

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023



THE  
Forum

WHERE WOMEN  
ENTREPRENEURS THRIVE

THEFORUM.CA



## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO AND BOARD CHAIR

2023 was truly a year of triumph for The Forum.

Not only did we continue to expand our established programming that functions as a lifeline for our community of women entrepreneurs, we are also very proud to have bridged even more gaps with new program offerings made possible by a growing base of supporters and our team at the Forum.

As The Forum and its community grew, so too did its vision.

Thanks to milestone funding through the Government of Canada's Women's Ecosystem Fund, we are able to continue to support all women entrepreneurs across the country, expand our tailored offerings to Black, Indigenous and women colour business owners, and reach new audiences with our bilingual program delivery.

With community at the heart of our work, we continued to be deeply accessible through our virtual programming, while also bringing back the magic of in-person gatherings. In May, we had the pleasure of connecting with more than 100 entrepreneurs from the Greater Toronto Area for an evening of knowledge-exchange and networking. The insightful event provided space for entrepreneurs to learn from and connect with one another- opening doors to opportunities for further collaboration and in-kind support.

As we listen to our community, we continue to hear that access to financial capital is one of the greatest hurdles women entrepreneurs face. We also know and hear that the social and wisdom capital women accumulate through our offerings are equally essential for their long-term prosperity, resilience, and sense of connection.

In the year ahead, we look forward to further expanding The Forum's reach and welcoming more women entrepreneurs from each province and territory to our community of champions, supporters, and ecosystem partners.

Thank you for joining us on this critical journey to support women and women-identifying entrepreneurs. Together, we look forward to celebrating the many successes to come in the years ahead.

With gratitude,

Paulina Cameron, CEO

Ingrid Leong, Board Chair



Paulina Cameron, CEO



Ingrid Leong, Board Chair



**VISION**

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**A Canada where women entrepreneurs thrive.**

**MISSION**

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**The Forum unlocks access to wisdom, financial and social capital for women entrepreneurs.**

**PURPOSE**

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**To deliver impactful community, education and mentorship programs that are designed to elevate women entrepreneurs in their unique journeys.**





## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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 Christina Anthony Chair Emeritus

The Forum is a Registered Canadian Charity:  
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## MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER

When I reflect on the 21 years of The Forum's evolution, I am amazed at the ongoing growth, impact and reach. From a small Vancouver based cohort to a truly National organization, a growth in demand of over 345% and with team members across the country.

Sustained growth like this is only possible due to the tremendous support of our committed community of champions, donors, sponsors and volunteers. Thank you for being on this ride with us for so long, and for ushering us into the future for many more years to come. The Forum is committed to continuing the work of creating radical impact, effecting institutional change and supporting Canadian women-led businesses.

**Christina Anthony,**  
 Founder + Chair Emeritus, The Forum  
 Odlum Brown Limited

# OUR 2022-2023 IMPACT



**1,612**

WOMEN SUPPORTED  
THROUGH OUR PROGRAMS



**47,000+**

COMMUNITY MEMBERS REACHED  
WITH EDUCATION, RESOURCES  
AND INSPIRATION



FROM

**237**

UNIQUE COMMUNITIES  
ACROSS 10 PROVINCES  
AND TERRITORIES

REACH

**9,700**

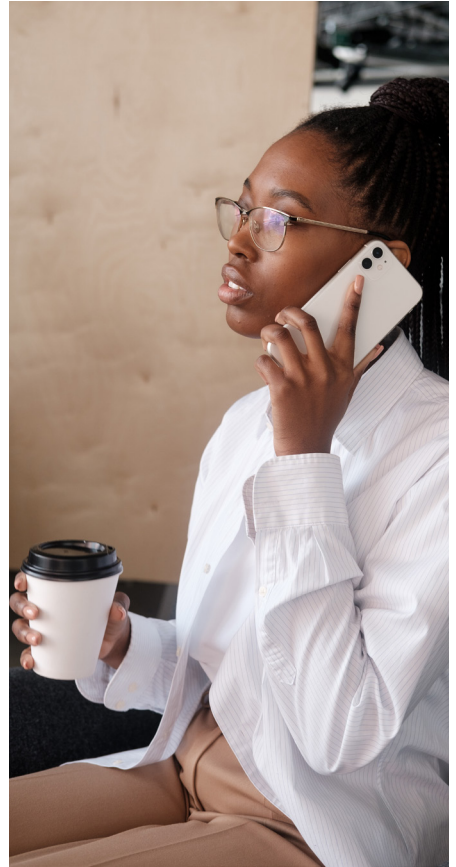
NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS

