



BRIDGING THE GAP

Report on Disability Inclusion in Canadian Workplaces

Prepared by:
Disability Inclusion Business Council

November 2024

Bridging the gap: Report on Disability Inclusion in Canadian Workplaces

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Message from the Co-chairs



As I reflect on the journey the Disability Inclusion Business Council has undertaken together, I can't help but take pride in the hard work, dedication and support shown by each Council member and their respective teams in delivering this report. I also wish to highlight the dedication of the civil servants who played an important role in the Council's success.

Every contribution has played a vital role in shaping the outcome of this report, and it is because of the collaboration shown by so many that we have been able to accomplish this milestone together. Thank you to each one of you for working to make your organizations more disability confident and inclusive for persons with disabilities.

Anita Huberman, Honorary Captain, Royal Canadian Navy. Former President and Chief Executive Officer, Surrey Board of Trade. Representing the full Canadian Chamber of Commerce network



As we reach the culmination of our collective efforts in delivering the Disability Inclusion Business Council Report on workplace inclusivity, I want to take a moment to extend my earnest thanks to each one of the Council members, working group members, the accessibility advisor Pina D'Intino, and the Secretariat staff who helped shape this report.

As a co-chair on the Disability Inclusion Business Council, I could not be prouder of the tireless time, effort and dedication exemplified over the last two years.

My hope is that this report serves as one of the many steps towards Canada's common goal of creating more inclusive workplaces for persons with disabilities.

Paul Clark, Senior Executive Vice President, Wealth Management, TD Bank Group

Disability Inclusion Business Council Members



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CEO of Aequum Global Access and Global Accessibility Lead and Strategist

Executive Summary

Disability inclusion is a competitive advantage for employers. Diverse businesses are shown to be more innovative and successful. Despite this, Canadians with disabilities continue to face higher rates of unemployment and underemployment compared to those without disabilities. More than 8 million Canadians with disabilities are a diverse group with a range of experiences, influenced by factors such as age, sex, and ethnicity. Addressing the systemic employment barriers they may face requires a concerted effort from all Canadians, including governments and employers.

Recognizing the need for change, in December 2022, the Disability Inclusion Business Council (DIBC; the Council) was established. This advisory body is composed of 10 corporate leaders and a senior accessibility subject advisor. It was mandated to advise the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities (the Minister), and to champion disability inclusion within the business community. This report focuses on the perspective of employers. It recognizes that many employers understand the importance and value of hiring persons with disabilities, but often face challenges to ensure that their workplaces are inclusive of persons with disabilities.

The report recommends that employers:

1. Champion a culture of inclusion and provide training opportunities regarding disability and accessibility awareness and sensitivity to all employees, particularly people managers.
2. Adopt inclusive design approaches to meet and exceed accessibility standards.
3. Adopt accommodations approaches that offer employees accommodations and adjustments by default, rather than relying upon disclosure.
4. Ensure fully inclusive environments throughout the full employee life cycle.
5. Ensure that artificial intelligence (AI) and technology used in the workplace is ethical and accessible by design.

6. Set standards and goals and measure performance to increase accountability.

The report presents advice for the newly launched Canadian Business Disability Inclusion Network (CBDIN) to:

- Provide a centralized library of tools and resources for employers and facilitate the exchange of best practices and lessons learned.
- Encourage, support and connect disability employee resource groups to empower their growth and strength.
- Promote the collection of data and the implementation of standardized benchmarking tools among businesses of all sizes.
- Support connections between employers and pools of talent.
- Champion the career advancement of employees with disabilities.

Additionally, the report offers advice for further Government of Canada action:

- Lead by example to ensure that the Government of Canada's workforce is representative of society and that the work environment is fully inclusive. Share successful efforts and lessons learned for other employers to learn from.
- Explore ways to enhance information-sharing, mentorships, build talent pipelines, and job matching efforts.
- Further promote the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA) requirements and Accessibility Standards Canada's (ASC) Centre of Expertise amongst all employers.

Introduction

In 2022, Canada's first Disability Inclusion Action Plan was released. The Plan sets out a blueprint for change, guided by four key pillars, one of which is Employment. A key action under the Employment Pillar was to create a Disability Inclusion Business Council (DIBC, the Council) to advise the Minister and champion disability inclusion within the business community. The Council was established in December 2022 as an advisory body.

The Council is a volunteer committee composed of 10 corporate leaders, including two co-chairs, as well as a senior accessibility subject advisor. The Council represents sectors such as:

- banking
- consultancy
- health and well-being services
- air transportation
- retail
- insurance
- computer systems design, and
- data services

The organizations represented by the Council have impressive track records of inclusive workplaces. They shared promising practices as well as challenges facing their organizations, which has informed this report.

The mandate of the Council is to: 1) design and set up an independent business network; and 2) provide the Minister advice and recommendations on workplace inclusivity.

The first mandate was completed in December 2023 with the launch of the Canadian Business Disability Inclusion Network (CBDIN). This report fulfils this second mandate and provides additional insight into the employer perspective.

Disability Inclusion: A Competitive Strength

Disability inclusion is a core value that impacts every area of the business.

Diversity and inclusion are a competitive advantage. Diverse teams are the most effective and productive. Different people, perspectives, and ways of thinking are critical to drive innovation. Organizations should be representative of the customer base and the broader society. It just makes business sense to invest in staff and ensure they feel that they belong, are valued, and are equipped to succeed.

In July 2024, the Minister released the Employment Strategy for Canadians with Disabilities (Employment Strategy). The Employment Strategy was also a key action set out in Canada's Disability Inclusion Action Plan and sets out a plan to break down barriers for persons with disabilities. To remove these barriers, governments, employers, and everyone in society need to work together.

One of the key goals in the Strategy centers around employers, recognizing that they need help to hire, retain, and develop talented persons with disabilities. Employers also need help to create welcoming workplaces that are inclusive and accessible. The DIBC was given the opportunity to review and comment on the Employment Strategy. This report can also inform how the Employment Strategy can continue to evolve to support employers.

Scope of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Minister with advice and recommendations to improve the inclusivity of persons with disabilities in workplaces across Canada. The report also provides advice to employers and the newly created CBDIN. Various groups were involved in the drafting of the report, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)¹, working group members including those with lived experience, and employees with disabilities. The recommendations were developed after consulting with employers, employer organizations, and employees. An in-depth literature review was conducted, two research reports informed by

¹ In Canada, small businesses are defined as having 1-99 employees, whereas medium businesses have between 100 and 499 employees.

interviews with persons with disabilities were commissioned,² and the Retail Council of Canada received input from their members by way of a survey (with 17 respondents).

More consultation with persons with disabilities will be required when exploring implementation of the recommendations and advice set out throughout the report, in accordance with the principles of Nothing Without Us. Nothing Without Us means that people with disabilities must participate fully in decisions that affect them.

