



The Old East Village Grocer SROI Case Study



Fast Facts:

- The Old East Village in London, Ontario, has been referred to a 'food desert' until recently.
- Prior to the opening of the Old East Village Grocery, all OEV residents would have had to travel across the city to access a greater variety of quality, affordable food. For many low income OEV residents, travel to access affordable quality food was a time-consuming requirement that added noticeable cost to the grocery bill.
- From start-up, the Old East Village Grocer expected to attract 400 local households and capture their annual grocery expenditures in year one of operations (in 2016).
- To date, the OEVG reports that 50% of customers are low income families, while the remainder are young professionals.
- In addition to its role as a grocer, the OEVG is a training center for individuals with disabilities. Forty trainees would be involved at the OEVG in any given year, on a rotating basis, gaining skills and experience to prepare them for long term employment.
- Between opening and early December, the Old East Village Grocer had 14,832 customer transactions.

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"This is so great; I'm very thankful for this opportunity to buy local and independent."

- Customer

Project Background

In Ontario, the rate of unemployment for people with disabilities is 16%¹, as compared to 7.6% for the general population. People with disabilities face many barriers to employment, therefore many face a lack of work experience.

ATN Access Inc. (ATN) is a London, ON based charity working with individuals with disabilities seeking to gain access to employment, to reach their educational goals and to improve the quality of their lives.

In 2008, the Old East Village neighborhood in London was defined as a food desert, i.e., an underserved neighborhood lacking access to healthy and affordable food. Residents either travelled to a different part of the city to food shop or accepted higher priced, lower quality local options. For a person on a low income, neither option worked.

In the summer of 2016, in partnership with Pathways Skill Development, ATN Access Inc. opened the Old East Village Grocer (OEVG) with investment from VERGE Capital linked to the Social Enterprise Demonstration Fund Initiative (SEDEF).

Offering a vibrant community hub as the local grocer, the OEVG offers healthy and affordable food to local residents. In addition, the OEVG offers employment and essential skills training for people with disabilities, preparing them for future employment.

The OEVG Approach

The OEVG is a social enterprise providing quality, healthy and affordable food for customers across East London, in Ontario. In 2016, at least half of OEVG customers represented low-income households while the remainder were young professionals working and/or living in the neighborhood.

In addition to its role as a local grocer, the OEVG serves as a training facility for individuals with barriers to employment.

Barriers faced by trainees range from disabilities, to physical or mental health challenges, which can prevent someone from finding meaningful work.

OEVG trainees participate in a seven-week program. The program includes job shadowing and hands-on practice in the

grocery store. Trainees experience includes tasks such as stocking shelves, customer service, handling cash and bagging groceries.

Customized to the individual, the OEVG training program includes job search activities and computer / technology workshops. The OEVG leadership reach out to future employers on behalf of trainees, building a network of next step opportunities.

After seven weeks, 60% of trainees are ready to be placed in another retail environment. After a period of further skill development, some trainees transition to employment, others pursue education and a few become long term volunteers. Those

Theory of Change Summary Statement:

If individuals with barriers to employment are provided with an opportunity to gain on-the-job training in a supportive environment, and the necessary support to secure employment, then they will become more financially stable, more resilient, and less isolated.



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not quite ready for employment can extend their training program at the OEVG for a period of time, with the support of ATN.

Stakeholder Outcomes

Many important changes are experienced by OEVG stakeholders. These include:

Trainees

- Increased employability in the grocery and retail industries
- Decreased social isolation
- Increased resiliency
- Increased feeling of social inclusion
- Sustained improved physical health
- Sustained improved mental health

Trainees who become employed

- Increased financial stability

Trainees who pursue their GED

- Increased earning potential due to the obtainment of GED

Family members

- Increased financial security
- Decreased worry about their family member

Customers (local and low-income)

- Improved access to healthy and affordable food and grocery items
- Time and cost reallocation due to reduced travel

Provincial Government

- Increased revenue from the taxes of the trainees who have become employed
- Reduction in ODSP payments
- Reduction in Ontario Works payments

Value Created

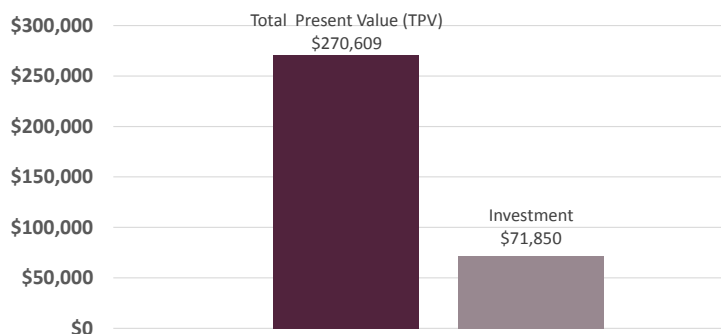
While it is the vision of the OEVG to one day create value as a local community hub, the most tangible value currently created stems from providing local, affordable, quality groceries and from employment preparation and skills training for individuals with disabilities and other barriers to employment.

OEVG creates value by being an employer and trainer with a social purpose. It helps people overcome barriers to employment and provides a valuable service to the community by addressing the 'food desert' of East London.

Social Return on Investment

An annual investment of \$71,850 into OEVG training programs, created a social and economic ROI with a total present value of \$ 270,609. For every dollar invested into the Old East Village Grocer's vision to overcome barriers to employment, a minimum of \$ 3.77:1 of social and economic value was created. This ratio should be considered a minimum value.

Comparison of Social Value and Investment



Looking Forward

Launched in 2016, the Old East Village Grocer is a new initiative enhancing the lives of trainees and local residents in the East Village of London, Ontario. ATN and the OEVG leadership share a vision to strengthen community through access to healthy food, creating employment opportunities and through creation of a vibrant community hub.

References

¹<https://www.ontario.ca/page/partnership-council-employment-opportunities-persons-disabilities-report>



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Value Created—Addendum

The value created was calculated by linking the outcomes experienced by stakeholders to financial proxies that represent the value of change that they (the stakeholders) have experienced.

Some examples can be found in the table below:

Stakeholder	Outcome	Number reaching the outcome	Financial Proxy	Proxy value per person per year	Total value created per outcome **
Trainees who go through the seven week in class program & placement	Increased employability in the grocery and retail industries	17 (90% of the 19)	Value of a diploma in customer service	\$9,940	\$43,479
All trainees (seven week program and placement, pursue education, employment, volunteering)	Decreased social isolation	13 (50% of the 26 as the remaining 50% already had social support)	Value of going out and socializing with friends	\$2,208	\$6,176
All trainees (seven week program and placement, pursue education, employment, volunteering)	Increased resiliency	18 (70% of the 26)	Cost of training on increasing self-confidence, & a class on stress reduction.	\$1,106	\$2,441
Trainees who become employed in the OEVG store or in another store	Increased financial stability	12 out of the 14	Value of income while employed in a different grocery store, or in OEVG	\$12,012	\$31,015
Customers of the grocery store	Increased ability to meet their financial obligations, due to reduced travel expenses	80–20% of customers used public transportation. They would avoid using public transportation as a result of the grocery store being closer to them.	Value of a taxi ride (2 ways)	\$1,109	\$100,239
Provincial government	Reduction in ODSP payments	All 6 trainees	Value of the reduction in ODSP payments	\$5,544	\$7,157

* Please Note* These calculations also reflect consideration of the time value of money, as well as deadweight, displacement, attribution, and drop-off.