

# On the Frontlines of Crisis Training Program (Weston Frontlines Centre)

## Document Review Technical Report

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FSC is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. We believe Canadians should feel confident about the skills they have to succeed in a changing workforce. As a pan-Canadian community, we are collaborating to rigorously identify, test, measure, and share innovative approaches to assessing and developing the skills Canadians need to thrive in the days and years ahead. The Future Skills Centre was founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint ADE, and The Conference Board of Canada

The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Future Skills Centre or the Government of Canada.



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# 1.0 Introduction & Background

## 1.1 Introduction

This Document Review technical report was conducted as part of the evaluation of the On the Frontlines of Crisis Training Program, led by the Weston Frontlines Centre and funded by the Future Skills Centre (FSC) over a two-year period. This evaluation is part of the broader Strategic Evaluation and Learning Support for FSC, for which Goss Gilroy Inc. (GGI) was engaged in order to capture project knowledge and generate learning reports for a number of FSC-funded projects.

This report contains findings obtained from program documents, aligned with the evaluation questions and indicators. Background information about the project, including purpose, scope and objectives are also included.

## 1.2 Background and Project Description

The Weston Frontlines Centre has been running a youth (ages of 18-29) culinary program for the past five years. The mission of the organization is to address the pressing needs of youth, in one of the poorest ridings in Ontario, and serving primarily Black youth in the community.<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>During the pandemic, the Centre experienced changes to their delivery training model including implementing online training and increased need for food production and distribution due to community food requests. The Centre reported an increased need for staffing in the nonprofit food sectors including at community kitchens and health care services. They also experienced an increased need for program participant training for improved social work knowledge, framework, and training.

On the Frontlines of Crisis Training Program (FCTP), provides skills training to youth and paid placement opportunities which prepares them for employment in the future. Due to the unexpected Covid-19 pandemic, there have been significant impacts to the culinary and nonprofit industry. FCTP was initiated in the context where many community service providers in Toronto recognized that there is a need to develop skills in individuals, particularly youth who have less compromised systems, to engage in community work and/or food preparation and distribution through working at nonprofits or in the health sector.

The project is open to youth in York-South Weston, one of the poorest ridings in Ontario and surrounding communities, and Black youth who are marginalized, by providing them training and paid placement opportunities. The 12 weeks mixed in-person and online training on social work

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/real-estate/neighbourhood-scout-old-weston-villages-new-wave/article546733/>

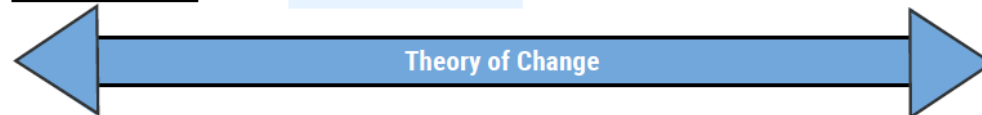
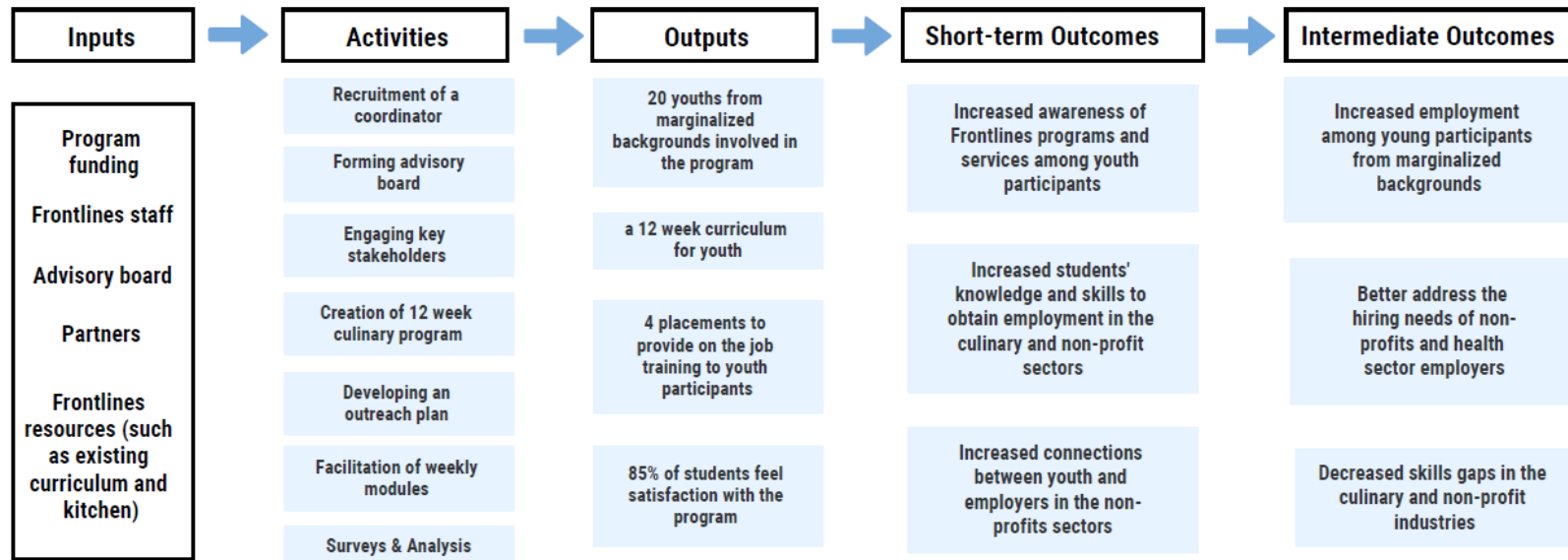
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.spno.ca/images/pdf/povertyprofiles/toronto/Toronto-York-South-Weston.pdf>

and food preparation will provide youth with flexibility to complete the training as they already experience barriers to learning in mainstream systems. By participating in this project, youth are expected to have opportunities to work for and within the community healthcare sector, acquiring exposure to aspects of the sector they may not have known otherwise. This project will also engage key stakeholders who can help highlight additional gaps and skills needed to move forward in changing times in the nonprofit and culinary sector.

