



Women's Enterprise
Organizations of Canada

ANNUAL REPORT

2021/22

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada's network of members is spread across many territories. We respect and honour the shared land on which we live, work and play. We are committed to understanding our shared past and moving forward in the spirit of reconciliation.

A large teal shape on the left side of the page, consisting of a curved bottom edge and a diagonal line extending from the top left towards the center.

POSITIONING STATEMENT

Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada (WEOC) is an association of organizations that work directly with women entrepreneurs. WEOC members support women entrepreneurs through a variety of services and initiatives, including business training, advising, financing, and mentorship.

WEOC supports its members by providing learning and networking opportunities, sharing best practices, and curating a variety of resources so members have the tools needed to support their clients.

OUR VISION

We lead the way to achieve excellence in the provision of services by women's enterprise organizations.

OUR MISSION

To build a strong national network that strengthens our member organizations.

**“THIS PAST YEAR WE SAW OUR
MEMBERSHIP GROW ACROSS THE
COUNTRY, WITH REPRESENTATION
IN MULTIPLE COMMUNITIES
WITHIN EIGHT PROVINCES.**

This continued growth in membership expands our collective voice. It furthers our individual knowledge and expertise, allowing us to better support the women entrepreneurs we serve. We truly are stronger together.”

MARCELA MANDEVILLE
**BOARD CHAIR, WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE
ORGANIZATIONS OF CANADA**



MARCELA MANDEVILLE
BOARD CHAIR

BOARD CHAIR MESSAGE

One of our truest beliefs at the Alberta Women Entrepreneurs is that our economy and communities are stronger when women are full participants in entrepreneurship. This belief has been reinforced through my role as Board Chair with Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada. WEOC is now in the final year of its original agreement and together we have achieved so much.

This past year we saw our membership grow across the country, with representation in multiple communities within eight provinces. This continued growth in membership expands our collective voice. It furthers our individual knowledge and expertise, allowing us to better support the women entrepreneurs we serve. We truly are stronger together.

On March 8, International Women's Day, the Honourable Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, announced the next phase of the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy - the establishment of a women's entrepreneurship loan fund. This investment will help tackle one of the greatest barriers to women entrepreneurs: accessing capital. I am proud that WEOC has been tasked with administering a portion of this fund and thrilled that so many entrepreneurs will benefit from the services offered by WEOC's Loan Fund Partners.

As I conclude my term as Chair of the Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada Board, I would like to acknowledge the hard work of my fellow Board members, including those who are new to their organizations. I would be remiss not to mention the impact of three past Board members, Jill Earthy, Prabha Ramaswamy and Sandra Altner. I look forward to continuing the important work supporting WEOC's CEO, Alison Kirkland, and look forward to welcoming new Board chair Jennifer Bessell.

With gratitude,

Marcela Mandeville, CEO
Alberta Women Entrepreneurs

**“WEOC CELEBRATES THE INNOVATION,
CREATIVITY, AND SPIRIT OF CANADA’S
DIVERSE WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS.
ALONGSIDE OUR MEMBERS, WE
CONTINUE TO SEEK WAYS TO SUPPORT
THEIR SUCCESS, WHICH IS INTEGRAL
TO THE RECOVERY AND GROWTH OF
OUR NATIONAL ECONOMY.”**

**ALISON KIRKLAND
CEO, WOMEN’S ENTERPRISE
ORGANIZATIONS OF CANADA**



ALISON KIRKLAND
CEO

CEO MESSAGE

A few weeks was all that COVID-19 was to last. Surely everything would be back to normal in a month at most. With the close of our fiscal year on March 31, 2022, like the rest of the world, WEOC had been navigating the pandemic for more than two years.

While it altered how and where we worked, it didn't affect what we were able to achieve. Our annual report not only summarizes our activities and accomplishments in 2021-2022, but it also provides the road map for the next steps in WEOC's journey.

Developing and evolving our partnerships is the goal for the future. Our work with a variety of organizations has been instrumental in enabling us to collect valuable insights from women entrepreneurs across the country. What we learned about their experiences through the pandemic and in their attempts to access capital provides a rich base of knowledge on which to build future programming.

This year we saw the fruition of a long-held dream of a national loan fund for women entrepreneurs. On International Women's Day (March 8, 2022), The Honourable Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, announced that Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada was to deliver a significant portion of the fund that will be a game-changer for women entrepreneurs in Canada.

