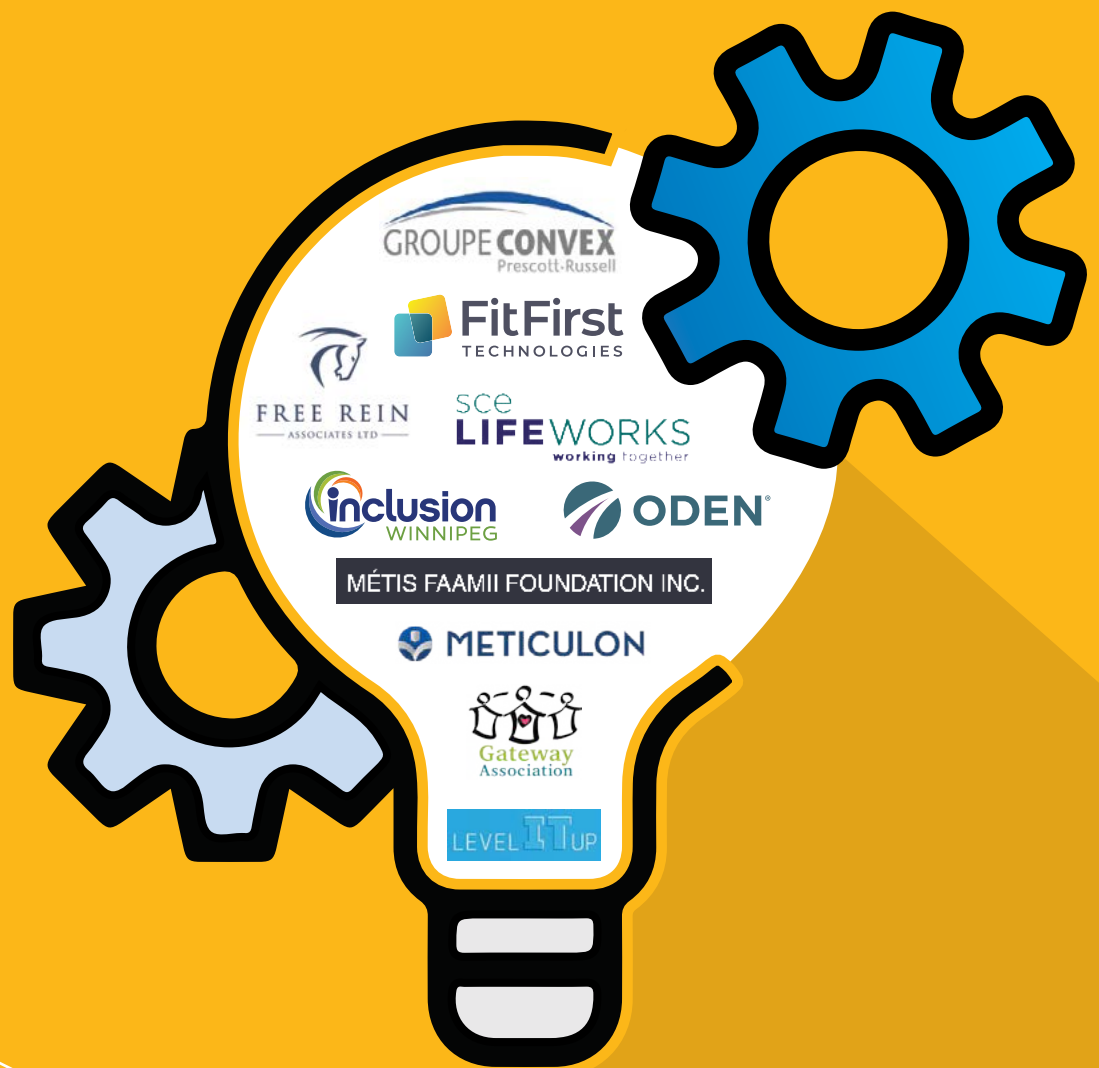


Canadian Association for
Supported Employment

INNOVATION LAB PARTNERS





Our Partners

CASE's Innovation Lab was created in 2021 to support, promote, and share learnings from innovative collaborations with partners across the country and grow transformative solutions that promote full labour market participation for Canadians experiencing disability.

