

2024-2025 Annual Report

We Open Doors to Opportunity



This report has been designed to meet WCAG 2.0 standards and guidelines, albeit with some limitations. To provide suggestions on how we can enhance this report, please send your feedback to Info@OpenDoorGroup.org.

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Territory Acknowledgement

The work of Open Door Group takes place across British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario — the homelands of over 500 distinct Indigenous nations and cultures. Our home office is located on the ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples. We extend our gratitude and respect to these Nations for their ongoing stewardship of the land since time immemorial.

A Note about Language

We prioritize using plain language to ensure this annual report is clear and easy to understand. We recognize that language around disability is always evolving, and different people prefer different terms. To respect these diverse preferences, this plan uses both person-first and identity-first language.

Person-first language puts the individual before their disability, such as "person with a disability". This approach emphasizes that a disability is just one part of who they are.

Identity-first language places the disability first, such as "disabled person". This reflects the belief that disability is an important and inseparable part of a person's identity.

When communicating directly with someone, we recognize that the best practice is to use the terminology they prefer.

Our Thanks

We thank everyone who contributed to the development of this report. Your insights, data, and lived experiences helped bring our programs and impact to life. **Some names have been changed to protect people's privacy, and all stories were shared with permission.** We're grateful for your support and for helping us share these important experiences.

Who We Are

We believe employment is an opportunity to build one's purpose, sense of value, and community connection. Our mission is opening doors to well-being through sustainable and meaningful employment for all.

Open Door Group is a CARF-accredited, not-for-profit organization and registered charity that serves people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. We are dedicated to helping people improve their overall well-being and achieve sustainable employment. Our holistic approach is built around your unique needs, providing integrated wellness, skills development, and vocational services. Whether you're a first-time job seeker, navigating a career change, overcoming health challenges, or an employer building an inclusive workplace—we're here to support you.

At the heart of our work are people and relationships. We are committed to building genuine, collaborative connections with our clients, employers, and partners. This focus on strong relationships helps us create opportunities and foster inclusive communities where everyone can thrive.

Our Vision

A world where all people have access to opportunities that give them purpose, prosperity, and belonging.

Our Mission

Opening doors to well-being through sustainable and meaningful employment for all.

Our Values



Customer Experience: Every interaction across all teams is guided by quality, care, and an understanding of the customer journey.



Impact Through Results: We focus on meaningful outcomes and hold ourselves accountable to align actions with our words.



Accessibility, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion: We are committed to ongoing learning and growth to serve and employ inclusively.



Message From The CEO & Chair



Alona Puehse

(she/her)

Chief Executive Officer

This past year has been transformative for Open Door Group. It's been a year of growth, learning, and expanded reach in service of our foundational belief: that every individual has the right and ability to succeed, and meaningful employment fosters purpose, prosperity, and belonging.

We've embraced change, from redesigning our service delivery model to expanding our service footprint, as an opportunity to deepen our impact, guided by our mission and the evolving needs of the communities we serve.



Clare Waters

(she/her)

Chair of the Board of Directors

One of the year's most significant milestones was welcoming Ethos Career Management Group into our organization. Based on Vancouver Island and with a service scope spanning British Columbia and Alberta, Ethos shares our values and long-standing commitment to inclusive, community-based employment services. This strategic integration unites two strong teams with complementary expertise in people, systems, and service delivery. Together, under a shared mission, we have expanded access to high-quality, personalized employment supports, advanced technology-enabled services, and strengthened our presence in communities where needs are growing.

At the same time, we continued to implement our redesigned, integrated service delivery model, a transformation in how we connect people to the right supports at the right time. This approach streamlines access, tailors services to individual needs, and removes barriers to navigating multiple service streams and complex systems, resulting in a more seamless experience and stronger employment outcomes for those we serve.

Message From The CEO & Chair

Looking ahead, we are excited to open our first two physical service locations in Alberta. In Calgary, our **WorkABility program** will support people with disabilities in their employment journey. In Red Deer, we will deliver our innovative **GROW project**, supporting people who experience chronic unemployment and are at high risk of homelessness. These openings mark a pivotal step in extending the reach of our community-based impact across provinces.

