



ADVANCING PRE-RELEASE READINESS AND POST-RELEASE CONTINUITY

2026 ANNUAL REPORT

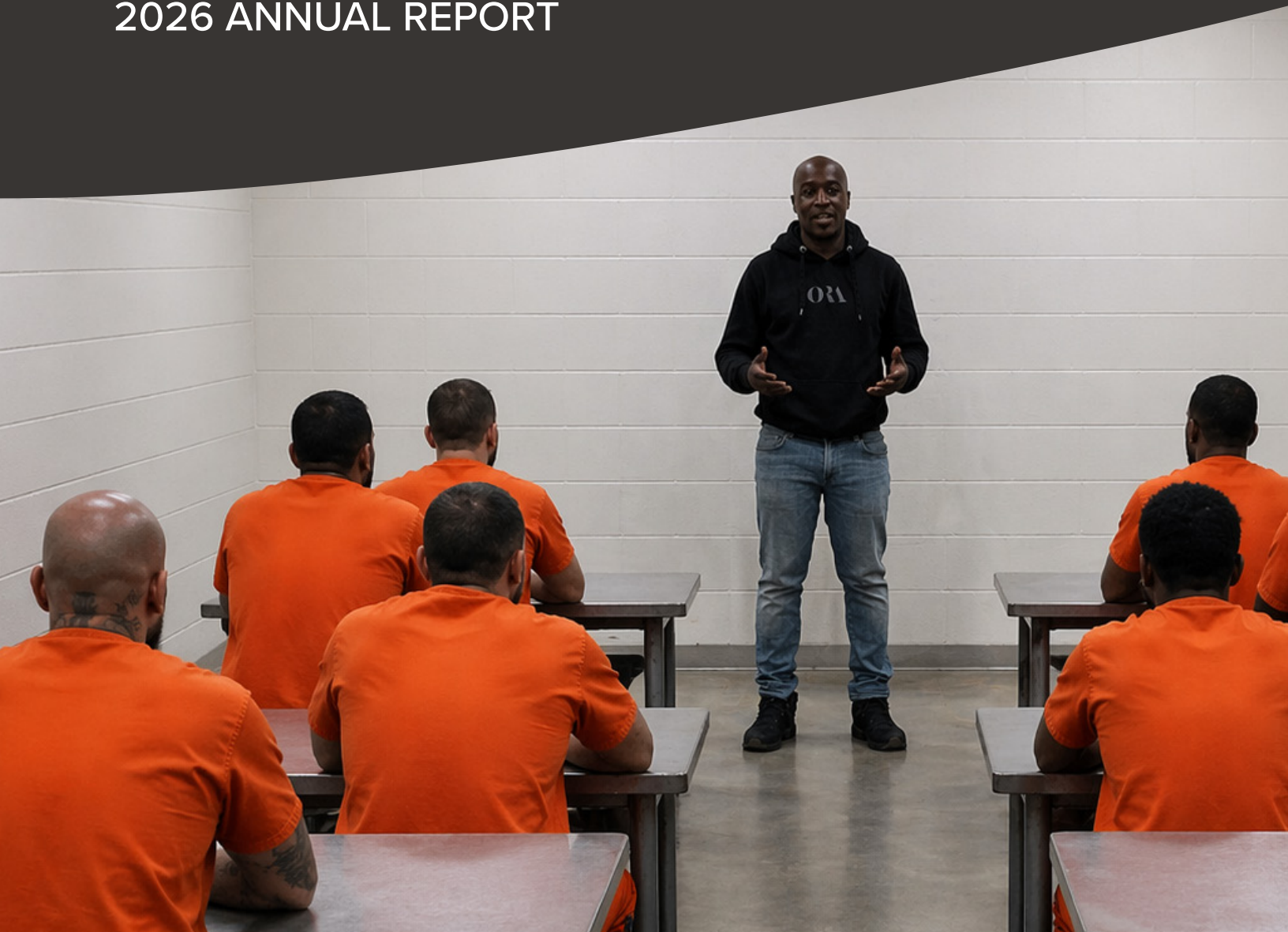


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“This program makes release seem less intimidating and I know what direction I will be heading in next.”

— NorthStar Client



MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

What began as a two-year pilot inside the Toronto South Detention Centre continued to grow into a serious, structured, and deeply meaningful pre-release and reintegration initiative. Over the course of the year, NorthStar became more than a series of sessions. It became a space where participants could step back from the noise, pressure, and limitations of the correctional environment and begin having honest conversations about who they are, the choices that brought them there, and the kind of life they want to build when they return to the community.

Throughout the year, participants engaged in direct and often difficult discussions about responsibility, discipline, work, money, relationships, identity, and the realities waiting for them after release. These were not surface-level conversations. They were real, sometimes uncomfortable, and often deeply reflective. We saw men ask hard questions, challenge old ways of thinking, and begin to think more seriously about accountability, stability, and what it would actually take to move in a different direction.

In a correctional setting, trust is not something that can be assumed. Many of the individuals we worked with are used to feeling judged, dismissed, misunderstood, or defined only by their worst moments. NorthStar created a different kind of environment, one rooted in honesty, consistency, and respect. It became a place where participants could speak candidly, reflect openly, and feel that they were being treated as human beings rather than reduced to a label or a file. Again and again, participants told us that NorthStar felt different from other institutional programming. Several described it as one of the only places where they felt they could truly speak openly and be heard.

