



# UNLOCKING THE POWER OF YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

An Action Plan for Canada  
**2014**

**Action**   
*entrepreneurship*  
GROWING YOUNG ENTERPRISE  
FAIRE GRANDIR LA JEUNE ENTREPRISE

**futurpreneur**   
canada™  
fuel for young enterprise

# TAKING ACTION



Outlining key recommendations from over 1,000 Canadian entrepreneurs and leaders, *Unlocking the Power of Youth Entrepreneurship: An Action Plan for Canada* represents the next step in advancing youth entrepreneurship in our country.

All of us must take up the torch to champion young entrepreneurs and help to build the pillars needed to ensure their success. Over the next two years, we at Futurpreneur Canada will undertake the actions that entrepreneurs and leaders assigned to us. We will also work with our partners and stakeholders to prioritize and collaboratively address other recommendations.

As you act on any of these recommendations, or take other innovative steps to help young entrepreneurs establish or expand their businesses, please let us know. To promote the work already underway and identify opportunities for further collaboration, we encourage you to share information about your programs and plans to support youth entrepreneurship on [Action Entrepreneurship Link](#), an online inventory of programs and activities to advance youth entrepreneurship.

If we work together, by 2016 we can implement this action plan, creating more entrepreneurs ready to propel our economy forward.

**Julia Deans**  
CEO, Futurpreneur Canada



@Futurpreneur / #AECanada

[actionentrepreneurship.ca](http://actionentrepreneurship.ca)

## STAKEHOLDERS



Academic institution



Community



Corporation  
(industry, media,  
financial institution, etc.)



Government



Non-profit organization,  
association



Small business /  
Entrepreneur



All  
stakeholders

# ENTREPRENEURS MATTER

---



At the heart of Canadian society, young entrepreneurs work and dream. Risk-takers and trail-blazers, they exist to innovate. They are creative, productive and daring. They work hard, they give back and they play a vital role in our economy.

Entrepreneurs head the small and medium enterprises that make up 98 per cent of all businesses in Canada. They create almost half of all jobs, and generate nearly a third of our gross domestic product. From disruptive technologies that abruptly shift the research and development landscape, to new ways of conducting age-old enterprises, entrepreneurs' ideas, inventions, products and services transform the way we live, work and play.

Since half of all business owners in Canada will retire in the next decade, and with youth unemployment more than double the rate for older age groups, the time is right to take decisive actions. Now is the time to nurture and encourage more young adults to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams instead of relying on traditional employment. Their success—and their willingness to learn from failure—is critical to the future health of our economy. Young

entrepreneurs can replace retiring business owners and create a strong and creative entrepreneurial sector that will keep growing and keep pace with the exciting opportunities that changing technology offers.

There is enormous potential to learn from those who have already chosen the entrepreneurial path and the business and non-profit leaders, policymakers, academics and others that work alongside them. *Unlocking the Power of Youth Entrepreneurship: An Action Plan for Canada* is the product of their insights, ideas and experience.

All parts of society have a role to play in fostering youth entrepreneurship: governments, industry and business associations, non-profit organizations, the financial sector, media, entrepreneurs themselves and their families and communities. This action plan outlines the responsibilities of each, with targeted recommendations. By working together, stakeholders can seize the opportunities that young people themselves say their hopes and desires represent. Acting in concert to help them achieve their goals will in turn create a more vibrant and prosperous Canada.



Sixteen per cent of 18 to 33-year-olds reported that they intend to fulfill their entrepreneurial dreams within a year, according to a recent national survey for Intuit Canada.

# DEVELOPING THE ACTION PLAN

---



This plan is the direct result of an initiative called Action Entrepreneurship: Growing Young Enterprise. For the last 18 months, Futurpreneur Canada (formerly the Canadian Youth Business Foundation) has been exploring ways to increase the number and success of businesses begun by young entrepreneurs. This work is intended to encourage more young people to see starting their own business as a viable career option.

As Canada's only national non-profit organization providing financing, mentoring and other support to entrepreneurs aged 18 to 39, Futurpreneur Canada has assisted more than 6,900 people\* as they created new enterprises. These businesses are responsible for 27,600 new jobs\*, and the \$201-million increase in tax revenues\* they have generated.