This is a big step for WEOC and for our Loan Fund Partners who are working with us to get capital to women entrepreneurs. With loans up to \$50,000 and a robust system of wrap-around business supports, we are focused on helping women across Canada start and grow their businesses.

We will continue building the strong foundation so that our members, the 'feet on the street' connection to women entrepreneurs, can rely on WEOC to deliver timely and relevant tools. Their work supporting women entrepreneurs requires access to leading-edge information. Our robust online library was a first step in assembling resources to support our members. Next steps include an even more diverse training calendar and more additions to the library.

None of this work would have happened without our partners. Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada has put its trust in WEOC, and we are grateful for their vision and commitment to women entrepreneurs. Past and present members of WEOC's Board of Directors have worked tirelessly for more than a decade to ensure that women entrepreneurs across Canada have resources for business success. Our members, the organizations working with women entrepreneurs, are the impetus and inspiration for WEOC. Finally, the WEOC team members who are creative, enthusiastic, and committed to ensuring that we are doing all we can to support this important eco-system.

BOARD MEMBERS



JENNIFER BESSELL
BOARD VICE-CHAIR, CEO
NEWFOUNDLAND &
LABRADOR ORGANIZATION
OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS



MARCELA MANDEVILLE
BOARD CHAIR, CEO
ALBERTA WOMEN
ENTREPRENEURS



MAXINE KASHTON
CEO
WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE
CENTRE OF MANITOBA



SANDRA ALTNER
CEO
WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE CENTRE
OF MANITOBA (2011-2022)



PRAHBA RAMASWAMY
CEO
WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS
OF SASKATCHEWAN



ROSALIND LOCKYER
FOUNDER, CEO
PARO CENTRE FOR
WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE



RUTH VACHON
PRESIDENT, CEO
RÉSEAU DES FEMMES
D'AFFAIRES DU QUÉBEC



JILL EARTHY
CEO
WEBEC (FORMERLY WOMEN'S
ENTERPRISE CENTRE OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA)



Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada

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Thank you Minister Petipas Taylor for great discussion about Canadian women yesterday.



Alison Kirkland, CEO of the Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada (WEOC), in Winnipeg on June 7, 2021. WEOC is an association of organizations that work directly with women entrepreneurs.

JOHN WOODS/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

WEOC and its CEO Alison Kirkland lend an important voice to the larger women's entrepreneurial network in Canada. This year Alison met with government partners, attended member events, and was invited to represent WEOC on panel discussions. She was also sought out by journalists to speak to the current state of women's entrepreneurship in Canada.

WEOC IN THE NEWS

[Staycation rentals, buy local and online trends spell opportunities for startup – Globe & Mail](#)

[Data is Critical – Clearing a New Path Podcast](#)

[Federal Government Offering Microloans to Women Entrepreneurs – MLT Aikins](#)

[Women entrepreneurs reluctant to access financial support: survey – BC Business](#)

[Study finds women-owned businesses faced unique issues during pandemic – Medicine Hat News](#)

[Pharmacy Own-HER-Ship: The plight of women in pharmacy leadership in a female-dominated field – Canadian Healthcare Network](#)

[Women entrepreneurs offer top tips for exporting to the U.S. – EDC](#)

**“ACCESS TO CAPITAL HAS
BY FAR BEEN THE TOP ISSUE
THAT HAS BEEN RAISED
AS A BARRIER FOR WOMEN
SUCCEEDING IN BUSINESS.”**

THE HONOURABLE MARY NG



WEOC NATIONAL LOAN PROGRAM

On March 8, 2022 – International Women’s Day – the Honourable Mary Ng announced that WEOC was selected as a delivery organization for the Government of Canada’s new \$55 million Women Entrepreneurship Loan Fund.

Part of Budget 2021, this initiative recognizes that access to capital, particularly in smaller amounts, remains a significant barrier for many women entrepreneurs seeking to start or grow their businesses. This new initiative will seek to provide smaller amounts of affordable financing to women entrepreneurs, particularly for start-ups, underrepresented groups or sole proprietors.

The loan fund program is moving forward in three major phases, with the first phase culminating in the delivery of the first loans, expected in Fall 2022.

(Left to right: Wendy Curtis, Northumberland Business Development Assistance Corp.; The Honourable Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Julie Dabrusin, Member of Parliament for Toronto-Danforth; Nataly De Monte, CFC Media Lab; Alison Kirkland, WEOC)

“WE ALL KNOW THAT SMALL BUSINESS IS THE BACKBONE OF THE CANADIAN ECONOMY, AND YET WOMEN MAKE UP SUCH A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THOSE BUSINESSES.

