



ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022

President's Report



As the President of the Working Skills Centre's Board, I am grateful for the diverse and collective efforts of our dedicated members and volunteers. We are inspired by our mission to empower individuals to overcome barriers to employment. This need has never been felt more than in the past couple of years of the pandemic.

As a board we are encouraged by the opportunity to build on the organization's strategic direction, as well as reflect on the successes and challenges ahead. With over four decades of serving our community, Working Skills Centre continues to foster an inclusive, accessible, and innovative approach in preparing our clients improve their skills, self-esteem, and employment prospects.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to acknowledge the tireless work of our Executive Director Marina Nikova, whose commitment and dedication to the organization is exceptional. We also extend our appreciation to the entire Working Skills Centre team for their tremendous resilience and contributions this past year.

The Working Skills Centre Board of Directors are optimistic with the direction the organization is moving. The Board will continue to provide guidance and support to strengthen our relationships, community engagement, and resilient services. Once again, we thank all members, agencies, students, volunteers, sponsors, and staff of the WSC organization. Together we will make a difference in the lives of the people we serve.

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

Denise Hinds, MBA
President, Board of Directors
December 2022

Management Report

Highlights for 2021-2022



It is often said that challenging times can bring out the best in people. This was evident in Working Skills Centre's 2021-22 year as our dedicated staff and volunteers consistently delivered outstanding results. Their commitment to assisting our clients and each other in working through

the additional challenges of the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic was truly remarkable.

The Wrap-Around Program, piloted by WSC and funded through the City of Toronto in the previous year, continued its initial success. WSC was awarded the maximum number of participant seats and continued to provide additional support and life skills training to residents on social assistance who were dealing with the additional challenges of navigating the Covid-19 pandemic.

The third year of our four-year Skills Training and Employment Services contract with the City of Toronto continued to deliver superior employment results, despite the challenges of delivering most of the program and services in a virtual format. Detailed results are included in the body of this Annual Report.

The multi-year project of upgrading WSC's computers and network infrastructure continued, with approximately 50% of our computers upgraded for a Cloud-based Microsoft Office 365 environment. The work is anticipated to be completed in 2022-23.

In terms of new programs, WSC was successful in obtaining funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Resilient Communities Program. The proposal is to develop a new Community Worker Certificate level course to fulfill the need to assist disadvantaged communities in achieving resilience. Upon completion, graduates will have placements as Community Ambassadors in high need communities to:

- Communicate Equity, Diversity & Inclusion initiatives
- Liaise with organizations involved in community-level initiatives
- Identify and make sound referrals to information sources and services
- Be familiar with the services available to address the needs of vulnerable populations
- Assist with the program "Managing Today, Building the Future."

The very dedicated Wise Women's Group continued to provide workshops and seminars as well as mentorship and counselling to each other and WSC's clients. We sincerely thank them for their continued commitment and success in these very challenging times.

None of these successes would have been possible without the support of all the WSC volunteers and members, our Board of Directors and most of all, the professional staff team. I extend my most sincere thanks to all of you for your advice, dedication and support. It is both humbling and rewarding to reflect on our contributions to positive changes in the lives of so many clients.

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

Marina Nikova
Executive Director
December 2022

Treasurer's Report

Financial information has been extracted from the Audited Financial Statement as @ March 31, 2022
(NVS Professional Corporation/David Burkes, CA)

Assets & Liabilities

| CURRENT ASSET | 2022 | 2021 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Cash | 252,117 | 174,335 |
| Accounts Receivable | 98,960 | 78,271 |
| Grant Contributions Receivable | - | - |
| HST Recoverable | 14,462 | 13,710 |
| Prepaid Expenses and Deposits | 10,629 | 15,451 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | 376,168 | 281,767 |
| Equipment/ Capital Assets | 96,076 | 75,943 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | \$ 472,244 | \$ 357,710 |
| | | |
| CURRENT LIABILITIES | | |
| A/P & Accrued Liabilities | \$ 9,056 | \$ 2,093 |
| Differed Revenue | 1,401 | 400 |
| Differed Operating Grants | 75,638 | 87,988 |
| Differed contributions related to Capital Assets | 31,731 | 44,806 |
| Unrestricted Net Assets | - | 222,423 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | \$ 117,826 | \$ 357,710 |

