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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**July 21, 2021**

**NEW ENTREPRENEURIAL TRAINING PROGRAM SET TO LAUNCH**

*Applications for small business success program closing soon*

Red Deer, Alberta – Community Futures Central Alberta, in partnership with the Central Alberta Regional Innovation Network (CARIN), is launching a new program to provide entrepreneurs access to business training and mentorship support. The SMARTstart program provides real-world business skills, tailor-made advice, and connection to the local business community to support the success of new businesses in their first crucial years.

Over the past seven years, SMARTstart has helped hundreds of entrepreneurs in communities throughout Alberta launch or expand their business ideas. Small businesses face the challenge of simply making it beyond the 3 to 5-year mark at only a 35% success rate. With proper training and resources, 80-90% of those businesses can succeed beyond five years.

*“We are excited to participate in the success of the SMARTstart program with our upcoming launch in Red Deer and Central Alberta which will provide opportunities for learning, networking, and mentorship to small business owners in our region. This will in turn contribute to economic development and strengthen our local economy.”*  
*Kelly Kierluk, General Manager, Community Futures Central Alberta*

*“SMARTstart is an essential program focusing on new small businesses and entrepreneurial ideas to develop key strategies for success. I have witnessed many passionate business plans stall from lack of professional preparation. This is an excellent opportunity to avoid common pitfalls that can derail your dreams.”*  
*Rick More, CEO, Red Deer & District Chamber of Commerce*

*“The Land and Economic Development team at the City of Red Deer is pleased to be a title sponsor to Red Deer’s SMARTstart program along with Community Futures and CARIN. It already has a proven history of increasing success for new entrepreneurs in many communities. Red Deer is rich with innovation and entrepreneurs; we welcome the tools that will allow these business leaders to succeed in adding diversity and fresh ideas into the Alberta economic landscape.”*  
*John Sennema, City of Red Deer, Land and Economic Development Manager*

Anyone with a business idea, a recent launch or who has been in business for less than three years may be eligible for the program. Over the course of eight months, the

entrepreneurs will complete a combination of online training and in-person workshops facilitated by local experts. Each participant will leave the program with a complete business plan, feasibility study or strategic plan they have created along with their mentor to set their business up for success.

The total cost of SMARTstart for the introductory launch is only \$199. Participants can expect to spend between 10-15 hours per month on the program.

Community Futures Central Alberta is also looking to hear from any candidates interested in being a mentor. Jodie Eckert is the SMARTstart Mentor Coordinator. She said, “SMARTstart mentors tell us they get just as much from the program as the entrepreneurs. It reignites that creative enthusiasm they had when they started their business.” SMARTstart is a chance for experienced business owners to share their wisdom, business expertise, and lessons learned with entrepreneurs who are just getting into the game.

We are fortunate to announce this program’s involvement in our community. If you are a small business owner in their first three years or an entrepreneur who needs their ideas transformed into action, we encourage you to apply. Applications will close on August 29, 2021. More information on this program including how to register can be found at: [SMARTstart Red Deer - Smart Start Your Business](#)

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#### About Community Futures Central Alberta-

Funded in Western Canada by [Western Economic Diversification Canada](#), Community Futures has been supporting small business and rural economic diversification since 1986. There are 27 Community Futures offices in rural communities throughout Alberta and a total of 269 across the country.

For more information on Community Futures Central Alberta please visit: [Home | Community Futures Central Alberta \(albertacf.com\)](#)

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