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Employer Perspectives on Hiring Persons with Disabilities



**BUSINESS
+ HIGHER
EDUCATION**
ROUNDTABLE



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Executive Summary

Persons with disabilities (PwDs) are an untapped talent pool in Canada. But it's not because of a lack of educational achievement, skills, or potential. PwDs have made incredible strides in post-secondary achievement and workplace readiness, yet remain underemployed.





The Government of Canada is developing new accessibility regulations as part of the Accessible Canada Act, with the goal of making workplaces barrier-free for PwDs by 2040. The ACA will have a big impact on the more than six million Canadians (15 and over) who have a disability. To inform the development of new employment standards, we spoke with employers about the barriers, needs, and enablers they face when it comes to hiring, supporting, and retaining PwDs.

There's no question that employers want to build accessible and inclusive workplaces. But they face barriers and challenges stemming from (mis) perceptions about working with PwDs, including what it means or how much it will cost to accommodate them, prohibitive or outdated organizational structures and hiring processes, and a lack of internal resources, including capacity and funding.

More than anything, employers need resources and support to change existing structures and make progress when it comes to creating accessible, inclusive workplaces for PwDs. In particular, they need to know where to find help. And who they can partner with.

Several initiatives in development or underway are enabling progress by helping change (mis)perceptions, creating new structures and processes within organizations, or building capacity and leveraging the work done by others. But much more remains to be done.

Employers are at different stages when it comes to making their workplaces accessible and they need different things to get there. The opportunity we propose here is that knowing what stage employers are at is a first step in figuring out what awareness raising, resources, supports, partnerships, and skills training employers need to meet the ACA's goal of making workplaces barrier-free by 2040.

Introduction

The Government of Canada is developing new accessibility regulations as part of the Accessible Canada Act (ACA), which came into force in 2019. More than six million Canadians (15 and over) have a disability. The goal of the ACA is to create a barrier-free Canada by 2040.



To do that, the ACA aims to identify, prevent, and remove barriers in seven priority areas: employment; the built environment; information and communication technologies (ICT); communication other than ICT; the design and delivery of programs and services; the procurement of goods, services and facilities; and transportation.

The legislation applies to federally-regulated entities and will involve the development of new accessibility standards, including publicly-available accessibility plans, feedback loops, open reporting, monitoring, and enforcement.¹

This report examines barriers to employment for persons with disabilities (PwDs), the first of the seven priority areas. It's the result of a research partnership between the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and the Business + Higher Education Roundtable (BHER), with funding from Accessibility Standards Canada, and part of a larger CNIB-led initiative to inform the development of new employment standards and the tools and resources to help employers adhere to them.

“ Hiring more PwDs is something we would celebrate as a huge win for our organization. It's not only the moral thing to do, it's a business decision: there is an amazing talent pool of candidates that are ready to work and commit to your organization. We need this talent more than ever in the current market.”

↗ Senior Talent Advisor, Crown Corporation

BHER conducted focus groups with human resources and EDI professionals from small and medium-sized enterprises (SME), post-secondary institutions, and large private and crown corporations in Canada. Our goals were to: 1. better understand employer perspectives on recruiting and hiring PwDs; 2. identify the biggest barriers related to hiring more PwDs; and 3. find ways to support and enable employers to meet new accessibility standards.

What we found when we spoke with hiring and EDI managers is that they're ready to act, but they face barriers shaped by (mis) perceptions and by the structural and capacity limitations of their organizations and industries. Employers in Canada are all at different stages when it comes to recruiting and hiring PwDs.

The opportunity we propose here is that knowing what stage employers are at is a first step in figuring out what awareness raising, resources, supports, partnerships, and skills training employers need to make workplaces barrier-free for PwDs by 2040.²

“ I think there is a big appetite, especially in my smaller community, to be more diverse. The biggest piece is finding people and resources: developing relationships with communities and addressing the barriers to skilled employment.”

↗ Head of People Operations, Small Non-Profit

Setting the Stage

PwDs are an untapped talent pool in Canada.

It's not owing to a lack of educational achievement, skills, or potential. PwDs have made incredible strides in post-secondary achievement and workplace readiness, yet remain underemployed.³



Statistics Canada data from 2017 show that PwDs were less likely to be employed (59%) than those without disabilities (80%). The more severe the disability, the less likely a PwD is to be employed. Among persons aged 25-64, 76% of those with mild disabilities were employed, whereas 31% of those with very severe disabilities were employed. Meanwhile, two in five (39% or 645,000) PwDs aged 25-64 years who were not employed and not currently in school, had the potential to work.⁴

The pandemic made things worse for Canadians living with disabilities. About 66% of PwDs between the ages of 15-64 who were employed prior to the start of the pandemic reported either being unemployed or experiencing temporary loss of hours in the early months of the

pandemic. New accessibility regulations, combined with pandemic recovery, and a strong demand for labour in Canada are opportunities to improve employment outcomes for PwDs.

We know employers want to hire and retain PwDs. Studies show that employers understand the benefits.⁵ We also know they don't always know how. Sometimes it's an access to talent issue.⁶ Sometimes it's a (mis)perception issue about what PwDs can do.⁷ Often this lack of experience, knowledge, and awareness can undermine employers' confidence, even when they recognize the benefits of hiring and supporting PwDs. Our goal is to understand employer perspectives on the barriers, needs, and enablers they face when it comes to hiring, supporting, and retaining PwDs.





