



Social Ventures Zone Annual Report 2019-2020

Executive Summary

It has been another amazing year of growth and learning at the Social Ventures Zone (SVZ) as we continue to work with students, alumni, faculty and people from the broader community to build social ventures that create real impact.

Growing interest from startups: The number of startups that applied to join the SVZ continued to grow, with upwards of 30 ventures applying for each of our three intake rounds during the year. Our Admissions Committee was able to ask a portion of these applicants to join our incubation stream (bringing our total there to more than 33 ventures by the end of the fiscal year) while we were able to accommodate many others through our Ideation programming or by referring them to other resources in the community.

Engaging students and providing learning (and work) experiences: We introduced a new internship program to pair SVZ startups with students interested in gaining work experience and learning about social issues. Our first internship cohort saw 19 students join ventures working in fields as diverse as fashion and tech. We also partnered with the Ryerson Liberal Arts Society in its SPROUT competition to bring more than 70 students together over a weekend to design innovative solutions to social problems.

Coaching roster growing (and recognized): We added four new volunteers (Nathalie Crosbie, Aliya Ladhani, Helen Shumilova, Sheena Williams and Ali Taiyeb) to our roster of community coaches, bringing our total number of professionals who donate their time to more than 30. Three of these coaches (Mark Barnes, Andrew Moss and Sandra Odendahl) were honoured by Ryerson with the G. Raymond Chang Outstanding Volunteer Award for their contribution.

Sharing our model: We continued to welcome visitors from universities around the world who were curious about our unique learning environment that brings students and community members together to learn from each other and benefit from the range of supports that the SVZ provides. Delegations visited the Zone from Scandinavia, central Europe, South America, the Middle East and India – as well as from a range of Canadian universities.

Growing our team: In addition to our part-time Director and full-time Coordinator, we were able to make our Community Engagement Coordinator into a full-time role to boost our engagement of students and community members. We were also able to offer work experience to a Ryerson student, who joined the team on a short-term basis as through the Career Boost Program.

These efforts are just a sample of the many areas in 2019-20 where we continued in our mission to help support social enterprise and the entrepreneurs at their heart.

Alex Gill
SVZ Director



Staff

Alex Gill



Alex co-founded the SVZ and serves as its Director. He is a social entrepreneur whose latest venture, Mendicant Group, helps nonprofits and social activists in 16 different countries. Alex also moderates the G20 Young Entrepreneurs' Alliance and was named one of Canada's "Social Justice All-Stars" by This Magazine.

Sarah Brigel



Sarah is the Operations Coordinator of the SVZ. She graduated from the Environment and Urban Sustainability program at Ryerson in 2016. During her time as a student she founded Microbe Hub, a startup that diverts organic waste from landfills using worms and uses this as a tool to engage classrooms in environmental stewardship and science.

Dania Faidi



Dania is the Community Engagement Coordinator at the SVZ. She graduated from the Professional Communication program at Ryerson in 2017. She discovered her passion for social impact while researching the inclusion of Arab women in the media for her capstone project. Dania is passionate about campus-wide engagement and student inclusion in the social space.

Key Offerings

The SVZ provides many of the standard supports one would expect in an incubator, including co-working space, peer-to-peer networking, on-demand workshops and training, access to funding opportunities and connections to a growing network of community activists and organizations.

The SVZ also offers additional features, including a coaching model that pairs ventures with “community coaches” who work with the team and its founder throughout their tenure in the zone.



2019-2020 Coaches

Chris Asimakis
Tyranny Anderson
Mark Barnes
Helen Burstyn
Varun Chandak
Jordy W. Chilcott
Nathalie Crosbie
Mike Da Silva
Sumeet Dhawan
Rick Findlay
Melody Gaukel
Alex Gill
Jon Kamin
Aliya Ladhani
Wilbert Madarang
Nancy Madonik
Jason Maghanoy
Andrew Moss
Dina Nikitina
Khushnam Polad
Anne Pringle
Helen Shumilova
Ali Taiyeb
Vanita Varma
Sheena Williams
Saeed Zeinali

Admissions Committee

Karim Bardeesy
Lucy Cullen
Amber Grant
Brian Gallant
Manu Kabahizi
Dr. Elaine Lam
Basia Lukasz
Jessica Machado
Dr. Robert Murray
Nick Reid
Dr. Reena Tandon
Dr. Cheryl Teelucksingh
Dr. Kernaghan Webb
Farhan Zia

2019-2020 Members

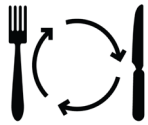
ample LABS



BOOTCAMPS
FOR
CHANGE

Brave Soles

chic made
CONSCIOUSLY



DARIA DAY



EARLY
CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT
Initiative



FINGERPRINTS INC.