It matters because meaningful change rarely begins with information alone. It begins when someone feels challenged, supported, and believed in at the same time. It begins when there is enough trust in the room for honesty to take hold. Over this past year, we saw clear signs that NorthStar was creating that kind of space.

At the same time, we want to speak about this work truthfully. This report is not intended to overstate the program or make claims that go beyond the evidence. NorthStar is still developing. It is still in an early stage, and longer-term outcomes must continue to be tracked carefully and responsibly. What this report does show, however, is that something meaningful has been built. It documents what the program delivered, what participants shared with us, what staff observed, and what the early findings suggest about the value of this kind of work.

Most importantly, it reflects a simple but important truth: there is real value in reaching people before release with structure, honesty, mentorship, and practical direction. There is value in creating space for reflection before someone returns to the pressures and uncertainty of the outside world. And there is value in building a program that does not only ask whether a person wants to change, but helps them begin thinking seriously about what change actually requires.

We are proud of what has been built so far. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed to the development of NorthStar. And we remain committed to continuing this work with seriousness, humility, and a clear understanding of how much is at stake for the individuals, families, and communities connected to it.



Mark Tenaglia
Executive Director



Joe Williams
Managing Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NorthStar is a structured pre-release and reintegration program developed by the Oaks Revitalization Association in partnership (ORA) with the Ministry of the Solicitor General. The program began as a pilot at the Toronto South Detention Centre in August 2025. It was designed to improve release readiness, build accountability, establish continuity of support, remove practical barriers to reintegration, and create pathways toward long-term stability.

The model combines in-custody mentorship, curriculum-based learning, guided discussion, practical life-skills education, release planning, post-release follow-up, and wraparound reintegration supports. During the reporting period, NorthStar delivered sessions on financial literacy, emotional regulation, relationships, accountability, philosophical and film-based analysis, ethical leadership, business formation, workforce readiness, and intentional living.

The available documentation shows consistently strong engagement. Participants asked thoughtful, future-oriented questions, requested more practical material, and frequently described the sessions as honest, relevant, and unlike other programming they had experienced inside the institution. A structured survey administered to

35 participants also found very high levels of satisfaction, strong comfort with discussion-based learning, and positive shifts in confidence, outlook, and perceived readiness.

During the same period, ORA continued building systems around the program through curriculum development, institutional outreach, probation and parole engagement, post-release meet-and-greets, and reintegration support planning. The result is a program model that is not limited to classroom delivery. NorthStar functions as both an in-custody intervention and a bridge into community-based structure, support, and opportunity.



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

About NorthStar

NorthStar is built on a simple principle: successful reintegration must begin before release, not after. The program was designed around two connected realities. First, the work of confidence building, mentorship, accountability, and release readiness should begin while participants are still in custody. Second, the transition back to the community should include continuity of support through practical guidance, community connection, and pathways into training, employment, and stabilization supports

Program Aims

Across the reporting materials, NorthStar is consistently framed around six core aims:

- Reduce recidivism.
- Improve pre-release readiness.
- Establish continuity of support.
- Strengthen personal accountability and decision-making.
- Remove practical barriers to reintegration.
- Create pathways to long-term stability.

Why This Work Matters

The need for this work became clear throughout the year. Participants regularly spoke about fear around release, poor past decisions, financial confusion, peer pressure, unhealthy relationship patterns, lack of guidance, and uncertainty about how to build a lawful future. The program responds to these realities by combining reflection with practical preparation. It addresses both mindset and readiness.

“When I’m in this program, I don’t feel like I’m being judged. I just feel like a regular person that’s able to share his thoughts.”

— NorthStar Client



PROGRAM MODEL AND SERVICE FRAMEWORK

NorthStar is a structured 16-week mentoring and readiness model built from several connected parts. It is not simply a workshop series. It is a coordinated system designed to help participants move from reflection toward action, and from custody toward community, through consistent mentorship, practical life and employment preparation, accountability, and reintegration planning.

- In-custody mentorship and group discussion.
- Curriculum-based learning tools and guided reflection.
- Practical life-skills education, including money, relationships, work, and accountability.
- Release planning and post-release reconnection.
- Referral into ORA programming, mentorship, and skilled-trades pathways.
- Wraparound reintegration supports for eligible registered clients.

The written curriculum is paired with live facilitation.

The Road Back workbook makes clear that the material is designed to be used alongside in-person instruction, direct challenge, guided discussion, journaling, and facilitator accountability. This combination of structured curriculum and relationship-based delivery became one of the defining strengths of the program over the year.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND EARLY OUTCOMES

During the reporting period, 32 participants demonstrated improved employment readiness through their engagement in NorthStar's mentorship, employment-focused discussions, financial literacy content, skilled trades exposure, and readiness-based programming. This improvement was reflected in their participation, questions, future planning, and growing understanding of employment pathways and workplace expectations.

With respect to movement toward jobs, training, or skilled trades, there were no clients who secured employment during this reporting period. This was largely due to operational and timing-related factors rather than a lack of participant readiness or interest. Specifically, the late start of programming, along with participant transfers to other facilities and the fact that many participants had not yet been released from custody, limited the ability of clients to exit the institution and transition directly into skilled training or employment opportunities during the reporting window.

