2024 LMI Report

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The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of its author(s) and not the official policy or position of the Government of British Columbia.

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Image Description: Three colleagues who are people of colour are having a discussion around a circular table in a modern, sunlit office. One man is using a manual wheelchair, while the other two women are seated in office chairs. Papers, computers, and office supplies are on the table. Large arched windows let in natural light, and there are plants and a large round hanging light fixture in the room.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

The New Inclusive Economy is a B.C. wide research project hosted by inclusion powell river society, a community living organization located in the qathet region. This project is funded by the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia through the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. Oversight is provided by a Governance Committee that includes the community living sector, business representatives, self-advocates, diverse economies thinkers and doers, and our government partners.

Three distinct research teams explored the role of the employer in creating inclusive workplaces for people with disabilities living in B.C., who represent 29% of people over the age of 15 years old (Statistics Canada, 2022). Research and knowledge sharing took place from 2022-2023; this work included a cross-sectoral look at the ways in which employers, both large and small, are providing inclusive jobs. This analysis also included entrepreneurs with disabilities or "solo-preneurs" who are employers creating inclusive employment conditions for themselves.

The New Inclusive Economy project undertook a combination of research methods, including a survey, interviews, focus groups, case studies and knowledge translation whereby early findings were shared with employers and community-based organizations for the purpose of sharing current knowledge and receiving feedback. including a business-to-business engagement with existing and aspiring inclusive employers across the Province and First Nation territories. The findings follow a socio-ecological model which emphasizes that workplaces are shaped by processes and conditions taking place across systems, while also having a profound impact on individuals.

A diverse economies perspective was applied to this project to expand our view of what makes up the economy and the organizational structures under which employers operate. Employers were asked how their values contribute to the wellbeing of employees and whether employers consider non-market transactions that relate to work, such as childcare, eldercare or volunteering, as an alternative means of remuneration. The hope was to get a broader view of structural conditions that lead to meaningful work, an area that requires further exploration through new research applying this lens.

The focus on demand-side or employer-side solutions is an important step towards addressing inequities faced by people with disabilities, who currently have an unemployment rate 1.4 times higher than those without, are working less paid hours on average, and are more likely to be self-employed. Other barriers being addressed by employers include physical access and external barriers including transportation and affordable housing.

Abstract (continued)

Nine consistent themes emerged from the insights provided by employers and entrepreneurs with disabilities regarding creating inclusive workplaces. These themes are:

1. **a work culture that values inclusion**
2. **individualized approaches**
3. **accessible and clear communication practices**
4. **flexibility at many levels**
5. **inclusion that balances with business viability**
6. **valuing lived experience**
7. **inclusive HR practices**
8. **partnerships with community and employment service organizations**
9. **practices that address external barriers**

The 'Introduction' section includes a summary of employer practices in a table, also available as a separate download **Read the Summary of Employer Practices** that summarizes promising practices that were shared by employers and there are six promising directions to take away from the learning included in the introduction which includes actions both employers, researchers and government can take to build upon.

The evidence in this research report points towards a value-based shift that is required to lower barriers that prevent people with disabilities having access to work; in other words, if the employer values inclusion and the wellbeing of their employees, they may be more likely to successfully employ people with disabilities for the long-term.

Introduction

Author Leni Goggins

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The New Inclusive Economy is a B.C. wide research project hosted by inclusion powell river society, a community living organization located in the qathet region. This project is funded by the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia through the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills and engages key partners in overseeing the research through a Governance Committee that includes the community living sector, business representatives, self-advocates, diverse economies thinkers and doers, and our government partners.

Over the course of two years, the project set out to research the role of the employer in creating inclusive workplaces for people with disabilities (as defined by Accessible Canada Act Footnote[1]). This work included a cross-sectoral look at the many unique ways in which employers across B.C. are providing inclusive jobs, including entrepreneurs with disabilities or "solo-preneurs" who are employers creating their own inclusive employment conditions. In this project the broader economy and the organizational structures under which the employer operates are considered. Approaches included may not be replicable in all contexts but may point towards practices that have potential under certain conditions and for some populations, hence why the decision to use the term "promising practice" in place of "best practice."

This report also includes a jurisdictional review which looks at legislation, policies and programs outside of B.C. for comparison, looking for both alignment and potential conflict around the practices identified in the New Inclusive Economy Project. Within this 'Introduction', links to research reports are provided so the reader can easily find other concrete examples. The 'Promising Directions' section includes inclusion powell river society recommended next steps to help shape the New Inclusive Economy for employers, organizations that support employers, and municipal, provincial and federal governments.

The 'Employer Summary' section is taken from the Interview and Focus Group Data Collection Report and highlights actionable tips for employers to be more inclusive, recognizing that there are a range of actions that are available to employers depending on their size (i.e., 10 or fewer employees vs. larger employers), organizational model, or sector.

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[1] The Accessible Canada Act defines disability as "any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment — or a functional limitation — whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society."

Image Description: A white man is in a wheelchair, working at an electronics assembly station in a lab or manufacturing facility. He is wearing a white uniform and using tweezers to handle small electronic components on a circuit board. His workstation is equipped with a computer, multiple monitors and various electronic tools. The lab has bright lighting, organized workstations, and specialized equipment, including a magnifying lamp and a microscope.
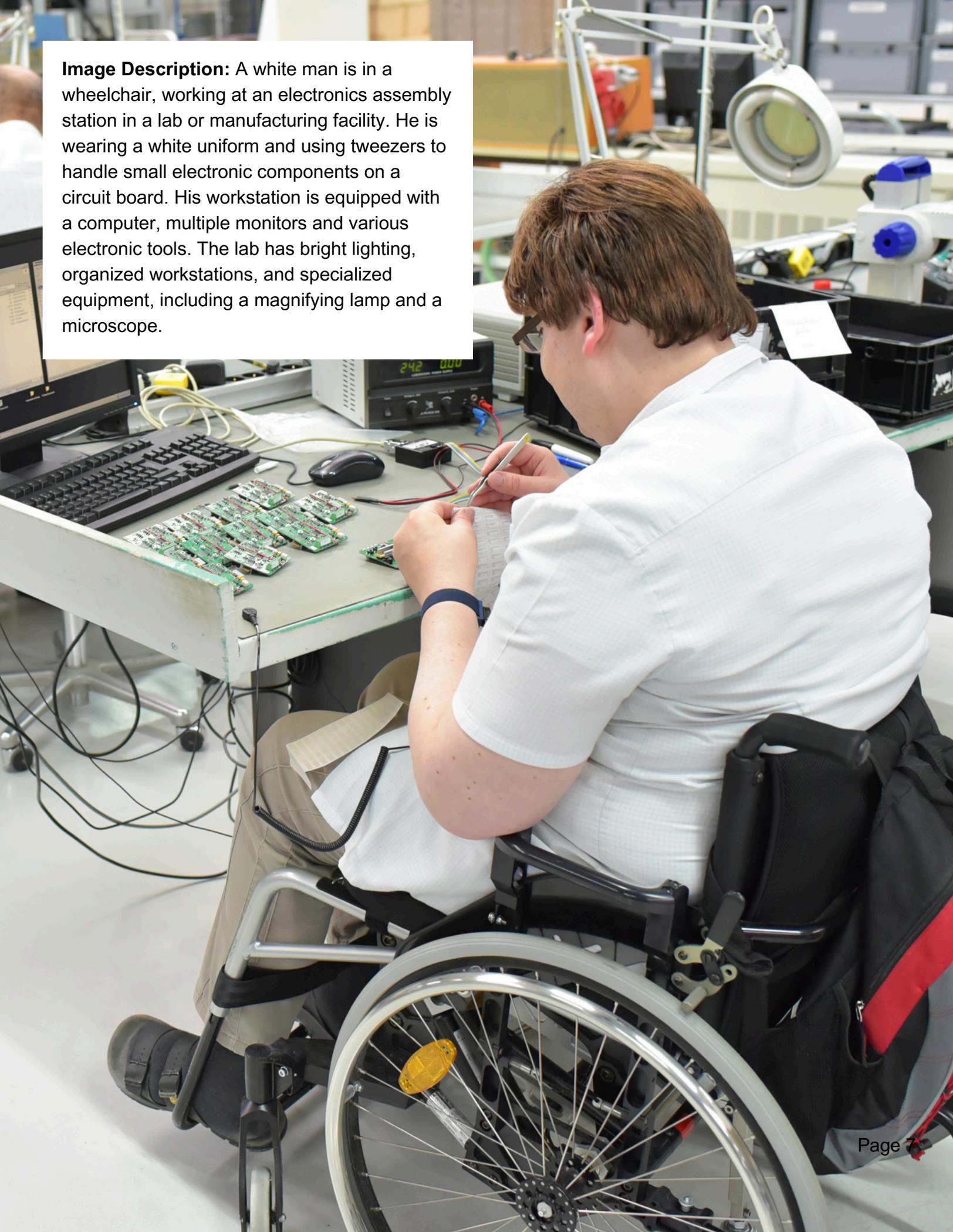
In B.C., almost 29% of people over the age of 15 years old live with some form of disability (Statistics Canada, 2022). Despite the tight labour market, people with disabilities currently have an unemployment rate 1.4 times higher than those without, are working less paid hours on average, and are more likely to be self-employed than those without disabilities. The picture is much the same nationally with the employment rate among those aged 25 to 64 with disabilities (62%) compared to those without disabilities (78%) in 2022 (Statistics Canada, 2022). Also, a higher proportion of individuals with disabilities (12.3%) are not actively seeking employment in contrast to the total population (3.6%) despite their desire to work.

The focus on demand-side or employer-side solutions is an important step towards addressing these inequities, but as this research will point out, there are broader structural conditions of our economy that require multiple levels of society to respond. In 2022, one in 10 persons with disabilities reported experiencing barriers related to accessing indoor and outdoor public spaces (Statistics Canada, 2022). Other barriers employers face include access to transportation for employees, especially in rural and remote areas and where businesses have had to move out of city centres due to rising costs; this connects employer experiences to the broader structure of our economy, not surprisingly real estate prices and the housing crisis impact inclusion!

Image Description: Above, a black man is smiling and sitting in a wheelchair. He holds a laptop on his lap and is wearing a checkered shirt and dark pants, seated in a bright indoor space with a blurred background.

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The StrongerBC Economic Plan acknowledges that "if an economy is not working for people, then it's simply not working." (Province of British Columbia Canada, 2022). The evidence in the New Inclusive Economy research report points towards a value-based shift that is required to lower the barriers which prevent people with disabilities having access to work. In some cases, the evidence suggests that some employers are moving away from the old paradigm of profit before people towards a more inclusive approach. This approach addresses structural barriers, acknowledging that people with disabilities want to define and design workplaces that address personal barriers and create positions that offer more flexibility, such as part-time roles or remote work, and build more accessible spaces. **Read case studies**.

We hope the learning from this project may contribute towards defining what an inclusive economy can look like in B.C. and be the beginning of a practical road map for how to get there. In the past six years, iPRS has invested in launching and operating "Workforce Integration Social Enterprises," Footnote [2]. This includes OneLight, a social enterprise that manufactures fire starters and employs people with and without disabilities as a means of creating more inclusive employment settings with a tested model of inclusive employment.

This approach is one way to address the demand side of the equation and is effective, especially for creating employment conditions for those with complex disabilities who are the least likely to enter or remain in the labour market. Surprisingly the evidence from the New Inclusive Economy suggests that the values and the mission and vision of inclusive employers in B.C. may matter more than organizational structure. In other words, your organization does not have to be a co-op to use participatory decision making, or be a non-profit to engage in community care, protect the environment, fight for gender rights or create cultural safety for Indigenous employees. **Read case studies**.

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2 Workforce Integration Social Enterprises are businesses with the primary purpose is to train and/or employ people who are traditionally excluded from the labour market. Generally speaking, these workers might have diverse abilities, or experience other barriers.
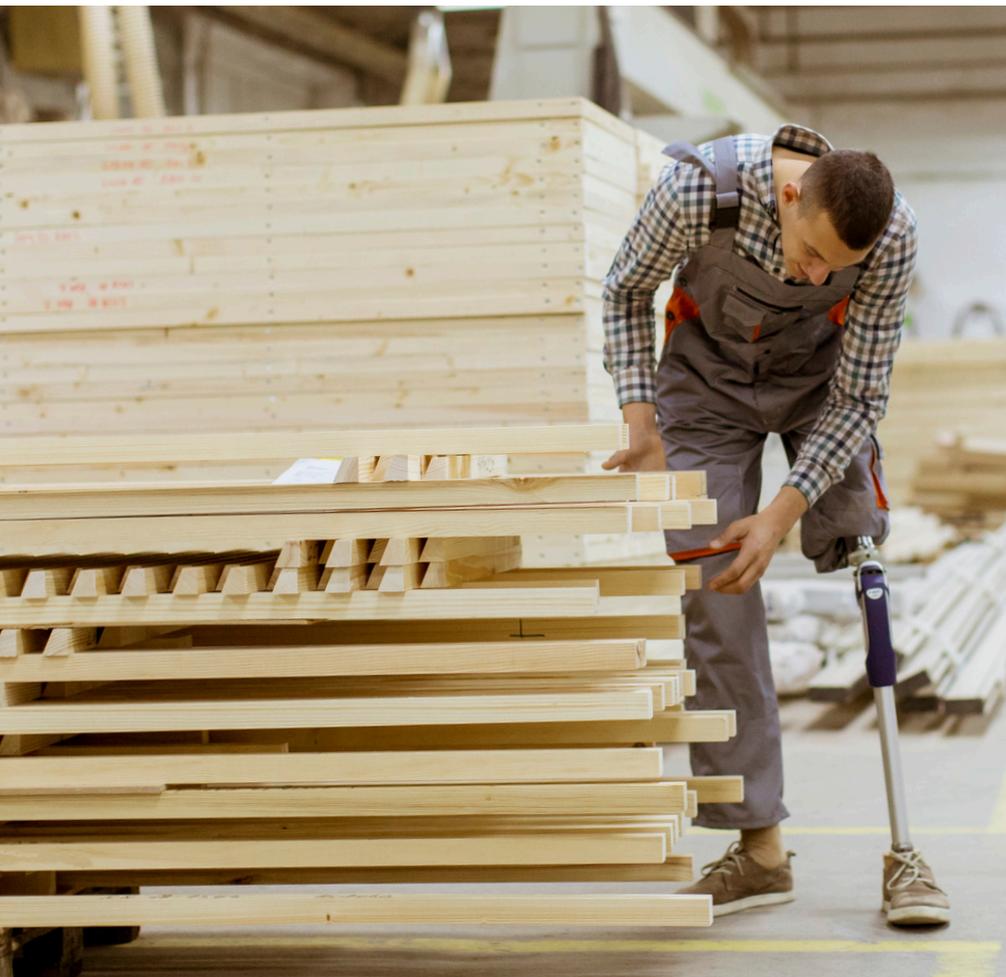
Image Description: Left, a carpenter with a prosthetic leg is working in a large woodworking facility. He is wearing a checkered shirt, gray overalls with red accents, and sturdy work boots. He is carefully selecting or organizing wooden planks from a large stack, examining them closely. The space is well-lit, with high ceilings and a functional industrial setting. His focused expression and body language convey skill and determination in his craft.

Research Approach and Methods

The research question guiding this process is:

What are the enabling structural conditions that create meaningful employment for people with disabilities and other barriers to employment?

How can these be amplified and mobilized in other employment settings?

The New Inclusive Economy project undertook a combination of research methods developed in collaboration with three distinct research teams:

1. University of British Columbia Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship (CIIC) in partnership with Regenerem Consulting produced an environmental scan, case studies and a jurisdictional review.
2. Social Research Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) completed primary data collection through interviews and focus groups from employers across multiple sectors as well as entrepreneurs who are disabled.
3. Knowledge translation was led by Talking Circle, an Indigenous planning and communication firm.

A diverse economies perspective was applied to this project to expand our view of what makes up the economy by considering values, wellbeing and non-market transactions that relate to work such as childcare, eldercare or volunteering and alternative means of remuneration. The hope was to get a broader view of structural conditions that lead to meaningful work. This perspective was provided through the work of Regenerem Consulting, members of the Governance Committee and External Evaluation.

The project took a four-phased approach:

Phase 1 – Where are we now?

- Included a literature review **Read the literature**, Communications Plan and setup of the Governance Committees.

Phase 2 – What is missing?

- Involved an environmental scan conducted by the CIIC to provide a high-level overview of promising models of disability inclusive employment in B.C. with 87 completed surveys from all sectors and all regions.

Phase 3 – Where do we want to go?

- Comprised of six case studies conducted by the CIIC and fifteen interviews and five focus groups with 43 employers and entrepreneurs across multiple sectors in B.C. conducted by SRDC. There was a mix of large and small entities, from solo-preneurs to organizations with 100+ employees, showcasing various organizational and economic models, while prioritizing the inclusion of individuals with disabilities.

Phase 4 – What did we learn?

- Incorporated pre-set knowledge translation activities coordinated by Talking Circle including a "Thank Tank" of aspiring inclusive B.C. employers to contextualize what we were finding and a Business-to-Business Roadshow which traveled with the inclusion powell river society team to eight distinct regions (Mainland/Southwest, Vancouver Island/Coast, Kootenay, Thompson/Okanagan, Cariboo, North Coast, Nechako, Northeast) in June 2023. We met with employment service providers, local champions of inclusive employment and aspiring inclusive employers to facilitate sharing local stories in relationship to the emerging evidence. **Learn more about the 'business-to-business roadshow'**.

The purpose of the **interviews and focus groups** was to understand employers' experiences, documenting promising practices and uncovering enabling conditions and barriers. **Read the interview and focus group data collection report**.

Employers and solo-preneurs shared many employment practices that they felt are key to attracting and retaining employees with disabilities. **Read the Summary of Employer Practices**.

The **case studies** are in depth explorations of five organizations/businesses and two solo-preneurs. **Read about B.C. employers creating disability inclusion at work**.

They seek to explore three main areas of inquiry:

1. What are the enabling conditions that exist within the workplace (i.e. accessible building, living wage, task modification).
2. How does the workplace respond to structural barriers that exist beyond its walls/culture (i.e. located on a bus route, flexible schedule, training managers about inclusion and nonviolent communication, actively fostering natural supports, business model, guiding values, internal workplace policies), and
3. What enabling structures are embedded in the workplace (i.e. stable baseline funding, political priorities at a government level, organizational partnerships, community support, economic context, cultural norms)?

The findings contained in these reports indicate:

- a need for more opportunities for employers to learn from one another,
- tailored supports for entrepreneurs with disabilities,
- wholistic approaches in inclusive employment that benefit all employees,
- the need to include people with disabilities in shaping their employment, and
- the need to address systemic barriers beyond the workplace in the broader environment and communities in which employers operate.

Image Description: Three bakers who are white with Down syndrome stand together in a commercial Argentine pasta factory kitchen, wearing white uniforms and chef hats. They have their arms around each other and are smiling warmly at the camera. The person on the left wears blue-framed glasses, the person in the middle has black-framed glasses, and the person on the right wears a white apron over their uniform. The background is slightly blurred, showing a professional kitchen setting. Their expressions and body language convey friendship, teamwork, and confidence.

Promising Directions

The New Inclusive Economy project engaged hundreds of employers from across B.C. who are taking steps every day to remove barriers for workers including those with disabilities, despite the mounting pressures of the housing crisis, inflation and a tight labour market, all which impact employers. If we are to achieve B.C.'s goal to become the most accessible province in Canada, employers (who may also be people with disabilities) need more supports and opportunities to catalyze the practices in this report and address the external conditions employers are facing such as more affordable housing, access to appropriate childcare, decolonization and many more.

The findings from this research are intended to help to guide employers across sectors and regions in B.C. This includes the project lead inclusion powell river society who will use these findings to transform into the employer of choice for all those with diverse abilities living in the qathet region.

The following is a list of five Promising Directions in support of further exploration of this research and some key actions that can be taken by employers, service providers and government to move us closer to a new inclusive economy.

Image Description: Right, a white man with dark hair and a well-groomed beard is smiling warmly at the camera. He is wearing clear-framed glasses and a short-sleeved, brown and white checkered polo shirt. His hands, which appear to have a limb difference, rest on a tablet.

1 – ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE IMPACT ON DISABILITY INCLUSION

Employer Challenges: Employers may operate within organizational structures that impact their ability to be disability inclusive. These challenges could be creating tensions and competing interests that get in the way of lowering barriers. Examples include:

- union regulated workplaces that are playing a leadership role in creating more diverse and inclusive workplaces but are needing to navigate collective bargaining agreements,
- government funded non-profit organizations that have inclusion embedded in their values but have financial constraints,
- employment settings that could benefit from more inclusive practices but have a culture that discourages employees with disabilities to seek out more inclusive, flexible and accessible working conditions.

Employers in the interviews and focus groups also often spoke of sectoral and organizational considerations together, highlighting both challenges and opportunities to be inclusive. For example, many non-profit and public sector employers emphasized that diversity in the workplace should reflect the broader public that they serve. At the same time, public funding requirements often constrain these employers' abilities to be flexible and explore alternative employment models.

Employers also noted specific sectoral considerations, including recent volatility in both the technology and manufacturing sectors. For example, the technology sector employers noted a de-prioritization of disability inclusive initiatives following restructuring in many companies, while manufacturing employers saw both opportunities to include people living with disabilities in certain roles, while being limited by the physical constraints of the manufacturing environment for other roles. **Read sectoral considerations in the interview and focus group data collection report**.

Promising Direction: The data collection from the New Inclusive Economy project pointed towards values being more important than organizational structure. In the interviews and focus groups, social purpose-oriented organizations such as non-profits, social enterprises and other employers didn't necessarily see the link between their specific organizational structure and being inclusive; instead values and vision and mission were more important.

In all case studies, profit was equal or lesser in importance than the social purpose, regardless of the organizational structure of the business. This warrants further examination of what is motiving employers from different organizational structures to take on disability inclusion as a value and prioritizing inclusion in their vision and mission.

The environmental scan conducted at the beginning of the New Inclusive Economy project asked three questions to indicate the diversity of the business/organization's leadership, specifically, representation of Indigenous, First Nations, Inuit or Métis persons for which there were 20 respondents. This represents 22% of the total respondents and is promising for the inclusion of Indigenous voices. There may be a strong connection between Indigenous leadership and inclusivity and more research would need to be done to verify.

Key Actions:

- Research that gains a larger sample size of differently structured organizations/businesses, but also includes data collection from employees with and without disabilities.
- Opportunities for organizations to gather and share how their social mission impacts their inclusivity. This could include a diversity of differently structured organizations.
- Research that explores the connection between Indigenous leadership and disability inclusion.

2 – ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS AND THE DIVERSE ECONOMIES APPROACH

Employer Challenges: There is a lack of understanding, and we would argue valuing, of how employers are supporting employees in their wellbeing **outside of work**, such as childcare, elder care and community benefits like volunteering. In general, wellbeing outside of work has fallen on the shoulders of the employee, especially women.

Promising Direction: A diverse economies framework was intended to expand understanding of what makes up the economy. It is the "new" in the New Inclusive Economy and looks beyond market transactions and paid labour to include unpaid, alternative pay and different market forms that can be important to belonging and inclusion. **Learn about community based alternatives in the literature review**.

New Inclusive Economy data collection highlights a few great HR practices that do consider wellbeing beyond the time spend at work like health spending accounts, flexible work arrangements like remote work, a culture that supports value for contribution not measured by hours worked, but output/quality of work. **Read the summary of employer practices**.

inclusion powell river has explored in depth employee experience of work serving as a place to create connection and build community through social enterprise models. The entrepreneurs with disabilities or "solo-preneurs" featured in the New Inclusive Economy case studies also reflected on the possibility presented when work conditions meet personal and professional needs. **Read about the journey of two solo-preneurs in the case studies report**.

The New Inclusive Economy research found that social purpose organizations are still trying to find ways to track and measure economic and social impacts that go beyond people having a job and consider overall wellbeing as an important impact. How to measure impact may also be a structural condition that is limiting the possibilities for a more inclusive workplace and the new inclusive economy.

The jurisdictional scan highlights Quebec's unique approach where principles of equality, access, collaboration, mutual benefit are entrenched in legal frameworks. The welfare program is Quebec is poignantly referred to as "social solidarity" which reflects the culture around mutual aid and social supports. **Read about Quebec and other jurisdictions approach to disability inclusion in the jurisdictional scan report**.

Key Actions:

- Human Resources (HR) practices that improve wellbeing for all employees within and without work, not just people with disabilities. Collaboration between human services sector and government funders with the express purpose of identifying and removing barriers with priorities given to housing, childcare/eldercare, transportation and community engagement.
- Research that is place-based or regional ethnographic methodologically approached, in other words, taking a deep dive into specific communities to see how employers are fostering empowerment, autonomy, security and belonging by or for people with disabilities and other employees. This methodology would also allow more exploration in what employees with disabilities consider "meaningful work".
- Experimentation with different impact measures that qualify the importance of wellbeing and not just numbers. This could include pilot projects and initiatives within the employment eco-system that qualify wellbeing for employees with and without disabilities at and outside of work.
- Further work to define and explore the social and solidarity economy in B.C.

3 – SELF-EMPLOYMENT AS A CHOICE FOR ENTREPRENUERS WITH DISABILITIES

Employer Challenges: Entrepreneurs with disabilities may be choosing self-employment as a reaction to a lack of autonomy and systemic barriers, such as ableism, faced at work. The New Inclusive Economy research clearly demonstrated that lived experience of disability was a key motivator for entrepreneurs to start their own business. Barriers experienced included the culture of full-time employment and a lack of flexible work arrangements.

Being self-employed also presented problems, such as a lack of sufficient supports for addressing their mental and physical healthcare needs. Focus group participants frequently felt that the supports for entrepreneurs with disabilities were unclear or difficult to navigate, compared to those supports for persons with disabilities in "traditional" workplaces. **Read the interview and focus group data collection report to learn more**.

The jurisdictional scan points out that the Canadian Employment Equity Act requires that employees disclose their disability for employers to address barriers. **Read the introduction of the jurisdictional scan report to learn more**.

Promising Directions: The burden of educating more traditional employers about how to be inclusive should not be downloaded onto persons with disabilities. Instead employers need more supports and to embrace flexibility while, at the same time, there needs to be further work done to include people with disabilities in decision making at an organizational level which may provide work conditions that allow entrepreneurs to stay in employment, or to provide conditions that demonstrate a true freedom to choose.

Another promising direction is how solo-preneurs are driving a culture of inclusion through their work. Entrepreneur's with disabilities as solo-preneurs passed on their culture, values and inclusion commitments to customers. One example is of a solo-preneur who offered sliding scale rates for clients who are Black, Indigenous or Trans-identifying. **Read the case study for solo-preneur Crows Nest Organizing**.

The jurisdictional scan includes reference to a program operated in the Yukon that provides individualized supports to entrepreneurs with disabilities that may show promise **Read about the Yukon in the jurisdictional scan report to learn more**.

Key Actions:

- Small Business supports specifically designed for people with disabilities to start and run businesses including grants that have for-profit eligibility and include human-to-human peer support, especially during start-up phase.
- Pilot projects/research to test and demonstrate how to best support entrepreneurs with disabilities. If delivered through organizations that support entrepreneurs, ensuring knowledge translation is shared.
- Provincial Government policy review of allowable earning exemptions as they apply to small business owners on disability income supports. The current model does not take into account the ebb and flow of income experienced by small business owners.
- Market research conducted by employer representative groups on the role of lived experience in accessible products and services.

Image Description: Below, a white woman with braided brown hair is seated at a work table, assembling *OneLight* fire starters. She is wearing a navy blue work jacket and a face mask featuring a bunny's whiskers and nose. Her hands are handling a small bundle of wooden sticks secured with a rubber band. The table is covered with a large pile of similar wooden pieces, and a woven basket is partially visible in the foreground. A water bottle sits on the table beside her. The background features a plain beige wall.

4 – THE SHIFT TO EMPLOYER/DEMAND-SIDE SOLUTIONS

Employer Challenges: There is still much to learn about the barriers employers are reinforcing with their practices and culture and those barriers they are actively removing. There is currently no broad way of registering inclusive organizations to find like-minded employers within sectors.

Promising Directions: Historically the focus of inclusive employment has been on helping individuals with disabilities to find and maintain work and not on employers removing barriers to be more inclusive. However, in recent years we have seen a shift in the funding landscape towards supporting more demand-side solutions, including support for the New Inclusive Economy project. Emerging trends in terms of creating critical mass among employers to take up inclusive employment include:

- service organizations shifting focus from job seekers to employers,
- organizations creating inclusive employment awards,
- businesses joining communities of practice to learn from one another on their journey to becoming more inclusive, and
- municipal level governments advocating for community-wide inclusion charters so local efforts can be adopted more widely, without putting all the pressure on smaller inclusive employers.

Case studies demonstrated that external supportive employment agencies were not instrumental in the organization becoming more inclusive whereas interviews and focus groups identified a lot of collaboration between employers and external employment agencies. The same was true for external training, when taking place for those featured in case studies, it was not made mandatory or consistent across the enterprises, a possible reflection that it was not necessary given the overall culture of the enterprise. This warrants further exploration of how we can support employers to consider the values and mission of their business to address disability inclusion and how external supportive employment agencies might play a role.

Case studies included equity seeking groups such as visible minorities or Indigenous leaders who have faced barriers and inequality at work and therefore seek to create more inclusive workplaces because of this experience. This may be an excellent area of exploration for projects considering intersectionality. **Read case studies.**

The response to wage subsidies as a policy lever to support employees with disabilities through supporting employers is divergent; some employers reported they were not worth the effort to get them on wage subsidies due to the quickly shifting labour market with employees moving easily between jobs, or jobs being seasonal/part-time that made wage subsidies too complicated. Some employers appreciated them for training, while also saying they were insufficient to cover the cost of onboarding a new employee and others reporting that once the subsidy ends, so does the position for the individual. **Read the interview and focus group data collection report**.

The jurisdictional scan presents multiple employer-side solutions being developed across Canada such as the **Government of Ontario's Accessibility website**, information for businesses providing resources to help employers to become more inclusive, including case studies from different businesses. Internationally, there are many unique approaches to demand-side solutions such as Finland's annual disability employment forum that connects employers, educational institutions and rehabilitation programs. Italy is consolidating practices into a central database and as of 2019, had 20% of Italian companies adopting non-mandated measures to enhance diversity at work. **Learn about European approaches in the jurisdictional scan report**.

Key Actions:

- Continued support of employment service providers shifting efforts to support employers.
- Support for employer-led communities of practice where employers who are already demonstrating a value and mission that is inclusive can support those who want to be more inclusive **Read about the 'business-to-business roadshow' in the knowledge translation report**
- Municipal governments support communities in adopting and advancing disability inclusion charters in addition to the Accessible Canada Act requirements.
- Research that explores the role of customized employment practices being adapted across different populations of people with disabilities may provide further promising practices that would benefit employers to becoming more inclusive and help to further define the conditions that can enable meaningful work.
- Training allowances in place of wage subsidies to support employers in onboarding.

5 – THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT POLICY AND THE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL

Employer Challenges: Government policies and programs can be challenging for employers and entrepreneurs when it comes to funding, wage subsidies, and the profound impact of provincial disability assistance (PWD). The frameworks in place to support disability inclusion have not in the past been informed by people with disabilities themselves, especially those living on the margins and when it comes to the emphasis of meaningful employment and wellbeing at work, legislation does not yet reflect these values. Interviews and focus groups with inclusive employers highlight how employers are not only influenced by their immediate operational settings, but also by the wider societal and environmental factors at play, including how these are shaped by policy and government programs. From a socio-ecological model perspective (Figure 1), there is a need to recognize how the workplace is shaped by other processes across systems, while also having a profound impact on individuals. Employers expressed a range of experiences and opinions on the availability and effectiveness of supports to include people with disabilities in the workplace, as well as how they navigated other government supports for people with disabilities. They also expressed a lack of publicly available support to address complex barriers for employment, including mental health and the high cost of living, as well as key challenges in the built environment (e.g., transportation and accessible infrastructure).
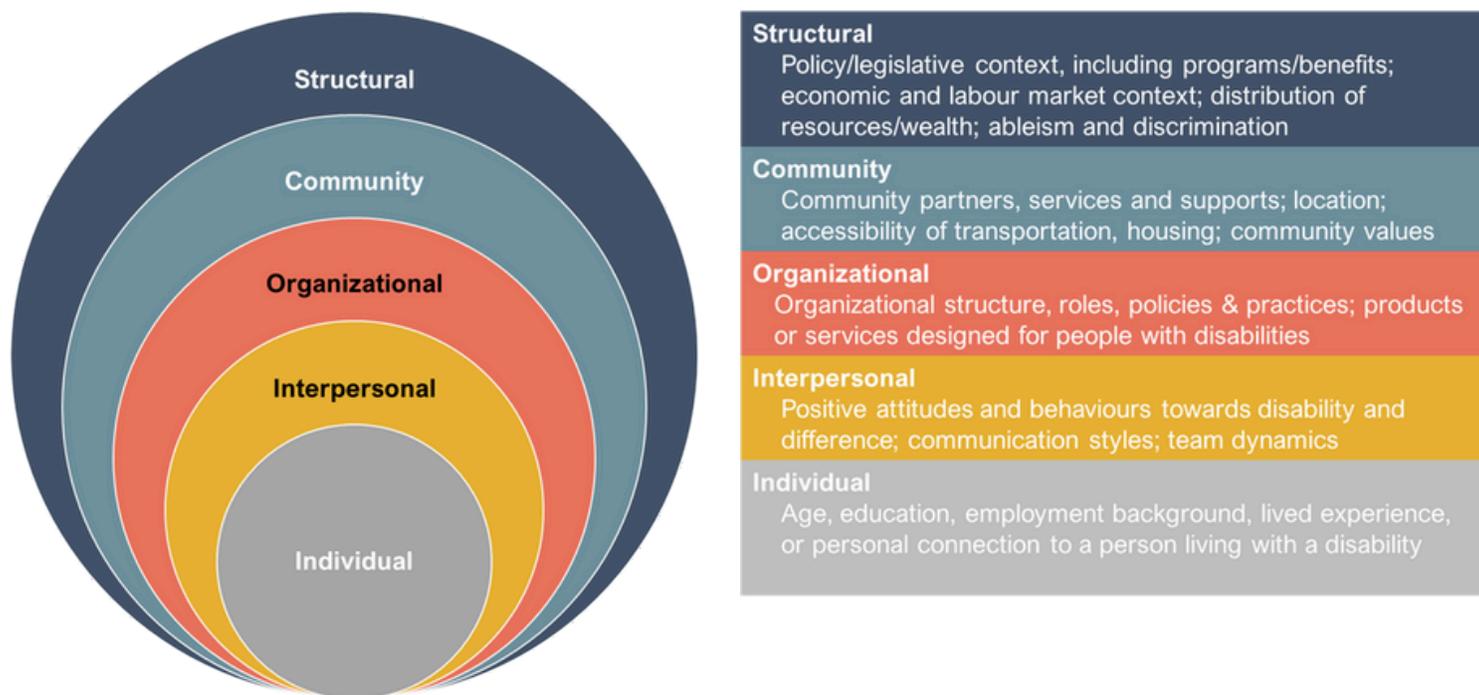
Structural
Policy/legislative context, including programs/benefits; economic and labour market context; distribution of resources/wealth; ableism and discrimination

Community
Community partners, services and supports; location; accessibility of transportation, housing; community values

Organizational
Organizational structure, roles, policies & practices; products or services designed for people with disabilities

Interpersonal
Positive attitudes and behaviours towards disability and difference; communication styles; team dynamics

Individual
Age, education, employment background, lived experience, or personal connection to a person living with a disability

Image Description: A diagram with five nested circles representing factors influencing disability inclusion. From the innermost to outermost: Individual (age, education, employment, lived experience), Interpersonal (attitudes, behaviours, communication, team dynamics), Organizational (roles, policies, services for disabled people), Community (partners, services, transportation, values), and Structural (laws, economy, resources, ableism). A matching color-coded legend describes each layer.

Promising Directions: Accessibility legislation, both federal and provincial, has triggered the adoption of proactive accessibility committees which must include people with disabilities and the non-profit sector, in particular, have made efforts to ensure diversity at a leadership and board level. Public policy seen through a lens of disability inclusion could have big impacts for the overall picture of a new inclusive economy in B.C. The jurisdictional scan report includes many examples of how other provinces in Canada are supporting employers through legislation and policies that not only help remove barriers but establishes that those who perpetuate barriers are responsible for removing them. Manitoba's Accessibility Fund shows promise in providing grants to organizations removing barriers or Saskatchewan's Human Rights Code which allows non-profit organizations to give preference to employment of individuals with disabilities. **Read about Manitoba's approach in the jurisdictional scan report**

From a socio-ecological model perspective, governments can go beyond accessibility legislation to enable conditions of accessibility and inclusion such as:

- providing incentives for inclusive employment in the form of training grants or subsidies,
- providing funding and resources for demand-side interventions that help employers build their own inclusion capacity and capabilities,
- adopting inclusive design principles into their own development of programs and services to ensure greater accessibility, usability, and flexibility,
- continuing to invest in pilot programs that test innovative inclusive design solutions,
- scaling successful initiatives as a way to continue to learn and create evidence-based solutions to build the inclusion capacity of employers.

Case studies included OneLight which in the past was provided special permissions to allow those working in a social enterprise to keep all earnings, including disability benefits. This resulted in a shift towards full time work. **Read OneLight case study**

Key Actions:

- Include people with disabilities in writing and understanding the frameworks government is putting in place to support disability inclusion.
- Policy experimentation on temporary exemptions of disability benefits could result in more people with disabilities training to full-time employment.
- Create funding programs that directly support employers to become more inclusive.
- Take on a leadership role in supporting demand-side solutions.

Summary of Employer Practices

Purpose: What are some specific actions emerging from the data collection report that employers can take to be more inclusive in their workplaces?

Context: There are more small businesses per capita in B.C. and self-employment is more prevalent than any other province in Canada. Of the 513,300 businesses in B.C. in 2022, 58% were self-employed without any help, 24% were businesses with one to four employees, and 16% were businesses with five to 49 employees. The remaining 2% were large businesses. Screening (environmental scan) of employers for the interviews and focus groups allowed employers to self-identify according to the following categories:

- **Self-employed**
- **five to nine employees**
- **10 to 19 employees**
- **20 to 49 employees**
- **50 to 99 employees**
- **100 and over employees**

Image Description: Right, a young white woman with Down Syndrome, wearing glasses and a black turtleneck, is seated at a desk in a busy office environment. She is wearing a headset and appears to be engaged in a phone conversation, with her hand adjusting the earpiece. In the background, blurred figures of colleagues can be seen working. The office is well-lit, with natural light streaming in through large windows.

Most actions and strategies below can be applied across employer sizes, organizational models, and contexts. Where applicable, distinctions between self-employed, smaller employers (under 10 employees) and larger employers (50 employees and over) are noted.

There are 9 themes that include:

1. Inclusive and Accessible Communication
2. Accessible Recruitment and Hiring Practices
3. Workplace Accommodations/Accessibility
4. Scheduling and Working Conditions Flexibility
5. Individualizing Roles
6. Employee Wellbeing and Benefits
7. Service Organization Partnerships
8. Other Employers Partnerships
9. Addressing Barriers in the Local Community / Physical Environment

Image Description: Below, a bearded white man is wearing a black baseball cap with sunglasses resting on top, a navy blue t-shirt, and black over-ear headphones around his neck. He is operating a professional camera mounted on a tripod. He has a focused yet relaxed expression as he looks towards something off-camera. The background includes a store setting with shelves stocked with products and a stainless-steel kitchen door. The lighting is bright and even.

1. Inclusive and Accessible Communication

Why Is this Important for inclusion?	• All workplaces rely on relationships (with coworkers, clients, partners) built on effective communication. • Differences in individuals' communications styles and preferences are often overlooked and communication can often be a significant barrier in the workplace. • It's not about "just being nice". Open, non-judgemental communication with employees that adapts to individual needs is important for employees to be successful. • Communication and supportive interpersonal relationships also foster psychological safety (defined as a workplace that promotes workers' psychological wellbeing and actively works to prevent harm to worker psychological health including in negligent, reckless, or intentional ways), team cohesion, and employee engagement. • Inclusive approaches to communication and interpersonal relationships were also a way for employers to concretely align values and mission with everyday actions. Employees with disabilities also emphasized that no two individuals experience their disabilities the same way. For example, people in the Deaf community have different preferences regarding lip reading vs. sign language, or both.
Employer Actions	• Providing choices and options for daily communication (e.g., text messages, in-person meetings, telephone calls). • Including employees with disabilities in decisions regarding their communications needs and preferences (e.g., sign language vs. lip reading, choice of formats for individuals with low vision). • Adopting plain language in public-facing text. • Ensuring websites are fully accessible. Working with service providers and job coaches to develop individualized approaches to communications.
Are there differences in how this is applied depending on employer size, organizational model, or context?	• Most self-employed individuals with disabilities emphasized the importance about asking the person how to best support them and their communications needs/preferences. • Smaller employers mostly relied on informal and continuous forms of employee engagement and feedback. • Some larger organizations sometimes rely on accessibility committees or employee resource groups to identify communication barriers and priorities for accessible communication in the workplace. Employers of all sizes, organizational models, and sectors highlighted the importance of working with service organizations – i.e., providing additional resources and expertise where needed.

1. Inclusive and Accessible Communication (continued)

Illustrative Quote	"So, this guy, he loves reading comic books. So, [the job coaches] created a comic book starring him and being in the workplace and the strategies that he can then use… they did [a] comic strip when he was learning how to take a HandyDART because he had never taken it before from his house to work, and then from work to his day program…" (Manufacturing BC Focus Group)

2. Accessible Recruitment and Hiring Practices

Why is this important for inclusion?	• Traditional recruitment and hiring methods can be a significant barrier for people with disabilities. • Many potential candidates can be "screened out" because their skills and experiences don't fit traditional application forms or processes. • Potential candidates with disabilities also have a preference to work with inclusive organizations and are looking for indications of organizational commitment to accessibility and inclusion in job ads. • Traditional job interviews can also have many barriers for people with disabilities and employers provided examples of how to rethink these processes for inclusion.
Employer Actions	• Review job ads for language, reading level, and technological barriers in off-the-shelf recruitment platforms. • Highlight the employer's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the job ad. • Automatically screen-in candidates who self-identify as living with a disability. • Create hiring "champions" to recruit directly from diverse communities or make it mandatory that hiring managers collaborate with community organizations to recruit people with disabilities. • Reconsider job requirements – remove unnecessary training or education criteria and focus on requirements for the job. • Apply a strengths-based approach to reviewing candidates; look for transferrable skills and "attitude over aptitude." • Reconsider traditional requirements for a cover letter and resume and offer different ways to apply e.g., in person sessions. • Share interview questions in advance. • Consider working interviews e.g., inviting candidate to showcase their skills directly on the job.

2. **Accessible Recruitment and Hiring Practices (continued)**

Are there differences in how this is applied depending on employer size, organizational model, or context?	• Most self-employed individuals with disabilities noted that they were not in a position to hire but would target recruitment to other people with disabilities if they were in the future. • Employers of all sizes, organizational models, and sectors highlighted simple and creative ways to remove barriers in the recruitment and hiring process.
Illustrative Quote	"My hiring philosophy now is attitude over aptitude and for the vast majority of our staff that are coming in, whether they identify as living with a disability or not, they're coming in with a really great attitude so I can teach them what they need to know." (Manufacturing BC Focus Group) "We've done some kind of working interviews which are awesome… We had one gentleman come in and he would have been fine, but he had severe arthritis in his hands, and that wasn't something that he could overcome based on the dexterity needed... for the [specific] job itself. So, it just wasn't the right fit. But on paper, he looked like he'd be a great candidate, but actually meeting the person, we came to that agreement that, you know, you're not going to be comfortable here. There's going to be something better for you out there. So, it gave us a lot more insight and into how that would translate to what we needed as well as the individual." (Interviewee 6)

3. **Workplace Accommodations**

Why is this important for inclusion?	• There is a common myth that making accommodations for employees with disabilities is complicated and expensive. • Like other research that has debunked this myth, **https://accessibleemployers.ca/resource/workplace-accommodation-guide/** findings supported that most inclusive employers considered accommodations on a case-by-case basis, aligning them with individuals needs, strengths, and requirements for the job and did not consider these to be complicated or expensive. • Many employees may not feel comfortable self-identifying as living with a disability or requesting accommodations. Providing options up-front – and to everyone – fosters inclusion.

3. Workplace Accommodations (continued)

Employer Actions	- If making an investment in the physical workplace or technology, focus on a "universal design" approach i.e., approach to designing the workplace/environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability. - Proactively offer different accommodation options/choices to new employees to reduce the need for self-identify as living with a disability. - Work with service or community organizations that can offer services and supports for recommending specific workplace or worksite adjustments and can offer help navigating available resources. - Individual approaches – i.e., adjusting the job role/work conditions based on individual strengths and needs – helps to empower employees to meet their role-specific requirements.
Are there differences in how this is applied depending on employer size, organizational model, or context?	- Most self-employed individuals with disabilities emphasized that accommodations are as unique as individuals themselves. They felt it was important to dispel a "one size fits all" approach to accommodations. - Many self-employed individuals found that self-employment allowed choice and control over their adjustments on a regular basis. - Employers of all sizes, organizational models, and sectors highlighted simple ways to make adjustments. However, this required consideration of the job role. For example, many roles required employees to be on-site (i.e., in a service role, at a manufacturing plant) so hybrid or work-from-home options were not always available in these cases.
Illustrative Quote	This quote is in relation to an employer that had an occupational therapist modify the employee's workstation during onboarding: "I have to be quite honest with you, I thought I was being placated a little bit as the token guy in a wheelchair joining the organization. So, I said to the staff, 'You really don't have to do this to me. For me, I've never had this type of accommodation done in the past. I'm pretty adaptable. I can make this happen.' What they explained to me was… 'You don't understand, we're not doing this as an onboarding practice for you. We do this for all employees that join our organization.'" (Interviewee 4)

4. Scheduling and Working Conditions Flexibility

Why is this important for inclusion?	• Offering flexibility in scheduling and working conditions was seen as a simple, low-cost way to accommodate diverse employees. • Flexibility in scheduling and working conditions looks different in diverse sectors and job roles – while hybrid and work from home might not be possible in all cases, offering more flexibility for breaks, part-time roles, or having uninterrupted work time were seen as other options.
Employer Actions	• Allow flexibility for taking breaks or scheduling uninterrupted time. • Provide open-ended leaves in which employees can be welcomed back to jobs or roles after time off. • Part-time and shift work can be seen as flexible or preferred options for some employees with disabilities. • Job-sharing (i.e., one FTE position split among several part-time employees) may be an option for some employers. • When possible, hybrid or remote work to fulfill job roles or specific job tasks. • Allowing employees to find their best approach instead of relying on strict instructions. • Encouraging manager and supervisors to not "micromanage" and focus on outcomes. • Adapt job duties or offer choice of tasks when an employee needs "a change of scenery". • Align learning and growth opportunities with career aspirations and roles.
Are there differences in how this is applied depending on employer size, organizational model, or context?	• Most self-employed individuals with disabilities preferred self-employment for the flexibility, choice, and control that it offered. • Many employers who had job roles requiring employees to be on-site emphasized how shift work, job-sharing, or part-time roles could offer more flexibility for people with disabilities.
Illustrative Quote	"We use a job share sort of approach, which I think everybody needs to get in on that, especially in this economy and this job market. Why do you have to have one person for a full-time position… why can't that position be shared by five people? … If you can think a little outside the box and be willing to try something, maybe not quite as traditional… would you rather not have five people to fill the job that are good, and they want to be there for the hours that they're there?" (Interviewee 5)

5. Individualizing Roles

Why is this important for inclusion?	• Tailoring jobs to match strengths, abilities, and interests promotes inclusion. • Individualizing roles to employees may look different in different sectors and job roles – while creating a job around an employee might not always be possible, other approaches might exist to align roles to employee strengths. • Overall, providing choice and control for individuals to complete their job roles and tasks was emphasized – i.e., focusing on the outcome rather than how the individual performed the task.
Employer Actions	• Allowing employees to find their best approach instead of relying on strict instructions. • Encouraging manager and supervisors to not "micromanage" and focus on outcomes. • Adapt job duties or offer choice of tasks when an employee needs "a change of scenery". • Align learning and growth opportunities with career aspirations and roles.
Are there differences in how this is applied depending on employer size, organizational model, or context?	• Employers of different sizes, organizational models, and sectors noted that flexibility and tailoring might exist on a spectrum. For example, a very large employer (i.e., over 100 employees) offered a "menu" of job options/tasks for individuals to choose from. Other employers might be able to tailor the role around the individual employee. • Regardless of size, sector, or structure, many employers felt that focusing on outcomes, allowing for different approaches, and an open mind to executing tasks was important.
Illustrative Quote	"Yeah, just kind of in finding the gifts that we all have. I think I like to do that with all my staff. I think we're all very different. And I think that's really important. It makes business operate very smoothly when you can find, highlight, and let people work towards their strengths." (Interviewee 14)

6. Employee Wellbeing and Benefits

Why is this important for inclusion?	- Flexibility was considered a core part of employee wellbeing – fostering a culture of support, trust, and safety. - Supporting employee wellbeing not only fosters inclusion, but also enhances productivity and retention. - Recognizing the importance that flexibility plays in mental health for all employees was emphasized.
Employer Actions	- Provide for personal days off or recognize mental health days in leave policies. - Provide mental health first aid training for leaders. - Allow for time off or flexible schedule for medical appointments, childcare responsibilities, or counselling. - Review sick leave and health care spending account policies.
Are there differences in how this is applied depending on employer size, organizational model, or context?	- Regardless of size, sector, or structure, many employers emphasized that mental health was a major concern for their workplaces and that all employees were impacted. - Recognizing the importance of mental health in the workplace was also seen as an important "entry point" into changing attitudes and practices in favour of flexibility and disability inclusion.
Illustrative Quote	"I think people are starting to understand like this is how things have to be done. You have to be flexible with childcare, people have childcare issues. People have depression where it's easier if you get them started later in the morning…This whole idea has changed about what work looks like." (Interviewee 11) "You're welcome back and to take time off because you need to focus on yourself. That's not a bad thing, and it's not anything to feel embarrassed about or feel guilty about, like it's a good thing that you can recognize that, 'Hey, you know what? I'm struggling right now, and I need some time.' So, we fully support that, and we let all the workers know… if that's what you need, you [just] have to tell us." (Interviewee 5)

7. Service Organizations Partnerships

Why is this important for inclusion?	• Partnerships with other organizations were pivotal for accessibility and inclusion for many of the interview and focus group participants from a variety of organizational models. • More than 30 unique organizations in B.C. were identified as partners. • Employers noted that service organizations provided expertise, resources, and one-on-one support to job candidates and employees with disabilities at no additional cost to the employer. • Sector-specific organizations (e.g., TAP Network, Employ to Empower) offered tailored supports to members and helped them see the value of inclusion in their specific contexts.
Employer Actions	• Service organizations can complete accessibility audits; identify barriers to workplace policies, practices, and the physical environment. • Service organizations have the expertise to recommend workplace adaptations and can help identify specific resources for employers. • Service organizations can help recruit and match employees with disabilities to positions and offer ongoing supports for their success, such as social workers and job coaches. • More broadly, service organizations can help employers' diversity recruitment and reach untapped talent in the community.
Are there differences in how this is applied depending on employer size, organizational model, or context?	• Entrepreneurs/self-employed individuals with disabilities highlighted the value of direct support (resources, equipment, business coaching). • Regardless of size, sector, or structure, many employers noted that service organizations provided the resources and ongoing supports required to ensure successful workplace adjustments and accommodations for employees with disabilities. • Diverse employers noted that the key to successful partnerships includes that the service organization deeply understands the employer's business needs and context.
Illustrative Quote	"The nice thing is having the job coaches, they are a great sounding board because every time that I need support, they're there for me as well as well as their employee or the job seeker or their person that we have here… They've been really instrumental to us as well as to the individual and some of the things that have come up that we hadn't thought of before." (Interviewee 6)

7. Service Organizations Partnerships (continued)

Illustrative Quote	"I think we were only able to hire because of the collaboration and support from...WorkBC… Being able to get the specialized equipment for our staff member… was essential, but we didn't have the budget for doing that ourselves. So, and then just learning right, learning, and providing a base support that we were able to." (Terrace Focus Group)

8. Other Employers Partnerships

Why is this important for inclusion?	• Local networks with other employers were helpful for idea sharing and mutual support for implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. • Learning from other employers (e.g., through communities of practice, local events, guest speakers) was considered a powerful way to raise awareness and educate employers on the value of inclusive workplaces.
Employer Actions	• Partnering with local Chambers of Commerce to learn from inclusive employers. • Hosting guest speakers or "lunch and learn" to hear about employer success stories. • Hosting inclusive employer awards to highlight success stories. • Participating in a community of practice – some sectoral associations offer this – to share ideas and problem solve with peers.
Are there differences in how this is applied depending on employer size, organizational model, or context?	• Participation in communities of practice was more prevalent for larger employers and employers in rural or remote areas. • While smaller employers noted that they sometimes lacked the capacity to participate in networking and employer communities of practice, one small employer offered an example to overcome this – their community created a network of employers, service organizations, and other stakeholders to work towards a community-wide inclusion charter. • Some smaller employers noted that there was an opportunity for local Boards of Trade or start-up accelerators to foster more peer learning regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion.

8. Other Employers Partnerships (continued)

Illustrative Quote	"There was a community committee that was looking at employment… through different organizations. And so, I joined that committee, and our goal was to try to create more opportunities in the community for people with disabilities… We brought in some guest speakers. You know, go to the Business Improvement Associations, the Chambers of Commerce, really trying to educate the business world in regard to hiring people with disabilities, which was great. But we weren't really changing the culture of those businesses because businesses weren't hiring people with disabilities because they didn't know how to hire people with disabilities. So, we had to sort of educate them." (Interviewee 9)

9. Addressing Barriers in the Local Community / Physical Environment

Why is this important for inclusion?	• Employers' location in the community and availability of accessible infrastructure (e.g., buildings, sidewalks, transit, etc.) was highlighted as a challenge. However, many inclusive employers used creative solutions to address these challenges. • Where employers did have influence over their own environments, many opted for Rick Hansen Accessibility Certification for building enhancements. • Employers noted that there were some examples of government support to address accessibility and infrastructure in their communities, but more would be welcome.
Employer Actions	• Providing transportation to a less accessible worksite by creating a central pick-up/drop-off location closer to transit. • Working with service organizations to remove barriers in buildings. • Working with service organizations to identify provincial or federal sources of funding to address accessibility in the built environment. • Participating in local community opportunities to advocate for accessible infrastructure.
Are there differences in how this is applied depending on employer size, organizational model, or context?	• Employers located in smaller communities had to address barriers due to lack of public transit and sometimes provided solutions themselves (i.e., carpooling). • One employer in the non-profit sector highlighted that there is an opportunity for more consortia models to procurement of accessible infrastructure. For example, where one organization might not be able to license accessibility technology on their own, a consortia license would reduce costs as a shared resource.

9. Addressing Barriers in the Local Community / Physical Environment (continued)

Are there differences in how this is applied depending on employer size, organizational model, or context?	• Larger employers may have more resources available to invest in accessibility to their buildings. • Employers located in smaller communities had to address barriers due to lack of public transit and sometimes provided solutions themselves (i.e., carpooling). • Larger employers may have more resources available to invest in accessibility to their buildings. • One employer in the non-profit sector highlighted that there is an opportunity for more consortia models to procurement of accessible infrastructure. For example, where one organization might not be able to license accessibility technology on their own, a consortia license would reduce costs as a shared resource.
Illustrative Quote	"Most of [our staff] don't have a car. A lot of them don't have a license. So, for us, the challenge is finding somebody that can drive on the crew. So, we provide the transportation to and from… take them to work and then bring them back to the mall and drop them off." (Interviewee 5)

Image Description: Below, an Asian woman and a young Asian man with Down syndrome, both wearing aprons, are smiling and preparing bread together in a kitchen. The counter is filled with various types of bread and pastries, and the atmosphere is warm and supportive.

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of the New Inclusive Economy project is to investigate inclusive employment conditions and economic models that show promise in increasing workforce participation across sectors by people with disabilities or other barriers to employment. We will then offer evidence-based recommendations that employers can learn from to address structural barriers in their own environments - contributing to collective movement towards the New Inclusive Economy.

In addition to standard employment settings, we are strategically including in our inquiry innovations and models that might be seen as 'alternative.' This is due to evidence that the dominant system is exclusive by design (as outlined in the section entitled Disability exclusion in the workplace).[1]

Beginning with employment that is already addressing structural barriers that lead to exclusion from the labour force, we can reveal powerful lessons so that other employers can learn from them and feel empowered to address these challenges. We are interested in nuance, complexity, and depth of learning over large numbers.

The research question guiding this process is: **What are the enabling structural conditions that create meaningful employment for people with disabilities and other barriers to employment? How can these be amplified and mobilized in other employment settings?**

Over the course of two years, the research will explore:

- **Examples** of increased labour market participation by people with disabilities and high barriers to employment;
- **Conditions** conducive to employment, including accessibility and accommodations;
- **Economic models** that demonstrate equity, sustainability, and inclusion;
- **Alternative approaches** to business that center the social benefits of inclusion and equity in the labour market while increasing economic benefits;
- **Supports and Barriers** that increase or decrease labour market participation by people with disabilities and those with barriers to employment.

The first step of the project is to review the current body of literature in order to see a) what is already known about this topic, and b) what we still want to find out through the research.

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[1] Grills et al, 2016

Key Terms

Some key terms to help orient us to the material include:

Capitalism: Capitalism is "an economic system in which most businesses and the means of production are privately owned and operated for profit." [2]

Disability: A social model of disability says that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. There is no single definition of disability – there are functional, legal, and subjective definitions.[3]

The Accessible Canada Act defines disability as "any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment — or a functional limitation — whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society." [4]

For the purposes of this project, we will use the social model of disability: the experience that results when persons with impairment or a functional limitation encounter attitudes or environments that hinder their full participation in society on an equal basis with others. [5]

Demand-side: Demand-side factors include "socio-political and labour market context and employers' motivations for hiring." [6] In this project, the demand-side refers to employers. (To date, most inclusive employment initiatives have focussed on addressing barriers to employment on the supply side: potential employees.)

Economy: The word 'economy' comes from the Greek oikos, which means household, combined with nomos, which means rules or norms. Thus, economy refers to the "art of household management." [7] However, the economy is now understood and examined largely in terms of financial growth, as a result of a set of international rules outlined in the United Nations System of Accounts.[8] This renders other important economic and socially useful activities – such as unpaid household or subsistence labour - invisible.

In this review we highlight diverse economic models as a reminder that the dominant economic structure is one possibility among many that have been used through time and in different places, and it can continue to change in response to the needs of the people. [9]

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[2] Hinton & Maclurcan, 2017
[3] Gronvik, 2009
[4] Government of Canada, 2019
[5] Bachrach, 2015
[6] Lindsay et al, 2019, p. 142

[7] Raworth, 2017, p. 4.
[8] Waring, 2018
[9] Waring, 2018

Employment: Employment is usually understood as the condition of having paid work. Access to fairly paid employment is considered a human right according to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. [10] It is worth noting that monetary exchange alone does not ensure equitable employment conditions. What is valuable will vary for different people: pay, enjoyment, purpose, autonomy, choice, and other characteristics are worth considering. In this research we are looking at meaningful employment as different for everyone and defined by the individual. [11]

Inclusion: Social inclusion is multi-dimensional, and doesn't look the same for everyone. It can be defined as the interaction between two major life domains: interpersonal relationships and community participation. [12] Flexibility and choice are important elements of inclusion. Inclusion in meaningful employment for our purposes could be defined as having equal access to employment opportunities without additional burden of risk or disclosure.

Inclusive Design: The terms Universal, Equity-centered,[13] Inclusive,[14] and Accessible Design[15] are commonly used, with similar meanings. The movement intends to design "the world with and for people with disabilities' different capabilities." [16] Inclusive design is also based on the principle that all people are included in decision-making at all stages.

Inclusive economy: There are studies that define inclusive capitalism[17] and inclusive growth,[18] but a ready definition of 'inclusive economy' is not yet available. For our purpose we speak of inclusive economy as one in which everyone has opportunity to participate, benefit, and design, and in which profit or other motives do not take precedence over inclusive participation.

Occupational justice: An occupational justice perspective recognizes that everyone has the right to work, regardless of "age, ability, gender, social class, or other differences" and that this right is limited for some people due to existing "social structures." [19]

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[10] Grills et al, 2016; see also Schmid, 2018

[11] Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2013; Gibson et al, 2018

[12] Simplican et al, 2014

[13] Education First, n.d.

[14] Holmes, 2018

[15] Treviranus, 2014

[16] Luck, 2018, p. 98

[17] Borko, 2016

[18] Pavlova, 2018

[19] Nillson & Townsend, 2014, p. 65

[20] Misawa, 2010, p. 26

[21] Hankivsky, 2014, p. 2

Positionality: Positionality refers to how differences in social position and power shape identities and access in society. Our identities "are shaped by socially constructed positions and memberships to which we belong." [20] Positionality is intersectional. This means "inequities are never the result of single, distinct factors" [21] but are "embedded in society." [22]

Social determinants of health: Social determinants of health include such things as: income and social status, employment and working conditions, education and literacy, childhood experiences, physical environments, social supports and coping skills, healthy behaviours, access to health services, biology and genetic endowment, gender, culture, and race/racism.[23] **Access to land is also a determinant of health, which is often overlooked but increasingly highlighted by Indigenous and other scholars.**[24] The Government of Canada states that determinants of health are the broad range of personal, social, economic and environmental factors that determine individual and population health."

Structural conditions: In relation to employment, they can be conditions in which a) the employment setting is embedded (ie. employment setting is accessible by public transit), or b) the conditions created within the employment setting (ie. emotionally safe work environment). Structural conditions are the specific ways political, cultural, social, material, and economic systems are organized. The term 'social structure' is sometimes used to describe the way social institutions are created and work together to create a stable society.[25]

Work: Work includes all the things people do to contribute to their families, their communities, the ecosystem, and themselves. When work is only understood as only something we do for money, it overlooks the vital uncompensated labour that holds up community economies (such as volunteer, household, and other forms of work). This tends to make the contributions of certain groups of people invisible - including people marginalized from formal workplaces on the basis of gender, ethnicity, or ability.[26]

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[22] Misawa, 2010, p. 26
[23] Government of Canada, 2020
[24] de Leeuw, 2015; Waring, 2018
[25] Britannica, 2022
[26] Waring, 2018

Roadmap

We begin with the *Context* in which we undertake this research, as well as suggestions for how to engage with this report.

