

# ASPIRE FOR HIGHER IMPACT REPORT 2025



ASPIRE FOR HIGHER



TOGETHER, WE CAN BUILD STRONGER COMMUNITIES

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## LETTER FROM **THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

### **Dear Friends, Partners, and Supporters,**

2025 was a transformative year for Aspire for Higher.

Building on the growing success of the A4H Skills Lab, we significantly expanded pathways to meaningful economic opportunity through the skilled trades. Participants received industry-aligned, hands-on training combined with comprehensive wraparound supports including career coaching, mentorship, financial literacy, and mental wellness services. These integrated supports empowered individuals to move from uncertainty to stability, equipping them with in-demand skills that lead to sustainable, family-supporting careers. This year alone, we served over 7,700 youth and 4,900 adults, created 130 jobs, and established 87 community partnerships, milestones that reflect the real and measurable impact of investing in skilled trades talent.

The A4H Skills Lab strengthened critical connections between training and employment by deepening relationships with employers, unions, and industry leaders. Graduates gained certifications, apprenticeships, and direct job placements in fields such as electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and construction. These outcomes represent more than numbers, they represent new beginnings, increased earning potential, and long-term career pathways for individuals and families across our communities.

We also strengthened our team and expanded key initiatives, which continues to thrive as a year-round platform for youth development, mentorship, and leadership. Thousands of young people benefited from programs that promote wellness, confidence, teamwork, and lifelong skills.

As we look ahead to 2026, we are focused on increasing training capacity, expanding employer partnerships, and growing academic and entrepreneurship programming to create even stronger pathways to employment, apprenticeship, and economic independence.

None of this work happens alone. To our partners, funders, staff, employers, and participants, thank you for believing in our mission and for helping us build brighter futures through the power of skills and opportunity.