In terms of early indicators related to reduced reoffending, there were no known participants who reoffended during the reporting period. While it is still early to draw long-term conclusions regarding recidivism outcomes, this is an encouraging preliminary sign. As additional participants are released and post-release follow-up continues, ORA expects to build a clearer picture of reintegration stability and longer-term outcomes over time.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND PARTICIPANT FLOW

During the reporting period, three cohorts were delivered, along with one make-up cohort consisting of 9 participants. The average cohort size was approximately 12 participants per cohort.

The program's 16-week structure was followed as designed. Delivery remained aligned with the approved model, while participant movement within the correctional setting affected the composition and continuity of some cohorts over time.

Participant flow during the reporting period reflected the realities of institutional programming. Specifically, there were 5 participant transfers, 16 participant releases, and 25 participants who remained in custody at the end of the reporting period. These factors affected continuity, completion timing, and the pace at which some participants were able to transition from the in-custody phase of the program into post-release supports and community-based opportunities.

Overall, the program structure remained consistent with the approved framework, while participant movement was managed as part of normal correctional operations.

STAFFING STRUCTURE AND PROGRAM DELIVERY

During the reporting period, NorthStar maintained a staffing structure sufficient to support both in-custody program delivery and follow-up support for participants transitioning into community-based programming. On site, a minimum of three mentors were present to deliver mentoring and group-based programming, with four staff participating on some delivery days depending on program needs and operational requirements. In addition to on-site delivery staff, ORA maintained office-based support staff to assist participants who had exited the institution and were continuing with programming and supports in the community.

The on-site delivery schedule took place on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, with mentoring sessions running from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., followed by a two-hour break, and resuming from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. This structure allowed for direct group mentoring, participant engagement, and relationship-building within the institution. Off-site program work was carried out during regular

office hours, generally from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with additional after-hours availability provided when needed to respond to participant circumstances and support requirements in the community.

With respect to alignment with required hours and roles, ORA met the staffing and delivery requirements needed to operate the program and, in practice, often exceeded the expected time commitment due to the nature of the client population and the complexity of participant needs. Additional staff time was regularly required to ensure continuity of support, respond to emerging participant issues, and provide the level of follow-up necessary to support successful outcomes. Overall, the program had the staffing capacity required to deliver mentoring, support participants both inside and outside the institution, and respond appropriately to the practical and relational needs that arose during implementation.

REQUIRED PROGRAM ACTIVITIES DELIVERED

During the reporting period, NorthStar continued to deliver activities aligned with the program requirements set out in the agreement, particularly in the areas of employment preparation, reintegration planning, and participant support.

Skilled trades and employment pathway support was delivered by preparing participants for transition into ORA's Skilled Trades Development Program following release from custody. Once participants exited NorthStar and entered the next phase of programming, they were connected to union-run training facilities, where they received high-quality instruction, practical skills development, and industry-recognized training certificates. This pathway was designed to support movement toward sustainable employment and long-term workforce attachment, particularly in the skilled trades.

Wraparound employment services were also provided to support participants' readiness for work. These supports included ongoing mentoring, employment-readiness preparation, résumé development, business card preparation, interview preparation, and other practical supports needed to help participants present themselves professionally and prepare for employment opportunities. Where required, participants were also supported with essential employment-related items such as appropriate clothing, personal protective equipment, and tools to reduce barriers to workforce entry.

With respect to **post-release supports**, NorthStar made available a range of reintegration services intended to support participants during the transition back into the community. These supports included housing assistance, food support, transportation support, health and wellbeing referrals, identification and documentation assistance, résumé writing and job search assistance, job matching, and therapeutic services. Together, these services were intended to strengthen stability in the early post-release period and support participants in moving toward lawful employment and reintegration.

In the area of **mental health supports**, participants had access to ORA's psychologist/therapist for additional support. This resource was made available to help address emotional, behavioural, and mental health needs that could affect participants' stability, readiness, and longer-term reintegration outcomes.

NorthStar also advanced its **online resource portal**, which was developed to provide participants with continued access to practical tools and supports beyond the classroom setting. The portal included key resources such as the 90-Day Survival Guide, NorthStar lesson materials, construction start information, and résumé support tools. This digital resource space was intended to strengthen continuity of support and provide participants with a practical bridge between in-custody programming and community reintegration.

During the reporting period, all planned mentoring courses and subject areas were delivered as intended under the NorthStar program model. Program delivery remained consistent with the approved framework and included structured mentorship, life skills development, personal growth content, employment readiness preparation, and reintegration-focused supports.

At the same time, the first year of implementation involved active curriculum development and refinement. In response to participant feedback and demonstrated areas of interest and need, ORA developed additional curriculum content and supporting materials to enhance the quality, relevance, and practicality of program delivery. This responsive approach helped ensure that the program continued to evolve in a way that was grounded in participant experience while remaining aligned with program objectives.

POST-RELEASE SUPPORTS AND AFTERCARE

The lower number of participants receiving aftercare support during the reporting period was directly related to release timing. While a number of participants engaged in the in-custody component of NorthStar, many had not yet been released during the reporting window and therefore had not yet entered the post-release phase of support.

For those who were eligible for post-release assistance, NorthStar made available a range of reintegration and stabilization supports intended to help participants transition safely and successfully back into the community. These supports included housing assistance, food support, transportation support, health and wellbeing referrals, identification and documentation assistance, résumé writing and job search assistance, job matching, and therapeutic services. Eligible participants could receive up to \$2,264.99 in approved support services to help address practical barriers to reintegration.

