

open
door
group



INSPIRATION AT WORK

2026 Annual Report

50 years of opening doors.

INSPIRATION AT WORK



Territory Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that Open Door Group's work takes place across British Columbia and Alberta, on the traditional and ancestral lands of more than 250 First Nations. Our home office is located on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the x̱m̱əθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

We recognize First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples as the original peoples and stewards of these lands, and acknowledge the enduring impacts of colonization and the systemic barriers Indigenous Peoples continue to experience today. We believe that understanding the history of the lands on which we live and work is an important part of our responsibility toward reconciliation.

A Note About Language

This report uses plain language to ensure it is clear and easy to understand.

We recognize that language around disability is always evolving, and different people prefer different terms. To respect these diverse preferences, this report uses both person-first and identity-first language.

Person-first language puts the individual before their disability, such as "person with a disability". This approach emphasizes that a disability is just one part of who they are.

Identity-first language places the disability first, such as "disabled person". This reflects the belief that disability is an important and inseparable part of a person's identity.

Our Thanks

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the development of this report. Your insights, data, and lived experiences helped bring our programs and impact to life. **Some names have been changed to protect people's privacy, and all stories were shared with permission.** We're grateful for your support and for helping us tell these stories.

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Message From the Board Chair and CEO



Alona Puehse

(she/her)

Chief Executive
Officer

Fifty years is both a milestone and an invitation to reflect.

In 1976, a small group of volunteers gathered in an East Vancouver church basement, offering woodworking and sewing workshops to people with mental health conditions. Over five decades, much has changed - the people carrying the work forward, our name, how we deliver services, and the communities we serve.

In 2009, we adopted the Open Door Group name, reflecting an organization that had evolved considerably from its beginnings. What started with skills workshops had grown into comprehensive career and employment services across urban and rural B.C.

Over time, we expanded our services further, working with employers to build inclusive workplaces. In 2014, we established Open Door Ventures to explore social enterprise as a vehicle for impact. In 2024, we acquired ETHOS Career Management Group, bringing their strengths in online learning, service delivery, and self-employment and entrepreneurship support into a broader suite of services for the people we serve. And in 2025, we expanded our service footprint in Alberta, opening locations in Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer and Medicine Hat and were honoured to receive an Accessibility Award from the Mayor of Calgary.

Today, that evolution has carried us to 13 locations across Western Canada, supporting almost 9,000 people every year. Over five decades, that has added up to more than 200,000 individual journeys - each one rippling outward into families, workplaces and communities.



Clare Waters

(she/her)

Chair of the Board of
Directors



What remains stronger than ever, is our belief that all people have the ability and the right to work and succeed--and our commitment to help make that possible.

Message From the Board Chair and CEO

Continued

Earlier this year, we asked each of our 200 team members the same question: 50 years from today, what is your hope for the future? The answers were hopeful and yet sobering - visions of a world without war, poverty and division, some of which could have been spoken 50 years ago. This was a reminder that progress rarely moves in a straight line – but that we all strongly believe something better is possible, and we each have a role in building it, one person at a time - evident in stories like Simone's first job, Alan's career rebuilt after injury, and the thousands of stories we're privileged to witness each day.

Thank you to our staff, Board, community, government, and employer partners, who all work toward a world where everyone has access to purpose, prosperity and belonging. Looking back on 50 years, we also owe a great deal to those who came before us, notably Tom Burnell, who led Open Door Group for 27 years, more than half our history, until 2021. Above all, we are grateful to everyone who has trusted us to play a part in their journey.

No one knows exactly what the next 50 years will look like. But what remains stronger than ever is our belief that all people have the ability and the right to work and succeed, and our commitment to help make that possible.

