

Annual Impact Report

2024-25



Letter from the Chief Executive Officer & Board Chair

This year stands as a powerful milestone for our organization as we proudly celebrate the successful completion of our 2022-2025 strategic plan. What began in 2022 as a bold vision to strengthen our sustainability, expand services, and support a diverse and growing community has culminated in achievements that surpassed even our own expectations.

One of the year's most defining accomplishments has been our preparation for — and transition through — the transformation of Employment Ontario in the Northeast. This has been a year of laying groundwork, strengthening processes, and equipping our team with the skills needed to thrive in a changing service environment. We are incredibly grateful to our new Service System Manager, Collège Boréal, for their partnership and leadership as our funder for Integrated Employment Services. Together, we look forward with excitement to next year's learning and the implementation of new ways of delivering impactful, client-focused services.

This has been a year of extraordinary progress — a year where bold ideas became real outcomes. We successfully launched our EDGE+ program, met and exceeded our goals in Literacy & Basic Skills, and continued to strengthen the resilience of our organization through diversified funding and expanded partnerships. These achievements are not just milestones — they are the result of a committed team that finds purpose in our mission, embraces change, and puts people at the center of everything we do.

We are incredibly proud of the culture we've nurtured — one of learning, inclusion, innovation, and care. Our staff have gone above and beyond, supporting one another, embracing professional development, and bringing to life new programs that meet the evolving needs of our community. Their energy, passion, and collaboration have created lasting impact.

We also extend our deepest gratitude to our Board of Directors, whose vision and governance have been instrumental in shaping our success. In particular, we wish to recognize Deidra Goral, who concluded her six-year term this year. Deidra has been a passionate and dedicated leader, and her steadfast support of our programs and mission has helped guide us through a time of significant growth.

As we reflect on all we've accomplished, we are filled with gratitude — and with pride. This year has reminded us of what's possible when we come together with purpose and perseverance. We move forward ready for what's next, stronger and more united than ever.



Chantal Makela
CEO



Jim Burke
CHAIR

Mission

To provide quality, accessible services responsive to the needs of job seekers & employers through individualized solutions & mutually beneficial partnerships.

Vision

A dynamic & prosperous community.

Values

Inclusivity, Empowerment, Compassion, and Respect.



As a leading Employment Ontario service provider, Spark Employment Services bridges the gap between employers and job seekers by delivering exceptional, innovative, and personalized employment and education solutions. Established in 1986, Spark has proudly served Greater Sudbury and the surrounding region for nearly 40 years.

At the heart of our work is the belief that employment is more than just a job, it's a pathway to personal growth, stability, and independence. We support our clients at every step of their journey by helping them identify where they are in their process of change and guiding them toward realistic, fulfilling employment goals.

Through an integrated, motivational approach to service delivery, including job development, coaching, and tailored support, we empower individuals to build the confidence, skills, and mindset they need to succeed. Whether someone is looking to enter the workforce for the first time, re-enter after a break, or navigate a career transition, Spark is here to help make change possible and sustainable.

I would love to give thanks to these two amazing ladies that have helped me on my new chapter of my life with this new job that they help me get. Amanda and Fallon are very kind genuine pleasant very easy to chat with and they are very good listeners honest caring courteous polite very helpful. I'm really glad to not only have these amazing ladies in my life but also all staff from spark who have been apart of me attending there facility. Glad for all you guys do to assist in people finding jobs and being kind and honest good listeners caring. Thanks for staying by my side and making this happen greatly appreciated. I recommend this place to Friends and family looking for assistance in finding work.

—Stacie Santerre

Strategic Plan 2022-2025

With a client-centered approach, the Board of Directors of Spark Employment Services leads the agency towards our Vision of: **A Dynamic & Prosperous Community. With the support of staff and our focus on the following priorities, our clients will succeed.**



SERVICE EXCELLENCE

GOAL:

Be the lead employment services support provider

STRATEGIES:

1. Attain charity Accreditation through Imagine Canada
2. Maintain our positive culture through growth & learning
3. Prioritize internal professional development to support strategic goals
4. Strategize new funding opportunities to build organizational resilience
5. Focus on mental health in the work environment



DIVERSITY & GROWTH

GOAL:

Expand & individualize programs & services to meet the needs of a diverse community

STRATEGIES:

1. Develop partnerships to support a growing, diverse & multi-lingual population, including multicultural and vulnerable groups
2. Recognize Indigenous peoples' rights and needs, while supporting their employment success
3. Build a successful social enterprise entity
4. Continue to offer client options for access to programs and opportunities



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

GOAL:

Foster prosperity by bridging the gap between employers & jobseekers

STRATEGIES:

1. Utilize effective marketing strategies to increase visibility and connect with the community
2. Build partner collaborations to increase referrals
3. Innovate to educate and support the community towards prosperity
4. Collaborate with employers to develop working opportunities, including mentorships

CORE STRATEGY

Strengthen organizational sustainability & resilience through strategies including expanded, diversified funding.

