

Lillooet Area Library Association
Social Enterprise Research Project

Final Report



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1.0 Introduction

The goal of this report is to summarize the findings of a six month-long research project conducted by the Lillooet Area Library Association (LALA). The research project set out to identify three business opportunities in Lillooet that could be adapted to the social enterprise model. It also aimed to identify barriers keeping people with low literacy skills from getting involved in the workforce and going back to school. Once the barriers were identified, the project explored ways to address these barriers.

45% of British Columbians aged 16 to 65 have difficulty with daily living tasks because of their low literacy skills.¹ Improving their reading, writing and numeracy skills can improve their chances of finding work and staying employed. It can also boost confidence, health and community engagement, which can benefit the community as a whole.

LALA embarked on this project with the goal of creating an adult literacy program that will provide its participants with a supportive work experience in which literacy training is fully integrated. This will allow the participants to earn a wage while they learn. Social enterprises that provide employment to people with multiple barriers, while still showing a profit, are cropping up everywhere in the world and provide great inspiration. This report will showcase some local success stories, as well as examples of social enterprises similar to the one we envision.

Throughout the research process, we have made it our priority to consult with the Lillooet community. This was accomplished through a series of surveys, a focus group meeting and an open house. The information gathered through these methods guided our decision making process as we chose three business opportunities to focus on and research further. The results of the surveys, focus group and open house are included in this report under sections 7, 8 and 9.

2.0 Defining Terms

2.1 Social Enterprise

According to the BC Centre for Social Enterprise, social enterprises are “revenue-generating businesses with a twist. Whether operated by a non-profit organization or by a for-profit company, a social enterprise has two goals: to achieve social, cultural, community economic and/or environmental outcomes; and, to earn revenue.”²

Specifically, when the term social enterprise is used in this report, it refers to a business operated by a non-profit organization with the goal of employing people with low literacy skills and creating a revenue stream to help fund adult literacy programming.

2.2 Work Integration Social Enterprise

A work integration Social Enterprise (WISE) is “a type of social enterprise that focuses on improving employment prospects for those furthest from the labour market through a wider range of work-based opportunities.” Its core mission is “the integration through work of disadvantaged people.”³

2.3 Barrier

In the context of this report, the term “barrier” means an obstacle, real or imagined, making it hard or impossible for individuals to reach their goals.

The Literacy Foundation’s website lists these common barriers keeping people from participating in literacy programs:⁴

- Problems concerning management of the programs offered and accessibility, such as a resource-person who does not call back, long waiting lists or inconvenient schedules;
- Family constraints and imperatives;
- Individuals’ own disposition, in line with past learning experiences (e.g., doing badly at school);
- Pessimistic outlook and low self-esteem;
- Lack of confidence in their ability to learn;
- Lack of money (precarious situation, barely enough money for basic needs);
- Schedule conflict with paid job;
- Distance from training site;
- Concerns with the program itself: duration, level of difficulty, anxiety about being able to work at their own pace and relevance of content offered;
- Difficulty dealing with change;
- Shame at having their problem revealed to others.

2.4 Literacy

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines literacy as: “the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society”.⁵

2.5 Numeracy

According to National Numeracy, a UK-based organization, numeracy “complements literacy and is sometimes called 'mathematical literacy'. Both skills are needed in order to function fully in modern life. Being numerate means being able to reason with numbers and other mathematical

concepts and to apply these in a range of contexts and to solve a variety of problems”.⁶

3.0 Business Opportunities

Listed below are three business opportunities that were identified as having the potential to meet needs not currently being met satisfactorily by the current Lillooet business community. The research was able to determine that there is strong support from the community for the establishment of these businesses and that they could easily be adapted to the social enterprise model desired by LALA.

For each business opportunity identified, the following have been included:

- a description of the business
- an example of a similar social enterprise
- a list of pros and cons brainstormed during a focus group session (more information on the focus group that was conducted can be found on page 26)

3.1 Car Wash

3.1.1 Description of the Business

The car wash idea is popular with the general public, according to all three surveys and the focus group. There is an existing car wash in Lillooet that consists of a covered area with a self-serve coin operated pressure-washer hose. The results of the surveys and focus group indicate that this car wash does not meet the needs of the community. Therefore, a full car wash service could be a viable business. The car wash could be a brick and mortar operation, with an indoor facility which could operate year-round, or a mobile service similar to the example below. It could also provide interior car detailing.

3.1.2 Example of a Similar Social Enterprise: Keeners Car Wash

Keeners Car Wash is owned by Family Services of Greater Vancouver. It delivers car washing services for corporate parking lots and car share services. Their mission statement reads: “*We envision building a livable, sustainable world where youth can reach their full potential.*”

According to their website, Keeners Car Wash was founded with a social purpose to “direct all Keeners Car Wash net profits to support programs at Directions Youth Services Centre. Directions provides Vancouver’s homeless youth with a single entry point to access the tools, support, and guidance they so desperately need to go about making healthy, positive changes in their lives.”

Keeners Car Wash provides employment to youth, helping them gain work and life skills, grow their confidence and move on to bigger and better things. They use a waterless method which is effective, safe and environmentally friendly.⁷

3.1.3 Pros and Cons

Table 1: Pros and cons of the car wash

| Pros | Cons |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys have demonstrated a high demand • Could be done in partnership with existing business • Could be labour intensive (lots of jobs) • Could be an opportunity for mentorship • Could include cafe/ laundromat/ pet wash station to increase traffic • Potential locations: T’it’q’et, Cayoosh Flats Transport, Old Pizzarama, Old Seton motors • Flexible • Collaborative • Money maker • Boats and vehicles need washing as an invasive plant species control • Could make lots of money from tourists | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of environmental mitigation could be high • Possible competition with existing business • High start-up cost • Seasonal • Wouldn’t be able to support that many staff • It would be harder to provide on-site childcare than for a business that operates inside at all times • Doesn’t have a large variety of jobs |

3.2 General Service Hub

3.2.1 Description of the Business

The focus group expressed strong interest in the general service hub concept. The farming community has long expressed the need for on-call labourers, and with the growing number of seniors in Lillooet, we will see an increase in demand for home and yard care services. The general service hub would oversee a crew of casual labourers who would offer a range of services, from delivery, to painting, yard work and cleaning. The service hub could also help those who already have landscaping skills or other skills but have difficulty with the administrative side of running their own business, by helping them acquire the skills they need to move towards autonomy.

3.2.2 Example of a Similar Social Enterprise: Manitoba Green Retrofit

“Manitoba Green Retrofit (MGR) is a non-profit social enterprise whose mission is poverty reduction through employment; they exist to create jobs for people who have a tough time in the formal labour market. Through their different divisions — residential repair and renovations, property management, a service for vulnerable persons who cannot prepare their home for bed bug treatment called Bug’N’Scrub, and a temporary labour pool — they are able to offer stable employment for people to take root and grow into their full potential.

Their team consists of a wide variety of folks — new Canadians, people who have been involved in the justice system, women (chronically underrepresented in the trades), and First Nations/ Aboriginal/ Metis people. These people want to work, but because of various reasons — language barriers, involvement in the justice system, addictions issues, growing up in systemic poverty — they have a hard time finding and keeping a job in the formal labour market.

By creating low barriered and straightforward job opportunities, MGR is breaking the cycle of poverty that is often multi-generational. In addition to hard skills, MGR also provides access to a comprehensive and integrated set of supports and resources within their positive, patient and supportive work environment.”⁸

3.1.3 Pros and Cons

Table 2: Pros and cons of the general service hub

| Pros | Cons |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could provide a variety of work experiences • Year-round work • Could lead to relationship building with businesses • Could lead to mentorship opportunities • Could teach a variety of career skills • Would provide an organic flow to learning (project based) • Could complement existing businesses • Would fill a community need • Could apply to a variety of industries • Trades programs team well with this • Could structure the business to start small & grow • Business structure could work with freelancers who need admin support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More training needed than other businesses • Potential increased overhead cost (personal protective equipment, tools, etc.) • Complex scheduling • Possibly not enough interest • Would require transportation to and from job sites • Might not be able to offer as much flexibility to workers • Might not be able to offer individualized support to workers • Would be harder to provide on-site childcare than for a business that operates inside at all times |

3.3 Thrift Store

3.3.1 Description of the Business

The thrift store concept was identified when the existing thrift store, run by the Lillooet Friendship Centre, closed its doors in April 2018. As well as providing affordable clothing and household items, the thrift store could act as a drop off point for people’s unwanted items, thus reducing waste. The thrift store could also focus on kids’ clothing, vintage clothing, building supplies, or other items, so as not to compete with t recently opened thrift store. It could also provide furniture repair and clothing alteration services. Unsold clothing could be cut up to make rugs or other crafts. It could also be sold in bulk.

3.3.2 Example of a Similar Social Enterprise: Karibu Thrift Store

Karibu Thrift Store, located in Scarborough, ON, is a second-hand shop that provides employment to people with varying levels of abilities.

“The store promotes opportunities for individuals to gain on-the-job training and employment experience.

While on the clock, these dedicated employees do everything from steaming, cleaning, organizing shoes and racks of clothing, to taking in donations.”⁹

3.3.3 Pros and Cons

Table 3: Pros and cons of the thrift store

| Pros | Cons |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a new idea (has a history of success) • Potential for large revenue • Could teach a variety of skills – literacy, numeracy, sewing, furniture refinishing, small electronic repairs, employment skills, people skills • Extra stuff could be sold in bulk • Reduces waste • Flexible and supportive environment is possible • Room to advance within the organization • Could include a laundromat • Could include craft production and sales | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People might have a pre-conceived image of what it is due to history in Lillooet • Needs a store front • Needs a good manager • There might be a lack of quality donations in Lillooet (need to outsource) • Since the beginning of this project, a privately owned thrift store was started in Lillooet • High start-up costs due to purchase of display equipment and inventory. |

3.4 Work Skills Development

With proper management and adequate staffing, each of the three businesses identified above could provide work environments that would be conducive to learning new skills. Table 1. below identifies skills that could be learned in all three businesses. Table 2. identifies skills that are unique to each individual business.

Table 4: Work Skills in All Three Businesses

| People Skills | Organizational Skills | Management Skills | Other Skills |
|--|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving Customers • Using proper phone/email etiquette • Working in teams • Acting professionally | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filing documents • Maintaining an organized work space • Following steps • Keeping inventory • Filling out timesheets • Managing time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervising • Problem solving • Critical thinking • Prioritizing • Team building • Adapting to new situations • Thinking creatively | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counting and giving change • Using computers • Cleaning • Advertising • Maintaining machines • Using tools and equipment |

Table 5: Work Skills Unique to Each Business

| Car Wash | Service Hub | Thrift Store |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using specialized equipment • Preparing cleaning solutions • Using chemicals safely • Car detailing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscaping • Using and maintaining small machines (lawn mower, weed whacker, rototiller) • Farming (weeding, irrigating, harvesting, butchering, etc.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sewing • Window dressing • Small repairs • Upcycling • Sourcing inventory |

4.0 Adult Education Program

LALA aims to create an adult literacy program that will provide its participants with a supportive work experience in which literacy training is fully integrated. This will allow the participants to earn a wage while they learn. LALA has partnered with the Open Door Group, Thompson Rivers University, the Lillooet Tribal Council and the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy to procure funding for a Community Adult Basic Education Learning Centre pilot project in Lillooet. The Learning Centre will provide a learning space for additional, accredited learning for the staff of the social enterprise.

4.1 Project Details

The Lillooet Community Adult Basic Education Learning Centre will provide academic support and services for a wide range of students from Lillooet and the northern St’at’imc communities. The following services will be provided:

- 1) Adult Basic Education (ABE) program—10 months;
- 2) Flexible English and math upgrading for independent learners;
- 3) Expert tutoring for students who need help with English, math, chemistry, biology, physics, Spanish, French;
- 4) Computer literacy, study skills, essential skills and career prep; and
- 5) St’at’imc cultural workshops and language.

Courses will be delivered in small, student-centered classes using teaching methods that can accommodate students’ life experience and learning styles. Curriculum used will be from the BC Open Campus and other appropriate available resources.

Students who are not part of the cohort program can take advantage of the Learning Centre services with flexible ABE courses and tutoring. This option will be ideal for the more independent learner or people who might be working, but who need to upgrade their basic skills in order to progress in their careers.

The program takes into consideration that many of the participants might have barriers impeding their ability to progress. The program partners will work collaboratively to ensure student success by undertaking literacy and numeracy assessments and helping people overcome barriers such as transportation, child care, social or health needs.

5.0 General Context Review

5.1 Community Overview

In order to identify viable business opportunities in Lillooet, a Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was completed for the Lillooet area. The SWOT includes four sections on different areas of interest: Geography and Location, Population, Business and Tourism, and Services and Resources. Together, they give an overview of the community, what it has to offer and where there is room to improve and grow.

In addition to the SWOT, included below are some charts that were created using data from the 2016 Census by Townfolio.co¹⁰. These charts provide an overview of the makeup of Lillooet’s

population. This information does not include data pertaining to the St’at’imc communities in the region.

Here is a summary of the information presented by the charts:

- In 2016, Lillooet had a population of 2,275.
- Between 2006 and 2016, Lillooet has seen a population decline of 49 people.
- 20% of the population identify as First Nations and 7% identify as Metis.
- 5% of the population identify as belonging to a visible minority.
- Of the 1,075 households who reported an income, 15% made less than \$20,000 a year, 32% made between \$20,000 and \$50,000, 33% made between \$50,000 and \$100,000 and 20% made more than \$100,000.
- The unemployment rate went down from 17.3% in 2011 to 10% in 2016.

