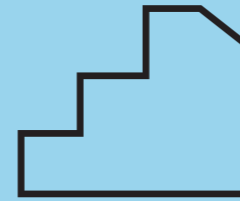


# FIRST



Impact Report 2023

# UNLEASHING AMBITION: FROM IDEA TO EXECUTION



## Mission

Our mission is to tear down barriers to educational opportunity and empower underrepresented talents to achieve better life outcomes.

Talent is universal, but opportunity is not. Despite the transformative power of education to level the playing field, our life paths are all too often shaped by the circumstances of our social background.

In response to this challenge, the Stockholm School of Economics and the Daniel Sachs Foundation united with the bold vision to reimagine society by expanding educational opportunities. We aimed to connect ambitious talents from underrepresented backgrounds with leading universities and forward-thinking corporate partners, broadening the horizons of all involved.

Our initial research identified the need for a robust social infrastructure that would offer these talents the support of nurturing social circles, inspiring industry role models, valuable professional networks, as well as the motivation and career-building skills required to propel them toward their dreams.

We knew that our intervention had to start early, and thus, our promise to our growing community is clear: from the moment these big dreamers first envision their career paths in the 8th grade to their entry into the professional arena, we are there, dedicated to removing barriers and bridging the path to higher education and the corporate world.

In the fall of 2022, we launched the F1RST pilot program, and the results have exceeded our high expectations. We are rewriting the playbook, challenging the status quo, and reshaping the narrative, one opportunity at a time. We are proving that talent, when nurtured and supported, is boundless.

Welcome to the F1RST Impact Report, where we celebrate the power of inclusivity and the limitless potential that awaits when we dare to unleash ambition.

# REACHING FOR THE SKY: THE F1RST PILOT PROGRAM

Unlocking the potential of underrepresented talents is a shared mission that serves the interests of both the corporate sector and higher education institutions. F1RST is dedicated to empowering individuals from under-privileged backgrounds through the pursuit of three core objectives:



- 1. Building Connections**  
We aim to foster meaningful connections among ambitious peers while providing access to relatable industry role models, igniting and nurturing career ambitions.
- 2. Education Empowerment**  
In collaboration with corporate partners and universities, we offer impactful programs to introduce young talents to various educational opportunities and career pathways, inspiring them to pursue their dreams.
- 3. Skills for Success**  
Our mission extends to equipping young talents with the essential skills required to embark on successful life journeys, ensuring they have the tools they need to thrive.

The pilot phase of F1RST was designed to transform these aspirations into tangible action. We united schools, civil society, and corporate partners to shape our vision into a reality. In our inaugural year, we focused on experimentation and fine-tuning, leveraging continuous feedback from our growing talent community. Our initial challenge was to identify and engage with a pool of talented individuals.

To address this issue, we concentrated on forming partnerships with schools that caters to students from our target demographic.

## Results from the pilot program

**91%**

satisfaction with  
community events

**47**

events and activities  
executed

**87%**

have increased their  
knowledge of career  
opportunities

**94%**

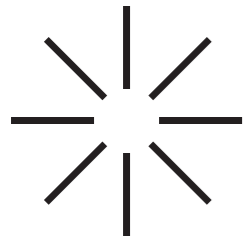
would recommend  
F1RST to a friend

**1,651**

opportunities created

**706**

members successfully  
integrated into  
the community



Valerie Ghimessy, F1RST Member, 9th grade

# Diving into the talent pool: partnering with schools

Our primary demographic comprises young talents from non-academic households, individuals with lower socioeconomic backgrounds, or those from diverse foreign backgrounds.

In an effort to engage with individuals in this demographic who are under the age of 18, we established strategic partnerships with selected schools, ranging from 8th grade to 3rd grade in high school.

Four schools were chosen for participation in the first-year pilot program: Västerholms friskola, S:t Botvids Gymnasium, Järva-skolan, and Fryshusets grundskola. Within these schools, teachers, student counselors, and management played pivotal roles in identifying ambitious students eligible to join the community. In select cases, we organized activities for entire classes, aiming to inspire more students to pursue higher education and become part of the F1RST community.