Financial Position - Statement of Operations

| REVENUE | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Governments/Foundation Contributions | \$ 407,867 | \$ 313,566 |
| TESS Skills Training & Employment Services | 435,225 | 371,376 |
| Certificate (Part Time) Programs | 10,836 | 4,009 |
| Fundraising, Donations and other Income | 24,246 | 44,854 |
| Donation -in - Kind | - | - |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | 878,174 | 733,805 |
| | | |
| EXPENSES | | |
| Salaries | \$ 488,896 | \$ 389,716 |
| Employee Benefits | 33,586 | 28,872 |
| Occupancy Costs | 120,218 | 121,635 |
| Outreach/Marketing | 2,599 | 178 |
| Bank Charges & Interest | 3,566 | 3,824 |
| Computer Software, Supplies & Technical Services | 27,225 | 25,438 |
| Equipment Leasing & Maintenance | 11,182 | 9,917 |
| Insurance | 14,052 | 12,750 |
| Office Supplies | 8,276 | 6,312 |
| Professional Fees | 6,678 | 6,548 |
| Program Resource Materials | 6,400 | 19,287 |
| Telephone | 8,538 | 9,260 |
| Travel & Participant Expenses | 4,018 | 4,001 |
| Fundraising Expense | - | - |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | 735,234 | 635,738 |
| | | |
| Revenue over Expenses Operations | 142,940 | 114,742 |
| Amortization | (10,945) | (10,133) |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| Net Expenses over Revenue | \$ 131,995 | \$ 104,609 |

Skills Training and Employment Services

Skills training continues to be a central component of WSC’s work. Since mid-March 2021 WSC made sure to continue to protect both clients and staff members while recovering from the disruption caused by COVID-19. As a result, we decided to slowly transition part of the program components in person while continuing to deliver most of our training online for 2021. This improved staff and client morale while addressing remaining barriers to transition back to a new routine.

Certificate Programs

WSC delivered 3 cohorts of **Essential Skills for Office Professionals** online. Participants gain fundamental practical skills needed to fulfill the multiple duties expected of the administrative worker. Participants train for 12 weeks gaining experience in the use of office equipment and computer applications as well as complete an Experiential Learning Project to enhance their portfolio of experience.

The **Career Development in the Financial Services Sector using SAP** program was delivered to 40 students this year. The program comprises 16 weeks of training designed to prepare participants for employment or further education in the accounting field, using SAP-FI as end users, super users or consultants

WSC was able to successfully deliver one cohort of **Microsoft Office Specialist**. The program was developed to address skill development needs of clients with education and or experience in the administrative

field but who are lacking current work experience or who have been away from the workplace for an extended time. The program is 16 weeks. Participants train in advanced MS Office applications with the option to get Microsoft Office Specialist 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) was 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

2021, 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.

Overall, the graduates of all our programs have done extremely well. Some graduates faced the challenge of having to stay at home due to lack of daycare and ongoing remote school learning for their children. Several of those graduates were not able to search for employment because of limited schedule availability.

| 2021-22 Program Summary | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----|------|------|------|------|------|-----|---|------|-----|
| 2021 | ES1 | ES2 | ES 3 | OA1 | OA 2 | MOS | SAP | 2022 | ES1 | MOS |
| Intake | 15 | 16 | 17 | 14 | 15 | 14 | 33 | Intake | 19 | 14 |
| Completed | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 13 | 12 | 26 | Completed | 15 | 11 |
| Employed | 5 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 13 | Employed | 4 | 3 |
| Training | 4 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 9 | Training | 19 | 1 |
| Volunteer/Placement | 11 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | - | Volunteer/Placement | 2 | 2 |
| Incomplete | 4 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 7+ | Incomplete | 4 | 3 |
| Success % | 90% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 92% | 100% | 88% | Success In Progress% | 100% | 55% |
| Overall percentages of success (employment/training/volunteer placements) for graduates who completed their programs in 2021 stand at 96% for Administrative Assistant and at 100% for MOS graduates. In the Essential Skills for Office Professionals program the success rate was of 97% for all three cohorts. | | | | | | | | Students that started before March 21, 2022, are currently in development to achieve their success goals. | | |

Skills Training and Employment Services

Opportunities

- Development and implementation of Managing the Present and Planning the Future (wraparound support program). This innovative program sponsored by TESS was an answer to our efforts to provide enhanced support for clients experiencing anxiety and isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The program supports participants to develop access to resources, skills and strategies to cope during the Covid-19 emergency and become prepared to transition to other programs to reach their goals.