**38,000**

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

**“Over the past year,  
my business has grown  
in unimaginable ways,  
thanks to the efforts of  
The Forum to support  
women entrepreneurs  
across Canada.”**

**KIM JACOB  
ARVOREI COMMUNICATIONS GROUP**



# YEAR IN REVIEW

## THE FORUM E-SERIES PRESENTED BY RBC

We delivered two E-Series cohorts; each with 6 days of virtual education, support and inspiration reaching a national community. Participants had the opportunity to participate in live sessions or follow along as a self-paced program with recordings of the live sessions. We elevated program delivery and accessibility experience for the Spring 2023 cohort by offering workbooks and video captions in both English and French.

Many of the participants continue with 12 months of mentorship to keep the momentum going.

**379**  
WOMEN  
ENTREPRENEURS  
WERE SUPPORTED  
DURING E-SERIES

**E-SERIES FALL 2022**  
**NOVEMBER + DECEMBER 2022**

**150 participants** from a variety of ages, stages and backgrounds, representing **63 unique communities** across **10 provinces**.

**E-SERIES SPRING 2023**  
**MAY + JUNE 2023**

**229 participants**, representing **98 unique communities** across **9 provinces**.





**“E-Series has made me feel connected, inspired and encouraged. This is the type of training I’ve longed for. It’s not always about working HARD on your business, it’s understanding what to work on to generate profits.”**

AMY TUNG, I AM LOVE PROJECT  
E-SERIES FALL 2022 PARTICIPANT



**“I highly recommend enrolling in E-Series and The Forum. This transformative experience can be likened to a condensed MBA program tailored specifically for entrepreneurs. I was truly captivated by the strategic insights and invaluable networking opportunities it provided. The power of women empowering women and discovering a community of like-minded women entrepreneurs is unparalleled.”**

TONYA DICKENSON, ASYMMETRIC BY DESIGN  
E-SERIES SPRING 2023 PARTICIPANT

## WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRATEGY (WES) ECOSYSTEM FUND

In March 2023, The Forum was selected as a recipient of the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy (WES) Ecosystem Fund. The WES Ecosystem Fund aims to remove barriers to support networks and deliver the resources that women entrepreneurs need to start up, scale up and access new markets. Until March 2025, The Forum will receive funding to support four key programs that meet the critical needs women entrepreneurs have identified today.

To date, the WES Ecosystem Fund has invested over \$100M to strengthen capacity within the entrepreneurship ecosystem and close gaps in service for women entrepreneurs. We are honoured to have been selected and are looking forward to continuing our commitment to invest in the education and support of women entrepreneurs across Canada, increasing our reach in every community.



## THE EQUITY OPPORTUNITY, BY LEAP PECAUT CENTRE FOR SOCIAL IMPACT

The Forum has also been selected to participate in The Equity Opportunity, a scaling initiative driven by LEAP Pecaut Centre for Social Impact. Until December 2026, we will benefit from additional scaling and capacity support through this incredible opportunity, along with five other Canadian organizations. The cohort is made up of diverse social ventures that address the long-standing barriers that prevent women from equity-deserving groups from achieving full economic well-being.

Over the first few months of the project, we focused on four key activities: determining our scaling strategy, capacity building support, access to experts, and cohort activities. In the near term, LEAP and The Forum team will collaborate to jump-start high-priority projects around fund development, impact measurement and alumnae activation. LEAP Sector Partners will support different areas of work, such as prospecting, research & benchmarking, documentation of best practices and much more. This will greatly support us in achieving our strategic goals and objectives over the next 3 years.



