



Futures Forward

Annual Report

September 2022 – March 2023



Who Are We?

Since 2013, Futures Forward has provided transitional services to youth aged 15 to 29 who have a history of Child and Family Services (CFS) involvement in Manitoba. Studies focused in North America have highlighted the impact that CFS involvement has on the lives of youth, and have consistently indicated less than favorable outcomes for those with experience in care. The goal of the Futures Forward program is to ensure that every youth with experience in care has:

- Skills, certifications, and resources needed to gain employment, either through employment based training or post-secondary education.
- Skills, confidence, and knowledge to make informed financial decisions and maintain a financial budget or plan.
- Skills, resources, and knowledge needed to manage their mental health, regulate their mood and independently navigate complex systems to achieve a desired outcome.

Futures Forward has a unique program model which brings together three distinct community agencies to offer a diverse continuum of specialized programming and services to youth in or from care. By working as a collaborative, participants are able to receive a variety of high quality services to help navigate their transition from care to interdependence. This targeted approach lets us cater our services and provide specialty support with each agency being able to provide their dedicated services to a targeted population.



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Manitoba and Winnipeg
Mental health for all



Who Are We?

Utilizing a youth-centered, participant-led approach, Futures Forward operates as both a support and resource hub to help meet participants where they are in their journey to interdependence. During the intake process, Futures Forward holistically assesses each participant and accounts for systematic, economic, and individual barriers to transitioning out of care. By offering a continuum of trauma-informed and research backed services, youth are able to engage with the program at their discretion and adjust their frequency of contact to match degree of need. The Futures Forward model also allows youth to access the service of any of the partner agencies on a short-term or long-term basis, to disconnect for any amount of time, and access services again. These critical services provide youth with the supports they need in order to engage in training programs, pursue post-secondary education, and/or gain fulfilling employment. The long-term effect of these supports is a reduction in the degree of reliance on social assistance programs.

Youth can be referred internally between the front-line staff at partner agencies and externally to community and government agencies, social support, justice services, and beyond.

The Futures Forward partnership allows for youth in or from care to access resources and supports that meet them where they are and advocate for their continued success. Whether it is as they work toward gaining employment, enrolling in education or training, or taking the smaller steps to get there, Futures Forward is here to support Manitoba's current and former youth in care.



Since 1973, Youth Employment Services Manitoba (YES Manitoba) has provided free, inclusive employment and education support services to young Manitobans between the ages of 16 and 29. We empower youth by providing a safe, supportive environment where they can learn new skills, develop confidence in themselves, and feel supported in their transition to employment.

Young people (aged 15 to 29) who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) are often considered to be more vulnerable than their peers, as they may face a risk of becoming disengaged or socially excluded and could miss out on gaining skills or experience in the labour market. This can have long term effects on their ability to transition successfully to interdependence in their community. Through our participant-led approach, we work to create opportunities for youth to become engaged members of their community through developing their employability skills, helping them gain meaningful employment, and exploring further education and training. Our purpose is to prepare youth in realizing their potential to become self-sufficient and contribute to our province's growth and prosperity.

YES Manitoba strives to stay current with trends in and changes to the employment market and supports youth seeking employment using a multilevel service approach. The team at YES Manitoba focuses on assisting youth to obtain and maintain employment by assessing participants' marketability; guiding them to appropriate choices including suitable employment opportunities, training programs, and/or education; exploring education and career opportunities; teaching participants to build strong résumés and cover letters; preparing them for interviews and on the job demands like workplace communication; and helping them build a strong repertoire of skills and resources to support them throughout their career journey.



Canadian Mental Health Association

Manitoba and Winnipeg

Mental health for all

Canadian Mental Health Association, Manitoba and Winnipeg (CMHA) is part of a national network of mental health serving agencies. Since formal incorporation in 1984, the goal of the Winnipeg regional office has been to honour and promote the mental health of all Manitobans and to support individuals who experience mental illness and addictions issues to achieve recovery and well-being within healthy and supportive communities.

