

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2023-2024

# Management Report

## Highlights for 2023-2024



The measure of a country's greatness should be based on how well it cares for its most vulnerable populations."  
~ Mahatma Gandhi

The 2023-24 fiscal year once again highlighted the Working Skills Centre team's ability to quickly and effectively

adapt to changing conditions in providing essential services to the most vulnerable populations in Toronto.

WSC was fortunate to obtain funding from both the United Way and Ontario Trillium Foundation which greatly assisted us in developing new learning formats and providing skills training leading to employment services and other supports to disadvantaged Canadians and convention refugees, including those displaced from the conflict in Ukraine.

The Province of Ontario announced the restructuring of how the Employment Ontario (Ontario Works) services would be delivered. Beginning in 2025, the Purchase of Employment Services programs would no longer be administered by the City of Toronto, but by a private sector contractor. This meant that WSC and other service providers would have no funds to operate these programs for the 2024-25 fiscal year. WSC and other allied service providers quickly organized a collective coordinated response and, as a result, the Province and City of Toronto extended the expired four-year contract for another year.

WSC's superior performance under the City of Toronto POES Contract continues to exceed the targets, details are available in the body of this Annual Report. Similarly, the influx of new Canadians and refugees meant that WSC's Settlement Services division clients also increased. The outstanding performance of staff in handling the increased caseload is greatly appreciated.

The Wise Women's Group continues to provide a broad range of activities to support and inspire the program participants.

The COVID-19 crisis necessitated a transition to and greater adoption of hybrid (in-person and online) learning formats. This, combined with the transition to the Microsoft Office 365 and SharePoint platforms, and tighter class scheduling allowed WSC to shut down one computer lab and shut down the server room, resulting in significant rental cost savings.

WSC's success in improving the lives of so many vulnerable Canadians is only possible through the support of all the WSC volunteers and members, the Board of Directors and most of all, the professional staff at WSC. Sincere thanks to all who continue to support us in this very important mission.



Marina Nikova  
Executive Director  
2023-2024

# Treasurer's Report

Financial information has been extracted from the Audited Financial Statement as of March 31, 2024  
(Rashidi LLP | Chartered Professional Accountants)

## ASSETS & LIABILITIES

	2024	2023
<b>CURRENT ASSET</b>		
Cash	\$ 174,021	\$ 146,057
Accounts Receivable	13,136	-
Grant Contributions Receivable	47,242	156,364
HST Recoverable	14,759	15,166
Prepaid Expenses and Deposits	16,086	10,704
	<u>265,244</u>	<u>328,291</u>
Capital Assets	72,267	90,333
	<u><b>\$ 337,511</b></u>	<u><b>\$ 418,624</b></u>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; Net ASSETS</b>		
A/P & Accrued Liabilities	\$ 14,371	\$ 12,440
Deferred Revenue	400	400
Deferred Grant Contributions	2,009	21,479
	<u>16,780</u>	<u>34,319</u>
Deferred Capital Contributions	31,086	38,857
Net Assets	289,645	345,448
	<u><b>\$ 337,511</b></u>	<u><b>\$ 418,624</b></u>

## STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

<b>REVENUE</b>		
Governments Grants	\$ 419,503	\$ 480,706
TESS Skills Training & Employment Incentive -non-vocational	307,950	287,243
TESS Skills Training & Employment Incentive - vocational	126,282	130,903
Certificate (Part-Time) Programs	15,727	20,055
Fundraising, Donations and other Income	22,085	13,578
	<u>891,547</u>	<u>932,485</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Bank Charges & Interest	4,206	3,928
Computer Software, Supplies & Technical Services	45,837	42,758
Employee and Trainee Benefits	46,622	21,420
Equipment Leasing & Maintenance	15,266	21,420
Insurance	17,077	15,540
Occupancy Costs	129,704	124,682
Office Supplies	17,403	17,489
Outreach/Marketing	1,422	3,443
Professional Fees	10,012	7,094
Program Resource Materials	9,793	11,026
Repayment of Covid-19 benefits	-	20,021
Grant Repayment	245	-
Telephone	7,930	8,694
Travel & Participant Expenses	1,727	5,852
Salaries	629,811	602,799
	<u>937,055</u>	<u>928,586</u>
<b>Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses before amortization</b>	(45,508)	3,899
<b>Net Amortization</b>	(10,295)	(12,869)
<b>Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses</b>	<u><b>\$ (55,803)</b></u>	<u><b>\$ (8,970)</b></u>

# Skills Training and Employment Services

Skills training continues to be the central component of WSC’s work. We were able to continue all the training programs under the TESS contract.

