



CONVERSATION IS THE KEY

A DIALOGUE ABOUT EMPLOYING
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

IN CELEBRATION OF THE 12TH ANNUAL ACCESS AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

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SPARC BC is a charitable organization operating in BC since 1966. We work with communities and organizations on issues of accessibility, income security, community development, and social planning. We are a well known resource for evidence-based social research and provider of the Parking Permit Program for People with Disabilities. Access Awareness Day is an annual campaign to promote understanding and action around the need for a more inclusive and accessible society.

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Acknowledgements & Thanks

Thank you to our four special guest speakers of the day for sharing your stories: **Chris Knowles, Heather McCain, Lorraine McLatchie, and David Morris.**

Thank you to Access Awareness Day community partners: the **Union of British Columbia Municipalities**, and **TransLink** for your continued support.

Special thanks to our **Advisory Committee** for their generous contributions to this dialogue event:

- Community Living Society, **Elke Tilgner**
- Delta Burnaby Hotel and Conference Centre, **Daniel Ilias**
- Flight Centre, **Allison Wallace**
- Greater Vancouver Business Leadership Network, **Mark Greunheid**
- Polaris Specialist Employment, **Peter Prentice**
- Port Metro Vancouver, **Helen Jackson**
- Translink, **Peter Hill**

Introduction

Employing people with disabilities is a hot topic garnering many different opinions whenever it is raised in conversation. For some individuals, having a robust conversation on this topic with a mixed group of employers, people with disabilities, and specialized employment agencies, might be intimidating. But, for some individuals, such as the ones who attended SPARC BC's Access Awareness Day dialogue 'Conversation is the Key' on June 4th, 2009, it was an opportunity to pursue a valuable goal: enhanced understanding and collaboration between employers, persons with disabilities, and employment agencies for the benefit of all. As we recount what emerged during the dialogue, we are happy to report that we met our goal that day—we did achieve a new level of understanding and collaboration. However, to further our day's work and to make it for the benefit of all, we need help from people like you. If you are inspired, or learn something new by reading this report, please think about a way you can pass it on or build on it. Included in this report are some recommendations and ideas for next steps. Should you feel inclined to take action on these ideas, or some of your own, we encourage you to do so. SPARC BC continues to work on accessibility issues and we would be happy to hear your ideas or work with you.

Where we began

What we intended to discuss

Employing people with disabilities is a broad topic. In order to narrow it down to a workable size for an afternoon-long discussion, we decided to focus on three themes: resumes and cover letters, recruitment strategies, and co-ops as a strategy for professional bridging opportunities.

Employing people with disabilities and improving access to job opportunities touches everyone in a community, but in order to have a manageable group size and build peer relationships, we chose to target employers from one type of industry: tourism (read more about why we chose tourism on page 10).

Although our initial objective was to discuss work-related opportunities and challenges specific to the tourism industry, the discussions that evolved during the dialogue centered on themes that are related broadly to employment. These themes could be applied to any sector in their human resources management, or conversely to anyone who is looking for work.

SPARC BC hosted the dialogue event to bring people together to bust myths around employing people with disabilities, presented from the perspective of being a potential applicant or from the perspective of an employer. Busting myths from those perspectives served as the underlying theme of the day. SPARC BC recognized that each person would tell a unique story, allowing new levels of understanding to be achieved. Because we had not seen many examples of dialogues with these particular groups before, we knew the important thing was to get people talking to each other.

Who was there?

Forty-five representatives including employees with disabilities, employers, recruitment firms, and disability advocates gathered to participate in the dialogue.



What was heard?

There were many different perspectives brought forward in the Access Awareness Day dialogue. The free-flowing conversation in a dialogical process allowed people to bring in their own life experiences, share new ideas, build on each others's thoughts, and work towards shared understanding. In this section of the report, we are summarizing the central ideas that repeatedly emerged during the dialogue. The central ideas were informed by all the perspectives at the table; everyone had something to contribute and people constructively built on each others ideas.