5.2 SWOT Analysis

Table 6: SWOT analysis of the Lillooet region

| Geography and Location | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| Strengths (Current State) | Weaknesses (Current State) | Opportunities (External Possibilities) | Threats (External Possibilities) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to Vancouver • Nature, wildlife & beautiful scenery • Relatively affordable housing • Great growing climate • Abundance of springs in the area • Interesting geology for rock hounding & geocaching | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad highway conditions • Lack of rental housing • Unsettled title and rights of St’at’imc traditional territory • Lack of public transportation • Unsightly premises | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to Sea to Sky Corridor could provide a willing clientele for agritourism and ecotourism initiatives • Dry and sunny climate could be harnessed thru solar power production • Great growing climate could allow for production of specialty foods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job losses due to declining forestry industry • Reduced traffic to Lillooet due to highway closures and repairs • Natural disasters i.e. wildfires, floods, mudslides |

Business and Tourism

| Strengths (Current State) | Weaknesses (Current State) | Opportunities (External Possibilities) | Threats (External Possibilities) |
|--|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing Visitor Centre • Active Chamber of Commerce • Diversity of outdoor recreation opportunities • Emergent agricultural community, supported by LAFS • Emergent viticulture and hop industries • Interesting culture, heritage sites and gold rush history • Majority of businesses are locally owned | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited tourism infrastructure • Difficult to find qualified staff • Limited diversity of businesses • Lack of business rentals and/or available real estate • Small market • Seasonal tourism • Dependence on tourists for a large percentage of clientele | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased marketing targeted to Sea to Sky Corridor could lead to bigger clientele • Businesses could partner to create package deals for tourists • There are obvious market gaps that could be filled by existing or new businesses, i.e. thrift store, car wash, recycling pick-up | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition from online stores • Competition from businesses in cities • Lack of tourist attractions in the off-season • Global economy • Rising price of fuel and goods • US tariffs and taxes aimed at small businesses |

Population

| Strengths (Current State) | Weaknesses (Current State) | Opportunities (External Possibilities) | Threats (External Possibilities) |
|---|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing population due to low real estate prices • Strong aboriginal culture • Tight-knit community • Diversity of residents • Widespread interest in outdoor activities and preserving the environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small population • History of strained relationships between local communities • Large low-income population • Declining/aging population | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The growing elderly population could support growth of senior services sector • Families moving from the lower mainland have more disposable income and could support more businesses and services aimed at youth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population decline • Youth moving away and not returning due to lack of career opportunities • Gentrification is out-ricing locals |

Services and Resources

| Strengths (Current State) | Weaknesses (Current State) | Opportunities (External Possibilities) | Threats (External Possibilities) |
|--|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Literacy Program through the library • Many services offered through the Lillooet Friendship Centre • Open Door Group • Abundance of local events • Affordable public transportation in the summer • Lillooet Agriculture and Food Society • Wealth of detailed plans and reports relating to the area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of public transportation year round • Lack of subsidized housing • Lack of daycare space and affordable child care • Lack of cooperation between service providers • Lack of funding to support new initiatives • Over-stretched volunteers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships could be formed between service providers to leverage additional funding • Social enterprises could fill gaps not currently addressed by not-for-profits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aging volunteer base not replaced by younger generations • Government funding fluctuations • Increased strain on existing services due to increased poverty |

