

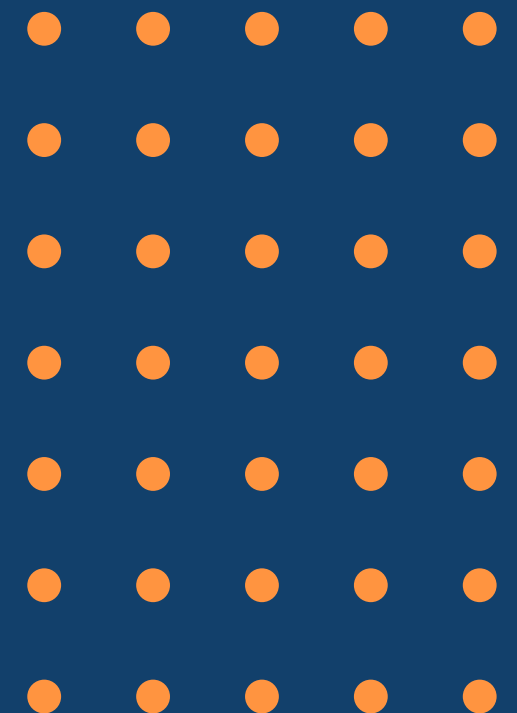
# Playbook SPEND.

Social Procurement & Enterprise Development

From: Campus  
To: Community

Funded By

SSHRC  CRSH





**SPEnD.**

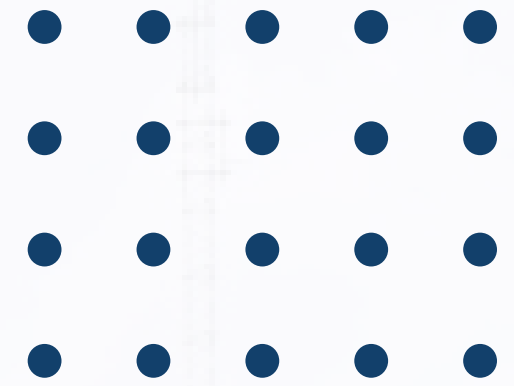
# An Invitation, Not Just a Book

This playbook is your invitation & your guide, crafted not just for you but with you. Every meaningful story begins with people gathering around a shared purpose. It's in these connections that we discover clarity and motivation to transform our problems into opportunities, our challenges into meaningful solutions, and conversations into real community impact. If you care enough to wonder what's possible, then you're already part of it. You stand within a social circle of changemakers from interns & mentors to partners & funders who believe in the power of collective action.

We are glad this playbook is the connection between you and us, because you've arrived at a place where together we are architects shaping not our ideas but the future of our society and community. Together, we know that even the smallest efforts can start a movement and spark momentum. This commitment to continuously support our community is what drives and fuels us. When each of us steps up and takes part, together we become the ones who build something better. It's a shared responsibility, one that asks us not just to imagine change, but to help shape it.. This playbook isn't just a document; it's a gathering point, a call to action.

**If change is in your mind, you are exactly where you need to be.**

**Welcome to SPEnD**



# Land Acknowledgement

Algonquin College campuses in Ottawa, Perth and Pembroke are located on the traditional unceded and unsundered territory of the Anishinàbe Algonquin People. The Algonquin People have inhabited and cared for these lands since time immemorial. We take this time to express our gratitude and respect to them and to the land for all that it has provided and will continue to provide.

As a post-secondary institution, we acknowledge the harms done to Indigenous Peoples and are committed to learning from the past. We pledge to promote healing and resilience as we move forward in partnership with the Algonquin Nations, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in a spirit of reconciliation.

While we recognize that territorial acknowledgements are only one step in cultivating greater respect for and inclusion of Indigenous Peoples, we commit to accompanying these words with actions. We are dedicated to building a future and community that is better for all.

We pledge to continue exploring and making meaningful contributions to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.

# SPEND. Highlights

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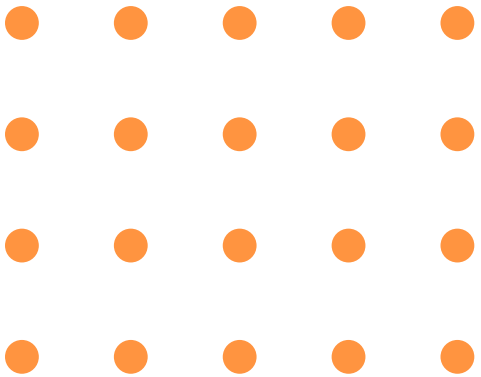
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# The Heart of SPEnD.

SPEnD, [Social Procurement & Enterprise Development](#), is an applied research initiative that connects education with social impact. Its purpose is built on a model that shows how colleges can strengthen their communities through student empowerment, collaboration and community engagement.

SPEnD is grounded in the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) (UN SDG'S), aligning each project with global goals for 2030. Through this framework SPEnD demonstrates how colleges can move beyond the classroom directly building sustainable communities.



Launched in 2022, SPEnD was powered by the [Social Innovation Lab](#) at Algonquin College in partnership with the School of Business and Hospitality. The Lab brought its expertise in community research and social innovation, while the School contributed its knowledge of business and entrepreneurship. Together with the assistance of our friends from IBM Centre for Advanced Studies (CAS) and Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan), the team created a model that turns academic learning into applied action.

SPEnD's framework was shaped by linking business with social innovation through four closely connected pillars that became the foundation of our work:



**SOCIAL ENTERPRISE**



**SOCIAL PROCUREMENT**

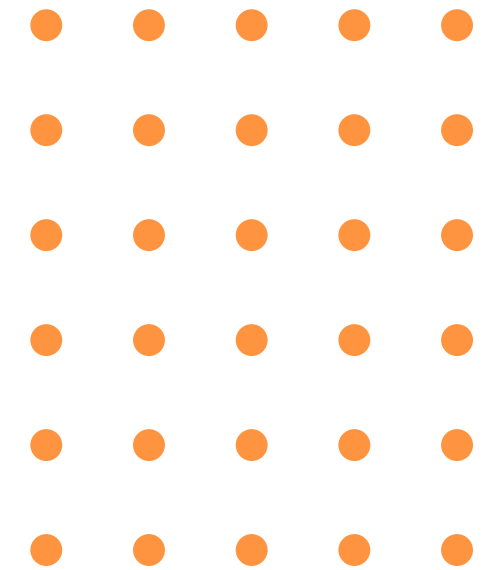


**SOCIAL FINANCE**



**SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

# Our **Home** has **4 pillars**. Come on in!



## Social Enterprise

Underlying SPEnD is the concept of a social enterprise, which means a business serving social objectives as its primary purpose. By understanding how a café in Buenos Aires empowers single mothers, or how a recycling startup in Nairobi delivers impact, SPEnD armed changemakers with inspiration and blueprints. This pillar ensured that our solutions in Canada were informed & inspired by the best ideas worldwide.



## Social Finance

Through a study of the capacity of the college sector in Canada to participate in the financial markets, SPEnD compiled a Social Finance Report mapping out how colleges might tap into funding that values social returns alongside financial returns. This pillar taught students to speak the language of investors and philanthropists, bridging the gap between idealism and economic reality.

## Social Procurement

Gather knowledge on how colleges can purchase goods and services in ways that generate social and community benefits. This meant examining how routine college purchases, such as choosing local suppliers for campus needs or contracting service providers who employ people facing barriers, can operate as community investment. Under this pillar, SPEnD promoted procurement practices that prioritize socially minded vendors and demonstrated that value for money can also mean value for community.