What We Found

01

Section

Barriers

Employers want to build accessible and inclusive workplaces, but they face barriers and challenges stemming from a. (mis)perceptions; b. prohibitive organizational structures and processes; and c. a lack of internal resources, including capacity and funding.





(Mis)perceptions

The understanding and implementation of accessibility varies based on perceptions and misperceptions about PwDs and accessibility requirements. Employers who view accessibility legislation as a burden and likely to introduce new barriers to their organization's operations have negative associations with government-led accessibility efforts.

Meanwhile, knowledge and awareness gaps and prior experience recruiting and working with PwDs shape perceptions and misperceptions around the ability and value PwDs bring to organizations. Organizations may consider themselves to be accessible based on the physical buildings and working environment, without integrating accessibility into their operations and general human resources (HR) processes.

“ There's some conscious and unconscious bias when it comes to recruiting talent with disabilities, especially if they request an accommodation during the interview process— hiring managers may perceive that as an issue of 'fit'. In an organization as large as ours, while that mindset is not the norm, it likely does exist for some hiring managers and they, consciously or not, decide not to hire someone that requested an accommodation.”

↗ Sr EDI Manager, Large Bank

We heard that some organizations avoid talking about disability altogether or assume a disability is only physical. Misperceptions are especially prominent in workplaces where most of the operations involve physical work. Some assume that a PwD is incapable of doing their share of the work or will create unfair or unsafe workplaces.

Others overestimate the cost of accommodation or what it means to comply with accessibility legislation. While large organizations are more likely to have accommodations available, the SMEs we spoke to were concerned that they could be complex and cost prohibitive, not

always realizing that an accommodation could be as simple as providing flexible working hours or bigger screens.

“ In an operations organization with airfield maintenance the perception or stereotype is that managers are going to end up with an employee in a wheelchair. ‘Do I have to pick them up and carry them?’ It tells us there's a lack of awareness about disabilities.”

↗ Director, Large Retail Company

“ Employers are standards-focused. Part of the dirty nature of job descriptions are standardized rules [about physical mobility, or vision or hearing] about who can even be in a particular role. And we are hoping that all sorts of different people can fit into the standardized rules — but they don't. We need support to redefine roles and standards — to realize we can be a lot more flexible than we are now.”

↗ Operations Manager, Large Transportation Company

Organizational structures and processes

Structural or systemic barriers (i.e. industry standards, union rules, outdated hiring policies, outdated equipment) can prevent PwDs from applying for jobs and employers from hiring them. For example, industry specific standards, such as requiring candidates to pass medical tests or have certain physical abilities, can keep PwDs out of those industries, especially when they're described as safety requirements and used for screening purposes.

Organizational hiring processes can also prevent PwDs from applying, let alone

making it through to a job offer. For example, we heard that short recruitment windows and generic, one-size-fits-all applicant screening can be prohibitive for PwDs.

We also heard that the over-dependence on PwDs disclosing their disability during the recruitment process can be a barrier. It can be an intimidating experience for the candidate and can lead to companies reacting on a case-by-case basis instead of proactively building accessibility into their processes.

“ When candidates have an invisible disability, unless they tell us, we don't know and we aren't accommodating them. That's one thing that's been quite challenging — we don't know who to help if they haven't come forward.”

↗ HR Advisor, Small Post-Secondary

Lack of resources including internal capacity and funding

Where large organizations had training resources and EDI practices in place, including staff dedicated to accessibility support, some noted limitations when it came to applying those practices to accessible recruitment specifically.

SMEs lack the capacity to hire and support PwDs. They also lack the budget and resources to educate or train people internally. In some instances, SMEs either don't know where to find tools and resources (i.e. guides, webinars, workshops), including free ones, or are dependent on third-party support.

It doesn't help that SMEs are often operating in a survival or pandemic recovery mode. In which case, accessibility is viewed as transactional or simply a regulatory requirement, rather than a priority, even if it's something an employer wants to act on.

“ We are going through an accessibility audit right now, but even that is difficult because when candidates have an invisible disability, unless they tell us, we don't know and we aren't accommodating them, even though we have support to help with this. That's one thing that's been quite challenging — we don't know who to help if they haven't come forward.”

↗ Director, Large Post-Secondary



“ It is not that employers don't want to, they just see accessibility as another government burden that they need to manage in a world that they are barely keeping up with. They are just trying to survive. Regardless of their core values, this is the kind of attitude I encounter.”

↗ Business Leader and Consultant, SME

SMEs located in rural and remote areas were further behind when it came to PwD inclusion, while others were frustrated about being held to the same standards as larger organizations with more resources. The SMEs we spoke to reported that they are unable to focus on accessibility and the most they can manage is meeting the minimum requirements of employment standards.

“ We find that the number of candidates that actually self-declare with a disability is very low...And I think the fear is that they're going to be overlooked for the position, which is, in fact, quite the opposite. We're looking to bring people with disabilities, as much as we can, into the workplace and will put their application to the top of the pile if they meet the credentials and education requirements.”

↗ EDI Manager, Large Telecommunications Company

“ I have learned that employers are reactive. They react to compliance standards and legislation changes. But employers need support. They are likely not experts on that stuff. [Our organization] is an expert on flying, we understand airplanes. Understanding how to accommodate disabilities is difficult for us.”

↗ Operations Manager, Large Transportation Company

Those same employers feel ill-equipped to identify what resources are legitimate, let alone resources that are applicable to their organization. For example, employers from the skilled trades or service industries report that the resources they found were more applicable to office environments. Others were entirely unaware that resources existed to help them with compliance with accessibility legislation.

