

YWCA TORONTO

ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR EMPLOYMENT



COMPENDIUM OF BEST PRACTICES
IN EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMING



YWCA
TORONTO

A TURNING POINT
FOR WOMEN



United Way



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
INTRODUCTION	5
YWCA TORONTO SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL	5
ESSENTIAL SKILLS	7
CONTEXT	9
ABOUT YWCA TORONTO	9
LABOUR MARKET TRENDS	10
YWCA TORONTO EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS	11
THE WOMEN WE WORK WITH	15
YWCA TORONTO APPROACH TO EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING	17
OUR INTAKE PROCESS	18
THE FIVE YWCA TORONTO EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM COMPONENTS	19
YWCA TORONTO PARTNERSHIPS	26
EMPLOYERS	26
EVALUATION PRACTICES	29
OUTCOMES	33
THE YWCA TORONTO PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS PRACTICES CURRICULUM	37
BACKGROUND	37
PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS PRACTICES PILOT DELIVERY	37
THE PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS PRACTICES CURRICULUM	38
HOW TO USE THE CURRICULUM	41
LEARNING FROM OUR SUCCESS	44
TIPS FOR PRACTITIONERS	44
TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS	46
CONCLUSION	47
APPENDIX A: ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR EMPLOYMENT PROJECT OVERVIEW	48
APPENDIX B: HISTORY OF EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMING AT YWCA TORONTO	50
APPENDIX C: PARTNERSHIPS	56
APPENDIX D: SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE	61
APPENDIX E: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS	64
APPENDIX F: EVALUATION TOOLS	67
APPENDIX G: SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS	70
APPENDIX H: GLOSSARY	73
REFERENCES	74

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The staff at 3090 Kingston Road Employment Programs are innovative and passionate in their efforts to support women in their efforts to reach their employment goals, move towards economic independence, and build strong futures for themselves and their families.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At YWCA Toronto, we are reminded daily of the tremendous and urgent need for programs such as ours to support women to move out of poverty, find solid job opportunities, and build better livelihoods for themselves and their families. In 2009 alone, over 20,000 women accessed one or more of our employment and skills development services.¹

We are operating in a very difficult economic climate, in communities where many people face a daunting array of barriers to engagement in both the labour market, and in broader Canadian society. Women who come to our programs are often low-skilled, and require significant support to enhance their literacy and essential skills for the workplace. Many have lost their jobs as a result of recent changes in the economy and labour market, and need re-training to upgrade their skills. We also work with Internationally Educated Professionals and/or new graduates who need additional training to facilitate their transition to the Canadian workplace and culture. Although our work is challenging, we have seen that we can make a difference in the lives of our participants.

Our Approach

Our approach to employment and skills development training is highly effective because it:

- offers a holistic, flexible menu of services and supports that can be customized to suit the individual requirements of each woman,
- responds to the needs of both job seekers and employers,
- concentrates on building participants' essential skills for today's diverse workplace, as well as enhancing other complementary skills needed by participants to retain and advance in their jobs,
- keeps abreast of the changing needs of our communities and the current labour market, and
- is based on our strong partnerships with employers and community agencies, in order to maximize our resources, build capacity in the field of employment programming, and find long-term solutions to our participants' employment goals.

This Compendium provides a succinct overview of our employment and skills development programming. We have been developing, delivering and tracking the outcomes of our employment training curriculum models in order to refine them into an integrated delivery approach to prepare and link women to sustainable employment opportunities. Our YWCA Toronto program model responds with flexibility to the needs of women through our five key components:

¹ For a list of the employment and skills development programs that we currently offer, see Appendix B.

- Career Assessment
- Employability Assessment
- Advanced Employment Preparation and Training
- Placements, Job Coaching and Mentoring
- Job Search and Job Maintenance Support

The model is based on *what works* in three of our employment programs located at 3090 Kingston Road in Scarborough, home to one of our service hubs. The programs are: LEAP (Learn, Explore, Assess, Prepare), the Skills Development Centre (SDC) social purpose enterprise, and MOTS (Moving On To Success).

The Government of Canada and other national and international agencies have identified nine essentials skills needed for work, learning and life: reading, writing, oral communication, numeracy, thinking, working with others, document use, computer use and continuous learning. These skills provide the foundation for learning all other skills, and enable people to evolve in their jobs and adapt to workplace change. We have integrated essential skills training into each of our three programs.

Our Outcomes

We have tracked and analyzed the impact of our programming on women's lives, and their progress towards achieving their employment goals. We have developed a participant-focused outcomes documentation and tracking system to assess employment results, along with some other simple research methodologies to document the longer-term outcomes of our programs.

Documentation of 2009 outcomes for the three employment programs at our Scarborough hub show that all far surpassed their target intake, demonstrating the huge demand for our services in our community. Additionally, a sampling of participants' outcomes tells us that:

- 92% of LEAP participants moved on to their next steps to employment through further education, training, job search, placements and/or direct employment,
- 107 of the 210 women in the MOTS program were linked to employment, further education or training, and 95% developed new or improved computer skills, and
- 98% of the 571 participants in SDC completed essential skills training, and over 100 were placed in internships.

The YWCA Toronto *Professional Business Practices* Curriculum

Over the course of this project we were able to refine our essential skills training through a one-time pilot with a group of women in East Toronto. Based on this pilot, we developed the *Professional Business Practices* Curriculum, a cohesive yet flexible model that we hope can be used and adapted to meet the essential skills training needs of other communities.²

The *Professional Business Practices* Curriculum consists of a series of general employability workshops that showcase YWCA Toronto's best practices in delivering essential skills training. The Curriculum specifically focuses on targeting the nine essential skills identified above. In the Curriculum, these skills have been enhanced to address other work readiness training relevant to the Canadian workplace. The Curriculum was developed based on feedback from YWCA Toronto staff members, participants and employer partners.

Learning from our Success

Based on YWCA Toronto's analysis of our employment and essential skills programs, we have collated in the Compendium a series of tips for service delivery organizations in the field, and for employers interested in getting involved with this valuable work.

In sharing the Compendium with our readers, we hope to help build the capacity of other organizations that provide literacy and essential skills training, and to raise interest in the field among a wide range of stakeholders, including employers, job seekers, and all levels of government. By working together and exchanging information and expertise, we can stimulate innovation in essential skills training, and support more people toward achieving rewarding, sustainable employment, personal fulfilment, and broader participation in the economy and society.

² For a copy of the YWCA Toronto Professional Business Practices Curriculum, and for information about our other programs and resources, please contact us. See p. 29 for our contact information.

INTRODUCTION

The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) has given YWCA Toronto an invaluable opportunity to create this Compendium of our best practices in developing and delivering employment-related essential skills programming.

The Compendium provides:

- an overview of the knowledge and experience we have gained from three of the 12 employment programs we offer across Toronto: LEAP (Learn, Explore, Assess, Prepare), MOTS (Moving On To Success) and the SDC (Skills Development Centre), all of which are located at one of our program hubs, 3090 Kingston Road, Scarborough, and
- an overview of the delivery and outcomes of our pilot curriculum, Professional Business Practices, to a sampling of participants in East Toronto.

In sharing the Compendium with our readers, we hope to help build the capacity of other organizations that provide literacy and essential skills training, and to stimulate interest in the field among a wide range of stakeholders, including employers, job seekers, and all levels of government.

YWCA TORONTO SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

YWCA Toronto currently offers a holistic, flexible employment and skills development service delivery model that has proven successful in working with women who need support to enter today's labour market. We offer customized, needs-based interventions to support our participants to become gainfully employed, retain and maintain jobs, and advance in the workplace. Our three programs provide a balanced mix of literacy and essential skills training related to both employment and self-management.

With our substantial experience of effective practice in developing and delivering essential skills programming, we have long understood the need to support participants to develop all nine essential skills – reading, writing, oral communication, numeracy, thinking, working with others, document use, computer use and continuous learning – in order to find and retain appropriate, fulfilling employment and advance in today's economy. Over time, we have worked with YWCA Toronto staff members, participants, external consultants, community members, community organizations, employers, and various levels of government to develop our approach to employment and skill development programming.

At YWCA Toronto, we have integrated life skills, literacy, and essential skills training into many of our employment programs for many years.³ Since 2006 we have been incubating our model for working with women who often have multiple barriers to finding and retaining employment. The program approach showcased in this Compendium consists of five YWCA Toronto Components, each of which incorporates training to help our participants develop one or more essential skill:

- Career Assessment
- Employability Skills Development
- Advanced Employment Preparation and Training
- Placements, Job Coaching and Mentoring
- Job Search and Job Maintenance Support.

In addition to our program model, we have been incubating the Professional Business Practices Curriculum at the Skills Development Centre for the past five years. The curriculum includes both life skills and essential skills training.

We hope to continue updating this Compendium as our employment programs evolve, and as we gain new insights into our work. We will be soliciting feedback from our national YWCA partners about both the Compendium and their experience of employment programming and best practices in the field.

³ For more information about the history of employment programming at YWCA Toronto, see Appendix B.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

The Government of Canada and other national and international agencies have identified nine essential skills needed for work, learning and life: reading text, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, continuous learning, thinking skills and computer use. These skills provide the foundation for learning all other skills, and enable people to evolve in their jobs and adapt to workplace change. At a very basic level, essential skills enable people to carry out different tasks, give them a starting point for learning other skills, and help them adjust to change. They are used in the community and the workplace in different forms and at different levels of complexity.

Figure 1: What are Essential Skills? ⁴

Essential Skill	Typical Applications
<p>Reading Understanding materials written in sentences or paragraphs (e.g. letters, manuals)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scan for information or overall meaning • Read to understand, learn, critique or evaluate • Analyze and synthesize information from multiple sources or from complex or lengthy texts
<p>Document Use Finding, understanding or entering information (e.g. text, symbols, numbers) in various types of documents, such as tables or forms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read signs, labels or lists • Understand information on graphs or charts • Enter information in forms • Create or read schematic drawings
<p>Numeracy Using numbers and thinking in quantitative terms to complete tasks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make calculations • Take measurements • Perform scheduling, budgeting or accounting activities • Analyze data • Make estimations
<p>Writing Communicating by arranging words, numbers and symbols on paper on a computer screen</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write to organize or record information • Write to inform or persuade • Write to request information or justify a request • Write an analysis or a comparison

⁴ Adapted from What Are Essential Skills?, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, 2009, pp. 1-2.

For more information about Essential Skills, visit the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills website: www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/oles/olesindex_en.shtml

Essential Skill	Typical Applications
<p><i>Oral Communication</i> Using speech to exchange thoughts and information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide or obtain information • Greet, reassure or persuade people • Resolve conflicts • Lead discussions
<p><i>Working with Others</i> Interacting with others to complete tasks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work independently, alongside others • Work jointly with a partner or helper • Work as a member of a team • Participate in supervisory or leadership activities
<p><i>Thinking</i> Finding and evaluating information to make rational decisions or to organize work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and resolve problems • Make decisions • Find information • Plan and organize job tasks • Use critical thinking • Use memory

Along with the development of training in these essential skills, our employment programs are now developing training for other complementary skills that are important for today’s diverse workforce.

“Participating in a project such as this has been an excellent opportunity for me to contribute to the valuable work that has been done by the Government and the YWCA to help prepare women for the workforce today. Essential skills are definitely needed for anyone to not just participate but succeed today. We hope this work will go a long way in sharing this knowledge across Canada.”

-Margo (Employer Advisory Committee Member)

ABOUT YWCA TORONTO

YWCA Toronto has a long history of providing employment and skills development, housing, violence prevention and transitional support programs for women. In 1873, YWCA Toronto opened its doors to women seeking supportive, affordable, well-maintained housing while making the transition to work.

Today, we are Toronto's trusted multi-service organization by, for and about women and girls. Our 40-plus programs and services help women and girls escape violence and build healthy lives, while offering a range of employment and skills development services, housing options, and girls' and family programs throughout the city. In 2009 we served the needs of over 26,000 individuals through our programs.

OUR MISSION

YWCA Toronto is an association of diverse and caring women dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls through dynamic leadership, advocacy, and a range of unique and essential services that promote personal growth and economic independence.

OUR VISION STATEMENT

Through a holistic and partnership approach, the YWCA will expand its programs and services to meet the more complex array of emergency and long term community needs, significantly increase its financial resource base and be widely valued for its commitment to equity, access, safety and a just society and as a leader in advocacy and service to women and girls.

YWCA Toronto is a member of YWCA Canada and the World YWCA, which ground our values and our work. Supporting a global network of women leading social and economic change in 125 countries worldwide, the World YWCA has been an active and respected advocate for women since it was founded in 1894. YWCA Canada is a charitable, voluntary organization of member associations that provides high quality programs and services for women and girls.⁵

⁵ For more information about YWCA Toronto programs and services, visit our website: www.ywca-toronto.org.

