Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society
Institut de recherche et de développement sur l'intégration et la société

Employment of People with Developmental Disabilities in Canada: Six Key Elements for an Inclusive Labour Market

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Introduction and Overview

There is a growing recognition among employers, governments, and the public at large of the valuable contributions that people with disabilities bring to Canadian workplaces. At the same time, concerns about skills shortages and labour market supply issues have been a dominant theme of Canadian and international policy discussion. A recent report of the federal 'Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities,' *Rethinking DisAbility in the Private Sector* (2013) points to a growing awareness among private sector employers that the skills of people with disabilities have not been utilized to their full potential.

People with developmental disabilities[1], in particular, have much to offer employers. With employment rates hovering in the 25-30% range, they are nowhere near the national average for people without disabilities and fall far behind the average employment rates for people with other disabilities. Yet, as is borne out by the research presented here, there have been extremely positive returns when concerted efforts have been directed toward employment of this group. For employers, people with developmental disabilities form a largely untapped and for the most part unrecognized labour pool. For governments, they form a group that is most vulnerable to slipping through the cracks and remaining completely outside of the labour force—in turn representing great economic and social costs.

Demand for employees with disabilities is increasing among employers, and this is also true for people with developmental disabilities. As is demonstrated by a special research supplement on labour supply and demand dynamics prepared for this report, employers are becoming more aware of the benefits of hiring people with developmental disabilities. At the same time, there are greater numbers of people with developmental disabilities who are being included in

[1] In this report, we use the term 'developmental disability' recognizing that it is often used interchangeably with 'intellectual disability'. 'Developmental disabilities' is an umbrella term that includes intellectual disability but also other disabilities that are apparent during childhood. In most cases, the findings of this research apply in the broader sense of usage, and not in a clinical or diagnostic sense. However, in certain instances research is drawn from samples where the term 'intellectual disability' was used in a more stringent diagnostic sense and the term has been retained in the text. Intellectual disability is defined as significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior in everyday social and practical skills, with onset before age 18 (American Association for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 2010).

all aspects of their communities. New cohorts of young people with developmental disabilities have gone through inclusive school systems and have increased expectations for employment—real jobs, in regular workplaces. Several community agencies and service providers are becoming exceptionally skilled at providing appropriate supports that can assist people with developmental disabilities to find and keep a job—and that can assist employers in hiring and retaining workers.

Despite these positive practices and examples, they are not by any means prevalent or widespread. As is emphasized by *Rethinking disAbility in the Private Sector,* the current challenge is to establish more effective bridges between labour supply and employer demand in communities throughout Canada. There is need for focus on bridging this divide in order to make progress against the staggering non-participation rates of people with developmental disabilities.

This research was undertaken to inquire into the nature of this challenge and to gain a better understanding of effective methods aimed at increasing employment of people with developmental disabilities. Its purpose is to identify best practices for more effectively bridging the skills and competencies of working age adults with developmental disabilities with increasing demand among employers. In doing so, it is necessary to review the demographics of labour supply among this group, explore best practice and innovative approaches and identify policy conditions that can support the activation and scale of these effective methods.

The research findings are presented in three main sections:

> Part I reviews key demographic information about working age adults with developmental disabilities and contains a special research supplement on related labour supply and demand dynamics and 'case for employment' prepared for this report.
>
> Part II presents findings related to promising practices in programs and initiatives designed to enhance labour force inclusion of people with developmental disabilities.
>
> Part III outlines the key policy challenges in developing a labour market that is more inclusive of people with developmental disabilities and boosts their employment opportunities.

Methodology

The current research consolidates several stages of developmental work to understand promising practices and desirable policy conditions for securing labour market access and labour force inclusion of people with developmental disabilities. The research has involved representatives from provincial, territorial and local disability-related organizations across the country as well as local support providers and policy experts.

Initially, a jurisdictional scan was completed of programs and practices that are reported to be effective in securing increased labour market access and/or employment outcomes for people with developmental disabilities in Canada. This involved:

- Review of key literature on best practices for employment supports for people with developmental disabilities including published reports and studies, 'grey literature' with a focus on program and service descriptions, policy and program evaluations, and academic research studies on topics identified and case studies;

- Consultation with Provincial and Territorial Associations for Community Living leadership staff and other representatives as key informants to canvass examples of effective employment supports and initiatives.

The results of this scan were consolidated to form thematic areas in order to cluster programs, services and initiatives. These were then developed as a framework of key elements and returned to informants and key stakeholders for consultation and further development.

Representatives from Provincial/Territorial Associations for Community Living and their respective networks were asked to identify specific programs, services and initiatives corresponding to these key elements that are successfully generating increased labour market access and/or employment outcomes for people with developmental disabilities in their jurisdiction.

Parallel to and acting complementary to these efforts, a scan of policy conditions that support or act as disincentives to employment of people with developmental disabilities was conducted via review of key literature and documents and as identified by provincial and territorial representatives involved in the research efforts.

A national working group was formed to oversee these efforts and a generalized criteria for effective employment initiatives was developed in order to bring further detail to what constitutes 'good practice' in this area. These criteria are included in Appendix A of this document.

Part I

An Untapped Labour Pool: Demographics of Developmental Disability

Despite modest improvement in recent years (Statistics Canada, 2008), the employment rate of people with disabilities has persistently been well below that of people without disabilities in Canada (Roeher Institute, 1993; Statistics Canada, 1993; Statistics Canada, 2003). For people with intellectual / developmental disabilities in particular, their employment rate has remained amongst the lowest of all people with disabilities' in Canada (Crawford, 2004, 2005 & 2011; Statistics Canada, 2008); only about a quarter are working. Their employment rate is very low in other jurisdictions as well (Olney & Kennedy, 2001; Burkhauser & Houtenville, 2001; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

Statistics Canada's 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) estimates 0.6 per cent of the working-age population (15 to 64 years) have intellectual disabilities. However, this particular sample was skewed to those with severe or very severe disabilities—estimated in the 2006 survey to be 75% of the population with intellectual disabilities. The same survey shows that only 40% of people with other disabilities have severe or very severe disabilities. According to standard prevalence estimates, the total population of people with intellectual disabilities includes a much larger proportion of people with mild disabilities, and is in the range of one to three per cent (Horwitz et al., 2000; Bradley et al., 2002). As findings of the Surgeon General of the United States indicate, the condition of most people with intellectual disabilities is "relatively mild, and once they leave school, they disappear into larger communities, untracked in major national data sets" (2002, xii).

A prevalence rate of 2% would mean that there are approximately 473,450 working age adults with intellectual disabilities in Canada, inclusive of the 129,000 people identified through the 2006 PALS data primarily as 'severely' or 'very severely' disabled (Statistics Canada, 2010). According to PALS 2006, only about a quarter of working-age people with intellectual disabilities are employed and almost 40% have never worked. This compares with a 53% employment rate of people with disabilities more broadly, and 75% employment rate of persons who do not have disabilities. This figure is in the same very low region of labour force participation estimated in the 1991 Health and Activity Limitation Survey which included a larger proportion of those with 'mild' intellectual disabilities.[2] The average earnings of people with intellectual disabilities employed at some point in 2005 were $18,172 and nearly half

[2] While the figures for PALS capture the situation for a quite severely disabled population of people with intellectual disabilities, the Health and Activity Limitation Survey (HALS) of 1991, which included a much larger proportion of people with mild intellectual disabilities also showed that only 38.1% of people with intellectual disabilities were employed at the time of that survey compared with 49.0% of other people with disabilities. Some 38.2% with intellectual disabilities had never worked. The persisting general pattern is extremely low participation rates for people with intellectual disabilities.

received provincial social assistance. Average earnings of adults with disabilities as a whole were $29,669 and for people without disabilities, $37,944. Nearly 50% of working-age people with an intellectual disability receive provincial/ territorial (PT) social assistance.

Special Report: Making the Case for Employment[*]

While everyone is different and each person brings a range of strengths and limitations to the employment table, a growing body of research literature points to the benefits of employing people with developmental disabilities in the open labour market:

- Despite historically low rates of employment and employer concerns, people with developmental disabilities are quite capable of working for pay alongside others in the open labour market.
- Most employers who have hired people with developmental disabilities have had positive experiences and would hire again.
- Key benefits to employers of hiring people with developmental disabilities are their consistent attendance, low turnover, positive attitude, pride in the job and their positive impacts on diverse workplace culture and on the employer's public image.
- Key benefits to public programs and taxpayers of the supported employment of people with developmental disabilities are reduced service costs and an increase in the amount of taxes paid, resulting in a net benefit per taxpayer dollar invested.

