

ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022



THE
Forum

WHERE WOMEN
ENTREPRENEURS THRIVE

THEFORUM.CA



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO AND BOARD CHAIR

2022 was another year of uncertainty, and The Forum chose to embrace optimism and create certainty. The Forum championed women-identifying entrepreneurs at all stages of growth, while also identifying more ways to uplift them.

As entrepreneurs continued to face challenges brought on by the pandemic, we launched programs with partners at no cost to participants to help them get back on track. Not only did these programs tackle the needs of both new entrepreneurs and brands farther-down-the-path, but the content was delivered - for the first time - in both French and English. This allowed the Forum to connect meaningfully with participants across all provinces and territories and expand our vision of accessibility.

To bring awareness to the economic and social impacts that women business owners have, we campaigned alongside WeBC for November 19 to officially be proclaimed as Women's Entrepreneurship Day in British Columbia. We celebrated this day of recognition alongside our community as we commemorated the trials and triumphs of women entrepreneurs.

In our mission to topple the barriers that prevent women business leaders from achieving success, we were able to begin the development of the AFIA DEI Certification after being selected to receive funding from the Feminist Response and Recovery Fund administered by the WAGE Ministry. This certification is the very first of its kind and addresses the systemic barriers faced by women entrepreneurs when accessing financial capital and we trust that the AFIA DEI Certification will play a significant role in improving the experiences of entrepreneurs from underrepresented communities.

After a hiatus from in-person programming and events, we were also thrilled to reconnect with our community both in Vancouver, and nationally, for The Odlum Brown Forum Pitch Finale. We welcomed more than 2,000 participants to cheer on the Finalists simultaneously by hosting both an in-person event and a virtual show. Through these events we were able to raise \$675,000 to fund life-changing opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

The coming year is full of opportunity - thanks to our Team and Board's unwavering commitment to possibility - and we're so thankful to stand with Canadian women as they build impactful businesses and dismantle the barriers that stand in their paths. Together, we're heading towards a more equitable future.

Thank you for supporting us on this journey,

Val Litwin, Board Chair
Paulina Cameron, CEO



ABOUT US

The Forum is a Canadian charity that energizes, educates, mentors, and connects self-identified women entrepreneurs across Canada – promoting strengthened economies and thriving communities.

PURPOSE

To help women entrepreneurs access the education, resources and community they need to thrive in business.





BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Val Litwin, Chair

Ingrid Leong, InBC, Vice-Chair

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Amelia Thorn, Ancient Nutrition

Joanna Track, Venturepark

Christina Anthony, Founder + Chair Emeritus,

Odlum Brown Limited

The Forum is a Registered Canadian Charity:
861056646RR0001

MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER

For 20 years, The Forum's vision has been to see women entrepreneurs in Canada thrive. I am so proud that The Forum has continued to grow its program offerings, as well as support women from all across Canada in a year of rebuilding and transitions.

Thanks to the tremendous support of our committed community of champions, donors, sponsors and volunteers, The Forum is ready for another 20 years of creating radical impact and supporting Canadian women-led businesses. I thank you all and hope you continue joining us in the evolution of this legacy.

