

Brenda Strafford Social Innovation Lab

Overview

The Brenda Strafford Social Innovation Lab offers six Enactus students from across Canada the opportunity to address one of Canada's most urgent social issues—helping survivors of domestic violence rebuild their lives with safety, dignity, and long-term stability.

- Six Enactus students from across the country will be selected to participate. Working in small, collaborative teams (three students per challenge statement), participants will apply a human-centred design thinking process to develop innovative solutions.
- Guided by a dedicated facilitator, students will progress through each phase of design thinking while accessing insight and support from subject matter experts.
- Participants will gain meaningful, hands-on experience in social innovation, empathy-driven research, collaboration, and systems thinking, while contributing to lasting community impact.

Program Structure

Using the stages of design thinking, students will work through a structured process to create and refine actionable solutions addressing one of two challenge statements co-created by the Brenda Strafford Foundation and Enactus Canada:

1. How might we design culturally sensitive, low-barrier, stigma-free supports around domestic violence that empower individuals to stay safe, preserve dignity, and access resources before, during, and after crisis?
2. How might we prevent domestic violence before it ever begins by fostering inclusive education, cultural change, and early intervention that challenge harmful gender norms and structural drivers, promote equity, and build a foundation for safe, respectful relationships across society?

Each team will develop its own approach and present final solutions to the Brenda Strafford Foundation and a national audience at the Enactus Canada National Exposition.

Schedule and Commitment

- The lab runs from January to April 2026, with mandatory weekly one-hour virtual sessions held Tuesdays at 4:00-5:00 pm PT | 7:00-8:00pm ET.
- Participants should expect to dedicate approximately 3-5 hours per week, including meetings, research, collaboration, and project work.

Session Schedule:

Date & Time	Topic	Notes
Jan. 20, 2026 7-8pm ET	Overview & Team Agreements	Ground your understanding of the social innovation lab process, and work with your team to set expectations, agreements, and processes.
Jan. 27, 2026 7-8pm ET	Notice	Identify your own motivations, biases and limitations, as well as your personal connections to the topic.
Feb. 3, 2026 7-8pm ET	Empathize I	Begin to understand the topic, mapping key dynamics and interest holders. Initiate interviews with key personnel to better understand the challenge.
Feb. 10, 2026 7-8pm ET	Empathize II	Continue to deepen your understanding of the topic through desktop research and interviews.
Feb. 17, 2026 7-8pm ET	Define	Clarify the key needs and systems dynamics that connect to the challenge statement.
Feb. 24, 2026 7-8pm ET	Ideate	Brainstorm possible solutions that address the identified needs and systems dynamics identified from prior steps.
Mar. 3, 2026 7-8pm ET	Prototype	Identify what data is needed and build a low-fidelity prototype to test your assumptions and collect additional data from key personal related to the challenge.
Mar. 17, 2026 No Formal Session	Team Worktime	Work with your team to build, test, iterate, and (re) test using prototype(s). Collate data and summarize learnings and next steps.
Mar. 19, 2026 7-8pm ET	Reflect & Review	Reflect individually and as a team regarding the process to date. Identify any challenges and align on any needed changes to your work.
Mar. 24, 2026 7-8pm ET	Prototype & Test	Reflect on both the data collected and the process used to prototype and test. Revise the prototype and testing approach(es).
Mar. 31, 2026 7-8pm ET	Presentation Prep & Reflection	Practice summarizing and presenting your process and recommendations. Give and receive feedback to/from your peers.
April 14, 2026 7-8pm ET	Presentation to Brenda Strafford Foundation	Present your approach and final solutions to the Brenda Strafford Foundation via Zoom.
May 6-8, 2026	Presentation at National Exposition	Present your approach and final solutions to the entire network at the 2026 Enactus Canada National Exposition.



Why Apply

Selected students will:

- Receive up to \$1,000 in travel funding to attend the Enactus Canada National Exposition.
- Gain hands-on experience applying design thinking in a trauma-informed, social innovation setting.
- Access insight and mentorship from experts in domestic violence recovery and community impact.
- Build leadership, research, and collaboration skills through guided teamwork.
- Present their work to the Brenda Strafford Foundation and a national audience.

This is more than a learning experience. It's an opportunity to lead meaningful change, and help build safer, more inclusive communities across Canada.