Through all this growth, our focus remains clear: people first. Sustainable employment outcomes are built through strong partnerships with communities, government, and businesses; the dedication and insight of our staff and service delivery partners; and inclusive service design that responds to the individual journeys of each person we serve while adapting to a changing labour market. The future of work is evolving, and we are committed to evolving with it - always centering the people we serve.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our staff; to the individuals who trust us to support their journey; to our Board of Directors; and to our funders, employer partners, and community collaborators. More than ever, it is by working together that we will build pathways to opportunity and shape a future where everyone can thrive.

With gratitude,



Alona Puehse (she/her)

Chief Executive Officer



Clare Waters (she/her)

Chair of the Board of Directors



Our Impact

We believe employment is an opportunity to build one's purpose, sense of value, and community connection. Our mission is opening doors to well-being through sustainable and meaningful employment for all.

1,198



Open Door Group clients achieved employment in 2024-2025.

536



people completed employment skill training to support employment readiness and enhance their prospects for employment.

32%



of our survey employees identified as persons with disabilities in the Pledge to Measure 2025 survey.



As a person with autism, I have found meaningful employment at Open Door Group, where I truly value the supportive team and the people I work with. The environment here allows me to thrive and feel appreciated for who I am.

Natalie Beanland (she/her)
Administrative Assistant

2,500+

employers across Canada partner with us to meet workforce needs and build more diverse, inclusive, and accessible workplaces.

192

inclusive employers received training from Canadian Partners in Workforce Innovation (CAN WiN) to build confidence in hiring and retaining employees with disabilities.

220+

employers in BC used the free Accessible Employers portal to improve workplace accessibility.

 **617**

individuals accessed Thrive's leisure and recreation services, receiving mental health support while fostering well-being.

 **90%**

participants reported that Thrive helped them connect with leisure, recreation, and education opportunities, fostering a stronger sense of community belonging.

 **17,144**

pounds of produce were harvested by Gardengate participants to give back to the Kamloops community.



Each program I participated in through Open Door Group contributed in different ways—helping me build confidence, manage my mental health challenges more proactively, and develop life skills and self-acceptance. When you're surrounded by people who believe in you, you begin to believe in yourself.

Mal H. (he/him)
Thrive program participant

Expanding Our Impact

We're excited to come together with **ETHOS Career Management Group**. By uniting over 75 years of employment services experience with ETHOS' strengths in technology, self-employment, and entrepreneurship, we're stronger together. This partnership is about more than services — it's about people. Together, we're creating inclusive, innovative supports that help individuals thrive, empower employers, and build stronger, more resilient communities.