How you can reach me

Employers having difficulties reaching out to people with disabilities heard about ways in which their application processes could be improved to be more inclusive and accessible to different types of disabilities. Telephone screening and electronic resume formats were said to be problematic for a number of reasons. It was decided that a better way would be face-to-face interactions so the applicants and employers become acquainted in a personable way. People agreed it is important to give applicants the opportunity to demonstrate their strengths in their personality and presentation. One example that was mentioned is that if someone has some gaps in their employment history, due to illness or their disability, the face-to-face approach would allow for this to be explained, unlike a paper resume where those gaps may stand out and be interpreted negatively.

Understand me by asking

People expressed that understanding anyone's abilities, experiences, and skills takes asking questions. For the interview process, we heard that employers could use more encouragement and education to feel comfortable asking questions about the abilities of the candidates, and to avoid making assumptions. It was recognized that employers often feel intimidated or afraid of breaking Human Rights legislation by asking the wrong questions. It was suggested that applicants need to be their own advocate by having knowledge of the human rights legislation and the rights regarding the application and hiring process. The applicant can play an active role in helping the interviewer to question them openly and fairly.



TALK WITH THE POTENTIAL EMPLOYEE AND FIND OUT WHAT THEIR NEEDS ARE. THEY MAY HAVE THEIR OWN EQUIPMENT OR THEY MAY ONLY NEED A SLIGHT CHANGE SUCH AS MAKING SURE PATHWAYS ARE CLEAR FROM CLUTTER. BEFORE ASSUMING THAT EMPLOYING A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY WILL BE TOO ONEROUS TAKE THE TIME TO TALK WITH THEM AND FIND OUT WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE, IF ANYTHING.

-HEATHER MC CAIN
CITIZENS OF ACCESSIBLE
NEIGHBORHOODS



“

QUESTION: “WHY DO YOU THINK IT IS IMPORTANT THAT BUSINESSES HIRE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?”

LORRAINE MCLATCHIE:
“SO I CAN DO THINGS FOR MYSELF. HAVE MY OWN APARTMENT. LIVE ON MY OWN. TAKE CARE OF MY SON.”

-LORRAINE MCLATCHIE
GROUSE MOUNTAIN RESORTS

”

At the same time, an understanding of the employers’ needs and their hiring tendencies was also expressed as something employment agencies and potential applicants could be encouraged to ask about. Employers expressed that potential applicants should demonstrate how they “fit” into the organization’s mandate and goals. In addition, timing plays a big role for stores during busy seasons. A company may not have a position available at that moment, but if people were aware of their business cycle, they could try again at a better time.

Learn from Each Other

People agreed that education was the first step to a more inclusive recruitment and retention process. We heard that the best way to improve the hiring process was to be flexible, and to educate one another at each step in the process. People suggested that application or interview styles should be readily adaptable to needs of the applicant, possibly with assistance from specialized inclusive employment services. It was also suggested that education could take place through company-wide workshops, which would facilitate discussions around integrating persons with disabilities at the workplace.

Envisioning an inclusive workplace environment may also help to outline the accommodations that can be provided to persons with disabilities.

Where can I find support?

A commonly held view was that employers would hire people with disabilities if they knew more about the funding programs, and other kinds of supports available to them. Finding ways to get the word out about funding sources and employment initiatives was regarded as important. The Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities was cited as an example. Connecting employers more to employment agencies was suggested numerous times and that more situations or events should be created to make that happen. Please refer to pages 21 and 22 in the appendices for a list of supportive resources.



My attitude plays a role

People suggested that the most beneficial attitude towards employment was to see each new hire as an opportunity; employers heard that adapting their workplace could have significant benefits for all employees. These comments emphasized the importance of the attitudes of employers in the process of hiring persons with disabilities and how their perspectives set the tone for the workplace. Employers also heard how crucial the communication of their acceptance and inclusivity can be, especially when the employee has a visible disability.