With deep gratitude and optimism,



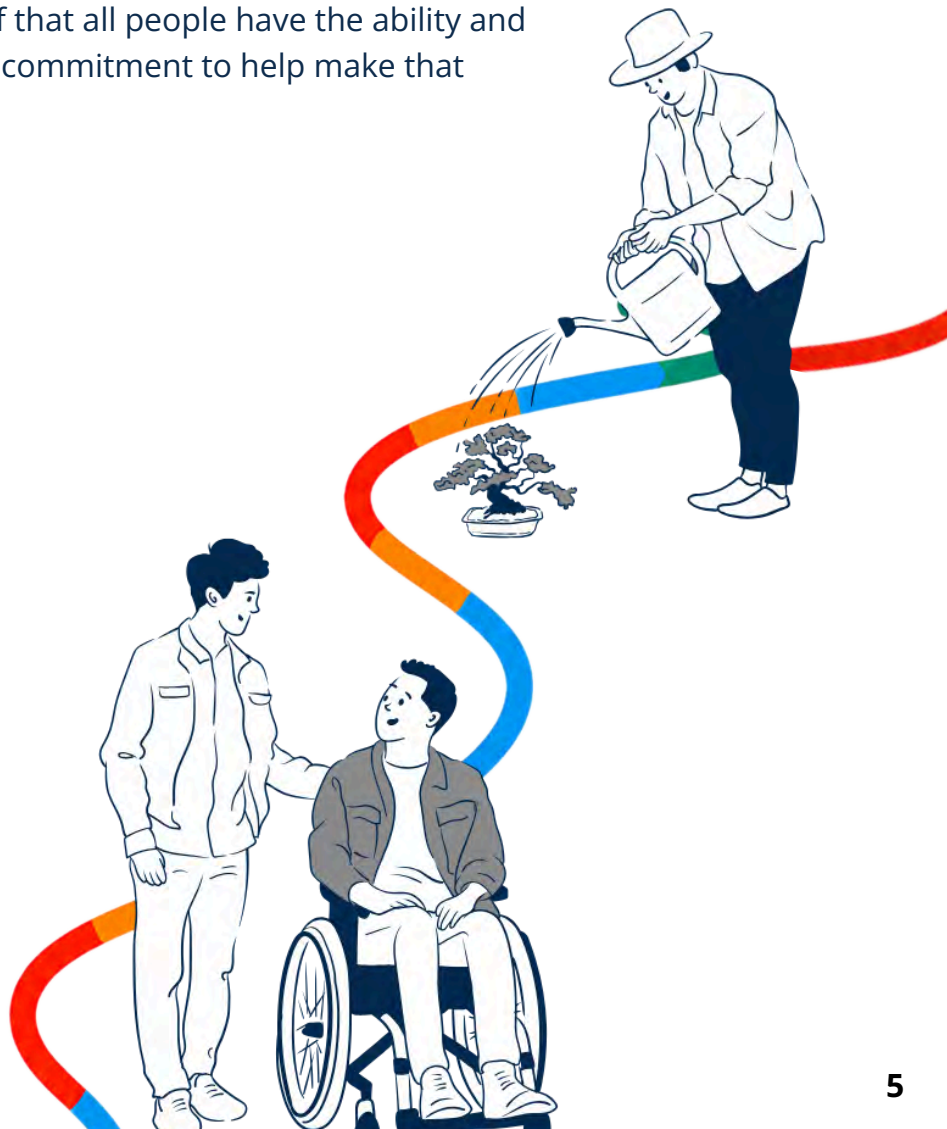
Alona Puehse (she/her)

Chief Executive Officer



Clare Waters (she/her)

Chair of the Board of Directors



50 years of impact

From our beginnings in 1976, with volunteers offering skills-based workshops, to supporting nearly 9,000 people each year and working with thousands of employers across Western Canada, much has changed in 50 years. These milestones reflect how we have grown and evolved, while continuing to open doors to meaningful employment and opportunity.

1976

Founded in East Vancouver

Founded during the shift from institutional care toward community-based support, with volunteers helping people experiencing mental health conditions build skills through woodworking and sewing workshops in an East Vancouver church basement.



1980s

From sheltered workshops to community inclusion

Vocational rehabilitation and employment supports expand, helping people with disabilities and mental health conditions build pathways to meaningful employment and fuller participation in their communities.



2009

Becoming Open Door Group

A new name reflects our evolution, expanding our mandate beyond serving people with disabilities and mental health conditions to supporting a broader and more diverse range of job seekers, while continuing our commitment to meaningful employment and community participation.



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1990s

Expanding our reach and mandate

Employment and training services expand across urban and rural BC, including the launch of the Gardengate Training Centre in Kamloops in partnership with Interior Health and the Kamloops Food Policy Council, using gardening to help people with mental health conditions build skills and community connections.

