Final Report
AMS Sustainability Projects Fund

UBC Social Enterprise Conference

CONTACT
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PART ONE: WHAT THE GRANT ACHieved:

How has your initiative met the criteria of the Sustainability Projects Fund?

1. How did the project promote the reduction of ecological footprint?

We invited speakers from various social enterprises that have a strong environmental focus, ranging from clean energy, to climate technology, to eco-friendly products, with the goal to educate and inspire students to make environmental conscious decisions in their work and personal life. We strived to follow the UBC Sustainability Event Planning Guide as much as we can in executing the conference. The conference took place in the Nest, a LEED Platinum certified building with efficient heating and water system, waste management, and natural lighting, that is located right on UBC campus. In order to reduce paper waste, most of our communications and marketing materials, including our program brochure, were presented digitally through various channels including digital screens, newsletters and social media. We made conscious effort to use products and services from local and sustainable social enterprises:

- Recycled notebooks from Coastal Reign
- Coffee supply for Ethical Bean
- Lunch from Chipotle and drinks from Yerba Mate
- Networking food from Save On Meats
- Raffle prize from Patagonia
- Delegate bags from Vancity
- Items in delegate bags from LUSH, Hippie Foods, Nature’s Path
- Speaker gifts from Sapadilla Soap
- Lanyards borrowed from the Lanyard Library, a project by Fairware Ltd.
2. How did the project increase student engagement?

The executive team consists of 18 students from various faculties in UBC, who brought in different skillsets while sharing the same passion in solving pressing issues in society. We provided volunteer opportunities to 20 students during the conference to help them gain event-planning experience and better understanding of social enterprise. With our aspiring vision for student engagement, we engaged 275 attendees from various faculties and also a small number from other universities. Altogether, our conference involved over 300 students. We have a strong belief that social change requires collaboration from across disciplines and stakeholders. As a conference on entrepreneurship, it was gratifying to know that 56% of the attendees were from different faculties other than commerce.

On top of inviting incredible speakers whose inspiring stories moved the attendees in many ways, we also provided various platforms for students to interact throughout the conference. Our goal was to successfully create an interdisciplinary approach to social enterprise, bringing out the entrepreneur in future engineers, developers, artists, business people and students from all walks of life. By engaging and igniting the spark in attendees, we have the opportunity to create a movement, one consisting of passionate students who want to be changemakers. During lunchtime, students had the opportunity to mingle over delicious food sponsored by Chipotle and visit various booths. The
attendees were challenged with real problems ranging from education to finance to sustainable products from eight social enterprises: Change Heroes, BSI Biodegradable Solutions, Spring Activator, GradusOne, Buy Social Canada, World Bank, Riipen, and My Green Space. Attendees were divided into small groups to work together in order to come up with innovative solutions for the problems each company is facing. Last but not least, we invited an additional 40 networking professionals during the networking session. Students had the opportunity to mingle over networking food provided by Save On Meats with the business professionals and among each other.

3. How did the project contribute to the educational aspect of sustainability and how did it approach its plans for outreach on campus?

SUSTAINABILITY:
We strived to lead by example by reducing our ecological footprint, as mentioned in the previous section. We believe this is an important means to educate the volunteers and our attendees about sustainability. We are proud of the sustainable partners that contribute to our sustainability aspiration.

Although our conference covered a broad range of topics such as health care, poverty alleviation, climate change, gender quality, child labor etc., a repeated message that was carried out by various speakers was systemic change. We want to send the message that we need to create sustainable and scalable change rather than Band-Aid or short-term solutions.

Several workshops had a direct focus on sustainable living. BSI Biodegradable Solutions is a business of sustainable/compostable packaging. My Green Space is a digital garden planner and seed shop on a mission to make communities more sustainable and resilient. Wize Monkey’s mission is to break the poverty cycle in coffee communities by harvesting tasty, healthy, and sustainable products.

OUTREACH:
By having executive team members from different faculties, we were able to reach out to students from many different faculties within our network, as mentioned in the student engagement section.

4. How did the project focus on its longevity and feasibility?

We strived to be judicious with our use of finances, in order to create the most impact in UBC community. We made it possible through the collaboration with our amazing sponsors and partners to keep our conference ticket price at $20 – a very affordable price for students. Therefore we were able to engage 275 students to attend the conference.
With our professional communications and hard work, we were able to establish long-term relationships with not only our speakers and sponsors, but also the attendees. With all the opportunities provided in the conference, we hoped to inspire and educate students to go on and choose their own path in social entrepreneurship. By providing the space for students to meet like-minded individuals, we hoped these meaningful relationships will last and turn into positive social impact in the near future.

