

**Overcoming  
Adversity  
Creating  
Opportunity**



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## Leadership Report: Overcoming Adversity Creating Opportunity

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During a complex year, ACCES continued to make a world of difference in the lives of thousands of jobseekers and businesses across Canada. To do so, we relied on our core values, which have been the foundation of our ability to succeed in an uncertain and chaotic world: responsive and agile, innovative and entrepreneurial, collaborative and inclusive.

By being flexible and embracing change, and by continuously adapting to emerging needs and opportunities within a highly dynamic environment, we continued to help our clients overcome adversity and create opportunities. ACCES has an important role to play in the economic and social recovery that lies before us. We are committed to doing this hard work and we have already started.

In 2020-2021, we saw the compounded impact of the enduring COVID-19 pandemic. We heard intensified calls for social justice in the wake of shocking instances of homophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Asian and anti-Black racism, and witnessed the painful evidence of Canada's Residential School System, with our Indigenous peoples demanding increased efforts towards reconciliation.

By seeking new, innovative, and creative opportunities to enhance our programs, we increased our capacity to deliver flexible, hybrid services. We integrated our digital platforms for learning, communications, and data management and served more than 40,000 jobseekers through our digital service offerings. We launched our new website, which offers improved functionality and more resources for our users and online communities. Thanks to the ongoing support of our employer partner, Accenture, we also launched our new AI-powered Virtual Employment and Resource Attendant, VERA, which has enhanced our ability to respond to a consistently increasing number of jobseekers requiring our support.

With all the events of the past year, the sector has also changed, and we have worked side-by-side with old and new partners to find innovative ways to achieve our purpose. ACCES worked closely with IKEA Canada to create the IKEA Canada Customer Experience Training program, which is making a difference in the lives of those with lived-refugee experience. As part of the Inclusive Local Economic Opportunity (ILEO) initiative, ACCES worked with the United Way Greater Toronto, BMO, IBM and Sun Life, to co-create the Good Jobs pilot project, a scalable workforce development model that removes barriers to employment for residents of priority neighbourhoods. We also launched the NOW program (New Opportunities for Women), an

8-week program to help vulnerable newcomer women cope with challenges related to COVID-19. These types of collaborations have enabled us to create better outcomes for our clients, our communities, and our partners.

This year, Employment Ontario underwent a significant transformation with the implementation of a new Service System Manager (SSM) model in Peel region. Our ACCES Peel team worked with our SSM, WCG Services, and other providers to create a 'community of practice,' where jobseekers who are the most marginalized are given every opportunity for career success.

At ACCES we value and respect the uniqueness of each person, including our clients, our employers, our community partners and ourselves. As a direct response to the murder of George Floyd and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, we supported a group of employees to form the Black Action Coalition for Change (BACC). BACC, working alongside our HR team, guided the creation of important equity, diversity, and inclusion training for all staff. Sessions have included Unconscious Bias, The History of Racism and Colonization, How to be an Ally to Racialized People, Microaggressions and more. We've also opened a conversation series, "EDI Chats," during which staff learn about Anti-Black Racism, Celebrating Pride, and Indigenous History. We know the goal of achieving equity and inclusion requires hard work, action, and commitment, and we pledge to continue to do this work with our staff and board.

Another noteworthy change is that ACCES bids farewell to John Shields, our outgoing Chair of the Board of Directors. We thank John for his years of service and leadership and the many contributions he has made at ACCES throughout the years. We know John will continue to serve the sector in new ways and we wish him well.

ACCES now welcomes Brian G. Bachand into his new role as Chair. Brian is a long-standing supporter, mentor, and volunteer at ACCES, and our most recent Vice-Chair.

Brian and I want to say a special thank you to our staff and our Board Directors for their collaboration, innovation and commitment to ACCES which has carried us through this difficult time. We are pleased to share our 2020-2021 Annual Report, "Overcoming Adversity Creating Opportunity." We hope you enjoy our success stories from the past year, and we look forward to what we will accomplish in the year ahead.



