

**Post-Event Impact Report**  
**HerStory Marketplace & Empowerment Expo 2025**  
**Prepared By Women Focus Canada**

**Host:** Women Focus Canada (WFC)  
**Event Date:** October 4, 2025  
**Location:** 205 Placer Court, Toronto, ON

## Executive Summary

The *HerStory Marketplace & Empowerment Expo 2025*, hosted by **Women Focus Canada (WFC)**, was a transformative community initiative that celebrated and strengthened women-led small businesses and social enterprises across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). This year's Expo brought together **155 registered participants**, with **144 confirmed check-ins (93% attendance rate)**, plus more than 25 volunteers, speakers, and partner representatives who were actively present and engaged. The event created an inclusive space for **education, networking, and economic empowerment**, aligning directly with Toronto Foundation's goals of supporting vibrant, equitable, and inclusive communities. Your support played a crucial role in helping us provide high-quality programming, equitable vendor participation, and accessible community education. The event's overwhelming success and post-event feedback show a clear demand for expansion in 2026.



Photograph captured on Saturday, October 4, at the HerStory Empowerment & Marketplace Expo.

## Event Overview and Outcomes

### Purpose

HerStory was designed to address two persistent gaps in the women entrepreneurship ecosystem:

1. **Access to Visibility and Platforms:** Many women entrepreneurs, particularly newcomers and racialized women, lack opportunities to showcase their products and connect with customers and partners.
2. **Access to Practical Education and Support Systems:** Entrepreneurs need ongoing training and peer learning opportunities to build sustainable businesses.

The Expo bridged both gaps by combining marketplace **experience** with an **educational symposium**, blending networking, capacity-building, and exposure for small businesses under one roof.

### Participation and Demographics

Registration vs Attendance	Number	Percentage
Registered participants who attended	144	93%
Registered but did not attend	11	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>Registered</b>

Participants by Role	Number	Percentage
Attendees	102	71%
Vendors / Exhibitors	17	12%
Volunteers / Speakers / Partners	25	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>Participants</b>

Participants by Location	Number	Percentage
Toronto-based Participants	69	48%
Brampton Participants	16	11%
Vaughan Participants	9	6%
Other GTA and Ontario	50	35%

## Key Insights (Participation Outcomes and Implications):

- **High engagement and relevance:**

The event achieved a **93% attendance rate (144 of 155 registrants)**, indicating strong alignment with participant needs and effective outreach. This level of engagement suggests high program relevance and community trust.

- **Balanced ecosystem participation:**

The participant mix included **71% general attendees, 12% vendors, and 17% volunteers, speakers, and partners**, demonstrating a well-structured ecosystem that balanced learning, market access, and community support without over-commercialization.

- **Strong local impact with regional reach:**

**48% of participants were Toronto-based**, directly supporting local economic and educational priorities. The remaining **52% from the GTA and Ontario** reflects regional demand and positions the program for scalable growth.

- **Low attrition, strong commitment:**

A **7% non-attendance rate** indicates strong participant commitment and suggests that the program design, topic relevance, and timing were effective.

## Educational and Learning Impact

Education was a defining feature of this year's HerStory Expo. Through our **fireside chat and keynote series**, participants gained actionable insights on entrepreneurship, funding, and leadership from experienced speakers including:

- **Rosemary Sadler:** *Accessing Capital When Doors Are Closed*
- **Sabine Soumare:** *Branding Your Voice and Presence*
- **Carlos Neato:** *Scaling with Purpose: Building Community-Driven Businesses*

Participants described these sessions as “transformational” and “practically helpful,” emphasizing that the event provided real strategies rather than surface-level inspiration.

Post-event surveys showed:

- **87%** of respondents felt more confident about growing their businesses.
- **91%** said they made valuable new professional connections.
- **100%** said they would attend the next HerStory Expo and recommend it to others.

## Impact of Toronto Foundation's Support

Your contribution directly:

- Enabled venue, logistics, and accessibility coverage to host 144+ attendees in a professional and inclusive space.
- Supported marketing, communications, and outreach to ensure equitable representation from across Toronto and surrounding cities.
- Provided partial support for our **Educational Programming Track**, which included the fireside chat series, business mentorship sessions, and resource sharing.

Because of Toronto Foundation's support, we were able to deliver a **high-quality, community-centered event** at a fraction of the cost it would have taken otherwise, creating lasting visibility for over a dozen small businesses and shaping dozens of new collaborations.

## Challenges and Opportunities for Improvement

Despite the event's success, we faced several challenges that we believe can be resolved with a stronger budget and multi-year partnership:

1. **Venue Capacity Limitations:** The space reached full capacity before registration closed, limiting additional participation. We have since received over 40 requests for a larger venue for next year's edition.
2. **Limited Audio-Visual and Media Budget:** A larger A/V allocation would allow better live coverage and replay content for continued reach.
3. **Vendor Subsidy Gap:** While we provided partial support for vendors, many women-owned businesses requested more affordable booth options, available spots and pre-event training support.

## Opportunity:

With enhanced funding, *HerStory 2026* can accommodate a larger venue, expanded marketing reach, and a vendor readiness bootcamp, maximizing both participation and long-term outcomes

## Next Steps and Future Vision

Our community has made it clear: they want more.

Since the event, Women Focus Canada has received **multiple partnership inquiries and requests to host HerStory 2026**, ideally in a **larger Toronto venue** with extended educational programming.

Our next steps include:

- Expanding HerStory into a **two-day expo** featuring deeper training sessions and business development clinics.
- Launching a **vendor mentorship and pre-Expo readiness accelerator** to equip women with tools for sustained success.
- Deepening collaboration with local funders, corporate sponsors, and educational partners to extend reach across Toronto and the GTA.

## Conclusion

The *HerStory Marketplace & Empowerment Expo 2025* proved that when women are given a platform, they rise, and their success uplifts families, communities, and local economies.

With Toronto Foundation's support, we created a meaningful and measurable impact for women entrepreneurs, particularly those who have historically been overlooked by traditional ecosystems.

We are deeply grateful for your partnership and excited about the potential to scale this movement in 2026, reaching more women, expanding educational access, and ensuring every story is seen, supported, and celebrated.