



ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

President's Report



The COVID-19 pandemic has created significant social and economic challenges impacting so many people locally and abroad. However, through the efforts and commitment of our Executive Director, Marina Nikova and her remarkable client-focused team, Working Skills Centre has

remained in a positive position both operationally and financially. WSC continues to successfully provide practical training programs and settlement services for our diverse community.

We are inspired and motivated by the tremendous efforts of our graduates this year. All who have learnt how to balance their many commitments with studies during this unprecedented time and have come out ahead. They continue to show us why our mission is so important as we empower our clients to succeed.

The Board and Management have seen a productive 2020-2021 year. Starting with our fast and effective switch back to on-line operations. In doing so, we replaced many PCs and laptops, and provided our older computers to students in need. We received many accolades from our students, as well as from the City of Toronto, regarding our successful Wrap Around program and the support we are providing our clients during COVID-19.

WSC management and the Board continue to welcome and embrace an inclusive and diverse organization. We have been updating our policies to include additional diversity criteria, and course materials to align with best practises. We also took part in the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation for awareness and learning.

We would like to thank Tom Hatcher, who served as our Treasurer these past few years and will no longer be continuing our Board of Directors. We extend our heartfelt appreciation for his tremendous contributions and appreciate his willingness to continue to support WSC in a consultative role.

Earlier this year, the Board recruited and welcomed several new Directors who joined in 2021: Vanessa Paul; Stephanie Pavlich; and Jing (Maggie) Yu. Since joining they have brought their expertise, experience and support to WSC's objectives and our Board. We are very fortunate to have them. Congratulations to Maggie Yu, currently holding the Officer position of Treasurer of the WSC Board of Directors.

Finally, as we look ahead to 2022, we are optimistic that WSC will remain true to our values and steadfast to our mission. The introduction of our new WSC logo and ACES logo speak to our innovative spirit while encompassing our organization's mindset and culture. The steps show we are moving in the right direction, as we and our clients climb to success.

On behalf of the full Board of Directors, we thank all members, agencies, students, volunteers, sponsors and staff of the WSC organization and we look forward to working with all to make an even greater contribution to our community. We hope you and your families are staying healthy and safe.

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

Denise Hinds, MBA
President, Board of Directors
November 2021

Management Report

Highlights for 2020-2021



The 2020-21 year presented many challenges and new opportunities for both staff and clients of Working Skills Centre. The ever-evolving government and agency response to the Covid-19 crisis meant that we had had to remain both focused and agile as WSC's service delivery conditions were

required to change. Maintaining regular team contact via virtual meetings during extended periods of working from home was essential to boosting team morale and achieving positive results.

The transition from an in-class to an online learning model was a huge success. Skills training delivery challenges were overcome quickly with the support of our instructors as well as the intake and assessment teams. Clients who did not have access to computers at home were supported by WSC's laptops lending program.

In spite of the challenging employment environment created by Covid-19, WSC continued to deliver superior employment results under the second year of our 4 year Skills Training and Employment Services contract with the City of Toronto. Details are included in the body of this 2020-21 Annual Report.

In May 2020, Working Skills Centre was invited to prepare a new proposal to the Toronto Employment and Social Services for a new "Wrap Around Support Program" to assist people receiving Ontario Works during the Covid-19 crisis. The team quickly developed a series of modules which could be delivered virtually. These modules included; Personal Finance, Nutrition, Digital Literacy, Self-Managing Mental Health, and preparation to transition to other programs to reach

their goals. One-on-one counselling was also provided to those who expressed an interest. WSC was awarded the maximum number of client seats and feedback from both clients and City of Toronto staff has been overwhelmingly positive.

During the suspension of in-class learning, WSC initiated the replacement of our 8-10-year-old lab computers with new all-in-one wireless connected models. Consistent with industry trends, the MS Office suite used in classrooms was upgraded to use Microsoft 365 and the most recent generation of desktop publishing software.

In the Fall of 2020, WSC prepared a proposal for consideration by the non-profit, Creative Day for Social Good, for the rebranding of Working Skills Centre with a new updated logo, print materials and a new web site. A team of volunteer Media and Design Specialists working with final year students at Conestoga College (Kitchener) developed these items for the approval of WSC staff and the Board of Directors.

WSC's success in meeting the extraordinary challenges of 2021-22 would not 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 at WSC. My most sincere thanks is extended to all of you for your ongoing dedication and support. Also, thank you on behalf of the many clients we serve and whose lives we have managed to change for the better.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marina Nikova', written in a cursive style.

