RAINFOREST ALBERTA

A COMMUNITY OF INNOVATORS

Rainforest Alberta

2023 Scorecard Report and Results

SUPPORTED BY

ERIN EDMONTON REGIONAL INNOVATION NETWORK BRIDGING INNOVATION

Calgary Innovation Coalition

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Table of Contents

04	Key Takeaways
12	2023 Scorecard Results
19	Culture
25	Leaders
32	Policy & Infrastructure
39	Resources
45	Role Model
54	Engaged Activities
61	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
79	Study Details
87	Appendix

“We need to support in the removal of systemic barriers; which is so much greater than what we can do by ourselves. Little bit by little bit.”

-Founder, Entrepreneur, Startup Service Provider, Freelancer, Edmonton, more than 3 years

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It is critical to reflect on the 2022 Scorecard results and identify where organizations and individuals have played a part in advancing the health of the Calgary ecosystem.

What impact have you or your organization had on improving the health of the ecosystem?

Looking back at the 2022 Scorecard Results, the following were key takeaways:

- 2022 score of 689/1000, with increased engagement from the ecosystem
- Need to embrace failure as a pathway to success
- The need for Policy makers to create a long-term foundation for ecosystem success
- The power of representation in the ecosystem
- Engaging and empowering the ecosystem from a grassroots level and through diverse and experienced role models

Recommendations included:

Employ an intersectional approach to lead EDI efforts

Nurture Psychological Safety

Mind the gap between disparate demographic groups for increased trust and inclusion

2023 IN REVIEW

According to the 2022 & 2023 Scorecard results, there was a sentiment that various ecosystem stakeholders have made strides in improving psychological safety in Calgary's innovation ecosystem yet there is plenty of room for growth and further understanding of how DEI impacts the foundation of the tech sector. Furthermore, there was demand for new ways of leading that match the velocity of change in the ecosystem. Through collaboration with the Calgary Innovation Coalition and other key stakeholders, Rainforest Alberta implemented various initiatives to meet these needs.

The first Rainforest Circles program was launched with over 60 participating leaders across the ecosystem. This learning experience was based on a newly developed leadership commitment relating to the Social Contract: *"To match the velocity of change, we need trust. Rainforest leaders ignite trust by inquiring with curiosity, advocating for and amplifying others, nurturing and fostering connections, speaking with candor, and leading with generosity and compassion."* Circles of participants embarked on a 7-week relationship-based exploration of these reimagined leadership characteristics.

Data gathered from participants tells a story of an engaging experience that helped connect and augment early-stage founders with resources and support to extend their businesses. 91% of participants rated their experience a 4.5/5 or higher and 97% said they would recommend this experience to others.

Throughout the year, Rainforest embarked on various initiatives to bring broader awareness of ecosystem resources and role model stories through guest speakers at LWOL and partner events. This included highlighting the successes and failures of tech founders and ecosystem resources such as the province's Technology Access Centres, GEDI Hub, YYC Queer Innovation, and more.

Rainforest launched a city-wide awareness tour developing relations with untapped Calgarian audiences through newly established connections at local nonprofits, community centres, and educational institutions. These included new partnerships with the Open Learning Lab (MRU), attending SAIT business classes, and various connections built with new Canadian-serving organizations. New connections were invited to a sold-out event during innovation week called Discover the Tech Sector, which introduced participants to various onramp organizations through a live gamified experience. The event received rave reviews and generated new interest in the sector.

Among other partnerships and projects in 2023, Rainforest Alberta champions from Calgary and Edmonton united for this first-pan provincial Scorecard assessment. The following report offers insights into the state of both ecosystems as well as the province. If you would like to access data for any of the regions, please contact info@rainforestalberta.ca

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Fostering a Collaborative and Inclusive Culture in Alberta's Startup Ecosystem

The Alberta startup ecosystem is recognized for its collaborative spirit and the push towards inclusivity and diversity. However, stakeholders consistently advocate for an enriched culture of trust and support throughout the ecosystem, emphasizing the importance of creating a nurturing environment that values risk-taking and the educational journey of failure.

This feedback underscores the critical necessity for a cultural evolution that embraces failure and diversity more openly, aiming to stimulate innovation. Such a shift would ensure entrepreneurs at all stages receive the active support they need, thereby fostering an ecosystem where innovation and risk-taking are not just encouraged but celebrated.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The Role of Benchmarking and Continuous Improvement

There's a focused interest in benchmarking against more developed ecosystems and incorporating their best practices, indicating a clear path forward for policy and infrastructure improvements to bolster the tech community. This ongoing feedback underscores the urgent necessity for strategic policy overhauls and infrastructure advancements to rejuvenate and enhance the ecosystem's competitiveness and appeal.

The consensus underscores the critical role of benchmarking with leading ecosystems and embracing their successful strategies for continuous enhancement. By adopting frameworks to assess the ecosystem's health and increasing engagement with wider networks, Alberta can infuse new perspectives and foster collaborative growth. These steps are vital for evolving the ecosystem into a more dynamic, competitive, and attractive hub for technology and innovation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Strategic Policy Reforms and Infrastructure Development

Feedback from previous years has consistently pointed to concerns over government strategies perceived as outdated, acting as significant barriers to R&D and the commercialization of innovation.

This ongoing feedback, coupled with this year's emphasis on the need for clearer communication, better coordination among ecosystem stakeholders, and the development of inclusive policies, underscores ongoing challenges in government engagement and support for the innovation sector. It reveals a clear and pressing need for more effective government involvement and comprehensive policy reforms aimed at fostering investment and startup growth.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Empowering Alberta's Entrepreneurs through Resource Accessibility and Talent Development

Persistent challenges in securing funding and accessing essential resources have been a focal point of feedback, notably emphasizing the intricacies involved in funding applications and a significant shortfall in private capital. This year's insights further underscore the imperative of enhancing access to resources, including funding, mentorship, and support frameworks, with a special focus on better serving underrepresented groups.

Additionally, there's a strong demand for bolstering talent development through purposefully designed programs and simplifying the process of navigating the ecosystem's resources to make them more transparent and accessible. Enhancing talent development with focused initiatives and demystifying the ecosystem's resource navigation are seen as vital steps toward fostering growth.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Tailoring the Ecosystem to Industry Demands and Market Needs

Facilitating strategic connections between emerging startups and established companies emerges as a key strategy. This is an opportunity for the ecosystem to refine its support mechanisms and events, ensuring they are specifically tailored to address the unique challenges and opportunities faced by startups across various sectors.

This addresses previous concerns regarding the applicability of ecosystem activities and underscores the importance of responsiveness to market needs. These connections are not only beneficial for startups, in terms of gaining access to mentorship, networks, and partnership opportunities, but also for established firms looking to innovate and stay competitive. This symbiotic approach encourages a vibrant exchange of ideas, resources, and innovations, thereby enriching the entire ecosystem.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the need for greater diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of society, including the entrepreneurial and innovative sectors.

As in years past, results from the Scorecard assessment show diversity, equity and inclusion are seen as critical to the success of the innovation ecosystem in Alberta.

The 2023 Scorecard Assessment looks more deeply at each concept and a deepened focus on how these influence the six pillars.

Participant responses reveal that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are seen as integral to the success of the ecosystem.

8.72 was the average response of all participants who feel that **diversity** is important to build a successful ecosystem.

8.40 was the average response for all participants who feel **equity** is important to build a successful ecosystem.

8.72 was the average response of all participants who feel **inclusion** is important to build a successful ecosystem.

Questions around DEI were designed to:

- Align with the six pillars
- Provide insights by splicing data demographically for questions
- Measure gaps between importance to individual against perceived importance to ecosystem members

In 2023, a new set of recommendations was created based on the DEI feedback against each pillar.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

While diversity, equity and inclusion are seen as important drivers of building a successful ecosystem, the gap between individual importance and perceived importance to ecosystem members is widening.

In all areas of equity, diversity and inclusion, the gap is consistent among:

- Women
- Indigenous
- Education sector
- Entertainment industry

An ecosystem's culture plays a pivotal role in shaping the fate of startups.

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CULTURE

Culture shapes all other pillars. An important part moving towards a culture of DEI is to have a mutual understanding of what equity, diversity and inclusion means to actors in the Rainforest ecosystem.

POLICY & INFRASTRUCTURE

Entrepreneurs note that access to funding is not equitable. This is felt strongest among women and diverse founders.

LEADERS

The overarching sentiment around leaders is that while leaders support diversity, representation suggests otherwise.

ROLE MODELS

There's a call for significantly improved diversity among role models, with a focus on gender, ethnic, and racial inclusiveness.

RESOURCES

Addressing gaps in mentorship, funding accessibility, and resource navigation emerges as crucial for strengthening the foundation and inclusivity of the ecosystem.

ENGAGED ACTIVITIES

Participants call for the inclusion of fresh voices to diversify insights and experiences at events. Socio-economic factors are also highlighted.

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I am glad the Rainforest continues to do this survey. We need a broad survey to see how our ecosystem continues to improve.

-Male, Founder, Entrepreneur, Investor, Ecosystem Builder, Edmonton, More than 10 years

2023 SCORECARD RESULTS

Alberta 653 / 1000

Overall score across all pillars

- Culture: 210/300 (70%)
- Leaders: 128/200 (64%)
- Policy & Infrastructure: 87/150 (58%)
- Resources: 94/150 (63%)
- Role Model: 64/100 (64%)
- Engaged Activities: 70/100 (70%)

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165 Total Respondents

Within past years of Edmonton's Scorecard, there had been many respondents from other Regional Innovation Networks (RINs).

This led to the decision to offer the 2023 survey to the entire province's 9 RINs.

There was, however, a smaller than anticipated sample size from the other RINs.

2023 SCORECARD RESULTS

Calgary 669 / 1000

Overall score across all pillars

- Culture: 218/300 (73%)
- Leaders: 130/200 (65%)
- Policy & Infrastructure: 89/150 (59%)
- Resources: 95/150 (63%)
- Role Model: 66/100 (69%)
- Engaged Activities: 71/100 (71%)

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-20 points

With marginal decreases in all pillars

84 new respondents

72% of respondents in 2022

116 surveys

125 fewer surveys completed compared to last year.

2023 SCORECARD RESULTS

Edmonton 612/1000

Overall score across all pillars

- Culture: 190/300 (63%)
- Leaders: 119/200 (60%)
- Policy & Infrastructure: 85/150 (57%)
- Resources: 91/150 (61%)
- Role Model: 58/100 (58%)
- Engaged Activities: 68/100 (68%)

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-76 points

since 20212 largely driven by decreases in Culture and Leaders

Engagement

Previous years of YEG's Scorecard included high number of respondents. This was not the case this year.

37 surveys

135 fewer surveys completed compared to last year

MEASURING THE PILLARS

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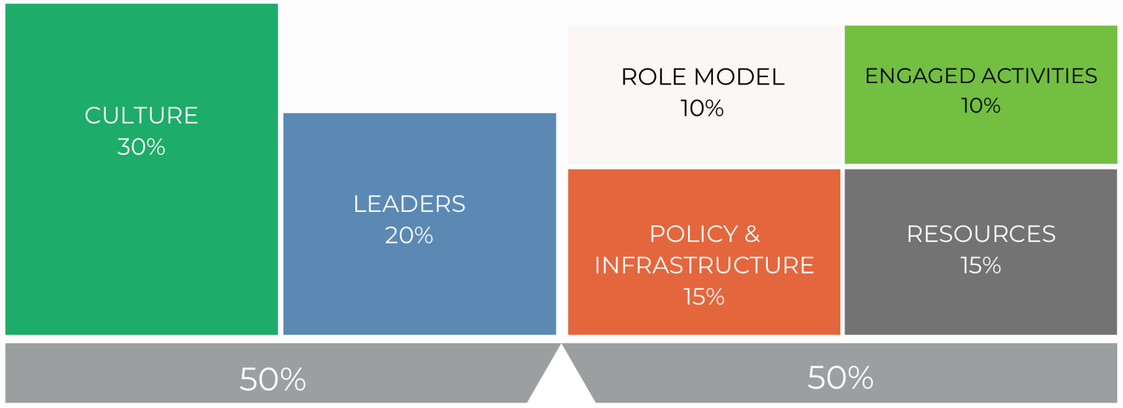
There are six pillars that make up the ecosystem. Like any natural ecosystem, having the right balance is crucial. The index is measured on a scale of 1,000, with each pillar weighted differently.

The Scorecard is a snapshot of the ecosystem in time, describing its strengths, weaknesses, and general condition.

An honest examination of the ecosystem's assets through the Scorecard Assessment works to identify opportunities to improve the culture of innovation in Calgary.

The Scorecard asks a series of questions within each pillar which have been thoughtfully adapted from the historical versions of the survey.

Respondents are asked to answer each question on a scale of 1-10 with 1 meaning "I see this less often" and 10 being "I see this all the time" in the ecosystem. Qualitative data is also collected for each pillar via a comment section.



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PILLARS
2023 SCORECARD RESULTS
ALBERTA

Culture

210/300

Leaders

128/200

Policy & Infrastructure

87/150

Resources

94/150

Role Model

64/100

Engaged Activities

70/100

Culture

Alberta 210/300

Culture is the foundation of any innovation ecosystem. It is the shared values and actions of ecosystem members which ultimately determine the success of ecosystem initiatives.

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Culture

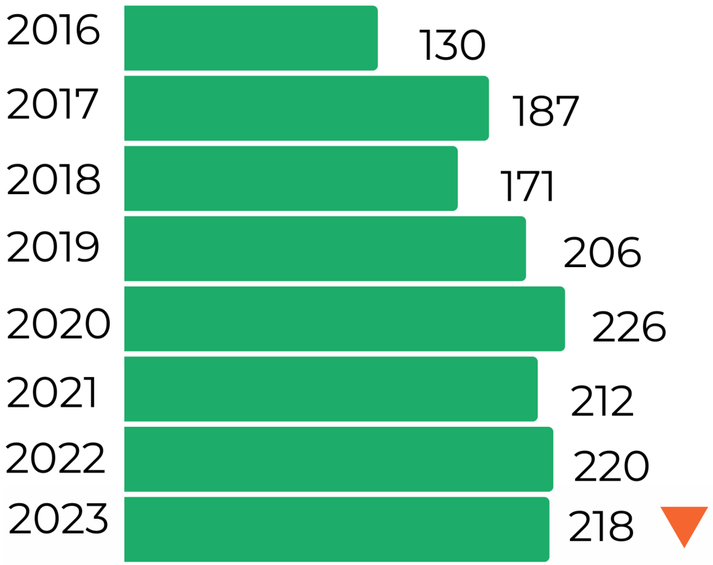
YYC 218/300

-2 points

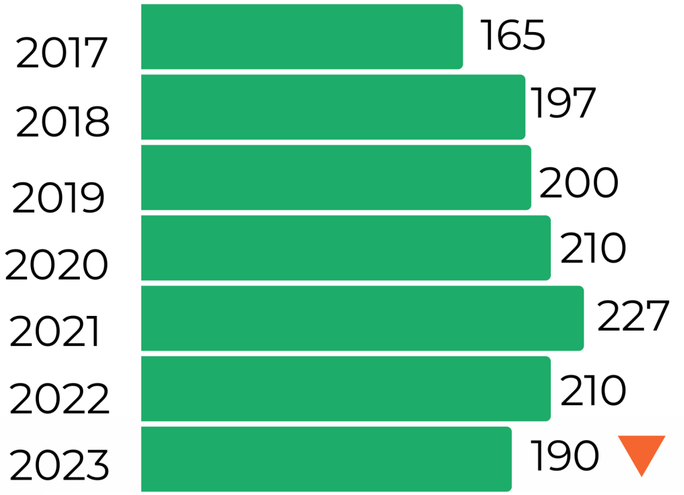
YEG 190/300

-20 points

YYC YEAR-OVER-YEAR



YEG YEAR-OVER-YEAR



"I'm definitely seeing a shift in the culture where we're embracing more diversity overall, which has been really great!"

-Entrepreneur, Ecosystem Builder, Educator, Calgary,, More than 10 years

**No 2016 YEG data*

Culture

YYC 218/300

-2 points

YEG 190/300

-20 points

In the Alberta startup ecosystem, there's a strong appreciation for the collaborative spirit, inclusivity, diversity, and entrepreneurial support, although concerns about competitiveness and trust underscore the need for a more universally supportive culture.

Feedback highlights the importance of learning from developed ecosystems and embracing benchmarking, alongside a significant emphasis on enhancing DEI initiatives and fostering innovation. There is a clear desire for a culture that not only celebrates effort and resilience in the face of failure but also provides tangible support to entrepreneurs at all stages of their journey.

“If failure is truly accepted then the ecosystem should be recognizing/supporting entrepreneurs from all levels of ‘success’”

-Entrepreneur, Ecosystem Builder, Entrepreneur, Calgary,, 18 months-3 years

Culture

YYC 218/300

-2 points

YEG 190/300

-20 points

Notable Regional Insights

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Calgary

- Mix of competitive and collaborative cultures; competition seen at leadership levels but balanced by a strong helping culture. The competitive aspect is seen as potentially fading as the ecosystem matures, with an expectation for more collaborative efforts to take precedence.
- Active DEI efforts, exemplified by organizations like CED and YYC Queer Innovations partnership in events like the YYC Pride Parade.
- Concerns about maintaining trust and collaboration as the ecosystem grows.

Edmonton

- Lack of trust within the ecosystem, with perceived unequal competition for government funding.
- Interest in using metrics for assessing cultural health and comparing with other ecosystems.

Culture

YYC 218/300

-2 points

YEG 190/300

-20 points

Trust and Support

Feedback from the community highlights a prevailing concern regarding the level of trust among service providers, indicating a gap in the ecosystem's support structure for entrepreneurs. This concern underscores the necessity for a culture that not only embraces but also actively supports entrepreneurs across the spectrum of their journey, including during times of failure. A desire for a more supportive ecosystem that encourages risk-taking and innovation.

Benchmarking and Learning

Suggestions for adopting frameworks or models to measure cultural health and benchmark against other ecosystems (eg. successful startup ecosystems that are recognized for their innovation, inclusivity, support structures, and overall health) indicating a desire for continuous improvement and learning from others.

Recognition of Effort and Failure

Feedback highlights the need for the ecosystem to value effort and learning from failure, suggesting a shift towards a more supportive culture that recognizes diverse forms of success.

Engagement with Broader Ecosystems

Calls for more engagement outside the local region, with a critique of an inward-looking focus and the repetition of leadership voices, suggesting a need for fresh perspectives and broader collaboration.

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Trust breaks down over funding at times. Sometimes funding encourages trust and collaboration. Failure is tough and there are emotions attached to it, plus different cultures view it differently. I think failure needs to be reframed as quick learning or big life lesson or the support network just needs to also allow for the emotions that can come with failure and not ignore them.

- Ecosystem Builder, Central Alberta, More than 10 years

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Leaders

128/200

Leaders, both formal and informal, are decision makers positioned to realize potential, convey perspectives, and rally groups to influence outcomes for innovation.

Leaders

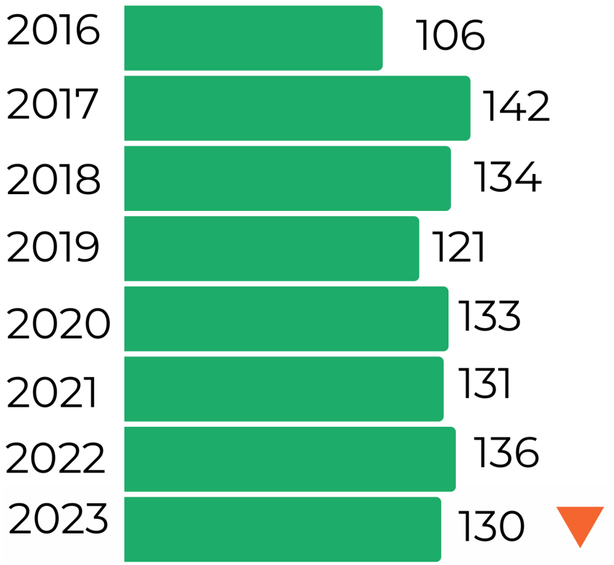
YYC 130/200

-6 points

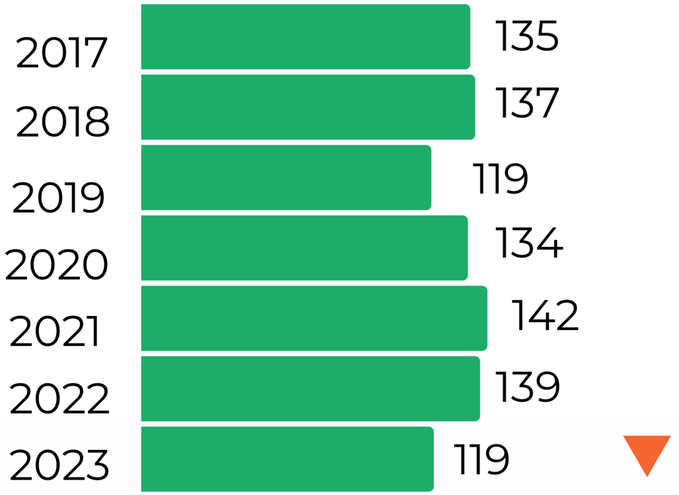
YEG 119/300

-20 points

YYC YEAR-OVER-YEAR



YEG YEAR-OVER-YEAR



In my experience, the leadership within this community has been instrumental in cultivating a collaborative and innovative atmosphere, akin to the biodiversity of a rainforest.

