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Financial Incentives to promote employment of people with disabilities: When and how do they work best?

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Financial Incentives to promote employment of people with disabilities: When and how do they work best?

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Executive Summary

Financial incentives are widely used in Canada and elsewhere as a way to address low employment among people with disabilities. They can take different forms, including wage subsidies, human resource supports, job coaching and job carving, retention supports, wrap-around supports, and covering the costs of accommodation. However, stakeholders often have opposing perspectives on the merits of financial incentives for improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities, particularly in the case of wage subsidies. Many have questioned the sustainability of wage-subsidized employment and believe that financial incentives may undermine the contributions that people with disabilities make in the labour market (Fraser et al., 2011). Conversely, others feel that wage subsidies, used under the right conditions, can help leverage employment opportunities for people with disabilities. This perspective views wage subsidies in the same light as other financial incentives provided to employers in an effort to help support the recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and retention of people with disabilities.

Despite the strong values associated with financial incentives and the significant investment in them, there has been little research examining how and when they work to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Through discussions between researchers and community partners involved with the Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy, the gap in knowledge about financial incentives was identified as a priority area requiring evidence to inform policy decision making. The need to develop evidence about how financial incentives can be used to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities is particularly pressing, given the significant funding contributions at both the federal and provincial levels. Specifically, there is a need to understand when and how they are currently being used in Ontario, and when and how they should be used to create opportunities for workers with disabilities to find and retain employment.

Study Purpose and Rationale

Given the current Ontario landscape and the large investment by the Ontario government to support the recruitment and retention of workers with disabilities, this research is timely as it addresses the controversy on the topic of financial incentives with a study that provides insight into the issue. The overall purpose of this project is to explore the impact of financial incentives that are designed to encourage employers to hire and retain workers with disabilities.

Methods

Drawing on qualitative data on the experiences of stakeholders (service providers, people with disabilities, and employers) with different types of financial incentives and circumstances, we explored opportunities, challenges, and the impact on employment for people with disabilities.

With recruitment assistance from our community partners, we interviewed 28 key informants who are involved in the employment support process for workers with disabilities. Each key informant was invited to discuss their experiences with financial incentives, including the costs, benefits, successes, challenges, risks, and outcomes. Analysis of the stakeholder interviews identified contextual factors that influence outcomes and illustrate the wide range of financial incentives used by service providers across Ontario.

Three service provider organizations were selected for the case study component. The organizations provided contact for job seekers with disabilities, employers willing to be interviewed about their experience with financial incentives, and frontline staff who deliver employment services that include financial incentives. Participants were asked to recount specific examples from their experience of how financial incentives were used and what seemed to work well or not work well from their perspective. From the interview data, we constructed four stylized case studies, combining data from interviews from different stakeholders. The case studies profile how financial incentives have been used to promote hiring and retaining workers with disabilities, and the impact they have on Ontario employers and the workers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study contributes to our understanding of financial incentives by expanding our definition beyond wage-subsidies to other critical services offered by service providers, and by highlighting the diverse ways in which financial incentives are being used in Ontario. The findings highlight the critical role of job matching, job carving, job coaching, retention, and wrap-around supports for successful employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Success was defined as a win-win for both employers who were able to find reliable and productive staff, and people with disabilities who were able to maintain employment. Wage subsidies were described as useful, in some circumstances, to help employers become more disability-confident and invest time in the onboarding process for people with disabilities.

The following policy recommendations emerged from the findings:

1. Evidence-informed financial incentives
   There is an urgent need to evaluate the outcomes associated with the provision of financial incentives and ensure that service providers collect data that can be used for program evaluation. Evaluation is needed to identify which financial incentives are most critical for supporting employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
2. Importance of flexibility and customization
   There is a need for flexibility within the funding envelopes for employment supports so service providers can determine the best package of supports to help each job seeker secure employment. Each situation is different, and the services provided need to be customized to meet the context. At times this might involve the provision of wage-subsidies, but not always. In most cases, it will entail comprehensive job-matching, job coaching and wrap-around supports to help people with disabilities find and keep jobs.

3. Collaboration between service providers
   People with disabilities have diverse strengths, interests, and challenges. Many face multiple barriers to employment that extend beyond their disability. Employers have diverse needs. A proper job match and adequate job coaching requires some service providers to have specialized skills. The funding model for employment supports must support collaboration between service providers in order to adequately respond to the complex needs and challenges of people with disabilities and employers. No one service provider will be an expert in all areas, so incentivizing collaboration across providers can better ensure job seeker needs are met.
4. Critical role of transportation
   People with disabilities need reliable transportation to be able to get to work on time. Reliance on public transport can be a challenge in some locations across Ontario, and specialized transportation service resources are not sufficient to serve all people with disabilities needing such services. Flexible hours of work can help resolve it in some cases. Improvements to accessible public transportation would increase employment opportunities for many people with disabilities in Ontario.
5. Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) claw-backs
   Many people with disabilities rely on income and other supports provided by ODSP. The way ODSP treats earnings from employment can have critical implications on employment outcomes for people with disabilities. There is a need to revisit the disincentives to employment within ODSP policy to ensure recipients are able to work to their capacity without jeopardizing their status with ODSP. Being able to be lifted out of poverty before claw backs, and accessing needed pharmaceutical provided by the program that employers are often unable to provide, are two recommendations suggested by several respondents.

Introduction

Financial incentives are widely used in Canada and elsewhere to address the low employment levels among people with disabilities by subsidizing supports for employers that facilitate recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and retention of workers with barriers to employment, including those with health conditions and disabilities. Financial incentives can take different forms, including wage subsidies, human resources support such as recruiting and training, wrap-around supports, workplace communications support, and offsetting accommodation costs. Stakeholders (including employers, disability advocates, people with disabilities, and service providers) often have opposing perspectives on the merits of financial incentives, particularly wage subsidies. Some feel it can encourage employers to take advantage of vulnerable workers. Many have questioned the sustainability of wage-subsidized employment and worry that employment opportunities will be limited to the duration of the subsidy. Further, some believe that wage subsidies can undermine the contributions that people with disabilities make in the labour market by incorrectly signaling that they are not as productive as their non-disabled colleagues (Fraser et al., 2011). Conversely, others feel that subsidies, including wage subsidies, used under the right conditions, can help leverage an opportunity or a trial period with an employer. For example, it can allow for an extended training or onboarding period without undue financial hardship on the employer.

