

**SYNERGY**  
FOUNDATION

**2024  
IMPACT  
REPORT**



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

“Looking back on 2024, Synergy continues to make significant strides in advancing sustainability and creating lasting change on Vancouver Island, across British Columbia, and beyond. Through its innovative programs and partnerships, the Foundation is empowering and supporting local businesses, communities, and individuals to take action toward a more regenerative future. Synergy’s commitment to promoting circular economies, food security, and green business practices continues to grow, while working to tackle the urgent challenges of our time.

This past year’s successes are a testament to the organization’s collective effort to create meaningful, lasting impact. With an expanding and dedicated team at Synergy focused on inspiring and leading change, the momentum is building in order to ensure a resilient and sustainable future for generations to come.”

- Paul Shorthouse, Board Chair, Synergy Foundation



# SYNERGY FOUNDATION

Since its inception in 2013, Synergy Foundation has focused on innovative projects and programs that have pushed the envelope, supported hundreds of businesses, and turned great ideas into action.

This BC-based non-profit focuses its efforts on green business and the circular economy. Its key initiatives include [BC Green Business](#), [Project Zero](#), and the [Ecostar Awards](#).

[synergyfoundation.ca](https://synergyfoundation.ca)

**SYNERGY**  
FOUNDATION



# OUR MISSION

To catalyze change and guide our communities and local economies toward a more regenerative future.

# OUR TEAM



Jill  
Doucette

Executive  
Director



Georgia  
Lavender

Director of  
Program  
Operations



Tai  
Uhlmann

Operations and  
Circular Economy  
Projects Manager



Jarret  
Klim

Green Business  
Program  
Manager



Emily  
Shields

Communications  
and Strategic  
Initiatives Manager

# OUR TEAM



Deep  
Chahal

Green Business  
Associate and  
Project Manager



Maddy  
Best

Circular  
Economy Project  
Manager



Luiz Alberto  
de Souza

Circular  
Economy  
Associate



Mariana  
Correia

Marketing and  
Communications  
Coordinator



Erica  
LeBrun

Office and  
Events  
Manager



Shannon  
Hamilton

Accountant

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Paul  
Shorthouse**

Board Chair



**Monica  
Pohlmann**

Vice Chair



**Kira  
Rochefort**

Treasurer



**Tessa  
Stewart**

Secretary



**Kris  
Ord**

Director at  
Large

# 2024 SNAPSHOT



**56+**  
Communities  
Impacted



**1130+**  
Workshop &  
Event  
Attendees



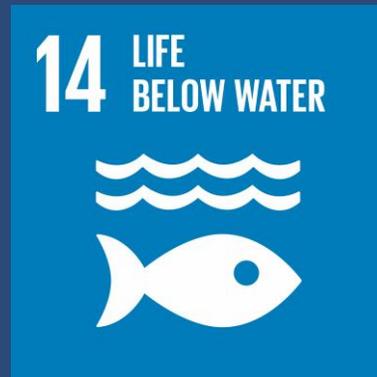
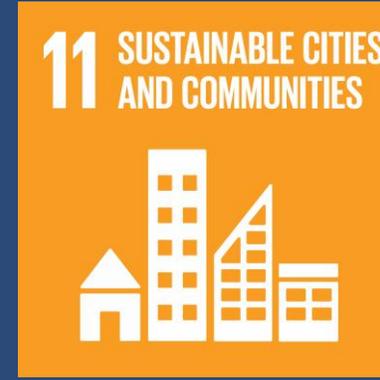
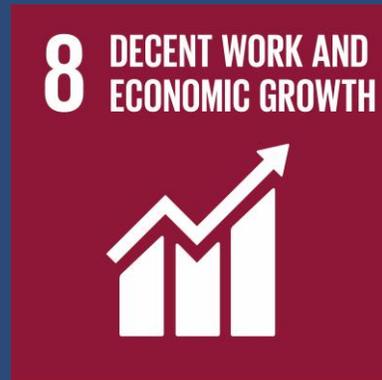
**227**  
Businesses  
Directly  
Supported



**4**  
Team  
Members  
Added

# UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Our work at Synergy ties into nine of the UN SDGs:



# STRATEGIC PARTNER

[Vancity](#) is a values-based financial cooperative serving the needs of its more than 570,000 member-owners and their communities in the Coast Salish and Kwakwaka'wakw territories. Vancity has been a leader in environmental sustainability through their internal operations and through the investments they make in the communities they serve.

