

REALIZING SUCCESS

ALBERTA WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

ANNUAL REPORT

April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012



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ALBERTA WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

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“Our Government’s top priority is job creation and economic growth, and organizations such as Alberta Women Entrepreneurs are providing women entrepreneurs with the resources they need to generate wealth and spur economic growth in communities across the province.”

*The Honourable Lynne Yelich,
Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification*

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ALBERTA WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS



FUELING OUR ECONOMY

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS ARE INCREASINGLY SIGNIFICANT DRIVERS OF BOTH LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES, JOB CREATION AND INNOVATION.

“Successful women entrepreneurs exist at all stages of business growth and are leading all types of ventures, ranging from industrial services to logistics to information technology to infrastructure companies,” says Tracey Scarlett, Alberta Women Entrepreneurs’ Chief Executive Officer. “Their businesses are critical elements of commerce in all economies.”

Providing a holistic approach to entrepreneurship guidance and support, Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) has helped thousands of businesses achieve success, through start-up loans, expansion financing, continuing education and networking opportunities. In 2011-2012, AWE financing helped entrepreneurs create 80 jobs, with a projected economic impact of \$30 million.

Building Awareness

AWE plays a key role in Canada and abroad in promoting an understanding of the impact of businesses owned by women on local and global economies.

AWE had an active advisory role in the non-partisan **Canadian Taskforce for Women’s Business Growth**, which hosted national roundtables that resulted in a 2011 report to federal and provincial governments, Action Strategies to Support Women’s Enterprise Development. “We found more women business owners want resources and advice to help them scale-up, optimize technology, enter new markets, increase profit margins, and better serve clients locally, nationally and internationally,” says Barbara Orser, Taskforce Chair and a professor at the University of Ottawa’s Telfer School of Management. “AWE”, she says, “is a leading example in Canada of what women entrepreneurs need to spur growth of their business to the next level.”

AWE was also an active participant in the October 2011 **Conference on Women’s Economic Empowerment**, hosted in Ottawa by the Canadian International Development Agency and United Nations Women, and formed

part of the Canadian delegation to the September 2011 **APEC Women and the Economy Summit**, chaired by U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton in San Francisco. “Common to each event was the conversation that engaging the full participation of women in business ownership can give a country a competitive edge,” says Scarlett. “It’s not about overcoming barriers; it’s recognition that women’s active participation in business creates a strong and sustainable economy.”

Women Entrepreneurs: Educated, Experienced and Ambitious

It’s more than creating a job; entrepreneurship is a career that women are choosing to create wealth, establish a venture, and leave their mark on the economy.

With a diverse portfolio of clients including young entrepreneurs with advanced university degrees, mid-career professionals who spot a market opportunity, and seasoned business owners looking to export beyond Alberta, AWE is seeing greater sophistication in the needs of its client base, and it fully intends to support women business owners in all stages of growth.

“It’s not just start-ups anymore,” says Scarlett. “Our clients are at the stage where they’re asking: What do I do next in the growth of my business? So, we’re continuing to expand our programs to create a pathway for women entrepreneurs to find what they need, when they need it, at any point in their growth cycle.”

“Majority women-owned small and medium-sized enterprises represented over \$117 billion per annum of economic activity in Canada.”

Action Strategies to Support Women’s Enterprise Development
The Canadian Taskforce for Women’s Business Growth
November 2011

AWE SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORK



Facebook Fans: **1709**



Twitter Followers: **4913**



LinkedIn Connections: **715**



e-Newsletter Subscribers: **13410**



ENERGIZING ENTREPRENEURS

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS AT ALL STAGES OF BUSINESS GROWTH CAN BENEFIT FROM UNIQUE TRAINING, MENTORING AND COACHING PROGRAMS.

Paradise (Almost) Lost

Four years ago, Linda Bruner and her husband, Greg Decksheimer, had dreams of leaving their government and oil sector jobs for the independence of business ownership. That dream came in the form of Paradise Lanes, a seemingly successful 18-lane bowling centre in Calgary.

Linda and Greg's dream might have turned into a nightmare, though, if not for a referral to Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) early in their entrepreneurship. "Our Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) contact suggested we approach AWE for help in lowering our loan requirements," says Greg, who speaks on Linda's behalf since cancer ravaged her vocal chords. As a relatively new entrepreneur, "BDC thought Linda was a perfect candidate."

