

Annual Report 2023





All portraits feature Open Doors Initiative participants,
we thank them for taking part

PHOTOS CREDITS

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Our Purpose

Is to enable equitable access to employability for marginalised people

Our Vision

Is of an inclusive Ireland, where diversity in business thrives and equitable measures are adopted to eliminate inequality so that everyone has fair access to meaningful employment

Our Mission

Is to guide those who are facing barriers to employability and to support companies through collaboration and innovation





Our Values

Collaborative: We leverage our unique position to foster collaborative working relationships among our partner companies, stakeholders and participants to magnify our impact and ensure the best outcomes

Participant Centred: We commit to the rights and needs of our participants in securing pathways to employability, guided by the relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals

Thought Leadership: We work with our business partners and Government to embed Corporate Social Justice thinking and actions in all their organisations to have positive impact on business outcomes

Open and Transparent: We ensure openness and transparency through effective governance and clear communication with all board members and stakeholders

Research Led: We leverage and conduct relevant research to ensure our work is targeted and informed by lived experience

Impact Driven: We focus on high impact work that supports employability of marginalised people and changes the lives of participants and their families; we regularly monitor and evaluate our work to ensure maximum impact

Agile: We continue to be agile to remain relevant in responding to participant needs and company needs and adapt to changes in the market

Overview from Our Chair, Paddy Hayes

Welcome to The Open Doors Initiative and the Annual Report for 2023. In these pages you will get a sense of the commitment and collective efforts of our dedicated team, our partner companies, and those with whom The Open Doors Initiative has had the privilege of working.

The Open Doors Initiative is rooted in the belief that every individual, whatever obstacles they may face, deserves the opportunity to unlock their full potential. In a world where many still face barriers to accessing employment, the Open Doors Initiative mission has remained steadfast: to create pathways to work, education, and entrepreneurship for those who have been marginalised or overlooked.

Throughout the past year, the work of The Open Doors Initiative has had a transformative impact for many. Training, mentoring, internships and direct support have empowered refugees, people with disabilities, disadvantaged youth, and many others to overcome challenges and to realise their dreams. Each success story is a testimony to the power of perseverance and resilience, and to optimism and the belief that no door is closed forever.

Our partner companies have played a pivotal role in supporting the Open Doors Initiative. By embracing diversity and fostering inclusive workplace cultures, they have enriched their own organisations and have shown what is possible. Together, we look forward to a future where every individual is valued, where diversity is celebrated as a source of strength, and where opportunities are available to all.

As we celebrate the achievements of 2023, it is important also to recognise the many challenges that remain. There is much more to be done to dismantle those barriers to employment and opportunity that still exist; and The Open Doors Initiative remains steadfast in our commitment to creating pathways to work, education, and entrepreneurship for those who have been marginalised.

To all who have supported The Open Doors Initiative through 2023 - to our partners, donors, volunteers, our dedicated team, and the communities we serve - thank you. Your belief, your commitment and your generosity have underpinned everything that has been achieved, and we are deeply grateful for your continued support.

The inspiring stories of resilience, hope, and transformation in this Annual Report reinforce the importance of the work of the dedicated Open Doors Initiative team and partner companies. Together, it is important to build further on this in 2024, continuing to remove barriers and creating pathways to work, education, and entrepreneurship for those who need support.

“Before the connection with Open Doors, I spent five months searching for a job. But after the workshop I corrected my mistakes in my resume. Preparing for the interview helped me understand the specifics of the answer strategy and the characteristics of the local labour market. Open Doors assisted me in building a resume and preparing for an interview. As a result, I received a job offer and additional training in Business English.”

**- Olha Hryn
Open Doors Participant**



Fazel Poyah

"I want to express my gratitude for the exceptional support I received during my journey with the Open Doors Initiative. The interview skills, training, and mentorship were invaluable, propelling me into a successful work placement at IDA Ireland.

Your commitment to fostering professional growth is truly appreciated. I highly recommend ODI to anyone seeking career guidance and meaningful opportunities."

MEMBER COMPANIES



ODI PROGRAMMES



"Over the last five years it has been IDA's pleasure to work in partnership with the Open Doors Initiative on IDA's work placement programme resulting in multiple paid work placements, providing valuable experience for participants. IDA Ireland has also worked with the Open Doors Initiative on mentorship programmes and participant trainings.

On a personal level I have had the privilege of providing mentorship to Fazel Poyah, an exceptional participant that ODI introduced to me. Fazel was forced to seek refuge in Ireland after the Taliban seized power in his native Afghanistan in August 2021. Initially we focussed on framing his value for employers within his CV and cover letters, job search activity and interview techniques. Fazel's self-confidence has increased and

he has a strong sense of his own value and is thriving in the workforce now. He is an incredibly brave person and continues to challenge himself where staying in a comfort zone would be an easier option. I am lucky to count Fazel as a friend.

Sometimes we can create reasons in our mind as to why we shouldn't do something. In the case of mentoring the reasons may include potential language barriers, a perceived lack of common ground or in many cases fear of saying the wrong thing. Language barriers can be overcome and common ground easily found. I have found my journey as a mentor hugely rewarding and would strongly recommend the Open Doors Initiative mentorship programme."

- Frank Scott Lennon
Organisational Development
Manager, IDA Ireland

2021

Came to Ireland as a Programme Refugee

2021

ODI supported Fazel with housing, employment, and family reunification

2022

ODI supported Fazel in gaining employment with IOM as a Procurement Coordinator

MAY 2023

Joined the ODI mentorship programme, mentored by Frank Scott Lennon from IDA Ireland

OCTOBER 2023

Applied for the IDA Ireland Work Placement programme with ODI

NOVEMBER 2023

Selected to join the team as Assistant Project Executive for the Mid-East Region

Message from Our CEO, Jeanne McDonagh

In today's rapidly evolving landscape, the imperative for businesses to embrace Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has never been more pressing. However, as our world faces unprecedented challenges—from global wars to social unrest—it is evident that a mere commitment to CSR is no longer sufficient. The paradigm is shifting towards a more robust framework: Corporate Social Justice (CSJ).

Corporate Social Justice signifies a fundamental re-evaluation of the role of businesses in society. It transcends the traditional notions of charity and environmental stewardship, urging companies to actively engage with and address the systemic inequalities and injustices that permeate our communities. It requires a holistic approach, one that integrates social justice principles into every facet of organisational operations, from internal policies to external engagements.

At the heart of Corporate Social Justice lies a deep commitment to understanding and responding to the lived experiences of marginalised and disadvantaged groups. It demands that businesses not only acknowledge their societal impact but actively strive to mitigate harm and promote equity. By fostering inclusive workplace cultures, supporting marginalised communities, and advocating for meaningful change, companies can become catalysts for social progress.

The journey from CSR to CSJ is not without its challenges. It requires a fundamental shift in mindset, one that transcends profit-driven motives to prioritise the well-being of all stakeholders. It demands courage, empathy and a willingness to confront uncomfortable truths. It is a journey worth undertaking—a journey towards a more just and equitable future for all.

At the Open Doors Initiative, we are proud to be at the forefront of this movement towards Corporate Social Justice. Through our unwavering commitment to empowering marginalised individuals and fostering inclusive workplaces, we strive to build a society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our corporate partners, donors, government, supporting partners, and our dedicated employees, whose tireless efforts make the work laid out here possible and who live this belief in every aspect of their engagements.

Together, let us continue to champion the principles of Corporate Social Justice and work towards a brighter, more equitable future for all.

Success Stories

Our partners support individuals from marginalised groups to access employment, entrepreneurship and education through a range of interventions, that are focused on creating and maintaining high-quality pathways to work.