-Startup Employee, Calgary, Less than 6 months

*No 2016 YEG data

Leaders

YYC 130/200

-6 points

YEG 119/300

-20 points

There's an opportunity for leadership to enhance its role in reflecting and advancing the community's collective goals and challenges. While leadership in Calgary is perceived as strong and accessible, there's an overarching call for improvements in both Calgary and Edmonton to close these leadership gaps and promote a cohesive innovation vision throughout Alberta.

Critiques focus on the need for greater diversity within leadership ranks, as feedback points to a predominance of homogeneity and a longing for leaders who not only advocate for diversity but are themselves diverse.

Additionally, the aspiration for leadership to forge deeper connections with grassroots organizations and extend support beyond major urban centers underscores a desire for a more interconnected, inclusive, and forward-thinking leadership approach. This sentiment advocates for a unified leadership vision that prioritizes collaboration, diversity, and accessibility, essential for driving the ecosystem's advancement.

> *Regarding leader diversity, although it's better than other industries, we still need more diverse representation.*
>
> *-Ecosystem Builder, Calgary, 6-18 Months*

Leaders

YYC 130/200

-6 points

YEG 119/300

-20 points

Notable Regional Insights

Calgary

- A recurring positive note for Calgary is the accessibility of its leaders. Respondents appreciate leaders being active on social media and accessible at in-person events, which is seen as an advantage over more mature regions.
- Leaders in Calgary are also described as supportive and foster a collaborative ecosystem.
- There's an emphasis on the need for better financial leadership support in connecting entrepreneurs to capital. Calgary is seen as doing well in supporting innovation but could improve in financial literacy and access to funding through leaders' influence

Edmonton

- Feedback from Edmonton includes criticism of leadership engagement, with concerns about the lack of clear vision and supportive actions. The regions would like more proactive pursuit of investment and advocacy for STEAM.
- Structural challenges, such as dealing with bureaucracy and the limitations of Alberta's market size were highlighted, which impact the ecosystem's growth and innovation potential.

Leaders

YYC 130/200

-6 points

YEG 119/300

-20 points

Leadership Accessibility and Visibility

Respondents value the accessibility of leaders within the ecosystem, particularly in Calgary, noting this as a distinct advantage. The presence of leaders at in-person events and their activity on platforms like LinkedIn are appreciated for fostering a collaborative environment.

Diversity and Representation Among Leaders

Concerns are raised about the homogeneity of leaders within the ecosystem. There's a call for more diverse representation in leaders who embody diversity in their identities and actions, not just those who champion it. The issue of performative inclusivity is mentioned as well, underscoring the importance of genuine commitment to diversity in leadership.

Leaders

YYC 130/200

-6 points

YEG 119/300

-20 points

Connection to Capital and Resources

A significant gap identified is the ability of leaders to effectively connect entrepreneurs with capital and financial resources. Improving financial literacy among entrepreneurs and facilitating better access to funding are seen as crucial areas where leadership can play a more impactful role.

Collaboration and Unified Vision

Feedback suggests a need for a more unified vision and strategy among leaders across the province. This includes a desire for leaders to work more collaboratively, both within and across different regions, to support a cohesive ecosystem that leverages Alberta's full potential for innovation and entrepreneurship.

LEADERS

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I find it difficult to discuss this pillar due to the continued difficulty that I see folks from marginalized backgrounds face when trying to take on leadership roles within various ecosystems. I would love to see more encouragement and potentially support for organizations that are being run by up and coming or new leaders that bring fresh perspectives to issues and industries.

-Founder, Entrepreneur, Ecosystem Builder, Edmonton, PNTS

Leaders need to strive to work together and share their knowledge and best practices amongst one another. The ecosystem is stronger when we collaborate and are able to build upon the work that is already happening, rather than reinventing the wheel. Creating communities, groups, and networks of leaders that can support, amplify, and advocate for one another, and ultimately the ecosystem we are all working to support.

-Ecosystem Builder, Calgary, 6-18 months

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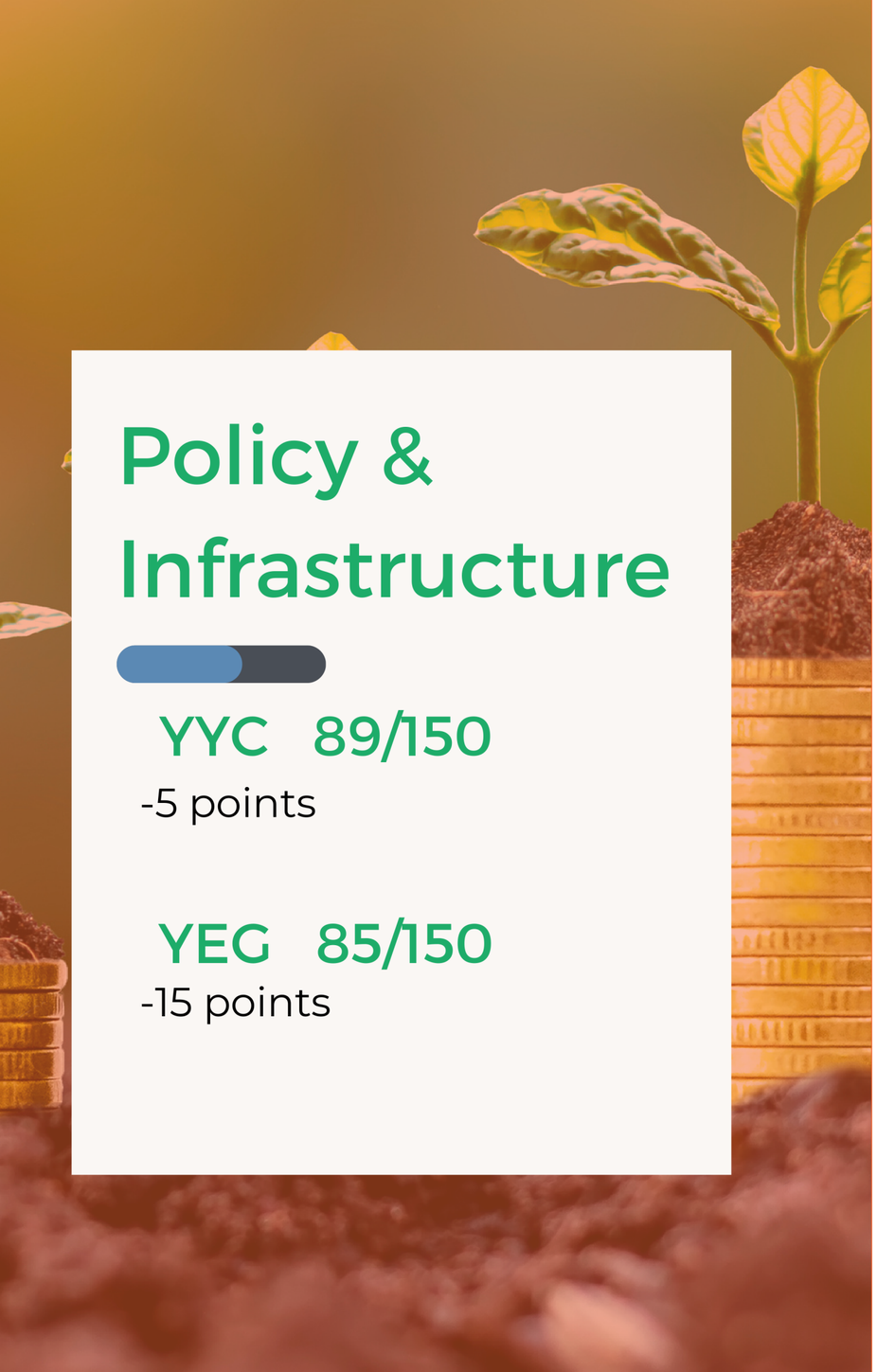
Policy & Infrastructure 87/150

Policy and Infrastructure is the infinite, non-depleting structural landscape the ecosystem exists within. Actions and interactions between organizations, departments, physical spaces, and policies play a role in supporting innovation.



Policy & Infrastructure

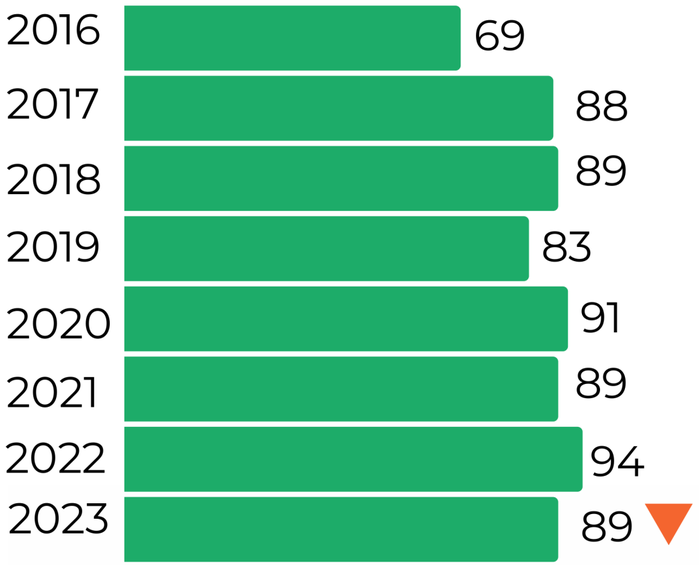
YYC 89/150

-5 points

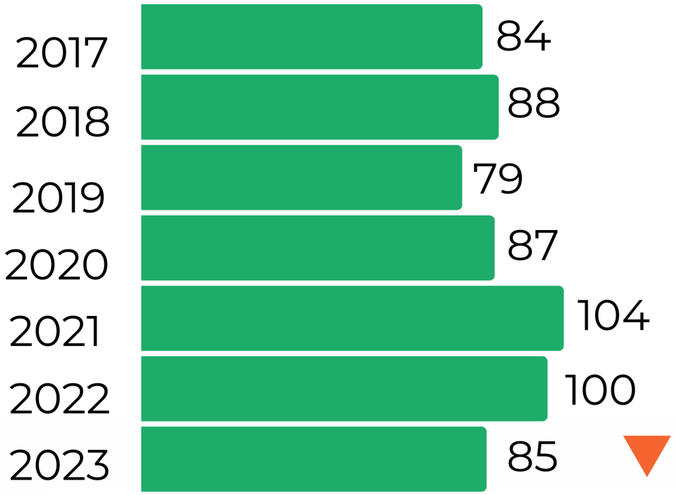
YEG 85/150

-15 points

YYC YEAR-OVER-YEAR



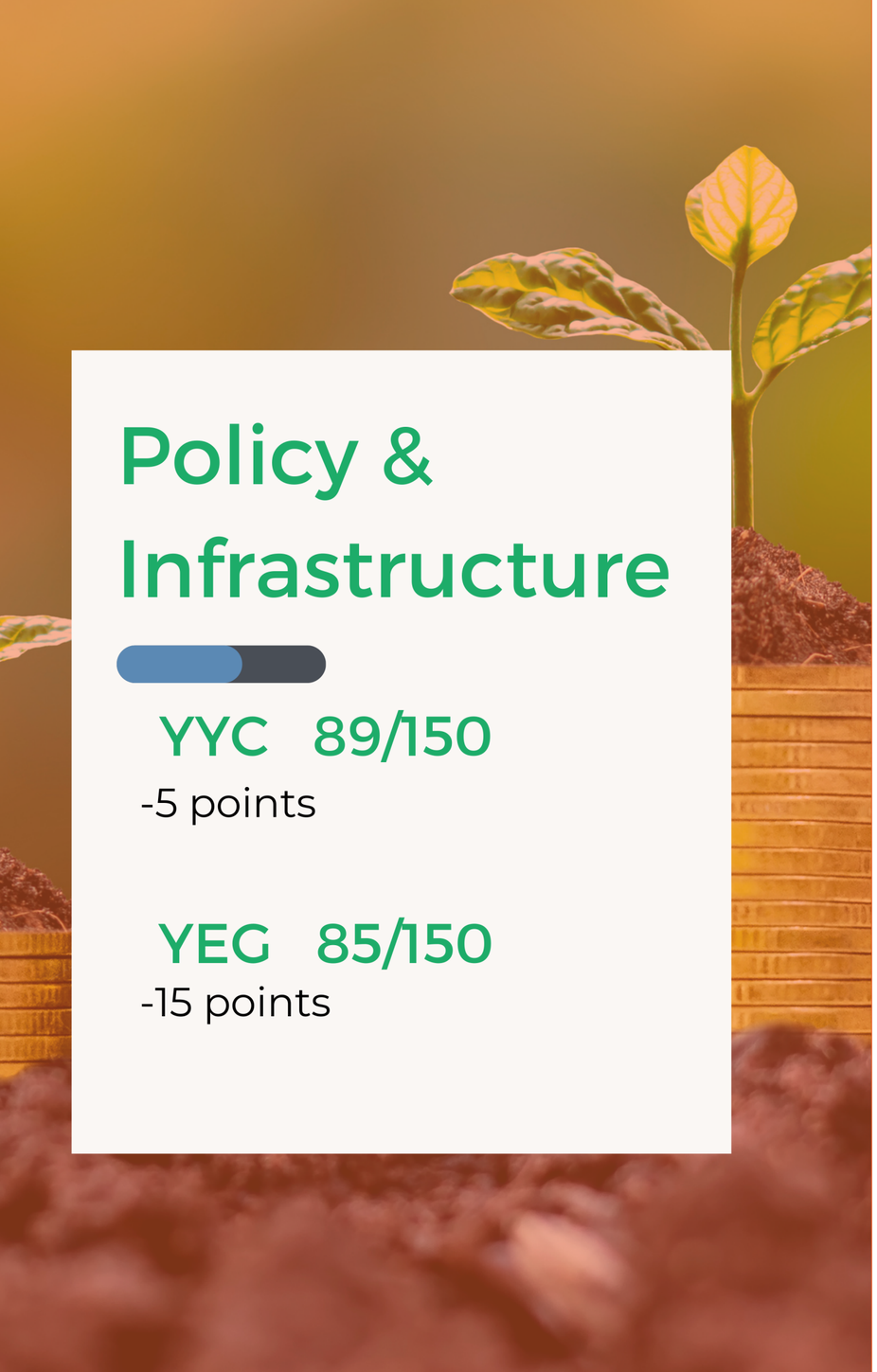
YEG YEAR-OVER-YEAR



Great support for startups - this attracted us to Alberta.

-Founder, Entrepreneur, Calgary, Less than 6 months

**No 2016 YEG data*



Policy & Infrastructure

YYC 89/150

-5 points

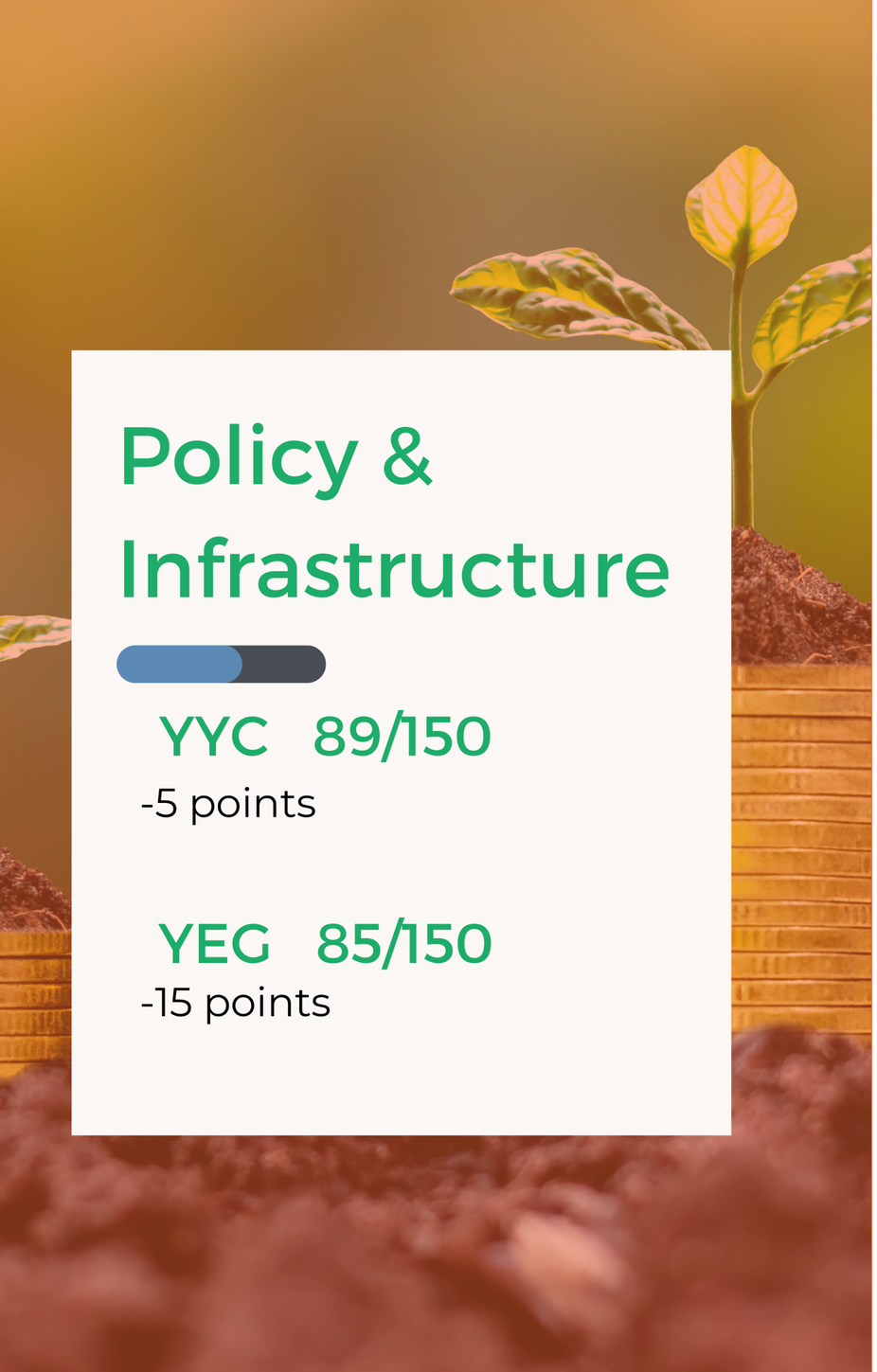
YEG 85/150

-15 points

Driving innovation and technology forward in Alberta, the private sector plays a pivotal role, with calls for enhanced public sector engagement to address the current inadequacies in procurement policies, tax reforms, and investor incentives. This call extends to improving physical infrastructure and creating a more seamless navigation system among service providers to attract young talent and investors.

Despite this, the provincial government faces criticism for policies that may impede startup growth and reduce Alberta's attractiveness to investment, whereas municipal efforts, particularly in Edmonton, receive praise for their supportive approach towards startups. There's a strong desire for a more unified and supportive ecosystem, highlighting the need for sustained innovative programs and policies that encourage inclusivity and growth. This is crucial for nurturing a vibrant startup ecosystem in Alberta, especially in fostering an environment where underrepresented groups have equal opportunities to succeed.