Shortly after financing was approved and the purchase closed, however, Paradise looked less idyllic. "When we took over the business, we found all kinds of mechanical problems. All the lanes rely on machines with big motors, and we ended up having to replace 16 of the 18 motors," he says. "Every box that came through our door that first year cost us about \$1,000."

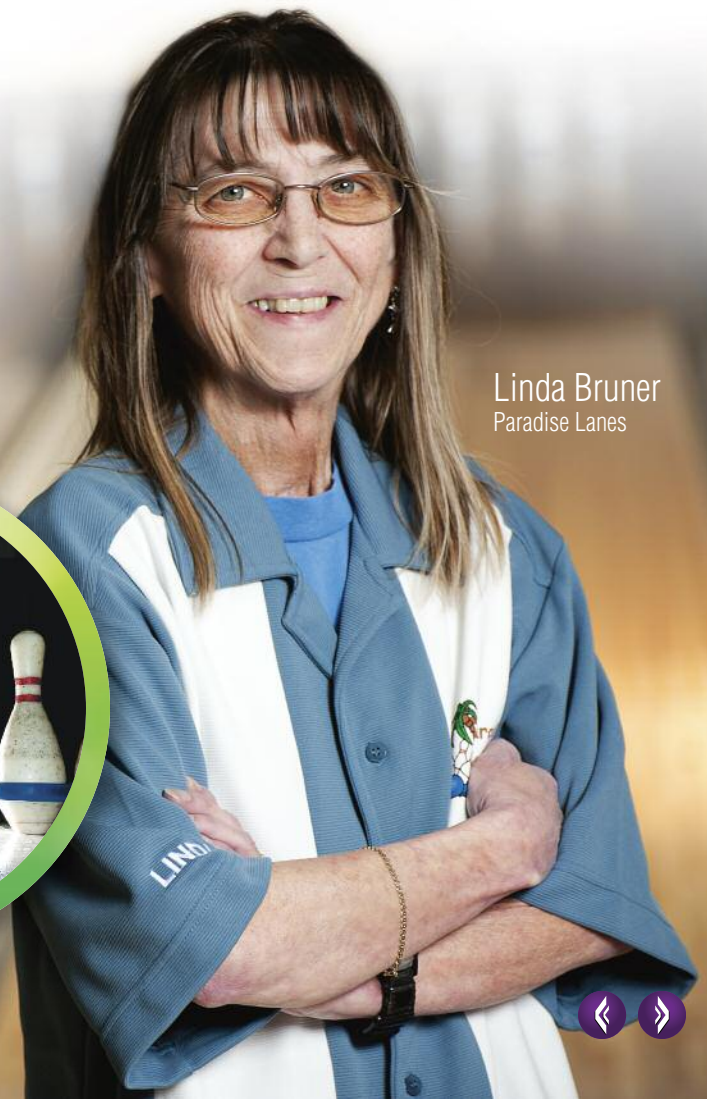
For the next year and a half, AWE's advisory team helped Linda and Greg successfully manage their way out of financial danger, primarily with the help of a mentor. "They connected us with Peter, a retired accountant who has devoted countless hours helping us learn to do our books properly and get our financial statements ready," recalls Greg.

Today, Paradise is thriving. "In Calgary, we probably have the largest number of bowling leagues at our center," says Greg. "It's guaranteed income." As for AWE, Greg and Linda are both thankful for its support and guidance, and take every opportunity to refer other new entrepreneurs to its services and resources.

Sharing Experience & Lessons Learned

For start-ups like Paradise, access to experienced Mentors and Business Advisors can be a tremendous confidence booster, says AWE Business Advisor Sheila Shand. "We help them stay focused."

As important as financing is for many entrepreneurs, AWE has found equal value in helping build up the entrepreneur herself with the knowledge needed to make the business a success. "Many entrepreneurs have an idea as to the path they want to follow," explains Shand. "Through our workshops, seminars and networking events with other entrepreneurs, they can also gain a better understanding of strategic planning and the time it will take to grow a business."



Linda Bruner
Paradise Lanes





Lindsey Parkin
Parma Ventures Inc.

Coaching Beyond the Start-up

ALBERTA WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS (AWE) NOT ONLY SUPPORTS NEW ENTREPRENEURS, BUT ALSO LEADERS OF ESTABLISHED BUSINESSES THROUGH SEMINARS, NETWORKING EVENTS AND NEW INITIATIVES SUCH AS ITS BUSINESS **EXCELERATOR** PROGRAM.

