# IP Roundtable - April 29, 2025

## Building an Inclusive & Sustainable IP Strategy for Rural and Under-Represented Entrepreneurs in Alberta

# Key Takeaways Report

An Elevate IP Alberta Event

**ElevateIP**
ALBERTA

In partnership with

Economic Development Lethbridge

IAC · CAI
Innovation Asset Collective
Collectif d'actifs en innovation

# Building an Inclusive & Sustainable IP Strategy for Rural and Under-Represented Entrepreneurs in Alberta

The Alberta - IP Roundtable for Rural & Under-represented Stakeholders is an essential virtual event designed to address intellectual property (IP) challenges and opportunities unique to rural and under-represented entrepreneurs, including Rural, Indigenous, newcomers, women, and BIPOC communities in Alberta.

## Agenda

**Welcoming Remarks**   1:00 PM - 1:10 PM

**Keynote Reflections**   1:10 PM - 1:25 PM

- **Kevin Dahl | Director, ElevateIP Alberta**
- **Erin Pisko | Vice President of IP Strategy, Innovation Asset Collective**

**Local Insights**   1:25 PM - 1:50 PM

- **ElevateIP Alberta Ecosystem Navigators**

**Instruction & Remo Platform Overview**   1:50 PM - 2:00 PM

**Facilitated Breakout Room Discussions**   2:00 PM - 2:45 PM

- Discussion Group:  Entrepreneurs & Founders
- Discussion Group:  Service Providers & Community Supports
- Discussion Group:  Government Entities

**Breakout Room Reports**   2:45 PM - 3:15 PM

**Final Thoughts & Submissions**   3:15 PM - 3:30 PM

### Event Details

**Tuesday, April 29th, 2025**
1:00 PM - 3:30 PM

**Hosted virtually via Remo Platform**

## Event Link:

https://live.remo.co/e/albertas-ip-roundtable-rural-and

## Renae Barlow

*Vice President, Entrepreneurship & Innovation,*
*Economic Development Lethbridge*

Renae is a seasoned executive with over 30 years of experience in startup leadership and non-profit management. Since joining Economic Development Lethbridge in 2010, she has been instrumental in designing strategic programs that support entrepreneurs across Alberta. Her leadership has guided initiatives like the $9.9M ElevateIP Alberta program and the award-winning WESTEM and RWEIT programs, which champion diverse women entrepreneurs in tech and STEM. Renae also founded three consulting firms focused on organizational development, diversity, and women's wellness. Her dedication to inclusive entrepreneurship is evident in her work with Tecconnect and as a founding member of the Regional Innovation Network of Southern Alberta (RINSA), managing multi-year projects that bring entrepreneurial support to rural, Indigenous, BIPOC, and newcomer communities. Recognized for her contributions, Renae received the YWCA Woman of Distinction award in 2018 and was a nominee for WXN Canada's Most Powerful Women in 2020. Her efforts continue to strengthen Lethbridge's role within the Alberta Innovation Corridor, empowering founders through inclusive, impactful programming.

## Kevin Dahl

*Director, ElevateIP Alberta*

Kevin Dahl is the Director of ElevateIP Alberta at Innovate Calgary, leading initiatives to enhance intellectual property (IP) support for startups across the province. With over two decades of experience in community building, ecosystem development, and technology innovation, Kevin brings a multifaceted perspective to Alberta's innovation landscape. Under Kevin's leadership, ElevateIP Alberta focuses on creating programs and partnerships that expand access to IP expertise, particularly for historically excluded groups such as Indigenous communities, women, newcomers, BIPOC and rural entrepreneurs. His commitment to inclusive innovation continues to drive meaningful change within Alberta's startup ecosystem.

His career spans senior roles in fintech, hospitality tech, telecommunications, music, and startup incubation. Notably, Kevin has held positions such as Director of Alberta at Plug and Play Tech Center, Advisor at Platform Calgary, and Practice Lead at Robots and Pencils Inc. He also co-founded evrywork, a platform aimed at fostering collaborative work environments. A self-described "geek at heart," Kevin is passionate about technology and its societal impact. His diverse background includes expertise in marketing, business development, sales, project management, product development, operations, and human resources. This breadth of experience enables him to approach challenges with a holistic and inclusive mindset.

## Erin Pisko

*Vice President of IP Strategy, Innovation Asset Collective*

In her role, she leverages her extensive experience as a leader in the IP field to support companies in building IP strategies that enable growth and create sustainable value. She has spearheaded numerous initiatives that advocate for the importance of IP Strategy across the innovation ecosystem. She teaches the creation of effective IP strategies, breaking things down into series of manageable tasks to support a company's ability to grow. With a career that spans decades in roles across the innovation ecosystem, Ms. Pisko has honed her skills and guides companies in capitalising on their initial discovery to build Canadian success stories and leverage the power of intellectual property.