Since late 2013, Futurpreneur Canada has engaged more than 1,000 of Canada's best and brightest young entrepreneurs, business and non-profit leaders, policymakers, educators and government leaders.

Through interviews, roundtable discussions and a national survey, participants identified the major challenges inhibiting youth entrepreneurship and the best ways to overcome those challenges.

On May 13-14, 2014, Futurpreneur Canada held the Action Entrepreneurship Canadian Summit. At the Summit, participants agreed on the essential elements of this action plan.

Entrepreneurs identified four ingredients necessary for success-ready entrepreneurs: Confidence, Competence, Capital, and Connections - "the four Cs."

This action plan is organized around three pillars required to make sure entrepreneurs achieve "the four Cs." The first, from which the others flow, is **building confidence** in entrepreneurship as a viable career path. The second is **earlier and ongoing education and experience**. The third is access to the capital and connections required to support the **launch and growth** of new enterprises.

Within each pillar, there are specific recommendations assigned to different stakeholders, from provincial and federal governments to industry associations and non-profit organizations, financial institutions, parents and communities, and entrepreneurs themselves. Some stakeholders, such as provincial governments, have more extensive roles to play, given their broad jurisdiction. It is possible to read only the recommendations for a particular stakeholder, but support for young entrepreneurs will only occur if all stakeholders work together and understand the context in which all of these recommendations occur.

\*From inception in 1996 to June 30, 2014

## THE FOUR “Cs”

ENTREPRENEURIAL ESSENTIALS	CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESS-READY ENTREPRENEURS
<b>Confidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Know entrepreneurship is a viable career option</li><li>• Overcome fears of failure and going into debt</li><li>• Receive family and community support for entrepreneurship</li></ul>
<b>Competence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Undertake relevant, useful entrepreneurship education about starting and expanding a business</li><li>• Participate in low-risk opportunities to gain hands-on entrepreneurship experience before starting their own business</li><li>• Seek resources to expand their skills</li></ul>
<b>Capital</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Know what financing they need and access potential sources</li><li>• Secure start-up funding</li><li>• Obtain additional funding to expand the business</li></ul>
<b>Connections</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with mentors with the time and ability to support them</li><li>• Participate in a network of peers</li><li>• Amass support from governments, industry associations, non-profits, mentors to make connections to start or expand their business</li></ul>

# PILLAR 1:

---



## Building Confidence and Competence

For young entrepreneurs to be truly successful, they require the confidence to take chances, embrace failure and perceive entrepreneurship as a viable career option. Young people gain confidence by increasing their competencies.

## PILLAR 1: Building Confidence and Competence

---



Whenever Nadine Duguay, Executive Director of 21inc., is trying to encourage young entrepreneurs who are struggling to establish their own businesses, she thinks of her inspiration: a man who has risen from the ashes.

Gene Fowler built Fatkat Animation Studios from a dream to a fast-growing company that employed more than 100 people in the small New Brunswick town of Miramichi. The Canadian success story was widely celebrated, as Fowler brought cutting-edge animation techniques and digital technology to popular shows like “Family Guy” from a Maritime community in desperate need of new jobs and a new start. But in 2009, after Fowler expanded too quickly, the company failed. The resulting unemployment and disappointment prompted the community to lash out at Fowler. The local newspaper launched a multi-week series, dissecting Fowler’s management failures. In the immediate aftermath of Fatkat’s demise, Fowler was devastated.

Almost immediately, though, Fowler started another animation and games studio with a different business model: Loogaroo. Instead of employees, Loogaroo uses freelancers. Not only did Fowler learn from his earlier mistakes, he is passing that knowledge on to young entrepreneurs, through TEDx talks and mentoring. His example is one Duguay draws upon in her leadership role at a non-profit organization that fosters youth entrepreneurship.

“Something like this could have destroyed or discouraged anyone,” Duguay says of Fowler’s reaction to the failure of Fatkat and the public flaying he took afterwards. “He didn’t get discouraged. He basically stuck it to them: ‘You tried to tear me down but it didn’t work – here I am.’”

