



FIRST WORK
ONTARIO'S YOUTH EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

Annual Report

2020-2021

Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres (OAYEC)

www.firstwork.org

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Letter from the Executive Director



“As we look to recovery and the evolving scope of First Work, we know that our success and path ahead is paved with the strength of our network and the passion of the people within it.”

Our year in review has been one of accomplishment and stride. With focused attention on our mandate, First Work has honed our direction to advocate for the broader employment sector at large with a focus on a sustainable youth employment delivery network.

As we approach the second year of a global pandemic, our sector has shown strength, resilience, and a strong ability to adapt to change. Along with this organic sectoral innovation, our sector is undergoing government mandated transformational change to a pay-for-performance model. Our network has worked together throughout this transformation to ensure we collaboratively share the successes and challenges faced in various catchment areas and together provide best practices to the rest of our sector. As we continue through these challenging times, I continue to be inspired by a network that convenes and shares openly, in the hope of moving forward together.

Over the last 12 months, First Work has partnered with both private and public organizations to ensure that we are providing our sector with ample opportunity to build capacity and innovate. Through the Ontario Government, we provided free training program offerings for our members and frontline staff, giving opportunity to increase professional development and create dual-customer focused programs. First Work’s partnership through LinkedIn offering free digital tools for our members, their jobseekers and community at large will support this capacity-building, while also helping to continuing to modernize this sector. Lastly, in partnership with dedicated job seekers and frontline staff, we created communities of practice to trial some solutions to common issues in government employment programs. Together as a network, we will utilize lessons learned to both advocate the government on some of the policy and program guideline changes to create more efficiency in program delivery, while also developing best practices to share across the network. First Work’s vision is to continue to grow the sector and build our sector in a way that strengthens our network.

Our success and the success of the network would not be possible without the dedication from the staff and team at First Work, and for these talented individuals, I am always grateful.

As we look to recovery and the evolving scope of First Work, we know that our success and path ahead is paved with the strength of our network and the passion of the people within it. This dedication will ensure we all continue to contribute to this network in the hopes of helping those job seekers most in need of our services, especially our youth.

Sincerely,

Akosua Alagaratnam

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a blue button-down shirt, is holding up a pink sticky note in a meeting. A man is visible behind her, also looking at the sticky note. The background shows a modern office setting with a grid ceiling and recessed lights.

Who We Are

About Us:

First Work is a leading membership organization bringing together the best providers of youth programming and employment services, business leadership, academia, and government in developing and advancing solutions for youth employment. Our direct engagement with youth ensures our services are relevant, culturally appropriate, and timely. Our membership community shapes our work and positions us as the bridge between the gap of young people and employment opportunities. Our continued advocacy at all levels of government supports progressive policy development for the benefit of all youth.

Mission:

First Work supports and advocates for a sustainable youth employment delivery network.

Vision:

To see Ontario youth access and leverage an agile and holistic employment network which assists them in reaching their employment and life goals.

Values:

- We believe all youth should have the opportunity to reach their full potential.
- We believe all youth should have equitable access to services, regardless of where they live.
- We believe in the values associated with a community-based, non-profit delivery models.
- We believe in honesty, fair play, and integrity in all our dealings and value solutions reached through collaboration.
- We believe First Work is accountable to its members for the achievement of its mission and core functions.
- We value an active and influential membership, leading the sector in advancement.
- We value partnerships with other organizations and governments where they contribute to the achievement of our vision and mission.
- We believe in the value of knowledge transfer and evaluation so that our members, governments, and community are well-informed, and our activities are evidence-based.

First Work Welcomes Nine New Members

ORGANIZATION	MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY	REGION
Niagara College Community Employment Services	STAKEHOLDER MEMBER – CATEGORY 1	SOUTH WESTERN
Project Work	STAKEHOLDER MEMBER – CATEGORY 1	CENTRAL
Sault Community Information and Career Centre	STRATEGIC 3	NORTHERN
Unemployed Help Centre of Windsor Inc.	STRATEGIC 1	SOUTH WESTERN
Algonquin College Community Employment Services	STAKEHOLDER MEMBER – CATEGORY 1	EASTERN
Goodwill Industries Ontario Great Lakes Career Centre	STRATEGIC 1	SOUTH WESTERN
KW Habilitation/ KW Career Compass	STRATEGIC 1	SOUTH WESTERN
Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre	STRATEGIC 1	EASTERN
PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs	STRATEGIC 1	CENTRAL

First Work Strategic Direction



Sector Engagement

- ▶ **Network Utilization**
- ▶ **Regional Targeted Priorities**
- ▶ **Top Industry Trends and Issues**



Regional Meetings

First Work regularly meets with members across Ontario, which are divided into four regional member groups, to ensure our work is responsive to the needs of youth, the frontlines, and the managers who support program development. These meetings typically take place in a monthly or bi-monthly capacity, however, with the onset of COVID-19, First Work increased the frequency of these meeting to better support our employment service providers during this critically turbulent period.

Regional meetings for frontline staff have been planned for the next year, as COVID-19 continues to impact the sector and the practitioners who serve it. Frontline meetings are offered on a voluntary basis for staff under the following categories, remaining broken down by region: Youth Job Connection, Canada-Ontario Job Grant, Employment Counsellors and Job Developers. The Eastern region has opted out of frontline meetings.

