Innovate for Impact

Ignite ideas, spark change, transform the Kootenays.

NEW ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

IMPACT REPORT

Fall 2025 Cohort

Community Futures East Kootenay

IMPACT TOOLBOX

OUTPUTS AT A GLANCE

6 participants total

2 cohorts (3 participants each)

16 sessions total + 1 virtual showcase)

14 hours group coaching hours (7 hours per cohort)

Advancing social entrepreneurship in the Kootenays by supporting purpose-driven innovators with the tools, training, and community to build impactful, sustainable ventures.

When local people drive community change, rural regions thrive

The Program at a Glance

The New Enterprise Incubation Program is an in-depth 5-month program that combines self-paced courses, expert coaching sessions, and a supportive cohort to help participants confidently turn their vision into a real and impactful social venture. (source)

From **October 2025 to March 2026,** six organizations from across the Kootenay region turned their ideas into actions. They now have validated business ideas, sensible financial projections, and a clear plan for measuring their social impact. We can't wait to see the impact they will make in their communities! (source)

- **Partners involved:** Community Futures East Kootenay (CFEK) helps to foster strong, resilient local economies. Engaging in Community Economic Development along with local, provincial and federal government partners, businesses, community organizations and other stakeholders, they champion economic growth and sustainability throughout their vibrant service area. (source)
- **Program Duration:** October 2025 to March 2026 (6 months)
- **Delivery method overview:** Online course & learning modules, virtual coaching live sessions
- **Courses completed:** 3 courses (How to Start a Successful Social Enterprise, Financial Feasibility Analysis for Social Enterprises, Storytelling and Marketing for Social Enterprises)
- **# of coaches involved:** 3 coaches (Alyssa Tataryn, Sarah Gumpinger, Aidan Cole)

MEET THE PARTICIPANTS

The Farm Hub is an online shop connecting consumers in Golden to local farm products conveniently delivered to your door. Our network of local growers extends to the Okanagan ensuring a robust supply of a wide variety of farm products. This enterprise exists to support local producers and increase access to local food, key pillars of a resilient food system. To ensure equitable access, our Harvest Share Coupon Program supports food insecure households and individuals with subsidized access to these local products.

KAST is building a social enterprise that helps rural organizations confidently and responsibly adopt digital tools and AI.

The Teen Chef Club is a community-based youth program model designed for organizations seeking to strengthen food literacy, support local food economies, and deliver structured, low-barrier programming for youth aged 12–18. A turn key program ready to be delivered by organizations across Canada.

The Kootenay Lake Geothermal Project is unlocking a clean, reliable energy source beneath our feet—transforming deep Earth heat into year-round power and sustainable economic opportunity for local communities. By combining advanced geoscience, strong Indigenous partnership, and a cascading "heat-first" development model, the project can deliver baseload renewable power alongside greenhouse agriculture, tourism, and local industry. This is a rare chance to establish the first geothermal energy hub of its kind in British Columbia—driving long-term energy security, jobs, and regional resilience.

The Lived Experience Circle for Community Insight (LECCI) creates structured, respectful ways for organizations to learn directly from people with lived and living experience on a wide range of community issues. LECCI offers both consultation and tailored training so partners can engage ethically, consistently, and with care.

The Sound Cellar is a music ecosystem, supporting artists and inspiring audiences. We offer music lessons, intimate performances, rehearsal space, and recording services.

IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES

The post-program feedback survey provided clear evidence of program success and impact. The survey was completed by all 6 participants.