In Canada, there is significant investment in financial incentives for employers to hire people with disabilities. The federal government directly operates programs in this domain and supports other initiatives through transfer payments to the provinces. The funds allocated to employment support activities are substantial. The Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities, administered by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), provides $40M to assists people with disabilities to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment (Maertens, 2017). Supports are delivered across the country by Service Canada Centres, in partnership with organizations in the community. Transfers to provinces and territories for skills training and other employment programs are approximately $3B per year, of which $222M is expressly targeted for people with disabilities (Maertens, 2017). In Ontario specifically, Employment Ontario and the Ontario Disability Support Program are involved in providing funds to assist with employment supports for people with disabilities, which include financial incentives for employers.

Ontario is a particularly relevant site for examining this issue in Canada because of its diverse labour market and vibrant community of people with disabilities. Many Ontarians with disabilities can and want to work and are seeking employment-related supports (Ali et al., 2011). However, a large proportion of the Ontario labour market is made up of small employers who fear that the cost of accommodating employees with disabilities without financial support is not manageable (Gewurtz et al., 2016; Ju et al., 2013). With recent increases to the minimum wage, some employers have become even more cautious about hiring people with disabilities. Many employers also lack what some service providers call “disability confidence.” This term is

used to describe employers who are comfortable with hiring workers with disabilities and have some knowledge about how to accommodate their needs in order to capitalize on their talent.

In a scoping review completed earlier this year, our team identified and described studies from published, peer-reviewed literature that investigates different types of financial incentives designed to encourage employers to recruit, retain and promote workers with disabilities. The review was based on a systematic search of the literature across seven bibliographic databases (Arksey & O'Brien; Levac, et al., 2019). We identified 12 relevant peer-reviewed studies that considered a variety of public-sector sponsored approaches to financial incentives from jurisdictions in North America, Europe and Australasia. Although the labour market context may differ in different countries, many common approaches to financial incentives were identified in the scoping review. At a high level, incentives were categorized into two broad categories. The first category being incentives that are positive in that they reward desired (Anderson et al., 2015; Baert, 2016; Catello, 2012; Chouinard, 2010; Deuchert, & Kauer, 2010; Gustafsson, et al., 2014; Jasper & Waldhart, 2013). Types of these incentives included wage subsidies, payroll tax reductions, cost-offsets for accommodation expenses, services to support recruitment, onboarding and retention of employment. The second category pertained to penalties or punishments for undesirable behaviours ones (Lalive et al., 2013; Nazarov, 1999; Wuellrich, 2010).Examples of incentives included quota systems with penalties for not achieving a target proportion of workers with a disability within an organization. However, some incentives bridged both categories depending on the context of their use (e.g., quota systems can also have rewards for exceeding targets set for accommodating new hires). This review highlighted the wide variety of reward and penalty-oriented incentives, some of which were pertinent to the Ontario context, and therefore broadened our understanding of the definition of financial incentives.

Despite the strong sentiments about financial incentives amongst diverse stakeholders and the significant investment in them by governments, there has been little research examining how and when they work to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Through discussions between researchers and community partners involved with the Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy, the gap in knowledge about financial incentives was identified as a priority area warranting evidence development. Specifically, there is a need to understand when and how they are currently being used in Ontario, and when and how they should be used to create opportunities for people with disabilities to find and retain employment. Such knowledge is invaluable to informing decision making in this policy arena.

Study Purpose and Rationale

Given the current Ontario landscape and the large investment by the Ontario government to support the recruitment and retention of workers with disabilities, it is timely to address the controversy on the topic of financial incentives with evidence that can inform the issue and assist with decision making in this policy arena. The overall purpose of this project is to explore the impact of financial incentives that are designed to encourage employers to hire workers

with disabilities. Building on the findings from an initial scoping review, we explore the perspectives of key stakeholders in Ontario involved in the provision of financial incentives to employers for hiring and retaining people with disabilities. Our objectives were to 1) map the available financial incentives for employment to hire and retain people with disabilities in Ontario; and 2) develop case examples that showcase how financial incentives are currently being used to highlight opportunities, challenges, risks and benefits of financial incentives.

Methods

To address the identified gaps in the literature and those identified in the completed initial scoping review, we examined how financial incentives are leveraged to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Ontario through primary qualitative data collection and analysis. Drawing on qualitative data on the experiences of stakeholders (service providers, people with disabilities, and employers) with different types of financial incentives and circumstances, we explored opportunities, challenges, and impacts on employment of people with disabilities.

Our aims in interviewing stakeholders were to:

- capture diverse perspectives on financial incentives to encourage hiring and retaining people with disabilities,
- identify what types of financial incentives are used,
- describe current practices in the use of financial incentives, and
- profile opportunities, challenges, risks and benefits of financial incentives.

Perspectives of Service Providers and Mapping of Funding Sources

With recruitment assistance from our community partners, we interviewed 28 key informants who are involved in the employment support process for people with disabilities. In teams of two researchers, we spoke to a range of service providers from across Ontario, as well as government policy makers at the provincial and federal level. Among the service providers, key informants were mostly executive directors and managers but included some front-line workers. Some respondents worked for national-level service providers based in Ontario. Each key informant was invited to discuss their experiences with financial incentives, including the costs, benefits, successes, challenges, risks and outcomes. They were also asked to provide insights into the various sources of funding available to their organization and others in the field. Interviews were undertaken by web-conferencing or telephone. The interviews were audio-recorded using Zoom and/or a tape recorder.

We analyzed interviews to map the current landscape of financial incentives in Ontario and how they are used by diverse service providers to help people with disabilities find and keep jobs. Analysis of the stakeholder interviews identified key contextual factors that influence outcomes and illustrates the wide range of financial incentives used by services providers across the province.