CMHA's goal is “Mental Health for All,” providing services and supports across the lifespan, including extensive youth focused programming. Offerings range from classroom based mental health promotion initiatives, cognitive behaviour therapy coaching for youth struggling with mood and anxiety difficulties, youth employment supports, family service navigation, education and support groups, co-produced youth courses, post-secondary mental health initiatives, and services for youth aging out of care. The philosophy at CMHA is “something for everyone,” and the organization strives to offer high quality, evidence-based, accessible services to youth and their families.



COMMUNITY

Financial Counselling Services

Community Financial Counselling Services Inc. (CFCS) is a community-based non-profit organization that offers services to a diverse population of Manitobans experiencing a variety of financial challenges. CFCS provides free, accessible, respectful, responsive, and effective services to meet the unique and complex needs of individuals, couples, families, and communities in order to achieve financial wellbeing. The organization builds capacity through collaborative partnerships with other organizations and by advocating for accessible, affordable, and appropriate financial services for all Manitobans.

In addition to its role as a financial counselling service open to all Manitobans, as a publicly funded, community governed agency, CFCS is uniquely positioned relative to other debt management companies to address the needs of more vulnerable and high-risk populations such as youth, seniors, lower income individuals, people with disabilities, and gamblers. They are able to take the time to provide comprehensive financial counselling that takes into consideration the individual or families other concerns; to partner with other organizations in order to provide more integrated service delivery; and to focus some attention on community education and professional cross training that increase the preventive and access to service aspects of financial counselling and debt management.

A Note on the Reporting Year

In September 2022, Futures Forward signed a new agreement with the Provincial Government department of Mental Health and Community Wellness (MHCW). Due to the resulting changes in our funding relationship and fiscal year as we made this transition, this report highlights our work over the 7 month period between September 2022 and March 2023.

We are pleased to begin this partnership with MHCW and are grateful to be working together to support youth in and from care in our province.

"Everyone is so good! I have never felt so connected with people before."
- 2022/23 FF Participant

2022–2023

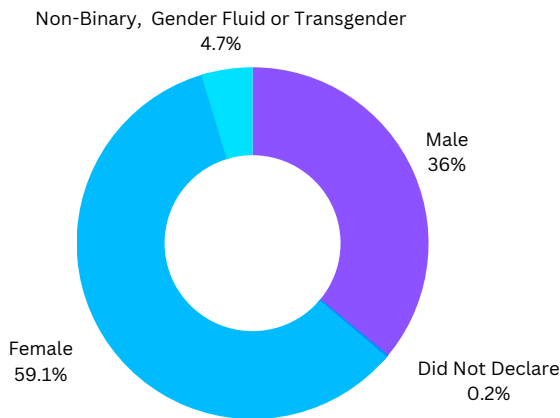
Futures Forward Staff

- Employment Facilitator - Chantelle Chernick
- Financial Counsellor - Madison Hooper
- Financial Counsellor - Ashley Kaartinen
- Indigenous Youth Service Navigator - Heaven Geller
- Post-Secondary Student Advisor - Samantha Olea
- Program Manager, CMHA - Levi Labelle
- Program Manager, YES - Caitlin Ashmore (September - January)
- Program Manager, YES - Jenna Drabble
- Mental Health Clinician - Steven Nero
- Outreach Coordinator - Evan Forest
- Student Support Case Manager - Christina McKay
- Youth Service Navigator - Laura McNaughton

"Without [Futures Forward], I wouldn't be in this position. I have so much to thank for the staff. So thanks!" - 2022/23 FF Participant, I wouldn't be in this position. I have so much to thank for the staff. So thanks!" - 2022/23 FF Participant

