



The Community Futures Development Centres' Disability Lens: An Inclusionary Guide for Staff and Volunteers

Written by:
Cathy S. La France, MA, of Collaborative Learning Strategies

For

FutureCorp Cowichan
135 Third Street,
Duncan, BC V9L 1R9

join us

DO GREAT THINGS

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Section 1

A. *Introduction*

1. Purpose of this guidebook – setting the context

The CFDC Disability Lens is intended to provide you with a framework to view your organization's policies, procedures, programs and activities from the perspective of how they may affect persons living with disabilities. It will provide you with key questions to ask yourselves that will help you determine whether you have considered all the issues that are important to making your organization as accessible as possible. It will help you identify what further accommodations are considered reasonable and would be beneficial in order to achieve your goals of creating an inclusive organizational culture that provides equal opportunity for all.

It is important to acknowledge that you likely will find a number of the questions difficult to answer at this point in time. However, this not a deliberate attempt to overwhelm you or to make the work of achieving a more diverse/inclusive organization seem an impossible task. Rather, the purpose of providing you with these questions and background information is to give you a frame of reference to work from in your discussions to educate yourselves and work toward such a goal. Obviously organizations do have limited financial, human and other resources. Sometimes you are limited by your mandate and what you can offer to the community. Other times, you may simply not have the financial resources to make every possible accommodation that would remove all potential barriers for individuals with various kinds of needs. However, the important thing to

remember is that each of the components of this framework will give you an opportunity to consider where you are now, and possibly help you identify some goals for the future.

2. Who the guidebook is for?

The intent of creating this resource is to have a tool that assists volunteers and staff members of CFDC organizations develop a state of mind that embraces diversity and inclusivity. While the focus is specifically on persons living with disabilities, it is equally applicable to other groups that may be underrepresented in your organization and generally marginalized in society at large, such as, Aboriginal people, women, individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds, people with differing financial status.

3. How the Guidebook is set up?

The first section gives some background information on the concept of what a disability lens is and provides some food for thought as to why it is beneficial for an organization to have one. This section will help both volunteers and staff persons alike understand the importance of embracing diversity and making a commitment to being inclusive.

The first section also offers an overview of the concepts and definitions of disability, impairment and handicap that have been adopted by the World Health Organization. These terms are regularly used in relation to persons living with disabilities and there is often confusion as to what they really mean. Hopefully this section will help clear up some of that confusion for those that have limited involvement in the disability community and with persons living with disabilities.

One of the first steps to take in making organizational change is to establish the foundational values and principles that will guide your work. The second section sets the tone for being more inclusive by outlining some organizational principles that can guide this work. While it is important for both volunteers and staff persons to gain an understanding of, and make a commitment to, the values underpinning an organization, it is most crucial for the decision makers who are establishing policies and procedures to use these as their guide.

While you are taking the time to give some thought to organizational values, it is also important to reflect upon your own personal values and decide firstly, if they fit with your organization's values; and secondly, how your personal values have an impact on how you interpret and translate your organizational values into goals, objectives and actions related to people with disabilities.

The third section actually outlines the different parts or components of the disability lens, highlighting the various things that need to be taken into consideration when you are working toward creating a more accessible and accommodating organization. The components cover such things as making a commitment to diversity, consulting with the disability community, identifying and eliminating systemic barriers within your organization, and marketing your programs and services. These various components can be viewed from the different perspectives of both volunteers and staff.

Moreover, those who are responsible for setting the direction of the organization and establishing policy may want to look specifically at the sub-sections on consulting with the disability community, identifying and eliminating systemic discrimination and making a commitment to diversity. These sections in particular address the idea of including people with disabilities in all aspects of the organization, not just as potential clients, which is more of a global issue for the organization.

Those who are responsible for the operational side of things will be interested in the communications and marketing section, the subsection on access and accommodations, and creating equitable access to programs and services.

The case studies in the fourth section are intended to provide you with an opportunity to discuss the practical application of the ideas outlined in the previous section. They (the case studies) will help you determine the parameters around what you can offer to clients given the capacity of your organization and the resources you have available to you. This section will also enable you to identify the limits you face in certain areas, and perhaps help you set some goals for the future.

Again, this section will be useful to educate both volunteers and staff around how the manner in which they work and the decisions they make have a practical application. However, it will be most relevant to those who are making decisions related to the parameters you set around how you provide services.

One of the things to remember here is that within the disability community, one of the most important factors that individuals look for in their search for quality services is an acknowledgement that you begin your work based on the assumption that all clients you serve do have certain abilities. It is from this place that you then look at how you can build upon a base of knowledge, skills and experience in order to address any barriers that prevent individuals from contributing economically to their community.

