



READ Initiative
Research Education Accessibility & Design
CARLETON UNIVERSITY

Final Report

David C. Onley Initiative for Employment and Enterprise Development

October 23, 2020



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and is a collaboration of the following Project Partners:



Carleton
UNIVERSITY
Canada's Capital University



LE COLLÈGE D'ARTS APPLIQUÉS
ET DE TECHNOLOGIE



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1 Executive Summary

Currently, there is not a systematic approach applied throughout postsecondary education that actively fosters the growth and opportunities for students with disabilities in the context of career preparation and development of employability skills. There is much to learn from the schools that have begun to individually implement these types of supports. In order to better prepare students for employment and career success, increased innovation and collaboration is needed between Disability Service Offices (DSO), Career Service Offices (CSO), future employers, and community service providers. These current gaps have been explored through the recent work of four postsecondary institutions who partnered to form the David C. Onley Initiative (DCOI).

By assuring that students with disabilities have access to all services, including some that look at the journey to employment through the lens of accessibility and disability-related impacts (both positive and negative), postsecondary has the chance to respond to the diverse experiences of all students. The interplay between lived experience of disability and the journey to and into the work world must be acknowledged in the preparation and experiential opportunities available to all students. It is indeed a developmental journey that is characterized with many different pathways that can lead to successful employment. The postsecondary journey is of course only one segment of a person's career development, but it is a critical early stage of that development and postsecondary institutions have a great opportunity to effect change.

Postsecondary plays a key role in providing students the opportunities to build their skills and readiness to transition and thrive in the world of work. To make the greatest impact however, these opportunities need to be accessible to the students. Research suggests that, for a variety of reasons, postsecondary opportunities such as Work Integrated Learning, Co-op, or Internships, and services related to employability, need to increase in accessibility and relevance for students with lived experience of disabilities (NEADS, 2018¹). The emphasis on accessibility and employment is part of the large national landscape that shows persons with disabilities significantly underemployed compared to Canadians without disabilities. The research also shows that postsecondary education is a powerful equalizer for employment opportunities, including for persons with disabilities. But an earlier environmental scan across Canada by the READ Initiative, the lead organization behind DCOI, showed gaps in postsecondary capacity for services to support employability needs of students with disabilities.

DCOI was a 2-year applied research project that started in June 2018 and ran until early 2020 when it was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was funded through a \$5 million grant from the Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU). DCOI was led by Carleton University in partnership with the University of Ottawa, Algonquin College, and College La Cité. The partnership focused its efforts on understanding the full spectrum of factors that influence development of employability for postsecondary students with disabilities. This was achieved through four major objectives:

- Identification of best practices for postsecondary student supports;
- Understanding of employer and entrepreneurship needs;
- Community engagement and capacity development; and
- Public awareness to address attitudes and stigma.

¹ NEADS, [Landscape of Accessibility and Accommodation for Post-Secondary Students With Disabilities in Canada report](#) 2018

Best practices for services to support employability of postsecondary students with disabilities were identified through iterative applied research undertaken through a researcher-practitioner approach by staff embedded within Disability Service Offices (DSO) and Career Services Offices (CSO) at the participating institutions. A model, called the Employment Pathways Facilitator (EPF) Essential Functions, was developed and aimed to be applied within postsecondary settings to improve the readiness and employment outcomes for postsecondary students with disabilities. The EPF Essential Functions focus on both students and campus-wide supports in improving the quality of the transition from school to work through skills development, accessible opportunities, and addressing the intersection of employment and lived-experience of disability in the journey towards employment.

Employers, business associations, and entrepreneurship groups were engaged by various levels of DCOI to better understand the issues that relate to employment of persons with disabilities and overall accessibility in the workplace. Knowledge exchange events were organized to bring together employers and students with disabilities to exchange information that contributed to greater mutual appreciation of needs but also concrete job opportunities. The Federal Government, the largest employer in the Ottawa region, was a key collaborator that contributed in different ways to DCOI efforts to better understand the landscape from employer perspectives. While focused on applied research and knowledge building, DCOI had a secondary impact on the actual employability of students with disabilities in the four postsecondary institutions. Students had to prepare resumes and applications, and some even had opportunities to be interviewed for work and/or were hired along one of the employment pathways, as a result of the services we provided and/or the events hosted, such as the Accessible Career Showcases or the Careers in Government Fair. In addition, during this project 197 individual students engaged in a total of 387 one-hour sessions with a support service that we designed to move students forward in their journey towards employment by supporting them to build employability skills and make actionable plans to gain work-related experiences throughout postsecondary.

DCOI was unprecedented in bringing together all four major postsecondary institutions in Ottawa, each very different and representing unique institutional cultures. The success of the partnership was the results of the recognition of this uniqueness and adaptation of the project to each partner's needs. DCOI was premised on the assumption that it was necessary to engage the broad ecosystem of community stakeholders in Ottawa in order to truly understand the spectrum of factors that influence employability of postsecondary students with disabilities in the region. In addition to the four major colleges and universities, key community organizations were engaged in different ways and have made contributions to the outcomes of the Initiative. Some of these organizations from Ottawa included EARN / United Way (Employment Accessibility Network), Ottawa Employment Hub and the Ottawa Board of Trade. We also collaborated with DiscoverAbility Network through the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and Magnet (based out of Ryerson University in Toronto). See Section 2.5.3 for more information on these organizations and their roles.

There are persisting attitudes and perceptions that present barriers to successful employment of persons with disabilities. This stigma impacts not only the hiring practices but can impede the development of employability throughout the students' postsecondary journeys. It also continues to have its negative impact within the workplace by affecting the opportunities for meaningful participation and advancement, as well as overall accessibility and relevant supports. DCOI undertook a very successful public awareness campaign, #AbleTo, that focused on promoting disability-competence and myth-busting. We saw over 7,700 unique visitors to the ableto.ca website where infographics and resources were accessed and downloaded. There were over 1 million impressions and 101,000 actual engagements combined on social media channels such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook, as well as over 74,000 views of the 10 Champion videos that were created. See Section 3.5 for more on the #AbleTo campaign.

For each of the four areas of focus outlined above, we make the following key recommendations, elaborated in the report as the DCOI Collective Impact Strategy:

- Implementation of the Employment Pathways Facilitator (EPF) set of service functions that cover the developmental spectrum of employability needs in postsecondary student supports.
- Engagement of employers and entrepreneurs with students along the lines of the diverse Pathways to Employment throughout the postsecondary journey.
- Collaboration with community organizations and stakeholders to increase knowledge and capacity to support employment of postsecondary students as a shared responsibility, not limited to postsecondary institutions.
- Active efforts by postsecondary institutions to promote awareness of disabilities and accessibility related to employment and toward greater disability-competence both within and outside of postsecondary environments.

The David C. Onley Initiative for Employment and Enterprise Development (DCOI) was an ambitious undertaking to achieve a comprehensive understanding of factors that influence employability of postsecondary students with disabilities. The DCOI Collective Impact Strategy is a framework that captures an evidence-based approach that is transferable and scalable. DCOI and its partners make this contribution available to other postsecondary institutions in Ontario and beyond as a holistic strategy to advance employability of students with disabilities, a key indicator of success and wellbeing for our students and our society.

1.1 Our Lens and Language on Disability

We acknowledge the value and strength of language in shaping our work and the ecosystems that our work impacts. Above all, we recognize the principle of ‘nothing about us, without us’ when doing work related to persons with disabilities. We value the importance of lived experience, including personal experience of disability and the experience of those people whose lives we are invested in, our family members, friends, and colleagues.

In our reporting, we are using the terms ‘persons with disabilities’ or ‘persons with lived experience’. The use of the term ‘persons with’ is adopted as one that is commonly used by leading international organizations that protect the rights of persons with disabilities, such as the United Nations. We recognize that society includes people with a range of abilities and lived experiences, but are also cognizant that the way in which functional limitations or ‘impairments’ are identified and qualified are socially constructed. The abilities and limitations of people within society are often not static and will change over time, impacting all of us at some point or another. As an example, most of us will experience a degree of functional limitations as we age. At the same time, we also recognize that our society has systematically discriminated against persons with disabilities throughout history. This includes both visible (mobility, sensory, and other) and non-visible disabilities (mental health, cognitive, and others).

We affirm that many members of the Disability community actively resist discrimination based on disability while also taking pride in their identity as a member of this community. As within all communities, the lived experiences of individuals are diverse, as are the preferred ways to identify, which we acknowledge and respect.

1.1.1 Common Acronyms and Terms Utilized in Report

CSO - For the purposes of our project, the acronym CSO represents a campus Career Services Office and could also include those offices at our partner campuses which also support co-op student services and placements.

DSO – For the purposes of our project, the acronym DSO represents a campus Disability Services Office. Some of our partners use the words Accessibility, Accessible or Accommodation in their service designations.

EPF – Employment Pathways Facilitator (see Section 3.4 for more information on this role).

RDO – Research and Development Officers (see Section 3.1.1 for more information on these roles).

SWD – This acronym represents students with disabilities and is also interchangeable with persons with disabilities throughout the report.

Crucial Conversations – in Section 3.4 we discuss the importance of having ‘crucial conversations’ with students in the context of their employment journey. By this we mean important conversations that are impactful and important as it relates to the intersectionality of their disability with their employment/career goals.

Pathways to Employment – This term refers to a framework utilized throughout the Initiative and it will also be referred to as employment pathways (see Section 2.4 for more information on the framework).

2 Project Overview

The David C. Onley Initiative for Employment and Enterprise Development (DCOI) was a unique and ambitious project of four postsecondary institutions in Ottawa. It was a much-needed undertaking to research in an applied way what factors contribute to development of employability for college and university students with disabilities. We are grateful for the generous funding from the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU) and their support during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic. What follows is the report on the work that we have done during the 2018-2020 timeframe for the DCOI.

2.1 Background

Carleton University has been a leader in accessibility for persons with disabilities over the years. Accessibility is reflected in its institutional culture and represented as a core value in its Strategic Integrated Plan. Through the well-recognized student services work of the Paul Menton Centre (PMC) and the 24/7 Attendant Services program, Carleton University is one of the most accessible postsecondary institutions in Canada. Out of this culture of accessibility and the innovative work through the PMC, Carleton established a unique cross-portfolio, multidisciplinary unit, the READ Initiative (Research, Education, Accessibility, and Design). READ is a centre of excellence in accessibility focusing on leadership and collaboration with stakeholders locally, nationally, and internationally.

Since its inception in 2012, the READ Initiative has recognized gaps in employment readiness between students with disabilities and the general student population. With financial support from the Office of Disability Issues, Employment and Social Development Canada, READ completed an environmental scan of trends and best practices in employment preparation programs for students with disabilities at colleges and universities in Canada. The key finding was the need for disability-competent and more integrated services in postsecondary settings to support employability preparedness of postsecondary students with disabilities. It also flagged many gaps in our understanding of the diversity of factors related to employability of students with disabilities and accessibility issues in employment.

In 2018 with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU), Carleton University partnered with the University of Ottawa, Algonquin College, and College La Cité for a two-year project, the David C. Onley Initiative for Employment and Enterprise Development (DCOI). DCOI undertook an applied study of the landscape relevant to the development of employability for postsecondary students with disabilities. Coordinating the work at four partner institutions, we embedded Research & Development Officers in Disability Service Offices (DSO) and Career Service Offices (CSO) who worked alongside staff and as part of regular service operations. Another part of the project was dedicated to employer outreach as well as a public awareness campaign to promote better understanding of issues of disability and accessibility in the workplace. The collaborations forged have provided an excellent lever for future projects including those that are geared to enhance the transitions into employment for postsecondary students, and supporting the surrounding community employers to create more accessible employment opportunities and effectively connect with the talent pool of postsecondary students with disabilities.

2.2 Purpose of Report

This report marks the end of the two-year collaboration between the four postsecondary institutions and their surrounding community to develop an approach that will positively support the employment outcomes for

postsecondary students with disabilities. It will outline the achievement of the key goals established with the MTCU by reporting on the activities that contributed to each goal over the course of the Initiative. It is also an opportunity to share key learnings and themes that emerged from the work of the David C. Onley Initiative during this time. The report is a general summary of combined information that was drawn from multiple sources including:

- Information about the barriers and facilitators in the postsecondary for students with disabilities collected from students and service providers.
- Information from employers and community agencies that represent employers about trends in the labour market and the state of accessibility for employees with disabilities.
- Information from organizations that represent and offer resources to individuals with disabilities, not necessarily specific to postsecondary students.
- Information collected from events that were aimed to support the transition by increasing knowledge capacity and facilitating direct connection between students with disabilities and employers that are building inclusive environments, building skills in creating accessible practices, and seeking a diversity of candidates.
- Information related to the challenges services face in providing the most meaningful and accessible services for employment readiness.
- Client stories, partner knowledge sharing, communication and discussions with various stakeholders through various points of contact.
- Analysis of data collected in one-to-one sessions with students through the implementation of the Employment Pathways Facilitator role in the four partner institutions.

This report aims to provide a retrospective and holistic look at the work of the David C. Onley Initiative including its key activities, findings and recommendations. The final report is intended to complement the previously submitted interim reports which focused on detailed summaries of activities and metrics. The primary objective for the present report is to provide a cumulative and integrative yet detailed elaboration of the entire 2-year scope of the DCOI. A secondary objective is to set the stage for sustainability of the knowledge derived from the Initiative in the form of the DCOI Collective Impact Strategy and future opportunities to contribute to advancement of employability for postsecondary students with disabilities in Ontario.

2.3 Applied Research to Develop a Model

The transition from school to work can be challenging for many postsecondary students, in particular for students with disabilities (Tomba et al., 2020²). People with lived experience of disability often face both individual and systemic barriers that draw on their resources to navigate and find positive employment outcomes (NEADS, 2018³). These vary individually but may include:

- Overload, including cognitive overload while managing their disability related needs
- Lack of accessible opportunities to build skills or have work-related experiences
- Financial implications of inaccessible education experiences and lack of supports
- Attitudinal barriers and misconceptions in employment community

² Tomba, E., et al., Skills Gaps, Underemployment, and Equity of Labour-Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in Canada. Skills Next. January, 2020

³ NEADS, [Landscape of Accessibility and Accommodation for Post-Secondary Students With Disabilities in Canada report](#) 2018

Conscious of the research that has highlighted school to work transition barriers specific to postsecondary students with disabilities (NEADS, 2018⁴), the DCOI has sought to develop a collective action strategy/approach to positively impact the employment outcomes for postsecondary students with lived experience of disability. It asks:

If we want to make collective impact on the employment outcomes for postsecondary students with disabilities, what areas do we need to focus on and what can be done within those areas?

To answer this, the DCOI engaged in applied research, community engagement and education, and knowledge exchange to inform and develop a model that holistically attends to the barriers identified for postsecondary students with disabilities and addresses gaps in knowledge within the postsecondary systems and the broader employment community.

From a research and development perspective, DCOI was a collaborative demonstration project using the methodology of applied research, an iterative and participatory research design. The Research & Development Officers functioned as both researchers and practitioners, embedded in the actual settings of practice while performing research activities and adjusting them as new learnings were continuously attained. Additionally, there was a symbiotic relationship between the research and development staff and the other team members dedicated to employer and community outreach. A continuous knowledge exchange within the DCOI team ensured development of a holistic knowledge base that served as the foundation for the EPF service model and the overall Collective Impact Strategy.

2.4 A Shared Framework to Guide our Conversations – Pathways to Employment

When engaging with multiple stakeholders to make a difference, it was important to ensure that we had a way to frame our discussions and investigations throughout the project. The DCOI used the framework of ‘pathways to employment’ to create a shared understanding of what paths might be leveraged, by both students and employers, to smooth out the transition from postsecondary to work.

When defining these pathways to employment for the purposes of our project, and to manage scope of what we could accomplish in the time set out before us, we adapted the work-integrated learning categories provided by Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL)⁵, and anchored our efforts on the following pathways at each of the four partner campuses:

- Volunteer opportunities
- Part-time jobs
- Summer jobs
- Co-op positions
- Internships / Apprenticeships
- Full-time jobs for new grads
- Entrepreneurship

⁴ NEADS, [Landscape of Accessibility and Accommodation for Post-Secondary Students With Disabilities in Canada report](#) 2018

⁵ https://www.cewilcanada.ca/What_is_WIL_.html

The pathways are seen as essential tools that can be engaged with to remove some of the barriers to finding employment for postsecondary students with disabilities. For example, when co-op placements are available and accessible from the postsecondary side and are meaningfully utilized from the employer side, students with disabilities have the opportunity to build transferable skills, gain experience and familiarity with work settings, and add to their network.

As a result, our team set out to ensure that whether they were speaking with students, engaging with CSO/DSO staff and/or speaking with or interviewing employers for the project, that those conversations were anchored in a mutual understanding of these pathways, and how those pathways could lead from school to work for students with disabilities.

2.5 Partners, Champions and Key Collaborators

2.5.1 Partners

In August 2018, Carleton hosted a launch event which officially brought together the presidents of the four major postsecondary institutions in Ottawa:

- Algonquin College;
- Carleton University;
- College La Cité; and
- University of Ottawa.



At this event, which hosted over 150 attendees from across Ottawa representing academic (secondary and postsecondary), community service provider, employer and many private citizens who wanted to learn more about the DCOI, the four presidents made a public commitment to cement the partnership on the project by signing a Letter of Understanding, each committing to ensure that their institutions would play a critical role in advancing accessibility in the area of employment for postsecondary students with disabilities. See *Appendix 8.1: Launch of David C. Onley Initiative* for more coverage of the launch activities.

While the presidents provided their full support towards the project, there were several key players on each campus that took an ongoing and active role in the day-to-day work of the Initiative. These partners represented the career and/or disability offices, or broader student services units on each campus, and they comprised our Advisory Committee, which met on a monthly basis for the duration of the project. These partners included:

Algonquin College

- Jeff Agate, Associate Director, Student Support Services
- Sara Jordan, Acting Manager, Centre for Accessible Learning
- Kristina Johnston, Manager, Career Services

Carleton University

- Larry McCloskey, Director, Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities
- Bruce Hamm, Manager, Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities
- Courtney Regimbald, Director, Career Development and Cooperative Education
- Rocio Alvarez, Manager, Career Development

La Cité

- Paul Toupin, Directeur, La Cité des affaires
- Stephane Côté, Directeur, Bureau des admissions et du registraire
- Jean-Robert Sabourin, Manager, Employment Ontario

University of Ottawa

- Nicole Miller, Assistant Director, Learning and Professional Development
- Vincent Beaulieu, Interim Manager, Academic Accommodations (Former)
- Bruno Castilloux, Assistant Director, Community Engagement and Employability Partnerships

Each of the above campus partners not only engaged in advisory capacity but also in the day-to-day support of the project, by welcoming and facilitating the integration of at least one, if not two, members of the DCOI Research and Development team in each of their respective offices for the bulk of the project.

2.5.2 Champions

In addition to the presidents of the four partner institutions, there were several champions of the Initiative that provided support, access to resources and/or assisted with promoting various activities of the project over the two years. While there are too many to name individually, there are several that we would like to acknowledge, as they each played a critical role in the success of the project.

The Honorable David C. Onley, former Ontario Lieutenant-Governor

From being our keynote speaker at the launch event in August 2018 to participating in our Virtual Showcase Celebration in April 2020, our namesake of the project, the Honorable David C. Onley, took an active role in supporting the work of the Initiative. We met with Mr. Onley on several occasions throughout the project, either in person or virtually, to keep him apprised of our activities and to seek his contributions and insight where needed.



Yazmine Laroche, Deputy Minister, Public Service Accessibility

Ms. Laroche played an integral role in ensuring that the Federal Public Service, the largest employer in the Ottawa area, was actively involved as an employer champion of the DCOI. DM Laroche oversees a portfolio focused on accessibility for Federal employees with disabilities but has become a key ally and influencer

in Canada's accessibility landscape. The Office of the Deputy Minister for Public Service Accessibility has played a critical role in supporting the Accessible Canada Act and has developed the Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada.

2.5.3 Key Collaborators

It was important to our team that we not only engage with campus partners and employers from the Ottawa region, but that we intentionally seek out key local community service providers who offer services or support to postsecondary students with disabilities and/or employers who hire them. We conducted an environmental scan of these organizations within Ottawa and met with many representatives to interview them and share about the work of the project, however there were five organizations that were key to our success:

- EARN / United Way (Employment Accessibility Network)
- Ottawa Employment Hub at Algonquin College
- Ottawa Board of Trade
- DiscoverAbility Network through the Ontario Chamber of Commerce
- Magnet (based out of Ryerson University in Toronto).

While we did not have formally established partnership agreements with these organizations, their contribution and support of the work of the DCOI was never-ending. Their representatives invested not only time and resources to support our work but they actively engaged in the day-to-day activities, referred employers and industry representatives to our team, and made their collective networks available to us as needed. Because the DCOI had a finite ending, we also took an active role in ensuring that these partners played a role in the sustainability of what we learned from our project. See Section 3.6 Supporting Sustainability to learn more.



It takes a community to support a community. We would like to recognize the following organizations for not only supporting the work of the Initiative, but also taking an active role in our efforts to enhance the employability of post-secondary students—and all people with disabilities.



3 Key Project Outcomes and Activities

The DCOI established a set of outcomes as part of the formal agreement with the MTCU, elaborated in this section. The outcomes evolved over the course of the two years and are presented here to be reflective of the planned activities stated in the Year 2 Transfer Payment Protocol (TPA). These included:

- Conducting research in best practices that support employment of postsecondary students with disabilities.
- Engaging in employer outreach and investigating issues related to enterprise development.
- Development of online repository of information and tools that support postsecondary students and employers.
- Establishing a model of postsecondary employability supports that is transferable and can be shared province wide.
- Implementing a Public Awareness Campaign to address attitudes and stigma related to employment of persons with disabilities.
- Supporting the long-term sustainability of the Initiative after completion and beyond its regional scope.

In addition to these agreed upon goals, the DCOI was successful in achieving these important secondary outcomes:

- Articulating a collective impact approach to positively impacting employment outcomes for postsecondary students, that can be pilot tested in other regions to assess the feasibility of replication.
- Establishing a strong ongoing base of collaborative partners that can be leveraged for ongoing work and future initiatives, implementation, and knowledge sharing.
- Knowledge capacity building in accessible practices for stakeholders provided through advisory supports and internal partner engagements.
- Development of operational processes, roles and functions that support the complexity of a multi-institutional partnership for the purpose of applied research across diverse postsecondary settings.

3.1 Postsecondary Student Supports

A key area to consider for making a collective impact on the employment outcomes of graduates with disabilities is the postsecondary settings themselves. Given the increase in students with disabilities accessing postsecondary education and the potential for postsecondary to serve as supportive factor in the rate of employment for these students, the DCOI looked carefully at the role of postsecondary, and in particular support services, in preparing students for the school to work transition.

The DCOI's exploration of the postsecondary environment was conducted by a team of Research and Development Officers (RDO's). Building on research that has noted the need for an increased connection and collaboration between two key supports of students with disabilities - the Disability Service Office and the Career Service Office- in order to improve services, the RDO's were placed in those respective services at each of the four partner institutions. To support an increased application of practices and sharing of resources, the RDO's came together on a regular basis through a knowledge exchange mechanism to review practices and contribute individual expertise, support each other's work in advising the partner institutions, and bring any best practices they had learned back to the postsecondary settings they were working with. In that way, each of the partner settings could gain from the learnings occurring in the other three settings.

The RDO's initial role in the postsecondary setting was three-fold:

1. to provide guidance and recommendations drawn from best-practices research on the support of students in developing career and employability skills and,
2. to facilitate increased collaboration and connection between student support services that students with disabilities may access during their postsecondary career development journey, and
3. support the different settings to innovate or apply new practices or activities relevant to disability and employment.

As the DCOI was using a methodology of gathering information to then respond with applied practices, the RDO's were required to significantly shift their role in the second year of the project to apply and test out a student-facing role called the Employment Pathways Facilitator (EPF) which is more extensively outlined in Section 3.4 of this report. The EPF was developed as a response to what was learned in the initial Discovery phase of the research.

See *Appendix 8.4: Highlights of Key Findings from Initiative During DCOI Showcase Celebration* where we have included the poster presentations prepared by the RDO team for the Showcase. Each poster demonstrates a few of the activities conducted at each campus partner.

3.1.1 The Role of the Research and Development Officers

In order to better understand the support practices at different points along the transition from postsecondary to employment for postsecondary students with disabilities, the Research and Development of DCOI began by looking first at the postsecondary environment itself. The DCOI acknowledges that the preparation and employment readiness for students begins prior to postsecondary and did some outreach to the secondary environment, however, given the constraints of the two-year project timeline, the focus was put on developing capacity at postsecondary and the employer community to impact employment outcomes. We recognize that the skills related to self-advocacy, self-awareness, understanding one's strengths, challenges, and interests; all these are developed over a lifetime and therefore must be supported throughout elementary, secondary, and postsecondary. Certainly, the connections between these key educational settings and the people working with them need to be further forged (Martin, 2018⁶). Many postsecondary students with disabilities point to the impact of their experiences in elementary and secondary on their self-perceptions, advocacy skills, and thoughts about career path. The scope of the DCOI was too look at the transition from postsecondary but we recognize the importance of students' previous experiences.