Who Are Our Clients

Participant Gender Identity

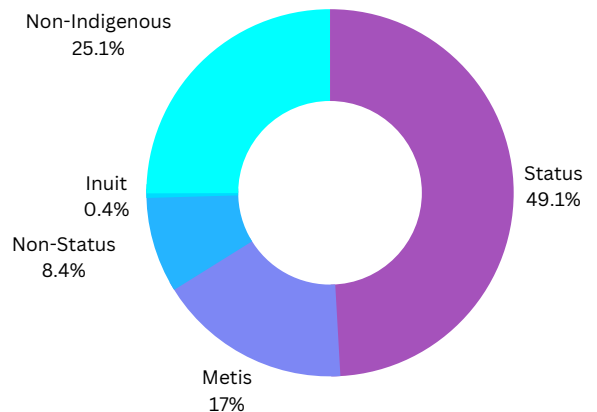


- From September 2022 to March 2023, Futures Forward served **537** participants.

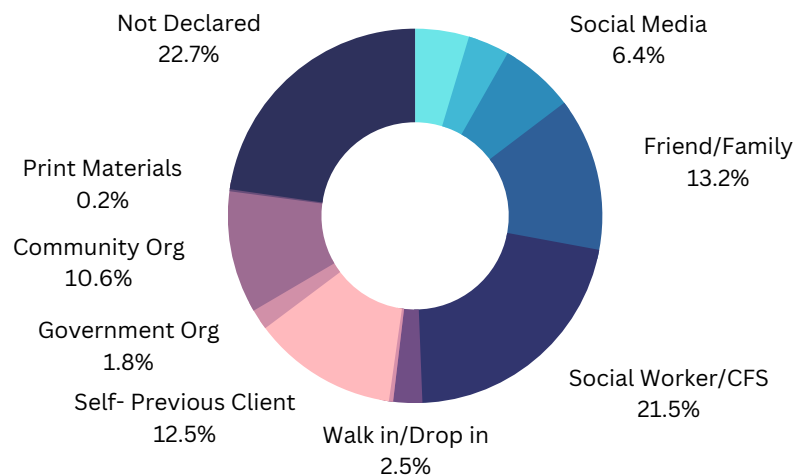
- **75%** of all Futures Forward participants identified as Indigenous (status, non-status, Metis, or Inuit)

- The majority of participants (**63%**) identified as being previously in CFS care
- 21% found Futures Forward this year through a referral from a social worker or CFS

Participant Indigenous Status



How Participants are finding Futures Forward



Program Outputs

	2022-2023
New participants enrolled in Futures Forward	537
Participants who accessed services from more than one agency	85
Post-secondary funding appointments	120
Students supported through post-secondary funding applications	25
Education planning appointments	94
Participants supported with employment planning	126
Service navigation support appointments	110
Housing support appointments	27
Participants who received support obtaining resources (ID's, bank accounts, etc)	20

""[Futures Forward staff]... are willing to help and are always ready to support anyone that needs it." - 2022/23 FF Participant

Program Outputs

	2022-2023
Participants who attended mental health counselling appointments	36
Mental health related referrals	20
Individual mental health counselling appointments held	90
Financial plans developed for participants	15
Financial counselling appointments held	26
Participants who filed taxes through Futures Forward	67
Number of participants who indicated that they had their needs met through Futures Forward	204

IN 2022-2023

54

PARTICIPANTS CONFIRMED
EMPLOYMENT

IN 2022-2023

253

PARTICIPANTS ENROLLED IN
FURTHER EDUCATION OR
TRAINING

Program Evaluation

As a program dedicated to serving youth and meeting them where they are, we look at different ways to engage participants in sharing feedback. In addition to the Council of Youth (COY), which is made up of current or former Futures Forward participants, we also seek broader participant feedback through an annual survey that is sent out to all participants from the program year (for whom we have an up to date email address).

In March 2023 a survey was delivered to 397 participants, 39 of whom filled it out with their feedback on the program. They were asked about their experiences accessing services from the 3 partner agencies and if these services helped them meet their needs and goals.

Overall there was high program satisfaction among respondents, with an average of 86% reporting that they felt supported by staff at the agency where they accessed services. A total of 87% indicated that their knowledge of community resources and how to access them had improved after being involved with Futures Forward. As one participant stated:

"I was pleasantly surprised at the number of supports which were available to me that I did not know existed."