We know that increasing the number of women entrepreneurs in this country is a key part of growing the economy. And that is why the women entrepreneurs loan fund is a game changer for women entrepreneurs. This new source of financing will enable women to start their businesses and capitalize on growth opportunities. That's why WEOC will provide loans that provide the holistic approach of a microloan with the wrap-around business supports that acknowledge the diverse needs of women entrepreneurs. I want to see every woman entrepreneur in the country have access to those supports.”

ALISON KIRKLAND
**CEO, WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE
ORGANIZATIONS OF CANADA**



WEOC X: EXCHANGE, EXPAND, EXPLORE NATIONAL CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 1-24, 2022

It was an amazing month of learning and sharing at this year's second annual WEOC X: Exchange, Expand, Explore National Conference. We kicked it off with keynote speaker Tina Varughese and "The Human Side of Unconscious Bias" and continued with a month of excellent presentations, workshops and discussions.

Thank you to all of the sponsors for their support in furthering women's entrepreneurship in Canada:

- Session sponsors: EDS, Payworks, BDC
- Ceremony sponsors: NLOWE, RFAQ, WECM, WeBC, WESK, AWE, PARO
- Community sponsor: Rogers
- Gift sponsors: Utoffeea, Tiber River, Coal and Canary, Adorable Chocolate, Eatable Popcorn, Geti, Native Northwest, Raw Island Botanicals

Recordings of all WEOC X sessions are available to members in the WEOC Commons Learning Library.



**“WOW! SUCH A DYNAMIC
GROUP OF WOMEN HELPING
WOMEN ACROSS CANADA.
CONGRATS TO ALL!”**

ROSALIND LOCKYER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER & FOUNDER,
PARO CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE

**“THANK YOU TO WEOC FOR
PUTTING THIS SPECIAL
CELEBRATION TOGETHER -
SO THOUGHTFUL
CONGRATULATIONS AGAIN
TO ALL MILESTONES
IN THE WOMEN'S ECOSYSTEM!”**

KIRAN SAGOO
PROGRAM LEAD, ALBERTA
WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

“FANTASTIC SESSION AND I REALLY APPRECIATE YOUR PERSONAL ANSWER TO MY QUESTION, YOU HAVE GIVEN US SO MANY RESOURCES AND REALLY PRACTICAL ACTIONABLE ITEMS.”

VANESSA NELSON
TALENT MANAGEMENT,
PAYWORKS

WEOC X TOAST! SERVICE RECOGNITION CELEBRATION

On February 24, WEOC hosted its inaugural Service Recognition Celebration and joined colleagues from across the country in a toast to the advisors, leaders and support staff who do so much to support the growth and success of women entrepreneurs. To begin the event we asked three women entrepreneurs from across the country to share how receiving business and financial support has impacted them and their business.

Thank you to:

- Amanda Buhse, CEO and Chief Creative Officer of Coal & Canary
- Shauna Allan, Founder, Director and CEO of Modern Match Lingerie
- Katrina German, Founder and CEO of Ethical Digital

Watch the moving video recording of this discussion at weoc.ca.



Loans, capital and women entrepreneurs survey

Survey closes
March 6, 2022

weoc.ca/survey

Enquête sur les prêts, le capital et les femmes entrepreneurs

Le sondage se termine le 6 mars 2022



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada



Women's Enterprise
Organizations of Canada
Organisations d'entreprises
de femmes du Canada



Women and Gender
Equality Canada
Femmes et Égalité
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weoc.ca/survey



SURVEYS

In early 2022, Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada launched a national survey of more than 1,000 women entrepreneurs, as well as a series of focus groups and one-on-one interviews. The purpose was to identify, assess, address, and ultimately change, gender bias within loan processes in Canada.

The Loans, Capital and Women Entrepreneurs Survey was designed to:

- Research and analyze the systemic barriers that prevent women entrepreneurs from accessing growth capital, and
- Use that knowledge to advocate for systemic change in lending policies among Canada's leading financial institutions.

The survey will be released in October 2022.

WEOC acknowledges the financial support of Women and Gender Equality Canada.



"I love the fact that the facilitator invited special guest speakers who are real women entrepreneurs to give their export story, successes, and challenges "

E.A., Export 101 Course Participant, Business Advisor and Entrepreneur, Alberta



(The course) gave a very thorough breakdown of the different steps required for exporting. I left feeling so much more knowledgeable in the exporting process!"