In addition to our school partnerships, we held a series of community-wide activities, inviting individuals to join F1RST independently. This open-access approach will remain a vital component of our programs, facilitating connections among different school cohorts and fostering a strong peer community. Throughout the pilot program, certain sessions emerged as key pillars of our school-based initiatives, shaping our educational approach moving forward:

## Inspirational Sessions

These sessions took place at each school, featuring F1RST student ambassadors and industry role models. Their purpose was to motivate young talents to aim higher in terms of their educational and career aspirations.

## Campus Visits

We organized visits to SSE and KTH to familiarize our talents with educational opportunities and various study paths, and we convened current university students and alumni to share their journeys with the community.

## Corporate Engagement

We arranged company visits and workshops at the offices of our corporate partners. These experiences introduced our talents to different career paths and established professional relationships between aspiring talents and industry insiders.

At the heart of F1RST lies our commitment to supporting students throughout their educational journey. This commitment extends to fostering involvement among underrepresented students who are already enrolled at institutions such as SSE and beyond. Originally planned for later stages, we took the opportunity to initiate this effort during the pilot program.

Over the past year, we mobilized a network of students from underrepresented backgrounds at SSE, and solidified a partnership with the student association Bright at KTH. As the pilot phase concluded, we also supported the launch of a brand-new student network for underrepresented talents at Stockholm University.



# Opening doors: ambitious companies showing the way

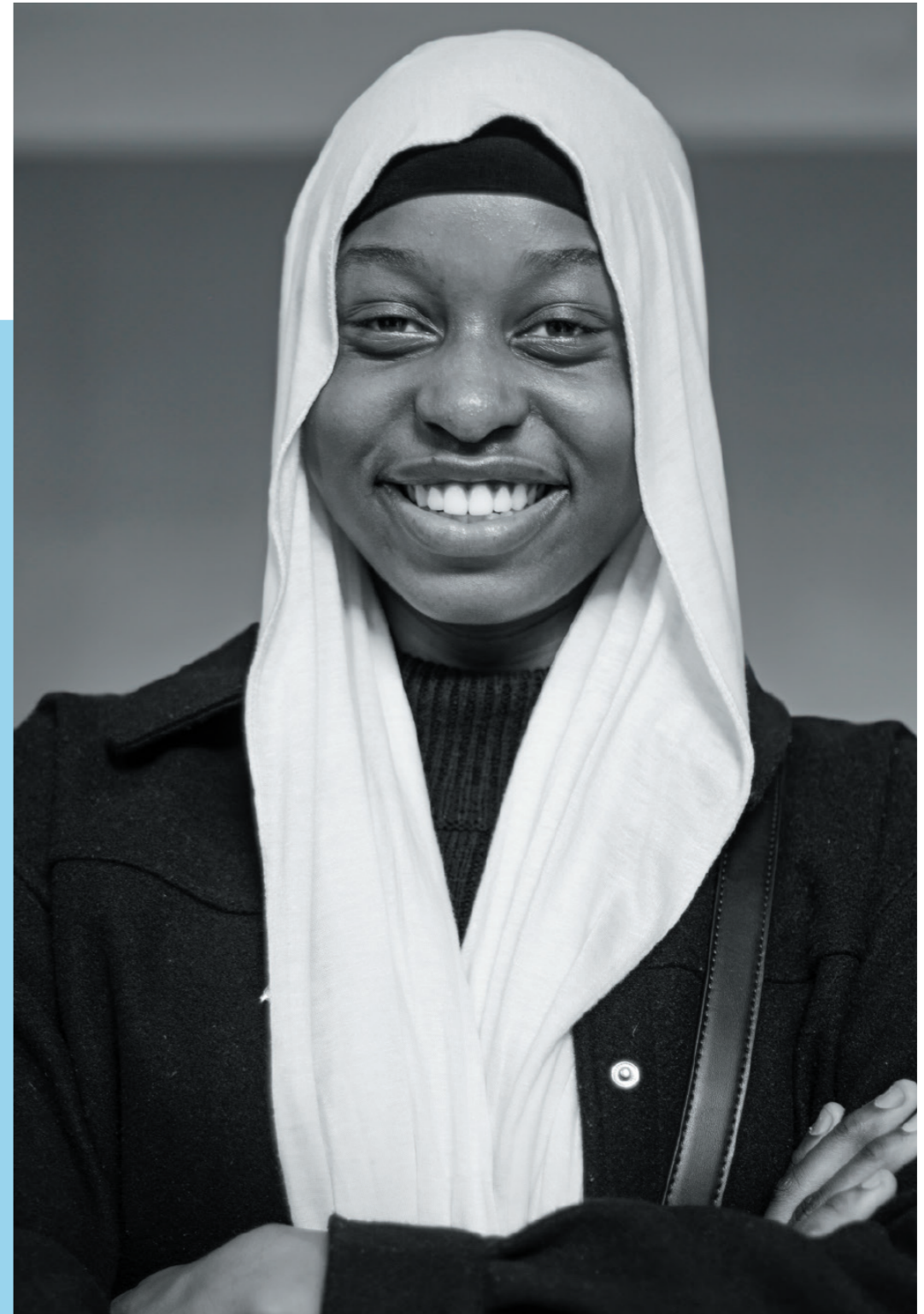
A central pillar of the F1RST program is to bridge the gap between ambitious talents and equally ambitious companies.