Through a grant provided by the Government of Canada's Sectoral Initiatives Program (SIP), the Innovation Lab is pleased to announce our partnerships with 10 organizations. Each organization will pilot and evaluate an innovative approach to increasing inclusion in the workforce. The selected partners each bring transformative ideas and a wealth of experience to identify and break down the barriers that prevent people experiencing disability from securing meaningful competitive employment.

A second call for proposals will be taking place in Spring 2023, so stay tuned to our newsletter for more information about this as well as upcoming courses on innovation, and lessons learned and best practices from our Innovation Lab Community of Practice.

Partners Summary

The Canadian Association for Supported Employment's Innovation Lab is pleased to showcase our partners. **To learn more, please click on the organization's logo.**



The Jobtimize® project uses technology to match a jobseeker's natural aptitudes and working style with the employment pathways that would suit them best. Through this partnership, the Jobtimize® platform will be customized for the supported employment sector, to meet the needs of jobseekers who experience disabilities.



The Right Fit project supports both employees experiencing disability and employers who require temporary or seasonal employees in rural regions of British Columbia. The project team will support recruitment, retention, and finding the right match for both jobseekers and employers.



The Gateway to Digital Inclusion project will scale up the development of the Gateway App, which is a free platform designed with and for the Canadian disability community to foster connections and employment inclusion. The app includes a platform where people experiencing disability can share their unique gifts and expertise, and a job coaching feature to strengthen employment supports and digital literacy skills.



The l'Académie Convex project will create an academy to develop and test a new, more objective approach to assessing the skills and abilities of jobseekers experiencing intellectual disabilities, to better understand their strengths, opportunities, and interests.



The Remote Job Coach project is a project to help individuals with intellectual disabilities, or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), become more independent in the workplace. It pairs together promising apps that exist in the marketplace to increase efficiency, collaboration, and encourage feedback and communications. The innovation was initially developed for job seekers/employees in response to COVID-19, and has since been applied to the education system to support work placements and transitions to the workplace.



The Support for Post-Secondary Jobseekers project will initiate partnerships with Career Development Departments in post-secondary institutions to develop and pilot a course to prepare students who experience disability for practicums, co-op, and/or post-graduate employment opportunities.



The Great Equalizer is a technical services project that will build on the established success of the Meticulon Assessment Service. This platform puts jobseekers experiencing disability and neuro-diverse conditions at the centre of an integrated [employment] service delivery model. The platform assesses employment readiness, and also measures on-the-job progress to inform individual development plans.



The Building Blocks to Inclusion project will expand on an existing pilot developed in consultation with Indigenous youth, on-reserve educators, Indigenous organizations, and First Nations Chiefs and Councils to address the multiple and unique barriers to employment that Indigenous, neurodiverse Canadians face.



The Youth Success Strategy is a national supported employment training project, based on extensive research, that will explore the impact of stakeholders including community partners, employers, educators and families on the lives of children experiencing disability, and specifically on their transition from school to work.



The "Minding the (Service) Gaps" project will address systematic and organizational gaps in supported employment services, particularly those for young adult jobseekers with developmental disabilities who face intersectional barriers such as First Nations clients, newcomers, and those experiencing intergenerational trauma, poverty, and mental health challenges.

Would your organization like to participate? A second call for proposals will be taking place in Spring 2023 so stay tuned to our newsletter "[The Case Connect](#)" for more information.



Dartmouth, NS



<https://fitfirsttech.com/products/jobtimize/>

Aptitude is evenly distributed, opportunity is not. Jobtimize® optimizes regional employment ecosystems by taking an intensely person-centric approach to accurately matching each individual's natural aptitude and behavioral profile with the educational and employment pathways to which they are best suited. Most recruitment and job-matching systems only capture the 'what' of the candidate – what level of education they have achieved; what their credentials are; what jobs they have held. Skills, knowledge, interests and experience are important considerations, but they are the weakest factors in predicting an individual's likely success in a job, and reliance upon them by employers perpetuates the barriers faced by anyone who has had limited access to educational and/or employment opportunities.

