



UNTAPPED TALENT

B2B GUIDE TO INNOVATIVE HIRING AND RETENTION



This resource is a labour of love. It has been developed by those of us whose passion and daily work is to support people on their journey to employment. Its publication was driven by our deep care for those facing barriers to traditional employment, and respect for the strength and resilience of those experiencing the challenges of poverty.

We know that there are thousands of people in our own community, and in communities across this province, who are ready and willing to work when connected with the right opportunity. Essential to this connection are supportive employers: business owners and managers who are motivated to meet their own employment needs while providing unemployed and under-employed individuals with the stability and dignity that comes with meaningful work.

If you are reading this guide, it is likely that you are a current or potential supportive employer. Employing people can be difficult on its own, and employing people who face extraordinary challenges can be intimidating. This guide will help you navigate the realities of employing people with disabilities and other barriers to employment, equipping you to be an excellent manager to those on their employment journey. It offers inclusive workforce best practices distilled from many decades of experience and expertise from business leaders, human resources professionals and others at the frontlines of supportive employment. It can help your business become more innovative by tapping into readily available talent to meet your hiring needs.

On behalf of community economic development practitioners, I'd like to thank all of the contributors, stakeholders, writers, and designers for making this resource a reality. And I would like to thank the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction for funding this project and getting it into the hands of those who need it most. May it serve to strengthen and support an innovative and inclusive economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Smedley".

Matthew Smedley

*Executive Director & CEO of Mission Possible,
and Project Lead for Untapped Talent*

USING THIS B2B GUIDE

Informative and Easy to Use

Information in this resource has been gathered from business leaders and subject matter experts with experience in developing innovative, inclusive and supportive hiring and retention practices.

Success stories and valuable lessons learned are shared by organizations that employ people with persistent barriers to employment and showcase how businesses benefit by adapting employment practices. Individuals who have overcome adversity also share their unique and insightful personal perspectives around the benefits of being engaged in the workforce.

By sharing these experiences with other businesses, the goal is to provide a useful framework for building capacity within organizations to tap into untapped talent. These practices also benefit communities overall, by getting more people included in the local economy and above the poverty line.

DISCLAIMER: Any views, opinions and guidance set out in this resource and supporting website are provided for information purposes only, and do not purport to be legal and/or professional advice or a definitive interpretation of any law. Anyone contemplating action in respect of matters set out in this resource or website should obtain legal advice.

This resource is divided into three sections:



Business Benefits to Hiring and Retaining Untapped Talent



Recruitment Practices to Gain Access to Different Sources of Talent



Retention Practices to Keep Employees Engaged, Once Hired



Additional helpful resources for employers are included at the end of each Recruitment and Retention section.



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Section 1

BUSINESS BENEFITS of HIRING and RETAINING UNTAPPED TALENT

INTRODUCTION

The New Normal

Staff shortages: they're here! Let's face it; you can't go too far without seeing *Help Wanted*, *We're Hiring*, *Interviews Onsite Today* or *Sorry, We're Closed* signs. Businesses of all sizes are finding it hard to find and keep employees. This reality is motivating employers to rethink employment. Many are reviewing recruitment and retention practices, and making adjustments to remove barriers, as a way to tap into talent previously overlooked.

In Canada, we have an aging boomer population, increased retirements, declining birth rates, steady job growth and fewer people to fill opportunities. A 2018 report by the Business Development Bank of Canada concluded that labour shortages are holding Canadian businesses back and are most serious in Atlantic Canada, British Columbia and Ontario¹. And, in a recent Deloitte study of over 750 hiring decision makers, 76% indicated that attracting candidates is the #1 challenge in their organization².

Yet, there is an entire pool of who people who can work, want to contribute and who are often overlooked as a result of traditional employment practices. Recruitment practices aimed at screening candidates out once served a purpose, but in today's labour market, are outdated.

We're operating in a time where we need all talent on deck; people with disabilities (visible or not), people who face persistent barriers to employment, including individuals living with addiction and other mental health challenges, barriers that have typically excluded people from the workforce. Seriously? Yes! Employing people with diverse abilities, who live and do business in our communities, has value to organizations and to society as a whole.

¹ BDC Study – Labour Shortage: Here to Stay, September 2018

² Glassdoor Deloitte – Statistical Reference Guide for Recruiters, 2018

B2B Resource

This business to business resource aims to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) easily adapt hiring and retention practices, in most cases at no cost. Learn from other businesses on how to be more responsive to workforce needs, stay competitive and viable, simply by doing things differently.

Doing things differently doesn't need to be difficult, but with major workforce shortages currently facing Canadian employers, now is the perfect time to innovate employment practices to find and keep available talent. This Guidebook will help you:

- Adapt recruitment and retention practices to gain access to a wider resource pool
- Learn from other businesses about what's worked best for their companies
- Understand what could be holding people back from working with your business

This resource could also be useful for large employers who are interested in learning more about how to adapt to be a more inclusive employer to access talent.

Why Hire from This Diverse Talent Pool?

Approximately 1 in 5 Canadians have some kind of disability or barrier, visible or not³. Simply put, there is a largely untapped pool of people who are ready, willing and able to work!

Many business leaders already recognize that workforce inclusion of people with diverse skill sets is important to the success of their organizations. This includes business led organizations like the Presidents Group, a leadership table for BC employers and its online Community of Accessible Employers, Discover Ability Network in Ontario, Prospect in Alberta, the Hire for Talent network in Atlantic Canada, and Social Enterprise employers in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Business to business networks sharing successes, driving change - and leading the way with intentional, inclusive hiring in Canada, to the benefit of their organizations.

Why Inclusive Cultures Matter – Business Benefits of Diversity

Progressive employers recognize that workforce inclusion of diverse talent offers significant benefits to their business. Well documented research shows that organizations with inclusive cultures, compared with those that are not, provide many competitive business advantages⁴:

6x MORE LIKELY

- to be **innovative**
- to **anticipate change** and **respond effectively**

2x MORE LIKELY to meet or exceed financial goals

GENERATE 1.4x more revenue

3 Statistics Canada Report on Employment and Disability, 2017

4 Deloitte Human Capital Trends – Diversity and Inclusion at Work, 2017



Consumers prefer to see themselves reflected and valued in companies they do business with. Being inclusive of people from different backgrounds, with different skill sets and abilities increases a business's financial success through an increased customer base. Consumer research consistently shows:

- 92% of consumers favour, and 87% would give their business to companies that hire people with diverse abilities⁵
- 53% of Canadians either have a disability or a close connection to someone who does
- For your business, that means tapping into the estimated **\$55.4 billion CDN** buying power of Canadians with a disability, which grows to **\$366.5 billion CDN** annually when you add in friends and family⁶

A consumer advantage, financial and innovation advantages, in addition to access to talent. The question really is, can your business afford not to be inclusive?

5 *Discover Ability Network*

6 *Canadian Business SenseAbility*

Getting Started

Now that you know more about what is included in this resource, the question is where to start? Here are a few suggestions on how you can use this Guide to help you begin to innovate your hiring and retention practices:

- This resource has a lot of valuable content and may take some time to review, decide whether you want to go through it all at once, or take-in smaller bites to review
- If you have time and are super-motivated to find new sources of talent, sit down and review the entire resource or one entire section at once, highlighting practices that your business could benefit from the most
- Provide the resource link to your managers, and/or hiring lead in your company and ask them for feedback on opportunities to adapt current practices
- Identify key areas you are most interested in from the Table of Contents and review those sections first to highlight where to start
- Start with the Business Self-Assessment on page 19 – this could help to determine whether or not this information is relevant to your business needs

If you are already an employer who values having employees involved in workplace decision making, start by asking your employees, what hiring or human resource practices they suggest be adapted to make it easier for others to work with your business. Remember, if you are experiencing a staff shortage, your employees are feeling it too by an ongoing increased workload.



“ **Employer Quote:** Hiring managers who believe in the value of everyone in the workplace pays off. **When employees enjoy coming to work, there is a real sense of purpose.** They feel connected to each other and community, they have increased self-esteem by contributing to something. This holds true for all employees, not just people with barriers. ”



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A SUPPORTIVE EMPLOYER TO ENGAGE UNTAPPED TALENT

What is Supportive Employment

Being a supportive employer helps people to lead productive, purposeful lives, earn an income and experience social inclusion. As a business, it means providing employment that supports individuals who have struggled in the past with earning an income due to barriers to employment. These barriers could be disability related, other factors like social stigma and bias against people with mental health or addictions, or systemic barriers like racism, transphobia and homophobia.

Diversity already exists in our communities, and among your customers. It's innovative because supportive employers intentionally and actively make a point of encouraging applicants from diverse backgrounds to apply to work with their organization. They invest time and resources to remove barriers for employees, and they hire managers that also support that. The value and importance of inclusion is built into the business right from the top and senior managers believe in it.

Supportive employers focus on people, flexibility, communication, building trust, connection, and positive relationships within their organizations, to the advantage of their business.



What Motivates Organizations to be Inclusive?

There are many reasons business leaders choose to provide a supportive workplace and it's different for every company. Leaders will say they are driven to be inclusive because they:

- Clearly understand the business advantage
- Have personal experience with adversity or barriers to employment
- Are motivated to make a positive difference for others
- Take intentional steps to ensure their workforce reflects community and customers
- Are of a generation where inclusion is valued and expected
- It's their mission and they have established their business with inclusion in mind

How Can my Business be an Inclusive Employer?

The following key principles are important to consider as you set your sights on being an inclusive employer. Actually, you may find this approach benefits not just people who need additional support to be successful at work, but all employees in general as it creates a genuinely more positive, engaged and caring workplace culture:

CREATE A CULTURE OF INCLUSION – intentionally building it into your business mission, vision and values

RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE – fostering professional, considerate and open communication where all employees can do their best work

ABILITY FOCUSED – recognizing abilities, focusing on what a person can bring to the role, as opposed to what they cannot

FLEXIBILITY – implementing work adaptations and reasonable adjustments to make it possible for people with barriers to work with your organization

INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT – acknowledging that each person is unique, and may require different things in order to do their best work

SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS AND PROVIDE EFFECTIVE ONBOARDING, TRAINING AND/OR COACHING - so people know what they are doing and can get up to speed faster

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS – working together with organizations in your community that are business focused and can provide you with resources tailored to your business



RE-THINKING WORK AND WHAT'S POSSIBLE FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

What Work Can Look Like

If you are struggling to find and keep staff, it's a prime opportunity to re-think how work is performed in your organization. Not all jobs need to be full-time and not every job seeker wants to or can work full-time hours.

Being flexible is key. It provides an opportunity for employers to innovate how business goals are achieved by rethinking jobs, how they are structured, delivered and performed. For example, your business may have temporary needs for someone to do certain tasks on a one-off basis, on a casual basis, on-call part-time or a regular part-time basis.

The diagram below, developed by LEDlab and Urban Core, outlines the different ways people engage in work in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Some individuals may only have the capacity right now to work more informally or periodically, until they gain confidence and stability in their lives as they re-enter the workforce.



Inclusion Tip *Flexibility is a Win/Win*

Hiring someone for 2 or 4 hours a week or month can be a real win for business. It's a great opportunity to get odd jobs completed like cleaning out a store room, filing, general office cleaning, or other one-off jobs. Being able to offer a small amount of hours weekly or monthly can work for your business and your employee. For a person who has been absent from the workforce for a period of time, or who is learning to live with an episodic condition, small amounts of work can support successful reintegration into the workforce.

Income Generation Continuum

INFORMAL

Binning,
vending,
etc.

HONORARIUM

One-off temporary
tasks (e.g. event
clean-up)

PART-TIME CASUAL

"0-Hour Contract"
as-needed work

PART-TIME REGULAR

Guaranteed
regular hours

FULL-TIME

More than
35 hours per
week

When ready, people may progress, and adapt to more work, or be able to work more consistent hours. Think about opportunities in your organization and where people who experience barriers to employment can contribute somewhere on the continuum from Honorarium to Full-time.



Inclusion Tip *Different Work Options*

If you are interested in exploring different work options to benefit your business, contact a local employment services provider like WorkBC or Community Living organizations in BC. Share this resource with them to help start the conversation around viable options for your business needs. Ask if they collaborate with other employment services providers, including social enterprises or non-profit organizations, to make it easier to expand your reach for talent.