Our pilot program received invaluable financial support from an extraordinary lineup of founding corporate partners, including Goldman Sachs, EQT, Triton, SEB, Nordea, Swedbank, Klarna, EY, Kinnevik, P Capital Partners, the af Jochnick Foundation, and Jan Carl Adelswärd.

These visionary backers not only provided the necessary financial resources to launch F1RST but also graciously opened their office doors. Their dedicated co-workers generously offered their time to create exciting opportunities for our community throughout the pilot phase. Beyond our financial partners, several other companies, entrepreneurs, and industry role models have contributed to the success of the F1RST pilot program by participating in community activities and events.

In total, we orchestrated 47 activities during the pilot phase, which included 10 company visits and workshops, 5 school visits featuring student ambassadors and industry role models, and 7 career lounge sessions at SSE. Responding to the community's needs, we also facilitated numerous work opportunities for F1RST members. This encompassed 34 youth internships, 6 part-time positions, and 1 summer internship at Soros Fund Management in London.

Through the generous support of the Gålö Foundation, we also launched two annual scholarships at SSE, exclusively dedicated to our core demographic. The collaborative efforts of these forward-thinking companies and organizations have been instrumental in propelling F1RST forward, enabling us to make a meaningful impact on the lives of our ambitious community.



Leila Wasswa, F1RST Member 9th, grade

# Exceeding expectations: the results of the pilot program

As we close the books of the pilot phase, we do so with immense pride, celebrating a year that has been nothing short of extraordinary.

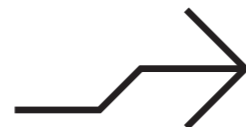
Our initial aim was to establish a community of 300 talents. A year later, our F1RST community boasts a remarkable 706 members, most of whom are still under the age of 18.

As we continue to grow the community, we remain committed to supporting these young talents on their educational journey, guiding them toward successful transitions into university studies. A significant milestone has already been achieved as we welcomed our very first F1RST community members at SSE in August 2023, clearly demonstrating the effectiveness and impact of our approach.

Another goal of the F1RST pilot program was to develop and execute 25 community events and activities. We far surpassed this target by hosting 47 activities in our inaugural year alone. This led to the creation of an astounding 1,651 opportunities, as

measured by the active participation of our community members.

Embracing the spirit of experimentation, our pilot program offered a diverse range of activities. Each event was meticulously evaluated in collaboration with our community, allowing us to adapt and refine our offerings. This feedback, collected through short surveys and interviews, illuminates the impact we are making on the lives of our community members, participating schools, and corporate partners.



"I think F1RST has been like a lamp that lights up a dark room. Ever since I became a member of F1RST, it has time and time again given me so many new opportunities that I never knew existed! It is so appreciated by me and my classmates who are also members. We who strive forward and have ambition have finally found a place that feels like home. F1RST inspires me incredibly!"

Ishmam Chowdhury, F1RST member in 9th grade at Västerholms Friskola



"F1RST go beyond just offering advice and tips; they build bridges to future opportunities by connecting with role models, business leaders, and companies. F1RST's work to widen recruitment to the Stockholm School of Economics and other academic institutions is not only admirable, it's necessary. It helps ensure a multifaceted and inclusive workforce that reflects modern Sweden. Their holistic approach to development – encompassing both personal and professional growth – positions them uniquely as an organization that doesn't just talk about change but makes it possible. In a short time, F1RST has changed my life and that of many others."