Under the heading *Disability exclusion in the workplace*, we outline how the barriers to employment currently faced by people with disabilities (PWD), impact them on many levels. We look at new legislation and policies that are emerging in B.C. and elsewhere to support accessibility. Critical disability scholars remind us that rather than (only) seeking inclusion in existing social systems, we might also seek to alter social systems to be more equitable in themselves.[27]

In the next section, *Positionality – seeing outside the silos*, we learn from Tla'amin writers [28] and from global economic geographers.[29] Their writing shows us how looking closely at the activities of particular groups of people in certain places and times can highlight important elements sometimes obscured when we view employment in a silo. We then look at how thinking about work and disability differently can expand the realm of possibility when it comes to identifying promising practices for inclusive employment.

The section entitled *Changing the Narrative* about disability and employment enables us to see the ways PWD are engaged in meaningful work *already*, and the ways PWD and others who are systematically excluded have found alternative methods of engaging in the economy that create new possibilities for everyone and for the workplace in general. Not only does this section debunk myths, but it allows us to see how conceptual and structural changes can pave the way for a new inclusive economy.

From there, we move to the very concrete ways employers are already taking it upon themselves to enact some of these changes. In the section called *Experiments in structural change within employment settings*, we highlight some promising practices that emerge from the literature. Examples include: inclusive design, centering values, internal workplace policies, inclusive participation at every level, and an organizational structure that aligns with these commitments.

In the *Conclusion*, we outline some of the gaps in the literature, and how they might guide us in our next steps. The intention of this literature review is to expand our understanding of what is possible when it comes to the New Inclusive Economy.

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[27] Adam, 2018; Rajarshi Mukhopadhyay, 2015

[28] Paul, 2014; Washington, 2004

[29] Gibson-Graham et al, 2013; Gibson-Graham et al, 2019

Context

Looking at the New Inclusive Economy with an un-siloed lens

Approaching conversations about inclusive employment by refocusing our understanding of what disability, employment, work, and economies *are* and *can* be is a helpful starting place. This invites researchers, employers, and others to recognize potential biases and allow for critical and creative thinking about inclusion. Businesses that do so - intentionally or not - also serve to create valuable disruptions in the larger context of oppressive systems in which they operate and can inspire or carve a new way forward.[30]

It is the responsibility of those currently benefiting to alter the imposed system that privileges them.[31] Meaningfully addressing workplace inclusion requires a dramatic altering of existing power dynamics. Supply-side solutions are not enough, if we are not also actively and collectively addressing the "socio-political and labour market context" in which employment takes place.[32] This requires the active participation of people who are currently often excluded from the conversation and is precisely why new efforts towards accessibility and inclusion – including but not limited to the Accessible British Columbia Act – are so necessary at this time.[33]

This project bridges two bodies of knowledge and practice that have previously not been in dialogue with one another: a) diverse economies and b) disability inclusion.

Current responses to structural barriers to employment

While the pandemic reminds us all of the precariousness of life, wellbeing, and (un)employment, these experiences are felt more heavily by people who are *already* marginalized by current systems.[34] This is in part due to the cumulative and "psychological impacts of oppression." [35]

The COVID-19 pandemic has mainstreamed conversations about employee rights and mental health. Many people are experiencing declining mental health due to the unstable nature of life and employment. This speaks to the fact that ableness itself comes and goes and societies/economies need to be responsive to fluid and intersectional vulnerabilities.[36]

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[30] Roth, 2019; see also Solid State Community Industries, n.d.

[31] Roth, 2019, p. 311

[32] Lindsay et al, 2019, p. 142

[33] Government of British Columbia, 2021

[34] Sheppard-Jones, 2020

[35] Bates et al, 2017, p.160

[36] Kuran et al, 2020

All workers can benefit from flexibility in the workplace.[37] Pointing to the structural inequities that persist, work-from-home options not previously readily available to PWD have been normalized during the pandemic. Recruitment and retention are challenges that emerged in force during the pandemic and are likely to remain with us.[38] The response to these challenges requires us to think about how to best support and nurture our human resources, and to (re)think the values and priorities upon which the entire economy is based.[39]

The world is currently in the midst of a significant experiment in relation to occupational justice, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the COVID-19 crisis itself is expected to be time-limited, it has created an opportunity to consider how collaboration can help us "in addressing other challenges of a more enduring nature," [40] making us more resilient in the face of new challenges. "In the COVID-19 environment, savvy employers will utilize UD [universal, or inclusive design] to strengthen the ability of all employees to continue to carry on business as usual in anything but usual times." [41] Tips on how to learn through this and create more inclusive employment environments can be found in the 'Inclusive Design' section, below.

System-level responses to the pandemic suggest that instead of trying to "build back better" we could "build back fairer" [42] by normalizing a system that addresses "ongoing and structural strains toward building 'everyday resilience'".[43] This can be pursued with a human rights approach, grounded in a commitment to equity-centered design as well as social and occupational justice perspectives.[44]

Disability exclusion in the workplace

The current, dominant economic system systematically excludes people with disabilities from equitable participation in employment.[45] Unemployment and lack of access to meaningful work remains a reality the world over,[46] despite the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* having been signed by 164 countries.[47]

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[37] Child, 2021; Hick & Murphy, 2020; Larue, 2021; Stuart, Spencer, McLachlan, & Forde, 2021
[38] Child, 2021; Hick & Murphy, 2020; Larue, 2021; Stuart, Spencer, McLachlan, & Forde, 2021
[39] Government of British Columbia, 2022; Larue, 2021
[40] Child, 2020, p. 118
[41] Sheppard-Joens, 2020, p. 76
[42] Jesus et al, 2021, p. 12
[43] Jesus et al, 2021, p. 12
[44] Jesus et al, 2021; Nilsson & Townsend, 2014; Sheppard-Jones et al, 2020
[45] Grills et al, 2016
[46] Grills et al, 2016, p. 338; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022
[47] Meltzer, Robinson, & Fisher, 2019; Murfitt, Crosbie, Zammit, & Williams, 2018

In 2017, "employment rates (including both full- and part-time employment) for approximately six million Canadians aged 15 and over who have one or more disabilities [was] 59% compared to an 80% employment rate for those without disabilities." [48] High unemployment rates for people with disabilities are observed worldwide. [49]

According to one study, people for whom the disability onset was later in life, and people with physical limitations or multiple limitations, are the *least* likely to be working. [50] In Canada, as many as 40% of disabilities are invisible, and as our population ages, the number of workers and job seekers with invisible disabilities will continue to grow. [51] People with intellectual disabilities face the greatest barriers to employment. [52] "As of March 31, 2019, only 24.2% of individuals supported by Community Living BC (CLBC) reported some employment earnings, with 82% of these reporting earnings below $10,000 a year," [53] despite the fact that research shows workers with intellectual disabilities are typically reliable and capable. [54] Inclusive workplaces also demonstrate other benefits including low turn-over among staff, profitability, and productivity [55] as well as higher morale, positive workplace culture, and improved corporate culture overall. [56]

Structural barriers that exist outside of employment settings

There are proven links between poverty and disability the world over. [57] The relationship between poverty and disability is described as cyclical: people who live in poverty often experience many forms of exclusion (from health care and education, for instance) as well as high exposure to risk factors (including trauma, poor nutrition, isolation, or mistreatment), which can increase the risk of some disabilities. Conversely, people with disabilities are more likely to be restricted from livelihood opportunities (such as education, work, and social connectedness) which can be a sentence to lifelong poverty. All of this is "shown to negatively impact on psychosocial wellbeing, identity and social inclusion." [58]

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[48] Gupta, Sukhai, & Wittich, 2021, p. 2; see also Prince, 2014 and Prince, 2017

[49] Baker et al, 2018; Berry & Kymar, 2018; Ferrucchi, 2014; Ramachandra et al, 2017; Mactaggart et al, 2018; Meltzer et al, 2019; Park et al, 2016; Prince, 2017

[50] Mactaggart et al, 2018

[51] Prince, 2017

[52] Ramachandra et al, 2017

[53] Hole, Reid, and Mudde, 2022, p. 2

[54] Backrach, 2015

[55] Backrach, 2015

[56] Buettgen & Klassen 2020; inclusion Powell River Society, 2021

[57] Mactaggart et al, 2018

[58] Mactaggart et al, 2018, p. 2

Specific population groups who experience the burden of systemic inequities due to gender, race, ethnicity, age, or socioeconomic status also experience some disabilities at a higher rate. These "systemic inequities (ie. lack of access to healthcare, poor nutrition, housing issues, violence, exposure to environmental hazards) intensify negative health outcomes for [people] with disabilities, and in some cases are causing secondary conditions." [59] All of these contribute to the exclusion of people with disabilities from the workforce.

To state more plainly, the major barriers to workforce participation for people with disabilities (PWD) are the compounding effects of exclusion or oppression - not their disabilities. This requires systemic and structural responses, not just individual accommodations, and in more than just the workplace.[60]

"Nearly half of all discrimination complaints in Canada are about disability" [61] and "more than 40% of disability-related complaints were in the area of employment in most jurisdictions."[62] Discrimination is identified as a major barrier in many other countries too.[63] People in Italy with disabilities state they experience discrimination in their job searches (40.6%) and in the workplace (38%).[64] An Australian study highlights barriers to *finding* work (such as narrow, dismissive, and discouraging attitudes of both employment support workers and potential employers) and barriers to *maintaining* work (including both subtle and overt discrimination).[65]

The impacts of this are also compounding: Many people with disabilities also experience depression or other mental health challenges. Being wrongfully dismissed, passed over for jobs or promotions, or otherwise discriminated against in the workforce leads to higher rates of depression, suicidality, and family trauma. These barriers also lead to many people simply not applying to work in a system that repeatedly and actively excludes or mistreats them.[66] "This structural inequality, which begins in the classroom and continues in the boardroom," has become a reality to which many people are indifferent, but to which PWDs have been forced to adapt.[67]

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[59] Sheppard-Jones, 2021, p. 72

[60] Meltzer et al, 2019

[61] Canadian Human Rights Commission, n.d, p. 1

[62] Canadian Human Rights Commission, n.d., p. 27

[63] Crawford, 2011

[64] Ferrucci, 2014

[65] Meltzer et al, 2019

[66] Amoroso, 2020

[67] Amoroso, 2020, p. 4

More structural barriers: economic and cultural

It is important to make explicit the connection between strategic colonial nation-building and the deliberate marginalization of people with disabilities. In contrast with a social model, a medical model of disability "treats disabilities as defects in need of treatment."[68] A medical approach has disproportionately pathologized and institutionalized Indigenous bodies and minds, and separated them from one another and from the land.[69] Indigenous cultures and perspectives are diverse, and around the world, they challenge "western narratives of disability."[70] A strong theme involves community members looking after each other, and people being understood more in terms of their role in community than in terms of what they are able to do or not do physically or otherwise.[71]

The collective impacts of colonialism include "loss of land, culture, identity, knowledge base, values and language" – and these are described as far more disabling than individual physical or intellectual impairments.[72] Traditional teachings emphasize interconnectedness, respect for the whole person, collective wellbeing, and belonging. Things commonly diagnosed as disabilities are seen as gifts: special talents, connections with the spirit world, or power.[73]

In economic terms, too, many Indigenous authors point to the ways we have lost sight of important connections with the world we inhabit, and that we have fallen out of step with the values embedded in teachings that honour and include the natural world as vital participants in the economic structure.[74] As the demands of capitalism place great strain on natural and social systems,[75] we are reminded that the physical world has value and worth beyond what humans allot to it. In order to address this, "language, policies, theories, frameworks" need to be pushed back against and constantly re-imagined.[76]

Colonialism has dispossessed many peoples and communities from the land, which compromises (among other things) the ability to provide for oneself, one's family, and one's community. The current economic priorities have led to an undervaluing of the broader range of activities that keep communities well.[77] In order to set the balance right, we can exercise the power we have (however limited) to do things differently; and this involves economic restructuring in a way that recognizes ourselves as embedded within all natural systems, not set apart from them.[78]

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[68] Guevera, 2021, p. 274
[69] Adam, 2018
[70] Adam, 2018, p. 13
[71] Adam, 2018
[72] Adam, 2018, p. 24

[74] Mitchell, 2018, p. 88
[75] Teegee, 2015, p. 121
[76] de Leeuw, 2015, p. 97-98
[77] Richmond, 2015
[78] Mitchell, 2018

One in-depth study traces the simultaneous containment of Indigenous people, certain immigrant groups, and people with disabilities in both prisons and asylums, specifically looking at Victoria, B.C.[79] The social construction of categories of 'unfit' - supported with the force of both the legal and medical systems – made it possible to remove people from their land.[80] In the midst of settler-colonialism, which is dominated by a capitalist orientation to land and labour, globalized capitalism is thus experienced as a new form of assimilation and "an expansion of the colonial model." [81]

Colonial systems and practices persist to this day that perpetuate the systemic exclusion of certain groups of people from participation in mainstream economic activities - such as landownership, education, and the workforce.[82] Other legitimate economic activities that are inhibited include providing food and other forms of sustenance that are based on living off the land. So, while large economic development projects that involve resource extraction, for instance, may provide Indigenous communities employment, they may simultaneously threaten Indigenous economies by destroying or devaluing the land without recognizing the vital role it plays in sustaining community economies more generally.[83] This is why the definition of meaningful employment' cannot be defined from outside, and why wellbeing cannot be measured in economic terms.[84] Even though there is enormous pressure for Indigenous communities (and others) to conform to capitalist economies, this does not mean other approaches are not viable.[85]

These broader economic and social conditions are often not recognized in our day-to-day lives or decision-making, but are increasingly being acknowledged for the way they *enable* participation for some groups of people, and present *barriers* for others. Making structural conditions visible by naming them can enable us to see and address the racism, sexism, and ablism built into them, as well as the intersections among these forms of oppression and exclusion.[86] Underlying cultural norms and values are often unacknowledged but play a significant role in who has access to what. Indeed, neoliberalism and neocolonialism are identified by many as the "two most important structural forces that shaped contemporary life." [87]

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[79] Roman, et al, 2009

[80] Roman, et al, 2009

[81] Hernandez, 2013, p. 10; Kuokkanen, 2011

[82] Roman et al, 2009, p. 20; Hernandez, 2013; Kuokkanen, 2011

[83] Kuokkanen, 2011; see for example Tenson, 2017

[84] Waring, 2018

[85] Kuokkanen, 2011

[86] Roman et al, 2009

[87] de Finney et al, 2011, p, 362-363

For instance, **the design of a building or neighbourhood, the routing of buses, the cost of rent are structural conditions that impact employment.[88] So are decisions about where investments and divestments are made, legislation, policies, and political priorities.[89]** Partnerships[90] can provide access to funding or relational supports, and alter conditions that make inclusive employment possible. Whether a biological or architectural metaphor, the term 'structure' helps us to see social and economic features that "persist over time, are interrelated, and influence both the functioning of the entity as a whole and the activities of its individual members." [91] We are beginning to recognize the need to widen the scope of dominant economic indicators and policy responses, and alternative approaches are emerging.

Some policy responses

There is now new legislation to support equity for people with disabilities, based on pre-existing human rights frameworks (ie. Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Human Rights Act, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).[92] This shift towards a rights-based approach can be felt worldwide, and has far- reaching implications, because it requires that we restructure many aspects of our society, including and extending beyond workplaces.[93]

The Accessible Canada Act of 2019 sets the target of complete accessibility by 2040 for Canada.[94] Laws, policies, programs, services, and institutions must be redesigned and developed with the "highest level of accessibility" as a goal. This will require employers and others to quickly acknowledge the barriers that PWD face and then adjust policies and practices towards this aim. This cannot happen without the active involvement of persons with disabilities.[95]

In 2021, the Accessible British Columbia Act set accessibility standards to remove or prevent barriers to full and equal participation in society. It outlines barriers which can be caused by "environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications or technology" and states that they can be "affected by intersecting forms of discrimination." [96]

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[88] Inclusion Powell River Society, 2021

[89] Baker, et al., 2018; Bates et al., 2017; Beyer, 2012; Crawford, 2011; Ferrucci, 2014; Kuznetsova & Yalcin, 2017; Morrow et al., 2009; Park et al., 2016; Prince, 2016

[90] Berry & Kymar, 2012; Sulewski, Ciulla Timmons, Lyons, Lucas, Vogt, & Bachmeyer, 2017; Nicholas et al, 2019; Pavlova, 2019

[91] Brittanica, 2022

[92] Government of British Columbia, 2021; Government of Canada, 2019

[93] Ebuenyi et al, 2018; Lang et al, 2019; Meltzer et al, 2019; Smith et al, 2018

[94] Government of Canada, 2019

[95] Government of British Columbia, 2021

[96] Government of British Columbia, 2021

The Accessible British Columbia Act also sets out that accessibility standards and related regulations may be established in many areas of civic life – the first of the eight that are listed in the Act is "employment". Importantly, the Act also sets out the parameters under which the standards will be developed, and this includes equitable representation on an Accessibility Committee by people with disabilities, and other people as well as organizations who will be directly impacted.[97] This demonstrates a central commitment to Inclusive Design – explored later in this review.

The StrongerBC Economic Plan, released in February 2022, acknowledges that **"if an economy is not working for people, then it's simply not working."** [98] In order for the economy to do well in meeting the needs of a society, more people need opportunities to participate in it. Importantly – as is evident in the discussion above – more people also need opportunities to define it and design it. It also points out that "healthy, inclusive societies where wealth and opportunity are broadly shared are more productive, competitive, and innovative than societies where inequality is high. They are also more resilient." [99] **Flexibility is key to successfully adapting** in ever-changing local and global conditions.[100] As identified in B.C.'s recent Economic Plan, now is the time for such adaptation.[101]

In this project, we look at employment as part of the broader economy and society. Localized and place-based approaches enable us to shed light on processes and practices that emerge from certain conditions.[102] These may not be replicable universally, or even sustainable in one place indefinitely.[103] For this reason, we refer to 'promising practices' instead of 'best practices' in this project.[104]

Positionality - Seeing outside the silos

This report is an update of a previous literature review related to inclusive employment.[105] The previous review primarily focused on barriers to employment, conditions within a workplace that can improve accessibility, as well as benefits of employment inclusion. The current review focuses on the broader conditions in which the workplace operates, as well as creative responses to those conditions, both of which are often missing from the conversation.

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[97] Government of British Columbia, 2021

[98] Province of British Columbia, 2022

[99] Province of British Columbia, 2022

[100] Child, 2021; Raworth, 2017

[101] Government of British Columbia, 2022

[102] Tenson, 2017; Waring, 2018

[103] Raworth, 2017

[104] Thoms, 2007; Wesley-Esquimaux & Snowball, 2010

[105] Inclusion Powell River Society, 2018

Tla'amin teachings about disability and the economy

Five members of the research team are living on the traditional and (modern-day) treaty territory of the Tla'amin people at the time of writing. When reviewing the writing of Tla'amin and other Indigenous scholars, the research question itself is immediately striking in two ways:

First, inclusion of diverse abilities is integral to community life.[106] Recognizing that each community member is more and less able to do certain things at different moments in life, so everyone in the community has a place, and everyone takes care of each other to the extent that they can – all the time.[107] An inclusive social environment is central to the primary teachings of how to live a good life. In the context of policy and research, this emphasis on creating inclusive social environments is now often called a social model of disability.[108]

Second, this inclusive worldview is supported directly by a broader understanding of economy as the running of a household or community for collective wellbeing.[109] The traditional Tla'amin economic system involves many ceremonial and other practices through which knowledge, food, and other assets are regularly redistributed throughout the community.[110] The redistribution may take place when a particular family is in a time of need (such as a funeral), or it may take place when a particular family is experiencing abundance. It also occurs in big and small ways on a daily basis, as part of living the ta'ow (teachings). According to this economic system, financial return is not the primary purpose. Work is done to care for your family's needs, to gain an education, share music and culture, entertain, build community, and offer spiritual advancement.[111] Another important aspect of work is recognizing our relationship with the rest of creation (ie. reciprocal relationships with everything around us, and stewardship of the land to sustain future generations). The humility this fosters ensures we do not take more than we need and encourages us to express thanks for everything that has enabled us to provide for our families through work.[112]

Tla'amin's traditional economic and governance structure includes *tlu uh nuck* (potlaching and governance). Within this system, each family has a *heh-goos* (head) and this person manages property and worked for the prosperity of the entire family.[113] Hosting feasts, for instance, is a way of not only providing for people, but also establishing good relations and reputations.

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[105] Inclusion Powell River Society, 2018
[106] Adam, 2018
[107] Paul, 2014
[108] Bachrach, 2015
[109] See also Raworth, 2017 and Warning, 2018
[110] Washington, 2004
[111] Paul, 2014
[112] Paul, 2014
[113] Washington, 2004, p. 588

Interestingly, economic leadership in this system is not structured around a business, but a family (similar to the Greek definition of economy, above).[114] If your family is managing well, then you are capable of contributing to the greater community; if your family is struggling, there are supports around you. Those whose families are well, and who are and do contribute more broadly to their community receive recognition, honour and influence.[115]

Although many of these teachings and practices have been dramatically disrupted through ongoing colonial imposition,[116] Washington maintains that many aspects of the *ums nah motl* (Tla'amin traditional laws) that "governed all forms of social, economic, and political relations" are relevant today and there is an obligation to include them in plans for the future.[117]

In a recent participatory action research project, parents and caregivers of Tla'amin children with disabilities center the importance of cultural safety.[118] This includes such things as:

- centering identity, and lifting them up to feel proud of who they are;
- integrating *ta'ow* (teachings) into daily life, which – among other things – teaches to acknowledge and embrace every child/person for their gifts; and
- fostering good and respectful relationships with the child, family, Elders, schools, and professionals.

The study also highlighted systemic barriers faced by children with disabilities and their families - including racism and bureaucratic red tape that interfere with achieving cultural safety and social inclusion. The community's recommendations for systemic change include:

- centering the child at every step;
- good support for workers and caregivers;
- revitalizing language and culture;
- building up the next generation of leaders; and
- investing in decolonizing and Indigenizing the dominant system.[119]

In this, we see this ancient wisdom being carried forward by current generations to re-center a Tla'amin orientation to inclusion and belonging. These recommendations can help us when considering inclusive employment.

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[114] Raworth, 2017
[115] Washington, 2004
[116] Adam, 2018; Paul, 2014
[117] Washington, 2004, p. 583
[118] Harrop, 2019, p. 4
[119] Harrop, 2019

A diverse economies framework: shedding new light

Although the words 'economy' and 'market' are often used interchangeably, the broader definition of economy is inclusive of a much wider range of activities that keep households, communities, and countries running well.[120] A diverse economies framework is a way of making visible all of the elements of the economy so we can see those activities that are valuable but marginalized, or discounted/uncounted[121] - not just activities that flow through the market.[122] Given the systemic exclusion of PWD and others from the mainstream workforce, exploring outside the dominant capitalist system can reveal economic contributions and promising possibilities not immediately recognized when financial growth is the only measure for success.

Using a diverse economies approach that is fluid, experimental, and place-based has proven beneficial.[123] It shows how the local and emergent activity of a single person or business has political and powerful implications.[124] Paying attention to everyday economic activity (which sometimes does and sometimes doesn't involve money changing hands) has exciting transformational potential. It helps us see the ways the economic system is created by all of us - even seemingly small, local initiatives contribute to meaningful systemic action.[125]

A case study demonstrates the big and small ways one woman's garden offers community-building and sustenance: people contribute to the production of food; they access and further distribute the food that is grown there; they build important friendships and social networks (through which other important needs get met as well), and so forth. These are vital forms of economic activity that would not be recognized as such using dominant indicators for success.[126] The impact of her garden is described as "liberatory" by not only providing food and social connection, but empowering community members and improving social determinants of health causing a positive ripple effect throughout the community.[127] This demonstrates how we create the economy through our everyday activities. Incremental changes - such as valuing the activities in this garden as part of the economy - are the active stepping stones of system transformation; small efforts, when examined together, can lead to radical change over time.[128]

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[120] Gibson-Graham, et al, 2013

[121] Waring, 2018

[122] Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2013

[123] Gibson-Graham, et al, 2013

[124] Hosking & Palomino-Schalscha, 2016

[125] Schmid, & Smith, 2021

[126] Hinton & Maclurcan, 2017

[127] Hosking & Palomino-Schalscha, 2016, p. 1250

[128] Gopel, 2016

Examples from economic geographers the world over abound, including the economic role of gardening,[129] bicycle-sharing,[130] food production and distribution,[131] and manufacturing.[132] These examples include for-profit and non-profit enterprises, and they may involve monetary exchange, trade, and sometimes other forms of remuneration. They show us that local experiments in doing things differently shine new light on what is possible when it comes to a more just, inclusive, and sustainable economy and how we view employment.

Global examples of existing diverse economic activities looked at in relation to each other and the broader economic system, reveals several themes:

- **Economic practices are responsive, adaptive, and flexible and may correspond to various notions of success.**
- **They are hybrid, and responsive to changing conditions and circumstances.**
- **They are not only individual-centered, but provide for the collective care of humans and non-humans.**
- **Surplus generated is generally (re)distributed through some community-based mechanisms, which increases wellbeing, reduces vulnerability, and strengthens resilience.[133]**

Examining current activities with an un-siloed lens gives us the opportunity to recognize that the alternatives we seek (in this case, inclusive employment) may already be within reach or in play.

Changing the narrative

When organizations acknowledge the systemic nature of workplace exclusion, and actively redefine themselves in a way that aligns with equity and inclusion, the entire corporate culture shifts so that inclusion is inherent to the organizational structure.[134] This takes the onus off of people who are historically marginalized from the workforce from having to self-disclose in order to access assistance or accommodation. Simultaneously this creates an environment that is hospitable to self-disclosure and accommodation. In other words, it relieves pressure to somehow 'fit in' to a system or environment that is not designed for or by them.[135]

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[129] Hosking & Palomino-Schalscha, 2016

[130] Zademach & Musch, 2018

[131] Moragues-Faus, Marsden, Adlerova, & Hausmanova, 2020; Rosol, 2019; White, 2013

[132] Gibson-Graham, Cameron, Healy, & McNeill, 2019

[133] Gibson et al, 2018

[134] Buettgen & Klassen, 2020, p. 91

[135] Buettgen & Klasses, 2020; Meltzer et al, 2019

A social model of disability shifts the responsibility to change from PWDs to potential employers, policy makers and the broader social world.[136] The social model of disability has effectively informed some policies and legislation in the direction of work inclusion around the world.[137] However, while it has alleviated some barriers and contributed to the development of accessibility policies and legislation,[138] exclusion from meaningful work for people with disabilities is still a reality.[139]

Employer attitudes and perceptions

Many employers express positive attitudes about the idea of hiring people with disabilities, but demonstrate a reluctance to do so.[140] They often believe the myth that people with disabilities will perform poorly or cost the company.[141] They also voice concerns about safety and productivity, their own knowledge related to hiring and retention, and identifying workplace supports and accommodations.[142] This is particularly the case for small companies.[143] Despite evidence that these concerns are unfounded,[144] these stigmas contribute to the low employment rates for PWD.

Grassroots or bottom-up approaches to structural change are imperative however the disability inclusion literature also points out that **a motivated leader with an empowering attitude at the top of an organization can play a role in setting the tone and conditions for the workplace.**[145] Employers who have a personal relationship to disability themselves are the most likely to cultivate inclusive work environments.[146] When employers have received training that addresses biases and have included disability as a focus in their diversity hiring strategies, they are more likely to be inclusive.[147] **Education, knowledge-building and ongoing support are needed** to dispel myths, change practices, and build "disability confidence".[148] Partnerships between employers and agencies that can help them raise their level of awareness, build connections, and provide employment for people with disabilities have also proven to be important.

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[136] Backrach, 2015

[137] Ferrucci, 2014

[138] McColl, Gitterman, & Goldowitz, 2019

[139] Kuznetsova & Yalcin, 2017

[140] Fraser, Ajzen, Johnson, Herbert & Chan, 2011; Kocman, Fischer, & Weber, 2018

[141] Baker, et al., 2018; Bonaccio, et al, 2020

[142] Bonaccio, et al, 2020; Kocman et al, 2018

[143] Kuznetsova, 2016

[144] Bonaccio et al, 2020; Kaletta, et al., 2012

[145] Glade, et al, 2020

[146] Kuznetsova, 2016; Nicholas et al, 2019

[147] Frazer et al, 2011

[148] Murfitt et al, 2018

We must look at both disability and work differently, in order to bring about this change: Organizations or businesses that are recognized by people with disabilities as good places to work celebrate the value of diverse experiences, embodiments, and voices while resisting dominant notions of disability and difference as in any way problematic.[149]

Non-standard employment

Even when employment is secured, it can often be precarious, unfulfilling, and even demeaning - especially for people with disabilities or other barriers to employment.[150] As a result, PWD often creatively address the barriers faced by bypassing a discriminatory mainstream labour market and creating "their own disability friendly business or non-profit."[151] Indeed, barriers or unmet needs often lead to significant innovations that benefit the individual and the collective.[152] We can observe many 'promising practices' by looking at employment and economic innovations that have emerged in response to some of the exclusive structures and practices discussed already.

Employment described as 'non-standard' usually involves atypical hours or contractual relationships. It can include such things as "temporary help and subcontracted business services, independent contracting, 'on call' workers and day labourers, part-time work, and self-employment." [153] Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a massive structural transformation was already in place in the Canadian labour market through intersecting impacts of "innovative technologies, demographic shifts, globalization, and the rise of the gig economy." [154] Since then, the pandemic has pushed boundaries and further normalized what was once considered non- standard employment.[155]

For many non-standard employment is not a choice, while some people choose and prefer it.[156] There is great debate over the implications of the growing gig economy in Canada.[157] Non- standard employment is often insecure, can be short term or cyclical, and lacks access to labour market protections.[158] "Workers with disabilities are nearly twice as likely to be in nonstandard work arrangements" than those without.[159] A Canadian study demonstrates that employees with disabilities who work in non-standard employment settings are "more likely to have unmet accommodation needs", despite accessibility legislation.[160]

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[149] Buettgen & Klassen, 2020; Ferrucci, 2014
[150] Meltzer et al, 2019
[151] Amoroso, 2020, p. 2
[152] Holmes, 2018
[153] Shuey & Jovic, 2013, p. 176
[154] Anani, 2018, p.S167

[155] Glavin, Bierman, & Schieman, 2021
[156] Ebuenyi et al, 2018
[157] Glavin, Bierman, & Schieman, 2021
[158] Shuey & Jovic, 2013
[159] Shuey & Jovic, 2013, p. 179
[160] Shuey & Jovic, 2013, p. 174

As outlined previously, this leads to poverty, isolation, and other compounding challenges for people without access to the workforce. That said, non-standard options may provide much-needed flexibility and autonomy that cannot be found in standard employment settings, and provide valuable alternatives to dominant structures that aren't serving many people.[161] Many people actively choose non-standard options because they are optimal for a wide range of reasons.[162] Some research demonstrates that "we should embrace non-standard employment as an opportunity rather than as a danger" and create institutional protections and supports for non-standard forms of employment[163] – a recommendation that is also emerging in new research about the labour market in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.[164]

This does not preclude employers from the responsibility of implementing recommendations in order to foster inclusive workplaces. It does, however, indicate that by looking both within and outside of the mainstream labour market we will find PWD have created meaningful employment opportunities. Including - and even centering - in this research the perspectives of people who have created or found non-standard employment will shed light on possibilities that can support disability inclusion in diverse employment settings and change the dominant narrative about work.

Redefining success

Our current economic, business, and employment models are structured by and for a very small, privileged demographic to the exclusion of others.[165] It is by now abundantly clear that those structures which do not currently work for PWD are also "less than optimal" for most people.[166] We are "in dire need of new disruptive interventions to address global risks and challenges." [167]

During any transition in which new approaches are being tested, indicators for success should not be imposed from outside, but determined by those most impacted by the intervention.[168] There also needs to be room for the learning that comes when outcomes are different than anticipated.[169]

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[161] Anani, 2018

[162] Hosking & Palomino-Schalscha, 2016; Solid State Community Industries, n.d.

[163] Schmid, 2018, p. 31

[164] Child, 2021; Sheppard-Jones, et al, 2020

[165] Waring, 2018

[166] Treviranus, 2014, p. 99

[167] Treviranus, 2014, p. 99

[168] Carnegie et al, 2019; Waring, 2018

[169] Schmid, 2018

When initiatives are developed by specific people, in specific places, on the basis of specific values, a strong argument is made for the definitions and indicators for success to also be "place-based and culturally relevant" - rather than applying singular standards for success, such as profit-growth.[170]

There are many efforts taking place in Canada and around the world towards this aim, with a focus on restructuring for the "next economy": [171]

One study redefined success on the basis of the learning and community impacts - not the company's viability. They found that **experiments in creating different futures require a certain tolerance for risk.**[172] Risk tolerance is important not only on the part of businesses and employees, but it also demands institutional (legal, financial, and organizational) capacities that provide "social protection for people engaging in these risky employment relationships." [173]

A B.C.-based example is testing its inclusive employment model thanks to provincial funding and the support of organizational partners during its 18-month pilot phase.[174] The stability these supports offer enables risks to be taken, which has contributed greatly to the social enterprise's collective learning. As with the bakery, many of the people employed at OneLight identified it as successful due to a wide range of success indicators: employee retention, employee satisfaction, collective learning, productivity, equitable pay, and improved quality of life. They indicated the value of employment on individual well-being as well as at a community level.

Developing internal measures for success expands possibilities substantially because what gets counted is what is deemed important by those most impacted. This is about making the market fit workers, instead of making workers fit the market. When working innovatively in these ways, other recommendations include: **having a "visionary leader", securing advice, having a solid plan, and ongoing evaluation efforts.**

A detour

There is an argument for employment inclusion that is based on evidence that it can increase productivity, profit margins, and shareholder returns.[175]

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[170] Carnegie et al, 2019, p. 253

[171] Center for Social innovation, 2022; see also BC Center for Social Enterprise, 2021; Solid State Community Industries, n.d.

[172] Santana & Paolo Parigi, 2015

[173] Arias-Loyola, & Vergara-Perucich, 2020, p. 56

[174] Inclusion Powell River Society, 2021

[175] Sheppard-Jones, 2020, p. 76

This argument aims to make the labour of people with disabilities or other barriers to employment visible within the existing profit-oriented economy, similarly to the way some economists have estimated the monetary value of "unpaid work," "environmental services," and "the free gifts of nature" in order to help us all recognize their value.[176] Evidence does show that the perspectives and experiences of people with diverse ways of engaging in the world physically, mentally, or socially have led to innovations that are not only useful – they are marketable. Inclusive design is smart business.[177] Similarly, research at a social enterprise reveals that it was more financially viable because social needs were being met.[178]

While this can be a compelling and impactful argument, it is a slippery slope when understood in dialogue with diverse economies literature. In fact, it ultimately works against pursuing the structural changes needed for genuine and meaningful employment inclusion and other forms of social and ecological justice, by centering financial gain over wellbeing as the purpose of our economic activity.[179]

Experiments in structural change *within* employment settings

There are many experiments in structural change already taking place within employment settings. What promising practices does the literature point us towards?

Inclusive design

Employment inclusion is not a burden; it is a benefit.[180] Despite persistent assumptions, [181] the truth from employers is that accommodations cost nothing or very little,[182] and the support needed by any new worker usually decreases over time.[183]

In order to foster inclusive employment opportunities, it is critical to break social norms and conditioning to disrupt stereotypes of PWDs or other barriers. When PWD are excluded from design conversations, this is difficult to achieve – but it is never too late to address the systemic exclusion of diverse voices.[184]

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[176] Waring, 2018, p. 18
[177] Holmes, 2018
[178] Bellostas, Lopez-Arceiz, & Mateos, 2016
[179] Waring, 2018
[180] Inclusion Powell River Society, 2021
[181] Bonaccio et al, 2020 - also see section entitled 'Employer attitudes and perceptions'
[182] Lindsay, et al, 2019, p. 149
[183] Hartnett et al, 2011
[184] Zitcer, 2014

Tools and roadmaps now exist to guide equity-centered design processes:

- beginning with understanding the problem,
- exploring possible solutions,
- reflecting on their effects,
- implementing an option, and
- ensuring it is equitable.[185]

An inclusive design (ID) approach honours natural human diversity, and recognizes that human diversity means no single design is universally accessible.[186] When the right people are involved at each stage of the process, ID is easy to implement, it is not a burden, and it benefits everyone – the positive implications extend to all existing and potential workers.[187]

Actively considering how to best accommodate all workers in every stage of employment (ie. recruitment, interviews, and promotion) allows for changes to be addressed easily.[188] **Hiring to people's strengths and interests, and creating a disability-inclusive recruitment and interview process are strongly recommended.[189]** For instance, demonstrating in job postings and interviews that flexibility and accessibility are prioritized in the workplace can encourage applicants - knowing they will not have to raise the topic and risk being seen as the complainer.[190] In some cases, employers can partner with other organizations in their region to support recruitment and hiring - educational institutions can connect them with students or graduates, or community service organizations can connect them with job-seekers.[191]

Company-specific policies and practices should attend to the environment as a whole.[192] **Ensuring environments – including architecture, transportation, communications, processes, and digital spaces – are accessible from the beginning will enable all employeesto be productive and efficient – as does flexibility.[193]** Flexibility makes workplaces emotionally and physically safe and accessible for people who have fluctuating physical or mental health. It enables employees to maintain other important commitments in their families and communities, without having to fear losing their jobs.[194]

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[185] Education First, n.d.

[186] Treviranus, 2014

[187] Bonaccio, 2020l Glade et al, 2020; Prince, 2017; Sheppard-Jones, 2020

[188] Lindsay, 2019

[189] Bonaccio et al, 2020

[190] Glade, et al, 2020; MacTaggart, et al, 2018

[191] Baker et al, 2018

[192] Baker, et al., 2018; Inclusion Powell River Society, 2021

[193] Baker et al, 2018

[194] Inclusion Powell River Society, 2021

Ensuring clarity and a shared understanding about the business model (relationship to profit, ownership structure, and decision-making mechanisms, for instance) is also important for meaningful inclusion at every level.[195]

Many of the strategies listed above will create a more hospitable and flexible workplace, contributing to employee recruitment, job retention, promotion, and innovation.[196] While "accessible design has often been motivated by charity or legal human rights obligations," it is argued that the most powerful rationale for inclusive design is that it creates concrete quality improvements to both products and practices"[197] and improved outcomes for society as a whole. For instance, such things as reading glasses and adjustable desks are all innovations that began by addressing exclusion, and have become ubiquitous in our daily lives and workplaces.[198] Inclusive Design is not only just and effective (and cost-efficient);[199] it has also tended to "spur innovation and cause disruptive leaps forward."[200]

In a successful initiative at a large distribution center, three commitments the business made up front included:

- partnering with social service agencies on an ongoing basis,
- building a physical workplace that would be conducive to a range of abilities and needs, and
- creating a welcoming and inclusive culture from day one, with safety as an explicit top priority.[201]

Changes over time at this distribution center have also led to:

- increased attention to matching employees' skills and interests with the job opportunity, as well as
- more thorough training that extends beyond tasks and safety instructions – particularly for employees for whom this is their first work experience.

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[195] Hinton, 2021; Zitcer, 2014

[196] Bonaccio et al, 2020; Brown, Kessler, & Toson, 2016; Holmes, 2018; Huang & Chen, 2015; West, Targett, Wehman, Cifu, & Davis, 2015

[197] Treviranus, 2014

[198] Sheppard-Jones, et al, 2020; Treviranus, 2014

[199] Jesus et al, 2021; Sheppard-Jones et al, 2020

[200] Treviranus, 2014, p. 95

[201] Kaletta et al, 2012

Being clear about values

Whether acknowledged or even recognized, values underlie the economic and social decisions being made.[202] How we understand our 'bottom line' alters trajectories and creates or limits possibilities.[203]

There is a long and successful history of what is now described as the *social economy*, though many efforts have experienced serious disruption as a result of a more globalized and universalized approach to economic development.[204] Currently, the system is structured in a way that makes it difficult for these beneficial and inclusive initiatives to survive and be recognized. Globally there are a myriad of actions, small and large, attempting to bring a more balanced look at the economy to include ecological and human wellbeing as part of the equation.[205] Values that underlie economic decisions vary widely:

Ecological sustainability is a value that is now guiding many businesses. The linear economy is one in which material resources are extracted from the earth, used (one or more times), and discarded whereas the circular economy creates a closed loop with limited and/or repurposed 'waste'.[206] The bioeconomy,[207] the green economy,[208] and sustainable development [209] are all slightly different approaches to creating economies that work within natural planetary limits.[210]

Social justice has emerged as another value that is central to many new initiatives, with a focus on justice for workers and ethical products. With this value in mind, many businesses are organizing themselves around equitable participation in decision-making as well as profit share.[211] These have taken many forms, including cooperatives,[212] social enterprises,[213] non-profit organizations,[214] as well as private enterprises.[215]

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[202] Waring, 2018

[203] Carnegie, McKinnon, & Gibson, 2019

[204] Rihter & Zidar, 2018; Qian & Wei, 2019

[205] Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2013; Hernandez, 2013; see also Frazo, 2010

[206] Bolger & Doyon, 2019; Sedikova, 2019

[207] Beluhova-Uzunova, Shishkova, & Ivanova, 2019

[208] Horbach & Rammer, 2020

[209] Slusariuc, & Nimara, 2020

[210] Okewale, Adeyemi, Soyemi, & Mieseigha, 2020

[211] Hinton & Maclurcan, 2017

[212] Klagge & Meister, 2018; Zitcer, 2014; Solid State Community Industries, n.d.

[213] Bouchard, Cruz Filho, & Zerdani, 2015; Smith, McVilly, McGillivray, & Chan, 2018

[214] Buettgen, & Klassen, 2020

[215] Gibson-Graham, Cameron, Healy, & McNeill, 2019

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Profit is a dominant value underlying many economic decisions, as discussed previously.[216] Profit is argued by some economists as an end in itself, and others as a means to an end (ie. community benefit); there is no consensus about the economic or social value of profit.[217]

For our purposes, it is important to acknowledge that environmental sustainability, social justice, and profit can be experienced as competing interests, so it is recommended for an organization or business to **be explicit about its guiding values and priorities** to help in decision-making and organizational development.[218]

Doughnut economics is a model which holds room for all three of the above values to play a role, with an underlying value of balance.[219] This model aims to support economic decision-making that is deliberately designed to both respect the natural limits of the planet and consider human wellbeing as a vital bottom line. In this model, profit may be generated, but not at the expense of people or the planet.

Some scholars recommend replacing efficiency with sufficiency as a fitting guiding value for businesses and organizations.[220] Sufficiency is a particularly valuable concept in terms of inclusive employment, because efficiency is often a value basis upon which employers justify not employing people with disabilities. A growth-orientation tends to favour efficiency which often interferes with equity and social justice.[221]

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[211] Hinton & Maclurcan, 2017

[212] Klagge & Meister, 2018; Zitcer, 2014; Solid State Community Industries, n.d.

[213] Bouchard, Cruz Filho, & Zerdani, 2015; Smith, McVilly, McGillivray, & Chan, 2018

[214] Buettgen, & Klassen, 2020

[215] Gibson-Graham, Cameron, Healy, & McNeill, 2019

[216] Hinton, 2021; Waring, 2018

[217] See Barauna et al, 2021; del Moral-Espin & Fernandez-Garcia, 2018; Gibson-Graham et al, 2019; Hernandez, 2013; Hinton & Mclurcan, 2017; Kuokkanen, 2011; North, 2016; Rosol, 2019; White, 2013

[218] Arias-Loyola & Vergara-Perucich, 2020; Austin-Broos, 2009; Bolger & Doyon, 2019; Hinton & Maclurcan, 2017; Sedikova, 2019; Slusariuc, & Nimara, 2020; Zademach & Musch, 2018

[219] Raworth, 2017, p. 39 and 25

[220] Krueger, Schulz, and Gibbs, 2018; Unger, 2010

[221] Krueger, Schulz, and Gibbs, 2018

There are many inherent challenges in the experiential nature of system transformation; there is no pre-existing formula and it is recommended to take stock of the different ways power and profit are organized within the enterprise.[222] A commitment to inclusion can often be trumped by other competing values a company might have.[223] **Identifying available support and using strategic business or other partnerships can mitigate against that inevitable conflict.[224]** Lessons learned also suggest that **nimbleness is important when navigating the tension between ideals and practice** in order to remain consistent with organizational values over time.[225] Deliberate, transparent, and participatory decision-making about the structure, the values, and the economic model can increase the chances of meeting the particular, place-based aims of the enterprise, and developing indicators for success that make sense for its purpose.[226]

Workplace policies

Workplace inclusion is a fundamental condition for an equitable economic landscape for us all. While some observe that focusing on one individual at a time - especially without altering the organizational culture and supportive partnerships - is inefficient,[227] others note that "protecting workers might make more sense than protecting jobs," given new challenges such as COVID-19 and climate change.[228]

Organizations and businesses can work to become "disability confident and have inclusive policies, processes, and facilities." [229] Recommendations include: **assessing the level of both cultural and physical inclusion**, proceeding to improve "disability awareness and diversity training," and "developing inclusive policies and procedures, especially for recruitment, and addressing physical barriers in the workplace." [230] Fear can be a barrier for change, but disability confidence and organizational growth towards equity and justice can be supported, regardless of the starting place.[231]

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[222] del Moral-Espin and Fernandez-Garcia, 2018

[223] Inclusion Powell River Society, 2021

[224] Berry & Kymar, 2012; Sulewski, Ciulla Timmons, Lyons, Lucas, Vogt, & Bachmeyer, 2017

[225] Oz & Aksoy, 2019

[226] Hinton, 2021

[227] Wehman, Brooke, Green, Hewett, & Tipton, 2008

[228] Larue, 2021, p. 272

[229] Murfitt et al, 2018, p. 428

[230] Murfitt et al, 2018, p. 428

[231] Murfitt et al, 2018; Vachon, 2018

Internal workplace policies can continue addressing "the structural and cultural barriers that create/reinforce disadvantage" in the workplace.[232] Companies with targeted corporate policies and sustainability programs in place at a company level are more likely than others to be inclusive employers.[233] Having policy is imperative; however implementing the policy is equally imperative. This may require a shift in organizational culture, training for all management and staff, and direct involvement of people with disabilities in decision-making.[234] These might be massive foundational changes in some places, or minor adjustments in others. **Fostering any kind of organizational change is a process, not just an outcome, and this process itself should be person-centered as well.**[235]

Inclusive participation at every level

Increased inequity is one of the major pitfalls of present-day capitalism.[236] Inclusive capitalism is described as a system that bonds people through interdependency and partnerships (rather than dependency and hierarchy).[237] This means active participation of every member of the system in things like decision-making, ownership, and employment. The argument is that with more equal participation at every level, benefits and harms would be more equitably distributed when the economy ebbs and flows.[238]

This approach points to the very important element of having PWD representation in decision-making, ownership, and other leadership positions.[239] As with gender and other forms of inequity, representation at all levels is vital for structural change.[240] Structural change that facilitates equitable representation in leadership positions will enable entirely new thoughts and perspectives to arise. Some concrete steps to better reflect a democratic inclusion are: sliding scale equity payments, anti-racism and anti-oppression training, and training for young people.[241] Others include: b**oard and leadership diversification, engaging with broader justice movements, and altering communications and signage.** These recommendations, again, do not speak only to disability inclusion, but to inclusive design more generally.[242]

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[232] Kitching, 2006, p. 881; see also Bumble, Carter, McMillan, & Manikas, 2017; Lang et al, 2019

[233] Kuznetsova & Yalcin, 2017

[234] Bonaccio, et al, 2020; Gunty et al, 2019; Glade et al, 2020

[235] Grills et al, 2016; Gunty, Van Ness, & Nye-Lengerman, 2019, p. 325

[236] Raworth, 2017; Waring, 2018

[237] Borko, 2016, p. 33

[238] See also Government of British Columbia, 2022; Treviranus, 2014

[239] Caldwell, et al, 2018; Grills et al, 2016

[240] Meier, Celis, and Huysentruty (2016)

[241] Zitcer, 2014

[242] Treviranus, 2014

People with disabilities are often excluded from the opportunity for career progression.[243] Case studies in Ontario, Alberta, and B.C. show that this can be addressed by:

- Having a range of products, services, or initiatives within a social enterprise increases the potential for job diversity and enables people to find work that suits their interests and skills.[244]
- Upward mobility with increased responsibility and pay was another strategy, as was moving to jobs in the mainstream workforce with support from the original social enterprise was another (with varying degrees of success).[245]
- And in B.C. the importance of flexibility in scheduling and tasks was identified as a central element of the inclusive employment model. **Flexibility requires attentive and skilled management, so structural support at the management level is also necessary for success.[246]**

A network of Canadian solidarity economy enterprises called 'Solid State Community Industries' (SSCI) demonstrates the wide range of possible forms an enterprise can take when inclusive participation at every level is a central commitment. "Bound together by a commitment to cooperativism and working past extractivism and exploitation," these enterprises embody shared decision-making, shared ownership, and organizational values that center social benefit.[247] This approach leads to meaningful employment, innovation, long-term commitment, and concrete impacts for those employed *and* the communities in which they are embedded.

Organizational structure: Spotlight on the social economy

People are reorganizing, and new responses are emerging – such as worker owned cooperative social enterprises. There is optimism about their ability to offer good working conditions, higher pay and benefits, job satisfaction, opportunities for skills training, and greater job security. A Spanish study found that social enterprises (that were also sheltered workshops for people with disabilities) had a track record of continuing to create jobs even during an economic crisis.[248] Similarly, a worker inclusive social enterprise in B.C. experienced extremely high employee retention and satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic when other employers were experiencing labour shortages.[249]

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[243] Amoroso, 2020
[244] Lysaght, Krupa, & Bouuchard, 2018
[245] Lysaght, Krupa, & Bouuchard, 2018
[246] Inclusion Powell River Society, 2021
[247] Solid State Community Industries, n.d.
[248] Bellostas, Lopez-Arceiz, & Mateos, 2016, p. 369
[249] Inclusion Powell River Society, 2021

Sometimes social enterprises are "non-profit organizations that participate in commercial activities to fulfill and even broaden the social missions of their organizations." [250] They can in fact take many forms.[251] Social enterprises can provide "higher quality work experience compared to sheltered employment, while creating a supportive atmosphere that may be lacking in competitive employment." [252]

The social economy also includes other economic structures – such as cooperatives, which share power through ownership.[253] The social economy is a potential opportunity for disability work inclusion because the social economy encompasses both economic and social aims.[254] Ableism is pervasive in Canada, and can be combated by engaging the social economy indisability inclusive initiatives - but there are **important questions that organizations and businesses should ask of themselves, to ensure they do not replicate paternalistic or oppressive patterns in their workplaces.**[255]

Challenges for social enterprises include: finding start-up funds, generating enough revenue to pay fair wages, balancing economic and social aims,[256] and resisting the replication of paternalistic or oppressive patterns in workplaces.[257] Another challenge is the fact that given the (often) part-time nature of this work, it may not be enough to lift people out of poverty – exacerbated by the fact that employment beyond a certain level actually interferes with financial aid eligibility for workers with disabilities.[258] It is recommended that social enterprises and other employers that center social purpose:

- **ensure the setting integrates employees with and without disabilities,**
- **pay fair wages,**
- **offer choice to employees about their role and how to be paid, and**
- **provide regular skill assessment that leads "to the opportunity for advancement** and promotion where appropriate, or, with the skills developed, movement to another job with another employer." [259]

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250 Hsu, Huang, and Ososkie, 2009, p. 20

251 Bouchard et al, 2015

252 Tan, 2009, p. 53

253 Oz, & Aksoy, 2019

254 Prince, 2014

255 see also Buhariwala, Wilton & Evans, 2015; Lanctot, Corbiere, & Durand, 2012; and Morrow, et al., 2009

256 Cooney, 2016

257 Prince, 2014

258 Buhariwala, Wilton & Evans, 2015

259 Katz, 2014, p. 134

It is also recommended that they:

- have their own management structure,
- are well-supported by their parent organization (if they have one),
- have a good business plan and competent people to implement it, and
- track both successes and challenges over time (related to economic and social impacts).[260]

For-profit businesses of various sizes are also demonstrating just and inclusive responses to many of the challenges discussed thus far. Larger organizations are more likely to have formalized disability inclusion policies and practices,[261] however small and medium sized businesses play an important role.

Looking at the impact of "small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in environmental action" we can see how private sector SMEs are (already) motivated by things beyond profit and growth in their decision-making, even when they are technically structured as for-profit businesses.[262] SME owners can also be associated with social purpose, and "can develop better stories about prosperous, sustainable and convivial local economies." [263] Similarly, rural communities are demonstrating innovations in "production and experimentation of utterly different, more desirable, futures" even though they are "often left out of urban-centric processes of designing the future of industry, economy, development, and society.[264]

Research on four manufactures (one shareholder corporation, one family-owned company, one cooperative, and one social enterprise) demonstrates how manufacturing can contribute to both ecological and social wellbeing.[265] Environmental care is enacted by: "eliminating waste", "treating waste as a resource," and "pushing at the limits of what materials can do." Social care is enacted through "remuneration rates", "career progression for employees", "relationship with casual employees", and openness to "those at a distance from the labour market." How each of the featured businesses does these things varies. The most innovative strategies were taken by **leadership who had the long view in mind, rather than making short term decisions to do business as usual in response to immediate pressures or demands.** It involves taking risks, and approaching challenges creatively in order to foster "new cultures of production" and redefining standards of success or goals.[266] All of them are financially viable, but they are redefining viability on others terms as well.

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[260] Katz, 2014

[261] Lindsay, Cagliostro, Leck, Shen, & Stinson, 2019

[262] North, 2016, p. 437

[263] North, 2016, p. 451

[264] Spanier, 2021, 121

[265] Gibson, Cameron, Healy, & McNeill, 2019

[266] Gibson, Cameron, Healy, & McNeill, 2019, pp 11-17

"The scope of the social economy movement is in fact quite large." [267] Through the course of this research, we hope to broaden our understanding of which, if any, of these forms shows promise in contributing to the structural conditions to inclusive employment.

Conclusion

Once again, the research question guiding this process is: **What are the enabling structural conditions that create meaningful employment for people with disabilities and other barriers to employment? How can these be amplified and mobilized in other employment settings?**

This literature review set out to explore a) what is already known about this topic, and b) what we still want to find out through the research.

What is known

- The barriers to employment faced by people with disabilities are largely structural. This includes broad economic and cultural conditions, as well as the structures of workplaces themselves.
- There is now both federal and provincial legislation that acknowledges and seeks to remedy this by foregrounding accessibility as a central commitment at every level, and in all contexts – including but not limited to employment.
- Legislation alone is not enough: employers need to first understand and then address the structural barriers that interfere with employing PWD.
- There are many known effective strategies that employers can and do take up to recruit, employ, and promote people with disabilities.
- Looking at these practices in context can create new possibilities related to a more integrated inclusive economic structure.
- Enterprises that are guided by social values show promise for creating inclusive employment settings, and centering the perspectives of PWD is important for ensuring structural barriers are addressed, and enablers are adopted.
- Many PWD are working in non-standard employment settings. We can widen our scope to include alternative ways people with disabilities are generating employment opportunities for themselves and/or others, for example as entrepreneurs.
- A social purpose can be compromised by a profit-orientation - being explicit about values is important.
- Rather than seeking a single 'best' practice, we are encouraged to consider the collective impact of many seemingly discrete actions over time. Recognizing the actions of small, medium-sized, and large enterprises of various forms in context can help us see the impacts they are having when it comes to both addressing structural barriers and creating structural enablers.

[267] Bouchard et al, 2015, p. 56

- This means we need not seek one decontextualized replicable model, but we can explore how system transformation occurs through the interplay of many diverse actions in a place.
- System-level transformation requires an appetite for risk, and visionary employers who take the long view are paving the way for exciting possibilities.

What we hope to learn

- Largely missing from the literature are the perspectives of entrepreneurs with disabilities themselves, or other PWD in leadership positions.
- Most of the inclusive employment literature focuses on either social enterprise or private enterprise. The diverse economies literature points to a wider range of possibilities, but doesn't speak specifically to disability inclusion. It would be useful to learn more about inclusive employment possibilities related to different kinds of employment settings such as non-profits, governments, co-operatives, and others.
- We hope to cultivate a richer understanding of these and other promising practices that can address the demand-side barriers to meaningful employment for people with disabilities.
- To gain new insight, we must ask questions about structural barriers that exist both within and outside of the employment setting, as well as the ways people address them.
- Our primary focus is to learn more about creating conditions for inclusive employment. By learning from what is already working well, we can better understand the creative ways people are addressing existing barriers.
- Each story is unique, and spending time with each employer or entrepreneur who chooses to participate will generate rich, localized, qualitative data.

Next steps

- Conducting an environmental scan will help us begin to identify potential research participants. Inventorying inclusive employment that is already taking place in B.C. will help us see where innovation is happening, as well as where more is needed.
- When it comes to inviting people to participate in this research, an innovative starting place will be 1) employers or entrepreneurs who live with disabilities themselves or in their families, 2) those with PWD in leadership positions, 3) as well as those who are identified *by* PWD as being accessible and inclusive employers.
- Developing the research tools such as invitations to participate, surveys, consent processes, and interview questions will require attention to Inclusive Design processes.
- When ready, we will embark on primary research through interviews, focus groups, and case studies, in order to better understand promising practices for workplace inclusion.
- The final step is to share the knowledge as widely and accessibly as possible through a multimedia microsite, and peer-to-peer/business-to-business sharing.

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Interview **and** Focus Group Report

The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) is a non-profit research organization, created specifically to develop, field test, and rigorously evaluate new programs. SRDC's two-part mission is to help policy-makers and practitioners identify policies and programs that improve the well-being of all Canadians, with a special concern for the effects on the disadvantaged, and to raise the standards of evidence that are used in assessing these policies.

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Executive Summary

The province of British Columbia (B.C.) has a vision of becoming the most accessible province for people with disabilities, which requires workplaces to truly embrace accessibility and inclusivity. The New Inclusive Economy (NIE) research project is dedicated to exploring the practices and factors that create genuine job opportunities for people with disabilities and aims to amplify these promising practices.

In support of the NIE project, the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) led fifteen interviews and five focus groups with 43 employers and entrepreneurs across multiple sectors in B.C. This included a mix of large and small entities, from 'solopreneurs' to organizations with 100+ employees, showcasing various organizational and economic models, while prioritizing the inclusion of individuals with disabilities. The purpose of this data collection was to understand employers' experiences, documenting promising practices and uncovering enabling conditions and barriers. The goal was to understand employers' successes and challenges, while examining the broader lived experiences and societal contexts shaping disability inclusive workplaces.

During the interviews and focus groups, employers and entrepreneurs/self-employed individuals with disabilities shared many employment practices that they felt are key to attracting and retaining employees with disabilities. The findings follow a **socio-ecological model** that breaks down factors affecting workplace inclusion for people with disabilities into key layers: individual, interpersonal, organizational, community and structural.

Here are some of the key findings that emerged from this research:

- **Lived experience of disability is a significant factor for shaping employers' orientation to disability inclusion at work.** In the interviews and focus groups, lived experience included having senior leadership who identified as living with a disability, a personal connection to someone living with a disability, personally living with a disability, and having hands-on service experience with individuals with disabilities. For entrepreneurs/self-employed individuals, lived experience is a strong motivation for being self-employed or starting their businesses.

- **Relationships and communication matter when it comes to inclusion.** There is significant value in fostering a workplace that supports open, non-judgmental communication with employees. This can be done by having an "open-door" policy, adapting communications styles to individual needs and preferences (e.g., text messages vs. in-person meeting or telephone), and fostering team cultures through collaboration, problem-solving and learning.

- **Applying individualized approaches to employment supports inclusion.** Embracing a "whole person" management ethos that values individual contributions and strengths can help to foster a disability-inclusive workplace. The emphasis is on individualized and flexible approaches that match employee needs and capabilities. For example, individualizing job roles to match abilities and interests and focusing on the skills needed for the role and not making assumptions about abilities are important aspects for shaping inclusion.

- **Flexibility is a central theme for employers that are working to shape inclusion in the workplace.** Inclusive HR practices, such as promoting flexible work arrangements, were seen as 'win-win' benefitting all employees, especially employees with disabilities. For example, flexible scheduling practices can include offering part-time work, allowing for regular breaks or uninterrupted work, open-ended leaves in which employees are always welcomed back, and working from home or remote work.

- **Inclusive HR practices benefit all employees.** Employers across different sizes, sectors, and economic models can adopt HR practices that proactively identify and remove barriers, emphasize individual strengths, and embrace flexibility. These practices can be applied to recruitment and hiring strategies, workplace accommodations, scheduling and working conditions, and the provision of employee benefits and supports. While employers may implement these practices to support employees with disabilities, they benefit the entire workforce and can improve commitment and employee retention.

- **Alternative economic models that differ from mainstream economic approaches, such as solo-preneurship, co-operatives, and social enterprises, typically have organizational values that align with inclusion.** Entrepreneurship can be a way for people with disabilities to exercise more control over creating a working environment that is flexible and celebrates the unique skills and abilities that their lived experience brings to their work. Co-ops are committed to participatory decision-making and community care, which fosters a positive orientation toward disability inclusion. Social enterprises are seen as attractive to employees whose values aligned with the mission of employing individuals with disabilities and overcoming employment barriers.

- **Collaborative initiatives between employers and community organizations, guided by a shared understanding of business and workforce needs, promote inclusion.** Other disability-serving or community organizations can help employers tap into expertise needed for identifying and removing barriers in workplace policies, practices, and the physical environment. Leveraging local networks for idea-sharing and mutual support can help employers take diversity initiatives further.

- **Government policy and legislation play a pivotal role in driving inclusion.** Structural factors, including public policy and programs for employers and entrepreneurs, play a pivotal role in driving inclusion, innovation, and collaboration among employers. Accessibility legislation can encourage employers to adopt proactive measures, like accessibility committees, in anticipation of forthcoming requirements. However, government policies and programs can also present challenges for employers and entrepreneurs when it comes to government funding and eligibility criteria for people with disabilities, such as employees with disabilities receiving provincial disability assistance (PWD) or entrepreneurs who require more flexible and tailored funding supports.

- **Addressing current labour market challenges requires disability inclusion.** Employers, entrepreneurs, and individuals living with disabilities confirmed that inclusive workplaces are more appealing to a broader range of job seekers. When organizations promote accessibility and inclusion, they are more likely to expand their talent pool, minimize turnover, and leverage a wide range of skills, perspectives, and experiences.

The findings have direct implications for employers' strategies for recruitment and retaining talent, especially regarding people with disabilities. They also underscore the need for additional opportunities for employers to learn from one another, more coordinated and holistic approaches to employer capacity building and support for entrepreneurs, and the need to address barriers beyond the workplace in the broader environment and communities in which employers operate. Together, they provide a variety of promising practices that employers across all sectors and sizes, can immediately take up to help shape the new inclusive economy.

Introduction

What does it mean to be an inclusive employer? How can employers increase their capacity to attract and retain employees with disabilities? The New Inclusive Economy is a research project investigating disability-inclusive employment practices in the province of British Columbia and the economic models that show promise of supporting them.