## Certificate Programs

The Essential Skills for Office Professionals continued to be delivered mainly online with three cohorts running during the year. 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 34 students this year. We had some issues with retention and intake overall but so far, the success rate for graduates is projected to meet expectations. 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 two cohorts 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 period of time. The program runs for 16 weeks where 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

Our graduates and students continue to face challenges when entering the labour market, due to the increased cost of living and other barriers such as immigration status, mental wellbeing and health conditions.

2023-24 Program Summary													
2023	ES1	ES2	ES 3	OA1	OA2	MOS1	MOS 2	SAP	2024	ES 1	OA1	MOS1	SAP
Intake	15	18	15	12	16	11	13	35	Intake	22	16	12	15
Completed	12	14	14	8	16	10	13	30	Completed	17	14	10	14
Employed	6	1	1	5	3	5	6	19	Employed	6	2	5	3
Training	3	9	8	0	5	5	3	2	Training	3	7	4	2
Volunteer Placement	1	3	4	3	7	0	4	4	Volunteer Placement	7	1	2	
Incomplete	3	4	1	4	0	1	0	5	Incomplete	4	2	2	1
Success %	100%	88%	100%	89%	86%	91%	100%	86%	Success In Progress%	94%	71%	92%	34%
Overall percentages of success (employment/training/volunteer placements) for graduates who completed their programs in 2023 stand at 94% for Administrative Assistant and at 100% for MOS graduates. In the Essential Skills for Office Professionals program, the success rate was 92% for all three cohorts.									Students who started before March 2024 are currently in development to achieve their success goals. SAP 2024 students are still in CORE				

# Skills Training and Employment Services

## Continued 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 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.

In 2023 we continued to offer individualized counselling, resources support, and Mental Wellness guidance to clients. Based on feedback and results from 2020, we were also able to increase the amount of clients served and add new modules to increase training quality (business writing, numeracy, additional classes in Word and Excel to increase digital literacy).

We continue to strive for service improvement through our partnership with TNLIP and we are involved in several workgroups that meet monthly for DEI and LMI. This partnership strengthens our presence in the non-for-profit sector, specifically when dealing with vulnerable newcomer clients.

## Challenges

Lack of technical resources and access to supports (such as childcare) continue to impact both the employment rates and the intake process for new programs. Lack of affordable housing and increased cost of living were also challenges that continued to impact our clients in 2023. As such we had to increase partnerships in the community to better refer clients to resources that could help them.

Overall, keeping participants motivated continue 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 increased cost of leaving in the GTA. Compiling barriers make the return to training and employment a difficult transition to face without appropriate supports and accommodations.

In 2023 WSC noticed an influx of newcomers with increased difficulties in the refugee claim process. Several of our clients have been waiting for work permits and for a refugee hearing date for more than 6 months. Continued partnership with LIP and Jumpstart Refugee Talent are some of the solutions we put in place to alleviate the stress of our students.

2023 Wrap Around - Managing the Present Planning the Future – Participant Summary			
2023	WA 1	WA 2	WA 3
Intake	17	11	31
Completed	16	10	30

# Settlement Services 2023- 2024

## Newcomer Settlement Program

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

### Key Accomplishments for 2023-2024

1. We exceeded our settlement targets, serving 509 unique clients, an improvement on our achievement the previous year (2022-2023) when we served 456 clients. One-on-one services included client needs assessment, settlement planning and information and referral.

2. We improved our series of digital literacy and business writing workshops for newcomers. There was positive feedback from participants. The series helped boost our settlement client intake and as a result was offered year-round.