Vancity and Synergy formed a Strategic Partnership in 2019. Through their financial support and collaboration, we have supported hundreds of small and medium sized enterprises and dozens of new start ups in the green economy.

# Vancity



# SYNERGY'S CORE PROGRAMS



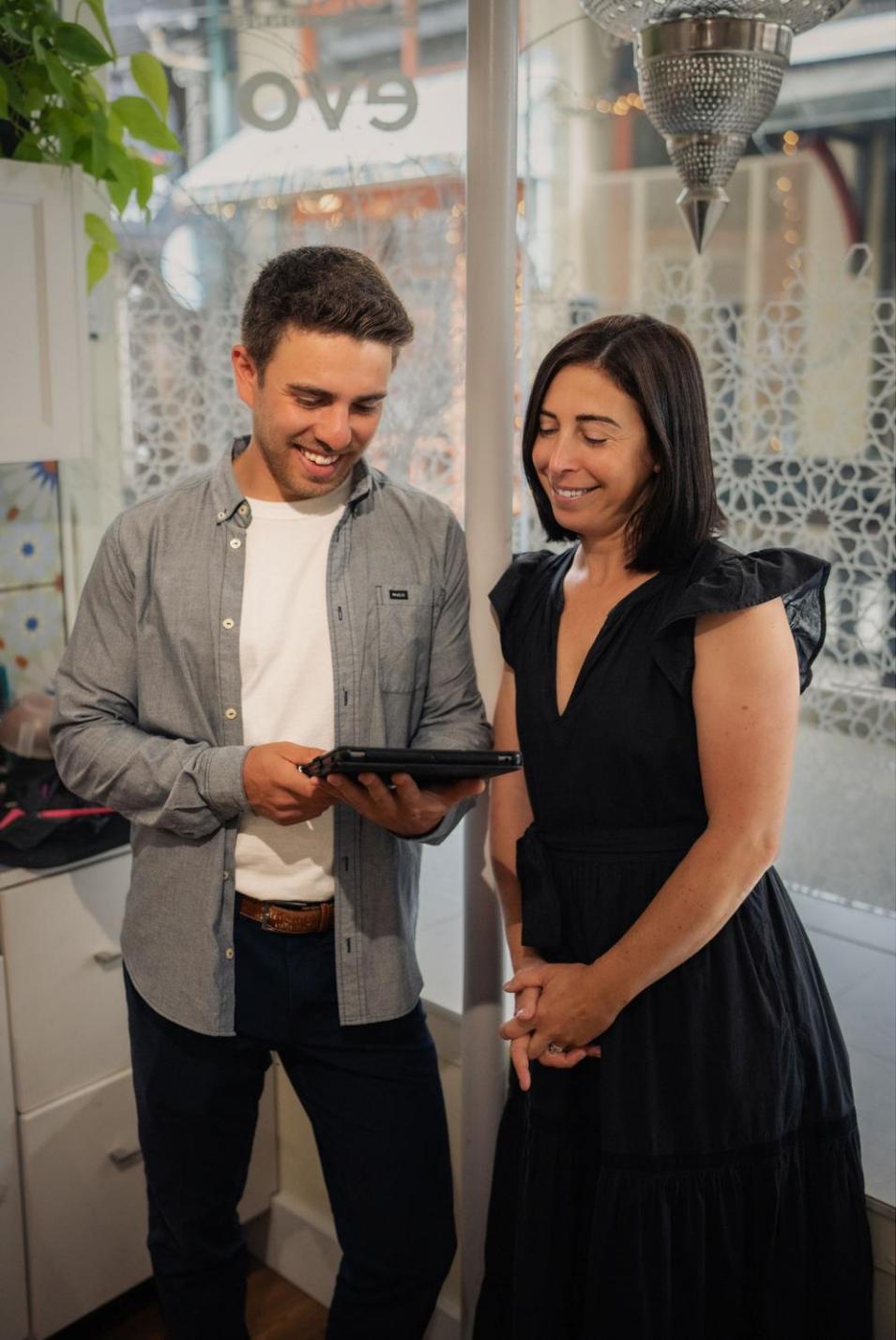
A provincewide green business certification program that provides practical and affordable ways to reduce business' impact on the planet