In preparing this report, the Council committed to delivering advice and recommendations for the Minister that are national in scope, and that consider how different identities interact and affect experience. Recommendations support employers, including SMEs, build disability confidence and workplace inclusivity, and foster greater collaboration amongst businesses. The term “disability confidence” is used throughout this report and refers to employers that are confident in attracting, recruiting, and retaining persons with disabilities.

The six recommendations provided to employers are actionable and can be applied by employers of different sizes and different sectors. The advice and comments in this report solely reflect the views of the Council and as indicated above, additional discussions with the disability community will be required to validate and implement the proposed recommendations.

Background and Context

Employment of Persons with Disabilities in Canada

As of data from 2021, there is a 16 percentage point gap between the employment rates of persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 (62%) and persons without disabilities of the same age range (78%) (Statistics Canada, 2023). The experience of a disability varies across persons. Disabilities can be permanent or temporary. Disabilities can also be episodic, which means they are unpredictable and fluctuate over time. Some disabilities may be apparent (e.g., Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy, Paralysis, etc.) while others are non-apparent (e.g., chronic pain, depression, learning disabilities, etc.).³ Persons with disabilities may have multiple or intersecting identities such as race, indigeneity, gender, age, sexual orientation, education, and economic status that lead to increased experiences of discrimination and barriers to employment.

The latest data show that among youth aged 15 to 24 years, the three most common disability types were mental health-related (14%), learning (9%) and pain-related (7%) disabilities. Among adults aged 25 to 64, the three most common disability types were related to pain (15%), mental health (11%) and flexibility (9%) (Statistics Canada, 2024c). Many disabilities have varying symptoms that can require low to high supports.

² (SRDC, 2023); (RoDG, 2023)

³ For more information on the terms used throughout this report, see: [A way with words and images: guide for communicating with and about persons with disabilities - Canada.ca](https://www150.communiquer.ca/guide-for-communicating-with-and-about-persons-with-disabilities)

Most people in Canada will be impacted by disability at some point in their life, either directly or indirectly via family and friends. Disability is not an exception to the rule, but rather, part of a richly diverse human experience.

The Impact of the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the ways Canadians work, including a shift to remote or hybrid work. In many cases remote work can be beneficial for persons with disabilities. However, many persons with disabilities are also frustrated, given that they had been advocating for this flexibility for years, and were often told it was not possible. In 2017, 30% of employed persons with disabilities who had expressed a need for working from home were not accommodated. In 2022, this figure had decreased to 19% (Statistics Canada, 2024d). The pandemic showed that increased flexibility in the workplace is not only possible but can also benefit all employees and businesses alike.

The pandemic had more negative impacts for persons with disabilities than those without disabilities. According to data collected by Statistics Canada, among Canadians with long-term conditions or disabilities who were employed before the start of the pandemic, 36% reported that they experienced a temporary or permanent job loss, or reduced hours at the beginning of the pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2020). The pandemic also revealed that laying off employees based only on seniority can negatively impact equity-deserving groups (women, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minority groups). Many Canadians with disabilities experience social isolation and loss of access to supports and services as well as increased risks of complications or severe impacts from COVID-19.

The Aging Workforce

Canada is experiencing an aging population and an aging workforce. The labour force participation rate for those over 65 more than doubled from 6.3% in 1997 to 15% in 2023 (Statistics Canada, 2024b). Older employees are more likely to have a disability due to onset of health conditions associated with aging. In 2022, two in five (40%) seniors aged 65 and over identified as having one or more disabilities, compared to almost 24% adults aged 25 to 64 years (Statistics Canada, 2024c). The aging workforce underlines the importance of understanding disability inclusion in the workplace and how ageism and ableism can create barriers for older employees. Flexible work and/or reduced hours can provide opportunities for older employees to stay in the workforce longer if they wish, which can alleviate labour shortages. These flexibilities can also facilitate knowledge transfer for those wanting to begin the transition to retirement. It is critical to support knowledge transfer to ensure knowledge is not lost as workers retire. Systems should be established to ensure this knowledge is transferred to younger generations of workers who will drive the future of work. However, assumptions should not be made based on age, and older employees should also be offered the same opportunities for continued success, advancement, and growth.

The New Generation of Employees

Today's youth do not see disability the same way as previous generations; they see inclusion as a bare minimum. They expect inclusion and accessibility and call for better communication and greater transparency. Younger employees also tend to push for change to improve diversity, equity and inclusion and wellness. This generation has also grown up with the internet and greater access to technology than any other generation before it, meaning they are able to communicate with broad audiences and networks about their experiences with an employer or business, whether positive or negative. Therefore, employers must be mindful of the impacts of their business practices and procedures to ensure employee retention and growth of younger employees (Deloitte, 2024).

“The younger generation expects an inclusive environment. If you can't succeed in meeting their expectations, you can't succeed period.”

– Paul Clark, Senior Executive Vice President, Wealth Management, TD Bank Group

The Jobs of Tomorrow

The Canadian economy is undergoing major transformations driven by factors such as the rise of AI, the shift to green jobs, and the undeniable impacts of climate change. As Canadians prepare for future work, it is important to consider how these factors will impact persons with disabilities. As outlined later in this report, AI in particular presents both opportunities and risks.

Report Limitations

While this report focuses on the role of employers and workplace inclusion, we want to emphasize that employers can not fully access the labour pool of persons with disabilities if pervasive barriers in other areas of society are not addressed. Below is a list of some of the additional barriers that can limit the ability of persons with disabilities to fully participate in the labour market. It is important to note that these barriers do not affect everyone equally. For instance, persons with disabilities who live in rural or remote regions may face greater barriers to accessing affordable and accessible public transportation and housing.

To achieve full and equitable economic inclusion of persons with disabilities, governments, in collaboration with persons with disabilities and other stakeholders, must continue to advance progress in other areas including:

Transportation: The lack of accessible and reliable transportation remains a barrier for many persons with disabilities, particularly in rural and remote communities where there is a lack of safe, accessible, and affordable transportation for those who do not or can not drive.

Housing: Without access to adequate housing, many persons with disabilities cannot fully participate in society. More accessible, adequate, and affordable housing needs to be built, as waitlists are often years long. Lack of housing built with inclusive design in mind limits the ability of persons with disabilities to move for job opportunities.

Education: Higher educational attainment is generally linked to better employment outcomes. However, many persons with disabilities can face various barriers to accessing education, including inadequate funding and physical inaccessibility of facilities at educational institutions (SRDC, 2023). Overall educational attainment is lower for persons with disabilities than those without disabilities (Statistics Canada, 2024a). This can also negatively impact co-op and volunteerism opportunities, limiting part-time or temporary work experience and opportunities for social skills development and integration.

Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurship can be a valuable career option for all Canadians, including persons with disabilities. Although business ownership rates among persons with disabilities in Canada has increased in recent years, persons with disabilities still face additional barriers to entrepreneurship, including difficulties related to accessing capital and lack of appropriate business supports and advice (Statistics Canada, 2022). As for anyone going into entrepreneurship, access to capital, tailored supports and business advice is essential.

