

# Black Business Needs Assessment

Engagement summary



# Contents

- 1. Introduction and purpose**
- 2. Methodology overview**
- 3. Results summary**
- 4. Discussion**
- 5. Next steps**

# Introduction

The City's Economic Development department strives to make Vaughan a place where entrepreneurship, business, tourism and art can prosper and evolve by identifying opportunities for growth and reducing barriers to investment and job creation.

- ▶ To support the Black business community, the City conducted the **Black Business Needs Assessment**, surveying and engaging Black entrepreneurs and business owners to better understand their needs and experiences and to enhance current and future programs and supports.



# Purpose

The goal of the needs assessment was to better understand the experiences of Black entrepreneurs and business owners, build trust and lay the groundwork for more effective support through:

- ▶ Comparing existing research on Black-owned businesses to Vaughan's local context
- ▶ Deepening our understanding of the experiences of Black entrepreneurs and business owners
- ▶ Strengthening relationships between Vaughan Economic Development and the Black business community
- ▶ Building a preliminary directory of Black-owned businesses in Vaughan
- ▶ Guiding future programming and support initiatives



# Engagement overview and themes explored

The focused engagement represents a meaningful starting point for continued dialogue and relationship-building.

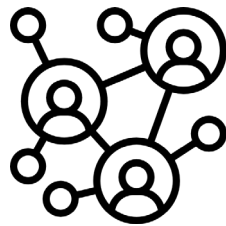
From Oct. 30, 2025 to March 6, 2026:

- ▶ Fourteen Black entrepreneurs and business owners participated in our survey
- ▶ Seven participated in a corporate call

Themes explored:



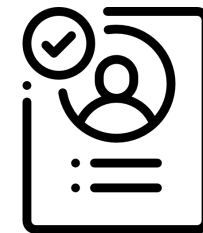
**Access to  
capital**



**Networking**



**Regulations,  
licenses and  
permits**



**Talent,  
hiring and  
training**

# Who we engaged and how they're connected to Vaughan:

**71 per cent**

live and own a business in Vaughan

**seven per cent**

live in Vaughan but own a business **outside** of Vaughan

**14 per cent**

don't live in Vaughan but own a business in Vaughan

**none**

identified as a youth entrepreneur



Sample size =14

# Black entrepreneurs and business owners behind the data

**64 per cent**

have been operating for one to three years

**21 per cent**

have been operating for four to six years

**64 per cent**

of businesses have one to four employees

## Top three primary sectors

- ▶ Arts, entertainment and recreation
- ▶ Education, healthcare and/or social assistance
- ▶ Retail trade

## Top three secondary sectors

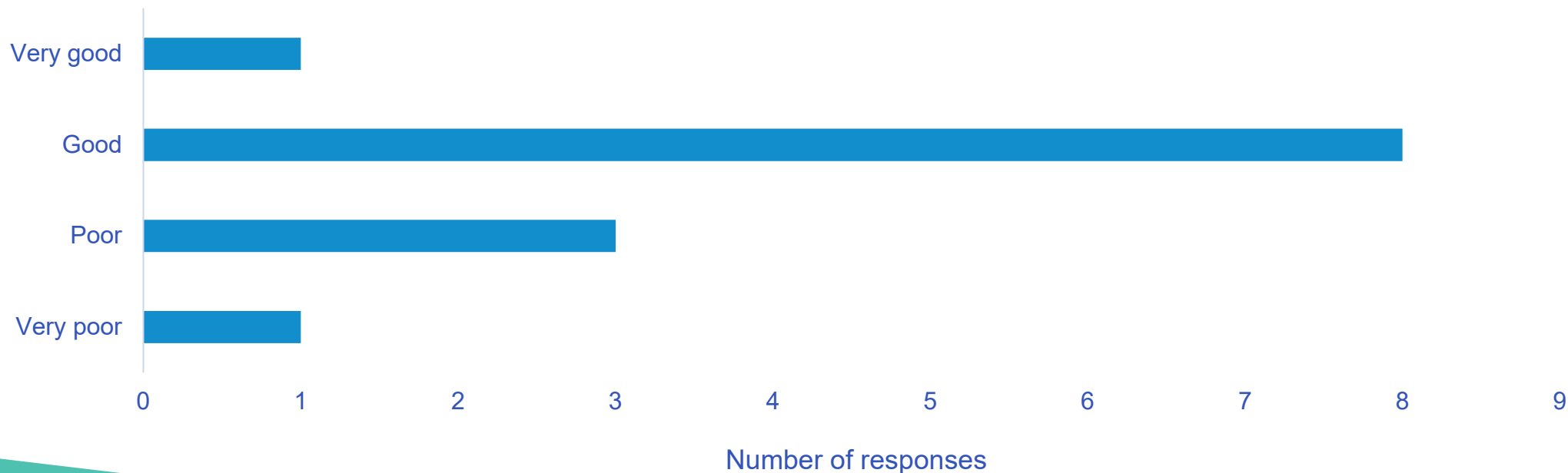
- ▶ Professional, scientific, technical and/or business services
- ▶ Information and cultural industries
- ▶ Manufacturing