Duguay admires Fowler’s courage. His is the kind of resiliency that young entrepreneurs need to learn from. “It’s inspiring to see someone who faced so much adversity with the courage to launch again. He has my utter admiration,” she says.

“My parents were entrepreneurs. From an early age they taught me how to fend for myself and instilled in me a sense of resourcefulness and ‘do it yourself.’ So I did it myself and continue to do it myself every day.”

– Gene Fowler, Founder, Loogaroo, in an interview with Startup Kitchen.



## ACTION ITEMS

- 1** Celebrate successful entrepreneurs and showcase role models in schools, in the media, and at public events, to help build the confidence of youth, their parents and communities and to normalize entrepreneurship as a sound career choice.
- 2** Praise resiliency and learning from failures, as well as successes.
- 3** Create incentives and support, from government tax credits to businesses opening up supply chains, to reduce the risks and costs of being a new entrepreneur.

“There are always going to be doubters and people who say ‘No,’ but you have to believe in yourself and just go out there and do it to prove them wrong. Don’t be afraid to fail, because those are times that will make you better and get you closer to success.”

– Harjas Dogra, Co-founder, GrandezVous





## STAKEHOLDER-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS



### **Federal government:**

- Use federal resources to promote and support entrepreneurship as a viable career path and to encourage related skills development.
- Support and encourage pan-Canada adoption of promising provincial practices to promote financial literacy and the development of entrepreneurial skills.
- Offer more rewards and recognition, like BDC's Resiliency Award, to celebrate entrepreneurial success stories and examples of recovering from business failures. This could occur in conjunction with major events such as Global Entrepreneurship Week or Small Business Week.



### **Provincial governments:**

- Create more competitions and other opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs to gain hands-on experience and exposure to entrepreneurship and to make connections.



### **Media (local and national):**

- Profile entrepreneurs and share their stories of success and failure on a regular basis to demonstrate the value of learning financial, life and business skills.



### **Industry associations, federations and chambers of commerce:**

- Create more competitions, co-op and internship roles and other opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs to engage directly with members, gain hands-on experience and make connections.
- Encourage members to speak to post-secondary classes and volunteer for entrepreneur-in-residence roles.



### **Non-profits that support young entrepreneurs, including Futurpreneur Canada:**

- Promote, reward and recognize entrepreneurs and mentors who have achieved success as well as those who have experienced and recovered from business failure.
- Encourage clients to be role models and mentors, sharing their stories of success and learning from failure with students, young entrepreneurs and the media.
- Create a speakers' bureau of entrepreneurs to promote the value of entrepreneurship to students and teachers, relevant community groups and the media.
- Create an Entrepreneur Week or Entrepreneur Day event for primary and high schools to showcase entrepreneurs' stories, potentially during Global Entrepreneurship Week.
- Promote Startup Weekends and other activities that deliver programs to support young entrepreneurs across Canada.
- Offer more competitions and other opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs throughout Canada to access expert advice and guidance, financing and connections to accelerate their businesses.
- Deliver programs, alongside community partners, to reach newcomers and aspiring entrepreneurs who do not attend post-secondary school.



### **Aspiring young entrepreneurs:**

- Establish entrepreneurship clubs open to students from all faculties, and build connections with entrepreneurs and organizations that could fund or support them, through start-up and small business 'crawls,' networking events, and by hosting speakers who are entrepreneurs, financiers and others who support young entrepreneurs.

“It’s in our nature to be terrified of failure, but as an entrepreneur you need to be prepared to fail all the time ... It comes with a lot of hard work, a lot of disappointment and a lot of missing out on certain things, but the reality is that the joy and excitement of building something that’s yours far outweighs any of that fear of failure.”

– Barbara McLean-Stollery, President, Executive Airways Grooming Services

## PILLAR 2:

---



# Enhancing Education and Experience

Teaching entrepreneurship at all levels of education, enhancing financial literacy skills and providing practical start-up experience—earlier and to a broader audience—will help build a culture of entrepreneurship among young people.