First Work Website & Membership Portal

First Work's membership portal remains the go-to resource for First Work members to access all our resources, previous research, news, and event registration for members-only programming. We are continuously working to make this portal more effective for our members and their staff. The Membership Portal hosts previous member updates, event information and registration, and previous Futures and Amplify content accessible to the membership.

In April 2021, First Work will launch a revamped website, in an effort to modernize First Work's public persona and increase the ease of access for information. This website will be easier to navigate, brighter in feel and colour, and will enhance First Work's reach.

With the new LinkedIn Project, First Work is building a microsite to house the automated registration for LinkedIn Licenses access. This site will also house all information needed by job seekers and providers to best utilize the digital tools provided by LinkedIn through Government of Canada and Ontario Ministry of Labour funding.

Sector Engagement

Tourism SkillsNet

Funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, this industry-driven initiative led by OTEC is growing network of industry peers and community investors, to support new ways of connecting jobseekers at all skill levels, to the training they need to access jobs, improve workplace performance, reduce turnover, and to enable the tourism and hospitality sector to grow and compete in the new economy. Since its inception in 2018, the primary priority of this award-winning provincial alliance has been to foster focused collaboration and coordination, bringing diverse stakeholders together to address specific industry needs.

In November of 2020, Tourism SkillsNet Ontario (TSNO) Provincial Advisory Council, announced the launch of TSNO's new website — TourismSkillsNet.ca — a digital hub that brings all TSNO stakeholders' efforts together in a single convergence point. This website acts as;

- An industry-curated **resource centre** that hosts insightful research from core stakeholders, contingency guides for the COVID-19 climate and industry stories;
- Access to exclusive **Labour Market** insights across the province, featuring workforce analytics that can be customized to your business' needs; and
- A consolidated calendar of upcoming **major events** across the province providing at-a-glance information in one place from all of TSNO's partners.

YSM Collective Impact

Through the Laidlaw Foundation's Youth CI program, Yonge Street Mission has launched a collective impact initiative designed to move the needle on graduation rates for street-involved and at-risk youth. Laidlaw's Youth CI aims to help organizations in local communities across Ontario learn about, develop, launch and implement collective impact approaches that directly improve outcomes for youth in their community. In 2019-2020, First Work was engaged in program development on the product and systems mapping aspects, to ensure that education leads effectively into employability for youth in Toronto through this CI initiative.

The initiative is now preparing for the Pilot Stage of the program (of 4 phases) which will take place in the fall of 2021. First Work has taken on a role in the Governance Committee for the next phase of the project, providing insight for longer-term, larger scale project success.

Canadian Coalition of Community-Based Employability Training

The Canadian Coalition of Community-Based Employability Training (CCCBET) is a national, non-profit organization whose membership is comprised of representatives from provincial and national non-profit employment and training associations and organizations. Through this past year CCCBET has convened and spoken at various conferences with locations including; Montreal, BC, Ontario and Alberta. Apart from convening these tables, CCCBET has worked cohesively to advocate the federal government on supports needed for the sector and put forward two proposals for sectoral change to Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).

Sector Engagement

Launching Committees

Advocacy Committees – Umbrella Organizations

First Work had organized an advocacy committee with other umbrella organizations, including: ODEN, OCASI, ONESTEP, CSES + Regional Representatives of Employment provider organizations. Over the course of the past year, First Work has worked in partnership with this council of organizations to advocate the ministry on a few critical issues. We have convened to discuss shared best practices as a sector, concerns and issues on both transformation and COVID, and invited the Ministry to our table to provide feedback from the sector with respect to the common assessment tool, employment transformation and program delivery.

Post-COVID Recovery Committee

This committee has met once and is composed of the regional representatives. Currently, met once to discuss the resources available to members and sharing of resources to prepare for transition back to work.

Strategic Communications

First Work is shifting communication outreach to provide as much practical support and resources to members during this time to mitigate the current climate. First Work is looking to building out a platform to provide information and regular updates as much as possible. In addition, First Work remains informed and in regular contact with our counterparts in Government to stay abreast of any upcoming changes.

First Work Strategic Direction

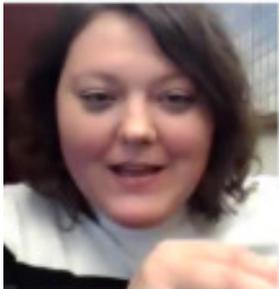


Workforce Development Innovations

- ▶ **Emerging New Approaches**
- ▶ **Program Innovation Pilots**
- ▶ **Information & Technology Integration**

Impact & Innovation Award

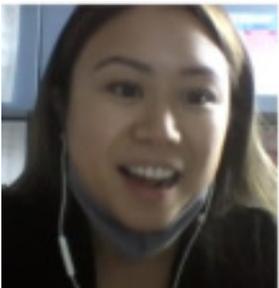
The **Impact & Innovation Award** recognizes projects and initiatives from an organization that demonstrate an innovative response to an issue or challenge in the youth employment sector, and that demonstrate promising outcomes and serve as inspirations for other service providers.