How Employment or Social Assistance Factors In

People with disabilities and people who have persistent barriers to employment can work and earn additional income while receiving social assistance. Your employees receiving social assistance are responsible for managing their earnings, not you as the employer. As a supportive employer, you will want to have a good understanding of the parameters. Although many people would prefer to earn the most they can, people with barriers rely on those financial supports and associated programs like counselling and Pharmacare. They may prefer to earn within the maximum amounts so it doesn't jeopardize what's secure, especially with uncertainty that comes from starting a new job opportunity or re-connecting to the workforce after a long period of absence.

There are earnings exemptions that limit how much a person can earn, either monthly or annually before wages are deducted dollar for dollar, which vary depending on the province in Canada. You can Google 'earning exemptions' for your province or territory to find specific information for your region.

If you are in BC, you can find more information about earning exemptions here:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/services-for-people-with-disabilities/disability-assistance/on-disability-assistance/annual-earnings-exemption>.

THE TALENT POOL

Potential Workforce

The untapped talent pool is made up of people who have different backgrounds and experiences. It may include people living with disabilities including mental illness, and others who live with barriers, sometimes persistent barriers to employment. Ultimately, the potential workforce includes people who are often overlooked when it comes to employment:

- People challenged by low literacy, cycles of poverty, lack of stable housing, trauma, abuse, poor social skills and lack of stable social connections
- People with diverse cognitive/intellectual abilities, learning disorders or autism
- People with physical disabilities including mobility, hearing or vision loss
- People living with illnesses such as Parkinson's, diabetes, epilepsy, MS, gastrointestinal disorders, arthritis or recovering from cancer, a brain injury, stroke or heart disease

To understand the potential resources of this diverse untapped talent pool in Canada:

- There are 6.2 million Canadians living with disabilities – the largest of all minority groups
- More than 75% of people with disabilities acquire their disability as adults and anyone can become a part of this group at any time, whether temporarily or permanently⁷
- Close to 10% of people in Canada live in poverty
- By the time Canadians reach 40 years of age, 1 in 2 will have or will have had a mental illness, including depression, anxiety, PTSD, an addiction problem⁸
- The employment rate of people with disabilities is half what it is for people without disabilities
- The unemployment rates for people living with a severe mental illness is 70% to 90%⁹

⁷ Discover Ability Network

⁸ Canadian Association for Mental Health, 2019

⁹ Mental Health Commission of Canada, *Aspiring Workforce*, 2019

Barriers

Barriers to employment can be either personal barriers experienced by the individual, or barriers that are present in the workplace, attitudes towards people who are different, HR policies and practices, whether intentional, conscious or not. Some workplace barriers can actually be **barricades** to employment.

Consider how the following personal barriers may play out in your organization or other businesses today, preventing people from gaining employment:

- Stigma and trauma related to poverty, mental illness and addictions, abuse, social isolation and homelessness
- Lack of life skills, digital literacy, employment experience, education or lack of early exposure to positive opportunities
- A lack of Canadian work experience and language barriers
- Low literacy, gaps in work history, lack of employment skills, lack of family support, attitudinal and behavioral issues
- Multiple disabilities
- Discrimination based on Indigenous background, ethnic origin or gender expression

People who experience multiple barriers are not well served by traditional job search methods, employment programs and rigid hiring processes aimed at screening-out candidates. The real barriers are not necessarily addictions, it's things like having a learning disability, poor self-esteem, mental illness, or lack of readiness for the workplace. That, combined with unconscious bias towards people who face multiple barriers, can keep an individual in a constant cycle of unemployment, under-employment and poverty.

Having a Job Helps to Overcome Barriers and Transforms Lives

Being an inclusive, supportive employer changes lives every day! These employers are proven to enable, empower and nurture individuals to overcome the challenges they face¹⁰. As part of the research for this guidebook, a number of people from diverse backgrounds (age, gender, abilities, mental health, addictions, Indigenous and ethnic backgrounds) who reside and work in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside shared their experiences with supportive employment.

Each person talked about what unique inclusive recruitment and/or retention practice worked for them, and how their lives benefits as a result. These employees also shared advice for employers who were interested in being more inclusive.

¹⁰ *Success Themes in Supportive Employment, Enterprising Non-Profits, 2014*

It Also Transforms Business Culture

Throughout this B2B resource, Employer Comments, Lessons Learned, Inclusion Tips and Case Studies are provided to showcase different ways organizations have benefited from inclusion.

Business leaders who employ people who face or have faced multiple barriers to employment also report personal change and resiliency in many people who were connected to jobs in their businesses:

- We are constantly amazed by what people have gone through and how resilient they are. People are grateful for the opportunity and make fantastic employees, are dedicated and really value the opportunity they have been given.
- Most surprising - in corporate environments people talk about life balance issues. We've not heard that here one single time. We don't need to keep our employees engaged; we just need to listen to them.
- The sense of dignity that is gained through work and the community and connection that comes with the work.
- It pays dividends over the long term and will bring stability.
- People can have a change in mindset as to how they see themselves - there is a real growth in confidence.
- There is a "dignity" in taking and having responsibility. Employment provides dignity and purpose and provides a ladder out of poverty.



Lessons Learned

If lessons can be learned from employers in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver who employ people who live with or experience barriers to employment, these lessons can be applied to any business anywhere with occasional, casual needs or part/ full-time employment opportunities.

WHAT DOES SUPPORTIVE EMPLOYMENT MEAN TO YOU?

“ When I went through depression, it was so hard. I have stability now, I am in touch with my family again, I’m a whole new me and it changed my life. ”

“ Not working was the death of me. Working now, not just to make money, **I can live with little and be happy.** ”

“ It provides meaning - doing something where **you can make a difference in the world.** ”

“ When people ask what you do, and you are doing nothing...work gives me purpose to my day. ”

“ Reduces debt. Diet improves. I like to have something to do. ”

“ Confidence and purpose - gaining that back is so important. ”

“ A place that’s supportive, understanding, flexible with hours, and helps me cope. ”

“ I have a home, a stable life, which I appreciate, and I am grateful. ”



“ I am a better mom, a better person and giving back when I can to help someone else. ”

“ I’m nicer to others and nicer to my son. **Now there’s hope.** Previously I threw money away but now I’m more aware of where my money goes. ”

“ It’s an environment where I feel supported and heard, where there’s room for growth and if I make a mistake, there’s room for compassion and respect. ”

“ It can be more promising for family, kids, grand-kids and improves depression. Work helps to cope with that, **and it means I can make friends.** ”

“ Gets me back on my feet, builds self-esteem and confidence which is completely lost when in deep trouble and depression. ”

“ So many people look at addiction and they look at you like you are never going to be anything. When people see people like me come back, they have a different look – it can humanize you again. ”

“ I have a sense of worth, make good choices and do good in my community. ”





Employer Case Study: *Mission Possible*

In 2007, the leadership team of Mission Possible held focus groups and surveyed residents living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The top issue after the need for more adequate housing was the lack of employment opportunities available to those challenged by poverty. While **many residents had the desire and ability to work, their disabilities and various barriers to traditional employment made accessing work difficult**. They felt overlooked simply for where they live or because they need flexibility and are not able to work full-time.



In response to this need, Mission Possible began to create exterior property cleaning jobs. To help facilitate more people moving into employment opportunities, **Mission Possible developed a model that begins with training that focuses on soft-skill development**. This is complemented by regular employment coaching with trained staff. And finally, transitional employment is offered in their social enterprise that allows individuals to start out at a manageable pace and increase their workload based on their personal capacity. The goal is to offer recent, supported work experience as a stepping stone into a permanent job with another employer—like you!

This supportive employment approach creates impact that is real and highly visible! **Those who have not worked for years quickly begin to see their physical and mental health improve, their stress levels decrease, and their sense of confidence and dignity soar**. They also begin to break out of isolation and feel more connected and included in the community and economy. And many are able to access more adequate housing with the additional income they can earn.



Fast-forward a decade and this impact has continued with demonstrable success. Mission Possible, along with multiple other social enterprises in Vancouver collectively **generate over \$16M in revenue, employing over 2,200 individuals with barriers to employment¹¹**.

The key piece to this achievement is due to the supportive practices of social enterprises. The majority of the individuals employed are able to succeed not because of extensive classroom training, but because they are hired by employers who recognize that although they have experienced trauma, illness, accidents, or other challenges in their lives, they have gifts, talents, assets and abilities to offer. **They simply need a supervisor who has the right mix of empathy and best practices to help them thrive.**

BUSINESS SELF-ASSESSMENT

Do you need to innovate recruitment and retention practices to find staff for your business?
Are you intrigued about inclusive hiring and don't know where to start?

The following questions may help prompt greater interest in learning and developing more inclusive practices to meet current and future workforce needs.

Ten Quick Yes or No Questions to Help you Get Started

1. Do you have job openings or a need for someone to work with your business?
2. Is it challenging for your company to attract and find candidates for job openings?
3. Is your organization connected to the community you do business in? If not, would you like it to be?
4. Are your customers diverse?
5. Do you provide employees with a respectful workplace?
6. Do you show you care about your staff and promote a healthy work-life balance?
7. Could your business be more flexible and provide occasional or part-time hours in addition to full-time hours of work?
8. Do you consider that underlying bias (conscious or not) may shape your hiring decisions?
9. Do you currently have a culture in your workplace that values inclusion of people facing or experiencing barriers to employment? If not, do you aspire to have a more inclusive culture in the future?
10. To meet your workforce needs, are you open to adjust your typical hiring practices to reach qualified job seekers you may not have considered in the past?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then your business is ready. Read on. This B2B Guide for innovative hiring and retention will help!



Section 2 RECRUITMENT PRACTICES to GAIN ACCESS to DIVERSE TALENT

This section highlights innovative ways for employers to adapt recruitment practices, including candidate sourcing, interviews and the selection process, to gain access to a wider talent pool.

EMPLOYER BRANDING

Most business leaders recognize the importance of developing a strong consumer brand, one that attracts customers to your business. The same concept applies to your employment brand. Whether you run a small business or a large company, having a strong employer brand will attract more people who want to work with you. A business that is seen as providing employees with a caring, respectful place to work, is highly valued in today's employment market. This can be leveraged to make it easier and more cost effective for you to hire and retain from a much wider talent pool.

Be creative when designing your employment brand:

- Put your employees centre stage and include short video testimonials—on your website or send via social media—of diverse employees sharing their career path and why they love working for you.
- Share “A Day in the Life” profiles of diverse employees working in different jobs.
- Seek feedback from diverse groups of people on how your employment brand can attract diverse candidates.



Key Elements of a Strong Employer Brand

Like your 'Customer Value Proposition', the most important part of a strong employer brand is your 'Employee Value Proposition' – what you offer your employees. The following five elements will bring your value proposition to life as an innovative, inclusive employer:

CULTURE – A healthy workplace culture is characterized by trust, collaboration, responsibility and support. It aligns with the company's goals and values and is made up of positive relationships between colleagues, managers and leaders. Caring, empathetic managers are crucial. Through coaching and encouragement they set their employees up for success including those with barriers to employment.

WORK ENVIRONMENT – Factors that contribute to a positive work environment range from understanding job responsibilities to having a healthy work-life balance. Other factors include a sense of autonomy, personal achievement, respect and recognition.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES – Inclusive employers focus on capacity building through training, coaching and feedback. They provide flexible job opportunities, which gives people many ways to engage in work, and for companies to tap into diverse talent.

COMPENSATION – Employee satisfaction with compensation and rewards. Important considerations are fairness and equity. Supportive employers also consider whether non-traditional compensation may be of value, including bonuses and meal plans.

BENEFITS – This includes typical benefits like health care, as well as others such as personal days, wellness initiatives, assistance with childcare and respite opportunities.

Website & Careers Page

Your website tells the world who you are, what you do and how you do it. It's also an opportunity to promote your company to potential candidates. Start by making sure your website is accessible, so people can easily access information. Is your application process creating an unintended barrier? Ask a diverse group of people to "test drive" your careers page and highlight any areas that are not accessible or that can be improved.

A separate and dedicated careers page provides information that demonstrates why your business is an employer of choice. Things to include on your careers page, in addition to current job openings:

- Your mission, values and employment awards recognition
- How to apply, including accessible options for applying in person or by mail
- The recruitment and selection process
- Supports available for people with disabilities, or other people who experience barriers to employment



Building Community Partnerships

Community partners and employment service providers can help you find new sources of talent, skilled employees that you might have overlooked. There are many great organizations that provide supportive employment programs for people who live with or have experienced barriers to employment, such as people with disabilities, Indigenous people or new immigrants. This includes social enterprises who have built successful business models to support local communities. In British Columbia, for example, WorkBC and Community Living BC are there to help support people with disabilities to obtain employment, at no cost to your business.



