

# 2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT



[www.optionsmississauga.org](http://www.optionsmississauga.org)



113 Lakeshore Rd W – Store Front  
151 Lakeshore Rd W – Training Centre



905-274-8663



**options**

RETAIL-OFFICE TRAINING



**options**

ARTISTS-IN-TRAINING



**options**

CHEFS-IN-TRAINING



**Healthy  
options**

MICROGREENS



# OUR CORE VALUES

**Well-being:** We prioritize safe spaces that enhance the social, emotional, and physical well-being of participants, families, volunteers, and staff.

**Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:** We believe in equal opportunities for all, ensuring diverse identities, backgrounds, and perspectives are embraced for continuous growth.

**Empathy:** We actively seek to understand others' perspectives and experiences, responding with compassion and care.

**Respect:** We treat everyone with dignity and kindness, recognizing and honoring the value of every individual.

**Accountability:** We are committed to delivering meaningful results, upholding good governance, and maintaining financial responsibility.

**Capacity Building:** We focus on developing skills, knowledge, and leadership to enhance our programs and ensure long-term adaptability and impact.

**Person-Centered Learning:** We prioritize the voices and needs of our participants, using challenges as opportunities for growth and improvement.

# A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**CHRISTINE BARLOW**  
Executive Director

It is with great pleasure and gratitude that I present to you our first annual report as your Executive Director. I'm honored to be part of this amazing Options team, and I would like to express my sincere thanks to our volunteer Board of Directors—Marlene Bauer, Edward Vessel, Ambika Atwal, and Veronique Lozada—for their continued guidance and governance. A special thanks also goes to our newest board member and retired Executive Director, Bill Penny, for his 20 years of dedication.

## Reflections and Key Milestones

I was thrilled to join Options as the Business Manager in June 2022. It was just a few months after the world reopened to business as usual and we all had to re-adapt and refresh our skills on how to manage typical day to day demands.

Our social enterprise print shop that provides paid work experience opportunities and helps fund our programs was faced with having to rebuild. There were serious supply chain disruptions that added to the challenge. I recall paper shortages that led us to physically searching for paper far and wide across the GTA to fulfill our customer orders.

Fast forward to 2.5 years later: our loyal print customers have returned and new customers are discovering us; we added paid work experience shifts at the store front and provided paid employment experience opportunities in our culinary, art and horticulture programs.

We now provide employment training five days a week to 32 participants in print, retail services, office services, culinary, art and horticulture. We've helped support participants to secure paid employment and meaningful volunteer roles outside of Options.

The future is bright. Through the dedication of our staff and volunteers, the motivation of our hard working participants; the support of our participants' families and through cultivating community connections — we continue to fulfill our mission and positively impact the lives of those we support.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Christine Barlow".

When we celebrated Bill's retirement at our anniversary banquet, Ward 1 Councilor Mr. Stephen Dasko highlighted that Bill not only managed Options for two decades, he also led the organization through one of the most challenging times in our history.



We acknowledge the lands which constitute the present-day City of Mississauga as being part of the Treaty and Traditional Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, The Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and The Huron-Wendat and Wyandot Nations. We recognize these peoples and their ancestors as peoples who inhabited these lands since time immemorial. The City of Mississauga is home to many global Indigenous peoples.

# OUR HISTORY

In 1988 a group of parents came together to start a not for profit social enterprise to provide community, opportunity and options for their adult children. In June 1993 Options Mississauga Print & Office services became a federally registered charity operating in downtown Port Credit, Mississauga. In 2001 Options moved to its current Port Credit location. In 2018 Options expanded the employment training programs to include Culinary & Art Training renting space at First United Church - and in 2022 we expanded again to open a Training Center by renting the main floor of that same church located just one block west at 151 Lakeshore Road West.

We recognize our original founders: Lorne St Louis, Barbara El-Nesr, Kume Rao, Monica Nichita, John Vissar, Gary Indech, Joel Robert, George Brand, Thelma Orchard, Patricia Moscovitch, Ron Whitelock, John Riddolls, Jerry Schaaf, Joan Bouckley, Carolyn English, Hideo Fukuchi, Andrew Johnston, Andrew Yu

# MISSION & VISION

While the language has evolved, the core principles of Options' mission and vision have remained unchanged since its inception.

**Mission Statement:** Options Mississauga provides unique programs, including employment training and paid work experience, for individuals aged 18+ who are neurodiverse or have an intellectual disability, empowering them to build skills, confidence, and independence.

