



# ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

Digital. Diverse. Driven by Data.



## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO & CHAIR

As we reflect on the past year, we are proud to share the remarkable strides we have made in empowering individuals and fostering community growth through our innovative programs and initiatives. Our commitment to supporting vulnerable populations and enhancing skills for success has driven us to achieve significant milestones that will have a lasting impact. We have successfully launched the following programs:

- Brighter Business
- Career Confidence for Adults 45+
- Wellness Workshop
- Conversational Confidence for Newcomers
- Job Path
- Leadership Plus

Additionally, in response to the growing demand for flexible and accessible learning options, we initiated online training through the Desire2Learn (D2L) platform. This initiative allowed us to reach a broader audience and provide high-quality training remotely. Participants could now access a variety of courses and resources at their convenience, ensuring that learning was not hindered by geographical or time constraints. The positive response to our online training offerings has encouraged us to continue expanding our digital learning portfolio in the coming years.

This year also saw the successful completion of the Digital Danger pilot program, aimed at educating individuals about online safety and cybersecurity. With the increasing reliance on digital tools and platforms, it became imperative to equip our community with the knowledge and skills to navigate the digital landscape safely. The pilot program covered topics such as recognizing online threats, protecting personal information, and understanding digital ethics. Participants left the program with a heightened awareness of digital dangers and practical strategies to safeguard themselves and their data online.

To support our expanded programs and initiatives, we grew our team with talented and dedicated individuals who share our vision and commitment to making a difference. Our new team members have brought fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and valuable expertise that have strengthened our organization. This growth has not only enhanced our capacity to deliver high-quality programs but also ensured that we are well-equipped to meet the evolving needs of our community.

In conclusion, this past year has been one of significant progress and impactful achievements. We are immensely proud of the work we have done and the positive changes we have brought about in the lives of individuals in our community. As we look ahead, we remain committed to building on this momentum, continuing to innovate, and striving for excellence in all our endeavors.

Looking forward, we are excited about the upcoming employment services transformation and the newly established Service System Manager (SSM). While change inevitably brings challenges, it also opens up new opportunities. We are prepared to navigate these changes with agility and optimism, leveraging them to further enhance our programs and services. Our focus will be on adapting to the new landscape, embracing innovative approaches, and ensuring that we continue to meet the evolving needs of our community with excellence.

Thank you to the Board & Staff for their unwavering support and dedication to our mission.

  
**Chantal Makela**  
CEO

  
**Jim Burke**  
CHAIR

# OUR STORY

As a leading Employment Ontario service provider, Spark Employment Services bridges the gap between employers and jobseekers by delivering exceptional and innovative education and employment solutions. Established in 1986, Spark has been proudly connecting our community with meaningful employment and education for over 35 years.

**We support our clients in their journey to employment success by facilitating personal growth and continued learning as individuals are guided through making the required changes to create a life that supports meaningful and suitable employment.**

Our integrated approach to service delivery including job development and our motivational approach helps our clients understand which stage of change they are starting at, and more effectively plan their path to success.



## MISSION

To provide quality, accessible services responsive to the needs of jobseekers and employers through individualized solutions and mutually beneficial partnerships