## PILLAR 2: Enhancing Education and Experience

---



When 24-year-old Harjas Dogra conceived the idea of a social networking platform for planning, selling and managing events, he was a fourth-year student at Toronto's Ryerson University. He was also chairing the Ted Rogers Management Conference. Dogra's business, GrandezVous, emerged from a challenge. He wanted to apply technology to make the existing conference registration process more efficient, while expanding opportunities for participants to network, connect and stay in touch after an event. The hardware and software solution Dogra and his partner George Phu developed was a hit when they launched it at the conference. They needed specific education and the help of experienced mentors, though, to make their business a success.

Through Futurpreneur Canada's Spin Master Innovation Fund, Dogra and Phu got the education and experience they needed. Futurpreneur Canada's mentoring program matched the pair with an experienced mentor. The new entrepreneurs attended a two-day Innovation Launch Pad Workshop. Executives gave them advice, guidance and contacts. They completed a design thinking/innovation workshop at Deloitte and participated in a two-day Accelerator Workshop. Deloitte facilitated a real-time crowd-sourcing activity with Dogras and Phu. Lawyers from Dentons led comprehensive workshops, providing legal context and expertise. And at the

Action Entrepreneurship Canadian Summit, Dogra and Phu attended workshops on networking, sales and financing.

The targeted education led Dogra and Phu to change their project in critical ways. From Vicki Saunders, the CEO of SheEO, they learned how to connect, collaborate and clinch a sale by asking for it at the end of a conversation, rather than following up later. They changed their practice and improved sales.

"I have a full schedule, and it's often hard to find time to expand my skills in new areas through formal education," says Dogra. "Learning through experience, workshops, conversations with experienced people and accelerators is a great way for me to gain relevant, useful skills and expand my knowledge in areas that will benefit my business."



## ACTION ITEMS

- 1** Teach entrepreneurship earlier and more effectively, using experiential approaches, throughout elementary and high school (Kindergarten to Grade 12), so youth see starting their own businesses as a viable career option.
- 2** Instill financial literacy (numeracy, budgeting) and life skills (self-motivation, persistence, creativity) in all students throughout their school years.
- 3** Encourage students to learn from failure, rather than create a culture in which failure is punished or scorned. A major challenge many would-be entrepreneurs face is overcoming their fear of failure. Targeted education and relevant experience help young people build the confidence that is so essential to entrepreneurs (a characteristic covered in more detail in the previous section).
- 4** Offer entrepreneurship courses and programs to post-secondary students in all disciplines, not just business, and reduce barriers to cross-faculty collaboration.
- 5** Expand and promote extracurricular programs, competitions, internships and co-op placements that provide low risk, hands-on exposure and practical entrepreneurial opportunities.

“In the early stages, everything is about cash flow, so that was the most important point to master. I had to know how the numbers looked and what they meant. Most businesses fail because of cash flow.”

– Jasmine Gervais, Vice-President, Operations and Co-Founder of Orangerine Inc., an interactive Montreal-based agency specializing in content for the web and other digital platforms.



## STAKEHOLDER-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS



### All stakeholders:

- Inform and support Canada's new Financial Literacy Leader's efforts to strengthen Canadians' financial literacy and ensure that youth entrepreneurship is on the agenda.



### Federal government:

- Use federal resources to promote and support entrepreneurship as a viable career path and to encourage financial literacy and other related skills development.
- Support and encourage pan-Canada adoption of promising provincial practices to promote financial literacy and the development of entrepreneurial skills.



### Provincial governments:

- Provide provincial self-employment programs and benefits, and make benefits more accessible.
- Ensure entrepreneurship education for youth is a regular agenda item and area of activity for the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada.
- Build or expand access to 'maker spaces,' like Manitoba's Assent Works, supplying equipment, tools and other resources entrepreneurs need to prototype and test their ideas.
- Promote learning from failure, de-stigmatizing its effects.
- Incorporate entrepreneurship training into the professional development of teachers and guidance counsellors.
- Celebrate teachers and counsellors who expose students to entrepreneurship, through entrepreneur fairs, local business crawls and career days.