**THE FORUM MENTOR PROGRAM  
PRESENTED BY  
THE SCOTIABANK WOMEN INITIATIVE®**

The Forum's Mentor Program continued to demonstrate its value and offer support to self-identified women, trans femme, and non-binary entrepreneurs across a wide variety of industries, stages of business, and backgrounds. We welcomed new entrepreneurs in the program through unique registrations, program bundles with our E-Series, Level Up, Founder's Circle, and Pitch programs, and developed partnerships with Black Entrepreneurship Alliance and ELLA at YSpace to provide mentorship options to even more participants.

We are continuing to leverage the Together mentorship platform to improve the effectiveness of our processes and quality of pairings, and have integrated regular surveys into the platform to provide participants with more touchpoints and opportunities to share feedback.

Since July 2022, we have hosted four virtual training and networking events for our Mentors and we have added the event recordings to the Together platform to be viewed at any time. In addition to these resources, we are constantly reviewing and adding relevant resources, training materials, and guides to support Mentors and Mentees throughout their mentorship and entrepreneurial journeys.

**BETWEEN 2022 AND 2023,  
WE HAD:**

**239** new registered  
**Mentees** representing  
**66** communities  
across **8** provinces.

**133** new registered  
**Mentors** from  
**7** provinces and  
**1** territory from  
**19** unique industries.



**“I had been struggling with my marketing plan for years, how and where to spend my dollars. I had listened to many sales pitches from marketing companies on how they could help me grow my business. With [my Mentor’s] help I know exactly what to do and how to go about doing it. For the first time in 10yrs I have a clear plan. It has alleviated so much stress and I hope will lead to greater sales in the next year.”**

LAURIE ALLAN-FRANKS, LA MOVIDA SEWING & DESIGN STUDIO - MENTEE

## THE SCOTIABANK WOMEN INITIATIVE MENTOR PROGRAM POWERED BY THE FORUM

The Forum entered its second year of its successful partnership with The Scotiabank Women Initiative on The Scotiabank Women Initiative Mentor Program. The program celebrated significant milestones and continues to flourish, having offered over 1000 mentorship hours to Scotiabank's women-owned and women-led small business clients.

There was a greater emphasis on providing mentorship for clients operating in the healthcare industry, such as dentistry and veterinary medicine, to ensure that women have the tools and resources they need to thrive in fields where they may be underrepresented. We look forward to deepening our relationship with The Scotiabank Women Initiative in subsequent years of The Scotiabank Women Initiative Mentor Program and continuing to offer our program management expertise as well as access to a strong community of Mentors who want to give back and support our community.

**“The biggest thing that I took away was thinking about different pathways to market our services and also which markets that I could potentially expand to. This was invaluable.”**

MENTOR



**225 new registered Mentees representing 57 communities across 9 provinces.**

**258 active pairings as of June 30, 2023.**



## THE FORUM FOUNDER'S CIRCLE

This year, The Forum launched a new program designed to provide resources and specialized advice to high-growth women entrepreneurs. Created with TD, The Forum Founder's Circle convened a cohort of women entrepreneurs from Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario over six hybrid sessions, to learn, share, and collaborate as peers navigating similar, yet varied, trajectories. Expert advisors provided personalized guidance to support the cohort in tackling challenges and identifying new avenues of growth. Between each group session, participants had access to advisors from TD and Borden Ladner Gervais (BLG) LLP for 1:1 deep dives. Shannon Pestun moderated the sessions as the inaugural Program Chair.



**“I found the information to be pertinent to exactly where our company is at in our journey. Multiple things that I didn’t even think to ask about were covered that had validity to our current situation. Having the slide deck to refer back to is really helpful to go over and be sure that I am covering all of my bases for our business.”**

ANGELA WILLARD, HARMONIC ARTS

**17 entrepreneurs,  
15 businesses.**

**100% of participants  
felt that Founder’s Circle  
increased their confidence  
to navigate their business  
growth.**

**THE FORUM LEVEL UP PROGRAM,  
PRESENTED BY  
TD AND TD INSURANCE**

This year, The Forum proudly introduced a new free 1-day program with the goal of connecting self-identified women entrepreneurs with experts and executives who shared unique industry insights and trends.