3. We established new partnerships and strengthened others. A special thanks to the Opening Doors Project, Credit Canada Debt Solutions, Workers Health and Safety Legal Clinic, YWCA Employment Services, Toronto Community Employment Services, Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre and West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Services for supporting our settlement program either through workshop presentations or client referrals. A special thanks also to the Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership that provides a forum for information sharing, networking and professional development, activities that ultimately enrich our settlement program.

4. Including the workshops mentioned above, we presented 96 well-attended group sessions covering a wide range of topics for newcomers including: Housing Resources; Working with Others; Employee Rights; Financial Literacy; Managing Stress and Anxiety; Fraud Prevention; Volunteering and Your Job Search; Indigenous Awareness; Healthy Eating, Civic Engagement; and Orientation to Settlement Services in Ontario. We piloted a new workshop series - Introduction to Canadian Popular Culture and Media for newcomers. LGBTQ2S+ awareness was integrated into some of the content.

### Trends Related to Service Delivery

1. We saw a boost in newcomer client intake compared with the previous year, no doubt partly due to the higher number of immigrants and resettled refugees arriving in Ontario as per IRCC monthly updates.

2. There was a welcome increase in the proportion of clients accessing settlement services within the first year of arriving in Canada. The increase was from 2% in 2022-2023 to 30% in 2023-2024.

3. In the latter half of the fiscal year we experienced a significant increase in newcomer clients from Ukraine due to many Ukrainian newcomer families taking up accommodation in the Yonge Eglinton area. The high cost of rent was a challenge for many of the newcomers who also faced language barriers. WSC hired a Ukrainian speaking staff member to assist with outreach and intake. WSC was able to accommodate several Ukrainian newcomers in our volunteer program. Individuals who volunteered benefitted from the opportunity to interact with residents.



WSC volunteers from our local Ukrainian newcomer community lent their support on behalf of WSC at a special event at Montgomery Place seniors residence, April 2024. They are pictured here with Mayor Olivia Chow who was the guest of honour at the event.

4. Finding sustainable employment continues to be the number one challenge facing clients. Many require some form of skills upgrading to reach their career goal. Clients on social assistance have been able to avail themselves of training programs funded by Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS). Unfortunately, these programs will come to an end in 2024. We are hoping that other avenues will open up in the future.

## NSP Client Profile

### Gender

Gender	% of Clients 2022-2023	% of Clients 2023-2024
Male	22%	34%
Female	77%	64%
Other	1%	2%

### Top Ten Countries of Origin

Ranking	Country of Origin 2022-2023	Country of Origin 2023-2024
1	Nigeria	Nigeria
2	Pakistan	Ukraine
3	Afghanistan	Pakistan
4	Jamaica	Iran
5	India	Bangladesh
6	Philippines	Afghanistan
7	Ethiopia	Sri Lanka
8	Uganda	Jamaica
9	Ukraine	India
10	Iran	Eritrea

### Immigrant Status

Immigrant Status	% of Clients 2022 - 2023	% of Clients 2023 - 2024
Permanent Residents	29%	21%
Refugee Claimants	21%	43%
Canadian Citizens	45%	24%
Other	5%	12%

### Length of time in Canada

Time Category	% of clients 2022-2023	% of clients 2023-2024
Less than 1 year	2%	30%
1 to 3 years	25%	31%
3 to 5 years	16%	6%
Over 5 years	57%	30%
Undisclosed	0%	3%

## WSC Seniors Program

The project, **Seniors supporting seniors and the mentoring of newcomer and racialized women** was implemented with funding from Employment and Social Development Canada, New Horizons for Seniors Program. 2023-2024 was our fifth year of funding.

### The goals of the project were:

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

### 2023 - 2024 Achievements and Highlights

1. We recruited a team of 29 senior volunteers (target was 25) who planned and designed an amazing schedule of activities. The team contributed wonderful ideas and contributed the time to ensure that the activities went smoothly. It can be said that they enhanced our agency's capacity to provide meaningful programming for seniors. Twenty-six (26) non-senior volunteers (target was 25) primarily newcomer and racialized women, supported the implementation of activities and were mentored by the senior volunteers.

