



Followings Foundation

2024 Annual Review

Growing Stronger, Building for the Future

Leap now, your wings will follow.

"Followings Foundation acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work, live, and gather, and pays respect to Elders past, present, and emerging. We extend that respect to the communities of Busubi and Kyetume, whose land, leadership, and resilience make the work of the Busubi Education Centre possible."

Busubi Empowered Communities, Uganda · followingsfoundation.org



Welcome

Founder message

Lauren Exton

Director, Followings Foundation

Welcome to the 2024 edition of the Followings Foundation Annual Review.

2024 was a year of growth — in trainees, in sewing machines, in programs — but also in the deeper sense of building systems that will sustain and expand BEC's impact for years to come.

The opening of the Busubi Communities Convenience Store in December was a proud moment. A small shop, yes — but what it represents is enormous: a community-run, income-generating enterprise, entirely community-led. This is exactly the model we have been working towards since 2017.

Thank you, as always, for being part of this journey. Webale nnyo.

Key partner message

John Ssentamu

Director, Busubi Empowered Communities

What a year of growth and new beginnings. We welcomed a new tailoring trainer, Hanifah, and our tailoring room has never been busier. By the end of the year, we had 12 full-time and 30 part-time trainees — a number we are immensely proud of.

The opening of our convenience store in December was a very special day for BEC. It is not just a shop. It is proof that our community can build and operate something entirely on our own. Young Aisha is doing a wonderful job managing it.

I am also very happy to report the establishment of our local Rotary Club here in Kinoni — an exciting new chapter in community leadership.

"On behalf of BEC we thank SMEC Foundation and all the partners for the generous contribution and the faith they have shown in us to empower ourselves."

— John Ssentamu, Director, Busubi Empowered Communities

Foundation Objectives

"We are so proud of our commitment to grassroots change. Both partners understand that the goal is neither to give nor receive endlessly, but to grow together. Side-by-side, BEC and Followings Foundation are committed to becoming beacons of change in both Australia and Uganda."

— Lauren Exton, Founder & Director

Objectives

To continue to support and fiscally sponsor the staffing, resourcing and maintenance of BEC Learning Centre as they move towards becoming financially independent.

To build a social licence and meaningful connection to communities in which Followings Foundation operates.

To increase the breadth of Followings Foundation's traditional corporate social responsibilities, ensuring the best possible social and developmental impact.

To create partnerships with non-government organisations and community groups addressing poverty, social disadvantage and environmental protection.

2024 at a Glance

A\$73k Raised (FY 2023–24) <i>largest income year to date</i>	85% Spent on BEC programs <i>of all expenditure to the Centre</i>	42 Tailoring trainees <i>12 full-time + 30 part-time</i>	Dec '24 Convenience store opened <i>BEC's first enterprise</i>
--	---	---	--

2024 Highlights

Q1

Tailoring under Hanifah

Tailoring training resumed in January with new trainer Hanifah. Trainees were immediately excited about the upgraded machines from the SMEC grant. Numbers grew from the very first session.

Hairdressing resumes

Hairdressing classes resumed with trainer Daphne and three trainees — providing practical, employment-ready vocational skills to the community.

Community visit: March 2024

Long time ambassador and advisor Ross Hitt & his son Joel, Joel's friend Fletcher and our beautiful Director Rebecca Boon visited Busubi — touring the BEC Primary School and laying groundwork for the future school infrastructure project.

Q2

Five new electric machines

Five additional electric sewing machines were purchased, dedicated to income-generation projects. Combined with the training machines, BEC now has one of the best-equipped tailoring facilities in the district.

Tailoring grows to 12 + 30

Enrolment reaches 12 full-time and 30 part-time trainees — a record for the program. Negotiations with local schools on a uniform supply contract continued.

Q3

Cultural Troupe invited to perform

The BEC Cultural Performance Troupe continues to receive invitations to perform at large cultural events of significance.

Kinoni Rotary Club established

BEC Director John Ssentamu founded the Kinoni Rotary Club — a major new chapter in local community leadership, with plans to co-support the future BEC Primary School Project.

Computer lab challenges

A lightning strike destroyed one of the new computers, and a second was damaged. Highlighted the need for surge protection and careful equipment training.

Q4

Convenience store launched

Total project cost AUD \$4,540, co-funded with SMEC Alumni Sam Busbridge and Steph Xavier. A former garage next to the BEC Centre was renovated — new floor, walls, shelving and electrical wiring.

Aisha appointed store manager

BEC trainee Aisha was trained to manage the store full-time, creating a new employment opportunity within the community. BEC Founder John Ssentamu briefly stepped in to keep the store running during the recruitment period.

Store opens December 2024

The Busubi Communities Convenience Store opened its doors serving the Kyetume community. All profits are immediately reinvested into restocking — self-sustaining from day one.