An initiative focused on implementing circular economy concepts in Canada through incubation, innovation, and education

# BC GREEN BUSINESS





# BC GREEN BUSINESS

BC Green Business supports businesses seeking practical and affordable ways to reduce their environmental impact and enhance their sustainability initiatives. Our one-on-one approach allows us to identify custom solutions that suit each individual business' needs.

We provide assessments, solutions recommendations, certifications, and educational opportunities to businesses that value the planet, people, and community.

[bcgreenbusiness.ca](http://bcgreenbusiness.ca)



# BC GREEN BUSINESS METRICS



250  
Members



76  
Ocean  
Friendly  
Businesses



80  
New  
Members



9  
Industry-  
Specific  
Checklists



89%  
Retention  
Rate

# ENVIRONMENTAL METRICS



WATER  
SAVED

459,241  
m<sup>3</sup>



ELECTRICITY  
CONSERVED

9,516,059  
kWh



EMISSIONS  
REDUCED

21,184  
tCO<sub>2</sub><sub>e</sub>



PAID  
VOLUNTEER TIME

13,719  
hours



WASTE  
DIVERTED

7,031,012  
kg



SINGLE-USE  
PLASTIC AVOIDED

3,036,311  
items

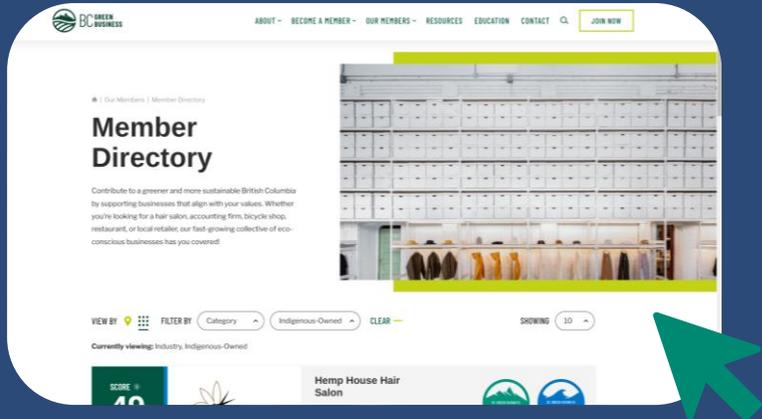


FORESTS  
CONSERVED

2,563  
trees

*This is the collective impact of the businesses certified in BC Green Business.  
These metrics continue to grow every week.*

Check out the Indigenous Business Directory:



21

Indigenous  
Business  
Members



89

Businesses  
Taking Action  
Toward  
Reconciliation

# TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

To advance reconciliation in alignment with Action 92 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, BC Green Businesses has:

- Incorporated action towards reconciliation into certification criteria
- Added an Indigenous business filter to the Member Directory
- Offered an Indigenous Bursary Fund for Indigenous-owned businesses to join the program for free

Here are some of the ways our members are taking action:

- The Cure Hot Sauce Co. completed Cultural Perspectives Training with the Indigenous Perspectives Society
- Home Block Restaurant collaborated with a local Indigenous community to restore their farm's ecosystem with native plant species.

Thank you to BC Hydro and Vancity for supporting the Indigenous Bursary.

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## 49 Below Ice Cream

📍 Victoria, BC

49 Below Ice Cream achieved the highest score among BC Green Business members by implementing innovative sustainability measures.

