LOW-INCOME ENTREPRENEUR NEEDS ASSESSMENT
The Downtown Eastside (DTES) is already an incredibly hard-working, resourceful and creative community. People engage in a wide range of self-employment and entrepreneurial activities ranging from informal to formal, from street-based to home-based in order to meaningfully contribute to their communities and to make ends meet. However, people who are self-employed are typically not represented by Business Improvement Areas, or Small Business bureaus, and thus tend to be more isolated. In the DTES, many micro-entrepreneurs in the informal economy are unable to participate in the formal economy due to a range of health-related issues, addictions, homelessness, and systemic poverty due to inadequate income assistance.

The low-income entrepreneur needs assessment is a listening project that was initiated in January 2017 as priority of the City of Vancouver’s Community Economic Development (CED) Strategy. The listening project was overseen by the Local Economic Development Lab (LEDlab) and an Advisory Committee of low-income entrepreneurs and nonprofits that support entrepreneurship. Two staff with lived experience with self-employment in the DTES were hired for the engagement process. Several Advisory Committee members also participated in an earlier working group of Urban Core, which was focused on supporting self-employment in the DTES.

Self-employment and entrepreneurship offer a real alternative that can provide flexibility to people facing barriers to stability, while increasing their economic independence. Therefore, the purpose of the low-income entrepreneur needs assessment project was to answer the question - how might we legitimize and support entrepreneurship in order to increase the personal incomes of DTES residents? What new community projects, resources, or policy changes could help achieve these goals?

Self-employment and Entrepreneurship in the DTES

Self-employment in the DTES is as complex and diverse as its residents. Many DTES residents engage in multiple forms of self-employment/entrepreneurship simultaneously. For instance, the project team have spoken to several people who engage in binning, Megaphone and other vending, and are also interested in launching at-home businesses such as sewing or catering, but do not yet have the economic and social resources to do so.

For the purposes of this report, individuals who are binning and vending might be considered self-employed, as they work for themselves and have autonomy over how much, when, and where they work. In the DTES, these folks often enjoy their independence and choose not to conform to more structured work environments. Sex work is also a form of self-employment, although we did not engage directly with sex workers in this listening project. Alternatively, an entrepreneur is someone who might be looking to build a business. Even though they might only employ themselves initially, entrepreneurs typically have aspirations to grow their businesses and eventually hire more people. The listening project team heard from a range of individuals on the self-employment/entrepreneurship spectrum.

In the DTES context, it is important to note that many individuals who are engaged in self-employment/entrepreneurship are on income assistance, but supplement their income with one or more additional activities. In this context, self-employment/entrepreneurship are inextricable from salient social conditions such as poverty, homelessness, mental illness, and addiction: many people have great ideas for businesses but due to one or more of these factors, as well as the punitive governmental regulations surrounding living in poverty or having a mental health concern, have been unable to begin.
Categories of Self Employment & Entrepreneurship in the DTES

In order to better understand the needs of DTES residents for diverse forms of income generation, the project team defined the following categories of self-employment/entrepreneurship:

» Binning
» Vending (Megaphone and street-vending)
» Art-making (sewing, wood carving, misc.)
» Urban cleaning
» Cooking / catering
» Other

The Findings section of this report will draw out common themes, as well as break down needs particular to each category of self-employment / entrepreneurship.
ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The project team mapped clusters of self-employment / entrepreneurship in the Downtown Eastside in order to identify interview participants.

The engagement process began by targeting visibly self-employed people, such as binners, vendors, and urban cleaners, who are involved in street-based activities. One on one, informal conversations were had with 38 visibly self-employed people.

The second phase of engagement was holding group conversations with particular ‘categories’ of self-employed individuals/entrepreneurs. Participants were recruited through organizations that support entrepreneurship including Megaphone, Carnegie Vendors Collective, the DTES Market, Enterprising Women Making Art (EWMA), the Binners Project, the Window, RayCam and Mission Possible. Group conversations involved 46 participants in total. A $15 honoraria was provided to participants who attended group conversations. Participants were recruited through word of mouth and through organizations that support entrepreneurship. During this phase the project team also spoke with 13 representatives of organizations that support entrepreneurship.

