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The YEG Innovation Compass is not a new action plan for the innovation ecosystem. Nor is it a list of demands from this city’s entrepreneurs. It is - as its name suggests - a tool to plan and then guide a journey once a direction has been set. It is a reference point to ensure that a path is maintained, but also inform adjustments when they need to be made. It is a reflective reference for decision-making.

Viewed at face value, this report provides an understanding of how this community’s entrepreneurs feel and think about the state of Edmonton’s innovation ecosystem and describes how they believe it should move forward. But look closely at their recommendations and directions. You will see that they reflect the experiences of people taking risks and working to build an innovation ecosystem in a growing city. That they reflect the contradictions in priorities that come from a community that is diverse not only in who they are, but in what they do. That they reflect the energy generated by years of heated debates, fruitful collaborations, civil disagreements, and creative planning. That they reflect the wisdom that comes through the joys of breakthroughs, the frustrations of failure, the disappointment of dashed expectations, and the unique intensity of seeing something once only imagined manifest into reality. You will see how important the perceptions and opinions of this community are to planning a bold new epoch for Edmonton’s innovation ecosystem.

Earlier, you read that this report is not a list of demands. That is not entirely true. This community has made a single demand quite clear: they want to see change in this ecosystem. In the way it supports innovation, in the responsibilities of its community, in the way it delivers on its promises, in what it seeks to achieve, in how it represents itself and even in how it defines itself.

With YEG Innovation Compass concluded, the discussion around what to change to and how to deliver it begins. This ecosystem has myriad studies, indicators, committees, organizations, market intelligence and dedicated contributors and supporters that will come together to inform that change. The reflections of YEG Innovation Compass provides the final vital component to informing and empowering that dialogue - the voice of the people at the very centre of the ecosystem.
CONTEXT

As with many public engagement exercises, YEG Innovation Compass was commissioned to respond to a group of stakeholders making it known that they wanted to be heard. Following organized objections within the entrepreneurial community over the outcomes of a previous public engagement exercise with EEDC, it was determined that deeper consultation with the members of the community was required in order to appropriately determine how to move Edmonton’s tech-enabled innovation ecosystem forward.

Evolution of Project Scope

The initial assignment in response to the need for additional consultation was to:

“…develop an entrepreneur-centric process designed to explore how to better foster the growth and development of the Edmonton tech-innovation sector.”

Under that objective, a series of pilot engagements were held in late December 2018 and reported on in early 2019.

Based on the findings of those pilot engagements, a broader and longer process was commissioned - the YEG Innovation Compass. The scope of this consultation process was slightly different from the original:

“Engage with Edmonton’s tech-enabled innovation community to develop a series of recommendations and directions around how to support and grow Edmonton’s innovation ecosystem.”

This would be a much broader exercise than the pilot engagements, lasting several months and using a variety of different feedback mechanisms. It would endeavour to listen to passionate thought leaders in the community and put more of the consultation process directly in their hands.

The outcomes of this project would provide direct feedback from the entrepreneurial community concerning what they believed needed to change in Edmonton’s innovation ecosystem and how to support its evolution.
METHODOLOGY

While the purpose of this report is to reflect the perspectives and opinions of the entrepreneurs in the ecosystem, it is important to understand where that input came from and how it was collected.

UNDERLYING DESIGN FACTORS

Entrepreneurs were clear they wanted to be heard in a comprehensive and transparent way that allowed them to reflect their experiences and ideas. They were clear that as the people grinding it out in the ecosystem every day, they were uniquely suited to contribute to its necessary direction. As such, the process was designed with the following key characteristics in mind:

Reflective – The process needed to act as a mirror to community feedback as much as possible. Interpretation could not just be left to the end of the process – participants needed multiple opportunities throughout the process to see their input reflected and to react to it.

Accessible – This audience, largely active entrepreneurs, are busy running businesses. Time is an important commodity to them and the processes needed to respect that. This engagement also needed to have not only as many access and engagement points as possible, but it needed to allow participants to provide as much or as little detail as they wished in the time they had available.

Iterative – To keep this busy audience engaged, input would need to be collected in stages, and provide new content to consider and react to. Over time, the processes needed to show consistent progress to the feedback as it drove toward the community’s eventual recommendations and directions.

Community-Focused – This process would need to do more than consult with the community – it would need to collaborate with it. Throughout the process, it needed to seek their advice on what questions to ask at the different stages. It would need to ask the community to actively extend their networks and make connections with people who might not otherwise be heard in a traditional process. It would need to be agile enough in the way it engaged participants to adapt to the advice of the community as it moved forward.
THIRD PARTY INDEPENDENCE

One of the conditions of this process set by the community was that the engagement consultant have no major interests or attachments within the innovation ecosystem and that they act as a neutral third party throughout the process.

Following the pilot engagement phase, the Entrepreneur Engagement Volunteer Committee and Innovate Edmonton determined that the engagement consultant would have complete independence over the content and direction of the process. This would be an important element in establishing and maintaining the credibility of the process. As such, Innovate Edmonton and EEDC would not review any of the outcomes or direct any feedback component in the process, leaving it entirely to the community.

It is worth noting that while the consultant had complete independence over the content and direction of the consultative process, they maintained regular contact with Innovate Edmonton staff for assistance with logistical elements, and to inform them of events, dates, and significant process changes. Innovate Edmonton also maintained control over administrative management and budgeting.
### PROCESS IN PRACTICE

The consultation pathway began with the pilot engagements, followed by successive sprints engaging the community in a series of iterative discussions collecting input and driving toward a set of recommendations and directions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE</th>
<th>ENGAGEMENT TOPIC</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Engagement</td>
<td>Early Focus Areas</td>
<td>Pilot Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>December 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEG Innovation Compass</td>
<td>Focus Area Priorities</td>
<td>Sprint 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>February 25 - March 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early Actions &amp; Imagined Future States</td>
<td>Sprint 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>March 11 - March 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refining Actions</td>
<td>Sprint 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>March 25 - April 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initial Recommendations &amp; Directions</td>
<td>Sprint 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>April 8 - April 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final Recommendations &amp; Directions</td>
<td>Sprint 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>April 17 - May 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prioritization of Recommendations &amp; Directions</td>
<td>May 7-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next Steps</td>
<td>Final Report</td>
<td>June 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Action Planning</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pilot
The pilot engagement was an early set of discussions with a variety of participants within the ecosystem. Run independently by the engagement consultant without Innovate Edmonton or EEDC staff present at the sessions, these focused on what works in the ecosystem and what needed to change.

Engagement types for the pilot engagement included:

- **Facilitated Group Discussions** – The most traditional method of engagement in any part of the process, these four discussions brought together people from across the ecosystem, including service providers, consulting firms and entrepreneurs. These sessions were relatively small, but produced an early set of focus areas that would provide a jumping-off point for YEG Innovation Compass.