The province of British Columbia (B.C.) has a vision of becoming the most accessible province for people with disabilities, which includes employment. This vision demands more than just training people – it requires workplaces to truly embrace accessibility and inclusivity. The New Inclusive Economy research project is dedicated to exploring the practices and factors that create genuine job opportunities for people with disabilities and aims to amplify these promising practices. The project is guided by the following questions:

? **"What are the enabling structural conditions that create meaningful employment for people with disabilities and other barriers to employment? How can these be amplified and mobilized in other employment settings?"**

The project is led by inclusion Powell River Society (iPRS), funded by the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. The research includes a literature review by an independent researcher, an environmental scan, and illuminating case studies led by the University of British Columbia's Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship (CIIC), in collaboration with Regenerem Consulting. Interviews and focus groups with employers and entrepreneurs across multiple sectors were led by the Social Research Demonstration Corporation (SRDC). Based on learning across these research activities, the New Inclusive Economy will offer evidence-based recommendations for employers and a suite of promising practices to increase their capacity to attract and retain employees with disabilities.

This report summarizes SRDC's research findings from interviews and focus groups conducted in 2022 and 2023 with B.C. employers and entrepreneurs/ self-employed individuals with lived experience of disability. Its purpose is to highlight the key characteristics, employer practices, and conditions that support disability-inclusive workplaces across diverse sectors and regions in the province.

Social Model of Disability

The New Inclusive Economy project embraces a social model of disability.

Unlike the medical model, which places disability within an individual's condition, the social model redirects attention to the social and environmental barriers that prevent a person from actively and equitably participating in society (Bachrach, 2015). The social model asserts that it is society's barriers – not an individual's condition or differences – that lead to disability.

Societal barriers can be environmental, institutional, or attitudinal:

- Environmental barriers can include inaccessible infrastructure, communication barriers, and lack of services.

- Institutional barriers can include barriers to education, barriers to employment, and non-inclusive policies or practices.

- Attitudinal barriers can include negative stereotyping, lack of understanding or awareness of disability, and social isolation.

A social model of disability focuses on preventing barriers that limit people's participation in society.

Research Methods

SRDC's data collection engaged 43 employers and entrepreneurs from diverse sectors and regions across B.C., prioritizing the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the research. This included a mix of large and small entities, from 'solopreneurs' to organizations with 100+ employees, showcasing various organizational and economic models.

The objective of the interviews was to understand the experiences and perspectives of employers and entrepreneurs from a variety of sectors, regions, and organizational structures across the province who do – or attempt to – adopt an inclusive employment model. The purpose of the focus groups was twofold: (i) to validate and further explore key themes arising from the interviews and (ii) to look at employment dynamics within specific sectors and communities to ensure data collection included a diverse array of employers.

Data Collection Overview

Recruitment
- Environmental scan survey
- Individual referrals and outreach
- Coordination with focus group organizers

Interviews
- 15 virtual interviews with employers and entrepreneurs/self-employed individuals with disabilities
- Semi-structured interview protocol

Focus Groups
- 5 virtual and in-person focus groups co-hosted with organizations
- Semi-structured focus group protocol

Analysis
- Thematic coding and analysis
- Organization and synthesis of findings

Recruitment

Interviewee recruitment and selection aimed to include a range of sectors, regions, and organizational models in the province. The environmental scan survey led by the UBC CIIC research team acted as the primary recruitment tool, providing SRDC researchers with basic demographic and inclusion data of participants indicating an interest in being contacted for future participation in the research.

The SRDC team reviewed a list of 60 employers and individuals who provided contact information. Approximately 38% of these were determined to be a) likely self-employed or b) representing the same employer. The SRDC team contacted 27 employers and individuals either by email or telephone, of which ten employers and entrepreneurs/self-employed individuals with disabilities responded.

To supplement interviewee recruitment, SRDC worked with iPRS to identify additional employers by workplace size and economic region in B.C. iPRS conducted additional targeted outreach and made referrals. SRDC coordinated follow-up activities to administer pre-interview screening questions that mirrored the environmental scan survey. Through these recruitment efforts, an additional five employers agreed to participate, for a total sample of 15 employers and entrepreneurs/self-employed individuals with disabilities.

Focus groups were co-organized with a trusted partner who could tap into their unique employer networks for participant recruitment. Priority areas included expanding representation from B.C.'s northern regions, further exploring insights from entrepreneurs with lived experience of disability, and delving deeper into sector-specific employment practices. SRDC and iPRS tapped into their professional networks to initiate outreach to various organizations. SRDC then coordinated introductory meetings and worked with these organizations to shape each focus group session. The co-organizers led participant recruitment, utilizing their connections and networks, with final confirmation by the SRDC team.

Interview Participants

Most interviewees were in the Mainland/Southwest region, although several indicated they operated on a province-wide basis. Interviewees operated in seven economic sectors. Six employers had a product or service specifically designed for people with disabilities.

Table 1 Regions

B.C. Economic Region	Number of Interviewees
Mainland/Southwest	8
Vancouver Island/Coast	1
Thompson/Okanagan	2
Kootenay	3
Cariboo	1
Northeast, North Coast & Nechako	0

Table 2 Sectors

Sector	Number of Interviewees
Accommodation and Food Services	2
Educational Services	1
Manufacturing	1
Professional Services	3
Retail and Wholesale Trade	3
Information, Culture and Recreation	3
Waste Management and Recycling	2

Interviewees represented a range of organizational models, including one co-op and one social enterprise created to employ people with disabilities and individuals facing barriers to employment. Most interviewees were from small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), including four individuals who were self-employed/entrepreneurs.

Table 3 Organizational Models

Organizational Model	Number of Interviewees
For profit	4
Not for profit	3
Co-operative	2
Public Sector/Government	1
Self-employed/entrepreneur	4
Social enterprise	1

Table 4 Employer Size

Number of Employees	Number of Interviewees
Self-employed/entrepreneurs*	4
5 to 9	2
10 to 19	3
20 to 49	3
50 to 99	1
100 and over	2

*2 individuals employed a family member, one was a solopreneur, and one hired a casual/part-time help

Focus Group Participants

A total of 28 employers and entrepreneurs/self-employed individuals participated in five focus groups. One focus group was dedicated to hearing from a variety of employers within the North Coast region (Terrace, B.C.) and two focus groups were held in-person in Vancouver. The remaining focus groups were held virtually and welcomed employers located in a variety of regions in the province.

Focus Group Co-Organizer	Description	Particip-ants
Employ to Empower	Employ to Empower works with individuals who face work and social barriers to cultivate community connections through entrepreneurship and self-advocacy opportunities. This focus group included entrepreneurs with lived experience in Vancouver's Downtown East Side to probe deeper into how entrepreneurs are creating disability inclusive environments for themselves and their communities.	7
Technology and People Network	Technology and People (TAP) Network is a peer network for People and Culture professionals in Canada's tech sector to share their learnings and best practices. This focus group was held in Vancouver to validate research findings on factors that foster disability inclusion in the tech sector, while exploring additional sectoral perspectives and contexts.	3
WorkBC Terrace	WorkBC Centre – Terrace connects job seekers and employers, helping people find jobs, explore career options, and improve their skills, while helping employers find the right talent to grow their businesses. This focus group explored inclusive employment within a specific community context and ensure data collection included employers in the North Coast region of B.C.	7
Vantage Point	Vantage Point works with non-profit organizations by convening, connecting, and equipping leaders to lift organizational capacity. This focus group validated and further explored unique considerations about non-profit organizational models, including providing front-line services to people with disabilities and other equity-deserving groups while fostering inclusive workplaces.	6
BC Alliance for Manu-facturing	BC Alliance for Manufacturing is the province's largest association of manufacturers to promote dialogue and encourage collaboration and joint action amongst a variety of industry stakeholders. This focus group with manufacturing businesses, start-ups, and supporting organizations across B.C. explored additional factors on disability inclusion within the sector.	5

Table 5 Focus Group Descriptions

Procedures

A semi-structured interview protocol was designed around seven key dimensions of inclusive employment to inform a series of sub-research questions on leadership, HR practices and policies (including recruitment, hiring, benefits, and accommodations), built environment, decision-making and communications, partnerships (including partnerships with disability service organizations), measurement and accountability, and organizational values and culture (mindsets, behaviours, practices). The interview protocol was then tailored for each interview participant to include the basic demographic and inclusion data of interviewees from their survey and pre-interview screening responses.

Employers and entrepreneurs/self-employed individuals were invited to participate in a virtual interview of 60 to 90 minutes in length, conducted over Zoom between October 2022 and January 2023. Interviews were conducted with two SRDC researchers (one of whom attended all 15 interviews for overall consistency).

In collaboration with co-organizers, customized semi-structured focus group protocols were developed for each session. Depending on focus group characteristics, the research team aligned questions with emerging interview findings, pinpointing areas for validation and where additional perspectives could be explored. Two focus groups were conducted in-person in Vancouver, and the remaining three focus groups were held virtually over Zoom throughout April 2023. Focus groups were facilitated and supported by two SRDC researchers.

All interview and focus group participants received a $100 e-transfer honorarium for their participation. Verbal consent was provided prior to beginning the interview or focus group and transcripts were generated verbatim from recordings or supplemented with the research team's notes in instances where recording did not occur.

Analysis

SRDC used a socio-ecological model (SEM) in the analysis. SEMs provide a way for understanding how employers are not only influenced by their immediate operational setting but also by the wider societal and environmental factors at play. It offers a holistic view, revealing different elements that shape a disability inclusive workplace – from personal attitudes to organizational policies, and the broader ways that society influences them.

For the interviews and focus groups, the research team undertook a thematic analysis of transcripts to identify patterns across the data, progressively refining research themes through coding, analysis, and review as a research team (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019). The research team then generated summary analysis notes with supporting quotes. The focus group analysis included an additional procedure to identify recurring themes with the interview analysis, as well as emerging sub-themes that departed from the interview analysis.

In the review and discussion of initial findings from the interview summary analysis notes, the research team elected to use a conceptual framework—a socio-ecological model (SEM) —to organize and synthesize results, which was then applied to the focus group analysis. As illustrated in Figure 3, a SEM for disability inclusive employment was created for this exercise to represent the connections, tensions, and contexts observed in the findings.

SEMs consider the dynamic relationships between individual, relational, and societal factors, revealing how one level influences another. They are a versatile tool for understanding the interplay between people, their environments, and complex social systems. While SEMs have been adopted in a variety of contexts, they generally consider the interaction between different levels. There is the societal or "macro" level (e.g., labour market, federal or provincial policies or laws, and access to resources), the more localized or "meso" level factors, such as those within an organization (e.g., hiring policies, practices, accommodations, work environment), and the individual or "micro" level (e.g., individual lived experiences, age, education). Together, SEMs unravel how different factors of context interact to grasp how individuals' experiences and outcomes vary (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

More recently, SEMs have been used to understand the experience of disability as the interaction of individual, environmental, and social factors and have been applied to understand the dynamics of diversity and inclusion in the workplace (Bond & Haynes, 2014; Purdie Greenaway & Turetsky, 2020; Simplican et al, 2014). SEMs help to illustrate how inclusion is a function of people's perceptions, attitudes, and interpersonal interactions, which are also shaped by the distribution of resources and cues embedded in the physical and social environment and vice versa (Purdie Greenaway & Turetsky, 2020).

Socio-ecological perspectives are also important in understanding disability-inclusive workplaces because they recognize that organizational issues are nested within multiple levels of context, with implications for how employers' approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) can reverberate throughout the system. In the social ecology of the workplace, SEMs recognize that the workplace is shaped by other processes across systems, while also having a profound impact on individual outcomes. At the same time, SEMs locate how people and practices can influence positive change towards DEI in their daily lives and within their broader communities (Bond & Haynes, 2014).

Figure 1

Social-Ecological Model
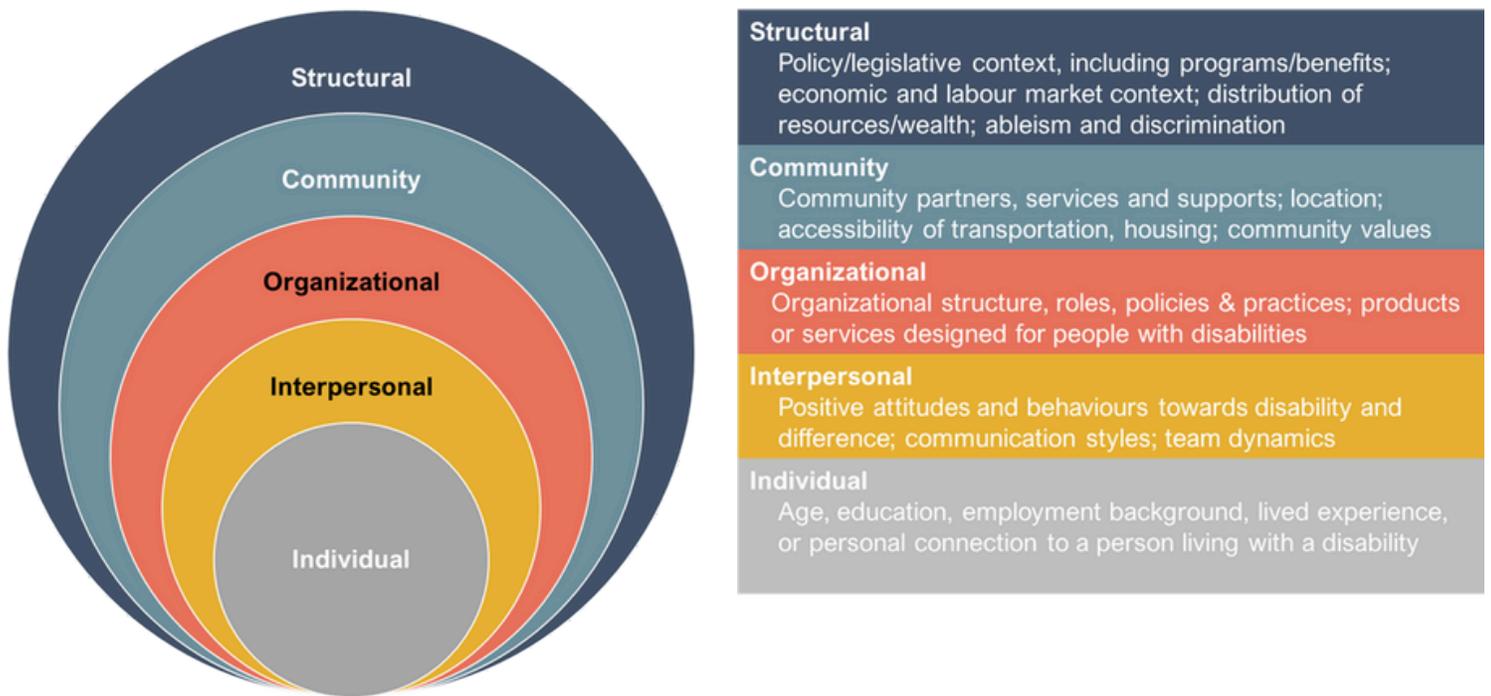
Image Description: A diagram with five nested circles representing factors influencing disability inclusion. From the innermost to outermost: Individual (age, education, employment, lived experience), Interpersonal (attitudes, behaviours, communication, team dynamics), Organizational (roles, policies, services for disabled people), Community (partners, services, transportation, values), and Structural (laws, economy, resources, ableism). A matching color-coded legend describes each layer.

Research Findings

Individual Factors

Individual factors influence behaviours, shape attitudes, and mold beliefs about disability inclusion at work. Lived experiences with disability, personal connections, professional expertise, and hands-on service experience with individuals with disabilities all play pivotal roles.

Lived Experience of Disability

The lived experience of disability was a significant factor for shaping interviewees' orientation to disability inclusion at work. All entrepreneurs/self-employed individuals noted that their lived experience influenced their work. Additionally, two other employers indicated that their organizations included leaders who identified as living with a disability, which positively influenced other interpersonal and organizational practices (e.g., team dynamics, decision-making, and organizational policies such as benefits and time off):

"I have a disability… It's newer for me. I think before you have a disability it's easy to be like, 'Oh yeah, that makes sense intellectually' … But if you have lived experience of what that feels like on the other end of that… it's a lot quicker to just do what you need to do what's right" (Interviewee 15)

For the remaining employers interviewed, about half had a personal connection to someone living with a disability. These usually included close family members, but two interviewees also had previous employment experience and/or educational backgrounds in services for people with disabilities, which provided them with a deeper understanding of the process of working with services to employ people with disabilities, as well as disability-inclusive knowledge, skills, and attitudes that they brought into their work in different sectors.

Likewise, some focus group participants noted that they had a close relationship to someone living with a disability:

"Personally, because of my, you know, my son [who is living with a disability] … I've spent countless hours trying to develop this in our community and it just makes good business sense… yeah, it's dear to my heart." (Terrace Focus Group)

Several interviewees also conveyed that when leaders with lived experience are willing to share their personal stories, they model individual qualities of empathy and showing vulnerability. These leadership qualities of individuals, which also included having an "open door policy," were all felt to positively contribute to a disability-inclusive workplace.

Interview and focus group participants included leaders from other equity deserving groups (e.g., individuals who self-identified as Indigenous and visible minorities). They noted that their individual experiences of facing barriers and inequality in the workplace influenced a positive orientation towards disability inclusion. Non-profit focus group participants discussed that they had made specific efforts to ensure diversity at the leadership and board level as well. Diverse representation at the leadership level was thought to address negative stereotypes and foster a personal commitment to DEI in management.

Entrepreneurs/Self-Employed Individuals with Disabilities

Interviewees who are entrepreneurs or self-employed noted that a strong motivation for being self-employed or starting their businesses was the lack of accommodation they experienced in conventional workplaces. Some conveyed previous work experiences of being under-employed or feeling undervalued. Others decided to become self-employed after a job loss. Of these four interviewees, all indicated that their negative experiences with other forms of employment shaped their motivation to work independently:

"We created our business to, you know, make an inclusive space that suited our needs as disabled people…. there's always some kind of pushback on… your accommodation needs. Like a lot of the times, my performance reviews would include my autistic traits as things I needed to improve continuously… it's like I literally try my best… I can't like get rid of it. Like if I could, I would not be me." (Interviewee 7)

These interviewees noted it was important to exercise more control over creating a working environment that was flexible and celebrated the unique skills and abilities that their lived experience brought to their work. Two interviewees emphasized that part of their motivation to become self-employed or start their own business included acting as role model for other people with disabilities:

"I wanted to take those learnings of how I felt abandoned by the system and support people in true leadership by understanding the things that I felt that I was missing in that experience and being the kind of leader that I wished other people were being for me." (Interviewee 4)

Entrepreneurs with disabilities in the focus group also emphasized how their personal experiences with disability motivated them to start their own businesses. They also cited reasons such as the inaccessibility of previous employers and lack of employment options, along with a desire to contribute to their communities. Like interviewees, focus group participants valued the flexibility and autonomy of self-employment, with one noting it also enabled them to prioritize personal health and recovery from an addiction over work.

These participants also discussed the complex decision of disclosing their disability to clients and partners – a choice that could open doors to new professional markets and networks, but one that wasn't always comfortable in other contexts.
Finally, living with a disability was also seen as providing entrepreneurs with a unique skillset:

"My challenges have given me a skillset to be creative, resourceful, and compassionate in business. I endeavour to employ at least 50% of my workforce in long term recovery from addictions and criminality." (Employ to Empower Focus Group)

Interpersonal Factors

Relationships matter – Interpersonal factors, including daily interactions with co-workers, supervisors, and open communication foster social support and personal growth, shaping inclusion. Flexibility and fostering psychological safety were key interpersonal factors for inclusive employers.

Open Communication

Interviewees stressed the value of open, non-judgmental communication with employees, emphasizing the importance of relationships. They provided examples, such as having an "open-door" policy, adapting communications styles to individual needs and preferences (e.g., text messages vs. in-person meeting or telephone), and fostering team cultures through collaboration, problem-solving and learning.

They also highlighted the need to respect individual communication preferences, especially for employees with specific disabilities like hearing or vision impairments. This meant involving them in decisions about communication methods (e.g., sign language vs. lip reading, choice of alternative formats for the visually impaired). Embracing an open dialogue and recognition that the experience of disability is unique to each individual were important: *"My number one takeaway…is always ask the person how you can best support them. Never make assumptions… They're going to know what is needed for their needs in the workplace in order to be the most successful and ultimately contribute back to your business." (Interviewee 4)*

Interviewees emphasized the importance of including people with disabilities in the decision-making process. Decisions impacting people with disabilities require their direct involvement. Interviewees discussed that people with disabilities can and want to take ownership over how they work best and what they can bring to the workplace:

"Talk to disabled people and listen to them and get them to make their own decisions… We need to make our own decisions because, you know, when you're making decisions for us, that's not empowerment, that's oppression still, and we need to be able to express our needs, and for those needs to be met, it's not much to ask… We just want to be like everybody else and we are like everybody else. We just work differently." (Interviewee 7)

Focus group participants reiterated the sentiment that communication was a "two-way street" and requires feedback to ensure daily work arrangements are meeting the needs of both employees and supervisors. Ensuring employees with disabilities are included in the decision-making process was also seen as vital:

"Giving folks the autonomy to tell us what they need from us and what is best for them [is important]. I think a lot of folks get told what's best for them and things decided for them. So, I think having that's a big, big thing for us is sitting people down and asking them what they what their expectations are of us having an open conversation." (Vantage Point Focus Group)

Focus group participants expanded on the importance of accessible communications, including plain language and fully accessible websites and technology. Some also highlighted the role of job coaches in tailoring communications to meet employees with disabilities needs:

"So, this guy, he loves reading comic books. So, [the job coaches] created a comic book starring him and being in the workplace and the strategies that he can then use… they did [a] comic strip when he was learning how to take a HandyDART because he had never taken it before from his house to work, and then from work to his day program…" (Manufacturing BC Focus Group)

Employee Engagement

Given that most interviewees worked in SMEs, they emphasized that employee engagement was mostly informal through daily discussions and regular invitations for employee input. Formal structures or practices such as employee resource groups (ERGs) or employee engagement surveys were less frequently cited by interview participants.

For the employers that did use more formalized mechanisms for employee engagement, these took the form of accessibility committees or ERGs that included people with lived experience, as well as creating a standing agenda item for accessibility during regular employee meetings. Whether employers used informal or formal methods to engage their staff, many noted that their approach was centered on fostering relationships and creating a space for interpersonal support through more dialogue:

"I think relationships are getting deeper. People are feeling more comfortable being themselves… We're trying to… foster more dialogue and from different perspectives… I do believe there's people on the team who have a far better understanding of disability justice than I do. And so, it's a question of creating the space so that all of our voices can come to the surface, and we can really develop the vision and how to enact that vision together." (Interviewee 13)

Some focus group participants, who included representatives from larger organizations, pointed out a common scenario: DEI responsibilities often fall to HR departments, who face a dual challenge of engaging enough employees to participate in DEI initiatives while experiencing a lack of leadership or resources to support these efforts. In for-profit settings, DEI was seen as a "nice to have" rather than a core objective, or central to day-to-day activities of employees, impacting overall engagement in accessibility and inclusion initiatives.

Management Style and Team Dynamics

Interviewees shared strategies for team management that revolved around interpersonal communications styles, a sense of psychological safety and support at work. These involved approaches that embraced a "whole person" management ethos, centering individual contributions and strengths. They emphasized individualized and flexible approaches that matched employee needs and capabilities:

"I think you have to know what everybody's sort of strengths and weaknesses are and find a way of helping them. Accept where people are different and similar, and work on helping them grow those things that work really well for them, but also challenging them to learn and maybe do better in areas that they struggle… That requires some flexibility on, you know, what their history is, what their needs are, even just what some of their work experience in the past might be like." (Interviewee 12)

Interviewees emphasized management styles rooted in open and transparent interpersonal communication. Leaders were encouraged to embrace diverse viewpoints and accept mistakes as opportunities for growth. The same principles held true for entrepreneurs/self-employed individuals with disabilities, some of whom noted that they were transparent with clients and customers about how their disability may impact business outputs or timelines.

Focus group participants echoed this, emphasizing strengths-based approaches, flexibility, and openness in teams. This fostered reciprocal relationships where team members readily supported one another when the need arose:

"In our place, our workplace, we're so small. We're a really good team and we just really support each other, and we all have people that can back each other up when you know, if you're off sick and things like that. So, I think building that strong team." (Terrace Focus Group)

Focus group participants highlighted the power of an open, empathetic workplace that extended beyond practical support. One employer from an organization serving people with disabilities shared that many staff and volunteers had experienced a loss of someone living with a disability. This shared experience of grief forged a deep connection and openness among team members, enabling them to support each other and communicate their needs at work:

"They've connected together as a result of that shared grief, and they're very open… People are very open about their life situations and are able to share what's happening with them and what they need, which is really helpful for me in order to support them as I can." (Vantage Point Focus Group)

Organizational Factors

Organizational factors, including the rules, policies, structures, and supports that employers engage with both formally and informally shape workplace inclusion. Employers across different sizes, sectors, and economic models adopted HR practices that proactively identify and remove barriers, emphasize individual strengths, and embrace flexibility.

Mission and Values

One third of interviewees had a specific product or service designed for the disability community or built into their operational model (e.g., they only employ people with disabilities), which shaped their organizational mission and values. For the most part, these were not public facing. Instead, accessibility and inclusion were seen as simply "the way we operate," integrated organically into workplace values. Many focus group participants also agreed that organizational mission was central to driving inclusion or noted that their commitment to DEI in general was also an important factor.

Entrepreneurs/self-employed individuals with disabilities made inclusion a core mission to normalize and advocate for people with disabilities as employable. Participants in the entrepreneurs' focus group shared how their missions were deeply tied to their lived experience and the desire to break down employment barriers.

For those interviewees with formal diversity and inclusion statements, these set the tone and ensured consistency in organizational practices. A major employer went further, embedding accessibility and inclusion goals into organizational models, strategy, and culture to drive organizational decisions:

"Why we've been successful is because we've been able to embed all… key sort of strategies, you know, KPIs, et cetera, within all our plans… So, some of the biggest strategies have that language of being inclusive. So that also ties into our overall sort of being an inclusive employer. So that's sort of why we've been successful… because we've embedded it into these sorts of strategies." (Interviewee 9)

However, not all interviewees felt that a formal policy or public-facing statement was beneficial. As one entrepreneur with disability conveyed, diversity inclusion statements can be limiting and that putting the person first was a better approach:

"We're big believers on treating people like people and putting the person first. I think that sometimes people get so lost in the literature of feeling as though they have to have this all-encompassing diversity inclusion statement that makes sure that you cover all aspects. But the danger in making sure that you're covering every subset is that you may miss a subset. And so [we]…throw the labels away." (Interviewee 4)

For one focus group participant from a service organization for people with disabilities, a demonstrated commitment to their mission meant prioritizing the representation of people with disabilities at all levels, including at the board of directors, the employee level, and in public-facing roles:

"Even when I do presentations, I always try to bring somebody to speak for themselves. I'm not speaking for people, but with people… making sure that the work that we're doing is accessible and is [ensuring] those accommodations to have more people at the table, more voices, the better work we can do. (Vantage Point Focus Group)

In both the interviews and focus groups, few participants had formal accessibility plans or DEI goals set in policy. Many interviewees from SMEs lacked codified practices but expressed intentions to work on this in the future. Some focus group participants were initiating steps like policy reviews and setting up accessibility committees. While these practices were viewed as beneficial, only a couple discussed commitments to measure progress or adopt tools such as the Presidents Group's Inclusive Employer Self-Assessment to formalize accessibility and inclusion within their organizations.

Inclusive Human Resources Practices

Interviews dug deep into inclusive HR practices, covering recruitment, accommodations, benefits, tailoring job roles to the individual, professional development, and retention. Interviewees were also asked to comment on the extent to which any of these practices were easy to operationalize and why, as well as the challenges they faced. Given that interviewees who were entrepreneurs or self-employed usually had no employees or employed a single individual (either family member or contracted), questions were tailored for this unique context.

Focus groups validated interview themes across sectors, organizational models, and regions. Together, interviewees and focus group participants identified a range of practices, described in further detail below.

Recruitment and Hiring

Many interviewees noted that they had reviewed recruitment and hiring policies and practices to remove barriers and highlight the organization's values of inclusion. Practices included looking for specific barriers in job applications, including language, reading level, and technological barriers common in off-the-shelf recruitment platforms. Many also added diversity statements and processes to "screen in" candidates who self-identified as living with a disability directly into an interview:

"When we're hiring, we publish the salary range, we publish detailed list of benefits, vacation, all of those things… That's still not standard… It's a real range of groups who do that, but we feel like that's a part of inclusion. We ask if people need specific accommodations during the hiring process, and we're doing really simple things like now, for the most part, we give people the interview questions in advance." (Interviewee 2)

Interviewees engaged in targeted recruitment of people with disabilities and other barriers to employment, either by design of their organizational model (i.e., social enterprise created solely to employ people with disabilities) or through partnerships with service organizations to target specific roles to be fulfilled by people with disabilities. Entrepreneurs/self-employed individuals with disabilities conveyed that if they were in a position to hire, they would prioritize hiring from the disability community, emphasizing strengths that people with disabilities bring to the job (e.g., loyalty, commitment, attention to detail).

One interviewee had workplace champions for hiring people with disabilities in each department, finding this a highly effective way to operationalize inclusive HR practices. Another made it mandatory for all hiring managers to collaborate with community organizations to recruit people with disabilities. Beyond these practices, many interviewees said that they hire for the best fit, but value diverse talent pools.

Focus group insights confirmed this approach to hiring, but also raised that it was important to reconsider job requirements. They stressed the importance of skill-focused job descriptions, removing unnecessary training or education criteria when appropriate, favouring learning on the job:

"My hiring philosophy now is attitude over aptitude and for the vast majority of our staff that are coming in, whether they identify as living with a disability or not, they're coming in with a really great attitude so I can teach them what they need to know." (Manufacturing BC Focus Group)

Transparency was a recurring theme. Being upfront about physical tasks and requirements, communicated in plain language, was crucial. Focus group participants emphasized personalized recruitment, moving away from batch hiring and onboarding to more individualized approaches. Focus groups also noted hiring practices such as working with service organizations to ensure that job postings reached a diversity of prospective employees, or shifting away from the use of cover letters in favour of a screening survey that made it more accessible for applicants. Some also noted the importance of choice in job applications – whether that be online or in person.

Interviewees and focus groups provided examples of revamping job interviews for inclusivity, such as sharing interview questions in advance. One interviewee went further with a low-barrier process, eliminating formal interviews and reference checks. Another introduced working interviews, where candidates are invited to showcase their skills directly on the job. The employer emphasized that the working interviews allow both the candidate and the employer to collaborative gauge job fit:

"We've done some kind of working interviews which are awesome… We had one gentleman come in and he would have been fine, but he had severe arthritis in his hands, and that wasn't something that he could overcome based on the dexterity needed... for the [specific] job itself. So, it just wasn't the right fit. But on paper, he looked like he'd be a great candidate, but actually meeting the person, we came to that agreement that, you know, you're not going to be comfortable here. There's going to be something better for you out there. So, it gave us a lot more insight and into how that would translate to what we needed as well as the individual." (Interviewee 6)

Workplace Accommodations

Most interview participants provided accommodation on a case-by-case basis, aligning them with individual needs and job requirements. For example, while many noted that they would provide worksite accommodations (e.g., assistive technology, workstation modifications) or adjust working conditions (e.g., work from home and other flexible work arrangements), these were weighed against job roles, especially those with public-facing or physically demanding aspects. In general, interviewees were guided by a focus on flexibility and support to empower employees to meet their role-specific requirements.

Focus group participants shared this approach, providing accommodation on a case-by-case basis and emphasizing that support should be available to employees as soon as they are requested. The focus group with technology sector employers also discussed ways to proactively inform new hires about accommodation options to reduce the need for self-disclosure and to foster a welcoming environment.

Interviewees with lived experience emphasized the value of consulting with accessibility experts, not only for employees with disabilities, but all new hires. One interviewee shared a standout example: an employer provided personalized occupational therapist consultations for every new hire to fine-tune their workspace:

"I have to be quite honest with you, I thought I was being placated a little bit as the token guy in a wheelchair joining the organization. So, I said to the staff, 'You really don't have to do this to me. For me, I've never had this type of accommodation done in the past. I'm pretty adaptable. I can make this happen.' What they explained to me was… 'You don't understand, we're not doing this as an onboarding practice for you. We do this for all employees that join our organization.'" (Interviewee 4)

Focus group participants also acknowledged the diversity within the disability community, emphasizing that support and accommodations must be as unique as individuals themselves. Participants in the focus group with entrepreneurs shared their varied needs, emphasizing the importance of dispelling a 'one size fits all' approach.

Flexibility and Employee Wellbeing

Flexibility was a central theme for all employers. Interview and focus group participants agreed that all employees come with their own strengths and needs. Inclusive HR practices, such as promoting flexible work arrangements, were seen as 'win-win' benefitting all employees, especially employees with disabilities.

Scheduling and Working Conditions

Several examples of flexible scheduling were found during interviews and focus groups, including offering part-time work (and allowing an employee to shift to full-time if they decide to), allowing for regular breaks or uninterrupted work, open-ended leaves in which employees are always welcomed back, and working from home or remote work (though it was acknowledged that this is not feasible for all roles). Trusting employees to work when and where they choose was highlighted. Focus group participants emphasized the importance of flexibility for neurodivergent individuals, allowing them more control over their individual work environments. Manufacturing sector participants saw part-time and shift work as healthy options, and service organizations agreed that non-full-time employment was compatible with client needs.

One employer noted the benefits of a job-sharing pilot program, in which a role that was traditionally filled by one full-time employee was shared among multiple part-time employees. It was noted that part-time work can be especially important for those with barriers to employment, who may struggle to maintain a consistent 40-hour work week:

"We use a job share sort of approach, which I think everybody needs to get in on that, especially in this economy and this job market. Why do you have to have one person for a full-time position… why can't that position be shared by five people? … If you can think a little outside the box and be willing to try something, maybe not quite as traditional… would you rather not have five people to fill the job that are good, and they want to be there for the hours that they're there?" (Interviewee 5)

Entrepreneurs/self-employed individuals with disabilities in the interviews emphasized that self-employment allowed for greater flexibility – both in scheduling and in their work environment. Some noted how rigid or restrictive working conditions in previous employment served as a motivation to become self-employed:

"I think the most inclusive employment is self-employment. I can sleep when I want to sleep. If I'm overstimulated, I can turn off all my lights. If I need to take a break for a few hours or come back to it another day, I have that flexibility." (Interviewee 1)

This point was emphasized in the focus group with entrepreneurs with disabilities, where having autonomy and flexibility over their own schedules allowed them to prioritize healthcare needs in their lives over work.

Individualizing Roles to Employees' Strengths

Interviewees highlighted how tailoring jobs to match abilities and interests promotes inclusion. Focusing on the skills needed for the role and not making assumptions about abilities were noted as important aspects of this factor. For task-based roles, allowing employees to find their best approach was preferred over strict instructions. Encouraging middle management to adopt individualized, not micromanagement, approaches was seen as fostering inclusion and retention. Individualized recruitment, onboarding, and communication styles were also noted.

One large employer offered a "menu" of job options for individuals to choose from. Another workplace, mainly employing people with disabilities, customized roles based on values and interests, adapting duties when necessary. For instance, on a challenging day, employees could assist with offsite deliveries for a "change of scenery." Another interviewee noted that job descriptions were tailored to align with career goals, promoting transitions to permanent roles to foster retention:

"I feel like we're just like one of the pieces in the puzzle… For some people… it's transitional employment like it's kind of a stepping-stone just to get them back in it… We don't have a thing where… 'you stay for six months and then you have to move on to something else.' Well, no, I think that's dumb. Like, if I have somebody really good that wants to stay on and, you know, help grow the business, then great. But you don't have to, either. It's again, we're meeting people where they're at, right?" (Interviewee 5)

Employers noted how individualizing roles to employees' strengths and interest can also positively impact business operations:

"Yeah, just kind of in finding the gifts that we all have. I think I like to do that with all my staff. I think we're all very different. And I think that's really important. It makes business operate very smoothly when you can find, highlight, and let people work towards their strengths." (Interviewee 14)

Navigating Work Beyond the Full-Time Model

Focus group participants stressed the importance of flexibility and customizing roles for inclusivity. However, they faced challenges in deviating from the dominant full-time equivalent (FTE) employment model. This included difficulties in accommodating reduced workloads, tailoring job responsibilities, and implementing job-sharing due to time and resource constraints. Addressing employees' needs for reduced workloads also posed dilemmas, as reallocating tasks to others was often tricky. This was particularly challenging in specialized roles, such as management positions, where duties could not easily be reassigned to multiple staff members.

"I think the flexibility comes from the team that is able to step in and also the planning. So right now, I have people that can sub in, so I have maybe people that are doing similar jobs that if one person is not there, the other person can step in. But in terms of management or [when] somebody is not able to do that work, then it falls on the leader's shoulders. So often I think the staff that recognizes that flexibility is important for them, and then they also give it to others and support each other. But again, I cannot necessarily expect people to do that all the time. So then often it lands on my plate." (Terrace Focus Group)

Some focus group participants also described how implementing flexible and inclusive practices required more time and effort, which was difficult for employers with limited resources. In particular, publicly funded and non-profit organizations emphasized that they did not have the financial means to hire more staff who could take on this workload:

"We're reliant on what the province and what our municipality gives us [for funding]. So, we don't have a lot of extra funding. And we're staffed at like our bare bones level, right? Like if I could hire one or two more full-time staff, that would be really great. And so unfortunately for us, sometimes it comes into that accommodation, and if an accommodation means that other people are going to have to take on more work. It's not that we don't want to, it's that we just can't, right?... It's finding that balance of how do we make this work, not just for that one person who needs that accommodation, but for everybody else who has to pick up that extra work? And unfortunately, because of our staffing level, we don't have a lot of that extra time to do that work." (Terrace Focus Group)

To address the challenges of navigating alternatives to the FTE model, employers emphasized the need for more sector-specific examples (e.g., tech sector) of how alternatives could be implemented in their organizations.

Employee Wellbeing, Benefits and Additional Supports

Many employers noted that the above examples positively impact employee wellbeing, which, beyond benefiting employees, enhances productivity and retention across their organizations. Flexibility embodies a culture of support, trust, and safety, as interviewees highlighted. Many mentioned a growing focus on employee wellbeing through additional personal days, extended leaves, and improved mental health benefits. Implementing these as policies addressed issues of "fairness," reducing conflicts when coworkers required time off. A flexible work culture minimized the idea that time off was an "infraction," which could also reduce the need for employees to disclose confidential or sensitive issues:

"I think people are starting to understand like this is how things have to be done. You have to be flexible with childcare, people have childcare issues. People have depression where it's easier if you get them started later in the morning…This whole idea has changed about what work looks like." (Interviewee 11)

"You're welcome back and to take time off because you need to focus on yourself. That's not a bad thing, and it's not anything to feel embarrassed about or feel guilty about, like it's a good thing that you can recognize that, 'Hey, you know what? I'm struggling right now, and I need some time.' So, we fully support that, and we let all the workers know… if that's what you need, you [just] have to tell us." (Interviewee 5)

Employers cited mental health and wellbeing support through various means, such as paying a living wage, organizing morale-boosting events like summer parties, and providing mental health first aid training for leaders. Essential support could also include work from home allowances, cell phone allowances, or free uniforms. Interviewees varied in terms of whether these were provided as extra benefits compared with some who saw them as crucial investments to sustain operations. However, those opting for informal support recognized the need for a dedicated mental health budget.

Focus groups echoed the importance of employee wellbeing, emphasizing flexibility and support for all. Non-profit organizations stressed the significance of paid sick days and health care spending accounts, especially for employees with disabilities, whose needs often extend beyond typical benefits coverage.

"If you have a majority of staff who have disabilities, they're going to go through like the $500 limit for physiotherapy really quickly. So, health spending accounts gives them freedom to use it where they need [including] additional counseling sessions and things like that." (Vantage Point Focus Group)

Influence of the Organizational Model

Employers represented diverse organizational models: solopreneurs, co-operatives, social enterprises, non-profits, and for-profits. They shared insights on how their unique organizational models and economic approaches contribute to their inclusive work practices.

The term "alternative economies" describes the differences within the economy, which include processes of production, ownership, labour, exchange, and consumption that differ from mainstream approaches[2]. A key aspect of the interviews and focus groups was to explore these differences and to understand employers' perspectives and approaches to disability inclusion from this "alternative" or "diverse economies" perspective.

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[2] Healy (2009) outlines that 'alternative economies' can be traced to an approach to the study of the fundamental nature and structure of the (capitalist) economy as a "space of difference". Alternative economies refer to scholarship rooted in human geography that explores these differences and the possibilities for more inclusive and sustainable approaches to economics that sit outside of traditional capitalist processes and its institutions.

While only a few interviewees felt their organizational model significantly impacted their accessibility and inclusion practices, most could identify how their model aligned with inclusive values. Smaller organizations and self-employed individuals highlighted flexibility and adaptability in addressing individual needs. Entrepreneurs with disabilities valued heading their own business as a way to honour their disability experiences.

Co-ops emphasized their commitment to participatory decision-making and community care, fostering a positive orientation toward disability inclusion. Social enterprises were seen as attractive to employees whose values aligned with the mission of employing individuals with disabilities and overcoming employment barriers. For these interviewees, such alternative economic models focused on generating social value, not just profits, which could positively benefit inclusive practices:

"I think it's really important to encourage more social enterprises to happen because… your profit isn't going into the pockets of like a CEO or a board or whatever… I think there's a shift in attitude that really has to happen… Being a part of a social enterprise, I didn't even know what it was until I started working here… you're not here to get rich, you're here to help… I think it would be nice if there was more of that in the world. But again, it's it takes certain people, you know, corporations are always going to be corporations and can't change that. I think all we can do is just encourage more people to… think about like social things or environmental things." (Interviewee 5)

Some interviewees from non-profits with a social mission shared the view that organizational values drove their inclusive employment efforts. However, one interviewee noted that non-profits also faced challenges with respect to resources and centralized decision-making necessary to drive inclusion. The interviewee felt that larger organizations could mandate accessibility, but smaller organizations, including non-profits and co-operatives, lacked resources, expertise, and centralized decision-making authority. Another interviewee also noted that when non-profits provide essential services or help vulnerable populations, they experience a tension where the organization's focus on helping people in crisis can overshadow internal efforts to be more inclusive of their own employees. The interviewee noted one way to address this dynamic is for non-profits to support one another to build DEI capacity across the non-profit sector.

Focus groups explored how alternative economic models affected attitudes and practices towards disability-inclusive employment. Like interview findings, flexibility for entrepreneurs with disabilities was central to what those focus group participants considered inclusive employment. Non-profit focus group participants also shared the view that an organization's mission and values had more influence in driving inclusion as opposed to their economic model:

"I think it depends on, you know, the purpose and mission and vision of the organization, more so versus whether you're a non-profit or not, perhaps, you know, in terms of your commitment to accessibility, diversity, equity, inclusion… I don't know how that [inclusion] connects necessarily to non-profits with completely different mandates… I'm not convinced that… the non-profit status would necessarily make a difference." (Vantage Point Focus Group)

Likewise, small business owners conveyed that being inclusive was fueled in part by their business mission, values, and personal commitment to their community. While this drove their inclusion efforts, it also brought emotional and operational challenges, as well as high expectations to address employee needs, which were challenging for small business owners to address:

"Our company is family owned and operated… I've been involved for pretty much my entire life. And how many times have I thought over the past couple of years, especially with COVID like man, I just want to go work for McDonald's because I don't have to take it home with me at the end of the day versus… that emotional load is just on my shoulders trying to keep people working and surviving and thriving… I know that… I shouldn't be able to do everything, and it's not my responsibility, but when I've also got parents and caregivers coming to me for answers, it can be challenging." (Manufacturing BC Focus Group)

Rather than organizational or economic models driving inclusion, focus group participants noted that their model influenced the nature of their stakeholders and those interactions. Non-profits felt the weight of the accountability and financial transparency requirements that come with public funding. By contrast, in the tech sector, non-publicly traded companies enjoyed greater decision-making flexibility without the burden of accountability to shareholders. Social enterprises grappled with the pressure to demonstrate "impact" to stakeholders, that often prioritized quantity over the nuanced impact of quality employment:

"If you have an impact business, your bigger numbers are always much more exciting than your smaller numbers. And if you have someone who's going to work there continually, that's a small number of people that you helped. If you can train people, turn them out, and train someone else, that's a bigger number. And anyone looking at your impact page is much more excited about the bigger numbers than the smaller numbers… Customers who want to support a business that's doing good in the world [may think] three employees… who have disabilities [and] have been with us for 10 years is less exciting than [if] we've helped 50 women who've come into this country find another job." (Manufacturing BC Focus Group)

Sectoral Perspectives

Often, interviewees spoke of sectoral and organizational considerations together. For example, interviewees in sectors that provide services to the public or that receive public funding held similar views that their workplaces should reflect the diversity of the broader public also. The interview participant from the public sector noted that it was not the organizational model, but new requirements under the Accessible BC Act, which drove accessibility and inclusion.

Further insights from focus group participants included the following sectoral perspectives:

- **Technology sector** barriers to inclusive employment included the fast-paced nature of the field as well as the current economic climate of mass layoffs, which makes disability-inclusion employment practices a lower priority for HR professionals.

- Participants in the **manufacturing** focus group highlighted both challenges and opportunities to inclusive employment in their sector. Employers at worksites with heavy equipment expressed challenges with finding accessible equipment and the knowledge of how to make such environments safe for persons with disabilities. On the other hand, many acknowledged that the repetitive nature of some tasks allows some persons with disabilities to thrive, and the clear division of tasks on an assembly line provides ample training and development opportunities.

- Focus group participants from **non-profit and public sectors** mentioned the constraints posed by public funding requirements, often providing little flexibility for accommodations and alternative employment models.

- **Entrepreneurs**, on the other hand, see self-employment as the most flexible type of work, though focus group participants frequently felt that the supports for entrepreneurs with disabilities were unclear or difficult to navigate, compared to those for persons with disabilities in "traditional" workplaces.

Community Factors

Employers value partnerships with community service organizations rooted in a shared understanding of business and workforce needs. Community factors are also at play in how employees navigate both the physical and social environment, and how these shape inclusive behaviours in the workplace.

Partnerships

Partnerships with other organizations were pivotal for accessibility and inclusion for many of the interview and focus group participants from a variety of organizational models. More than 30 unique organizations in B.C. were identified as partners. Employers detailed diverse partnerships and how they fueled inclusive employment. Partnership dynamics varied based on organizational models and workplace structures, and focus groups delved deeper into what makes these partnerships thrive.

Service Organizations

Interviewees and focus group participants partnered with disability-serving or community organizations to foster workplace inclusion. They tapped into these organizations' expertise for accessibility audits, identifying barriers to address in workplace policies, practices, and the physical environment. The extent of accessibility audits varied, but included document reviews (e.g., strategic plans, HR policies, and board materials), employee surveys, leadership reports, and forming accessibility committees.

The President's Group, Neil Squire Society, and Open Door Group were frequently cited as service organization partners in both interviews and focus groups, in addition to local organizations across the province. These organizations offer a range of expertise, from the strategic level, to ensuring that employers can access specific expertise to accommodate new employees:

"And then we've also worked with Neil Squire, some of the other community organizations… to adapt their workspace if they need to or if they need any support coming in to do any of the testing. We can bring in that sort of support. So, we would sort of make sure that set up the individual before they come in." (Interviewee 9)

Focus group participants also raised the importance of sector-specific organizations that provide capacity building support. Focus group co-organizers Employ to Empower and the Technology and People Network were noted as examples that provided tailored supports to their members and helped employers see the value of inclusion.

Supported employment services for people with disabilities in securing and maintaining work was highlighted by a range of interview and focus group participants, who valued their partnerships with local service organizations, such as in the community living sector or with local WorkBC offices.

Interviewees who predominantly employ people with disabilities frequently worked closely with social workers and service providers to support employees and create individual employment plans. For example, WorkBC providers can help with recruitment and onboarding. Working closely with service providers helped new employees thrive in their new role:

"The nice thing is having the job coaches, they are a great sounding board because every time that I need support, they're there for me as well as well as their employee or the job seeker or their person that we have here… They've been really instrumental to us as well as to the individual and some of the things that have come up that we hadn't thought of before." (Interviewee 6)

In some cases, interviewees and focus group participants worked with service organizations to broaden and diversify recruitment, while ensuring that the organization continued to help with employees' essential skills development with supports on the job. Partnerships also fostered shared problem-solving, provided expertise on accessible technology and equipment, and enhanced employers' inclusion skills by offering fresh perspectives and adaptable approaches:

"I think we were only able to hire because of the collaboration and support from... WorkBC… Being able to get the specialized equipment for our staff member… was essential, but we didn't have the budget for doing that ourselves. So, and then just learning right, learning and providing a base support that we were able to." (Terrace Focus Group)

Interviewees and focus group participants extolled the merits of partnering with service organizations and expressed a keen interest in expanding community collaborations. Non-profit interviewees frequently joined forces with local organizations to bolster fundraising and secure grants, leveraging existing community expertise and relationships. Some interviewees expressed their eagerness to forge stronger community bonds, such as conducting local outreach to explore partnership potential. One interviewee, whose organization primarily employs people with disabilities and serves vulnerable populations, aspired to create a "one-stop shop" by partnering with service providers to benefit both employers and service clients.

Interviewees emphasized the value of cultivating enduring relationships over one-time partnerships, noting the role of trust between organizations. While acknowledging the time investment, interviewees highlighted the potential for lasting and far-reaching impacts. Some saw these collaborations as necessary to achieve collective goals beyond what any single organization could achieve alone:

"We're not going to change the world on our own, but you can certainly do something in our local community and we're not doing it alone. Like, you know, we work with lots of different people that have the same sort of ideals." (Interviewee 5)

Focus group participants stressed the importance of time-tested relationships in fostering successful partnerships, where service organizations comprehend employers' business and workforce requirements. One participant noted that their local service organization had shifted its focus from job seekers to engaging with employers, promoting workplace inclusion.

Entrepreneurs/self-employed individuals with disabilities also highlighted the value of direct support, including funding for equipment, business coaching, and providing an opportunity to participate in conferences. One interviewee who provided consulting services also highlighted the benefits of tapping into community experts to enhance and expand their offerings:

"So, we very much lean on partners …we will go to those experts first as opposed to just assuming that we know what we're doing and get their documentation, resources, things of that nature. So, I think it's really important to have a healthy relationship with the experts in the community… if I didn't have that training and knowledge and expertise given to me by partners… I wouldn't be able to speak to those things outside of my own lived experience." (Interviewee 4)

Employer Communities of Practice

Some interviewees actively participated in communities of practice, utilizing local networks for idea-sharing and mutual support in diversity initiatives. This was more prevalent among larger employers, as well as those in rural or remote areas. In the public sector, one interviewee fostered inclusive employment by creating an award for local employers. They promoted their achievements on social media and collaborated with Chambers of Commerce to educate local business leaders on hiring people with disabilities:

"There was a community committee that was looking at employment… through different organizations. And so, I joined that committee, and our goal was to try to create more opportunities in the community for people with disabilities… We brought in some guest speakers. You know, go to the BIAs, the Chambers of Commerce, really trying to educate the business world in regard to hiring people with disabilities, which was great. But we weren't really changing the culture of those businesses because businesses weren't hiring people with disabilities because they didn't know how to hire people with disabilities. So, we had to sort of educate them." (Interviewee 9)

Some non-profit interviewees took active roles in advisory groups across various sectors and contributed to building capacity in other organizations. For instance, one interviewee facilitated the development of a board member pipeline for individuals with disabilities, offering coaching and training to ensure their confidence and effectiveness. Partnerships emerged as a pivotal element in inclusive employment for all interviewed employers. They provided a valuable resource for employers with limited inclusion experience or capacity, as well as for those well-versed in inclusive employment, fostering connections with like-minded organizations.

However, establishing these partnerships wasn't always straightforward, and staff turnover occasionally disrupted established relationships, requiring a fresh start with new contacts. Some small businesses acknowledged their capacity limitations for participating in communities of practice, and employers in smaller communities faced resource constraints for engaging in multiple initiatives. To address these challenges, one participant in a small community spoke of a partnership network working towards a community-wide inclusion charter. While focus group participants valued partnerships with service organizations, they highlighted the need for more networking opportunities through local Boards of Trade and start-up accelerators:

"There is advocacy there, but there isn't a community of business owners that I would go and talk to about these problems... So, I don't have a good solution there, but I can definitely tell you where there are places where I orbit… where those resources I would probably get to. (Manufacturing BC Focus Group)

Community Values and Public Accountability

Interview participants revealed a dynamic interplay between community values and public accountability in shaping their commitment to inclusive employment. While most lacked formal accountability or reporting mechanisms, many felt compelled to uphold their reputation as inclusive employers and fulfill their duty to the disability community. This commitment extended to external communications, such as maintaining accessible websites and participating in community events and celebrating diversity on social media platforms.

For some, their reputation as an inclusive employer served as a cornerstone of their public value proposition. For example, one entrepreneur who provides services for people with disabilities said:

"I think it would take our expertise down a number of pegs if we weren't doing the things that we were encouraging other organizations to do… the reason that we're able to operate so well is because people recognize that we're not just talking about [accessibility], we're being about it… It's through our actions that that really speaks for itself, which has enabled us to potentially get jobs over other organizations that are similar." (Interviewee 4)

Interviewees noted that developing a reputation as an inclusive employer brings both benefits and added responsibility. In small communities, interviewees noted how they developed a reputation as an inclusive employer through word-of-mouth, where community members, schools, and businesses were familiar with them. For others, an orientation towards inclusion provided a competitive advantage over similar organizations in attracting customers. Building a reputation as an inclusive employer also resulted in being sought out by potential employees that wanted to work with them, reducing the burden of recruiting new staff.

This public perception of being an inclusive employer reinforced the values in the community, which further drove inclusion organizationally:

*"We want our staff to have a good attitude coming to work every day and being open and willing to learn. And that also reflects on us as leaders of the business as well as within the community. We have to be open t*o other opportunities to grow our business, as well as to grow our staff." (Interviewee 6)

Fostering community values or conversations regarding inclusion also played a role. An employer noted that their training for newcomers to Canada was also aligned with local social and cultural inclusion expectations. In the arts sector, the celebration of individuality spurred conversations about addressing the disability community's needs and gaps. Similarly, focus group participants observed a community-wide embrace of inclusion as "good business sense." They recognized a broader social trend highlighting the value of inclusion, acknowledging its long-term financial benefits for the community.

Physical Accessibility in the Community

While barriers in the built environment were a significant factor at the community level, responses identified the accessibility of the built environment across personal, interpersonal, organizational, and broader societal or structural factors as well (shown in Figure 4).

Figure 2

Accessibility of the Built Environment Across Factors of the Socio-Ecological Model

Structural
Participants with lived experience noted how barriers in the built environment impacted their daily lives (e.g., inaccessibility of buildings; lack of public transportation); remote communities lacked public transportation infrastructure and availability of accessible work sites

Community
Availability of reliable and accessible transit was a common concern, particularly in rural communities (see previous section).

Organizational
Accessibility audits helped address barriers in the physical workplace, but challenges persisted (e.g., lack of funding to retro-fit, options for accessible industrial equipment). Promising practices included accommodations during onboarding; commitment to universal design.

Interpersonal
Several participants noted a lack of expertise in incorporating accessible technology, which impacted daily communications.

Individual
Having autonomy and flexibility to adjust the work environment was important for self-employed/entrepreneurs, especially with respect to sensory factors that are often overlooked in traditional workplaces.

While physical accessibility was a pervasive issue across each level of the socio-ecological model, specific concerns were noted at the community level. Employers' community location and the availability of accessible transit were recurrent concerns. One employer questioned the suitability of transportation options in rural areas and raised doubts about their feasibility in even smaller or remote communities:

"I know some of the other [communities we work in] do not have a taxi and no bus. [A community organization has] a volunteer service that will help clients with disabilities to get to work or appointments if needed. But I don't know how regular, like if that's just, you know, a few times or I don't know if it would be OK that 'I'll take this person to work every day for the next year'." (Interviewee 3)

Expanding small businesses in less central community areas posed transit challenges. Due to zoning and rising real estate costs in city centers, businesses often relocated to areas with limited or no public transit and inadequate pedestrian infrastructure, creating difficulties for employees without a driver's license. One employer addressed this by offering transportation from their new location to a central hub, facilitating employee connections to other transit options:

"Most of [our staff] don't have a car. A lot of them don't have a license. So, for us, the challenge is finding somebody that can drive on the crew. So, we provide the transportation to and from… take them to work and then bring them back to the mall and drop them off." *(Interviewee 5)*

Reliable public transportation was a widespread issue with interviewees, often overlooked by organizations in urban areas. Some interviewees noted how disability-serving organizations in the Lower Mainland failed to acknowledge physical accessibility challenges in remote communities, and that this could be a point of tension when working with them. In northern communities, focus group participants described the impacts of insufficient public infrastructure, including transportation, parking, and sidewalk maintenance, and how accessibility options were further reduced when municipalities attempted upgrades:

"A few years ago, they re-did the street in front of our office, and I had a client that… needed a walker and we had to get them to park across the street… It was really, really, really challenging while they were working on our street. But even now that the streets fixed are still there, there's no parking lot for the clients… As far as anybody working on a Sunday in our town, there's no bus service on a Sunday and our taxi service is not reliable. So that's another thing that I would add to just the community in general. (Terrace Focus Group)

With respect to what employers could influence over their own environments, many opted for Rick Hansen Accessibility Certification, but recognized the financial and time investment required for building accessibility enhancements. A northern employer found that certification both facilitated compliance with COVID-19 distancing regulations and they were able to access government funding support. By contrast, an urban employer shared the challenge of locating an accessible site near public transit, a process taking nearly a year. Additionally, a focus group participant emphasized the need to address accessible technology in the workplace, suggesting potential collective solutions that are both inclusive and open source:

"We went through a process of assessment last year for accessible office suites and sadly there are no open source accessible office suites, which is a real drag… our staff who are really philosophically and fundamentally aligned with an open source mission… that is not accessible at the moment, so we're going to have to pay… that got me wondering about the possibility for provincial support or some support for consortia licensing… it strikes me that there's a possible role, not just for that tool, but for other accessible tools within the online landscape." (Vantage Point Focus Group)

Structural Factors

Public policy and programs play a pivotal role in driving inclusion, innovation, and collaboration among employers. As current labour market realities are pushing employers to consider untapped talent, employers and entrepreneurs grapple with overcoming complex barriers and investing in the long-term retention of their employees.

Policy

Drivers

Interviewees and focus group participants highlighted the significant impact of accessibility legislation, both federal and provincial, on their disability-inclusive practices. Some adopted proactive measures, like accessibility committees, in anticipation of forthcoming requirements. Others recognized that compliance with these requirements was not only essential, but also good practice for business.

In the technology sector, requests for proposals that included DEI criteria were identified as drivers of inclusion. This led some employers to view disability inclusion as a competitive advantage over larger competitors. Moreover, focus group participants thought that the government should lead by example, promoting barrier-free employment practices within these institutions to set a positive precedent for the private sector:

"I think ways government can make things better is by… practicing what they preach… they should be showcasing that as well within their own… places of employment. And I think that would really showcase that the government is taking it seriously and that people with disabilities can and do want to work and have the level of skill and ability to be able to do so." (Vantage Point Focus Group)

Some participants proposed innovative ways for the government to incentivize disability-inclusive employment and accessibility solutions. Ideas included government procurement preferences, licensing considerations, and financial incentives. One suggestion was an incentive structure where the government would cover mandated employment contributions (e.g., workers' compensation, pension, insurance) if organizations met specific diversity representation thresholds.

Challenges

Interviewees and focus group participants faced multiple challenges related to government funding and eligibility criteria for people with disabilities. Some noted difficulties in supporting employees with disabilities receiving provincial disability assistance (PWD), who often chose part-time or contract roles. Employers speculated that they may do so because of the episodic nature of a disability or wanting a sense of security regarding the benefits provided to them. Interviewees highlighted that self-selection into non-full-time, permanent employment impacted the employer's ability to enroll them into the organization's benefit programs and pensions. Navigating the annual earnings exemption for individuals working and receiving disability assistance also posed challenges:

"I can't pay them more, which always sucks. I don't think that's fair at all, that there's an income cap because it's just with PWD… Sometimes… they're good, they're on a roll, they're doing really well and then other times, not so much... I think for a lot of them, it's kind of like that fall back just in case… It sucks that [it] can be taken away if they… make too much money, go over." (Interviewee 5)

Focus group participants also faced challenges assisting employees with PWD navigate decisions regarding their employment and their benefits. One participant noted that the misconception that people with disabilities will lose their benefits designation if they exceed income caps is widespread[3] which results in more work and effort from employers to help educate employees and navigate decisions:

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[3] In B.C., the purpose of a Person with Disabilities (PWD) designation is for individuals to access assistance or programs under the Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act. Recipients retain the PWD designation whether or not they continue to be financially eligible for disability assistance. They are not required to apply for the designation on reapplication for assistance. (For details, see: **https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/pwd-designation-and-application/designation-application**)

"When people who are on PWD come and apply for our jobs and we hire them, there's always this navigation that we go through with them… because they don't want to necessarily make too much… [and] no longer be eligible for PWD because they're put in a situation of legislated poverty where they're like… 'I know that I could make more but what if my disability gets worse?... What if I lose this job? … What do I do next?' So, we work with them on that, and we try to be as flexible as possible, but that also drives our work up. It is like trying to support people where they're at with employment, in whatever way that looks like. For them, understanding that disability is not a monolith… it can be permanent, it can be episodic and be temporary." (Vantage Point Focus Group)

Navigating Disability Benefits as an Entrepreneur

Self-employed/entrepreneurs with disabilities faced the dual challenge of growing their businesses while maintaining financial security and access to crucial health support, posing added complexity to navigating disability benefits:

"You have to remember that if you're on PWD, you can only make like fifteen thousand a year. I am on… a self-employment program through the provincial government. What that allows me to do is that allows me to write off my business expenses so that I do not get to that fifteen thousand dollars threshold as fast because then my disability benefits would be cut off, not my medical benefits, but my monetary benefits." (Interviewee 1)

Participants in the entrepreneur focus group voiced uncertainty about how their business incomes could impact their disability benefits, highlighted the lack of clarity in navigating income thresholds compared to traditional forms of employment:

***"When employed by someone else, it's easier to understand how much money one can make without interfering with disability benefits. But as entrepreneurs, it is clear as mud." (Employ to Empower Focus* Group)**

Focus group participants emphasized the crucial role of personalized supports, like Employ to Empower, in assisting entrepreneurs with disabilities as they navigate these challenges. Additionally, interviewees and focus group participants underlined the need for greater streamlining and harmonization between federal and provincial taxation requirements, programs, and disability benefits to better support self-employed individuals and entrepreneurs with disabilities.