## VISION

A dynamic and prosperous community



## VALUES

Inclusivity, Empowerment, Compassion, and Respect

# 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.**

 <b>Service Excellence</b>	 <b>Diversity and Growth</b>	 <b>Community Engagement</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GOAL</b></p> <p>Be the lead employment services support provider</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GOAL</b></p> <p>Expand &amp; individualize programs &amp; services to meet the needs of a diverse community</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GOAL</b></p> <p>Foster prosperity by bridging the gap between employers &amp; jobseekers</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STRATEGIES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attain charity Accreditation through Imagine Canada</li> <li>2. Maintain our positive culture through growth &amp; learning</li> <li>3. Prioritize internal professional development to support strategic goals</li> <li>4. Strategize new funding opportunities to build organizational resilience</li> <li>5. Focus on mental health in the work environment</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STRATEGIES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop partnerships to support a growing, diverse &amp; multi-lingual population, including multicultural &amp; vulnerable groups</li> <li>2. Recognize Indigenous peoples' rights &amp; needs, while supporting their employment success</li> <li>3. Build a successful social enterprise entity</li> <li>4. Continue to offer client options for access to programs &amp; opportunities</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STRATEGIES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Utilize effective marketing strategies to increase visibility &amp; connect with the community</li> <li>2. Build partner collaborations to increase referrals</li> <li>3. Innovate to educate &amp; support the community towards prosperity</li> <li>4. Collaborate with employers to develop working opportunities, including mentorships</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CORE STRATEGY</b></p> <p>Strengthen organizational sustainability &amp; resilience through strategies including expanded, diversified funding.</p>		

# PROGRAMS & SERVICES

**We help transform lives by connecting our community with meaningful employment, education services, resources and opportunities.**

## Employment Services

We support jobseekers by providing supports to build job readiness including: individualized employment counselling, Resume and Cover Letter Support, Job Search Strategies, Labour Market Information and Occupational Research and more.

## Job Development

We work closely with many employers within the community to help create access to a hidden job market and to effectively match jobseekers to the right employment opportunities.

## Literacy & Basic Skills

We offer an adult learning environment to support individuals' essential, digital literacy, and on-the-job, skills. We provide personalized learning plans based on each individual's goals, needs and abilities to help them successfully transition to employment, school, apprenticeship, and increased independence.

## Workshop & E-learning

We offer many workshops and e-learning options designed to help develop and improve individuals' skillset and credentials, including: PowerSkills, Financial Literacy, Workplace Wellness, Working at Heights, and more.

## EDGE

EDGE is a 12-week program designed to help youth ages 15-30 facing barriers navigate through the labour market and successfully transition into sustained employment.

## Better Jobs Ontario (BJO)

Better Jobs Ontario is an Ontario government program designed to help laid-off and unemployed workers transition to new careers by providing skills-training and financial support to those who qualify.

## Canada-Ontario Job Grant

The Canada-Ontario Job Grant provides an opportunity for employers to invest in their workforce, and for individuals to gain the skills necessary to maintain employment and advance in their careers with help from the government.

# 2023-2024 INNOVATIONS & NEW VENTURES:

## Data Track

Our commitment to efficiency and client satisfaction remains steadfast. In 2023, we implemented the DataTrack system, revolutionizing how we track and report Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) & Employment Services (ES) programs. From tracking R&I numbers to assisted clients, DataTrack has become integral to our success.

DataTrack is a versatile information tracking system tailored to our agency's needs. With its customizable features, we collect, monitor, and generate reports with precision and ease. DataTrack empowers our clients to check in seamlessly using personalized simple PIN codes. This user-friendly interface enhances their experience from the moment they arrive at our agency. Since its implementation in October 2023, DataTrack has revolutionized our service delivery. By accurately tracking all traffic and the purpose of visits, we can report our service delivery metrics with confidence.

**Data Track View**



**Total Visits**

## Resources for International Students and Workers

Evaluating our current Greater Sudbury Labour Market, we identified that the need for services in internationally trained community has been on the rise and to cater to their needs, we created a Resource and Information workbook that included the list of community resources, tools for the labour market information, career and occupation introductions, career planning and job search strategies, information about R&I workshops (Help Wanted Club) and other assisted service information etc.

With no eligibility or access criteria for RI, the Resource and Information (RI) component is a resource that is available to everyone in the community including the employed, under-employed, job seekers, students, laid-off workers, apprentices, internationally trained and employers.

**1300+**  
**Clients served through  
Resources and  
Information**

# 2023-2024 INNOVATIONS & NEW VENTURES:

## Online Training

We initiated online training as part of the Skills for Success pilot program last year to increase our reach to clients and broaden the digital delivery of our programs.

The funding received to purchase D2L's online platform Brightspace enabled us to make available our current skills training programs online and create new digital content. By the end of March 2024, we managed to add six courses and one information session.

