

Inclusive Design for Employment Access (IDEA)

Symposium Programme

Version: September 22, 2025

Date: Monday, October 6th and Tuesday, October 7th, 2025

Location: Schwartz Reisman Innovation Campus at the University of Toronto and virtually online

Registration Link: <https://www.vraie-idea.ca/idea-symposium>

Day 1

Masters of Ceremonies

- **Alec Farquhar**, IDEA Strategic Advisor
- **Sinead McCarthy**, Vice President, Development, Programs and Human Resources, Youth Employment Services; IDEA Hub Co-lead for Transitions to Work and Career Development

Time	Session
9:00 – 9:15 AM	Registration and Continental Breakfast
9:15 – 9:30 AM	Welcoming Remarks Masters of Ceremony Krista Carr , IDEA Advisory Committee Chair; Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion Canada Emile Tompa , IDEA Executive Director; Senior Scientist, Institute for Work & Health Rebecca Gewurtz , IDEA Director; Associate Professor, McMaster University
9:30 – 9:45 AM	Morning Remarks

Time	Session
	Melissa Fishman , Educator and Community Collaborator, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations
9:45 – 10:30 AM	Opening Keynote Topic: Inclusive employment practices – Supporting employers on their inclusion journey Susanne Bruyere , Academic Director, Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability, Cornell University
10:30 – 11:30 AM	Panel Session Implementation of inclusive employment practices as tools to support employer journeys Moderator: Emile Tompa , Executive Director, IDEA Andrew Dixon , Research Associate, IDEA Peter Field , Diversity and Inclusion Consultant Matt Freeman , Assistant Clinical Professor, McMaster University Rebecca Gewurtz , Director, IDEA Andy Livingston , Chief Executive Officer, Dexterity Consulting Mahadeo Sukhai , Chief Operating Officer, IDEA-STEM
11:30 – 11:45 AM	Break
11:45 – 12:30 PM	Lightning Talks IDEA applied work – Tools and resources from IDEA's Incubator Hubs
12:30 – 1:30 PM	Lunch
1:30 – 2:00 PM	Afternoon Keynote Address

Time	Session
	Alec Farquhar , IDEA Strategic Advisor
2:00 – 3:00 PM	<p>Panel Session Improving the Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement of Employees with Disabilities in the Public Service of Canada</p> <p>Moderator: Alfred MacLeod, Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Service Accessibility, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Government of Canada Nadine Charron, Executive Director, Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) Program, Shared Services Canada André Baril, Director General, Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Projects, Employment and Social Development Canada Angela Wellman, Chief of Staff/Senior Advisor, Office of Public Service Accessibility, Treasury Board Secretariat Ashvene Sureshkumar, Research Associate, IDEA</p>
3:00 – 3:05 PM	Masters of Ceremony explain breakout room setup
3:05 – 3:20 PM	Break
3:20 – 3:30 PM	Transition to Breakout Rooms
3:30 – 4:30 PM	IDEA Incubator Hub Workshops (In-person only)
4:30 – 4:40 PM	Transition to Main Room
4:40 – 5:00 PM	Closing Keynote

Time	Session
	Mayor Mike Bradley , City of Sarnia, Ontario
5:00 – 5:15 PM	Day 1 Closing Reflections/Announcements Masters of Ceremony Emile Tompa , IDEA Executive Director; Senior Scientist, Institute for Work & Health Rebecca Gewurtz , IDEA Director; Associate Professor, McMaster University
5:20 – 6:30 PM	Reception

Day 2

Masters of Ceremony

- **Wendy Cukier**, Director, Diversity Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University; IDEA Advisory Committee Member
- **Peter Field**, Diversity and Inclusion Consultant

Time	Session
9:00 – 9:15 AM	Registration and Continental Breakfast
9:15 – 9:35 AM	Welcoming Remarks Masters of Ceremony Karen Harlos , Professor, Department of Business, University of Winnipeg
9:35 – 10:05 AM	Opening Keynote Address Bilan Arte , National Representative, Human Rights Department, Canadian Labour Congress; IDEA Advisory Committee Member
10:05 – 11:00 AM	Panel Session Transforming Workplace Systems to Build Sustainable Capacity for Inclusion of Diverse Youth Moderator: Rafael Gomez ; Director, CIRHR, University of Toronto; Initiative Co-lead Andrew Dixon , Research Associate, IDEA Brian Foster , National Program Manager, Policy & Resource Development, Ready Willing and Able (RWA), Inclusion Canada Jonathan Lai , Executive Director, Autism Alliance of Canada

Time	Session
	<p>Sinead McCarthy, Vice President, Youth Employment Services (YES)</p> <p>Emile Tompa, Executive Director, IDEA; Senior Scientist, Institute for Work & Health</p>
11:00 – 11:15 AM	Break
11:15 AM – 1:00 PM	<p>Partner Lightning Talks</p> <p><u>Diversity Institute</u> Wendy Cukier, Director, Diversity Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University</p> <p><u>March of Dimes Canada</u> Charlotte Buttle, Research and Evaluation Associate, March of Dimes Canada Hedgerow Thompson, Lived-experience Project Committee Member</p> <p><u>LiveWorkPlay</u> Rebecca Coxon, Team Lead for Employment Ontario and the Interim Volunteer Manager, LiveWorkPlay Anna Nelson, Director of Employment Supports, LiveWorkPlay</p> <p><u>Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital</u> Laura Bowman, Project Manager, Research and Evaluation, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital Carolyn McDougall, Manager, Employment Pathways and Ontario/Canada coordinator-Project SEARCH, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital</p> <p><u>Youth Employment Services (YES)</u></p>

Time	Session
	<p>Gabriella Evans, Regional Manager, WorkAbility, Youth Employment Services (YES)</p> <p><u>Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN)</u></p> <p>Bridgette Sterling, Disability Employment Inclusion Specialist, ODEN</p> <p><u>CASE/MentorAbility</u></p> <p>Joanna Goode, Executive Director, Canadian Association for Supported Employment</p> <p>Mary Beshai, Director - MentorAbility Canada, Canadian Association for Supported Employment</p>
1:00 – 2:00 PM	Lunch
2:00 – 3:00 PM	<p>Table Talks</p> <p>Brainstorming the Next Generation of Activities</p>
3:00 – 3:15 PM	Break
3:15 – 3:45 PM	<p>Closing Keynote</p> <p>Agnes McLachlan, Manager - Global Well-being, TELUS</p>
3:45 – 4:00 PM	<p>Symposium Closing Reflections and Remarks</p> <p>Masters of Ceremony</p> <p>Emile Tompa, IDEA Executive Director; Senior Scientist, Institute for Work & Health</p> <p>Rebecca Gewurtz, IDEA Director; Associate Professor, McMaster University</p>
4:00– 5:00 PM	Networking and Speed Mentorship

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