Christina Anthony,

Founder + Chair Emeritus, The Forum
Odlum Brown Limited

OUR 2021-2022 IMPACT



1,676

WOMEN SUPPORTED
THROUGH OUR PROGRAMS



44,000+

COMMUNITY MEMBERS REACHED
WITH EDUCATION, RESOURCES
AND INSPIRATION



FROM

219

UNIQUE COMMUNITIES
ACROSS 13 PROVINCES
AND TERRITORIES

REACH

9,200

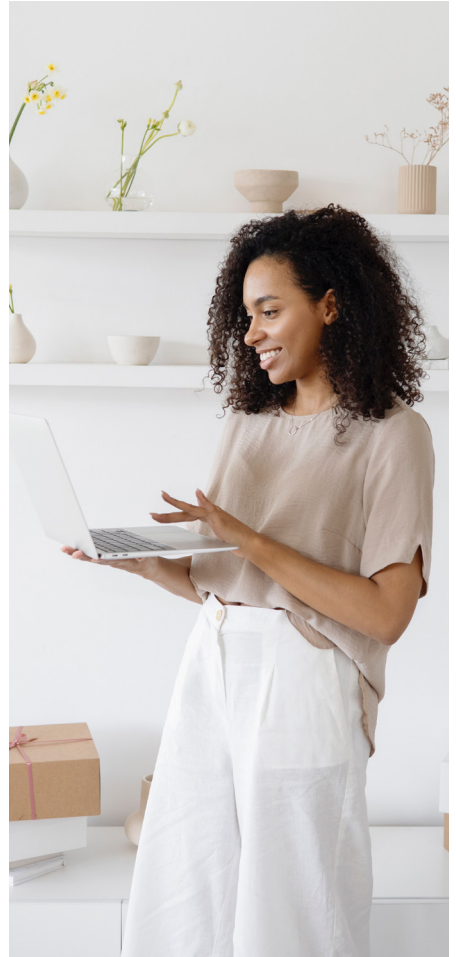
NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS

34,000

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

“I now feel very confident in accessing a community of women entrepreneurs to support me along my growth and I feel very confident in growing my business to meet my goals.”

**KELLY ACHESON
ADVENTURE ENGINE INC.**



YEAR IN REVIEW

THE FORUM E-SERIES PRESENTED BY RBC

We hosted two virtual E-Series cohorts with 6 days of live virtual education, reaching a national community providing education, inspiration and life-changing connections. All components of the program were hosted online using Zoom, and content was recorded and made available to the participants through the private learning platform (Thinkific). This year, we provided 80+ total hours of education to participants, through a combined 96+ live and pre-recorded sessions. Many of the participants continued with 12 months of mentorship to keep the momentum going.

**E-SERIES FALL 2021
NOVEMBER 2021**

88 women from a variety of ages, stages and backgrounds, representing 43 unique communities across 5 provinces.

**E-SERIES SPRING 2022
MAY + JUNE 2022**

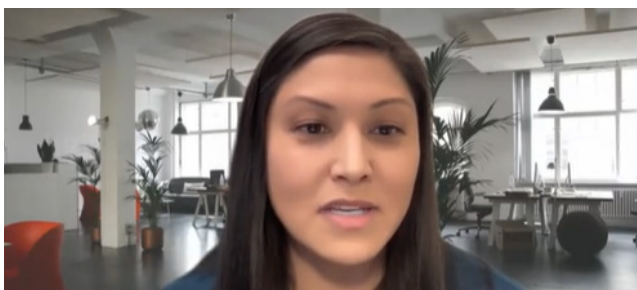
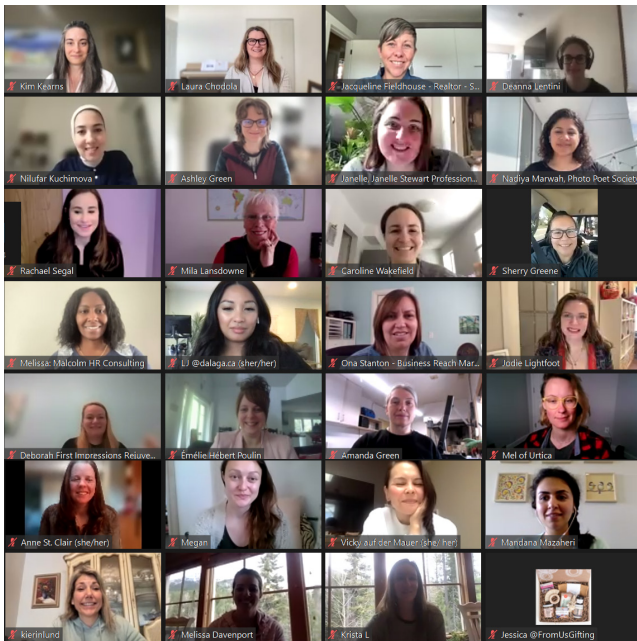
120 participants, representing 57 unique communities across 7 provinces.

208
SELF-IDENTIFIED
WOMEN
ENTREPRENEURS
WERE SUPPORTED
DURING E-SERIES



“Dignity intact, love, support, so grateful. I’ve been trying to get a [business] going for 12 years. One of your values [is] ‘leave no woman behind’ and that is the embodiment of this program.”