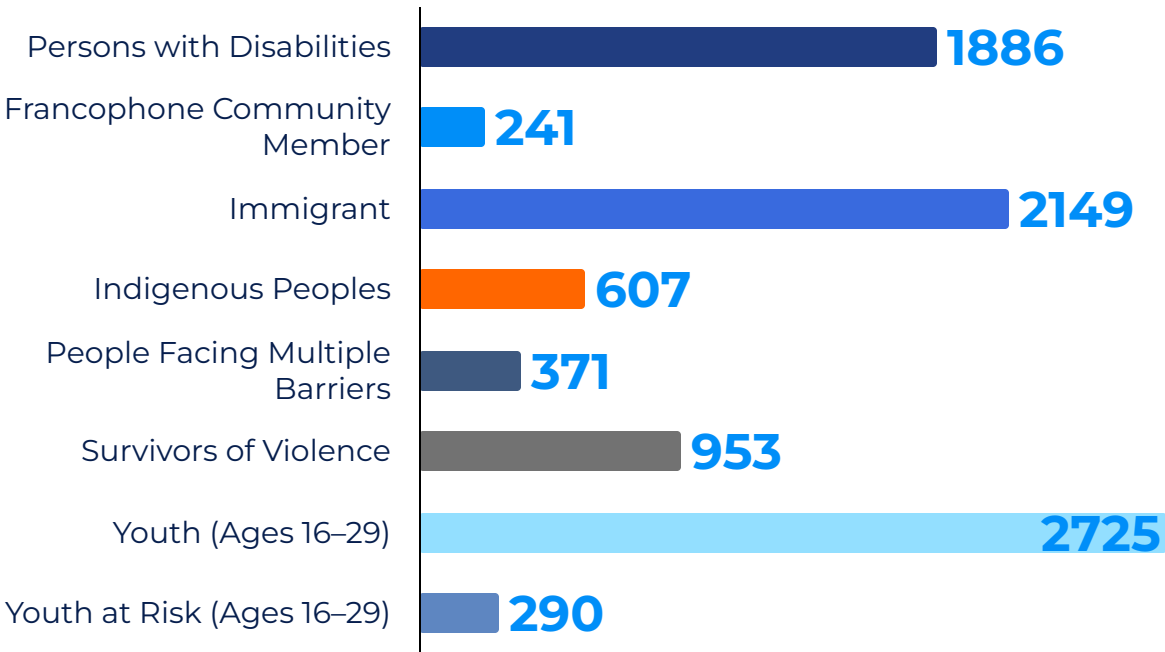


In 2025, we're opening our first service locations in Alberta! In Calgary, the WorkABility program will empower people with disabilities to find meaningful employment, while in Red Deer, the GROW project will provide vital support for individuals facing chronic unemployment and at risk of homelessness.

Employment and Training Services

WorkBC Employment Service

In 2024–2025, WorkBC Vancouver City Centre, Sea to Sky, and Kamloops-Thompson served a total of 8,880 clients. Youth (ages 16–29) and immigrants represent a significant portion of this population, with 2,725 youth and 2,149 immigrants accessing services, highlighting the importance of programs tailored to first-time job seekers and newcomers to the Canadian labour market. Clients with disabilities (1,886) also show strong demand for specialized employment support.



I am extremely grateful for the support I received from WorkBC-Kamloops centre in finding employment. The team is always approachable, professional, and committed to meeting clients where they are with honesty and clarity. Their guidance and encouragement helped me navigate challenges and regain confidence in my job search. I felt supported without my disabilities being seen as a barrier, and I was given a safe space to express concerns without judgment.

E.M (she/her) – Client at WorkBC centre Kamloops-Thompson

WorkBC is funded by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.

Opportunities Fund Support Service

158 persons with disabilities accessed the financial support service through Opportunities Fund to gain resources, training, and employment skills in 2024. STRIDES (Solution-focused, Training, and Recruitment promoting Inclusive and Diverse Employment Success) supports individuals with disabilities in their journey towards employment and self-employment. STRIDES is currently offered in the Lower Mainland, Okanagan, Thompson, and Kootenay regions including remote areas where employment resources might be limited.

This service is funded by Employment and Social Development Canada's Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities.

Employment Training Service

411 individuals successfully completed Jobs In Demand training. The service is delivered in Sechelt, Kamloops, Kelowna, and Vancouver and helps participants cultivate relevant skills and gain work experience in high-demand industries.

This service is funded by the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills.



When Erik connected with Open Door Group's employment training services, he aimed to build confidence, workplace skills, and strengthen his mental well-being. Despite personal challenges, including a serious family health crisis, he remained engaged in his training and secured a job at a busy Kelowna resort, balancing work, training, and family responsibilities.

"I had personal challenges while the services were going on, but I remained positive," Erik shared. "I'm proud that I got to meet new people, including the staff. I'm grateful for their support when I needed time away."

Through coaching, mentoring, and skills development, Erik advanced from steward to food preparation, applying his new skills and confidence every day. "My mental health is improving and helping my family. I'm off the old rocky trail and into an open area now," he added. Today, Erik is building momentum at work and at home, creating a more stable and fulfilling future—one step at a time.



Erik (he/him)
Jobs In Demand participant

Wellness, Vocational, and Community Connection Services

Thrive Leisure and Recreation Service

In 2024, 617 people accessed Thrive services to support their mental health and well-being. Thrive offers a safe and welcoming space for anyone facing mental health barriers, providing dedicated guidance and opportunities for personal growth. Participants engage in meaningful community activities and receive support to enhance their overall wellness, preparing them to achieve personal goals and pursue sustainable, fulfilling employment.