Employers should do their part to take into consideration this broader context, appreciating the challenges that employees face in their daily lives. Employers should take person-centred approaches and can provide flexible work arrangements, foster work-life balance, and provide comprehensive wellness and benefit packages for employees.

Advice and Recommendations for Employers

A culture shift is needed in the labour market and in workplaces. This needs to begin with leadership at the very top of the organization and permeate through the organization with champions at all levels. The business case for disability inclusion is compelling. Research done in the United States shows that Disability Inclusion Leaders realized marked business gains, including in revenue, net income, and economic profit. Disability Inclusion Leaders were significantly more likely to outperform their peers on productivity, measured at a 25% increase in revenue per employee (Accenture, 2023). The benefits of a fully accessible and inclusive society would create an estimated value of \$337.7 billion dollars for Canadian society in the reference year of 2017 (Tomba, 2022). To get there, businesses need greater support, tailored tools and resources, flexible approaches to accommodations, and increased accountability. The report includes targeted recommendations that can be implemented by employers of all sizes.

“The tone starts from very high up. Disability inclusion is not just a moral obligation but also a business imperative.”

– Jad Shimaly, Global Managing Partner – Client Service, EY Canada

Workplace Culture

Persons with disabilities in Canada continue to face significant and persistent barriers in the workplace due to biases and discrimination, which can be compounded by other identity factors such as gender, indigeneity, visible minority status or income. Negative stereotypes and employers' lack of knowledge contributes to discrimination in hiring processes, lower retention rates, and undervaluation by employers (SRDC, 2023).

“We want to ensure we are creating a great work environment, rather than just check a box to say we are hiring persons with disabilities.”

– Naveed Irshad, President and Chief Executive Officer, Manulife

While people with disabilities may require accommodations, it's equally important that their colleagues are accepting of these differences. Managers need to be aware of interpersonal dynamics and understand how the competitive nature of many workplaces and the resulting interactions can impact employees with disabilities. Persons with disabilities may carry their own assumptions and face psychological and social barriers, due to limited work experience or previous negative experiences. Businesses must acknowledge that persons with disabilities may not enter the workplace with the same level of confidence and experience as persons without disabilities, especially when navigating a new environment. Their employment journeys may not align neatly with existing business models for onboarding or progression.

To achieve greater success, it is essential to build a bridge between the needs and assumptions of individuals with disabilities and the understanding and expectations of businesses and policymakers.

Too often, disability is viewed very narrowly, without consistent consideration of non-apparent disabilities. Efforts to increase understanding must include additional resources on disability-related barriers, challenges, and the strengths of persons with non-apparent disabilities (e.g., neurodiversity, episodic disabilities, mental health, and mental illness). Employers' understandings of accessibility often focus only on the physical environment and mobility considerations and don't adequately consider disabilities such as mental illnesses and neurodiversity.

Culture change takes time and must come from the top. Studies have shown that even among employers who hire persons with disabilities, stereotyping and discrimination can remain an issue. There is often a preference for hiring persons with more commonly known, specific or similar disabilities and not others (SRDC, 2023).

Many Canadian employers indicate that there is a lack of tools and resources to address discrimination, stigma, and increase workplace accessibility. This can be especially true for smaller organizations, who may have limited capacity or resources to design new hiring practices in-house or manage compliance (Presidents Group, 2019).

“It is equally important to be careful not to stereotype persons with disabilities in particular jobs. For instance, someone who is autistic may not always be the best match for data collection or repeatable tasks. We must allow each individual to succeed based on their personal strengths and not assume we know what is best for them.”

– Pina D’Intino, Global Accessibility Lead and Strategist and CEO of Aequum Global Access

Recent findings from a survey of Canadian SMEs show that having practical resources to learn how to make workplaces more accessible and inclusive was viewed as the most useful tool (48%), followed by connections with community organizations (41%) and information about financial incentives (36%) (EnviroNics, 2022).

Employer organizations raise the importance of connecting their members with disability organizations and disability recruitment agencies and providing them with tools and knowledge to increase their disability confidence (Lansdowne, 2024). Whenever feasible, the tools and resources that have been shown to lead to tangible positive outcomes should be shared more broadly, as many smaller organizations do not always have the resources to establish partnerships with disability organizations. Employers have indicated the need for greater access to information to help them be more inclusive, preferably through a one-stop-shop. In this regard, the recently launched CBDIN could play an important role as it sets out to help employers become more disability confident.

“The only way we are going to really improve workplace inclusivity is to ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have the tools and resources they need; after all, over 99% of employer businesses in Canada are SMEs. Providing support in this area is paramount to ensuring the disability confidence of Canadian employers.”

– Anita Huberman, Honorary Captain, Royal Canadian Navy. Former President and Chief Executive Officer, Surrey Board of trade (Representing the full Canadian Chamber of Commerce network)

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) - voluntary employee-led groups - can benefit employees with disabilities by providing greater connection, networking, and support. They also benefit the employer as these groups can offer a structured feedback loop where the organization can get diverse perspectives and hear about challenges and opportunities employees with disabilities

are facing. These insights are critical, as building an inclusive and positive workplace culture is a commercial driver that leads to business success.

Many employers are apprehensive about making mistakes and doing or saying the wrong thing, which can make them hesitant to hire persons with disabilities or engage with disability inclusion initiatives (Lansdowne, 2024). Employers are encouraged to take stock of where they are and to commit to a process of continuous improvement. It's important to note that discrimination or the creation of barriers is often not intentional. Everyone has unconscious biases. Ableist microaggressions can contribute to unfair treatment of persons with disabilities while at work. Microaggressions and biases are small-scale verbal or physical interactions that are hostile or negative, though often unintentionally. Even if these interactions are not intended to be malicious, they may eventually lead to a sense of exclusion and potential mental health issues for their recipients. People managers can benefit from improving their knowledge on how to identify and address these behaviours to improve workplace inclusivity (Jammaers et. al. 2024). Employer education can support employers to recognize unconscious bias, correct misinformation, and take strengths-based approaches.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Employers champion a culture of inclusion and provide training opportunities regarding disability and accessibility awareness and sensitivity to all employees, particularly people managers.

This could include:

- Sharing progress and lessons learned, including success stories, challenges and meaningful examples of what works and why, to support other employers.
- Collaborating with experts and stakeholders including colleges, universities, training and disability employment services providers and job seekers, and other businesses.
- Employers can aim to hire training companies led by persons with disabilities and/or freelance consultants with disabilities who are subject matter experts with lived experience to offer training on topics such as unconscious bias, disability etiquette and sensitivity.
- Employers can include mechanisms to measure the impact of training programs (e.g., pre- and post-training surveys to gauge changes in attitudes or knowledge).
- Senior leadership actively participate in and champion training programs to demonstrate commitment from the top.

Inclusive Design

There are a few related but distinct approaches used to design physical environments, products, services and processes with usability and accessibility in mind. First, the concept of “universal design” means designing one experience to be useable to the greatest extent and by the largest number of people possible. When a wide range of users are considered in the design it limits the need for adaptations later. This concept was created by an architect and was first applied to the built environment, and then applied to other processes, like the design of products and services including the design of digital content.