The implementation of the new online platform allowed us to better serve our clients and learners, as well as to take advantage of the benefits that online training offers for adult learning programs; such as flexibility in scheduling, accessibility for diverse learners, personalized learning experiences, and the ability to track progress effectively.

By embracing online training, we aim to enhance engagement, facilitate tailored learning journeys, and ensure the efficacy of our educational endeavors for our clients.

**I really like how the classes are structured differently through online learning. They are independent and cover many familiar subjects that Amanda and you have taught me in the past. It was really fun to jog my memory and see that I could still remember all of this almost 2 years later, even without using it every day :)**

**~Hailey**

**5+**  
**Learners in 2023-24**

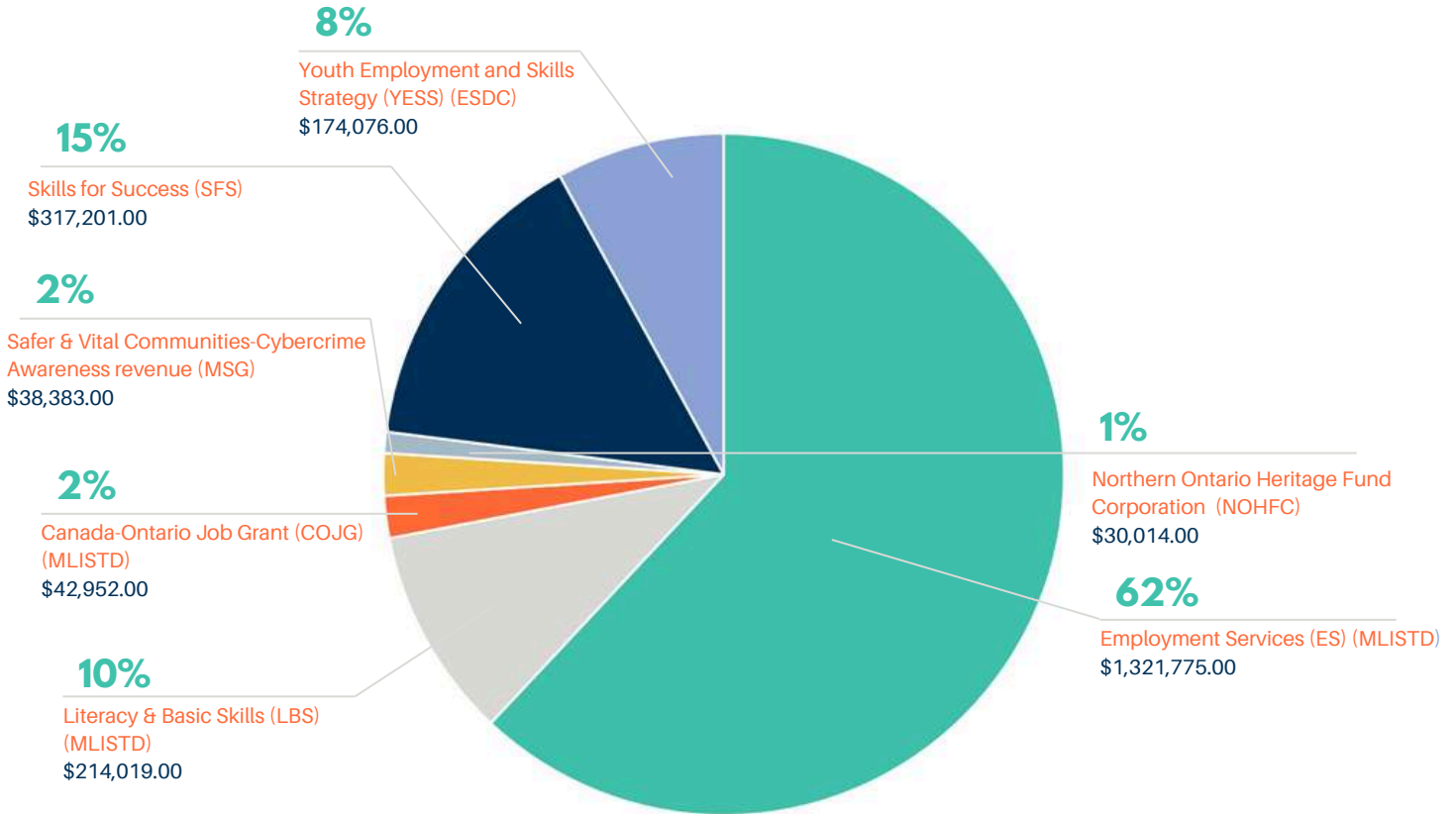


# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

## Revenues 2023-24

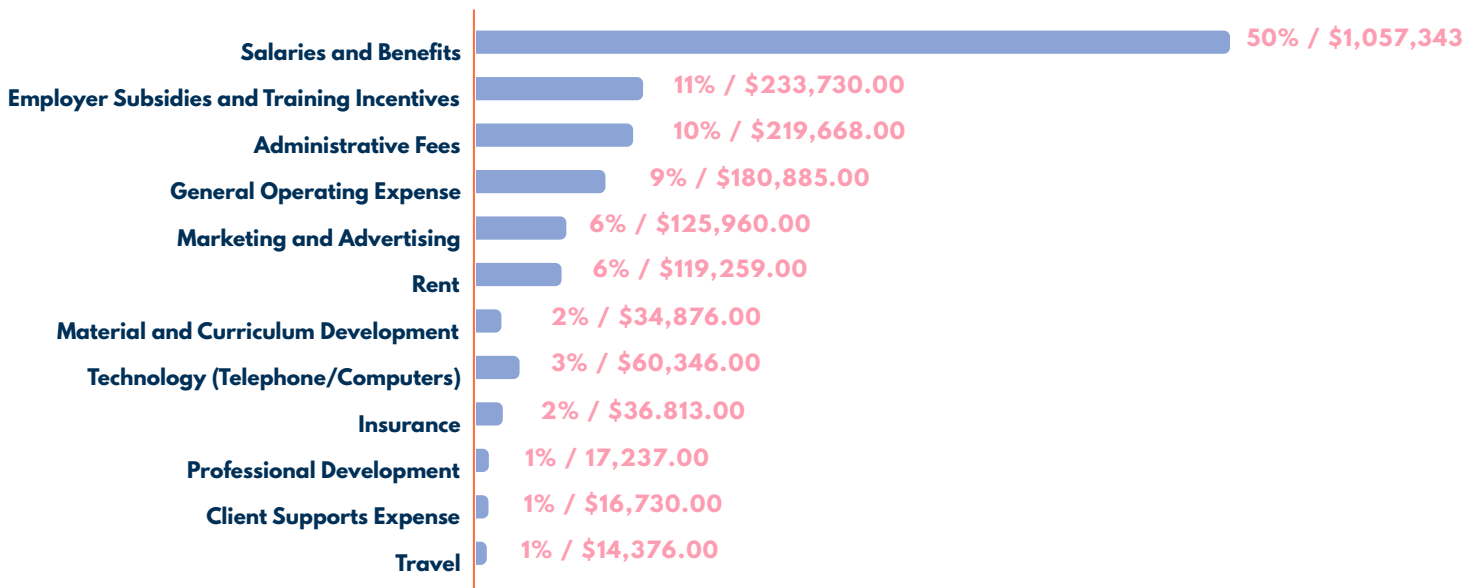
**Total Revenues: \$2,138,420.00**

- Funder #1: Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD)**
- Funder #2: Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)**
- Funder #3: Minister of the Solicitor General (MSG)**
- Funder #4: Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC)**



## Expenses 2023-24

**Total Expenses: \$2,117,223.00**





# SPECIALIZED PROGRAM REPORT

## Employment Services

We are committed to providing comprehensive support to individuals seeking employment opportunities. Our qualified Employment Specialists are dedicated to helping clients navigate the job search process and find a fulfilling career fit. They work closely with clients to increase their self-awareness, develop targeted résumés, and prepare effective job search strategies, utilizing a variety of approaches and tools.