Field.

GreenStory



HARA HOUSE

JiiWA

kind karma
COMPANY



LinkMentalHealth
Your Link to in-person therapy

LISNEN



Music Share

Mayana Genevière®

NIKU
DIRECT FROM FARMS



ParentUp

POKET

PURA



SHOWER
BELT

SOURCE
MY GÄRMENT



swate



Spent Goods
EAT, DRINK AND
SAVE THE PLANET
MADE IN TORONTO
SPENTGOODS.CA

Savyn

TKS
TIGHT-KNIT SYRIA

TABOO
HEALTH

TALK MEDIA



VESTA

Ryerson
University

SV Social
Ventures
Zone



2019-2020 Graduated Members

 **BeanBagChat**


FEEDBACK


FUTURE
HAPPENS
HERE


GREEN IGLU


Moolaa

MA
CORNER
myafricancorner.com

 **OUT OF
BOUNDS**

small **talk**

terus
sustainability in hospitality

th
thrivehire.org

TRIBE OF LAMBS
TOGETHER WE GIVE

**UP
LIFT**

**Wastenot
farms**

Ryerson
University

SV Social
Ventures
Zone

2019-2020 Highlights

47%

Youth-led Ventures

70%

Women-led Ventures

\$2.3M

Funding raised

\$9.9M

*Funding to date**

\$1.2M

*Sales Revenue***

26

Coaches Involved

63

Jobs Created

19

*Ryerson student
internships created*

75+

Applications Received

**Includes \$ from investments, donors, grants, and competitions*

***\$ revenue from sales of goods and services*

**Ryerson
University**

SV Social
Ventures
Zone

Programming

Ventures in each cohort are led through unique sessions where they can refine their business skills, better understand their social return on investment and receive peer feedback. To better serve our ventures, the SVZ hosts two “streams” of programming:

INCUBATION

- Membership in the SVZ of up to two years
- Open card access to space and bookable board and meeting rooms
- Assignment of at least one coach
- Access to workshops at the SVZ and Zone Learning community and platform-based resources
- Inside scoop on funding and PR opportunities
- Structured initial sessions to lay the groundwork for growth

IDEATION

- Short-term membership in SVZ
- Series of sessions hosted every semester to help early-stage innovators build the basic elements that prepare an idea for incubation
- Sessions focus on foundations (research, assumptions, problem statements, value proposition, initial ideas and structure, developing and delivering a pitch)



Ryerson
University

SV Social
Ventures
Zone

Incubation Sessions

Each term, the Social Ventures Zone Admissions Committee admits a small number of social enterprises into the incubator. Entrepreneurs are required to attend regular group sessions with their cohort to ensure their venture establishes a solid foundation and they learn from each other's entrepreneurship journey. Sessions are led by SVZ staff and also feature subject matter experts who can give them direct advice in such areas as marketing, business model and funding.

At the close of the Incubation Sessions, staff assign one or more coaches to the venture, based on their understanding of the major challenges the venture faces. The venture and its team are then encouraged to attend supplemental workshops, participate in the Zone community and access advice on demand as their venture moves forward.

Session 1: Ryerson and Social Ventures Zone Overview

Session 2: Business Modelling - Structuring your venture

Session 3: Team Roles - Defining roles and hiring

Session 4: Marketing - Developing a brand and social media

Session 5: Funding - Types of capital and securing it

Session 6: Pitching 101 - How to persuade and win

The SVZ realized there was a gap in the supports available to very early-stage social ventures. Many of their proponents, while they were very passionate about their issues and wanted to create social change, lacked skills and concrete ideas to put their passion and ideas into action. As most of these students and early stage ventures were not sufficiently developed for traditional incubators, potential changemakers and their ideas were often left by the wayside.