5.3 2016 Census Charts

Chart 1: Population of Lillooet

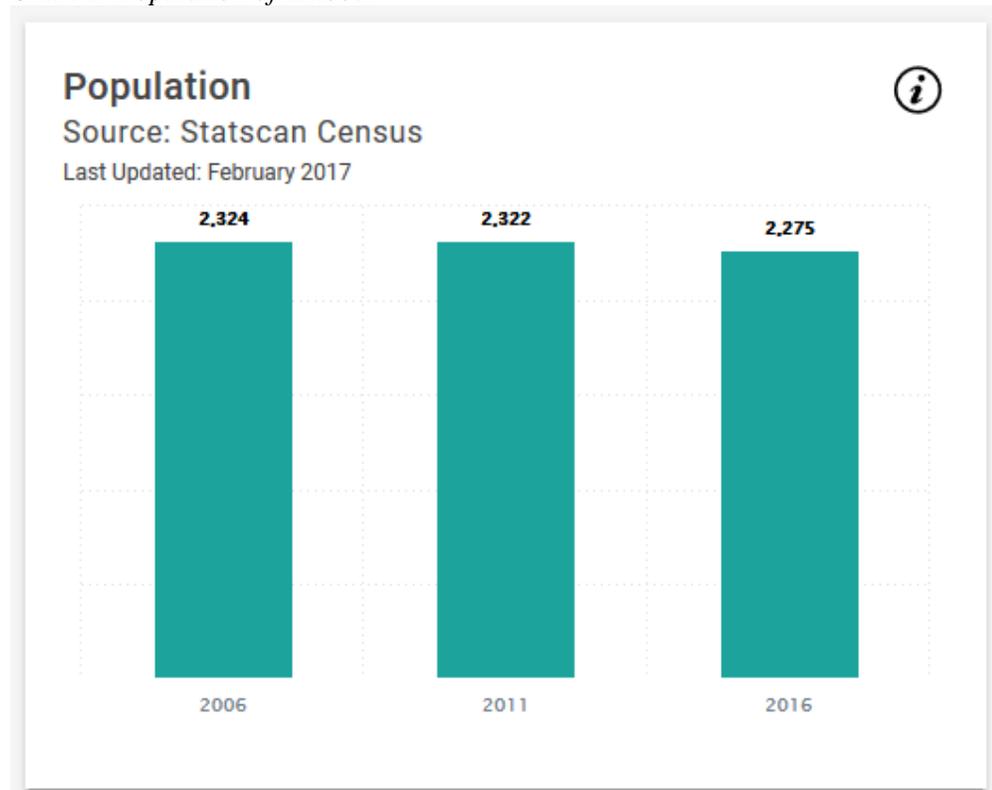


Chart 2: Participation Rates in Lillooet

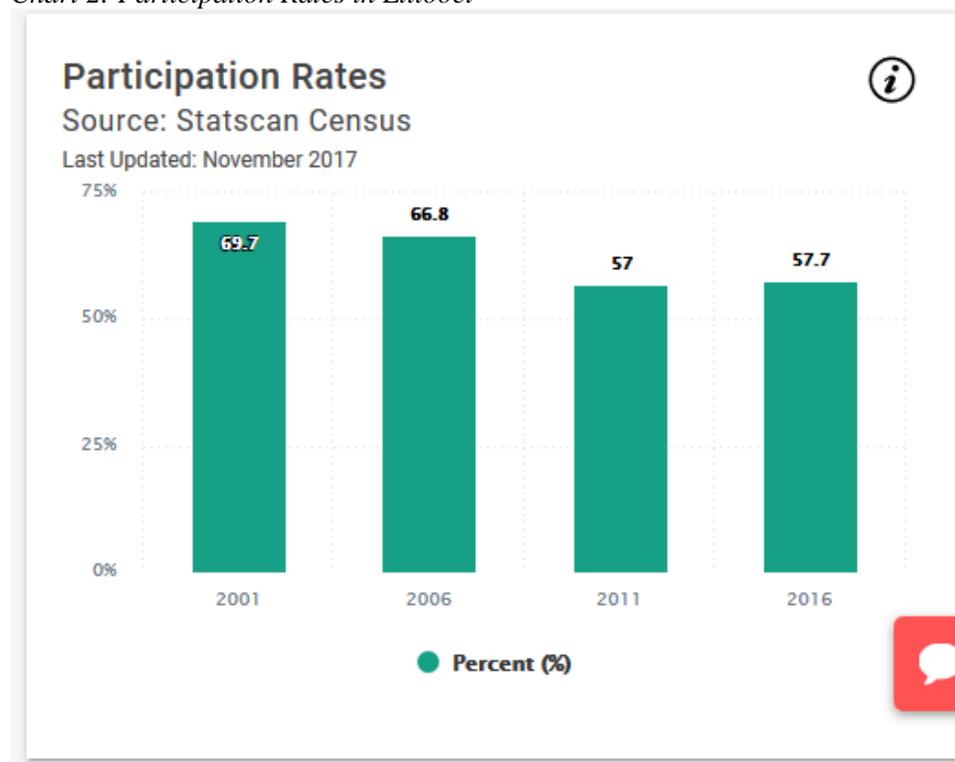


Chart 3: Ages

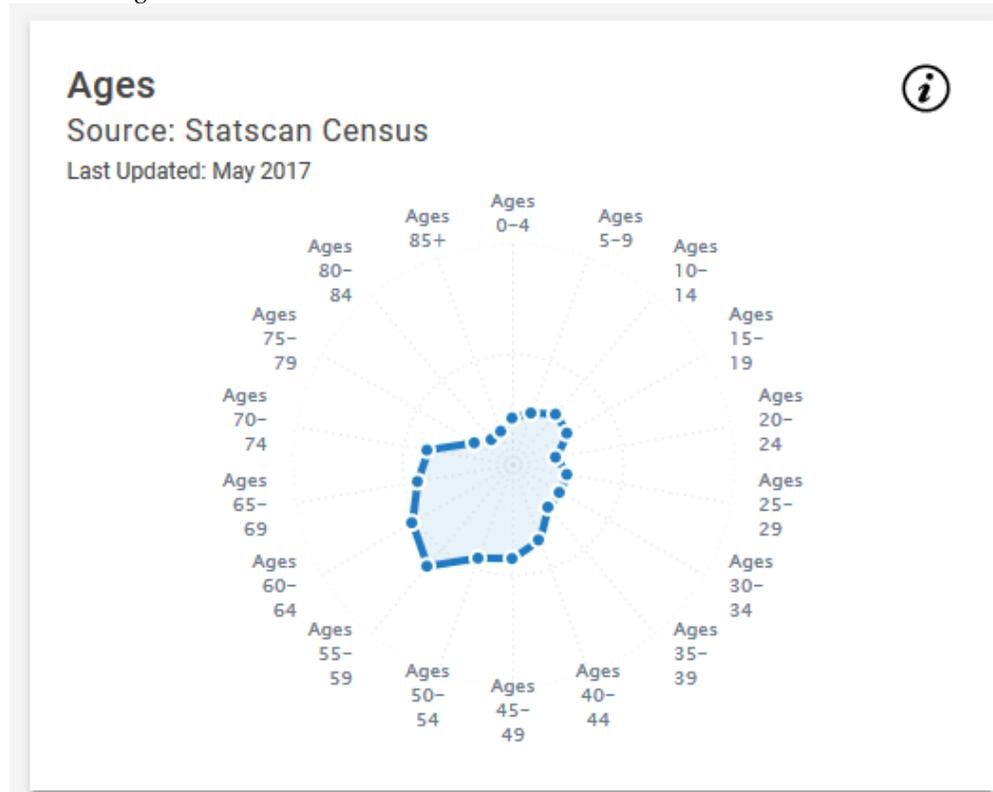


Chart 4: Gender

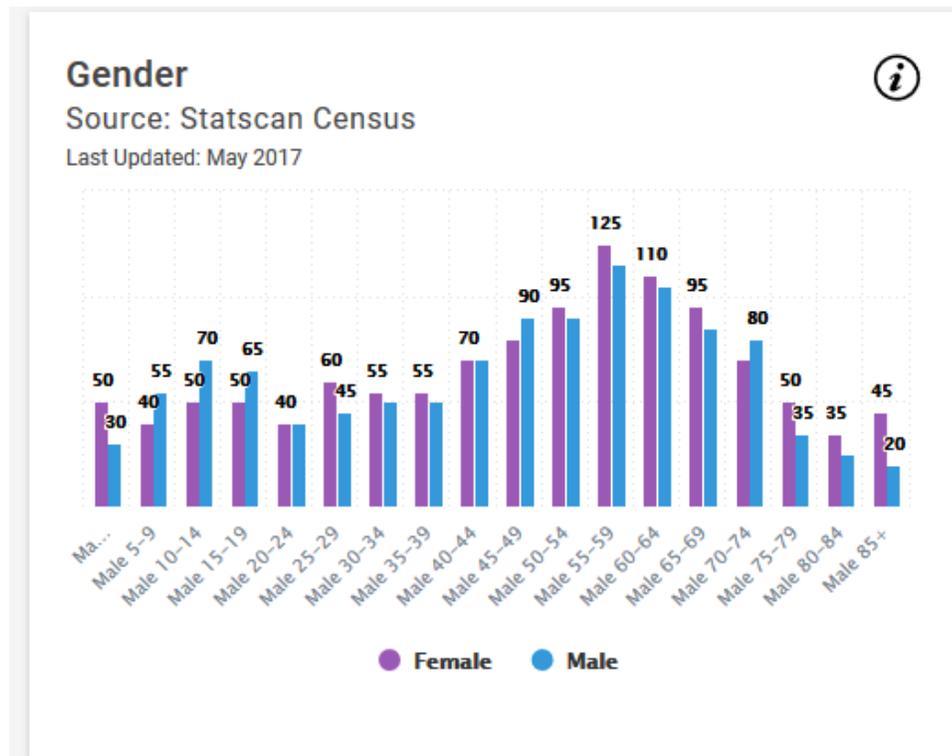


Chart 5: Aboriginal identification

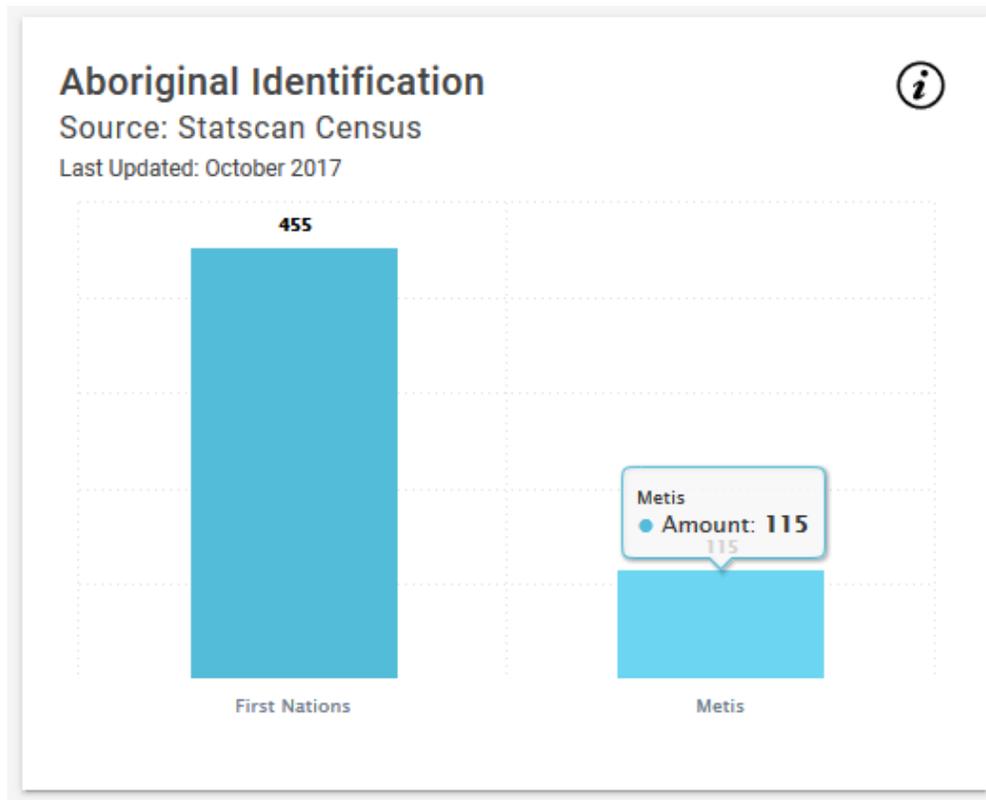


Chart 6: Visible minorities

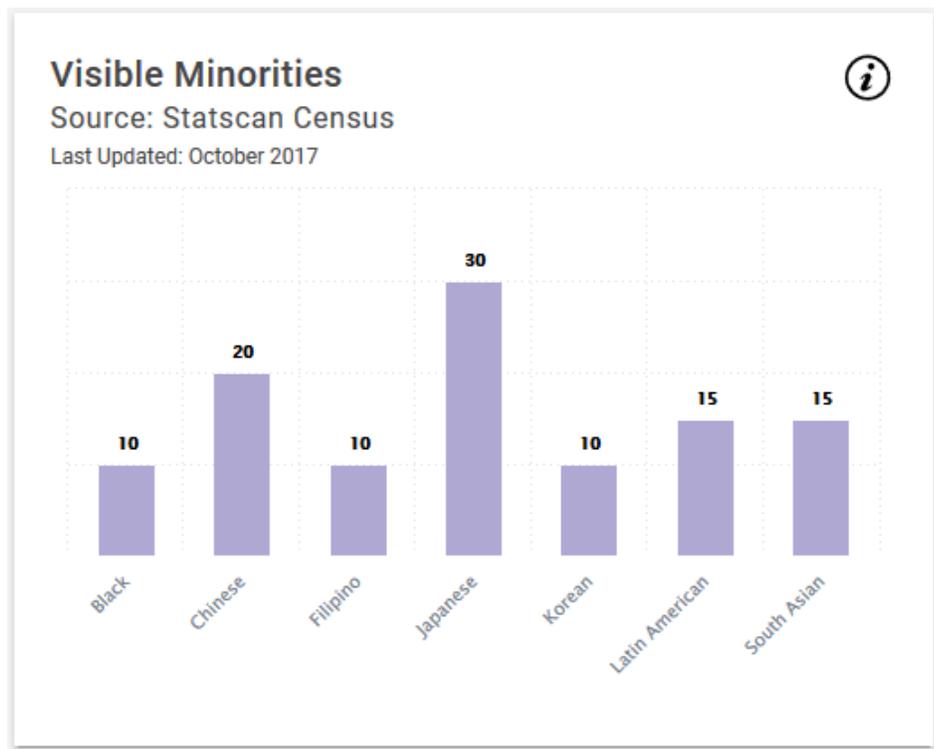


Chart 7: Household income

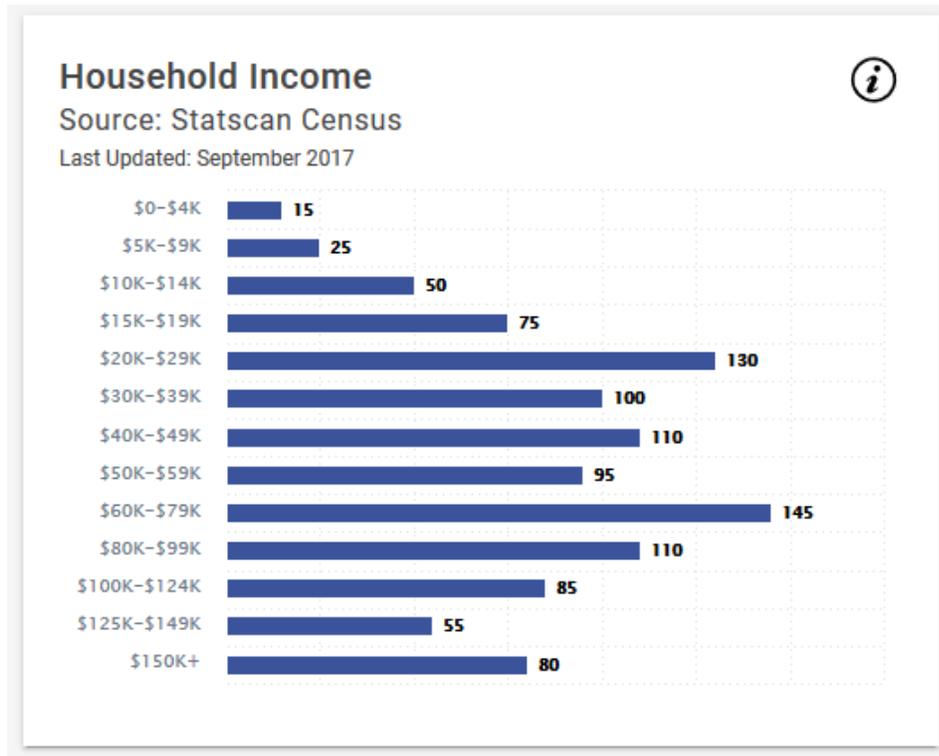


Chart 8: Employment Rates

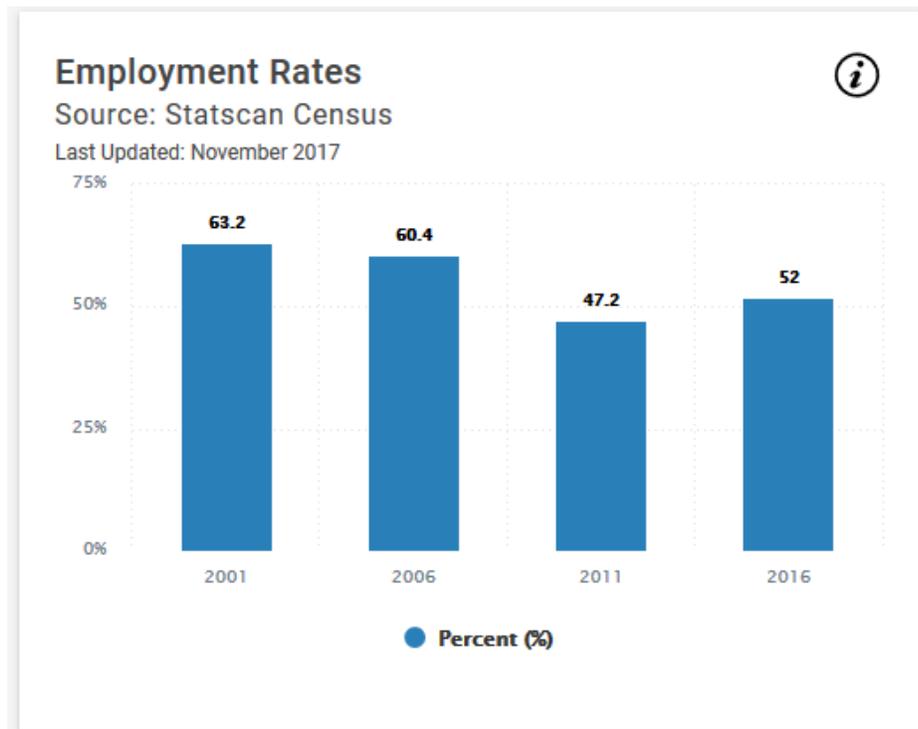


Chart 9: Unemployment Rates

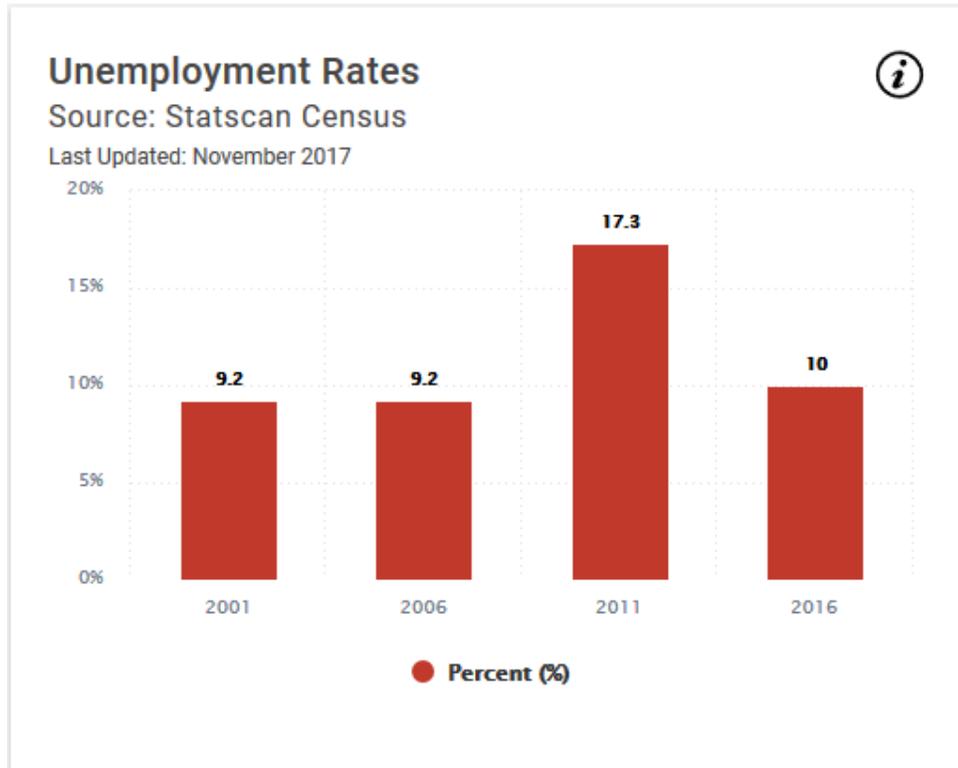
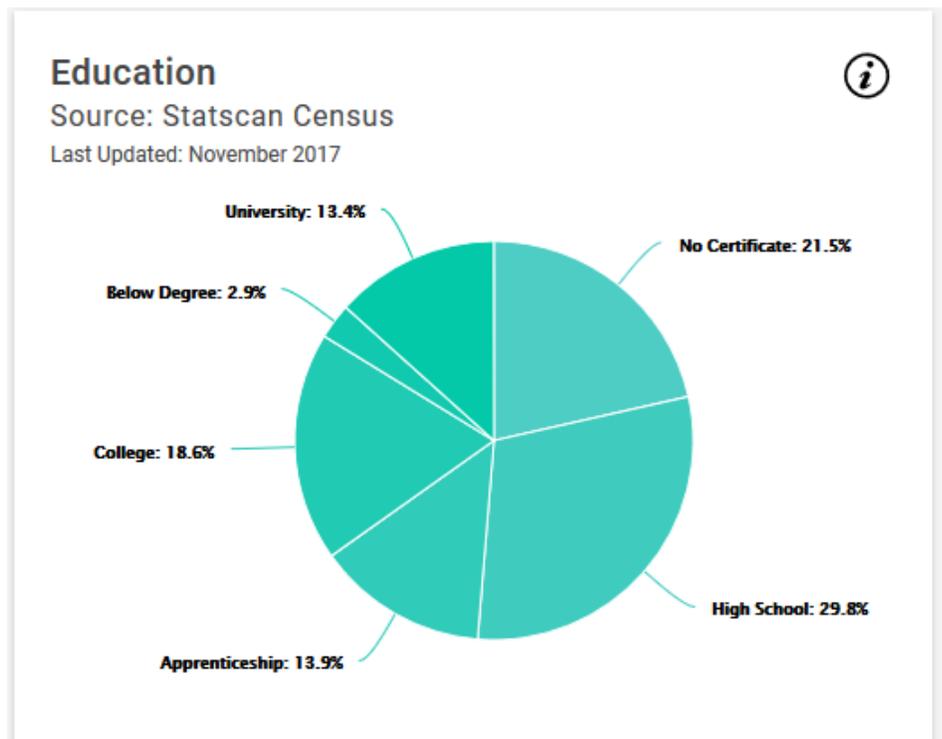


Chart 10: Education



6.0 Barriers to Seeking Education

Below is a list of barriers which might make it harder or impossible for certain individuals to improve their literacy skills. The barriers have been broken down into main categories.