What I have to offer

During discussions about the interview process, consensus emerged about the importance of being able to effectively market one's experiences and skills to employers. Confidence and one's attitude towards oneself were considered a fundamental capacity in self-promotion, which some felt could be encouraged more in job search preparation and tools. Being confident in communicating past experiences as skills and interests was seen as an effective marketing technique for persons with disabilities. In addition, people suggested that persons with disabilities could better promote their 'intellectual property' by demonstrating the value of past activities, highlighting the value of their unique perspective gained from life experiences, and tailoring their resume and cover letter to highlight strengths in a brief and well-structured format.

Employers were also encouraged to put creative consideration into what personality traits and skills are required for a job. One example was raised about a company who had extremely high turnover in a position that mainly consisted of the task of putting cardboard boxes together. Finally they hired a man with a brain injury who was uniquely positioned with the ability and aptitude to complete these repetitive tasks. People also suggested the use of specialized employment agencies as go-to resources for employers if they are wondering if they have an opportunity for a person with a disability, whether from simple preliminary questions, to designing a job and finding the right candidate.



I LIKE TO BE ABLE TO SAY "DISABILITY? WHAT DISABILITY?" EVERY BUSINESS NEEDS A CHAMPION THAT CAN ENSURE THAT THE RIGHT PEOPLE ARE GIVEN THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITY TO SUCCEED. THE PAYOFF COMES FROM THE IMPROVED BUSINESS ACUMEN THAT DEVELOPS WHEN PEOPLE ARE PRESENTED WITH THIS CHALLENGE.

- CHRIS KNOWLES
LONDON DRUGS



Working in Partnership

The idea of internships and co-ops as a way to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities was generally received positively, although some people expressed justified reservations. People agreed that co-ops are an excellent way for persons with disabilities to demonstrate to employers that they can excel in the workplace. Several voices explained that employers are often reluctant to hire persons with disabilities because they are skeptical about the abilities of a candidate, but once they see them in action, employers can recognize persons with disabilities are hard-working, capable, and loyal employees. People expressed enthusiasm over their own experience where they saw first hand the changes in employer attitudes. It was noted that employers could become advocates of inclusive employment policies inside their own organization, and be an example for other organizations to follow.

Another benefit to co-ops or internships is that it allows the person with a disability to get to know the company, its people, and the routines and to assess whether it is a compatible arrangement for them. Short contracts with breaks in between may be ideal for someone who struggles with health issues. In addition, participants saw co-ops as a way for employers to fill vacancies and increase productivity in a more economical fashion than the formal employment process, while still providing meaningful paid work for persons with disabilities.

In contrast, co-ops can also be viewed as an expense, not an opportunity, because of the extra mentoring support and training that is required. Attitudes and education were mentioned as being conducive to convincing employers to pursue co-ops. It was noted that many employers are not aware of external funding programs for this purpose. Other drawbacks are the risk of exploitation. For example, an employer who pays low wages while pocketing program funding, or one who is overly dependent on temporary hires instead of moving valuable employees into full-time arrangements.

What are others doing?

In addition to speaking about improvements to the recruitment process, questions were raised around how to encourage more companies to employ

persons with disabilities. People noted the importance of looking for positive examples of inclusive environments, and then sharing that evidence. Some people wondered whether hiring practices would be most influenced by legislation or model businesses. One example of legislation is the United Kingdom, where the government and the country's largest public employers are mandated to hire with a diverse range of abilities. It was suggested a similar top-down trend would benefit employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in British Columbia. IBM was given as an example of a private corporation that was recognized for their continued commitment to hiring employees with disabilities and utilizing their specific skill sets.

Where do we go from here?

The Access Awareness Day dialogue 'Conversation is the Key' was a good step forward in bringing people with disabilities, employment agencies, and employers together to talk and develop new understandings. SPARC BC recognized that limited opportunities had existed for such an open and relaxed exchange between these specific groups and thus made conversation a priority in the 2009 Access Awareness Day campaign. Many participants at the dialogue expressed the need for more events like this one, or similar types of events such as a special networking/career fair that stresses conversation between employers and potential employees.

