

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

*A review of activities from the 2019-2020 fiscal year*



# Management Report

## Highlights for 2019-2020

Working Skills Centre's 2019-20 year was another roller coaster ride, highlighted by a series of major successes and ending with the Covid-19 crisis. The organizational strategies developed in 2019 allowed WSC staff to meet the later challenges of 2020 effectively and with the minimum amount of disruption. Congratulations to the entire WSC team for their focus and dedication in handling of these challenges and in achieving the best possible outcomes.

The year began very strongly. In April 2019, Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and the MP for Toronto-St. Paul's, made an announcement on behalf of Maryam Monsef, Minister for Women and Gender Equality, that WSC would receive \$50,000 per year for 4 years for a new Capacity Building project "Building Innovation and Growth — Women Empowerment". Year One of the project has focused on an updated strategic plan and the operational changes that would allow WSC to better serve our clients and broader community needs.



*Hon. Caroline Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and MP for Toronto-St. Paul's*

This was followed by the award of a new 4 year Skills Training and Employment Services contract with the City of Toronto. The new innovative formats of these 4 programs was based on the successful employment outcomes of the previous City contract as well as the lessons learned from the 2018-19 pilot project "Career Launch In Canada Knowledge & Skills" (CLICKS). Staff from all WSC operational areas were instrumental in making the new contract possible through their intimate knowledge of the unique challenges our clients face, as well as the means to assist them in getting their careers and lives on track.

In 2019-20 WSC continued to exceed the employment

targets set by the government agencies that fund the programs. This in turn allowed us to see the number of program seats allocated to WSC increased to the maximum. The success of these programs is a credit to the entire WSC Team, from Assessment and Intake, to Program Instructors and Employment Services.

As part of the lease extension of WSC's offices, the premises were refreshed with new flooring and paint to create a more positive learning and working environment. This was done with no disruption to our operations. We also initiated the process of moving the majority of the IT services to a Cloud based infrastructure. This process will be completed in the next 2 years.

Thanks to new funding from the McLean Foundation WSC was able to re-establish the very successful Social Café for Women, a free weekly networking and learning opportunity geared towards immigrant women from the local community. Many thanks to WSC Board Vice-President, Denise Hinds who prepared and managed the application. WSC was also invited to participate in the Toronto Foundation's Deacon Legacy Grant Program and received \$15,000 per year for 2 years. The Federal New Horizons Program for seniors was also extended for a further year, allowing this valuable networking and mentorship program to continue.

The above successes and highlights of 2019-2020 are a tribute to all the WSC volunteers and members, our Board of Directors and most of all, the professional staff team at WSC. On behalf of the many clients we serve and whose lives we have changed for the better, please accept my sincere thanks to all of you for your ongoing dedication and support of the organization.

*Marina Nikova, Executive Director  
November, 2020*

## Treasurer's Report

Financial information has been extracted from the Audited Financial Statement as @ March 31, 2020  
(David Burkes, CA)

### Assets & Liabilities

#### CURRENT ASSET

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
Cash	106,340	68,732
Accounts Receivable	41,066	23,302
Grant Contributions Receivable	0	8,953
HST Recoverable	9,010	12,002
Prepaid Expenses and Deposits	10,458	53,102
	<u>166,874</u>	<u>166,091</u>
Equipment/ Capital Assets	58,265	79,836
	<u>\$ 225,139</u>	<u>\$ 245,927</u>

#### CURRENT LIABILITIES

A/P & Accrued Liabilities	7,890	28,552
Differed Revenue	15,187	1,200
Differed Operating Grants	28,300	28,802
Differed contributions related to Capital Assets	55,948	74,775
Unrestricted Net Assets	117,814	112,598
	<u>\$ 225,139</u>	<u>\$ 245,927</u>

### Financial Position

### Statement of Operations

#### REVENUE

Governments/Foundation Contributions	\$ 241,347	\$ 412,794
TESS Skills Training & Employment Services	340,086	282,666
Certificate (Part time)Programs	75,885	77,749
Fundraising, Donations and other Income	24,720	17,676
Donation -in - Kind	8,422	8,177
	<u>690,460</u>	<u>799,062</u>

#### EXPENSES

Salaries	411,770	474,741
Employee Benefits	28,186	32,614
Occupancy Costs	153,495	113,064
Outreach/Marketing	418	1,731
Bank Charges & Interest	4,001	4,084
Computer Software, Supplies & Technical Services	11,528	13,804
Equipment Leasing & Maintenance	11,386	11,939
Insurance	12,924	12,082
Office Supplies	13,664	18,569
Professional Fees	15,826	18,956
Program Resource Materials	10,188	19,941
Telephone	3,940	3,497
Travel & Participant Expenses	5,025	6,124
Fundraising Expense	149	6,241
	<u>682,500</u>	<u>737,387</u>

#### Revenue over Expenses Operations

7,960                      61,675

#### Amortization

(2,744)                      (5,053)

#### Net Expenses over Revenue

\$ 5,216                      \$ 56,622

## Skills Training and Employment Services

2020 was a challenging year in many aspects and brought incredible opportunities as well.