In the final phase of engagement, the project team held a Design Workshop that included both low-income entrepreneurs and representatives from organizations that support entrepreneurship, as well as representatives from the City of Vancouver, to share back what was heard through the first two phases of engagement and prioritize and refine the community recommendations that came forward in the listening process. Attendees were offered a $30 honoraria upon request.

In June 2017 the project team reported back to community at a forum at 58 West Hastings, and made presentations to Urban Core and the CED Strategic Action Committee. A hard copy summary report was also distributed to as many interview participants as could be located.
Interview Questions

» To begin, can we hear in your words what doing X looks like? Describe a typical day.
» How did you get into doing X?
» Do you find that the income you generate from doing X is generally enough to meet your needs on a regular basis?
» If not, do you do anything else to supplement your income?
» What do you see as being the major barriers, be they legal or social, that you experience to generating income through doing X?
» Are there any sorts of policy changes that the city could make to help you generate more income?
» Outside of government, can you think of any ways that the community might better support you?
» Do you have a desire to expand on what you're doing now? (start your own business)
» What ideas do you have that you would like to act on?
» [The project team also shared suggestions they had heard thus far for feedback in later interviews]

In total, the project team spoke with...

84 individuals
A few participants had only been in the DTES for a few weeks or months, many are long-time community members who are deeply embedded in the local micro-economy.

71 low-income entrepreneurs
Ages ranged from early-twenties to late-sixties.

13 representatives of organizations that support entrepreneurship
The majority were male, although a significant number of women were interviewed.
Limitations

» Categories of self-employment/entrepreneurship are not static; many people engage in multiple forms of income generation simultaneously.

» The project team primarily met with people who are either visible (i.e. street-based vendors) or those who are integrated with organizations that support entrepreneurship (sewers connected to Common Thread, EWMA, etc.)

» The project team only met with people who speak English, although we did have a translator available to support Mandarin and Cantonese speaking residents.

» There is always a risk of response bias among participants. For example, they may feel pressure to give answers that are socially acceptable.

» Despite our best efforts, we were not able to secure individual or group conversations with Chinatown food producers or women who are involved in sex work.

Ethical considerations

The listening project has made every effort to ensure that the voices of community members are accurately portrayed in this report. This involved recording detailed notes after individual and group conversations. Individual conversations were more informal and happenstance, so honoraria was not awarded. However, all individuals who attended a group conversation were awarded an honorarium of $15 to recognize their time and specialized knowledge.

Resident leadership was an important aspect of the listening project, therefore the project team involved two staff members with lived experience in the DTES, who were transparent about this during the engagement process to mitigate hierarchical “expert”/resident dynamics. The entire listening project was also supported by an Advisory Committee made up of half residents/entrepreneurs. During conversations, the project team made every effort not to ask misleading questions or bring their own personal agendas to the conversation.
FINDINGS

Common Challenges and Opportunities

Like all forms of labour market attachment, having basic needs met is foundational to self-employment and entrepreneurship. Therefore, across all categories of low-income entrepreneurship participants noted the following challenges:

» Accessing and navigating income assistance, including accessing ‘assisted to work’ welfare programs such a Person with Persistent Multiple Barriers (PPMB) and Persons With Disabilities (PWD)
» Difficulties due to government limits placed on income generation (claw backs)
» A general sense of distrust or hostility towards law enforcement and punitive policing practices
» Limited access to technology and lack of technology-literacy
» Limitations due to cost of transit and general difficulties with mobility
» Access to childcare
» Access to affordable housing
» Personal physical or mental health challenges, or health challenges of others around them

Specific to self-employment/entrepreneurship, participants noted the following common challenges:

» A reliance on word-of-mouth advertising
» Difficulties in pricing or appraising their products/services
» Limited opportunities to sell products/services to outside markets
» Technology support specific to selling products/services
» Frustration due to the complexities associated with declaring self-employment income to income assistance

Notably, participants also highlighted several community assets and opportunities to build on:

» Strong connections with local organizations that support entrepreneurship
» A desire to learn or improve on their skills
» A desire to meaningfully contribute to community-building and economic development
» An interest in developing or offering peer-mentorship/peer-run workshops
Specific Challenges and Opportunities

The following section outlines the specific challenges and opportunities particular to categories of low-income entrepreneurs that were surfaced through small group conversations.