- **Website Survey** – Intended to be a companion to the group discussions or an access point for anyone who could not make one of the sessions, the website in the pilot engagements received very few visitors. Those who did make submissions were also attendees at the in-person sessions.

YEG Innovation Compass
Evolving out of the pilot engagements, YEG Innovation Compass was designed to engage the community over five iterative sprints, taking place over 2-3 weeks each. Each sprint cycle is the same:

1. Sprint begins with a summary for participants to review and questions to react to based on the summary content.

2. Through the available engagement methods (listed on page 9), participants provide feedback that shapes the summary for the current sprint and defines the question for the next sprint.

3. The next sprint immediately begins with a new summary and corresponding questions.

Each successive sprint cycle provides more refined feedback until a final prioritization exercise concludes the consultation process.
Engagement methods employed during YEG Innovation Compass were:

- **InnovationCompass.ca** – The website was the main engagement mechanism. It included an outline of the process, necessary background information and provided a central resource to archive sprint summaries. Most participants in the process used the site to provide input at some point, with use on the site growing over the length of the engagement.

- **Interviews** – Interviews were a key engagement tool, especially for entrepreneurs on the road or with tight schedules. These interviews were favored by established entrepreneurs and senior-level leaders. Given the length of these interviews, they proved to yield high-value data points on a few specific subjects and usually produced a referral to others in the ecosystem. They also proved as a useful engagement tool to reach underrepresented groups and sectors within the ecosystem.

- **Community Organized Roundtables** – Leveraging the generosity of the community to extend their networks and bring others into the engagement process, these roundtables were another useful way to engage specific segments of the ecosystem. The casual nature of these conversations allowed facilitators to not only listen to feedback on the questions at hand, but also understand the nuances of the community better. These sessions tended to favour early-stage entrepreneurs and established thought leaders in the community.

- **Meetings and Presentations** – Occasionally the process facilitator was invited to present at meetings or organizations. These were largely to explain the process or provide an opportunity to field questions, but in one case early on in the process, the facilitator was able to include an input exercise.

- **Submissions** – The community was encouraged to provide any material to the consultant they believed would be useful to the process, including their own thoughts. A select number of participants provided articles and thoughtful emails.

- **Availability of Consultant** – As part of the commitment to listen to the community, work closely with them and take their advice, the main consultant was made fully available to the community. This included calls, office visits, Slack channels, social media and any other way the community could reach out. These proved to be useful sources of advice and feedback throughout, as well as a practical way to expand the consultation and make it more accessible to the community.
Benefits of the Process
Because this process was specifically designed with this community in mind, it allowed a specific set of benefits:

- The process attracted involved members and thought leaders from the community to make multiple substantive contributions.
- As the process moved forward, a consistent engagement community developed around the process, supporting it, sharing it with others and providing consistent input.
- The feedback from the process tended to be more dense than in a traditional process, with relatively detailed qualitative submissions from those who chose to participate.

Limitations of the Process
Conversely, the process and approach did have some recognized limitations:

- The process can only act as a mirror to the perceptions and opinions of the community and was not a scientific study or formal audit.
- The decentralized nature of the process and emphasis on opt-in participation meant that not all segments of the community were engaged equally.
- The consultant in this case is a public engagement specialist, and not a member of or expert on the innovation ecosystem.
YEG INNOVATION COMPASS BY THE NUMBERS

Data Points

This process is estimated to have generated 1903 data points over the course of all engagement types and iterations. An estimated 1010 of the data points were qualitative data points, which provided significant feedstock for reports and summaries throughout the process.

YEG Innovation Compass Data Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Data Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total written comments submitted to YEG Innovation Compass website</td>
<td>705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(minus an approximate 5% downward adjustment for obvious input errors)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated data points from pilot engagements</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated data points from roundtable sessions</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated data points from interviews</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated data points from emailed submissions</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total estimated qualitative data points</strong></td>
<td><strong>1010</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of prioritization exercise selections</td>
<td>893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total quantitative data points</strong></td>
<td><strong>893</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to the nature of the face-to-face sessions, the number of data points from each needed to be estimated. Reviewing both the average time taken for each engagement method and/or the length of the transcribed notes, conservative average data points were estimated from each engagement method:

- Pilot engagements – Assumed average of 20 data points per facilitated session
- Roundtable sessions – Assumed average of 15 data points per roundtable
- Interviews – Assumed 3 data points per interview
- Emailed submissions – Assumed 3 data points per submission
Participation Numbers

Based on a count of the number of people who provided input to the website and a count of those who provided direct feedback through other means, the process generated between 257 and 300 unique participants, a relatively large portion of which provided feedback at multiple points. The range reflects the difficulty in cross-referencing those who participated both online and in a face-to-face forum. Since it is assumed that a large portion of those who participated face-to-face would have also taken the time to participate online, a minimum 66% redundancy rate was assumed among the face-to-face participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Type</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Engagement Sessions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEG Innovation Compass website sprints</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneur-led Roundtables</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations with input opportunities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submissions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant Breakdown

Over the course of the engagement, participants were asked in all cases to provide both how they identify within the tech innovation sector and to list their industry. For sector identifier, the choices were to identify as a:

- **Service Firm** – Someone who provides consulting or professional services to the tech innovation ecosystem
- **Service Provider** – Someone who works for one of the publicly supported organizations that provide direct support to entrepreneurs in the innovation ecosystem.
- **Entrepreneur** – Defined and sub-categorized according to the Startup Commons Startup Development Phases spectrum and included:
  - Ideating
  - Committing
  - Scaling
  - Concepting
  - Validating
  - Establishing
- **Other** – Someone who does not fit into these categories, and was asked to specify, but usually represented self-determined entrepreneur categories.
For industry, the participants were given both a list and the ability to specify a specific industry. You will find three participant breakdown charts in the pages that follow. Because ‘Technology’ was such a highly populated category in the industry breakdown, it has been cross referenced against its respective sector identifiers.

