

Case Study

Affirmative Ventures

Affirmative Ventures is an innovative not-for-profit organization that assists Nova Scotians living with mental health issues to achieve lifelong independence. Through housing and employment integrated programs Affirmative Ventures focuses on the foundational pieces of life - homes, jobs, and friends - allowing people to join the workforce, live independently, or start a business.

The housing portfolio encompasses two models, each answering specific needs associated with the different stages of recovery. One model, Affirmative Homes provides support to people starting their journey to recovery and welcomes those in need of assistance with their daily living activities. A second model, Affirmative House, provides stable and affordable housing from which participants recovering from mental illness can engage as productive members of our communities with goals of going to school and/or work. Striving to help more people, Affirmative Ventures will complete a new 45-unit facility in 2022. This new building will reach out and help more people in need.

The employment program creates job opportunities for program participants within the community through placement within Affirmative Venture's social enterprises - Pet Stuff on the Go, Common Values, Mort's Convenience Store, U-Haul Dealership, AV Property Maintenance and AV Moving. The employment program provides training that blends unique client needs with the application of sound business practises to help individuals grow personally and professionally.



Strategic Clarity



Improved Business Management



Increased Awareness



Improving Messaging

Affirmative Ventures' holistic approach to mental health positively impacted many of their tenants in their 27 years of experience. Yet, aside of their close networks, many people do not know who they are and what they do. Acknowledging the need for better messaging, the social enterprise enrolled in SEI's Social Impact Measurement Certificate to reframe their mission statement and their programs in a streamlined and clearer way to better communicate their impact.

Ahead of the new 45-unit building construction and a funding campaign to be launched in the fall of 2020, the support Affirmative Ventures received was timely. Improving the way Affirmative Ventures tells their story, enhancing awareness on mental health, increasing the promotion of their work, and communicating their impact will serve these two core activities essential to their growth.

The Social Impact Measurement Certificate helps social enterprises to plan, measure, communicate and grow their social impact. According to Lori Edgar, director of operations at Affirmative Ventures, the learning process was highly rated: the courses were clearly outlined, concise, and completing the certificate through SEI's online platform provided her with great flexibility. Combined with monthly coaching support on each module, the learning process allowed her to fully meet the learning objectives associated with the Certificate and provided her with all the knowledge, skills and tools needed to achieve Affirmative Venture's objectives.

IMPACT

The support provided by SEI resulted in a series of positive results. The Certificate provided Affirmative Ventures with the strategic clarity needed by reframing their mission statement and program, which was the first step for informed decision-making to plan, measure, and communicate their impact.

Affirmative Ventures developed new tools and resources, including a set of videos created and directed solely by the tenants, without any input from Management. The videos provide a congruent point of view with Affirmative Ventures' mission and values. This concurring perspective helped validate that the social enterprise was on the right path, that their tenant-centred efforts were meeting their goals. A chart explaining the two programs was also developed. The chart highlights the programs' specific activities and objectives, as well as their complementarities. These tools serve a twofold purpose: to communicate Affirmative Ventures' social impact, but also to inform their operational plan to take evidence-based decisions toward their business development strategy.

Affirmative Ventures met its objective of improving their messaging. The clarity brought about by the Social Impact Measurement training, enabled the creation of adequate tools and resources informing their operations and strategy, and improved the way the social enterprise tells their story. The chart and videos are used in presentations to funders, service providers and prospective tenants and these new visual aids provide a better understanding of the services, programs and associated social impact. The videos hosted on their website and YouTube contribute to increasing awareness on mental health and outreach to new audiences.

GOING FORWARD

Affordable housing is not enough! Affirmative Ventures plans to build on their new knowledge and skills to measure and communicate the social impact of their innovative, integrated, and holistic approach to mental health. The construction of a new 45-unit building will provide the perfect opportunity to pursue this work and reach out to a broader audience, sharing their beautiful story and helping individuals facing mental health challenges.



Lori Edgar

Director of Operations, Affirmative Ventures

"SEI has provided our organization with the strategic clarity and focus we needed to improve our messaging and allowed us to better communicate our services, programs and social impact. We can now effectively show the added value of our unique approach to mental health."

For more information, please contact:

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