To strengthen post-release engagement as additional participants are released, ORA has put in place a structured follow-up process. Individuals released from the Toronto South Detention Centre are contacted as early as possible and receive an initial phone intake interview, followed by an in-person meet-and-greet at ORA's office with NorthStar staff. At that stage, participants are assessed for suitability for the Skilled Trades Development Program (STDP). Where appropriate, suitable participants are accepted into STDP and supported in moving forward into skilled trades

training and employment pathways. Where participants are not suitable for skilled trades training, or choose not to proceed with ORA programming, they are referred to other appropriate services and community-based supports. This process is intended to improve continuity of care, increase early engagement following release, and ensure that participants are connected to the services best suited to their needs and goals.

PARTICIPANT NUMBERS AND OUTCOMES

During the reporting period, 82 participants were accepted into the NorthStar program, and 36 participants completed programming within the reporting window. These figures should be understood in the context of program delivery inside a correctional environment, where participant movement can affect continuity, completion timing, and the transition to post-release supports.

The difference between the number of participants accepted and the number who completed programming during this reporting period is primarily related to participant transfers, releases, and ongoing custody status. Some individuals were transferred to other facilities before completing the in-custody program cycle, while others were released prior to the conclusion of scheduled delivery. In addition, some participants remained in custody at the end of the reporting period, which affected the timing of both program completion and post-release outcomes.

It is also important to note that participants who were released from the institution were contacted by ORA and offered wraparound supports and resources to assist with their transition back into the community. These supports included continued mentoring, housing-related assistance, mental health supports, care packages and hygiene packs, résumé writing, referrals to other services, and identification and documentation support. Some individuals accepted these supports and continued forward with ORA programming, including the Skilled Trades Development Program where appropriate. Others chose not to continue with STDP programming, but were still made aware of

the resources and service options available to them. This approach helped ensure that participants leaving custody were not left without information, contact, or support at a critical point in their reintegration.

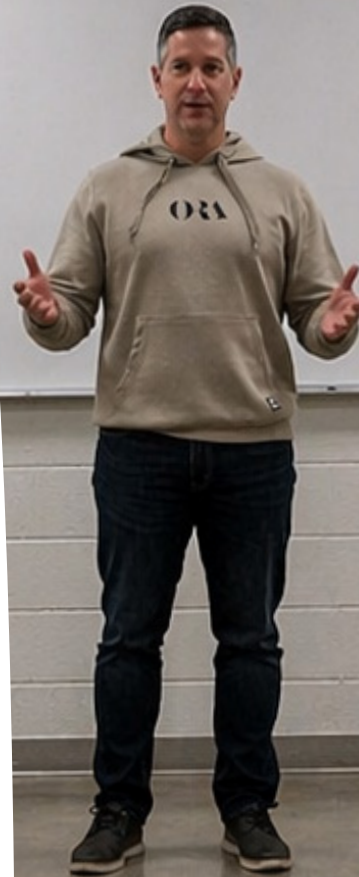
Overall, the participant numbers reported for this period reflect both the scale of engagement achieved by the program and the operational realities of delivering structured mentorship inside a custodial setting. As additional participants are released and continue with follow-up supports, ORA expects to build a clearer picture of completion, reintegration, and longer-term outcomes over time.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPORTING

ORA has maintained ongoing data tracking and reporting processes to support accountability, program monitoring, and continuity of service delivery. During the reporting period, the program tracked key operational and participant-related information, including attendance, participation, client transfers, releases, referrals, letters prepared on behalf of clients, and the distribution of program materials and practical supports, including hygiene bags and related client resources.

To support regular monitoring and documentation, weekly activity reports were completed throughout the reporting period. These reports captured details related to program delivery, participant engagement, client needs, emerging issues, and implementation progress. In addition to weekly reporting, ORA also completed quarterly reporting, including financial reporting, to document program expenditures, service activity, and overall implementation progress. This reporting structure has helped support consistent oversight, financial accountability, and a clear record of program delivery over time.

Overall, the program continued to be delivered in line with the approved framework. ORA has maintained the staffing, data tracking, and reporting practices required to support implementation, monitor participant progress, and uphold accountability throughout the reporting period.



“I want to become someone
great one day when I get out.”

– NorthStar Client

REPORTING PERIOD ACTIVITIES

The reporting period included a broad range of learning activities and engagement efforts. The program was intentionally varied in order to connect with different learning styles while still reinforcing a consistent set of principles: accountability, discipline, responsibility, restraint, work ethic, long-term thinking, and belief that change is possible.

Core Delivery Topics

- Relationships, healthy masculinity, identity, and emotional awareness.
- Ethics, power, justice, and responsibility.
- Film and philosophical analysis used to deepen critical thinking and self-reflection.
- Orientation, behavioural expectations, accountability, and career pathways.
- Financial literacy, debt, budgeting, investing, credit repair, retirement planning, and money management.
- Business formation and entrepreneurship, including incorporation, banking, tax responsibilities, and legal structure.

Financial literacy was one of the strongest recurring themes. Participants regularly asked detailed questions about debt, investing, credit, business creation, saving, and long-term financial stability. These sessions were not treated as abstract financial lessons. They were framed as practical, moral, and identity-related discussions about how lawful income, responsibility, and stability are built.