Case Studies Based on the Perspectives of Stakeholders

Three service providers were purposively selected to participate in developing case studies to profile the use of financial incentives from the perspectives of employees and job seekers with disabilities, employers and service providers. These service providers identified key informants who were invited to participate in the case studies. Specifically, they were asked to recommend job seekers with disabilities and employers willing to be interviewed about their experience with financial incentives, as well as frontline staff who deliver employment services that include financial incentives. Thirteen key informants were interviewed, each by two researchers on the team. The five people with disabilities interviewed were employed for periods ranging from two months to two years. The five service providers interviewed were executive directors, job developers, or recruitment specialists. The three employers interviewed owned small businesses in the retail, food and healthcare sectors.

Respondents were asked to recount specific examples from their experiences with financial incentives and whether they appeared to work well or not work well from their perspective. From the interview data, we constructed four stylized case studies (see Table 1 in the results section) by combining data from interviews with all three types of stakeholders across the three organizations. The purpose for stylizing the cases was to avoid revealing the identities of participants. The case studies profile how financial incentives have been successfully used to hire and retain people with disabilities, and the impact they have on Ontario employers and people with disabilities. They also show the challenges experienced with using financial incentives and how service providers try to overcome them.

Themes and Policy Recommendations

Drawing on the knowledge gathered through the mapping interviews and case studies, we discuss what currently works well in the policy arena of financial incentives for the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities in paid employment across Ontario. We make some policy recommendations that address challenges in the use of financial incentives to promote the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities.

Findings

Insights from Stakeholder Interviews

Perspectives on the Use of Wage Subsidies and other Financial Incentives

In our interviews with service providers, there were mixed feelings about the use of financial incentives in the form of wages subsidies. Several respondents noted that wage subsidies suggested that a job seeker was worth less than a person without a disability therefore

incentives encouraged businesses to hire a person as “cheap labour”. The examples provided to support this view stemmed from the fact that when the sometimes when the subsidy runs out the person is often dismissed. One service provider noted that the sustainability of jobs with wage subsidies is low, estimating that the majority of wage subsidized jobs do not result in long-term employment. Another provider mentioned that jobs created by wage subsidies are the first to go. One respondent commented that many service providers think highly of wage subsidies because they do not know better. It becomes a key feature of the way they market their job seekers and services. It gets a job seeker placed, but not always in a good way. Many funding programs require service providers to use them, creating a norm of use. Additionally, in some cases, if the wage subsidy is not used the money returns to the funder. Program funders may believe that providing funding in the form of wage subsidies will help quickly solve the concern of high unemployment among people with disabilities, but it can create new problems. For instance, it promotes the creation of a labour market of short-term jobs that exist primarily due to wage subsidies. One respondent described the phenomena as the “revolving door syndrome,” where job seekers and employers have a series of short-term subsidized jobs. The lack of attention to job matching, i.e., ensuring a good fit of job seeker to job, can make an employer “gun shy.” Essentially, the employer may be reticent to consider hiring a person with a disability in the future, if it has not worked out after several attempts. People with disabilities who have cycled through several short-term wage subsidized jobs may give up on the labour market, feeling that they do not have the ability to maintain long-term employment.

However, some respondents argued that wage subsidies do have a role if used appropriately. For example, a wage subsidy might be a way to get in the door of an organization that has no experience with hiring people with disabilities. It is an opportunity to provide a free trial to an employer. It can also help offset the longer training period that some people with disabilities may require. But most respondents felt that wage subsidies should be downplayed and not used as the key reason for hiring a person with a disability. Rather, they should be given consideration when all other aspects of the match are indicative of a good fit, but where the employer may still need the financial support to help alleviate concerns such as the possibility of extra training time required for the job seeker. It was noted by many respondents that wage subsidies cannot stand on their own and must be attached to other supports, in particular coaching. Unfortunately, they are often not provided with enough supports such as onboarding support and coaching. Some providers understand this; they do not want to use wage subsidies, but sometimes they need to. They know where they fit in amongst the other, more critical supports that they provide.

Many respondents felt that support to people with disabilities in the employment seeking stage (e.g., interviewing support), training support during onboarding and longer-term sustainability support in the form of coaching (sometimes described as job maintenance support) were the most important services they provided. In the past, coaching was primarily used for job seekers with serious mental illnesses and other cognitive limitations (e.g., developmental conditions such as autism), but they are currently used for physical disabilities as well. Funding for other types of supports was also noted as important, in particularly transportation support, since public transit and specialized municipal services for people with disabilities were not always

reliable or available in order to make their scheduled shifts. Funding for assistive devices and other equipment required for a job was also needed in some instances, e.g., coaching tablets and special software. Some employers also did not pay for uniforms and basic work gear, so funding for these items was also helpful. Some respondents also noted that small and medium sized enterprises would always need some form of human resources support, even if they are disability confident (i.e., knowledgeable about and comfortable with accessing the talent pool of people with disabilities), because they do not have the in-house human resources capacity given their size. As one respondent put it, they "know the boundaries of their abilities" to recruit, hire and onboard people with disabilities.

Given that the services needed to secure long-term sustainable employment may vary from job seeker to job seeker, several respondents noted that more flexibility of funding from programs would be of great value. Respondents noted the need for more funds for job coaching in both the short and long term. Funds for such a purpose would be possible if wage subsidies were not required for all job seekers placed in a job. Training was also emphasized as an important front-end service for both the job seeker and the employer in many instances. If funds for a specific service were not needed, having the ability to deploy it for other purposes would allow a service provider to optimize the use of funds available from a funder.

The Critical Role of Job Matching

Job matching was identified by respondents as a critical role of service providers, and when done well, it was the linchpin to sustainable, long-term employment for their job seekers. A focus on the quality of the match, i.e., ensuring a good fit, was seen as paramount. It required a dedicated pursuit of exploring the employer's needs and the job seeker's interests and abilities, respecting that people with disabilities have diverse strengths and preferences. The focus on a good employee fit built trust with the employer resulting in easier onboarding. In contrast, ignoring both the employer's and the job seeker's needs can cause significant damage. The employer may become apprehensive about hiring people with disabilities and a job seeker may lose their confidence and be prone to drop out of the system.