The **Creativity in Youth Job Connection Program** delivered by **YMCA Hamilton Burlington Brantford** is an initiative incorporating three types of artistic and creative skills with youth within the workshop programming. The initiative provided insights on how resume templates, colours, different mediums of expression can be instilled in employment workshops in order to incite critical thinking and self-expression in youth.

Emerging Leader Award

The **Emerging Leader Award** recognizes an individual whose energy and vision have furthered the cause of youth employment in Ontario. They have also demonstrated vision, collaboration and commitment in their efforts to serve their clients and communities. Annual submissions are encouraged.



The 2020 Emerging Leader winner is **Alhyssa Bofill, Coordinator, Get In Gear Program at the Centre for Skills Development.**

Facilitation Training with Generation Chosen

First Work's youth council and staff will be receiving facilitation training from Generation Chosen's Anchoring Facilitation Program. This training will provide First Work's youth council and staff the necessary skills to work respectfully with vulnerable populations.

The entire Anchoring Facilitation Program consists of 8 seminars. There are two parts to the program: Emotional Intelligence and Life Skills. All seminars are designed to be interactive, provocative and cathartic, pegging the ability to serve others to one's ability to better understand who they are.

First Work Strategic Direction



Strategic Collaboration

- ▶ **Public, Private, and Non-Profit Partnerships**
- ▶ **Research & Evaluation**
- ▶ **Mobilization & Partnership Agreements**

PROJECT INTEGRATE
Exploring Future Employment Pathways



How Digital Platforms Are Tailoring Youth Pathways To Employment
June, 2021

Future Skills Centre: Project Integrate

In 2019, the Future Skills Centre invested \$2.5M in a two-year project led by OTEC, MaRS Discovery District, and First Work, which explored the creation of a single, technology-enabled employment pathway for youth.

This project continues to explore how competency assessment models can be enhanced by technology to support more targeted employment skills training. OTEC's ALiGN assessment and job-matching model is designed to "screen in" candidates in the absence of transferable skills or experience. MaRS' Employment Pathway Platform is a career guidance tool created in partnership with Google to help create career paths in a rapidly changing economy.

Project Integrate presented demonstrations to youth at First Work's Youth Aspire Summit in October 2020. A unique use-case: Our project has predominately tested the stack of tools in a guided, closed group setting with ESPs. Futures helped us test an unguided approach with a group of youth. There was a total of 126 participants in attendance. The First Work team for conceptualizing the youth experience in a conference setting. Love the gamification aspect too. The results: We ended the day with 14 completed surveys. That means these youth experienced the stack of tools and then completed the survey. All this unguided. Big win for the project.

Project Integrate was extended by 3 months (ending April 30, 2021)¹ to allow the project more time to promote the two digital job planning tools: Align and Planext. This extension was focused on increasing youth outreach to the digital tools due to COVID.

Project Integrate utilized First Work's Aspire to Grow Summit that took place on January 29th to engage with youth directly to promote the benefits of utilizing ALiGN and PLANEXT in the youth employment pathway. The session was attended by approximately 66 youth and a number of field-testing partners who proactively shared their positive experiences of utilizing the digital tools to engage with youth in the planning and discovery stages of their employment pathway.

Project Integrate also utilized First Work's Aspire startUp Entrepreneurship Series as an exhibitor to further engage with young people regarding the benefits of Project Integrate's employment pathway tools. This event was attended by approximately 120 youth in addition to young entrepreneurs speaking at the event.

Sector Collaboration

Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity

First Work's pan-Canadian initiative for youth, the Council for Youth Prosperity, has expanded to a national body, the Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity. Now entering their second year, CCYP has continued to grow to aid in covid recovery. Our continued collaboration with CCYP as Ontario Council Member will ensure our members benefit from the advancements achieved by this council.

First Work and CCYP conducted a national survey and a series of roundtable consultations (led by First Work) across Canada to explore the various digital tools used through the employment journey. Over 250 participants from the employment and training ecosystem, youth, and leaders in Canada's workforce development sector were engaged in this study. The data and insights gathered will inform the delivery of a catalogue of tech tools used across the employment services sector in Canada.



Building Capacity, Strengthening Recovery: First Work's COVID Response Program with LaunchPad and Online, Together

Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development: Ontario Labour Market Partnership

Timeline: October 26, 2020 – February 19, 2022

This project seeks to increase the capacity, effectiveness and impact of employment service providers by providing training and technical assistance to engage and prepare disadvantaged job seekers for in-demand jobs, including: those in receipt of income support (Ontario Works and ODSP), NEET Youth, the long term unemployed, and those who have been laid off and are at risk of long term unemployment.

Designed and delivered in partnership with Purpose Co, this project will provide employment service providers with training and technical assistance to increase their capacity to provide quality virtual cohort-based programming, asset-based assessments and case management, and also develop customized pre-employment programming based on local labour market needs including specific industries and employers.

Project activities have kicked off with both training programs under this project – Launchpad and Online, Together – currently underway. These programs, targeted towards employment service providers, will help build capacity in the sector and strengthen the success of economic recovery for all of Ontario.

Sector Collaboration

First Work's Communities of Practice

JP Morgan & Chase Foundation

Timeline: November 1, 2020 – October 31, 2021

First Work's Communities of Practice (CoPs) aims to leverage the power of collaboration to solve Ontario's workforce development issues. This project is designed to harvest knowledge from practitioners with on-the-ground experience and insights from industry leaders to create and test solutions to workforce problems. The focus areas for communities of practice involving employment service providers are: Second Career, Canada-Ontario Job Grant, and Youth Job Connection.