However, people can have conflicting needs – for instance someone with low vision may need brighter lighting, and someone with light sensitivity may need dim lighting. Universal design cannot address all needs. This is where the concept of “inclusive design” comes in. Inclusive design embraces multiple design variations. It considers many aspects of human diversity that could influence someone’s experience, including but not limited to disability. An inclusive lens is used throughout the process, and varied users are involved from the start of the process to ensure their needs and preferences are accounted for. Inclusive design provides personalization and flexibility to meet the broader need. Accessibility is a key element of inclusive design, while recognizing that access is the bare minimum. Inclusive design goes beyond addressing barriers to seek to improve the overall user experience.

When thinking about inclusive design it’s helpful to think about the social model of disability. The social model states that the disadvantage is not the physical or mental condition, but rather society’s response. The issue arises when society characterizes the condition as an impairment and fails to accommodate differences. Under the social model, persons with disabilities are not disadvantaged because of their conditions, but rather they experience discrimination in the way that society is organized.⁴

“When considering universal and inclusive design, it’s imperative that persons with disabilities be included not only early, but often throughout the design process.”

– Stephen Liptrap, Former President and Chief Executive Officer, LifeWorks

When combining universal design and inclusive design principles, employers can get closer to ensuring they are not leaving anyone behind in their workforce. Studies show that these principles increase the proportion of employees who can succeed, reduce the need for individual accommodations, reduce stigma, and ultimately improve the bottom line (Sheppard-Jones et al. 2021). Including persons with disabilities early and often in the process ensures that any products, systems or processes are fully inclusive before implementing them in the workplace. For instance, the [Equity Resource Hub](#) created by TD Lab can help businesses follow a repeatable process to incorporate an equity lens into processes, projects, and products.

⁴ Ontario Human Rights Commission, n.d.

Promising examples of building in accessibility from the start include offering well-being programs and benefits, providing flexible work to all employees, and providing guidance to ensure all meetings and events are inclusive. Employers should ensure that job postings are accessible. The focus should be on functional requirements, in other words, the tasks and abilities that are required to carry out the job. Too often, job listings require levels of education or experience that are not necessary, and which may screen-out suitable candidates.

Inclusive design can be costly for many SMEs. However, building in accessibility from the start results in fewer accommodation requests down the line and leads to improved customer experiences and higher employee satisfaction and retention. Many accessibility solutions can be implemented at little to no cost (e.g., coding a website to be screen reader friendly and allowing users to adjust the contrast or remove images). For costlier options, the Government of Canada has different programs that support businesses, such as the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities and the Enabling Accessibility Fund. Simply becoming aware of, and promoting, accessibility features readily available in everyday products and tools can also go a long way.

Larger organizations can have a big impact by promoting accessibility amongst their vendors and within the broader system. When businesses and governments require high accessibility standards in their procurement processes, it sends a strong message to vendors. If vendors want to remain competitive, they have to offer accessible products and demonstrate how they support disability-led business services. This also means that there are more products and services being built with accessibility in mind, which in turn benefits businesses of all sizes.

Public Services and Procurement Canada is currently working on initiatives to apply accessibility requirements in the procurement of goods and services the Government of Canada buys. The initiatives include a Resource Centre to guide and provide advice to other federal organizations on accessible procurement, guidelines to help federal procurement officers consider accessibility in the early stages and identifying the key accessibility considerations for a number of goods purchased on a regular basis (PSPC, n.d.).

RECOMMENDATION 2

Employers adopt inclusive design approaches to meet and exceed accessibility standards.

This could include:

- Including persons with disabilities early and often in the process of developing and updating policies, processes, products, and services.
- Adopting accessibility standards such as those currently being developed by Accessibility Standards Canada in the areas of employment, the built environment, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Accommodations

Many accommodations processes begin with disclosure of a disability. This can pose challenges as the decision to disclose a disability can be impacted by multiple factors including disability type, availability of supports, and ability to self-advocate. Persons with non-apparent disabilities, particularly those related to mental illness, often choose not to disclose their disability due to risk of discrimination (CRWDP, 2023). A best practice is to work from the assumption that employees will not disclose. Instead, employers should provide their employees what they need to work most effectively, understanding that this benefits employees and the business.

Providing Productivity Enhancements to all Employees

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) often implement effective accommodation practices unknowingly. By prioritizing the comfort and productivity of all employees, these employers are also being inclusive of persons with disabilities. For example, some provide flexible work schedules, adaptable work environments, ergonomic desk setups, and large monitors to all employees without requiring disclosure of disabilities or accommodation requests. These approaches are sometimes called “productivity enhancements” or “adjustments”, acknowledging that these efforts can benefit all employees and the business (RoDG, 2023). Accommodations are also about efficiency, self-confidence and are seen as an opportunity to put everyone on an equal footing for success.

Despite the benefits of accommodations, many employers are falling short. According to Statistics Canada, amongst individuals who needed accommodations in 2022, approximately 42% of persons with more severe disabilities and 31% of those with milder disabilities had unmet accommodations needs (Statistics Canada, 2024d).

Employers have a duty to accommodate. In addition to incorporating inclusive design principles and offering all employees flexibility to ensure they have the productivity enhancements or adjustments that they need, there should still be an established process in place for accommodations. Accommodations processes should be based on building an understanding of the workplace barriers faced by each individual. Discussions about accommodations should be as natural and commonplace as conversations about vacations with employees.

“Hiring persons with disabilities is an obvious choice. It leads to improvements in profitability, competitive advantage, and inclusive work culture. There's no need to overthink it.”

– Tamara Vrooman, President and Chief Executive Officer, Vancouver Airport Authority

Employers need to take an approach that is human-centric, sensitive, and empathetic. During hiring, it is a best practice to have the contact responsible for accommodations be different from

those who are responsible for the hiring decision. This removes any potential for bias as well as any perception by candidates that asking for an accommodation will impact the hiring decision. When onboarding, information about how to request accommodations should be included in all onboarding packages, so that employees have the information they need (RODG, 2023). Another promising practice that some employers have identified is having a centralized funding source for accommodations requests, as this alleviates operational budget constraints and separates financial questions from hiring and promotion decisions and can provide anonymity for employees with disabilities. However, the majority of accommodation requests tend to have little to no cost involved, for instance those that relate to flexible work (RoDG, 2023). The most common types of workplace accommodations that were needed in 2022 included:

- modified work hours (16.3%),
- modified or different duties (11.6%),
- working from home (10.9%),
- modified or ergonomic workstation (10.7%), or
- a special chair or back support (10.3%) (Statistics Canada, 2024d)

RECOMMENDATION 3

Employers adopt accommodations approaches that offer employees accommodations and adjustments by default, rather than relying upon disclosure.