People collectively agreed that increasing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities requires both collaboration within an organization, and interrelationships among the different sectors. Participants also raised other valuable ways in which relationships between employers, employment agencies, and people with disabilities could be enriched. For example:

- Specialized employment agencies could provide more training to companies and make themselves known as a resource for questions and guidance.
- Companies that already employ people with disabilities could engage those employees to work with HR staff on inclusive recruitment, retention, and training strategies.

“

THERE MAY BE SOME INITIAL RENOVATION COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH HIRING A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY BUT IN THE LONG RUN THIS IS MONEY WELL SPENT IN THAT YOUR BUSINESS IS NOW ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL PERSONS NOT JUST THAT EMPLOYEE.

- DAVID MORRIS
MODEL COMMUNITY PROJECT

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- Business-to-business mentoring could also be established, as experienced companies help others follow their example in creating an inclusive workplace.
 - Creative partnerships could be established, such as graphic designers volunteering their services to help people with disabilities design eye-catching business cards and resumes which enhance their marketability.
 - On a policy level, establishing standards of early inclusion and accommodation will help shape children's attitudes and as a result, disability could simply be regarded as a different set of abilities.

Why Now?

Most of the discussions during the dialogue evolved into ideas that could be applied in any sector, at any time, to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities. But as some voices pointed out, with the approaching 2010 Olympics and Paralympics, the time to act is now. Imagine what kind of example the tourism industry in BC can set within the BC community, and to travelers from around the world. As tourism picks up, many opportunities will be created for co-op programs, contract, and full-time employment. All of these possibilities could finally break down barriers and set new examples of what is possible. So how could people take action now?

Perhaps the greatest barrier to overcome, for everyone, is the feeling of the employment process being overwhelming. It can seem like an insurmountable task if you are facing rejection, navigating into the unknown, trying to find the right workplace or the right candidate. However, what we discovered in 'Conversation is the Key' is that shared dialogue is the one of the most effective strategies to connect, reflect, and learn something new. Amongst the many programs, initiatives, and resources out there to help employers hire or help a person with a disability find employment, we know that talking is a valuable process and a meaningful way to take significant steps towards change.

Appendices

Dialogue Design

'Conversation is the Key' was designed by the project's advisory committee, which oversaw the format, structure, and topics of the event. The advisory committee was composed of seven members, including employers in the tourism industry, inclusive recruiters, and SPARC BC staff members.

The dialogue was set-up using the World Café Model¹, which utilizes facilitated small group sessions. Each participant engaged in three different sequential dialogues; one for each theme (resumes and cover letters; recruitment; and co-op programs). Guest speakers shared their lived experiences around hiring persons with disabilities in-between the dialogue exchanges, each highlighting their personal experiences in seeking or providing employment within the tourism industry. At the end of the day, all the participants reconvened in a large group and reported back on what they had discussed during the day.

Social Media

This year's dialogue also involved the solicitation of feedback via social networking sites. Discussion boards were set-up where community members could leave their feedback regarding the discussion topic or create their own discussions. Those who participated in these discussions were not required to be participants in the formal dialogue event.

About SPARC BC & Access Awareness Day 2009

For the past twelve years, SPARC has lead Access Awareness Day in BC through a public education campaign in partnership with the Union of British Columbia Municipalities and Translink. Additional community partners are brought on every year depending on the theme of the campaign. Access Awareness Day promotes understanding and action around the need for a more inclusive and accessible society. Each year the campaign focuses on a topic critical to the creation of an accessible society.

1. Simon Fraser University. (2009). *Techniques and Structures in Dialogue*. Retrieved from: www.sfu.ca/dialog

Why Employment and why Tourism?

After the interest generated in the 2008 Access Awareness Day campaign around enhancing customer service through accessible business practices, SPARC BC felt that employment was a complimentary area for improvement. There are several reasons why SPARC BC chose tourism.

Businesses that can offer an accessible workplace to employees can also be accessible to travelers and residents. Both outcomes are good for business and the community. Being socially inclusive is part of having a healthy and vibrant community, and economy too.