First Work is also developing a CoP for trades industry employers to support more inclusive workplace practices, to be titled Industry Workforce Collaborative.

To further support this initiative, First Work and Purpose Co. developed and rolled out a Jobseeker Survey, for which hundreds of unemployed persons in Ontario have contributed. This research will be utilized for First Work's report titled, Ontario's Unemployed: Diverse Experiences, Common Challenges, to be delivered in October 2021.

Better Together

New Horizons for Seniors Program

Timeline: March 15, 2019 – May 15, 2020

In the height of COVID-19, applying the latest emerging and best-known evidence-based practices should help limit the emergence and spread of COVID-19 in settings which have a high likelihood for transmission, like nursing and retirement homes. Applying these practices will in turn likely lessen future demand for acute and critical care services, and so First Work supported the National Institute of Ageing (NIA) think tank on implementing evidence-informed work. First Work specifically aided the social connection of communities at the Baycrest Recreational Therapy programs by purchasing iPads for seniors in their long-term care facilities. By enabling social connection with family and friends at a time when visitation opportunities had been drastically reduced to prevent COVID spread, First Work supported the emotional well-being of this community. These iPad purchases will also be utilized for learning and development opportunities, in addition enabling the connection and communication between family and friends with loved-ones.

Sector Collaboration

First Work x LinkedIn Initiative

First Work has been approached by LinkedIn to be the community partner in their government-funded COVID-recovery program. LinkedIn has been awarded \$5.8 million through the Skills Development Fund to offer their digital tools to support job seekers and providers across the province. First Work, in partnership with LinkedIn and the membership community, will support the dissemination of digital licenses to job seekers and providers who serve them.

Specifically, Ontario has funded LinkedIn to deliver:

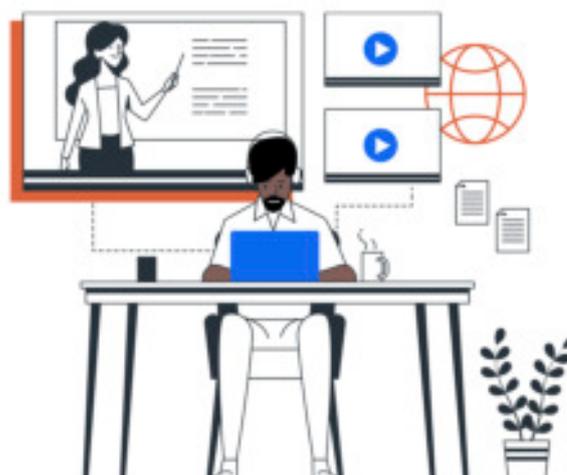
- **100,000 LinkedIn Learning Licenses** to help jobseekers build in-demand skills and for providers' individual professional development.
- **2,000 LinkedIn Recruiter Licenses** to First Work's partner organizations to engage local employers to facilitate employment for youth and jobseekers.
- **2,000 LinkedIn Talent Insights Licenses** to First Work's partner organizations to inform in-demand skills, programming and job pathways.



LINKEDIN LEARNING FREE until March 31, 2022

Funded by the Government of Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development

- Access over 16,000 courses available 24/7 on your mobile device and desktop
- Learn from industry experts to gain new skills, retrain and gain valuable micro-credentials
- Upskill with courses available in 7 different languages
- Achieve certificates of completion - available to download for your resume or display on your LinkedIn profile if you have one
- Show hiring managers that you are learning the skills they care about



First Work Strategic Direction



Knowledge Advancement

- ▶ **Conference & Learning Exchange**
- ▶ **Community of Practice**
- ▶ **Credentialing & Certifications**



Amplify Leadership Summit 2020
Cultivating Engagement & Innovation in Workforce Development
May 12 – May 14 | Virtual

First Work hosted its first virtual conference on May 12-14. The three-day event featured sessions about leadership, change management and the future of work for youth, and included an impressive lineup of speakers sharing their personal experiences and thought leadership with delegates across six meaningful sessions. The conference also included a very engaging Tweet Up with Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity (CCYP) about COVID-19's impact on the future of work for youth, and we wrapped on a high note with Dr. Kofi Hope providing closing Keynote remarks on the last day.



Futures Conference 2020
Workforce Revolution: Designing a Brave New World
October 27-29, 2020 | Virtual

First Work hosted the first virtual Futures Conference from October 27 – 29.

Futures'20 featured sessions about COVID-19, Building an Anti-Racist/Anti-Oppression Approach into our sector and Dual-Customer Approach. Futures provided three mapping opportunities about engaging vulnerable youth in program enrollment and employment retention, working with regional employers, and delivering trauma-informed services. The most anticipated session was led by three Service System Managers (SSMs) from FedCap, WCG and Fleming College on Employment Transformation Planning.

Knowledge Advancement

During Futures'20, an Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression training was offered by Hawa H. Mire in a session titled, "Building an Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppression Approach into Our Sector." This session was completed by all First Work staff in our continued effort to combat discrimination in all its forms.