Strategic Plan 2022-2025 Achievements

Over the course of our last strategic plan, we not only met but significantly surpassed all of our organizational targets, demonstrating the strength, adaptability, and commitment of our entire team. Each of the four core strategic areas saw measurable success, with outcomes consistently exceeding what was initially envisioned. Through innovative programming, strong partnerships, and a client-centric approach, we achieved ambitious goals and laid a solid foundation for continued growth and impact in the years ahead.

Core Strategy

We set out to launch five new programs over the course of the plan and exceeded this goal by 160%, introducing a total of eight innovative programs between 2022 and 2024. These included specialized services in cybersecurity, seniors' care, and youth employment, along with expanded initiatives targeting underrepresented groups and persons with disabilities. We also proactively submitted multiple funding applications to further strengthen our financial sustainability and support future program delivery.

Service Excellence

With a goal of becoming a leading provider of employment services, we achieved 200% of our targets. This included completing two rounds of the Guarding Minds survey and implementing meaningful changes to improve psychological health and workplace culture. Key initiatives included a comprehensive staff recognition program, an enhanced orientation process, professional development plans for all staff, and the expansion of internal training opportunities. We also submitted 11 funding applications to support organizational growth and innovation.

Diversity & Growth

We aimed to foster inclusivity and meet the needs of our diverse community, surpassing our target by 157%. Seven formal partnerships were established to better serve a wide range of populations, including Indigenous communities. We launched three new programs and made progress toward reconciliation by incorporating a formal land acknowledgment and engaging staff in Indigenous-led cultural learning experiences. Additionally, steps were taken toward building a social enterprise and increasing program accessibility.

Community Engagement

In our efforts to increase community visibility and partnerships, we achieved 122% of our target. We implemented a successful referral program, hosted numerous on-site and off-site events, and formed key collaborations with eight community organizations. Our marketing capacity grew with the addition of an event coordinator, and we launched new initiatives such as employer info sessions and our first DEI Conference.

The Spark Impact

IES Transformation

In 2019, Ontario began overhauling its employment services through pilot programs in three regions. By 2020, each had a designated Service System Manager (SSM) to oversee integration, with full implementation starting in January 2021. The transformation focuses on unifying employment supports under the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD), redefining service boundaries, and adopting a performance-based funding model to improve outcomes.

The goal of this initiative is to better serve job seekers through tailored, locally driven support. Ongoing collaboration between Employment Service Providers, SSMs, and the province is key to ensuring inclusive, high-quality services—especially for those facing the greatest barriers.

As one of the early adopters of the new Integrated Employment Services (IES) model, Spark Employment Services has taken a leadership role in implementing and adapting to this system transformation. In preparation for and in response to IES, Spark:

- Developed four distinct employment workbooks tailored to different client streams (Self-Directed, Stream A, Stream B, and Stream C) to support individualized pathways to employment;
- Hired two Employment Coaches to work alongside Employment Specialists, strengthening service delivery and enhancing client outcomes;
- Trained all Employment Specialists, Employment Coaches, and Administrative Assistants on the new case management system and the Ministry's updated platform;

- Introduced a new common assessment tool and was the first organization to launch a new service level determination method on day one of the IES rollout;
- Designed and implemented new client pathways aligned with the IES framework to better guide clients through the employment journey;
- Partnered with Ontario Works to support system integration and continues to nurture that relationship to ensure seamless client service.

Spark's proactive engagement with the IES transformation reflects its commitment to innovation, collaboration, and excellence in service delivery. By embracing change and investing in the tools, training, and partnerships needed for success, Spark remains well-positioned to deliver responsive, effective support for all job seekers in our region.

D2L Launch

Spark Employment Services has successfully launched D2L's Brightspace online platform, marking a major step forward in our digital transformation. This initiative has enabled us to bring existing skills training programs online, making them more accessible and flexible for job seekers. In addition to digitizing current offerings, Brightspace has empowered us to create new, engaging digital content tailored to the evolving needs of learners in today's job market. This move supports Spark's mission to deliver high-quality, responsive training solutions that help individuals build the skills they need to succeed.

Women of Distinction Award

Spark is proud to celebrate our very own CEO, Chantal Makela, for being recognized as one of Sudbury's 2024 Women of Distinction. This prestigious honor celebrates women who have made meaningful contributions to our community, and Chantal's leadership, vision, and unwavering commitment to empowering others make her a truly deserving recipient. Her passion for creating inclusive opportunities and driving positive change continues to inspire our team and the broader community alike.

As CEO of Spark, her leadership and strategic vision played a key role in securing seven new funding agreements over five years, resulting in a significant 40% growth in staffing capacity. This expansion has strengthened Spark's ability to foster a respectful, inclusive, and compassionate workplace, while continuing to deliver high-quality, client-focused services.

Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) Partner

Spark Employment Services collaborates as a protocol partner on the Sudbury District's Violent Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) committee. This collaborative framework was established through input and consultation with numerous community stakeholders, including the four local school boards, police services (Greater Sudbury Police Service, Ontario Provincial Police, and Tribal Police), and various community organizations. The VTRA protocol promotes timely, coordinated responses by multi-disciplinary teams to support individuals and families facing risk. When activated, the protocol facilitates appropriate and effective information sharing among partners, allowing for early intervention when someone exhibits threat-related or concerning behaviour in school or community contexts.

Service Spotlight Summit 2024

Spark Employment Services proudly continued its collaborative efforts through participation in the Service Spotlight Summit, an event designed to strengthen connections across the social service sector. Building on the success of last year's summit and led by Workforce Planning Sudbury-Manitoulin with support from a small planning committee including Spark, the event brought together nearly 150 participants and 30 local agencies dedicated to various aspects of employment support.

The summit featured expert presentations on key issues affecting employability, including food insecurity, addictions, mental health, youth engagement, legal access, and employment services. Feedback from attendees highlighted the event's critical role in fostering collaboration among service providers, with strong support for making it an annual initiative.

The success of the Service Spotlight Summit underscores the importance of continued collaboration, knowledge sharing, and innovation across sectors. We look forward to building on this momentum and contributing to future initiatives that empower individuals and strengthen our regional workforce.



Spark Events

Spark Up Your Summer!

In August 2024, Spark Employment Services hosted its first-ever Spark Up Your Summer! event, an outdoor celebration designed to bring the community together, raise awareness about employment services, and connect job seekers with opportunities in a fun, welcoming environment.

Held on-site outside the Spark office, the event featured local vendors, employer & community organization booths, music, food trucks, games, mock interviews, giveaways, and a variety of activities. The day served as more than just a celebration, but a bridge between the public and Spark's wide range of programs, including job search support, skills training, and employer services.

Many Employers attended to network with potential candidates, promote open positions, and build awareness of their industries. Community partners were also on hand to share resources

and collaborate on making employment more accessible and inclusive for all.

"Spark Up Your Summer! was about creating a space where community members could connect with opportunity in a relaxed and approachable setting," said CEO Chantal Makela. "We wanted to show that employment services can be engaging, supportive, and fun."

The event was such a success that Spark plans to make it an annual tradition to continue to shine a light on local talent, community collaboration, and the power of inclusive employment.

150+
attendees

13+
participating organizations



EDGE+ Conference

The EDGE+ Conference, hosted by Spark Employment Services in January 2025, was a one-day event, dedicated to advancing equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the workforce. Funded in part by Government of Canada, EDGE+ Conference was an initiative to bring together employers, service providers, and community organizations to explore how we can collectively create more inclusive workplaces in Northern Ontario.

The conference featured engaging keynote speakers, expert panels, and interactive breakout sessions on topics such as inclusive hiring practices, accessibility in the workplace, disability disclosure, mental health supports, and the power of lived experience in shaping better services and systems.

Participants left with practical tools, resources, and renewed motivation to champion inclusion in their own organizations and communities. The event also provided a platform for employers to share success stories and challenges in building more accessible employment practices, while clients offered insight into what meaningful support truly looks like .

The conference reaffirmed Spark's role as a leader in inclusive workforce development, and the strong turnout demonstrated the region's readiness to embrace EDI as more than a concept, but as a core value in how we work and grow together.

Spark plans to continue hosting the EDGE+ Conference annually as part of its commitment to empowering individuals with disabilities and equipping employers to lead with inclusivity.

I found the entire day both enjoyable and informative. Thank you for organizing such a wonderful event."

— Karen Mathewson

120+

attendees engaged in meaningful discussions

7+

diverse DEI topics explored through sessions and a panel



Getting to Better: How to Elevate Human Potential at Work and in Life

Spark Employment Services marked a milestone this year by hosting its first-ever leadership event, "Getting to Better: How to Elevate Human Potential at Work and in Life," on March 6th at the Steelworkers Hall. The event brought together more than 100 attendees, including executives, HR professionals, and leaders from major organizations such as Greater Sudbury Police Service, Greater Sudbury Utilities, and numerous community organizations. This diverse gathering reflected Spark's commitment to fostering leadership and collaboration across sectors.

The highlight of the day was a transformative session led by renowned leadership expert Stephen de Groot, whose experience spans working with major companies across Canada and internationally. Stephen's dynamic approach and actionable insights inspired participants to rethink strategies, challenge perspectives, and embrace continuous improvement in their professional and personal lives.

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees praising the event for its engaging content, practical takeaways, and the opportunity to connect with peers who are equally passionate about driving positive change.

Throughout the day, participants engaged in insightful discussions and built meaningful connections, making the event much more than a typical leadership seminar. It served as a catalyst for ongoing dialogue about leadership, growth, and the power of collaboration.

