



Good Afternoon,

Back in the early 2000's, when my then-business partner and I started our Crst entrepreneurial venture, we did so from the ground up. It was the deCnition of bootstrapping. During our Crst year in business, we barely made rent. I can remember hunting for \$1 deals at the grocery store and long meetings over two-can-dine-for-\$5.99 meal deals to make ends meet.

We never sought external capital because, honestly, we didn't think it existed for two women in our 30s trying to build something new in a traditional, male-dominated industry.

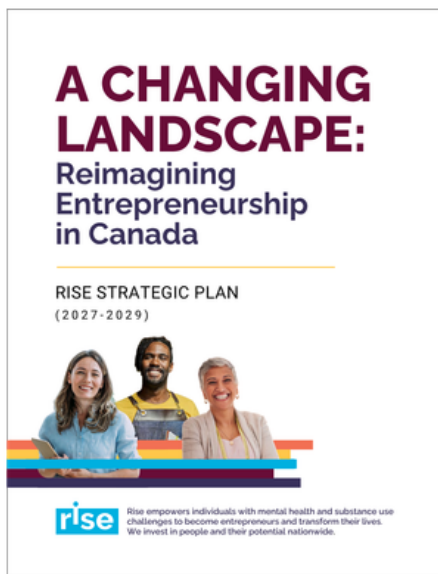
What we did have was stress, uncertainty and plenty of others' doubts to contend with. Looking back, I realize the thing that kept us going was what I call "entrepreneurial egotism"—the unwavering belief that we'd Cnd a way, somehow.

I often think about that when I meet Rise clients. They are folks whose mental health and substance use challenges, income and employment histories, and intersecting identities mean that they do not Ct the typical mold of an entrepreneur.

Yet, I recognize the same potential that I saw in myself years ago.

The difference is that conCdence isn't always there from the start. More often, it's built over time. It grows when you validate your business idea; when you develop new skills and begin to trust your own abilities; when peers and mentors encourage you; and when capital considers your character, not just your credit history.

That's what we do at Rise. We support people who experience mental health and substance use challenges to build conCdence and pursue entrepreneurship on their own terms.



Today, that mission matters more than ever.

Amidst shifting social and economic realities, our clients are navigating increasingly complex challenges, including their mental health, systemic barriers to employment, and income, housing and food insecurity. They don't need another mold to try to fit; they need flexible, compassionate support that responds to their changing needs.

That's why I'm excited to share Rise's new strategic plan, ***A Changing Landscape: Reimagining Entrepreneurship in Canada (2027-2029)***.

Over the next three years, we will strengthen how we assess and understand our clients' unique circumstances, so we can provide the right support at the right time, recognizing that every entrepreneurial journey is different, and every wellness journey is too.

READ OUR NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

When I think back to my early days as an entrepreneur, I don't wish it had been easier. But I do wish I'd had access to a partner like Rise—one that sees every entrepreneur for who they are and helps them build confidence alongside capability.

Sincerely,

Adwoa K. Buahene

Chief Executive Officer

www.risehelps.ca

 Explore our newly released **Impact Report** to see how the lessons of our last fiscal year (May 2025 – April 2026) have informed our strategic plan: www.riseimpactreport.ca