Sophia Nabil, F1RST member and Student President at F1RST GEN SSE



"We feel honored to be able to be a part of and support F1RST's efforts to diversify our business community. The collaboration also gives us the unique combination of the opportunity to interact with people we don't always reach otherwise, as well as the chance to give back in the form of knowledge, inspiration, and mentorship where it truly makes a difference."

Sara Janson, BCG Nordic Recruiting Manager



"Before, I couldn't imagine myself in an executive position because of the lack of diversity and representation at the top. Through F1RST, I met people in higher positions that shared similarities with me. I thrive in places where I can share my ideas and learn from other people with different backgrounds. By joining F1RST, I have been able to connect with people my age and much older than me that share similar interests and experiences as me. Through the initiative, I feel seen and heard, and have found different people I could relate to."

**Fatma Qureshi, F1RST Member now enrolled at SSE**



"The events F1RST has organized have, among other things, given me the opportunity to ask questions to influential individuals who have provided me with invaluable knowledge about what working life really looks like, but most importantly, the chance to build a network. For me, F1RST has been a community where I could develop as a person and show my potential as a woman in society. F1RST has given me the chance to realize that despite my background, as a woman, and the area I grew up in, I deserve the opportunities and knowledge that I get from these events. F1RST has helped me realize the importance of matching talent with opportunities."

**Rachinal Salame, F1RST member and high school student**



"Our collaboration with F1RST increases the opportunities for our students to create networks that are essential for successful integration into society. Through F1RST, our students establish contacts with people in various industries that can open doors for our students in the future. It promotes their personal development and increases their motivation for higher studies."

**Camilla Tenggren, Vice Principal at Västerholms Friskola**



"F1RST's work to broaden the recruitment base to top universities is extremely important. It contributes to democratization through inclusion, but also to promoting meritocracy, which is a cornerstone of a dynamic and democratic society."

**Jan Carl Adelswärd, F1RST Ambassador and investor/entrepreneur**



"F1RST truly goes from vision to action by successfully building bridges between young people in Stockholm's less privileged suburbs, the School of Business, and the business community. The F1RST ambassadors are committed and above all authentic, which gives young people a credible role model and hope that they can succeed. Hats off to Sabinor and the team for their work, which is more important for Sweden's future than ever."

**Sadie Percell, F1RST Ambassador and Director at Aon**



"I wish F1RST existed when I was studying. It's impossible to achieve something you don't know exists. Opportunities start with being aware that the opportunity exists. F1rst not only spreads information but also role models and clear paths to take to achieve these opportunities. Incredibly important, and I am proud to be a part of it."

**Shuayb Ibrahim, F1RST Ambassador and Investment Associate at Summa Equity**



# VIVIEN KOVACS

“F1RST has given me a sense of belonging and motivation”

Vivien Kovacs is one of two F1RST members who were granted admission to the Stockholm School of Economics during the pilot phase of our program. This is her F1RST story.

Can you share your journey? How did you end up joining F1RST?

– My journey dates back to an Open Day at Stockholm School of Economics. It was after I walked out of the building through the oak door that I realized that SSE without a doubt was the ideal place for my academic ambitions. It was on this day that I connected with F1RST for the first time, an encounter that would play a significant role in my SSE journey. Thanks to F1RST, I have had the privilege of stepping through that oak door several times even before officially becoming an SSE student. Still, it was an out-of-this-world feeling to enter the school as an enrolled student, especially knowing the hard work that had led me to this moment.

How has F1RST influenced your decision to pursue higher education, particularly in the field of economics?

– Thanks to F1RST, I have had the opportunity to connect and network with like-minded students and meet inspirational people, especially in the fields of economics. Taking part of other people’s stories and experiences has been eye-opening for me and inspired me to pursue higher education in economics. F1RST has been a significant contributing factor in my decision to apply to SSE and study Business and Economics.

In what ways has F1RST’s talent community and support network had an impact on you and your professional goals?

– F1RST has given me a sense of belonging and motivation. Knowing that I am part of a community of like-minded individuals who share a passion for their future careers has been incredibly inspiring. F1RST has opened doors to valuable connections and insights. Through networking events and interactions with mentors, I have gained a deeper understanding of various career paths and industries. These interactions have not only broadened my horizons but have also provided me with advice and guidance for my own journey.