## Social Entrepreneurship

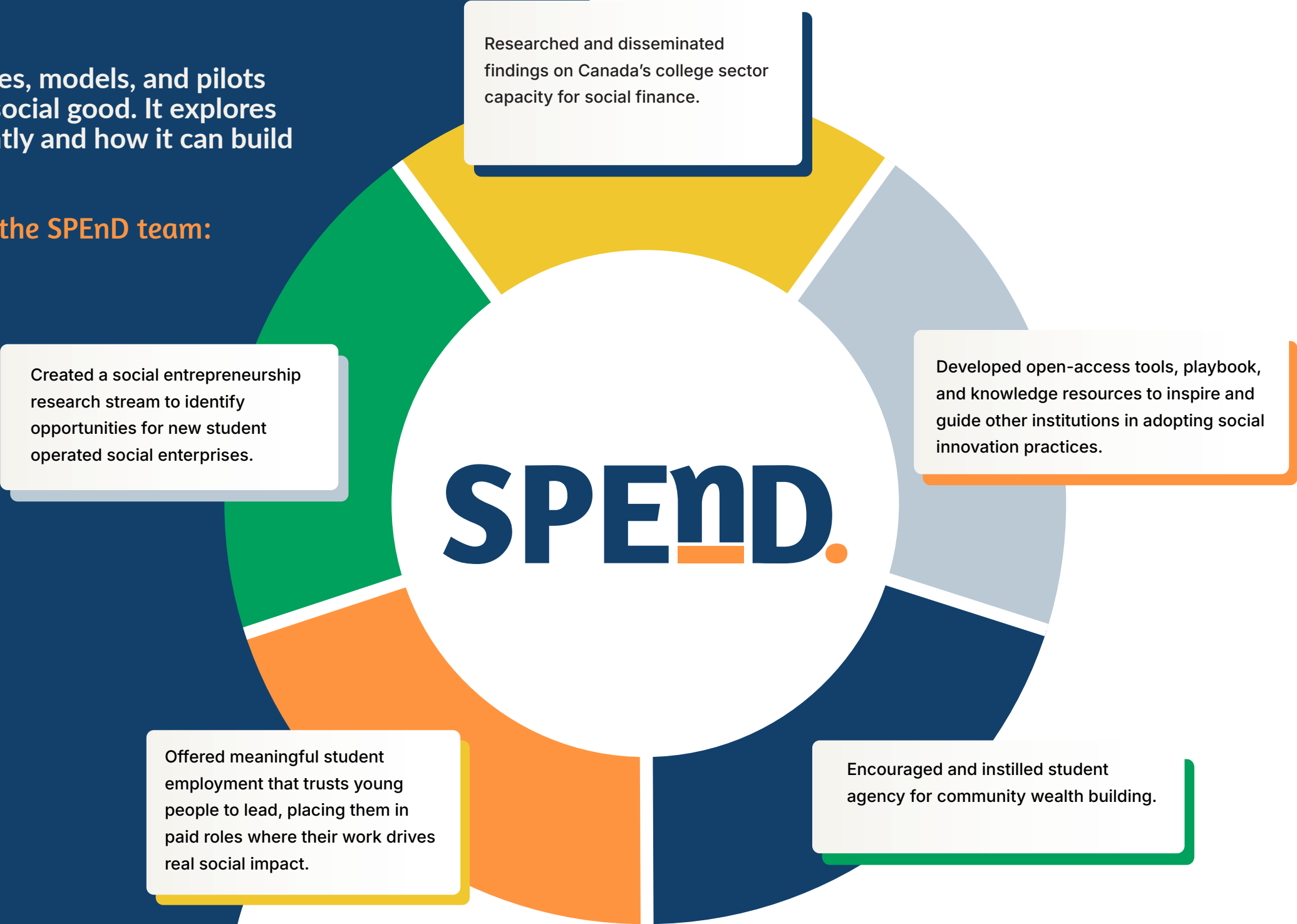
Using business principles and strategies to address social or environmental problems, creating both social impact and financial sustainability. This pillar uses business principles and strategies to address social or environmental problems, creating both social impact and financial sustainability. It focused on providing mentorship, training, and hands-on opportunities for SPEnD interns to develop ideas that would drive impact.



# Our Core

In simple terms, SPEnD researches, models, and pilots new ways of doing business for social good. It explores how a college can spend differently and how it can build differently.

Over the course of 2022 - 2025, the SPEnD team:





## The Idea That Started a Movement

“What if educational institutions leverage their students’ creativity, their community connections, and their purchasing power to create lasting **social** change?”

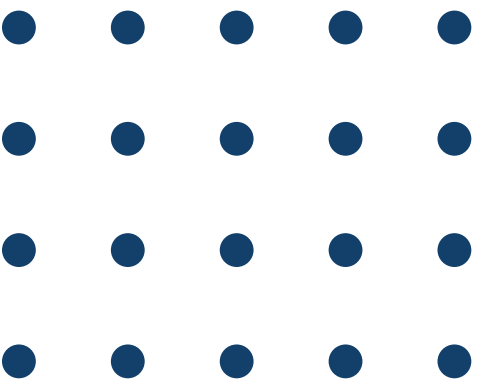
# Rethinking Institutional Impact

## Inside college campuses,

Bright minds are everywhere, students with purpose in their hearts and skills in their hands. In these hallways that are filled with the buzz of conversations, we see flyers on walls that say “Be the Change!”, “Shape the future”, “Support local.”

## But what’s beneath all that energy?

Educational institutions are anchors in the society. No community is complete without one. They hold the power to drive change and shape our communities. They are meant not only to educate minds but also to nurture empathy, spark innovation, and uplift communities. Yet that full potential often goes untapped.



## This is where the idea of social infrastructure comes in.

Defined by the McConnell Foundation, Social Infrastructure is the organizational arrangements and deliberate investments in society's systems, relationships and structures that enable society to create a resilient, just, equitable and sustainable world. (McConnell Foundation, Maximizing Capacities of Advanced Education Institutions to Build Social Infrastructure, 2017).

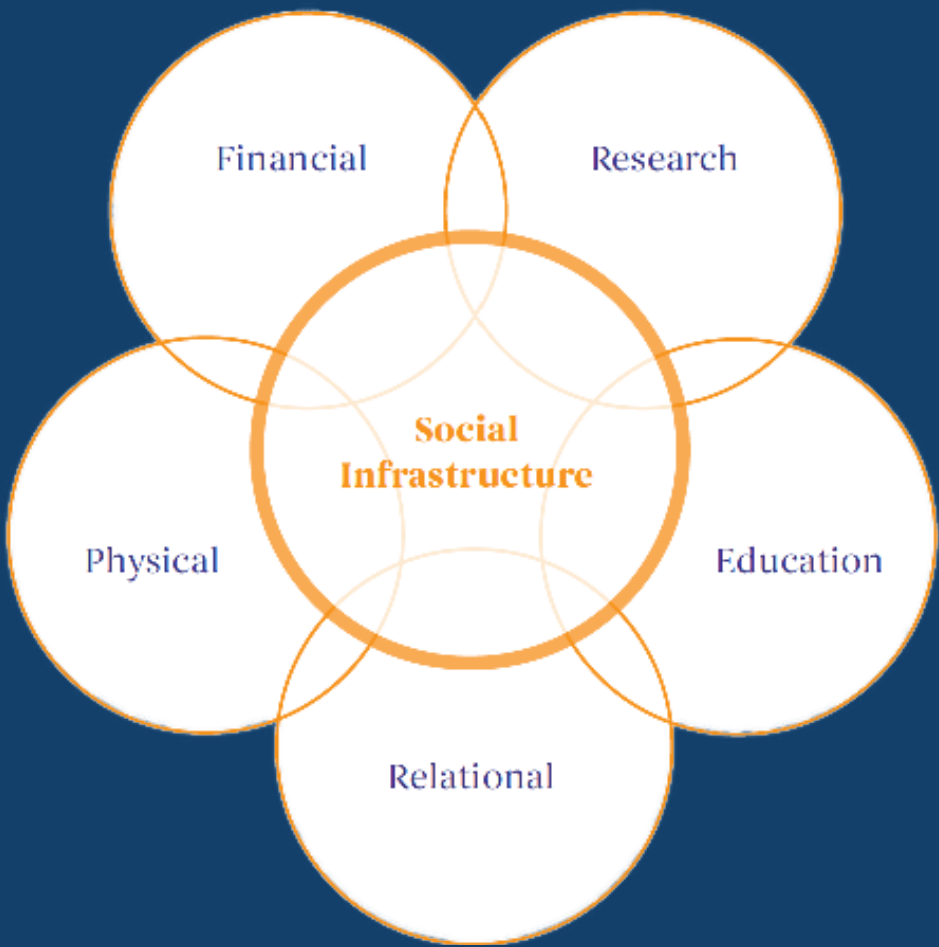


Figure 2. Instruments for Institutional Engagement. McConnell Foundation, Maximizing Capacities of Advanced Education Institutions to Build Social Infrastructure, 2017).

There are two powerful sectors that usually run in parallel and don't intersect:

Education

Financial

Inside every institution, **education** is where students develop expertise needed to drive social change. **Finance** is where investment strategies and procurement decisions that shape communities take place. Although these two sectors exist within the same model, they rarely intersect. As a result, the opportunity to turn student creativity and knowledge into social impact is often left unrealized.

What if institutions became launchpads for students to build real community impact?

**SPEND**.exists as proof that:



Students could be more than passive beneficiaries in post secondary institutions.



Students can be architects of a sustainable future for our communities.



If you give students the chance, they could lead, build, and demonstrate that social impact can start from campus.

It wasn't just a work placement, but a system that allows students to shape the future of our community from campus.

# The SPEND. Effect



# By the numbers



**Xplore  
impact**

**\$190,000**  
in paid wages



Empowered **20** students to drive impact and fuel change through paid internships.

