

FIRST WORK

ONTARIO'S YOUTH EMPLOYMENT NETWORK



Annual Report

2022-2023

Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres
(OAYEC)

www.firstwork.org

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Members, Supporters and Funders,

I am both honored and humbled to address you as First Work's Executive Director on our 35th anniversary. Together, we have accomplished remarkable feats which fortify our communities and advance our shared mission.

Among our key achievements, we have forged a new, impactful partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Farming, and Rural Affairs. This collaboration has allowed us to continue our work to establish vital talent pipelines in key sectors, opening doors to countless opportunities in agri-food for our members and the jobseekers they serve.

In response to the evolving needs of our community, we have significantly expanded training initiatives for our frontline members. This investment in their professional development not only enhances their capabilities but also ensures that our jobseekers receive the highest level of support and guidance from our sector.

Advocacy remains at the heart of our efforts to bridge the gap between those furthest away from employment opportunities. This year, we have redoubled our focus to create opportunities for Network members in senior leadership roles. This strategic development is a testament to our commitment to elevate the voices and influence of those championing this sector.

Equally significant are the improvements we've made to our organizational processes. Through concerted efforts, we've streamlined operations to introduce a new members' portal. This transformative tool promises to enhance online convening, fostering even stronger connections within our network.

The research and data we have assembled on Ontario's employment transformation allows us to provide evidence-informed advocacy to the work being done on the frontlines. Through this research, we've provided recommendations to Government, employment service providers, and the service system managers as our network navigates through this transformation.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the unwavering support of our dedicated board. Your guidance and commitment have been instrumental in propelling First Work to new heights, and for that, I am profoundly grateful.

To my exceptional team, I extend my deepest appreciation. Your dedication, ingenuity, and tireless efforts continue to be the driving force behind our success. Together, we have demonstrated time and again that there are no limits to our accomplishments when we work in unity.

As we move forward, let us carry forward the momentum of our accomplishments. Together, we will continue to thrive and emerge even stronger, bound by our shared vision and purpose. I eagerly anticipate celebrating our collective achievements at this year's conference, as we mark our 35th year as a network.

With gratitude and anticipation,

Akosua Alagaratnam

Executive Director

FIRST WORK

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 jobseekers. 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 those furthest away and employment opportunities. Our continued advocacy at all levels of government supports progressive policy development for the benefit of all.



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 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 NEW MEMBERS

ORGANIZATION	MEMBERSHIP CATAGORY	REGION
ACCES Employment	STRATEGIC 1	CENTRAL
ontrac Employment Resource Services	STAKEHOLDER MEMBER – CATEGORY 2	EASTERN
Lighthouse Labs	STAKEHOLDER MEMBER – CATEGORY 2	CENTRAL
The Learning Enrichment Foundation	STAKEHOLDER MEMBER – CATEGORY 1	CENTRAL
Times Change Women's Services	STRATEGIC 1	CENTRAL
CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals	STRATEGIC 1	CENTRAL
Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) of Greater Toronto	STRATEGIC 1	CENTRAL
CareerFind Inc.	STAKEHOLDER MEMBER – CATEGORY 2	CENTRAL
Dixon Hall	STRATEGIC 1	CENTRAL
County of Bruce	STAKEHOLDER MEMBER – CATEGORY 2	SOUTHWEST
YMCA of the National Capital Region	STRATEGIC 1	EASTERN

FIRST WORK STRATEGIC DIRECTION

SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

Network Utilization

Regional Targeted Priorities

Top Industry Trends and Issues



Regional Meetings

First Work regularly meets with Strategic member managers across Ontario. These meetings offer real-time solutioning, best practice sharing, and networking – led with the understanding that we, as a Network, are stronger when we work together.

Our four regional member groups help to ensure our work is responsive to the needs of youth, the frontlines, and the managers who support program development – regardless of location in Ontario. These meetings typically take place in a bi-monthly or quarterly capacity. First Work has begun integrating in-person meetings with our employment service providers, in addition to the virtual meetings, where agreed upon by the regional members.

This year, we have begun to invite speakers from different regions to the various tables. This enables providers to learn about the experiences of ESPs, offering organic development of sector expertise.

Frontline Meetings

First Work hosts quarterly meetings to bring frontline staff members together to network, problem-solve, and provide training in specific areas noted by First Work members.

Upon receiving feedback on previous frontline meetings, First Work transitioned from region-based frontline meetings to an amalgamated format with breakout groups for program-specific discussion. Staff were invited to participate in the following breakout rooms: Better Jobs Ontario, Canada-Ontario Job Grant, Youth Programming, Job Developers and Employment Counsellors and French Programming.

First Work Committees

First Work is thrilled to formalize voluntary Network engagement through members-only committees. First Work's Committees are a conduit for achieving Board priorities, with participation from both First Work staff and also Member representatives. Network representatives are responsible for sharing community-based insights, bringing creativity, and contributing to recruitment endeavours required to achieve Committee goals.

The collaborative nature of these committees helps to ensure First Work activities are continuously informed and validated by Network members, leveraging the capacity of strength together.