Thanks to the expertise of our partners, participants gained awareness of the most current trends and insights in: banking, insurance, legal, and the current Canadian economic climate and customer landscape, wrapping the day up with a session on building confidence in entrepreneurship.

Hosted on Zoom, attendees from across the country had access to networking opportunities and live Q&As with industry experts. After the program, they could choose to continue the momentum by reviewing the recorded sessions and engaging in 12 months of 1:1 mentorship through The Forum Mentor Program.



**“The Level Up Program is an easily digestible day that connects you to fantastic industry insiders. Getting to ask questions specific to your business in real-time is amazing. The connections you can make in this group are worth clearing the calendar for. I definitely recommend it and can’t wait to join the next one.”**

LEVEL UP 2023 PARTICIPANT

8

SPEAKERS

6

INDUSTRIES

115+

ATTENDING LIVE

8

PROVINCES

35%

PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFIED BIPOC

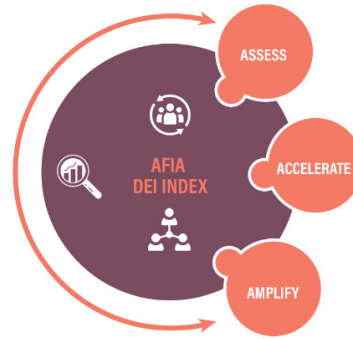
225

REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS

## AFIA DEI INDEX

### ENGAGING FUNDERS TO IGNITE WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

AFIA DEI Index is a nation-wide initiative developed by The Forum to address the barriers experienced by women and non-binary entrepreneurs in accessing the financial capital they need to succeed, especially Black and Indigenous women, Women of Colour (BIPOC women), and people with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations (2SLGBTQ+ individuals).



**AFIA = ACCELERATING FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND ACCESS** to business capital for women entrepreneurs in all their diversity.

We offer Canadian funders a dynamic package of evidence-based resources and services to assess, accelerate and amplify Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) and Reconciliation in business funding.

AFIA DEI Index is comprised of three components:

#### 01 AFIA ASSESSMENT

An online tool for funders to assess their policies, strategies, products, and services against leading practices and metrics.

#### 02 AFIA GUIDANCE

A report with a scorecard and recommendations for action provided to funders who complete the AFIA Assessment.

#### 03 AFIA TRAINING

A three-module interactive, self-paced course designed to build capacity of team members at organizations that fund entrepreneurs.

**AFIA LAUNCHED IN SEPTEMBER 2023 WITH EVENTS IN TORONTO AND VANCOUVER. THE INITIATIVE IS FUNDED BY WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY CANADA.**

**250**  
ATTENDEES AT THE  
LAUNCHES OF AFIA  
IN TORONTO AND  
VANCOUVER

**“37% of all 2SLGBTQ+ entrepreneurs (including agender, non-binary, transgender, and cisgender individuals) choose not to be public with their identity to avoid discrimination when accessing funding or services.”**

THE STATE OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN CANADA, WEKH, 2021

## WEEKLY VIRTUAL CONNECTS

Each Wednesday, we welcome self-identifying women, transfemme and non-binary entrepreneurs from across the country to join us on Zoom for an hour of community and connection. Entrepreneurs huddle together (virtually) to share their work, crowdsource resources, ask questions, talk through challenges, celebrate their wins together, and forge new connections.

This weekly peer networking hour has become a valuable experience; a safe space for entrepreneurs to freely share their 'Ask' and generously offer a 'Give' in the form of expertise or time to support one another.

Over the year, we saw 359 entrepreneurs spend their Wednesdays from 11am - 12pm PST with us to engage in conversation and gain inspiration. It has been a rewarding and gratifying part of our work; watching each entrepreneur who attends truly practice community as a verb.

**“This has become the highlight of my week. I get inspiration and drive from these women.”**

ANNETTE RICCI, DESIGN & DELIVER  
WEEKLY CONNECT PARTICIPANT



## COMMUNITY + CONNECTION EVENT IN TORONTO

We hosted our first (in a long time!) in-person community event in Toronto on May 10, 2023 at the beautiful 10th floor of the TD Tower.

