



RECRUITMENT

Tool 2: Developing a Disability Confident
Strategy for Recruitment

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DISABILITY CONFIDENT RECRUITMENT APPROACHES

Disability Confident Recruitment Approaches

Across Canada, it remains needlessly difficult for the modern business to attract, recruit, and retain people with disabilities. At the same time, people with disabilities continue to face barriers to employment and economic participation. [1]

There are a variety of organizational approaches to recruitment that help empower more people with disabilities and aid employers to fill vacancies with suitable applicants. These approaches are based upon the shared understanding among employers and the disability sector that things need to be done differently to achieve an inclusive and barrier-free Canada.

“Positive attitudes and even intentions or plans to hire people with disabilities do not lead to hiring on their own; having a formal disability policy is twice as likely to lead to hiring people with disabilities than the lack of stigma alone.” – Araten-Bergman (2016) [2]

Recruitment Approaches

The First Shot Strategy

For a comprehensive description of the First Shot Strategy, and the resources required to implement this approach effectively, please visit the [Inclusive Futures Disability Confident Employers Toolkit](#). [3]

The purpose of the First Shot Strategy is to create a more stable push-and-pull balance in any labour market to support participation in employment among persons with disabilities. This strategy considers:

- **The Push:** The services that push people towards employment
- **The Pull:** The services that help businesses attract qualified applicants with disabilities

The First Shot Strategy hinges upon the idea that we need to make it easier for employers to say “yes, we will go that extra mile to employ someone from this overlooked talent pool.” By working to lift this barrier for employers, job seekers with disabilities will also gain access to the employment opportunities they need and deserve.



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How does the First Shot Strategy Work?

The First Shot Strategy involves opening vacancies for job opportunities to a talent stream of pre-screened applicants with disabilities who gain a guaranteed interview. If the vacancy cannot be filled from this talent pool, the employer returns to their standardized barrier-free recruitment process.

Successful application of the First Shot Strategy requires 3 key players to work together:

1. **The employer**, who forecasts the vacancies that need to be filled in their respective organization and is keen to consider applicants with disabilities, but typically finds it difficult to attract suitable applicants.
2. **The recruitment partner**, a community-based organization with lived experience, who either helps people with disabilities prepare for and find employment or manages relationships with these organizations on the employer's behalf.
3. **The coordinator**, who helps both parties negotiate an agreed-upon middle ground for smooth communication and effective implementation of the recruitment approach.

This strategy helps you as employers and leaders to:

- Attract from the widest possible talent pool, including job seekers with disabilities who are often overlooked
- Increase the access for qualified, pre-screened applicants who would otherwise be overlooked
- Challenge internal biases and promote cultural change
- Develop stronger and deep-rooted partnerships with local disability organizations Fill larger employment vacancies

“645,000 Canadians with disabilities are not working but could work if there were an inclusive labour market” - Morris et al., 2014 [4]



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The Guaranteed Interview & Individual Recommendation Approaches

Guaranteed Interview Approach [1],[5]	Individual Recommendation Approach [6]
• A company develops a guaranteed interview policy to ensure that any applicant with a disability who meets the minimum qualifications for the vacancy will be offered an interview • Recruiters must clearly communicate the guaranteed interview policy to all applicants • Interviewers are trained in how to manage these interviews effectively • Guaranteed interviews enable and empower job seekers with disabilities the chance to demonstrate their potential • Helps to build disability confidence amongst recruiters and interviewers	• An internal employee provides an individual recommendation for a candidate to fill an open position at the company • A single applicant with a disability can apply and be directly appointed because the intermediary is trusted to have done a good job 'pre-screening' • As an employer, you request community-based organizations or agencies for specific referrals for the vacancy

Recruiting Through Disability Organizations & Service Providers

Engaging with local community organizations and employment service providers is a great way for businesses to learn more about barrier-free recruitment. Partnering with a wide variety of community members will enable your business to learn directly from people with lived experience of disability and begin to implement key intersectional changes to become more disability confident.