We are in the process of completing formalization of the following committees:

- Advocacy
- EST Monitoring
- Onboarding Working Group
- Awards
- Conference

We look forward to showcasing Network involvement in these committees for the future.

First Work Membership Portal

First Work will be launching its new member-facing portal website replacing the Wild Apricot Member Portal, later this year. This project is a culmination of internal system changes, spurred by the Network request for enhanced digital collaboration.

The new portal will be more easily accessible than the existing Wild Apricot portal, including the following functionality:

- Advanced Content Privileges specific to Membership Level
- Custom Content Approval Workflows to increase member submitted content with a level of content moderation
- Events Listing
- Discussion Board to facilitate more network collaboration including sharing best practices and solutions.
- Members Directory
- Job Posting Board to advertise sector-related jobs
- Resources Hub, including Advocacy elements for members

Welcome to First Work Membership Portal

Our portal gives access to businesses that are interested in looking for the best talent to grow and improve their business.

[Get Started](#)

Salesforce Integration

Since initializing enhanced digitization of internal processes in 2021, Salesforce is being operationalized to streamline First Work's client management and ensure a more efficient, centralized database. With the successful integration of Mailchimp, QuickBooks and Eventbrite, most of Wild Apricot's innate functionality will be replaced in our Salesforce integrations albeit at a higher capacity and sophistication. Staff have created new internal processes given the expanded functionality offered by Salesforce. Over the coming months, the consultant will begin to offboard and decrease direct support and our internal teams will monitor and document challenges and work towards self-generated solutions.

FIRST WORK STRATEGIC DIRECTION

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INNOVATIONS

Emerging New Approaches

Program Innovation Pilots

Information & Technology Integration



Staff Training

To ensure we meet the needs of our growing Network, First Work creates an opportunity for team learning and joint innovating. These sessions aim to create strategic alignment with our members and our growth while helping our staff to better identify and meet the needs of the jobseeker populations we ultimately serve.

Annual First Work Team Meeting: Strategic and Communications Planning

August 4, 2022 & August 5, 2022

The First Work team met in-person over the course of two days to review the last of a 3-year strategic plan and create tools based on membership feedback on how to better communicate the needs and growth of the network. Staff ideated on how to best serve the Network, this sector, and the jobseekers we collectively serve; identifying opportunities to incorporate into First Work's offerings.

Cultivating the Four R's to Support Indigenous Youth

September 30, 2022

First Work staff discuss the Four Rs of Indigenous education - respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility - as they relate to education and employment service provision. In this process, we will move away from notions of cultural competency and focus on anti-racist, anti-colonial relationship building.

MBTI First Work Team & Individual Assessment

January 6, 2023

First Work's Board President Carolyn Warkentin facilitated a team-building session for the First Work staff by utilizing the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®). The MBTI® assessment is used to develop individuals, teams and organizations to meet today's challenges in such areas as communication, team building and leadership. First Work used this opportunity to better understand staff dynamics, working styles, and feedback approaches to bolster workplace performance and comradery.

FIRST WORK STRATEGIC DIRECTION

STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

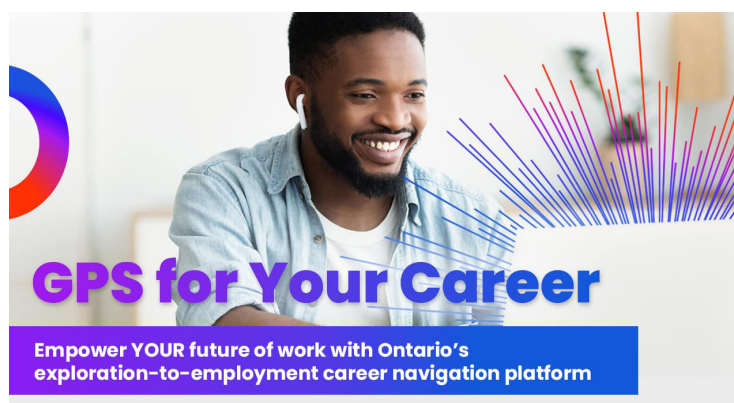
Public, Private, and Non-Profit Partnerships

Research & Evaluation

Mobilization & Partnership Agreements

FutureFit AI – GPS for Your Career

First Work's GPS for Your Career project is powered by FutureFit AI thanks to funding from the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development with support from the Government of Canada. This exploration-to-employment career navigation platform provides skills profiling, career exploration, upskilling and job matching all in one easy-to-use digital tool. With the GPS for Your Career platform, young people in Ontario can be supported to find that survival job that's actually on the pathway to their chosen career.



FIRST WORK x **FutureFit AI**
 ONTARIO'S YOUTH EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

The project has made significant progress in platform deployment, developing our relationship with technology partner, FutureFit AI, and increasing engagement with our service agreement organizations. Our team has hosted over 80 meetings to demonstrate the platform to counselors in colleges, universities, high schools, and community organizations. We are currently in the process of expanding our platform database to include Agri-Foods programs and career paths to support other upcoming project outcomes.

The project remains focused on outreach and user recruitment, service agreement organization training, resource development, and marketing; however, at this stage, we are moving towards project closure.