Employers highlighted the need for transparent stacking of disability benefits and government funding to accommodate flexible work arrangements preferred by people with disabilities. Eligibility criteria and funding restrictions were seen as hindrances to offering individualized, part-time positions. For example, an employer noted that federal eligibility criteria to fund a summer job prevented them from using the funding to split a full-time position into multiple part-time positions. The employer noted that strict funding criteria prevented them from offering the types of flexible, individualized job roles that were often cited as inclusive practices throughout the interviews and focus groups.

Supports for Entrepreneurs

Interviews explored various enabling factors of inclusive employment, which included publicly funded support available to entrepreneurs and employers. Three out of four interviewees who were entrepreneurs/self-employed individuals had previous experience with programs that supported them through business coaching or mentoring. These interviewees had positive experiences with business coaching and mentorship support:

"[My business mentor] helped me to fly; we have weekly meetings and phone calls to support me… I think you need a mentor and someone to hold you up when you are not so strong; you need that person right beside you." (Interviewee 8)

Some interviewees expressed frustration with the availability and accessibility of entrepreneurial support programs. While they acknowledged the benefits of such programs, they highlighted the lengthy application process and significant wait times as obstacles. Moreover, some interviewees found that existing supports, such as the Self-Employment Program for disability benefits that allows participants to exempt business-related expenses, to be insufficient. Another interviewee also expressed dissatisfaction that other financial support available was in the form of business loans rather than grants.

The focus group with entrepreneurs echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the need for tailored, accessible support. They called for enhanced entrepreneurial skills development, increased networking opportunities, and additional support for addressing their mental and physical healthcare needs. Participants in both interviews and focus groups shared the view that finding and accessing publicly funded support as an entrepreneur with a disability was a challenging and often inconsistent endeavor. As one participant commented, "you've really got to dig deep" to find and access publicly funded supports.

Supports for Employers

Interviewees presented a spectrum of experiences and opinions regarding the availability and effectiveness of support for employers. While some employers praised provincially funded services like WorkBC for aiding in their recruitment of individuals with disabilities, others criticized these services for "bureaucratic" delays that hindered their staffing efforts. Some described these services as too inflexible to cater to the unique needs of both employers and individuals, leaving them inadequate in providing necessary support. One employer underscored the challenge of ensuring employees with disabilities received the essential support they required, such as access to a counselor or job coach. They emphasized that accommodation often necessitates ongoing assistance and follow-up, areas where employers commonly lack expertise and resources:

"As an employer, we feel like we're on our own… there's no supports… There's no job coaching. There's no onsite [support]. There's been a little bit here and there… Somebody needs to handhold employers or at least feed them the information they need. Employers are willing to listen. It's just they don't have the resources right now." (Interviewee 11)

By contrast, most focus group participants spoke positively about their partnerships with service organizations, including WorkBC and credited these supports with addressing the necessary capacity they lacked to pursue more inclusive forms of employment. Where focus group participants noted challenges was with respect to addressing more complex barriers, whether that be with respect to addressing the costs of making buildings accessible or when they have difficulty navigating what publicly funded supports and programs are available to help employees.

This was true of some interviewees who expressed they lacked the expertise to identify and remove barriers and to understand the best ways to work with employees with disabilities. They noted that there was a lack of experts to work with, which could make employers more cautious about trying to be a more disability-inclusive organization. For example, one employer shared an experience where a service organization had made recommendations about workplace adjustments that did not match the employee's preferences or expectations. While the employer was able to address the issues and work with the employee, the employer noted that this lack of expertise was challenging and contributed to a perceived risk employers feel of making mistakes that could impact people with disabilities negatively:

"There's a cost. There is an expertise gap. I would say in terms of folks who can actually facilitate those things, so everyone is trying to become their own expert. And then, you know, you do get to that place where if we can't do it well, we don't want to do it because in terms of those more public facing where you don't have a relationship with the person, it's one thing with an employee where you can have an ongoing relationship and say, sorry, my bad. But if you invite someone into the [organization] and really get it wrong, that's not a great experience… Maybe we're not looking in the right places, but there does seem to just be a lack of expertise and just where to go, both on the employment and on the public facing front." (Interviewee 10)

Addressing Complex Barriers to Employment

Interviewees recognized the lack of publicly available support for employee mental health, and the pandemic's impact on employee wellbeing compelled them to address this, thereby enhancing overall accessibility and inclusivity. They responded by providing additional staff training, enhancing employee benefits, and offering resources for management. They increasingly felt responsible for addressing employees' mental health needs in the workplace:

"Everybody's got some challenges, whether it's suffering from anxiety, that's popped up because of COVID, [or] because of the pandemic depression that may have come into play… that's happened with all of our team members. So having that… understanding has been really key with how to make sure that we've got solutions and that we can make sure that everything's working within our business." (Interviewee 6)

While many interviewees acknowledged their organizations' increased focus on mental health support, they also highlighted the lag in employer capacity. Consequently, employers often felt ill-equipped to promote staff wellbeing, both financially and interpersonally. Middle management sometimes acted as "stand-in social workers," diverting manager resources into addressing employees' mental health challenges. Some rural employers were frustrated by the cost of bringing in experts from urban areas.

Focus group participants noted that their employees faced complex barriers, including physical health issues, poverty, and food insecurity, which often intersect and compound, creating multifaceted challenges:

"There's mental health, there's physical. But then there's also the poverty aspect, and we've got some amazing people that there's so much potential. But trying to overcome this with them when they're taking medication that makes them depressed and it makes them, like, super-hot so they can only work certain times of the year because they just run … into a depression spiral and then they can't work. And then they worry about being able to pay the bills. So, it's just this terrible thing that we see all the time." (Manufacturing Focus Group)

Small business owners in focus groups grappled with the challenge of providing livable wages to their employees, especially in high-cost areas like Metro Vancouver, where they felt it would render their businesses unsustainable. Even with wage subsidies, disparities remained, hindering their ability to meet their employees' financial needs. While these employers recognized the importance of higher wages, they emphasized their inability to shoulder the burden of addressing the cost-of-living crisis:

"I'm looking at the system and I'm going "we honestly need a guaranteed income" because not everybody can make as much money as they need to be able to in order to survive in our economy here… it's unfortunately killing a lot of the small businesses." (Manufacturing Focus Group)

To address these challenges, one social enterprise noted that their model focuses on hiring people with multiple barriers to employment also included an in-house peer employment support worker, offering comprehensive assistance to address complex issues like substance use and mental health. This approach fostered an inclusive and supportive workplace broadly, aligning with their social mission.

Few interviewees were knowledgeable about, or utilized wage subsidies, indicating that they would hire people with disabilities regardless of additional financial support. Addressing vacancies was their primary concern. Interviewees also noted that employee turnover was influenced by a tight labour market, especially in certain sectors like hospitality, where employees could move or change jobs quickly. Given seasonally adjusted staffing needs, some felt that wage subsidies were not practical to accommodate those fluctuating conditions, making them unsuitable.

By contrast, focus group participants had more experience with wage subsidies, but held divergent views on their usefulness, adequacy of funding, and overall effectiveness. While some participants relied on wage subsidies to address the costs of training and to provide more opportunities to employees for individualized approaches, others felt strongly that they don't contribute to long-term retention (i.e., when the subsidy ends, so does employment). Likewise, while some employers highlighted the effectiveness of wage subsidies helping to offset the costs of training roles with more refined skills, others felt that wage subsidies were insufficient to cover the length of time it takes to onboard and train an employee. These employers noted that for certain positions, such as software development, training and onboarding can take months and there is still no guarantee that the employee will onboard successfully. However, if the employee doesn't work out, there was no mechanism to renew the subsidy to try again. Finally, some employers felt that wage subsidies did not adequately cover the costs of employees' mental health supports or provide a living wage, and some noted that wage subsidy eligibility requirements were difficult to navigate.

Some non-profit employers highlighted that government funding is structured in a way that creates a competitive landscape amongst organizations instead of fostering collaboration or pooling of resources to promote inclusion. These employers acknowledged that greater collaboration could contribute to sustainability for inclusive initiatives and longer-term employee wellbeing, which is an ongoing challenge due to the nature of short-term, competitive funding cycles. They noted that the nature of this funding not only has negative consequences for them as employers, but also the vulnerable communities that they serve:

"… What happens when these contracts are cancelled, or your organization doesn't win those[?]… The members of that population still come to your organization and they're looking for a certain staff member that they've had a connection with, and they may be gone. And so, it impacts the community and the population tremendously when the funding is competitive and unreliable, not long-term thinking." (Vantage Point Focus Group)

Labour Market

In a competitive labor market, inclusive hiring practices emerged as a necessity for attracting and retaining talent. Employers recognized the value of tapping into diverse talent pools through inclusive employment conditions, viewing people with disabilities as a valuable, "untapped" resource. Furthermore, they observed improved retention rates among individuals with disabilities, noting their reputation for reliability and loyalty to their roles:

"With other employers, other small businesses, talking about it [I'd] say: 'Hey, are you looking for staff? Because there's a huge part of society that is available. And if you're willing to put in some extra time and some extra effort here and there, they'll be super loyal. They'll do the job really well and it'll make your life easier." (Interviewee 6)

Similarly, one interviewee with lived experience with disability suggested that they were intentional about hiring people with disabilities because such employees were perceived to be more committed to their jobs, paid more attention to detail, and were more loyal to the employer.

Echoing this sentiment, focus group participants agreed that inclusive hiring practices were essential to address labor shortages, recognizing people with disabilities as an untapped talent pool. They emphasized that embracing DEI wasn't just a moral imperative but also a sound economic decision for long-term success:

"… There's good employees out there that have been kind of an untapped resource that I think, you know, the community is starting to be a little bit more willing to spend that extra time to get a really good long term financial benefit. It just makes good business sense, right? People that are living in town don't have to look for this to live. Perhaps, you know, they just need a few things, you know?" (Terrace Focus Group)

Success factors

Employers emphasized that open-mindedness, empathy, and flexibility are key to fostering inclusive workplaces. They also expressed the need for guidance, support, and resource-sharing among peers. Employers want to learn directly from one another with practical examples on the benefits of disability inclusion.

Success Factors and Transferrable Approaches

Interviewees were asked to reflect on transferable approaches, key success factors, and advice they could share with other employers at the beginning of their journey to be inclusive. Many interviewees highlighted factors related to an open mindset and leaving any preconceived biases and judgements with respect to disability behind. Likewise, interviewees with lived experience emphasized that approaching accessibility and inclusion with compassion and empathy was the most important quality that an employer could have:

"I think this [person-first approach] is transferable to all organizations across the globe because we're talking about the golden rule. Treat people the way you wish to be treated period, right? … I feel like more and more employers need to stop virtue signaling what they think is the right thing to say… because we are in a time where people are so afraid to say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing because they don't want to be canceled. I say you're 'cancel-proof' if you're a good person and you just approach people with compassion and empathy. Right? There's nothing that can be canceled when you admit your faults and you understand that you're not perfect in all aspects, but that you're willing and open to learn… They're just forgetting the fact that it's not about playing up to people's sensitivities. It's about playing up to their strengths." (Interviewee 4)

Interviewees with lived experience emphasized the importance of engaging in open conversations with employees about their individual strengths, needs, and preferences. They stressed that disability experiences vary widely, and what works in one context may not in another. Rather than relying only on self-disclosure, they advocated for proactive removal of barriers for all employees, with options to tailor the work environment to individual strengths.

Focus group participants echoed the importance of bringing flexibility, open-mindedness, and embracing new ways of working that foster disability inclusion. They underscored the importance of bringing different perspectives and being able to see things differently:

"… I really appreciate [the partnership] because it [helped] myself… think about it in a different way and to think about who's using our space, how is it being used? How can we make this work? And I really appreciate when I go to the staff and say, 'this is what's going on, this is the needs of the person. This is what they're interested in doing. What can we what can we do?' Everybody is very supportive about saying, 'Well, I think this could work or we could make that work.' And so, I really appreciate that aspect of… [helping] the staff see things in a different way and see how we can do things differently and that flexibility, and so I appreciate that too." (Terrace Focus Group)

In addition to personal traits like open-mindedness and curiosity, interviewees and focus group participants highlighted the value of guidance, support, and resource sharing with other employers. They emphasized the importance of participating in learning events and networks where employers could collaborate and share experiences, preventing redundant efforts. These employers were eager to share their insights and resources to educate others about the benefits of disability inclusion:

"I'll basically tell any [employer] and I've done this for years… 'Here's our model, here's our resources. Here's everything we developed. You can have it and then just put your logo'… I'm all about sharing resources because I really want to educate other parties around how they can make changes as well." (Interviewee 9)

Several employers also commented that they need more concrete examples of employers who do this well, acknowledging that they were still on a journey to become more inclusive. As such, the case studies that will further explore enabling conditions and structures for disability-inclusive employment and how employers respond to barriers that exist beyond their walls, will serve as important examples in terms of their successes, innovations, and how they address or overcome challenges.

Summary of Learning

This summary of learning from interviews and focus groups with employers and entrepreneurs across British Columbia has contributed an understanding of employers' approaches to disability inclusion at work, how their approaches are nested within personal lived experiences, as well as larger social, political, and economic contexts.
From the pivotal role of individual factors in shaping attitudes toward disability inclusion to the significance of open dialogue, flexibility, and transparency in fostering the full participation of individuals with disabilities, employers illuminated how such "everyday" actions can meaningfully contribute to inclusive employment.

Employers and entrepreneurs with disabilities emphasized the urgent need for improved coordination, clarity, and access to publicly funded supports and services. They navigated complex barriers to employment and the systems designed to address them. Employers sometimes felt challenged balancing immediate pressures with long-term solutions to ensure the flourishing of their employees, organizations, and communities. Lastly, interviewees and focus group participants expressed eagerness to learn from one another and emphasized the importance of diverse examples and stories directly from disability-inclusive employers.

APPENDIX A: Dimensions of Inclusive Employment

SRDC conducted a targeted review of the evidence on inclusive employment to identify a variety of dimensions known to contribute to better outcomes for people with disabilities. These dimensions are reflected in the sub-research questions proposed for primary data collection.

Table 1 Methods to access and retrieve materials

Method	Description
Search for academic literature	- Use of Google Scholar, EBSCO, ProQuest, and Scholars Portal to identify areas, factors, and frameworks for understanding inclusive employment for people with disabilities and those experiencing other barriers to employment. - Search terms consisted of combinations related to the specific population (people with disabilities), jurisdictions (results limited to Canada and the US), and employment. Results were limited to publication year of no earlier than 2010.
Targeted scan of grey literature and employer tools/guides	- Review of inclusive workplace practices and guides from Canadian organizations (Inclusion Canada, CASDA, ODEN, President's Group, CASE, Conference Board of Canada, Parkinson Canada, Ready Willing & Able, and Restigouche CBDC) - Review of inclusive employment frameworks from international sources (Gartner Inclusion Index, Handicap International 5 Dimensions of an Inclusive Company, Disability:IN Disability Equality Index, UK Disability Confident Employer (Level 2), National Organization on Disability Employment Tracker).

In total 30 resources were reviewed and coded in NVivo, which identified seven dimensions of inclusive employment. These dimensions are not mutually exclusive nor exhaustive, and the sources we reviewed emphasized the mutually reinforcing nature of these dimensions. However, they help to establish an evidence-based framework to further investigate the unique experiences of B.C. employers.

Table 2 Dimensions of inclusive employment

Dimension	Description	Sub-Research Question
1. Leadership & Manage-ment Approaches	• Includes leadership commitment, but also recognizes specific leadership characteristics (i.e., humility), role of senior management and direct supervisors in contributing to inclusive workplaces, the importance of representation in senior ranks, mentorship, and modelling inclusion.	• What are the characteristics of inclusive leaders/management of B.C. employers/entrepreneurs and what facilitates this type of leadership?
2. Employment & HR Practices	• A broad category encompassing organizational policies and procedures with respect to non-discrimination and accommodations, but also practices with respect to recruitment, hiring, retention, promotion, training, job flexibility, attendance, performance management, and occupational health. This category also includes considerations with respect to compensation, benefits, return to work, and emergency policies and procedures.	• What specific employment and HR practices have contributed to creating an inclusive workplace? What practices were easy for employers/entrepreneurs to operationalize and what practices were more challenging and why?
3. Physical Accessibility (Including Technology)	• Identification and elimination of physical barriers in the workplace as well as access to assistive technology or approaches to inclusive or universal design to ensure accessible environments for all staff.	• How have employers/entrepreneurs addressed issues accessibility in their work environments and in technology used in the workplace? What broader conditions have supported them in this process?

Table 2 Dimensions of inclusive employment (continued)

Dimension	Description	Sub-Research Question
4. Decision-Making and Communication	• Includes specific governance features (e.g., inclusion of stakeholders in governance), mechanisms for employee engagement/employee voice, Employee Resource Groups for people with disabilities, and communications styles that focus on accessibility/plain language, consensus, and transparency/regularity of communication on inclusion efforts, successes, and challenges.	• What decision-making and communications strategies can employers/entrepreneurs identify that contribute to workplace inclusion? What contributes to their effectiveness?
5. Partnerships	• Intentional partnerships with community and organizations serving people with disabilities, as well as strategies for public-private-partnerships, emphasis on supplier/partner diversity, and procurement.	• What role do partnerships with other businesses, organizations, and within the community play in creating inclusive employment?
6. Measurement & Account-ability	• Emphasis on setting goals and measurement strategies for workplace inclusion, a focus on continuous improvement and positioning inclusion as a journey as opposed to a time-limited initiative.	• How is progress defined and measured? What influences the ways in which employers/entrepreneurs articulate accountability to employees and to the public?
7. Culture & Values	• Various characteristics identified include celebration of difference, emphasis on learning/growth, flexibility and collaboration, authenticity and brining the "whole self" to work, and incorporating inclusion into employer mission, vision, and values.	• How do employers/entrepreneurs understand inclusive employment within the context of the organization's mission, vision, and values? • How do employers and entrepreneurs foster a culture of inclusion through specific behaviours, mindsets, or other practices? How do broader societal values and beliefs influence these? For employers who are guided by a stated social mission with regards to their business and employment practices, to what extent are these social values reflected in their inclusive employment practices?

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Case Study Report

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Introduction

Following the earlier phases of this project; literature review, environmental scan, interviews, and focus groups; phase three ("where do we want to go?") involved in-depth case studies conducted by the UBC Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship research team in partnership with Regenerem Consulting. This phase sought to explore three main areas of inquiry: 1) What are the enabling conditions that exist within the workplace (i.e. accessible building, living wage, task modification), 2) How does the workplace respond to structural barriers that exist beyond its walls/culture (i.e. located on a bus route, flexible schedule, training managers about inclusion and nonviolent communication, actively fostering natural supports, business model, guiding values, internal workplace policies), and 3) What enabling structures are embedded in the workplace (i.e. stable baseline funding, political priorities at a government level, organizational partnerships, community support, economic context, cultural norms)?

The prior stages of this project supported the identification of several case examples of models of inclusive employment practices across B.C. Case study was used to examine these models in more depth and identify structural conditions and employment practices that promote meaningful employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Case study has a long and rich tradition within qualitative methods, focused on allowing researchers to take an in-depth look at a particular circumstance, drawing out detailed and holistic understandings from small sample size (Tight, 2017). Ethical approval for this phase of the project was obtained from the UBC Research Ethics Board. An external review was completed by the British Columbia Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills.

Case Study Selection

Recruitment for case studies was done using a purposive sampling approach and included only participants who had responded to the previous environmental scan who had indicated consent to participate in later phases of the project. Potential cases were identified and discussed with the broader project team members and included all types of organizations/businesses who employ (including self-employ) persons with disabilities in British Columbia as permanent/regular paid employees regardless of size, economic/business model, profitability or sector. Diversity across demographics (i.e. sector, size, business model, disability status of employees, etc..) was prioritized and potential cases were excluded if they were not identified as inclusive employers in the environmental scan, and/or if persons with disabilities were only in volunteer, training, or fully subsidized employment roles.

CASE STUDY	In which region of British Columbia does your business/ organization primarily operate? Please select all that apply.	Which sector of the labour market best represents your business/ organization? Please select all that apply. - Selected Choice	What type of structure best describes your business/ organization? Please select all that apply. - Selected Choice	How many total full-time and part-time employees (permanent or contract) does your business/ organization employ?
Solo-preneurs	Across Canada (including British Columbia)	Educational/ Professional Services	For-profit	1 (self-employed)
Joni	Across Canada (including British Columbia)	Retail	For-profit, social enterprise	5 - 9 people
Alinker	Across Canada (including British Columbia)	Healthcare/ Retail	For-profit	10 - 19 people
Northern Lights	Across Canada (including British Columbia)	Agriculture, Retail	For-profit	30 (off-season) to 100
ILV	Okanagan	Social Services	Non-profit	5 - 9 people
One Light	Vancouver Island	Manufacturing, Retail	Social Enterprise	5 - 9 people

CASE STUDY	Does your business/organization offer any profit-sharing or shared ownership options with employees (for example bonuses, stock options, RRSP matching)?	Is your business/organization owned or led by an Indigenous, First Nations, Inuit, or Metis person?	Is your business/organization owned or led by someone with a disability or who identifies as disabled?
Solopreneurs	N/A	No	Yes
Joni	Yes	No	No
Alinker	Yes	No	Yes
Northern Lights	No	No	No
ILV	No	Yes	Yes
One Light	No	No	I do not know

CASE STUDY	Are there individuals with disabilities in leadership positions within your business/ organization?	To the best of your knowledge, what percentage of your workforce has a known disability or identify as disabled?	Does your business/ organization have a formal diversity declaration? (for example a written Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) statement?	Does your business/ organization intentionally recruit and hire people with disabilities or who identify as disabled?
Solopreneurs	Yes	100%	N/A	N/A
Joni	No	25-49%	Yes, and it is shared internally AND posted/shared publicly	Yes
Alinker	Yes	25-49%	Yes, it is shared internally	No
Northern Lights	No	5-10%	Yes, it is shared internally	Yes
ILV	Yes	75-100%	Yes, it is shared internally	Yes
One Light	I do not know	50-74%	Yes, and it is shared internally AND posted/shared publicly	Yes

CASE STUDY	Does your business/ organization use disability-friendly recruitment and hiring processes?	Is disability inclusion central to your business/ organizational mission?	Does your business/ organization partner with local disability organizations/ agencies to support the hiring and/or retention of disabled employees?	Does your business/ organization receive subsidies or funding to hire and/or retain disabled employees?
Solopreneurs	N/A	Yes, definitely	N/A	N/A
Joni	Yes, definitely	Yes, definitely	Yes, we partner with several disability organizations	Yes
Alinker	Yes, definitely	Yes, definitely	Yes, we partner with several disability organizations	No
Northern Lights	Yes, through disability support organization	No	Yes	No
ILV	Yes, definitely	Yes, definitely	No	No
One Light	Yes, definitely	Yes, definitely	Yes, we partner with several disability organizations	Yes

Procedures

Data was collected from multiple sources, including publicly available information about the organization, internal document review, observation and interviews with key informants (over the age of 18) including employees, founders, leadership, and solopreneurs.

Interview participants were invited to share some demographic information about themselves as well as the business/organization that they were being invited to share about. A semi- structured interview guide was developed by the research team to invite participants to share more qualitatively their experiences with employment and inclusion, including the influence of values, policies and practices on inclusive employment. See Appendix A for the semi-structured interview guide.

All interview participants completed informed consent forms and were advised that all the data would be shared in connection with the name of their business/organization, including solopreneurs who would be personally identified through the dissemination of data. Informed consent procedures were conducted before all internal document review and interviews. Interview participants were informed they could opt out of answering any questions, could end the interview at any time, and could request their data not be included in the overall findings; at no consequence to them. An honorarium of $100 was offered to all participants who agreed to be interviewed.

All interviews were conducted by two research team members and were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. When data collection was completed, raw data (audio recording and transcription) was downloaded and stored by the UBC team on an encrypted and secure folder. The raw data will be saved for a minimum of 5 years post-publication as required by UBC Ethics.

For this project, analysis was conducted with a translational goal in mind, meaning rather than a traditional qualitative case study approach that offers a deep and individualized exploration of a phenomenon; we sought to highlight patterns across practices and process to develop a thematic consensus that can be used to directly inform consideration and development of best practice initiatives. Data analysis was iterative and emerging themes/points of connection were discussed among team members in an attempt to reduce individual researcher bias.

The Case Studies

The case studies involved in this study represented a diverse range of businesses/organizations and approaches. Three are small for-profit businesses with strong social purpose commitments (Alinker, Joni, Northern Lights Estate Winery {NLEW}). One is a disability related non-profit (Independent Living Vernon {ILV}). One is an initiative of a disability support agency specifically designed to create employment for disabled persons[1] and other marginalized populations (One Light), and one case study comprised two disabled solopreneurs who were also representing for- profit businesses with strong social purpose commitments. Some were specifically developed as disability inclusive employment vehicles (One Light), others included inclusive hiring as part of their broader commitments to inclusivity and social purpose (NLEW, Joni, Alinker, ILV). Two case studies reflected an approach where hiring disabled people reflected the knowledge they brought to the work which non-disabled employees may not have (Independent Living Vernon, Alinker). The solopreneurs represent a further variation where self-employment is the vehicle to achieve working conditions that suit their needs as disabled persons and are often hard to achieve in the general employment landscape, conditions though that are also present in many ways with the other case studies. Finally, three represented for profit entities (Alinker, Joni, NLEW) as did the solopreneurs.

The case studies also represented a broad range of disabled persons; including people with physical, cognitive, learning, mental health disabilities and neurodivergence. Some participants in the case studies had a single disability type (NLEW, ILV, Alinker), some mixed (Joni, One Light). Some case studies had a majority of workers with disabilities or other employment challenges (One Light, ILV) while others had a minority of disabled employees (Joni, Alinker, NLEW).

Despite this broad diversity of employment settings and approaches, several common themes emerged as to what makes them effective inclusive employers.

Please see the case study summaries in Appendix B.

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[1] This report uses both 'identity first' language as in 'disabled person' and person first language as in 'person with a disability' to reflect the different preference of the various participants.

Findings

Culture, Values and Commitment

A common feature of all of the case studies was a shared set of values and a culture of inclusion. This was true both for those businesses/organizations which had a specific commitment to disability (ILV, One Light), the solopreneurs, and the for-profit enterprises (Joni, Alinker, NLEW).

Often this was a broader commitment than disability inclusion encompassing values such as sustainability and gender equality. Joni for example does not specifically identify disability inclusion but the broader values of the company naturally incorporate this in a culture which is committed to its mission of period care equity, support for women investors and, ethical and sustainable product components and production. Joni Participant 4 shares, *"something else that we're very excited about is, um, we're starting to create our application to become a B Corp 2 company. Um, and so, that's something again solidifies our commitment to people, the environment, and then profits. And I would honestly say that it's in that order. Um, uh, we're a business, so being profitable and, and again, paying our, you know, employees for their services is important, but not more important than the, the greater mission that we serve."* Through its "essence statement 3 ," Alinker supports and promotes the work of reconciliations with Indigenous people and support for Indigenous women entrepreneurs and has obtained B Corp status demonstrating this broader social purpose and commitment orientation.

One Light, which has a specific mission of inclusive employment, is also committed to sustainable and ethically sourced material and production. NLEW was to a large extent a business developed specifically to give back to the community and inclusive employment flows from this broader commitment.

ILV Participant 1 explained, *"I've been really trying to work on, you know, ensuring that that we're not just focused on disability, either. Right? That we're focused on people as like as people. You know all the parts of who they are that come along with them right?"*

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[2] Designation as a B Corp means a company meets high social and environmental standards (and commits to improving their performance in those areas) in addition to pursuing financial success. The application process and designation is managed via B Lab, which assesses the company's performance on five major categories: governance, workers, community, the environment, and customers. It also looks at the overall impact. More information available from **https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/**

[3] Alinker Essence Statement is found at **https://thealinker.ca/pages/our-essence**

Both solopreneurs ran businesses that purposely sought to meet the needs and goals of persons from marginalized populations. They both spoke about how their business practices shone a light on the broader systemic gaps and oppressive structures that impact people's disability. For example, one stated *"I work with folks who have been most impacted by patriarchy and other problems of oppression. And so, you know, we're working with, you know, people that are burnt out by capitalism and then beating themselves over the c... uh, about not getting the creative practice down, and it's like, well, look at the system."*

The commitment of ownership/leadership both to inclusion and the broader social purposes noted above was a key common feature across all of the case studies. While present in all of the case studies it is particularly notable in the for-profit case studies where the social purposes were equal to or more important than making a profit. In one instance the leadership for example indicated that they would not compromise their social purpose simply to make or increase profit and had in fact turned down investors who were not willing to accept their commitment to return 5% of revenues to community organizations to promote period care equity. This privileging of social purpose over profit was a key difference between many of the case studies and traditional for-profit enterprises. While social purpose (including inclusive employment) was often prioritized this did not mean profitability was sacrificed, but that the costs associated with this were simply viewed as part of the cost of doing [good] business. This seems to be a paradigmatic feature of the new inclusive economy.

A further feature was that in most of the case studies the value base of the enterprise was up front and overt either through specific DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) statements or, more commonly, through the communication between leadership/ownership and employees or prospective employees. Some of the case studies did have formal DEI statements and while this was not directly expressed, it felt as if these were seen as redundant or unnecessary given the overall culture of the enterprise. Alinker has a robust 'essence' statement affirming its commitment to reconciliation and highlighting a culture of social commitment and purpose.

Similarly, inclusion or inclusive employment training was provided in some cases but this was generally not mandatory or consistent across the enterprise. Again, while not stated, this seemed not to be a reflection of a lack of commitment to inclusion but rather a feeling that such training was not necessary given the overall culture of the enterprise. The nature of the training was also more broadly focused on lived experience rather than inclusive employment per se. As NLEW Participant 5 notes: *"[A local autism trainer] did a, a little kind of workshop sort of with us, to try to give us an idea of what it is like to process things, and what it's like to have autism. And that was really beneficial. I, I would love it if they could come back and do that again. And I thought it was really, really great."* Instead of providing specific information on hiring and supporting autistic people, the training was focused on understanding autistic perspectives and experiences.

Joni Participant 2: *"It's you're already including people no matter what. It, it, that's what I, that's like how I saw it anyways, when I got trained onto it, it was just like, they're unap-, unapologetically, like inclusive to everyone, and it's just, this is who we are. Um, from what I, from what I'm seeing, like again, I didn't have like a, I don't see like a formal training and I, I didn't see that. I just was trained for my actual job and then was told that we have workers with disabilities that you are gonna work with and, and this is how we've, and I think 'cause it is at this time, it's a small business, so it is very much like we all are talking to each other every day."*

Participant 5 further spoke about the impact Alinker's commitment to truth and reconciliation has had on her, *"It's been amazing. Um, again, I've, I've never felt so accepted for, uh, the way I think and the way I believe, um, at any place I've ever worked. Um, I've had other places where I worked where I said I was indigenous and people laughed, (laughs), or people, you know, made jokes about it. Um, you know, all those kinds of things. Um, it's always been, that's always been a struggle to, to be looked at as different and not having that identity valued. And with Alinker, it's valued. It's, it's seen as, as a positive thing, and it's seen as, um, uh, wisdom that's, that's to be shared."*

Solopreneurs also spoke about the impact of less inclusive cultures on their own sustainability as an employee and drive to turn to self-employment. For example, in speaking about their past experiences as an employee, one stated: *"I feel like I'm just starting to recognize, too, how much value to misalignment was an issue for me, that autistic and maybe neuro-atypical in general thing where we, like, feel, like, justice really strongly. Um, I really struggled with that misalignment in my corporate job. Um, and even before I kinda got radicalized, like, when I started working that job, I still was like, "Capitalism is fine, it just needs to be reformed." And I have... no, (laughs) not anymore. Uh, so getting more and more radicalized, I think, and, like, m- more and more leftist over time, I think really aggravated that and I think I can, looking back, I can recognize the toll that took on me, that dissonance, cognitive dissonance took on me, um, both in terms of, like, the work I was doing, and both what people around me were saying and doing. "*

Joni Participant 5 spoke to the impact inclusive teams and culture has had on their own job satisfaction and success, *"Like anecdotally, throughout my career, I have had more success, and have had more fulfilling roles when I work with people that bring in diverse experiences and ideas. And that could be lived experiences, that could be, you know education, that could be a whole host of things, but I find that we are... Like the fabric of the culture and the baseline of how we work becomes much stronger."*

Building Employment and Roles Around People's Strengths, Skills, and Needs.

Across case studies, participants spoke about the value of being in a role where the responsibilities were created or adapted to align with their unique strengths, skills, and needs. This reflects in many ways a traditional customized employment approach common in disability employment, specifically in relation to individuals with intellectual disabilities and more complex needs. In our case studies this was described differently as something adopted across employee populations and tended to flow naturally within the culture of the business and was not a 'special accommodation' for disabled employees. With the slight exception of NLEW, external customized employment agencies were not involved in any of the case studies; rather, employers and employees work through what was required in a largely organic manner. It is important to note that with these employers this applied to most if not all employees and not just disabled employees.

Alinker Participant 5 explained their experience in joining the organization: *"I had recently lost my position on my, on previous online position, and in talking <Participant 1> heard that, and she just kind of said to me, "How would you like to come work for the Alinker?" And I basically said, "What (laughs)?" And, um, she just said, "Well, you know, in talking to you, it sounds like you've got a lot of talents that we can use and, you know, I'd love to have you come on board." And I said, "Well, what would my position be?" And she basically said, "You got a lot of things we can use, we'll figure it out."*

This model of shaping a position around an employee's individual skills and strengths was adopted across all positions within Alinker. Participant 2 talked about the impact this model of employment has on the culture of the organization, *"Challenging yourself to be more aware about who you actually are… And so I think it's probably not very often that we find organizations that we want you to individually be the best version of you."*

Joni Participant 3 shares how this works for their organization, *"And then just to think of sort of each person holistically. Everybody has strengths, and everybody has things that are, they're challenged at. So creating a strength-based, um, environment, I think is the goal of any organization. And so then your focus is not on what tasks people can't do, or how this employee is failing, but what, how can we, um, leverage the strengths that each person and create an environment that's gonna optimize that. There, those are my two cents (laughs)."*

Clear, Informal, And Regular Communication

As with the above, this was not exclusive to disabled employees but part of the broader culture of the enterprise. Most took a dialogic approach rather than a top-down approach. While the employers would set the goals and nature of the work, how this was achieved was determined more through both formal and informal discussion and dialogue between the employer and the employees. The knowledge that one could contact the people in management when required, often informally, promoted a sense of security and confidence amongst employees, disabled and non-disabled alike. Similarly, those in management positions had confidence that employees would reach out as needed and hence complex or overbearing oversight mechanisms were not required. In short, this type of employee and employer communication was not only more efficient but also instilled confidence in all members of the team, from management to employee alike. While this applied equally to disabled and non-disabled employees, for disabled employees it likely represents a welcome break from what is frequently an experience of detailed and regular oversight and directive communication from both employers and employment support workers.

ILV Participant 3 explains, *"We feel comfortable talking to each other about what's going on. I think that makes a very big difference for our workplace compared to other workplaces. Everyone has the opportunity to share their concerns and barriers."*

Solopreneurs spoke about how they modelled this clear, informal, and regular communication with their clients and how this allowed them to show up and be present as they are in their role. For example, one solopreneur stated:

"I'm still allowed to be seen even when I'm unwell, and there's so much about, like, having to, like, hide being unwell, um, because shamed of showing up unwell, all of those kinds of things. So, I think it's just also, like, being able to be met where you are, and to be able to, like, show up however you can show up."

ILV Participant 2 notes, *"Things are not as black and white here. So there's room to go into like a gray area, and to go into seeing different inputs and not always the same outcomes."*

Flexibility

Flexibility was one of the most significant and frequently cited aspects noted by virtually all case study participants as a key facilitator of inclusive employment. This had a number of different components. First was flexibility around hours of work. Having the ability to choose when to work allowed employees the ability to work around times when their disability, health, or other issues may need attention.

Flexibility around hours of work allowed employees to have agency in determining when to work, without compromising their employment status or requiring them to seek specific accommodations or leaves, which can be stigmatizing and challenging. The solopreneurs cited flexibility as a key benefit to self-employment as they did not have to negotiate with anyone should they need to take time off for disability or related matters. For example, one solopreneur stated "Yeah, and if I'm having a day when I really just can't focus, uh, it's fine, I don't really have to. I can just take the pressure off myself and if I get things done, great, and if I don't, I don't."

Similarly, the ability to take time off when required due to health or other issues allowed employees the flexibility to continue employment while still attending to health and disability related issues. This was not unlimited and varied with the business type. One Light and NLEW were able to offer significant latitude in this respect whereas the for-profit enterprises took the view that so long as the work gets done and people keep them informed they were happy to accommodate these needs. Alinker Participant 5 shares:

"Well, I'm working entirely remotely, so I'm working from home. So it's, it's perfect. I mean, I'm, I can be comfortable. I can be, you know, if I'm having a really bad day, I can be in my bed in my pajamas if I want to, as long as I don't have, you know, a meeting. And if I have a meeting, I, I'm only from here up, so (laughs). Um, so yeah. And, and it allows me, um, Alinker pretty much allows me to set my own schedule. So if I'm having a, a really rough day, a really high pain day, I can just say, "Hey, I'm, I'm not good today. I'm probably gonna be offline, and, uh, I'll catch you tomorrow."

One solopreneur captured this in stating *"Like, I'm so, so aware that I could not work at a regular job. There's just no way. Um, and I also reflect on how wild it is that I can still run a business, have a creative practice, have a full life. I do have all of these things while it not being symmetrical or regular. Like, it's really based on what my body has decided to do at any given time."*

A key facilitator was the flexibility afforded by virtual working. This was most evident with the for-profit enterprises Joni and Alinker, as well as the solopreneurs, who all work almost exclusively virtually. Transportation is frequently cited as a major barrier by disabled workers and virtual work solves this problem without a need for special interventions or accommodations. What is interesting here is that working remotely or virtually is not seen as an accommodation but as the most effective way of conducting business. Joni Participant 2 shares, "<We're> s*uper flexible. Um, and I think, yeah, I think from, from the get-go,* <my boss>*, when I was getting hired on, she was like, "I don't care what your hours are, as long as you're getting them done." Like, like if you're working, you know, the morning, take a break in the afternoon, come back in the evening. If that's what works best for you, then do it. I'm not looking to like micromanage that portion of it. I'm just looking for somebody to get their work done and respond to me when I need something, you know, kind of urgently."*

In addition to flexibility of when work was completed, several spoke to the flexibility in *how* they approached their work. Participant 1 from ILV shared:

"It's really important to me, like I'm able to work here and practice social work the way I think social work should be practiced right? It's informed by you know who I am as a person, my cultural values…And so, being able to have an employer that I can practice social work that aligns with, that is everything right? And so so yeah, so it's the flexibility to do the job. But then it's also the flexibility to like practice."

Incorporating Inclusion and Viability/Sustainability

While some of the case studies were explicitly not intended to be profitable or did not prioritize profit (ILV, One Light) all case studies sought to be inclusive, viable and sustainable. In other words, while they held the social purpose in equal or greater regard than profit, all sought to be viable and sustainable and not just vehicles for inclusion. The for profit and solopreneurs had a reasonable traditional approach to financial viability. In the case of the solopreneurs, this approach was supported by knowledge, information and mentorship to enhance the viability and sustainability of the business. For One Light, which was always conceived as primarily a social purpose enterprise and a 'learning lab', this took the form of applying business principles and practices to the work to ensure maximum sustainability as a business and typical workplace environment. For ILV this took the form of a typical non-profit and the performance of the core functions of the agency were never secondary to the goal of inclusivity.

Both solopreneurs spoke about the ongoing balancing of accessibility for clients with their own financial viability. This balance was made more challenging due to the fact that they both regularly and purposely offered sliding scale rates for clients who may not be able to access their services otherwise. One specifically advertises on their website sliding scale rates for Black, Indigenous, and Trans-identifying clients (Crows Nest Organizing). Additionally, solopreneurs spoke about how the limited and space availability of external resources to support the growth of their business in becoming more financially viable. For example, one solopreneur stated: *"I know how to do my job where I work with my clients, but everything else has been a really steep learning curve and it was really hard to find accessible resources, and I think it did impact my ability to find funding. I ended up funding my business off of personal line of credit, rather than a business loan, which wasn't ideal, but it was the only thing that was really accessible to me at the time, and I don't know if I could've done this without having had my own good credit."*

Finally, none of the case studies viewed the employment of disabled or other equity seeking groups as detrimental to their broader goals as an enterprise and in many cases the employment of disabled persons was seen as value added to the enterprise.

For example, Alinker employed many users of their product as they were best placed to support clients in accessing and using their product. NLEW valued the availability of a workforce willing to work seasonally while ILV valued the knowledge that disabled persons brought to their work, which enhanced their contributions to the work of ILV.

In many cases, there was also a financial benefit to being overtly inclusive or having broad social purpose commitments. Prospective customers increasingly want to know that the businesses they are engaging with not only provide a good product or service but also have strong social values and commitments. Beyond marketing, investors are also increasingly conscious of the sustainability and social impact of companies they invest in.

In speaking to his reasons for investing with Alinker, Participant 3 notes his desire to only invest in social purpose ventures: *"There's a lot going on that's focused on inclusiveness in investors, especially with female led and startups. So, then I started to invest in startups, only either with a purpose, or it should be a female led."*

In conducting these case studies, we have observed a range of businesses/organizations navigating where there are tensions between profit imperatives of business on one hand and social purpose and disability inclusion supports on the other. Some of our case studies see themselves as involved in systems change while trying to operate within or at least adjacent to the existing system. Moving towards ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) investing, social purpose businesses is increasingly a demand-side factor through which consumers are asking for evidence of social responsibility to multiple stakeholders. Consumers are prepared to pay more for products that – at a minimum – do not harm the planet or other people. Younger generations in particular will avoid purchasing from companies that either do not have demonstrate positive social impact or engage in greenwashing[4] or social washing[5] to seem as if they do.

Anecdotally, the same issue regarding systems change is seen in the impact investing arena, where it is still not clear where or how to balance returns on investment with the diverse economy structures that are building the new economy.

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4 Definition: "Greenwashing is the act of making false or misleading statements about the environmental benefits of a product or practice. It can be a way for companies to continue or expand their polluting as well as related harmful behaviors, all while gaming the system or profiting off well-intentioned, sustainably minded consumers."
https://www.nrdc.org/stories/what-greenwashing

5 Social washing is the extended version of greenwashing

Purpose driven social enterprises, their founders, investors, and consumers are in a liminal space of moving from the old paradigm of profit-first and considering profit as moral-neutral, towards what else can be included or created. The problem is that change within a complex adaptive system is difficult to predict or direct.

This was perhaps most evident with Alinker and with the solopreneurs. They all described the difficulty of operating in a capitalist system while not sharing the values of the structure within which they are still required to work. Navigating that tension can limit the organization in many ways with respect to accessing the resources of the existing system - resources that are beneficial and necessary in securing their own impact.

In addition, making profits are also a way of carrying out the social purpose of the business (for example, Joni's "5% Giveback Pledge", whereby they give 5% of every order to their Canadian nonprofit partners). In this way, many of our case studies are living in both worlds, and the existing system is both a barrier and a facilitator of carrying out social purpose.

Discussion

The case studies discussed in this report provide insight into factors which support inclusive employment across a variety of settings as outlined above. It is worth noting however a number of issues and differences between the case studies that may influence the degree or success of the themes discussed above in promoting inclusive employment.

While all the case studies paid at least minimum wage, few of the employees with disabilities were able to survive exclusively on the income from their employment. This was due both to work being part time or episodic in some cases or in the case of the solopreneurs, simply due to difficulties in generating enough income. The income gap was addressed in a variety of ways: taking on additional work elsewhere, relying on partners to subsidize living expenses or, continuing to rely on disability benefits as well as earned income.

This was most acute in the two case studies which were more disability specific as in One Light or disability specific initiatives within the broader business as in the case of NLEW and their partnership with AimHi to provide opportunities for seasonal work for people with intellectual disabilities. One Light was able to negotiate a waiver of the standard earnings exemption level of $12,000 per year which allowed a small number of persons to earn enough to live on. This is not a readily scalable option, though it may suggest some form of temporary exemption would be useful in transitioning from benefits to full-time paid work. For NLEW the nature of the work is not likely to ever be able to provide sufficient income to eliminate the need for supplementary sources.

This leads to the next issue regarding grants and other external sources of income. While this was not a significant factor in the for-profit case studies, it was essential to One Light as the actual income from product sales only covered approximately one third of the revenue needed to sustain the enterprise. This reliance on external grants has meant that work has been very episodic for many of the employees, which limits the number of employees who do not require other sources of income. While theoretically One Light could eventually be a 'break even' enterprise, the gap between revenue and cost is significant. This does not invalidate One Light as an employment option but suggests that an alternative means of subsidizing the work to allow sustainable employment is required.

Another issue concerns the size and scale of the businesses/organizations. These ranged from a single 'solopreneur' to small and medium sized businesses. It is notable that the two case studies which employ more than 10 persons in total were those that were connected to or supported by disability agencies and both required additional resources beyond the business income. While the smaller entities did not require additional support for their inclusive hiring it is unclear from this study if the kind of inclusive businesses/organizations they represent are feasible in medium to larger businesses/organizations where the kind of flexibility, cultural homogeneity and informal communication may be more difficult to realize.

In summary, the case studies provide some significant insights into how a new inclusive economies approach can foster and enhance inclusive employment. That said, there are still significant questions as to how broadly applicable this can be in terms of hiring, supporting, retaining) people with more complex disabilities. It is also clear that for many businesses/organizations, external support and subsidy will be required to support inclusive hiring. The case studies provide some useful insights into how these types of supports can be implemented in ways which are more 'naturally inclusive'. Policy directions will be addressed in the final report integrating all phases of the broader study.

Limitations

A key limitation of this project is the alignment with case study methodology in research design and data collection followed by a translational and pragmatic oriented analysis. The small sample size used (as per case study methodology) may limit the applicability of the points of connection and consideration into other organizations and businesses beyond those examined in this study. The research team took this potential limitation into consideration when conducting the translational analysis and team discussions included overt discussions on how the themes shared may apply more generally to other businesses and organizations.

Another key limitation to note is that this report represents our conversations with the businesses/organizations who responded to our call for case study participants, as well as other businesses/organizations to whom we have been alerted or otherwise separately identified. There is potential that self-selection bias influenced the findings. In this study, the case selection was an intentional process, purposively designed to showcase specific insights and experiences in inclusive employment, with the intention of sharing that knowledge and experiences with other businesses, other employers, and other advocates.

A further key limitation is the restricted range of diverse economy activity in these case studies. As mentioned above, we drew our interview candidates from the available pool of self-selected respondents. Further research could identify organizations involved in a greater range of enterprise diversity (such as worker owned co-ops, tribal enterprise), transaction diversity (i.e., local trading systems, co-op exchange, or alternative currencies), and labour diversity (i.e., volunteering, family care, reciprocal labour) for deeper insight into inclusive employment in the new economy (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski 2021).

The trends in this report are presented from the perspective of emerging findings rather than final results.

References

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Gibson-Graham, J. K & Dombroski, K. Eds. (2021) *The Handbook of Diverse Economies.* Edward Elgar Publishing eBooks.

APPENDIX A: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

The New Inclusive Economy - Case Study Interview Guide

Version: October 11, 2022

The following will help guide the researcher in collecting information from case study participants. Organization, order and quantity of questions will be determined based on the suitability of each interview participant.

Theme: Participant Information

- Demographics: age, gender, ethnic background, citizenship, disability status
- Employment Relationship: role with the organization, how long they have worked with organization, FT/PT,
- Proximity: Do they have a family member or loved one that identifies as having a disability? Do they have a child with a disability? Are they close with someone with a disability? Do they work with someone with a disability (what is the working relationship)?

Theme: Employment Setting

- Business Demographics: sector, region(s) of operation, size of organization, business structure
- Mission/Vision of Business/Organization
- Physical Employment Setting: how many people work on site? Details of physical setting (i.e.. assembly line, offices, cubicles, open concept, etc.), where is the business situated in relation to broader community (downtown, visible, industrial, remote, etc.), general accessibility? Any unique aspects of physical working space?
- Inclusive Impact: % of people with disabilities employed? Disability types represented? Disability participation in leadership?
- Inclusive Practices: Are there any specific inclusive practices they feel their business does well?
  - Recruitment: specific disability recruitment efforts? 3rd party recruiters? Employment fairs? Online? DEI statement? Are there any targeted ratios in DEI recruitment efforts?
  - Interviews: Do they support any alternative/innovative interviewing practices?
  - Hiring: What aspects of their onboarding and initial training do they consider inclusive? How so?
  - Career Management: How do they promote growth amongst disabled employees? Do they have regular or alternative performance management plans?
  - Decision Making: When making decisions related to inclusive practices, who is involved and what does the decision-making process look like?

- UD/Accommodations: Do they aspire to any universal design or accessible practices? Is plain language used in marketing/recruitment material? How do they offer and provide accommodation when needed?

Theme: Diverse Economies

- Does your business have a social purpose? How is that integrated into the business structure/model? How is the social purpose measured? How is the social mission prioritized against other purposes of the business/organization?
- What types of connections do you have with the local community? Are you connected to any localized initiatives?
- Does your business have any sort of social purpose certification/affiliation? (Ex. B Corp)
- Does your business have any profit-sharing opportunities for employees? What does this look like?

Theme: Inclusion Support

- Does your business offer any training or education around diversity and inclusion?
- Does your business partner with any other organizations or initiatives to support inclusive hiring? Elicit details of partnership. What has made the partnership successful/challenging?
- If someone needed support at work, how would they request that support?
- Ask questions about enabling conditions a) developed within the workplace, b) developed in response to outside barriers, and b) in which the workplace is embedded.

Theme: Inclusive Values

- Listen for the guiding values (implicit or explicit)?
- How does disability inclusion fit within the broader values of the business/organization?
- Is there an internal champion or steward of these values? How are these values shared amongst the broader staff/team?
- How are these commitments integrated into the work, and what facilitates or promotes this? How do these values show up in recruitment, hiring, training, leadership, ownership, etc.?

Theme: Processes/Conditions that Support Inclusive Practices
- What were the factors that led to the values and practices outlined above?
- Are there any external factors or structural conditions that create challenges in implementing your values? What is the impact and how do you address these challenges?
- What changes or shifts in values (of inclusion) have you seen over time? Internally? Externally? How have these shifts influenced your work?
- How do you measure the implantation or impact of your values?

APPENDIX B: Case Study Summaries

ALINKER CASE STUDY

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

Interviews: 5 Interviews
Documents Reviewed: Employee Handbook, Website, Financial Statements,
NIE Environmental Scan Survey

1.1 Participant Information

Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Disability Type	Close to Disability	Citizen-ship	Role	Time with Comp-any
59	Gender Queer	White	Physical	Family	Im-migrant from Nether-lands	Leader ship	2012
44	Cis-gender Female	Not specified	None	Friends, coworkers	Canadian	Leader ship	2016
60s	Cis-gender Male	White	None	Friend	Nether-lands	Invest or	A few years
44	Cis-gender Female	White	Physical	Family	USA	Front line	4 years
64	Cis-gender Female	Native American	Physical	Family	USA	Leader ship	3 years

1.2 Employment Setting

Alinker is a Certified B Corp, which sells a non-motorized walking bike intended to be a "stigma free" mobility aid. Most of Alinker's employees work remotely, located across Canada and the United States. Occasionally, the organization operates a pop-up shop in downtown Vancouver, which allows customers the opportunity to see and try the product; this space has also become a hub for Alinker social media creation/engagement.

Alinker, also the name of their product, describes their product as: "The Alinker can be described as a non-motorized walking-bike without pedals. With an adjustable saddle and handlebars, it is custom designed to challenge society's assumptions about disability. BE designed it to be so cool that it overcomes the divide between people with and without disabilities." Their product is distributed internationally and has a growing customer base. In addition to direct-to-consumer sales, they operate a rent-to-own model, and support crowd funding campaigns for customers with financial barriers. The crowdfunding campaigns have become a staple of their marketing/sales strategy, with a community of Alinker users built around the campaign activities. To date, 219 crowdfunding campaigns have been completed. (website reference)

The mission of Alinker is to "use our business as a force for good, the Alinker as a vehicle for change. We are committed to creating accessibility to all, reducing inequality, lowering levels of poverty, creating a health system that works for all, building communities, and creating high-quality jobs with dignity and purpose."

1.2a) Roles

Alinker has 5 full-time and 3 part-time staff with some contracted expertise to support various activities. All staff work remotely, with some in-person connections/meetings happening for staff based in Vancouver. Manufacturing of the product takes place overseas (Taiwan), while operations, sales and customer support take place in North America.

1.3 Diverse Economies

Alinker is a certified B Corporation and Social Enterprise. They are involved in the Social Enterprise community in Vancouver, regularly participating in events such as SVI (Social Venture Institute: **https://hollyhock.ca/hollyhock-leadership/svi-hollyhock/**). As noted above, Alinker's mission extends beyond profits.

Participant 5 identified this intentional shift away from a profit-based mission as, *"…what people are afraid of in that is we, we are so entrenched in the colonial mindset of you are only successful if you are making money and you are expanding and you are growing and you are doing all of these things. And people are so afraid that if they change the way they're doing things, they're not going to meet those goals and they're not going to be seen as successful. And, you know, that's the beauty of the Alinker. We're not seen as successful by a lot of people, but we're pretty freaking successful (laughs) as far as we're concerned… We're so, so entrenched in that that colonial capitalistic mindset, um, that says everything has to have a goal and everything has to have a reason, and everything has to have, um, you know, this linear movement… as an indigenous person, and I, I'm always saying, you know, I'm so circular, I'm not linear. Um, and most of the rest of the world is linear. And, um, I see us at Alinker as more circular as well. We're very organic."*

In addition to extending the mission beyond profits, Alinker participates in profit sharing with both full-time and part-time employees. Participant 2 explains, *"depending on what is needed in the year, uh, last year we needed more reserves for stock. So we kept, we basically decided to share that 5%."* This has had a significant impact on employees feeling valued, Participant 4 states: *"Well, it's just kindness, and the kindness that they w- would share, you know? I don't know. It just feels like a... Like, "wow, you really wanna share that with me?" You know. So it just feels like, again, included. You know, I always find myself coming back to included when I speak about them, 'cause they always seem to make you feel included... It feels personal, you know? It kind of feels like, um, maybe I'm seen, or they... I don't know. It feels, again, inclus- included. It feels like they just kind of are like, "hey, we see that you're doing a great job, and we wanna share this with you."*

1.3a) Finance Stack

In regard to finances, Participant 2 shares: *"I think we, I... We access, what I call, a finance full stack. So a little bit of... Money can come from different places."* It was also noted that they recently became profitable as organization, *"Um, and we also have, um, really funded our inventory through, through our revenues, our own profits. So, two, three years ago we became profitable as an organization."*

The organization also has investment partners. In speaking to his reasons for investing with Alinker, Participant 3 notes his desire to only invest in social purpose ventures: *"There's a lot going on that's focused on inclusiveness in investors, especially with female led and startups. So, then I started to invest in startups, only either with a purpose, or it should be a female led."*

Finally, in addition to traditional sales, Alinker supports crowdfunding it's product. This has had a significant impact on organizational sales and culture (discussed more below). Participant 4 shares about her reaction to Alinker crowdfunding, "I was like wait, they offer something that no one else does. And that's so huge in the... In th- this... This world is that they offer crowdfunding."

1.3b) Business Growth

In terms of growth, Alinker continues to build their market through their online presence. Currently, the bulk of their sales have been located in North America. Seeking to expand their business overseas, they have started partnering with localized distributors. Participant 2 explains the challenges partners face in developing their market: "*So part of the difficulty of expanding fast is, bringing the market up to speed so that they can do minimum order quantities…We have partners in South Africa, in Italy, in Germany, in Switzerland, um, in, um, I'm gonna say in Australia, in New Zealand. Um, and all of them, it takes time to develop the market for this device. Um, and so they purchase maybe 10 or 20 at a time. Which is not enough for it to be a viable business for their region.*"

Further in discussing expansion and growth, Participants 1 and 2 explain the need to continue their lean operating practices, with Participant 2 noting, "*Many woman-led companies don't come from, generational wealth... we don't have the, that... we don't have the privilege of losing a lot of money.*"

Following this lean operating model and seeking investments only when needed, Participant 2 explains, "*We've, we've only brought on investors as we have something new coming on-... coming on board. Um, we've matched that with, um, access to a lot of credit*."

1.4 Inclusion Support

Alinker's perspective on disability and inclusion is unique from most, seeking to eliminate the need for inclusive supports and practices by eliminating exclusionary practices as a whole. Participant 1 explains, *"Like, if you focus on what serves people the best, you don't have all those other questions of trying to be inclusive and stuff because we're already human centered. And human centered, really human centered, and not just talking about it. Being in the Alinker means that we need to live the life that we say we advocate for."*

Participant 1 continues, *"You can- you only have to talk about inclusion because you have an exclusive environment. … hat's- that's why I find the word inclusion a very icky term. … Because you got an exclusive, um, uh, work environment, and you try to in- include somebody, they stick out as a sore thumb because now they're included in the still exclusive environment. It- it's very damaging to people, actually."*

However, when specific supports are needed, Alinker seeks to be proactive in understanding employee needs, Participant 4 shares her experience when starting her job at Alinker: *"So when I started, they send you a laptop to do y- your work from, and they made sure that the laptop... Because I have optic neuritis, they made sure that the laptop would... It doesn't affect your eyes, or it doesn't hurt your eyes as much. So they were very accommodating. They were like, "let's do this for you so it doesn't hurt your eyes so much." And, um, they're patient, um, understanding. There's... You know, there's no barriers. It's always, "you. Your health, or you come first. Not the job. People can wait, you can't." So I feel heard, which I never did ever before. So it's a totally different work."*

1.5 Inclusive Values

As noted above, Alinker has strong opinions and perspectives informing their views on disability & inclusion. Participant 1 states: *"If I have MS, yet I can do now with the Alinker, 50 kilometer run, who's disabled now? Like, what is that? So I think... we need to mess with the assumptions on what titles mean. Plus that, I think, um, we judge people too much on just the external identifiers…This body is a logistical nightmare anyway… It's a logistical nightmare that we constantly have to manage. Whether I walk wonky or miss a leg doesn't change who I am. And so I think it's really important that we focus on who we choose to be as people, instead of being judged on what we have, as exterior. Exterior characteristics. Now, disability, some of it is invisible. Some of it is visible. And when it's visible, people judge. When it's invisible, people judge even harder."*

These strong perspectives are maintained across the organization, as many Alinker employees are also Alinker users and immersed in the Alinker community (discussed more below). Participant 5 speaks to this strong culture, *"I mean, it's just the culture of the organization. Um, you've met <Participant 1>, you know, she is just an incredible human being who, um, has made it very, very clear that the people in her organization come first. And it's, it's not about, um, the selling of bikes is secondary, um, that she's more about the people that, that work for her and about changing, um, the way the workplace is and the way society is. And, um, so yeah, that just, um, all of that makes me just feel very, very held and very, very comfortable with, um, just being who I need to be…So yeah, it just, I think, I think it emanates from her vision for her company and from her curating of the people that she's brought on board. Um, because everyone who works for the Alinker, um, is of a similar mindset. Um, we kind of describe ourselves as we're all kind of a little bit, um, weirdos, um, because we've (laughs), we've never quite fit into the regular workplace (laughs) because our values were different."*

1.6 Processes/Conditions that Support Inclusive Practices

Moving away from specific processes and more towards conditions that support inclusive culture, Alinker has worked hard to define their values as an organization, letting practices and processes flow from the articulated values. An example of this values informed practice is the Alinker hiring process. Rarely does the organization define need and post positions, rather, they find people and create positions around them, building on skills and strengths that fit organizational need (more on this below). Participant 1 notes this shift away from traditional hiring processes: "I care about hiring the right people that get us, and that we get, and that we can tea- we can teach people stuff. That's secondary stuff. It's not necessarily what they can do, it's more who they are. If they get it, the whole mind shift thing, then it's mindset thing healthcare, that's way more important, than that they know how to- how to use Excel, for example. You can learn that."

Participant 2 shares that their primary pool of candidates originates from their online community, specifically those that have completed crowdfunding campaigns: *"And so I think we have over 200 and 220 campaigns that we have, uh, launched and, and fulfilled. So that seems to be our pool of people. We're, we're, we hi- we hire Alinker users, um, that are able to tell... Inform us collectively what it's like for our customers to experience what they're looking for and what, what challenges they might have, or in the buying experience, um, and how to answer questions about what it's like, what they're having."*

Participant 1 shares their hiring experience of a campaign Alinker user, *"One user, he broke his back, uh, and neck in a big motorcycle accident, and got … spinal cord injuries. And as I got to know <him>, I was like, "Well, actually, I know you're good on customer service." Because he was working with the insurance company or something…He was like, "Yeah, I would love to come and work with you." So we hired him…And it's, like, it makes for us also total sense to hire Alinker users because they live the life... of an Alinker user."*

In addition to organic hiring processes, Alinker also seeks to provide adequate vacation and sick leave. Focusing less on what is allowed and more on what is needed to be successful and healthy. Participant 2 shares that their vacation and sick leave, *"has been informed by like, just what's humanly needed."*

SECTION TWO: "POINTS OF CONNECTION"

2.1 Commitment to social purpose and/or social justice, or at least questioning model of conventional workplaces

In terms of social purpose, Alinker cares deeply about thinking beyond their product mission (disability stigma) and towards broader issues of human justice – seeing people as whole and not singular identities.

Participant 1 shares what this looks like from an organizational perspective: *"But I think the more we're in a personal level and willing to personally grown and willing to be on edges where might not be too comfortable, but we're growing. And we're aware of the world out there and who we are in this world. But it's more important than just bringing in your revenues. But that's who we are as a company."*

In addition to seeking to provide spaces of holistic understanding, Alinker has specially addressed several issues of justice beyond their mandate of disability mobility and stigma.

Most closely related to their mission, is Alinker's stance on the industrial medical complex, which they refer to as "sick care." They have intentionally decided to operate outside of the system, stating that they are not a medical device, rather they are a mobility aid. Participant 1 explains why Alinker does not align with medical systems, *"Like, the whole medical world that is focused on and only reactive to sick care and disease. Once you're diagnosed, then you're in the sick care…Why don't we focus on health right now? Like, what we food or feed ourselves. And how much we move. Because that is where... if we continue with food systems that we have, that feeds into the pharma systems that we have, then we get to a market that makes money over the back of sick people."*

Participant 5 notes that this social stance has a direct impact on customers, as most insurance companies will not cover the costs of non-medical, mobility aids. *"We don't participate in the insurance industry because of our values as a company, um, and because we know that that would drive the price up even more and, um, mostly to line the pockets of the insurance companies. And so we don't participate in that, but we get customers sometimes who are upset by that, and we have to be able to explain that to them and help them understand that, um, that this is why we do things the way we do them, and that we're not out to make a huge profit."*

In addition to the above, Alinker has been intentional about understanding their role as an organization and individuals in conversations on truth and reconciliation. Their website prominently features a section titled, "Our Essence," which includes a land acknowledgment, values statement, a "what you can do" section, additional resources for learning, and a list of indigenous women owned businesses.