AN AVERAGE OF

84%

SAID THEY FOUND THE
SERVICES THEY ACCESSED
TO BE HELPFUL

90%

STATED THAT THEY FEEL
MORE HOPEFUL FOR THE
FUTURE

Supporting Youth

Tuition Waiver Program

The Tuition Waiver program has been with Futures Forward for over eight years and it continues to grow, as more students apply each year. Together with the support of various institutions across Manitoba and the Manitoba Government, the program is able to provide students with grants and bursaries that covers the cost of tuition and living supports for youth who have spent time in care, eliminating some of the financial barriers students may face pursuing education.

By the March 31, 2023 deadline, 125 applications for a Tuition Waiver had been received and processed by the Futures Forward Post Secondary Education Advisor. Over the course of the spring and summer, these applications will be forwarded to the participating institutions for selection and successful applicants will be notified. Tuition Waiver students will be supported throughout their programs by the Futures Forward Student Support Case Manager.

The 2023-2024 Annual Report will highlight how many students receive a waiver and how many current Tuition Waiver recipients graduate in 2023.

"I am so grateful for the tuition waiver program, I wouldn't be in university otherwise and it has been an enormous help in my life." - 2022/23 FF Participant

Supporting Youth

Access to Services

As a collaborative program, Futures Forward aims to provide access to as many services as possible to support youth in or from care. From our three partner agencies we are able to provide services around employment, education, mental health, service navigation, and financial literacy. Futures Forward also builds connections with other agencies across Manitoba to ensure that if there is a need we cannot support internally, we are able to refer participants to other organizations and services to get the help they need.

Futures Forward staff continue to provide hybrid services to meet participants where they are. An online registration form allows participants to sign themselves up for Futures Forward programming and be immediately directed to the most relevant services. Participants have a range of options when it comes to communicating with staff, whether by Facebook, email, phone, virtually or in person, which supports the goal of offering services that are low-barrier and easy to access.

85

PARTICIPANTS ACCESSED
MORE THAN ONE FUTURES
FORWARD AGENCY

42

REFERRALS MADE TO
AGENCIES OUTSIDE OF
FUTURES FORWARD

71

CONNECTIONS MADE WITH
OTHER YOUTH SERVING
ORGANIZATIONS

Supporting Youth

Indigenous Cultural Events

Manitoba has the highest rate of children involved in child and family services with approximately 10,000 children in care. Within that population 91% identify as First Nations, Metis, or Inuit. In 2022-2023, **75% of Futures Forward participants identified as Indigenous** (First Nations, Inuit, or Metis.)

In order to best serve our participants, Futures Forward, with in kind support from CMHA's Circle of Spirit and Reconciliation, was able to provide a variety of culturally safe programming for participants. From teaching with Elders, sweat lodges, crafting, and medicine walks, it's important youth from care have the opportunity to connect with their culture – or have an opportunity to commit to Truth and Reconciliation through their own learning.

58

CULTURAL CEREMONIES
HELD

25

UNIQUE PARTICIPANTS
ATTENDED

12

CONNECTIONS WITH
INDIGENOUS-LED
ORGANIZATIONS



Connecting With Youth

Council of Youth (COY)

As a way to keep the youth we serve at the forefront of what we do, Futures Forward engages with a voluntary group of youth in or from care to make sure their voices have a place in our program. The COY meets monthly to review program materials, plan special events and contribute new ideas to the program.

The council currently has three regular members who are invested in the group. Between September 2022 - March 2023, they reviewed program resources such as the Scholarship Guide and Transitional Programs Guide and provided valuable insight on these materials. They are also working on developing a code of values for Futures Forward that will be shared by all 3 agency partners, and are supporting plans for the Futures Forward 10-year anniversary event in May.

