



FIRST WORK

ONTARIO'S YOUTH EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

Annual Report

April 2021- March 2022

Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres (OAYEC)

www.firstwork.org

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Letter from the Executive Director



“We as an organization through the pandemic and through the transformation worked to be a sounding board for the leaders of our network who leaned on each other to vocalize the challenges and issues they faced.”

This year marks the third anniversary of my leadership at First Work, joining this Network of professionals and community leaders that have grown a community of camaraderie. First Work continues to witness the resilience, strength and commitment of our network and sector to serve young people, and those furthest away from employment achieve not only meaningful work, but also an ability to contribute to their families and community.

From my team here at First Work, I see the tireless hours and passion to deliver above our capacity to help our members, jobseekers and industry sectors build bridges to act more consciously in delivering value, to explore the career opportunities available and to be more inclusive. First Work has grown thanks to the tireless and quiet efforts of a team that always hits above its weight. Through the strength of the team at First Work we provided over 45,000 unemployed, underemployed and transitioning jobseekers with LinkedIn Licenses, we provided over 450 front-line staff with free professional development to build capacity to better serve our job seekers in this hybrid world of learning, through a community of practice - we built shareable resources for everyday programming delivered by our members, and we advocated for change on key issues to all levels of Government. Lastly, we stood as witness to the impact of employment transformation and documented the change and process that will forever shape our landscape.

I am very grateful to the Board of Directors under the leadership of our Board chair Carolyn Warkentin, as they helped innovate and envision alongside our team, supporting and amplifying our efforts to further our network.

We as an organization through the pandemic and through the transformation worked to be a sounding board for the leaders of our network who leaned on each other to vocalize the challenges and issues they faced. We amplified their concerns through our first Queen’s Park advocacy week, this past spring. We utilized the opportunities at our sector tables to vocalize the efforts of the network, and the resources provided by our community-based employment services that are often underrated.

All this work, we know and acknowledge, cannot be done without partners and supporters in the community. This year as we celebrate our 34th year as a network and the first year back in-person together at Futures 2022, know that we will continue to be committed in ensuring our network at First Work is thriving and emerge stronger, together. We look forward to celebrating our achievements together at this year’s conference.

Sincerely,

Akosua Alagaratnam
Executive Director



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
Avon Maitland District School Board	STRATEGIC 1	SOUTHWEST
Georgian College	STAKEHOLDER MEMBER – CATEGORY 1	CENTRAL
Humber College	STAKEHOLDER MEMBER – CATEGORY 1	CENTRAL
Labour Education Centre	STRATEGIC 1	CENTRAL
Partners in Employment	STRATEGIC 1	SOUTHWEST
The WorkPlace Group	STRATEGIC 3	SOUTHWEST
WCG Services	STAKEHOLDER MEMBER – CATEGORY 2	CENTRAL
YMCA of Central East Ontario	STRATEGIC 1	EASTERN
YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka	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, bi-monthly capacity, or quarterly capacity. With the continued onset of COVID-19, First Work meets with our employment service providers through virtual platforms.

New First Work Membership Portal & Salesforce

With increasing requirements to digitize our workspace and automate processes, First Work has found the need to implement a new member-facing portal website that replaces and expands on the functionality of the Wild Apricot Member Portal. This project is a culmination of internal system changes that have been implemented over the course of this fiscal year.

This ongoing project includes design, development and implementation of a member portal including all visual and functional elements. The new member portal will include the following functionality:

- *Advanced Content Privileges* specific to user role privileges
- *Custom Content Approval Workflows* to increase member submitted content with a level of content moderation
- *Advanced Membership Management* that mimics account management in the Wild Apricot system.
- *Events Listing* to allow for sectoral/industry event notification
- *Discussion Board* to facilitate more sector wide collaboration including sharing best practices and solutions.
- *Members Directory & Membership Map* to provide members the opportunity to both network and make new collaborative connections.
- *Job Posting Board* to advertise our sector related jobs.
- *Reports and Publications* for members that First Work, our partners and sectors provide to better support the work we do.

Sector Engagement

In August, First Work began to pivot its client relations manager software from Wild Apricot to Salesforce with the support of a procured consultant. The first phase of implementation was completed in September 2021 to better track and support our member outreach and provide easier updates to our members on the effect of the projects we undertake. In the second phase of implementation, is furthering our implementation to ensure our members can easily navigate and register for events with ease. With the successful integration of Mailchimp, Quickbooks and Eventbrite, most of Wild Apricot's innate functionality will be replaced in our new Member's Portal with these Salesforce integrations, albeit at a higher capacity and sophistication.

