



**SMALL ECONOMY WORKS**  
**Strategic Plan**  
2022-2025



## The Context

While youth in rural, remote, Northern and Indigenous communities face unique challenges, increasing levels of education, employment, and self-employment in these communities indicates a promising trend.

This has resulted in youth increasingly wishing to participate in the economy in their own communities, and on their own terms.

Further, Indigenous entrepreneurs in particular are creating new businesses at nine times the Canadian average (RBC, Building Bandwidth 2020). As Canada works towards the advancement of Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, there is growing interest in, and exciting opportunities to look towards “Indigenomics” as a way to “call into visibility the relevance of an Indigenous worldview into today’s modern economy” (Hilton CA, 2021). An Indigenous approach to economics is one rooted in values such as reciprocity, renewal, and respect rather than an abject commitment to classic economic development theory.

But as we look towards adopting more sustainable business models, approaches must consider how the digital economy has transformed every sector across the country. While demand for capital, digital innovation, and skills is accelerating, young people living in rural, remote, Northern and Indigenous communities remain disadvantaged and underrepresented when it comes to tooling up for, and participating in, the digital economy. Indigenous workers in particular are much more likely to work in occupations projected to decrease in the next decade than occupations projected to increase (Ahead by a Decade, 2020). This challenge is compounded by a lack of training and infrastructure, ongoing barriers to internet access, and the legacy of colonial policies.

Our organization seeks to address these challenges and opportunities by developing imaginative and unique opportunities to spur innovation. We serve rural, remote, Northern and Indigenous youth to help them influence the changing business, education and employment market in a holistic, long-term and culturally resonate way. Our work offers unique experiences for young people to imagine, design and implement new ideas to help their communities thrive.



Vision

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Thriving, sustainable, and vibrant small communities.

Mission

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Invigorating small economies and communities through culturally responsive and locally adapted entrepreneurial training and social innovation initiatives.

## Mandate

Small Economy Works believes that people who are equipped with entrepreneurial mindsets and skills, and who are engaged with and supported by their community have the power to create positive and lasting change. As a national leader in social entrepreneurship in Northern Canada, we create platforms, programs, and opportunities to support individuals and communities to thrive. Our services include capacity building and training delivery, digital platform development, program development, community engagement, and network building.

As part of our commitment to meaningful long-term social impact, we work directly with - and within - three levels of influence:



### Individuals

We support Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants of our programs who come from remote and rural communities to gain knowledge, skills and confidence through our leadership and entrepreneurial training.



### Institutions

We support Northern-based institutions to develop and offer innovative and skills-based programming to meet employer and market demands within schools, post-secondary institutions, and community-led initiatives



### Communities

We work intently to ensure that our offering is in line with community values, rooted in Indigenous cultures and Northern realities, and reflective of local knowledge and priorities.

## Values

### Reciprocity

We prioritize building trusting relationships in the communities in which we work, and across our diverse organization. We strive to lead by example in mutual knowledge, sharing and listening deeply to different perspectives and life experiences.

### Reconciliation & Decolonization

Our work seeks to uphold the principles of the UN's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, by promoting full and effective participation of Indigenous People in our program development and delivery. We respect and promote Indigenous Peoples' right to remain distinct and pursue their own visions of economic and social development and prosperity. For more information on how our work upholds the principles of UNDRIP and the Calls to Action, see our Reconciliation Action Plan.

### Collaboration

We bring together youth, Elders, artists, educators, and entrepreneurs and foster dialogue and innovation on locally-driven responses to community challenges.

### Innovation

We foster an environment in which everyone is a leader as much as they are a learner, and no idea is too small. We experiment, take on challenges, adapt in the face of challenges, and embody an entrepreneurial mindset in all that we do.

### Openness to Dialogue

We incorporate humility in our learning processes - exploring what we're getting right, and where we need to improve. We apply this learning to our work and engage our participants and partners to support our continued growth and improvement.

### Person-Centered

We seek to know and understand each of our participants individually - their life circumstances, motivations, desires, and unique needs - to ensure our programs, materials, and support meet them where they are at.

### Sustainability

We build local capacity, resources, and leadership so that the entrepreneurial ecosystem can thrive over time. We address systemic gaps to ensure meaningful long-lasting change in communities.



# The Challenges & Opportunities We Are Tackling

We believe that youth should be the leading voice and movement in generating new and better opportunities in their communities, and be given the opportunity to upskill and lead positive social and economic change without having to leave home.

Our work centers around the following six trends as we work to advance our Mission and Vision.