Organizations In Attendance:

1. Agilis Networks
2. Better Beginnings Sudbury
3. Cambrian College
4. CMHA
5. Century 21 Integrity
6. Child & Community Resources
7. The Children's Aid Society of Sudbury and Manitoulin
8. City of Greater Sudbury Paramedic Services
9. Computrek
10. Conseil scolaire du Grand Nord
11. Employment North
12. Greater Sudbury Police Service
13. GSU
14. ILSM
15. Independence Centre and Network
16. Innovative Health Pathways
17. Inspiring Organizational Growth
18. LTL Group
19. Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board
20. Monarch Recovery Services
21. Northern Youth Services Inc.
22. NOSM University
23. Our Children Our Future
24. Pioneer Construction | Fisher Wavy
25. Public Health Sudbury & Districts
26. Sudbury Women's Center
27. Sofvie
28. Triangle Sudbury
29. Workforce Planning For Sudbury & Manitoulin

Stephen was a great speaker, looking forward to implementing and working on the Three Great States.

— Roxanne

130+

attendees engaged in
meaningful discussions

Big thank you to our
Event Sponsors

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COMPUTREK
BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY SOLUTION

brivia
We Make Work Better



Our Services

Employment Services

At Spark Employment Services, we empower individuals to grow, learn, and adapt as they navigate their path to meaningful and suitable employment. Our integrated approach to service delivery — which includes job development, personalized counseling, and innovative tools — allows us to connect job seekers with work that fits and support them in achieving long-term success. Our qualified Employment Specialists and Career Coaches help clients increase self-awareness, build targeted résumés, and develop focused job search strategies using a variety of approaches. Services include job search assistance, job matching and placement, financial supports for job seekers, career coaching, virtual reality career exploration, subsidized work experience opportunities, and assistive technology or accessibility accommodations. Through this comprehensive and client-centered support, we help individuals move forward with confidence in their employment journey.

704

ES clients served

2103

self-directed clients served

281

found employment/Career Path

139

secured training/education path

Programs & Services

Help Wanted Club (HWC)

In 2024-2025, Spark Employment Services continued its commitment to empowering job seekers through the Help Wanted Club, a dynamic, drop-in workshop series held every Wednesday afternoon. Open to all and free of charge, the Help Wanted Club provides a welcoming space where job seekers can gain practical tools, build confidence, and take real steps toward employment.

Each week, participants engaged in hands-on sessions focused on resume building, interview preparation, job searching techniques, and networking. With guidance from Spark's experienced Employment Coaches and insights from guest employers and industry speakers, attendees leave each session better prepared to navigate the job market.

This year, the Help Wanted Club saw strong and consistent attendance, highlighting the ongoing need for responsive, community-based employment services. By removing barriers to access and offering immediate, practical support, the Club plays a vital role in Spark's mission to help people find meaningful work.

Looking ahead, Spark is excited to continue expanding the Club's reach, deepening employer engagement, and further supporting Sudbury's diverse job-seeking population.

152

total HWC workshops delivered

Better Jobs Ontario (BJO)

This past year, Spark Employment Services proudly supported dozens of clients through Better Jobs Ontario (BJO). BJO is an initiative funded by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. The program provides eligible individuals with up to \$28,000 in financial assistance for skills training that leads to in-demand employment.

BJO is designed for people who are unemployed, underemployed, or facing career uncertainty. At Spark, our Employment Specialists work closely with each applicant to identify career goals, explore local labour market opportunities, and develop personalized training plans. The program supports tuition, transportation, books, childcare, and other living expenses, removing key financial barriers to education and training.

We saw a growing interest in BJO, especially among individuals affected by layoffs or seeking to pivot into high-demand sectors such as health care, skilled trades, and technology. Many successful participants have already re-entered the workforce with new credentials and renewed confidence.

Better Jobs Ontario is a critical part of Spark's mission to help clients achieve long-term, meaningful employment. We are proud to support career transformation and economic resilience through this impactful program.

77.2%

application success rate for BJO

Virtual Reality

Spark has continued to embrace innovation through CareerLabsVR, a cutting-edge virtual reality (VR) tool that brings career exploration to life. Designed to engage job seekers in immersive, hands-on learning, CareerLabsVR allows users to explore over 20 in-demand occupations across multiple sectors, from construction and health care to transportation and the skilled trades.



Using VR headsets, clients can step into realistic workplace environments and experience job tasks firsthand. Whether it's welding a metal beam, assisting a patient, or operating heavy equipment, CareerLabsVR offers an engaging, low-pressure way to explore interests, develop insight, and build career confidence.

This year, 51 participants utilized CareerLabsVR in workshops, one-on-one sessions, and outreach events. The tool not only introduces a wide range of career options but also supports informed decision-making for training and job search planning for those who may be unsure about their career path.

By integrating technology into our employment services, Spark is helping job seekers envision new futures.



What a fantastic organization! After only a few appointments, Amanda had a remote job lined up for me to do from home! This was the only type of work I was comfortable with, as I am living with epilepsy, so Amanda really had her work cut out for her! She helped me refine my resume and prepare a cover letter, and submitted the application for me. Within a few days, I had an interview. Amanda helped me prepare for the interview, and the very next day, I got the job! Thank you Amanda for all your support and guidance, and thank you Spark!