This could include:

- Wherever possible, providing flexibility and adjustments to employees to support their success, without requiring disclosure.
- Leading with empathy and taking a human-centric approach to accommodations discussions, recognizing the varying barriers that individuals may encounter in the workplace.

Recruitment and Career Development

“Hiring persons with disabilities fosters diversity and promotes an inclusive work environment. It sends a powerful message that the company values and respects individuals from all backgrounds and abilities. Companies can’t just talk a good game when it comes to an inclusive workforce. They need to prove it with the people they hire.”

– Diane J. Brisebois, President and Chief Executive Officer, Retail Council of Canada

Research has shown that a large majority of persons with disabilities (78%) prefer to be hired as part of a mainstream hiring process. Many feel the positions reserved for targeted initiatives can fall short of their perceived skillsets, might limit their opportunities, and could potentially lead to

discriminatory practices (RoDG, 2023). However, networking and word of mouth are some of the most common methods of recruitment. In cases where persons with disabilities have faced barriers to informal networking and job experience opportunities, they may struggle to gain access to employers in their field, even when they have the education and skills that employers are looking for. Employers should ensure that they are advertising broadly for positions, rather than relying on networks that may not be fully representative. Additionally, efforts need to be taken to ensure that networking opportunities are fully accessible, and further strengthened through mentorship opportunities. Mentorship can enhance employee engagement, retention, and performance. One Council member highlighted that they make free coaching available to all their employees.

It is also important to collaborate with educational institutions such as high schools, colleges, trade schools, and universities, to facilitate the school-to-work transition. This transition is difficult for everyone. Persons with disabilities can be more likely to fall through the cracks during this transition, where they face additional barriers and may not have access to the same informal networks as other students.

Support for Interviews and Accommodations

Through engagements with small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), we heard that many smaller organizations are interested in hiring persons with disabilities. However, these employers are not always aware of their obligations and resources available to them regarding providing accommodations during the interview process, such as sign language interpreters (Lansdowne, 2024).

For instance, the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities provides Enhanced Employer Support activities including those that help employers hire persons with disabilities, including interpretation services for interviews. Other jurisdictions have also implemented programs to address higher-cost accommodations and communication supports for interviews, such as the United Kingdom's Access to Work program. These models may be worth exploring.

Employers should also look critically at job descriptions, ensuring clear language and focusing on the essential functional requirements. Job descriptions should encourage candidates with different abilities, relevant alternative expertise or experience who can perform the job functions, with or without supports (Accessibility Standards Canada, 2024). Too often, the discussion of workplace inclusion ends after hiring and onboarding. This is a missed opportunity for employers. If employees are not given equitable opportunities to further develop their skills and advance in their careers, they will not feel valued, and employers will lose these employees or miss out on making the most of their employees' potential.

The draft standard on employment in development by Accessibility Standards Canada sets out how to support the retention and career development of persons with disabilities. This includes encouraging the promotion of persons with disabilities based on responsibility, merit, and/or seniority; providing career development support to enhance skills and experience; ensuring that criteria for advancement does not disadvantage persons with disabilities; and, providing individual accommodations plans as required (Accessibility Standards Canada, 2024).

"Persons with disabilities face many barriers to entering the job market. Several initiatives aim to remedy this under-representation and tackle stigma, by offering employers tools to recruit these employees. Persons with disabilities are a reliable workforce, an added advantage in times of labor shortages."

– Karl Blackburn, President and Chief Executive Office, Conseil du patronat du Quebec

Where mainstream training opportunities are not accessible, persons with disabilities are often placed in disability-specific training that, while accessible, may not align with their individual aspirations, aptitudes, interests, needs, and circumstances. It is critically important that mainstream training programs be better equipped to include persons with disabilities (CRDWP, 2023). This includes removing barriers at every step and ensuring opportunities are affordable. Personalized training should be customized to address the specific needs of individuals to accommodate various learning styles.

Leveraging the Expertise of Disability Organizations

Employers have found success in partnering with disability organizations. Council members have been working closely with disability organizations, to hire employees with disabilities and ensure they support them to reach their full potential.

Such partnerships can be tailored to suit the requirements of both SMEs and larger organizations. These partnerships provide employers with experience hiring candidates with disabilities, reinforcing the positive impacts and improving the disability confidence of employers.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Employers ensure fully inclusive environments throughout the full employee life cycle.

This could include:

- Reviewing job descriptions and postings to ensure alignment with accessible and inclusive best practices.
- Reviewing existing training and work experience programs to ensure they are inclusive and accessible by design, incorporating the usage of an intersectional accessibility lens.
- Designing and implementing paid internships for persons with disabilities.
- Providing managers with training that supports them in establishing performance agreements that accurately reflect employees with disabilities' true abilities and potential, fostering a more inclusive and supportive work environment.
- Leveraging disability organizations, agencies, employee resource groups and other experts to access tools and best practices in recruiting and supporting employees with disabilities to develop and advance in their careers.

Artificial Intelligence and Assistive Technology

AI solutions and other digital tools have the potential to help create workplaces that are more inclusive and accessible. AI could be used to ensure assistive technologies address barriers faced by multiple groups, offer personalized solutions to users, and reduce accommodations costs for employers. In addition, AI could also help scale-up accessibility measures in everyday technology. Many companies are taking a leadership role and working to implement promising AI-powered solutions to address a multitude of accessibility needs and reduce barriers.

“We believe that technology can really make a difference, for customers and clients, employees, and the business. Organizations need to be deliberate about the technologies they adopt to ensure they are enabling all employees to be their most effective and productive.”

– Andy Canham, President, SAP Canada

Although AI has great potential, research also shows potential negative effects that could worsen challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the labour market. For instance, voice and facial recognition may negatively impact persons with disabilities who rely on different means of communication (e.g., sign language), or have different pace or pronunciation of speech (Touzet, 2023). There is often an incorrect assumption that technology is by its very nature objective and without bias. AI systems generally rely on machine learning. They take information provided by humans and identify and replicate patterns. If the data used to “teach” these systems contains bias, the machine will learn and replicate that bias (UNHRC 2021). It’s critical that persons with disabilities, as well as a range of other diverse persons and users are included in machine learning and user data used to develop technologies. The nature of AI and other technologies is that they are rapidly evolving, making it challenging for both private and public sector partners to keep up.

A report from Deloitte (2023) shows that 86% of surveyed companies express concerns with the ethical risks involved with AI technology. AI systems should be developed, implemented, and managed to reduce bias as much as possible. Close collaboration between the disability community, businesses, and regulators is critical as we move into uncharted territory.

Risks Associated with AI and Job Matching

AI systems that scan through resumes to identify candidates can potentially discriminate against persons with disabilities, as the barriers they face (attitudinal, economic, health conditions, etc.) often impact their educational and career paths. This can lead to AI systems excluding persons with disabilities as candidates on the basis of these “irregularities” in their resumes. Several organizations are working to develop alternative job-matching tools using AI to screen in persons with disabilities (Touzet, 2023).