There are some great opportunities to leverage pre-existing transition programs to facilitate students' engagement with the various Pathways to Employment as well as career services at postsecondary. There is also room to innovate new connections with secondary settings. The DCOI did engage in discussions with school boards to look at possible ways to connect and we did link in with Make the Cut, a very well established, well-attended transition event that is held twice a year in the Ottawa region and is led by the Paul Menton Centre at Carleton University and the Centre for Accessible Learning at Algonquin College. The organizers of Make the Cut graciously afforded us the opportunity to provide professional development for secondary teachers on supporting students to connect with the career supports at

⁶ Martin, Elizabeth. *Making the Connection: Growing Collegiality and Collaboration Between K–12 and PSE Educators*. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2018

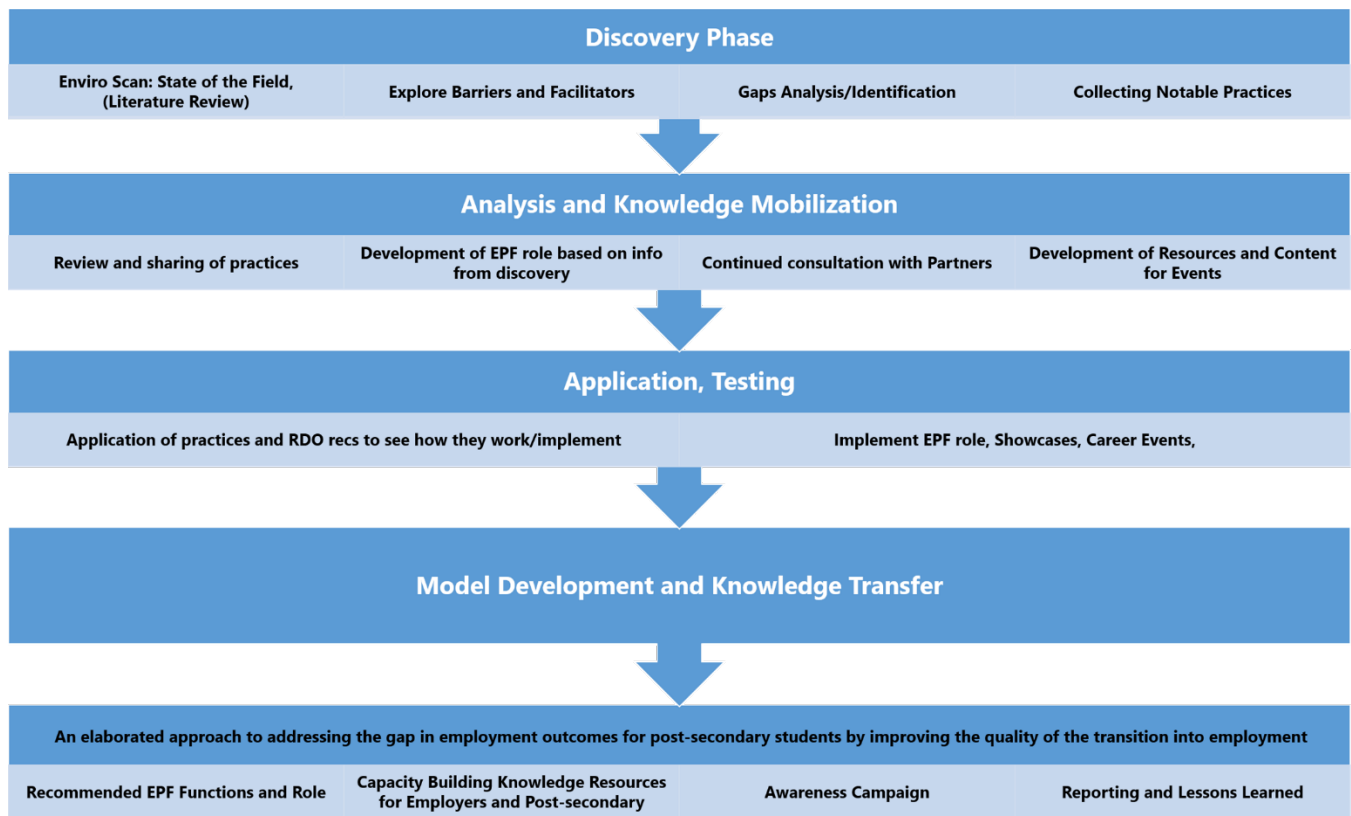
postsecondary and connect with the Pathways to Employment. In addition, we connected directly with students to introduce them to the #AbleTo awareness campaign.

Continued work at how to provide meaningful messaging and preparation for students who will be making the journey to postsecondary, and indeed those who will directly enter the workforce is also incredibly important.

The rollout of the research and development occurred in several phases: Discovery, Analysis and Knowledge mobilization, Application, and Model Development & Knowledge Transfer, with a variety of activities occurring within each phase (see image below which visually describes the activities from each phase).

The work of the RDO's in the postsecondary was focused on:

- Capturing the perspectives and experiences of student support providers and students about the quality of the transition from postsecondary to work, including the barriers and facilitators for postsecondary students with disabilities in preparing for employment and engaging with the Pathways to Employment.
- Discovering and implementing effective and sustainable ways to support a consistent connection between the Disability Services Office and the Career Services Office;
- Analyzing the data collected from the four partner institutions to develop and apply a proposed set of functions that can address some of the gaps in postsecondary related to the school to career transition.
- Developing and providing professional development workshops to various services, including career service staff, to increase their confidence in addressing disability-related concerns that students who accesses services may have.



3.1.2 Discovery Phase - Perspectives and Experiences of Service Providers

The discovery phase consisted of a variety of steps intended to help identify existing literature that is linked to our work, getting clarity on barriers and facilitators which led to a gap analysis, along with documenting notable best practices from postsecondary as well as in the industry. Understanding the perspectives and experiences of postsecondary service providers and the students accessing those services was an important step before making suggestions and proposing solutions. The Research and Development Officers engaged in one to one calls or meetings, attended relevant discussions at staff meetings and participated in the Partner Institution Lunch and Learns.

Some of the themes emerging from the discussions with student service providers revealed the following barriers:

Barrier: Disclosure and Accommodations

- Students do not always disclose their disabilities to employers. If they do then disclose after being hired, there may be challenges to receiving proper and timely accommodations.
- Both students and employers are unaware of available accommodations and employers' duty to accommodate.

Barrier: Student Self-advocacy Skills

- Students' self-advocacy skills are often poor, which impacts their ability to voice their strengths and skills to employers during the hiring process.

- Students are not always aware of the available resources in the postsecondary settings and beyond, impacting their abilities to ask for assistance.

Barrier: Time Implications

- Students are often unable to commit to both studying and working to gain experience during school due to time commitments.
- Similarly, students often have busy schedules and lack time to focus on building employment related skills during studies.

Barrier: Infrastructure

- There is a reported lack of resources in postsecondary institutions to support students with disabilities through their employment journey and when navigating their employment pathways.
- Even when the institution hosts an employment related event for this population, the turn-out is not necessarily well attended.

3.1.3 Perspectives and Experiences of Students

The DCOI takes a Nothing About Us, Without Us approach and therefore highly valued the student voice not only to inform the research we were engaging in but also in forming part of the DCOI team designing and rolling out the project. One way the RDO's connected with students was through the Kick Start Your Career event.

Students were asked four discussion questions to understand the facilitators and barriers they feel they face to reaching employment through the many employment pathways. The facilitators and barriers highlighted were categorized into those which were "experienced" vs. "perceived". Experienced facilitators or barriers were expressed from lived experiences and examples, which is the data reported below. Perceived facilitators or barriers were expressed as things that could or might impact their employment pathways but were not necessarily experienced directly. Below summarizes the main barriers and facilitators.

Barrier: Job application process

- Similar to many students with and without disabilities, students explained that they often apply for jobs and never hear back from the employer.
- Students also explained lengthy or intimidating job application processes that deter them from applying for jobs all together.
- In addition to application processes, students explained that the many listed job requirements also deter them from applying.
- Some students also voiced frustration with many impersonal online application processes.

Barrier: Fears, perceptions and self-esteem

- Many emotional experiences were voiced in relation to the job seeking process including fear of assessment and criticism resulting in the individual not applying for certain jobs.

- Other fears voiced include fear of being less qualified than other candidates, fear of being overwhelmed, fear of failure and fear of change.
- Perceptions of accommodations were also discussed, as students felt asking for accommodations might decrease the chances of landing a job.

Barrier: Time, family or financial commitment

- The impact of time management was discussed as students expressed feeling too busy to balance work and studying or seeking other employment pathways.
- The limitation of time commitment also extended to the pathway of Coop. Students felt Coop placements would delay their degree completion.
- Many students expressed family commitments that limited their abilities to seek employment or build employment skills. Family commitments ranged from caring for children, parents and siblings.

Facilitator: Networking, support, connections

- Using personal connections was one of the most voiced facilitators in gaining employment. Examples extended to connections with professors, family members, previous supervisors and overall role models in their lives.
- Students explained they felt supported when they built connections and communicated with others.

Facilitator: Soft-skills

- Several skills were highlighted as beneficial to gain meaningful employment including organizational skills, multi-tasking skills and communication skills.
- The importance of exploring interests was highlighted several times as students felt it built their self-awareness and other skill sets.

Facilitator: Courses, training and program

- Supplementary courses or a specialization in school was highlighted as a facilitator to employment.
- Practicums, internships and attending presentations related to their field of study was provided as facilitator in moving the individuals forward.

The Research and Development Officers also gathered valuable insights from students by conducting group conversations, also referred to as “Catalyst Conversations”. These conversations were conducted in groups of approximately 5-10 students, where education around the employment pathways provided followed by a facilitated discussion. These conversations were conducted in groups of approximately 5-10 students, where education around the employment pathways was provided followed by a facilitated discussion. Information regarding resources available at each campus was provided at these meetings (e.g. DSO information, CSO information). The main themes gathered from the Catalyst Conversations include:

Barrier: Job application process

- There exist many challenges with breaking down and following through on applications to the employment pathways as students explain they are large, daunting and difficult.
- Graduate students explain they are uncertain how to disclose their disability, they are unclear on their legal rights.
- Grad students also report a fear of explaining gaps in work experience in their resume due to their studies.

Barrier: Time and family commitment

- It is difficult to access pathway experiences tied to programs (internships, research positions, practicums) due to grade cut-offs, increased cognitive load and family obligations.

Barrier: Perceptions and self-esteem

- Students express difficulty marketing themselves to employers.
- Graduate students explain that their perception of the working world causes stress as they have had limited experience.

Note that this does not include the themes that emerged from data collected from students engaging with the Employment Pathways Facilitator Sessions that are highlighted in Section 3.4.

3.1.4 DCOI Map of Knowledge Exchange and Transfer

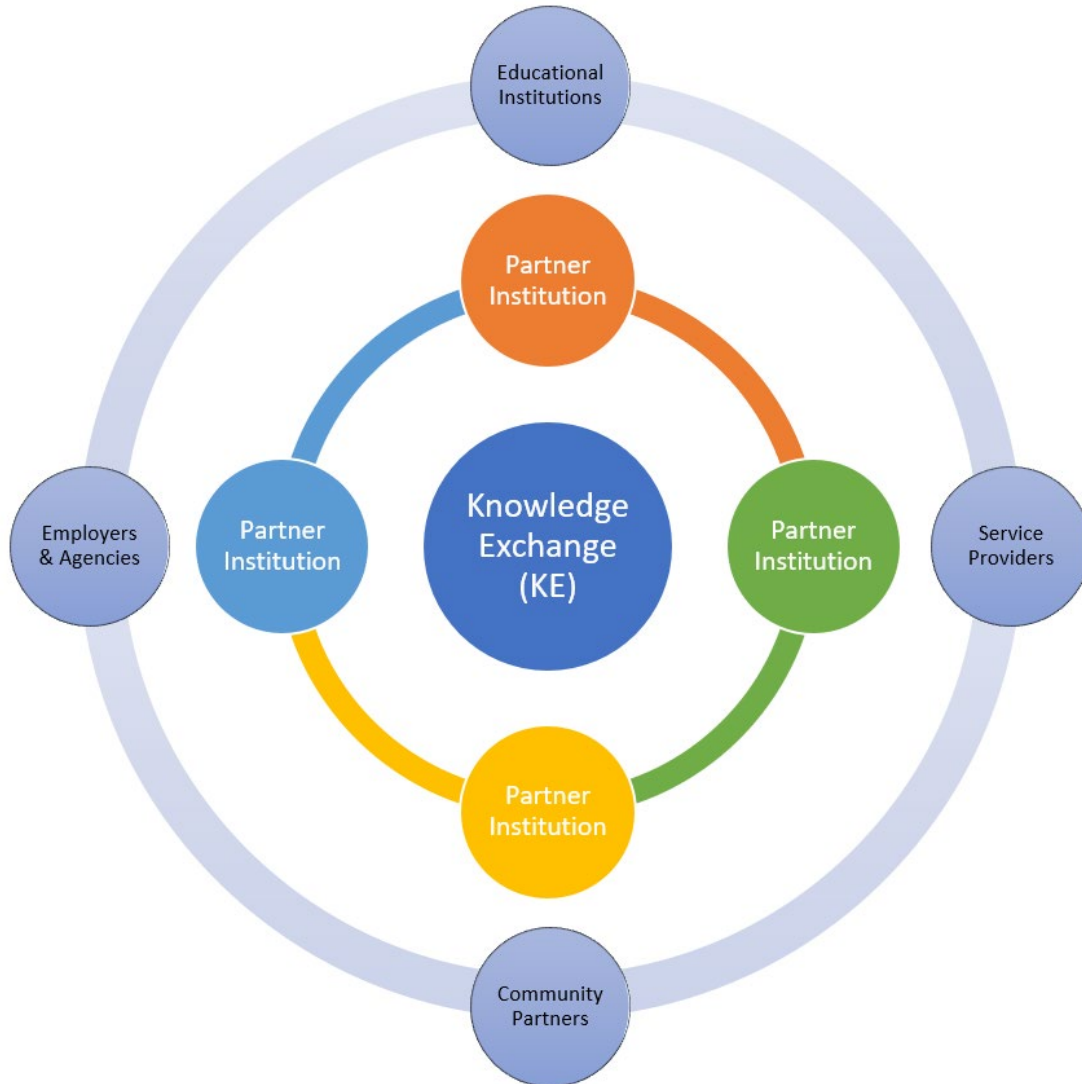
The DCOI was focused on integrating many sources of information into some practices that could be applied and tested within its community-wide project, as well as forging strong collaborative connections for sustainability of future actions and continuing knowledge exchange by key postsecondary and employer stakeholders throughout the community. This meant that it was important to be sharing the learnings and practices in one setting with the others, so they could be considered, modified for use, or integrated as-is.

Despite the complexity of engaging a collaboration of this magnitude, the advantage of the DCOI's format was that all project partners and community members could engage with the project from their own individual starting place with a view to make progress forward. It also allowed for individual settings to identify and recognize their areas of strength from which they could confidently contribute to the collective effort, as well as identify their areas of challenge and draw from the collective knowledge to address. The ability for each organization to share its strengths and draw from strengths of others was an important aspect in forging the potential for future collaborations and efforts.

Similarly, community stakeholders were at varying levels of experience in engaging with and implementing knowledge and practices to increase accessibility. The way knowledge was shared throughout the two-year project, allowed multiple stakeholders, including project partners, to find the information they needed and move forward from their individualized starting point. Whether that meant starting the conversation about accessibility, increasing awareness of disability-related issues or inclusive approaches, building specific skill sets, or honing already established practices, the stakeholders were able to move the work of their setting forward. This allowed for an "all ships rising with the tide" approach to

making positive impact on the overall transition from school to work for postsecondary students with disabilities.

The diagram below maps the knowledge sharing of practices throughout the two-year project.



3.2 Employer Outreach and Enterprise Development

Recognizing that employers play a critical role in the transition from school to work by creating accessible job opportunities, engaging in accessible hiring practices and building accessible, inclusive workplaces, a second objective of the DCOI was to outreach to the employers in the community.

At the same time, we also explored the concept of enterprise development – entrepreneurship – with a lens of a student with a disability's desire to explore becoming an entrepreneur when/if they are not able to find meaningful employment alongside with identifying existing tools and resources in the Ottawa community to support entrepreneurship, to working directly with a start-up company.

This outreach was to better understand, in general, the employers needs and stages in building disability confidence (Tomba, 2020⁷) and to apply and test practices for effectively connecting employers and postsecondary students with disabilities.

Doing this, though, was not just a matter of putting people in the same place at the same time. Connecting employers to the talent pools of students with disabilities across Ottawa included:

- finding effective mechanisms to support the ongoing connection between the postsecondary environment and employers in the community;
- teaching employers how to communicate their commitment to creating an accessible and inclusive workplace that would draw that talent;
- supporting employers to develop capacity in communicating the actions they are taking to create inclusive and accessible environments;
- capturing the realities and stated needs of employers of all sizes as it relates to creating, maintaining and communicating their respective accessibility practices; and
- informing student development through employer needs, skills sets, talent pools.

⁷ Tomba, E., et al., Skills Gaps, Underemployment, and Equity of Labour-Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in Canada. Skills Next. January, 2020



Ontario has a shortage of skilled talent. Students with disabilities can help fill this talent gap.

We engaged with employers who hire (or are open to hiring) post-secondary students with disabilities in a variety of ways to learn about their business needs and to address common myths and concerns they have.

Outreach with employers included, but was not limited to:

- Facilitating a knowledge exchange session between employers and campus career educators to learn more about their fears, biases and perceptions about hiring students with disabilities. We busted some myths!
- Advising business leaders on how they could modify their on-campus recruitment activities in ways that are more inclusive and accessible for all students.
- Interviewing to learn more about company accessibility/recruitment strategies and unique priorities.
- Hosting a series of accessible career showcase events to introduce employers to students with disabilities.
- Introducing campus career services/co-op professionals to discuss enacting inclusive recruitment needs.



3.2.1 Finding Effective Mechanisms

In order to better comprehend the level of understanding of the various employment pathways between postsecondary career and coop offices and employers, the project team undertook two key activities to learn from employers:

1. Conducted a series of interviews with both employers and campus career staff; and
2. Hosted a series of Accessible Career Showcase Events at each partner campus.

Insights from Interviews with Campus Career Centre Staff that Engage with Employers

Outreach with key members of campus career teams that directly engage with employers revealed that there is not much time, or capacity, for staff to innovate when it comes to ensuring that employers are tapping into the diverse talent pool, let alone to have a strategic conversation about how the employer can engage in the various employment pathways or events to meet their recruitment needs. Staff rely on existing databases, templates, or past events such as career fairs as the primary mechanisms for connecting employers with students and typical pathways referenced are primarily co-op. Conversations about recruiting from diverse talent pools are typically only engaged in if the employer specifically requests it, which is not common, and when it does happen, the general consensus is that there is limited comfort in how to direct them accordingly. Some staff noted “it [disability] is no one’s responsibility” and there are “no mechanisms to connect employers with students with disabilities.”

“It [disability] is no one’s responsibility.”

Insight from Employers that Engage with Campus Career and Coop Offices

The majority of employers that were interviewed regularly take part in postsecondary recruitment and attend job fairs. Relationships to specific institutions in Ottawa were accredited to “relationships that local hiring managers have developed with various campuses” and it was not uncommon that the employer representative was their dedicated HR representative responsible for postsecondary recruitment for their company.

While co-op was the most commonly mentioned pathway suggested by career services staff to meet their general recruitment needs, followed by field placements and internships, knowing how to tap into and access students with disabilities from the various pathways was not clear for employers.

When asked about their ‘wish list’ for tools or support to help them with recruiting students with disabilities, 22 of the 30 employers expressed how they would like to have support to move forward with becoming accessible workplaces. Key suggestions included:

1. Having access to a website or directory of services and resources to connect with and support work with students with disabilities on campus “would be extremely valuable.” Another similar suggestion included having a one-pager about “who to access on campuses should disability diversity become a priority”;
2. Postsecondary institutions need to do more to encourage connections [for employers] with students with disabilities at events such as job fairs; and
3. Provide “more transparency on how postsecondary institutions support students with disabilities”.

See Appendix 8.5: Interview Questions Asked During Campus and Employer Interviews and Appendix 8.6: Employers Interviewed

Accessible Career Showcase Events

Traditional career and employment events on postsecondary campuses includes job or career fairs. These events are often overcrowded, loud and could be perceived as overwhelming by some. It is also very difficult to engage in meaningful conversations between students and recruiters, let alone physically navigate the spaces.

Our team set out to host what we called Accessible Career Showcase Events on each of our partner campuses. We worked with each partner to host this event either on the same day as their already scheduled career fair or the evening before or immediately following the event. We heard from employers regularly that they are often conflicted about which career events they will attend at each institution, if at all, because there are so many in such a compressed recruiting period, and they often don’t have the human or financial resources to attend every event.

We did not want to create more work, or expense for employers so we worked closely with campus partners to reach out to those registered to attend the existing campus event to see if they would be willing to stay a little longer, or come a bit earlier, to participate in our Showcase activities.

At each institution, we very strategically structured an event that hosted between 15 to 20 employers in the space being utilized. The event space was set up so that instead of allocating a typical 6ft table with room for backdrop to promote the employer, each organization was provided with a large round table which allowed for 2-3 representatives to sit on half of the table and anywhere from 4 to 6 students to sit at the other half, whether on chairs or in their wheel chair. Employers could set up their corporate banners behind the table and had room to place materials or giveaways on the table.

What was most important about the design of this event was that it was free-flowing for student attendees. They could come and go from one table to another, sitting and engaging with the employer directly as part of a small group conversation or they could sit and listen. They could stay as long as they felt comfortable or they could move on to the next employer. In addition, we created an observation space at each event that was away from the main exhibitors but close enough that students could still see the room and what was going on. For those with anxiety, or who were unsure about how to proceed, they could take however long they needed to sit back and observe what was going on until they felt comfortable enough to move around the room and engage with employers.

We had a team of trained student ambassadors at each event who were either assigned to specific student attendees to help guide them through the room at their preferred pace, or who floated around the room and at the observation area, ensuring that students were doing ok and feeling comfortable. Our Research & Development Officers at each partner institution were also on hand to triage with students if there were any issues or concerns that needed to be addressed.

See *Appendix 8.2: Accessible Career Showcase Events* for more information.

Careers in Government Event

Using the same model for the Accessible Career Showcase, we also held a two-part Careers in Government Event, in collaboration with our partners in the Federal Public Service (PSC). This event was designed to be in two phases to provide the students with disabilities who attended, the opportunity to get ready for the Fall 2019 recruitment campaign.

Part I: In April 2019, our partners at La Cité provided the use of their state-of-the-art event facilities so that we could bring together 150+ students from across the four partner institutions along with 29 representatives from 11 departments. This event provided participating students with an opportunity to learn about the opportunities that exist for persons with disabilities within the PSC, and how to navigate their online recruitment process, which has been described by students as “overwhelming, confusing and complicated”. Navigating the PSC portion of the program was the first part of a two-part event services designed to help graduating students become career ready and prepare for the Fall 2019 PSC Recruitment Campaign.

Part II: In October 2019, we hosted a follow up event at the Shaw Centre in Ottawa. Our intention was to create an accessible event that provided graduating students and recent graduates from each of the four partner institutions with an opportunity to:

- Learn about FSWEF and GC Jobs available within the Federal government’s many departments and agencies;

- Develop an interactive workshop forum to provide students with instruction on how to fill out a PSC on-line application for FSWEF and GC Jobs; and
- Provide an opportunity for students to have meaningful employment exchanges with HR representatives that lead to the distribution of Discovery Letters and possible job offers.

All student attendees pre-identified their interest in an ‘employment stream’ within the PSC and during the event, and were invited to hands-on workshops where they were provided information about how to pursue opportunities in those streams. Preference was given to those interested departments/agencies who were prepared to extend Discovery Letters and/or make conditional offers to attendees either on the same day or within 24 hours of the event. There were three distinct activities happening during the day.

- **Employer Networking Showcase:** 16 government departments had one table each to promote their jobs, and work environments. Each table can accommodate a maximum of 2 employer representatives and 5 students. An additional 2 employer representatives were invited to circulate the periphery of the room to engage in additional informal conversations with student attendees.
- **Career Café:** A more casual networking space with a designated area for quiet conversations was provided allowing for another 2 employer representatives and 2 Champions (persons with disabilities employed by participating department/agency) to interact with students. Light refreshment service were be available throughout the afternoon.
- **Interactive Workshops:** Workshops facilitated by PSC representatives were hosted in English and French. Approximately 50 students and graduates participated in each of the three rooms where they received instruction on how to navigate the on-line PSC application process for both FSWEF and PC Jobs.

This event welcomed 170 students and graduates with disabilities from across the four partner campuses along with 60 representatives of 15 different departments or agencies in the PSC. Similar to the Accessible Career Showcase events, we provided training to a team of students who had a role as a Networking Ambassador, and acted as a supportive bridge in facilitating conversations and meaningful connections between their fellow classmates and potential employers. The RDOs also played a key role in engaging with students who were demonstrating signs of anxiety or distress during the event.

Discovery Letters: By November 6, 2019, we had received confirmation that at least 79 letters were extended to students for FSWEF and GC Job positions.

Resume Book: We also put together a resume book which was a combination of student resumes expressing interest in the Federal Student Work Experience Program (71 resumes submitted) and GC Jobs (63 resumes submitted).

Preparation Events: We also held a series of preparation events in advance of Part II. For representatives from the various departments, we hosted a webinar to prepare them for how the event would work and what to expect, including how to engage with students with disabilities. There were 60+ attendees for this lunch time webinar. For the three weeks leading up to Part II, we held a French and English webinar for students to help them understand the event, how to prepare and what to expect on the day of the event.

Government Departments Represented:

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Canada Border Services Agency
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency
- Employment and Social Development Canada
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Health Canada
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
- Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
- Natural Resources Canada
- Office of the Procurement Ombudsman
- Public Safety Canada
- Public Services and Procurement Canada
- Shared Services Canada
- Statistics Canada
- Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat



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POUR L'EMPLOI ET L'ENTREPRENEURIAT

Showcase Events

Objective:
Identify and pilot a series of events designed to create meaningful opportunities for engagement between employers and students within fully accessible, low stress, low sensory environments, on- and off-campus. Key events included:

Accessible Career Showcase

- Designed the physical space to allow for ease of mobility, regardless of the disability.
- Created intimate spaces for conversations which allowed both employers and students to engage in meaningful dialogue (i.e. 1-2 employers at a roundtable with no more than 3-5 students at one time); students could engage however they were most comfortable.
- Provided observation areas for those with anxiety or feelings of being overwhelmed; they could sit and observe activities and when ready engage throughout the space.

Careers in Government Showcase

- Two-part series to inform students about the PSC recruitment process.
- **Phase 1 (Spring 2019):** Students received an overview of the various PSC pathways to employment to prepare for fall recruitment campaigns.
- **Phase 2 (Fall 2019):** HR Specialists from PSC hosted 300+ students at interactive sessions designed to help navigate the online application process; students left with completed applications for part-time, summer or new graduate full-time positions. Many received letters of intent for interviews as part of the networking fair.