Prior to joining IAC, Erin has worked at major Canadian law firms and as an in-house IP Strategist in both small Canadian startups and a large multinational organization. She has considerable experience developing tactical internal processes to support innovation and assisting companies from different industries enhance their innovation strategies. Erin is a registered patent agent in both Canada and the United States and holds two engineering degrees: civil and environmental. It was during her master's program that Erin discovered her passion for IP. Since then, she has dedicated her career to this field and can be heard often parroting the phrase "IP is a teachable skill".

# Executive Summary

In response to the recommendations outlined in the February 2025 IP Roundtable: Turning the Tide on Canada's Declining IP Ownership, a second province-wide dialogue was convened to address one of the most urgent gaps identified: the lack of equitable IP access and support for Alberta's rural and under-represented entrepreneurs.

Held on April 29, 2025, the Inclusive IP Roundtable brought together more than 100 participants from across Alberta's innovation ecosystem—including entrepreneurs and founders, service providers and community supports, and government and policy makers. The purpose was clear: to listen, learn, and act.

# Why This Roundtable Mattered

The February roundtable made one truth unmistakably clear: Alberta cannot build a meaningful or competitive IP strategy while entire communities remain excluded. Indigenous, rural, newcomer, women, and BIPOC entrepreneurs continue to face disproportionate barriers to IP education, funding, and legal protection. This roundtable was intentionally designed to centre their voices and lived experiences, and to translate their insights into tangible ecosystem and policy recommendations.

**"It's truly my pleasure to welcome you to today's inclusive IP roundtable,"** said Renae Barlow, Vice President of Entrepreneurship and Innovation at Economic Development Lethbridge. **"But we must recognize the urgency of action. We have listened long enough."**

Kevin Dahl, Director of ElevateIP Alberta, spoke with candor about the systemic disconnects that brought participants to the table:
**"We're here because the status quo is failing many of our most promising innovators."**

Erin Pisko, Vice President of IP Strategy at the Innovation Asset Collective, reinforced the purpose of the gathering:

> An IP strategy isn't about filing more patents. It's about freedom to operate, access to markets, and protection of value—especially for those who haven't had a seat at the table.

## What We Set Out to Do

Participants engaged in facilitated discussions within homogenous peer groups (entrepreneurs, service providers, government), responding to three core areas of questions:

1. **Where do the biggest gaps in IP education, funding, and access exist?**
2. **What innovative approaches or partnerships could better engage and support under-represented entrepreneurs?**
3. **What tools, resources, or system-level shifts would make IP support more accessible, actionable, and culturally appropriate?**

Through this process, we aimed to:
- Identify persistent and emerging IP barriers facing rural and equity-deserving entrepreneurs;
- Capture community-driven ideas and system-level innovations to increase IP participation;
- Propose Alberta-specific, actionable recommendations to build a more inclusive and effective IP ecosystem.

## What We Heard

Across all groups, participants consistently called for practical, personalized, and culturally safe IP support—accessible not just to those in major urban centres, but to all innovators, regardless of location, background, or business stage.

**"I don't need another course. I need someone I trust to help me file my patent."**
**— Entrepreneur Participant**

From rural entrepreneurs navigating poor broadband and geographic isolation, to Indigenous creators seeking protection for traditional knowledge and collective rights, the system was described repeatedly as "too slow, too centralized, and too one-size-fits-all."

# Key Outcomes & Insights

**Five dominant themes emerged from the roundtable:**

- **Trust and Navigation**

Founders voiced a desire for case manager-style IP Navigators who could walk alongside them throughout the business lifecycle—not just offer one-off advice or static resources.

- **Recognition of Non-Patent IP**

Many equity-deserving communities create and protect value through non-patent IP such as cultural knowledge, branding, art, and trade secrets. Alberta's IP supports must expand beyond a patent-centric model to reflect these realities.

- **Systemic Fragmentation**

Participants described a disjointed support landscape where entrepreneurs are often forced to restart with every new program or referral—delaying critical filings and reducing confidence in the system.

- **Decentralization and Place-Based Access**

There is strong appetite for community-delivered programming—IP education and advisory services held in community halls, rural libraries, band offices, and newcomer hubs. Support must be visible, culturally contextualized, and easy to access without relying on broadband, LinkedIn, or formal networks.

- **Accountability and Tracking**

Government and ecosystem leaders acknowledged that equity-related metrics remain insufficiently tracked. Who is being served—and who is not—remains largely invisible in current reporting systems.