“ I think the attitude in HR is that it will take too much time to review the whole hiring process and ask, ‘Are my criteria creating barriers?’ ‘Do I need to ask specific questions?’ ‘Do I need a diverse hiring panel?’ ‘How do I do all that?’ It all seems to be too much.”

↗ Director, Large Post-Secondary

02

Section

Needs

More than anything, employers need resources and support to change existing structures and make progress when it comes to creating accessible, inclusive workplaces for PwDs.



Correct (mis)perceptions and provide training opportunities

One of the most compelling needs is for organizations to invest in internal accessibility training and awareness raising, ideally targeted at different levels of the organization based on the most prominent barriers.

Training materials should explain the value of creating accessible workplaces, eliminate (mis)perceptions about PwDs, and create roadmaps for changing workplace culture. Training opportunities might include facilitating open conversations or inviting PwDs to share their stories and experiences.

“ We also need to bring the union into the conversation and help them understand what is fair and equitable, because the perception is that every member of the union should go through an identical process and that changing it in any way was ‘unfair’. So we needed to change that perception to say ‘actually, it’s unfair if you’re making everybody go through the same process’.”

↗ Operations Manager, Large Transportation Company

We heard that in organizations where executive teams made PwD inclusion a priority, management teams worked harder to recruit, hire, and support PwDs. In other words, organizations need to adopt a mindset of sustained or continuous workplace accessibility versus viewing it as a one-off or one-time initiative.

To increase their applicant pools and create career pathways, we heard that organizations need to do more to raise awareness of their companies, industries, and what they do among potential PwD applicants.

“ We need money to be able to scale up how accessible our physical space is. And we need time and people to do this work. I get volunteers from the organization to be a part of my accessibility committee. It is not part of their regular duties so it is all on the side of their desks.”

↗ Sr Talent Advisor, Crown Corporation

“ We are building our accessibility plan, and a major component of doing so is to consult people with lived experience of different disabilities. But I don't know where to start on that or how to connect with communities.”

↗ Sr Talent Advisor, Crown Corporation

Improve organizational structures and processes

Overcoming internal or external structural barriers to hiring PwDs requires updating outdated sector and/or industry-specific employment standards. An organization's recruitment and hiring processes likely need to be reviewed and updated.

We heard that employers need to do more to include PwDs in recruitment and hiring efforts, to gain their perspectives and lived experiences, and empower them in the process to make adjustments to job criteria or candidate evaluation criteria.

“ Being a new manager looking to employ a person with a disability can be daunting. There needs to be constant reassurance and reminders about the support that's available to them. And to provide that support through HR, educational workshops, and the like. That's what we provide through our HR department.”

↗ Manager, Large Telecommunications Company



Where possible, employers need to engage PwDs directly to find out why they apply (or don't) to certain open positions. For those who do apply, employers need to better understand the factors that influence their decision to disclose (or not) their disability during the hiring process.

With better data, employers will have more evidence and more opportunities to adjust, update, or eliminate outdated or unnecessary recruitment and hiring processes.

“ We are constantly reacting to regulatory compliance issues and they change a lot. Some changes are nominal, but others are really dramatic. There needs to be an agency that will work with us in the background to audit our stuff and give us a report with 10 actionable steps, for example. That is the only way employers will ever get ahead of these issues.”

↗ Operations Manager, Large
Transportation Company

“ Businesses need quick, five-point or ten point checklists on how to diversify and hire people with disabilities. We are trying to develop a one-stop shop of all the organizations we are partners with that are focused on accessibility in the workplace to create resources within the business community that can better support the work they are doing.”