Those who selected ‘Other’ in the industry category tended to be from philanthropic, non-profit, educational, niche professional, or representative organizations. A very small number of organizations that might be considered service providers by some participants also filled out this category.
**Participant Breakdown by Industry**

- Technology: 42%
- Other: 18%
- Education: 12%
- Health: 10%
- Finance: 5%
- Pharmaceutical: 3%
- Legal: 2%
- Eng & Construction: 2%
- Food: 1%
- Insurance: 1%
- Publishing: 1%
- Real Estate: 1%
- Retail: 1%
- Transportation: 1%

**Breakdown of Technology Industry Participants by Sector Identifier**

- Scaling: 29%
- Validating: 22%
- Other: 12%
- Service Firm: 7%
- Service Provider: 6%
- Establishing: 6%
- Concepting: 6%
- Committing: 6%
- Ideating: 6%
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS & DIRECTIONS

The purpose of the YEG Innovation Compass process was to reach out into Edmonton’s tech-innovation ecosystem and deliver a set of community-validated recommendations and directions for how to support and improve the city’s tech innovation ecosystem. Listed by order of priority as selected by the community at the conclusion of the consultation process, those recommendations and directions are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation &amp; Direction Statement</th>
<th>% OF PARTICIPANTS WHO SELECTED STATEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Encourage pools of private investors from all sectors to move off the sidelines and start investing in local tech entrepreneurs.</td>
<td>58.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Find ways to deploy government funding and support of the ecosystem in ways that better align to the needs of entrepreneurs.</td>
<td>51.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Make it extremely easy for innovators to benefit from and build on the IP they develop at post-secondary institutions.</td>
<td>39.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Facilitate more direct mentoring by entrepreneurs who have recent experience successfully founding and building tech companies.</td>
<td>38.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Invest in the establishment of a tech accelerator with a model proven in other jurisdictions.</td>
<td>36.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Reshape the mandates and governance models of service providers to be as agile as possible with the goal of meeting the evolving needs of the ecosystem.</td>
<td>33.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Foster an environment where companies can launch easily and fail fast.</td>
<td>32.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Develop a single window to communicate the entirety of services, programs and supports within the ecosystem available to entrepreneurs.</td>
<td>31.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Persistently communicate the ecosystem’s success stories – small or large – to both external and internal audiences.</td>
<td>28.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Establish funding and initiatives that encourage a predominantly relationship-based culture between entrepreneurs across the ecosystem.</td>
<td>25.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Facilitate opportunities for entrepreneurs at every stage to build applicable skills in practical areas (e.g., coding) and business skills (e.g., customer development).</td>
<td>24.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Shift the service provider focus to securing local, national and international customers for entrepreneurs.</td>
<td>24.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Formalize, fund and strengthen a mandate for an entrepreneur-led tech industry association.</td>
<td>21.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Focus the ecosystem around supporting identified pillars of strength, rather than diluting focus in dozens of areas.</td>
<td><strong>19.90%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RECOMMENDATIONS AND DIRECTIONS IN DETAIL

While the above recommendations and directions are ranked in order of priority, these are the synthesized ideas from a longer list of input. A low ranking on this list does not mean that it is unimportant to this community.

Beginning on the next page, each of the final recommendations and directions (in order of overall priority) are further broken down to reflect the feedback from the community over the course of the process.

As has been mentioned throughout this report, the content detailing each statement is a reflection of the thoughts of the community. They intend to summarize preference and opinion and should not be considered as a recommended plan of action. However, these details, along with the information summarized throughout this report, are intended to be key tools, along with the experiences of the community, in determining what actions should be taken, who will be responsible and what the intended outcomes are.

Under each recommendation and direction statement, you will find:

- **Summary of Community Feedback** - A description of each statement based on feedback from the community.

- **Inherent Assumptions** - Operating assumptions that correspond to the position of the community. This is intended to highlight required conditions for change to be successful.

- **Identified Actions** - A summary of the community’s common suggested actions to begin to address this issue. Because this is directly representative of the community’s many perspectives and represents tactical suggestions, some of these actions are contradictory to one another.

- **What Success Looks Like** - Each recommendation and direction description ends with a suggestion of what success might look like in the short term (providing a suggested first step) and in the long term (providing an imagined future state).
SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Right now, investments in Edmonton’s tech-enabled innovation ecosystem come from a small number of specific investment funds, service providers, government agencies and the entrepreneurs themselves. The community believes there are broad pools of investors across Alberta who are not investing in tech companies in Edmonton because they:

• Are not being presented with opportunities to do so;
• Do not completely understand how to make investments in the sector;
• Do not necessarily see the value proposition of tech investments.

INHERENT ASSUMPTIONS

• There is a significant amount of latent investment within Edmonton and across Alberta.
• That there are tech companies in the Edmonton ecosystem that are both worthy of investment and having difficulty finding it within the city.

IDENTIFIED ACTIONS

There is a very clear desire to engage these previously untapped pools of investors and getting them actively involved in supporting the burgeoning tech ecosystem in the city by:

• Taking stock of the common sources of funding and sectors they typically flow from.
• Developing a clear, communicable, community-approved value proposition for investing in Edmonton’s tech ecosystem.
• Identifying strong investors and industries who are not already engaged.
• Creating organic opportunities where these industries and investors can make meaningful connections with entrepreneurs, such as pitch competitions.
• Developing incentive programs to encourage new investor pools to accept greater risk.
• Considering a crowd-sourced capital solution as a way to introduce new investors at a lower risk profile.
• Providing appropriate education for latent investors in making investments in tech start-ups.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Early success will be determined by the tracked and measured engagement of previously uninvolved investors and the development of a communicable tech-investment value proposition; long term success will be a measurable, sustained deepening of the investor pool, with steadily increasing private support in Edmonton start-ups and scale-ups.
2. Find ways to deploy government funding and support of the ecosystem in ways that better align to the needs of entrepreneurs

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK
When governments support the innovation ecosystem, funding is often dependent on the wrong conditions or directed at what entrepreneurs do not actually need at their stage or in their business. Conversely, governments are not any more focused on what the ecosystem as a whole specifically needs. While the community acknowledges a need for accountability that comes with public funding, the nature of entrepreneurship and the restrictions around public support are sometimes at odds to the point that they become unproductive. Because they cannot accept the same risk profiles as private investors, governments of all orders need to be more creative with the way they apply public money and efforts to support innovation in Edmonton.

IDENTIFIED ACTIONS
The community wants government to think differently about the way it supports the ecosystem by:

• Eliminating the need for matching funds in grant programs.
• Reconsidering job-creation as the dominant metric to measure success - focus on company and revenue growth instead.
• Generalizing the desired outcomes for grants (ie, ask for clean energy tech rather than a specific type of wind turbine).
• Concentrating funds currently dispersed across myriad government programs into a single tax credit/incentive program.
• Finding ways to entice entrepreneurs who have been away in other ecosystems to return to Edmonton and disperse that knowledge.
• Create programs that support talented post-secondary students to keep them in the Edmonton ecosystem after they graduate.
• Developing programs that invest in and encourage entrepreneurship much earlier in life – innovation does not begin at age 18.