Listed here are some of the programmes and opportunities many of these participating companies provide:

- In person and online workshops to teach individuals pre-employment skills, including CV writing, job interview preparation, and navigating the Irish job market.
- Provide comprehensive training programmes to expose marginalised groups to real-life work environments and experience.
- Provide information sessions about their company culture, hiring practices and available opportunities.
- Provide opportunities and eliminate barriers for students from under-represented backgrounds.
- Provide mentorship and additional support to job seekers with an intellectual disability.
- Provide opportunities for work experience across various company sites for asylum seekers and people with disabilities.
- Employed people with intellectual disabilities and provided support when they join the workforce.
- Provide apprenticeships for marginalised job seekers.
- Actively include migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in the recruitment process and support their development through the experience.
- Provide apprenticeships to upskill young migrant people with practical training and work experience.
- Provide pro bono advice, support and professional services to marginalised groups.
- Paid work placements for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers so they can gain local experience and gain relevant skills.
- Provide accredited qualifications courses in key areas such as technology and accounting.
- Provide hospitality skills training and work experience placements for refugees, asylum seekers, people with various disabilities, and young people coming from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Drop-in clinics featuring speakers from mixed ethnic backgrounds to highlight and draw awareness around diverse creative perspectives.
- Internship programme for members of the Traveller and Roma communities.
- Train the Trainer sessions on job searches, CV preparation, information on recruitment agencies, preparing for interviews, and more to help the staff of NGOs train their service users.
- Implemented a 12-week work placement programme for refugees.
- Intellectual disabilities graduate programme and guide for other employers.
- DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) workshops for students.
- Mentoring people from marginalised backgrounds, guiding them to access employment, start their own business, navigate new workplaces, and access training and education.
- Provide toolkits and other resources to help job seekers navigate the Irish job market.
- Provide workshops about employment rights with a focus on people from marginalised backgrounds.
- Organise and attend recruitment events aimed at hiring candidates from diverse backgrounds.



Case Studies

CPL/Vision Ireland

“Throughout 2023, Cpl strengthened our partnership with Vision Ireland. According to the last Census, only one in four people with visual impairment were in the labour force, and they had a 60% less chance of being in employment. They identified there was a lack of awareness from employers and colleagues and emphasised the importance of employers being open and willing to hire a person with a disability.

This year, Cpl partnered with Vision Ireland to deliver a Train the Trainer session where Cpl volunteers compiled content on job searches, CV preparation, information on recruitment agencies, preparing for interviews, etc. that would help the staff of Vision Ireland train their Service Users who have vision impairments to try find and secure employment. The session was very successful and Martina Melvan, Workplace Integration and Partner Officer from Vision Ireland followed up to say:

“Thank you all for an amazing session yesterday! I feel that our whole team learned a lot, and you shared very useful insight with us. We’ll be much more confident and aligned as a team in supporting our service users in their job search moving forward.”

In return, Vision Ireland hosted a fantastic session on “How to be an Accessible Presenter” with our Cpl staff which provided excellent tips on the do’s and don’ts of accessibility and inclusiveness while presenting.

Cpl hosted Mock Interviews and CV preparation sessions with nine service users of Vision Ireland. Overall, the learners had phenomenal feedback about the day, with one of the participants stating: “You can tell they (Cpl) made an effort with everyone, and it was great to work with them”, and the other saying: “Ten out of ten regarding the sighted guide!”. Additionally, one of the learners highlighted



**Vision
Ireland**

“Open Doors helped me build my resume. During my communication with them, I received advice on preparing for interviews, which emphasized my skills. I received a job offer and further training on a business English course. On the English course I gained knowledge and professional vocabulary. Thank you very much.”

**- Polina Rodak
Open Doors Participant**

“I had previously applied to various organisations for help, but only at Open Doors I received real support and a helping hand! They helped me with writing a resume and with further development. They responded very quickly and competently. All the information provided was easy to understand and most useful. After a year in Ireland, I am ready to start my own business after their support and trainings. Thanks a lot!”

**- Oksana Khvostikova
Open Doors Participant**

the value of the whole experience that felt like an actual interview process, as they needed to come in properly dressed and groomed and there was also a waiting process in line for the candidates, so they received some valuable hands-on practice.

We were thrilled to welcome Mena Fitzpatrick, a service user from Vision Ireland on an eight-week work placement with Cpl alongside her service dog Pepé over the summer. Mena was an excellent addition to the Cpl Group HR team and provided Cpl with further insight on how we can improve the accessibility across the platforms we use. During Mena's placement, Mena also contributed to a number of projects such as an Accessibility Audit with Access Earth, a review of our Recruitment processes and Mena took part in Cpl News delivering a segment on tips for supporting blind or visually impaired individuals."



Publicjobs.ie Internship Programme for Traveller and Roma Communities

"During 2023, we facilitated an internship placement as part of a new pilot internship programme for members of the Traveller and Roma communities. It is recognised that members of the Traveller and Roma communities have traditionally been underrepresented in the civil service workforce, and the purpose of the programme is to provide members of both communities with paid work experience opportunities in the civil service. We facilitated an intern at Executive Officer level for a 12-month period. Their line manager was provided with appropriate cultural awareness training at the beginning of the internship, and the intern was assigned a workplace mentor during the internship. On successful completion, we hope the Intern will be well placed to apply for future



recruitment competitions for permanent roles across the civil and public service. During 2023, as part of the pathway to permanency element of AHEAD's Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) programme which promotes access to the labour market for graduates with disabilities, we also hired a WAM graduate at Executive Officer level on a permanent basis. Since joining the organisation, the graduate has gained experience working in a number of areas of the organisation and they continue to develop their skillset."

TU Dublin Entrepreneurship for People with Disabilities Course

Niamh Cosgrove is based in Cork city and in the summer of 2023, she learned that a new online entrepreneurship course that was targeted towards persons with disabilities would be starting in September. Niamh has a visual impairment (registered with NCBI) and also has an ADHD diagnosis. For many years she has wanted to own her own business, but there were so many obstacles and no customised supports available. Niamh decided to apply as it was exactly the type of course that she needed. The course recognised her situation, it would provide appropriate learning content and supports, plus she would be given a business mentor to assist her in researching the long-term viability of her business idea.

The 12-week course consisted of online lectures every Wednesday from 11.00 – 13.00. Each lecture had guest speakers who were successful entrepreneurs who have a disability, plus participants were required to complete a section of their business plan each week. The course was offered at NFQ Level 6 of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), and successful

participants were awarded 5 ECTS credits. Participants were students of TU Dublin and therefore were eligible to access any of TU Dublin's resources (e.g. library, disability support services). The course was co-founded by the Open Doors Initiative, it was sponsored by AIB, and the Local Enterprise Office network provided the business mentors.

Niamh's business is the [Alternative Christmas Pudding Company](#) which is a small artisan producer based in Cork, manufacturing gourmet chocolate Christmas puddings for the artisan food and gift market. Currently there are three established products in the range which have been on sale across a number of different types of retail space - artisan/culinary store, Christmas craft/gift markets, farmers/food markets, SuperValu supermarket, online via direct website sales, online via gift websites (Shop in Ireland/Giftsmith), and via hamper companies. Her goals for 2024 are: to achieve sales of 4- 5,000 units during the Christmas season, trial other products during Easter, soft launch of the liqueurs-based products. Niamh expects to continue to achieve a net margin of 38% on sales, and her focus will be on achieving sales earlier in the year, allowing the business to streamline their production schedule and reduce staff costs. At the conclusion of the course, there was a Dragons Den styled event and Niamh took home first prize.