#### Primary through high schools:

- Build the skills entrepreneurs need, such as financial literacy, into the curriculum beginning in primary school, as Ontario and Alberta are beginning to do.
- Expand no- or low-risk opportunities for students to experience hands-on entrepreneurship in class, in extra-curricular activities (e.g. a Lemonade Stand app where users create and manage their own lemonade stand business, Junior Achievement-type opportunities to build or sell a product, bringing Startup Weekends into schools), and through high school community service hours (e.g. allow hours with start-up businesses, social enterprises and entrepreneurs to qualify).
- Create 'sharing platforms' for teachers with tools (e.g. database of volunteers for entrepreneurs-in-residence, or speakers with entrepreneurial stories), lesson plans and online forums to seek advice and share best practices.



### **Post-secondary institutions:**

- Include entrepreneurship in the mission statements and objectives of every post-secondary institution, and appoint an entrepreneurship champion or an entrepreneur-in-residence in every faculty.
- Establish entrepreneurship centres accessible to all students and offer cross-faculty programs, multi-disciplinary competitions, incubator or accelerator support and opportunities to connect with entrepreneurs.
- Offer continuing education courses in entrepreneurship to reach the 40 per cent of youth who do not pursue post-secondary education, and to promote life-long learning.
- Integrate entrepreneurship into existing courses and add courses where gaps exist. Offer credit courses for developing business ideas and use non-traditional experiential teaching approaches including 'service learning' (learn theory in class, practice it in the community), and interactive online webinars and courses.
- Promote entrepreneurship and opportunities to work in start-ups and early growth companies through co-op programs, internships and at campus career/job centres.



### **Non-profits that support young entrepreneurs, including Futurpreneur Canada, as well as business associations:**

- Collaborate to promote and expand curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for students to improve their financial literacy and business skills.
- Consider enhancing the financial component of experiential programs like 4H and Junior Achievement to help kids develop business-related financial literacy skills.
- Encourage members and clients to be role models and mentors, and to share their stories of success and learning from failure with students, young entrepreneurs and the media.

“‘Entrepreneurs are born, not made.’ That’s easy to think when the primary place we have encouraged entrepreneurship is in the homes of entrepreneurs. Our linear, left-brain dominated education system has taught many youth how not to be entrepreneurial for so long. Instead, we should give nurturing entrepreneurship a try – especially when our kids are young. Their entrepreneurial potential is enormous.”

– Gary Rabbior, President of the Canadian Foundation for Economic Education

## PILLAR 2: Enhancing Education and Experience

---



### Financial institutions:

- Collaborate with organizations that work with aspiring youth entrepreneurs to build their financial literacy skills, as Capital One does through its Financial Education Challenge, operated in partnership with Enactus.



### Industry associations and chambers of commerce:

- Encourage members to be role models and mentors, and to share their stories of success and learning from failure with students, young entrepreneurs and the media.
- As noted above, offer more rewards and recognition, like BDC's Resiliency Award, to celebrate entrepreneurial success stories and examples of recovering from business failures, perhaps in conjunction with major events such as Global Entrepreneurship Week or Small Business Week.



### Parents:

- Teach children financial literacy skills by exposing them to banking, buying groceries or fundraising for a cause.



## PILLAR 3:

---



# Supporting Launch and Growth

For young entrepreneurs launching and growing businesses, leveraging mentors, networks, financing and favourable regulatory conditions contribute to their long-term success. Young entrepreneurs benefit from expanded services and resources and coordinated efforts across stakeholder groups.



Barbara McLean-Stollery did not set out to become an entrepreneur. Passionate about planes and flying, she was going to school to become an aircraft mechanical engineer in 2005, when an opportunity to change course and enter the aviation service industry presented itself.

The owner of a small aircraft grooming and detail company in Calgary, where McLean-Stollery worked part-time, had decided to retire. Knowing McLean-Stollery's passion for planes, he offered to sell her the business. It seemed like a perfect fit.

McLean-Stollery, though, was just 25, with no assets and no track record as an entrepreneur. When she tried to get a loan, multiple banks turned her down.

"Traditional lenders consistently said 'No' to me," McLean-Stollery remembers. "I was not a traditional start-up, as I was purchasing an established business."

Frustrated but determined, McLean-Stollery Googled "where do you go for money when nobody will lend you money?". The search engine led her to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation (now Futurpreneur Canada).