> **"** We have a good system, but it's not built for the people we say we want to serve. The system needs to be tailored, not the people.
> — Service Provider Participant **"**

This roundtable surfaced both the frustration and the solutions. What's needed now is not another report—but urgent, coordinated implementation. Alberta has the talent, the infrastructure, and the will.

**The only question is: will we build a system that truly works for all?**

# Drilling down into the DATA

Alberta's entrepreneurs—particularly those in rural communities and from under-represented groups—delivered a powerful, and at times emotional, message:

**the current IP system feels inaccessible, opaque, and misaligned with their lived reality.**

The frustration was clear. So was the hunger for a better path.
This section captures what rural, Indigenous, BIPOC, women, and newcomer entrepreneurs shared about the IP journey—where it fails, where it holds promise, and what they urgently need Alberta to change.

**1. Barriers to Protecting and Managing Ideas**

**Discussion Question:** What are the biggest challenges you face in protecting and managing your ideas—and how do these challenges reflect your experience as a rural, Indigenous, newcomer, women, or BIPOC entrepreneur?

**Cross-Cutting Themes:**
- Overwhelming Complexity: IP terminology is unfamiliar; many can't distinguish between strategy and filing.
- Cost and Gatekeeping: Legal and technical fees are prohibitive.
- Systemic Delay: Program shifts, slow timelines, and inconsistent rules create paralysis.
- Trust Gaps: Many under-represented founders feel unsafe or uncertain asking for help.

**Rural & BIPOC Lens:**

"I filed a provisional on my own, I filed a PCT and still can't get help."

"Time is limited. IP process is difficult and not efficient so I have to focus on revenue."

"Access to networks is unequal. We have to choose IP or making."

## 2. What Entrepreneurs Need to Succeed

**Discussion Question:** What specific supports, resources, or changes would help you confidently secure, understand, and benefit from IP – and how could Alberta act now to make this easier?

### Key Calls for Action:
- Decentralized, Local Support: Founders want someone they trust nearby—not another Zoom course.
- A Central Resource Hub: Centralized but navigable tools that reflect Alberta's jurisdictions and voices.
- IP Navigators & Triage Models: Help understanding what matters for their business at their current stage.
- Plain Language + Sector Examples: Entrepreneurs want relevant, digestible case studies and how-tos.

"I don't need another course. I need someone I trust to help me file my patent."

"IP is so important along with security. I need to understand how to protect it. I felt like I was being tossed around."

"Make IP SRED-eligible. That would get us off to the races."

> " There should be someone on staff—a lawyer or IP strategist—to answer our questions, not just pass us along. "

**3. Lost, Excluded, Overwhelmed: The IP Education Gap**

**Discussion Question:** Where have you felt lost, overwhelmed, or excluded—and what would make IP learning clearer, more accessible, and relevant?

**What's Not Working:**
- Redundancy Without Progress: Many are told to "take this course" repeatedly—without tangible help.
- Unclear Eligibility: Founders waste time on applications only to learn they don't qualify.
- AI & DIY Limits: While AI tools are helpful, founders know they can't replace live expert guidance.

**"We need a triage system. I've gone course after course and still can't get help."**

**"I've been using PatentAI to research Freedom to Operate. That helped more than any workshop."**

**"I own six patents but I'm lost on how to build a business strategy around them."**

## What Entrepreneurs Told Us They Need

❝❝ Give me a local person, not a portal.

❝❝ I need someone who gets my industry, my culture, my community.

❝❝ Tell me what's possible with my idea— not just what's patentable.

❝❝ Don't make me prove I deserve support while I'm trying to survive.

# Breakthrough Ideas & Innovations

Entrepreneurs were not just frustrated—they were deeply insightful. Many offered practical innovations that, if implemented, would shift Alberta's IP ecosystem from one of gatekeeping to one of empowerment.

**Below are some of the most compelling ideas that emerged.**

### 1. Launch an IP Triage System

Entrepreneurs repeatedly asked for a "choose your own IP journey" tool that matches business stage, sector, and identity. The idea: stop overwhelming founders with generic content and start guiding them with personalized pathways.

> "You don't need to clog your whole pipeline when you are looking for one thing."

> "Let the application trigger a task list with the right supports—legal, accounting, mentorship."

### 2. Fund IP Navigators and Case Managers

Entrepreneurs from rural and newcomer communities stressed the need for ongoing support—someone who "walks with them" through their IP journey. This was described as a mix of business coach, translator, navigator, and trusted guide.

> "You don't know what you don't know… having a trusted advisor to support you through the journey is important. It's the first step."

