

Enterprising Change: 2015 Ontario Social Enterprise Survey Highlights

Purpose

The purpose of this survey is to provide a snapshot-in-time profile of this province's social enterprise sector, in order to increase awareness and inform actions to support its development.

This survey builds on previous research that the CCEDNet conducted in 2012, titled [Inspiring Innovation](#). It also contributes to the national profile being created through similar surveys which have been conducted across the country to develop a better understanding of a national social entrepreneurial movement within the Canada. Specifically, the research captures key societal and financial dimensions of the social enterprise sector by highlighting the size, scope, and nature of their activities. The survey of social enterprises in Ontario was conducted in the summer of 2015, and respondents were asked to report on their activities during their previous operating period in 2014.

Community Partners

This profile and the final report were created by staff of the Canadian CED Network in Ontario and MaRS Centre for Impact Investing with Peter R Elson, Mount Royal University and Peter V Hall, Simon Fraser University and support by CLSEW-OISE/UofT and CEPC-Georgian College. Financial support was received from these organizations and the Government of Ontario, the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Government of Canada. The authors thank these supporters and all those who participated in the survey.

The Government of Ontario states that "a social enterprise is an organization that uses business strategies to maximize its social or environmental impact". This survey is unique in that it is the first in Canada to include for-profit social enterprises as well as many nonprofit child care and housing providers. The findings from this survey are based on the participation of 597 respondents representing 1,271 entities.



Community Impact

Ontario's Social Enterprises...

Have Economic Impact

In 2014, Ontario's 428 responding SEs earned at least \$489 million in total revenues, 78% of this came from the sale of goods and services.

Are Well Established

Almost three-quarters of responding social enterprise are 10 years or older, with over half operating for more than 20 years.

Address Employment Barriers

Almost half of nonprofit respondents assist low income populations and one-fifth specifically train, employ or provide services to people living with physical, psychiatric or intellectual disabilities

Create Jobs

Responding SEs employed a total of at least 14,000 people and paid out a total of at least \$252 million in wages and salaries.

Work With Diverse Communities

Nearly half of nonprofit and one-quarter of for-profit responding SEs work with people with low incomes. About two-fifths of nonprofits work with youth, women and families.

Work Locally

The majority of Ontario's responding SEs operate at the local/neighbourhood, city/town and regional levels.

Are Developing New Enterprises

66% of nonprofit SEs with a poverty focus began less than three years ago, as did 57% of all responding for-profit SEs.

Fight Poverty

Nearly half (45%) of nonprofit SEs surveyed have a poverty focus. This is more common among younger social enterprises.

Key Findings

Ontario's Social Enterprises...

Are Distinctive in Francophone Communities

Francophone respondents are more likely to identify with a cultural purpose and there are a higher percentage of them in rural communities.

Operate Under a Range of Legal Structures

42% of nonprofit respondents identify as co-operatives and 48% as registered charities. 19% of for-profit respondents identify with another legal structure (original IP, B Corp etc).

Differ in Rural and Urban Contexts

Rural respondents are more likely to operate as farmers' markets and in arts and culture, while urban SEs are more likely to focus on employment development and housing.

Engage Volunteers

Responding SEs engage at least 25,000 volunteers, an average of 60 each, with nonprofit respondents engaging almost four times as many on average as for-profits.

Are Financially Sustainable

Over three-quarters of nonprofit respondents reported breaking even in 2014, while just over half of for-profit respondents broke even in that year.

Balance Multiple Purposes

The majority of responding SEs (85%) identify with a social purpose. Over a third Nonprofit respondents identify with having a cultural or environmental purpose.

Operate Across A Range Of Industries

Ontario's responding SEs are active in diverse sectors ranging from health and social services to trade, finance and food and tourism; more for-profits in professional services and health and social services while more nonprofit in trade and finance, accommodation, food and tourism and real estate

Want Practical Support

Respondents identify educational and training as very helpful. Nonprofits prefer this online or in-person through workshops, while for-profits prefer it as in-person coaching.



Key Findings

Ontario's Social Enterprises...

Have Diverse Revenue Sources

Common sources of potential revenue growth identified by all responding social enterprises are profits/surplus and fundraising, followed by government and non-government grants.

Succesfully Support Disability Communities

20 % of nonprofit respondents specifically train, employ or provide services to people living with physical, psychiatric or intellectual disabilities and their average sales revenue is twice that of other SEs .

Plan To Grow

56% percent of all responding SEs consider business revenue growth as a very important part of their strategic plans over the next two years.

Are Willing to Use Loans

68% of for-profit respondents secured loans in 2014. Their primary sources were private individuals (22%), banks (19%) and corporations (12%) .

Are Hesitant To Use Loans

Only 25% of nonprofit respondents report receiving loans in 2014, although almost half of those over 40 years of age did take loans. Banks and credit unions were their primary sources.

Have Human And Financial Resource Challenges

Human resources were identified by 42% responding nonprofits as a moderate or significant challenge. Access to external capital was similarly identified by both nonprofits (53%)and for-profits (81%) .

Protect The Environment

Almost half of for-profit respondents report having an environmental purpose as do 34% on nonprofit respondents

Are Developing The Labour Market

Responding Ontario social enterprises trained at least 56,700 people in 2014, an average of 115 each. Childcare centers each trained an average 308 people.