INHERENT ASSUMPTIONS
• That governments will be willing and able to make the changes necessary to properly align with the innovation ecosystem and entrepreneurs.
• That continued government funding of Edmonton’s innovation ecosystem is – in the long term – good for the ecosystem as a whole and should be encouraged.
- Asking governments to adopt immigration policy that attracts top talent.
- Continuing to grow and build Edmonton into a city that more people want to live, work and build a business in.

**WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE**

In the short term, success is developing a new understanding with government support offices as to what entrepreneurs and the ecosystem as whole actually need and determining what changes to current innovation programs can help achieve immediate political objectives. In the long term, government support is not only aligned with the evolving needs of the ecosystem and entrepreneurs, but its public investments in innovation go well beyond specific grants and programs to include effective, integrated innovation-centric policy designed to support and grow ongoing innovation capacity.
3. Make it extremely easy for innovators to benefit from and build on the IP they develop at post-secondary institutions.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Intellectual property policy was widely discussed throughout the consultations. The community largely believes that IP policy in this ecosystem has not appropriately evolved with the ecosystem or even the general direction of innovation in our society. Many participants repeated anecdotes about researchers and inventors shielding their work from involvement with their institution until they were clear of it. In order for the ecosystem to work better, to attract talent and to drive discovery, the community believes it needs to be easier to transfer intellectual property out of post-secondaries and into spin-off companies. Right now, many in the community see IP policy as confusing or restrictive and believe that it is a barrier to innovation within Edmonton.

INHERENT ASSUMPTIONS

• That a shift in IP policy will not adversely impact the innovation programs being run by post-secondaries.

• Post-secondary institutions, particularly the University of Alberta, agree with the community’s issues around IP policy.

IDENTIFIED ACTIONS

In order to support entrepreneurs at post-secondaries, better IP policy and understanding of IP policy can be developed by:

• Reviewing and articulating the value institutions are providing to the entrepreneur over the life of the product.

• Measuring the volume, speed and nature of IP leaving post-secondary institutions to identify what changes need to be made first.

• Considering emulating other innovation-focused post-secondary IP models, such as the University of Waterloo.

• Focusing IP policy on company growth, not ownership, by adopting a straightforward royalty scheme on the institution side.

• Setting aside resources for post-secondary-based start-ups to consult their own IP legal council.

• Shaping IP policy to reward spin-off companies who remain headquartered in Edmonton.

• Reorienting the connection between the University of Alberta and TEC Edmonton to eliminate any real or perceived conflict of interest.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

In the short term, starting a discussion around finding ways to assess current IP policy and finding “quick wins” to relax IP policy and start giving inventors a wider range of options to benefit from their work. In the long run, success is an order of magnitude more companies coming out of the post-secondaries, feeding both into the ecosystem as a whole, but also back into their original institutions. The vast majority of inventors view their institution as an important partner.
4. Facilitate more direct mentoring by entrepreneurs who have recent experience successfully founding and building tech companies.

**SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK**

Participants generally feel that the ecosystem as a whole has a lack of direct mentorship capacity with senior and established entrepreneurs. This is contrasted with a widely-held observation that those in leadership and consulting positions at service providers and other organizations do not have sufficient entrepreneurial experience to provide the effective mentorship entrepreneurs need. Creating opportunities and building capacity for experienced entrepreneurs to provide mentorship will be beneficial for the ecosystem in the long term. While participants were welcoming of all additional mentoring capacity, they wanted to emphasize the importance of engaging recent successful entrepreneurs.

**INHERENT ASSUMPTIONS**

- Successful entrepreneurs within this ecosystem have both the capacity and the desire to provide more formal mentoring and involvement within the ecosystem.
- That Edmonton has a sufficient stock of experienced mentors to make the desired impact.

**IDENTIFIED ACTIONS**

The Edmonton ecosystem can build additional mentorship capacity by:

- Determining what is keeping potential mentors from offering formal mentoring within the ecosystem.
- Creating a program that allows mentors to connect and engage mentees that they might be uniquely suited to provide value to.
- Focusing events around access to mentors, such as speed-mentoring.
- Asking potential mentors to be the public face of particular events and programs designed to build skills.
- Recruiting more experienced entrepreneurs to the boards and advisory councils of service providers and innovation improvement initiatives.
- Engaging mentors in the content development of service provider training and programming.
- Providing incentives for established ecosystem successes to provide internships and residencies within their companies for promising entrepreneurs.
- Making recruiting mentors from outside the ecosystem a key responsibility of service providers.
- Ensuring that access to mentoring does not represent a significant financial burden on entrepreneurs who need it, while still compensating mentors.

**WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE**

In the short term, the ecosystem needs to take inventory of what the mentorship capacity in Edmonton is, identify the barriers for increasing that capacity, and shift its most pliable programming to provide an emphasis on accessing mentors. In the long term, Edmonton will have a deep pool of home-grown mentors as a pillar of the growing and evolving ecosystem, while still benefiting from the diverse perspectives of mentors and experienced founders visiting from outside this ecosystem.
5. Invest in the establishment of a tech accelerator with a model proven in other jurisdictions.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK
The community views the Edmonton tech innovation ecosystem as having evolved to the point that the time has come to consider establishing a proven accelerator chapter within the city. The community wanted this accelerator to be funded by private investment, but understands that initial public investment may be required to attract and establish it. While Edmonton can likely start its own tech accelerator, having a proven accelerator set up here would send an important signal to external markets.

INHERENT ASSUMPTION
• That Edmonton meets the criteria for a worthy existing accelerator program.

IDENTIFIED ACTIONS
Edmonton could attract a proven-model tech accelerator and have it successfully contribute to the ecosystem by:

• Working with the community to identify criteria for an external accelerator.
• Being open to investing some public support and service provider resources in finding and approaching the right program.
• Recruiting outside Edmonton to find an experienced Managing Director to lead a new accelerator in Edmonton.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE
In the short term, the successful establishment of a proven accelerator. In the long term, sustained success means high retention of successful companies that cycle through, investment attraction and recognized wider economic benefits in the city and region.
6. **Reshape the mandates and governance models of service providers to be as agile as possible with the goal of meeting the evolving needs of the ecosystem.**

**SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK**

The community felt that a hallmark of a well-functioning ecosystem is the productive alignment between service providers’ programs and the specific needs of entrepreneurs. The community was clear throughout this process that by and large, this was not the case within Edmonton’s ecosystem. Generally speaking, the community does not consistently see the value that service providers bring to their businesses. In some cases, these concerns are relatively mild, while in other cases the perspective is much more severe. For instance, for some in the community, they see service providers as being shackled to the expectations of their funder organizations, preventing them from making meaningful change. Others, however, viewed service providers as either unwilling (perceived as due to the benefit they derive from the current system) or unable (perceived as a result of not having sufficient innovation-focused backgrounds) to change. As a result, there is a significant appetite to see a difference in the operation of service providers to better meet the continually evolving needs of entrepreneurs if the ecosystem is to evolve.