2. Other than the volunteers, 139 community members (90 seniors and 49 non-seniors) benefitted from a variety of project activities. (Target was 80 seniors and 45 non-seniors.)

3. We hosted 23 stretch exercise and dance classes. The stretch exercise classes, attended by an average of 10-15 seniors per session were hugely successful. The instructor established a wonderful rapport with seniors who enjoyed the stretch exercises performed to music. Seniors came from different cultural backgrounds and even those not conversant in English were able to follow the activity and enjoy the sessions.

4. We hosted 32 social cafe type events consisting mainly of conversation circles but also including several special events: a trip to a museum, a nature walk, a board games event, a music percussion session, an intergenerational indigenous awareness session and a summer barbecue gathering.

5. We also hosted 24 digital literacy workshops and over 20 individual computer coaching sessions.

## WSC Seniors Program Cont'd

6. In implementing some of the events for seniors, we collaborated with the social clubs at two Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation buildings in our office neighbourhood. They helped us promote the events and one senior from each club joined our volunteer team to strengthen the collaboration.

7. The 26 non-senior volunteers that we recruited consisted primarily of women drawn from newcomer and racialized communities, this being the target group for this deliverable. Non-senior volunteers supported the implementation of project activities, gaining work experience in the process. Mentoring from seniors helped enhance the quality of the work experience. (Resume gaps and lack of recent and/or relevant work experience are among some of the challenges to finding employment for many newcomer and racialized women.)

8. Senior volunteers also provided coaching in communication skills through business writing workshops and presentation skills coaching sessions. We hosted 30 business communication workshops including 23 business writing skills workshops, four sessions on how to use Outlook effectively as a tool for communication, and coaching sessions on how to deliver effective presentations.

9. An important highlight of the year was the December 19 community event entitled **The Growing Epidemic of Fraud and How Seniors are Impacted**. The event was the culmination of a special project in which non-senior volunteers guided by senior volunteers developed four presentations on senior abuse and fraud. The community event was attended by 42 community members from a cross section of age groups. Attendees were impressed by the quality of the presentations, which they said were very informative. It was also a learning journey for the volunteer team who by the end of the project had greatly increased their knowledge of fraud in general and the impact on seniors in particular.

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



New Horizons for Seniors Program activities were lead by a team of senior volunteers. This volunteer team is pictured here on a nature walk guided by Sophie Kohn Kaminsky in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, May 2023.



Seniors sampled a wide range of percussion instruments at this workshop presented by musician and composer Alejandra Nunez, December 2023. Event organized by WSC in collaboration with Janet Magee Manor Social Club.



## Alumni Testimonials

My name is Elly Mirlohi, and in February 2024, I joined the Administrative Assistant with Desktop Publishing diploma program at Working Skills Centre, graduating successfully in July of the same year.

The program had a profound impact on me as a learner. Not only did I gain valuable hands-on experience, but I also acquired essential knowledge that has been crucial in helping me excel in my job. The skills I developed during my time at WSC have made me a strong and confident candidate in the job market, and I am proud to say that I am now employed, fully utilizing everything I learned in the program.

I am truly glad I made the decision to join Working Skills Centre. I highly recommend WSC to anyone looking to enhance their skills and build a successful career.

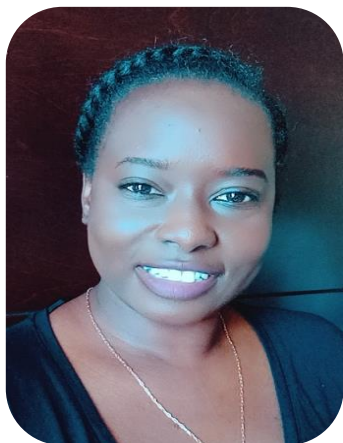
I would also like to express my heartfelt appreciation to Claudia, Dian, and Isabel for their unwavering support throughout the program and beyond, and to Silva and Mark for their exceptional teaching and providing us with the practical experience we needed. Without their

dedication, I would not have achieved this level of success so quickly.

Thank you to the entire WSC team for your incredible guidance and commitment to helping students succeed!!



