

ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023

Chairperson's Report



As the President of the Working Skills Centre Board, I am honored to present this year's report. It is with mixed emotions that I share my decision to transition from my current role. Effective January 31, 2024, I will be

stepping down as President/Chairperson and transitioning to the role of Past President to continue supporting our organization during this pivotal time. This transition will enable me to work closely with the Board and the executive team to select and onboard my successor, offering guidance, sharing institutional knowledge, and ensuring a smooth transfer of responsibilities.

This year, we welcomed a new accounting firm specializing in non-profit clients. Notably, our new lead auditor had a prior relationship with our organization, having served as a past auditor with a previous accounting firm we had engaged with. This familiarity and expertise have greatly benefited us in financial matters. Additionally, in accordance with the Ontario Not-for-profit Corporations Act, 2010, we are changing the title of President to Chairperson, to reflect our compliance.

In December 2022, our previous Past President concluded their term on the board. As well, on January 24, 2023, we bid farewell to our Vice-President of the Board, whose contributions have been invaluable. We extend our gratitude and best wishes for their future endeavors.

Our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives continues to be a priority, fostering an inclusive and welcoming work environment, ultimately better serving our clients and communities. One such endeavour has been in alignment with the Employment Standards Act, of 2000, where we are introducing a new vacation policy to enhance control and oversight of vacation expenses while promoting employee well-being, compliance and efficiency.

As we look to the future, the Working Skills Centre Board remains optimistic about our organization's direction. We are committed to providing guidance and support to strengthen relationships, engage with our community, and deliver resilient services. We express our deep appreciation to all members, agencies, students, volunteers, sponsors, and staff. Your collective efforts make a significant difference in the lives of those we serve.

I would like to thank you all for your unwavering support and dedication. I believe that, with your continued commitment, we can navigate the challenges ahead with resilience and innovation, ensuring our mission to empower individuals to overcome employment barriers continues to thrive.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Denise Hinds'.

Denise Hinds, MBA
Chairperson,
Working Skills Centre Board of Directors
(Effective until January 31, 2024, after which I will transition to the role of Past President)

Management Report

Highlights for 2022-2023



The entire WSC Team continues to be attentive and responsive to the needs of our clients, partners, and employers. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations faced challenges with finding adequately trained staff and volunteers to support

their operations. In parallel, feedback from many individuals was that they found it rewarding to serve the community and have transferable skills relevant to the sector. This aspiration was hampered by a lack of confidence to apply for jobs or volunteer positions, because many feel that they lack the necessary skills and knowledge to make a meaningful contribution in the sector.

In response to this need, WSC piloted a Community Worker career development program for individuals interested in working in entry-level positions in the not-for-profit sector. This unique program included a practical experiential learning component where participants liaised with local community groups in the execution of a project. We ran the pilot twice and participants completed three successful projects that surpassed expectations. There was very positive feedback from community members who benefited from the projects.

Several of the individuals who participated went on to find employment and /or volunteer work in the non-profit sector. This initiative would not have been possible without funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

WSC's "Wise Woman's Group" seniors program continues to be an immensely successful program at WSC. The goals of the program are to promote volunteerism among seniors and support the social participation inclusion of seniors. The program, funded by the federal New Horizons for Seniors Program, has made it possible for WSC to work with an amazing team of senior volunteers who organize a rich and varied schedule of activities as well as contribute their knowledge and expertise in program planning and evaluation.

2022-2023 was the final year of our funding for a four-year capacity-building project in which WSC made significant advances in our ability to plan strategically for the future, build a secure financial foundation with longer-term prospects, improve our marketing and branding strategy, enhance our IT infrastructure and incorporate gender-based analysis in our program planning processes. This work would not have been possible without the support of Women and Gender Equality Canada.

Our provincially funded newcomer settlement program saw an increase in intake compared with the two preceding years, no doubt partly due to the higher number of immigrants and resettled refugees arriving in Ontario. There has also been a notable increase in refugees seeking our settlement services. WSC keeps exploring opportunities for funding to address the ever-changing needs of our communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marina Nikova'.

