

Social Purpose Association Case Study: BC Chamber of Commerce

Introduction

The BC Chamber of Commerce (the BC Chamber) is the largest business association in British Columbia, representing 85 chambers of commerce and boards of trade (the Network), and 32,000 businesses of every size, and from every sector and region of the province. Its purpose is to champion the collective voice of its members to create an environment in which B.C. businesses prosper, families thrive and communities flourish.

In 2024, the BC Chamber received funding from Coast Capital and partnered with the [Canadian Purpose Economy Project](#) (CPEP) to launch a one-year “social purpose in business” education program, *Building Your Social Purpose Business*.

This case study describes the program and the impact it achieved from September 2024 to June 2025.

Background

During its annual Small Business Week Summit in 2023, the BC Chamber introduced the concept of social purpose through a webinar. The session sparked significant interest, with over 40 businesses expressing a desire to learn more about social purpose business. Building on this momentum, the [Building Your Social Purpose Business](#) program was created to:

- Educate the BC Chamber’s provincial network and its business members about social purpose.
- Develop a replicable model for engaging other associations in promoting social purpose for business.

The educational program aimed to answer these key questions:

- What is a social purpose business, and what is the business case for adopting one?
- How do you develop a social purpose?
- How do you implement a social purpose?

Activities

The program included the following core activities:

Network Surveys: To track progress, the BC Chamber conducted a before and after survey of its members to determine how many understood the social purpose business model and were using a social purpose to guide their business.

Webinar Series: A complimentary five-part educational series (valued at \$1,500) was offered to the BC Chamber membership and other businesses across Canada. The series provided businesses with step-by-step guidance on understanding, defining, and implementing social purpose. Backed by the expertise of CPEP, a leading, internationally respected voice on social purpose business and a trusted authority on best practices, this series draws on over five years of proven training and delivery.

The program launched in October 2024, and all chambers of commerce and boards of trade received a [promotional toolkit](#) with which to promote the program to their business members. The BC Chamber hosted 2 kickoff sessions with the Network to introduce the program, walk through the toolkit and highlight the opportunity for chambers of commerce and boards of trade themselves to participate in the series alongside their members. The sessions generated strong interest and enthusiasm, with 31 chambers of commerce and boards of trade in attendance. A recording of the kickoff session was shared with the Network.

The webinars were co-developed and presented by Mary Ellen Schaafsma, Founder and Purpose Advisor of [Purpose Pathways](#), and Ambassador for the Canadian Purpose Economy Project.

Participants who completed all five sessions were offered a [Certificate of Completion](#).

Recordings of the sessions are available on the tailor-made webpage, known as the Social Purpose Hub. As follows:

- Session 1: [Why Social Purpose Drives Success and Matters for Your Business](#)
- Session 2: [Uncovering the Key Insights for Social Purpose](#)
- Session 3: [Crafting Your Unique Social Purpose Statement](#)
- Session 4: [Bringing Social Purpose to the Heart of Your Business](#)
- Session 5: [Building Partnerships and Amplifying Your Purpose Message and Impact](#)

Social Media and Newsletter

The BC Chamber created social media posts and launched them across all of their channels, including Facebook, LinkedIn, “x”, and Instagram. The BC Chamber regularly featured the program in its monthly newsletter, often as the lead story.

Small Business Week Summit Launch: The BC Chamber officially launched the webinar series during the 2024 Small Business Week Summit and profiled the initiative during the fourth national #PurposeInBusinessWeek in November 2024.

Social Purpose Chamber Champions: Nine local chambers of commerce (e.g., Langley, Burnaby, Surrey) were engaged to act as social purpose champions and co-promoters of the webinar series.

Twelve chambers of commerce participated in the webinar series, and five registered for all five sessions. These chambers of commerce are now equipped to develop a social purpose themselves and further promote social purpose business within their networks. The BC Chamber is exploring with its Network, including these engaged chambers of commerce, how it can support chambers of commerce and boards of trade to champion social purpose business in their communities.

Association Engagement

The BC Chamber further identified the opportunity to engage trade/sector specific associations in its orbit on opportunities to similarly educate their members, either by sharing the webinar series or another approach. It developed this brochure for association outreach: [link](#), and sent it to its 27 member trade/sector specific associations and 8 peer chambers of commerce across Canada.

As part of this effort, the President and CEO of the BC Chamber also delivered a high-level presentation to the BC Business Council's *BC Caucus*—a group representing 34 associations from across the province, including both provincial and national organizations. The presentation introduced social purpose concepts and the Social Purpose Hub, highlighting how social purpose can help businesses navigate uncertainty. Twenty-five associations participated live, and following the presentation, all 34 associations received the full presentation deck and a link to the Social Purpose Hub by email.

In total 61 associations received information on social purpose in business through these combined outreach efforts and were encouraged to educate their members by leveraging the BC Chamber social purpose webinar series.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

To measure the program's success, the following KPIs were tracked:

Webinar Attendance

- 720 total session registrations
- 323 unique individuals registered
- 71 participants registered for all five sessions

Content Engagement

- 6,389 views of the social purpose webpage
- 557 views of the five recorded webinars on YouTube

Social Media Engagement

- 22 LinkedIn posts

- 3,981 total organic impressions
- 181 average impressions per post
- 2.99% average click-through rate – *well above LinkedIn's typical benchmark (0.4–1%)*
- 6.76% average engagement rate – *exceptionally strong; over triple the LinkedIn average (1–2%)*

Completion Certificate

-72 participants clicked on the [Social Purpose in Business Training Completion Certificate](#)

Impact of the Webinar Series¹

- 50% increase in those who understand purpose (42% to 63%)
- 80% decrease in those unsure of what it means (18% to 3%)
- Use of purpose in decision-making doubled (16% to 33%)
- 40% increase in the number of businesses who have or are planning to adopt a social purpose for their business

Impact

The *Building Your Social Purpose Business* program achieved significant milestones, including raising awareness of social purpose among thousands of businesses, establishing a replicable model for other chambers of commerce and boards of trade, and fostering a network of early adopters and champions. The initiative laid the foundation for future collaboration and innovation in embedding social purpose within the business community in B.C. and beyond.

Through this program, the BC Chamber demonstrated the potential of chambers of commerce and boards of trade specifically and trade/sector-specific associations generally to catalyze meaningful change and help their members advance the purpose economy.

Building on this success, the BC Chamber will maintain access to the recordings on its website and actively promote it to its members on a regular basis to encourage continued uptake and awareness.

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. We are grateful to Coast Capital, our Founding Purpose Champion, for their support. The Project is an initiative of the CBSR Education Foundation.

Subscribe to our [updates](#) and sign our [Call to Purpose](#) to help us advance social purpose in business.

¹ Due to the small sample size—49 responses to survey 1 and 40 to survey 2—the findings should be treated as indicative rather than definitive.