Thrive is funded by Vancouver Coastal Health.



Visit from the Governor General of Canada

In February 2024, our wellness service team was deeply honoured to welcome Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada, to Open Door Group as part of the western stop of her Mental Health Learning and Listening tour. The team did an incredible job preparing for and hosting the visit. Radka Prihodova (she/her), our Wellness and Rehabilitation Manager, shared:

Governor General of Canada Visits Thrive: Event Photos



Such an incredible day! The clients in the art room did wonderfully, including the peer facilitator. Many shared how easy and enjoyable it was to speak with Their Excellencies. They had the opportunity to ask questions and engage in a friendly, open conversation about mental health—highlighting the importance of talking openly about a topic that is often stigmatized, while also prioritizing self-care. Several clients spoke about the value of Thrive in their mental health journey, noting that being treated as participants rather than patients provides a refreshing break from the ongoing challenges of frequent medical appointments.

Radka Prihodova (she/her), Wellness and Rehabilitation Manager

Peer Support Worker Pilot Project

The Thrive Peer Support Worker Pilot Project has created lasting impact for participants, clients, and community partners. Peers gained skills and confidence, Thrive clients benefited from peer-led programs, and many participants secured and sustained employment soon after training.

Since launch, graduates have shown strong growth in peer support skills, transferable abilities, and job readiness. In February 2025, 17 peers began the 12-week training and work experience. To date, 65% of graduates have found work in mental health or disability services—demonstrating the project’s success in preparing peers for meaningful employment.

Specialized Vocational Employment Services

Through WorkBC and Community Living BC (CLBC) contracts, Open Door Group provides a range of Specialized Vocational Employment Services. Specialist teams, including Vocational Consultants, provide expertise in disability employment best practices, helping to build capacity across all employment services, supporting meaningful outcomes for persons with disabilities.

One such service, Customized Employment, ensures meaningful matches between clients and employers that lead to lasting success. This flexible, individualized model helps clients build routines, tools, relationships, and community connections - supporting them to reach their employment goals while gaining confidence and a sense of belonging. Last year, 185 people accessed these services across the Lower Mainland, Sunshine Coast, Squamish, Merritt, Kamloops, and Chase.

Community Connection Services

Through our CLBC contracts in Kamloops and Chase, we offer Community Connection Services for individuals who want to explore work but first need opportunities to connect with their community, build friendships, and learn new skills.

Through these services, 28 clients increased their confidence, community connections, and employability by taking part in community-based activities tailored to their interests—such as art and cooking classes, volunteering, and joining local events. These experiences also foster independence and lasting social connections.

By focusing on connection, growth, and inclusion, Community Connection Services provide a strong foundation for participants to take their next steps toward employment when they are ready.



Working with Open Door Group helped me learn about myself while receiving support navigating systems and emotions. The timely guidance helped me connect with employment that works for me and provided hope and encouragement for the future. I recommend anyone unsure about their next steps to reach out for support.

A.J (she/them),
Open Door Group client

Gardengate Horticulture Service

In 2024, Gardengate harvested 17,144 pounds of fresh produce, supported 56 participants, and benefited from 5,716 volunteer hours contributed by 14 dedicated volunteers. As part of Open Door Group, Gardengate provides a healing space for individuals living with addictions or mental health conditions, supporting our mission to empower people of all abilities to achieve well-being and sustainable employment.

As we enter 2025, we celebrate 25 years of Gardengate, a cornerstone of the Kamloops community that has empowered over 1,500 individuals on their mental health journeys and fostered a sense of well-being. Together with our participants, volunteers, and team, we continue to contribute an average of 18,000 pounds of fresh produce annually to support local food security.

Gardengate is funded by BC Interior Health.