E-SERIES SPRING 2022 PARTICIPANT



“It was such a learning experience and so enriching to meet incredible entrepreneurs across the country whom I never thought I could have met otherwise. Through sponsorship and amazing supporters - the fact that E-Series is completely financially accessible to everyone is incredible. I have been involved with The Forum for 2 months and it’s already changed my vision and approach with the business and it has expanded my network. Thank you for making community and learning so accessible.”

E-SERIES SPRING 2022 PARTICIPANT

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

The Forum's Mentor Program continued to demonstrate its value and offer support for women entrepreneurs this year, especially in this economic climate. Mentorship is needed now more than ever, and we are there to answer the call. We welcomed new entrepreneurs in the program through unique registrations and program bundles, such as E-Series and Growth Series. We have continued to leverage the Together mentorship platform to improve the effectiveness of our processes and quality of pairings. In the spirit of community building, we've started hosting quarterly virtual events in 2022 to provide additional training, resources and networking opportunities to our Mentors.

**BETWEEN JULY 1, 2021 AND
JUNE 30, 2022, WE HAD:**

**221 new registered
Mentees representing
76 communities
across 7 provinces.**

311 active pairings.

**194 new registered
Mentors from
8 provinces.**

“I wouldn't be where I am today without The Forum Mentor Program. I have had two different long-term mentors who listened, shared their observations, knowledge, expertise, and connections. Through the ups and downs, they were a constant light of encouragement.” MENTEE



THE SCOTIABANK WOMEN INITIATIVE® MENTOR PROGRAM POWERED BY THE FORUM

In partnership with The Scotiabank Women Initiative®, The Forum launched The Scotiabank Women Initiative® Mentor Program. Similar to The Forum Mentor Program, this partnership provides opportunities for women entrepreneurs who are Scotiabank Women Initiative program participants to connect with experienced business leaders and seasoned entrepreneurs through 1:1 mentorship. The program enables The Forum to support up to 600 more women over two years, as well as offer opportunities to our Mentors.

**“I felt seen, heard, and understood.
Clear communication, and
I feel we are a good fit.
Thank you.”**

MENTOR



**“[My Mentor] and I have a
great start for working together
to meet my business goals.
[My Mentor] has a strong business
background that I believe will
support me well to be successful!”**

MENTEE



AFIA DEI CERTIFICATION

The Forum is collaborating with funders and diverse entrepreneur groups to develop the first national certification to address the systemic barriers that women entrepreneurs face when accessing business funding. AFIA DEI Certification seeks to recognize, inspire and accelerate change in how funders serve women entrepreneurs in all their diversity, to create better experiences in the funding process and greater access to business capital. Increasing inclusion of Black women, Indigenous women, and women of colour as well as members of LGBTQ2S+ communities, is emphasized. The initiative is funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada and will launch in September 2023.



42%, of new women-owned businesses are created and owned by **Black women**.

Indigenous women entrepreneurs are growing at **twice the rate** of their non-Indigenous counterparts.

16 Working Group members: 7 banks, 1 credit union, 3 national women's enterprise organizations, 2 diverse entrepreneur groups, 1 national angel investor association, and 2 DEI and education experts.

"This groundbreaking certification program sets the bar for more inclusive and equitable lending. It is a powerful resource for financial institutions and other lenders looking to operationalize ED&I best practices and better serve diverse women entrepreneurs. Ultimately, it is a meaningful step towards a more socially inclusive economy."

COMMITTEE MEMBER

**THE FORUM GROWTH SERIES:
SHIFT AND RESTO**

In partnership with Uber Canada, we proudly introduced The Forum Growth Series: Shift and Resto, free half day virtual programs hosted in February 2022 and offered in English and French. These programs enabled women entrepreneurs across Canada to bring their business visions to life.

Our goal was to support 500 women entrepreneurs to access the resources and community they needed to thrive in business, including live programming, additional courses and an opportunity to receive 12 months of 1:1 mentorship.

This program was specifically designed for both live session attendance and self paced learning, in order to meet the needs of every entrepreneur joining.



