CREATING OPPORTUNITIES IN ARIZONA

2016 IMPACT REPORT
OUR FOUNDATION’S MISSION

Local First Arizona Foundation works to build equitable communities that have opportunities for all people to build healthy futures for themselves and their families. We work to build resilient, inclusive economies that are self-reliant and prosperous. To do this work, we must challenge old systems that limit access to resources that enable residents to build the independently owned businesses that create wealth and diversity in Arizona. Our holistic approach to building prosperity is paving new paths for all residents to thrive.

WHO WE ARE

Local First Arizona is a nonprofit organization that celebrates independent, locally owned businesses. We support, promote and advocate for a strong local business community and raise public awareness of the economic and cultural benefits provided by strong local economies. Local businesses contribute to a sustainable economy for Arizona and build vibrant communities we’re all proud to call home.

FUERZA LOCAL

Our Foundation’s leading program that transforms lives through building strong enterprises and credit scores.

Our vision is an Arizona economy that is sustainable, resilient and celebratory of diverse cultures.
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Local First Arizona Foundation's
FUERZA LOCAL BUSINESS ACCELERATOR PROGRAM
localfirstazfoundation.org

Fuerza Local is a six-month Business Accelerator program designed to teach under-served micro-entrepreneurs important basics for financial literacy and business development. Participants attend weekly classes on a variety of topics including marketing, business planning, cash flow management, and many more. Participants also gain critically important literacy through participating in a lending circle, which requires them to make on-time payments every month they are in the program. These payments are reported to Experian, building a credit history for the small business owner, often for first time. Their savings is then matched by a scholarship from the Local First Arizona Foundation. Each graduate is offered the opportunity to access credit at fair market rates through several partnering financial institutions in lieu of any previous credit history.

Local First Arizona Foundation launched the Fuerza Local Business Accelerator in 2013 as a direct response to the influx of predatory lenders that target low-income Latinos who often lack financial literacy and access to resources that help build thriving businesses.

Investing in under-served communities through entrepreneurship is a successful strategy that in just four years has seen incredible job creation and business expansion, along with a reduction in reliance on social services. Creating opportunities for small business development in low-income communities helps build an Arizona we are proud to call home.
Mirna Cote  
Escuela de Electricidad Automotriz

When Mirna Cote came to the United States with her husband, she envisioned an opportunity for growth, development, and prosperity for her and her family.

When Mirna and her husband joined the Business Accelerator program, their dream of opening an electrical school became a reality. Escuela de Electricidad Automotriz (Automotive Electrical School) opened its doors in February 2017. Through their business, they teach beginners, professionals, and even women the basics to automotive electrical care.

Today, Mirna and her family live their dream every single day through running their business. In addition to their educational programs they offer to mechanics in the field, Escuela de Electricidad Automotriz also offers free courses on Mondays - a way they give back to the community that allows them to live their dream.

“Local First Arizona Foundation and Fueza Local helped us to grow as individuals and as a family, as well as professionals. Local First has given me a platform that has facilitated my growth as a mom, wife, and now as an entrepreneur.”
75
Total jobs created in 2016.

162
Total jobs created by Fuerza Local graduates.

80%
of Fuerza Local graduates still participate in monthly meetings, mentoring or technical assistance.

34%
Population in Arizona that identifies as Latino.

1/4
Latino adults live in poverty.

1/3
Latino children live in poverty.
As a high school dropout, Francisco Aldaco learned early on that if he wanted something, he was going to have to work hard for it. After dedicating most of his life to dead-end jobs and his family, he came across an opportunity that changed his life as he knew it. With no business management experience, Francisco entered the Fuerza Local Business Accelerator program with the hope to build the foundation for a company that he would one day be able to hand off to his children.

Today, Francisco runs his business with the support of his wife, children, and community. Francisco is no longer defined by his past and is he’s motivated to fight for his future.

“For someone that didn’t go to college, a lot of people looked at me as if I wasn’t ever going to become anything. There’s no greater feeling than having your own business. For that, I’m thankful for Fuerza Local and the Local First Arizona Foundation.”
46% of graduates buy from fellow Fuerza Local businesses.

Graduates who have received media coverage: 59%

Graduates who have received an award or recognition since graduating: 15%

Graduates who volunteer: 57%

Graduates who give charitably: 61%
THE REDESIGNER

Isaias Santiago
E&S Landscaping

For many, starting a business is part of a dream. For Isaias Santiago, it was a necessity. With three children and a tough upbringing, Isaias learned first-hand the importance of hard work and dedication.

