

# Canada's Supported Employment Sector: Understanding the Current State of Research and Data Availability

Environmental Scan

Prepared for the Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE)  
by Challenge Factory Inc.

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## About Challenge Factory

Challenge Factory is a research and advisory services firm that helps clients achieve productivity gains and positive social impact.

We apply best practices from the international career development field to build human-centric workplaces where people are valued as equity, not as assets that depreciate over time. Our clients don't just compete in today's challenging labour markets. They lead.

As a certified B Corporation, we believe a better Future of Work can be shaped through evidence-based, innovative solutions that meet the needs of all interest holders—across organizations, industries, communities, and economies. Every step we take to identify and develop talent, no matter how hidden, delivers measurable results.

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## Notable acronyms

- SE – Supported Employment
- CD – Career Development
- CDP – Career Development Professional
- EDII – Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigeneity
- ESDC – Employment and Social Development Canada
- P/T – Province/Territory, Provincial/Territorial

# Executive Summary

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This environmental scan, conducted by Challenge Factory in collaboration with the Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE), explores the current state of research and availability of data about Canada's supported employment sector. The scan assesses publicly accessible data sources, government resources, and sector-specific literature and websites to identify the scope and scale of existing research, gaps in knowledge, and overall visibility of the supported employment sector.

## Key Findings

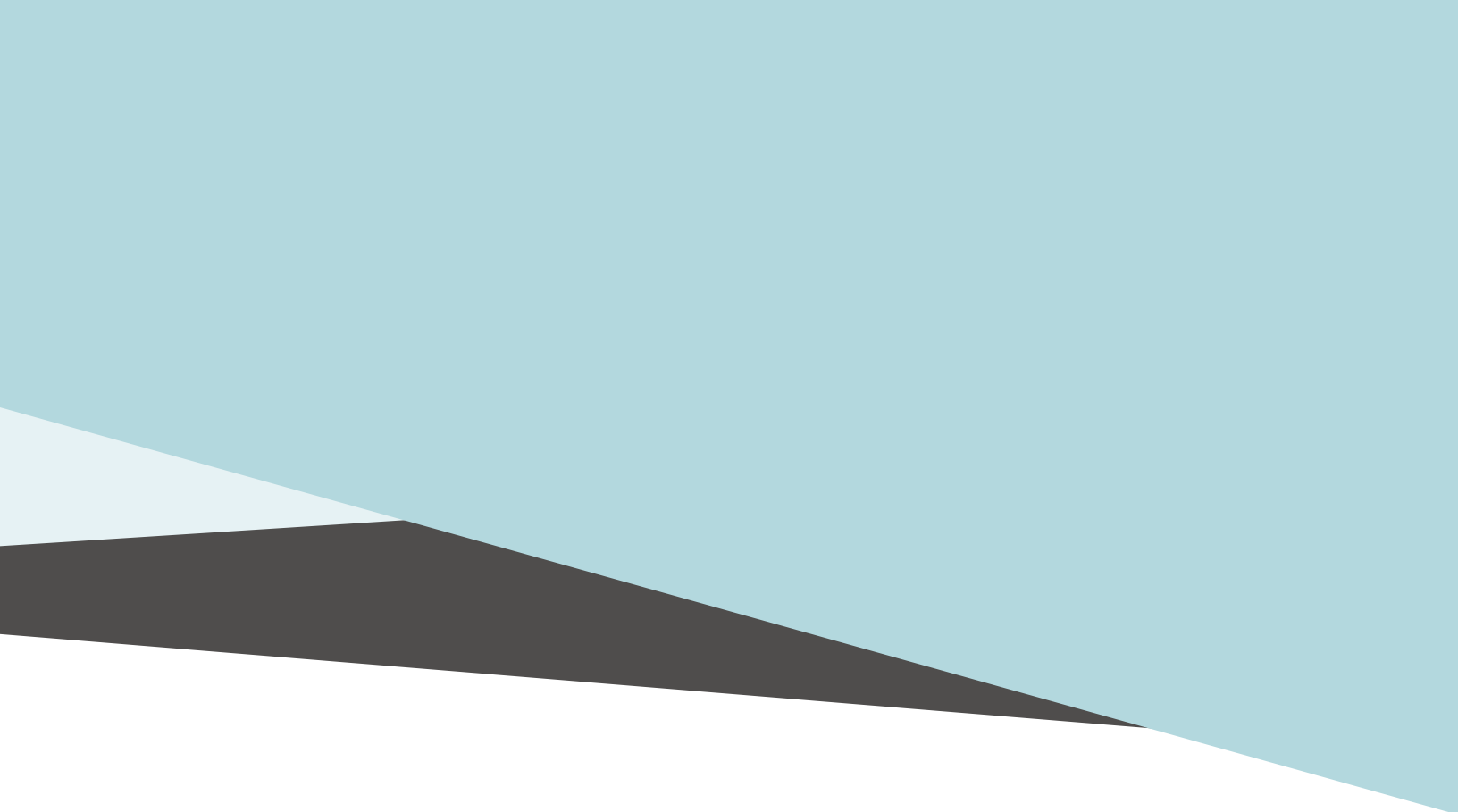
**Critical Role of Supported Employment:** Supported employment is essential for enhancing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and shaping Canada's work, education, and labour markets. Supported employment services are delivered in all of Canada's provinces and territories. They are part of broader career development and disability support ecosystems.

**Data Gaps and Inconsistencies:** Research specific to the supported employment sector, particularly regarding the professionals who deliver services, is scarce. Data is inconsistently available and often hidden within broader employment services, career development, and disability support ecosystems.

**Insights from Previous Mapping Research:** Findings from Challenge Factory's career development sector mapping project and its "Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent" report highlight valuable information about supported employment programs and the responsible ministries across provinces and territories. However, the exact scale of the supported employment sector within the broader career development landscape is difficult to determine from the report's data alone.

**Government Resources and Reporting:** Targeted supports for persons with disabilities is a priority funding area for the Labour Market Transfer Agreements between the Government of Canada and provinces and territories. This offers a meaningful research tool for understanding the supported employment sector.

**Sector Resources and Research:** Provincial and territorial networks of supported employment sector members are identifiable and important for sector representation, but the individual professionals delivering services are largely invisible within existing data sources.



**Academic Research Focus:** Scholarship predominantly centres persons with mental illness using the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model. Other models and disability groups (including persons with non-apparent disabilities) are much less prominent. The scholarship demonstrates the need for specialized supported employment skillsets, but leaves gaps in understanding of professional roles, service delivery specifics, and specific training needs.

**Future Research Potential:** The findings of this environmental scan offer pathways for future research areas and targeted data collection to improve sector visibility, inform policy development, and foster inclusive employment practices across Canada.

## Challenges Identified

**Scarcity of Sector-Specific Research:** Research explicitly addressing the supported employment sector and its professionals is limited, leaving critical knowledge gaps about their roles and impact.

**Limited Sector Visibility:** Supported employment professionals and their activities are often embedded within general employment services data, making them difficult to distinguish or analyze. Despite the availability of some data and an ecosystem of provincial and territorial networks, the sector lacks comprehensive visibility and representation in both research and public awareness.

**Limitations in Existing Data:** Challenges in disaggregating supported employment data from broader datasets, particularly within the career development and disability support ecosystems, hinder comprehensive analysis.

**Academic Gaps:** Existing academic studies primarily focus on a narrow segment of the population (e.g., individuals with mental illness) and fail to address broader disability categories and service delivery intricacies. The dominance of the IPS model may hinder a full understanding of other supported employment models.

**Need for Tailored Research Approaches:** Effective sector mapping requires customized research methodologies that address the unique characteristics and data gaps within the supported employment landscape.

# Introduction: Establishing the Scope of the Environmental Scan

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## What We Did

Challenge Factory, in partnership with the Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE), conducted a two-part environmental scan about Canada's supported employment sector:

1. A review of existing research and data about the supported employment sector in Canada.
2. An assessment of the sector's "data availability" using methodology from Challenge Factory's previous career development sector mapping project.

Existing and publicly accessible research, information, and other data about the supported employment sector was scanned, including its members, broader ecosystem, professional practices, and related topics. The first two sections of this report present the findings from Challenge Factory's previous career development sector mapping project. The next three sections present the environmental scan findings from government sources, sector and association sources, and scholarship sources. Each of these sections includes key takeaways, what we found, and what we didn't find. The concluding section provides examples of pathways for future research using the environmental scan's findings.

The research undertaken was not a sector mapping project, and it is not intended to be taken as a comprehensive map of the supported employment sector. No data collection with research participants was conducted, such as interviews, surveys, or focus groups. See Appendix A for the full project methodology, including data limitations, criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of data, and ethical considerations. See Appendix B for additional discussion of out-of-scope research activities and areas for future research.

## Why We Did It

Supported employment is a successful, accepted, and flexible model for assisting individuals experiencing disability to obtain meaningful and fairly compensated work.<sup>1</sup> A partnership between jobseeker, support person, and employer, supported employment takes a person-centred, individualized approach. Jobseekers receive support tailored to their specific skills and career goals. Employers are supported with advice and resources to help meet their unique labour needs.

The importance of supported employment in Canada is clear. The sector is integral to Canada's broader career development landscape and critical to shaping work, education, and labour markets across the country. The number of Canadians living with a disability is increasing, with 27 percent of Canadians aged 15 years or older living with one or more disabilities in 2022, up from 22 percent in 2017.<sup>2</sup> Younger age groups have seen the largest increase in disability rate, mental health-related disabilities are also becoming more prevalent, and the most prevalent disability types among working-age adults are related to pain, mental health, and flexibility.<sup>3</sup> All of these trends indicate that the importance of supported employment will only grow in the future.

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Association for Supported Employment, "About Supported Employment: What is Supported Employment?", <https://www.supportedemployment.ca/about/about-supported-employment/>, accessed November 19, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, "The disability rate in Canada increased in 2022," *Government of Canada*, April 3, 2024, <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/o1/en/plus/5980-disability-rate-canada-increased-2022>, accessed October 15, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Benoît-Paul Hébert et al., "A demographic, employment and income profile of persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over in Canada, 2022," *Statistics Canada*, May 28, 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2024001-eng.htm>, accessed October 15, 2024.



The supported employment sector's overall goals within Canada are the following:

- Promote inclusive employment and lifelong career development by enabling individuals with disabilities to access competitive, integrated jobs that align with their interests, skills, and goals.
- Build individuals' confidence and capacity to sustain long-term employment through tailored supports, training, and workplace accommodations.
- Bridge gaps between jobseekers and employers by acting as a connector—providing employers with guidance on inclusive hiring practices while helping jobseekers prepare for and thrive in workplace environments.
- Advance equity and accessibility by advocating for systemic change to reduce barriers, ensuring equitable access to employment and increasing awareness of the value of inclusive workplaces.
- Support the full economic participation of persons with disabilities, recognizing their contributions as valuable members of the workforce.
- Work with government bodies, community organizations, employers, and education providers to strengthen networks of support and opportunities.

To meet these goals, there is a need to better understand who works in supported employment and where they work so that frontline service delivery providers, sector leaders, policymakers, and other interest holders can deepen the impact of supported employment policy, services, and programs for Canadians facing barriers to participation. The supported employment sector has its own unique challenges, needs, and opportunities. It is a diverse sector, and cultivating engagement with its members for the purposes of robust research can be complicated. The inclusion and intersectionality of the sector and the people it serves (BIPOC-D) is not yet understood as well as it should be, and this is a priority area for CASE.

The purpose of the environmental scan is limited to reviewing and assessing what data is available within the existing research about the supported employment sector. This limited scope aims to:

- Provide a foundational understanding of the current state of research within the supported employment sector.
- Identify gaps in existing literature and knowledge.
- Assess the sector's visibility and representation in available data sources (e.g., Census of Population, Government of Canada Job Bank, 211.ca, the "Employment Insurance Monitoring and Assessment" reports, the "Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent: Mapping Canada's Career Development Sector" report, etc.).
- Lay the groundwork for more comprehensive studies of the supported employment sector in the future.