Participant 5, who identifies as Indigenous, helped inform the "Essence" section of the website: *"And to feel like I have the privilege of being able to gently address that and educate folks and say, "Um, this is not really the right way to be looking at this, you know, as an indigenous person, let me tell you."*

Participant 5 further spoke about the impact Alinker's commitment to truth and reconciliation has had on her, *"It's been amazing. Um, again, I've, I've never felt so accepted for, uh, the way I think and the way I believe, um, at any place I've ever worked. Um, I've had other places where I worked where I said I was indigenous and people laughed, (laughs), or people, you know, made jokes about it. Um, you know, all those kinds of things. Um, it's always been, that's always been a struggle to, to be looked at as different and not having that identity valued. And with Alinker, it's valued. It's, it's seen as, as a positive thing, and it's seen as, um, uh, wisdom that's, that's to be shared."*

Participant 4 spoke to her own learning on the issue, *"We do r- recognize like, the land that we're on, which I think is amazing. I've learned so much, um, doing so."*

Connected to this, has been a purposeful conversation on anti-racism and white supremacy in the workplace. Alinker met for a guided training over the period of several months to discuss the issue. Participant 2 explains, *"We did <the anti-racism training> collectively together. We found a great resource that we each presented one part of it each week (during the team meeting>."*

Participant 4 discussed her experience, *"I knew a lot of racism already existed. I'm 44, so I mean, I grew up in Louisiana, which is horrible. You know? There's great things and there's horrible things but, um, <these conversations> were not something I participated in and I never thought it was right, and I knew from a very young age that it wasn't right. I could feel it. I could feel it right in my soul, so I knew that that's not something I wanted to do. So when this became something we were talking about, I actually got excited because I was like, "finally, somebody wants to talk about all the shit that is wrong in this world." Sorry for cussing. But I mean, it's just so much stuff. And I mean, "we're gonna talk about this? We're including this in our job? This is awesome, because I think the world sucks."*

Participant 5 speaks to her experience during the anti-racism training: *"And, um, all of it is just, you know, we've, we have, like you said, done so much work with, with, um, looking at anti-racism and, and looking at our own white privilege and how that looks and dismantling that. We've done, um, you know, most people, they have, uh, team meetings where all you do is, is look at, um, uh, statistics and, you know, things like that. And our team meetings were, "You know, let's talk about this aspect of white, white privilege today." And we would spend an hour talking about that. And, um, I think it really helped build us as a team, um, because, um, when you're talking about those kinds of things, um, you have to be vulnerable and you have to be, um, truthful or, um, or you have to just kind of sit back. It feels like we've, we've been on that journey together."*

All of the above speaks to the organization's social purpose extending beyond one issue, seeking to create healthier and whole communities. Participant 5 spoke to this, *"I feel so privileged to work for Alinker because of that, um, because I do feel like, um, we're doing important work, um, that has absolutely nothing to do with selling this crazy mobility device. We're building up each other and then helping building up our wider community…As an indigenous person, I don't tend to put people in categories and boxes. Um…my language has, has a saying [foreign language word], meaning we are all related. And … it's all part of the one. And, um, as, as we talk about disability and inclusivity, if we're, if we expand our knowledge and we expand our understanding of people as other, um, in, within the disability community, it, it feels like that can only help to, um, translate into expanding our understanding of people as other, as indigenous or as black or as, um, you know, Asian or, or whatever that it's, it's just a mindset of, of learning to expand our own world and look beyond our own limitations."*

2.2 Flexibility and agency

Flexibility and individual agency to perform work responsibilities when the employee is at their best is key to how Alinker operates. As noted, Alinker employees work almost entirely from their home offices. In discussing how tasks are delegated, Participant 1 noted the need to have common goals and direction, *"We are an organic... being an organic organization means you're actually paying attention to what's live and real. As opposed to, like, a box. You are- you're- you're not a straight line. There are bends and curves that you have to deal with. And they're never gonna be perfect, but we're all going to work in the same direction and not leave people behind. And- and be working towards something."*

Participant 2 further explains, *"They tell us when they need time off. Um, when it's the right time for them to work. Um, based on their ability to focus and stay aware."*

Participant 4 shares what this working arrangement looks like for her: "*At home, if I'm... MS will make you nauseous. So if in the morning I'm just super nauseous, I can have that time, you know, t- to go through that, and then jump on and, you know, answer the customers."*

Participant 5 had a similar experience: *"Well, I'm working entirely remotely, so I'm working from home. So it's, it's perfect. I mean, I'm, I can be comfortable. I can be, you know, if I'm having a really bad day, I can be in my bed in my pajamas if I want to, as long as I don't have, you know, a meeting. And if I have a meeting, I, I'm only from here up, so (laughs). Um, so yeah. And, and it allows me, um, Alinker pretty much allows me to set my own schedule. So if I'm having a, a really rough day, a really high pain day, I can just say, "Hey, I'm, I'm not good today. I'm probably gonna be offline, and, uh, I'll catch you tomorrow." And, uh, they're, they're really good about that…Um, that I'm not afraid to say I'm having a really bad day and I can't do what I need to do today. Um, or I'm not afraid to say, "Um, you know, I need to take time off for a doctor's appointment, or I, you know, whatever I need to do."*

2.3 Communication (not always verbal) and psychological safety

Given the high level of flexibility built into the remote work environment of Alinker, communication is seen as essential to ensure the team is effectively working together. In discussing how team collaboration happens, Participant 2 explains, *"Like, there's- there's room and space in that, um, and I think the flexibility, we have one team meeting a week and then each department has their own team meetings throughout the week, um, just being there and just mostly being a responsible adult, sharing when you're online or offline. Our office is Slack."*

In addition to regular communication, the interview team discussed how remote team members would approach challenging situations or problems, Participant 4 shared: *"That would be a one-on-one huddle. I would ping <my co-worker> or, um, and just send her a slack and say "hey, can we chat?" And she's pretty... Pretty quick on saying "absolutely."*

The employee handbook suggests performance feedback take place annually, and while team members say this happens, they believed most important feedback happened more frequently and informally. In addition, feedback was not always provided from the top down, Participant 5 explains, *"We do all look at each other as equal members of this team. And, um, so, um, I think, um, when anybo- any of us have needed feedback on anything, um, you know, it's just been who's the most appropriate person to give them that feedback."*

In regards to feeling psychological safety and support, both Participants 4 and 5 expressed their comfort on the team, with Participant 4, *"And it's the people, too. You know, I have really great teammates, and they always show up for each other."* Participant 5 states, *"I feel completely supported."*

2.4 Champions in leadership positions can drive culture and inclusivity through the whole organization

N/A

2.5 Meet people where they are

As noted earlier, Alinker recruits employees from their pool of completed crowdfunding campaign participants. This is an intentional strategy to retain values, culture and internal product expertise, as they are all Alinker users. Interestingly, they do not articulate business need and create a related employment position, rather, they start with individual skills and strengths and build a position around the individual.

Participant 1 explains what this looks like, *"The first question to people when we hire them is, like, "What is your ideal job?" What would you love to do? Because if people love what they're doing, they're probably gonna perform a lot better. They're probably gonna stick with you longer. They're probably gonna learn a lot more. And then it's up to us as management to see, like, oh, well, you like to do, like, you like to do that. There's a gap. We need to hi-find somebody to do that because neither of them likes to do that. That's our job."*

Participant 4 shared about how this process worked for her after meeting Participant 1 on a zoom call for new Alinker users: *"I don't even really think I had an interview… That was it from there. And then, um, not long after that, she kind of offered me a job. She said, "I don't know what I'm gonna do with you, but I want you with Alinker. So I was super excited, 'cause it felt like home. It felt like the first time since I had been a disabled person that I felt like I belonged in this world. 'Cause I don't. You know, you know? So that was an amazing feeling, and that feeling has really never gone away, and that's been four years."*

Participant 5 had a similar experience: *"I had recently lost my position on my, on previous online position, and in talking <Participant 1> heard that, and she just kind of said to me, "How would you like to come work for the Alinker?" And I basically said, "What (laughs)?" And, um, she just said, "Well, you know, in talking to you, it sounds like you've got a lot of talents that we can use and, you know, I'd love to have you come on board." And I said, "Well, what would my position be?" And she basically said, "You got a lot of things we can use, we'll figure it out."*

Growth within the organization followed a similar model, Participant 5 shared: *"So the position kind of grew with <me> and kind of as I figured out different things that, um, matched my skills and strengths, that's kind of how the position grew. Now I'm doing a lot of stuff with, um, our marketing team, um, because that's been an interest of mine, and, um, so they've given me an opportunity to get in that and, and start learning more about marketing."*

Participant 2 talked about the impact this model of employment has on the culture of the organization, *"Challenging yourself to be more aware about who you actually are… And so I think it's probably not very often that we find organizations that we want you to individually be the best version of you."*

ILV CASE STUDY

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

Interviews: 4 Interviews
Documents Reviewed: Website, NIE Environmental Scan Survey

1.1 Participant Information

Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Disability Type	Close to Disability	Citizen-ship	Role	Time with Comp-any
48	Cis-gender Female	Indigenous	Yes, not specified	Yes, not specified	Canadian	Leader-ship	24 years
40	Cis-gender Female	White	Yes, not specified	Yes, not specified	Canadian	Front line	13 years
58	Cis-gender Female	White	Yes, not specified	Yes, not specified	Canadian	Front line	20 years
51	Cis-gender Female	White	Yes, not specified	Yes, not specified	Canadian	Admin-istration	5 years

1.2 Employment Setting

Independent Living Vernon (ILV) is a small non-profit located in Vernon, B.C. They are part of the Canadian Association of Independent Living, which is a collective movement to provide pan-disability resources with a philosophy distinguishing themselves from a medical model of supports. The Independent Living movement defines their philosophy as, "The Independent Living (IL) philosophy is an alternative approach to the traditional medical/rehabilitation service delivery model. The IL philosophy promotes and encourages an attitude of self-direction in consumers so they can negotiate and access the community services and resources they require in order to participate as equal citizens in their community. The IL philosophy recognizes the rights of individuals with disabilities to assume risks and make choices."

Further, ILV lists their mission as: "To create sustainable community links, to work for societal change, and to remove barriers so that people with disabilities have the opportunity to realize their full potential."

The ILV office, which includes shared space in the "People Place," is located in the city centre of Vernon, B.C. This area of town experiences a high number of people facing extreme poverty and under-un-housed individuals. This has had an impact on the ILV staff and offices and the types of interactions they are having with consumers (people that use their services) and community members. In regards to volume of support, the ILV team supports around 150 people per week, with many visiting their location in-person to receive assistance.

1.2a) Roles

ILV has 6 staff members with most working part-time. Aside from the clerical and bookkeeping support, all staff are Registered Social Workers, and provide support in the various areas of programming. Most staff have been part of the organization for long periods of time. The organization also hosts unpaid practicum students working towards their social work degrees.

1.3 Diverse Economies

As a non-profit organization, ILV operates outside of a traditional business model. Instead, they receive funds from various grant-based initiatives, including some provincial funding, B.C. gaming funds, and various community grants. They also have several fee-for-service offerings to support their programming.

1.3a) Finance stack

N/A

1.3b) Business growth

While the organization is not seeking intentional growth, it was noted that their services and supports have evolved over time. In addition, it was noted that the types of people they support have evolved alongside programming, as well as alongside the changing demographics of their community.

1.4 Inclusion Support

In terms of physical space, ILV has been intentional about increased accessibility for both staff and consumers. Participant 1 explains: "The way our office is structured, when you kind of come through a front door, it's really open. When you first come in like our front desk, is there, but there's quite an open space between the door and the front desk. And you know we do that intentionally to make sure that there's lots of room for, like big scooters, wheelchairs, you know, people with various mobility issues and stuff like that. We really like that piece. We were able to redo our office probably about 6 years ago, to get new flooring, new paint. And so we were really cognizant about you know, principles of universal design, and making sure that there's contrast between floors and walls, furniture and stuff like that... just so that people feel really comfortable."

Additionally, the built environment and the impact it has on both consumers and staff is something their team regularly adjusts to facilitate inclusive space. Participant 1 notes, "Many consumers that have such a variety of disabilities like, we're just constantly having to shift things right, and also for our staff as well. Just because one day something works another day it might not work."

In regard to staff accommodations, flexibility was noted as a key accommodation support by most (more on this below). In addition, Participant 3 noted that she experiences pain and has received accommodations in her physical working space, "I have a different kind of layout of computers. I've also got an accessible mouse and my keyboard is more ergonomic."

1.5 Inclusive Values

As an organization dedicated to "removing barriers so that people with disabilities have the opportunity to realize their full potential," inclusion and inclusive values are central to the work of ILV. Several participants spoke to the values of the Independent Living philosophy and their impact both in and beyond the workplace. Participant 3 states, *"The independent living philosophy is not something that I just exercise here. It's something that's really embedded in to me like, like I really connect with it. You know that people have choice and control, and that you know that they should be able to exercise that as best as possible… That's part of my life outside of work."*

Participant 4 spoke to the ways in which embracing the IL philosophy and inclusive values have impacted her self-perspective, *"back when I stopped being able to work, I didn't know I had a disability. I just thought it was a character flaw. So, it's giving me back a lot of self-respect, and that I know I have the respect of others, it means a lot."*

1.6 Processes/Conditions that Support Inclusive Practices

In regard to staff accommodations, flexibility was noted as a key accommodation support by most (more on this below). In addition, Participant 3 noted that she experiences pain and has received accommodations in her physical working space, "I have a different kind of layout of computers. I've also got an accessible mouse and my keyboard is more ergonomic."

SECTION TWO: "POINTS OF CONNECTION"

2.1 Commitment to social purpose and/or social justice, or at least questioning model of conventional workplaces

Similar to other case study participants, ILV seeks to see people as whole and not singular identities. Again, as a social service agency, the ILV team is regularly engaging in support activities and conversation. While they are focused specifically on supporting people with disabilities, it was noted that they understand the importance of seeing need beyond disability related support, Participant 1 explained, *"I've been really trying to work on, you know, ensuring that that we're not just focused on disability, either. Right? That we're focused on people as like as people. You know all the parts of who they are that come along with them right?"* Participant 3 noted this perspective extends across the team, *"I think I've learned that from <my co-worker>. And I mean, it kind of becomes second nature to me now…I just see a larger picture with everybody, right?"*

Beyond perspectives, this value of seeing outside of disability support needs, extends into the ways in which ILV partners with other types of services and supports. Participant 1 shares that, *"The collaboration piece is a really big one. I just, I don't see that with a lot of other organizations doing that, because they're all like, this is my money, or this is our client group, or, you know, like, there's a real competition. And we try to be like, what do you need?"*

The commitment to collaboration and working across sector specific need has had significant impact on the people served, extending ILV capacity and types of support offered. Participant 3 explains, *"I've helped people get off the street. And you know, we work with another organization to get them housing. And then, because we don't do housing, of course, and so what would happen is they would end up back on the street and not getting the help they need."*

It was noted that the need for and sense of collaboration was rooted in the Indigenous heritage of the organization's leader. Participant 4 shares that this is felt both in how the organization partners with other service providers, as well as within the team, allowing for voices across the organization to be heard and valued. She shares, *"<Our boss> gets everybody's input first. She understands the why we want it this way and why we were going to say that and why we were going to vote that way except you never vote, we just talk. And so yeah, I think the smaller community style consensus has definitely informed how she leads in that it gives me a feeling of like I've got a lot to say in the matter, And I don't feel like there's a real echelon of hierarchy here."*

Participant 1 shares that her Indigenous heritage values all perspectives and this has informed her leadership style or welcoming input from all team members, *"If we if we have something to give, we'll give it and yeah. That's another piece about how kind of my upbringing and our my teachings have influence."*

In addition to providing space for all voices and perspectives, it was noted that this has resulted in allowing for the team to think outside of the box in terms of the ways they provide support. Participant 2 notes, *"Things are not as black and white here. So there's room to go into like a gray area, and to go into seeing different inputs and not always the same outcomes."*

2.2 Flexibility and agency

Flexibility and agency in work method/mode was noted across interviews as a key facilitator in supporting an inclusive and positive work environment. Unlike some other case study participants, most ILV work is completed in office with remote work happening only occasionally. For the ILV team, flexibility was most often described as flexibility of scheduling and feeling empowered to come to work when they were feeling healthy and able. All ILV participants identified as having a disability and this was discussed by several in resulting fluctuating need. Participant 3 notes that, *"So if I have a doctor's appointment, or I have an appointment that I need to go to Physio or something. I can work around that."* Similarly, Participant 4 shares, *"There have been times when I've been completely overwhelmed. And I've just scraped the bare minimum. And that was okay. Knowing that, you know, I still felt responsible for the job, and that I would come back and get to it when I could."*

The idea that presenteeism was not required to do a job well was noted as a key value of the organization, with Participant 1 sharing, *"one of my big pieces that I always talk about is like, what's the worst that can happen if we have to do something a little bit differently. So that adds to the busyness of the work that we do, because we're having to adjust things a lot for to make sure that people feel accommodated both staff and the consumers…We kind of have this motto in the office, like, you know, we'll figure it out."*

Noting the impact this level of flexibility has on work outcomes and productivity, Participant 1 further shared: *"There are some things that need to get done right? I mean, you know, we have a parking permit program. So we got it. We got to move those along and stuff. And so but a lot of times we'll have a staff person that'll be like, you know. Hey? I'm not feeling it today. Can I just come in on the weekend? Absolutely right, if that works better for you? And then so the work still gets done."*

Beyond when work gets completed, flexibility was also noted in the ways in which the work was completed. Participant 1 shares, *"It's really important to me, like I'm able to work here and practice social work the way I think social work should be practiced right? It's informed by you know who I am as a person, my cultural values…And so, being able to have an employer that I can practice social work that aligns with, that is everything right? And so so yeah, so it's the flexibility to do the job. But then it's also the flexibility to like practice."*

2.3 Communication (not always verbal) and psychological safety

Most of the ILV team has been with the organization over ten years and their level of comfort and perceived psychological safety is strongly embedded in team culture. Participant 3 explains, *"We feel comfortable talking to each other about what's going on. I think that makes a very big difference for our workplace compared to other workplaces. Everyone has the opportunity to share their concerns and barriers."*

While formal performance reviews are included in the employee handbook, the importance of informal and regular feedback was noted by several. Participant 3 shares her preferred style of feedback and communication, *"I think, more organically, we do touch base regularly, we meet during group supervision on Wednesdays. And we, you know, share what we're doing. And if there's any support that we need, we share that way as well. It's just very supportive."* Participant 2 shares, *"It's easy for me. I feel comfortable going to <our boss> and just talking about what's going on, and we work out the schedule that'll work best for what I'm doing."*

In addition to leadership support, the ILV team has a culture of co-worker support. Participant 3 shares about this intentionality amongst the team, *"I just keep my eyes and ears open, and just ask, you know, hey, is there anything that I can support you this morning? <My coworker> told me she had a lot on her plate, and I said, Is there anything that I can help you with? So just in general, having a open communication with the team and picking up where the folks need support and back and forth."*

This respectful and supportive sense of communication extends to challenging conversations as well. Participant 4 recounted a situation in which she made a significant error in her work. She shares, "There was no anger. There was no, you should have been doing better. There's no I'm paying you for better. There was just this happened. Let's move on." Having previously experienced anger in the workplace, Participant 4 notes the difference at ILV, "I knew that I was making mistakes, and I wasn't performing my best, and that somebody else would probably be better able to help them. And so I stepped back. I had an over exaggerated sense of responsibility for that kind of thing. I tried doing that <at ILV>, and <my boss> told me that she wanted me to stay. She said, you get along with everybody here. We're cohesive team now. That's more important to me than the few mistakes that you make." It made a big impact on me."

2.4 Champions in leadership positions can drive culture and inclusivity through the whole organization

N/A

2.5 Meet people where they are

As noted above, the culture of ILV is founded on respectful and holistic support of both staff and consumers. Participant 1 shares this focus, *"One of my biggest pieces is like, how do we provide support? To our staff in order to be able to make sure that they can, that they can do this work right? Because our wages are crappy, we don't have benefits right?...So that's one thing that we really, we talk a lot about in in our organization is like, how are you actually doing? What do you actually need? Right? And you know, how can we make this better?"*

This is felt by the staff team in both tangible and intangible ways. Participant 4 noted that her work tasks were modified and reallocated when she was struggling, *"I was really overwhelmed, and I couldn't guarantee that I would be able to get <my task> completed on time. <My coworker> offered to take that off my plate, and that really helped me bounce back and so we're trying to find a way to make it a more manageable."*

Participant 2 shared a similar experience, noting that while she is great at her job, she often needs more time to get things completed. She notes, *"I'm slower at doing things like emails and typing and reading stuff. I'm slower. So, I need to be accommodated in that aspect. And also, that my speech is slower. So, it's good that they know that and support that."*

ONELIGHT CASE STUDY

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

Interviewees: Five interviews conducted in 2023, via Zoom. One researcher conducted a brief site visit in March 2023.

Documents reviewed: Website, reports from previous research participation, NIE environmental scan survey.

1.1 Participant Information

Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Disability Type	Close to Disability	Citizen-ship	Role	Time with Comp-any
42	Cis-gender Female	White (Irish, Polish, and Mi'kmaq)	Mental health	Family, coworkers	Canadian	Leader-ship	6 years total, 4 years paid
64	Cis-gender Female	White (Scottish, Norwegian, Swedish)	Physical	Family, coworkers	Canadian	Front line	4 years
47	Cis-gender Female	White	Learning disability	Family, coworkers	Canadian	Manage ment	1.5 years
41	Cis-gender Male	European/ Greek	No	Family, coworker, prior jobs		Manage ment	a few months?
48	Cis-gender Male	White	Physical, cognitive	No response shared	Canadian	Front line	4 years

We conducted five interviews with participants ranging in age from 40s to 60s; three of whom identify as female and two identify as male. Three of the participants identify as living with a disability and two do not. However, almost all participants in this case study reported being close to people who live with disability (siblings, children, parents), and all work with people who live with disability. The duration of employment ranged from a few months to four years with the OneLight project, which is the current extent of the project's length. All interviewees have worked in other organisations prior to OneLight, in a diverse range of backgrounds including farm work, security, publishing, managing large restaurants, as well as in entrepreneurial and corporate settings.

1.2 Employment Setting

OneLight is a social enterprise engaged in the manufacturing of firestarters made from reclaimed materials. Their website (**https://onelight.ca/**) explains: *"OneLight fire starter will start your fire in minutes without kindling and is built with 99% recycled materials that are diverted from the waste stream. OneLight is a social enterprise created in 2020 with a vision for inclusive employment in manufacturing with the added goal of creating products made from recycled materials. Our fire starter is handmade with recycled untreated lumber, paper rolls, candle wax, and a wick"*.

The firestarters are called OneLights, which is the same name as the social enterprise. The non-management employees are called "makers", and all work in a light industry building in Powell River, located on the traditional territory of the Tla'amin Nation. Inside the building are several workstations for the manufacture of the firestarters, including presses, woodcutting machines, a wax dip, and wicking placement. There are offices upstairs and a warehouse facility for material preparation at the back.

OneLight is located on a bus route, not far from the centre of Powell River, with free parking on premises (which was part of the decision to use that site (**https://www.qimproject.com/research**). OneLight is a project supported, initiated by, and under the umbrella of *inclusion Powell River*, a not-for-profit organisation with the mission to build a "safe, inclusive community where everyone belongs".

The project began as an employment support program within the gathet **inclusive manufacturing pilot** with an 18-month government grant. OneLight has the capacity to employ up to 35 makers.

At the height of production there were 30 makers and 4 supervisors with an output of around 10,000 units per month. **https://www.qimproject.com/phase-three-report**. When the funding for the initial project was not renewed, the team sought gap funding and operated with reduced staff, while waiting for approval of more permanent funding. Moreover, the project experienced many interruptions due to Covid.

1.2a) Roles

At the time of writing, in November 2023, OneLight employs eight people, of which six are in paid positions and two are volunteers. Two of the employees – the two managers – are full time, and the six makers are working 20 hours or less. Five out of the eight employees live with disabilities.

Case study interview participants ranged from newly employed (within the past few months) to working with the organisation from the beginning of the project. In total we interviewed five people from OneLight across a period from eight months from February to October: two employees (called Makers in OneLight), two managers, and the project director.

It should be noted here, and will be disclosed in the final report, that there was a special circumstance with this case study. The director of OneLight is also the director of the New Inclusive Economy project. Due to the potential for increased difficulty in ensuring data privacy for the OneLight participants, we altered the consent form accordingly, with additional disclosure and discussion in the preamble to the interviews to ensure that our interviewees were aware of this potential conflict or extra risk to their participation.

1.3 Diverse Economies

OneLight is described as a social enterprise, and as a "revenue negative business". There exists within the organization a strong motivation and values for social impact (see section 2.1) that supersedes the motivation for profit. The purpose of the organization is to provide work environments that are positive for people.

Quote from Participant 1: *So, I describe One Light as a revenue negative business. And so, by revenue negative, that means we do not produce and sell enough product to pay for our operational costs. And so, in the business world, that would be considered a failed business, but we don't consider it a failed business because what we also produce is work environments that are suitable to people who have not been able to find employment elsewhere and we also share the learning about those environments with other employers so that they can adopt some of our practices.*

1.3a) Finance stack

The "finance stack" employed by OneLight includes profit from the sale of OneLights, government grants, and profit distribution from an "ecosystem" of social enterprises under the inclusion Powell River umbrella. There are currently two other inclusive employment social enterprises within the ecosystem, one of which is revenue positive and intended to channel funds into OneLight.

Quote from participant 1: *So, we have to have grant revenue to be able to operate this social enterprise, and that's very typical of workforce integration social enterprises. Most of them have a, um, some kind of other revenue because our cost of operating is much higher than a typical business… We also have other social enterprises that ideally are feeding revenue into One Light, so revenue positive social enterprises…. So that if you look at it as an ecosystem or as a whole package, all of our enterprises, then it doesn't matter that it's revenue negative, but it is definitely revenue negative, and by quite a bit."*

We heard that one third of operating costs come from sales and production, while two thirds come from grants. Labour is the greatest overhead, and revenue is not sufficient to cover all wages, let alone other fixed costs. As a result, OneLight still relies on grants to operate, and report having approximately 10 different sources of funding over four years of operations.

1.3b) Business growth or financial sustainability

The discontinuity of funding and revenue is an issue for the financial sustainability of the enterprise. However, there is strong demand for positions at OneLight – at present, there are 40 people on their employment waitlist. OneLight has the capacity to employ up to 35 makers, so the missing piece is funding to pay the wages.

There is also a significant opportunity cost involved in applying for funding. We heard that grant applications consume around 50% of the director's time, and there are other managers involved in the process. This is a significant administrative overhead when compared with the estimated cost of $200 000 to sustain the project every year.

1.4 Inclusion Support

Inclusion support at OneLight is deliberate and codified, offered through the structure and intention of the organisation, as well as via specific training, role crafting, flexibility, and hiring practices (more on this below).

In addition, OneLight negotiated an exemption to the income support rules such that makers could keep every dollar of their earnings, so they did not lose their disability payments while working at OneLight. This supported the makers in experimenting with earning and working in a way that suited them. We heard that most people did not actually exceed their allowable earnings, but some did, and in that 18 months were able to make money and use the income in a way that they had never before been able. During the interviews it was noted that in many ways, OneLight functions as something of an "inclusive employment lab".

In addition to financial and organizational sustainability, we can consider the sustainability of employment after receiving inclusion supports. For example, some people go on to other employment afterwards:

Participant 1 noted: *"And I know all of the folks who were supported by employment services, so those are people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, there were 10 people out of the 30 who were CLBC eligible, they all went on to work. Um, th- those that had employment services, and went into work into other areas. Yeah. So, that was very cool to see."*

Further detail on employment opportunities from Participant 1: "[before coming to OneLight] *a significant proportion of the participants had not been employed. They'd either never been employed or they had been une-, not employed for many, many years. Um, and so, it was very surprising for us to learn that people, after being at One Light, decided to continue in the labor market, and I think it's because they recognized, and this is what was shared with me, was that, um, that, how good work made them feel. And just working and getting up and having a place to go, and getting over that, um, that fear of, um, having their disability or other incomes taken away if they had gone, if they went to work."*

Inclusion supports and accommodations were explicitly arranged at the interviewing/onboarding stage. We heard that reframing supports as "tools" can help foster a perspective that these are ways to facilitate work rather than an accommodation or something that might be perceived as negative. Participant 3 described tools as "*being smart, helpful… it's, you know, ingenuity… we see it as working smart and, and, coming in and using those tools to do your job really well."*

Participant 2 spoke about the hiring and onboarding stage: *"And both of them said, "Is there anything we can do specifically for you? Do you need any special equipment … or, you know, any, anything that we could do to make the job easier for you?" And I believe they, they did that for everybody.*

… there was a lot of written material initially for us to sign and, and, you know, like I say, the, the special things we might need to help us.

….We had a lot of opportunity, actually. …. If you got tired of one [task]*, you can just say, "I really need a break from this," and you can do something else."*

1.5 Inclusive Values

Inclusive values are intrinsic to the existence and operation of the organisation, given that it is funded and organised to provide accessible inclusive employment opportunities. These values are both explicit and implicit.

With respect to impact of these values, we heard that "the best way to get people with disabilities into employment is to give them a job."

Participant 3 spoke about the values regarding supports: "Task modification is one of our values, right? [W]hen we talk to people, I really wanna make people feel that they're empowered, that they're not asking for something out of the norm, that this is part of the job."

1.6 Processes/Conditions that Support Inclusive Practices

OneLight has experimented with many inclusive employment practices; i.e., hiring, training, retention practices, and communication.

When hiring new makers, the managers send out the interview questions first and encourage interviewees to bring a personal consultee to the interview. Upon hiring and onboarding, they explicitly ask the employee which supports are required so they can ensure the most accessible workplace.

OneLight offers flexible hours and encourage using that flexibility to work in a way that suits the employee (more about flexibility below). The organisation has deliberate communication practices (more about this below). They also offer training in inclusivity and respecting differences and contributions of everyone (more on this below).

We heard that the philosophy is to offer something of a "trampoline effect" via the flexibility and experimental approach to figuring out what works for each person. Makers are given the opportunity to practice self-advocacy, which can result in increased confidence going into further work (more about this below).

The profit imperative was identified as one of the structural barriers to supportive and inclusive employment more broadly; i.e., the requirement in the mainstream economy to not only be revenue positive but to deliver significant profits to shareholders. This may be achieved by cost-cutting through loading increasing responsibilities onto the existing employees, which then produces a need to hire people who are perceived as more likely to handle the (more than) full-time workload.

Participant 4 reflected on their time in a profit-driven corporate environment: "*So the big focus was, "We need to bring people on that can take on this huge capacity," it's just high capacity, high capacity, high capacity. You need to be able to hammer away, work 60 hours a week. That's how we're gonna make a profit. Um, but then you … start kinda hitting overtime, um, you start losing money, uh, with people going off, let's say, on, on sick leaves, and whatever else. So I think right now, i- it might be a turning point in a lot of these kind of corporate environments, because they're just not finding bodies, right? They were cutting back, cutting back, cutting back, but now they're not finding the bodies that they needed. Um, so they're going to have to shift the way they do business. And I think there is an opportunity to bring on additional people, maybe for less hours."*

With respect to the impact of overcoming those structural barriers, one of the flow-on impacts is reduced hospitalisations and use of medical services, which reduces costs to governments.

Quote from participant 1: *"So we had, we had one gentleman and he's, he's, um, there's a video of him saying this so I can disclose it, um, that we have on our website. But he used to go to the hospital at least once a month, sometimes once a week to the psych ward to commit himself, um, because he has, um, bipolar disorder, and he has not been to the hospital since he began at One Light over a year and a half ago. So that's how many? 12, 12 to 16 hospital visits for one individual. Um, and 30% of those 36 people did not, they did not go to the hospital, they did not, um, use other services as a result of having a job and feeling more stabilized as a result of having a job.*

So there's those cost savings that are like very hard to capture. [T]here was reduced suicidality. So how do you quantify someone not taking their own life?"

Participant 3: *"people love being part of a team. … Um, I hear the word useful. I hear the word, I like to come in… engage, like that's something that I definitely hear come up. [A]nd pride, and money."*

Delivering on the social purpose of the organisation also gives purpose to the participants: Participant 2: *"Purpose. The fellow that I talked about with the bipolar, he said he looks forward to getti- getting up every morning now…I had people tell me, one person in particular, well, no, two, that, um, their suicidality had decreased, that they realized that, with this purpose that they have now, having to get up, going to work, doing what they can. The friendships too, we form friendships down there. I go out for coffee with one lady quite regularly. I have another fellow that, um, he checks with me to see if any more grants have come in because he really wants to come back to work. And I phone and check in with him. Um, but the biggest thing in a nutshell is probably purpose. This has really brought a lot of people together and given them a reason, a reason for getting up every day."*

SECTION TWO: "POINTS OF CONNECTION"

2.1 Commitment to social purpose and/or social justice, or at least questioning model of conventional workplaces

OneLight is built on a commitment to social purpose and questioning the model of conventional workplaces in that they actively seek to create inclusive and accessible work opportunities as the priority rather than profit maximisation (see previous section about being a "revenue negative" business).

The organisation is deeply committed to giving people the opportunities they desire for themselves. We heard this repeatedly in the interviews, saw it recorded on their organisational website, and in their previous reports.

We heard a commitment to that social purpose from all interviewees, as well as the impact of that commitment and the future opportunities it offers. By focusing on its social purpose, OneLight creates social value rather than financial value at this point in the organisation life cycle.

Participant 3: *"So I think, the value proposition in One Light is …more of an employment piece. [W]e have people that come in and are employed here, have a wonderful experience and then have the knowledge that they are able to go into do other things that they're, that they have value. And it makes me so sad that that's something that people get from here because that should just exist.*

And I start thinking about, um, the, the effects that someone has when they come in here and that they, the amount of people that leave more employment ready, build skills, um, what, what that brings into their family and to their community. I mean, the reaches are so huge, right?

I'm like, oh, is this a valuable business? And does it make sense for people to put money into this program? Absolutely. The business part of me, totally makes me go, "This is ridiculous." (laughs). Um, but you know, when you, when you see someone who hasn't worked for 20 years, comes in here, has this experience, and then goes off to work somewhere else and …you've got their family emailing you saying, "You have changed all of our lives and I've never met you." I mean, does this have value? Absolutely. Yeah."

Participant 4: "*I think it shines as a, as a training opportunity, as an opportunity for people to develop skills, um, that would be transferable to other workplaces. Um, so that's first and foremost. Now, the business piece is still important, because there's still tangible targets, there's still, you know, we'll talk about sales targets, we'll talk about, you know, um, how many units we sold, all of those kinds of things. And I think that's important, especially if you're looking to train people to get into other employment settings, right? To get people comfortable with, with those things."*

2.2 Flexibility and agency

OneLight not only offers flexibility and encourages agency, but they also actively support employees in becoming self-aware self-advocates for the supports and flexibility they need to do their work.

If not feeling well or needing to prioritise health or self-care, employees are encouraged to take the day off rather than trying to force themselves to come to work. As we've heard in other case studies, this can mean less time away from work than if they had to force themselves to push through and perform regardless of their own wellbeing. When employees feel safe to ask for that flexibility, they can self-manage their energy to deal with the impact of their disability, which results in a shorter recovery time.

Participant 2: *"The biggest things that I see, especially through the OneLight, is employers have to be compassionate, empathetic, flexible. Yeah, that's pretty much it… The flexibility is fabulous down there… [it] was really like nothing I've ever seen before."*

With respect to agency to ask for accommodations, participant 4 pointed out the following: "I mean, it is a supportive work environment, ... Let's say this thing goes away tomorrow. [M]y goal would be that the people that are here would be able to continue employment in another setting, and continue to be employed successfully based on the things that they learned here, not only about working for an employer, but also what makes them successful. What do they need as an individual to be successful? And to just kind of empower them to advocate for themselves if they get into a situation where they can say, "Hey, you know, like, I'm, I'm not very comfortable with this, but would it be okay if I did it this way?" Because that's one of the things that I think is absolutely fantastic, is just the way people have modified their own thing. It's not like the management team is coming up with all these modifications. People have found different ways to do things on their own, um, that end up making them more productive. So to me, that's a huge win, when you start recognizing what you need as an individual to be successful, that's so cool."

Participant 5: *"Well, for people that are aware of themselves and aware of what their abilities are and aware of what their abilities aren't or how they react to situations, you know, this is a very good, uh, platform to start off on because you're gonna learn, like, a lot about how, like, what's frustrating to you, what's not…. Not everyone feels the same way of course, but yeah. This is a good place to, like, learn acceptance of other people's, uh, barriers and, um, likes and dislikes or what not.*

It's, like, it's one of the best places I've ever worked for sure… Probably the best place. And yeah, self awareness, that's a big thing. And I don't think that enough people have enough self-awareness…"

In addition, the processes and strategies are revisited and changed if another approach is identified for experimentation, allowing flexibility in approaches to the conditions of employment as well as for the how the employees work.

Participant 1: "I think it's part of that trampoline effect that there's room for creativity, um, and it's not so formulaic and, uh, prescriptive like so many other programs that relate to employment for people with disabilities… [T]hat's all a part of the ecosystem. It has to be flexible. It has to be experimental. There has to be risk and there has to be, uh, room to fail."

2.3 Communication (not always verbal) and psychological safety

Communication skills and norms are included in training and are modeled by leadership, who are open to conversation. If supports or modifications are needed, it is just a matter of having a conversation with the managers. As Participant 2 noted: "*there's times when a boss can be a little bit intimidating. This wasn't the case at all. They took the team training with us. They did all the role playing with us. They were on the same playing field. So now they're, the supervisors are very open to just conversation. If you're having a problem, you can talk to them.*"

Participant 2 further notes that: "*The other workers, if they notice something, they'll go and speak to the supervisors, and they'll, they'll come down and talk to the person.*"

OneLight has established norms of communication reminding makers of what is important in the workplace – given the light manufacturing setting, there are physical reminders of how to operate machinery and observe safety procedures. There is also explicit communication and reiteration of tasks in meetings, with written instructions displayed at workstations.

This is also seen in verbal and interpersonal communication with employees, modelling how to advocate for self and take care of self. The culture of OneLight fosters psychological safety to ask for help, share when things are rough, or offer help to others. The organisation holds monthly meetings to celebrate wins and successes and discuss what is challenging.

Participant 3: "*Because every single person in here, um, you, you know, myself probably at the top of that list, has days where, where they need help and has, you know, time in those exact same days where I'm here to help other, other people. So, you know, have, having that, that that comfort for everybody, um, is definitely important.*

[A]nd then it also goes through a lot of communication of ... is there any part of this job, you know, this this task that we need to go over again? Um, is there any part of this task that, um, we can do to make it easier? And so there's just kind of this constant communication."

In addition to positive communication, we heard there is also an absence of negative communication. This shows up as not pressuring people, but rather looking for ways to support them; rather than talking down to someone for not having done much work, look at what is getting in the way of them doing more; i.e. coming from a strengths-based perspective and looking at how to remove barriers.

We heard that this happens by moving the focus from individual achievement to collective achievement and communicating support for the overall organisational mission. For example, Participant 4 mentioned the importance of *"...not putting pressure on your fellow coworker. Um, teaching people to naturally look to, to create supports for other people.... because I think a- at the end of the day, it has to come from the frontline. Management can be all a- all about it, and management can have great training, and whatever else. But it's the frontline employees working together that are gonna make it successful or they're gonna break it. ….but seeing the end result of the actual culture that was built here, walking into a culture that was already established, um, that was one of the things that k- I, i- it just kinda threw me for a loop, a little bit, just seeing that level of positivity. I mean, people would have individual struggles, but I didn't see anybody taking a shot at anybody. Um, there was just, everybody was very supportive of everybody, um, there'd be a suggestion of, "Hey, have you tried doing this?" Um, but never, never anything negative, never a, "Oh, you only made 20 today," or, y- you never heard that. That, that's just, just, it doesn't happen. Um, and I think that's a testament, um, t- to the team training that had taken place to, that really prepared people to work in a truly inclusive kind of environment."*

2.4 Champions in leadership positions can drive culture and inclusivity through the whole organisation

As a disability support organisation, inclusion Powell River has strong values that attracts champions for inclusion. Specifically, for OneLight, the director of the project applied for the funding and was involved in setting up the pilot, was identified as a champion of culture and inclusivity, and set up training for this approach expand the culture throughout that organisation.

Participant 2: *"I think our champion is [the director]...She, she has been amazing from the start, and she, she's the one that's really instilled in everybody, you know, we're all human and we all have lots to give. And let's just appreciate the different things that we can all give.*

The biggest things that I see, especially through the OneLight, is employers have to be compassionate, empathetic, flexible. Yeah, that's pretty much it."

The focus on inclusivity and inclusive culture is evident in comments across the respondents.

Participant 2 said *"it's very much not just a, a two-tiered supervisor/employee kind of thing...we're just one big, um, group, cohesive group."*

Participant 3 noted that: *"...I think some of what we're talking about is, is definitely set up in a management level as far as, like we talked about the posters on the wall, what we do, who we are as our core values. But once you set people up with a certain culture, it happens for itself. Like it is something that is very, very natural and, you know, keeps happening.*

Participant 4 felt that the culture was more important than specific accommodations: *"It's not about accommodating people, it's about improving your workplace culture. And I just can't see how i- it wouldn't improve a workplace culture to take some of that negative competitiveness out of there, to stop, you know, looking at what the guy beside you is doing. I- it's just basically teaching people some empathy, teaching people to, you know, take into consideration what might be going on with that person, maybe they're having a bad day. We all have bad days. We have days that we come into work and we suck for eight hours. And we're like, "Wow, I can't believe I got nothing accomplished today." And having somebody point that out for you is horrible, regardless of who you are, regardless of, of whether or not you identify with barriers...I think by doing those things, ultimately, I think the production takes care of itself. Having happy employees, having low turnover, having high retention, those are all huge, huge cost-savers, right? So s- sometimes it's not all about making more money and producing more, sometimes it's saving more on the backend. Right? Um, so I, I do think that there- there's a place for this, um, in a lotta different sectors, um, that will end up improving your bottom line. Is it gonna necessarily improve your, your revenue? Maybe not. But is that small dip in revenue gonna be more than made up for, and the savings that you, that you basically realized on the backend, probably. I, I honestly think it would".*

Participant 5 noted the importance of the code of conduct at OneLight: *"You're not gonna get fired from this job. Unless you're, like, really out of hand and not, not cooperating or being rude or not, uh, following the code of conduct that we have here at One Light, which is to treat everyone as best as you can, not, not be a jerk to people and not talk to other people or not, you know, belittle people or whatever it is.*

Participant 5 further noted how revenge procrastination can show up in toxic cultures: *"... 'cause if you're stressed out at work, you hate your job, you're not a happy person, and you're not really that productive in the first place...So you're probably gonna be just, you know - fluffing off, doing whatever you feel like or on your stupid cellphone or talking to someone on Facebook or whatever it is. Who knows what people do, right?"*

2.5 Meet people where they are

OneLight's commitment to working with the whole person is evident in how they adjust work tasks, location, and supports based on needs and strengths. They don't require that everyone does the same job to create the same output. The culture is set up to respect the whole person, appreciate the whole person, and appreciate the strengths and skills of each person.

Participant 1: *"And so that's a really important piece of One Light, is that everyone's contribution is valued. And that is missing, we believe, from, from our, the world of work. (chuckles) That people do not feel valued for their contribution, uh, whatever that contribution might be. Um, and so that's, that essential."*

This willingness to engage in job crafting means that employees/makers have opportunities to grow and learn skills. In addition to employing people living with disabilities, OneLight also employs people with multiple kinds of barriers. There may be people with mental health conditions who could be supported through VCH, or single parents, or people who are newcomers to Canada, because the employment context and environment is attracting these workers to the project. Participant 1 noted the intersectionality of barriers to work.

The concept of meeting people where they are and respecting the whole person is conveyed initially during training and then reinforced via job crafting and task modifications. With respect to the training, Participant 2 noted that *"...included in the team training was lots of, of things like that, understanding that we're all different, that we all bring, I think the term was gifts to the workplace. And we had to talk about what we thought our gifts were. Um, and like I said before, all the supervisors were there at the team training as well."*

Participant 3 mentioned the different capacities or desires for duration of work: *"[N]ot everyone has the ability to focus on something for more than four hours, for their body to be in that position for more than four hours. But it doesn't mean that they don't wanna do it, they just don't wanna do it for seven and a half, eight hours, right?"*

Participant 1: *"And all of our social enterprises have adopted a pi-, at least a piece of that vision, that value for contribution. Yeah. That everyone matters and everyone is, is a part of the, the team."*

Participant 2: *"Like I said, I really think that team training was a brilliant way to start that, and it opened us up to, to everybody's gifts that they have and to know that your 100% is not going to be the same as his 100% or her 100%…. And even though it wasn't everybody had to produce the same, you had to give kind of your 100%, whatever that was, it's, it's not always easy for everyone to be able to understand that and to realize it's okay."*

Another aspect of meeting each person where they are is being flexible to what the individual wants to achieve – being aware of what 100% looks like for each employee. What goal are they are aiming for? Is it coming in a certain number of scheduled shifts? Is it making a certain number of OneLights? This is where meaningful work can be found for the individual, and where there are potential negative effects of pushing people beyond their capacity or where they feel comfortable with working.

Participant 4: *"And if you're working within your own capacity, then you don't feel that stress, right? You know, what's, what's success for you today? Um, and as long as we're consistently, you know, allowing people to work at their individual peak capacity, um, depending on their, you know, circumstances that particular day, uh, I think that's what makes it, what makes it kind of, um, successful, and that's what allows us to achieve those targets.*

...I think meaningful work … it's entirely up to the individual, right? I mean, some people find fulfillment in repetitive, simple tasks. They thrive in that environment. It's my nightmare, right? Like, for, for me as an individual, that would be my nightmare. But for that individual, that's what they thrive in and, and that's what gives them fulfillment.

Now, the other thing is, oh yeah, we give people the opportunity to be able to take on more. Right? And I think that, that is a key part of, um, meaningful work, is having the opportunity to make progress, um, and to learn new skills, and to, um, be able to apply those skills and know that they, those skills might be transferable. So to me, tha- that would be goal for, for kind of meaningful work."

Participant 3 noted the positive side of individualised approaches to job crafting for different strengths, *"I kind of realized that if you hire people that you simply, um, connect with and that you understand, it makes your job so unbelievably easy because you're manage, you're managing them the same way that you would wanna be managed.*

But what a flat group of people you would have as far as, you wouldn't have the, um, you wouldn't have this well-rounded team of everyone bringing in different strengths, of, of, um, of everyone being able to support each other because everyone's so similar. Right. And so it kind of, when I, that, that was a real interesting learning curve for me, is kind of looking at, um, a, a, a bigger picture and challenging myself as a manager to figure out what each person needs for success. Um, what each person is kind of looking at for, um, feeling valued, um, and how much information someone needs to kind of move forward. And kind of that I was the one that needed to change, um, and to look for something a little bit different.

So that was something that happened with me prior to coming to One Light. Um, the thing about my past experience is that I was still, even with that, hiring someone to do a specific job. One Light, we hire the person and then we're able to tailor the job to fit the person. So that is completely new to me, um, and is probably my favorite part of the job. Um, 'cause it's something I didn't have the ability, well, maybe, I don't wanna say I didn't have the ability, but at the same time I also did the numbers and it's, it's a tricky answer for me."

When asked what could have been better at OneLight we heard that there is no one-size-fits-all answer to this question:

Participant 2: "*Oh, that's a really hard question, actually, because to me, um, to say that something could've been done better maybe would've worked better for me, but it certainly wouldn't have worked better for the other 15 people. And what might've worked better for the person next to me certainly might not have worked well for me. So I don't think there was a lot of things they could've improved on.*

So you know, I think they did everything humanly possible, and I think that's what's great about having those four supervisors too. Because they were both so diverse in so many ways with so many different backgrounds that with all the different things that would come up with the group of 25, and I'll tell you, that was a pretty diverse group, um, I think they did a fabulous job."

Participant 5: *"This is the best job I could ever hope for and with my, the situation that I'm in. ...But a four or five hour shift is about w- kinda a perfect range of work capacity. I start to get a little irritated and my ener- my energy levels will drop after about four or five hours."*

SOLOPRENEUR CASE STUDY

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

Interviews: 2 Interviews
Documents Reviewed: Website, NIE Environmental Scan Survey

1.1 Participant Information

Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Disability Type	Close to Disability	Citizen-ship	Role	Time with Comp-any
48	Cis-gender Female	White	Physical	Family, friends	Permanent Resident	Leader-ship	9 years
38	Non-binary trans man	White with French Canadian and Ashkenazi Jewish Heritage	Physical, cognitive, neuro-diverg-ence	Friends	Canadian	Leader-ship	just over a year

1.2 Employment Setting

Both solopreneurs operate for-profit business that serve clients across Canada. Both work alone with no hired employees. Both identified disability inclusion as central to their business.

The Creative Good offers 1:1 and group educational services online with creators, who "have been most impacted by patriarchy and other oppressive systems". The Business aim is "for us to live better, more fulfilled lives through the realization of creative practices that are generative, sustainable, and liberatory"

Crows Nest Organizing offers professional 1:1 or group-based home-organization services (education and co-working supports). Thy specifically market to ADHD and other neurodivergent persons. The business is described on their website as:

"Crow's Nest is a judgement-free service that works with people to help them feel less overwhelmed by physical and virtual clutter. Everyone is welcome, and we specialize in working with clients who've struggled for years or even their whole lives to stay organized. If that describes you, you're not lazy. You're usually working twice as hard to stay on top of things and have tried over and over again to make lasting changes. Long-term disorganizing often happens because of unmet access needs.

1.2a) Roles

Both solopreneurs offer education and practical strategies and supports to individual and group clientele. Both are seeking to offer accessible supports that benefit others like them.

1.3 Diverse Economies

The Creative Good offers pay-what-you-wish and pay-what-you-can options as well as payment plans.

Crows Nest Organizing offers fee-for-service supports, and offers sliding-scale opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and Trans-identifying clients. The group supports are intended to offer a lower-cost support system for persons who may not have the resources to hire 1:1 support.

1.3a) Finance stack

N/A

1.3b) Business growth

Both Solopreneurs are managing a balance of making their businesses more sustainable while also offering accessibility for clients.

"As somebody who does those things, um, you know, we are often not clear about how we are being resourced to be able to do those things, right? 'Cause it's not easy to be resourced enough to be an artist or to do your own business or whatever. And often, it is because another family member is s... un- under- underwriting it, right? (laughs) So, that's definitely the biggest resource that I had, was that."

"So I know how to do my job where I work with my clients, but everything else has been a really steep learning curve and it was really hard to find accessible resources, and I think it did impact my ability to find funding. I ended up funding my business off of personal line of credit, rather than a business loan, which wasn't ideal, but it was wh- the only thing that was really accessible to me at the time, and I don't know if I could've done this without having had my own good credit."

1.4 Inclusion Support

Both solopreneurs spoke about a need for more practical, logistical, and financial supports and that having these early on would have most benefitted their success as solopreneurs.

"The major issue for me was that everybody needed a business plan, which is reasonable, but nobody had- nobody had, like, a, uh, like, wh- it- it was really hard to find, like, actual, like, human to human support building a business plan."

"and in terms of, like, grants for the work I do, I have had a quick look, I do not qualify because I am a for-profit business. And my- my impression with disability-based grants is that I am not disabled enough. Like, you basically have to not be able to do any other work to qualify for the ones I found, and that's not my story either. I have a steady employment history."

"I'm at the point now where I would really just love, like, a mentor, someone I could talk to and just be like, "Hey, I'm feeling stuck on this. Help me think it through." A lot of the time when I verbalize it, that's solves the problem, I don't even always need someone else's input. Uh, but that's not the kind of programming I'm finding, everyone is tied to funding."

Additionally, both solopreneurs spoke about the benefit of peer support and mentorship.

"I was looking for other people that were modeling ways to be in business and to not always be well, or to have disability."

"I would love to have a better connection to other, like, radical entrepreneurs, uh, it's just hard to find them. Online, it's easier... but in person, it's rough."

1.5 Inclusive Values

Both solopreneurs spoke about inclusive values grounding their business and practices within, and ways in which they modelled these values with clients.

"But then within that overall system, there's also, like, pause mode. Like, when d... when do we hit pause, um, how do we take intentional rest. So, that's like one example of, like, a liberatory practice being built in. We do things like, um, in the la... la... I do like little lessons on different things, and so they- they'll be included in the lecture. So, you know, I did a seasonal workshops, and so we talk a lot about decolonizing time in that workshop, and how the benefits of being closer to nature, et cetera. So, there's... It's just kind of baked in all over the place."

1.6 Processes/Conditions that Support Inclusive Practices

Both solopreneurs spoke about the fact of being a solopreneur in itself created a condition that allowed them to be more inclusive of their own needs and strengths.

SECTION TWO: "POINTS OF CONNECTION"

2.1 Commitment to social purpose and/or social justice, or at least questioning model of conventional workplaces

Both solopreneurs spoke about how their businesses were grounded in a commitment to social purpose and social justice.

"When the pandemic came, the business shut down, and then it became just my own business and very much changed to really add that elements of doing feminist and justice-based work within the business as well."

"I feel like the thing that moved me to this direction where I felt capable of doing this business and, uh, trusting myself to do it was actually... racial justice work is actually what got me started."

Both identified experiencing discordance between their personal values and prior workplaces within which they had previously been employed, and how much this had contributed to their struggles with employment.

"I feel like I'm just starting to recognize, too, how much value to misalignment was an issue for me, that autistic and maybe neuro-atypical in general thing where we, like, feel, like, justice really strongly. Um, I really struggled with that misalignment in my corporate job. Um, and even before I kinda got radicalized, like, when I started working that job, I still was like, "Capitalism is fine, it just needs to be reformed." And I have... no, (laughs) not anymore. Uh, so getting more and more radicalized, I think, and, like, m- more and more leftist over time, I think really aggravated that and I think I can, looking back, I can recognize the toll that took on me, that dissonance, cognitive dissonance took on me, um, both in terms of, like, the work I was doing, and both what people around me were saying and doing."

Additionally, both spoke about the challenges of meeting the ableist demands of traditional workplace environments prior to becoming solopreneurs.

"It felt like a constant game of, "How can I hide that I'm not productive like I'm supposed to be?"

"Like, I'm so, so aware that I could not work at a regular job. There's just no way. Um, and I also reflect on how wild it is that I can still run a business, have a creative practice, have a full life. I do have all of these things while it not being symmetrical or regular. Like, it's really based on what my body has decided to do at any given time. Um, so it's wild to me that I could be, like, you know, a productive member of society at work, but the accommodations likely wouldn't have been made for me to be out there doing that kind of... a- anyone else's work, so it really... I'm so grateful to have self-employment because I don't think I would survive out there."

"I feel like the expectation around productivity is you come into your desk or you log in from home or wherever you're working, and you work steadily from X-time to X-time. And obviously, you can take water cooler breaks, you should take your lunch break, all of that kind of stuff, but there is kind of this expectation of steady ongoing work, and that has never really been something my brain does well"

"Even just, like, my own internalized ablesim, and my beliefs about what I think I should be able to do and what's, like, normal. Like, that... Intellectually, I know so much more than I ever did now, but, like, still trying to, like, make that match up, right, is really, really challenging. Like, I catch myself all the time, thinking, like, "I should be able to do this," or, "I should be able to do that." And, and all of that kind of a generalized ableism and all of those things, like, I've had to really, to actually show up for my work, I have to tend all those things."

2.2 Flexibility and agency

Flexibility and agency in work method/mode was noted as a key benefit of being a solopreneur, and one that prompted a move away from traditional employment.

"So, one of the things that I do in my business is that everything is by season. So, um, there's lots of reasons for that, and one of the reasons is is that when we start to decolonize time and think in terms of seasons, then we're stepping a little bit to outside of capitalism, et cetera, so there's, there's all s- sorts of things there. Um, but for me, it also means that I have clearly times of year when I know I'm doing my intakes, and when... And so I can really go, okay, this is the time where I have to really try and be prepared for that, like, you know, push, um, and then I can pace myself throughout the rest of the year. And so, by only doing the intakes and new offerings to the seasons that I really know what I'm in for and can really have that pacing. Um, so that's one, one big thing of how I run the business. And it's taken me some trial and error to figure out the best ways to do things"

2.3 Communication (not always verbal) and psychological safety

Both solopreneurs spoke about the value of themselves being in the leadership roles, and not having to communicate or mask themselves in communication with others in leadership positions.

"I don't have to manage my coworkers' or by boss's expectations around who I am as a person, because that I am my own boss and coworker. I think it will take me... I think I- I think I am less likely to burn out in this role, but I might anyway. Like, I might... this- this does have- this could be a hyper focus, and maybe in a few years, I'll be like, "No, I'm done with this," but I will also have the freedom to move on."

"I'm still allowed to be seen even when I'm unwell, and there's so much about, like, having to, like, hide being unwell, um, because shamed of showing up unwell, all of those kinds of things. So, I think it's just also, like, being able to be met where you are, and to be able to, like, show up however you can show up"

"Disabilities and illness are still considered just, like, to be so shame-based, right? Like, oh, this is something that has to be hidden or kept from people. And it's like, being able to actually say what somebody needs and what they're, what they're dealing with, is like, huge, right?"

Solopreneurs also spoke about how they modelled psychological safety through their communication with others.

"It just really does reaffirm that this is where I want to be, um, 'cause also, like, eh, it gives me grace, too, right? Like, if I get overwhelmed and forget to reply to an email for a week, other ADHD-ers are gonna go, "Yup, sounds about right," whereas people without disability is gonna look at that and go, "Well, that's so unprofessional." Also, not masking is awesome, or masking less at least, awesome."

2.4 Champions in leadership positions can drive culture and inclusivity through the whole organization

Both solopreneurs spoke about their role as business owners and how they drive culture and inclusivity through their own organization and through role modelling.

"I also really try to model it in my, in my business, and, um, somebody is in a kind of leadership with my people, is that, you know, lots of people have chronic illness of some kind, disabilities of some kind, and that's, like, really helpful, actually, to have somebody that can model that for them so they know what then, you know... So, um, all of my participants and students know what my boundaries are on time and how when I'm gonna get back to them and how often can I show up, and I'll fully show up when I do, but they also know that I have other times where I'm not gonna be available. So, there's, there's, there's so many things. Those are some of the things off the top of my head."

"All of my participants and students know what my boundaries are on time and how when I'm gonna get back to them and how often can I show up, and I'll fully show up when I do, but they also know that I have other times where I'm not gonna be available."

2.5 Meet people where they are

Both solopreneurs spoke about their clientele and ways in which their business model allowed them to meet people where they are, by encouraging people to look at the impacts of broader systemic structures on their current experiences.

"To help the folks that I work with realize that what they've often, um, labeled as a personal, um, problem or failing is actually a collective issue stemming from all these various systems of oppression. So, things like perfectionism or visibility, like, and, and trying to help see where that's actually not a personal problem in their creativity, right? And so, that comes up over and over again with the folks that I work with. So, I specify that I work with folks who have been most impacted by patriarchy and other problems of oppression. And so, you know, we're working with, you know, people that are burnt out by capitalism and then beating themselves over the c... uh, about not getting the creative practice down, and it's like, well, look at the system."

"You're usually working twice as hard to stay on top of things and have tried over and over again to make lasting changes. Long-term disorganizing often happens because of unmet access needs."

NORTHERN LIGHTS ESTATE WINERY CASE STUDY

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

Interviews: 6 Interviews
Documents Reviewed: Employee Handbook, Website

1.1 Participant Information

Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Disability Type	Close to Disability	Citizen-ship	Role	Time with Comp-any
43	Cis-gender Female	White	None	Family	Canadian	External support	Several years partnering with NLEW
24	Cis-gender Female	White	Learning	Friends, coworkers	Canadian	Front line (seasonal)	2-3 years
25	Cis-gender Male	White	Physical	Friends, coworkers	Canadian	Front line (seasonal)	1 year
45	Cis-gender Female	White	None	None	Canadian	Leadership	9 years
32	Cis-gender Female	White / Indigenous	None	Family	Canadian	Leadership	5 years
61	Cis-gender Male	Indigenous	Learning disability	Friends, coworkers	Canadian	Front line (seasonal)	2 years

1.2 Employment Setting

Northern Lights Estate Winery (NLEW) is a winery located in Prince George, B.C. producing fruit wines with gooseberries, raspberries, apples, rhubarb, black currants, cherries, and blueberries. Founded in 2013, NLEW has experienced significant growth, with about seven to eight thousand cases of wine bottled yearly. The winery, which includes a bistro, is on the banks of the Nechako River near downtown Prince George and maintains growing facilities elsewhere near the city. NLEW is both the most northernly and the largest fruit winery in B.C.

The stated organizational goals of NLEW are "to make everyone's day a bit better than before they experienced us. We want to have the largest impact on the community, by making the smallest footprint on our environment."

1.2a) Roles

NLEW has approximately 30 year-round employees across all operations, with this number rising to about 100 during the high season for increased picking and processing, as well as for weddings and other special events in the summer. For eight years the winery has cooperated with a local disability support organization, AimHi, to employee clients with disabilities to work as berry pickers during the high season.

1.3 Diverse Economies

NLEW is locally owned by Family Fast Foods Ltd., which operates Wendy's and Hoppy Brews in Prince George. While not all the fruit used in the wines is grown by NLEW, all fruit is sourced from B.C., with a preference for local growers. The winery is committed to sustainable agricultural practices. Pesticides and fertilizers are largely organic, and the water conservation efforts have been put in place. NLEW's wines are vegan. In cooperation with UNBC, the winery has examined its carbon footprint and achieved carbon neutrality through purchasing offsets.

1.3a) Finance stack

NLEW has annual revenues of approximately $1.6 million yearly. There is no profit-sharing scheme for employees, though some employees are shareholders in the company.

1.3b) Business growth

NLEW has experienced rapid growth since its founding, increasing the demand for seasonal labour. Fruit pickers with disabilities have made a small contribution to filling this need.

1.4 Inclusion Support

NLEW partners with a local disability support organization, AimHi to recruit, provide transportation for, and include workers with disabilities in picking fruit. AimHi provides most of the inclusion support, beginning with recruitment through Ready, Willing and Able, as Participant 1 explains: *"They'll send out an email to any of the partner agencies that are connected. And they will let all the partner agencies know about a specific job opportunity. So, Ready, and Willing and Able kind of come from an, kind of like from a national perspective. And that's how they are kind of connecting with the different employers, but from a higher level than, like say, we would just coming in off the street and applying for a job somewhere."*

Ready, Willing and Able provides financial support for workers to travel to NLEW.