Employer Concerns

Unger (2002) found in his review of the literature that employers are more reluctant to hire people with mental or emotional disabilities than individuals with physical disabilities. Echoing that finding, several other studies have pointed to employer concerns about potential legal liabilities and the additional time, training, supervision, and job accommodations required by employees with intellectual / developmental disabilities (Fuqua et al., 1984; Harrison, 1998; Nietupski et al., 1996; Olson, Cioffi, Yovanoff, & Mank, 2001; Shafer, Hill, Seyfarth, & Wehman, 1987). Employers in a Massachusetts survey reported that the best ways to address such concerns were to help them understand the benefits of hiring people with

[*] This research supplement prepared by Cameron Crawford as a previously unpublished literature review for the Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society (IRIS), 2013.

disabilities, educate and train employers and hear success stories from other small business employers and people with disabilities (Harrison, 1998).

Benefits of Employing People with Developmental Disabilities

Despite low levels of employment, employer reluctance to hire them and the history of segregation from mainstream employment that most people with developmental disabilities have experienced, experience has also shown that with the right conditions they are quite capable of working alongside others for pay in the open labour force (Statistics Canada, 2008; Association of People Supporting Employment First [APSE], 2009 & 2010; Parmenter, 2011). Indeed, the majority would prefer to work for pay (Reid & Bray, 1999; Lysaght et al., 2009) and most who are in sheltered workshops would prefer to work in the regular labour force (Migliore et al., 2007). Where given this opportunity, most enjoy their jobs (National Core Indicators [NCI], 2010) and there are benefits to employers, to individuals with developmental disabilities and to public programs and taxpayers.

Supported employment has emerged as one of the more successful approaches to furthering the employment of people with developmental disabilities in regular jobs in the open labour market. It involves supporting the individual to obtain employment, then supporting that person on the job while he/she comes to terms with its demands (Canadian Association for Supported Employment [CASE], 2011). It generally involves a 'place then train' rather than 'train then place' approach.

Benefits to Employers

The Environics Research Group (2004) found in a Canadian national survey that 73% of people in workplaces that employ people with disabilities strongly agree that these individuals are contributing as much as others to their organization. Deloitte (2010) has reported that workers with disabilities are typically associated with strong performance, good attendance and higher-than-usual job retention. A national survey in Australia found that employers typically perceive that the financial benefits of employing people with disabilities outweigh the associated costs of workplace modifications and training (Graffam et al., 2002).

Research on employers with prior experience hiring people with disabilities reveals that most have had positive experiences (e.g., McFarlin et al., 1991; Diksa & Rogers, 1996; Gade & Toutges, 1983; Gibson & Groeneweg, 1986; Gruenhagen, 1982; Levy et al., 1992; Marcouiller et al., 1987), even where individuals had severe forms of disability (Levy et al., 1992 and 1993). Commonly reported benefits among these employers are consistent attendance, co-worker partnerships, less turnover and presenting a diverse workforce to consumers and the public. Indeed, hiring people with disabilities can result in positive reputational effects, e.g., improved image with customers and investors and sustainable relationships through client-employee contacts (Spataro, 2005; Nietupski et al., 1996; Morgan & Alexander, 2005, Siperstein et al., 2006; Olson et al., 2001).

Concerning people with intellectual / developmental disabilities in particular, studies have found that they are often loyal, stable, dependable and competent employees who can reliably perform routine work tasks (Olson et al., 2001; Tse, 1993; Parmenter, 2011), especially in high-turnover, entry-level jobs (Kregel, 1999; Olson et al., 2001). Some research has pointed to their unique capacity to help humanize workplace culture (Lin, 2008) and contribute to productivity by eliciting improved worker connectedness, commitment and morale (Porter, et al., 35).

Echoing earlier research of Nietupski, et al. (1996), a recent American survey of over 500 employers by Morgan and Alexander (2005) found that, among employers that had hired people with developmental disabilities, nearly all had favourable experiences and would hire them again. Benefits of hiring this group include consistent attendance, a diverse workforce and improved public image, co-worker partnerships and long-term job retention. Olson et al. (2001) have also pointed to the benefits of favourable public image resulting from the hiring of people with developmental disabilities.

People with developmental disabilities are typically most able to contribute to work output and the social climate of the workplace when work tasks are tailored to their skills and they are provided with clear job expectations (Lin, 2008). Research by Cimera (2009) suggests that additional costs to employers for supervising workers with developmental disabilities may be more than offset by savings that accrue as a result of their lower turnover.

Benefits to Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

Summarizing the research of several studies, Lysaght et al. (2009) have reported key benefits of supported employment for people with developmental disabilities, including opportunities for connecting with others, keeping busy and meaningfully occupied, pay and other economic benefits, pride, satisfaction and opportunities for new learning and experiences. Jahoda et al. (2008) have drawn attention to supported employment's positive implications for the quality of life, psychological well-being and autonomy of people with developmental disabilities.

As pointed out by Cimera (2010b), however, income from supported employment earnings alone may not be enough to enable people with developmental disabilities to live above the 'poverty line'. As well, if the work of many people with developmental disabilities is in low-skilled, low-status service sector jobs, this does not mean that such jobs are always the jobs that individuals would prefer (Lysaght et al., 2009). An ongoing challenge for employment agencies is ensuring a good match between individual interests and skills and employer needs (Morgan & Alexander, 2005).

Benefits to Public Programs and Taxpayers

Hill et al. (1987) found robust returns on the investment in the supported competitive employment of people with developmental disabilities. Benefits included earnings for individuals and savings on Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Decker and Thornton (1995)

found much the same. Addressing small samples and the localized nature of much of the cost-efficiency research on supported employment, Cimera's review (2010a) of national data in all states and territories of the US found an overall net benefit of $1.23 for each public dollar spent on the supported employment of people with developmental disabilities and no other diagnosis of disability, a benefit that was only marginally lower ($1.19) for people who have additional (e.g., mobility, sensorial) disabilities. Overall benefits of $1.21 irrespective of single or multiple diagnoses were chiefly realized in the form of savings from alternative programs and increased taxes paid. Costs of supported employment typically decrease over time (Cimera, 2008). Researchers in the UK have also found potential net savings to income security and day support budgets where people with developmental disabilities are engaged in supported employment (Kilsby and Beyer, 2010). [3]

Part II

Promising Practices in Bridging Supply and Demand

A survey of the literature reviewed above, and consultations with employment agencies and organizations supporting people with developmental disabilities identified a number of promising practices and programs in communities throughout Canada that are generating positive employment outcomes. We define 'positive outcomes' and 'promising practices' as programs, services and initiatives that are designed and acting to increase the employment of people with developmental disabilities in the mainstream labour market.[4] Thus, for this research we scanned programs that assist people with developmental disabilities to acquire "real work, for real pay" as opposed to sheltered industry, enclave-based employment, work for less than minimum wage, long term volunteering or long term training. A full set of criteria developed for this purpose can be found at Appendix A of this report.

In some jurisdictions, numerous programs and services were cited and in some cases are linked as part of a provincial or territorial strategy aimed at increasing employment rates. In other jurisdictions, discrete programs are generating positive outcomes but are not linked to an

[3] In the Canadian context, Latimer's research (2001) concluded that, even if not more cost effective for people with severe mental illness, supported employment is no less cost-effective than other options.
[4] In the scope of this research it was noted that a common approach to outcomes measurement is lacking in Canada. Development of such a common approach is noted as a valuable potential avenue of future research. Our review of outcomes relies on the testimony and data supplied by key informants from organizations consulted for the research. As such, it relies on their assessment of services and programs as promising and effective practices and the criteria developed and presented in Appendix A.

overall formal strategy.

From the promising practices that were identified, six themes emerge that may be seen as key elements that could comprise a comprehensive strategy. It should be noted that in no single jurisdiction are all six of these key elements fully developed. Rather, they can be seen as effective 'tactics' that if consolidated, could form an overall strategy to increase employment rates of people with developmental disabilities. They are:

- Building employer capacity and confidence;
- Facilitating transitions of youth with developmental disabilities from high school to employment and careers;
- Access to inclusive post-secondary education programming at colleges and universities;
- Engagement of employer-to-employer networks and private sector service clubs;
- Strategies to encourage entrepreneurship and small business development;
- Community service system transformation and modernization.

This research begins from a starting assumption of 'supported employment' as best practice and does not go into detail of best practices related to the qualities and character of that support. There is a good deal of international literature on supported employment and best practices for providing effective support (See for example McGaughey and Mank, 2001; Cimera, 2006; Wehman and Levell, 2003; Griffin, 2008). Some of this will be discussed further in Part III related to policy conditions. Supported employment, simply speaking, is the provision of supports to a job seeker with a disability to help them to find, obtain and maintain a job. It is also sometimes known as 'job coaching' or 'customized employment'. A framework for funding and delivery of effective supported employment could be considered a seventh key element in this research. However, as a cross cutting issue, supported employment can be seen as a part of the broader picture that stands alongside and is tied to each of the strategies and tactics discussed below.