**ALLISON POND**  
PRESIDENT & CEO,  
ACCES EMPLOYMENT



**BRIAN G. BACHAND**  
CHAIR OF THE BOARD,  
ACCES EMPLOYMENT

# Our Jobseekers

At ACCES, we respond to the unique needs and circumstances of each client that we assist by providing customized services and supports. This past year, we confronted many challenges as the global COVID-19 pandemic transformed the economy and job market. ACCES is prepared to do our part to support the recovery and rebuilding of the economy by working diligently to innovate and expand our services and connect with jobseekers on a national and international level to increase our reach and impact. With the generous support and collaboration of our funder partners and all our corporate employer partners, we continue to provide each client with the support they need to create new employment opportunities. Our clients have shown immense strength and resilience, and we are proud to share their stories of overcoming adversity and finding new opportunities.



## Overcoming Adversity and Finding Success



**Meet Gian Angelo Zapata,** Canadian Employment Connections funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada; and Engineering Connections: Project Management funded by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development

“Perhaps the biggest help was the reinforcement and enlightenment from the ACCES team—they gave me the drive and the push to keep moving forward. Their words are still there in my heart”

**GIAN ANGELO ZAPATA, PMP, ICGB™**  
PLM ADMINISTRATOR, ARMSTRONG FLUID TECHNOLOGIES



### 40,000+

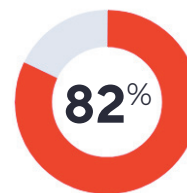
**JOBSEEKERS SERVED IN 2020-2021.** THIS STEADY GROWTH IS DUE TO OUR INCREASED ONLINE CAPACITY TO SUPPORT JOBSEEKERS VIRTUALLY.

### 224,570

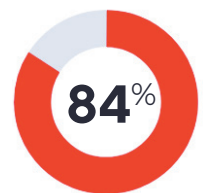
**TOTAL NUMBER OF VISITS** AN INCREASE OF **OVER 38%** FROM LAST YEAR AS A RESULT OF PROGRAMS & SERVICES BEING DELIVERED ONLINE.



**OF CLIENTS RECOMMEND OUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**



**OF ALL ACCES CLIENTS ACHIEVED A POSITIVE OUTCOME** (INCLUDING EMPLOYMENT, PLACEMENT, TRAINING OR EDUCATION)



**OF EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO CLIENTS FOUND EMPLOYMENT OR PURSUED TRAINING OBJECTIVES**

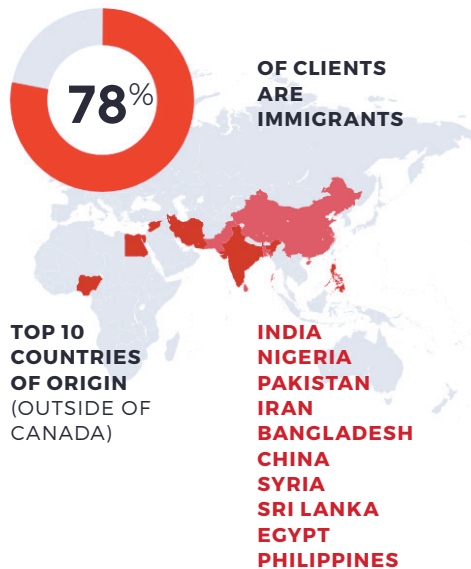
## Our Diverse Community of Jobseekers

82

TOTAL NUMBER  
OF LANGUAGES  
SPOKEN  
BY ACCES  
JOBSEEKERS



TOP 10  
LANGUAGES  
SPOKEN  
**ENGLISH**  
**HINDI**  
**ARABIC**  
**PUNJABI**  
**URDU**  
**PERSIAN**  
**GUJARATI**  
**BENGALI**  
**TAMIL**  
**SPANISH**



49.1% WOMEN  
50.9% MEN

ACCES has increased programs for women and this is reflected in the higher number of women supported in 2020-2021.

## Overcoming Adversity and Finding Success



Meet **Veryl Obodi**,  
START Customer Care  
Program, funded by  
*Toronto Employment  
and Social Services*



"Thanks to the START Program at ACCES I was able to overcome the many difficult challenges that I was facing. I was able to achieve my goals and become the person I am today thanks to ACCES Employment. I'll forever be greatly indebted."