**Vision Statement:** Our vision is an inclusive and diverse community where everyone has access to meaningful and accessible paid employment.

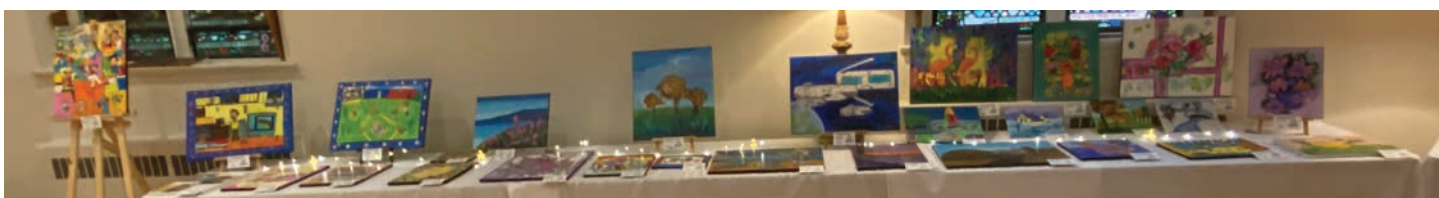
# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



**Print and Office Services:** In 2023-2024 Options added 2 additional paid employment experience positions in the shop and added 4 new participant training shifts. Participants also have opportunities to take part in tradeshows and practice customer service and sales skills.



**Culinary Program:** Chefs-in-training have opportunities to be paid for working on special projects: soup on World Food Day; preparing baked goods & wraps and managing a Café; preparing 60+ meals weekly for the Inn From The Cold outreach program.



**Arts Program:** Participants continue to expand their skills and techniques while earning commissions for artistic works sold at our store front, markets and art shows - including canvases and the reproduction of the artwork for cards, calendars and notebooks.

**Horticulture / Microgreens Program:** This training program - in addition to learning all the steps to grow and maintain plants and microgreens - provides the experience of engaging with our community weekly at the Port Credit farmer's market learning customer service and sales skills.



## \$31,578

2023-2024 gross pay

The gross pay to coworkers and trainees from a variety of our training programs and Social Enterprise Ventures (retail print shop, art sales, culinary projects, horticulture sales)



# STRATEGIC GOALS



**Expanding Paid Employment Opportunities:** Increase internally paid employment opportunities across various social enterprise sectors, including the print shop, special culinary projects, art sales and the newest social enterprise venture - the Horticulture Microgreens Program.

**Enhancing Employability Skills Training:** We utilize the UP Skills for Work curriculum to help participants develop key employability and life skills, starting with Motivation, Attitude, Accountability, Time Management, Adaptability, Stress Management, and Confidence. Our goal is to acquire funding to deliver the curriculum modules in more depth in classroom settings led by certified Up Skills For Work facilitators.

**Building Partnerships:** Developing individual employment profiles with our participants and cultivating partnerships within the 500+ business community located within a 3km<sup>2</sup> radius of Options and provide more opportunities to secure accessible and sustainable paid employment.

**Returning to Pre-COVID Financial Sustainability:** Return to a time when 50% of our operating expenses were funded through social enterprise revenues by improving efficiencies, updating equipment, and immersing ourselves in community and building partnerships.

# IMPACT GOALS



Intentionally fostering business community partnerships aims to **increase paid employment outcomes for our participants both internally and externally.**

Enhancing the Employability Skills training as an extension of all training programs - and using a person centric approach by creating individualized employment profiles - we are **creating greater potential for participants to be sustainably employed in roles that match their interests and skill sets.**

Fostering these partnerships also serves as an opportunity to promote our print and office services social enterprise and restore pre-COVID revenue. Increased revenue will enable us to offer more internally paid employment training opportunities and reduce reliance on external funding.



Thanks to our partnership with the Port Credit BIA, three of our participants were offered paid employment as Street Ambassadors. Additionally, other participants secured meaningful employment and volunteer roles outside of Options.

At our 30th Anniversary Banquet on June 7, 2024, we hosted an extraordinary celebration that united families, volunteers, community members, and dignitaries. The evening was a resounding success, raising \$11,000 to support the enhancement of our training spaces. In an exciting collaboration, third-year Sheridan College interior design students are volunteering their expertise to develop plans and renderings for the updated space. The project is on track for execution in early 2025..