The project has an overall targeted outcome of employing 10K youth with a minimum set target of 80% achievement of that target (8K youth). This fiscal year we had over 11,000 users registered to use the platform, over 1200 referrals to employment service providers. By the end of the initiative, over 1400 users achieved employment as a result of utilizing the project.

The platform will be available to jobseekers until June 30th, 2025. Over the course of the next two years, First Work will continue to work with FutureFit AI to enhance the referral process, continue to update the platform to include relevant career paths, learning opportunities, and resources, and integrate a referral process for jobseekers to connect with employers across Ontario.

ICI Talent Pipelines: Ontario General Contractors Association (OGCA)

Timeline: April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2024

Leveraging previously completed research via the JPMC Foundation's Communities of Practice (CoPs) project, First Work embarked on a project with the Ontario General Contractors Association (OGCA) to build up Pathways to Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) Construction. As part of First Work's 2020-'21 CoPs, the OGCA identified strategies to improve the talent pools for project managers, site supervisors and project coordinators. The Action Plan resulting from this project can be read clicking this link. These strategies were leveraged for a – ultimately – successful application to the Ontario Skills Development Fund (SDF), which First Work supported.

The resulting program – Pathways to ICI Program – is a 20-week bridging program focused on recent graduates and newcomers interested in exploring Project Coordinator career pathways in construction. As the curriculum was designed in consultation with industry and subject matter experts, First Work offered a network of providers to support program development and participant recruitment.

Specifically, the OGCA partnered with First Work to utilize its ESP network to attract candidates in Toronto eligible for the program.

Program participants will be new graduates and newcomers interested in exploring the construction career paths of Project Manager and Site Supervisor roles. Once training is completed, participants will be given the opportunity to complete a 6-month paid placement.



WE BUILD ONTARIO
ONTARIO GENERAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

FIRST WORK
ONTARIO'S YOUTH EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

A training and work* program for recent graduates in construction management.

Take the bridge to a rewarding career in ICI Construction. Apply now!

www.ogca.ca/pathways-to-ICI
pathways@ogca.ca

*All participants have the opportunity to interview with companies to obtain a paid work placement. Work placements are not guaranteed.

Canada EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO Ontario

First Work is also supporting the success of this project in various ways. Presentations for jobseekers, incorporating best practices in employment supports, will be as follows:

- *"Introduction to Résumé Development for the Construction Sector"*
- *"Why Should I Hire You"*
- *"Introduction to Interviewing for the Construction Sector"*

This project is ongoing, with outreach for program recruitment beginning in the Spring and jobseeker presentations slated for the Fall.

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) | Expanding Job Entry Pathways in Agri-food

Timeline: January 1, 2023 – March 30, 2024

First Work secured funding from Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) to launch the Expanding Job Entry Pathways in Agri-food.



Leveraging this employment service provider network, First Work will increase awareness of agri-food employment opportunities and also of the supports ESPs can offer this sector's employers over the course of the two years.

The project will connect 80 Agri-food businesses to the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development's Employment Ontario network of agencies supporting skilled workers and employers across 4 regions in Ontario.

First Work is delivering the following activities to achieve increased talent pipelines in Agri-food:

- Employer webinars to facilitate access to First Work's network of ESPs to better utilize the EO network of supports;
- Jobseeker webinars, advancing the potential of Agri-food careers in specific sub sectors; and
- Aspire career exploration events – titled Farm to Fork – in partnership with member ESPs to promote Agri-food opportunities.

Since the January project launch, the First Work research team has completed the primary research on the Agri-food sector in Ontario, identifying several clear regions with a strong Agri-food industry. The findings have been validated through primary research interviews with ESPs, sector experts and local employers to support project development. These insights will help to shape the approach to execution for associated project-activities.



Sector Umbrella Organizations

First Work in partnership with 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) convened shared discussions with Ministry officials to advocate on issues that were faced by our respective members. 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.

The organizations invited the Big City Mayors Association to the table to discuss the impact and importance of the employment sector on the municipalities' workforce development.

University of Toronto Scarborough Campus (UTSC)

First Work has been partnering with University of Toronto Scarborough. First Work attended their job fairs "LAUNCH 2022: Connect with UTSC Arts & Science Co-op Job Seekers" in September and "LAUNCH Winter: Arts & Science Co-op Networking Event" in February 2023. In the fall 2022 term, students from a data analysis course assisted with analyzing the data being used in the Employment Services Transformation report. In the winter 2023 term, First Work was joined by a student in a Francophone course to help translate and develop materials for our network.

Jobs Fair Canada

First Work was invited by Jobs Canada Fair to exhibit at three career fairs:

- North York – February 28th, 2023
- Richmond Hill – March 7th, 2023
- Toronto – March 14th, 2023

First Work was able to build relationships with jobseekers looking to explore Canada's labour market. Over the course of the three career fairs, First Work interacted with over 600 jobseekers.