You can also contract with community partners to deliver certain aspects of your business, especially where you are finding it difficult to hire staff.

Diversity Statement

Send a clear message to job applicants that your business strives to provide an inclusive workplace and that you encourage candidates with diverse abilities to apply. Include a Commitment to Diversity statement on your website or include it in your company Mission, Vision, Values.

Examples of Diversity Statements include:

- *We are a social enterprise that provides customers with a social return on investment. Our mission is to provide top quality professional services while also offering job opportunities to people who have barriers to employment, such as poverty and disability. (CleanStart BC)*
- *Vancity welcomes applications from all qualified job seekers, and if you are an applicant with a disability, we will work with you to make reasonable workplace accommodations you may need for your best work performance.*
- *A career at ICBC is more than a job. It's an opportunity to be part of a talented, diverse and inclusive team in an environment that promotes growth and development.*



Inclusion Tip *Employee Value Proposition*

The best way to ensure that your Employee Value Proposition hits the mark with inclusion is to ask the experts: your employees. Ask what they like the most about working with your company, if they view the business to be supportive and what you can do to provide a more inclusive environment. Include all staff in these conversations. You can do this through team meetings, an informal online survey, 1:1 meetings, focus groups or through an employee engagement survey. You can also reach out to a community partner for ideas and support.



What to Expect When Working with an Employment Service Provider

Sharing your business goals, values and workplace culture will help an employment service provider to understand your unique business needs. As an employer, don't be afraid to ask questions, be clear about your expectations and share the reality of your business. Having an open discussion upfront will set everyone up for success as you work together to find talent.

The best way for a partner to understand what it's like to work with your business, is for a service provider to spend some time in your workplace, observing how work is done. This enables them to better assess match - what candidates would be a good fit for the job duties, the team and your work environment.



The following checklist was provided by Open Door Group, a non-profit that specializes in helping support individuals with barriers find employment. These are services and resources that are typically available to employers when working with a community partner:

✓ **A supported approach to accessing local candidates**

- Identify needs and match those with local candidates
- Develop job-preparation workshops that specifically target the needs of a specific employer or industry

✓ **Ongoing support post-placement**

- Follow up support to both the employer and new hire based on need
- On-the-job coaching for candidates to help support onboarding

✓ **Access to training**

- A variety of training for managers and staff based on desire/need (e.g. Mental Health First Aid, Diversity in the Workplace, etc.)
- Connecting employers to additional training offered in the community

✓ **Support navigating and accessing valuable resources**

- Government resources, including wage subsidies (when applicable)
- Community resources including accessibility supports & assessments





Inclusion Tip *Flexibility*

To be a more supportive employer and gain access to a wider talent pool, are you open to a flexible work schedule or working from home options? In your postings, do you make a point of inviting applicants from diverse backgrounds and abilities to apply?



Here are some questions to ask an employment services provider in your community, to help you assess if they are the right partner for your business:

- What services do they provide to support the employer throughout the recruitment, onboarding and probationary periods?
- Are they open to visiting your workplace in advance of introducing any candidates in order to view the work environment and gain a clear understanding of the job duties?
- How do they prepare job seekers for employment and what kind of support do they provide after hire?
- Will they work onsite in your workplace to support training and onboarding, if needed?
- Can the service provider help to prepare your existing team to welcome a person with a barrier such as a disability?





Employer Case Study: *Gabi and Jules*

In Port Moody, British Columbia, a small municipality east of Vancouver, you will find a little bakery and coffee shop called Gabi and Jules. Known for their delicious pies, and other yummy offerings, Gabi and Jules is also known for something special: they are an inclusive, supportive employer. As they say on their website, “Our mission is to passionately create exceptional pies and baked goodness in a collaborative environment inclusive of individuals of all abilities.”

*Lisa Beecroft and her husband Patrick named their bakery after their two daughters, one of whom has Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Lisa wanted to create a place where families with children with ASD would feel welcome. She also wanted to **create a workplace that recognized the value in everyone and where people with disabilities, ASD in particular, are welcome, can contribute to the workplace and build employment skills.***

*As a small business without a dedicated human resources team, Gabi and Jules has partnered with employment service providers to help fill job vacancies and to deliver on their commitment to be a supportive, inclusive employer. **Lisa has found it helpful to be clear from the start with any partner that she works with about the support that she needs as an employer.** Asking questions and setting clear expectations has helped Lisa and employment partners to work effectively together.*

*Lisa hears often from customers that they come to Gabi and Jules because they feel welcome – they never feel judged. **And candidates come to Lisa, with resume in hand, because they know that Gabi and Jules is a supportive employer; they want to be part of that!** Because the Beecrofts were intentional with their vision, mission and goals for the bakery right from the start, their employer brand has sent a strong, clear message: everyone is welcome here.*



DEFINING JOB REQUIREMENTS

Traditional and non-traditional ways to define job requirements can give you access to a wider talent pool; you may have otherwise not been aware of.

Non-traditional: Informal, Honorarium and Part-Time Casual Jobs

There are employment programs in communities that allow for a slower integration back into work for people absent from the workforce for a lengthy period. This approach allows people to successfully re-integrate at a pace they can handle and begin to work more hours on the pathway to a sustainable income. These programs could be highly valuable to your business as they reduce the level of ongoing employment commitment and could provide an opportunity for people in your community to work.

It is important that anyone working with your company on an informal or part-time basis be covered under WorkSafe BC. If employed directly with your business, they should also be on payroll, receiving an amount that is at least minimum wage.

Have Odd Jobs?

If your business has a need for one-off 'odd jobs' or casual labour, you could be creating meaningful opportunities for people in your community to earn money, increase their skills, gain experience and begin to improve their livelihoods. Contact a social enterprise, community living organization or employment service program provider in your community to discuss your needs. These organizations can provide people who they pay to meet your requirements.

Traditional: Regular Part-Time and Full-Time Opportunities

For more traditional opportunities, the following will help you define requirements prior to conducting a candidate search.



Job Description

A thoughtfully crafted job description will help determine what's needed for the position and target recruitment for qualified candidates. It also helps existing employees fully understand their job duties and assists with performance management.

The following key elements will help you to develop a strong job description.

JOB TITLE When creating a job title, be specific, short and simple. Steer clear of non-traditional job titles such as “Rock Star Line Cook”, “Warehouse Ninja” or “Administrative Unicorn.” Consider the diversity of your audience when they read the job title – will they know what it means? Words like “rock star” and “ninja” are gendered: they tend to appeal more to male candidates, which means that you may be excluding half of your potential candidate pool right from the start.

COMPANY AND JOB SUMMARY Summarize the job duties and share important information about your company to potential candidates. It's a perfect opportunity to explain why your business is a great place to work by sharing your commitment to diversity and inclusion, important elements of your employer brand, a definition of your workplace culture and values.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES List the key responsibilities and activities of the job. Clarify the tasks before you start and consider the specific qualifications and skills needed by the person doing the job. Keep in mind as you write this section, especially if your intent is to be inclusive, to differentiate between duties that are essential—bona fide occupational requirements—and those that aren't.

QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS Education, previous work experience (paid and volunteer), certifications, soft skills such as problem solving, and communication skills, etc. should be included

in this section. Just like with the responsibilities and duties section, consider what is required and what is not.

- Are you hiring for fit, attitude or qualities?
- Can you train for skills that might not be strong, or experience not yet gained?
- Are there parts of a job, like repetitive tasks, that can be carved-out from the full job description, to make it possible to create an opportunity for someone less skilled to contribute and still get your business needs met?

JOB POSTINGS Ensure job postings support your brand proposition and include the following:

- **How to apply:** online, email, in person
- **What's required:** do you require a resume, cover letter or a copy of certification?
- **Salary and benefits:** the range of compensation or hourly rate of pay and any relevant benefits and key perks that would appeal to potential job seekers
- **Location:** work location
- **Status:** part-time, full-time, on call, temporary, contract
- **Hours:** hours that the employee will work





Inclusion Tip

Inclusive Language

Before posting the job, review the job description for any language that is not inclusive. Asking for another person's feedback can help you identify any possible unconscious bias. Is the language easy to understand for those whose first language is not English? Do you really need a person to have the level of qualifications, skills and previous experience you have always asked for or have things changed since the last time you hired for this job? What could you reasonably adjust within the job description to be more inclusive and tap into a larger talent pool?

SOURCING CANDIDATES

To attract a wide, diverse pool of talented job seekers, you need to engage with people in a variety of ways.

To reach candidates, it's no longer enough to simply advertise a job in one place. This is where your employment brand can help – the stronger the brand, the greater the interest will be in working with your business.

Sourcing Options

Here are some ideas to reach potential employees for your business:

- **Use your Website** — Add a banner to your home page that announces, “We are hiring! Apply now!” Include your Commitment to Diversity statement in a spot that is easy for potential candidates to see.
- **Engage Through Social Media** — Reach candidates through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. These are great places to share your inclusive workforce success stories, highlight innovative hiring and promote your business as a great place to work.
- **Work with an Employment Service Provider** — Contact your community partner or employment service provider, provide the job description and seek referrals. Ask if they can customize an employment initiative for your company. Can they upskill people in the community by providing skills training and certification with your business in mind? If you had the need, you could hire multiple new employees at one time that way.
- **Use Job Boards** — If you advertise your job openings on job boards such as Indeed.com and on Craigslist, be sure to include that diverse candidates are welcome to apply. Also consider websites and job boards that are unique to industries and specialized free job boards to reach candidates with diverse abilities in Canada.
- **Collaborate and Expand Your Network** — Share job openings via email with colleagues and customers, business and industry groups, or training institutions, especially those that have programs aimed at your inclusive hiring efforts.



- **Attend Targeted Career Fairs** — Seek out and attend inclusive hiring fairs in your community that have a proven audience of qualified, diverse candidates. In addition to a hiring manager or member of your human resources team, consider inviting other employees to attend and share their experiences as an employee.
- **Build Candidate Pools** — If you have regular openings, you can also host monthly information sessions about opportunities and invite people to attend to find out more about the jobs you have to offer, what you look for in candidates and how to apply.
- **Create an Employee Referral Program** — Invite your employees to help you find talent. Who knows better what it's like to work with your company than existing employees?
- **Employment Agencies** — For jobs that are hard to fill, when time is of the essence, or you don't have the staff to look after the hiring process, consider working with an employment agency (for a fee). Be sure to let them know you are an inclusive employer and welcome diverse applicants.



Employer Case Study: *Common Thread*

*Nestled in a bright, light-filled corner of a top floor warehouse in East Vancouver is Common Thread, a cooperative social enterprise that provides **practical and flexible training and employment in industrial sewing** for people who are living with mental health challenges, or who are experiencing other employment barriers.*

*Participants can **work from home assembling craft kits, or at the East Vancouver location where they have flexibility in the number of hours they work.***

The crafting program is about social engagement as much as it is about earning an income. A program manager visits participants in their homes, brings them supplies, gathers assembled kits and will also just sit, have tea and visit. For a person living with a serious mental illness, these visits are an opportunity for regular social connection.



REVIEWING APPLICATIONS

Now it's time to review and screen applications. Two steps are highlighted below to get you to a short-list of candidates quickly.

Step 1: Screen Candidates – Yes, Maybe, No

Based on information in a resume, knowledge of the applicant, a referral recommendation and possibly a cover letter, you are assessing applications for the following criteria:

At this stage you may choose to intentionally screen-in applicants who identify as being from a group that has experienced barriers to employment, especially if you are motivated toward inclusion and the candidate has been referred by a trusted community partner. This is a chance to easily increase diversity within the selection process and to provide an opportunity for people who are often underrepresented in the workforce to be considered. If they don't have the skills required, they can then be screened out.

Does the candidate meet the basic requirements for the job? Yes Maybe No

Step 2: Take a Closer Look

Things to consider as you take a closer look at your 'Yes' applications:

- Can the applicant meet the bona fide occupational requirements of the position?
- Do they have the required education, certifications and/or licences? If not, is this something you can provide on the job? Is there a community partner that can help?
- Are you going for the most qualified person, or are you open to considering fit?
- Are you able to increase diversity by providing mentorship for someone with less experience?

After the second step you should have a short list of ideally, three to five applicants and are ready to move to the interview stage.