**Elly Mirlohi**  
**Graduate, Administrative Assistant with Desktop Publishing Diploma Program**



My name is Tagwa Abbakar. I learned about WSC through a friend after expressing my interest in pursuing a career in medical billing and coding. I wanted to leverage the skills I gained as a medical doctor in my home country while I work towards obtaining my medical license here in Canada.

I graduated from the MOS program in 2024, with medical billing as my elective, having joined the program in September 2023. At that point, I had been in Canada for a year, unemployed, and struggling with mental health challenges following the loss of my father just six months earlier.

The program has significantly impacted my life in numerous ways. I connected with amazing and inspiring women from diverse backgrounds, and we supported one another throughout our journey. Attending class regularly and completing my assignments provided me with a sense of accomplishment that greatly improved my mental well-being. Additionally, I acquired valuable skills that have boosted my confidence in my job search.

Thanks to the incredible experience at WSC, I am now employed full-time as a Settlement Counselor at the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture. I utilize the skills I learned at the center almost daily, particularly the hands-on aspects. I am truly grateful and honored to have been taught by the exceptional staff at WSC, and I wholeheartedly recommend the program. I want to express my sincere appreciation to everyone at the Working Skills Centre for creating a positive environment and providing unwavering support. like this.

**Tagwa Abbakar**  
**Graduate, Microsoft Office Specialist**

## Alumni Testimonials

My name is Ngozi Gladys Obi. I was fortunate to come across the program 'Microsoft Office Specialist' offered by Working Skills Centre, Toronto, while searching for a study program online. I decided to make further inquiry as this was in line with my interests. The response I got from the staff was encouraging so I went ahead to apply. By March of 2024, the program kicked off.

This was an intensive program that took me from beginner to expert level in just 4 months. There was never a dull moment. The conducive learning environment with zero distractions as well as the seasoned instructors made this a great learning experience. At the end of the program, I obtained my Microsoft Office Specialist Certificates (Excel, Word, PowerPoint and Outlook). I further became a Microsoft Certified Associate in Excel and Word after sitting for and passing the Microsoft administered exam. I also obtained the Medical Billing and Medical Terminology Certificates. The time I spent in going through this program was definitely worth it.

As a newcomer to Canada, one of the key impact the program had on me, apart from equipping me with sought after technical and office skills, was to boost my confidence in my ability to succeed in the work place. I want to say thank you to all the Directors, Staff and Instructors at Working Skills Centre for your dedication and passion in making this a life impacting and positive



experience. I want to specially appreciate Dian Liu, who worked closely with me on my job search journey – the interview prepping sessions were a game changer for me. From dreading interviews, I now look forward to it. Thank you for your mentorship and for your support.

I am convinced this training and sessions went a long way in preparing me for my job with the City of Toronto as a Program Support Assistant, and in successfully going through all the application and interview stages in securing the job. I am already recommending any number of the different programs offered at Working Skills Centre to my friends and hope they get to have the same opportunity as I did.

**Ngozi Gladys Obi**  
**Graduate, Microsoft Office Specialist**



My name is Glendine Foster, and I am a proud 2024 graduate of the Essential Skills for Office Professionals program at the Working Skills Centre in Toronto. I discovered this transformative program through Ontario Works, and it has been a pivotal step in my journey towards career success.

The program has had a profound impact on my learning and readiness for the job market. The curriculum was comprehensive, covering essential office skills that I can apply in a real-world setting. My tutors, Vivian, Silva, Isabel, and Claudia, were knowledgeable and supportive, providing individualized guidance that helped me thrive in the program.

I am thrilled to share that I have landed a job with the City of Toronto, a testament to the program's effectiveness in preparing graduates for employment. I am grateful for the opportunity to put my new skills into practice and take this exciting step in my career.

I want to extend special thanks to Dian, the Employment Services Coordinator. Her guidance and support were instrumental in my success. From resume building to interview preparation, Dian played a crucial role in helping me navigate the job search process and secure employment.

