



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2024-2025

## Management Report

### Highlights for 2024-2025



In 2024–25, nonprofit organizations in Canada faced significant challenges, including rising demand for services, financial instability, and a shrinking donor base. Other major pressures included workforce issues such as high staff burnout and increased operational costs,

particularly for insurance and rent.

The biggest impact on WSC during the year was the expiration of the contract for the delivery of Purchase of Employment Services (POES) with Toronto Employment & Social Services. The Province of Ontario determined that these services would be better delivered through a competitive bidding process. For Working Skills Centre, this contract had been its main funding source for the past 15 years. Losing it posed a major challenge—one that the WSC team met with determination and courage.

In Fall 2024, eight proposals were submitted in an effort to secure new funding. The two largest successful proposals were:

- Walk Out Working (WOW-Youth) program funded by TK Foundation (based in Bahamas)
- Integrated Employment Services (IES) system funded by the Ministry of Labour and Training Skills Development through WCG Corporation.

The Working Skills Centre team adapted quickly to the new format of Employment Ontario services and was ready to begin delivering services immediately in April 2025.

Systemic challenges have persisted across the nonprofit sector over the past three years:

- Financial instability: 88% of organizations cite financial uncertainty as a major concern, with costs like insurance rising significantly. Revenue has declined on average, while expenses have increased for most organizations.
- Increased demand: The demand for services has risen significantly, particularly for skills training, but the capacity to meet this demand has not kept pace.
- Declining funding: A decline in donor numbers and a multi-decade reduction in individual giving, combined with insufficient government funding increases, has created a difficult financial environment.
- Rising operational costs: In addition to staff wages, operational costs, such as insurance and general and inflation continue to strain nonprofit budgets.

The 2024–25 year was an important transitional year for WSC. Many thanks to the dedicated, hard-working WSC team and to the Board of Directors for their consistent support, which enabled the successful navigation of these changes.

Marina Nikova  
Executive Director  
2024-2025

## 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](http://www.workingskillscentre.com)

## 2024 -2025 Board of Directors & Officers

<b>Jo Anne Rabanillo</b>	Chairperson	<b>Vida Arshad</b>	Member at Large
<b>Denise Hinds</b>	Past Chairperson	<b>Shideh Dianetnejad</b>	Member at Large
<b>Leslie Alves</b>	Secretary	<b>Stephanie Pavlich</b>	Member at Large
<b>Maggie Yu</b>	Treasurer		

## List of Staff 2024-2025

<b>Marina Nikova</b> Executive Director	<b>Vivian Unegbu</b> Instructor
<b>Ansuya Chetty</b> Settlement Counsellor / Coordinator	<b>Kaloc Ky</b> Coordinator of Student Services
<b>Claudia Bargellini</b> Employment Services Manager	<b>Amany Seleem</b> Bookkeeper
<b>Dian Liu</b> Employment Services Coordinator	<b>Mark Trumble</b> Microsoft-Lead Instructor
<b>Isabel Laparra</b> Education Manager	<b>Kevin Wilson</b> Microsoft Office Instructor
<b>Sofia Hall</b> Education Assistant	<b>Silva Mardirossian</b> Office Procedures/Reception Instructor
<b>Ilona Moskalenko</b> Outreach Worker	<b>Shodan Nadkarni</b> SAP End User Project Manager
<b>Dr. Mobaswar Hossain</b> Medical Office Procedures Instructor	

## Volunteers 2024-2025

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!

Alice Bonavia  
Kiara Fine  
Kourosh Arshad  
Linda Williams  
Marika Budu  
Natalya Krylova  
Pary Momeni  
Rafath Ali-Khan  
Ruby Sportum-Wood  
Sophie Kohn Kaminsky  
Susan Le Roy  
Suzan Shath  
Teresa Szymanski  
Theresa Masson  
Tom Hatcher  
Vida Arshad  
Zenab Naqvi

Ana Cecilia Carillo Vargas  
Archana Jaiswal  
Ashley Zimmerman  
Bolaji Akinde  
Deepa Kotapati  
Hapuarachchige Duminda Hapuarachchi  
Mark Moskalenko  
Maryam Daryaei  
Mohammad Musa  
Parmida Mirtalebi  
Ruth Wanjiru Maina  
Sanaz Ghadiri  
Shima Arshad  
Tsolina Jaladian  
Tuan Farook  
Yasmin Shath