With the help of a \$10,000 loan from Futurpreneur Canada, McLean-Stollery leveraged an additional \$180,000 in financing so she could purchase

Executive Airways Grooming Services. Today, McLean-Stollery has 25 employees and has expanded the business from a single location to an operation that serves multiple airports in Alberta.

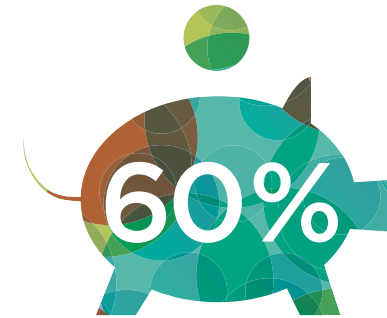
Access to that initial \$10,000 loan was critically important to McLean-Stollery. While more traditional and non-traditional lenders have emerged over the last decade to support start-ups and young entrepreneurs, a gap continues to exist, she believes, in connecting young entrepreneurs to the capital they require to purchase existing businesses. And anyone who has previously declared bankruptcy has great difficulty securing capital, even though failure is often the only way to learn enough to succeed with another enterprise.

**"There is still a need to improve access to capital for young entrepreneurs who have had credit and bankruptcy difficulty in the past, as new financing to these individuals is incredibly limited," says McLean-Stollery.**



## ACTION ITEMS

- 1** Build and promote easy-to-navigate, one-stop-shops to connect young entrepreneurs with the resources to start up and run businesses.
- 2** Coordinate services among organizations that support young entrepreneurs.
- 3** Expand and make it easier to access government incentives for young entrepreneur-led start-ups and for the potential funders of start-ups and growth-stage businesses.
- 4** Reduce tax and regulatory barriers on start-up and new enterprises.
- 5** Expand and promote mentorship programs, including connecting newcomers and young entrepreneurs to retiring business owners and to opportunities to network, share knowledge and learn from peers.
- 6** Provide exposure and connections to mentors and potential customers in new markets domestically and internationally.



More than 60 per cent of entrepreneurs surveyed in a 2010 Business Development Bank of Canada study called current financial obstacles, such as fear of going into debt or losing regular income, their main challenge in creating or taking over a business.



## STAKEHOLDER-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS



### All stakeholders:

- Collaborate to support 'one-stop shops' and comprehensive websites and resource guides to make it easier for young entrepreneurs to find funding, mentorship, training, networks, space and events.
- Expand and leverage technology to better support entrepreneurs and to increase awareness about programs and services, including through simplified websites, phone apps and social media.



### All governments:

- Make it easier to access information and resources.
- Collaborate to create a single point of entry to search, discover and access government materials, services and programs for entrepreneurs such as Industry Canada's Canada Business Network site and BizPal.
- Use online apps and marketing geared toward young Canadians to promote available resources.

- Streamline applications and allow a single application to trigger multiple actions (e.g., applying to register a business triggers other account registrations), as Futurpreneur Canada and BDC have done by sharing a single financing application.
- Connect young entrepreneurs to university researchers and commercialization support through programs similar to the federal government's Collaborative Research and Development Grants.

### Government funding and incentives for young entrepreneurs:

- o Increase the amount of funding, supports and other benefits available to young entrepreneurs by expanding the small business loan and self-employment programs.
- o Provide provincial self-employment programs and benefits, and make benefits more accessible.

“Banks are formula lenders, and many entrepreneurs’ needs don’t fit in a box.”

– Interviewee quoted in Futurpreneur Canada’s *Action Entrepreneurship: Growing Young Enterprise 2014 Roundtable Background*.

### PILLAR 3: Supporting Launch and Growth

---



- o Provide graduates starting businesses with seed funding or with student loan forgiveness or repayment deferral, such as the Ontario government's one-year Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) grace period for entrepreneurs.
- o Encourage young entrepreneurs to buy existing businesses from retiring business owners in a program similar to the RRSP first-time home buyer plan; provide seed capital and tax-free loans, and give owners incentives to sell to their businesses.
- o Help reduce the costs of doing business through policies such as a one-year tax break for start-ups, wage incentives like New Brunswick's One-Job Pledge, subsidies for rental space, and by continuing to reduce red tape and simplify compliance with regulations.