LABOUR MARKET TRENDS

At YWCA Toronto, a core best practice imbedded into our ongoing research and program design is to pay close attention to labour market trends in Toronto, in Ontario, and in the larger Canadian economy, in order for us to respond quickly and flexibly to the changing needs of both job seekers and employers.

All workers are now faced with the need to upgrade their skills on an ongoing basis, to keep pace with the rapidly shifting knowledge-based economy. Moreover, we know from our research that the composition of the Canadian labour market has changed significantly in the recent past, to include a far higher proportion of women, older workers and immigrants. 2009 was a difficult economic year, marked by downsizing of businesses, job loss, and high unemployment rates in Toronto and across Canada. The workforce is also aging, and as experienced older workers retire, a skills shortage has emerged that could worsen. HRSDC has estimated that by 2011, approximately 41% of the working population will be between the ages of 45 and 64, compared to 29% in 1991.⁶

All of the women who access our programs are therefore particularly affected by these shifts, making it all the more important for us to keep our programming relevant and up-to-date.⁷

We glean our information about the labour market from a wide variety of sources and perspectives, from all levels of government to other public and private organizations working in our community.

Some of our key resources are:

- labour market bulletins that we receive every three months from the Ministry of Colleges, Training and Universities in Ontario (MTCU),
- demographic information about Toronto provided by Statistics Canada,
- reports such as the United Way of Greater Toronto (UGWT)'s Poverty by Postal Code,
- information about other programs and services being delivered by different levels of government and/or other public or private bodies,
- internal quantitative and qualitative program data about participant demographics,
- information gleaned from our strong collaborative links with other community development projects such as: the Local Immigrant Partnership (LIP) initiative in Toronto; the Employment Ontario Plan (MTCU) in Toronto; the Scarborough Employment Programs Network; the City of Toronto Employment and Social Services One Ontario Plan; the United Way Action for Neighbourhood Plan,
- information from other, smaller grassroots agencies, such as the Toronto Training Board Research, and A Community for Training and Employment for Women (ACTEW)'s research

⁶ Challenges of an Aging Workforce: An overview of the issue, Human Resources Development Canada, May 2002, p. 4.

⁷ See Appendix E for participant demographics.

- on Employment Training for Women in Ontario, and
- information about business trends, hiring practices, and economic forecasts gleaned through our membership in professional associations such as: the Toronto Board of Trade; Human Resource Professionals Association of Ontario; East Toronto Human Resources Association; and other such business associations.

YWCA TORONTO EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Since 1961, we have been providing a variety of employment-related skills development programming for women in the Toronto area.⁸ We have pioneered a number of specialized employment and training services specifically geared towards women who face barriers to employment. Over time, our employment programs have developed to promote literacy and essential skills and life skills training, offer vocational and career assessments, employability skills, language skills, assist in developing successful job search strategies, build essential skills for the workplace, and provide employment counselling and job placement, matching and retention services. In 2009, over 20,000 individuals accessed one or more of our employment and skills development services.⁹

We currently offer twelve innovative employment programs across the city of Toronto. Each program is unique and offers a range of employment and skills development programming that responds to the needs in the community. Some of the programs are specially designed for specific groups of women and girls. For example, the latest additions to our portfolio of programs is a women's Pre-apprenticeship Carpentry Program that started this year, and JUMP (Join, Unite, Motivate, Participate), a young women's employment and settlement program.

We are now documenting the results and lessons learned from these new additions to our portfolio. At the same time, we are building our organizational capacity by creating 'hubs' at three locations in Toronto that offer a holistic range of programs, in order to integrate our essential skills for employment programming. Two of these hubs are in Scarborough, and one is in Etobicoke. We also deliver programming at various satellite locations. Our services are available not only in Toronto, but can be delivered across Canada and internationally.

⁸ For a brief history of employment programming at YWCA Toronto, see Appendix B.

⁹ For a listing of the employment and skills development programs that we currently offer, see Appendix B.

Since 2005, we have been drawing on our experience of what works in integrating essential skills for employment into our program model. At our program hub at 3090 Kingston Road, Scarborough, we have been incubating this program model through three of the employment programs offered at this location, which is home to ten YWCA Toronto programs. The design of the model is based on continuous, in-depth research and analysis of three cutting edge employment programs that we offer: LEAP (Learn, Explore, Assess, Prepare), MOTS (Moving On To Success), and the SDC (Skills Development Centre).

HRSDC has recommended that the most effective training practices follow the principles of adult learning: relating new skills to past experience, allowing for self-paced learning, providing social support, and providing opportunities for practice.¹⁰ YWCA Toronto's program model is strongly grounded in these principles, which, as we know from our own experience, are highly successful in supporting participants to achieve their employment goals.

LEARN, EXPLORE, ASSESS, PREPARE (LEAP)

LEAP is a free program that helps participants to learn, explore, assess and prepare for the world of work. The program started in 1991 and has evolved throughout these years due to changing funding mandates. The original program model was designed to offer life skills, literacy and essential skills, employability skills, computer training, placements and a job finding club. Today, the program has been designed to enable women to make informed and well founded employment-related decisions, and to move on to sustainable employment. This program has been incubated during the past five years to work within a collaborative program model, and is delivering excellent results. Counsellors assist each participant in preparing for, obtaining, and retaining employment. The program lasts anywhere from three days to one year, depending on the individual needs of participants. Support continues until each woman meets her employment goals.¹¹

¹⁰ Challenges of an Aging Workforce: An overview of the issue, Human Resources Development Canada, May 2002, p. 14.

¹¹ For a summary of quantitative and qualitative participant outcomes for LEAP, MOTS and SDC, please see p. 20.

As of August 2010, the Ontario Government introduced the Employment Ontario Plan (EO), to be implemented through Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. It is designed to provide job seekers with a convenient and efficient one-stop hub of services offering:

- information and referral,
- participant service planning and coordination,
- job placements and mentoring,
- job search, and
- job retention.¹²

This year, LEAP and the YWCA's Scarborough Village Women's Employment Centre, incorporated the new Employment Ontario Plan directives into their service delivery model through the support of MTCU.

MOVING ON TO SUCCESS (MOTS)

Started in September 2006, MOTS is a comprehensive employment training program for women who experience multiple barriers to employment which may include trauma from domestic violence. The program is funded through the Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD), and focuses on developing essential skills for employment. It offers a flexible range of modules, services and supports that can be tailored to meet each woman's individual needs, such as: career assessments, employability skills training, job search and job maintenance support, advanced training and education, and job placement, coaching and mentoring. The program also offers vital additional supports to participation, including: counselling, training stipends, transportation allowance, safety planning, and personal support.

MOTS is based on a formal partnership model, with the YWCA being the lead agency. The following partners play a key role in the success of the program:

- the LinksToJobs Employer Network, which offers multi-programming support such as job placements, on the job mentoring, and employment opportunities
- the Continuing Education Department at York University, which has designed a special certificate program in Leadership and Communications for participants in the program
- the Scarborough Women's Centre, which provides counselling for program participants.

MOTS provided the framework for incubating the template YWCA Toronto program model showcased in this Compendium.

¹² For more detail on the Employment Ontario model, visit the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Website: <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/>.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE (SDC)

The Skills Development Centre (SDC) was established in 2002 as a fee-for-service social purpose enterprise (SPE) through which a range of participants including individuals, businesses, community agencies, government funded programs, and private and public sector training and education programs can purchase from us products and services. The SDC was created to fill a gap in training services that low-income women needed to prepare for the workplace. Since then it has evolved to incubate a number of literacy, training and recruitment services that are proving highly successful in supporting women of various skills levels to prepare for employment, link and retain jobs, and advance in their employment goals. Today, SDC offers services in three divisions: Training, Recruitment and Consulting.¹³

Through the support of the Canadian Women's Foundation (CWF) and its partners, we have been able to incubate this SPE for women, and participate in a five year research project to document how SPE programs such as this enable women to transition out of poverty towards sustainable livelihoods.¹⁴

All three of the programs described above complement each other to provide a one-stop location for essential skills training at our 3090 Kingston Road service hub. At this time, not all of these three programs offer the five YWCA Toronto Components of our service delivery model (described in detail in the following section of this document). However, by offering them at the same location we are able to support women's access to one or more of the programs based on her individual need.

Currently, the only program offering all five Components is the MOTS program. In the Compendium, we focus on showcasing this successful program model, integrated with various aspects of the other employment programs that we offer, to create our template for the essential skills for employment program model.

¹³ For a complete list of programs currently offered at the SDC, see Appendix D.

¹⁴ For more information, see: Janet Murray, Mary Ferguson and Claire Letemendia. *Beyond Survival: Helping Women Transition Out of Poverty*. Toronto: 2010.

THE WOMEN WE WORK WITH

Based on our research into labour market trends in our community, we have tailored our employment programming to address the needs of three main groups of women:

- low-skilled women who need support to enhance their literacy and essential skills levels to find and retain jobs,
- women who have recently become unemployed as a result of changes in the economy and labour market and need re-training to upgrade their essential skills, and
- internationally trained professionals and/or new graduates who need additional training to facilitate their transition to the Canadian workplace and culture.¹⁵

These women often face complex barriers to employment that may include one or more of the following:

- low literacy rates,
- high literacy and lower language skills and/or a combination of lower literacy and language skills,
- lack or low technical skills, understanding of the culture of the Canadian workplace and/or insufficient Canadian work experience to gain employment,
- weak English language skills,
- professional and academic qualifications and certifications that are not recognized in Canada,
- lack of networks, local references and timely information about labour trends,
- low income security, which makes it difficult to focus on long-term goals and employment,
- instability of basic personal needs such as housing, shelter, childcare, food etc.,
- working in precarious and/or low paying jobs,
- lay-off/dismissal and job loss transition, and
- personal issues, including: violence in their homes, health issues, lone parenting with insufficient child support, serious social isolation, depression, legal issues, low-self esteem, and fear of change, mental issues, disabilities (diagnosed and possibility undiagnosed), etc..

YWCA Toronto responds to these issues through a holistic approach to programming, supporting the women to address their needs at different stages of their lives, as they move towards socio-economic stability. YWCA Toronto employment programming further provides a dynamic range of services including housing, counselling and life skills, essential skills, and a number of literacy training programs.

¹⁵ For a demographic profile of our program participants, see Appendix E.

We know that children are much more likely to succeed both socially and economically in Canada if their family environment is stable. Providing women with the supports they need to transition out of poverty helps lay the foundation for a brighter future for both the women and their families. We provide support from one week to one year.

We have an attrition rate of about 10% (and in some programs a little higher), since many women cannot complete the programs due to the impact of one or more of the barriers mentioned above. Nevertheless, women who attend our programs bring with them a keen interest in training and learning about the workplace. Most demonstrate a strong desire to improve their lives and develop a successful plan that will provide the foundation for developing their economic self-sufficiency, and securing the overall well being of their families.

“This work is very beneficial for all people wanting to know how to get jobs in this very difficult economic climate for all unemployed and especially newcomers. I hope it will help others across Canada to benefit from the work that the YWCA is doing.”

-Arun (Employer Advisory Committee Member)

YWCA TORONTO APPROACH TO EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

Our employment and skills development service delivery model has three main objectives:

- to offer women a holistic range of life skills and literacy and essential skills training supports to enable them to build their assets and secure economic stability,
- to build a network of employers and partners who can support their employment goals, and
- to identify and document best practices that can contribute to building the capacity of essential skills training programs across Canada.

At YWCA Toronto, we take a woman-centred approach to employment programming that has proven highly successful in working with women who face multiple barriers to employment. We focus on offering individualized, needs-based interventions, and essential skills training related to both employment and self-management, in order to increase their self-confidence. We recognize that each woman has unique needs, and may require multiple employment-related interventions to reach her goals. We place strong emphasis on women's independence and self-directed learning, supporting them to assess their core competencies, identify and begin to resolve the barriers to learning that they face, and set realistic, manageable employment goals.

By creating and maintaining relationships between our participants and employers, we play a crucial role in linking women to work. This satisfies the needs of both participants and our employer partners.¹⁶ Through our programs, participants have the opportunity to access ongoing specialized employment support opportunities in the five YWCA Toronto program components:

- Career Assessment
- Employability Assessment
- Advanced Employment Preparation and Training
- Placements, Job Coaching and Mentoring
- Job Search and Job Maintenance Support.

Depending on their individual needs, women have the opportunity to access these supports over a period ranging from one day to one year in length.

¹⁶ For more information about our employer partnerships, see Appendix C.