Another risk associated with widespread adoption of AI is that it could lead to the automation of certain jobs. This could have a disproportionate negative impact on employees with disabilities as well as other equity deserving groups that tend to be overrepresented in occupations that are more likely to be automated. Personal data protection and privacy is also critical, as persons with disabilities can be more easily identifiable in data sets due to the barriers they face which impact educational and work experiences and histories (Touzet, 2023).

As a member of Digital Nations⁵ since 2018, digital inclusion and accessibility is an important area of focus for the Government of Canada. Identifying and addressing unintended bias and negative outcomes, including for persons with disabilities, is also part of the objectives of the Government's Directive on Automated Decision-Making.⁶ This Directive applies to automated systems that are used to support or make administrative decisions, including systems that rely on AI. In addition, Accessibility Standards Canada provides accessibility requirements for information communication technology. Canada has also introduced Bill C27 into parliament, also known as the Digital Charter Implementation Act, which, if passed, would establish a precedent for the safe and responsible development and use of AI technologies.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Employers ensure that artificial intelligence and technology used in the workplace is ethical and accessible by design.

This could include:

- Adopting standards for accessible technology, such as [Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services](#), published by Accessibility Standards Canada.
- Adopting assistive technologies that align with universal/inclusive and accessible design, to ensure employees have the tools they need to be successful.
- If using tools that utilize artificial intelligence to select candidates, provide hiring managers the necessary guidance to recognize algorithms that discriminate against persons with disabilities or patterns that are not always repeatable.

Measuring Success

What gets measured gets done. Employers that track disability inclusion, collect accessibility metrics, and link these metrics to the performance of their business (e.g., customer satisfaction rates, employee belonging and financial results) see positive results.

⁵ The Digital Nations is a collaborative forum of the world's leading digital governments that aims to use technology to improve citizens services in Canada and globally. For more information, see: [The Digital Nations - Canada.ca](#)

⁶ For more information, see: Guide on the use of generative AI and [Directive on Automated Decision-Making \(canada.ca\)](#)

“Thinking about disability inclusion in four steps can be a useful exercise for organizations to embrace: care to listen, care to understand, care to act and care to be accountable.”

– Paul Clark, Senior Executive Vice President, Wealth Management, TD Bank Group

Employers can demonstrate the importance of disability inclusion by embedding diversity goals in business results and in the performance management of people managers. Holding senior people managers accountable for taking ownership for inclusion values and measurable goals is a way to demonstrate the importance of disability inclusion to employees and customers. Sharing how disability inclusion benefits an organization’s bottom line can also encourage others.

Publishing information publicly on goals and progress can advance transparency and accountability. Under the ACA, federally regulated entities must publish their accessibility plans, feedback processes, and progress reports as of 2023. Other organizations can learn from these processes and seek to publish information publicly where possible, while aligning with privacy and data management best practices.

Some employers do not feel prepared to collect this information or do not know how to best include these measures in their organization’s key performance indicators. The Council also acknowledges that collecting relevant and reliable data can be challenging. Collecting disaggregated data poses unique challenges. Most of the surveys that exist do not include enough disaggregation to provide a meaningful picture of the diversity of barriers faced by persons with disabilities.

What’s more, many employees are hesitant to disclose a disability for fear of negative repercussions to their career, and often only disclose when they need accommodations. In a nationally representative survey of white-collar employees undertaken in the United States, data show that although a large proportion of the workforce has disabilities (30%), only 3.2% of employees self-identify as having a disability to their employers (Coqual, 2020). This is an area of concern for many employers, as a lack of information on disability status of employees makes it challenging to understand the needs of their workforce. Where workplace-level data is limited, employers can start by familiarizing themselves with national-level statistics such as the Canadian Survey on Disability to understand what kind of disabilities, barriers, and accommodations measures are common.

Data-driven Workplace Improvements

Anonymous “pulse” surveys provide opportunities for employees to give real-time feedback. One Council member increased mental health supports based on pulse survey results. Another discovered that employees with disabilities felt supported during hiring and onboarding, but that more could be done following onboarding to support them.

Some successful ways to gather information include through annual anonymous surveys and exit interviews. In many cases, Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) dedicated to disability inclusion can also advise management within the company about their experiences in the organization and what is needed to improve inclusivity. They can also directly inform or lead on initiatives to improve disability inclusion in the organization. Both quantitative and qualitative data are critical to understand employee experiences and sense of belonging. Another way to assess progress is to analyze the number of complaints, and feedback to understand barriers users experience.

The Government of Canada's Performance Indicator Framework for Accessibility Data can be a useful reference for employers, as it identifies key indicators such as disability pay gap, and the proportion of persons with disabilities encountering barriers with the onboarding process that can be adapted by employers.⁷

RECOMMENDATION 6

Employers set standards and goals, and measure performance to increase accountability.

This could include:

- Setting measurable performance indicators to assess progress on creating an inclusive work environment, and hiring, retaining, and supporting the career progression of persons with disabilities.
- Requiring metrics and targets on disability inclusion should be added in the performance assessment of managers and executives.
- Using anonymous employee surveys to provide insights, given that employees may not always disclose. Qualitative as well as quantitative data can provide useful insights on the experiences of employees with disabilities.
- Tracking results to make data-driven improvements and to transparently report on progress, while abiding by privacy and data protection best practices.

The six recommendations above are concrete actions that employers can take to be inclusive. Through these efforts, employers can reduce stigma, improve employee and customer satisfaction and retention, and ultimately enhance organizational performance. Many organizations have already begun to move in this direction, and we encourage them to continue leading by example. Both large and smaller organizations have an important leadership role to play.

⁷ For more information, see: [A Performance Indicator Framework for Accessibility Data \(canada.ca\)](https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publications/performance-indicator-framework-for-accessibility-data)

Advice for the Canadian Business Disability Inclusion Network

Over the course of the first year of its mandate, the Council laid the foundation for the creation of the Canadian Business Disability Inclusion Network (CBDIN), an independent national organization led by and for employers.

Using its internal resources and connections, the Council put together a Board of Directors for the Network. Manulife Canada, EY Canada, TELUS Health, and IBM Canada provided initial “seed” funding to incubate their work. Launched in December 2023, the CBDIN aims to advance the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workplace and to promote disability inclusive best practices. The CBDIN is still in its infancy in establishing its priorities and service offerings for Canada’s business community. The Council has suggestions for the CBDIN to consider to make it relevant for all employers. These include:

- Serve as a centralized library of tools and resources for employers to help them hire and support employees with disabilities, including on topics such as inclusive design, accommodations, accessible technology, AI, benchmarking and performance measurement. See **Annex A** for a list of useful tools and resources that the Council identified.
- Facilitate the exchange of best practices and lessons learned through the organization of seminars, discussions and webinars.
- Encourage, support and connect disability employee resource groups to empower their growth and strength.
- Promote the collection of data and the implementation of standardized benchmarking tools.
- Support connections between employers and pools of talent.
- Champion the career advancement of employees with disabilities and the inclusion of persons with disabilities in leadership positions.