A crowdsourced world map featuring over **450 social enterprises** from around the globe.



**GREEN  
LOOP  
CLUB**

From defining what's a social enterprise

**SOCIAL**  
SIDEKICK

To launching **two** official social enterprises researched, created, and run entirely by students.



**4,200,000,000**

Research across **140 Canadian colleges** revealed a collective **\$4.2B in investment holdings** - a finding captured in our **Social Finance Study & Report**.



Many **Feasts** to keep our students nourished with food from diverse cultures.

# SPEnD.

## More than a name



The founding student cohort collaborating during a project meeting.

SPEnD, social procurement and enterprise development, is much more than a title or time frame. SPEnD's identity is less about an institution and more about a living network of changemakers. It was a movement welcoming anyone with the heart to make a difference.

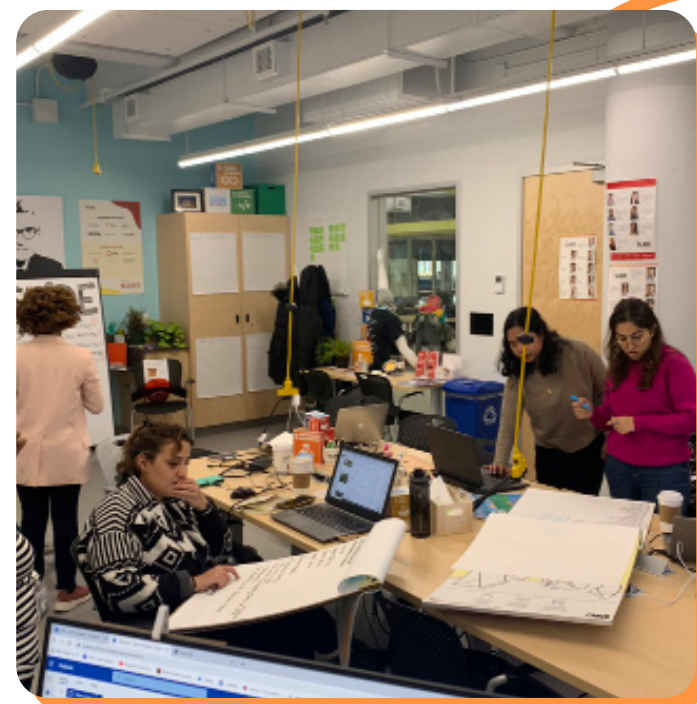
The name "SPEnD" itself is a playful twist on the concept of spending. Yes, it's an acronym for its focus areas, but it also asks us to reflect:

Can we spend in ways that strengthen our communities?

To "spend" is to invest in people, in ideas, and in hope.

## Not just another Project

The two visionary mentors, Kevin Holmes & Jaswinder Kaur, and founders of the program cultivated a culture where hierarchy dissolved and every voice carried weight. They welcomed the students not as helpers but co-designers of what SPEnD has become.



Once the culture was set, the founding student cohort focused on building SPEnD's foundations. They began by defining the core questions that would shape the initiative's direction.

With guidance from mentors, the cohort clarified SPEnD's identity by exploring its branding, vision, and role within Algonquin College and the broader social innovation ecosystem. They also developed SPEnD's mission statement, reframing how institutions could participate in driving social change.

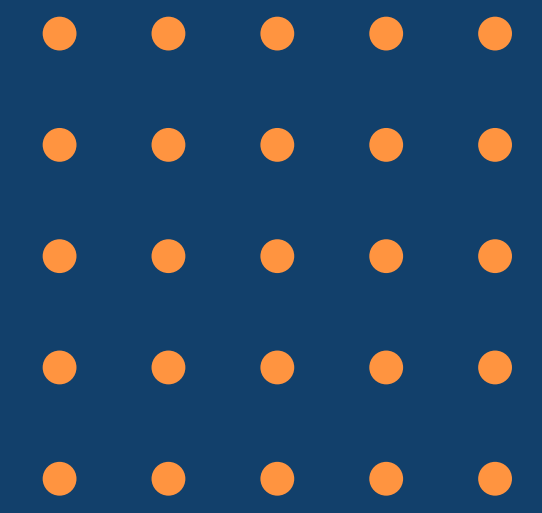
At the same time, the cohort established SPEnD's initial operational structure. They applied project management principles to develop workflows and set up essential systems such as communication pathways.

These foundations ensured that future cohorts could move faster and build on what had already been created. With clarity in place, the team turned its focus to understanding social innovation through the lens of social enterprises.

Once the groundwork was set and the questions were clear, the path forward also became clear. Through practice, SPEnD interns decided that their primary focus would be to explore how social innovation can move through the world of social enterprises.



# From: Campus To: Community





## Social Enterprise

Before launching social enterprises of our own, we needed to understand them in depth and what social innovation looks like through them.

SPEnD's founding student cohort started by defining social enterprises as

***businesses that direct the majority of profits toward a social mission, rather than to private owners or shareholders.***

To truly understand social enterprises, and not just the definition but how they work in real life, we explored stories and researched examples from around the world. The interns also launched a SPEnD website with a survey asking the community to submit social enterprises that inspire them, helping us collect a wide range of lived examples. This became one of SPEnD's early experiments in communal knowledge.

The survey brought in examples from countries far beyond our initial research, and exposed SPEnD to the depth, variety, and creativity of social enterprises worldwide.



Click to preview

It opened the door to a truly global perspective on how social enterprises are reshaping economies and communities.

By May 2023 SPEnD had already crowdsourced around 430 global social enterprises. We ended up with a foundational list of global social enterprises that we gave the initial purpose of inspiring future cohorts when it was time to launch SPEnD social enterprises..



The Database was full of enterprises with different social goals and from different parts of the world. So we decided to organize them based on the SDG they support and the country they run their social enterprise in.

A year later by May 2024, SPEnD was able to collect 1000+ social enterprises from around the world. A number we are extremely proud of and grateful to everyone who has contributed.

As the Database grew and became richer with lived examples, the team realized the value extended beyond internal use. We knew what we had could be a valuable community resource to many groups from social entrepreneurs to community partners.

It became a core part of our mission to showcase the diversity of social enterprises, foster social innovation, and inspire entrepreneurs worldwide to make an impact. What started as a foundational research initiative, quickly evolved into a vision:



*A tool that could bring the world of social enterprise to anyone, anywhere!*

After we ended up with a database of global social enterprises, that tool became

# Xplore impact

# Xplore impact

55

Countries Represented

464

Enterprises Mapped  
and still counting

1000+

Enterprises Collected

## Xplore Impact

*Initiated Q3 2023, Released Q3 2025*

*Xplore Impact is an interactive digital map and an open access resource that profiles social enterprises from around the world. A tool of inspiration, a tool of teaching, a tool of impact.*



### ARE YOU ON THE IMPACT MAP



Globally launched on the 7th anniversary of the Social Innovation Lab, Xplore impact is a world map that represents and showcases social enterprises from all around the world. By showcasing examples from across the globe, Xplore Impact brings visibility to the social enterprise movement. Bringing more people into the mindset that social enterprises is the future of business in Canada, Xplore Impact aspires to demonstrate the achievements elsewhere and allow future entrepreneurs to be inspired. It is designed to shift mindsets, inform new models of entrepreneurship, and make the possibilities of socially-driven business accessible to anyone. Built from an early internal database envisioned by SPeND students, Xplore Impact has since been reimaged and refined into a more accessible, intuitive, and high-impact tool that reflects the creativity and ambition of every cohort that shaped it.



### Social procurement

Xplore Impact holds powerful potential for social procurement, purchasing with impact. Whether you are an institution looking for a local service, or a business in need of ethical printing, Xplore Impact helps people identify vendors that align with community values.

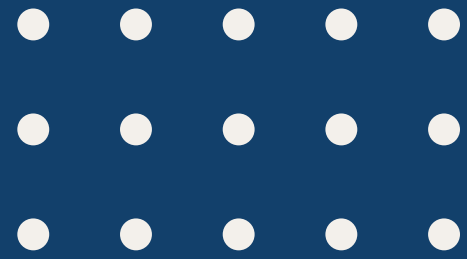
It makes the market more transparent and helps direct purchasing power toward the social enterprises Xplore Impact showcases. This is where Xplore Impact shifts from being a map to a catalyst. It connects inspiration with action, allowing buyers to support businesses that give back to their communities. Xplore Impact becomes a natural entry point that links the world of social enterprises to the systems that can sustain them.



### Social Entrepreneurship

By gathering social enterprises from around the world, Xplore Impact offers students and educators a living library of examples to learn from. Xplore Impact Influence continues to grow as it has reached the classrooms of Algonquin College. Adopted by the Business Management & Entrepreneurship program, Xplore Impact is set to inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs by showcasing social enterprises with different social missions, models, and services that you can bring into your community. Now, with teaching toolkits available, educators can bring Xplore Impact into their classrooms and use global examples to inspire new ways of thinking about entrepreneurship.