AimHi then supports workers on-site as needed. For most clients, this does not mean constant support but rather supervision by NLEW supervisors as would be the case for all pickers. Nonetheless, the initial support work needed for each worker for a relatively short period of work (a few months at the most per year) is considerable:

Participant 1: *"it's a lot of coordinating […] .and then paperwork through RWA and then monthly paperwork for all the mileage reimbursements, and then if we're gonna be out here on site. So that's why we love that they have a supervisor here, because if they said, "Oh, well, they're not gonna be supervised at all." Some of our people might not have the opportunity, right?*

So we would probably look, be looking at funding for, to have staff out here the entire time if that was the case. But especially people that are returned berry pickers and stuff, they don't need us watching them pick berries all the time if there's another supervisor on site that they're comfortable with. And that's why we always come for at least the first week or so, just to make things are running, running smoothly, but we can always pop back out at any time and stuff as well. "

This enables NLEW to dedicate minimal resources of its own to inclusion, as participant 4 explains:

"because they're supported by their job coach and it doesn't give us a lot of extra work […] we're more than happy to give as much opportunity to any, as many individual that they can provide."

NLEW's full-time farm employees do receive some training in inclusion support originally spearheaded through AimHi, though it appears this has been minimal, according to participant 5: "*[A local autism trainer] did a, a little kind of workshop sort of with us, to try to give us an idea of what it is like to process things, and what it's like to have autism. And that was really beneficial. I would love it if they could come back and do that again. And I thought it was really, really great.*"

1.5 Inclusive Values

NLEW states in their employee handbook that they seek to be "inclusive not exclusive" and refer to fair employment practices as they relate to non-discrimination against disabled persons, as well as the relevant principles of the BC Human Rights Code. Participant 4 highlights this as an important representation of the winery's inclusive values: *"We're not supposed to discriminate, according to gender or ethnicity or disability if we are going to employ someone. But we're really standing behind that statement. So we are trying to have, uh, to bring as more, much diversity in our employment to pool."*

Participant 1, an AimHi employee, supports this statement with observations from practice*: "I think they, the main thing is that they just don't treat any person with a disability any different than they would a non-disabled person. They, they have all sorts of different employees. They might have employees that English is a second language, that type of thing, right? You just, you just still show them how, how to pick the berries and where to come to weigh the berries and that type of thing."*

As does participant 5, a farm manager: *"I think the biggest thing is Northern Lights is very big on everybody being very friendly and very welcoming […] they're very good at hiring in that sense I think, because we've never had an issue with somebody being mistreated […]we come at it from a very, just a very friendly perspective […] we're just trying to make everybody feel really comfortable."*

NLEW aspires to expand inclusive hiring and employment to other departments (for example, the bistro) but noted multiple barriers to actually doing so, for example managerial discretion, physical intensity of tasks (for example carrying cases of wine), and additional costs due to training.

1.6 Processes/Conditions that Support Inclusive Practices

AimHi performs integral background support to enable workers with disabilities to participate in the workplace. For some, this means training before the work begins on appropriate workplace behaviors. For others, this can mean part or full-time support through a job coach or personal assistant. NLEW supervisors provide friendly workplace oversight, as described by Participant 3: *"They say, "How you doing here? How you doing?" and show how them how much in the bucket I have."*

And participant 5: *"we'll just kind of check up on them, like walk up and down. Sometimes I'll pick with them, depending on how they're doing and stuff. And I just try to basically give them the best tips on how to pick. Like if I notice that, like they're doing something that might make it faster, then I will come up to them and help them, I suggest a better way that they could do it a little quicker, 'cause the faster they pick, the more money they make, 'cause they are paid by the pound. When they do fill their buckets, the supervisor is the one who weighs it. They record all of the weights during the day. And then that's what they're able to get paid properly. So we make sure they have somebody stationed at the scale."*

Supervisors from NLEW also attend to issues of workplace safety and worktime. Participant 1 elaborates:

"And they have no problem with his staff coming out with him and sitting on, sitting on a bench somewhere and just kind of overseeing and being here to help him with his tube feeding at lunchtime and, and that type of thing. They have no problem with whoever, whoever wants to be out, whoever needs to be out, that type of thing. They're very inclusive."

The physical conditions of a farm are rarely inclusive but NLEW has made efforts to improve the accessibility of the workplace for pickers. The ground at the farm is reasonably flat and uniform, and the rows of berries are wide. This space is likely be accessible for most people with physical disabilities, though some parts of the farm and bistro are not.

Participant 6 describes this: *"Yeah, the terrain is pretty good. There was a couple spots here it flipped up. Um, walking through. But, I mean, it's soft ground and stuff like that. But for the most part, in between, where they had the walkways, you're able to bring your walker in and you actually got to use it to sit on."*

NLEW pays all pickers the same, unsubsidized piece rate but strives to be inclusive and equitable by paying a higher rate than mandated by law: *"I mean, there will always be slow pickers and there will always be faster pickers, but the average picker, um, should make minimum wage. And yes, this, it's 10 to 15 and more times then the, the baseline that the government is giving."* (Participant 4)

SECTION TWO: "POINTS OF CONNECTION"

2.1 Commitment to social purpose and/or social justice, or at least questioning model of conventional workplaces

We want to have the largest impact on the community, by making the smallest footprint on our environment.

NLEW describes their organizational goals thusly: "We want to have the largest impact on the community, by making the smallest footprint on our environment." In the employee handbook, the organization seeks to challenge some facets of traditional Canadian workplaces, for example stating that they seek to "be progressive but not righteous," "be professional but not prestigious," "be funny but not a joke," and "be formal but wear jeans."

The winery is locally owned and operated by a family with deep roots in the community. The Bell family has been involved in local and provincial politics, as well as a variety of local business ventures and non-profit organizations. Family Fast Foods has donated over $500,000 to local charities.

Participant 4 spoke to the motivations of the Bell family to found NLEW and to the purpose of the organization in the community more broadly: *"They really wanted to build something for the community […] Not necessarily just for them, but have an impact in the tourism of Prince George and being able to be an employer. And to just to elevate the experience that everyone has in Prince George. Because as you might know, Prince George doesn't have necessarily the best, um, um, reputation. And by building a winery, it would just elevate, the life of everybody in Prince George are so proud of having a winery […] people when they come here, we're a number one tourist attraction."*

The farm site includes a stage and terraced rows of seats that go uphill from the stage. This space is used for viewing performances, weddings, and films. Participant 4 elaborated that *"This whole community that, and I don't know if those individuals come and participate in the Light Up the Orchard or like, or agri-tourism events, but then they, they're proud, they're probably proud to say that they contribute to this organization that provides such a good experience to the community."*

2.2 Flexibility and agency

The workers with disabilities at NLEW pick fruits and berries several months of the year, giving them some flexibility and agency as employees. Pickers are seasonal contractors that are paid at a per piece rate. They can decide if, how much they work, and, within the season, at what times they work during hours that supervisors are present. This flexibility was universally lauded by pickers and the support worker interviewed for the case study. Participant 1 notes that: *"Somebody might sign up for berry picking and then something happens with their health or their mental health or whatever, and they're not able to commit to it. That's okay. It doesn't mean it's gonna hurt their chances for next year or anything. Whereas with, you know, some, just, you know, general employers, you know, 'Oh, that first situation didn't work out very well. Okay, well I don't think it's gonna work.' Right? Whereas, you know, we have people that, you know, might take a season off and then they come back the following season and it's just, they're, they love seeing people return, but they also love seeing new faces out here and stuff as well, right?"*

Workers with disabilities mentioned how the flexibility can serve a wide range of needs in their lives, ranging from career progression to life quality:

Participant 2: *"I do want a job, but I want to start off with part-time […] And, work up to full-time."*

Participant 6: *"So we hold his shifts for this six weeks. And if the weather's bad, just so he can still have an activity-, he has the option to still come in for his shredding shift. And if he's able to come, that day he comes, and if not, then if, if weather was great for those whole six weeks, then he takes six weeks off shredding."*

Similarly, during worktime pickers can decide when they take their breaks. Appropriate facilities with shade and water are provided. Due to transportation costs (for example by taxi) being covered by Ready, Willing and Able, pickers have access to tailored transit to their worksite.

The cooperation with AimHi is integral to providing both flexibility and agency to pickers. AimHi staff often coordinate different work commitments (also internal to AimHi) with the seasonal work at NLEW. Support staff also inform and assist their clients with issues relating to disability benefits so that they can avoid having benefits reduced. This increases the agency of pickers at NLEW to decide how much they want to work.

The partnership with AimHi also gives NLEW considerable flexibility in hiring seasonal workers and agency in the impact it hopes to have on the community. Participant 4 explains that the partnership is characterized by "*easiness,*" going on to say that "*since they do all the pre-screening this is very helpful for us because it saves us time. And our ability or, eagerness to provide all the information to AimHi just made the partnership very smooth,*" and that other businesses should know that "*it probably makes the process easier if you're going through an organization, uh, instead of trying to work, um, hire just in the regular way.*"

2.3 Communication (not always verbal) and psychological safety

As noted above, AimHi is integral to assuring smooth communication between pickers and NLEW. AimHi acts as a go-between on employment issues, helping pickers understand contracts and workplace etiquette. Although farm staff have received some training in inclusive employment, the disability support agency provides job coaches and other staff to assist pickers at the beginning of their seasonal employment. Some pickers require constant support, for example if they have significant medical or speech-based disabilities.

AimHi also helps brief NLEW staff on pickers ahead of time, stated Participant 5: *"if I've never, if I hadn't met them before, she kind of gives me a little bit of an insight on what, what they're like, and how I can best communicate with them, I guess"* and that *"it feels really good to be able to make them, to, to be able to communicate with them on a, on a level that's, I guess, more, more professional."*

The relational comfort in communication is respected by NLEW in their dealings with pickers, as Participant 1 explained: *"Well, people with disabilities, it might look like a different scenario or, you know, maybe they say, 'Oh, well I prefer to just, you know, communicate with the person.' Well, the person's gonna forget a lot of the things that you communicate with them. So we would actually prefer that you communicate with their caregiver that picks them up every day."*

Supervisory interactions were universally described as positive by interviewed seasonal pickers. Communication with seasonal pickers with disabilities has little difference to seasonal pickers without disabilities – the same procedures and training are utilized for both groups in an inclusive manner, with AimHi providing some additional support for workers with disabilities.

2.4 Champions in leadership positions can drive culture and inclusivity through the whole organization

Both the Director of Operations and the Farm Manager were named as champions of the cooperation with AimHi and the inclusive employment practices of NLEW. The Director of Operations attends job fairs to recruit disabled persons, has advocated for other departments to begin hiring and training disabled persons, and acts as a primary contact for AimHi. The farm manager acts as an operational champion, assuring that supervisors are informed about pickers and can supervise them appropriately.

To the Director of Operations, leading on the issue of inclusive employment means aspiring to hiring more persons with disabilities, increasing the number of roles open to them, increasing pay, and creating opportunities for seasonal employees to move into permanent positions. Additional subsidies, public transit in Prince George, and awareness around government policies were noted as being significant external barriers to these aspirations.

2.5 Meet people where they are

N/A

ILV CASE STUDY

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

1.1 Participant Information

Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Disability Type	Close to Disability	Citizenship	Role	Time with Company
33	Cis-gender Male	South Asian	No	Family, coworkers	Permanent Resident	Leadership	Oct-19
30 - 35	Cis-gender Female	White	No	Coworkers	Canadian	Leadership	a few months?
Late 40s-50s	Cis-gender Female	White	Neuro-divergence	Family		Leadership	3 years
38	Cis-gender Female	White	No	Family, coworkers	Canadian	Leadership	13 months
44	Cis-gender Female	Mexican, Latino, Canadian	Physical	Family, coworkers		Leadership	2019

1.2 Employment Setting

Joni is a period care company, founded in 2019. The company is nominally based in Victoria, Canada, however most team members work completely remotely within Canada. One employee spends time in the office and warehouse on a regular basis. There are other jobs in warehouse/fulfillment, with outsourced warehousing in Vancouver.

In the past Joni has employed interns from University of Victoria, and a short-term contractor who participated with a support worker.

The regular team is currently quite small, with three full time workers, and two part time contractors. Two employees identify with having a disability (or at least a condition that reduces functioning).

1.2a) Roles

- Two co-founders
- Operations manager
- Sales
- Content manager

1.3 Diverse Economies

Joni is explicitly a social enterprise, with a strong mission that is expressed through their product and their company culture.

"But the purpose is social, so we call it social enterprise. Making sustainable period care accessible for everyone…."

"so, this has two parts; one, sustainable, and secondly is accessible. Um, because many times, companies lean on one or another. Uh, so, we, we make very conscious decision, even when we are sourcing any raw material or anything,"

Joni operates a 5% giveback arrangement for not for profits. Their mission is to provide sustainable period care accessible for everyone. However, they are doing this through a business paradigm so will still need to at least break even.

The company is in the process of applying for B corp certification[1], which is based on a score given at the point of qualifying. Every year after, Joni is obligated to increase their social benefit score, which means continuous improvement of the triple bottom line operations.

Participant 4: *"something else that we're very excited about is, um, we're starting to create our application to become a B Corp company. Um, and so, that's something again solidifies our commitment to people, the environment, and then profits. And I would honestly say that it's in that order. Um, uh, we're a business, so being profitable and, and again, paying our, you know, employees for their services is important, but not more important than the, the greater mission that we serve."*

1.3a. Finance stack

Investment:
They have investors, having raised about $600 000 in total investment, so will need to make a return to those shareholders. The 5% giveback commitment serves as a screening device for values aligned investors. They have deliberately let go of investors that do not believe in or align with this giveback program.

Joni employees are also investors – most have between $500 and $1000 invested, but all will be eligible for an option scheme once it's financially feasible to do the legal work to set that up. They currently have 11000 unallocated options reserved for employees.

The finance stack includes applying for grants (about 4% to 5% of cashflow) for various aspects of the company operations:

Participant 1: *"these grants can come for R&D work, or project management kind of work, or hiring, uh, people with disabilities."*

1.3b) Business growth

The business is currently breaking even after a number of years of losses and growing rapidly.

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[1] Designation as a B Corp means a company meets high social and environmental standards (and commits to improving their performance in those areas) in addition to pursuing financial success. The application process and designation is managed via B Lab, which assesses the company's performance on five major categories: governance, workers, community, the environment, and customers. It also looks at the overall impact. More information available from **https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/**

Participant 1: *" financially, we are breaking even this year, finally. And, uh, (laughs), we are growing over, like, 130/40% year over year. Uh, this year, uh, uh, we were targeting about hun- $450,000 in revenue, but we are somewhere around 650, uh, because of this regulatory changes and everything. So, which is a good thing."*

Participant 2 notes they are *"also working with organizations, um, to work with like nonprofits or to work with businesses that are providing products that, you know, aren't, uh, nonprofits per se. Um, again, like looking at the details of it, they're so focused on price and cost. They want it to be accessible to people. They want it to be, um, you know, mission-driven, but they also are very aware that money makes it work. So, um, yeah, that's definitely conversations that we have frequently about making sure that, you know, costs are working and we're not losing money on something we shouldn't be. Um, yeah, that's definitely in the conversation."*

Thus, Joni are not only looking to make financial sense to customers that might usually purchase from bigger brands that are able to compete on cost, but they are also making sure the products and profits are delivered to not for profits and charities. They are currently working with 20+ not for profits.

1.4 Inclusion Support

Much of their inclusion support comes from being inclusive by default, see 2.2 : leadership champions and 2.3: communication of that inclusion.

Apart from one instance of inclusivity training, there is not yet a lot of formal inclusivity training or formal codification of inclusion. The team is currently quite small and moving from start-up to scale-up phase of operations. As a result, so far there are no targeted efforts or specific hiring attempts.

We noted that previous employment had equipped some team members with the training and experience to offer an organically inclusive approach to interacting with people living with disability.

However, they have made a change to wording their job advertisements to make them more inclusive, as explained by Participant 1: *"Hey, even if you feel that you know some of these portions of the work, and you feel like you can learn while you're working, it's fine. Or you," they are, like, with disability or anything, it's fine. Please apply. And so, making it, like more welcoming. And it, it helps us, like, build more, uh, applicant pool as well, uh, than won't be available to us otherwise."*

Some discussions flagged a probable future change to the organic approach to training and documentation, for example, Participant 3 noted: *"even though, I like an organic approach, I think as you scale you definitely need, uh, a document, uh, for consistency. Um, something that people can refer to so that there's a, a process in place. And so that people might feel more secure in that, so that there are, that it is written down, that it is, it's not just lip service. That it's an actual document that maybe is a living document that gets adjusted as need be, but. To have it, have more of a, of a, of guidelines or a statement about it. Or not a statement, guidelines, uh, would be beneficial."*

1.5 Inclusive Values

Joni's commitment to inclusive values are demonstrated through the entire supply chain and employment and business model, and such inclusive values may be influenced by the nature of company.

In addition, both cofounders related having grown up with or seen lack of opportunity or barriers to opportunity that had affected them directly or someone close to them. One cofounder identifies with having a serious condition that causes disability and loss of function.

These inclusive values extend to efforts to diversify their investor base. Joni targeted 80% of efforts towards attracting investment from women:

Participant 1: *" And so, we have put about 80% of our efforts into raising money from female-identifying investors. And we also did the Crowd Funding, so, net, like, a small investor. So, like, people who don't have, like, couple of million dollars in the bank, kind of, people can also, like, invest in, like, a small way. $500, or $1,000 in, like, a, this, kind of, like, a start up.*

And frankly, we put, like, 80% of effort to get those 35% women-identifying investors. And we put about 20% up for, uh, if, up for someone, like, finding male-identifying investors, because, there are frankly a lot of men investors who can just put the money. And we still get 80% of the money from those investors, because they have money."

1.6 Processes/Conditions that Support Inclusive Practices

Given that Joni is a period care company, with a mission for inclusive and affordable period care, they are working in a space that is already breaking taboos and looking for ways to be inclusive.

In addition, the team works remotely, communicates online, has open and supportive leadership with a fairly flat hierarchy, fosters psychological safety, currently operates a small team which allows in-depth knowledge of each person.

Furthermore, they offer part time and contract work to suit people with caretaking responsibilities or disability.

SECTION TWO: "POINTS OF CONNECTION"

2.1 Commitment to social purpose and/or social justice, or at least questioning model of conventional workplaces

Joni has the strongest commitment to social purpose of all the case studies operating with a business-based structure. Joni was founded on the commitment to social purpose – to provide accessible period care. Their stated mission is: "Making sustainable period care accessible for everyone"

Joni pursues this mission through a business model of selling product in a financially sustainable way, so it's an enterprise. Their mission and commitment to those values attracts and retains customers as well as employees/team members.

The diverse economies approach means they are explicitly pursuing social outcomes as well as a financial outcome of keeping the company running. When explicitly questioned about what sort of trade-off would be made if there was a conflict between social purpose and profit, they could not see a way that would happen. For example, participant 3 responded: *"Profit before their social mission? I don't think so, 'cause it's baked into their business plan. So they do, like there's a 5% give back commitment that I know that they adhere to... they're creating like a holistic community of accessibility".*

In addition to social purpose for their organisation, they are also committed to social purpose through the supply chain – ensuring their products and processes are as sustainable as possible and investigating their sources within the supply chain for aligned social purpose and sustainability values. This draws the values of the organisation through the company and holds the culture in integrity and demonstrates to employees and customers that it is not "greenwashing".

For example, quote from participant 1: *"Yeah. Um, so understanding that the partners that we have in manufacturing and supplying our products, they, a, a lot of what we're working towards since the beginning of Joni before I even got there, they're working on making sure that that product is meeting the standards that they set themselves upon creating the company. So sustainable, um, you know, biodegradable or recyclable, responsible within the certificates that they're getting through, like the certificate of forestry, like responsibility, um, through the textiles that they're getting for creating the products. So that portion of it where I think to myself, and, you know, one of the manufacturers is working on like a ci-, circular kind of supply chain where they're not creating wastewater, um, with like toxic chemicals in it. They're like reusing that water through the production process. So it's, it's really interesting."*

Quote from participant 2: *"cause there's, there's so many people, and I was one of them too, as, as you're looking for products that are kind of that extra step, which feels like it shouldn't be an extra sh-, step, it should be something that's already been made into the business model."*

Participant 2 refers to the cofounders and their mission, noting that *"they're focused so much on, um, helping create that new kind of economic style of business where it's like, why aren't we focusing on people and planet and profits? Like all of these things can be together, and why do we always have to sacrifice one over the other? Let's try and make this as sustainable and accessible as possible while we can still make money off of it. 'Cause otherwise it doesn't make sense."*

….Um, and I think that shift is really slow, but it's happening where companies are realizing like the consumer wants to feel good about their purchase. And though it is very murky and a very gray right now, and I don't think it's perfect, um, I think people are working towards trying to create something that is sustainable because we're all seeing it happen now where we're like, this, this isn't working. Like we're not making this work very well. A lot of people are getting, you know, becoming, uh, climate refugees. A lot of people have terrible working conditions. Like this really doesn't work. This isn't sustainable."

This commitment to the mission and values can attract talent, for example, Participant 4 pointed out that *"what really drew me to Joni was their core values, uh, the products that they were interested in creating, and their give back model of 5% to period care initiatives across Canada and the US. …. So for me to go and spend, you know, my time being of service to someone else's dream, per se, I really wanted to make sure that it was a good fit.*

2.2 Flexibility and Agency

Joni offers a very flexible environment and flexible approach to workload management. In addition to providing remote work opportunities and flexible hours, team members can choose their own workload distribution – i.e., they can work when energies are high and do something else when not feeling motivated.

This balances a high degree of autonomy over choosing work and when to work with clear guidelines on what's expected and which outcomes are mission-critical. Joni employees are empowered to ask for help when they need support to achieve outcome.

Quote from participant 1: *"so, uh, and just staying, like, the work, rather than, like, oh, it's a nine to five job, like, do it. And focus on the, like, values and the vision and the getting shit done makes it easier for everyone. It doesn't have to be, like, hard-pressed, like, job, job. Uh, we have 80, 70 or 50 years on this planet, uh, we can live and learn and work and, like, grow and, like, die, I guess, kind of offensive."*

Quote from participant 2: *"Super flexible. Um, and I think, yeah, I think from, from the get-go, [cofounder], when I was getting hired on, she was like, "I don't care what your hours are, as long as you're getting them done." Like, like if you're working, you know, the morning, take a break in the afternoon, come back in the evening. If that's what works best for you, then do it. I'm not looking to like micromanage that portion of it. I'm just looking for somebody to get their work done and respond to me when I need something, you know, kind of urgently.*

I think the inclusive employment, um, is so important now that we know how we can do this remotely. Like that helps so much. I think you're, you're creating the ability for people to feel included in, in, in the working world, in the workplace. Um, so yeah, I think remote also being flexible with hours. I think that's a huge one.

Cause you feel like you have, you know, we still are people, we have lives, we have responsibilities outside of our job. So, um, again, I think that's a really interesting perspective. Um, also, uh, if people do need to go somewhere to work, it's like having those infrastructures in place where it's easy to access public transit if you can't afford a car. 'Cause hell, we all know how expensive it is to have a car. And (laughs) so yeah, I think those kind of things do require some structural changes within, um, you know, cities and, and then also changes maybe the government."

Quote from participant 3: (identifies as living with disability) *"I haven't had to ask for accommodations because of the nature of the work. Uh, because it's part-time, um, I dedicate four hours of my day to Joni. Um, and I work from home, so I can incorporate walks or whatever other activities I need to do, or change up my activities. Um, I have a variety of tasks to do, so I can always mix up what I'm working on, uh, to keep myself interested (laughs) in what I'm working in. So that it comes with the nature of the job, and I think I've sort of sought that, uh, over time. Like because I only discovered that I had ADHD later in life, I have sort of different tactics that I have developed over time, uh, to get me through the day."*

Quote from participant 5: *"Um, I think there's a couple things here. Like I think that, um, on one sense, we have an inherently, I feel, inclusive environment because of how we work. So we work remotely from home. There's a ton of flexibility there. That support, you know, as a, as a mother, as a parent, you know, that's definitely more flexible and more inclusive in that sense. Um, so I think inherently, there's just like, the way of working is inclusive. Um, and so someone coming in with a disability would find it, would find that they would get the support that they need to take the time, so there's no like, "You have to be online between nine and five at all times. We're not clocking hours here. Every role has like, you know, accountabilities that, um, things that they're accountable for, um, or they have to report on, but the how you execute, um, is really person-dependent."*

When Participant 5 realised that she could choose her own hours at a previous job, she decided: *"I'm gonna do some hours. I, I'm gonna make my work day work for me, and not try to fit my life into this work day."*

2.3 Communication (not always verbal) and psychological safety

The team members at Joni were aware of the importance of communicating what it is to be inclusive while also refraining from judgement. This means not just sharing platitudes to talk up the culture and the organisation, not only the positive support of all team members, but also the absence of judgement.

Participant 4: *"you know, in terms of like deadlines, we're very, very conscientious of like putting, um, like timelines and being clear about expectations and boundaries and asking for help, making sure that the environment is open, that if you need help or you feel like you're drowning or something is, is going awry, that you can reach out and any one of us will hop on the Slack channel and make a point to support.*

….We also had an inventory meeting at the same time, and I had something that came up for me personally this morning. And so, I reached out to the team. I told them in full transparency what had happened. And this is something in my personal life. And I said, "You know, I have this interview and then it's gonna go right into the inventory meeting. I'm gonna have to postpone, like not attend the inventory meeting. You can catch me up on Slack or I'll be available tomorrow." And, you know, the hearts come through and (laughs) take care of you and do what you need to do. And so that is who we are. I'm getting emotional just thinking about it 'cause in the morning I had, but the, the genuine care of the person over, "We're not talking about forecasting today. You don't need to talk about it. You don't need to think about it. We've got you."

In addition, it can be communication via actions – for example, one of the cofounders demonstrated that it's safe to talk about not being on top form. This goes beyond championing inclusivity (discussed in the next section), but models being vulnerable and open, and fosters psychological safety by communicating when not operating at full capacity themselves. Participant 3 related a story: "[Cofounder] *said like, "I cannot focus today. Does anyone have any advice for me?" And then everyone kind of chimed in with some of the techniques that they do. So they're sort of openly sharing that. Because we know they, [the cofounders], work really hard, but even they struggle from time to time, and they are open with that. Um, I know that [cofounder] is sort of a strong, um, proponent for, on her social media, for resting. And not just resting on your period, just also just like, yeah, she might work hard or other people might work hard, but you can't live the grind day in and day out, 'cause you're gonna burn out."*

2.4 Champions in leadership positions can drive culture and inclusivity through the whole organisation

The leadership team of Joni are strong champions for inclusivity. As mentioned above, they approach business building from a social justice lens, addressing injustice via the business product itself and the profit-sharing model.

While Joni's structure and hierarchy are very flat, the cofounders appear to lead by supporting their team. We heard that if the team member requires anything, they only need ask. Both cofounders play powerfully to their strengths and interests – one cofounder focuses on logistics and technical problem solving, the other focuses on the "people" side of problem solving.

Participant 3 noted: "*it's accessible period care, but it's also, uh, accessibility, um, encompasses inclusivity. So I think they, um, with Joni, I feel like [the cofounders] started off with the, the dream of accessible period care, and as they dove deeper into it, they, uh, and sort of the, the layers of the onion still is getting peeled away. But what does that, what does that entail?*"

Participant 4 mentioned: *" like, if you go to [the cofounders] with a request, they say, "Wh-wh- Yes, what can we do to make that happen?" So they're very much open to any type of support that you would need."*

A culture of "inclusivity by default" is championed by the cofounders and supported by the employees:

Participant 2 notes: *"...you're already including people no matter what. It, it, that's what I, that's like how I saw it anyways, when I got trained onto it, it was just like, they're unap-, unapologetically, like inclusive to everyone, and it's just, this is who we are. Um, from what I, from what I'm seeing, like again, I didn't have like a, I don't see like a formal training and I, I didn't see that. I just was trained for my actual job and then was told that we have workers with disabilities that you are gonna work with and, and this is how we've, and I think 'cause it is at this time, it's a small business, so it is very much like we all are talking to each other every day."*

Quote from participant 5: *"So I'm a really big, throughout my whole career, big believer that culture, um, basically eats strategy. So you can have the best strategy that is super competitive, but if you don't have the culture that is going to help support it, then I feel like you're gonna be dead in the water. So I think that comes from having worked in very not-inclusive and diverse cultures, and then learning from that what I would never want to do.*

So for me, when it came to the personal philosophy and, and value-based system, autonomy in your work is so critically important, and so that is just ingrained at Joni because of that. And [cofounder] works the same way, and I think that's why [cofounders] work so well together because it's never about... I inherently trust you to do the work, unless something tells me otherwise. And if that's the case, then let's have a conversation around what that is.

Like anecdotally, throughout my career, I have had more success, and have had more fulfilling roles when I work with people that bring in diverse experiences and ideas. And that could be lived experiences, that could be, you know education, that could be a whole host of things, but I find that we are... Like the fabric of the culture and the baseline of how we work becomes much stronger.

But I think the fundamental core, at least what I've seen, is that how committed are you to your culture? And culture is not, "I have a ping-pong table. We have beer nights." Culture is not like, "We get Fridays off." Culture is, "How do my or- How do my employees talk about the organization and their work when I'm not around?" How are we showing up when nobody is looking? When it doesn't, when nobody's monitoring and, and managing what we're doing, how are we then making decisions? That to me is what the culture is."

2.5 Meet people where they are

Meeting people where they are means that every human has different strengths and needs and it's possible to figure out what best supports each employee on a case-by-case basis. For Joni, given their purpose-driven social enterprise is focused on equity and accessibility, it is perhaps not surprising that this purpose from within the core DNA of the company extends to how they provide flexibility and context for their people to work.

In practice, this means they do not necessarily ask specifically for accommodation requirements and disability status because they will work with everyone to figure out what it is they need. For example, when hiring interns from UVic, they knew that some students with disabilities were coming to work, but unless the students self-disclosed they didn't know what the disability was.

One of the problems with not having a codified inclusivity and accommodations strategy is that it relies on the employees to be able to self-advocate. It is possible that training programs such as OneLight in Powell River or the AimHi in Prince George could be the pathway to developing that ability for a lot of folks.

As participant 1 noted: *"But, I just check with them, like, frequently, like, "Hey, do you need something?" Or, like, "Is there anything we can help you with?" But we never force them to, like, disclose what disability they have, or, like, uh, if... yeah. It's, it's up to them. …. And so, uh, we knew a little bit about what they preferred, how they preferred to work and everything. So we accommodated their requirements. But, other intern we've had, never disclosed what disability they had, and we were fine with it."*

Participant 2 related the natural approach to disability accommodations: *"...we're saying, like, 'Come on, come on down, like, we got this, like, we can figure this out. What do you need from us? And this is what we need from you,' kind of thing. So, um, from what I understand, it, it felt more or less organic in that sense."*

Participant 1 expanded: *"And, and...yeah. And so, uh, and maybe that's why some of the employees who have certain disabilities or anything, they don't affect the work in any way, because they are actually asked or, like, supported in making decisions that make them comfortable in many ways."*

Participant 3 shared their experience with Joni's organic approach to meeting people where they are: *"And even before revealing that I had ADHD... One, one particular time, I was really overwhelmed with the amount of tasks that I had. And I, you know, I wasn't sure of how much time I should be allotting to each activity. And she was really helpful in helping me plot out all the tasks and devoting, and what, how I should be devoting my time. And, uh, just that sort of one-on-one. Uh, I know [cofounder] has a coaching background, so that I felt really coached. And, um, I feel like every manager (laughs) should actually coach like that, whether or not their team is neurodivergent or neurotypical."*

Participant 3 further suggested that it would be helpful to have individual employment plans for people in workplaces, just as there are individual education plan for kids in schools. *"Um, but what I, you know, what I have heard, well, you know, working with my son and his school and the accommodations that they have set up. Like, uh, you know, they have the IEPs, the Individualized Education Program. And, I mean, I, how neat would that be if a work place had a workplace, um, a work (laughs), like a working plan, an individual working plan...*

"And then just to think of sort of each person holistically. Everybody has strengths, and everybody has things that are, they're challenged at. So creating a strength-based, um, environment, I think is the goal of any organization. And so then your focus is not on what tasks people can't do, or how this employee is failing, but what, how can we, um, leverage the strengths that each person and create an environment that's gonna optimize that. There, those are my two cents (laughs)."

Quote from participant 4 on supporting a team member with a disability: *"And so, something that I did was I created, um, like a s- a screen grab video. So I basically had the certification up and then I spoke about what the certification was and she found it a lot easier to, to listen to what I was saying rather than to read and digest all of that information. So, um, yeah, my biggest takeaway from that was to, to meet her where she was at, right? And to ask her what would be the best way for her to learn the information that I had to give, whether it was in a slideshow, whether it was video format, and just making sure that she was comfortable."*

Participant 5 explained their approach to meeting people where they are: *"There's like, a flexibility to how I work, and it's not, I am not measured on, "Did you get this done at this time? Otherwise, you're a failure." It's, "You're a human being. Things came up. Let's look at how you can complete the task in a different way." And that, to me, is... It's difficult with interviews 'cause I can't essentially come out, and be like, "Do you have a disability? If yes, what is your disability, and then how would we accommodate?" But that is how we would manage it with individuals, whether that's, you know, feeling overwhelmed... It, I mean, it could be a whole host of things."*

Participant 5 also reflected on how meeting people where they are also means recognising when there's not a fit: "And so what that signals to me, essentially over time, is a conversation with like, "Is this person ever gonna be success- Successful in this role?" Because we want to set people up for success as well. Is this person enjoying their role, or are they constantly stressed out because they keep dropping these glass balls? And in the end, the conversation was like, this person wasn't the right fit. They, they felt that way as well, and so we move... They, they moved, they moved away."

Jurisdictional Scan

Authors

Macintyre, A.

Purpose

A jurisdictional scan of employment legislation, policy and practices across Canada for the purpose of providing the Ministry of Post-Secondary and Future Skills (PSFS) a comparative analysis of our findings on promising practices and structural conditions in British Columbia. Themes identified in the primary research conducted in B.C. through NIE are related in this scan to jurisdictional variations in legislation and policy that constitute the structural conditions for promising practices.

Introduction

This jurisdictional scan was conducted to complement the research carried out in the New Inclusive Economy project undertaken in British Columbia. The NIE research involved interviews, focus groups, case studies. The scan examines promising practices and structural conditions in other jurisdictions.

Disability is one of the most under-recognised aspects of inclusion and diversity in employment. While businesses estimate that 4% of their workforce live with disability, surveys of employees suggest the true figure is closer to 25%[1] and Stats Canada research indicates that in 2022 the figure is 27%[2].

People living with disabilities also endure underemployment, unemployment and precarious employment. They can be prevented from fully participating in socioeconomic life[3], and particularly may not be able to access meaningful or decent work (ILO[4]), impacting quality of life.

These issues are being recognised both here in Canada and globally, albeit slowly. The Accessible Canada Act (2019) sets a mandate for making Canada "barrier free" by 2040. Recent Accessible Canada Regulations (2021) outline what needs to happen in federally regulated workplaces and the penalties for not doing so.

The jurisdictional scan will focus on legislation and policy in other provinces of Canada, before considering European practices, as many new strategies and practices are emerging from the European Union's recent focus on inclusion.

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[1] **https://www.B.C.g.com/publications/2023/devising-people-strategy-for-employees-with-disabilities-in-the-workplace**

[2] **https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231201/dq231201b-eng.htm**

[3] See Grills et al, 2016, p. 338; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022

[4] **https://www.ilo.org/skills/pubs/WCMS_316815/lang--en/index.htm**

Structure of scan

Structural conditions and promising practices in other jurisdictions

Legislation, policies, and programs in other jurisdictions are compared with themes identified in the NIE project, looking for examples of alignment and potential conflict, or areas missing from the research conducted in B.C.

Themes arising from NIE

Despite the range of organisational sizes, structures, and industries involved in our research, and the different research methodologies employed, several consistent themes emerged from the NIE project around creating inclusive workplaces, i.e. employment contexts that are friendly to workers. Nine themes were broadly identified. The shorthand terms used in this scan are in the left column, a few notes expanding on those short terms are on the right.

Theme	Notes
Culture, Values, and Commitment	A shared set of values, perhaps promoted via a champion or shared inherent values of inclusion
Individualised Approaches	Individualised approaches; i.e. building employment and roles around people's strengths, skills, and needs (solo-preneurs being the ultimate example of this as they can develop their own individualised approach).
Clear, Informal, and Regular Communication	This was more specifically within a workplace - it builds psychological safety and clarity
Flexibility	Flexibility in how, when, and where work is conducted
Inclusion and Viability	Incorporating inclusion and viability/sustainability

Theme	Notes
Lived Experience of Disability	Lived experience of disability (or proximity to lived experience) as a motivation for developing inclusive employment practices
Inclusive HR Practices	Can be applied to recruitment and hiring strategies, workplace accommodations, scheduling decisions, benefits and supports
Community/Service Organisation Collaboration	Collaborative initiatives guided by shared understanding of business and workforce needs
Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers	Enabling conditions and removal of barriers with respect to policy and labour market

The jurisdictional scan will investigate how these themes are addressed in other jurisdictions in Canada and then will briefly consider the European Union. An accompanying spreadsheet lists the legislations and policies discussed in the following pages, as well as their URLs, and dates last checked for functionality. There is also an additional section with links to jurisdictions that could be considered as comparators in future as some interesting developments regarding employment of PWD and social enterprises are taking place in Washington State and in Australia.

Limitations to the scan

As we found through the case studies and focus groups, not only are a lot of the inclusive employment practices organic and arising from champions in the workplace, there are no conglomerates, which was the void that the New Inclusive Economy Business-to-Business roadshow hoped to fill as a later state of the research project.

The lack of a searchable database of legislation and policies surrounding inclusivity was identified during the primary research and noted again during this scan. It seems there is a gap in the market for a register of small to medium businesses pursuing inclusive employment. The scan discovered a couple of examples where social enterprises and successful partnerships are listed on a website along with their highlighted practices. These are the kinds of information sources useful for specifically researching social enterprise employment inclusion in future. These networks (and B Corps) may be good candidates for surveys or other studies.

Buy Social Canada[5]

Ready Willing and Able[6] success stories and partnerships across Canada

The primary research in case studies, interviews and focus groups discovered bespoke, individualised approaches that fit the workplace and the employees in that workplace. However, the majority of the time, these individualised approaches were based on some shared foundational principles. Where inclusive employment and accommodations for inclusivity are made "in house", there is a strong commitment to social purpose. It is stronger than the commitment to being revenue-positive, even where the primary organisational structure is a conventional business, the primary transactional nature profit seeking through goods and services.

None of the case studies treated inclusivity as a box ticking, business case-first exercise or as a regulatory compliance issue. The requirement was values-based on sharing opportunities for decent work with people who have been excluded and for seeing the valued contributions of all people towards a shared goal.

Since the subjects of the case studies went beyond local regulatory requirements here in B.C., it is difficult to compare these kinds of organic and organisationally bespoke approaches across jurisdictions unless there are other local research projects similar to NIE. Thus, most of the discussion in this scan is on legislation, policy, and strategic directions.

Methodology

This scan was conducted via desktop research, taking into account themes identified in primary research. Searches were undertaken in Google and academic literature databases (Google Scholar).

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[5] **https://www.buysocialcanada.com**
[6] **https://readywillingable.ca/benefits-of-ready-willing-able/stories/**

The results were separated where possible by Canadian province and then by international area. Where there is evidence of the themes and findings in each jurisdiction this was highlighted. Themes that were underrepresented in the NIE research findings are also noted.

The searches were undertaken using the following terms:

Area of interest	Search Terms
Culture, values, and commitment	work* culture disability Canada
Individualised approach	Disability individualised approach [jurisdiction]Solo-preneur and disability [jurisdiction]Entrepreneur and disability [jurisdiction]
Inclusive employment practices	Inclusi* employment practices disab* [jurisdiction]
Flexible work	Flex* work disability [jurisdiction]
Jurisdictional legislation	disability employment legislation [jurisdiction]
Jurisdictional policies	disability employment practices [jurisdiction]
"New" part of the New Inclusive Economy	social enterprise disability employment canada [jurisdiction]

The majority of results examined here were found under the jurisdictional legislation and the jurisdictional policies themes. Some additional websites and publications were found under the theme search terms and are included in the text.

CANADA FEDERAL

Accessible Canada Act (ACA)[7],[8]

The Accessible Canada Act came into force in 2019. Its aim is to realise a barrier-free Canada by 2040. By proactively identifying and removing accessibility barriers, all Canadians - especially people with disabilities - can benefit. The Act lists accessibility barriers, describes their impact and states that they must be removed in the following seven areas:

- employment
- the built environment
- information and communication technologies (ICT)
- communication other than ICT
- the design and delivery of programs and services
- the procurement of goods, services and facilities
- transportation

The minister responsible has a mandate to make Canada barrier-free by 2040 and also has a mandate to fund research and make grants in support of that aim.
The Act applies to federally regulated organisations, including government departments, Armed Forces, and RCMP, as well as the private sector regulated by the federal government, such as banks, transportation, communications.

Accessible Canada Regulations (ACR)[9]

The Accessible Canada Regulations came into effect in 2021 and are the first set of regulations drawn from the Accessible Canada Act. They establish the rules that federally regulated entities must follow when publishing accessibility plans, setting up feedback processes, and developing progress reports. Guidance materials are available to help federally regulated entities meet or exceed the regulatory requirements.[10]

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[7] About an Accessible Canada - Canada.ca **https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/accessible-canada.html**
[8] **https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/A-0.6/**
[9] **https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2021-241/index.html**
[10] **https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/accessible-canada-regulations-guidance.html**

This Act points to the importance of ensuring equal opportunities, including the possibility of **Flexible Work**. A barrier-free environment promotes economic, social, and civic participation of all individuals, regardless of disabilities; and it contributes to inclusive workplace **Cultures, Values, and Commitments**.

Regulated entities are required to develop accessibility plans that address the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers, which supports **Individualised Approaches**.

Employment Equity Act[11]

The Employment Equity Act (EEA), last amended Jan 1, 2021, includes provisions to address the inclusion and fair treatment of persons with disabilities in the workforce. It compels employers in Canada to proactively implement measures that promote the inclusion and equitable treatment of individuals with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities (PWD) must have equal opportunities for employment and advancement. Employers must identify and eliminate any barriers to such equal treatment, for example in their policies and procedures. They must review their workforce and collect information to determine to what extent people with disabilities are underrepresented in their organisation. For the purposes of employment equity, employers can only count people who self-identify as PWD or agree to be identified as such.

The Employment Equity Act does not specifically mention **Flexibility** in work arrangements for persons with disabilities. However, employers are required to identify and eliminate barriers that may hinder the employment of persons with disabilities, which could potentially include barriers created by inflexible work arrangements, as well as failing to foster **Clear, Informal, and Regular Communication**. In reducing barriers, employers will also ensure **Inclusive HR Practices** and do not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. While reviewing employment systems and practices, employers can tailor their approaches to create **Individualised Approaches** to accommodate strengths, skills, and needs of individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

Positive policies and practices to ensure that persons with disabilities have representation in the workforce that reflects their presence in the Canadian workforce, reflecting workplace **Culture, Values, and Commitment**.

Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers: The Employment Equity Act itself is an example of creating enabling conditions; however, in reviewing systems, policies, and practices, employers can also create enabling conditions for persons with disabilities to participate in the labour market.

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[11] **https://lois-laws.justice.gc.ca/PDF/E-5.401.pdf**

Disability Inclusion Action Plan (2022)[12]

Focuses on improving employment opportunities and outcomes for PWD via four pillars of actions:

Pillar 1 - Financial Security
Pillar 2 - Employment
Pillar 3 - Accessible and Inclusive Communities
Pillar 4 - Government Leadership and Collaboration
Pillar 2 – employment

The Plan identifies lack of access to skills training, development opportunities and inaccessible workplaces as barriers to employment and recognises that persons with disabilities are regularly subjected to workplace bias, discrimination and exclusion. As a result, many workplaces are not disability inclusive (p11).

This action pillar helps PWD find and keep jobs or become entrepreneurs **(Individualised Approaches)**. It aims to improve the inclusivity and accessibility of workplaces by encouraging employers to provide adaptations and other supports. It raises employer awareness of the benefits of hiring PWDs and creating a diverse workforce and aims to reduce the perceived stigma of employing PWDs. At the same time it offers support to the employers to enhance inclusivity.

The theme of workplace **Culture, Values, and Commitment** is present by creating a supportive work environment, as this is crucial for helping persons with disabilities find and retain jobs.

Providing **Flexibility** at work can contribute to necessary support and accommodations and help PWD find and keep employment. The plan aims to "increase the capacity of individuals and organizations that work to support disability inclusion and accessibility", which encourages **Community/Service Organisation Collaboration**:

Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers: this theme is evident in initiatives to support employers develop inclusive work environments and implement inclusive hiring practices - which also feeds into **Inclusive HR Practices.**

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[12] **https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/programs/disability-inclusion-action-plan-2/action-plan-2022/ESDC_PDF_DIAP_EN_20221005.pdf**

Concrete actions derived from this pillar include $270 million in new funding for PWD and the establishment of the Disability Inclusion Business Council and Disability Inclusion Business Network. [13] This empowers member organizations to "adopt best practices that benefit their businesses, employees, and customers."

Pillar 3 - Accessible and Inclusive Communities

System design should be accessible design. Persons with disabilities should not feel like an afterthought in service provision or access to public space (p13). This speaks to making spaces inclusive by default, reflecting the theme of **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**. This also aligns with creating workplaces that are universally inclusive as the primary design, not an afterthought, which may require lived experience, but can arise from **Culture, Values, and Commitment** of the organisation and its leadership.

Pillar 4 - Government Leadership and Collaboration

Government is in the best position through leadership and collaboration to champion, fund, support, encourage, and build on all nine of the NIE themes.

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[13] **https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/disability-inclusion-business-council.html**

ALBERTA

Human Rights Act[14]

Prohibits employment discrimination based on physical or mental disability.

Employers must provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities so that they are able to perform their duties, promoting the adoption of **Individualised Approaches.**

The Act defines "physical disability" and "mental disability" broadly, with regard to origin or duration of disability.

Discrimination based on disability during job-related processes (such as applications, advertisements, inquiries related to employment, or use of discriminatory language) is forbidden.

The Act aims to ensure fair treatment and equal access to job opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Overall, the Act promotes **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**, which flows to **Inclusive HR Practices ,** but also establishes the **Culture, Values, and Commitment** of the society from which the businesses will develop.

Workers Compensation Act[15]

The primary goal is to protect the rights and well-being of workers and enhance workplace safety.

The Act outlines compensation and support for workers with work-related injuries or disabilities, prescribing financial assistance for individuals whose earning capacity is impacted by workplace incidents.

The Act outlines procedures for assessing disabilities and calculating compensation.

Specifies that rehabilitation services are facilitated for injured workers.

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[14] **https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/A25P5.pdf**
[15] **https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/W15.pdf**

Blind Workers' Compensation Act[16]

The Blind Workers' Compensation Act establishes roles and standards to foster inclusivity, fairness, and support for individuals with visual disabilities in work environments.

The Blind Workers' Compensation Act in Alberta provides tailored support for visually impaired individuals in the workforce.

It guarantees equitable compensation, evaluates employers appropriately, and offers workplace accommodations for blind workers.

The Act assists in addressing the distinct challenges faced by blind workers due to their visual impairment.

NIE themes: **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers; Individualised approaches**

Support Programs

The Disability Related Employment Supports (DRES) program[17]

Offers three categories of support for PWD at work, addressing barriers to education or employment and enabling integration of PWD into the workforce:

Job Search Supports for PWD aged 16 and above to seek employment. For example, the provision of a sign language interpreter during job interviews.

Workplace Supports to help with making successful transitions into the workplace, maintaining employment, and fully participating in the workforce; for example job coaches, worksite modifications, and assistive technology.

Educational Supports for PWD after kindergarten to grade 12. Includes post-secondary education, basic skill training, academic upgrading, or labor market programs. Specific supports include sign language interpreters, tutors, note takers, and assistive technology tailored to specific disabilities.

The DRES Supports: Job Search, Workplace, and Education Supports allow for **Individualised Approaches;** the skills training and job search assistance especially creates **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers** in policy and labour market.

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[16] **https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/B04.pdf**
[17] **https://www.alberta.ca/disability-related-employment-supports**

Job Search Supports[18]

Provides short-term funding to help PWD get independent employment. PWD must demonstrate engagement with the labour market, perhaps by connecting with employers or attending job interviews. The funding is available for supports that address barriers to job search and employment, have a fixed completion deadline, are monitored by an "Authorized Official" and are offered in Alberta. Up to $5,000 is available per person and there is no maximum time of funding. **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers** and also promotes **Individualised Approaches** to whatever the jobseeker needs to be successful in their job search.

Workplace Supports[19]

Four categories of Workplace supports are available within this program:

On the Job Supports - $35,000/employee with a disability while employed with the same employer.

Worksite Modifications - maximum Government of Alberta contribution of $10,000/employee with a disability and up to $40,000/worksite that employs 4 or more persons with disabilities.

Vehicle Modifications - first vehicle modification: DRES may contribute up to 100% of the cost to a maximum of $50,000, (reducing allowances for subsequent vehicles).

Assistive Technology - $35,000/employee with a disability while employed by the same employer.

NIE themes: **Individualised Approaches; Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

Education supports[20]

Allows funding up to $75,000/academic year to help students with disabilities access education and training.

NIE themes: **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

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[18] http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/AWOnline/ETS/7892.html

[19] http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/AWOnline/ETS/7896.html

[20] http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/AWOnline/ETS/7894.html

Alberta Government Website - Accommodations: Working With Your Disability[21]

Government website explains that under the Alberta Human Rights Act, employers have a duty to accommodate disability at work and lists examples of types of accommodations; from adaptive equipment, accessible parking, a sign language interpreter, to flexible work hours, job sharing, and remote work.

Provision of this resource and explanation of the how the Human Rights Act applies to working with disability encourages **Flexibility** in how, when, and where work is done, encourages **Individualised Approaches; Inclusive HR practices**; values the **Lived Experience of Disability** in discussing whether or how to disclose disability or request accommodations; creates Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers.

SASKATCHEWAN

Legislation in Saskatchewan (as in other jurisdictions) is the foundation/building block of ensuring **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers** and **Inclusive HR practices.** Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, 2018.[22]

Emphasises the right to employment without discrimination based on a prohibited ground, including disability, **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers.**

Inclusive HR Practices: Employers are prohibited from discriminating against individuals with disabilities either in employment or in the terms and conditions of employment (Page 10).

Inclusion and Viability: Non-profit organisations primarily serving specific groups are allowed to employ or give preference in employment to individuals who identify similarly, if it is a reasonable and bona fide qualification given the nature of the employment (p11).

Saskatchewan Employment Act[23]

Provides further guidance on enabling conditions and reducing barriers.

Employers are required to consider accommodations for workers with disabilities as part of their general duties to ensure health, safety, and welfare at the place of employment, which could support **Flexibility.**

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[22] **https://publications.saskatchewan.ca/#/products/91969**
[23] **https://www.canlii.org/en/sk/laws/stat/ss-2013-c-s-15.1/latest/ss-2013-c-s-15.1.pdf**

Employers are required to designate an occupational health and safety representative for a place of employment, indicating a commitment to inclusive practices, ensuring the health and safety of all individuals, including those with disabilities, which would be the underpinning of **Inclusive HR Practices**.

The document highlights the general duties of employers, supervisors, workers, and self-employed persons to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of all individuals at the place of employment, which would be part of **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers** for PWD

The Accessible Saskatchewan Act (2023)[24]

This was enacted on December 3 2023, with a goal to develop and release an accessibility plan for interacting with the government by December 3 2024.

At present, the Act applies to the government and public sector bodies. As the website states, the Government will be impacted first, and "Government will lead the way in becoming more accessible". Taking the initiative demonstrates one of the NIE themes: **Culture, Values, and Commitment.**

From the website: "... purpose of this legislation is to prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities. This supports the government's goal of building strong, inclusive communities for persons with disabilities. The Government supports the principle, 'Nothing about us without us.'"

NIE theme: **Lived Experience of Disability.**

From the Act: "The Government of Saskatchewan and any public sector body must, in developing and updating their accessibility plans, consult with persons with disabilities and consider the following principles: inclusion; adaptability; diversity; collaboration; self-determination; universal design" (p6).

NIE theme: **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers.**

Policies and strategies

The Saskatchewan Disability Strategy[25]

Titled "People Before Systems: Transforming the Experience of Disability in Saskatchewan"; launched June 2015.

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[24] **https://publications.saskatchewan.ca/#/products/121340**
[25] **https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/family-and-social-support/people-with-disabilities/saskatchewan-disability-strategy**

Six broad Priority Outcome Areas: Putting People Before Systems, Safeguarding Rights and Safety, Increasing Economic and Social Inclusion, Building Personal and Community Capacity, Creating Accessible Communities, and Becoming an Inclusive Province. (p4)

In line with the UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), this strategy recognises that the way people experience disability is affected by the interaction between their health condition and their physical and social environment. It also acknowledges that we are all people who experience disability. (p9)

Four Drivers of Transformation

Achieving person-centred services: "A person-centred service system places the person experiencing disability at the centre of the process. It is organized to achieve that person's desired outcomes. It respects dignity and autonomy by allowing people to control and make decisions about the supports and services they receive" (p9).

NIE themes: **Individualised Approaches.**

Responding to the impact of disability. In the past the province focused on a medical model of disability, which focused on health conditions. Since 2015, Saskatchewan has switched to the WHO's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, which concerns itself with impact of disability, resulting from dynamic interactions between health conditions and personal and environmental factors. This recognises that the disability can change as both health and external factors change (p10).

NIE themes: I**ndividualised Approaches; Lived Experience of Disability**

Respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights: "Often, people experiencing disability are viewed as 'objects' of care, welfare, or medical treatment rather than 'holders' of rights like other citizens" (p10).

Recognising that accessibility and inclusion benefit us all: The Strategy notes "our current approach to designing living environments and developing programs and services tends to respond within a standard or 'normal' range of functioning. This results in many people experiencing disability having 'exceptional' or 'special needs' because they fall outside of this range" (p11).

NIE themes: **Individualised Approaches; Lived Experience of Disability**

Selected recommendations from the Strategy of relevance to NIE

INCLUSION IN THE ECONOMY (recommendation 6, p27)

"Expand opportunities for people experiencing disability to contribute to the economy and address the extra costs of disability".

"Remove disability-related barriers to post-secondary education, employment training and skills development programs to improve labour market participation for people experiencing disability."

"Champion the inclusion of people experiencing disabilities in the workforce, including working with business and industry groups to improve access to tools and supports for more inclusive and welcoming workplaces."

"Develop education and awareness tools to help employers and co-workers understand opportunities to include and accommodate people experiencing disability in the workforce." "Work with employers, organized labour and people experiencing disability to develop ways to increase employment levels of people experiencing disability. (p28)

"Explore work experience options such as increasing part-time work, flexible work arrangements and hours, and summer job opportunities for students and new entrants to the workforce who are experiencing disability".

Demonstrates NIE themes of: **Inclusive HR Practices; Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**: policy and labour market; **Culture, Values, and Commitment** and **Flexibility**

ACCESSING PERSONAL SUPPORTS (recommendation 7, p30)

"Improve access to the supports that people experiencing disability need to live in their community"

"Increase access to, and availability of, assistive technology, technical aids and modifications"

"Increase access to and availability of human services to facilitate living in one's home and community."

Demonstrates NIE themes of: **Inclusion and viability; Community/Service Organisation Collaboration**.

Employability Assistance for Persons with Disabilities (EAPD) program[26]

This program offers:

- Specialised assessments to identify
- How disability impacts participation in education or employment
- Necessary supports.
- Job search supports for example: resumé building, interview skills training, workplace assessments, and vocational assessments.
- Workplace supports for example: job coaching, assistive technology, job or worksite modifications.
- Education supports for example: interpretation services, assistive technology, tutoring, note-taking assistance, tutors

Addresses employees' specific needs and barriers, which facilitates **Individualised Approaches**. Employers hiring PWD can also receive funding for accommodations such as technical supports, job coaching, and job shadowing, which reflects the themes of **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**; and **Inclusive HR practices.**

MANITOBA

The advanced nature of accessibility legislation and policy in Manitoba provides strong foundations and supports to promising practices and structural conditions that facilitate most, if not all, of the NIE themes.

Human Rights Code[27]

The Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination on the basis of:

- Disability
- Source of income
- Social disadvantage

There is less detail given regarding the Human Rights Code because the Accessibility Act is extensive. At a minimum, Manitoba's Human Rights Code provides for Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers; Inclusive HR Practices.

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[26] **https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/jobs-working-and-training/job-training-and-financial-support-programs/employability-assistance-for-persons-with-disabilities**
[27] **https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/_pdf.php?cap=h175**

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act[28]

The Act is advanced in terms of definition and recognition of disability. It defines disability in line with UNCRPD definition:

"This Bill enables the establishment of accessibility standards to achieve accessibility for Manitobans disabled by barriers. A barrier is defined to be anything that, in interaction with a person's impairment, may hinder the person's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis".

The Act explicitly notes that most people will confront barriers to accessibility at some point in their lives. The Act calls for equality of opportunity and outcome, as well as universal design that does not establish or perpetuate differences and systemic responsibility; that is, whoever establishes or perpetuates the barrier is responsible for removing the barrier. The Act defines barriers quite broadly:

"The following are examples of barriers: (a) a physical barrier; (b) an architectural barrier; (c) an information or communications barrier; (d) an attitudinal barrier; (e) a technological barrier; (f) a barrier established or perpetuated by an enactment, a policy or a practice." (p4)

These provisions and definitions support Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers; Inclusive HR Practices; Individualised Approaches; and by stating that whoever establishes or perpetuates the barrier is responsible for removing the barrier, the Act facilitates development of Culture, Values, and Commitment.

Accessible Employment Standard Regulation[29]

Aims to promote accessibility and inclusion for all Manitobans, including those with disabilities.

Aims to eliminate barriers and ensure equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities in areas such as employment, customer service, transportation, information, and communication.

With respect to employment, the Regulation requires employers to provide an individualised accommodation plan for employees temporarily or permanently disabled by barriers in the workplace.

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[28] **https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/40-2/b026e.php**
[29] **https://accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/employers_handbook_bnpos.pdf**

"An individualized accommodation plan must document (a) any accessible formats and communication supports to be used in providing information to the employee, as provided for in section 14; (b) any workplace emergency response information the employer is to provide to the employee under section 15; and (c) any other reasonable accommodation the employer is to make to address any barriers that disable the employee and the manner and timing within which the accommodation is to be made.

The employee's responsibility is to cooperate "in good faith".

Public sector and large employers must publicly and accessibly document measures, policies and practices established under the regulations. It also requires that communication must be made in accessible formats.

When recruiting, potential applicants must be informed of the availability of reasonable accommodations in case they may be disabled by a barrier in the assessment or selection process and must be given accommodations when requested.

An employer must also ensure that accommodation training is provided anyone responsible for "(a) recruiting, selecting or training employees; (b) supervising, managing or coordinating employees; (c) promoting, redeploying or terminating employees; or (d) developing and implementing the employer's employment policies and practices."

Further, performance management must take accommodation plans into account, or barriers in the workplace that disable the employee.

The Regulation is quite comprehensive in supporting PWD in employment, and is relevant to several of our NIE themes: **Inclusive HR Practices; Individualised Approaches**; and **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers.**

Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan: 2023 and 2024[30]

The document outlines the actions and plans that the Manitoba government intends to take to recognise, prevent, and eliminate obstacles for PWD. This accessibility plan is prepared in compliance with the AMA (Accessibility for Manitobans Act).

In 2023 and 2024 they launched "the second and third intakes of the $20 million Manitoba Accessibility Fund (MAF) to provide annual, sustainable grants to assist Manitoba organizations to remove barriers and comply with accessibility standards." (p2)

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[30] **https://www.gov.mb.ca/csc/publications/accessgovsvc/pdf/mgap-pub_doc_en.pdf**

"Under the AMA, accessibility standards are developed and are building blocks for making real, measurable and effective changes to accessibility. Each standard focuses on a key area of daily living and outlines specific requirements and timelines for eliminating barriers in organizations, including the Manitoba government. Under the AMA, there are five accessibility standards. Three have been enacted to date and two are in progress.

Accessible Customer Service Standard (enacted May 1, 2018)

Accessible Employment Standard (enacted May 1, 2019)

Accessible Information & Communications Standard (enacted May 1, 2022)

Accessible Transportation Standard (to be enacted in 2023)

Accessible Design of Public Spaces Standard (to be enacted in 2023)"

(p4)

The Accessibility Plan is focused on six priority areas:

Accessible Customer Service: addresses organisational practices and training requirements to provide better customer service to persons with disabilities, facilitating **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**.

Accessible Employment: calls on all employers to consider reasonable accommodation at various stages of employment as it applies to their organisation; as well as the policy and education framework that ensures everyone completes training on accessible employment and related legislation; as well as development of individualised accommodation plans. It also promotes community programs that provide work and life experience to students living with disabilities (p6) **Inclusive HR Practices, Individualised Approaches, Community/Service Organisation Collaboration.**

Accessible Information and Communications: focuses on removing and preventing barriers that exist digitally, in-print or through interaction with technology or people." This standard aligns with NIE themes of **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers** by promoting development of a Community of Practice education, outreach and awareness.

Enhanced Training and Education: **Inclusive HR Practices**

Enhanced Accessibility of the Built Environment: requires integration of barrier-free Universal Design principles and work environment accessibility when undertaking government projects (p7). This standard aligns with NIE themes of **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers.**

Leadership in Advancing Accessibility: This focus area is about championing accessibility. There are awards for accessibility programs, a commitment to ensuring there is an accessibility champion in government, and provision to develop a forum for Diversity and Inclusion champions. Moreover, the government commits to reinforcing AMA obligations in "over 52,000 businesses through paid advertising, social media and direct mail campaigns, including reminders about the opportunity to apply to the Manitoba Accessibility Fund", and to ensuring that "the principles of inclusive leadership are embedded into the content of all leadership programs." This standard aligns with NIE themes of **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers** (reducing attitudinal barriers through education and advocacy); and also **Culture, Values, and Commitment.**

The Accessibility Plan also includes an appendix which outlines notable actions to advance accessibility across Manitoba's Public Service during 2021 and 2022. It outlines many achievements in built environment and education (toolkits and publications) and policy, and legislation with amending acts.