Table 7: Barriers to seeking education

| Barriers to Seeking Education | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| Poverty Issues | Health Issues | Personal Issues | Societal Issues |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work is prioritized due to the need to make money • Lack of transportation • Lack of childcare • Lack of housing • Inflexible work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addiction • Physical handicaps • Mental health issues • Learning disabilities • Illness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reluctance to access available resources • Resistance to learning • Lack of time • Lack of direction • Lack of confidence • Pride • Shame • Fear of judgement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs not met by education system • Parents have low literacy skills • Limited opportunity • Inflexible programs • Culturally insensitive programs • Discrimination (racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.) • Legacy of trauma |

LALA recognizes that, in order for the social enterprise to be as inclusive as possible, the barriers above will need to be addressed and considered when developing the enterprise’s structure and mandate. Here is a list of qualities that will be required:

Flexibility

The social enterprise will have to be able to offer a flexible work environment, both in terms of scheduling and performance expectations, to ensure that employees dealing with health or personal issues have the support they need from the rest of the team to contribute to their full potential.

Cultural Sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity is being aware that cultural differences and similarities between people exist without assigning them a value – positive or negative, better or worse, right or wrong.¹¹ Cultural sensitivity is essential in creating a healthy and supportive work environment.

Empathy

Empathy, or the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, is essential in creating a work environment that values people over profits. This is especially important in addressing the legacy of trauma and discrimination faced by First Nations people.

The following two sections look more closely at transportation and childcare and how the social enterprise could provide support to its employees in these two areas.

6.1 Transportation

Since there is no public transportation in Lillooet, people living outside of town or who have mobility issues have to be able to provide their own transportation in order to go to work or to school. For low income people, this can be a barrier that keeps them from seeking work or returning to school.

Below is some information on options for providing transportation to the social enterprise’s employees.

Mile 0 Taxi

Mile 0 Taxi is a taxi company in Lillooet. It has indicated that it is willing to give discounts to good causes. Their regular rates, as determined by the government, are \$100.00/hr for driving and \$55.00/hr for waiting. They have not increased this rate in 10 years. Mile 0 Taxi has two fifteen-passenger vans and five five-passenger cars.

Medical Bus

The Medical Bus makes trips to and from Lillooet to Kamloops every Tuesday and Thursday. The bus can be rented when it is available, as long as the rental benefits the community and does not take away business from other transportation services in Lillooet. There is a 2-hour minimum usage and the rate is \$41.00/hour. If the bus was to be used for transportation in the morning and then again at the end of the work day, the social enterprise would have to pay for the time the bus was waiting in town, making this option unaffordable.

Xwísten Summer Bus

The Bridge River Lillooet Community Link Bus runs for a few months every summer. It is sponsored by businesses in the community. The location of the stops and the times of pick-up vary each year as they are determined by the sponsors. It is a free service. The employees of the social enterprise could take advantage of this service if they lived along the bus’s route.

In order to rent the bus during the months it is not being used, the renter is required to go through a detailed documented inspection. The rental costs are as follows:

Cost

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ford Bus 20 Passenger Bus (2) | \$90.00 per day + \$0.50 per km |
| Ford XLT 15 Passenger Van (1) | \$75.00 per day + \$0.50 per km |
| Ford Flex 7 Passenger Van (1) | \$55.00 per day + \$0.50 per km |

If the group rents for more than one day they will receive 100 free km per day starting on the second day.

A qualified Driver may be provided if required, dependent on the driver's availability.

Library Provided Transportation

The social enterprise could get one of its staff to provide transportation with their own vehicle. The Lillooet District has confirmed that, as long as the service was provided for free, there would be no business license or other license required at their end.

HUB International strongly suggests increasing the liability limit on the insurance of the vehicle used. To get full coverage they would need:

- **Liability, Maximum 5 Million** - The cost would depend on the make of the vehicle and the owner's individual insurance rates.
- **Rated for Business Youth** - This does not mean that the people you are transporting are youth. It's also for transporting multiple people. The cost would also depend on the make of the vehicle and the owner's individual insurance rates.
- **Uninsured and Underinsured Motorist Coverage, Maximum 50 Million** - This is to cover the damage to the vehicle and any bodily damage if someone else were to hit the vehicle being used. Costs \$40.00/year.

Other costs would include paying the vehicle owner \$0.55/km and paying the driver a wage for their time.

6.2 Childcare

Families who cannot afford childcare may get caught in a chicken and egg situation. They cannot afford childcare because they are unemployed or underemployed, but they cannot find full employment because they do not have proper childcare. In some cases, even when fully-employed, they might still not be making enough to pay for childcare.

Childcare services may be licensed or unlicensed. Unlicensed childcare may provide care for only 1 or 2 children. If care is provided to 3 or more children a licence is required.

The Community Care and Assisted Living Act states the following:

“anyone providing care for 3 or more children, not related to them by blood or marriage, is required by law to become licensed.”¹²

However, it also states that childcare services are exempt from requiring licensing if:

“a parent of each child is engaged in a program on the same premises as where the child-minding service operates, being present on the premises while the child is in care, and is immediately accessible at all times to attend to the child's needs.”¹³

Therefore, it would be feasible to consider offering childcare services on the premises of the social enterprise if the employees were working on the premises at all times.

7.0 Focus Group Summary

A Focus Group meeting was held to brainstorm business opportunities that could be adapted to the social enterprise model envisioned by LALA. The meeting started with a brainstorm of characteristics the social enterprise would require in order to attain its goal of employing people with low literacy skills. These characteristics are listed in Section 6.1. Each member of the group then wrote business ideas on post-its (see Section 6.2). The ideas were grouped by sector and four distinct business ideas emerged from the process. The group then divided into four smaller groups. Each one was assigned one of the four business ideas and was asked to make a list of pros and cons, which were then presented to the rest of the group.

The four business ideas that emerged were:

- Car Wash (see Section 3.1.3 for the pros and cons list);
- General Service Hub (see Section 3.2.3 for the pros and cons list);
- Thrift Store (see Section 3.3.3 for the pros and cons list); and
- Agriculture Production and Sale (see Appendix A for the pros and cons)

7.1 Needed Characteristics of the WISE

- Flexible
- Supportive
- Inclusive
- Accountable
- Responsible
- Provides hands-on learning opportunities
- Provides job coaching
- Complementary, not competitive, to existing businesses
- Is well managed
- Works collaboratively with health care and other community partners
- Has long-term support from the community
- Empowers its employees
- Has a clear vision and mission
- Celebrates individuality
- Allows for one on one support
- Has a strong team of professionals
- Is client (employee) centered
- Provides repetitive work within units
- Provides variety overall
- Provides opportunities to work on literacy and number skills

7.2 Business Ideas

The following business ideas were identified by the participants of the Focus Group. Each participant wrote as many business ideas as they could think of on post-its. Ideas that appear more than once in the table below were suggested by more than one person and were left in the table to illustrate the popularity of certain ideas.

Table 8: Business ideas generated by the Focus Group (1)

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Agriculture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mushroom farm • Food co-op and delivery service supporting farmers to get produce to people's homes • Agriculture produce and sales • Agriculture working group • Food processing • Retail business that sells local produce, meats, crafts |
| Landscaping | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yard maintenance • Yard care • Yard maintenance • Farming supplies, selling and installing fencing • Labour pool • Labour pool |
| Car Wash | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car wash • Car wash, Laundromat, with dog wash/ grooming • Car wash Quick oil change • Car wash • Car/auto detailing |
| Hot Meals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot meals, using local produce • Grocery delivery • Meals on wheels • Home cooked meals with delivery • Food truck |

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Thrift Store | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thrift store • Thrift store • Appliance repair shop • Re-use it centre • Re-use it centre • Remakery • Thrift store – clothing and household goods, refurbishing centre. |
| Dog/ House-Sitting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House-sitting • House-sitting • Pet-sitting and dog walking • Dog walking/pet sitting • Housekeeping service • Window cleaning |
| Recycling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycling processing • Recycling/blue box • House pickup recycling |
| Tourism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike rentals • Walking tours • Outdoor equipment rental store – bikes for tourist, snowshoes • Art co-op store with displays, people can watch people create art |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book store • Small engine repair • Make something like fancy handbags • Cinema • +55 Community, active community • Youth group mentor society • Laundromat • Laundromat service/ sewing repair/ dry-cleaning • Professional Organizer |

8.0 Surveys

The research project involved surveying both the business community and the general population in order to better understand the needs for literacy training in our community. It was important to gauge what services are needed and what support we can expect to see from the community for this kind of project. The surveys also helped to identify business opportunities and their relative chance of success.

The following section describes each survey that was conducted and summarizes the results obtained.

8.1 Community Survey Results

The Community Survey was filled out by 162 participants, or 6.5% of the population. The charts below illustrate the results of the survey. In summary, the following observations can be made:

- Respondents indicated that they were most likely to spend their spare money on:
 - activities and hobbies;
 - traveling; and
 - entertainment and culture.

- Respondents showed the most interest in the following products or services:
 - family activities;
 - a supercenter that sells a broad variety of items like a Walmart;
 - a youth centre;
 - a thrift store;
 - a restaurant; and
 - a car wash.

- Respondents indicated that the following items were most often purchased out of town or online:
 - clothing;
 - electronics; and
 - furniture and household items.

- Respondents identified the agriculture and tourism sectors as having the most potential for growth in Lillooet.

- Respondents identified over 40 business ideas. They fell under these general categories:
 - outdoor activities;
 - car wash services;
 - tourism;

- agriculture; and
 - courses/programs.
- Respondents chose their top five business ideas from a list of twelve. The top five choices in order from most popular to least were:
 - produce farming;
 - recycling/compost pick up;
 - hot meals delivery;
 - re-use-it centre; and
 - kids play centre.
 - 51 respondents selected that they would like businesses to be open later. 104 respondents selected that business hours were convenient.
 - Respondents selected that the following four barriers had the biggest impact in keeping people from getting help to improve their literacy skills:
 - learning disabilities;
 - lack of programing;
 - mental health issues; and
 - poverty.
 - 99% of the respondents indicated that they would support a business that uses its profit to fund an adult literacy program. 124 respondents said they would support the social enterprise by purchasing the product or service and helping spread the word. 57 said they would consider volunteering, 46 would donate, and 23 respondents said they would be willing to invest in the social enterprise.

The following charts were create using Survey Monkey and illustrate the results of each survey question.

Chart 11: What are you most likely to spend your spare money on? Pick the three that most apply.

Answered: 162 Skipped: 1

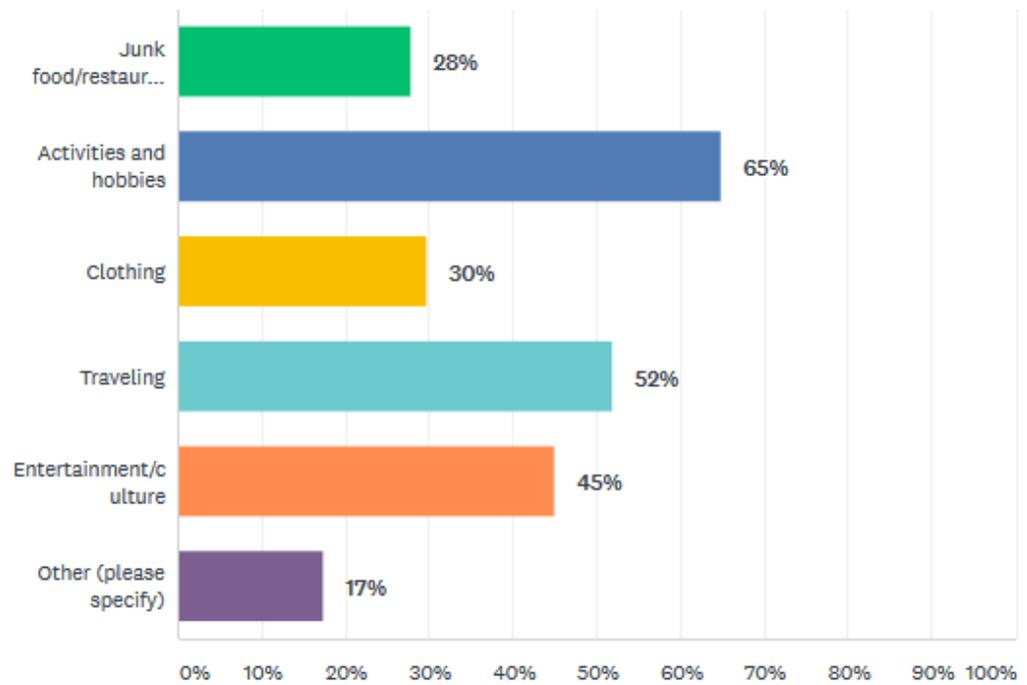


Chart 12: Is there a product or service that you wish you could get in Lillooet?

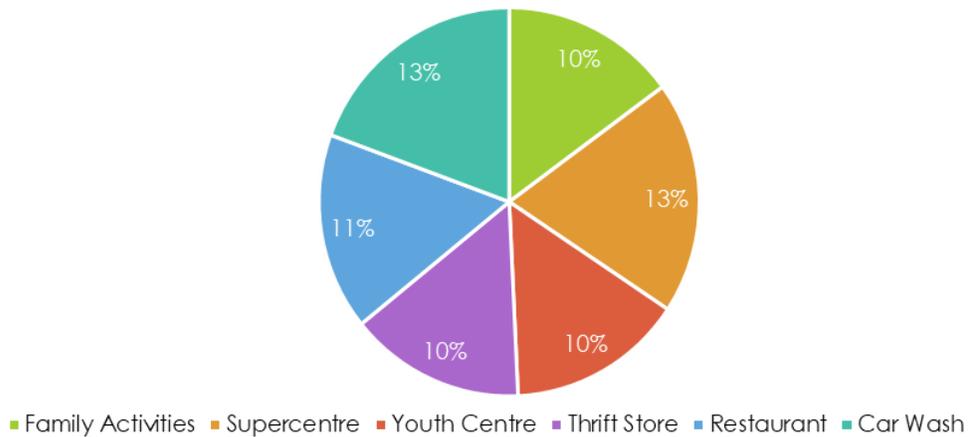


Chart 13: What type of things do you often purchase out of town or online?