School of  
Business & Hospitality  
**ALGONQUIN**  
COLLEGE



# Social Finance & Procurement

As SPEnD's first cohort completed their exploration of social enterprises, the next step was to understand the systems that can support and scale their growth. This led us to social finance.

*Social finance directs capital to generate social and economic returns, enabling opportunities created by social enterprises*

Rather than investing solely for profit, social finance directs resources toward community well-being, environmental sustainability, and social purpose organizations, from community bonds to institutional investment portfolios.

SPEnD sees colleges as institutions with untapped potential to use their financial assets for community development. Although they manage substantial investments, few consider how these resources could strengthen local economies and support social outcomes, which shaped SPEnD's dual focus on social procurement and social finance, both centred on improving people's lives.

In May 2023 the Canadian government launched the Social Finance Fund (SFF), which was valued

**\$755 Million**

The SFF reduces the risk of investing in social innovation by directing public dollars to social finance intermediaries. More than a funding mechanism, it became a catalyst for SPEnD's work, reshaping our understanding of Canada's social finance ecosystem and prompting a key question: How can colleges use social finance to drive community impact?

## Social Finance Report Initiated Q3 2023 Released Q1 2024

As the Fund opened new pathways for social purpose organizations, SPEnD decided to dig deeper into the SFF ecosystem. With flexible capital now available for social purpose organizations, SPEnD explored:

*Where do colleges fit and how could they use social finance to strengthen their communities?*

SPEnD's students took on the challenge of providing the factual groundwork needed to begin answering this question.

### The Social Finance Model

To clarify this opportunity, the team developed a simple model (Figure 3) illustrating how social impact emerges at the intersection of three forces: Canada's Social Finance Fund, existing college investments, and the college sector's mission and values. Together, these components revealed a shared opportunity for educational institutions to deploy financial resources in ways that contribute to social innovation and community well being.

### Purpose of the Report

This report served multiple aims:

- Provide foundational data on college investment holding across Canada
- Encourage colleges to align their investment strategies with community wealth building.
- Demonstrate how colleges can become influential players in Canada's emerging social finance market.
- Equip students and stakeholders with knowledge to engage in financial systems that prioritize social return.

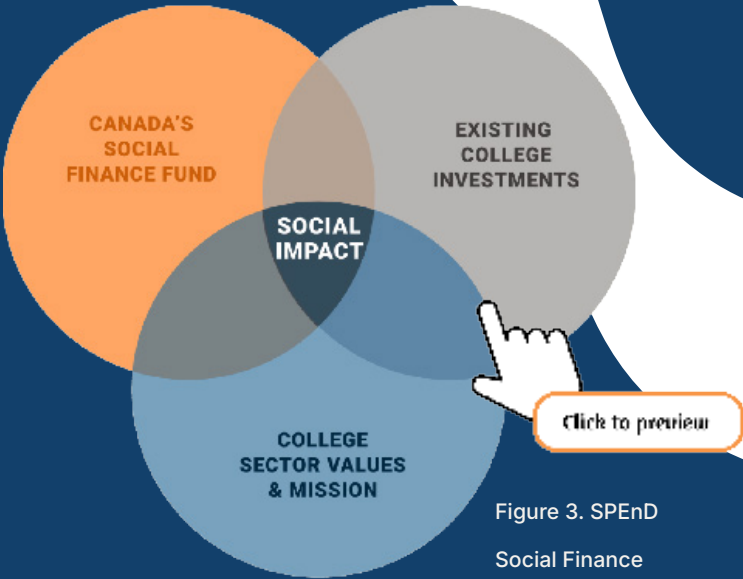


Figure 3. SPEnD Social Finance Model

This effort advanced SPEnD's core mandate:

*To curate novel foundational research on Canada's college sector's capacity for social procurement and social finance*

To build this dataset, students analyzed audited 2022 financial statements from 124 Canadian colleges, reviewing and classifying investment holdings into short-term, long-term, and endowment categories. Financial statements were collected from college websites and provincial government reporting systems.

To ensure rigour and consistency, the team used InsightScope, a knowledge-synthesis platform developed at Algonquin College. The tool enabled students to create custom abstraction forms, independently review financial statements, reconcile discrepancies, and assemble a consistent, reliable dataset.

*The results were staggering.*

## \$4.2 Billion

Was total investment holdings identified across Canada's college sector

- \$2.4B in short-term
- \$1.2B in long-term
- \$0.6B in endowments.

Behind those numbers is a quiet truth: we are sitting on a massive, untapped pool of community wealth. This discovery doesn't just signal potential but it opened a room for discussion.

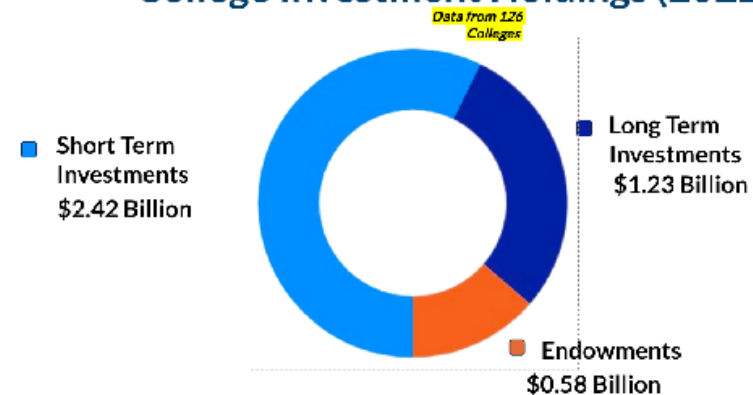
### Implications

We now have sectoral evidence that education institutions have the capacity to lead in social finance. If your mission as an educational institution includes community impact, equity, or innovation, then the next step is aligning your financial practices with that purpose.

*The capacity is here. The moment is here.*

*The leadership is yours to claim.*

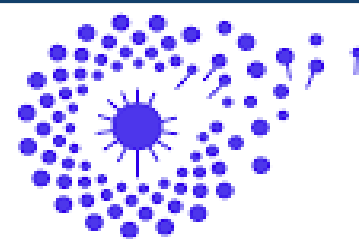
### College Investment Holdings (2022)



SPEND.

## Community Catalyst Summit

SPEnD presented at the Community Catalyst Initiative Summit (2024) in Saskatoon, where community finance leaders from across Canada convened to strengthen connections and deepen collaboration. Our session shared key insights from the SPEnD research project, supporting the Summit's goal of enhancing learning and knowledge exchange across the sector. Discussions advanced a shared advocacy agenda and collective priorities for growing community finance, with particular attention to the role of colleges in building community wealth. The experience underscored how research, partnership, and coordinated action can accelerate impact and strengthen Canada's social finance ecosystem.



**CATALYST**  
COMMUNITY FINANCE

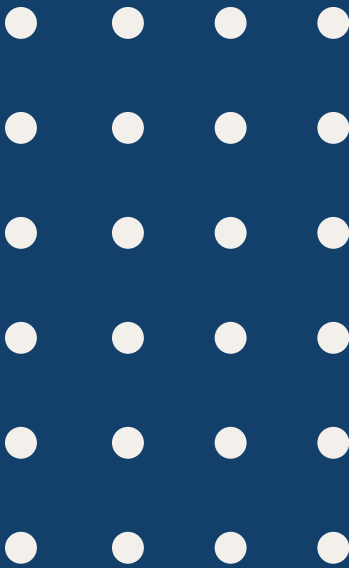
## CICAN Applied Research Symposium

At the 2024 Cican Applied Research Symposium, SPEnD stepped into the national spotlight by presenting its Social Finance Report, highlighting how Canada's colleges can play a meaningful role in advancing community wealth building through social finance. Sharing our research with educators, researchers, and sector leaders helped position social finance as a concrete opportunity for colleges to align their financial capacity with community impact, positioning social finance not as theory but as a practical opportunity for colleges to lead real community impact. It was a moment where SPEnD contributed new knowledge to a space that needed it. It invited institutions to see their financial capacity as a tool for social change and affirmed that student-led research can shape the future of applied innovation in Canada.





# Social Entrepreneurship



## The Purpose Behind SPEnD. Social Enterprises

### Empowering Interns

By designing, launching, and managing social enterprises, students gained entrepreneurial experience they can't find in a classroom. These projects gave them new skill sets in research, marketing, operations, sales, partnership development, and business management. More importantly, they left with a mindset of agency. When you start something from scratch and watch it grow, you don't see yourself as "just a student" anymore; you start to realize your capacity to shape systems.