Frontline Meetings

As COVID-19 continues to impact the sector and the practitioners who serve it, First Work began hosting regional meetings for frontline staff in April 2021. The frontline meetings are held for frontline staff members in the Central, Southwest, and Northern regions. The Eastern region had opted out of the frontline meetings. The frontline meetings include practitioners servicing Youth Job Connect and Youth Job Connect Summer, Canada-Ontario Job Grant, Job Developer and Employment Counsellor. Approximately 160 frontline staff members registered to be a part of the various meetings.

Discussions primarily revolved around identifying pressing issues, barriers and challenges and sharing of best practices. As a result of the discussions, First Work's Frontline Training Series and webinars were created to support the needs identified.

Frontline Training Webinars

First Work's Frontline Training series began in February 2022, made available to exclusively frontline staff members. The frontline training webinars were developed based on discussions and feedback received from both the frontline and regional meetings. Three different training courses have been conducted: motivational interviewing; trauma-informed care and practice; and meditation and mindfulness. Over the course of the three-webinar series, there were over 330 participants.

Due to high demand and interest, part two of the motivational interviewing and trauma-informed care practices sessions will be offered in summer 2022.



**FRONTLINE
TRAINING**

**Trauma Informed
Care and Practice**

**Presenter: Theresa Hirschberg
Founder of Sights on Solutions**

**June 8th
10:00 AM - 3:00 PM**

FIRST WORK
ONTARIO'S YOUTH EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

Free for First Work Member Organizations

Sector Engagement

Launching Committees

Sector Umbrella Organizations

First Work had organized an advocacy committee with the other sector umbrella organizations including: ODEN (Ontario Disability Employment Network), OCASI (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants), CESBA (The Ontario association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators), CSES (College Sector Employment Services) and, ESC (The Employment Sector Council). Over the course of the past year, the organizations have convened to discuss shared best practices as a sector, concerns and issues on both transformation and COVID-19.

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. The organizations invited the Ministry to the table to provide feedback from the sector with respect to the common assessment tool, employment transformation and program delivery.

Pre-Election Advocacy Committee

First Work established a Pre-Election Advocacy Committee to support preparation for the 2021 Queen's Park and advocacy day.

Comprised of 12 members, First Work established this volunteer committee to both validate and develop First Work's advocacy priorities in advance of the election (taking place in June 2022). The Committee was open to any Network members with experience in frontline delivery – to ensure the job seeker is kept at the heart of advocacy initiatives – and willing to lend their voice to the Network's goals. Messaging and sector objectives created at these tables were verified by the broader membership prior to any public advocacy efforts to ensure membership agreement.

Strategic Communications

With pandemic upheaval beginning to lessen, First Work has refocused communication efforts on member- and sector-issues in an effort to amplify the important work ESPs champion. **First Work's Advocacy Activation week** is an example of how the Network is working to raise the profile of Employment Service Providers and the important work you do in our communities.

First Work remains informed and in regular contact with Government counterparts to keep the Network abreast of significant updates. With Ontario's ES Transformation moving forward, First Work will continue to advocate for timely communication from Government.

Leveraging the advancements in back-end data processing First Work has undertaken since August 2021, the Network has shifted nearly all communication over to MailChimp for easier engagement with members and First Work's public audience.

First Work has also initiated a restructuring of the Member's Portal; designing a new Member's Only site to replace the existing portal on Wild Apricot. Based on feedback collected during conferences, regional and frontline meetings, First Work understands the sector desire to make collaboration easier within the Network and is designing the new platform with cross-member engagement in mind.

First Work Strategic Direction



Workforce Development Innovations

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

STAFF TRAINING

Facilitation Training with Generation Chosen

First Work's youth council and staff have received facilitation training from Generation Chosen's Anchoring Facilitation Program. This training provided First Work the necessary skills to work respectfully with vulnerable populations and helped to prepare the Youth Council for their focus group research.

The complete Anchoring Facilitation Program consists of 8 seminars split into two parts: 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.

Black Philanthropy Month 2021 Global Summit Series

August 3 – 5, 2021

Staff attended sessions on assessing funding equity progress over the past year; how to expand adoption of the Global Black Funding Principles; the design of a Global Black Funding Equity Index; and a funding equity action plan.

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



LinkedIn Learning Licenses

Every staff person was given access to LinkedIn Learning licenses to increase their professional development over the course of the LinkedIn Project.

