

YWCA Peterborough



Location: Urban Ontario



Number of Beds: 25



Type of Shelter: Crisis Shelter and Transitional Housing Community



Number of Housing Units: 40



Type of Program: Employment Readiness

How the Program Works

YWCA Peterborough created the Thrive Hive program in 2022 to support the economic empowerment of women staying at YWCA's Centennial Crescent Housing Community and Crossroads Violence Against Women (VAW) Shelter. The program focuses on improving participants' life skills and socio-economic outcomes through employment-oriented training.

Thrive Hive delivers a holistic employment skills training cycle designed to build self-efficacy. This includes weekly capacity-building sessions led by Family Support Workers and/or Women's Well-Being Workers, as well as contributions from community partners and peer support networks. Programming is grounded in principles of peer learning, equity, diversity and inclusion, life skills development, literacy, and access to technology.

Participation in Thrive Hive workshops is voluntary and not required for residents at Centennial Crescent or Crossroads VAW Shelter.

Example of programming:

A Human Resource Manager with over 20 years of experience reviewing resumes and conducting interviews from entry-level to senior roles came in to deliver two workshops on resume writing and interviewing skills. The resume-writing workshop provided participants with three resume templates tailored to entry-level, mid-level, and executive roles and offered practical guidance on addressing employment gaps, a common barrier for survivors.

The interview skills workshop gave participants the opportunity to build their confidence and interview skills by participating in 3-5 mock "real-world" interviews over two weeks, with opportunities for self-reflection and constructive feedback. The focus was on body language, eye contact, professional presentation, tone and confidence, reducing filler words, using the STAR method to structure answers, and pacing.

CASE STUDY

Program Development and Implementation

YWCA staff began by connecting with a community partner interested in facilitating resume writing and interview workshops. An initial meeting was held to align on workshop goals, content, and participant needs. To ensure accessibility for participants at different stages, the workshops were designed to address entry-level, intermediate, and advanced job seekers.

YWCA staff and the community partner collaborated on training methods and materials, including the development of a slide deck that remains available for future use. They decided on an in-person format to encourage engagement and allow for interactive learning, particularly during question-and-answer periods.

Workshops are delivered in an interactive format, incorporating feedback loops to assess participant understanding.

Program evaluation is conducted through participant surveys. A \$5 gift card honorarium is offered to encourage feedback. Staff review survey results to refine workshop content, delivery methods, and tools for future sessions.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Participation remains a consistent challenge, as Thrive Hive workshops are voluntary. Despite offering honorariums and refreshments, attendance is often low, particularly for employment-focused sessions compared to arts, crafts, or community-building activities. For example, one resume and interview workshop had only two participants out of a possible 43.

Additionally, participants are all at different stages in their healing journeys. Some women who have arrived at the shelter more recently are not ready to consider employment, while others may still face barriers such as low confidence or difficulty envisioning a return to the workforce.

To address this, Thrive Hive continues to prioritize capacity-building and goal-oriented programming while recognizing that readiness takes time. Building trust, rapport, and confidence is central to increasing long-term engagement. Improving participation remains an ongoing goal, requiring sustained, trauma-informed approaches.



CASE STUDY



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Impact

Despite low attendance, the program has had a meaningful impact at the individual level.

One participant, a recent college graduate, secured an interview in her field after attending the workshops. Through mock interviews and targeted preparation, she successfully obtained a full-time position with a living wage, benefits, and a pension. She transitioned off Ontario Works and is now building a career and planning for her future.

She has also continued to engage in additional Thrive Hive programming focused on budgeting, saving, and investing.

Advice for Other Shelters

While low attendance can be discouraging given the time and resources required to deliver workshops, even a single success represents a significant outcome. These successes not only transform individual lives but also demonstrate to other participants that change is possible and reinforce a sense of self-worth and potential.

About the Economic Empowerment Programming Case Studies Series

This series of case studies was developed through Women's Shelters Canada's Community of Practice (CoP) on Economic Empowerment. The seven case studies highlight examples of how shelters and transition houses across Canada are supporting survivors through economic empowerment programming. Each profile shares approaches, promising practices, and lessons learned from organizations working to strengthen survivors' financial security, independence, and long-term stability.

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