In keeping with the Skills Innovation Challenge, this program aims to assess gaps in skills of the culinary and non-profit industry that is needed in maintaining resilience for future shocks, including global pandemics. The three primary objectives of the program were to equip youth with skills in social work and food preparation; develop a 12-week curriculum for youth (8 weeks extensive community and social work curriculum and a 4-week culinary program); and provide youth with on-the-job training through placements.

The Weston Frontlines Centre expects several impactful results for the program including the provision of employment training in the social work sector and in food preparation, and knowledge and skills development to respond to social and economic issues which can be exacerbated in crises. As well, it was anticipated that the program's training will address some employer's needs as the program will create a pipeline of candidates to the nonprofits and health sector employers that they can access if looking for additional staffing, whether before, during and after any unexpected crises or shocks to their systems.

# 1.3 Logic Model and Theory of Change



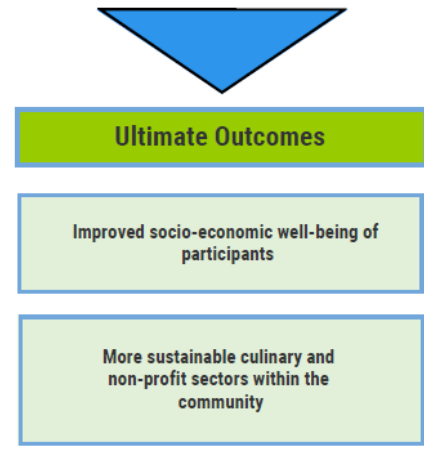
The proposed theory of change for the On the Frontlines of Crisis Training Program is:

***If** youths from marginalized backgrounds participate in the training and placement*

***Then** the participants will be well prepared for employment opportunities in the culinary and non-profit sectors*

***Resulting in** increased employment among young participants from marginalized backgrounds and an improved response to the hiring needs of non-profits and health sector employers*

***Contributing to** improved socio-economic well-being of participants and more sustainable culinary and non-profit sectors within the community*



A theory of change explains how an intervention is expected to produce its results.<sup>3</sup>

## Context

The Weston Frontlines Centre has been running a youth (ages of 18-29) culinary program for the past five years. FCTP was initiated by the Weston Frontlines Centre to provide skills training to youth and paid placement opportunities which prepares them for employment in the future. In keeping up with the Skills Innovation Challenge, this program aims to assess gaps in skills of the culinary and non-profit industry that is needed in maintaining resilience for future shocks, including global pandemics.

During the pandemic, the program had experienced changes to their delivery training model including implementing online training and increased need for food production and distribution due to community food requests.

## Target Groups

The primary target population comprises youth in one of the poorest ridings in Ontario, with a particular emphasis on Black youth. FCTP aims to empower these young individuals through skills training and paid placement opportunities. Additionally, the program identifies the nonprofits and health sector employers as key stakeholders. It was anticipated that the program will create a pipeline of candidates to the nonprofits and health sector employers that they can access if looking for additional staffing, whether before, during and after any unexpected crises or shocks to their systems

## Mechanisms of Change

A description of each layer of the theory of change and how these interrelate is provided below, starting from the left-hand side of the visual, and moving to the right.

### *Key inputs*

Key inputs include experienced Frontlines staff, partners, Frontlines resources, the advisory board and funding from FSC. These inputs enable the program to implement activities and reach its desired outcomes.

### *Activities*

The program conducts a range of activities to reach its desired outcomes. Utilizing available funding, the program hired a program coordinator to ensure efficient coordination and implementation of the program. An advisory board which includes youth participants was also formalized to ensure diverse perspectives are reflected in the design and delivery of the program. The program coordinator, along with advisory board and other Frontlines staff developed outreach plans to engage youth. In addition, experienced Frontlines staff planned and facilitated the

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<sup>3</sup> Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, *Theory-Based Approaches to Evaluation: Concepts and Practices*, <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/audit-evaluation/evaluation-government-canada/theory-based-approaches-evaluation-concepts-practices.html#toc4>

culinary program. Recognizing the importance of feedback from participants, the program conducted surveys with students. By analyzing data, the program gained insights to further improve the program.

### *Outputs*

The outputs are the direct result of those activities. These outputs include 20 youths from marginalized backgrounds involved in the program, a 12-week curriculum for youth, 4 placements to provide on the job training to youth participants and 85% of students being satisfied with the program.

### *Short-term Outcomes*

The short-term outcomes are the changes that are expected to directly result from the activities and outputs, in a short period, and largely attributable to the project. The program anticipates to achieve short-term outcomes which include increased awareness of Frontlines programs and services among youth participants, increased students' knowledge and skills to obtain employment in the culinary and non-profit sectors and increased connections between youth and employers in the non-profits sectors.

### *Intermediate Outcomes*

Building upon the short-term outcomes, the program seeks to achieve intermediate outcomes that represent progress towards broader goals. These outcomes include increased employment among young participants from marginalized backgrounds and decreased skills gaps in the culinary and non-profit industries. The program also expects to better address the hiring needs of non-profits and health sector employers.

### *Ultimate Outcomes*

Overtime, the program envisions achieving long-term outcomes that address the overarching goals of community improvement. These outcomes include improved socio-economic well-being of participants, and more sustainable culinary and non-profit sectors within the community.

## **Assumptions**

The program is built on the following key assumptions:

- The program curriculum is well developed to effectively equip youth participants with the culinary skills and other skills necessary for working in the culinary and the non-profit sectors;
- Youth participants are able to complete the program with adequate resources and support; and,
- The culinary and the non-profit sectors consistently maintain a steady demand for workers, ensuring promising employment opportunities for the youth participants who have completed the program.



