

Alberta Inclusive Growth 2025

BUILDING ALBERTA'S INCLUSIVE GROWTH STORY

Outcomes Report

Insights and highlights from Alberta Inclusive Growth 2025 Conference

10 SEPTEMBER, 2025 | UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY DOWNTOWN CAMPUS

HONOURING THE LAND AND COMMUNITY

In the spirit of respect, reciprocity and truth, we honour and acknowledge Moh'kinsstis and the traditional Treaty 7 territory and oral practices of the Blackfoot confederacy: Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, as well as the Îyâxe Nakoda and Tsuut'ina nations. We acknowledge that this territory is home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3 within the historical Northwest Métis homeland. We acknowledge all Nations, Indigenous and non, who live, work and play on this land and who honour and celebrate this territory.

Root Economy is proud to have served as the Strategic Direction Partner for AIG 2025, shaping a day where data, design, and dialogue met to move Alberta forward.

Alberta Inclusive Growth Conference (AIG 2025) was made possible through the vision and leadership of Canada Maple Foundation, with heartfelt thanks to Jamshaid Qureshi, President, for his guidance and commitment; Shermin Mullan, Event Director, for her unwavering dedication; and Muhib Qureshi, Marketing and Media Manager, for bringing the conference to life through its digital presence, design, and storytelling. We are especially grateful to Hubba Khatoon of Root Economy, whose strategic direction, curation, and execution shaped the conference and ensured that every detail reflected the vision of inclusive growth.

We also acknowledge with gratitude our event sponsors: Government of Alberta, Ministry of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration; City of Calgary; Veritas Solutions; Toast; Economic Developers Alberta; Open Door Group; BDC; Universal Ford; and Alberta Blue Cross, whose investment and leadership made this conference possible.

Our thanks extend as well to our community and programming partners, who brought depth, energy, and inclusivity to the day. These include TD Bank, UN Global Compact Network Canada, SAIT, YW Calgary, Platform Calgary, Futurpreneur, Immigrant Techies Alberta, ATB, Movement 51, Learning City, ICTC, Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub, Momentum, Menaal for Life, Canadian Blood Services, Inclusion Factor, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, CulturING, Coffee Pass, WJ Agency, Tech Connect Alberta, Partake Brewing, Michaela Tomic, Jing Wo Cultural Association, Madhuban Dance Academy, City Prints and Signs, Carrie Fanai, and Lil E Coffee Café, alongside many others whose contributions enriched the experience.

Finally, we extend our appreciation to the speakers, panelists, performers, students, volunteers, and attendees. Their voices, energy, and participation transformed AIG 2025 into more than an event, it became a collective step toward building Alberta's inclusive growth story.



Note on Attribution

In this report, quotations from panelists and participants are presented anonymously. This decision reflects two considerations: first, to emphasize the collective themes and insights that emerged rather than the views of individual speakers; and second, to allow participants to share candid perspectives on sensitive topics, particularly around capital access and policy practices. Where context is helpful, quotations are attributed to a general role (e.g., “community finance leader,” “government panelist”) without naming specific individuals.

Building Alberta's Inclusive Growth Story: AIG 2025 Outcomes Report

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A COLLECTIVE **BEGINNING**

ALBERTA INCLUSIVE GROWTH CONFERENCE (AIG 2025)

Alberta Inclusive Growth Conference (AIG 2025) brought together leaders from business, government, non-profits, academia, and community organizations to advance inclusive economic growth across the province. As Alberta's first conference dedicated entirely to inclusive growth, it was designed to connect, inspire, and innovate by convening diverse voices from across Alberta's innovation ecosystem. This report highlights the event's key insights, outcomes, and recommendations, along with participation metrics and program highlights.

PARTICIPATION AND REACH

AIG 2025 welcomed over 220 participants, including 30+ speakers, 115 community organizations, and a wide range of inclusive innovators, policymakers, youth, funders, and corporate leaders.

The event generated 20,000+ social media impressions, 400 volunteer hours, and provided 80 sponsored tickets for historically excluded groups, demonstrating both strong engagement and the effectiveness of AIG's inclusive model that blends dialogue, research, and cultural celebration.

VISION AND APPROACH

AIG 2025 was built on the understanding that inclusive growth requires more than goodwill, it demands cross-sector collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and policies that remove structural barriers for ethnocultural entrepreneurs, women in technology, youth, and historically excluded communities. These principles guided the conference agenda and form the foundation for the recommendations outlined in this report.

LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERS

The one-day event was hosted by the Canada Maple Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to community and cultural development, with strategic direction from Root Economy, a Calgary-based consulting firm specializing in data-driven impact and inclusive economic strategy.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The program featured keynotes, panels, lightning talks, cultural performances, and interactive activities such as Inclusive Growth Bingo, a student-led World Café, and a live survey exhibit titled "What Inclusive Growth Means to You."