Building employer capacity and confidence

Much of the current literature indicates that employers' lack of awareness and understanding of the process and supports available for finding, hiring and managing employees with developmental disabilities is a key barrier to hiring. This has meant that many employers do not at present see people with developmental and other disabilities as a solution to their labour needs. This theme has been identified by a review of current literature identifying effective practices as common to a number of reports and studies (Crawford, 2012a) and emerged as a major focus of the recent report by the Federal Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (2013).

To encourage employers to see people with developmental disabilities as a valuable part of the workforce, many organizations undertake awareness raising and outreach activities targeted towards employers. In doing so, organizations have found that it is important to make the 'business case' for hiring people with disabilities, rather than speaking to employers from a charity or 'social services' perspective. Several research reports speak to the importance of this point in the content of these outreach activities (British Columbia, 2011; Public Service Commission of Canada, 2011) and many organizations have incorporated this perspective into their outreach activities. This usually includes providing employers with information about productivity, work ethic, and tenure of employees with disabilities.

Some tactics that community organizations have used in their strategies to develop the confidence and capacity of employers to hire people with developmental disabilities have included:

- Targeted public awareness via public service announcements, advertising campaigns, etc.;
- Peer to peer workshops and presentations by and for employers;
- Sharing success stories about employment of people with developmental disabilities;
- Employer mentoring strategies;
- Production of guides and information packages on accommodations and on the business case for hiring people with developmental disabilities and addressing "facts and myths" about employees with disabilities;
- Employer's forums and other events focused on raising awareness about the issue;
- Creating and building on employer-to-employer networks such as Rotary clubs, Chambers of Commerce and others (more details about this effective practice is provided below in the section dedicated to employer-to-employer networks).

Working directly with employers and conducting outreach is a necessary part of the activities of any organization that is working to advance the employment of people with developmental disabilities. However, in consultations with provincial and territorial organizations some programs and initiatives were identified as promising or particularly effective in achieving these ends. Such practices generally fall into one of two categories: production and dissemination of information resources, and active 'event-based' outreach to employers.

Another tactic used to raise awareness of these issues is the collection, production and dissemination of employment success stories. The Canadian Association for Community Living has issued two volumes of employment success stories through its "Ready, Willing and Able" campaign. The collection, preparation and distribution of such stories assists in identifying people with developmental disabilities as a potentially 'untapped' labour pool that employers have not traditionally accessed.

Some organizations and networks host series of events such as "disability employment week" to raise awareness of the issue with employers and conduct a coordinated awareness campaign.

Manitoba, Québec and New Brunswick, among other jurisdictions, have notable designated disability employment awareness weeks/month. During these, efforts are coordinated to conduct outreach to employers and raise awareness about employment of people with disabilities.

In British Columbia, Inclusion BC, the provincial association representing people with developmental disabilities and their families has launched a campaign that seeks to bring key stakeholders—people with developmental disabilities, employers and employment service providers—together around a shared vision of securing employment for youth with developmental disabilities. Under this integrated fundraising, awareness and community development campaign they will seek to generate 500 new jobs for people with developmental disabilities.

In Ontario, two communities have piloted an initiative titled "Generation Yes," a national community development program aimed at securing positive youth transitions from school to employment and raising awareness amongst the business community about the possibilities and challenges currently faced by youth leaving the school system. The initiative seeks to better understand the key factors of positive transitions of youth from school to employment through an active research process grounded in the lived experience of a small group of youth who are currently in the process of making career and future plans. However, a key innovation of the program is its active community development component involving outreach to employers to encourage community ownership of the issue.

The issues of raising employer awareness factor prominently in the Québec *Stratégie nationale pour l'intégration et le maintien en emploi des personnes handicappeés* (Québec, 2008). Through this strategy, a number of regional projects were supported in order to raise awareness about inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace. Promotional tools have also been developed to disseminate information throughout Québec about programs that can assist in hiring people with disabilities.

Awards and recognition of "champions of employment" is another common tactic used in generating employer awareness of people with developmental disabilities as valuable employees. Some have expressed a need for caution when making such awards or recognizing champions to ensure that employers are not recognized for the simple act of hiring a person with a disability. This can be seen to undermine the 'business case' for hiring. Rather, it is seen as good practice that employers should be recognized if they have gone "above and beyond" what can generally be expected of any employer. More discussion of these practices is provided below in the section dedicated to engagement of employer-to-employer networks.

Facilitating transitions of youth with developmental disabilities from high school to employment and careers

Recent literature from the U.S. (Carter, Austin and Trainor, 2012) has shown that the single greatest predictor of youth with significant developmental disabilities (age 23-26) having a paying job at or above minimum wage two years after leaving high school is having a job for pay while attending high school. Similar research has not been conducted in Canada, but Canadian data does show that for a comparable group of those with "severe disabilities" in this country, youth are less likely to have a job while attending high school than their peers with other disabilities, or no disability (Crawford, 2012b). It would be reasonable to suspect that the findings of the U.S. study of youth with developmental disabilities would apply equally to this comparable group in Canada.

These findings suggest that emphasis should be placed on securing labour force attachment for youth with developmental disabilities in the period of age 15-24. A review of U.S. and U.K. research on school-to-work transitions for youth with disabilities (Crawford, 2011) points to a number of key findings on conditions conducive to effective youth transitions:

- *[Regardless of whether it is] formal or informal, planning for transitions should be an integral part of the educational process, preferably earlier rather than later in the high school years.*
- *This planning should be holistic and individualized, taking into account the strengths and needs of the individual, gender, cultural background, and the many domains of life that may be encountered (e.g., work, further learning, access to decent income, housing, friendships). It should also consider the specific implications of the youth's particular disability (e.g., supports required for maximum participation in the community, self-determination, and to ensure general health and well-being).*
- *The planning should involve key stakeholders who share — or should be sharing — concern for the well-being of the young person: parents, educators, counsellors, service providers and, ideally, employers.*
- *There should be solid lines of communication between these stakeholders, who should devise methods for collaborating effectively in transition planning and post-planning follow-up.*
- *Stakeholders should understand their respective roles and responsibilities and should take ownership for doing their part, individually and together, in furthering the well-being of the youth for whom they have responsibilities.*

- *[Transition planning processes] should be well co-ordinated. The young person should be central to the process and instrumental in driving that process to the largest extent possible; that is, the youth's preferences and choices should be heard and respected.*
- *Young people with disabilities may need opportunities to "try on" various options, such as through work experience, career counseling, and counseling about post-secondary educational interests and options.*
- *There should be something meaningful for youth with disabilities to transition to after high school.*
- *Supports for participation in post-secondary education and employment should be accessible, affordable, and reasonably convenient for youth to bring into place in a timely manner, and youth should not be left solely responsible for obtaining and co-ordinating the supports they may require.*
- *Goals and outcomes should be clear and measurable. There should be a process to determine whether outcomes have been achieved and flag where alternative measures or additional supports may be required.*
- *Goals and outcomes to be achieved by service providers in supporting youth with disabilities in transition should also be clear, measurable, and monitored.*

These findings are supported by the relatively fewer research studies in the Canadian context (see for example Butcher and Wilton, 2008) and point to the need for proactive and coordinated interventions across stakeholders to assist in the transition from school to work.

These findings indicate that a focus on youth employment is an important strategic consideration in seeking to advance the employment of people with developmental disabilities. The findings also match what service providers and community organizations throughout the country have learned and many, in turn, have focused their efforts on youth transitioning from the school system for this reason. A number of tactics have been used to advance employment among this segment of the population. While there is no consistent or uniform method for approaching this issue in communities throughout the country, many effective approaches have been developed. A selection of these diverse approaches is detailed below.

Guides and Information Resources

Effective practices focused on transitions for youth with developmental disabilities from school to work and careers take place across a number of settings and involve several stakeholders including families, youth themselves, educators and other school officials, employment support providers, employers and community organizations. Several guides have been developed to assist community stakeholders in understanding their respective roles in supporting youth transitioning from school to employment and careers (See for examples CACL, 2012; NBACL,

2002; PEIACL, 2007; SACL, 1999; Bunch, 2009; Manitoba Education, 2008). For the most part, information resources that have been developed for this purpose fall into one of three categories. First, several resources are designed to assist families, individuals and communities in supporting effective transitions of youth and provide tips and strategies for engaging the community. Second, many guides have been developed that are meant as active planning tools to assist youth in planning for their future. Third, some guides have been developed to educate parents and others about transitional planning protocols that are mandated by provincial education departments, and how to engage those processes to the student's best advantage.