3.2.2 Teaching Employers How to Communicate

Understanding definitions and the lens by which people see and interpret things is critical. At the onset of the project, we assumed that when employers spoke about diversity and inclusion, that their definitions included people with disabilities. Likewise, we assumed that if employers were speaking about accessibility, it was a lens that included disability. It only took a few interviews to realize that “creating an accessible and inclusive workplace that would draw talent” did not necessarily include people [students] with disabilities.

In addition, when we did mention hiring students with a disability, we quickly realized that most employers saw disability as something physical. At an Employer Knowledge Exchange event that we hosted in April 2019, we heard employers say that students with disabilities were not applying for their jobs. When we probed a little further on this, their comments included statements such as “we don’t see anyone with a disability” at career fairs or applying for our jobs.

As a result of these insights, we set out to have meaningful conversations, through our one on one interviews, our public awareness campaign (see Section 3.5), and by attending conferences and events, speaking to employer groups from various industries about these important distinctions. We wanted to bust some of the myths we knew existed, including sharing a finding from Statistics Canada that reports that “1 in 5 Canadians over the age of 15 identify as having one or more visible or non-visible disabilities”. The fact is, most of the employers that we were engaged with were already hiring and/or working with people [students] with disabilities, they just couldn’t see the disability.

3.2.3 Developing Capacity

We also took the opportunity to do some presentations at conferences where employers and campus recruiters and small business owners from across Ontario were the primary attendees. During these presentations, we shared about the work of the DCOI and infused messages about the importance of having strategic conversations within their companies about designing and cultivating inclusive and accessible recruitment practices from the ground up. This included sharing steps for recruiting along the employment pathways in postsecondary environments, the business case for hiring people [students] with disabilities, and creating a culture of accessibility and inclusion that was inclusive of people with disabilities.

As a concrete example, we worked with a start-up company called PharmaXilia that was just entering its growth stage. A small group of its founders had built the company up but they were ready to expand and needed more staff to reach the next level. Our team worked with this company to design and build an inclusive campus recruitment strategy, that included how to create inclusive job postings and create an atmosphere for accessible interviews, along with how to integrate a culture of inclusion and accessibility as they continue to grow and recruit staff with all levels of experience.

We wanted to give employers and new start-up companies simple tools and resources to help them build a solid foundation for not just recruiting people with disabilities but supporting their longer-term career plans and needs.



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Employer Engagement

Ontario has a shortage of skilled talent. Students with disabilities can help fill this talent gap.

We engaged with employers who hire (or are open to hiring) post-secondary students with disabilities in a variety of ways to learn about their business needs and to address common myths and concerns they have.

Outreach with employers included, but was not limited to:

- Facilitating a knowledge exchange session between employers and campus career educators to learn more about their fears, biases and perceptions about hiring students with disabilities. We busted some myths!
- Advising business leaders on how they could modify their on-campus recruitment activities in ways that are more inclusive and accessible for all students.
- Interviewing to learn more about company accessibility/recruitment strategies and unique priorities.
- Hosting a series of accessible career showcase events to introduce employers to students with disabilities.
- Introducing campus career services/co-op professionals to discuss enacting inclusive recruitment needs.



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CARLETON UNIVERSITY



LA CITÉ
CITY OF OTTAWA



ALGONQUIN
COLLEGE



uOttawa



Ontario

3.2.4 Capturing the Reality and Needs

During some of the events we hosted and/or attended, and in our one on one interviews, there were a few key themes that stood out which we feel captures the reality and needs for Ottawa employers.

Accommodations:

While some of the employers we interviewed demonstrated a proactive approach to accommodations, it was clear that most are still taking a reactive stance. In some cases, supportive measures tend not to be in place but the employer will act once/if a request is made. Therefore, once one employee asks for an accommodation or discloses, this triggers awareness and information sharing between both parties. As one employer noted, “While disability is listed as part of our diversity statement, as far I am aware, there are no particular policies, procedures or strategy as it relates to hiring persons with a disability and each request for accommodation is done on a case by case basis.”

We also saw many cases of what could be called lip service, where a company’s effort at addressing accommodations was by including a standard line on a job description that reads *Accommodations available upon request*, thereby putting the responsibility on the individual to discuss their needs as opposed to creating a culture of inclusion and actively speaking about how the employer supports the needs of all of its employees.

Disclosure:

Employers, generally, would like employees to disclose their disability so that accommodation planning can occur, but they do not necessarily realize what they need to do to foster an environment in which an employee may feel comfortable to disclose. There is a desire of employers to learn more about disclosure while at the same time, a healthy fear of saying or doing the wrong thing, which then leads them to no action and/or possibly not even hiring someone that they suspect may have a disability. There is a realization that building trusting relationships may enable an employee to disclose if they wish but how to do this is still a gray area for them.

One of our postsecondary partners has an established service in place for referring students with disabilities to employers. For some employers participating in this program, there is an awareness that disclosure of disability is a personal choice even if at student or a job seeker is being referred through a disability related service. Dedicated services such as those provided by this partner, whether integrated in the career center or elsewhere on campus, should be considered essential to helping both students and employers navigate these types of scenarios and conversations.

Lack of Disability Awareness by Staff:

Another area where we saw a gap, or a need, for employers was in disability awareness by their staff, including those who work in human resources, recruiting, and/or hiring managers for various departments. This has resulted in a lack of understanding towards recruiting and hiring students with disabilities. As noted earlier, many employers conclude that having a disability is physical; if they can’t see the disability then in their minds there is no need for an accommodation or on-going support for an individual. Investing in the creation of tools and resources to better prepare managers to support their employees is necessary. The question is, will creating a new website be the answer to these questions or

is there something more tangible that can be done. Several employers expressed a desire to create a 'safe' place such as a network or 1-800 number that they could call and seek support or ask questions as they pertain to different scenarios within their company, where they could get advice about how to best respond and/or support their employees.

Reporting Requirements Limiting Action:

It is important to note that several representatives that we spoke with commented that they are only required to report on gender and/or visible minority groups and as such, their recruitment efforts are driven by those requirements. While Ontario has taken great strides with the creation of key AODA standards, particularly around employment, and there is increased awareness by employers about these standards, they are still approaching the recommendations as meeting minimum requirements. Projects like the DCOI, in collaboration with community partners and local secondary and postsecondary institutions alongside with employers and organizations such as the local Board of Trade or Chambers of Commerce can make great strides moving forward.

Without question, the majority of employers that we spoke with have expressed a desire to become more disability aware and are open to helping their companies become more inclusive and accessible for all people, as long as there are tools and resources to support them as they do this.

Greatest Challenges

While presenting at the Future Workforce Conference in Fall 2019, we took the opportunity ask employers what they saw as the greatest challenge about hiring students with disabilities. The graphic image below is a great representation of what we heard from employers, not just at the conference but over the duration of the project. Our #AbleTo public awareness campaign was a great opportunity to help address some of these challenges.

When poll is active, respond at [PollEv.com/onley](https://www.poll-ev.com/onley)
Text **ONLEY** to **37607** once to join

**What's one word to describe what you see as your
greatest challenge about hiring students with
disabilities?**



3.2.5 Informing Student Development

Whether through formal interviews that we conducted, informal conversations at conferences or while attending networking events on and/or off-campus, we saw the importance of finding a way to translate what we learned from employers into meaningful information for students, as well as campus service providers that support students with disabilities with their employment needs.

3.3 Development of Online Repository

The DCOI has worked from the standpoint of acknowledging the work that has already been done to facilitate better outcomes in employment rather than “re-inventing the wheel”. In that vein, members of our team looked at collaborating with, and enhancing projects in, the community whenever possible.

Throughout the project, the team conducted a variety of literature reviews and explored existing tools and resources that support advancing employment for postsecondary students with disabilities. The team built a library of various literature for reference throughout the project but in particular, efforts were made to enhance and/or design and create tools that might already exist but without the lens of postsecondary recruitment. Many of these tools were created and utilized as part of our public awareness campaign (see Section 3.5) and were collated and can be found at <https://onleyinitiative.ca/resources>.

Resources on this site include infographics, guidebooks and other resources geared towards students, employers and service providers and were created directly as a result of many of the gaps and needs identified by these stakeholders.

In addition, we looked at and worked with local and provincial partners to conduct a review of existing resources such as websites, resource libraries, employability toolkits and even some workshops geared towards supporting employment or entrepreneurial opportunities. Where feasible, we conducted audits, provided training and/or made recommendations for how they could further enhance them. For example, in some cases we identified opportunities to bring a lens of postsecondary recruitment, or how to design workshops or resources to be more accessible for those with non-visible disabilities, and sometimes even how to make their spaces more physically accessible to accommodate people [students] with physical needs.

Throughout the project, we held several meetings with the leadership of Magnet, which is a “social innovation platform with a mission to accelerate inclusive economic growth in Canada”⁸. It was co-created by Ryerson University in partnership with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

Magnet has established partnerships with most, if not all, of the Ontario postsecondary institutions. As a result, in further exploring their online portal which supports both job seekers and employers, we hosted a couple of knowledge exchange sessions where our career services partners were able to share valuable feedback with Magnet to further inform some of the institutional challenges that have been identified, in particular from an accessibility perspective. Magnet was very open to working with our partners and to respond to some of the recommendations and changes that were suggested.

Also, closely linked with Magnet, and under the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) umbrella, is an online resource called the DiscoverAbility Network. We saw an opportunity to collaborate with this Network as their site

⁸ <https://magnet.today/about/>

is dedicated to supporting job seekers with disabilities and linking them with employers that hire people with disabilities. In early 2019, we entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the OCC to establish the Ottawa portal of the DiscoverAbility Network - <https://ottawa.discoverability.network>

Our team conducted a full audit of the site and worked with OCC and Magnet to integrate several changes to make the site even more user friendly, including updating content to reflect the Ottawa community of employers and job seekers. This collaboration took place in conjunction with our campus partners. We also included EARN, the Ottawa Employment Hub and the Ottawa Board of Trade in conversations to ensure that it was enhanced in a way that was meaningful for the Ottawa area.

The efforts linked with the Online Repository were closely linked with our Sustainability objective, which is further discussed in Section 3.6.

3.4 Transferable Employment Pathways Facilitator (EPF) Model and Essential Functions

One of the key deliverables emerging from the DCOI's applied research in the postsecondary settings was the development of the Employment Pathways Facilitator (EPF) Model. It elaborates a set of essential functions necessary to address the employability skills for students with disabilities in higher education and promote increasing campus-wide knowledge and understanding of the interconnection between accessibility, lived-experience of disability and the journey to employment. The EPF was developed by the DCOI research and development team, in an effort to address gaps relevant to postsecondary environments that were identified by the RDO's. It is grounded in an 'empowered to act' philosophy that seeks to resource students as their own agents of change. The role was developed to use a solution-focused coaching approach that is student-centered and driven. It uses the framework of Pathways to Employment to facilitate students in building actionable plans for gaining work-related experiences as we know that students can leverage experiential learning to further develop their employability skills. The EPF was also envisioned to provide students a space to have key conversations about the ways their unique lived-experience of disability intersects with their employment/career development and goals. This allows students to engage in an informed and empowered approach to their career journey that respects their holistic experience rather than requiring them to engage with services through a single lens of 'job seeker' or 'requesting accommodation'.

Acknowledging that postsecondary institutions are moving towards a model of services that emphasizes accessibility as opposed to specialized services that might serve to single out groups of students or reduce the responsibility of all services to be accessible, it is important to highlight the intent of the EPF role and functions. The Employment Pathway Facilitator was not created to replace or duplicate the services that are currently available to support all students in their career development. The DCOI takes the position that student services must be fully accessible to all students on campus, including those with disabilities. The EPF is seen as an enhancement to services and a catalyst for increased accessibility across campus. It should be noted that the EPF functions proposed, expand past a student-facing service into a campus level advisory function that serves to champion and support the collaborations on increasing accessibility within the campus community.

It should be noted that with further testing, this model could be adapted to support individuals in employment settings as well, however this was not in scope for the 2-year DCOI timeline.

See Appendix 8.8: Working Draft of Employment Pathways Facilitator Position Description

3.4.1 Developing the EPF Functions – Addressing Gaps, Designing for Transferability

The EPF functions were developed through a series of meetings in which the Research and Development Officers reviewed the gaps emerging from the synthesized data gathered in their respective post-secondary settings and applied information from best practices literature and knowledge exchanges to pull together a set of proposed functions that could respond to the gaps.

It was determined that the functions were best tested through a student facing role so that the greatest amount of support could be provided in the duration of the project and that student voice could directly impact the continued development of the role and the functions. A data collection tool was designed to look at how students accessed the role, why they accessed it, assess if the functions were implemented successfully and if they were meaningful to students. The DCOI was not interested in creating a service that did not speak to student experience or meet a need for them.

The RDO's determined a set of functions that would support students, student services, and campus community to make positive impact on the transition from school to work for students with disabilities. Additionally, they mapped out the ways in which the Employment Pathways Facilitator role could be operationalized in each of the four postsecondary settings.

The following are the EPF functions that were to be applied and evaluated by the DCOI, with the exception of Function # 9 that was deemed too expansive in nature to be adequately evaluated within the scope and timeline of the DCOI.

Employment Pathway Facilitator Functions
1. Leverage the employment pathways
2. Gain work-related experience
3. Build self-awareness
4. Build self-advocacy skills
5. Build soft skills that support employability
6. Build career management skills
7. Opportunity to have crucial conversations related to disability and employment
8. Assessment of relevant needs and strengths
9. A central advisory function to support campus community on issues/topics of disability and employment

See *Appendix: 8.3 Employment Pathways Facilitator Functions* for the list of functions and their respective definitions.

3.4.2 Measuring the EPF – Capturing Student Experience and Examining Service Metrics

The Employment Pathway Facilitator role was measured on two different levels:

1. To see if and how it was used by students when it was applied in the postsecondary settings; and
2. To assess if the proposed core functions were addressing the needs of students that were identified in the Discovery Phase of the DCOI.

Student Appointments with Employment Pathway Facilitators (EPF)

- 197 individual students accessed the EPF through the four postsecondary settings.
- A significant number of those students, 77% self-identified with a non-visible disability compared to 6% of students who self-identified with a visible disability. There were 9% of students who identified as having both a visible and invisible disability.
- 94% had or were currently using services at their institution's Disability Service Office (DSO), while 43% had or were currently using services at the Careers Services Office (CSO).
- A total of 387 visits with the EPF were attended, each session averaging one hour. From these sessions, 236 "scaffolded" referrals were made by the EPF's to a variety of other services and activities that students could benefit from while still seeing the EPF. Of those referrals, 37% were made to the Careers Services Office (CSO), 13% were made to the Disability Service Office (DSO), and 11% were made to Academic Advisors in a student's specific program of study. EPF's did not seek to replace the services offered by other student services and therefore would support students to access those services for the supports that were relevant to the goals they identified for moving along the Employment Pathways or for building particular skills.
- The academic year of the students accessing the EPF was spread quite evenly through first to fourth year students (19%, 24%, 22%, 21%). Graduate Studies students represented only 1% of students who accessed the EPF. There were 6% of the students who had recently graduated and were still eligible to connect with services that accessed the EPF.

What did students work on with the EPF?

The EPF's worked with students to move them along their individual employment journey. This work fell within the proposed EPF functions. We tracked the number of times work falling within one of the functions was recorded in the EPF session data to get a sense of which functions were being used most in response to the student's accessing sessions. See Table 1 below for a visual representation of the data.

Table 1:

Rank	EPF Function	# of Times Addressed in Meetings with EPF
1	Assess needs and strengths	238
2	Build career management skills	168
3	Gain work-related experience	152
4	Crucial Conversations	111
5	Leverage the employment pathways	67
6	Build self-advocacy skills	55
7	Build self-awareness	51
8	Build soft skills to support employability	23
9	Advisory role to campus	0 n/a

By meeting students where they were at and assisting the students in designing actionable plans to gain employment-related experience and skills, the EPFs were able to individualize service to address the issues that were meaningful and significant to the students. Additionally, the EPF's were consistently able to support the students by assessing needs that were relevant to students' ongoing development of skills. In addition to tracking the frequency that the functions were being applied in the EPF sessions, we also

kept track of the most frequently addressed topics in the student sessions to get a sense of what student were seeking support with. The following table (Table 2) outlines the main topics that are ranked in order of frequency they were addressed in sessions.

Table 2:

Key Topics	Rank
Employment Search Process	1
Self-awareness / Perception of Self	2
Disclosure	3
Accommodation	4
System Barriers	5
Other*	6
Flexibility of Degree	7
Career planning	8
Networking	9
Skill building	10
Program-specific	11
Finding experience	12
Self-Advocacy	13
Pathway	14
Interview process	15
Disability-specific	16
Goals	16
General uncertainty	16
Perception of disability from others	16

It was important to see if the EPF essential core functions proposed by the RDOs were actually represented in what the students sought to explore with the Employment Pathways Facilitators.

Did the functions respond to what students felt they needed to discuss and access support for?

An analysis of the raw data from sessions showed that Functions #1-8 were indeed operationalized in the sessions. It made sense that the data showed nothing for Function #9 as we had chosen not to implement it so that the EPF's could focus on the more student-facing aspects of the role.

Core Function #7, "Opportunity to have Crucial Conversations Related to Disability and Employment", was represented in 4 out of the 7 main themes. As this is one of the functions that aims to be complimentary to current service offerings, it is important that it is one that was initiated and activated by students in their sessions with the Employment Pathways Facilitator.

Themes that emerged from the raw data about the types of work done by the EPF's and how that connects to the Core Functions can be found in Table 3 below.

Table 3:

THEME	% of the 197 students	The EPF Essential Core Functions Used
Students meet the EPF for support on specific employment skills	89.3%	#1, #2, #5, #6
EPF provides a 'scaffolded referral' to an additional service to support student goals	72.1%	#8
EPF's guide the building of student self-awareness & advocacy skills	29.95%	#3, #4
EPF supports conversation about disability disclosure	18.78%	#7
EPF supports discussion of workplace needs and accommodations	16.75%	#7
EPF supports conversation regarding student concerns regarding impact of disability on career	14.72%	#7
EPF supports conversation on student concerns related to discrimination, legal rights, and employer perceptions	9.14%	#7

A key finding emerging from the EPF sessions data was that while students may be familiar with a pathway, they may not be participating in it. Considering the importance of experiential learning for students, it is significant to note that there is a significant gap between the familiarity with and the usage of the following pathways: Co-op, WIL, practicums, fulltime job opportunities, and entrepreneurship. See Table 4 for a list of Pathways to Employment and the percentage of the students who have participated in them and how they are being used.

Table 4:

Pathway	% of students who indicated they are familiar with this pathway	% of students who indicated they have participated in this pathway
Co-op	63%	19%
Internship, practicum, apprenticeship, or other placement opportunities	62%	14%
Experiential learning or other work-integrated learning opportunities	44%	8%
Volunteer opportunities	66%	61%
Part-time job opportunities	66%	52%
Full-time job opportunities	64%	23%
Summer job opportunities	64%	49%
Entrepreneurship or personal business	56%	9%

Student Satisfaction with the EPF Services

The DCOI research and development team sought to answer the following questions in implementing the Employment Pathways Facilitator role:

1. Was it used by students?
2. Did it address or respond to the gaps and needs at postsecondary that were identified to focus on?
3. Were the functions that were proposed actually operationalized through the work of the EPF's with students; and
4. Did it resonate with students as helpful or meaningful?

At the end of each EPF visit, a short anonymous online satisfaction survey was presented. We received 144 responses to the satisfaction survey. The survey asked students about the level of satisfaction with the appointment, using a Likert scale that ranged from Extremely Dissatisfied to Extremely Satisfied. Of the 144 responses, 93% were satisfied and the majority of those were extremely satisfied (see Table 5).

Table 5

Level of satisfaction	# of responses	% of total responses
Extremely satisfied	121	84%
Somewhat satisfied	13	9%
Neutral	9	6.3%
Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0%
Extremely dissatisfied	1	0.7%
Total	144	100%

To get a sense of whether students found they were learning something from their engagement with the EPF sessions, a second question asked students "What did you learn today? Please check all that apply" and provided students with seven response options including an option to state "I did not learn anything new" during the appointment and an option to indicate a topic that was not included in the list. While this does not capture the experience of all the students who accessed EPF sessions, of the 144 survey responses submitted, only 1% indicated they had not learned something within the session (see Table 6 below).

Table 6

Student Indicates Having Learned Something During EPF Session (Related to Topics Below)	# of times indicated	% of 144 responses
Planning to gain experience related to my employment journey	91	63%
Increasing awareness of supports available on and off campus	90	63%
Getting employment support	80	56%
Increasing awareness of my skills that are related to employment	74	51%
Preparing for what is next after graduation	65	45%
Other	23	16%
I did not learn anything new	2	1%

3.5 Public Awareness Campaign

A core element of the DCOI Collective Impact Approach is Increased Awareness or **Awareness+**.

It is not enough to simply highlight the facts. The research and the business case for hiring individuals with disabilities has been thoroughly developed and eloquently and clearly articulated already. If it were a matter of awareness then that should be reflected in the numbers/ statistics. For this reason, the DCOI partners articulated the need for this area to be Awareness+, to include activities that can promote and impact culture shift related to accessibility and inclusion in work settings.

Culture shift takes time and consistent effort. The timeline of the DCOI project allowed only for the development of a campaign geared strategically to build awareness, start conversations and catalyze action, as much as a two-year mandate for development and implementation would allow.

The DCOI took care to develop a campaign that could remain sustainable past the 2-year funding window, and to create it in such a way that it could be used by other initiatives as an engagement tool. They worked with a local agency by the name of Stiff Communications, that took over under the direction of the DCOI team, the creation of a two-pronged public awareness campaign – year 1 was focused on engaging employers in the Ottawa area and year 2, while continuing to engage with employers, was slightly modified to launch across campus at each of the four partner institutions, specifically targeting students, staff/faculty and campus service providers. Sections 3.5.1 through to 3.5.5 below are excerpts taken from final reports and other findings that were provided by Stiff Communications. You can also see *Appendix 8.9: Public Awareness Campaign*.

3.5.1 Myths and Misconceptions

Many myths and misconceptions exist regarding students with disabilities and the accommodations required to support them in the workplace and help them reach their full potential. The campaign was designed to dispel these myths and misconceptions and alleviate employers' fears and concerns. While many employers want to employ students with disabilities, they face real challenges in doing so. These challenges are primarily a lack of resources and expertise, or difficulties adapting job requirements to those with a disability.

3.5.2 The Campaign Objectives – Year 1

The campaign's objectives were to create a visible presence for the Initiative through the use of web, social media, print and other traditional means, tracking analytics in order to determine levels of engagement and response by key stakeholders. It would create communication, marketing and awareness campaigns for various events and activities to bring a voice to the Initiative. Communications objectives included:

- Increase public awareness of issues related to the employment of students with disabilities;
- Promote the benefits of hiring and retaining students with disabilities while addressing common barriers, myths and misconceptions to influence cultural change in the employment sector;
- Support a system-wide knowledge transfer of best practices to show employers how to recruit and retain students with disabilities through the dissemination of research, the sharing of evidence-based tools, resources and knowledge from employer leaders and postsecondary institutions; and

- Create a platform for sustained dialogue and awareness of students with disabilities.

3.5.3 Primary Target Audiences

Employers

By targeting employers, changing their attitudes and equipping them with the knowledge and tools they need to hire and retain students with disabilities, our intention was to effect real change and reduce the employment gap. Our employer target audiences included:

- Employers who are receptive to hiring students with disabilities but are unsure how to do so.
- Employers who are reluctant to hire students with disabilities but who could become proponents of doing so.
- Employers who are highly reluctant to hire students with disabilities, but whose attitudes we could begin to change.

Stakeholders

By targeting stakeholders, we encouraged the sharing of our campaign messages to broader networks and created dialogue that supported the campaign. Our stakeholder target audiences included:

- Employer advocates who set an example of industry inclusiveness and share best practices.
- Families and parents of students with disabilities who are credible and vocal advocates.
- Policymakers who can facilitate overarching change across industries.
- Service providers who are well connected at postsecondary institutions and throughout our community who can build networks.
- High schools equipped to support students with disabilities from an early stage in life.

Secondary target audiences included:

- **Postsecondary students:** By targeting postsecondary students, we were able to take advantage of the inclusive networks that already existed within Ottawa's postsecondary institutions and build the confidence of students with disabilities.
- **The local and regional public:** By targeting the local and regional public, we created a broader dialogue about inclusion and accessibility in our city. This was essential to building employer support and creating a template for broader support of persons with disabilities.

3.5.4 AbleTo – A Call to Action

We did not envision a campaign that would be an exercise in diplomacy, but instead an unapologetic call to action. To ensure consistent, coherent campaign communications, we needed to control key aspects of language: tone, diction and voice.

Through development of the campaign's strategic framework, we identified target audiences, as well as a campaign tone and associated messaging. We helped identify words to avoid and to use to ensure communications remained bold, persuasive and inspiring to a reluctant—and often sensitive—audience.

We also settled on the second-person voice—*you* and *your business*—to speak directly to those whose attitudes needed to change.

We called our campaign #AbleTo. It was to signify our message with a double meaning. First, to call on and challenge those in the positions of power and influence to create change in workplaces and close the gap in employability for persons with disabilities – you are #AbleTo make workplaces more accessible. And second, a message to disabled youth navigating the complexities of postsecondary education and employability – you are #AbleTo empower yourself for employment.

There are essential elements that are needed to raise awareness and start a movement. #AbleTo was designed to deliver on these elements:

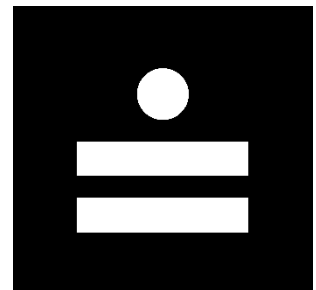
A powerful story. The #AbleTo story is one of the personal, academic and professional achievements of students and graduates with disabilities. By sharing this collective story of success, we showed employers the diversity of those with visible and non-visible disabilities, as well as the untapped potential of students and graduates living with disabilities.

Flexibility to connect with likeminded people on multiple platforms. Campaign platforms included social media, the campaign website, traditional media such as print and radio, and employment and recruitment events. For best results, a combination of these platforms operated in tandem, spreading our campaign message to different audiences based on their preferred communications method.