### Supporting Our Community

Each venture was designed to address an actual gap, often identified through student experience itself. Whether it was about circular fashion or equitable marketing access, these projects didn't guess what the community needed. They listened, they asked, and they responded. This made every social enterprise not only a learning tool, but a vehicle for direct service.

The first cohort had already mapped what social enterprises could look like across the world, giving the next generation a library of models to learn from. Then came the social finance and procurement stream, which revealed that institutions have the investment capacity and procurement pathways to support social change. Because of what they built, we stepped into a phase where it was possible to create the student enterprises SPEnD had been preparing for.

Before we introduce the social enterprises SPEnD launched, it's important to tell you why we launched them. We didn't want interns to only learn about social innovation, we wanted them to build it. Instead of assigning interns to assist existing business systems, we gave them the opportunity to launch their own. We challenged them to think like founders, not followers, and imagine what a business built for impact could look like.

This approach was loosely inspired by the Evergreen Cooperative Initiative in Cleveland and the University of Maryland's Community Wealth Building Practicum. Their models centered the community by launching enterprises and leveraging local procurement. While those initiatives worked with anchor institutions, SPEnD reimagined this in a student-powered context, to create from inside campuses to the community.

Giving students ownership of these enterprises transformed them into social entrepreneurs in action. These enterprises weren't side projects but real challenges, real opportunities, real services, real businesses, real communities served. Through them, SPEnD began to prototype what student powered change can look like in action.

## Supporting UN Sustainable Development Goals

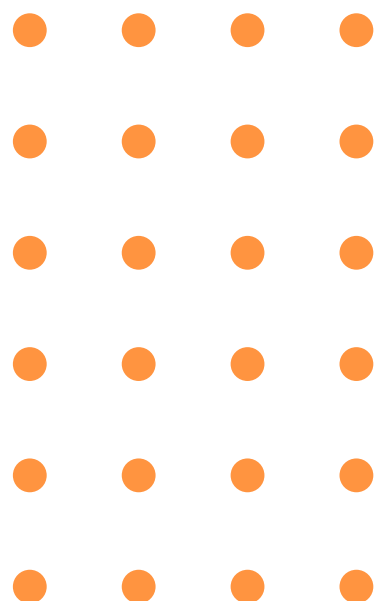
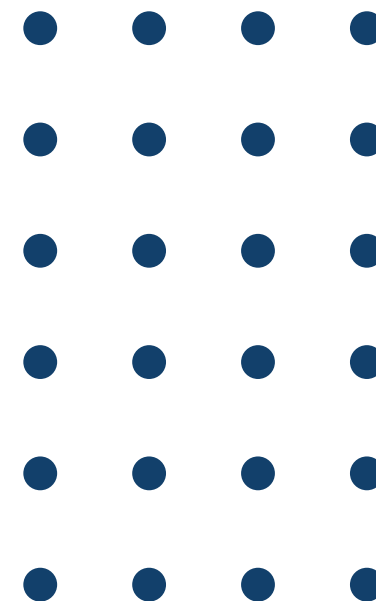
SPEnD examined Canada's SDG indicators to identify where meaningful student-led action could contribute to national gaps.

The data revealed strong progress in some areas and significant gaps in others, particularly within Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12) and Decent Work and Community Well-Being (SDG 8 & SDG 11). These insights guided the development of SPEnD's social enterprise directions, ensuring that future student projects respond to real, measurable challenges in Canada.





**At the end,  
we launched social enterprises that we  
are incredibly proud of.**



# GREEN LOOP CLUB



720

Lanyards Collected

700

Lanyards Reused  
in Conferences

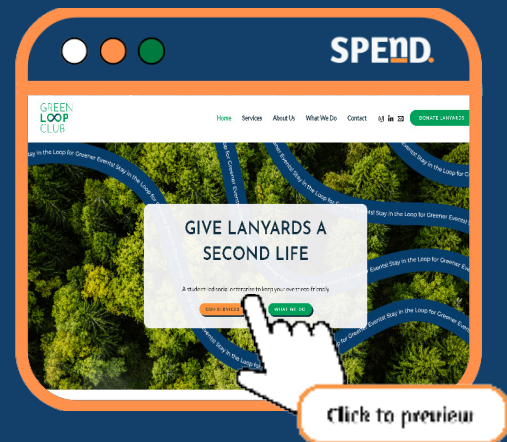
28Kg

of Waste Avoided

## Green Loop Club (GLC)

Launched Q1 2025

*Ottawa's first Lanyard Library, a social enterprise led by students where we collect lanyards and reuse them by lending them to future conferences instead of having them end up as waste.*



Most people don't think twice about lanyards. You wear them for a few hours at a conference and then they end up as waste. Across institutions, these small items add up quickly and they aren't biodegradable. Meaning they sit in landfills for years which leads to a long-term waste problem hiding in plain sight.

*We saw an opportunity to turn something ordinary into something circular.*

So we launched the Green Loop Club as a simple, practical way to reduce waste by giving lanyards a second life. Our model works in two parts:

- 1. Collecting donated lanyards -** We run campaigns using different marketing strategies to collect lanyards from students, the community, or partners.
- 2. Reusing lanyards for conferences -** We reach out for event organizers or they ask for lanyards from our library. We pair this with a full-service offering badge design, printing, delivery, and admission management creating a stress-free sustainability option.

Many attendees left our activations rethinking the role of sustainability in everyday operations. What once felt disposable has a sustainable choice. This shift from unconscious use to intentional reuse is exactly the kind of awareness SPEnD aims to create. Behind the scenes, the student team experienced what it truly means to build something real. They learned how to manage a system, build relationships with partners, design outreach, operate a service, and offer event support. The Green Loop Club became a living classroom and a prototype of youth-powered systems change.

Green Loop Club contributes directly to **SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production**, and it sparked new conversations across campus about what sustainable behavior can look like when led by students. When you redesign something as small as a lanyard, you begin changing how people think about waste, responsibility, and the everyday choices that shape larger systems.

### GLC PARTNERS



# SOCIAL SIDEKICK

## Social Sidekick

Launched Q3 2025

*Social Sidekick is a pop-up hub where student entrepreneurs are given a space to use as their hub where they can showcase and test their business ideas for two weeks.*



A space from us to us. What's better than supporting other student entrepreneurs as one. We saw an opportunity to take advantage of our lab space and repurpose it in a way that would continue to support student innovation. This initiative was designed to provide practical experience, visibility, and a supportive environment for aspiring student entrepreneurs while addressing **SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth**.



In July 2025, Social Sidekick Space welcomed Armelle, founder of Evented by Armelle, an event planning and design company dedicated to creating unique and memorable experiences.

For two weeks, Armelle transformed the space into her creative hub - showcasing her event décor concepts, and networking daily. "I used every bit of knowledge from my program (Business - Management and Entrepreneurship) - from marketing to building a website to even accounting," she said.



Her promotion strategy focused on LinkedIn and Instagram, which she called her "biggest platforms" for drawing attention to her Social Sidekick residency.

Even though it was a quiet summer on campus, Armelle still had steady foot traffic and encouragement from students, department staff, and the Students' Association, who dropped by to show their support.

When asked about her favourite part of the experience, she shared:

"Being able to have a space to create and showcase my art in a meaningful way - and to practice more of my art - that was incredible." With a 5/5 rating and 10/10 likelihood to recommend, Armelle had no suggestions for improvement:

"I would change anything about the experience - it exceeded the expectations I had from the beginning."

Her advice to future participants?

"Use its full capacity... don't be afraid to rearrange the space to fit your vision."

Through her Social Sidekick experience, Armelle left with new contacts, a stronger brand presence, and greater confidence - showing that with the right space and community support, even a quiet season can spark major entrepreneurial growth.

SOCIAL SIDEKICK Graduates



# Community Engagement

The goal was simple but powerful which is to spark action and show attendees that addressing the SDGs is not just a government or institutional responsibility, but something each of us can participate in, right where we are.

“This experience was a great experience for me because I got to organize an event, learn more about the SDGs and, as the MC, conquer public speaking.”



- Sophia Venables



Alongside these projects, SPEnD's timeline is studded with events and advocacy that amplified its impact. Part of our strategy was to go out and get involved directly with the community in social innovation, entrepreneurship, or just getting inspired by local industry leaders. Being out there involved with the community was always a memorable experience for students as it allowed them to connect, get involved, and learn



## SDG Fair

As part of SDG Month, SPEnD hosted an SDG Fair integrated with the Social Innovation course from the Business Management and Entrepreneurship program, bringing the global conversation close to campus. More than an awareness event, it was a gathering of local changemakers where community leaders and students explored how the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) could be translated into real, local action. The fair was a collaborative effort between the School of Business & Hospitality and the Social Innovation Lab.