Alex Sternin  
Alexander Rudnev  
Amani Abdelaziz  
Annette Muhoro  
Bob Ottaway  
Grace Ikhifa  
Kolawole Ogunlade  
Michelle Roberts  
Musa Mohammad  
Olha Romanenko  
Rehana Akhter  
Shaghayegh Haririan  
Shazia Tasneem  
Tetiana Maliukova  
Vera Radkevich  
Yuliia Pyvovar

## Placement Students

Kingsley Clarke

## Acknowledgments

Working Skills Centre would like to acknowledge our 2024-2025 volunteers, funders and partners.

### Grants and Contributions were received from:

#### Government of 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, Purchase of Employment Services
- Toronto Employment and Social Services, Wrap Around Program
- Investing in Neighbourhoods

#### Foundations and Other Grants

- Toronto Foundation
- Shum Vourkoutiotis Fund
- PayPal
- OCASI

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

- Access Alliance
- Academy of Learning Career College North York
- Canadian Centre for Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW)
- Canada Human Rights International Organization
- Canadian Mental Health Association (Opening Doors Project)
- Credit Canada Debt Solutions
- Don Valley Community Legal Services
- Don Valley Health and Wellness Centre
- Findhelp Information Services
- Heritage Skills Development Centre
- New Circles
- Multilingual Community Interpreter Services
- St. Stephen's Community House, The Neighbourhood Group
- Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre
- The Neighbourhood Organization
- Toronto Community Employment Services
- Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation
- Unison Health and Community Services
- United for Literacy
- Up with Women
- West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Services
- Willowdale Community Legal Services
- WoodGreen
- Workers' Health and Safety Legal Clinic
- YMCA
- YWCA Employment 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
- Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership
- Youth Employment Partnership

## Skills Training

In 2024, our long-standing partnership with TESS for skills training and employment programs came to an end, but our proposal for IES services under Employment Ontario was successfully approved.

### Certificate Programs

The Essential Skills for Office Professionals program ran mainly online this year, with two cohorts completing 12 weeks of training. Participants built core administrative skills, gained hands-on experience with office tools and applications, and completed Experiential Learning Projects to showcase their abilities.

The 16-week Career Development in Financial Services using SAP program trained 34 students this year. Participants gained accounting skills and SAP-FI experience.

WSC delivered two cohorts of the Microsoft Office Specialist program, where participants developed advanced MS Office skills and could earn certifications, with optional training in medical administration or bookkeeping.

### Diploma Program

WSC and the Academy of Computer & Employment Skills successfully delivered two cohorts of the Administrative Assistant with Desktop Publishing Diploma program. Over 20 weeks, graduates develop the professional, technical, and soft skills needed for administrative, secretarial, and executive assistant roles.

### Overview

Our graduates and students continue to face challenges entering the labour market due to rising

living costs and other barriers, including immigration status, mental health, and personal well-being

### Challenges

WSC continued to support participants in overcoming barriers to employment, including limited access to resources such as childcare, rising living costs, and housing challenges. By strengthening community partnerships, we were able to connect participants with essential supports to help them succeed.

Despite challenges such as mental health concerns and delays in the refugee claim process, our clients remained resilient. Many newcomers, including those awaiting work permits, benefited from our collaborations with LIP and Jumpstart Refugee Talent, helping them move closer to training and employment opportunities.

Through these efforts, WSC continues to empower students and graduates to navigate obstacles and build a strong foundation for career success

### Continued Opportunities

We continue to be involved in several workgroup that meet monthly for DEI and LMI. This partnership strengthens our presence in the non-for-profit sector. We participate in a panel to discuss the pathways and barriers that asylum seekers encounter when trying to access jobs and what resources are available in April 2024. In addition, we strengthen our partnership with Yonge Eglinton Community Centre for a job fair with CIBC in February 2025.