A related issue is ensuring the job seeker is job ready. One service provider spoke about a program their organization developed which was described as an employment discovery model. It is a way to get to know job seekers' interests and abilities and facilitates informed job matching. Also noted was the importance of developing soft skills. Employers may be able to train for hard skills, but soft skills are more difficult to train on the job.

The Need for Education Campaigns

A key challenge that service providers and job seekers face was the misperceptions and stigma of many employers. Thus, educating employers was noted as an important role of service providers. One responded also commented that education campaigns are best undertaken by third parties, i.e., the service providers themselves or other stakeholders, not by the

government. It was seen as an activity for which third parties were better equipped. Such efforts required funding and it is an area where government could invest more.

Hiring people with disabilities can be a challenge for employers because they often lack the knowledge on how to accommodate workers' needs. Thus, they can find it difficult to understand the value proposition. Rather, they focus on barriers and deficits. If they have some understanding of accessibility issues, it is generally in the area of the physical environment. Through education, the knowledge and abilities of organizations can improve in this area, but there is also turnover of supervisors/managers, so education is an ongoing and critical role of service providers.

A related issue noted by respondents is that employers fear confronting a situation where a person with a disability needs to be dismissed, what was described by some as "fear of firing." Essentially, employers want to avoid human right litigation that might arise if they need to end the employment contract of person with a disability if it turns out the person does not perform well in a job. Some service providers assisted with this process if it arose. Acknowledging this concern and offering to assist with the process if it should arise can allay an employers' concerns.

It was also noted that a lot of marketing is targeted to large organization, but most jobs opportunities are with small employers, or local branches of companies. Educating small employers presents challenges, given their time and resource constraints. They often do not have dedicated human resource functions. The small business owner will serve in that role as well as many others. Thus, providing human resources services to business is key element of the service provider's role.

One challenge noted by respondents is the move to online application processes for recruitment that organizations are turning to for efficiency purposes. Many job seekers may not have access to a computer or have the know how to complete an online application. Even when they do, they can get screened out automatically for reasons such as not having high school diploma. This can create barriers for even entry level jobs. Group interviews are another approach used by employers to improve efficiency in the recruitment process. This too poses challenges for people with disabilities, who may not stand out as a viable candidate in a crowd. One respondent noted the importance of having good relationships with employers to get past such barriers… "the secret back door is having a champion inside."

Speaking the Language of Business

Many respondents noted that private sector businesses are focused on the financial bottom line. They are in the business of doing business, and service providers need to learn to speak their language. Hiring a person with a disability is best framed in terms of the business case. It is critical to highlight the value proposition. For example, onboarding in the fast food sector was noted as costing approximately $4,000, so given the high rate of turnover in the sector, employers are apprehensive to take on unnecessary risks. Hence, it is important for service

providers to focus on what they can do for the business, e.g., assisting with ensuring a better fit that will lower turnover. One responded describe it as “find out where they hurt.” Human resources are often an issue with small employers or in sectors where there is high turnover. If the service provider can solve the employer’s human resources needs, they are more likely to come back in the future when seeking to fill a position.

Collaborations and Partnered Approaches

One phenomenon noted across interviews with service providers is the use of partnerships and collaborations. Service providers in different catchment areas often work together formally or informally to capitalize on skills sets and funding opportunities. It was not unusual for a service provider to draw on the skills and funding from another provider if they were not available in house. For example, a wage subsidy or accommodation technology may be accessed through partner agency. One respondent emphasized that more money could be spent on increasing specialized services, as it is not realistic for all agencies to serve all needs. Several respondents spoke about an Ontario pilot taking place in three catchment areas in the province that appeared to work well. The pilots provided funding to a group of service providers with one provider in the role of lead agency with the funder.

Funding Sources

Diagrams 1 and 2, in an annex, provide a flow chart of funding sources that support financial incentives for the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities in Ontario, as identified through service providers who participating in the mapping exercise. The key source at the federal level is Employment and Social Development Canada through the Opportunities Fund. Some of the funds flow directly to third party service providers, while some of the funds are transferred to the province and administered through various provincial ministries. Some funding is also available through other sources. For example, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board administers programs funded by premiums paid for by Ontario employers. There are also some private foundations that provide funding to third party providers.

Employment Supports for People with Disabilities in Ontario

There are multiple funders involved in employment supports for people with disabilities in Ontario including ODSP, the federal Opportunities Fund, Employment Ontario and the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care. ODSP Employment Supports are widely available across the province. However, the program utilizes a funding model that is based on meeting targets. Service providers often supplement ODSP Employment Supports with funding from the federal Opportunities Fund and Employment Ontario in order to provide more in-depth job matching, job coaching, and wage subsidies. Where service providers are not under contract to these funders, they may partner informally with other service providers who are. In most cases, this funding is used for wage subsidies.

In April 2018, Employment Ontario launched Supported Employment Phase One. Three communities were chosen for the launch: Cornwall (Inclusion Alliance, www.inclusionalliance.ca), Timmins (EmployAll, http://employall.ca), and Belleville.

These consortia were intended to integrate and replace Ontario Employment Assistance Services, Ontario Disability Support Program – Employment Supports, and Mental Health Vocational Employment Supports (https://www.ontario.ca/page/access-talent-ontarios-employment-strategy-people-disabilities).

The launch followed the consultation report *Access Talent: Ontario's Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities* (published in June, 2017). It recommended integrating employment and training services for people with disabilities. The intent was to create seamless, person-centred employment and training services. Feedback from the first phase was to be used to plan a full provincial rollout. However, since the three consortia began, the provincial Government changed and now service providers are awaiting news of possible changes to supported employment.

Ontario's Supported Employment program has a precedent in the United Kingdom. In 2006, the Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee report *Removing Barriers and Creating Opportunities* recommended a change in approach to employment services for people with disabilities. The report led to the development of The Supported Employment Framework for Scotland (https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20180516025656/http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2010/02/23094107/0), published in February 2010.

One example of a consortium of service providers in the United Kingdom is the Edinburgh Supported Employment Consortium (http://allinedinburgh.org.uk). This organization provides supports to find and retain jobs, guided by the Scottish Government's *5 Stage Supported Employment Framework* (http://www.employabilityinscotland.com/employability-pipeline/supported-employment).