Inclusion Tip **Community Partnerships**

Build an ongoing relationship with a community partner that specializes in supporting underrepresented groups, such as people recovering from addictions, mental illness, Indigenous people and people with disabilities. These groups are rich with untapped talent and reach out in different ways in the community to engage with local unemployed job seekers. For example, many will host free meals or other gatherings that bring together people in the community to talk about employment opportunities.





Inclusion Tip

Opportunity for Disclosure

You may not know if the candidate identifies as having a disability or is from a diversity group unless you encourage and provide an opportunity for disclosure during the application process. While you cannot ask if the person has a disability, you can ask them to let you know if they require any accommodations, or ask what adjustments, if any, would be required for the candidate to do their best.

Pitfalls to Avoid

- **UNCONSCIOUS BIAS** A common unconscious bias that affects hiring managers is called Similarity Bias. Simply put, we prefer people who are like us. If we see on a resume that a candidate grew up in our hometown or went to our school, we may develop an affinity towards them without realizing it. Focus on matching applicants' abilities and experience with the job requirements.
- **PLACING AN EMPHASIS ON HOBBIES AND INTERESTS** It's common to associate an applicant who has played team sports as being a team player. You might not consider that a person who has diverse physical abilities, or who didn't have early access to play team sports due to socio-economic status, may have the same skills.
- **USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO SCREEN APPLICANTS** While reviewing an applicant's social media profiles may provide a broader view than just a resume does, it also may highlight things that are irrelevant to the job. It's best to avoid looking at the social media profiles of applicants.
- **SCREENING OUT RESUMES FOR SPELLING ERRORS** If you are hiring for a job that requires a high attention to detail and excellent written communication skills, then a resume free of spelling errors is important. However, if the job doesn't require that, consider the other essential skills and abilities without focusing on errors. A candidate who has experience working with their hands, cooking, assembling kits or picking and packing orders, may not need strong written skills.





Employer Case Study: *Embers Staffing Solutions*

*Embers is Canada's only non-profit temporary staffing agency, providing socially responsible temp services for companies in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. Their mission is to **provide clients with high-quality, reliable, professional workers that exceed their expectations, and to support workers to improve their skills and advance their careers.***

Embers was launched in 2008 to reach people in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside that needed help in transitioning back to work. As a temporary staffing company founded and based in Vancouver, Embers delivers a higher level of service to employers requiring temp services workers, while providing compassion and tangible supports to workers, including training.

*Temporary jobs can be a highly effective means of re-entering the workforce after an absence, or to transition into a new job market, whether through a skilled or general labour position. Candidates are talented, reliable and proven workers. **Daily, close to 200 people are connected to employment through this temporary help agency.***



INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES

The interview is an opportunity for you to learn more about the candidate's experience, skills, abilities, interests and assess their overall fit to the job. It's also an opportunity for the candidate to decide if they can see themselves thriving with your business!

Give thought to and plan for the accessibility needs of diverse applicants. People who use a wheelchair for mobility, people with hearing or vision impairments, people who can be anxious during interviews, or those with diverse cognitive abilities may require an accommodation during the interview process.

When you know in advance that a person may be uncomfortable or won't do well with structured interviews, a conversational approach in an informal setting can help candidates to open up. Helping candidates to relax allows for a more genuine conversation and an opportunity for people to connect in a more authentic way.

Types of Interviews

There are different types of interviews that can serve different purposes:

**TELEPHONE
OR ONLINE
INTERVIEWS**

**IN-PERSON
INTERVIEWS**

**WORKING
INTERVIEWS
AND WORK
TRIALS**



Inclusion Tip *Interview Adjustments*

Adjustments during the interview process could include holding the interview in a quiet space if the person gets overwhelmed by noise, or a wheelchair accessible location if the applicant uses a wheelchair for mobility, understanding communication options for a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, or a job coach for support if the candidate has diverse cognitive abilities.



Working Interviews

Working interviews can be very effective at determining whether a candidate can do or learn task-oriented jobs. This approach is especially useful when considering candidates with diverse cognitive abilities, people who are non-verbal or for people whose anxiety gets in the way of communicating well in a structured interview setting. It's also a chance for the individual to learn more about the opportunity by experiencing the tasks first-hand. A **show, do, review** approach works best, where:

- The candidate is *shown* how to do a task (for example, facing a shelf)
- Has an opportunity to *do* the task and (after being shown how to do it)
- Strengths are *reviewed* on how well the candidate could perform the task

When working with an employment service provider, WCB is usually covered through their employment programs, which reduces the liability if someone is injured on your premises. Job Coaches in these programs can provide tips, suggestions and checklists to the employer on how to best explain or demonstrate tasks in ways that the candidate learns best.

For longer work trials, where someone is brought on for a day or more, the candidate would need to be paid and covered under the company's WCB plan to reduce liability.

To determine whether the working interview should be paid or unpaid, consider these general guidelines and review WCB regulations to confirm

Is the candidate performing the actual job duties? If yes,
PAID

Are you using this as a less than two hour test as part of your hiring process? If yes,
UNPAID

Are you offering this as a trial period of work (a day, week, etc.)? If yes,
PAID



Inclusion Tip **Communicating**

Some people who are deaf or hard of hearing rely on lip-reading, but not all. Use alternative ways of communicating by asking in advance what works best for the individual. Some people communicate through sign-language, so booking an Interpreter is an option. Others communicate well by written communication, so offering an opportunity for the applicant to complete their interview questions on computer or writing back and forth works well.

What Can you Ask in an Interview (and What Can't you)?

Questions should always relate to the requirements of the job. Stay away from questions that are irrelevant, invasive or illegal. Some employers don't base interview questions entirely on exploring previous work experience or academic achievements, but more on shared life experiences to identify people with potential, rather than to eliminate candidates. If you are planning a casual, informal interview, communicate this in advance so the candidate is more at ease and knows what to expect.

If an applicant has a disability, you cannot ask them for a diagnosis, the status of their health, nor the cost of accommodations, if required. Unless the applicant brings it up, staying away from personal questions regarding the nature of disability is recommended. You can, however, ask job-related questions, or if they require any adjustment or accommodation to do their best work in the position.

Preparing an interview guide in advance of the interview will help to ensure consistency of the approach and that relevant questions are asked of each applicant.

Pitfalls to Avoid

- **BASING YOUR HIRING DECISION ON A FIRST IMPRESSION** It is natural to have a strong first impression. When interviewing an applicant, it's important to set aside your first impression and consider the applicant's overall potential.
- **JUDGING COMMUNICATION** It can be difficult to judge communication when a person is nervous, anxious or when someone is from an Indigenous or cultural background where silence is valued and respectful. Interviews can be daunting, and people will likely open up more once hired.
- **ASKING IRRELEVANT QUESTIONS** Make the best use of the allotted interview time by asking questions that are directly relevant to the work that the successful applicant will be responsible for.
- **KNOW WHETHER TO USE OPEN ENDED OR CLOSED ENDED QUESTIONS** Open-ended interview questions prompt discussion and provide more details to decide whether there's a good match. Closed-ended questions (ones that require a yes or no answer) work well for people with diverse cognitive abilities and others who may not do well with structured interview questions.
- **FORGETTING WHAT THE APPLICANT SAID** Take notes. Trying to remember who said what between multiple applicants is almost impossible. Recording responses allows for record keeping, whether the applicant is declined or hired. Ensure that written comments are only in reference to the candidate's ability to do the job.





Employer Case Study: Zero Ceiling

At Zero Ceiling in Whistler, British Columbia, a social enterprise committed to reducing youth homelessness and raising the quality of life for young people experiencing homelessness from Vancouver through the Sea to Sky Corridor, interviews are a casual thing. But that doesn't mean that they don't take them seriously and prepare in advance.

*They **rarely do traditional behavioural-based interviews and prefer to take an informal approach.** Sean Easton, co-Executive Director, prepares their employment program candidates in advance by letting them know that it will be more of a conversation than an interview and that they should dress casually.*

*It's important to Sean right from the start to set the tone as friendly so that each candidate feels comfortable. And **the interview is not just about assessing the suitability of the candidate; it's also about the candidate interviewing them to ensure that the program and experience is a fit for them, too.** To ensure a positive experience right until the end of the process, Sean also provides constructive feedback should someone not be selected to join the program.*

***Building relationships,** spreading a message of “unconditional love” to youth who've had many doors closed to them in their young lives is what Zero Ceiling is all about, from start to finish.*



Inclusion Tip **Personality Assessments**

People who are highly detail-oriented can get overwhelmed and stuck when presented with too many choices. When you know in advance a candidate has diverse cognitive abilities, including autism, or lower levels of literacy, it's a reasonable adjustment to by-pass personality assessments and rely more on the interview to determine whether the candidate is a good match to the job.

ASSESSMENTS AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT CHECKS

Assessments

Depending on the position, candidates may be required to complete assessments or testing in advance of hire. Testing may include typing speed and accuracy for administrative positions, math skills for positions that handle cash transactions or testing coding skills for programming.

Some employers use online psychometric tests to assess personality types in line with what is required for the position, to help choose the right candidate by better understanding personality traits, cognitive abilities and behavioural style. However, this may unintentionally exclude a huge part of the talent market. People with low literacy, autism or diverse cognitive abilities will have difficulty completing these assessments because of the abstract nature of how questions are asked.

Most employers only need to confirm previous work experience. Positions that require a high degree of trust, such as working at a bank or school or for any job that works with vulnerable people (children, the elderly or people with disabilities) may require a credit or criminal record check. This is for the protection of the people served through the business.

Before conducting a pre-employment check on an applicant, an employer should:

- Include this in the position posting
- Obtain the applicant's consent
- Explain to the applicant why specific checks are required and ask if there are any red flags that might come up
- Keep the information obtained from a background check confidential, regardless of whether the applicant is hired

Reference Checks

Conducting reference checks confirms work experience provided by an applicant. This can also provide examples of relevant behaviour—positive or otherwise—in the applicant's work history and identify additional training needs should that person be hired.

Reference checks are typically conducted over the phone or via email by either the hiring manager or a member of the Human Resources team who is experienced with conducting reference checks and familiar with the job requirements. Responses should be recorded, preferably in a reference check form and stored securely to maintain confidentiality and in accordance with privacy legislation.

Pre-employment Check Conducting pre-employment or background checks can be an important part of the selection process and includes:

REFERENCES

CREDIT
REPORTS

CRIMINAL
RECORD
VERIFICATION

DRUG TESTING
for safety sensitive
positions

EDUCATION/
CERTIFICATION





Inclusion Tip

Disclosing Hardships

Providing an applicant with an opportunity to self-disclose any financial hardships or previous criminal charges in advance of conducting these checks can provide a chance for the employer to understand situations surrounding these events and make an informed decision.

Appropriate References (Referees)

Provide applicants with an understanding of the type of person who should be used as a reference and the information that will be collected. An ideal reference will:

- Have worked with the applicant recently and observed their performance in the job
- Be a former supervisor in either a paid or volunteer position, or a colleague or client who worked closely with the applicant
- Be able to provide constructive comments regarding the consistency and quality of the applicant's work and describe how to best support the person should they be hired



Inclusion Tip

Broaden References

When an applicant has not been in the workforce recently or at all, consider broadening references. A supervisor from a volunteer job, an employment program manager, job coach or an instructor/teacher/professor may be able to provide relevant and valuable information about the applicant's ability to do the job.

“ Staff are always committed and driven to accomplish a shift. ”



Reference Check Questions

Preparing your questions in advance will help you to make efficient use of the reference check and make an effective hiring decision.

- ✓ **Ensure that all questions relate to the requirements of the job, as well as employee performance and conduct during their previous job(s)**
- ✓ **Probe beyond yes or no answers and try to get concrete examples of the referee's experience working with the applicant**

Here are some sample questions to ask during a reference check:

- What was your relationship to the applicant?
- How long was the applicant employed at your company?
- What were the applicant's main responsibilities?
- How would you describe the applicant's key strengths?
- What are the applicant's weaknesses and what worked to overcome those?
- Why did the applicant leave the position?
- How could we bring out this person's best on the job?
- Would you rehire this person if there was a suitable position?

Criminal Record Verification

If a criminal record check is required, candidates should be informed in advance why it's relevant to the role. You can make exceptions for offenses that are not related to the position and consider the length of time since the offense, or whether past offenses are currently still considered an offense as a result of updated laws, for example, possession or use of Cannabis.

Costs for any pre-employment checks should be covered by the employer.

Drug and Alcohol Testing

Ultimately, employers have a legal responsibility to provide a safe workplace. In industries that are highly safety conscious like aviation or transportation, employers may include mandatory drug and alcohol testing as part of the pre-screening process. The type of test will depend on the position and must be included as part of the application process, so candidates are informed in advance of the requirement. The employer is not obligated to proceed in the recruitment process if the applicant refuses to take the test.