Due to COVID-19 we had to face an unexpected impact on the labour market that affected most of our graduates from the 2019 programs. While our Essential Skills graduates did incredibly well, graduates from the second Office Administration Diploma cohort and some of our Medical Receptionist graduates were forced to stay at home due to lack of daycare and school for their children or were not able to search for employment as a consequence of the Pandemic.

Overall percentages in employment for graduates who completed their programs in 2019-2020 stand at 67% for Office Administration graduates and at 54% for Medical Receptionist graduates. In the Essential Skills for Office Professionals program, enrolment in further education is also considered a success. This program achieved a success rate of 100% for all three cohorts.

2019	ES1	ES2	ES3	OA1	OA2	MR
<b>Intake</b>	18	18	11	16	10	14
<b>Completed</b>	17	16	9	15	8	13
<b>Employed</b>	10	4	1	10	2	7
<b>Training</b>	0	5	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Volunteer</b>	7	7	6	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Incomplete</b>	1	2	2	1	2	1
<b>Success %</b>	100% out of 17	100% out of 16	100% out of 9	67% out of 15	In Progress	54% out of 13
<b>Post program End Date</b>	October 2019	May 2020	July 2020	March 2020	December 2020	July 2019

Since mid-March 2020 we made sure to follow government measures to protect clients and staff members and reduce the spread of COVID-19. As a result, we were faced with the challenge of moving most of our programs online for 2020. Fortunately we were able to make the transition within a short time-frame and by May 2020 were successfully running our programs online.

2020	ES1	ES2	ES3	OA1	OA2	MOS
<b>Intake</b>	15	11	18	12	Nov 2020	12
<b>Completed</b>	13	9	In Progress	In Progress		In Progress
<b>Employed</b>	1					
<b>Training</b>						
<b>Volunteer</b>						
<b>Incomplete</b>	2	2				
<b>Success %</b>						
<b>Post program End Date</b>	March 2021	April 2021	May 2021	July 2021		July 2021

2019	SAP
Intake	39
Completed	39
Employed	22
Training	10
Incomplete	0
Success %	82%
Post program End Date	October 2020

2020	SAP
Intake	22 so far
Completed	7
Employed	
Training	
Incomplete	
Success %	In Progress
Post program End Date	End of PP varies based on the start date of the different cohorts

The SAP continues to be an extremely successful program and the number of seats was further increased for 2020.

## Challenges

- As a result of the significant economic impact of the pandemic at the beginning of 2020, Ontario experienced an unprecedented decline in employment. In addition the health risk to the population, brought severe health measures and physical distancing that impacted the job search efforts of many Canadians including our graduates.
- School and daycare closures forced most of our students and graduates to stay at home and impacted both the employment rates and the intake process for new programs.
- Lack of technical resources (such as access to computers and reliable internet connections) was one of the main barriers to implementing online training for 2020. We had to advocate on behalf of our clients and raise the issue to the City of Toronto (TESS) to make sure that our clients did not feel more isolated and adrift in the current situation.
- Keeping participants motivated and involved in an emergency situation, taking also in consideration that our client have existing multiple barriers to employment, such as mental health issues and emotional distress that were exacerbated by the social isolation.

## Innovations

- The development and implementation of managing The Present and Planning the Future (WRAP support program) as part of the WSC Team and with the support

of TESS. As an answer to our efforts to advocate for OW clients experiencing COVID-19, the City launched an incredible program that facilitated social connection and continued support of the most vulnerable. We started 3 cohorts in 2020 and offered individualized counselling, support, Nutrition & Yoga classes and Mental Wellness guidance to 36 clients (28 have already completed the program and several transitioned into additional training with us at WSC).

- First cohort of the Microsoft Office Specialist Certificate program was started successfully this October, with 12 students in the class and great expectations for the following 5 months.
- Launch of remote learning through Zoom classes and implemented small class sizes for in person training for longer courses such as Administrative Assistant with Desktop Publishing Diploma and Microsoft Office Specialist Certificate.
- Further develop partnership with Volunteer Canada to organize events for graduates, such as a video mock interview event on September 30<sup>th</sup> where Vertex employees volunteered the afternoon to practice video interview strategies with our clients. In addition we have another event planned with UBS Financial (returning employer from 2019) for a similar online event.
- We are still thinking about expanding our department with the addition of a new staff member that will mainly concentrate on building and maintaining relations with employers for future placement and employment opportunities.