A snapshot of the sector, identified through pre- and post-training surveys, indicated sixty-eight per cent of participants had never received prior training on racism, indicating a concerted need for further training opportunities for the sector on anti-racism approaches. Discrimination based on race affects millions of workers worldwide and so it's important that effective workplace strategies and policies be designed and implemented in order not only to eliminate racial discrimination but to support more diverse workforces.

A special thanks to our sponsors who helped make this conference possible: Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association (APMA), Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity (CCYP), Future Skills Centre, TalentEgg, RESCON, RBC, and WCG Services.



DOWNLOAD: Exploring Opportunities for Senior-Youth Intergenerational Mentorship.

New Horizons Seniors Project - Better Together

Promoting Mentorship, Volunteerism and Intergenerational Learning through Discussions with Older Workers

This research was funded by The New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHSP) which supports projects that enable seniors to make a difference in the lives of others and their communities. Through the NHSP, the Government of Canada encourages seniors to share their knowledge, skills, and experiences to the benefit of others. This research is a project with the objective of understanding the relationship between seniors and youth in the workplace. The project aims to understand the value of intergenerational mentorship programs for seniors, youth and their employers and identify the best practices for establishing senior-youth mentorship programs within the workplace.

This project determined mentorship can play a key role in promoting a positive attitude toward an age diverse work environment. Intergenerational mentorship programs present an opportunity for seniors to gain awareness of new ideas and trends and helps them feel more connected to young people in their personal lives. At the same time, it helps mitigate stereotypes and ageism among their younger colleagues and allows them to learn from elders in other contexts, becoming more grounded individuals.

Knowledge Advancement

Responsive Webinars

CERB & CESB Webinar - Service Canada (May 2020)

First Work in collaboration with Service Canada and Canada Revenue Agency will be providing a webinar on the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) for First Work Members. This webinar provided support for frontline staff navigating clients through the application process and address the most critical questions from the sector with respect to these benefits.

CAMH Webinar: Building individualized pathway to self-care and resiliency during COVID19 Pandemic (June 2020)

First Work in collaboration with CAMH hosted Dr. Katy Kamkar, a Clinical Psychologist at CAMH's Work Stress & Health program and Karleigh Darnay, CAMH Youth Engagement Coordinator to engage First Work Members on pathways to selfcare and building resiliency to tackle issues such as burn-out, compassion fatigue and provide some effective coping mechanisms to better engage both front-line staff and the clients they serve.

Going Digital Webinar: Exploring Digital Career Development Tools to improving Job Seeker Outcomes (June 2020)

First Work, in collaboration with Ontario Tourism and Education Corporation and MaRS Discovery District, held a webinar to share research outcomes focusing on youth employment pathways and the challenges faced by youth in their job search. The webinar focused on digital tools that facilitate youth in career navigation and demonstrate the benefits of implementing stacked deployment of digital tools for organizations and clients.

Train the Trainer: An Asset + Goal Focused, Trauma-Informed Dual Customer Employment Preparation Program (June 2020)

In collaboration with Purpose Co, First Work offered a unique 4-week pilot LaunchPad program to First Work members free-of-charge. The trainthe trainer program involved intensive training and applied exercises to inform each agency's customization of the dual-customer approach framework. The program was launched in mid-July, including training and program design preparation, including key informant interviews, data analysis and focus groups.

First Work x Shopify - Support Apprentice Program (July 2020)

First Work hosted an informational webinar with Shopify for a deep dive on their new support apprentice program.

The Shopify Support Apprentice role is an intensive 3-month program in the aim of digitizing Canada's businesses. Shopify is intending to hire hundreds of youth across the country, with a major focus on Ontario. The program eligibility is for Canadian youth between ages 18-29, who identify as belonging to at least one of the following groups: Indigenous youth, racialized youth, new immigrant and/or refugee youth, youth who identify as having a disability, youth in rural areas/remote communities, women & gender diverse youth, and youth who identify as LGBTQ+.

Knowledge Advancement

LaunchPad Webinar: First Work's COVID Response Program (November 2020)

In partnership with Purpose Co, First Work hosted an overview webinar for the LaunchPad program, part of Building Capacity, Strengthening Recovery: First Work's COVID Response Program.

Online, Together Webinar: First Work's COVID Response Program (November 2020)

In partnership with Purpose Co, First Work hosted an overview webinar for the Online, Together program, part of Building Capacity, Strengthening Recovery: First Work's COVID Response Program.

RBC x First Work: Career Launch Program Information Session (January 2021)

First Work and RBC hosted an Information session for RBC's Career Launch Program for eligible candidates as an opportunity to ask questions directly about the program.

Young people without a university or college education face challenges transitioning from school to work. RBC is keen on supporting these youth as well and will be allocating internship opportunities for youth between the ages of 18 to 24 who have a secondary school diploma for their upcoming 2021 cohort.

First Work's Communities of Practice (January 2021)

First Work in partnership with Purpose Co hosted an informational webinar on First Work's Communities of Practice. This webinar provided an overview about Communities of Practice (CoPs), how CoPs operate to push forward positive change, and how members can get involved with First Work's Communities of Practice. 38 members registered for this event.