Sample size =14

# Experience operating a business in Vaughan

Most participants rated their experience operating a business in Vaughan as “good” or “very good.”

How would you rate your overall experience operating a business in Vaughan?



Sample size =13

# Where entrepreneurs encounter friction

When starting and growing their businesses, Black entrepreneurs and business owners told us their biggest challenges extend beyond access to funding.

## Top three challenges when starting business

1. Marketing
2. Connecting with knowledgeable mentors
3. Access to capital

## Top three challenges when operating (ongoing) business

1. Networking and learning opportunities
2. Connecting with knowledgeable mentors
3. Business development

Sample size =13



# Awareness and use of City supports

Black entrepreneurs and business owners showed moderate awareness of the City's business supports, generally found them accessible and want more information shared through trusted channels.

**46 per cent**

were aware of the City's Economic Development business support services

**77 per cent**

did not encounter any challenges accessing the City's business support services

## Top three services of interest

1. Business-to-business networking
2. Distribution of provincial and federal small business grants
3. Information on available funding programs, local and regional support organizations and business development opportunities

## Top three preferred channels

1. eNewsletters
2. Social media, such as LinkedIn or Instagram
3. [vaughanbusiness.ca](http://vaughanbusiness.ca)

Sample size =13

# The most consistent barrier to growth

Access to capital emerged as one of the strongest and most persistent challenges for Black entrepreneurs and business owners.