Ultimately, CBDIN should strive to become the go-to resource for employers in Canada for information and advice on how to improve disability inclusion in their organizations. The DIBC members will continue to support and champion the Network amongst the Canadian business and employer community even after the mandate of the DIBC has formally ended.

Advice for the Government of Canada

A more inclusive labour force means a stronger, more sustainable Canadian economy. There are many ways that the federal government supports and incentivizes employers to become more disability inclusive. This includes providing access to information and resources to increase knowledge on disability inclusion, challenging assumptions, celebrating successes and innovations, and funding projects related to workplace inclusivity. The federal government could also socialize the role of the CBDIN and encourage employers to consult the CBDIN to improve their disability inclusivity practices in the workplace.

It's also important to recognize the role of provinces and territories. Eight provinces now have accessibility legislation in place, and many also have mandatory standards. These jurisdictions have varying other human rights focused legislation and/or policies in place that support greater disability inclusion in the workplace. The federal government and the provinces/territories can learn from one another's experiences and continue to ensure that efforts align.

Leading by example: Inclusive workplaces

The DIBC recognizes that as the largest employer in Canada, the federal public service has an important role to lead by example on workplace inclusion. The Government of Canada published an Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada in 2019 (TBS, 2019) and has published annual progress reports ever since. The Government of Canada has committed to hiring 5,000 new employees with disabilities by 2025. As of February 2024, more than 4,000 net new hires in the Public Service have been persons with disabilities (Privy Council Office, 2024).

A key initiative resulting from the strategy is the Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport, which allows employees to document the barriers they may face at work and propose potential solutions. The passport is a record of conversations and agreed-upon solutions that speeds up access to equipment or adaptive tools. It also prevents employees from having to renegotiate support measures when they change organizations or managers.

While progress has been made, there is still a lot of work ahead. The latest update also acknowledges that "persons with disabilities have been under-represented in the federal public service and continue to face barriers at all stages of employment including: inaccessible hiring practices and interviews; delays in accommodations; and, barriers to promotions" (TBS, 2023).

Employment and Social Development Canada's (ESDC's) mission is to build a stronger and more inclusive Canada, to help Canadians live productive and rewarding lives and to improve Canadians' quality of life. ESDC is also subject to the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA). As such, it has an accessibility plan which is updated every three years. The latest plan includes a series of targeted actions such as increasing the representation of persons with disabilities in the workforce, enhancing the approach to workplace accommodations and reviewing procurement processes to ensure accessibility is considered from the beginning. The plan outlines how ESDC will remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities under each of the seven priority areas, including employment.⁸

ADVICE

Recognizing the important role that the Department plays in the lives of Canadians, having a workforce within the Department that is representative of society and operates within an inclusive work environment is critical. ESDC, and the broader federal public service, should continue to strive to be a positive example for Canadian employers and should promote successful Government of Canada efforts underway.

⁸ For more information, see : [Employment and Social Development Canada 3-year accessibility plan - 2022 - Canada.ca](https://www.esdc.gc.ca/en/employment-social-development/3-year-accessibility-plan-2022-Canada.ca)

Support to Employers

The federal government's largest investment in skills training and employment for persons with disabilities is through funding provided to provinces and territories through the Workforce Development Agreements (WDAs)⁹. The WDAs support individuals with weaker labour force attachment as well as employers. Each year, approximately \$220 million in federal funding is spent on skills training and employment services for persons with disabilities, which is cost-matched by provinces and territories. More than half of all participants supported through these agreements self-identified as a person with a disability in 2022-2023.

ESDC programs such as the [Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities Program](#), and [Skills for Success \(SFS\) Program](#) also support persons with disabilities in overcoming barriers to participation in the Canadian labour market and assist employers to hire persons with disabilities. Additionally, [Canada's Job Bank](#) connects job seekers with disabilities and employers through an online job board.

The federal government also has a role in raising awareness and sharing best practices surrounding disability inclusion in the workplace. [Canada.ca/right-here](#) provides information for employers about how to find, hire, and retain persons with disabilities. The federal government's Inclusive Workplaces advertising campaign raised awareness among employers that persons with disabilities are an important source of talent and pointed them to this resource for more information.

In addition to ESDC initiatives, Innovation Science and Economic Development Canada partners with Canadian businesses and diversity organizations on [the 50 – 30 Challenge](#). The 50 – 30 challenge asks that organizations aim for 50% women and/or non-binary people and 30% other equity-deserving groups including persons with disabilities, on Canadian boards and/or in senior management.

For more details on ESDC initiatives that support the employment of persons with disabilities, as well as other federal efforts, see the [Employment Strategy for Canadians with Disabilities](#).

Building on this work, the federal government could expand information-sharing. For instance, sharing lessons learned around accessible procurement. Government can also play a role in ensuring that publicly funded education and training is accessible. The DIBC is proud to have answered the Government of Canada's call to establish a national independent network, the CBDIN, that will play an instrumental role in providing businesses in Canada with practical tools and advice to improve disability inclusion in Canadian workspaces. Increasing awareness and

⁹ The federal government also provides funding that benefits persons with disabilities through the Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs). For more information on WDAs and LMDAs, see: [Labour Market Transfers - Canada.ca](#)

sharing best practices will be helpful for employers to have the tools and resources they need and a better understanding of programs that already exist.

ADVICE

Building on existing efforts, ESDC could explore ways to enhance information-sharing, mentorships, talent pipelines, and job matching that connect skilled persons with disabilities with employers. This would further support the hiring, retention, and career advancement of this untapped labour pool.

Legislation

Another critical lever governments have available is legislation and regulation. [The Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#), the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#), and the [Employment Equity Act](#) contribute to disability inclusion. Provinces and territories also have various legislative and regulatory tools and policies that promote disability inclusion in the workplace.

ESDC is the focal point for the implementation of the [Accessible Canada Act \(ACA\)](#) which supports the realization of a barrier-free Canada by 2040, through the identification, removal, and prevention of accessibility barriers. The ACA regulates all federal departments, agencies, Crown corporations, and federally regulated private sector entities (e.g., airlines, telecommunication, banking, etc.). Federally regulated entities alone employ 1.4 million people in Canada.

The ACA also established Accessibility Standards Canada (ASC) to develop accessibility standards. ASC has a Centre of Expertise which provides access to draft and final standards, accessibility guidance products such as technical guides, as well as research projects, available to anyone free of charge. Employers could benefit from these tools and resources to develop their own accessibility plans. Although the ACA applies to organizations under federal responsibility, ASC was created with the mandate of developing national accessibility standards, which may be adopted by any entity across Canada. These standards are voluntary unless adopted into regulation. Employers outside of the federal jurisdiction can consider adopting ASC standards or elements of these standards, in addition to any mandatory provincial standards. Companies should aim to go beyond the minimum requirements for compliance to ensure the best experience for employees.

ADVICE

The Government of Canada could further promote the Accessibility Standards Canada Centre of Expertise amongst federally regulated employers, as well as employers that are not federally regulated, to drive positive change.