There is room for improvement in government policy, but there are plenty of physical and mentorship supports for startups in the major centers
-Founder, Entrepreneur, Investor, Ecosystem Builder, Startup Service Provider, Edmonton, More than 10 years



Policy & Infrastructure

YYC 89/150

-5 points

YEG 85/150

-15 points

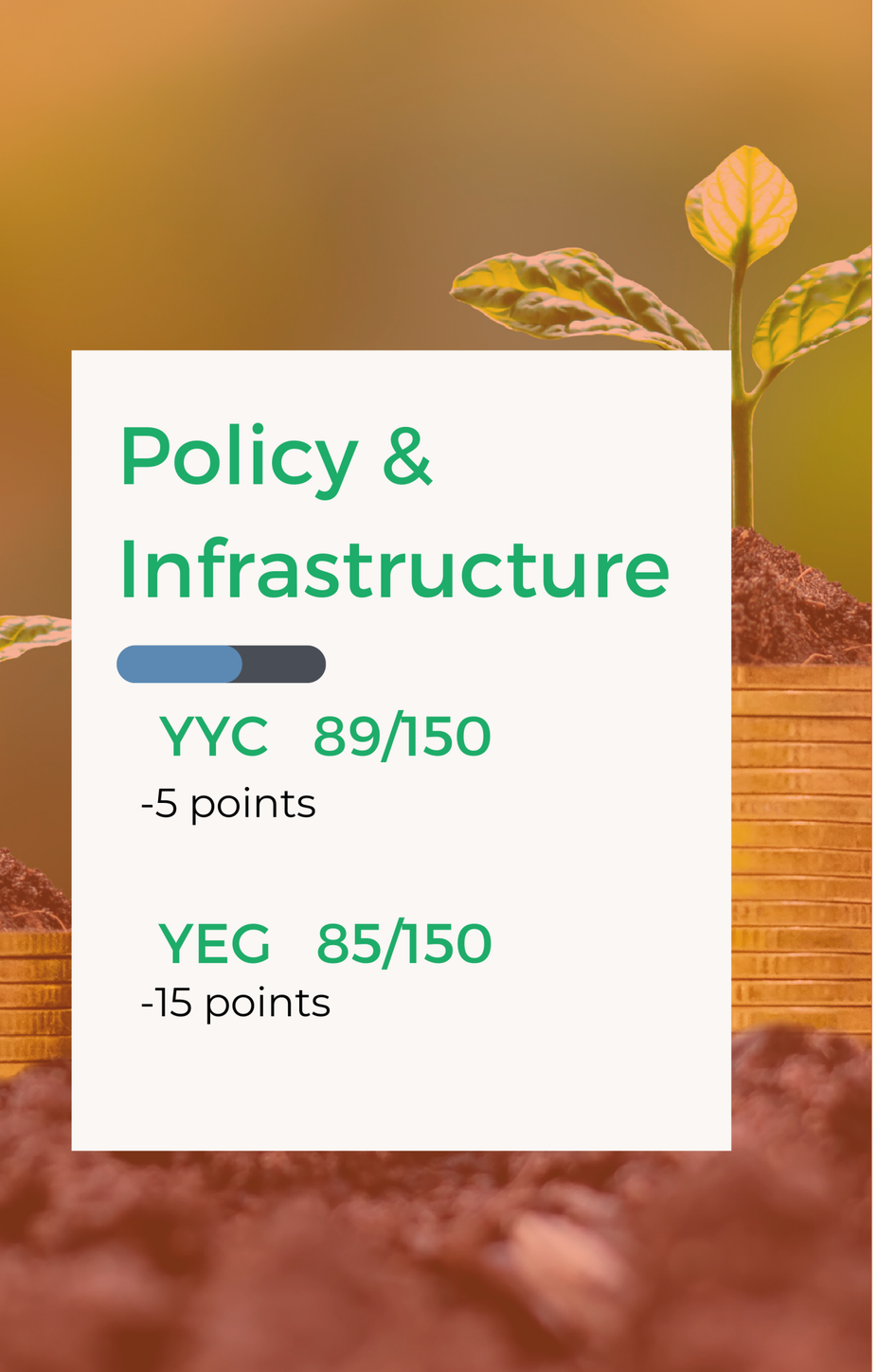
Notable Regional Insights

Calgary

- Government support is not widely noticeable, with more assistance thought to come from local businesses.
- Entrepreneurs are frustrated by the ecosystem's complexity, advocating for improved collaboration and policies supporting diversity and women-led startups.
- Critiques of government funding highlight slow decision times, ambiguous requirements, and a perceived preference for private sector investors.

Edmonton

- Edmonton's innovation ecosystem is primarily driven by private sector initiatives, with the government and public sector being perceived as largely absent.
- Calls for more government involvement in procurement policies, tax reform, investor tax credits, and productivity incentives.
- Provincial policies are viewed as detrimental to attracting young talent and investment, though Edmonton's municipal government provides supportive policies and grants.



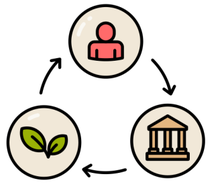
Policy & Infrastructure

YYC 89/150

-5 points

YEG 85/150

-15 points



Government Role and Support

Respondents express mixed views on the government and public sector's role in driving technology and innovation. While some note government investment in supports like accelerators and funding for VCs, there's a call for more proactive government policies, such as procurement policies to act as a first buyer, tax reform, and incentives for business investment in productivity.

Funding and Support Programs

- The complexity of the ecosystem and the difficulty in navigating it were highlighted, with calls for better coordination and cooperation among service providers.
- Long wait times and perceived inefficiencies in decision-making for funding support from entities like Alberta Innovates were mentioned.
- A desire for more grants and better promotion of available grants to support diverse entrepreneurs.

Policy & Infrastructure

YYC 89/150

-5 points

YEG 85/150

-15 points

Policy and Ecosystem Leadership

Questions about clarity and leadership within the policy-making sphere, with a call for more unified and overarching guidance for the innovation ecosystem.

There are concerns about the territorialism and competitive nature of various ecosystem organizations, leading to inefficiencies and duplicated efforts.

Mentorship and Navigation

The need for better mentorship opportunities and guidance for new entrepreneurs, with a suggestion for a pan-Alberta concierge service to help navigate the ecosystem.

Communication and Collaboration

A need for better communication and information sharing within the ecosystem, including a centralized source of information or ecosystem map to reduce silos and duplication of efforts.

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We are in desperate need for a crowd sourced, decentralized, single source of information for an ecosystem map. Our community is disparate, with many working on the same thing in silo. The government agencies are also in silo an do not share information. We should be working better together on this. We need an ecosystem map. We also need a way to encourage businesses to support startups, not just government grants, they are sometimes too dependent on them.

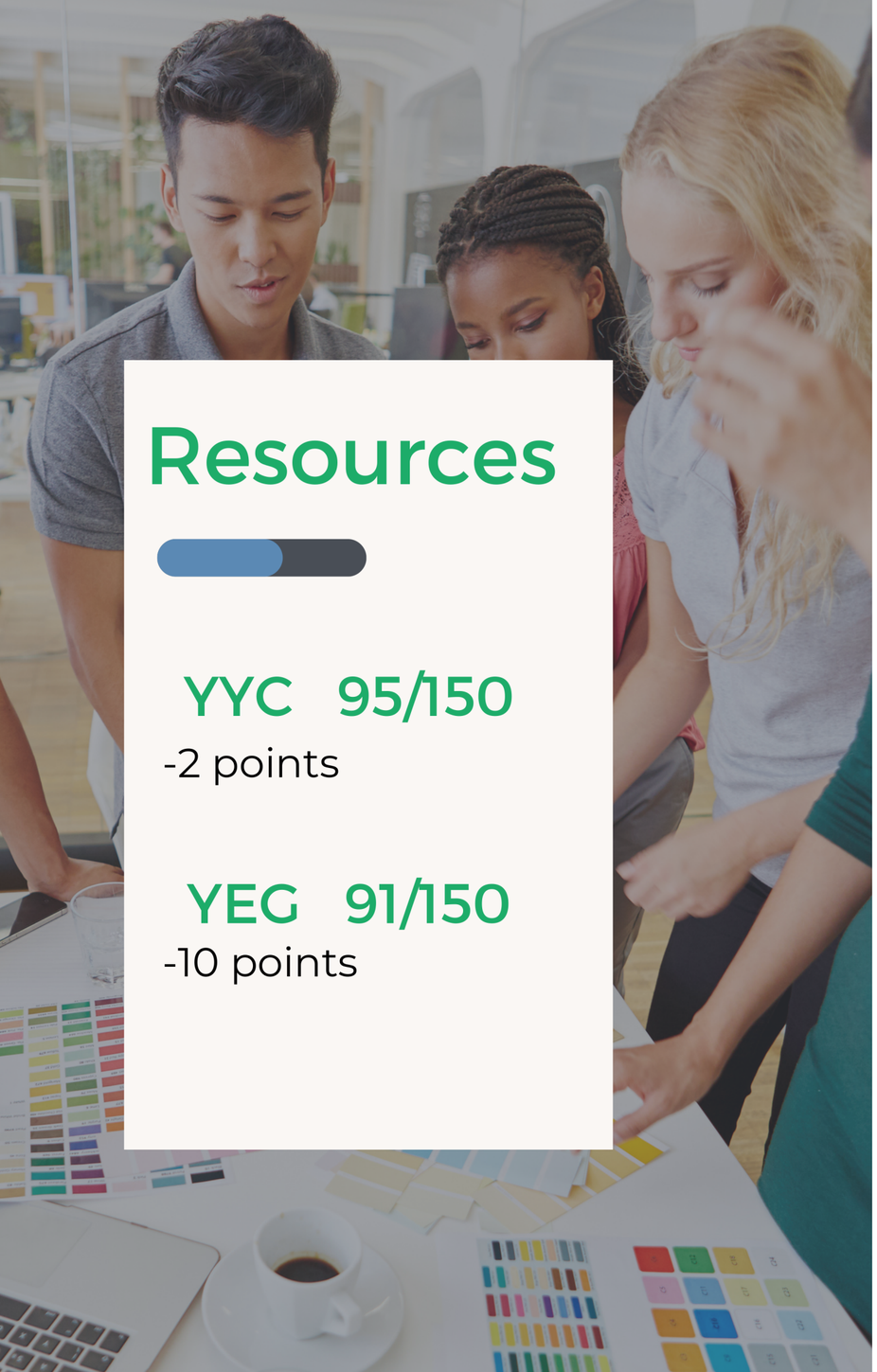
-Startup Employee/Team Member,Investor,Ecosystem Builder,Educator,Freelancer, Calgary, , more than 10 years

RAINFOREST ALBERTA
A COMMUNITY OF INNOVATORS

Resources 94/150

Resources are a critical factor in achieving success. Resources include funding, knowledge sharing, support, organizations and service providers and talent.

A balance of resources available in quality, quantity, and origins can support innovative potential through both generation and implementation.



Resources

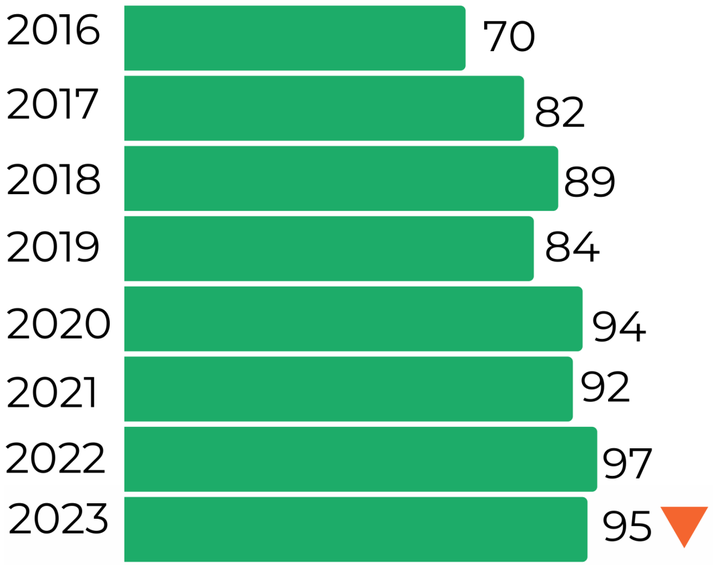
YYC 95/150

-2 points

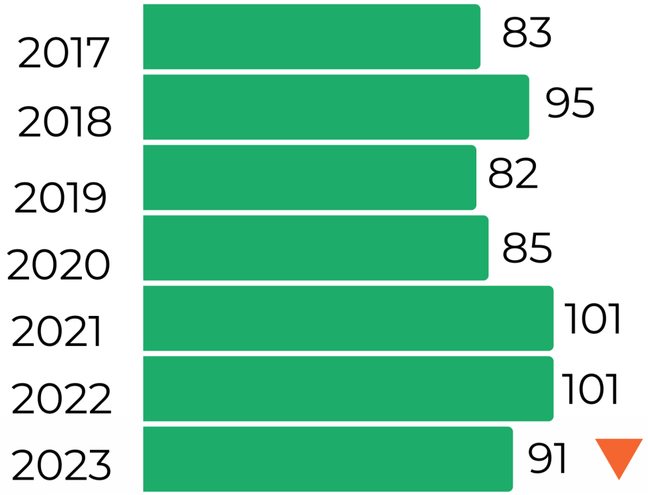
YEG 91/150

-10 points

YYC YEAR-OVER-YEAR



YEG YEAR-OVER-YEAR



It is great to see a variety of groups and events that focus on the broad spectrum of disciplines.

-Ecosystem Builder, Other, Calgary, 6-18 Months

*No 2016 YEG data

Resources

YYC 95/150

-2 points

YEG 91/150

-10 points

Addressing gaps in mentorship, funding accessibility, and resource navigation emerges as crucial for strengthening the foundation and inclusivity of the ecosystem. Enhanced mentorship and upskilling, especially for junior talent, are critical for closing the talent gap and ensuring a steady flow of skilled professionals vital for ecosystem growth.

Addressing funding gaps, particularly during the scaling phase, alongside calls for revising procurement policies and financial incentives, underscores the urgency for a financial ecosystem that nurtures innovation and supports startups at all stages.

Moreover, the feedback highlights the challenges in resource discovery and connectivity, advocating for a centralized directory and clearer funding pathways to simplify access. Emphasizing inclusivity, there's a strong push for resources and support mechanisms that cater to a diverse range of entrepreneurs, ensuring a more accessible and equitable ecosystem.

> *Access to funding continues to be a huge barrier to innovation and entrepreneurship, particularly for women-identified, gender-diverse, and other underrepresented diverse entrepreneurs.*
>
> *-Ecosystem Builder, Calgary, 6-18 Months*

Resources

YYC 95/150

-2 points

YEG 91/150

-10 points

Notable Regional Insights

RAINFOREST ALBERTA
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Calgary

- Advocate for talent programs to emphasize mentoring for junior talent.
- Identify gaps in private and public funding at the scaling stage, recommending enhancements in government procurement to back local tech.
- Highlight the need for a straightforward funding application roadmap and improved access to early-stage and private funding.
- Concerns about limited awareness and access to resources, indicating the ecosystem appears closed-off and difficult to navigate.

Edmonton

- Suggestions for developing the supply side of investment capital, such as reintroducing the Investor Tax Credit and expanding the self-certified investor class. An accelerator program for investors is proposed to mirror support for entrepreneurs.
- Call for a better resource directory to access the variety of available resources across Alberta and for better collaboration between post-secondary institutions (PSIs) and the innovation ecosystem.

Resources

YYC 95/150

-2 points

YEG 91/150

-10 points

Funding Gaps and Investment Support

Respondents identified gaps in funding, particularly at the scaling stage, and suggested improvements such as reintroducing the Investor Tax Credit and expanding the self-certified investor class. An accelerator program for investors was also proposed to complement the support provided to entrepreneurs.

Government Procurement and Policy

Additional support for government procurement of tech services was highlighted as a way to market-validate local tech solutions and stimulate growth. Current procurement policies were noted as favoring large, established companies, indicating a need for policies that encourage innovation and support smaller tech companies.

Resource Accessibility and Awareness

Desire for a better resource directory and a simplified roadmap for funding applications pointing to a need for clearer navigation through the ecosystem's resources. The feedback suggests that while resources are available, connecting founders and tech talent to the appropriate support remains a challenge. Feedback suggests that while there is access to funding, it often comes from outside Alberta.

Diversity and Inclusion in Resources

The ecosystem is seen as needing more inclusive resources and programs, particularly for underrepresented groups such as LGBTQ2S+ folks, women-identified, and gender-diverse entrepreneurs. There's a call for more opportunities for financing that consider the unique needs of these diverse entrepreneurs.

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RESOURCES

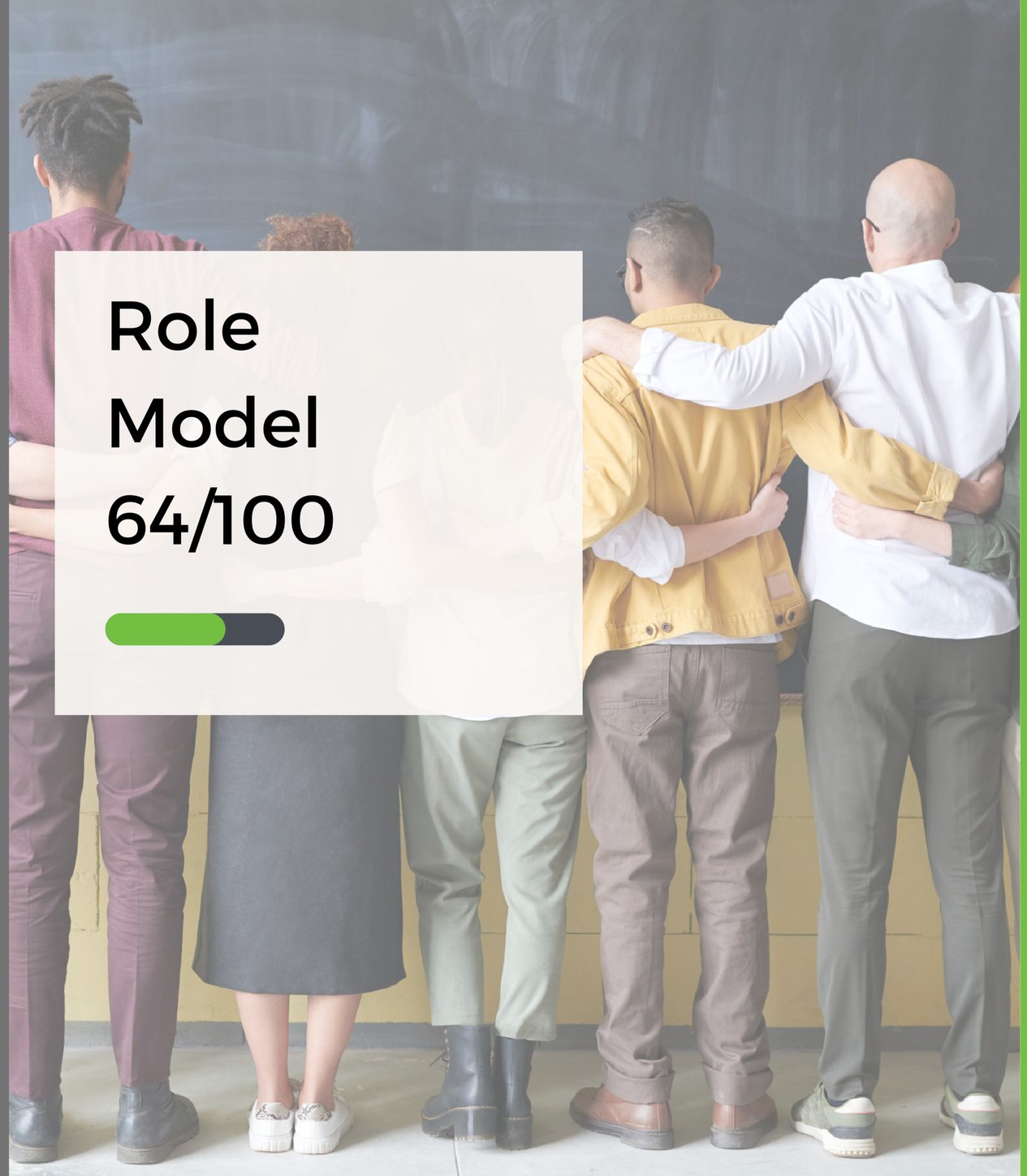
Talent programming needs to shift to help upskill/mentor junior talent. Supply of junior talent development programs is saturated. Let's focus on mentoring the junior talent we have to help them succeed in their careers. It would be great to have asynchronous programming available at any time to early stage entrepreneurs.

- Founder, Entrepreneur, Freelancer, Calgary, More than 5 years

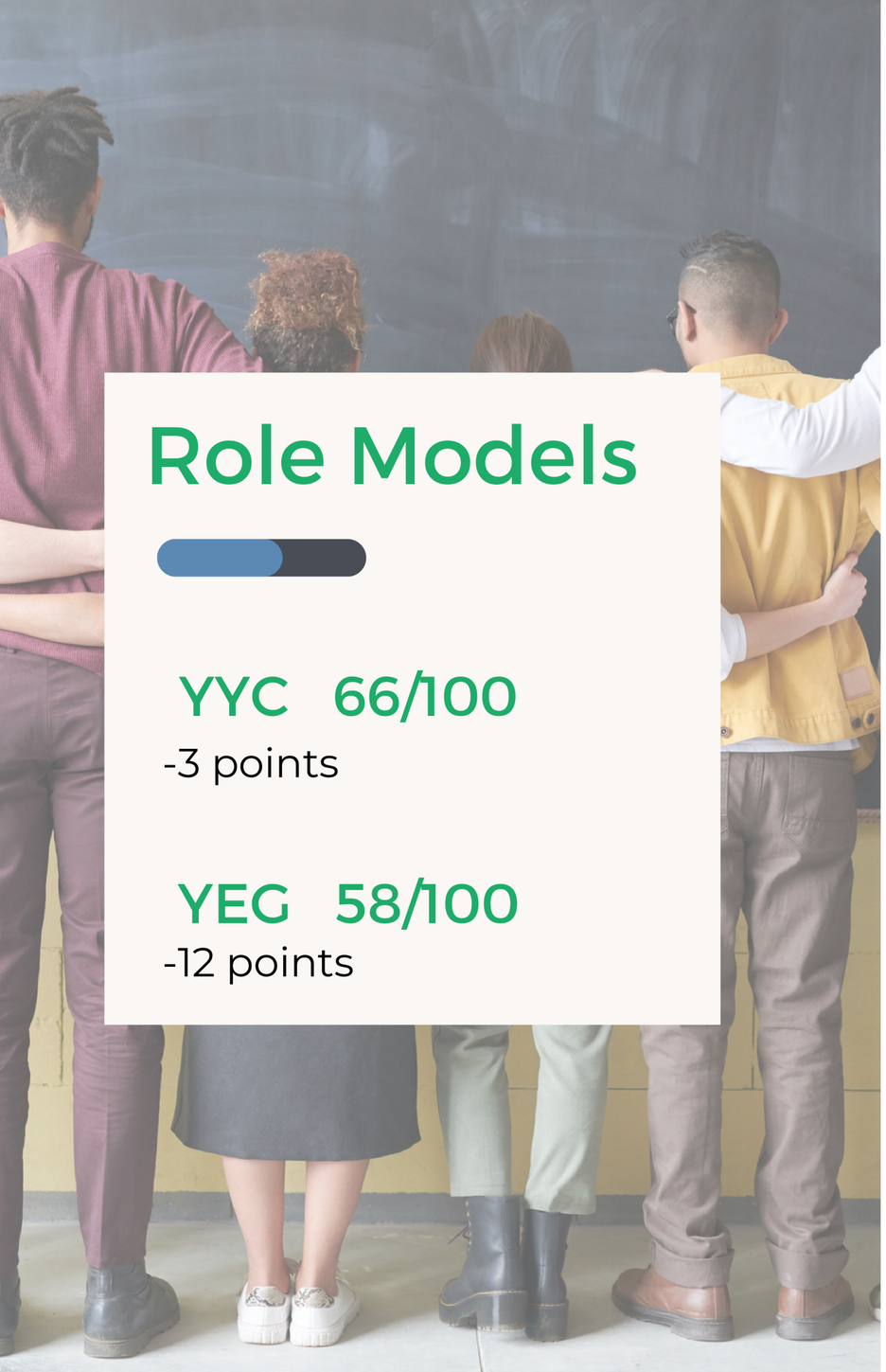
There needs to be additional support for government procurement of tech services. This is a key way to market validate local tech solutions and help them grow to attract additional capital. Currently, procurement policy is favorable to incumbent vendors and large companies that have little incentive to innovate and solve big issues like how to leverage digital health to expand equitable health care access.