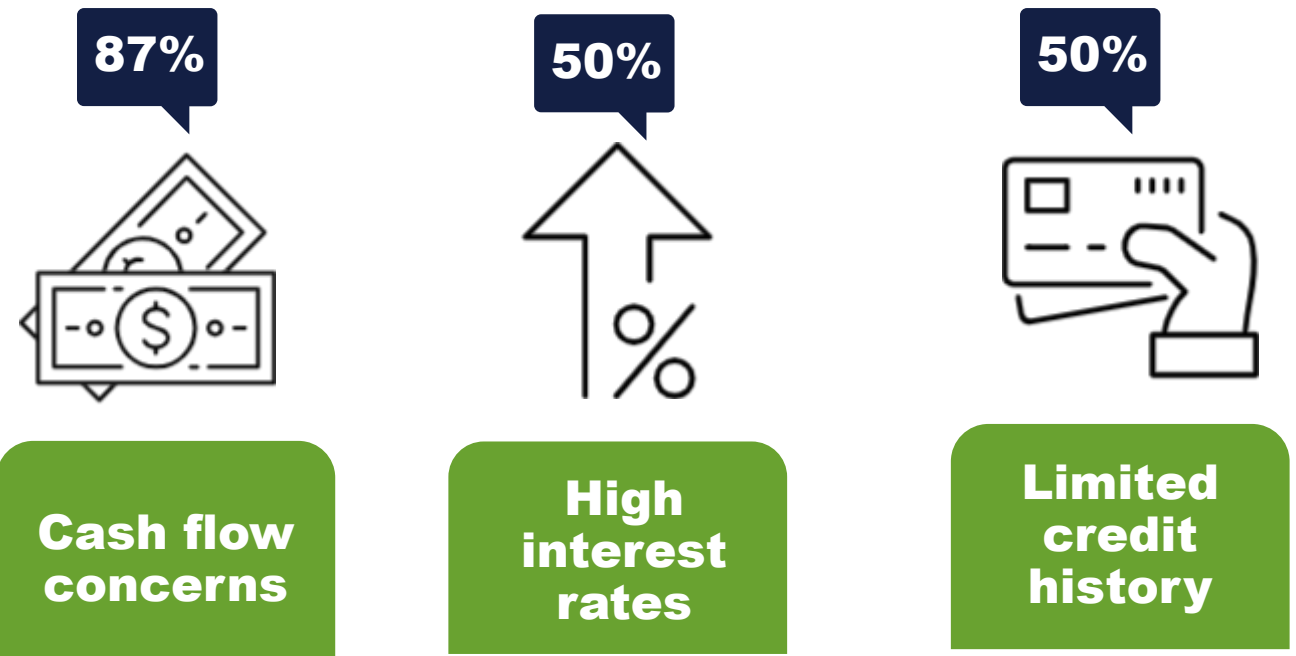
**80 per cent**

faced barriers in accessing capital (e.g. loans, grants, investments)

*Sample size =10*

## Top three barriers to accessing capital

*Sample size =8*



# Navigating the regulatory landscape

While most Black entrepreneurs and business owners did not report major regulatory barriers, those who did highlighted very specific pressure points.

## Top three challenging regulatory requirements

Sample size =3

# 66 per cent

have not faced regulatory barriers that have impacted their business

Sample size =9



Employer regulations



Business registration



Occupation-specific regulatory bodies

# Talent, hiring and training

For many businesses, hiring and retaining staff is constrained by cost, availability and turnover.

**50 per cent**

faced staffing challenges

*Sample size =8*

## Staffing challenges (select all that apply)

*Sample size = 4*



# Networking

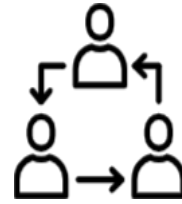
Black entrepreneurs and business owners strongly value networking, yet many face practical barriers that limit participation.

## 72 per cent

stated professional associations or attending networking events were very important to their business, yet are **not members**

## 45 per cent

mentioned they rarely participate in networking with **time of day** and **lack of awareness** as the most prominent reasons



## 90 per cent

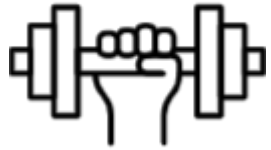
mentioned it was 'very important' to have networking events **specifically designed to support and celebrate the Black business community**



Sample size =11

# Additional suggestions

**Black entrepreneurs and business owners provided additional suggestions for how the City could better support their success.**



- ▶ Expand access to resources, including information about grants, local procurement opportunities and clearer municipal permitting processes.



- ▶ Involve Black entrepreneurs and business owners directly in program design and decision-making.



- ▶ Build youth pathways by connecting local students to Black-owned businesses for early work experiences.

# Opportunities for improvement

Throughout the survey responses and interviews, four priorities consistently surfaced as the areas where support would make the biggest difference.

- ▶ Access to information about grants, funding and business resources
- ▶ Increase awareness of Black-owned businesses
- ▶ Connection, networking and community building
- ▶ Skills development and talent pathways

Insights from the Black Business Needs Assessment highlight where and how we can strengthen relationships, expand awareness and prioritize actions that respond to the needs of Black entrepreneurs and business owners.

# From insights to action

This work builds on existing City business supports and reflects an ongoing journey grounded in relationship-building, connection and continuous improvement.

- ▶ The City is committed to continue strengthening connections with Black entrepreneurs and business owners and applying feedback received to the design of future programs and supports.
- ▶ The Economic Development team is here to support Black business owners and entrepreneurs through:
  - ▶ One-on-one consultations
  - ▶ End-to-end site selection support
  - ▶ Data analysis and local economic intelligence
  - ▶ Business events and workshops

An introduction to the City's business supports:



Watch the [video](#) (opens in a new window with captions)

**Learn more.  
Share your  
business  
needs.**

**Connect with me!**

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🌐 [vaughanbusiness.ca](http://vaughanbusiness.ca)

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