Inclusive Recruitment Training

In Q4 of 2022 we were delighted to receive the support of AIB in launching our Inclusive Recruitment Toolkit.

“We were delighted to support the launch of ODI’s Inclusive Recruitment Toolkit, and felt it was important to lead by example and use it ourselves to educate AIB hiring managers,” said David McCormack, Chief People Officer, AIB

In order to lead by example, in 2023 AIB committed to offering all staff who were involved in the hiring process the opportunity to take part in Inclusive Recruitment training. Since the beginning of the year ODI have facilitated 11 sessions, training a total of 1204 AIB team members.

As a result the team have seen an increased awareness of I&D within the business and recruitment as well as efforts to acknowledge and avoid bias in selection processes.

Reasonable Accommodation was a focus for the team and updates to resources, guidance and practices were implemented over 2023, such as ensuring all job adverts had a clear and welcoming offer of reasonable accommodation as part of their recruitment process.

“We successfully rolled out the training, with great support from ODI, throughout 2023, and it has certainly helped to create the right mindset and practices when it comes to ensuring our recruitment is as inclusive as possible and in driving our diverse talent ambitions.” - David McCormack, Chief People Officer, AIB



Heylove Robert Mark Sr

"I started my journey with Open Doors in March, joining Pathways to Progress to build my CV, learn how to craft a cover letter, and ultimately finding employment while seeking asylum. I attended several meetings with ODI before being connected with a mentor who guided me in tailoring my CV to Ireland."

During my online job search, I expressed to the Open Doors Initiative the challenges I faced as a person with a disability, struggling to find suitable employment. In response, they connected me with the Towards Work project, where I received training on networking and interview preparation, which proved invaluable.

Open Doors continued to support me in my job search with work opportunities and guidance, and in August 2023, I got a job offer from Age Action. Throughout my job search, the Open Doors Initiative has been an incredibly supportive and helpful family to me. Their guidance and assistance with mock interviews, connecting me with resources and opportunities, and the computer that was given me, have played a pivotal role in my journey toward finding employment. I am truly grateful for their continuous support, and I look forward to starting this new chapter of my career at Age Action Ireland."

MEMBER COMPANIES



ODI PROGRAMMES



"We were more than happy to provide 10 refurbished laptops to Open Doors. The Tech team were really touched by the impact the laptops had on the people who received them. It showed us that a small gesture can go a long way."

- Aran Grey
Tech Support Engineer, Flutter

MARCH 2023

Supported through Pathways to Progress, received individual support through online meetings

APRIL 2023

Supported by Towards Work to overcome additional barriers he faced as a person with a disability

MAY 2023

Joined the mentorship programme, working with a mentor from Dell

JUNE 2023

Had difficulties updating CV and completing courses because his computer broke, so Flutter provided a laptop

JULY 2023

Joined the Open Doors Business English course, delivered by AllTalk Training

AUGUST 2023

Got a job at Age Action as an Administration Assistant

“I participated in the Pathways to Progress CV workshop in February. They kindly reviewed my CV and proposed me to apply for a position with Compass Ireland. Later, I was interviewed and got a job offer in March. Thank you so much for helping me find a job.”

**- Artem Marych
Open Doors Participant**

“My mentor helped me review my CV and prepare to interview steps. It was super interesting to have feedback from someone with a similar background (immigrant from Latin America) and this was a key factor to my success during all the recruitment steps. He helped me build confidence and sell myself as the ideal candidate for the position.”

**- Samuel Silva
Open Doors Participant**

Measurements and Reporting

The Open Doors Initiative has reached an impressive milestone in 2023 – over 100,000 people from marginalised backgrounds supported since Open Doors was established. This collective impact by Open Doors and its partners has been measured through self-reporting from the companies.

As part of our membership, our companies take a pledge to provide opportunities into employability for those people most in need in Irish society. These include training, placements, apprenticeships, community supports and employment opportunities. Through these interventions, ODI and our partners were able to support over 26,000 people in 2023 alone, an increase of over 60% compared to 2022.

Many companies reported challenges measuring the number of people from marginalised backgrounds that had been employed by their organisation. In many cases, this cannot be measured properly as it is the individual's choice to share this

information. Therefore, we expect that in reality, the number of people employed is much greater than what is being reported here.

As always, we continue to refine our measurement process to develop a more comprehensive picture of the work of ODI and member companies in this area.

The following are some of the highlights of 2023, which capture just a portion of the work done by ODI and partner companies.

26,248 SKILLED

People who successfully completed an intervention led by ODI or a participant company that enhanced their employment prospects through the development or enhancement of market-relevant skills

449 SECURED EMPLOYMENT

People who accessed full-time employment at a participant company and/or after completing an intervention

104 PAID INTERNSHIPS

People who secured a paid internship or placement in a participant company

64 NEW BUSINESSES

New companies created by 74 people who completed an intervention that enhanced their entrepreneurial skills

3,623 MENTORED

People who received mentoring by employees from participant companies

1,945 TRAINED

People who progressed to further education, training, or other employment schemes after completing an intervention

45,743 HOURS

Time spent by over 7,900 staff from participant companies on interventions

1.3 MILLION EXPENDED

Amount invested by participant companies in NGO programmes, training materials and stipends to fund interventions



Yuliia Bunina

"During the course, I learned about the Irish job market and realised I needed to improve my CV, interview skills, and professional English. Tina, who was an amazing mentor, helped me create a CV that matched the Irish job market, highlighting my strengths. I wrapped up my training with the Business English course. As a result, my visibility in the job market increased, and I started getting job offers from recruiters on LinkedIn."

Eventually, one of those connections led to my current position as a Retail Recruiter in a major Irish/UK supermarket chain. I want to express my deep gratitude to the Open Doors Initiative for their invaluable support to foreign job seekers. Your work is truly life-changing!"

MEMBER COMPANIES



ODI PROGRAMMES



"Microsoft's mission is to empower every person and every organisation on the planet to achieve more. This is not just a statement, we make it a reality. Last year, we launched the Digital Sales Programme with Open Doors to support diverse migrants and refugees to pursue their career in Digital Sales, which is aligned with Microsoft's mission."

The Programme offered key workshops to understand the nature of Digital Sales roles, a day in the life of a Digital Seller, and how to stand out in a Digital Sales job interview. 15 participants worked with 15 Microsoft mentors, including Managers and Senior Digital Sellers, who dedicated time to meet their matched mentees for individual sessions. Additionally, the

programme also helped Microsoft Mentors by boosting their mental health. This is because helping others can make them feel rewarded, fulfilled, and empowered. The mentors benefitted from sharing their learnings and experiences with their mentees, which helped them in their career progression, as mentoring fosters leadership development for mentors and mentees and helps them grow together."

- Dina Medhat, Enterprise Digital Sales Manager, Microsoft

APRIL 2023

Joined the ODI Digital Sales programme, in partnership with Microsoft

APRIL 2023

Worked with a manager from Microsoft as her mentor

MAY 2023

Received support from LinkedIn with her profile and using it as a platform to find opportunities

AUGUST 2023

Joined the Business English course delivered by AllTalk Training

SEPTEMBER 2023

Joined the Job Ready programme

SEPTEMBER 2023

Got a job at a large supermarket chain as a Recruiter

Our Work with Participants

Open Doors and its members work directly with participants from marginalised backgrounds to support them in accessing employment, entrepreneurship, and education. Assisting them is a key focus of our work. Our flagship participant programmes include:

Pathways to Progress

The Open Doors Initiative launched Pathways to Progress on May 18th 2022 with Tánaiste Leo Varadkar, along with Open Doors former chair and Bank of Ireland CEO, Francesca McDonagh and Open Doors CEO, Jeanne McDonagh.