Education/Certification Checks

An education or certification check is conducted to ensure that the applicant holds the level of education required for the job. Conduct education or certification checks only if they are bona fide occupational requirements. For example, is a high school diploma or a bachelor's degree mandatory or could the applicant have gained the required skills through practical on the job experience?



Inclusion Tip *Easing Back to Work*

Some people who have been out of the workforce for a long period of time, or people who live with multiple barriers, would benefit from working fewer hours of work at first, then scale up as the person eases into a schedule that includes work. If you are open to considering this, check with the individual first to see if this would help bring out their best to start.

OFFER OF EMPLOYMENT

Congratulations! You have interviewed applicants for the job, conducted the required pre-employment checks and are ready to make an offer of employment. Typically, a verbal offer is presented to the successful applicant first (especially in a competitive job market) and then followed up with a written letter of offer, also known as an employment contract or employment agreement.

Verbal Offer

A verbal offer is conducted over the phone or in person by the hiring manager or a member of the human resources department.

For a person who is deaf or hard-of-hearing, the verbal offer can be in the form of an email, text or Teletype (TTY) to let them know you would like to make an employment offer and the written offer will be sent soon.

For a person who is blind or has a visual impairment, ensure the written offer is available in an accessible format including large print or as an electronic document (technology makes it easier for a document to be read aloud). Alternatively, the hiring manager could read aloud the offer and guide the person to sign in the appropriate space.

If an accommodation or workplace adjustment has been identified during the recruitment process, you can include this in the letter of offer. In this case, you can state it as part of your commitment to workforce inclusion of people with diverse abilities. For example, "Our business is committed to accommodating the needs of employees with diverse needs. To ensure that appropriate accommodations are in place before you begin work, the following has been identified: the ability to use a noise-cancelling headset while at work and to be assigned a workstation that is in a quieter area in the office. Please advise your manager of anything else we can adjust to help you do your best at work."



ONBOARDING NEW EMPLOYEES

A strong onboarding experience continues to build positive relationships that set people up for success. Support from supervisors - effective training, clear expectations, creating a sense of community - all helps employees to grow confidence. Being clear on the workplace culture is an important element of success. This leaves employees feeling welcomed, included and informed.

When employing people who live with multiple barriers, there is a high value placed on building relationships. Some people can be more challenging to support at first and may take more time from a supervisor. Much of the challenge comes from a lack of confidence or a lack of positive supportive role models. It's important to understand in advance if extra feedback and coaching is required and be prepared to work that into your approach.



Supportive Employer Top Tip

“Employees who experience barriers to employment such as addiction or mental health issues can be challenging to support because they may have needs that are different from those without barriers. I have learned that working with a community partner that is an expert in employment services for marginalized groups is really helpful.”

Post Offer / Pre-Start Date

Before your new employee starts, you have an opportunity to create a welcoming first impression and continue to build a positive relationship. Take this time to prepare all employees by doing the following:

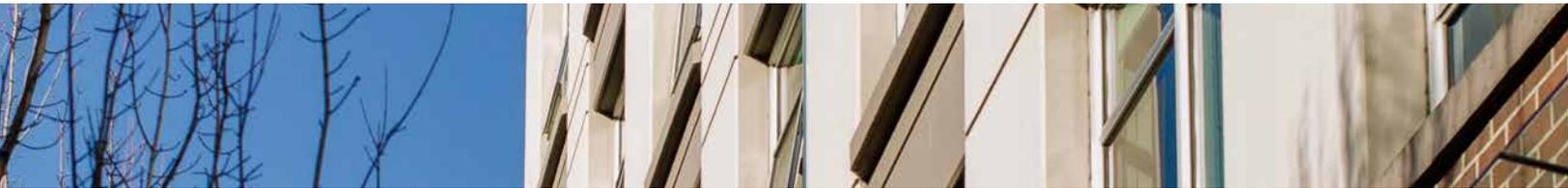
- Send a welcome email to the new employee, confirm start date and time, who they report to on their first day and an orientation schedule for the first day or week
- Determine what if anything, needs to be adjusted to bring out their best and if required, have this in place in advance of the start date
- Provide all employment forms and required reading about the company
- Arrange for the things that your new employee will need on their first day (computer and access to systems and files, uniform if required, business cards, cell phone, etc.)
- Create an employee file
- Send an email to existing employees to advise that a new employee has been hired
Include information such as their start date, previous experience and, with the new employee's permission, any additional information that the employees should know



Inclusion Tip

Workplace Adjustments

Ask the new employee if they require any workplace adjustments in order to help them do their best work. Examples of an adjustment or accommodation might be a stand-up desk if the person has back pain, a quiet workspace to enable concentration, checklists for people who have diverse cognitive abilities, or an earlier/later start time to attend to any regular medical appointments. For a listing of accommodations that have worked for businesses, visit <https://askjan.org/>.



If the new employee requires a workplace adjustment or accommodation and has authorized the manager to share some information prior to their start date, arrange a time to share this information with other employees. Provide an opportunity for employees to ask questions, but only answer questions that won't violate the new employee's confidentiality and privacy unless you have the individual's permission. Including a subject matter expert, such as the job coach of a new employee who is neuro-diverse, for example, can help to ensure the information is shared appropriately.

First Day

The first day of a new job can be an exciting, but also an intimidating, experience. Make a positive first impression and help your new employee ease into the role by taking these steps:

- Make introductions to the other employees
- Assign a “buddy” for the first week to provide a tour of the workplace and answer questions about the job
- Review the job description and duties together, explaining more about your workplace culture and how things are done
- Highlight your inclusive culture and commitment to it as a manager

- Explain your expectations regarding job performance and how it is measured
- Be clear and specific about attendance and required procedures if unable to attend
- Check in at the end of the day – how did it go?

On the first day, plan to have a team coffee break or lunch to welcome the new employee. This provides an opportunity for everyone to get to know each other. If you are bringing in lunch, be sure to check for any dietary restrictions.





Supportive Employer Top Tip

“People who are entering the workforce after being unemployed and homeless are often shifting from a survival mentality to a professional mentality. Be clear right from the start about what is acceptable in the workplace and what is not. For example, in orientation review your requested notice period if an employee decides to resign, “If you give us adequate notice as you agreed to when you were hired, we can better prepare the team for your departure and support you in your search for a new job by acting as a reference”.

First Three Months The first three months of employment are often the most important. Here are some things to do during this time period to ensure the employee is set up for success:

Provide training and support

Assess progress and ask what more you can do to support learning

Document any challenges and the measures that have been taken to support them

The format of training may need to be adjusted to meet the learning needs of a person with a cognitive or physical disability, learning disorders like dyslexia or a person for whom English is a second language. This also provides an opportunity to take an innovative approach to learning which can often better meet the needs of many.





Inclusion Tip *Training*

Ensure training is inclusive. With diversity of people in your company comes a diversity of learning styles. Some people learn from performing a task, while others learn by picking up a manual and studying it. Maintaining an effective learning environment involves knowing the different types of learning styles and the best approach for each person.

Benefits of Job Coaches

Job coaches not only help and support individuals who encounter barriers to employment, they also support managers who have questions on what inclusive hiring might look like.

One of the most important aspects of any employment is the way that training is done, and this is especially true for people re-entering the workforce after a long period of absence, people with diverse cognitive abilities or other barriers to employment.

An effective practice is to use a job coach, either an internal employee who is supporting the person for a successful return to the workplace, or an external expert who is a specialized coach, trained on the unique needs of the individual (e.g. someone with expertise in coaching people with Down Syndrome).

Job coaches can help you and your employees by:

- Identifying clear strengths the person brings to the role, as well as areas where they may need additional support
- Communicating what adjustments are needed to bring out the person's best at work
- Working with the person to help them learn a new job quickly and well
- Developing task checklists or clear instructions to build a strong understanding for the role in a straight-forward way, and assist with onsite training
- Helping the manager, individual and coworkers navigate social interactions and encourage wider social inclusion
- Supporting the individual to get them started at work in a positive way

Some people require a job coach as they begin to learn the job and then again, if changes occur during employment. Ideally coaching lessons over a period of time. Building cohesion, communication and collaboration leads to successful and sustained employment.



DECLINING AN APPLICANT

Keeping Your Employer Brand in Mind

As you go through these discussions with applicants, keep in mind that declining an applicant is also part of your employer brand.

All applicants not selected for the job will need to be advised. Providing people with this type of feedback can be uncomfortable, but it's also an important learning experience for each to better prepare for the next opportunity they apply for.

Of candidates who have had a bad experience, 72% of them have shared that experience online or with someone directly.¹²

If the candidate was referred by a community partner or employment service provider, contact the referring organization to provide an update on your employment decision. Give as much detail as you are comfortable with and if the candidate was not a good fit, let them know why. They may be able to provide a better match to your needs in the future. If skills or experience was lacking in the candidate, they may also be able to provide training to better prepare the candidate to be successful for future openings. Either way, it's a learning opportunity for the individual to further grow and develop.

End the discussion by thanking the applicant for considering your business. If the applicant may be suitable for a job at another time within your organization, let them know that you will keep them in mind for future opportunities.

Declining an applicant in a professional, timely and considerate way will help to maintain your employer brand reputation and leave the applicant with an overall positive impression of your business.

¹² Candidate Experience Study, CareerArc



Supportive Employer Top Tip

“Whenever an applicant isn’t selected to participate in our employment program, we always give them constructive feedback about why they were not chosen and things that they can work on. And we let them know that we will keep them on our list for when the next program starts.”

Providing Feedback

Whenever possible, give the applicant an example of why they were not selected. Providing them with a suggestion of a skill to build upon or additional training to take can be helpful and reflects well on your business. Here are some tips for providing feedback:

- Let the person know of your decision in a timely manner, explaining what's relevant
- Be intentionally kind and respectful
- Whenever possible, decline the applicant by phone and not by email
- Listen to the person and provide an opportunity for them to present any supporting information
- If the applicant becomes upset, maintain a non-defensive and non-confrontational manner throughout the discussion
- Demonstrate a willingness to review a decision if an error was made. However, if the decision is final, let the applicant know





RECRUITMENT RESOURCES and OTHER LINKS FOR BUSINESSES

Additional resources are listed below that may be helpful for your business as you focus on recruitment of diverse talent. Visit www.untappedtalent.info to access links.

Accessibility Canada

Accommodations A-Z Job Accommodation Network

Accommodations (Employer's Duty to Accommodate Canada) FAQ

Autism Speaks Accommodations Toolkit for People with Autism

B2B Focused Resources

- Presidents Group in British Columbia
- Discover Ability Network in Ontario
- Prospect Human Services in Alberta
- Hire for Talent in Atlantic Canada
- Global Human Capital Trends - Deloitte (annual updates)

Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion Toolkits for Employers

Checklist for What to Include in Letters of Offer

Credit and Criminal Record Checks

Diversity in Employer Branding – Human Resources Today

Effective Interview Guidelines

Inclusive Employment Service Providers in British Columbia

- WorkBC in British Columbia
- Community Living British Columbia

Inclusive Employment Organizations in the Lower Mainland (in addition to BC)

- BC Partners in Workforce Innovation
- CleanStart BC Property Services
- Just Work
- Mission Possible
- Potluck Catering
- EMBERS Staffing Solutions
- Ready Willing and Able

Mental Health Commission of Canada Aspiring Workforce Toolkit

Online Job Boards focused on Inclusion

- Magnet– targets post-secondary graduates
- Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW)
- Spinal Cord Injury

Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Reviews

Pacific Autism Family Network

Privacy, Personal Information Regulations, Provincial or Territorial





Section 3 RETENTION PRACTICES that KEEP EMPLOYEES ENGAGED

You have invested time, effort and resources to hire a new employee. Now it's time to focus on retention practices that keep employees engaged and committed to stay with your business. This next section highlights innovative retention practices so that people don't leave because:

- The workplace culture is disrespectful, full of bias and stigma
- Employee needs are overlooked, or not taken into account
- Employees are not recognized for their unique contributions
- Employment practices limit and stifle growth
- Managers haven't received the tools and training to foster an inclusive and safe workplace



Inclusion Tip *Be Curious*

When we understand each other better, we're able to communicate and work together better. Are you a non-Indigenous person wanting to learn more about Indigenous history within Canada? Visit the Reconciliation Canada website, read a book by an Indigenous author such as Richard Wagamese, take a trip to the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre or watch a documentary about Indigenous culture. Be curious to learn about barriers that others have faced.