Active Programming to Support Transitions

Active programming to assist youth with developmental disabilities in their transition from school to employment and careers exists to some degree in most provinces and territories throughout the country using a number of diverse strategies and tactics. These include mentoring programs and employment transition initiatives such as career planning, job placement support and summer job placement programs. Some of the most effective examples of these programs that were brought forward by provincial and territorial representatives are explored below.

Mentoring Initiatives

Several jurisdictions in Canada have adopted a strategy of mentoring initiatives for students with developmental disabilities that match high-school students with adult mentors in their community. Student and mentor are matched on the basis of the student's interests. For example, a student interested in radio and television broadcasting may be matched with someone from that industry in their community. The extent of the mentoring activities are pursued on an individualized basis and can range from a single instance of a visit to a workplace, to a longer term relationship allowing the student to explore their interest and investigate the skills or training they may need to acquire in order to pursue their goals.

Both Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador have adopted this model of mentoring and cite several examples where mentorship has led to students pursuing work in the field or other work opportunities. The connection between students and mentors is facilitated by a mentor coordinator who works together with school personnel, parents and community. Through the assistance of experienced adult mentors, students have opportunities to learn about careers, and to meet and learn from people who have a shared area of interest. Mentors can provide information regarding their area of expertise and role in the community, provide information about their industry and provide the student with the opportunity for hands-on experience and skill development and networking with potential employers and others in the sector.

Employment Transition Initiatives

In most provinces and territories, programs oriented towards transition from high school to employment are available to students with developmental disabilities. Often this involves support for transition planning including aspects of career development, job search, resume development, job coaching and job matching, as well as support with other aspects of leaving school such as housing, transitioning to greater independence, securing of additional supports needed and so on.

The New Brunswick Association for Community Living provides transition planning and facilitation support to students leaving high school to help them prepare. Through this program a transitions facilitator will:

- Gather information about each student's strengths, interests, and needs;
- Coordinate transition planning meetings;
- Investigate the community programs and resources that may benefit students before and after they complete high school;
- Work with students to help them learn important employment skills;
- Help to identify work experience opportunities for students in grade 12;
- Connect students to employment agencies and other organizations to arrange work experience and volunteer opportunities;
- Prepare and finalize transition plans for each participating student; and
- Help to ensure the activities identified in transition plans are carried out.

In Saskatchewan, the Association for Community Living provides transition support to youth with developmental disabilities transitioning from high school and reports high outcomes for employment success. Facilitators work with individuals to find employment, connect individuals with supported employment agencies within their community, meet with prospective employers, and ensure that resources and efforts are put in place to enable individuals to achieve success in the workforce.

Employment, Education and Transition (EET) Facilitators:

- Connect people to community resources;
- Assist students with their transition from high school into the workforce;
- Provide job development, maintenance and workplace accommodations;
- Make referrals to other organizations or placement agencies as appropriate;
- Enhance individuals employability skills and help to coordinate support;
- Provide public education, community development and labour market information;

Working with students is a key area for Saskatchewan's EET Facilitators. EET Facilitators work with students in the transition from high school to the workforce. This often means presenting to groups of students and parents, and talking about transition planning and what resources/opportunities exist. Sometimes it also means being part of a transition planning

team meeting. These activities happen alongside broader community development efforts to raise expectations about the employment of youth with developmental disabilities.

Sarnia, Ontario has developed a fairly comprehensive strategy to encourage employment of people with developmental disabilities. A cornerstone of that strategy is engagement of youth in their final years of high school through a summer jobs program. Consistent with a number of the Community Living organization's other employment initiatives, the summer employment program is open to students with all types of disabilities, it has achieved strong employment outcomes for students with developmental disabilities and students with this label represent the main focus of the program.

Several features of this program are seen as innovative and promising practices. For student participants in the program, a one week orientation and basic job readiness training is provided after which students are matched with a paying job in the community at or above minimum wage. For staffing, the program typically draws on the population of university students who are home for the summer and provides a training course in job coaching before the program commences for the summer. This program has become well known in the community amongst an increasing number of employers and has increased demand for employees with developmental disabilities.

In Québec, planning for successful transitions from high-school to employment and careers has been a part of the government's employment strategy for people with disabilities. Through *La transition école – vie active* (TEVA) planning for transitions incorporates an employment focus to support youth entrance into the labour market.

"Generation YES!" a national initiative focused on youth transitions is currently being piloted in communities in Ontario and at time of writing was entering a second phase of evaluation and expansion. The initiative engages a community development process that is grounded in the lived experience of students currently in the process of finishing high school and planning for the future. It works to identify and eliminate barriers that keep youth with developmental disabilities from joining the labour market, bring together partners from the service sector, employers, educators and other community allies, and provides opportunities to plan and develop strategies that will increase the likelihood of employment success.

Development of inclusive post-secondary education programs at colleges and universities

Canadian data from the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey shows that post-secondary education has a strong bearing on employment outcomes for youth with disabilities. It also shows that youth with more severe disabilities are less likely than others to attend college or university (Crawford, 2012b). Given the strong connection between post-secondary

education and employment outcomes, there have been many efforts placed toward securing post-secondary access for students with developmental disabilities.

Best practice among these models is recognized as those initiatives that facilitate the greatest degree of integration and inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in the same experiences that are a part of post-secondary education for their peers (Mosoff, Greenholtz, and Hurtado, 2009). While the term "inclusive post-secondary" is being used to describe an increasing number of practices on the sites of Canadian post-secondary institutions, some of these represent a segregated program taking place on the site of a university or college—often with a focus on "life skills"—rather than supports oriented toward access to and inclusion in all aspects of post-secondary education and social experience.

The province of Alberta has led the way in implementing access to post-secondary education for students with developmental disabilities. This option has been increasingly available at universities and colleges in the province for more than twenty years. Through this extensive experience in that province, researchers have refined and further developed a model for encouraging and maximizing inclusion across a diverse set of schools and throughout a wide range of academic programs and disciplines (Uditsky and Hughson, 2007).

Students with a broad variety of challenges and disabilities have been successfully included at the post-secondary level through these initiatives in Alberta. It is noted that in many cases post-secondary institutions have been more accommodating, inclusive and welcoming of students with developmental disabilities than high-schools—meaning that, an inclusive primary and high-school experience is not a 'pre-requisite' for flourishing in the post-secondary context.

The Alberta Association for Community Living reports that upwards of 70% of students who have participated in inclusive post-secondary education programs have had positive employment outcomes. This represents a near reversal of national statistics on employment rates for persons with developmental disabilities where more than 70% are outside of the labour force (Uditsky and Hughson, 2007). Given these high rates of success and positive outcomes, the initiatives have been the subject of several awards and international recognition including being highlighted as an example of international best practice by the Zero Project, a collection of leading best practices from throughout the world (ESSL Foundation, 2013).

A 2006 study of the inclusive post-secondary initiatives in Alberta makes a number of conclusions and recommendations for sustaining and expanding the current successes (Mosoff, Greenholtz, and Hurtado,2006). The recommendations and cautions include:

- Keeping initiatives small, personalized and individualized in order to sustain the 'invisible' supports and resist 'one size fits all' programmatic approaches;

- Mentoring new staff and new initiatives requires intentional steps to "keeping the vision alive" and requires communication and collaboration between new and existing initiatives.

Addressing resistance that most often comes from established "disability services and supports" departments within institutions;Other jurisdictions in Canada have commenced development of inclusive post-secondary initiatives to varying degrees and with varying success. While one report notes that progress with this model has been limited to jurisdictions west of Ontario (Bruce, 2011), New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have also developed initiatives to increase access to inclusive post-secondary education for students with developmental disabilities (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

Engagement of employer-to-employer networks and private sector service clubs

Much of the recent literature on employment and disability highlights the importance of employers "leading the way" in making the case for hiring of people with developmental and other disabilities (Federal Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for People with Disabilities, 2013; Public Service Commission of Canada, 2011). When employers speak to employers about the benefits of hiring people with developmental disabilities, the impact is much greater than similar presentations made by disability-related organizations. Further, employer-to-employer outreach can encourage knowledge transfer and sharing of positive practices for developing natural supports in the workplace.

Several local and provincial/territorial efforts have shown positive results in advancing employment of people with developmental disabilities by developing or becoming involved with networks of business "champions" of employment of people with disabilities. These employer networks assist in raising awareness amongst other employers about the business case for hiring people with developmental disabilities.

One highly successful example of employer-to-employer networking is the partnering that has taken place with Rotary clubs. These partnerships now exist in some but not all jurisdictions in Canada. This model has become highly successful in both Alberta and Ontario and has generated many employment opportunities for people with developmental disabilities. The success of these partnership lies in the way the program addresses the needs and priorities of each group. People with developmental disabilities are provided opportunities for employment while employers are given access to reliable and motivated staff who add value to the business and the work culture.