It is important to note that many of the other recommendations and directions contained in this report reflect changes that are directed toward service providers.

**INHERENT ASSUMPTION**

- Service providers have the authority to make meaningful change to address many of these issues.

**IDENTIFIED ACTIONS**

The ecosystem can better meet the needs of the community through service providers by:

- Ensuring the mandate of service providers per their funder is regularly updated to reflect the rapidly changing innovation ecosystem.

- Changing the leadership and board compositions of service providers to be made up largely of entrepreneurs with relevant experience.

- Ensuring that those providing mentoring and consulting services have considerable experience in the tech space.

- Rationalizing the overlap between the different services providers and consolidate programs where possible.

- Eliminating service providers where redundancies exist.

- Adjusting the performance metrics of service providers to measure their ability to meet the needs of entrepreneurs.
• Periodically reviewing the work and effective role of a service provider, as with the recent TEC Task Force.

• Supporting and bolstering their role as a hub between entrepreneurs and industry.

• Providing entrepreneurs with free or low-cost access to services that they have difficulty accessing otherwise, such as legal or accounting services.

• Providing free or no-cost amenities and resources such as space, machinery, tool libraries or 3D printers – costs that are difficult to bear for early-stage entrepreneurs.

• Discontinuing the practice of charging beyond cost-recovery for services they provide, particularly when competing with the private sector.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE
In the short term, success is the development of a plan to move forward with service providers, including assessing their scope of responsibility, what their accountability mechanisms are, as well as the time and resources required to get it done. In the long term, success is a continuously harmonious relationship between service providers and the entrepreneurial community from which the healthy growth of the ecosystem can be attributed.
7. Foster an environment where companies can launch easily and fail fast.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK
If you can build an ecosystem with a high number of starts, you will inherently have a high number of failures. Participants throughout the process largely agreed that the mark of a robust ecosystem is one where companies can set up easily and that failure means you can turn your attention to another venture in the same ecosystem rather than being completely personally catastrophic. Failing fast means no languishing efforts with an idea that will never move forward.

INHERENT ASSUMPTION
• Service providers and governments will accept the risk of a high number of failures if it means growing the ecosystem with the remaining successes.

IDENTIFIED ACTIONS
Edmonton can create an easy start, fast fail ecosystem by:
• Working to build a critical mass of companies through a low barrier to entry, allowing for easy talent recycling when companies fail, and therefore talent retention.

• Focusing the innovation ecosystem around entrepreneurs, not service providers.

• Setting conditions for companies to set up easily and quickly validate their ideas, including providing small unrestricted grants to help get an idea just far enough to see if it is validated.

• Demonstrating a tolerance for failure and creating an environment that supports those who do to make a graceful exit and start contributing again soon after.

• Provide assessment and intervention for stalled mid-stream start-ups.

• Rely less on grants to sustain ventures, making individual risk an important part of the process.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE
In the short term, success will be a change in attitudes toward failure, and the early development of programs that seek to take away barriers to starting. In the long term, there will be a relatively high critical mass of company starts against today’s benchmark.
8. Develop a single window to communicate the entirety of services, programs and supports within the ecosystem available to entrepreneurs.

**SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK**

The current inventory of service providers, programs, organizations, grants, committees and events are difficult to follow and understand for many within the community. They find themselves missing opportunities or knocking on the wrong door for help, or, worse yet, finding out where they should have been all along long after investing time and money into their venture. There is a desire to find a way to simplify this information to make accessing it and understanding it easier and more useful. It is important to note that this is a communications direction from the community, not a direction around system structure.

**IDENTIFIED ACTIONS**

A single window resource consolidating all support available in the ecosystem can be established by:

- Developing a robust resource that intuitively funnels you toward the most appropriate resources.
- Paying specific attention to the ability to review grant programs.

**WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE**

This is a “quick win” directive. In the short term, success is measured by the existence of a resource that the community regards as a useful improvement over the status quo and allays the aforementioned confusion in the ecosystem. In the long term, success is the continued relevance, upkeep and benchmarked use of the single window resource.

**INHERENT ASSUMPTION**

- Confusion and frustration among the community is a result of insufficient communication.
9. Persistently communicate the ecosystem’s success stories – small or large – to both external and internal audiences.

**SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK**

This is an issue that affects Edmonton as a whole, not just the innovation ecosystem. There is a significant amount happening across the ecosystem, but the ecosystem has not always done well telling the full breadth and depth of the activity occurring in Edmonton. The community felt that as an ecosystem, there is a tendency to allow certain stories to dominate for too long and overshadowing everything else. While those major successes are often impressive, they are not compelling to every relevant audience. A small Edmonton success story may be more relatable to someone just starting out in another jurisdiction or may prove attractive to a new immigrant planning a move to Western Canada. Telling all these stories strategically is vital to showing ourselves and the world who Edmonton really is and what you can do here.

**INHERENT ASSUMPTION**

- There will be a central resource to capture, update and apply a strategy to these stories.

**IDENTIFIED ACTIONS**

Edmonton’s ecosystem can reach new and target audiences in compelling ways by:

- Developing an ecosystem-wide media and communications strategy to tell these stories in a compelling and creative way.
- Finding ways to celebrate even small victories within the confines of the ecosystem.
- Recording small but compelling stories from all along the entrepreneurial spectrum and continuously updating them.
- Aggregating start-up data on a regular basis to quantify successes that do not warrant featured stories.
- Updating the “big” stories to talk not just about their initial success, but their ongoing success and the impact it has on the innovation ecosystem and the city as a whole.
- Telling stories that focus on cooperation between elements of the ecosystem.

**WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE**

In the short term, success is a high volume of new stories being captured and ready to be deployed, along with the presence of a system to continue to collect and update them. In the long term, the metric needs to be how well those stories have permeated with target audiences (investors, other companies) and into target jurisdictions.
10. Establish funding and initiatives that encourage a predominantly relationship-based culture between entrepreneurs across the ecosystem.

**SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK**

Throughout the consultation process, the community said that the development of an organic relationship-based culture is one of the most important aspects of a healthy innovation ecosystem. A vibrant and dynamic ecosystem where everyone can easily make connections, trade information, provide assistance and understand what's happening will be the foundation of the ecosystem's future infrastructure as it grows. Through service providers, Edmonton has a lot of structured events and gatherings for the ecosystem, but they do not always translate into the development of relationships outside those gatherings. The community itself has also developed events and gatherings to foster these natural bonds. For both service provider and community gatherings, however, attendance at many of these events is not what it should be (for a variety of reasons), and the sense is that while these efforts are appreciated, the relationship-building between the events is just as, if not even more important.