**1900+**  
**Total clients  
Supported by ES**

**56%+**  
**Assisted Clients found  
meaningful  
employment**

**97%**  
**Customer Service  
Satisfaction rate**

### Client Success Story

Shared by: **Amanda**

One remarkable success story from this past year is that of L, a client who arrived in Canada from Nigeria in November 2023.

From the very beginning, L demonstrated exceptional determination and eagerness to secure their first Canadian work experience to support their family. Despite facing various challenges, they remained resilient and committed to achieving their goal.

Our team provided comprehensive support to L, including transportation assistance to attend job interviews, placements, and workplace training sessions. We also worked diligently to arrange three separate placement opportunities tailored to L's current needs. Through dedication and hard work, L successfully completed workplace training and excelled in their placements. We are thrilled to share that L's efforts have culminated in a full-time position that not only meets their financial needs but also pays more than minimum wage.

It has been incredibly rewarding to witness L's growth and success throughout this process. Their determination, adaptability, and positive attitude serve as an inspiration to our team and the clients we serve. We have no doubt that L will continue to thrive in their new role and make valuable contributions to their workplace and the community.

# BETTER JOBS ONTARIO

Better Jobs Ontario is a government program in Ontario that provides financial support to help qualified, laid-off workers train for in-demand careers. The program offers funding for tuition, books, living expenses, and other costs associated with skills training programs that are 52 weeks or less in duration.

The goal is to help unemployed or underemployed individuals gain the necessary skills to find stable employment in occupations that are in high demand in the current labor market.

**In 2023-24, BJO applications were submitted to gain skills in various industries, including:**

Heavy Equipment Operator, Underground Hard Rock Miner, Construction Programs, Trades - Welder, Plumbing technician, Hairstyling etc., AZ/DZ driving, Office administrator and accounting, Human Resources Management, Common Core.

**75%**

**Success rate of Better Jobs Ontario (BJO) Applications**

## Client Success Story

Shared by: **Pauline**

On July 27th, 2023, a 39-year-old individual entered the Ontario Works Office, seeking Supported Employment Services after 27 months of unemployment due to incarceration. Guided by our Employment Services (ES) team, they expressed a strong interest in skills training through Better Jobs Ontario (BJO).

After thorough assessments, ES helped the client apply to the BJO program, aiming for a career as an AZ driver. Despite meeting all prerequisites, the application was initially rejected due to the client's criminal record and non-bondable status. ES did not give up, finding employers willing to hire individuals with a criminal past and resubmitting the application. However, it was again rejected.

Undeterred, the client returned in January 2024, expressing interest in Heavy Equipment Operator (HEO) training. With renewed effort, ES submitted a new application on February 15th, 2024. This time, it was approved on March 11th, 2024. On June 7th, 2024, the client called ES with great news: they had secured employment with Detour Lake Mine. This journey from overcoming significant barriers to achieving employment success highlights the resilience of the client and the crucial support provided by our ES team.

# SPECIALIZED PROGRAM REPORT

## Help Wanted Club

Facilitated by the Employment Specialists, over 100 jobseekers and learners have attended our on-site HWC in 2023-24. We've also taken the show on the road to many community organizations as well. The goal has been to provide resources, information, and guidance to individuals implementing a job search strategy, preparing for interview, developing job search tools like resume and cover letter, and learning about career development topics that support them in taking control of their own employment outcomes.



**I worked in the bush my whole life and I cut trees and that's all I knew, just cutting in the bush, that's where I grew up. When I came to Spark, they helped me with the resume they helped me a lot. Now, I'm in a computer class and I can make my own resume. I know exactly how they do it. They also paid for my license because I never needed a license. It's a half day program but I walk out of the class real happy knowing what I learned today.**

**~Marvin**

## Conversational Confidence Course

In our ongoing commitment to inclusivity, we introduced the "Conversational Confidence Course" as part of our LBS programming. Designed to support newcomers and immigrants to Canada, this program enhanced workplace communication, fostered cultural understanding, and equipped participants with the tools to thrive in our diverse workplace.

