowledge Exchange Between Grassroots Small Businesses and Seasoned Entrepreneurs*

**CALGARY** (January 15, 2024) – Business Link, a provincial support organization for entrepreneurs, has officially launched its pilot Mentor Program. This free mentorship initiative is designed to support grassroots small businesses, including retailers, mom-and-pop shops, consultants, and sole proprietors in Alberta. It's especially well-suited for Indigenous and newcomer entrepreneurs in Alberta, providing a welcoming space for diverse business ideas and cultures. The program connects aspiring business owners with experienced entrepreneurs, facilitating a dynamic and non-judgmental exchange of expertise and insights.

Uniquely, this program operates like "speed dating for entrepreneurs," offering flexible mentor-mentee matching. This process ensures that each mentee is paired with a mentor whose expertise and experience align closely with the mentee's business needs and goals. There is also the option to switch mentors if desired, ensuring the most beneficial and comfortable partnership for both parties.

The program kicks off with an initial 30-minute intake meeting, allowing mentors and mentees to establish their objectives and discuss potential challenges. This is followed by a focused 90-minute session, aimed at developing strategies to tackle these challenges and set the path for future success. From there mentees and mentors have three distinct paths to choose from: formalizing their relationship through regular meetings, opting for a more flexible approach with informal interactions, or continuing to access Business Link's resources and events if immediate challenges are resolved.

"Starting a business can be overwhelming. Our Mentor Program ensures that budding entrepreneurs don't have to navigate this path alone," says executive director, Paul Cataford. "Our goal is to create a supportive environment where new business owners can develop and grow with the guidance of those who have experience and valuable advice."

To be eligible for this pilot program, businesses must be Alberta-based and in operation for less than a year or in the initial stages of developing a business plan. Business Link is also calling on experienced entrepreneurs to join as mentors. This role offers a chance for established business owners to share their knowledge, guide new entrepreneurs, and to help strengthen Alberta's small business community.

In addition to the mentorship sessions, Business Link provides an array of resource materials and educational content to enhance the experience for both mentors and mentees. The program also lays a

foundation for ongoing professional relationships, encouraging participants to maintain their connections beyond the program's duration.

As a pilot initiative, the Business Link Mentor Program is dedicated to testing and refining effective support strategies for new entrepreneurs. This approach ensures that the program is responsive to the evolving needs of Alberta's small business community.

For more information on the Mentor Program or to register, please visit <https://businesslink.ca/programs/mentor-program/>.

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### **About Business Link**

Business Link, a non-profit organization established in 1996, is dedicated to nurturing the growth and success of Alberta's small businesses. As a cornerstone in the entrepreneurial community, Business Link offers comprehensive support services to early-stage and small business entrepreneurs including personalized coaching, market research, educational programs, online resources, networking opportunities, and targeted referrals. Notably, Business Link's commitment extends to tailored assistance for Indigenous and immigrant entrepreneurs. In recent years, the organization has broadened services to encompass digital support programs, catering to the evolving needs of modern businesses.

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