The key to creating opportunities under these partnerships is the information and support that employers are given—a process that starts before any hires are made. Employers are helped to

see how someone with an developmental disability can contribute and the benefits to their business of having a diverse staff. Employers usually hire employees to fill a specific role in their offices—the Rotary partnerships encourage employers to think about job tasks rather than just job titles, and to re-organize some jobs, if necessary, to create an opportunity for a person with a disability. Once a job opportunity has been identified, the employer is assisted to match the job with a candidate looking for work who has the skills, capacity and interest in the business.

For the most part, the Rotary employment partnerships that exist in Canada are coordinated through provincial and local Community Living organizations. In the case of Alberta, the provincial association works together with the provincial government's Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) Program and local Rotary clubs to coordinate the initiative. Support is provided with evaluating the work place for suitability, tailoring the job description based on unique needs, providing on-the-job training and other ongoing supports.

Employers report that as a result of the program, employee retention is improved, office and business practices are more efficient, workplace culture and employee morale is greatly improved, and customers are more satisfied. Rotary employment partnerships are seen as a socially-valuable business practice with benefits that create a better business. Part of the success of the Rotary partnerships is reported to be due to the fact that they tap existing centers of leadership and capacity within their respective communities. The fact that such leadership is internally driven creates a sense of ownership for the issue.

There are other examples of employer-to-employer networks that use a similar model of networking with employer leaders, but outside of Rotary clubs. In Ontario, the Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN) has pioneered an innovative strategy through its development of a "Champion's League" and individual tactics of employers challenging and calling on other employers from their industry to hire people with disabilities.

Through the Champion's League, ODEN has recognized the efforts of several employers who meet three simple criteria:

- Leading by example – the employer has demonstrated a commitment to include people who have a disability in their workplace.
- The employer has championed the cause through promotion to others;
- The employer has made a commitment to continue to help move this cause forward.

ODEN's Champions have included diverse employers such as a mayor, a police chief, an owner of several restaurant franchises, a law firm, and several others. Rather than simply giving awards to employers who have hired someone who has a disability, the initiative recognizes employers who go above and beyond typical expectations in encouraging others to include

people with disabilities in their workforce. Employers have been recognized for activities such as speaking to other employers encouraging them to hire, building employment initiatives in their communities and committing their time to raise awareness of the issue. By recognizing and celebrating these efforts, ODEN has been able to raise the profile of people with developmental disabilities as valuable employees and each initiative has generated new employment opportunities for people with developmental disabilities.

Strategies to encourage entrepreneurship and small business development

Encouraging self-employment and entrepreneurship among people with developmental disabilities is an important part of a comprehensive strategy to advance employment of people with developmental disabilities. As is the case for their non-disabled peers, entrepreneurship offers flexible solutions to people with developmental disabilities who may not be interested in assuming a traditional employee role, or for whom circumstances make working for themselves a better fit.

The main considerations for self-employment and entrepreneurship among people with developmental disabilities do not differ greatly from the factors that any entrepreneur must consider. Developing a business plan, obtaining the required skills, securing start-up capital, implementing the business plan and expanding the business are basically the same common steps for any entrepreneur. The role of supports for entrepreneurs with developmental disabilities is similar to the role of human supports typical of supported employment arrangements. These include task analysis, skills training and ongoing provision of needed supports (Crawford, 2006).

Considerations for best practices in facilitating self-employment and entrepreneurship include: ensuring that the person starting the business is informed about and controls as many of the decisions about the business as is possible and desired; maximizing use of generic supports available to all entrepreneurs; engaging business mentors in the community; fading agency supports to the extent possible to maximize individual autonomy and self-sufficiency; and connecting the entrepreneur to networks of other entrepreneurs in the community (CACL, 2011). In addition to these, an important consideration is to ensure that an adequate support network is in place for management of the business.

There is limited available research on outcomes with respect to self-employment of people with developmental disabilities but it is recognized that financial outcomes have not generally been comparable to the equivalent of minimum wage rates. However, there are examples of businesses that have flourished and experienced a great deal of success. While not nearly as extensive as other practices encouraging employment of people with developmental disabilities, self-employment is an attractive option for many and is especially relevant in rural areas or in areas where job opportunities are limited (Kendall, et al., 2006; Conroy et al., 2010).

Two notable examples of successful entrepreneurship and self-employment strategies exist in communities in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. In Newfoundland, The Bay St. George Community Employment Corporation provides support to persons with developmental disabilities to find and retain employment. The organization has also provided support to several people with developmental disabilities to assist in starting their own businesses and pursuing entrepreneurship. One of those businesses, Ken's Engraving Inc., has drawn international attention and has been the subject of national and international media coverage. Key to their success in this area has been ensuring the appropriate balance of facilitating maximum control of decisions about the business and independence with providing adequate support to the entrepreneur in areas that they require assistance.

While several organizations in Canada provide support to entrepreneurs with developmental and other disabilities, it is noteworthy that many of the businesses established in Bay St. George have been developed by people with more significant disabilities. This feature points to the potentially critical place of entrepreneurship and self-employment in an overall labour market strategy to engage people with developmental disabilities - some of whom have significant challenges to entering the traditional labour market.

In Nova Scotia, the Community Association of People for REAL Enterprise (CAPRE) is an organization that supports people with developmental disabilities through person-centered planning, entrepreneurship, innovation, partnerships, and community engagement. The organization supports people to create, own and operate their own micro or small business while establishing circles of support in order to promote sustainability and self-sufficiency for the long term. CAPRE guides participants through each stage and cycle of the entrepreneurial experience including decision making, business planning and business operations.

These activities are combined with strategies to increase awareness and educate the community about the employment potential of people with developmental disabilities and the benefits of self-employment and entrepreneurship for people with this label. The organization maintains a resource library on entrepreneurship and small business especially as it pertains to people with disabilities. Notable in CAPRE's approach, is its work to educate family members, schools and other organizations about this approach.

CAPRE has built-in capacities to provide initial resources and support for establishing the business plan and necessary family and personal network to sustain the venture. To the greatest degree possible these resources are identified in the generic community so that the entrepreneur is empowered by and connected to these mainstream supports – rather than to simply to an agency. However, in extenuating circumstances, the organization is equipped to provide back-up supports geared toward assisting the entrepreneur/business to get back on track toward financial viability, growth and can assist to revitalize the network of structure in place to support the business.

These two examples show the potential for supports for entrepreneurship and self-employment/micro-enterprise in an overall strategy for economic and labour force inclusion of people with developmental disabilities. Such strategies become especially relevant to areas where other employment prospects are limited, and to people who encounter significant challenges (or do not wish to pursue) traditional employment in the mainstream labour market.

Community service system transformation and modernization

Throughout Canada, the most prevalent response to the employment needs of people with developmental disabilities continue to be sheltered workshops and day programs. Based on the assumption that participation in the competitive labour market was not an option, a separate, segregated system of sheltered workshops, day programs and enclave employment evolved as a primary response for this population. While it is now acknowledged that with appropriate supports people with developmental disabilities can successfully enter the mainstream labour market, this separate system persists and now serves as a barrier that isolates and reinforces marginalization.

While sheltered workshops, day programs and other similar services often state objectives of eventual transition to the labour force, the literature on outcomes for these services finds that transition rates are as low as 1-5% (Migliore, 2011). There is also a good deal of literature finding that workshops show minimal effectiveness as sites for training in skills that are transferable to mainstream settings (Rogan and Murphy, 1991; National Disability Rights Network, 2011). While demand for these services is declining in favor of supports for employment it is reported that sheltered industry and day program services are actively recruiting by promoting their services in the school systems (CACL, 2011).

Provincial and territorial policy is also still for the most part based on an assumption that people with developmental disabilities will not enter the competitive labour market, and thus disincentives to this transition persist. Rebuilding, reinvestment and demonstration of more effective approaches is needed in the generic and disability-specific community employment services delivery system to transform to more inclusive models that provide individualized planning and support for employment and entrepreneurship.

Several challenges to transition from this service system to supports for employment in mainstream settings have been cited. Earlier legislative efforts at regulating these services did not achieve the intended outcomes, because organizations merely reframed their services as day activity, 'occupation' or training. Some of these day program and sheltered workshop services are still being tracked and reported to funders as employment-related training, or

employment outcomes. Funding policies often do not allow for the type of transition activity that would be necessary to shift from sheltered services to integrated employment services. Finally, bringing an integrated employment support focus to services and programs can sometimes be seen by funders as a duplication of employment services available through the generic system (CACL, 2011).