The day ran from 8:00 a.m. registration to 5:00 p.m. networking, opening with an Indigenous land acknowledgment and closing with reflections and connection. Core sessions, including Unlocking Capital Access, Women in Technology, Skills and Workforce Development, and Embedding Equity in Systems, showed how inclusion and innovation together can drive Alberta's economic future.

AIG 2025

GUIDING PURPOSE AND GOALS

Alberta Inclusive Growth Conference (AIG 2025) was grounded in a clear purpose: to advance a shared vision of inclusive, data-informed, and community-driven economic growth across Alberta.

The conference was guided by five core goals:

1. SPARK CROSS-SECTOR DIALOGUE

Foster a shared understanding of how innovation and inclusion together can strengthen Alberta's productivity, resilience, and long-term competitiveness.

2. SURFACE BARRIERS AND SOLUTIONS

Identify real challenges faced by underrepresented groups and showcase practical, evidence-based, and community-led solutions.

3. HIGHLIGHT HOME-GROWN MODELS

Share Alberta-based examples of inclusive economic growth, such as supplier diversity programs, data-sharing initiatives, and collaborative pilot projects, that can be scaled or replicated elsewhere.

4. ELEVATE HISTORICALLY EXCLUDED VOICES

Ensure Indigenous peoples, ethnocultural entrepreneurs, women in technology, youth, and rural communities were not just participants but co-designers in shaping the conversation.

5. INSPIRE ACTIONABLE COLLABORATION

Turn dialogue into meaningful partnerships and next steps that drive real, measurable progress toward inclusive growth.



OUR COMMUNITY OF CHANGEMAKERS



AIG 2025 brought together a diverse and dynamic coalition of participants representing Alberta's innovation and inclusive growth ecosystem. The conference convened voices from across sectors and communities, including:

- Inclusive innovators and entrepreneurs
- Equity-centered organizations and community leaders
- Policymakers and public servants
- Youth and emerging talent
- Investors and funders
- Researchers and educators
- Corporate and industry leaders

Together, these groups reflected the broad network of changemakers shaping Alberta's inclusive economic future. Their collective insights, experiences, and collaborations formed the foundation for the recommendations captured in this report.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

AIG 2025 featured a dynamic mix of panels, keynotes, lightning talks, cultural performances, and interactive sessions designed to spark dialogue and showcase how inclusion and innovation reinforce one another.

WELCOME REMARKS

The Economic Power of Diversity

Jamshaid Qureshi, President, Canada Maple Foundation

Opened the day by underscoring the economic imperative of inclusion in shaping Alberta's growth story.

THE FUTURE OF INCLUSION

Cutting Through the Noise in 2025

Elise Konadu Ahenkorah, Lead Culture and Inclusion Strategist, Inclusion Factor

A call for clarity and action in an era of overwhelming DEI rhetoric, emphasizing measurable progress over performative intent.

CONFIDENTLY WRONG

The Quiet Power of Bias

April Hicke, Co-Founder, Toast

Explored how unconscious bias influences decision-making and how leaders can challenge assumptions to drive meaningful change.

UNLOCKING CAPITAL

For Ethnocultural Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses

Examined barriers to financing and showcased trust-based lending, blended capital models, and culturally competent advisory supports that advance equitable access to growth capital.



WOMEN, TECH & THE NEW ECONOMY

Explored Alberta's women-led technology sector, its innovations, policy challenges, and opportunities to close structural gaps in funding, leadership, and support systems. Featured trailblazing women driving real change across Alberta's tech ecosystem.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR AN INCLUSIVE FUTURE

Explored how micro-credentials, mentorship, and digital tools connect education with employment. Featured leaders in post-secondary, immigrant skills development, and workforce innovation.

EMBEDDING EQUITY IN CALGARY'S BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM

A City of Calgary-led panel highlighting inclusive procurement practices and supplier diversity models that integrate equity into local business systems and supply chains.



CO-CREATING GROWTH FOR ALL (STUDENT-LED WORLD CAFÉ)

Facilitated by Sabrina Grover with student rapporteurs

Flipped the script by placing students at the center. This 60-minute dialogue invited professionals, educators, and policymakers to co-create solutions alongside emerging youth leaders.

DEI THAT STICKS: Strategies That Work Even When People Resist

Tynan Allan, Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and Host of The CultureING Podcast
Shared practical approaches to embedding equity into daily operations, highlighting tools and systems that sustain progress even without full organizational buy-in.



THE PURPLE PARADIGM: Where Purpose Meets Prosperity

Leann Hackman-Carty, CEO, Economic Developers Alberta

Explored how purpose-driven enterprises generate value that is both economic and social, reinforcing Alberta's vision for a more inclusive and resilient economy.

GOVERNMENT ADDRESS

Associate Minister Muhammad Yaseen, Government of Alberta

Reaffirmed the Government of Alberta's commitment to advancing inclusive economic growth and fostering opportunities across communities.