Watch the video of [Gardengate: Celebrating 25 Years of Cultivating Wellness, Sustainability, and Community Impact](#)



Gardengate team members harvesting produce photo



Cheryl came to Gardengate facing challenges with isolation, communication, and confidence, and she wanted to rebuild her work skills. Living with generalized anxiety disorder, even leaving her home could trigger panic attacks. At Gardengate, she engaged in cooking, gardening, carpentry, and other tasks, focusing on completing projects, improving communication, and reconnecting with herself.

"I contributed! I socialized—that was a big thing. Some days I was anxious, but I was chatting with everyone," Cheryl shared. She built trusting relationships with co-workers, enjoyed moments of laughter, and gained confidence interacting with others outside the program.

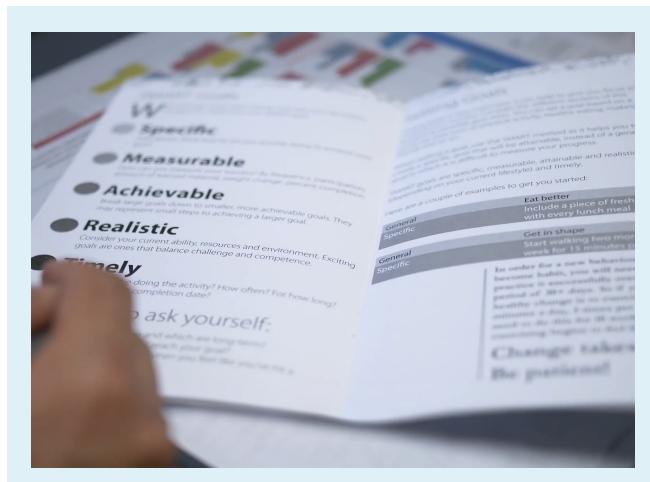
Through these experiences, Cheryl strengthened her wellness, developed resilience, and discovered a love for art and flowers. Preparing to move with her family, she now plans to start a business incorporating this passion, carrying forward the skills, confidence, and self-belief she cultivated at Gardengate.

Cheryl N. (she/her), Gardengate participant

Inclusive and Accessible Workplace Services for Employers

Accessible Employers

Accessible Employers, part of Open Door Group's Inclusive Employment Services Division, helps Canadian organizations become accessible, inclusive, and equitable workplaces. Founded by business leaders and rooted in community networks, we provide practical tools, resources, and guidance to advance disability inclusion and accessibility in the workplace.



This initiative is proudly supported by the Disability Supports for Employment Fund and the Vancouver Foundation.

 [AccessibleEmployers.ca](https://www.accessibleemployers.ca)

350+



employers, 29 of which are new employers, have joined the Accessible Employers Network, collectively representing over 15,000 employees across BC.

220+



employers utilized the free online portal and resources to strengthen accessibility in their workplaces.



Accessible Employers' online courses were incorporated into BCAA's DEI e-learning catalogue to provide leaders and team members with the competence and confidence to advance disability inclusion and accessibility in their respective environments. Courses like these enable us to scale important knowledge more efficiently, positively impacting the inclusivity of our recruitment and retention practices across the organization.

Emily Dietrich (she/her) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Program Manager at BCAA

Pledge to Measure

Launched in 2021 by Accessible Employers, Pledge to Measure (PTM) is a structured, user-friendly survey that enables organizations to report on disability inclusion through employee and senior leader self-disclosure, track progress on workplace accessibility, and celebrate year-over-year successes while driving industry-wide change.

The start of the 2025 reporting period marks a significant milestone as PTM expands nationally. In 2024, 55 employers participated, representing 94,208 employees in British Columbia. Of these, 68,267 employees responded to the survey, with 11,232 employees and 543 senior leaders self-identifying as having a disability, highlighting the growing impact and reach of the initiative in promoting inclusion and accessibility across workplaces.

In 2025, 94 Open Door Group employees participated in the Pledge, with 32% self-identifying as persons with disabilities.

 PledgeToMeasure.org

55



employers participated in the 2024 Pledge to Measure, representing 94,208 employees in British Columbia.

94,208



employees across British Columbia were represented by employers participating in Pledge to Measure 2024.

11,232



surveyed employees self-identified as having a disability.