OUR INTAKE PROCESS

We have designed a thorough intake process for each program that we offer. We take an inclusive, participant-centred approach, to support each woman to:

- benefit from better economic opportunities,
- prepare for and enter into the labour market,
- build her skills and assets,
- explore and complete customized interventions and training options, and
- commit to an employment action plan that will guide her towards sustainable employment opportunities.

Women who are interested in applying to any of our programs first register over the telephone or in person. We invite them to attend an information session in order to us to determine their eligibility to participate in any of our employment programs, provide them with basic information about the different programs, and/or refer them to other appropriate services available in the community. After the information session, if applicants are still interested in attending any of our programs we schedule a time to complete an individual assessment.

THE FIVE YWCA TORONTO EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The components of our employment programs address the specific needs of our participants, and are flexible to fit their diverse situations. We encourage all of the women to complete as many of the components as possible that fit with their individual employment goals. Component 1 focuses on identifying participants' needs; Components 2 and 3 focus on employability skills building; Component 4 focuses on preparing, linking and matching participants with employment; and Component 5 focuses on job search, acquisition and retention.

Figure 2: YWCA Toronto Employment Program Components



The Components outlined in the chart following have been designed and pioneered by YWCA Toronto to integrate an emphasis on cultural diversity, equality rights and a gender-based analysis. We offer these Components on weekdays between 9:30am and 2:30pm, with some flexibility for women to look after their personal and/or childcare needs. Our research shows that a woman can take anywhere between four months to more than one year to complete all five program Components.

Figure 3: YWCA Toronto Employment Program Components

	Rationale	Description
Component 1: Career Assessment	<p>We recognize that each person has unique needs, and may require multiple employment-related interventions to reach their goals. Component 1 ensures that each potential participant is directed to a program that serves her specific needs, which enables us to provide her with targeted and specialized support in order to achieve her employment goals. All potential participants are encouraged to complete this component.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential participants are invited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attend an information session and undergo an initial assessment ○ Meet confidentially with a counsellor to discuss needs and goals • A counsellor determines whether the woman is ready to begin attending a program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If ready, she is referred to the program that best suits her needs ○ If not ready, she may be connected to other interventions and supports based on need (i.e. food bank or legal aid) • A counsellor works together with her to prepare an individual action plan outlining the steps she will take to achieve her employment goals
Component 2: Employment Assessment	<p>Component 2 provides the opportunity to build a strong relationship between participants and YWCA Toronto: this is essential for her to feel safe, supported, motivated and committed to reach her employment goals. It also provides the opportunity for staff members to assess the barriers that each woman is facing and ensure that our resources are invested carefully and thoughtfully in a targeted process that fits and supports her specific goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women participate in one-on-one sessions with a counsellor and a group-based workshop series led by a qualified facilitator in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explore and determine their experience, skills and abilities; academic, language and numeracy levels; career directions; and specific barriers to employment ○ Begin to evaluate their immediate employment options, and calculate the advantages of the various employment, further education, and/or training components of the program ○ Undergo assessment of their credentials and be provided with access and referral to other community supports (if applicable)

Continued from Figure 3: YWCA Toronto Employment Program Components

	Resources	Timeframe
Component 1: Career Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counsellors assess each woman based on a number of broad dimensions of employment, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Personal and environmental issues that impede or support employment o Career decision making and transition to employment o Job readiness and employment enhancement o Job search skills development and access to labour market information o Employment maintenance and job retention 	Two days to two weeks (depending on individual needs and specific program design)
Component 2: Employment Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants have the opportunity to complete workshops from the <i>Professional Business Practices</i> curriculum¹⁷, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Communication skills (verbal, non-verbal and written) o Data and records management o Office protocol and business etiquette o Employer expectations o Cultural diversity in the workplace o Financial literacy o Computer skills o Time management o Stress management o Goal setting o Job retention 	One week to three months (depending on the needs of each intake group)

¹⁷

¹⁷ For a detailed overview of the Professional Business Practices Curriculum, see p. 22.

	Rationale	Description
Component 3: Advanced Employment Preparation and Training	<p>We recognize the importance of encouraging and facilitating continuous, lifelong learning.</p> <p>Component 3 enables participants to access advanced essential skills training related to their employment goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants continue to build on the essential skills developed in Component 2 and have access to funding to facilitate this advanced essential skills training • They continue to receive integrated supports by attending support group sessions and individual sessions with their counsellor • Each participant also has the opportunity to access advanced training, bridging, and/or education programs through external programs
Component 4: Placements, Job Coaching and Mentoring	<p>Practical work experience is invaluable for women with little or no work experience.</p> <p>Through our LinksToJobs Employers Network and other employer partners, we have access to a number of various sectors that strongly support placement initiatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each participant is linked with a Job Developer who assesses her job readiness, and can then recommend her to a placement opportunity • She may be offered one of two placement options, depending on availability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Paid employment contracts for those who are work-ready, or o Placement opportunities that provide on-the-job mentoring for those who need a more supportive environment
Component 5: Job Search and Job Maintenance Support	<p>Once a woman is ready for employment, she may require support in finding and retaining her job.</p> <p>Through Component 5, she can access individualized job search and job maintenance support, designed and offered depending on how she is progressing with her employment goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women who are ready for employment can access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Specialized job search workshops o Job linking strategies o Self-directed, supportive, up-to-date computerized job search tools • They can also access other services at YWCA Toronto, including a self-directed employment café where they can obtain employment leads and links to job opportunities • They receive ongoing employment counselling support, individual preparation and support, and networking opportunities

	Resources	Timeframe
Component 3: Advanced Employment Preparation and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced employment preparation and training options offered through YWCA Toronto include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ongoing and self-directed essential skills development offered through the Skills Development Centre ○ Academic upgrading through the GED (General Education Diploma) program 	Three months to one year
Component 4: Placements, Job Coaching and Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sophisticated database system exists to support our Job Developers to assess, prepare, and match women with appropriate host employers • Job Developers help prepare both women and host employers for a placement or a paid employment experience • Job Developers provide on-the-job coaching for both women and employers when needed 	Four weeks to six months
Component 5: Job Search and Job Maintenance Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports available include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A targeted job search campaign ○ Resume tailoring ○ Self-promotion and employment connections ○ Interview preparation ○ Accessing the ‘hidden’ job market ○ Self-marketing ○ Handling follow-up and feedback ○ Responding to technical questions regarding computer training 	Up to six months

Throughout Component 1, we use a wide array of intake and assessment tools, since we believe that a thorough intake assessment enables us to support women to make more informed choices. We use a wide variety of assessment tools and inventories to assess applicants and program participants, and offer an array of advanced employment preparation and training options through YWCA Toronto.¹⁸ We also offer our participants a holistic range of women-centred employment supports and services.

Following on our philosophy of creating programs that have long term solutions, and because we do not always have the in-house capacity to offer all five Components to all of our participants, we use our thorough case management system to support women to initiate an individual employment action plan, and we partner with other organizations to offer advanced training, education and support through programs such as:

- Second Careers offered through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities,
- training offered through the City of Toronto Employment and Social Services,
- bridging programs,
- continuing education programs offered through colleges and/or universities,
- other training programs,
- English language training,
- self-employment programs, and
- apprenticeship programs.

Another of our key best practices is to celebrate the successes of the women who participate in our programs. We host a number of events each year, such as graduations and networking opportunities to acknowledge achievements, to keep women motivated and inspired. Through the work of these programs we have built a participant and alumni network to support them not only until they complete the programs but also into the future.

YWCA Toronto staff continue to work with the women for up to one year after they have achieved their goals. Women often stay in touch with us after they have entered the workforce, and call us with job maintenance questions. Our ongoing support allows them to build confidence while they adapt to their new work environments.

¹⁸ For a list of these, see Appendix D.

At YWCA Toronto we try to 'keep a pulse' on the profiles and needs of the women we work with, as well as with service gaps in the community and in the field of employment. We conduct regular in-house surveys and consultations within a community development framework to help us enhance our service delivery to the diverse populations of Toronto.

Our staffing models are developed based on the funding guidelines of each specific program, and on program needs. For developing and delivering this program model, we hired a team of multi-disciplinary specialists comprising of participant services assistants, employment counsellors, trainers and job developers.

“This opportunity helped me to learn more about current business practices, improved my business language, made me more organized and professional, and got me a job and boosted my confidence. I utilize by computer skills and people management skills to prepare for full time work”

-Aliva

YWCA TORONTO PARTNERSHIPS

Through growing and maintaining partnerships with employers, community organizations, and various levels of government, we are maximizing our capacity to develop and deliver holistic employment programming. Our goal is to provide opportunities for every woman to reach her potential, and we recognize that our resources are most effective when used in collaboration with other community groups that share common goals.

EMPLOYERS

Partnerships, collaboration and consultation with employers are key components of our YWCA Toronto employment programs, supporting the effectiveness and sustainability of our services and refining our response to the employment and training needs of our participants.

Since 1998, YWCA Toronto has been cultivating close relationships with employers in both public and private sectors across the city who share our eagerness to support women to find and retain employment. We take a progressive approach in creating special partnerships with employers, so that we can ensure a good 'fit' between our participants and their workplace. Together we have found jobs for hundreds of women with multiple barriers to employment.

Initially coordinated by the SDC, these partnerships with employers grew over time to become the LinksToJobs Employers' Network in 2004. Since then, we have collaborated with the Network to provide supportive employment opportunities for our job-ready participants, and to offer participating employers the benefit of recruiting these talented and qualified women. The LinksToJobs Network represents a remarkable example of collaboration among not-for-profit, government and private sectors. Today, the LinksToJobs Employer Network has over 70 members who offer internships, on-the-job training, mentoring and employment opportunities.¹⁹

¹⁹ For a list of our employer partners, see Appendix C.

Our partnerships with employers enable us to:

- provide on-the-job training through paid and unpaid workplace opportunities for women,
- increase awareness and sensitivity about the barriers to employment that women often face,
- provide essential skills training needed for today's workplace,
- support women understand the particular organizational culture of each workplace, and how to adapt to it,
- provide innovating and solution-focused approaches to dealing with workplace issues such as equity, diversity and confidentiality,
- bridge employer and participant needs, and
- continuously improve the training and support that we offer in order to assist women to retain and advance in their jobs.

Our employer partners have contributed to the development and delivery of our employment programs by:

- participating in employer focus groups, pre-placement focus groups, and the consultation process for this project,
- participating in training sessions and acting as liaisons to promote our work,
- acting as host employers for placements, on-the-job training, job shadowing, and mentoring activities,
- contributing to the development of best practices for job seekers, employment service providers, and practitioners,
- providing us with feedback so that we can monitor employment issues related to our programming, and
- providing in-kind support to help us build our expertise in essential skills training.

In turn, we act as a broker to provide recruitment services that meet employer needs. Our staff members help our employer partners hire and recruit workers with qualifications and skills relevant to their businesses. Through this process, we ensure a good 'fit' between our job-ready participants and their workplace by offering thorough pre-employment screening, testing, coaching and training.

For each of the programs and services that we offer, we involve our employer partners in a variety of capacities. For example, through our MOTS program we work with two lead employers from our LinksToJobs Network: one is a diversified manufacturer that supplies products and services around the world, and the other provides disability management services. Both of these partners have shown commitment and support to our MOTS program through the provision of valuable volunteer, internship and employment opportunities to our program participants. Both have also consulted with us on this project, to assist in developing innovative ways to provide placement and recruitment services.

One of our key employer partners is the East Toronto Human Resources Association (ETHRA). Through ETHRA, human resources and industrial relations professionals meet to discuss common challenges and current trends in the workplace. They share resources, tools and techniques, hiring practices and related issues especially relevant to the current downturn of the economy. ETHRA has worked closely with us to provide placements and jobs, acting as a forum to learn from and to exchange knowledge and skills. It has contributed as a partner in YWCA Toronto employment programs, and participated in employer round tables and forums. Two of its executives serve on the employer advisory committee for this project.

Besides our employer partners, we work to advocate for, promote, act as a broker, and support women to find employment in small, medium and large industry sectors. We currently have a LinksToJobs Employer Campaign that uses a range of innovative strategies to build this network.

Please see Appendix C for a sample list of employers who have hired many of our participants, either through our network or independently. We have concentrated mainly in the areas of administration, finance, business, human and social services, and retail and customer service. However, through our integrated model we have also been able to work with professionals in other fields who have been matched to appropriate employment, such as engineers, IT specialists, graphic designers, logistics specialists and quality controllers.

“Working with the YWCA throughout these years has been priceless. Their work with preparing women to participate successfully in the workforce today is of high calibre. We therefore are honoured to continue to work with them to build skilled and professional women for our businesses.”