Celebrating NorthStar's First Graduating Class

During the reporting period, ORA held the inaugural NorthStar graduation ceremony inside the Toronto South Detention Centre to recognize the first group of participants who completed the program on site. The ceremony honoured 24 clients, each of whom received a custom NorthStar certificate in recognition of his commitment, participation, and the work he put into the program. In a correctional setting, where personal progress is not often acknowledged in a formal way, the event carried real significance. It created an opportunity to recognize effort, growth, and accountability in a respectful and meaningful setting. The ceremony was attended by institutional management along with guests from the Ministry of the Solicitor General's office, and ORA also provided catered food for the graduates and invited guests, helping create a warm and dignified atmosphere for the occasion.

This first graduation should also be understood in the context of participant movement during the reporting period. One participant was transferred, while nine others completed make-up sessions in February and will be formally recognized at a summer graduation. In addition, several participants were released before the in-custody program cycle ended, and some completed programming in the community.

Post-Release and Community Engagement

The program's reach extended beyond direct in-custody delivery. ORA held post-release meet-and-greets with former participants, coordinated referrals, and presented to community correctional stakeholders.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY SNAPSHOT

NorthStar maintained strong financial accountability throughout the reporting period, with program resources tracked carefully and expenditures managed in alignment with approved budget categories and reporting requirements. Financial oversight was maintained across all major areas of the program, including staffing, curriculum development, participant supports, technology, printing, transportation, bookkeeping, audit, and other administrative costs.

The financial report shows that expenditures were monitored consistently throughout the year by reporting period and budget line, allowing ORA to track spending, remaining balances, and year-end allocations in a clear and structured way. This helped ensure that funds were used responsibly, that spending remained tied to program delivery, and that financial decisions supported the practical needs of implementation.

NorthStar demonstrated a strong level of financial discipline and accountability. Resources were directed toward core program priorities, including direct service delivery, curriculum and resource development, participant reintegration supports, and the operational systems needed to sustain the program. This approach helped maximize participant impact while maintaining transparency, budget control, and responsible stewardship of public funds.

Budget Category	Approved Funding	Total Year-End Spending
Program Salaries	\$235,000.00	\$235,000.00
Program Costs	\$336,098.00	\$336,098.00
Administration	\$28,902.00	\$28,902.00
Total Budget	\$600,000.00	\$600,000.00

“You helped me see that I do have a future.
It’s not based on my past choices, it’s
based on how hard I’m ready to work.”

– NorthStar Client

NORTHSTAR PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026

A comparison of target values and cumulative totals shows that NorthStar exceeded targets in several areas during the reporting period, including participant referrals, participant acceptance, direct staff contact hours, digital and financial literacy support, referrals to other programming and supports, and printed worksheet distribution.

217

Number of participants referred to the program.
(Target: 100)

82

Number of participants accepted into the program.
(Target: 60)

63

Number of participants enrolled who self-identified as a member of a racialized group.
(Target: 30)

36

Number of participants who completed the program.
(Target: 60)

3,567

Total staff hours spent in direct contact with participants and others to deliver or monitor the program or placement.
(Target: 2,000 hours)

72

Number of participants who obtained digital or financial literacy support.
(Target: 60)

72

Number of participants who were referred to other programming and supports, either ministry specific or external.
(Target: 15)

2

Number of participants who received industry recognized certification (e.g., WHMIS, Working at Heights).
(Target: 25)

4

Number of participants who received employment/vocational supports.
(Target: 60)

108

Number of printed worksheets distributed to participants.
(Target: 60)

82

Number of 90-day survival kits handed out to participants released from custody.

4

Number of participants who received aftercare sessions following release to community for a period of up to three months.

4

Number of service disruption days (e.g., no access to institution, agency staff unavailable).
(Target: <10)

70

Number of participants who reported services are culturally appropriate.

68

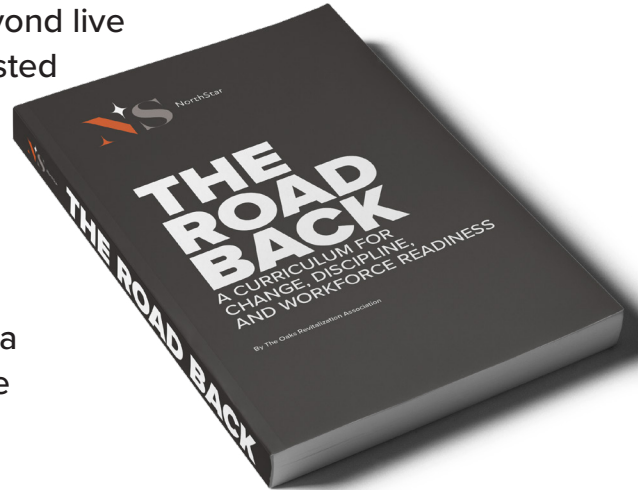
Number of participants who reported feeling supported in accessing/navigating services that will help them achieve their goals culturally appropriate.

5

Number of participants who were referred to MLITSD specific programs.

CURRICULUM AND MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

A major area of progress during this reporting period was the continued development of NorthStar's custom curriculum, learning tools, and participant resource materials. This work extended well beyond live session delivery inside the institution. ORA invested significant effort in building the written, digital, and practical supports needed to reinforce learning, improve continuity, and give participants resources they could return to during custody and after release. Taken together, these materials helped move NorthStar beyond a discussion-based pilot model and toward a more complete, structured program framework.