↗ Chamber of Commerce Lead

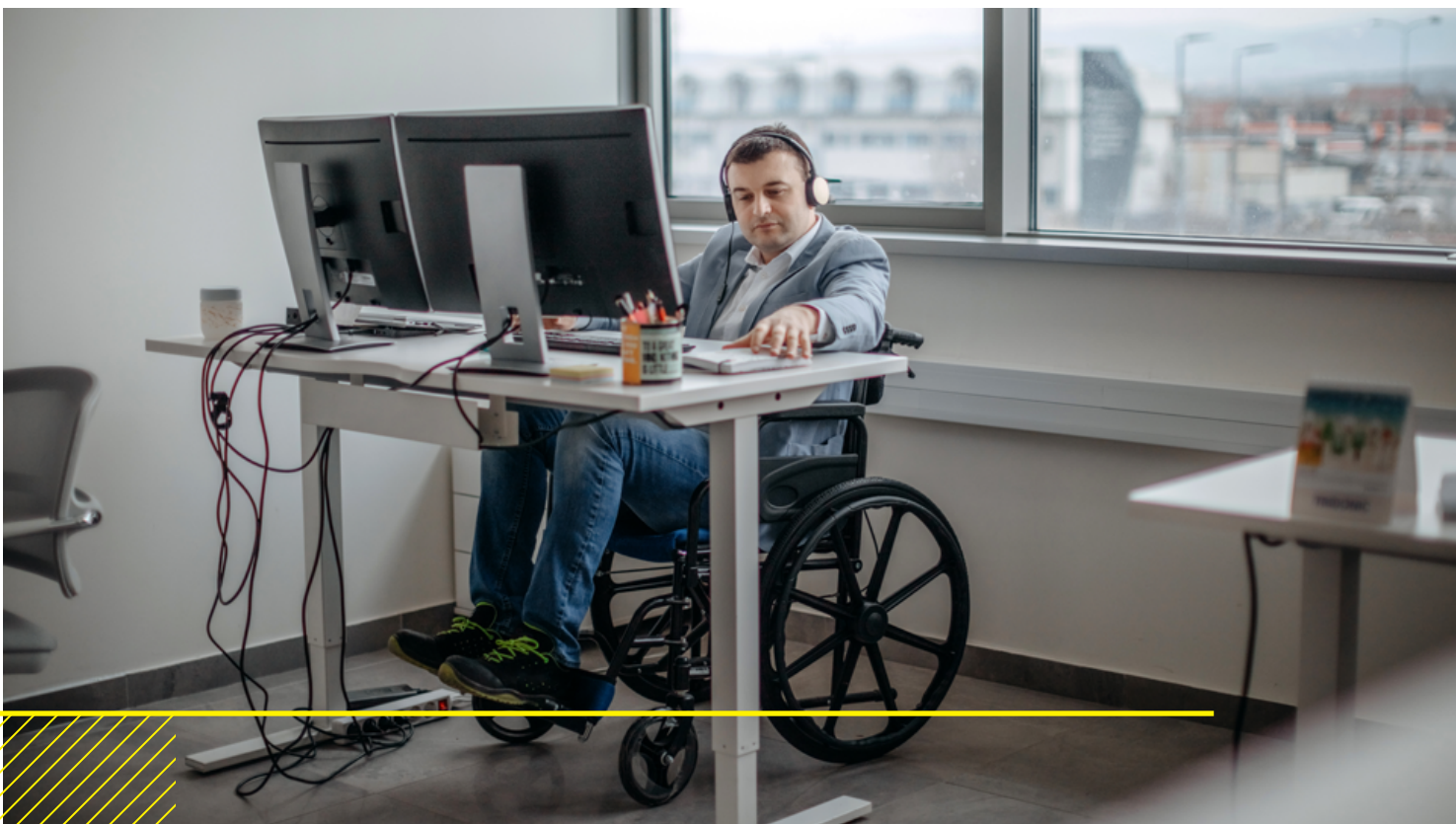
Build internal capacity and find new resources

The organizations we spoke to talked about the need for tools and resources, including step-by-step guides on how to provide accommodations, how to understand and comply with accessibility legislation, and how to build on what they've done to take their efforts to the next level.

Employers want tools and resources to be easy to use and actionable versus dense, detailed reports. They also need help navigating the wealth of accessibility content that already exists and finding what they need, including access to government subsidies or stipends to help offset the cost of external consultants or paid training.

“ With manufacturing, obviously we must consider the types of disabilities on the floor, but we also have a large office space upstairs. Our facility is also aging. We need some tools, guidelines, and knowledge on existing programs so we can become a more inclusive employer.”

➤ HR Support, Large Manufacturing Company





The employers we spoke to are also looking for support when it comes to connecting and partnering with PwD communities as well as community organizations that provide support, resources, and access to talent. They need help partnering with post-secondary institutions, too, particularly accessibility offices and career or experiential learning centres that develop work-ready graduates with disabilities.

And finally, they need partnerships with other employers to collaborate and network in their industry, share best practices, and provide mutual support.

“ In small businesses, there’s always a little bit of fear and concern over how to manage costs. So how do we create a toolkit or something to address the perception that it’s going to take a lot of work and training when, in fact, a lot of times it probably will not.”

↗ HR Director, Non-Profit SME

03

Section

Enablers

Several initiatives in development or underway are enabling progress by helping change (mis)perceptions, creating new structures and processes within organizations, or building capacity and leveraging the work done by others.





Changing (mis)perceptions and empowering champions

The shift to remote work during the COVID pandemic forced many employers to rethink how they work and what's possible. In the process, it required employers to reassess and better understand the challenges faced by equity-seeking employees, including PwDs. For some, this was the nudge they needed to act and invest more into the recruitment and support of PwDs.

The shift to remote, hybrid and flexible work environments also meant that employers whose physical spaces could not support PwDs were still able to hire and retain them by allowing them to work from home.

“ We need to constantly provide education and awareness. So we've got an internal website where we post different sorts of success stories and we work closely with our Learning and Development team just to make sure that we are bringing in new and relevant training.

The need for education never ends. Whether you're a new organization or over 100 years old like us.”

↗ EDI Manager, Large
Telecommunications Company



We heard from several employers about the power of accessibility champions, at all levels in an organization. Senior leaders who are leading the charge on making their workplaces more inclusive for PwDs, including championing new investments in training opportunities, are enablers. So too are middle managers who advocate for changes in regulations and hiring processes to increase the number of PwDs in their workplace.

Finally, some of the most powerful enablers are the employees themselves who champion change in “the way things are done” to grant PwDs better access to their organizations.

“ We used an external consultant who helped connect us to a group of individuals who had different types of disabilities. We [worked with them] to see what some of the barriers were that they experienced... It was about including them in the conversation so we could truly understand what their needs were.”

➤ Operations Manager, Large Transportation Company

Creating new structures and bringing PwDs into the process

We heard multiple examples of employers who have created new structures to reduce barriers and create more opportunities to hire and support PwDs.

In many instances, current employees with disabilities are part of the process. For example, at one company, employees with disabilities were central to the

process of providing recommendations that helped their employer design new, universally accessible resources and spaces. At another, employees with disabilities were asked to help identify new roles that would make it possible for PwDs to participate more fully in their work and better set them up for success in their roles.