Its aim is to support refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Ireland to access employment, entrepreneurship, and education. In 2023, Pathways to Progress offered close to 14,000 participant engagements through innovative programmes, individual support, workshops, and the Migrant Hub.

Highlights

- Over 2,700 participants supported through workshops and events
- 250 participated in innovative programmes, including Job Ready, Business English (delivered by AllTalk Training), Entrepreneurship for Migrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers (delivered by TU Dublin), and Digital Sales (in partnership with Microsoft).
- 620 were supported directly by the ODI team with CV reviews, mock interviews, and general employment and entrepreneurship queries.
- 124 received individual mentorship through ODI programmes
- 180 people from more than 30 nationalities registered to attend the Open Doors event 'Céad Míle Fáilte: Refugees Welcome Dinner', in

- partnership with TU Dublin and Sodexo
- 50 scholarships were awarded to entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs to attend the TechFoundHer bootcamp in May 2023
- 7,200 people visited our Migrant Hub in 2023

Outcomes

In 2023, at least 33 individuals gained permanent employment as a direct result of Pathways to Progress' support. These include those who received mentorship, participated in the Job Ready programme, and received individual support from ODI.

Additionally, 19 Pathways to Progress participants started paid work placements in 2023, nine of them were with ODI members.



A programme of the
Open Doors Initiative

Funding

The programme is funded by the European Social Fund (€161,706) and Bank of America (€86,357)



Towards Work

The Towards Work project was relaunched in 2023 with the goal of providing a central point for people with disabilities in Ireland to access resources and support in their journey towards employment or entrepreneurship. Throughout the year, Towards Work provided direct supports to individuals with disabilities, delivered a range of training workshops and information sessions, and supported existing ODI programmes and initiatives to help continue their successful impacts.

Highlights of Towards Work's activity in 2023 includes:

- TW Online Hub engagement of 1,700+ Users, and 2,100+ Visits.
- 104 PwD have received direct supports.
- 10 Skills & Information sessions delivered on topics including CV & Interview skills, Career pathways, Work Accommodations, and Entrepreneurship.
- 50 participants recruited to, and supported on, TUD/AIB Entrepreneurship course and ODI Mentorship programme.
- 25 PwD progressed to new employment or further education/entrepreneurship/training opportunities.



A programme of the
Open Doors Initiative



An Roinn Leanai, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Oige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

Funding

The work of Towards Work is funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disabilities, Integration and Youth (€140,000)

Entrepreneurship Programmes

Migrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers

Funding of €50,000 was provided by the Higher Education Authority to offer a bespoke entrepreneurship course to meet the needs of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Ireland. From almost 170 applications, 48 students were selected to join the course based on their business ideas. The course was provided by TU Dublin over the course of 12 weeks and it was offered at Level 6 of the National Framework of Qualifications.

This was the first fully online self-employment course for Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Ireland and it allowed participants from across the country the opportunity to attend as there were no barriers regarding accessibility and transport. The online nature of the course also enabled the lectures to be recorded and participants could review them in their own time and space. This was especially useful for people who don't have English as their first language.

The course consisted of 12 lectures of 2-hour duration, with the first hour dealing with lecture content and the second hour featuring two guest speakers: one an expert on the topic being addressed that week and the second a successful immigrant entrepreneur. The use of role models (successful immigrant entrepreneurs) was a huge success as it inspired participants to believe that they could also become an entrepreneur. Each participant was allocated a business mentor through the Open Doors Initiative and participants met their mentor once a month to get feedback on the development of their business plan.

The course concluded with participants pitching their ideas to a panel of four 'Dragons' on at the LinkedIn

HQ: Kevin MacSweeney (Broadlake), Ray Belmaine (Bank of America), Des McCarthy (Microfinance Ireland), and Edizemi Onilenla (Mamashee). Prizes included pro bono support from William Fry and McCann FitzGerald, free office space from The Digital Hub, and LinkedIn Premium licenses.

Based on student feedback, we believe that approximately 11 new start-ups generated from the course. The overall response from course participants through the post-course survey was hugely positive, with an overall score of 4.7 out of 5.

People with Disabilities

The third year of the Entrepreneurship for People with Disabilities course at TU Dublin began in September 2023, supported by AIB and the Open Doors Initiative. TU Dublin hosted and delivered the course through its Continuing Professional Development programme which was open to anyone who self-identified as having a disability and wished to start their own business.

Participants were required to have a business idea they could evaluate and potentially develop as a sustainable enterprise. During the course, participants covered a wide range of topics and modules which included a range of guest speakers, new technologies, and, by adopting Universal Design for Learning principles, a customised experiential learning approach which allowed each participant to maximise their learning from the course.

The course was offered at NFQ Level 6 of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), and successful participants were awarded 5 ECTS credits. Additionally, each participant was allocated a business mentor from the Local Enterprise Offices network who supported them in developing their business idea.

Open Doors Participant Training

Open Doors offers a variety of free online training resources. These courses have assisted participants in building confidence and key employability skills required to secure job opportunities

A number of our partner companies and supporting partners have provided us with the courses and training aids below, available on the ODI website to interested participants. These include the following:

Modern Hire

An excellent opportunity to practice interview techniques, the Modern Hire platform allows participants to complete a series of interview questions in a mock interview video format.

Accenture Digital Skills Courses

An easy to use package of information and skills in the digital area.

Solas eCollege

A leading online learning platform, allowing participants to learn at their own pace. Courses include: project management, information technology, graphic design, web design, digital marketing, software development and basic computer literacy.

Olive Group

The unique Learning Management System, Academy HQ platform enables users to take the course of their choice, online, anytime and anywhere. The courses are accredited by Solas, QQI and RoSPA.

Skills Summary

A series of online quizzes which assist young people to assess their career skills, and provides courses to improve any areas where they might need further development, including communication, interpersonal skills and much more.

INCO Academy

Bridging the digital skills gap and creating opportunities for under-represented communities aged between 18 - 35. In Ireland, they offer 100% funded courses in Digital Marketing, Data Analytics, and Green Digital Skills. The courses are delivered virtually through hands-on workshops and real-world projects.

Hays Thrive

Engaging training content comprised of videos, quizzes and assessments – frequently updated for relevance.

Other Activities



Cairde

Cairde – the Allies Network is a partner organisation of The Open Community. It is run by The Open Doors Initiative with the purpose of creating links with key areas of Irish society such as business, education, sports, the religious and other groups who can leverage their connections to enable families to integrate. This can be by a number of ways and we encourage innovative and creative thinking. The North Star is to welcome families and help them create a home from home.

Community Sponsorship was pioneered in Canada in the 1970s. After four decades of the programme's success, we know that this is hugely positive for the lives of both refugees and local communities.

Refugees referred to the Community Sponsorship programme go directly to the community where they will reside and immediately begin the process of settlement. Under community sponsorship, private citizens and community organisations become the face of welcome for resettled refugees arriving to their country; supporting them through the process by providing a range of social and emotional supports, as well as providing accommodation, assisting in learning the language and seeking employment, enrolling in schools and any other necessary assistance.

With Community Sponsorship programme in Ireland, communities will be supported to provide direct assistance to refugees settling in their locality through a structured programme backed by a unique collaboration

between government, UNHCR, NGOs and civil society

Cairde is the means by which all of society can link in with this work and create a home from home. We look forward to future engagement with existing and other partners in this work.