—James Sitko



Our Services

Employer Services

Hiring the right people takes more than a job posting, and in 2024-2025, Spark Employment Services was proud to be the behind-the-scenes partner for dozens of local businesses navigating recruitment and workforce challenges.

Through our Employer Services, Spark provides a full suite of no-cost supports tailored to each organization's needs. Whether it's promoting a vacancy, identifying the right candidate, offering wage subsidies, or navigating inclusive hiring practices, our team is ready to help at every step. We work fast, stay flexible, and adapt our approach based on each employer's goals.

But our support doesn't stop after the hire. Spark continues to offer onboarding assistance, job retention strategies, and workplace consultation to ensure long-term

success for both the employee and the business.

Last year, our team helped fill roles across sectors like health care, construction, retail, and hospitality, all while strengthening relationships with both established and emerging employers in the region.

At Spark, we believe workforce development is a two-way street and we're here to make the connection.

97

client placements

74

employer partnerships

Programs

Job Development

Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, our Job Developers work on both sides of the employment equation. With job seekers, that means hands-on support: sharpening resumes, building interview confidence, and preparing for real-world workplace expectations. With employers, it means listening, learning about their unique needs, and delivering candidates who are a true fit, often backed by hiring incentives and post-placement support.

This year saw stronger-than-ever collaboration with businesses across Sudbury, particularly in sectors like construction, health care, retail, and warehousing. Many of those connections resulted in successful hires, some for individuals who had been overlooked due to barriers like limited work history or disability.

At its core, Job Development is about creating opportunities that might not happen on their own. Spark is proud to be the connector that helps those opportunities come to life.

Canada-Ontario Job Grant (COJG)

Behind every successful business is a skilled, adaptable team, and last year, the Canada-Ontario Job Grant (COJG) continued to help employers invest in just that. Through COJG, Spark Employment Services helped local companies access funding to train new or existing employees in ways that directly support productivity, retention, and growth.

The grant covers up to \$10,000 per employee for third-party training, and Spark's Employer Services team provides hands-on support through every step of the application process,

from identifying eligible training programs to coordinating paperwork and follow-up.

Over the past year, employers used COJG funding to upgrade certifications, introduce new technologies, and improve leadership capacity within their teams. From small businesses looking to scale up, to larger organizations enhancing safety and compliance, the impact was felt across multiple sectors. Employers were able to strengthen their workforce, and employees gained valuable skills that kept them competitive and confident in a changing labour market.

With Spark's guidance, more local businesses are discovering that workforce development doesn't have to be costly, it just takes the right partner.

Impact Story

Kwikway Convenience Store

When the new owner took over Kwikway Convenience Store, staffing the business with reliable and trainable individuals was a top priority. Seeking candidates eager to grow in retail, they partnered with our team to find suitable matches for short-term placements with long-term potential.

We collaborated closely to understand the store's needs and quickly placed motivated candidates ready to learn. With hands-on training from the employer, the candidates adapted well and demonstrated strong potential. The placements were a mutual success—the employer gained dependable team members, and the candidates secured valuable retail experience.

Impact Story

Larry Service Centre

When Larry's Service Centre approached us in search of a reliable and skilled Parts Advisor and Front Desk Assistant, we worked closely with the employer to understand their specific needs, workplace culture, and expectations for the role. Our team quickly got to work, leveraging our client database to identify potential candidates who could meet and exceed the requirements.

Through our thorough screening process, JD, one of our dedicated employment specialists, identified a client whose experience, attitude, and skill set aligned perfectly with what Larry's Service Centre was looking for. After a successful introduction and interview, the client was offered a two-week placement opportunity.

The results spoke for themselves. From day one, the client demonstrated professionalism, adaptability, and a strong work ethic. The employer was impressed by the client's performance and how seamlessly they fit into the team. As a result, at the end of the two-week placement, Larry's Service Centre made the decision to retain the client permanently.

This successful placement is a testament to the power of collaboration, careful matching, and a commitment to finding the right fit for both employer and job seeker. We're proud of JD's efforts and even more thrilled to see our client thrive in their new role.

Impact Story

Trendy Thrift Store

Trendy Thrift Store, a community-focused business offering affordable clothing and household items, partnered with Spark in July 2024 to support local jobseekers through training and employment opportunities.

Through this partnership, clients from both the EDGE+ program and regular employment services were connected to meaningful work experiences. With the support of Spark and the opportunities provided by Trendy Thrift Store, they were able to gain valuable work experience in a supportive, real-world environment.

A significant milestone is that two clients were retained and continue to work at the store, marking a strong step forward in their employment stability and confidence.

The business owner shared that working with Spark has not only helped the store meet staffing needs but also created a positive impact on the local economy by supporting jobseekers in building lasting careers.



Our Services

Literacy and Basic Skills

Spark's Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program continued to make a meaningful impact by helping adults build the essential skills they need to succeed in today's job market. Whether it's brushing up on math, improving digital literacy, or strengthening reading and writing, LBS is often the first step in a bigger journey toward employment, further training, or greater independence.