- The business has installed a heat pump, transitioned to all-electric cooking appliances, uses an EV for daily operations, and charges their ice cream E-bike using solar panels
- 49 Below also incorporates circular economy practices by providing reusable tasting spoons and partnering with a local grocery store to upcycle unsellable produce into unique ice cream flavors.
- One of their upcoming plans is to collaborate with local Indigenous groups to create traditional ice cream flavors, fostering sustainability and reconciliation.





# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## Endless Adventure

📍 Crescent Valley, BC

- Endless Adventure, an eco-tourism company, used their BC Green Business assessment to secure a Destination BC microgrant, enabling the installation of a solar array that powers 100% of their office operations.
- The business has also transitioned to using paper products made from 100% recycled content and prioritizing in-house equipment repair over replacement for damaged rafts and tubes, reducing waste.
- Looking ahead, Endless Adventure is exploring opportunities to enhance its operations by transitioning to digital guest waivers, implementing a flexible plastic recycling program, and switching to environmentally friendly wetsuit cleaning products.



# PROGRAM WINS

2024 marked a year of significant growth for BC Green Business. This year, we:

- Welcomed **80 new members**
- Introduced **two new checklists** for goods producers and service providers to expand certification opportunities for businesses
- Identified and communicated **key challenges** faced by businesses, which contributed to the Regional District of Central Kootenay piloting a commercial composting program in Nelson
- Delivered a record number of **educational webinars**, covering topics like sustainable packaging, climate action, circular economy principles, and energy efficiency



# THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

BC Green Business would like to extend a special thank you to the 2024 funding partners who make this work possible!

**Vancity**

 **BC Hydro**  
Power smart

Fondation  
**McConnell**  
Foundation

# THANK YOU TO OUR REGIONAL PARTNERS

BC Green Business would also like to thank the 2024 Regional Partners who helped expand the program across BC.



# PROJECT ZERO



*Photo : Salt Legacy*



# PROJECT ZERO

Since 2019, Project Zero has been catalyzing the transition to a circular economy through business incubation, acceleration, innovation, and education.

Project Zero engages the private sector, local governments, universities and colleges, and non-profits to move toward a regenerative future for British Columbia and beyond.

In 2024, Project Zero launched its 6<sup>th</sup> BC Incubator cohort, expanded its Circular Accelerator program, and collaborated with Queen's University to launch the QVENT Green Summer Incubator Program.

[project-zero.ca](https://project-zero.ca)



# PROJECT ZERO METRICS



**57**  
SMEs  
supported



**50+**  
Jobs  
Created



**58%**  
Women  
Founded  
Ventures



**440+**  
Workshop  
& Event  
Attendees

# 2024 INCUBATOR COHORT HIGHLIGHTS

Nineteen ventures were supported through the Project Zero Incubator Program this year. Check out some of the highlights from this year's cohort:



[wear on kids clothing](#) launched their guaranteed buy back program, allowing customers to return outgrown or damaged clothing for shop credit. Returned garments are repaired and resold in the preloved section of the shop.

## ZIPPLY

— Zero Emission Logistics —

[Zipply Logistics](#) expanded their fleet and delivery services. In 2024, they saved 59,190 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e through their zero emissions delivery services, traveling 16,247 km by bike and 180,459 km by electric van.



[Sustainably Wed](#) launched their website and are rolling out a membership community for green wedding vendors. In early 2025, they're hosting a conference targeting sustainability in the wedding industry.

This year's Incubator was supported by:



Développement économique  
Canada pour le Pacifique

Canada

Vancity

Fondation  
**McConnell**  
Foundation



# ALUMNI SUCCESS

[Seacork Studio](#) (2023 cohort) is a bio-based material design studio, developing acoustic panels from responsibly harvested seaweed.

Since completing the 2023 Incubator program, they filed a patent in Canada and the US. In September 2024, they moved into their new R&D workshop and installed their first pilot project!

In addition:

- In April 2024, they placed first at the [COAST](#) and [Spring Pitchfest](#), winning a \$10,000 prize. In October 2024, they joined 15 finalists to pitch at [Ocean Exchange 2024](#).
- Joined Ocean Startup Project's 2024 [Ocean Idea Challenge](#) and the 2024-2026 [MaRS RBC Women in Cleantech](#) cohort.