# GRANTS & FUNDING



The COVID shutdowns significantly depleted our capital equipment reserves, leaving us reliant on outdated and unstable equipment for our print shop social enterprise and retail training program. Fortunately in September of this year we secured a grant from the **Trillium Capital Grant** program and the **Mississauga Foundation Pendle Fund** to replace aging print equipment that not only improves the quality and efficiency of the print and office services social enterprise - it is designed with improved accessibility features for operation by our participants.

The Region of Peel's Community Investment Program recognizes that investing in the core operations of community agencies enables them to develop, maintain and improve programs, service delivery, and overall outcomes. We are thankful to have received the 2024-2026 core funding grant.

Charitable Gaming - Community Good. is an ongoing source of grassroots funding for participating local charities and non-profits across Ontario. Through volunteer participation at Rama Gaming House, charities earn an average of \$800 per volunteer per two-hour shift to fund activities that directly support our participants.

Community Living Mississauga, one of our founding funders 30 years ago continues to support and partner with us to this day.

Additional Supporters: Ian Martin Raise Recruiting, Government of Canada's Summer Jobs, Free Google Workspace for Not For Profits, Free Canva Pro for not for profits,

Ontario Trillium Foundation / Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario  
An agency of the Government of Ontario / Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

MISSISSAUGA FOUNDATION

Region of Peel working with you

Charitable Gaming. Community Good.

RAMA GAMING HOUSE RGH MISSISSAUGA - SCARBOROUGH

Community Living MISSISSAUGA

Google for Nonprofits

Canva

Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada

## New Funding

We are seeking new funding opportunities to scale up the Horticulture program and Microgreens Social Enterprise. The pilot project was a huge success showing great potential for paid employment, community engagement and partnership. building. Possible funding avenues could include a charitable "Go Fund Me" campaign.

## New Funding

We are hopeful to be awarded in 2025 a United Way Inclusive Employment Grant to fund additional staff and resources to update assessment and goal setting processes and to develop partnerships with local businesses in our community that will lead to increased paid employment opportunities for those in our programs.

## New Funding



# SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ACTIVITIES



## Qualities & Benefits

**Options operates as a charity while engaging in commercial activities to generate revenue. This model allows us to fund our mission through sustainable business practices**

**1. Charitable Status:** Options is a federally registered as a charity, which means we meet specific criteria set by regulatory bodies, such as having charitable objectives and being non-profit.

**2. Social Mission:** Our primary goal is to create positive social impact, aligning business activities with our mission.

**3. Revenue Generation:** We generate income through a variety of social enterprise ventures: print shop, art sales, culinary projects - which helps to cover operational expenses while putting money into the pockets of our participants while they gain real work experience.

**4. Reinvestment of Profits:** Profits made from business activities are reinvested into the charity's programs or initiatives to further its mission.

**5. Accountability and Transparency:** As a registered charity, we must adhere to regulations regarding financial reporting and governance, ensuring accountability to donors and stakeholders.



## Benefits:

### Financial Sustainability:

Generates a reliable income stream to support charitable activities.

### Increased Impact:

Enables the organization to expand its programs and reach more beneficiaries.

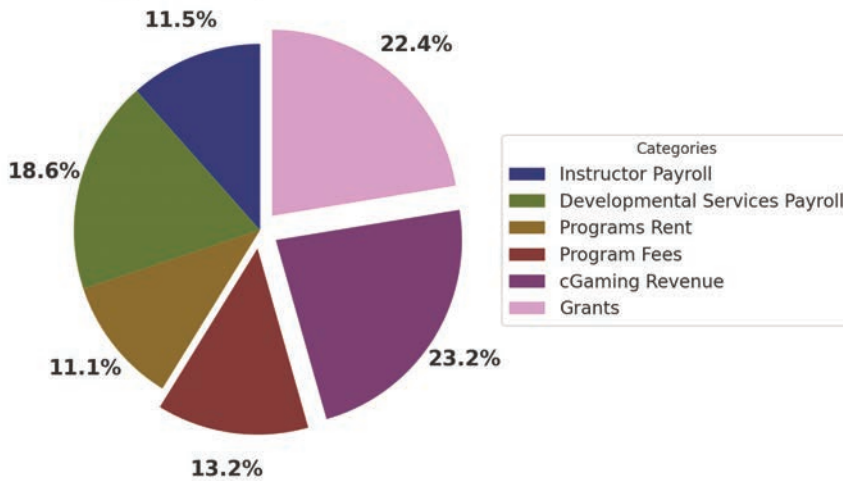
### Community Engagement:

Engages the community through social entrepreneurship creating training opportunities and skills development.