The final section provides you with further resources and suggested readings related to entrepreneurship, disability and diversity/inclusivity that may be useful to you and your organization.

B. What is a disability lens?

A disability lens is a tool that can be used to review your organizational policies, programs, services and activities in relation to how they have an impact on persons living with disabilities. It provides a framework that can be used to make decisions around how to embrace diversity and create a more inclusive organization.

C. Why do we need one?

Some demographic background on people living with disabilities is useful in demonstrating the need to eliminate barriers:

- ❑ 1 in 65 people in Canada lives with a permanent disability
- ❑ Disabilities affect every income bracket, age group, racial ethnic background and geographical region
- ❑ Disability issues affect those who interact with persons living with disabilities - such as friends, family, and colleagues.

- As we age, we are at an increasing risk of acquiring a disability, and/or knowing someone close to us who has acquired a disability

Thus, disability affects us all...

The British Columbia Office for Disability Issues created a Disability Lens that can be used with all government legislation, policies, programs and services. Based on the assumption that all government legislation, policies, programs and services have some kind of impact on persons with disabilities, ODI states the following:

“Legislation, policy, programs and services that do not consider the unique life experiences and needs of persons with disabilities may inadvertently discriminate against them or create barriers to their participation. In order for initiatives to be truly reflective of, and useful to all persons, we must continue to ask ourselves questions which challenge us to think outside of our own experience. Integrating diverse perspectives and experiences into an initiative not only helps to ensure equity, but also fosters partnerships and builds support.”

This same rationale could be applied to Community Futures Development Centres. Having a disability lens could be useful to CFDCs’ to identify and address any real or perceived systemic barriers that prevent entrepreneurs with disabilities from participating in their organization, whether that is as a client, volunteer or staff member. Being able to identify and address systemic barriers becomes even more imperative when targeted programs and services are offered to specific populations, such as is the case with the loan fund available to entrepreneurs with disabilities who meet specific criteria.

D. What do we mean by the concept of disability and how do we define it?

In order to know who and what we are referring to when we refer to the concept of disability, we need to first define what that means for us. The World Health Organization (WHO) has developed three definitions that make a distinction between the different ideas related to disability, handicap and impairment.

1. Disability

The loss or reduction of functional ability and activity that is as a result of impairment

Disabilities can be visible or non-visible, significant or mild, singular or multiple, chronic or intermittent. Disabilities can limit your ability to move about, process information intellectually, balance your emotions, hear, speak, see and more generally, be healthy.

2. Impairment

Any disturbance of, or interference with, the normal structure and functioning of the body, including the systems of physical, emotional and mental functions

Examples of different kinds of impairment are:

- Physical, such as spina bifida, cerebral palsy, paraplegia

- ❑ Mental/cognitive, such as intellectual or developmental impairment
- ❑ Emotional/mental health, or what some might call a psychiatric disability
- ❑ Hearing, such as being deaf or hard of hearing
- ❑ Speaking, such as stuttering
- ❑ Visual, such as being blind or visually impaired
- ❑ Health/environmentally related, such as allergies to perfumes, chemicals, smoke and other toxins

3. Handicap

An environmental or attitudinal barrier that limits the opportunity for a person to participate fully

Negative attitudes or inaccessible entrances to building are examples of handicaps.

One way of understanding the differences between these concepts is to think of them in the following way:

A person can have a *physical impairment* such as spina bifida, which creates a *disability* that can limit their ability to walk. If this person uses a wheelchair for their mobility, and can not enter a building because there is no accessible entrance, they are faced with a *handicapping condition*.

Section 2

E. Principles that Guide Our Work

As volunteers and staff of Community Futures Development Centres, you are aware that CFDCs are committed to community development principles. CFDCs believe a healthy economy isn't just about making sure people are employed. More broadly, it's about community members working together to create their own solutions to developing a strong and caring community, and not having solutions imposed upon communities from elsewhere, which is why Community Futures Centres are referred to as 'grass-roots' organizations. Community Futures Development Centres believe in working in collaboration with groups and individuals in our communities to create healthier, more vibrant economy.

Based on the principles of community economic development, Community Futures organizations believe that local decision-making and local development are the most effective means for communities to shape their future. They are committed to building entrepreneurial capacity as one of the keys to establishing thriving, healthy communities.