FOSTERING A SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE

Creating a caring, supportive workplace culture isn't hard, but it does take commitment and intention. The many benefits of focusing on workforce inclusion of diverse talent are clear: increased innovation, higher employee engagement, lower turnover costs, and a stronger ability to deliver on business goals. Valued employees will stay with you longer, which gives your business both a talent and cost advantage!

Workplace Culture

Is your workplace culture positive and engaging? The following can positively influence workplace culture and increase employee engagement:

- **PURPOSE** Recognize that employees don't just work to make money. They care that the work they do provides purpose and contributes to the goals of the organization.
- **LEADERSHIP** Effective leadership means connecting your employees to your business, empowering them to do great work, and creating a feeling of belonging.
- **APPRECIATION** Show appreciation for efforts and commitment to the business and recognize employees for work that is well done. This fosters a greater sense of pride.
- **OPPORTUNITY** Give your employees the opportunity to develop their skills, take on new challenges and grow their career with your business.
- **WELL-BEING** Working to support your employees' overall well-being—physical, social, emotional, and financial—is a key factor in a healthy workplace culture.



Flexibility and Curiosity

Inclusive employers understand that there are times when employees require support through the ups and downs of life. Displaying curiosity, empathy and flexibility will help a manager to understand what an employee might be experiencing and how to best support them. For example, adjusting shift start and end times to accommodate childcare or a recurring healthcare appointment provides the flexibility an employee may need to stay employed.

Employee Resource Groups

Having an Employee Resource Group (ERG) in your workplace, is a great way to gain greater insights into unique employee (and consumer) needs. ERGs are voluntary, employee-led and advise their employers on ways to innovate policies, practices and service offerings. Who better understands the unique needs of individuals with barriers to employment who are employed with your business, than your current employees with barriers!

Inclusive Leadership

Some managers are naturally inclusive leaders, while others may need coaching or additional development. By understanding what inclusive leadership is and why it matters to your employees, you will gain access to a wider talent pool and keep employees with you longer. Research has found that “when employees feel they are treated fairly, that their uniqueness is appreciated and they have a sense of belonging, and that they have a voice in decision making, then they will feel included¹³.”

So, what exactly is inclusive leadership? It’s about...

- Recognizing, acknowledging, respecting and valuing diverse employees.
- Choosing curiosity over judgement. Understanding why an employee acts a certain way builds trust. It also helps to move performance and coaching conversations forward.
- Being aware of unconscious biases. Understanding why there is bias, how it impacts decision making in the workplace and how to mitigate it.
- Treating people equitably, based on their unique characteristics and needs. This means sometimes treating individuals differently in order to remove barriers to their full participation in the workplace.

¹³ Research conducted by Deloitte Australia (Deloitte) and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission



Inclusion Tip *Safe Harbour for Employees*

Supportive leaders see themselves as providing a safe harbour for employees. This includes meeting their financial needs, supporting their engagement while at work and ensuring that each person works well with their peers. This creates a healthy workplace overall, and actively contributes to a person’s ability to manage their own challenges.



Diversity and Inclusion Training

Providing your employees, especially managers and supervisors, with an opportunity to develop their diversity competency skills will help you prepare to truly foster an inclusive workplace culture. Training should be ongoing and woven into your business culture. It can be included as part of the new hire orientation, delivered through informal lunch and learns, team meetings or as part of an employee's personal and professional development.

Training that may be helpful for you and your teams may include Unconscious Bias, Mental Health First Aid and Inclusive Leadership. The Presidents Group in partnership with BC WiN and WCG Services, offers free training for employers called Accessible Employers 101. See their website for upcoming dates.

You can also reach out to your local Chamber of Commerce or other business associations to explore what diversity and inclusion training they offer or do a Google search of other professional training resources available in your community.

FLEXIBLE ARRANGEMENTS, ADJUSTMENTS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Even though employers have a legal duty to accommodate, many managers fear the cost of accommodations or simply don't know how to adjust the work environment, or practices, to employ a person with a disability. This perception is one of the most significant barriers to employment because in reality, most adjustments cost nothing at all and can be easy to do.

Flexible Adjustments to Bring Out an Employee's Best

Being flexible to each employee's unique needs helps set everyone up for success. Adjustments are made all the time to remove barriers so employees can contribute their best.

Here are a few examples of easy to implement workplace adjustments:

- Lower lighting in workspace to prevent headaches or accommodate vision needs.
- Providing a checklist for someone with a learning disability.
- Adjusting work schedules so an employee can attend ongoing mental health specialist appointments.
- Providing space for an employee to have quiet time, meditate or pray during the work hours.
- Adjusting your bereavement policy to accommodate Indigenous employees whose definition of family may be broader than non-Indigenous people.
- Allowing employees to take "mental health days" to help them cope with a mood or anxiety disorder, or allowing a pet with them at work.
- Providing a stand-up desk, assistive technology or a wheelchair accessible ramp to accommodate employees with disabilities.
- Periodic rest breaks can allow an individual to move about, stretch, adjust their seating position or calm anxiety.



Employer Case Study: *Tacofino*

*From a small food truck selling tacos in the beach-side surf town of Tofino, British Columbia, to a chain of restaurants and food trucks in Vancouver, Tacofino has remained true to their roots and values throughout their growth: **providing delicious food, supporting local farmers, adapting to and celebrating the local communities in which they operate, and employing amazing people.***

*Taylor Chobotiuk, Human Resources Director, says that it starts with hiring a great person who shares the organization's values. "At Tacofino employees are viewed as individuals. This applies to all employees, not just those with barriers. **We all have unique needs in the workplace.** The Tacofino culture is built on uniqueness and a high value is placed on how we treat each other."*

*With that goal in mind, Taylor has been developing **leadership training to enable Tacofino leaders to better understand and respond to the "uniqueness" of their employees.** Examples of this are workshops around inclusive hiring and how to better support employees with mental health and addictions challenges.*



Duty to Accommodate – Obligations of Employers and Employees

As an employer, you have a legal obligation to adjust policies and practices so employees can participate fully in the workplace. This is called a Duty to Accommodate and it means that sometimes it's necessary to treat someone differently in order to prevent discrimination.

The *employer* is responsible for:

- Eliminating barriers that prevent people from accessing or being included at work.
- Minimizing the need for accommodation by reviewing policies and practices to ensure they are not discriminatory.
- Ensuring that all employees and job applicants are advised of their right to be accommodated.
- Responding to accommodation requests in a timely, confidential and respectful manner.

This is a shared responsibility between the employer and the employee. An employee who requests an accommodation should be clear about the limitations they face and make reasonable suggestions about what adjustments could remove the barrier.

The *employee* is responsible for:

- Making their accommodation needs known (this does not require the disclosure of the specific diagnosis, only what creates the need for accommodation).
- Helping to identify accommodation options.
- Providing documentation in support of their request for accommodation (if required), including information about any restrictions or limitations.
- Accepting an offer of accommodation that meets their needs, even if it is not their preferred accommodation option.

Employers are obligated to do everything to accommodate a disability up to the point of undue hardship. This varies depending on the size and resources of the employer. For example, a highly successful multinational business with extensive financial resources will have a higher threshold to meet the point of undue hardship than a small business with limited resources.



Inclusion Tip *ATP*

Not sure what an employee needs or how to go about it? Try ATP - Ask The Person first. If they have been living with a barrier for a while, they probably know best what works. If it's a new situation (for example, they have experienced a car accident or developed a new illness), discuss how to adapt the workplace or job with your employee and connect with a subject matter expert if you need advice or support.





Employer Case Study: *Potluck Café Society*

*At Potluck Café Society, social impact is on the menu! They create jobs and provide healthy food for people living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. **Potluck uses culinary training and employment to help people regain their confidence, skills and economic independence.** Over 50% of their workforce currently faces or previously experienced persistent barriers to employment. Staff can work flexible schedules from 2 to 35 hours a week, based on their needs. They recognize that employment is a stabilizing force and a fundamental step towards gaining greater stability in life, and that many barriers can be overcome with the right support.*

***Potluck prides itself on its high retention/low turnover. Many staff have been with the organization for more than a decade - virtually unheard of in the food and beverage sector.** The leadership team believes that everyone has value and they have created a workplace culture where employees are treated like family. There is a sense of loyalty among staff who are proud to work there and some have even recruited family members to join the company.*

*They have a dedicated resource to help staff navigate through challenges or obstacles, so that they can continue to be productive in the workplace. **By providing a caring, compassionate, nonjudgmental workplace, staff feel comfortable discussing any sensitive issues they may experience personally.** When an employee finds they need to step away from work, or take some time to gain control over their life issues - which often would typically result in job loss with other employers, Potluck works with the employee to help overcome those challenges and they are welcomed back to work once they feel ready to return.*





Inclusion Tip *Requests for Accommodations*

Asking for an accommodation can be uncomfortable for anyone who may fear increased stigma by disclosing they have a barrier to employment. Or they may worry that other employees will learn about something they consider private. Whenever an employee discloses something of a personal nature, handling the situation with respect, empathy and sensitivity will help you to build trust and find reasonable ways to adjust, so everyone can do their best at work.

Duty to Inquire

If you notice an employee is acting differently or starts to experience performance issues, you have a duty to inquire if there is something having an impact on them at work. These situations, if they arise in your workplace, need to be handled carefully and with an empathetic approach. Taking disciplinary action can make the situation worse. To start the conversation, you can:

- Invite your employee to meet with you and hold the meeting in a quiet, private place
- Let the employee know what you have noticed lately and that you want to better understand what might be contributing to that
- Confirm you are here to support the person to do their best at work, that you care about their wellbeing and ask if there is anything you can do to help
- Follow-through on any adjustments you can make that are work related and follow-up to see the employee is progressing

Taking this approach will help you to understand the situation and better support your employee. What you might think is a performance issue could be a symptom of a health issue or something going on in their personal life. They may require an accommodation, time off or coaching.



Supportive Employer Top Tip

“The barriered employees I have are often not the most difficult ones to manage. It is the non-barriered people who usually need more accommodation and support overall. Those who come in naming their barriers up front do not leave you to realize six months into a job that they are not able to do the work, are overwhelmed and having a mental health crisis, and then don’t tell you about it until they are in the hospital. I think it is important to recognize that people disclosing their personal issues can be a very positive thing and should not be a reason to not hire or keep someone.”



Requesting Medical Information

To effectively accommodate an employee's disability, the employer may require medical information. Consider first if it's necessary, especially for more obvious situations such as a broken leg. When asking for medical information from a family doctor or specialist, employers must use the least intrusive means and respect the employee's right to privacy and dignity.

If you do require that an employee provide a note from a medical professional, ensure that the employee is reimbursed for the cost. Employees should not be required to pay these costs as part of the accommodation process.

Employers need to know:

- Whether the employee has a disability or barrier to employment; and if so
- What accommodation the employee needs

Employers do not need to know:

- The diagnosis or reasons for a barrier to employment; or
- What caused the need for accommodation



Inclusion Tip *Awareness of our Own Biases*

We all have unconscious biases. While we can't get rid of them entirely, it's important to be aware of them and what has influenced these beliefs. Do you view a certain group of people in a certain way? Have you spent time with people within that group or are you judging based on what you have heard from others or the media? A great way to mitigate bias and eliminate stereotypes is to learn about and spend time with people who are different than you.