I.N., Program Officer, Startup Canada

WEOC COURSES FOR ADVISORS

Over the past year we were able to provide innovative learning opportunities for advisors from across the eco-system via expert-led courses. In 2021-22 we offered two cohorts of our Export 101 for Advisors series, as well as a new course: Sales Bootcamp for Advisors. Both series were quickly "sold out" and well-received by participants.

PENNY TREMBLAY SALES BOOTCAMP FOR ADVISORS

Hosted by entrepreneur, advisor, and award-winning coach Penny Tremblay, this course was designed specifically for women's entrepreneurial advisors. It's purpose was to help participants develop methods to motivate and inspire clients in the sales process. Sessions covered topics like:

- Identifying networking contacts
- Developing polished pitches
- Building solid relationships
- Developing follow-up skills and post-sales service

“GREAT TO CONNECT WITH COLLEAGUES ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND DEVELOP SOME WORTHWHILE STRATEGIES FOR CONNECTING WITH CLIENTS.”

- PF

“THE ACTIONABLE STEPS AND HOMEWORK HAVE BEEN HELPFUL FOR SURE!”

- NM

“THE CONTENT WAS INCREDIBLY VALUABLE... IT WAS WONDERFUL TO ATTEND THESE TRAINING SESSIONS WITH OTHER WOMEN IN SIMILAR ROLES AS MYSELF FROM ALL ACROSS CANADA.”

- MM

“PENNY IS GREAT AND I FEEL LIKE SHE HAS SO MUCH MORE TO TEACH. I WILL BE KEEPING OUT AN EYE FOR ADDITIONAL OFFERINGS FROM BOTH WEOC & PENNY.”

- AH



EXPORT 101 FOR ADVISORS GRADUATES

Karen Lynn Evans **PARO**
Parth Patel **WESK**
Kim Yuen **WeBC**
Sophie Bienvenue **RFAQ**
Nicole Cayanan **AWE**
Colleen Krebs **WECM**
Christine Vorrath **WECM**
Jennifer Bessell **NLOWE**
Denise Cornick **NLOWE**
Mietka Zieba **Export Navigator**
Jill Lee **Community Futures**
Priya Timiri **Community Futures**

EXPORT 101 FOR ADVISORS

Ideas for WEOC programming always come from conversations with members and colleagues in the eco-system. The need for practical, foundational export knowledge was something we kept hearing and Export 101 for Advisors was the result. Designed specifically for advisors wanting to develop their understanding of critical export-related topics, this course brought together peers from across the country to learn from a seasoned professional in Canadian export.

Participants heard from our expert facilitator, Josie Mousseau, as well as guest entrepreneurs about how to navigate a variety of critical export-related topics. They were able to share experiences and each bring the unique perspectives from their region. At the end of the six sessions, each participant received a certificate of completion from WEOC.

Export 101 was made possible with funding from Global Affairs Canada.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

"The resources were excellent. I absolutely loved the sessions. I think it has given me a chance to have richer conversations with my clients about their export/import journey." – AS

"It gave a very thorough breakdown of the different steps required for exporting. I left feeling so much more knowledgeable in the exporting process!" – IN

"Although we were spread across the country the experiences we have / had working with clients who are starting their export journey were very similar." – BS

"My key takeaway was

- a) identifying when a company is ready to export
- b) ensuring that the client is aware of the investment (time and \$ involved)
- c) an overview of the resources and supports available to begin exploring exporting and executing an export plan." – VW

CROSS-BORDER PERSPECTIVES: WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP & DIVERSITY IN THE US



SESSION 1
PRESENTER:

Betty
Hines

CROSS-BORDER PERSPECTIVES: WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP & DIVERSITY IN THE U.S.



SESSION 3:
Dr. Kate
Caldwell

CROSS-BORDER PERSPECTIVES SERIES

The goal of this three-part virtual discussion was to expand knowledge around U.S. supplier diversity programs for Canadian women's entrepreneurial advisors. Sessions focused on opportunities for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs, as well as entrepreneurs with a disability who are looking to export to the U.S.

Session 1, December 2021: BIPOC Perspectives

Session 2, January 2022: LGBTQ+ Perspectives

Session 3, March 2022: Perspectives of Women with a Disability

Each session included a facilitated discussion with expert panelists from the U.S. and Canada and were followed up with a video recording and recap document in English, French and Spanish. All are available to watch and download at weoc.ca.

Cross-Border Perspectives: Women's Entrepreneurship & Supplier Diversity in the U.S. was made possible through a grant by the U.S. Consul General's Building Back Better program.