> "A case manager-style expert who supports you throughout the lifecycle would help."

### 3. Video-Based IP Storytelling

Multiple founders called for Alberta to create short, experiential video content featuring real businesses at different stages of the IP journey—especially local, culturally relevant examples.

> "An IP Program could deliver a series of experiential videos at the various stages of IP strategy with specific Alberta resources."

### 4. Make IP SRED-Eligible

To ease the burden of early IP costs, entrepreneurs proposed linking IP activities with existing incentive programs like SR&ED (Scientific Research and Experimental Development). This would allow IP to be part of broader innovation funding.

> "Make IP SRED-eligible. That would get us off to the races."

### 5. Build a Central Resource Hub—with Local Faces

Participants supported a centralized platform, but only if it included real human access and culturally safe design. This wasn't about tech—it was about trust, language, and personalized help.

> "I would love to have a ChatGPT where my data isn't stolen —but that could support the questions."

> "IP advice isn't one-size-fits-all. I want to meet someone who gets where I'm coming from."

# Key Recommendations: What Alberta Must Do Now

Entrepreneurs were crystal clear: Alberta cannot afford to tinker at the margins.

**Below are direct, urgent recommendations derived from the insights of founders across geography, gender, culture, and industry.**

### 1. Launch an IP Triage Model to Avoid Redundant Courses
Alberta must develop a digital triage system that helps entrepreneurs understand where they are in their journey and directs them to appropriate IP tools, experts, or programs—before they waste time on repetitive, irrelevant courses.

> " Deliver IP support that are timely, appropriate, and on pace with the entrepreneur. "

### 2. Fund IP Navigators for Each RIN
Alberta must invest in IP navigators embedded in Regional Innovation Networks (RINs), especially in rural and under-represented regions. These navigators should reflect the communities they serve and have the lived experience and cultural fluency to build trust.

### 3. Create a Central IP Resource Hub with Role-Based Navigation
A province-wide online hub must be developed—but unlike current portals, it must offer role-based navigation (e.g., by founder stage, identity, sector), live chat support, and video content tailored to real-world Alberta examples.

### 4. Make IP Activities SRED-Eligible and Reduce Red Tape
Alberta should advocate to the federal government to make key IP activities eligible for SR&ED credits. Simultaneously, it must sure the the application and intake process is simplified, which is currently a barrier to access.

### 5. Embed Outcome Tracking and Demographic Equity Measures
Alberta must require all IP programs to report on who is accessing services, from what communities, and with what results. This aligns with ESG frameworks and is essential for closing the access gap long-term.

## What We Heard: Voices from Service Providers & Community Supports

Service providers are the frontline translators, triage points, and trust-builders between Alberta's IP systems and its most underserved founders. Their message was direct: the IP ecosystem is not built for rural, Indigenous, newcomer, women, and BIPOC entrepreneurs—and they're burning out trying to fill the gaps.

> **"** We need to go to them. We're asking them to come to us, to come into our systems, our timelines, our language. That's not equitable. **"**

From grant delays to program rigidity to the inability of IP law to handle collective or traditional knowledge, service providers named dozens of structural barriers that they themselves cannot solve—but are being expected to.

**"It's not just about education. We need an entry point where people feel safe first."**

**From grant delays to program rigidity to the inability of IP law to handle collective or traditional knowledge, service providers named dozens of structural barriers that they themselves cannot solve—but are being expected to.**

### 1. Barriers to Inclusive IP Access

**Discussion Question:** Where do you see the biggest gaps in IP education, funding, and resources for rural and under-represented entrepreneurs – and how could these supports be better designed to meet their unique needs?

**Common Themes:**
- Misunderstanding IP vs. Patents: Entrepreneurs confuse IP strategy with filing processes—so do some advisors.
- Overcentralization: Calgary and Edmonton are seen as the only hubs. Rural and Indigenous communities are left behind.
- Legal Misfit: Western legal frameworks ignore community-based ownership models.
- Gatekeeping Through Eligibility: Funding is denied because someone isn't incorporated, isn't in tech, or can't meet timelines.

"Is it IP or patent? Need to bring awareness and education."

"I can commiserate with Indigenous clients—but I don't have an answer for how the law protects community-held knowledge. It doesn't."

## 2. Innovative Approaches & Community-Driven Support

Discussion Question: What innovative approaches or partnerships could help you better engage and support entrepreneurs from rural, Indigenous, newcomer, women, and BIPOC communities?