## External Factors

External factors that play a crucial role in this theory of change are the capacity of non-profit organizations to collaborate with the program and provide placement opportunities for youth participants. Steady funding is also essential to ensure financial support for paid placements.

## 2.0 Scope and Methodology

### 2.1 Evaluation Objectives and Scope

GGI was engaged to conduct this evaluation of the On the Frontlines of Crisis Training Program (FCTP) by the Future Skills Centre (FSC) to support their strategic evaluation and learning support initiatives. The evaluation of FCTP is being conducted in order to evaluate the overall impact the project has had so far, challenges experienced and, most importantly, how FCTP will further maximize its impact in the future.

### 2.2 Evaluation Questions

The evaluation of the FCTP will assess relevance and reach, design and delivery, and the effectiveness of the FCTP. The questions and indicators to be addressed in the evaluation are as follows (see appendix A for the evaluation matrix):

#### *Reach and Relevance*

- 1.1 To what extent has the On the Frontlines of Crisis Training Program (FCTP) met the needs of its participants including a) Client participants and b) Job placement employer participants?
  - 1.1.1 Identification of the needs of clients (needs in employment, community participation, etc.)
  - 1.1.2 Extent to which the program was relevant to the needs of placement employers
  - 1.1.3 Evidence that the program's activities support the needs of clients
  - 1.1.4 Evidence that the program's activities support the needs of employers
- 1.2 In what ways, and to what extent, is the FCTP reaching its intended target populations?
  - 1.2.1 Number of clients/ participants in the program

#### *Design and Delivery*

- 2.1 To what extent was the program implemented as intended?
  - 2.1.1 Extent to which the program was implemented as designed

## *Effectiveness*

- 3.1 To what extent did the Program meet its intended outcomes for client/ participants including a) For clients' career goals (employment needs and placement), b) For clients' culinary skills training goals, c) For clients' social service skills, and d) For clients' personal goals:
  - 3.1.1 Evidence that clients' career goals have been met
  - 3.1.2 Evidence that clients' culinary skills training goals have been met
  - 3.1.3 Evidence that clients' social service skills goals have been met
  - 3.1.4 Evidence that clients' personal goals have been met
- 3.2 Have there been any unintended impacts (positive or negative) of FCTP for program team, program clients/ participants, and employers? If so, what were they?
  - 3.2.1 Evidence of/perceptions of unintended outcomes (positive or negative) from internal program staff, participants, and employers

## 2.3 Methodology

GGI implemented the evaluation based on a document review of documents provided by FSC. The document review contributed to evidence for all evaluation questions. Specifically, it provided background information on the origin and initial design of the project. The review of documents was key in order to understand how the project was intended to operate, and how it was actually implemented. Moreover, administrative data allowed to evaluate the reach of the program.

Key documents reviewed included:

- FCTP's application for Innovation Project Funding;
- FCTP's Proposal Project Description;
- FCTP's PIF;
- FCTP's Work Plan and Evidence Generation Form;
- FCTP's quarterly reports (Q1 2021, Q2 2021, Q3 2021, Q1 2022); and
- FCTP's annual report 2021–2022.

The document review methodology was undertaken, as follows:

- Review all documents in order, beginning with the Application for Funding, Work Plan, Quarterly and Annual Reporting, and other documents, inputting and organizing key information into an Evaluation Matrix by Evaluation Question and Indicator;

- Once all documents were reviewed, translate Matrix findings into a concise narrative in the Report, returning to the matrix or documents as necessary to fill in any gaps; and
- Write conclusions for each Evaluation Question according to the findings.

## Limitations

- Project progress made in the second, third and fourth quarter of the second financial years was not reported due to the absence of these reports among the documents provided.
- While GGI was provided with FCTP's Work Plan and Evidence Generation Form, the document did not contain any content and, therefore, findings from the work plan could not be incorporated in this document review.
- The documents have limited details on certain aspects important to this review. For example, there is limited information about the target population, resulting in a less comprehensive description of the program background. In addition, there are no details provided on the lack of financial support available for placements.
- The program's application documents generally lack references, which makes it hard to verify the accuracy of some information.

## 3.0 Findings

### Reach and Relevance

EQ 1.1 To what extent has the On the Frontlines of Crisis Training Program (FCTP) met the needs of its participants including a) Client participants and b) Job placement employer participants?

#### Summary of Key Findings:

The main need of youth participating in the program was identified as receiving skills training (particularly in the fields of community work and food preparation and distribution) to prepare them for future employment and to address inequities (e.g., marginalization, poverty, disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic) they are facing.

The main need of employers participating in the program was identified as needing access to knowledgeable staff to address shortages in their nonprofit food sectors.

Frontlines conducted consultations with both youth and partner organizations to ensure that their specific needs are understood and implemented into the program curriculum and the activities offered as part of the program.

#### 1.1.1 Identification of the needs of clients (needs in employment, community participation, etc.)

According to program documents, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit youth living in Weston particularly hard as this community is not only one of the poorest ridings in Ontario but has also experienced some of the highest levels of COVID-19 cases at the onset of the pandemic. Youth living in Weston thus do not only have to deal with marginalization and poverty but also with the disproportionate impact of the pandemic. These youth, many of whom are Black, are in particular need of receiving skills training in order to prepare them for future employment.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, reviewed program documents demonstrate that these youth are in need of skills development relating to engagement “in community work and/or food preparation and distribution through working at nonprofits or in the health sector”.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> FCTP’s application for Innovation Project Funding.

<sup>5</sup> FCTP’s application for Innovation Project Funding.