Comprised of monthly meetings, the Exceleator program brings together a small peer group of established women entrepreneurs who are focused on business growth. Each session also features a workshop component around the themes of strategic planning and self-evaluation and is facilitated by an industry leader to guide entrepreneurs to maximize their success.

"Historically, there's been support for entrepreneurs when they first start a business, but once you hit a certain point there is a big gap." says Sherri Hilton, an Edmonton-based certified executive coach and Exceleator Facilitator. "All the participants feel their businesses are on the edge of a significant growth opportunity. They are at the tipping point."

That's certainly the case for participant Lindsey Parkin, of Parma Ventures Inc., a family-owned oilfield equipment rental company with offices in High Level and Peace River, Alberta. Though Parkin was "born into the business" and completed a business degree a year ago, she's looking to fellow participants for help planning the company's future. "For me, I'm learning now to work on the business and not just in it," she says. "This whole program is perfect timing for me and my brother. We are in the midst of our succession planning and it gives me an opportunity to apply my learning."

Lindsey is not alone. "These women are so mired in the operational aspects of their businesses, they haven't had any time or opportunity to think strategically or be visionary," says Hilton. "To be successful, it's critical they develop a heightened sense of self-awareness concerning their leadership strengths and weaknesses. It is not only about them growing a business, but also growing a team of people who buy into the vision for the business."

Alberta Women Entrepreneurs' attention to this previously-unserved area of entrepreneurial need will pay big dividends, says Hilton. "Women face a lot of obstacles in the business world, and AWE is going above and beyond the call of duty to help fill the educational gaps for all women," she says. "AWE will not only be there when they need help in start-up mode, but also as they grow to the next level."

"Mentoring is clearly very important to women, as are the encouragement and financial support of business partners, experience, and well-developed professional networks."

The Anatomy of an Entrepreneur: Are Successful Women Entrepreneurs Different From Men?
Kauffman Foundation Report (2010)

2011-2012 Events

- 21 Roadmap for Success - Business Plan Writing Workshops (184 attendees)
- 12 Building on Success - Performance Improvement and Growth Workshops (152 attendees)
- 11 Informative Networking Sessions (462 attendees)
- AWE Annual 2 Day Conference: Performance Improvement and Growth Strategies (165 attendees)

Networks & Training Services

- Program Partnerships
- Access to Experts
- Peer-to-Peer Networks
- International Market Access
- Angel and Other Private Investor Networks



IGNITING VIABLE VENTURES

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS NEED TOOLS, SUPPORT AND RESOURCES TO EXPAND THEIR BUSINESSES, DEVELOP PRODUCTS AND ENTER NEW MARKETS ACROSS CANADA AND GLOBALLY.

For over 40 years, Leduc-based freight forwarder AOG International Inc. has been no stranger to global commerce. As a major transportation and logistics company, it works with a worldwide network of agents to execute quick and efficient shipments of everything from drilling rigs to ocean and air freight.

It was an Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) information session about two years ago that alerted President and CEO Christina Forth-Matthews to a new opportunity to secure contracts with major companies and governments that have a mandate to buy from majority women-owned enterprises.

Connecting to Contracts, conducted in partnership with other Women's Enterprise organizations across Western Canada, educates female business owners on major procurement opportunities and helps them achieve **WEConnect Canada** certification, which guarantees companies are majority-owned (51%) and managed by women. To date, 155 Canadian businesses have been certified or are close to certification, including 55 businesses in Western Canada such as AOG International.

"If you're looking to grow and expand, or even just access seminars on procurement, this is a great opportunity," says Christina. Since her company achieved WEConnect certification in 2010, she has had numerous opportunities to bid on major procurement contracts and is now on a preferred supplier short-list for several multi-national corporations. In addition to a heightened business profile, certification has also opened up new opportunities for networking, including an invitation to Ottawa to consult with the government on a recent Federal budget. A potential strategic alliance with a European woman-owned business is also in the offering — all thanks to certification as a diverse supplier.

Supplier Diversity Drives Success

Supplier diversity often benefits everyone at the table — stimulating job growth, opening new markets and driving more competitive procurement pricing among all suppliers. Many multi-national corporations have comprehensive supplier diversity programs and play a pro-active role in helping certified women-owned companies grow.

"There have been very innovative corporations that have recognized [the value of supplier diversity] and have made an intentional effort to allow women to have access to procurement contracts through a process called supplier diversity," says Mary Anderson, Executive Director of WEConnect Canada.