**Key Innovations:**

- Decentralization & Mobile Delivery: Bring IP education to chambers, community halls, counties—not just accelerators.
- Trusted Cultural Intermediaries: Not just "experts," but culturally aligned first points of contact.
- Coaching + IP Strategy Fusion: Embed IP education in Value Proposition Design, not separate curriculum.
- Story-Driven, Identity-Based Case Studies: Founders need examples that reflect them, their sector, and their region.

"Rural entrepreneurs can tell their story—but they don't know how to tell it technically in terms of IP."

"Gamify IP education. Make it culturally appropriate, community-embedded, and interactive."

"A diversity access point they trust would help them open up and overcome the barriers."

## 3. IP Education & System Navigation

Discussion Question: Do you feel confident guiding clients towards IP support that is accessible and culturally safe—and what tools, resources, or collaborations would strengthen your ability to do so?

**Gaps in Confidence and Tools:**
- Limited Legal Infrastructure: Providers don't have clear referral options for IP lawyers or experts.
- Mismatch with Non-Western Models: Current IP laws don't allow for protection of Indigenous, oral, or communal knowledge.
- Lack of Clear Roadmaps: Even providers don't know what programs are available or how they change.
- Burnout and Underfunding: Service providers are being asked to do more with less, with no continuity funding to sustain relationships.

"The IP system doesn't deal with things that are not individually owned. That's a legal issue."

"The challenge is awareness of who's out there, what the eligibility criteria are, and if programs are even ready for entrepreneurs."

"We need examples. Stories of when IP helped, how it was used. That's what our clients connect with."

### 1. Embed IP Into Business Coaching, Not as a Standalone

Tie IP education into Business Model Canvas (BMC) and Value Proposition Design. Don't separate it from the core strategy.

> **"Funding and resources should be focused on the Value Proposition Canvas."**

### 2. Fund "Cultural Access Points" Within Ecosystems

Support trusted individuals or small organizations that serve as cultural and regional IP triage leads—especially for Indigenous, newcomer, and BIPOC entrepreneurs.

> **"How do Indigenous people relate to something this complex if they don't trust the person they're talking to?"**

### 3. Build an IP Journey Map for Rural Entrepreneurs

Visual tools—customized by identity and region—are needed to show what the process of IP looks like and when different decisions should be made.

> **"They can't see the path—what it looks like going down the IP journey. We need to make this more clear."**

### 4. Add Plain Language + Sector-Specific Examples

Move beyond jargon. Create toolkits that explain what IP means in food, agriculture, software, art, biotech—using real Alberta cases.

> **"Too much jargon. We need plain language training even for the organizations."**

# Key Recommendations from Service Providers

**1. Decentralize IP Education Access—Bring It to Community Halls**
IP programs must deliver in-person IP sessions in rural counties, Indigenous communities, and newcomer centers. Relying solely on urban accelerators is a structural failure.

**2. Fund Cultural Access Points Within Regional Ecosystems**
Fund and train navigators who are trusted in their community to be the first point of contact for IP—especially those who are women, Indigenous, or from newcomer communities.

**3. Create a Central Alberta IP Resource Map—with Real-Time Updates**
**Service providers need an up-to-date portal that clearly outlines:**
- Available programs and how to access them
- Eligibility requirements and timelines
- Culturally appropriate supports and legal referrals

**4. Build Plain Language, Industry-Specific IP Toolkits**
An IP program must develop and distribute case studies and IP guides for sectors underserved by traditional IP frameworks: creative industries, agriculture, biotech, food systems, Indigenous innovation.

**5. Invest in Story-Based Learning and Sector Case Studies**
Incorporate real stories from Alberta's rural and equity-deserving founders into microcredential programs and workshops. IP must feel relevant to feel possible.

## What We Heard: Voices from Government & Public Agencies

Government participants acknowledged both the urgency and the complexity of building a more equitable IP system in Alberta. They recognized that current supports are fragmented, reactive, and difficult to navigate—especially for rural and under-represented entrepreneurs. The need for policy alignment, shared accountability, and measurable progress was a common refrain.

**"People don't even know what to ask for money FOR."**

**"Education needs to be available and accessed EARLY and BROADLY. And the basics—what is IP—hint: it is not just patents!"**

There was shared agreement: government cannot design from the center and hope inclusion follows. Engagement must be local, early, and informed by lived experience. And success must be measured not just in programs launched—but in outcomes delivered.

## 1. Systemic Gaps in IP Education and Ecosystem Access

**Discussion Question:** How can Alberta strengthen collaboration to better support rural and under-represented entrepreneurs in generating, protecting, and leveraging IP?

**Key Themes:**
- Lack of Early Touchpoints: Entrepreneurs encounter IP too late—after they've missed protection windows.
- Confusion About IP Itself: Many founders think IP means "IP address" or just "a patent."
- No Coordinated Wayfinding: Ecosystem actors don't know who else is doing what—and entrepreneurs are caught in the middle.
- Visibility Gaps: Under-represented groups are often invisible to government programs and metrics.