Programs in 2024

Tailoring: New Trainer, New Momentum

Under the guidance of new trainer Hanifah, the tailoring program flourished in 2024. The installation of machines funded through the 2023 SMEC grant transformed the room, and enrolment grew steadily to reach 12 full-time and 30 part-time trainees by year's end.

Five further electric sewing machines were acquired for income-generation purposes, positioning BEC to deliver on the school uniform supply contract under negotiation with local primary schools. The program now has the capacity and the equipment to become a genuine, sustainable business.

Hairdressing

Hairdressing classes resumed with trainer Daphine and three trainees. The program offers immediately applicable vocational skills and is growing steadily in enrolment.

Computer Lab

The computer lab, expanded in 2023, continued serving trainees and community members throughout 2024. Online learning programs ran consistently during school holiday periods when youth attendance surged.

The year presented some challenges: a lightning strike destroyed one of the new computers, and a second was damaged through rough handling. These incidents highlighted the importance of ongoing equipment care training and surge protection investment.

Cultural Performance Troupe

Equipped with instruments, costumes and equipment from the 2023 SMEC grant, the BEC Cultural Performance Troupe performed regularly at community events and social gatherings throughout 2024. Income earned from performances covered meals, costume maintenance, and drum repairs.

Convenience Store

The Busubi Communities Convenience Store, co-funded with SMEC Alumni Sam Busbridge and Steph Xavier (total cost AUD \$4,540), was the most significant new initiative of the year. A former garage beside the Centre was transformed over several months through community effort and skilled tradespeople, with new flooring, plastering, painting, wiring, and custom shelving.

BEC trainee Aisha was identified and trained as the store manager — a genuine employment outcome for a BEC graduate. Since opening in December 2024, the store has stocked everyday household essentials serving the Kyetume community, including bulk cooking supplies purchased by the local primary school.

All profits are immediately reinvested into restocking. The store is self-sustaining from its first day of operation.

Kinoni Rotary Club

BEC Director John Ssentamu founded the Kinoni Rotary Club in 2024 — a remarkable act of community leadership. The club has already signalled interest in co-supporting the planned BEC Primary School Project, further deepening the network of local partnerships supporting BEC's growth.

Our Partners

Followings Foundation is deeply grateful to all who made 2024 possible:

- John Ssentamu — Director, BEC; founder, Kinoni Rotary Club
- Shallon Nakimwero — Manager, Busubi Empowered Communities
- Aisha — convenience store manager, BEC trainee
- Daphine — hairdressing trainer
- Hanifah — tailoring trainer
- SMEC Foundation — continued grant support and institutional partnership
- Sam Busbridge and Steph Xavier — SMEC Alumni, co-funders of the convenience store
- Ross Hitt — advisor, supporter, and in-person community connector
- Joel Hitt, Fletcher Pearson, and Rebecca Boon — 2024 community visit participants
- All individual donors and community fundraisers across Australia and beyond

Financial Transparency

The figures below are from our audited Profit & Loss for the financial year 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024. This was a landmark year for Followings Foundation — our largest income year to date, driven by the SMEC Foundation grant and record individual donations via Chuffed and direct channels.

Income · FY 2023–24	
Donations — Chuffed (via Stripe)	A\$35,086.08
Donations — Direct	A\$35,477.00
Donations — Good to Give	A\$788.50
Advance reimbursed	A\$1,900.00
Total Income	A\$73,251.58
Expenditure	
BEC Learning Centre	A\$40,254.12
BEC Sporting Equipment	A\$1,968.18
Travel expenses (flights)	A\$2,992.81
Office expenses	A\$1,410.77
Stipends and advances	A\$1,000.00
Expenses reimbursed	A\$1,500.00

Subscriptions (accounting software)	A\$438.00
Advertising and marketing	A\$57.86
Bank charges and fees	A\$60.79
Total Expenditure	A\$49,682.53
Result	
Net Surplus (held in reserves)	A\$23,569.05

85% of all expenditure went directly to BEC Learning Centre programs and sporting equipment. The \$23,569 net surplus was retained in reserves to fund ongoing BEC programs in 2024–25.

Full financial records available at followingsfoundation.org/aboutus.

Looking Ahead to 2025

With the convenience store running and enrolment growing, Followings Foundation and BEC look ahead with confidence:

- Grow the convenience store into a consistently profitable enterprise
- Commence the BEC Primary School Project (SMEC Foundation grant)
- Establish tailoring uniform supply contract with local schools
- Explore book making and new skills programs through Inner Wheel partnerships
- Support the Cultural Troupe's preparation for further events
- Welcome a Japanese volunteer embedded in the community for two years

Thank you for being part of Followings Foundation. Step by step, village by village. Webale nyo.