### 1.1.2 Extent to which program was relevant to needs of placement employers

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic Frontlines has been seeing an increasing “need for staffing in the nonprofit food sectors including at community kitchens and health care services”.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the organization also witnessed more and more residents becoming involved in this sector without necessarily having the skills (e.g., “social work knowledge, framework and training”) required to successfully support this sector.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, while there is an increasing need for skilled and knowledgeable staff in the nonprofit food sector, limited programs are available to prepare individuals appropriately. By assessing the “gaps in skills of the culinary and nonprofit industry” and providing a targeted program to interested youth, Frontline’s project aims to address this emerging need and to better prepare employers in the nonprofit and health sector by providing them with a “pipeline of candidates” that they can access to fill staff gaps.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.1.3 Evidence that the program’s activities support the needs of clients

Because the youth participants already face a lot of barriers and challenges in the mainstream education system, the program offered by Frontlines allows for flexibility in completing the 12-week training.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, an internal evaluation of Frontlines’ culinary program indicates that the program has been successful and addresses the needs of participating youth.<sup>10</sup>

Results from this previous evaluation demonstrate that youth increase their culinary skills, employment and educational attainment by participating in the program.<sup>11</sup> Finally, currently, there are also no other service providers in Toronto that provide training specifically for youth in community development and social work.<sup>12</sup> Frontlines’ program addresses this gap by providing “young adults with an age appropriate and culturally specific curriculum and engagement” in this sector.<sup>13</sup>

Frontlines conducted consultations with youth to better understand their needs. Findings from these consultations were incorporated in the curriculum development to ensure the program addresses the needs of youth. For example, consultations with youth identified that they were interested in receiving certification on things such as Health and Safety, CPR, High Five, Suicide prevention which they can include on their resumes.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, Frontlines incorporated this aspect into its curriculum and ensured that youth would be certified in several areas (i.e., WHMIS, Food Handlers, ASIST (Suicide Prevention Training), Standard First Aid and CPR) as part of the

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<sup>6</sup> FCTP’s application for Innovation Project Funding.

<sup>7</sup> FCTP’s application for Innovation Project Funding.

<sup>8</sup> FCTP’s PIF.

<sup>9</sup> FCTP’s application for Innovation Project Funding.

<sup>10</sup> The findings for this evaluation were scarce with no further descriptions provided.

<sup>11</sup> FCTP’s application for Innovation Project Funding.

<sup>12</sup> FCTP’s application for Innovation Project Funding.

<sup>13</sup> FCTP’s application for Innovation Project Funding.

<sup>14</sup> FCTP’s Quarterly Report Q2 2021.

program.<sup>15</sup> Upon completion of the program, those who attend a minimum grade of 75% were awarded a certificate of completion.<sup>16</sup>

#### 1.1.4 Evidence that the program activities support the needs of employers

Consultations were held with existing and new partner organizations, especially those in the food and health care sector to inform the development of the curriculum for the program.<sup>17</sup> Findings from these consultations were incorporated in the curriculum development to ensure the program addresses the needs of employers.

### EQ 1.2 In what ways, and to what extent, is the FCTP reaching its intended target populations?

#### Summary of Key Findings

While FCPT has been successful in reaching potential participants initially (e.g., 37 youth participated in focus groups to better understand the needs of youth and 36 youth registered for the program), only 11 participants ended up participating in the training component of the program even though the program's target was set at 15. Challenges associated with the lower-than-expected enrollment level were attributed to delays in the start-up of the program due to staff terminations related to vaccine-uptake; and a postponement of the program's marketing efforts, resulting in lower awareness levels amongst potential participants, about the value of the program.

Of the 9 participants who were on track to complete the program, only 8 were able to secure a placement spot. Due to a lack of financial support, only 6 participants were able to complete their placement hours.

#### 1.2.1 Number of clients/ participants in the program

Frontline was very successful at engaging youth in the program during the planning and initiation period. For example, 37 youth participated in focus groups to inform the development of the program and identify specific needs of the youth to be incorporated into the curriculum.<sup>18</sup> However, while 36 youth registered for the program, only 11 participants ended up participating in the training component of the program.<sup>19</sup> Enrollment levels thus remained below the goal of 15 participants.<sup>20</sup> The documents reviewed identify some of the challenges associated with the

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<sup>15</sup> FCTP's annual report 2021-22.

<sup>16</sup> On the Frontlines of Crisis Curriculum

<sup>17</sup> FCTP's application for Innovation Project Funding.

<sup>18</sup> FCTP's annual report 2021-22.

<sup>19</sup> FCPT's Quarterly Report Q1 and Q2 2022.

<sup>20</sup> On the Frontlines of Crisis – Progress Report – June 2022.

program’s enrollment levels being lower than the expected goals. These challenges are associated with delays in the program due to staff terminations related to the vaccine-uptake,<sup>21</sup> and marketing efforts that were postponed resulting in lower awareness among potential participants. In response, the project team increased their visibility on social media platforms, as well as increased their marketing approach within the community.<sup>22</sup>

All 11 participants were between the ages of 15 to 29, and 7 of them were racialized persons some of whom experienced “financial hardships”.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, 10 of the 11 participants identified as female, 2 identified as belonging to the LGBTQ2S+ community, and 1 identified as being from a rural, remote or northern community.<sup>24</sup>

Out of the 11 participants, only 9 participants were reported to be “on track to complete the program”, and of these, 8 were able to secure a spot for the placement portion of the program.<sup>25</sup> In the end only 6 of the 8 participants who started a placement were able to complete their placement. The reasons identified by two participants for not completing the placement was lack of financial support. No further information was provided by youth on why they failed to complete their placements.<sup>26</sup>

Program documents also indicate that Frontlines aimed to cooperate with different project partners across the non-profit and health sector. These partners were meant to either provide curriculum support, advisory support or help with the recruitment of participants. As of the first quarter of the first project year, Frontlines had succeeded in securing 7 out of the 10 intended project partners.<sup>27</sup> At the end of quarter 2 of the first project year, Frontlines succeeded in securing four additional project partners.<sup>28</sup> The table below presents an overview of the different project partners as well their roles and the sector in which they work (if information was available).

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<sup>21</sup> FCTP’s annual report 2021-22.

<sup>22</sup> FCPT’s Quarterly Report Q1 2022.