Marina Nikova
Executive Director
2022-2023

Treasurer's Report

Financial information has been extracted from the Audited Financial Statement as of March 31, 2023
(Rashidi LLP | Chartered Professional Accountants)

ASSETS & LIABILITIES

CURRENT ASSET

	2023	2022
Cash	\$ 146,057	\$ 252,117
Accounts Receivable	-	-
Grant Contributions Receivable	156,364	98,960
HST Recoverable	15,166	14,462
Prepaid Expenses and Deposits	10,704	10,629
	<u>328,291</u>	<u>376,168</u>
Capital Assets	90,333	96,076
	<u>\$ 418,624</u>	<u>\$ 472,244</u>

LIABILITIES & Net ASSETS

A/P & Accrued Liabilities	\$ 12,440	\$ 8,492
Deferred Revenue	400	1,401
Deferred Grant Contributions	21,479	76,202
	<u>34,319</u>	<u>86,095</u>
Deferred Capital Contributions	38,857	31,731
Net Assets	345,448	354,418
	<u>\$ 418,624</u>	<u>\$ 472,244</u>

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

REVENUE

Governments Grants	\$ 480,706	\$ 407,867
TESS Skills Training & Employment Incentive -non-vocational	287,243	267,356
TESS Skills Training & Employment Incentive - vocational	130,903	167,869
Certificate (Part-Time) Programs	20,055	10,836
Fundraising, Donations and other Income	13,578	24,246
	<u>932,485</u>	<u>878,174</u>

EXPENSES

Bank Charges & Interest	3,928	3,566
Computer Software, Supplies & Technical Services	42,758	27,225
Employee and Trainee Benefits	21,420	11,182
Equipment Leasing & Maintenance	21,420	11,182
Insurance	15,540	14,052
Occupancy Costs	124,682	120,218
Office Supplies	17,489	8,276
Outreach/Marketing	3,443	2,599
Professional Fees	7,094	6,678
Program Resource Materials	11,026	6,400
Repayment of Covid-19 benefits	20,021	-
Telephone	8,694	8,538
Travel & Participant Expenses	5,852	4,018
Salaries	602,799	488,896
	<u>928,586</u>	<u>735,234</u>

Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses before amortization

Net Amortization

Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses

3,899	142,940
(12,869)	(10,945)
<u>\$ (8,970)</u>	<u>\$ 131,995</u>

Skills Training and Employment Services

Skills training continues to be the central component of WSC's work. At the start of the year in March 2022, WSC made sure to continue to protect both clients and staff members while recovering from the disruption caused by COVID-19, however, halfway through the year, our September Administrative Assistant and MOS cohorts transitioned back to in-person instruction. It was nice to see students in the computer labs again, and we saw an improvement in staff and client morale.

Certificate Programs

WSC delivered 3 cohorts of **Essential Skills for Office Professionals** online, where participants gain fundamental practical skills needed to fulfill the multiple duties expected of the administrative clerk. Participants train for 12 weeks, gaining experience in the use of office equipment and computer applications as well as completing a community project to enhance their portfolio of experience.

The **Career Development in the Financial Services Sector using the SAP** program was delivered to 5 cohorts this year. The program consists of 16 weeks designed to prepare participants for employment or more advanced training in the accounting field, using SAP-FI as End Users, Super Users or Consultants

WSC was able to successfully deliver 2 cohorts of the **Microsoft Office Specialist** program. The program

is 16 weeks, participants train in advanced MS Office applications with the option to get Microsoft Office Certifications and choose additional sector-specific training in Medical Administration or Bookkeeping.

Diploma Program

WSC and the Academy of Computer & Employment Skills (registered since 2008 as a career college) were able to effectively deliver 2 cohorts in the **Administrative Assistant with Desktop Publishing Diploma** program. Graduates train for 20 weeks and gain professional technical and soft skills required in administrative, secretarial and executive assistant positions.

Overview

2022, although a challenging year in many aspects also brought incredible opportunities. Our graduates and students continue to face challenges when entering the labour market, due to the long-lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and increased cost of living.

While, in general, the graduates of all our programs have done extremely well, some graduates faced the challenge of having to stay at home due to a lack of daycare or existing health conditions. Several of those graduates were not able to search for employment because of limited schedule availability.

2022-23 Program Summary

2022	ES1	ES2	ES 3	OA1	OA2	MOS1	MOS 2	SAP	2023	ES 1&2	OA1	MOS1	SAP
Intake	19	19	15	14	14	13	11	39	Intake	33	12	11	27
Completed	15	16	11	9	14	11	9	24	Completed	26	8	10	27
Employed	4	8	2	7	7	6	6	12	Employed	7	5	4	7
Training	9	6	8	1	4	2	3	7	Training	11	0	5	1
Volunteer Placement	2	0	1	0	1	2	0	2	Volunteer Placement	5	1	0	0
Incomplete	4	3	4	5	0	2	2	15	Incomplete	7	4	1	
Success %	100%	88%	100%	89%	86%	91%	100%	86%	Success In Progress%	88%	75%	90%	30%
Overall percentages of success (employment/training/volunteer placements) for graduates who completed their programs in 2022 stand at 88% for Administrative Assistant and at 96% for MOS graduates. In the Essential Skills for Office Professionals program, the success rate was 96% for all three cohorts.									Students who started before March 2023 are currently in development to achieve their success goals.				