ENGAGEMENT & CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

Activities such as Inclusive Growth Bingo, live polling, and student-led reflections made the conference participatory and engaging. Cultural performances by Madhuban Performing Arts and the Jing Wo Cultural Association celebrated Alberta's diversity, ensuring the day was as much about co-creation and community as it was about dialogue and insight.



BY THE NUMBERS

AIG 2025 generated meaningful economic and social value for Calgary and Alberta. Beyond the conversations, the conference delivered tangible impact through participation, partnerships, and purpose-driven spending.

220+ PARTICIPANTS

Leaders, entrepreneurs, policymakers, students, and community builders convened in downtown Calgary, driving both dialogue and local economic activity.

30+ SPEAKERS AND PANELISTS

Voices from across Alberta and beyond shared bold ideas and practical solutions, advancing thought leadership and cross-sector learning.

115 COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGED

Strengthened Alberta's civic and innovation fabric by ensuring broad representation from grassroots groups, non-profits, and equity-centred organizations. Nearly a third of our audience were directors or senior leaders, but the spirit of AIG was that everyone's voice mattered equally.

SUPPLIER DIVERSITY IN ACTION

Event contracts for catering, audiovisual services, design, printing, and cultural programming prioritized women-led and ethnocultural businesses, strengthening Alberta's diverse enterprise base.



80 SPONSORED TICKETS

Enabled students, early-stage entrepreneurs, and historically excluded community leaders to attend, removing financial barriers to participation.

400+ VOLUNTEER HOURS

Contributed by youth, students, and community members, building leadership skills and strengthening civic engagement.

20,000+ SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS

AIG 2025's message reached wide audiences across digital platforms and drove awareness of inclusive economic growth, with an engagement rate nearly three times higher than industry benchmarks.

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

New collaborations between government, business, and community organizations emerged, momentum that will shape Alberta's innovation landscape well beyond 2025.



AIG 2025 demonstrated that an inclusive growth agenda not only drives social progress, it creates measurable economic returns through local spending, supplier diversity, workforce development, and long-term ecosystem building.