We started 3 cohorts in 2020 and offered individualized counselling, resources support, Nutrition & Yoga workshops and Mental Wellness guidance to 73 clients. Based on feedback and results from 2020 we were able to increase the number of clients served and add new modules to increase training quality (Business Writing, Numeracy, additional classes in MS Word and Excel to increase digital literacy).

| 2021 Wrap Around - Managing the Present Planning the Future – Participant Summary | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|-----|
| 2021 | WA 1 | WA 2 | WA 3 | WA4 |
| Intake | 11 | 16 | 18 | 28 |
| Completed | 10 | 11 | 11 | 26 |

- Expanded partnership with YWCA. This partnership enabled WSC graduates to utilize paid placement opportunities to enhance self confidence and overcome challenges in returning to in person work.
- Increase in staffing. We successfully welcomed a new staff member in Employment Services department who will mainly concentrate on building and maintaining communication with employers for future placement and employment opportunities.

Challenges

- As a result of the significant socio-economic impact of the pandemic, our clients continue to experience difficulties in accessing training and employment.
- 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 2021. We had to increasingly tap into our partnership network to refer clients to resources that could help them.
- Overall, keeping participants motivated post pandemic was and 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. Compounding barriers make the return to in person training and employment a difficult transition to face without appropriate supports and accommodations.

Settlement Services 2021- 2022

Newcomer Settlement Program

WSC's settlement services were funded by the Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP) under the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, (formerly the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. This was the last year in our extended contract covering the period 2018-2022. A new application was submitted in October 2021. The outcome was 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. Services included 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, and stress management.
3. Service Coordination. WSC settlement staff attended meetings of the Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership on a regular basis. As always, the meetings are a wonderful opportunity for networking and sharing information on settlement trends and resources.

Results for 2021-2022:

- We served 405 unique clients. Although 19% below target this was an improvement on the previous year where we were 28% below target.
- Conducted 1200 one-on-one services to clients. Through combining in-person, telephone and internet-based channels we were able to achieve service targets in this category.
- WSC hosted 92 settlement workshops attended by 787 participants in total. We exceeded our targets in this area.

The profile of NSP clients accessing settlement services is provided below. There was a decrease in the number of clients whose date of arrival was in the last 5 years. This was due to a decline in Canada's permanent resident intake in 2021.

NSP Client Profile

Gender

| Gender | % of Clients 2020-2021 | % of Clients 2021-2022 |
|--------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Male | 21% | 19% |
| Female | 78% | 80% |
| Other | 1 | 1% |

Top Ten Countries of Origin

| Ranking | Country of Origin 2020-2021 | Country of Origin 2021-2022 |
|---------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Nigeria | Nigeria |
| 2 | Pakistan | Pakistan |
| 3 | Iran | Iran |
| 4 | Ethiopia | Ethiopia |
| 5 | India | Jamaica |
| 6 | St. Vincent | India |
| 7 | Jamaica | Bangladesh |
| 8 | Colombia | St. Vincent |
| 9 | Uganda | Afghanistan |
| 10 | Philippines | Guyana |

Immigrant Status

| Immigrant Status | % of Clients 2020-2021 | % of Clients 2021-2022 |
|---------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Permanent Residents | 28% | 28% |
| Refugee Claimants | 33% | 23% |
| Canadian Citizens | 40% | 48% |
| Other | - | 1% |

NSP Client Profile

Length of time in Canada – NSP Clients

| Time Category | % of clients 2020-2021 | % of clients 2021-2022 |
|------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Less than 1 year | 11% | 2% |
| 1 to 3 years | 29% | 25% |
| 3 to 5 years | 9% | 16% |
| Over 5 years | 50% | 57% |