Marina Nikova, Executive Director
November 2021

Treasurer's Report

Financial information has been extracted from the Audited Financial Statement as @ March 31, 2021
(David Burkes, CA)

Assets & Liabilities

	2021	2020
CURRENT ASSET		
Cash	174,335	106,340
Accounts Receivable	78,271	41,066
Grant Contributions Receivable	-	0
HST Recoverable	13,710	9,010
Prepaid Expenses and Deposits	15,451	10,458
	<u>281,767</u>	<u>166,874</u>
Equipment/ Capital Assets	75,943	58,265
	\$ 357,710	\$ 225,139
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
A/P & Accrued Liabilities	\$ 2,093	\$ 7,890
Differed Revenue	400	15,187
Differed Operating Grants	87,988	28,300
Differed contributions related to Capital Assets	44,806	55,948
Unrestricted Net Assets	222,423	117,814
	<u>\$ 357,710</u>	<u>\$ 225,139</u>

Financial Position - Statement of Operations

REVENUE		
Governments/Foundation Contributions	\$ 313,566	\$ 241,347
TESS Skills Training & Employment Services	371,376	340,086
Certificate (Part Time) Programs	4,009	75,885
Fundraising, Donations and other Income	44,854	24,720
Donation -in - Kind		8,422
	<u>733,805</u>	<u>690,460</u>
EXPENSES		
Salaries	\$ 389,716	\$ 411,770
Employee Benefits	26,872	28,186
Occupancy Costs	121,635	153,495
Outreach/Marketing	178	418
Bank Charges & Interest	3,824	4,001
Computer Software, Supplies & Technical Services	25,438	11,528
Equipment Leasing & Maintenance	9,917	11,386
Insurance	12,750	12,924
Office Supplies	6,312	13,664
Professional Fees	6,548	15,826
Program Resource Materials	19,287	10,188
Telephone	9,260	3,940
Travel & Participant Expenses	4,001	5,025
Fundraising Expense		149
	<u>635,738</u>	<u>682,500</u>
Revenue over Expenses Operations	<u>114742</u>	<u>7,960</u>
Amortization	<u>(10,133)</u>	<u>(2,744)</u>
Net Expenses over Revenue	\$ 104,609	\$ 5,216

Skills Training and Employment Services

Skills Training continues to be a central component of WSC's work. Since mid-March 2020 WSC made sure to follow government measures to protect clients and staff members while reducing the spread of COVID-19. As a result, we were faced with the challenge of delivering our training programs online for 2020. Fortunately, we were able to make the transition within a short timeframe and by May 2020 were successfully running our programs online.

Certificate Programs

WSC delivered 3 cohorts of **Essential Skills for Office Professionals** online, where participants gain fundamental practical skills needed to fulfill the multiple duties expected of the administrative clerk. Participants train for 12 weeks gaining experience in the use of office equipment and computer applications as well as complete a community 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 consists of 16 weeks designed to prepare participants for employment or more advanced training in the accounting field, using SAP-FI as End Users, Super Users or Consultants

WSC was able to successfully deliver one cohort of a new program, **Microsoft Office Specialist**. The program was created to address 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 MOS 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

2020 was a challenging year in many aspects and brought incredible opportunities as well. Our graduates and students continue to face challenges when entering the labour market, due to the long-lasting impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic.

While, in general the graduates of all our programs have done extremely well, some graduates faced the challenge of having to stay at home due to 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.

2020-21 Program Summary										
2020	ES1	ES2	ES 3	OA1	OA 2	MOS	SAP	2021	ES1	MOS
Intake	15	11	18	12	11	12	40	Intake	15	14
Completed	13	9	17	9	9	12	40	Completed	11	12
Employed	4	3	5	5	4	5	25	Employed	5	3
Training	9	4	9	2	2	4	7	Training	1	
Volunteer/Placemen t		2	1	1	1	1		Volunteer/Placemen t		2
Incomplete	2	2	1	3	2	0		Incomplete	4	
Success %	100 %	100 %	88 %	88 %	78 %	83 %	80 %	Success In Progress%	55 %	42 %
Overall percentages of success (employment/training/volunteer placements) for graduates who completed their programs in 2020 stand at 83% for Administrative Assistant graduates and at 83% for MOS. In the Essential Skills for Office Professionals program the success rate was of 95% for all three cohorts.								Students that started before March 21, 2021, are currently in development to achieve their success goals.		