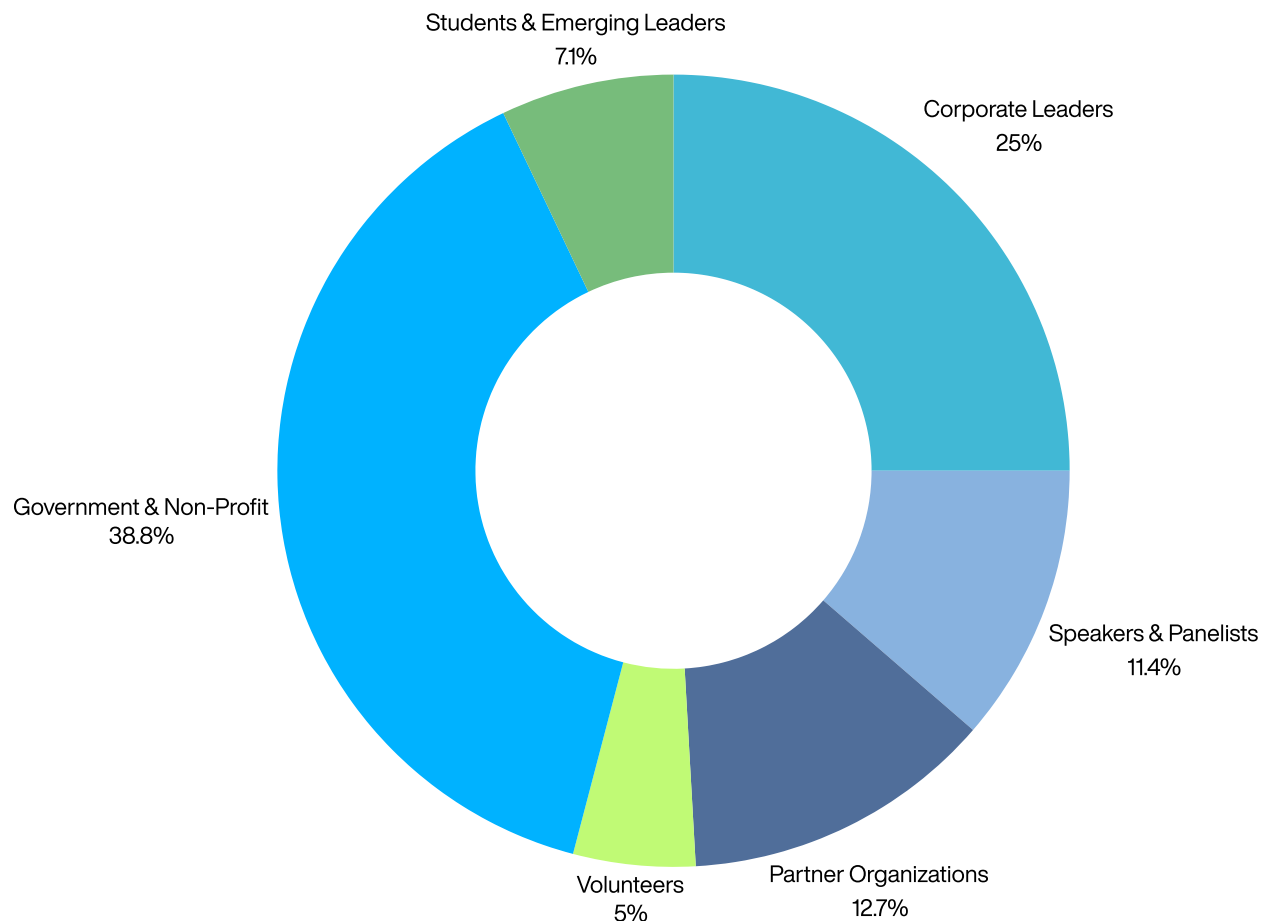
- Community Finance Leader

BY THE NUMBERS | THE FACES OF INCLUSIVE GROWTH



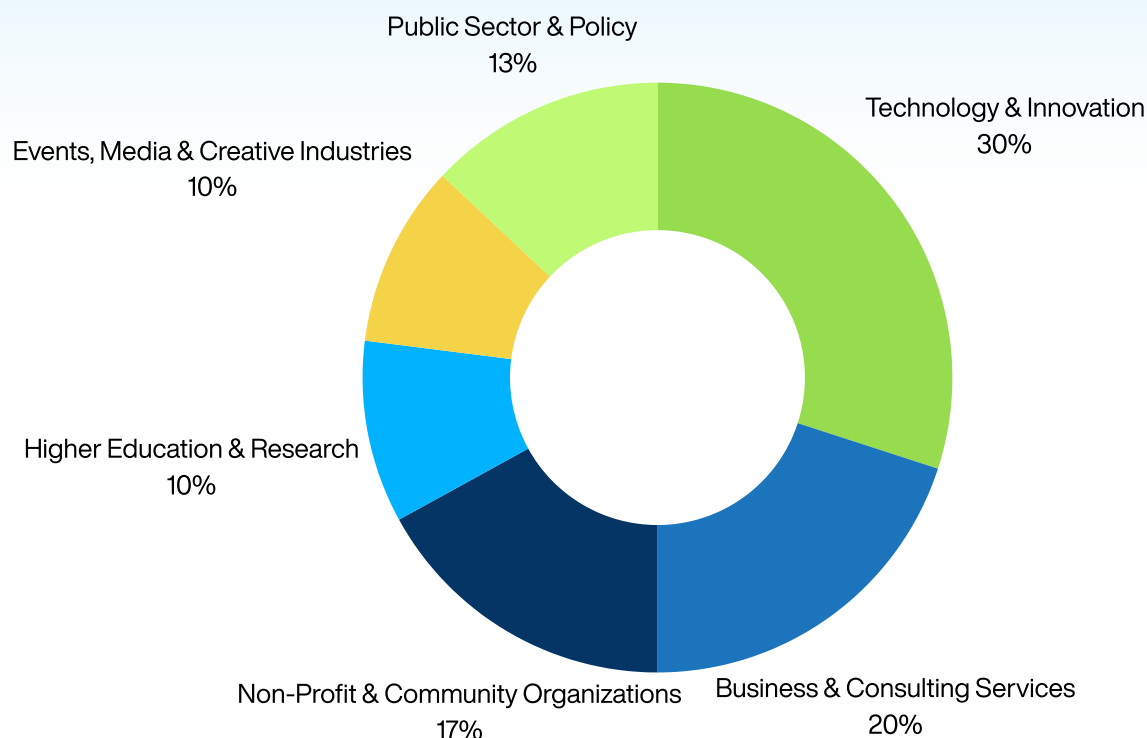
The conference created a unique space for dialogue, design, and collaboration that delivered measurable value to sponsors, partners, and the broader innovation ecosystem.

- Non-profit Community Leader



Through targeted multi-stakeholder marketing and strong partner collaboration, AIG 2025 positioned itself as Alberta's leading inclusive growth platform, bringing together leaders from government, business, and community in nearly equal measure.

Nearly 40% of participants represented government, non-profit, and community organizations, alongside 25% from the private sector, while more than 13% were students, emerging leaders, or volunteers, reflecting AIG's future-focused commitment to inclusive ecosystem growth and talent development.



Industry Representation

AIG 2025's digital audience reflected Alberta's dynamic innovation landscape, led by technology and innovation (30%) and business and consulting services (20%), followed by non-profit and community organizations (17%), public sector and policy (13%), higher education and research (10%), and events, media, and creative industries (10%).