“ What’s enabled us the most have been our partnerships with multiple PwD community groups and awareness training for our staff. They’ve provided tip sheets and additional resources that our recruitment team can leverage to deepen their understanding about different disabilities and actually tackle unconscious biases.”

↗ Talent Acquisition Manager, Large Bank



In other instances, employers have started showcasing some of the successes of employees with disabilities within their company. One company invited employees, including those who have relatives who are PwDs, to share some of their experiences at special events or meetings. The goal was to hear the personal stories of PwDs to better understand their lived realities.

Some of the employers we spoke to, mostly larger ones, described the formation of disability-specific EDI committees to work towards the inclusion and success of PwDs within their organizations. Some instituted a

diverse-interview-panel policy to ensure candidates from equity groups, such as PwDs, are treated equitably and with respect during the recruitment process.

“ Our leadership made it a requirement that the organization take diversity training. So they’re driving it at the top, then of course, the rest of the organization generally follows through.”

➤ HR Manager, Large Telecommunications Company

Identifying what's already out there and leveraging partnerships

Organizations we spoke to that were advanced in their PwD inclusion work had internal education materials and training resources for their employees, including resources and support for managers of PwDs.

Some have Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) for various equity-deserving employee groups within their companies, including PwDs. These groups help design training materials and facilitate conversations to educate employees. SMEs benefited from resource sharing in instances where large organizations had developed tools for PwD inclusion.

“ Leadership is an enabler. When the leadership is focused on hiring people with disabilities, that makes it a top down priority.”

↗ Chamber of Commerce Lead



Partnerships are also key enablers. Employers view partnerships as opportunities to help them audit the accessibility of their workplace and comply with regulations, access resources and toolkits, and learn how to make them usable. Partnerships provide support not only when it comes to job ad design and refining interview processes, but figuring out how to get job ads in front of PwDs, to help PwDs see themselves in a role or company, and to more meaningfully engage with and build relationships with PwD communities and their support networks.

Post-secondaries are uniquely positioned to work with employers to build stronger PwD talent pathways from school to work. We heard that post-secondaries can help prevent students from self-selecting out of certain disciplines and industries.

To help address some of the challenges identified here, we developed a repository of existing, publicly available employer resources, found in Appendix B.

“ We promote ourselves as an inclusive employer through our partnerships in the disability community.”

↗ HR Manager, Large Telecommunications Company

04

Section

Proposed Maturity Model

Employers are all at different stages when it comes to making their workplaces universally accessible and they all need different things to get there. Here we propose a maturity model, inspired by the Canadian Human Rights Maturity Model⁸, that captures the different stages, based on the common organizational characteristics, experiences, barriers, and needs at each of the different stages.



“C” Level

DESCRIPTION

Employers at this level haven't made room for accessibility yet. They're thinking about it, they want to change their workplaces and include PwDs, but they don't know how or where to start. They might not have the funding and resources to act.

“ I have been here for nine years, so I have seen a lot of changes. But to answer your question about our experiences with accessibility: what experience? Honestly, I think this is just even the basic starting piece that we have a lot of work to do in.”

↗ HR Lead, Large Service Company



“B” Level

DESCRIPTION

Employers at this level have started their accessibility and inclusion journey. The priority at this stage is education and awareness raising across the organization. They are looking for partnership and support to help with training and developing action plans to get things moving.

“ A lot of people put accessibility on the side of their desk. There needs to be more defined efforts and budget put into this work and organizations need to have someone dedicated to finding community partners that can reach candidates with disabilities.”