<sup>23</sup> FCPT’s Quarterly Report Q1 2022.

<sup>24</sup> FCPT’s Quarterly Report Q1 2022.

<sup>25</sup> On the Frontlines of Crisis August 2022 Report.

<sup>26</sup> FCPT’s Quarterly Report Q2 2022 and One the Frontlines of Crisis August 2022 Report.

<sup>27</sup> FCPT’s Quarterly Report Q1 2021.

<sup>28</sup> FCPT’s Quarterly Report Q2 2021.



Table 1: Overview of Project Partners, Their Roles and Sectors

Name of Organization	Role	Sector
Second Harvest	Advisory support	Accommodation and food services
Community Place Hub	Advisory support	Other services (except public administration)
Falstaff Community Centre	Advisory support	Other services (except public administration)
Seneca	Curriculum support	Educational services (including post-secondary institutions)
York Active Living Centre	Advisory support	Other services (except public administration)
P and M Restaurant	Advisory support	Accommodation and food services
Elevate Youth Toronto	Recruitment of participants	Other services (except public administration)
WAES	Advisory support	N/A
Seva Food Bank	Advisory support	N/A
Kennedy House	Advisory support	N/A
ROOTS Community Services	Advisory support	N/A

# Design and Delivery

## EQ 2.1 To what extent was the program implemented as intended?

### Summary of Key Findings:

The review of program documents identified that Frontlines faced several challenges in implementing the program as intended. While the organization was successful in conducting consultations with youth and partner organizations to inform the development of the program curriculum and had successfully developed the curriculum by the end of quarter 3 of the first project year the implementation of the program was delayed due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as internal staff turnover. Staff turnover also resulted in changes to the initially developed curriculum which impacted the program’s format and length, the number of participants, placement options as well as the amount of honorarium participants received. After one cohort of participants had completed the program in August 2022, Frontlines paused the program for the remainder of the year to participate in FSC Accelerator Program. This resulted in further revisions of the program curriculum. Most notable, the duration of the program as well as the number of hours for the placement portion of the program were increased to provide youth with better opportunities to learn and practice their skills.

### 2.1.1 Extent to which program was implemented as designed

According to program documents, Frontlines intended to develop a 12-week online and in-person training program for youth aged 18-29 that focuses on providing youth with insights into “community social work” as well as an “introduction into community food preparation and distribution”<sup>29</sup>. The first 8 weeks of this program were intended to be guided by an “extensive community and social work curriculum”, while the remaining 4 weeks were meant to be dedicated to a culinary program.<sup>30</sup> Topics and themes to be addressed during this program were identified as the following<sup>31</sup>:

- Community asset mapping;
- Community outreach;
- Mental health first aid;
- Fundraising;
- Data Tracking, collection and analysis;

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<sup>29</sup> FCTP’s Proposal Project Description (p.1).

<sup>30</sup> FCTP’s application for Innovation Project Funding.

<sup>31</sup> FCTP’s application for Innovation Project Funding.

- Food and environment health and safety including proper sanitation;
- Food preparation – Knife skills and safety;
- Food handlers; and,
- CPR.

However, it was also highlighted that consultations with both youth and project partners would be conducted to inform the curriculum development for the training program and ensure that both youth and employers needs would be addressed. Additionally, Frontlines planned to involve 1-2 youth as part of the advisory committee for this program.<sup>32</sup>

After youth completed the training program, Frontlines planned to provide participating youth with paid placements in the nonprofit and health sector to gain practical experiences.<sup>33</sup> The organization also planned to conduct an evaluation of the program to identify best practices and lessons learned.<sup>34</sup>

Overall, Frontlines identified four specific planned activities for this FSC-funded project<sup>35</sup>:

1. Curriculum development informed by consultations.
2. Implementation of program.
3. Paid placements for youth after completion of program/curriculum.
4. Evaluation to identify best practices and lessons learned etc.

The reviewed program documents indicate that Frontlines completed the curriculum development at the end of quarter 2 in the first project year (2021) but was still planning to revise some of the content based on insights they had gained during the consultations with youth, particularly in regard to the culinary education.<sup>36</sup> This was completed at the end of quarter 3 of the first project year.<sup>37</sup>

At the end of quarter 3 of the first project year, Frontlines aimed to prepare contingency plans for the delivery of their program as it seemed likely that there would be another lockdown in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic at the time the program was meant to start in February 2022.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, changes were made to be able to deliver the social work sections of the program online and plans shifted to delivering the culinary section of the program with reduced numbers of participants.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> FCTP’s application for Innovation Project Funding.

<sup>33</sup> FCTP’s application for Innovation Project Funding.

<sup>34</sup> FCTP’s Proposal Project Description.

<sup>35</sup> FCTP’s Proposal Project Description.

<sup>36</sup> FCPT’s Quarterly Report Q2 2021.

<sup>37</sup> FCPT’s Quarterly Report Q3 2021.

<sup>38</sup> FCPT’s Quarterly Report Q3 2021.

<sup>39</sup> FCPT’s Quarterly Report Q3 2021.