Inclusion Tip *Alcohol-free Events*

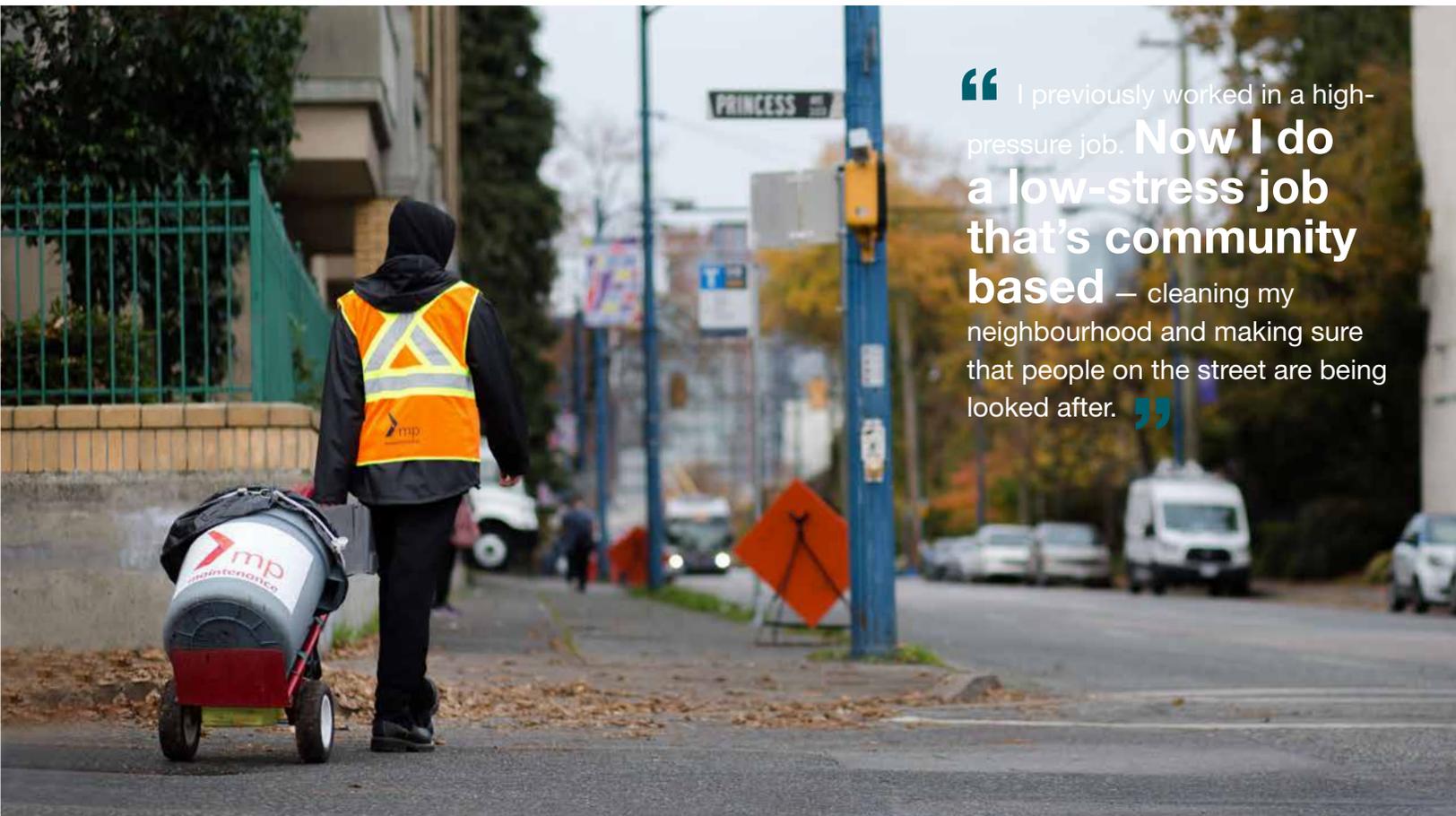
When you plan your next team outing or celebration, consider making it alcohol-free. Not only will you greatly reduce potential liability, but you will create an environment that is inclusive of those with addiction and substance use challenges, likely more of a percentage of your workforce than you might realize.

Accommodating Addictions in the Workplace

This is a topic that's gaining more attention. Some ways you can accommodate employees with addictions are:

- Re-assignment to a position that is not safety-sensitive or modifying job duties
- Allowing the employee time to attend meetings and appointments that support their treatment and recovery process during work hours
- Schedule adjustments, such as changes to start times and number of hours worked
- Short term or long-term leave, with an ability to return to work when ready

For more information regarding Accommodations, refer to the resources at the end of this section.



“ I previously worked in a high-pressure job. **Now I do a low-stress job that's community based** — cleaning my neighbourhood and making sure that people on the street are being looked after. ”



Supportive Employer Top Tip

“The everyday stresses of managing your life and maintaining employment can be hard to handle for someone on the path to recovery from addiction. Providing a supportive, empathetic workplace can help an employee manage these stressors and reduce the chance of relapse.”

Stigma

The stigma associated with barriers like poverty and disabilities, especially invisible disabilities such as mood disorders and addiction, is a powerful thing. Misunderstandings associated with these illnesses leads to prejudice. People who live with addiction and mental illness are often denied employment and experience discrimination, both intentional and unintentional, in the workplace as a result.

Unfortunately, stigma also holds people back from getting the help that they need. Stigma prevents 40% of those with anxiety or depression from seeking medical help¹⁴.

Stigma and discrimination don't just hold back people with disabilities - they also negatively impact people from many different groups: people who experience poverty, Indigenous people, immigrants, women, visible minorities and members of the LGBTQ+2S communities. Here are some ways that you can reduce stigma to create greater understanding in your workplace:

LANGUAGE MATTERS Words have power to stigmatize others, knowingly or not, so choose them wisely. Using terms like “that’s so mental” or “going postal” can spread negative stereotypes about people with mental illness. Use person-first language: Putting the person first is helpful, for example, rather than saying “the disabled”, choose to say “the person with a disability.”

NORMALIZE INCLUSION TOPICS If you never talk about addiction or mental illness, the silence keeps stigma alive. Normalizing the topic, by talking openly about health and overall wellbeing, sends an important message to your employees that these things matter - that they matter - and that it’s OK to ask for help when needed. Add a standing agenda item about mental health to your team meetings or write a weekly wellness tip on a white board in your break room.

¹⁴ The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)

Employee Wellness

Be proactive about creating a workplace that supports overall wellbeing and inclusion for all. Here are some ideas to help employees learn about wellness and disability topics:

- Hold lunch and learns on different wellness topics
- Participate in initiatives such as Mental Health Awareness Week
- Offer wellness perks such as discounts at a local gym or yoga studio
- Provide 5-minute mindfulness moments in the morning or afternoon for your employees
- Post resources in a common area so employees have easy access to help, if needed

PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH & SAFETY

A Psychologically Healthy and Safe Workplace

Like physical health, psychological (mental) health is a continuum and everyone is on it! There are many things that can impact our mental health, both in our personal life and at work. A psychologically healthy and safe workplace promotes employee mental health and works to prevent harm.

Poor employee mental health impacts job performance and overall business effectiveness. Here are some statistics about mental health in the workplace from the Mental Health Commission of Canada:

- 1 in 5 Canadians experience a psychological health condition or illness in any given year and is the number one cause of disability in Canada.
- Psychological health problems cost the Canadian economy \$51 billion per year, \$20 billion of which results from work-related causes.
- 47% of working Canadians consider their work to be the most stressful part of daily life.



Supportive Employer Top Tip

“Deliver on your employment promise! If you hire someone knowing that they have barriers, then follow through. Understand and accommodate those barriers. Honour that promise.”

Fostering a psychologically safe and healthy workplace can boost employee engagement, increase productivity and reduce health costs, employee turnover, and lost work time due to mental illness and stress. Here are some strategies to promote psychological health and safety in your workplace and bring it to life:

EMPLOYEES

- Be supportive of coworkers who are experiencing stress
- Ask for help and offer help in situations of workplace abuse
- Report any incidences of workplace abuse, violence, discrimination or harassment
- Take the opportunity to rest during designated breaks and holidays
- Build a healthy lifestyle by practicing wellness

EMPLOYERS

- Lead by example with respectful workplace behaviours
- Recognize workplace stressors and changes in an employee's behaviour or performance
- Accommodate employees who need flexible work arrangements
- Provide training on mental health in the workplace
- Recognize and reward employee contributions
- Listen to employees' concerns and respond accordingly
- Create opportunities for team building, stress-reducing activities and fun at work
- Involve employees in the development of workplace mental health programs
- Connect employees with resources for mental health, including addiction
- Establish peer support and/or a counselling network
- Establish an incident-reporting and a conflict resolution system

As you will notice from the list above, the bulk of the responsibility for a psychologically healthy and safe workplace falls on employers. You will find additional resources at the end of this section that may be helpful to you as an employer.



Inclusion Tip *Stressful Encounters*

After a stressful encounter with an angry customer or colleague, it's important to support your employee who has had to deal with the situation. Ask them how they are feeling, provide an opportunity for them to talk about the experience and to take a break or leave work early, if the experience was traumatic. If your company has an Employee and Family Assistance Provider (EFAP), encourage them to contact the provider and access counselling support.





Employer Case Study: *Union Gospel Mission*

Union Gospel Mission is in the heart of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Committed to transforming communities "by overcoming poverty, homelessness and addiction one life at a time", the employees at UGM work in a rewarding yet psychologically challenging environment. And sometimes this work takes a toll on their mental health and overall wellbeing.

*UGM took an innovative approach to supporting those employees who needed a break from emotionally taxing work on the streets of Canada's poorest neighbourhood. **They created a respite program that provides employees with the opportunity, if they need it, to transfer to a one-year position that works inside UGM.** This program gives employees who are deeply committed to the work and mission of UGM a sometimes much needed chance to "catch their breath." In addition, this practice leads to higher employee retention, as opposed to the employee leaving due to burnout, which can often be the #1 reason for people who work in caring occupations to leave their employer.*

*Taking employee health and self-care seriously is a priority. All UGM employees also receive nonviolent crisis intervention training, which equips them with the knowledge and skills to safely handle difficult situations. This type of training acts as a preventative measure because it **decreases the likelihood of them becoming overwhelmed with stress or even fear** if such situations arise in the future. UGM also runs a coaching program, where **employees can meet with professional coaches in a safe space to talk through or receive professional insight on various matters.***





EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

Investing in Employee Development

Your employees have chosen to work with your business for a variety of reasons. Mostly, they want to do work that contributes to your success and has meaning to them. According to a 2018 Workplace Learning Report conducted by LinkedIn Learning, 94 percent of employees would stay longer with an employer who “provides career development and training opportunities.” Your employees are there to earn a paycheck, but more importantly, they also want to learn, develop skills and feel a part of something.

Development Opportunities

Providing employees with training and development opportunities is essential to setting people up for success. Keeping employees engaged and challenged means giving them opportunities to learn new things. They may want to develop new skills to move into other opportunities in your company or they may want to learn how to do their current job better. Provide learning opportunities for all employees, not just high achievers, so that they can grow and take on new tasks and jobs helps to develop diversity at all levels of your organization.

Skills Inventory

A skills inventory might sound formal but it’s just about recognizing the different skills and abilities that exist among your employees. Get to know your employees’ unique talents and abilities by observing their work, how they interact with others — both coworkers and customers—and through 1:1 meetings.



Inclusion Tip *Career Development Plan*

A career path and job satisfaction mean different things to different people so it’s important for managers to understand each employee’s needs and goals. There will be areas that you identify to keep talent engaged and progressing in your company. Creating a career development plan is formed following discussion between employer and employee.

This helps:

- To Identify and address any skills gaps
- You understand targeted training and learning opportunities that you need to provide to employees, both individually and as a group
- To develop an internal talent channel to fill future openings
- You identify which skills and abilities you need to look for in a new hire that will complement your existing team

EMPLOYMENT EQUALS
FINANCIAL and SOCIAL
INCLUSION





Employer Case Study: *Hives for Humanity*

*At Hives for Humanity it's not just about making honey; they “**connect people to nature, community and themselves, and we do it through the bees.**”*

*Sarah Common, co-founder, CEO and Chief Community Officer, says that success for the employees and program participants at Hives for Humanity is when they feel that they have a level of accountability and a sense of ownership of their projects and work. **When Sarah is more “checked-in” with people she is better able to support their growth and development.** To maintain this, they have weekly team huddles, have begun to implement a performance review cycle, and at the end of the year there is an opportunity to meet one to one and talk about things that employees are proud of having accomplished and identify areas they would like to develop over the next year.*

At Hives for Humanity it might be the bees that bring people together, but it's an intentional and ongoing commitment to helping people to develop in their own unique ways and at their own pace that keeps them together.