## Expected Impact

This project is designed to provide a clearer understanding of Canada's supported employment sector, with the following anticipated impacts:

1. **Enhance Sector Visibility and Self-Understanding:** Contribute to the sector's ability to articulate its value, fostering a stronger collective identity among supported employment professionals and organizations. This includes identifying types of supported employment organizations and situating them within Challenge Factory's Career Development Sector Scoping Model.

2. **Identify Key Interest Holders:** Assist in pinpointing potential partners, collaborators, and experts, including the important role of provincial and territorial networks, that are critical to building a more cohesive and effective ecosystem.
3. **Prepare for Emerging Challenges:** Position the sector to proactively respond to evolving employment landscape challenges, ensuring it remains adaptable and impactful.
4. **Provide Guidance for Future Research:** Deliver insights to CASE about the questions that need answering to fully map the supported employment sector. This includes starting points for analysis, such as the dominant IPS model.

By deepening our understanding of who provides supported employment services to Canadians, this research will help ensure no one is left behind as we work towards more inclusive and accessible education, employment, and labour markets in Canada.

# 1.0. Data Availability Assessment

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## Key Takeaways

- The assessment evaluates the availability of supported employment sector data within the data sources used in Challenge Factory’s previous career development sector mapping project.
- The assessment shows where data sources and methods used to map Canada’s career development sector would be useful for mapping the supported employment sector, while also highlighting areas that would require tailored research approaches.
- The overall availability of data on Canada’s supported employment sector is uneven and often insufficient for comprehensive analysis. While certain data sources, such as FOIA requests, may provide valuable insights, the sector requires targeted, consistent, and inclusive data collection efforts to address current gaps and support evidence-based policy and practice development.

## What We Found

In 2021-2023, Challenge Factory conducted a first-of-its-kind research project, funded by CERIC, to map Canada’s career development sector. The project’s final report is titled, “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent: Mapping Canada’s Career Development Sector.”<sup>4</sup> It presents an evidence base that identifies the size, scope, and composition of the sector’s membership, including a national portrait and profiles of the career development ecosystems in each of Canada’s 13 provinces and territories. The members of the supported employment sector are identified in broad strokes within the “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report (see Section 2.0. of this environmental scan), and any division between these two sectors is likely more artificial than practical.

The data availability assessment conducted as part of the current environmental scan set out to answer the following research question: **How available is data about Canada’s supported employment sector?**

To answer this question, we assessed the availability of data about the supported employment sector within the same set of data sources that was used to map Canada’s career development sector. Table 1 presents the findings of this assessment, with a legend to understand the data availability categories used. Overall, the availability of data about Canada’s supported employment sector is uneven and often insufficient for comprehensive analysis. While certain data sources, such as FOIA requests, may provide valuable insights, the sector requires targeted, consistent, and inclusive data collection efforts to address current gaps and support evidence-based policy and practice development.

This assessment can also be used as an exercise by CASE to test where there are gaps in existing data, knowledge, and understanding about the supported employment sector. While exploring Table 1, consider the following questions:

1. What surprises you within the assessment findings?
2. Where might there be information or a perspective that is different from how it is reflected in Table 1?
3. Where there is a difference, how do you know? Is it a gut feeling, a known missing data source, a missing part of the sector ecosystem, or something else?

<sup>4</sup> Taryn Blanchard and Lisa Taylor, “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent: Mapping Canada’s Career Development Sector,” *Challenge Factory*, 2024, [www.challengefactory.ca/hiddensector](http://www.challengefactory.ca/hiddensector).

## Legend for Table 1. Data Availability Categories

Verification of Data Availability
Expected (but not verified)
Verified
Not applicable
Anticipated Amount of Quality Data
Minimal
Moderate
Comprehensive

**Table 1. Availability of supported employment sector data within “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” data sources**

Data Source	Availability of SE sector data	Description	Viability of data source in future research methodology
“Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” – Environmental Scan  <i>See Section 4.0. for more information.</i>	Verified – Minimal	Within the environmental scan conducted for the previous mapping project, there are references to serving designated and/or underrepresented individuals. Existing research and reporting focus more heavily on the clients served than the service providers. There are few uses of the term “supported employment.”	Not applicable
<b>Top-down data sources</b>			
Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM)	Not applicable – Minimal	In most P/Ts, the main supported employment program is funded through a Ministry or Department of Community Services. As such, requesting data from the FLMM may not be an appropriate data source for research about the SE sector.	The relevance of this research method for the purposes of SE research is likely low.
P/T Ministry of Labour Representatives	Verified – Access, quality, and quantity vary by P/T	The research for the “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report demonstrated that targeted outreach to individual representatives of P/T ministries can be conducted (requesting information about the CD sector). The probability that the same applies to requesting data relevant to the SE sector is high.	The success of this research method relies on the project team having the correct connections and access to representatives of relevant P/T ministries.

P/T Freedom of Information Act Requests	Verified – Access, quality, and quantity vary by P/T	The research for the “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report demonstrated that the data available about career services varies by P/T. However, it also provided proof of concept that submitting 13 FOIA requests (one in each P/T) is a viable data collection method with sufficient resources. The probability that the same applies for requesting data relevant to the SE sector is high.	Data availability varies by province and territory. While P/Ts are supposed to respond to all FOIA requests within certain timeframes (e.g., 30 days), they can be extended. The fees may also be significant if the amount of work required by the FOIA office to fulfill the request is high. However, findings about timeframes and fees would provide valuable research findings about the maturity of P/T data systems. For example, the response to an FOIA request submitted in Ontario produced a robust, usable data file for a single application fee of \$5.00. In British Columbia, the same request would have resulted in a partial record (fulfilling the full data request would have interfered with ministry operations) and an estimated cost of \$210.00 for time spent extracting the partial data and producing a record (in addition to an initial application fee of \$10.00).
Job Bank – Employment Centres Database  <i>See Section 3.0. for more information.</i>	Verified – Minimal to Moderate	While all the employment centres listed in the database likely serve or can serve persons with disabilities, there is no filter function for identifying service providers that specialize in it. The raw data can be sorted and analyzed manually based on organization name (e.g., Abilities to Work, Canadian Hearing Services), but ESDC does not collect information at sign-up about providers’ clients.	Internal team resource constraints during research will determine whether this data analysis is feasible. The Job Bank Data Team’s resources would determine how quickly an up-to-date dataset can be provided.
<b>Bottom-up data sources</b>			
National and P/T Sector Associations  <i>See Section 4.0. for more information.</i>	Expected – Moderate to Comprehensive	Like the CD sector, SE sector associations are expected to have information about their members. (Some CD associations have conducted research about the sector, and the SE sector is encompassed but often not spotlighted or treated as distinct in a way that would support SE-focused research.)	There is a hypothesis that securing the participation of SE sector associations and members for research is more difficult than in the broader CD sector. One way to engage and increase participation is to foster a sense of ownership in the research by associations. For example, inviting them to join a project advisory committee was an effective engagement method for the “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” research project. Asking them for letters of support when submitting funding applications also sets a foundation for engagement.
• “The State of the Sector’s EDII” Survey	Expected – Moderate to Comprehensive	Like the CD sector, SE sector associations exist that could send out an online survey to their members that is designed to collect data about them.	See above.

Career Service Providers – Targeted Outreach (to employment centres, post-secondary career centres, and community-based organizations)	Expected – Varies by provider	As in the CD sector, targeted outreach can be conducted to SE service providers.	Resource constraints and capacity to participate will determine how effective this data collection is.
Publicly Available Websites	Verified – Quality and quantity vary by website	Serving designated and/or underrepresented individuals, including persons with disabilities, is a priority for public institutions at all levels of government. As such, the likelihood that there is public reporting about SE services provided (and potentially the service providers) is higher than the general CD sector.	Public reporting may focus more heavily on the clients served than the service providers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Census of Population (Statistics Canada)</li> </ul> <p><i>See Section 3.0. for more information.</i></p>	Verified – Minimal	Compared to the broader CD sector, there is less Census data that can be disaggregated about the number of professionals working within the SE sector. While CD professionals have specific NOC codes (41320 and 41321), SE professionals do not. Their job titles are captured within NOC 41320 and 41321, as well as others (e.g., 42203).	Within the Census, it is not possible to fully disaggregate roles specific to the SE sector from roles within the broader CD sector or other disability support service providers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LinkedIn Sales Navigator</li> </ul> <p><i>See Appendix B for more information.</i></p>	Expected – Quality of data is unknown	LinkedIn Sales Navigator is a subscription-based service that provides advanced search filters for identifying and segmenting accounts/profiles. It can be used as a research tool to search for SE professionals by job title, industry, skills, and location.	The quality of the data findings will depend on how effective the LinkedIn search filters are at identifying SE professionals by job title, industry, skills, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government Employee Directories</li> </ul>	Verified – Quality and quantity vary by P/T	The “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report identifies CD professionals from publicly accessible government employee directories.	Not all P/Ts have a public employee directory, and there is often no way to know how up-to-date they are. The research for the “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report may not have searched all job titles relevant to the SE sector.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>P/T Services and Program Information</li> </ul> <p><i>See Section 2.0. for more information.</i></p>	Verified – Quality and quantity vary by P/T	Where possible, the “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report identifies the main P/T ministries responsible for funding or providing employment services to persons with disabilities in each province and territory (see Table 2).	The names of P/T ministries are subject to frequent change as government administrations shift organizational priorities, mandates, and structures. The “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report’s references to ministries may differ from their current name.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post-Secondary Institution Websites</li> </ul>	Verified – Quality and quantity vary by institution	Where possible, the “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report identifies the number of staff providing career services on campuses; some or all of them also serve students with disabilities.	The research for “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” may not have identified all relevant job titles or campus departments/units that provide SE services to students (e.g., Accessibility Services).

Source: Challenge Factory.

## 2.0. Supported Employment in the “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” Report

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### Key Takeaways

- Findings from Challenge Factory’s career development sector mapping project and its “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report highlight valuable information about supported employment programs and the responsible ministries across provinces and territories. However, the exact scale of the supported employment sector is difficult to determine from the report’s data alone.
- Within the report’s national portrait, the Vocational Rehabilitation Association of Canada (VRA Canada) and College of Vocational Rehabilitation Professionals (CVRP) are the most visible elements of the supported employment sector, representing individual professionals.
- Every province and territory has a supported employment ecosystem. Supported employment delivery models vary significantly across provinces and territories, ranging from direct government service delivery to community-based organizations and networks.
- There is a mix of general employment services and specialized programs for persons with disabilities. Funding often comes through federal-provincial/territorial Workforce Development Agreements.

### What We Found

As part of this environmental scan, all information explicitly related to the supported employment sector that exists within the “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report was identified.<sup>5</sup> This includes any relevant information from the report’s national portrait of the career development sector and 13 provincial and territorial ecosystem profiles.

Supported employment sector data that is missing from the “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report has been intentionally reflected in this section in order to reveal gaps about the supported employment sector that emerge within broader career development research efforts. For example, only programs, organizations, funding bodies, and workforce development agreements that were identified in the “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report are presented. Spotlighting potential omissions in the data demonstrates:

- The hiddenness of the supported employment sector
- The need for additional research
- CASE’s foresight in identifying the need for research

Inaccuracies in this section may arise due to out-of-date data within the “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report, which was published at the beginning of 2024. For example, the names of provincial or territorial ministries and departments (see Table 2) are subject to frequent change as government administrations shift organizational priorities, mandates, and structures. Furthermore, while the “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report presents overall membership numbers about the career development sector, and supported employment members are captured within those numbers, they often cannot be disaggregated from them. See Section 4.0. Sector and Association Sources for additional findings about supported employment organizations and networks.