Findings: Binning

“People want us to clean up and be part of society but then they don’t give us any opportunities – you get discouraged.”

Biners (n=6) noted the following common challenges:

» Stigma around binning
» Inability to use public transit to move bottles and cans
» Difficulties in transporting bottles and cans
» Difficult relationship with law enforcement
» Lack of means through which to sell found items online that are discovered while binning (access to technology and lack of technology-literacy)

Findings: Vending

“If you want to make a buck, you better get out there”

Vendors (n=6) noted the following common challenges:

» Need for marketing platforms
» Need for organization amongst themselves (business cards, meetings...)
» Lack of access to transportation to move around equipment and ‘goods’
» Need to become visible and legitimate (shirts, inclusion)
» Lack of storage area to keep their equipment safe and store ‘goods’ (redeemables, merchandize)
» Lack of acceptance from the Business Improvement Associations
» Standard pricing structure for services (like a minimum wage but minimum charge)

Findings: Artists

“Everything I do, I do with heart”

Artists (n=12) noted the following common challenges:

» Need for affordable and accessible workspace
» Lack of venues through which to formally advertise
» Limited knowledge of marketing
» Limited knowledge of appraising one’s goods
» Lack of access to technology and enhanced technology literacy
» Lack of affordable materials with which to make one’s goods (i.e. proper sewing machines, fabrics, beads, wood)
» Lack of access to further learning opportunities (i.e. refresher courses)
» Limited knowledge of grant-writing and access to capital for materials

Findings: Urban Cleaners

“We keep the city clean cuz that’s our job”

Urban Cleaners (n=5) noted the following common challenges:

» Need for marketing platforms
» Need for organization amongst themselves (business cards, meetings...)
» Lack of access to transportation to move around equipment and ‘goods’
» Need to become visible and legitimate (shirts, inclusion)
» Lack of storage area to keep their equipment safe and store ‘goods’ (redeemables, merchandize)
» Lack of acceptance from the Business Improvement Associations
» Standard pricing structure for services (like a minimum wage but minimum charge)

Findings: Vending

“If you want to make a buck, you better get out there”

Vendors (n=6) noted the following common challenges:

» Advertising locations for Megaphone vendors
» Dependency on optimal weather and traffic conditions
» Inability to legitimate street-based vending through permitting
» Need for further legitimization to facilitate stronger relationships with law enforcement
» Need for further communication and collaboration with other vendors
» Lack of access to affordable transit options / enhanced mobility
» Need for an ability to sell items at a reasonable cost and in a more formalized fashion (i.e. online)
Findings: Cooks / Caterers

“I care about good healthy food, I want to make nutritious food for my daughter and people that I know”

Caterers (n=2) noted these common challenges:

» High demand from individuals (friends, contacts), stores and restaurants
» No access to commissary kitchens that:
  » Ensures that products are clean
  » Regulated food procedures in place
  » Have space 3 days a week, 8 hours a day
  » Access to equipment, utensils
  » Close to home
» Limited capacity for storage and production
» Need for business planning support
» Need for start up financing “just need someone to take a chance on me”
» Lack of access to printing labels on products

Other Findings

Musician (n=1) / Parking Lot Security (n=1)

» The challenges of these individuals are integrated into the results above due to low participation.
Throughout the engagement process we asked low-income entrepreneurs what potential community projects or initiatives might help to resolve their self-employment / entrepreneurship challenges. The following community solutions were presented at a Design Workshop held in April 2017.

