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Discover program will help Airdrie entrepreneurs test business ideas ahead of launch

Jessica Williamson, an economic development officer for the City of Airdrie and AEC's president, said the objective of the program is to help entrepreneurs validate their ideas properly before potentially launching a new business or start-up.

Scott Strasser
Aug 30, 2023 10:00 AM



The AEC's Discover program will offer eight sessions this fall to aspiring entrepreneurs who want to test the viability of their business idea. | Maranda Vandergriff/Unsplash.com

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When it comes to forming a new business or start-up, no idea is a bad idea – at least until someone works through it and decides for themselves if it's a bad idea.

That's the general attitude local entrepreneurs and start-up owners will be encouraged to adopt during this fall's Discover program, put on by Airdrie Entrepreneur Common (AEC) – a non-profit society founded in 1995 that provides resources, training and mentorship to support the start-up and growth needs of Airdrie's small businesses. The organization is operated by City of Airdrie Economic Development and Community Futures Centre West.

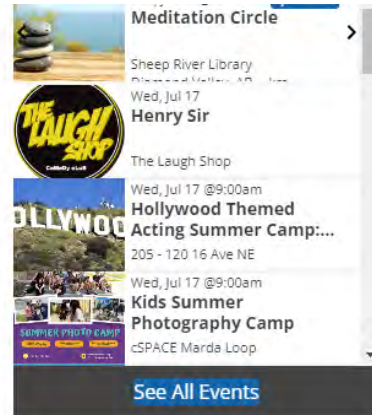
According to a press release, AEC was rewarded grant funding from Alberta Innovates to run the Discover program again this fall. The organization's release states the program will be used to support Airdrie-based start-ups and small businesses in "building viable business solutions" during the business development process.

"...too many entrepreneurs are not moving from intuition to evidence in their business development process," the release stated.

Jessica Williamson, an economic development officer for the City of Airdrie and AEC's president, said the objective of the program is to help entrepreneurs validate their ideas properly before potentially launching a new business or start-up.

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"I have been there, where a business idea didn't turn out to be successful, and I know how painful personally and financially it can be for businesses to have their business idea fail," she said. "We really want to help businesses move from intuition and assumptions to evidence of the elements of their business plan to really help them go forward with a validated business idea and plan that can be seen as customers wanting it, that it's viable, and they can make money doing it."



The screenshot displays a list of events from a social media platform. The events listed are:

- Meditation Circle**: Location: Sheep River Library, Date: Wed, Jul 17.
- Henry Sir**: Location: The Laugh Shop, Date: Wed, Jul 17 @9:00am.
- Hollywood Themed Acting Summer Camp...**: Location: 205 - 120 16 Ave NE, Date: Wed, Jul 17 @9:00am.
- Kids Summer Photography Camp**: Location: cSPACE Marda Loop, Date: Wed, Jul 17 @9:00am.

At the bottom of the list, there is a button labeled "See All Events".

According to CBIInsights, the top two reasons start-ups fail are because they run out of cash and there is no market need for that product.

AEC stated in their release they have partnered with the regional innovation networks across Southern Alberta (APEX Alberta, CARIN and RINSA) to tackle this gap through curriculum development.

"This grant will help us reach entrepreneurs at the very start of their journey, when they're making crucial decisions that will impact the success of their business," Williamson stated in the release. "We're excited to roll-out this evolution of the Discover program and assist more entrepreneurs with validating their business ideas in our community."

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Williamson said Airdrie will be refreshing the existing Discover program with this new curriculum. Over eight weeks, participants will run experiments to test their products' desirability, feasibility, and viability.

She noted this will be the third session of the Discovery program.

"We've run two sessions of the Discover program already, but what was immediately evident is that the program focused on just desirability – do customers want this product?" she said. "We really encouraged entrepreneurs to do customer interviews to investigate that. That is a key step, but we realized we were missing testing, feasibility, and viability, which are huge components of testing a business idea.

"We're really excited the program now is going to cover all three aspects of testing a business idea and making sure you consider all areas of your business plan."

Williamson said the program is suitable for tech-enabled start-ups and small businesses across southern Alberta, and that the learning is also relevant for existing businesses looking to revisit their business model and/or add a new product or service.

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According to the release, Discover will run from Oct. 3 to Nov. 16 at Genesis Place Recreation Centre's Rotary Room, with evening sessions starting at either 6:30 or 7 p.m.

There is a cap of 20 participants for the fall session, Williamson said, but added AEC also intends to run a spring session next year for entrepreneurs who miss out this time around.

More information and registration can be found at airdriecommon.ca/discover

Economic Developers Alberta (EDA) Recognizes Excellence in Economic Development in Alberta

April 15, 2024 10:30 AM

Economic Developers Alberta (EDA) Recognizes Excellence in Economic Development in Alberta

Economic Developers Alberta (EDA) presented its Annual Awards of Excellence during EDA Xperience 2024 Leaders' Summit and Conference at the Pomeroy Kananaskis Mountain Lodge April 10 - 12.

The 2024 Annual Awards of Excellence honour Alberta individuals for their contribution to the profession, as well as Alberta communities for excellence in the following categories:

- Economic Development Renewal Project
- Innovative Approach to Economic Development Project
- Regional Collaboration and Partnership Project
- Marketing for Economic Development Outcomes Project

The winning communities and organizations and the names of their initiatives are:

Economic Development Renewal Project

- Large Community/Region: *City of Edmonton - Corner Store Program*
- Medium Community/Region: *Parkland County - Explore Parkland*
- Small Community/Region: Leduc County - *Leduc County Business & Entrepreneur Centre*

Innovative Approach to Economic Development Project

- Large Community/Region: *Energy Futures Lab - Alberta's Electricity Future*
- Medium Community/Region: *Airdrie Economic Development - Discover Program*
- Small Community/Region: Mountain View Regional Film Office - *Make it Reel BIG in Mountain View!*

Regional Collaboration and Partnership Project

- Large Community/Region: *Community Futures Lethbridge Region - Blackfoot Signage Project*
- Medium Community/Region: Town of Taber - *Taber Regional Immigration Initiative*
- Small Community/Region: Town of Strathmore - *Lead by Example Powwow*