Gillian (employer representative from ETHRA)

EVALUATION PRACTICES

YWCA Toronto has adopted a results-based approach to evaluating our employment programs that allows us to monitor and measure results and demonstrate both quantitative and qualitative outcomes. While celebrating the successes of our participants, we can also facilitate continuous program improvement. We have integrated the United Way Program Effectiveness Organizational Development (PEOD) management systems into our evaluation practices.

We use internal evaluation and data capture systems for each program that we offer, depending on funder requirements. We have developed a participant-focused outcomes documentation and tracking system that enables us to assess employment results for many of our programs.²⁰ In addition, we have developed some simple research methodologies to document the longer-term outcomes of our programs, a sample of which can be found below. We adapt these methodologies to meet the requirements of each funder.

Figure 4: Methodology for Documenting and Assessing Outcomes

Tracking Participant Progress		
Statistical reporting	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of participation rates and demographics based on base line information collected through our intake process • Update on participant results (e.g. completion of employment plan, finding a placement/job etc.)
Progress assessment	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular monthly monitoring of program deliverables completed – included with a short narrative report
Funder reports	As per different requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written report of activities, results and learning for the period • Summary of program and financial results statistics

²⁰ For a sample of our evaluation tools, see Appendix E.

Documenting and Assessing Participant Outcomes		
Baseline data	Based on each program intake criteria and monitoring requirements expected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intake form completed and updated as women enter and progress through the program to employment • In house data capture systems designed • Continual updating of information about participants' asset development through the participant information system • Database gathers information and generates reports
Participant satisfaction surveys	End of program cycle Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit surveys are completed with women who have participated in different programs and workshops • Satisfaction interviews are completed with a representative sample of women
Employer satisfaction surveys and consultations	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sample of employers is interviewed to explore their satisfaction with our participants and their levels of employability • In addition, we do in-depth consultations with employers, in order to assess our services and to explore the outcomes of our work
Participant outcomes research	Ongoing / Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth 'portrait' interviews with women are completed for some of our programs using the Sustainable Livelihoods outcomes documentation process and tools²¹
Statistical analysis	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics are gathered and analyzed on an ongoing basis. We also have the ability to 'count' the incidences of qualitative and anecdotal outcomes, providing more detailed information. For example, we collect statistics about jobs, but also collect the qualitative information about a woman's ability to benefit from those jobs (i.e. income, job retention, quality of work, availability of a promotion path etc.)

²¹ For more detail on the Sustainable Livelihoods approach see Appendix G.

Documenting and Assessing Participant Outcomes		
Reflection and learning notes	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and consultants complete brief point-form observations and learning about outcomes and effective practice; this forms the basis for monthly reviews
Staff review sessions	Semi-Annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 month review sessions with the staff team to review and assess program outcomes and to refine program planning and design • Best practices are implemented to ensure a woman-centred approach, to maintain the quality of service, and to help us remain leaders in providing essential skills training
Focus group summary reports	Depending on the need, they are organized accordingly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group with program participants are completed as needed • The summary reports from these focus groups are analyzed to help us refine our programming and develop relevant curriculum
Documentation of best practices	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We undertake an annual analysis of our best practices, and integrate new strategies to remain responsive to the needs of our participants/ participants and our employer partners

In 2004, YWCA Toronto's SDC program had a unique opportunity to participate in the Women's Economic Development Collaborative Fund, an initiative sponsored by the Canadian Women's Foundation (CWF) and facilitated by the Toronto-based Eko Nomos Development Consultants. Through this project, we collaborated with CWF and nine other community organizations to develop and test a Sustainable Livelihoods-based asset-mapping approach to exploring women's livelihood outcomes.²¹ While a heavy commitment of organizational time and resources, the exercise was extremely valuable to us as a learning experience. As shown in the above chart, we have incorporated some key aspects of the methodology into our YWCA Toronto evaluation systems.

At the YWCA we have adapted the Sustainable Livelihoods evaluation tool for the SDC and MOTS programs. Through it we have been able to do some thorough quantitative and qualitative research on how our programs have an impact on supporting women to sustainable livelihoods. We took part in a five-year research project through the Canadian Women's Foundation. We recommend that this is one of the most valuable tools to evaluate the program's impact on women's lives. Please see the Appendix G for the tool and summary.

“During my time at the YWCA, I gained knowledge that I use in performing a wide variety of tasks while in an office environment. I had the opportunity to learn from the kindest staff who had a lot of patience and support. I also had the opportunity to be part of a wonderful group of individuals from different cultural, economic and social backgrounds.”

–*Diana*

²¹ For more information about this initiative, see Janet Murray, Mary Ferguson and Claire Letemendia. *Beyond Survival: Helping Women Transition Out of Poverty*. Toronto: 2010. Also see Appendix G.

OUTCOMES

Internal YWCA Toronto data shows that our programs enable participants to develop essential skills, and improve their lives and their employment prospects. Along with acquiring essential skills training related to obtaining and maintaining employment, they generally achieve many of the following qualitative outcomes:

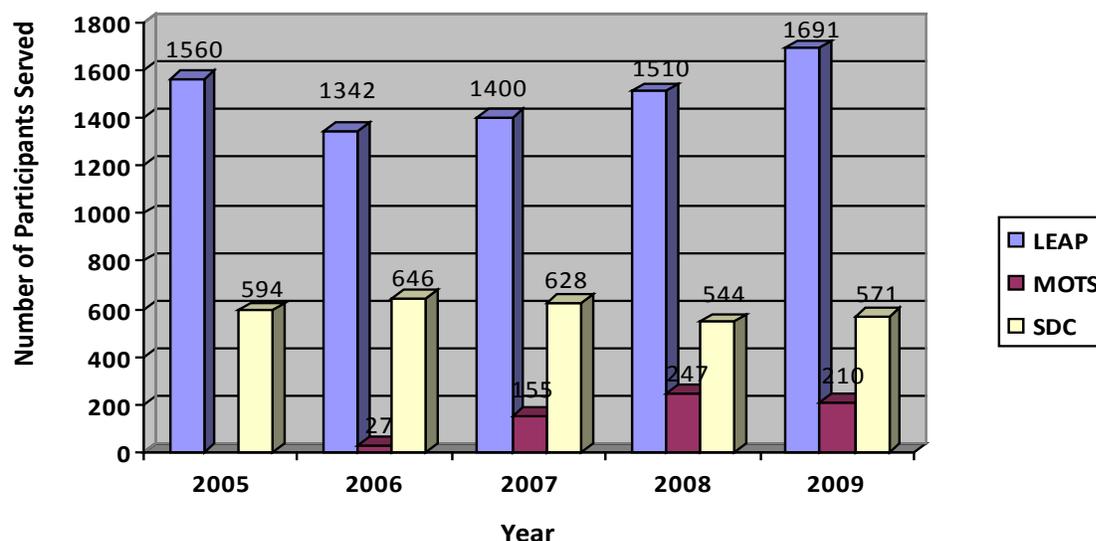
- clearer, more realistic long-term career direction,
- greater ability and self-confidence to make informed decisions about employment goals,
- increased self-esteem, awareness of employability skills,
- reduced isolation and enhanced access to jobs,
- improved ability to retain employment,
- improved quality of job/pay and promotion path,
- access to Canadian work experience,
- improved ability to function in Canadian workplace culture,
- improved workplace English,
- access to peer groups to provide continued support for participants as they move into employment,
- access to personal and professional networks,
- sustainable and meaningful employment opportunities, and
- interest in and commitment to lifelong learning.

Please note: the above qualitative outcomes are a combined analysis of all the three programs that were incubated: LEAP, MOTS, and SDC. Since 2005, 11,125 women have accessed these programs.

Below is a summary of outcomes from these three programs.²²

²² These programs are ongoing and continue to evolve from different funding sources and cycles. We have used data collected for various periods over the past five years to substantiate evidence-based data.

Figure 5: Number of women who accessed LEAP, MOTS and SDC Programs 2005-2009



LEARN, EXPLORE, ASSESS, PREPARE (LEAP) PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

LEAP continues to hold a well-established and respected position in the employment programming landscape of Toronto.

In 2009:

- 1,691 women accessed LEAP program supports, surpassing our original target goal of serving 650 women,
- despite the difficult economic environment, over 295 participants found employment,
- 92% of our participants moved on to their next steps to employment through further education, training, job search, placements and/or direct employment, and
- 96% of participants rated the overall quality of the program as 'excellent' or 'very good'.

Target vs. Actual Results (March 1, 2008 to July 31, 2010)

	Target	Actual
Number of women who contacted the program	12,000	20,532
Number of who accessed the program	4,800	6,857
Number of who completed one or more interventions	2,016	5,230
Number of who became employed during or after the program	1,040	1,373

MOTS (MOVING ON TO SUCCESS) PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Since inception in 2006, the MOTS program has been highly successful in linking women to employment, further education and training. Today, it is one of the four signature programs in the province offering this specialized employment training program through the Ontario Women's Directorate.

In 2009:

- the program surpassed target intake of 140 women by serving the needs of 210 women,
- 107 women were linked to employment, further education or training,
- 95% of women who attended training developed new or improved computer skills, and
- 100% of women who participated in the program reported increased self-esteem.

Target vs. Actual Results (August 23, 2006 to March 31, 2008)

	Target	Actual
Number of women who contacted the program	100	202
Number who entered the program	80	130
Number who pursued further education after the program	16	20
Number who became employed during or after the program	64	70

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE (SDC) PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The SDC continues to offer a range of training, recruitment and consulting services that are in high demand.

In 2009:

- 571 women accessed the SDC,
- 98% completed essential skills training,
- 92% rated SDC services as excellent,
- over 100 women were placed in internships, and
- 250 job coaching and employment counselling sessions were held.

Target vs. Actual Results (January 1, 2004 to September 30, 2007)

	Target	Actual
Number of women who completed one or more interventions	160	421

Number who became employed during or after the program	120	246
<p>Preethi came to YWCA Toronto in August 2009 after losing her job as a Montessori school teacher, a position which she had held for the past ten years. Her doctor had strongly advised against working with small children due to numerous back injuries. This caused her to consider an alternate profession.</p> <p>She came to the YWCA with the hope of getting some support during this difficult transition period. She had always wanted to work in an office environment but lacked the necessary skills and confidence to pursue this career path further.</p> <p>At YWCA Toronto, Preethi completed various personality tests and assessments that helped her develop confidence. This enabled her to understand herself better and make some major career decisions. Preethi received emotional support from her peers and from YWCA Toronto staff members who provided her with guidance as she made critical career choices.</p> <p>Before coming to YWCA Toronto, Preethi's computer skills were reasonably good but largely self-taught. She was frustrated by not knowing how to complete simple tasks or use shortcuts. At YWCA Toronto she completed Computer Skills and Professional Office Management courses that taught her a diverse range of new skills, including efficient ways to complete tasks.</p> <p>Preethi's counsellor linked her to a temporary job opening at a professional office in downtown Toronto – an opportunity she feels she never would have received had it not been for the YWCA. Her counsellor gave her the support she needed to prepare for the job interview. The interviewer, and future supervisor, was thoroughly impressed by her confidence and skill set, and she was offered the job.</p> <p>Preethi feels that she would not have been able to apply for or retain this job had she not come to the YWCA. She uses the skills that she learned from YWCA Toronto employment programs to complete her daily tasks.</p> <p>She writes: "This program offered at the YWCA has been a blessing to me as I believe it has been to many other women like me. For many of us it is impossible to go to full-time school because of the other priorities that life has placed on us. A program such as this is vital for bridging the gaps in our skills. Words can't express the appreciation I feel for all the staff at the YWCA who have put together this wonderful program. Thank you for your help and support through this journey."</p>		

THE YWCA TORONTO PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS PRACTICES CURRICULUM

BACKGROUND

At YWCA Toronto we have been developing and delivering employment training curriculum since 1961. We have created a range of curriculum models that respond to the needs of women to help them learn, practice and enhance their essential skills through our five key Components:

- Career Assessment
- Employability Skills Development
- Advanced Employment Preparation and Training
- Placements, Job Coaching and Mentoring
- Job Search and Job Maintenance Support.

In the recent past, we recognized a gap in employment programming for women in our three target groups:

- low-skilled women who need support to enhance their literacy and essential skills levels to find and retain jobs,
- women who have recently become unemployed as a result of recent changes in the economy and labour market and need re-training to upgrade their essential skills, and
- internationally trained professionals and/or new graduates who need additional training to facilitate their transition to the Canadian workplace and culture.

Through this project funded by the HRSDC's Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, we were able to deliver a one-time pilot of the YWCA Toronto curriculum that we have been developing and offering through our Skills Development Centre (SDC) for the past five years. The aim of the pilot was to test, capture and refine our best practices in delivering essential skills training.

PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS PRACTICES PILOT DELIVERY

Since 2005 we have been developing and delivering an innovative essential skills curriculum through the SDC. We have refined this to become the *Professional Business Practices Curriculum*,²³ designed to prepare our participants for more sustainable employment and inspire in them a passion for lifelong learning.

²³ For a copy of the *Professional Business Practices Curriculum*, please contact YWCA Toronto at www.ywca.org.

In May 2010, YWCA Toronto delivered a sample of this curriculum to a group of women through the SDC. The workshops included:

- **Professional Office Management:** Oral Communication, Written Communication, Data and Records Management, Office Protocol and Business Etiquette, Organizing Meetings
- **Professional Development:** Group Dynamics, Self-Esteem and Self-Talk, Values, Listening Skills, Time Management, Stress Management, Cultural Diversity, Goal Setting, Employer Expectations
- **Computer Skills:** Keyboarding, Computer Concepts, Windows, Email, Internet, Microsoft Word, and Microsoft Excel

A selection of curriculum modules was offered over a period of ten weeks. Attendance ranged from thirty participants in the Professional Office Management workshops to fifteen participants in the Professional Development and Computer Skills. The pilot delivery included all five components of our programming model listed above.

The women who participated in the pilot were asked to provide detailed evaluations of the modules by completing paper-based evaluations following each workshop they attended, and taking part in two focus groups. In these evaluations and focus groups, participants made the following comments and recommendations:

- participants learned from both the counsellors and their peers,
- participation enhanced their self-confidence in approaching their employment and life goals,
- many participants recognized that they still had much to learn, and were interested to pursue more training,
- participants expressed an interest in having access to electronic copies of the resources that they were given during the workshops,
- participants agreed unanimously that they wished the program could have been longer, and
- all participants felt that their employment potential had improved as a result of their involvement at the YWCA Toronto, and voiced their satisfaction with the experience.

THE PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS PRACTICES CURRICULUM

The *Professional Business Practices* Curriculum consists of a series of general employability workshops that showcase YWCA Toronto's best practices in delivering essential skills training. The Curriculum specifically focuses on targeting the nine essential skills identified by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada: reading, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, continuous learning, thinking skills and computer use. In the Curriculum, these skills have been enhanced to address other work readiness training relevant to the Canadian workplace, including cultural diversity, employer expectations, and financial literacy.

The Curriculum was developed based on feedback from YWCA Toronto staff members, participants and employer partners. Two advisory committees provided detailed input into the design of the curriculum: an internal advisory committee comprised of YWCA Toronto staff members who have vast experience in developing delivering essential skills essential skills training, and an external advisory committee comprised of some YWCA Toronto employers.

The *Professional Business Practices* Curriculum Modules are divided into four sections: Professional Office Management, Computer Skills, Professional Development, and Continuous Learning.

Figure 6: Professional Business Practices Curriculum

	Description	Modules
Professional Office Management	These modules focus on developing the basic essential skills needed for working in an office environment. Specific emphasis is placed on the roles and responsibilities involved with administrative positions, in order to help participants to develop essential skills that are consistent with the Canadian workplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral Communication • Written Communication (Levels I and II) • Writing in Business Today • Data and Records Management • Office Protocol and Business Etiquette • Organizing Meetings • Employer Expectations • Cultural Diversity • Financial Literacy • Effective Emailing
Computer Skills	These modules focus on developing computer skills. They range from covering basic computer concepts to advanced formatting and functions. The modules are offered in a blended format that includes instructor-led and individual internet-based training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keyboarding • Computer Concepts • Windows • Email • Internet • Microsoft Word (Beginner and Intermediate) • Microsoft Excel (Beginner and Intermediate) • Microsoft PowerPoint (Beginner)

	Description	Modules
Professional Development	These modules focus on a wide range of soft skills that can help participants obtain and maintain employment. They have been adapted from the <i>Discovering Life Skills Training Manuals</i> , published by YWCA Toronto.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Dynamics • Listening Skills • Self-Esteem and Self-Talk • Values • Time Management • Stress Management • Goal Setting • Job Retention
Continuous Learning	These modules focus on upgrading the essential skills training offered in the other <i>Professional Business Practices Curriculum</i> modules. They are internet-based, so that participants can complete them at their own pace from wherever they are most comfortable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem Solving • Project Management • Verbal Communication • Written Communication • Career Management • Customer Service

The core modules of the *Professional Business Practices Curriculum* focus on essential skills training at a very basic level, but can be readily expanded to accommodate learners with intermediate or advanced skill levels.

HOW TO USE THE CURRICULUM

The Curriculum is designed in a modular format that allows for flexible delivery. This enables the training to be customized to meet the specific learning needs, objectives, and/or employment goals of any target group. The modules can be offered as stand-alone workshops, or offered in sequence to focus on targeting specific essential skills.

Before delivering the Curriculum, it is important for the instructor to identify the needs and goals of the participant group. Once these have been identified, the instructor can customize delivery by offering Modules best suited to the group. Additional handouts, activities, videos, and/or industry-specific information can be included to complement the core Curriculum.

“Everything I learned at the YWCA is valuable. At my current position, I am able to use knowledge learned from the Essential Skills program, especially the filing course and computer skills. I appreciate [the staff members] who encouraged me along the way. It was so hard at first to overcome as I had been through so much in my life.”

-Linda

We hope that the Curriculum can prove useful to other employment skills training organizations in both the public and private sectors, and to any interested readers. As a learning community development organization, we seek constantly to refine and enhance the services we offer. We welcome your feedback about the Curriculum model, how you may have adapted it for your target group, and the outcomes that you have captured about best practices in program delivery. Through working together and exchanging information and expertise, we can stimulate innovation in the field of essential skills training, and support more Canadians towards rewarding, sustainable employment, personal fulfilment, and broader participation in the economy and society.

The Curriculum modules, along with the essential skills that are targeted in each, are summarized in the chart below.

Figure 7: Professional Business Practices Curriculum Modules

Module	Topics Covered	Primary Essential Skill	Secondary Essential Skill
Professional Office Management			
Oral Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to various types of verbal and non-verbal communications • How to use speech to exchange thoughts and information 	Oral Communication	Working with Others Thinking
Written Communication I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to different types of letters, memos and forms used in business • How to organize information, choose a writing style, and write and send written correspondence 	Writing	Reading Document Use
Written Communication II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to format business letters, memos and faxes • Rules for addressing envelopes • Tips for writing effectively 	Writing	Reading Document Use
Writing in Business Today	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical tools, strategies and techniques for business writing 	Writing	Reading Document Use
Data and Records Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic concepts of data and records management, including file management • Stages of records management, retention and disposition 	Document Use	Computer Use Thinking
Office Protocol and Business Etiquette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for organizing their work space • Effective time management. • Manners and common courtesies applicable to the Canadian business environment 	Working with Others	Document Use Oral Communication

Module	Topics Covered	Primary Essential Skill	Secondary Essential Skill
Organizing Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to organize a variety of different types of meetings • Tips for making basic travel arrangements 	Working with Others	Writing Oral Communication
Employer Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General expectations that employers have for employees 	Working with Others	Oral Communication Continuous Learning
Cultural Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General information about cultural diversity in the Canadian workplace 	Working with Others	Thinking Oral Communication
Financial Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinct, but inter-related tools for making smart, informed financial decisions 	Numeracy	Thinking Document Use
Effective Emailing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques and strategies to manage email effectively • Email etiquette 	Writing	Computer Use Reading
Professional Office Management			
All Modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various computer software applications 	Computer Skills	Thinking Document Use
Professional Development			
All Modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft skills used to manage personal and working life 	Continuous Learning	Thinking Oral Communication
Continuous Learning			
All Modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of topic available online 	Continuous Learning	Document Use Computer Use

LEARNING FROM OUR SUCCESS

From YWCA Toronto's learning about 'what works' and 'what doesn't' in developing and delivering employment and essential skills programming, we have collated a series of tips for service delivery organizations in the field, and for employers interested in getting involved with this valuable work.

TIPS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- In today's larger employment and training landscape, if you cannot offer all the components, work to partner with the experts in the field and develop partnership models.
- Do the assessment of your capacity to deliver employment programs such as the YWCA Toronto's: some of these programs are complex and you need have good leaders as project managers to use the resources wisely, as funding is usually limited.
- Look at new ways of collaboration: today's non-profit sector cannot totally depend on funding, so there needs to be a mix of funding, philanthropy and entrepreneurial mix. Consider changing the mind set of your organization to make this possible.
- Create hubs of services to share costs and build a continuum of services, whereby participants can pick from a menu what best meets their individual needs.
- Understand who your participants are, and what are their barriers to employment. Integrate essential skills into your program design and curriculum to lay the foundation for employment success.
- Conduct an environmental scan of programs and services available. Understand current labour market trends and the demographics of the communities you work with, to make informed decisions during the planning process.
- Offer flexible programming. Marginalized populations face multiple barriers to employment, and may require more than one intervention to move towards their employment goals. It is therefore important to ensure that programming is flexible in terms of time, location, and the frequency at which it is being offered in order to make it accessible.

- Solicit continuous feedback from program participants. This helps to ensure that the programming being offered is relevant, helpful, and responsive. Collect and document your participants' challenges and successes, and the specific ways in which they have overcome barriers to employment. Use appropriate and rigorous evaluation tools to capture and analyze both quantitative and qualitative participant outcomes, in order to understand how your programming has affected their lives.
- Create a menu of services to accommodate different levels of learners, and offer multiple services under one roof to allow for participants to pick and choose what meets their needs.
- Ensure that you have experienced and competent multi-disciplinary staff to: support a multi-service model, build the capacity to develop your programs, and help you adapt curriculum materials and tools to meet the needs of different learners and groups.
- Document your best practices. Tracking and analysing what works well – and not so well – on an ongoing basis will help you ensure that programming evolves as effectively and efficiently as possible. It will also be crucial to building your credibility as an organization, and to showcasing your best practices to a wide range of current and potential community stakeholders.
- Keep building your network of allies and supports. Nurture partnerships with different levels of government, investors, employers, and community and public sector allies to form networks of support. Integrated service delivery models have proven to be very effective. This type of capacity building can facilitate programs that have a significant impact, and sustainable results. Lobby, advocate and build alliances with various stakeholders to encourage funders to invest in employment programs.
- Keep costs effective and efficient. Examine your social return on investment to identify what works to build capacity within your organization. Tell your success stories to funders and other stakeholders who may be interested in the type of programming that you offer. This can help build investment in and contributions to your organizational capacity for employment training programs.

TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

- Cultivate partnerships with community-based training organizations. These partnerships can be a value added benefit for your business. Organizations such as YWCA Toronto have a long track record of preparing job seekers for the labour market through current and relevant supports. Their services can help you simplify the hiring process, by providing support to job seekers before, during, and after employment. In this way, you can ensure that you are hiring employees who are a good 'fit' for your organization.
- Community agencies such as YWCA Toronto can benefit you by providing current information about how to keep your workplace accessible, inclusive, safe and productive.
- Collaborate with these organizations to provide feedback, thereby ensuring that their services meet your needs. Not all employment training services meet the standards and expectations of today's job market.
- Invest in new models of employment development. While traditional philanthropy remains vital to the field of employment skills training, you can go beyond the old model of 'giving'. Partnering with agencies to invest in projects through in-kind, financial and capacity building initiatives help engage all stakeholders to find long term solutions for people in our communities who experience barriers to employment. Collaboration can include: volunteering; offering placement opportunities, job shadowing, and job trials; and connecting with participants through job fairs and employer events.

CONCLUSION

At YWCA Toronto, we are reminded daily of the tremendous and urgent need for programs such as ours to support women to move out of poverty, find solid job opportunities, and build better livelihoods for themselves and their families. We are operating in a very difficult economic climate, and in communities where many people face a daunting array of barriers to engagement in both the labour market, and in broader Canadian society. Some of our participants are just beginning to take their first steps in learning and practicing the essential skills needed for today's workplace, and in gaining the self-confidence and motivation to set goals for themselves and carry them through with our support.

Although our work is challenging, we have seen that we can make a difference in the lives of the women who come to our programs. Our approach to employment and skills development is successful because we offer a holistic, flexible menu of services and supports that can be customized to suit the individual requirements of each woman. We keep 'a pulse' on the changing needs of our communities and the current labour market. We have created strong partnerships with employers and community agencies to maximize our resources, build capacity in the field of employment programming, and find long- term solutions to our participants' employment goals.

In the YWCA Toronto Compendium, we have showcased both the design and delivery of our best program model through the pilot *Professional Business Practices* Curriculum, and the excellent outcomes from three of our cutting edge employment programs at our Scarborough 'hub'. We have offered quantitative and qualitative evidence of our successes. We hope that the Compendium will prove useful as an open, adaptable resource for further innovation in employment programming.