Workforce Development Innovations

Toronto Regional Board of Trade Workforce Summit 2.0: Winning the War for Talent

March 29th, 2022

Staff attended the Toronto Region Board of Trade's Workforce Summit 2.0, attended by business and political leaders. The thought leaders presenting spoke to the root of the transformational challenges in the Ontario workforce, with focus on unlocking solutions that leverage the global talent pool and identify what organizations need to do to win.

Executive Director Akosua Alagaratnam spoke on a panel regarding Strengthening the Talent Pipeline – speaking to employment solutions from a community-driven perspective.

Other summit sessions focused on the struggle to retain and attract the workers needed to succeed and offered solutions on how to create talent pipelines that both train workers and provide them with a pathway to careers that are in demand.

Motivational Interviewing

Staff completed Motivational Interviewing Training and discussed the training further at our weekly team meeting. Motivational Interviewing is a client-centered, evidence-based counselling approach to working with clients ambivalent about making a change. This training was also offered to Network frontline staff as part of the recommended preparation for transitioning to the new model of ES following transformation.



**FRONTLINE
TRAINING**

**Practical Application of
Motivational
Interviewing**

Presenter: Dale Kuehl

**Available Dates:
July 12,13,14
10:00 - 3:00 PM**

FIRST WORK
ONTARIO'S YOUTH EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

Free for First Work Member Organizations

First Work Strategic Direction



Strategic Collaboration

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

LinkedIn Learning

Timeline: April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022

Approved Amount: \$1,000,000

First Work was LinkedIn's community partner in their government-funded COVID-recovery program. LinkedIn was 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, supported 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.



This initiative represented an opportunity to utilize LinkedIn's unique capacity to support economic recovery and increase capacity within the employment services sector by getting over 45,000 individuals to complete over 26,000 courses and fill over 6,000 jobs, in under a year. This project offered anyone unemployed, underemployed or transitioning employment due to COVID to receive skilling and employment supports via LinkedIn learning licenses (100,000 licenses). For employment service providers this meant access to 2000 licenses to LinkedIn Talent Insights (LinkedIn Labour Market Dashboard), and 2000 LinkedIn recruiter licenses (utilized in reverse to help identify employers).

Four coordinators were hired and onboarded as part of this funded project. We had Service Agreements with 5 community partners. To educate the sector on the tools available to them, First Work hosted four types of webinars that ranged from product overviews to best practices sessions. In total, 24 sessions have been conducted with a total of 714 attendees and averaging 32 attendees per session. In addition to these webinar sessions, the outreach team met with 170 organization leaders through one on one or group meetings to onboard groups into the project.

As part of this project, First Work in partnership with LinkedIn and sector partners provides a series of webinars and training programs inclusive of;

Sector Collaboration

LinkedIn Webinars

In partnership with LinkedIn and funded through the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, First Work has been offering anyone unemployed, underemployed, or transitioning employment due to COVID to receive skilling and employment supports via LinkedIn licenses.

Through this initiative, there are 100,000 learning licenses available for use. Additionally, for employment service providers this means access to 1000 licenses to LinkedIn Talent Insights, and 2000 LinkedIn Recruiter licenses.

To maximize impact of the LinkedIn initiative, a variety of webinars were conducted for both employment service providers as well as general job seekers.

First Work & LinkedIn Premium Access Launch Webinar

May 17th, 2021 | Virtual

This Member's Only webinar kicked off the LinkedIn x First Work initiative, offering attendees a first-look at the program offerings.

LinkedIn Monthly Best Practices and Knowledge Sharing Call

First Work and LinkedIn focused on best practices thus far with LinkedIn's Learning, Recruiter and Talent Insight Licenses!

Providers looking to maximize their use of the 3 digital tools (Learning, Recruiter and Talent Insights) given by LinkedIn were welcomed. Attendees heard from fellow providers already implementing these tools on their approach and learnings. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions and dive further into best practices in breakout sessions.

LinkedIn Learning for Job Seekers

This webinar was open to all young people, unemployed, under-employed and everyone in between interested in taking advantage of this free upskilling initiative.

LinkedIn Learning Webinar

LinkedIn Learning licenses were available for use by both ESPs and the job seekers they served. As such, LinkedIn Learning specific webinars were held to support individual professional development, client-upskilling, and learning pathway development.

Through these licenses, any and all jobseekers can have access to free learning modules to supplement your work as ESPs. ESPs can create learning pathways, monitor progress, and help empower their jobseekers through professional, networking platform.