National Trend	How Small Economy Works supports these trends
1. Remigration out of cities may lead to greater prosperity in small communities.	We foster local leadership and economic opportunities within small communities.
2. Indigenomics, reconciliation, and decolonization are characterizing a changing economy.	Our approach and curriculum focus on decolonizing assumptions and centering Indigenous and local knowledge.
3. Democratized educational credentials are being recognized mainstream.	We partner with Educational Institutions to credentialize our programs and encourage self-driven learning through our online platforms.
4. Young people are able to pursue their dreams in their communities.	We provide training in entrepreneurialism and foster small economies within small, remote, and Northern communities.
5. Technology supports career readiness and success.	We provide online learning tools and platforms to support individuals with education, career readiness, and entrepreneurial training.
6. Programs and services for youth are also being designed by youth.	Our youth participants and alumni provide feedback and their interests and passions drive the curriculum on entrepreneurship.

# How we influence change

## Partnering with local organizations

Partnering with local organizations and institutions to design and deliver localized training and mentoring programs to empower individual to help build their community's future.

## Cultivating the ecosystem

We form partnerships to share insights on e-learning, social innovation, and employment support.

## Connecting individuals to opportunities

We form partnerships to share insights on e-learning, social innovation, culturally informed training, and employment support.



## Transforming the system

We demonstrate the positive impact entrepreneurial activity can have in small communities and work to decolonize and indigenize small economy initiatives.

## Integrating our programming

We work with academic institutions and community partners to integrate experiential entrepreneurial training

## Engaging in ongoing learning

We evaluate our impact through ongoing learning, self-reflections and assessment, open dialogue, and multi-model evaluation tools.

## Our Approach to Localization

Our approach is rooted in the idea that solutions to community challenges can be found in addressing the underlying factors that help - and sometimes hinder - the ability for small communities to thrive. Therefore, our approach puts historical context, geography, people, culture, wellness, and localization at the core of our work. The approach is as much about process as it is about outcomes.

### How we apply our localization approach:

- **Ground** our work in the cultures we engage with through centering local leadership, local assets, knowledge and traditions, and connection to land and place
- **Blend** an exploration of self, community, and enterprise, and their interconnections; focus on wellness and mental health as an integral part of programming
- **Support** participants by meeting them where they're at, at all stages of their personal and professional journeys
- **Design** and continuously adapt programs for, and with, young people, and Indigenous people, and ensure programming centers their perspectives and ideas
- **Sustain** our impact through deliberate and meaningful capacity building of local staff, interns and partners



Small Economy Works team - Spring 2022

## Our Team

Small Economy Works comprises multi-generational and multicultural business, community development, educational and cultural leaders, and experts from across the country.

We seek to hire Indigenous staff in all core elements of the organization's structure - leadership, program design, and program implementation. We work towards instituting non-hierarchical power structures and collaborative working relationships throughout our organization.

We know equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) practices support increased innovation, creativity, and economic success among organizations. Prioritizing EDI in all that we do, and applying equity principles to our hiring practices is vital to our impact as an organization.



Senior NWT Adviser, Lois Philipp, instructing a cohort of participants in Fort Providence.

# The Inspire Program

## Quick Stats

Created in  
**2015**

Created in 2015, our flagship “Inspire” Program is a 12-week entrepreneurial leadership training experience currently being offered in Nunavik, Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, and Yukon.

**12** week  
entrepreneurial leadership training program

As of 2022, we have delivered more than 25 Inspire training programs across the North. Our Inspire Program currently engages youth from remote, rural, and Northern communities. More than 85% of our program participants to date identify as Indigenous - Inuit, First Nations and Métis.

**85%**  
of program participants identify as Indigenous

In the next two years, we seek to ensure the Inspire Program is a sustained offering embedded within - and delivered by - partner organizations and educational institutions in three of the Northern Territories.

**25+**  
training programs delivered since 2015

**250+**  
participants across three territories





# 3-Year Strategic Vision

Given that our work is iterative in nature, our learnings from our flagship “Inspire” Program will help us inform our wider strategic goals and objectives as we continue to pilot, adapt and scale the program. For the next two years, we will focus on integrating this learning into our organization, which will help us refine our strategic priorities for the wider ambitions of Small Economy Works.

In the next three years, *Small Economy Works seeks to make tangible contributions toward local community economic development through thought leadership and program offerings in e-learning, social innovation, culturally informed training, and employment support.*

## Goals & Objectives 2022-2025

### Program Goals

#### 1. Design, reach, and impact

Refine and solidify the Inspire program’s design, infrastructure, and impact, and collect evidence to prove its effectiveness and deepen the impact and outcomes for graduates.

#### 2. Scaling through partnerships

Build the infrastructure and partnerships to test models of incorporating the Inspire Program into existing educational or community institutions and enact the optimal model.

### Strategic Goals

#### 3. Real-life application

Develop a platform and program for Inspire Graduates and other entrepreneurs to test their ideas, skills and knowledge in their communities.

#### 4. Thought leadership and learning

Share knowledge and learning to influence e-learning, social innovation, culturally-informed programs. Identify and act upon gaps and opportunities to influence entrepreneurial skills development and community economic transformation.

### Operational Goals

#### 5. Sustainability and Governance

Strengthen operational effectiveness (including organizational structure, communications, HR, and financial stability) to achieve organizational goals and deliver on our mission.