2021-2022 Settlement Services Highlights

a) Although we were below target for unique clients, this was a 10% improvement in client intake compared with the previous year. The loss of walk-in client traffic that we had experienced in 2020-2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic continued to endure in 2021-2022 due to further province-wide lockdowns.

b) This year again we exceeded the target for workshops and group sessions with many clients attending multiple group sessions.

c) We were very proud to note that one of our NSP settlement counsellors, Claudia Bargellini served on the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee in the Toronto North LIP. She will be contributing the expertise she has gained in helping WSC further develop our diversity and inclusion strategy.

d) We conducted a very successful outreach email and telephone campaign to promote our digital literacy and communication workshop series for newcomers. We reached out to settlement and employment agencies beyond Toronto and received a positive response. Use of a virtual format is ultimately more accessible to individuals living further afield.

g) Our settlement services department hosted field practicum placements for three visible minority women social work students. The women helped with taking attendance, development of marketing materials and research on content for our diversity and inclusion workshop series. It was very rewarding to hear their feedback at the end, that the experience was very empowering for them.

WSC Seniors Program

The project, Seniors Supporting Seniors and Newcomers During and Beyond the Pandemic was implemented with funding from Employment and Social Development Canada, New Horizons for Seniors Program. 2021-2022 was our third 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
- raise awareness of elder abuse
- promote the social participation of seniors

2021 -2022 Achievements and Highlights

a) We recruited 17 (our target was 20) senior volunteers and 11 (our target was 10) non-senior volunteers.

b) Senior volunteers as always made an enormous contribution to WSC: they co-facilitated the business communication workshop series; they assisted with digital literacy coaching; they did a special presentation for staff, board and clients to promote indigenous awareness; they provided coaching to newcomer clients and job seekers in communication skills and presentation skills; and they took overall responsibility for the planning and implementation of the seniors program.

c) Activities organized and/or facilitated by the volunteers were attended by 58 (our target was 60) senior participants and 46 (our target was 40) non-senior participants.

d) We hosted 24 (our target was 24) business communication workshops.

WSC Seniors Program Cont'd

2021 -2022 Achievements and Highlights

e) We hosted 36 social café sessions (our target was 20). Seniors successfully planned and participated in a rich variety of social café activities including:

- Collage and Journaling
- Introduction to Watercolour Painting
- Word Puzzles
- Current affairs, and stories in the news
- Indigenous Awareness
- Anti-Ageism awareness
- Elder Abuse awareness
- Intro to the ABCs of LGBTQ2+ awareness
- Stewardship of the environment.
- Managing Stress
- Tax Tips for Seniors
- Viewing and discussion of films and documentaries



Seniors on a nature walk in Mount Pleasant Cemetery. We stepped off the path to admire one of the magnificent trees. Photograph by Vida Arshad.

Capacity Building Project

2021-2022 was the third year of our four-year grant for capacity building from Women and Gender Equality Canada (Federal Government). The grant has 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.

Achievements in key capacity areas are outlined below:

a) Gender-Based Analysis and Awareness

A diversity and inclusion awareness workshop series was implemented at the end of the year in which we explored gender equality in relation to ageism, islamophobia, and racism. There has been the development of a much stronger commitment to promoting gender equality at WSC.. We have seen accelerated development of leadership skills among a younger cohort of visible minority women staff due to greater spaces created for women to express themselves and shape the development of the organization.

b) Communications

We completed a three-minute promotional video that can be viewed on the WSC web site. Our promotional materials and training manual covers were updated with WSC's new logo. Significant progress was made in the building of a new website to be launched next year.

c) Financial Management

We completed the implementation of our fundraising and income-generation strategy and reached our target of raising \$200,000 over and above existing longer-term contracts.

d) Networks and Partnership Development

Our capacity to maintain partnerships has greatly improved with strategies for better exchanges, processes for acknowledging the support we have received, and establishment of direct connections between frontline staff at WSC and other agencies.