Seniority Representation

Nearly **40%** of engaged professionals were senior leaders or directors, confirming that AIG 2025's digital campaigns effectively reached the decision-makers shaping Alberta's inclusive growth agenda.

8.5% Engagement Rate

AIG 2025 achieved nearly three times the industry average for engagement, with more than 20,000 impressions across LinkedIn and partner channels reflecting the strength, reach, and authenticity of its inclusive growth message across Alberta's innovation ecosystem.

3-4× Partner Amplification

Co-branded campaigns with sponsors and ecosystem partners extended AIG's digital reach up to four times beyond organic performance, showcasing the power of collaboration in amplifying impact and awareness.

BEYOND THE NUMBERS

TOP 10 INSIGHTS FROM AIG 2025



1. CAPITAL MUST MEET COMMUNITY

Advancing a demand-led approach to finance and shared decision-making, so entrepreneurs aren't asked to "fit the file", the file is designed to fit them.

Access to capital remains a structural barrier for Alberta's ethnocultural, newcomer, Indigenous, women-led, and youth-led ventures. Too often, entrepreneurs must "fit the file" to rigid systems built without them in mind, wasting time on duplicative paperwork instead of growing their business. Speakers called for demand-led finance anchored to real buyer contracts and shared decision-making that treats platform payouts, brand deals, and letters of intent as legitimate cashflow.

Procurement can de-risk loans if paired with fast pay and modest advances, while a "capital concierge" could streamline intake across banks, government, and community lenders. Wrap-around supports childcare stipends, translation, flexible hours make access real. The case is clear: inclusive growth is not charity but strategy; every week lost to paperwork is a week not spent building, selling, and hiring Albertans.

It's easy enough to [find a seat at the table], anyone can bring a folding chair. What truly matters is whether the decisions made around that table are democratic. Without that, representation is just performance, not progress.

- Government Panelist

2. EQUITY IS A DRIVER OF INNOVATION

Equity is not an add-on. It is the engine that powers stronger teams, sharper ideas, and more resilient economies.

Across AIG 2025 sessions, speakers underscored how equity-first approaches unlock creativity and performance. Indigenous innovators, entrepreneurs, and community enterprises shared models that demonstrate how inclusive design builds both trust and market advantage. Leaders from industry, education, and economic development backed this with data and lived experience, showing that organizations grounded in equity make better, faster decisions.

Equity in action also means rethinking how we develop, attract, and retain talent. Work-integrated and experiential learning emerged as one proven lever: analysis from the *Talented* YYC initiative found that every dollar invested in such programs generates between \$1.50 and \$3.00 in local economic impact, while a *Mitacs* study showed productivity gains of roughly 20 percent among participating organizations.

But beyond classrooms, equity-driven innovation is taking shape on factory floors, in boardrooms, and within startups. Calgary-based ventures are embedding community engagement into product design; food manufacturers are partnering with Indigenous producers to diversify supply chains; and ecosystem organizations are co-designing programs with underrepresented founders to ensure resources meet entrepreneurs where they are.

Leaders agreed that adaptability is key. Whether in curricula or corporate strategy, agility, the ability to iterate, pilot, and pivot, is what keeps innovation inclusive and relevant. As one panelist noted, “What used to be a five-year plan now needs to evolve month by month.”

The conversation around hiring and advancement is shifting. Employers are focusing on skills over credentials and valuing learning in all its forms, from degrees and apprenticeships to community programs and open-source contributions. The result: wider talent pipelines, better alignment with real-world skills, and fewer missed opportunities across Alberta’s innovation economy.



3. YOUTH ARE BUILDERS, NOT TOKEN VOICES

Give youth real seats at the table, introvert-friendly pathways, and bridges to first contracts. Then step aside and let them lead.

Young participants and newcomer youth were clear: symbolic consultation is no substitute for real opportunity. “Not everyone is extroverted; create space for those who aren’t. They still want the knowledge,” one participant shared. A standout example came from a community–corporate partnership that co-designed a paid cohort for youth of colour to gain their first professional experience. Attendees urged that this model be expanded and scaled to help more young people access Alberta’s innovation economy.

Speakers linked youth readiness to social capital, mentorship, and early exposure, the confidence that comes from being seen and supported. One innovation hub leader described intentionally designing an open, centrally located space with no private floors or opaque doors so that founders, investors, and partners could connect organically. The lesson: when environments are open, opportunity flows more freely.