Workplace Barriers and Solutions[31]

This information sheet ("To Make Your Workplace Accessible, Begin by Removing Barriers") is for employers, summarising the purpose of the Accessibility Standard for Employment under Manitoba's accessibility law.

The Accessibility standard requires employers to remove barriers to employment. The information sheet points out that:

"Some people mistakenly think of a disability as a barrier. The Accessibility for Manitobans Act defines a barrier as anything that interacts with a disability in a way that affects a person's participation in everyday life";

which introduces Manitoban employers to the social model of disability (in line with the NIE project and the definition under the UNCRDP), encouraging the development of better workplace **Culture, Values, and Commitment.**

The sheet also suggests **Individualised Approaches**:

"To remove barriers for individual employees, you must consult with them about reasonable accommodations that best meet their needs. For more information, see the Guide to Create an Individualized Accommodation Plan Process and Policy".

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[31] **https://accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/barriers_&_solutions_in_the_workplace.pdf**

The Government of Manitoba has developed a range of resources and guides, including the one mentioned above. Moreover, they encourage universal design:

"The results will benefit not only employees with disabilities, but all staff. Everyone benefits from a respectful and diverse workplace", encouraging better **Culture, Values, and Commitment.**

The information sheet lists a range of different kinds of barriers, when they occur, and how to address them, along with suggested solutions. The barriers listed below are from the sheet. See the factsheet for the full list of barriers and their suggested solutions or actions.

Attitudinal Barriers occur when people think and act based on false assumptions.

Information and Communication Barriers occur when employees with disabilities cannot easily receive, respond, or understand information available to others.

Physical and Architectural Barriers make it difficult for some people to access a place or handle objects.

Technology Barriers occur when technology or the way it is used cannot be accessed by people with disabilities.

Systemic Barriers are policies, practices or procedures that result in some people receiving unequal access or being excluded.

"Maintaining a fixed work schedule: 9am to 5pm" is given as an example of a systemic barrier.

The solution: "Allow work schedule flexibility as a disability accommodation when possible, including for people who need breaks during the workday or whose sleep is affected by their disability"; which is an example of one of the most important themes from the NIE research, i.e. **Flexibility.**

Addressing these barriers with solutions encourages the development of **Culture, Values, and Commitment; Individualised Approaches; Clear, Informal, and Regular Communication; Flexibility; Inclusive HR Practices; and Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers.**

Employer's Handbook on the Accessibility Standard for Employment For Businesses and Non-Profit Organizations[32]

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[32] **https://accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/employers_handbook_bnpos.pdf**

The handbook is a more thorough resource to help employers develop practices to meet requirements under the Accessibility Standard. The handbook points out that employers are "welcome to use other practices that are not required by law, but would help to make workplaces more accessible." (p3)

The handbook specifies who needs to document their accessible employment practices, and offers a comprehensive suite of information and guides from the government to help employers understand and comply with legislation.

For example:

- Accessible Employment Standard Policy Guide and Template
- Workplace Emergency Response Information Toolkit
- Guide to Create an Individualized Accommodation Plan Process and Policy – for Public Sector Organizations
- Discussing Accessibility in the Workplace poster
- Barriers and Solutions in the Workplace
- Frequently Asked Questions

It also outlines staggered timelines for compliance with the Standard, which would contribute to Inclusion and Viability while improving Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers.

The Manitoba government is demonstrating leadership by complying with the full standard effective May 2020.

Public sector organizations must comply with the full standard by May 2021
The private sector, non-profit organizations and small municipalities must comply with the full standard by May 2022."

Sample accessible employment policy[33]

The Sample Accessible Employment Policy For Businesses and Non-profit Organizations, updated in January 2021, complements the Employers' Handbook for Accessible Employment. It goes through the Accessibility Standard for Employment under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and gives sample wording and policy statements that comply with the standard and are available for a business to use and adapt.

This resource aligns with NIE themes of facilitating **Inclusive HR Practices**.

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[32] **https://accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/sample_accessible_employment_policy_bnpos.pdf**

ONTARIO

As the most populous province, it is not surprising that Ontario perhaps has the better range of accessibility resources. This scan uncovered some extremely interesting practices and knowledge transfer and sharing. There is considerable overlap with Manitoba's programs and practices; thus, many elements are not described in detail.

Ontario Human Rights Code[34]

The Code aims to ensure equal treatment with respect to employment for individuals with disabilities. It prohibits discrimination in employment based on disability. The principles are summarised in "Guide to Rights and Responsibilities under the Human Rights Code".[35]

Under the Code, employers have a duty to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities to the point of undue hardship, to make sure PWD have equal opportunities, equal access and can enjoy equal benefits. The goal of accommodation is to allow everyone to take part equally in employment, which reflects the NIE theme of **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)[36]

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act came into effect on June 13, 2005, and applies to all tiers of government, non-profit entities, and private sector companies in Ontario that have at least one employee, whether they are full-time, part-time, seasonal, or on contract. The Act is accompanied by an explanatory document: "Accessibility in Ontario: what you need to know".[37]

The Act is broadly similar to the corresponding Act in Manitoba. Selected main points are repeated below:
- employers to provide accommodations for applicants and employees with disabilities during the recruitment process
- information on accommodation policies to successful applicants when making offers of employment
- consider accessibility needs and individual accommodation plans in performance management processes for employees with disabilities
- career development and advancement opportunities should take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities and individual accommodation plans

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[34] **https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h19/v30**
[35] **https://www3.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Guide%20to%20Your%20Rights%20and%20Responsibilities%20Under%20the%20Code_2013.pdf**
[36] **https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11#BK17**
[37] **https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-ontario-what-you-need-to-know**

Similar to Manitoba's accessibility standards, Ontario's standards help businesses and organisations identify and remove barriers to improve accessibility in five areas:

- customer service
- access to information
- public transportation
- employment
- outdoor public spaces

Adherence to AODA standards aligns with NIE themes of promoting **Inclusive HR Practices; Individualised Approaches; and Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**.

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)[38]

This is part of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), which is a comprehensive law that aims to create a barrier-free Ontario by 2025. It sets out specific requirements for organizations with 50 or more employees in the areas of information and communication, employment, and transportation. Adherence to regulation aligns with NIE themes of promoting Inclusive HR Practices; Individualised Approaches; and Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers.

Ontario government websites

The websites of the Ontario government offer extensive information and resources. Again, these are similar to those published by the government of Manitoba, so many points are not repeated.

Businesses are provided a webpage of resources[39] to help them become inclusive employers, including case studies on how different businesses have been inclusive, with resources and information. The resources cover employing the "untapped talent pool of PWD", accessibility for customers, an AODA toolbox along with a description of services and supports available to facilitate employment of PWD and material regarding employee needs and dignity.

Help is available on how to complete an accessibility compliance report[40] and there is a list of the programs available for PWD[41].

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[38] **https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110191**
[39] Accessibility in Ontario: information for businesses
(**https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-ontario-information-businesses**)
[40] **https://www.ontario.ca/page/completing-your-accessibility-compliance-report**
[41] **https://www.ontario.ca/page/people-disabilities**

These government resources may develop or promote improved **Culture, Values, and Commitment; Individualised Approaches; Inclusion and Viability; Inclusive HR Practices; as well as the fundamental Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**.

Statistics on the benefit of employing PWD[42]:

Some of the statistics reported in making a business case for employing PWD are relevant to the **Inclusion and Viability** theme from the NIE primary research:

72% higher employee retention rate among people with disabilities[43]

92% of consumers favour companies that hire people with disabilities (ibid)

63% of people with disabilities do not require accommodations in their workplace[44]

Ontario Disability Employers Network[45]

This network is a rich source of information, guidance, resources, programs, for employers and employees and partnerships, as well as advocacy for disability.

From their website:

"We promote innovation and promising practices in both the business and employment services sectors. ODEN curates and develops case studies of businesses that excel at creating inclusive workplaces. We use these as examples and demonstrations with other businesses and as part of our training for employment service providers. For employment service providers, we study the high performers. We identify what they're doing well and share that information across the province. We promote individual tools, practices and initiatives that are unique and/or promising and have the potential for replication. Here too, we use the learnings in parts of our training modules. ODEN has partnered with Community Living Essex County and Partners for Planning to develop the MCCSS supported xKnowledge Translation and Transfer Hub, hosted on the Real Xchange".

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[42] **https://www.ontario.ca/page/hire-people-disabilities**
[43] **https://discoverability.network/business/**
[44] **https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1310074901**
[45] **https://www.odenetwork.com/**

Selected publications accessed from their website:

ODEN has published a large document dedicated to case studies[46], includes promising practices and explanation of the employer and employee experiences.

They have also published "Reimagining change : A WORKBOOK FOR CREATING, EMBRACING, AND HARNESSING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE"[47]

Other selected case studies on their website to help employers with examples of how to be inclusive and disability employers[48]

Additionally, they partner with the REAL Xchange website[49], which offers a wide variety of knowledge transfer modules and trainings for free.

Conference board guide[50] on how to make business more accessible.

Retail council guide - Handbook for retail businesses to comply with AODA[51].

Further innovations and promising practices noted:

ODEN delivers a comprehensive Train-the-Trainer module for ESPs, school boards and college

Community Integration Through Co-operative Education (CICE) programs on Job Path and Summer Employment programs

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[46] **https://www.odenetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/ODEN-Compilation-of-Case-Studies-Edition-One-2023.pdf**

[47] **https://www.odenetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/EN-CM_Workbook_2023_01Fill-FINAL-uae.pdf**

[48] **https://www.odenetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NDEAM-2022-success-story-UHN-FINAL.pdf**

[49] **https://realxchange.communitylivingessex.org/knowledge-exchange/**

[50] **https://edata.conferenceboard.ca/docs/default-source/public-pdfs/19187_accessibilityguide_en_pac.pdf?**

[51] **https://www.retailcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/ER_Handbook.pdf**

QUEBEC

Quebec has a different perspective on disability inclusive employment and the New Inclusive Economy in general. The foundational principles of equality, access, collaboration, mutual benefit etc. may offer a cultural and societal advantage when identifying and lowering barriers. The institutional approaches are also different. An almost trivial example is the name of their benefits program: it is referred to as social solidarity rather than welfare, which reflects the very different approaches to mutual aid and social supports.

Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms[52]

Aims to create a society where every individual is treated with dignity, respect, and equality, and where their rights and freedoms are protected and upheld

Prohibits discrimination based on various grounds such as disability, in various aspects of life, including employment

Provides equal access to public services, employment opportunities, and participation in society for all individuals

Provides mechanisms for addressing unlawful interference with rights, including obtaining compensation for any harm caused

Guarantees equal rights and freedoms to both women and men

Upholds and enforces the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and respect for human dignity

According to the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion[53], "Quebec is the only province that has a Charter of Rights and Freedoms that is not a simple anti-discriminatory statute, but rather a fundamental law that takes precedence over other laws and is only second to the Constitution of Canada…. Further, The Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms is unique among Canadian (and North American) human rights documents in that it covers not only the fundamental (civil and political) human rights, but also a number of important social and economic rights".

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[52] **https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/C-12**
[53] **https://ccdi.ca/media/1414/20171102-publications-overview-of-hr-codes-by-province-final-en.pdf**

It lays out a number of specific protected grounds that are unique to Quebec, including civil status, language, and social condition. The latter is covered in "less than half of provincial or territorial codes, this protected ground means that you cannot be discriminated against because of your income level, your occupation or level of education".[54]

As such, it is a foundational document in societal Culture, Values, and Commitment; the anti-discriminatory part at least will contribute to Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers.

The Act Respecting Labour Standards[55]

establishes and regulates minimum employment standards in Quebec.
covers wages, hours of work, statutory holidays, annual leave, rest periods, and conditions of employment.

Some workers are not covered, for example, those who are self employed. In addition: "People working in companies governed by federal laws are also excluded. This is the case for employees of: the federal government, banks (except caisses populaires), radio and television stations, interprovincial transport businesses, ports, telecommunication businesses. The labour standards for these people are in the Canada Labour Code, which is a federal law." [56]

The Act Respecting Equal Access to Employment in Public Bodies[57]

Establishes a framework for equal access to job opportunities for discriminated groups, including PWD.

Public bodies are mandated to implement equal access employment programs, with goals to increase representation of target groups in the workforce and eliminate discriminatory practices.

Public bodies must report on the implementation of these programs every three years.

Compliance with program requirements is monitored and enforced

Demonstrates governmental **Culture, Values, and Commitment;** contributes to **Inclusive HR Practices; Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

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[54] Ibid
[55] **https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/n-1.1**
[56] **https://educaloi.qc.ca/en/capsules/workplace-protections-in-quebec/**
[57] **https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/A-2.01**

The Act Respecting Industrial Accidents and Occupational Diseases[58]

Quebec's workers' compensation act

provides compensation for employment injuries and their consequences

covers a wide range of workers, including domestic workers, independent operators, students, and paper carriers,

Social Economy Act[59]

This Act is unique to Quebec and arises from its specific historical and cultural context. The existence and provisions of the Act are of great interest to the New Inclusive Economy project.

The objective of this Act is to recognise, strengthen, and champion the social economy sector, i.e.

define its core principles,

specify government involvement

and highlight the importance of social economy enterprises in the province's socioeconomic structure.

The concept of social economy in Quebec goes well beyond the more widely used framing of social enterprise:

From the Act:

"Social economy" means all the economic activities with a social purpose carried out by enterprises whose activities consist, in particular, in the sale or exchange of goods or services, and which are operated in accordance with the following principles:

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[58] **https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/A-3.001/**
[59] **https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/E-1.1.1**

- the purpose of the enterprise is to meet the needs of its members or the community;

- the enterprise is not under the decision-making authority of one or more public bodies within the meaning of the Act respecting Access to documents held by public bodies and the Protection of personal information (chapter A-2.1);

- the rules applicable to the enterprise provide for democratic governance by its members;

- the enterprise aspires to economic viability;

- the rules applicable to the enterprise prohibit the distribution of surplus earnings generated by its activities or provide that surplus earnings be distributed among its members in proportion to the transactions each of the members has carried out with the enterprise; and

- the rules applicable to a legal person operating the enterprise provide that in the event of its dissolution, the enterprise's remaining assets must devolve to another legal person sharing similar objectives.

For the purposes of the first paragraph, a social purpose is a purpose that is not centred on monetary profit, but on service to members or to the community and is characterized, in particular, by an enterprise's contribution to the well-being of its members or the community and to the creation of sustainable high-quality jobs.

A social economy enterprise is an enterprise whose activities consist, in particular, in the sale or exchange of goods or services, and which is operated, in accordance with the principles set out in the first paragraph, by a cooperative, a mutual society or an association endowed with legal personality."

The provisions of this Act reflect and reinforce development of **Culture, Values, and Commitment** most in line with NIE research themes, suggesting not only collaboration with community and community organisations, but that the enterprise should be in service to the "well-being of its members or the community and to the creation of sustainable high-quality jobs". This facilitates the theme of **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers.**

Social Enterprise in Quebec: Understanding Their "Institutional Footprint"

Given that Quebec's approach is so different from other provinces, this scan also consulted a research paper on the social economy approach: *Social Enterprise in Quebec: Understanding Their "Institutional Footprint"*[60].

Some key points are outlined below:

Because of the historical roots of cooperatives, mutual societies, collective values of solidarity, cooperation, and community well-being, social economy is a foundation and not an addition.

Do not think of organisations working to increase inclusion as social enterprise, rather approach from the frame of social economy, i.e. coming to the concept of diverse economy and social inclusion from a different lens.

Less about the individualistic culture and more about "associative and mutual movements", "in addition to having affinities with the Latin and French European social and solidarity economy concepts" (p47).

This foundational approach is worth considering in further NIE research. The theme of **Culture, Values, and Commitment** evident in many of the social enterprises in B.C. have these fundamental principles in common with Quebec. **Community/Service Organisation Collaboration** is also supported by **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**.

Guide to programs in Quebec[61]

This document represents a comprehensive guide to various programs available for people with disabilities, their families, and caregivers. It outlines different types of assistance, support, and services that are offered to individuals with disabilities, as well as the eligibility criteria and application processes and employment. Published in 2017 by the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec.

Some of employment-related programs and services are summarised below:

Employment integration contracts

Designed to promote equal employment opportunity for people with disabilities.

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[60] Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research
https://anserj.ca/index.php/cjnser/article/view/198
[61] **https://www.ophq.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/documents/GuideProgammes2017_Angl_Web.pdf**

Eligibility: "your abilities enable you to meet at least 15% of productivity requirements in the first year of a given job and 25% in subsequent years; you are able to work between 12 and 40 hours a week in a standard workplace".

Available Assistance (p29-30)

Wage subsidy

Assessment

Coaching

Salary compensation for medical treatments

Barrier-free workplace

Adaptation of a workstation

Interpretation services

Special consideration

Other programs listed include

Grant program for adapted businesses (wage subsidy that has the possibility of being long term)

Work-Readiness Skills Program for people with disabilities (paid with benefits during training and skilling process)

The programs outlined relate to themes of **Individualised Approaches; Inclusion and Viability; Community/Service Organisation Collaboration; Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers.**

Document published by the Quebec Intellectual Disability Society

Policy Directions and Required Actions[62]

In contrast to the picture from the Social Economy Act and the report discussed above, this document is critical of the situation regarding work for people living with disability. It describes

"A complex ecosystem with multilayered challenges. The ecosystem of employability and sociovocational services for people with disabilities in Québec is very complex. Many stakeholders are supposed to work together, while in reality there are many silos. It is essential to reconsider this dynamic." (p25)

The authors point out the lack of inclusive employment:

"There are too few programs in Québec that focus on inclusive employment. The Society has hosted the Ready, Willing, Able program for several years, but this program is not available across the province and is limited in terms of human and financial resources." (p28)

In terms of NIE themes, to facilitate **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**, perhaps some work is needed on the structural conditions is needed if there are silos.

Government Resources

Workplace protections in Quebec[63]
This government website describes protections available to workers via the labour standards, which apply to most employees in Quebec, including those working remotely (for example, working from home).

DuoEmploi day[64] - one day internships during Disability Awareness Week

This is potentially an interesting policy or practice, similar to some of the open days held in Europe:

"With these internships, the participants were able to have a new job experience and discover a trade or occupation that could suit them. These internships also allowed employers to discover the benefits of including people with disabilities in the work teams".

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[62] **https://www.sqdi.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Orientations_et_Demandes_SQDI_2022_EN_WEB.pdf**
[63] **https://educaloi.qc.ca/en/capsules/workplace-protections-in-quebec/**
[64] **https://www.quebec.ca/en/emploi3/embauche-et-gestion-de-personnel/duoemploi-offres-de-stages-pour-les-personnes-handicapees**

People with disabilities[65]

A government resource outlining the programs, measures, and services for people with disabilities, their families and their caregivers. Covers a broad spectrum:

- Transportation and paratransit
- Employment and adapted jobs
- Education and studies
- Family and support for individuals
- Homes and housing
- Recreation, sports, tourism, and culture
- Tax measures and pensions
- Health and technical aids

These select government resources provide information and access to PWD, encouraging participation in the workforce and other aspects of life. They demonstrate at the very least, a commitment to **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers.**

NEW BRUNSWICK

New Brunswick might be described as early in the process of accessibility and inclusive employment when compared with provinces such as Manitoba. According to the Premier's Council on Disabilities[66] Annual report from 2022-2023, New Brunswick is currently at the stage of setting up committees and task forces.

Human Rights Act[67]

prohibits discrimination in employment based on physical or mental disabilities explicitly prohibits discrimination by any person, employment agency, trade union, or employers' organisation against individuals seeking or already employed, on grounds of physical or mental disabilities

requires equal opportunities and fair treatment for individuals with disabilities in various aspects of life, including employment and access to services

Relevant themes: **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

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[65] **https://www.quebec.ca/en/people-with-disabilities**
[66] **https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/pcsdp.html**
[67] **https://www.canlii.org/en/nb/laws/stat/rsnb-2011-c-171/latest/rsnb-2011-c-171.html**

Employment Standards Act[68]

While the document does not explicitly address disability provisions, it does cover leaves of absence for critically ill adults and employee rights concerning termination, layoff, and discrimination.

One of the controversies in NB regarding employment of PWD was that it was legal to pay below minimum wage. This has been stopped recently by an Act to amend Employment Standards Act.[69]

Accessibility legislation still in development

New Brunswick produced a report in 2023 entitled "New Brunswick's Framework for Accessibility Legislation"[70] which recognised that the "need for accessibility legislation is urgent and should come before all other recommendations." (p4). It recommends legislation is based on universal design, ensuring products, environments, programs and services are usable by all people to the greatest extent possible and without requiring adaptation. New legislation will apply first to government departments, then public sector organisations, before finally applying to the private sector. (p7)

Barriers will be defined broadly and in line with other jurisdictions (these are similar to Manitoba, and the document includes references to architectural, attitudinal, ICT and organizational barriers). Key entities, identified by legislation or regulation, will be required to develop and implement accessibility plans, removing these barriers from their operations.

When this legislation is in place, it will address development of **Culture, Values, and Commitment; Individualised Approaches; Inclusive HR Practices;** and **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers.**

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[68] **https://laws.gnb.ca/en/ShowPdf/cs/E-7.2.pdf**
[69] **https://legnb.ca/en/legislation/bills/60/2/12/an-act-to-amend-the-employment-standards-act**
[70]**https://www.legnb.ca/content/house_business/60/3/tabled_documents/2023%20Accessibility%20EN.pdf**

Disability Action Plan[72]

The Disability Action Plan (released in 2020, progress updated in 2023[73]), contains recommendations for impact of services provided, employment rates for PWD, education levels etc. It also sets out plans for legislation, including an accessibility act by the end of 2021.

For a province that has such a high rate of disability (second highest with 26.7% of people aged 15 and over, vs the national average of 22.3%), New Brunswick seems to have less legislation, policy, and strategy to address the needs of this population. The most common types of disabilities among the New Brunswick population were those related to pain, flexibility, mobility and mental health. The plan noted that "New Brunswickers with disabilities need support to reach a level playing field where they can demonstrate their full potential as contributing citizens. Physical and attitudinal barriers must also be diminished."

If developed, this proposed Act could relate to NIE themes of **Individualised Approaches; Inclusive HR Practices; Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

The Disability Action Plan stands out amongst the documents reviewed for this scan in that it acknowledges disparity in Indigenous rates of disability.

"The disability rate for Indigenous persons nationally is about 50% higher than for non Indigenous persons. This higher disability rate magnifies the challenges of poverty, employment, health, housing, and economic and social inclusion faced by Indigenous persons and First Nations communities. The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) made 94 Calls to Action. The Calls to Action urged governments, non-government organizations, educators, and the public to take meaningful steps towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, by renewing relationships based on mutual understanding and respect. In partnership, we need to create a process to raise awareness and create opportunities for Indigenous persons with disabilities to fully contribute to their own economic, social and human rights". (p9)

If the Action Plan develops in this direction it will address one of the key limitations of many policies and strategies in most provinces and territories, which is to serve the needs of Indigenous persons with disabilities. This was also one of the key aspects missing from the NIE research, and one that urgently needs to be prioritised.

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[72] **https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/pcsdp/disability-action-plan.html**
[73] **https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2023.07.0382.html#:~:text=Released%20in%20July%202020%2C%20the,transportation%2C%20and%20recreation%20and%20wellness**

Research papers related to New Brunswick

In the process of this jurisdictional scan, two research papers discussing the situation in New Brunswick were also reviewed.

Work disability programs in Newfoundland & Labrador and New Brunswick[74]

This report included a literature review combined with interviews with officials, service providers and other stakeholders, along with focus groups with people with lived experience. It compared New Brunswick with Newfoundland in terms of eligibility criteria and employment barriers faced by selected disability populations.

The report notes one of the key issues with mental health disability, namely that

"While the national unemployment rate is approximately 7%, the unemployment rate of Canadian adults with mental illness ranges from 70-90%, depending on the severity of the disability (CMHA, 2014)". (p6)

"Canadian disability policies have been described as "fragmented" and "a complex web of legislation, regulations and programs, crossing many departments within government and multiple layers of jurisdiction" (Jongbloed, 1998; McColl, Jaiswal et.al, 2017)." (p7)

In 2019, at the time of this report, the authors noted that

"The Training and Employment Support Services (TESS) component of the Employment Services Program provides supports to case managed New-Brunswickers who have a permanent physical, intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, or sensory disability to participate in training and/or employment opportunities. However, while NL programs are designated for persons with disabilities, the NB program also included Aboriginal persons and members of visible minorities". (p15)

"The Supported Employment Program works in partnership with Employment Corporations/Agencies to develop employment opportunities for eligible individuals who have developmental (intellectual) disabilities. The Work-Related Disability Supports program provides persons with disabilities assistance with seeking or maintaining employment".

The program "Equal Employment Opportunity Programs in NB is the equivalent of the Opening Doors program in NL" and both may be interesting practices in provision of access to protected jobs within the public service.

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[74]**https://www.crwdp.ca/sites/default/files/documentuploader/crwdp_2016_seed_grant_study_nl_-_report_june_2019.pdf**

An Untapped Labour Market Pool Economic Impact Assessment of Disability and Employment[75]

discusses obstacles faced by individuals with disabilities in accessing competitive job opportunities in New Brunswick.

advocates transitioning from income-support to employment-support frameworks to increase the participation of individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

emphasizes recognizing the diverse experiences and situations of individuals with disabilities.

highlights the benefits of employment for individuals with disabilities and employers. The importance of education, awareness of support services, employer involvement, and inter-departmental collaboration necessary to support the integration of individuals with disabilities into the workforce.

The report makes recommendations for changing the conditions and barriers present in the labour market as well as the social/cultural context for employment of PWD.

Critical of "welfarization" of disability:

"Across Canada, social assistance disability income expenditures are growing faster than those of any other program, suggesting a 'welfarization of disability'. This development is concerning as labour force participation and employment are not only of benefit to regional economic development but also to a sense of self determination among individuals". (p3)

"In all situations, however, these individuals are facing obstacles to employment on account of being required to navigate the labour market as persons with disabilities" (p8).

The author interviews 15 PWD about their experiences and specifically notes the importance of Workplace Accessibility and Culture:

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[75]**https://www.abilitynb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Tacit-Elements-Ability-NB-Employment-and-Disability-Final-Copy-UPDATE-CASE-1.pdf**

"Whether trying to navigate the re-entry to employment, or trying to adjust to on-going employment as a disability develops, many of the case summaries demonstrate challenges relating to workplace accessibility and culture. It would seem that persons with disabilities are largely expected to adapt to work environments, including physical infrastructure and colleagues' perceptions, understandings, and attitudes, which have typically been developed from the perspective of persons without disabilities. Accessibility relates not only to the physical aspects of the work environment but also to the culture and processes of the work environment—and many work environments are not accessible"

If workplaces, infrastructure, etc were developed with **Lived Experience of Disability**, there would be more **Culture, Values, and Commitment; Individualised Approaches; Clear, Informal, and Regular Communication; Flexibility; Inclusive HR Practices.**

Such an environment would constitute the structural conditions for the theme of **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers.**

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

PEI has a specific Act regarding supports for PWD and a workforce diversity policy that specifically mentions building a workplace culture around inclusive practices in the public service, as well as about being flexible. PEI has also recently been successful in attracting funding for programs for PWD.

The Human Rights Act in Prince Edward Island[76]

Upholds the fundamental principle that all individuals are equal in dignity and human rights, regardless of various characteristics including disability (and also specifically mentions "source of income").

Discrimination in employment is prohibited:

Employers are not allowed to refuse to employ or continue to employ an individual on a discriminatory basis, including discrimination in any term or condition of employment.

Employment agencies are not allowed to accept inquiries that express discriminatory limitations or preferences and must not discriminate against individuals based on disability.

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[76] **https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/legislation/H-12%20-Human%20Rights%20Act.pdf**

The goal of these conditions is to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal opportunities in the workplace and are protected from discriminatory practices.

NIE themes: **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**.

They're Your Rights to Know[77]

This is an information resource that aims to increase public awareness and understanding of PEI's human rights legislation. It includes scenarios to help explain when the Human Rights Act might apply, equipping PWD with knowledge about their rights and protections.

NIE themes: arguably **Clear, Informal, and Regular Communication** (accessible information on the Human Rights Act for PWD), **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

The Supports for Persons with Disabilities Act[78]

Purpose: provision of assured income, categories and rates, application procedures, and outlines/describes the responsibilities of the Director in providing assured income.

The Act
- provides supports and assured income to individuals with disabilities in PEI
- defines PWD - substantial impairment
- outlines eligibility criteria, application procedures
- addresses the provision of assured income to cover basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and transportation for individuals with disabilities

While conducting this scan, a similar Act was not found in other provinces. This Act allows for **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers** in a right to assured income; yet at a higher level it may represent something about or contribute to the **Culture, Values, and Commitment** of PEI.

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[77] **http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/YRTK_eng.pdf**
[78] **https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/legislation/s-09-2-supports_for_persons_with_disabilities_act.pdf**

Workforce Diversity Policy[79]

This policy acknowledges disability as a dimension of diversity, and considers physical or mental disability as a dimension that should be recognised and valued in organisations. It assists in recruiting and training persons from designated groups, which may include persons with disabilities who are underrepresented in the public service workforce. Its primary goal is to support the Government of PEI's commitment to creating a workplace that represents the diversity of the population it serves.

The policy refers to "diversity" in general, but specifically encourages organisations to: Build a workplace culture characterized by inclusive practices and behaviors for the benefit of all the staff and their clientele (internal & external).

Create a work environment that values and utilizes the contributions of employees with diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives through improved awareness of the benefits of workforce diversity and successful management of diversity.

Implement a framework that requires all departments to embrace fairness, equity and diversity in the development of their policies and programs, as this positively impacts the delivery of their services.

Eliminate barriers in the workplace and develop a work environment that promotes diversity and inclusiveness.

Also states: "The PEI Public Service respects people as individuals and values their differences. It is committed to creating a work environment that is fair and flexible, promotes personal and professional growth, and benefits from its diversity."

This policy document has lots of NIE themes, e.g. **Culture, Values, and Commitment; Individualised Approaches; Flexibility; Inclusion and Viability; Inclusive HR Practices; Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers.**

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[79] **https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/legislation/s-09-2-supports_for_persons_with_disabilities_act.pdf**

The Youth Employment Act[80]

This Act regulates the employment of young persons under the age of sixteen in PEI, containing provisions to ensure that the employment of young persons does not harm their health, safety, or moral and physical development. It establishes guidelines for employers when employing young persons. The Act also includes provisions for inspections, exemptions, and penalties for non-compliance by employers. However, it does not specifically mention disability.

Employment Standards Act[81]

This act has the following objectives:

- Ensuring that employees receive at least basic conditions and benefits of employment.
- Promoting positive relationships and open communications between employers and employees.
- Fostering the development of a productive and efficient labor force that can contribute fully to the prosperity of Prince Edward Island.
- Assisting employees in meeting work and family responsibilities.
- Providing fair and efficient procedures for resolving disputes over the application and interpretation of the Act.

It does not mention disability except where certain employment standards may not apply to individuals caring for persons with disabilities in private home settings.

Duty to Accommodate[82]

Includes references to individualised approach, recognising that each employee's needs are unique and must be considered for every accommodation request.

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[80] **https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/legislation/y-02-youth_employment_act.pdf**
[81] **https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/legislation/e-06-2-employment_standards_act.pdf**
[82] **https://www.peihumanrights.ca/education-and-resources/duty-to-accommodate**

Lists examples of accommodations:

- allowing a flexible work schedule

- modifying job duties

- modifying workplace policies

- making changes to the building (for example, installing ramps, hand rails, automatic door openers, wider doorways, etc.)

- modifying workstations (making ergonomic changes, supplying a specialized chair, back support, etc.)

- providing specialized adaptation or assistive devices for computers, accessible technology

- providing alternative ways of communicating with the employee

- additional training

- allowing short-term and long-term disability leave

- alternative work

NIE themes: **Individualised Approaches; Flexibility; Inclusive HR Practices**

The community groups Resourceabilities[83] offers Employer resources:

- Making use of individual's skills and abilities

- Abilities@Work, a wage subsidy program

- Job matching

- Work site assessments

- Support and job coaching

- Job carving

NIE themes: **Flexibility; Individualised Approaches; Community/Service Organisation Collaboration**

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[83] **https://resourceabilities.ca/employers/**

PEI HR toolkit » Persons with Disabilities[84]

Suggests employers consider the location, schedule and responsibility mix for each work situation to ensure best opportunities for PWD. Employers should create an inclusive workplace and should also establish connections to local services and agencies offering employment support services to PWD.

NIE themes encouraging better **Culture, Values, and Commitment; Individualised Approaches; Flexibility, Inclusive HR Practices; Community/Service Organisation Collaboration**

Recent success in funding

Two notable recent successes in PEI for services and facilities for PWD were found: *Government of Canada invests in foundational skills training and support for workers on Prince Edward Island*

"The ADAPT project is a partnership between Workplace Learning PEI (WLPEI) and the Government of New Brunswick's (GNB) Virtual Learning Strategy (VLS) adult-learner support model. This project utilizes the Government of New Brunswick's proprietary tools for screening for learning disabilities (LDORI) and their assessment for foundational skills gaps (ESSA) to target clients with learning disabilities who are employed or entering employment in Prince Edward Island." [85]

NIE themes: **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers; Community/Service Organisation Collaboration**.

Tremploy opens new modern facility to support clients[86]

"Tremploy recently opened a 24,000-square-foot facility at 23 Regis Duffy Drive in Charlottetown. Tremploy is a PEI-based non-profit that provides adults who have an intellectual disability with vocational training, life skills training, life enrichment and support programming. They also offer one-to-one service and employment opportunities. Their work empowers and inspires clients while making a tangible difference in our province." NIE themes: **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers; Community/Service Organisation Collaboration.**

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[84] **https://www.peihrtoolkit.ca/resource/diversity-and-inclusion/persons-with-disabilities/**

[85] **https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2022/08/government-of-canada-invests-in-foundational-skills-training-and-support-for-workers-on-prince-edward-island.html**

[86] **https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/news/tremploy-opens-new-modern-facility-to-support-clients**

NOVA SCOTIA

Nova Scotia may be described as early in the progress towards accessibility - notably, and controversially, only recently agreed to close institutions for PWD.

Human Rights Act[87]

Prohibits discrimination against PWD in employment or during the hiring process

Employment agencies are not allowed to accept inquiries from employers expressing preferences or limitations on hiring due to disabilities

Physical and mental disabilities are defined broadly, includes various conditions and impairments

NIE themes: **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

Nova Scotia Accessibility Act (2017)[88]

Similar to the Accessibility for Manitobans Act. Recognises the attitudinal and environmental barriers faced and multiple forms of discrimination.

Commits the government to develop accessibility standards for goods and services, information and communication, transportation, employment, built environment, and education. (Accessibility Directorate are responsible for making that happen)

Public sector bodies must seek input from persons with disabilities when preparing an accessibility plan

Accessibility plans must be updated every three years and made publicly available

These provisions and definitions support **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers; Inclusive HR Practices; Individualised Approaches** and by stating that public sector bodies must seek input from persons with disabilities when preparing an accessibility plan, the Act facilitates inclusion of **Lived Experience of Disability.**

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[87] **https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/human%20rights.pdf**
[88] **https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/accessibility.pdf**

Labour Standards Code[89]

Doesn't mention disability.

Duty to Accommodate Physical and Mental Disability Guidelines (2023)[90]

This document provides guidance to employees and managers who review requests for workplace accommodations for civil service employees and other direct employees working for the Province of Nova Scotia.

NIE themes: **Individualised Approaches; Inclusive HR Practices; Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

Access by Design 2030: Achieving an Accessible Nova Scotia[91]

Out of all the provinces, Nova Scotia has the highest percentage of PWD, much higher than the Canadian average[92]. This document (published in 2018) outlines priorities, key actions, and a framework for how Nova Scotia aims to achieve its goal of becoming an accessible province by 2030. It points out the necessity for collaboration and support from various stakeholders to ensure the rights and needs of persons with disabilities are central to policy and program development in the employment sector. It also highlights the need for employment standards that support PWD in finding and maintaining employment, contributing to a more inclusive workforce.

NIE themes: **Inclusion and Viability; Lived Experience of Disability; Inclusive HR Practices; Community/Service Organisation Collaboration; Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

Websites

This scan also consulted websites (community organisations and government websites) in search of resources for employers or businesses.

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[89] **https://www.nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/labour%20standards%20code.pdf**

[90] **https://humanrights.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/duty_to_accomodate_final.pdf**

[91] **https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/access-by-design/access-by-design-2030.pdf**

[92] "30% of Nova Scotians 15 years and over have at least one disability, the Canadian average is 22.3%" - **https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/stats-on-disability-in-Nova-Scotia.pdf**

InclusionNS[93]

Refers to the report "HUMAN RIGHTS REVIEW AND REMEDY FOR THE FINDINGS OF SYSTEMIC DISCRIMINATION AGAINST NOVA SCOTIANS WITH DISABILITIES"[94], "a landmark agreement between the Disability Rights Coalition and the Province of Nova Scotia".

This was the result of "an 8-year legal battle over the right to live in community and marks the beginning of meaningful change for people with disabilities in NS. The Remedy Report will lead to transformative change in how people with disabilities will be supported to live and be included in their communities".

"For people with intellectual disabilities and their families, the Remedy will bring us a chance to dream beyond the limited services that have been available in NS and to build a truly inclusive life."

The Remedy identifies 6 Key Directions to guide the transformation including:
"A new system of Individual Planning and Support Coordination to drive more person directed and local community-based supports and services. Uses an approach known as Local Area Coordination".

NIE themes: **Individualised Approaches; Community/Service Organisation Collaboration**

Miscellaneous

Accessibility resources - Government of Nova Scotia[95], includes success stories - e.g. wheelchair mats at the beach, awards to local citizens and resources providing collateral to raise awareness, webinars and recorded conversations about the benefit of accessibility at work.

Accessibility in Nova Scotia[96] the website of an organisation representing PWD, that offers many resources and reports.

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[93] **https://www.inclusionns.ca/**
[94]**https://www.inclusionns.ca/_files/ugd/7ee84c_9a8fdb417c0e4739adcc6abd7852b9dd.pdf**
[95] **https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/resources/**
[96] **https://accessible.novascotia.ca**

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Human Rights Act[97]

Individuals with disabilities are protected from discrimination under the Act, covering those with a disability, believed to have or have had a disability, or predisposed to developing a disability.

These measures aim to protect individuals with disabilities from discrimination and ensure equal opportunities in housing and employment.

NIE themes: **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

Accessibility Act[98]

The Accessibility Act in Newfoundland and Labrador underscores the significance of promoting accessibility in employment environments and strives to eliminate obstacles that impede individuals with disabilities from fully engaging in the workforce.

It outlines:

Employment Standards

The Act applies accessibility standards to individuals, organizations, or public bodies employing individuals.

Specific measures, policies, and practices are in place to prevent barriers in employment and ensure accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

Ministerial Responsibilities

The Minister is responsible for raising awareness of how barriers affect individuals with disabilities, including in employment.

Emphasizes the importance of identifying and addressing barriers faced by individuals with disabilities in work settings.

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[97] **https://assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/statutes/h13-1.htm**
[98] **https://www.canlii.org/en/nl/laws/stat/snl-2021-c-a-1.001/latest/snl-2021-c-a-1.001.html**

Liability Protection

Provisions in the Act protect individuals, organizations, and public bodies from liability when fulfilling their duties in good faith, including those related to employment.

Encourages active participation in creating accessible employment environments.

Defines barriers: "'barrier' means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in society, including (i) a physical barrier, (ii) an architectural barrier, (iii) an information or communications barrier, (iv) an attitudinal barrier, (v) a technological barrier, or (vi) a barrier established or perpetuated by an Act, regulations, a policy or a practice"

Broad range of application:

An accessibility standard may apply to an individual, an organisation or a public body that (a) designs and delivers programs and services; (b) provides information or communication; (c) procures goods, services and facilities; (d) offers accommodations; (e) provides education; (f) provides healthcare; (g) employs persons; (h) owns, operates, maintains or controls an aspect of the built environment other than a private residence with 3 or less residential units; or (i) conducts an activity or undertaking prescribed in the regulations.

Public bodies have to create accessibility plans every 3 years. The Act also outlines monetary penalties for non-compliance and the process to appeal that penalty.

These provisions and definitions support **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers; Inclusive HR Practices; Individualised Approaches**

Disability Policy Office - Children, Seniors and Social Development[99]

Recently established, under the Accessibility Act, the Disability Policy Office will:

- Support the implementation and administration of this Act and the regulations;
- Provide policy and communication support for this Act and the regulations;
- Support others to develop and implement public education and awareness on the purpose of this Act.
- Examine and review measures, policies, practices and other requirements to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities;
- Identify and study issues of concern to persons with disabilities and recommend action where appropriate; and
- Provide administrative support for the Accessibility Standards Advisory Board.

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[99] **https://www.gov.nl.ca/cssd/disabilities/**

NIE themes: **Individualised Approaches; Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

Government disability accommodation policy[100]

A policy for employment in government departments which offers accommodations on an individualised basis.

"The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to having a diverse and inclusive workforce where employees have equal and fair opportunity to participate, contribute, and advance in the workplace. This commitment stems from the desire to ensure a strong, dedicated, and engaged public service."

Defines accommodation as:

"A temporary or permanent adjustment to working conditions, work assignments, policies, rules, practices, programs, or the physical work environment to address an employee's current or potential employment needs arising from a disability which is supported by medical documentation."

NIE themes: The existence and publication of such a policy demonstrates **Culture, Values, and Commitment** of the government, as well as supports **Individualised Approaches; Inclusive HR Practices; Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

Research Report

Also consulted a research report comparing NB and NL[101]
Work disability programs in Newfoundland & Labrador and New Brunswick: Mapping eligibility criteria and identifying barriers for the employment of selected disability populations.

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[100] **https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/tbs/working-with-us/disability-accommodation/**
[101]**https://www.crwdp.ca/sites/default/files/documentuploader/crwdp_2016_seed_grant _study_nl_-_report_june_2019.pdf]
(https://www.crwdp.ca/sites/default/files/documentuploader/crwdp_2016_seed_grant_ study_nl_-_report_june_2019.pdf**

From the research paper:

"In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Department of Advanced Education and Skills, the Department of Health and Community Services, The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, and the Human Resource Secretariat all provide programs and services to assist persons with disabilities. The NL Government also set up the Disability Policy Office within Children, Seniors and Social Development, to ensure the development of policies that include people with disabilities and that are barrier free. In addition, the provincial government also partners with community agencies to deliver specific programs and services. Interventions to improve the employability of persons with disabilities are provided in response to individual needs. Accordingly, assistance with employment preparation and attachment to the workforce, or to address vocational crisis, tends to vary in intensity and duration." (p11)

NIE themes: **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers; Community/Service Organization Collaboration.**

"The Human Resource Secretariat delivers the Opening Doors Program which provides opportunities for individuals with disabilities to obtain employment within the provincial public service". The program offers "permanent Opening Doors positions throughout the provincial public service in various locations of the province. The Opening Doors Program positions have been designated for persons with disabilities and may be filled only by members of this employment equity group who have been accepted for inclusion on the Office's client registry". (p12)

The study finds a failure of the programs available for people with disabilities:

"The qualitative findings of this CRWDP Seed Grant Study further outline the realities of individuals with mental health conditions and ASD accessing employment opportunities based on current work disability policies and programs in Newfoundland and Labrador. The complex nature of mental health conditions and ASD, and the lack of tailored services and supports for these population groups are also emphasized in the findings". p26

Finally, and this appears to echo some of the information from research participants in NIE, the report reflects on how many employment support programs are not suitable for mental health disability:

"It is evident that eligibility criteria for existing employment support programs does not offer the flexibility necessary for the self-disclosed, episodic, and unpredictable nature of some mental health conditions. The expected program outcomes are often rigid and not articulated in a meaningful way. For those who deliver these programs, as well as those who benefit from them, getting a job and finding a job alone is not always a good measure of success. It is believed that individuals with complex needs would be better served if the outcomes that are measured were focused on individual growth and potential. The lack of adequate support, including employment as one of the most important survival issues, can have significant and long-term consequences, especially for young adults". (p26)

NIE themes: **Flexibility, Individualised Approaches, Inclusive HR practices, Enabling Conditions Removing Barriers.**

CANADIAN TERRITORIES YUKON

Human Rights Act[102]

defines disability

prohibits discrimination against a number of protected classes, including disability
notes the duty to accommodate, to make reasonable provisions to address the special needs of others, particularly in the context of employment, accommodations, and services

NIE themes: **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

Duty to accommodate[103]

"The goal of accommodation is to give everyone the opportunity to participate and contribute at work and in society. Examples of common accommodations include:

In the area of employment, flexible work schedules which can accommodate child care needs (family status) or faith-based practices (religion)

In the area of housing, installing a ramp to accommodate a tenant in a wheelchair (disability)

In the area of services, allowing a student with a learning disability to bring a note taker into class and/or to tape record lectures."

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[102] **https://laws.yukon.ca/cms/images/LEGISLATION/acts/huri.pdf**
[103] **https://yukonhumanrights.ca/what-is-the-duty-to-accommodate/**

Flexible employment referred to in the context of caring or religion but not disability

NIE themes: **Individualised Approaches; Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

Employment Standards Act[104] doesn't mention disability, while the Workers Compensation Act[105] only mentions disability in reference to injury at work and/or compensation.

Inclusion Yukon

Inclusion Yukon[106] offers support for those wishing to set up self employment, funded by YTG's Community Development Fund.

"Inclusion Yukon's has supported Self Employment Initiatives for individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities who are interested in starting their own business or who are already self employed but requiring extra support."

"We may be able to provide individualized guidance on determining the feasibility of a business idea and the implementation of a business plan, dependent on funding and what step you are on. Support is also available to individuals implementing changes to an existing, independently running business."

NIE themes: **Individualised Approaches** (one of the very few examples of individualised approach to entrepreneurship)**; Community/Service Organisation Collaboration**

Challenge Disability Resource Group

In a news article from 2019 the Challenge DRG report:

"'We use an integrated workforce model where adults with disabilities work in an environment with more experienced individuals. This follows our principle of social inclusion and allows our more experienced workers to role model workplace etiquette and teach new skills,' said Hardie. 'All workers are paid to industry standard.'" [107]

NIE themes: **Community/Service Organisation Collaboration**

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[104] **https://laws.yukon.ca/cms/images/LEGISLATION/PRINCIPAL/2002/2002-0072/2002-0072.pdf**
[105] **https://laws.yukon.ca/cms/images/LEGISLATION/PRINCIPAL/2008/2008-0012/2008-0012.pdf**
[106] **https://www.inclusionyukon.org/employment**
[107] **https://www.whatsupyukon.com/yukon/yukoners/opportunity-is-what-they-do/**

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

The Northwest Territories have a relatively small population, and have a relatively high proportion of First Nations people living with disability.

Human Rights Act[108]

key framework for protecting human rights with provisions related to the interpretation, application, complaints, adjudication, and appeal processes

defines "disability" to include physical disabilities, mental disorders, and other conditions that may impact an individual's ability to carry out daily activities

prohibits discrimination based on disability and outlines the rights and protections afforded to individuals with disabilities

recognizes that disabilities can vary in degree, and it aims to ensure equal treatment and opportunities for individuals with disabilities

NIE themes: **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

NWT Disability Strategic Framework 2017-2027[109]

This framework guides the development and implementation of the first five-year NWT Disability Action Plan: 2017-2021 and will direct the development of subsequent action plans. It embraces the UNCRPD concept: "This recognizes that disability is an evolving and complex concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments, attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others." (p3)

The vision of the framework is to advance equity, accessibility, inclusion, and participation for persons with disabilities in all aspects of economic and social life in the Northwest Territories.

The principles are: Self-Determination; Equity of Opportunity; Independence; Innovation; Personal Accessibility; Dignity; Flexibility; Respect; Non-Discrimination; and, Person and Family Centred.

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[108] **https://www.justice.gov.nt.ca/en/files/legislation/human-rights/human-rights.a.pdf**
[109] **https://www.ntassembly.ca/sites/assembly/files/td_84-183.pdf**

The framework is built on four interconnected goals that shape and guide priority objectives and associated actions. These goals are centered around being 1. person and family-centered, removing physical, social, cultural, and systemic barriers by advocating "universal design"; 3. Awareness education and training to change attitudes, beliefs, and practices; 4. Coordination, Evaluation and Reporting through "whole of government" approach and with partnerships with non-government organisations, undertaking collaborative research.

The framework guides the development and implementation of Disability Action Plans to support individuals with disabilities and improve accessibility by removing physical, social, cultural, and systemic barriers to facilitate inclusion and equitable participation.
The NWT Strategic Framework goes beyond the medical and social model of disability to discuss disability in terms of a "socio-political model".

"The emerging socio-political model of disability is an expression of the behaviours, attitudes and barriers that cause disabling conditions in society. This model explains that attitudes, and economic, legal and policy barriers are the real reasons that people with disabilities have difficulties participating as full members of society. This model shifts the focus to changing attitudes, altering environmental barriers and advancing the potential of persons with disabilities." p18

These provisions and definitions support **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers; Inclusive HR Practices; Individualised Approaches; Community/Service Organisation Collaboration;** and demonstrates a level of **Culture, Values, and Commitment** in the NWT government and society.

Disability Matters[110]

Defines what disability is in a broad, and non medicalised way;

Recognises disability can be acquired, age related, and transitory, or recurring, or changing; and

Describes how supports are the usual things we think of (caregivers, adaptive equipment) but are also "attitudes and policies that include people with disabilities".

NIE themes: **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

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[110] **https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/sites/hss/files/resources/disability-matters.pdf**

GNWT Programs and Services for Persons with Disabilities Inventory[111]

a resource guide for individuals with disabilities seeking information on education, training, and employment opportunities

outlines programs and services available through GNWT Departments and partners to support persons with disabilities in accessing employment opportunities

supported living programs and other living options that may impact their employment decisions

aims to promote inclusivity and accessibility in the workforce for persons with disabilities, aligning with the NWT Disability Strategic Framework

With respect to employment, the document mentions:

"The Workforce Development Agreement (WDA) is an agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories that provides employment and training supports to eligible residents, including persons with disabilities." (p20)

This scheme provides training such as literacy, supports on a continuum of needs-based services, employment partnerships to expand availability and quality of opportunities, and builds knowledge on labour market information.

NIE themes: **Culture, Values, and Commitment; Individualised Approaches; Community/Service Organisation Collaboration; Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

Rights of People with Disabilities in the NWT[112]

This document from the NWT Disabilities Council translates UN, Canadian, and Territory laws into what it means for PWD in the NWT. Each statement of rights of PWD is supported by UN, Canadian, and Territory levels of legislation.

NIE themes: **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

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[111] **https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/sites/hss/files/resources/gnwt-disabilities-inventory.pdf**
[112]**https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5da6397b6663ff07558fa515/t/5ed1550089d12f1ce610ce5c/1590777092258/Bill+of+Rights.pdf**

NUNAVUT

Human Rights Act[113]

"The purposes of this Act are to acknowledge within the framework of Inuit

Qaujimajatuqangit that the Government, all public agencies, boards and commissions and all persons in Nunavut have the responsibility to guarantee that every individual in Nunavut is afforded an equal opportunity to enjoy a full and productive life and that failure to provide equality of opportunity threatens the development and well-being of all persons in the community."

prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of disability, not allowed to refuse to employ or discriminate against individuals with disabilities with respect to any term or condition of employment

states employer duty to accommodate the needs of PWD in the workplace, unless such accommodations would result in undue hardship on the employer

discrimination is considered a contravention regardless of whether there was an intention to discriminate

NIE themes: Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers

Labour Standards Act[114]

Establish minimum employment standards for various aspects of employment, including wages, hours of work, overtime, holidays, and other conditions of work. The Act aims to protect the rights of employees, ensure fair treatment in the workplace, and promote a healthy and safe working environment. It sets out the responsibilities of employers and employees. Disability is only mentioned in relation to taking domestic violence leave that results in disability.

Workers compensation Act[115]

Only refers to disability acquired at work.

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[113] **https://www.canlii.org/en/nu/laws/stat/csnu-c-h-70/latest/csnu-c-h-70.pdf**
[114] **https://www.canlii.org/en/nu/laws/stat/rsnwt-nu-1988-c-l-1/latest/rsnwt-nu-1988-c-l-1.pdf**
[115] **https://www.canlii.org/en/nu/laws/stat/snu-2007c15/latest/snu-2007c15.pdf**

Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society[116]

The website is a rich source of information and the society seems to be core to disability service and advocacy in Nunavut. In addition to offering a variety of services such as support groups and workshops, job coaches, programs and counselling, the site includes the following specific areas of interest to the NIE project:

Inclusion and Accessibility[117]

Explains definitions of accessibility in terms of reducing and preventing barriers. Explains duty to accommodate in the IQ framework:

"IQ Principles: Inuuqatigiitsiarniq (respecting others, relationships and caring for people), Tunnganarniq (fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming and inclusive)."

"Sometimes this means treating people differently to make sure they have everything they need to succeed. Sometimes this means changing the environment or the tools related to the job. Sometimes bigger changes are needed to address discrimination in the workplace, such as re-working the policy, rules, or practices"

The website points out that Canada "is still lacking in compliance with the declaration on the rights of Indigenous people (Dion, 2017)."

"The Nunavut Human Rights Act continues the promotion of equal rights for Indigenous people with disabilities, with a focus on the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) framework."

Advocacy

Advocacy services, from encouraging self-advocacy to individual, group, and systems advocacy.

The Nunavut Solutions Grant

"The Nunavut Solutions Grant is a joint project with NDMS, the Rick Hanson Foundation, and the Government of Nunavut. The grant provides funding for those living with a mobility-related disability to access equipment or services that will improve the quality of life for Nunavummiut."

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[116] **https://nuability.ca/**
[117] **https://nuability.ca/inclusion-accessibility/**

All nine of the NIE themes are addressed here. In addition, the Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society addresses one of the key limitations of the NIE research in that we did not hear from inclusive organisations working with Indigenous people with disabilities.

Nunavut Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit takes snapshot of disability needs[118], a research project

The Nunavut Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society is conducting research to understand the needs of people with disabilities in Nunavut

The organisation is exploring barriers for PWD in accessing transportation, medical travel, accessing medical services, communications, housing

Lack of accessible transportation and demand for mental health support for PWD has already been identified as an important theme in Nunavut and from NIE we know how it can impact ability to access employment opportunities

Gathering information from PWD and their caregivers to advocate for more services and supports tailored to their needs

The research manager is quoted in the newspaper article as saying: "There hasn't been, to our knowledge, a study that looks at disabilities across the territory. So it is unique in that regard. We started the study in 2021, so we will have the report out early fall 2024.

European Union

The EU has recently released documents describing their strategy between now and 2030, listing new programs and deliverables, some of which are still being developed. They have renewed their focus on improving the employment prospects of people with disabilities through strategies derived from a social model of disability, paying particular attention to intersectionality, the needs of women, refugees, etc.

This recent focus and investment into strategies across such a diverse range of countries means there are several promising practices and structural conditions worth considering in the context of a jurisdictional scan.

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[118] **https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/nunavut-disabilities-makinnasuaqtiit-takes-snapshot-of-disability-needs/**

Background

The EU is a monetary union of independent countries with independent fiscal policies; thus, considerable work is required to harmonise disability employment policy. Multiple departments and agencies aim to achieve this harmonisation, starting with the European Commission's *Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion* organisation. Under that is a layer for *Social Protection & Social Inclusion*, which has a department taking care of Persons with Disabilities, which works in line with the UN Convention on Human Rights for *Persons with Disabilities* and as mentioned above recently released the *Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030*.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)[119]

The EU Member states have ratified the UN CRPD and implemented it with binding force. The implications for Public Employment Services (PES) include:

the need to develop holistic support packages to meet barriers faced by persons with disabilities;

ensuring internal and external equality and diversity packages that also consider the overt and covert forms of discrimination and physical, attitudinal and legal barriers;

reasonable accommodation must be provided, both technical (assistive devices and adaptations to the workplace) and organisational (working hours, distribution of duties, WFH, redeployment);

persons with disabilities are enabled to live independently, fully participating in all aspects of life. PES should ensure equal access to the physical environment and transportation, to information communications technologies and systems and to other facilities and services in urban and rural areas;

specific, positive measures making a visible contribution to reducing barriers. (pp.5-6)

These requirements encompass most of the NIE themes. Perhaps most obvious are the **Culture, Values, and Commitment; Individualised Approaches; Flexibility; Inclusive HR Practices; Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**

Promoting hiring perspectives through affirmative action and combating stereotypes

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[119] **https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities**

"Principle 17 of the European Pillar of Social Rights reaffirms the right of persons with disabilities to services that enable them to participate in the labour market and a work environment adapted to their needs".

NIE themes: **Individualised Approaches**

The Disability Employment Package[120]

This package aims to improve labour market outcomes for persons with disabilities. It identifies several priorities, including accessibility, quality of life, the role of the EU in leading by example, and promotion of rights of persons with disabilities globally.

Derived from these initiatives, the Package lists six deliverables, two of which are complete and have been published online; the other four are "upcoming".

Completed Deliverables

Practitioner *toolkit* on strengthening Public Employment Services (PES). The toolkit provides a concrete, practical guide for how PES can promote the participation of persons with disabilities in the labour market.

Catalogue[121] of positive actions, which promotes hiring perspectives through affirmative action and combating stereotypes.

Deliverables listed as "upcoming"

Ensuring reasonable accommodation at work

Retaining persons with disabilities in employment: preventing disabilities associated with chronic diseases

Securing vocational rehabilitation schemes in case of sickness or accidents

Exploring quality jobs in sheltered employment and pathways to the open labour market

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[120] Union of equality: Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission (**https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1484&langId=en**)
[121] **https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8570&furtherPubs=yes**

The Practitioner Toolkit[122]

This toolkit provides a practical guide, with concrete examples, for how Public Employment Services (PES) can promote the participation of persons with disabilities in the labour market. The toolkit, as one of the deliverables of the Employment Package, is intended to improve the labour market outcomes of persons with disabilities, contributing to closing the employment gap between people with and without disabilities. Increasing employment rate of persons with disabilities will also help to achieve the ambitious target of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, to have at least 78% of the population aged 20 to 64 in employment by 2030 (p1)

What are PES?

As the name suggests, they are public bodies connecting job seekers with employers.They focus on aligning job supply and demand by providing information, job placement, and support services. Each country will have its own PES, with possibly divergent structures and organisation, but in general all aim to facilitate the matching of job seekers with employers at local, national, and European levels, with both supply and demand side policies and measures.

PES and stakeholder partners have significant scope to adopt measures to combat discrimination and other barriers experienced by persons with disabilities and help them overcome these barriers and improve their labour market position. (p7)

Three categories of barriers are identified: attitudinal; institutional; and participatory.

*"**Attitudinal** barriers refer to any occasion in which prejudiced norms toward disability affect the employment of persons with disabilities. Examples of this include prejudice in employment decisions or acts of micro-aggression in the workplace."*

*"An **institutional** barrier refers to any physical, administrative, legal and bureaucratic obstacle which prevents persons with disabilities from participating in the labour market."*

*"A **participatory** barrier refers to any obstacle to involving persons with disabilities in the design of employment support measures. This includes actively seeking input from persons with disabilities to ensure support materials meet client needs, venues (step free entry) and tools are suitable and physically accessible for use by persons with disabilities, and language is appropriate."*

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[122] **https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8505&furtherPubs=yes**

Some of the concrete suggestions the toolkit offers to combat discrimination and other barriers include awareness raising workshops addressing attitudinal barriers (p11); a checklist for inclusive job adverts addressing institutional barriers; "duodays" where organisations pair a person with disability with an employee for a day, addressing participatory barriers (p22). Further case studies throughout the toolkit suggest other ways to address the three barriers.

Active labour market measures

The toolkit refers to a detailed overview of policy measures in Member States found in the Eurofound[123] (2021) report "Disability and labour market integration: Policy trends and support in EU Member States" and describes the following active labour market measures: Supported employment. Supported employment helps individuals with disabilities obtain and keep paid positions in the open job market.

- *Support is provided to both the employee and the employer.*
- *A designated PES contact offers guidance, coaching, and job carving/crafting advice.*
- *Workplace modifications are facilitated.*
- *Financial subsidies may be available to support the employment process.*
- *Personalised support for those facing more complex barriers.*
- *Intensive Personalised Support Packages are tailored for individuals with disabilities.*
- *Individuals have control over planning and support selection (and can make choices about what kind of work they want to pursue, their own goals).*
- *Support workers collaborate with different agencies.*
- *The aim is to enhance the participation of individuals with disabilities in the labor market.*

Customised employment support. *Customised employment support focuses on individual strengths for jobseekers with disabilities rather than which jobs are available in the market.*

- Collaboration between jobseeker and employer creates personalized job opportunities - "involves both the jobseeker and employer in shaping a job opportunity and creating a specific job description to match the requirements of both (Citron et al, 2008)[124]." p18
- Matching strengths, interests, and preferences with job descriptions meets individual needs.

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[123] Disability and labour market integration: Policy trends and support in EU Member States Eurobarometer (2019), Discrimination in the European Union - **https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2251**.
[124] Citron, T.; Brooks-Lane, N.; Crandell, D.;Brady, K.; Cooper, M. and Revell, G. (2008). A revolution in the employment process of individuals with disabilities: Customized employment as the catalyst for system change, Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation 28, 169-179.

- Strategies like job carving, job creation, job sharing, and self-employment are employed.
- Employers are supported in developing reasonable accommodations.
- Specially trained PES staff guarantee effective implementation.

Self-employment and entrepreneurship

Recognises that self-employment can be attractive for PWD "as they may have difficulties finding a traditional job but also because when self-employed they determine their own working hours, arrange their own workplace, and generally achieve a relatively high level of control and independence. Start-up incentives as a minimum provide financial support through income support, loans, and subsidies such as those provided to employers."

However, "According to Eurofound (2021), however, most Member States provide more comprehensive support, e.g. support for developing a business plan or a mentor scheme featuring established entrepreneurs. The ONCE Foundation in Spain is one of the PES that delivers ESF+ funded programmes in this area" (p19)

Reasonable accommodation and accessibility (p19)

Supporting reasonable accommodation in companies

Introducing flexible working hours

Providing bespoke training and mentoring schemes

Altering workplaces so that they are disability friendly

Ensuring that all workplace materials are available in accessible formats

Adjusting or obtaining equipment enabling workers with disabilities to perform tasks

Outreach programs

Targeted job fairs and insight days

"encourage employers to think differently about their workplace and work processes and consider how barriers can be removed to incorporate persons with disabilities." p 21

Specialised disability advisory services expert teams

"PES can create their own expert disability advice teams to launch effective outreach programmes". p21

Catalogue of Positive Actions to Encourage the Hiring of Persons with Disabilities and Combating Stereotypes

The second completed deliverable from the DEP is the catalogue of positive actions, many of which are highly applicable to the findings from NIE conducted in B.C., triangulating the exploratory nature of this research project. Here we examine some of the catalogue's case studies with reference to the NIE project.

