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Annual Report

2023-2024



This Employment Ontario program is funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario.

Board of Directors 2023-2024

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Thank You to Our Volunteers

Anne Oakes
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Central Branch
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Hamilton, ON L8R 3K1

What We Do

As Hamilton's adult learning network we provide [educational planning services](#) for youth and adults wanting to upgrade their skills or retrain. We work with people to develop plans that are individual and goal oriented. Plans could include referrals to skills upgrading, completing high school, getting into post-secondary, apprenticeship training, other training or employment services.

We work closely with our adult education partners across the city to develop the annual [Literacy Service Plan](#). This plan identifies key issues and actions that we work on throughout the year. We also coordinate an annual practitioner conference and spotlight sessions for learners.

We offer [Clear Writing](#) training and consulting services. We offer workshops, document editing as well as a 12-week online course through the Learning Networks of Ontario.

We also support employers with our [Workplace Education Services](#). We can help employers identify skill gaps and create a customized training plan to increase employees' skills now and for the future.

**Want to get literacy, education and
employment updates all in one place?**
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A Message from the Chair

Muhammad Ali Hameed

As we reflect on the past year, I am delighted to share the remarkable strides that ABEA has made in connecting individuals with lifelong learning and skill development resources. The past year brought some new opportunities and challenges. ABEA has risen to them and remained strong in its commitment to serving the Hamilton community and beyond. They've empowered individuals to unlock their full potential through education and skill enhancement.

Since its inception in 1983, ABEA has been a beacon of hope for countless individuals seeking to navigate the ever-changing landscape of employment and career advancement. In an ever-changing landscape, ABEA has continued to innovate, adapt, and evolve. They've ensured that services remain accessible and relevant to those who need them most.

Looking ahead, I am pleased to announce that ABEA has developed a strategic plan for the next phase of its journey. This plan underscores our dedication to embracing innovative approaches to meet the evolving needs of the communities we serve. By leveraging new technologies, forging strategic partnerships, and expanding our outreach efforts, we are confident that ABEA will continue to be a driving force for positive change.

As we celebrate our successes, it is also important to acknowledge the contributions of those who have served on the board of directors. This year, we bid farewell to Tracy Cunning and Adis Rajic, whose dedication and leadership have been instrumental in shaping the direction of ABEA. Tracy, in particular, has served as both a mentor and a guiding light during her tenure as board chair, and her presence will be deeply missed.

On a personal note, I must also announce my forthcoming departure from the board of directors. Due to my own commitments to lifelong learning, I have made the difficult decision to step down as board chair and from the board itself. It has been an honour and a privilege to serve alongside such dedicated individuals and to be a part of an organization that is truly making a difference in the lives of others.

In closing, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you for your unwavering support of ABEA. Together, we have accomplished great things. I have no doubt that our collective efforts will continue to drive positive change in our community for years to come.

Warm regards,
Muhammad Ali Hameed
Board Chair

ABEA Strategic Plan 2024-2027

Key Priorities

- 1. Diversify and Increase Revenue – continue existing and find new approaches to increase revenue sources with a focus on**
 - a. project partnerships
 - b. increasing fundraising efforts
 - c. increasing unrestricted funds
- 2. ABEA is a safe space for everyone in the community – we will**
 - a. focus on accessibility – both physical and digital
 - b. continue to create and implement anti-oppressive, trauma-informed policies and practices
 - c. strive to offer low-barrier services
- 3. Develop a human resource strategy that includes talent**
 - a. recruitment
 - b. development
 - c. retention
 - d. succession
- 4. Create and activate a robust digital strategy that includes**
 - a. implementing cyber security measures
 - b. offering services digitally
 - c. promoting digital technology upgrading programs
 - d. developing digital tools to increase engagement and referrals
- 5. Increase visibility of the organization through**
 - a. potentially re-branding – research and plan for the rebrand of ABEA to better align with the updated mission, moral ownership and ends of the organization (this will include an environmental scan and change management plan)
 - b. increasing partnerships – continue to maintain and build new partnerships to continue to serve our clients better
 - c. increasing engagement with the broader community
- 6. Research**
 - a. contribute primary research in the adult education space
 - b. find/share existing research as part of our work with partners to inform practice locally and across the province

From the Executive Director

Sara Gill



Along with our typical suite of services, 2023-2024 was a year of intense project work that we undertook both locally and across the province. The focus of this work was to better integrate Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) into the workforce development system. We did this through enhanced service coordination, planning and partnership development within 4 initiative areas.