<sup>5</sup> Blanchard and Taylor, “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent,” [www.challengefactory.ca/hiddensector](http://www.challengefactory.ca/hiddensector).



Within the report’s national level findings, the field of vocational rehabilitation represents the most visible segment of the supported employment sector. As explained in “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent”:

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Association of Canada (VRA Canada)** represents and advocates for vocational rehabilitation professionals across the country who help people overcome vocational challenges and barriers, supporting them to reach their career and personal goals. VRA Canada also promotes vocational assessment, vocational evaluation, work adjustment, and job development and placement services as a defined discipline within human resources, disability management, employment services, and vocational rehabilitation. In June 2023, VRA Canada had 877 members.

**The College of Vocational Rehabilitation Professionals (CVRP)** is a non-profit organization and the regulating body for vocational rehabilitation professionals in Canada. The CVRP was founded by VRA Canada; both organizations are careful to maintain their respective roles, independence, and impartiality. The CVRP’s public registry lists all registered VR professionals. In June 2023, the CVRP had 856 registered professionals.<sup>6</sup>

Table 2 presents a summary of some of the main supported employment programs in each provincial and territorial ecosystem, the ministry or department responsible for them, and any relevant disaggregated data (as identified in the “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report). These programs serve an inclusive range of client populations, including those with physical, developmental, and non-apparent disabilities. As discussed above, data accuracy, completeness, and consistency vary.

**Table 2. “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report findings about the supported employment sector, by province and territory**

Province/ Territory	Main Supported Employment Program	Responsible P/T Ministry or Department	Relevant Disaggregated Data
Alberta	Disability Related Employment Supports (DRES)	Ministry of Seniors, Community, and Social Services	DRES applicants and clients engage with Career and Employment Consultants at Alberta Supports Centres online or at one of the 51 locations across the province.
British Columbia	WorkBC (also serves general clients)  <i>No specific program name reported</i>  Mental Health and Substance Use Pre-Employment, Supported Education, and Supported Employment programs	Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction  Community Living BC (CLBC)  Ministry of Health	A total of 25,291 clients with disabilities were served through the three program areas in 2021-2022.

<sup>6</sup> Blanchard and Taylor, “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent,” pp. 77.



Manitoba	Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities (EAPD)	Department of Economic Development, Investment, and Trade	Supported employment services for clients with an intellectual, psychiatric, or learning disability are provided by Vocational Counsellors (government staff). For clients with physical disabilities, services are provided through three agencies: Vision Loss Rehabilitation Manitoba, Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba, and Manitoba Possible.
New Brunswick	AvenueNB	Ministry of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour	AvenueNB is a non-profit organization created to oversee the contract management of its member agencies, coordinate professional development, promote communication and outreach, develop intersectional partnerships, and monitor programs and services for evaluation and accountability. In October 2023, it had 22 member agencies.
Newfoundland and Labrador	Supported Employment for Persons with Disabilities (including the Supported Employment Newfoundland and Labrador network)	Department of Immigration, Population Growth, and Skills	There are 21 provincially funded organizations that specialize in serving people with disabilities, with an estimated 21 management roles and 33 frontline practitioner roles (Table 4.5.5).
Northwest Territories	ECE Service Centres (also serve general clients)	Department of Health and Social Services	Of the seven partner organizations listed by the Department of Health and Social Services that serve people with disabilities, at least one (InclusionNWT) provides supported employment services. InclusionNWT is reported to have two management roles and two frontline practitioners (Table 4.6.7).
Nova Scotia	Disability Support Program (DSP), including Employment Support Services (ESS) and Adult Service Centres	Department of Community Services	The Disability Support Program is reported to have 11 management roles and 47 frontline practitioner roles (Table 4.7.8). Nova Scotia was the only P/T to report EDII indicators from publicly funded third-party organizations (NSEAS agreement holders) that deliver career services. Within those indicators, 69 CDPs and administrative staff self-report living with a disability.
Nunavut	<i>No specific program reported</i>	Department of Family Services, Career Development Division	<i>No specific disaggregated data</i>
Ontario	Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)	Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services	In July 2023, 91 organizations delivered services at 199 locations across Ontario, with a calculated estimate of 199-597 management roles and 796-1,990 frontline practitioners (Table 4.9.8).
Prince Edward Island	AccessAbility Supports	Department of Social Development and Seniors	The Accessibility Supports program is reported to have one management role and two frontline practitioner roles.

Quebec	<i>No specific program reported</i>	<i>Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale</i>	<i>Regroupement des organismes spécialisés pour l'emploi des personnes handicapées (ROSEPH)</i> is a career development association in Quebec that represents employment organizations that support persons with disabilities. In December 2023, it had 25 members.
Saskatchewan	Employability Assistance for Persons with Disabilities (EAPD)	Ministry of Immigration and Career Training	The EAPD program is run through SaskJobs Career Services.
Yukon	<i>No specific program reported</i>	Department of Economic Development	Inclusion Yukon and Opportunities Yukon are two career service providers that provide targeted supports to persons with disabilities. They are reported to have two management roles (one per organization) and six frontline practitioners (three per organization) (Table 4.13.10).

Source: Challenge Factory.

## What We Didn't Find

- A fulsome understanding of the supported employment sector at the national level. This is partly due to project constraints in the 2021-2023 “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” mapping project.
- Consistent data about the supported employment sector, including networks, across all provinces and territories that can be disaggregated from the broader career development sector. See Section 4.0. Sector and Association Sources for more information about supported employment networks.

## 3.0. Government Sources

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### Key Takeaways

- Analyzing Canada's Labour Market Transfer Agreements and related reporting can provide valuable insight on public programs, services, and funding that directly support employment for persons with disabilities, making the mapping of sector members, interest holders, and clients more feasible.
- Workforce Development Agreements (WDAs) prioritize funding for individuals facing barriers, including persons with disabilities, which is crucial for identifying supported employment programs.
- Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs), though traditionally for EI-eligible individuals, have expanded to include persons with disabilities, increasing the visibility of funding for this group.
- Reports like the Employment Insurance Monitoring and Assessment Report provide useful data for tracking supported employment efforts and outcomes, highlighting transparency in services and funding across provinces and territories.
- The Government of Canada Job Bank links to external resources that offer one reliable entry point into the supported employment sector's ecosystem of programs, service providers, partners, and resources. 211.ca contains a considerable amount of data about the supported employment sector's ecosystem.
- While the Census of Population contains data about the number of professionals working within the supported employment sector, it cannot be disaggregated from the broader career development sector or other disability support service provider ecosystems. There is no specific National Occupational Classification (NOC) unit group for supported employment professionals.

### What We Found

The Government of Canada has formal legislation and strategies directly related to supporting persons with disabilities to participate fully in their communities and labour markets. This contrasts with the broader career development sector, which is not a universal or formal part of government language and approaches to employment supports.

Key policy documents include:

1. Employment Strategy for Canadians with Disabilities (2024)
2. Disability Inclusion Action Plan (2022)
3. Accessible Canada Act (2019)
4. Disability Inclusion Action Plan (2019)
5. Employment Equity Act (1995, 2021)

Key actors include:

1. Employment and Social Development Canada
2. Minister of Diversity, Inclusion, and Persons with Disabilities

### 3. Canadian Business Disability Inclusion Network (2023)

### 4. Disability Inclusion Business Council (2022)

This environmental scan includes limited data about how persons with disabilities learn about and access the employment supports and services that are available to them. However, two access points are identified and discussed in the rest of this section: Job Bank and 211.ca. Three other free-to-use access points are Benefits Finder, Benefits Wayfinder, and the Canadian Disability Resources Society's disability resources directory.<sup>7</sup> Benefits Wayfinder and the Canadian Disability Resource Society's disability resource directory are online searchable databases, and Benefits Finder is a questionnaire tool which generates a customized list of benefits that the user may be eligible for through Employment Insurance, including programs under the umbrella of supported employment.

## Labour Market Transfer Agreements

Removing barriers to employment and full community participation for persons with disabilities and other underrepresented groups is a government priority and recognized as a key component of building a truly inclusive and accessible Canada. As a result, public funding mechanisms and outcomes for the supported employment sector are generally transparent, as seen in reports like the annual Employment Insurance Monitoring and Assessment Report. While there are variations in provincial and territorial reporting, services and funding for persons with disabilities are consistently prioritized, making this aspect of the supported employment sector somewhat more visible than the broader career development sector. However, this does not mean access to and quality of service provision is guaranteed or similarly prioritized.

**Labour Market Transfers Agreements** are the Government of Canada's largest investment in careers, employment, and skills training, providing funding to provinces and territories through two types of bilateral agreements:

1. **Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDA)** help provinces and territories fund programs and services for Employment Insurance (EI) eligible individuals who recently lost a job, including current and former EI claimants as well as individuals who have made minimum EI premium contributions in at least five of the last ten years. They provide programming that assists individuals to prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment. Eligibility requirements for regular benefits are determined based on the regional economic unemployment rate, to a maximum of 45 weeks. The LMDAs also support the provision of Employment Assistance Services (EAS) and Employment Benefits and Support Measures (EBSM) for all Canadians.<sup>8</sup>
2. **Workforce Development Agreements (WDA)** complement LMDAs by helping provinces and territories fund programs and services—outside EI eligibility requirements—for individuals facing barriers to participating in the labour market, such as people who are unemployed, underemployed, or living with disability, as well as members of underrepresented groups, including Indigenous peoples, youth, older workers, and newcomers. They help participants acquire new skills and gain work experience through a variety of measures, including skills training programs and wage subsidies.<sup>9</sup>

While WDAs provide the bulk of the public funding for supported employment programs and services, eligibility for funding through LMDAs was recently expanded to include persons living with disability provided they

<sup>7</sup> Government of Canada, "Benefits Finder," <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/finder.html>, accessed October 15, 2024; Prosper Canada, "Benefits Wayfinder," <https://benefitswayfinder.org>, accessed December 3, 2024; Canadian Disability Resources Society, "Disability Resources Directory," <https://www.disabilityresources.ca/categories>, accessed December 3, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, "About the Labour Market Development Agreements Program," *Government of Canada*, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/training-agreements/lmda.html>, accessed September 20, 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, "About the Workforce Development Agreements Program," *Government of Canada*, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/training-agreements/workforce-development-agreements.html>, accessed September 20, 2024.

meet other requirements. According to the Employment Insurance Monitoring and Assessment Report 2022-23, LMDA participants included 128,000 persons with disabilities (a 48,000 increase year-over-year).<sup>10</sup>

WDAs require each province and territory to submit an annual report to ESDC that includes financial reporting on the expected and actual program and service costs for all WDA-funded programs and services, including costs for employment and training supports for persons with disabilities. There is also a minimum allocation requirement for funding for persons with disabilities. Additional research would be required to fully understand the use of public funds for supported employment by Canada's provinces and territories.

## Employment Strategy for Canadians with Disabilities

Canada's Employment Strategy for Canadians with Disabilities is designed to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, ensuring they can fully participate in the workforce.<sup>11</sup> The strategy focuses on removing barriers to employment, enhancing workplace accessibility, and promoting inclusive hiring practices. Key components include providing support to individuals in finding and maintaining jobs, offering financial assistance to employers for accommodations, and encouraging partnerships between businesses and organizations to foster inclusive work environments.

The Employment Strategy identifies three key groups:

1. **Individuals with disabilities**, who sometimes need support to succeed in the job market. ESDC lists 22 programs that support this group.
2. **Employers**, who need help to hire and retain persons with disabilities and to create welcoming, inclusive, and accessible workplaces. ESDC lists 12 programs that support this group.
3. **Enablers**, the individuals and organizations across the country working to improve disability inclusion in employment, who need support too. ESDC lists 10 programs that support this group.

"Enablers" are core members of the supported employment sector. Employers would be a member of a broader Sector Scoping Model designed to capture everyone who plays a role in supported employment and how they work together (see Figure 1). Individuals with disabilities are clients and learners, and a key element of what constitutes a sector.