Skills Training and Employment Services

Continued Opportunities

Due to the successful implementation of Wrap Around programs, WSC was able to deliver 3 cohorts of Managing the Present and Planning the Future (wrap-around support program).

This innovative program is supported by Toronto Employment and Social Services. Participants develop access to resources, skills, and strategies to cope with mental health challenges and become prepared to transition to other programs to reach their goals.

2022 Wrap Around - Managing the Present Planning the Future – Participant Summary			
2022	WA 1	WA 2	WA 3
Intake	15	11	17
Completed	15	11	16

- Increased partnership with YWCA to utilize paid placement opportunities to enhance self-confidence and experiential learning for graduates who are still experiencing challenges in returning to in-person work.

Successes

- 2022, although a challenging year in many aspects still, showed us areas of improvement for our in-person courses and continued to deliver success for our online cohorts.
- We were able to add a member to the team that proved over and over her commitment to improving employment outcomes for our graduates and we are in the process of solidifying our partnerships with employers for future opportunities.
- We continue to strive for service improvement through our partnership with TNLIP and we are involved in several workgroups that meet monthly for DEI and LMI. This partnership strengthens our presence in the not-for-profit sector, specifically when dealing with vulnerable newcomer clients.

Challenges

Lack of technical resources and access to supports (such as childcare) continue to impact both the employment rates and the intake process for new programs.

Lack of affordable housing and increased cost of living were also challenges that impacted our clients in 2022, as such we had to increase partnerships in the community to better refer clients to resources that could help them.

Overall, keeping participants motivated continues to be a challenge. Several of our clients have existing barriers to employment, such as mental health issues and emotional distress that were exacerbated by the social isolation and the increased cost of living in the GTA. Compounding barriers make the return to in-person training and employment a difficult transition to face without appropriate support and accommodations.

Settlement Services 2022- 2023

Newcomer Settlement Program

WSC's settlement services continue to be funded by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. This was the first year of a new contract for the five-year period 2022-2027.

Activities undertaken during the reporting period included:

1. One-on-one services. These were conducted over the telephone, via Zoom meetings and in person. One-on-one services include client needs assessment, settlement planning, information and referral, and follow-up.

2. Workshops and group sessions. These included our: workplace communication and business writing workshop series; civic engagement series; protecting our environmental heritage series; equity, diversity and inclusion series, and our digital literacy series. There were also ad-hoc workshops on financial literacy, the value of volunteer work for job search, continuous learning strategies, employee and tenants' rights, the importance of nutrition in disease prevention and stress management.

3. Service Coordination. WSC settlement staff attended meetings of the Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership regularly. As always the meetings have been a wonderful opportunity for networking and sharing information on settlement trends and resources.

Results for 2022-2023:

We achieved our performance targets:

- Provided settlement services to 456 unique clients.
- Conducted 1,109 one-on-one services to clients.
- Hosted 96 settlement workshops.

Challenges most frequently cited by clients included: finding employment; difficulty coping with health issues both physical and mental; lack of access to affordable childcare; and the high cost of rent.

The profile of NSP clients accessing settlement services is provided below. The profile is very similar to last year with one important difference: an increase in refugees from Afghanistan, East Africa, and Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) visa holders.

NSP Client Profile

Gender

Gender	% of Clients 2021-2022	% of Clients 2022-2023
Male	19%	22%
Female	80%	77%
Other	1%	1%

Top Ten Countries of Origin

Ranking	Country of Origin 2021-2022	Country of Origin 2022-2023
1	Nigeria	Nigeria
2	Pakistan	Pakistan
3	Iran	Afghanistan
4	Ethiopia	Jamaica
5	Jamaica	India
6	India	Philippines
7	Bangladesh	Ethiopia
8	St. Vincent	Uganda
9	Afghanistan	Ukraine
10	Guyana	Iran

Immigrant Status

Immigrant Status	% of Clients 2021 - 2022	% of Clients 2022 - 2023
Permanent Residents	28%	29%
Refugee Claimants	23%	21%
Canadian Citizens	48%	45%
Other	1%	5%

Length of time in Canada

Time Category	% of clients 2021-2022	% of clients 2022-2023
Less than 1 year	2%	10%
1 to 3 years	25%	21%
3 to 5 years	16%	13%
Over 5 years	57%	57%

WSC Seniors Program

The project, **Seniors Supporting Newcomers and Unemployed Adults Across Generations** was implemented with funding from Employment and Social Development Canada, New Horizons for Seniors Program. 2022-2023 was our fourth year of funding.