Capacity Building Project Cont'd

Achievements in key capacity areas are outlined below:

c) Operational Planning

We continued to work on implementing a longer-term strategy to move our computer network to the cloud. Phase 1, which included configuring our domain on the Microsoft Cloud and implementing Microsoft 365 for staff, was completed last year. This year we worked on implementing phase two: updating the hardware in all the computer labs used by clients and rolling out Microsoft 365 across the agency. Phase 3 to be implemented next year will involve decommissioning our physical server infrastructure. Going forward we will be able to provide an improved learning environment that will ultimately be more empowering for women attending our programs.

The above changes were the consequence of careful planning that would not have been possible without the funding provided by Women and Gender Equality Canada.

Alumni Testimonials

I heard about WSC through Ontario Works training programs. I enrolled myself in Microsoft Office Specialist program in April 2022 and graduated in July 2022. I had 5 years of experience back home with an MBA in Project Management, still I couldn't secure any job because I didn't have Canadian qualifications and experience.

I was heartbroken when it was taking me so long to job search, that's when I started my research and there I stumbled upon Ontario Works training programs, I found Microsoft Office Specialist Certificate program with WSC. I needed a program to overcome my weaknesses in MS Excel, improve my PowerPoint presentation skills, and polish my interview skills.

Fortunately, I gained both the skills and confidence to thoughtfully use a variety of approaches in my work. All the WSC instructors were knowledgeable, approachable, and quite skillful at leveraging the online nature of the program. In fact, the courses were so thorough that it took me only 3 days of training, to become hands on at my new workplace and it wouldn't be wrong to say WSC played a big role in it. Now I'm employed with GWL residential authority and it gives me a great sense of achievement when I apply all the skills that I learnt from WSC in my daily life.

The instructors in each course were patient, understanding, and highly skilled. Dian supported me during my job search like no one has. She immensely improvised my resume and cover letter, which was the sole reason of me landing a good job. Also, when anyone reviews my resume, they all complement and give me praises and credit goes to her. Misbah was an amazing mentor and teacher who not only helped me gain confidence in myself but assisted me in achieving excellence in this Microsoft. Silva taught us how to use common office equipment which I believe no one teaches and is quite essential for corporate work. I'm happy to report that I couldn't have made a better choice; WSC has changed my career trajectory for the better!



I would highly recommend this program to anyone wanting to expand their competencies and credentials.

Laraib Siraj
Microsoft Office Specialist Graduate

My name is Chinedu from Nigeria. I speak Igbo and English. I have a background in Accountancy and studied a broad range of subjects from management, taxation, and economics where I worked as a finance Associate in a Telecommunication Company. During my 3yrs as finance Associate, I worked with over 40 clients, working on financial projects, doing reconciliations of company's accounts, preparing invoices and date-entry. I gained lots of experience and knowledge working with different clients with various needs and won the best staff in 2018 and was also promoted for taking leadership roles and also helped the company to generate funds by marketing its products and services through various social media platforms. I had to leave Nigeria due to some irreconcilable differences.

I found it difficult to settle and find suitable employment. I attempted to find a full-time or part-time job in my field of study, but it was not successful since I was told that I had no Canadian experience. I had a very hard time trying to make ends meet for my children and I.

After so many attempts, I came across an advert for the WSC and I thought that I should give it a try. I must say that it was my best decision ever. I got to learn a lot about job search in Canada, how to prepare for an interview and we

did various presentations, this built my confidence when speaking in a group.

Immediately after I finished the program, I finally got employed as a Greeter with the City of Toronto, this was my first job and I was really excited.

My contract was over at the end of December and before it came to an end, I was determined to find another job with the skills I learnt from WSC. I put into practice what I learnt and I was able to get my current job which is with CIBC. I am so excited to be finally working in my field.



From the bottom of my heart, thank you to all the WSC staff for being such a great supporter. I was able to build my confidence. Thank you, Dian you did a lot of improvement on me, and I will not take it for granted.

WSC is the place to be.