FIRST WORK STRATEGIC DIRECTION

KNOWLEDGE ADVANCEMENT

Conference & Learning Exchange
Credentialing & Certifications

Amplify Leadership Summit 2022

Mobilizing Workforce Development Leadership

April 27, 2022 | Virtual



Amplify is Ontario's premier gathering of those challenging, disrupting, driving and shaping workforce development across the Province. This day of inspiring and thought-provoking conversation attracts hundreds of government, industry and sector leaders, professionals, educators, funders and researchers. The 2022 Amplify Leadership Summit took place virtually on April 27th with a total of 165 registrants.

The 1-day virtual conference hosted a multitude of sessions for Ontario's workforce development leaders. The opening keynote – Fireside Chat with Minister Ahmed Hussen – and afternoon keynote – Labour Market Integration of Canadian Racialized Newcomers: Newcomer Hazing – were the most well attended sessions. Hosted by Leeanne Maille, First Work Board Treasurer; the Minister for Housing, Diversity and Inclusion spoke aptly about the need for youth-driven leadership to face the challenges Canada encounters.

Delegates had the opportunity to learn from domestic and international labour market trends. Rohinton Medhora from the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) led a future-focused session for delegates, concentrated on what we as a sector should be keeping in mind over the next 10 years to be ahead of the game.

FutureFit AI's Terralynn Forsyth shared the importance of technology and AI in the sector and showcased their new career-exploration to -application portal. We were thrilled to host our project partners from FutureFit AI in advance of the **GPS for Your Career** project launch.



Futures Conference 2022

Inclusive Recovery for Today's Workforce

October 26, 2022 – October 28, 2022 | Blue Mountain



Futures was held at Blue Mountain from October 26th to October 28th, 2022, attended by over 460 delegates. More than 33 sessions took place over the three-day conference, with topics including: innovative service delivery approaches, best practices in youth engagement approaches, anti-racism in action, labour market insights, and more.

The Futures Conference kicked off with a bang: attendees were treated to a powerful performance by the Raging Asian Womxn Taiko Drummers (RAW) – a Toronto-based performing arts ensemble made up of East and Southeast Asian womxn. The large Taiko drums represent creative resistance for social change, carving space for self-expression, education, and community building.

A series of networking discussions provided delegates an opportunity to solution together as a sector. Attendees were asked to re-imagine the transformation conversation, so the jobseeker remains the focus of sectoral design.

Elyse Watkins from the Futures Skills Centre hosted a fascinating panel on microcredentials, joined by Robert Luke (eCampus Ontario) and Malika Asthana (D2L), in a discussion focused on meeting future skills needs. Panelists discussed how microcredentials can meet the needs of learners and employers alike: microcredential fungibility, wrap-around supports, and barriers to access were examined in detail.

The Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) hosted various sessions that included an Ontario Employment Services transformation update by David Cronin, a presentation on Better Jobs Ontario, more information about Round 3 of the Skills Development Fund, and an overview of the Common Assessment tool (CAT).

Delegates had the opportunity to connect and network throughout the conference particularly during our networking reception and Costume Party, themed TV family and friends through the ages. Congratulations to YMCA North York who took home first prize for Coco, YMCA Scarborough 2nd prize for Squid Game, and EEC took home 3rd prize for WWE.



First Work's Frontline Training Series

The frontline training webinars were developed based on discussions and feedback received from those in the Employment Service Transformation catchment area as well as both the frontline and regional meetings. With evolving practitioner needs due to labour force and transformation changes, two core trainings have been identified and offered: practical applications of motivational interviewing, and trauma-informed care and practices. Over the course of four sessions per training, there were over 330 participants.

Due to high-demand and interest, sessions will be offered to members in July, August, and September of 2023.



Motivational Interviewing Training

Dale Kuehl | Advanced Practice Clinical Leader

Motivational Interviewing is an evidence-based counselling approach working with individuals contemplating a change. This hands-on, client-centred yet worker-directed approach will be described and applied. This interactive session will engage participants to apply the concepts in practice and opportunity to reflect in small and large group discussions.

Part 1

Motivational Interviewing is a client-centered, evidence-based counselling approach to working with clients ambivalent about making a change. Since its development it has been successfully applied in education, employment, healthcare, and social service settings.

Part 2

In this highly interactive and engaging session, Motivational Interviewing Part 2 built on the concepts, techniques and strategies covered in part 1, introducing new case studies and more opportunity for reflective practice and application. Participants dove deeper into eliciting change talk and minimizing sustain talk.



Trauma Informed Care and Practice Training

Theresa Hirschberg | Founder of Sights on Solutions

Implementing trauma-informed care into our service delivery means understanding the impacts of trauma on the individual – that trauma is a defining and organizing experience that forms in the core of an individual's identity with far reaching impact which can often lead to one facing additional barriers in reaching their life goals (Harris & Fallot, 2001). By incorporating this approach, we can better help individuals understand that recovery is possible - in order to allow them to flourish and reach their full potential.

Part 1

This training provided an introductory understanding of the principles of trauma-informed care and a deepened understanding of potential symptoms and outcomes of trauma. Through this training session learners were able to develop strategies to create psychological and physiological safety, best practices to working with clients who experienced trauma and managing their own triggers in the workplace.