A clear call to action. Our campaign asked all audiences to join a movement. For employers and hiring managers, this meant committing to change and pledging what they are *AbleTo* do in their workplaces to help close the employment gap. For students, educators, service providers and members of the public, their pledge of what they are *AbleTo* do could mean spreading our campaign’s message, supporting a friend or family member who is living with a disability, or taking part in a community dialogue that emphasizes *ability* over *disability*.

3.5.5 AbleTo Identifier

The #AbleTo identifier was the visual representation of the campaign. We encouraged individuals, organizations and businesses to use the identifier to show their support. In short, the identifier stands for accessibility, and our belief in it. Similar to how a person in a wheelchair is a universal symbol for disability, it was our hope that the identifier would become universally synonymous with accessibility. When a student, employer or community member sees this symbol at their school, work, in their neighborhood or even throughout their social media feeds, they will know that it is a space that values and prioritizes accessibility.



A robust and targeted campaign focused on the campaign identifier was designed to help expand the reach and influence of the overarching #AbleTo campaign. Our efforts focused on sharing how to use the identifier, and what it meant to do so. Through social media, swag kits and email campaigns, we engaged employers, students and educators in using and displaying the campaign identifier. Disparate groups were encouraged to use the identifier in various ways, including inserting the identifier into email signatures and social media profiles, adding the identifier to job posts and company profile pages to mark

accessibility, or adding the identifier to the footer or header of company webpages to indicate that an organization or business is doing its part to prioritize accessibility and close the employment gap.

3.5.6 Campaign Results

The following summary is a condensed version of the final report prepared by Stiff Communications Agency for the period of November 2018 to April 2020.

Over the course of 18 months (November 2018—April 2020), we launched a fully integrated awareness program:

- We engaged in extensive research, including environmental scans and risk assessments.
- We developed and launched the #AbleTo campaign.
- We created a toolkit of accessible resources.
- We developed and maintained a campaign website featuring #AbleTo stories, pertinent statistics and employer-relevant information.
- We used social media channels to connect with employers, local community advocates, postsecondary students and recent graduates.
- We launched a hashtag and asked businesses to make an #AbleTo pledge.
- We produced a moving video series featuring students, employers and advocates.
- We planned and managed strategic media buys to heighten our campaign's penetration in Ottawa.
- We executed a campus campaign that featured activities at all four partner institutions.

Year 1 Highlights at a Glance

- In April 2019, we launched the AbleTo.ca website, attracting more than 2,500 unique visitors.
- In March 2019, we activated a social media campaign that delivered over 850,000 impressions.
- Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson made an #AbleTo pledge on [social media](#).
- We designed resources that dispelled myths, highlighted the business case for inclusion, and equipped businesses with the information and statistics they lacked.
- We interviewed students, graduates and employers to help them share their #AbleTo stories.
- We placed campaign advertisements on buses and at the Ottawa International Airport (YOW).

Year 2 Highlights at a Glance

- From September 2019 to April 2020, our social media received a cumulative 75,000 engagements.
- In October 2019, we relaunched AbleTo.ca with a new design that featured enhanced pledge functionality.
- In November 2019, we featured an #AbleTo story about Shopify's inclusive recruitment practices.
- For the winter term, we launched a campus campaign including campus news and LinkedIn portraits.
- Our Champions videos had over 70,000 combined views from across the channels.
- We filmed each of the partner school presidents making their individual pledges to their students.

Tools and Resources Created

Over the course of years 1 and 2, we researched, developed and adapted a series of resources for both employers and students. These tools were designed to be fully accessible, adhering to industry best practices such as contrast ratio, font sizing and information hierarchy. As with all elements of the #AbleTo campaign, these resources were translated by a professional service that incorporated French-language idioms.

- **Myth-busting:** dispelled common misconceptions about working with employees with disabilities
- **Good for business:** illuminated the business case for inclusive hiring practices
- **Build an inclusive workplace:** helped employers understand steps they can take to accommodate all employees, regardless of ability

Design for everyone: showcased the concept of Universal Design

Make your business welcoming: helped start-ups understand the importance of building accessibility into all areas of a business—not only for employees, but also for clients and visitors

Ask the right questions: encouraged students to advocate for their employment needs by asking questions of prospective employers about workplace and organizational culture

Branded assets development

As part of our fully integrated campaign, we designed branded collateral to be disseminated at employment events, HR workshops, and among the campus and business communities. We produced a range of collateral, including physical pledge cards, steel water bottles, button pins, presentation folders, decals featuring the #AbleTo identifier, posters, stickers and stress balls. The #AbleTo presentation folders featured printouts of infographics, tip sheets, and other resources to support both employers and student services officers.

Campaign website

When we launched the #AbleTo campaign, we deployed a website to act as the campaign’s digital headquarters. This website housed #AbleTo stories, information for businesses about disability employment, third-party links to resources, pledge calls to action, and more. The website was available in both official languages and adhered to best practices for web accessibility.

To galvanize our efforts in year 2, we relaunched ableto.ca to reinforce our Champions video series, create a more fluid mobile-friendly user experience, enhance content architecture, and add more resources and tools. As part of our website relaunch in year 2, we also enhanced the call to action for pledges by creating an interactive section where users could select one of eight different #AbleTo pledges to share on their social media channels.

Social media

Social media is one of the most effective ways to start a movement. We relied heavily on social media and digital strategies to ensure our campaign reached the highest level of market penetration possible. Our activities included preparing monthly content calendars, social updates copywriting, social tile design and channel management.

In addition to the thousands of tweets, LinkedIn posts and Facebook updates we sent out under @abletoottawa, we also performed daily community management. We interacted with users, retweeted and shared relevant information from external sources, engaged with businesses and government bodies, and delved into online conversations surrounding disability employment.

We promoted our Champions video series heavily via paid social media campaigns, resulting in over 70,000 unique video views logged over Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and AbleTo.ca.

The below metrics were gathered across years 1 and 2 using platform-specific analytic dashboards to ensure the greatest accuracy of data.

Channel	Metric	Year 1	Year 2	Overall
Website (AbleTo.ca)	Total unique visitors	2,459	5,317	7,776
Website (AbleTo.ca)	Average daily visitors	43/day	38/day	40/day
Website (AbleTo.ca)	Average time on site	1:47	2:02	+15 seconds
Twitter	Impressions	768,400	289,430	1,057,830
Twitter	Engagements	2,274	21,330	23,604
Twitter	Audience	340	552	+62.4%
LinkedIn	Impressions	29,421	68,279	97,700
LinkedIn	Engagements	9,812	22,243	32,055
LinkedIn	Audience	174	342	+96.6%
Facebook	Reach	36,125	97,634	133,759
Facebook	Impressions	56,800	122,744	179,544
Facebook	Engagements	14,597	30,884	45,481
Facebook	Audience	119	193	+62.2%
Instagram	Impressions	Not applicable	4,017	4,017
Instagram	Engagements	Not applicable	1,468	468
Instagram	Audience	Not applicable	104	104
Video views (Facebook)	Total views	Not applicable	25,200	25,200
Video views (Facebook)	Approx. minutes watched	Not applicable	6,800	6,800
Video views (Twitter)	Total views	Not applicable	21,572	21,572
Video views (LinkedIn)	Total views	Not applicable	24,601	24,601
Video views (AbleTo.ca)	Approx. total views	Not applicable	2,816	2,816

Hashtag and Pledges

In year 1, we launched the #AbleTo hashtag to persuade local businesses to make their own pledge to support employment pathways for students and graduates with disabilities. We also implored businesses to pledge to make accommodations part of their workplace cultures to benefit entire teams. Throughout

our first year, the hashtag was used 97 times outside of DCOI posts—including a pledge by Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson.

In year 2, we updated the pledge functionality on AbleTo.ca to encourage further social sharing. While we found many students and businesses were apprehensive to make a public pledge, we did see a massive increase in hashtag use in year 2. We logged over 500 uses of the hashtag across Twitter and LinkedIn alone.

As we amplified our community engagement tactics, we found that #AbleTo was being used as a content connector and dialogue driver—especially on Twitter.

Champions Video Series and President’s Pledges

For year 2, we produced a series of six videos that featured students, employers and advocates sharing their personal connection to disabilities and why they support the #AbleTo mission. The powerful video series presented differing experiences with visible and non-visible disabilities and provided hopeful and meaningful commentary to the David C. Onley Initiative’s overall mission. The videos, averaging 90 to 180 seconds, have been shared on social media channels and are in rotation on ableto.ca.

To accompany these stories, we also filmed the presidents of the four institutions. Each leader gave their unique #AbleTo pledge and offered insight into how the institutions promote inclusivity among educational communities. These short videos also appeared across social channels and at AbleTo.ca.

Media and Advertising Placements

In year 1, we managed an extensive out-of-home advertising program that included digital, radio, television, transport and airport ads. Our OC Transpo advertisements are still in rotation as of April 30, 2020. Our program emphasized ability over disability, and our advertisements reinforced this core message. We additionally worked with Ottawa Business Journal (OBJ) to create an ad for the Book of Lists that applauded the inclusive practices of ten local Ottawa companies.

We embarked on a media relations campaign to help spread the message among Ottawa’s reporters. This included 50 pitches and coordinating requested interviews. We conducted pre-interviews with CBC Ottawa Morning and Ottawa Community Voices, and published a piece with Charity Village.

In year 2, we continued our ad spend on digital channels to great effect—especially in relation to number of engagements and engagement rate. We continued to work with OBJ, as well as with CAPITAL Magazine, the publication of the Ottawa Board of Trade, to craft editorial geared towards employers. Our media placements in OBJ and CAPITAL covered concepts such as building inclusive workplaces and enacting diverse recruitment practices at postsecondary institutions.

Campus Campaign Activities

In year 2, we adapted our efforts to include a stronger focus on engaging the student population at all four postsecondary partner institutions. Aside from the activities outlined below, we also began using social media to share more student-focused tips and resources—as well as to heavily engage with and share content from Carleton University, University of Ottawa, La Cité and Algonquin College.

Poster Campaign

In late November 2019, the four partner schools began distributing a series of posters across their campuses. These posters directed students to visit their on-campus career services offices to learn about advocating for their employment needs and finding support throughout the employment process. These posters were visible on community and message boards, as well as through digital signage systems (where available) on campuses. Our posters provided a daily reminder of the campaign and its core messaging to students.

Campus Media Placements

We placed advertisements with available school news outlets, such as The Algonquin Times, The Charlantan at Carleton University, and The Fulcrum at uOttawa. We then embarked on a campus media campaign, securing and coordinating interviews with The Charlantan, La Rotonde and The Fulcrum's One in Five podcast.

LinkedIn Portraits at Career Fairs

Throughout the winter term, the DCOI team had a presence at highly trafficked career fairs on all campuses. During these fairs, we set up a branded backdrop featuring our #AbleTo identifier and took professional student portraits to be used on LinkedIn and other social media channels. After each event, we selected the best photos for each student. Then we cropped, edited and colour corrected the portraits, and provided a list of student contact information for the DCOI to deploy the photos.

We photographed more than 60 students at the Carleton Summer Job Fair; more than 50 at the uOttawa Summer Job Fair; some 80 students at La Cité's Foire de l'emploi; and 15 students at the Algonquin College LinkedIn workshop.

Street Teams, Decals and Branded Assets

Additionally, in the Winter 2020 term of year 2, the DCOI led street teams on partner school campuses to engage directly with students in an informal and convivial atmosphere. We equipped the DCOI with a new student resource that directed students towards upcoming career fairs, alongside #AbleTo identifier stickers and window decals. The DCOI also used these newly created decals and stickers in a parceled #AbleTo presentation folder to disseminate to student services offices, faculty and staff at the partner institutions.

3.6 Supporting Sustainability

The DCOI project was a two-year project with a finite end. We knew that we wanted to support the sustainability of the project once it was completed so we took every effort to ensure that all activities that we participated in and/or initiated were designed in a way that our campus partners, employers in industry or other key stakeholders could build their capacity and knowledge and carry on our 'learnings'.

3.6.1 Development of Postsecondary Supports

Our team invested time and resources to assisting our campus partners in refining, creating and/or building tools and resources that could be used not just for the purpose of the Initiative but that could be tailored for their specific institutional needs. Some examples of resources that were developed by the RDO's for their postsecondary settings:

Guide Books

- Employers Guide to Hiring and Working with Professionals with Disabilities
- Job Seekers Guide for Students and Graduates with Disabilities

For Employers

- Tips for Employers: Understanding Disability
- Tips for Employers: Language and Disability
- Tips for Employers: Building an Inclusive Workplace
- Building Disability Etiquette into the Workplace
- Employers Guide to Workplace Accommodations
- Tips About Disclosure

For Students

- Tips and Considerations When Disclosing a Disability to an Employer
- General: Tips for Students About Workplace Accommodations
- Carleton University: Tips for Students About Workplace Accommodations

For Service Providers

- Tips for Working with Students with Disabilities
- Tips for Communicating with Students About Workplace Accommodations
- Tips for Communicating with Students About Disclosure

A comprehensive list of tools and resources can be found in both French and English at <https://onleyinitiative.ca/resources>.

In addition, we created tailored workshops for staff in the career and/or coop offices addressing disability-related content including issues related to disclosure, common workplace accommodations, strategies to support students in placements, strategies to support and provide relevant resources to employers in building their skills, and review of relevant legislation.

We also took the opportunity to start conversations and build capacity within other units on some of our partner campuses. For example, at Carleton University, we embraced the overall institution with the lens of it being an employer which currently employs over 5,000 staff (including postsecondary students) working across campus. We met with the Associate Vice President of Human Resources and a couple of members of their team, to share the work of the DCOI and to plant seeds for building even more inclusive hiring practices, and putting in place stronger supports for people [students] with disabilities across

campus. We were scheduled to conduct a 'building capacity' information session for the directors and managers across campus, in collaboration with the Equity and Inclusive Communities and HR in late March 2020 however it was cancelled as a result of the onset of COVID-19.

3.6.2 Development of Community Supports

Efforts in this area involved mobilizing and leveraging existing community support organizations and networks for more efficient collaboration in the service of postsecondary students with disabilities. An excellent example of this is our collaboration with United Way East / EARN. While they offer existing programs and services to employers and community service agencies, and they also host events to connect job seekers with employers, we provided them with some funding for the development of accessibility training for employers that had a specific lens on the talent pool of postsecondary graduates with disabilities. Below is a description of how EARN used this funding.

EARN Training: Building Disability Confidence

Through support of the David C. Onley Initiative (DCOI), the Employment Accessibility Resource Network (EARN) was able to develop a 1-hour workshop titled Building Disability Confidence.

The Employment Accessibility Resource Network (EARN) is a community initiative, led by United Way East Ontario, that builds partnerships across communities to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities. We provide a coordinated access point for education and expertise on employment, accessibility and workplace inclusion for both people with disabilities and employers. Our goal is to improve employment outcomes for persons with disabilities, including students and recent graduates.

This funding has allowed us to develop a foundational workshop that covers many of the topics that employers ask about most often. Bringing this type of education into the workplace will empower employers to understand that they have the tools needed to be an inclusive and to ensure that they are attracting the best talent to meet their goals.

At the end of the workshop, participants will be able to define disability confidence, explain inclusive hiring practices, outline the features of an inclusive and accessible work environment, and understand how to communicate effectively with persons with disabilities.

Our goal is to offer this session to individual employers to host in their workplace as well as a regular offering that individuals can attend at various intervals throughout the year. Given the current focus on virtual offerings, we are also working to deliver it online. This workshop is a complement to our other activities that include job match activities and inclusive recruitment support, and will hopefully be a foundation to more workshops to come.

Skills Catalyst Project

The READ Initiative has continued its community partnerships from DCOI and has leveraged them in the services of new engagements to address employer training related to accessibility in the workplace. We have extended our collaborations with the four original DCOI postsecondary institutions, along with other DCOI collaborations, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Ottawa Board of Trade, and EARN. Integrating the knowledge built through the DCOI, under the Skills Catalyst Project funded by the Ministry of Labour,

Training and Skills Development, READ and its partners are creating a learning series which will bring together postsecondary institutions, employer networks, and community employment programs, to create disability-competent training for employers and jobseekers with disabilities who are exiting higher education and entering the workforce.

The Skills Catalyst learning series will be informed by best practices in employment accessibility and will respond to the needs articulated by employers and jobseekers with disabilities. Essential disability and accessibility-related needs and pathways to employment, both student and employer informed, will be the basis for the topics of the videos in the training series and the related trainer guides. The content will draw on the applied research from the DCOI, from the expertise of the project partners, and the lived experience contributed by the students and graduates themselves. Interestingly, all of the partners and collaborators that we worked closely with for the DCOI are key partners in the Skills Catalyst project as they saw the importance of creating enhanced supports and resources for employers.

RIC Project

As discussed in Section 3.4, one of the primary objectives of DCOI was to identify and articulate the spectrum of service functions for employability supports at our four partner campuses. The Employment Pathways Facilitator (EPF) model emerged out of this work. From the start it was intended to be designed with a potential for transferability to other postsecondary institutions. When we were presented with an opportunity to validate this assumption, we applied for and received funding from Research Impact Canada (RIC) to conduct a feasibility study to determine to what extent is the proposed set of Employment Pathway Facilitator (EPF) Functions feasible to implement in postsecondary institutions across the pan-Canadian landscape.

Over a three-month period, we engaged with 38 participants from multiple perspectives in a diversity of settings across Canada which, represented 13 postsecondary institutions including 10 universities and 3 colleges, 4 of which are in rural areas and the other 9 are situated in urban areas. The study had 6 institutes from Ontario, 2 from Nova Scotia, 2 from British Columbia and 3 from Alberta. By undertaking this feasibility study of the EPF role in collaboration with these other postsecondary CSO/DSO offices, we were able to inform the role to be responsive to a diversity of settings and are now able to better mitigate the inherent risks in adopting a localized model across other postsecondary institutions and their unique service systems. The RIC project was another demonstration of the potential for longer term sustainability and broader impact of DCOI that transcends its regional scope.

3.6.3 Development of Online Resources

DiscoverAbility

In Section 3.3 we discussed our collaboration with DiscoverAbility through the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. In addition to working with them to create an Ottawa hub of DiscoverAbility (<https://ottawa.discoverability.network/>), we also contributed funds to the Chamber which have been used to support the sustainability of the DCOI through the dissemination of generated research content. Some of these activities have, and will continue to, include:

- Incorporating research content into Discover Ability training materials and workshops, both online and in-person where feasible;

- Disseminating research materials online; and
- Supporting the adoption and use of research content at postsecondary institutions by facilitating collaboration through workshops/training.

Onleyinitiative.ca

A stand-alone website was created for the Initiative as a way to document key components of the project. In particular, we created a section called [Resources](https://onleyinitiative.ca/resources) (<https://onleyinitiative.ca/resources>). We wanted to ensure that the documents, tools and resources that were created were collated and accessible to the public. We have worked with our partners in postsecondary to create tailored versions of some of these items, which are now being used. We have shared access to resources for employers via social media so that they, too, can continue to learn and build capacity. We created a video on how Assistive Technology can Transform the Workplace and held webinars on how to create accessible documents which were recorded and archived on this site as well. To showcase the resource and tools that are now available on this site, we held a *Showcase Celebration* wrap-up event as a form of “living legacy” for the project, on April 30th, 2020. At this event we hosted over 150 attendees from across Ottawa, Ontario and Canada, including our Champions highlighted in Section 2.5.2, who were either directly or indirectly involved with the work of the Initiative.

AbleTo.ca

Through our public awareness campaign, we created another stand-alone website ableto.ca. This site has specifically been designed to capture #AbleTo Stories and Resources related to shifting perception and culture within organizations. On this site there are videos from champions in support of the campaign, opportunities to download infographics for distribution within organizations, download the campaign identifier, important statistics and information on the business case for hiring people with disabilities. This legacy site will continue to be maintained by the READ Initiative at Carleton University.

In order to maintain the momentum that was built through DCOI, the #AbleTo concept, which was in the early stages of becoming a movement at the time the project came to an end, will continue to live on through a new affiliation with the Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN), also led by the READ Initiative at Carleton University. This pan-Canadian Network is dedicated to advancing accessibility for people with disabilities and has established five domain areas of focus including employment, education and training, community engagement, policy and research, innovation and design. READ intends to revamp the existing ableto.ca site over the next 6-12 months to not only include the employment domain and existing resources and materials in that area, but to include each of the other four domains.

3.7 DCOI Showcase Celebration Event

As noted in Section 3.6.3, under Onleyinitiative.ca, we hosted a virtual DCOI Showcase Celebration Event at the end of the project, which allowed the project team to showcase some of the key findings and work that had been achieved over the two years of the project. We designed the Showcase page to a “living legacy” for the project, which houses some of the following items:

- Overview of Project
- Thank You Note
- DCOI Highlights

- Poster Showcase
- DCOI Photo Gallery
- Tools and Resources
- AbleTo Campaign
- Partners and Sustainability

See *Appendix 8.4 Highlights of Key Findings from Initiative During DCOI Showcase Celebration* for more information.



4 Collaboration for a Collective Impact Strategy

The DCOI has been an excellent opportunity to test how postsecondary institutions can leverage collaborative practices and come together to create shared and lasting impact on issues. While the concept of collaboration and its benefits is eloquently simple, the reality of collaborating is complex. The DCOI provided a chance to document and see the challenges that can occur when four postsecondary institutions with different internal systems, cultures, policies, strategic directions, and student populations, come together to investigate and coalesce to make a difference around an issue. The lessons learned and solutions used to navigate the complexities of collaborating and mobilizing around an issue, have been very valuable and can be shared and leveraged in other regions.

Collective impact is a concept that was developed/coined by Kania & Kramer (2011).⁹ It refers to the commitment to solving a social problem by a group comprised of stakeholders from different sectors through a structured format for collaboration. According to Kania and Kramer, a collective impact project has the following 5 elements:

- Common agenda – a shared vision of the problem and of a potential solution
- Shared measurement – some agreed upon indicators that can measure change
- Mutually reinforcing activities- activities that are coordinated and moving in the same plan of action
- Continuous communication - stakeholders have ways to be informed of the progress and work
- Backbone organization - a group that supports the initiative and creates the systems that facilitate the work

In the case of the DCOI a large focus has been on the collaboration between the postsecondary institutions to develop a collective impact model to address the employment outcomes for postsecondary students with disabilities. The collaboration between the postsecondary institutions to develop this model was itself a micro collective-impact approach with multiple players from within the same sector. Here is an example of how they meet the five points of Kania & Kramer:

- The common agenda was held by the four postsecondary settings.
- The group used shared measurement in evaluating a proposed set of functions for the Employment Pathways Facilitator and measuring the impact of the #AbleTo campaign.
- Activities were coordinated through the engagement of the DCOI team, including embedded Research and Development Officers in the four partner settings.
- One postsecondary provided backbone support for the project through the DCOI team.

Paying attention to the lessons learned from collaboration has been instructive in how to help entire regions apply the DCOI approach for making collective impact on this issue.

Some key ways that collaboration between the four postsecondary partners supported the efforts toward the development of a collective impact strategy:

1. Partners Advisory Committee
2. Knowledge Exchange Mechanism
3. Communications from Lead Partner

⁹ Kania, John and Mark Kramer, "Collective Impact," Stanford Social Investing Review, Winter 2011

4.1 Partners Advisory Committee

In addition to entering into a Letter of Understanding with the four postsecondary institutions collaborating on this project, we wanted to create an opportunity for ongoing communication and engagement with our direct partners on each campus. As a result, we established the DCOI Advisory Committee (AC).

Representatives on the DCOI AC included directors and/or managers representing the campus career and disability offices on each campus. See *Appendix 8.11: Members of DCOI Advisory Committee*.

The AC met either in person or virtually, on a monthly basis from August 2018 through to the completion of the project in April 2020. In an effort to experience the culture and environment on each campus, we alternated the physical locations of our meetings each month, at each institution. When possible, we took the opportunity to visit the respective campus career and/or disability offices and to also meet some of the staff who worked in each location, or to visit the DCOI team members who were working on site at each campus.

In addition, and where possible, we undertook to invite a student or recent graduate representative to monthly meetings, allowing time on the agenda to hear from a student with lived experience from that campus and learning more about their experiences from an employment lens.

Meetings of the AC provided opportunities for the Project Team Leaders from Carleton to share updates on key activities happening since the last meeting as it related to general project updates, employer engagement and research and development activities. In several cases, members of the front-line project team were invited to share about work they were doing, external guests such as community service provider collaborators or the media agency running the public awareness campaign, brought updates or shared insights. These meetings also presented an opportunity for representatives from the partner schools to share comments, concerns and feedback on the work being done or the design of some of the activities, and allowed for great opportunities for knowledge exchange about best practices, common barriers and challenges experienced, and more.

4.2 Knowledge Exchange Mechanisms

While we used the monthly Advisory Committee meetings as an opportunity to hear from the project partners, we felt it was important to also bring together the teams working in each of the campus career and disability offices at each campus. As such, at a few key points during the project, we built in time to bring together members from one or both teams at each campus to participate in a knowledge exchange mechanism.

4.2.1 Campus Partners

During the first month of the project, on each campus, we held a Lunch 'n Learn Knowledge Exchange where we brought together most, if not all staff from both the campus career and disability offices. In all cases, it was the first time that these two teams had come together in this way. At these lunches, we ensured that staff from both offices were co-mingled at their tables and our team facilitated a conversation with the group, sharing about the project and its objectives, how the two offices would be involved in the various activities, as well as the other partner campuses. We also made time for a series of break out conversations that proved to be highly meaningful for the staff and informative for the project team. Questions included:

1. One of our objectives is to enhance the level of collaboration between the campus DSO & CSO. What do you see as ways that this could happen?
2. What is the biggest challenge you see facing SWDs that are seeking meaningful work after graduation and in what ways could this Initiative help address these challenges?
3. In what ways could we engage employers/industry to consider hiring SWDs using the following 6 Pathways to Employment (Part-time, Summer, Coop, Internship / Placement, Graduate Recruitment, Self-Employment / Entrepreneurship).
4. One of our objectives is to enhance the level of engagement of SWDs on campus in career development, whether they are registered with the DSO or not. What strategies could be used to help increase this level of awareness?
5. What additional pathways exist on campus for students to gain access to experiential learning while in program and/or to prepare them for the transition to FT work after graduation? Are there any other ways that we could create experiential learning opportunities, which do not currently exist?

