

Tuesday October 13, 2015 / *For Immediate Release*

Local Program wins Excellence and Innovation Award

AIRDRIE, ALBERTA –The made-in-Airdrie SMARTstart program has been recognized by the Community Futures Network of Alberta with an Excellence and Innovation Award.

The award was presented on October 2, 2015, at the National Community Futures Symposium in Jasper. Mr. Sid Van der Meer, Community Futures Centre West Board Member and SMARTstart mentor, accepted the award.

"Our training program provides entrepreneurs with real-world business skills and access to the advice they need to set their businesses up for success," explains Jodie Eckert, SMARTstart Committee Member. "We're now in the second year of the program and it's exciting to see the success of our participants. Winning this award is really a tribute to the dedication of the 30 entrepreneurs that have been involved in this program so far."

The Excellence and Innovation Award recognizes the efforts, innovation, and initiatives of Community Futures organizations for economic development projects that lead to economic diversification. Projects must have been in operation for at least one year, demonstrate diversification outcomes, and be transferable, allowing other organizations to learn from them. Community Futures Centre West applied for the award on behalf of SMARTstart.

SMARTstart was launched in 2013. It was designed and developed by the Airdrie Business Resource Partnership and is delivered in Airdrie. The eight month training program consists of an annual intake of up to 20 new and prospective businesses and provides them with online training, workshops and local mentors.

SMARTstart is organized and delivered by the Airdrie Business Resource Partnership which includes Airdrie Chamber of Commerce, City of Airdrie Economic Development, and Community Futures Centre West.

This is the third award for SMARTstart. Earlier this year, the program received two awards from the Economic Developers Alberta Awards of Excellence program: the Community Economic Development Medium Community Award and the 2015 Alex Metcalfe Award which recognizes the best project in its category.

Applications for the 2016 program are now open. Entrepreneurs with an idea or new businesses in operation for less than three years are invited to an information session to find out if the program is right for them.

SMARTstart 2016 Information Sessions:

Wednesday, Oct. 21 at 12:15 p.m. or Tuesday, Nov. 10 at 7 p.m.
Airdrie Chamber of Commerce office, #102, 150 Edwards Way NW.

To learn more about SMARTstart, visit www.smartstartbusiness.ca or email info@smartstartbusiness.ca.

Photo caption: SMARTstart Committee Members with the Community Futures: Excellence and Innovation Award. From right, Sara Chamberlain (City of Airdrie Economic Development), Jodie Eckert and Bruce Tannas (Community Futures Centre West). Missing: Airdrie Chamber of Commerce.

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Media Contact:

Jodie Eckert, SMARTstart Committee Member
Community Futures Centre West
Phone: 403-932-5220 x. 321 Email: jeckert@albertacf.com