

# Supporting Aboriginal Entrepreneurship in Alberta



By Tracey Campbell  
Editor of Career Momentum

Career practitioners have a range of federal, provincial and regional programs and resources to assist Aboriginal individuals with starting and growing business in Alberta. In June 2009, Alberta Indigenous Relations (formerly Aboriginal Relations) launched a [Toolkit of Economic Development Resources](#) for Aboriginal people. The toolkit was divided into three sections:

- **Community Economic Development** – contains information and resources to help understand the community economic development process and the critical steps for Aboriginal communities.
- **Business Development** – contains resources to assist in startup of new businesses and growth of existing businesses.
- **Funding Sources** – contains information on sources of funding available to Aboriginal communities and businesses to support business and economic development initiatives.

While most of you would agree that this toolkit needs to be updated it does contain a wealth of information and resources that will assist you and your clients.

## Alberta Programs:

The *Métis Entrepreneurial Program*, offered by [Rupertsland Institute](#) has been designed to provide self-employment training for those starting a new business or expanding an existing business. The financial contribution may include:

- Tuition for self-employment training (usually 16 weeks)
- Mentoring and support while developing a business plan
- Income support for up to 26 weeks while in training and implementing a business plan

Rupertsland Institute has a partnership with Apeetogosan to provide individuals with access to expert support and information about business start-up and business expansion financing.

The *Aboriginal Business Investment Fund* (ABIF) was established to provide funding to capitalize on community-owned business development opportunities. The grants offer direct investment into eligible Aboriginal community-owned businesses. ABIF is intended for capital projects that are close to starting operations or breaking ground for building projects within the funding year. The projects must demonstrate long-term impacts as follows:

- increase the number of Aboriginal-owned businesses;
- increase the number of employment opportunities for Aboriginal people;
- create local revenue streams for Aboriginal communities, and
- strengthen the economies of Aboriginal communities.

An Aboriginal community can only submit one application and business plan for consideration in any given funding year. A minimum of \$150,000 and a maximum of \$750,000 (maximum of \$750,000 in each fiscal year up to two years) to support a particular economic development project is allocated on a competitive basis. The maximum level of funding to a recipient from all sources (including federal, provincial/territorial, and/or municipal) for any one initiative or project is 100 percent of eligible costs.

For complete details and submission requirements please see the [ABIF Application Guidelines](#).

The *Aboriginal Economic Partnerships Program* (AEPP) supports Aboriginal communities, businesses and organizations to start or expand business initiatives that will promote and foster economic development and contribute to improved social and economic outcomes for Indigenous peoples. The program supports projects that:

- Increase capacity of Aboriginal communities to identify and plan for economic opportunities.
- Facilitate the use of local resources for long-term growth.
- Support a stable business environment that encourages the attraction of investment in Aboriginal economic projects.
- Support communities striving to strengthen local participation in small business opportunities and entrepreneurship.

- Provide supports to entrepreneurs and businesses through the varying stages of business development.
- Result in the development of new information, tools and resources that enable, enhance and support economic opportunities.

AEPP has three program streams:

- **Economic and Governance Capacity**  
Grant funding to support feasibility studies, business plans, market analysis, governance frameworks and other related economic development project soft costs.
- **Business and Entrepreneurial Development**  
In partnership with Aboriginal Capital Corporations, the program supports business and entrepreneurial development services to Aboriginal entrepreneurs. For information about these services, please contact [AR.EconomicDevelopment@gov.ab.ca](mailto:AR.EconomicDevelopment@gov.ab.ca).
- **Research and Strategic Initiatives**  
The program supports Aboriginal community-owned business and other organizations to help build economic development-focused relationships and identify opportunities and solutions to economic development challenges.

Eligibility:

- Tribal Councils, First Nations, Metis Settlements, Metis and First Nations companies and organizations or non-government organizations that directly promote the economic development and capacity building of Aboriginal Albertans.
- Applications will be considered from a non-Aboriginal partner where the applicant demonstrates support for the project from the Aboriginal community.
- All applicants must be located or have established operations in Alberta and be in compliance with the terms and conditions of any previous Aboriginal Relations funding.
- Applications submissions will be collected in the Spring of 2016.

