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IMPACT REPORT

2023 Leadership Forum & Rise on Boards Training Day

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The 2023 Leadership Forum: Collective Action for Social Change

On Friday, September 15, we welcomed our community of young changemakers, as well as leaders across the corporate, nonprofit, and government sectors for a full day of panels, workshops, networking, and mentorship at Fora's Leadership Forum.

This event focused on elevating young voices and putting local sustainable solutions at the forefront of the world's biggest challenges. Acclaimed experts led participants through insightful panel discussions, immersive workshops, and important conversations about how young people can take the lead in solving our toughest crises – from tackling the climate crisis to actioning reconciliation, to addressing growing inequalities, to championing more inclusive and equitable policies, and so much more.

200+ Attendees at our Leadership Forum event in Toronto

20 Expert panelists, speakers, and facilitators engaged

27 Youth Mentees and 10 established professional Mentors participated in our inaugural "Speed Mentorship" sessions

53% Of participants were youth under the age of 30

106K+ Reached across our social media, newsletter, and web channels

Highlights from the Event

Attendees participated in invigorating panels, hands-on workshop, customized mentorship sessions, and networking opportunities, including:

- Panel: Youth-led Innovation for Social Impact, ft. Linxi Mytkolli, Nika Elmi, and Farahnaaz Kanji, moderated by Marija Shaw
- Panel: Collaboration and Collective Action for Social Change ft. Michelle Musindo, Lindsay Debassige, and Kelsea Walsh, moderated by Maxime Matthew
- Panel: Youth Leading the Way Toward a Sustainable Future. ft. Faith Edem, Megan Quinn, and Taira Mehta, moderated by Pam Galenzoga
- Workshop: Building Your Leadership Voice to Drive Change by Niem Huynh
- Workshop: Advocacy: Making Collective Change Happen, by Amanda Arella
- Opening & Closing Remarks by Amy Desjarlais, and Miriam Butt, and Heather Barnabe, with emcee Adewunmi Ajike
- Keynotes from exceptional youth leaders Meena Waseem and Shadwa Ramadan

Over breakfast, lunch, and the speed mentorship session, panelists and participants connected and networked with one another, building relationships that will last far beyond the event.

For the first time, we also hosted a Speed Mentorship session, which allowed young leaders (ages 29 and under) to connect with accomplished mentors across industries, gain practical strategies for personal and professional growth, and expand their networks with like-minded individuals.

Reflecting our community

- 53% of our attendees were age 30 or under
- Keynotes were delivered by youth leaders and activists, Meena Waseem & Shadwa Ramadan
- Our speakers reflected our community, and included the voices of racialized, Indigenous, trans and nonbinary experts.
- As part of our commitment to representation, over 70% of the event speakers and panelists were Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour.





Industry leaders address why having young voices in decision-making spaces is essential

Panelists Farahnaaz Kanji (RBC), Linxi Mytkolli (Diabetes Action Canada), Nika Elmi (Youth Science Canada), and moderator Marija Shaw (Fora) discuss how young leaders, especially those from marginalized communities, are using innovation and technology to tackle global challenges during a panel focused on Youth-led Innovation for Social Impact.

What participants are saying...

Thank you Fora for igniting my passion for advocacy and equity-based work to an even brighter level. Thank you to all the speakers and mentors that took their time to share their knowledge with us. Thank you to all the mentees and Young Directors who showed me you are never too young, or too old or too lost. Most importantly, your ideas for the future are never too bright or far fetched.
– Beryl-Aissatou

I had the opportunity to attend Fora's Leadership Forum two weeks ago. The buzz and electric energy in the space reminded me how inspiring it is to be surrounded by young people. We have so much to learn from young people, but we need to put in the work to advance equity and diversity in decision-making spaces. Thank you Fora for such an energizing experience!
– Marie-France

I feel so seen at Fora. Thank you for uplifting young women and gender-diverse leaders!
– Cal



Volunteers show their support for youth leadership & gender equity!

Volunteers from Definity Insurance's Women's Empowerment Group brought their skills and enthusiasm to the Leadership Forum, checking-in event attendees and supporting logistics throughout the day. Fora was so grateful to have the support of Definity Insurance, as well as all volunteers who helped make this event possible!

Building stronger networks through a highly anticipated Speed Mentorship session

For the first time, emerging young leaders (ages 29 and under) had the chance to connect with industry leaders through a guided Speed Mentorship session.

This included invaluable opportunities to ask questions, and gain practical advice for personal, professional and leadership growth. Participants were inspired by the success stories of experienced leaders navigating many of the same challenges and opportunities as theirs, and left with new strategies to advance in their careers and personal lives, and to change the status quo.

Being invited to act as a Mentor with Fora has been and continues to be a privilege. I see this time together as a reciprocal moment to share in what we value as women in leadership. What I enjoy the most is that everyone in the room already has so much to offer one another and this world. Together, their future and ours is brighter.

— Amanda Calzolaio (she/her)





Young leaders receive training to join their first Board of Directors

By training and placing emerging leaders from diverse backgrounds at the board table for the first time, Rise on Boards is building more equitable and inclusive boardrooms across Canada.

Since 2017, Fora's Rise on Boards program (formerly Girls on Boards) has trained and placed 170 emerging leaders from a range of backgrounds and experiences in decision-making roles. Prior to their board appointment, Young Directors receive in-depth training from expert facilitators in matters of governance, financials, fundraising, communications, problem-solving, and leadership. Throughout their term, each Young Director is supported by a pre-selected board member and volunteer coach, and will also have the opportunity to connect with other Young Directors.

Inspiring and engaging workshops

On September 16, 30 Young Directors participating in this year's Rise on Boards program came together in Toronto to build connections with likeminded peers, and receive in-depth training to prepare them for their first board placements.

Workshops included:

- Decolonizing Boardroom Negotiations by Kat Daaca
- Imposter Syndrome by Juanita Lee-Garcia

These young leaders also built connections with one another, building a network of like-minded peers from across the country to share experiences, ideas, goals, and dreams.

About this year's Young Directors

For the first time since the program's inception, 100% of our most recent cohort of the Rise on Boards program identifies with at least one equity deserving group. This is especially important to our organization as we work to ensure young leaders who have historically been left out of decision-making spaces have a seat at the table.

60% of Young Directors are racialized

26% of Young Directors belong to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community

20% of Young Directors are living with a disability

46% of Young Directors are immigrants or newcomers to Canada

45% of Young Directors are members of a low-income household (\$50,000 or less)

34% of Young Directors are first-generation college or university students

6% of Young Directors are Indigenous





What Young Directors are saying...

The Leadership Forum was truly a remarkable opportunity to connect with fellow change makers. There's something so inspiring being in a room full of people that have such a spark in them.

— Krushi Patel

We were able to meet in person for the first time, and learn through comprehensive workshops about Imposter Syndrome and Negotiations. It was an absolute privilege to meet and connect with young leaders from across the country, all who brought their full, authentic selves to this experience. I learned so much from every single one of them, and am so thankful for this opportunity.

— Sahara Leckie



The Leadership Forum was made possible by our generous partners, helping us champion gender equity.



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Thank you for empowering the next generation of leaders!