We asked each group that worked on the questions to then share key points about each question that they discussed, with the full room. During these sessions, we saw evidence of several 'aha' moments where staff saw immediate opportunities to enact change of processes, to collaborate together, or duplication of efforts and/or services to students.

4.2.2 Research & Development

The Research and Development Officers were placed in the four partner institutions of the DCOI. A knowledge exchange process was put in place to support the growth of each of the institutions. It consisted of a weekly meeting time for the RDO's to gather, brainstorm, develop content or resources, present to each other, gain insight on the rollout of the project, and share their experiences and lessons learned from the implementation of the EPF role that occurred in the second year of the project.

The intention of the knowledge exchange mechanism was to expedite the knowledge exchange process by having the RDO's bring in the practices they are seeing at their individual institution and takeaway practices from the other RDO's that they can recommend for implementation.

At the end of the project an evaluation of the RDO knowledge exchange mechanism was undertaken to see if it met its intended goals. Unfortunately, the impacts of COVID-19 disrupted our ability to complete that activity.

4.2.3 Employers

While we conducted many different activities to gather data and insights from employers through one-on-one interviews or engaging with them at campus career events (see Section 3.2), we intentionally hosted a couple of Knowledge Exchange events where we brought together a collection of employers, most of whom are actively engaged in campus recruitment activities, but may not have considered inclusive recruitment practices which included students with disabilities.

Employer Knowledge Exchange and Training

In April 2019, we invited a group of approximately 20 employers from across Ottawa and from various industries to join us for a knowledge exchange with the intent of creating an opportunity for them to share and learn from each other, while giving them tools to be #AbleTo Thrive in a Talent Crisis. Some of these employers were involved in active recruitment of postsecondary students and some were not.

In addition, with a lens of sustainability, we invited EARN/United Way to join us. We wanted to introduce employers to EARN and in addition, they provided a brief training to help employers build capacity in creating and writing inclusive job descriptions.

We took an opportunity to conduct an informal poll with the group, seeking information such as whether or not they currently hire from a postsecondary institution in Ottawa; whether they have an accessible recruitment strategy; their familiarity with the various employment pathways; what they saw, in their opinion as the biggest challenges and barriers in creating inclusive workplaces; and what types of tools and resources they would find most helpful in supporting their recruitment efforts with students with disabilities.

Following this, we held a small group discussion where they were all sitting in mixed groups and we facilitated a conversation at each table where representatives took some time to share their thoughts, perspectives and concerns around the following topics:

- What types of barriers to accessibility and inclusion exist in your workplace? / What are some strategies your org could put in place to remove and prevent these barriers?
- What are some barriers that exist on campus that might affect your recruitment efforts of students with disabilities? What are some strategies that could put in place to remove and prevent these barriers?
- What is your vision for a city-wide approach to supporting postsecondary students and graduates with disabilities transitioning into a meaningful career?

Our team walked away from this event with some very valuable information that contributed to some of our campaign activities and activities moving into year two of the project. In addition, we heard feedback from those that attended, asking for further opportunities to engage with their colleagues in this same type of format, and interestingly, they agreed that the opportunity to have frank and open conversations with students to learn more from them, would be beneficial.

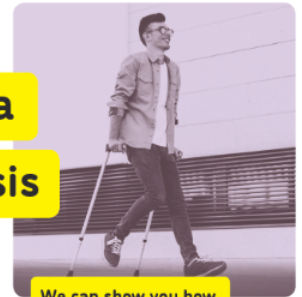
Campaign Knowledge Exchange

As noted in Section 3.5, we launched a public awareness campaign that we call #AbleTo. There were a few occasions where we invited either members from our Advisory Committee and/or staff from their



**Thrive in a
talent crisis**

Find new talent by considering highly skilled students and graduates with disabilities, and help these qualified candidates pursue pathways to meaningful employment.



We can show you how

The David C. Onley Initiative for Employment and Enterprise Development is a partnership between the University of Ottawa, Algonquin College, La Cité and Carleton University. Together, we are working to help students and graduates with disabilities gain access to meaningful career and employment opportunities.

Join us on April 11 from 5pm to 7pm at the Carleton campus for *Recruiting Strategies for Hiring Students with Disabilities*. This is your opportunity to network with other local employers and find best practices for truly inclusive recruitment and hiring. We'll also provide some tips and tools to learn how to create more inclusive job descriptions.

Register on Eventbrite by searching *Recruiting Strategies for Hiring Students with Disabilities* and discover how you can overcome today's workplace shortage.

onleyinitiative.ca



respective offices to join us to contribute to the design of the campaign by sharing their comments, feedback and knowledge about hands-on experiences supporting students with disabilities from an employment lens.

Building the Campaign

During these sessions, we worked with the media agency running the campaign, Stiff Communications, to coordinate a series of knowledge exchange sessions with members of the Advisory Committee, employers, community service providers, and students from each campus. While Stiff had come up with a concept, we felt it was important to conduct a risk assessment with key stakeholders. At each session, Stiff presented attendees with the initial concept and then opened the floor discussion, capturing comments, concerns, feedback that was being discussed amongst the group. Stiff was looking for feedback in three particular areas:

1. Establishing the risk of offending or alienating any audiences or sub-groups;
2. Determining if the campaign could be perceived as ableist; and
3. Using the risk assessment process to refine the messaging and plans for campaign activities.

We received valuable feedback during these exchanges such as:

- The language of the campaign subverts the idea of disability, turning it on its head while avoiding any concerns of ableism.
- The campaign is catchy and punchy, with a strong, effective focus on businesses.
- The campaign messaging does not need to refer to people *living with disabilities* and can simply refer to *people with disabilities*.
- We should emphasize that students and graduates with disabilities are an untapped talent pool.
- We should emphasize opportunity over deficiency in our messaging to employers about their practices.
- We should avoid red text and make all text as large as possible for accessibility purposes.

As a result of these, and other comments, we were able to move forward with the formal launch of the #AbleTo Campaign.

Campus Campaign Integration

In year 2, we felt it was important to take the #AbleTo campaign to the four partner campuses. To do this, we sought feedback from the Advisory Committee partners during a regularly scheduled meeting. In addition, we hosted another series of Lunch 'n Learn sessions on each campus where we presented the campus career, and in some cases the disability offices, with campaign kits that included background information on the campaign, how it would roll out, key messaging and related activities that the #AbleTo Street Team would have a presence at on respective campuses. These sessions were helpful in receiving feedback to inform the efforts of the campaign, how to focus our activities and presented opportunities to engage with the staff in a way that helped us gain additional support in communicating with students.

4.3 Communications from Lead Partner

As with any collaboration with two or more people or organizations, a significant element of the success of our project revolved around the ability of the leadership, project team, partners and key collaborators to communicate along the project timeline. As noted in Section 2.5, a primary mechanism we put in place to communicate with our partners was to establish a monthly Advisory Council meeting where the project leadership team could provide updates to the partners, as well as to solicit feedback or insight from them which could inform the activities.

In addition, once the RDOs were embedded in each of the campus CSO/DSO offices, we found it to be just as important to engage directly with the managers/directors of the respective offices on a one-to-one basis, as frequently as possible, so that we could hear directly from them about the impact of the work of the RDO, explore opportunities and/or address issues that might have come up.

While the R&D and Operations teams met separately from week to week, we intentionally held monthly staff meetings with the entire project team, to allow both groups hear about key insights, activities and updates that had occurred since the previous meeting. We also designed teams around events, activities and programming to ensure that there was representation of both RDOs and Operation staff, which ensured that there was a link between what each respective group was doing.

4.4 A DCOI Collective Impact Strategy

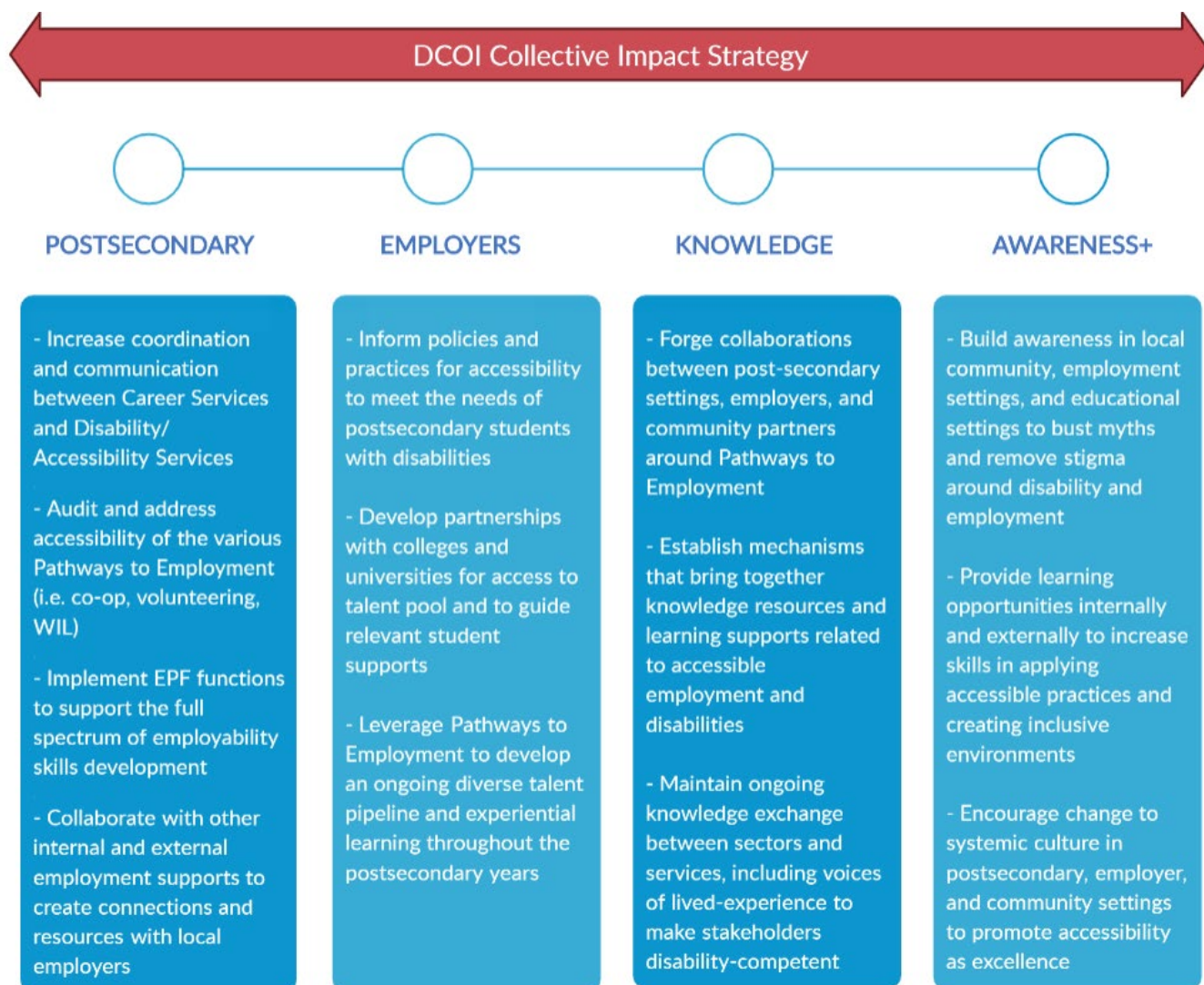
We asked ourselves a question:

“If we want to make a collective positive impact on the employability and employment outcomes of postsecondary students with disabilities through collaboration, what are the areas to focus on and what do we do in those areas?”

The two-year DCOI project has looked at this question and has spent time reviewing the existing research, listening to stakeholders connected with this issue, applying and trying out various activities and possible practices, forging connections between various stakeholders and actively engaging with multiple parts of the community to bust myths, build awareness and promote action to improve the employment outcomes for postsecondary students with disabilities. This however is only the foundation and there is indeed far more to do. The DCOI partners have come together often over the past two years to hear and consider the information that has been gathered from multiple sources. The areas the DCOI has highlighted as necessary for a region or a community to put energy into as a collective impact approach on this issue are represented and include:

- Postsecondary settings with student supports and academic allies, including secondary schools to support college and university transition;
- Employers across the labour market including employer groups and agencies, as well as entrepreneurship hubs and resources;
- Knowledge building opportunities that emerge at the intersection of postsecondary institutions, other educational partner, employers and entrepreneurs, community organizations and service providers;
- Public awareness domain with a diversity of ways to address discriminatory attitudes and stigma to ultimately effect a culture change toward greater accessibility in employment for persons with disabilities.

The following diagram demonstrates how we did this.



5 Key Learnings and Recommendations from the DCOI

DCOI produced a broad base of knowledge and experience that serves as the foundation for its Collective Impact Strategy. For each of the major areas of the Strategy, we present in this section sets of key findings and recommendations. While the four major areas and high-level guidelines from the Collective Impact Strategy outline the strategic aspects of the DCOI outcomes, the following learnings and recommendations represent the depth of its applied knowledge base.

5.1 Postsecondary Settings

What we learned:

- There is no systematically dedicated resource that supports students to explore the way their career journey and employability preparation is impacted by their individual lived-experience of disability or need to navigate barriers. It represents a gap in the services for postsecondary students with disabilities that there are few services that address issues related to the intersection of disability and employment.
- Employers are wanting soft skills (CBOC¹⁰). Development of employment related soft skills are often facilitated through experiential learning. Research points out that there are multiple reasons why experiential learning is not easily accessed or sometimes accessible at all for postsecondary students with disabilities (NEADS, 2018¹¹). The low participation rate of postsecondary students with disabilities in experiential learning and WIL opportunities puts them at a great disadvantage in that:
 - they have fewer opportunities to practice and build the employment-relevant soft skills and
 - they have fewer employment-related experiences to point to when applying for work.
- Graduates with disabilities seeking employment have fewer work-related experiences to point to when applying to employers along with peers who have the same academic certification.
- There is a continued need for DSO's and CSO's to connect more to learn from each other, engage in collaborations to provide complimentary supports and a cohesive approach to support postsecondary students with disabilities to build employability and career management skills.
- There are limited formalized practices that link DSO and CSO. Often informal forms of referral (i.e. phone call between colleagues) are used to connect students who are seeking supports related to disability and employment support.
- Lack of a 'go-to' consultation resource for staff and faculty that can provide consultation and refer to appropriate resources.
- Disclosure remains a complex issue for students and services.
- We learned that some of the tech, processes, or procedures within organizations can be presenting a challenge to implementing more accessible practices. Having a review of where this is occurring is an important step as often it is a luxury to take a step back and look when this is happening. (i.e. the disconnect in making a post that is accessible and the co-op software not allowing the space for it).
- There is a need for formalized programming that supports the transition from postsecondary to work for students with disabilities and other students facing barriers. This includes making disability-confident supports available to alumni.

¹⁰ Edge, Jessica, Elizabeth Martin, and Matthew McKean. Getting to Work: Career Skills Development for Social Sciences and Humanities Graduates. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2018

¹¹ NEADS, [Landscape of Accessibility and Accommodation for Post-Secondary Students With Disabilities in Canada report](#) 2018

- That development of employment readiness can begin prior to postsecondary.

What we recommend:

- The implementation of EPF in postsecondary settings to support the transition of postsecondary students with disabilities from school to work and support the increased connectivity and coordination between CSO and DSOs.
- Recommend facilitating discussions between postsecondary and employers is very important in identifying these disconnects in order to smooth out the transition from postsecondary to work environments.
- The strengthening of partnerships between Disability Services Office and Career Services Offices in postsecondary institutions.
- The use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles in employment-related programming offered by student services.
- Implementation of a formalized support related to the transition out of postsecondary that is dedicated to preparing students with lived-experience for navigating barriers to make the transition from postsecondary to employment. This could take the form of a pre-graduation Transition Event, a for-credit transition course, the integration of e-portfolio development, etc.

5.2 Employer Engagement

What we learned:

- Many employers are keen to engage and recruit individuals with disabilities but there are some barriers to be addressed such as whose responsibility it is to address the need for accommodations, when and how to disclose a disability, and on-going supports in the workplace.
- Employers, particularly those in small and medium sized businesses or organizations, report challenges that are practical and/or attitudinal in nature when it comes to hiring individuals with disability. Many of the employers we spoke with were interested in hiring postsecondary students with disabilities and understood some of the benefits this would bring, however, they were challenged by:
 - a lack of knowledge on how to connect with and recruit students with disabilities,
 - a self-perceived lack of confidence in 'working well' or interacting with people with disabilities,
 - a time efficient and effective way to 'level-up' their accessibility knowledge, processes and procedures that fits with the employers setting,
 - a time efficient way to develop a pipeline to a talent pool of PSWD's and feeling already spread too thin among the many career fairs they are attending
 - attitudinal assumptions that lead to fear of 'doing something wrong' that would negatively impact an employee with disability,
 - concern that the perceived effort it would take to onboard and support an employee with disability would be too much for the organization's current capacity,
- Some employers expressed that it would be helpful to have someone they could contact, a facilitator or advisor with expertise in disability who could field their basic questions related to accessible practices and help them navigate the complex system of programs, supports, and varied pathways to hire students and graduates with disabilities.
- While there is an understanding of the business case for hiring graduates with disabilities by some employers (particularly large employers who have resources such as HR equity teams), there remain attitudinal barriers among employers that are expressed through a belief that the recruitment, hiring,

onboarding or managing of an employee with disabilities will be more challenging, time-consuming, or complex than the employer perceives they have capacity for.

- In addition to a need for job fairs and other employer/student networking events to be fully accessible, there was a need expressed by students and employers for an additional event to bring employers and students with disabilities. Students should be able to attend all events without barriers but also have the option to attend an event that takes a disability-positive approach to connecting students with a diversity of lived-experience with employers who are seeking to build diverse, inclusive work environments and work force that draws on the talents of graduates with disabilities.

What we recommend:

- Collaboration between postsecondary institutions to develop streamlined mechanism that supports employers to effectively access and leverage the talent pool of postsecondary students with disabilities.
- Establishing a mentor-like network where employers can get in touch with a peer from another organization to ask questions in a confidential environment (i.e. large organizations that have resources to establish diversity recruitment teams could provide mentorship to SME's just starting out).
- Collaborate with organizations such as the Canadian Accessibility Network and their Education & Training working group members to identify and build more resources, tools and training for employers. While resources for inclusive job design and recruitment would be valuable, additional tools such as those geared to how to better support people [students] with disabilities in the workplace on an on-going basis are needed.

5.3 Knowledge Building

What we learned:

- There is a need for both service providers at postsecondary and employers to build their disability confidence. Both these groups expressed an interest in further developing their knowledge of disability-related issues and accessibility in employment.
- Employers expressed a need for effective, efficient, relevant and easily accessed learning resources they can use to support them in building awareness and implementing accessible practices.
- Many employers continue to equate the word disability with physical disability and are not considering invisible disabilities when engaging in discussions about accessibility. This is salient since out of 10,000 students registered with DSO's at the four partner institutions in 2018-2019, 91% identified with a non-visible disability. Employers can greatly benefit from learning how to best implement accessible practices that will be supportive of employees with non-visible disabilities to thrive if they want to attract and leverage this significant talent pool.
- We heard that there is a lack of knowledge and understanding in students, including those with disabilities, of what employers expect. There is more to be done on the part of employers, student support services and students themselves to build an understanding of both the language and expectations of employers. Additionally, there is a need for students to learn how to communicate and demonstrate their skills and attributes in a language that employers can understand. This points to a need for more knowledge exchange opportunities that include employers, students, graduates, and student support services, where the experiences and expectations can be articulated to generate genuine understanding.
- Employers want and need talent. Talented postsecondary graduates want and need to work in accessible workplaces. Mechanisms that support the shared understanding between both these groups is highly

beneficial to getting the right people into the right work. This will also help postsecondary support services stay current in how and what they provide as career-related preparation support to students with disabilities.

What we recommend:

- The continued development of learning resources that can build knowledge capacity and skills in accessibility and accessible practices that are easily implemented by small and medium employers to support the creation and growth of inclusive and diverse work settings
- Infusing student voice and lived experience into the learning resources that are developed and provided to employer settings, postsecondary service providers, and community service providers.

5.4 Awareness+

What we learned:

- Building awareness is important but must be complimented with action.
- Awareness building activities must be maintained, sustained and continually evolve with input from disability communities so that it can support culture shift over time.

What we recommend:

- #AbleTo can be broadened and expanded to reach outside Ottawa to employers in other regions.
- Recommend employers fulsomely communicate what the work setting, type of work and work culture is like. They can do this by:
 - using job descriptions that realistically reflect the core duties;
 - using videos and other media that allow potential candidates to virtually experience the setting;
 - providing the options for potential candidates to visit the setting; and
 - featuring blog posts or other social media of current employees describing “a day in the life” at the workplace.
- These tools will help potential candidates who might otherwise self-select out of applying, better understand the employer’s workplace. Additionally, this will support incoming employees build a sense of familiarity and will support their onboarding process.

5.5 Other Observations

What we learned:

- We learned that in all settings, there is an appetite for having a role that they can contact that is advisory in nature, to bounce their ideas, get some advice, recommendations, referrals regarding questions related to the many points along the transitions from postsecondary to work (i.e. preparation, employability skills development, experiential learning, recruiting, onboarding, building accessibility practices, creating a workplace culture where accessibility is the norm).

What we recommend:

- Recommend/ encourage that regions take a collective impact approach to improving the transition to employment for persons with disabilities holistically, one that engages postsecondary institutions, students, employers and community, in applied practices, knowledge building, and increased awareness and action that will create culture shift.

6 Insights and Challenges

Carleton University and its partners took on the opportunity and the generous funding from the MTCU with enthusiasm and a conviction that advancing employability for postsecondary students with disabilities is a priority for the Province of Ontario. At the same time, we were mindful of the fact that two years was a short timeframe for a project of such scope and funding. It was a very dynamic and challenging, yet highly rewarding, two years for DCOI with many lessons learned.

6.1 Partnerships

DCOI was extraordinary as a project in terms of the degree of partnership among its four partner institutions. It is rarely the case that all postsecondary institutions in the city come together in very active way around a project with a common purpose. This was possible first because DCOI received endorsement and very active support from the highest level of the institutional leadership. The image of the four presidents and representatives from key student services signing the commitment to collaborate is a striking visual testament to the DCOI's unique supports from the administration of the four partners. Reflected in that image was also the representation from the offices that provide services critical to the support for employment of students with disabilities. One of the key insights draws on this high degree of engagement from the key institutional leadership structures. It was a critical support for successfully meeting the objectives that relied on the effective partnership among the DCOI partners.

We also gained insights as part of the partnership development process, a complex and lengthy undertaking. The four partner institutions are very different in many respects and coordinating the partnership development in a way that worked for all four was exceptionally challenging. There are important lessons learned through DCOI about processes necessary to bring together stakeholders from diverse institutional cultures and offices. We had to effectively, and sensibly, navigate procedures at each institution related to human resources, financial management and logistics related to the infusing of 8 of the 10 Research & Development Officers (RDOs) with the respective partner sites (one in each of the Career and Disability Offices at each campus). Of particular challenge was the recruitment process for the hiring of the project team, in particular the RDOs. After much discussion with the HR departments at each campus, and exploring the implications of navigating respective hiring policies and collective agreements, it was determined that it was in the best interest of all partners to hire the team as Carleton employees who would then take a role as a consultant, embedded within each campus CSO/DSO. Equally as challenging was the recruitment of the RDOs in that we were looking for a very specific set of skills and qualifications – people with skills and experiences with both disability and career backgrounds, who have worked in or who were familiar with postsecondary, who could also function in both official languages of French and English. In addition, we could only offer initial contracts to the successful hires through to April 30, 2019 as the TPA only reflected funding through to this date. This meant that our ability to secure hires that met the skills, qualifications and requirements and who were willing to leave existing jobs to come to the project for only an initial 4-6 months without guarantee of the additional 12 months, was quite limited. As a result, we set out to build of team of individuals from within the Ottawa area that, combined, addressed the various needs of the work. The recruitment process alone took nearly 8 months for the entire team. See *Appendix 8.12: DCOI Organizational Chart*.

One of the major elements in the partnership was the embedding of Research and Development Officers into the DSO and CSO teams at each institution. This was an important way for DCOI to collect information from within the settings as active participants in the life and work of the services, rather than as outsiders looking in that is more typical of research studies. This is how the key aspect of 'applied' research was realized, with the project

staff serving as both researchers and practitioners at the same time. In addition, the perspectives and contributions from those with lived experience on our team played an essential role in building the capacity of all team members. We established an Accessibility Working Group where members of the project could talk through event scenarios, translation needs, creation of accessible documents, and more. We also integrated a standing item at our monthly team meetings called *Accessibility Moment*, where we would explore common scenarios that employers or students with lived experience might face, and we would discuss different ways to approach the scenarios. It was a valuable opportunity to ensure that our entire project team continued to build their own capacity while ensuring that there was always as lens of accessibility and inclusion in the creation, design and implementation of various project activities.

6.2 Scope and Impact

DCOI had an ambitious scope to understand the vast complexity of factors that contribute to employability of students with disabilities from the perspective of college and university services, but also the interfacing of those environments with the world of work and workplace cultures. Hence our insights gained and impact achieved with regards to the scope of the initiative are reflected at the institutional, service, and external levels.

The obvious first step was to ensure that the knowledge constructed about the employability factors was in fact representative of the different postsecondary settings, which was achieved through the very active engagement of the two colleges and two universities in Ottawa. While this approach was essential in our efforts to realize the intended scope of the Initiative, it led to significant challenges. Postsecondary institutions are in constant flux and our 2-year project had to continuously pivot to respond to structural and functional changes in our partner settings, including offices where our staff were embedded. To achieve any degree of meaningful impact, it was necessary to fully individualize the nature of engagement for each partner institution and their specific engagement touch points. Understandably, parts of these engagements worked exceptionally well, while others required more time and resources, and adjustments to expectations.