The goals of the project were:

- to promote volunteerism among seniors and other generations
- engage seniors in the community through the mentoring of newcomers and job seekers
- raise awareness of senior abuse
- promote the social participation of seniors

2022 -2023 Achievements and Highlights

a) We recruited 28 senior volunteers (target was 20) and 15 non-senior volunteers (target was 15).

b) Volunteers helped organize and present the weekly intergenerational social café series. We presented a total of 48 sessions (target was 36), including conversation circles, exercise sessions, field trips and special events. Topics covered included senior abuse and fraud awareness; diversity, equity and inclusion awareness and caring for the environment. We role-played an audio drama scripted by one of the volunteers on fraud awareness. There were also sessions commemorating Remembrance Day, National Indigenous People's Day, and International Women's Day. Other activities included cooking demonstrations, handicrafts, word puzzles and music appreciation. There were three field trips: a nature walk to Mount Pleasant Cemetery; trip to Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre (RIWC) for a cooking demonstration; and visit to a vegetable and pollinator garden created by a member of the volunteer team.

c) We hosted a series of 10 exercise and dance sessions for seniors. The classes for which we hired an exercise instructor.

d) We presented 24 digital literacy group training sessions for seniors as well as 46 individual coaching sessions. The individual coaching sessions were greatly appreciated by seniors, especially those looking for employment who said they gained confidence navigating applications.

e) Newcomers being mentored by seniors benefitted from 22 communication and presentation skills workshops (target was 18).

f) In total, excluding volunteers, 95 seniors (our target was 70) and 44 non-seniors (our target was 45) benefitted from the project.

g) Senior volunteers also provided mentoring to the non-senior volunteers. At the end of their volunteer placements the non-senior volunteers expressed through written reflections their appreciation for the volunteer experience and the guidance from senior volunteers which had helped them grow professionally.

Overall, this was a very productive year including well-attended events, successful collaborations with local organizations and overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants.



Seniors attending a stretch exercise class organized by Working Skills Centre in collaboration with Montgomery Place Social Club. This activity was sponsored by the New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHSP).



Field trip to Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre, February 2023 for a cooking demonstration, one of the activities in the intergenerational social café series, part of the WSC seniors program sponsored by the NHSP. Photo: Vida Arshad.

Capacity Building Project

2022-2023 was the fourth year of our four-year grant for capacity building from Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE). The grant made it possible for staff to devote time to strengthening capacity in eight areas: gender-based analysis; strategic planning; financial management; communications; networks and partnership development; program planning and implementation; operational planning; and human resources management.

In wrapping up the project it was exciting to reflect on our achievements over the past four years:

a) Within the agency there is now a much stronger awareness of gender-based analysis than existed in the past. We have seen accelerated development of leadership skills among a younger cohort of women staff due to greater spaces created for women to express themselves and shape the development of the organization.

b) We now have an increased capacity to recruit, develop and manage staff effectively.

c) We have greatly improved our marketing capacity. Important milestones were the creation of a new logo and brand colours; the design of new marketing materials and the recording of a promotional video. An important development was the completion of the design and mapping for a new website that will be mobile-friendly.

d) Our capacity to maintain partnerships has greatly improved with strategies for better exchanges, and collaboration as reflected in two successful community projects over the past year.

e) We completed the implementation of our fundraising and income-generation strategy including successfully increasing our revenue from grant applications, contracted services and fee-for-service activities.

f) Improvements in technical infrastructure and staff knowledge to manage the infrastructure have advanced far beyond what we were aiming for at the start of the project. We successfully completed all three phases in the transformation of our local area network to a cloud-based network and have already benefited from improved tools for hybrid work and collaboration.

g) Other areas in which we built capacity and saw substantial improvements included: writing more

effective funding proposals; improved succession planning and mentoring of staff; greater innovation in program delivery; and engagement of women from the client group in program design.

The above achievements and changes were the consequence of careful planning that would not have been possible without the funding provided by WAGE. It should also be noted that the strategic planning process that took place at the start of the project helped us ensure that our project activities and goals were in line with WSC's strategic goals.

In addition to the support provided by WAGE we would like to acknowledge the support of our board, and volunteers from our seniors program whose assistance, especially in the early stages, built the necessary momentum to deliver a successful project.

Ontario Trillium Foundation Resilient Communities Fund

As one of many community agencies impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, WSC was pleased to receive a Resilient Communities Fund grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF). This funding stream was geared towards supporting the recovery efforts of organizations and helping them develop resources to meet the changing needs of their communities.

The grant made it possible for WSC to install hand sanitizer equipment in all our classrooms, expand our laptops for loan program, establish new partnerships and pilot a program that would help build capacity for the non-profit sector.