**"We don't typically see [under-represented groups— understanding where their challenges really are is a first step."**

**"People have already given away information by the time they get to us—it's too late."**

> Can banks be educated on IP so that when people open a bank account, even as a sole prop, they get this information?

## 2. Immediate Actions & Policy Shifts Needed

**Discussion Question:** What immediate actions or policy changes could accelerate a more cohesive, inclusive, and equitable IP ecosystem in Alberta?

**Policy-Level Needs Identified:**
- Make IP a Priority Across Ministries: IP needs to be embedded in economic development, education, and Indigenous relations—not siloed within innovation portfolios.
- Support Non-Traditional IP Pathways: Many cultural, Indigenous, or creative innovations do not fit traditional IP protection models.
- Fix the Funding Bottlenecks: Requirements around incorporation or industry type are excluding too many from access.
- Shift to Bite-Sized, Early Education: Build confidence and awareness before the business is fully formed.

**"What are the protections you have as a sole proprietor vs. incorporation? We need to educate on that."**

Under-represented founders are struck out because they don't incorporate… we need to rethink funding criteria.

## 3. Accountability, Tracking & Long-Term Impact

**Discussion Question:** How should the IP Program track progress, ensure accountability, and measure the success of its IP strategy?

**Gaps Identified:**
- No Long-Term IP Tracking: Programs track outputs (e.g., patents filed), but not outcomes (e.g., commercialization, equity impact).
- No Demographic Data: There's no consistent way to know who is using IP services and who's left out.
- Lack of Cross-Government Integration: Different departments and funders operate in silos, preventing system-wide tracking.

**"We don't track who is filing IP, where they are from, or what barriers they faced to get there."**

" Can we embed IP metrics into our ESG and job-creation frameworks? "

### 1. A Centralized IP Outcomes Dashboard

Government leaders called for a unified, province-wide dashboard to track IP engagement, outcomes, and equity by region and demographic.
*"There is nothing being tracked for demographics of IP filed besides location. We need longitudinal tracking."*

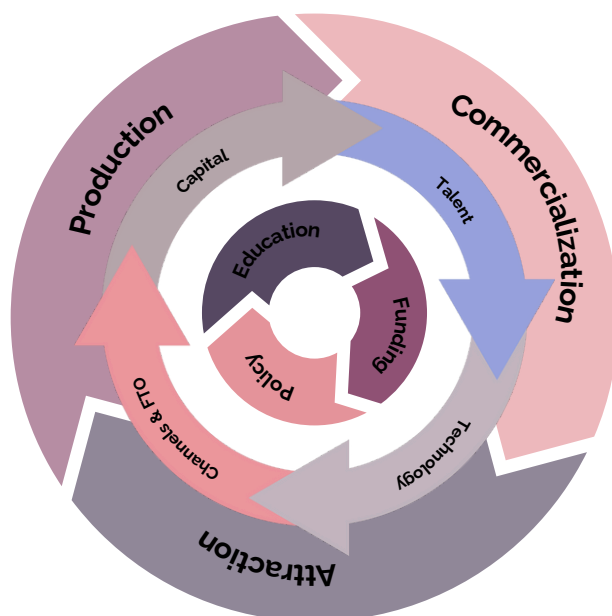### 2. Use Banks, Registries & PSIs as Early IP Entry Points

Ideas included embedding IP prompts when entrepreneurs open bank accounts, register sole proprietorships, or enter post-secondary institutions.
*"Catch people earlier—at PSIs, in bank interactions. Build it into those moments."*

### 3. Mandate "Train the Trainer" Models for IP Across Ministries

Leverage public servants, PSIs, and business advisors across government to embed baseline IP knowledge, making the entire system more IP-literate.
*"We don't need to build new stuff—we need to level up the people already working with under-represented founders."*

**1. Create a Central IP Outcomes Dashboard**

Alberta must track who is accessing IP supports, what barriers exist, and what long-term results follow—especially across gender, region, race, and immigration status. This dashboard should be transparent and tied to program funding.

**2. Expand IP Awareness Through PSIs, Banks & Incorporation Portals**
**Embed IP prompts, videos, and referrals into:**

- Business registration systems
- Post-secondary entrepreneurship programs
- Small business banking onboarding

**3. Broaden Funding Eligibility Criteria**

Revise IP-related funding policies to:

- Include sole proprietors and social enterprises
- Remove unnecessary tech-only filters
- Allow flexible timelines for early-stage innovators

**4. Integrate IP Education Across Ministries**

Economic Development, Indigenous Relations, and Advanced Education must jointly promote IP knowledge. Create "IP 101" for civil servants, grant writers, and frontline business advisors.