- Entrepreneur,Startup Employee/Team Member,Ecosystem Builder,Startup Service Provider,Freelancer, CalgaryMore than 3 years

Role models across the ecosystem are builders, influencers, and accelerators who add value to the ecosystem through inspiration; they embody characteristics that others wish to emulate. Role models can be uniquely personal and also general to the community.



Role Model 64/100



Role Models

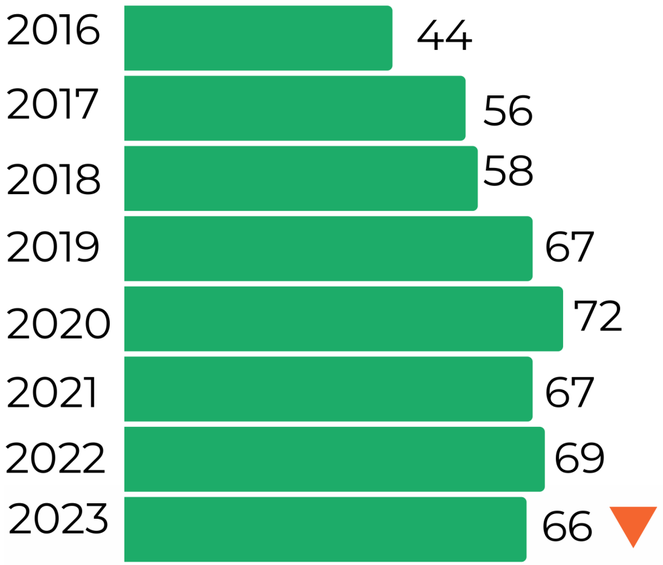
YYC 66/100

-3 points

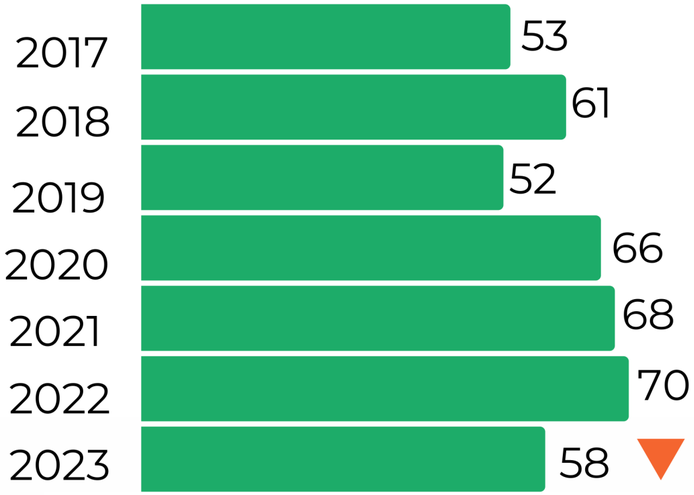
YEG 58/100

-12 points

YYC YEAR-OVER-YEAR



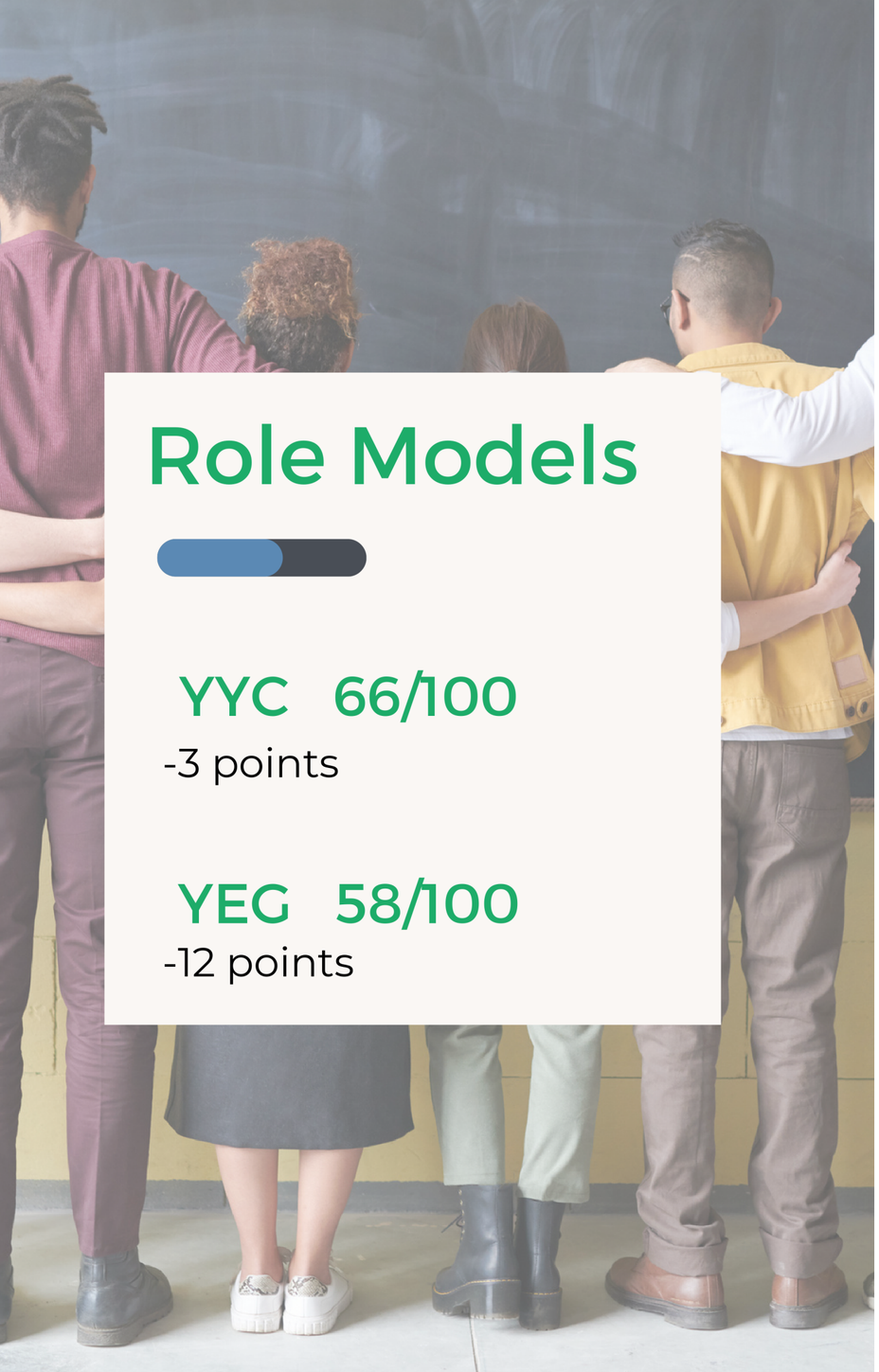
YEG YEAR-OVER-YEAR



Who/what determines who a "high-potential" future role model is? Subjective? What are we missing? Equity.

-Founder,Entrepreneur,Educator,Startup Service Provider,Other, Edmonton, more than 5 years

*No 2016 YEG data



Role Models

YYC 66/100

-3 points

YEG 58/100

-12 points

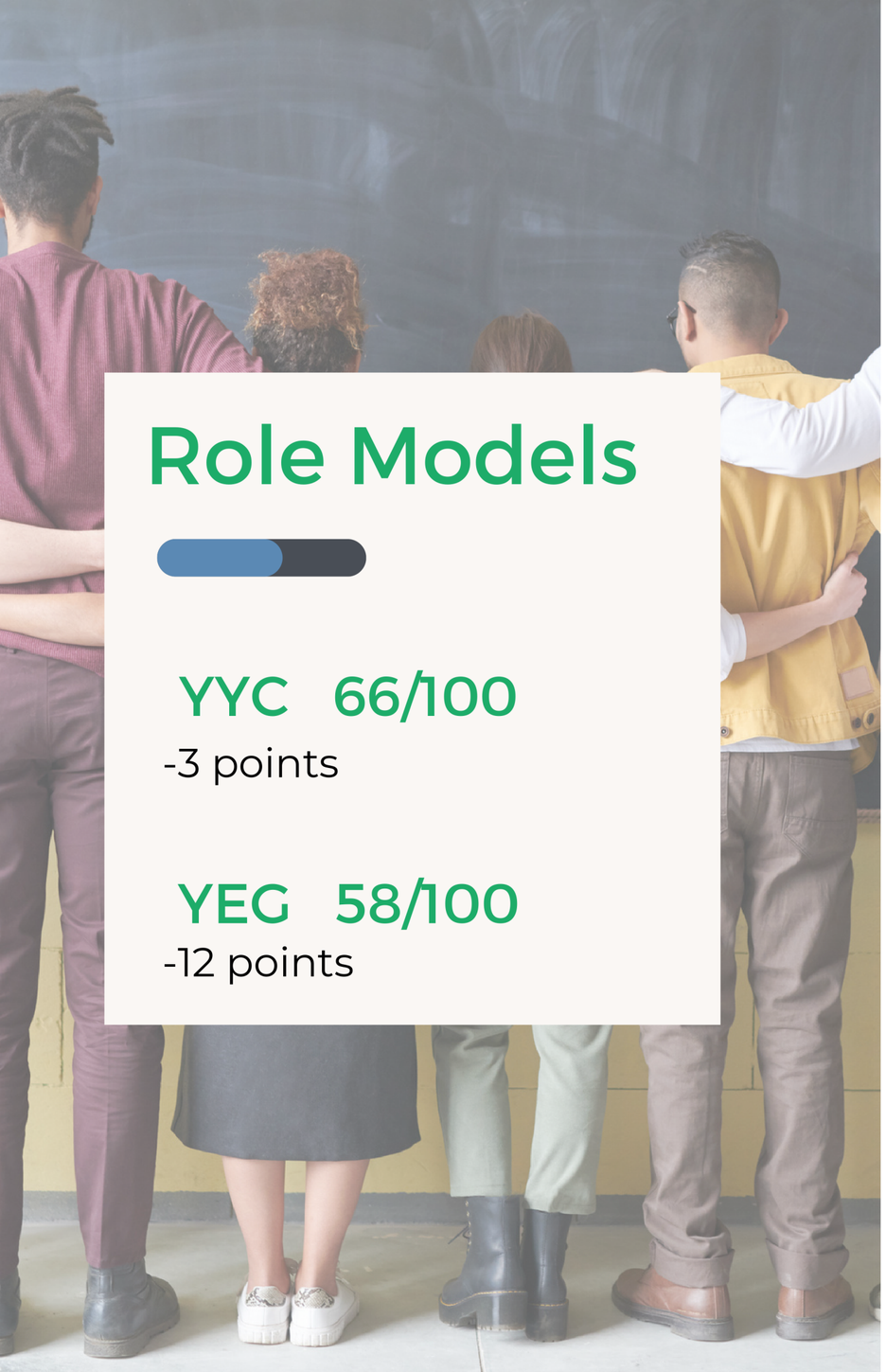
Expanding the definition of role models to include both high-profile leaders and the unsung heroes making significant, yet underrecognized, contributions is essential for fostering a more inclusive innovation ecosystem. This shift aims to democratize access to mentorship and inspiration across Alberta's innovation ecosystem, advocating for a broader definition of success that values impact alongside financial achievements.

Also highlighted is the gap in mentorship as founders scale their businesses and become less accessible, suggesting a need for continued engagement of role models at all stages.

Furthermore, there's a call for significantly improved diversity among role models, with a focus on gender, ethnic, and racial inclusiveness. Implementing structured support for emerging role models, enhancing visibility, and fostering networks for mentorship can lead to a more inclusive, inspiring, and supportive environment, laying the groundwork for a vibrant and diverse future.

Role models and leaders are crucial to the success of the next generation of innovators

-Founder,Entrepreneur,Investor,Ecosystem Builder,Startup Service Provider, *Edmonton, more than 10 years*



Role Models

YYC 66/100

-3 points

YEG 58/100

-12 points

Notable Regional Insights

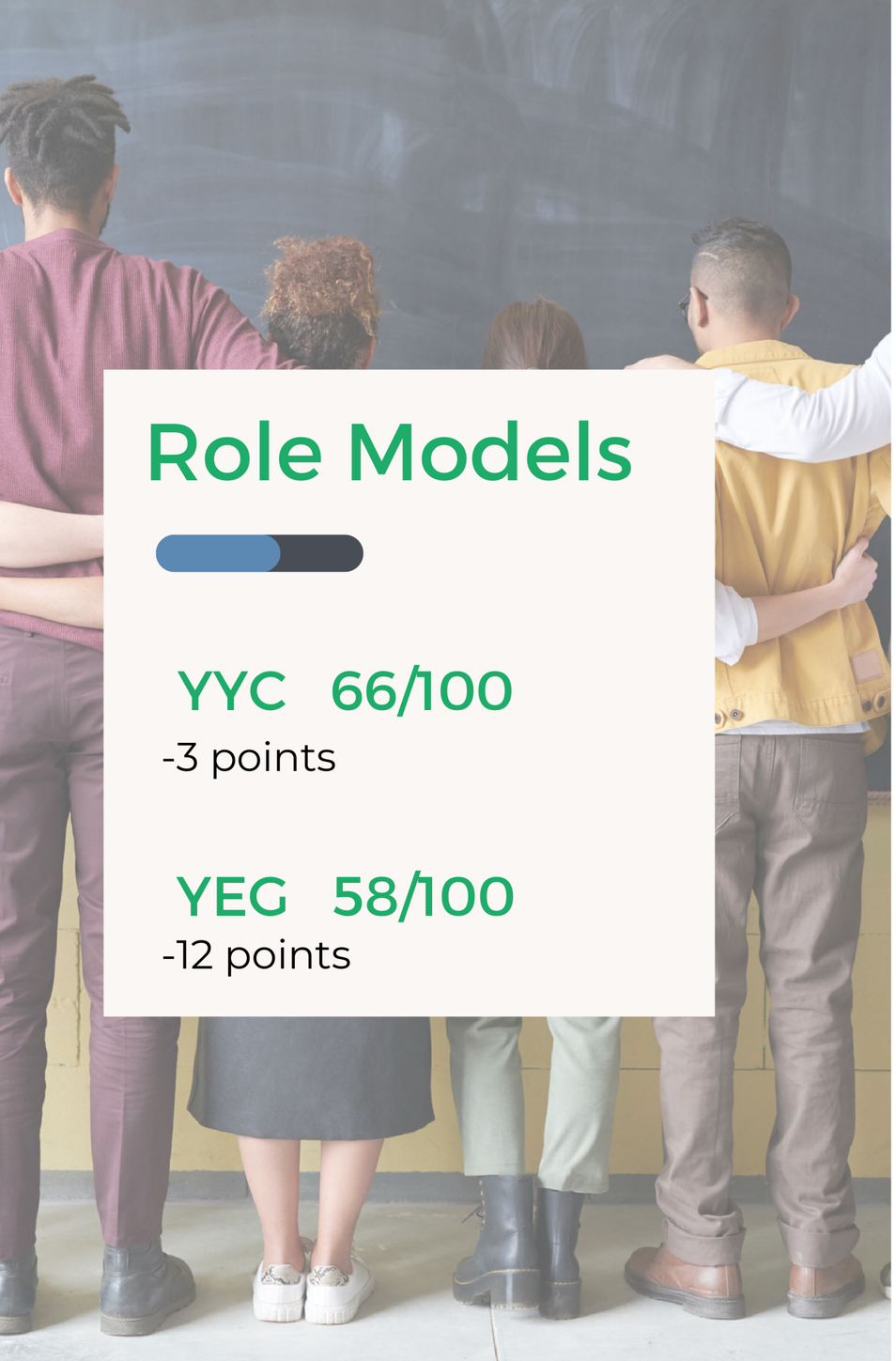
Feedback from Calgary and Edmonton reveals similar themes and concerns across both cities, highlighting shared priorities and challenges within the ecosystem when it comes to the area of Role Models

Calgary

- A strong emphasis on the need to shine a light on those working under the radar and the importance of redefining success beyond financial metrics to include impact and problem-solving.

Edmonton

- Concerns of the effectiveness of certain organizations and programs in nurturing role models and the overall engagement of experienced entrepreneurs.



Role Models

YYC 66/100

-3 points

YEG 58/100

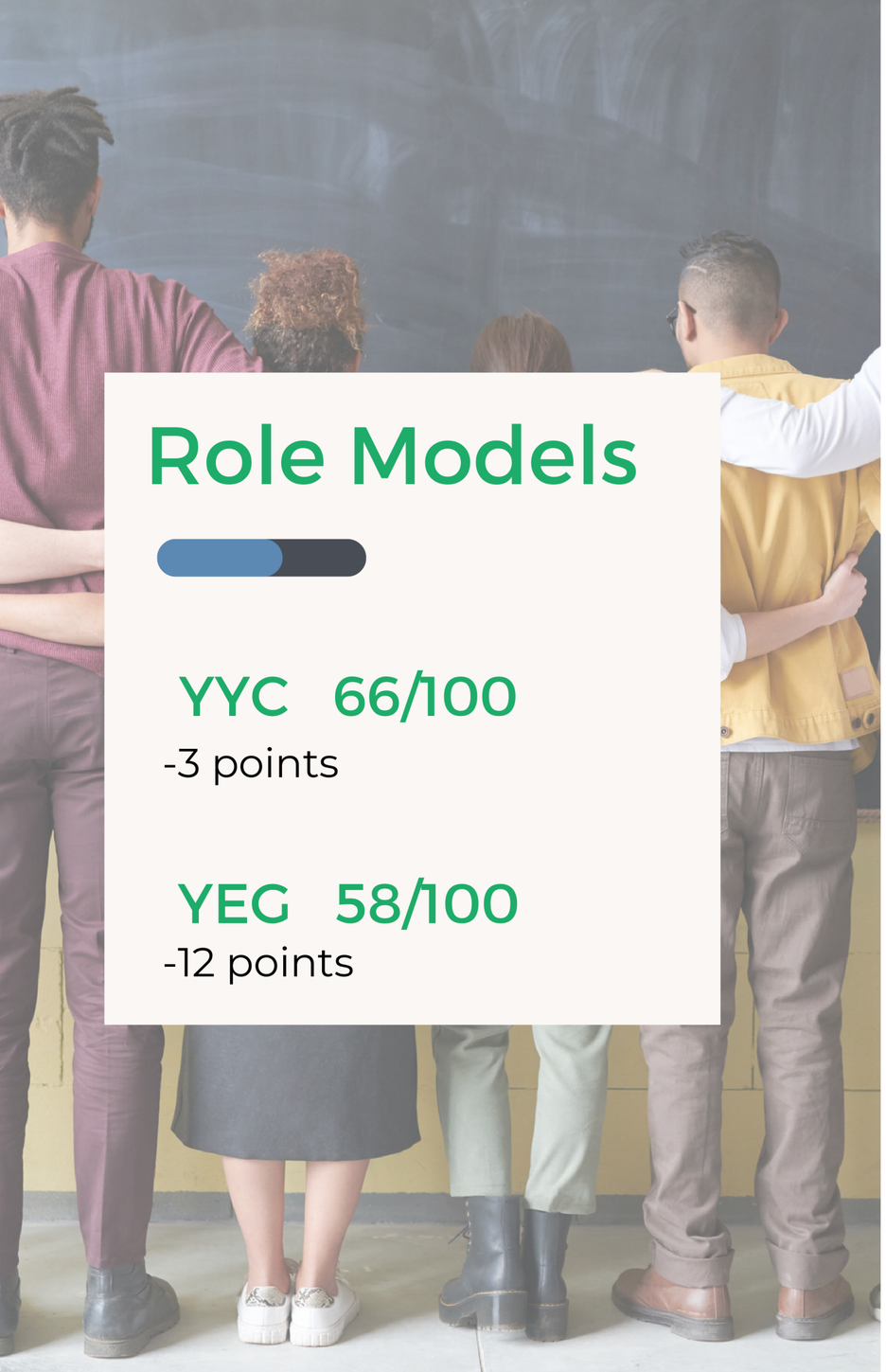
-12 points

Accessibility and Engagement of Role Models

While role models are appreciated for their contributions, there's feedback indicating that once businesses scale, these individuals become less available. This highlights a gap in ongoing engagement and accessibility of role models to the broader ecosystem.

