

ESIO STRATEGY

A city that yearns for creative talent is not an implausible fiction. We've watched this story unfold for decades, as big-city mayors, planners, and organizations like ours chase the massive social and economic benefits that attend a healthy creative class.

The creatives who focus that talent on our film, television and gaming screens might be the most crucial.

A project built for screens is a local enterprise with potential that's global, borderless, exponential. Screen industries' economic impact in Canada alone is astounding: the art produced by the industry generates \$15 billion-plus a year in activity.

And there are intangible benefits to a healthy, local screen industry. Something magical stirs in us when we see ourselves -- our stories and games and ideas -- projected to the world. Even when Edmonton stands in for somewhere else, gritty or glamorous or otherwise, when we see a familiar neighbour or neighbourhood flash on that screen, our hearts skip. When an Edmonton actor voices an internationally loved video game hero, we feel heard, seen, even understood.

The attraction and sustenance of creative talent might just be the biggest imperative in the world economy today and it is the ESIO's obsession.

The central challenge we intend to attack is that too many creative people who work in screen industries have left our city, attracted by other creative-minded places. The talented people who've stayed don't have the resources or allies or enough fulfilling work to sustain them.

As the ESIO sets out on its new course, in this strategy and beyond, we're armed with an enormous advantage. Edmonton is a story place, a creative place, an art place. It has always been.

First Nations people have gathered near this generous bend in the river for millennia to pass along stories and teachings and memories. Contemporary examples of our creative fluency are everywhere: at the biggest Fringe Festival on the continent, in our literary and documentary film communities, in Canada's best regional theatre scene.

If the problem feels very universal, the ESIO has a very Edmonton way to solve it.

Much of the ESIO's energy since we formed in 2017 has been devoted to managing and deploying the Edmonton Screen Media Fund, seeded with \$4 million in municipal money.

The idea was to invest in film and gaming projects that appeared profitable. The fund would recoup its investments (and then some), grow the fund, invest in more projects, and that virtuous cycle would give rise to thriving industries in film, TV, and digital gaming.

As our creative partners in the community know very well, film, TV, and interactive digital media are irregular realms, ungoverned by the usual instincts and parameters that frame other industries.

Creatives who work on screen aren't churning out widgets and grinding margins to boost shareholder value. They're trying to feed their passion, realize their vision, tell their story, build their game – and sell the result of their inspiration and hard work to the world. They face unique challenges and risks, and they need a unique sort of help that isn't found in a typical economic development vehicle like a venture capital fund.

We intend to continue to invest in Edmonton's screen industries, but not through that venture capital model. Our core business needs to shift from transaction to inspiration, from prospectuses to persuasion.

Call us a catalyst, a convener, a champion, or the centre of gravity for creativity in Edmonton. They all fit, and they all nudge the world to understand what the ESIO is trying to build here: a place that feels like it has no limits.

How do we get there? If we're not going to necessarily concentrate on investing in individual projects ... then what?

In a broad sense, the ESIO will focus on creating a centre of gravity for creativity in Edmonton. We'll connect our effort to the community we serve and to the world. We'll gather like-minded people to put collective energy behind it. And we'll fuel the momentum with resources and investment.

Specifically, our day-to-day priorities are revealed later in this plan. They're all designed to help us and our city make straightforward, fundamental progress.

We need to help the people who live and breathe this industry trust us. We need to persuade creative makers -- of films, episodes, games, scripts, technology -- to stay in Edmonton or come back. We need to compel them to CHOOSE us because they see us as an interesting, indispensable place to make their art.

Everything we do should be aimed at driving activity -- production, revenue, crew size, numbers of game studios, academic programs that train a new generation of screen creatives, conversations and collaborations, the transfer of knowledge and expertise from veterans to upstarts.

The world needs a clearer picture of who we are, what we're good at, what we have to offer, and why they should choose Edmonton. A central figure needs to organize and sell that story to the world, because our long-term success starts with the short-term attraction of new film, TV, and gaming studio talent. That's us.

Someone needs to show what we can offer, model it, prove it, and then replicate it, a dozen times and then 100 times. Someone needs to help activate film and television crews that are still in Edmonton and pull more of them home through the magnetic power of our success. Someone needs to work to attract more gaming studios to follow in the footsteps of our pioneering companies. Someone needs to convince our post-secondary institutions that there's massive upside -- good business for them, exponential intangibles for our city -- in training and curriculum.

That's us.

Meanwhile, we'll bring in mentors and set them loose on an industry audience hungry for instructive stories of what can go beautifully right and what can go horribly wrong and what we can learn from all of it before the red light comes on again. We'll find artful ways to share the successes of our industry pioneers and that wildly talented newcomer who just kicked off a new idea two weeks ago.

We'll scheme a way to build and bring more spaces to Edmonton where screen creatives can take risks, play around, fail, learn, fail some more, and then ultimately break through with something worth showing to each other and the world. Perhaps we build a space ourselves or persuade an investment/industry partner to build. Maybe we invent an audacious made-in-Edmonton idea, co-created with our community. Stay tuned.

We'll partner more, with organizations who live locally and think globally. The City of Edmonton's strategies see Edmonton's creativity as "a light to the world." They call for the support of new and established entrepreneurs and better co-ordination with our tourism leaders, so the world understands the opportunity here. We couldn't agree more.

And we'll look outside our borders for inspiration. Other screen industry organizations in Canada have built something special in their cities. We can learn from them. We **will** learn from them.

As a leader, a team, we'll rally around our purpose:

To be a daring partner that champions creativity, powers the success of our screen industries, and drives pride in a radiant city.