Skills Training and Employment Services

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.
- 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 referred many clients to supports available through Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) and also assisted a number of clients through our laptops for loan program.
- 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 affordable housing and increased cost of living were also challenges that impacted our clients in 2020, as such we had to increase partnerships in the community to better refer clients to resources that could help them.
- Keeping participants motivated under pandemic conditions was a challenge. A number of our clients have existing barriers to employment, such as mental health issues and emotional distress that were exacerbated by the social isolation.

Innovations

- 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 facilitates supporting 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 36 clients. 28 have already completed the

program and several transitioned into additional training at WSC.

- Increased partnership with YWCA to utilize paid placements opportunities to enhance self confidence and experiential learning for graduates that are still experiencing challenges in returning to in person work.
- Launched 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 developed partnership with Volunteer Canada to organize events for graduates, such as a video mock interview event that was hosted on September 30th where Vertex employees volunteered their afternoon to provide virtual coaching to clients on interview strategies. In addition, we also participated in a similar event planned with UBS Financial on November 13th.



Vertex employees conducting mock interviews with our clients in September 2020.

- 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 2020 2021

Newcomer Settlement Program

WSC's settlement services were 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.** In this period one-on-one services focused on helping clients cope during the pandemic including providing information on health care and mental health resources and government supports. One-on-one services were delivered using a mix of strategies including meetings over the telephone, virtual meetings on Zoom and in-person meetings during periods when pandemic restrictions were eased.
- b. **Workshops and group sessions.** Themes and topics covered in our schedule of workshops and group sessions included: a) Communication skills; b) Essential writing skills for home, school and work; c) Working with others; c) Continuous learning resources; d) Employment Services in Ontario; e) Importance of critical thinking in civic engagement; f) Planning a community event; g) Benefits of volunteering; h) Protecting the environment series; i) Employee Rights; j) Tenants Rights and Responsibilities; k) Digital literacy series; l) Coping with stress and anxiety.

The digital literacy series was added to our schedule in response to the need for digital literacy training for newcomers identified by community partners and documented in the report *Access to Technology* published by Toronto South Local Immigration Partnership. All workshops and group sessions were presented via Zoom.

- c. **Service Coordination.** WSC settlement staff attended meetings of the Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership on a regular basis. The meetings were very useful for networking and sharing information on settlement trends and resources.

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.

Results for 2019-2020:

- Served 362 unique clients. This was 28% below target, a consequence of closure of our offices for in-person services for much of the reporting period due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. One impact of this was the loss of walk-in client traffic.
- Conducted 1125 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.
- Hosted 94 workshops and group sessions with a combined attendance of 829 clients. WSC exceeded targets in this category with healthy attendance in our workshops and group sessions.

NSP Client Profile

The profile of NSP clients accessing settlement services is provided below with a comparison to the previous year. There was a sharp drop in the number of clients with a length of residence in Canada of less than one year due to the drop in newcomers admitted to Canada during the pandemic.

Gender – NSP Clients

Gender	% of Clients 2019-2020	% of Clients 2020-2021
Male	25%	21%
Female	75%	78%
Other	0%	1%

NSP Client Profile

Top Ten Countries of Origin – NSP Clients

Ranking	Country of Origin 2019-2020	Country of Origin 2020-2021
1	Nigeria	Nigeria
2	India	Pakistan
3	Ethiopia	Iran
4	Pakistan	Ethiopia
5	Iran	India
6	Philippines	St. Vincent
7	Russia	Jamaica
8	Uganda	Colombia
9	Colombia	Uganda
10	Bangladesh	Philippines

Immigrant Status – NSP Clients

Immigrant Status	% of Clients 2019-2020	% of Clients 2020-2021
Permanent Residents	28%	28%
Refugee Claimants	41%	33%
Canadian Citizens	30%	40%
Other	1%	0%

Length of residence in Canada – NSP Clients

Length of residence in Canada	% of clients 2019-2020	% of clients 2020-2021
Less than 1 year	31%	11%
1 to 3 years	23%	29%
3 to 5 years	8%	9%
Over 5 years	38%	50%

Newcomer Needs

Notable trends in needs as identified through our needs assessment process:

- During the pandemic, many newcomers identified loneliness and isolation as a challenge. Managing physical and mental health was a concern for all clients. WSC attempted to address this through the social café sessions, as well as workshops on managing mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Access to computers was a barrier to participation in online workshops and programs. WSC created a lending program through which we were able to help a number of clients gain access to computers. However demand far exceeded supply and a need has been identified for WSC to fundraise to increase available inventory.
- Job losses and not having enough money to make ends meet was a concern expressed by many clients. In the one-on-one sessions WSC was able to make newcomer clients aware of additional government supports available during Covid-19. Many clients were also referred to employment programs at WSC and elsewhere in the community.