An important achievement was the development of the curriculum for a Community Worker Program. The program was piloted in August 2022 with a second test run in February 2023. The overall feedback was largely positive especially regarding the experiential learning component of the program. We concluded that the program was an affordable vehicle to help build community resiliency through equipping volunteers and prospective staff with prior knowledge of the sector, as well as skills to perform event planning and other tasks. There were many suggestions for improvement to the curriculum and we hope next year to be able to source funding to take the project to a new level.



Participants in the Community Worker Pilot Program are pictured here with committee members from the Janet Magee Manor Social Club. The two groups collaborated closely in organizing a special event in March 2023 attended by over 45 community members.

The following quote from the participant's testimonial sums up the impact of the pilot:

"I gained new skills; I gained new friends and we had an impact on the community. Having completed this program, I want to use the knowledge and experience in my volunteer work with my church. I have been a volunteer for many years, helping with administrative duties and managing the church database. The church does important social work in the community including sponsoring refugee families. I feel I am now able to support this work with renewed energy. Thank you to the Trillium Foundation for providing funding to WSC".

Leila Boutros



This Afternoon Tea special event held in September 2022 and attended by over 70 community members was organized by participants in the Community Worker Pilot Program in consultation with the Montgomery Place Social Club. Photo: Vida Arshad

Alumni Testimonials

My name is Alicia Edmunds and am a recent graduate of Working Skills Centre's Microsoft Office Specialist Program (M.O.S.) which was a 16-week full-time in-person program that began at the beginning of April 2023 I completed the end of July 2023 with the receipt of a certificate.

I learned of the Working Skills Centre after doing some research online to try and find the perfect fit for me as I had been out of work during the pandemic, a recipient of Ontario Works and was hoping to advance the administrative and Microsoft Office skills I already had to the next level.

From the moment I placed my first call to the centre and spoke with Sofia Hall the Education Assistant, I knew this was where my new journey was going to begin. I was made to feel welcome and safe; all of my questions were answered, and I was guided through the registration process with ease.

What I learned in the Microsoft Office Specialist Program was invaluable and more than I ever anticipated. From the wonderful staff and teachers to my fellow classmates, I gained more than just education, self-confidence and readiness to join the workforce again, I gained experience and friendships that I am extremely grateful for.



Within 4 weeks of my completion of the M.O.S. program, I was employed by Times Change Women's Employment Service; a not-for-profit organization where I am using much of what I learned during my time at WSC in my new role.

I do highly recommend anyone who wishes to upgrade their skills whether they have been out of the workforce for a long time, or a short time, to consider one of the many programs that are offered at WSC.

Many thanks to all of the staff at the Working Skills Centre: Marina, Isabel, Claudia, Ansuya, Sofia, Dian, Mark, Vivian, Silva, and Matilda – you all made my time there an amazingly special experience and I thank you from the bottom of my heart!

Alicia Edmunds
Graduate, Microsoft Office Specialist

My name is Casheena Muschette and I am a graduate of the Administrative Assistant with Desktop Publishing Diploma Program. I have an extensive background in customer service and some office administration experience. At the time, I had been out of employment since COVID-19 and I was looking to re-enter the workforce. Since everything was changing, I wanted to upgrade my skills to give myself the best advantage for securing employment. I looked into several different training programs online when I came across WSC. I enrolled late in the September 2022- February 2023 class and I had quite a bit of catching up to do but I persevered.



Overall, this program provided me with the technical knowledge and practical skills needed to be successful in an office administration role. While overwhelming at times, it allowed me to push myself and realize new potential. I am very grateful for this experience and the material that was taught as I use most of it daily.

Thank you Silva for being so passionate and thorough in your teaching. I learned a lot from you. Learning about

resume and cover letter writing, job searching and how to prepare for interviews proved to be very valuable. A very special thank you to Dian for working so diligently in my job search and for believing in me and my capabilities.

Within 3 months of graduating, I was presented with the opportunity to work for a non-profit organization (WSNCC) as a Program Assistant, assisting youth to become more employable through skills enhancement training. It was a seamless transition for me thanks to the knowledge I gained from WSC and my journey. After 5 months of demonstrating exemplary performance, I have since advanced in the organization to a Program Coordinator role where I support individuals with disabilities in overcoming barriers to employment through training and finding suitable employment.

To conclude, I would like to say thank you to the staff at WSC for offering programs like this.