To understand the spectrum of needs, and related gaps, in services at each institution, it was necessary to study their operations on a long-term, continuous basis. We accomplished this by embedding the Research and Development Officers into the DSO and CSO teams at each of the participating institutions. This allowed us to glean both the diversity of approaches to employability of students with disabilities, but more importantly the commonalities. As outlined in the Research Findings and elsewhere in the report, there are essential service functions that are applicable to all students with disabilities, regardless of whether they attend a large comprehensive university with professional degree programs or a small francophone community college focused on applied training of specialists and practitioners.

An important part of the scope was the employment landscape outside of the postsecondary settings. This external environment factors into the development of employability for students with disabilities not only as the ultimate destination for jobs but also as having the potential to influence student development during their postsecondary journey. Soliciting information about employer expectations and needs informed our understanding of the supports that postsecondary institutions can provide to students with disabilities. Additionally, we sought to make impact on the employment sector itself, through knowledge exchanges and our public awareness campaign directed at employers.

We also explored entrepreneurial development. On our partner campuses, our RDOs conducted an environmental scan to learn what programs, curriculum, services and activities were provided for students with a lens of entrepreneurship. Off campus, we conducted an environmental scan of the Ottawa area to identify programs and

services to support entrepreneurs and startups, in particular, noting whether or not they provided any services to students in general. We conducted an audit of specific workshops offered by Invest Ottawa to want-to-be entrepreneurs, which were commonly promoted to students. We provided feedback on how to enhance the delivery of their workshops to not only be more inclusive for people [students] with disabilities, but also suggestions for improving the accessibility of the registration process. We consulted to provide information to local startups about how to create accessible and inclusive environments for their annual Start Up Open House events and contributed similar information to an online blog for entrepreneurs, through Invest Ottawa. In addition, we worked directly with a start-up company that was on the cusp of growth, to build an inclusive postsecondary recruitment strategy that addressed creating an inclusive job description, how to tap into the talent pool at postsecondary campus partners, establishing inclusive hiring practices and recommendations for how to establish an inclusive and accessible work environment from day one.



DAVID C. ONLEY INITIATIVE
FOR EMPLOYMENT & ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

INITIATIVE DAVID C. ONLEY
POUR L'EMPLOI ET L'ENTREPRENEURIAT

Entrepreneurship

Some students with disabilities prefer to pursue entrepreneurial interests. To support this, here are some of the key activities we engaged in:

Campus Entrepreneurship Activities

- Collaborated with Algonquin College to hire an **Entrepreneur in Residence with a disability** who is meeting and mentoring students
- **Hosted a panel discussion** for students and graduates with disabilities at the Legacy Conference in Ottawa
- Met with **entrepreneurship clubs and faculty** to explore accessible opportunities

Built Capacity Across the City

- Contributed a guest blog for **Start-up Open House** about hosting inclusive and accessible events
- Audited start-up workshops at **Invest Ottawa** to identify ways to make sessions more accessible and promoted to more students
- Conducted an **environmental scan** of resources, funding and organizations to identify opportunities to better inform/support people with disabilities

Worked with a Local Start-up

- We worked with **PharmaXilia**, a local Ottawa start-up poised for growth, to design an inclusive on-campus recruitment strategy—from hiring to onboarding to supporting students in their career success
- Successfully hired an MBA intern for Summer 2020
- Currently building their campus strategy for Fall/Winter 2020-21



READ Initiative
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LA CITÉ
LES SERVICES ÉCONOMIQUES
ET DE TECHNOLOGIE



ALGONQUIN
COLLEGE



uOttawa



Ontario

7 Next Steps and Considerations for Ongoing/Future Work

The David C. Onley Initiative for Employment and Enterprise Development (DCOI) set out to understand the spectrum of factors in postsecondary spaces that are critical for employability of students with disabilities. We are confident that the DCOI work successfully captured this comprehensive understanding in a model that is applied and transferable. The DCOI model is designed to be most relevant and impactful in two critical areas of practice in the postsecondary sector: a) Student services, and b) Employer engagement. We have identified best practices specific to each of those areas intended to address existing gaps in postsecondary services and practices. We have also identified best practices that apply across these two areas, such as those addressing attitudes and stigma and promoting awareness and culture change in employment accessibility, or those that exemplify collaboration and knowledge exchange to build capacity for impact and results.

The DCOI model also reflects the learnings from four very different postsecondary institutional environments and cultures, representing two universities and two colleges with distinct characteristics, varying in institution size, program focus, history, localities, and official languages. Still, DCOI was embedded in the Ottawa region and its model can benefit from further evaluation in other regions in Ontario. What the DCOI model contributes is the evidence-based collection of best practices, integrated and systematically organized to ensure the activities cover the spectrum of employability needs of postsecondary students with disabilities. That was the key objective for DCOI and an invaluable contribution to other Ontario institutions that are not able to undertake a systematic study of services and activities in this area. Adopting the DCOI model will bring those institutions to the same level of understanding and preparedness to support employability of students with disability as demonstrated by the DCOI partners.

Ontario, like all other provinces, is facing a challenge to ensure equitable employability for persons with disabilities. Postsecondary students and graduates represent the future talent to support our economy and growth. But their potential can only be realized if we reduce or eliminate systemic barriers to employability and support students throughout their developmental journey to employment. The DCOI model is one wholistic way of addressing this challenge and one that could be potentially adopted by other postsecondary institutions in Ontario. The READ Initiative has the experience and motivation to explore ways of scaling up the DCOI model, designed with such transferability in mind, in partnership with stakeholders across the province.

8 Appendix

8.1 Appendix: Launch of David C. Onley Initiative

- Article following Launch Event - <https://newsroom.carleton.ca/2018/david-c-onley-initiative-for-employment-and-enterprise-development-launches-at-carleton/>
- Letter of Understanding signed by partner presidents during Launch Event.



Letter of Understanding

This Letter of Understanding (the "Agreement") is entered into on Monday, August 27, 2018 (the "Effective Date") between the following parties:

Carleton University, the University of Ottawa, Algonquin College, and La Cité, all located within the City of Ottawa.

WHEREAS the David C. Onley Employment Development Initiative (the "Initiative") is aimed at establishing partnerships to develop knowledge, resources, and tools to support postsecondary students with disabilities in their employment readiness and career aspirations; and

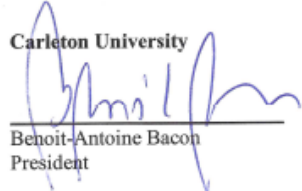
WHEREAS the Initiative is funded by contributions from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; and

WHEREAS the parties hereto compose Education City, a bilingual pilot project established in 2017 and funded by the Government of Ontario aimed at developing integrated academic programs, shared research, and personalized learning opportunities for students.

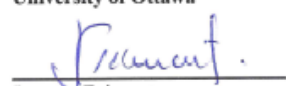
The parties hereto agree as follows:

1. The Initiative, which has been endorsed by Education City, will be carried out collaboratively by the parties hereto in order to meet the agreed upon objectives and to achieve positive outcomes related to supporting postsecondary students with disabilities.
2. The parties recognize and agree that this Agreement is non-binding. The parties are committed to entering into collaborative sub-award agreements shortly to establish and formalize the rights, obligations, and contributions of each party with respect to the Initiative.

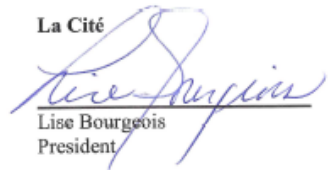
Carleton University


Benoit-Antoine Bacon
President

University of Ottawa


Jacques Frémont
President

La Cité


Lise Bourgeois
President

Algonquin College


Cheryl Jensen
President

8.2 Appendix: Accessible Career Showcase Events

This Appendix describes the Accessible Employer Showcase events that were hosted by the DCOI in collaboration with the University of Ottawa, Algonquin College and Carleton University. While we intended to host an event at La Cité we were not able to make it happen due to some constraints in capacity there.

The Accessible Employer Showcase events occurred between March 6, 2019 and March 25, 2019 and involved students and recent graduates registered with the disability offices from each campus as well as private and public sector employers in the community, keen to build an inclusive and diverse workplace.

To ensure the success of each event, much attention was given to creating a comfortable, inclusive and accessible atmosphere for student and employers attending the event. Innovative practices to support students with disabilities were developed and are described here. Similarly, careful attention was paid to employer outreach as well as campus communications and partnership development with the local career and disability offices on each campus.

This outline includes lessons learned that were collected throughout the planning and execution process of the event, as well as provides recommendations to campuses on how to incorporate more inclusive practices when organizing career fairs on campus.

Event Name:	ACCESSIBLE EMPLOYER SHOWCASE AND NETWORKING RECEPTION
Event Dates:	March 6th - Carleton University March 13th - Algonquin March 25th - University of Ottawa
Event Times:	4:30 – 7:00PM
Purpose:	The David C. Onley Initiative (DCOI) ¹² , in partnership with EARN ¹³ (Employment Accessibility Resource Network/United Way), to develop a template for a sustainable, accessible employer showcase and networking event for postsecondary students and recent graduates of each of the four postsecondary partner institutions. A forum for students and employers to explore work integrated learning opportunities along various pathways such as volunteer, part-time and summer employment, co-op and full-time opportunities. A networking and engagement opportunity in a more informal and intimate environment specifically tailored to support the needs and comfort of students with disabilities.
Event Partners	EARN United Way DSO ¹⁴ and CSO ¹⁵ Offices, Carleton, Algonquin, University of Ottawa
Key Stakeholders; Planning	EARN DCOI PMC ¹⁶ CUAEL ¹⁷ ACT ¹⁸ Central Career Business Career

¹² DCOI- David C. Onley Initiative

¹³ EARN- Employment Accessibility Resource Network

¹⁴ DSO – Disability Support Office

¹⁵ CSO- Career Support Office

¹⁶ PMC- Paul Menton Centre at Carleton University

¹⁷ CUAEL- The Carleton University Accessible Experiential Learning (CUAEL)

¹⁸ ACT- Accessible Career Transitions

	Management Centre (Carleton); CAL (Algonquin) ¹⁹ ; SASS (UOttawa) ²⁰
Goals / Anticipated Outcomes:	Develop an inclusive and accessible Career Networking / Job Fair that services the needs of students with disabilities that can be integrated into existing career fairs and/or scheduled in proximity (same day) at each of the four partner postsecondary institutions.

8.2.1 Student Engagement

Marketing | Promotion

- On-Line | Web, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn
- DCOI collaborated with designated communications partners on each campus at DSO and CSO level to assist with marketing and promotion.
- Events were posted on the DCOI website with a link to Eventbrite for Registration.
- Posters were created, printed and distributed to Campus Communication offices, DSO and CSO offices for distribution on campus(es)
- Social media channels were used to promote the event as it was occurring and post occurrence.
- Email communications to students who had registered with disability offices at each of the campuses. Additional messaging was shared with the broader student population through posters and CSO offices, not only for students who might have an interest in attending the event, but also for those who might not have registered with the DSO office at their campus.
- Event messaging was shared with campus partners such as student (graduate, undergrad) offices, radio, student government, and campus media channels.

Lessons Learned:

- While we did use social media to advertise, we could have utilized the student services social media as well. For example, CUAEL has an active Instagram account and it could have been used to give shout-outs for the event. Other channels could have been used to create a more integrated, holistic social media strategy and timeline.

8.2.2 Registration

Pre-Event: Eventbrite Registration included Accessible Field Queries to ensure we had an awareness and understanding of what the accessibility and dietary requirements were. A series of emails were sent to registered students, including:

- Welcome Confirmation- Upon Registration on Eventbrite.
- Information Follow-up(s) with tips and guidelines on what to expect at the event, event preparation, and an invitation to join in a pre-networking preparation call.
- Specific call-out for students who may have accessibility, dietary or other need to ensure accommodation arrangements.
- List of participating employers with hyperlinks on partner organizations websites and distributed to registrants prior to event.

¹⁹ CAL (Algonquin College) – Centre for Accessible Learning

²⁰ SASS (University of Ottawa)- Student Academic Success Service

- Post Event Thank You and Survey.
- All information, both pre-Event and post- Event were presented in accessible format and were translated into French and English.
- Students were encouraged to contact the DCOI with any questions and concerns.

On-Site Registration

- Registration was staffed by 3 people; two of whom were tasked with checking attendees in using an alphabetically sorted registration list that additionally flagged any specific disability notes and support needed.
- A third person was assigned to distribute the promotional items and provide general entry information i.e., coat check, event flow, etc.
- Registrants who had identified a desire to have a Networking Ambassador to assist throughout the event were accommodated at this time also.
- A strong client service focus was prioritized at registration to address any issues that arose unexpectedly.

Lessons Learned:

- We will be reaching out to Eventbrite to inquire about accessibility features. We dedicated a staff member to monitoring Eventbrite registrations and following up with each registrant to ensure needs were met.

8.2.3 Student Attendees

This table shows that in all cases there were a large number of students who originally registered, however in all cases student turn-out was much lower than expected.

Campus	Students Registered	Students Attended	Attrition
Carleton University	76	41	46%
Algonquin	65	45	31%
University of Ottawa	80	58	27%

8.2.4 Student Support

Pre-Fair Coaching: As part of our preparation for students, we organized a pre-fair coaching phone call with our partner organization, EARN. Two separate dates and times were offered for this service to ensure that the largest number of students could benefit from this service. Only five students called in for all three events. The phone call included:

- Details to the event venue, location, transportation, timing, and how much of a crowd to expect
- Explanation of event format and agenda
- List of participating employers
- General communication tips, and advice on networking

The Pre-Fair Coaching phone call provided a comfort/ease to students with disabilities. It provided them confidence that they could speak to someone in advance to the event so they know what to expect or address any questions they may have.

Networking Ambassadors | Volunteers

A Networking Ambassador program was developed to support students who may feel anxiety in networking situations and/or who expressed a need for support during the conversations with employers. The Ambassadors were student leaders that acted as a supportive bridge in facilitating conversations and meaningful connections between their fellow classmates and potential employers. They were recruited through our postsecondary partners, received an instructional 'manual' prior to the event and were provided with an in-person on-site briefing during the volunteer briefing session prior to the event. Manual included in appendices and included information such as strategies for assisting people with disabilities.

The Networking Ambassador support service was promoted as a service at time of registration and were identified as such on event days. Our teams of volunteers were consistently made up of amazing students who were quick to help in any circumstance including setup, tear down and registration.

Preparation Resources

A series of four one-pager resources were created and shared with students prior to event:

- **One week prior to event:** Tips on how to research attending employer companies, updating your resume, perfecting your elevator pitch and arranging accommodations.
- **1-2 days prior to event:** Tips on dress code, creating a strategy, and advice on what to bring to a career event.
- **Day of event:** An encouraging reminder to take a deep breath and interact as best you can.
- **Post event follow up:** Tips on following up post event and applying for jobs.

Lessons Learned:

Initially, we separated "volunteers" with Networking Ambassadors but found that everyone who signed up to volunteer for the event also wanted to have the experience as a Networking Ambassador. A recommendation to co-train both the Networking Ambassadors and Volunteers to better support students with disabilities.

8.2.5 Venue | Logistics

Room Set up

Each employer was seated at a large 8-seater round table, with swag and banner visible. Students were invited to join the employer by sitting with them at the table and engaging in conversation. Space was provided at each table for students with mobility devices and ambassadors were on-site assisting with seating as required.

A separate area/table was identified for those attendees requiring a space separate from the active networking areas to allow attendees to mentally and physically regroup, reflect and review. These spaces were identified with signage to provide participants with an understanding that this was where they were able to 'take a break' or to sit and prepare themselves for networking.

Space were large enough to accommodate: catering table(s) run (approximately 18' running feet); 10 information tables with space for pop-up banners (72" rounds with 7 seats at each table; 2 employers, 5 students); and approximately 50 – 75 student attendees with a standard 5' – 6' between all hard surfaces.

Events were held in a large closed room on each campus. Ideally situated in an area of campus that is well known, and easy to locate as well as easily accessible with elevators and signage.

The time of day chosen was between 16:30-19:00 and aimed to attract students who were still on campus for classes as well as invite employers after regular working hours. This timing also reflected the desire to piggy-back on the existing job fairs on each campus to attract the largest number of employers possible.

Lessons Learned:

- Having dedicated quiet space helped students take a moment away to approach things at their own pace. We also had a room designated for volunteers when possible. This was useful as it allowed a separate space to brief the volunteers, share thoughts and feedback and have dinner as a group to help break the ice.
- The ideal space was a large room, within easy reach of main campus facilities is best for an accessible career fair. The space needs to be easy to access for employers as well as students. A large space, where students are free to move about, observe and interact with employers is ideal. The room set up with round table is ideal for this type of event and allows for more informal conversations. The sense of informality that the room set up afforded, contributed to more relaxed environment, with less crowded areas and reduction in noise and stress.

8.2.6 Food & Beverage

A light selection of hot and cold sweet and savory canapés and selected non-alcoholic beverage service was included in these events to a) elevate the attendee experience for both students and employers and b) provide light service to compensate for the fact that the event occurred over the traditional 'dinner hour'. All Food and Beverage was set up on a long table run in the center of the room.

Lessons Learned:

- The food was a welcome addition, however, it would be better positioned on the side of the room, as opposed to the center. Additionally, a staff/volunteer should be present at the food table to assist with serving attendees as well as bringing refreshments to seated employers.
- Awareness needs to be given to the height of table and ease of access to refreshments, making these as accessible as possible.
- Food was not a 'must have' component of these events. Rather, they contributed to yet another "safe gathering space" for student and employers alike.

8.2.7 Feedback from Students

Preparation Resources: Of the 26 respondents to our student survey, 89% found these resources to be helpful to their preparation for meeting with employers at the event.

Event Atmosphere: Students appreciated the atmosphere that was created for the event, noting the “patience and understanding” shown by the event organizers, and the “Positive non-judgmental atmosphere”. One student felt that “the casual atmosphere of the event helped me be more open to disclosing circumstances surrounding my disability.”

Event Flow: While some student respondents enjoyed the open, “drop-in” format for student-employer interactions, other had some issues with this fluid arrangement:

“The casual, open set-up of the event made it less stressful to meet employers, but at times it also led to overwhelming noise that made it difficult to concentrate on what was being presented right in front of me.”

“My son is on the autism spectrum - so the format was not good. Too free-flow & he didn't know what he was supposed to do - and it was difficult for him to get in to talk to anyone. It was also very hectic and loud for him. It would be better if it was clear what was going to happen and what he should do.”

Networking Ambassadors: When asked what they liked about the event, 58% of respondents selected the “Support provided by Networking Ambassadors”. One suggestion for improving the service was:

“Provide a list of ambassadors and their backgrounds. Also, have students request specific ambassadors for the event and have the ambassador be with the student at all times to try and help the student process information easier.”

“There could have been more work done from the ambassadors. They could have taken notes for the students, while the students were listening to the employers speak.”

Meaningful connections: 77% of student respondents felt that they made meaningful connections with employers at the event.

8.2.8 Recommendations to Campus CSO and DSO Offices:

- Ensure an accessible registration platform. Eventbrite is not an accessible screen reader platform. The workaround solution is to a) encourage anyone having difficulty with the registration platform to contact general information email/telephone number for assistance and/or b) to include a screen reader accessible PDF document as a link attachment.
- Ensure accessible venue, including consideration for spacing between tables, minimal distraction through noise and light and availability of ‘rest area’.
- Ensure nametags and all supporting collateral is fully accessible, with large font size and colour coded
- If catering is provided, it is recommended to provide smaller service stations throughout the room for increased ease of access for employers and for those who felt a center room service was too overt.

- If Accessible Employer Showcase occurs after on-campus CSO Job Fair – provide promotional signage; handouts with AES information i.e., Description, Agenda, Activity Roster, List of Employers, etc.
- A pre-session workshop for students for 30 minutes in advance of session to help them better prepare. Alternatively, a webinar would also be suitable.
- At the time of this report we can confirm that as a direct result of our events, five students were interviewed and two students hired for employment opportunities.

8.2.9 Employer Participants

In order for the event to be a success, attending employers needed to be properly sourced and testify as ‘accessible’ employers. Our Employer Outreach Specialist recruited employers to attend the events. The following employers attended:

Employer	Carleton	Algonquin	U of O	Private	Gov’t
Payments Canada			Attended		X
Black and MacDonald		Attended		X	
BuildAble	Attended		Attended	X	
Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services	Attended	Attended	Attended		X
Bank of Canada	Attended	Attended	Attended		X
Accenture			Attended	X	
Canada Post	Attended	Attended	Attended		X
Enterprise	Attended			X	
Correctional Services	Attended	Attended	Attended		X
Public Service Commission	Attended	Attended	Attended		X
Communications Security Establishment			Attended		X
CSIS			Attended		X
Shared Services Canada		Attended	Attended		X
House of Commons		Attended	Attended		X
Total %				28.57%	71.43%

Employer Engagement and Outreach

Most of the employers were recruited through our partner postsecondary institutions, local networking events as well as outreach through linked in and social media. An effort was made to strike a balance between the public and private sectors. Venue capacity dictated the number of employers that could attend.

Employer Communications

In the lead up to the event, numerous communications were sent out to employers with reminders for the event, logistical information, paid parking vouchers, as well as an information sheet on communication strategies presented by EARN.

8.2.10 Feedback from Employers

- Many of the employers indicated that this was their first disability related event attended on any of the four campuses.
- Employers indicated that their company or organization was actively seeking to hire people with disabilities and wanted to learn about how their organization could improve their workplace and be more accessible.
- The employers enjoyed the format of the networking portion of the event, indicating that they liked the ability to have longer conversations with the students.
- Employers appreciated the catering during the event.
- The employers also indicated they would have liked to see the students more informed about the format of the event to facilitate the networking portion of the event which could be attributed to networking anxiety that the students could be experiencing.
- In addition, they also would have like to have access to a database like system, with all of the student's cover letters and resumes. This would allow the employers to connect easier with the students after the event.
- Employers also noted that having the ability to have short presentations on what they are offering could have been beneficial.

Recommendations to Campus for CSO and DSO Employer Outreach:

- Recommendation to clearly communicate with employers the benefits of inclusive hiring practices and to have events that allow employers to engage with the diverse student body.
- Provide employers with profiles of students who have registered, including possible accommodations and work interests ahead of time. This would be feasible by incorporating queries within the Eventbrite registration form and compiling and distributing the student profile ahead of time. Alternatively, students could be redirected to a platform that captures this information and allows them to post their resumes, work preferences and skills.
- Provide employers with resources to assist them in preparing the event. For example, Effective Communication guideline from EARN.
- Provide employers with session on how to be inclusive in their communications and hiring approaches on the day of the event. A pre-event coaching opportunity on how to approach and engage with students with disabilities could be beneficial to employers

Lessons Learned from Employer Experience:

- We were somewhat restricted by the fact that partner postsecondary institutions seemed reluctant to share with us their employer contacts. This resulted in difficulty in recruiting employers to the event as we were unable to work from existing database or contacts. Sharing contacts who are already recruiting from campuses would greatly increase employer traction.
- One employer had mobility issues, and was placed in an inconvenient place, the same consideration for accommodations and comfort need to be made for employers.
- A larger employer outreach team would result in a more diverse and eclectic representation of employers.

8.3 Appendix: Employment Pathways Facilitator Functions

Functions...	Definition
1. Leverage the employment pathways	Helping students with disabilities understand the pathways available, how and when to access them and what the pathway entails so it can be assessed for best fit and effectiveness in meeting one's employment goals. This helps facilitate reflection, based on their strengths, abilities, transferable skills, challenges and interests, which pathway(s) they best thrive in and best use to meet their work experience goals.
2. Gain work-related experience	Accessing and applying to opportunities for active, hands-on experience that can be transferred and translated into reportable experience that can be shared with a potential employer. Working with the students with disabilities to create an individualized action plan, developmental in nature, responding to their specific profile and links to their postsecondary journey timeline. Capturing and mapping out the student's vision (long-term, medium-term and short-term goals for gaining work-related experience) and break this down into manageable and actionable SMART goals.
3. Build self-awareness	Assisting the students with disabilities to gain knowledge that relates to the diverse facets of their individual personality and learning profile including one's: strengths, weaknesses, beliefs, interests, motivation, values and emotions, in particular how they relate to identification and choice making in employment and career goals. A process that occurs continuously across the life span. The intent is to build awareness about strategies that work for them to leverage their strengths in employment settings and mitigate their challenges in employment settings; self-awareness and how it links to self-advocacy (i.e. self-awareness informing actions and choices); self-assessments related to work readiness (i.e. personal)
4. Build self-advocacy skills	Linked to an understanding of one's self and their strengths/challenges. Identifying strategies that have worked effectively; the environment or any accommodations that one needs to bring one's best; self-advocacy is the active practice of communicating what is needed to thrive and bring one's best in the environment. Self-advocacy can look different for each individual. The intent is to provide the student with support to communicate with employers through practice, prep, scripts development, role playing, discussion, building the 'language' and practicing for familiarity and comfort.
5. Build soft skills that support employability	Ensuring conversations such as the importance of communication and interpersonal skills that are transferable into diverse types of employment and workplaces, in order to build understanding of the general expectations and unwritten rules at play in the majority of workplaces, as well as understanding how to navigate the social environment of a specific workplace or career of interest. The intent is to help students with disabilities understand how their lived experience of disability impacts their soft skills (i.e. communication, rapport building, outreaching).
6. Build career management skills	Access to resources which can assess which career management skills students with disabilities need. Supports could include writing a resume, applying for a job, interviewing, preparing for job fairs, as well as planning, developing an action plan, measuring one's progress against the career goals set.

7. Opportunity to have crucial conversations related to disability and employment	Access for students with disabilities, faculty and/or staff to have discussions with an individual who is knowledgeable in the areas of disability and employment, and who can navigate topics such as stigma, strategies, environments, useful resources, including providing guidance on potential next steps, resources, supports. These discussions are related to the student's employment journey which considers the way their lived experience impacts that journey, what considerations and additional information they may need to meet their goals.
8. Assessment of relevant needs and strengths	Engaging with students with disabilities, faculty and/or staff to assess or refer to appropriate assessment services related to a wide variety of functional limitations and functional strengths. A range of referrals or activities that can lead to students having information they need to make best decisions for themselves in their development of employability skills and individual journey towards employment and/or entrepreneurship.
9. A central advisory function to support campus community on issues/topics of disability and employment	A liaison between prominent accessibility and employment related services on campus, with a bird's eye view of the programs, services and supports available to students with disabilities as well as faculty and staff. There is a coordinating function that keeps knowledge exchange opportunities flowing, including referrals as needed, champions continued educational opportunities and awareness building, and facilitation of ongoing conversations on accessibility and employment.