All in Edinburgh (the new name of the Edinburgh Supported Employment Consortium) comprises four organizations: The Action Group, ENABLE Scotland, Forth Sector, and IntoWork. Together these organizations serve people with intellectual disabilities, mental health conditions, acquired brain injuries, stroke, autism, physical disabilities, dyslexia and dysgraphia, vision or hearing loss, and chronic fatigue syndrome.

The Edinburgh Supported Employment Consortium won a competition to provide employment services for people with disabilities through the City of Edinburgh Council. Based on a prior review of supported employment services, the Council wanted better outcomes, delivered through one pan-disability contract. In its proposal, the Edinburgh Supported Employment Consortium took a partnership approach to deliver the new service and was awarded a multi-year contract

(http://stats.learningandwork.org.uk/events_presentations/2%20Lianne%20Williams%201st.pdf).

The partnership approach to service delivery includes:

- One route for referrals
- Delivery Manager to oversee the contract
- Steering Group
- Teams working together
- One model, one system
- Shared training and mentoring
- Compliance and consistency
- Quality improvement

Services provided to people with disabilities by All in Edinburgh include:

- Advice on money and benefits
- Assistance with job applications and support to arrange accommodations
- Job-search support
- Job coaching
- Support to retain jobs
- Referral to other services in Edinburgh

Services provided to employers include:

- Enhancing recruitment practices to improve their accessibility
- Attending job interviews
- Retention supports
- Disability-awareness training
- Advice on accommodations

Another example of UK consortium is Supported Employment Solutions in Northern Ireland. This consortium comprises seven voluntary organizations: Action Mental Health, The Cedar Foundation (serving people with disability, autism and brain injury), Action on Hearing Loss, Mencap (serving people with "learning disability"), NOW (serving people with "learning disability, difficulties and those on the Autistic Spectrum," and employers), Orchardville (serving people with learning disability), and the Royal National Institute of Blind People.

One of the consortium's aims is to ensure that high quality, standardized services are delivered across its partner organizations by sharing their resources, knowledge and expertise.
SES was awarded one of three contracts from the Northern Ireland Department for the Communities to deliver Workable Programme across Northern Ireland. A support package is provided to employees/employers for one year and can be extended. Services include:

- One-on-one supports to individuals
- Job coaching
- Disability awareness training to job seekers' employers and coworkers
- Advice to employers on accommodations
- Retention supports for employers

Ontario Disability Supports Program – Employment Supports

ODSP provides funding for employment supports to service providers and ODSP recipients. Service providers may receive three types of employment support:

- Job Development and Placement, including Workplace Training
- Job Retention
- Job Advancement

Dollar amounts are usually determined by each service provider's delivery targets. Service providers receive funding for job development and placement when job seekers remain in their new jobs for six weeks ($1000 per job seeker) and 13 weeks ($6000 per job seeker).

ODSP recipients may receive two types of employment support:

- One-time Supports
- Exceptional Work-related Disability Supports

Supports to ODSP recipients fund assistive devices, adaptive technology, on-the-job supports, and communication-skills training to address disability-related job needs. However, this funding is only available if these supports cannot be funded under another program and accommodating the employer would cause financial hardship for the employer.

For details on ODSP Employment Supports, see Appendix 1.

Case Studies

Table 1. Stylized Case Studies

	Case Study 1	**Case Study 2**	**Case Study 3**	**Case Study 4**
Pseudonym	Koby	Patience	Layla	Blake
Age	20	41	26	32
Gender	Male	Female	Transgendered	Male
Education	Working on high school diploma	BSc, Nursing	High school diploma	College diploma in

		University diploma, nursing administration Certificate, office administration Pursuing college diploma in healthcare administration		laboratory technology
Disability	Developmental	Mobility	Mental health conditions Learning disability	Autism Spectrum Disorder
Occupation	Food preparation	Administration assistant	Warehouse worker	Cleaner
Workplace	Grocery store	Healthcare and home support services organization	Retail store	University research laboratory

Case Study # 1: Young Male Worker with a Developmental Disability

Demographics

Koby is a 20-year-old student living in London Ontario. He attends an adult learning centre where he is working towards completing his high school diploma. He dropped out of high school at 16 and started spending his time at home playing video games. His grandmother paid him to help with some odd jobs and he really enjoyed earning money. However, the motivation was to have money to buy new video games. His grandmother then suggested that he call a local employment program for people with disabilities and he agreed because he would receive money for attending the Skills for Work program[1]. At this point he was very motivated to earn money to pay for more video games. Through the service provider he also completed a food services training course and WHMIS training.

Employment Situation

With support from the service provider Koby was able to secure a job preparing sandwiches and salads at a grocery store. His job is considered part-time and casual in that his hours vary each week and he does not receive company benefits. But he usually ends up working between 30-40 hours a week. He is paid minimum wage.

[1] **Footnote or side bar:** The Skills for Work is a youth employment initiative for individuals 15-30 years old that includes 3 weeks in-class employability skills development and a 2 weeks job preparation training. Participants than receive a 16 week paid job placement, while the employer receives a training subsidy. Additional job coaching and supports are provided as needed.

He was first hired two years ago, having been motivated to find work to earn money to buy new video games. However, he experienced significant challenges at work. He had trouble working with others, including his manager, co-workers and customers. He would often get overwhelmed and not come in for his scheduled shifts. He also often missed shifts or showed up late because he would miss his bus. He did not feel comfortable calling to let his manager know he would be missing a shift or arriving late so he would often just not show up. His manager gave him two warnings and explained the process he had to follow if he could not make a shift. His retention worker also tried to support him by helping him plan out transportation and communicate his scheduling needs to his manager. However, after the third incident in one month, he was terminated from his job.