2

LANGUAGES

30

SPEAKERS

520

REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS

155

ENTREPRENEURS LIVE

7

PROVINCES

60+

ACCESSED THE ONLINE COURSE

438
WOMEN
WEEKLY CONNECTS

WEEKLY VIRTUAL CONNECTS

Each week, we brought together women entrepreneurs from across the country to provide a safer space to ask questions, offer support and network with one another.

Over the year, we saw 438 women spend their Wednesdays from 11am - 12pm PST with us to ask questions, celebrate their wins together, engage in conversation and offer a “give” to share resources and make further connections. This weekly networking call has truly become a valuable experience; watching each participant gain inspiration and embrace practicing community as a verb has been rewarding for us.

WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP DAY

We celebrated Women's Entrepreneurship Day with our community across Canada, while also marking a significant step forward in British Columbia—where for the first time, November 19, 2021 was officially proclaimed.

In partnership with WeBC (previously Women's Enterprise Centre), The Forum was presented with the proclamation by Minister of Finance, Selina Robinson. This was followed by a panel discussion featuring Barbora Samieian of Field and Social, Allisha Heidt of Chickpeace Zero Waste Refillery and Tessa McKoughlin of KWENCH.



THE FORUM SERIES FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN TOURISM

On January 13 and 20, 2022, The Forum hosted The Forum Series for Women Entrepreneurs in Tourism, in partnership with the Vancouver, Coast & Mountains Tourism Region (managed by Destination BC). The series consisted of 1.5 days of programming for BC-based, self-identified women entrepreneurs in the tourism industry. In total, the series welcomed 75 participants representing 41 different communities from across the province, with 40 (54%) of the participants coming from the Vancouver, Coast & Mountains Tourism Region and the remainder throughout BC. 17 guest speakers contributed to delivering this impactful series.

“Community!! I loved the whole event – I have been feeling so lost, anxious, alone and overwhelmed in the past few months. Between Covid and Mother nature, my company which guides hikes has taken a huge hit. I hold on but it’s just stressful. This event and the self-identified ladies who took part helped me remember that we have each other to lean on. Sisterhood is pretty amazing!”

“So glad that I was able to be part of the course! It was definitely one of the most authentic and helpful courses I have participated in. Thank you for your leadership Paulina, and team.”

MENTAL HEALTH RESILIENCE PROGRAM: GROW AND THRIVE

Thanks to the support of the TELUS Vancouver Community Board, we relaunched this free self-paced, online course which helps women entrepreneurs learn how to plan for adversity, pivot during challenging times, and develop a resilient, confident mindset when it comes to business ownership.

In total 113 women entrepreneurs accessed this self-paced program to gain the tools they need to support a resilient mindset, business and leadership approach and financial strategy.

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. This year alone, the Fund supported 147 women entrepreneurs - of whom 50% identified as Black, Indigenous or Women of Colour - providing either full or partial bursaries and removing the financial barrier to access needed education and mentorship. This year's funds were granted to women from six provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec and the Yukon.

SANDRA POPESCU FRIID INNOVATIONS INC.

Sandra Popescu is the Founder of Friid Innovations, a patented ergonomic multi-use mousepad. By participating in E-Series Fall 2021, Spring 2022 and by being paired with a mentor, Sandra has gained a sense of direction and clarity around various aspects of the business, leading to her officially launching the business. Immersing herself into the programs also allowed her to continually build her network of supporters; important for a growing business.



The three-year, \$150,000 fund was created in 2020 to support women who – due to financial difficulties or belonging to a marginalised group – would otherwise not be able to access The Forum's programs.

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

INGRID BROUSSILLON GRIOTTES POLYGLOTTES

Ingrid Broussillon is the Founder & Owner of Griottes Polyglottes, a French and English instruction program based in Vancouver. She received a bursary to participate in both our Mentor Program and E-Series Spring 2022 cohort. Ingrid is grateful for the opportunity to learn from program speakers, mentors, and fellow participants, as well as The Forum community.



One of her challenges coming into the program was social media, particularly her low engagement and lack of a communications plan. With her mentor's guidance, Ingrid was able to increase her social media presence by 70%. Through E-Series, she also expanded her network to include English-speaking women entrepreneurs, which in turn will open up doors for further growth.