↗ HR Advisor, Small Post-Secondary



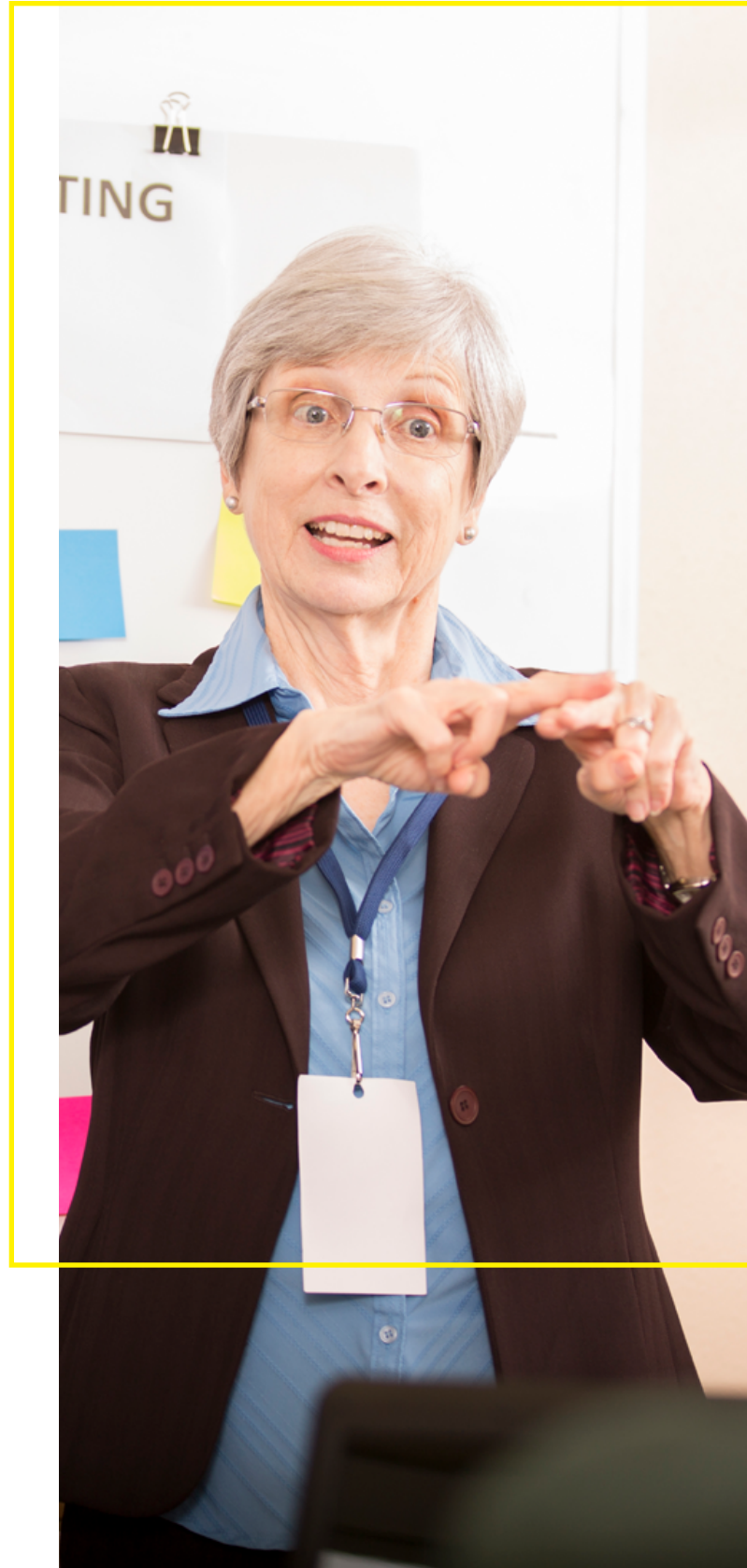
“A” Level

DESCRIPTION

Employers at this level are further along in their accessibility journey. They have leadership buy-in and champions advocating for more to be done. They have committed resources, including disability-specific professionals working to ensure all PwDs in the organization have what they need to succeed and thrive.

“ Our CEO created a commercial and talked about employing people with disabilities and the business advantages of doing such. So we’re very proud of being out in the community as an inclusive employer and it’s been very helpful to our recruitment process.”

↗ HR Manager,
Large Telecommunications Company



“A+” Level

DESCRIPTION

Employers at this level are more proactive in how they approach disability inclusion. To get here requires a fundamental change in workplace culture and HR practices. This is the point where employers have universal accessibility built into all organizational processes and practices.

“ A person in a wheelchair is not disabled because they’re in a wheelchair—they are disabled the moment they show up to a building and aren’t able to get in. That’s what disabled them. Society builds barriers. It’s a societal mindset that people with disabilities cannot do everything or will need hand-holding.”

↗ HR Manager, Non-Profit SME



Putting it all together

This report aims to contribute to the goal of creating a barrier-free Canada, namely by identifying and aiming to better understand employer perspectives on the barriers to hiring, supporting, and retaining PwDs. We also asked employers what they need as well as what opportunities and enablers are working to help them create accessible workplaces.



We identified the following key takeaways

KEY TAKE-AWAY 1

What we talk about when we talk about accessibility. Employers need to be able to say: “I know we need to do something but I don’t know where to start.”

Creating something from nothing is hard, especially for resource and capacity-starved SMEs. It’s more daunting yet for employers to find the language and the safe spaces to speak openly about what they know and what they don’t.

KEY TAKE-AWAY 2

There’s no one-size-fits all solution. Everything, from the challenges they’re facing to the specific resources and support they need to move forward, depends on the employers’ starting point. For this reason, we’ve grouped employers with similar characteristics and pain points into different stages of an accessible workplace “maturity model.”

KEY TAKE-AWAY 3

It’s ok to need a little help from your friends. No matter what stage an employer is at, opportunities exist for organizations to partner with other employers, professional associations, post-secondary institutions, or non-profit organizations to work together, pool resources, avoid duplicating efforts, and achieve common goals.



A

Appendix

Methods

Research Questions

1. What attitudes and beliefs do employers hold regarding the benefits and opportunities for supporting and hiring PwD?
2. What behavioural (e.g., implicit and explicit biases, capacity challenges) and other (e.g., financial) barriers do employers face in hiring and supporting PwDs?
3. What resources, tools, or other actions/solutions (i.e., enablers) are needed to shift attitudes, address needs and barriers, and/or close intention-action gaps? How can employer standards make workplaces more accessible? What currently exists and/or what are examples of success stories?
4. How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted attitudes, barriers, and experiences around recruiting and hiring PwD? How do these differ across remote-work and essential/frontline environments? What are the short versus longer-term considerations?

Focus Groups

We conducted ten virtual focus group consultations with 27 participants from 24 organizations across Canada. We spoke with Human Resources, Talent, and/or Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Directors, Managers, and Associates, roles typically present at large organizations; we also spoke to business leaders (e.g. Executives, Operations Leads etc.), who tend to be responsible for HR and accessibility in smaller organizations; and we spoke to Accessibility Consultants who support and are able to speak to the accessibility challenges and needs of SMEs.

We prioritized the recruitment of participants from federally-regulated organizations, given their experiences and relationship with federal accessibility legislation. We also recruited participants from comparable, non-federally regulated industries (e.g. retail, manufacturing). Recruitment materials and online forms were available in both English and French.