At Spark, learners receive personalized support in a welcoming, goal-focused environment. Our team works closely with each participant to design a learning plan that fits their needs, pace, and ambitions, whether they're preparing for post-secondary programs, re-entering the job market, or navigating workplace expectations.



To make learning more flexible and accessible, Spark also offers online training through Brightspace (D2L), allowing learners to complete courses at their own pace, from home or on the go. This blended approach has expanded access to learning for clients balancing work, family, or transportation challenges.

This year, the program supported a diverse group of learners, including newcomers, career changers, and those returning to education after time away. Many went on to access further training, job placements, or employment programs through Spark.

By investing in foundational skills, Spark's LBS program empowers

162

total clients served (Goal: 158)

100%

client satisfaction rate

“ This is an awesome place especially if you lack technology skills. Everyone is courteous, polite and very helpful. They helped me with my online profile to get the job I really wanted and now I'm working where I wanted to work. With getting my grade 12 and getting technology skills at the same time they were understanding the frustration I was having and helped me navigate everything I needed to get it done. I recommend Spark to everyone that I know who's looking to upgrade their skills to obtain the employment they want. It's never too late to learn. They can and will help you achieve it.

— Deborah McLaughlin

Our Services

E.D.G.E+

Empowering Diversity: Training for All Abilities

In 2024, Spark Employment Services proudly launched EDGE+, a two-year initiative supported by nearly \$1.5 million in funding from the Government of Canada's Opportunities Fund. Created to support individuals living with disabilities, EDGE+ is a training program rooted in inclusion, empowerment, and a commitment to creating lasting change in the labour market.

Over 24 months, 40 participants with disabilities and 130 employers will engage with EDGE+, which combines in-depth employment training, mentorship, and a 12-week paid work placement to foster real, sustainable career outcomes. Participants gain practical skills, build confidence, and receive personalized support to help navigate and overcome employment barriers. Employers receive resources,

accessibility training, and guidance on inclusive hiring practices. Last year, 20 individuals with disabilities participated in the program, gaining new skills, valuable work experience, and increased confidence in their ability to thrive in the workforce.

At its core, EDGE+ is about creating mutually beneficial opportunities, helping individuals with disabilities thrive in meaningful roles while helping businesses build more inclusive and dynamic workplaces. With EDGE+, Spark is proud to lead a local movement toward a workforce where everyone has the chance to succeed.



20

successfully completed the program

6

successfully employed after graduating from the program

Marketing & Advertising Efforts

This year marked a pivotal chapter for Spark Employment Services as we focused on strengthening both our digital presence and community visibility—driven by the understanding that word-of-mouth remains our most valuable referral source.

We undertook a full content refresh of our website to better reflect our programs, services, values, and the evolving needs of our clients. Our social media strategy also saw a significant revamp, with increased focus on platforms like LinkedIn, and the use of engaging formats such as videos and reels to broaden our reach and connect with a wider audience.

Our presence in the community grew significantly through active participation in numerous events across Greater Sudbury. With the dedication of our team, Spark was proud to attend and contribute to events such as the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce networking sessions, the ARCH Project by FutureNorth, Inclusive Olympics and National AccessAbility Week organized by ILSM, various job fairs, Suicide Prevention Day, and community service fairs at local post-secondary institutions. At each event, we brought the Spark spirit—raising awareness of our services, building employer relationships, and connecting directly with individuals seeking support.

In addition to external outreach, we also took the lead in organizing monthly events tailored to client needs. These included a volunteer information session in partnership with the United Way, an ILSM (Independent Living Sudbury Manitoulin) program and service presentation, Service Canada Information Session, and a financial literacy workshop facilitated by the Sudbury Community Service Centre. Some sessions saw notably high attendance, underscoring the value of collaboration in addressing the real-life needs of our clients.

Looking ahead, we are preparing for a complete website redesign aligned with our new strategic plan. This will further enhance how we communicate our services and values, ensuring that our digital presence continues to support our mission and strategic goals.

