

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Innovation Guelph launches annual business funding program for women entrepreneurs**

*Deadline to apply is May 15, 2016*

**April 26, 2016 (Guelph, ON)** – Innovation Guelph is encouraging women in Guelph and Wellington County with a business idea or developing small business to apply for the 2016 Rhyze Award. Applicants have a chance to receive up to \$750 in seed funding and business coaching from Innovation Guelph.

“We’re thrilled to see how our 2015 Rhyze Award recipients have developed their businesses since receiving funding and mentorship. **This year, our focus is to support women with entrepreneurial spirit who are in the early stages of their developing their business idea,**” said Kristel Manes, Project Lead for the Rhyze Project and Director, Innovation Guelph. **“We’re providing smaller investments to more women.** This approach will enable us to assist as many women as possible on their business journey, support a wider range of business initiatives and ideas, and positively impact our regional economy.”

In 2015, Innovation Guelph successfully crowdfunded \$30,000 to provide support to local women entrepreneurs. More than \$20,000 in seed funding and in-kind services were awarded to local women business owners through a pitch competition in September 2015. Top prize – which included \$10,000 and business coaching from Innovation Guelph – was awarded to [\[re\]Fresh Juice Co.](#), an organic cold-pressed juice bar in downtown Guelph.

“Winning the Rhyze Award was a very proud and pivotal moment for us personally and for our business,” said Whitney Douglas, founder of [re]Fresh Juice Co, Guelph’s first juicery. **“It was incredible to have the support from our community and to feel the validation of our efforts.** The funding came just as we had opened our doors at the juicery on Québec Street, and we needed additional capital to grow. We could not be more grateful.”

**Applications will be received for the 2016 Rhyze Award until May 15, 2016.** Complete information on the program – including an online application, eligibility requirements and details on the review process – are available at [innovationguelph.ca/rhyze-award](http://innovationguelph.ca/rhyze-award).

Everyone who submits an application for the Rhyze Award and meets the eligibility requirements will be invited to participate in mentoring opportunities, which may include peer mentoring circles, one-on-one mentoring, professional advice and business model coaching.

Follow [@TheRhyzeProject](#) on Twitter for updates on the Rhyze Award, and women’s entrepreneurship in Guelph and Wellington County.

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### **About The Rhyze Project**

Formerly the Women’s Economic Advancement Project, The Rhyze Project is a collaborative project led by Innovation Guelph that cultivates women’s entrepreneurial spirit in Guelph and Wellington County. The Rhyze Project has received funding through Status of Women Canada, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the County of Wellington, and Meridian Credit Union to research, design and develop pilot programs focused on business education, mentorship and the development of financial resources for women entrepreneurs.

### **About Innovation Guelph**

[Innovation Guelph](#) helps ideas start, grow, and thrive by cultivating entrepreneurs, developing powerful partnerships, and supporting innovative initiatives that transform the way we do things in business and in our community. We help companies, entrepreneurs and youth to explore and solve business challenges through our hands-on approach to business coaching. We’re committed to helping businesses succeed. We also work with The City of Guelph, the region, local organizations, and community groups to strengthen community projects that will improve the quality of life in Guelph. Innovation Guelph is a member of the [Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs](#) (ONE).