Casheena Muschette
Graduate, Administrative Assistant with Desktop Publishing Diploma Program

Alumni Testimonials

Hello everyone, my name is Candace Prescott. I was previously in the food and service industry, and I had to change my career goals due to some health issues and move on to plan B with my career goals. So, I discussed with my case worker my interest in receiving additional education in the administrative field. My case worker directed me to the Ontario Works Training Programs and on this website was where I was first introduced to the Working Skills Centre and their Essential Skills – Office Professional Program.

I joined the Essential Skills – Office Professional Program in March 2023, completed the program and received my Certificate in May 2023. I never had previous experience working in the administrative field, so I was ready and enthusiastic about learning all the aspects of working in an administrative position. What also attracted me to the WSC Office Professional Program is that after completing our program, we had the opportunity to gain hands-on experience through a job placement. With the much-appreciated help and guidance from my instructor Dian Liu, I was able to complete my 150 hours of hands-on

work experience as an administrative assistant with my job placement at Gateway.

I am now employed as an administrative assistant at a healthcare facility. Now I can successfully work as an administrative assistant using all I have learned from my incredible instructors at WSC.

Words can't express how grateful I am to have joined the WSC office program and I was able to learn valuable skills from my amazing instructors Silva, Dian, Claudia, Vivian, and Isabel. And yes I would 100% recommend anyone and everyone to join WSC.



Candace Prescott
Graduate, Essential Skills for Office Professionals



My name is Cheldy Marcelin, an ex-WSC student, Diploma Graduate.

In March 2023, I had the idea of studying a short-term program and that's how I put this project in front of my social worker. And without thinking, he would send me a post of all the programs offered by Ontario Works. All of a

sudden, I chose to learn administrative assistance. And the next day, I called the school, and Sofia answered me professionally giving me all the criteria to be admitted. At the same time, I took the test and was finally admitted.

The impact is that WSC made me a winner. Although at first, I was a little scared to go for it because I didn't want to quit my job but being after graduating, I saw that this sacrifice was worth it. After the program, I was very motivated, and I was convinced of my ability in administration.

I am currently employed at EMSB, the second-largest English School Board in Montreal.

At 99.99 I'm using or practicing everything I learned at WSC, otherwise I wouldn't be able to continue with my job and I'm super happy to have joined WSC.

Joining WSC has been one of my best experiences in Canada, it's impossible to have even a single taste of regret.

I highly recommend WSC. Their organizational skills are exceptional, and they consistently go above and beyond to make sure everyone is doing well. Their attention to detail and efficiency have greatly contributed to our success.

I want to express my sincere appreciation for the exemplary education provided by WSC. The dedicated educators, supportive environment, and diverse opportunities have truly enriched my academic journey, fostering both personal and intellectual growth. Grateful for the experiences gained at this outstanding institution.

Cheldy Marcelin.

Alumni Testimonials

My name is Shandelle Stapleton. I gave birth to my second child in 2020 and I was taking care of him while my firstborn was going to school. I felt bored and tired of doing the same routine each day with my son at home. I felt stuck honestly. At that time, my mind was fixated on changing my situation. I wanted to find my career. I started doing my research. I was on Ontario Works and already completed a 14-week program prior but I had no luck fitting into the IT industry with zero experience. Then, I looked into administration. The administrative industry still requires you to be a bit tech-savvy so I thought why not? I went searching again on the OW website and came across Working Skills Centre; a 20-week Administrative Assistant with a Desktop Publishing Diploma Program. I figured this was perfect for me, I'd leave with a diploma perfect. I hounded down Ms. Hall and asked for her to put me on the list. She gave me the details and I did exactly what she said.

Working Skills Centre had an amazing impact on my life. As a learner, who was coming from staying at home all day with my youngest and only having the priority and responsibility of my children, I felt like that was my only purpose for a while and mentally it started taking a toll on me. WSC allowed me to get back on my feet in the working world and adapt in the best way possible. Waking up early and being on time to attend our professor's classes with my morning coffee, was tiring at times frustrating because of the transitioning of balancing home life with work life, but it stretched me in the greatest of ways. I wouldn't take it back. Now I'm able to get up in the morning and handle my business like a professional because of this program. It made me more disciplined, confident and courageous. I feel like I'm able to walk in any room and know my worth in the professional world, I had no confidence before joining this program.

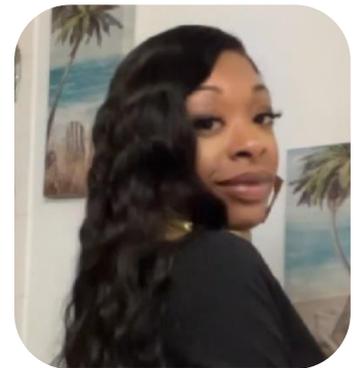
Yes! I am currently employed at the EarlyON Jane Finch Child and Family Centre. I am a Programs Connections Worker and I have my email address!!! I give clients information about the programs we provide and if they have an interest I register them. I answer phones and respond to emails, greet people who walk in, and book appointments. It's exactly what Silva prepared me for and I like it a lot. It's within walking distance, I don't need to use the subway or bus! I can drop off and pick up my children on time.