As a solution, the ideation stream allows innovators to further refine their ideas and make them “pitch-ready” for the SVZ or other incubators. Innovators attend three modules that provide the skills and perspective that can help them further develop their ideas. This year we ran the Ideation cohort in sessions of three and saw great progress from the participants between sessions. We complemented these sessions with office hours for one-on-one mentoring.

Ideation Sessions

Part 1: What Problem Are You Trying to Solve?
(Defining and understanding your problem, doing research)

Part 2: How are you going to solve your problem?
(Exploring solutions, business models, and pitching)

Part 3: Presenting Your New Idea
(Exploring solutions, business models, and pitching)

Facilities and Equipment

The Social Ventures Zone (SVZ) is an open concept co-working space with hot desk workstations. Our 60 members (working on their 33 respective ventures) access the space when they need it. On an average day, the space is regularly used by between two and ten ventures.

Our welcoming and modular space seats 20 entrepreneurs comfortably and can easily be arranged for various venture purposes. The main room has a large screen for presentations, two work computers, and a comfy living room style lounge space. Our space also hosts a semi-private boardroom and large whiteboards, suited for up to 10 people. We have a kitchenette so ventures can conveniently host events and meetings at any time.

Members also have access to the facilities across Ryerson University, including the Student Learning Centre, Ryerson Library and research help, print services, lab spaces, and more.



Partnerships

Strong community partnerships are key to the growth and impact of the SVZ. In the 2019-2020 operating year, we benefited from a variety of activities, programs, events and workshops as a result of collaborating with key members within the space of social innovation.

Net Impact - Net Impact is made up of Ryerson MBA students who have a shared value of social innovation and sustainability. Net Impact hosts consulting clinics with SVZ members to analyze opportunities to make profit while maximizing social benefit.

Ryerson Library Arts Society (RLAS) - RLAS is the professional students society for all students within the Faculty of Arts, representing over 4500 students. This year we collaborated with RLAS on their second annual Sprout Student Case Competition, providing the keynote presentation, mentorship, and sat on the judging panel. The successful team will be incubated at the SVZ.



Professional Services and Workshops: 2019 - 2020

The SVZ provides a wide range of workshops to support entrepreneurs in building their business. This year we have hosted workshops on **brand discovery, social media, growth and scale, sales, building advertising campaigns, funding opportunities, media training, and more.**

Content Marketing with Jasmine Williams

Classroom to Career (in Partnership with the Ryerson Career Centre)

Digital Marketing Series with Acquire Agency

Ryerson Library Resources and Market Research Tools

How to Measure Social Impact

Successful Negotiation Tactics

An Introduction to Social Enterprise and Social Innovation (SHAD Program)

Effective Sales

Media Training Workshop With Ryerson Media Relations

Public Speaking and Communications with Brian Gallant

Mitacs and Career Foundation Startup Info Session

Events and Conferences

The SVZ participated in, collaborated on and attended various events, workshops and conferences held throughout the 2019-2020 year at Ryerson University and the external Toronto social enterprise community. We continue to grow our connections in the social impact sector and increase our visibility in the community.

This year we were thrilled to take part in Ryerson University's Social Justice Week. We hosted a themed edition of #CaffeinatedInnovators on conscious consumption and making socially just choices in what we eat and what we wear. Cassandra Ciarallo, founder of Chic Made Consciously and Jake Goldberg, co-founder of NIKU Farms both led the conversation on ethical consumption of fashion and food and sustainable practices in each space.

Events Hosted by the Social Ventures Zone

Going Beyond Walls: Integrating Social Justice and Ethics in Everyday Life

SVZ Tropical Holiday Party

Student Internship Demo Day (Fall and Winter Semesters)

Global Entrepreneurship Week Founders Breakfast

Weekly Caffeinated Innovators sessions

Events Attended by the Social Ventures Zone

Ashoka U Conference

Ryerson University Campus Groups Fair

Zone Learning Open House

World Vision 4th Annual Social Innovation Challenge Pitch Competition & Reception