We welcomed 100+ entrepreneurs from across the Greater Toronto Area for a wonderful evening of knowledge-exchange and networking.

We hosted a fireside chat with two entrepreneurs from diverse fields who are a part of our community – Rachel Bartholomew, Founder of Hyivy Health and Mehwish Panjwani, Co-Founder of QUIL. Led by our CEO, Paulina Cameron, the conversation shed light on ways to overcome entrepreneurial challenges, learnings from raising funds, building your brand and marketing your products and services.

The insightful conversation was followed by an open Q&A segment wherein entrepreneurs attending had an opportunity to talk through challenges in real-time and learn from each other. This rich exchange also opened up avenues for collaboration, resource-sharing and fostered new connections in the room. The evening wrapped up on a high note with each entrepreneur walking away with a bit more support and community to propel them forward in their entrepreneurial journeys. We look forward to hosting many more in-person gatherings to champion our community and foster connections.



## THE GIUSTRA FOUNDATION BURSARY FUND FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

We are so grateful for the continued support of The Giustra Foundation, whose generous funding seeded The Giustra Foundation Bursary Fund for Women Entrepreneurs. Over its three-year course, the Fund supported 381 women entrepreneurs, 42% of whom identified as BIPOC. The Fund provided full or partial bursaries and helped remove financial barriers to education and mentorship that exist for so many women entrepreneurs. This year's funds were granted to women from Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and the Yukon.

Read the impact stories of just a few of the recipients of The Giustra Foundation Bursary Fund for Women Entrepreneurs:

### **GUIA YAZDANI** CAMPERTUNITY

Guita is the Co-Founder and CEO of Campertunity - a platform that connects RVers to private landowners. Before receiving a bursary to participate in the E-Series program, Guita's business faced numerous challenges including limited access to capital and resources, lack of strategic direction, and disorganization on priorities. Guita also struggled with isolation as a solopreneur. Participating in E-Series helped Guita gain invaluable knowledge and access to a supportive community of like-minded women entrepreneurs providing advice, inspiration, and collaboration.



### **CAROLINE WAKEFIELD** CTRS MARKET INTELLIGENCE

Caroline is the Executive Vice President of CTRS Market Intelligence, which supports businesses across North America with research and analysis to support their strategic decision making. Caroline participated in our E-Series Fall 2022 cohort, where she learned from subject-matter experts on all things from marketing to finances, HR and market growth. Thanks to the program and this bursary, Caroline was able to apply her knowledge directly into her business, connect with her cohort peers, and gained a community "cheering squad" for her business journey.

**NATALIE MULLIN**  
FROM A FULL CUP

Natie is a Certified Wellness Educator, Trainer & Coach. She also hosts the “From a Full Cup” podcast - a mental wellness education program that teaches ambitious women to dream big. Natalie’s bursary allowed her to participate in The Forum Mentor Program, which helped her get more work done - including the “scary” things that help move her business’ needle forward. Since joining the program, she has seen an increase in new clients, a larger community of contacts, and has experienced a deep sense of feeling supported.



**SHOBNA KANNUSAMY**  
SOIRETTE COACHING  
& CONSULTING

Shobna is the Founder & Principal Coach at Soirette Coaching & Consulting. She recently transitioned from a brick and mortar to a service-based business. Shobna participated in our E-Series

program - before which she was experiencing burnout and a lack of clear boundaries between her work and personal lives. The program helped her prioritize her health and as a result has yielded benefits for her business: she has a clearer understanding of her business’ marketing and financial needs and challenges, and is making more informed decisions to set her business up for success.



**BRITTNEY ASHLEY**  
CREATIVE DYNAMICS  
VIRTUAL SERVICES

Brittney is a certified Business Coach and Imposter Syndrome Coach, and the Founder and Owner of Creative Dynamics Virtual Services. Before receiving this bursary and joining The Forum Mentor Program, Brittney struggled to maintain a clear focus on her business; time management challenges and lacking a well-defined strategy hampered her achieving her business goals. Since working with a Mentor, Brittney has learned to prioritize and execute her business goals effectively, and her business has seen substantial growth.