That said, AWE is working hard to promote the benefits of procuring goods and services from businesses owned by women. The Canadian Taskforce for Women's Business Growth recently noted: "Canada has yet to realize the full economic benefits of supplier diversity and strategic procurement. . . . procurement is not yet on the 'diversity agenda' of most Canadian corporations."

"A 20% increase in total revenues among majority female-owned enterprises will contribute an additional \$2 billion per annum to the Canadian economy."

Action Strategies to Support Women's Enterprise Development
The Canadian Taskforce for Women's Business Growth
November 2011

Christina Forth-Matthews
AOG International Inc.





Building Momentum

“We see all stages of businesses and business cycles, from start-ups to expansions. What we are observing now are more clients who are seasoned entrepreneurs looking for opportunities for growth and new markets, doing strategic planning, and seeking strategic alliances with other business operators,” says AWE Business Advisor Sheila Shand.

Through its Connecting to Contracts program, workshops, seminars and other initiatives, Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) is actively helping these businesses identify growth opportunities within Alberta and beyond its borders. According to Canadian Taskforce Chair Barbara Orser, that trend will likely continue.

“Engagement in international trade and global value chains is associated with enterprise growth,” she notes. “Women entrepreneurs want to harness supplier diversity opportunities and contribute to the global supply chain, but many don’t know where to find help.”

Organizations such as AWE help bridge the gap in knowledge and guidance. “Female business owners are coming to groups like AWE with three motives that all relate to business growth” she says. “One is to acquire the managerial capacity and improve their management acumen. Two is the social capital; that is, the mentoring and networking.” And, a third reason is perhaps the most interesting element.

“Clients using women-focused centres are often engaging in business development and growth amongst themselves. They are targeting colleagues in these programs. They are also more acutely aware of the women’s market for their products and are able to build their service or product prototypes with input from women, so it becomes an added-value in their business growth process.”

Most important for women-owned enterprises, she says, is that organizations like AWE offer a “caring culture and environment” that encourages the growth of their business.

“As the economy gathers steam, especially here in Canada, women will be leading the way. . . Congratulations to all of you [women business owners] for your entrepreneurship, your leadership, and your contributions to the prosperity of our communities, our province and our country.”

***The Honourable Rona Ambrose
Minister of Public Works and Government Services & Minister for Status of Women
AWE 2010 Annual Conference***

Borrowing Money from AWE

AWE offers repayable loans of up to \$150,000 for women-owned market-ready start-ups, business expansions and business purchases.

AWE can also help identify lending partnerships to meet larger loan requirements, and has been successful in securing other public and private financing partners for women entrepreneurs.

Financings At-a-Glance 2011-2012

Loans Extended:	15
Total Value:	\$994,000
Jobs Created:	79.5
Business Expansions Financed:	10
Business Start-ups Financed:	5

Service Inquiries by Geography

Edmonton:	37%
Calgary:	37%
Around Alberta:	26%

Service Inquiry by Demographic

Women 18-34:	42%
Women 35-50:	50%
Post-Graduate Schooling:	64%
Trades/Professional Training:	19%



INSPIRING COMMUNITY



WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS ARE CONNECTING TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE, LEARNING AND EXPERIENCES THAT RESULT IN NEW CLIENTS, PARTNERSHIPS AND A BETTER BOTTOM LINE.



Elvie Reinson
Ballast Environmental Consulting Ltd.

For Elvie Reinson, founder of Calgary's Ballast Environmental Consulting Ltd., a four-person company providing site assessments for land reclamations and remediations, leadership can be an isolating experience. That's why she highly values the regular networking and informational events hosted by Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (AWE).

"I find it most interesting when people are talking about the challenges they faced in their own businesses," she says. She started her venture about four years ago and now she's ready to take it to the next level — a sometimes daunting idea. "It's a growth stage, which is way worse than the start-up," she laughs. "Everything is bigger. The numbers are bigger, the risks are greater, there's more at stake and the stress is higher."

The speakers and entrepreneurial community at AWE's Annual Conference and its networking sessions strive to make the growth transition easier. "It's good to see that it's possible and that it can be done," she says. "For me, that's where the greatest value lies."

That's what Joanne Rowe, Chair of AWE's Board, likes to hear. As co-owner of the legendary Calgary burger shop, Peters' Drive-In Ltd., she understands the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs and hears from many of them that AWE is making a difference in their lives and businesses.

"The success stories are great," she adds, "but AWE's programs and initiatives also translate into real contributions to our economy. Small business drives our economy and when women themselves are contributors, they're having a meaningful impact on our communities."