His employment worker agreed to help him apply for a new job but encouraged him to complete the Skills for Work program first. After completing the program, there was another opening at the grocery store. It was in the same department but there was a new manager who was willing to give Koby another chance. Things seemed to work better right from day one. Koby seemed to have a better understanding of what was expected of him and the new manager seemed to understand Koby's strengths and challenges. With support from the employment worker and a wage subsidy, the manager took a bit more time to help Koby connect with his co-workers. The employment worker helped Koby develop communications strategies including how to inform the manger when he was going to miss a shift. They also discussed his scheduling needs and agreed to avoid slotting him in for early morning shifts when the public transit he relied on was not yet operating. He has since been in this job for just over a year and his wage subsidy ended 6 months ago.

Employment Aspirations and Career Plans

Recently Koby realized that he needs to finish his high school diploma if he wants to move up in the company. He contacted an adult learning centre and was able to sign up for courses that will enable him to earn his high school diploma. He is able to continue working 30-40 hours per week at his job while working on his courses at his own pace. Although most of the people he works with are at least 10 years older than he is, he has been able to form good relationships in part because he has discovered that he enjoys helping his co-workers and is a great team player.

Koby believes his disability is often an asset at work. Although he sometimes struggles with concentration and picking up on social cues, he is very organized and has a very good memory. He was temporarily moved to help with the garden centre for a few weeks in the spring when that department was very busy. He was asked to organize the shelves and bring in shopping carts. At this point he feels that his manager gives him freedom and autonomy to work independently because they know that he will do a good job and help those around him to do great work as well. However, he still experiences difficulty interacting with customers on a regular basis. His manager is aware that Koby is not good with customers, and generally assigns him to positions that have minimal customer interaction. However, he hopes to continue to learn different positions in the store.

Services Provided
Although his employer no longer receives a wage subsidy, he still has contact with the job coach at the employment agency that he can call as needed. The other financial incentives provided to Koby and his employer included: screening the candidate for the job, resume preparation, interview preparation, support communicating to the manager about his skills and the supports he needs, a wage subsidy, job coaching (on the job support), and counselling.

What Worked Well
The counselling Koby receives helps him manage the social demands of his job and other aspects of his life. Many of the challenges that Koby experienced were similar to those experienced by other young workers and the youth program seemed to really help him gain insight into workplace expectations. Furthermore, it helped him learn how to articulate his strengths and challenges, and ask for support and flexibility around schedules. The new manager also took time to understand Koby's strengths and needs, and support him to succeed in his job.

Problems and Challenges
The service provider felt challenged by the fact that Koby did not retain his initial job after receiving many hours of support and various services. Under ODSP's outcome-based approach to service delivery, the provider is funded based on meeting their targets. When a worker is terminated before 13 weeks on their job, the service provider is not fully compensated for the services they have provided before to the worker up to that point.

Koby has identified that he really needs a supportive manager who can understand his strengths and limitations. He has a lot of trouble expressing what he needs from his manager and co-workers so sometimes needs some help from the service provider to facilitate this communication.

The employer needs a reliable worker who has flexibility to work in different departments. The employer can provide additional training when provided with a wage subsidy, and can also take additional time to ensure clear communication. There are enough jobs within the grocery store that the employer can accommodate Koby's preference to have limited interaction with customers and avoid early morning shifts when he has no transportation.

Case Study # 2: Middle-Aged Female Worker with Mobility Challenges

Demographics
Patience is 41 years old and lives in Kingston. She has a mobility disability and uses a wheelchair and crutches. After completing an undergraduate nursing degree in Africa, she worked as a nurse in a clinic for people with disabilities.

After Patience immigrated to Canada in 2011, she did a university diploma in nursing administration and then a certificate in general office administration. She is currently pursuing a college diploma in healthcare administration. Her job in Africa gave her skills in fundraising,

social work, advocacy, facilitation, and community development. She added to these skills by volunteering for a number of other healthcare organizations in Kingston.

Employment Situation
Patience is an administrative assistant in a non-profit organization that provides healthcare and home support services. She began as a volunteer in 2016. When she heard about wage subsidies from her service provider, she proposed the idea to her supervisor Marie, and they worked with her service provider to set up a short employment contract. After it ended, Patience concentrated on her school work until 2018, when the organization hired her on a second short contract with a wage subsidy. Registered as a full-time student, she receives ODSP.

Patience sees her disability as an asset, in that it made her eligible for wage subsidies and other employment supports. She notes that her non-disabled friends do not have jobs.

In 2019, Patience decided to look for work again and her service provider sent her links to jobs. She used her personal network to job search as well. After Patience contacted one of the non-profit organization's staff, he spoke to Marie, telling her that Patience was working on a diploma in health services administration. Marie hired Patience on a third short contract, this time without a wage subsidy, full-time at a higher pay rate. She has been told verbally that her current contract may be extended.

Employment Aspirations and Career Plans
Although Patience started a master's program in nursing, she soon realized seeking clerical work in the healthcare field would get her a job much faster. She chose a service provider from a list provided by her ODSP case worker. Her long-term goal is to complete her master's degree.

Services Provided
Patience received support from her service provider editing her resume, applying for the jobs, and preparing for interviews. However, to her the wage subsidy was most important in securing her first contract. She described her experience as follows: "They [wage-subsidies] crack walls…. I'll never forget that the day I mentioned that incentive to my employer; it was a big yes, almost instantly. Actually, that's how I got my first job in Canada."

She also received a start-up allowance to buy clothes and other things she needed for work and limited retention support. Experienced in advocacy, she was a self-starter and says she does not usually ask for too much. However, in retrospect she realized that she needed job coaching and more time to learn her tasks.

What Worked Well
Marie has hired people with disabilities in the past as personal support workers (PSWs). She has also received free disability-awareness training from the service provider. A job developer from the service provider calls when she has potential job candidates. Marie finds this hiring support extremely helpful, since there is a shortage of applicants for PSW jobs. Having a good

relationship with the service provider gives her access to pre-screened candidates who match her needs. Invited to job fairs, she uses them to recruit new employees. She also values support from the service provider during the 33-week retention period.

Patience values the support that she has received from her service provider and the wage subsidy, which gave her more time to learn the job and get up to speed.