Rockweed

Scientific name: Fucus distichus  
Class: Phaeophyceae (Brown Seaweeds)  
Order: Fucales  
Habitat: Upper intertidal zones  
Growing period: steadily throughout the year  
Harvestable

# CIRCULAR ECONOMY ACCELERATOR

Project Zero proceeded with Phase 2 of the Circular Economy Accelerator Program, a one-on-one program designed to help existing businesses on Vancouver Island to find operational efficiencies, reduce waste and emissions, increase revenue, and adopt innovative technologies by incorporating circular economy principles.

In 2024, we supported 21 businesses in the program, identifying nearly 1000 recommended actions that, if adopted, will divert over 147 tonnes of waste.

Thank you to our program partners:

Supported by :  
Pacific Economic  
Development Canada

Canada 





# BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

## Duncan Garage Bakery & Café

📍 Duncan, BC

Duncan Garage Café & Bakery is a fully vegetarian organic café, bakery, and restaurant that has served the community for over 21 years. The café's new owners completed the Circular Economy Accelerator program to help further their mission of being "clean for the planet".

Through the program, the business found ways to become more energy efficient, including immediately actionable opportunities like installing strip curtains to walk-in fridges and freezers

"Being part of the Circular Economy Program has provided us with great awareness of our business processes and the impact we have on the environment. It gave us clear, practical steps to improve our business in ways that are better for the community and the planet, and it's already making a real difference."

- Matthew Huotari  
Owner, Duncan Garage Café & Bakery

# PROGRAM WINS

This year, in addition to adding the new Circular Economy Accelerator program under Project Zero's umbrella, we also:

- Completed the first national Project Zero Incubator program in partnership with Queen's University, supporting nine circular ventures
- Developed and delivered the inaugural [Building Deconstruction & Salvage](#) microcredential in partnership with North Island College
- Lead workshops at conferences including the IMPACT Sustainability Travel & Tourism conference and GLOBE Forum
- Released a video series featuring Project Zero program participants, created by Paper Heart Films



Watch Project Zero's video series here:



# ECOSTAR AWARDS





# ECOSTAR AWARDS

The Ecostar Awards recognize outstanding environmental and social achievements on Vancouver Island. The awards are presented to Island-based businesses, non-profits, governments and individuals who have demonstrated outstanding leadership in sustainability.

In November, Synergy hosted the ninth annual Ecostar Awards Gala. This year, 15 awards were given out, ranging from Community Leadership to Inspirational New Venture.

[ecostarawards.com](https://ecostarawards.com)



# SPONSOR SHOUTOUT

Thank you to our sponsors for making this year's event a great success!

**Vancity**

DESTINATION GREATER  
**VICTORIA**

 Inn at  
Laurel Point

 spinnakers  
BREW PUB & GUESTHOUSES

 Used.ca  
LOCALS BUY & SELL HERE

**DOUGLAS**

 GREATER  
**VICTORIA**  
HARBOUR  
AUTHORITY

 Saanich



 CRD  
Making a difference...together



**PETER B. GUSTAVSON**  
School of Business  
The world looks different from here.

**BAY CENTRE**  
VICTORIA

 CAMOSUN

 CITY OF  
VICTORIA

 BIG WHEEL  
BURGER

 THE  
ParkSIDE  
HOTEL & SPA

Monk  
Office

**Schneider**  
Electric

# 2024 AWARD WINNERS

Award Category	Winner	Sponsor
Clean Oceans	<u>Rugged Coast Research Society</u>	<u>Greater Victoria Harbour Authority</u>
Climate Action	<u>4VI Social Enterprise Group</u>	<u>District of Saanich</u>
Community Leadership	<u>The Den Refillery</u>	
Design & Construction	<u>Wescon Cedar Products Ltd.</u>	<u>ANCORD Design Co</u>
Ecological Stewardship	<u>QENTOL YEN WSÁNEĆ Marine Guardians Program</u>	<u>Capital Regional District</u>
Ecopreneur of the Year	<u>Sadie Fox of The Sustainable Fox</u>	<u>Centre for Social and Sustainable Innovation</u>
Experiential Tourism	<u>Malahat Skywalk</u>	<u>Destination Greater Victoria</u>
Greenest Retailer	<u>Grove Outdoors</u>	<u>Bay Centre</u>

