

April 25 2026

Social Entrepreneurship: From the Basics to Myth-Busting to Maximizing Impact



Provoking Innovation and Building Capacity in Social Entrepreneurship

[Who we are](#) ➔



Agenda

- **The Basics of Social Entrepreneurship**
 - Definition
 - Social Entrepreneurship, Social Entrepreneur, Social Enterprise
 - Official Status
 - Legal Structure
- **The Biggest Myths & Common Pitfalls Holding Social Entrepreneurship Back**
- **A Movement that is Inclusive & Aspirational**

What is “Social Entrepreneurship”?

The Definition Discussion



Trico Charitable
Foundation

“Social entrepreneurship uses business models – selling goods or services – to enhance social impact.”

What is “Social Entrepreneurship”?

The Definition Discussion



Trico Charitable
Foundation

“Social entrepreneurship uses business models – selling goods or services – to enhance social impact.”



Canadian Task Force
on Social Finance

“Social enterprise is defined as any organization or business that uses market-oriented production and sale of goods and/or services to pursue a public benefit mission.”

What is “Social Entrepreneurship”?

The Basics

- Social entrepreneurship = the activity
- Social entrepreneur = the person
- Social enterprise = the venture/
organization



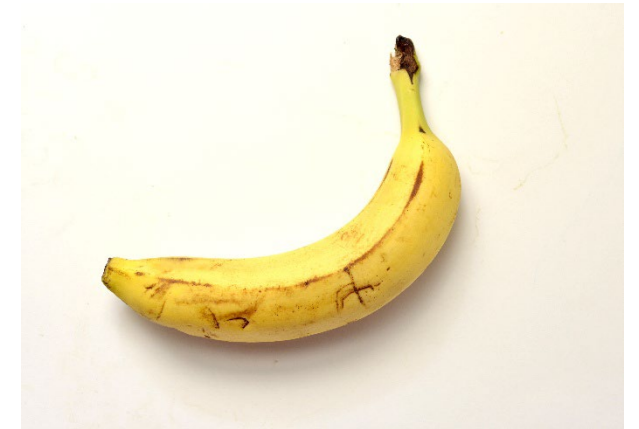
What is “Social Entrepreneurship”?

The Basics

“Should I be a non-profit or a social enterprise?”



or



Social Entrepreneurship as a Problem Solver



Promise, Pitfalls, and Potential of Social Entrepreneurship

Positive Change Unleashed

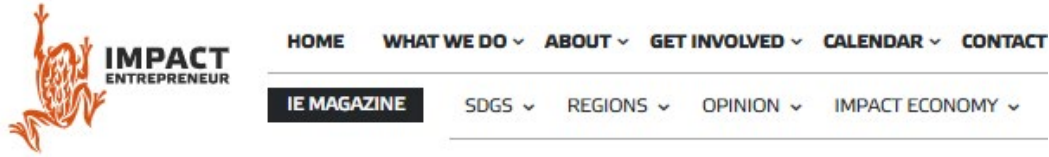
SHEILA CANNON
AND CONCEPCIÓN GALDÓN



“Social entrepreneurship is undoubtedly a powerful way to generate solutions to social and environmental challenges at scale”

(Bacq & Janssen, 2011; Martin & Osberg, 2007; Weerawardena & Mort, 2006; Nicholls, 2006; Defourny & Nyssens, 2010; Santos, 2021; Welsh, 2012).”

But Social Entrepreneurship Itself Has Some Problems



Home / Impact Economy / Financial Inclusion / How Prioritizing Profit Can Maximize Social Impact

Opinion Impact Investing

How Prioritizing Profit Can Maximize Social Impact

The sustainability paradox



Russell McLeod - May 1, 2025



Buy Social Canada surveyed 132 social enterprises :

- Only 11% were meaningfully profitable,
- 89% were struggling to grow.

“... social enterprises are often resource-starved, local in reach, and unsustainable in the long term.”

Russell McLeod

The Risk of Zombie Ventures



“The land of the living dead or zombie ventures as we like to call them are stuck in limbo, getting just enough sales to survive but not growing to the level of impact they want.”

Eric Ries, Author of
The Lean Startup and *The Startup Way*

Social Entrepreneurship is Easy to Imagine,

But Often Hard to Live With

Here's a riddle for you. Take one coffee shop. Locate it on a high street bustling with pedestrians who earn enough to spend £3 on coffee. Staff it with the best in the service industry: people who work fast, don't make mistakes and ooze smiles. Laden it with double-espresso-mocca-soy Frappuccinos. Secure investment and scale rapidly. Take another coffee shop. This time you secure a modest grant. You employ four part-time staff. They all have learning difficulties and have rarely been in work. You opt for a small retail unit where you live, in a low-income area. You soon realise the residents here can't afford to buy coffee all day every day, so you open on just a few mornings a week.

Which coffee shop is going to have more commercial success?