Tourism is in a unique position to demonstrate accessibility and be a leader for the BC community, and to show to visitors from around the world that accessibility makes a community livable.

There is a solid business argument for tourism because of reports that predict a future labour shortage in the sector. People with disabilities can play an important role in easing that shortage.

Finally, supply chain and seasonal work allows for an array of different options for meaningful and flexible employment. From summer positions, to winter experiences, or from working with the public, to behind the scenes, there are many types of positions available and opportunities to create.

Supporting Materials – Toolkit from the dialogue

Conversation is the key: Accessibility Dialogue

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Welcome

Welcome to the conversation is the key dialogue event. The goal of SPARC BC's 2009 dialogue is to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in the tourism industry. The three themes for our dialogue are:

- Effective cover letters and resumes
- Recruitment tips for hiring candidates who have disabilities
- Co-op programs as a professional bridging opportunity between employees and employers

The myths around employing people with disabilities are the underlying premise for all three of these themes.

At SPARC BC we truly believe that conversation is the key. A dialogue event is an opportunity for open communication in a relaxed and comfortable environment. SPARC BC is working to stimulate ongoing conversation between key groups so that understanding around key issues is exchanged and workable solutions are found.

Access Awareness Day

Access Awareness Day is an annual celebration and provincial public education campaign lead by SPARC BC and assisted by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, TransLink, and our community partners.

The message of Access Awareness Day continues to spread across British Columbia each year as more municipalities and organizations recognize the value of celebrating successful achievements, or marking out new initiatives in creating accessibility for all.

Access Awareness Day, now in its twelfth year, has been made possible because of dedicated and inspired individuals who understand the importance of social inclusion; the recognition that both the right and the opportunity to participate in all aspects of human life enables individuals and communities to celebrate their diversity and recognize their responsibilities.

Access Awareness Day is ultimately about more than just one day a year - it is a call to respond creatively and purposefully to build a society where barriers to inclusion are removed, and the independence, self-esteem, and security of all citizens is ensured.

Agenda

- Registration & Coffee
- Welcome & Introductions
- Lived Experiences
- Small Group Discussions #1
- Lunch
- Small Group Discussions #2
- Small Group Discussions #3
- Report Back
- Dialogue Weavers
- Closing Thoughts and Thank you
- Evaluations

Myths

Myths are untrue statements which are often mistaken for fact. These myths may severely limit the employment opportunities for persons with disabilities within the tourism industry.

Myths about Employing People With Disabilities

Myth #1: Employees with disabilities have higher absentee rates than employees without disabilities.

Reality: Many studies show that employees with disabilities are often more productive, dependable and loyal than their co-workers without disabilities.¹ 86% of people with disabilities rated on average or better in attendance over their colleagues without disabilities.²

Myth #2: A considerable expense is necessary to accommodate workers with disabilities.

Reality: The duty to accommodate refers to employers' obligation to take appropriate steps to eliminate barriers for employees, or prospective employees with disabilities so that they can do their jobs properly.³ Accommodations may be relatively inexpensive, as it only takes a little creative thinking with the employee to make the work environment welcoming. The Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance has initiatives to support people with disabilities in the employment field, thus there are resources to build an inclusive workplace.⁴ Persons with disabilities often don't need any kind of physical accommodations, and when accommodations are required they are often specific to the employee with a disability.

Myth #3: It's almost impossible to interview people with disabilities because it's so easy to break human rights laws.

Reality: People with disabilities should be interviewed like any other applicant. Law prohibits general inquiries about health problems. An employer can ask about the ability but only in the context of a job requirement

Myth #4: Someone will always have to help employees with disabilities do their job correctly.

Reality: Quite often, persons with disabilities may approach tasks differently as they have made certain adaptations in living with their disability. Out-of-the-box thinking that can shift a team's orientation from focusing on prescribed work processes to thinking about how things can be done differently to build a better product or provide better service. With some flexibility and understanding from the employer, persons can fulfill their work responsibilities.⁵

Myth #5: People with disabilities are inspirational, courageous, and brave for being able to overcome their disability.

