



GROWTH AGAINST THE ODDS: HOW SMALL BUSINESSES, BIG DREAMS, AND BOLD PARTNERSHIPS ARE REBUILDING ECONOMIES

A LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Bpeace Community,

2024 marked a turning point. In a world where rising costs, talent shortages, and shifting global dynamics could have stalled small businesses, the 224 small businesses in Bpeace's portfolio doubled down. They not only survived—they expanded, hired, diversified, and injected over \$640 million into their communities.

From small food processors adding dozens of jobs despite thin margins, to women-led companies breaking the \$1M barrier, and manufacturing businesses powering regional employment—we saw proof that with the right support, small businesses can be engines of both economic and social stability.

Bpeace's distinctive model—fueled by our network of 700+ Skillanthropists—delivers personalized, high-impact advisory that helps SMEs overcome the most urgent challenges of today while preparing for what's next.

In 2024, we didn't just advise.

We **adapted**.

We **listened**.

We **segmented**.

And we **invested smarter**.



Alexandra Salas

Alexandra Salas
CEO | Bpeace



760
new jobs
created



13,200+
people
employed



53,700+
family
members
supported



**For every \$1 invested
by Bpeace, small
businesses
generated
\$24 in
new
revenue**



**224 small
businesses
63% family
owned in
Bpeace portfolio**



**74%
women-led
businesses**



**\$640M total revenue
injected in local communities**

Operating in: El Salvador, Guatemala and the U.S.



**\$1.43M of in
kind value
invested by
Skillanthropists**

representing 3,800+ hours of support



**\$84M
in new
revenue**



**\$22M
financing
raised**





NEW HEADWINDS DEMAND NEW SOLUTIONS

Context matters. In 2024, small businesses in our portfolio contended with rising costs, economic uncertainty, and shifting market conditions. These pressures are reshaping how—and how fast—they can grow.

Top external challenges



Rising input costs & inflation



Access to raw materials



Geopolitical & policy shifts



Slowing consumer demand in key sectors

Why it matters:

Growth strategies that ignore these headwinds won't hold. Entrepreneurs need tools to forecast risk, scenario-plan, adapt pricing, and pivot operations.

Bpeace's role:

We help businesses stay agile. By evolving our fee models, deepening sector expertise, and providing strategic foresight, we equip small businesses to build internal resilience—even when external conditions are volatile.





Who We Backed in 2024—and Why They Grow

224 Small Businesses

High-potential small businesses across Central America & the U.S.

63% Family-Owned

Rooted in community, legacy, and resilience.

3,850+ Hours from 209

Skillanthropists

Strategic expertise delivered at scale.

Advisory translates directly into execution

89% achieved strategic goals

14% fully implemented their Bpeace action plans and 75% are actively progressing.

INVESTING WHERE GROWTH MULTIPLIES

STRATEGIC TARGETING WORKS

- Our portfolio isn’t random—it’s designed. By focusing on women-led and family-owned businesses, Bpeace supports entrepreneurs who reinvest in jobs and community.
- It’s our core commitment: backing inclusive, rooted businesses with long-term potential. Our approach resonates with entrepreneurs who see business as a force for both economic and community resilience.

GROWTH BEYOND THE NUMBERS

- Revenue and jobs grew—but so did client bases, operational maturity, and funding readiness. This is the kind of layered, sustainable growth that sticks.
- Over one-third of small businesses credit Bpeace directly for these outcomes → this reinforces our catalytic role.
- Impact is not a point-in-time event; it’s a process. These metrics help us set realistic expectations around when growth—and job creation—will materialize.

THE BPEACE EDGE

- Hands-on advisory is our differentiator. The time and guidance of 209 Skillanthropists helped businesses make sharper decisions—and take smarter risks.
- Our key lever of growth → Enabling access to tailored expertise that would otherwise be unaffordable for most small businesses.
- Repeat participation (25%) reflects sustained trust in our value. For Bpeace, this confirms that deep relationships, not just one-time interventions, drive momentum.



STRATEGIC GROWTH = RESILIENCE

GROWTH IS NO ACCIDENT—IT’S A SIGNAL OF STRATEGIC CONFIDENCE

- **69%** of businesses expanded in 2024: launching new products, entering new markets, or targeting new customers.
- **27%** venturing into new geographic regions.
- **83%** plan to expand further in 2025.
- **68%** gained new clients since Bpeace | **21%** say Bpeace directly made that possible.