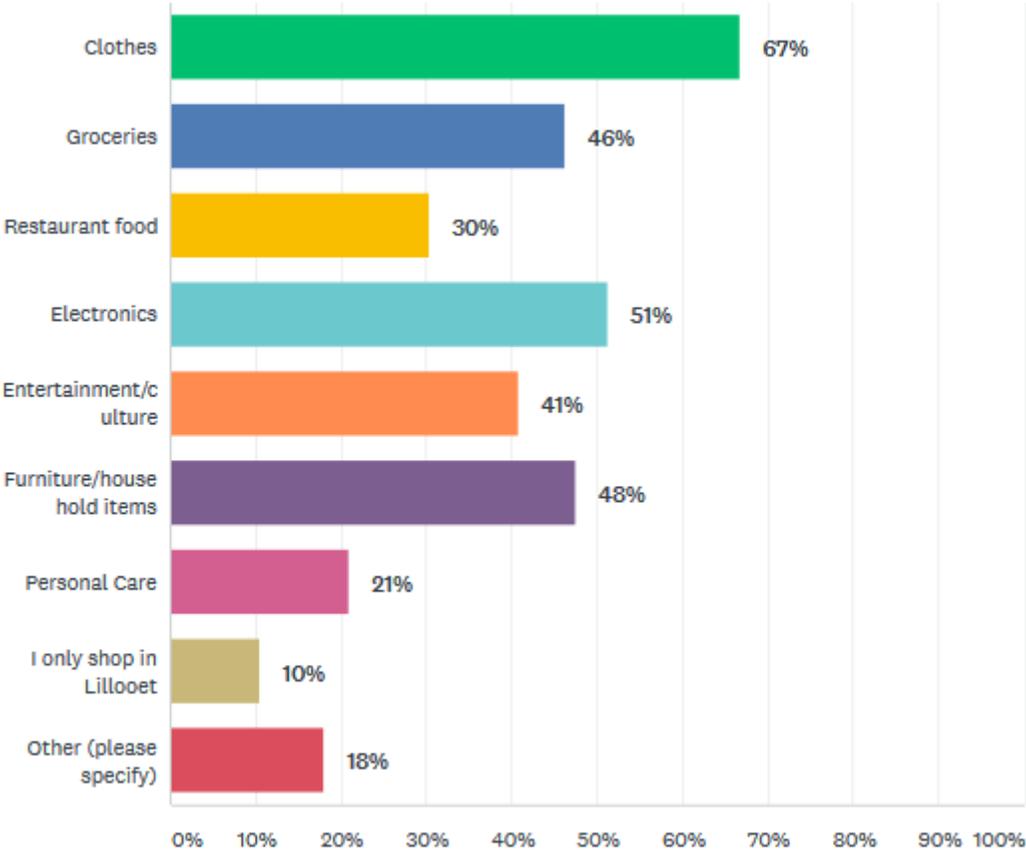


Chart 14: What business sectors do you think have the most potential in Lillooet? Please pick 2.

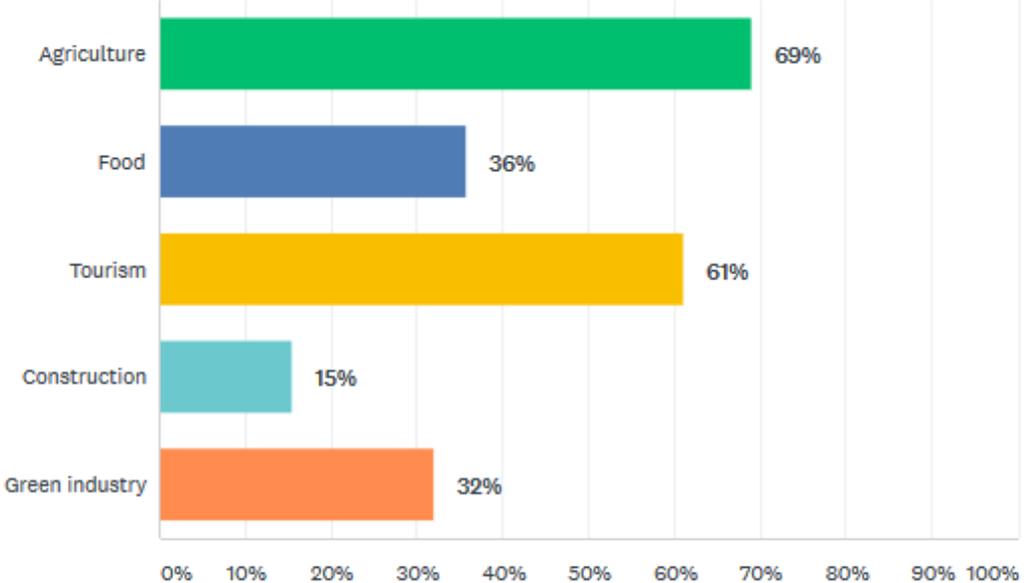
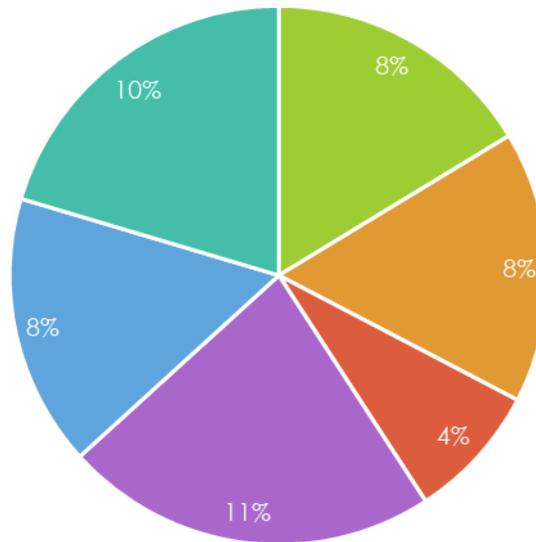


Chart 15: What business idea(s) do you have for Lillooet?

(The pie chart identifies the most popular ideas while the lists below identify specific ideas)



■ Outdoor Activities ■ Car Wash ■ Agriculture ■ Courses ■ Cinema ■ Tourism

Outdoor Activities:

- Community Garden
- Zip Line
- Guided outdoor activities
- Adult and Kid Activities Centre
- Waterslides
- Duffy Lake Ski Resort
- Biking
- Mountain and hunting tours
- Outdoor swimming pool
- Outdoor dance club

Car wash:

- Carwash with Dog wash section
- Carwash with Laundry matt

Tourism:

- Joint Multicultural tourism
- Higher profile location visitor centre
- Outside entertainment
- 7 business days during season event that creates overnight draw

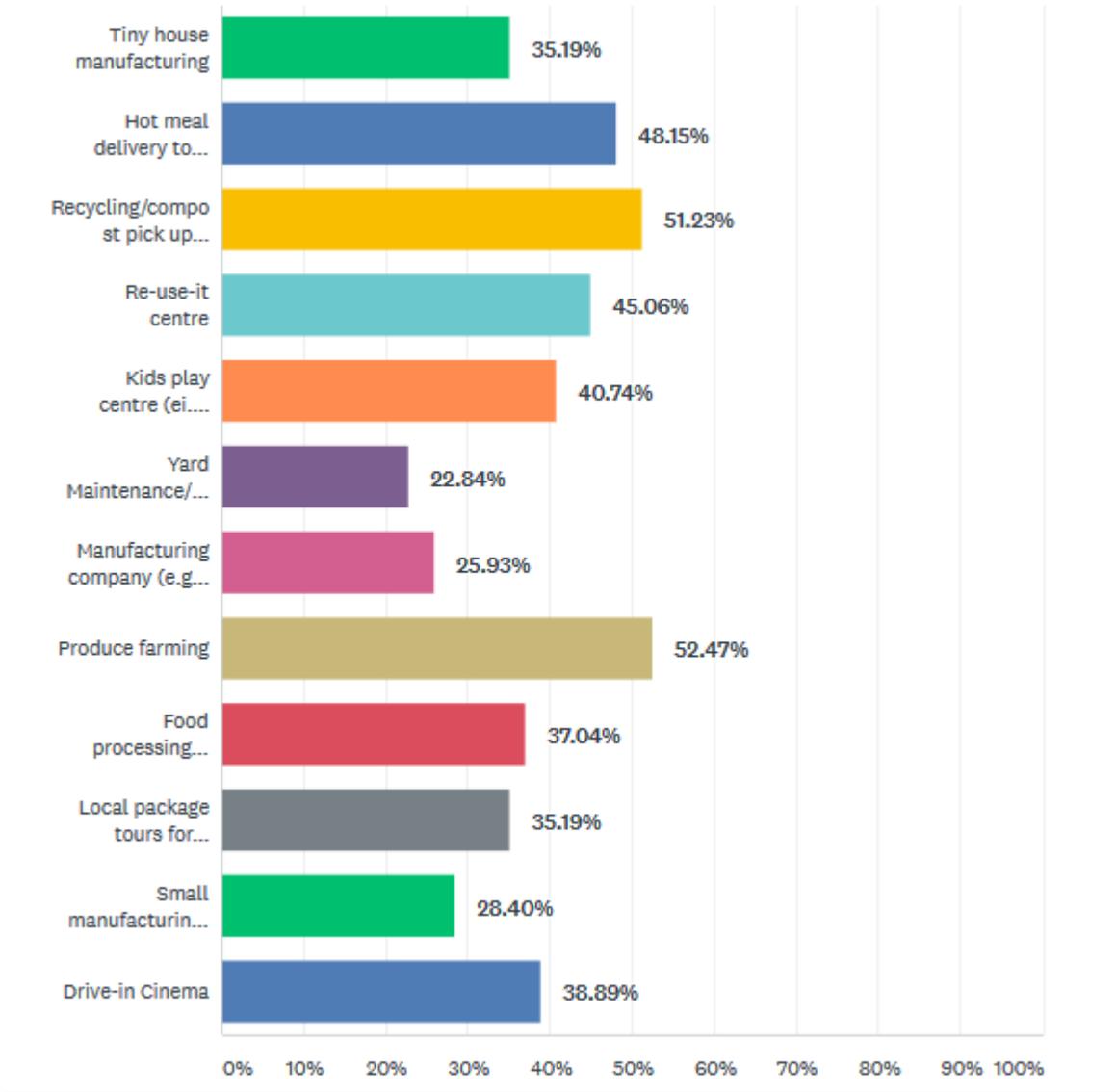
Agriculture:

- Marijuana
- Agritourist
- Micro Brewery with outdoor seating
- Home Farm
- Mushroom Farm
- Dispensary
- Tomato cannery
- Winery
- Specialty local foods
- Trade Coopertive

Courses/ Programs:

- Art classes
- Hobbies and craft classes
- Agricultural Learning Centre
- Horticulture college
- Gym Class
- Outdoor dance club
- Survival training
- University of the arts
- Yoga Studio
- Tutoring

Chart 16: Please pick the 5 business ideas you think would be most successful in Lillooet.



8.2 Business Owner Survey Results

Research showed that there are 223 registered business in Lillooet. We were successful in surveying 12% of those business, or 26 businesses, with this survey.

The charts below illustrate the results of the survey. In summary, the following observations can be made:

- 88% of respondents recognized the need for an adult literacy program in our community.
- 73% of respondents indicated that they have trouble finding employees with the skills they need.
- 80% of respondents do not have a literacy training program at their place of work.

- 56% thought that incorporating such a program would be a good idea.

The following sections will take you through the results of our business surveys, showing the direction this business community would likely take in implementing a social enterprise that would support and adult literacy program.

Chart 17: Do you have trouble finding employees with the skills you need?

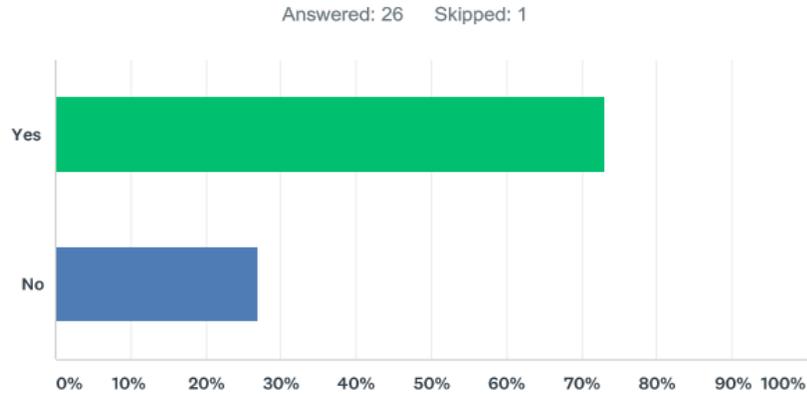


Chart 18: Do you see a need for an adult literacy program in our community?

