

Social Purpose Business Curricula Framework

Introduction

The Canadian Purpose Economy Project is engaging national ecosystem actors to create an enabling environment for social purpose businesses to start, transition, thrive and grow. It has identified business schools as a key ally to teach social purpose business models and collaborated with Corporate Knights to understand the global state of social purpose business school education.

To inform the research both organizations developed the “Social Purpose Business Curricula Framework” as set out below. It provides examples of how business schools can integrate social purpose business models into their core curricula across 15 mandatory courses. This framework was incorporated into a global survey of MBA programs conducted by Corporate Knights in partnership with CPEP which assessed 1) the social purpose of the business school; and 2) whether the school included social purpose concepts in its core curricula. The findings are included in this 2023 report: [Social Purpose in Business Schools and MBA Curriculums](#).

The Canadian Purpose Economy Project (CPEP) adapted the framework to include an additional three mandatory courses to enable effective social purpose execution.

CPEP launched the Social Purpose Business Schools Project with the objective of engaging Canadian business schools on the opportunity to holistically embed social purpose concepts in the core curricula. Business school professors and deans are encouraged to contact CPEP if they are interested in participating in the Social Purpose Business Schools Project.

Definition of a Social Purpose Business

Corporate Knights and the Canadian Purpose Economy Project used these definitions of social purpose business in their global scan.

A social purpose business is a business that exists to profitably solve the problems of people and planet without profiting from creating problems¹. It is a business whose enduring reason for being is to create a better world², whose reason to exist is to achieve an optimal strategic contribution to the long-term wellbeing of all people and planet³. While it generates profits and creates returns for shareholders and owners, shareholder return is not its purpose.

Social Purpose Business Curricula Framework

This Social Purpose Business Curricula Framework is designed as a comprehensive resource for business schools who are embedding social purpose into their core curricula. It encompasses both the standard curriculum essential for understanding the business operations (Purpose Integration Competencies) and courses to equip business students with personal leadership and systemic change skills crucial for effectively managing and innovating within social purpose businesses and across their ecosystems (Purpose Enabling Competencies).

¹ The British Academy: [Future of the Corporation | The British Academy](#)

² Canadian Purpose Economy Project: [About Us - Canadian Purpose Economy Project](#)

³ British Standards Institute: [PAS 808:2022 Purpose-driven organizations | BSI \(bsigroup.com\)](#)

Purpose Integration Competencies

Course	Description
Finance	How to conduct financial analysis from the perspective of a social purpose business.
Risk Management	Consider the risks to the company's social purpose, the risk of not achieving the social purpose, and how risk is assessed in a social purpose company.
Accounting	Cover purpose accounting, measurement, and reporting.
Strategic Management	Address how to create, implement, and evaluate strategies that execute on the company's social purpose and cover the role of stakeholder engagement and collaboration in achieving the company's social purpose.
Product Innovation and Development	Cover approaches to understanding customer needs and preferences aligned to the purpose, embedding purpose in product, service, and experience design.
Entrepreneurship	Include social purpose business models when covering how to start and manage a new venture, innovation, and entrepreneurial strategies and address how this differs from other business models.
Marketing	Cover the role of marketing to achieve the social purpose including strategies to mobilize customers and other stakeholders to help achieve the social purpose and create a movement around the brand.
Organizational Behavior and Human Resources	Include social purpose as a performance driver, and address how to engage employees in the social purpose and build it into the organizational culture.
Operations Management and Supply Chain	Include how to seek out and include social purpose suppliers and how social purpose organizations can collaborate with value chain and other stakeholders to achieve their purpose.
Business Ethics	Cover how social purpose statements create the guardrails for ethical decisions.
Project Management	Explore how to integrate social purpose into projects and measure progress toward embedding purpose in product design throughout the project life cycle.
Governance and Management Systems	Cover the role of the board of directors in governance of the social purpose, including key supporting concepts such as ISO 37000 and BSI PAS 808.
Industrial Relations	Cover how to create a purpose that builds a better world for workers and how to collaborate with labour representatives to jointly achieve the social purpose.
International Business	Address purpose in relation to the context of the company's various locations (i.e., make sure purpose is for people in all locations, not just the wealthy countries); consider whether tax planning supports the company's purpose or works against it.
Information Technology	Integrate purpose into decision-making about AI, automation, and technology.

Purpose Enabling Competencies

Course	Description
Systems Thinking for Social Purpose Business	Explores systems thinking as a critical tool for social purpose business. It empowers students to understand complex systems, analyze interdependencies, and apply holistic problem-solving approaches to social and environmental challenges within the business context. Students will learn to navigate and influence complex systems to further the social purpose.
Personal Leadership Development	Empowers individuals with the tools and mindset needed to develop stable and secure sense of self, understand, and embrace personal values, and enhance leadership skills for creating positive social change through business. Participants will engage in self-discovery, leadership practices, focusing on personal and professional growth aligned with social impact goals to prepare themselves to lead with purpose, empathy, and effectiveness.
Collaboration for Social Purpose Business	Equips students with the ability to enable effective collaborations – to influence and lead change across, within and beyond business boundaries and across disciplines and fields to advance the social purpose. Participants will learn how to establish or contribute to collaborations to jointly develop solutions and work together to further the social purpose.

About the Canadian Purpose Economy Project

The Canadian Purpose Economy Project exists to accelerate the transition to the purpose economy. It engages national ecosystem actors to create an enabling environment for social purpose businesses to start, transition, thrive and grow. This paper is one in a series of reports exploring the roles of key actors to advance social purpose in business including accountants, boards, investors, associations, business schools and others. Subscribe to our updates at www.purposeeconomy.ca

About Corporate Knights

Corporate Knights Inc. is a leading sustainable-economy media and research B Corp headquartered in Toronto, Ontario. The award-winning magazine, Corporate Knights, which has been published quarterly since 2002, maintains an editorial focus on climate change, responsible investing, and the ideas, actions and innovations that shape a sustainable economy and is distributed in The Globe and Mail, The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal. Corporate Knights' research division produces global sustainability rankings, research reports and financial product ratings based on corporate sustainability performance. Our flagship ranking is the Global 100 Most Sustainable Corporations in the World, released each year during the World Economic Forum.