**IDENTIFIED ACTIONS**

Edmonton can build a more relationship-based culture in the innovation ecosystem by:

- Doubling down on the events and programs that are consistently successful.
- Making more free or flex space available to encourage interactions between entrepreneurs.
- Emphasizing the importance of inclusiveness as a fundamental value in everything the community or service providers do.
- Emphasizing the importance of social connection as a business practice.
- Creating social meetups that encourage cross-segment interactions (students through to investors).
- Developing new metrics for measuring the health of the ecosystem. For instance, the strength of relationships, number of collaborations, how much of your social contact is ecosystem-related.

**INHERENT ASSUMPTIONS**

- If supported, the community will engage in shifting the culture of the ecosystem into being a relationship-based one.
- A relationship-based culture is a cooperative responsibility between the community-at-large and service providers.

**WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE**

In the short term, the ecosystem should be measuring the growth of gatherings and the sense of value and well-being the community derives from their participation in the ecosystem. In the long-term, the ecosystem should be an immediately welcoming and helpful place for anyone who enters it, with everyone given the opportunity to be a valued contributor and collaborator.
11. Facilitate opportunities for entrepreneurs at every stage to build applicable skills in practical areas (e.g., coding) and business skills (e.g., customer development).

**SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK**
While the formal educational offerings within the ecosystem are considered very good, they often do not include the requisite skills required to start, build and run an effective business, much less manage an entrepreneurial venture. As a key component of boosting our local competitiveness, the community wanted to see more opportunities for budding and existing entrepreneurs to grow these skills here. The community imagined this would take place both within service providers and within established companies. Supporting the deliberate development of practical skill building opportunities will enhance the quality and quantity of the companies that start here, will retain the talent that trains here and will attract new talent to this ecosystem.

**IDENTIFIED ACTIONS**
The Edmonton ecosystem will create important practical training and skill building opportunities for entrepreneurs by:
- Incentivizing established tech companies to provide internships and other programs to current students and recent graduates.
- Focusing programs on building core business skills, not just start-up skills.
- Assessing the quality of educational programming delivered by service providers to ensure it aligns with what the ecosystem actually needs.
- Emphasizing programming on skill-building events like DevCon and guided pitch competitions.

**INHERENT ASSUMPTIONS**
- Local companies will be willing to provide this training.
- Providing practical skill-building training will help entrepreneurs create ties to the Edmonton ecosystem and retain them after training is complete.

**WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE**
In the short term, Edmonton’s success will be in building the skills of the people that we already have in the market and connecting them to existing or easily created programs within the ecosystem. In the long-term, Edmonton should be a net importer of new graduates and early-stage entrepreneurs, with local companies benefitting from providing practical experience and skills training.
12. Shift the service provider focus to securing local, national and international customers for entrepreneurs.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK
Throughout this process, there has been significant debate around the role of governments and service providers in how they should be focusing their support in the ecosystem. A lot of participants in this process said that they do not want a grant or unrestricted cash – what they want is customers. Investment is essential, but companies need to eventually demonstrate that they can provide value to someone out in the market. The community does not expect service providers to negotiate deals for them or guarantee customers - they want governments and service providers to leverage their resources and networks to create meaningful opportunities so they can make their case to a customer base.

INHERENT ASSUMPTION
• Service providers and their government funders are equipped to facilitate connections with customer bases.

IDENTIFIED ACTIONS
The community wants to see a greater emphasis on connecting companies with potential customers by:

• Creating specific programs that incentivize local companies to work with early-stage entrepreneurs as a way of generating early adopters.

• Focusing on working with companies to identify potential early adopters in other markets and making those initial connections.

• Helping companies understand how to measure product-market fit for their venture so they can make the most out of customer interactions when the connections are made.

• Providing early educational resources and mentorship focused on building client bases as a central part of service provider programs, especially for initial entrepreneurs.

• Supporting companies by bringing them to major provincial, national and international trade shows like Collision and Inventures, and showcasing them.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE
In the short term, Edmonton needs to assess and understand the content and quality of its current network to make connections for entrepreneurs. It will also require that service providers create plans to move their focus and set measurements for customer connection.
In the long term, Edmonton is seen as a place where companies are unambiguous about their market viability in part because they have access to quality customer leads, and in part because the ecosystem emphasizes and supports building and creating value for customers as a fundamental value.
13. Formalize, fund and strengthen a mandate for an entrepreneur-led tech industry association.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The community was very clear throughout the course of the consultation that they wanted to see a more entrepreneur-led ecosystem. They believe that public support cannot be the foundation of a dynamic and healthy ecosystem in the long term and that at some point the responsibility needs to be on the community itself to take the ecosystem to the next level. As such, part of turning over more responsibility to the community means establishing centralized representation and leadership for entrepreneurs.

IDENTIFIED ACTIONS

Edmonton can establish and grow a successful tech innovation industry association by:

- Establishing the parameters of responsibility for an industry association in the context of the ecosystem.
- Relying on and supporting an individual (whether locally or recruited) or group to act as the unambiguous leaders of the industry association, and therefore the local ecosystem as a whole.
- Evolving the mandate of the Edmonton Advisory Council on Start-ups (EACOS) and trusting them to fit this role.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

In the short term, a tech innovation industry association will develop a plan of action on the basis of the reflections within this and the other processes and publications generated in the last year, as well as represent the local industry as a whole in public forums. In the long term, an industry association will speak with authority for the entrepreneurs in an established and growing ecosystem in Edmonton. It will work closely with governments and service providers as an important partner coordinating and shaping the industry as a whole.

INHERENT ASSUMPTIONS

- That there is an appetite for public investment to support an industry association with autonomy in its early stages.
- The mandates of service providers and supportive organizations will change to make room for the responsibilities of an industry association.
14. Focus the ecosystem around supporting identified pillars of strength, rather than diluting focus in dozens of areas.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK
Edmonton’s innovation ecosystem is still growing and shaping, with many people in the community seeing Edmonton as a centre of excellence for a few specific fields. There is a belief that supporting and growing these areas will highly benefit the ecosystem as a whole and will steadily grow opportunities in unrelated fields as a consequence. However, a contingent of the community worries that this could be restrictive and discouraging for potential start-ups and investors not interested in our pillars of strength.

INHERENT ASSUMPTIONS
• Edmonton’s analysis of its competitive advantages on its pillars of strength in the tech ecosystem are correct.
• Focusing the ecosystem on building up specific areas will not create significant barriers to entrepreneurship in other areas.

