

**CASE STUDY****WISEBOX™**
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Strengthening our local economies through sustainability, business recovery and digital-first growth

The Company

Wisebox Solutions, part of the **i-Open Group of Companies**, is a software company based in Abbotsford, BC. With a proven track record for marketplaces, eCommerce, and business process automation, the company transforms technology decisions into competitive advantage. It specializes in the rapid development of fully-managed web-based transactional e-commerce solutions that integrate and automate front-end processes with back-office logistics such as pricing, inventory, orders, fulfillment, marketing, customer relationship management, analytics, reporting, business intelligence and more.

The Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the retail industry in more ways than one. Supply chain issues and fast-tracked digital transformation have forced local businesses to quickly adopt creative solutions to keep their doors open. Stay-at-home orders, restrictions and economic uncertainty have caused a massive shift in consumer shopping behavior towards digital-first. The desire to support local businesses is also gaining momentum across Canada, as every dollar spent in the local economy results in \$0.68 staying in the community.

**3X**

+ Faster business growth

**45+**

+ Alberta communities engaged on Chamber Marketplace

**50+**

+ Local food producers in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley engaged on DirectFood.store



The DirectFood.store Solution

DirectFood.store is a digital marketplace platform that was built to strengthen the local food supply chain, provide the digital infrastructure small businesses need to survive and support the growing “shop local” movement. Led by Wisebox Solutions, a division of the i-Open Group of companies, DirectFood.store is one of the first online fulfillment systems to facilitate convenient grocery delivery straight from “farm to table”, increasing profitability for local grocers and suppliers while providing consumers easy access to healthier, additive-free food with traceable origins.



The DirectFood.store marketplace supports a direct sales business model that enables vendors to receive payments and issue receipts direct from their own merchant account. It leverages i-Open Technologies’ precision agriculture platform, **AgriLyze**, to improve transparency and traceability throughout the food supply chain. AI-driven analytics also help farmers make better business decisions around planting and harvesting.

The DirectFood.store delivery network removes the need for warehouses. All orders are picked up directly from the farms or vendors in the morning and delivered to customers later that day. This reduces food miles and eliminates food waste as producers know exactly how much they need to harvest or package on any given day.

DirectFood.store has been successfully rolled out in the Lower Mainland and the Fraser Valley, providing a one-stop shop for consumers and restaurants to source fresh food directly from 50+ local producers, such as Wisbey Veggies, Goat’s Pride Dairy, and The EggStore. Other companies involved in the development of this platform include Burnaby-based D-Wave and Richmond-based Novex Delivery Solutions.

Building upon the success of DirectFood.store, Wisebox identified a new market opportunity with chambers of commerce in Canada. In less than three months, they repackaged the DirectFood.store core technology into a marketplace called **Chamber Market**, which supports two big trends: shopping online and shopping local.

A Compelling New Use Case: The Chamber Market Solution

The Alberta Chambers of Commerce has a vision to expedite the recovery of local businesses and communities that are suffering through the pandemic. This includes rolling out an Alberta-wide digital marketplace platform that will help deliver an amazing online, shop-local experience.



The Alberta Chambers of Commerce knew they needed to partner with an e-commerce expert that could demonstrate agility, flexibility and a high level of responsiveness to their needs. They chose Wisebox because of its customer-first approach and the unique, built-in logic that enabled Chamber Market to customize varying vendor commission structures and product margins. The ease of onboarding also allowed Albertan small businesses to adopt a competitive, online digital presence in a timely, cost-effective manner. To date, the Chamber Market online platform has been rolled out in 32 communities across Alberta with another 14 communities currently onboarding.

The Alberta Chambers of Commerce has invested heavily in this project as a cornerstone of their small business growth strategy. The Chamber Market platform has enabled them to better serve B2C businesses and attract new members in that segment. Products currently being sold include food, handmade plush toys, holiday décor, original art, clothing and accessories, board games and travel consultations.

Measurable Results

With the Digital Technology Supercluster's co-investment, Wisebox accelerated product development and added functionality that enabled them to triple the speed at which their business is growing. To date, this project has enabled Wisebox to grow its team by an additional 50 people, with a revenue opportunity forecast of over \$13 million. Building on Alberta's success and network momentum, the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce also partnered with Wisebox and has begun onboarding their first five communities. Plans for 2022 include rapid expansion with more vendors in Alberta, while working with chambers in BC and other provinces before entering the US market.

Integrations with Alida, a leading consumer insight platform, and Talinity, a hire-by-referral software, positions chambers implementing Chamber Market to deliver a robust value-proposition to SMEs – helping them to hire local, sell local, and provide policy makers feedback to strengthen local competitiveness. Wisebox also estimates March 2022 as the release timeframe for a complete chamber platform version that will enable 80-percent of the smallest chambers to use Chamber Market for membership, events, affinity programs and marketplace.

We always believe in collaboration when it comes to our environmental sustainability, reducing food miles and supporting our local economy. With the funding support and strategic partnerships made through the Digital Supercluster, we were able to develop and bring the DirectFood.store product to market three times faster. We are confident that our proven technology platform puts us in a position to lead the digital-first shopping movement that was accelerated by the pandemic.

COLIN SCHMIDT, CEO OF WISEBOX SOLUTIONS INC.

Learn more about DirectFood.store at:
digitalsupercluster.ca/projects/directfood-store-securing-the-food-supply-chain/