Of the 10 programs listed by ESDC that support "enablers," three programs provided lists of the organizations that have received funding:

1. Opportunities Fund (OF): 89 organizations<sup>12</sup>
2. Sectoral Workforce Solutions Program (SWSP): 10 organizations<sup>13</sup>
3. Skills for Success Program: 9 organizations<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Canada Employment Insurance Commission, "Employment Insurance Monitoring and Assessment Report 2022-23," *His Majesty the King in Right of Canada*, 2024, pp. 186.

<sup>11</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, "Employment Strategy for Canadians with Disabilities," *Government of Canada*, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability-inclusion-action-plan/employment-strategy.html>, accessed September 20, 2024.

<sup>12</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, "Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities," *Government of Canada*, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/opportunity-fund-disability.html>, accessed September 20, 2024; Employment and Social Development Canada, "Backgrounder – List of organizations receiving or will receive funding under the 2022 Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities call for proposals, as announced," *Government of Canada*, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2024/07/backgrounder-list-of-organizations-receiving-or-will-receive-funding-under-the-2022-opportunities-fund-for-persons-with-disabilities-call-for-prop.html>, accessed September 20, 2024.

<sup>13</sup> Canada Employment Insurance Commission, "Employment Insurance Report," pp. 270.

<sup>14</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, "Projects funded through the Skills for Success Program," *Government of Canada*, <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/jobs/training/initiatives/skills-success/projects.html>, accessed October 7, 2024.

# Government of Canada Job Bank

The Government of Canada Job Bank is a website and mobile app that connects jobseekers with employers and helps employers find new hires. It has a job board, career planning tools, and labour market information. ESDC delivers Job Bank on behalf of the Canada Employment Insurance Commission, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments.<sup>15</sup>

Job Bank has several sections relevant to supported employment, including links to members of the sector:

- A specific job search page for persons with a disability<sup>16</sup>
  - » Support for People with a Handicap Exploring the Road to Employment (SPHERE)
  - » National Centre on Physical Activity and Disability
  - » Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work
- An employer resource page for hiring persons with disabilities<sup>17</sup>
  - » Hire for Talent: Inclusive workplaces
  - » Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work: Disability Confidence (AIM playbook)
  - » Canadian Association for Supported Employment: Inclusive workplace
  - » Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act: Attitudinal barriers at work
  - » Search 211.ca for disability employment service providers
  - » Find lists of disability employment partners (Opportunities Fund recipients)
  - » Find benefits and programs
  - » Learn what financial incentives and disability employment programs are available in a specific province or territory (see Table 3)

Table 3 presents the entry point, identified by Job Bank, for employers to access supported employment resources in each province and territory. The five smallest provinces and territories link to non-profit organizations, while the eight larger provinces and territories link to government websites. Quebec’s entry point is targeted more for jobseekers than employers.

**Table 3. Supported employment entry points identified by Job Bank, by province and territory**

Province/Territory	Entry point	Type of resource
Alberta	Alis – “Working With Employers to Recruit and Retain People With Disabilities and Disorders”	Government initiative
British Columbia	WorkBC – “Create an Inclusive Workplace, Hire People with Disabilities”	Government initiative

<sup>15</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, “Job Bank: About Us,” *Government of Canada*, <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/aboutus>, accessed September 26, 2024.

<sup>16</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, “Job Bank: Find a job in Canada as a person with a disability,” *Government of Canada*, <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/personnes-handicapees;sessionid=12421BAC37D72DCB6E76BE9232616FA2.jobsearch76>, accessed October 11, 2024.

<sup>17</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, “Job Bank: Hire persons with disabilities,” *Government of Canada*, <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/hiring/persons-with-disabilities>, accessed October 11, 2024.



Manitoba	Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources – “Hiring someone with a disability is good business”	Government initiative
New Brunswick	Premier’s Council on Disabilities – “Employers”	Government body
Newfoundland and Labrador	InclusionNL – “Employer Support Services”	A corporate program of Empower, The Disability Resource Centre
Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission – “Working With Abilities – Resources for Employers”	Government agency
Ontario	Ontario.ca – “Hire people with disabilities”	Government landing page
Prince Edward Island	ResourceAbilities – “Employers”	Non-profit organization
Quebec	Quebec.ca – “Emploi” (for jobseekers, not employers)	Government landing page
Saskatchewan	“Employability Assistance for Persons with Disabilities”	Government program
Northwest Territories	Inclusion NWT	Non-profit organization
Nunavut	Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society– “Resources”	Non-profit organization
Yukon	Opportunities Yukon – “Partner with us”	Non-profit organization

Source: Government of Canada Job Bank.<sup>18</sup>

Job Bank also has a searchable database of employment centre locations across Canada. As of October 2024, this database had 838 entries.<sup>19</sup> It includes government-run centres, non-profits, private for-profits, school boards, colleges, and First Nations. One organization may have several locations and therefore several entries in the database. It is not an exhaustive list of all the employment centre locations in Canada. Representatives of employment centres can request to have their centre added to the database by completing an online form.

As explained in Table 1, while all the employment centres listed in the database likely serve or can serve persons with disabilities, there is no search or filter function for identifying service providers that specialize in it. The raw data can be sorted and analyzed manually based on organization name (e.g., Abilities to Work, Canadian Hearing Services), but ESDC does not collect information at sign-up about providers’ clients.

## 211.ca

According to its website, “211 is Canada’s primary source of information for government and community-based, non-clinical health, and social services. The free and confidential service can be accessed 24 hours a day, in more than 150 languages, by phone, chat, text, and web.”<sup>20</sup> Each province and territory now has its own 211 database.<sup>21</sup> Quebec’s 211 services are further separated by administrative region. Before the pandemic, 211 was available in Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan, and most of Quebec. As part of its COVID-19 response, the Government of Canada provided funding to United Way Centraide Canada

<sup>18</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, “Job Bank: Hire persons with disabilities,” *Government of Canada*, <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/hiring/persons-with-disabilities>, accessed September 26, 2024.

<sup>19</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, “Job Bank: Find an Employment Centre,” *Government of Canada*, <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/findajob/employment-centres>, accessed October 8, 2024.

<sup>20</sup> 211, “About 211,” *United Way Centraide Canada*, <https://211.ca/about-211/index.html>, accessed September 26, 2024.

<sup>21</sup> 211, “Find Help With 211: Service Areas,” *United Way Centraide Canada*, <https://211.ca/find-help-211/index.html>, accessed September 26, 2024.

to increase the capacity and expand access to 211 services in Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and the Yukon.<sup>22</sup>

The landing page of each P/T 211 website has a number of topic filters, including at least one related to employment or training supports and one related to disability supports. Only New Brunswick 211 does not list a specific disability supports topic. Other overlapping topics include addiction supports and mental health supports, community programs, income or financial assistance supports, and healthcare.

The disability supports may be called:

- Accessibility
- Audience-Specific: Health and Physical Disabilities
- Disabilities
- Disability Supports
- People with Disabilities

The P/T 211 websites provide a significant amount of data about Canada's supported employment sector (such as names and locations of organizations, and potentially client needs). They also show the extent to which supported employment is integrated with broader disability, social services, and community support ecosystems. However, the public-facing data can be difficult to navigate because each P/T 211 website is organized differently, and the search filters can be cumbersome. Alberta, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and certain administrative regions in Quebec offer "211 Data," which are data dashboards about 211 contacts, caller demographics, needs identified, and unmet needs identified.

There are no specific publicly available guidelines for accessing and interpreting data from 211 across Canada's provinces and territories. According to FindHelp, the charitable organization behind 211, there is a shared focus on ensuring standardized data quality and taxonomy across regions.<sup>23</sup> The 211 network in Canada collaborates on data standards and policies to maintain consistency in the information available through its platform. It uses a centralized API and data-sharing mechanisms to aggregate and share data nationally, while also recognizing and addressing regional differences in services and needs. These efforts are coordinated by leadership bodies like the 211 Canada Leadership Table and supported by regional partners. While this information from FindHelp's website requires validating and further investigation for usability through direct outreach to FindHelp, it suggests a commitment to data for equity collaboration.

## Census of Population

The Census of Population, administered by Statistics Canada, is conducted every five years. It includes reporting on the Canadian population by National Occupational Classification (NOC), a systematic classification structure that seeks to categorize the entire range of occupational activities in Canada. The narrowest occupational category is called the occupation unit group.

Two NOC unit groups are central to the career development sector:

- NOC 41320 – Educational counsellors
- NOC 41321 – Career development practitioners and career counsellors (except education)

<sup>22</sup> 211, "211 Service Goes Nationwide with Funding From The Government of Canada," <https://211.ca/news/211-service-goes-nationwide-funding-government-canada/index.html>, accessed November 21, 2024.

<sup>23</sup> FindHelp, "20 Years of 211 in Canada – 211 Spotlight," <https://www.findhelp.ca/innovation/211-canada/>, accessed November 21, 2024.



Unlike the broader career development sector, there are no NOC unit groups specific to the supported employment sector. Instead, supported employment job roles are captured within NOC 41320, NOC 41321, and other NOC unit groups. Sometimes, this occurs through specific job titles. Other times, job titles are shared between the career development and supported employment sectors, but their client groups served differ. For example, a career development practitioner working for an organization that specializes in serving persons with disabilities will only serve the one client group, whereas a career development practitioner working for a generalist career service centre will serve persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities.

As such, while the Census does have data about the number of professionals working within the supported employment sector, it often cannot be disaggregated from the broader career development sector or other disability support service provider ecosystems. This finding also applies to labour market information (LMI) available through Job Bank. For example, the job title “Job coach for persons with disabilities” was searched, but the LMI provided is “applicable to all Instructors of persons with disabilities (NOC 42203).”<sup>24</sup> The job title “Certified return-to-work coordinator – disability management” was searched, but the LMI provided is “applicable to all Social and community service workers (NOC 42201).”<sup>25</sup> Deeper LMI analysis of available and missing data relevant to the supported employment sector is required.

Table 4 identifies NOC unit groups that include job titles specific to professionals that provide supported employment or other types of support to persons with disabilities. This approach has been used to show how distributed the entire support ecosystem for persons with disabilities is. Just as supported employment is part of the broader career development sector, it is also part of the broader disability support ecosystem.

**Table 4. Supported employment sector job titles within National Occupational Classification (NOC) unit groups**

NOC unit group	Supported employment sector job titles
NOC 41320 – Educational counsellors	<i>SE-related activities are possible within all job titles.</i>
NOC 41321 – Career development practitioners and career counsellors (except education)	<i>SE-related activities are possible within all job titles, including the following specific SE job titles:</i>  Vocational rehabilitation consultant Vocational rehabilitation counsellor Vocational rehabilitation professional Vocational rehabilitation specialist Workforce adjustment officer Workforce development officer
NOC 10011 – Human resources managers	Disability management program manager
NOC 11200 – Human resources professionals	Certified disability management professional Disability case manager - human resources Disability management coordinator Disability management practitioner Disability management professional Disability management specialist
NOC 12104 – Employment insurance and revenue officers	<i>No specific job titles, but SE-related activities are possible.</i>

<sup>24</sup> Job Bank, “Labour market information: Job coach for persons with disabilities in Canada,” *Government of Canada*, <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/summary-occupation/5223/ca>, accessed October 15, 2024.

<sup>25</sup> Job Bank, “Labour market information: Certified return-to-work coordinator - disability management in Canada,” *Government of Canada*, <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/summary-occupation/5125/ca>, accessed October 15, 2024.