I highly recommend the Essential Skills for Office Professionals program at the Working Skills Centre to anyone seeking to enhance their office skills and advance their career. The program's combination of relevant coursework, dedicated instructors, and employment support services makes it an ideal choice for those looking to launch or advance their career in an office setting.

**Glendine Foster**  
**Graduate, Essential Skills for Office Professional**

## Alumni Testimonials

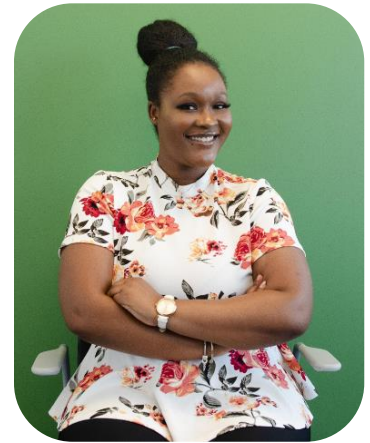
My name is Ashley Hoyte, and I first learned about Working Skills Centre (WSC) through my Ontario Works (OW) caseworker, who recommended the program to me multiple times. Initially, I postponed joining due to personal commitments, but I eventually enrolled in the Office Administration (OA) Diploma Program, graduating in February of this year.

The skills I acquired during my time at WSC have been invaluable in my current role as an Administrative Trainee with the City of Toronto. I frequently apply the knowledge gained from the classes, where Mark focused on essential hard skills, Silva emphasized soft skills, and Dian's resume-building course was crucial for success in administrative roles. WSC equipped me with vital customer service abilities and taught me how to effectively use job-related queries. While my current position has introduced me to additional competencies, I credit WSC for instilling the importance of critical thinking, which I apply daily in my role as an Office Administrator.

Some of the key takeaways from my experience at WSC include workplace harassment awareness, mastering Excel formulas like the "IF Function," and developing the ability to work independently with minimal supervision. Particularly critical thinking, this is a skill that every Office

Administrator must demonstrate consistently, as problem-solving is integral to both hard and soft skillsets.

In hindsight, I am extremely grateful that I joined WSC, even though I delayed it initially. I can confidently say that I would not be where I am today without the opportunity to enhance my skills and employability. I highly recommend this program to others and deeply appreciate everyone who contributed to my success. I want to extend a special thanks to Dian and Silva for their continued support and guidance, even after I moved on from WSC. Their willingness to serve as references for my current positions has been invaluable.



**Ashley Hoyte**  
Graduate, Administrative Assistant with Desktop Publishing Diploma Program

My name is Rosemary Njiru. I am an alumna of the Working Skills Centre. I heard about WSC from a friend who had taken the same program I was interested in at the institution. I graduated from the SAP program in November 2023 with certificates in SAP, Bookkeeping, QuickBooks and Advanced Excel.



The program helped me improve my skills and compete more in the job market. My international education background was not strong enough to get me hired as fast, and taking the course was the best

decision. I marketed myself in a greater way than I was before I took the program. I got calls for interviews, and this helped me gain confidence as time went by.

I am now employed in the finance department at Re:Sound Music Licensing Company and have been using my earned skills at WSC in my day-to-day reporting. I am glad I joined the SAP program and I recommend to anyone who may be thinking of joining WSC to do so.

My appreciation goes to the management, all the instructors who took us through the program, and Claudia who greatly supported me post-program in preparing my resume and assisting me through the interview processes. I wish the future candidates the best.

**Rosemary Njiru**  
Graduate, SAP Financial

## Alumni Testimonials

My name is Sylvia, and I joined WSC as a conventional refugee. Through my Ontario Works caseworker, I was introduced to the Working Skills Centre (WSC) where I enrolled in the Microsoft 365 certification program. The support and guidance I received from WSC staff were exceptional—they helped me throughout my training, encouraged me during the job search process, and guided me on how to successfully navigate the Canadian job market. As a result of their support, I was able to secure a role as a Financial Services Representative at CIBC.

The skills I gained through the program have been invaluable in my current position. I regularly use Microsoft Teams, Outlook, Excel, Word and office phone, all of which I was trained on during my certification at WSC. Additionally, I was fortunate to attend a networking event that led to my first interview with CIBC I received from my Employment Services Coordinator. That opportunity was crucial in opening doors for me within the company, and I am grateful for the connections that WSC helped me establish.