We welcomed inspiring voices such as Mike Bulthuis (Executive Director, Ottawa Community Land Trust), Erika Randall (Founder, Shared Value), and Jed Looker (Professor, Human-Centered Design Lab), who each shared how they are advancing sustainable development through housing, business, and education in Ottawa.



## International Women's Day

Women lead a huge part of social innovation around the world. In fact, 45% of social enterprises are

led by women. To honor that and the women's place in the society we decided to initiate an open house in our Social Innovation Lab to commemorate International Women's Day. Through this activity we took insights from many different women about their daily lives, learned more about women that inspired them, and of course enjoyed free popcorn.

Part of International Women's Week, SPEnD students had the privilege to attend the conference "Women Creating a More Sustainable World" hosted by Invest Ottawa. It was an inspiring event centered on the three key spheres of sustainability: Innovation, Investment, and Entrepreneurship.



## CICAN Applied Research Conf.

At the 2024 Cican Applied Research Symposium, SPEnD stepped into the national spotlight by presenting SPEnD's Social Finance Report on how colleges can drive community impact by embracing social finance. Sharing our research and findings on a stage surrounded by educators, researchers, and industry leaders helped raise awareness of SPEnD's work and proved that student-led innovation belongs in serious policy conversations. More than a presentation, it was a moment to engage, listen, and grow. We weren't just showcasing but we were contributing this time. In doing so, we helped position social finance as a real path forward for institutions seeking lasting community change.



## CAN MASHUP 23, 24, 25

Capital Angel Network's Mashup was a check for SPEnD to see what innovation looks like beyond campus. A room alive with founders, investors, entrepreneurs and most importantly bold ideas. From pitchfest to panel talks, MASHUP offered a rare look into how ideas get challenged, funded, and launched in the real world. In 2025, SPEnD interns joined as volunteers, supporting the event while gaining insight from the inside. MASHUP gave us a deeper understanding of the entrepreneurial spirit & thinking, showed us the stakes of early-stage innovation, and made us reflect on how our own ideas could stand up in that space.



## AC Applied Research Day

What's a better place and space to showcase our progress and mission than the halls where people are studying to create change. Every year, SPEnD showed up to AC Applied Research Day with something new to share. As one of Algonquin College's largest showcases, the event brings together over 120 student and faculty projects focused on solving real world problems. In 2023 and 2024, we introduced the SPEnD model to students and the progress we made in areas of social finance & procurement. By 2025 we came back with launched social enterprises and how we transformed into social entrepreneurs. SPEnD was a living example for students to show how social impact can come out from campus to the community and beyond.



## Volunteering at L-SPARK SaaS Showcase

SPEnD students volunteered at L-SPARK's SaaS Showcase, where startups pitched their businesses on stage before a 300-person audience of investors, mentors and community partners. As they supported the showcase and interacted with speakers and guests, the interns gained insight into how innovation ecosystems function and how many people contribute behind the scenes. It broadened their understanding of how collective effort fuels entrepreneurship and why participation matters.





## Collaborating With Foodworks Ottawa Catering

SPEnD collaborated with FoodWorks, a social enterprise run through Operation

Come Home that empowers at-risk youth through employment and end homelessness in the community. Instead of just observing, we contributed by helping share their story. We interviewed team members and amplified their mission across our channels. It was a reminder that supporting social change doesn't always mean leading, it can also mean lifting the people already doing the work. For SPEnD interns, it expanded our understanding of how impact can take shape and how many different forms social enterprise can take.



## Volunteering at Accelerate Ottawa

SPEnD interns joined AccelerateOTT hosted by invest ottawa as volunteers.

The event brought together founders, funders, and builders to spark innovation and support local startups. By volunteering, SPEnD interns gained exposure to what makes the entrepreneurship successful through storytelling pitch strategy, and connections. From conversations with Invest Ottawa leaders to catching powerful moments like the startup world cup, it reminded SPEnD interns that being part of change sometimes means stepping in with open hands. Ready to help, ready to learn.



## Rideau Rockcliffe Community Centre

Our relationship with the Rideau Rockcliffe Community Center has grown

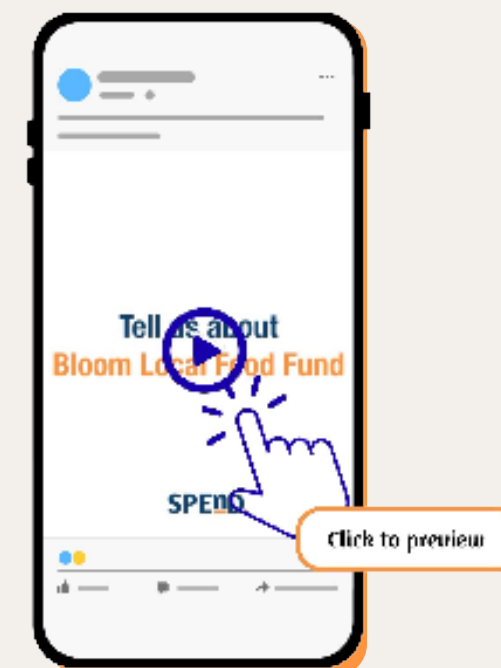
into one of the most meaningful relationships SPEnD has made. It felt like a natural fit with both sides focus on making impact and empowering our community. We first witnessed the depth of that work in their Annual General Meeting, where nonprofits and social enterprises came together to share their services, products, and purpose. Later, we saw the full vision of the local ecosystem during our tour of the RRCRC. What was a former school revealed itself as a thriving network of community programs & services. For SPEnD, it became a mirror of the kind of future we want to build.



## Collaborating with Bloom Local Food Fund

SPEnD met with Katy McIntyre, fund manager at Bloom Local Food Fund, to

better understand how social change can also come through finance. Bloom is a place-based social impact fund focused on building sustainable food systems in rural communities by investing in local enterprises that deliver both returns and deep community impact. For SPEnD interns, the conversation opened up new ways of thinking that impact isn't just about services but it can be designed into the flow of capital itself.





## CSED Unleashed

CSED Unleashed has been a constant in SPEnD's journey. A space where we returned each year to learn, connect, and grow alongside Ottawa's social enterprise community. From supporting our mentor Jaswinder during her panel on investment readiness, to celebrating Black History month and community-led innovation, the event has always been a mirror of what SPEnD stands for.

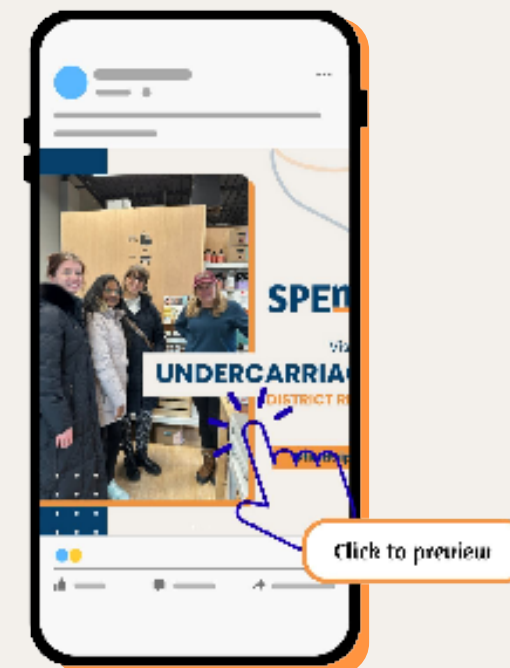
In 2025, it came full circle. What began as a place to show up became a place to launch the Green Loop Club. It held its first-ever presence at Unleashed, turning community engagement into a client partnership. It was a reminder that when we stay present, grounded, and involved, opportunities grow with us.



## UnderCarriage District Refill

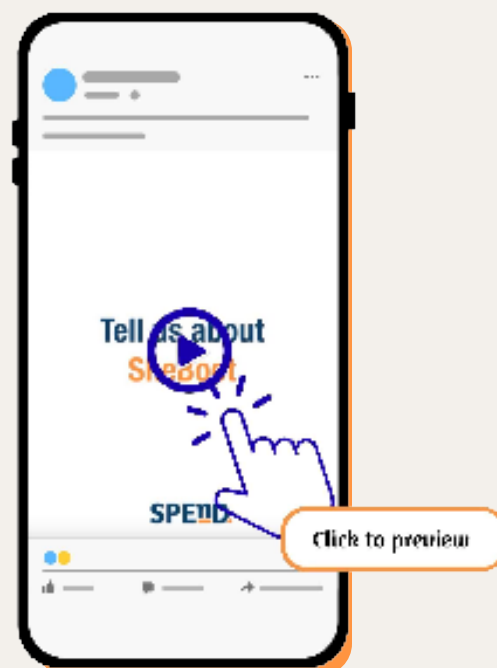
Before launching their own ventures, SPEnD interns visited District Refill to see social entrepreneurship in action.