WSC Seniors Program

The project, **Seniors Promoting Awareness, Empowerment and Civic Engagement** was implemented over the period March 18, 2020 to March 17, 2021 with funding from Employment and Social Development Canada, the New Horizons for Seniors Program. This was our third year of funding.

The goals of the project were:

- to promote volunteerism among seniors and other generations
- to engage seniors in the community through the mentoring of others
- to promote the social participation of seniors through organizing social café type events

WSC Seniors Program cont'd

Achievements for 2020--2021 included:

- Recruited 21 (our target was 20) senior volunteers and 15 (our target was 10) non-senior volunteers.
- Most activities, including meetings of the volunteer team to plan and organize events were conducted via Zoom. Volunteers were provided training in the use of online meeting tools.

Online events and activities in which senior volunteers participated and/or organized:

- 23 communication skills workshops for newcomers and job seekers
- 28 social café events for seniors (arts and crafts; fraud prevention; discussion of articles in the news; caring for the environment video series; emotional well-being and gardening, viewing and discussion of films; and a cooking demonstration.)
- A special virtual event on elder abuse awareness held in June 2020, was attended by 28 participants, both seniors and non-seniors.
- Senior volunteers also assisted WSC management with program planning. They conducted an independent review of one of WSC's skills training programs and made recommendations.



Members of the WSC senior volunteer group at a garden tea party hosted by one of the volunteers, Vida Arshad.

July 20, 2020

Capacity Building Project

Building Innovation and Growth – Women Empowerment (BIG-WE) is a capacity building project funded by Women & Gender Equality Canada. The 2021-2021 fiscal year was our second year of funding. The grant spans the four-year period 2019-2023

The grant has provided a much-needed injection of resources to enable WSC to develop capacity in the following areas: Gender-based analysis; Strategic planning; Communication strategy; Financial sustainability; Human resources management; Partnership development; Program Planning; Operational Planning.

Impact of the Capacity Building Project

The project has so far contributed to many improvements and positive changes:

- a) There has been development of improved gender-based analysis among the staff team. A highlight for the year was a community event organized by staff, students and volunteers to raise awareness of the struggle for gender equality and impact of the pandemic on women. The event took place on December 15, 2020 and was attended by 30 people.
- b) The project has developed WSC's capacity to plan and implement plans with an awareness of strategic goals.
- c) An important milestone was the completion of a long overdue re-branding exercise. As a result, WSC now has a new logo, brand colours and typefaces for future use in promotional materials and publications.
- d) One of the most profound changes was the migration of part of our network to the cloud and provision of training for staff in new digital tools.

The above developments and improvements would not have been possible without the planning and staff training processes facilitated through the capacity building project.

Alumni Testimonials

I immigrated to Canada with 2 foreign professional qualifications and 8 years of relevant professional experience (including experience with one of the top audit firms in the world) - initially, it was hard for me to get shortlisted for interviews. I realized that there were two main barriers to entry in the Canadian job market: Canadian certification/qualification and Canadian experience.

Thanks to Working Skills Center's SAP Program I was able to garnish my Resume with a Canadian certification which paved the way to getting my first job. The SAP program is a great course in terms of its design and content; on the knowledge front it provides a revision to the basic accounting and financial concepts, and on the practical/experience front it provides a thorough exposure to the SAP software.

I found the staff to be very considerate and our tutor, Mr. Shodhan Nankarni was exceptionally helpful and knowledgeable. He also went above and beyond, by providing us the opportunity to use him as a reference in our job applications, which greatly enhanced our prospects of landing a job.

I would gladly recommend WSC and their SAP program to all newcomers to Canada and to those seeking a break into the Canadian financial services sector.



Aaron Ambrose, CPA, CG

My name is Alaa Elhussien, I have been in Canada for two years and a couple of months. I wasn't working yet and I didn't know what I should be doing or how. I was feeling lost, and struggling because I had a lot of barriers, such as language and the fact that it is very difficult to get a job without Canadian experience, it was a nightmare for me, as a single mom with a 3 year old child.