Reality: Persons with disabilities are simply carrying on regular activities of living when they drive to work, go grocery shopping, pay their bills, or compete in athletic events. Many people with disabilities are independent and have made adaptations to their life. An inclusive work environment is where persons with disabilities are welcomed, supported and appreciated for their abilities just like everyone else.⁶

Myth #6: There will be a decrease in my business because my customers are reluctant to deal with my employees with disabilities.

Reality: It is all about education and awareness. When a customer sees that the person with the disability can perform the job quite adequately, their reluctance should dissipate. Having a person with a disability on staff may even help increase your business! A diverse work force that includes people with disabilities sends a message that you are accessible and inclusive and may be appealing to those looking for work.⁷ In addition, it will be a true reflection of one of the growing segments of the population in British Columbia.

Myth #7: My other employees feel awkward or uncomfortable about working with a person with a disability.

Reality: Ongoing staff training is a crucial component of the organization to maintain the level of consistency and professionalism. A component of the staff training should include disability awareness training to promote understanding and acceptance of people with disabilities. Being educated, talking about people with disabilities, or having direct contact will generate positive interactions with people with disabilities. In a survey completed by the BC Chamber of Commerce about 30% of staff in a company wanted disability awareness training.⁸

Myth #8: Hiring employees with disabilities increases employers' insurance rates.

Reality: Employers' insurance rates are not based on whether or not workers have disabilities. They are based solely on the workplace's relative hazards and the company's accident experience. Supervisors report that workers with disabilities have higher safety rankings than their peers without disabilities.⁹

Myth #9: People with disabilities need to be protected from failing.

Reality: People with disabilities have a right to participate in the full range of human experiences, including success and failure. Employers should have the same expectations and work requirements for all employees.¹⁰

Myth # 10: Workers with disabilities will find it too difficult to get comfortable in a job. It will take a huge amount of resources to train them and help them.

Reality: Like any new employee, a person with a disability needs to meet his or her colleagues, view the work location, and understand what is expected of them on the job. The key for employers is to be aware of and open minded to the possibility that a new employee with a disability may have specific questions or concerns that come up during orientation.¹¹ Likewise, the employee with a disability may want to express their specific needs related to the orientation.

Benefits of Discussing these Myths Are to:

1. Identify the truth.
2. Look at employability with an open mind.
3. Ensure that persons with disabilities will consider opportunities in the tourism industry.
4. Encourage employers to consider persons with disabilities as equally qualified candidates.
5. Increase the willingness of employers to hire persons with disabilities.

Cover Letters should always accompany the resumé to compliment and summarize the resumé's listing of experiences and aspirations.

Resumés are meant to get you an interview for the job by describing your suitability as a candidate.

Cover Letter and Resume Tips

Tips for Applicants

DO ensure the documents are:

- Engaging: focus on your unique experiences and strengths.
- Concise: a brief summary of your relevant experiences, qualifications, and skills.
- Highlight your experiences: if you have not had a lot of previous work experience, focus on other experiences, such as hobbies, volunteering, courses, and extracurricular activities.

-
- Focus on the skills you've obtained from your diverse experiences – such as interpersonal skills (ie. being dedicated and reliable) and practical skills (ie. problem-solving abilities).
 - Tailored specifically to the employer and the industry.
 - Focus mostly on what you can do for your employer, not what they can do for you.
 - Have someone proofread your application to ensure it accurately and positively highlights your qualifications.

DON'T construct these documents to be:

- Modest: show-off your strengths, unique skills, and accomplishments.
- Flashy: do not use fancy fonts, creative designs, or obtrusive graphics. Stick to a consistent and simple format.
- Dishonest: while you are not legally obligated to tell employers about your disability on your application, you should be truthful about any of your skills or strengths.

Tips for Employers

DO ensure that applications are:

- Accessible
 - o If the applicant cannot hand-in their application via the standard method, offer alternatives (verbal, video, or electronic submissions).
 - o Formatted in large print and Braille and available in accessible electronic formats.

