

Enterprise Saint John Expands Programming for Entrepreneurs with *ESJ Navigator*

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Saint John N.B. – Enterprise Saint John (ESJ) is introducing a new name for its expanded entrepreneurship programming. *ESJ Navigator*, is a name that better describes the role the economic development agency plays with entrepreneurs in our region and includes a number of distinct programs designed for entrepreneurs at different stages of development.

“It is challenging for new entrepreneurs to know all the steps in starting a new business,” said Janet Scott, Director of Business and Community Development for Enterprise Saint John.

“The ESJ Navigator tagline, *Guiding Entrepreneurs to Success*, really describes our role in the journey of an entrepreneur. From developing a business idea, to getting ready to launch, we can help make connections, identify resources, and offer business coaching but ultimately, it’s the entrepreneur himself or herself who is in the driver’s seat. We’re just there to help make sure they’re headed in the right direction.”

The *Enterprise Saint John Navigator* has four (4) distinct programs to help entrepreneurs move from idea to launch. Entrepreneurs can participate in programming at any stage of their development. The programming includes business idea validation, small business loans, business skills training and support for export-oriented technology start-ups. ESJ Navigator will replace what was formerly known as *Venture Garage*, since the programming has now expanded to include multiple programs for entrepreneurs under one common name.

Enterprise Saint John Navigator offers the following programs:

Venture Validation Program:

This 13-week business course helps aspiring entrepreneurs move from business idea to validated opportunities. Twelve participants per Spring, Fall and Winter session will be exposed to a combination of workshops and coaching that helps to: 1) identify the size of their market, customers and competition, 2) create a value proposition, and 3) identify start-up and operational costs. All of this work will lead to a polished pitch which is essential in securing financing, building a team, and being confident in the feasibility of the business idea.

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Incubator Program:

The Incubator Program is built to support the development of technology startups. Start-ups will receive a membership to ***ConnexionWorks***, the local co-working space in Saint John. Companies will receive weekly mentoring sessions with our Entrepreneur-in-Residence, access to our mentor network, workshops, and opportunities to network with key players in their industry who may be able to support their development. Ideal candidates for the Incubator are start-ups developing and commercializing technology, seeking their first round of financing, and, or, conducting proof-of-concept projects. Participants are expected to fill out monthly progress reports and stay on pace for achieving objectives set by the Entrepreneur-in Residence.

Kickstart Your Business:

Our already established Kickstart Your Business Program is a 12-week business networking and skills development program. The course is offered once a year for up to 15 new business owners. The program curriculum is delivered by local experts at ***ConnexionWorks***. The course includes a robust financial boot camp and key primer courses in sales, marketing, social media, and business pitching.

Impact Loan:

The Impact Loan, formerly known as the SEED loan, is a loan fund for business start-ups and expansions. The fund will permit entrepreneurs to apply for a loan of up to \$20,000 on a 5-year term. The loan is offered at the interest rate of 2% + prime and is interest-free for the first 12 months. In addition to capital, the program also offers free business management skills training for successful applicants.

“Enterprise Saint John plays a key role in cultivating entrepreneurship in our community. The ESJ Navigator’s multi-layered programming will allow Enterprise Saint John to reach more entrepreneurs and have a greater impact on their ability to launch successful ventures in the region,” says Enterprise Saint John’s Entrepreneur Development Officer, Dakota Lutes.

For more information or on the ESJ Navigator you can reach Dakota at dakota@enterprisesj.com or 639-4041.

You can find program outlines on our website at www.enterprisesj.com/navigator

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