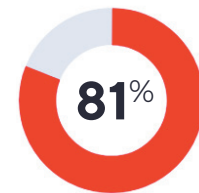
**VERYL OBODI**, RELIEF STAFF, YMCA TORONTO

### ACCES Services for Women

Over **8,261 women** gained greater confidence, negotiation skills and acquired new job search strategies customized to meet their specific career goals. ACCES programs that serve women include **Career Pathways for Newcomer Women, New Opportunities for Women, Women in Technology, Empowering Women, Entrepreneurship Connections®, and the START Customer Care Program.**

### Ontario Bridge Training Programs

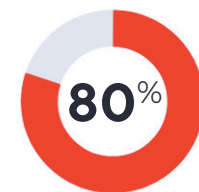
Our sector-specific bridge training programs connect internationally trained professionals with employment in their field including Engineering, Financial Services, Human Resources, Information Technology, Leadership, Sales and Marketing and Supply Chain.



OF CLIENTS SECURED  
EMPLOYMENT  
REFLECTING THEIR SKILLS  
AND EXPERIENCE

### Other Industry-Focused Programs

ACCES offers programs tailored to the following industries: Engineering, Hospitality, Healthcare, Construction Trades, Customer Care and Cybersecurity.



OF CLIENTS SECURED  
EMPLOYMENT  
REFLECTING THEIR SKILLS  
AND EXPERIENCE

### Job Search Support for Refugees

Over **1308 refugees** increased their employability and job search skills by accessing learning content through workshops, digital platforms and industry-focused programs.



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## Overcoming Adversity and Finding Success

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**Meet Andrea Lucia Vargas Saad,**  
Youth Job Connection Program, funded by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development



“ACCES helps you successfully navigate the job market, but for me it was more about my self-confidence. I was able to work on relationships, meet my goals, and begin to build a career.”

**ANDREA LUCÍA VARGAS SAAD**  
BUSINESS SOLUTIONS EXPERT, MASTERCOM

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## Overcoming Adversity and Finding Success

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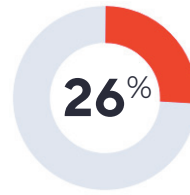


**Meet Prajit Dasani,**  
Entrepreneurship Connections® - Pre-Arrival & Entrepreneurship Connections®, funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada



“ACCES motivated me to start my business right away and they supported me through all the early steps. I was able to connect with mentors, with advisors in my industry, and met subject matter experts in Canada to build my professional network. ACCES saved me a lot of time and I was able to avoid early pitfalls and errors.”

**PRAJIT DASANI**  
FOUNDER, ATRYBE



OF OUR CLIENTS ARE  
YOUTH BETWEEN 15 AND 29  
YEARS OF AGE

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## Career Success For Youth

Over **7,000 youth** (aged 15-29) received employment counselling, job search preparation and skills training to set them on the path to employment and career success in Canada.

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## Starting a Business in Canada

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**ACCES PROVIDED  
SUPPORT TO**

**253**

**NEWCOMER  
ENTREPRENEURS  
TO START THEIR  
BUSINESSES IN CANADA**  
(THROUGH LOCAL  
AND PRE-ARRIVAL  
PROGRAMS)

# Our Employers

ACCES is proud to work with a vast network of committed employers across Canada. We collaborate with our employers to understand the critical needs and skills in the current labour market and we provide connections to a talented pool of potential employees. Our employers demonstrated ongoing commitment to supporting ACCES and our clients throughout the pandemic. Through increased engagement and a willingness to connect virtually for coaching and mentoring sessions, our employers continued to help us create new career opportunities for our jobseekers.

**2,800+**

EMPLOYERS



- 1. SMALL **69%**
- 2. MEDIUM **22%**
- 3. LARGE **9%**

**8,256+**

VOLUNTEER  
HOURS  
CONTRIBUTED  
BY EMPLOYERS



## ACCES and Accenture Collaboration to Enhance our Digital Capacity to Serve Jobseekers and Employers



"ACCES provides crucial services to thousands of jobseekers every year and exemplifies how innovative thinking can truly improve the way the world works and lives. At Accenture, we believe that a better future depends on bridging the gap between talent and opportunity, and we recognize the importance of diverse newcomer talent and hiring through the ACCES pipeline. We are proud of the team at ACCES and all they do."