## Federal Program Support:

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) is committed to providing greater opportunities for Aboriginal entrepreneurs and to helping Aboriginal business owners to succeed in their business goals.

The **Aboriginal Business & Entrepreneurship Development (ABED)**, AANDC, with its program delivery partners the **Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs)**, provides funding to Aboriginal entrepreneurs, communities and organizations to increase the number of viable businesses in Canada owned and controlled by Aboriginal people. The national **Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business** is a Government of Canada initiative that helps Aboriginal businesses do more contracting with all federal government departments and agencies along with assisting Aboriginal businesses to gain access to the overall procurement process.

ABED works with Aboriginal entrepreneurs and its partners to provide a range of services and supports that promote the growth of a strong Aboriginal business sector in Canada. Support will vary depending upon the needs of the client, the availability and sources of funding, the eligibility of costs, the economic benefits and the project viability. ABED can help Aboriginal entrepreneurs, communities and organizations to achieve their business goals.

Many Aboriginal entrepreneurs and communities can qualify for business development support. Depending on the nature of the project, funding to assist with a wide range of activities may be available, including:

- Business planning;
- Establishment (capital) costs;
- Business acquisitions;
- Business expansions;
- Marketing initiatives that are local, domestic or export oriented;
- New product or process development;
- Adding technology to improve operations and competitiveness;
- Operating costs in association with capital costs;
- Financial services, business support, business-related training and mentoring services.

Through the Program Delivery Partners (PDP) initiative, AANDC partners with Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs) to deliver funding for business development. AFIs are located in all regions of the country and are well-positioned to meet the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal entrepreneurs and communities at the local level. AFIs have responsibility for the management, distribution and administration of an equity fund and have the authority to approve funding for activities up to a maximum of \$99,999 for Aboriginal individuals and incorporated businesses and up to \$250,000 for community owned businesses.

Albertans can access Apeetogosan (Metis) Development Inc. (AMDI)

Telephone: (780) 452-7951 Toll-free: 1 800-252-7963

Email: [office@apeetogosan.ab.ca](mailto:office@apeetogosan.ab.ca)

Web: [Apeetogosan \(Metis\) Development Inc. \(AMDI\)](http://Apeetogosan (Metis) Development Inc. (AMDI))

## Spotlight on Aboriginal Women's Programs:

Aboriginal women compose 37% of the total Aboriginal Canadians participating in self-employment ventures and their participation growth is increasing at an impressive rate, 2.5 times higher than that of non-Aboriginal women. Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) offers a fantastic program for Aboriginal women. The *NextStep to Success Business Plan Learning Series* is designed to provide guidance, expertise and peer mentoring to Aboriginal women at an early start-up phase of business who are ready to develop a comprehensive business plan that could be used for financing purposes. The unique circle delivery format has been developed specifically to meet the needs of Aboriginal women. Final business plans can be submitted for review and feedback. AWE works in partnership with local band and economic development agencies to deliver the training series. Please contact the organization at [nextstep@awebusiness.com](mailto:nextstep@awebusiness.com) to inquire about hosting the series in your community.

The [Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women](#) (IAAW) is also dedicated to assisting Aboriginal women achieve their social and economic goals. They have a wide variety of programming to assist women with transitioning from unemployment to employment. Some of the unique program supports include: assisting women who have exited prison; providing an asset building and financial literacy group; and offering a mentorship program to build individual, family and community capacity.

While many Albertans prefer to utilize specialized programs, services and tools others are content with using the mainstream resources like the [Business Link](#). After 15 years of working with clients I have found that what is truly important is getting to know your client's needs and then choosing tools, resources and programs that will work best for that client. Choosing resources and programs are dependent on you knowing what is out there and being able to connect your client to the most appropriate intervention. Here is to making those matches!