-
- Weighed for their demonstration of a diverse and unique range of ability and experiences.

Do not read resumés with a preconceived notion of formative experiences.

Don't expect that received applications will:

- Discuss the person's disability – Applicants are not legally required to disclose their disability unless it directly relevant to the tasks attached to the job. It is also illegal to ask for this information on an application form.

Recruitment is the comprehensive process of filling vacancies within an organization. It involves writing a suitable job description, advertising, searching, interviewing, testing, reference checks, and selection.

Recruitment Tips

DO:

- Send postings to organizations that provide services to persons with disabilities.
- Post job ads in large print and in adaptive formats.
- Post job ads on websites with accessible designs.
- Utilize human resources firms with inclusive candidate criteria.
- Attend job fairs geared to persons with disabilities.
- Partner with educational programs that cater to students with diverse abilities.
- Ensure your interview environment is accessible to everyone.
- Applicant tests should also be accessible to everyone. Tests should be available in both print and electronic format.



DON'T:

- Use questions which limit the candidate's opportunity to talk about their qualifying experiences. Persons with disabilities often have a diverse range of formative experiences.
- Ask inappropriate questions at the interview. Brush up on the Human Rights Code and its guidelines for relevant interview questions regarding health and ability.
- Assume what persons can do. Ask them instead.

Co-ops are an opportunity for employers, tourism educators, and students to partner together in a shared professional and educational endeavour. Co-ops will usually compliment prior courses in intensive technical skill in particular service areas (such as bartending, food preparation, marketing or accounting)

Co-ops: A Professional Bridging Opportunity

PROS:

- These opportunities meet many of the criteria for successful employment training programs for persons with disabilities, including:
 - o Onsite job development.
 - o A focus on participants' skills, and employment goals.
 - o Effective coordination and strong working relationship between employers, support staff, and program participants.
 - o Welcoming work environments with well-developed training programs and social supports.

PROS:

- Co-op opportunities are also a mutually beneficial partnership.

They:

- o Increase the skill level of students for post-graduation employment.
- o Provide evidence of the professional potential of that employee.
- o Educate employers on the necessary alterations which will increase the accessibility of the workplace for all abilities.

CONS:

- Co-op opportunities may fall short of their anticipated outcomes when employers:
 - o Spend too much time on assessment and training.
 - o Isolate the employee away from their fellow employees.
 - o Limit their further training and advancement opportunities arbitrarily.
- Other problems may arise when:
 - o Communication deteriorates between the employer, educator, and student.
 - o The placement has a limited amount of hours that are offered to students.
 - o Inadequate support is provided for employers by educators or support workers.

The Consumer Benefits of Hiring Persons with Disabilities

Resources

Toolkit

Myths

1. Ministry of Community and Social Services. 2005. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.
2. BC Government, Workable solutions. Component two: Determining Job Design and Job Requirements. <https://www.workablesolutionsbc.ca>
3. Canadian Human Rights Commission. Barrier-Free Employers Practical Guide for Employment Accommodation for People with Disabilities. (Hosted by DAWN Ontario website). http://dawn.thot.net/employment_accomodation.html#duty
4. Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance. 2007. Minister's Council on Employment for Persons with Disabilities 2006-2007 Annual Report.
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The Consumer Benefits of Hiring People with Disabilities Diagram

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NewSask Community Futures Development Corporation.