#### Government incentives for investors:

- o Encourage pension funds to add more young entrepreneurs' businesses to their venture capital portfolios.
- o Educate potential angel investors and offer them tax incentives or capital gains exemptions if they sell a business and reinvest in a start-up.

#### Government actions to encourage growth:

- o Reduce impediments to growing new businesses, such as the \$250,000 sales threshold that results in businesses losing the small business tax credit; provide tax credits for businesses that expand within their first two years of operation.
- o Open procurement opportunities to help start-ups and small businesses grow and expand into new markets and make tenders scalable to accommodate growth.
- o Develop a 'first customer' tax credit or other program to encourage established businesses to buy from start-ups.
- o Include young entrepreneurs on trade missions and help them make useful business connections, for example, by having embassies set up 'speed dating for businesses' events, to build international connections.
- o Support mentoring and networking.



#### Provincial governments:

- Work with educators to include networking skills training in the K-to-12 curriculum, as part of life-skills training, and to offer older students in all disciplines training on making connections and communicating with business people and other influencers.
- Create platforms like Mentorship BC to connect young entrepreneurs with organizations that can match them with qualified mentors to meet their specific needs.
- Offer a tax credit to encourage more entrepreneurs and business people to become mentors.



### **Financial institutions:**

- Leverage the loans and services that organizations like Futurpreneur Canada provide to young entrepreneurs to provide more lower-risk loans to young entrepreneurs.
- Train front-line employees on resources available outside of the financial institution so they can guide young entrepreneurs to them.



### **Industry associations, federations and chambers of commerce:**

- Encourage business owners nearing retirement to mentor young entrepreneurs, transfer their knowledge and groom potential successors.
- Offer young entrepreneurs free first-year memberships to provide them with exposure and connections as well as access to resources and discounts on business services.
- Work with young entrepreneurs to create a 'Better Business Bureau-like' validation or rating system and a referral program to help their members feel comfortable purchasing from start-ups.
- Create young entrepreneur divisions of chambers of commerce and business organizations like the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and help young entrepreneurs make connections with members.



“During the next decade, half of Canadian small business owners over age 45, with a maximum of 10 employees, are planning to retire....Small business owners are not adequately prepared for succession and almost one in five said they do not know what will happen to their businesses when they retire.”

– BMO Retirement Institute Report, October 2009



**Non-profits that support young entrepreneurs, including Futurpreneur Canada:**

**Promote access to information and resources:**

- o Provide funding and incentives for young entrepreneurs, including help to buy existing businesses from retiring business owners.
- o Provide information specific to different types of businesses.
- o Act as intermediaries to raise awareness about existing government services and support.
- o Raise awareness about programs and services offered.

**Encourage growth:**

- o Expand Futurpreneur Canada's Expansion Program to encourage more young entrepreneurs to grow their businesses.
- o Develop 'stay-up' programs and resources, including mentorship, for businesses that have moved beyond the two-year start-up phase.

"It was much easier to grow once I landed my first corporate client in the United States, but getting there was an upward battle."

– CEO of successful Canadian technology start-up, quoted in Futurpreneur Canada's *Action Entrepreneurship: Growing Young Enterprise 2014 Roundtable Background*.

- o Collaborate with each other and with business associations to create online and other platforms to make it easy for young entrepreneurs to promote their businesses and find other young entrepreneurs' businesses to patronize.

**Support mentoring and networking:**

- o Collaborate to create and expand online platforms to help young entrepreneurs and mentors connect with each other, join forums for discussion and peer support and to find expert advisers for one-on-one, ad-hoc advice.
- o Consolidate and co-promote platforms with other organizations, or share underlying technology and best practices.
- o Enhance programs like Futurpreneur Canada's Entrepeer to offer forums for young entrepreneurs to seek advice from peers, discuss business topics and secure pro bono or discounted professional services.



Immigrants to Canada show consistently higher levels of entrepreneurial activity than individuals born in Canada.

