



ACCOMMODATIONS

TOOL 11: Learning from Promising Practices
in the Accommodation Space

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LEARNING FROM PROMISING PRACTICES IN THE ACCOMMODATION SPACE

Employers must be innovative, practical, and timely when considering accommodation options. The following Promising Practices can be used by businesses to develop accommodation HR policies that are consistent with the requirements of the Accessible Canada Act and can be adopted to your workplace.

Promising Practice 1: Creating A Centralized Accommodation Program

Employers are required by law to provide workplace accommodations. However, by going above and beyond to ensure easy and timely access to accommodations for both applicants and workers, you highlight your business's commitment to disability confidence and workplace inclusion. You can work towards this by developing straightforward policies and processes for workplace accommodations or a centralized accommodation program. A centralized accommodation program can provide a: [1]

Standardized Accommodation Process:

- Streamline your company's accommodation process
- Consolidate subject matter expertise necessary to assess, evaluate, and implement effective and meaningful accommodations
- Create an office or location housing the expertise needed to implement accommodations

Centralized Accommodation Fund:

- Develop an organization-wide fund to support some or all accommodations
- Provide funding at a level removed from the department or unit that the requesting employee works remove direct line
- Remove direct line managers from the procurement process to enable them to say yes to accommodations



LEARNING FROM PROMISING PRACTICES IN THE ACCOMMODATION SPACE

Adopting a centralized accommodation program can yield several benefits: [2]

- Delivers consistent, timely, and streamlined accommodations
- Reduces potential concerns about the costs of workplace accommodations
- Encourages employers to follow through with their legal duty to accommodate
- Establishes clear roles for important actors in the accommodation process (e.g., accommodation coordinator, individuals in IT, HR, Facilities, etc.)
- Communicates to employees that their needs are important and reduces stigma associated with workplace accommodations

The design of a centralized accommodation program is meant to be flexible.

According to the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), offering an organization-wide general fund to support the costs of applicant and worker accommodations is an effective strategy for increasing employment for people with disabilities.³ It mitigates the fear that line and hiring managers may have about lack of budget for workplace accommodations. JAN has developed best practices for establishing a centralized accommodation fund. Visit JAN's website and resources here: <https://askjan.org/index.cfm>

The Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN) on Disability Inclusion has drafted a helpful checklist for the development of a centralized accommodation program. Their checklist covers key considerations for program design, expertise, and staffing, streamlining of processes, funding and accountability and tracking [1]. Visit EARN's website and resources here: <https://askearn.org/>

Without a centralized accommodation process, requests for adjustments may be inconsistently handled across various direct managers and departments. With a formalized model, employers can harmonize accommodation policies and practices across an organization and ensure that all employees are treated fairly.

LEARNING FROM PROMISING PRACTICES IN THE ACCOMMODATION SPACE

Spotlight: CIBC Supports Employees with Exemplary Workplace Accommodation Program

CIBC is committed to meeting the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities in a timely manner, consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity. The purpose of this plan is to outline CIBC’s strategy to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility.

The bank’s philosophy is that by creating a diverse workforce — and providing a welcoming, inclusive, accessible workplace — it will be better able to understand and serve its clients. “CIBC is making inclusion the way we do business,” explained Sarah Matheson, Director Employee Policies and Programs. “We value the perspectives and abilities that each of our team members bring to the table because their unique skills and experiences give us a competitive edge.” For CIBC, providing an inclusive and accessible work environment is a key part of its broader effort to support diversity and foster a culture of belonging. Through its Workplace Accommodation and Ergonomics Program, the bank seeks to ensure that all its team members have what they need to thrive and achieve their very best.

The program is managed by specialists Amy DeMelo and Luke Wilson, who work with team members to understand their needs and find solutions, from assistive equipment to adaptive furniture and flexible work strategies. CIBC is committed to accommodating diverse needs. “Our approach is based on the desire to accommodate versus the duty to accommodate,” said DeMelo. Wilson added, “We manage each request with trust and respect. It’s important for everyone at CIBC to know that we’re here to help.” In 2004, CIBC spent over \$350,000 on workplace accommodations. The bank introduced online content and an automated process to increase program awareness. Education and awareness sessions are also regularly delivered across the organization.

The Workplace Accommodation and Ergonomics Program continues to help CIBC deliver an exceptional and seamless experience for its team members by prioritizing their wellbeing and providing the support they need to perform at their very best – this differentiated experience furthers CIBC’s commitment to inclusion, diversity and accessibility

This Plan is publicly available at our Accessibility at CIBC page at cibc.com. This Plan is also available in an alternate accessible format upon request by contacting us through any of the methods set out on CIBC’s Contact Us page.

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Promising Practice 2: Partnering with People with Lived Experiences and Accessibility Experts to Manage Workplace Accommodations

adVISOR

adVISOR is a managed service designed and delivered by [the INNoVA Solutions](#) that provides support to Canadian businesses to improve the management and implementation of accommodations and workplace adjustments.

adVISOR services are customizable to meet your business needs, from expert consultation and assessments to end-to-end organizational support with accommodation policy, processes, and practices.

With a focus on creating accessible and inclusive workplaces, our service provides:

- A scalable, comprehensive approach
- Access to INNoVA expert consultants
- Our team of expert consultants have a wide range of expertise including;
 - Return to Work
 - Mental Health
 - Assessment Services
 - Assistive/Adaptive Technology
 - Flexible/Hybrid Work
 - Accommodation policy, procedure and practices
- Proactive and responsive interventions, including practical solutions designed for all environments and workplaces.