With gratitude,

*Abena J. Addo*

**ABENA ADDO**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

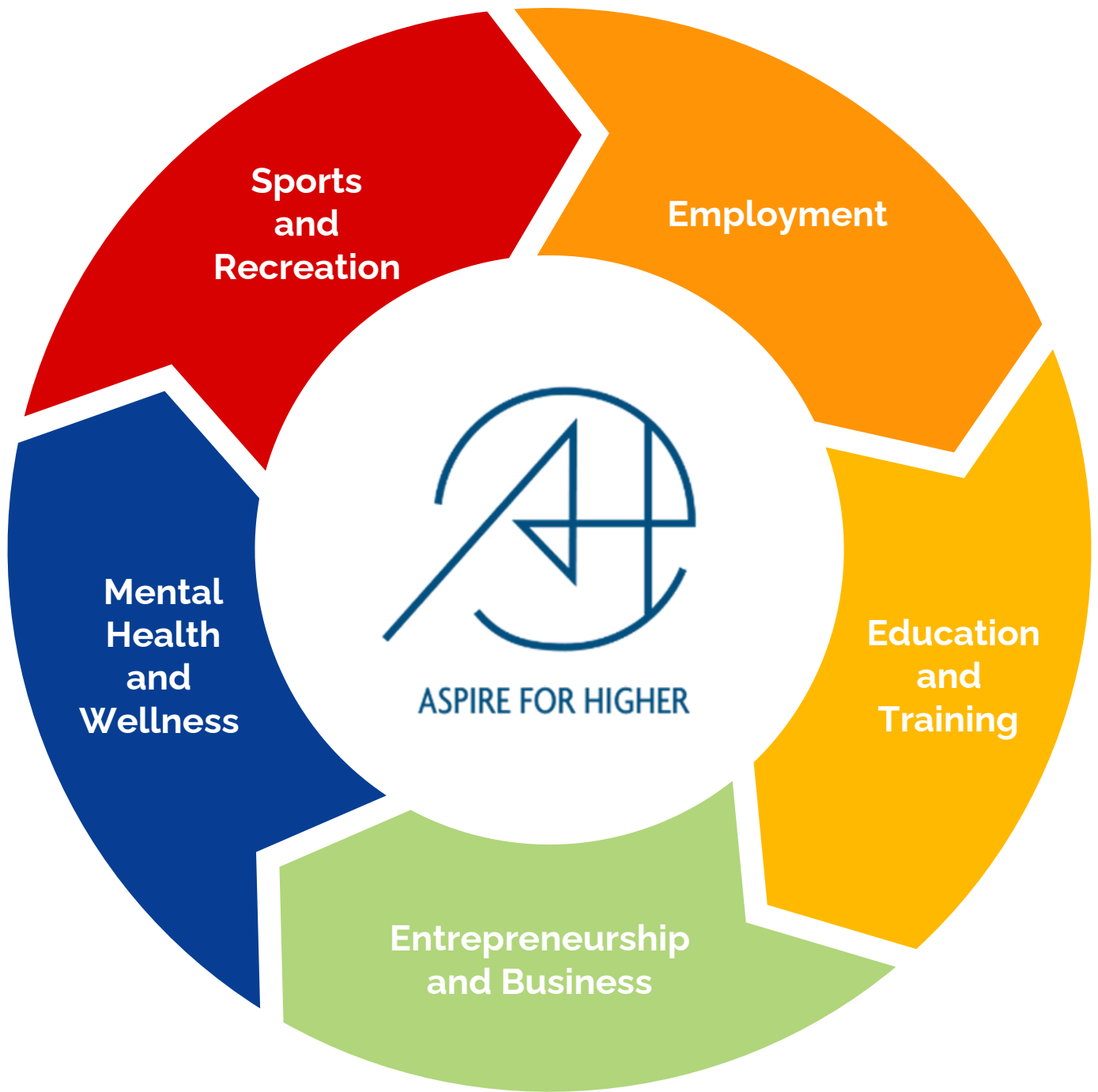


## Our Story: **Mission + Vision**

At A4H, **our mission** is to fortify the foundation of communities by leveraging the power of sports, health & wellness, education, employment, and entrepreneurship. We are a data-driven organization unwavering in our dedication to empower youth, young adults, and professionals through innovative and comprehensive strategies.

**Our vision** is to implement a social inclusion framework where people can develop, learn, work and play in a context that is responsive and supportive of their needs, aspirations, and interests.

# CORE PILLARS



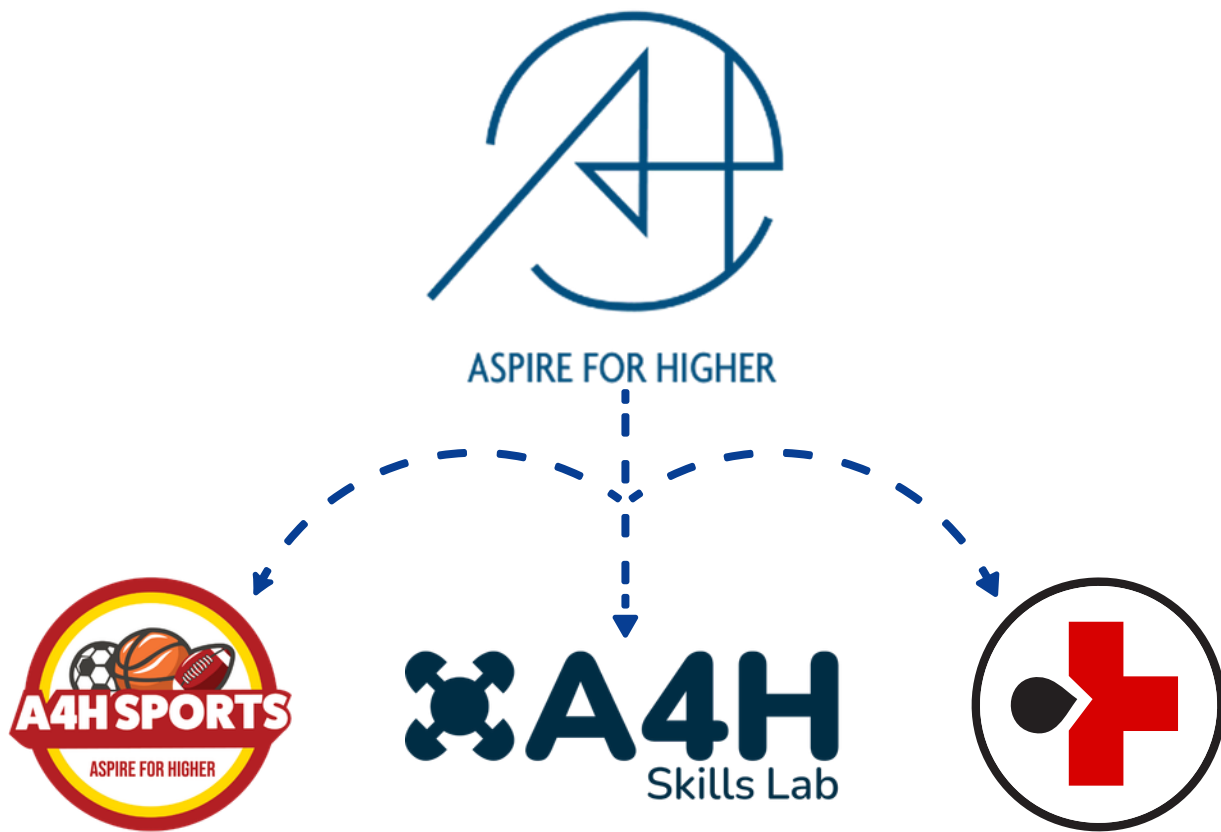
# Our Initiatives at **Aspire for Higher**