Sector Collaboration

LinkedIn Recruiter and Talent Insights Webinar

Training sessions on how to use LinkedIn Recruiter and Talent Insights licenses to enhance capacity as employment service providers. Through these licenses, ESPs can directly connect to jobseekers seeking employment, while cultivating relationships with employers and building learning pathways to meet the skills-demand in their region.

LinkedIn Talent Insights Consultation: Identifying New Partnerships (August 2021)

This LinkedIn Talent Insights Consultation was a deep dive into how to apply this tool to make the data work for ESPs and their programming.

Attendees learned strategies for uncovering new employers and companies hiring locally with LinkedIn Talent Insights to facilitate employment conversations and build relationships to create more opportunities for your job seeker.

LinkedIn Talent Insights Consultation: Developing People for The Future (August 2021)

This LinkedIn Talent Insights Consultation was a deep dive on how to apply this tool to make the data work for ESPs and their programming.

Participants helped inform programming and job pathways with Talent Insights and learned to identify key skills for certain job roles to assist clients.

LinkedIn Talent Insights Consultation: Connecting Talent to Opportunity (August 2021)

This LinkedIn Talent Insights Consultation was a deep dive on how to apply this tool to make the data work for ESPs and their programming.

Attendees learned how to connect recently laid off talent with companies currently hiring and competing for this talent with LinkedIn Talent Insights.

Designing for Change

Through the Designing for Change learning series, First Work provided capacity building opportunities to utilize the digital suite of tools provided by LinkedIn to a diverse number of providers. These providers, in turn, transferred this knowledge to jobseekers in meaningful and insightful ways.

These LinkedIn tools provided an opportunity to further modernize and digitize this sector, enhancing service outcomes for barriered job seekers. Attendees benefitted from use-cases from Network ESPs using the tools in creative ways, offering opportunity to ask questions and knowledge-share.

Sector Collaboration

Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity

In 2019, through funding from Employment and Social Development Canada, First Work's pan-Canadian initiative for youth, the Council for Youth Prosperity expanded to a national body, the Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity. Now entering their fourth year, CCYP has continued to grow to provide pan-Canadian aid to youth in workforce development. Our continued collaboration with CCYP as Ontario Council Member and as a founding member organization will ensure our members benefit from the advancements achieved through this council.

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 initiative – featuring the LaunchPad and Online, Together programs – was designed to increase the capacity, effectiveness and impact of employment service providers by providing training to better 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. Specifically, LaunchPad focused on a dual-customer approach – developing programming with both the job seeker and the employer as clients in mind – so ESPs could better prepare local labour markets. The focus of Online, Together centered on effectively motivating clients virtually to reflect pandemic realities.

Designed and delivered in partnership with Purpose Co, this project provided 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.

In total, First Work engaged over 300 organizations to garner 358 participants across two cohort-based programs. Online, Together trained a final total of 280 participants in 14 cohorts. LaunchPad trained a final total of 78 participants in five cohorts. LaunchPad curriculum was augmented twice over the course of the project through feedback provided by participants and organizations.

Sector Collaboration

First Work's Communities of Practice

JP Morgan & Chase Foundation

Timeline: November 1, 2020 – October 31, 2021

Employment Service Providers Communities of Practice

Through this project, First Work had an opportunity to develop solutions to pressing employment service challenges by harnessing the knowledge of frontline, practitioner-experts. This project differs from First Work's regular network convening and focused on specific programming – Youth Job Connection (YJC), Canada-Ontario Job Grant (COJG), and Second Career. Participants were selected via an interview process and represented employment service providers across Ontario. First Work's Community of Practice (CoP) practitioners were provided concerted opportunities to convene regularly with professional frontline peers, building on these knowledge-sharing engagements through curated access to research and content expertise, with structured and facilitated opportunities to test and trial solutions. Through this approach, First Work's CoPs fostered creation of innovative practical solutions and produced sector knowledge which has been mobilized through First Work's networks more strategically.

The YJC CoP identified that client evaluation should incorporate multiple facets and be done periodically through programming based on the clients goals and skill levels as the core issue. Employment Ontario (EO) Service Providers need to be able to support their clients in the way the clients need, but when the funding depends purely on the status of a client exiting the program employed it makes it difficult to properly support client experiencing extreme barriers.

Programming is here to help clients achieve employment goals. If that goal starts with attending education or training, enhancing soft skills, or gaining part-time employment, the client should be evaluated on those successes. Not every client has the same background or goals, and entering service should support them in achieving the goals that they feel are reasonable for themselves.