Problems and Challenges
One of Patience's biggest work challenges is unreliable transit, especially during the winter. If the snow is not plowed, she cannot get to the bus stop. Alternatively, to book the city's door-to-door accessible transit, she has to call 24 hours in advance. Even then, the bus may not arrive on time. Because transportation issues make it hard to be punctual, she has avoided working in the winter. However, she is thinking of asking her employer about working at home this winter if her contract is extended.

Patience feels that working with a service provider has helped her avoid potential discrimination, because they would not refer her to jobs where employers are not open to hiring a wheelchair user.

Initially in her job search, Patience connected with a service provider for immigrants. She found they could not address her needs as a disabled job seeker. For example, she was referred to workplaces that were too crowded for her to get around. She recounted employers telling her that, once they saw her wheelchair, they had no job openings. In contrast, her current employer not only hired her but created space for her wheelchair.

On the other hand, Patience valued the language training that agencies serving immigrants provide, along with orientation to Canada and talks on how to adapt. She suggested that service providers for people with disabilities incorporate these services for immigrants, saying "There are problems that look alike for all immigrants, whether you're disabled or not. And then it reaches a certain point whereby if you're disabled, [you] probably face more challenges than someone who is not."

The service provider highlighted the need to watch for employers who abuse wage subsidies by laying off job seekers as soon as the wage subsidy ends. In concert with other service providers, they keep a 'black book' of employers who use this tactic. To prevent abuse, they clarify before offering a wage subsidy that the job, whether part or full time, is going to be permanent.

Case Study # 3: Young Female Worker with a Mental Health Condition

Demographics
Layla is a 26-year-old transgendered women living in Thunder Bay. She completed high school about 9 years ago. Although she is quite bright, she did not excel at school and has not pursued post-secondary education. She experienced significant bullying during high school and did not feel like she fit in. She lives with depression, anxiety and a learning disability, which has created

significant barriers to employment. She has trouble with dynamic memory and problem-solving, and has trouble interacting with people. She experiences significant self-doubt and lacks self-confidence. As a result, she often doubts her capacity at work and has difficulty thinking on her feet, especially in a fast-paced environment. She currently receives income support from ODSP.

Employment Situation

After finishing high school Layla did not know what to do. She initially attended an employment program for youth with barriers to employment. She was placed into jobs in the food services sector and this was not a good fit. She could not keep up with the fast pace and demands. She typically lasted a shift or two. Although she asked the workers of the youth employment program to send her to jobs that were more suited to her needs, they kept sending her to other food services jobs, so she left the agency.

At this point, Layla began transitioning from male to female and realized that she needed to find an agency and a job that would accept her as a woman. A family member recommended a local agency that served people with disabilities, including those living with mental illness and learning disabilities. She attended the Skills for Work program, which addressed many issues she had been struggling with. These included communicating with managers and co-workers, writing a resume and interviewing. However, she continued to lack confidence that she could succeed at work.

Layla was then paired with a job coach named Lorne, who seemed to immediately understand her strengths and challenges. He felt that she was ready to begin looking for work and that she could succeed despite her history of short job tenure. Together, they looked for jobs that did not require dynamic memory, problem solving, or interacting with the public. They met with a job developer to understand the requirements of different positions and identified a potential job in a retail warehouse. However, Layla still felt overwhelmed and worried she would not be accepted. She also doubted she would be hired and that she could do the job. She did not feel ready to sell herself as an employee. Lorne supportively suggested that he could attend the interview with her. During the interview, he was able to help Layla highlight her strengths and articulate the supports she would need to be successful. This strategy proved successful and Layla was hired to work in the warehouse.

Layla has been working at the warehouse for 18 months. She works part-time and receives ODSP. She recently received a small raise and therefore makes slightly more than minimum wage. Layla also received funding from ODSP for work boots and coverage for medication. Her employer received a wage subsidy for the first six months of her employment, which allowed for additional training and orientation. Although most warehouse workers are occasionally asked to work in the store when it is short staffed, her manager realized that this would not work for Layla and exempts her from this requirement.

Employment Aspirations and Career Plans

Layla's long-term career plan is to go to college and secure a job that would allow her to transition off ODSP. She is interested in video game and web design. However, she does not

feel she can go back to school until she becomes more comfortable being around others and interacting with the public. Therefore, her short-term goal is to be able to work in the store without becoming overwhelmed. She is receiving some counselling to assist with this goal and also continues to work with her employment counsellor to identify strategies.

Services Received
Layla attended the Skills for Work program, receives retention support from Lorne as needed, and received a wage subsidy. She has all rules for processing shipments at the warehouse written out so there are few dynamic demands.

What Worked Well
Layla felt that all of the supports she has received were extremely helpful but identified the Skills for Work course and Lorne coming to her interview as most critical. She is not sure the employer would have taken a chance on her without the wage subsidy. Also critical was the time Lorne took to ensure she was properly matched to the available positions.

The warehouse manager felt that hiring Layla was a good decision. The wage subsidy allowed him to provide an extended onboarding period including training and removing the requirement for her to work in the store. There is high turnover and absenteeism in the warehouse, so the employer is satisfied with Layla's attendance record and tenure.

The service provider is pleased with the outcome of Layla's supports. She will apply for additional funding to provide ongoing retention support to Layla, as she still occasionally needs telephone support. Recently she helped Layla communicate a medication change to her manager. This medication change impacted her performance for a few weeks as she became drowsy. Layla also recently noticed that there was a brochure for transgender support on the table in the lunch room. This made her feel accepted.

Problems and Challenges
An ongoing challenge is the lack of public transportation available to Layla on weekends, late nights and early mornings. Layla is completely reliant on public transit and unable to make it to work for shifts when there is reduced transit service. When the weather is nice she will ride her bike but, during most of the year, her capacity to get to work is limited by the lack of public transit.

Case Study # 4: Male Worker with Autism

Demographics
Blake is 32 and on the autism spectrum. He and his girlfriend live in a rent-geared-to-income apartment in Waterloo. After receiving a college diploma in lab technology, he completed an internship in the lab of a medical-supplies manufacturer.

Blake views autism as "both a curse and a gift". Although he finds interpersonal communication challenging, he is a very strict follower of procedures—which is necessary to ensure lab safety.