# Settlement Services 2019-2020

## Newcomer Settlement Program

WSC's settlement services are funded by the Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP) under the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Citizenship and Immigration Division:

Activities undertaken during the year included:

a) **One on one services.** Our one-on-one services included information and referral, interviews with clients, and follow-up meetings. WSC also administered essential skills assessments for clients needing to identify their readiness for working in Canada and their educational needs.

b) **Workshops and group sessions.** This included settlement information sessions; trips to the library; presentations by community partners from legal clinics and employment centres, workshops to improve written and oral communication skills; and workshops related to civic engagement including on topics such as critical thinking, community event planning and volunteering.

c) **Service Coordination.** WSC settlement staff attended meetings of the Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) and OCASI.

Services were delivered by a team of three part-time settlement counsellors. Eligible clients included permanent residents, convention refugees, refugee claimants, naturalized Canadian citizens and work permit holders.

Achievements for 2019-2020 include:

- Served 465 unique clients
- Conducted 1180 one-on-one services to clients
- Held 90 settlement related workshops and group sessions with a combined attendance of 722 clients

According to client feedback from interviews and surveys, most clients have been very satisfied with the quality of guidance provided by our settlement staff on in relation to career and educational pathways. Clients indicated that this guidance has been very useful in the settlement journey.

The profile of NSP clients accessing settlement services is provided below. Last year we reported an increase in the proportion of clients with refugee status. This

situation has continued and reflects a trend that began in 2017-2018 with an increase in refugee claimants being housed in the City of Toronto.

## NSP Client Profile

### Gender – NSP Clients

Gender	% of Clients 2018-2019	% of Clients 2019-2020
Male	27%	25%
Female	73%	75%

### Top Ten Countries of Origin – NSP Clients

Ranking	Country of Origin 2018-2019	Country of Origin 2019-2020
1	Nigeria	Nigeria
2	India	India
3	Ethiopia	Ethiopia
4	Eritrea	Pakistan
5	Uganda	Iran
6	Pakistan	Philippines
7	Bangladesh	Russia
8	Phillippines	Uganda
9	Jamaica	Colombia
10	Iran	Bangladesh

### Immigrant Status

Immigrant Status	% of Clients 2018-2019	% of Clients 2019-2020
Permanent Residents	31%	28%
Refugee Claimants	38%	41%
Canadian Citizens	30%	30%
Other	1%	1%

## Length of time in Canada

Time Category	% of clients 2018-2019	% of clients 2019-2020
Less than 1 year	15%	31%
1 to 3 years	39%	23%
3 to 5 years	6%	8%
Over 5 years	40%	38%

## Newcomer Needs

The key needs of newcomers as identified in previous years continue to persist.

1. Lack of recent work experience and gaps in resumes posing a barrier to finding employment.
2. Many of the recent newcomers we met with need guidance on how to best leverage their skills and education from their home country to find employment in Canada.
3. There is a need to improve communication skills for the workplace, both written and oral.
4. Access to child care continues to be an important need. We continue to encounter newcomer women were unable to participate in programs at WSC due to lack of childcare.



One of our NSP group sessions was a special event to commemorate International Women's Day. The event was attended by 20 women. Here Julie Gray, a volunteer from our seniors' program is addressing participants. To her left is the event facilitator, Emma Wanjiku, and settlement counsellor, Silva Mardirossian.

Annual Report 2019-2020

## Social Café Program

We were pleased to re-establish our Social Café program for women in February 2020 due to a generous grant from the McLean Foundation. The social café takes place Mondays from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm. Activities include art and craft lessons, games, guest presentations on community resources, Canadian history and geography, a reading and film club and cooking demonstrations. .



Social Café participants learning to play chess.



Art work produced by social café participants.



Cooking demonstration in the social café. Ingredients for Persian Finger Food called Kou-Kou Sabzy

Working Skills Centre



## WSC Seniors Program

The project, **Seniors Empowering Newcomers and Job Seekers Across Generations** was offered from March 18, 2019 to March 17, 2020 with funding from Employment and Social Development Canada, New Horizons for Seniors Program. This was our second year of funding.

Achievements for 2019-2020 included:

- 27 seniors and 13 non-seniors participated as volunteers.
- 60 seniors benefitted from the project through participating in activities organized by the volunteers.
- 45 non-seniors benefitted from the project and either attended activities organized by the seniors or were mentored by them.

Senior volunteers played an active role in leading and directing the project and met approximately once a month to plan activities.

