OUR FOUNDATION’S MISSION

Local First Arizona Foundation works to build equitable communities that create opportunities for 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.

localfirstazfoundation.org

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

The Fuerza Local Business Accelerator is a six-month 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 financial 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 the 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.
Reyna Sandoval developed a love for animals at an early age, but never dreamed of opening a grooming salon. It was by coincidence that a friend offered her a job in the field, and she knew right away that she was in the right industry.

After gaining valuable experience in the field, Reyna soon opened a pet grooming business of her own business, Le Doggie Pet Grooming. Though she had been advertising for over a year, she was still seeing limited success, until one day a client (also a Fuerza Accelerator graduate) recommended she look into the Fuerza Local Business Accelerator Program. Once joining, she attended every class with the conviction of turning her business around.

Today, Le Doggie is serving North Phoenix families and their furry friends. She styles dogs from Shitzus to Great Danes, and has seen a large boost in her customer pool since implementing practices she learned through Accelerator classes.

“I started my business without the knowledge I needed, and the Fuerza Local Business Accelerator program helped me set a foundation so that my business can now grow faster.”
112
Total jobs created by 2017 graduates.

287
Total jobs created by Fuerza Accelerator graduates.

68%
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.
Auto repair has been a tradition in Roberto Ahumada’s family for decades. In a family of four brothers, three of them are mechanics. Roberto has a gift for the trade. Just by listening to a vehicle, he can tell the model and what is wrong with it.

Although Roberto had 26 years of experience as a mechanic, he saw that he was not advancing professionally in his business. In looking for options to help him advance, Roberto found the Fuerza Local Business Accelerator. In the classes that he took, he learned that he had the bad habit of offering his labor to some clients on the promise of future payment, and then never getting paid back. He had been losing a lot of money because of this, hurting him and his business.

The Fuerza Local Business Accelerator empowered Roberto to overcome these bad habits, and today his business is thriving in West Phoenix. With his Fuerza Local Accelerator certificate hung proudly behind his desk, Roberto now gets to work alongside his wife and son to continue his family legacy.

“After graduating the Fuerza Local Business Accelerator, I now feel more secure about what I’m doing, more confident, and that my goals are clear to keep advancing.”
68% of graduates buy from fellow Fuerza Local businesses.

**GRADUATES BY YEAR**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>120</td>
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59% Graduates who have received media coverage.

18% Graduates who have received an award or recognition since graduating.

58% Graduates who volunteer.

60% Graduates who give charitably.
The Go-Getter

Nashelli Paita
La Perrera Hot Dogs

Nashelli Paita, who was born in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, was always proud of where she came from. She always visualized herself as an entrepreneur and having her own business from a very early age. She had heard from family and friends that Arizona was a land of opportunity, but upon moving here, Nashelli found those opportunities were more difficult to find and take part in than anticipated. However, she refused to give up.

In 2016, Nashelli heard from a friend about people like her graduating from the Fuerza Local Business Accelerator and starting their own businesses. She was impressed that these graduates were able to open businesses and contribute to their community by generating jobs. At that same time, she had a job offer in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Nashelli had two options at that time, leave to start a new life in New Mexico or realize her dream of becoming a business owner by applying for the Fuerza Local Business Accelerator.

When Nashelli began the Accelerator program, she started to see everything more clearly and knew she was part of a growing trend of local entrepreneurs starting businesses in her community. Today, Nashelli is proud of the opportunities being a business owner has opened up for her. Her proudest achievement, though, is being able to now support her son through college as he chases his dreams to become an engineer.

“My goal was clear; to start my own business and to prove to my children and myself that even if you fail a thousand times you must try again and again because there are different ways to find success. Thank you Fuerza Local for believing in me and for the opportunities that you gave me!”
Loans approved at traditional financial institutions in 2017

$67,000
Average loan size.

SINCE 2016

32%
Increase in new jobs created.

28%
Overall growth in workforce.

Total capital borrowed in 2017

$1,113,600


$5,821,400
THE PROVIDER

Alejandra Gutierrez
Sunny Sun Day Care

From an early age, Alejandra Gutierrez was responsible for caring for her six siblings. This instilled in her the importance of family, as well as a knack for caring for young children.

When Alejandra joined the Fuerza Local Business Accelerator Program, her dream of opening a childcare business became a reality. After graduating from the 8th cohort of the program, she then launched her business in December of 2017. She has since been able to open her first facility in Avondale, with plans of expansion already in the works.

Alejandra opened her business to bring her 20+ years of experience nurturing children to families beyond her own. Now not only has she been able to care for her growing family while fulfilling her goal of being an entrepreneur, but she has been able to provide opportunities of employment to both her son and daughter and build a family business.

“It all starts with a dream. The Fuerza Local Business Accelerator program helped me structure those ideas and dreams into a business plan, and we were able to start working professionally right away.”
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENTS

44%  Built new websites.

77%  Built new social media platforms.

70%  Opened first time ever checking accounts.

60%  Business expansion rate in 2017.

40%  Increase in sales between 2016 and 2017.

TYPE OF EXPANSION

18%  Added new service offerings.

16%  Purchased new company vehicles.

18%  Opened new location (primary).

8%  Purchased new equipment.
In my cohort there were 60 graduates and I would really like to see more and more entrepreneurs graduate every semester, so they can obtain the same business knowledge as I did.

THE NUMBER CRUNCHER

Ana Gordillo
Easy Number Consulting

As a child, Ana Gordillo found a passion for numbers and administration. As she grew, she saw a need in her community for someone to provide quality information about the nuts and bolts of accounting. This desire grew into her business, Easy Numbers Consulting, where she provides affordable accounting to small business owners.

Ana first learned about the Accelerator Program through attending a class at her local library. Through the Fuerza Local Business Accelerator, Ana further honed her business knowledge and acumen. Every week she made the commitment to attend every class, even after her long days in the office. By going through the program, she specifically unlocked strategies for marketing her business, which has increased her reach and client pool.

Ana says that the Fuerza Local Business Accelerator also gave her better customer service to attract and keep clients. Ana found that most business owners know that they need an accountant but don’t know what accounting is. Now every time Ana has an initial meeting with a new client, she takes about an hour to explain the expenses they should add, the taxes they should pay, and what permits and licenses they should have.

“In my cohort there were 60 graduates and I would really like to see more and more entrepreneurs graduate every semester, so they can obtain the same business knowledge as I did.”
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.

Support this work today at localfirstazfoundation.org/donate/

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

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