Given the grassroots nature of CFDCs, and the principles that underpin their work, it follows that as an organization, you would want to be as inclusive as possible and representative of who is in your community. Often there is a misconception that people with disabilities are a minority of our population. This simply is not true. As technology has advanced, and medical procedures improved, we are seeing a dramatic increase in the number of

people with disabilities within society. The lifestyle that has been adopted by many people with disabilities is one that can be described as active, independent, and participatory in nature. This is in strong contrast to the often-held societal notions of people with disabilities being passive, dependent, non-contributory individuals that are taken care of by the government. Since the closure of many institutions that used to house people with disabilities, this segment of our population are an ever-increasing part of our communities more so than they have been in many years. These changes in society provide further illustration as to why it is important for CFDCs to reflect on how they can, organizationally, be more representative of who is in their community. That is, whether they have diverse representation in their staff, volunteers and clients. The following section outlines the components of a disability lens and offers a number of questions to ask yourselves that should help lead you toward developing a more diverse/inclusive vision of your organization. Many of the questions are difficult to answer, and you may not be able to address them right away, but they are intended to provide food for thought and a place to start from in the work you do to create a more inclusive environment for people with disabilities.

Section 3

F. Components of the Lens

In reviewing any information related to the development of policies, procedures, programs and services of an organization, it is apparent that there are four primary areas to consider when conducting such a review:

1) Consulting with the Disability Community

The ability to liaise effectively with the disability community at large, and various other community-based services can make the difference between being able to offer quality, successful programs and services that are open and accessible to all who might benefit from them, or alternatively, creating programs and services that do not meet the needs of all potential clientele and effectively exclude certain individuals, whether that be intentionally or not. Sometimes systemic barriers and/or discriminatory practices can be created unknowingly, especially if policies and procedures, as well as programs and services are established without the full knowledge of how they may affect people living with disabilities.

People with disabilities have fundamental information about their experiences of living with a disability that is helpful in identifying the barriers they experience to participating in a meaningful way in society. More specifically they understand the barriers they experience to accessing employment or self-employment, community

programs and services as well as volunteer opportunities. This information can be vital to determining how those barriers can be minimized or eliminated all together. One thing that is often heard in the disability community is “*nothing about us without us.*”

To ensure that you are open to consulting with and using the expertise of people with disabilities, ask yourselves the following questions:

- Has relevant qualitative and quantitative information about people with disabilities been used in the design, development and implementation of your organizational development strategies? For example, if serving people with disabilities is included as part of your mandate and operational plan, have you consulted with people in the disability community around whether there are people who would access your service, how you can reach them etceteras.
- Have you looked at how other organizations are being successful at such an initiative? In addition to other CFDCs, perhaps credit unions or banks can provide examples as to how to make lending programs more accessible to people living with disabilities.
- Have all stakeholders been consulted who may be impacted by any policies, programs and services your organization establishes related to persons with disabilities? Including for example, persons with disabilities from diverse economic backgrounds, cultures, genders, ages or type of disability.
- Have these stakeholders had an opportunity to provide input into all stages of the design, development and implementation of such policies, programs and services?

2) Identifying and Eliminating Systemic Barriers

a) Access and Accommodation Issues

Often visions of ramps, clear signage and grab bars in washrooms are what come to mind when you think of access and accommodations for

people with disabilities. However, increasing access and making useful accommodations can involve much more than the physical environment. Consider the following questions:

- Have accommodations for persons with different kinds of disabilities been considered, planned for and integrated into your organization's strategy to be inclusive?
 - For instance, have you assessed the space where you are located and identified any physical barriers that need to be addressed, along with any solutions that may be available to you to eliminate such barriers?
 - Have you considered such things as whether hours of service and the structure of programs or services are as accessible as possible, given your resources and the capacity of your organization.
 - Have the communication needs of person's with disabilities been considered? E.g. Do you have information materials in alternative formats? If not, can you get materials put into alternate formats upon request.
 - Do you have a TTY? Or, does someone in your office know how to use the operator assisted relay service for customers wanting to communicate between someone using a TTY and another person communicating by voice over the phone?
 - Does your organization encourage and support equal access to education, training, employment and volunteer opportunities for people with varying types of disabilities?
 - Have the transportation needs of persons with disabilities been considered in terms of where you are located, how people can get to your programs and services or participate in various organizational events? This is a particularly difficult barrier to address, especially in more rural areas where public transportation is either limited, or non-existent. However, being centrally located in your community makes sense for all your clients.

b) Systemic Discrimination

One thing is certain in mainstream society; people with disabilities do experience attitudinal and discriminatory barriers, as well as lack of access to opportunities to exercise their full rights as citizens. Social, economic, political and legal systems that support some groups of people, and exclude others, create systemic barriers. Often, systemic barriers and discrimination can arise unknowingly or unintentionally. It is important for any organization to look carefully at any potential sources of systemic barriers or discrimination their organization may be creating in order to ensure that all policies, programs, services and activities conducted by the organization are equitable. Ask yourselves the following questions:

- ❑ Do you know of any sub-group of people with disabilities been excluded from being involved in your organization? Have you thought about why that may be and whether there is anything you can do to include these groups?
- ❑ Have measures been taken to include under-represented groups? Or, have you considered any legal implications that may arise from offering programs and or services targeted specifically at these groups? For instance, people who have been labeled as having an intellectual disability, with an IQ of below 70, are legally excluded from being directors of a cooperative. While many people have advocated using the co-op model to create self-employment for people with all kinds of disabilities, in reality, if an individual lives with an intellectual or cognitive disability, legally they cannot be a director in their own business.
- ❑ Have you considered the legal implications of involving people with disabilities in other aspects of the organization? Again, a concern arises when someone is deemed “incompetent,” and wants to serve on a board of directors, whether that is a result from a mental health disability, an intellectual disability, or a

traumatic brain injury. While serving as a director may not be the most effective means of enabling them to contribute to the direction of the organization, perhaps there are other ways individuals represented in these sub-groups can be involved. For instance, the Community Living organizations that serve individuals with intellectual disabilities have found that one way of supporting individuals in contributing to the governance of the organization is to create a caucus of representatives that provide input and advise to board directors from the perspective of living with a intellectual disability.

- Is any aspect of what your organization is doing to include persons with disabilities likely to cause indirect discrimination? We have all heard stories of where businesses have made renovations to their premises with the intent to become more accessible to persons with disabilities, only to find out that the changes they made do not work, and continue to exclude persons with disabilities. A simple example is when a ramp is installed to make a premise accessible to those in wheelchairs and scooters, but it is designed in such a way that it is so steep a person in a manual chair can not navigate to the top of the ramp on their own. Another example might be when an appropriate ramp is put in place, but there are double doors to go through and the person gets stuck in between the two because they can't back up far enough to open the second door.
- Does your organization recognize that persons with disabilities may need different resources and supports in order to achieve equitable access and meaningful participation in your organization? For example, a volunteer may need to have access to your policy and procedures manual through an alternate format such as audiotape.
- Have you taken into consideration how geographic location, culture, gender, age and other societal factors may influence your strategy to be inclusive? For example, CFDCs are located in rural communities. Being in rural locations often presents some significant challenges for your clients to access transportation, especially for people with disabilities who may not have their own means of transportation or access to public transit.

3. Communications and Marketing Messages

Clear communication and full access to information is vital to enabling full participation within an organization. Language that can be construed as elitist or colloquial, potentially can limit one's access to information, as does placing information in inaccessible locations or in inaccessible formats. In order for communication and marketing strategies to be inclusive and effective, they must meet the needs of people with different kinds of disabilities.

Additionally, careful presentation of information about disability issues can be helpful in changing negative perceptions of persons with disabilities and what their abilities may or may not be. This is also true of information that is presented to persons with disabilities.

- ❑ Does your organization use language that focuses on ability over disability? I.E. Do you start by asking yourselves what can this person do, rather than, what can't he/she do? Do you secondarily, acknowledge what barriers they might experience, and how the person can use their own knowledge and expertise to minimize or eliminate those barriers?
- ❑ Does the manner in which you communicate recognize the diverse nature and experience of people with disabilities? For example, differing levels of education, literacy skills, and varying styles of learning and communicating?
- ❑ Are documents and communication materials written in language that is clear and easily understood?
- ❑ Are documents available in alternative formats such as electronic or audiotape? If not, can people request that they be put into alternate formats?
- ❑ Are documents left in a place that is physically accessible to those in wheelchairs or scooters?
- ❑ Are persons with disabilities informed that materials can be made available in alternate formats?

4. Organizational Culture: Creating an Inclusive Environment

a) Making a Commitment to Diversity

i. Sample Diversity/Inclusivity Policy

Making a commitment to creating an inclusive culture within your organization begins with establishing foundation principles that value diversity and support equal opportunity for all. What follows is a sample diversity policy that was adopted by the FutureCorp Cowichan May 17th, 2001.

Diversity/ Inclusivity Policy

The Community Futures Development Centre – Cowichan Region’s vision is that: “All Cowichan Region residents take responsibility for a caring, safe, and prosperous, sustainable community, ensuring opportunities for future generations.”

The organization’s mission affirms that “As a volunteer driven organization, Community Futures Development Centre – Cowichan Region partners with the community to achieve a diverse, vibrant local economy by facilitating the development of an entrepreneurial climate, key sustainable economic sectors and thriving businesses.”

Furthermore, Federal Human Rights legislation prohibits discrimination based on race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religious beliefs, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or age.

Therefore, the Community Futures Development Centre – Cowichan Region is committed to the following guiding principles that support a diverse/inclusive organizational climate.