In my role at CIBC, I advise clients on their financial needs and help them make informed investment decisions. Every day, I apply the communication skills and professional etiquette I learned at WSC, particularly in how to introduce myself, conduct business calls, and manage relationships with clients. WSC not only helped me build confidence in these interactions but also provided me with the tools to thrive in a corporate environment.

I have always felt a deep sense of gratitude towards the staff at WSC. Their ongoing encouragement, even after I secured my job, has been a source of motivation. Whenever I achieved something significant in my role, I shared it with my WSC instructors, knowing that their mentorship played a key role in my success.

Their dedication was evident not just in helping me land a job but also in fostering my long-term career aspirations.



When I expressed my interest in finance and my dream of becoming a portfolio manager, WSC introduced me to the Canadian Securities Institute (CSI), guiding me on the path to obtaining the necessary licenses. This was a crucial step toward furthering my professional goals.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the entire team at WSC. Their support has made a lasting impact on my life and career, and I am proud to say that I wouldn't be where I am today without their help.

**Sylvia Nalwanga**  
Graduate, Microsoft Office Specialist

My name is Caroline Ojijo, I heard about Working Skills Centre through my Ontario Works Case Worker thereafter I joined in March 2023. This led to my graduation in July 2023 with a certificate in Careers in Financial Sector using SAP. The course helped me sharpen my skills in SAP finance, Bookkeeping, QuickBooks and Advanced Excel. Prior to joining WSC, it was not easy to get a gainful job so I resulted in survival jobs. I am so grateful to WSC because after graduating I was assigned an Employment Services Coordinator who helped me work on my resume and cover letter and also shared with me vacancies and workshops that matched my career path. I later landed into a rewarding job as an Assistant Accountant with Beauty Nut Inc.

I appreciate the fact that what I learnt at WSC helped me a lot in my work, and it's amazing that Beauty Nut Inc. uses QuickBooks to process accounting transactions.

Another aspect that contributed into my career growth is being able to stand in front of a class and share what I have learnt, this has boosted my

confidence a lot. All the lectures were knowledgeable and very professional, they made it so easy to learn. I thank God every day for connecting me to WSC and so far I have recommended a few people to join WSC some have and others are yet to.

To WSC I am so grateful for believing in me and giving me a chance to get back to my career path after going through a difficult season that left me so devastated and discouraged. I wish you all the best even as you continue to assist people like me.

**Caroline Ojijo**  
Graduate, SAP Financial



## Alumni Testimonials



My name is Dequana A. Simmonds. I discovered WSC while I was WSC. of work for six months and feeling uncertain about continuing my studies in social service. After researching various free programs online, I found WSC, which helped me move forward after feeling stuck. I joined WSC in February 2024 and

graduated from the Administrative Assistant Desktop Publisher diploma program in July 2024.

The impact of WSC on my learning and growth has been profound. I improved my interview skills and learned how to present myself more effectively. I gained the confidence to voice my opinions and advocate for myself. Building strong connections with my peers motivated me to strive for excellence, and with valuable tips from Diana and Isabel, I successfully secured a job on my own after graduation.

I applied my word , excel, photoshop, bookkeeping and QuickBooks skills to assist small businesses, including my own, and became more proficient in editing projects and writing professional emails. Mark taught me how to streamline my workload using shortcuts to enhance efficiency, which was incredibly helpful. The program helped me rediscover my passions and find my identity again, providing the confidence I needed to succeed in both administrative and social service fields.

I expanded my network with peers and professors, gaining valuable insights into my strengths and areas for improvement. Since participating in WSC, I've practiced public speaking more and have seen significant

improvement in my skills. The program equipped me with the knowledge and skills to complete my poetry journal, titled "Heart Strings."