I first heard about WSC online (City of Toronto website), which provides newcomers who are on OW with programs to develop and enhance their skills and find their way to resettle in Canada. I enrolled in the Diploma Program on September 2020 and I graduated and received my Administrative Assistant with Desktop Publishing Diploma on February 2021

As a graduate from WSC I gained some new skills from the sessions and lectures I attended, starting with the Job Search sessions (I didn't know that I had to learn those skills or they even existed). I also developed my skills in Microsoft Office applications, Customer Service (how to deal with clients, and how to be highly organized administrator by operating telephone systems) Business Communication (how to support and organize my team by preparing business correspondences, meetings, taking minutes, writing reports, agendas and memos). I also developed and acquired some design skills through the Desktop Publishing and Accounting and Bookkeeping using QuickBooks.



I am currently working at the City of Toronto, as an Exempt Trainee (Support Assistant). I really appreciate the knowledge I acquired from WSC because they were extremely beneficial and helpful during my current job. I am so glad that I found my way to this program, which has changed my whole life, and

I highly recommend this program, especially for the newcomer youths.

From the bottom of my heart, I grateful to all of the WSC staff for being such a great supporter. I would love to say that the most important thing I took from WSC is strengthening my self-confidence to get what I desired.

They are among the biggest supporters of me in my career. I obtained from this program the necessary experience and training in the job market, as well as the good relationship from the whole WSC team and continuous support.

Definitely, I'll never forget what I learned here for my entire life.

Alaa Elhussien

Alumni Testimonials

Hello my name is Brashad Gardiner, I heard about WSC's programs through my OW case worker. The program that had my interest was the Administrative Assistant with Desktop Publishing. I enrolled in this program as of September 2020-February 2021.

During my time at WSC I found that the staff and



instructors were amazing. They help you in whatever capacity that they can. I remember on one occasion I told the staff that I may not be able to attend class one day due to a financial struggle and they collectively decided to help.

When it comes to their teaching style, I must say they are hands down one of the best, the way you are thought makes you want to learn something new every day.

As of today, I can firmly state that the tools, resources, and techniques I've learnt at WSC are ones that I use from time to time, mainly communication and customer service.

I am currently working in the medical field as a Peer Support Worker with The Neighborhood group (TNG/St Stephens) we deal mainly with people who suffer from homelessness, mental health, and addiction.

It has been my pleasure to have gain such support and knowledge from all parties at WSC. I'd like to make a special mention to the staff who made my experience at WSC so amazing for their support and overall great personalities.

Brashad Gardiner

Hello, I am Cigdem. After I came to Canada, I was researching what kind of work experience I needed to set up my life again easily and quickly. I needed to learn the details on how to prepare a new resume and look for a job in Canada. I talked to my caseworker and she suggested I enroll in the Essential Skills for Office Professionals program with Working Skills Center.

I attended the program at the end of September 2020 and I graduated in December 2020. It was a 12 week program including various subjects such as: Job Search-preparing a resume, mock interviews with Human Resource volunteers, Critical Thinking, Communication, Microsoft Excel, Word, and PowerPoint. Furthermore, you are learning how to set your goals professionally, and be part of a community project with your classmates. It was a full time program with significant courses, additionally after the program ended I attended two courses with WSC in Medical Terminology, and Medical Billing.

In every subject and instructor follow-ups, everything was very professional done at Working Skills Centre. Instructors are very helpful and they never give up until you achieve your goal. They encourage you during the course and in the following 6 months. They email all the job posts that come across and they follow up with you on your job search applications. Finally, all the work, time spent, and follow-up brought me success and I got a job in the field that I wanted.

If you are a new immigrant, you can be very confused and hopeless. To start in a new country and build your career again isn't easy. You need help every step of the way, such as: job interviews, updating your resume, finding job posts, or being aware of job fairs. I suggest new immigrants to find the right point to start. It may be a program that relates to your previous career or maybe a new start in different career. The program I completed with Working Skills Center was related to my previous job and I also gained new skills in computers and communication.



During the post-program support, I met with my instructor almost every 2 weeks and she sent me job postings that I could apply for. One of them was a hospital job fair and I attended the hospital job fair. After the job fair process, I got the job and I had a chance to use all the knowledge that I gained in my new job.

Again I want to thank all my instructors for their amazing support in my new journey.

Cigdem Kirlangic Yalcinkaya

Alumni Testimonials

My Name is Mercedes Thompson and I decided that I wanted to upgrade my skills and get back in the work force, that's when I found Working Skills Centre. I found Working Skills Centre from my OW worker and she recommended me this program, so I could advance some of my career skills. I joined Working Skills Centre on June 7, 2021, and I graduated with a certificate for Essential Skills for Office Professionals.