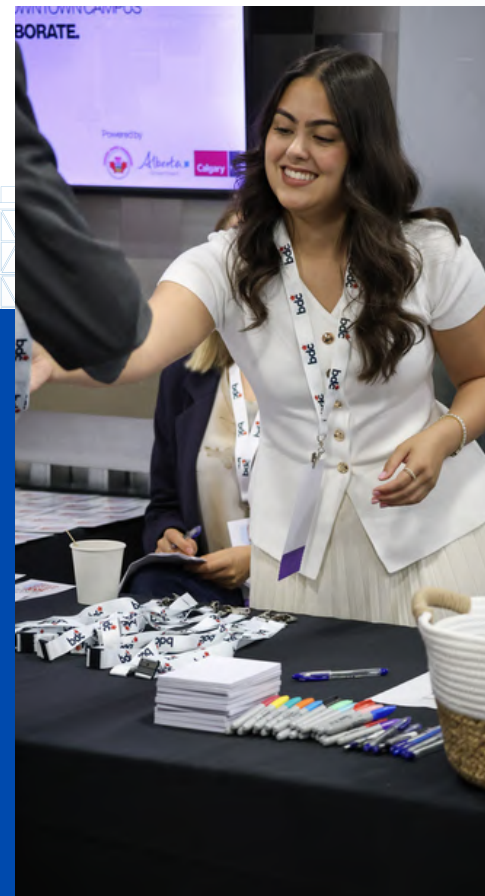
Yet persistent barriers remain. Youth still face biased career advising, shifting grant calendars, and limited visibility into health, mental health, and financial supports. Newcomer youth spoke candidly about navigating Canadian individualism after growing up in more communal cultures, and how that cultural translation, when unsupported, becomes an invisible tax on performance.

**Cultural translation, when unsupported,
becomes an invisible tax on performance.**

- Newcomer Youth Participant

Youth emphasized the need for more practical, accessible opportunities. They called for programs that offer paid, hands-on experience, flexible formats for different personalities, and guidance to help participants navigate their next steps.

Intergenerational learning also stood out as a powerful model. In one community partnership, seniors and youth collaborate through a local university to publish a book each year. Youth document seniors’ life stories, and both groups build skills, connection, and a sense of belonging in the process.



4. WOMEN IN TECHNOLOGY FACE STRUCTURAL BARRIERS



The pipeline of women entrepreneurs is strong. It's the systems that fund and support them that need to catch up.

- Community Finance Leader

Modernize finance, scheduling, and evaluation for the way women *actually* build and lead.

A recurring message from speakers was that many financial and workplace systems still don't align with women's realities. As one financial services leader noted, "Banking systems are traditional, sometimes even colonial and patriarchal."

Women entrepreneurs often grow their businesses creatively and sustainably, yet struggle to access capital at critical growth stages. Financial institutions acknowledged this gap and called for bias training across all client-facing roles by 2030, alongside more flexible, evidence-based financing tools, such as accepting online revenue records, brand contracts, and letters of intent as proof of business activity.

Participants also urged updates to workplace design. Traditional hours and evaluation methods can exclude caregivers and those working nontraditional schedules. Solutions include interviews during school hours, remote or recorded options, structured return-to-work programs, and performance assessments based on results rather than desk time.

A Calgary city leader captured it well: the pipeline of women entrepreneurs is strong, it's the systems that finance and support them that must evolve.



5. BIAS IS QUIET BUT POWERFUL

Replace biased practices, normalize speaking up, and protect those who do.

Participants agreed that bias often hides in everyday language and unchecked systems. One example drew strong reactions, the phrase “Canadian experience,” described by a senior engineer as “polite racism,” a gatekeeping term that excludes skilled newcomers from opportunities they’re fully qualified for.

The problem goes beyond job postings. Hiring, lending, and procurement processes still rely on closed panels and old networks where “fit” is often confused with “familiar.” In some workplaces, generational or cultural differences are mislabeled as performance issues, when in fact the underlying processes no longer match today’s diverse workforce. A corporate training leader summarized the issue clearly: “Culture is top-down. If leaders are box-checking, nothing sticks.”

**Bias doesn’t always shout. It often whispers through policies, habits, and assumptions.
Real inclusion starts with noticing, naming, and redesigning those quiet systems.**

- Ecosystem Builder

Attendees urged clear, practical action:

- Retire “Canadian experience” as a requirement and replace it with onboarding that teaches local standards and practices.
- Use structured rubrics, diverse panels, and data tracking to spot disparities.
- Encourage staff to speak up about bias, and ensure protection for those who do.
- Differentiate between refugee and professional immigrant experiences to design fair, responsive programs.

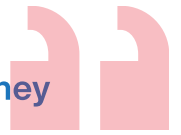




6. PURPOSE AND PROSPERITY CAN ALIGN

**We are stewards, not owners, of the land.
Stewardship and benefit-sharing are not extras, they
are the rent we owe to future generations.**

- Indigenous Leader



A reconciled economy asks who we help, who we harm, and what we leave for those who come next.