1 – Educational Planning Supports

We partnered with local employment services and other community partners to offer educational pathway planning services to clients considering an application to Better Jobs Ontario (BJO). BJO is a government program through Employment Ontario where clients can apply for funding for training programs less than 52 weeks. However, many clients had been out of school for many years and were unsure of their skills and the preparation needed for these programs. We worked with clients to build educational plans to help them identify their skills and find upgrading and training programs to be successful.

Through this work we also facilitated a provincial community of practice group with other regional learning networks and upgrading programs that were delivering pilot programs to support applicants.

2 – Workplace Education Services

We worked with local employers that had identified a skills gap within their staff team. We helped them identify the specific skills gaps and connected them with appropriate training programs to meet their needs. In some cases we also offered Clear Writing training to ensure that their written communication was accessible both for their staff as well as for their clients/customers.

3 – Apprenticeship

Over the last several years we have worked with a provincial apprenticeship committee to showcase the benefits of Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programming to support pre-apprentices and apprentices. This was done primarily through newsletters and social media campaigns (#hereforapprentices). We also facilitated relationships between LBS service providers and apprenticeship stakeholders. Adult upgrading programs can play a critical role in supporting those interested in an apprenticeship program. They assist people to upgrade the critical skills needed both on-the-job and during the in-school portions of their training. They can also assist apprentices to prepare for their final certification exam.

In addition to this work, we also partnered with the McMaster Research Shop to explore the barriers and challenges faced by apprentices. The purpose was to determine how adult upgrading programs could better support apprentices throughout their journey. A [report](#) and [infographic](#) were developed to showcase the results.

4 – Underrepresented Groups

We also wanted to make better connections with underrepresented groups in the labour market. We focused on building connections between Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs and organizations serving youth and newcomers. The focus was on developing partnerships to co-deliver and co-design programming. Programming was offered where clients were already accessing service. Added to this work was professional development activities focused on developing inclusive learning spaces.

A Key Pillar to Our Work - Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Universal Design for Learning is a framework for teaching that puts the learner at the centre of the design and planning process. It allows for individual flexibility to engage all learners and optimize their learning experience and outcomes. This means that services are accessible and flexible to meet the needs of diverse learners. To commit to this framework, we redesigned our educational pathway planning service with UDL and accessibility at the forefront. We are continuing to gather feedback from clients and will continue to adapt to the needs of our clients.

Thank You to Our Board of Directors

Thank you so much to ABEA’s Board of Directors for their insight, guidance and support over the last year. I’m excited about our renewed strategic plan for 2024-2027. We continue to build relationships and work collaboratively with our community partners across the city and across the province to support skills upgrading, training and education.

Sara Gill, Executive Director

JOB SEEKERS

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Career Pathways
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Our Community Partners/Networks

Employment Ontario - Literacy and Basic Skills Service Providers

CNIB – Deafblind Community Services Literacy Program

Collège Boréal

Community and Continuing Education - Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

Hamilton Literacy Council

Hamilton Regional Indian Centre – Native Learning Centre

Mohawk College – Academic Upgrading, Deaf Empowerment Program

St. Charles Adult & Continuing Education Centres – Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board

Employment Ontario – Employment Services

Hamilton Brown Bag Lunch Group (BBL)

Hamilton Employment Resource Network (HERN)

Hamilton Disability Employment Network (HDEN)

Learning Networks of Ontario

McMaster Research Shop

Mohawk College – Challenge 2025

NPAAMB Indigenous Youth Employment and Training

Our Future Hamilton – Community Partner Ontario Works

Skills Development Flagship Committee

Congratulations to our Leaders in Literacy Award Winners 2024!

Lynne Livingstone Memorial Award

Tracy Cunning

Kim Brooks Memorial Lifelong Learning Award

Jessika Del Prete Silva

The Excellence in Adult Education Practitioner Award

Linda Jenkins, Steven Lobodici, Lynn Schneider

The CIBC Murphy Investment Group Individual Early Literacy Education Award

Debbie Stevenson

Agency Early Literacy Education Award

Little Peoples Daycare

The Hamilton Spectator Adult Literacy Learner Award

Cheryl Garlow O’Kane, St. Charles Adult & Continuing Education Centre

Elizabeth McMicking, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board – Continuing Education

Stace Cook, Hamilton Literacy Council

Ashley Kucik – Mohawk College Academic Upgrading

Thank you to our award sponsors

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And 2 friends of ABEA

A very special thank you to John Mayberry who passed away earlier this year. John sponsored the Kim Brooks Memorial Lifelong Learning Award for many years. He was a colleague and friend of Kim Brooks through ArcelorMittal Dofasco.

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