ODI secured legal and insurance support for the work and several corporate partners to help amplify its aims. We continue to grow this area of work

Refugee Assistance

We assisted in family reunification for six families, from Afghanistan and Pakistan, working with the Department of Justice to ensure safe passage for those in need, and helping to set them up in Ireland with housing, language supports, childcare and other supports to aid integration.

Photography

One of our participants, a refugee from Afghanistan, hosted a photography exhibition in Dublin Castle, opened by Minister Roderic O'Gorman, from our main funding department, Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. It was supported by WHPR, the Photo Museum Ireland, Catapult, Create, the Arts Council and other organisations.

With our partners the Photo Museum Ireland and Martin Beanz Ward, we organised a young Traveller photo exhibition – Through Our Eyes, which showed their community and their lives through their own pictures. This was displayed with the launch night video shown in Meeting House Square to all attendees.

UNHCR Speech

The CEO and Head of Programmes attended the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva as part of the Irish Delegation and spoke about our work with refugees.



Remote Working Centre for People with Disabilities

The Impact Hub @ The Crann Centre - David Stanton TD and local businesses people from the Ballincollig Business Association have been all involved in the development of this centre, the first of its kind in Ireland. The Open Doors have been a partner since its inception and have sourced 60% of the funding in partnership with AIB, with Cork City Council making up the balance. The Impact Hub is a brand new modern, fully-inclusive co-working space based in Ballincollig, West Cork. It was launched in March 2022.

The Impact Hub offers a spacious environment for individuals or teams, with a full range of amenities to allow work in a productive environment. It consists of a 17-desk facility with high-speed broadband, a fully accessible working environment and free parking, set on a three-acre site. Members of the hub have access to key business supports from The Rubicon Centre at Munster Technological University (MTU), Cork City Council Local Enterprise Office, and the Open Doors Initiative. An ODI Team member sits on the Impact Hub Advisory Group in order to further support its work and outreach.



Computer Donation

Computers for Participants

We are working with a range of groups to collect computers for people in Direct Provision, who are in education or looking for work. A large number of companies have already contributed hugely to this appeal, empowering people to move on and have access to supports.

“Cultural Awareness training with Open Doors was a true value to our employee base; it gave us a strong understanding of how to engage and include cultural difference in a way that’s natural and sustainable. Thank you!”

**- Samuel Riggs
ED&I Programme Manager
Irish Rail
ODI Member Company**

“Thanks to Open Doors for delivering a very informative session to our Hays Ireland DE&I Council and Senior leadership team. At Hays, we strive for inclusivity in everything we do, and we are already thinking about ways to incorporate elements of the cultural awareness session into our business.”

**- Sarah Lyons
Senior Manager
Hays
ODI Member Company**

Our Work with Employers

Open Doors is dedicated to supporting employers to create inclusive workplaces where people from marginalised backgrounds can thrive. It also aids employers in a number of key business areas such as recruitment and retention of employees, sustainable practices, training, mentoring, research in various areas to further business development, working with government through several fora and collaboration with government bodies and business to advocate and work for Corporate Social Justice and support sustainable businesses practices

Our employer initiatives include:

Employers for Change

Employers for Change, an employer disability information service, was launched on 11th March 2021 by the Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD, disability advocate and author Sinéad Burke and CEO Bank of Ireland Francesca McDonagh.

Employers for Change provides a central source of information and advice for employers that informs them on all aspects of working with people with disabilities and encourages them to actively recruit from this group.

We do this in a number of ways:

- Providing consultancy and advice through one-to-one engagement with employers via phone, email and in-person or online meetings;
- Hosting a central web-based information resource incorporating guidance, toolkits and FAQ's;
- Providing and participating in awareness raising and outreach activities, such as attending Diversity and Inclusion forums, speaking at employer focused event or delivering trainings;
- Maintaining links with employer stakeholders and disability stakeholders;
- Facilitating research focused on the topic of disability in the workplace;
- Promoting the positive business case for the employment of people with disabilities.



Funding

The work of Employers for Change is funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disabilities, Integration and Youth (€150,000)

Year on year we see an increasing demand from employers for our services and a result of that and the focused work, in 2023 Employers for Change has overachieved all set targets:

- We have engaged with 127 employers regarding questions of disability inclusion in the workplace - inquiries were about specific cases or general information about available grants, reasonable accommodations, inclusive recruitment practices
- We delivered 83 hours of trainings to 46 employers - trainings included Disability Awareness, Disability Inclusive Recruitment and Inclusive Communications
- We attended or spoke at 18 employer events, conferences with University of Limerick, Talent Summit, Digital Business Summit, Ibec, Small Firms Association, IHREC, Chambers Ireland and others

In 2023 we held:

- Two in-person employment events, one in Bray and one in the Mansion House, hosted by the Lord Mayor
- Six online information seminars have been delivered with supporting partners, on topics such as Mental health, Supporting Neurodiverse Talent or Utilising Assistive Technologies
- With the aim to reach as many employers, hiring managers, HR teams, and recruiters as possible, our work has appeared in nine platforms, including blogs, podcasts and publications targeting employers, such as Insight.HR podcast, Institute of Directors and SFA Better Business Magazine
- Our social channels on LinkedIn and the newly launched Instagram have more than 2000 followers and our website has received 15000 visits this year

Events

In November 2023, Employers for Change held an event themed 'Transforming Dublin into an Accessible and Inclusive City' to celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities which falls on Dec 3rd each year. The event took place in the Oak Room of The Mansion House, hosted by the Lord Mayor of Dublin Daithí de Róiste.

The Lord Mayor shared his plans to make Dublin an autism-friendly city and we heard from Minister Dara Calleary about Ireland as a digital leader in Europe and the role we must play in promoting digital accessibility.

The event included two panels with representatives from the industry, disability stakeholders and individuals sharing their lived experiences in the topics of 'Creating Accessible and Inclusive Employment' and the 'Role of Digital and Physical Accessibility.'

Collaboration with Stakeholders

Employers for Change and AHEAD started a collaboration to create an Inclusive Employer Framework. This will be a good practice framework for employers which will address barriers to employment for people with disabilities and will be housed on the Employers for Change website.

In collaboration with Ibec, Employers for Change has created a Reasonable Accommodation Guide and Reasonable Accommodation Passport.

“Our managers attended Disability Awareness training from Employers For Change recently and it was an excellent experience for all. The learnings that were taken away from the session were significant. The trainer met us where we were, whilst training and supporting our managers to better understand disability in the workplace. We would highly recommend the training with Employers for Change for any organisation, large or small, regardless of where they are on their DEI journey.”

- Louise O' Loughlin, Roomex

“Very informative and really made me think about practical ways I could embed inclusive behaviours in my day-to-day job, as well as in my community. The trainer was excellent, and I couldn't recommend Employers For Change highly enough.”

- DEI Tech Company

Partners Network Training and Support

The work of ODI is continuously supported by our company partners in a myriad of ways. There are over 70 partner companies as part of the ODI network who strive to enable equitable access to employment. We in turn support their DEIB work with training and seminars in a range of areas, to improve their inclusive recruitment and retention. Our training sessions are informed by research and the lived experience of the communities that we work with.

Employer Training & Seminars in 2023

- Information Seminars: 5
- Cultural Awareness: 7
- Disability Awareness: 7
- Inclusive Recruitment: 20
- DEIB Workshop: 2
- Placement Programme: 2
- Mentorship Programme: 9

ODI Research

We carried out a number of research projects during the year, to underpin and form a solid basis for our work, grow knowledge in the area of employment for marginalised people and help us plan future projects and work. We also inputted into other organisations research to aid them with our knowledge and experience in these areas.