Speakers throughout the conference emphasized that purpose and prosperity are deeply connected in practical ways. Safe and affordable housing, for example, was described by a city policy manager as essential to both labour-market participation and entrepreneurial survival. Public safety and vibrant, walkable streets contribute directly to stronger local economies through higher foot traffic and business activity. Investment tools such as the Opportunity Calgary Investment Fund (OCIF) were cited as key levers that can determine which sectors grow and who gets to lead.

Participants noted that the definition of work is rapidly evolving. Creator platforms, freelance production, and digital entrepreneurship now generate real income for many Albertans, often women, caregivers, and newcomers. As one panelist observed, “Homemakers on TikTok with brand deals are running businesses.” Speakers called on financial institutions and funders to keep pace by recognizing this new economy and developing modern income verification tools that include platform analytics, brand contracts, and affiliate statements.

An opening address tied these ideas together: diversity is not abstract. It looks like newcomers launching businesses, Indigenous youth shaping environmental policy, and women in technology creating new jobs. The collaboration among these groups creates the most resilient and forward-looking form of growth. Inclusive growth, the speakers concluded, is not charity, it is economic strategy.

7. CULTURE IS ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Language, movement, and joy are not “nice to have.” They are what keep people at the table long enough to do hard work together.

The conference intentionally treated culture as a form of infrastructure that supports connection and problem-solving. Mayor Jyoti Gondek opened the day with greetings in the mother tongues of Treaty 7 Indigenous peoples, Ojibwe, Taranistana, Amawastich, and Tansi, and explained why: “Language is really the key to the preservation of culture.” She shared a personal story about her mother’s insistence on speaking Punjabi at home, which allowed her to connect across generations decades later.

Organizers of AIG2025 extended that same principle beyond words and into the body. After a day of honest, and at times difficult, dialogue where participants challenged euphemisms and named harm the host invited everyone to dance. “We’ve had such a full day,” she said. “Who’s ready to dance it out? This is two-left-feet safe.” Laughter filled the room. It was not just a lighthearted moment; it was a deliberate way to release tension, rebuild trust, and make space for continued learning.



Design choices throughout the day reinforced a strong sense of belonging. The single-level, fully accessible venue encouraged movement, interaction, and spontaneous exchange among attendees.

These deliberate details demonstrated that inclusion extends beyond policy and data, it’s also about how people feel in a space. When culture is treated as infrastructure, it creates the conditions for genuine connection and lasting collaboration.

8. COLLABORATION IS THE IMPERATIVE

Know when to lead, when to collaborate, when to advocate, and when to step back,
and meet in the purple zone, where social and economic issues overlap.

- Economic Development Leader

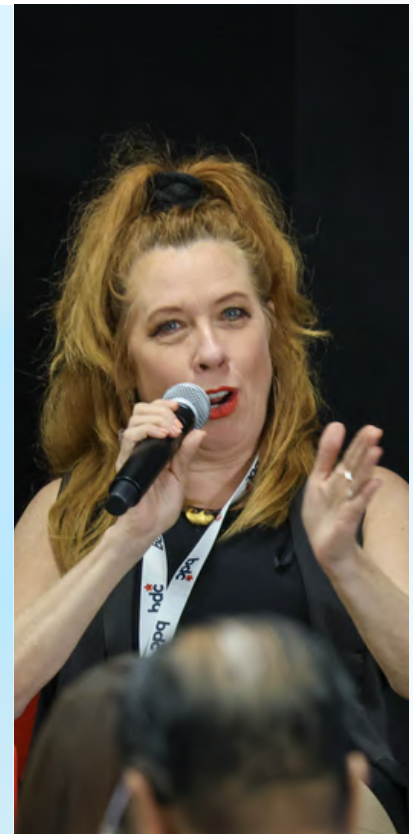
Participants agreed that many of Alberta's toughest challenges live in this purple zone, where social and economic problems are deeply intertwined and no single sector can solve them alone. One economic development leader offered a clear framework:

- When your organization has high expertise and high responsibility, lead.
- When responsibility is high but expertise is lower, collaborate.
- When expertise is high but responsibility is limited, advocate.
- When both are low, defer to others better positioned to make impact.

This clarity helps reduce duplication and strengthen results. Public agencies often receive multiple pitches for the same challenges, stretching resources and creating confusion. As one speaker noted, "Duplication isn't just waste, it's inequity," because it forces under-resourced founders and organizations to navigate overlapping programs instead of focusing on delivery. To improve coordination, a national diversity institute partner announced quarterly ecosystem meetings in Alberta to align efforts, consolidate proposals, and coordinate next steps.

DEFINING WHO LEADS, SUPPORTS, AND CONNECTS:

- **Economic developers** should lead in creating welcoming communities and helping newcomers and entrepreneurs navigate local systems. Partnering with diversity and inclusion experts can make their programs more effective.
- **Immigrant and community organizations** can focus on preparing people for work and entrepreneurship, and connecting them directly with employers and opportunities.
- **Philanthropic groups** can share early risk, fund coordination between partners, and support the backbone infrastructure that keeps collaborations moving.
- **Employers** should commit to fair hiring and faster payments, for example, paying within 30 days to ease cash flow for small suppliers.
- **Cities and municipalities** can lead on fair payment standards, housing, and safety, while partnering with others on transparent procurement and shared data systems.