The Community Futures Development Centre – Cowichan Region:

- Believes in the dignity and worth of all persons, while valuing their similarities and differences through mutual respect and understanding
- Values and welcomes diversity in its volunteers, staff and clients and is committed to building an organizational climate that is free from all forms of harassment and discrimination;

- Is committed to building an organization that is reflective of the diversity of the region it serves at all levels of the organization; and
- Is committed to creating and providing equitable access to all its programs and services for entrepreneurs through consultation with clients and community groups and by providing volunteers and staff with the knowledge, skills and abilities to govern and deliver culturally responsive programs and services.

b) Including People with Disabilities in all aspects of the organization

People with disabilities as volunteers, employees and clients

When we have certain programs or services targeted to specific populations, such as the loan fund for entrepreneurs with disabilities, we often envision that segment of the population as clients only. Nevertheless, facilitating the meaningful participation of people with disabilities within various functions of Community Futures is essential to creating an all-inclusive organizational culture.

If people with disabilities are represented in different roles throughout the organization, it will serve to demonstrate a commitment to embracing and valuing diversity. For example, board directors and committee members who have personal experience with disability often have a greater sense of what is needed in terms of setting policy that does not discriminate against people with disabilities.

Individuals who are providing direct services for clients with disabilities that have personal experience with disability and an intimate understanding of disability issues offer a certain level of expertise in knowing what resources are out there in order to eliminate or reduce the barriers that people with disabilities face in accessing

services and becoming engaged in some form of employment. Some questions to ask are:

- Can you envision people with disabilities in roles other than as potential clients, such as board directors, committee members, or paid employees?
- Are people with disabilities included in decision-making processes within your organization?
- Are people with disabilities represented in leadership positions within your organization?
- Are there opportunities for people with disabilities to influence policies, programs and services beyond being consulted?

c) Creating Equitable access to programs and services

i. Developing an integrated service versus a segregated program

One of the most fundamental questions an organization faces when considering how best to serve individuals living with disabilities is to decide whether there should be a targeted program or a more integrated approach to providing services. This is not a simple question that can be answered with one approach or the other. The Canadian Centre for Disability Studies and the Rehabilitation Studies Program at the University of Calgary address this issue in their report, “Urban Business Development and Disability: Models and Strategies.” (Neufeldt, Enns, Watters and Sannuto, 1999)

Essentially, there are circumstances when a segregated mechanism is needed and can be more useful to the client. For instance, new entrepreneurs who are in the process of learning about entrepreneurship and how to manage their disability in relation to managing a business often benefit from a targeted learning program.

A number of service providers are finding that entrepreneurs at this stage of development more often than not do benefit from a segregated or targeted assessment process at the beginning of their journey to becoming an entrepreneur.

Once individuals have completed an assessment process, considered the barriers they face to becoming an entrepreneur and decided whether they can address these barriers or reduce the risks associated with such barriers, they can often then be integrated into a generic entrepreneurship stream.

Another example of how targeted programs can be useful comes from a variety of alternate funding mechanisms that have been developed in other institutions for individuals who have very limited or no equity, no credit history or a poor credit history. Peer lending circles, micro-loans, lines of credit and loan guarantees are all mechanisms that are helping some individuals acquire assets and build their credit history, or in some cases repair a bad credit history with low risk. Although this example is not related specifically to disability issues, you can see how in certain circumstances targeted strategies and mechanisms can offer creative solutions to difficult situations. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that creating such strategies of course does require a certain amount of resources, knowledge and expertise.

Additionally, in order for any targeted program to be truly effective, it must be linked to a more integrated service system. This is especially true for those that have already mastered the foundational skills and

confidence to pursue an entrepreneurial venture. It is also true of those that are already experienced entrepreneurs. For the most part, it is important to offer those that have some experience with entrepreneurship a fully integrated approach to services within CFDCs. However, those that are new to the small business world would still benefit from a peer-mentoring program that has people both with and without disability experience that they can look to for support and resources.

Therefore, while it is important that the services offered to people with disabilities not necessarily be seen as separate and segregated in nature, it is important to recognise that there are some instances where entrepreneurs with disabilities will not be successfully integrated into the services that already exist. Rather, serving entrepreneurs with disabilities may require certain considerations that have not necessarily been developed yet or is currently offered within the CFDCs' continuum of services. This will require some creative thinking.

Key to making successful organizational change is openness to doing things in what might be termed a non-traditional manner. For example, in CFDC – Cowichan's literature on "Finding Out Who is - and Who Isn't – An Entrepreneur, it states that there is a common notion that entrepreneurs are born and not made, and "That the "truth is, anyone can be taught to be an entrepreneur." This is an important foundational belief to base the entrepreneurship services upon, which can and should also apply to the entrepreneur with a disability.