Staff turnover experienced throughout the first project year also resulted in some changes to the program. Specifically, the start date of the program was delayed to the beginning of May and the curriculum was changed “to fit a 2-day week program for 5 hours” as it was thought that this would “help motivate youth to come out to Frontlines and attend workshops”.<sup>40</sup> Instead of being a 12-week program as initially planned, the program was now to be delivered over the course of 15 weeks.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the program capacity was changed to 15 participants with an increased honorarium provided to participating youth (i.e., \$50 per day for 16 weeks = \$1600 in total).<sup>42</sup> Participating youth were also supposed to receive “certification training in WHMIS, Food Handlers, ASIST (Suicide Prevention Training), Standard First Aid, and CPR”.<sup>43</sup> Finally, the number of placements offered as part of this program was reduced to 4.<sup>44</sup> This was due to the negative impact that staff turnover had on communication and relationships with affiliated organizations.<sup>45</sup>

After the first cohort of the program completed the training program and their placements in August 2022, in September 2022 Frontlines decided to pause the program for the remainder of the year as it got the opportunity to participate in FSC Accelerator Program.<sup>46</sup> This program provided Frontlines with assistance in examining the current program design, and its theory of change; as well as implementing experimentation and innovative practices to increase the impact of the program.<sup>47</sup>

As a result of the involvement in FSC’s Accelerator Program, Frontlines made further changes to the program curriculum. Specifically, the program has been expanded to 4-days-a-week over an 8-week period to allow participants to learn more and practice their skills. The new curriculum was to be offered in a hybrid model, with one-day-a-week online via zoom while the remaining three days would be offered in-person, either in the kitchen or in a classroom setting.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, the placement hours increased. While the first cohort only had to cover 16 hours of placement, the new curriculum aimed for 80 hours in total over a four-week period (i.e., 20 hours per week).<sup>49</sup> As of the end of December 2022, Frontlines aimed to implement this new curriculum for a second cohort that was meant to start on February 21st 2023.

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<sup>40</sup> FCTP’s annual report 2021–2022.

<sup>41</sup> FCTP’s annual report 2021–2022.

<sup>42</sup> FCTP’s annual report 2021–2022.

<sup>43</sup> FCTP’s annual report 2021–2022.

<sup>44</sup> FCTP’s annual report 2021–2022.

<sup>45</sup> FCTP’s annual report 2021–2022.

<sup>46</sup> On the Frontlines of Crisis September 2022 Report.

<sup>47</sup> On the Frontlines of Crisis September 2022 Report.

<sup>48</sup> On the Frontlines of Crisis May 2023 Progress Report.

<sup>49</sup> On the Frontlines of Crisis May 2023 Progress Report.

# Effectiveness

EQ 3.1 To what extent did the Program meet its intended outcomes for client/ participants, a) For clients' career goals (employment needs and placement), b) For clients' culinary skills training goals, c) For clients' social service skills, and d) For clients' personal goals.

## Summary of Key Findings:

The document review found that the "On The Frontlines of Crisis" program is designed to empower participants by offering them opportunities to enhance their skills in culinary, social service, and career development. Participants engage in workshops and training courses to develop skills and acquire valuable hands-on experience during a four-week placement with a community organization. The documented evidence suggests that participants who completed the program have benefited in terms of career goals, culinary skills training goals, social service goals, and personal goals. However, it is important to note that only 11 participants advanced to the placement portion of the program. Due to a lack of financial support, only 6 participants completed the placement.

### 3.1.1 Evidence that clients' career goals have been met

The "On the Frontlines of Crisis" program aimed to offer participants the opportunity to learn about self-management skills, techniques to support their own self-care, identify when to take breaks and how to prevent burnout, diversity and inclusion at work, leadership and transformative change, and culinary techniques.<sup>50</sup>

According to the quarterly report (Q2, 2022),<sup>51</sup> participants went through a series of workshops to ensure that they were ready to work in the culinary and non-profit industries. ASIST Training and Certification, Fundraising, Grant Writing, Food Handlers Training, and hands-on skill development in a professional kitchen were among the workshops offered.

Additionally, these abilities were eventually put on display during a four-week placement with a community organization. The participants worked one-on-one with a program staff member to develop their cover letter, résumé, and interviewing techniques in order to prepare themselves for the placement opportunities. The workshops, certification, and hands-on training improved the participants' job preparedness and armed them with the skills they were lacking to enter the workforce.

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<sup>50</sup> Copy of ON THE FRONTLINES OF CRISIS CURRICULUM .docx

<sup>51</sup> Weston\_Q2 2022. pdf

It should be noted that due to personal issues and social barriers, the Program was unable to keep 15 participants throughout the program's duration. There were 9 participants who advanced to the placement portion of the program. 8 participants were able to secure a placement, however, due to a lack of financial support, only 6 participants completed the placement. No further information was provided regarding why or how there was a lack of financial support.

The 6 participants who began their placement each completed all 16 hours and have been sent to the “On the Frontlines of Crisis Exit Surveys” to provide feedback on the program, discuss their volunteer opportunity and experience, and comment on how to improve the program as a whole. One participant verbally shared that they appreciated receiving hands-on experience while volunteering through the program. Moreover, their placement allowed them to enhance their knowledge of fundraising and gain a better understanding of the research process involved in data collection.<sup>52</sup>

### **3.1.2 Evidence that clients’ culinary skills training goals have been met**

Frontlines is equipped with an updated curriculum that addresses identified gaps in skills for the culinary sector, along with an in-house community kitchen where students get practical training and learn about current culinary trends.<sup>53</sup> In July 2022, 9 participants completed their 2-day Food Handlers Training course followed by in-kitchen learning through the culinary training portion of the program. The culinary training consisted of basic kitchen food prep skills such as how to cut chicken and classic vegetable cuts; as well as advanced techniques such as how to lollipop a chicken drumstick. The participants utilized their basic skills training assisting On the Frontline of Crisis’s culinary department with preparing food for the youth at camp program.<sup>54</sup>

The quarterly report (Q2, 2022) indicates that participants went through a series of workshops to ensure that they were ready to work in the culinary industries. Based on feedback collected through the participant exit survey, all respondents (n=6) reported an improvement in their confidence level in culinary skills, with 4 of them indicating that their confidence level had improved greatly.<sup>55</sup>

### **3.1.3 Evidence that clients’ social service skills goals have been met**

The program sought to create chances for students to learn about theoretical frameworks, legislation and social policy, social work values and ethics, mental health supports, social innovation, and anti-oppressive practices in a social service framework.<sup>56</sup>

As this program was taken over by a new team at Frontlines, it has now revised the curriculum to support their teaching style by including topics such as: community engagement (outreach),

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<sup>52</sup> On the Frontlines of Crisis August 2022 Report.docx