543



surveyed senior leaders self-identified as having a disability.



We joined the Pledge to Measure because we want to be part of the movement that is removing the stigma around openly discussing and disclosing disability.

Noah Senecal-Junkeer (he/him),
Co-Founder and Team Lead, Easy
Surf Collective Corp.

Canadian Partners in Workforce Innovation (CAN WiN)

CAN WiN helps employers meet workforce needs by connecting job seekers with disabilities to accessible employers across British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario.

In 2024, a total of 209 employers accessed CAN WiN training and consulting services to enhance their inclusive hiring strategies and build more diverse and accessible workplaces. Of these, 35 employers successfully hired one or more employees who are persons with disabilities.

CAN WiN is funded by Employment and Social Development Canada's Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities.

 CanadianPartnersWin.ca

Untapped Accessibility

Untapped Accessibility (UA) is a certified social enterprise that generates revenue to support the Open Door Social Services Society, enabling the non-profit to advance its mission of fostering well-being for people with disabilities through sustainable, meaningful employment.

UA equips organizations across Canada with the tools and expertise to move beyond compliance and build truly inclusive environments. By drawing on the knowledge and experience of its accessibility experts, UA helps organizations strengthen their capacity to create workplaces where everyone can thrive. To date, UA has partnered with more than 180 clients nationwide, guided 15 organizations in developing their first accessibility plans, and supported nearly a dozen in establishing dedicated accessibility committees.

Over 4,300 people have joined UA-led workshops to build awareness and address barriers for clients and employees with disabilities. A highlight from the past year is UA's free e-learning course, Creating Effective Accessibility Committees in BC, developed with Disability Alliance BC. The course offers tailored streams for committee members and staff, reinforcing knowledge of the Accessible BC Act and best practices for inclusive committees.

 UntappedAccessibility.ca

”

They used examples from our own services to help us think about different types of barriers and how to build more flexibility into the way we do things. Everyone was so engaged and the room was buzzing! We're planning to use the framework in an upcoming leadership meeting to empower our management team to address accessibility in their own departments.”

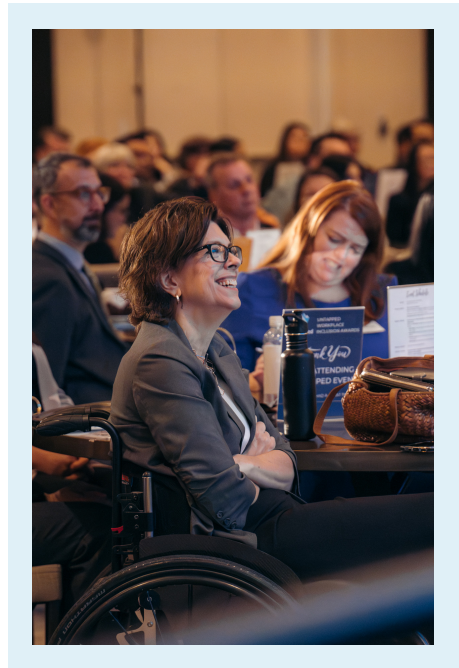
The District of Squamish

”

Partnering with Untapped has been incredibly rewarding. Their expertise and commitment to understanding our needs made a real difference, challenging us to think more deeply about supporting our students. Our collaboration was both impactful and a highly valuable use of time.

Joshua Mitchell (he/him)
Associate Vice President of
Student Affairs at KPU

Untapped Workplace Inclusion Awards 2024



Untapped Awards 2024 event photo

The Untapped Workplace Inclusion Awards 2024 celebrated its 11th anniversary on September 19th at PARQ Vancouver. The event honoured BC businesses and individuals who were leading the way in workplace equity, accessibility, and inclusion.

The celebration highlighted 82 outstanding nominations and welcomed over 250 guests from across BC, including business leaders, service providers, government representatives, industry experts, and dedicated advocates. Together, they celebrated the significant progress made in advancing disability inclusion in the workplace and the remarkable achievements driving positive change.