2023-2024 Post Program Results	ES3	OA2	MOS2	2024	ES1	OA1	MOS1	SAP	ES2	OA2	MOS2
Intake	15	16	13	Intake	22	16	14	32	22	14	12
Completed	14	16	13	Completed	18	14	12	32	22	11	11
Employed	1	3	6	Employed	7	2	6	14	There was no post-program component. Clients were offered job search support until March 2025 and to register for Employment Ontario.		
Training	8	5	3	Training	3	8	3	9			
Volunteer/Placement	4	7	4	Volunteer/Placement	8	1	2	2			
Incomplete	1	0	0	Incomplete	4	2	2	0			
Success %	93%	94%	100%	Success %	100%	71%	92%	78%			
These results indicate a consistently high level of success for graduates, with program-wide placement rates averaging 93% or higher.				As the Purchase of Employment Services with the City of Toronto came to an end in 2024, program completion rates were high amongst all groups. Although there was no post-program component for these groups, employment support was provided and many graduates completed work placements or found employment. Several graduates became clients of ours under the Employment Ontario program on March 3, 2025.							



# Settlement Services 2024- 2025

## Newcomer Settlement Program

WSC's settlement services are funded by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. This was the third year of a five-year contract covering 2022-2027.

### Key Accomplishments for 2024-2025

1. We served 493 clients, exceeding our target of 480 for the year.
2. We provided over 1146 one-on-one services, including needs assessments, settlement planning, and referrals to community resources.
3. We conducted 96 settlement workshops covering a wide range of topics including: Employee Rights; Financial Literacy; Managing Stress and Anxiety; Fraud Prevention; Volunteering and Finding a job; Indigenous Awareness; Healthy Eating, Civic Engagement; Conversation Circles, Digital Literacy, Business Writing and Orientation to Programs for Newcomers in Ontario.
4. Throughout the year we had excellent attendance at our workshops and group sessions and we were pleased to note registrations from parts of Ontario beyond the GTA.
5. We successfully explored a language across the curriculum approach in our digital literacy for newcomer's workshop series. These workshops not only teach digital literacy skills, but also build vocabulary, improve grammar, and increase knowledge about Canada and Ontario.

### Acknowledgements

Our settlement program benefited greatly from the support of community partners. A special thanks to the Canadian Centre for Rehabilitation and Work, Yonge Eglinton Community Centre, Toronto Community Employment Services, the Opening Doors Project, Credit Canada Debt Solutions, Workers Health and Safety Legal Clinic, YWCA Employment Services, Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre, and West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Services for their practical assistance. We also sincerely thank the Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership (now the North East Toronto Local Immigration Partnership), which offers a platform for information sharing, networking, and professional development, activities that ultimately strengthen our settlement program.

## Trends Related to Service Delivery

1. There was an increase in refugees seeking services compared with the previous year. In 2023-2024, asylum seekers accounted for 43% of our newcomer client population. In the 2024-2025 reporting period, asylum seekers accounted for over 55% of our newcomer client population. Many were earnestly seeking employment.
2. Most newcomers, in general, need some form of skills upgrading to achieve their employment goals. A service gap now exists because the short-term skills training programs sponsored by Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) for over 20 years are no longer available. The program officially ended in March 2025. We hope that in the future some avenue becomes available for low-income individuals to access sponsored short-term training like what was offered by TESS.
3. In 2023-2024, we experienced a significant increase in newcomer clients from Ukraine, as several Ukrainian newcomers having moved into the Yonge-Eglinton area. We continued to serve these individuals in 2024-2025, and we added a Ukrainian-speaking staff member to our settlement team. Many of the Ukrainian newcomers have been facing financial hardships due to high rents. It is essential that we keep supporting Ukrainian newcomers, given the wind-down of federally funded settlement services for CUAET visa holders.

## NSP Client Profile

### Gender

Gender	% of Clients 2023-2024	% of Clients 2024-2025
Male	34%	34%
Female	64%	65%
Other	2%	1%

### Top Ten Countries of Origin

Ranking	Country of Origin 2023-2024	Country of Origin 2024-2025
1	Nigeria	Nigeria
2	Ukraine	Bangladesh
3	Pakistan	Ukraine
4	Iran	Iran
5	Bangladesh	India
6	Afghanistan	Sri Lanka
7	Sri Lanka	Pakistan
8	Jamaica	Afghanistan
9	India	Jamaica
10	Eritrea	Eritrea

### Immigrant Status

Immigrant Status	% of Clients 2023 - 2024	% of Clients 2024 - 2025
Permanent Residents	21%	23%
Refugee Claimants	43%	55%
Canadian Citizens	24%	12%
Other	12%	10%

### Length of time in Canada

Time Category	% of clients 2023-2024	% of clients 2024-2025
Less than 1 year	30%	37%
1 to 3 years	31%	38%
3 to 5 years	6%	4%
Over 5 years	30%	16%
Undisclosed	3%	1%

## WSC Seniors Program

The project, Seniors supporting seniors and mentoring newcomers was implemented with funding from Employment and Social Development Canada, New Horizons for Seniors Program. 2024-2025 was our fifth year of funding.