**DTES Artisan Market**

**What is it?**
- Artisan market on the outskirts of the DTES
- Appeals to a clientele from outside the neighbourhood
- All products sold at the market must be hand made
- All vendors must have confirmation that they are low income and live in the DTES
- Opportunity for shared marketing/branding
- Help artists to price/value their goods

**What needs does it address?**
- Existing DTES Markets (at 501/62) are too chaotic for some vendors/artists
- Artists don't want to sell their stuff for $2
- Customers at the DTES Market can't afford nice art and aren't looking for it
- More venues through which to formally advertise
- Artists identified need to increase knowledge of marketing and knowledge of appraising one's goods

**Container Maker Space**

**What is it?**
- Converted storage containers into low-barrier community workspaces
- Could be used to store free art materials
- Could be used to house e.g. kiln for pottery
- Provide courses for individual needs
- Peer support networks for artists
- Containers can be placed in empty lots, alleyways, or spaces under development

**What needs does it address?**
- Affordable and accessible workspace
- Affordable materials with which to make one's goods (i.e. proper sewing machines, fabrics, beads, wood)

**Mini Workshops**

**What is it?**
- Connect with peer support networks
- Access to further learning opportunities
- Recommendations for Mini Workshops include:
  - Grant writing
  - Business planning
  - Registering for events and pop ups
  - How to manage income assistance

**What needs does it address?**
- Many self-employed people in the DTES don't want to be formally registered in a school-based course
- Looking for low-barrier and accessible ways to access new skills and expertise
- Access to technology and how to use technology in business are substantial barriers
- How to sell goods online (Craigslist, Etsy, Paypal)
- Marketing and communications
Micro-loans

What is it?
» Seed money for your business to grow out from your living room
» Teaching people to understand what capital raising options they have and what risks there are
» Must be accessible to people with bad credit
» Business planning support
» Financial literacy support

What needs does it address?
» Currently people do not have access to loans or are afraid to ask for them
» Gives an opportunity for business to expand
» Transitions business from informal into formal

Peer Mentoring

What is it?
» Enlist local residents who have knowledge of business, marketing, communications, or government relationships to hold low-cost or free courses
» Provide stipends for mentors

What needs does it address?
» DTES residents are resourceful and want to contribute to community building
» Many people expressed that they are willing to host/teach workshops for others in their community
» Builds community-owned support networks

Co-mentoring

What is it?
» In the case where local knowledge can't be found, enlist volunteers from outside the neighbourhood to offer mentorship
» DTES entrepreneurs exchange knowledge and ‘teach’ those from outside the community in a mutual exchange
» Co-mentoring emphasizes the importance of cooperative, non-hierarchical relationships for learning and development
» Demand-led by entrepreneur seeking mentorship (not a workshop)

What needs does it address?
» DTES residents identify their own skills gaps and areas for learning/development
» A more organic relationship between local residents and mentors
» Building outside relations with other entrepreneurs
DTES Worker Co-op

What is it?
» Independent workers ban together (e.g. window cleaners)
» Benefit from more legitimacy, better recognition, marketing, networking, peer support
» Way to facilitate better relationships with law enforcement and businesses
» Shared advocacy
» Benefits might include name tag, starter kit, shirt or hat signaling membership

What needs does it address?
» Currently some independent workers in the DTES are still very marginalized
» Build off of the success of Megaphone, the Binners’ Project and DTES Market

Commissary Kitchen

What is it?
» Independent caterers access commercial kitchen to cook and fulfill orders
» Affordable cost
» All users must have confirmation that they are low income and live in the DTES
» Storage space for products
» Able to grow catering business out of home

What needs does it address?
» Currently the commissary kitchens that are located in Vancouver are booked and over priced due to the growing food-truck market; low income caterers cannot compete
» Kitchen will allow business the opportunity to grow and succeed
» Catering business can grow and employ others in the neighbourhood

The purpose of the Design Workshop was to get feedback on and prioritize the solutions proposed by low-income entrepreneurs in the DTES about how to increase their personal incomes.