I think what helped me land this position with my current employer was my confidence. I lacked that. I didn't know how to sell myself on paper or even during interviews. Claudia, Dian and Isabel showed me that I'm It! I have all these great qualities that any employer would need. I just had to see it and believe it! I studied the job search booklet up and down to understand and comprehend what to bring to the table when any employer asks for an interview. They're looking to you to solve their problem! I went through a few interviews and handed out tons of resumes and cover letters but still something was missing. And it was my confidence. 1 hint I have for you future graduates, KNOW YOUR RESUME! Don't just skim through it. Know it like you know your favourite song lyrics, hahaha. It helps you to speak better about yourself and to sound like you know what you're talking about. That's why it's good not to lie, on your resume either.

Joining WSC has helped me recognize my worth and helped me narrow down what I want to do for the rest of my life. I'm still not quite sure about it, but I know it's serving people. I know it's some sort of administration. But it's a start! I would recommend this program to people who are either starting over, newcomers, working parents who are looking for a fresh start or even people who are looking to learn computer skills!

I would like to give a warm appreciation to All my professors: Mark Trumble who did an amazing job keeping us awake during all of our classes, and Silva with our pre-requisite courses which are equally important. Claudia Bargellini and Dian Liu for their job search and interview help. Isabel Laparra for her words of encouragement, and Sofia Hall for being the inspiration for the position I imagined myself in. And last but not least, Amany Seleem, for her knowledge of bookkeeping and her great sense of humor. I just want to say thank

You all for doing such a great job keeping my head up, and motivated to not give up and to do this for myself! I appreciate it all! You people have helped me reach my goal! I'm so proud of myself. So thank You again.



Shandelle Stapleton
Graduate,
Administrative Assistant with Desktop Publishing

Alumni Testimonials

Hello everyone, my name is Beverly Obikoya, a graduate of the Microsoft Office Specialist **program**. I self-directed to the Working Skills Centre after a considerable career gap as

I wanted an opportunity to refresh the skills I had acquired before with a diploma in Business Administration. I compared several similar programs, and I chose the Working Skills Centre because it appeared to be the most comprehensive and they offered the Microsoft Certification option at the end of the program.



I chose the Microsoft Office Specialist Program because it was a course specifically designed for women who had experienced a career gap and had a familiarity with Microsoft Office and it was in person for 16 weeks.

The impact of the program has been phenomenal, I felt better about myself, my confidence in finding employment grew and I made meaningful connections with other women in the program, and we keep in touch and encourage each other.

I am currently employed as a Program Assistant at United for Literacy on a one-year contract for 21 hours a week. The position is an Investing in Neighbourhoods Initiative. I have since taken on a couple of responsibilities outside my job description and I am enjoying the process of contributing meaningfully to my team and the Organization.

As you can imagine, I am pleased with my decision to join the MOS program at the Working Skills Centre, and I will recommend the program as well as the other programs at the Centre to anyone willing to take the steps to better themselves in finding meaningful employment.

I appreciate everyone who I encountered however briefly; they impacted my time at the WSC positively. I looked forward to going to class every day and I even went in when we were not required to be in class!

Post-program I took every advantage that the WSC presented to me, and I studied and sat for the Microsoft Office exams, I'm pleased to announce that I currently have the Microsoft Office Specialist – Associate certificates in Excel, Word, and PowerPoint. I also returned and received the Outlook 2019 associate certificate.

Special thanks to Silva for being a referral for me in my current position as well as being an excellent engaging tutor and a champion for the WSC. I also want to commend Dian Liu, another excellent tutor and employment services specialist who held my hands throughout the process and went above and beyond the scope of her role. I also saw her support other classmates incredibly; one of us secured a full-time position before graduating and was at her job the week after graduation.

The tutors are great at what they do, from Mark, with his incredible patience in building the foundational knowledge to Vivian who always had an energizing class with no shortages of laughter while also imparting knowledge.

The entire staff is excellent and passionate about the WSC and if a learner is engaged and does everything to the best of their ability, their outcome will be positive.