Diversity Among Role Models

Respondents note an improvement in diversity among role models but still see significant room for growth. The tech sector, in particular, is mentioned as being predominantly male, pointing to a need for more inclusive representation across gender, ethnicity, and other diversity dimensions.



Role Models

YYC 66/100

-3 points

YEG 58/100

-12 points

Perceptions of Success and Mentorship Models

There's a critical view of how success is measured, with a preference for valuing problem-solving and impact over financial gain. Additionally, there's mention of the ad hoc accessibility of resources and mentorship models, suggesting a need for a more unified and structured approach to supporting future role models.

Visibility and Support for Emerging Role Models

The feedback includes suggestions for more support and visibility for new and diverse role models, emphasizing the importance of showcasing successes and providing platforms for mentorship and networking. This includes rethinking the criteria for what makes someone a high-potential future role model and ensuring that equity is considered in these determinations.

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Role Models Across Alberta

*Please note this is not the full list of Role Models

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ROLE MODEL

The definition of successful is usually associated with dollar signs and not the problem being solved. An app that makes millions doesn't automatically mean that the founder is a role model compared to a university student solving sustainability problems.

- Founder,Entrepreneur,Ecosystem Builder, Calgary, 10 months - 3 years

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I see a lot of the old guard wanting to hold their place as role models, when their way of how they got here is not representative of the future we are trying to create

- Founder,Entrepreneur,Ecosystem Builder, Calgary, More than 10 years

Activities and engagement are helpful tools to foster a vibrant and connected ecosystem. Ecosystem activities should be balanced between organizational drive (top down) and grassroots led (bottom up). Activities may include networking and learning events, job fairs, pitch events, scorecard evaluations, and other forms of collaboration.

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Engaged Activities 70/100

Engaged Activities

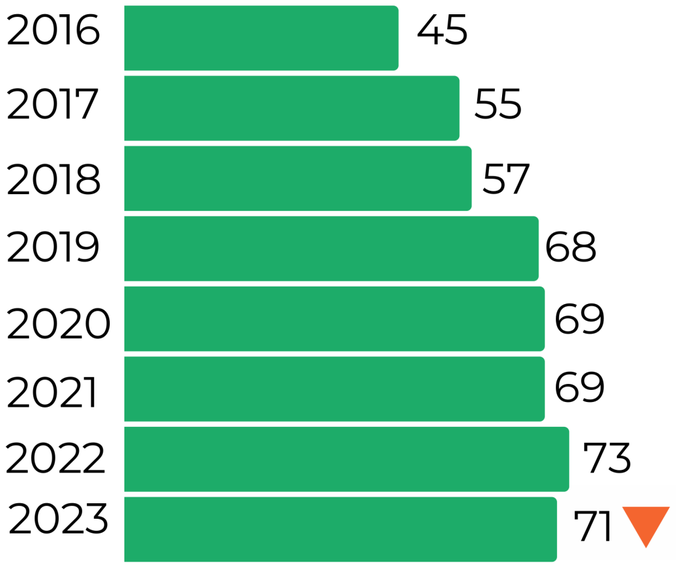
YYC 71/100

-2 points

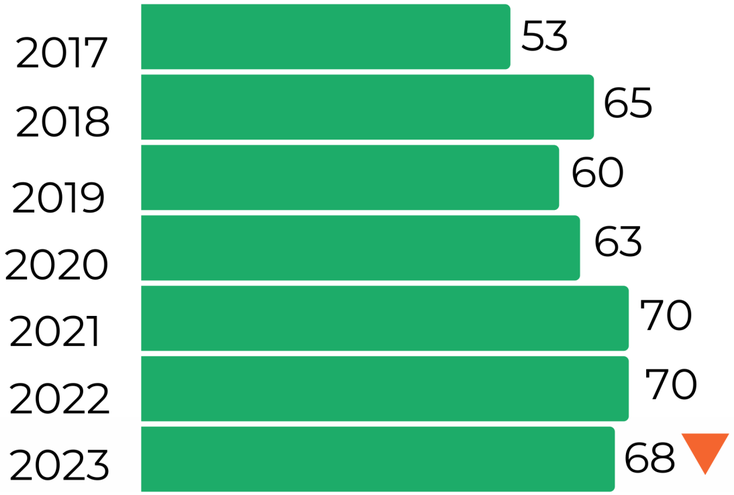
YEG 68/100

-2 points

YYC YEAR-OVER-YEAR



YEG YEAR-OVER-YEAR



Getting better and stronger each year.

-Founder,Entrepreneur,Investor,Ecosystem Builder,Other, Calgary, More than 10 years

*No 2016 YEG data

Engaged Activities

YYC 71/100

-2 points

YEG 68/100

-2 points

A shift towards innovative, action-oriented events is advocated by ecosystem members, emphasizing experiential activities over traditional panel discussions to enhance direct engagement and learning.

Participants call for the inclusion of fresh voices to diversify insights and experiences, alongside the implementation of events that align more closely with industry demands, facilitating meaningful connections between startups and larger companies. The importance of socio-economic inclusion is emphasized, highlighting the need to address barriers such as ancillary costs that may prevent wide participation.

There's an appreciation for the current vibrancy and diversity of the ecosystem's events, like Inventures, but also a clear call for improvements to make these gatherings more accessible and impactful, suggesting support mechanisms like grants to enhance event organization and participation.

Very impressed with the diversity of activities

-Entrepreneur,Investor, Ecosystem Builder,Startup Service Provider, *Calgary, More than 3 years*

Engaged Activities

YYC 71/100

-2 points

YEG 68/100

-2 points

Notable Regional Insights

Calgary

- Desire for more creative and action-oriented events over traditional panels. Calgary is recognized for hosting impactful and engaging events like Innovation Week and Stampede tech events.
- Concern with the effectiveness of current activities in creating lasting connections with networking events.

Edmonton

- Noted for its vibrant grassroots ecosystem and a wide range of activities, from pitch competitions to networking events
- The need for more quality, educational, and supportive events for entrepreneurs, particularly those directly involved in tech (as opposed to tech-adjacent fields).

Engaged Activities

YYC 71/100

-2 points

YEG 68/100

-2 points

Need for Creative and Experiential Events

There's a strong call for moving beyond traditional panel discussions to more creative, experiential events that actively engage participants. This includes a desire for activities that are action-oriented and provide direct learning experiences, suggesting a shift towards formats that encourage participation and interaction.

Diversity and Inclusion

Respondents express concerns about the repetitive selection of panelists and the socio-economic barriers to event participation. There's a clear demand for a broader representation of voices and experiences, as well as measures to make events more accessible to diverse populations, including considerations for costs related to event attendance.

Engaged Activities

YYC 71/100

-2 points

YEG 68/100

-2 points

Alignment with Industry Needs

- The need for event organizers within the entrepreneurial ecosystem to tailor their events more closely to the actual needs and challenges facing the industry they serve. Events should not just be general networking opportunities or discussions but should be designed with a clear understanding of the current market demands and the specific problems that existing companies are facing.

- By organizing "industry demand" driven events, the aim is to create platforms where startups and newer companies can present their solutions directly to larger, established companies that are already facing these challenges. This setup provides startups with a unique opportunity to demonstrate how their products or services can meet the needs of these larger companies, thereby facilitating more targeted and meaningful connections between emerging businesses and potential clients or partners, leading to mutually beneficial partnerships.

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ENGAGED ACTIVITTIES

There should be more "industry demand" driven events. E.G. what problems do the bigger companies/institutions have so that startups can articulate their value proposition for them. This makes customer acquisition more equitable and less nepotistic for new founders.

- Entrepreneur,Startup Employee/Team Member,Ecosystem Builder,Startup Service Provider,Freelancer, More than 3 years

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It does not seem like Edmonton has recovered to pre pandemic levels. Minimal activities and events, minimal value, low attendance.

- Founder,Startup Employee/Team Member,Freelancer, Edmonton, More than 5 years

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Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

DEI continues to play an important role in building a thriving ecosystem - just like a Rainforest. While DEI has become mainstream as a term, it is important to look at how to build an ecosystem culture where everyone feels seen, valued, and can bring their authentic selves to their work.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are often used interchangeably but there are important differences between these terms that are often misunderstood.

The 2023 scorecard examined each concept to grasp the individual meanings and implications for the purposes of identifying improvements.

Diversity is a measure of representation within a community or population that includes identity, background, lived experience, culture, and many more.

Equity is the promotion of fairness and justice for each individual that considers historical, social, systemic, and structural issues that impact experience and individual needs.

Inclusion *is the creation of an environment where everyone shares a sense of belonging, is treated with respect, and is able to fully participate.*

Source: https://research.utoronto.ca/equity-diversity-inclusion/equity-diversity-inclusion-

Diversity, equity and inclusion are seen as important drivers of building a successful ecosystem yet the gap is widening

8.72 average response of all participants who feel that **diversity** is important to build a successful ecosystem

8.40 average response of all participants feel that **equity** is important to build a successful ecosystem

8.72 average reponse that **inclusion** is important to build a successful ecosystem

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PARTICPANT FEEDBACK: INCLUSION

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“It's one thing to have diversity of people and thinking but I think it's highly important for members to feel the inclusion.”

-African Canadian, Finance Sector, less than six months, female, gen z

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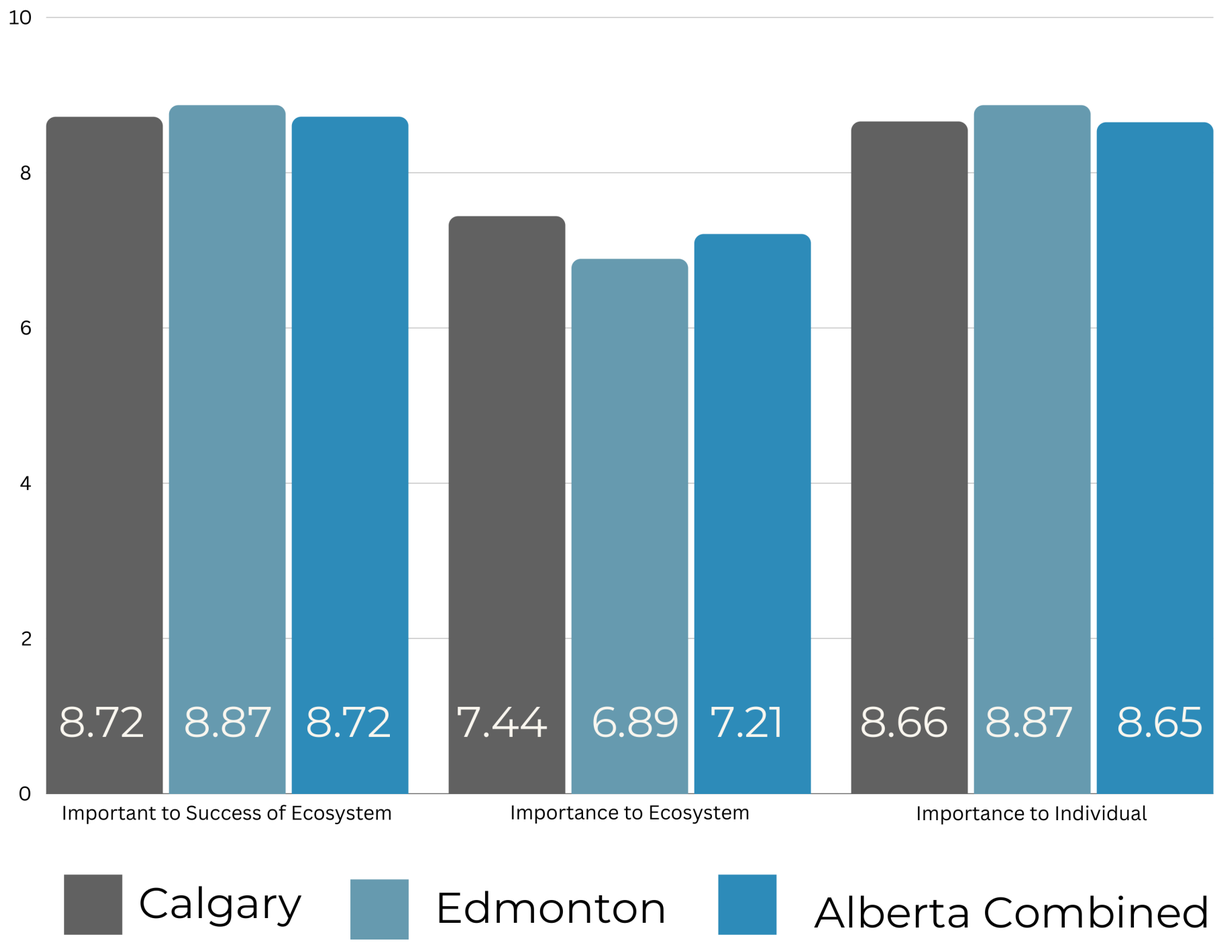
Regional Perspective

Diversity



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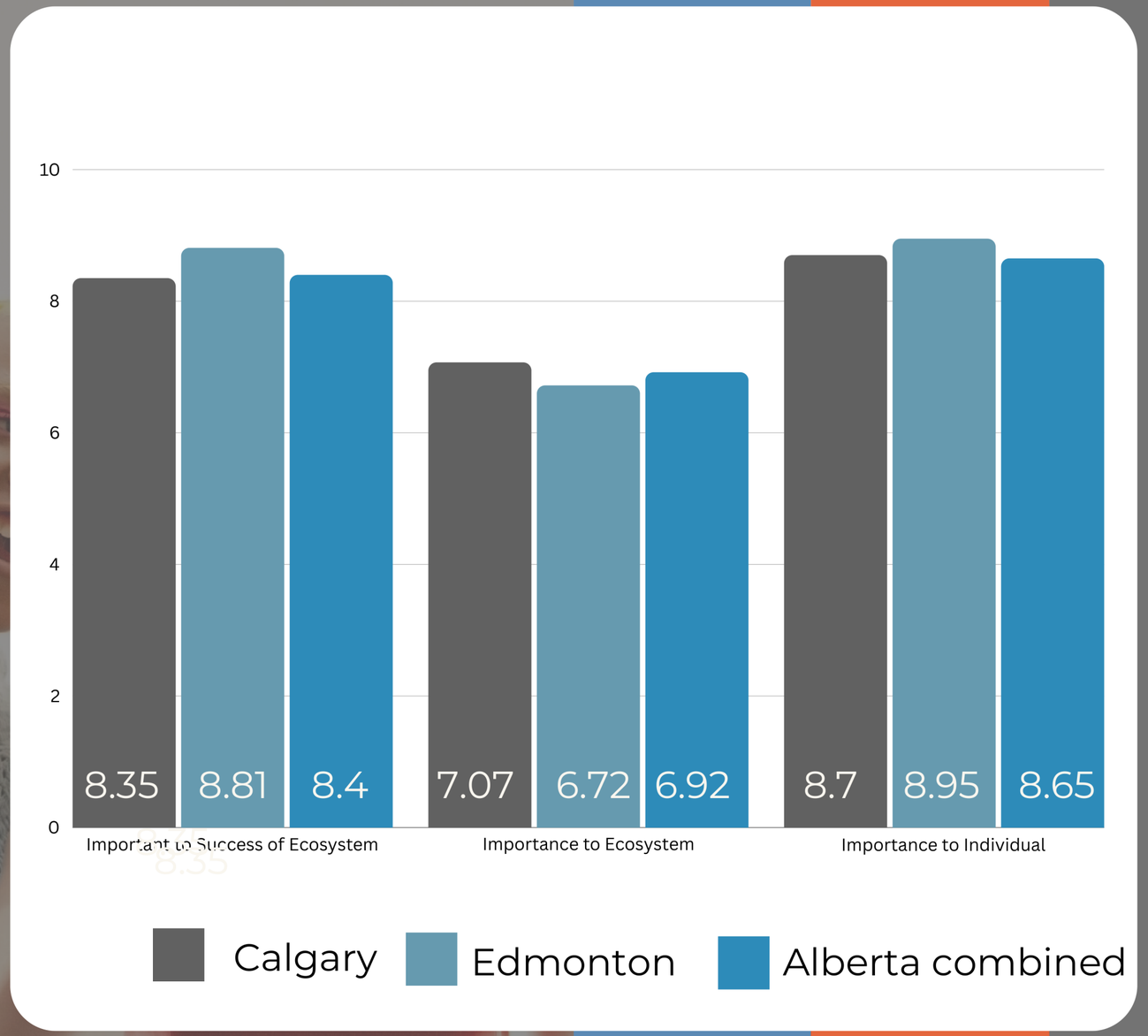
Regional Perspective

Equity



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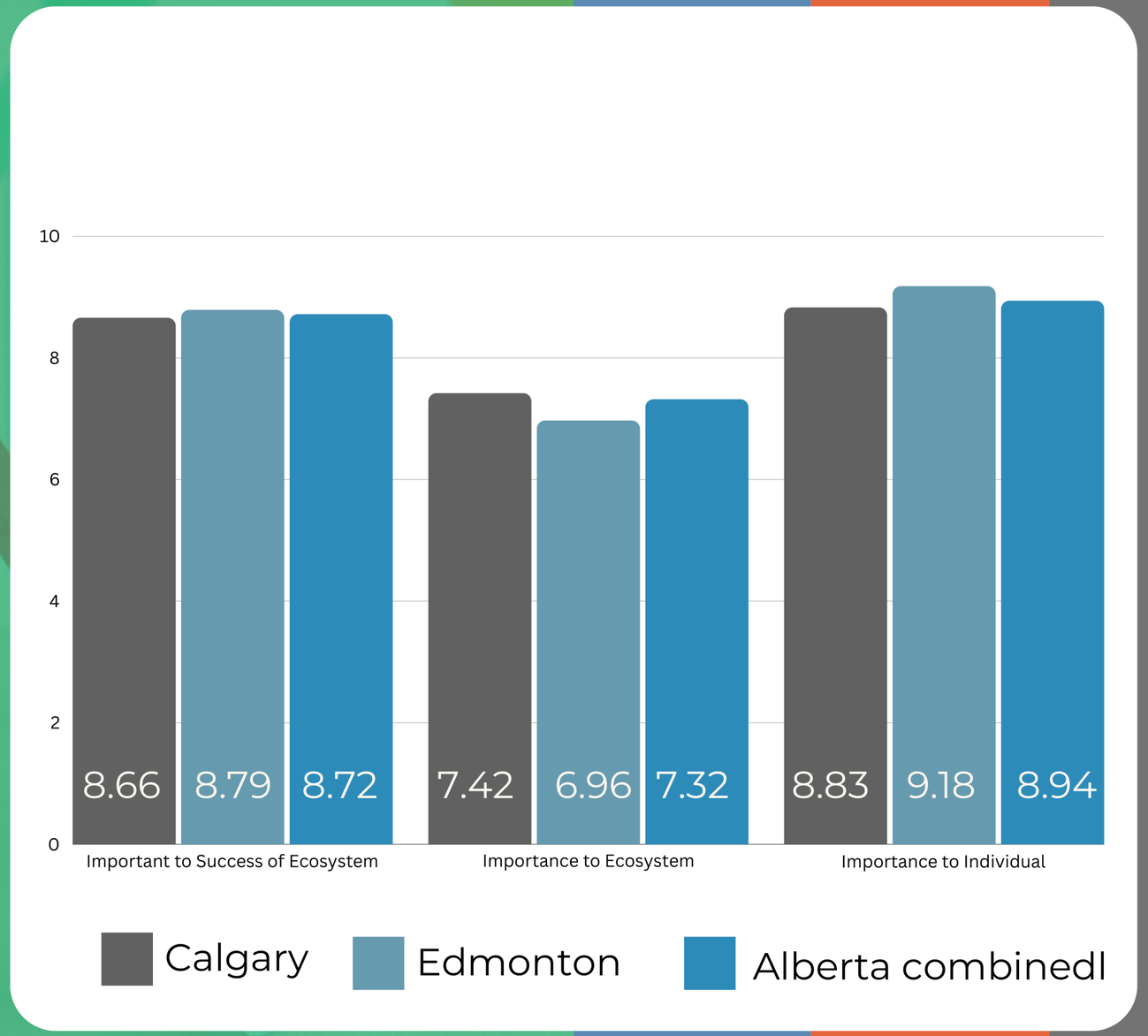
Regional Perspective