Watch the video of [Untapped Workplace Inclusion Awards Event Highlight](#)

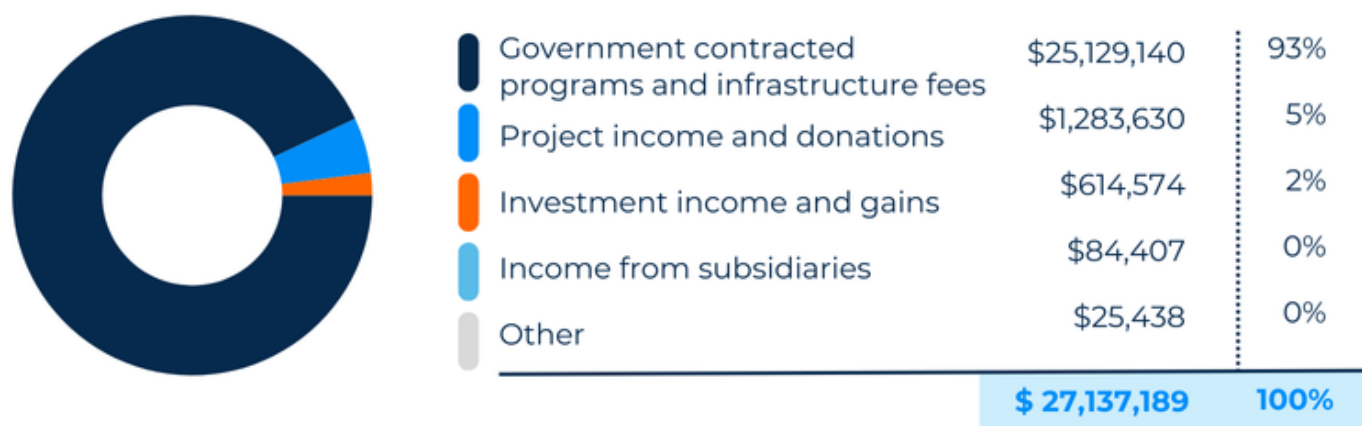
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Overall, the Untapped Awards event exceeded my expectations in every aspect – from the choice of venue to the quality of food and the excellence of the presentations. It was a truly memorable day that celebrated untapped talent in a way that was both enjoyable and interesting. I want to extend my gratitude to the entire event team for their hard work and dedication in coordinating such a fantastic event. I look forward to future events organized by your team and anticipate more remarkable experiences.

Raminder Bahl (she/her)
Assistant Program Manager, Back in Motion.

Financial Overview

Revenue – Year End March 31, 2025 How We Were Funded



Expenses – Year End March 31, 2025 How We Used Our Funding



*Note: Audited financial statements are available upon request.

Locations



Thrive-Vancouver

300-1338 West Broadway,
Vancouver, BC.
Phone: 604-334-6372.



Vancouver Burrard

900 – 1200 Burrard St.,
Vancouver, BC.
Phone: 604-334-6372.



Vancouver West Pender

200 – 250 West Pender
St., Vancouver, BC.
Phone: 604-334-6372.



Vancouver East Hastings

134 E Hastings St.,
Vancouver, BC.
Phone: 604-872-0770.



Chase and District

822B Shuswap Ave.,
Chase, BC.
Phone: 1-800-763-1681.



Gardengate-Kamloops

915 Southill St.,
Kamloops, BC.
Phone: 250-554-9453.



Sechelt

101 – 5530 Wharf Ave.,
Sechelt, BC.
Phone: 604-885-3351.



Squamish

302 – 37989 Cleveland
Ave., Squamish, BC.
Phone: 604-639-1743.



Barriere

5 – 4480 Barriere Town
Rd., Barriere, BC.
Phone: 250-672-0036.



Clearwater

100 – 240 Park Dr.,
Clearwater, BC.
Phone: 250-674-2928.



Kamloops North Shore

795 Tranquille Rd.,
Kamloops, BC.
Phone: 250-377-3670.



Kamloops South Shore

210 – 450 Lansdowne St.,
Kamloops, BC.
Phone: 250-377-3670.

Keep in Touch



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