“WE NEED TO SAY: I’M INTELLIGENT, I’M FLEXIBLE, I’M INGENIOUS, I’M INNOVATIVE. I CAN STEP IN AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY.”

NANCY G. ALLEN
CEO, WOMEN’S BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
CENTRE OF FLORIDA, WBENC REGIONAL
PARTNER

“CERTIFICATION IS THE STARTING LINE, NOT THE FINISH LINE.”

SABRINA KENT
EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT, PROGRAMS
AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, NATIONAL GAY
AND LESBIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
(NGLCC)

“ONE OF THE BEAUTIFUL THINGS ABOUT DISABILITY ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS THAT IT SHIFTS THE PARADIGM AWAY FROM SEEING DISABLED WOMEN SIMPLY AS PASSIVE EMPLOYEES THAT NEED TO BE HIRED BY SOMEONE ELSE... BUT NOW WE’RE LOOKING AT DISABLED PEOPLE AS JOB CREATORS WHO ARE MAKING THE HIRING DECISIONS.”

DR. KATE CALDWELL
CLINICAL ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, UIC
DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITY & HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT AT UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT CHICAGO

“ I JUST WANTED TO SAY A HUGE THANK YOU FOR HAVING US THERE! WHAT A DELIGHTFUL TALK AND IT MADE ME REALLY GLAD TO BE WORKING IN THIS INDUSTRY AND SUPPORTING OUR QUEER BUSINESSES. I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR FINDING SUCH AMAZING PANELISTS AND MAKING TODAY’S PANEL SO “FRUITFUL” (INSERT OTHER GARDENING PUNS HERE!).”

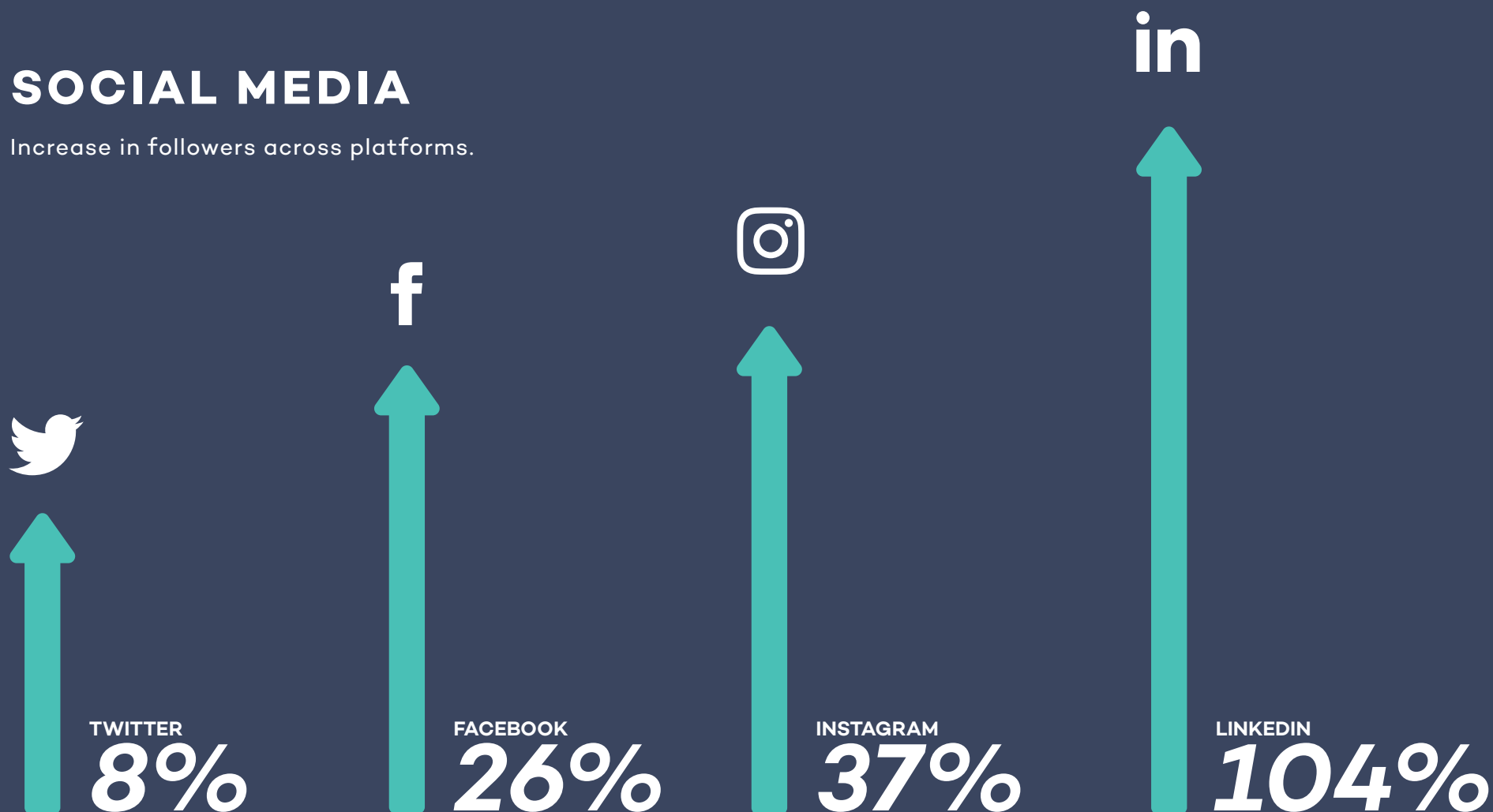
CANADIAN GAY AND LESBIAN
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
(CGLCC)

