

Business Friendly Edmonton Background

Municipalities play a critical role in supporting the launch of new businesses and ensuring the retention and expansion of businesses that are already invested in the community. Traditional economic development activities are no longer sufficient when new technologies are shifting how people work, traditional industries are being disrupted, and social inequities are coming into focus. Administration recognizes there must be a renewed focus on the importance of agility, empathy, customer service and partnership to support economic growth. Many businesses have choices for where they locate and investment capital is more mobile, therefore it is imperative that Edmonton stays competitive in this environment.

Business Friendly Edmonton was developed to integrate and refocus the City's business support services. It is a direct outcome of the Economic Action Plan, The City Plan and ConnectEdmonton. Specifically, Business Friendly Edmonton focuses upon the Economic Action Plan actions that support job growth, business retention and investment attraction.

Business Friendly Edmonton directly addresses the following actions from the Economic Action Plan:

- *Action 3 - Support building capacity and access to resources for entrepreneurs from marginalized communities, such as racialized entrepreneurs, and newcomers.*
- *Action 13 - Work together to support emerging made-in-Edmonton technology solutions.*
- *Action 18 - Develop an integrated Investment Intake, Business Retention & Expansion and Aftercare Program that supports the efforts of Edmonton Global and others to attract foreign direct investment as well as existing and new Edmonton businesses.*

In addition to focusing on the above actions, Business Friendly Edmonton contributes to the implementation of further actions:

- *Action 6 - Leverage Edmonton's digital infrastructure, including Open Data, fibre optic network, and the Innovation corridor to link research, educational and technology organizations.*
- *Action 12 - Develop tools to facilitate growth in green economic sectors.*
- *Action 19 - Develop and implement an integrated place brand strategy.*

Attachment 1

Business Friendly Edmonton was developed through a combination of partner engagement, direct work with businesses, a jurisdictional scan, research into best practices, and internal collaboration. It builds on work done through the success of the One-on-One Support Program, the City's COVID-responses to business challenges, and efforts in attracting new investments to Edmonton. To understand best practices, six major Canadian cities were contacted to find out what economic development departments are doing to support their local businesses. A few key insights were uncovered:

- Equity-based economic development is in early-stages of evolution (see GBA+ section for more details).
- Engagement with economic development partners and the business community was identified to ensure needs were being addressed.
- Municipalities typically categorized their support either by life cycle stage (e.g., new entrepreneur) or industry-type.

Administration maintains a holistic understanding of these touchpoints to help businesses navigate the City. While some cities undertake a sector-based approach and create sector-based expertise, with the presence of Edmonton Global (which focuses on priority sectors), Innovate Edmonton and Explore Edmonton, the City is able to reach across sectors. In this way, the Business Friendly Edmonton team is able to be the experts about the City and its processes regardless of the sector or industry of a specific business.

A set of guiding principles has been developed to inform how Administration implements the services, and interacts with partners and businesses. These principles reflect the working relationships within the City of Edmonton, as well as support the direction of The City Plan.

Guiding Principles for Business Friendly Edmonton:

- Use an equity lens to ensure inclusive participation and equitable access to economic opportunities
- Ensure businesses are at the center of our work
- Strive to move at the speed of business and provide excellent customer service
- Use creativity, innovative approaches and strong relationships to build the City with business partners and community
- Use smart strategy and good data

The draft performance measures specific to Action 18, which Business Friendly Edmonton will implement, are:

- Number of clients using the program

Attachment 1

- Satisfaction of clients using programs
- Percentage of respondents across Canada that identify Edmonton as a place to live, visit and invest in (ConnectEdmonton)
- Total construction value of Final Investment Decisions resulting from investment leads
- Employment created by Final Investment Decisions resulting from investment leads