Given that this is only the second year of the annual UBC Social Enterprise Conference, we were very humble to receive many compliments from speakers and attendees about the quality of the event. After the conference, we took the opportunity to quickly recruit the best talents that were moved by our work to carry on our vision and mission for the next academic year. With the growth and importance of social entrepreneurship in solving society’s pressing issues, we strongly believe that our cause is valuable to UBC community and beyond for years to come.

What was something unexpected that occurred during the event or project?

One issue we had during the conference was the delay of networking food. Save On Meats staff arrived 20 minutes later than what we have agreed on, while also missing some food trays that were supposed to be there. Therefore a portion of attendees left because we had a long gap between two sessions. We have negotiated with Save On Meats in order to reflect service quality. A lesson we learnt is to have very clear communications with event partners and stakeholders in order to ensure effective event operations.

What resources were most difficult to find in order to carry through with the event or project successfully and efficiently?

Since the processing time for various grants that we applied for were longer than expected, we were struggling with funding for the conference at some point. In the end, we successfully acquired sufficient funding to run the conference.

Is there any feedback you could provide regarding the service you received from the AMS Sustainability Projects Fund?

AMS Sustainability Projects Fund was vital to the success of our conference. We found that it was slightly difficult in communication with AMS Sustainability at the beginning, in terms of email responsiveness. However everything went quicker and smoothly towards the end. We’re looking forward to working with AMS Sustainability again next year.

PART TWO: SHARING YOUR STORY:
The UBC Social Enterprise signature conference Limitless was held on Saturday, March 12th at the NEST on UBC campus.

The conference had an attendance of over 250 students who were introduced to the concept of social entrepreneurship by successful social entrepreneurs who have managed to incorporate societal contribution as a part of their business model. The UBC Social Enterprise Conference aimed to connect hundreds of UBC students directly to social entrepreneurs in Vancouver through various workshops, which were part of the one-day conference.

Our Opening Keynote, Miki Agrawal, was a recipient of the 2013 Tribeca Film Festival’s “Disruptive Innovation Award” and was also named 2013’s Forbes’ “Top 20 Millenials On a Mission”. She is the founder of the acclaimed farm-to-table, alternative pizza concept called WILD in NYC, while also leading the underwear revolution with THINX: a high-tech underwear solution for women during their period. She and her partners teamed up with AFRIPads in Uganda to fund 7 reusable cloth pads for every underwear sold to get millions of girls back in school. Her book entitled “DO COOL SH*T” published by Harper Collins on entrepreneurship and lifestyle design hit #1 on the Amazon Bestsellers list for entrepreneurship. Our closing keynote, Joe Roberts, was a celebrated Canadian entrepreneur before he was 35 years old. He is the winner of the Ontario Premiers Award, The Courage to Come Back Award, and recently received an Honorary Doctorate from Laurentian University. What is most amazing about Joe is that 25 years ago, he was a homeless heroin addict pushing a shopping cart around Vancouver’s notorious downtown eastside. He is now working on a campaign to push a shopping cart across Canada to End Youth Homelessness. Joe is a testament to the idea that “anything is possible”.

On top of speakers where students listen to inspiring stories and lessons, we provided various platforms for students to interact throughout the conference. During lunch, students had the opportunity to mingle over delicious food sponsored by Chipotle and visit the various booths. The attendees were challenged with real problems ranging from education to finance to sustainable products from eight social enterprises: Change Heroes, BSI Biodegradable Solutions, Spring Activator, GradusOne, Buy Social Canada, World Bank, Riipen, and My Green Space. Each of these workshops was designed to help students find their passion and generate social impact. The workshops also served as an opportunity for students to engage in talks focusing on various aspects social entrepreneurship while connecting with like-minded individuals who share a passion for limitless change.

Although our conference covered a broad range of topics such as health care, poverty alleviation, climate change, gender quality, child labor etc., a repeated message that was carried out by various speakers was systemic. We aimed to send the message that there is a need to create sustainable and scalable change rather than band-aid or short-term solutions.
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Success of the 2016 UBC Social Enterprise Conference will be achieved if each delegate walks away having learned three things. The first being that change is most effective when systemic, meaning that in order to catalyze a positive shift in an industry, a social entrepreneur must target the problem at a systems level and revolutionize the sector rather than place a Band-Aid on the problem. Secondly, limitless change means nothing if the impact on society is not measurable, a successful social entrepreneur will know both their region of impact and how to effectively measure the results achieved. The final lesson is realizing that as a social entrepreneur or intrapreneur you have the mindset and skills to innovate an idea into a sustainable solution and prove to the world that change is limitless if you adapt, question the status quo, and stand at the forefront of positive social change.