IDENTIFIED ACTIONS
Edmonton can grow its ecosystem with a focus on its demonstrated areas of strength by:
• Focusing Edmonton’s innovation ecosystem on artificial intelligence and machine learning.
• Supporting the companies that have established success to ensure they are retained in Edmonton.
• Consider the major innovation investments already made and the significant political capital spent in areas like health and advanced manufacturing.
• Take inventory of what the areas of emphasis are in Edmonton’s economic strategies and consider “drafting” in behind those efforts.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE
In the short term, the substantial success stories within Edmonton will keep growing, maintaining a competitive national and global edge. In the long term, their continued success spurs interest, investment and participation in Edmonton’s tech-enabled ecosystem as a whole, providing opportunity for growth in new sectors and industries, as well as contributing to Edmonton and the region’s economic growth as a whole.
COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS ON SERVICE PROVIDERS

Throughout the course of the YEG Innovation Compass process, participants were asked to provide their reflections and perceptions of publicly mandated and funded service providers in the ecosystem. Because these questions were asked publicly, directly and anonymously - and in the interests of a level of transparency consistent with the rest of this process - a summary of the high-level common themes from the analyzed and collected input are included here.

Further, it is important to emphasize that this summary is intended to be reflective of the views of the community. It does not reflect the findings of a formal audit, performance assessment or structured investigation. It is a summary of qualitative data, and is presented as agnostic to the mandates, institutional performance measures and personnel of each service provider.

Feedback is listed in alphabetical order by service provider.

Advanced Technology Centre

• Several entrepreneurs are positive about the ATC, particularly those who identified as being tenants. They appreciate the space, the proximity to customers in Nisku and Leduc, and the unique culture of the facility. They appreciate that it has laboratory facilities and other amenities they require for the products they are developing. They also appreciate that the ATC is not downtown, citing cost considerations.

• Other participants express the belief that the Edmonton Research Park generally is from a bygone time when technology companies required manufacturing or laboratory space. These participants express a belief that start-ups are largely software-based and thus there is no need for the Edmonton Research Park or the ATC. They see the ATC’s existence as undermining the goal of developing an interconnected tech-innovation community in the downtown core.

• Overall, views about the Advanced Technology Centre (ATC) are mixed. The main differentiating factor appears to be based on whether individuals support the consolidation of all ecosystem elements in the downtown core.
Alberta Innovates

- Many participants in the process stated that they do not understand who Alberta Innovates is mandated to support. A cohort within the community shares and discusses anecdotes of entrepreneurs being declined by Alberta Innovates for not being innovative enough, yet later finding considerable interest amongst private funders.

- Alberta Innovates has a reputation of supporting companies that already have access to cash and is perceived to “knock on the door” of such companies. This has undermined the reputation of the organization, because it is seen to be there for entrepreneurs when it is no longer needed.

- Some participants indicate that Alberta Innovates can be helpful in providing small grants that enable the testing of products. However, the organization is not seen as a source of support for taking products to market.

Edmonton Economic Development Corporation & Innovate Edmonton

- The connection between EEDC and Startup Edmonton and the connection between EEDC and Innovate Edmonton are largely unclear to entrepreneurs. There is widespread uncertainty amongst community members about EEDC’s mandate and activities in respect of start-up companies and the tech-innovation ecosystem.

- Entrepreneurs signal resistance at attempts by EEDC to lead them in any kind of direction, viewing EEDC’s stated interest in the tech-innovation ecosystem to be fair-weather or trendy in nature and driven by direction from their shareholder.

- There is skepticism within the community about whether EEDC has the desire or capacity to make improvements to the ecosystem in concert with the community.

- As with other service providers, the community question whether EEDC’s leadership and staff have sufficient recent experience as entrepreneurs or in founding successful tech companies to provide leadership in this area.

Startup Edmonton

- While Startup Edmonton is viewed externally as largely providing a co-working space, the community perceives it as struggling. However, participants believe this is not central to Startup Edmonton’s mandate, and that the organization has become distracted from its core mission.

- Startup Edmonton is seen as lacking in its outreach and generation efforts. People feel that Startup Edmonton does not do enough to bring together innovators, funders and adopters. Entrepreneurs believe that it should help facilitate connections between industry/early adopters and the local start-up community, in order to help innovators secure early customer and co-adopters. However, entrepreneurs find Startup Edmonton lacks the necessary reach and contacts to effectively support local entrepreneurs that way.

- Startup Edmonton is perceived to have lost its unique culture and ‘verve’ in the wake of becoming part of EEDC. It is said that previous to the change, Startup Edmonton offered a positive and lively culture that encouraged informal interaction and adopted a model closer to the traditional ‘start-up’ expectation.
• The community had largely positive comments about the use of Startup Edmonton’s space for meet-ups and viewed their signature public-facing programming as successful.

• Programs like DemoCamp and the Preflight program are cited as positive and important to the ecosystem.

• The costs of Startup Edmonton are seen as prohibitive given the corresponding value and the offerings to entrepreneurs, which are seen as too limited. Many in the community feel there are no cost advantages to being part of Startup Edmonton.

• Startup Edmonton is regarded as very focused on software companies. There is a view that the organization would benefit from broadenings its horizons beyond apps and computer programming into innovative products and services that intersect with traditional industries.

• Similar to other service providers, there is skepticism in the community about whether the people leading and providing services at Startup Edmonton have experience as entrepreneurs or founding tech companies. This impacts the perceived credibility of the organization when it comes to mentoring aspiring entrepreneurs.

**TEC Edmonton**

NOTE: The feedback reported on TEC Edmonton was collected and published independently of the TEC Task Force process, which ran parallel to the YEG Innovation Compass process. The resulting recommendations of the TEC Task Force in June 2019 and any subsequent action taken as a result are not included in the feedback below.

• The community described TEC Edmonton as an organization that does not communicate consistent objectives and as one whose interests are fundamentally misaligned with the interests and needs of entrepreneurs and start-up companies.

• TEC Edmonton’s services are seen as duplicating the efforts of other service providers in the ecosystem. The organization is perceived as akin to a government institution, and there are questions about whether its leadership and staff have the right entrepreneurial experience to appropriately service ventures.

• TEC Edmonton is seen by many in the ecosystem as being challenging to work with, with a portion of entrepreneurs being vocal about avoiding the organization. Anecdotes suggest that some researchers in the University of Alberta are deliberately delaying spinning-off of their discoveries to avoid dealing with TEC Edmonton until the organization demonstrates a more appealing approach to intellectual property.

• A number of participants cited TEC Edmonton’s recognition by external organizations as an incubator of choice as good for both the reputation of the city and the service provider.
• Perceptions of TEC’s current approach raises confusion around how to move IP out of the University of Alberta and into the commercial space. Entrepreneurs believe this is rooted in TEC Edmonton’s culture, which they perceive as focused on how TEC will benefit, rather than supporting the flight and growth of companies.