Inclusion



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Mind the Gap

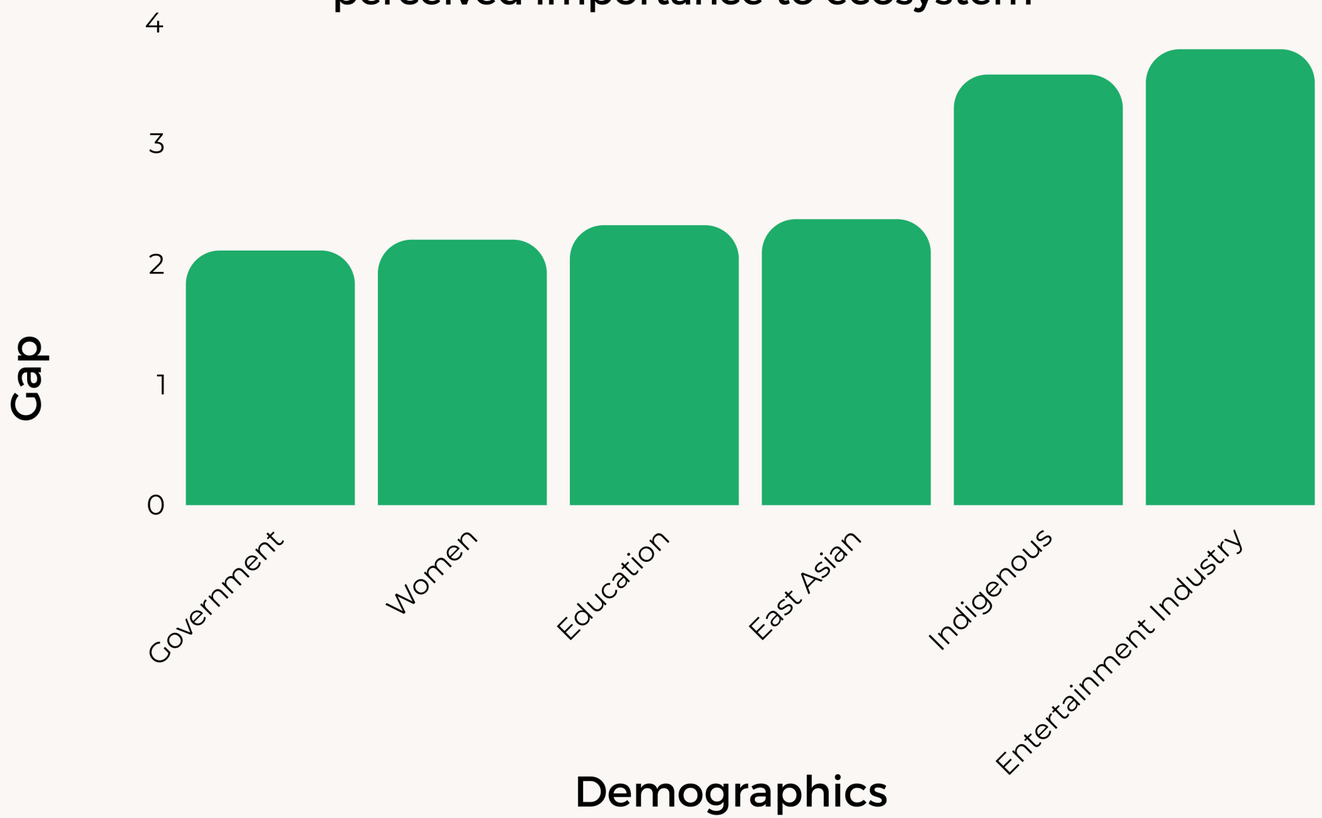
One way to quantify a feeling of belonging is the gap between how important Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is to a particular demographic and how important that same group feels D&I is to the population as a whole. This section looks at gaps greater than 2.0 in how important DEI is to them personally versus how important they perceive DEI being to the ecosystem as a whole.

Mind the Gap: Diversity

There are 6 groups with aggregates of 5 or more responses that indicated a gap greater than 2.0 in how important D&I is to them personally versus how important they perceive D&I being to the ecosystem as a whole.

If the gap is 2 points or more, it suggests a significant discrepancy between personal valuation and perceived community valuation.

1. Government
2. Women
3. Education
4. East Asian
5. Indigenous
6. Entertainment Industry



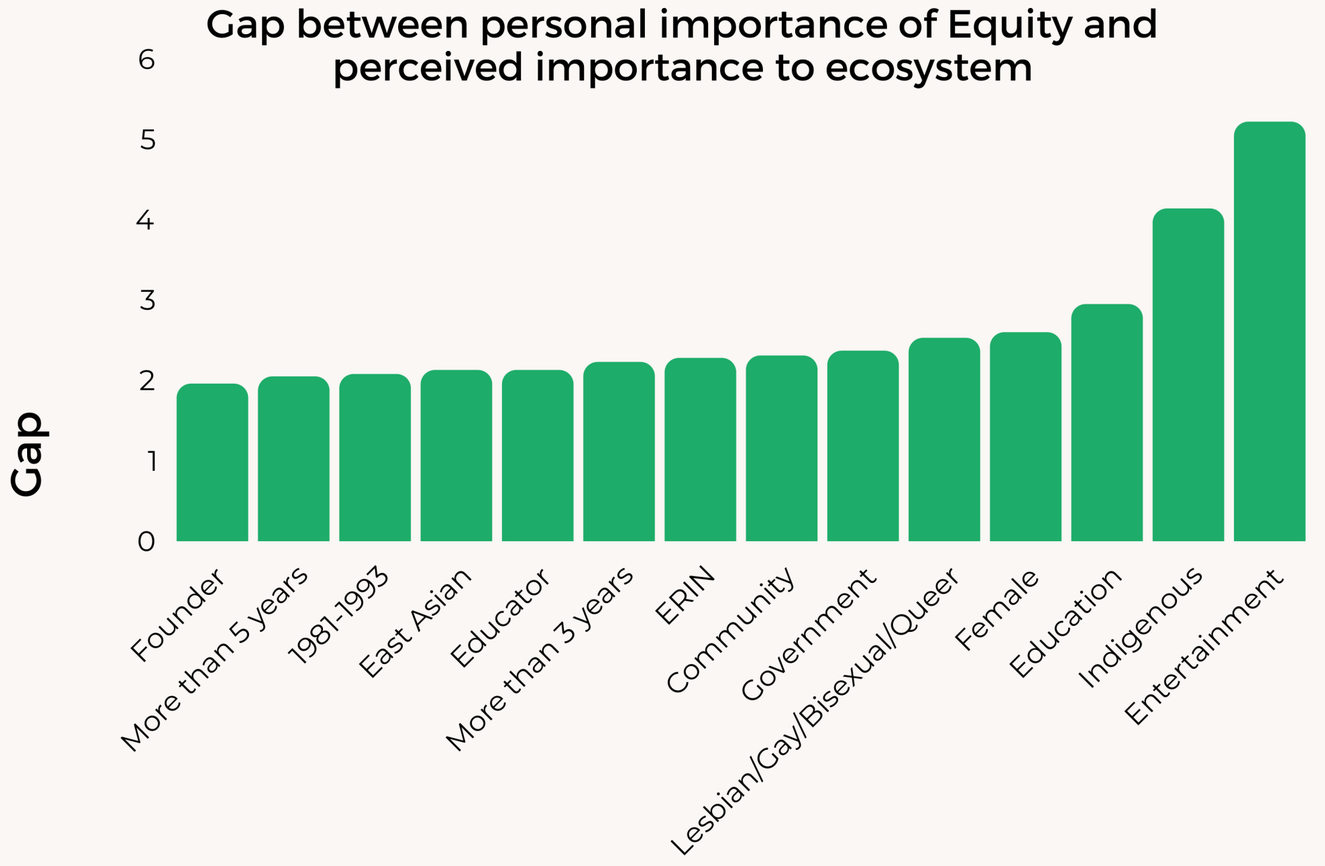
11 GROUPS

indicated a gap greater than 2.0 between the personal importance of Diversity to respondents and their perception of its importance to the entire ecosystem. Though small sample sizes, those with one or more dependents as parents and individuals with Mobility Impairment indicated a gap greater than 3.0.

Mind the Gap: Equity

There are 14 groups with aggregates of 5 or more responses that indicated a gap greater than 2 .0 in how important D&I is to them personally versus how important they perceive D&I being to the ecosystem as a whole:

1. Founder
2. More than 5 years
3. 1981-1993
4. East Asian
5. Educator
6. More than 3 years
7. ERIN
8. Community
9. Government
10. Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Queer
11. Female
12. Education
13. Indigenous
14. Entertainment



The gap widened to 4 points for individuals identifying as non-binary or gender non-conforming, as well as for those with mobility impairments. A gap of 3.67 points was observed among respondents with one or more parents as dependents, though the sample size for each group was <5.

Notably Founders (73 respondents) had a gap of 1.96 and Startup Employees (36 respondents) expressed a gap of 1.92 indicating that this sentiment may be prevalent within startup teams.

Mind the Gap: Inclusion

There are 12 groups with aggregates of 5 or more responses that indicated a gap greater than 2.0 in how important D&I is to them personally versus how important they perceive D&I being to the ecosystem as a whole:

1. Education
2. Government
3. Community
4. More than 5 years
5. Freelancer
6. ERIN
7. 1981-1993
8. Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual
9. Female
10. More than 3 years
11. Entertainment
12. Indigenous

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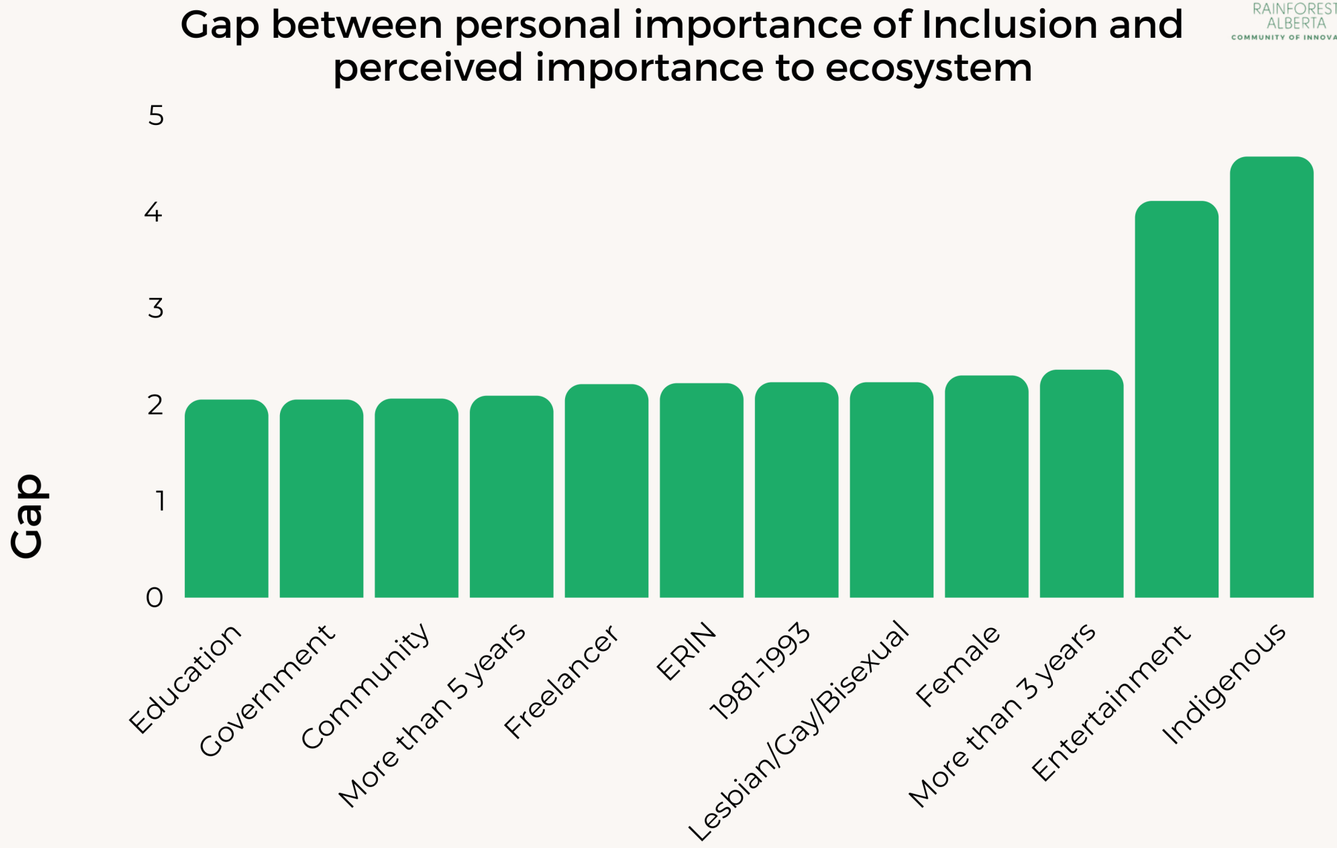
COMMUNITY OF INNOVATORS



The most significant gaps in the personal perception of Inclusion versus its perceived importance within the ecosystem, were noted by individuals in the Entertainment and Indigenous groups, with gaps of 4.11 and 4.57, respectively

Mind the Gap

Initial enthusiasm for the Alberta startup ecosystem tends to wane as participants deepen their involvement, highlighting the difficulty in sustaining early optimism.

However, the notable satisfaction within specific sectors and roles suggests valuable opportunities for cross-sector learning and the exchange of best practices, which could help in maintaining positive sentiment across the ecosystem.

Age and Engagement

- Younger respondents (born between 1994-2003) show notably high scores, especially in Culture and Leaders pillars, which could reflect a more vibrant engagement with the ecosystem among younger entrepreneurs.

- Respondents with less than 6 months in the ecosystem report the highest scores across all pillars, indicating initial optimism or satisfaction with early experiences. This contrasts with more tenured participants, who report lower scores, hinting at potential disillusionment or identified gaps over time.

Industry and Occupation

- The Real Estate industry scores highly in Culture and Leaders, suggesting strong community and leadership within this sector.

- Policymakers/Government Representatives and Educators report very high scores, particularly in Culture and Leaders, indicating that individuals in these roles may perceive or experience the ecosystem more positively.

Mind the Gap

Ensuring diverse voices are brought into the fold becomes easier when spaces, events, and tools are designed to service diverse needs - this includes accessible design for people with physical or mental disabilities and inclusive design for wide-ranging cultural perspectives based upon gender, ethnicity, care-giver status, age, sexual identity and beyond.

Focusing on existing needs of the ecosystem, such as 16% of the respondents identifying as neurodiverse and 13% as having a mental illness, will move the ecosystem from diverse to inclusive and equitable. For example, explore how the ecosystem can offer child care or other relevant support during events as 46% of respondents identify as a primary caregiver to dependents.

Additionally, when considering the 44% of the ecosystem that identifies as women, how can the community eliminate micro-aggressions and attract even more women of diverse backgrounds into Alberta's tech ecosystem? Bringing these voices directly to the leadership, strategy, and design tables will ensure valuable insights are captured.

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16%

IDENTIFY AS BEING NEURODIVERSE

13%

IDENTIFY AS HAVING A MENTAL ILLNESS

10%

IDENTIFY AS LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL OR QUEER

46%

IDENTIFY AS A PRIMARY CARE GIVER TO DEPENDENTS

44%

IDENTIFY AS WOMEN

Building a More Equitable and Inclusive Ecosystem

Access to financial, social, human capital and talent capital are critical to the success of entrepreneurs and founders.

Therefore, it is essential for all ecosystem actors to consider these challenges from an DEI lens.

The most common roles identified are:

Founder - 46%

Entrepreneur - 47%

Ecosystem Builder - 53%

Focusing on these identities as primary stakeholders when describing and designing for the ecosystem will resonate with many.

Culture

- Develop a **mutual understanding** of equity, diversity and inclusion in the ecosystem and how EDI is being integrated and measured across the ecosystem

- **Focus on Trust:** DEI work also relies heavily on building trust, belonging and connection with people from all backgrounds.

- **Embrace a culture of allyship:** Allyship creates an inclusive culture where everyone has opportunities for growth and development. Allies listen, learn, and understand where systems create and uphold barriers.. Allies can influence the culture of the ecosystem

- **Sign on to Diversity Challenges:** Signing on to challenges such as The 50 – 30 Challenge, an initiative between the Government of Canada, Canadian businesses and diversity organizations challenges Canadian organizations to increase the representation and inclusion of diverse groups within their workplaces, while highlighting the benefits of giving all Canadians a seat at the table.

- **Increase collaboration between mainstream and grassroots organizations: Prioritize c**ollaboration over competition.

Leaders

- Promote and **embody inclusive leadership** and equitable behaviours

- Consistently promote **moving beyond diversity** initiatives towards equity, inclusion and belonging

- Leaders should actively **seek to listen, engage and work to dismantle barriers** that uphold oppressive structures

- **Openly reward courageous displays of allyship** and honest feedback.

- Adopt **policies that encourage increased representation** of women and equity-deserving groups in the innovation network, including entrepreneurship, business, and corporate leadership (e.g., 50-30 Challenge).

- **Set measurements** for diversity targets inside the organization - what gets measured gets done and Hold executive leaders accountable for driving D&I outcomes.

- **Actively seek** upcoming leaders.

Policy & Infrastructure

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- Bring together multi stakeholder (entrepreneurs, risk capital, corporations, government, universities, non profits, community groups) **roundtables** to find solutions, together.

- Address barriers to inclusive access to **child care programs and parental leave policies**.

- Increase **access to funding** for diverse entrepreneurs.

- Governments should continue to provide funding for programs that specifically target diverse start-ups including grants, prizes (pitch competitions) and venture capital.

- **Encourage investment capital:** Governments should provide tax investment incentives to drive investment capital for equity seeking groups

- **Encourage more diverse talent** through education and STEM programs

- **Drive collaboration through funding that benefits mainstream and grassroots organizations:** Grassroots organizations understand the multifaceted contexts and issues that face diverse talent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Resources

- **Improve wayfinding and navigation of the ecosystem through an intersectional lens.**
- Create more **networks and mentorship programs for women and other diverse innovators**
- **Increase access to financial capital particularly for diverse entrepreneurs:** In an effort to close the gender gap in the VC sector, several Canadian organizations have developed VC investment funds specifically for women-led businesses.
- **Build leadership pipeline** through Upskill/mentor junior talent
- Focus on procurement from diverse entrepreneurs.

Role Model

- **Showcase** the achievements and experiences of diverse talent across the ecosystem.
- **Ensure diverse voices are showcased** at events and panels.
- **Invest in mentorship programs for diverse founders** where connections and learning can take place in a **safe and inclusive environment.**
- Intentionally build channels to **attract** more women, diverse individuals, and younger audiences into innovation and entrepreneurship.

Engaged Activities

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- **Collaborate to connect:** Create opportunities for cross pollination of diverse audiences from traditional leadership to grassroots.
- **Feature diverse voices.**
- **Create events tailored to diverse** seeking groups: Relevant programing curated with consideration of their needs (ie. indigenous, caregivers, mobility impairment, etc.)

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“I believe most organizations only value EDI when it comes to applying for grants and are often shoe-horn in content just to apply rather than genuinely believing in making the effort and having difficult conversations with their communities.”

“I believe most organizations only value EDI when it comes to applying for grants and are often shoe-horn in content just to apply rather than genuinely believing in making the effort and having difficult conversations with their communities.”

“There is a distinct lack of diversity (gender and ethnic/racial) in games industry leadership. BIPOC voices seem to be continually silenced. The importance of EDI has fallen off of a cliff with the many layoffs that have occurred in the games industry. There is support from ecosystem members, but there are also attempts to silence traditionally underrepresented voices in favour of dominant narratives.”

“It would be great to have asynchronous programming available at any time to early stage entrepreneurs.”

“Speaking specifically to women-identified, gender diverse, and other underrepresented groups of entrepreneurs and innovators; role models are few and far between, not because they don't exist, but because they are stretched so thin in their contributions to the ecosystem. We tend to focus on 'unicorns' and do not create opportunities for other successful diverse innovators to be featured and represented as speakers, mentors, and role models. Because of this, the few that are focused on do not have the capacity to be accessible.