Within the disability community, one of the most important factors that individuals look for in various assistance services is an acknowledgement that you start first from the place that a person does have certain abilities. It is from that place that you then look at how can you build upon this base of knowledge and skills in order to address the barriers individuals face to contributing economically to their community. This sets a very different attitude in terms of how you assess their capacity to become entrepreneurs.

ii. Working in Partnership with other Disability Services

When an organization and the people involved within that organization have had limited exposure to the social and economic experiences of living with disability, often working in partnership with other disability service organizations/providers can be helpful in gaining insight as to how you can create a more inclusive environment within your organization. They have the expertise to be able to fully inform you of what resources are currently available in the community. They can advise you on such things as access and accommodations solutions, as well as how to identify and eliminate systemic barriers. Following are some examples of the various types of barriers that people with disabilities experience that affect their participation in community.

iii. Identifying Barriers

- **Physical**
 - Stairs to get into the building
 - Heavy doors

- Tight corners, narrow halls, limited open space
 - Desks that you can't get a wheelchair up to
 - Too much furniture
 - Small offices or cubicles
 - High counters, shelving etc.
- **Attitudinal**
 - Failure to believe a person with a disability can contribute to the overall direction and governance of an organization.
 - Inability to see or understand how a person with a disability can have the knowledge and skills to work for the organization.
 - Resistance to make accommodations so that a person with a disability can contribute to the organization as a volunteer or employee, or as a client participating in the various programs and services offered by the organization.
- **Systemic**
 - No organizational commitment to diversity and being an equity employer expressed through the foundational values, mission, guiding principles as well as the policies and procedures of the organization.
 - No role models of people with disabilities being involved within the organization.
 - No willingness to making various organization resources available in various formats.

iv. Access and Accommodations Guidelines

- **Physical**
- **Intellectual/Cognitive**
- **Mental Health/Emotional**
- **Traumatic Brain Injury**
- **Hearing**

- **Speech**
- **Visual**

In this next section, think about the various scenarios that are presented here and how you might respond to each situation both personally and at an organizational level.

Consider the policies and guiding principles your organization is committed to, along with what human, financial and other resources you might have available to you when deciding what your responses would be. Ask yourself what barriers you might face in assisting these individuals in reaching their goals.

Because an individual lives with a disability or some kind of functional limitations, this does not necessarily mean that accommodations are needed. Some people who have disabilities require no accommodations, some - a few, or in some cases, several accommodations are needed. This must be considered on a case-by-case basis. Similarly, individuals who have the same disability may have differing limitations and as a result, require different supports and accommodations. Additionally, whether the person's condition is progressive or stable may change the approach they take to the accommodations they require.

What follows is the Job Accommodation Process as used by the Job Accommodation Network. These materials were prepared by Ryan Kittle, M.S. and Tracie Saab, M.S. of CRC. Human Factor Consultants at the Job Accommodation Network (9/97.) They offer a number of questions to ask when identifying what limitations or barriers someone may be facing to completing certain job tasks. They also offer suggestions or ideas for making accommodations to address these barriers. This information may be useful to your organization when you are considering recruiting volunteers or staff that live with disabilities. It may also be useful in terms of assisting clients to look at how to manage their disability within the context of their business. Outlined below is a 10-step process, followed by detailed explanation of each step.

- Step 1: Identify the barrier(s) the person is facing?
- Step 2: Find out if it possible to modify the work to address this barrier?
- Step 3: Consider whether it is possible to modify the workplace?
- Step 4: Look to see if any products or services exist that would address the barrier?
- Step 5: See if it is possible to use or combine products that are currently available in a different way than they are usually used?
- Step 6: Consider if it is possible to modify a product?
- Step 7: Find out if a new product can be designed?
- Step 8: Ask if there is alternative work the person can do?
- Step 9: Take time to reevaluate and redefine the situation
- Step 10: Make a commitment to maintain accommodations

Step 1: Identify the barrier(s)?

Defining the barriers the person faces to participating in the workplace is the first step of the job accommodation process and is critical for successful results.