NOC 12201 – Insurance adjusters and claims examiners	Disability claims examiner - insurance
NOC 31112 – Audiologists and speech-language pathologists	<i>No specific job titles, but SE-related activities are possible.</i>
NOC 31203 – Occupational therapists	<i>SE-related activities are possible within all job titles.</i>
NOC 31204 – Kinesiologists and other professional occupations in therapy and assessment	<i>No specific job titles, but SE-related activities are possible.</i>
NOC 32109 – Other technical occupations in therapy and assessment	<i>No specific job titles, but SE-related activities are possible.</i>
NOC 41301 – Therapists in counselling and related specialized therapies	Disability consultant
NOC 41403 – Social policy researchers, consultants and program officers	Advisor for the integration of persons with disabilities
NOC 42201 – Social and community services workers	Certified return-to-work coordinator - disability management Certified return-to-work facilitator - disability management Disability management worker Intellectual disabilities worker Return-to-work coordinator - disability management Return-to-work facilitator - disability management
NOC 42203 – Instructors of persons with disabilities	<i>SE-related activities are possible within all job titles, including the following specific SE job titles:</i>  Job coach for persons with disabilities
NOC 44101 – Home support workers, caregivers, and related occupations	<i>No specific job titles, but SE-related activities are possible.</i>

Source: Employment and Social Development Canada.

Note: For the full profile of each NOC unit group, including the index of job titles, go to [noc.esdc.gc.ca](https://noc.esdc.gc.ca) and search by NOC code.

## What We Didn't Find

- Government reporting or monitoring data about the professionals who deliver supported employment services and supports is largely absent. Data like this may be available through FOIA requests. Existing research and reporting focus on programmatic and funding levels.
- Disaggregated LMI relevant to specific job roles within the supported employment sector is missing.
- Private sector initiatives and the professionals who work within them appear to be largely invisible within publicly accessible government sources. One entry point may be the members of the Disability Inclusion Business Council and Canadian Business Disability Inclusion Network.
- The findings do not include any technological innovations or digital platforms spearheaded by government that are specifically designed to support employment for persons with disabilities.

# 4.0. Sector and Association Sources

## Key Takeaways

- Supported employment services are delivered in all of Canada’s provinces and territories. Every province and territory has a supported employment network.
- This environmental scan identifies eleven types of organizations that are part of the supported employment sector. They map to Challenge Factory’s Career Development Sector Scoping Model (Figure 1).
- Types of organizations that are part of the sector are more visible than individual professionals within it.
- Two methods of identifying organization members of the supported employment sector and extended ecosystem are lists of recipients of government funding programs and member directories of provincial and territorial networks.
- The supported employment professionals who act as the intermediary between the public funding allocated by government and the persons with disabilities who receive it are largely absent from existing research and reporting, which focus more heavily on the clients served.

## What We Found

### Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE)

CASE is a national association of community-based service providers and interest holders working towards employment inclusion of persons experiencing disability.<sup>26</sup> CASE is at the centre of Canada’s supported employment sector.

As of October 2024, CASE has:

- 265 members (organizations and individuals)
- 28 staff
- 13-member Board of Directors, who are sector leaders across the country
- MentorAbility Hubs in all 13 of Canada’s provinces and territories (see Table 5)

Table 5. MentorAbility Hubs, by province and territory

Province/Territory	MentorAbility Hub
Alberta	Gateway Association
British Columbia	Inclusion BC
Manitoba	Work and Social Opportunities (WASO)
New Brunswick	AvenueNB
Newfoundland and Labrador	Avalon Employment Inc.
Northwest Territories	CDETNO Inclusion NWT

Nova Scotia	TEAM Work Cooperative
Nunavut	Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society (NDMS)
Ontario	March of Dimes Canada Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN)
Prince Edward Island	ResourceAbilities
Quebec	<i>Regroupement des organismes spécialisés pour l'emploi des personnes handicapées (ROSEPH)</i>
Saskatchewan	SaskAbilities
Yukon	Inclusion Yukon

Source: Canadian Association for Supported Employment.<sup>27</sup>

MentorAbility Hubs are the first connection point for local employment service providers (site partners), persons experiencing disability (mentees), and employers (mentors) to connect with the national MentorAbility Canada network.

CASE is also a member of the World Association for Supported Employment (WASE), providing one point of reference for how the Canadian sector is connected to the international supported employment landscape. Its membership includes:

- Association of People Supporting Employment First (USA)
- Brazilian Association of Supported Employment
- Canadian Association for Supported Employment
- Disability Employment Australia
- European Union of Supported Employment
- Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment

## Types of Sector Organizations

This environmental scan tested the ability of researchers to identify members of the supported employment sector through publicly accessible websites. Specifically, research was conducted to identify the diverse types of organizations that exist within the supported employment ecosystem. These are listed below, and Figure 1 maps them to Challenge Factory's Career Development Sector Scoping Model.

### Types of supported employment organizations:

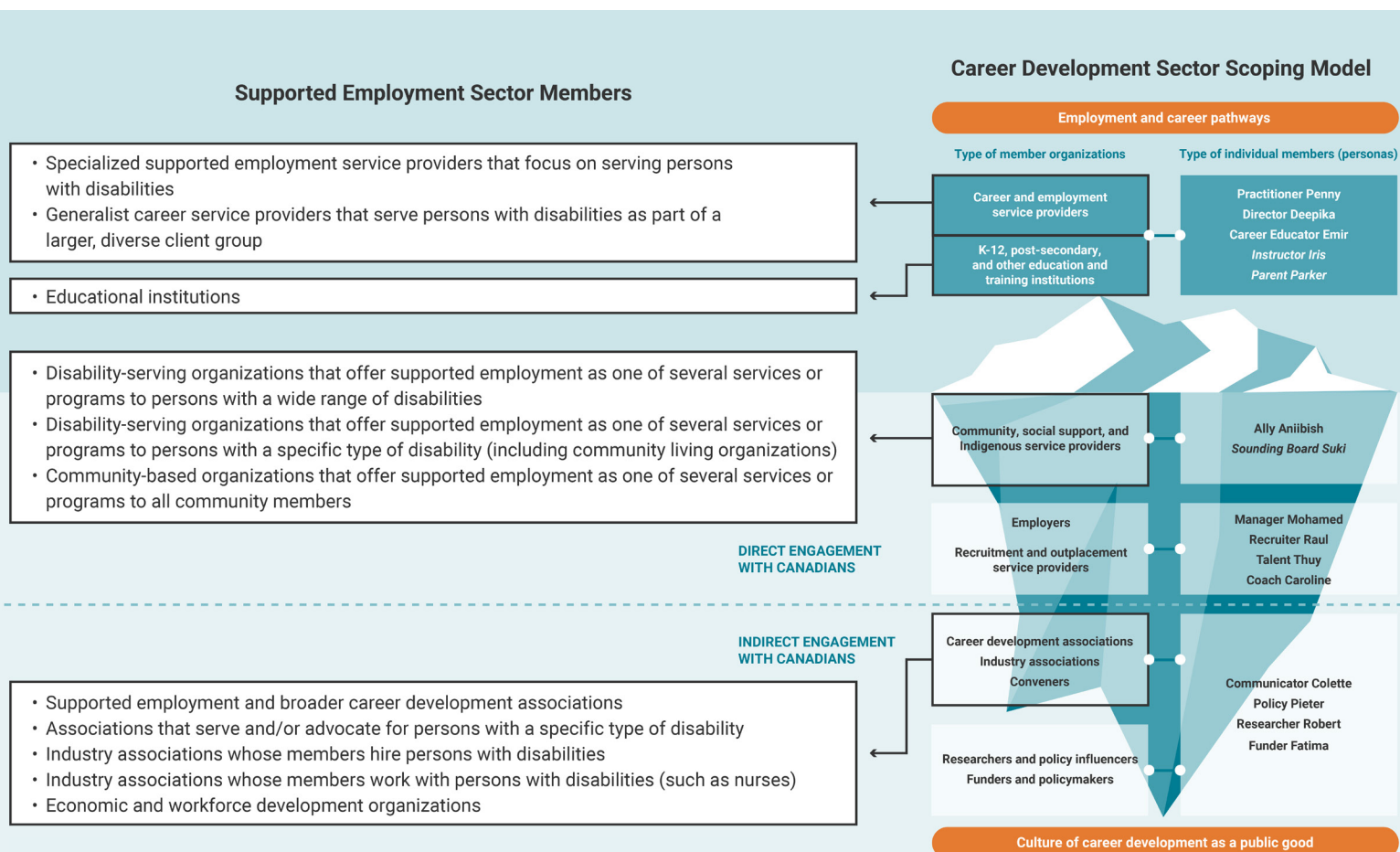
- Specialized supported employment service providers that focus on serving persons with disabilities

<sup>26</sup> Canadian Association for Supported Employment, "About CASE," <https://www.supportedemployment.ca/about/about-canadian-association-for-supported-employment/>, accessed October 4, 2024.

<sup>27</sup> Canadian Association for Supported Employment, "MentorAbility Canada," <https://www.supportedemployment.ca/initiatives/mentorability/>, accessed December 5, 2024.

- Generalist career service providers that serve persons with disabilities as part of a larger, diverse client group
- Supported employment and broader career development associations
- Associations that serve and/or advocate for persons with a specific type of disability
- Disability-serving organizations that offer supported employment as one of several services or programs to persons with a wide range of disabilities
- Disability-serving organizations that offer supported employment as one of several services or programs to persons with a specific type of disability (including community living organizations)
- Community-based organizations that offer supported employment as one of several services or programs to all community members
- Economic and workforce development organizations
- Industry associations whose members hire persons with disabilities
- Industry associations whose members work with persons with disabilities (such as nurses)
- Educational institutions

**Figure 1. Types of supported employment organizations, mapped to the Career Development Sector Scoping Model**



## Provincial and Territorial Supported Employment Networks

Table 6 identifies supported employment networks in each province and territory. Where a formal network of members was not identified, non-member organizations are listed. This is not a comprehensive list of all notable supported employment organizations in each province and territory.

**Table 6. Provincial and territorial supported employment networks**

Province/Territory	Network	Members
Alberta	Alberta Association for Supported Employment (AASE)	Formed by Autism Awareness Centre Inc., the AASE does not appear to have members yet, but the goal is to create a formal network
	Alberta Employment First Network (AEFN)	34 member organizations
	Inclusion Alberta	40+ member organizations
British Columbia	British Columbia Employment Network (BCEN)	13 member agencies
	Inclusion BC	66 member organizations
Manitoba	Abilities Manitoba	69 member organizations
	Community Living Manitoba	11 local branch associations
	Manitoba Supported Employment Network (MSEN)	29 local branch members
New Brunswick	AvenueNB	23 member agencies
	Inclusion NB	Not a member network but has 6 provincial offices
Newfoundland and Labrador	Inclusion Canada Newfoundland and Labrador	Individual (citizen) members only and 9 listed partner organizations
	Supported Employment Newfoundland and Labrador (SENL)	19 agencies
Northwest Territories	CDETNO	36 workforce and business development members (not supported employment organizations)
	Inclusion Northwest Territories	Not a member network but lists community partners and resources
	NWT Disabilities Council	Not a member network, identified by CASE as key network
Nova Scotia	Inclusion NS	Individual (citizen) members only
	Government of Nova Scotia Disability Support Program (DSP)	Centralized government program run by the Department of Community Services, identified by CASE as key network
	Nova Scotia Works	18 employment service providers, many but not all offices provide supported employment services, funded through the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration, identified by CASE as key network



Nunavut	Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society (NDMS)	Not a member network but lists disability organizations
Ontario	Community Living Ontario	124 local agencies
	Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN)	107 member organizations
Prince Edward Island	Prince Edward Island Association for Community Living	Individual (citizen) members only
	ResourceAbilities	Individual (citizen) members only (it is unclear how members join)
Quebec	<i>Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec (COPHAN)</i>	49 member organizations
	<i>Regroupement des organismes spécialisés pour l'emploi des personnes handicapées (ROSEPH)</i>	27 member organizations
	<i>Société québécoise de la déficience intellectuelle</i>	84 member organizations
	<i>SPHÈRE</i>	Not a member network but lists partners and resources
Saskatchewan	Inclusion Saskatchewan (formerly the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living)	13 local branches, members include citizens, organizations, and corporations (but they are not listed publicly)
	Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres (SARC)	107 community-based organizations
Yukon	Inclusion Yukon (formerly the Yukon Association for Community Living)	Not a member network but lists local business partners
	Opportunities Yukon	Not a member network but partners with local employers and community members

Source: Network websites, Canadian Association for Supported Employment.