Recruitment of participants willing to speak candidly about organizational challenges with accessibility is immensely difficult, and there is likely an element of sample bias reflected in our participant sample (i.e. the desire to speak about and/or take action on accessibility). We therefore also recruited consultants and business leaders who could speak on behalf of industries or organizations (e.g. SMEs) that tend to be further behind or haven't even started their accessibility journey. Despite these challenges, participants came from organizations or spoke on behalf of industry trends that reflected a diversity of experiences with accessible recruitment.



Demographics

TABLE 1: SECTOR & INDUSTRY (N = 27)

Associations & Cooperatives	3
Crown Corporations	2
Non-Profits	5
Post-secondaries	3
Private – Banks	2
Private – Consulting Organization	1
Private – Telecommunications	3
Private – Transportation	5
Private – Other	3

TABLE 2: ROLE TYPE

Business Leader, including Consultants	18.5%
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion	22.2%
HR or Talent	59.3%

TABLE 3: REGION**% of Participants**

Atlantic	14.8%
Central	25.9%
Prairies	22.2%
British Columbia	18.5%
Northern	7.4%
Region: National	11.1%

TABLE 4: ORGANIZATION SIZE**% of Participants****Large****51.8%****Medium****22.2%****Small****25.9%**

B

Appendix

Employer Resources

This compilation is a snapshot of the publicly available resources, tools, initiatives, services, and supports that aim to help employers recruit and support jobseekers and employees with disabilities. This is not an exhaustive list. It's not regionally or sectorally specific, but it provides an overview of the resources that are freely available to Canadian employers while also providing employers with a 'one stop shop' to explore what's out there.



TABLE 5: EMPLOYER TOOLS & RESOURCES

Finding Funding to Accommodate Employees with Disabilities

SOURCE: National Educational Association of Disabled Students

DESCRIPTION: A directory of Provincial and Federal funding sources to help employers provide workplace accommodations.

Finding Funding [↗](#)

Programs and Funding Sources

SOURCE: Hire for Talent

DESCRIPTION: A searchable database of provincial programs, federally funded initiatives, and sources of funding that help enable accessible, inclusive business practices, including recruitment and hiring.

Programs and Funding Sources [↗](#)

Employer Toolkit

SOURCE: Hire for Talent

DESCRIPTION: A toolkit focused on how to effectively recruit, retain, and include people with disabilities in the workplace.

Employer Toolkit [↗](#)

TABLE 5: EMPLOYER TOOLS & RESOURCES CONTINUED

Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada

SOURCE: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat

DESCRIPTION: A resource on the federal public service's strategy for how to integrate accessibility into employment practices, built environments, technology, services, and culture, and how to measure progress. Although built for the federal public service, this resource contains insights that may be applicable to other federally regulated industries.

**Accessibility
Strategy for the
Public Service of
Canada** [↗](#)

A Place for All: A Guide to Creating an Inclusive Workplace

SOURCE: The Canadian Human Rights Commission

DESCRIPTION: A guide to help employers understand accessibility legislation and to develop accessibility and accommodation policies and procedures.

A Place for All [↗](#)

A Template for Developing a Workplace Accommodation Policy

SOURCE: The Canadian Human Rights Commission

DESCRIPTION: A guide and template to help employers create a workplace accommodation policy that aligns with federal legislation.

**Workplace
Accommodation
Template** [↗](#)

TABLE 5: EMPLOYER TOOLS & RESOURCES CONTINUED

Hire Persons with Disabilities

SOURCE: Employment and Social Development Canada

DESCRIPTION: A directory of information for employers on why and how to hire people with disabilities.

Hire Persons with Disabilities [↗](#)

Supporting Persons with Disabilities: A Roadmap for Canada's Trucking and Logistics Industry

SOURCE: Trucking HR Canada

DESCRIPTION: A roadmap for organizations in the trucking and logistics industry on how to effectively recruit, support, and retain employees with disabilities.

Supporting Persons with Disabilities: A Roadmap for Canada's Trucking and Logistics Industry [↗](#)

Enabling the Trucking Workforce Connector Guide

SOURCE: Trucking HR Canada

DESCRIPTION: A directory of regional and national programs and resources for organizations in the trucking and logistics industry looking to start their accessibility journeys.

Trucking Connector Guide [↗](#)

TABLE 5: EMPLOYER TOOLS & RESOURCES CONTINUED

Inclusive Human Resource Practices: Tips for Building an Inclusive Workforce

SOURCE: Ready Willing & Able

DESCRIPTION: A guide for HR leaders on strategies to integrate accessibility and accommodations into candidate recruitment, evaluation, and selection processes.

Inclusive Human Resource Practices [↗](#)

Employer's Guide To Hiring and Working with Professionals with Disabilities

SOURCE: David C. Onley Initiative For Employment & Enterprise Development

DESCRIPTION: A guide that provides employers with key information, tools, tip sheets, and other resources for integrating accessibility into the workplace, including through recruitment and hiring.

Employer's Guide [↗](#)

Values of Supported Employment

SOURCE: Canadian Association for Supported Employment

DESCRIPTION: A web resource that outlines the guiding principles and values of supported employment (i.e. the practice of making sure anyone seeking employment has the support they need to make employment possible).

Supported Employment Best Practices [↗](#)

TABLE 5: EMPLOYER TOOLS & RESOURCES CONTINUED

HR Inclusive Policy Toolkit

SOURCE: Canadian Association for Supported Employment

DESCRIPTION: A toolkit designed in collaboration with the supported employment service provider community across Canada that focuses on disability inclusion at various stages of employment, including hiring practices.