### 2024 -2025 Achievements and Highlights

1. We recruited a team of 27 senior volunteers who planned and designed a rich tapestry of activities. Twenty-four (24) non-senior volunteers, primarily newcomers, supported the implementation of activities and were mentored by the senior volunteers.
2. At least 172 community members (121 seniors and 51 non-seniors) benefited from project activities.
3. We hosted 26 social cafe sessions mainly featuring conversation circles along with several special activities and events. Topics at the social cafe included brain health, an introduction to film and media genres, art workshops, awareness of indigenous culture, 2SLGBTQIA awareness, and anti-racism awareness. There were special events to celebrate Canada Day, Thanksgiving, and the Winter holidays. We also held a community presentation on Toronto neighbourhoods. Additionally, a session focused on fraud prevention and raising awareness of common phone scams was presented.
4. We hosted six music and song workshops where participants, guided by a music instructor, created, rehearsed, and recorded a medley of songs. This intergenerational initiative was very well received.
5. We hosted 10 stretch exercise and dance classes for tenants in a Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation building at 130 Vaughan Road. We were pleased to have made inroads into a new community.
6. One component of the project was about engaging seniors in mentoring others. Senior volunteers hosted 24 communication workshops. They coached newcomer participants from different generations in oral communication and writing skills.



## How Seniors Benefited

In the focus group held at the end of the year, participants identified four categories of benefits: social, physical, educational, and therapeutic. They provided some examples: the bond that developed between participants working together on the song project; the knowledge gained from social cafe topics such as brain health, an introduction to film, and Canadian history and geography; the therapeutic art classes that provoked introspection and stimulated memory; and the improvements in mental and physical health from the exercise classes.

## Acknowledgements

A special thank you to Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation staff, especially Emma Beer, as well as tenant volunteers Kiara Fine, Gary Brigden, and Sourie Chaabo for collaborating with us so successfully on numerous events.



*Volunteer Ruby Sportum-Wood guides participants on a walk through Regents Park, introducing important landmarks and the area's history. (Nov 2024.)*



*At this indigenous awareness workshop, facilitators Tanya and Cheyenne Macmillan teach participants the significance and art of making Bannock. (Oct 2024.)*



*Tanya and Cheyenne introduce participants to Wichita Do Ya, an indigenous song that expresses gratitude for water. (Oct 2024.)*



*In this music and song workshop series, instructor, Alejandra Nunez, guides participants through the creative process of creating a medley of songs. (Nov-Dec 2024)*

# Treasurer's Report

Financial information has been extracted from the Audited Financial Statement as of March 31, 2025  
(Rashidi LLP | Chartered Professional Accountants)

## ASSETS & LIABILITIES

### CURRENT ASSET

	2025	2024
Cash	\$ 362,624	\$ 174,021
Accounts Receivable	12,250	13,136
Grant Contributions Receivable	-	47,242
HST Recoverable	8,029	14,759
Prepaid Expenses and Deposits	15,008	16,086
	397,911	265,244
Capital Assets	57,814	72,267
	<b>\$ 455,725</b>	<b>\$ 337,511</b>

### LIABILITIES & Net ASSETS

A/P & Accrued Liabilities	\$ 13,107	\$ 14,371
Deferred Revenue	400	400
Deferred Grant Contributions	89,998	2,009
	103,505	16,780
Deferred Capital Contributions	24,869	31,086
Net Assets	327,351	289,645
	<b>\$ 455,725</b>	<b>\$ 337,511</b>

## STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

### REVENUE

Governments Grants	\$ 265,197	\$ 419,503
TESS Skills Training & Employment Incentive - non-vocational	290,442	307,950
TESS Skills Training & Employment Incentive - vocational	129,803	126,282
Certificate (Part-Time) Programs	65,790	15,727
Fundraising, Donations and other Income	85,028	22,085
	836,260	891,547