ELAINE TAN COMEAU
EASY DAISIES

Elaine Tan Comeau is the Founder & CEO of Easy Daysies, a magnetic daily scheduler for kids and adults based in Vancouver. Elaine participated in our E-Series Fall 2021 cohort and Mentor Program. For years, she hoped to attend E-Series but a tight cash flow and lack of time made it not possible. In Fall 2021, Elaine knew the time was right but needed the financial support to remove her barrier to access The Forum's programs. Thanks to this bursary, she filled knowledge gaps and joined a community of women entrepreneurs across the country.

JENNIFER SIRIPONG MANDEL
ROOT AND SEED

Jennifer Siripong Mandel is the Co-Founder of Root & Seed, a Toronto-based tech company that helps people protect their heritage through stories, recipes and more. Since participating in E-Series and Mentor programs, Root & Seed has launched their digital product to the public, brought their technology in house, launched two more feature releases, and plans to add monetization by the start of 2023. They are also releasing the 4th season of their podcast in September 2022 and have been Finalists in two Pitch contests shortly after the program for Startup Canada's 2020 Canadian Export Challenge, eventually winning the competition in the startup category. She and the team are now focusing their efforts on industrial applications in areas of safety, commercial fishing and emergency lighting.



ASHLEY SINGLA
RAISING HUMANITY

Ashley Singla is the Founder of Raising Humanity, where she helps families reconnect to their true, playful nature. Ashley participated in both E-Series Spring 2022 and the Mentor Program, expanding her network and community locally and across the country as a result. She also credits the programs for reaffirming her intuition in a variety of ways, and taking faster and clearer action in turn.



THE FORUM PITCH

Now in its sixth year, The Forum Pitch program received a hugely positive response both in applications to the program and interest in supporting our women entrepreneurs. We received 313 incredible applications from across Canada. An Alumnae Committee helped select 30 Quarter-Finalists, and then The Community Panel chose 12 Semi-Finalists to move forward. Those Semi-Finalists hailed from six provinces: BC, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec, and Saskatchewan.

The Community Panel then faced the hard task of selecting three final ventures to move and make their final pitch.

The Forum was proud to support Ashwaq Al-Hashedi of INViCARE, Brianna Blaney and Aria Hahn of Pocketed, and Yasemin Emory and Whitney Geller of Jems, at The Odium Brown Forum Pitch Finale on April 28, 2022. The Finalists shared their visions with our in person and virtual audiences, and our two Moderators, Judy Brooks and Shaina Azad. The audience then voted live to select The Forum Pitch Winner 2022 Winner, Brianna Blaney and Aria Hahn of Pocketed.

362

WOMEN SUPPORTED
FROM

100

UNIQUE COMMUNITIES
ACROSS

10

PROVINCES + TERRITORIES

50%

IDENTIFIED AS BIWOC

APPLICANTS' AGES RANGE
BETWEEN 22 AND 66

6

COMMUNITY PANELISTS

12

SEMI-FINALIST MENTORS

2

FINALE MODERATORS

3

MENTORS

THE ODLUM BROWN FORUM PITCH FINALE

On April 28, 2022, we hosted The Odlum Brown Forum Pitch Finale - our 20th year of gathering to celebrate and fundraise, this time back in person AND virtually! Hosted by Sonia Mangat, and with entertainment from Jill Barber, and auctioneer Paul Florez-Taylor, it was an event like no other. CountDown Events transformed the ballroom at The Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, as we welcomed community back in person after a year's hiatus, and simultaneously broadcasted to a virtual audience across the country. We raised \$675,000 for our game-changing programming. Brianna Blaney and Aria Hahn of Pocketed won the \$25,000 cash prize, and were joined on stage by finalists Ashwaq Al-Hashedi (INViCARE) and Yasemin Emory and Whitney Geller (Jems). The Forum is so grateful to all those who gave that night. Our special thanks goes to our Activation Committee and Co-Chairs, Gayla DeHart and Ravy Mehroke, for their passion in diving right in with us to bring everyone back together.