15 people participated in the Design Workshop: 6 low-income entrepreneurs, 6 representatives from organizations that support entrepreneurship, and 3 representatives from the City of Vancouver. For a copy of the full transcript from the Design Workshop contact info@ledlab.ca.

Of the 8 solutions proposed, 3 rose to the surface as important for further exploration:

1. DTES Artisan Market
2. Micro-workshops and Peer Mentoring (combined)
3. Commissary Kitchens
Strengthening the Self-Employment System in the DTES

The solutions that came forward through the Design Workshop represent key elements that need to be present in order to strengthen self-employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for low income residents in the DTES. That is, low-income entrepreneurs, and specifically those who might identify as makers, need:

» **Spaces for production**: kitchen space, maker space, carving space, storage for materials (low barrier and affordable)

» **Places to sell things**: in particular, outside of the DTES, where makers can earn a better price for their goods

» **Targeted self-employment training**: pricing goods and services, how to sell things online, etc. (low barrier, one on one and peer-led)

Underscoring this is the idea that basic needs must be met, in order for low-income entrepreneurs to engage in income generation. Again, informal and formal self-employment in the DTES is often used as a way to earn supplemental income to top up inadequate income assistance rates. **Foundational supports such as: access to income assistance, transportation, housing, childcare, and technology literacy are crucial to the success of low-income entrepreneurs.**

An individual may not need all aspects of the self-employment system. For example, perhaps they only need help setting up a PayPal account, or a space to store carving tools. Individuals may also choose to enter at any point in the system. What is crucial to the success of this model is the starting assumption that individual residents and entrepreneurs have innate passion, creativity, and determination.

When understood as a self-employment system, the project team proposes that it is most important to strengthen the connections between different elements of the system. A ‘micro-enterprise facilitator’ whose role it is to strengthen these connections and remove barriers to success might be a strategic investment for consideration. Valuing this function and backing it with resources, has huge potential to reduce poverty and increase resilience through self-employment in the DTES. This approach and thinking has been informed by the Enterprise Facilitation methodology of Ernesto Sirolli and other local economic development theorists.
While aspects of the solutions proposed above may need to be developed from the ground up, there are also a significant number of community assets that can be activated in order to better connect, facilitate, and strengthen the self-employment system in the DTES.

Below community assets that have been surfaced through the low-income entrepreneur needs assessment are listed.

**Existing Community Assets**

**Maker Spaces**
- Mission Possible pottery studio
- Just Work pottery studio
- MakerLabs
- Arts Scape Maker Space
- Hastings Urban Farm/PHS
- 501 Powell St.
- The Lux?

**Commissary Kitchen Spaces**
- Groundswell Cafe
- Uncommon Cafe
- Save on Meats
- Potluck
- Hives for Humanity Bee Space
- VCC kitchen
- Commissary Connect

**Targeted Self-Employment Training**
- The Lux
- EMBERS
- Open Door Group - Customized Self-Employment
- EWMA
- The Window
- Skwachays Lodge Artist programs
- DTES Literacy Roundtable Tech Cafe

**Sales and Marketing Opportunities**

*Ideally outside the DTES*
- Skwachays Lodge
- Bird on a Wire type boutiques outside the DTES
- Possibility to activate Vancouver Farmers Markets, East Van Flea
- City of Vancouver Engineering “Art Carts” project
- Groundswell Marketplace (Granville Island)
- False Creek Flats or Blood Alley opportunities?
- Downtown Casino Opportunities?
- CIRES?

Other key partners include: Window, EWMA, Megaphone, Carnegie Vendors Collective, and DTES Market, Woodwards (atrium), Hogan's Alley group
RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations included in this report are directed towards the funders and partners in the low-income entrepreneur needs assessment project including the Community Economic Development Strategic Action Committee (CEDSAC), Urban Core, and the City of Vancouver. The Lux low barrier income generation hub, operated by EMBERS, will also play a prominent role in programming recommendations to support low-income entrepreneurship.

