

**SV** Social  
Ventures  
Zone

Ryerson  
University



# Transform ideas into solutions

At the intersection of empathy and enterprise, the Social Ventures Zone at Ryerson University is a unique incubator where innovators turn novel ideas for change into lasting social impact.

Social ventures begin with an idea to improve society with some kind of measurable impact and may range from for-profit and nonprofit startups to cause-specific projects, community programs, events or system-level change activations.

Our social innovators are students, alumni, faculty and members of the broader community. They tackle issues such as ethical fashion, urban poverty, gender-based violence and conscious consumption. Surrounded by like-minded people, zone members have access to workshops, coaching, networking and funding opportunities.

Many incubators use social impact or impact in general as a performance indicator. We are unique, however, as we only incubate ventures that are addressing a social challenge at the core of their operations. Every venture will have a social impact unique to them that is measured to determine success.







# Zones and Zone Learning

Zone Learning is a new model of experiential learning that prepares students for the 21st-century workplace. By providing opportunities to initiate and develop creative and social impact projects and startup companies, Ryerson's 10-zone network enables students to solve real-world problems and learn new skills in one of the world's most vibrant cities.

Each zone focuses on a specific industry and offers students access to resources and mentors that help bring their ideas to life. Students work at the forefront of emerging markets, exploring innovative solutions to pressing challenges by developing new products and services. Students involved in Zone Learning acquire valuable skills and real-world experience that employers look for, and many graduate with their own startups.

### Ryerson 10 zones

- Biomedical Zone
- Clean Energy Zone
- Design Fabrication Zone
- DMZ
- Fashion Zone
- iBoost Zone
- Legal Innovation Zone
- Science Discovery Zone
- Social Ventures Zone
- Transmedia Zone

## Co-curricular programming

### Startup School

Startup School is an education program that helps students and zone members develop the mindset, skills and understanding of the entrepreneurial process. Industry experts, thought leaders and seasoned entrepreneurs lead free workshops on topics such as design thinking, business plan development and investor relations.

### Multidisciplinary collaboration

Zone members work with experts from a range of disciplines and industries. They also have access to resources, awards, programming, competitions and networking and industry events across Ryerson's entire zone network.

### Optional specialization

Students enrolled in Zone Learning for four terms earn a specialization noted on their transcript.

# Join the Social Ventures Zone

All members have access to:



Workspace, lab space, library access, research assistance and software



Workshops and events tailored to social enterprises and business building



Networking opportunities with industry executives and thought leaders



Strong community partnerships across the GTA



Industry leaders as coaches who provide mentorship

**Want to join an existing venture?**

We can connect your passion for change and unique skillset to a venture already underway.



The Social Ventures Zone offers two types of membership:

## Ideation

**You have an idea for social change and the passion to make it happen, but aren't sure what to do next.**

If you're not yet ready to launch a venture or don't have a business plan, we can help.

Learn how to prepare your innovative idea for incubation:

- **Identify problems and develop solutions:** attend ideation sessions to refine ideas, define problems, identify opportunities, and clarify outcomes
- **Gear up for incubation:** perform research, collect evidence, identify the business structure, and become "pitch-ready" for applying to an incubator

Visit [ryerson.ca/svz](http://ryerson.ca/svz) to learn how to apply to our zone.

## Incubation

**You already have a social venture that is ready to grow.**

If your idea is ready for incubation – or you already lead an enterprise, project, startup, or service that is beginning to make a difference – we can help you take the next steps.

Ventures that are admitted to the Zone spend their first four months working with other members of their admission cohort to complete a series of workshops to further improve their ideas and lay the groundwork for success.

After completion of the four-month program, members retain their membership status and may continue accessing resources, contacts, programming and events for their venture's growth and success.

In addition to an innovation with the potential for lasting social impact, we look for entrepreneurs to demonstrate a flexible mindset about growing their venture.

**Four-month program**

- Curated startup programming to refine business skills, understand social impact, develop branding and marketing, use social media, and other business building and professional development topics
- A co-working space and peer network
- Funding opportunities and support
- One-on-one support from community coaches
- Connections to a range of faculty and community subject matter experts
- Research resources and support
- Awards and competitions
- Impact measurement



# Community building

Strengthen connections, expand opportunities, increase resources or build capacity for a particular group

- Collaborate with other like-minded changemakers across Ryerson's 10-zones
- Develop career-ready soft skills, like teamwork, communication, time management and presenting
- Work with industry and university partners to test innovative solutions in the real-world

## The pickup pioneers

### The problem

Recent immigrants are often overwhelmed when integrating with their new surroundings and underserved communities face challenges to participate in the world's most played game.