<sup>53</sup> ON THE FRONTLINES OF CRISIS CURRICULUM .docx

<sup>54</sup> On the Frontlines of Crisis July 2022 Report.docx

<sup>55</sup> OTFOC EXIT SURVEY (Responses).xlsx

<sup>56</sup> Copy of ON THE FRONTLINES OF CRISIS CURRICULUM .docx

marketing, asset mapping, event planning and fundraising, program development and facilitation, and mental health and wellness. Based on feedback collected through the focus groups and weekly evaluations with the students, program staff made adjustments to ensure the program is meeting the expectations and learning the needs of participants.<sup>57</sup>

Participants (n=11) also completed their Emergency First-Aid, Basic Life Support and WHMIS certifications in June 2022.<sup>58</sup>

The results from the participant exit survey<sup>59</sup> indicate that most of the students (4 out of 6) rated their level of social service skills better after completing the in-class sessions of On the Frontlines of Crisis than before the program. In addition, all respondents (n=6) felt more confident working in a social service capacity after attending the program. When asked what transferrable skills they learned during the program, that they used during their placement, responses included time management skills, how to put together a facilitation, mental health lessons, communication, and community mapping.

### 3.1.4 Evidence that clients' personal goals have been met

The feedback for the culinary portion has been positive with participants stating that they feel they were able to learn a new skill that would be valuable to them in their personal lives after completing the program. One participant shared that they appreciated learning new skills while actively supporting Frontlines youth.<sup>60</sup>

In response to the survey question regarding their learning and personal growth, all participants responded positively, indicating that they felt their placement environment offered opportunities for learning and personal growth.<sup>61</sup>

## EQ 3.2 Have there been any unintended impacts (positive or negative) of FCTP for program team, program clients/ participants, and employers? If so, what were they?

### Summary of Key Findings:

Program staff identified a slew of challenges faced by participants. These barriers were not limited to traditional educational challenges, but also included personal challenges that affected their ability to acquire the necessary skill set for workforce success. However, on a positive note, the staff found it rewarding to see how the participants demonstrated their talents in

<sup>57</sup> Weston Annual Report 2021-2022. pdf

<sup>58</sup> On the Frontlines of Crisis - Progress Report- June 2022.docx

<sup>59</sup> OTFOC EXIT SURVEY (Responses).xlsx

<sup>60</sup> On the Frontlines of Crisis July 2022 Report.docx

<sup>61</sup> OTFOC EXIT SURVEY (Responses).xlsx



presentations, workshops, and peer-to-peer activities; and noted that all participants were dedicated to receiving their diplomas.

### 3.2.1 Evidence of/perceptions of unintended outcomes (positive or negative) from internal program staff, participants, and employers

In the quarterly report (Q1, 2022),<sup>62</sup> program staff indicated that they found it rewarding to see how the participants demonstrate their talents in presentations, workshops, and peer-to-peer activities. In addition, all participants were dedicated to receiving their diplomas, which have led to opportunities that go beyond the scope of the project.

Program staff also identified a slew of challenges faced by participants. These barriers were not only noted in traditional education spaces, but also within their own lives that affected their capacity to gain the necessary skill set they need to achieve success in the workforce. Examples of the barriers included homelessness, immigration challenges, food insecurity, mental health issues, and limited access to personal hygiene items. As a result, program staff provided the participants with additional support based on their unique individual needs, such as investing more one-on-one time with participants as a support and motivation system. This helped participants accomplish their goals and participate in the program with new and improved skills in areas of self-care, planning, culinary, among others.<sup>63</sup>

## Project Learnings and Lessons Learned

The following key insights were identified by the Weston Frontlines Centre as project learnings and/or lessons learned.

*Capacity building:* Given the magnitude of the program, the program was required to implement a substantial amount of capacity-building in the back-end administration of this project. Program staff highlighted the importance of budgeting sufficient time and resources for staff capacity-building to ensure their readiness to handle the program effectively.<sup>64</sup> The importance of regularly scheduled team meetings was also noted, especially with respect to fostering a supportive environment where team members overcome challenges collectively, and share valuable insights and experience.<sup>65</sup>

*Outreach and Engagement:* According to program staff, early and continuous outreach and engagement with stakeholders plays a vital role in gathering valuable input from various stakeholders.<sup>66</sup> In addition, it is important to incorporate both traditional and innovative/online

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<sup>62</sup> Weston\_Q1 Report 2022. pdf

<sup>63</sup> Weston\_Q2 2022. pdf

<sup>64</sup> Weston Q1 Report 2021

<sup>65</sup> Weston Q2 Report 2021

<sup>66</sup> Program staff noted the importance of conducting a needs assessment prior to the start of the programme.



social media platforms. Traditional marketing mechanisms including word of mouth, and in-person community outreach, were found to be more effective at targeting participants. It was noted that most of the participants were reached via community outreach as opposed to social media. Program staff also pointed out the importance of showcasing the value and objectives of the project to prospects, fostering active engagement from all stakeholder groups. They also discovered that providing incentives can be an important factor in enhancing stakeholder participation in the consultation process. To mitigate the risk of dropouts, reaching youth beyond the initial target is necessary, especially during lockdown periods.<sup>67</sup>

*Committed and flexible team:* Based on the program documents, the project team demonstrated a high level of commitment and adaptability throughout the project. The documents indicate that they are open to changing their strategy towards outreach. For example, all of the activities were initially designed for in-person learning; however, extra activities were introduced to support online learning during the COVID pandemic.<sup>68</sup>

