

A CHANGING LANDSCAPE:

Reimagining Entrepreneurship in Canada

RISE STRATEGIC PLAN
(2027-2029)



Rise empowers individuals with mental health and substance use challenges to become entrepreneurs and transform their lives. We invest in people and their potential nationwide.

RESPONDING TO A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Canada's economic and social realities have shifted—and with them, the conditions for entrepreneurship. Political and financial instability, persistent inflation, market disruption, and growing income inequality are changing how Canadians participate in traditional employment and entrepreneurship. What remains true is that small businesses are the engine of our economy—they make up 98% of Canadian businesses¹ and include more than 5.1 million sole proprietors².

At the same time, mental health and substance use challenges are increasing in prevalence and complexity. In recent surveys, just over half of Canadians reported very good or excellent mental health—down sharply from a decade ago.³ For those with identified mental health disabilities, fewer than 50% are employed.⁴

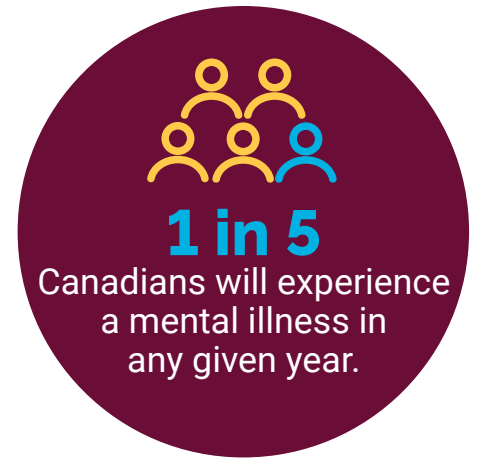
Rise works at this nuanced intersection where mental health meets entrepreneurship, delivering flexible supports that empower people to create new pathways to improved income and well-being.

A UNIQUE MODEL FOR UNIQUE CLIENTS

For the individuals Rise serves, the pressures of a changing world are compounded. In addition to mental health and substance use challenges, many are navigating unstable incomes, systemic discrimination, institutional barriers, and stigma. It's a level of complexity that traditional financing and business support systems were not designed to handle. That's where Rise comes in.

Founded more than 15 years ago by the Rotman Family as a joint initiative with CAMH, our mandate is unique—and more relevant than ever. We don't simply consider an entrepreneur's mental health; we empower individuals to harness their lived experience, strengths, and resilience to build small businesses that fit their lives. We believe that people living with mental health and substance use challenges deserve equitable access to the opportunities provided by entrepreneurship. It is the most viable path to building a future that balances greater financial self-sufficiency with meaningful self-care.

Rise is unique for who we serve *and* in how we serve them. We don't ask clients to conform to a standardized model; our programming is designed to accommodate their mental health and recovery. Our training programs, micro-financing, and other tailored supports – including self-employment coaching, mentorship and our virtual community – are inclusive and grounded in compassionate accountability. They are intentionally built to remove barriers to access for neurodiverse individuals and people with intersecting identities and challenges.



“At a time when I did not feel credible or confident, [Rise’s] support gave me energy and helped me begin believing in myself again. It allowed me to re-engage in business in a way that ... can be especially helpful when someone is struggling with mental health and needs a gentler path back into work.” – Rise lending client



OUR MISSION IS ENDURING AND ADAPTING

Our 2027-2029 strategic plan reflects both continuity and change. We continue to deliver the high-touch, client-centred support that defines Rise, while evolving how we structure, scale, and measure that impact in response to the ever-changing socio-economic environment. Our plan positions Rise to deepen its effectiveness while strengthening our role within Canada's inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystem.



OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. ENHANCING OUR CLIENT SUPPORT MODEL

We aim to meet our clients wherever they are on their entrepreneurial journeys and provide adaptive support that empowers, never harms. To advance this aim, we will evolve our model and expand our partnerships to ensure we can reach individuals in need of support and appropriately respond to the complexity of their personal and business development needs.

3-YEAR STRATEGIC GOAL:

- Establish a progressive level-of-service model that responds to the complexity of our clients in that moment of their entrepreneurial journey.
- Develop system-level partnerships to bolster our client referral pipeline.

KEY MEASURES:

- \$1M deployed in micro-financing by the end of year 3 (cumulative).
- 2,000 clients served annually by the end of year 3, doubling the FY26 baseline.



2. MEASURING OUR IMPACT & EXTENDING OUR INFLUENCE

We are the only organization in Canada that explicitly supports people with mental health and substance use challenges to thrive as entrepreneurs. Our unique position means we must become a leading advocate and influencer, driving meaningful conversations and showcasing our impact.

3-YEAR STRATEGIC GOALS:

- Build Rise’s profile as the premier national service provider of self-employment supports for individuals with mental health and substance use challenges.
- Position Rise as a thought leader on how to support individuals with disabilities to thrive as entrepreneurs.

KEY MEASURES:

- Publish a comprehensive report on Rise’s “ripple effect,” showcasing how our impact extends beyond individual clients to positively affect Canada more broadly.
- Develop and drive the conversation on progressive thought leadership topics that Rise can “own” in the public domain to increase our credibility and elevate our profile.

3. BUILDING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Building a business takes time. Mental health recovery takes time. And as the world around us continues to change and evolve, we must develop new and strengthen existing revenue streams rooted in sustainable, multi-year funding to ensure Rise’s long-term impact.

3-YEAR STRATEGIC GOALS:

- Secure stable, multi-year funding commitments to underpin Rise’s operating model.
- Secure blended-finance impact investments to responsibly increase Rise’s capacity to deploy capital through its micro-finance program.

KEY MEASURES:

- Establish at least 50% of operating revenue through multi-year commitments.
- Increase government partnerships, formalizing 3 provincial relationships outside of Ontario.

1. Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, *Key Small Business Statistics 2025*.
2. Statistics Canada, *Canadian Small Businesses: Data and Demographics (2024)*.
3. Statistics Canada, *Perceived Mental Health – Quality of Life Indicators (2015–2024)*.
4. Canadian Mental Health Association, *The State of Mental Health in Canada (2024)*.