What are the specific limitations the person is facing that are creating barriers to performing certain job tasks? Be specific. Remember that even individuals who have the same disability may have different limitations. _____

Is the condition progressive or stable? If progressing quickly, this may change your accommodation approach to some extent. _____

To what degree do limitations affect the person's ability to work? For example, are they minor limitations that only require some adaptive technology, or are they major barriers that you are going to have to look at in terms of restructuring the work to be done? _____

What specific job tasks are problematic and what specific equipment if any is typically used? _____

Does any medical information need to be documented so that the person can get the appropriate accommodations needed? _____

Step Two: Modify the job

Job modifications can include:

- ❑ Working different hours that suit you best
- ❑ Establishing a flexible work schedule
- ❑ Working at home
- ❑ Sharing or trading job duties with an employee

Step Three: Modify the existing facility

Modifying the existing facility may include:

- ❑ Installing a fire alarm strobe with a flashing light for someone with no hearing
- ❑ Installing a ramp for someone with a mobility impairment to access an area where only steps are provided
- ❑ Providing an accessible parking space to someone who easily fatigues
- ❑ Replacing doorknobs with door levers for individuals with limited grasping ability
- ❑ Having a wheelchair accessible washroom with grab bars

Step Four: Purchase a product or service that will remove the barrier?

There are many different *products* on the market that can be used to accommodate individuals who have disabilities. Some products are specifically designed and intended to accommodate individuals who have disabilities while others were not designed specifically for that purpose, but work nonetheless. It is also important to remember that if a product is purchased as an accommodation tool, then additional accommodations may also be needed to support that individual in the use of that tool. For example, additional accommodations may include training on use and maintenance of the device, and co-worker support just to name a couple. If the product is to be used with other equipment, compatibility with that equipment must be considered.

The purchase of a *service* may also be a form of accommodation. This may include:

- ❑ an interpreter for an individual with a hearing impairment
- ❑ a reader for someone with no vision, or
- ❑ the services of a company that can transfer information from printed text into alternative format

Step Five: Use or combine products that are currently available in a different way than they are usually used

This step of the process requires the person seeking accommodation to consider using products for purposes in which they were not necessarily intended. For example, amplified stethoscopes were designed to assist nurses and doctors in noisy areas like an emergency room or on the site of an accident. However, these same amplified stethoscopes have also proven helpful to nurses and doctors with hearing loss in controlled noise environments.

Are there already products available that I can use to accommodate my needs? _____

Step Six: Modify a product

Often existing products can be modified in house; however, at times it may be necessary to call a professional such as a rehabilitation engineer, electrician, computer specialist or the manufacturer of the product.

Are there any products that can be adapted or modified to meet my needs? _____

Step Seven: Design a new product

This involves designing a new product to satisfy a specific accommodation need. Again, this may require the assistance of a professional such as a rehabilitation engineer, computer specialist, or a company willing to design a new product.

Will I need to have a new product designed in order to meet my specific accommodation needs? _____

Step Eight: Consider alternative placement possibilities

In the case of employees, reassignment may need to be considered as a reasonable accommodation. This step is not particularly relevant for entrepreneurs as you would be making the decisions around what your role is in your company and what tasks you take on.

Step Nine: Redefine the situation

If, at the end of the accommodation process, an accommodation has not been identified then an accommodation option may have been overlooked. At this point, it is suggested that the situation is redefined and an accommodation team put together. If you feel you need some resource people to help you in this process, an accommodation team may consist of rehabilitation counsellors/engineers and an organization that serves people with disabilities. The team may also include medical specialists such as doctors, physical therapists, occupational therapists, nurses or pharmacists

Will I need to review what has been looked at so far for accommodations and redefine the situation for myself? _____

Who do I want to assist me with this? _____

Step Ten: Maintain accommodations

Once an accommodation has been identified and provided, it is important to maintain it. When maintaining accommodations, it may be helpful to answer to following questions.

- Are the accommodations you chose being evaluated for effectiveness?
- Has any change occurred with your condition, limitations, work environment or job duties that would affect existing accommodations?

If a product was purchased as an accommodation then:

- Is the product being used appropriately?
- Was proper training provided for the use of the product?
- Is proper maintenance to the product being performed?
- Are other accommodations needed to support the use of the product?
- Is support being offered to sustain the accommodations that have been implemented?

Following are some questions that people who require accommodations in the workplace might ask themselves:

How does my disability impact my ability to work and/or be an entrepreneur? What barriers or limitations am I facing in the workplace? _____

What access and accommodation issues do I need to consider in managing my disability? _____

What people will I need to assist in making these accommodations? _____

What financial resources will I need to make these accommodations? _____

What other resources will I need to make these accommodations? _____

What will I need to do to plan for and access the resources I need? _____

Section 5

H. Resources and Further Reading

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

<http://www.janweb.icdi.wvu.edu>

This is a very good site on “job accommodation”—it also has very useful links to other job accommodation websites and other disability-related websites.