"[I needed] financial support for child care during an evening course. The proposal I provided [to Workforce, Training and Employment] was overseen at first. Until I connected with [the Student Support Case Manager], what a Godsent she is! Not only did she provide help with getting the financial support I needed but also my mental health weighed much less. She gave me high hopes for a better understanding of the financial help I needed. Thank you so much for making me feel supported in every way!!"- 2022/23 FF Program Participant

Connecting With Youth

Other Outreach Activities

	2022-2023
Futures Forward newsletter recipients	1535
Social media posts made relating to mental health, service navigation, basic needs, and holistic wellness	1390
Social Media posts relating to financial literacy through "MoneyTalk Mondays"	26
Presentations and workshops provided	106
School presentations and workshops provided	62
Unique presentation participants	1,422
Connections to rural Manitoba schools or youth serving agencies	13

"[Futures Forward] can change a life." - 2022/23 FF
Program Participant

Celebrating Youth

Holiday Party 2022

In 2022, Futures Forward hosted its annual holiday party in person for the first time since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Youth and their families and friends gathered at Huddle Broadway for an evening of games and activities, entertainment, a full meal, gifts and festive holiday atmosphere. Every participant received gifts that were generously donated by local businesses.



In addition to the holiday party, 450 participants were mailed a post card from Futures Forward wishing them a wonderful holiday season and happy new year from all the staff at Futures Forward.



Participant Stories

Participant A came to see the Employment Facilitator (EF) to update her resume and do job searching. At their second appointment, she told the EF that she was having more success with employers reaching out since updating her resume. During this appointment the EF also reviewed all of the Futures Forward services with the participant, which resulted in getting her signed up for free CPR training at YES Manitoba as well as referred to 2 internal partners (Financial Counsellor and Youth Service Navigator). Even though the participant was accessing services from multiple Futures Forward service providers already, reviewing the services she has access to lead her to be connected to more services.

Participant B needed support submitting her application to the RRC Polytech Child and Youth Care Program. With the help of the Post-Secondary Education Advisor, she was able to go through the requirements before applying, gathering all documents to upload and having FF cover the application fee. This student also needed to complete an Academic Communication Assessment (ACA) to apply so they researched together what the ACA required, studied essay writing, and navigated the RRC website to book an assessment. In the end she was able to submit the required documents and complete the application form.

Participant C, who has been accessing services consistently with Futures Forward since 2018, reached out wanting support in applying to university to study English. The Outreach Coordinator supported this young person in exploring post-secondary options, navigating the application process as a mature student, and applying for accessibility accommodations. They were also able to identify a university to apply to that the youth had not previously considered but is a great fit for their needs. The youth was supported in submitting 2 Tuition Waiver applications and is looking forward to attending post-secondary school this Fall.

Participant D attended his first financial counselling session at CFCS. Afterward, he indicated that his financial questions had been answered and he appreciated all of the information presented in the session and how it related to his current situation. He stated that he was leaving the session thinking about his future financial goals.

Participant Stories

Participant E came to see the FF Mental Health Clinician. During the counselling intake, they disclosed a history of trauma from being in the care of CFS and explained the many adversities they had subsequently experienced as a result of having experienced these traumas. Over several one-at-a-time counselling sessions, the participant was able to externalize and separate the traumas and other positive life experiences using narrative therapeutic approaches. Over time they were able to reauthor their story to see the new positive narrative they have built for their life. The youth continues to meet with the clinician to focus on developing skills to manage the challenges associated with their past traumas.

Participant F was referred to the Futures Forward Youth Service Navigator (YSN) by their social worker. They were on an extension of care and had been struggling with gaining employment, finding a safe and stable living environment, as well as struggling with addiction and mental health concerns. This participant had very minimal support in the community, and their social worker wanted to make sure there was support for them once they exited CFS care. The YSN referred this participant to the Mental Health Clinician for mental health supports, the Employment Facilitator for support with resumes, cover letters and job searches, made an external referral to the ACT program for addiction supports and assisted with an EIA intake and housing searches.