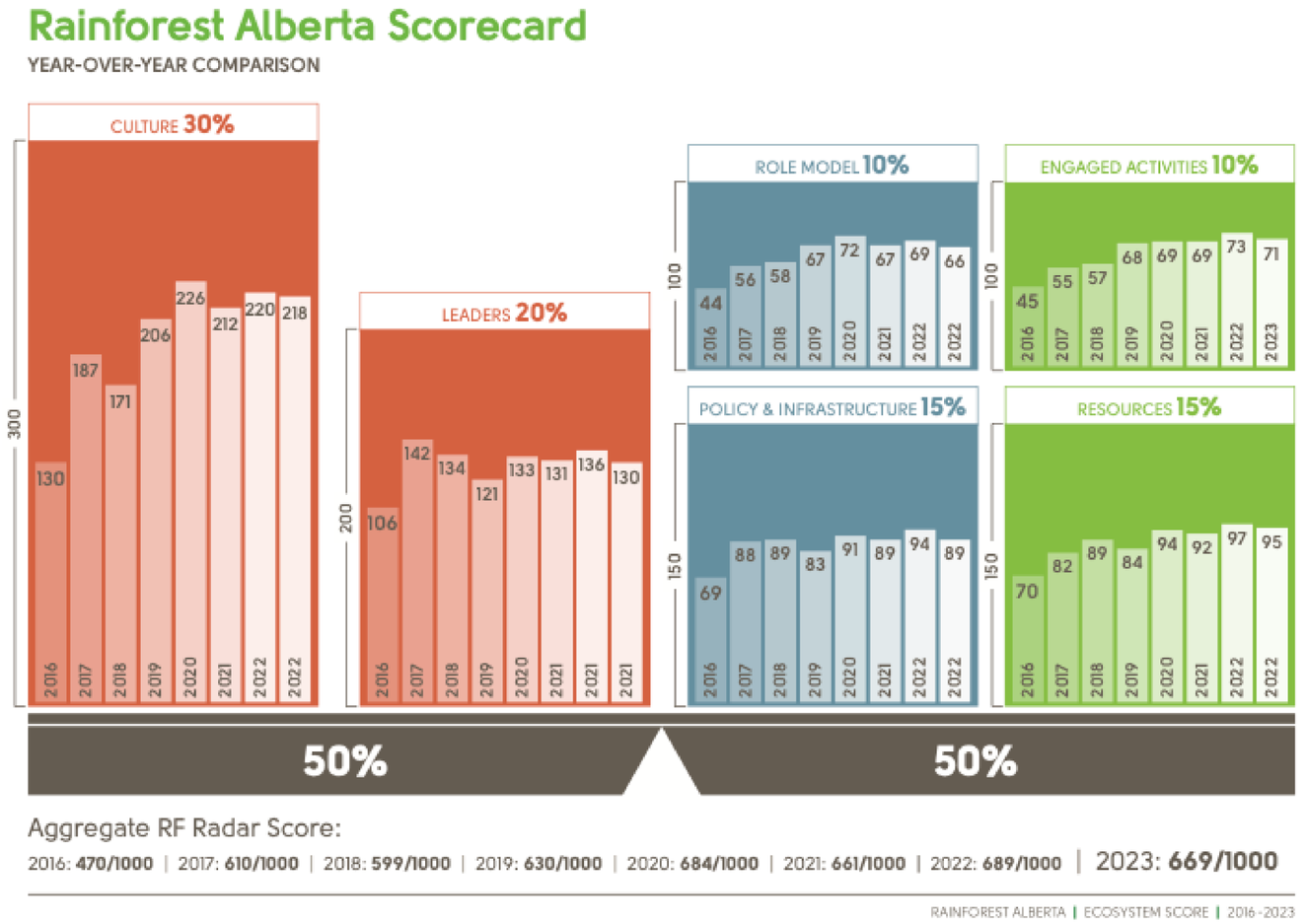
“More Indigenous lead sharing. More understanding of the complexity of their spiritual ceremonies and the relevance to personal /relationship commitments.”

“There are a lot of the same leaders being showcased in the ecosystem. We need to highlight those who are working in the ecosystem that are under the radar but are true leaders in the ecosystem”

Study Details

Year-over-year comparison & Target

2023 results demonstrate an incremental decrease across all pillars since 2022 .



Rainforest Alberta Scorecard History

The Rainforest Alberta Scorecard Assessment was derived from the book, "The Rainforest Scorecard: A Practical Framework for Growing Innovation Potential" by Henry Doss and Alistair Brett. The framework was created to measure the innovation pillars within an organization and was further adapted through the work that Rainforest Alberta undertook with Rainforest Strategies LLP consultants between 2016-2018.

In 2019 it was identified that the Rainforest Alberta movement had evolved beyond the scope of Rainforest Strategies LLP. As a result, a large group within the community undertook a re-tooling exercise to ensure the right questions were being asked in the assessment. This approach, though collaborative, led to an ineffective survey design.

In 2020, Rainforest Alberta worked with a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) expert to include respondent demographics in the Scorecard Assessment, which provided valuable data on how various demographics experienced the ecosystem.

In 2023, we broke out the data on DEI to measure each aspect individually in an effort to gain deeper insights.

Rainforest Alberta Scorecard History

There was still, however, lower-than-anticipated participation in the 2020 survey.

This led to the 2021 iteration of the survey presented in this report. In order to provide the ecosystem with an effective measurement of the six pillars and valuable data, a psychometrics expert was engaged to redesign a lasting and effective 2021 iteration of the Scorecard.

In this iteration of the Scorecard Assessment, a new DEI section was created and questions throughout the survey were designed to:

- Align with the pillars
- Provide insights by splicing data demographically for questions
- Educate and prime the ecosystem
- Measure gaps between awareness, perception, and desire

The resulting analysis has informed recommendations to increase the score of the six pillars.

Gaps in Scorecard Research & Data insights

Jenelle Morgan, Psychometrics Expert

The goal of the Rainforest Scorecard is to measure the presence and quality of the ecosystem's infrastructure (i.e., the six pillars), in their facilitation of a thriving innovation community in Calgary, Alberta. Whereas the Scorecard has been critical in understanding the state of Calgary’s entrepreneurial and innovative capabilities, further improvements in its design and content would provide a more accurate depiction of the ecosystem's performance.

We targeted three main areas in ensuring the Scorecard more precisely measures the ecosystem’s infrastructure. The first is reconfiguring the focus to the ecosystem, rather than the community. The previous Scorecard asked respondents to evaluate the “community” on various attributes, which likely resulted in participants examining the Rainforest community, rather than the broader ecosystem that encapsulates it. The written comments provided by previous years’ respondents, showed frequent mentions of "Rainforest" in their evaluations rather than the ecosystem. This highlights the importance of being more intentional about the context we want respondents to evaluate.

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Meet our experts!

Experts recruited from our local community were paramount in creating an intentional survey design that produced valuable insights

Jenelle Morgan

Psychometrics expert

Jenelle is a PhD candidate in the Industrial-Organizational Psychology program at the University of Calgary. She works in the selection and recruitment lab, examining the content and influence of employee voice as expressed in online organizational reviews. As a result, Jenelle has developed skillsets in using machine learning tools, univariate, and multivariate analyses, and has worked previously in survey design and creation. Further, Jenelle teaches an undergraduate course in Personnel Selection and labs in quantitative and qualitative research analyses and methods while privately tutoring graduate students in the same area.

More generally, her goals are to determine how organizations and systems cultivate climates where persons feel supported, and how feedback can facilitate this process.

Shannon Pestun

DEI Consultant

Shannon is a proud Cree Métis woman entrepreneur and courageous leader who is breaking barriers to advance an inclusive and sustainable economy. Recognized for creating innovative funding models and solutions that challenge the status quo, Shannon is one of Canada's most sought-after finance consultants and a trusted voice on women's entrepreneurship for educators, government, industry and the media. She was one of the first women in the country to lead a women's banking strategy and one of seven women appointed to serve on Canada's women entrepreneurship expert panel.

Shannon is the Co-founder of The Finance Cafe, the CEO of Pestun Consulting and the Senior Advisor for Business and Finance for Canada's Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub. Shannon is committed to bolstering Indigenous economic prosperity and wellness by driving regional economic growth and bringing an Indigenous-centred approach to her work. In 2020, she created the Gifting Circle Bursary for Indigenous women entrepreneurs, the first community-funded bursary that supports Indigenous women who pursue entrepreneurship and has raised over $120,000.

RAINFOREST ALBERTA
A COMMUNITY OF INNOVATORS

Meet our experts!

Experts recruited from our local community were paramount in creating an intentional survey design that produced valuable insights

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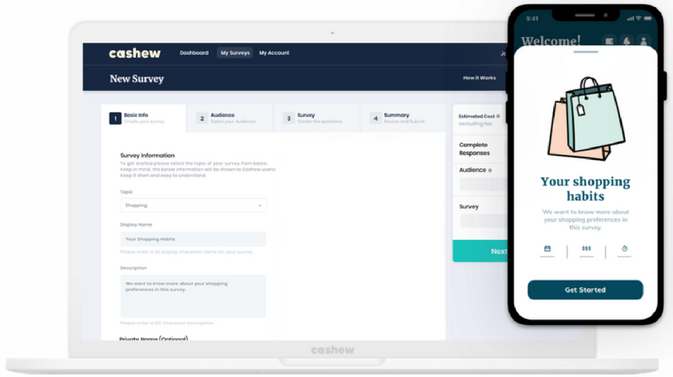
Cashew is a full-service research company that offers end-to-end solutions, simplifying access to high-quality insights. Our fast and highly customized research empowers you to make customer-centric business decisions.



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How Cashew is different:

With technology, research expertise, and a highly engaged audience community, Cashew extends itself as a true partner to all of our clients. Our ecosystem enables us to adapt and innovate solutions that specifically address your business problems, without extending your budget or timelines. We orbit your world, delivering tailored solutions that meet your needs.

What we deliver:

- Faster research applications that is better suited for your needs
- Enabling you to own a larger piece of the process and therefore control the quality of insights
- Enabling you to build solutions for your unique business practices
- Cashew acts as an extension to your insight machine

What's Next?

The 2023 Scorecard Analysis will be distributed to Calgary Innovation Coalition members, ecosystem leaders, startups, and the broader community.

All organizations working within the Calgary ecosystem are strongly encouraged to consider Scorecard insights in their strategic planning and day-to-day work.

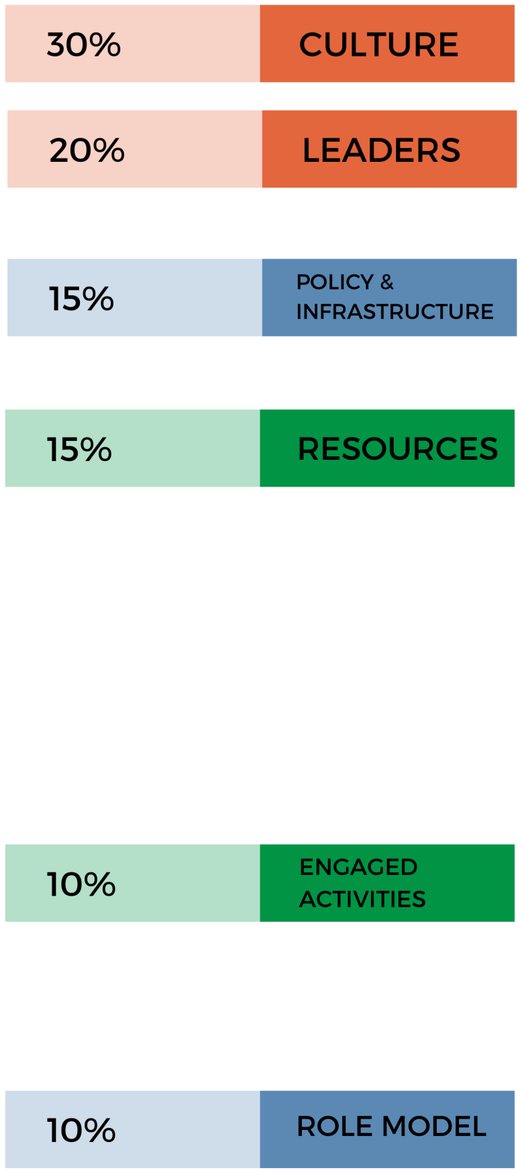
Together, we make a difference!

Have any questions or looking for more information on the data collected in this report?

Contact the Rainforest Alberta team.
info@rainforestab.ca

Appendix

What are the pillars?



Culture is the foundation of any innovation ecosystem. It is the shared values and actions of ecosystem members which ultimately determine the success of ecosystem initiatives.

Leaders, both formal and informal, are decision makers positioned to realize potential, convey perspectives, and rally groups to influence outcomes for innovation.

Policy and Infrastructure is the infinite, non-depleting structural landscape the ecosystem exists within. Actions and interactions between organizations, departments, physical spaces, and policies play a role in supporting innovation.

Resources are a critical factor in achieving success. Resources include:

1. Funding: access to funders, grants, etc
2. Knowledge sharing: publications, patents, databases, Research & Development
3. Support, organizations and service providers: programs, accelerators, incubators, work space
4. Talent: skilled labor pool and powerful networks A balance of resources available in quality, quantity, and origins can support innovative potential through both generation and implementation.

A balance of resources available in quality, quantity, and origins can support innovative potential through both generation and implementation.

Activities and Engagement are helpful tools to foster a vibrant and connected ecosystem. Ecosystem activities should be balanced between organizational drive (top down) and grassroots led (bottom up). Activities may include networking and learning events, job fairs, pitch events, scorecard evaluations, and other forms of collaboration.

Role models across the ecosystem are builders, influencers, and accelerators who add value to the ecosystem through inspiration; they embody characteristics that others wish to emulate. Role models can be uniquely personal and also general to the community.

Survey Questions
Pillar: Culture

Culture is the foundation of any innovation ecosystem. It is the shared values and actions of ecosystem members which ultimately determine the success of ecosystem initiatives. Based on your experiences in the ecosystem, to what extent do you see the following occur?

1 = I see this less often ..... 5 = I see this half the time ..... 10 = I see this all the time

- Failure is accepted as part of the path to success, within the ecosystem.
- Individuals within the Calgary ecosystem are willing to help others without expecting something in return.
- The ecosystem actively welcomes and includes people with diverse lived experiences (i.e., gender identity, ethnic/racial backgrounds, Indigenous, sexual orientation, abilities/disabilities, age, etc.).
- Trust among individuals is evident within the ecosystem.
- Individuals within the ecosystem encourage each other to dream big.
- Individuals within the ecosystem act collaboratively instead of competitively.
- Are there any other comments you would like to share about the Culture pillar?

Survey Questions
Pillar: Policy and Infrastructure

Policy and Infrastructure is the infinite, non-depleting structural landscape the ecosystem exists within. Actions and interactions between organizations, departments, physical spaces, and policies play a role in supporting innovation. Based on your experiences with Policy and Infrastructure in the ecosystem, to what extent do you see the following occur?

1 = I see this less often ..... 5 = I see this half the time ..... 10 = I see this all the time

- Government policy facilitates the growth of startups.
- The physical infrastructure (e.g., accessible spaces, internet access, hardware, etc.) within the ecosystem supports innovation."
- Timely decision-making is evident across policymakers in the ecosystem.
- There are effective communication tools/platforms to share data, events, and happenings in the ecosystem.
- Entrepreneurs are able to identify ecosystem supports (e.g., mentorship and funding options) that are applicable to their current stage of growth.
- Are there any other comments you would like to share about the Policy and Infrastructure pillar?

Survey Questions
Pillar: Leaders

Leaders, both formal and informal, are decision makers positioned to realize potential, convey perspectives, and rally groups to influence outcomes for innovation. Based on your experiences with Leaders in the ecosystem, to what extent do you see the following occur?

1 = I see this less often ..... 5 = I see this half the time ..... 10 = I see this all the time

- Leaders throughout the ecosystem represent a variety of diverse lived experiences (i.e., gender identity, ethnic/racial backgrounds, Indigenous, sexual orientation, abilities/disabilities, age, etc.).
- Leaders in the ecosystem effectively communicate their visions and objectives to other ecosystem members.
- Leaders in the ecosystem are accessible for guidance and advice.
- Ecosystem members are supportive of leaders' initiatives.
- Leaders in the ecosystem value and encourage diversity of thought from a diverse spectrum of individuals (i.e., gender identity, ethnic/racial backgrounds, Indigenous, sexual orientation, abilities/disabilities, age, etc.).
- Are there any other comments you would like to share about the Leaders pillar?

Survey Questions
Pillar: Role Models

Role models across the ecosystem are builders, influencers, and accelerators who add value to the ecosystem through inspiration; they embody characteristics that others wish to emulate. Role models can be uniquely personal and also general to the community. Based on your experiences with Role Models in the ecosystem, to what extent do you see the following occur?

1 = I see this less often ..... 5 = I see this half the time ..... 10 = I see this all the time

- Successful innovators are viewed as role models in the ecosystem.
- There are systems to support high-potential future role models.
- Role models are accessible to the ecosystem for guidance and mentorship.
- Role models in the ecosystem inspire me to be a role model.
- Role Models throughout the ecosystem represent diverse lived experiences (i.e., gender identity, ethnic/racial backgrounds, Indigenous, sexual orientation, abilities/disabilities, age, etc.).
- Are there any other comments you would like to share about the Role Models pillar?

Survey Questions
Pillar: Resources

Resources are a critical factor in achieving success. Resources include:

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- Knowledge sharing: publications, patents, databases, Research & Development
- Support, organizations and service providers: programs, accelerators, incubators, work space
- Talent: skilled labor pool and powerful networks A balance of resources available in quality, quantity, and origins can support innovative potential through both generation and implementation.

A balance of resources available in quality, quantity, and origins can support innovative potential through both generation and implementation. Based on your experiences with Resources in the ecosystem, to what extent do you see the following occur?

1 = I see this less often ..... 5 = I see this half the time ..... 10 = I see this all the time

- There are widely accessible programs to train workers with needed skills for the ecosystem.
- The ecosystem's workforce is talented across a range of skill sets that support market demands.
- There are effective resources provided by organizations to support entrepreneurs through mentorship and education.
- There are helpful programs to inform industries about in-demand skilled workers (e.g., through post secondary education institutes, nonprofits, industry organizations and job fairs).
- Entrepreneurs are able to access funding at the various stages of their entrepreneurial growth.
- Relevant information from a broad spectrum of disciplines is accessible to members of the ecosystem.
- Are there any other comments you would like to share about the Resources pillar?

Survey Questions
Pillar: Engaged Activities

Activities and Engagement are helpful tools to foster a vibrant and connected ecosystem. Ecosystem activities should be balanced between organizational drive (top down) and grassroots led (bottom up). Activities may include networking and learning events, job fairs, pitch events, scorecard evaluations, and other forms of collaboration. Based on your experiences with Activities within the ecosystem, to what extent do you see the following occur?

1 = I see this less often ..... 5 = I see this half the time ..... 10 = I see this all the time

- There are activities within the ecosystem that support innovation.
- Ecosystem activities are designed to be inclusive of people with diverse lived experiences (i.e., gender identity, ethnic/racial backgrounds, Indigenous, sexual orientation, abilities/disabilities, age, etc.).
- Activities enable collaboration between ecosystem members from wide ranging professional backgrounds and industries.
- Activities hosted within the ecosystem create value (e.g., through inspiration, calls to action, problem-solving, and learning).
- The ecosystem encourages self-organization of events and activities.
- Are there any other comments you would like to share about the Engaged Activities pillar?

Survey Questions
Pillar: Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

Rainforest Alberta is committed to supporting a diverse and fully-inclusive ecosystem representative of the communities that we exist within. We understand that your background may be a contributing factor to your experience with the ecosystem and want to learn more about you, your perspectives on DEI.
When considering your responses, please keep these definitions in mind.

Diversity is the measure of representation within a community, including but not limited to: gender identity, ethnic/racial backgrounds, Indigeneity, sexual orientation, abilities/disabilities, age, skillsets and backgrounds.

Equity is the promotion of fairness and justice for each individual that considers historical, social, systemic, and structural issues that impact experience and individual needs.

Inclusion is the cultivation of a space where people believe they belong, are respected, and their participation is valued and encouraged.

Reminder: All individual responses will remain confidential and will be used to inform our progress, gaps, and opportunities year over year. You may choose “prefer not to say” for any of the demographic questions
Based on your experiences in the ecosystem, please rate the importance of **Diversity** to...

1 = Not quite important to you 5 = Moderately important 10 = Extremely important

- You
- Ecosystem
- Building a successful ecosystem

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Survey Questions
Pillar: Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

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Based on your experiences in the ecosystem, please rate the importance of **Equity** to...

1 = Not quite important to you 5 = Moderately important 10 = Extremely important

- You
- Ecosystem
- Building a successful ecosystem

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Based on your experiences in the ecosystem, please rate the importance of **Inclusion** to...

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- You
- Ecosystem
- Building a successful ecosystem

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Survey Questions
Pillar: Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

Do you have any ideas on how we can improve our diversity, equity and/or inclusion efforts as an Ecosystem?