PROGRAM VALUE & OVERALL SATISFACTION

Metric	% Scoring 4 (Agree/Useful) or 5 (Strongly Agree/Very Useful)
Online course usefulness	Very Useful - 4/6 participants (67%)
Live Session Usefulness	Very useful - 3/6 participants (50%) Fairly useful - 3/6 participants (50%)
Coaching Usefulness	Very useful - 3/6 participants (50%) Fairly useful - 3/6 participants (50%)
Gained Valuable Knowledge/Skills	Strongly Agree - 2/6 participants (33%) Agree - 4/6 participants (67%)
Equipped to Apply Knowledge/Skills	Strongly Agree - 4/6 participants (67%) Agree - 2/6 participants (33%)

NUMBERS AND PROJECTIONS

What is the estimated amount ($) you have invested in the community through your project? (ex: new office space, new tools, etc.)	$480,000 total (2 participants)
What is the estimated amount ($) you are projected to invest in the community through your project in the next year? (ex: new office space, new tools, etc.)	$110,000 total (2 participants)
How much have you raised through sales revenue and grants currently?	$565,000 total (2 participants)
How much are you projected to raise through sales revenue and grants in the next year?	$210,000 total (3 participants)
How many jobs did your social enterprise create or maintain (including yourself)?	4 jobs total (2 participants)
How many jobs is your social enterprise projected to create or maintain (including yourself) in the next year?	14 jobs total (3 participants)

PROGRAM FEEDBACK

What did you enjoy most? (participant response summary)
Participants enjoyed the live sessions, consistently highlighting them as a powerful tool for peer connection, mutual sharing, and maintaining momentum through the coursework. The expert coaching provided by Aidan and Alyssa was a major standout, with participants praising their firm, knowledgeable, and highly constructive feedback. Additionally, respondents valued the tangible elements of the program, such as the detailed training modules and practical templates, which empowered them with the vocabulary needed to differentiate their social enterprises and effectively develop their ideas.

Were you faced with any challenges? (participant response summary)
Participants primarily struggled with time constraints, often balancing the intensive program workload "off the side of their desk" alongside personal emergencies or the demanding daily operations of running a non-profit. Many expressed a desire for a slower pace—such as an extra week between sessions—or additional one-on-one coaching time to dive deeper into their specific projects. While some faced minor hurdles like technical formatting issues or feeling occasionally unprepared for varied homework assignments, participants ultimately viewed these challenges as a necessary and valuable push that successfully forced them to recontextualize their thinking and brought their social enterprises closer to reality.

Do you have any general feedback? (participant response summary)
Participants provided constructive feedback focused on improving the program's structure, relevance, and depth. A major theme was the desire for more tailored support, such as individualized 1:1 coaching to navigate one-size-fits-all components like the budgeting and business modeling templates. Respondents also suggested structural adjustments, including introducing all coaches early on for better project context, combining cohorts for broader peer learning, and reordering the curriculum so that foundational topics like marketing and product definition come earlier. Finally, participants expressed a strong need for the program to meet them where they are—whether that means offering more complex materials for advanced ventures or adding specialized, practical modules on the legal, tax, and registration requirements unique to setting up a social enterprise.

Will you continue growing your social enterprise after the program? (participant response summary)

The vast majority of participants responded with an enthusiastic and definitive "Yes," indicating a strong, near-unanimous commitment to continuing the growth of their social enterprises after the program, with only a single individual remaining unsure of their next steps.

Do you currently have a clear plan for your next steps after completing this program? (participant response summary)

The majority of participants feel confident moving forward, with four out of six stating they have a clear plan for their next steps after completing the program. Of the remaining respondents, one has a general idea but requires additional support to define the specifics, while another remains entirely unsure of their next steps.

Would you be interested in receiving a follow-up check-in or learning more about post-program coaching/support services? (participant response summary)

There is an overwhelmingly high interest in continued engagement, with five out of six participants explicitly requesting to be contacted with more information regarding follow-up check-ins or post-program coaching and support services. Only a single respondent declined, indicating that they are currently all set.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

The Power of Cohort and Coaching

The live sessions, peer-to-peer networking, and constructive, firm feedback from coaches were the highest-rated elements of the program.

The Time Crunch is Real

Balancing an intensive program "off the side of a desk" while running existing non-profits or navigating personal emergencies was the primary challenge for almost every participant.

One Size Does Not Fit All

Generic financial, budgeting, and business modeling templates fell flat because the social enterprise models within the cohort were vastly different from one another and not all participants' ventures were at the same level of readiness.