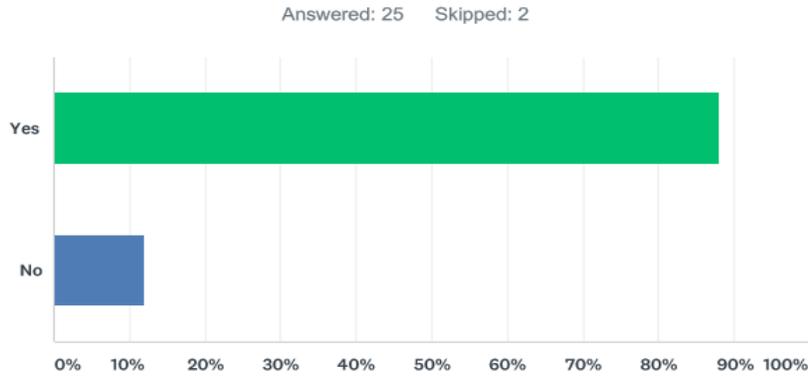


Chart 19: Do you think that incorporating reading, writing and numeracy (number skills) training into a business is a good idea?

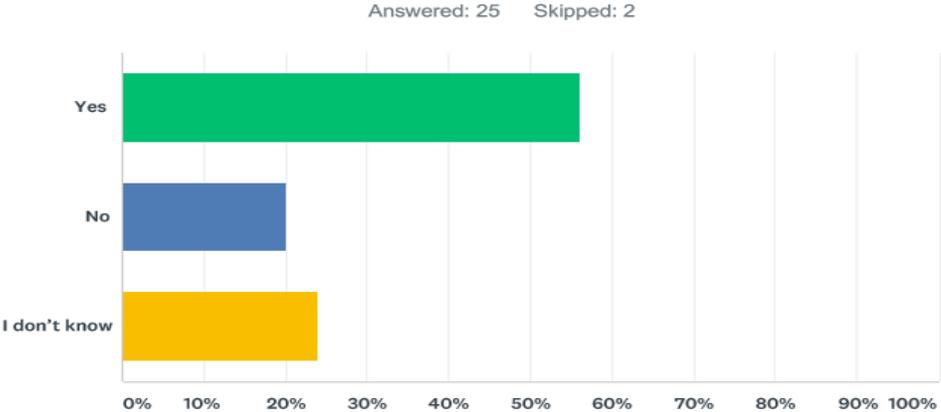


Chart 20: Do you have existing reading, writing or numeracy training available in your business?

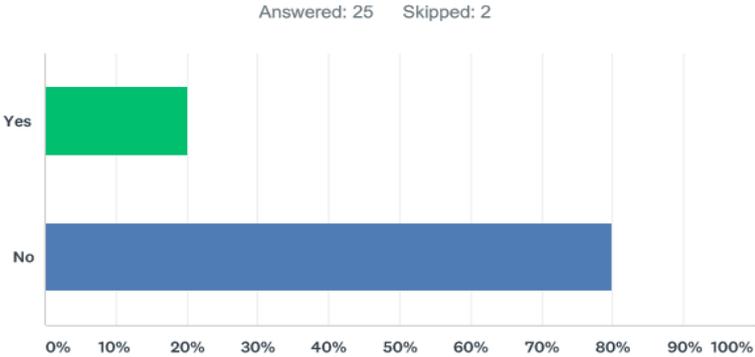


Chart 21: If not, would you consider incorporating reading, writing and numeracy training in the future?

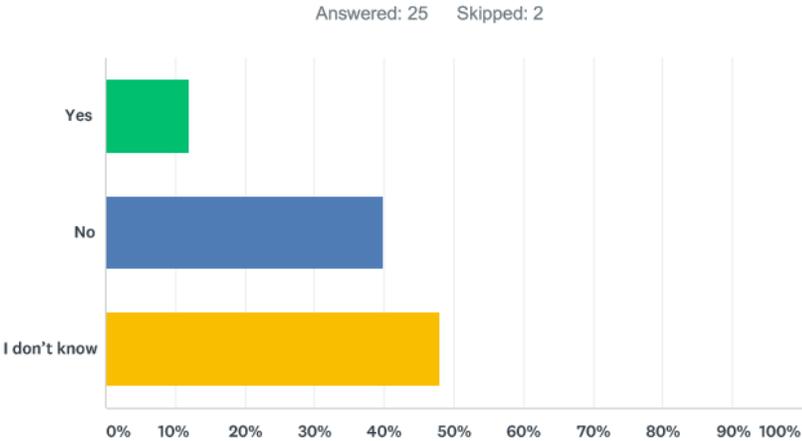


Chart 22: Would you give an adult student hands-on experience through a placement in your business?

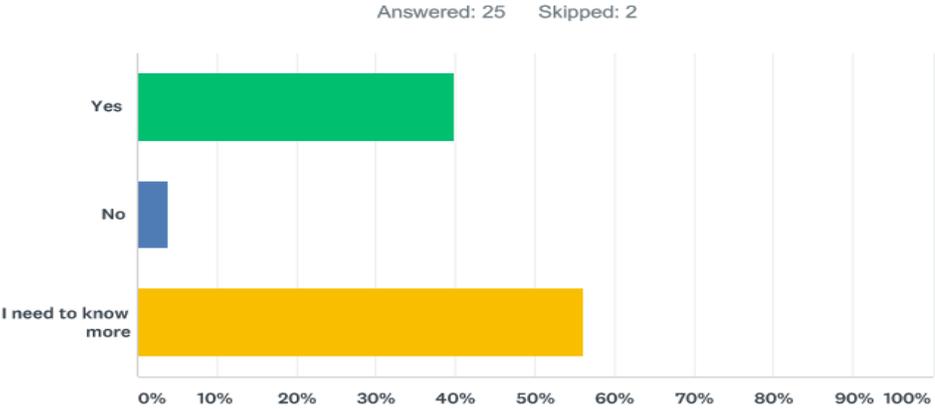


Chart 23: Please select what kind of support you have in place for your employees. Please pick all that apply.

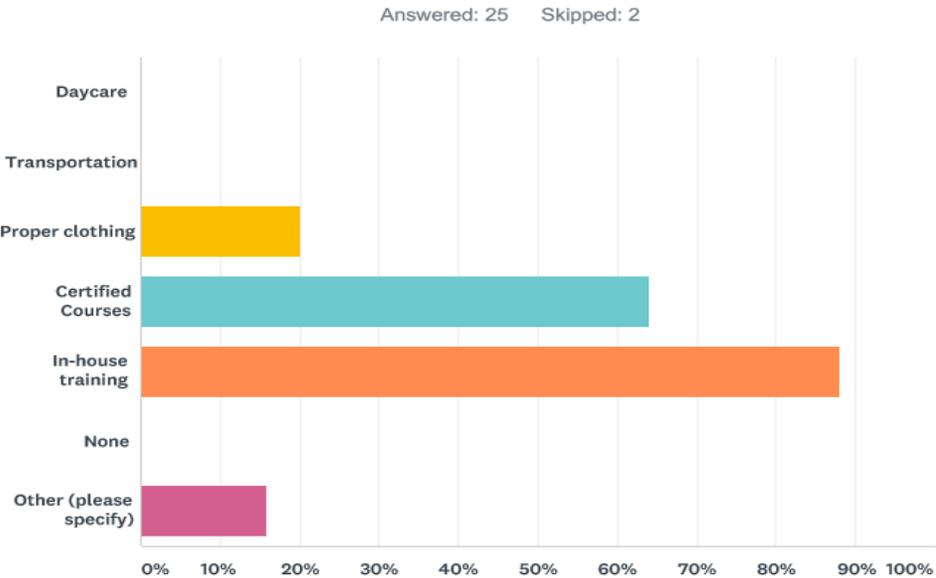


Chart 24: Which issues do you think affect local businesses? Please pick all that apply.

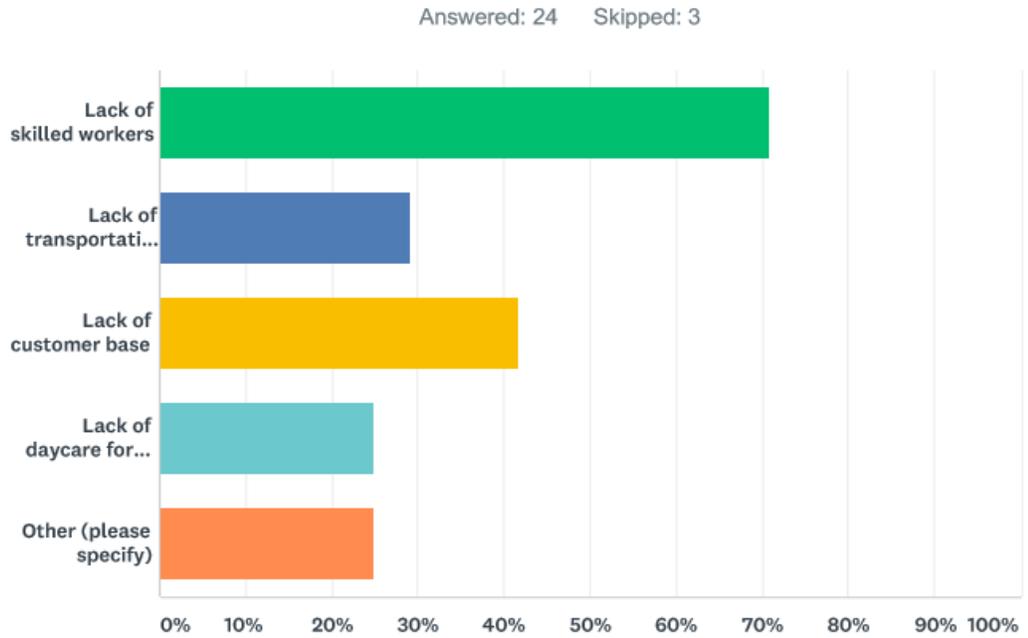


Chart 25: What type of things do you purchase for your business out of town and/or online?

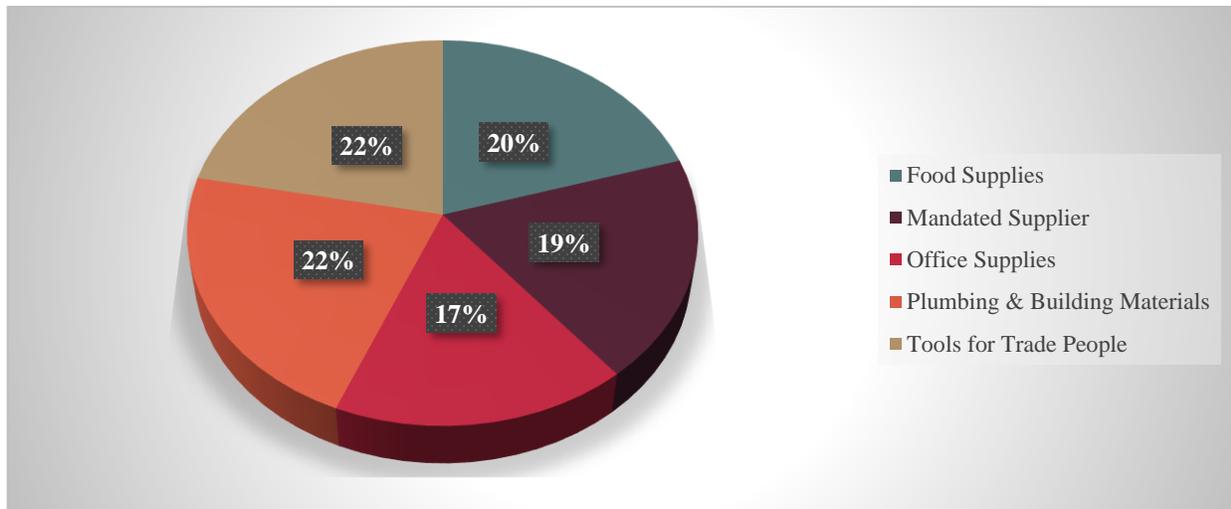


Chart 26: Please pick your 5 favourite business ideas.

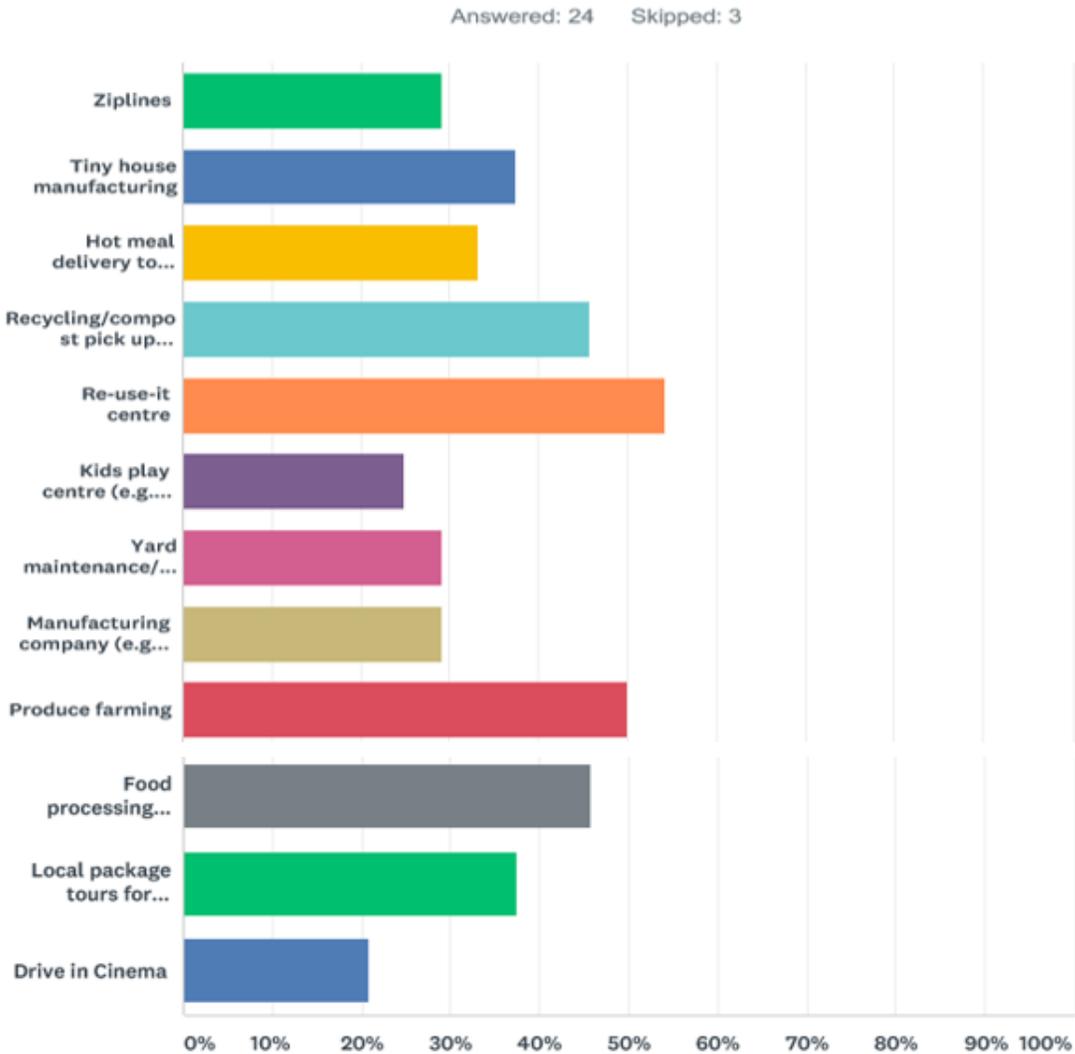


Chart 27: What Business Idea(s) do you have for Lillooet?