With years of experience in landscaping, Isaias took his skills and turned it into a business. E&S Landscaping became a graduate of the 7th cohort of the Business Accelerator program. For him, the opportunity to establish his business and suitably create what will one day be inheritance for his children.

Today, Isaias travels across the Valley creating beautiful yards for his clients and a bright future for his children. The same way Isaias redesigned his destiny, he does it every day as he redesigns his client’s yards.

“When I wake up every day I want to change my family’s destiny, and that’s why I’m building this business to be strong in Arizona.”
$5,224,000
Gross sales for graduates in 2016.

8/10
Loans approved in 2016.

$67,000
Average loan size.

$532,000
Total capital borrowed in 2016.

SINCE 2015

27%
Increase in new jobs created.

22%
 Overall growth in workforce.
THE CHANGE MAKER

Berni Reina
Colados Coffee & Crepes

When Berni Reina arrived back home from a family vacation, his routine life quickly turned to a nightmare when he and his wife were laid off from the company they had dedicated their careers to. That milestone turned Berni into an entrepreneur.

When Berni applied for the 2nd cohort of the Fuerza Local Business Accelerator Program in 2014, all he had was an idea and a dream. The first step? Building a strong business plan that could become his map to success.

Since its inauguration three years ago, Colados Coffee & Crepes has become a must-stop coffee shop in the West Valley. With the growing demand came the opportunity to grow their team, as they have quickly expanded from a team of 2 to 14 in just three years.

“The Business Accelerator helped us tremendously,” said Berni. “We started from zero, but little by little, we obtained valuable tools from those 12 courses. Fuerza Local was an incredible tool that helped me grow as a new entrepreneur.”

Photography by Tierra Nelson
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENTS

58%  Built new websites.
68%  Built new social media platforms.
66%  Opened first time ever checking accounts.

57%
Business expansion rate in 2016.

67%
Increase in sales between 2015 and 2016.

TYPE OF EXPANSION

22%  Added new service offerings.
18%  Purchased new company vehicles.
  4%  Opened new location (primary).
  4%  Purchased new equipment.
  4%  Acquired new client(s).
The "American Dream" has countless meanings depending on the individual. For Migdalia Morales, it meant the opportunity to become her own boss, take care of her children, and create a legacy that she would be proud of.

When Migdalia joined the Fuerza Local Business Accelerator program, she was an entrepreneur with a dream. Today, Migdalia employs a team of women and drives a professional and branded work truck. With the development of her business skills and professionalism, Migdalia has become a go-to cleaning company in Anthem, a recognition she takes very seriously.

For Migdalia, having control of her income and the growth of her company is one of the most satisfying aspects of being an entrepreneur.

"Fuerza Local helped give us the support to grow our businesses. In America, anything is possible no matter where you come from, no matter how limited your English. It doesn’t stop me, we can achieve whatever we want."
Board Members:

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Dean, School of Public Service and Community Solutions
Arizona State University

Keisha Tatem, Board Vice-Chair
State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Jeffrey Brodin, Board Secretary
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Senior Vice President and General Counsel
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona

William Mandeville
Director of Development
The Nature Conservancy

Becoming Part of Something Bigger
From Graduates to Advocates

Once participants complete the program, they are celebrated at a community graduation ceremony that highlights each of their accomplishments. Alongside their $1,000 matching grant, each graduate also receives a business membership to Local First Arizona, the sister organization to the Foundation.

Through their membership, each business becomes part of a community of more than 3,200 local business members across the state, giving them the opportunity to build and sustain strong relationships with like-minded business owners. Fuerza Local members also have access to webinars, seminars, and exclusive member-only opportunities, like participating in Independents Week, Buy Local Month, and other Local First Arizona campaigns. Allowing them to continue their education and develop their skills and knowledge.
Contributing to the Fuerza Local program insures access to the thousands of under-served residents we have in Arizona who are victims of predatory lending scams that perpetuate poverty and limit our future. For $2500, one entrepreneur can complete the 6-month program, receive a scholarship, a credit score, a mentor and lifelong access to the tools and resources provided by Local First Arizona.

Please contribute any amount today at www.localfirstazfoundation.org

Learn how to help support the program at
localfirstazfoundation.org/donate/

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Local First Arizona is supported by the following Corporations, Organizations and Foundations:

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