Every milestone tells a story.



"I've witnessed people who felt very lost, even feeling that this was their last door to go through, and then go on to achieve things they never thought possible."

- Susan Waters, Employment Specialist

2013

Inaugural Untapped Workplace Inclusion Awards

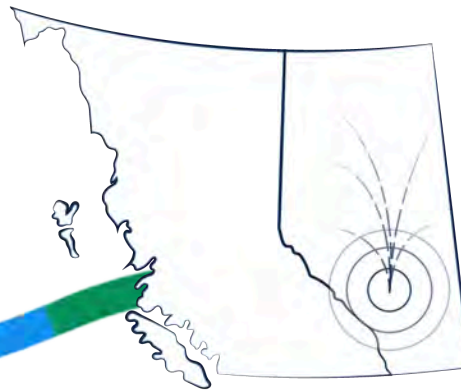
The Untapped Awards recognize individuals and employers advancing workplace inclusion. Since launching, the event now welcomes more than 300 attendees annually and has celebrated over 600 nominees.

2026

50 years

200,000 journeys

And counting...



2014

Open Door Ventures launched



Established as one of BC's first Community Contribution Companies and wholly owned by Open Door Group, Open Door Ventures was created to advance social impact through business and innovation, including co-founding Buy Social Canada and later launching the social enterprise Untapped Accessibility.

2025

Opening doors in Alberta

Open Door Group begins serving communities in Alberta, opening locations in Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer and Medicine Hat and increasing access to services for job seekers, entrepreneurs and employers.

Service Delivery Philosophy

There is no single path to meaningful and sustainable employment. People access support at different points in their journey, with different goals, challenges, and opportunities. Our role is to meet people where they are and connect them to the support they need, when they need it.

How we deliver services

Integrated

Employment, wellness, entrepreneurship, and employer engagement are connected. Our services work together to create more pathways to opportunity and support.

Accessible

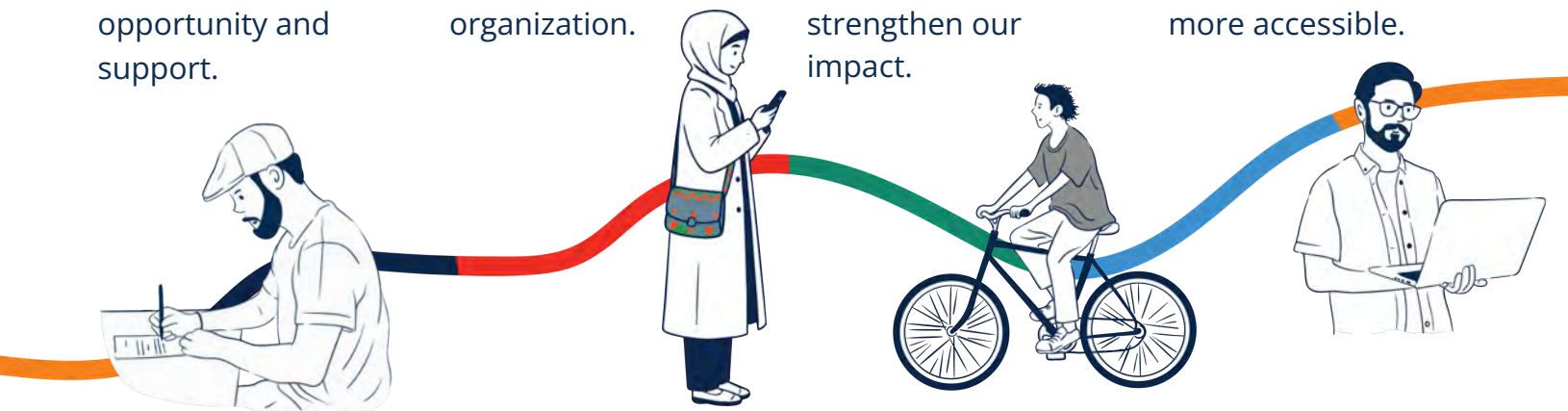
Accessibility is built into how we design and deliver services. Through our Accessibility Plan, we are working to identify, remove, and prevent barriers across the organization.