Inclusive Recruitment of Trans and Non-Binary Candidates: An Employer Toolkit

Download [here](#).

This informative and practical toolkit highlights the barriers that can exist within recruitment processes for trans and non-binary candidates and provides

employers with practical measures they can implement to systematically remove these barriers.

A number of focus group, made up of those with lived experience and employers, informed the research by sharing their expertise on the key stages of recruitment as well as input on core topics such as Culture, Meaningful inclusion, Leadership and Reasonable Accommodations.

Further to this, a guidance document on how to develop an inclusive gender-identity policy was developed. This can be downloaded from this link [here](#).

The research was carried out by Dr Vanessa Lacey, Gendercare, and was funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth under the LGBTI+ Funding, Scheme B: Promoting LGBTI+ Visibility and Inclusion.

ODI launched the Inclusive Recruitment of Trans and Non-Binary Candidates: An Employer Toolkit to a full house in November 2023 and were hosted by Accenture. Hilary O'Meara, Country Managing Director of Accenture Ireland, opened the event. Lead researcher, Dr Lacey shared some of the key findings from the research and was joined by Karen Stevenson, Associate Director at Accenture Operations and Samuel Riggs, EDI Manager at Irish Rail for a panel discussion moderated by ODI's CEO Jeanne McDonagh.

“The Secondary Punishment” A Scoping Study on Employer Attitudes to Hiring People with Criminal Convictions

Download [here](#).

The research was carried out by Dr Joe Garrihy and Dr Ciara Bracken-Roche from Maynooth University School

of Law and Criminology and commissioned by the Irish Penal Reform Trust. Funding was provided from Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission's (IHREC) and additional funding from ODI in order to broaden out the scope of the original research brief.

The Secondary Punishment presents the findings of interviews with employers and people with convictions and survey data. The report has made 10 recommendations for actions that would support employers in the inclusive hiring of people with convictions.

Further to this, ODI was awarded funding as part of IHREC's Human Rights and Equality Grant: 2023-2024. With this funding, ODI will produce a toolkit which will educate and support employers in hiring and retaining employees who have a criminal history. This toolkit will be informed by “The Secondary Punishment” report, further research and the lived experience of those who will be positively impacted by this resource. A tender process took place at the end of 2023 and Dr Joe Garrihy and Dr Ciara Bracken-Roche of Maynooth University were awarded the contract to produce this toolkit.

The Inclusive Employment of People with a Criminal History: Employers Toolkit will be launched in Q2 of 2024.

“We worked so well with Open Doors during the recruitment process. I loved the collaboration during the screening process and interviews.”

**- Manager
IDA Ireland
ODI Member Company**

“Open Doors were very responsive, we never felt we were in this on our own. If we had run this programme without ODI’s support, we wouldn’t have been quite so courageous. The support session and awareness training provide useful information and created confidence in the managers and staff so we were able to implement supports.”

**- Placement Champion
SIRO
ODI Member Company**

Government Engagement

At ODI we believe in the value and strength in policy informed by lived experience and are committed to transparent, civic participation. Over 2023, ODI has submitted several consultation documents on policy that affects the communities we work with as well as being asked to share our knowledge with political representatives through Oireachtas Joint Committees. By doing so, ODI has the opportunity to raise awareness of the barriers that currently exist and the solutions that can be put in place.

There was a number of consultations submitted over 2023:

- Pre-Budget 2024- download through this link [here](#)
- Dept. Of Social Protection: Pathways to Work Consultation
- Oireachtas Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment: Submission- Download here
- Dept. Of Social Protect: Green Paper on Disability Reform: Attended and contributed to two public consultations
- Dept. Of Justice: Consultation on Statement of Strategy
- DCEDIY: Consultation on National Strategy for Migrant Intergration

We also spoke with Government Ministers and departments throughout the year on various topics in an effort to improve policy and supports for people who are marginalised. We made a submission on Budget 2023 highlighted the need for supports across a wide range of groups and progressive policies that will help them.

Case Study

The Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform Paschal Donohoe TD has announced the expansion of the eligibility requirements to apply to civil service jobs. Potential candidates holding Stamp 4 visas will now be able to pursue civil servant roles in Government departments. The initiative has been developed by the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform and the Public Appointments Service. It progresses the public service wide goal of being an employer of choice by promoting diversity and inclusivity, as outlined in its Public Service Transformation 2030 Strategy ("Better Public Services").

Margaret McCabe, CEO of Public Appointments Service said: "The Public Appointments Service, through our website publicjobs.ie, is focused on recruiting a diversity of people for the civil service with the talent, character and commitment to deliver for Ireland. Removing this eligibility barrier for those from a migrant background follows an in-depth study we conducted in partnership with NGO The Open Doors Initiative and global immigration services firm Fragomen. Its removal opens up a wider recruitment talent pool for the civil service, that will further help us effectively implement our skills first approach to recruitment. We now look forward to receiving applications from talented individuals who would have previously found themselves unable to pursue a career in the civil service".



External Relations

We spoke to companies and organisations across Ireland through a wide range of talks and training including the UNHCR Global Refugee Forum in Geneva, several Oireachtas Committees on varying issues; Pride and Transgender events; support for people living with HIV, International Women's Day events; Ibec, Chambers Ireland and other business events, on rights for various marginalised cohorts in a range of seminars and general diversity and inclusion topics. We attended the Global Sponsorship Gathering in Portugal to learn more about Community Sponsorship.

For our own members, we supported and spoke at over 65 different in-house events on various DEI topics and gave training to their Leadership teams, HR and employees

Memberships & Associations

- The Open Community – lead on the Cairde allies network
- Lord Mayor's Integration Taskforce member – engagement on making Dublin a city of inclusion
- Dublin Regional Enterprise Committee - supporting in meeting their goals on inclusion in employment
- Dept of Business, Enterprise and Employment National CSR Hub members
- Dublin City PPN
- Dublin City Council Inclusivity Forum
- Diversity Charter Ireland
- INAR – Irish Network Against Racism
- Trans Equality Network
- Cork Chamber of Commerce
- Ukraine Civil Society Response Forum
- The Impact Hub Advisory Group
- We have signed the forth UNHCR Refugee Pledge with our updated numbers from this year and work to date

Ongoing Projects with Partners

Dublin Regional Forum – Open Doors is leading out on an Inclusion Pillar to encourage business in the greater Dublin area towards more inclusive hiring of marginalised people. This work begins this year over a three-year period

Dublin City Learning Festival – a collection of our work was shared with community groups and a wider audience, aimed at those looking for employment. This festival continues to expand



Rory Rafferty

“Open Doors has been a fantastic experience for me. The mentorship programme has been superb. The team have done huge work to help outline supportive care for me in my job search.

The programme with my mentor from EY was excellent. She is very knowledgeable with her advice which helps in understanding and making decisions. We have made it through a number of sessions and to our luck we have managed to secure a new role.

This is a full-time permanent role which is exactly the goal I was looking to achieve from this experience.”

MEMBER COMPANIES



ODI PROGRAMMES



“Our partnership with ODI is an integral part of delivering on our purpose of building a better working world. As a large employer in Ireland we are focused on increasing employment for broader cohorts in society as part of our EY 4 All employment programme.

We are committed to building more inclusive environments, clearing obstacles and enabling access to resources and opportunities so that people can thrive. Through this partnership we get to create opportunities for those who, for whatever reason, have challenges accessing the workforce.

This year we completed our 3rd mentorship programme with ODI; supporting people

from under-represented communities to meet their full career potential. We have been so pleased that 75% of our mentees have since secured meaningful work and 25% say they are closer to their reaching their goals.