## CERIC

**CERIC** is a national charitable organization and leader in Canada's broader career development sector. A search of "supported employment" and "disability" was conducted on CERIC's main website (which includes Careering magazine) and its CareerWise website. Table 7 summarizes the quantitative findings and shows that there are significantly fewer relevant article headlines than overall search results. This indicates that supported employment intersects with and is part of other broad ecosystems, networks, learnings, and professional development opportunities related to career and social supports.

Table 7. Search results for “supported employment” and “disability” on CERIC’s websites

Search Term	Website	Search Results	Relevant Article Headlines
Supported employment	Main website	~180	~17
	CareerWise website	~264	~27
British Columbia	Main website	~170	~48
	CareerWise website	~209	~40

Source: CERIC and CareerWise websites.<sup>28</sup>

The search results also demonstrate:

- There is limited use or socialization of the term “supported employment” as a distinct sector or specialized field.
- Articles focus on related and overlapping ecosystems, such as mental health, ADHD, and autism support.
- There is a larger focus on clients with mental health challenges than a broader spectrum of disabilities.
- Other specialized populations—such as youth, Veterans, immigrants, seniors, BIPOC, LGBTQ, international students, and individuals experiencing homelessness—are populated within these types of searches.
- This research method offers an entry point for identifying supported employment sector members.

As part of its leadership role within the career development sector, CERIC conducts surveys of the career development professionals.<sup>29</sup> A review of the surveys shows that the clients served by professionals, including those delivering supported employment, are sometimes visible. However, professionals who specialize in supported employment are rarely surfaced and made visible as distinct from the broader sector membership of career development professionals.

CERIC also conducts literature searches and compiles bibliographies of sources relevant to a range of career development topics.<sup>30</sup> The following literature searches are related to supported employment:

- [Diversity and work](#)
- [Intersection of diversity and inclusion in the workplace](#)
- [Learning disabilities in the workplace](#)
- [Mental health issues in the workplace](#)
- [Persons with disabilities and career development](#)

<sup>28</sup> CareerWise, “Search: Disability,” CERIC, <https://careerwise.ceric.ca/search/?q=%22Disability%22>, accessed October 4, 2024; CareerWise, “Search: Supported Employment,” CERIC, <https://careerwise.ceric.ca/search/?q=%22Supported%20Employment%22>, accessed October 4, 2024; CERIC, “Search: Disability,” [https://ceric.ca/?s=disability&post\\_type=post](https://ceric.ca/?s=disability&post_type=post), accessed October 4, 2024; CERIC, “Search: Supported Employment,” [https://ceric.ca/?s=%22Supported+employment%22&post\\_type=post](https://ceric.ca/?s=%22Supported+employment%22&post_type=post), accessed October 4, 2024.

<sup>29</sup> CERIC, “Surveys,” <https://ceric.ca/surveys/>, accessed October 11, 2024.

<sup>30</sup> CERIC, “Literature Searches,” <https://ceric.ca/literature-searches/>, accessed October 11, 2024.



## CERIC-Funded Environmental Scan

As part of the current environmental scan for CASE, the findings of an environmental scan conducted in the 2021-2023 CERIC-funded project to map Canada's career development sector were reviewed for any insights it might provide about the data availability and hiddenness or visibility of the supported employment sector.

The purpose of the previous environmental scan was to compile, review, and consolidate research and knowledge from information sources that already exist about the make-up of Canada's broader career development sector. It included more than 70 data sources and resulted in a 65-page report submitted to CERIC.<sup>31</sup> In addition to reviewing the report, a sample of 18 data sources were chosen and scanned again for the current environmental scan, including searching key terms such as "supported employment," "disability," "inclusion," "barriers," and "vocational rehabilitation."

The previous environmental scan demonstrates that existing sector research and reporting focus more heavily on the clients served than the professionals providing services. Even research that is intended to focus on the service providers and professionals can sometimes inadvertently focus more on the clients or skip over the professionals.

Within the 18 re-scanned data sources:

- No instances of the term "supported employment" were found, indicating the sector's hiddenness even within research about career development.
- The term "disability" (or "disabilities") was found in 14 of 18 sources, indicating that while governments fund targeted services for persons with disabilities, supported employment is not universally surfaced within all sector-related research.
- "Vocational rehabilitation" was found in 7 of 18 sources, indicating that sometimes it can be an entry point or proxy for the supported employment sector.

The previous environmental scan confirms there is significant overlap between the supported employment and career development sectors, and any division between them is largely artificial:

- Supported employment is often integrated within the broader career development and employment services ecosystem. Both specialized and generalist organizations provide supported employment services.
- Many CDPs work with diverse clients, including those with disabilities.
- There is a lack of consistency in job titles and roles across the career development sector, which appears to extend to supported employment. Specific job titles identified are "Vocational Rehabilitation Counsellor," "Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist," "Job Coach for Persons with Disabilities," and "Disability-Specific Employment Skills Specialist."

However, the previous scan also demonstrates some key differences between supported employment and career development:

- **Skills and competencies:** Persons with disabilities are a common client group for CDPs, and they require specialized knowledge and skills. There is a recognized need for more training in serving persons with disabilities. Cultural competency and diversity awareness are also increasingly important. However, what specific specialized knowledge and skills are required remain under-explored. Professionals who serve persons with disabilities in a range of other community, social, and health services roles also find themselves providing career services without specialized training in career services.

<sup>31</sup> Taryn Blanchard and Lisa Taylor, "Environmental Scan – Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent: Mapping Canada's Career Development Sector," *Challenge Factory*, January 2023 (Unpublished Report).

- **Employer challenges and gaps:** There is 1) ongoing workplace discrimination and ableism, 2) a need for more inclusive hiring practices, and 3) a lack of assessment tools that properly consider how disability affects work performance.
- **Funding and policy:** Workforce Development Agreements between federal and P/T governments include specific funding for persons with disabilities. Some provinces have separate contracts or organizations dedicated to providing career services for persons with disabilities.
- **Service access and usage:** Service access points and usage are identified as differing between persons with a disability and those without. However, detailed studies of these differences are absent.

Overall, the review of sector and association sources from the CERIC-funded environmental scan reveals that the supported employment professionals who act as the intermediary between the significant public funding allocated by government and the persons with disabilities who receive it are largely hidden. While supported employment is recognized as a specialized field within career development, it is highly integrated with broader employment and career services in Canada. The sector faces challenges in consistency, skills and competencies, and employer engagement, but there is a growing awareness of the need to better serve clients with disabilities across the career development and employment ecosystem.

## What We Didn't Find

- LMI specific to the supported employment sector was not identified, including demographic and EDII data about supported employment professionals.
- Case studies and other research about supported employment best practices, skills, competencies, or responsibilities were not identified (e.g., what quality supported employment service delivery looks like and requires).
- No national database that collects supported employment service providers in one online directory was identified.

# 5.0. Scholarship Sources

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## Key Takeaways

Within the academic literature reviewed:

- Most research centres on persons with mental illness, using the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model. Limited information exists on approaches for serving persons with other disabilities, non-apparent disabilities, and how different disabilities might require varied skillsets from providers.
- There is a lack of in-depth analysis of roles and interactions among various interest holders in the supported employment ecosystem.
- Supported employment programs typically last 6-24 months, but specific service delivery details are not well-described.
- The need for supported employment is clear, but providers face difficulties in accessing training and up-to-date best practices.

Compared to the sector and association sources, within the scholarship sources it is more evident that there are:

1. Specific and significant differences between serving clients from general populations and clients with disabilities
2. A wide range of interconnected and specialized interest holders (outside career development and employers) involved in delivering supported employment services

## What We Found

Within the literature reviewed for this environmental scan, supported employment research in Canada primarily focuses on persons with mental illness, with limited attention given to other medical conditions or disabilities. When other medical conditions or disabilities are investigated, they are often very specific cases, such as returning to work after brain cancer or young adults with developmental disabilities transitioning after high school.

The Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model emerges as the most researched and recognized best practice, particularly for those with mental illness. The model, comprising 6-8 core principles, emphasizes competitive employment, rapid job search, and integration with mental health services.

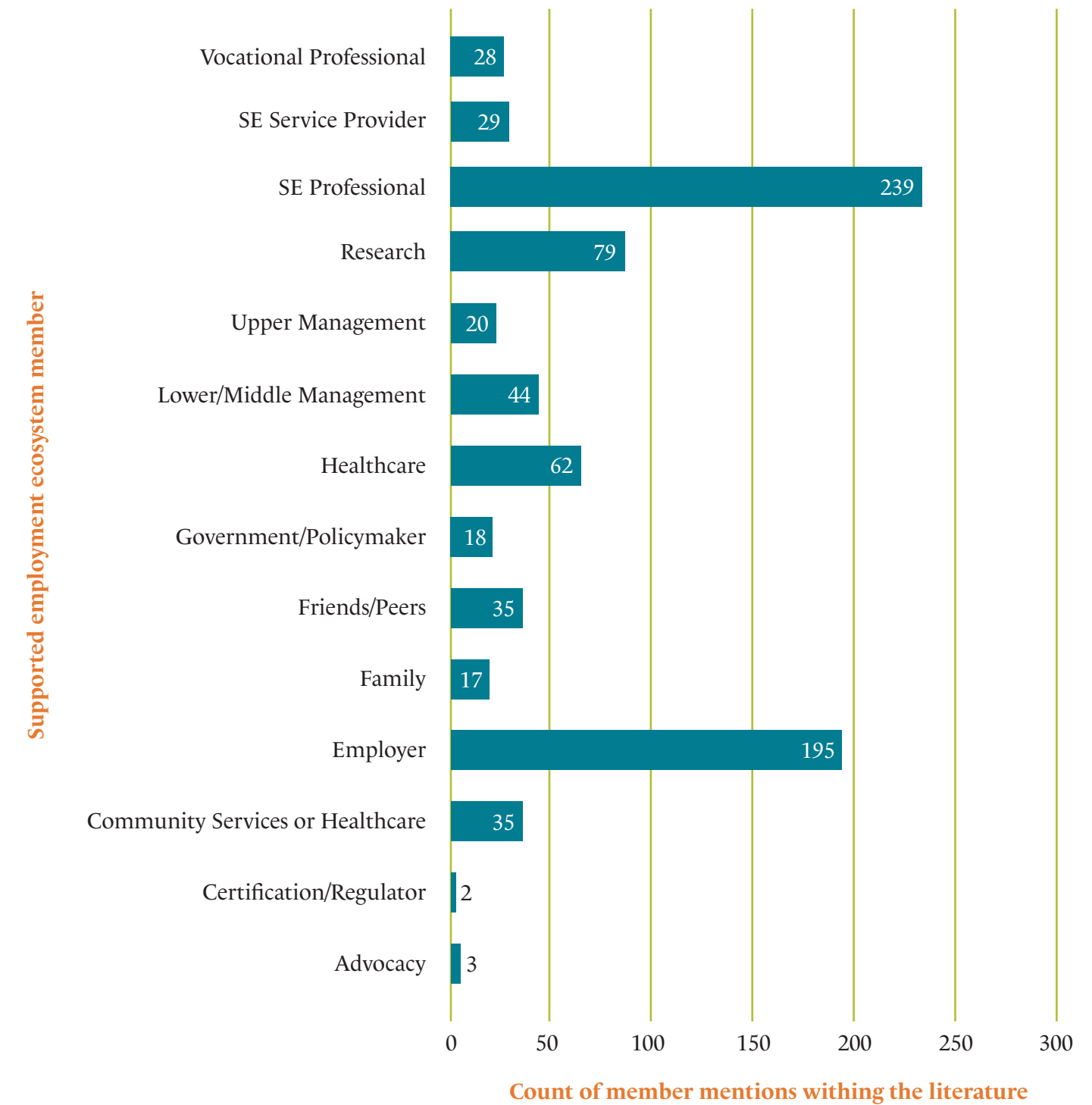
While the IPS model dominates the field, alternative models exist and are listed in Table 8. Not all of these models are mentioned in the literature reviewed, demonstrating their hiddenness within the scholarship. In particular, studies about clients other than those with mental illness did not typically discuss specific models or theories of supported employment. However, the research demonstrates that assessing return-to-work strategies early, with a focus on accommodations and supports, is beneficial when individuals experience new disabilities or life events. The need for supported employment is clear.

