

### **OPENING STATEMENT**

To expand the private sector base, Yukon must cultivate new and growing businesses – Particularly new and growing businesses in Yukon communities, where many potential business owners reside but face difficulties starting and running their businesses. The reasons are diverse, including:

- Limited knowledge and experience related to starting and running a business
- Limited knowledge of business licensing and legal requirements
- Limited knowledge of credit, credit management, and access to funding and debt and equity financing
- Difficulty accessing markets (for exportable goods and services)
- Limited market sizes (for local markets)
- Self-confidence

Many of these obstacles can be overcome with access to a knowledgeable business counselor. Unfortunately, in most Yukon communities, business counselors are neither available nor are they affordable. Mentors are few and far between, and current business development funding programs are laborious to access, prescriptive in approach, and do not provide the flexibility that entrepreneurs and business owners require.

Business counseling helps new business owners get past the initial hurdles of starting a business helps existing businesses expand their operations in a viable manner, and helps struggling businesses adapt to maintain their viability. Because business counseling improves the transfer of knowledge and skills to community members, the service grows our communities' long-term capacity to engage in business. We believe that access to business counseling services is essential to the growth of our communities' economies.

The keys to success for a business counselling service are:

1. Convenience
2. Trust and Confidentiality
3. Longevity
4. Local Partnerships

### **Demand for Business Counselling Services**

Over a period of three years with 2 to 4 week-long visits per year to Yukon communities (starting with Old Crow, Ross River, and Beaver Creek, eventually expanding to all Yukon communities except Whitehorse), the e-Commerce Yukon Project provided access to a business counseling service with an e-Commerce focus. During that time, over 270 unique clients accessed the service.

## Bringing Business Counselling Services to Yukon Communities

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in delivered a 10-month pilot business counseling service in Dawson City. The service was available at any time to any Dawson-area resident. In the first five months of service, 59 clients were served, 32 of which were start-ups or potential start-ups. By the end of the pilot project, 90 clients had been served.

As part of its Community Economic Development Strategy, the Old Crow Economic Development Survey found that 53% of respondents had either started or have considered starting their own business. Of those that haven't done so, the most commonly cited barrier was a lack of knowledge and access to technical support.

The North Yukon READI service serves Old Crow, Dawson City, and Mayo. The project had 65 client intakes between the end of February 2016 and the beginning of May, 2017. Of those client intakes, 48% are aboriginal-owned businesses and 62% are proposed businesses. Because the service is provided on a rotating basis, where the business counsellor is in Old Crow and Mayo approximately one week per month, it is expected that program uptake would further increase were services provided in each community throughout the entirety of each month.

### **Business Counselling Objectives**

The objectives of community-based business counseling services are to:

1. Increase business-related knowledge and skills transference to existing and aspiring business owners in Yukon communities,
2. Improve confidence amongst entrepreneurs and business owners,
3. Create a local growth-oriented business culture,
4. Facilitate access to capital through one-on-one business planning,
5. Increase the number of successful start-ups, and
6. Increase the profitability of local businesses.

### **Conclusion**

There is a demand for business counselling services in Yukon communities, and the service should be available to all Yukoners to support start-ups and promote growth in the private sector. Business counselling services must be convenient, confidential, and long-term, ideally delivered through partnerships with the territorial governments and community-based organizations.

### ***THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS***

That the Yukon Government:

1. Proactively develop partnerships with Yukon municipalities, First Nations, and Chambers of Commerce to establish dedicated business counselling services in every Yukon community, adhering to the principles of services outlined in this resolution.

Resolution Adopted: 2017/06/01