The mentorship with ODI initiative has been a mutually beneficial relationship, as it gives our colleagues the chance to share their knowledge and lived experience; in the process developing important leadership skills such as empathy, trust and communication, while having a positive impact on someone’s professional journey.”

- Sorcha Greaves
Chief of Staff, EY

NOVEMBER 2023

Joined the ODI Mentorship Programme, looking to find work as a Clerical Officer or Administrative Assistant

NOV-JAN 2023

Worked with a professional mentor from EY

JANUARY 2024

Got a job in Jan 2024 as a Clerical Officer with the Injuries Resolution Board

Connecting Participants and Employers

Open Doors act as a connector between participants and employers, ensuring mutual benefits for both and that they are connected, and work to grow the employers understanding and awareness of the barriers they face with regards to employment and wider societal issues

Placement Programme

In 2023, Open Doors redesigned its Work Placement programme so it can be easily tailored to different companies with different needs. The programme can be rolled out in companies with already established placement or internship programmes or can be developed from the start, with the support of ODI.

Open Doors offers a range of services to members on this journey, from creating and promoting the role, to onboarding the new employee and training managers and the HR team.

Work placements represent tangible opportunities for people facing additional barriers to employment. They offer the opportunity to gain relevant experience and train (or re-train) in key areas that are necessary to successfully find employment. Without these, many

job seekers from marginalised backgrounds struggle to find employment.

"I had sent my CV to over 1,000 jobs and done over 200 interviews in Ireland. This was the easiest recruitment process I had." – **Placement Employee**

While there is certainly a huge benefit to the Placement Employees, employers reported positive results to their team outputs:

"A huge impact on our team has been changing some processes as the participant brought new ideas and we reviewed the managing of some procedures." – **Placement Manager**

"The quality of the work is fantastic, we wouldn't have

had the resources or the experience to be able to pull together a whole new marketing plan for the team in less than nine months. I'm bowled over by the quality of her work. She had great experience and fantastic people skills." – **Placement Manager**

“The training provided by Open Doors helped us build the confidence we needed to do the programme. They were always available to meet with managers if they had any questions or concerns.”

**- Placement Champion
IDA Ireland
ODI Member Company**

“SIRO partners with Open Doors to recruit highly skilled people from a range of countries. They not only support people from migrant backgrounds to find work, but also support the employer at all stages of the programme.”

**- Placement Champion
SIRO
ODI Member Company**

Case Study

In January 2023, SIRO ran a 12-week work placement programme in partnership with ODI. Six refugees from Ukraine, Nigeria, and Somalia were selected to join the programme. At the end of the placement period, SIRO converted five placement employees to permanent roles with a considerable salary adjustment. Later in the summer, the sixth employee was placed in a grad role.

Since then, one of the hires started apprenticeship training in sales and another moved from an admin role to a long-term position that better matched her skills.

SIRO reported that the contributions from the new hires have been significant:

“One example was the civil engineer, he has brought a level of data analysis to the role that wasn’t anticipated. Another engineer, had qualifications that were parallel but not directly relevant and he has done a lot of self development and is contributing well to the team. The contribution to overall culture has been very strong also.” The programme was so successful that SIRO wrote about it in an article about alternative sources of talent. They reported that, contrary to the current employment market, SIRO have had low turnover and have been able to fill their open posts:

“Having suitable interns in place has meant that we have people on the bench when opportunities arise and they have already proven themselves so it is not difficult for managers to decide to give them an opportunity.”



The Open Doors Mentorship Programme continues to have huge impact for the participants we work with, with 99 mentees having received support from mentors in 2023.

Through the programme, mentees receive guidance from experienced professionals who can support with goal setting, job search, career progression, and more. We had mentors from 28 ODI members in 2023, with expertise in many areas such as Business, Marketing, Retail, Hospitality, Human Resources, IT, Finance, Entrepreneurship, and more.

“My mentor has been very responsible, supportive, and caring throughout all our mentorship sessions. I am deeply grateful to this programme for connecting me with her invaluable guidance and mentorship.” - Mentee

Mentors also report positive outcomes, including the development of communication and problem-solving skills.

“It was a great opportunity to connect with and guide someone from a completely different training background to my own. It taught me to really listen to and comprehend that different perspective and be respectful in the way I shared feedback and advice. I enjoyed learning from my mentee and was able to grow my skills as a mentor.” - Mentor

“I felt the program was very good and structured, loved the great outcome-based framework of the program and was really happy to have a positive impact.” - Mentor



Open Doors launched a new programme in 2023 to offer additional support to its participants: the Employment Expert programme. Employees at ODI members with extensive knowledge and experience in recruitment joined the programme as ‘experts’ to support participants with specific pre-employment skills, such as CV writing, preparing for job interviews, and using LinkedIn as a job search tool.

Supporting documents were developed to support experts and participants, including the Open Doors Mock Interview Guide and Mock Interview Feedback Template.

Over 30 experts from seven companies joined the programme and provided 64 individual sessions to ODI participants from September to December 2023.

Design and Communications

Open Doors continues to grow, reaching more participants every year and establishing networks with an increasing number of organisations committed to equity and inclusion. Part of that growth is attained through our presence in online spaces, as well as all external communications that establish the values and voice of the ODI brand. As awareness of ODI grows, it is critical to maintain a high standard of consistent messaging that adheres to our brand standards, establishing the organisation within the business and social advocacy communities.

With the success of ODI's three core programmes, Employers for Change, Towards Work and Pathways to Progress, a central challenge is to communicate the relationship of these programmes within the overall framework of the Open Doors organisation. We seek to increase awareness of the individual programmes, which all have their own social media accounts and websites, while also establishing strong links back to the core messages of ODI.

ODI has seen significant growth on our social media presence in 2023. Our principal

platforms are LinkedIn and Instagram, which serve our two main audiences, the business and professional community, including our member companies, as well as our participants, who come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. We launched a new LinkedIn business page in February 2023 and it already amassed 2,316 new followers by the end of 2023. Our Instagram account began in March 2022, and grew from 536 followers at the end of 2022, to 1,004 by the close of 2023.

A greater emphasis on video content was a key component of our communications in 2023. A series of high quality videos featuring ODI participants were created with the support of FUEL, allowing their voices and stories to be heard by a wide audience. Videos provide a great opportunity to connect with our followers in a more dynamic, engaging manner. We also record, edit and share videos from all online events and webinars, making content available at any time to those unable to take part on specific days, or for ongoing use as training or skills sessions.

Our new podcast series, Open Mic, recorded our first series of interviews in late 2023, with guest host, Hogai asefi Wardak from





Afghanistan, one of our participants, leading our range of guests through prepared questions. The podcast will be launched in first quarter of 2024, providing a further outlet for reaching new audiences and expanding awareness of our work.

As ever, maintaining a high standard of accessibility for all of our communications is a key consideration, whether on social media, in toolkits and informative documents, or on our website. Employers for Change ran a campaign called 'Embed Accessibility' in 2023 to highlight the importance of creating all promotions and communications with this in mind. It was also an opportunity to offer their Inclusive and Accessible Communications training to any organisation who wished to expand their knowledge in the area.