The practitioners determined that a new evaluation strategy needs to be developed that will evaluate the success of a client based on what the client has gained and/or developed from the program. Evaluation resources include:

- Common Assessment Tool (CAT)
- Employment Readiness Scale
- YouthREX
- Work Sampling

The COJG CoP aimed to answer the following question, "How can we maximize program promotion to attract high quality applicants from small businesses?"

Sector Collaboration

The practitioners compiled a toolkit composed of marketing materials for websites and promo. The toolkit strives to provide consistent messaging for service providers, trainers and individuals and assist in building partnerships. The toolkit includes the flyer and PowerPoint marketing copies and scripts for video and radio promotions.

The Second Career CoP found the core issue within the program was the lack of available marketing and promotional materials. This caused for client and training provider expectations to be misaligned and inconsistent message across various platforms. Practitioners determined that ineligible clients not engaging into service and complexity of eligibility makes marketing difficult.

The practitioners developed marketing materials for websites and promotions. The resources included a website copy, marketing copy and script. The goal of the toolkit is to provide consistent messaging for service providers, trainers, and individuals and build partnerships.

The resources developed from the employment service providers CoPs are available on First Work's membership portal.

In our recent professional development conference FUTURES 2021, attended by over 300 workforce development stakeholders, our employment service provider participants along with First Work and Purpose Co delivered our process, research and solutions to our colleagues in the sector, and since then have shared the resources and toolkits developed as a product of solutioning.

Industry Collaborative

First Work also developed and initiated one CoP with the Ontario General Contractors Association (OGCA) and its selected members to generate an action plan on improving talent pools and pipelines for project managers, site supervisors and project coordinators. Findings from this program indicate that the Communities of Practice delivery model had immense value to participating OGCA members, who would not otherwise be able to collaborate towards addressing common industry challenges. This project culminated with knowledge-sharing the learnings, insights, and recommended actions to the broader OGCA membership and sector-at-large. The Working Group will explore funding opportunities to continue to refine the proposed solutions, sequencing, and implementation of this action plan.

First Work's CoPs utilized the information gleaned from the job seeker survey data to help inform their solutioning approaches for their respective programming. Precautions were taken to ensure the information presented aligned with labour market insights publicly available at the time of delivery.

First Work Strategic Direction



Knowledge Advancement

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



Amplify Leadership Summit 2021 *Cultivating Engagement & Innovation in Workforce Development*

April 12th and April 14th 2021 | Virtual



First Work held the Amplify Leadership Summit virtually on April 12th and April 14th, with a total of 166 registrants. The Hack-a-Thon pitches were presented on April 13th. Delegates had the opportunity to participate in the NoW of Work Hack-a-Thon and CCYP Design Jam. Some of the pitches from the NoW of Work Hack-a-Thon inspired First Work's team in the redevelopment of our members portal especially in the contribution of a forum for better collaboration across the network. In addition to this, First Work's Sophia Koukoulas hosted a members-exclusive advocacy workshop along with a panel of government relations professionals. Delegates were inspired by the NoW of Work keynote session led by Rocky Ozaki who spoke to organizational archetypes and applying new tools and mindsets to organization's operations and culture.



Futures Conference 2021 *Inclusive Recovery for Today's Workforce*

October 5th, October 7th, October 12th and October 14th 2021 | Virtual

Futures is the national workforce development conference for employment service providers hosted by the team at First Work. This conference attracts over 300 professionals from across Canada each year to learn the latest in labour market trends, best practices for engagement, and inspiring discussions to elevate your programming and professional development.

The 2021 Futures Conference focused on strengthening foundations for inclusion, professional development for the front lines, and best practices sharing, with special presentations from international speakers. Conference attendees gathered across four half-days to learn the latest in labour market trends, best practices for engagement, and knowledge-sharing to elevate their programming and professional development. This virtual event hosted over 300 attendees who participated in sessions, networking opportunities and an interactive Exhibitor Hall with gamification challenges embedded throughout the conference.

Knowledge Advancement

RBC: Social Impact Learning Program (SILP)

First Work was provided an opportunity from RBC in partnership with the Taproot Foundation to work with designated RBC staff for an organizational growth plan.

Specifically, the **Social Impact Learning Program** connected teams of 4-5 RBC employees with First Work to help us solve critical capacity-building challenges. Over the course of 12 weeks, we collectively met to better understand First Work's problem for RBC to propose a solution and support the organization with implementation planning.

Resulting from this effort is a comprehensive plan to maximize sector engagement and impact, which has been shared with the First Work Board for strategic planning.