Part 2

This training explored practical applications of the 6 CDC principles and, the 4 Rs of trauma informed care. Attendees were provided with an introduction to the framework of trauma informed care from various stakeholder lenses and learn how to identify, manage and support triggers for themselves and their clients.

Cannexus23

Canada's Career Development Conference

January 23 – 25, 2023 | Virtual & Ottawa

Cannexus – Canada's Career Development Conference hosted by CERIC – brings together those across the career and workforce development ecosystem to explore research, policy and practice. First Work participated as a conference exhibitor and presented two sessions at Cannexus23.

Ontario's Evolving Employment Services: Impact on the Ground

January 25th, 2023 | Virtual

Presented by:

- Akosua Alagaratnam – Executive Director at First Work
- Deanna Villella – Senior Manager at Job Gym, a division of the John Howard Society of Niagara
- Karen Wilson – Executive Director at Employment Planning & Counselling Peterborough

Ontario's modernization of employment services has created unique challenges. This new system must be flexible enough to cater to all jobseekers in various localized social and economic agencies to achieve the integrated workforce development ecosystem vision ascribed. As governments aim to strengthen inclusive talent development, the prosperity of community-based employability sectors must be recognized as vital to economic health.

Youth, Work and Post-Pandemic Futures

January 25th, 2023 | Virtual

Presented by:

- Carmine Chen – Manager, Finance and Operations at First Work
- Sophia Koukoulas – Manager, Communications & Stakeholder Relations at First Work

This session addressed the question of how we can realign employer approaches to hiring youth so that we can overcome Canada's disrupted labour markets. Youth-led solutions to barriers to employment are essential for equitable economic prosperity. Leveraging youth-led solutions for employer approaches to hiring and retention are equally important. The presenters discussed on recommendations to reduce barriers to employment for youth and showcase a solutioning example Ontario is taking on.

QUARIERA 2023

February 15 – 17, 2023 | Trois-Rivières

Digitizing Collaboration: Digital Partnerships with the Workforce Development Sector

February 17th, 2023 | Trois-Rivières

Presented by:

- Alexis Roy – Project Lead at First Work

The pandemic has tested this sector in unique ways, requiring unique solutions to meet jobseekers and employers in an increasingly virtual space. To enhance practitioner capacity, First Work partnered with two technological agencies to provide access to user licenses and platforms that bridge the gap to skill development. The presentation focused the "Ontario Accelerating Micro-Learning, Capacity Building and Digitization for Employment Success Through LinkedIn & First Work Partnership" project and its successes. The presentation provided an overview on the utilization of the platform to supplement programming, while increasing digitization and professionalization of the sector, and the positive impact the project had on the province.

FIRST WORK STRATEGIC DIRECTION

CULTIVATING TALENT

Labour Mobility Pathways School-to-Work Transition

Aspire

Aspire Event: Construction Networking and Career Exploration

August 25th, 2022 | Virtual

On August 25, 2022, First Work's Aspire initiative – with the OGCA and RESCON – hosted a virtual Networking and Career Exploration Event for nearly 50 youth (ages 15-30) in the GTA interested in the construction industry. Industry professionals shared experiences from their career journeys and promoted a variety of careers in the construction industry. Panelists and focused networking conversations in breakout rooms took apart the myth of traditional construction careers and instead built for youth a map for many pathways in the construction industry.



Construction Networking and Career Exploration Event

First Work's Aspire initiative is hosting a virtual career exploration event for the Construction Industry in the GTA.

Listen to Industry Professionals talk about their career journey and the skills and qualifications that they have gained along the way.

Bring your resume and network with Local Employers!

This event is open to youth from 15-30 years old.

Sign Up Today!

August 25th, 2022 from 10am-12pm on Zoom

Email aspire@firstwork.org

For more information check out our website at:

First Work's Aspire



SCAN ME

WE BUILD ONTARIO
ONTARIO GENERAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

RESCON
REPRESENTATION & EDUCATION
COUNCIL OF ONTARIO

Aspire FIRST WORK
CAREER EXPLORATION & EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Aspire Event: Manufacturing and Supply Chain Career Exploration

September 14th, 2022 | Brockville, Ontario



On September 14, 2022, local manufacturing and supply chain industry partners converged on Brockville to motivate over 300 youth, inspiring them to discover potential careers close to home. First Work's Aspire career exploration initiative partnered with the Employment and Education Centre (EEC) in Brockville to offer an event for jobseekers to learn about pathways for careers in Brockville and the surrounding areas.

The event hosted two Employee Panels where company representatives shared experiences and information about the roles, workplace culture, and the types of jobs currently open at each company. CareerLabs VR provided simulations of manufacturing jobs. Local industry employers in attendance included: 3M, LeClerc, Burnbrae Farms, Ross Video, James Ross, Trillium, Giant Tiger and Northern Cables.