Strength in Numbers

"Entrepreneurship can be a very lonely road," agrees Kurian Tharakan of Edmonton-based Acton Consulting Ltd., who facilitates AWE's sales and marketing training sessions for AWE entrepreneurs. "To be amongst people that have a business in similar circumstances is a confidence-builder. It allows you to see that many other people are going through the same experiences."

That sense of community among entrepreneurs can also have a real impact on the success of their businesses. "In AWE's marketing workshops, everyone listens to the ideas the presenter is offering individual participants and then they contribute to the building of that value proposition. The group itself actually helps the individual," he says.

"I think women entrepreneurs are more open to trying new things," he adds. "They're certainly more open to new ideas and they're not afraid to ask questions."



Connecting to Business Success

Cidnee Stephen, President of Calgary-based marketing firm Strategies for Success, can speak first-hand to the value offered by the community Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) has created. "Women entrepreneurs are an interesting breed because we are so supportive of each other," she says. "When you put us in a room together, it's all about connecting and support. Going into an AWE event, you know you're going to meet some amazing women."

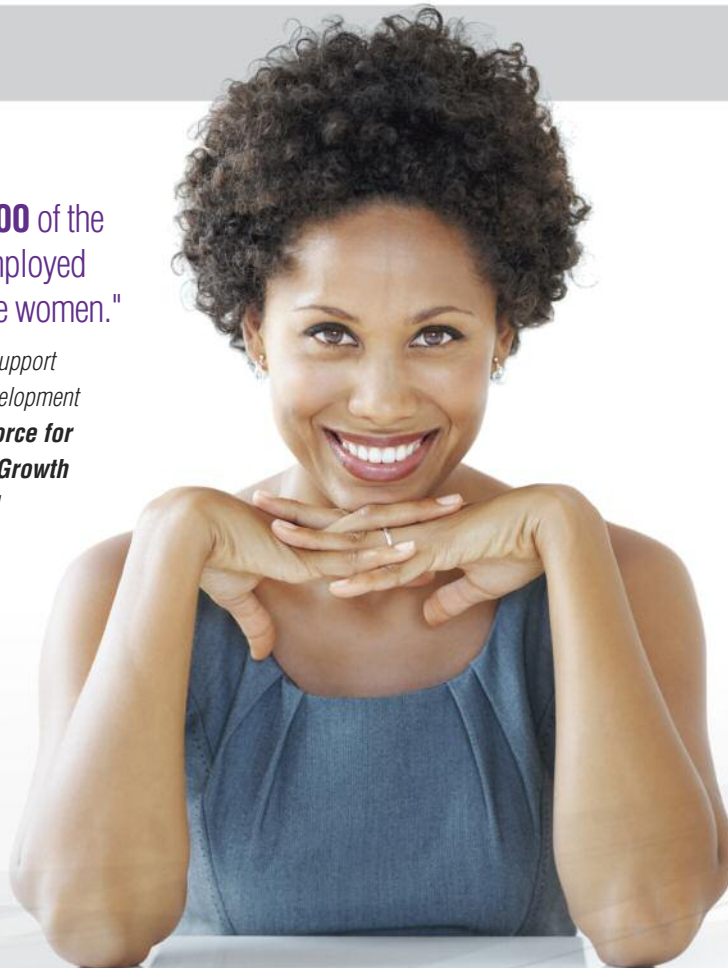
In her own business, she frequently works with small enterprises that sometimes struggle to create and manage their own marketing and business development systems. Many don't have access to the resources offered by an organization like AWE.

"AWE is, to me, a little bit like a life preserver," she says. "They offer support, community and an education. Some of these women don't even realize they're not on their own." AWE says to them: 'We're going to help you get there'.

"I like to think they're saving a few businesses."

"Today, over **900,000** of the 2.6 million self-employed workers in Canada are women."

*Action Strategies to Support
Women's Enterprise Development
**The Canadian Taskforce for
Women's Business Growth**
November 2011*



AWE Programs

- Entrepreneurship Development
 - Business loans
 - Business advising and mentoring
 - Path finding to resources
 - Roadmap to Success business plan writing workshops
- NextStep to Success entrepreneurship development program for Aboriginal women
- Building on Success business performance improvement workshops
- Connecting to Contracts
 - Linking entrepreneurs to corporate, government, and international business opportunities
- Excelerator
 - Peer mentorship and coaching for established entrepreneurs whose businesses are poised for growth

AWE-Inspiring Facts

- 44% of female business owners intend to expand the size and scope of their business within two years
- Small businesses make up 96% of all businesses in Alberta, with over 110,700 being women-owned ventures
- Since the start of this century, Alberta has led Canada in the rate of new small business creation with 19,324 new small businesses created from 2000-2010
- Between 1999-2009, the number of self-employed females increased by 13% compared with 10% for men



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The complete set of financial statements were audited by Grant Thornton LLP and can be provided by Alberta Women Entrepreneurs upon request.