Working Skills Centre really helped me achieve my full potential of being a leader, my performance quality by being more self-confident and utilizing past knowledge and experiences. With these skills Working Skills helped me obtain a job as Administrator for a Childrens Dental Office. I obtained this job by advancing my resume, cover letter and interview skills. Also learning how to navigate through Microsoft programs such as Word, Excel, Outlook, and Power Point. Additionally

learning how to critical think, working with others and reception job duties.

I am glad I joined this program because Working Skills helped me decide what career path I would like to take and obtained the knowledge to present in the workforce. I highly recommend this program if you want to start somewhere and don't know how to go about doing it, the staff will make sure you are ready and able to do the program with a lot of guidance where they feel your best skills are suited.

I would love to give some recognition to all the staff that taught us for this program to Silva Mardirossian, Dian Liu, Isabel Laparra and last but not least Ansuya Chetty. You ladies were very supportive, knowledgeable, and helpful and I want to say thank you for all your support.

Mercedes Thompson

I had been struggling to find a job in the career I was trying to start. I had gone years being underemployed or unemployed. I was very frustrated. I believed in myself but realized that I needed to make a change and acquire additional skills to improve my employability.

Upon arriving at WSC, I worked with and got help from Shodhan (SAP), Debra (Excel Expert), Matilda (Bookkeeping and QuickBooks), and Claudia (Employment Counselling).

I was enrolled in the SAP program which also included courses on Excel, QuickBooks, and Bookkeeping. I was able to refresh my accounting knowledge and gained additional bookkeeping principles, which lead to learning how to apply and utilize that knowledge in some of the most commonly used software in business. I completed each course with a confidence that I did not previously have.

Upon completing the program, Claudia provided one-on-one employment counselling. This step was

irreplaceable because she provided the necessary support for me to best communicate and connect with potential employers.

I have landed a job with the City of Toronto as a Financial Trainee. It is as good of a start to my career as I could have ever imagined.

Each course emphasized developing practical competence by completing projects and exercises. Each instructor did an excellent job demonstrating why and how the software is used in business. They were extremely patient and attended to every question they were asked. My classmates were mutually supportive and a joy to be with. The bottom line for me is after only a few months, WSC has helped me overcome years of disappointment and diminishing hope. Had I known about WSC earlier, I would have reached out to them a lot sooner.

Allen Widjaja

List of Staff 2020-2021

Marina Nikova
Executive Director

Matilda Thevasagayam
Financial Manager

Ansuya Chetty
Settlement Counsellor/Coordinator

Claudia Bargellini
Employment Service Manager

Isabel Laparra
Education Manager

Sofia Hall
Microsoft Instructor – Education Assistant

Dian Liu
Student Coordinator & Alumni Support

Tracy Lopes
Program Coordinator 2020-21

Deshara Francis-Dennis
Administrative Assistant 2021

Mark Trumble
Microsoft-Lead Instructor

Silva Mardirossian
Office Procedures/Reception Instructor

Shodan Nadkarni
SAP End User Project Manager

Nawal Chowdhury
Medical Office Procedures Instructor

Debra Yeung
Microsoft Instructor 2020-2021

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
Vida Arshad
Alice Bonavia
Shirin Dorafshar
Sophie Kohn Kaminsky
Susan LeRoy

Fatemehsoghra Momeni
Zenab Naqvi
Alex Sternin
Shahnaz Tabassian
Lynn Wolverton

Placement Students

Hira Chaudri
Svetlana Chumasova
Stephanie Francis

Patience Isemin
Varsha Sood

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

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Acknowledgements

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- 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 Neighborhoods

Toronto Foundation

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- McLean Foundation

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- Hospice Toronto
- The Career Foundation
- Toronto Community Employment Services
- Workers' Health & Safety Legal Clinic
- Canadian Mental Health Association (Opening Doors Project)
- West Scarborough Neighborhood Community Centre
- Habitat for Humanity
- Canada Human Rights International Organization
- Canadian Cancer Society
- Comprehensive Health Care Network
- Lumacare
- Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre
- YMCA
- MCIS Language Solutions
- YWCA
- Newcomer Women's Services
- Toronto Community Employment Services
- Unison Community Health Centre
- Access Alliance
- UBS Financial
- Volunteer Canada

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