**5. Fund and Formalize Train-the-Trainer Programs**

Develop training for ecosystem builders, not just entrepreneurs. Ensure those working with equity-deserving groups understand IP strategy, protection models, and cultural limitations of existing law.

# Afterthoughts: What Was Shared After the Room Went Silent

Not all insights fit neatly within the timeframe of a breakout room. After the virtual chairs were tucked in, participants continued to reflect—submitting comments that were raw, strategic, and often more pointed than what was voiced aloud.

**These "afterthoughts" offer critical final clarity on Alberta's IP strategy gaps, especially around trust, timing, policy transparency, and systemic misalignment.**

### 1. Entrepreneurs Feel the System is Designed Around Itself—Not Them

Multiple contributors pointed to a system built from the inside out, not the outside in. Language was strong: the process was described as unclear, non-negotiable, and distant from actual entrepreneurial needs.

> **"You're designing a system according to how you think it should be… You forget the customer."**

### 2. IP and Commercialization Must Be Seen Through a New Lens

The world has changed since the February roundtable. Several participants highlighted geopolitical shifts, including U.S. tariffs and the federal election, as new strategic imperatives for IP localization and commercialization in Canada.

> **"It's a new world—and Canadian IP will factor prominently in both accessing and expanding new markets."**

### 3. The Disability Innovation Economy Is Overlooked

A critical submission pointed out the absence of IP conversations around people with disabilities, despite this group being one of the largest demographics for innovation—and one of the least supported.

### 4. We Must Train Entrepreneurs on Leveraging IP—Not Just Filing It

A recurring theme was that lawyers may not be the best strategic guides. There is an urgent call to train founders themselves in how IP can be a lever—not just a document.

> **"If Alberta wants an IP Portfolio boom, we need to train entrepreneurs on how IP is a lever in their business. Not just a business."**

### 5. One Size Doesn't Fit All—And Yet the System Demands It

There's a tension between program standardization and the need for flexibility. Entrepreneurs and service providers both asked for role-based guidance, sector-specific examples, and culturally relevant supports that reflect diverse paths to IP success.

> **"How does the everyday person with ideas find out if they are viable? That they could have a positive impact?"**

> **"IP is just one tool in the toolbox to make a successful business."**

# Next Steps: From Dialogue to Action

**This report is not the end of a conversation—it is the beginning of a shift.**

Alberta's entrepreneurs have spoken clearly: the province cannot afford to perpetuate an IP system that favors the well-connected and well-resourced. The stakes are high. Without immediate structural change, we risk continuing the cycle of lost innovation, IP exfiltration, and under-leveraged economic potential.

This roundtable reaffirmed that IP is more than protection—it is prosperity, power, and possibility. As one participant put it:

> " IP is not just a legal tool. It's economic sovereignty. And Alberta must treat it that way. "

The February 2025 roundtable laid the foundation. This event deepened it —ensuring the voices of rural and under-represented entrepreneurs are no longer an afterthought, but a cornerstone of Alberta's future IP strategy. To honour the trust and time of over 100 participants and deliver on the urgency expressed in every breakout room, the development of an Alberta IP strategy must now shift decisively into implementation.

# The following next steps are essential.

## 1. Publish and Table this Report

Submit the Inclusive IP: Key Takeaways Report as a formal recommendation to the Alberta Ministry of Technology and Innovation and share widely with federal partners, innovation agencies, and post-secondary institutions. The report represents a province-wide consensus and must inform the forthcoming provincial IP strategy.

"If I had $1 for every IP 101 course I've seen reproduced, I could retire."

## 2. Co-Design and Launch Community-Based IP Navigator Pilots

Embed IP Navigators within every Regional Innovation Network (RIN), with tailored roles for rural, Indigenous, BIPOC, newcomer, and women entrepreneurs. These Navigators must act as long-term case managers—not one-time touchpoints.

"We need a triage system. I've gone course after course and still can't get help."

These pilots should be co-designed with local stakeholders and community-led organizations to ensure relevance and trust. Funding must be flexible and sustained.

## 3. Establish a Centralized Alberta IP Resource Hub
Develop a one-stop digital portal for IP learning, action, and access. Features must include:
- Role-based navigation (e.g., researcher, founder, artist, Indigenous innovator);
- Plain-language resources and translated materials;
- Interactive tools for early-stage decision-making;
- A live support function or referral tool to match users with local experts.

"It would have saved me hundreds of hours if there was one place to go that told me who to talk to and what to expect."