15000+

Website Visitors

235000+

Social Impressions



Financial Statements

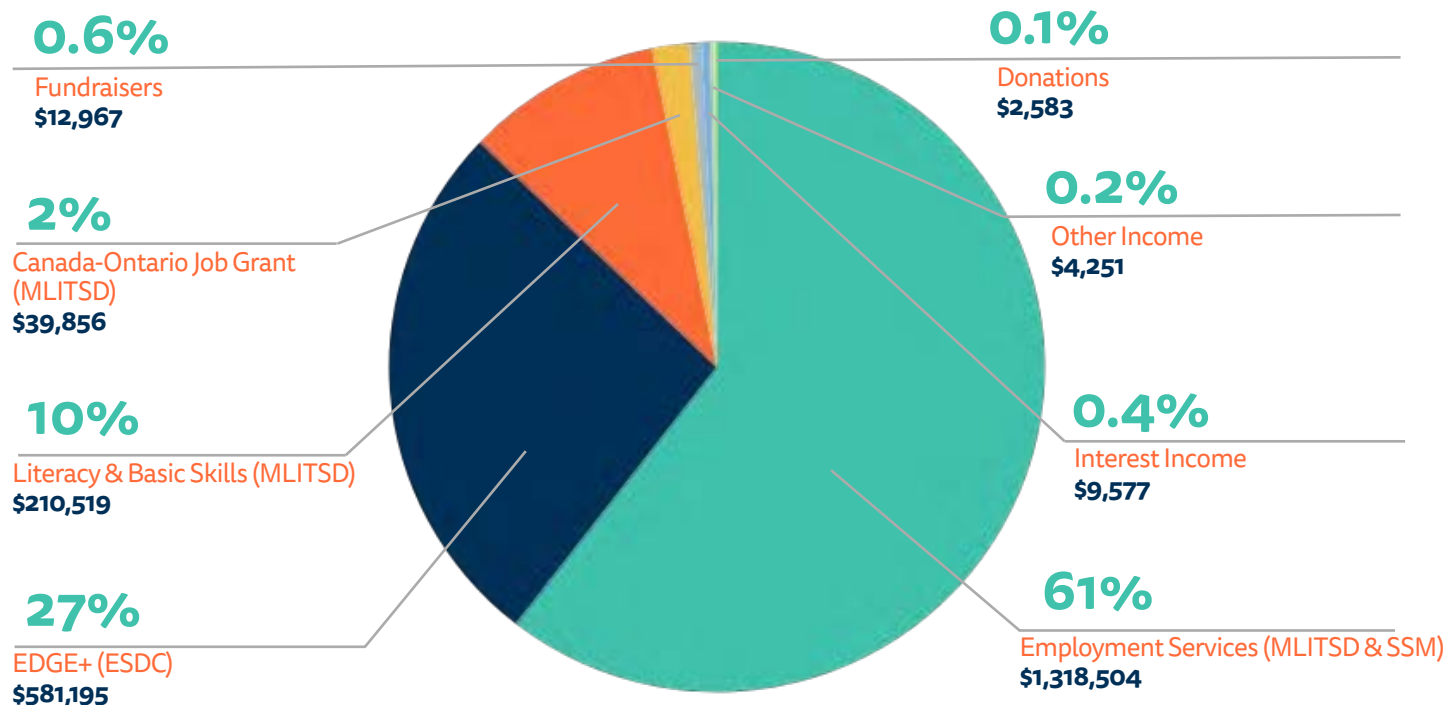
Revenues 2024-2025

Total Revenues: \$2,179,452

Funder #1: Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD)

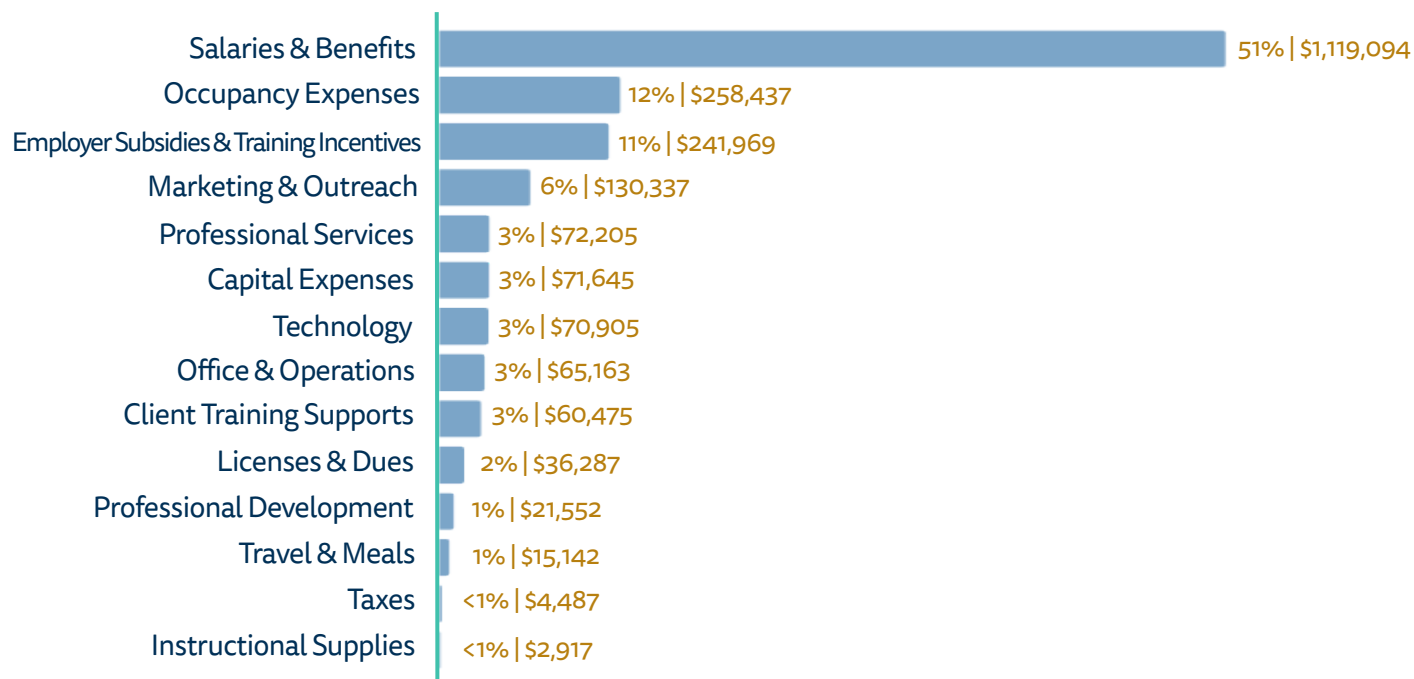
Funder #2: Boréal - Service System Manager (SSM)