## THE ODLUM BROWN FORUM PITCH

In its seventh year, The Forum's Pitch program drew tremendous interest nationwide from self-identified women entrepreneurs and their supporters. This year, we introduced two days of complimentary live virtual education sessions to help all applicants learn more about the different types of capitals they could leverage to accelerate their businesses. We received 368 incredible applications from across Canada. The Community Panel chose 14 Semi-Finalists, hailing from Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario. From this group, the Community Panel then selected three ventures to advance and make their final pitch.

The Forum was proud to support Carlyn Loncaric of VodaSafe Inc., Mehrsa Raeiszadeh of MintList, and Mehwish Panjwani and Kelly Thomson of QUIL, at The Odlum Brown Forum Pitch Finale on April 27, 2023. The Finalists shared their visions with our in person and virtual audiences, and our two Moderators, Bobbie Racette and Leah Nguyen. We were delighted to award equal-value prize packages to all three Finalists. As Recipient of the Audience Vote, Carlyn Loncaric of VodaSafe received an additional prize.

# 435

WOMEN SUPPORTED FROM

# 130

UNIQUE COMMUNITIES ACROSS

# 9

PROVINCES + TERRITORIES

# 47%

IDENTIFIED AS BIWOC

# 7

COMMUNITY PANELISTS

# 14

SEMI-FINALIST MENTORS

# 2

FINALE MODERATORS



## THE ODLUM BROWN FORUM PITCH FINALE

On April 27, 2023, we hosted The Odlum Brown Forum Pitch Finale. Once again our host, Sonia Mangat, guided a sold out room through an evening of fundraising and celebration. Countdown Events transformed the ballroom at The Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, as we welcomed the community back in person, while a virtual audience watched from home earlier in the day. We raised \$880,500 for our game-changing programming.

The three Finalists, Carlyn Loncaric, Founder & CEO, VodaSafe Inc., Mehwish Panjwani and Kelly Thomson, Co-Founders, QUIL and Mehrsa Raeiszadeh, Co-Founder & COO, MintList, shared their business visions with us and each received a prize package valued at \$37,750 to fund and fast-track their business goals. The prize packages included financial, social and wisdom capital - \$10,000 for each Finalist was generously donated by Capital Sponsor Wheaton Precious Metals; services such as legal, marketing and social media were also donated

by partners. The audience also voted and selected VodaSafe Inc. to receive an additional prize package valued at \$20,000 thanks to the generosity of Capital Sponsor Wheaton Precious Metals and Community Impact Partner, Good Eggs & Co.

The Forum is so grateful to all those who gave that night. Our special thanks goes to our Activation Committee and Co-Chairs, Christina Brown and Gayla DeHart, for their passion and commitment to bringing us a night like no other!

# 800+

AUDIENCE IN PERSON AND VIRTUAL

# \$880,500

RAISED

## ACTIVATION COMMITTEE

Thank you to the Activation Committee for their tremendous energy and contributions to this year's The Odlum Brown Forum Pitch Finale.

Christina Brown (Co-Chair)  
Gayla DeHart (Co-Chair)  
Amy Carruthers  
Tara Clark  
Robyn Chisholm

Rhogene Dadashzadeh  
Jenny DeJong  
Kate Dunstan  
Jessica Green  
Soha Lavin

Katie Peardon  
Jenn Podmore  
Russell Sam Reynolds  
Candy Wang

## THE ENTREPRENEUR SHOWCASE

New this year, we hosted our inaugural Entrepreneur Showcase during the Welcome Reception of The Odlum Brown Forum Pitch Finale. Featuring 29 entrepreneurs and past program alumnae, it was an opportunity to showcase their businesses to our audience of over 800 engaged champions and supporters. This unique experience allowed us to shine a spotlight on their businesses, share firsthand the benefit of the support they've received from The Forum and directly illustrate the importance of the work we are doing.