– Business Development Bank of Canada's BDC Index

### PILLAR 3: Supporting Launch and Growth

---



- o Improve mentor training, expectation-setting and accountability for goals. This could be done online, as Futurpreneur Canada is doing with its 'Crash Courses.'
- o Promote mentorship by recruiting established young entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs in ethno-specific chambers of commerce and newcomer community organizations, highlighting relevant statistics and mentorship success stories and the benefits mentors receive from volunteering.
- o Hold networking events to help entrepreneurs and mentors build their relationships with each other and with others in the organization's network.
- o Leverage Futurpreneur Canada's national presence and international connections to connect young entrepreneurs to mentors who can help them grow in new markets.
- o Continue the Action Entrepreneurship: Growing Young Enterprise initiative and Summit.
- o Encourage young entrepreneurs to become mentors after their business is on a sustainable footing (after five years).



Research has shown that 70 per cent of small businesses that receive mentoring survive for five years or more (double the rate of non-mentored entrepreneurs), and 20 per cent are more likely to experience growth ([www.getmentoring.org](http://www.getmentoring.org)).

“Kevin’s realistic and enthusiastic outlook gave me the confidence and knowledge I needed throughout the ups and downs of starting and running a business. His expertise, connections and experience were powerful resources that prevented me from learning everything ‘the hard way.’

– Lisa von Sturmer, CEO/Founder, Growing City in Vancouver, B.C., about her Futurpreneur Canada mentor Kevin Brennan, Senior Vice-President at EY, and his help in the early stages of her business.



# YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

---



Entrepreneurship cannot grow and thrive in Canada without all stakeholders actively promoting and nurturing this innovative segment of our economy. Ultimately, though, young entrepreneurs themselves have a large role to play in promoting the tremendous benefits of youth entrepreneurship.

Young entrepreneurs will increase their numbers and create a more supportive culture that recognizes the opportunities and the importance that youth entrepreneurship holds for all Canadians by:

- volunteering to speak and share their stories with students, community groups and the media;
- transferring their knowledge and expertise by mentoring others; and
- supporting and using the platforms and resources being developed to help them connect with potential funders, mentors and each other.

Young entrepreneurs offer Canada a tangible opportunity to grow, through the ideas, innovation and insights they capitalize upon. Acting promptly on the thoughtful recommendations developed by participants through Action Entrepreneurship: Growing Young Enterprise will give young entrepreneurs their best chance for success. Their success will, in turn, lead us towards a growing, thriving economy that will support not only these new small- and medium-sized businesses, but whose spin-off benefits will flow throughout Canadian society. Futurpreneur Canada is committed to working alongside our partners to make this vision a reality.



## Young Entrepreneurs ...

- ✓ Create high-value jobs for others
- ✓ Focus on fast-growing, innovative industries
- ✓ Grow their businesses faster than those headed by older owners
- ✓ Use passion and determination to create value for their communities



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

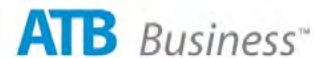
We sincerely thank the following individuals, groups and companies for their support in developing this action plan to expand youth entrepreneurship, and for the work they do every day to fuel young enterprise in Canada.

## Action Entrepreneurship Presenting Sponsors



Foundation for an Entrepreneurial Canada

## Action Entrepreneurship Associate Sponsor



## Action Entrepreneurship 2014 Roundtable Hosts

- [Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency](#)
- [Concordia University](#)
- [EY](#)
- [Industry Canada](#)
- [Paul J. Hill School of Business](#)
- [The University of Winnipeg](#)
- [University of Calgary](#)
- [Université Laval](#)

## A special thank you to:

- Over 1,000 entrepreneurs and leaders who participated in the 2014 Action Entrepreneurship events and activities, in-person and online
- [Speakers](#) and volunteers at 2014 Action Entrepreneurship events
- Futurpreneur Canada's [Board of Directors](#)
- The Action Entrepreneurship Steering Committee
  - o Taline Artinian
  - o Jill Black, J.E. Black & Company Ltd.
  - o Sarah Cheng
  - o Beth Dea
  - o Julia Deans
  - o Marsha Josephs
  - o Rachel Shuttleworth
  - o Tamara Smith
  - o Lesley Wilmot
- Karen Sterling, Ideas & Equities; Scott Newlands, Scott Newlands Creative; Laura Eggertson; and the teams at Counsel PR and Public Good

 @Futurpreneur / #AECanada  
actionentrepreneurship.ca