First Work Strategic Direction



Cultivating Talent

- ▶ Labour Mobility Pathways
- ▶ School-to-Work Transition
- ▶ Fostering Entrepreneurship

Brockport Youth Hiring Event (July 2020)

First Work hosted a hiring event with Brockport Home Technology on July 10th, 2020. Brockport connected with First Work, spurred by an introduction from RESCON, to support the hiring of 10 youth for their Panel Assembling position. A total of 30 youth applied through the pre-screening process with First Work, with 5 successful applicants offered positions.



Futures'20 Aspire Youth Summit (October 2020)

First Work hosted the Aspire Youth Summit on Wednesday, October 28th, as part of this year's Futures Conference. This was First Work's largest Aspire youth event to date with almost 400 attendees (youth, ESP professionals, speakers, and exhibitors). The Aspire Youth Summit featured career exploration sessions that highlighted opportunities in the automotive, construction and trades sector. Sessions also focused on volunteering, networking, mentorship, digital skills/micro-credentialing, mental health and resiliency.

The highlighted sessions included the keynote sessions with Wali Shah, Poet and the Honorable Bardish Chagger, Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, and fireside chat with MP Adam Van Koeberden and Owen Charters, CEO of the Boys and Girls Club of Canada.

The First Work Youth Council were actively involved on the day of the Summit. Council members actively participated in introducing speakers and facilitated breakout sessions during the Youth Summit. Chair and Vice-Chair, Alkiie-Babe Froman and Zakareya El-Rouby participated in the opening and closing ceremonies and Secretary, Amira Abdelrahim led the Q&A session with MP Adam Van Koeberden.

Cultivating Talent



Aspire Event: Aspire to GROW (January 2021)

First Work kicked off 2021 with the Aspire career exploration event – Aspire to GROW in partnership with Landscape Ontario on January 29th. With almost 70 attendees, the event featured speakers and industry professionals highlighting the opportunities and career pathways within Ontario’s landscaping and horticulture sector.



Aspire Event: startUp Entrepreneurship Series (March 2021)

First Work hosted another Aspire Event in March focusing on the opportunities in entrepreneurship. With 40 attendees, the event focused on social entrepreneurship, grants and funding opportunities, and from side hustles to full-time gigs.



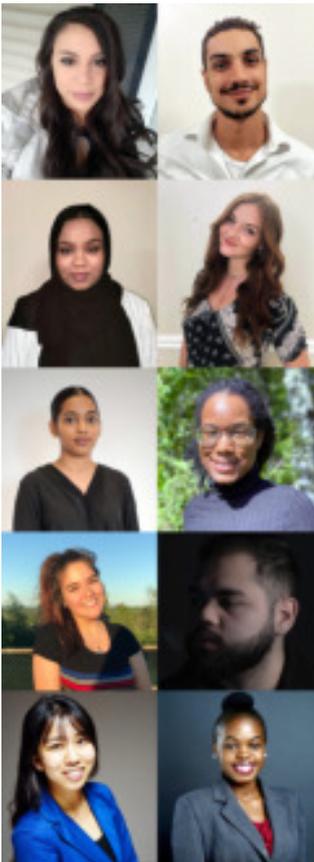
5 Minute Mentor Series

The 5 Minute Mentor Series is a new video series that launched on YouTube after the Aspire Youth Summit. The series is hosted on YouTube featuring short, 5-minute segments showcasing personal and human stories of resilience from those who have overcome adversity and have sage advice to offer young people.

This platform aims to bridge the gap between experiential learning and mentorship, stimulating curiosity, conversation and online mentorship content for youth (15-30), who face barriers to employment.

The first mentor in the series featured Terence Penny, a rapper, artist and community outreach leader from Toronto. The second mentor was Brooke Crewson, Ryerson Diversity Institute.

Cultivating Talent



First Work Youth Council

Thought Leadership Research Reports

The First Work Youth Council will write Thought Leadership Research Reports in extension from the research collected from the Shape the Narrative, Shape the Future sessions from the Aspire Youth Summit. The Youth Council members will lead virtual focus groups with youth across Ontario related to the following topics and community issues:

- BIPOC Youth Experiences: Young racialized looking for work – what is it like looking for work for young people of colour?
- From School to Work: How can the path be smoother?
- From First Job to Building a Career: Navigating Career Development During the COVID-19 Pandemic
- The Robots are Coming! Will technology kill jobs, or will it create opportunity?

The Thought Leadership Research Reports are set to be published in September 2021.



Aspire Blog Launch

In January, First Work launched the [Aspire Blog](#) on the Aspire Website. Each blog post is written by a Youth Council Member on a topic of their choosing. Blog posts also have contributions from the First Work staff. To date, 7 Blog Posts have been published on the Aspire website focused on self-empowerment, career advice and employment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Blog post topics also included career exploration in tandem with Aspire events.

Government Relations

Ontario Government

Employment Services Transformation

First Work has continued to closely monitor the Employment Services Transformation in Ontario. As such, First Work has engaged closely with the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) to ensure the sector is prepared for transformation.

First Work has also developed and maintained relationships with the 3-prototype SSMS, Fedcap Inc., Fleming College, and WCG, who attended Futures'20 to present to the sector. These ongoing partnerships allow First Work, and therefore our members, key insight to the planning and priorities of the SSMS during the transitional period.

