



Start Something Small

Working towards a
small business strategy for Alberta



ENGAGEMENT
SESSIONS
Small Business Strategy

Table of Contents

- 2 Introduction
- 3 What the Strategy Would Do
- 4 Direction One and Two
- 5 Direction Three
- 6 Direction Four
- 7 Moving Ahead

Small Businesses Mean Big Business

Small businesses are a vital part of Alberta's economy. They comprise 95 percent of all businesses in the province, account for over a third of private sector employment and contribute over 27 percent to Alberta's GDP.

While Alberta has been home to the highest number of small business start-ups over the past 10 years, small business owners have identified ways we can do even better. At the same time, the global marketplace is increasingly competitive, and we need to ensure Alberta's economy is creative, innovative, productive and growing.

To this end, the Government of Alberta has engaged people from various walks of business life to help develop a small business strategy for Alberta.

Have Your Say

The following document sets out the key directions and components of a possible small business strategy. These have been developed based on small business input to the Red Tape Reduction Task Force, which engaged members of the business community in discussions about how to improve our province's regulatory environment for small businesses. The document has also been informed by targeted engagements, surveys and emerging initiatives for entrepreneurship.

The intent is for this strategy to make a meaningful difference for small businesses and entrepreneurs. Your views are important to help shape the direction the Government of Alberta will take to support small business within the province.

We invite you to have your say by attending one of eight community engagement sessions, or by providing input online at: shape.alberta.ca

What the Strategy Would Do

Vision

The proposed vision of Alberta's Small Business Strategy is straightforward:

Alberta is the best place to start and scale up a business.

The vision reflects a desire to reach higher and enhance the ability of small businesses to contribute to economic expansion, diversification and employment. We not only want more businesses to take root in the province. We also want them to grow here.

We can make Alberta the best place to start and scale up a business by fostering a climate that nurtures and grows small business.

Strategic Directions

We can make Alberta the best place to start and scale up a business by fostering a climate that nurtures and grows small business. . Alberta needs to offer an environment that works for each and every small business owner and entrepreneur, whatever their aspirations. So far, we have heard that four big strategic directions would be an excellent start:

- 1. Reshape government-funded programs and services by focusing on the needs of the clients to achieve better results.**
- 2. Make it easier for small businesses to better understand and comply with regulatory requirements;**
- 3. Ensure small business has a strong voice into government to enhance the business climate and inform policy direction; and**
- 4. Enhance and accelerate entrepreneurship.**

Your input will determine whether these directions or others form the core of the small business strategy.

Direction One

Reshape government-funded programs and services by focusing on the needs of the clients to achieve better results.

The Government of Alberta funds an array of business support programs and services. These are delivered by various business service providers (which can be government ministries, public sector bodies or external organizations, often nonprofits). However, through engagement and surveys of businesses and service providers, it is clear that there is much room to improve responsiveness to business across the system. Government-funded business supports are not operating as an effective system. Consequently, a business person can find themselves going from office to office in an attempt to locate the assistance they seek, often repeating their story.

Action: *Shift government-funded programs and services for small business, in part by supporting the cultural change that is emerging from leaders in the system, so that service providers are consistently collaborative, relevant, easy to locate and focused on clients and results.*

Action: *Develop a streamlined website for government-funded small business and innovation programs and services to better connect small businesses and needed talent and services.*

Direction Two

Make it easier for small businesses to understand and comply with regulatory requirements.

Time spent sifting through regulatory information is costing people time and money. Recently, government announced a new website that makes it easier for businesses to provide input on new regulations under development. Building on this foundation, small businesses should be able to easily understand which regulatory requirements apply to them. Regulatory requirements should make sense and minimize compliance costs for business, consistent with the government's "right rules, not more rules" approach to regulation.

Action: *Clarify mandatory regulatory requirements for small businesses, in part by making relevant information and staff more accessible.*

Action: *Identify and address specific opportunities to reduce regulatory red tape in Alberta.*

Action: *Engage other governments and regulation-making bodies to encourage more streamlined, consistent and effective regulations that meet the needs of small business.*

Direction Three

Ensure small business has a strong voice into government to enhance the business climate and inform policy direction.

To maintain a climate that enables businesses to succeed, grow and remain competitive, the Alberta government needs to be attuned to business' needs.

Small businesses can be uniquely impacted by government policies due to their size and nature of work. As well, small business owners can also speak directly about which policies, programs and services they value most. As such, small business needs a strong, meaningful voice into government.

Action: *Share this “Start Something Small” engagement primer with small business owners to invite comment on draft directions and shape the small business strategy.*

Action: *Define small business preferences for the “what and how” of future engagement on issues that are important to them and put a plan in place, such as engaging with small business owners on emerging policy issues through periodic Ministerial roundtables.*

Action: *Connect with and respond to the Government of Alberta’s Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise (SME) International Export Advisory Council.*

Direction Four

Enhance and accelerate entrepreneurship.

Although this engagement process is more focused on the specific needs of small business, Alberta is looking ahead to opportunities to accelerate entrepreneurship in the province.

All business owners are, to some degree, entrepreneurs and risk-takers. However, entrepreneurship can be surprising. Great successes can come out of unexpected places.

Alberta is committed to provide a climate that is attractive to entrepreneurs and empowers them to reach their goals. Further work is needed to determine how to best provide that climate, but it will undoubtedly require new partnerships with the private sector and a more comprehensive range of indicators to better assess and inform Alberta's business climate.

Action: *Nurture a climate that inspires new entrepreneurs and accelerates new ventures.*

Action: *Align government resources to better empower entrepreneurs and create a more entrepreneurial Alberta.*

Action: *Develop an enhanced small business and entrepreneurship index for Alberta to strengthen the ability to assess the province's climate for entrepreneurship and inform future direction.*

Moving Ahead

Building on Alberta's strong foundation of competitive taxes, an educated workforce and a commitment to free market principles, we can make our province the best place to start and scale up a business.

In the course of developing the foundation for this engagement, people from across the business landscape have started to think differently. Organizations are already engaged in dialogue about how they can collaborate to better support small businesses and entrepreneurs. Alberta government ministries are coming together to fundamentally change the way they deliver services and respond to small business needs.

With your perspective, we can develop and implement a small business strategy to ensure Alberta will be an even greater place to do business, as a leader and magnet for entrepreneurial activity.

We invite you to shape these proposed directions and actions by participating in one of the engagement sessions in eight communities or on-line at shape.alberta.ca

Alberta government ministries are coming together to fundamentally change the way they deliver services and respond to small business needs.