The adVISOR Framework

The adVISOR framework meets employers where they are at and allows them to engage with the adVISOR service from varying entry points, depending on their particular needs and requirements. adVISOR refers to this as “no wrong door.” adVISOR services work synergistically to provide tailored solutions, whilst promoting inclusive workplaces and helping organizations build towards increased disability confidence:



LEARNING FROM PROMISING PRACTICES IN THE ACCOMMODATION SPACE



adVISOR Direct

adVISOR Direct provides rapid response to improve the identification and implementation of accommodations and workplace adjustments.



adVISOR Engage

adVISOR Engage utilizes collaboration to explore, identify, and customize a range of assessment and accommodation options for employees.



adVISOR Balance

adVISOR Balance moves beyond the individual employee, INNoVA consultants provide support for businesses looking to become more accessible at an organizational level.



adVISOR Intelligence

adVISOR Intelligence offers a customized roadmap to identify gaps, opportunities, and areas for continuous improvement in your accommodations policy, process, and practice through an evidence-based approach using measurement and research.

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

The JAN - Job Accommodation Network (askjan.org) is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on job accommodations and disability employment issues. Based in the United States, the services provided cater to customers around the world for more than 35 years. JAN provides free one-on-one practical guidance and technical assistance on job accommodation solutions, related legislation, and self-employment and entrepreneurship options for people with disabilities.



LEARNING FROM PROMISING PRACTICES IN THE ACCOMMODATION SPACE

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (ccohs.ca) is a national resource for the advancement of workplace health and safety. Their vision includes the elimination of work-related illnesses and injuries by providing credible and relevant tools and resources to improve workplace health and safety programs, guidance on accommodations supports, and encourage attitudes and methods that will lead to improve worker physical and mental health. All products and services are in English/French and are designed in cooperation with national and international occupational health and safety organizations.

Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE)

About Us - CASE (Canadian Association for Supported Employment) is a national association for the supported employment sector. Working with employment service providers, employers, community allies, and stakeholders working toward employment inclusion of people experiencing disability. CASE strive to facilitate full participation in the labour force by offering resources, expertise, and support to service providers.

Neil Squire Society

Neil Squire Society's mission is to use technology, knowledge, and passion to empower Canadian with disabilities. Committed with social inclusion, economic equity, and a productive society, Neil Squire provide support in economic and social inclusiveness for all people with disabilities.

Promising Practice 3: Creating an Accessibility/Assistive Technology Hub

The most requested accommodation in the workplace is assistive technology such as adapted computers, hearing aids, wheelchair ramps, speech communication devices, Braille note-taking computers, etc. In general, requests for assistive technology are seen as reasonable if no undue hardship is involved. This means that unless an accommodation would incur unreasonably large expenses, an employer must make an effort to meet the needs of an employee with a disability.



LEARNING FROM PROMISING PRACTICES IN THE ACCOMMODATION SPACE

Spotlight: TD

In Canada, TD has paved the way when it comes to deploying workplace accommodations. With their development of an assistive technology catalogue, TD has recognized that having a readily available, pre-approved range of equipment is one of the most efficient ways to support employees and their productivity within the workplace.

An assistive technology catalogue allows an organization to curate a specific collection of assistive technology that best suits their policies, processes, practices, and people. At the same time, offering pre-approved equipment removes the procurement waiting game that organizations must play all too often with vendors. With more employees subscribing to the same assistive technology, organizations can also build support networks, sharing tips and tricks for how to best utilize devices or software. Likewise, a narrower range of pre-approved solutions can streamline IT processes and help IT staff provide more in-depth support as they become familiar with a smaller number of products.

TD's assistive technology catalogue highlights various features and capabilities of the assistive technology standards TD has recommended for use. It also explains the characteristics of users who would benefit from their use. Their list is not intended to cover all disability types, but rather the most common solutions which assist the needs of their employees. TD's recommendations include:

- No one product necessarily accommodates the complete needs of individual with disabilities. A combination of hardware, software and services may be required to provide an effective accommodation solution. Therefore, it's essential to conduct a comprehensive assessment which include participation from the person with disabilities in the evaluation, testing and selection of Assistive Technology solutions.
- It's helpful to recognize the compatibility features of Assistive Technology solutions within each of TD's technology environments. While some devices are designed to be 'plug and play' and integrate seamlessly with Windows based operating systems, in some instances, special software drivers and/or programming may be required to allow AT solutions to work with business specific or customized applications.
- When recommending a product, it will be important to identify if the minimum hardware specification of the employee's workstation will be suitable to operate the Assistive Technology product. Please consult with our Assistive Technology Specialists who can assist in determining any limitations / restrictions of AT products and services to interoperate seamlessly across each line of business technology environment.
- To ensure that the solution is compatible and sustainable, it is recommended that one of our Assistive Technology Specialists be consulted during the assessment phase or prior to making any formal product recommendations.

REFERENCES

- [1] Employer Assistance Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (2021). Centralized accommodation programs (CAP) in practice (version 1). https://production-askearn-org.s3.amazonaws.com/EARN_2020_Checklist_Centralized_Accommodation_Programs_ae2962329c.pdf
- [2] Government of Canada (2020). 2020 validation of key findings from the 2019 Treasury Board of Canada secretariat benchmarking study of workplace accommodations in the federal public service. <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/diversity-inclusion-public-service/accessibility-public-service/benchmarking-study-workplace-accommodations/2019-tbs-benchmarking-study-workplace-accommodations-federal-public-service-validation-key-findings.html>
- [3] Job Accommodation Network (n.d.). Best practices in establishing a centralized accommodation fund. <https://askjan.org/articles/Best-Practices-in-Establishing-a-Centralized-Accommodation-Fund.cfm>