Led by Julie M. Dorion, founder & CEO of Under carriage Deodorant (District Refill), the tour offered more than a look at sustainable products. It was a lesson in how a local enterprise operates. From refill systems to local maker partnerships, Julie showed SPEnD interns how values translate into business decisions. This visit wasn't just inspiring, it was part of our strategy to ground students in lived examples of impact before they started building their own.



## Collaborating with SheBoot

To better understand how equity plays out in the world of entrepreneurship and investment, SPEnD connected with Julia Elvidge, co-founder of SheBoot. SheBoot is a program dedicated to closing the funding gap for women entrepreneurs. By increasing the number of women both investing and being invested in, SheBoot is creating a more inclusive startup ecosystem. Through this conversation, SPEnD interns saw how systems can be reshaped when capital and confidence are placed in the hands of women ready to lead.



## SVX Columbia Visits the Lab

Sometimes the most meaningful progress happens when ideas travel across borders. In June 2024, SPEnD was shared with a delegation from SVX Colombia during their visit to Algonquin College's Social Innovation Lab. The conversation brought together impact investors, faculty, and applied research leaders to explore how social finance and procurement can support climate action, biodiversity, and gender equity across different contexts. For SPEnD, it was a moment to place our work within a global conversation and to see how student-led research can connect local action to international impact.





## TEDx Mechanicsville: Vitality

SPEnD's Green Loop Club partnered with TEDx Mechanicsville to introduce sustainability into the event's operations by supplying reusable lanyards making TEDx one of our first official clients. In return, TEDx became more than a platform, it became a point in our learning journey experiencing what makes a movement thrive. Aligned with the event's theme of Vitality, this collaboration gave SPEnD access to a community of bold thinkers, an immersive event experience, and insight into how local storytelling fuels systemic energy. It was a mutual exchange of us supporting their mission for impact, and they fed ours.



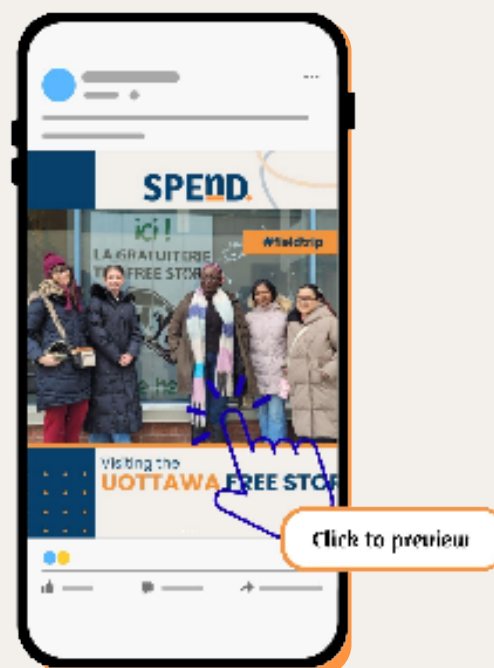
## EnviroCentre Annual Reception

At the EnviroCentre's Annual Reception, held under the theme Making the Magic Happen in Climate, SPEnD was present. Through the Green Loop Club, SPEnD contributed by bringing our focus on reuse and circular design into a space filled with local climate leaders. More than just attending, we were part of a community taking real, practical steps toward climate action, aligning deeply with SPEnD's commitment to community-rooted change. Being there let us connect with people driving change on the ground, and showed how even small interventions, like reused lanyards, have a place in bigger conversations.



## UOttawa Free Store Visit

As part of our strategy to expose interns to real-world examples of student-led innovation, SPEnD visited the uOttawa Free Store - a campus initiative offering clothing, school supplies, and household items at no cost. Led by a passionate student coordinator, the Free Store operates through volunteer support and redistributes excess to other charities in the city. It's more than a service, more like a living system of care and sustainability. Seeing how a student idea grew into a model adopted by campuses worldwide reminded us that local action can spark global inspiration. For SPEnD, it reinforced a core belief: that impact starts with doing.



## AC In-Class Project Showcase

At Algonquin College's In-Class Projects Showcase, SPEnD interns proudly presented The SPEnD Effect—sharing our research, experiments, and growing impact with peers, faculty, and campus partners. It was a space to show not just what we've built, but why it matters. Presenting alongside other student projects helped root our work in a broader culture of innovation at the college—and reminded us that visibility isn't just about celebration. It's about accountability, inspiration, and showing others what student-powered change can look like.



# How We SPEnD and How We Could

Educational institutions play a steady role in the life of their communities. Through education, employment, partnerships, and campus programs, their presence is widely felt. Another role they're meant to play is contributing to social infrastructure through procurement.

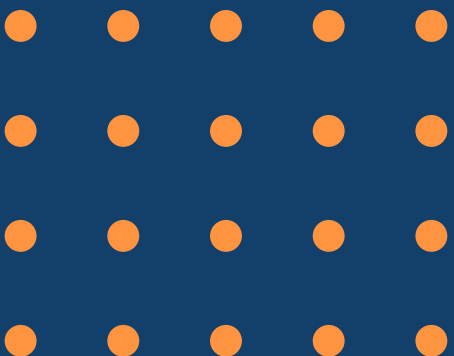
Every institution buys materials, services, food, furnishings, tech, printing, and supplies. These purchasing decisions, often made quietly through routine systems, carry weight far beyond their transactions. They shape which businesses grow, which sectors thrive, and where money circulates.

Across Canada, these systems are often built for efficiency. Procurement teams are trained to meet policy requirements, work within tight budgets, and avoid risk. These are understandable pressures, but in practice they also mean that local vendors and social enterprises are often left out of the process due to a lack of access. The capacity exists as we established in the social finance report section, but the challenge is making space for it. There is little to no evidence of that wealth being intentionally aligned with social impact. The report also notes a lack of transparency and sector-wide coordination in how investment policies are shaped.

This isn't a failure, but a reflection of the way the system is designed

As noted in the McConnell Foundation's report,

*“Advanced education institutions are well-positioned to integrate social purpose into procurement — but doing so requires new mechanisms, support systems, and cultural readiness.”*



## That's the real contrast here.

Not between intent and negligence, but between systems doing what they were built to do and what they could do with a slight shift in structure.

That shift doesn't have to be dramatic. In fact, small changes like including community benefit clauses, creating space for smaller contracts, or adjusting vendor outreach can open the door to a broader network of suppliers that reflect the institution's own values and actively contribute to community wealth building.

And when that door opens, the impact doesn't stop at vendors. The same mindset of aligning institutional spending with social purpose can be applied internally. Investment doesn't have to mean just dollars going out the door. It can also mean investing in the people already inside, the students with ideas, creativity, knowledge and lived connection to the community.

**SPEnD didn't just offer students a chance to participate, but it handed them ownership.**

For Sharika, SPEnD wasn't about validating a resume but it was about rewriting what was possible. SPEnD gave her the opportunity and support to go from admiring changemakers to becoming one.

“Working on SPEnD gave me the agency to bring real innovation and help build a foundation for student-led social enterprises.”



- Sharika Sadaf

Her time in the Social Innovation Lab also expanded her reach as she met & learned from social entrepreneurs, partnered with donors, and built lasting relationships in the sector all while learning how to scale that impact into a career of her own.

For Maria, that trust came at a time when she felt her entire professional identity was being disregarded. Despite holding an engineering degree, a master's, and nearly a decade of international experience, she was met with silence in the job market.

“The level of ownership and trust Kevin and Jaswinder give to the students is exceptional. They encourage us to bring our ideas, lead projects, and play to our strengths.”

Maria Silveira -



It was only when SPEnD recognized her value and gave her leadership responsibility that the silence broke.

With that trust came transformation. Maria contributed to the Social Finance Report, rebuilt her confidence, and ultimately stepped into the presidency of the Students' Association. It wasn't a detour, but a direct path carved through opportunity.

Swaathy's journey spoke to a quieter kind of skepticism: the internalized belief that student-led ideas would always be treated as charming but impractical.

Before SPEnD, she was unsure whether any college would trust young people to build something real. By the end of the program, she and her peers had not only launched two student-run ventures but also created tangible models that outlasted their own involvement.

“It wasn't just theory; we launched two student-run social enterprises... . It gave me confidence, hands-on experience, and a chance to solve the problems we identified.”



- Swaathy Senbaharajan

Taken together, these stories illustrate more than personal growth. They are evidence that the barriers so often described as inevitable such as lack of opportunities, limited funding, or institutional caution are in fact choices. Choices about where to direct resources, whose ideas are deemed credible, and whether community impact is a promise or a practice.