Addressing demand for such segregated services is key to strategies for community service system transformation. Informants report that increasing the availability of inclusive opportunities (i.e. employment opportunities during high school years, post-school opportunities) reduces demand both among people with disabilities and their families for sheltered employment and segregated services. In this sense, transition strategies have focused on providing such opportunities and awareness raising activities aimed at increasing expectations of students, teachers, family members, and others in the community as to possibilities for life after high school.

Selected agencies throughout the country have developed experience with transitioning their services from sheltered or day program focused agencies to adopt a supported employment focus. However, a good deal of the transformation efforts that have taken place in Canada occurred during the 1970's and 80's and progress is seen to have stalled since that time. There have been calls for a renewed effort at transformation in Canada and many service providers across the country have reported interest in making such a shift.

Some key effective practices in transitioning from sheltered approaches to supports for mainstream employment have been studied and cited as promising approaches. These include:

- Adopting an 'employment first' approach in policy, funding and practice. This means that where services for people with developmental disabilities are concerned, employment in the regular labour force is to be considered as the "first and best option in support";
- Developing awareness and leadership amongst parents and educators. Engaging families and educators to have high expectations of students with developmental disabilities and increasing opportunities for collaborative planning is crucial to developing capacity for transformation efforts.
- Building capacity of service providers. The shift to a supported employment model involves a 'culture shift' involving development of many new capacities within the organization.
- Making employment supports available to people over the long term. Current limitations on the amount of time that a person can receive on the job assistance prevent many people from entering and staying in the labour force.
- Knowledge transfer initiatives that share learnings and best practices among providers.
- Incentives in income security systems to "make work pay" and elimination of disincentives, such as low earnings exemption levels and loss of drug benefits, loss of

housing subsidies and various disability-related services and supports upon entering employment .

Part III

Policy conditions that support or act as disincentives to employment of persons with developmental disabilities

This section presents a brief review of policy conditions reported to be effective in securing labour market access and labour force participation among people with developmental disabilities and those that act as barriers or disincentives. The findings presented below are drawn from a review of the relevant current Canadian and international literature, original source documentation (i.e. policy and program descriptions, rates schedules, policy and program evaluations) and from consultations with provincial and territorial stakeholders knowledgeable about developmental disability and employment.

The findings below are organized around four main categories of enabling policy conditions, and policy barriers and disincentives.

First, a framework for enabling provision of support for mainstream employment is investigated. As mentioned above in Part II, availability of 'supported employment' services could be considered as a seventh key element of good practice, as availability of these supports is foundational, or at least stands alongside, many of the strategies and good practices discussed. These supports for mainstream employment are generally available in all jurisdictions in Canada, but inconsistently and with some specific limitations. These issues form the basis for investigating policy conditions related to availability of supported employment to people with developmental disabilities.

Currently, the most prevalent approach to daytime support for people with developmental disabilities is provision of sheltered work and day programs. Investment in these outmoded service models diverts investment from more effective forms of employment support and acts as a primary barrier to the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in the general labour force. The second part of this section examines the policy conditions that prevent transition and perpetuate these service types instead of more inclusive models for employment support.

Third many jurisdictions internationally, and to a limited degree in Canada, have adopted an 'employment first' policy framework. Section three examines further details about this approach and Canadian experience is investigated.

Current models and organization of income support to people with disabilities are frequently cited as representing a major barrier to employment of people with developmental disabilities' participation in the labour force. Some of the key features and some emerging good practices are investigated in the fourth part of this section.

Framework for effective employment supports

Part II of this research examined examples of programs, initiatives and strategies that are reported to be effective in securing labour market access and labour force inclusion of people with developmental disabilities. Six key elements, or general strategies emerged that were common among these effective approaches. It was noted that a seventh key element could possibly be added to this list to acknowledge the importance of the availability of 'supported employment' services.

Description of 'supported employment'

'Supported employment' is a term coined in the 1970's and 80's to describe support provided to persons with developmental disabilities to find, obtain and maintain a paying job in a mainstream workplace. This support model is typically designed for persons with developmental disabilities, but is also used (perhaps less frequently) to provide support to people with other types of disabilities, or who face other significant employment barriers. In particular, people with psychosocial disabilities have benefitted from this approach in recent years. Supported employment as a service model expanded rapidly in the 1970's and 80's throughout North America with the first wave of closure of sheltered workshops but it is noted by many that progress has slowed in recent years (McGaughy and Mank, 2001; Cimera, 2006).

The term 'supported employment' is used for the purposes of this research for the sake of simplicity, but it is noted that in some cases sheltered workshops and other non-employment 'work-like' services describe their activities as 'supported employment.' Partly due to this fact, many have begun to adopt other language and particular models of 'customized employment' to differentiate from sheltered and enclave-based day support. Supported employment typically often involves techniques such as 'job-carving' or 'place and train' approaches.

The following is an accepted definition for supported employment that has been used in US employment law:

> …competitive work in integrated work settings, or employment in integrated work settings in which individuals are working toward competitive work, consistent with the strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice of individuals. . .for individuals with significant disabilities: (a) for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred; or (b) for whom competitive

> work has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of significant disability; and who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need intensive supported employment services (McGaughy and Mank, 2001).

This definition generally describes what is meant here by 'supported employment.' While there are different approaches to providing supported employment, these approaches generally have in common providing an individual with a range of supports to facilitate competitive employment in an integrated, mainstream, community workplace. These supports can include, but are not limited to:

- Training and pre-employment services—ensuring that training is time-limited based on a workplace entry plan;
- Job development, job search and placement services;
- Job coaching: on the job training and skills development;
- Supports for retention/maintenance and advancement;
- Ongoing support as needed to both employer and employee.

Supported employment services were originally developed and used to engage people who have more significant disabilities and need a degree of on-the-job support, at least to start and learn a job, but sometimes involving longer term support through engagement of a co-worker who assists the employee with a disability to learn the job and maximize their independence on the job. An important feature of best practice in supported employment is to facilitate the enrollment of natural and existing supports within the workplace to reduce reliance on paid co-worker supports provided by employment assistance service.

This type of support is accepted broadly in the literature as 'best practice' for employment support (see CACL, 2011 for a full review). In comparisons of supported employment with other models of provision of 'work-related' activity and day services, supported employment is consistently found to result in higher quality of life scores and better average earnings than in sheltered workshops (Beyer et al., 2010; Eggleton et al., 1999). While it is outside the scope of the present research, there is extensive literature on best practices among different supported employment models. A number of quality indicators have also been developed to assess provision of best practice supported employment services (see Wehman, 2003; Griffin, 2008).

Policy considerations for provision of employment supports:

Availability and policy/funding framework

A detailed study of the policy and funding framework for employment supports in Canada (CACL, 2011) found that while supports for people with developmental disabilities to seek employment in mainstream workplaces are available to at least a basic degree in every provincial and territorial jurisdiction, they are not consistently available. In some jurisdictions, there is strong policy and funding framework and this type of support is available to most job

seekers who need it. In other jurisdictions, it is available only sporadically through pilots and individual initiatives. In many instances it is reported that there are disparities in availability and quality of support between communities.

In Canada, employment supports for people with disabilities are a shared area of jurisdiction between provincial/territorial governments and the federal government. A large degree of financing of supports is ultimately sourced through the federal suite of labour market agreements funding—Labour Market Development Agreements under Part II of the Employment Insurance Act, Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities (LMAPDs) and in particular Labour Market Agreements (LMAs) for people who do not qualify for Employment Insurance, and the Opportunities Fund (OF). Accordingly, most decisions about policy framework and funding priorities are made at the provincial and territorial level.

Provincial and territorial governments fund a range of approaches but a consistent framework for funding and delivery of best practice in employment support to people with developmental disabilities appears to be lacking. Labour market agreement funding does not shape provincial/territorial policy as much as it provides a financial contribution to existing programming. While some of this funding does flow to 'supported employment' approaches, it is at provincial/territorial discretion.

Availability overly determined by service provider priorities

Most provincial and territorial representatives report that employment supports for people with developmental disabilities exist as a 'patchwork' of programs and approaches. One jurisdiction reports as many as six different funding pots and separate programs and associated policy and financial reporting regimes being used for employment supports for people with developmental disabilities. Local service providing agencies report that it is necessary to 'cobble together' funding from various sources in order to provide effective supports for people with developmental disabilities (CACL, 2011).

This reported 'cobbling-together' of funding streams and programs requires much time, effort and commitment. The result is that only those agencies with an 'entrepreneurial-like' approach and deep commitment to labour market inclusion of people with developmental disabilities provide such supports. One example of this "entrepreneurial approach" of service providers has become necessary in some jurisdictions that have moved to a pay for outcomes funding formula for employment supports and where for-profit providers have been introduced to the system. In this context, organizations that retain a deep commitment to employment of people with developmental disabilities and people who require more extensive supports for entry into the labour force have found that in order to finance their supports to people with developmental disabilities, they need to serve others who are 'easier to place' using the profits on those 'placements' to finance the more intensive or longer tenured supports.