**Table 8. Types of supported employment models**

Model	Description
Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Model	IPS is an evidence-based approach specifically designed for individuals with mental health conditions. It focuses on competitive employment as a primary goal, provides personalized job support and ongoing workplace assistance, and emphasizes rapid job search and integrates employment services with mental health treatment.
Train-Then-Place and Place-Then-Train Models	The Train-Then-Place and Place-Then-Train Models are contrasting approaches to supported employment. The Train-Then-Place Model emphasizes pre-employment preparation, where individuals build skills through vocational training or sheltered workshops before seeking competitive jobs. The Place-Then-Train Model prioritizes immediate job placement in competitive environments, with tailored, on-the-job training and ongoing support to ensure success. (IPS uses Place-Then-Train). While the Train-Then-Place Model focuses on readiness before employment, the Place-Then-Train Model promotes real-time learning and integration into the workforce.
Customized Employment Model	The Customized Employment Model is a person-centred approach that tailors job opportunities to align with an individual's strengths, interests, and needs. It involves comprehensive personal profiling and job development. A key component is job carving, where tasks from existing roles are restructured or combined to create a position that suits the employee's abilities while meeting employer needs. As part of this process, job responsibilities and work conditions are negotiated with employers.
Clubhouse Model	The Clubhouse Model is a community-based approach to psychosocial rehabilitation for individuals with mental health conditions, emphasizing peer support, social inclusion, and recovery. Members join a supportive community where they engage in structured, voluntary activities, often related to running the Clubhouse, to build confidence and purpose. Employment support is a key component, offering both supported employment for maintaining community jobs and transitional employment for temporary, part-time roles with ongoing assistance. By focusing on holistic well-being, the model empowers members through participation and shared governance.
Vocational Rehabilitation	Vocational rehabilitation helps individuals with disabilities or barriers to employment achieve and maintain meaningful work through personalized support, skills training, and workplace accommodations. It aims to enhance their independence, employability, and overall quality of life while promoting inclusive workforce participation. Vocational rehabilitation often, but not always, focuses on pre-employment preparation (Train-Then-Place), short-term or transitional support, and serving individuals with various types of disabilities or employment barriers, including those with fewer challenges.

The supported employment ecosystem involves various interest holders, including employment specialists, employers, medical professionals, and program administrators. Figure 2 presents 15 types of ecosystem members and the number of times they are mentioned within the literature reviewed. However, the literature lacks in-depth analysis of their roles and interactions. Notably, there may be tensions between service providers, employers, and program administrators. Middle management often serves as a crucial broker in effectively implementing supported employment programs.

**Figure 2. Count of supported employment ecosystem members within the reviewed academic literature**



*Note:* “SE Professionals” may also provide more general career services to a range of diverse clients. Job titles and references to SE Professionals in the literature include “Career Counsellor,” “Employment Specialist,” “Employment Support Professional,” “Employment support worker,” “Staff of provincial disability support program,” and “Supported employment staff.”

Typically long-term in nature, supported employment programs last 6, 12, or 24 months. However, the specific details of service delivery for different interest holders are not well-described. This gap extends to other relevant sector information, such as how supported employment specialists enter the field and how various interest holders interact within the broader ecosystem. For example, practically, what do the various interest holders actually do for their supported employment clients? How do family members support their loved one who has a disability? What does an occupational therapist do? What does the CEO of an organization do?

Several other challenges and gaps in the research are evident. There is limited information on supported employment approaches for clients with disabilities other than mental illness, and insufficient discussion on non-apparent disabilities and how they might require different approaches or skillsets from providers. Implementation challenges include difficulty accessing training and up-to-date best practices for providers.

The review of the sector and association sources in Section 4.0. showed that CDPs working with clients with disabilities need specialized knowledge and skills, and that there is a recognized need for more training in serving persons with disabilities. The scholarship sources in this section provide deeper evidence of these needs. Studies that focus on supported employment models and frameworks are useful for gaining a richer understanding of the sector because they demonstrate the extensive specialized knowledge and skills that are distinct from the provision of general career services. Examples of practical differences are listed below but require validation:

- The models described in Table 8
- The importance of network and ecosystem connections, strong working alliances, and recognized involvement of many interest holders (see Figure 2)
  - » Collaboration with a broader client support team, including medical professionals and clinical teams
  - » Knowledge of disability regulations, health authorities, etc.
  - » Nature of outreach to and relationship development with employers
- Supported employment program phases – For example, 1) facility-based sheltered employment, 2) additional pre-vocational component, 3) brokered supported employment services, 4) individual placement and support model
- Program provision of individualized and time-unlimited support
- Coercive pressures from government policy and societal views on the rights of persons with disabilities

## What We Didn't Find

Within the literature reviewed:

- A fulsome collection of interest holders and their roles in supported employment was not identified.
- Information on supported employment approaches used with clients experiencing types of disabilities other than mental illness is largely absent. Different types of disabilities require specific supported employment skillsets, but these and the professionals who possess them are not clearly identified. These differences may influence who chooses to work in the supported employment field.
- Non-apparent disabilities are not identified by group and the apparent/non-apparent dimensions are not explored.
- The roles of various interest holders are assumed rather than explored in depth. For example, the role of family or peer support is referenced in several articles, but how they impact supported employment is not

described. Advocacy work is only mentioned in two articles and implied in one.

- There is little investigation of how:
  - » Interest holders interact, beyond possible tensions between frontline service providers and decision-makers who define and set priorities.
  - » Supported employment professionals and clients interact, and what additional training professionals need to be successful in these interactions.
  - » Clients access supported employment services and programs. The journey investigated starts after clients have already made contact and are “inside” the system.

## 6.0. The Way Forward: Future Research for Better Outcomes

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The findings of this environmental scan demonstrate a clear need for future research to address significant gaps in data and understanding within Canada's supported employment sector. While the scan provides foundational insights about the availability of data, sector visibility, and existing methodologies, it also surfaces examples of critical areas where further exploration can be pursued in larger-scale or follow-on projects.

### Example 1: Data Availability Assessment

The findings of the data availability assessment in Section 1.0., which evaluates the availability of supported employment sector data within the data sources used in Challenge Factory's previous career development sector mapping project, can guide future research methodologies, resource allocation, and other elements of project development, such as advisory committee composition. It shows where data sources and methods used to map Canada's career development sector may be relevant for mapping the supported employment sector, while also highlighting areas that would require tailored research approaches.

Overall, the assessment can contribute to future research development by helping to:

1. Determine the best research methods and data sources to use in a follow-on research project
2. Identify which parts of these research methods will be easier or more difficult (e.g., require more resources)
3. Identify who should be on the advisory committee of a research project to fill gaps in data collection

### Example 2: Service Access Points

How persons with disabilities learn about and access supported employment services and programs is an important and valuable topic for future research. Already known access points (Benefits Finder, Benefits Wayfinder, and the Canadian Disability Resources Society's disability resources directory) may be used as research tools to map the ecosystem of publicly available services and programs at the provincial, territorial, and federal levels.

### Example 3: 211.ca

In a larger-scale research project, provincial and territorial 211 websites may provide a significant amount of data about Canada's supported employment sector (such as names and locations of organizations, and potentially client needs). However, using them as a data source would require tailored research methods and resources (the time of a research analyst) to handle the high volume and potentially cumbersome state of the data. Alberta, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and certain administrative regions in Quebec offer "211 Data," data dashboards about 211 contacts, caller demographics, needs identified, and unmet needs identified. Research using these dashboards may be facilitated by contacting the 211 Data staff in each jurisdiction.

### Example 4: Sector Entry Points for Research Activities

In a larger-scale research project, CASE's Board of Directors, MentorAbility Hubs, Hub participants (mentees, employers, communities, event attendees), and provincial and territorial networks all represent valuable entry points and a potential participant recruitment pool for a variety of research activities:



- Building profiles of the supported employment ecosystem in each of Canada's provinces and territories
- Gaining a deeper understanding of elements of the supported employment sector, such as job titles, employment status (full-, part-time), education and training, skills and salary ranges, and geographic contexts (remote, rural, urban)
- Investigating clients' experiences of receiving supported employment services or engaging with the sector

## Conclusion

This environmental scan has revealed both the critical importance of supported employment in Canada and significant knowledge gaps surrounding it. As the number of Canadians living with disabilities continues to grow, the need for a comprehensive understanding of supported employment becomes increasingly urgent. This research serves as a crucial first step in illuminating the sector's landscape and members, challenging existing research limitations, and paving the way for more targeted, inclusive studies. By identifying current data constraints and potential research pathways, this scan not only highlights the sector's current hiddenness, but also offers an evidence base for future investigations that can strengthen support for jobseekers with disabilities, enhance employment practices, and contribute to more equitable and accessible labour markets across Canada.

# Appendix A. Methodology

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This environmental scan was conducted by systematically reviewing a range of publicly accessible data sources, publications, and sector-specific literature to assess the current state of research about Canada's supported employment sector. The research undertaken was not a sector mapping project, and it is not intended to be taken as a comprehensive map of the supported employment sector. The scan focuses on identifying existing data, research gaps, and visibility challenges within the sector.

To achieve this, we combined environmental scan research methods with a unique data availability assessment that leveraged the methodology and data sources from Challenge Factory's 2021-2023 CERIC-funded project that mapped Canada's career development sector.

## Key Research Activities

1. **Literature and Data Review:** We examined both general and specialized sources across government, association, and academic research publications. Sources were evaluated for content directly relevant to supported employment, particularly data that can be disaggregated from broader career development and disability support sources. We included sources from these intersecting ecosystems in order to identify service, research, and knowledge overlaps, as well as the representation of supported employment professionals within them.
2. **Secondary Snowball Sampling:** In secondary research, snowball sampling is used to efficiently expand the scope of the environmental scan's sampling frame (i.e., the set of sources reviewed) and ensure we capture an acceptable breadth of existing research. This involved identifying key data sources, reviewing their reference lists and/or external links to discover additional relevant data sources, and repeating the process until an acceptable sampling frame was reached.
3. **Comparative Analysis:** We examined the availability of supported employment sector data within the data sources used in Challenge Factory's previous career development sector mapping project. The goal was to assess coverage and completeness within existing datasets, comparing the efficacy of previously used research approaches for applicability to the supported employment sector.
4. **Sector Participation and Feedback:** Providing opportunity for participation and feedback from sector members is very important to ensure the environmental scan captures and produces an acceptable representation of current sector research. During data collection, a request for participation was sent to CASE's MentorAbility Hub Coordinators and through the MentorAbility newsletter in English and French. The first draft of the report was reviewed by CASE's MentorAbility team and project liaison. The second draft was reviewed by CASE's Board of Directors.

## Key Methodological Boundaries

1. **Data Access limitations:** The environmental scan was restricted to publicly accessible data sources (such as government and organization websites) and secondary research sources (such as existing reports and academic literature). To fit within the project scope (timeline, resource allocation, etc.), outreach efforts to access non-publicly available or unpublished data from interest holders and relevant organizations was not conducted. Primary data collection with research participants—such as interviews, surveys, and focus groups—was not conducted. Additionally, certain regions and networks either lacked up-to-date or publicly available data, or entry points to accessing them were not identified, leading to potential gaps in representation.