8.4 Appendix: Highlights of Key Findings from Initiative During DCOI Showcase Celebration

The following posters were presented as part of the Showcase Celebration on April 30, 2020 and were designed to highlight some of the key activities or takeaways from the work of the project team.



DAVID C. ONLEY INITIATIVE
FOR EMPLOYMENT & ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

INITIATIVE DAVID C. ONLEY
POUR L'EMPLOI ET L'ENTREPRENEURIAT

Algonquin College

Co-op Work-Term Accommodation

- Previously, there was no formal process for a co-op student to request accommodations for their work terms.
- We approached the Co-op Department and the Centre for Accessible Learning about our recommendations—and both departments agreed.
- After various meetings, document drafting, and the creation of FAQs, the Co-op Work Term Accommodation form was implemented.
- This resulted in the creation of cross-departmental consent forms for improved collaboration and services for students.



Entrepreneur in Residence

- The Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centre (IEC) hosts a program for aspiring students in which they receive mentorship from successful entrepreneurs.
- We recommended the IEC to include successful entrepreneurs with disabilities in their 'Entrepreneurs in Residence' program.
- As a result, the IEC hired an entrepreneur with a disability and students have seen her for guidance. She also appeared on a panel for Women in Business on International Women's Day.

Employment Empowerment Workshops


- We created and facilitated eight employment readiness workshops (per semester) in the Transition Support Centre for students on the autism spectrum.
- Topics included self-advocacy, job search, accommodations, disability disclosure, etc.
- Moving forward, we recommend providing professional development training for staff on how to support students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in relation to their employment needs.

Resource Creation and Professional Development Training

- A need for better disability employment resources was identified. Thus, two comprehensive guidebooks were created: one tailored to students, the other for employers.
- Using this robust content, we created and delivered professional development training to the Employment Support Centre and Co-operative Education. This included information on disability types, appropriate language and etiquette, interviewing, disclosure, accommodations, etc.
- These resources resulted in increased awareness about the intersection of employment and disability.



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INITIATIVE DAVID C. ONLEY
POUR L'EMPLOI ET L'ENTREPRENEURIAT

Carleton University

Integration of Career Development Support with Established Academic Support

- Piloted the Employment Pathways Facilitator (EPF) role at the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC)
- Collaborated with PMC staff to identify ways to set up internal referrals within their office to connect registered students interested in pursuing university-supported employment pathways with the EPF for personalized employment discussions
- Developed and administered a “skills tracker” for students with disabilities to identify personal gaps in essential employability skills and reflect on their development – before, during and after employment pathway experiences; worked with students to plan how to apply the lessons learned
- Encouraged students with disabilities to reflect on the applicability of their academic accommodations and strategies in the workplace – before, during and after employment pathway experiences.
- Made individualized and scaffolded referrals to other Carleton service providers by ensuring that each student clearly understood the rationale behind the referral, the service provider's role, and how they could actively participate and follow up for their own benefit
- Participated in revising online descriptions of PMC volunteer opportunities to increase accessibility

Enhanced Communication about Specialized Career Supports on Campus

- Maintained a dedicated “Career Corner” in the PMC common area to promote campus-wide career development events (such as job fairs) as well as career development services specialized for students with disabilities (EPF, Accessible Career Transitions, and Act to Employ) using a variety of channels including email, through the PMC website, RSS live feed, and student newsletter
- Shared detailed and up-to-date information about the EPF role and other career development services specialized for students with disabilities with PMC Coordinators to facilitate individualized referrals

Increased Knowledge Capacity

- Presented to PMC-registered students during orientation on the topic of employment pathways and on-campus specialized career development services to capture students early in their academic careers
- Hosted a series of interactive student workshops themed “Employability for the Neurodiverse Student”
- Hosted workshops for Co-op and Career Services professionals to raise awareness of issues associated with the impact of disability on employment (e.g. disclosure, assistive technology, and accommodations) as well as to share best practices in universal design for postsecondary service providers

Partnership with Student Experience Office (SEO)

- Worked with SEO professionals to modify Campus to Community leadership activities and volunteer opportunities to enhance accessibility for students with disabilities
- Collaborated with SEO staff to enhance accessibility of online descriptions of Campus to Community leadership activities and volunteer opportunities, with specific details about physical accessibility and a prompt to confidentially communicate accessibility needs
- Invited SEO staff member to a PMC meeting to educate PMC Coordinators about the Campus to Community program and promote it as an accessible employment pathway





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FOR EMPLOYMENT & ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

INITIATIVE DAVID C. ONLEY
POUR L'EMPLOI ET L'ENTREPRENEURIAT

La Cité

Improve visibility of the Career Services Office (CSO) and the dissemination of resources to students

- Expand the CSO's portal into a full-service employment hub
- Engage directly with students to determine their preferred methods of communication
- Expand the CSO's offerings to include volunteering and entrepreneurship guidance

Promote partnership between La Boussole (DSO) and the CSO to better encompass the needs of SWDs

- Identify key team members at the CSO and DSO able to provide cross-training, resources, and support to staff
- Integrate disability awareness within the current workshop offerings of the CSO
- Modify the EPF role to act as a bridge between the CSO and DSO

Improve access to financial resources for students struggling with financial insecurity

- For some students, their employment journeys are fulfilling a life need for financial security, which may be further compounded by disability
- Include the student voice in systemic decisions
- Increase transparency about financial aid on campus

Future directions

- La Cité is in an ideal position to integrate disability awareness across the whole of its campus by promoting a partnership between the CSO and DSO—and to develop an actionable plan to improve services offered to SWDs



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INITIATIVE DAVID C. ONLEY
POUR L'EMPLOI ET L'ENTREPRENEURIAT

University of Ottawa

Provided a point-person for students and staff on matters involving the intersection of disability and employment

- Disability and career services are not currently integrated or co-located.
- Expertise in both areas is often needed in order to address career development needs that are disability-specific.
- There is significant value of having a consultant who can mediate access to information and resources.

Offered disability awareness training to student service professionals in the career office

- Enhanced the level of knowledge and comfort among student service staff for working with students with disabilities.
- Designed and delivered a workshop to co-op and careers staff.
- Laid the groundwork to continue the provision of training across other student service units across campus.

Strengthened executive function skills of neuro-diverse students

- The ability to generate, modify and implement strategies for attaining goals is important to success in school and at work for students living with disabilities that affect executive function.
- Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder tend to experience difficulties in this area.
- We offered targeted support for these skills to facilitate the success of neuro-diverse students in attaining their career goals.

Identified an opportunity to enhance mechanisms to support the core career development needs of students with disabilities

- Core career management skills are needed by all students—however there are additional disability-specific topics which may need to be addressed.
- There is an opportunity to consider implementing a campus-wide career development certificate program. This would provide the pathway to start the discussion earlier about disability and career management at the post-secondary level.



8.5 Appendix: Interview Questions Asked During Campus and Employer Interviews

Questions Asked of Campus Career/Coop Staff That Engage Directly with Employers or Involved with Employer Events

1. When do you decide to engage with an employer? At what point in the planning process do you engage with employers - before you plan, or do you plan and then reach out to them? At what point do you consider the employer in the process?
2. Do you build your events/outreach activities around the employer needs or student needs, or both?
3. How do you engage with employers? Do you have templates for emails, letters, use the phone, in person, other?
4. How do you decide who to reach out to?
5. How do you find employers/speakers? Do you use existing databases, direct outreach, personal networks, favours, other?
6. Tell us about the kind of conversations you are having with employers – are you discussing their needs and which pathways are the best fit? For those in business development vs events, how is your conversation different – is it a holistic conversation or more about employer needs or event needs?
7. What tools or resources do you share with employers? Are these unique to your institution?
8. Do you speak with employers about how to access a diverse talent pool on campus and if so, which pools? What do you say?
9. Do you ask employers what would make it easier for them to contact career service offices or to find the talent they need?

Questions Used for Employer Interviews

Q. 1 - Can you tell me a little bit about your company/organization:

- # of staff?
- work environment/work culture?
- Do you consider various diversity groups as represented within your company/organization? If so, which ones?
- *If disability is listed, discuss explore definition and build awareness.*
- *If disability is not listed, add disability to the discussion.*

Q. 2 - Does your company participate in postsecondary recruitment?

- Province wide? National?
- Which campuses? How did you choose which schools to work with?
- What types of activities on campus do you partake? (fairs, panels, networking events, office tours, mentorship, other)
- What areas of study does your company target?
- Is there a person or team dedicated to postsecondary recruitment?
- When considering support from the institution, who or what department is your best resource?
- What could be improved?
- What other recruitment strategies do you use? (job boards, applicant tracking systems)

- Are you familiar with the various employment pathways students have toward employment?
 - Apprenticeship
 - COOP
 - Internships
 - Entrepreneurship
 - Service Learning
 - Applied Research Projects
 - Professional Practicum/Clinical Placements
 - Field Placement
 - Work Experience
- Are you aware of how many hires have resulted from your postsecondary recruitment efforts?

Q. 3 - Can you tell me a little bit about disability in your workplace, either from a recruitment perspective or for current employees?

Q. 4 - Is there a diversity and inclusion specialist member or team?

Q. 5 - Best Practices (optional if strategies for connecting with SWD are in place)

- Do you have any best practices at your organization for:
 - Accessing SWD candidates
 - Interviewing SWD
 - Hiring SWD
 - Onboarding SWD
 - Supervising SWD
- What, if any, barriers have you encountered in hiring PWD/SWD? How have you overcome them?
- Access to PWD/SWD? Bias?
- What do you see as some benefits in hiring SWD? Any challenges?

Q. 6 - Supports: Community and tools

- How do you feel about current supports that exist in the community for SWD and employers? What would you do to improve these?
- If you had a wish list what type of tool or support would be helpful to you in your work with SWD?
 - Website
 - Learning module
 - Checklist
 - Advisor
 - What would this tool look like to you?

Q. 7 - Follow Up

- If appropriate, discuss if/how employer can get engaged in DCOI activities and/or refer them to appropriate PSI partner career/disability office

8.6 Appendix: Employers Interviewed

Over the duration of the project, at least one representative responsible for the (campus) recruitment function, from 30 different companies, were interviewed during two different sets of interviews. Three of those organizations were interviewed on both occasions (Payments Canada, Bank of Canada, and Black & McDonald) making the total number of different employers 30 rather than 33.

It is important to note that several other organizations participated and engaged in uniquely designed career/employment events as a result of the DCOI project. While the companies listed below participated in the formal interview process, they may have also engaged in these other activities (i.e. Accessible Career Showcase, Champions for AbleTo campaign, career fairs, networking events and more).

Companies - First Data Collection (N=22)

- Accenture
- Bank of Canada
- Bell
- Black & McDonald
- Canadian Commercial Corporation
- Costco
- Deaf Blind Ontario
- Deloitte
- Enterprise Holdings
- Erikson
- Hydro Ottawa
- Insurance Planners
- LRI Engineering
- Nielson.com
- NRCAN
- Payments Canada
- Penske
- Royal Canadian Mint
- Searidge Tech
- Shopify
- Smart and Bigger
- Survey Monkey

Companies - Second Data Collection (N=11)

- ABA Connections.doc
- Bank of Canada
- Black and McDonald
- Canada Post
- Convergent Technologies
- Leonardo DRS
- Payments Canada
- Ribbon Communications
- Sandler Training
- Securitas
- Slice

8.7 Appendix: List of Key Outreach and Engagement Activities During DCOI Project

The DCOI team participated in many events, activities and conferences over the period of the project. Below is a list of the key activities that took place. Under the activity column, these notes reflect Campus Based Activities

Activities:

- **Advising / Consultation** – DCOI members invited to advise on related work, research, activities
- **DCOI Activity** – activities directly tied to day-to-day work of project team
- **DCOI Sponsored Event** – project sponsored opportunity to present and/or attend event to create awareness
- **DCOI Sponsored Article** – purchased article in magazine, newspaper or online channels to promote work of project and/or public awareness campaign
- **Meeting** – noteworthy meeting with key stakeholders
- **Partner Event** – activity held in collaboration with campus partner either on/off campus
- **Presentation** – members of project team made presentation to audience at meeting, event and/or conference on some element of the project

Activity	Activity	Date
DCOI Activity	Public launch of the David C. Onley Initiative	August 2018
DCOI Activity	Start Up on the Hill in Ottawa	September 2018
Presentation	Geneva Centre for Autism Symposium	October 2018
DCOI Activity	Hosted Knowledge Exchange Luncheons with University of Ottawa and Carleton University to bring together their Disability and Career/Coop Offices.	November 2018
DCOI Sponsored Article	Ottawa Business Journal HR Magazine Full Page Article	November 2018
Presentation	Innovation Showcase – Office of Quality Initiatives, Carleton University	November 2018
Meeting	Education City Launch Event	November 2018
DCOI Activity	Make the Cut – Secondary School Event @ Carleton	November 2018
Meeting	PSE Stakeholder Round-Table Meeting - Series of meetings with key stakeholders in Toronto area: IDIA, CCDI, CACEE, Public Garage, MTCU; CCRW; David Onley and more.	November 2018
Presentation	Ontario College Career Educators at Regional Professional Development Day	December 2018
DCOI Activity	National Conference Disability & Work in Canada to provide input on national strategy being cultivated	December 2018
DCOI Activity	Attended Cannexus Conference	January 2019
Meetings	EARN Leadership Group	January 2019
DCOI Sponsored Event	Ottawa Employment Planning Council – Building Connections Event and spoke briefly to promote the Initiative	January 2019
Presentation	CCDI (College Committee on Disability Issues) Provincial meeting in Toronto	February 2019

Activity	Activity	Date
DCOI Sponsored Event	Student run, city-wide event – Legacy Conference; sponsored 40 student attendees and facilitated panel discussion with student/graduate entrepreneurs	March 2019
DCOI Activity	Facilitated student engagement from partners for first time Lime Connect Networking Event in Ottawa	March 2019
DCOI Activity	Hosted Accessible Career Showcase Events (Carleton University, Algonquin College, University of Ottawa)	March-April 2019
DCOI Activity	Hosted Part I – Careers in Government Fair	April 2019
Meeting	Conducted series of meetings with Secondary School Boards in Eastern Ontario to discuss career/employment issues as it relates to transition from high school to postsecondary	April 2019
DCOI Activity	Finalized MOU with DiscoverAbility / Ontario Chamber of Commerce to design Ottawa Hub of online site	April 2019
Meeting	Presented to Ontario Postsecondary Career Centre Directors and Managers	May 2019
DCOI Sponsored Event	Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD) Conference luncheon and presentation	May 2019
DCOI Sponsored Event	EnableOttawa Conference with DCOI booth and facilitated panel discussion	May 2019
Presentation	CACEE Conference Poster Board Presentation	May 2019
DCOI Activity	Launched #AbleTo Pledge Card Campaign with Mayor's support at Accessibility Day in Ottawa at City Hall	May 2019
DCOI Sponsored Event	EARN Conference & Awards	June 2019
DCOI Activity	Hosted session for CSO partners and Magnet to explore use of Magnet Portal	June 2019
Meeting	Minister of Accessibility from New Zealand	June 2019
Presentation	CACUSS Conference, Calgary, AB	June 2019
DCOI Activity	Attended CASE Conference	June 2019
DCOI Activity	Attended CEWIL Professional Development Conference and Symposium	June 2019
Presentation	AHEAD Conference in Boston, MA USA	August 2019
Partner Event	Algonquin College DSO Orientation for New Students	August 2019
Partner Event	Carleton U PMC Orientation for New Students	August 2019
DCOI Activity	Attended conference on Holistic Corporate Engagement	August 2019
DCOI Sponsored Article	Released full page colour ad in Ottawa Book of Lists featuring DCOI employer partners and #AbleTo pledges	September 2019
Partner Event	Carleton University Student Resource Fair	September 2019
Partner Event	#AbleTo Booth at Carleton Part-time Job Fair	September 2019
Partner Event	#AbleTo Booth at Algonquin Campus Village Fair	September 2019
DCOI Sponsored Event	Shopify Internship Evening	September 2019
Partner Event	#AbleTo Booth at Algonquin Part-time Job Fair	September 2019
Advising / Consultation	Public Service Commission Internship Program leads to discuss and advise	September 2019
DCOI Sponsored Event	Ottawa Talent Summit	September 2019

Activity	Activity	Date
Partner Event	#AbleTo Booth at U of O Public, Para-public and NGO Career Fair	September 2019
Meeting	Dr. Ross Johnston, ED of Cooperative Education, Waterloo and VP, Global Network of the Cooperative Education and Internship Association	September 2019
DCOI Sponsored Event	Local Breakfast Series – Pierre Dorion, GM of the Ottawa Senators and Chris Phillips; Kanata Golf and Country Club	October 2019
DCOI Activity	Navigating Careers in Government Fair	October 2019
Partner Event	#AbleTo Booth at U of O PT Job Fair	October 2019
Partner Event	#AbleTo Booth at CU Fall Career Fair (2 days)	October 2019
DCOI Sponsored Event & Presentation	Ottawa Business Summit - Booth and made presentation on Building a Culture of Inclusion in the Workplace	October 2019
DCOI Activity	Team member participated as panelist at National Employment Equity and Diversity Conference	October 2019
Advising / Consultation	Reviewed and consulted on DRAFT TD Economics report – Canadians with Disabilities: Seizing the Opportunity (Released Oct. 16/19)	October 2019
Advising / Consultation	Reviewed and consulted on DRAFT Public Garage report – The Perfect Storm: Employment Prospects for Postsecondary Graduates with Disabilities (for the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility)	October 2019
DCOI Sponsored Article	Article in October issue of HR Magazine	October 2019
DCOI Activity	Meeting between Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Ottawa Board of Trade, Ottawa Employment Hub, EARN and DCOI to discuss collaboration on Discoverability website - Ottawa Hub.	October 2019
DCOI Activity	Distributed resource to support Ottawa Start Up Open House	November 2019
Meeting	EARN Leadership Group	November 2019
DCOI Activity	Conducted meeting with Carleton University HR Director to discuss inclusive hiring practices and explore hosting a training session as part of the Management Mornings monthly meetings.	November 2019
DCOI Activity	Meeting with Invest Ottawa to discuss contributing to monthly blog for duration of project as well as to explore collaboration for delivery of programming as part of regular workshop series.	November 2019
DCOI Sponsored Article	Article in November issue of Capital Magazine	November 2019
Presentation	IDIA Member meeting in Toronto to present on collaboration with Discoverability and EPF role	November 2019
Partner Event	“It All Adds Up” event at Algonquin College	November 2019
DCOI Activity	Make the Cut – Secondary School Event @ Carleton	November 2019
Presentation	Presented at SEMM Conference in Toronto (https://semmforum.ca)	November 2019

Activity	Activity	Date
DCOI Sponsored Event	Tie into Business Career Networking / Panel Event (https://www.algonquincollege.com/employment/tie-business-networking-night)	November 2019
Presentation	Presenting at Future Workforce Conference in Toronto (https://futureworkforce.ca)	November 2019
DCOI Activity	Exhibitor booth at launch of Canadian Accessibility Network	December 2019
DCOI Activity	Attended DWC 2019 Conference – (https://www.ccrw.org/dwc-2019-conference-strategy-in-action)	December 2019
DCOI Activity / Sponsorship	Exhibitor booth at Transform Ed Conference with Microsoft	December 2019
Presentation	Presented at Cannexus Conference	January 2020
Meetings	Presented DCOI and EPF Essential Function Model to representatives from CSO/DSO at 13 postsecondary institutions from west coast to east coast of Canada through RIC Project.	February to March 2020
Presentation	CCDI (College Committee on Disability Issues) Provincial meeting in Toronto	March 2020

8.8 Appendix: Working DRAFT of Employment Pathways Facilitator Position Description

The following DRAFT position description was crafted as a guide for partners that desire to enact the functions in the form of a position as opposed to separate functions, within their institution. It would need to be modified to address unique requirements for each institution.

POSITION OVERVIEW

Under the direction of ----- and reporting directly to -----, the Employment Pathways Facilitator is responsible for implementing the EPF Essential Functions. The EPF Essential Functions support both the journey towards employment goals for students with disabilities as well as supporting campus services to become 'disability confident' and versed in accessibility, particularly related to the transition from school to work. The EPF role has both a student-facing aspect and a campus-wide support aspect that combine to make positive impact on the employment outcomes for students with disabilities.

Aspect 1 – Student Facing Support

The EPF is responsible for providing facilitation, recommendations and support to help students make an individualized, actionable plan to gain work-related experiences throughout postsecondary. To support students with disabilities in preparing for the transition from postsecondary to employment, the Employment Pathways Facilitator connects students with appropriate tools and resources as well as encouraging their engagement with experiences that will help them to: 1) build readiness skills and transferable work skills, 2) access opportunities to build and practice self-advocacy, 3) gain opportunities to self-reflect on interests, strengths, challenges, goals, and fit and 4) understand and communicate what they need to thrive in a work environment.

Aspect 2- Campus Support

The Employment Pathways Facilitator will be responsible for collaborating with other student service partners in order to share knowledge, facilitate professional development opportunities, and extend resources as available, in order to build and maintain awareness and knowledge capacity related to disability and career development services for postsecondary students. The role includes participation in knowledge exchange activities as well as informing and supporting student services in their planning, project management and implementation of practices to support students with disabilities in their career development.

Finally, the EPF is not intended to be the only role working with students who identify with disabilities. The role is not intended to duplicate other existing services. It is not meant to separate students with disabilities out of the varied employment preparation services available to them. It is an additional support that addresses some current gaps in service provision and can serve to increase the campus's capacity to best serve students confidently throughout all its services regarding issues related to the intersection of employment preparation and the lived-experience of disability. The EPF is a specialist that can support the generalists in employment/disability topics. The incumbent must be able to promote ongoing conversation and champion a sense of shared engagement with this topic across the campus community.

EPF Essential Functions (for reference)

Functions of helping students to:

- a. Leverage the employment pathways
- b. Gain work-related experience
- c. Build self-awareness
- d. Build self-advocacy skills
- e. Build soft skills that support employability
- f. Build career management skills

Functions of facilitating access to:

- g. Opportunity to have crucial conversations related to disability and employment
- h. Assessment of relevant needs and strengths
- i. A central advisory function to support campus community on issues/topics of disability and employment

PRIMARY DUTIES PERFORMED

Facilitation and Student Pathways Navigation – (40%)

- Assist students in understanding the various pathways they can access to build work-related experiences
- Help students create an individualized plan to move forward in the pathways to continue building meaningful, relevant experience that will translate into transferable employability skills, build readiness and provide opportunities for self-reflection and useable feedback
- Assist students in assessing their level of readiness as it pertains to employment, experiential opportunities and career-based educational and professional development.
- Encourage, facilitate and participate in conversations regarding strengths and challenges to provoke thought and actions that lead students to leverage this information and choose pathways in which they can thrive
- Introduce students to relevant tools that can support them to capture their progress and integrate their learning from work related experiences
- Support students in progressing along the pathways to gaining experience by providing relevant referrals to student services and providing recommendations and suggestions for questions the student may want to ask
- Educate and support students in identifying and navigating the opportunities and options for work-integrated learning available to them through the postsecondary institution
- Provide supports in a student-centered manner that is responsive to students' lived experience and needs, reflecting the diversity of the student population
- Assess relevant needs and strengths of students and provide appropriate referrals as needed
- Identify and connect with the student services and academic supports that are relevant to career development and skills building, in order to provide students the appropriate referrals at the right time, based on a student's individual progress along the pathways.
- Manage and maintain the confidentiality and security of student files.

Campus Engagement and Service Collaboration (30%)

- Liaise and partner with other student services to promote and encourage accessible practices, increase opportunity for students to move forward along the various Pathways and connect co-curricular records
- Identify and understand student services relevant to disability and career development and skills building, in order to provide students the appropriate referrals at the right time, based on a student's individual progress along the pathways.
- Encourage and support the collaboration and connection between career services and disability services to boost the exchange of knowledge
- Track and provide year end reporting/ summary of the activities linked the EPF Essential Functions

Consultation and Resourcing (20%)

- Research and gather resources, tools and information relating to student experiences and employability skill development in order to best assist students in preparing for and navigating the transition to employment
- Remain informed and educated regarding the accommodation process in a postsecondary setting and employment settings
- Provide consultative support and/or referrals to staff and faculty who reach out with questions related to supporting students with disabilities in their career planning, employment skills development, access and navigation of experiential learning opportunities.
- Provide consultative support and/or referrals to staff and faculty who reach out with questions related to supporting employers who are seeking to support students with disabilities to thrive in the employers setting.

Other Duties (10%)

- Other duties as required within the implementation of the project
- There may be occasional travel or evening work

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Postsecondary Education (College Diploma or University Degree) in a related field with related professional experience
- Strong understanding of or professional experience within a post-secondary environment
- Incumbent must be fluently bilingual in both French and English
- The incumbent must demonstrate a strong knowledge in adult learning and strategic solution development
- Must have demonstrated experience in, or working knowledge of disability, employment development issues and career services within a postsecondary environment
- Strength in supporting the learning needs of a diverse group of stakeholders coming from multiple perspectives (including student, service provider, faculty)
- Engage with students, staff, and faculty confidently and intuitively, having the ability to initiate outreaches, build rapport, facilitate connections, provide solution-focused support for questions or concerns, and adapt to changing priorities and demands.

- Must have a demonstrated ability in initiating, organizing and implementing tasks for which they have provided accountability check-ins and final summaries
- Experience navigating complex conversations, communication and demands while maintaining strict confidentiality
- The incumbent must maintain a current knowledge of trends and developments in the fields of disabilities and accommodations and employment development services

NATURE AND LEVEL OF CONTACT

- To provide navigational support and connection to resources, tools, information and opportunities that will translate into translatable skills and experiences leading to career development in order to cultivate employment opportunities for postsecondary students and recent graduates with disabilities.
- To provide advice and support to the members of the campus community in order to best build their overall capacity to provide meaningful, accessible supports related to the journey towards employment to all students.