Could you share a particularly memorable experience from your time with F1RST?

– I have so many cherished memories from my time with F1RST, but one that always comes to mind is when we met with comedian and writer, Melody Farshin. Our interaction with her was not just a typical guest lecture; it was a heartfelt and enlightening conversation. Melody shared her personal journey, highlighting the challenges and triumphs she faced as someone from a diverse background in the entertainment industry. Her stories really resonated with each of us.

Lastly, as a role model for other underprivileged students with big dreams, what advice would you give to someone who might be considering participating in F1RST or pursuing higher education?

– Just do it! Your future self will be so proud that you put your dreams first.



Vivien Kovacs, F1RST member and enrolled student at SSE





Mohammad Abuquta, FIRST Member, 9th grade

# 5 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE FIRST PILOT PROGRAM

1. 0–706 members in the first year alone
2. Four school partnerships established spanning 8th grade to 3rd grade in high school
3. Modular programming developed tailored to our community's needs
4. 13 top-tier corporate partners engaged and actively supporting the community
5. Two members successfully enrolled at the Stockholm School of Economics

# CHARTING THE PATH AHEAD: OUR FUTURE ROADMAP

As we set our sights on the future and plan the evolution of F1RST beyond the pilot phase, we're building upon the invaluable lessons we've learned over the past year.

One crucial insight from our journey is the need to develop a well-defined blueprint for the F1RST school program model. This blueprint will not only clarify our offerings to schools but also streamline our expansion efforts. Embracing a more standardized approach, while still retaining flexibility, will empower us to continue our rapid growth. Through the pilot phase, we've also identified the critical success factors for school partnerships, allowing us to better support schools in integrating new talents into our community.

Our ambition for the upcoming year is to add more school partnerships and expand our reach. By 2024, we aim to double the number of community members and establish F1RST outside the Stockholm region.

By the year's end, we envision F1RST having a presence in at least one additional Swedish region, with international expansion on the horizon beyond 2024.

The feedback we've received from our community is clear—beyond our existing offerings, they seek meaningful work experiences to enhance their CVs. In response to this, we're allocating resources in 2024 to develop a robust work opportunity program. This initiative will match underrepresented talents with work opportunities at our corporate partners, encompassing internships, summer jobs, part-time positions, and more.

As we continue to redefine higher education recruitment and champion diversity in the

business sector, we hope for the enduring support of our founding corporate partners and the opportunity to welcome new allies.

Our track record speaks volumes about the incredible potential of putting talent first. Now is the perfect moment to fully embrace your own ambitions and those of our ever-expanding community.



Melody Batti, F1RST member SSE

# 5 KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2024



Oyon Ahmed, F1RST Member, 9th grade

1. Create a blueprint for the F1RST school program model to facilitate expansion
2. Expand our reach through additional school partnerships and by establishing F1RST outside the Stockholm region
3. Mobilize corporate partners to develop a work opportunity offering
4. Focus on member engagement, increasing the number of highly engaged members
5. Develop an impact framework to assess the quality and effects of F1RST

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

Today, as I reflect upon our journey through the pilot program, I am humbled and overwhelmed by the collective spirit of dedication, resilience, and ambition that has propelled us forward. Our results, while measurable in numbers, carry a deeper resonance in the lives transformed and dreams kindled. We embarked on this journey with the aspiration to change lives and I dare to say that it is exactly what we are doing.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to every stakeholder, school, corporate partner, industry role models, and most importantly, our bright young talents for shaping F1RST. We are just at the outset, but with every step, we are reimagining society by unleashing ambition to reach further. Join us in our work!

We invite you to get in touch and embark on this journey with us:  
[sabinor.haas.lonnroth@hhs.se](mailto:sabinor.haas.lonnroth@hhs.se)



Sabinor Haas Lönnroth, F1RST Program Director

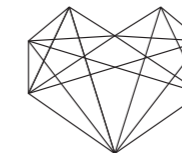
## Funding corporate partners



AF JOCHNICK FOUNDATION



## Educational partners



JÄRVASKOLAN



## Founders



## Supporting partners



GÅLÖSTIFTELSEN

