



MEDIA RELEASE

RISE ANNOUNCES NATIONAL EXPANSION OF WOMEN+ ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM, MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH GOVERNMENT OF CANADA SUPPORT

WITH A \$1.42 MILLION GRANT THROUGH THE WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRATEGY, RISE TO OFFER INNOVATIVE, FEMINIST-FORWARD SMALL BUSINESS TRAINING TO WOMEN AND GENDER-DIVERSE ENTREPRENEURS NATIONWIDE

TORONTO, ON, April 20, 2023 — Today Rise announces the national expansion of its Women+ Entrepreneurship Program, supported by the Government of Canada through the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy (WES). Using a curriculum built on inclusive, decolonized and accessible feminist philosophy, the training program is aimed at empowering diverse women, including trans women and non-binary individuals (women+), with the skills and confidence to pursue self-employment.

“The Women+ Entrepreneurship Program is about creating a safe and supportive space where women and gender-diverse communities can share experiences, develop ideas and learn foundational skills, while also taking care of their mental health,” says Rise CEO, Lori Smith. “We are grateful to the Government of Canada for its support, which is enabling Rise to reach more aspiring women+ entrepreneurs who may feel underserved by traditional business training.”

Rise is Canada’s only national organization dedicated to empowering individuals with mental health and addiction challenges to achieve greater social and economic inclusion through entrepreneurship. It provides micro-financing, mentorship, training and other custom supports to help people build small businesses. After completing a Women+ pilot in Ontario last month, national expansion means Rise is deepening its commitment to ensuring that diverse and intersectional identities are not only considered in Canada’s economy but harnessed as an asset.

While only about 18 per cent of businesses in Canada are owned by women, they represent nearly 40 per cent of self-employed individuals nationwide, which indicates that women are accessing the economy in a variety of small-scale ways. With the new WES funds, Rise will run a total of six women+ cohorts over the next two years, one third of which will be offered in French. Focused particularly on filling a gap in services for mature women+ entrepreneurs, the

program is designed to meet participants where they are in their business development and their personal lives. Highly responsive to individual needs, the program provides critical learning and support to help individuals achieve their own definition of success.

“So often, the conversation about empowering women in business centers on reaching the C-Suite and achieving equality in corporate leadership roles,” says Smith. “But for many women and individuals from diverse gender communities – especially those with mental health and addiction challenges – the power of entrepreneurship lies in its flexibility and the opportunity to build a sustainable source of income to support themselves and their families.”

Modelled on Rise’s longstanding [Peer Supported Startup Program](#), the Women+ Entrepreneurship Program is delivered in two-hour sessions, twice weekly, over 10 weeks. It includes facilitator-led learning segments that cover business fundamentals (e.g., financial forecasting, brand building, digital marketing and customer experience, etc.), peer group working sessions and mentorship support. The program is open to women, trans women and non-binary individuals 18+ who have a business idea they would like to develop.

About Rise

Rise is a national organization dedicated to empowering people with mental health and addiction challenges to achieve greater social and economic inclusion through entrepreneurship. Through training, mentorship, micro-financing and other customs supports, Rise helps individuals build the skills and access the capital they need to build a small business that can improve quality of life and enable them to support themselves, their families and communities.

Since its founding in 2010, Rise has disbursed more than \$3 million in low-interest loans and established training and mentorship programs that have helped empower 2,000+ Canadians as entrepreneurs. Rise collaborates with local partners to recruit for and deliver programs, and benefits from the time and talent of 800+ volunteers. Rise has nine program locations across five provinces (BC, AB, MB, ON & NS) and a national reach that extends from coast to coast.

Rise is changing lives and strengthening communities by unleashing the entrepreneurial spirit of all Canadians with mental health and addiction challenges. www.risehelps.ca | [@RiseHelps](https://www.instagram.com/RiseHelps)

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