By relentlessly pursuing that purpose, our audacious goal is to build a \$300 million screen industry right here in Edmonton.

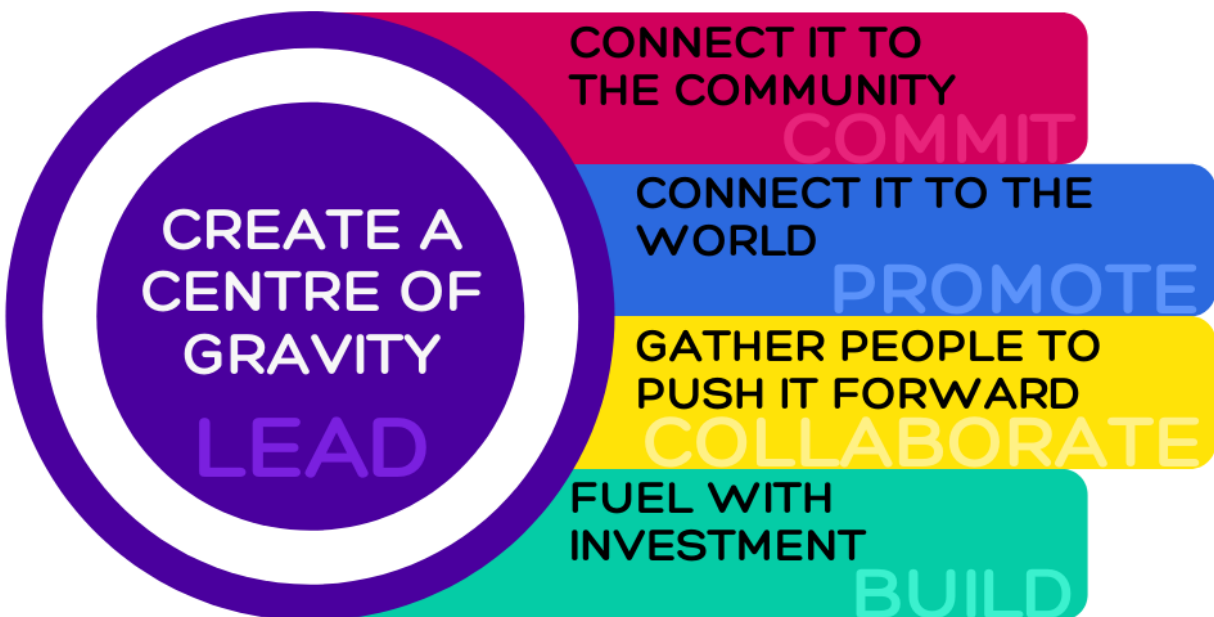
When we do these things well, Edmontonians will be in for a stunning next act.

Just watch us.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our strategy is built on five actions. While there is an order and progression to these actions, they will often be worked on simultaneously. Each of these actions are represented by a strategic priority.



LEAD

We will be the champions, the leaders, and the solutions seekers. We will build a creative, energetic, optimistic and united team that can be an example of what we are trying to build in our community.

Key Objectives

1. Develop the abilities and leadership of the team.
2. Be informed and current with industry trends.
3. Foster an inclusive environment within our organization and in our interactions with the community.

Indicators

1. Net promoter score by team.
2. Staff report having exceptional access to information.
3. Staff report having skills necessary for success.

COMMIT

We will be engaged and immersed in the activities of our sectors, here in Edmonton but also across Alberta and Canada. We will show our support by showing up! We will give our time and our energy to build lasting relationships wherever we go.

Key Objectives

1. Have a presence at national and international shows, festivals, and marketplaces.
2. Regularly engage local stakeholders through supporting and initiating local events.
3. Increase visibility to our objectives and progress.
4. Engage with Indigenous and other under-represented communities and foster their growth.

Indicators

1. Relationships made (create an indicator of this in our CRM).
2. Social media followers and engagement at local/national/international level.
3. Participation of under-represented communities in programming.
4. Net promoter score.

PROMOTE

We will develop and promote the Edmonton screen media identity. We will seek out the key characteristics that make us stand out. We will organize them and refine them until they are clear and undeniable. Then we will unabashedly share them until creators around the world say, "Let's go to Edmonton!"

Key Objectives

1. Foster an attractive creative environment.
2. Enable community to act as ambassadors.
3. Clarify and share our value proposition as a place to engage in the creative industries.
4. Build and maintain long term relationships with screen industry decision makers.

Indicators

1. Increase total production of film and TV in Edmonton region to \$100,000,000.
2. Increase the number of IDM games shipped from Edmonton studios.

COLLABORATE

We will lead and support collaboration with local and regional partners. We will amplify our voice through connection and integration with other leaders and reduce historical roadblocks.

Key Objectives

1. Establish a mutual trust and respect with all our stakeholders.
2. Leverage resources of other organizations to address the needs of stakeholders who crossover.
3. Develop sustainable and clear organizational relationships and integration.

Indicators

1. Reputation as a leader in trust and collaboration measured by net promoter score.
2. Number of collaborative activities engaged in.
3. Successfully advocated programs at a provincial and federal level.

We will support and invest in the creation of infrastructure, education and resources that will increase the opportunities for creatives to develop themselves and their projects.

Key Objectives

1. Develop programs to deploy ESMF capital and leverage third party funds.
2. Promote and support the creative talent pipelines.
3. Remove obstructions that prevent business from growing in a sustained way.

Indicators

1. Third party dollars raised for investment in screen industries infrastructure, programming, and education.
2. Third party investment in technology that is available to community.
3. Number of screen industry FTE's.