Due to a funding and policy framework that is incoherent overall, availability of employment support to people with developmental disabilities has become overly determined by service provider priorities. It is often not financially viable under current funding formulae to provide the greater amount of support that may be required by people who face significant employment challenges. It is reported that providers of high quality employment support to job seekers with more significant disabilities often do so as a matter of values and service philosophy, and out of an overall commitment to assist people with developmental disabilities, often to the financial disadvantage of the organization.

The net result is that there is a great inconsistency between communities in terms of the quality of supports that are available to a person with a developmental disability. While in one community, a person may be able to access the supports they need to find and keep a job, in a neighbouring community, the same person may only be offered a placement in a sheltered workshop.

Generic vs. specialized supports

There is a clear policy trend in many jurisdictions toward a 'one-stop shop' approach to the provision of generic employment supports to all persons with barriers (CACL, 2011). There are several concerns about the survival of supported employment models in this approach. One reported concern is that generic employment services have not absorbed the experience that has been developed in providing 'place and train,' 'job-carve' supported employment services to persons with developmental disabilities. Another concern is that funding formulae for these supports and agencies often incentivize 'cream-skimming' or providing support primarily to those job seekers who seem most likely secure and keep a job with the least investment and effort on the part of the provider. Many such services partake of an historical and outdated view of people with developmental disabilities as 'unemployable.' This mistaken assumption is exacerbated by the continued dominance of sheltered and congregate non-employment day services for people with developmental disabilities and by 'accountability' regimes that financially reward organizations that get jobs most quickly for large numbers of people.

Time limitation on employment support

A further policy limitation that is frequently reported is related to the duration of time that a person can receive employment supports. In most jurisdictions a person can only receive on-the-job employment supports up to a maximum of 52 weeks. This disqualifies from employment, many job seekers and employers who will require at least some degree of ongoing support to maintain their employment relationship over the long term. Only one jurisdiction (Newfoundland and Labrador) reports availability of this type of support beyond 52 weeks.

Policy coherence and interactions

There are examples of policy and program incoherence at the systems level that creates unintended interactions between programs, which have the effect of removal of individuals from the labour market. One such example will be provided here to illustrate. For the most part, employment supports that proceed along a supported employment model are funded through programs outside of the Employment Insurance (EI) system—due largely to the low employment rates (and hence, disqualification from accessing EI supports) among persons with developmental disabilities. However, once a job-seeker becomes successfully employed and eligible for EI, if they lose their job they also lose access to supports delivered through other labour market programming because these measures are not available through EI 'active measures'. Having become eligible for EI, the individual is disqualified from accessing the employment supports that could have assisted their re-entry to the labour market. The disqualification is usually for a prolonged time period and significant skills atrophy, discouragement and loss of motivation is likely to occur.

Inflexibility in funding programs

It has not been possible in the present research to systematically identify relative investment levels of bilateral financing mechanisms into sheltered services and non-work day services versus approaches that support participation in the regular labour force. However, it is clear that there is a great deal of variation between jurisdictions in how these resources are directed. For example, in some jurisdictions it is reported by informants that a larger relative degree of this financing goes to congregate service options outside of the regular labour force, while in others there is a greater proportion invested in supported employment.

Service providers have noted an issue of inflexibility of funding programs to provide appropriate employment support. The Opportunities Fund, for example, is known in the main to fund delivery of wage subsidies to employers to hire people with disabilities. While wage subsidies are reported to be effective for some groups of job seekers, some within the groups of agencies and organizations representing and supporting people with developmental disabilities have found that they are ineffective over the long term and in many cases 'get in the way' and send the wrong message to employers (CACL, 2013). In the case of people with developmental disabilities, wage subsidies seem to suggest to employers that unless hiring is subsidized by government, it will represent a financial burden to the business' bottom line. Past calls for proposals have stipulated that delivery of wage subsidies are a required activity and as a result some organizations have not accessed this fund, which would otherwise seem to have a purpose that fits their mandate.

Sheltered workshops and segregated day services

Currently in Canada, the most common approach to day support for people with developmental disabilities continues to be sheltered work and day programs. Investment in these outmoded services diverts investment that could otherwise flow to practices known to be

effective in securing labour market access. Furthermore, the continued presence and prevalence of sheltered workshops and congregate day programs sends a message to employers and the community at large that these services are the appropriate 'place' for people with developmental disabilities.

The absence of other routes for employment and inclusion in the community in many cases means that sheltered workshops and segregated services represent to families, a 'reliable' form of respite and day time activity. In the absence of other option, such services appear more attractive than the risk of pursuing inclusive routes.

While demand for such services has been declining over the past decades, in many communities these services still maintain an active presence in the school system and act to recruit students with developmental disabilities for their services. The picture is complicated by the fact that in many cases, the same organization is responsible for providing supported employment services. In some cases, this is the result of a transition plan in progress for eventual closure of the workshop. However, in other cases, the sheltered industry system acts as a gatekeeper to employment supports and individuals report difficulties in obtaining the support that they desire for gaining employment in the mainstream workforce.

Tracking and reporting of employment outcomes

Tracking and reporting of employment outcomes varies between provinces and territories in Canada. Reporting requirements on labour market agreement funding do not share a common definition of employment outcomes. In many cases placement in sheltered workshops and day programs are framed as training, employment preparation or work activity and tracked as employment outcomes (CACL, 2011). Many other non-work activities such as volunteering or community participation activities are also sometimes tracked as employment outcomes. While some of these activities can form a legitimate part of an individual's path to employment there are concerns that in the absence of a dedicated stream of financing for best practices in supported employment, definitions for the purposes of outcomes measurement need to be tightened.

Minimum Wage

Sheltered workshops have in many cases been able to operate work environments where participants complete contracts for the agency without being paid a minimum wage. A common way of skirting provincial/territorial minimum wage requirements is to pay participants a 'training stipend' or monthly/weekly allowance. In some jurisdictions sheltered industries have been challenged by advocates on the basis of their failure to pay minimum wage to the people performing the work at these sites. However, in many of these cases workshops merely reframed their activities as some combination of day activity, training or employment preparation and efforts to address sub-minimum wage reform were not ultimately successful in encouraging a shift away from these practices.

"Employment First" policy framework

"Employment first" is an approach to policy and programs that means that for government funded community services for people with disabilities employment is to be considered as a first and preferred option in support. An employment first approach is aimed at raising expectations of all community members about the capacities and contributions of people with developmental disabilities. It is about "real work for real pay" and it is a commitment in principles, policy and practice to achieving inclusive employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

In Canada a number of communities, provinces and territories are exploring or moving toward an employment first approach. British Columbia and Newfoundland have policies or practices that correspond with employment first principles; and dialogues are beginning calling for province-wide employment first approaches in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario and Alberta.

In the U.S., a number of States have adopted Employment First initiatives to focus on integrated employment for people with developmental disabilities. Tennessee, Washington, California, Indiana, Minnesota, Georgia, North Dakota, Wisconsin, Missouri, North Carolina, Iowa, Rhode Island and Nevada have all established or are in the process of developing Employment First initiatives. These policies have a clear impact on achieving high outcomes for people with developmental disabilities. For example, in 2008, Washington State reported that 87% of people with developmental disabilities receiving employment and day supports participated in integrated employment.

Numerous governments across the country have begun to show interest in an employment first approach and consider the changes necessary to enable people with disabilities to achieve their full potential. However, numerous barriers continue to exist in policy and program delivery toward an effective stream of employment support to achieve these ends. Research conducted by the Canadian Association for Community Living has identified the following key roles for policy makers in pursuing an employment first approach (CACL, 2011).

- Policy dialogue within government and with stakeholders about an Employment First approach should start with the question of "what is and what isn't employment?" in order to create a common language and set of starting assumptions.
- In many places in Canada there are a number of different government organizations and funding pots involved in the delivery of employment supports. These can be reviewed with an Employment First lens to understand whether they are effectively supporting people with developmental disabilities in their pursuit of employment and careers.

- Several jurisdictions in Canada have created policy commitments to early provision of quality transition planning focused on employment and careers within the school system.

- Provincial/territorial dialogues and partnerships with key stakeholders including families and people with disabilities to pursue an Employment First strategy.

