



Barriers and Enablers of Northern Businesses and Entrepreneurship

Understanding what shapes economic success in Canada's North

THE NORTHERN REALITY



Geographic isolation, limited infrastructure, and extreme climate define how businesses operate in the North.

22.3%

YUKON

3 Territories

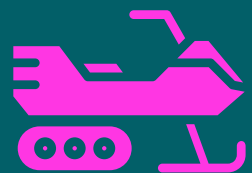
Indigenous Peoples represent:

49.6%

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

85.8%

NUNAVUT



Remote and fly-in communities



Seasonal transportation networks



Extreme climate conditions



High operating and logistics costs

Indigenous entrepreneurship is central to Northern economic participation.

SMALL BUSINESSES, BIG ROLE



99.6%

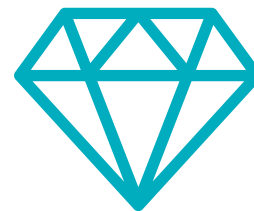
of enterprises in the Territorial North are **small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)**



Small and medium-sized enterprises **power Northern economies**

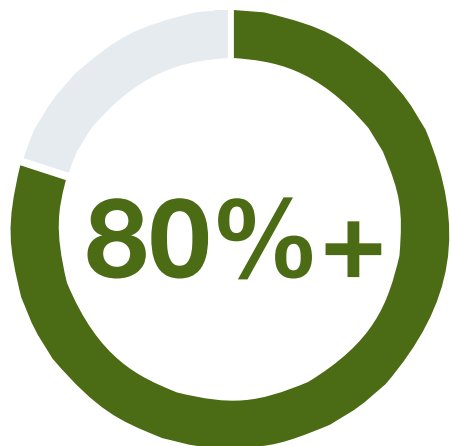


SMEs make up the majority of businesses across every major Northern sector



Large enterprises still **dominate resource and capital-intensive sectors**

WORKFORCE & SKILLS

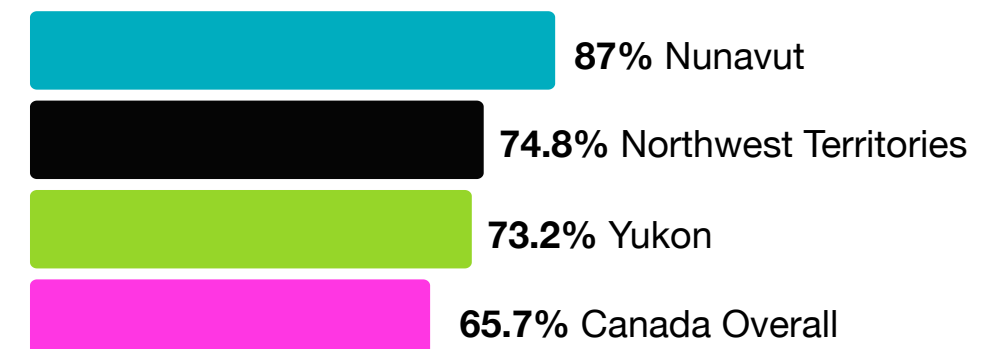


of Northern businesses **have enough cash to operate for at least three months** — above the national average.



Business confidence remains high

Businesses with a positive 12-month outlook:



5x

higher labour shortage rates in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories

2x

Skilled recruitment challenges in Yukon vs. Canada overall

ACCESS SHAPES OPPORTUNITY



67–83%

of enterprises experience limited or inconsistent internet access.

Labour is the #1 constraint

3x

more businesses report difficulty implementing innovation due to labour and skills gaps

Connectivity gaps limit:

- E-commerce
- Skills training
- Digital tools & AI
- Market diversification

ECONOMY



Exports drive Northern economies



43% of Yukon's GDP



36.4% of Northwest Territories' GDP



3.9% of Nunavut's GDP



89.9%

of Northern exports go to the United States



INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Indigenous-owned businesses are a major proportion of northern enterprises



26% in Northwest Territories

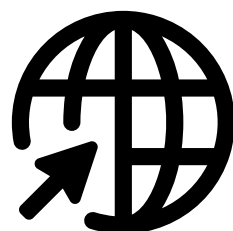
11% in Yukon

53% in Nunavut

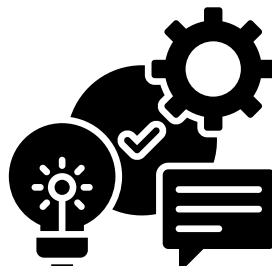
WHAT SUCCESS DEPENDS ON



INFRASTRUCTURE
Invest in transportation, energy, and logistics that reflect Northern realities.



BROADBAND
Expand reliable digital access beyond minimum service levels.



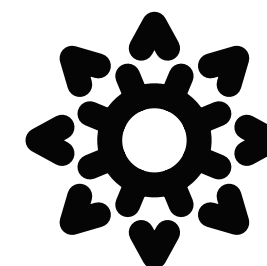
SKILLS
Build training pathways aligned to Northern sectors and workforce needs.



FINANCING
Improve access to capital for SMEs and Indigenous entrepreneurs.



PROCUREMENT
Use purchasing power to support Northern and Indigenous-owned businesses.



CULTURE
Deliver culturally responsive supports aligned with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action

Northern businesses are resilient — but inclusion shapes what's possible.

**TED
ROGERS
SCHOOL
OF MANAGEMENT**

DiVERSITY
INSTITUTE



**Future
Skills
Centre**

**Centre des
Compétences
futures**