Austria

Austria's "Service for Business" was introduced in 2020, with measures ranging from informing, advising and supporting businesses to actively employing persons with disabilities (p7).

Assessment of the program in 2022 found that employers appreciated the "one stop shop" for information on employing people with disabilities. The program supplies information, advice, and (sometimes) support with funding opportunities. It supplies advice on the legal framework of employing PWD, alongside support in the recruiting process, particularly in the design of application processes and advertising (**Inclusive HR Processes**). The program can help with creating and designing accessible workplaces. It seeks the "greatest possible accessibility in the operational environment"; **Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers**.

Belgium

SAREW, a Service assisting with job search for deaf or hard of hearing people in Wallonia (p8), offers individualised support for living with deafness, supporting the individual and seeking work placements in "deaf friendly" workplaces. (**Individualised Approaches**), along with awareness-raising actions to increase inclusion of deaf people. The activities are conducted by deaf and hard of hearing people who have lived experience and knowledge about requirements and also the challenges tied to the use of their national sign language (**Lived Experience of Disability**)

Croatia

The Croatian Employment Service uses active labour market measures to target persons with disabilities. Two measures are aimed at employers of persons with disabilities: employment support, in the form of financial subsidies towards the salaries of persons with disabilities, for 24 months, in the green or digital spheres; and a public works scheme (p8). (**Enabling Conditions, Removing Barriers)**. A 2021 evaluation found that the number of persons with disabilities added to active employment policy measures increased by 23% in 2020.

Denmark

From 2021 to 2022, the city of Aarhus implemented a labour market activation project known as "Business training fields – on the way to a flex job". It provided participants with social and professional skills training as they joined an ordinary workplace. It was intended that they were then retained through a flexi-job, thereby supporting both the employer and the employee. (**Flexibility; Culture, Values, and Commitment**)

Finland

The VATES Foundation fosters equal employment of persons with disabilities, long-term illnesses or other causes of partial work capacity by working with employment, rehabilitation and education stakeholders. They have created an annual disability employment forum to create bridges between these stakeholders, alongside a handbook supporting employment. An example of the concrete assistance they provide is a work coach who tailors suitable work tasks (for the employer) and familiarises employees with them.

France

The Service Pôle Emploi launched the "Employment and Autism" initiative to provide jobseekers with autism with individualised support in accessing employment along with the social aspects, such as housing, healthcare and mobility. Counsellors, trained in autism support, accompany jobseekers as they decide on career paths and training projects, providing them with job-search techniques and enabling contacts with companies to enable successful integration into the workforce. Support is provided for more than one year.

Individualised Approaches: the service asks the jobseekers what kind of work they want to do, and then help them find it and figure out contracts with companies.

Studies show an increased rate of return to employment for persons with autism of 42% (in Nouvelle-Aquitaine) and 23% (in Pays de la Loire), illustrating that targeted, quality support improves long term outcomes.

This demonstrates the NIE theme of workplace Culture, Values, and Commitment:, support for recruiters, negotiating contracts for jobseekers with autism.

Ireland

The Irish government has implemented more inclusive recruitment pathways into the civil service for persons with disabilities. Potential employees undertake a work placement of around 10 months (p10), and during the placement they demonstrate their existing skills and learn new ones.

Individualised Approaches - employees get to demonstrate their skills in a period of work before being hired

Inclusive HR Practices and Workplace **Culture, Values, and Commitment** - fosters a culture of inclusion and support for persons with disabilities in the civil service in Ireland through inclusive recruitment pathways

Italy

In 2022, Italy adopted guidelines on targeted placement of persons with disabilities and diversity management (p11), comprising good practices for professional integration and an accessible database to record the practices, including creation of agencies to promote a culture of inclusion. Over 20% of companies had already adopted at least one non-mandated measure to manage or enhance diversity among workers in 2019, i.e. before the guidelines were proposed.

Latvia

Latvia holds "Open-Doors Days for Persons with Disabilities" which permit an employer to meet potential employees, demonstrate the work to be performed and its requirements and gauge the potential employees abilities and suitability.

Netherlands

A Coalition for Technology and Inclusion drives development and use of technology to create a more inclusive labour market. They have pilot schemes using speech recognition, VR and augmented reality, for example.

Norway

Norway's Work and Inclusion (W&I) promotes cooperation between its service providers and members of the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO), known as "Ripples in the Water". Starting from the position that most people want to, and are able to work, it aims to increase employment of persons with disabilities. The W&I service provider compares companies' needs and roles with candidates and tries to match roles with skills. They also encourage the creation of new roles by companies via the Inclusive Job Design methodology and can provide training to improve the employability of candidates. Approximately 80% of candidates obtained permanent employment - three times more than ordinary supportive employment. Moreover, 57% of the NHO companies would not have recruited without the program. Version 2 of the program is now being piloted.

Sweden

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, an employers' organisation, represents local government. It ran a project in 2017-19 to educate employers about inclusive recruitment. A major finding was that employers were willing to employ persons with disabilities but needed support in fully accommodating them.

Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain

The Inclusive SMEs in Europe project (i-SME) aims to make as many SMEs aware of the work potential of persons with disabilities and the benefits of becoming "inclusive SMEs". SMEs opened their doors to candidates and matched skills to jobs and created adapted working environments as necessary. Best practices for integration were collected and analysed and case studies published[125].

The Catalogue also explores policy avenues and where those have been put in place:

Quotas

Quotas are often the first stop on the policy journey. It is reported in the Catalogue on page 27 that most of the EU's Member States use some kind of quota system stipulating employers must give employment to PWD . The quotas themselves vary in the percentage of PWD that must be employed, the sector (whether public or private) and what size of organisation is subject to those quotas. There may be penalties for not complying with the quota:

"About a third of the Member States impose fines, fees or levies on employers who do not meet their quota… "Almost all such assessments have found that quota schemes were having little effect on the employment rate of persons with disabilities, although some were generating considerable revenue, which either went to a fund to support the employment of workers with disabilities or to the general state budget."

Subsidies

Another policy avenue is subsidies, for example:

Wage subsidies, payments or grants, tax relief, reduction to social security or mandatory health insurance payments.

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[125] **https://www.i-sme.eu**

Awareness Raising

Another policy avenue is awareness raising: the Catalogue refers to schemes in Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal,

One scheme particularly worth noting is the 'come here – all are welcome' label in Estonia.

This is a special logo/graphic to indicate that all are welcome and to designate employers who are proactively prepared to arrange the workplace and work arrangements to accommodate PWD.

"The 'come here – all are welcome' label was developed by Estonia's Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, in cooperation with the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund 81. There are two versions of the label. The coloured label signifies an accessible physical environment and can be used by enterprises, organisations and public authorities to indicate that their building, facilities and premises are accessible. The blue version of the label is intended to be used by employers who are prepared to offer equal opportunities to all jobseekers, regardless of any barriers they face. It can be added to vacancy notifications and employers' websites.

The use of the label indicates that the employer welcomes all potential job seekers. It signifies that the employer has already created or is prepared to make specific adjustment to create accessible and adjusted premises and facilities, work arrangements and information" (p 32).

Knowledge Translation

Why We Are Connecting

CONTEXT

The New Inclusive Economy (NIE) was a British Columbia (B.C.) based, province-wide research project which intended to capture alternative economic approaches to inclusive employment and explore how employers recruit and retain people with disabilities.

A Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills Sector Labour Market Partnership project, the two-year research project completed engagement with employers and entrepreneurs with disabilities through an environmental scan, (including a UBC Qualtrics survey) interviews, focus groups and case studies.

B.C. has a vision of becoming the most accessible province in the country for people with disabilities – including having the highest labour participation rate. People with disabilities are currently employed at a far lower rate than people without, and inclusive employment has the potential to greatly benefit both B.C.'s Accessibility 2024 goals and the provinces growing labour market needs. Until now, tons of resources have been put into training people with disabilities to fill gaps in the workforce, yet, many employers don't know how to, or aren't prepared to offer meaningful employment to people with disabilities.

Research Question

The goal of the NIE project was to develop **evidence-based promising practices for employers and entrepreneurs** and identify alternative economic approaches to inclusive employment. Through an engaging and accessible process, the NIE research was intended to benefit people with disabilities who need and deserve to be recognized as having a place in the economy. The NIE research team was guided by this central **research question**: **When people with disabilities and other barriers to employment *are* meaningfully employed, what are the enabling structural conditions? How can these be amplified and mobilized in other contexts?**

Plain Language Research Questions:

What workplace conditions and practices lead to meaningful employment for people with disabilities? What are the alternative economic approaches to providing meaningful employment?

Who We Connected With

The project holder and host agency, inclusion Powell River Society (iPRS), has been in operation since 1954. iPRS is a registered charitable organization and non-profit society whose mandate and primary activities are designed to support and encourage children and families with or at risk of developmental delay, adults with developmental disabilities, adults with other disabilities and seniors to live fulfilling lives in their community of choice.

inclusion British Columbia

Community Living British Columbia

Social Research and Demonstration Corporation

Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship

Embers Eastside Works

Exchange Inner City

Manufacturing British Columbia

Share Reuse Repair Initiative

Tap Network

Presidents Group

Inclusion Powell River

PROJECT CHAMPIONS

The project was overseen by three committees: a Governance Committee reviewed methods, protocols, tools, communications plan and feedback; an Ethics Sub-committee reviewed the research plan; and an Experts and Innovators Committee provided validation to the findings through thought leadership around inclusive employment. These committees included members from the Presidents Group (association of disability inclusive employers in B.C.), industry representatives, experts in disability inclusive employment (including self-advocates), and staff from the Sector Labour Market Partnerships (SLMP) program in ex-officio capacity.

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

iPRS is explored a potential collaboration with ECUAD Health Design Lab and a student group comprised of persons who self-identify with a disability. Potential project partners also include the B.C. Chamber of Commerce, representing more than 120 chambers of commerce and boards of trade, and 36,000 businesses of every size, and from every sector and region. As well, the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNET) is a national association committed to strengthening communities by creating economic opportunities that enhance social and environmental conditions. CCEDNET is a potential recruitment and research dissemination partner.

EXTERNAL AUDIENCES

This project explored current environment and opportunities for inclusive employment in a variety of diverse industries and with employment decision-makers (C-suite and executive members of enterprises, human resource professionals and managers) from a variety of economic models, including but not limited to:

Cooperatives
Cooperatives (co-ops) develop communities and create jobs by offering a range of supports like housing, food or health care. They are owned and operated by the people who use these essential products or services. There are over 90 member cooperatives in B.C.[2] (e.g., Coast Capital Savings, banking and insurance co-operatives, Modo and sharing economy co-ops).

Social enterprises
Social enterprises are revenue-generating businesses with specific social objectives to benefit society. Social enterprises operated by non-profit organizations with a focus on workforce integration social enterprises operating in B.C. are of a particular interest as they are addressing barriers to employment for people with and without disabilities. (e.g., OneLight and The Nook in qathet region, Potluck Café and Embers in Vancouver).

For profit business

Much like social enterprises, businesses operating for-profit have a goal of earning revenue as a sustainable business. The three common types of business structures are sole proprietorship, partnership and corporation. People with disabilities who are entrepreneurs and/or inclusive employers would be included in this category of external audience (e.g., 25+ members of Presidents Group, 3,700+ business leaders associated with the B.C. Chamber of Commerce, and Small Business B.C.).

Public sector employers

Employers in this category include B.C.'s 29+ Crown Corporations as well as other levels of government (federal, regional district, municipal, Indigenous). With over 203+ First Nations in B.C., there is leadership and economic development involvement of Indigenous Governments and Organizations (IGOs).

Diverse industries

This audience category includes labour market innovators (also known as disruptive innovation), online retailers located in (or selling to) B.C. markets, unions, manufacturers, and service agencies that are interested in generating inclusive workplaces.

ECONOMIC REGIONS IN THE PROVINCE

The NIE research intended to identify inclusive employers from among research participants in each of the 8 economic regions in B.C., to share their perspectives with other employers as part of knowledge translation and dissemination.

Figure 1: Government of British Columbia has outlined eight distinct economic regions3
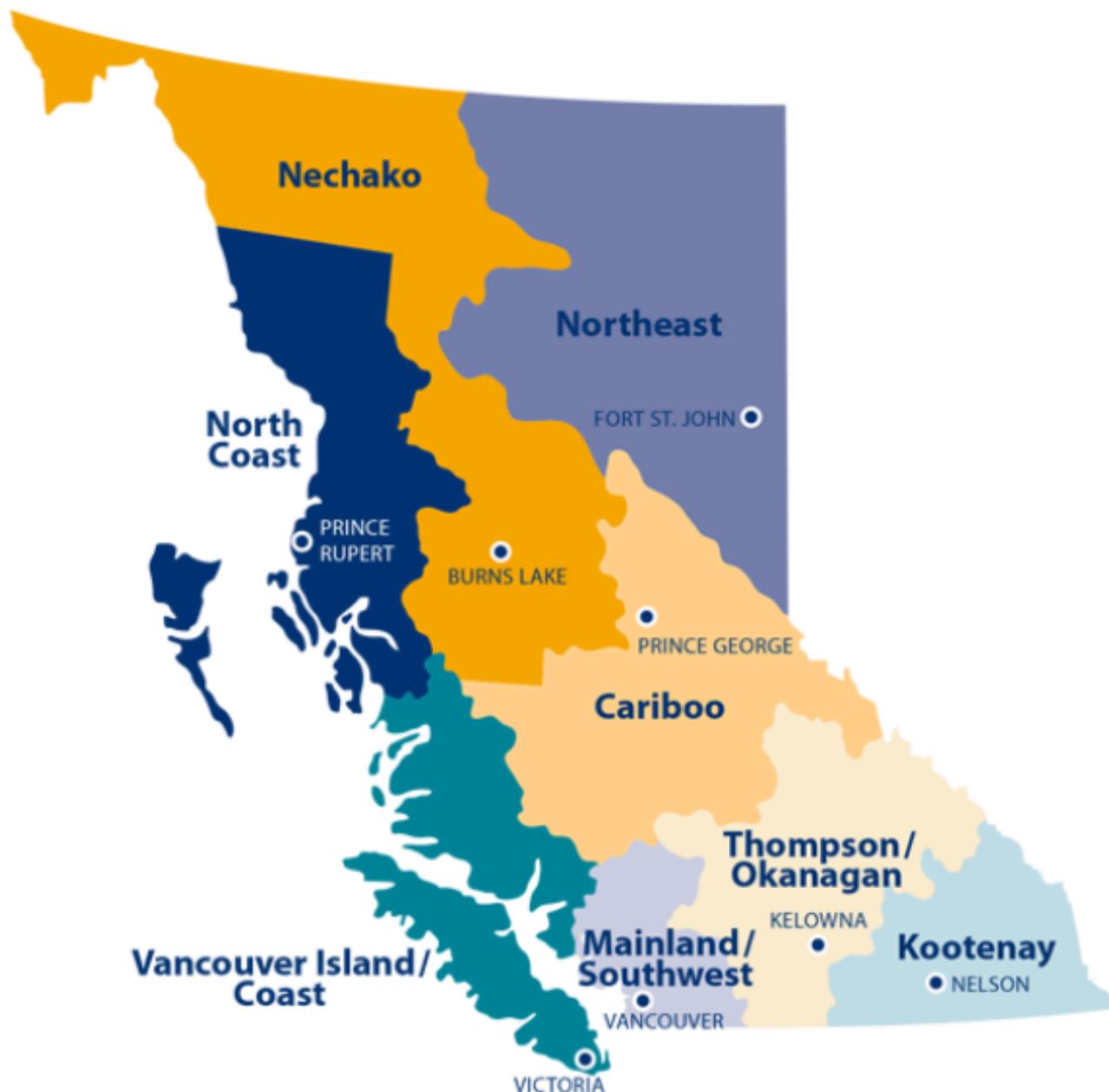
How We Connected

STRATEGIC APPROACH

This report describes the strategic approaches and actions taken to attract and engage a diverse array of employers in B.C. into a conversation about inclusive employment. Knowledge translation activities were intended to meet the project goals to elucidate the benefits of inclusive hiring through Business to Business (B2B).

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

Throughout the project, a Detailed Communications Plan supported the two overarching communication directions: **recruitment** to the research project; and making the research findings **accessible.** Through **knowledge translation**, the NIE project aimed to encourage meaningful employment by communicating promising practices and lessons learned to cultivate inclusive and productive employment environments and address employer barriers to providing inclusive employment.

Specifically, there were three communication objectives:

1. Maintain participation and unity among project champions and partners through **strong internal communications processes and practices**
2. Promote **diverse industry/employer participation** in the project
3. **Translate and disseminate key findings** to industry partners and external audiences

Objective 1: Strong Internal Communications

The NIE project developed **strong internal communications processes and practices** with the completion of these outcomes:

- SharePoint workspace established for internal communications
- Terms of Reference and agreed Decision Making Approach
- Provide reporting and summaries for review in both written and audio formats
- 5 meetings of NIE Governance Committee
- 8 meetings of NIE Innovators and Experts Committee
- 12 meetings with Research Team
- 24 bi-weekly internal communications meetings with iPRS

Objective 2: Diverse Participation

The NIE project promoted **diverse industry/employer participation** in completing the following outcomes:

- Website launched to describe the project, showcase partners and accessible document repository, survey launched with brief description
- +150 Newsletter subscribers to a growing database https://newinclusiveeconomy.ca/newsletter
- Earned media via 2-3 press releases, up to 12 blogs, 10 media interviews in print, radio and television
- Paid media via 2 news outlets (print, radio, TV or online including value for Google ads) in each economic region
- Social media via iPRS Facebook, network's Twitter
- 89 participants completed the survey
- Disability-inclusive B.C employers participating as 6 case studies, 6 focus groups, 10+ interviews (during recruitment time period, October 2022 to April 2023)
- iPRS reached out to key target employer research participants
- Governance Committee members assisted with research validation through focus group participation

Objective 3: Knowledge Translation and Dissemination

The NIE project team **translated and disseminated key findings** to industry partners:

- NIE project findings shared and disseminated (literature review and research findings) on website, newsletter media releases, opportunity events
- Thank Tank assembled (20 employers from key sectors and partner groups establish concrete recommendations)
- Presented findings at Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE) World Conference to (approximately) 100 attendees, June 8, 2023
- NIE Road Show (Business-to-Business conversations and panel presentations to share project findings) with 403 registrants from all 8 economic regions
- Additional social media dissemination opportunities as recommended by the Governance Committees including Presidents Group events, and B.C. Disability Employment Month

KEY MESSAGES

Shaping Key Messages Together

On September 14, 2022, during a joint meeting with the NIE Research Team, Experts and Innovators, and Governance Committees, the team reviewed a draft set of five key messages. After 'workshopping' the messages and soliciting feedback via Zoom Whiteboard, the following revised key messages were agreed upon to communicate about the NIE project:

Message # 1:

Inclusive employers are looking for new possibilities about work and workplace accommodation. At the same time, employees are drawing clearer boundaries for their physical and mental health.

Message # 2:

We are engaging in conversations about inclusive employment in different industries in B.C. We are inviting participation from employers who aspire to be disability inclusive, self-employed people with a disability, and B.C. employers with an inclusive employment story to share.

Message # 3:

What workplace conditions and practices lead to meaningful employment with disabilities, and what are the alternative economic approaches to providing meaningful employment?

Message # 4:

What are the challenges faced by employers who want to be more inclusive, and what are the internal/external supports that can be provided to meet those challenges?

Message # 5:

At the end of this research, we will share back what we learn about the enabling structural conditions and promising practices for employers to be inclusive in hiring and retaining employees with disabilities.

Feedback from Communities

Figure 2: Communication Messages and Feedback from NIE Committees

New Inclusive Economy Re-Launch 2022-09-14 08:51 AM
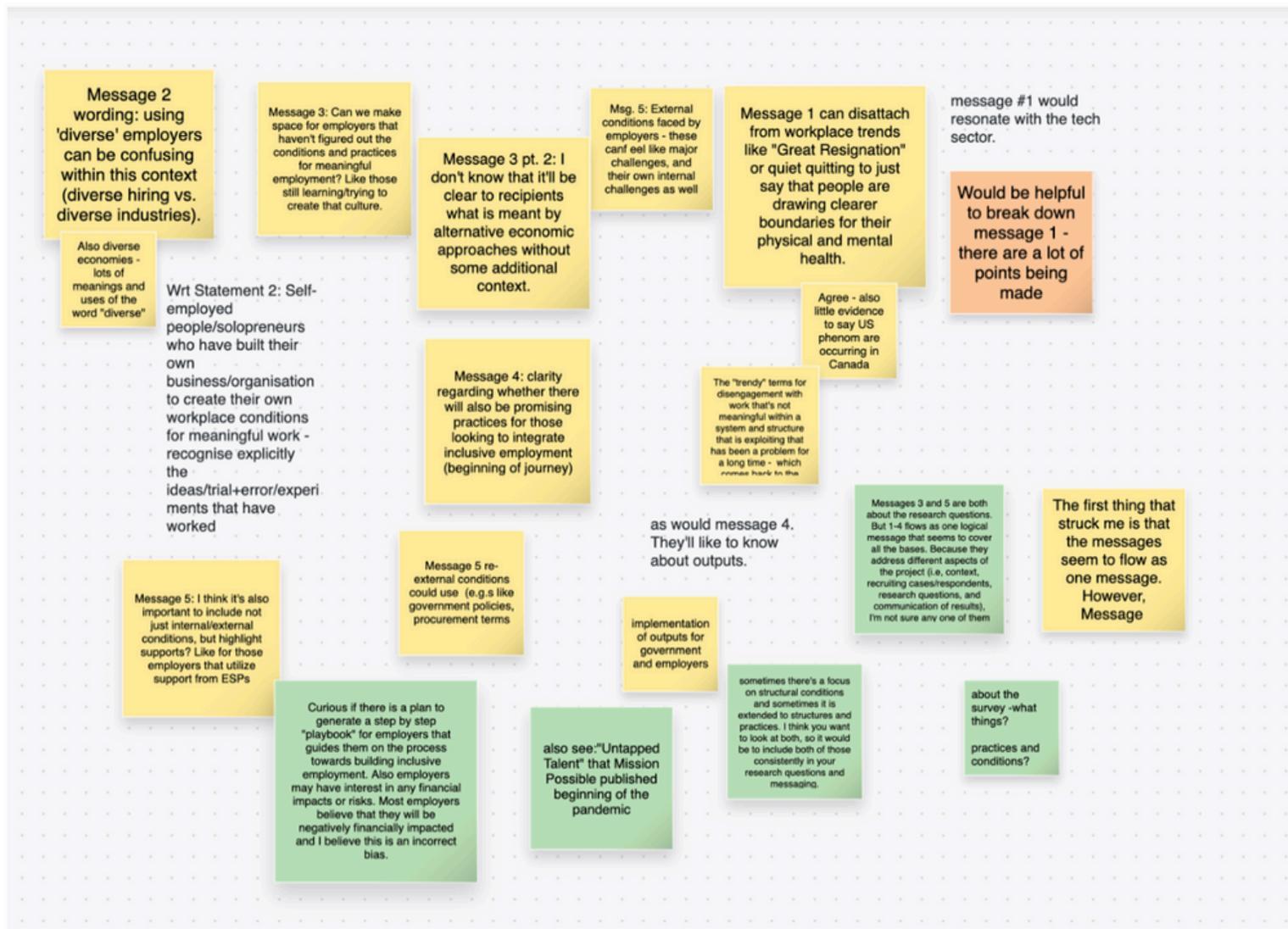
Message Frame

Problem: Many B.C. employers appear to be unaware that most employees with disabilities require no workplace accommodation; and if required, the average cost associated with providing accommodation is relatively low. Employers tend to presume hiring people with disabilities is a liability rather than an asset to the workplace. There is a lack of data pointed at what employers can do to foster more inclusive workplaces through policy, education, and workplace culture shaping.

Solution: Illustrate, clearly and factually, the winning characteristics of productive inclusive work environments. Share research findings from literature review and environmental scan.

Who Benefits: The goal of this research is to share a set of promising practices and conditions with employers and entrepreneurs who want to be more inclusive and equitable, and to identify economic models that lend themselves well to inclusion. Through an engaging and accessible process, the New Inclusive Economy research aims to benefit people with disabilities who need and deserve to be recognized as having a place in the economy.

Key Facts

According to the 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability, the employment rate for people with disabilities is rising, with about 62% of working-age people with disabilities employed compared with 78% for Canadians without a disability.[4] Additionally, people with very severe disabilities face lower employment rates and are two-and a-half times less likely to be employed than people with mild disabilities.

With a forecast of 903,000 job openings in B.C. between 2018 and 2028, British Columbians with disabilities are an important, and largely untapped, talent pool. Inclusive hiring by employers in B.C. supports Accessibility 2024, government's vision of becoming the most accessible province in Canada for people with disabilities—including having the highest labour participation rate.

With new information from the Presidents Group[5]

People with disabilities are great employees

- 72% higher staff retention
- 86% had equivalent or better attendance than their peers
- 90% performed equal or better than their coworkers without disabilities
- Studies also show workers with disabilities are less likely to have to take time off or file worker's compensation claims due to workplace injury.

Diverse and inclusive workplaces have better business outcomes

- 2x more likely to meet or exceed financial targets
- 6x more likely to be innovative
- 6x more likely to effectively anticipate change

APPENDIX A: Communications Guidelines

SCHEDULE "B"

MARKETING, PUBLICITY AND COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

For the purposes of this Schedule "B", all references to the Project Holder shall be deemed to include any of its SuB.C.ontractors, as applicable.

1. The Project Holder must:

(a) cooperate with the Province in relation to making such public announcements, issuing such news releases or participating in such event opportunities regarding the Project, as the Province may request; and

(b) comply with the Province's instructions regarding the matters described in paragraph (a) above.

2. The Project Holder must not make any public announcements or provide any media releases, promotional materials or communications in a public forum with respect to the Project except where the same have been approved in advance in writing by the Province.

3. The Project Holder must acknowledge the financial contribution made by the Province and the Government of Canada ("**Canada**") on or in any signage, posters, exhibits, pamphlets, brochures, advertising, websites, social media content, video footage, or other Materials produced or compiled by the Project Holder in relation to the Project that will be published, used for promotional purposes or otherwise viewed by, or made available to, the public (collectively, "**Communications**") in a manner satisfactory to the Province.

4. All Communications must display the following logos and statement ("**Branding**")

5. The Project Holder must prominently display the following disclaimer on and in association with all final Project reports: "The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of its author(s) and not the official policy or position of the Government of British Columbia."

6. All Communications must have prior written approval from the Province. To obtain prior written approval, the Project Holder must submit the proposed template for the Communications to the Province identifying the media channel and duration of the proposed Communications.

7. Any urgent media deadlines for the Communications should be flagged when requests for approvals are submitted

8. Any and all use by the Project Holder of the Provincial logos or the Canada logos set out in the Branding will be in the form provided, and will comply with the graphic standards and any conditions communicated, by the Province to the Project Holder from time to time.

9. The Province and Canada are and shall remain, respectively, the owners of all right, title and interest in and to the Provincial logos and the Canada logos set out in the Branding, and any goodwill associated with the use of such Provincial logos and the Canada logos by the Project Holder will ensure entirely to the Province and Canada, respectively. Any proprietary rights not specifically granted to by the Project Holder under this Agreement remain with the Province and Canada, respectively, including, without limitation, copyright and trade-mark protection.

APPENDIX B: Communications Action Plan

(LAST UPDATED, JANUARY 31, 2024)

Table B1: Communications Action Plan

Objective #	Communications Activities	Target Completion Date	Lead Responsibility
Objective 1: Strong Internal Communications	Initiate communication protocols and procedures: • SharePoint workspace established for internal communications • Terms of Reference and agreed Decision Making Approach • Accessible sharing of research materials	**COMPLETED** – 2022 **COMPLETED** – 2022	iPRS Project Manager NIE Research Team NIE Committees & project champions

Objective #	Communications Activities	Target Completion Date	Lead Responsibility
Objective 1: Strong Internal Communications	Maintain regular communications within teams: • 5 meetings of NIE Governance Committee • 8 meetings of NIE Innovators and Experts Committee • 12 meetings with Research Team • 30 bi-weekly internal communications meetings with iPRS	**COMPLETED** – 2022-2023 **COMPLETED** – 2022-2023 **COMPLETED** – 2022-2023 **COMPLETED** – 2022-2023	iPRS Project Manager + delegate Talking Circle Consultant NIE Research Team NIE Committees & project champions
Objective 2: Diverse Participation	Reach External Audiences, as planned in Appendix B: • Website launched to describe the project, showcase partners and accessible document repository • Increase from 50-150 Newsletter subscribers to a growing database • Earned media via 3 press releases, up to 12 blogs, 10 media interviews • Paid media via 2 news outlets in each economic region • Social media via iPRS Facebook, network's Twitter	**COMPLETED** – Sep 8, 2022 **COMPLETED** – 2022-2023 **ONGOING** Mar-April 2024 **COMPLETED** – 2022-2023 **COMPLETED** – 2022-2023	Talking Circle ConsultantiPRS Communications iPRS Project Manager + delegate

Objective #	Communications Activities	Target Completion Date	Lead Responsibility
Objective 2: Diverse Participation	Recruit Diverse Participation: • Survey launched and shared with external audiences • 89 participants complete the full survey • Disability-inclusive B.C employers participating as 6 case studies, 6 focus groups, 10+ interviews	**COMPLETED** – Sep 12, 2022 **COMPLETED** – Oct 31, 2022 **COMPLETED** – Nov 1, 2023	iPRS Project Manager + delegate NIE Research Team NIE Committees & project champions
Objective 3: Knowledge Translation and Dissemination	Sharing results virtually and accessibly: • Literature review shared in plain language • Create a readings and resources section on project website • Update the approved schedule (in Appendix B) for timely dissemination of press releases and media advertisements.	**COMPLETED** – Nov 1, 2023 **COMPLETED** – Sep 8, 2022 **COMPLETED** – Nov 1, 2023	Talking Circle Consultant iPRS Project Manager + delegate
Objective 3: Knowledge Translation and Dissemination	Exchanging knowledge in B2B dialogue: • Thank Tank assembled (20 employers establish concrete recommendations) • Connect with inclusive employers across 8 economic regions (B2B Road Show) • Coordinate welcome with Indigenous Host Nations in each of the 8 economic regions. • Present findings at opportunity events/conferences (CASE Conference)	**COMPLETED** – May 2023 **COMPLETED** – June 2023 **COMPLETED** – June 2023 **COMPLETED** – Sep 2023	iPRS Project Manager Talking Circle Consultant NIE Research Team NIE Committees & project champions

APPENDIX C: Communications Deliverables

Schedule of Marketing, Publicity and Communications Deliverables

(Last updated, January 31, 2024)

Table C1: Communications Deliverables

NIE Project Milestone	Detailed Communications Deliverable	Marketing/Publicity Approval Date (target)
Survey launch, resulting in 100-200 participants in survey	Media Release (1 of 3) 1. **September 26, 2022: New project asks inclusive employers in B.C. to share practices**	**COMPLETED** iPRS – Sep. 16, 2022 PSFS - Sep. 25, 2022
	Earned Media Coverage (7) 1. The Peak news 2. CBC B.C. Today 3. Accessible Media Inc. Kelly and Company 4. CBC Vancouver News at 6 5. **The Tyee with Leni Goggins and Anju** 6. **Accessible Media Inc. NOW with Dave Brown** 7. **UBC CiTR Radio Podcast**	**COMPLETED** Oct 3 – Dec 31, 2022
	Blog posts (3) 1. B.C. Centre for Social Enterprise 2. Small Business British Columbia 3. B.C. Partners in Workforce Innovation	**COMPLETED** Oct. 6-14, 2022

NIE Project Milestone	Detailed Communications Deliverable	Marketing/Publicity Approval Date (target)
Recruitment to Engagement (interviews, Thank Tank, B2B road show)	Media Release (2 of 3) 2. **May 26, 2023: Employers lead the way with New Inclusive Economy**	**COMPLETED** IPRS – Mar. 30, 2023 PSFS - April 2023
	Earned Media Coverage (5) 1. **Penticton Herald (June 5, 2023)** 2. **Alaska Highway News (June 5, 2023)** 3. **B.C. Government News (May 26, 2023)** 4. **City of Victoria News (May 26, 2023)** 5. **Prince George Citizen (May 26, 2023)** 6. **Rewind Radio 102.9 (May 25, 2023)**	**COMPLETED** May-June 2023
Final Reporting dissemination	Media Release (3 of 3)	**DRAFTIED** Mar-April 2024
	Earned Media Coverage (12 of 12)	**ONGOING** Mar-April 2024
	Blog posts (1-3)	**ONGOING** Mar-April 2024

APPENDIX D: Knowledge Translation

RECRUITMENT AND INVITATIONS TO PARTICIPANTS FOR THANK TANK

Subject: You're invited to the New Inclusive Economy - Thank Tank Virtual Event

When: Wednesday, May 3, 2023
10:00 am morning presentations: research findings and roundtable Q+A (10am-12pm)
12:00 pm midday health break (12pm-2pm)
2:00 pm afternoon discussions: sector-based or organization structured groups (2pm-4pm)

The New Inclusive Economy (NIE) is a British Columbia (B.C.) based, province-wide research project that captures promising practices and alternative economic approaches to inclusive employment. We are convening a Thank Tank group of B.C.-based organizations who want to be more inclusive and equitable. This engaging and accessible virtual event is an opportunity to hear about promising practices for employers and entrepreneurs.

We are inviting one member of your organization to participate in the discussion about how employers recruit and retain people with disabilities. In reciprocity, we are offering honoraria ($500) in thanks for your participation, or a donation to a Canadian charitable organization of your choosing.

To register please use the following form to input your information here:
https://newinclusiveeconomy.ca/registration

Sincerely

Leni Goggins
Project Manager New Inclusive Economy project

Table D1: Thank Tank Participating Organizations

THANK TANK MAY 5, 2023	20 INVITED / PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS
B.C. Aboriginal Network on Disability Society	Immigrant Services Society of B.C.
B.C. Assembly of First Nations	New Beta Innovation
B.C. Association of Manufacturers	Red Cross
B.C. Co-op Association	Small Business in B.C.
B.C. Ministry of Social Development & Poverty Reduction	Surrey Board of Trade
Canadian Community Economic Development Network	Tla'min Nation
Canadian Mental Health Association	TransLink Union
Caribou-Chilcotin Aboriginal Training Centre	Union of B.C. Municipalities
Destination Canada	Vancouver Community College
First Nations Health Authority	Vancouver Economic Commission

Thank Tank graphic notes

**Figure 3:** NIE Thank Tank Graphic Recordings and audio narration:
https://newinclusiveeconomy.ca/b2b-roadshow/
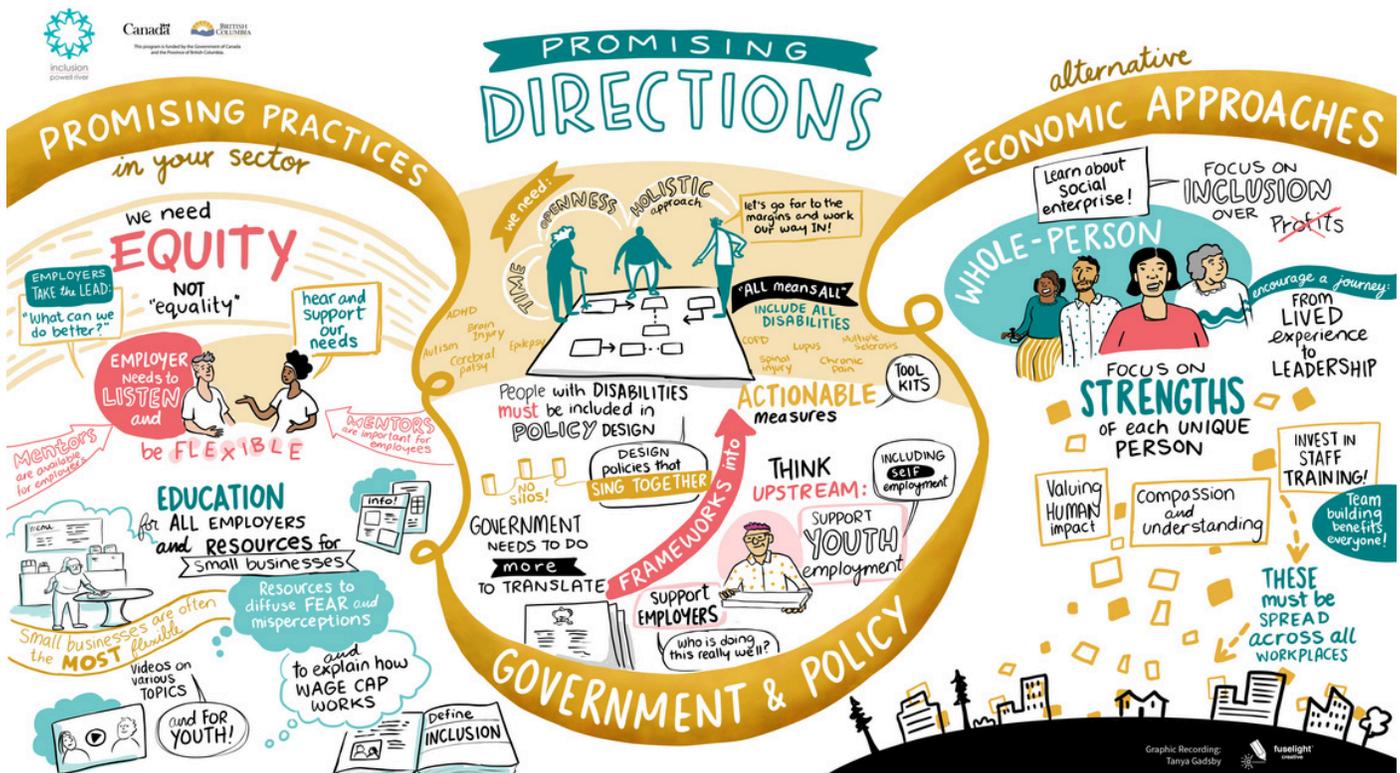
Figure 4: NIE Promising Directions and audio narration:
**https://newinclusiveeconomy.ca/b2b-roadshow/**

B2B Employer Roadshow

Purpose: This series of Business-to-Business conversations and panel presentations were intended to share project findings with inclusive employers in the 8 economic regions of B.C..

Invitees: Outreach to target audience included employers who aspire to be disability inclusive, self-employed people with a disability, and B.C. employers with an inclusive employment story to share; community members and general public all welcome.

Goals: Our target was 5 employers attending for each community, with each organization having a minimum of one person with a disability represented. Three panel presentations featured employers with a disability-inclusive story to tell; with a goal of having the employer and employee featured on the panel.

Figure 5: NIE project team completed engagement in ten communities in the eight economic regions of B.C.
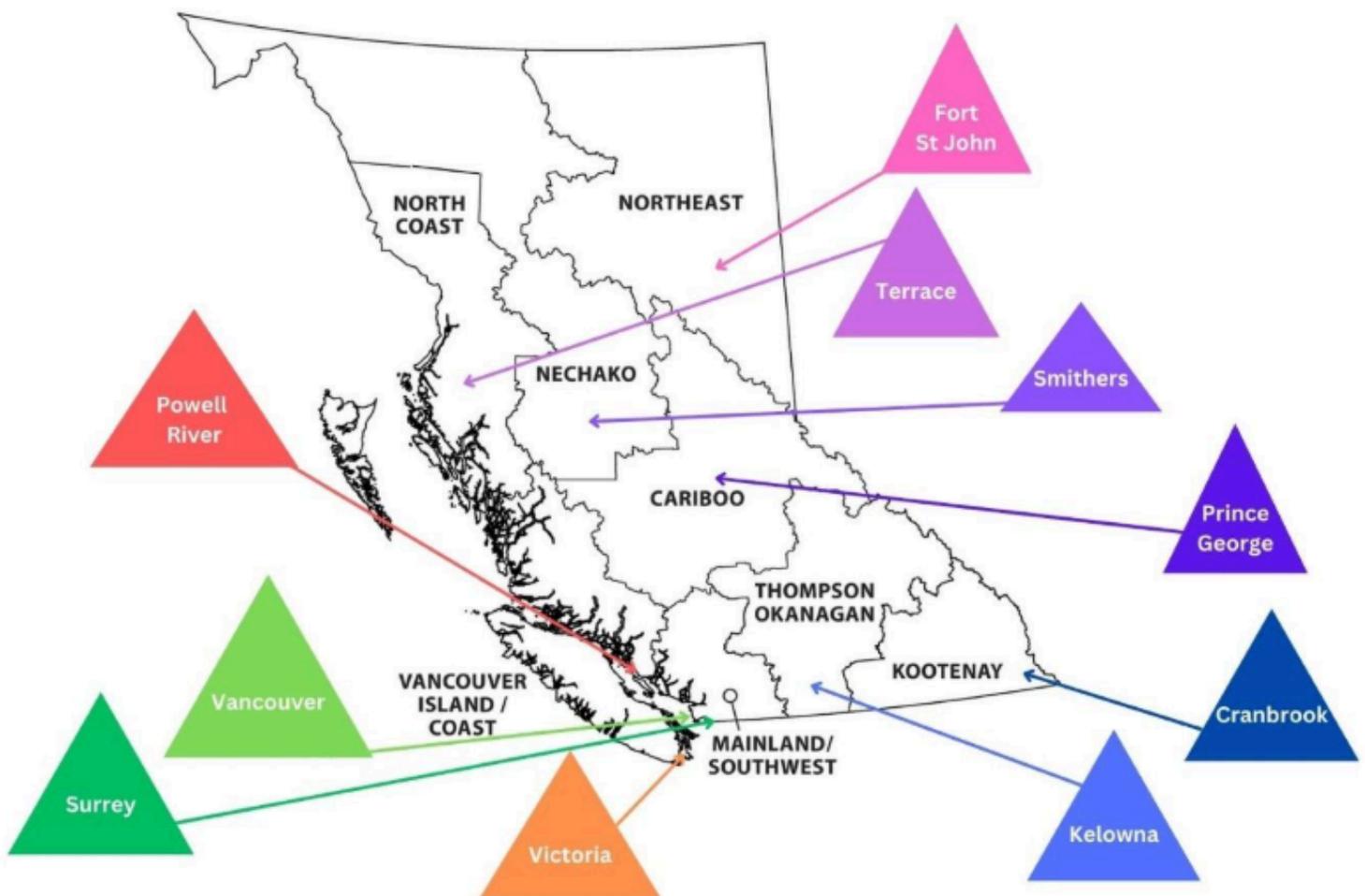
Partnerships: WorkBC centres, local Chamber of Commerce, Rotary at Work organizations, Municipal and Indigenous governments and Host First Nations.

Indigenous Host Nations: inclusion Powell River reached out to Host First Nations in all economic regions of B.C. to invite a member to provide a Host Welcome at the start of each event (see Table D3 in Appendix D).

Available supports: each event was free and open to the public. Meals or light refreshments were available in reciprocity for participation and presentation times reflected the norm for employer gatherings in each community. iPRS provided technical supports to encourage inclusive participation (ASL translation for each event, accommodations of disabilities, printed materials etc.).

Outreach tools: The template poster/flyer was tailored for each community and provided to WorkBC centres and community partners, at least 4 weeks in advance for participants to plan their time, transportation and supports, as-needed.

Communications:

- 2 media releases (Sep 2022, May 2023)
- Coverage/news stories in 12 earned media outlets (B.C. Gov news, CB.C. B.C., Accessible Media Inc, the Tyee, UB.C. podcast) and 3 blog posts
- Pre-registration (optional) via Eventbrite and social media for promoting the events
- Each venue was selected as having physically accessible event spaces, hired local catering and provided live American Sign Language for every event.
- Video recordings for several events were made publicly available at:
  https://newinclusiveeconomy.ca/resources/knowledgetranslation/

Typical event agenda:

- A complimentary meal (breakfast or lunch) was provided for every event
- With each event, we began with a Territorial Welcome (provided by an Elder or Host Nation representative of whose territory we were visiting) and welcome from co-hosts
- Our goal was to share the stories from 3 employers in each community, with a minimum one person with a disability co-presenting.
- We closed each event by presenting the outcomes of the Thank Tank virtual event w/ 20 inclusive employers (held May 2023)
- On each table during the events was a double-sided copy of the graphic recordings / images describing the NIE Research Questions and Promising Directions

Participation outcomes:

- Business-to-Business Roadshow engaged 403 participants across B.C. for 9 events
- CASE Conference was a 10th event we did not manage registration for (apx. 100+)
- Overall low attrition rates (ranging from 2-10%)
- Nearly 100% at-capacity in half of the events communities (Terrace + Prince George, Victoria, Kelowna, Fort St. John)
- Highly engaged participation was largely due to deepening relationships of the NIE team and iPRS staff with WorkBC Centres and employer engagement.

Table D2: Knowledge Translation Regions in B.C.

Regions in B.C.6	Community	Dates	# of registrants
Lower Mainland / Southwest	Surrey and Vancouver	Jun 2/23	76
Kootenay	Cranbrook	Jun 5/23	29
Cariboo	Prince George	Jun 12/23	40
Nechako	Smithers	Jun 14/23	38
North Coast	Terrace	Jun 15/23	30
Vancouver Island/Coast	Victoria and CRD	Jun 19/23	59
Thompson/Okanagan	Kelowna	Jun 22/23	71
Northeast	Fort St. John	Jun 28/23	41
Vancouver Island/Coast	Powell River	Jun 26/23	19
8 Economic Regions in B.C.		Total	403 registrants

We learned that majority of participants were either "aspiring to be inclusive" or already identifying as an inclusive employer. The employers who chose to show up were the ones interested in learning about a New Inclusive Economy. We asked, "What best describes your situation?" Many registrants provided more than one answer in this category:

Figure 6: Advance poll results for Business-to-Business Employer Roadshow registrants

Business-to-Business Roadshow Registrants

- I'm a service provider (33%), 161
- I'm an inclusive employer (22%), 106
- I'm in government or education sectors (16%), 77
- I'm aspiring to be an inclusive employer (15%), 74
- None of the above (14%), 71
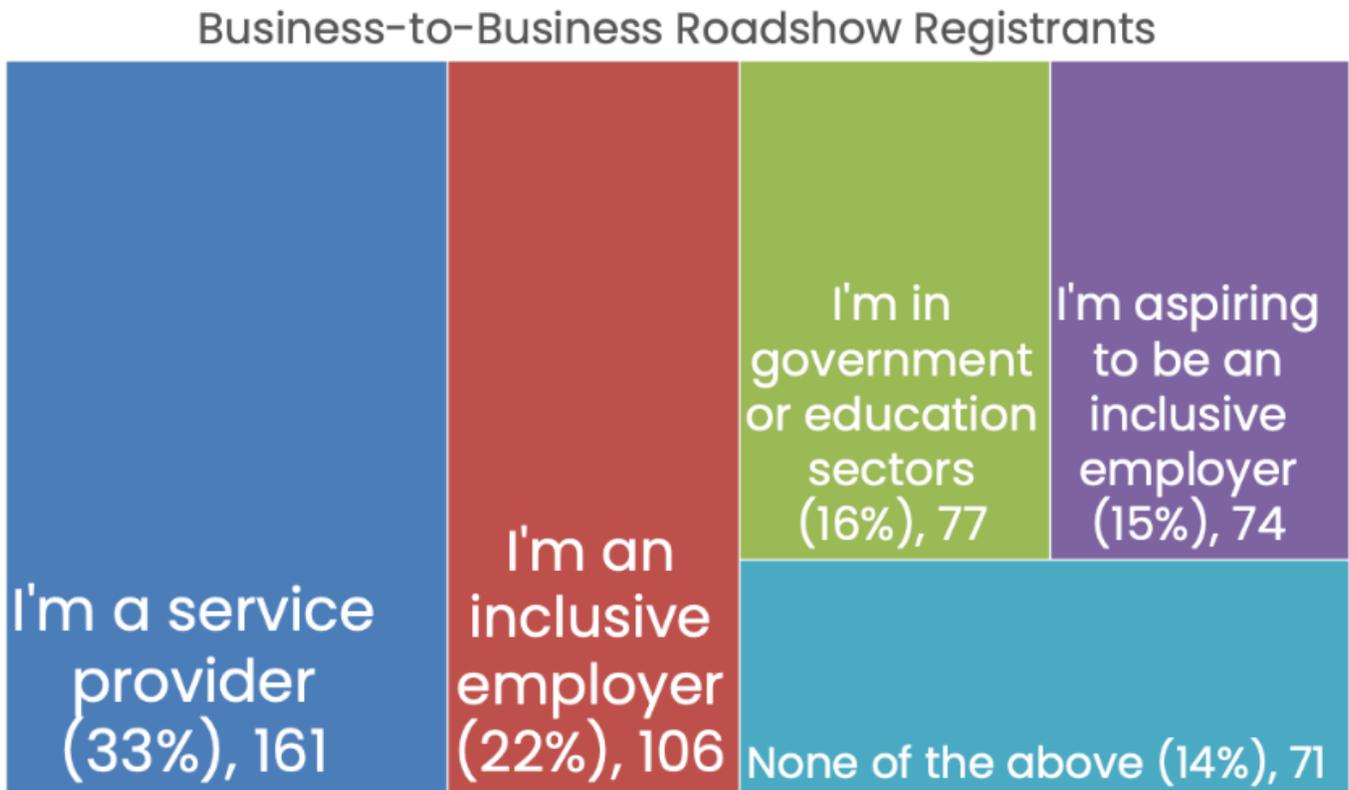
Table D3: Community Partners in B.C.

City	Co-host Partner Organizations	Co-Facilitators Organizations	Host First Nation & link to video recording
Surrey	• Surrey Board of Trade • Downtown Surrey BIA • South Surrey and White Rock Chamber of Commerce	**Marco Pasqua**, co-facilator **Seema Tripathi,** co-facilitator, UNITI **Garnett Pawliw**, Party Works Interactive **Raunaq Singh**, Bandra Cafe **Scott Johnson,** Holiday Inn Express Metrotown	https://youtu.be/Fm_CP8SYbuw
Cran-brook	• City of Cranbrook • Cranbrook WorkBC Centre • Nexus Community Support Society	**Lecia Furber**, St Eugene Golf Resort & Casino **Kelly Waller** & Blade Runner Shredding Services / Nexus Community Support Society **Ursula Brigl**, Cranbrook Public Library	Ktunaxa Host Nation Welcome from **Kahtryn Teneese**
Prince George	• Northern Lights Estate Winery • Prince George WorkBC Centre • Infinite Employment Solutions	**Noemie Touchette**, Northern Lights Estate Winery **Sarah Lloyd & Harman Dandiwal,** CMHA Northern B.C. **Sheryl Elgie**, Prince George Native Friendship Centre	Lheidli T'enneh Host Nation Welcome from **Darlene McIntosh**
Smithers	• Town of Smithers • Smithers WorkBC Centre • High Road Services Society • Smithers District Chamber of Commerce	**Tamara Shulman**, Share Reuse Repair **Leticia Groenink**, I-Kitchen / High Road Support Services Society **Brie McAloney**, The Grendel Group **Leni Goggins**, inclusion Powell River	Wet'suwet'en Host Nation Welcome from **Chief Timberwolf – Mabel Forsythe** https://youtu.be/AoYnOdCIn84

Terrace	• City of Terrace • Terrace WorkBC Centre • Terrace and District Community Service Society • Storytellers' Foundation	**Rita Wacholtz,** WorkBC Centre Terrace **Saša Loggin**, Skeena Diversity Society **Colleen Brager,** Mitchell Brager Artist & Entrepreneur	Kitsumkalum Host Nation Welcome from **Sharon Bryant**
Victoria and CRD	• City of Victoria • Victoria WorkBC Centre • Destination Greater Victoria • Thrive Victoria	**Dorothy Morrison,** Imagine Studio Cafe Society **Giulia Lucchini**, B.C. Transit **Lee Britton,** Best Western Plus Inner Harbour	Songhees Host Nation Welcome from **Brianna Bear**
Kelowna	• Kelowna and West Kelowna WorkBC Centres • Kelowna Chamber of Commerce	**Jennifer McKenzie,** co-facilitator **Shari Avery & Glen McIntyre,** Delta Hotels by Marriott Grand Okanagan Resort **Peter Boyd**, Peter's Your Independent Grocer Kelowna **Mike Prescott,** Disability Alliance B.C.	Westbank Host Nation Welcome from **Bonnie Coble**
Fort St. John	• City of Fort St. John • Fort St. John & District Chamber of Commerce • Fort St. John Association for Community Living	**Cameron Eggie & Andrea Conkin** City of Fort St. John **Amanda Stafford & Chrystal Wheat**, Dawson Creek Society for Community Living **Chad Carlstrom & Carmela Klassen,** Urban Systems	Doig River Host Nation Welcome from **Councillor Gary Oaker** https://youtu.be/m7mxNGh8pOk
Powell River	• Powell River WorkBC Centre • Employment Services inclusion Powell River	**Steve Wadsworth,** FreschCo **Raya Audet,** OneLight	https://youtu.be/KcfrSiidgsg

APPENDIX E: Summary of Engagement Efforts

Our Commitment

The New Inclusive Economy project hosted by inclusion Powell River Society aims to create an accessible research process that engages key partners in overseeing the research including the community living sector, advocates, business, diverse economies thinkers and doers, and our government partners.

The project is heavily reliant on expert involvement and guidance and engagement is critical to the success of the project. The project has three distinct committees that we are asking to help us nominate and recruit employers, analyse the research data and interpret it and decide how to use the results. We also have External Evaluation for the data collection process to ensure our approach is ethical.

Project Oversight

The Governance Committee met five times over the life of the project and is comprised of community living agencies, social enterprise representatives, an economist and staff from the Ministry of Post-Secondary and Future Skills in an ex-officio capacity and provides oversight to the research. The Experts and Innovators Committee met 6 times and is comprised of people with lived experience and those with inclusive employment experience and provides thought leadership.

Communications to committees is provided in three modes, email, audio files and a SharePoint workspace existing as an on-demand document repository including the following documents:

- Meeting Minutes
- Agendas
- Review drafts of documents
- Workplans
- Meeting Schedules
- Research materials (in both word and audio files)

Finally, project committees received periodic updates about the project in writing at milestone intervals throughout the project.

This project was an iterative process where learning from each research phase informs the next, with discussion and sharing with the committees along the way. **Figure 6** indicates at which step of the research phase the committees are consulted.

**Figure 6:** Image of Key Dates for Research Phases and Meetings.
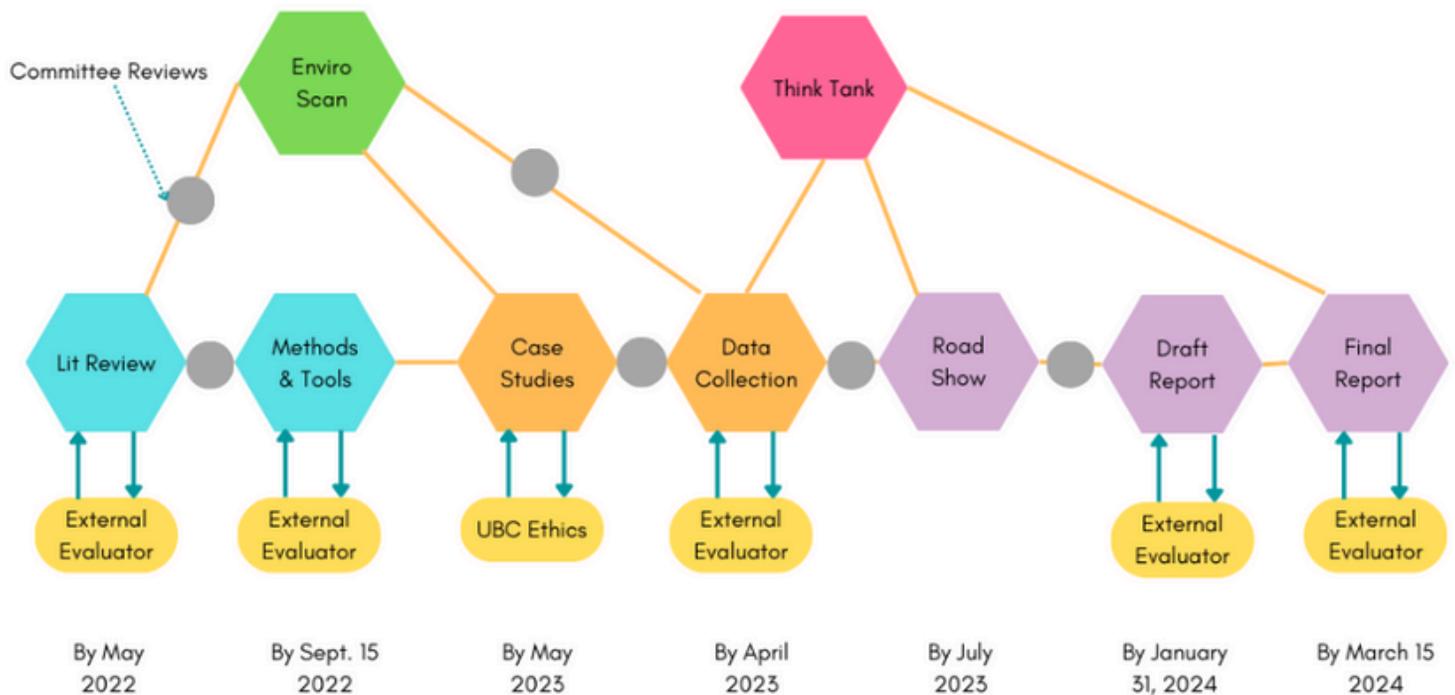
Table E1: Oversight and Thought Leadership Engagement Efforts by Phase

Output	Outcomes
Project Launch (Project Introduction and Opt In)	Invitation to 17 potential members to introduce the project and determine which committee they would like to sit on. 9 individuals selected to join the Experts and Innovators Committee and 8 individuals selected to join the Governance Committee. The research team opted to form a third Ethics SuB.C.ommittee to include an indigenous researcher who reads and reviews materials and provides ethical oversight as indigenous What we heard: • Having a discussion-based committee was desirable to some members. • Closed captioning essential for meetings 80,000 job openings in manufacturing industry • The tech sector shows promise as pay is high, there is growth, and it is sustainable • Promising practices, you may want to also include NOT promising practices, such as asking pwd to sit on committees to validate inclusivity rather than being inclusive.
Phase I (Terms of Reference, Communications Plan, Literature Review)	Terms of reference facilitated for both committees. See Appendix C for Experts and Innovators Guidelines (also includes all points from Governance Committee) Literature review with feedback from 4 Governance Committee members, 7 Experts and Innovators members and 1 Ethics SuB.C.ommittee member. Feedback was substantial in terms of word selection, framing.

Phase I (Terms of Reference, Communications Plan, Literature Review)	What we heard: • Academic writing difficult, recommend there be plain language. • There was not mention of what role advocacy plays in inclusive employment. Eg. Self-advocates often have to fight for accommodations and being considered for jobs. • There may be apps or other programs to show how accessible a business is. • We should have more inclusive and equitable economies whether or not its profitable for shareholders. Centering a human rights approach above becomes so important. • Meaningful employment cannot be defined from the outside and we must keep this in mind when presenting promising practices. • Including alternative economic models/practices is a part of the transformational change piece of the project and is part of the "incremental change" reviewed in the Literature. • Consider relationship to profit in the literature and analysis. • Be aware that some things are considered economic while others "uneconomic" like distributive practices, unpaid essential care etc. Indigenous approaches that do not conform to colonial capitalism should be considered, as well as other non-indigenous communities that do not conform Community based approaches should be considered
Phase II (Methods and Tools, Enviro Scan, Recruitment, Survey)	Methods and Tools drafted, and feedback provided by 4 Governance Committee members, 7 Experts and Innovators members and 1 Ethics SuB.C.ommittee member. What we heard: • Documents need to be shared in audio format • Recruitment for enviro scan: A press release should go out to attract employers across B.C. we haven't heard from, Rotary Club, Focused Professionals work with folks with neurodiversity. • More clarity around the Think Tank, what is it exactly and who is it for? • Enabling structures and conditions to be broader and less abstract. • Further discussion is needed on how we can create reciprocal and beneficial relationships with our research participants in concrete ways.

Phase II (Methods and Tools, Enviro Scan, Recruitment, Survey)	• Have a consistent sentence to describe the kinds of structural conditions we are collecting data on for future reports. Eg. Management/Leadership approach, and also separate out structural conditions from employer practices to make clearer. • Consider organizing Sub-Research Questions into categories 1) structural conditions 2) employer practices 3) how the conditions and practices impact each other. Consider doing only interview or only focus groups as time is limited (we shrunk interviews to 20 and focus groups to 6). Clarity around on and off reserve The rights of indigenous people must be included in any accessibility discussions by the Province, not just considered. In the survey, consider rewording this question: *What is the most **significant** challenge your organization has experienced in terms of **employing [in place of hiring]** a person with a disability?*
Phase III (Data Collection)	Interview and Focus Group Summary and Case Study Summary shared with 5 Experts and Innovators committee members in meeting and 3 committee members one-to-one with Project Manager. 1 Ethics SuB.C.ommittee member shared final summaries February 2024. What we heard: Need to look at different disability communities within the inclusive employment setting to understand differences. See Promising Directions. Surprise of informal nature of disability inclusion vs. Policies and procedures put in place for Case Studies. Focus groups should be asked a) how are those working in non-profit sector mitigating need to serve community and also be inclusive and b) what was the reason for new policies/practices around accessibility to be implemented.

Phase III (Data Collection)	Experts and Innovators committee self-advocate joined in three media interviews in place of meeting participation which was difficult for them balancing work/school. This was acknowledged as a reciprocal role for them as they were gaining media experience while also contributing to the committee work in a meaningful way. Audio recordings of research documents provided as an alternative way of reviewing information which was used by folks with and without visual impairment successfully. Note: MP3 files did not always work on the technology of one participant. In future, we recommend making sure all committee members have appropriate applications installed on computers to be able to access audio files.
Phase IV (Knowledge Translation)	Business-2-Business Roadshow plan and Thank Tank shared with joint Governance and Experts and Innovators committee meeting in two separate meetings. Committee members offered suggestions for who to engage in organizing events in each community, who to invite as champions of inclusive employment as well as sharing invitations to community to attend the events. What we heard: • Confusion around who the Thank Tank was for (engaged employers who are "aspiring" inclusive employers from key sectors instead of already advanced inclusive employers). • Thank Tank invited 3 Governance and Experts Committee members to participate as co-facilitating of breakout groups: Promising Practices, Government and Policy and Diverse Economies. • New Inclusive Economy governance committee structure, processes are a good example of promising practice in community-based research. The success is partly due to the leadership organizing. Important pieces identified is always starting meetings with an overview of the phases of the project and research question. • Be aware of different audience such as small vs. Large employers. Also keep in mind that "people with disabilities" is an extremely diverse group and there are approaches that work for one population that may not work for another.