*Post-program supports to participants:* An essential learning from the project was the importance of providing the necessary post-program supports to participants. Rather than simply being a step in the pipeline for skill development and employment, it was felt that the development of a holistic program is required to adequately support participants in a way that adds value. This includes offering structured training, and services that support personal, social, and mental well-being that assist program participants in meeting their basic living needs. This is significant given that traumatic stressors impair participants' abilities to focus, perform, and live up to their full potential. In this way, the program's curriculum not only demonstrated that it was effective at setting quantifiable goals that kept participants engaged, it also provided opportunities to exercise civic responsibility, think critically, make decisions, plan ahead, exercise self-control, and manage oneself. It was noted that participants were able to convey their vulnerabilities thanks to social emotional learning.<sup>69</sup>

*Other:* Other lessons learned identified by the project team include: 1) Maintaining a working resource list of community partners, organizations, and professionals to assist participants and developing relationships with community partners; 2) Conducting pre-, mid-, and post-surveys to track program participation; 3) Holding one-on-one sessions with participants on a regular basis to assess their personal, social, and mental well-being; 4) Incorporating stress management and traumatic aspects into the training program to support participants as well as to aid and facilitate smoother program implementation; and 5) Carrying out a well-thought-out curriculum and work plan that is adaptable to different learning styles. Of most importance was the need for the curriculum to add value to participants' lives and current situations.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Q3 Report 2021

<sup>68</sup> Weston Q3 Report 2021

<sup>69</sup> Weston Q2 Report 2022

<sup>70</sup> Weston Q1 Report 2022

## 4.0 Conclusions

According to the reviewed documents, it appears that the needs of both youth and employers were adequately addressed by the FCPT project. For youth, the program assisted them in identifying and receiving skills training (particularly in the fields of community work and food preparation and distribution) that would help them prepare for future employment while addressing the inequities (e.g., marginalization, poverty, disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic) they are facing. For employers, FCPT allowed them to address shortages in their nonprofit food sectors, through their participation in the program.

While FCPT was successful in reaching potential participants initially (e.g., 37 youth participated in focus groups to better understand the needs of youth and 36 youth registered for the program), only 11 participants ended up participating in the training component of the program (out of an intended 15). Challenges associated with the lower-than-expected enrollment level were attributed to delays in the start-up of the program due to staff terminations related to vaccine-uptake; and a postponement of the program's marketing efforts, resulting in lower awareness levels amongst potential participants, about the value of the program. Only 8 out of the 11 were able to secure a placement spot. Due to a lack of financial support, only 6 participants were able to complete their placement hours.

The review of program documents identified that Frontlines faced several challenges in implementing the program as intended. While the organization was successful in conducting consultations with youth and partner organizations to inform the development of the program curriculum, and had successfully developed the curriculum by the end of quarter 3 of the first project year, the implementation of the program was delayed due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as internal staff turnover. Staff turnover also resulted in changes to the initially developed curriculum which impacted the program's format and length, the number of participants, placement options as well as the amount of honorarium participants received. After one cohort of participants had completed the program in August 2022, Frontlines paused the program for the remainder of the year to participate in the FSC Accelerator Program. This resulted in further revisions to the program curriculum. Most notable, the duration of the program, as well as the number of hours for the placement portion of the program, were increased to provide youth with better opportunities to learn and practice their skills.

The "On the Frontlines of Crisis" program is designed to empower participants by offering them opportunities to enhance their skills in culinary, social service and career development. Participants engage in workshops and training courses to develop the skills and acquire valuable hands-on experience during a four-week placement with a community organization. The documented evidence suggests that participants who completed the program benefited in terms of career goals, culinary skills training goals, social service goals and personal goals. However, it is

important to note that only 8 participants advanced to the placement portion of the program. Due to a lack of financial support, only 6 participants completed the placement.

In terms of unintended outcomes, on the one hand, program staff identified a slew of challenges faced by participants. These barriers were not limited to traditional educational challenges but also included personal challenges that affected their ability to acquire the necessary skill set for workforce success. However, on a positive note, the staff found it rewarding to see how the participants demonstrate their talents in presentations, workshops, and peer-to-peer activities and all participants were dedicated to receiving their diplomas

# Appendix A: FCTP Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Issues/Questions	Indicators	Document Review	Key Informant Interviews
<i>Reach &amp; Relevance</i>			
1.1 To what extent has the On the Frontlines of Crisis Training Program (FCTP) met the needs of its participants including: a) Client participants; and b) Job placement employer participants.	1.1.1 Identification of the needs of clients (needs in employment, community participation, etc.)	X	X
	1.1.2 Extent to which the program was relevant to the needs of placement employers	X	X
	1.1.3 Evidence that the program activities support the needs of clients and employers	X	X
1.2 In what ways, and to what extent, is the FCTP reaching its intended target populations?	1.2.1 Number of clients/ participants in the program	X	
	1.2.2 Perceptions of staff and partners regarding strategies to engage clients		X
<i>Design &amp; Delivery</i>			
2.1 To what extent was the program implemented as intended	2.1.1 Extent to which the program was implemented as designed	X	X
2.2 What lessons have been learned about how the project was designed and delivered? What worked well, and what might be done differently in the future, regarding: - Components of the program - Implementation (timing, partnerships, methods, etc.)	2.2.1 Suggestions for improvement of delivery of program		X
<i>Effectiveness</i>			
3.1 To what extent did the Program meet its intended outcomes for <b>client/ participants</b> : a) For clients' career goals (employment needs and placement) b) For clients' culinary skills training goals; c) For clients' social service skills; and d) For clients' personal goals.	3.1.1 Evidence that clients' career goals have been met	X	X
	3.1.2 Evidence that clients' culinary skills training goals have been met	X	X
	3.1.3 Evidence that clients' social service skills goals have been met	X	X
	3.1.4 Evidence that clients' personal goals have been met	X	X

3.2 To what extent did the Program meet its intended outcomes <b>for job placement employers.</b>	3.2.1 Perceptions of employers that the program met its intended outcomes		X
3.3 Have there been any unintended impacts (positive or negative) of FCTP for the program team, program clients/ participants, and employers? If so, what were they?	3.3.1 Evidence of/perceptions of unintended outcomes (positive or negative) from internal program staff, participants, and employers	X	X