We consider it vital for government, public and private sector organizations, and grass roots community groups to collaborate to support women with barriers to employment to participate and compete in our changing labour market. To this end, we will continue to strive for excellence in our program design and delivery, and to share our knowledge and experience as widely as possible, as a vital part of our mission to build a healthy future for all of our communities.

If you would like more information about this project and how the YWCA Toronto can continue to support you or for additional supports and resources related to employment and skills development, and the *Professional Business Practices* Curriculum, please do not hesitate to contact the following at the YWCA Toronto:

Marilda Tselepis, Director, Employment and Skills Development
mtselepis@ywcatoronto.org or at 416.961.8100 ext. 339

Eva Pakyam, Manager, Employment Programs, Scarborough
epakyam@ywcatoronto.org or at 416.269.0090 ext. 229

Please also visit our website: www.ywcatoronto.org for more information about all of our programs.

APPENDIX A: ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR EMPLOYMENT PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada granted funding for YWCA Toronto to create a Compendium of “what works” in building literacy and essential skills programming for employment. The overall goal of the project was to disseminate this Compendium across Canada to share with other literacy and essential skills providers.

The project had two specific objectives:

1. Refine and pilot the literacy and essential skills training currently offered by YWCA Toronto to create a *Professional Business Practices* Curriculum Model
2. Produce a Compendium of best practices in building literacy and essential skills programming that includes the Curriculum Model, information regarding employer partnerships, evaluation tools and program outlines that respond to labour market needs

In order to achieve these objectives, the following activities were carried out:

PHASE 1: INITIAL SETUP (MONTHS 1-2)

- Established an Advisory Committee including employers, internal staff members and consultants
- Scheduled monthly consultations, establish a framework to track and document outcomes
- Organized processes for collation of outcomes and effective practices from past YWCA Toronto employment programs and feedback from YWCA Toronto staff members, LinksToJobs employers, alumnae, and current participants

PHASE 2: RESEARCH (MONTHS 3-5)

- Began to collate information on past YWCA Toronto programs; this continued throughout the project
- Set up for pilot, which included preparation of curriculum that focused on literacy and essential skills training

PHASE 3: PILOT (MONTHS 6-8.5)

- Delivered a 10-week pilot of the *Professional Business Practices* Curriculum to a group of 15-30 women from the east Toronto Area
- Collected feedback through participant surveys, focus groups and data tracking systems upon intake, after delivery of each module, and upon completion of the entire program
- Refined the Curriculum Model based on participant feedback

PHASE 4: DRAFT (MONTHS 8.5-10)

- Collated all outcomes and feedback from pilot participants and research team
- Produced an initial draft of the Compendium
- Contacted a sample of YWCAs across Canada to review the draft Compendium

PHASE 5: WRAP UP (MONTHS 10-12)

- Revised the Compendium according to feedback from Phase 4
- Disseminated the final Compendium nationally

APPENDIX B: HISTORY OF EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMING AT YWCA TORONTO

For many years, YWCA Toronto has been involved in developing and delivering employment programming. In 1884, we offered our first employment program for women. Since then, we have been a pioneer in developing and delivering programs for women that respond to the needs of both employers and job seekers. We have developed a holistic approach to employment programming, focusing on the combination of career assessment, life skills, essential skills, literacy and language upgrading, training, job search and job maintenance support services. The following is an overview of our innovative employment programs' history that have helped us through these years to develop, refine and pilot our current YWCA program model in offering literacy and essential skills programming:

HISTORY AT A GLANCE: YWCA TORONTO'S EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

1884 *Phonography, Stenography and Typing Classes*

YWCA Toronto began to offer phonography, stenography and typing classes for women, during a time when these were considered non-traditional trades too physically demanding for women

1961 *Employment Focus*

An employment preparation program that offers vocational assessment and career planning for women receiving social assistance

1963 *Focus on Change*

A holistic program combining life skills and employability skills training, along with academic upgrading

1972 *Life Skills Training, Coaching and Publications*

Provides fee-for-service training services and publishes nine English and five French language Life Skills manuals for educators, coaches, group leaders, facilitators, and other human services professionals

1977 *Women's Development Services*

Resources were offered to help women understand the realities of their lives, their expectations, opportunities and future possibilities through various workshops, courses, research materials, and information on community services

- 1984** *Working Skills for Women (name changed to REACH in 2004)*
A pre-bridging program for women who sought to move from underemployment or unemployment into secure and equitable employment
- 1988** *GED (General Education Diploma)*
An academic upgrading program that combines principles of equity and adult learning styles to provide a one-of-a-kind learning experience for women
- 1991** *LEAP (Learn, Explore, Assess, Prepare)*
A modular program that enables participants to make informed and well-founded employment-related decisions and prepare for, obtain and maintain employment
- 2000** *Morningside Employment Resource Centre (name changed to Scarborough Village Employment Resource Centre in 2006)*
An employment resource centre designed to improve participant's access to employment through practical job search workshops, up-to-date computer and internet equipment, as well as individual employment coaching, workshops, employer showcases and job search resources
- 2002** *Skills Development Centre (SDC)*
A social enterprise that offers training, recruitment and consulting services and whose programs are offered not only in Toronto but across Canada
- 2006** *SOAR (Seek, Obtain, Advance, Retain)*
An employment program for women with a focus on sole-support mothers. This unique program was tailored to fit the needs of each woman by helping her to develop a realistic career plan
- 2006** *MOTS (Moving On To Success)*
A comprehensive employment training program that can be tailored to meet each woman's individual needs; gives priority service to women who have experienced domestic violence or who are at risk of abuse
- 2007** *LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada)*
A program offering free English classes developed specifically for immigrant women

- 2008** *JUMP (Join, Unify, Motivate and Participate)*
A program designed to help young newcomer women overcome barriers to employment and help them settle positively and prosperously in Canada
- 2010** *Pre-Apprenticeship Carpentry Training*
A training program designed to prepare women for general carpentry apprenticeships
- 2010** *Essential Skills for Employment Program Pilot*
A pilot project to showcase YWCA Toronto's the best practices and success stories in building the capacity for essential skills for employment
- 2010** *LEAP and Scarborough Village Women's Employment Centres (Employment Ontario Integrated Service Delivery)*
An integrated service delivery offering participant service planning and coordination, resource and information, job search, job matching, placement, and job/training retention as a one stop program

We currently offer thirteen innovative employment and skills development programs that have assisted more than 20,000 people in their job search last year alone. The following is a brief summary of each of these programs. For more information, visit our website: ywcatoronto.org.

CAREER ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING (CAP)

CAP is a fee-for-service program that offers career counselling and vocational assessment. The main objective of the program is to provide clarity and career direction to women, men and youth at crossroads in their work lives. CAP offers participants the opportunity to explore career options in a supportive environment where they are challenged and encouraged to consider options beyond traditional norms and maximize their natural aptitudes, skills and abilities. Participants receive career counselling and complete vocational assessment instruments that gauge their temperament, personality type, skills, values and occupational interests. Participants leave the program with an action plan outlining the steps toward achieving their goals. CAP is most suitable for self-directed participants who are able to learn quickly with minimum support.

EMPLOYMENT FOCUS

Employment Focus is a ten week employment preparation program that offers vocational assessment and career planning for women receiving social assistance. Each participant receives support to develop a realistic action plan that includes skills upgrading, if necessary, and Ontario Works approved skills training. Through a variety of vocational assessment tools and employability workshops, women identify their skills, interests, values and personality types. After the first three weeks of assessment, reflection and discussion, participants begin to research occupational interests and training opportunities available through Ontario Works. The program focuses on developing essential skills for employment by integrating basic and intermediate computer classes and *Professional Business Practices* into the curriculum.

EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS: LEAP AND SCARBOROUGH VILLAGE WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT CENTRES

Employment Ontario has developed an integrated service delivery framework that combines Ontario government funded training and employment services to make it easy for participants to find and use them based on their individual interests and needs. The framework is guided by six principles: accessibility, integration, accountability, cost-effectiveness, customer-centricity, and quality. At YWCA Toronto, we provide a full range of employment service components under this framework, including participant services planning and coordination, resources and information, job search and job retention support, and job matching, placements and incentives.

JOIN, UNIFY, MOTIVATE AND PARTICIPATE (JUMP)

JUMP supports young newcomer women between the ages of 13 and 24 years through a variety of essential settlement services in a unique girl-only space. The program provides one-on-one settlement and employment counselling, referrals to other YWCA programs and community services, educational workshops and training, solution-focused counselling, field trips, special events, and a variety of other creative and youth-driven workshops and opportunities. The program aims to help young women become connected to employment and educational opportunities that best suit their unique situations, and to increase their knowledge of available community resources and how to access them. Services are offered in a variety of languages, including Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), English, Hindi, Punjabi, Tamil, Tibetan and Urdu.

LIFE SKILLS: TRAINING COACHING AND PUBLICATIONS

YWCA Toronto Life Skills: Training, Coaching and Publications was founded in 1972 and is a valuable component of essential skills programming. The department provides fee-for-service training services and publishes nine English and five French language Life Skills manuals for educators, coaches, group leaders, facilitators, and other human services professionals. The published manuals contain 525 lesson plans on topics such as self esteem, communication skills, managing conflict, cultural diversity, and job search techniques.

LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA (LINC)

The LINC program offers free English classes developed specifically for immigrant women. Eligible participants must be 18 years or older, be landed immigrants with permanent residency cards, and must not speak English as their first language. The program seeks to help women learn and improve their English language skills, feel more comfortable in their community, be empowered to pursue their goals, and deal with issues of diversity, isolation, assimilation and language barriers. The program uses communicative language teaching techniques, task-based learning, and a variety of tools to develop proficiency in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Each class is built around a specific theme, and exercises are based on real life situations. In this program, participants not only gain comfort with the English language, they also gain a valuable introduction to the Canadian way of life. Participants learn English in a manner that enables them to develop an array of valuable life skills, which can allow them to integrate with their community and become contributing members of Canadian society.

MOVING ON TO SUCCESS (MOTS)

MOTS is an employment training program that gives priority service to women who have experienced domestic violence or who are at risk of abuse. The program focuses on developing essential skills for employment through a comprehensive design that can be tailored to meet each woman's individual needs. Participants are offered career assessments, employability skills training, job search and job maintenance support, advanced training and education, and job placement, coaching and mentoring. The program model includes additional supports such as counselling, training stipends, transportation allowance, safety planning and personal support, which have proven to be highly successful in helping women prepare for the workforce.

PRE-APPRENTICESHIP CARPENTRY TRAINING PROGRAM FOR WOMEN

This program prepares women for paid general carpentry apprenticeships. The 32-week program includes academic upgrading, introductory training in general carpentry, job readiness training, and a paid eight week placement after the formal training program is completed.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE (SDC)

The Skills Development Centre is an innovative social enterprise created by YWCA Toronto to open new doors to employment by promoting the personal growth and economic independence of women. The SDC was created in order to fill identified gaps in training services available for low-income women needing to prepare for the workplace by providing flexible programs designed to respond to current labour market practices and individual preferences. Using effective YWCA employment supports, the Skills Development Centre delivers high quality programs that enhance employment opportunities for all women through training, recruitment and consulting services.

APPENDIX C: PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships, collaboration and consultation are key components of all YWCA programs, supporting the effectiveness and sustainability of our services and refining our response to the employment and training needs of our participants. These partnerships enable us to provide a holistic response to the needs of the participants while developing more comprehensive approaches to effective service delivery.