• Entrepreneurs felt that the outlook of TEC Edmonton is backwards. For instance, at one point, TEC talked about having a “record year” during which there were 11 spin-off companies and a low failure rate. Some entrepreneurs view this as backwards; they argue that if TEC Edmonton had the correct focus, it would be facilitating the spin-off of hundreds of companies and there would be a high failure rate. This would demonstrate the organization is committed translating IP into companies and launching as many companies as possible.

• A number of participants listed significant cash raises by TEC companies in recent years as evidence their programs have been effective in line with their mandate.

• The community questioned the value of TEC Edmonton’s services, and cites its cost-recovery model as problematic. While the organization sometimes positions itself an incubator or accelerator, many in the community disagree with either of those characterizations. Some participants felt that TEC Edmonton is conservative in supporting companies and tends to support start-ups that already have money.

**Venture Mentoring Service**

• Entrepreneurs are enthusiastic about the Venture Mentoring Service (VMS) at the University of Alberta and are vocal about the fact that VMS has a strong value proposition in this ecosystem.

• Though the service is known for being lightweight with a small team, it is seen as being agile, non-bureaucratic and aligned with the needs and interests of entrepreneurs.

• Entrepreneurs point to VMS’ focus on mentoring as a key strength. The service is known to be populated by individuals who have recent experience as entrepreneurs and in founding tech companies.

• Entrepreneurs also appreciate there is no cost-recovery by VMS, offering their services free of charge to anyone who is accepted to the program.
OTHER REFLECTIONS

Over the course of the consultation process, a number of observations and themes presented themselves in the community’s feedback that did not necessarily fit within the objectives of the process. Nonetheless, these are judged to be important and relevant to the future work of the community in the innovation ecosystem.

**Inclusiveness** – While the ecosystem is generally made up of generous and thoughtful people, participants who represent minority cohorts continue to experience consciously or subconsciously discriminatory behaviour in business and social contexts within the ecosystem. These incidents can range from the way someone is spoken to in contrast to a white male counterpart, to the false representation of minority status within their company as a means of competing for business. These participants wanted to remind others to reflect on their interactions toward these segments of the innovation community and ensure they are creating equal space for everyone in the community to thrive.

**Role of Government** – Over the course of the process, there has been a debate over the role of government in supporting entrepreneurs and the ecosystem itself. Generally speaking, there are two camps – those who believe that government should have a limited role and those who believe that the current ecosystem should include relatively heavy support from orders of government. Those that favour the relatively heavy involvement of government tend to do so because they view governments as actively soliciting entrepreneurs to enter the space and work to make it competitive – as such, they believe governments should be willing to make the corresponding investments to support those who answer the call. On the other hand, many who prefer less government intervention believe that extended government support ultimately erodes the risk tolerance required among entrepreneurs necessary for an ecosystem to thrive over the long term. Moving forward, understanding these two positions more clearly may help craft programs and solutions that involve government and take both positions into account rather than reverting to ideological stances.
The Ecosystem’s Sense of Its External Perception – Within the community, there seems to be disagreement around what kind of external reputation Edmonton’s innovation ecosystem has in other cities and innovation nodes. A portion of the community believes Edmonton is seen as an excellent place to start an innovation venture, partly because of the strength of the community, as well as economic and cost of living considerations. Others view Edmonton as having a challenging reputation externally because of previous historic issues and sectors that never realized their potential. Yet another group felt that the ecosystem was not mature enough to warrant a strong external reputation, citing factors like a lack of deal flow coming out of the city. Finally, some felt that the external reputation of Edmonton mattered less than in other ecosystems and that, for the moment, the community should focus on building its ecosystem with local talent, resources and investment rather than trying to leverage our civic reputation in other jurisdictions. Point of view on this issue tended to correspond to sector in the market and length of experience within the ecosystem.

Tension In The Ecosystem – Some participants demonstrated concern around a sense of simmering tension within the innovation community. While a relatively obvious tension exists between some entrepreneurs and some service providers for a variety of reasons covered within this report, participants flagged concerns around relationships between groups of entrepreneurs. While a few of these concerns stemmed from perceived competition between initiatives and organizations, the main source of the tension seems to be a difference around entrepreneurial philosophy and what success in the ecosystem looks like. While these differences will no doubt always exist to some extent, where the community’s material concern lay was in the ability for the community to put differences aside and develop solutions together.
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

With the consultation process now complete and the final report tabled, the natural tendency is wonder what comes next.

As the party that requested the development of the process and oversaw the logistics (but not content) components, this report is officially delivered to Edmonton Economic Development Corporation’s Innovate Edmonton (IE) division. As well, it has also been officially provided to the Edmonton Advisory Council on Start-ups (EACOS), who was regularly involved in the process.

These two organizations are key to determining what concrete action and change arises from this and other initiatives before it. They will formulate the immediate and long-term next steps for how to address the growth and support of the tech-enabled innovation ecosystem in Edmonton.

The immediate next steps beyond this report is suggested as follows:

**Final Report Released Publicly (EACOS & IE) – Summer 2019**

- Formal acceptance of final report at both Innovate Edmonton and EACOS
- Formal acceptance for information at any other required committees and bodies
- Socialization of the final report with necessary partner and stakeholder organizations
- Review of the final report with the Edmonton Innovation Ecosystem Community (EIEC) gathering

**Ecosystem Development Plan (EACOS & IE) – Summer/Fall 2019**

- Creation of a high-level action plan informed by various consolations’ feedstock, community expertise, service provider data and market intelligence that details:
  - Terms of reference for ecosystem initiatives
  - Definition of areas of responsibility between community and civic agencies
  - Development of long-term objectives
  - Prioritization of short and long-term specific action areas based on practical factors
  - Itemized resource and support mechanism inventory
  - Sequencing
  - Alignment with other major civic strategic processes
  - Measurement of impact
- Presentation of Ecosystem Development Plan to major funders and potentially impacted stakeholders

**Implementation – Winter 2019 - Onward**
Throughout the course of the YEG Innovation Compass process, feedback summaries of community input were developed at each stage.

For additional detail and context for this process you can find the following summaries at innovationcompass.ca/summaries:

- **Full Summary Report and Executive Summary from Pilot Engagements** - Setting Early Focus Areas
- **Sprint 1 Summary** - Prioritizing Focus Areas
- **Sprint 2 Summary** - Early Suggested Actions and Imagined Future States
- **Sprint 3 Summary** - Refining Suggested Actions
- **Sprint 4 Summary** - Initial Recommendations & Directions
- **Sprint 5 Summary** - Final Recommendations & Directions