U of T Impact Centre Oslo Student Pitches

Elevate Tech Fest

SOCAP19

Available Funding

SVZ member companies have raised more than \$3 million in funding and grants, and they are continuing to gain traction through investments and donors. Many of our ventures are also able to access early-stage funding to support proof-of-concept work and initial growth. Here are a few awards for which SVZ members are eligible:

Kimel Family Campus Linked Accelerator Fund (up to 20 awards of \$7500)

Social Venture Zone Prize (two \$1500 prizes to cover startup costs & one \$3,000 prize to scale an existing startup)

MAKO Student Innovation Award (\$10,500 to take ideas from prototype stage to market-ready products)

Sheldon and Tracy Levy Aspiring Innovators Fellows Program (five awards of \$5,000)

External Funding

- Kimel Family Campus Linked Accelerator Fund
- MAKO Student Innovation Award
- Sheldon and Tracy Levy Aspiring Innovators Fellows Program

More funding opportunities for Zone Learning members can be found on the Zone Learning website.

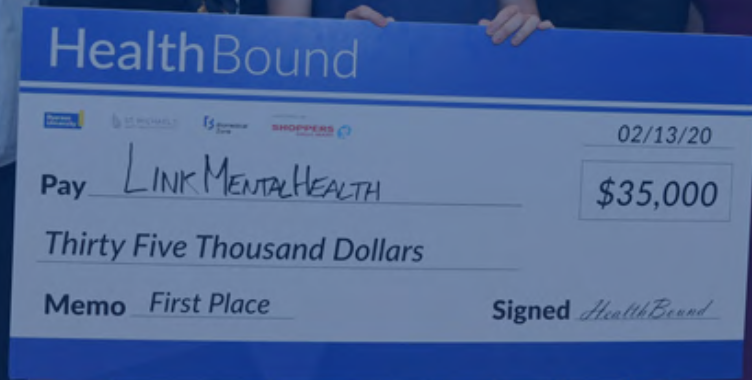
Internal Funding

- Social Venture Prize

Startup Milestones

We pride ourselves on supporting a variety of socially impactful startups at the Social Ventures Zone.

Throughout the year, entrepreneurs at the SVZ accomplished many goals, received grants, won pitch competitions, and worked to grow their social impact in the local and global communities they support.



POKET was named one of MIT SOLVE's Community Innovation Teams and received [USD\\$35,000](#)

LinkMentalHealth won the [\\$35,000 first place prize at the HealthBound competition](#) put on by St. Michael's Hospital, The Biomedical Zone and Shoppers Drug Mart

Taboo Health hosted their [second annual Dying event series](#) during DesignTO, exploring attitudes towards death through art and design

OVO Solar received [\\$250,000 from the federal Fund for Innovation and Transformation](#) to begin a field trial of their solar-powered egg incubators with farmers in Zambia

Swate won first place in the [Manulife New Product Challenge](#) and received [\\$10,000](#)

Lisnen won the [\\$15,000 Business Grant at the Lions Lair Competition](#) at the Black Arts & Innovation Expo

Adila Cokar, Founder of Source My Garment, [launched The Source My Garment Book](#)

Brave Soles was [nominated for a Canadian Arts & Fashion Award](#)

NIKU Farms introduced [100% compostable green cell foam packaging](#) into its home meat delivery business, the first such company in the sector to do so

Startup Milestones



VESTA Social Innovation Technologies received \$1 million in funding from Women and Gender Equality Services Canada in early 2019.

This funding will be used to build Vesta Community; an impartial, and unbiased survivor-focused information and reporting platform for survivors of gender-based violence.



Out of 230 ventures from around the world, Green Story was one of five selected to participate in the Collider startup accelerator program in Amsterdam in late 2019. The company gave a pitch to a room full of startups, agencies and investors and received EUR175,000 in equity investment from the program.

Startups In the Media

This year our startups had an impressive share of media attention. From video interviews to Toronto Star articles, media features of SVZ entrepreneurs reflected their work around social impact and created more awareness around the Social Ventures Zone and our programs, as well as Ryerson University's startup ecosystem.