9. INCLUSION REQUIRES ACCOUNTABILITY

Ask better questions, use shared data, and show your work.

Good intentions are not outcomes. A City equity team shared a practical tool to help make inclusion measurable, called the ABCDEs of Equity:

- A – Assumptions: What assumptions are we making?
- B – Behind: Who might be left behind?
- C – Connect: Who did we connect with or co-design with?
- D – Data: What data are we using (for example, the Calgary Equity Index)?
- E – Evaluate: How are we evaluating for equity, what are the key metrics, who is responsible, and when will it be reviewed?

Two City departments illustrated what accountability looks like in practice. The Business & Local Economy team described how equity is now being built into permits, payments, procurement, and small business navigation. Calgary Housing reinforced a simple truth: access to safe and affordable housing is essential to economic participation. If people can't afford stable housing, they can't take business risks or pursue new jobs.

Participants also called for public dashboards that make progress visible tracking things like approval timelines, supplier diversity, 30-day payment compliance, and who benefits from City investment funds. They recommended regular “You said / We did” updates after community consultations, with clear actions, deadlines, and named owners. One civic leader summarized it well: “Don't hide behind acronyms. Say diversity, equity, and inclusion on purpose.”





10. INCLUSIVE GROWTH BUILDS ALBERTA'S ADVANTAGE

Openness, collaboration, and the discipline to repeat what works.

If there was one big message from the day, it was this: Alberta's advantage is not an accident. It grows from being open to newcomers, to women leaders, and to Indigenous governance. It grows from sectors working together, such as energy with cleantech, media with software, and security with design. And it grows from doing the right things consistently: skills-first hiring, 30-day pay, transparent reporting, and financing models that meet entrepreneurs where they are.

Several examples brought this to life. A city leader shared research showing that most new tech firms coming to Calgary want to partner with oil and gas companies because here, crossover is normal. In the cleantech sector, many founders are new to Canada, many are first-time entrepreneurs, and an increasing number are women, showing that Alberta's next wave of innovation is being built by people with fresh ideas and ambition.

The City of Calgary's approach was another example. Safety and housing strategies were described as the foundation of opportunity, while investment tools like the Opportunity Calgary Investment Fund (OCIF) help route capital to founders who create jobs and long-term growth. One city leader summed it up well: "A city has to work well for everyone. Making it work for everyone doesn't make it worse for anyone. Rights aren't pie."

There were also moments that showed what inclusion looks like in action. Volunteers greeted guests with care and helped make newcomers feel at ease. Students and community leaders shared tables, sparking genuine cross-generational conversations. Even small gestures, like recognizing partner organizations by name and encouraging quieter voices to contribute, reinforced that everyone's presence mattered.

These moments created the kind of environment where good policy can take root and last. The closing message was clear: progress does not happen by accident it happens by choice. Inclusive growth is the choice Alberta makes when it wants to attract and keep talent, capital, and community, because people stay where the system is fair, the work is meaningful, and everyone belongs.

LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

AIG 2025 was more than a conference, it was a collective declaration that Alberta's growth story must include everyone. The ideas, energy, and connections sparked on September 10 will continue to ripple outward, shaping workplaces, classrooms, boardrooms, and communities across the province.

Participants underscored that government leadership is a catalyst for systemic change. Alberta ministries, from Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration to Arts, Culture and Status of Women, are uniquely positioned to embed inclusive growth into policy frameworks, ensuring that economic development, cultural investment, and gender equity advance together rather than apart.

Canada Maple Foundation and Root Economy extend heartfelt thanks to every attendee, partner, and contributor for making this vision real. AIG 2025 showed what is possible when data, dialogue, and diverse voices converge.

The work of inclusive growth does not conclude with this conference, it starts here. Alberta's future competitiveness depends on embedding inclusive innovation as a core principle of our economic and social frameworks.

The evidence is overwhelming, on all fronts. Inclusive growth is not charity, it is an economic strategy.

— Jamshaid Qureshi
President, Canada Maple Foundation



SPONSORS AND PARTNERS

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ABOUT **ROOT ECONOMY**

Root Economy, founded by Hubba Khatoon, is an independent economic consulting firm based in Calgary, Alberta.

With over 10 years of experience in economic impact analysis and strategic consultation, we provide data-driven insights to support economic development both locally and globally. Root Economy specializes in conducting economic impact assessments and offering strategic advice to businesses, governments, and organizations looking to foster sustainable growth.

Our commitment to evidence-based research helps clients make informed decisions that drive positive economic change.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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