YWCA Toronto community partners include:

- Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse Network
- Barbra Schlifer Clinic
- Big Brothers/Sisters
- Black Creek Community Health Centre
- Braeburn Ontario Early Years
- Catholic Children's Aid Society
- Centennial College
- Chartered Accountants of Ontario
- Child Development Institute
- Children's Aid Society of Toronto
- College Park Domestic Violence Advisory Committee
- Daily Bread Food Bank
- Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Centre
- Driftwood Community Centre
- Ernestine's Women's Shelter
- George Brown College
- Girls Unlimited
- Grenoble Public School
- Humber College
- J.P. Piccininni Community Centre
- Kroma
- Learning Enrichment Foundation
- Mental Health Police Records Check Coalition
- Native Child and Family Services
- North Toronto Community Mental Health Network
- North York Food Harvest
- Ralph Thornton Community Centre
- Realstar
- Realstar/Clairhaven Property Management
- Rexdale Alliance Church
- Rexdale Women's Services
- Ryerson-Chang School of Continuing Education
- Scarborough Village Recreation Centre
- Second Harvest
- Seneca College
- Sheridan College
- Sterling Hall
- Toronto Community Housing
- Toronto North: Family Violence Network
- Toronto Parks and Recreation
- Toronto Police, 55 Division, Crime Prevention Program
- Toronto Public Health
- Toronto Public Library
- Toronto VAW Regional Committee
- Transglobe
- University of Toronto
- West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre
- Windfall
- Women Abuse Council
- Women's Habitat
- Woodgreen Community Centre
- York University
- Yorktown Child and Family Centre
- Yorktown Women's Shelter

Our funders and government partners include:

- Canadian Women’s Foundation
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- City of Toronto – Ontario Works
- City of Toronto – Children’s Services
- City of Toronto – Housing, Support & Administration
- City of Toronto – Social Housing Unit
- Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities – Employment Ontario
- Ministry of Children and Youth Services
- Ministry of Community and Social Services
- Ministry of Health and Long Term Care
- Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network
- Ontario Women’s Directorate
- Girls Action Foundation/Fondation filles d’action
- The Counselling Foundation of Canada
- Toronto Arts Council
- United Way of Peel Region
- United Way Toronto
- YWCA Canada

The table below includes a sample of our employer partners who have hired our participants, along with the positions our participants. The table is organized by sector.

Employers	Positions
Administration	
Alliance Group Andes Travel Anglican Church Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation BTT College Canadian Cancer Society Centennial College CTV Dental Office Chiropractor Office Elections Canada Ernst & Young EurOptimum Display Inc Independent Order of Foresters George Brown College Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada Hilite Fine Foods Honda Dealership Hospice Association of Ontario JVS Toronto Laura Stores LLP Chartered Accountants Manpower Temps McMillan Binch Medysis Health Group Inc. Natural Choice Packaging Co People Bank Progress Career Planning Institute Prostate Cancer Canada Ryerson University Rehabilitation Centre Seholin Mfg. Shepell-fgi St Augustine Seminary TD Bank TD Waterhouse Tempworks Solutions The Career Foundation Tim Horton's United Nations Vasanti Cosmetics Watrous Inc. Woodgreen Community Services YWCA Canada YWCA Toronto	Administrative Assistant Admissions Representative Bi-lingual Administrative Assistant Clerical Support Data Entry Clerk Inventory Control Clerk Legal Receptionist Medical Receptionist Receptionist Records Clerk

Employers	Positions
Customer Service	
Arby's Arvato Bell Canada BMO CIBC EB Games Gemma Communications Giant Tiger Global Planet Hercules Trucking Home Depot Home Sense KFC Linens and Gifts Loblaw Supercentre McDonald's Myron No Frills North Toronto Collision Centre Omega Call Centre Optima Call Centre Rogers Scotia Bank Sears Sprint Canada SunLife Financial TD Bank The Bay Tim Horton's Toys R Us Voxdata Wal-Mart Zellers	Cashier Customer Service Representative Inbound CSR Account Manager Customer Service Manager

Employers	Positions
Accounting/Finance	
American Express August Group Financial Group MacKenzie Financial McMillan LLB Prostate Cancer Canada Shepell-fgi TD Canada TD Waterhouse Toyota Vasanti Cosmetics Venterra Realty	Accountant Accounting Assistant Accounting Clerk Accounts Payable Clerk Commercial Underwriter Compliance Analyst Credit Analyst Long-Term Disability Claims Analyst RRSP Administrator
Education/Training/Facilitation	
Participant Relationship Counsellor Childcare Assistant Counsellor Early Childhood Educator ESL Instructor GED Instructor Intake Worker LINC Instructor Music Teacher	CareerEdge Cambridge Place Catholic Cross-Cultural Services Christie Ossington Shelter TDSB Tic Toc Daycare Wee Watch YMCA YWCA Toronto

APPENDIX D: SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

The YWCA Toronto Skills Development Centre (SDC) opened its doors in 2002 and is a social enterprise that offers programs and services in Toronto and across Canada.

The SDC provides services in three areas:

- **Training:** including a platform of computer training courses, a General Education Diploma (GED) program, and our signature *Professional Business Practices* curriculum;
- **Recruitment:** including internships, pay roll services and employment support services; and
- **Consulting:** including marketing YWCA Toronto's expertise in training and employment to different stakeholders such as government, community agencies, and the corporate sector.

We offer a menu of products and services.

CUSTOMIZED TRAINING

These one-day workshops are designed for participants with intermediate computer skills or business professionals who would like to upgrade their skills. A wide range of topics are available, including advanced Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Time Management and Stress Management.

E-LEARNING

We partner with an online training provider to offer a variety of business skills, personal development, and computer skills training. The self-directed structure of this type of training allows participants to learn on their own time, at their own pace.

FACILITATION SKILLS SERIES

Participants in this training program acquire and enhance their facilitation skills and learn the basics of processing group dynamics. Trained facilitators use their skills to increase the effectiveness of an organization by learning how to engage and process group dynamics. The training is delivered over a five-day period.

GENERAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (GED)

This type of academic upgrading has been offered at YWCA Toronto since 1988. The program consists of a 2-week optional academic refresher for women who need to upgrade their math and English skills, and 6-week of instructor-led training in preparation for writing the ministry General Education Diploma (high school equivalency) exam.

INTRODUCTION TO COMPUTERS

This training is designed to provide participants with essential skills related to computer use. Topics covered include:

- Typing,
- Microsoft Windows,
- internet and email, and
- introduction to Microsoft Word.

LIFE SKILLS COACH CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Participants in this certificate program learn the NewStart model of adult education and its versatile applications in experiential learning. Trained Life Skills Coaches use their skills to increase participation in their groups and apply the model of facilitation in their communities. The training is delivered in two phases over a period of eight days.

OFF-SITE TRAINING

We travel nationally and internationally to communities large and small to train Life Skills Coaches, leaders and facilitators. We also provide customized Life Skills curriculum design services in the areas of employment, career development, social skills and anti-violence against women.

PERSONALITY DIMENSIONS® TRAINING

Participants in this training program learn how to use the Canadian-developed Personality Dimensions® tool for building self awareness, self-esteem, and effective communication strategies. This is a new, interactive human relations and communications process that enhances the basic values of self-esteem, dignity and self-worth.

QUICKBOOKS TRAINING

This 12-lesson e-learning training tool provides participants with an understanding of QuickBooks accounting software that is often used by small businesses. In addition to the training, each participant receives a copy of the QuickBooks software. The training was designed by a Certified QuickBooks® ProAdvisor.

YWCA TORONTO CUSTOMIZED TRAINING

We customize a wide variety of professional development workshops to meet the needs of community leaders, supervisors and working professionals in the human service industry. We respond to training requests with a needs assessment and create customized training experiences. After the training has been delivered, we follow up with a summary report and recommendations for future training. Topics include:

- Professional Development
 - Authenticity in the Workplace
 - Team Development from Within
 - Conflict, Ownership and Accountability
 - Visioning and Organizational Soul Searching
 - Staff Recognition Days
 - Managing Energy and the 'S' Word
 - Courageous Conversations

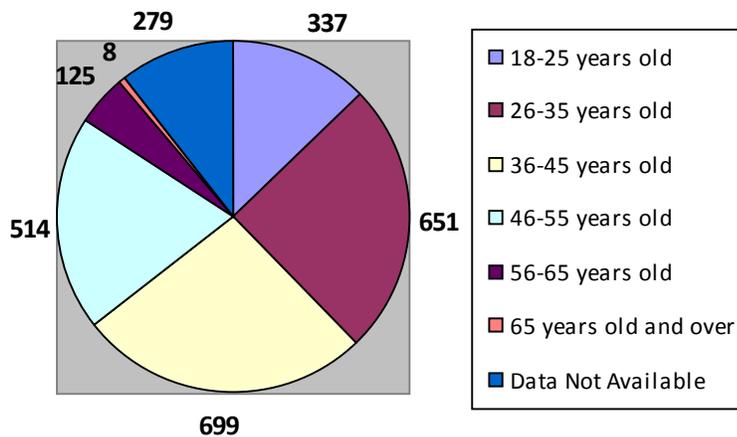
- Skills Enhancement
 - Writing in Business Today
 - Beyond ESL: English Writing for Working Professionals
 - Working Smarter: Strategies for Improving Productivity in the Workplace

APPENDIX E: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

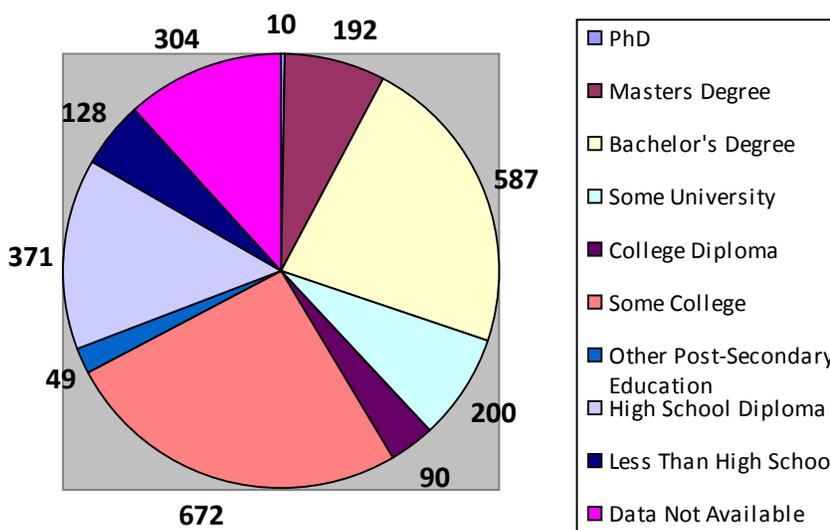
Participant demographic information is valuable to help us design innovative programs to meet their needs. We therefore track information that helps us to successfully offer programs for them. The following is a sample of the demographic information that we captured to show you how we designed appropriate programs for them.

LEAP Program Participant Demographics (March 1, 2008 to July 31, 2010)

LEAP Client Age



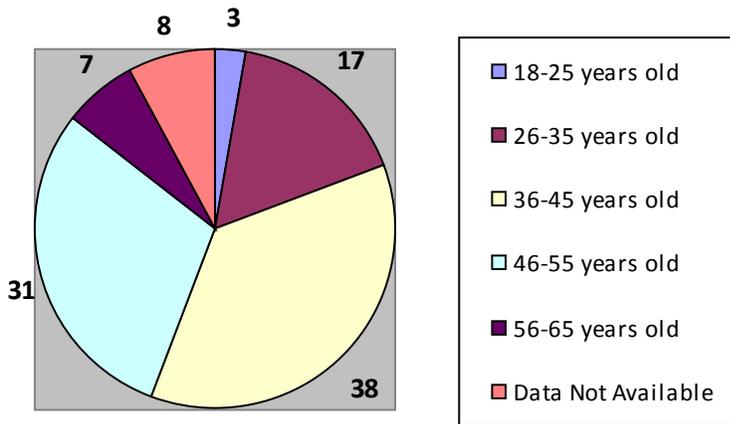
**LEAP Clients
Highest Level of Education Completed**



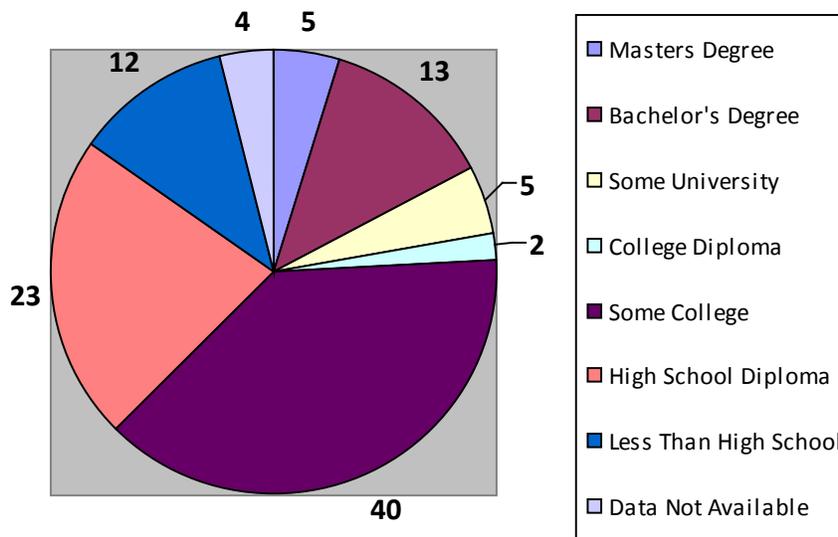
The 2613 participants who accessed the LEAP program came from 135 different countries.