At the provincial/territorial level, a policy commitment to Employment First could start with the following:

- Clear definitions of employment outcomes—e.g. employment in the mainstream workforce at competitive wages and support for self-employment initiatives;
- Statement of Employment First principles—e.g. recognition that people with disabilities can work and want to work real jobs for real pay;
- Commitment to provision of supports necessary and workplace accommodations/adaptations. To ensure employment for all, supports need to be available over the long term (i.e. not limited to a certain time frame) and focused on best practices;
- Cross-departmental cooperation on an employment first policy commitment between government departments responsible for employment; training, education and universities; social and income supports; community services and disability-related supports;
- Coherent community-based delivery system for provision of employment supports including elements of:
    - Assessment and coordination of supports;
    - Pre-employment training—with appropriate policy guidance on time limits and curriculum of best practice;
    - Job search and job development;
    - Employer outreach initiatives;
    - Job coaching, retention and follow up supports;
    - On-the-job supports—with availability of long term supports (i.e. not limited to 52 weeks);
    - Supports for business development and self-employment strategies;
    - Connectivity to other supports;
- Assistance to community service providers and providers of employment supports to encourage transition to an employment first approach;
- Demonstration initiatives and pilot projects; and
- Training and technical support for effective practices in employment assistance;

Leadership from policy makers and government can be a critical ingredient in the development of an employment first strategy. Providing flexibility in policy and funding agreements to pilot new approaches within an employment first framework is seen to be a key driver of such change. Cross-ministry and cross-stakeholder engagement and cooperation in the development of an employment first strategy has been a key element of the most successful employment first approaches explored for this research.

Income security policy

Several governments throughout Canada have begun to address disincentives to employment that are currently a part of provincial and territorial income support programs. Within these income security systems, claw backs on employment earnings from benefits and retention of health and housing subsidies have been chief among the reforms that have been recommended. Other key employment related incentives and disincentives in income support programs include matters related to extension of drug benefits/pharmacare; rapid reinstatement of benefits and additional support for employment related expenses.

Income support systems typically contain provisions related to how additional income from employment will be treated by the benefit program. These rates are usually calculated and reconciled monthly with individuals' earning patterns. However, some jurisdictions have given consideration to recommendations related to amortization of these amounts over longer cycles to better accommodate changes in employment (ODEN, 2011).

Western provinces of Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia have recently made increases to their employment exemption amounts under their respective income programs. In British Columbia and Alberta the exempt amount for a single person is $800 per month. In Saskatchewan the current rate of exemption for employment for a single person is $200 plus 25% of the next $500 to a maximum of $325. In other provinces and territories exempt amounts for single persons are in the range of $150 - $200 for the basic exempt amount and additional exemptions of 10-50% over remaining income. Different formulae apply depending on supports needed by the individual and different aspects of how the program defines the benefit unit—e.g. single individual, lone parent, person with spouse and with or without children, etc. The following table details monthly earnings exemptions for each of the provinces and territories income support programs.

Table 1: Monthly Earnings Exemptions in Provincial and Territorial Income Support Programs			
Province/Territory	Single Person	Family Unit	Special Considerations
British Columbia	$800 for family units with one person with a disability	$1600 for family unit with two persons with disabilities	
Alberta	$800 for single person	Maximum of $1950 for family unit	
Saskatchewan	$200 + 25% of next $500 to Maximum of $325	$200	Childless Couple $250 + 25% of next $700 to Maximum of $425
Manitoba	$200 + 30%	Same	
Ontario	50% + $100 work related benefit		
Quebec	$200	$300	*for the Social Solidarity program the exempt amount is $100
New Brunswick	$250	$300 for household unit where more than one person has a disability	Recently announced that there single people will be able to keep an additional 30% on top of flat rate.
Nova Scotia	$150 + 30%		*$300 + 30% for persons with disabilities participating in supported employment; *special considerations for students aged 16-20
Prince Edward Island	$75 + 10%	$125 + 10%	
Newfoundland & Labrador	$75.00; $150 +20% for persons who require support services	$150; $250 + 20% if a family member requires support services	

Northwest Territories	$200 + 15%	$400 + 15%	
Yukon	$100 + 50% for 3 years, $100 + 25% after 3 years	$150 + 50% for 3 years; $150 + 25% after 3 years	
Nunavut	$150	$300	

In addition to exemptions related to employment income, some income programs provide additional financial incentive for those seeking employment such as Ontario's "start up" amount (ODSP Income Support Directive 9.1 – Employment and Training Start up) or for those leaving the program completely for employment, such as Ontario's transition benefit (ODSP Income Support Directives 9.17 - Employment Transition Benefit). In other cases, additional expenses related to employment may be covered..

Some provinces and territories have made further attempts to ease transitions to employment by providing extended drug benefit coverage for persons who would be leaving the income program for employment. This has been seen as a positive way of removing a key disincentive to individuals seeking work and to employers from hiring.

An emerging policy direction in treatment of income benefit programs for persons with disabilities, as well as general welfare programs for people in poverty, is to 'unbundle' additional supports that have often been provided through welfare programs, so that persons accessing the program can continue to access such benefits—whether direct payments or other supports—after they no longer qualify for the program. At time of writing, this type of approach was under consideration in Ontario in its review of social assistance (Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario, 2012).

Conclusion

This research has consolidated some of the current effective practices in advancing employment of people with developmental disabilities in Canada and has begun to identify policy conditions that can support these practices. While no one province or territory has fully developed all of the strategies and practices identified, and no single government has adopted all of the positive policy conditions discussed, there are very strong foundations and centers of innovation that can be tapped in communities throughout Canada.

This research has not attempted an in depth analysis of single practices or policy conditions identified. However, as findings emerged through this research process it has become clear that there are several focal points of leadership throughout the country in each of the key areas of effective practice, as well as a need for capture and dissemination of these learnings. There is depth of knowledge and experience with highly successful models in pockets of excellence across Canada that present promising avenues for further research and development. Several governments have currently set employment of persons with disabilities as a priority issue in their current policy agenda and are seeking such research and findings that can guide these efforts.

One further avenue of investigation that emerged as this research was being conducted, is the development of mechanisms to measure employment outcomes, and the impact that employment—even at modest hours and frequency—have on individual's overall quality of life, needs for other specialized services and life goals and plans. Such research would require longitudinal study to confirm the economic and social benefits that many researchers suspect are accruing.

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Appendix A: Criteria for 'Good Practice' in Employment Support Initiatives

Background

The following submission guidelines were developed by the Canadian Association for Community Living Income, Employment and Disability Supports Working Group. The purpose was to guide call for submissions to employers, community agencies, schools, post-secondary education institutions, government agencies and other community-based organizations involved in employment to submit their employment-related initiatives for consideration. The following was developed to guide the selection process:

What do we believe in?

The Ready, Willing and Able initiative (RW&A) supports employment-related projects and programs that are consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), the Core Principles and Statement of Values and Beliefs of the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) and that are representative of effective practice in advancing the inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities as valued equals in the mainstream workforce.

What do we mean by employment?

For the purposes of Ready, Willing and Able, employment is defined as real work for real pay as part of the general workforce and alongside persons without disabilities in inclusive community settings. Employment is paid at industry standard wages associated with the position and with the same protections and benefits available to the general workforce. Employment also includes self-employment, and business partnerships in which people operate and maintain their own businesses for the purposes of earning income.

What is Ready, Willing and Able about?

Ready, Willing and Able supports efforts that:

- Proceed from an assumption that, with appropriate supports in place, all working-age people are capable of employment;
- Provide needed support to persons with developmental disabilities, including those encountering significant barriers to employment, with a goal of obtaining employment as defined above;
- Foster inclusion and maximize social interaction with co-workers;
- Foster inclusive business practices and workplace cultures accommodating of the needs and strengths of persons with intellectual disabilities;

- Generate typical employment relationships where the employee is hired, supervised and paid by the business where the employee is working;
- Match individual talents, skills, desires and career goals to employment opportunities and the needs of employers;
- Maximize individual choice and control concerning employment sought and support that is received;
- Include opportunities for longer-term career advancement and skills development and that maximize the use of the employee's skills and talents;
- Provide support that is flexible, responsive, individualized and focused on working towards the greatest independence and 'fading' of external supports (i.e. job coach) as is achievable;
- Provide employment opportunities in a variety of industries, sectors and businesses;

In addition to these criteria, there are a number of considerations that relate to activities that may form part of an individual's path to employment. These considerations include the following:

- Volunteering opportunities take place along traditional voluntary roles typical of persons without disabilities and are not positions for which the person should ordinarily be paid;
- Co-operative, work-experience and training opportunities are time-limited, have clear objectives and are focused on career development;
- Youth-focused programs do not interfere with the student's completion of regular schooling requirements;
- Consideration will be given to efforts that are demonstrating success in transitioning from a segregated or congregated model of support towards an inclusive model of employment in the general labour force.