At Aspire for Higher, we lead three key initiatives:

**A4H Sports** - launched in 2013 to foster mentorship, leadership, and wellness through youth sports.

**Black Healthcare Professionals Network (BHPN)** - established in 2021 to offer business support and advancements for Black healthcare entrepreneurs.

**A4H Skills Lab** - launched in 2024, is dedicated to providing accessible and tailored learning opportunities in skilled trades and other in-demand industries.



# Impact at a glance



YOUTH SERVED **7734**



ADULTS SERVED **4930**



JOBS CREATED **130**



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS ESTABLISHED **87**



BUSINESSES SUPPORTED **9**



# Aspire for Higher Staff



**Abena Addo**  
Executive Director &  
Founder



**Eldon Holder Jr.**  
VP Social Impact &  
Stakeholder Relations



**Alanna Garner**  
Director of Camps &  
Programs



**Dr. Nikolai Whyte**  
Co-Founder &  
Managing Director (BHPN)



**Christian Poyser**  
Head Coach



**J'mar Williams**  
Wellness Basketball  
Program Manager



**Karen Smith**  
Executive &  
Administrative Assistant



**Haile McGibbon-Corbin**  
Program Coordinator



**Arka Roy**  
Program Outreach  
Coordinator



**Emmanuella Dwumfour**  
Marketing &  
Communications Coordinator



**Dillon Lewis**  
Marketing &  
Communications Coordinator



**Cassandra Brady**  
Marketing &  
Communications Manager



**Jennelle Robb**  
Strategic Engagement &  
Event Manager



**Tianna Thomas**  
Operations & Member  
Support Coordinator



**Shayok Shayok**  
Senior Program Manager



**Vivian Duarte**  
Executive Assistant &  
E- Learning Coordinator



**Mahalia Crichlow**  
Workforce Development  
Manager, HR



## Board of Directors



**Roya Assadi**  
Treasurer



**Nicole Morris**  
Chair



**Mitsy Clennon**  
Board Member



**Nicolette Stewart**  
Board Member

# A4H SPORTS

## 2025 HIGHLIGHTS



# A4H Sports Impact at a Glance



**YOUTH SERVED 7700+**



**JOBS CREATED 130**



**LOCATIONS 6**



**SCHOOLS 82**

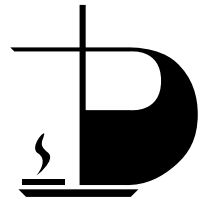


## Partnered with:



Public Health  
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé  
publique du Canada



**POLYCULTURAL**  
IMMIGRANT & COMMUNITY SERVICES



**BRAMPTON**





# School Programs

<b>7540</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>Instructional</b>	<b>Schools</b>
<b>Participants</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Visited</b>

## After-School Multi-Sport Enrichment Sessions:

Through our After-School Multi-Sport Enrichment Sessions, delivered in partnership with PLASP, we supported over **2,500 children** across **55 schools**, delivering more than **450 instructional hours**. These sessions helped develop students' physical literacy by introducing them to a variety of sports and fundamental movement skills, while also building their confidence, teamwork, and communication abilities.