MOTS Program Participant Demographics (August 23, 2006 to March 31, 2008)

MOTS Client Age



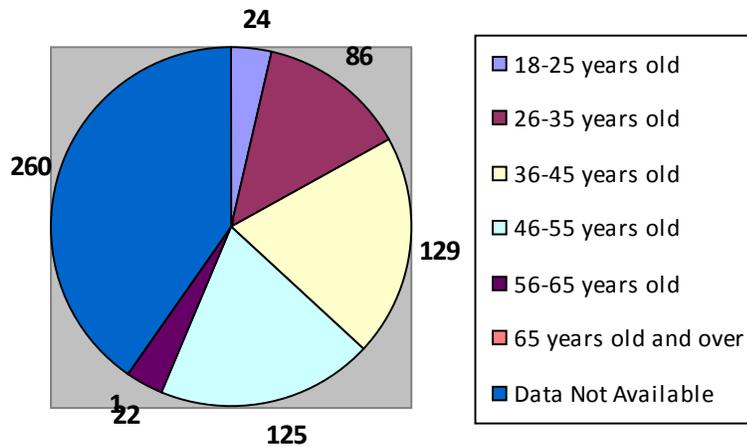
MOTS Clients
Highest Level of Education Completed



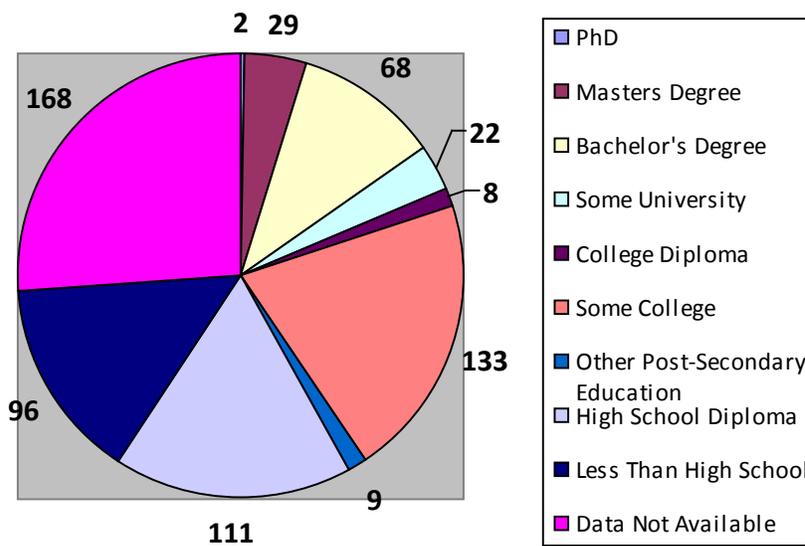
The 104 participants who accessed the MOTS program came from over 37 different countries.

SDC Program Participant Demographics (January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2009)

SDC Client Age



SDC Clients Highest Level of Education Completed



The 647 participants who accessed SDC programs came from 73 different countries.

APPENDIX F: EVALUATION TOOLS

Evaluation is an important part of how we create best practices and learn from our lessons, feedback from participants and employers, community and funders. Here are samples of evaluation tools we use in our programs:

Evaluation Tool 1:



Thank you for participating in YWCA Employment Program!

At YWCA Toronto we want to ensure the highest quality of service and support to help our participants meet their career or hiring goals. Please take a minute to answer the following question by circling one of the options.

On a 1-5 scale, how likely are you to recommend the Employment Service to someone looking for similar services as those you received?

- 1 – strongly not recommended
- 2 – rather not recommend
- 3 – no general opinion
- 4 – generally recommend
- 5 – strongly recommend

Comments:

Thank you for your input! We wish you all the best in your endeavours!

Evaluation Tool 2:



EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOP EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

Date: _____

At YWCA Toronto we constantly strive to improve the quality of our training. We value your feedback and comments. Thank you.

Please circle your choice

Low Average High

CONTENT:

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The extent to which I understood the information presented was... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. The extent to which I agreed with the information presented was... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. The extent to which I valued the information presented was... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

PROCESS:

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. The degree to which the workshop met my needs was... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. The degree of openness exhibited by the group was... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. The degree of spontaneity, humour, and energy exhibited by the facilitator was... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. The degree to which the facilitator encouraged group collaboration, trust and responsiveness was... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

EXPERIENCE:

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. The amount of learning I experienced in the workshop was... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. The extent to which I enjoyed the workshop was... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. The extent to which the workshop was relevant to my goal was... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

IMPACT:

11. Please list the experience(s) and/or information that was most important to you:

12. Please list the experience(s) and/or information that was least important to you:

13. How will you apply what you learned in this workshop?

OTHER COMMENTS:

Thank you for your time and participation!

APPENDIX G: SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

EKO NOMOS 2008

Over the past decade, Eko Nomos (www.ekonomos.com) has been developing a participatory, outcomes-based tool to capture the profound effects of social exclusion in the lives of disadvantaged people and communities, and learn how better to support them towards moving out of poverty. Drawing upon the extensive experience of the Institute of Development Studies in the United Kingdom²⁴ and through its own work in practice, research and evaluation, Eko Nomos has arrived at a holistic range of assets that combine to promote social inclusion and the development of livelihoods for individuals and neighbourhoods: the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework.²⁵

The Framework is an excellent tool to explore three contextual dimensions of poverty:

- A: The “Vulnerability Context”
- B: Assets
- C: The Policy and Institutional Context

A: THE “VULNERABILITY CONTEXT”

The Framework focuses on understanding the context that creates and perpetuates people’s vulnerability to poverty, in order to support more active, strategic interventions. It explores the context at two levels: that of the individual and her circumstances; and that of the broader institutions and systems that affect the options that are open to marginalized people. It acknowledges that while people can and do make choices that deplete assets and make their lives less stable, there are powerful external systems and forces that combine to keep them in a long-term cycle of poverty.

²⁴ For a more detailed description IDS of the Framework see <http://www.livelihoods.org/>

²⁵ For some of our recent publications using the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, see: Murray, Janet and Ferguson, Mary, *The Business of Inclusion* (Toronto Enterprise Fund: March 2004); Murray, Janet and Ferguson, Mary, *Women in Transition Out of Poverty: A Guide to Effective Practice in Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods through Enterprise Development* (January 2002); Murray, Janet and Ferguson, Mary, *Women in Transition Out of Poverty: An asset based approach to building sustainable livelihoods* (Women and Economic Development Consortium: February 2001).

B: ASSETS

Assets are the building blocks of a sustainable livelihood at the individual level (and a sustainable community at the neighbourhood level). People pursue various asset-building strategies that support them both in surviving, and in coping with the context that makes them vulnerable to poverty, so that they can move towards stability and sustainability. Lack of a range of assets is what makes people vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework identifies five broad asset areas that offer a holistic picture of all the capabilities, resources and entitlements that people have invested in and developed over time. In its focus on people's assets rather than their deficits, the Framework avoids the negative, deficit-based approach that is so common to the social service field.

These five broad asset areas are:

SOCIAL ASSETS

These assets refer to the social connections that people can draw upon to achieve their goals. By building a foundation of networks and contacts, they find that they have enhanced their support systems, making it easier for them to develop other assets.

PHYSICAL ASSETS

Physical assets include people's basic needs for housing and food, plus access to the information and services required to build a livelihood.

HUMAN ASSETS

Human assets refer to how employable a woman may be, in terms of her skills, knowledge, education, health and leadership. Although human assets are central to all livelihood strategies, they are not sufficient on their own to ensure progress towards a sustainable livelihood.

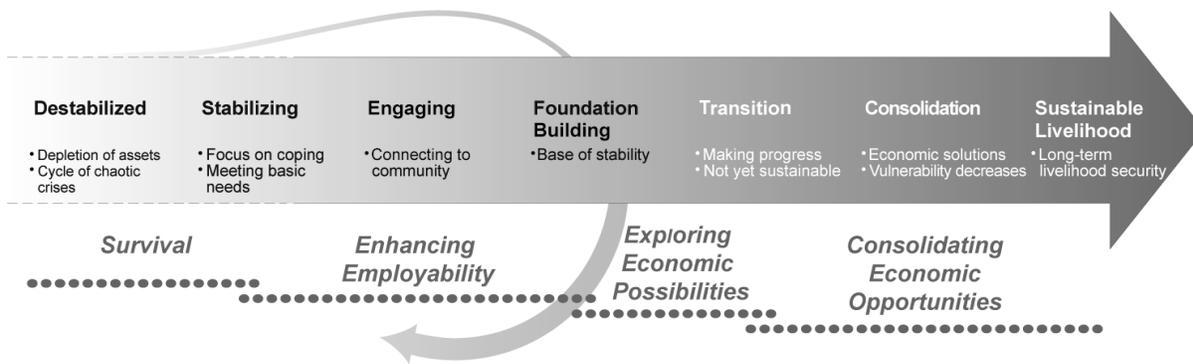
PERSONAL ASSETS

Less tangible are personal assets, which are connected to people's sense of personal and cultural identity, and their private values and beliefs. These assets include self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as the motivation and strength that people may be able to bring to the process of personal transformation.

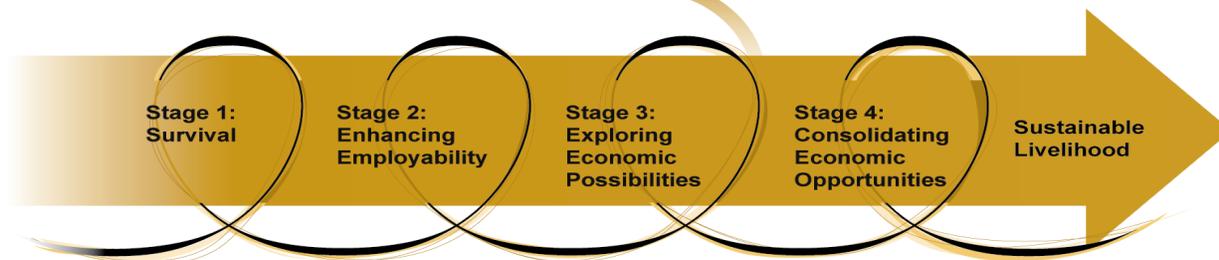
FINANCIAL ASSETS

Financial assets are earnings, money and financial security (including access to financial entitlements from government). They offer an important entry-point for transformation and development: the ability to earn money and decide how it should be spent provides people with a powerful means of reversing the downward spiral into poverty, and of building up a wider range of assets.

Stages of Livelihood Progress



Women's Evolving Decision Making Priorities



C: THE POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

“Transforming Structures and Processes within the livelihoods framework are the institutions, organisations, policies and legislation that shape livelihoods. Their importance cannot be over-emphasised. They operate at all levels, from the household to the international arena, and in all spheres, from the most private to the most public.

They effectively determine:

- **Access** (to various types of capital, to livelihood strategies and to decision-making bodies and sources of influence);
- The **terms of exchange** between different types of capital; and
- **Returns** (economic and otherwise) to any given livelihood strategy.”²⁶

By looking at the context provided by our institutions and their current policies, we can understand some of the constraints and opportunities it presents, and develop strategies to build a more enabling policy environment.

²⁶ Section Two: Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets: http://www.livelihoods.org/info/guidance_sheets_rtf/Sect2.rtf

APPENDIX H: GLOSSARY

Essential Skills	Nine skills needed for work, learning and life: <i>reading, writing, oral communication, numeracy, thinking, working with others, document use, computer use and continuous learning</i> ; they provide the foundation for learning all other skills, and enable people to evolve in their jobs and adapt to workplace change
Applicant	Any person who contacts YWCA Toronto for information about our programs
Participant	Any person who participates in one or more YWCA Toronto programs
Participant	Any person or organization purchasing services from YWCA Toronto; employers who support women post-program
Counsellor	A YWCA Toronto staff member who provides support for participants who are seeking employment-related direction and/or advice; provides participants with guidance to create their employment action plans
Job Developer	A YWCA Toronto staff member who works with participants who are job ready to help them find and retain employment
Employment Action Plan	A plan developed and agreed upon jointly by a YWCA Toronto counsellor and participant outlining her employment goals and the strategies that she will undertake to achieve them
Employment Ontario	The training and employment services program funded by the Government of Ontario that provides services such as apprenticeship, literacy programs, technical training, wage subsidies, summer jobs, laid-off worker assistance and employment counselling through an integrated network in communities across the province
Ontario Works	A program funded by the Government of Ontario that provides income and employment assistance for people who are in temporary financial need; recipients are required to participate in one or more employment search activities as a condition of eligibility for financial assistance

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ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR EMPLOYMENT
COMPENDIUM OF BEST PRACTICES IN EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMING



YWCA
TORONTO

A TURNING POINT
FOR WOMEN



United Way