



Be Local: Insights, Impact, and Emerging Directions



Reflections from 2025

Be Local's story has always been rooted in creating meaningful impact by supporting local, values-driven businesses. 2025 was a landmark year in this work, marked by many important pivots and notable successes, including the expansion of programmatic work, a sharpened focus on local businesses with employees, and closer alignment with host organization, [Momentum](#), and its income first approach to poverty reduction.

Together, these shifts have brought great clarity. As we move into 2026 and beyond, we turn the page to a new chapter, positioning Be Local to deepen its impact and respond more effectively to the needs of community.

Be Local extends sincere gratitude to our community, partners, and supporters who make this possible. We invite you to reflect on your alignment and contributions to this work as you read on. What follows is a recounting of where we've been, what we've learned, and what we're stepping into in 2026.

Characters in our Story

The Be Local team is comprised of a dedicated group of community and business lovers who operate as staff, contractors, and volunteers. The 2025 team included **Diana Frost, Brian Hill, Philip Lozano, Meredith Perich, Jenna Walsh, and Bronwyn Williams.**

What We're Celebrating?

Convening Community

Be Local has always held the role of convener and host of community as a core pillar of impact, and that continued into 2025. There are no values-driven businesses without values-driven entrepreneurs. Be Local fosters a community where entrepreneurs find inspiration, support, and drive to continue their important work.

Gathering with Purpose

Be Local hosted three events in 2025 that brought businesses together to connect, inspire one another, and spark new partnerships.

01

Art and Economics at
the Opera Centre

Mar 20, 2025

02

Community Networking at
Establishment Brewing

May 22, 2025

03

Festive Cheer at Born
Brewing

Nov 25, 2025



Be Local has an incredible entrepreneurial atmosphere that inspires creativity and collaboration. I love meeting and hearing from local business owners; there's always something new to learn. The networking, feedback, and shared problem-solving make it an invaluable community for any business.

Nelson Berlin, BluPlanet Recycling



94%

of attendees said being involved in Be Local events **helped them learn or take steps towards social/environmental impact.**





Programs that Drive Impact

Living Wage Pilot

Four Calgary-based cleaning companies were supported to develop a strategy to become a living wage employer through education, peer learning, and tailored advisory support.



Outcome

- 3 of 4 participants are now certified as living wage providers, and the 4th made meaningful progress towards this goal by increasing wages.
- 50 employees have received a pay increase, with 40 of those now being paid a living wage!



I was reflecting back on my revenues, and we had jumped 40%. I think it was multiple factors helping me with that, but I give a lot of the credit to this program.

Program Participant



Impact Sandbox

Four Calgary-based companies participated in Impact Sandbox, a program designed to support entrepreneurs to identify an impact goal in a cohort of supportive peers.



Outcome

- All participants developed or began developing a Theory of Change model to guide their impact work.
- Every participant took at least one concrete action toward implementing their goal.



This program really helped me cement my desire to be committed to building and operating a social enterprise focused on the quality of the lives of my team, the wellbeing of the planet while being profitable.

Program Participant



Social Venture Institute: Alberta



From Oct 2-4th, 75 changemakers, entrepreneurs, and community leaders from across Alberta gathered at Métis Crossing for three days of connection, reflection, and inspired problem-solving. The gathering was anchored by powerful keynote speeches from Tonya Surman (CEO, Centre for Social Innovation) and Karina Birch (Owner, Rocky Mountain Soap Co.), and featured case studies, peer-coaching, workshops, and other intentionally designed opportunities to connect and move meaningful work forward.



Outcome

Attendees estimated that their revenue in 2026 would increase by 20% because of SVI: Alberta

The estimated total revenue impact of learning, connecting, and inspiration from SVI: Alberta was \$3.9 million

Attendees gave SVI: Alberta an average overall rating of 9.2/10



One of the most transformational experiences of my professional career.

2025 Attendee



What Comes Next

The Next Chapter

As Be Local turns the page to 2026, our direction is grounded in the learnings, insights, and feedback gathered throughout 2025. In the next phase of our story, we are prioritizing:

Good Local Jobs

Centring our work around good local jobs and an [income-first strategy](#), with fair and reliable wages as a foundational lever for poverty reduction.

Employer Focus

Focusing our efforts to work primarily with local Calgary businesses with employees, recognizing that employers play a critical role in shaping job quality, income stability, and advancing inclusive workplace conditions.



This work will be strengthened through partnerships. Be Local, alongside [Vibrant Communities Calgary](#) (stewards of Calgary's poverty reduction strategy) and the [Alberta Living Wage Network](#) (who provides certification for employers), have established a formal agreement to coordinate efforts, enhance awareness and support more businesses to become certified living wage providers in Calgary.

Our Flagship Offerings in 2026

Living Wage Project

Supports aspiring living wage employers to develop and implement a strategy to get them living wage certified. Two industry specific cohorts will be offered in 2026: one open to breweries and one to cleaning companies.

SVI: Alberta Lite

A Calgary-centred offering of SVI: Alberta, meant to keep connections strong in alternating years. SVI: Alberta Lite will be delivered Fall 2026, with the full program running again in 2027.



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