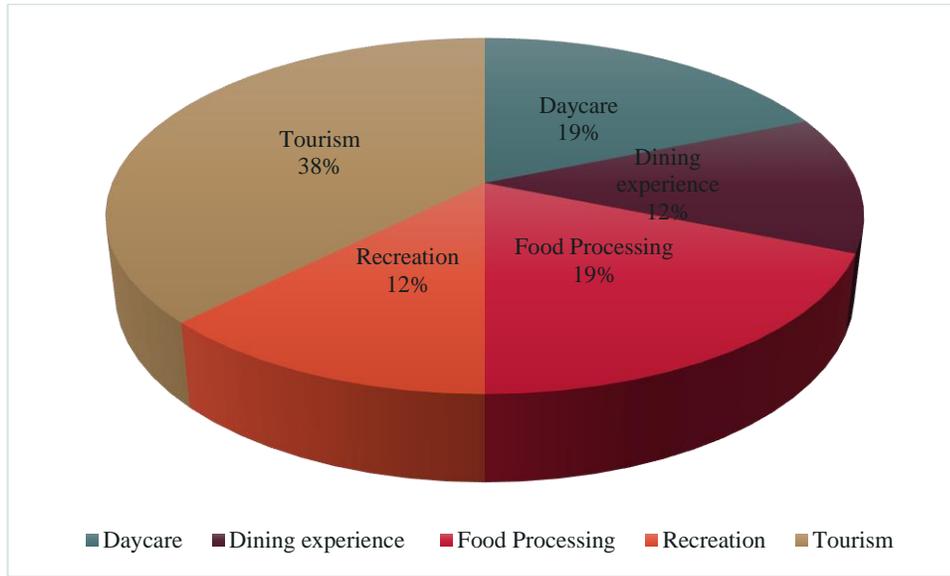


Chart 28: Would you support a business that uses its profit to fund a literacy program?

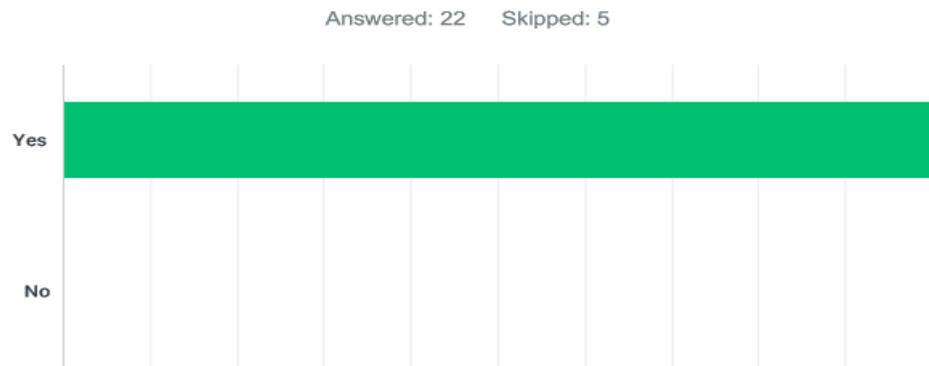
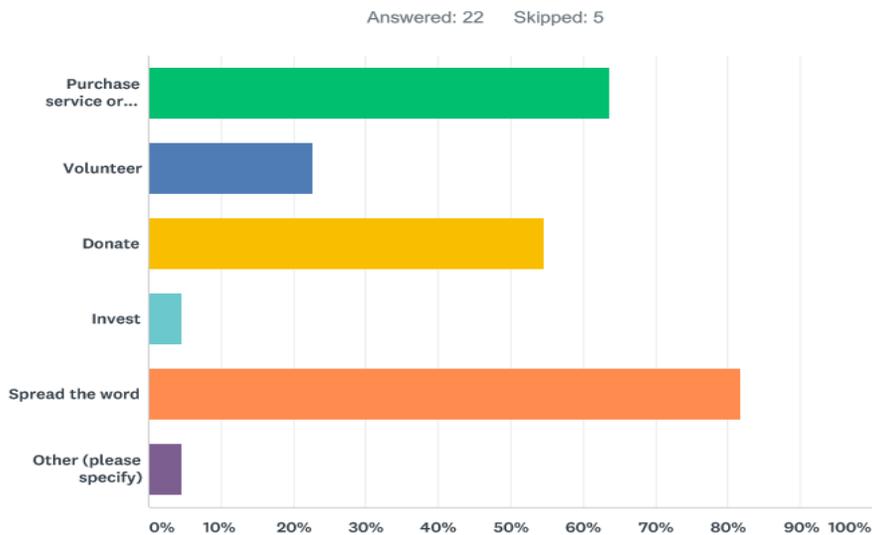


Chart 29: If yes, in what ways would you be likely to support the business? Please pick all that apply.



8.3 Social Enterprise Survey

The final survey was meant to identify which business, of the three that were selected for further research, would find the most success in Lillooet. The results of the survey indicate that, of the 100 respondents, 41% would most like to see a car wash started in Lillooet, 36% would most like to see a thrift store and 23% would most like to see a general service hub.

When asked how often they use each service, the result showed that respondents use car washes 9% more often than thrift stores and 35% more often than cleaning and landscaping services on a monthly basis.

When asked how often they would use each service if the business was located in Lillooet, the survey showed the following results:

- 15% increase for the car wash
- 9% increase for the thrift store
- 3% increase for the general service hub

Although the frequency of use indicates the car wash would be most successful, the survey indicates that more money would be spent at the thrift store (see Table 10.).

The following table compares the percentage of respondents who currently use the three different proposed businesses at different intervals of time to how much they would use them if new businesses were started in Lillooet.

Table 9: Frequency of use

| How Often Do You: | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| | Get your car washed? | Shop at a thrift store? | Hire a house cleaner/ landscaper |
| Every Week | 19% | 10% | 4% |
| Twice a Month | 18% | 15% | 9% |
| Once a Month | 22% | 25% | 11% |
| Total | 59% | 50% | 24% |
| Every 6 Months | 16% | 16% | 10% |
| Once a Year | 6% | 22% | 21% |
| Total | 22% | 38% | 31% |
| How often would you... if this service existed in Lillooet: | | | |
| Every Week | 18% | 15% | 5% |
| Twice a Month | 25% | 16% | 14% |
| Once a Month | 31% | 28% | 8% |
| Total | 74% | 59% | 27% |
| Every 6 Months | 7% | 12% | 20% |
| Once a Year | 9% | 14% | 21% |
| Total | 13% | 26% | 41% |

The following table attempts to project how much money would be spent at each of the proposed businesses, based on the results of the survey, by a population of 100. Please keep in mind that there is a 10% margin of error for this survey.

Table 10: Revenue Projection based on population of 100

| \$/month | Car Wash | | Thrift Store | | House Cleaning/Yard Work | |
|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| | % of Responses | Revenue/month | % of Responses | Revenue/month | % of Responses | Revenue/month |
| \$100+ | 0 | - | 3 | 300+ | 6 | 600+ |
| \$75-\$99 | 1 | 75-99 | 6 | 450-594 | 5 | 375-495 |
| \$50-\$75 | 2 | 100-150 | 13 | 650-975 | 8 | 400-600 |
| \$25-\$50 | 17 | 425-850 | 19 | 475-950 | 13 | 325-650 |
| \$1-\$25 | 43 | 43-1075 | 37 | 37-925 | 20 | 20-500 |
| \$0 | 37 | - | 23 | - | 48 | - |
| Total: | | \$643-2,174+ | | \$1,912-3,744+ | | \$1,720-2,845+ |

9.0 Open House

Near the conclusion of the project, an Open House was held to present the project's findings and get feedback from the general public. Displays were arranged on the walls around the room. The attendees were guided through the room and had a chance to discuss each section of the presentation with one of the researchers.

The display started with a poem written by Roxanne Sivik, one of two researchers, about the project, followed by an introduction to define terms and objectives. Then, each business idea was presented, with an accompanying real-life example. A display showed the different types of skills the employees could learn at each business. Then, a poster highlighted success stories of other social enterprises operating in Canada. A S.W.O.T analysis of Lillooet and a preview of some of the survey results completed the display.

Once they were done touring the room, attendees had the option to write a comment on the comment board and to vote for one of the three business ideas. The comments they wrote and the results of the vote can be found below.

Picture 1. A Panorama of the Open House display.



9.1 Votes

The Thrift Store got 10 votes, the Car Wash 5 votes, and the General Service Hub 12 votes.

Picture 2. Voting bowls



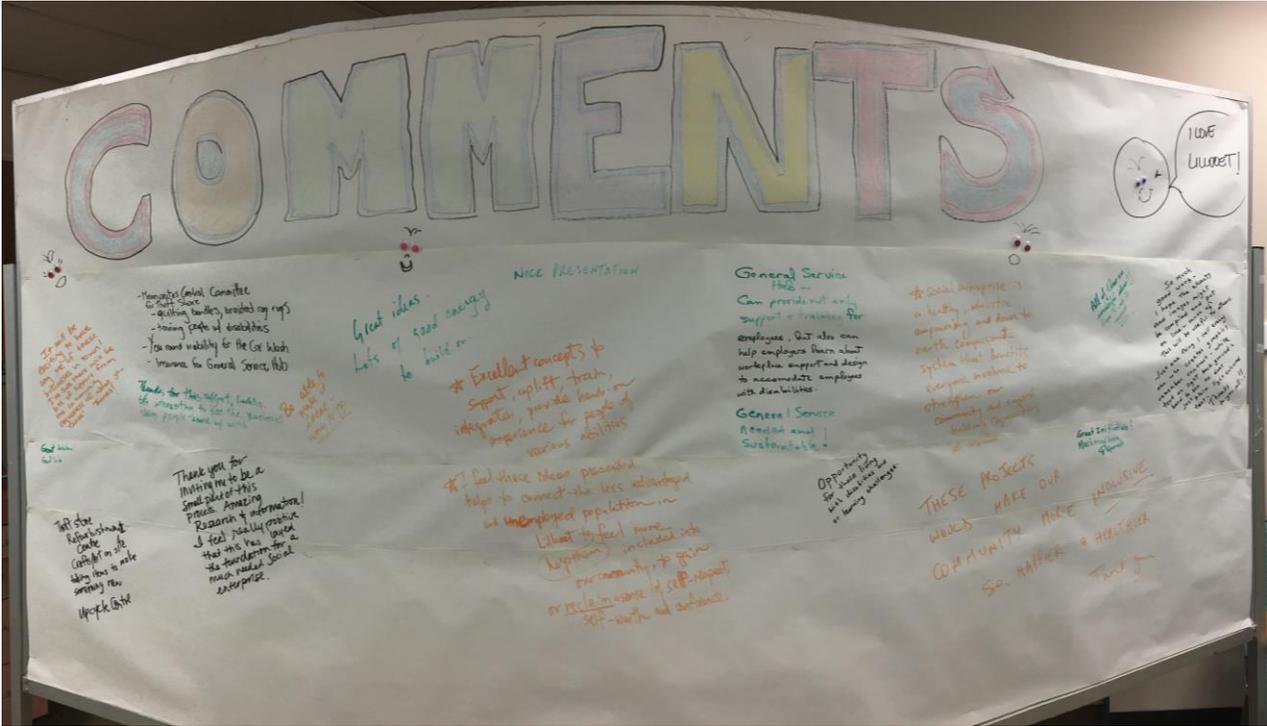
9.2 Comment Board

Comments:

- General Service Hub- Can provide not only support and training for employees, but also can help employers learn about workplace support and design to accommodate employees with disabilities.
- Opportunity for those living with disabilities and/or learning challenges.
- General Service Hub needed and sustainable!
- Social enterprise is a healthy, holistic empowering and down to earth compassionate system that benefits everyone involved to strengthen our community and support building capacities all around.
- These projects would make our community more inclusive; happier, & healthier. Thank you.
- Great Initiative! Much need here.
- All of these are wonderful ideas!! Hope to see it succeed.