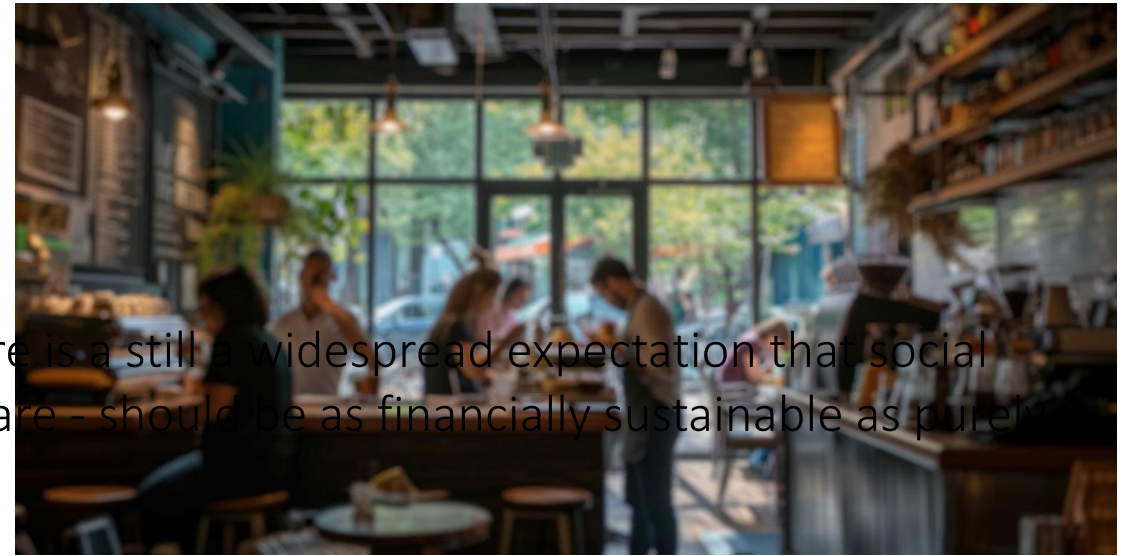
I'll admit it. This is not the most taxing of riddles.

But it seems to have got a lot of people in a pickle. Because there is a still a widespread expectation that social entrepreneurs - as our mates running coffee shop number two are - should be as financially sustainable as purely commercial businesses.

Wholly sustainable social enterprises are a myth

We need to axe that assumption. Social enterprises, for the most part, just aren't set up to have major commercial success.

Alison Wilson 14th September 2017



The Power of “Why?”



“People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it. This belief is the cornerstone of impactful leadership and innovation...”

Simon Sinek

How great leaders inspire action

Why do “Social Entrepreneurship”?

“Social entrepreneurship uses business models – selling goods or services – to enhance social impact.”

A Look at WISEs

PIONEERS POST



A Social Entrepreneurship Movement that is Inclusive and Aspirational

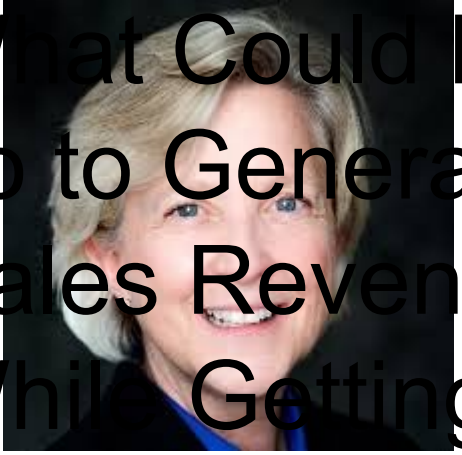


A Social Entrepreneurship Movement that is Inclusive and Aspirational



Putting it All Together: An Exemplar of Social Entrepreneurship

What Could Kyle
do to Generate
Sales Revenue
While Getting
Books to Kids in
Need?

A screenshot of the First Book website. The header features the First Book logo (a red sun over a blue book with hands) and the tagline 'Access to New Books for Children in Need'. Navigation links include 'GET INVOLVED', 'RECEIVE BOOKS', 'FIRST BOOK STORY', and 'PARTNERS IN ENDING ILLITERACY'. A search bar and social media icons are in the top right. A main banner shows a 3D illustration of a castle with the text 'BE INSPIRED TO SHARE THE MAGIC OF STORYTELLING'. On the right, there are four colored buttons: 'DONATE' (blue), 'GET BOOKS' (red), 'SIGN UP' (green), and 'STAY CONNECTED' (yellow).

Source: <https://firstbook.org/>



Access to New Books for Children in Need

[GET INVOLVED](#) | [RECEIVE BOOKS](#) | [FIRST BOOK STORY](#) | [PARTNERS IN ENDING ILLITERACY](#)



Kyle Zimmer



Access to New Books for Children in Need

SEARCH OUR SITE    

[ADVISORY BOARD LOGIN](#) | [RECIPIENT GROUP LOGIN](#)

[RECEIVE OUR NEWSLETTER](#) | [CONTACT US](#)

[GET INVOLVED](#) | [RECEIVE BOOKS](#) | [FIRST BOOK STORY](#) | [PARTNERS IN ENDING ILLITERACY](#)



DONATE
Give books to a child in need

GET BOOKS
Visit the First Book Marketplace

SIGN UP
Get books and resources for the kids you serve

STAY CONNECTED
Receive inspiring stories, news and more



TRICO CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

First Book Releases "Title Raves" List: 10 Books that Make an Impact, According to Educators Serving Kids in Need



Paired with First Book Bestseller List, Title Raves demonstrates educators' use of books to meet unique needs of children from low-income families in book deserts



Kyle Zimmer

First Book Title Raves

Highly-rated new books loved by educators serving kids in need





Diverse Books Impact on Student Reading

First Book Research & Insights study reveals the impact increasing access to diverse books in classroom environments has on student reading and students' reading scores.

[VIEW FULL REPORT](#)

Key Takeaways

- Definition of Social Entrepreneurship
- Legal Structure
- Official Status
- The Secret Sauce of Social Entrepreneurship (and what makes it unique): The Why of Social Entrepreneurship (using business models to enhance social impact)
- We Need a Movement that is Inclusive & Aspirational
- What is Next for Trico





Thank You