# 2024 AWARD WINNERS

Award Category	Winner	Sponsor
Innovation	<u><a href="#">Clean Air Yard Care</a></u>	<u><a href="#">Camosun College</a></u>
Inspirational New Venture	<u><a href="#">Wireless PnC Inc</a></u>	<u><a href="#">City of Victoria</a></u>
Leadership in Hospitality	<u><a href="#">Pendray Inn and Tea House</a></u>	<u><a href="#">Big Wheel Burger</a></u>
Local Food	<u><a href="#">Victoria Community Food Hub Society</a></u>	<u><a href="#">Schneider Electric</a></u>
Social Impact	<u><a href="#">Reciprocity Trusts Society</a></u>	<u><a href="#">The Parkside Hotel &amp; Spa</a></u>
Sustainable Workplace	<u><a href="#">Prince of Whales</a></u>	<u><a href="#">Monk Office</a></u>
Waste to Resource	<u><a href="#">I Used To Be A Pallet</a></u>	<u><a href="#">Capital Regional District</a></u>

# SPECIAL PROJECTS



BC  
B

GREENING B.C.'S  
BUSINESS COMM





# SMALL BUSINESS, BIG IMPACT EVENTS

The Small Business, Big Impact event series was designed to bring together leaders in the green economy and circular economy space to share ideas, make connections, and get inspired by the work happening in our community.

These two events in Vancouver and Victoria featured bite-sized presentations from organizations taking climate action, a solutions showcase, and catering dishes upcycled food waste.

Thank you to our funders and partners:





# FED URBAN AGRICULTURE



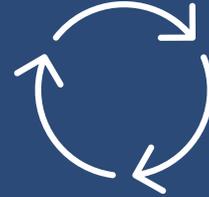
[FED Urban Agriculture](#) is a charity administered by Synergy Foundation that creates high impact urban food systems projects that meaningfully connect Victorians to local food through innovation and genuine engagement. From creating garden spaces and delivering educational programs to collaborating with local restaurants and farmers, FED continues to push the envelope within Victoria's local food system.

In 2024, FED introduced FED Urban Farm, launched a CSA Program, and expanded their rooftop gardens, increasing local food production and availability in the region.

# IN THE MEDIA



Winners of 2024 Ecostar Awards announced  
**Capital Daily**



Meet the 3 winners of the 2024 Project Zero Pitch Event  
**BCBusiness**



Boosting business sustainability with a circular economy ecosystem  
**Island Coastal Economic Trust**



Celebrating a community of green businesses in the Kootenays  
**Nelson & District Chamber of Commerce**

# OUR CUMULATIVE IMPACT

2024 marks the end of Synergy Foundation's 2022-2024 Strategic Plan. The past three years have been characterized by rapid growth. Here are some highlights in numbers from the past three years:



**460+**  
Businesses  
Supported



**154**  
New BC Green  
Business  
Members



**150%**  
Increase in  
Team Size



**2**  
Core  
Programs  
Expanded  
Provincewide



**4,250**  
Workshop &  
Event  
Attendees



# LOOKING AHEAD

Next year we look forward to building momentum as we continue to expand our geographic reach and build new partnerships under our 2025-2027 Strategic Plan.

Some highlights to look forward to include:

- Supporting over 320 SMEs through the Project Zero Incubator, Circular Economy Accelerator, and BC Green Business
- Celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Ecostar Awards
- Running a regional Project Zero Incubator program in Newfoundland and Labrador in partnership with [econext](#)
- Creating circular economy community hubs on Vancouver Island

# SYNERGY

FOUNDATION



[www.synergyfoundation.ca](http://www.synergyfoundation.ca)



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