It is the 'who' of the candidate that is most predictive of their potential and their long-term success – their deep-seated traits, attitudes, values and beliefs, how they respond to their environment, how they establish and maintain relationships with managers, coworkers and customers, and so on. These are a much more reliable predictor of compatibility and success. When the fit's right, people will tend to stay longer in a role, perform better and are more likely to feel satisfied and fulfilled in their work.

This innovation will take the existing Jobtimize® offering and customize it for the supported employment sector so that it is specifically focused on meeting the needs of job seekers who experience disabilities. This will include a space where job seekers and their service providers will be able to complete behavioural and other questionnaires and use this to find the employment opportunities most suited to them. Employers, in turn, will have the information they require to make the most informed hiring decisions and therefore access a relatively untapped segment of the labour market.

Fit First is a technology company specializing in innovative, research-driven technology solutions primarily focused on improving the matching of Talent with Opportunity. They pride themselves on their expertise and experience in successfully delivering solutions to customers; ranging from the smallest company to multi-national enterprises. They are leaders in predictive analytics related to improving the success rate and efficiency in job-matching applications.





The Right Fit



Hope, British Columbia



www.freereinassociates.ca/

With this project, Free Rein Associates intends to assist people experiencing disabilities to gain employment in a changing labour market by piloting an innovative idea that supports employers and employees in rural regions of British Columbia. In particular, they will focus on employers who require temporary or seasonal employees, such as the hospitality and tourism sectors

An increasing number of employers are looking to hire people experiencing disabilities due to labour shortages in key sectors, a move towards more inclusive workplaces and other factors. For many employers, this requires the ability to look past stereotypical preconceptions regarding this largely untapped labour pool, and 'The Right Fit' program was designed to help. The program provides guidance in recruitment, retention and finding the best match for both job seekers and employers. Two key resources will be provided for the benefit of employers:

- Awareness and information on the benefits and challenges associated with hiring people experiencing disabilities.
- On-site Community Engagement Worker to provide job coaching. This Engagement Worker will act (where necessary) as a bridge for the employer to support the newly hired employee in learning their role, acquiring new skills, understanding worksite protocol/procedure and developing strategies for maintaining employment.

The project will utilize common approaches to new/re-employment, including work hardening and incremental, gradual schedules. Clients will also be able to access short-term training through Free Rein's existing programming to better prepare them for employment. Free Rein recognizes the importance of social justice and an individualized approach to supporting diverse abilities within complex structures that impact their intersecting dimensions, including cultural, social, sexual, gender and other factors.

Free Rein Associates has been serving Hope's employment needs since 1993. Their company started off small, offering workshops and short programs to help people become re-employed. Since then, they have grown into a larger organization helping job seekers acquire work, gain new skills and develop new careers. They are proud of their approach that supports clients to move forward as they need to, and encourage people to own their careers, follow their passions and achieve success on their own terms.





Gateway to Digital Inclusion



Edmonton, Alberta



<https://gatewayassociation.ca/>

In 1975, a group of passionate parents fought to open doors for their children. Gateway Association emerged as the “Gateway to a better life” they envisioned for people experiencing disabilities and their families. Gateway is a Family Resource Centre (FRC) and an Employment Resource (ERC) Centre that provides education, family support, mentorship and inclusive employment. It is their mission to assist the community to understand disabilities.

They are passionate about empowering families and people who live with disabilities to live fully authentic lives. They envision a community where all children grow within a family, all children learn together in neighbourhood schools, all adults work at real jobs in the community, all adults have real homes and real friends and all people are valued, contributing members of their communities.

Gateway Association’s innovative project is comprised of 3 components:

- **Gateway App:** Continued development of the Gateway App, a free platform designed with and for the disability community across Canada. The design and content of the app aims to build social communities, connections, digital literacy/fluency, digital citizenship, labour market participation and the democratization of ideas.
- **Storytelling Project:** The development and implementation of this offering will provide skills, resources, coaching, mentoring and confidence for people experiencing disabilities to share their stories, ideas and expertise with other members of the community and the general public. This would allow community members to feel seen and heard in a space where they can share the innovations that occur on a day to day basis. Storytelling is empowering, life changing and a key ingredient of community building with cascading results.
- **Job Coaching Feature/Channel:** This will be hosted through the Gateway App in collaboration with self-advocacy groups and service provider organizations and will be offered to participants and their employers at no cost. The aim is to make job coaching, employment supports and retention supports more efficient and effective while increasing the digital literacy of all involved.