One important development was the creation of a custom NorthStar microsite and digital resource space. This digital platform was designed to act as a centralized location for program-related information, resource materials, and structured supports connected to the NorthStar model. The purpose of the microsite was to improve continuity, strengthen organization, and support a more durable program infrastructure as NorthStar continued to evolve. In practical terms, it reflected an effort to ensure that NorthStar was being built not only as an in-person experience, but also as a system supported by accessible and organized learning tools.

In support of weekly in-custody delivery, ORA also developed multiple custom double-sided lesson handouts tied to specific NorthStar sessions. These materials were created to reinforce lesson content, simplify complex topics, and provide participants with written tools they could review independently. In a correctional environment, where repetition, clarity, and accessibility are especially important, these handouts served an important function. They gave participants something concrete to hold onto, supported retention of key ideas, and extended the value of each lesson beyond the immediate group discussion.

The most substantial curriculum product developed during the year was *The Road Back* workbook. This resource was created as a comprehensive NorthStar curriculum tool focused on change, discipline, responsibility, and workforce readiness. Rather than functioning as a simple handout or collection of notes, the workbook was designed as a structured written framework that complements live facilitation with deeper reflection, journaling, and self-examination. Its content addresses major areas that repeatedly surfaced during program delivery, including accountability, identity, self-mastery, money, relationships, work, conduct, long-term thinking, and preparation for life after release. The workbook represented a significant step forward in formalizing the NorthStar model and creating a durable curriculum resource that can support consistency across delivery.





Another important part of this work involved developing additional curriculum in direct response to participant feedback. Throughout the reporting period, participants consistently demonstrated strong interest in certain topics, particularly financial literacy, entrepreneurship, personal accountability, identity, relationships, and practical future planning. ORA responded by refining existing material and building new lessons that reflected those needs. This was important because it ensured the curriculum remained responsive to the real questions, barriers, and aspirations being raised in the room. It also showed that the program was not static. It was being shaped through active listening, observation, and a genuine effort to make the content relevant to the lived realities of participants.

ORA also produced the *90-Day Survival Guide* as a practical transition resource for participants approaching release. This guide was designed to support individuals during the critical early period after returning to the community, when instability, uncertainty, and pressure are often at their highest. Its purpose was to help participants think clearly about immediate priorities, basic needs, structure, next steps, and the importance of disciplined decision-making during a vulnerable stage of reintegration. As a practical support tool, it reflects NorthStar's emphasis on preparation, not just inspiration.

In addition, ORA developed the *Post-Release Resource Sheet* as a straightforward reference tool for clients returning to the community. This material was created to

connect participants to key supports and services that may be required after release, including reintegration assistance, employment-related supports, and other community-based resources. Its value lies in its practical usefulness. It helps bridge the gap between what is taught inside the institution and what participants must navigate once they are back in the community.

Collectively, these materials represent a significant part of NorthStar's development during the year. They show that the program has been built not only through in-person mentorship and live facilitation, but also through a growing body of custom curriculum, written tools, digital infrastructure, and practical transition resources. This work has helped strengthen program consistency, reinforce learning, and improve continuity between custody and community. It also demonstrates ORA's commitment to building NorthStar as a serious, structured, and lasting reintegration model.



PARTICIPANT PROFILE AND EARLY FINDINGS

The most structured participant data currently available comes from the early survey report completed during the pilot phase. A 24-question survey was administered in person to 35 participants at Toronto South Detention Centre. Questions were read aloud to support varying literacy levels and learning styles.

The [From Custody To Community](#) survey results suggest that NorthStar is reaching many participants at a stage where guidance and accountability can have significant impact. Most respondents were young adults, with the majority between the ages of 25 and 30. The participant group was diverse, and most reported prior educational exposure ranging from some high school to some college or trade school.

The early findings also point to a strong response to the program model itself. Participants reported high levels of satisfaction, strong comfort in asking questions and participating in discussion, and high agreement that the material was useful for their future. They also reported increased confidence, a stronger sense of progress toward goals, and strong perceived relevance to future employment and training.



“ I look forward to this program every week. It gives my life a sense of purpose. ”
– NorthStar Client

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

One of the clearest patterns across the reporting period was the depth of participant engagement. Weekly reports repeatedly describe strong attendance, thoughtful questions, candid reflection, and visible trust-building across cohorts. In several cycles, participants described the end of the program as bittersweet, which in itself speaks to the value they placed on the sessions and the relationships built through them.

The learning environment appears to have mattered as much as the content. Discussion-based delivery, direct mentorship, and room for real questions created conditions where participants felt safe enough to think honestly. That psychological safety is especially meaningful in a correctional setting, where people often feel guarded and mistrustful.

Participants also showed a clear appetite for practical knowledge. Questions about debt, investing, taxes, credit, business ownership, trades, and work pathways were frequent. Staff also noted that participants increasingly connected the material to real-life situations such as conflict on the range, strained family relationships, self-control, identity, and future planning.

What Participants Valued Most

- Being treated with respect and dignity.
- Direct, honest conversations rather than generic programming.
- Practical lessons that felt relevant to life after release.
- Mentorship rooted in accountability, not judgment.
- Consistency, follow-through, and the sense that facilitators kept their word.

OUTCOMES AND EARLY SIGNS OF IMPACT

It is important to be truthful: NorthStar is still in an early stage of development, and longer-term outcomes must continue to be measured carefully. The current materials do not yet provide a full long-term outcome analysis on employment retention, recidivism reduction, or sustained post-release stability.