Through a 4-week training course facilitated by our experienced instructors, clients developed communication skills, cultural sensitivity, and problem-solving abilities. This initiative not only supported integration but also enhanced workplace dynamics, boosted employee confidence, and reduced stress.

**The course boosted my confidence for job interviews and navigating the Canadian workforce. Dokun's guidance helped me embrace my accent and understand cultural nuances, making me feel more comfortable in conversations. Now, I'm well-prepared for my Personal Support Worker Training and grateful for Spark Employment Services' impactful course.**

**-Anonymous**

# SPECIALIZED PROGRAM REPORT



## Virtual Reality Program at Spark Allows Jobseekers to Explore Career Options

Spark Employment Services has partnered with CareerLabsVR to provide jobseekers with immersive exploration simulations, offering insights into real-world job experiences. Originating in Brockville, ON, in 2019, CareerLabsVR was developed to support career practitioners in employment agencies by integrating virtual reality (VR) technology into career exploration. This innovative program combines career exploration with VR, allowing users to engage in hands-on career tasks from the comfort and safety of an office or classroom setting.

With nearly 32 career path simulations available, including high-demand jobs in the trades, users can experience typical daily tasks associated with their chosen career path.

**45+**  
Assisted with the VR Program

## Career Confidence and Job Search for Adults 45 +

It is a comprehensive 6-week program meticulously designed to support mature individuals in their quest for renewed professional journeys. We served a total of 14 clients in two groups over the year. Tailored specifically for older adults seeking to bolster confidence and acquire essential skills for successful job searches or transitions into second careers, this course encompasses a range of critical components.

Career Confidence for 45+ course encapsulates our commitment to supporting individuals in realizing their professional aspirations, fostering adaptability, and empowering them to navigate and succeed in diverse career landscapes.

The class has been an transformative experience for me. It fosters camaraderie and support, with engaging teaching methods like videos and discussions. The dedication to our success is remarkable, offering one-on-one support and encouraging further education. I'd rate this class a perfect 10 out of 10. Thanks to this course, I feel empowered to navigate challenges ahead with confidence.

~ Susan

**170+**  
Total clients served by LBS and SFS

**95%**  
Completion rate for LBS & SFS

# Wellness Workshop

The program provides comprehensive training to individuals currently seeking to work remotely or wanting to pursue working from home options. The program delivers general cybercrime awareness training with a focus on identifying working from home scams, before and after assessments as well as tips and tricks to remain safe online, designed to give participants the required skills to attain online employment without being caught in employment and recruitment fraud. The project targets individuals seeking working from home opportunities, individuals who have previously been victims of cybercrime, and/or barriered individuals furthest away from the labour market who are exploring employment options.

## Story about one of our sessions with **Myths and Mirrors**

In February 2023, our Workplace Wellness Workshop series offered a unique opportunity for participants to explore creative outlets and engage in rejuvenating activities. One highlight was the Paint Social Workshop facilitated by the talented team from Myths and Mirrors.

Learners and our staff experienced the therapeutic power of creative expression, engaging in interactive sessions and enjoying a relaxing atmosphere aimed at enhancing mental well-being.

By incorporating creative and mindful activities alongside practical skill-building, our Workplace Wellness Workshop series empowered individuals to prioritize their overall well-being, ultimately contributing to a more engaged, productive, and supportive work environment for all.



# SPECIALIZED PROGRAM REPORT

## Leadership+

This course was designed to provide learners with the essential competencies they would need when joining the workforce and to work towards promoting an inclusive and diverse workforce.

The approach was task-based, goal-directed, and learner-centered. The learners worked towards the course goals and set their own goals, collaborating in the class with an objective to improve or learn new skills.

The expectation was that the learners attended classes and actively participated in their learning. The goal was to support learner goals to successfully transition to employment, post-secondary education, apprenticeships, secondary school, and increased independence.