Bpeace support fuels more than growth—it builds the mindset and market access that turn local businesses into regional players.

OPERATIONAL UPGRADES POWER GROWTH

- **86%** improved operations in 2024
 - Most-cited drivers: digital management systems, updated production processes, smarter inventory management, better margin tracking, and stronger HR practices.
- **31.5%** outsource part of their operations year-round | 10% during peak season
 - Most outsourced functions: Accounting/HR (50%), Logistics (48%).

SCALING SMARTER, NOT JUST BIGGER

Growth without structure is chaos. Our entrepreneurs are scaling with clarity.

- Small businesses are investing in systems and structures that reduce waste and boost performance.
- Many of these shifts are driven by Skillanthropist-guided changes in staffing models and tech adoption.

Bpeace impact isn’t just top-line growth—it’s lasting transformation through smarter strategy, staffing, and systems.

What this means for Bpeace

As small businesses grow externally, they also need to evolve internally. Our role is to support market expansion and operational design—two sides of the same coin.

Growth without efficiency creates strain; efficiency without growth stalls progress. Bpeace helps balance both.

Together, they form a dual engine of resilience: one drives growth, the other sustains it.



POWERING WOMEN’S PROGRESS

Bpeace’s gender-intentional strategy is working: **women-led businesses now make up 74% of our portfolio**, exceeding our 60% target and sustaining gains from the past two years. But there are warning signs. The drop in jobs held by women—from 52% to 44%—may reflect declining employment opportunities or

underreporting, especially in Central America. It’s a signal to watch closely.

Women-led businesses also raised just 62% of total capital, despite making up 74% of the portfolio—highlighting a **persistent gender gap in access to financing**, even in supportive ecosystems.

74% Women-led businesses

44% of jobs held by women

62% of total funding was raised by women

BPEACE’S ROLE

- Maintain momentum by expanding **gender-intentional programming** and reinforcing our 60%+ women-led target.
- Investigate the job data drop to determine if support is needed to **protect women’s employment**.
- **Close the funding gap** by connecting women entrepreneurs to aligned capital partners and strengthening their readiness to raise.





ONE WOMAN EMPOWERED, MANY LIVES CHANGED

Marisol Monge, founder of Mayan Gifts, built her business around empowering rural women artisans by offering stable sales channels and even small personal loans repaid through their craft.

One artisan, Doris, whom Marisol met at a fair while she was selling bracelets to fund medical travel, saw her life transformed. With Marisol’s support and access to international buyers, Doris shifted from making sporadic sales to fulfilling large wholesale orders —providing her family with stable

income for over a decade. After Doris’s passing, her daughter Jennifer continued the business.

Since joining the Bpeace community, **Marisol’s own business has flourished—revenue has quadrupled and she’s hired 29 Salvadorans.** With two new stores planned for 2025, Marisol is scaling her impact, proving how the right-sized support can unlock generational opportunity for women-led enterprises.

"I believe in leading by example and plan to leave a positive impact on everything I do. Sharing my journey and experiences can help others in my community understand the importance of support and mentorship."

Marisol Monge, Mayan Gifts Artesanías



FINANCING: CONNECTING CAPITAL TO PURPOSE

Bpeace is not just helping businesses become investment-ready—we’re building the relationships that unlock growth. In 2024, we deepened partnerships with innovative, mission-aligned capital providers who share our belief in the transformative power of small businesses—especially those led by women.

Through curated learning opportunities and direct introductions, we’re convening funders and entrepreneurs to demystify financing, build trust, and fuel sustainable growth. The result: more businesses are raising capital—and more funders are aligning with impact.

- **\$22M funding raised.**
- **Median amount: \$136K.**
- **33% of small businesses credit Bpeace as the catalyst that made it possible** — equipping them with strong plans, confidence, and access to a growing network of capital partners interested in their growth.
- **Ongoing barriers:** interest rates, guarantees, financial documentation
- **45% are seeking funding in 2025**—mostly to expand their business, improve their infrastructure, and for working capital.