**JANET KRSTEVSKI,**

MANAGING DIRECTOR, CANADA TALENT & ORGANIZATION/  
HUMAN POTENTIAL PRACTICE LEAD, ACCENTURE

## A Growing Partnership with IKEA Canada to Support Clients with Lived-Refugee Experience through the IKEA Canada Customer Experience Training Program



"Together with our partners at ACCES, the new IKEA Canada Refugee Skills for Employment Initiative enables us to engage and support many different needs through language skills, customer service training, mentorship and networking. At the same time, we have the opportunity to discover and recruit new talent, expand our diverse co-worker base and contribute to our role in creating a more equal world."

**JOHN WILLIAMS,** HEAD OF EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION, IKEA CANADA

## Creating Opportunity

### Our Mentors & Volunteers

Mentoring is a critical component of service delivery at ACCES. The involvement of our volunteers and mentors throughout the pandemic has been instrumental in creating positive outcomes for our jobseekers. Our clients needed additional support and guidance, and our mentors and volunteers went above and beyond to connect and create opportunities in virtual spaces.



**Meet Rashmi Vohra,**  
Volunteer from TD Bank Group



"I come from immigrant parents, and I know the challenges they faced. Supporting and enabling newcomers to Canada is so important. I am constantly inspired by their bold choice to leave everything behind—their lives, their friends, their connections—with no guarantee of what is to come. I feel I have a responsibility to help, to really 'lean in' to the work of mentorship. Through the TD-ACCES collaboration, and volunteering with Empowering Women and Women in Technology, we've been able to support, mentor, and hire some amazing candidates."

**RASHMI VOHRA**  
DISTRICT VICE PRESIDENT, METRO WEST,  
ETOBICOKE, TD BANK GROUP

## New and Expanded Employer Partnerships

### CIBC Mellon

CIBC MELLON

In 2020, CIBC Mellon became a sponsor of the START Customer Care program for women. Through this sponsorship CIBC Mellon will have the opportunity to provide their expertise and guidance to help women succeed in their goal of re-entering the workforce.

"Our company has benefited immensely from having access to the talent and skills of newcomers to Canada, including many of us who have volunteered our time as mentors. Our partnership with ACCES has allowed us to "pay it forward" as we offer our own insights and experience to jobseekers."

**SUSAN CARROLL-CLARK**  
PMP, PROJECT MANAGER, CIBC MELLON

### IBM Partnership



IBM has generously provided us with access to their SkillsBuild platform, making custom training courses, projects, and personalized coaching available to our clients as they reskill, upskill and prepare for employment.

"IBM SkillsBuild is an amazing platform for learning. The courses are explained in simple language so that it is easy for a beginner like me to understand. I am confident about my skills now after taking this course. I would like to thank ACCES and IBM for giving me this opportunity to learn and enhance my skills."

**MANEESHA RAZDAN**  
ACCES CLIENT

83

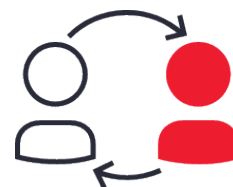
TOTAL NUMBER  
OF SPEED MENTORING®  
EVENTS

962

TOTAL NUMBER  
OF MENTORS

3,987

TOTAL NUMBER  
OF MENTEES



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# ACCES Builds Opportunities

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ACCES is deeply committed to service excellence and continuous improvement. Over the past year we have worked to update our operational processes, enhanced our ability to deliver digital and hybrid services and we have further strengthened our equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives and commitment as an organization. At ACCES, we know that our strong organizational capacity and commitment to our values is reflected in the quality of services we provide to our communities and the collaborations we create with our clients, our employers, our partners.