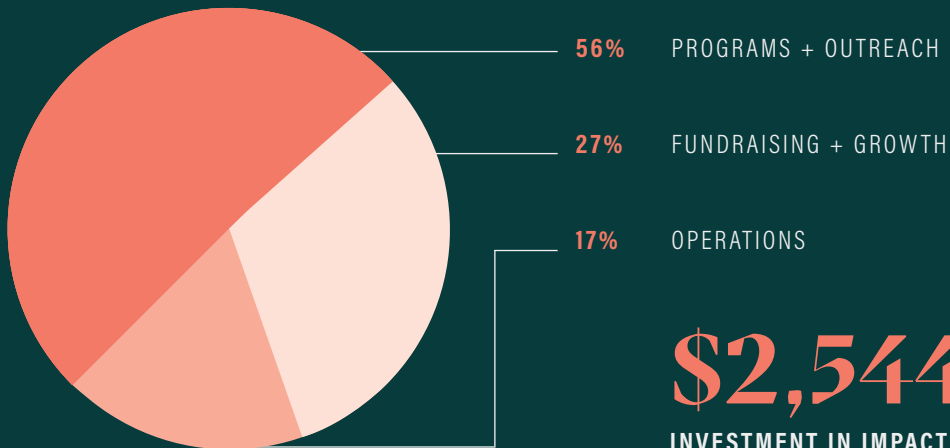
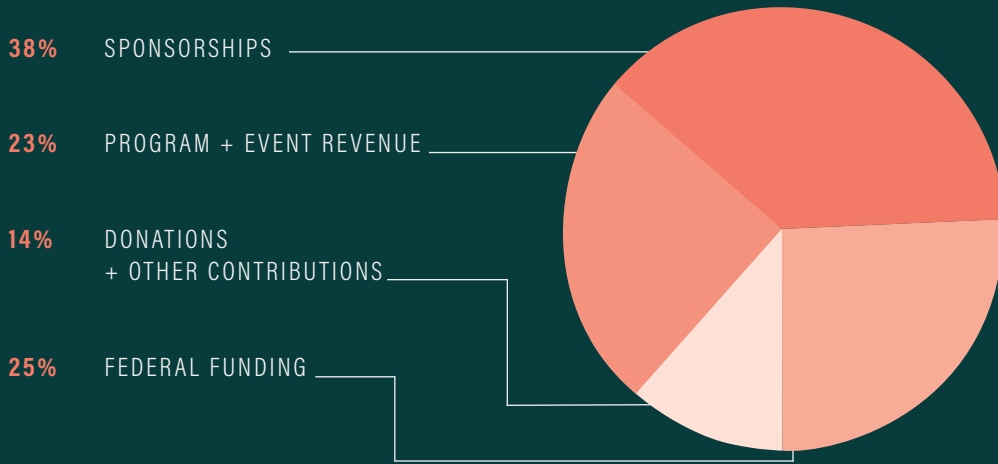


# FINANCIALS

Financial Statements audited by BDO Canada LLP.

## \$2,449,052

TOTAL REVENUE



## \$2,544,743

INVESTMENT IN IMPACT

The copy of the financial statements can be obtained on The Forum website or by emailing [info@theforum.ca](mailto:info@theforum.ca)

# OUR SPONSORS + PARTNERS

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# DONORS

The Forum is deeply grateful for the generosity of our Donors, whose contributions helped us strengthen the economy and empower women entrepreneurs across Canada to become #wildlysuccessful.

## \$50K+

The Giustra Foundation

## \$25K+

Abeir Haddad

Charlotte Faulkner

Christina & Matthew Anthony

Ms. Karen Flavelle and

Mr. Colin McTavish

## \$10K +

Charles & Eve Chang  
Foundation

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## \$5K +

BLG

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Nicola Wealth

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## \$2.5K +

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Cathy Thorpe

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## \$100 +

150 additional  
generous donors



# TEAM

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Anne Kinnear  
Anne MacKenzie  
Anne McLean  
Ariel Letterick  
Cherie Kai

Erika Thomas  
Gretchen Ferguson  
Hilary Hutchins  
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Melodie Gingras  
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Nolizwe Mhlaba







# THE Forum

WHERE WOMEN  
ENTREPRENEURS THRIVE



WHERE WOMEN  
ENTREPRENEURS THRIVE

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