Online, Together QA Session

Attendees met program facilitators to learn more about the Online, Together program - a 7 week course designed to support employment service providers to deliver programs that increase engagement, motivation and retention, as well as foster learning, resilience, goal achievement and support a trauma-informed approach.

Questions were asked by participants to determine program eligibility and fit.

LaunchPad Fast Track QA Session

Attendees met the program facilitators to learn more about the new LaunchPad- Fast Track program - a 7 week applied skills training program for employment service providers.

LaunchPad-Fast Track will takes service providers through the process of designing a dual-customer, industry specific pre-employment program that recruits and prepares vulnerable jobseekers for specific in-demand jobs based on the needs of employers. LaunchPad-Fast Track requires agencies to apply in groups of 2-3 colleagues. needs of employers. LaunchPad-Fast Track requires agencies to apply in groups of 2-3 colleagues.

Knowledge Advancement

NOC Changes Overview Webinar with Service Canada

September 9th, 2021 | Virtual

Service Canada hosted an overview presentation on the changes to the National Occupation Classification (NOC) codes for First Work Members.

These changes improve how the NOC classification takes into account the distinctions in formal training and educational requirements and better reflects skill and knowledge development occurring through on-the-job experience. At the same time, it increases the homogeneity of the distribution of unit groups within the classification, and addresses concerns about the "Skill Level" categorization and the distribution of unit groups among them.

CERIC x First Work | Succession Planning Webinar Series

November 12th, 19th, and 26th, 2021 | Virtual

[First Work and CERIC](#) partnered to develop and deliver a series of webinars featuring Dr. Nicole Jackson of the Sacred Heart University. The series covered the need to strike a balance around what is called the "ambidexterity challenge" – defined as the need to balance for competencies with innovation – in the digital and post-COVID economy.

Today's career pathways and leadership succession practices face rapid disruption. They need to be informed by the existing effects of digital transformation and now the effects of the post-COVID economy. Yet, many of the practices that centre upon career and leadership succession are trapped in the past and/or show a significant disconnect to the ways in which individuals now need to empower themselves and their organizations for this shift.

First Work Strategic Direction



Cultivating Talent

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

Aspire Event: startUp Entrepreneurship Series

April 19th, 20th, and 21st, 2021 | Virtual

The startUp entrepreneurship series was designed to excite your inner Boss, grow your business skills and learn about grants to get funding for your big idea! Youth heard from young business owners through panel discussions and had the opportunity to network with the speakers, other participants and First Work staff.

Throughout this series, special guests included: Futurpreneur, [Business in the Streets](#), and founder/CEO of [Cheekbone Beauty](#), Jenn Harper.



Aspire Event: Behind the Scenes! Career Exploration in TV & Film

June 21st, 2021 | Virtual

Aspire hosted its last virtual career exploration date of the season. The event gave 69 attendees a behind the scenes look at the exciting opportunities within Ontario's film and TV industries by hearing from a diverse panel of industry professionals.



Cultivating Talent



Aspire Blog Posts

Since the launch of the Aspire Blog in January 2021, the Youth Council, along with First Work staff, have been actively involved in contributing content. To date, there have been 11 blog posts published on the Aspire website:

- Finding a job in the middle of a pandemic: A college grad's story by First Work staff Cody Gillen (January 6, 2021)
- Creating Opportunities for Yourself: Amidst and Beyond the Pandemic by Youth Council member Daisy Heung (January 14, 2021)
- Empowerment Amidst a Lockdown by Youth Council member Amira Abdelrahim (February 4, 2021)
- Navigating Relationships at Work: Making Critical Decisions and Trusting Myself by Youth Council member Jewelle Edwards (February 17th, 2021)
- Growing your horizons: Exploring a career in Landscaping & Horticulture by First Work staff Kristen Lattip (February 24, 2021)
- Navigating Relationships at Work: Reading the Signs... and Responding to Them by Youth Council member Jewelle Edwards (March 3, 2021)
- Yes, you should attend that online event! by First Work staff Cody Gillen (March 17, 2021)
- Navigating Relationships at Work: Building Healthy Relationships and Being a Supportive Co Worker by Youth Council member Jewelle Edwards (April 14, 2021)
- Pushing Boundaries through Entrepreneurship Career Exploration by First Work staff Cody Gillen (June 30, 2021)
- Staying Productive While Unmotivated by Youth Council member Jewelle Edwards (August 4, 2021)
- Motivation Struggles: Getting Past Negative Thoughts and Feelings by Youth Council member Jewelle Edwards (August 18, 2021)

The latest post is a two-part series by Youth Council member Jewelle Edwards on staying productive while feeling unmotivated, with contributions and insights from fellow YC members.