L'Académie Convex



Hawkesbury, Ontario



www.groupeconvexpr.ca

The innovative initiative that will be undertaken by Groupe Convex is the creation of an academy that aims to develop and test a new approach to assessing the skills and abilities of job seekers experiencing intellectual disabilities. This is in response to input from various sources (job seekers, family, stakeholders, etc.) stating that a more objective assessment process for recruitment is required. Existing tools focus more on the tasks and needs of employers, rather than the unique abilities and interests of the applicant – especially in the case of those experiencing disabilities.

The new assessment program will include theoretical and applied components to highlight the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the interests of candidates looking to (re)join the labour market. The theoretical component is designed to prepare job seekers for the reality of the labour market, and includes training on health and safety, interview preparation, reading a pay statement, teamwork and dealing with authority. Basic skills are also assessed in this component, including literacy and numeracy. The practical component will include elements related to the assessment of skills required to accomplish certain tasks, such as physical strength, fine dexterity, stamina, ability to work standing up, resistance to noise, ability to use tools and geospatial orientation. All modules will be available digitally in both official languages.

The goal is to get to know the candidates better to ensure a better match between them and a potential job/employer. If a candidate is not yet ready to enter the labour market, the assessment program would

identify gaps that need to be filled. Identifying the gaps would allow the stakeholders associated with the person to develop better coaching and a targeted training plan to bring them more in line with labour market requirements.

Established in 2004, Groupe Convex is a non-profit organization that manages social enterprise networks and adheres to a social mission. They offer employment and skill development opportunities to people living experiencing disabilities, empowering their social companies to offer quality products and services.





Remote Job Coach



Winnipeg, Manitoba



<https://inclusionwinnipeg.org>

Remote Job Coach is a project to help individuals with intellectual disabilities, or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), become more independent in the workplace. It pairs together promising apps that exist in the marketplace to help increase efficiency, provide collaborative assistance, and encourage ongoing feedback and communications. The innovation was initially developed for job seekers/employees in response to COVID-19, and has since expanded into the education system to assist with work placement and transition to the workplace.

Based on the criteria of security, ease of use, robustness and cost, 4 apps were tested and selected to form the base of the solution. These are Routine Factory, Brain in Hand, Life Sherpa, and Cognitopia.

Benefits of Remote Job Coach include:

- Increased efficiency: Using the app has helped individuals stay on task and seamlessly switch to new tasks when they are done.
- Ability to assist multiple individuals: Supported employment service providers can remotely provide coaching (where applicable) and make work site adjustments through the web interface.
- Collaborative assistance: Multiple persons can assist one individual. For example, a manager at work can set up a list of tasks, while families at home can do the same – all in one platform.
- User feedback: Users can send feedback on what is working and what is not, allowing for improved communications and quick adjustments where needed.

Inclusion Winnipeg is a registered charity which, for 60 years, has been dedicated to making life better for children and adults living with intellectual disabilities. They do this by connecting people, assisting their families to navigate systems and leading the way in advancing their human rights. The organization promotes respect, empowerment and belonging to ensure equality for all.

Serving the City of Winnipeg and the surrounding area, Inclusion Winnipeg is a part of a national federation of over 400 community, 10 provincial and 3 territorial associations; together forming Inclusion Canada. Inclusion Canada is a member of Inclusion International, an association of over 110 countries.





Support for Post-Secondary Job Seekers



Winnipeg, Manitoba



<https://levelitupmb.ca>

Many post-secondary students who experience disabilities do not succeed in gaining valuable work experience and connections through practicum and co-op placements due to their poor performance on interviews, lack of ability to showcase their skills/talents and employer attitudes and fears. In this proposed project, Level IT Up will work with Career Development Departments in post-secondary institutions, in particular the Canadian Mennonite University, to develop and pilot a course for students preparing for various practicum, co-op or post-graduate employment opportunities.