“CROSS BORDER CONNECTIONS GOT MY ATTENTION. YOU SHOULD DO THIS MORE OFTEN - LEARN FROM ACROSS THE BORDER, SHARE TIPS, CONNECT WITH AND MAKE NEW FRIENDS. AND YOU HAD AMAZING SPEAKERS TOO.”

**E.A.
(PARTICIPANT)**

SOCIAL MEDIA

Increase in followers across platforms.



NEWSLETTER

We are sharing news, best practices, and relevant resources in our monthly newsletters. Designed for member organizations, business advisors, government partners and individual entrepreneurs, they also offer the opportunity for paid partnership through our newsletter promotion option. Currently there are more than 1,000 subscribers from across Canada.

OPEN RATES ARE CONSISTENTLY WELL
ABOVE INDUSTRY AVERAGE AT

40%

News from around the ecosystem

Updates, information and ideas from WEOC and other organizations around the women's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

[READ THE SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER](#)

[Subscribe to our monthly newsletter](#)

[Advertise in our newsletter](#)



BLOG

New this year is our News from Around the Ecosystem blog, which provides updates, information and ideas from WEOC and other organizations around the women's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

WEBSITE

WEOC's website is a central hub of information for our members and others in the ecosystem. It includes a public library of useful tools and resources, including research and reports. There is a news blog, information on membership and a link to our member-only portal and learning library. Launched in 2020, the website saw 40,000 visits in this fiscal year. The most visited page on the site is "find a member", where entrepreneurs and organizations can find a WEOC member in their region. Visits to this page increased by 24% from April 2021 to March 2022.



Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada/Organisations d'e...

1,165 followers
11mo •

New to WEOC Commons this month is Connecting with Rural Women. This program offers strategies to access women in rural areas, and bridges difficulties in connecting with women in various regions. Log into WEOC Commons to browse all of our new resources: <https://member.weoc.ca>



WEOC COMMONS

Exclusive to WEOC members is our learning portal: WEOC Commons. The digital platform includes a robust online Learning Library, as well as a digital discussion forum. The Learning Library functions as a curated professional development portal, with courses, presentations, reading materials, and work sheets from expert coaches, trainers and speakers. There are currently more than 100 learning resources in the library, within the categories of Export, Funding & Finance, Marketing & Branding, Operations, and Skills & Tools.

WEOC MEMBERS

WEOC's diverse membership includes non-profit organizations from across Canada that support women entrepreneurs through business and financial planning, advising, and mentorship programs.

This year WEOC members offered more than 14,000+ training and advising sessions to nearly 19,000 participants. Of the members who provide loan funds to entrepreneurs, they dispersed more than \$6.2 million this year, in addition to \$8 million in Regional Relief and Recovery Loan Funds (RRRF).



STAFF

ALISON KIRKLAND,
CEO

BRUNO BERTO,
PROJECT MANAGER

CAROLINA MONTANA,
PROJECT AND TRAINING COORDINATOR

LISA CAILLIER,
FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION MANAGER

LINDSAY STEWART GLOR,
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

CHANTAL HERRIOT,
ENGAGEMENT MANAGER
(DECEMBER 2019-MAY 2022)

ORYCIA KARPA,
COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR
(AUGUST 2020-NOVEMBER 2021)

CONTACT

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 Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada.