	Unrestricted	Externally Restricted	Internally Restricted	2012 Total
Statement of Operations - Year ended March 31, 2012				
Revenues				
Contributions from WED	\$ 975,000	-	-	\$ 975,000
Other Contributions	244,768	-	-	244,768
Program Income	93,775	-	-	93,775
Interest Income	-	143,972	-	143,972
Recovery of Bad Debt	-	8,905	-	8,905
Amortization of Deferred Capital Contributions	24,800	-	-	24,800
	<u>\$ 1,338,343</u>	<u>\$ 152,877</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>\$ 1,491,220</u>
Expenses				
Salaries & Benefits	\$ 683,582	-	-	\$ 683,582
Travel	98,187	-	-	98,187
Marketing	97,835	-	-	97,835
Events	69,624	-	-	69,624
Rent	63,779	-	-	63,779
Professional Fees	49,765	-	-	49,765
Office	47,335	-	-	47,335
Special Projects Expenses	46,668	-	-	46,668
Amortization of Property & Equipment	43,069	-	-	43,069
Training & Board Expenses	19,217	-	-	19,217
Insurance	10,482	-	-	10,482
Other Loan Fees	5,404	2,500	-	7,904
Bank Charges & Interest	5,130	-	-	5,130
Repairs & Maintenance	835	-	-	835
Gain on disposal of Property & Equipment	(50)	-	-	(50)
Recovery on Loan receivable	-	(86,608)	-	(86,608)
	<u>\$ 1,240,862</u>	<u>\$ (84,108)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>\$ 1,156,754</u>
Excess of Revenues over Expenses	\$ 97,481	\$ 236,985	-	\$ 334,466
Statement of Changes in Net Assets - Year ended March 31, 2012				
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	\$ 5,224	\$ 4,703,844	\$ 410,057	\$ 5,119,125
Excess of Revenues over Expenses	97,481	236,985	-	334,466
Transfer to Internally Restricted	(95,000)	-	95,000	-
Net Assets, End of Year	<u>\$ 7,705</u>	<u>\$ 4,940,829</u>	<u>\$ 505,057</u>	<u>\$ 5,453,591</u>
Statement of Financial Position - As at March 31, 2012				
Assets				
Other Current Assets	\$ 207,992	\$ 1,741,702	\$ 505,057	\$ 2,454,751
Current Portion of Loans Receivable	-	903,850	-	903,850
Long Term Loans Receivable	-	2,297,777	-	2,297,777
Property & Equipment	131,686	-	-	131,686
	<u>\$ 339,678</u>	<u>\$ 4,943,329</u>	<u>\$ 505,057</u>	<u>\$ 5,788,064</u>
Liabilities				
Current Liabilities	\$ 127,209	\$ 2,500	-	\$ 129,709
Deferred Operating Contributions	123,976	-	-	123,976
Deferred Capital Contributions	80,788	-	-	80,788
	<u>\$ 331,973</u>	<u>\$ 2,500</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>\$ 334,473</u>
Net Assets				
Externally Restricted	-	\$ 4,940,829	-	\$ 4,940,829
Internally Restricted	-	-	\$ 505,057	\$ 505,057
Unrestricted	\$ 7,705	-	-	7,705
	<u>\$ 7,705</u>	<u>\$ 4,940,829</u>	<u>\$ 505,057</u>	<u>\$ 5,453,591</u>
	<u>\$ 339,678</u>	<u>\$ 4,943,329</u>	<u>\$ 505,057</u>	<u>\$ 5,788,064</u>



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AWE's programs and services would not be possible without the generous support and funding of Western Economic Diversification Canada and the Government of Alberta.



Our Major Sponsors

Thanks to our sponsors, AWE and women entrepreneurs received a generous amount of financial and in-kind support, specifically:



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ENTREPRENEURIAL moms
CONNECTING WOMEN WHO WANT TO GROW BC



Our Volunteers

We sincerely thank our many volunteers, including speakers and other contributors, who provided an estimated 588 hours worth of their valuable time.





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