Conclusion

The Government of Canada is working to meet the target of a barrier-free Canada by 2040 which includes closing the employment gap for Canadians with disabilities. The DIBC encourages ESDC to explore additional supports for businesses to take part in accessibility programs and invest in accessible workplaces.

The Employment Strategy for Canadians with Disabilities sets out a plan to break down barriers for persons with disabilities. To remove these barriers, governments, employers, and everyone in society need to work together.

The advice and recommendations in this report build on the Employment Strategy for Canadians with Disabilities that the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities released in July 2024. The actions taken from this Report could be highlighted in updates and reports back of progress on the Employment Strategy.

As we look ahead, continued collaboration between governments, the disability community, employers, community organizations and other stakeholders will be essential to achieving a barrier-free Canada by 2040. If Canada is going to be a leader on the global front, we cannot afford to miss the mark on inclusion. This is an imperative for economic success. Together we can build a future where all Canadians, including those with disabilities, have equal opportunities to thrive in the workplace.

ANNEX A: Tools and Resources

The purpose of this section is to offer employers a list of readily available tools and resources, mostly free of charge, including training and educational materials, assistive technology tools, and promising practices to increase disability inclusion in the workplace. Initiatives from our organizations, as well as other organizations, are highlighted. Programs and initiatives designed to support employers to create more inclusive workplaces from the federal, provincial, and territorial governments are also listed.

Publicly available tools and resources from Council Member Organizations

Tool / Resource Name	Description of Tool / Resource
EY Neurodiversity Centres of Excellence, EY Canada EY Canada	EY Neurodiversity Centres of Excellence assist organizations in recruiting, onboarding, and developing a neurodiverse workforce using advanced technology and inclusive consulting.
TD Equity Resource Hub	The Equity Resource Hub by TD Lab integrates an equity lens into project planning and design through a structured five-step process and guiding principles to enhance inclusivity.
TD Adapted Accessibility (browser plug-in for accessibility - available for free from the Chrome Store)	The TD Accessibility Adapter, from TD Invent, customizes Chrome Browser sites to user-specific accessibility needs, working alongside existing assistive technologies for enhanced compatibility.
SAP SAP Autism Inclusion Pledge	SAP's Autism Inclusion Pledge invites organizations to commit to autism inclusivity and provides resources through the Autism at Work Knowledge Center to support autism and neurodiversity programs.
IBM Home – IBM Accessibility	IBM Accessibility offers tools and resources through the IBM Equal Access Toolkit to ensure inclusive design and development across various project stages, promoting market accessibility.
Retail Council of Canada Retail Accessibility Standards Retail Council of Canada	The Retail Council of Canada provides extensive resources on disability inclusion throughout the employee lifecycle and promotes inclusive employment practices through the EnAbling Change for Retailers Program.
Canadian Chamber of Commerce Accessibility in the Workplace - Canadian Chamber of Commerce	The Chamber's Inclusive Growth Initiative aims to mobilize knowledge and resources to influence policy, support business actions on accessibility, and amplify member expertise for inclusivity in the workplace.
Surrey Board of Trade Diversity, Equity and Inclusion – Surrey Board of Trade (businessinsurrey.com)	The Surrey Board of Trade, in partnership with the Presidents Group, offers free training on disability confidence, legal requirements, workplace accommodations, and barrier removal, along with an accessibility webpage providing resources.

Tool / Resource Name	Description of Tool / Resource
Conseil du patronat du Québec Formation sur l'intégration, l'accompagnement et le maintien en emploi des personnes handicapées Conseil du patronat du Québec (cpq.qc.ca)	The Conseil du patronat du Québec offers free comprehensive training for employers on the integration, support, and retention of employees with disabilities.
Conseil du patronat du Québec Programme DuoEmploi	The Conseil du patronat du Québec is a key partner of the DuoEmploi internship day for Persons with disabilities, which has led to permanent employment for a number of participants.
Manulife Accessibility at Manulife - Canada	Accessibility at Manulife summarizes what Manulife is doing to provide accessible goods and services to persons with disabilities, and provides access to Manulife Canada's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Benchmarking, Certification, and Self-Assessment Tools

Tool / Resource Name	Description of Tool / Resource
Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification	Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ (RHFAC) is a rating system that measures and certifies the level of meaningful access of buildings and sites. A RHFAC rating can provide organizations with information on physical accessibility, and ways to improve.
Open Door Group and BC Presidents Group Disability Inclusive employer Self-Assessment Tool	A free Self-Assessment tool intended for organizations to gain a deeper understanding of where they're doing well and where there's room to improve.
International Labour Organization Global Business and Disability Network Self-Assessment (United Nations)	The ILO GBDN Self-Assessment enables any local business, in any country, to set priorities for action as they set out to define and deliver the best practice that benefits both business and Persons with disabilities.
Cornell University BenchmarkABILITY (USA)	BenchmarkABILITY is a self-assessment tool for organizations to improve disability inclusion by tracking progress in six HR categories: Recruitment & Hiring; Career Development & Retention; Accessibility & Accommodation; Compensation & Benefits; Diversity & Inclusion; Metrics & Analytics.
Australian Network on Disability Access and Inclusion Index (Australia)	A suite of online tools helps Australian organizations assess and improve their disability confidence, ensuring their policies and practices are accessible and inclusive for employees and customers with disabilities.
Business Disability Forum Disability Smart Self-Assessment (United Kingdom)	Use the self-assessment tool from the Business Disability Forum to evaluate your organization's performance in ten areas of the Disability Smart Framework, available exclusively to members and partners.
Business Disability Forum Smart Business 4 All (SB4All) (United Kingdom)	SB4All offers action steps, strategies, and resources from disability advocacy groups to help organizations achieve full inclusion of persons with disabilities, based on criteria for sustainable accessibility and inclusion plans. Participation is available on a limited basis to IAAP organizational members.

Other Tools

Tool / Resource Name	Description of Tool / Resource
Job Demands and Accommodation Planning Tool (JDAPT)	The Job Demands and Accommodation Planning Tool (JDAPT) helps employees with chronic and episodic conditions—and the workplace parties who support them—identify accommodations tailored to job demands that allow employees to successfully stay in their jobs.
Businesses leading the way on disability inclusion (ilo.org)	In this guide published by the International Labour Organization Global Business and Disability Network, 30 leading multinational companies present some of their best practices, with the aim of inspiring and encouraging other companies to improve the inclusion of Persons with disabilities in their workforces.
Inclusive Design for Employment Access (IDEA)	Inclusive Design for Employment Access (IDEA) develops tools to support the capacity of employers to recruit, hire, retain and promote persons with disabilities.
Disability and Work in Canada The Pan-Canadian Strategy for Disability and Work	“Moving Forward Together: A Pan-Canadian Strategy for Disability and Work” was prepared by the Disability and Work in Canada (DWC) Steering Committee, in consultation and collaboration with partners across Canada. The Strategy, released in 2019, provides a guide for action for multiple stakeholders and partners.

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