### The solution

Break down barriers to inclusion by building a city-wide network of open-access pickup soccer games for adults and youth. Draw on the universal appeal of the sport to build communities and empower personal growth, especially for those transitioning to a new life in Canada.

### The startup

An idea initially developed for a capstone project, STADIUM is a non-profit led by Ryerson fourth-year Entrepreneurship student Seokhoon Jun and his brother James. The startup's goal is to build a sustainable ecosystem for recreational soccer players. STADIUM offers 103 adult pickup games to 1,400 participants. It uses the proceeds to fund 63 free games for over 1,200 kids at two Neighbourhood Improvement Areas made available through a partnership with the Toronto District School Board. Utilizing a Ryerson sponsorship opportunity, STADIUM presented to WE Day Toronto's nearly 20,000 attendees, capturing their largest audience ever.

“We had a business plan and a passion for change, but needed support creating a viable venture. Our coach and peers from the Zone helped us overcome obstacles we wouldn't have been able to foresee.”

– Seokhoon Jun, STADIUM co-founder and Entrepreneurship student

1,400+ 63

adult members

free children's games hosted





# Global engagement & development

Improve living or working conditions to make a more secure and equitable world

- Benefit from guidance and insights from industry experts to define business opportunities
- Find talented employees and interns through Ryerson's vast talent pool of undergraduate and graduate students
- Utilize coaches for guidance and mentorship when looking to scale your venture for global audiences

**“There are literally endless resources and a safe place to develop, make mistakes and grow. Within the Zone, you become part of a wider network that is both a safety net and fertile ground for collaboration.”**

– Dana Kandalaft, founder of Tight-Knit Syria

\$12K

annual sales

55

refugee artists



## The dream weavers

### The problem

Earning an income to support their families is nearly impossible for Syrian women displaced by the refugee crisis. This places an added burden on host communities like Lebanon.

### The solution

Support the financial independence refugee women by creating online marketing opportunities to sell their beautiful handcrafted products in Canada and around the world.

### The startup

Tight-Knit Syria is a Toronto-based not-for-profit venture that provides displaced Syrian women with an online platform that connects them to local and international retailers and wholesalers. Clothing and fashion accessories are produced by 30 women in northern Syria and 25 refugee women in the Shatila Camp in Beirut and sold around the world. Tight Knit Syria is scaling up operations with \$15,000 from the Social Enterprise Demonstration Fund and by hiring two students from Ryerson's School of Fashion.





# Environmental sustainability

Reduce ecological harms or improve the quality of the environment to support future generations

- Make industry connections across Ryerson's 10-zone network to grow your venture
- Leverage the incubation process to accelerate growth
- Gain access to funding, awards and competitions

## The green guardians

### The problem

In a recent EU survey, only two out of 10 consumers said they trust green labels on products. Diminished consumer perceptions can be attributed to the flood of new environmentally-friendly products and the "green washing" of product marketing without adopting sustainable practices.

### The solution

Develop a marketing and analytics platform that enables companies to provide customers with data-driven proof of the positive environmental and social impact of their products.

### The startup

Founded by Rotman MBA graduate Akhil Sivanandan, Green Story is an integrated online platform that analyzes and presents social impact metrics for a given product or service. This provides effective and trustworthy communications of committed environmental sustainability. Since joining the Social Ventures Zone in 2016, Green Story has seen 500% growth, secured the majority of its current contracts and over \$50,000 in funding.

"Our coaches at the Zone connected us with their personal networks, which is how we met our Director of Client Engagement who helped bring on our first international clients."

– Akhil Sivanandan, founder of Green Story

\$50K+ 500%

revenue

growth since 2016



## Ethical consumerism

Promote corporate responsibility and empower consumers to make purchasing choices that favour ethical products and processes

- Disrupt industries with sustainable and ethical business models
- Access suppliers and vendors, including marketing and graphic design agencies
- Learn new skills on-demand through workshops and Startup School

“Zone Learning has helped me learn new skills through workshops and programs, while being in downtown Toronto has given me amazing networking opportunities.”