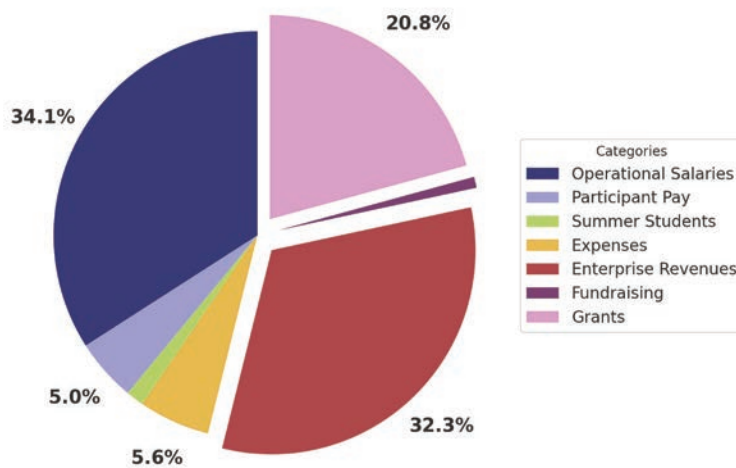
# SUSTAINABILITY & FINANCES



Programs Snapshot 2023-24



Enterprise Snapshot 2023-24



Like many small businesses and nonprofits - the post pandemic rebuild took some time. Print shop sales were drastically impacted by the pandemic - we went from \$200k in 2019-2020 to just \$40k in 2020-2021. The rebuild has been slow and steady - with shop sales of \$144k in 2022-2023.

However, attempting to maintain the same level of managerial staffing to support the rebuild resulted in a deficit of \$29k for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.



## Addressing the Deficit

**Consolidated Leadership Roles:** We reduced salary expenses by combining three management roles - Business Manager, Program Manager, and Executive Director into a single position - and adding a part time contracted Finance & Admin Role.

**Cost Reductions:** We identified savings wherever possible, while also leveraging non-profit discount programs while updating to more efficient operational processes.

**Current financial position:** At the halfway point of the 2024-2025 fiscal year, we are on track to meet a net-zero balanced budget bottom line.

# HOW YOU CAN HELP....



**Become a Member:** We invite participants, families, caregivers and community partners to become voting members of Options. A yearly membership fee of \$20 per household is appreciated and it helps to cover the cost of the annual general meeting (facility rental fees and refreshments and snacks prepared by our culinary students etc). We aim to make each AGM more than just a financial review—it will be an opportunity for our community to come together, connect and share ideas -- ultimately helping to guide the future of Options and those we support.

**Support the Print Business:** If you or your organization uses printing services, please consider allocating part of your budget to Options. We offer comprehensive printing services, and no job is too big or too small.

**Volunteer 2 hours every other month:** Consider volunteering two hours every other month as part of our cGaming (previously referred to as Bingo) team. Through volunteer participation at Rama Gaming House, we earn an average of \$800 per volunteer per two-hour shift. If interested, please connect with Christine Barlow for more details. The tasks are very simple during a 2 hour shift: greeting, serving coffee and talking about our charity.

**Make a Donation:** As a federally registered charity, we can issue tax receipts for your contributions. Please consider making a one-time, monthly, or annual donation to support our recovery efforts and ensure a stable financial future. Your generosity makes a difference!

**Share Ideas for New Enterprises and Training Programs - Join A Committee:** Do you have ideas for new social enterprise opportunities or training programs that could benefit our participants? We are planning a Programs and Social Enterprise Think Tank in early 2025. We are still sorting out the details but if you would like to be involved please let Christine know and we will keep you posted on a date and time. We have just formed a Programs Committee and will be forming a New Enterprise Committee in the new year.

**Join the Board:** We are currently seeking a few new directors with experience in Human Resources, Social Services and/or Sales & Marketing. The time commitment is 1 meeting a month (2.5 hrs) plus 1 hour of pre or post meeting review. If you are interested please reach out.

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to create a stronger, more sustainable future for Options and for the amazing individuals we serve!

**Become a Member**

**Support the Print Business**

**Volunteer**

**Donate**

**Join a committee**

**Join the Board**



Options is 1 of 50 standout businesses selected from over a thousand submissions from around the world, to join the ranks of the year's best - Square 50 Honorees: Most Impactful Business of 2024 in the Community category.



Options is a 2024 Finalist of Charity Village's BEST NONPROFIT <20 EMPLOYER: DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