## Wellness & Sports Program and Physed Class Takeovers:

Our Wellness and Sports Program and Physed Class Takeovers empowered **over 3,500 students across 17 schools** through a combination of targeted small-group sessions and large-scale school-based programming. Students improved physical literacy and sports skills, built confidence and teamwork, and developed critical life skills including stress management, emotional regulation, and healthy habits. Simultaneously, **we strengthened 17 teachers' capacity** by introducing innovative drills, activities, and instructional strategies, leaving a lasting impact on school physical education programs and fostering a culture of wellness that extends beyond our sessions.

## Food Lunch Program Partnership:

In partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia and R&B Kitchen, a soul food restaurant, we supported a food lunch program that delivered high-quality, nutritious meals to **over 1,500 youth**. This collaboration ensured young people had access to the fuel they need to learn, grow, and thrive, one meal at a time.





# Year-round Programs

**94**  
**Total**  
**Participants**

**72**  
**Instructional**  
**Hours**

**31**  
**Jobs**  
**Created**

## Jr.NBA:

Over 16 weeks, our Jr. NBA program supported **28 children** aged 4–8 in developing fundamental basketball skills, including dribbling, shooting, defense, and lay-ups, while also fostering teamwork and sportsmanship.

## Basketball Skill Development Program:

Over 24 weeks, our Skills and Drills program supported **36 children** aged 9–13 in refining their basketball skills, focusing on game strategy and concepts, while also developing teamwork, communication, and leadership abilities.

## All Girls Basketball Development Program:

Over 8 weeks, our All Girls Basketball Development Program supported **30 girls** aged 8–13 in developing basketball skills, including dribbling, lay-ups, shooting, and understanding game strategy. The program aimed to increase their love for the game, encourage lifelong healthy habits, and provide an inclusive and supportive environment.



# Summer Camps

**1,500+**  
Total  
Campers

**61**  
Jobs  
Created

**6**  
Locations

## A4H Sports Camps:

During the eight-week program, Aspire for Higher Sports successfully hosted four independent sport camps at 3 locations, supporting over 500 campers and providing 45 youth employment opportunities. The camps focused on developing physical literacy by introducing participants to a variety of sports, while also fostering teamwork, communication, and leadership skills.

## Africentric Camp:

During the five-week program, the Africentric Camp, delivered in partnership with the Peel District School Board, engaged 125 campers from Kindergarten to Grade 8, providing a dynamic mix of sports, wellness, and culturally enriching activities. The camp helped campers develop a stronger sense of identity, belonging, and leadership skills, empowering them to make positive changes in their communities.

## Focus on Youth Camp:

During the three-week program, our organization partnered with the Dufferin- Peel Catholic District School Board's Focus on Youth Camp, serving as guest instructors to lead interactive STEM and physical literacy workshops. Through these hands-on sessions, 125 campers developed critical thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving skills, while building confidence and curiosity to explore new interests and reach their full potential.



# Testimonials

“ The impact of Aspire for Higher goes beyond the classroom. Students develop leadership, resilience, and critical thinking skills while having fun.

”  
- Margaret Majewski, Elementary Teacher, **A4H Sports**



“ My favourite thing about A4H Basketball are the coaches and I like the friends that are here. My favourite coach is Coach Christian because he was my first coach and I was with him for three years. I like basketball because I like shooting and practicing my shots. I like playing it, I like dribbling the ball, it feels relaxing and comfortable.

”  
- Noah, 8 years old, **A4H Sports**  
Fall Programs.



# A4H Skills Lab

## 2025 HIGHLIGHTS



# Overview

**240+**  
Participants

**13**  
Partnerships

This year, A4H Skills Lab proudly graduated **28 students** from our pre-apprenticeship program, equipping them with the skills, experience, and confidence to launch successful careers in the skilled trades. We onboarded **eight new employer partnerships**, expanded our active job sites across the GTA and Ottawa, and generated over **5,000 hours of skilled trades work experience for participants**. Our outreach efforts included job fairs across Ontario, workplace readiness workshops for youth, volunteer work on active job sites, and a dynamic roundtable discussion. All introducing folks to skilled trades opportunities and establishing valuable partnerships for our students. Beyond technical training, we're building a community of future tradespeople and business owners through comprehensive support including **12 affordable housing units, experienced mentorship**, and our innovative mobile app that connects talent with opportunity.