The onset of pandemic delayed the transformation roll-out by 4 months, with service contracts signed between Service System Managers (SSMs) and agencies in catchment areas during the Fall of 2020. As of January 1, 2021, the SSMS in the 3 prototype regions assumed oversight and management of the agencies in their catchment. As the sector has not been provided an input pathway nor data-insights regarding Transformation, First Work established an SSM Monitoring Committee to ensure learnings are captured and solutions identified where needed.

First Work is also engaging with Minister McNaughton's office (MLTSD) to advance the insights gleaned from the frontlines during transition. To date, there has not been further guidance provided regarding a slowed timeline for Transformation accommodating for pandemic disruption and impact.

COVID-19 Ongoing Response

Beginning in March 2020, the sector transitioned all employment services in Ontario to a remote working model to accommodate health safety measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The sector pivoted to virtual delivery while also trying to adjust to a severely disrupted labour market with few job vacancies and a growing fear among job seekers of the associated health risks of those available jobs. Within this period, the labour market has also shed over 1,011,000 jobs in March, with over 50% being in the hospitality and retail sectors – industries that have a large concentration of youth employed, as well as many newcomers. The unemployment rate for youth hit a record high of 34% between February and April 2020, according to Statistics Canada.

First Work released a survey to all members in April 2020 to determine the impacts of COVID-19 on their operations and delivery services. We look forward to reporting on the results in next year's annual report.

The employment service sector faced unique challenges in response to COVID-19 and responded with innovative service delivery, new programming for the new workforce reality, and supporting a new wave of jobseekers while continuing to manage existing caseloads. To enable agile best-practice sharing and engagement, First Work increased the occurrence of Regional Meetings to bi-monthly for most regions.

During this time, providers dealt with the personal impacts of the pandemic, while also continuing to provide exceptional services to vulnerable job seekers. The province-wide lockdown impeded typical delivery services and so ESPs filled the gap in human services by providing counselling to clients where needed, particularly for young people. The resulting compassion fatigue in the sector spurred First Work to host a mental health and wellness webinar in June 2020 for all members.

Members

Central Region

- 360 Kids
- Achēv (previously known as Centre for Education & Training)
- Agilec
- Centre for Skills Development & Training
- COSTI - Caledonia Employment Centre
- FOCUS Community Development Corporation
- Gateway Cafe/West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre
- Job Skills - Employment and Business Programs & Supports
- JobStart
- John Howard Society of Peel-Halton-Dufferin
- JVS Toronto
- Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training
- Project Work
- PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs
- Simcoe County District School Board - Barrie Career Centre
- Skills for Change
- Springboard
- The Career Foundation
- The Neighbourhood Group-St. Stephen's Community House
- The Yonge Street Mission
- Toronto Community Employment Services (TCES)
- Toronto District School Board (TDSB)- Next-Steps Employment Centres
- Toronto Workforce Innovation Group (TWIG)
- TRACKS Employment Services
- Tropicana Employment Centre
- VPI Inc.
- Woodgreen Employment Services
- YMCA Career Development & Learning Centre - Hamilton/Burlington
- YMCA of Greater Toronto - Peel Region
- YMCA of Greater Toronto - North York
- YMCA of Greater Toronto - Etobicoke
- YMCA of Greater Toronto - Scarborough
- YMCA of Greater Toronto - York Region

Eastern Region

- Algonquin College Community Employment Services
- Career Edge/ Youth Habilitation (Quinte) Inc.
- Eastern Ontario Training Board
- Employment & Education Centre (EEC)
- Employment Planning & Counselling Peterborough (EPC)
- Employment Services Centre (CSEPR)
- Job Zone d'emploi
- John Howard Society of Durham Region
- KEYS Job Centre
- META Vocational Services Inc.
- Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN)
- Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre
- Prince Edward Learning Centre
- ReStart / John Howard Society of Kingston & District
- VCCS Employment Service - Victoria County Career Services Inc.
- YMCA Employment & Community Services - Durham
- Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa

Northern Region

- Cambrian College – Career Centre
- Collège Boréal – Employment Centre
- Employment North / District of Parry Sound Employment Services
- Employment Solutions (Sault College)
- Lake of the Woods Employment Action Project Inc. (LEAP)
- NCDS Career Works - Northern Community Development Service
- Partners for Employment Centre
- Red Lake Career & Employment Services
- Sault Community Information and Career Centre
- YES Employment Services - Thunder Bay
- YES Employment Services Inc. - Nipissing / North Bay
- YMCA Employment Services & Newcomer Services - Sudbury

South Western Region

- CERF Niagara
- Community Employment Services
- Employment Services Elgin - Elgin / St. Thomas Youth Employment Counseling Centre
- Employment Hamilton
- Fanshawe College - Simcoe Campus – Community Career and Employment Services
- Grand River Employment and Training
- Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) - The Employment Assessment Centre
- Goodwill Industries Ontario Great Lakes Career Centre
- John Howard Society of Niagara (Job Gym, Fort Erie)
- John Howard Society of Niagara (Welland)
- John Howard Society of Waterloo-Wellington (Cambridge Career)
- KW Habilitation/ KW Career Compass
- London Employment Help Centre
- Lutherwood
- New Canadians' Centre of Excellence Inc. - NCCE Inc.
- Niagara College Community Employment Services
- NPAAMB - Niagara Peninsula Aboriginal Area Management Board
- Owen Sound Family YMCA Community & Employment Services
- Quad County Support Services - Community Employment Choices
- Region of Waterloo Community Services
- Second Chance Employment Counselling
- South Essex Community Council
- St. Leonard's Community Services / Brant Employment Centre
- Tillsonburg & District Multi-Service Centre
- Unemployed Help Centre of Windsor Inc.
- Windsor Women Working With Immigrant Women (W5)
- Youth Opportunities Unlimited