SEWING SUCCESS WITH THE RIGHT SUPPORT

When Ena De Rivera founded Mosst, a custom garment business in El Salvador, she poured her heart into every stitch—balancing motherhood, leadership, and the daily realities of running a small enterprise.

As **one of the smallest businesses** in the Bpeace portfolio, Ena joined the Women Forward program in 2023 seeking more than growth—she wanted to lead with purpose. Through mentorship, she strengthened her delegation skills and prioritized **workplace wellbeing, creating a healthier environment for her team and herself.**

"Thanks to institutions like Bpeace and Devela, we can keep advancing as a small business."

Her next challenge was financing. In early 2025, Bpeace hosted a webinar with Devela Capital.

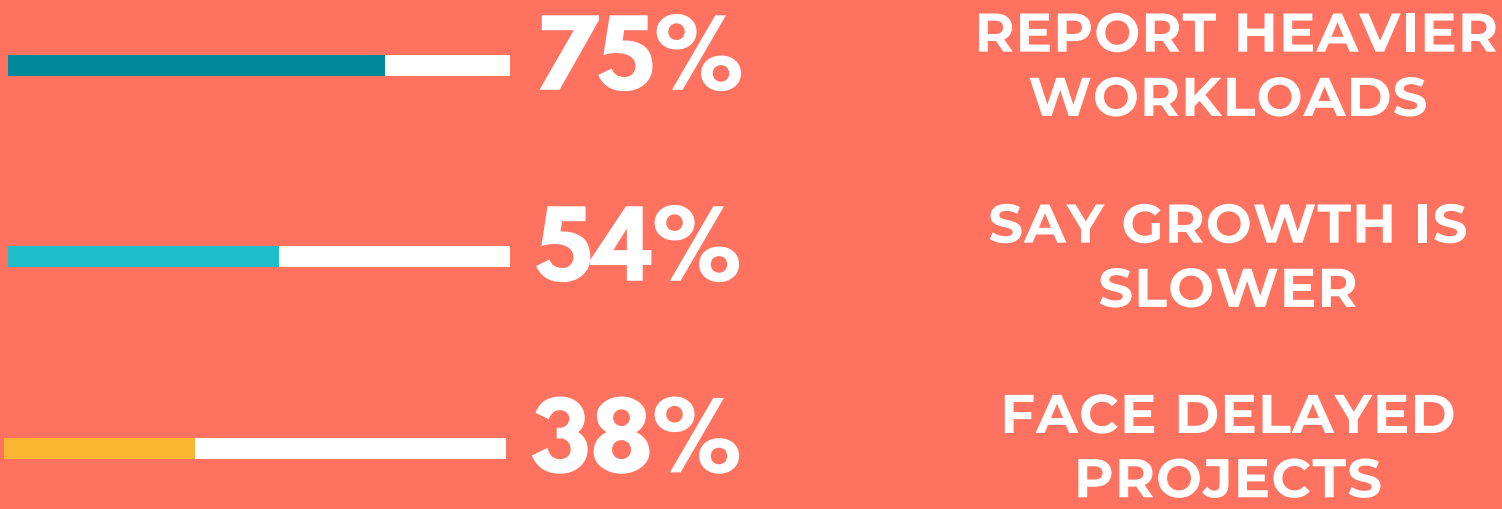
Ena saw an opportunity, **requested an introduction, and secured funding within two months**, unlocking a \$114,000 contract with a public institution that would have otherwise been out of reach.

Today, Devela is considering a follow-on investment. For Ena, the right connection at the right time transformed potential into progress.