Aspire Event: Grand Erie Aspire Job Fair

November 15th, 16th, 17th 2022 | Grand Erie, Ontario

The Grand Erie Aspire Job Fair was the largest three-day event in Grand Erie with over 100 employers participating across the 3 days. The event series took place in Brantford, Delhi, and Paris, servicing over 600 jobseekers across the region. Collaboration with community partners made the event a success. The event featured employer representation from small, medium, and large companies spanning several industries across Grand Erie. Noteworthy employer participants included: Sierra Construction, Scotlynn Commodities, Mitsui High Tec, Piller's Fine Foods, Maple Leaf Foods, Toyotetsu Canada Inc., and, Apotex. By the end of the event, many employers had interviews scheduled with candidates who attended, and several jobseekers already have offers of employment!



Aspire Youth Summit

February 9, 2023 | Virtual

The Aspire Youth Summit – a full day dedicated to youth-led, youth-focused programming – was designed to empower youth to advocate for themselves in the workplace, use their skills in creative and innovative ways, have the curiosity to explore career options and create a positive network of people around them. To ensure sessions were relevant to Ontario's young people, particularly in this post pandemic landscape, the youth council was instrumental in planning the session topics and agenda. The Summit also hosted two career exploration panels for young people to explore a career in the guide dog and agri-food industries.

TCBN Green Building Job Fair

February 22, 2023 | Toronto, Ontario

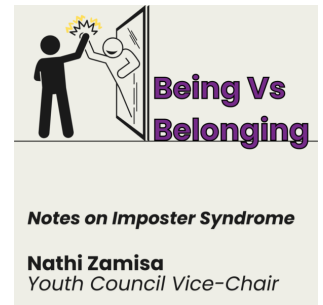
First Work partnered with Toronto Community Benefits Network to host the Build Green Career Fair to introduce jobseekers to companies offering entry level positions in the Green Building industry, such as construction workers, apprentices, professional, administrative and technical workers, sustainability consultants, project coordinators and project managers.

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 8 blog posts published on the Aspire website this year:

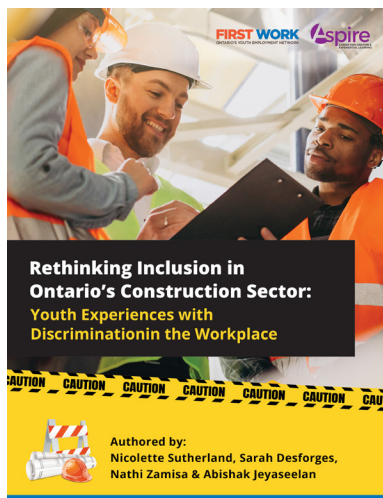
- The Lost Girl by Sarah Desforges
- Putting the Courage in Encouragement: Mentorship during COVID-19 by Abhishak Jeseleeyan
- Overcoming the Awkwardness of Networking by Promi Begum
- Choosing Your Post-Secondary Pathway by Karuna Adhikari
- Hidden in Plain Sight: Employment Service Professionals by Priscilla Mensah
- Hustle Culture – Take a Breather by Charlton Sinclair
- Keys to Success: A Social Life by Nick Sutherland

The latest post is Nathi Zamisa's Being vs Belonging: Notes on Imposter Syndrome.



Youth Council Thought Leadership Research Reports

First Work's Youth Council cohort conducted focus group discussions with fellow youth related to the following topics:



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Construction

Inspired by First Work's drive to create talent pipelines for underrepresented groups, the Youth Council set out to understand the challenges that diverse youth have in the construction industry.



Mentorship programs

Due to limited availability of research on youth experiences with Mentorship programs; the Youth Council evaluated the effectiveness, accessibility, and equity of mentorship programs, especially for equity-seeking participants.

These virtual focus group discussions provide insights into the experiences of young workers, offering youth-led recommendations to workforce challenges. These insights will be captured by the youth council via research reports that will be released by the end of 2023.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Advocacy Committee

First Work has convened an Advocacy Committee – originally established as the Pre-Election Committee – to discuss priorities, approaches, key messages development and policy-recommendations for the Network's advocacy issues.

This Committee ensures First Work champions policy aligned with the needs of the membership and the jobseekers we serve. Messaging and sector objectives created at these tables were verified by the broader membership prior to any public advocacy efforts to ensure membership agreement.

This Committee is open to any Network members with experience in frontline delivery – to ensure the jobseeker is kept at the heart of advocacy initiatives – and willing to lend their voice to the Network's goals.

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

First Work has re-invigorated engagement on federally managed advocacy issues, in preparation for an Advocacy Day on Parliament Hill, anticipated to take place this Fall.

Leveraging our members' insights, focused discussions on existing Federal support will take place during all Regional Manager meetings in the Spring and early Summer of 2023. Federally focused discussions are ongoing and First Work will continue to leverage the Advocacy Committee to ensure a strong voice for Ontario's employment services sector.

Canadian-Coalition of Community-Based Employability and Training

First Work continues to leverage our relationship and membership with the Canadian-Coalition for Community-Based Employability and Training (CCCBET-CCODE). Our membership to this Canadian-wide association affords First Work insights into employment services across Canada. As Ontario's employment services model transforms, First Work position on this pan-Canadian network will become increasingly important as changes in Ontario will likely impact other provinces.