When institutions decide to invest in social infrastructure, not just in theory, but in budget lines and contracts, students don't have to wait their turn to lead for a better society. They can begin right where they are and when that happens, what once felt like an impossible distance collapses into something hopeful, immediate, and real.

# Lasting Legacy: What Was Built Isn't Just Our's

# It Was Built for You

In late 2025, SPEnD concludes as a research initiative but this isn't an ending.

The ideas that lived inside SPEnD didn't stay contained. They became working systems and tools each planted with the intention that it could live on, grow, and evolve beyond us to you.



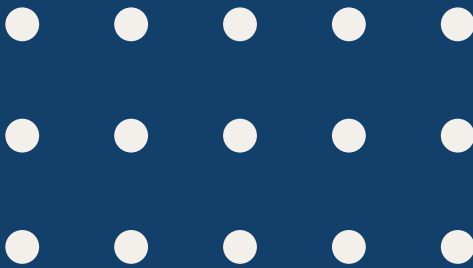
Xplore Impact will remain as a living archive of the database our students collected and crowdsourced. It will remain accessible for educators, social enterprises, and organizations as the benefit of the tool simply extends to multiple entities. If you are a social enterprise make sure you put your enterprises name on the map. If you are an educator explore the possibility to educate your youth about social enterprises showing them working models. If you are an organization explore the possibility to buy social.



The Green Loop Club will continue giving lanyards a second life. GLC will keep supporting events to be more sustainable as a lanyard library instead of them ending up in landfills. Moving forward, Green Loop Club is going to support events across Canada's capital with hopes of expanding further over time. The focus remains on small, practical changes that actually make a difference.



Social Sidekick will keep running in the fall semester 2025 at Algonquin College to support student entrepreneurs' business ventures. The model of this initiative is an innovative, accessible, and replicable model for activating underused spaces in ways that empowers our college youth. It will now serve as a campus resource for students that need support and visibility at the start to kick things off.



As we approach the ending and the opportunities it brings, the Social Innovation Lab remains open and ready to shape what's next. We're not done prototyping futures, and we're never done welcoming changemakers from students to institutions, who see the world not just for what it is, but for what it could become.

*What SPEnD offered was never just research. It was momentum.*

Momentum like this doesn't disappear; it moves through whoever's ready to carry it. So, if something in this playbook stirred you maybe a flash of an idea, a gap you want to fill, a future you want to co-create hold onto it. Let it grow. Imagine the satisfaction of building something your community needed, something that rewrites how systems work, something that lets you lead change instead of waiting for it.

## If You're Wondering Where to Start

You don't need to invent something new. Start by recognizing the power already within your reach, your people, your partnerships, and your purpose. The work doesn't begin with answers but with willingness to change.

This playbook opened with an invitation.

Let it close the same way.

This time though, the next move is yours.

Because when we say

**Driving Impact, Fueling Change,**

We don't just mean us. We mean together,

# SPEnD. & You

# Faces Behind the Progress

{“Teams are what it’s all about” - Kevin Holmes}

One of the extraordinary parts of SPEnD will always be the teams that the Social Innovation Lab hosted. A vibrant collection of changemakers from across programs, countries, and walks of life. It wasn’t just diversity in identity, but in thought, in drive, in lived experience. Each person carried a different story, a different strength, and together they built something greater than any individual could do alone. What made SPEnD special wasn’t just what we did but how we learned from one another, challenged each other, grew alongside each other. Everyone brought something to the table (sometimes literally, the potlucks feasts were so good), and somehow, there was always room for more. Being on this team didn’t just feel like working on a project, it felt like being part of a movement.



**Alexander Griswold**

Program: Graphic Design



**Amilcar Alvarenga**

Program: Business Management and entrepreneurship



**Bahaa Alsaqqa**

Program: Bachelor of Commerce



**Chelsea Julia Gomez**

Program: Business Marketing



**Goldvivan Ekkenia**

Program: Interactive Media Design



**Grace Aoun**

Program: Business Management and entrepreneurship



**Hilderruth Allan Shoo**

Program: Digital Health





**Kariman Okby**

Program: Marketing Research Analysis



**Lorena Vilela**

Program: Business Management and Entrepreneurship



**Maria Luisita Cauton**

Program: Business Management and Entrepreneurship



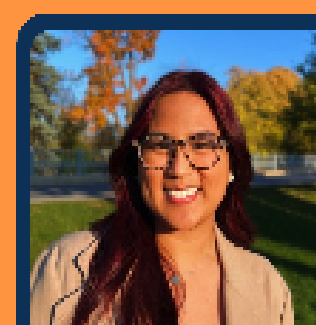
**Maria Silveira**

Program: Business Management and Entrepreneurship



**Maria José Puyol**

Program: Interactive Media Design



**Paula Morella**

Program: Human Centred Design



**Prajakta Amin**

Program: Human Centred Design / Marketing Management



**Rebeca Feria García**

Program: Business Marketing



**Sharika Sadaf**

Program: Human Centred Design



**Simran Dhanani**

Program: Financial Services



**Sophia Venables**

Program: Business Management and Entrepreneurship



**Swaathy Senbaharajan**

Program: Human Centred Design



**Yash Gokhale**

Program: Human Centred Design



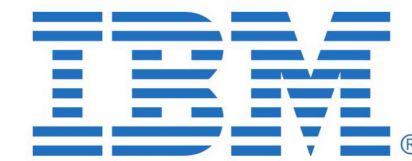
**Bassel Miqdadi**

Program: Bachelor of Digital Marketing and Communications



- 
- **To Everyone**
- **Who Dared to Believe**
- 

No narrative of SPEnD would be complete without acknowledging the community of support that made it all possible. SPEnD's journey was a tapestry woven by many hands, and each thread strengthened the whole. The SPEnD team and The Social Innovation Lab gratefully acknowledge the following co-creators of our impact that have generously contributed to us in our journey:



Ottawa Community Social  
Innovation Student Fund



COLLEGES &  
INSTITUTES  
CANADA

COLLÈGES &  
INSTITUTS  
CANADA

SSHRC  CRSH



**Salo Family Endowment  
for Social Innovation**

**envirocentre**

### To the mentors, Kevin Holmes and Jaswinder Kaur:

Thank you for your guidance, patience, and steady leadership. Your wisdom shaped this journey, and your belief in student potential made room for growth, experimentation, and courage.

### To the students of SPEnD:

This playbook is your story. Your curiosity, creativity, and persistence built a community defined by purpose and possibility. The fellowship formed along the way stands as one of SPEnD's strongest achievements.

### To community partners and organizations:

Thank you for opening doors, sharing expertise, and grounding ideas in real-world experience. From nonprofits to social enterprises and city officials, your collaboration left a lasting imprint throughout these pages.

### To the sponsors of smiles and morale:

The family members, friends, and peers who might not have been directly involved but who cheered the team members from the sidelines, thank you. Every proud parent, every friend who filled out "just one more survey", every classmate who attended SPEnD events, you contributed more than you know. You made SPEnD feel seen and supported.

### To those who will carry this forward:

Future students, educators, and community leaders—thank you in advance for expanding this vision, questioning it, adapting it, and giving it new life. May this playbook spark the same curiosity and purpose that inspired its creation.

This playbook is a testament to all of you. It was written with the words and deeds of hundreds of hearts and minds. As we close this chapter, know that every story, every success, and every failure along the way has been a gift. Thank you for spending your time, talent, and trust in SPEnD. We hope we SPEnT it well.



# About the Social Innovation Lab



## Who are we?

The Social Innovation Lab at Algonquin College provides students, staff, and faculty with unique opportunities to collaborate with the community for the greater good. Our work at the lab is rooted in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) for 2030 while supporting local communities. Inspired by the 2017 J.W. McConnell Family Foundation's RECODE initiative and Simon Fraser University report highlighting the importance of colleges in strengthening Canada's social infrastructure, the Lab serves as a hub for collaborative projects that drive positive social change.

## Our Mission

To empower our community with student creativity and technological knowledge to drive social change.

## Support Us

### Giving to The Social Innovation Lab

All the programs and initiatives of the Social Innovation Lab are made possible through the dedication and support of our co creators from government partners, businesses, foundations, and individuals like you who care about creating a better future.



Join the students, faculty, valued partners, and changemakers who fuel our mission. Your support helps us build on our commitment to education, innovation, and collective action.

### Co-create

If you would like to be a co-creator of our mission at The Social Innovation Lab, please contact us at ([holmesk@algonquincollege.com](mailto:holmesk@algonquincollege.com)) or visit our fund page <https://www.algonquincollege.com/advancement/ocsisf/>

### Contact us

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[1385 Woodroffe Ave, Ottawa, ON K2G 1V8](#)