While I'm not currently employed in a traditional role, I assist a few small businesses back home with creating business cards, designing flyers, managing client emails, developing social media content, and handling QuickBooks. I also run my own venture, HEART STRING, which is a poetry journal. I finish my internship as a Community Worker at CultureLink in September 4th 2024 and return to Seneca on September 7th to complete my social service degree. My passion lies in working within my community and supporting undocumented youth, and completing my degree will enable me to pursue what I love.

I'm truly grateful for my experience at WSC. There were days when I struggled due to my home environment and challenges in class, but the strong support system helped me push through and realize the program's value. I wholeheartedly recommend WSC, as it not only supports personal growth but also aligns with career goals. The skills I learned are transferable to a wide range of jobs.

I also want to express my gratitude to Mark for always encouraging us to strive for excellence. He consistently went above and beyond to ensure we understood our assignments and material. His words, "If my students are dealing with challenges at home, how can I make it stressful for them at school?" really resonated with me during tough times. Mark was patient and understanding, allowing us to think for ourselves, and sometimes we all need someone to push us to do better and he was that person for me.

**Dequana A. Simmonds**  
**Graduate, Administrative Assistant with Desktop Publishing Diploma Program**

## List of Staff 2023-2024

**Marina Nikova**  
Executive Director

**Kaloc Ky**  
Coordinator of Student Services

**Matilda Thevasagayam**  
Financial Manager/Bookkeeping Instructor

**Amany Seleem**  
Bookkeeper

**Ansuya Chetty**  
Settlement Counsellor / Coordinator

**Mark Trumble**  
Microsoft-Lead Instructor

**Claudia Bargellini**  
Employment Services Manager

**Sophia Omoregie**  
Program Administrative Assistant

**Dian Liu**  
Employment Services Coordinator

**Silva Mardirossian**  
Office Procedures/Reception Instructor

**Isabel Laparra**  
Education Manager

**Shodan Nadkarni**  
SAP End User Project Manager

**Sofia Hall**  
Education Assistant

**Dr. Mobaswar Hossain**  
Medical Office Procedures Instructor

**Vivian Unegbu**  
Instructor

**Kevin Wilson**  
Microsoft Office Instructor

## Volunteers 2023-2024

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

Rafath Ali-Khan  
Alice Bonavia  
Sophie Kohn Kaminsky  
Susan Le Roy  
Tom Hatcher  
Kiara Fine  
Shirin Dorafshar  
Pary Momeni  
Natalya Krylova  
Teresa Szymanski  
Vida Arshad  
Marika Budu

Rehana Akhter  
Ilona Moskalenko  
Helen Woldegeorgis  
Ashley Zimmerman  
Magdalena Chojnaka  
Parmida Mirtalebi  
Grace Ikhifa  
Tanya Macmillan  
Ahlam Ayoub  
Asma Zubair  
Tetiana Maliukova  
Olha Romanenko

Humberto Perez Urrea  
Asma Zubair  
Lubna Zubair  
Bob Ottaway  
Shalini Seeram  
Christiana Onugha  
Shanique Francis  
Katherine Castro  
Anna Novikova  
Amina Salihi  
Michelle Roberts  
Ana Cecilia Carillo

## Placement Students

Magdalena Chojnack

## 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)

## 2023 -2024 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		

## Acknowledgments

Working Skills Centre would like to acknowledge our 2023-2024 funders and partners.

## Grants and Contributions were received from:

### Government of Canada

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

### Province of Ontario

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

### City of Toronto

- Toronto Employment and Social Services
- Investing in Neighborhoods

### Foundations

- Toronto Foundation
- Shum Vourkoutiotis Fund
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- United Way of Greater Toronto

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

- Access Alliance
- Academy of Learning Career College North York
- Babra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
- Canadian College of Homeopathic Medicine
- Canada Human Rights International Organization
- Canadian Mental Health Association (Opening Doors Project)
- Credit Canada Debt Solutions
- Delta Family Resource Centre
- Don Valley Community Legal Services
- Don Valley Health and Wellness Centre
- Findhelp Information Services
- Heritage Skills Development Centre
- New Circles
- One Stop Medical
- Multilingual Community Interpreter Services
- St. Stephen's Community House
- Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre
- The Neighbourhood Organization
- Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership
- Toronto Community Employment Services
- 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