Awards

- Winner: Best Employment Opportunity Provider 2023 in the Irish Enterprise Awards
- 8th Annual Influential Businesswoman Awards – CEO nominated
- The Open Doors Initiative (2022 Winner: Irish Enterprise Awards) - EU Business News
- CEO of the Year Image Awards – Diversity and Inclusion Businesswoman of the Year CEO runner up
- Irish News Workplace & Employment awards – Employers for Change nominated
- ODI awarded Most Supportive Training Initiative 2023 – ROI by Corporate Vision magazine
- Ally of the Year in the Galas Awards for LGBTQ+ - CEO nominated
- Disability Award by Diversity in Tech - Employers for Change nominated

Media

[The Irish Times](#)

Photographic exhibit in Photo Museum in conjunction with Open Doors

[BusinessPlus.ie](#)

54 Accepted into TU Dublin Entrepreneurship Course for Refugees

[Business and Finance Magazine](#)

Dublin's tech contraction: What happened?

[ThinkBusiness.ie](#)

Why We Need to Support Migrant Entrepreneurs

[WomenMeanBusiness.com](#)

Empowering Migrant Entrepreneurs

RTÉ 1 - Nationwide

Feature on the TUD/ODI/AIB Entrepreneurship course for People with Disabilities

[RTÉ Radio 1](#)

Morning Ireland interview with Dr Najib Ali on work

Newstalk - World Bipolar Day

Interview with Open Doors CEO Jeanne McDonagh

[FM104](#)

Business course for asylum seekers and refugees to start next week

Phoenix FM

Interview with Open Doors CEO Jeanne McDonagh on TUD Entrepreneurship course

[Radio Kerry](#)

Event in Tralee for Ukrainians interested in starting a business



Suzy Mooney

"I was a few months away from completing my Master's in Sociology when I contacted Open Doors. From the outside looking in, I seemed to have it all together. However, I felt I needed more support to transition smoothly from college into the workforce. I was linked up with Towards Work and had an initial meeting with the Programme Coordinator to discuss how I planned to work in either the NGO sector or work in Diversity and Inclusion. I also needed to devise a structured plan for how to get there.

ODI provided me with resources for potential career pathways and opportunities, and gave me advice on tailoring my CV and cover letter to a career path in the social sector. ODI not only helped me in the realm of mentoring, they were also a huge resource in the recruitment process for my thesis. My thesis focused on the perspectives of employers and how they can improve recruitment and inclusion for people with disabilities in their organisations.

Without the help of ODI, I would not have successfully gotten the job I have today. I am now doing similar work to what ODI do, with Chime, The National Charity for Deaf and Hard

of Hearing People, and am inspired by what ODI have cultivated. I hope to bring what the mentors in ODI taught me during my time as a mentee, to my current role as a Mentor on the Explore Mentoring Programme with Chime."

MEMBER COMPANY



ODI PROGRAMME



AUGUST 2023

First video call with Towards Work and received resources and support on potential work opportunities

SEPTEMBER 2023

Received CV and Cover Letter support

OCTOBER 2023

Invited for a job interview with Chime, an ODI Supporting Partner and then offered the role

DECEMBER 2023

Suzy joins Chime as a Mentor on the Explore Mentoring Programme, supporting Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

Chime, the National Charity for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People established the Explore Mentoring programme in 2021. Since then, we have built strong collaborative links with Open Doors.

This partnership has been hugely beneficial for both Explore participants and the Mentor team. This relationship has provided information, advice, and support in ensuring that ODI offer more inclusive services from a Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) perspective. In turn, ODI have championed and showcased the transferable skills and value that DHH people bring to the workplace. Their employer

engagement strategy has focused on building confidence and awareness in inclusive recruitment practices which has benefited Chime's client base.

Mentors signpost those from the DHH community to access all the services, workshops and events that are provided by ODI which ultimately improve employability skills. We look forward to continuing and building on our collaboration well into the future."

**- Laura Donnellan
Team Leader, Explore
Mentoring Programme, Chime**



Governance

The Open Doors Initiative has a robust Governance structure and is supported by CEOs and Directors from a number of the member companies

We were delighted to welcome more new directors to increase our governance and oversight standards and provide support to the team and work of Open Doors

Leadership Advisory Board

Company Directors

- Chair – Paddy Hayes, CEO, ESB
- Patrick Doyle, eFrontiers, Director
- Sharon Vize, Head of HR, CPL
- Veronique Rodriguez Cabeza, Director
- Fernando Vicario, CEO Bank of America DAC
- Sharon Murphy, MD, WHPR
- David Stanton TD
- Barry O'Sullivan, MD, Diageo Ireland
- Hilary O'Meara, CMD, Accenture

Advisory Board

- Secretary - Gerard Kiernan, Icon Accounting, CEO
- Ian Anderson Momentum CEO
- Prof Thomas Stone, Vice President, TUD
- Denis Doolan, Strategic Head of Inclusion, AIB

- David Fox, Sodexo CEO Ireland
- Anne Dermody - Strategic Advisor
- Brian Sheehan - Consultant

Date of Meetings

February 2023

March 2023

May 2023

AGM June 2023

December 2023

Employees

Jeanne McDonagh, CEO

Christabelle Feeney, Director, Employers for Change

Claire Hayes, Programme Manager

Talita Holzer, Programme Manager, Pathways to Progress

Lidiia Oborina, Migrant Co-ordinator

Patrick Flanagan, Disability Co-ordinator

Jessica Reid, Design and Admin Executive

Company Number 665789

Auditors Donal Ryan and Co, Auditors

Financial Statements

for the financial year ended 31 December 2023*

Income and Expenditure Account

for the financial year ended 31 December 2023

	2023 €	2022 €
Income	680,595	578,848
Expenditure	(609,228)	(413,430)
Surplus before interest	71,367	165,418
Interest receivable and similar income	150	-
Surplus before tax	71,517	165,418
Tax on surplus	-	-
Surplus for the financial year	71,517	165,418

Balance Sheet

as at 31 December 2023

	2023 €	2022 €
Fixed Assets		
Tangible Assets	<u>2,873</u>	<u>1,436</u>
Current Assets		
Debtors	49,850	101,250
Cash and cash equivalents	825,609	753,329
	<u>875,459</u>	<u>854,579</u>
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	<u>(389,742)</u>	<u>(438,942)</u>
Net Current Assets	<u>485,717</u>	<u>415,637</u>
Total Assets less Current Liabilities	<u>488,590</u>	<u>417,073</u>
Reserves		
Income and expenditure account	<u>488,590</u>	<u>417,073</u>
Equity attributable to owners of the company	<u>488,590</u>	<u>417,073</u>

*Full audited financial accounts are available at www.opendoorsinitiative.ie

Supplementary Information Relating to the Financial Statements

Schedule 1: Overhead Expenses

for the financial year ended 31 December 2023

	2023 €	2022 €
Administration Expenses		
Wages and salaries	401,080	254,439
Social welfare costs	44,237	27,958
Employee Pension Contributions	18,000	18,000
Insurance	1,370	1,029
Printing, postage and stationery	2,811	1,276
Marketing and Events	-	8,818
Courier and delivery charges	128	-
Telephone	960	1,129
Computer costs	2,465	30,144
Travelling and entertainment	6,035	3,393
Consultancy fees	26,405	50,748
Consulting & Accounting	6,488	-
Bank charges	460	73
General expenses	26,072	13,503
Gifts	2,457	-
Auditor's remuneration	2,134	2,441
Depreciation of tangible assets	519	479
	541,621	413,430

Trading Statement

for the financial year ended 31 December 2023

	2023 €	2022 €
Income	680,595	578,848
Costs	(67,607)	-
Gross surplus	612,988	578,848
Overhead expenses	(541,621)	(413,430)
	71,367	165,418
Miscellaneous income	150	-
Net surplus	71,517	165,418

Funding

A sincere thank you to all our funders and supporters for various initiatives, without whom we could not carry out our work:



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Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
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