Funder #3: Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)



Expenses 2024-2025

Total Expenses: \$2,170,616



Looking Forward: *Launching Our 2025–2028 Strategic Plan*

As we proudly close the chapter on our 2022–2025 Strategic Plan, we do so with a strong sense of accomplishment and gratitude. Over the past three years, we have strengthened our sustainability, deepened our impact, and supported thousands of individuals on their employment journey. With that foundation in place, we are excited to announce the launch of our new 2025–2028 Strategic Plan — a bold and forward-thinking roadmap designed with the future in mind.

This plan is the result of months of collaboration, co-creation, and reflection. Led by our Board of Directors and developed with the input of our staff, clients, community members, and stakeholders, the 2025–2028 Strategic Plan is rooted in both experience and aspiration. As part of this renewal, we also reviewed and refined our vision, mission, and values to better reflect our purpose and the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

At the heart of this new plan are three key strategic pillars:

GROWTH & EXPANSION – Expand and individualize programs and services while further developing sustainable, diverse funding.

SERVICE EXCELLENCE – Empower clients through innovative, evidence-based service delivery to enhance workforce development.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS – Develop and build partnerships to achieve social and economic advancements.

Our strategic actions will focus on innovation and responsiveness — from new workshops and flexible service delivery models to embracing digital tools and enhancing leadership development. We're committed to staying agile, inclusive, and impactful as we build capacity and expand our services to meet current and emerging workforce needs.

The 2025–2028 Strategic Plan reflects who we are and where we are going. It is grounded in our values and driven by a belief that when we innovate, collaborate, and lead with purpose, we can make a lasting difference.

We look forward to the journey ahead — and to sharing it with you.

Our Vision



**A DYNAMIC AND SUSTAINABLE
COMMUNITY**

Our Mission



**To provide quality, accessible services
responsive to the needs of job seekers &
employers through individualized learning
solutions & mutually beneficial partnerships.**

Our Values



Inclusivity



Accountability



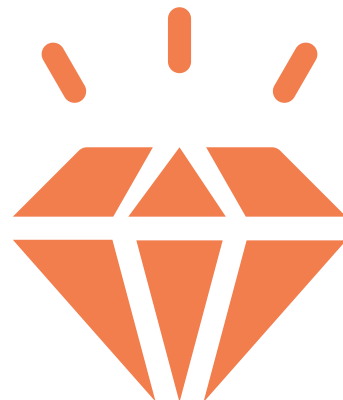
Compassion



Respect



Collaboration



Strategic Plan 2025-2028

Through a client-centered approach, the Board of Directors of Spark Employment Services leads the agency towards our Vision: *A Dynamic & Sustainable Community*.
With the expert support of staff and our focus on the following priorities, our clients will succeed.

Key Goal #1

GROWTH & EXPANSION

Expand and individualize programs and services while further developing sustainable, diverse funding

OBJECTIVE

Deepen the impact of current programs through analyses and optimize offerings to increase client reach by **20%** and expand by building team capacity, securing 3-5 funding sources.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. Expand program offerings with the development of new workshops and tailored services.
2. Conduct a Market Needs Assessment and Skill Gap Analysis and optimize based on results.
3. Build Team Capacity.
4. Develop and implement flexible program delivery model.
5. Enhance fundraising activities to supplement grant funding.

Key Goal #2

SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Empower clients through innovative, evidence-based service delivery to enhance workforce development

OBJECTIVE

Increase client employment success rates by **20%** through data-driven service improvements and personalized career coaching.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. Build a sustainable quality improvement system that drives programmatic growth and improvements.
2. Identify and prioritize professional certifications and designations relevant to each role's responsibilities.
3. Increase client competencies needed for the current and emerging workplace.
4. Embrace technology and innovate to maximize processes.
5. Collaborate through research & innovation.
6. Provide solutions to develop leadership skills.

Key Goal #3

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Develop and build partnerships to achieve social and economic advancements

OBJECTIVE

Strengthen strategic partnerships by establishing **five** collaborations with community organizations and employers to enhance client success through wrap-around support services.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. Incorporate Diversity, Equity and Inclusive (DEI) practices to reflect our community.
2. Cultivate new partnerships to increase access to wrap around services.
3. Increase client success with the development of a mentorship program.
4. Increase donor engagement and diversify funding.
5. Increase employment readiness.



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