### EXPENSES

Bank Charges & Interest	4,490	4,206
Computer Software, Supplies & Technical Services	22,789	45,837
Employee and Trainee Benefits	41,174	46,622
Equipment Leasing & Maintenance	11,001	15,266
Insurance	13,298	17,077
Occupancy Costs	100,418	129,704
Office Supplies	20,963	17,403
Outreach/Marketing	1,483	1,422
Professional Fees	10,420	10,012
Program Resource Materials	15,699	9,793
Grant Repayment	-	245
Telephone	8,112	7,930
Travel & Participant Expenses	658	1,727
Salaries	539,813	629,811
	<b>790,318</b>	<b>937,055</b>

**Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses before amortization**

**Net Amortization**

**Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses**

45,942	(45,508)
(8,236)	(10,295)
<b>\$ 37,706</b>	<b>\$ (55,803)</b>

## Alumni Testimonials

My name is Garcia Moore. I found out about WSC through a friend who worked in child and youth development as a case worker. I graduated from MOS (Microsoft Office Specialist, Medical Billing, and Medical Terminology, class of 2024–2025. I joined the MOS program in August 2024 and completed the entire program in February 2025. The MOS certification portion was completed in November 2024, and the Medical Billing and Medical Terminology certification was completed in February 2025.

Being a part of WSC was truly a wonderful experience. The lessons were very impactful, and the support from our instructors was phenomenal. I left the program feeling confident, knowing I was well-equipped to succeed, and very grateful for a place such as WSC that took the time and effort to pour into us.

I am currently employed with Affinity Health as a Client Care Coordinator, and I am happy to say that most of the skills I learned through WSC I can use daily, allowing me to remain sharp to the best of my ability.

I consider myself very blessed for the opportunity to join WSC. It has truly impacted and changed my life in ways I

didn't think were possible just a year or two ago. I would highly recommend WSC to anyone ready to upgrade their life and perhaps boost their confidence.

I am very thankful for every person I encountered at WSC, especially my instructors—Vivian, Silva, and Dian—who helped guide me in the right direction. I also want to thank Isabel for her kindness and support.

In closing, I would like to say that I wish everyone who needs to further their education or seek better employment could have the opportunity that we, the class of 2024–2025, had with WSC. Thank you, and be blessed.

**Garcia Moore**  
**Graduate, Microsoft Office Specialist Program**

My name is Julian Smith. I first heard about WSC through PTP, and at the time, I was just looking for a chance—a real opportunity to gain experience, build skills, and step into a career I could be proud of. In August 2024, I enrolled in the Microsoft Office Specialist program. I started part-time, doing my best, showing up every day determined to learn. Isabel noticed my effort and determination, and she believed in me. She made it possible for me to switch to full-time, and that moment meant the world to me. It is powerful when someone sees your potential before you fully see it in yourself. That support lit a fire in me. It motivated me to push harder, stay committed, and prove to myself that I could do this.

By November 2024, I completed the program and earned my Microsoft Office Specialist certificate, a moment I will never forget. But the certificate is not the only thing I walked away with. I walked away with confidence, real skills, and the ability to walk into any office knowing that I belong there. I learned tools that are essential in every workplace, and now I am proud to be the person who can help others by sharing tips, tricks, and knowledge that once felt so far out of reach.

Today, I am working as an Administration Trainee with the City of Toronto. I get to display everything I learned, and it feels incredible to see that hard work pays off. Joining WSC was not just about training; it was about

transformation. The instructors there do not just teach you—they uplift you. They make sure you understand, they make sure you grow, and they never let you feel like you are doing it alone. The patience, encouragement, and genuine care they put into us is something for which I will always be grateful.

To the entire WSC team, thank you. Thank you for believing in me, for pushing me, and for giving me the tools to step confidently into my future. You did not just prepare me for a job; you helped me step into my purpose. I would recommend WSC to anyone who is ready to invest in themselves, anyone who wants to build real skills and real confidence. If you are ready to level up, discover your potential, and prepare for opportunities that can change your life, this is where you start. I am profoundly grateful for this journey, and I am so proud of who I am becoming. Thank you, WSC, for being a part of my story.



**Julian Smith**  
**Graduate, Microsoft Office Specialist Program**



## Alumni Testimonials

My name is Asmaa Shakur, and I am a proud graduate of the Working Skills Centre. I first heard about WSC through my caseworker while I was searching for opportunities to strengthen my computer and administrative skills. What began as a simple search for professional growth soon became one of the most transformative and rewarding experiences of my life.