Even with that limitation, several early indicators are clear. Participants consistently reported increased confidence, improved outlook, and a stronger sense of accountability. Staff observed practical application of lessons in real time, including participants describing how they walked away from conflict, reflected on past choices, or began planning for lawful work and stability after release.

The written records also show strong signs of trust and follow-through after program contact. In one case, a participant facing serious legal consequences told staff he had built his letter to the judge around principles learned through NorthStar, including responsibility, resentment,

mission, and rebuilding one's internal world. In another case, a recently released participant arrived at ORA's office expressing gratitude for the practical and emotional support he had received and speaking openly about the realities of re-entry.

A particularly telling moment came when ORA received a handwritten letter from an incarcerated individual asking for the opportunity to begin upon release. Staff accurately observed that this kind of outreach reflects more than interest. It reflects belief in the program as a real path toward structure, dignity, and opportunity.

“You care for us like a father.”
— NorthStar Client

REINTEGRATION SUPPORTS AND CONTINUITY OF CARE

NorthStar's practical strength lies in the fact that it does not stop at encouragement. For eligible registered clients, ORA offers a range of service-based reintegration supports intended to reduce immediate barriers during the return to community life.

Key Reintegration Supports

- Housing assistance, including support related to first and last month's rent.
- Temporary food supports and grocery assistance.
- Transportation assistance for training, employment, and critical appointments.
- Identification and documentation help, including health cards and Social Insurance Numbers.
- Résumé development, job search help, workplace readiness, and job matching.
- Health, wellbeing, counselling, and therapeutic referrals.

The available reintegration support framework states clearly that these supports are provided as approved services or direct payments to service providers. They are not cash handouts. This distinction is important because it reflects a structured, accountable model focused on reducing barriers while maintaining program integrity.

The reporting period also includes examples of this continuity of care in practice. Recently released clients met with ORA staff at the office, received practical items such as hygiene bags and ORA sweaters, and spoke about how much those gestures meant during a vulnerable time. These moments show that continuity is not only logistical. It is also relational.

Service Parameters

Registered NorthStar clients may be eligible for up to \$2,265.00 in approved reintegration supports, subject to program conditions and availability. Funding is intended to stabilize participants through practical service delivery rather than direct cash provision.

“I wish I knew about
you guys years ago.”

– NorthStar Client



PARTNERSHIPS, OUTREACH, AND SYSTEMS BUILDING

NorthStar's work during the year also involved building the systems around the program. This included institutional recruitment, community corrections outreach, referral coordination, and relationship-building with probation, parole, and detention stakeholders.

The reporting period also documents outreach to provincial parole and probation offices, engagement with Central Region leadership, and intake activity connected to Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre. NorthStar's growing reputation has extended beyond Toronto South, including referrals from Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre, reflecting broader recognition of the program as a credible mentorship and reintegration pathway. The reporting period also included a well-received in-person presentation at the Brampton Probation and Parole Office, where officers were provided with program materials, case studies, and an overview of the ORA model and referral pathway.

These efforts matter because continuity of care depends on more than participant interest. It also depends on professional relationships, clear referral pathways, and institutional confidence in the program's credibility and structure.

LESSONS LEARNED

Several lessons emerged clearly from the year's documentation.

1. Discussion-based mentorship is central to engagement.

Participants responded strongly to open dialogue, practical examples, direct challenge, and relationship-based mentorship. The environment of psychological safety appears to be one of the program's most valuable features.

2. Practical life skills create strong engagement.

Financial literacy, business formation, and future-planning material consistently generated some of the strongest responses. Participants wanted information they could use, not just messages they could agree with in theory.

3. Identity work matters.

The reporting period shows repeated engagement with themes of accountability, positive male identity, strength of character, self-worth, labels, and purpose. Participants were not only asking how to get a job. They were also asking what kind of man they should become.

4. Post-release support matters as much as pre-release support.

The early findings suggest that confidence built inside custody needs to be supported by practical follow-up after release. Without continuity, even strong engagement can lose momentum.

5. Credibility depends on consistency.

Participants repeatedly commented on ORA's follow-through, honesty, and the sense that staff kept their word. In a correctional environment, that consistency appears to have had a major effect on trust and credibility.

“I just want to work, take care of my family, and stay out of trouble.”

– NorthStar Client

“From beginning to end, I’ve learned something new each week.”

– NorthStar Client

CHALLENGES AND OPERATIONAL LIMITS

A responsible annual report should also acknowledge the challenges and limits of the work. NorthStar operates inside a correctional setting, which naturally creates obstacles around access, scheduling, consistency, release timing, and long-term follow-up. The records also show that at least one session was missed due to an unexpected staffing issue, although the material was later recovered in subsequent sessions.

There are also limitations in the current evidence base. While participant feedback and staff observation are strong, long-term outcome tracking remains an area for continued development. The program is still building its measurement systems and refining its curriculum in real time. That is a normal part of pilot-stage growth, but it means care should be taken not to claim more than the evidence currently shows.



PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT YEAR

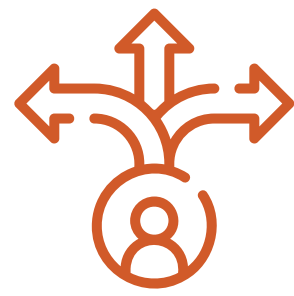
Based on the year's work, several priorities are clear for the next phase of NorthStar.