*Team members see the value in their work, **“It bridges and closes the gap between classes. I can go into affluent neighbourhoods and teach people about beekeeping! I can see this change in their eyes. It's awesome.”***



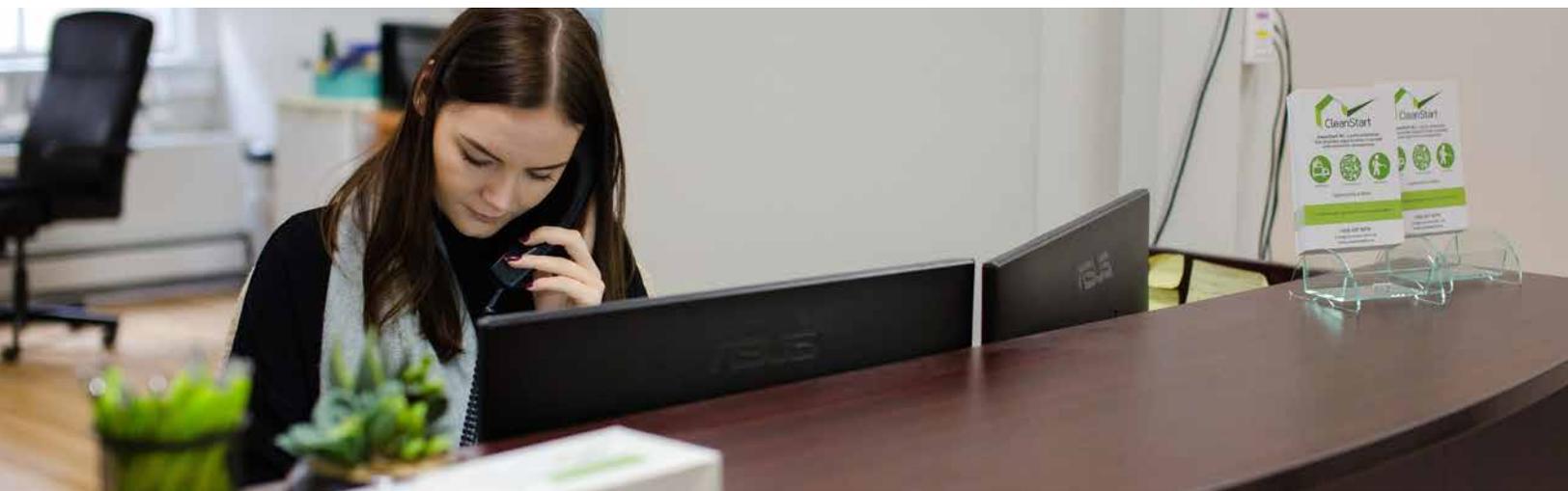
As you continue to focus on creating a diverse and inclusive workplace culture, keep these things in mind when providing development opportunities:

- **PEOPLE LEARN DIFFERENTLY** Provide training opportunities in a variety of ways and be willing to adjust how the training is delivered to accommodate different learning styles and for people with disabilities. For example, provide both online and in person training, with opportunity for discussion and questions.
- **BE CREATIVE** Broadening your idea of relevant training can help to build skills and foster loyalty and engagement within your workplace. A course that might seem unrelated to the employee's job could help them to build life skills. For example, taking a mindfulness course could help a person with mental illness better manage their anxiety which will then help them to be more productive and focused at work.
- **MENTORSHIP** A mentorship relationship doesn't have to be between a manager and an employee. In fact, connecting employees who have different skills and abilities and are from different diversity groups is an opportunity for them to learn from each other, gain new perspectives and build relationships.



Supportive Employer Top Tip

“Our business does an employee engagement survey every two years and have made improvements to workplace culture as a result. For example, we worked on creating a more open, trusting environment for employees to feel comfortable speaking to supervisors about challenges they were facing on the job. Overall scores have been high (about 98% positive).”



ENGAGEMENT, RECOGNITION AND PERFORMANCE

The link to having a diverse workforce and the impact it has on building trust is now well researched¹⁵. This can provide a real advantage to your business.

Employee Engagement

Building an engaged workforce provides returns through more satisfied employees, increased loyalty, reduced turnover and greater job involvement. You can use your inclusive hiring commitment to strengthen employee engagement because people typically like working for organizations that care.

Engaged employees have a vested interest in the success of the companies they work with and want to contribute to that success. While there are many components to engagement, factors contributing to engagement will be different for each team member. Ask for feedback during staff meetings, performance reviews or via surveys.

THE HIGHER THE
LEVEL OF TRUST
=
THE HIGHER THE
LEVEL OF EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT

Employee Recognition

Recognizing your employees for the work that they do, the unique skills and talents they bring to the workplace, contributes to higher engagement. Recognition can be formal or informal. Often, simple acts have the most impact. Saying thank you to employees at the end of their shift, for going above and beyond in how they served a customer or for how they supported a co-worker is an underrated form of recognition.

You can recognize employees and foster an environment of gratitude through these easy tips:

- Send a thank you card or place a letter of recognition in their employee file
- Host a team-building event as a thank you to employees after a key project is complete
- Bring in lunch on a Friday or have a coffee, juice and muffin station set up to greet your employees on a Monday morning
- Share what each person is grateful for that week or month during staff meetings
- Provide a bonus or profit share structure as part of your compensation plan

Performance Reviews

A performance review is an opportunity for you and your employee to formally talk about what has gone well, the employee's strengths, areas for improvement and to set development goals.

PROBATION REVIEW
just before the probation
period is complete

ANNUAL REVIEW
depending on what's in place
at your company

¹⁵ <https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/human-capital/articles/role-diversity-practices-inclusion-trust-employee-engagement.html>

“ All employees feel proud to work for the company because **it is truly inclusive** (we receive a lot of employee referrals for jobs as a result). ”



You want an employee to feel motivated, engaged and excited about their work and their future with your business. To ensure that you both get the most out of the performance review meeting, take some time to prepare yourself. Provide specific examples of your feedback and then allow your employee to share their views on own performance. Here are some questions to encourage conversation:

- What are you most proud of from the past year in your job?
- How can I be a better manager for you?
- What are your development goals this year? How can I help you to achieve them?
- What parts of your job do you expect to be the most challenging for you in the next year/six months/quarter?
- What support can I provide for you that will help you with these challenges?

Involve Employees

So that people feel included and respected, involve employees in designing your recognition efforts. Ask them what they might like. Different cultures may place different value on things such as rewards and recognition like group recognition vs. individual recognition. One person might appreciate accolades in front of their coworkers while another might prefer that recognition happen privately.



Inclusion Tip *Feedback Coaching Sessions*

For employees with multiple barriers to employment, informal check-ins that occur throughout the year can be very effective to stay tuned-in and keeping people engaged. Feedback coaching sessions could be monthly, or as required.

Performance Management

Managing employee performance is an essential part of a manager's job. It's about identifying areas for improvement, coaching employees to help them achieve their goals. It can also be about progressive discipline and sometimes termination.

Having regular one to one meetings with your employees may be time consuming but it can also be a valuable opportunity to support their growth, build trust and increase employee engagement. Providing employees with a balance of positive feedback with constructive feedback will help to foster a healthy workplace.

Giving someone positive feedback is easy. Providing constructive feedback can be challenging and sometimes uncomfortable. Here are some tips to help you prepare to deliver feedback:

- **BE TIMELY** Give feedback to the employee as close to the incident or situation as possible – don't save up examples of things that they need to improve upon for a meeting that will happen a month later.
- **BE RESPECTFUL** Have the conversation in private away from other employees. Telling an employee that they did something wrong in front of their coworkers can create anxiety, embarrassment and reduces trust.
- **BE SPECIFIC** Provide a specific example of behaviour and then be clear about your expectations for improvement.
- **LISTEN** Give your employee an opportunity to explain the situation from their perspective. This will help you to better understand the situation and what support you need to provide, and the employee will feel heard and respected.
- **CREATE A CALL TO ACTION** Involve the employee in the improvement process. Ask them to suggest ways to build skills or improve the situation.

Progressive Discipline

When you hire a new employee and set up their employee file, it's also a good idea to set up a performance tracker. The tracker is a written record of coaching or performance management conversations, and any issues that may come up. This is useful if coaching conversations move to the progressive discipline stage – you will have a record of what happened, when and how it was addressed at the time. It's a good idea to operate by the principle, if it isn't written down, it didn't happen.

Informal coaching in the moment can be enough to help an employee improve performance. Sometimes you will need to move to a formal progressive discipline process. A typical progressive discipline process consists of the following steps. Note that these may be repeated and, depending on the severity of the situation, immediate termination may be required.

1
VERBAL WARNING

2
WRITTEN LETTER OF WARNING

3
TERMINATION



Culpable vs. Non-Culpable Behaviour

Before you begin a progressive discipline process, consider if the employee knows what they were doing was wrong. Do they lack the skills and abilities to do the job? If so, redirect - provide additional training and clear expectations. Maybe reassign to another opportunity within their capabilities. Was there something going on for the employee personally? Maybe reach out to find out more and how you can help. Did they knowingly break the rules? If yes, it may be time to begin progressive discipline.



Inclusion Tip *Take an Extra Step*

Having to fire a person with a disability or barrier to employment is a fear that gets in the way of hiring in the first place... what if it doesn't work out?! Sometimes, despite best efforts to set someone up for success, it doesn't work out. Employers who have hired inclusively take an extra step to check-in with people after they have left to see how they are doing. They also leave the door open whenever possible, for the person to return if their situation improves and they are ready to re-engage.

Suspension or Termination

If a previously identified performance issue recurs, or for situations that are very serious in nature (theft, assault), more significant action may be warranted, ranging from suspension without pay to termination from employment.

Termination of employment is considered a serious action to take and the decision is usually based on many factors, including:

- The severity of the incident and effect of the incident on others
- Impact on the reputation and profitability of the company
- Whether or not the employment relationship has been severely jeopardized by the actions of the employee
- Whether or not the employee was found to be honest in their discussions
- Whether or not there has been any previous corrective action
- Whether or not the employee was on probation, or final conditions of employment
- Whether or not the employee demonstrated remorse and regret for their actions

The decision to suspend or terminate an employee should be taken very seriously, handled with care and documented, with a copy placed on the employee's HR file.



Inclusion Tip *Attendance, Seek to Understand*

Supportive employers may approach attendance issues differently, especially with employees who live with multiple barriers to employment. While organizations may differ in their policies, what they do share is a consistent approach. It's important that when an employee fails to show up or exhibits what you perceive to be bad behaviour, that you ask them about it. Seek to understand the situation first and then decide upon the appropriate next steps.



DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Sometimes employers don't hire inclusively because they are concerned about opening their business up for a claim of discrimination. This fear of the unknown can be easily mitigated by learning more about what is and isn't discrimination.

Discrimination and harassment can happen unintentionally or on purpose. Often, issues come up because of a misunderstanding. An important part of preventing this is to ensure all employees understand their responsibilities and what's appropriate behaviour for the workplace. Taking the time to be clear about what you expect can help reduce issues and create an inclusive workplace culture. You can do this by creating a Code of Conduct or a Respect in the Workplace policy with a procedure for reporting and responding to incidents in the workplace.

For more information on discrimination and harassment, refer to resources at the end of this section, or attend a local training event in your community.

Create a Respect in the Workplace Policy

A Respect in the Workplace Policy reiterates and clearly states a commitment to providing a safe, healthy, inclusive workplace that is free of harassment and discrimination.

Your Respect in the Workplace Policy should include:

- Definitions of respect, harassment and discrimination
- Roles and responsibilities of the employer and employee
- Examples of unacceptable behaviour
- Consequences of disrespectful behaviour
- How to resolve and/or report an incident
- Privacy and confidentiality

Provide a copy of the Respect in the Workplace Policy to each new employee as part of their new hire package and discuss it on the employee's first day to ensure that they understand it.

To bring your Respect in the Workplace Policy to life, provide ongoing opportunities for your employees and managers to learn more about diversity and inclusion topics such as intercultural competency, disability, wellbeing and mental health and unconscious bias. Build skills such as empathy and effective communication. Not sure what inclusion issues matter most to your employees? Ask them!

When you draft your Respectful Workplace policy, seek advice to ensure that your policy is effective and legal. For additional information and resources guides to create a Respectful Workplace as well as Tips for Crisis Intervention, refer to resources at the end of this section.





RETENTION RESOURCES and OTHER LINKS FOR BUSINESSES

Additional resources are listed below that may be helpful for your business as you focus on retention of diverse talent. Visit www.untappedtalent.info to access links.

Accessibility Canada

Accommodating Addictions at Work

Accommodations A-Z Job Accommodation Network

Accommodations (Employer's Duty to Accommodate Canada) FAQ

Accommodation Policy Template

B2B Focused Resources

- Presidents Group in British Columbia
- Discover Ability Network in Ontario
- Hire for Talent - Atlantic Canada

Canadian Human Right Commission Duty to Accommodate

Diversity and Inclusion Training BC

Diversity and Inclusion Consulting BC

De-escalation and Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Guidelines

Mental Health First Aid Training

National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

Privacy Regulations Canada

Privacy, Personal Information Regulations, Provincial or Territorial

WorkSafe BC Respectful Workplace Guidelines

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