## Partners Include:



MOE'S LAWN & GARDENING SERVICE



# Outcomes dashboard



GRADUATES

65



JOBS PLACEMENTS

55



PLACEMENT HOURS

5,000+



GROCERY SUPPORT

Participants: 21  
Total Spent: \$12,400



HOUSING SUPPORT

Participants: 22  
Total Spent: \$117,080.34



# Event Spotlights



## Event One: Employer Members Luncheon

In March, A4H Skills Lab hosted the Employer Members Luncheon with over 20 guests, transforming a simple meal into a life-changing afternoon for aspiring tradespeople. Around tables filled with conversation and possibility, our students aged 17-30 sat across from industry leaders, sharing their stories, skills, and dreams of building careers in the trades. **Nine students** had secured job placements on the spot, their futures suddenly illuminated with new opportunities. We forged **five new employer partnerships** that continue to open doors for our program participants. This single afternoon embodied our mission: breaking down barriers, creating authentic relationships, and proving that when talent meets opportunity in the right environment, transformation happens.



## Event Two: Community Giveback Day

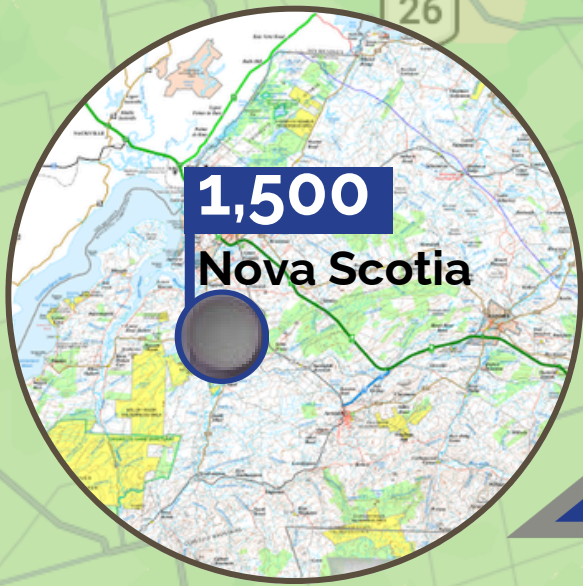
In September, A4H Skills Lab partnered with Brand Momentum for our Community Giveback Day, trading office chairs for paintbrushes and transforming an Ottawa site into a space of possibility. Over two days, our team worked shoulder-to-shoulder with students who aspire to give back to their communities, painting walls with fresh coats of promise, clearing fall leaves that blanketed the grounds, and sweeping away the remnants of neglect to reveal a clean, welcoming space for future skilled trades students. This wasn't just about site preparation—it was about living our values beyond paperwork and policies, stepping into the community we serve and demonstrating that change happens when we roll up our sleeves together.