I joined WSC in late 2023 and completed my studies in 2025, earning multiple certificates, including the Reception Certificate, Microsoft Office Specialist, and Office Procedures Certificate. Each program offered me valuable knowledge, hands-on training, and practical tools that built my confidence and prepared me for today's competitive workplace.

The impact of the WSC program on my life has been truly profound. The courses were comprehensive and thoughtfully designed, and every class added new depth to my learning. Beyond the curriculum, it was the people at WSC who made all the difference—the teachers, staff, and mentors who were always there with patience, professionalism, and genuine care. They believed in me even when I doubted myself and made the learning environment feel like a community built on encouragement and mutual respect.

All the instructors were exceptional—knowledgeable, compassionate, and deeply dedicated to their students' success. They created an atmosphere that inspired me to learn, grow, and challenge myself every day. I am especially grateful to Marina, whose guidance and belief in my potential changed the course of my journey. From the very first day, she saw something in me and encouraged me to pursue programs that perfectly matched my skills

and goals. Her support and faith in my abilities meant the world to me.

Today, I am proud to share that I have secured a position with the City of Toronto, working in the Policy, Planning, Finance & Administration (PPFA) Division. The skills I gained at WSC—from communication and professionalism to computer proficiency and office administration—have been invaluable in helping me achieve this milestone.

Joining the Working Skills Centre was truly a life-changing step. It opened doors I never imagined possible and helped me grow both personally and professionally. I am deeply grateful to my teachers, Marina, and the entire WSC team for their constant encouragement, kindness, and unwavering support.

For anyone considering enrolling in WSC, I wholeheartedly recommend the program. It is not just a place to learn—it is a place to grow, to be inspired, and to discover your true potential. I will always carry the lessons, experiences, and gratitude from my time at WSC with me, wherever my journey leads.



**Asmaa Shakur**  
Graduate, Microsoft Office Specialist

My name is Liz and was in the I am a Microsoft Office Specialist program with specialization in Medical Terminology and Medical Billing. I graduated with certificates for all programs. My caseworker from Ontario Works mentioned this program and said it would be a great way to update my computer skills and become more current.

I joined the program in August 2024 and graduated in November 2024, in Medical Terminology in December 2024, and in Medical Billing in February 2025.

This program helped me update my Microsoft skills, which are used in most office jobs. We had a tight-knit group of students who became like family. We all assisted each other in studying and understanding the course material.

I am very happy to have joined WSC. The instructors were very helpful and genuinely wanted to see us succeed. They were approachable and understanding of our individual

journeys. I was also supported after the courses ended, which helped me obtain an opportunity where I could use both my administrative and retail experience. It has been a great combination of the two industries.

I would definitely recommend this program. It is always beneficial to update your skills and learn, and this program did just that. The instructors took the time to help us understand the material and ensured we were ready for employment.

I appreciate all my instructors for the guidance they gave us, especially Vivian, Diane, and Isabel. They are the most patient and knowledgeable group. They were excellent at helping us understand the material in ways that matched our learning styles.

**Liz Rios**  
Graduate, Microsoft Office Specialist

## Alumni Testimonials

My name is Michelle Van Luien. I first heard about the WSC program from my Ontario Works worker and joined the Administrative Assistant with Desktop Publishing program in 2017. I also completed Medical Terminology and received the certificate in 2017, then graduated with a diploma as an Administrative Assistant in 2018.

The impact of WSC on my life has been huge. It didn't just teach me skills; it built my confidence, strengthened my mindset, and reminded me that it's never too late to start again. The lessons I learned there still guide me every day, both professionally and personally.

Now, as of 2025 I am still employed at St. Michael's Hospital, and I use the skills I learned at Working Skills

Centre every day. Because of this, I feel it is important to share my experience and recommend WSC programs to anyone looking to grow and achieve their goals.

I truly appreciate the entire organization. I'll never forget what my instructor, Silva, said: "The only one holding you back is YOU." Those words have stayed with me and continue to motivate me whenever I set out to reach a goal. Thank you, Silva, and thank you, Working Skills Centre.

**Michelle Van Luien**  
**Graduate, Administrative Assistant with Desktop Publishing Diploma Pro**