Community Links

Career Fairs

- Assistive Technology BC:
<http://www.at-bc.ca/newsandevents.html>
- I AM Cares Society:
<http://www.iamcares.ca/jsEAS.htm>

Inclusive Recruitment/Career Services

- Triumph Vocational Services:
<http://www.triumphvocational.com/index.htm>
- I AM Cares Society: <http://www.iamcares.ca/jsEAS.htm>
- Polaris (specializing in persons with developmental disabilities):
<http://www.polaris-employment.bc.ca/homepage.html>
- THEO BC: <http://www.theobc.org/index.htm>
- Jobs West Employment Services (Developmental Disabilities Association): <http://www.jobswestdda.ca/>

Tourism Education Programs

- Tourism and Hospitality Education Network - Link BC:
 - o <http://linkbc.ca/main/>
 - o <http://www.studytourisminbc.com/index.html>

Documents

- Tapping the Talents of Persons with Disabilities: A Guide for Employers:
<http://www.mysens.ca/resourcesforemployers/Tapping%20the%20Talents%20of%20People%20with%20Disabilites.pdf>
- Guide to Hiring Persons with Disabilities for Saskatchewan Employers:
http://www.sarcsarcan.ca/links/Employer_Guide.pdf
- Removing Barriers to Work: Flexible Employment Options for Persons with Disabilities in B.C.: http://www.policyalternatives.ca/documents/BC_Office_Pubs/bc_2008/bc_removing_barriers_summary.pdf

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- 10 by 10 Challenge– Minister’s Council on the Employment for Persons with Disabilities (To download a toolkit):
<http://www.10by10challenge.gov.bc.ca/10by10Tools.htm>
 - 2010 Legacies Now: Measuring Up:
http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/measuring_up/

Online Forums

- Employers’ Forum on Disability: <http://www.efd.org.uk/>
- ORW Opportunities through Work and Rehabilitation Network
<http://www.orw.ca/findex.html>
- Greater Vancouver Leadership Business Network
<http://www.gvbln.ca/>
- Canadian Association for Supported Employment
<http://supportedemployment.ca/en/forum/>
- SPARC BC - BC CAN(BC Community Accessibility Network)
<http://sparc.bc.ca/join-the-bc-can-network>

Funding Opportunities

- Vancouver Foundation – Disability Supports for Employment Fund:
<http://www.vancouverfoundation.bc.ca/grants/specialprograms.htm>
- 2010 Measuring Up Fund for Accessibility and Inclusion
http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/measuring_up/measuringup@2010LegaciesNow.com
- Human Resources and Social Development Canada – Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities
http://www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/funding_programs/opportunities_fund/index.shtml

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- Assistive Technology BC <http://www.at-bc.ca//>

About SPARC BC

SPARC BC's mission is to work with communities in building a just and healthy society for all. As a non-partisan non-profit operating in BC since 1966, SPARC BC is an independent voice and expert on social policy and planning in the areas of accessibility, community development, and income security. Through public education and consulting services, we have helped hundreds of communities, organizations, and municipalities create lasting positive change.

If you are looking for: high-quality, community-based research; expert advice on accessibility planning; tailored engagement strategies, or want to know more about our parking permit program for people with disabilities, visit our website www.sparc.bc.ca and contact us today.

We would be happy to discuss any projects, partnerships, or ideas you may have for creating positive change in your community or organization.

Contact Information

If you are interested in taking further action and continuing this conversation, please contact
SPARC BC for more information and resources.

mail: 4445 Norfolk Street, Burnaby, BC V5G 0A7 Canada
tel: 604-718-7733 fax: 604-736-8697
web: www.sparc.bc.ca email: info@sparc.bc.ca

You can also follow us on twitter! www.twitter.com/sparc_bc

Join the conversation on our Facebook group!
Accessibility Awareness British Columbia

Acknowledgments & Thanks

Thank you to everyone who helped organize this event. We would like to take the time to acknowledge some of our very important partners and sponsors.

Thank you to our community partners the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, and TransLink for your continued support.

Special thanks to our Advisory Committee for their generous contributions to this dialogue event:

- Community Living Society, Elke Tilgner
- Delta Burnaby Hotel and Conference Centre, Daniel Ilias
- Flight Centre, Allison Wallace
- Greater Vancouver Business Leadership Network,
Mark Greunheid
- Polaris Specialist Employment, Peter Prentice
- Port Metro Vancouver, Helen Jackson
- Translink, Peter Hill

Special thanks to Precision Graphics for their continued generosity and support with the publication of this toolkit.