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## Building Opportunities through Community Collaboration

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ACCES works collaboratively with many community organizations to strengthen our services and ensure that our clients receive seamless, well-integrated support from various service providers. Through joint referrals, virtual events, program ideation, and more, we work together to build new opportunities. Over the past year, and moving forward, these partnerships are instrumental for us to effectively serve our communities. We thank our community partners, and we look forward to our continued collaboration.

### WCG Services

In January 2021, The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development commenced the transformation of Employment Ontario with the initial roll-out targeting three 'proto-type areas', including Peel where ACCES Brampton and ACCES Mississauga officially went live under the new Employment Ontario (EO) model. ACCES has worked closely with WCG Services, the new Service System Managers (SSM) for the region to ensure a smooth transition to the new model which places primary emphasis on serving clients who are farthest removed from the labour market.

### United Way

United Way Greater Toronto (UWGT) has worked collaboratively with ACCES over the past year offering greater flexibility and support allowing us to respond to the changing needs brought on by the pandemic. UWGT provided much-needed additional resources through their administration of the federal government's Emergency Community Support Fund, including essential resources for clients such as tablets for digital connectivity and gift cards to purchase groceries and other necessities.

### Workforce Planning Board of York Region

The Workforce Planning Board of York Region has been instrumental in connecting ACCES to employers and other key stakeholder in York Region, and we have collaborated on several important initiatives over the past year. The Workforce Planning Board has been a strategic partner in various regards, this includes advising on demographic/socioeconomic data for Newmarket and York Region; supporting the development of workshop content; promoting ACCES among other service providers, employers, and clients; and hosting virtual job fairs and information sessions. This collaborative relationship has strengthened our ability to support jobseekers in Newmarket and across York Region.



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## Building Opportunities through New Initiatives

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### Centre for Immigrant and Community Services (CICS)

CICS is a valued community partner. CICS supports our clients and helps us to promote our services within the community by hosting virtual hiring events for hundreds of jobseekers as well as facilitating information sessions focused on ACCES Bridge Training Programs. CICS continues to demonstrate the true spirit of collaboration to ensure newcomers are well-informed and supported as they settle into their life in Canada.

### The Tent Partnership for Refugees (Tent)

This year, ACCES is pleased to join Tent as a Preferred Implementing Partner. The Tent Partnership for Refugees is a non-profit organization launched in 2016 to mobilize the global business community to include refugees. ACCES is working closely with businesses in the Tent Partnership to help them implement projects to support refugees providing individualized guidance, best practices and support to meet their refugee hiring goals.

### Technology

As we tackle the important work ahead of post-pandemic economic recovery, ACCES is well-positioned to implement a flexible, hybrid (virtual and in-person) service model that will provide customized support to jobseekers facing varying needs and circumstances. During the past year, ACCES has developed a new website; launched VERA (an AI-powered chatbot); integrated our email and marketing automation platforms with our client management software; improved capacity in data collection and reporting; and integrated our client registration, content management, and learning management systems.

### Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at ACCES

The vision and mission of ACCES is centered on core principles of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Over the past year ACCES has renewed and enhanced our commitment to EDI through a new EDI Action Plan, which includes reviewing our EDI policies and practices; an enhanced focus on recognizing, valuing, and promoting EDI; new measures to attract, retain, and support staff from diverse backgrounds; and expanding our collaboration with community and corporate allies on EDI related initiatives. Internally, we have embarked on comprehensive EDI training for our staff. Achieving our EDI goals will require continued hard work, action, and reflection; but we will not waver on our commitment.

### Black Action Coalition for Change (BACC)

The Black Action Coalition for Change (BACC) is a network of Black ACCES employees who are working together to provide leadership and insight in addressing racism and Anti-Black racism. BACC has worked closely with the ACCES leadership team to champion our renewed commitment to EDI and has played an instrumental role in the development and roll-out of various initiatives at ACCES.

### Diversity in Canadian Workplaces Initiative

ACCES's Diversity in Canadian Workplaces Initiative, funded by Canadian Heritage, examines barriers and challenges faced by racialized individuals in Canadian workplaces as they move through various phases of employment, including hiring, retention and career mobility. The project identifies and delivers strategies for addressing these barriers by working with employers to develop solutions that help their workplaces and teams to strengthen their diversity and inclusion practices.