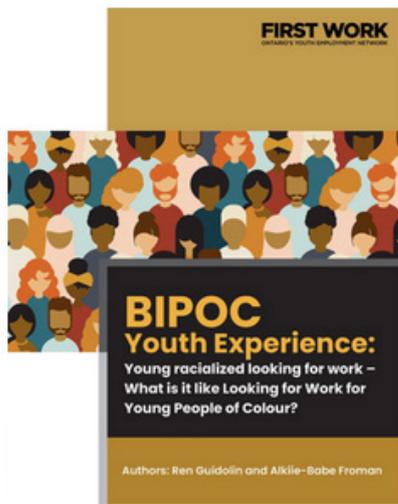
Cultivating Talent

Thought Leadership Research Reports

In April, the Youth Council members facilitated virtual focus group discussions related to the following topics:

- 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 data collected from the focus groups were put into 4 reports that were officially released this year.



Government Relations

Government of Canada

As part of First Work's role as the Ontario counterpart in our pan-Canadian coalition through the Canadian Council of Community Based Employment and Training board members, First Work has contributed in partnership with our other provincial counterparts to the advocacy efforts on employment service delivery. Inclusive of putting forward a proposal to the Federal government highlighting the challenges and issues faced by our sector providers across Canada.

In addition to this, First Work hosted a **Youth Roundtable** on April 27th, in partnership with the Federal Minister for Diversity and Inclusion and Youth Hon. Bardish Chagger for a youth roundtable discussion on the recent Federal Budget.

Ontario Government

First Work engaged Navigator Ltd., a Government Relations Firm, to support strategic advocacy for a sector Queen's Park initiative. Alongside the Board and other Network members, the following political members were met with:

MPP Faisal Hassan – Opposition Youth Critic – meeting on June 15, 2021.

Minister Tibollo – Mental Health and Addictions – meeting on July 14th, 2021.

LinkedIn Announcement with Minister McNaughton and Parliamentary Assistant Deepak Anand on July 20th, 2021

Minister McNaughton – Labour, Training and Skills Development – meeting on July 21st, 2021.

Townhall with Kate Graham – Ontario Liberal Candidate and Co-chair of campaign platform - on August 18th, 2021 held for 30 strategic members.

Meeting with Ontario Liberal Peel Candidates – Mississauga Lakeshore, Brampton South and Mississauga Streetsville – in November 2021

On August 18th, 2021; First Work had a meeting with Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development as well as the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to discuss First Work's Early Insights report on Transformation and some of the concerns from the sector identified.

First Work also received the Ministry's participation at the Futures Conference, specifically to provide a session on the Common Assessment Tool as well as provide their perspective on the Economic recovery and the future of Employment Ontario.

A Year in Transition: Ontario's Employment Services Transformation Report was shared with MLTSD's Minister's Office, ADM Cordelia Abankwa, Director David Cronin and Acting Director David Beaulieu.

Ontario Canada

Townhalls

First Work held a townhall with the NDP on February 15, 2022 with MPP Faisal Hassan. Strategic members were invited to participate and share insights from the sector.

Activation Week

In 2020, First Work had to cancel Queen's Park Day due to COVID-19. This would have been an opportunity for Members to lobby and advocate for the employment services sector.

In partnership with Navigator Ltd., a Government Relations Firm, First Work hosted Advocacy Week from March 8th to March 14th, 2022. First Work alongside over 30 Board Directors and Members met with the following political officers:

- MPP Mantha (NDP – Algoma-Manitoulin)
- MPP West (NDP – Sudbury)
- MPP Nicholls (Independent – Chatham-Kent-Leamington)
- Minister Fullerton (PC – Kanata-Carleton)
- Minister Lecce (PC – King-Vaughan)
- MPP Hassan (NDP – York South-Weston)
- MPP Martin (PC – Eglinton-Lawrence)
- MPP Sattler (NDP – London West)
- MPP Stiles (NDP – Davenport)
- MPP Gates (NDP – Niagara Falls)

Throughout the week, First Work and the Members advocated for and discussed multiple concerns: the identity of employment service providers, the focus on youth, the use of social services, COVID-19 recovery, funding and multi-national corporations and the ongoing employment services transformation.

Ontario Canada

ES Transformation

First Work continues to host SSM Monitoring Committee Meetings every six to eight weeks with members in the announced catchment areas. Dialogue includes the transformation process, successes and challenges experienced.