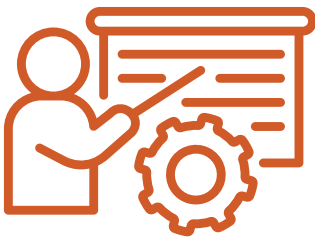
Continue refining and standardizing curriculum while preserving the program's direct, discussion-based mentorship style.



Strengthen post-release follow-up and continuity of care, especially in the first months after release.



Expand formal referral pathways with probation, parole, and institutional partners.



Deepen practical programming in financial literacy, work readiness, identity, relationships, and lawful future planning.



Improve data collection and medium-term outcome tracking to support stronger evaluation over time.



Maintain the dignity-based, truth-telling culture that participants identified as a defining strength of the program.

CONCLUSION

The first year of NorthStar shows real promise. The program created a structured, credible, and deeply human environment inside a difficult setting. It combined mentorship, accountability, practical education, curriculum development, and wraparound thinking in a way that participants clearly found meaningful.

The available documentation shows strong engagement, high participant regard for the program, repeated demand for more learning, early signs of impact on confidence and outlook, and serious effort by ORA to build the systems needed for continuity of care. Participants asked real questions. They reflected honestly. Some reconnected after release. Some reached out on their own from inside custody. Many described NorthStar as different from anything else they had experienced.

At the same time, honesty matters. NorthStar remains early in its development, and longer-term outcomes still need to be tracked carefully. But based on the evidence available during this reporting period, it is fair to say that NorthStar has already demonstrated meaningful value as a pre-release intervention and reintegration platform. The task now is to keep building on that foundation with discipline, clarity, and consistency.

“I appreciate you guys for seeing us, understanding us, appreciating us and valuing us.”

– NorthStar Client



PARTICIPANT QUOTES

This program changed my mindset from thinking now that I am in jail and my future is over to thinking about building a real future. A step to a better future with NorthStar.

– NorthStar Client

I think that NorthStar program should be a part of what we are taught in high school because so much of what they teach us is essential to being a great person if asked to pick out one of all the amazing aspects of this amazing program I would have to say it's the hope, hope

in myself, hope in my situation, hope in the fact that I'm not alone, hope for more, hope for a better tomorrow walking out of this program.

– NorthStar Client

If someone asked me what NorthStar is like I would tell them it is a program that prepares you for a life that brings peace and comfort to us and our families.

– NorthStar Client

I wish I met the facilitators before making the mistakes I've made that led me to where I am at right now. I feel like they help a lot of young men like myself realize the potential we have, and grow into better men, better versions of ourselves.

– NorthStar Client

If someone asked you what Northstar is like, what would you tell them? What is the most important thing you have learned so far?

– NorthStar Client

I can honestly and truly say thank you for giving one who had lost all hope the audacity to hope once again thank you for teaching me that I am worth such hope and beyond that I deserve nothing less thank you for my hope.

– NorthStar Client

The program covers many different topics and criteria, such as family law, building your financial future, mental and physical health, positive relationships strategies and many more. I could only describe this program as the art of success.

– NorthStar Client

Overall amazing program 10/10 highly recommend to others with amazing staff and a overall very resourceful and helpful team who are extremely dedicated individuals.

– NorthStar Client

The most important thing I learned from this program is the mindset of working hard and smart.

– NorthStar Client

I think that NorthStar program should be a part of what we are taught in high school because so much of what they teach us is essential to being a great person if asked to pick out one of all the amazing aspects of this amazing program I would have to say it's the hope, hope in myself, hope in my situation, hope in the fact that I'm not alone, hope for more, hope for a better tomorrow walking out of this program.

– NorthStar Client

There is so much that I've learned from this program. I've taken 28 programs and this is light years ahead of any of them.

– NorthStar Client

The NorthStar program removes the victim morality exposed by others and in its place imposes a distinctly empowering form of accountability while showing us the fruits of that accountability through both visual media and through the direct mentorship, experiences and discussion of its facilitators.

– NorthStar Client

The NorthStar program removes the victim morality exposed by others and in its place imposes a distinctly empowering form of accountability while showing us the fruits of that accountability through both visual media and through the direct mentorship, experiences and discussion of its facilitators.

– NorthStar Client

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Oaks Revitalization Association acknowledges the participants who engaged with NorthStar honestly and seriously throughout the year. Their reflections, questions, effort, and willingness to trust the process shaped the program in important ways.

We also acknowledge the staff, mentors, institutional contacts, community correctional partners, and referral stakeholders who supported delivery, outreach, and follow-up during the reporting period. Building this kind of work takes consistency, patience, and belief. The first year of NorthStar shows what can happen when those qualities are sustained.

We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to the **Government of Ontario** for their support of this work. Their investment in this program has helped make it possible to create meaningful space for mentorship, preparation, and reintegration planning at a critical point in participants' lives. That support has played an important role in helping NorthStar begin to grow into a program that offers direction, dignity, and practical opportunity.





Oaks
Revitalization
Association

THE FUTURE IS IN YOUR HANDS

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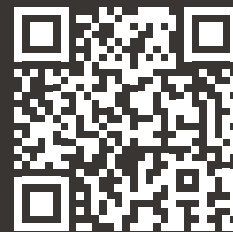
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