Building Partnerships

Invite people with disabilities and community-based disability organizations to engage in dialogue. Be sure to indicate that you want to develop a shared understanding of how to build disability confidence of your business. Here are a few points you can focus on: [1]



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- Introduce yourself and your company – its mission, vision, values, business model, etc.
- Share your disability-related experience and commitments as an employer, business, and as a corporate citizen
- Ask disability organizations to introduce themselves and help you understand:
 - The lived experience of people with disabilities in your local community
 - How your company can make it easier for people with disabilities to get hired and advance their careers
 - How you can partner with cross-disability communities to inspire change among your peers and collaborators (e.g., service providers, suppliers, customers, stakeholders, government, etc.)
 - Where you and other companies should go for expert advice, resources, and support to become more inclusive and accessible
 - Where opportunities for collaboration might be found

Specialized Recruitment Assistance

Each disability organization has different areas of focus and specialized skillsets. By partnering with employment service providers during the recruitment process, your business can benefit in the following ways:

- Assistance with determining job matches between applicants' skills and interests, and the job role
- Access to job coaching services, provisions of ongoing vocational rehabilitation, and other training to enhance job opportunities and success
- Facilitation of a healthy employer-employee relationship
- Identification, suggestions, and implementation of potential workplace accommodations (e.g., job coaching, mentorship, flexibility, etc.)

When good relationships are maintained with local disability organizations, both businesses and service providers can support the 3 key player targeted recruitment approach more effectively. For example, businesses can share job vacancies with community-based partners, so they are able to disseminate the job opportunity within their network or opt for the 'Individual Recommendation Approach.' Employment service providers can also:



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- Pre-screen applicants and analyze job duties/tasks to ensure there is a job match before the applicants apply
- Discuss essential job duties, possible issues, and safety procedures with the applicant to ensure they are job-ready
- Identify appropriate and pre-existing sources of support and help make transportation arrangements
- Service providers guide newly hired employees in developing and enhancing self-advocacy skills, as well as “soft skill” such as time management, organizational skills, and social skills

Expert Advisors with Lived Experience of Disability

To ensure that your organization remains educated and informed bring in expert advisors with lived experience of disability. Expert advisors can take a business a long way in their journey towards disability confidence. They can identify critical areas where your business could benefit from training opportunities that enhance the accessibility and inclusivity of your workplace (i.e., training on intersectionality, reflexivity, cross-disability, historical/current disability movements, collective knowledge, human rights models, Accessible Canada Act implementation).

BMO introduces new recruitment program for displaced persons, immigrants, and refugees in effort to provide support and creating employment opportunities for newcomers to Canada and the United States. The BMO Newcomer Talent Program includes a personalized recruitment page that makes it easy for jobseekers to introduce themselves to BMO and explore job opportunities. To help match prospective candidates with open roles, BMO has partnered with two specialized employment organizations: ACCES Employment and Upwardly Global. “This program is designed to make joining the BMO team seamless and attractive for qualified newcomers, helping them build financial independence and social connections as they resettle in North America,” said Karen Collins, Chief Talent Officer, BMO Financial Group. “Supporting an inclusive society by eliminating systemic barriers is fundamental to our Purpose, to Boldly Grow the Good in business and life. We look forward to working with our partner agencies and prospective new members of Team BMO to help them find new careers with us.”



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The Post-Secondary Partnered Approach



**Mock
Interview
Events**



**Information
Events**



**Job
Shadow
Opportunities**



Presentations



Mentorship



Internship

By partnering with local universities and colleges, businesses can establish a talent stream for applicants with disabilities. Further, offering “bridge experiences” such as paid internships, mentoring, and on-the-job training opportunities, can help you connect with new and talented individuals before they hit the job market.

Organize Casual Events

Hosting informal events and open houses for students and recent graduates with disabilities allows an organization to learn more about applicants in a non-professional setting. These types of events also allow potential applicants to tour the premises and speak openly and freely in a social manner. Use informal events as an opportunity to introduce yourself and your company’s values, business reality and workplace culture. Describe the talent you are looking to recruit in the coming months, your recruitment practices, and your commitment to learning.



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Understand the Perspectives of Students and Graduates with Disabilities

Consider asking students and graduates with disabilities about how you can become more disability confident with your recruitment strategies:

- What works and what gets in the way when they look for training and work?
- Why so few graduates with disabilities apply to your company?
- What you could do differently to encourage them to apply?
- What would make it easier for people with disabilities to gain the qualifications you and other local employers are looking for?
- What adjustments should your company be prepared to provide?
- Whether an internship programme or work experience of some kind would be helpful?
 - If yes, how might that be structured?
- Invite innovative proposals, such as “what would you do in our shoes?”

Through these conversations, you begin to:

- ✓ Help students, graduates, and other job seekers imagine themselves working in such an environment
- ✓ Start conversations to bridge-the-gap between young people with disabilities and your colleagues
- ✓ Encourage attendees to consider you as a potential employer

Pop Up: Offering internships or other paid work experiences while applicants are still in school to help integrate individuals into the workplace is a promising method for a smoother transition into the workforce once they graduate.

REFERENCES

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