ESP interviews in late-May and early-June were completed, a short survey has been circulated and the second round of ESP interviews were completed from mid to late August. First Work has approached all three prototype SSMs for interviews.

Early Insights Report

First Work's Early Insights Report was published in early August 2021, and shared primarily with strategic partners, members, the government and SSMs, but also circulated to the broader general public. Development of a larger report is also underway with expected publication in October 2021.

Following the publication of the Early Insights Report, First Work held an information-sharing meeting with MLTSD and MCCSS.

A Year in Transition: Ontario's Employment Services Transformation

First Work's larger report was published at the end of January – A Year In Transition: Ontario's Employment Service Transformation. The report has been shared with strategic partners, members, the government and SSMs. The report is also available to the general public.

First Work plans to expand the SSM Monitoring Committee to include members in the next iteration of catchment areas in the summer of 2022.

Members

Central Region

- 360 Kids
- Achève (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
- Georgian College
- Humber College
- Job Skills - Employment and Business Programs & Supports
- JobStart
- JVS Toronto
- Labour Education Centre
- 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
- 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
- YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka

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
- YMCA of Central East Ontario

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
- Goodwill Industries Ontario Great Lakes Career Centre
- Grand River Employment and Training
- Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) - The Employment Assessment 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 | Pathways 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
- Partners in Employment
- 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
- UHC-Hub of Opportunities
- Windsor Women Working With Immigrant Women (WWWWIW)
- Youth Opportunities Unlimited

Financial Report

Balance Sheet

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

Balance Sheet as at March 31, 2022

	2022	2021
ASSETS		
Current:		
Cash	\$ 1,345,039	1,157,147
Guaranteed investment certificate (Note 2, 3)	75,115	25,000
Account receivable	216,378	165,878
Harmonized Sales Tax Recoverable	33,460	34,854
Prepaid expenses	5,842	16,827
	<u>1,675,834</u>	<u>1,399,706</u>
Capital assets, net (Note 4)	10,118	8,223
	<u>1,685,952</u>	<u>1,407,929</u>
LIABILITIES		
Current:		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	254,179	62,695
Deferred revenue (Note 5)	1,078,645	1,138,915
	<u>1,332,824</u>	<u>1,201,610</u>
Non current:		
Canada Emergency Business Account Loan (Note 6)	-	30,000
	<u>1,332,824</u>	<u>1,231,610</u>
NET ASSETS	<u>353,128</u>	<u>176,319</u>
	<u>\$ 1,685,952</u>	<u>1,407,929</u>

On behalf of the Board:  Director

 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, 2022

	2022	2021
REVENUES		
Government grant (Note 5)	\$ 2,055,849	1,296,408
Project Revenue	1,037,326	389,998
Conference Fees	176,872	183,892
Membership Fees	118,934	99,775
Other Grants	100,159	99,841
Bingo Proceeds	55,307	17,595
Other Revenue	1,673	769
	<u>3,546,120</u>	<u>2,088,278</u>
EXPENSES		
Programs and Services	2,055,742	1,268,188
Personnel	888,617	455,731
Professional fees	260,885	111,317
Conferences	83,489	32,905
Office and General	52,305	9,687
Travel	11,731	149
Rent	5,624	64,564
Amortization (Note 4)	4,683	4,513
Insurance	6,235	2,762
	<u>3,369,311</u>	<u>1,949,816</u>
EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	176,809	138,462
OPENING NET ASSET	176,319	37,857
CLOSING NET ASSET	\$ <u>353,128</u>	<u>176,319</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, Manager, **Projects & Strategic Initiatives**

Anushka Shahjahan, **Lead Researcher**

Syed Shah, **Lead Researcher**

Chardae Henry, **Research Assistant**

Jennifer Puddicombe, **Evaluation Lead**

Samira Adnan, **Digital Lead**

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

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

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

Ikram Abdi, **Conference Coordinator**

Staff

Jennifer Harrower, **Community Outreach Coordinator**

Chris Lambert, **Community Outreach Coordinator**

Kathleen MacLeod, **Community Outreach Coordinator**

Alexis Roy, **Community Outreach Coordinator**

Julie Notto, **Community Outreach 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
- Employment and Social Development Canada
- Toronto Employment & Social Services
- Government of Ontario | Ministry Labour, Training and Skills Development
- JPMorgan and Chase Foundation
- LinkedIn

Sponsors

- WCG
- Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association
- HTA75
- Future Skills Centre (Under Ryerson University)
- Rescare
- RBC

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: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/FirstWork>

Aspire

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

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

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