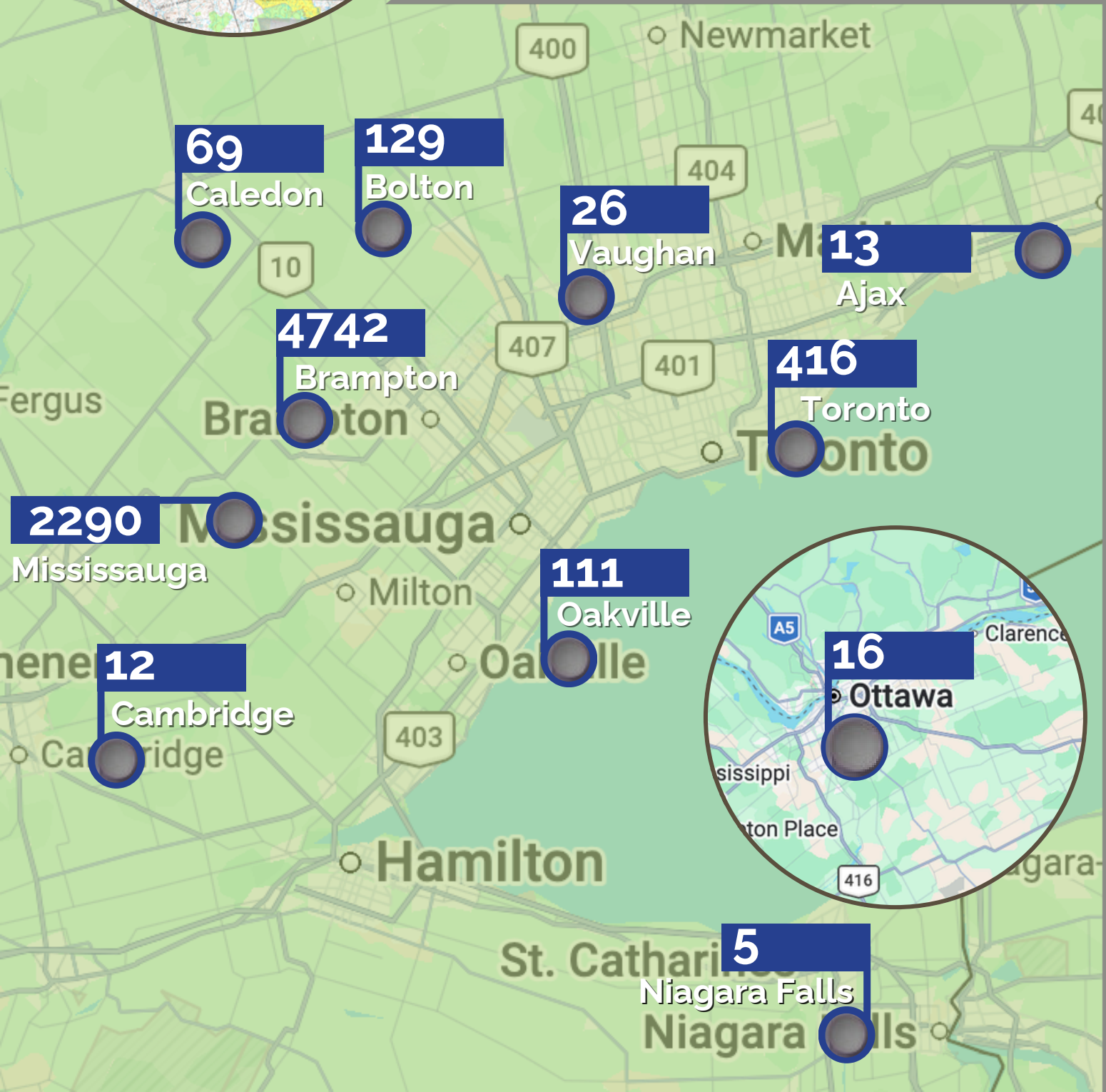
# Mental Wellness

Through our partnership with **MindWell**, A4H Skills Lab participants gained practical tools to manage stress, advance professionally, and build stronger community connections via programs like the **Take 5 Mindfulness Certificate, Financial Freedom Series, and Career & Wellness Healing Sessions**. In September, we brought this holistic approach to life with a transformative **Muay Thai self-defense wellness workshop** in Ottawa at the Westside Muay Thai Martial Arts School, where **15 participants and two expert instructors** came together to learn real-world defensive tactics rooted in **Muay Thai and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu**. As fists met pads and bodies moved through defensive sequences, confidence grew, stress melted away, and a community united in strength, resilience, and the knowledge that they have the power to protect themselves and support one another through any challenge.



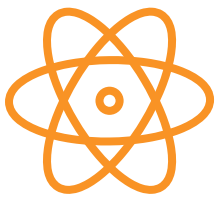


# Participant Map



# LOOKING AHEAD 2026 GOALS

## A4H SPORTS:



### Expand Academic Enrichment

Integrate STEM, math, and literacy programs to enhance student development beyond athletics.



### Grow Institutional Partnerships

Strengthen collaborations with school boards to expand program reach and impact.



### Elevate Brand Visibility

Implement targeted outreach to increase community presence and program participation

## A4H SKILLS LAB:



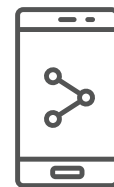
### Cultivate Entrepreneurial Mindsets

Develop students' leadership and business skills to inspire future job creators.



### Enhance Training Capacity

Expand instructors, resources, and tools to scale student skill development.



### Grow App Adoption

Increase employer engagement with the A4H Skills Lab app to boost student employment connections.

# Thank You!



ASPIRE FOR HIGHER

## CONTACT US

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