The project team recommend the following community project and policy interventions:

1. **CEDSAC, the City of Vancouver, and other partners should continue to advocate for adequate investments in income assistance, child care, housing, transit, education, and digital literacy.**
   
   Self-employment and entrepreneurship in the DTES are inextricably linked to individuals’ ability to meet their own basic needs.
   
   **Lead proponents:** CEDSAC, Urban Core, City of Vancouver

2. **Engage with the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation on income assistance reform.**
   
   This includes (i) helping individuals to access basic assistance, (ii) ensuring that individuals with barriers to employment are accessing ‘assisted to work’ programs such as PPMB or PWD, (iii) providing case specific support to individuals managing self-employment income while on income assistance, and (iv) raising basic income assistance rates.
   
   **Lead proponents:** CEDSAC, Urban Core, City of Vancouver

3. **Continue to support nonprofit organizations that support entrepreneurship.**
   
   These include, but are not limited to, the DTES Market, the Binners’ Project, EWMA, the Window, and Carnegie Vendors Collective.
   
   **Lead proponents:** City of Vancouver, other funders
4. **Pursue investments into programming that supports micro-enterprise facilitation.**

   Connect low-income entrepreneurs who demonstrate passion and commitment to existing community assets and resources and targeted self-employment training. The Lux might be an ideal location for micro-enterprise facilitation programming.

   **Lead proponents:** City of Vancouver, other funders

5. **Unlock talent and potential by investing in local residents who have knowledge of business, marketing, communications, to hold low-cost or free courses for their peers and neighbours.**

   **Lead proponents:** The Lux, and other organizations that support entrepreneurship

6. **Explore opportunities to develop a DTES Artisans Market, as well as other sales and marketing channels outside of the DTES to connect low-income entrepreneurs to new markets.**

   **Lead proponents:** The Lux, and other organizations that support entrepreneurship

7. **Invest in storage and maker spaces for DTES artists and makers.**

   **Lead proponents:** City of Vancouver and operators of city-owned sites, e.g. 58 West Hastings, 501 Powell St.

8. **Reduce barriers to legal vending in areas outside the Downtown Eastside.**

   Support the Carnegie Vendors Collective in developing permitted, mobile vending carts.

   **Lead proponents:** City of Vancouver, CEDSAC, Urban Core

9. **Reduce policy barriers to activating kitchen assets in the DTES that might be used for commercial purposes and invest in programming to facilitate coordination and activation of commercial kitchen spaces.**

   **Lead proponents:** City of Vancouver, CEDSAC, The Lux

10. **Collaborate with one or more credit unions or foundations to initiate a low-interest micro-loan and/or micro-grant program for low-income entrepreneurs.**

    **Lead proponents:** The Lux and interested parties, e.g. Eastside Community Fund, Vancity
QUICK-START PROJECTS

The findings and recommendations of the low-income entrepreneur needs assessment have informed the development of the following quick start projects.

Handmade Downtown Eastside - Micro-Enterprise Facilitation Project

EMBERS and the Local Economic Development Lab will partner on an initiative that will intentionally and strategically connect low-income DTES entrepreneurs (specifically makers) to production facilities and new sales and distribution opportunities outside of the neighbourhood, in order to help grow their personal incomes and capacities in entrepreneurship.

The project objectives are to:

» Work with a cohort of low-income entrepreneurs to the micro-enterprise facilitation model

» Build partnerships for new sales and marketing opportunities outside the DTES

» Research and expand a list of community assets that can be used for production and materials storage

» Compile and produce a list of self-employment resources to be used by Lux staff and low-income entrepreneurs

» Design and implement information sharing/management processes to support effective micro-enterprise facilitation

» Maintain and strengthen partnerships with various organizations, agencies, and institutions who contribute to the project

LEDlab will provide a full-time graduate student Project Coordinator to this initiative for 8 months, beginning in September 2017. EMBERS will provide targeted self-employment training through the Lux, and oversee the micro-enterprise facilitation initiative.
Aboriginal Carving and Maker Space

The Hastings Urban Farm has been asked by the City of Vancouver to re-animate the vacant space left by the Mobile Medical Unit at 58 West Hastings. One potential aspect of this re-animation is an Aboriginal Carving and Maker Space that can be used for artist materials storage, dry carving space, workshop and training space, and will have a small vending space as well.