Ena de Rivera, Mosst

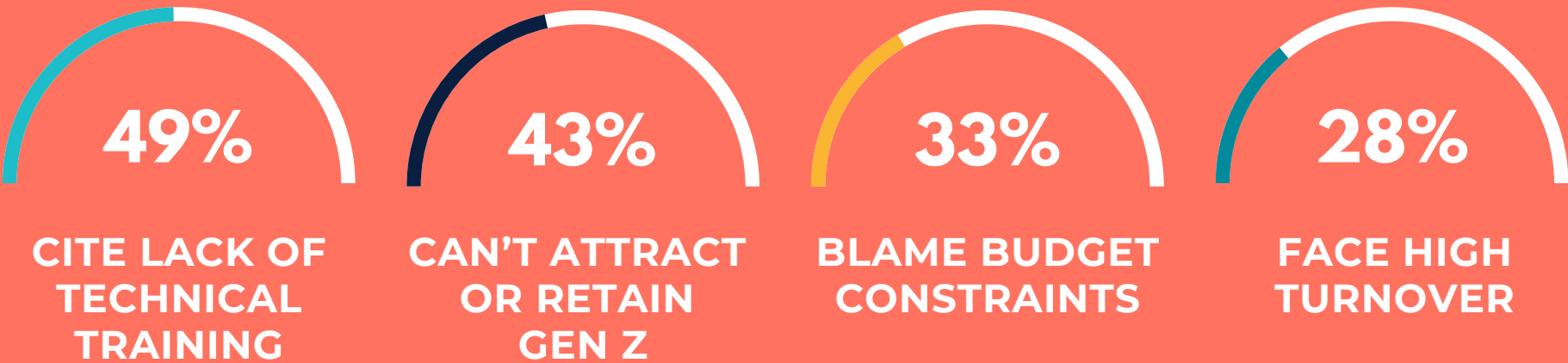
GROWTH NEEDS PEOPLE—AND PEOPLE NEED OPPORTUNITIES

In Central America, 56% of businesses can’t fill key roles, compared to just 18% in the U.S. The result:



Why it matters:
Businesses are ready to scale, but weak talent pipelines are a brake on momentum.

What’s behind the hiring crunch?
Systemic gaps and a regional bottleneck.



Bpeace’s role:
We bridge this gap. Through training, advisory, and partnerships, we help small businesses design smarter hiring strategies and push for long-term system change in workforce development.

A portrait of Melinda Miller, a woman with short brown hair and black-rimmed glasses, smiling. She is wearing a dark blue patterned shirt. The background is a warm, out-of-focus outdoor scene with sunlight filtering through trees.

OWNING THE ROLE, STEERING THE SHIP

When Melinda Miller acquired PIXO, a software consultancy, during the pandemic, her instinct was to protect what was already built. But stabilizing wasn't enough—she needed to lead with purpose. Through the Bpeace program and her mentor Yvette, Melinda began to define leadership on her own terms: not by doing everything herself, but by focusing on where she adds the most value. With renewed clarity, she **hired a full-time project manager**, began

involving her team in strategic learning opportunities, and crafted a clear, values-driven pitch to strengthen PIXO's identity. She shifted from fear-based decision-making to leading with intention.

Today, Melinda is **preparing to grow her team by five new roles**, especially in client-facing areas. Her time in the Bpeace program laid the groundwork for sustainable growth—by anchoring the business in strong values, clear communication, and authentic leadership.

"If you had asked me at the start of the program, I would have said, "I need help with sales. That's all I need help with. We need more revenue." And while that's true, I don't think it was the most important thing for me to focus on. What we did was more foundational."

Melinda Miller, PIXO

DIGITAL IS HAPPENING—BUT NOT FOR EVERYONE

TECH TRANSFORMATION IS NO LONGER OPTIONAL—IT'S UNDERWAY

- 55% of small businesses are actively modernizing operations
- 32% are exploring
- 11% are not prioritizing (yet)

Top goals: Customer experience, automation, efficiency, data-driven decision-making. Bpeace businesses are aligning with global best practices—but nearly half still face barriers that risk stalling progress before impact is realized.

AI: INTEREST IS HIGH, BUT GAPS PERSIST

Where businesses stand today with AI:

- U.S.: 64% already using AI
- Central America: 33% using AI | 46% exploring

Top use cases: Reporting, marketing, customer service, and analytics
But 21% of businesses not prioritizing AI say it's due to a lack of understanding—not lack of interest.

BARRIERS TO GOING DIGITAL

- High tech costs
- Limited digital skills
- Low internal readiness

Where Bpeace fits in: We don't just teach tools—we show entrepreneurs how to use them strategically. Bpeace demystifies digital, turning uncertainty into clarity, and helping small businesses transform tech from a cost into a competitive edge.



FASHIONING THE FUTURE WITH SMARTER SYSTEMS

What began as a response to a job loss became one of Guatemala’s rising urban and sports fashion brands. Carlos co-founded The Box franchise, channeling his retail experience into building a bold urban clothing line.