SUPERVISION / MANAGEMENT CONTROL EXERCISED

- Provide supervision and guidance to a team of Specialists for work distribution and completion; ensure staff have appropriate training to conduct their jobs

8.9 Appendix: Public Awareness Campaign Sample Assets

8.9.1 Infographics Designed to Engage and Inform Employers in Industry



We worked with Stiff Communication to create a series of one-page infographics that were shared with those that we met with during one-on-one meetings, at local business events, and public-facing initiatives. These are some of the examples of the documents that were created. All assets created were done in both English and French.



8.9.2 Campaign Assets Designed for Engagement on Campus

In year 2, we modified the Able To campaign and created assets and materials to promote across each campus. Below left: Sample card given out to students attending campus career fairs to help them think about important questions that they could ask of employers. The same card was shared with employers

to make them aware of the importance of being able to answer these questions for students and graduates of postsecondary.

#AbleTo

ask the right questions.

Informing yourself about prospective workplace environments and cultures is an important part of your job search.

We want to help you in your research.

Pick one or two questions you are comfortable asking and see what you can learn.

- 1 How flexible is your work environment for those with diverse needs?
- 2 Do you have resources and activities in place to promote workplace balance and wellbeing?
- 3 Do you offer a range of tools, training and technology to support people with different learning styles?
- 4 Do you have an accessibility policy?
- 5 What do inclusive hiring practices mean to your organization?
- 6 In what ways does your company value diversity?

Not sure about other questions to ask?
Visit your campus career centre to find out more.

READ Initiative
LA CITÉ
ALGONQUIN COLLEGE
UOttawa
Ontario
AbleTo.ca



Above: Poster placed on campuses to encourage visiting career centers.



Left: Sample information kit used to inform campus service providers and employers at campus events about the campaign.

8.9.3 Campaign Assets Created for Sponsored Ads or Articles in Ottawa Publications

#AbleTo

make hiring inclusive.

These employers are closing the employment gap for students with disabilities. They have been #AbleTo find this untapped talent by engaging with local post-secondary schools.

GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Seventy-eight percent of Canadians are more likely to buy a product or service from a business that hires people with disabilities.

© Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN)

Business name	Industry	Member of EARN*	Areas of recruitment interest	What they're #AbleTo do to help close the employment gap:
Bank of Canada bankofcanada.ca	Central Banking, Financial Sector	Yes	Part-time, summer positions, co-op, internship, apprenticeship, new grad recruitment (full-time)	The Bank of Canada is committed to a diverse and inclusive workforce. They have a scholarship program that helps close the gap and an employee resource group that helps to ensure a barrier-free workplace by raising awareness of different disabilities and providing support.
Black and McDonald blackandmcdonald.com	Construction, Multi-Trade Services	Yes	Summer positions, co-op, internship, apprenticeship, new grad recruitment (full-time)	Black and McDonald provides accommodations to employees for flexible work hours, work space as needed, access to technology tools, and resources to remove barriers.
BuiltAble builtable.ca	Accessible Design and Renovations	Yes	Volunteer, part-time, summer positions, co-op, internship, apprenticeship, new grad recruitment (full-time)	BuiltAble provides an accessible and inclusive work environment. Their team values inclusivity and diversity as a hiring requirement for all staff. Accessibility and inclusivity are at the core of their services.
Dalton's daltons.com	Professional Services	Yes	Part-time, summer positions, co-op, internship, new grad recruitment (full-time)	Dalton's Internal team focuses on accessibility and accommodations. They offer flexible work arrangements, participate in hiring programs with leading organizations and ensure a strategic focus on inclusion at the top level of the organization.
Enterprise Holdings enterprise.ca	Transportation, Automotive	Yes	Part-time, summer positions, co-op, internship, new grad recruitment (full-time)	At Enterprise, they provide employees an accessible and inclusive work environment. Being an equal opportunity employer, they are constantly thinking of new ways to continue being an employer of choice for top diverse talent. Their customers are diverse and so are their employees!
Government of Canada canada.ca	Government	N/A	Part-time, summer positions, co-op, internship, apprenticeship, new grad recruitment (full-time)	The Government of Canada is committed to ensuring the representation of persons with disabilities in the federal public service and improving their work experience. They offer initiatives such as the Employment Opportunity for Students with Disabilities and accommodation measures that remove barriers to fair assessment.
Shopify shopify.ca	Commerce	Yes	Co-op, internship, apprenticeship, new grad recruitment (full-time)	At Shopify they are intentional with their inclusion practices in all areas of the business. This helps them to attract, hire, and grow the best talent and leverage their diverse thought and perspectives to make stronger decisions, so they can make commerce better for everyone.
SurveyMonkey surveymonkey.com	Information Technology	Yes	Part-time, summer positions, co-op, internship, apprenticeship, new grad recruitment (full-time)	At SurveyMonkey, their goal is to create an environment where everyone—no matter their background—can succeed, feel a sense of belonging, and learn from one another through intentional and open conversations. This commitment begins with their hiring practices and is embedded in all parts of the business.

* To learn more about the Employment Accessibility Resource Network (EARN) and how you can leverage EARN in your diversity and inclusion strategy, please visit earn-palme.ca.

To learn more, visit AbleTo.ca

Left: This ad appeared on the inside cover of the Ottawa Business Journal Book of Lists in Spring 2019. While we couldn't create a list of companies that were engaged in accessible business practices, we decided to feature a list of companies that were working directly with the Initiative to advance accessibility for students with disabilities.

Below: This article appeared in the May 2019 issue of the Ottawa HR Magazine. We also featured articles in the same magazine in Fall 2019 and Spring 2020. These magazines are heavily accessed and read by HR professionals and SMEs businesses from the Ottawa area.

Closing the employment gap by being inclusive

Local business can find the talent they need by becoming more inclusive

A recently launched awareness campaign called #AbleTo is encouraging local employers to tackle one of their biggest challenges — recruiting talented staff — by becoming more inclusive.

According to the Ottawa Board of Trade, 61 per cent of Ottawa employers see recruitment and retention as one of the top issues facing their company.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR INCLUSION

Research from the Ontario Disability Employment Network illustrates the benefits to an organization of employing individuals with disabilities:

RETENTION RATES are 72 per cent higher among people who have a disability.

ATTENDANCE: 86 per cent of employees who have a disability have average or above-average attendance records.

CUSTOMER ATTRACTION: 78 per cent of Canadians are more likely to buy a product or service from a business that hires people with disabilities.

As it turns out, business owners are able to find a solution by considering an untapped pool of qualified candidates — students and graduates with disabilities — of which there are over 10,000 in Ottawa alone.

That's what the #AbleTo campaign is all about — closing the employment gap between students and graduates with disabilities and their non-disabled peers, helping everyone find meaningful work while strengthening local businesses.

#AbleTo comes from the David C. Onley Initiative (DCOI) for Employment and Enterprise Development, a collaboration between Algonquin College, University of Ottawa, College La Cité and led by Carleton University.

"People with disabilities bring an additional set of skills," says Tara Connolly, DCOI's assistant director for research and development.

"People with disabilities are creative problem solvers and out-of-the-box thinkers."

The #AbleTo campaign encourages employers to consider what they are able to do to help close the employment gap, such as writing inclusive job descriptions or building accessible workplaces. The campaign also asks everyone making an effort to share their #AbleTo pledge on social media and discuss what they are able to do to close the gap.

#AbleTo

make inclusion inclusive.



For DCOI, one of its early efforts involved being #AbleTo help students with disabilities connect with employers through Accessible Employer Showcase events. These events feature groups of students sitting down in small groups for roundtable discussions with individual employers, avoiding the need to compete in a traditional career fair environment. At the events, companies and organizations are also encouraged to invite their existing employees with disabilities to speak about their work experience.

"That way students can easily see themselves in the environment instead of thinking, 'What do I need to do to fit into this place?'" Connolly says.

ACCESSIBLE WORKSPACES
To learn how to make their workplaces more accessible and find untapped talent, employers are invited to register to attend Enable Ottawa 2019 on May 22, a one-day summit that will bring together organizations that are active in the development of innovative solutions to accessibility.

It will also be an opportunity for employers to share success stories of hiring people with disabilities.

"We need to make sure employers understand their own work setting," says Connolly. "Is your workplace truly accessible?"

To learn more about how your company can find untapped talent and be part of the movement, visit the #AbleTo website at AbleTo.ca.

Accessible workplaces are beneficial for all employees

Local businesses can take simple steps to build inclusive workplaces

A common misconception exists that employing a person with a disability places stress on employers who must go out of their way to accommodate their new hire. But as many Ottawa companies are discovering, tapping into this often-overlooked talent pool can lead to improved workplace culture and higher employee retention rates.

Employee accommodations can be as simple as rearranging desks, offering flexible hours or adjusting the lighting. And a growing number of businesses and organizations are realizing how seamless it can be to integrate employees with disabilities into their workforce through these low-impact, high results practices.

With the assistance and collaboration of organizations like the David C. Onley Initiative (DCOI) and United Way Ottawa's EARN

(Employment Accessibility Resource Network), local employers have access to the tools and advice they need to make their businesses more accessible.

"Accommodations are actually beneficial for all employees, not just those with disabilities," says Julie Caldwell, assistant director of the DCOI. "More inclusive workplaces allow all staff members to perform at their personal best."

FIRST STEPS

Incorporating accessibility into your business can start as early as the recruitment process, such as creating inclusive job postings that describe the work environment. For example, mention if your office is open concept – for those that might not be able to work in busy, distracting environments – or scattered with cubicles – for those with physical disabilities and mobility aids.

"Employers will say they aren't seeing people with disabilities applying for jobs – but it is important to consider that many disabilities are non-visible," says Caldwell. "Being inclusive is about taking everyone into consideration."

Some people live with neurological disabilities, or painful conditions such as fibromyalgia, which can require a certain level of accommodation. Offering flexible work hours, ergonomic chairs and desks, or different assistive software can shape a workplace that benefits all staff.

MAKING CHANGES

Once a business has hired a person with a disability, several practices can be instituted to make the office more navigable. But it starts with having an open dialogue with employees.

"It's important to remember that the needs of each person are different – there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution," asserts Caldwell.

Sean MacGinnis, co-founder and president of the



accessibility contracting company BuildAble, agrees.

"It may sound obvious, but the best person to help you become more inclusive is someone living with (a disability)," says MacGinnis.

One of the biggest mistakes MacGinnis sees when it comes to outfitting a workplace for accessibility is not consulting someone with a disability. "When you actually have an accessibility plan, have someone try it out to make sure it actually works," he says.

According to the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability Reports by Statistics Canada, the most commonly required types of workplace accommodations are flexible work arrangements, workstation modifications, and human or technical supports.

"The average cost of accommodating an employee with a visible or non-visible disability is under \$500," offers Caldwell. "That's a very small price to pay to attract and retain top talent for your business."

#ABLETO TAKE THE PLEDGE

Join the DCOI's movement and make a social media pledge about how you're #AbleTo help employees and colleagues with visible and non-visible disabilities in the workplace. Learn more at AbleTo.ca.

THE NEW ACCESSIBILITY IDENTIFIER

For businesses looking to showcase their commitment to inclusive workplaces, the DCOI has launched a new symbol that raises awareness among current and prospective employees, associates and community members.

The identifier, part of the DCOI's #AbleTo campaign, is a symbol that means "accessibility for all." If you would like to highlight your business's commitment to inclusivity, contact the DCOI to request a free identifier decal to display in your office or storefront. Email info@onleyinitiative.ca for more information.

CAPITAL/David C. Onley Initiative

Creating an inclusive campus recruitment strategy

WHEN WE THINK ABOUT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, a person in a wheelchair or someone with a white cane or hearing aids might come to mind. But, disabilities are far more prevalent than we think—they're just not as visible as those described above. One in five Canadians older than 15 have one or more disabilities, according to a 2017 Statistics Canada report.

Non-visible disabilities include mental health and memory or learning challenges such as dyslexia. They can even be related to chronic pain through such conditions as fibromyalgia, Crohn's disease or arthritis.

A shortage of talent in the Ottawa area should prompt businesses to tap

into the talent pool that includes people with disabilities. Rethinking traditional recruitment practices could ensure you're reaching what are often considered untapped pools of talent.

"One of these untapped pools of talent includes post-secondary students with disabilities," says Julie Caldwell, assistant director of program operations at the David C. Onley Initiative.

The David C. Onley Initiative for Employment and Enterprise Development, a two-year project between Carleton University, Algonquin College, University of Ottawa and La Cité Collégiale, aims to reduce the employment gap for post-secondary students and graduates with disabilities.

"These are students with undergraduate and graduate degrees, diplomas and certificates who have also had the opportunity to develop work-integrated learning experiences through co-op, apprenticeships, internships and other leadership opportunities, and who are ready to embark upon a meaningful career path," says Caldwell.

An inclusive and well-defined post-secondary recruitment strategy can contribute to a company's growth, help expand its brand, and even help its bottom line. And to simplify the process, post-secondary institutions have created employment pathways that help businesses access students and graduates and start building a more inclusive workforce.

Five top tips for creating an inclusive campus recruitment strategy

1

Be clear on your needs

Identify skills, previous experiences and academic knowledge required to be successful in the role in question. Consult your diversity team, or an expert, to ensure you're creating an inclusive work environment to support the needs of all employees.

2

Write a clear position description

Be sure the description doesn't include tasks that could exclude someone, such as indicating a need for physical demands such as lifting boxes that may not be essential for the role. This could limit your talent pool. In addition, include a description about the company and the work environment. Knowing whether the office is open-concept, or high traffic, for example, can help candidates decide if it might be a fit.

3

Discuss how best to mentor a student or graduate in the role

Identify a mentor and be prepared to talk about the student's accommodation needs at work. Ask about their learning style and if there are resources the company can provide to support their success.

4

Identify three to five post-secondary institutions

Do your research. Identify institutions that offer academic programs that address your company's needs as well as provide opportunities for work-integrated learning for students while in programs.

5

Identify employment pathways that meet your business needs

Work with campus career offices to identify which employment pathway is right for you. While co-op is most widely used, there are other options. Check out cwitcanada.ca to learn more about work-integrated learning opportunities in line with your company's needs.

For more, check out AbleTo.ca or contact Julie Caldwell at info@onleyinitiative.ca or see Twitter: @AbleToOttawa.



Deputy Minister, Public Service Accessibility, Yasmine Larocque visits the DCOI's October 2019 "Career is in Government" event.

Accessibility for all.

The DCOI has developed a new symbol to help businesses show they are committed to accessibility for all employees. Download, print and position the identifier around your workplace and include it in email signatures and on job postings to show your company's dedication to providing an inclusive environment.

Visit AbleTo.ca for more information.

twitter.com/abletoottawa

linkedin.com/company/david-c-onley-initiative/

facebook.com/OnlyInitiative/

instagram.com/abletoottawa/

ableto.ca

Inclusive hiring enriches workplaces

YVAN LE HAD completed a bachelor's degree in mathematics, finishing with honours, and he still couldn't find a job. It seemed his hearing impairment was getting in the way of his potential employment so he decided to bolster his skills by doing graduate studies in computer engineering at Carleton University.

It was a good move because as a result of connecting with the campus career office at Carleton, he discovered EARN, the United Way's Employment Accessibility Resource Network. A program that works closely with the David C. Onley Initiative (DCOI) for Employment and Enterprise Development, EARN empowers people with disabilities to fully participate in the labour market. Today, Le is happily employed as an analyst at Accenture, a company in the network.

Persons with disabilities often face barriers to employment, but with a little help connecting, the company and the future employee can both gain. As Shannon Bruce, manager of business development at EARN, says, "The experiences of persons with disabilities can add so much value to the workplace."

She notes that disability is often thought of as something someone has always had, but disabilities can be acquired later in life.

"If a top employee is in a car accident, we wouldn't get rid of them," Bruce says. "But workplaces, often through unconscious bias, are willing to risk not attracting or recruiting the next best employees because of assumptions based on disability or their own fears."

Disabilities come in many forms, from visible to non-visible, and accommodations don't come in a one-size-fits-all solution. Advancing accessibility positively impacts not just those with disabilities, but the entirety of a business's workforce.

Various accommodations – such as flexible hours or

universally-designed work environments or even telecommuting – can show all employees that a business is willing to put inclusivity and diversity at the forefront of their company culture.

"It can really show a company's team that diversity is all-inclusive," says Julie Caldwell, the DCOI's assistant director of program operations, of making accessibility part of the workplace makeup. "A company can't claim diversity and inclusion success if they're not willing to create access to the most effective tools and resources to support the success of all staff."

The DCOI's #AbleTo campaign provides employers with resources to dispel biases surrounding disability and take advantage of the talent that's out there, including Ontario's 50,000 post-secondary students – more than 10,000 in Ottawa alone – with visible and non-visible disabilities. The campaign is showing employers that they're missing out on this huge talent pool of young, highly skilled graduates.

"These students are really skilled, but something's keeping them out of the workforce," Bruce says. "People assume persons with disabilities are less educated but that's not necessarily the case."

The DCOI makes the points that skilled labour is in short supply; and socially minded customers are more likely to do business with companies that have policies of hiring people with disabilities.

The campaign notes that while diversity and inclusion are imperatives for many businesses, those efforts often end with gender and visible minorities, but employees with visible and non-visible disabilities must also be included if Ottawa employers are to thrive.

To that end, it challenges Ottawa employers to take the #AbleTo pledge, in which they share their "commitment to weave disability awareness and inclusiveness into the fabric of employment in Ottawa." ●



#AbleTo

**make your business
welcoming for everyone.**

Talk about your desired business culture.

Let your employees, patrons and visitors know they are welcome and accepted for who they are.

Turn down the sound.

Too much background noise can be distracting or overwhelming.

Go easy on the lights.

People living with vision loss may have an aversion to bright lights.

Consider multiple formats for materials.

Offer options such as PDF or copies with larger print.

Remove physical barriers.

Start by removing unnecessary boxes, furniture or other obstacles that could impede ease of mobility.

Support service animals.

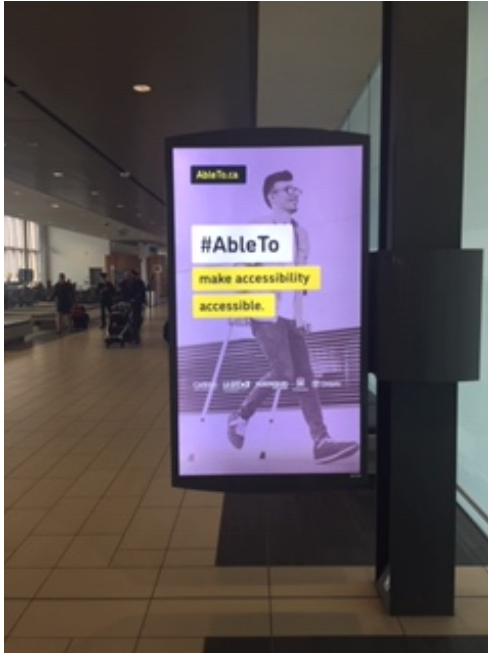
Don't touch or feed service animals without the owners' permission.

[AbleTo.ca](https://www.ableto.ca)

Left: The article below appeared in the Ottawa Capital Magazine in Spring 2020.

8.9.4 Campaign Assets Designed for Media Buy

We worked with a local media company to create a series of assets that were promoted strategically across Ottawa between May 2019 and August 2019. These assets included ads at the Ottawa Airport, Bus King ads on the local buses, radio and tv promotion and strategic placement of advertisements on 'tech screens' in high-traffic office buildings in Kanata and downtown Ottawa.



Above: Ottawa Airport Advertisements

Below: Bus King Ads (Ran May 2019 to Spring 2020)



Above: Ad featured in the Ottawa Citizen Newspaper in the Financial Post Section May 2019

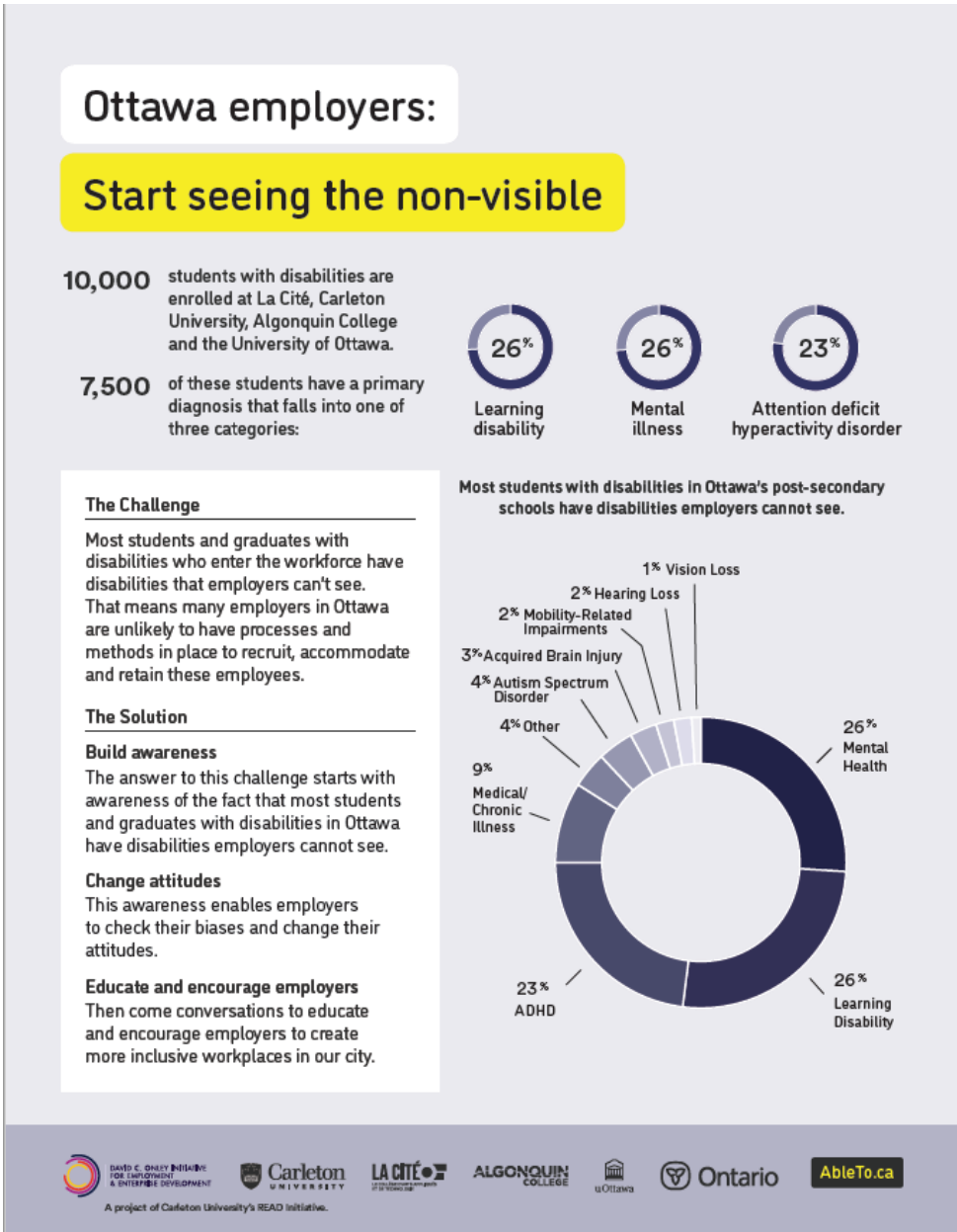
8.9.5 Campaign Assets Designed for Awareness Consumption “SWAG”

These items were designed to be distributed at events both on and off-campus. In addition, “AbleTo” gift baskets were made and distributed to employers for one-on-one interviews, public meetings, events and even used as prizes for draws. We even created a ‘wheel’ of options that was used at public events for engaging with people, starting conversations about our project and they would get a give-away based on the topic. SWAG items included items such as: pens, buttons, decals for windows/laptops, USB portable chargers, coffee mugs, pop-sockets for phones, umbrellas, sun glasses, stress balls, padfolios and t-shirts for staff and volunteers to wear at events. Some items were targeted specifically for students and others specifically for employers.



8.10 Appendix: Students Requiring Accommodation Supports from Campus Partner Disability Offices

The information graphic below reflects the number of students with disabilities who require accommodation supports from their campus disability office. This document was shared with employers that were interviewed and and/or engaged during activities in the Ottawa area, as it demonstrates not only the number of students that are registered²¹ but more importantly, it highlights that 91% of that population of students have what are considered to be non-visible disabilities.



²¹ The data used for this infographic was captured for the period of the 2018-2019 academic years from the four partner disability offices.

8.11 Appendix: Members of DCOI Advisory Committee

Institution	Partner Representatives
	<p>Campus Partner Representatives – Algonquin College</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jeff Agate, Associate Director, Student Support Services ▪ Sara Jordan, Acting Manager, Centre for Accessible Learning ▪ Kristina Johnston, Manager, Career Services
 <p>LE COLLÈGE D'ARTS APPLIQUÉS ET DE TECHNOLOGIE</p>	<p>Campus Partner Representatives – La Cité</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stéphane Côté, Directeur, Bureau des admissions et du registraire ▪ Paul Toupin, Directeur, La Cité des affaires ▪ Jean-Robert Sabourin, Manager, Employment Ontario
 <p>uOttawa</p>	<p>Campus Partner Representatives – University of Ottawa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nicole Miller, Assistant Director, Learning and Professional Development ▪ Vincent Beaulieu, (Former) Interim Manager, Academic Accommodations
 <p>Canada's Capital University</p>	<p>Campus Partner Representatives – Carleton University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Larry McCloskey, Director, Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities ▪ Bruce Hamm, Manager, Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities ▪ Courtney Regimbald, Director, Career Development & Co-operative Education ▪ Rocio Alvarez, Manager, Career Development

DCOI Project Team Based out of the READ Initiative at Carleton University

- Boris Vukovic, Director, READ Initiative
- Dean Mellway, Special Advisor, READ Initiative
- Tara Connolly, Assistant Director, Research & Development, David C. Onley Initiative
- Julie Caldwell, Assistant Director, Program Operations, David C. Onley Initiative

8.12 Appendix: DCOI Organizational Chart