Hastings Urban Farm will explore this opportunity further, aiming to build out programming at the space in the summer of 2017. The intention is to connect the site assets to targeted self-employment training through the Lux, as by the artists and makers using the space.

The Aboriginal Carving and Maker Space will exist as part of the green community respite which the Hastings Urban Farm offers in partnership with Hives for Humanity Society and PHS Community Services Society.

Removing Policy Barriers to Self-Employment in the DTES

CEDSAC might consider convening a working group to alleviate systemic barriers to self-employment and entrepreneurship in the DTES uncovered by this report. From improving relationships with vendors and the Vancouver Police Department, to increasing access to underutilized DTES commercial kitchen spaces at off hours, there are a number of municipal policy innovation opportunities that would remove barriers to self-employment and entrepreneurship in the DTES.

CEDSAC and/or Urban Core should also advocate for changes to income assistance legislation and administration that would allow for low-income entrepreneurs to more actively engage in income generation. Other structural impediments including access to childcare, transportation, and housing will continue to pose challenges to income generation for low-income entrepreneurs and must also be advocated for as part of a holistic, community economic development approach.
CONCLUSION

Self-employment and entrepreneurship offer a real alternative that can provide flexibility to people facing barriers to stability while increasing their economic independence.

There are also many existing community assets that can be leveraged in the DTES in order to strengthen the self-employment system around low-income entrepreneurs. However, programmatic investments are needed in order to facilitate and connect micro-entrepreneurs to the right resources in a person-centered and individualized way. The Lux low barrier income generation hub represents an ideal location for this type of approach. Meanwhile, self-employment/entrepreneurship are inextricable from salient social conditions such as poverty, homelessness, mental illness, and addiction, therefore any efforts to support micro-entrepreneurs should be linked to advocacy efforts to reduce structural barriers to income generation, taking a holistic community economic development approach.

Special thanks to Martin Mannette for his digital paintings used in this report.
APPENDIX A

Sarah Carten, Social Planner, City of Vancouver, has uncovered the following barriers to hosting commercial kitchen/commissary spaces in the DTES.

Policy / permitting barriers

» Any business (even small scale) would need a business license. To get a business license, they need to be operating in a building that is zoned appropriately (i.e. businesses can't get a business license in a residential zone, so many community centres or neighbourhood houses wouldn't be appropriate sites).

» Any business needs to operate from a VCH permitted kitchen (i.e. infrastructure in place for VCH to issue a kitchen permit).

» Exception: Sales that are only for farmers markets (see report for details).

Programming barriers

» Some commercial kitchen owners are concerned with cleanliness, smallwares theft, equipment use/breaking. Most likely don't have a process in place for charging for the use of their space (to help cover equipment costs). Multipurpose rooms are often adjacent to a kitchen and if they are being used, then the kitchen cannot be used. And a final challenge is that after hours use (evening, weekends, overnight) is sometimes not possible because of access issues (i.e. no one there to let someone in; or a requirement to pay someone to be on-site while the kitchen is used by a non-staff person).

» Once people talk in person, they can often find agreement and ways to share space - so making individual connections is important.

So, it seems like what may be needed is:

» Conversations with all of the ‘maybe’ kitchens about whether they are willing to have people contact them directly to chat about rentals; whether there are immediate philosophical alignments they would seek (i.e. specific nonprofits types or specific mandates, i.e. supporting people within the community to get jobs; a women only employment focus, or Aboriginal; etc.)

» To ask those who are already offering space, how much they charge and whether they have a sample agreement that identifies responsibilities; maybe a checklist for clean-up that we could adapt / share.