This course will address not only resumes, cover letters, interviews and professional portfolio development, but also a greater understanding of self, aptitudes, desired working environment, accommodation needs, workplace expectations, responsibilities, communication skills, problem-solving, thinking styles and so on. This will feed into a mindmap that can be used as a reference when preparing for interviews and employment. It can also be used by the employer to help dispel any fears or concerns they may have regarding how best to work with a job candidate or new hire.

Level IT Up is a social enterprise dedicated to increasing the employment of Manitobans with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). They are part of the global alliance, Neurowrx; working together to advance this mission. Their goal is to showcase and support the hiring and employment of trained and skilled personnel in Winnipeg's tech sector as well as within those businesses and companies using similar skillsets within their workforce. Their consultants are sourced from among those with ASD and possess unique skills and abilities, what they term the "Autism Advantage,"; making them uniquely adept at not only filling but excelling in tech sector employment.





The Great Equalizer – Technical Services



Calgary, Alberta



www.meticulon.com

The Great EQualizer – Technical Services Project will harness innovative technology and a promising approach to research, select, test, analyse and grow supported employment solutions for many sectors with digital workplaces. This innovation builds on 5 years of success with Meticulon’s signature offering, Meticulon Assessment Services (MAS). The nationally-tested MAS platform enables youth in a pan-disability population, their family, professionals, service providers, community organizations, training institutions and employers to “put the individual at the centre of an integrated service delivery model”.

Through the Great EQualizer project, the next generation of MAS will be developed in collaboration with CASE and other key stakeholders; ensuring that it will be a cost-effective, replicable and scalable tool that elevates people with disabilities and neuro-diverse conditions to increase their inclusion in life opportunities, to enter into meaningful work and into the digital workforce. This will be accomplished by helping individuals assess their “employment readiness”, including the personal attributes, life skills, interests, job-fit, talents, interests and hard digital skills required to gain entry into the digital workforce or other opportunities. This information and subsequent updates also serve as a lifelong guide with results that can be shared with the job seeker and their support network, as well as employers, to allow for an ongoing assessment of progress and potential for improvement.

Meticulon is a charitable business that was created to provide specialized consulting services to businesses in the digital workplace, especially involving Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Those services included quality

assurance, software & application testing, and data management services. Meticulon was founded in 2012 by Autism Calgary and became a separate charity (Meticulon Consulting Inc.) registered under CRA in 2013.

Meticulon is the first enterprise in Canada to focus solely on leveraging the unique gifts and capabilities of people with Autism to create a self-sustaining, profitable enterprise in the ICT sector and other sectors utilizing a digital workforce, such as financial services (FinTech). Meticulon’s approach ensures organizational fit and facilitates a highly productive and socially rewarding work environment for all employees.





Building Blocks to Inclusion: A Roadmap to Employment for Indigenous Youth with Neurodiversity



Rosthern, Saskatchewan



www.metisfaamiifoundation.ca

Individuals who are both Indigenous and neurodiverse face multiple and unique barriers to employment. Moving toward increased inclusion and addressing these barriers requires innovation and new ways of thinking that are not grounded in conventional supported employment models. Such models often overlook the unique and complex needs of Indigenous people with neurodiversity, and culturally-appropriate programming is most often not available for this widely under-detected and underrepresented group.

The Building Blocks to Inclusion project will expand upon an existing pilot that was born from consultation with Indigenous young adults, on-reserve educators, Indigenous organizations and First Nations Chiefs and Councils. Testing of this sustainable, culturally appropriate supported employment program model will take place in 2 First Nations communities in Saskatchewan: Beardy's Okemasis Cree Nation and One Arrow First Nation. The Métis Faamii Foundation will work in cooperation with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, on-reserve members, those experiencing neurodiversity, employers and partnering collaborators. The strengths of Indigenous job seekers and employees with neurodiversity will be leveraged and accessibility barriers addressed through the inclusive design of in-person, online and blended education and training.