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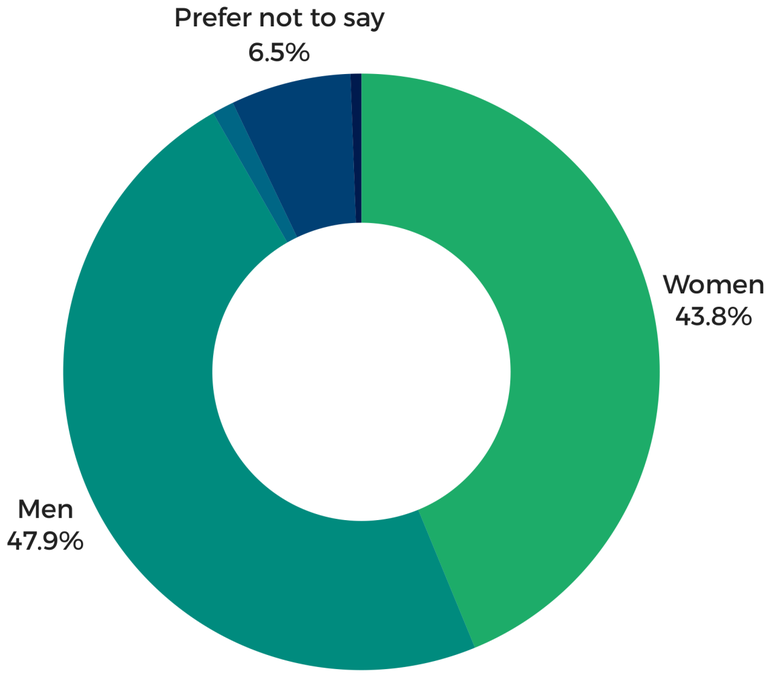
WHO MAKES UP THE ECOSYSTEM?

Gender

Proportion of Participants



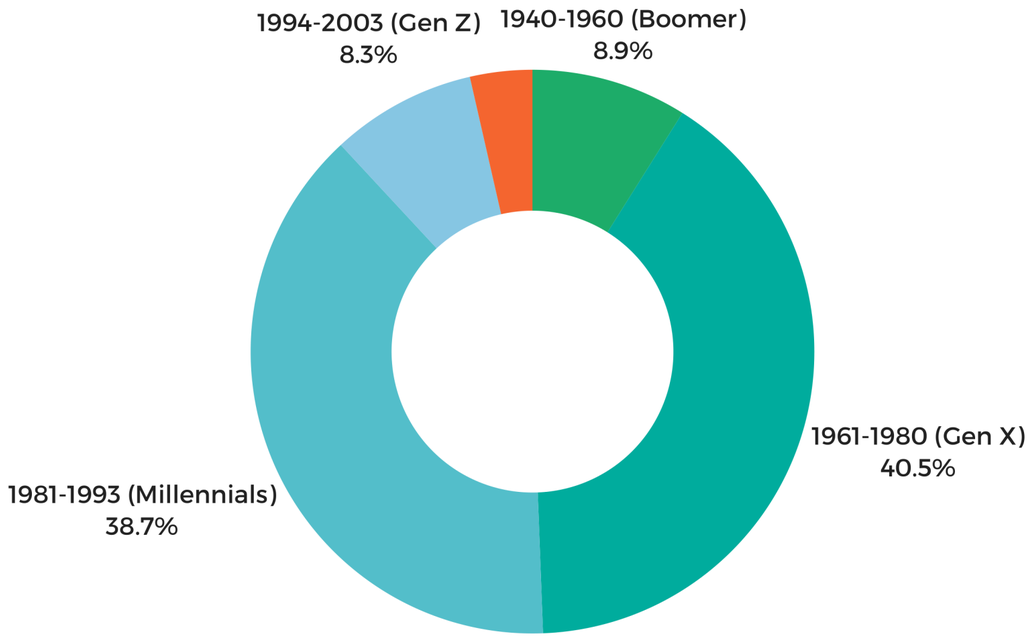
Total Pillar Satisfaction Scores

Female	644
Male	675
Non-binary or gender non-conforming	779
Prefer not to say	570

WHO MAKES UP THE ECOSYSTEM?

Age

Proportion of Participants



Total Pillar Satisfaction Scores

1940-1960	572
1961-1980	661
1981-1993	658
1994-2003	698
Prefer not to say	615

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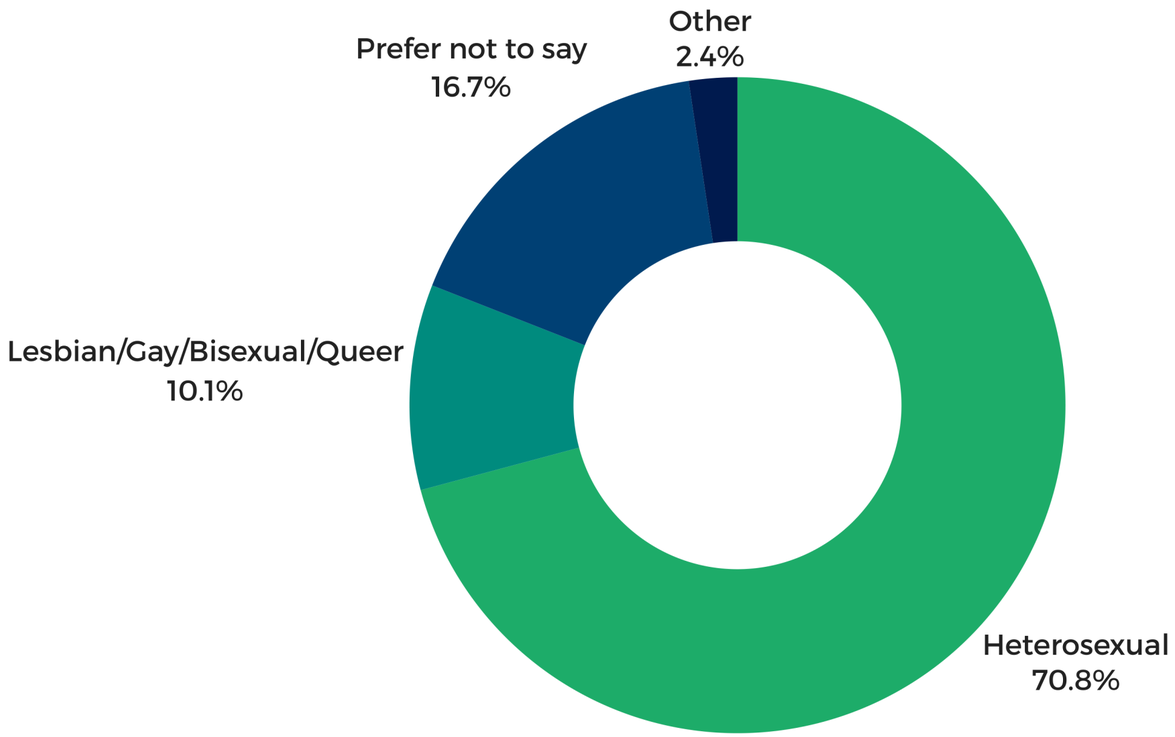
WHO MAKES UP THE ECOSYSTEM?

Sexual Orientation

Proportion of Participants



Total Pillar Satisfaction Scores

Heterosexual	667
Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Queer	667
Other	432
Prefer not to say	622

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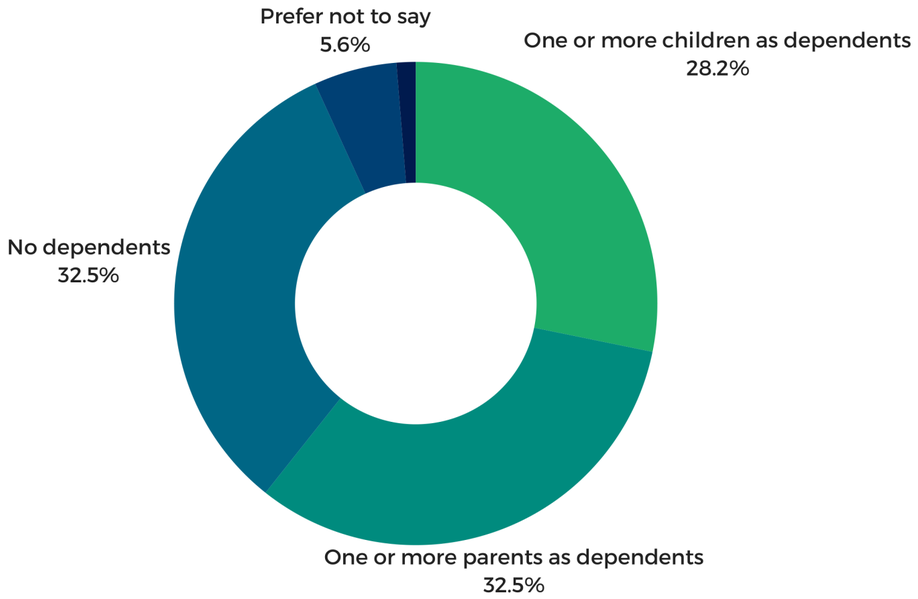
WHO MAKES UP THE ECOSYSTEM?

Caregiver Status

Proportion of Participants



Total Pillar Satisfaction Scores

I do not have any dependents	690
I have one or more children as dependents	659
I have one or more parents as dependents	604
Other	399
Prefer not to say	525

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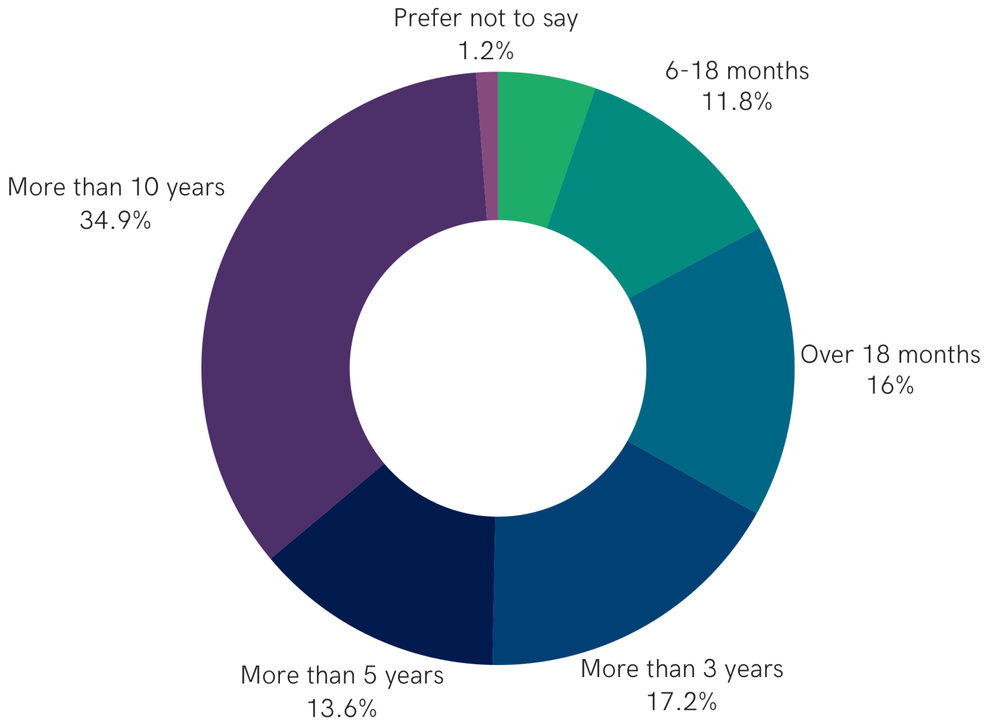
WHO MAKES UP THE ECOSYSTEM?

Length of time in ecosystem

Proportion of Participants



Total Pillar Satisfaction Scores

Less than 6 months	789
6-18 months	675
18 months - 3 years	657
More than 3 years	664
More than 5 years	601
More than 10 years	648
Prefer not to say	408

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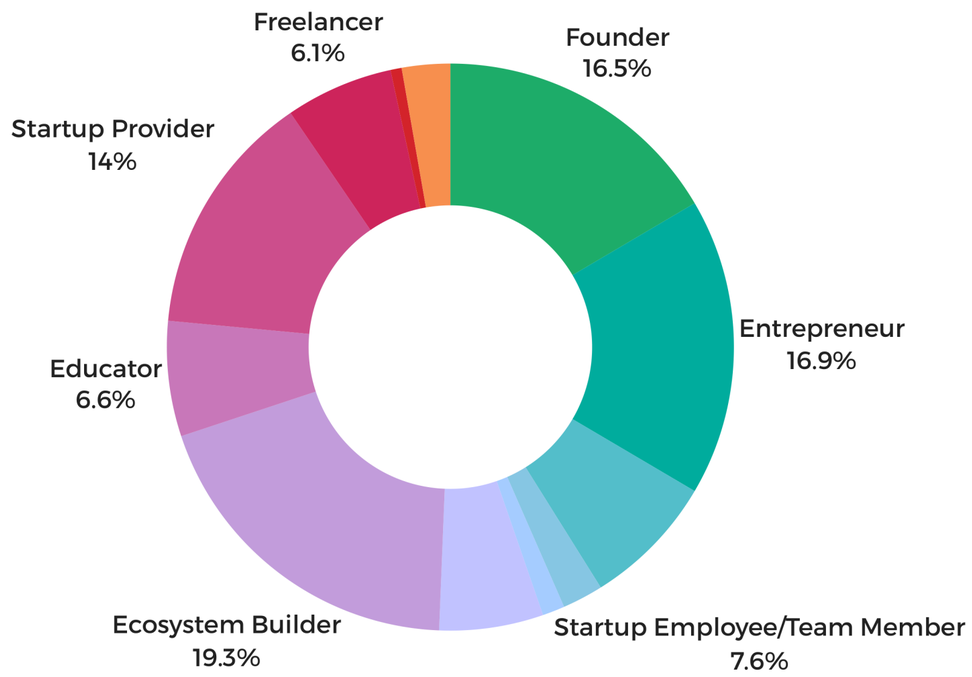
WHO MAKES UP THE ECOSYSTEM?

Occupation/Position

Proportion of Participants



Total Pillar Satisfaction Scores

Founder	624
Entrepeneur	627
Startup Employee/Team Member	657
Student	702
Policymaker/Government Representative	766
Investor	686
Ecosystem Builder	668
Educator	705
Startup Service Provider	661
Freelancer	656
Prefer not to say	575
Other	711

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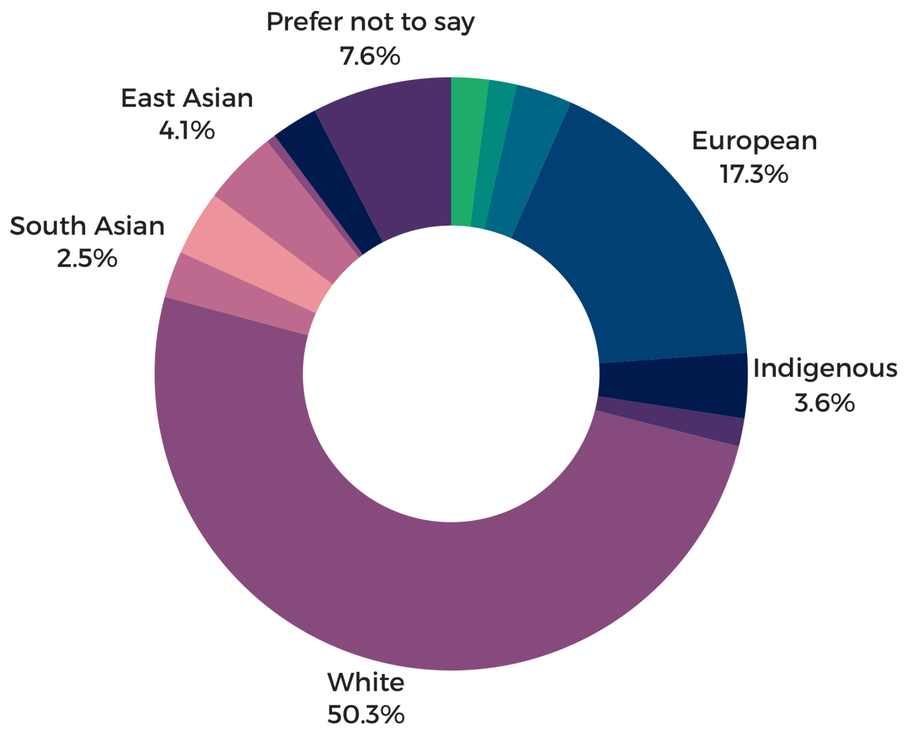
WHO MAKES UP THE ECOSYSTEM?

Race/Ethnicity

Proportion of Participants



Total Pillar Satisfaction Scores

Hispanic or Latinx	671
Caribbean	718
African Canadian	750
European	689
Indigenous	516
Black	729
White	670
South Asian	693
Southeast Asian	664
East Asian	565
Prefer not to say	557
Other	576

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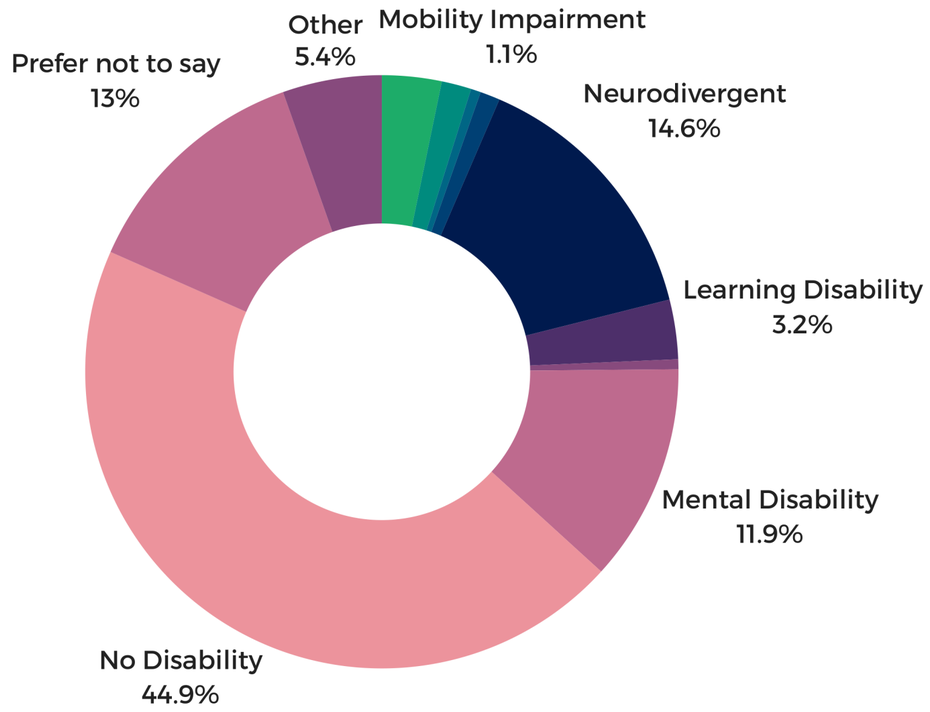
WHO MAKES UP THE ECOSYSTEM?

Disability Status

Proportion of Participants



Total Pillar Satisfaction Scores

Visual impairment	665
Hearing impairment	792
Mobility impairment	641
Neurodivergent (ADHD. Autism, OCD…)	684
Learning disability (Dyslexia, Dyscalculia…)	699
Mental disability or illness (Depression, Anxiety, PTSD…)	692
No disabilities	664
Prefer not to say	580
Other	504

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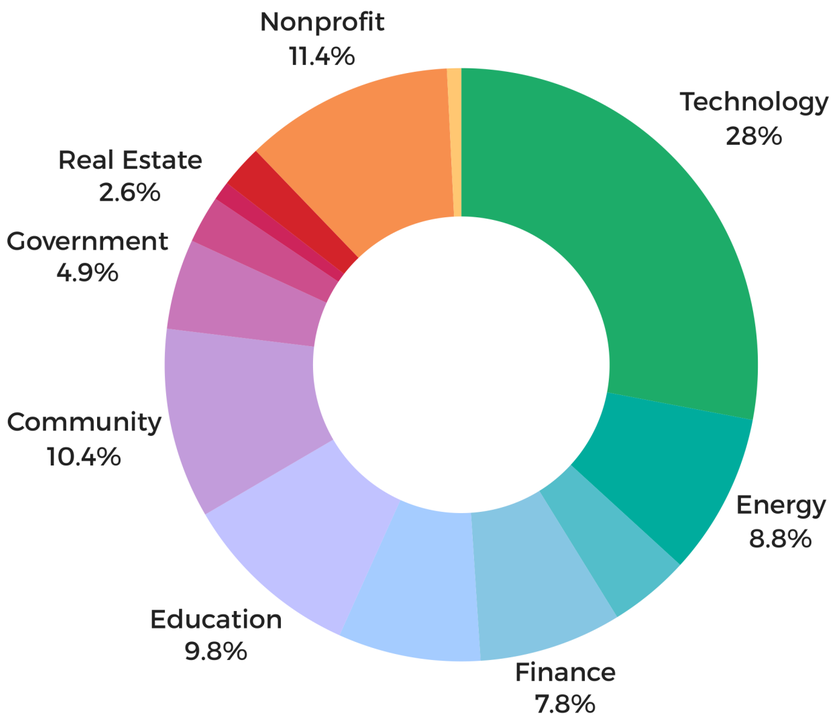
WHO MAKES UP THE ECOSYSTEM?

Industry

Proportion of Participants



Total Pillar Satisfaction Scores

Technology	643
Energy	635
Agriculture	635
Finance	635
Health Sciences	648
Education	662
Community	638
Government	664
Real Estate	682
Food and Beverage	648
Entertainment	555
Nonprofit	654
Prefer not to say	732

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