Beverly Obikoya
Graduate, Microsoft Office Specialist

List of Staff 2022-2023

Marina Nikova
Executive Director

Kaloc Ky
Coordinator of Student Services

Matilda Thevasagayam
Financial Manager/Bookkeeping Instructor

Amany Seleem
Bookkeeper

Ansuya Chetty
Settlement Counsellor / Coordinator

Mark Trumble
Microsoft-Lead Instructor

Claudia Bargellini
Employment Services Manager

Sophia Omoregie
Program Administrative Assistant

Dian Liu
Employment Services Coordinator

Silva Mardirossian
Office Procedures/Reception Instructor

Isabel Laparra
Education Manager

Shodan Nadkarni
SAP End User Project Manager / Financial Manager

Sofia Hall
Education Assistant

Dr. Mobaswar Hossain
Medical Office Procedures Instructor

Vivian Unegbu
Instructor

Misbah Dar
Instructor

Volunteers 2022-2023

WSC recognizes the many volunteers who so generously and willingly give of their time. You are an important part of this organization - we couldn't do it without you. On behalf of the staff of the Working Skills Centre, thank you. Your contribution is greatly appreciated, and we wish you all the best in your future endeavors!

Rafath Ali-Khan
Alice Bonavia
Sophie Kohn Kaminsky
Susan Le Roy
Tom Hatcher
Kiara Fine
Marcel Desrochers
Shirin Dorafshar
Pary Momeni
Alice Tsang
Natalya Krylova
Teresa Szymanski
Amina Salihi
Michelle Roberts

Amina Saqib
Cassandra Banton
Catherine Job
Eleanore Matchett
Fizza Batool
Hazel Aniwasal
Lois Moharib
Marsha Dixon
Mubshra Waqar
Ranya Osman
Rehana Akhter
Amar Hussien
Malathy Vellupillai

Grace Ikhifa
Asma Siddiqi
Dorothy Tan
Leila Boutros
Sandra Henry
Gbolahan Ogunmekan
Saeed Gulaid
Fiona Birabwa
Faith Nayiga
Nolan Craig
Steven Martin
Thuweba Faraj

Placement Students

Yana Wang

History and Mandate

Working Skills Centre (WSC) was established in 1978, incorporated on May 1, 1980, and received charitable status in March 2003. Originally mandated to serve immigrant women from Spanish and Portuguese-speaking communities, the organization quickly expanded to serve immigrant women from any country of origin. The Letters Patent was revised in 2005 to expand the mandate to serve individuals, primarily immigrants, who are unemployed or underemployed, and to assist them in obtaining the skills needed to become self-sufficient. While mandated to serve a broader clientele throughout the Greater Toronto Area, the Mission Statement reflects the emphasis on programs for immigrant women:

Working Skills Centre (WSC) is an innovative, community-based, non-profit, charitable organization that empowers immigrants, primarily women. Our purpose is to prepare our clients to fully participate in Canadian society by providing education, work experience, and settlement services that ultimately lead to employment.

Location and Contact Information

Address: 703 - 55 Eglinton Ave E

Toronto, ON M4P 1G8

Phone: (416) 703-7770

Fax: (416) 703-1610

Website: www.workingskillscentre.com

2022 -2023 Board of Directors & Officers

Denise Hinds	President	Vida Arshad	Member at Large
Vanessa Paul	Vice-President	Shideh Dianetnejad	Member at Large
Hira Chaudri	Secretary	Stephanie Pavlich	Member at Large
Maggie Yu	Treasurer		

Acknowledgments

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Grants and Contributions were received from:

Government of Canada

- Women and Gender Equality Canada
- Employment and Social Services Development Canada, New Horizons for Seniors Program

Province of Ontario

- Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, Newcomer Settlement Program

City of Toronto

- Toronto Employment and Social Services
- Investing in Neighborhoods

Foundations

- Toronto Foundation
- Shum Vourkoutiotis Fund
- Ontario Trillium Foundation

Community and Private Sector Partners who supported us in our work

- Access Alliance
- Babra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
- Belmont House
- Canada Human Rights International Organization
- Canadian Mental Health Association (Opening Doors Project)
- Catholic Cross Culture Services
- Childhood Cancer Canada
- Comprehensive Healthcare Clinic
- Don Valley Community Legal Services
- Don Valley Health and Wellness
- Findhelp Information Services
- Gateway (WSNCC)
- Indie Week
- Medix College
- Nordia
- Redwood VAW Shelter
- Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre
- St. Stephen's Community House
- The Neighbourhood Group
- Toronto Community Employment Services
- Unison Community Health Centre
- Up with Women
- Vago Law Firm
- West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre
- Willowdale Community Legal Services
- Workers' Health and Safety Legal Clinic
- YMCA
- YWCA

And the many employers who provided work experience for our graduates, especially those who hired a graduate.

The umbrella groups who provide valuable information and lobby for systemic change on behalf of our clients:

- Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
- Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership
- Youth Employment Partnership