Chinedu Ndukwe
Essential Skills for Office Professionals Graduate

Alumni Testimonials

My name is Gisselle Arroliga; I am from Nicaragua and have been in Canada for three years and six months. I studied at WSC and I completed the Essential Skills-Office Professionals Program in December 3, 2021. I heard about Working Skills Centre from my Ontario Works caseworker.

My studies at WSC has been the best decision that I ever made. I have been armed with the knowledge and skills that has improved my confidence that I needed to find a job. All the teachers at Working Skills Centre were patient with me and very professional, in addition to motivating me to be better every day.

I am currently working as an administrative assistant at a non-profit organization, a job that I was hired for because of my knowledge, motivation and necessary skills that my instructors armed me with to start my professional life here in

Canada. I hope to be able to continue learn from them, since I can attest that the educators at WSC are highly-qualified.



I appreciate all of my teachers for the support they provided me, helping me believe in myself, and strengthening me with the confidence and courage to search for the job that I wanted to have. Thank you and I wish everyone great success in the future.

Gisselle Arroliga
Essential Skills for Office Professionals Graduate

My name is Salma Farah, and I came to Canada in 2015. I went to school to learn English and to achieve an Ontario High School Diploma. While in school I worked in a variety of fields such as hospitality, retail, and customer service to acquire Canadian work experience. In 2018, I went to Mohawk College and studied Small Business and Entrepreneurship, which gave me an understanding of how to start and manage a small business.



In early 2021, I was working for a pastry shop as a Sales Assistant, but while on the job I realized that I wanted a change in my work environment. I researched how to improve my skills and pursue a career in a professional office setting. Through my research, I discovered Working Skills Centre under the training

programs promoted by Ontario Works. I applied to their Administrative Assistant with Desktop Publishing Diploma program and started training in August 2021.

I graduated in January 2022 and, during my time, I received practical training to succeed as an Office Administrator, such as advanced Microsoft Office software, customer service, reception, and clerical duties.

Through the knowledge and help of my teachers, I was able to believe in myself and gain confidence in my skill set.

Especially thanks to Dian Liu, I was able to enhance my resume and find good employment. Through her motivation and belief in me, I was able to overcome my fears and I now work with the City of Toronto as an Administration Trainee. I will use the skills I obtained at WSC and apply them at my current workplace.

I am very grateful to the staff and the support they have given me. Their teaching style, the available resources, and their support are what makes WSC great. I would recommend their programs to anyone who wants to advance their knowledge and skills and to find work in a professional environment, especially for immigrants. It is not easy to live in a new country and find yourself navigating through life while trying to both learn the language and find work. WSC helps anyone who wants to achieve their goals and move up the career ladder.

Salma Farah
Admin Assistant - Desktop Publishing Diploma Graduate

Alumni Testimonials

My name is Marika Matthews. I became a mother during the pandemic and, needless to say, I had to figure out what my next steps would be. I called my case worker inquiring about ways in which I could upgrade and enhance my skills. She sent me a list of programs offered by Working Skills Centre and I decided to take the Essentials Skills for Office Professionals program from June to August of 2021. I absolutely enjoyed my journey towards obtaining my certificate. There were times when I felt overwhelmed by the course load, but the instructors were very patient and supportive.

I felt so confident about my newly developed skills that I decided to take the Administrative Assistant with Desktop Publishing Diploma program in August 2021 to January 2022. This program helped me further improve my business and communication skills among other things. Additionally, the courses helped me to tap into my creative side where I was able to design a magazine cover and edit digital images with Adobe Photoshop.

After successful completion of the diploma program, I was able to complete a placement at Unison Health and Community Services through WSC where I was able to utilize

all the skills that I acquired and developed from all the courses. I continued to advance my career and I am now currently working for the federal government at Service Canada.



In conclusion, I would like to express my immense gratitude to the entire staff at WSC. Each and everyone of you had a role to play in my success. Starting from intake, course instructors, special guest speakers, to post program support. I am truly honored to have had the chance to work with and learn from a diverse team that welcomed, encouraged, and supported me and my classmates. You have left a lasting impression on me. Thank you all.

