

# Designing Disability Inclusive Career Fairs

A Guide for Career Fair Organizers, Job Seekers, Employers, and Other Collaborators

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# Agenda:

## 1) Disability Inclusive Career Fairs

- a) Why career fairs?
- b) Guiding principles (**thinking**)
- c) Practices (**acting**)
  - Know & prepare your participants
  - Event structure
  - Logistic, coordination, & communication
  - Other resources

## 2) Other IDEA Hub 3 Projects

- a) ADHD resource for managers; mentorship guide
- b) Episodic disability and transitions to work

## 3) Discussion



# Part 1:

## Disability Inclusive Career Fairs

# Why Career Fairs?

- An important gateway to employment
- Often excluding job seekers with disabilities & related experiences:
  - E.g., how to request accommodation
  - E.g., formats that disadvantage some neurodivergent job seekers, similar to issues with interviews that do not test job-relevant aptitude
- Limited guidance available on disability inclusion at career fairs, mostly for general events



# Research Background

Based on 30 interviews, advisory discussions, literature searches (academic & “grey”)

- Emphasis on supporting practitioners
- Respecting resource-constrained contexts
  - Many practice suggestions are low to no cost
  - Highlighting opportunities for **collaboration**
- Relevance for other events/activities beyond career fairs

## Inside the Guide:

### 8 Principles for Designing a Disability Inclusive Career Fair

1. Nothing about us  
without us

2. Focus on  
meaningful,  
competitive  
employment

3. Respect the  
complexity of the  
individual

4. Strength-based  
view

5. First be  
proactive, next be  
flexible

6. Collaborate

7. Context matters

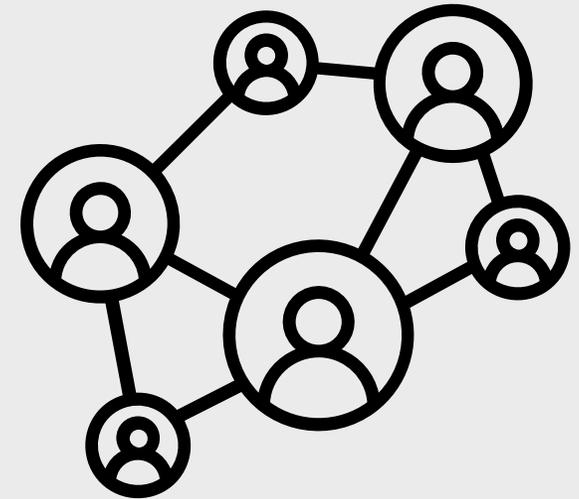
8. Continuous  
improvement  
(PDCA)

## Inside the Guide: Practices

**Know** your participants and **Prepare** them for the event

Participant list:

- Job seekers
- Employers
- Additional Collaborators



# Practices: Job Seekers

## Know your job seekers

- Organizer assumptions about interests, a common concern for job seekers
- Array of interests (urban/rural, trades/office work/other, **lateral** growth opportunities, upward career mobility)
- Emphasizing **meaningful job opportunities** in **inclusive workplaces** (colleagues, managers, organizations)
- Career stage differences, first-generation post-secondary students
- Transportation access needs

## Job Seeker Preparation Highlight

- Workshops on disclosure & accommodation at work
- Job readiness (resumes, interviews)
- Employer interaction practice
- Demystifying the hiring process

# Practices: Employers

- Invite employers who match job seeker interests
- **Preparation:** education on models of disability (social, medical, affirmative, others), inclusive communication practices, accommodation conversations, accessible presentations
- Encourage highlighting DEIA initiatives (requested)
- Potential pre-career fair webinars, lunch-and-learns
  - Share resources with employers, this can go beyond career fair

## Employer Preparation Highlight

- Formalized “employer contract”
- Share expectations clearly
- Explain acceptable and unacceptable behavior

# Practices: Bring in Collaborators — *Why Work Alone?*

Employment Service  
Providers

Job Coaches

Service Provider  
Networks

Community  
Organizations led by  
Persons with  
Disabilities

Professional  
Associations and  
Regulatory Bodies

Chambers of  
Commerce

Post-Secondary:  
Career Services,  
Accessibility Services,  
Alumni Services

Mentors

Guest Speakers &  
Role Models

Applied Research  
Organizations

# Practices: Event Structure

- Nothing about us without us in practice
- **Some options to consider:** disability-focused or not disability-focused, one-on-one or group formats, industry/occupation/profession-specific or general
- Highlighting other career supports & opportunities can reduce pressure
- Integrate mentorship and peer networking opportunities
- Experiment, Plan-Do-Check-Act
  - Consider a post career fair survey

## Reverse Career Fair Highlight

- Job seekers host booths
- Employers circulate
- For some job seekers, this can reduce social pressure
- Showcases strengths proactively

# Practices: Logistic, Coordination, & Communication

- Early notice (at least one month, ideally earlier)
- Accessible registration process & response to registration
- Make the accommodation process clear
  - What to include in correspondence
  - How to address accommodation requests
  - Sample statement & more in the guide
- Local transportation
- Access:
  - Communication, documentation, physical location, scheduling breaks
- Do a trial run if possible

## Roles Highlight

- Event Contact
- Accessibility and Accommodation Coordinator
- Wayfinders
- Tech Support
  - Assistive tech
  - General tech
- Networking Support (from "cold" to "warm" connections)

# Resources in the guide

- Detailed by **participant** and **sub-topic**
- Link to the career fair guide:
  - <https://www.vraie-idea.ca/resources/report/designing-disability-inclusive-career-fairs-guide-career-fair-organizers-job>

## Designing Disability Inclusive Career Fairs

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# Part 2:

## Other IDEA Hub 3 Projects

# ADHD and Career Success: Barriers and Facilitators

## A Guide for Managers



<https://vraie-idea.ca/resources/microlearning/adhd-and-career-success-barriers-and-facilitators>

# Disability Inclusive Mentorship

1. Guidance on how to design disability inclusive mentorship programs
2. Potential future mentorship program

# Are you a recent grad with an episodic disability? Are you new to the world of work?



**Institute  
for Work &  
Health**

Research Excellence  
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Healthy Workers

**Get involved! Help our research team find better ways to support your career success.**

You can take part in our study if you:

- live with an episodic disability
- are 18-35 years old
- have been in school within the last five years
- are now working or looking for work
- speak fluent English and
- live in Canada

An episodic disability is a chronic health condition with symptoms that can flare up and be potentially disabling for periods of time.

For more info, scan the QR code or click on the link below:

<https://www.iwh.on.ca/projects/inclusive-design-for-employment-access-idea-transition-to-work-and-career-development>



Thank you!