## Job Path

Job Path is a 4-week program designed for people who have a goal of employment/volunteering. Job Path provides in-class learning, career exploration, and work-related topics, that offer an opportunity for participants to learn about themselves while interacting in a group setting and exploring the world of work. Through activities, group projects, and individual reflection, attendees should be on the path to gainful employment.



# PROGRAMS WRAPPED UP LAST YEAR

## Digital Danger

Under the **Safer and Vital Communities Grant** from the **Ministry of the Solicitor General**, Spark Employment Services secured funding to implement the Digital Danger program. This initiative was designed to address the escalating concern of employment and recruitment fraud within the Greater Sudbury area. The program aimed to equip vulnerable job seekers with the essential knowledge and critical thinking skills needed to identify and prevent fraudulent recruitment and employment schemes.



Last year, Spark Employment Services successfully delivered the Online Cybercrime Awareness Training program to a total of **52 trainees**. By leveraging the allocated funding, we provided participants with comprehensive education on detecting and mitigating online job scams. This proactive approach not only empowered individuals to safeguard themselves against exploitation but also contributed to the broader efforts of enhancing community safety and security.

## Experience Development to Gain Employment

The Experience Development to Gain Employment (E.D.G.E) program was specifically designed to support youth aged 15 to 30 who were facing employment barriers. This initiative served as a crucial platform for participants to navigate the complexities of the labor market and ultimately transition into sustained employment upon completion.

Participants in the E.D.G.E program underwent a structured journey that included leadership training, skills enhancement, and employer placements. Over a period of 12 weeks, participants engaged in two weeks of intensive leadership training aimed at fostering self-awareness and developing crucial employability skills. Following this, they received up to four weeks of specialized training to enhance their skill sets and readiness for the labor market. The program also provided participants with up to eight weeks of hands-on experience through placements with employers in the Greater Sudbury Area.

**75+**  
Clients trained in  
EDGE



# EMPLOYER SERVICES HIGHLIGHT

**We work with more than 200 employers in Sudbury to create a customized approach to meet their business needs.**

**We have a multitude of services to ensure that employers fill job vacancies with the right people quickly and efficiently.**

## Benefits to our services:

- Training incentives
- Job coaching
- Job matching
- Reduced training and employment costs
- Pre-screened candidates
- Free-job postings
- Large inventory of potential employees
- Subsidized job placements

## Organizational Needs Assessment (ONA)

It is a strategic process utilized to assess and identify workplace needs within an organization. The insights gleaned from ONA results play a crucial role in pinpointing areas for improvement and development within the business environment. These findings inform decision-making processes, guiding the implementation of targeted training initiatives and other activities aimed at addressing the challenges encountered by businesses. The success of the Brighter Business program can be attributed to the enthusiastic participation

and collaborative efforts of our valued employers, including the City of Greater Sudbury, Pioneer Construction Inc., DAMISONA ROOFING, Workforce Planning for Sudbury & Manitoulin, Sudbury Women's Centre (SWC), Community Builders, Best Western Hotels & Resorts (Sudbury), Tourism Excellence North, E360 Environmental Services, and Meals on Wheels.





# JOB MATCHING/CARVING

Job matching/carving is a dynamic approach to employment that involves customizing job developers to match the unique skills and aspirations of individuals seeking work, while also meeting the needs of employers. It entails identifying candidate strengths and interests, redesigning job duties or creating new positions, and presenting tailored proposals to potential employers. By aligning job roles with individual capabilities and employer requirements, job carving facilitates meaningful employment opportunities for individuals facing barriers to traditional employment.

## PLACEMENT SUCCESS STORY:

### **Client "K" approached Spark Employment Services seeking assistance in re-entering the workforce after an eight-year hiatus.**

Facing barriers such as a criminal record and reliance on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), K was determined to secure permanent employment, with a long-term aspiration of working in a driving position.