Every aspect of the project will take into consideration the cultural context of the communities in which it will operate. This framework will recognize the historical and contemporary factors that shape the lived realities and the traditional and contemporary Indigenous cultural protocols required to build meaningful partnerships, including those with employers. Once developed, the model can be shared and implemented with other First Nations communities across the country.

The Métis Faamii Foundation is an Indigenous non-profit organization that envisions a world where all people, including those with neurodiversity, are fully engaged in learning, working and participating in their community. Their goal is to create accessible learning and supported employment opportunities that are inclusive of the intersectionality of Indigenous culture, language, gender identity, disability and neurodiversity.





Youth Success Strategy



Whitby, Ontario



www.odennetwork.com

The Ontario Disability Employment Network is a province-wide organization that brings together businesses and Employment Service Providers to increase employment opportunities for job seekers who experience disabilities. They have over 140 member agencies; all in the business of helping people who experience disabilities enter the workforce. Members are from every corner of the province and support people of all disability types. Beyond Ontario, they have connections with organizations in most provinces and territories of Canada.

The Youth Success Strategy (YSS) developed by ODEN is based on extensive research to understand what strategies and service components lead to successful employment outcomes for youth – regardless of their abilities. They found that employment training and work experiences are essential in high school, and the role that parents' expectations play regarding their careers cannot be underestimated. Unfortunately, many parents with children who experience disabilities do not see employment as an option for their child for reasons related to safety concerns, insufficient supervision, lack of acceptance/understanding and other issues. Stakeholders in the life of a child who experiences disability, including community partners, employers, educators and families, are all critical players in bridging gaps in the school to work transition to ensure these students are seen as a viable future talent pool.

The global findings from the Youth Success Strategy in Ontario are applicable for family and educators' networks across Canada and could

impact how key stakeholders perceive the benefits of volunteering, summer work, part-time employment, paid internships and co-op opportunities as foundational to building employable skills. Promoting this awareness and empowering families and educators throughout the country is the goal of this national project. Trainers will be provided training on how to bring the workshop, "Employment: The GOLD standard for Inclusion" to 3 pilot organizations in Western, Central and Eastern Canada. Through these pilots, ODEN will be testing the hypothesis that family networks can advocate effectively, at a local level, the importance of higher expectations for students experiencing disabilities when the appropriate tools and resources are provided.





Minding the (Service) Gaps and 'Meeting You Where You're At'



Winnipeg, Manitoba



www.lifeworks.mb.ca

SCE LifeWorks have developed their innovation in response to identified systematic and organizational gaps in supported employment services; in particular with respect to young adult job seekers experiencing developmental disabilities who face intersectional barriers such as First Nations clients, those with intergenerational trauma, those without strong support networks, those living in poverty, clients facing mental health challenges and newcomers.

The “Minding the (Service) Gaps” project will involve Research/Program Developers who will create a service framework to include:

- Tools like ‘Stages of Change’ and Motivational Interviewing,
- A strategy for increasing organizational cultural competency for supporting First Nations clients, including potential community resources and partners for supporting individualized plans,
- Developing new offerings tailored to the selected target group,
- Addressing the existing waitlist backlog created by the pandemic for referred clients and
- Standardized current virtual group employment session offerings.

In addition, Community Engagers will be hired to support the clients selected for the programs.

The “Meeting You Where You're At” initiative will support people with intersectional barriers for whom employment is a good goal for the future, but not at present due to such barriers, life issues or service competencies that need to be addressed. Lastly, SCE LifeWorks’ existing Project SEARCH school-to-work program will be supported to identify young adults who have left school and therefore have no existing funding to participate.

In 1985, SCE LifeWorks was established by parents of individuals who lived with intellectual disabilities, together with engaged community members. Dissatisfied with the range of existing options for their sons and daughters, they had a dream of alternative services which would not only provide their children with opportunities and participation in mainstream life, but which would support people in contributing their own skills, abilities and resources to society.

The organization was built on four cornerstone policies which, to this day, remain the strong foundation of SCE LifeWorks. These are: person-centred services, identifying and fostering community-based opportunities, zero rejection of applicants and lifelong access for graduates from supported employment services.