You can also visit the Canadian JAN website (“Workink”) at:

<http://www/ccrw.org/workink/ab/jancana.htm>

2. Links to other Job Accommodation Website

<http://www.equalopportunity.on.ca/engtext/resource/accommod.html>

3. Accommodation Ideas

<http://www.janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/english/pubs/AccommodationIdeaList.html>

This site contains many several ideas and publications for accommodating individuals with various specific types of disabilities. It is a very good reference tool that will likely contain accommodation ideas for an encounter with a client with a certain type of disability—very worth reviewing.

4. The Duty to Accommodate/How to Accommodate

<http://www.hrhc-drhc.gc.ca>

5. Workplace Barriers of Aboriginal People with Disabilities In B.C.

Prepared by the British Columbia Network on Disability Society (July 1995)
Please contact the national toll-free line at 1-888-815-5511 to request a copy

8. A National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities: The Community Definition (Nov./1999)

<http://www.pcs.mb.ca/~ccd/nation~4.html>

9. In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues

http://socialunion.gc.ca/pwd/unison/unison_e.html

10. Equal Citizenship For Canadians With Disabilities: The Will To Act

Federal Task Force on Disability Issues (October 1996)

<http://www.hrhc-drhc.gc.ca/sdd-dds/odi/documents/taskforce/english/report>

11. **Government of Canada Disability-Related Programs and Services**
<http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca>
12. **Human Resource Professional (newsletter): Successful Strategies in Job Accommodation**
<http://www.lrp.com>
14. **Policy on the Provision of Accommodation for Employees with Disabilities: Treasury Board of Canada**
<http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca>
15. **Inclusion Web Links**
<http://www.inclusion.org>
16. **National Institute of Disability Management and Research (Canada)**
<http://www.nidmar.ca>
17. **Canadian Jobs Catalogue–Employment Resources For Persons Labelled Disabled**
<http://www.kenevacorp.mb.ca/disable.htm>
18. **10 Essentials to Get That Job: An Employment Guide for Persons with Disabilities**
<http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca>
19. **The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (Workink)**
The Virtual Employment Resource Centre for Persons with Disabilities has a national site and resources for every region or province in Canada.
<http://www.workink.com/>
20. **Office for Disability Issues, Human Resources Development Canada**
<http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca>

This site includes many useful topics such as:

- World of Work–publications;
- The Duty to Accommodate/ How to Accommodate;
- Barrier-Free Employers;
- Canadian Human Rights Act;
- Policy on the Provision of Accommodation for Employees with Disabilities

21. Barrier-Free Employers (Practical Guide for Employment Accommodation For Persons with Disabilities)–The Canadian Human Rights Commission

http://dawn.thot.net/employment_accommodation/html

22. Revenue Canada Publications:

This site lists recent publications, including information on medical expense and disability tax credits, attendant care expense deductions and sales rebates for the purchase of specially equipped vehicles for those using wheelchairs.

<http://www.rc.gc.ca>

23. Annual Report of the Canada Pension Plan

<http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca>

24. Disability Benefits–Canada Pension Plan

“Facts about Reassessing Eligibility”

<http://www.hrdc-dhrc.gc.ca>

25. Facts About Changes to CPP Disability

<http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca>

26. A Safe and Timely Return to Work: Disability Management for Employees

<http://www.stategis.ic.gc.ca>

27. Long-Term Disability Benefit (Revenue Canada)

<http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca>

28. How to provide alternative formats

<http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca>

29. Subsidies to Help you Hire

In this section you will find information on Federal and Provincial Government Departments and Non-Profit Agencies that provide Wage Subsidy Programs. Some examples include the following: targeted wage subsidy program; NRCan Science and Technology Internship Program; Housing Internship for First Nations and Inuit Youth; Opportunities Fund; Youth Internship Canada; and First Nations and Inuit Youth Work Experience Program.

30. Bridging the Gap: Government of Canada Programs and Services of Interest to Canadians with Disabilities

<http://www.hrdc-rhc.gc.ca>

This site contains the following:

- Office for Disability Issues (HRDC)
- Accessibility
- Education
- Employment
- Entrepreneurship
- Funding For Not-for-Profit Organizations
- Housing
- Human Rights
- Income Security
- Miscellaneous
- Taxation
- Transportation
- Addresses
- Telephone Services for Persons with Hearing Impairments
- Internet Addresses

31. Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities (OFPD)

The objective of the OFPD is to assist persons with disabilities (PWD) to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment or self-employment resulting in increased financial independence (for more information, please refer to the Internet site).

Human Resources Development Canada Working Together: A Tool Kit for Diversifying Our Work Force. (1995) HRDC: Ottawa

Job Accommodation Network (JAN) available at: <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/>

National Center for Access Unlimited available at: <http://www.pdassoc.com/xcommand.htm>
(Chicago, IL)