Quality

CARF accreditation reflects our commitment to quality, accountability, and continuous improvement. We use feedback, outcomes, and evaluation to strengthen our impact.

Flexible

People access support in different ways. Through in-person, digital, and community-based services, we continue to expand choice and flexibility while making services more accessible.



The employment journey is rarely linear.



"When you talk to people who have found their path, it's never been a straight line to get there. Whether it's finding different jobs, switching careers completely, having a later start, or having multiple starts into work—that's normal."

- Erica McCue, Activity Coordinator

Impact in Action

British Columbia

As we celebrate 50 years since our beginnings in British Columbia, our work continues to evolve alongside the people and communities we serve. This past year, 8,059 people accessed employment, training, entrepreneurship and career development services, with more than 1,200 finding employment aligned with their goals and 87 launching their own businesses.

Behind these numbers are individual journeys - and the value of providing people with the right support, skills and connections to pursue opportunities that are meaningful to them.



8,059

Clients served



87

Businesses launched



1,264

Clients achieved
employment



2,722

Skills training, workshops, and
work experience completed

Kalem's story



After experiencing a period of unemployment, Kalem was looking for direction and an opportunity to explore a career in the construction industry. Through training and hands-on work experience, he gained practical skills, certifications, and the confidence to pursue a new path.

Today, Kalem is employed as a cabinet assembler and continues to build experience in a field he is excited to pursue. What started as an opportunity to explore a new career became a pathway to increased confidence, independence, and meaningful employment.

"Being able to show up every day with a positive attitude and on time really shows me that I'm ready to commit to a job."

Impact in Action

Alberta

This past year marked significant growth and evolution for Open Door Group in Alberta. New contracts expanded our reach into additional communities and broadened the employment and workforce services we provide. Today, almost 60 employees deliver seven programs across four major centres, serving a diverse range of people through different programs and service models.

With that growth has come the opportunity to deepen relationships with government, employers, community organizations and service partners, and to continue learning how our experience can best respond to the needs of Alberta communities.

Most importantly, we are reaching more people and continuing to evolve how we support them. From individualized employment supports and employer-focused services to community engagement, workforce development and approaches designed for people facing greater barriers to employment, our Alberta teams continue to learn, adapt and build partnerships that create more pathways to meaningful employment.



7

Programs
launched



4

Locations
opened



59

New
employees

Felicia's story

When Felicia connected with Open Door Group's WorkAbility program, she was working toward greater stability for herself and her family. Through training, workshops, and employment preparation, she built the skills and confidence needed to pursue new opportunities.



Felicia secured and maintained employment while building a stable future for herself and her family.

Today, Felicia continues to thrive in her career and is building a positive future rooted in confidence, purpose, and possibility.

Impact in Action

Vocational Wellness Services

Open Door Group's vision is a world where all people have access to opportunities that give them purpose, prosperity, and belonging. Through Gardengate, Thrive, and CLBC programs, individuals build confidence, strengthen community connections, pursue personal goals, and create pathways toward meaningful participation and employment.

These services recognize that meaningful progress looks different for everyone. Success may mean developing new skills, improving well-being, building relationships, gaining confidence, finding employment, or becoming more engaged in the community.



690

Clients served



8,819

Pounds of produce donated
to the community



J.Ch.'s story

Before joining Thrive, J.Ch. was unemployed, living in the Downtown Eastside, and searching for a way to rebuild stability and purpose. Through new experiences, skills development, and opportunities to explore personal interests, J.Ch. began rebuilding confidence and reconnecting with a passion for art.

Today, J.Ch. works full-time as a Journey Facilitator, supporting others as they explore their own goals and opportunities. Alongside a growing career, J.Ch. continues to pursue an active art practice and recently completed an artist residency and solo exhibition.



What began as a search for stability became a future shaped by confidence, creativity, and possibility.

Impact in Action

Inclusive Employment Services

Across the communities we serve, we work directly with employers to understand evolving workforce needs, connect organizations with talent, and strengthen inclusive and accessible workplace practices.

Strong employer partnerships help create meaningful employment opportunities while supporting businesses to grow, adapt, and access a wider pool of talent.