Christal Earle on Global News

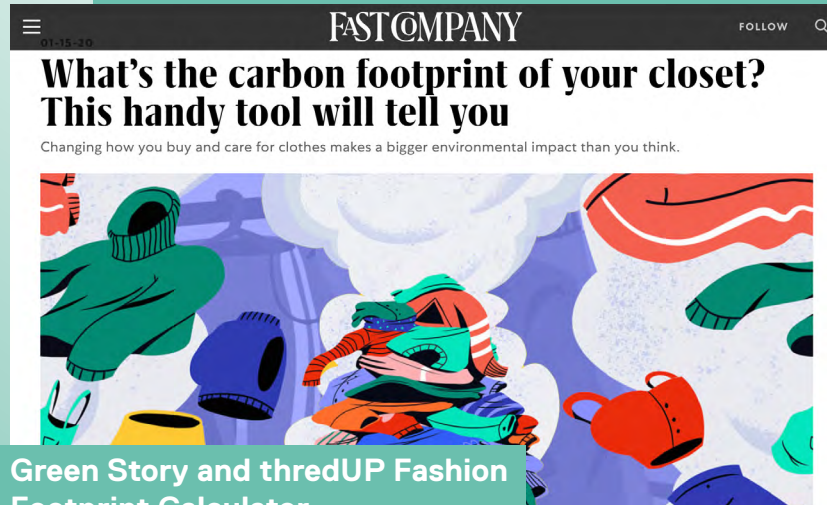


Eyra Abraham on TVO

a. HOW AI CAN ASSIST ACCESSIBILITY
The Disability Market **tvo**

Non-profit tech company designs app to help Toronto's homeless

Ample Labs ChalmersBot Launch in the Toronto Star



Green Story and thredUP Fashion Footprint Calculator

Ryerson
University

SV Social
Ventures
Zone

Marketing and Engagement

2,716 Twitter Followers

(5.27% increase from 2018-2019)

661 Instagram Followers

(66.5% increase from 2018-2019)

588 Facebook Likes

(6.5% increase from 2018-2019)

156 LinkedIn Followers

14,597 Website Visits

(44.5% increase from 2018-2019)

738 Newsletter Subscribers

(14.24% increase from 2018-2019)

Last year the SVZ focused its efforts on storytelling content across its social media channels to raise awareness of SVZ members and their ventures and break down the barriers with our online audience. Our Marketing team also invested more time into growing our professional page on **LinkedIn** to build awareness about our incubator and its programs, founders, and milestones among the professional social impact community.

Founder Portraits was one of the highlights of our marketing campaigns last year—a series of interviews with SVZ Founders about their entrepreneurial journey, experience at the SVZ, and stories behind founding their business. Founder Portraits profiled one SVZ entrepreneur each week for 14 consecutive weeks, and drew in an impressive **15,000 impressions** across our social media channels, and an average **9% engagement rate**.

This year we also refreshed the Social Ventures Zone newsletter and revisited our content strategy for this medium. We introduced an “in this issue” summary section to promote reads, added engagement content such as Sustainability Tips and Recommended Reads, and improved on the newsletter’s design and look.

The SVZ will continue to grow our storytelling efforts across our online channels in the coming years to increase our online reach and tap into new audiences, create more partnerships, and strengthen our brand.

Looking Forward

Since our founding in 2014, we have grown to meet the demand from social enterprises. In the years to come, we will explore a number of ideas that can help take social entrepreneurs – and Ryerson’s unique support of them – to the next level. The following are three (3) key questions we will focus on:

How do we offer our unique learning opportunity to more Ryerson students?

Working on a social startup offers a unique and transformational learning experience for university students, giving them the opportunity to gain practical work skills in the process. In 2020-21 we will build on our pilot internship program to find new ways to place Ryerson students on social startup teams.

How do we support high-potential, scalable social enterprises?

The SVZ is committed to offering a learning environment for entrepreneurs who want to work on social issues. A small number of ventures we encounter discover an opportunity to scale quickly and generate a high degree of positive impact. We will explore how best to offer customized support to these high-potential ventures while maintaining our diverse program and venture mix.

How do we generate and apply targeted micro-funding to early-stage ventures? Many social ventures encounter difficulty at key points in their journeys where a small investment, equity stake or other financial support would make all the difference. We will explore how a targeted “micro-fund” might help ventures at the right time to overcome obstacles and move on to the next stages in their evolution.