Youth Summit 2023

The Youth Summit took the federal stage when Hon. Marci Ien, Minister for Women and Diversity and Youth, introduced the 2023 event – Level Up: Future Changemakers. In support of the theme, Ien emphasized the importance of government partnering with youth as problem-solvers of the future – and that all youth need is opportunity. Federal programs like Youth Employment Skills Strategy funding and Canada Summer Jobs were promoted as facilitating pathways to sustainable and meaningful employment opportunities.

Amplify 2022

The Honourable Ahmed Hussen took the virtual stage at Amplify'22 for an important Fireside Chat focused on newcomer jobseekers. Hosted by LeeAnne Maille – First Work Board Treasurer – the Minister for Housing, Diversity and Inclusion spoke aptly about the need for youth-driven leadership to face the challenges Canada encounters.

ONTARIO GOVERNMENT

First Work regularly engages the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) as part of our ongoing government relations and policy work for this sector. Though engagement takes place at a variety of levels – Minister's office, Assistant Deputy Minister, Transformation Secretariat, etc. – in both ad hoc and strategic capacities.

Ministry-Sector Events

The Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) hosted various sessions at Futures'22, including an Ontario Employment Services transformation update by David Cronin. Other presentations covered topics of Better Jobs Ontario, Round 3 of the Skills Development Fund, and an overview of the Common Assessment tool (CAI).

EST Market Sounding Sessions

First Work was approached by the Ministry to co-host 4 market-sounding sessions in partnership with MLITSD. Through these sessions, the Ministry had open discussions with First Work Members on the complexities and challenges of the Toronto and Northern Catchment areas. Co-hosted First Work sessions took place:

- Friday, November 4th Central Region for Toronto members virtual session.
- Monday, November 7th Northern region in-persons session in Sudbury.
- Tuesday, November 8th Northern region virtual Francophone session.
- Wednesday, November 9th Northern region hybrid session in Thunder Bay and virtual.

First Work also put forward a market sounding submission document, which can be read following the link here.

Pre-Budget Submission

Amongst a tight labour market and looming recession, First Work submitted a Pre-Budget Submission to the Ontario government, focusing on three crucial recommendations:

1. Prioritize Youth-Specific Programming in Employment Ontario to provide youth-facing-barriers equitable access to supports;
2. Employ further consideration for accessibility through digital upgrading of Ministry resources; and to
3. De-silo EO Programming for Youth from the Ministry of Education.

Employment Services Providers (ESPs) are essential to supporting the growth of local economies. With compounding and competing pressures impacting Ontario's workforce, the submission emphasized the opportunity to utilize ESPs as a resource in local economic recovery, emphasizing the mutual benefits it brings to both jobseekers and employers.

You can read the full submission by clicking this [link](#).



Queen's Park Advocacy Day

First Work looks forward to the first-ever, membership-wide Advocacy Day at Queen's Park taking place on 18 April 2023.

Preparation for this day has included working with government relations firm Navigator Ltd. to secure meetings with MPPs and host a reception at the provincial Legislature. This event is intended to drive home the message that **youth-specific** supports are an essential component of workforce development.

Our focus for the day will be on Youth. No matter where young people live in Ontario, they have unique needs and require unique supports to achieve meaningful employment. To ensure both ends of the employment spectrum – jobseekers and job creators – have their needs met, we expect to foster relationships on both sides of the aisle so that Employment Service Providers are recognized as economic development drivers that strengthen the workforce and make young people not just job-ready, but retention-ready.

Ontario's Employment Services Transformation

Following the release of the 2022 report, *A Year in Transition: Ontario's Employment Service Transformation*, First Work has continued to study the experiences of ESPs and Service System Managers (SSMs) undergoing transformation into the Integrated Employment Services (IES) model.

This research is made possible thanks to the contributing members of First Work's **EST Monitoring Committee**, who represent agencies undergoing transition to or delivering the IES model. Historically, this Committee has been comprised of representatives from the Prototype Catchments: Muskoka-Kawartha, Hamilton-Niagara, and Peel. In preparation for the 2023 report, First Work's EST Monitoring Committee has been expanded to include Phase 1 Catchment member agencies, encompassing the regions of: Halton, Kingston-Pembroke, Stratford-Bruce Peninsula, and York.

Various methods of engagement are used for the ongoing monitoring of the EST, including working meetings with stakeholders, attending the government's market sounding sessions, and conducting primary research activities with ESPs and SSMs in the prototype and Phase 1 catchment areas. Interviews with ESPs were conducted during July 2022; those with Phase 1 catchment SSMs (WCG Services, Fedcap Inc, Fleming College, Serco Inc., and Bruce County), during November 2022.

As Transformation progresses across the province, First Work will continue to engage key stakeholders, particularly municipal stakeholders who are increasingly impacted by the EST.

First Work will offer insights to the impacts of IES implementation via a 2023 report, with recommendations for ESPs, SSMs, and government.