Throughout FY2025/26, this work included employer recruitment and hiring events, direct employer supports, accessibility and inclusion initiatives, and opportunities for employers to learn from and connect with one another.



2,200+

Engagements with
distinct employers
across Western Canada



68

Hiring and recruitment events,
connecting employers with
thousands of job seekers



91

Nominations for the 2025
Untapped Workplace
Inclusion Awards



379

Employers received training and
workplace inclusion supports,
with 82% reporting increased
confidence in disability inclusion



Our Team Makes It Possible

Behind every employment outcome, business launch, wellness milestone, and employer partnership is a dedicated team committed to helping people move forward.

By The Numbers



230+

Employees



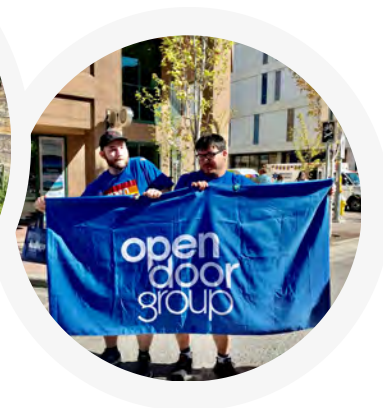
13

Locations



92%

Employees feel good about the ways we contribute to community



People thrive when they belong.



"Today, I ensure that every person who walks through those doors feels the same support that I felt."

- Afreen Barkat, Customized Employment Specialist

Putting inclusion into practice

We are committed to understanding and improving the impact of our work through evaluation, client feedback, outcomes tracking, and initiatives such as Pledge to Measure.

Our commitment to accessibility, inclusion, and continuous improvement is reflected in the standards we uphold and the recognitions we've earned.



29%

Employees disclosing disabilities



11%

Senior leaders disclosing disabilities



**Pledge to
MEASURE**
Operated by Open Door Group



The best work happens together.

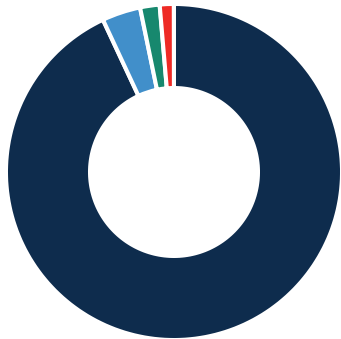


"I've been with Open Door Group for over 18 years... and I think it's really special that I get to work with people in a capacity that helps them get their feet on the ground and grow as a person."

- May Chow, Recreation Therapist

Financial Overview

Revenue - Year End March 31, 2026



Government contracted programs	\$23,132,312	93%
Projects income and donations	\$921,825	4%
Investment income and gains	\$469,711	2%
Income from subsidiaries	\$336,293	1%
Other	\$96,978	0%
	\$24,957,119	100%

Expenses - Year End March 31, 2026



Salaries, benefits, and employee expenses	\$13,314,628	52%
Programs	\$8,238,636	32%
General and administrative	\$1,481,718	6%
Properties	\$1,956,287	8%
Repairs, maintenance, software, and other	\$743,151	3%
	\$25,734,420	100%

Looking Ahead



Hear from our team

For our 50th anniversary, Open Door Group employees reflected on meaningful work and the impact of employment.

As part of Open Door Group's 50th Anniversary Roadshow, we traveled across British Columbia and Alberta, connecting with employees and inviting them to reflect on one question:

What is your wish for the future?

Together, more than 200 employees shared their hopes. While the responses were diverse, common themes emerged: belonging, kindness, inclusion, connection, and a desire for a more peaceful and equitable world.

These reflections remind us that while much has changed over the past 50 years, the values that inspire our work, and the hopes we hold for one another, remain remarkably consistent.

Inclusion

"Different ways of being, including disabilities, are normalized, accepted, embraced by all."

Connection

"People have a true sense of connection, belonging & purpose."

Belonging

"A safe world where everyone feels they belong."

Community

"Greater social cohesion and a sense of community."

Kindness

"The strength of human kindness and goodness is the dominant force."

Together, these hopes paint a picture of the future we continue to work toward: one where every person has the opportunity to contribute, thrive, and belong.

**50 years.
200,000 unique journeys.
Countless possibilities ahead.**