– Kim Kirton, , UnCo co-founder

\$60K+

funds raised

20

Corporate fashion partners



## The wardrobe curators

### The problem

Of the nearly 80 billion clothing items purchased each year, 85% end up in landfills. Industry trends like fast fashion exploits both international labour markets and the environment.

### The solution

Design curated wardrobes for women that maximize the utility of clothing while minimizing environmental impact, reducing waste and empowers textile labourers.

### The startup

UnCo is an online platform for women to build capsule wardrobes from environmentally-responsible designers and brands. From up to a dozen items, UnCo designs 30 to 40 outfits. Founded by Ryerson School of Fashion graduate Jaclyn Patterson and University of Ottawa student Kim Kirton, UnCo has sold 18 capsules in their first year and is in the process of launching a new line. Since joining the Zone, UnCo has attracted \$60,000 in funding, hired a student contractor, and won a \$1,500 Social Venture Prize.





## Mental health and wellness

Help people cope with stresses, overcome challenges, contribute to their community and live to their potential

- Access academics, researchers, industry experts and thought leaders as resources for your venture
- Test and validate your ideas on Ryerson's campus with access to the student population and associations
- Collaborate with entrepreneurs and skilled individuals from other zones or disciplines

## The messenger of hope

### The problem

One in six Canadians report a need for counselling or therapy yet over half a million have unmet needs and another million are only partially served.

### The solution

Simplify the process for people to meet their counseling needs through a mobile app that supplements a patient's face-to-face interactions with a mental health counselor.

### The startup

Founded by Master of Digital Media alumnus Harry Deardon, SmallTalk allows patients to securely message their counselor between sessions, ensuring help is available when needed. SmallTalk was released for testing in late 2017 and has built collaborations with Ryerson's Students for Mental Awareness, Support and Health (SMASH) and Sandbox. It is also in discussions to partner with counselors through Movember Canada and the Canadian Mental Health Association.



"I've met wonderful people who are driven to better society and have had a platform to share my thoughts on how digital can support systemic change."

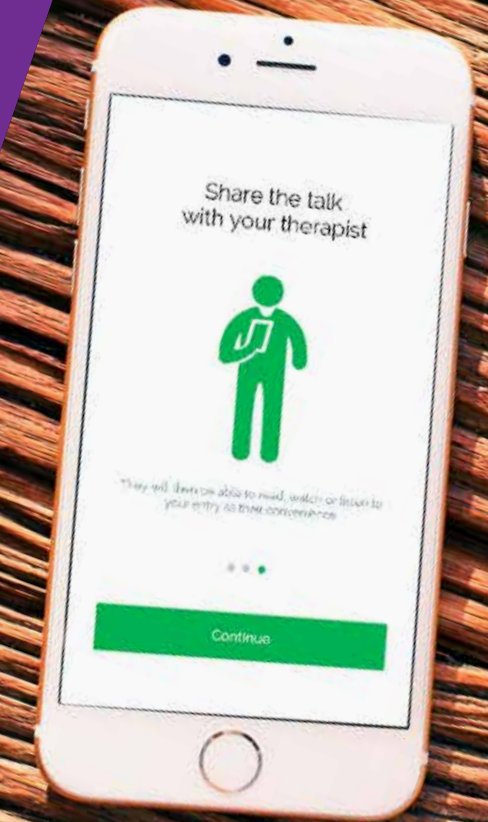
– Harry Deardon, founder of SmallTalk and Master of Digital Media alumnus

\$42k+

funding

#

counselors





**“Without the people, community and programming, my venture’s success would not have been possible. I’ve formed valuable relationships that I know I can rely on, and that is the most valuable aspect of all.”**

– Barbara Lukasz, Founder of Be The Chage, Social Ventures Zone Alumni

**“It’s a dynamic forum for bringing entrepreneurs with great ideas, deep social awareness and an aptitude for business together with mentors and advisors to reshape our communities and change our world.”**

– Helen Burstyn, Distinguished Visiting Professor, Social Enterprise and Advisor, Social Ventures Zone



## Social Ventures Zone by the numbers\*

35

Current startups

34%

Non-profit ventures

\$2.6M

Grants and investments raised

21

Coaches

74%

Ventures led by women

63%

Ventures led by founders under 30

60

Community partnerships

\*Statistics as of December 2017





Visit [ryerson.ca/svz](https://ryerson.ca/svz)  
today to find out how you  
can get involved

   @RUSocialVenture #caffeinatedinnovators