Desire for Tactical/Legal Rigor

Participants coming from business backgrounds felt the program lacked crucial, social-enterprise-specific legal, structural, and tax-related decision-making tools.

Strong Momentum, High Demand for Support:

Post-program momentum is incredibly high; nearly all participants are moving forward with their ventures (83% of participants) and explicitly requested follow-up check-ins or ongoing coaching (83% of participants).

WHAT'S NEXT

1:1 Coaching Hours

Allocate dedicated 1:1 "office hours" with coaches, specifically paired with the complex budgeting and business modeling modules. This allows coaches to meet participants where they are and customize templates to their specific operational models.

Avoid Holiday Interruptions

Restructure the program's timeline to ensure it runs entirely before or after the December holiday window. Future cohorts should be scheduled to conclude by late November or launch fresh in the new year to protect cohort momentum and avoid awkward mid-program pauses.

Introduce an SE Legal & Structural Module

Expand the curriculum to include a practical module focused on social enterprise governance. This should include decision-making frameworks for entity registration, tax structures, legal obligations, and board assembly.

Optimize the Curricular Sequence

Re-evaluate the flow of the program so that foundational concepts like market definition, product scope, and customer discovery are introduced earlier, giving participants a stronger base before moving into complex business planning.

Launch a Post-Program Support Pipeline

Capitalize on the 83% demand for continued support by establishing a formal "Next Steps" follow-up framework. This could include a 30-day post-program check-in, an alumni network structure, or an option to transition into a dedicated post-program coaching package.

VOICES FROM THE PROGRAM

"The Impact Toolbox social enterprise incubator cohort was an immensely valuable framework through which to organize our ideas, language, business model and enterprise concepts. Key plans, timelines and strategies came together clearly for us through this program. The coaching was high quality, on-point and wonderfully helpful.
- **Chrystel Vultier, The Farm Hub**

This was an incredible program and a truly valuable experience. I learned so much throughout, from practical tools to new ways of thinking about building and sustaining a social enterprise. What stood out most was the opportunity to come together with others across the Kootenays, each working on different social enterprise ideas, and to learn from one another. The peer learning, combined with the guidance and insight from the coaches, made the experience even more impactful. A huge thank you to everyone involved in creating and supporting this program. I would highly recommend it to anyone looking to start or grow a social enterprise.
- Priya Biswas, KAST

We came into this with a 5 year program that we knew well and were ready to evolve. The program helped us identify, structure and clarify our Social Enterprise so we can evolve and share this proven program in other communities with confidence. The coaching sessions were helpful and constructive and it was great having a small group of peers to grow alongside.
- Mandi Lunan, Teen Chef Club Canada

The New Enterprise Program was very well organized and delivered by a talented group of professionals. Our project started with a narrow view of what was possible however as the program unfolded, this view expanded into something we are excited to be a part of. The program forced us to rethink some of our base assumptions and consider what else was possible. The experience gained and the new insights created through this program have been transformative - Thank you!
- Anonymous

This was an excellent program! The learning modules are easy to follow and provide just enough detail to understand the key concepts needed for building a successful social enterprise. I was able to adapt the learning content to my unique social enterprise. I was supported throughout the process and am grateful for this experience. I highly recommend this program for anyone interested in exploring a social enterprise idea!
- Jayme Jones, Lived Experience Circle for Community Insight

It was really inspiring to connect with other Kootenay peers embarking on their own social entrepreneurship journeys.
- Robyn Goldsmith, The Sound Cellar

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Community Futures East Kootenay

Community Futures East Kootenay (CFEK) is a non-profit that supports entrepreneurs and local development in BC's East Kootenay region. They offer business loans, training, and lead regional economic initiatives.

IMPACT TOOLBOX

Impact Toolbox (ITB) is a British Columbia-based social enterprise and registered charity that equips youth with the training and resources to turn their passion for social change into impactful and sustainable enterprises.