This hub should also serve as a backbone for coordinated provincial messaging and cross-agency referrals.

**4. Implement a Province-Wide IP Triage System**

End the "course-first" gatekeeping model. Instead, design a triage tool that allows entrepreneurs to:

- Identify their current IP stage;
- Access immediate resources relevant to that stage;
- Get routed to the right expert, coach, or advisor—before being asked to complete full courses.

This model reflects healthcare logic: no one is told to "take a class" before getting diagnosis or treatment. The same dignity and efficiency should apply to Alberta's IP support ecosystem.

**5. Create and Publicly Share an Alberta IP Outcomes Dashboard**

Build and publish an open-access, real-time dashboard that tracks:

- Who is accessing IP supports (disaggregated by geography, gender, cultural identity, and business stage);
- What kinds of IP are being pursued (beyond just patents: copyright, trade secrets, trademarks, cultural IP);
- What barriers persist in access, affordability, and outcomes.

This tool will enable accountability, adaptive programming, and policy alignment with ESG and economic impact metrics.

> "We track patents. But we're not tracking whose ideas we're actually protecting."

**6. Integrate Cultural and Collective IP Protections into Policy Reform**
This roundtable raised repeated concerns that existing IP laws fail to protect traditional knowledge, Indigenous cultural expressions, and non-patent forms of innovation. Alberta must:

- Advocate federally for changes to better support collective rights;
- Support legal research, consultation, and community-led frameworks;
- Fund education for service providers and lawyers to understand OCAP®, TK, and cultural IP.

"This isn't about patents. It's about identity and ownership. And the current system doesn't see us."

**7. Fund Capacity Building for Ecosystem Navigators and Frontline Coaches**
Invest in microcredential programs, mentorships, and knowledge exchanges that train navigators, business advisors, and community coaches in IP literacy, cultural safety, and sector-specific IP guidance.

"We don't need more IP lawyers in the room. We need trusted people who can walk beside entrepreneurs through the mess."

# Conclusion

Alberta has the infrastructure, the institutions, and the will.

What's needed now is implementation with integrity, equity, and urgency. The voices captured in this report are not abstract—they are Albertans with ideas, ready to lead.

## Participating Entrepreneurs, Companies, Service Providers and Government Agencies Attending

2612448 Alberta Ltd.
Aeternum Corp.
AgriPhoton Inc.
Aksis, Edmontons Indigenous Business & Professional Association
Alberta Innovates
AltaML
Angel-Earth Corporation
Anova Law Group
APEX
Athabasca University
BDC Capital
BiPOC Foundation
Blue Rock Law LLP
BridgeTownWorks
Burnet, Duckworth and Palmer LLP
Calm Growth
Campus Innovation Consulting Group
Catapult Startups
Canadian Council for Indigenous Business (CCIB)
CED/OCIF
CFC West
CIPO
Community Futures Entre-Corp
Community Futures Lethbridge
Creative Destruction Lab - Rockies
Cydallia Inc.
Discovery Lab
Economic Development Lethbridge
Edmonton Unlimited
ElevateIP Alberta
Enter Cree Contracting LTD-
Formulate IP Inc
Full Circle Corporate Health Consulting
Government of Alberta
Government of Alberta, Advanced Education
Highway Innovation Inc
Hoodo
IAXOV
Indigitech Destiny
Innovate Calgary
Innovation Asset Collective
Jasis Solutions
Kent Imaging Inc.
Kumu Corporation
Kyle Napier
LAWcubator Technologies Inc
Luminary

Medlior Health Outcomes Research Ltd
Meliora Wellbeing
MHCombiotic Inc.
Miller Thomson
MLT Aikins LLP
New Idea Machine
Nigerian Copyright Commission
Nittoor Software Research Corporation
NorQuest College
Olayinka Mogaji
ORFAPROTEIN CORPORATION
Outdoor Gala
PanAccess Innovations Inc.
Panache Ventures
Parlee McLaws LLP
PatiML
Physics Inspired Drilling Simulator Corporation
Platform Calgary
PURYS ENERGY
QOL MedTech
ReSkill Calgary
Resolve Plastics Recycling Ltd.
Rogers Communications
Sadaiv Education Limited
Shirah Technologies Inc
Simply Best Underpinnings Corp
smart data warehouse solutions LTD
SOLARSTEAM
SOLIS
Special Areas Board
Sprout Together
Startup Lloydminster
Stemp and Company
The51 Ventures Inc.
THNQ Global Corp
TMG
Town of Coronation
TWM
University of Alberta
University of Calgary
University of Lethbridge
Vaster
Zhen's Corp