By the end of 2024, The Box had grown to nine stores and a 56-person team—including four new full-time jobs created that year alone.

With support from Bpeace, Carlos embraced data-driven decision-making—refining inventory systems,

strengthening financial controls, and realigning his team for growth. These changes unlocked a 44% increase in sales and a 49% jump in profits across all locations.

Carlos also earned national recognition from Nike for in-store performance and digital growth.

Now, with expansion plans on the horizon, he’s focused on maintaining momentum in a competitive market. His journey shows how strategy and resilience can turn a tough start into a standout brand.

“With Bpeace’s guidance, we’re not just growing—we’re growing smarter.”

Carlos Lemus, The Box



SECTOR SNAPSHOT: RESILIENCE ACROSS INDUSTRIES

**+10% revenue,
100% job retention,
\$81M injected locally**

**Hospitality &
Food Service**

**+16% revenue,
+13% jobs,
\$103M**

Manufacturing

**+2% revenue,
+9% jobs,
\$84M**

Food Processing

**+13% revenue,
+3% jobs,
\$152M**

Services

Sector-level data shows how Bpeace’s support contributes to resilient, job-generating growth across industries. Manufacturing and hospitality businesses led revenue gains, while food processors quietly added jobs even with slower sales. Our service sector businesses delivered the highest total revenue, showing that impact is not tied to a single industry—but to the entrepreneurs within them.

NOT ONE SIZE: GROWTH DEMANDS THE RIGHT FIT

Top Performers Prove It:

The top 16% of businesses—those we matched with our most intensive support—outperformed across every metric.

- Joined at: \$2.5M revenue | 56 employees
- Median ROI: \$115
- Cost per job: \$2,883 (vs. \$6,500 industry benchmark)

Strategic support at the right moment unlocks scalable job creation and accelerates returns.

But Growth Also Starts Small:

52% of Bpeace businesses joined earning under \$1M—and they’re proving readiness matters more than size.

- Smallest starter: \$166K revenue | 14 employees
- 2024 growth: 80% revenue | 10% headcount
- Total jump: \$4.2M → \$13.3M revenue | 386 → 415 employees



Smart Support, Streamlined

In 2024, Bpeace doubled down on flexibility. With programs designed for growth-stage entrepreneurs, we introduced shorter formats combining peer pods, on-demand content, and targeted Skillanthropist sessions. The result? High growth with lower lift.

- 50% of our smallest participants jointed a guided group learning model (vs. our typical Maximizer model)

It’s proof that customized, right-sized support drives meaningful outcomes even for small businesses

We’ll launch AvanzaPro in July 2025, a new program model tailored to meet these earlier-stage businesses where they are and provide a tailored, resource-smart pathway for businesses still laying their foundation.

LOOKING AHEAD: BUILDING THE NEXT CHAPTER

- Expanding local and Spanish-speaking Skillanthropist pool.
- Piloting new data and job tracking tools.
- Reimagining our engagement models to serve more growth-stage firms.
- Access to markets/Pan Latam approach.

We're beginning again—not from scratch, but from strength. As we transition to serve smaller and growth-stage businesses, we bring with us a proven model, an agile mindset, and an unwavering belief in the entrepreneurs we support.





REPORTING METHODOLOGY

- **Who is reporting?** Bpeace businesses self-report their progress annually for three years after joining our programs. They complete an online survey each year in February-April. Baseline data is collected during recruitment via application forms and validated during interviews.
- **Response rate:** Projections were calculated for businesses who did not report, based on their previous trajectory.
- **Time frame:** All data is reported as of December 2024, unless otherwise stated.
- **Job creation:** Total jobs = full-time jobs + (part-time jobs + temporary jobs) x 0.25.
- **Family members supported:** For each full-time-equivalent job, we estimate the number of family members supported using data from the World Bank and Census Bureau.
- **Women-owned and women-led businesses:** During application, candidates self-identify if their business is fully, partially or not at all owned/led by women. A business with at least one woman as an owner or leader is considered “women-owned or led.”
- **Cost per job:** This metric applies to cohorts with at least two years of impact data. We are counting cash investment only. Cost per job = new jobs / (number of businesses / cohort budget).

Country	Average size of families
El Salvador	4
Guatemala	4.5
United States	2.5