### Activities for Seniors

Activities for other seniors included line dancing sessions organized with the support of the Montgomery Place Social Club. The Social Club helped us to promote the event and access space for it. Participants who were surveyed said they especially enjoyed the music and the stretch exercises at the beginning and end of each session. To reciprocate the support provided by the Montgomery Place Social Club WSC volunteers provided assistance serving food and clearing tables at some of the social clubs events.



*Line dancing class led by part-time instructor, Maria Astudillo.*

There were two major special events - one in July on Elder Abuse Awareness and the second in November on Financial Literacy. In the planning and execution of these events senior volunteers worked with non-senior participants and used the event planning process as a vehicle to provide coaching to non-senior-participants and help the latter develop their portfolio of experience.



*Financial literacy workshop for seniors, November 2019.*

Seniors planned and delivered 18 business communication workshops that included coaching in English grammar, business writing and oral presentation skills. They also hosted 10 job search workshops including mock interview sessions as well as one-on-one coaching. Verbal feedback collected from participants indicated that the coaching was very useful especially advice on how to expand their network.



*WSC students delivering a presentation on elder abuse awareness in July 2019. Prior to presenting the students received coaching in communication and presentation skills from our senior volunteers.*



## List of Staff 2019-2020

**Marina Nikova**  
Executive Director

**Matilda Thevasagayam**  
Financial Manager

**Claudia Bargellini**  
Employment Service Manager

**Mark Trumble**  
Microsoft-Lead Instructor

**Silva Mardirossian**  
Office Procedures/Reception Instructor

**Ansuya Chetty**  
Settlement Counsellor/Coordinator

**Isabel Laparra**  
Coordinator of Student & Alumni Support

**Sofia Hall**  
Microsoft Instructor

**Tracy Lopes**  
Program Coordinator

**Nawal Chowdhury**  
Medical Office Procedures Instructor

**Mobaswar Hossain**  
Medical Terminology/Transcript Instructor

**Shodan Nadkarni**  
SAP End User Project Manager

**Zumrud Guluzade**  
Program Coordinator

**Tunzala Mammadova**  
Program Coordinator

### 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!

Roy Malaga  
Victoria Gril  
Fatemehsoghra Momeni  
Sophie Kohn Kaminski  
Alice Bonavia  
Shahnaz Tabassian  
Rafath Ali-Khan  
Almaz Johannes  
Vida Arshad  
Shirin Dorafshar  
Lynn Wolverton  
Mickail Lawrence  
Haji Hasan Salum

Jennifer Skalenda  
Olga Chernyk  
Rozina Khoja  
Zenab Naqvi  
Julie Gray  
Etenesh Habtemariam  
Damiana Palmieri  
Sofiat Tokunbo Agunrege  
Wasiu Onibun  
Mohammed Ogunsanya  
Ameera Ahmed  
Tina (previous receptionist)  
Zumrud (previous program coordinator)

## 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.

Location	2019 -2020 Directors & Officers			
<b>Address:</b> 703 - 55 Eglinton Ave E Toronto, ON M4P 1G8 <b>Phone:</b> (416) 703-7770 <b>Fax:</b> (416) 703-1610 <b>Website:</b> www.workingskillscentre.com	<b>Jo Anne Rabanillo</b> <b>Denise Hinds</b> <b>Marilyn Buentipo</b> <b>Tom Hatcher</b>	President Vice-President Secretary Treasurer	<b>Shideh Dianetnejad</b> <b>Leyla Akhmerova</b> <b>Vida Arshad</b>	Member at Large Member at Large Member at Large

Acknowledgements Working Skills Centre would like to acknowledge our 2019-2020 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 Children, Community and Social Services, Newcomer Settlement Program
- City Of Toronto
  - Toronto Employment and Social Services
  - Investing in Neighbourhoods
- Toronto Foundation
  - Deacon Legacy Grants
  - Shum Vourkoutiotis Fund
- McLean Foundation
  - Canadian Mental Health Association (Opening Doors Project)
  - West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre
  - St. Stephen's Community House
  - Habitat for Humanity
  - Canada Human Rights International Organization
  - Canadian Cancer Society
  - Comprehensive Health Care Network
  - Elspeth Heyworth Centre for Women
  - Lumacare
  - Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre
  - YMCA
  - MCIS Language Solutions
  - YWCA
  - Newcomer Women's Services
  - Street haven Learning Centre
  - UBS Financial
  - Volunteer Canada

### Community and Private Sector Partners who supported us in our work

- Credit Canada Debt Solutions
- Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Organization
- Institute of Leadership for Women in Ontario
- Hospice Toronto
- The Career Foundation
- Toronto Community Employment Services
- Toronto Public Library, North Toronto Branch
- Workers' Health & Safety Legal Clinic
- Woodgreen Community Services

*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
- Social Enterprise Toronto
- Toronto Workforce Innovation Group
- Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership
- Youth Employment Partnership