2. **Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion:** Publicly accessible data sources that do not constitute existing research (such as information on government and organization websites) were included if they provided insight related to the availability of data about the supported employment sector or overall visibility of the sector. Sources were excluded if they were outdated, lacked clear attribution, focused on sectors unrelated to supported employment (such as general workforce development without a targeted lens), or otherwise fell outside the scope of the project's focus on existing research about Canada's supported employment sector.
3. **Ethical Considerations:** Because the data collection for this environmental scan did not include any human research participants, there are no ethical considerations (such as privacy protection and informed consent) that require disclosure or discussion.

# Appendix B. Summary of Feedback Received and Observations

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In the first round of feedback from CASE, several insightful comments and questions were provided that fall outside the scope of this environmental scan and/or point to potential future research. This appendix collects and addresses them.

## Demographic Trends

*CASE: Are there any specific demographic trends within the supported employment workforce (e.g., age, gender) that the report aims to address in future research?*

This environmental scan did not reveal any specific demographic trends within the supported employment workforce, demonstrating 1) a lack of research about the sector and the professionals who work within it, and 2) a need for future research to address this gap.

Challenge Factory's research mapping Canada's career development sector revealed that the demographic profile of the career development professional (CDP) has known gender-based and age-based disparities. A larger proportion of CDPs working in settings like employment centres, campus career centres, and independent or private practices are women, and they are often older.<sup>32</sup> It also highlighted that there are pay discrepancies among educational counsellors (NOC 41320) who belong to a visible minority and those who do not.<sup>33</sup>

Future research could validate if the demographic profile of the supported employment professional matches or diverges from the known CDP profile (and to what extent), and what the implications of these findings are for the sector's talent pipeline.

## LinkedIn Sales Navigator as a Research Tool

*CASE: For "LinkedIn Sales Navigator," specify which SE sector job titles or keywords might yield the most accurate search results, as this could help maximize the tool's effectiveness.*

LinkedIn Sales Navigator was an effective research tool during the CERIC-funded "Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent" project to map Canada's broader career development sector. As discussed in Table 1 of this report, LinkedIn is identified as a potentially useful tool for research about the supported employment sector as well. However, the quality of data and any SE sector job titles or keywords that yield useful search results can only be determined by conducting additional research outside the scope of this environmental scan.

## Job Titles, Inconsistency, and Standardization

*CASE: Expand on why job titles vary across organizations. Explain how this lack of consistency impacts professionals' roles and recognition in the sector.*

Section 4.0. Sector and Association Sources of this report notes, "There is a lack of consistency in job titles and roles across the career development sector, which appears to extend to supported employment. Specific job titles identified are "Vocational Rehabilitation Counsellor," "Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist," "Job Coach for Persons with Disabilities," and "Disability-Specific Employment Skills Specialist." Supported employment job titles are also listed in Section 5.0. Scholarship Sources (see Figure 2's note).

<sup>32</sup> Blanchard and Taylor, "Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent," pp. 56.

<sup>33</sup> Blanchard and Taylor, "Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent," pp. 60-61.

The “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report explains that the career development sector is not (yet) regulated and organized at a national level, and there is no universal application of consistent job titles, sector member definitions, or sector data tracking systems.<sup>34</sup> As a result, job titles vary across organizations and the lack of consistency impacts professionals’ roles and recognition in the sector by rendering them less visible than professions that have clear and more recognizable job titles. The clearest example of this in the current environmental scan is seen in the Census of Population findings (e.g., Table 4), which shows that supported employment sector job titles, roles, and activities are distributed across and within many different NOC unit groups, effectively making them hidden within labour market information reports and other data findings from Statistics Canada.

Additional investigation of sector job titles, falling outside the scope of this environmental scan, would be required to validate if and how the findings about the broader career development sector apply to the supported employment sector specifically.

*CASE: Would it be beneficial to have a set of standardized job titles within supported employment to improve clarity and recognition of roles?*

Standardizing job titles within a profession has been shown to improve clarity of roles, facilitate integration and socialization of new professionals within the talent pipeline, enhance public awareness of the roles, responsibilities, and contributions of professionals, and build trust and recognition in the expertise and specialization of professionals.<sup>35</sup> However, additional investigation, such as a needs assessment, would be required to determine if and how standardizing job titles within the supported employment sector would be feasible, received by sector members, and achieve the intended improvements.

### **Professional Pathways and Career Progression of Supported Employment Professionals**

*CASE: What additional methods could be used to gather more information on the professional pathways and career progression for supported employment professionals?*

A range of research methods could be used to gather more information on this topic, including surveys and questionnaires, interview and focus groups, labour market information and job posting analysis, sector/workforce mapping, case studies, and more. Collaborating with professional associations and networks, post-secondary or other training institutions, and other sector partners may be a valuable approach to this type of research project. Identifying specific methods that would be most useful and feasible would require additional research scoping and development work.

### **Visibility vs. Usability**

*CASE: Including a summary of the data sources’ usability and limitations would make it easier for stakeholders to apply this information effectively.*

*Could the draft include potential strategies for aligning the varying reporting standards across provinces and territories to improve consistency?*

Data limitations are discussed in Section 1.0. Data Availability Assessment (including Table 1) and the project methodology (Appendix A). The interest expressed about the data sources’ usability, including potential strategies for aligning reporting standards to improve consistency (and therefore usability), is very encouraging.

<sup>34</sup> Blanchard and Taylor, “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent,” pp. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Paige S. Boydston and Erica S. Jowett Hirst, “Public Perceptions and Understanding of Job Titles Related to Behavior Analysis,” *Behavior Analysis in Practice* 13 (2020): 394-401, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40617-019-00384-z>; Faith Donald et al., “Clinical Nurse Specialists and Nurse Practitioners: Title Confusion and Lack of Role Clarity,” *Nursing Leadership* 23, Special Issue (2010): 189-201, <https://doi.org/10.12927/CJNL.2010.22276>; Alison Leary et al., “Variation in Job Titles within the Nursing Workforce,” *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 26, no. 23-24 (2017): 4945-4950, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.13985>; Lindsay Melling, “What’s in a Name? Job Title and Working Identity in Professional Services Staff in Higher Education,” *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* 23, no. 2-3 (2019): 48-53, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2018.1535459>.

However, it falls outside the scope of this project, which focuses on assessing the availability of sector data (i.e., can it be found) and visibility of the sector to set a baseline for understanding if and how deeply Canada's supported employment sector is currently hidden. The availability vs. usability dimension is an excellent topic for future research.

### **Potential Outcomes of Making the Supported Employment Sector More Visible**

*CASE: Are there any initiatives in place to encourage standardized data reporting across provinces for easier national-level aggregation?*

No initiatives are currently known to exist. This type of initiative is an excellent example of a potential outcome that may result should this research about supported employment continue to advance. The feasibility and need for standardized data reporting and national-level aggregation would become clearer through further research. However, first the sector has to become unhidden.

*CASE: Would it be feasible to recommend enhancements to the Job Bank or Census of Population to better categorize roles in supported employment?*

As above, this type of initiative is an excellent example of a potential outcome that may result should this research about supported employment continue to advance. The feasibility of recommending enhancements to Job Bank or the Census would become clearer through further research. However, first the sector has to become unhidden. Note that ESDC and Statistics Canada undertake a major structural revision of the National Occupational Classification (NOC), which currently gathers labour market information on more than 40,000 job titles classified into 516 unit groups, every 10 years to improve its accuracy and relevance. The last major revision was released in 2021.<sup>36</sup>

### **Section 2.0. "Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent" Report**

*CASE: Integration of regional realities: The "HIDDEN SECTOR..." report does not place enough emphasis on regional specificities that influence the supported employment sector. It is crucial that our project takes into account these nuances (types of service providers, collaboration models, job seeker needs) to draw a complete picture of the situation.*

The "Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent" report findings that pertain to the supported employment sector are organized by province and territory and presented in Table 2 of this environmental scan. The report findings do not include insights about regional specificities that influence the supported employment sector, and therefore were not included in Table 2. The insufficient emphasis on regional specificities in Section 2.0. and the rest of the environmental scan indicates that previous research about the sector has not investigated this topic. The environmental scan does not provide a complete picture of the situation because its purpose is to assess the available data in existing research about Canada's supported employment sector. Additional research to investigate regional specificities that influence the supported employment sector is an identified area of inquiry for the future.

*CASE: Comparative analysis: There are significant disparities between provinces/territories. It would be great to analyze these disparities and propose solutions adapted to each context. Proposal: Integrate a comparative analysis of the different Canadian regions, including consultations with key interest holders from each region. Comparative table of strengths and weaknesses by province/territory (excerpt from the "HIDDEN SECTOR..." report).*

This type of comparative analysis and consultation with key interest holders from each region falls outside the scope of the environmental scan's purpose to review existing research and assess what data is available about the supported employment sector. It is an excellent topic for future research.

*CASE: It would be beneficial to include a column [in Table 2] summarizing the types of disabilities each program supports, to help differentiate their focus areas.*

This information was not included in the “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report findings, and therefore was not included in Section 2.0. The data gap may be filled by consulting each program’s informational webpage. (Additional costing required to complete within this project.)

*CASE: Could we add more specifics on each program’s funding structure [in Table 2]? Knowing if programs rely on federal vs. provincial funds would add context to their stability and reach.*

This information was not included in the “Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent” report findings, and therefore was not included in Section 2.0. The data gap may be filled by consulting each program’s informational webpage and other external sources of information about their funding structures, such as P/T budgets. (Additional costing required to complete within this project.)

### **Section 3.0. Government Sources**

*CASE: Consider adding a brief case study or example to illustrate the impact of WDAs on supported employment outcomes for persons with disabilities. This would help contextualize the quantitative data provided.*

Case studies fall outside the scope of the environmental scan’s purpose to review existing research and assess what data is available about the supported employment sector. It is an excellent idea for future research.

### **Section 5.0. Scholarship Sources**

*CASE: Enhance the analysis of “interest holder interactions” by including hypothetical or real-world scenarios to illustrate potential challenges.*

*Is there additional information available on how family involvement specifically impacts supported employment outcomes for different disabilities?*

Because the topics of interest holder interactions and the impact of family involvement were included in the “What We Didn’t Find” subsection of the scholarship review, additional analysis has not been presented in this environmental scan. Below are examples of interest holder interactions that may make excellent topics for future research. These and others are mentioned in passing within the literature but not investigated:

- Supported employment professionals (career counsellors, employment specialists, etc.) and medical, psychiatric, or clinical team members
- Policy or decision makers and frontline professionals responsible for implementation
- Post-secondary students with a disability who disclose to campus representatives for the purposes of accessing accommodations

*CASE: Are there any current training programs aimed at addressing the specialized skill gaps noted for providers working with diverse disabilities?*

*Could there be further research into the recruitment process and skillsets for SE professionals to address the field’s evolving needs?*



No training programs or information about the recruitment process and specific skillsets for supported employment professionals were identified within existing sector research. Within the research about the broader career development sector, skill profiles for various roles that CDPs fill do exist.<sup>37</sup> The lack of specific supported employment skill profiles aligns with the finding that career development research can contribute to the hiddenness of supported employment. Mention of the field's evolving needs also highlights an important gap: the existence of up-to-date research. Training programs, the recruitment process, and supported employment skillsets would make excellent topics for future research.

<sup>37</sup> For example, see Life Strategies Ltd. for the BC Centre for Employment Excellence, "Skill Requirements for BC's Career Development Practitioners: An Exploratory Study," May 17, 2013, <https://www.cfeebc.org/reports/skill-requirements-for-BC-career-development-practitioners.pdf>, accessed November 22, 2024.

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