MEMBERS

Central Region

- 360 Kids
- ACCES Employment
- Achēv
- Agilec
- CareerFind
- CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals
- Centre for Skills Development & Training
- COSTI - Caledonia Employment Centre
- Dixon Hall
- 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
- Lighthouse Labs
- Project Work
- PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs
- Simcoe County District School Board - Barrie Career Centre
- Skills for Change
- Springboard
- The Career Foundation
- The Learning Enrichment Foundation
- The Neighbourhood Group-St. Stephen's Community House
- The Yonge Street Mission
- Times Change Women's Services
- Toronto Community Employment Services (TCES)
- 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
- Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) of Greater Toronto

Eastern Region

- Algonquin College Community Employment Services
- Career Edge/ Youth Habilitation (Quinte) Inc.
- Eastern Ontario Training Board
- Employment and 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)
- Ontrac Employment Resource Services
- 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
- YMCA of National Capital Regional
- 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-West Region

- CERF Niagara
- Community Employment Services
- County of Bruce
- 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 (GECDSD) - 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
- 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)

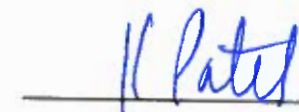
Balance Sheet as at March 31, 2023

	2023	2022
ASSETS		
Current:		
Cash	\$ 621,239	1,345,039
Guaranteed investment certificate (Note 2, 3)	125,115	75,115
Account receivable	1,067,413	216,378
Harmonized Sales Tax Recoverable	153,994	33,460
Prepaid expenses	28,979	5,842
	<u>1,996,740</u>	<u>1,675,834</u>
Capital assets, net (Note 4)	7,074	10,118
	<u>2,003,814</u>	<u>1,685,952</u>
LIABILITIES		
Current:		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	1,051,103	254,179
Deferred revenue (Note 5)	520,594	1,078,645
	<u>1,571,697</u>	<u>1,332,824</u>
NET ASSETS		
	<u>432,117</u>	<u>353,128</u>
	<u>\$ 2,003,814</u>	<u>1,685,952</u>

On behalf of the Board:



Director



Director

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, 2023

	2023	2022
REVENUES		
Government grant (Note 5)	\$ 5,926,183	2,055,849
Project Revenue	310,009	1,037,326
Conference Fees	488,589	176,872
Membership Fees	121,378	118,934
Other Grants	-	100,159
Bingo Proceeds	103,427	55,307
Other Revenue	12,547	1,673
	<u>6,962,133</u>	<u>3,546,120</u>
EXPENSES		
Programs and Services	5,418,065	2,055,742
Personnel	991,907	888,617
Professional fees	82,593	260,885
Conferences	320,716	83,489
Office and General	27,457	52,305
Travel	24,737	11,731
Rent	8,597	5,624
Amortization (Note 4)	5,101	4,683
Insurance	3,971	6,235
	<u>6,883,144</u>	<u>3,369,311</u>
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	78,989	176,809
OPENING NET ASSETS	353,128	176,319
CLOSING NET ASSETS	\$ 432,117	353,128

See accompanying Notes to Financial Statements

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Carolyn Warkentin

President

South Essex Community Council

Kim Patel

Treasurer

The Neighbourhood Group Community Services

Laryssa Smith

South West Region Representative

John Howard Society of Niagara - Job Gym Fort Erie

Ray Rauth

Central Region Representative

JobSkills

Ian Nyman

Member At Large

YMCA of Greater Toronto - York Region

Jordon Myers

Indigenous Representative

Grand River Employment and Training

LeeAnne Maille

Vice President

YES Employment Services - Nipissing

Susan Watts

Secretary

Employment and Education Centre

Donna Sedore

Northern Region Representative

Employment North

Gillian Watters

Eastern Region Representative

KEYS Employment and Newcomer Services

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**

Syed Shah, **Lead Researcher**

Chardae Henry, **Research Analyst**

Samira Adnan, **Digital Lead**

Ashley Allado, **Business & Operations Coordinator**

Ikram Abdi, **Conference Coordinator**

Kathleen MacLeod, **Membership & Youth Engagement Coordinator**

Alexis Roy, **Project Lead – Bilingual**

Rushel Briscoe, **Project Lead**

Amma Dapaah, **Finance and Administration Coordinator**

Lucas Solowey, **Communications & Public Affairs Coordinator**

Gabriel Busca, **Public Affairs Assistant**

Mahesha Amirthasivam, **Community Outreach Coordinator**

Christopher Moothedom, **Community Outreach Coordinator**

FUNDERS

Core Funders

- [First Work Members](#)
- [Ontario Charitable Gaming Association](#) / [Dolphin Bingo](#)

Program and Project Funders

- [Employment and Social Development Canada](#)
- [Government of Ontario | Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development](#)
- [Government of Ontario | Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Rural Affairs](#)
- [Ontario General Contractors Association \(OGCA\)](#)
- [RBC Future Launch](#)
- [Toronto Employment & Social Services](#)

Sponsors

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| • Accenture | • HTA 75 |
| • Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association | • RBC Future Launch |
| • Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity | • Rescare |
| • CareerFind Inc. | • Serco Canada Inc. |
| • CERIC | • triOS College |
| • Christian Labour Association of Canada | • Urbacon |
| • Contact North BC | • WCG Services |
| • Devant | • Youth Employment Services Toronto |
| • Erco Worldwide | |
| • FedCap | |
| • Future Skills Centre | |

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/