Financial Report

Balance Sheet

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT CENTRES (OPERATING AS FIRST WORK)

Balance Sheet as at March 31, 2021

	2021	2020
ASSETS		
Current:		
Cash	\$ 1,157,147	876,826
Guaranteed investment certificate (Note 2, 3)	25,000	25,000
Account receivable	165,878	106,194
Harmonized Sales Tax Recoverable	34,854	49,439
Prepaid expenses	16,827	30,215
	<u>1,399,706</u>	<u>1,087,674</u>
Capital assets, net (Note 4)	8,223	6,422
	<u>1,407,929</u>	<u>1,094,096</u>
LIABILITIES		
Current:		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	62,695	178,928
Deferred revenue (Note 5)	1,138,915	877,311
	<u>1,201,610</u>	<u>1,056,239</u>
Non current:		
Canada Emergency Business Account Loan (Note 6)	30,000	-
	<u>1,231,610</u>	<u>1,056,239</u>
NET ASSETS	<u>176,319</u>	<u>37,857</u>
	<u>\$ 1,407,929</u>	<u>1,094,096</u>

On behalf of the Board:

A. Laurentin

Director

S. Maille

Director

Financial Report

Statement of Operations

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT CENTRES (OPERATING AS FIRST WORK)

Statement of Operations and changes in net assets For the year ended March 31, 2021

	2021	2020
REVENUES		
Government grant (Note 5)	\$ 1,296,408	871,473
Project Revenue	389,998	252,455
Conference Fees	183,892	297,514
Other Grants	99,841	-
Membership Fees	99,775	97,688
Bingo Proceeds	17,595	62,733
Other Revenue	769	1,298
	<u>2,088,278</u>	<u>1,583,161</u>
EXPENSES		
Programs and Services	1,447,014	977,914
Personnel	276,905	242,695
Professional fees	111,317	35,801
Rent	64,564	61,685
Conferences	32,905	189,970
Amortization (Note 4)	4,513	2,906
Insurance	2,762	3,124
Travel	149	21,203
Office and General	9,687	11,034
	<u>1,949,816</u>	<u>1,546,332</u>
EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	138,462	36,829
OPENING NET ASSET	37,857	1,028
CLOSING NET ASSET	\$ <u>176,319</u>	<u>37,857</u>

See accompanying Notes to Financial Statements

Board of Directors

Carolyn Warkentin

President

South Essex Community Council

LeeAnne Maille

Treasurer and Secretary

YES Employment Services - Nippissing

Donna Sedore

Northern Region Representative

District of Parry Sound Employment Service

Susan Watts

Eastern Region Representative

Employment & Education Centre

Ian Nyman

Member At Large

YMCA of Greater Toronto - York Region

Gillian Watters

Vice President

Kingston Employment & Youth Services
(KEYS Job Centre)

Laryssa Smith

South West Region Representative

John Howard Society of Niagara - Job Gym Fort Erie

Kim Patel

Central Region Representative

The Neighbourhood Group Community Services

Jordon Myers

Indigenous Representative

Grand River Employment and Training

Suzanne Coutu

French Language Representative

CERF Niagara

Staff

Akosua Alagaratnam, **Executive Director**

Carmine Chen, **Manager, Operations & Finance**

Sophia Koukoulas, **Manager, Communications & Stakeholder Relations**

Derrick An, **Project Manager**

Anushka Shahjahan, **Lead Researcher**

Jennifer Puddicombe, **Evaluation Lead**

Shifat Ara, **Project Coordinator**

Samira Adnan, **Digital Lead**

Kristen Lattip, **Coordinator, Youth Engagement & Events**

Cody Gillen, **Coordinator, Social Media & Communications**

Ashley Allado, **Operations Coordinator & Executive Assistant**

Ikram Abdi, **Conference Coordinator**

Rohan Mehta, **Coordinator, Administration & Membership Initiatives**

Funders

Core Funders

- First Work Members
- Ontario Charitable Gaming Association / Dolphin Bingo

Program and Project Funders

- RBC Future Launch
- Ontario Tourism Education Corporation
- Employment and Social Development Canada
- Toronto Employment & Social Services
- Government of Ontario / Ministry Labour, Training and Skills Development
- JPMorgan and Chase Foundation

Social Media

First Work

Site: <https://firstwork.org/>

Member's Portal: <https://firstwork.wildapricot.org/>

Twitter: @first_work | https://twitter.com/first_work

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/firstwork>

Instagram: @firstworkontario | <https://www.instagram.com/firstworkontario/>

Facebook: FirstWorkON | <https://www.facebook.com/firstworkon/>

Youtube: [First Work](#)

Aspire

Aspire Site: <https://youthaspire.org/>

Twitter: @YthAspire | <https://twitter.com/ythaspire>

Instagram: @youth_aspire | https://www.instagram.com/youth_aspire/