This participant meets regularly with the Futures Forward Mental Health Clinician and feels this has greatly impacted his life and well-being. This participant benefits from having a regular person to chat to about life and emotions. They have found employment through Youth Employment Services and are getting support securing housing. The YSN will be attending the apartment viewing with them and helping to fill out rental forms. This participant regularly checks in with the YSN and feels like they have the support they were wanting. They also have not used substances for 2 months and they shared that they feel Futures Forward helped them reach that milestone.

Participant Stories

Participant G was referred to the Futures Forward Youth Service Navigator (YSN) by the Outreach Coordinator. The Futures Forward team worked to organize wrap-around supports as this participant had been struggling with getting on EIA and advocating for themselves through the lengthy process, chronic food insecurity, a lack of understanding of government systems and lack of support with childcare, complicated by a desire to improve their parenting skills.

The YSN completed an EIA Intake alongside this participant, explaining the process and next steps. Together, they will attend the first EIA appointment once it is scheduled. The YSN and this participant completed a Winnipeg Harvest application together for ongoing food support as well. The YSN got this participant connected to parenting classes at Acorn Family Place that have childcare available. The YSN also referred this participant to the FF Employment Facilitator so that they could start working on their resume and cover letter to begin applying for work. This participant feels better equipped to handle life's stresses now that they have had the support of Futures Forward. This participant now has a regular source of food for themselves and their child, and are on track to getting connected with EIA, as well as potentially gaining employment and feeling more confident in themselves and their abilities as a parent. This participant has shown progress with advocating for themselves and becoming more assertive.

Participant H, who is a single mom to three young children, expressed how helpful it was to be able to access free tax filing through CFCS, particularly considering the increasing cost of living. She was also very appreciative of the fact that she could do her appointments on Microsoft Teams which saved her a long bus ride with her children. She shared that her Financial Counsellor is a kind and helpful person who has helped her a lot.

Program Challenges

Connecting with Participants

Connecting with youth through the winter months was difficult due to the constraints imposed by the weather. Weather and its effects on mental health have led to a large number of cancellations to appointments, rescheduling, appointments shifted from in-person to virtual, etc. When appointments are missed consecutively, staff have observed that some participants choose to not rebook due to built up anxiety about already missed appointments leaving staff to reach out multiple times to reconnect.

Program Capacity

The administrative time required to support participants can pose challenges for Futures Forward staff. Most staff have fairly extensive administrative duties associated with their roles that are particularly heavy at certain times of the year which can lead to difficulties balancing client follow-ups, appointments and administrative work. There is a shared need for more administrative support across all agencies.

Additionally, the particular needs of individual participants are growing. Multiple systemic barriers, lack of access to food, difficulties connecting and receiving supports from EIA, substance use, mental health challenges, life skills deficits among others, are all presenting equally and often to the point of crisis when they connect with Futures Forward. Since these challenges often require an all at once approach rather than tackling each barrier or challenge and moving onto the next, staff have seen an increased need for administrative time to meet the demands of required paperwork, make appropriate referrals and handoffs and to document case notes when required. While this is not a new phenomenon, the volume of services requiring this level of intervention has significantly increased.

Consistently heavy caseloads can also make it difficult for many staff to schedule appointments with participants within a short time frame after receiving an intake or referral, which is always the goal across all Futures Forward services. This challenge is particularly felt within employment and financial counselling services which have a high demand and more limited staffing resources than other services.

Thank You to everyone who makes Futures Forward possible!

Funding provided by the Government of Manitoba



Canadian Mental Health Association
Manitoba and Winnipeg
Mental health for all



YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SERVICES



COMMUNITY
Financial Counselling Services

Tuition Waiver Partner Institutions



BRANDON
UNIVERSITY

Université de
Saint-Boniface

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WINNIPEG



Thank you to our 2022 Holiday Party Donors:

Across the Board
Silver Jeans
Winnipeg Art Gallery
Canadian Human Rights Museum
Assiniboine Park
McNally Robinson
Folklorama
Goldeyes Baseball Club