- So much good work – I hope the charts and images might be compiled and put on line – much of this will be useful to others. Just one thing I tell everyone who creates graphics remember contrast – white text on light background = hard to see as does just plain light coloured text – Thanks to you all!!
- Nice presentation.
- Excellent concepts to support, uplift, train, integrate, provide hands-on experience for people of various abilities.
- I feel these ideas presented helps to connect the less advantaged and unemployed population in Lillooet to help them feel more included into our community, to gain or reclaim a sense of self-respect, self-worth and confidence.
- Great idea. Lots of good energy to build on.
- Be able to make it local- way to go.
- Thanks for this effort ladies. It's interesting to see the various ideas people come up with.
- Look into Mennonites Central Committee for their Thrift Store; quilting bundles, braided rag rugs; training people with disabilities; year round viability for the Car Wash; insurance for General Service Hub
- Thank you for inviting me to be a small part of this process. Amazing Research & information! I feel really positive that this has laid the foundation for a much needed social enterprise.
- It will be exciting to have any one of these businesses in town! I'm sure there will be lots of support from the community regardless of what you chose! Thanks!
- Great initiative! Good Job
- Thrift store; refurbish centre; craft/art on site; take items to make something new; upcycle centre

Picture 3. Comment Board at the Open House Presentation.



10.0 Recommended Next Steps

The following recommendations are intended to guide the next steps taken by the Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC). Since the information in this report will be used to support applications for funding, the recommended actions below should be completed as soon as possible to ensure that the information does not become dated. It is also important not to lose the momentum and public awareness that has been built by the research project.

Recommendation 1: Select one business idea

The purpose of the research project was to identify possible business opportunities that could be adapted to function as WISEs. Now that three have been identified, the Literacy Outreach Coordinator, Library Director and Library Board of Directors should meet to review the report and choose one business idea to pursue further. If none of the three ideas are deemed suitable, a different set of next steps will need to be developed.

Recommendation 2: Apply for funding

A feasibility study should be completed to assess the ability and likelihood of success of the chosen business, taking into account all relevant factors. Such a study will cost upwards of \$10,000 and will need to be funded through grants. The LOC will have to research possible streams of funding to identify one that would provide sufficient funding, or find several smaller grants.

Recommendation 3: Hire a consultant

A consultant who specializes in feasibility studies, with prior experience working with WISEs should be hired to evaluate the business as described above. The consultant will also complete a business plan and recommend business models and next steps.

11.0 Conclusion

The Social Enterprise Research Project has identified three business ideas that could be adapted to function as WISEs: a Car Wash, a General Service Hub and a Thrift Store. Each idea has its advantages and disadvantages, and each idea can be backed up with the success story of a similar WISE. The research conducted has also demonstrated that the Lillooet community is in support of a WISE which would focus on those with low-literacy skills. The business community has confirmed the need for the kind of soft-skills training the WISE would provide.

Once the information in this report has been reviewed by the LOC, the Library Director and the Board of Directors, LALA will be well positioned to secure funding to move forward with the next steps, and, ultimately, to develop a sustainable, self-funded adult literacy program.

The Research Project

By Roxi2011 aka the soulful poet

I came to this town
Winter was still around
I never thought in a million years
That I would conquer a lot of my fears
I embarked on a journey
Learning new things
Self discovery was the gift that it brings
The opportunities were open wide
Many talented people were there to guide
Time has moved so fast
Now I find myself wishing this project would last
The days have evolved into months
We have overcome many bumps
The completion draws near
This project is really kicking into gear
I know a lot more than I did before
I learned it is not important to keep the score
We all have things that make us strong
Bringing things to the table, that move us along
Many new terms have become dear to me
Learning of what social enterprise is meant to be
Courses and workshops and technique
The many attributes of which I speak
Surveys and data, and people I've met
Learning to look for what you can get
This has been an astounding ride
I discovered the best of me is right inside

Appendix A: Pros and Cons

Table 11: Pros and Cons of the Agriculture Production and Sale

| Pros | Cons |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We all eat • Could be a physical or digital hub, or an online farm store • Could provide a variety of jobs • Would help build food security • Could also connect to Meals on Wheels • Potential for immediate implementation • The feed store building is for sale • Could connect with the labour pool concept • Potential for immediate implementation • Social impact high • Could help educate the public on importance of food security and healthy eating | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would require building/ infrastructure • Tough to find managers • Existing businesses already doing similar work • Food has a low profit margin • Not enough farmer products for a co-op grocery store • Local population has low income • Educating the public can take a long time |

Appendix B: Success Stories

There are many inspiring social enterprises that have helped address barriers such as poverty, mental illness, literacy issues and addiction. The following are some shining stars that have brought the concept of WISEs to a successful reality.

Ask Wellness Mattress Recycling

<https://cfjctoday.com/article/608693/ask-wellness-mattress-program-huge-success>

The Mattress Recycling Centre in Kamloops offers living wages for 9-12 months to individuals who really need it. “We employ people who have largely never been in the workplace, or have been away from work for quite some time,” says Bob Hughes, Executive Director of ASK Wellness. The coordinator Cory says, “I don’t believe in labels, we treat everyone as equals,” and, “if you can write a good resume then there’s no point in us hiring you.”¹⁴

The employees have a flexible work schedule and can work varied hours that best suit their situation. For the clients that have difficulties getting to work on time, they have a social worker or life skills coach to help them. The supervisors would call the social worker in the case that the client didn’t show up for work.

Some of the clients/employees that have come through the Mattress Recycling Centre have had low literacy skills. The coordinator and supervisor currently set aside 5-10 hours a week to give the 7 clients employment counselling to help them find long term meaningful employment. They help them write resumes, hand out resumes, regain drivers’ licenses, and take aptitude and placement tests.¹⁵

Common Thread

The following information was excerpted from the “Stories of Impact” section of Vancity’s website:

Immigrant women or women who are coping with mental illness often have a difficult time finding work that fits their lifestyle. But they are welcomed at Common Thread Cooperative, a marketing co-op focused on creating meaningful employment while producing sustainable products.

Common Thread’s producers make bags from recycled street banners in a flexible work environment that also builds their confidence and independence. The women gain experience and financial stability through meaningful work.

When the co-op needed funds, Vancity Community Foundation provided a grant to strengthen Common Thread’s production capacity. Vancity is also a Common Thread customer, purchasing bulk orders of colourful tote bags.¹⁶

The Cleaning Solution

The following information was excerpted from the “Stories of Impact” section of Vancity’s website:

Offering professional janitorial and specialized cleaning services that have an environmental and social impact is all in a day’s work for The Cleaning Solution, which serves private, public, and not-for-profit organizations. The company mostly employs people living with mental health illnesses who are ready and able to work, and uses environmentally friendly cleaning products to keep them and its clients safer.

A Vancity member since it began in 2004, The Cleaning Solution has received three grants from the Vancity-funded Enterprising Non-Profits program as well as a line of credit from Vancity to bridge receivables and enable expansion.

The Cleaning Solution is a socially conscious employer that contributes to a healthy environment. Vancity invests in successful local companies that contribute to the community and protect the environment, to ensure we have a flourishing society and ecosystem for generations to come.¹⁷

Street Youth Job Action

The following information was excerpted from the “Stories of Impact” section of Vancity’s website:

Street Youth Job Action (SYJA) supports homeless youth in Vancouver through a double dose of employment and tough love. Workers must show up on time, well-rested and drug-free to join a street clean-up crew. They must also show pride in their work and a good work ethic.

It’s a strategy that’s produced results, as every graduate from the SYJA program has moved on from life on the streets.

“SYJA really made a huge difference in my life,” says one graduate. “Having them on my resume allowed me to get off welfare. They gave me much more than a paycheck. I got more confidence in myself since they trusted me. Also I learned that responsibilities are not necessarily a bad thing.”

In support of this program, Vancity and the Vancity Community Foundation have provided several grants and donations, and Vancity has invested two years of funding and technical support through the Social Enterprise Fund, a collaboration with BC Social Venture Partners, to grow the business and employ more youth.¹⁸

Potluck Café Society

The following information was excerpted from the “Stories of Impact” section of Vancity’s website:

Potluck Café Society runs a popular business Potluck Café & Catering in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, with a mission to create jobs with on-the-job training and life skills support for local residents.

In 2010, when Potluck suffered a business setback, Vancity stepped in to help. With the aid of a grant from Vancity Community Foundation and patronage, coaching and a grant from Vancity, Potluck Café & Catering is growing by refocusing on its core corporate catering business in the adjacent business district.¹⁹

EMBERS

The following information was excerpted from the “Stories of Impact” section of Vancity’s website:

Marcia Nozick founded EMBERS in 2001 after volunteering in a community organizing process in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES). She determined to use her experience in urban planning and community economic development to engage her community.

EMBERS provides people facing multiple barriers to employment with opportunities and resources to start and grow a business. It has helped launch more than 500 businesses, placed over 1,000 people in temporary jobs, and set up a construction company that specializes in sustainable building practices and provides long-term employment for DTES residents.²⁰

JustWork Economic Initiative

The following information was excerpted from the “Stories of Impact” section of Vancity’s website:

In 2003, Grandview Calvary Baptist church (near Commercial Drive) started thinking about the employment challenges faced by some members of their church and community. Wanting to address this issue, in 2004 the JustWork Economic Initiative was born.

Initially an incubator to support new Canadians starting their own business, JustWork quickly launched its first social enterprise, the JustGarden landscaping company. JustGarden provides part-time employment to people otherwise unable to hold permanent jobs due to physical or mental health challenges.

Encouraged by the success of JustGarden, JustWork has launched a number of other social enterprises. JustPotters makes handcrafted ceramic pottery for individuals and businesses.

JustCatering offers delicious food for business meetings, events, and parties. JustRenos is a renovations and painting service. All of these initiatives blend financial and social goals, building dignity and community through work experience and hands on training.²¹

East Van Roasters

The following information was excerpted from the “Stories of Impact” section of Vancity’s website:

East Van Roasters is Vancouver's first bean to bar chocolate roaster, shop and café. Set below the historic Rainier Hotel in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, East Van Roasters is an enterprising non-profit run by PHS Community Services Society.

When PHS's funding was cut in 2012, it decided to focus its efforts on finding new and creative ways to sustain its services and employ people in the community. What it came up with was a concept that reinvests all profits back into the neighbourhood while at the same time hiring and training women who are recovering from addiction and who are staying at the Rainier Hotel.

“We wanted to do something meaningful. It is so important to have something to focus on when you are going through addiction recovery, but it is also hard to find work,” states Shelley Bolton, the visionary behind East Van Roasters. “There is such a need for dignified, creative work in the Downtown Eastside. We wanted to create work that is unique, interesting and above all something people will feel proud of.”²²

Saint John’s Learning Exchange

The following information was excerpted from the ABC Life Literacy Canada October 2016 Newsletter.

“At a glance:

The Saint John Learning Exchange (SJLE) offers the people of New Brunswick’s largest city opportunities to further their education and build skills to serve them in the search for employment. The organization offers classes toward G.E.D. completion, literacy and numeracy improvement and has created social enterprises to build job skills in an employment setting.

Programs of note:

The SJLE’s *Stone Soup* program is a social enterprise, which employs learners who are new to the workforce in a café and catering business. It helps them build the basic skills required for employment—literacy, numeracy and computer use, for example—in a real-world professional context. Participants prepare food, interact with customers, work the cash register and partake in every aspect of running the business—all while receiving personalized feedback and skills development. *Stone Soup* pays the learners an hourly wage

and provides them with valuable and relevant job experience they can use to find permanent employment in the food services industry. Claire Ashton, one of SJLE's social enterprise developers, described how this gives participants a leg-up that traditional classroom skills training can't.

"The more authentic the learning environment is, the more those skills are transferable," she says, "Our people who were working in arranged work placements were finding that they needed more time for skill development and more coaching. So if we had our own work opportunity, we'd be able to provide that."

Stone Soup began in a borrowed kitchen in a church basement as a program intended to teach basic skills through cooking. Since then it has expanded into a fully operational business including a café location in the local YMCA and an industrial kitchen at the Boys' and Girls' Club. Participants cater events for local businesses and non-profits as well as furnish a weekly no-fee lunch for students at a local school.

Stone Soup is named after the children's book of the same name. Just like the soup in the story, the social enterprise grew with the help of community involvement from a small idea into a big deal—an effective means of providing learners with relevant skills and generating revenue to feed back into the program.

"It's about the community coming together to build something," says Ashton. "The name is also a shout-out to the Stone Church who lent us their kitchen when we were starting out. No charge, no questions asked."

Ashton says the program is providing help to people who might not otherwise be working at all. "The city has Irving Petroleum and not a lot of other major employers," she says. "There's a large portion of the population who haven't really engaged with the workforce for up to a few generations. You may have a whole family, kids, parents, grandparents who are all on income assistance."

She went on to say how *Stone Soup* has given several of these families a start in the workforce. She mentioned one single mother in particular who was the first in her family to have a job for decades and went on to continued employment elsewhere in the city. "Not only was she earning more money, her daughter saw her working and setting an example. She was able to see real meaning in what she was doing."

Coming up next:

After running the program in spaces belonging to other local organizations, *Stone Soup* is moving to new custom-made kitchens in the Social Enterprise hub they're building in partnership with Saint John's tight-knit non-profit community. The new kitchen will

allow *Stone Soup* to expand—make more food and reach more people. And SJLE’s offices will be moving to the new building as well, making it the new home for all of their activities, including a new boutique selling hand-made goods which will involve learners on a similar employment model to *Stone Soup*. The new kitchens will be funded in part by the *Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life Literacy Innovation Award*, which was granted to SJLE in 2016 for their *Stone Soup* program.”²³

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