**HR Inclusive
Policy Toolkit** [↗](#)

Supported Employment Resource Hub

SOURCE: Canadian Association for Supported Employment

DESCRIPTION: A hub of 400+ resources and tools for supported employment.

**Supported
Employment
Resource Hub** [↗](#)

Accessible Recruitment Checklist

SOURCE: AccessibleEmployers.ca, a Presidents Group initiative

DESCRIPTION: A checklist for how to plan inclusive, accessible recruitment and hiring practices.

**Accessible
Recruitment
Checklist** [↗](#)

Interview Questions

SOURCE: Discover Ability Network

DESCRIPTION: A resource that outlines commonly misworded questions that employers ask interviewees with disabilities, why they are inappropriate, and appropriate substitutes.

**Interview
Questions** [↗](#)

TABLE 5: EMPLOYER TOOLS & RESOURCES CONTINUED

Discover Ability Roadmap

SOURCE: Discover Ability Network

DESCRIPTION: A series of online modules to educate employers on how and why to hire people with disabilities.

Roadmap [↗](#)

Employer Success Stories

SOURCE: Hire for Talent

DESCRIPTION: A video gallery featuring real success stories from employers across Canada that have hired people with disabilities.

Employer Success Stories [↗](#)

Service Providers Directory

SOURCE: Hire for Talent

DESCRIPTION: A directory of national service providers who assist in the recruitment, hiring, and retention of people with disabilities.

Service providers [↗](#)

Hire Inclusively

SOURCE: The Inclusive Workplace

DESCRIPTION: A hub of resources and training opportunities to help employers hire jobseekers who are on the autism spectrum or who have an intellectual disability.

Hire Inclusively [↗](#)

TABLE 5: EMPLOYER TOOLS & RESOURCES CONTINUED

Training Opportunities

SOURCE: Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work

DESCRIPTION: Live workshops and eLearning training for business leaders who want to learn how to foster disability inclusion in the workplace.

Training Opportunities [↗](#)



TABLE 6: INITIATIVES AND SUPPORTS FOR EMPLOYERS

Skills Catalyst Project

SOURCE: Accessibility Institute

DESCRIPTION: A project that aims to support employer readiness for and the employability of postsecondary students with disabilities via training for both employers and jobseekers.

Skills Catalyst Project [↗](#)

National Accessibility Resources for Employers (NARE)

SOURCE: Work Wellness Institute

DESCRIPTION: A two-year project that aims to develop employer resources to support employer readiness for and capacity to recruit, hire, and retain talent with disabilities in a post-COVID world.

NARE—National Accessibility Resources for Employers [↗](#)

Accommodation and Inclusion Management (AIM)

SOURCE: Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work

DESCRIPTION: An intervention service that helps manage and implement workplace accommodations and adjustments.

AIM [↗](#)

Working Together

SOURCE: Neil Squire Society

DESCRIPTION: A recruitment support service that helps employers find talented candidates with disabilities.

Working Together [↗](#)

TABLE 6: INITIATIVES AND SUPPORTS FOR EMPLOYERS CONTINUED

Come to Work

SOURCE: CNIB Foundation

DESCRIPTION: A recruitment support program that connects employers with a talent pool of job seekers who are blind or partially sighted.

Come to Work [↗](#)

MentorAbility Canada

SOURCE: Canadian Association for Supported Employment, in collaboration with select employment service providers

DESCRIPTION: A supported employment service that facilitates mentoring opportunities between people with disabilities and employers.

**MentorAbility
Canada** [↗](#)

Specialisterne Recruitment & Onboarding Services

SOURCE: Specialisterne

DESCRIPTION: A support service for employers who are looking to hire candidates with autism and other neurodiversities.

**Recruitment &
Onboarding** [↗](#)

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Endnotes

- 1 Employment and Social Development Canada, “Towards an Accessible Canada.”
- 2 Our project uses a broad definition of disability that includes physical disabilities (e.g., flexibility, mobility), pain and/or injury related disabilities, hearing and/or sight loss disabilities, cognitive disabilities, mental health disabilities, and neurodivergence.
- 3 Morris et al., “A Demographic, Employment and Income Profile of Canadians with Disabilities Aged 15 Years and over, 2017”; OECD, “Labour Market Inclusion of People with Disability: Where Are We Now?”
- 4 Morris et al., “A Demographic, Employment and Income Profile of Canadians with Disabilities Aged 15 Years and over, 2017.”
- 5 Celeste, de Raaf, and Fraser, “Increasing Employment through Inclusive Workplaces: Interim Report”; Lindsay et al., “Employers’ and Employment Counselors’ Perceptions of Desirable Skills for Entry-Level Positions for Adolescents”; and Murfitt et al., “Employer Engagement in Disability Employment.”
- 6 Lindsay et al., “Employers’ and Employment Counselors’ Perceptions of Desirable Skills for Entry-Level Positions for Adolescents.”
- 7 Bonaccio et al., “The Participation of People with Disabilities in the Workplace Across the Employment Cycle”; Gasper, “Employer Practices and Attitudes toward the Employment of People with Disabilities.”
- 8 Canadian Human Rights Commission, “Human Rights Maturity Model Continuum.”



About BHER

The Business + Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization bringing together some of Canada's largest companies and leading post-secondary institutions. BHER is the only organization in Canada that brings together leaders from the country's top companies and post-secondary institutions to build a better social and economic future for all. We are a national leader in member-driven change and work collaboratively to tackle some of Canada's biggest skills and talent challenges.

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