



The Living Wage for Small Businesses



78% of Living Wage Employers in BC have 50 or fewer employees, and 48% have 10 or fewer employees.

What small businesses are saying:

"We want our team members and their family to have a better quality of life - to have enough money for transportation, food and essentials for their loved ones."

-Rebalance Rehab, Chilliwack

"[We pay a living wage] to keep employees happy and not have to worry about them not making ends meet at home. Keeping good employees working is of high priority."

-West Coast Floatation Systems, Duncan

What is a living wage?

A living wage is the hourly amount that each of two parents, both working full time, would need in order to afford basic expenses like food, clothing, rent, and child care. Living wages for communities across BC are re-calculated annually by the Living Wage for Families Campaign and our local partners.

Paying a living wage enables your staff to participate fully in their community, spend time with family and friends, and be proud of their work without worrying about how they'll pay their bills.

Benefits for small businesses

Though small businesses face unique challenges, paying a living wage can bring significant benefits:

- **Improved staff morale and productivity:** In the UK, 43% of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) reported higher employee morale and productivity after certifying as Living Wage Employers.
- **Improved staff recruitment retention:** In the same UK survey, 40% of SMEs said higher employee retention was a benefit of paying a living wage, and 25% said they can attract better-trained staff.
- **More focused staff:** If your workers do dangerous or highly specific work, they should be able to completely focus on the task at hand rather than being distracted by worrying about how they will pay their bills. Many Living Wage Employers in BC cite this as a reason for paying their staff a living wage.
- **Improved company reputation and profile:** There is growing consumer demand for ethical consumption. 72% of SMEs in the UK living wage program reported that being publicly recognized as Living Wage Employers improved their brand reputation as ethical companies.
- **Municipal contracts:** If your local government is a Living Wage Employer, they will need to work with contractors and small businesses who also pay the living wage. Businesses in living wage municipalities may be able to establish partnerships or secure contracts with local governments if they share a commitment to the living wage.

Living wage tips for small businesses

To make the living wage work for you, consider this advice from other small businesses:

- **Calculate the value of your hourly benefits.** If you offer non-mandatory benefits like a health care package or paid sick time, you can deduct the value of these benefits from your local living wage rate. Workers must receive the living wage through a combination of their base wage and the value of their benefits. See the Living Wage for Families Campaign's website for an online benefits calculator.
- **Embed the living wage as part of your company ethos.** Businesses can more effectively implement a living wage policy when they can link it to the nature or quality of the product or service they offer, to the organization's wider social responsibility activities and strategy, or to a staff training and skills development strategy.
- **Develop an internal communications plan.** An internal communications plan will help your staff understand the policy and build support. Emphasize that the living wage is a poverty reduction measure, not a bargaining strategy. This may help in conversations about wage differentials.
- **Publicize your Living Wage Employer status as much as possible.** Share your commitment to poverty reduction and your pride in taking this step with your staff, your customers, and the public. Include the Living Wage Employer logo and promotional materials - provided by the Living Wage for Families Campaign upon certification - in your company communications, website, social media, and in your stores and staff rooms.
- **Plan for small initial costs but long-term savings.** While you may have initial costs if you need to raise wages, SMEs in the UK living wage program found that increased staff productivity (45% of businesses surveyed) and being able to offer high product or service quality (43%) helped them implement their living wage policies. The Living Wage for Families Campaign can help you create a plan that works for you.



Ready to become a Living Wage Employer? Contact us.
www.livingwageforfamilies.ca

"Committed and engaged employees are the key to the company's financial success, which in turn provides each of us with the financial means to lead happy and fulfilling lives."

-Sun Porch Homes Ltd.,
Nanaimo

"Since we began paying a living wage and charging our 'Living Wage Top Up' on customer bills, the overwhelming majority of our customers have enthusiastically supported this approach, and the performance and reliability of our employees has improved."

- Nikkei Ramen-ya Restaurant,
Courtenay

"Care of children is an important job and needs to be respected by society in all ways, including with salaries."

-Life Ways Childcare Society,
North Vancouver

"When an employee feels financially empowered, our business, our team and our customers win."

-Bloom Strategies, Vancouver

"We want our employees to have a great quality of life so they can live and work here for the long term. We want to see their families thrive and to help them reach their goals."

-Cleanline Automotive,
Invermere