Marika Matthews
Admin Assistant - Desktop Publishing Diploma Graduate

My name is Adefemi Okesanya, I have been in Canada for 9 months and I heard about Working Skills Centre through my Ontario Works case worker. I enrolled in the Essentials Skills for Office Professionals program in June 2022 and graduated in August 2022. It was 12 weeks of intensive teaching and learning that covered modules like Job Search, Career Exploration, Microsoft Office, and Reception. They also prepared us for real job opportunities which included resume and cover letter preparation, employment counseling, and a community project that provided solutions to the current needs of the community and country at large.

WSC greatly prepared me for the Canadian job market through the different supports that were available to me. They have dedicated, caring, dependable, and knowledgeable staff and tutors who are always ready to go the extra mile for you to be able to achieve your career goals and become successful in life.

Even though I had previous work experience in the field of Information Technology, I learned new things in the program which gave me an added advantage. This boosted my confidence and encouraged me to aim high to secure my dream job in Canada.

WSC follows up with all their students until they secure a job, they sent job vacancies and information that will enhance your career development. Today I work as a Quality Assurance Analyst with Reinsurance Group of America (RGA), all thanks to my instructors at WSC. My special gratitude goes to Dian Liu whom while on vacation, she still attended to my urgent request and guided me through my job hunting and interview process.

I would gladly recommend WSC to all newcomers to Canada and Canadian residents that want to break into the job market.

Thank you.

Adefemi Okesanya
Essential Skills for Office Professionals Graduate

List of Staff 2021-2022

Marina Nikova
Executive Director

Matilda Thevasagayam
Financial Manager

Ansuya Chetty
Settlement Counsellor / Coordinator

Claudia Bargellini
Employment Services Manager

Dian Liu
Employment Services Coordinator

Isabel Laparra
Education Manager

Sofia Hall
Education Assistant

Kaloc Ky
Coordinator of Student Services

Deshara Francis-Dennis
Administrative Assistant 2021

Mark Trumble
Microsoft-Lead Instructor

Misbah Dar
Microsoft Instructor 2021

Silva Mardirossian
Office Procedures/Reception Instructor

Shodan Nadkarni
SAP End User Project Manager / Financial Manager

Nawal Chowdhury
Instructor, Medical Office

Dr. Mobaswar Hossain
Medical Office Procedures Instructor

Volunteers

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 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

Ruth Davis

Shirin Dorafshar

Khadijah Dukuray

Aliya Hagielmi

Sophie Kohn Kaminsky

Susan Le Roy

Pary Momeni

Pacy Omayo

Amina Salihi

Alice Tsang

Srinivas Venkata

Lynn Wolverton

Placement Students

Hira Chaudri

Tricia Wong

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 were revised in 2005 to expand the mandate to serve individuals, primarily immigrants, who are unemployed or underemployed, and to assist them to obtain 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

2021 -2022 Board of Directors & Officers

| | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Denise Hinds | President | Vida Arshad | Member at Large |
| Vanessa Paul | Vice-President | Shideh Dianetnejad | Member at Large |
| Jo Anne Rabanillo-Crowe | Former President | Stephanie Pavlich | Member at Large |
| Marilyn Buentipo | Previous Secretary 2021 | | |
| Hira Chaudri | Secretary | | |
| Maggie Yu | Treasurer | | |

Acknowledgements

Working Skills Centre would like to acknowledge our 2021-2022 funders and partners.

Grants and Contributions were received from:

Government of Canada

- Women and Gender Equality Canada, Women's Program
- 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

Toronto Foundation

- Deacon Legacy Grants
- Shum Vourkoutiotis Fund
- Trillium Foundation

Community and Private Sector Partners who supported us in our work

- Access Alliance
- Canada Human Rights International Organization
- Canadian Mental Health Association (Opening Doors Project)
- Comprehensive Healthcare Clinic
- Credit Canada Debt Solutions
- Cruzado and Associates
- Don Valley Health and Wellness
- Newcomer Women's Services
- Indie Week
- Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre
- The Career Foundation
- Toronto Community Employment Services
- YMCA
- YWCA
- Unison Community Health Centre
- Up with Women
- Volunteer Canada
- West Scarborough Neighborhood Community Centre
- Workers' Health and Safety Legal Clinic

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