2000+

AUDIENCE IN PERSON AND VIRTUAL

\$675,000

RAISED



“What an INCREDIBLE evening - everyone I spoke to was blown away by the energy in the room, the three finalists and the ability to return to IRL with such a bang! For those of us lucky enough to just enjoy the Gala, it was such an energizing night and I can only imagine the months and months of work The Forum’s team put in to make this all happen,”

FINALE ATTENDEE

ACTIVATION COMMITTEE

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

Gayla DeHart (Co-Chair)

Ravy Mehroke (Co-Chair)

Christina Brown

Amy Carruthers

Tara Clark

Jenny DeJong

Soha Lavin

Mike McKee

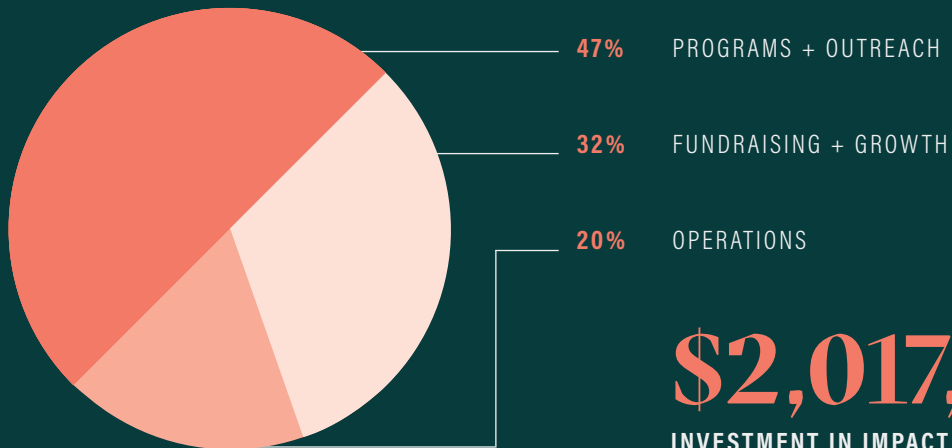
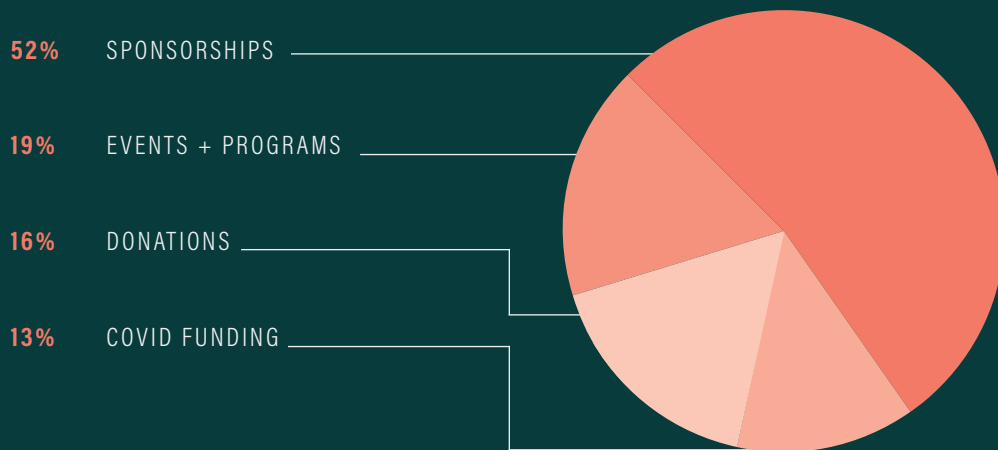
Amelia Thorn

FINANCIALS

Financial Statements audited by BDO Canada LLP.

\$1,872,086

TOTAL REVENUE



\$2,017,519

INVESTMENT IN IMPACT

The copy of the financial statements can be obtained on The Forum website or by emailing info@theforum.ca

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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
Kathryn Dunstan Family
Foundation

\$25K+

Christina and Matthew Anthony
Ms. Karen Flavelle and
Mr. Colin McTavish

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**The Forum is a
Canadian charity that
energizes, educates,
mentors, and connects
self-identified women
entrepreneurs across
Canada – promoting
strengthened
economies and
thriving communities.**



**THE
Forum**

**WHERE WOMEN
ENTREPRENEURS THRIVE**

THEFORUM.CA

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