After assessing K's readiness for employment, a Job Developer (JD) recognized their motivation and strengths. Understanding the employer's need for cleaners who could also drive, the JD proposed a unique solution termed "job carving" to a partnered cleaning company.

Job carving involved redesigning roles to match both the employer's needs and K's aspirations. In this case, the JD suggested that hiring a designated driver to transport employees and supplies could fulfill the company's transportation challenges while offering K an opportunity to explore a career in driving.

The employer embraced this innovative solution, leading to a successful match between K and the company. K's placement swiftly evolved into a permanent employment opportunity, providing tangible progress toward their long-term goal.

This job carving not only facilitated K's entry into the workforce but also opened doors for other Spark clients.

Since securing employment in early 2024, K has thrived in their role, expressing satisfaction with their work environment. Likewise, the employer has praised K's seamless integration into their team, underscoring the success of the job carving approach.



**220+**  
**Employer Partnerships**

**100+**  
**Placements with  
\$17.85/hr on average  
wage**

# CANADA-ONTARIO JOB GRANT

The Canada-Ontario Job Grant offers a range of skills training services to employers and individuals to support workforce development and encourage greater employer involvement in training through cost-sharing arrangements to train individuals. Through employer-led skills training, the grant also provides individuals with the skills necessary to maintain employment and advance in their careers.

## Program Highlights:

- Provide up to \$10,000 in government support per person for training cost;
- Require employers to contribute 1/3 of the total costs. There will be additional flexibility for small businesses to provide an in-kind towards their share of the costs;
- Require training to be delivered by an eligible, third-party trainer.

# OTHER IMPACT & ACHIEVEMENTS

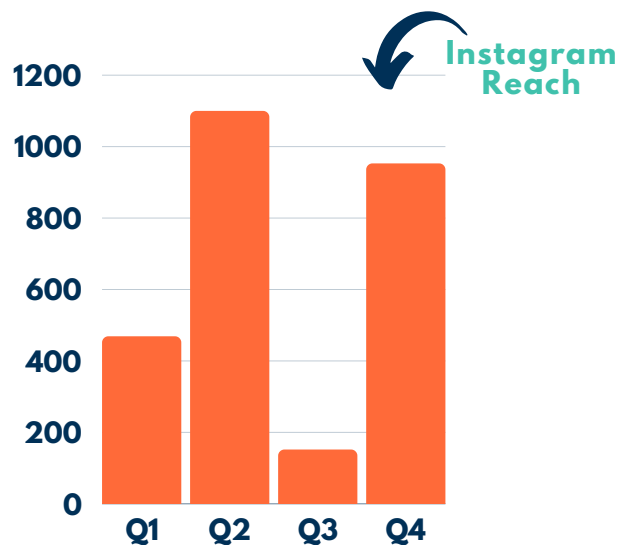
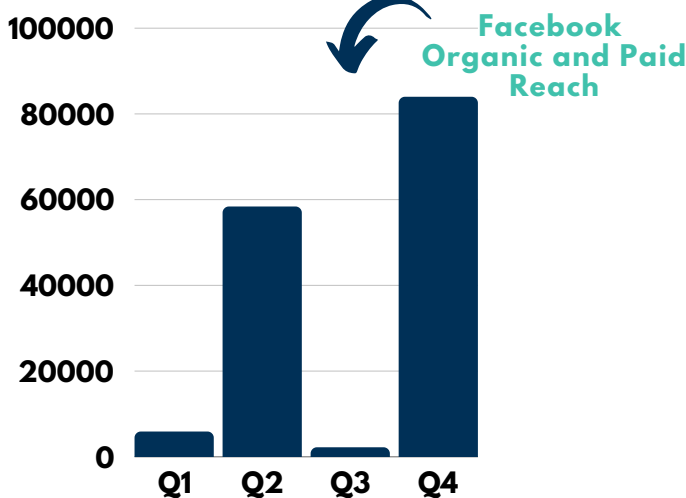
## Community Engagement

**13000+**

Unique users on the website

**1930**

Followers on Social Media Channels



# SudburyEmployment.ca

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