Employment Situation
On the advice of his service provider, Blake volunteered at a university research lab. After a few months, he was hired as a cleaner on a one-year contract with a 100% wage subsidy at minimum wage. The subsidy was arranged through a partnering service provider that had access to the Opportunities Fund.

Blake works 3 hours a day, 5 days a week. He also receives income from ODSP, along with dental care and eyeglass benefits. Being a casual employee, he is not eligible for these benefits through his employer. However, he can access the university's fitness centre and pool for free. A few months ago, Blake's contract was renewed for two more years, and he received a raise to $19/hour. Blake is concerned that, if his hours increased and he started earning more money, his rent would rise to the point that he would lose his rent subsidy and be unable to afford his apartment should his contract not be renewed.

Employment Aspirations and Career Plans
Being a cleaner gives Blake access to all the labs on his floor, so he learns about the technologies in use. He regards the job as a "foot in the door" towards a better-paying technologist job that fits his education and his passion for science. He would also like to shift from casual to permanent status so he has the job security needed to start a family with his girlfriend.

Services Provided
Blake found out about the service provider through his mother. The agency helped him to create a resume and look for jobs. When he started his current job, he received job coaching and the service provider kept in touch with him. They use an employment-readiness evaluation tool to measure job seekers' progress between pre-employment training and job placement.

What Worked Well
Blake said that the service provider had the contacts he needed to build a job-search network related to his field and that he could not have built this network on his own.

Blake's service provider explained that, because some people with autism tend to answer questions either yes or no, not look the employer in the eye, and not want to shake their hand, they often do not do well in interviews. So she attended Blake's interview with him. She also coached him on how to communicate concerns at work and, before he met with his supervisor, wrote scripts expressing the concerns and role played them.

Blake's retention specialist explained that, not only does she give job seekers emotional support, she also helps them find natural supports at work. In the first 13 weeks, she checks in with job seekers at least once a week. Some job seekers call her once a month, and some even multiple times a day to vent about stressors. During the calls, she does conflict resolution and problem solving with them. She also attends meetings between job seekers and their other support workers.

The service provider belongs to a consortium of agencies that serve people with disabilities. These agencies collaborate by sharing expertise and access to financial incentives such as funding for accommodations and wage subsidies through Employment Ontario and the Opportunities Fund.

Problems and Challenges
Blake explained that he needs instructions (preferably written) explained to him a few times before they set in. During his first two weeks at work, his job coach broke down each task into its component parts and created lists. Later on, when his duties expanded to making deliveries to other labs at the university, he needed detailed information on the routes and someone to accompany him. The job coach drew a map of the routes between each delivery point and shadowed him. Once Blake learned the routes, he navigated on his own.

Because the job coach was not a university employee with security clearance, he was not allowed to enter certain parts of the lab. Because Blake was nervous being on his own during training, the retention specialist provided emotional support by phone. Although things worked out in the end for Blake, it took him a long time to learn how to clean the secure areas of the lab.

When Blake was searching online job sites, he found that jobs matching his education all required experience. He felt that, for recent grads with disabilities, having access to wage subsidies, job coaching, and other services can boost their chances on the labour market.

Blake's service provider views wage subsidies as a way of compensating for employers' perception that hiring people with disabilities is risky because on-the-job training will take longer. According to the service provider, it is usually small business operators who ask for wage subsidies. The service provider prefers not to offer them but will do so to "sweeten the pot," as she says, especially if they are competing with other agencies (such as those serving youth) that can also offer wage subsidies. Wage subsidies can also be used to compensate employers who want to retain a really reliable employee who needs more training than the workplace can provide.

Discussion

The findings from this research highlight a complexity in the employment supports for people with disabilities in Ontario. Although there are significant government investments and a variety of service providers with significant expertise and innovative practices, the services and opportunities for workers and employers vary across the province. Most service providers provide a range of financial incentives for employers, including job development, job coaching, job matching, and retention supports, and a time-limited wage subsidy under certain circumstances. However, what seemed to be most valued by employers and job candidates/workers were the human resources support focused on helping employers recruit

suitable job candidates, and helping workers with disabilities problem solve challenges that could otherwise lead to job loss.

The complexity of employment support programs for people with disabilities has been reported in previous studies (Kirsh et al., 2016; Stapleton & Tweddle, 2014; Matthews, 2006). While this report supported this previous literature it established a unique contribution to the literature as with specific focus on programs that provide financial incentives to employers to hire people with disabilities. This report highlighted the variation of how financial incentives are used across these different programs and contexts.

Multiple layers of barriers to employment for people with disabilities were highlighted by the respondents in this study. Some of the identified barriers included the fact that individuals were newly immigrated to Canada, young with limited workplace experience, gender diverse, poor, and/or lacking access to reliable transportation. Participants described seeking employment supports initially from service providers who specialized in working with youth or immigrants but had modest success with them. These participants attributed their initial challenges to the lack of understanding of their disability and the service provider's inability to adequately address their needs. The interaction of multiple barriers for individuals with a disability made makes the search for employment additionally difficult. These barriers highlight the depreciated factors in low employment rates and acknowledge the skill sets and expertise required of service providers to work with people with diverse abilities. It is of importance to equip these service providers with the resources to address a multitude of complex barriers to employment among people with disabilities.

Many human resources supports were seen as the most valued financial incentives in this study. Incentivized supports included pre-screening job candidates to ensure a good match to the position, job coaching, and retentions supports such as counselling. Wage subsidies were described as supporting smaller employers with funding to offset longer training periods and ongoing supports. Job coaching was described as a way for employers to provide feedback to their employees and ensure that they meet the requirements of the position, and wraparound support were described as preventing job losses by helping people get to work and perform their job duties. People with disabilities and service providers also highlighted the importance of resume and interview supports, noting that many people with disabilities have trouble showcasing their skills in the context of an interview or applying through online platforms. Often being hired was attributed to having a service provider help with the application process and prepare for the interview. At times, service providers attended interviews with job seekers to help them showcase their skills and experiences. The service providers were often involved in helping workers with disabilities communicate with their supervisor, which was often essential for job retention. Human resources supports as financial incentives were beneficial from both the employee and employer point of view.

Another key support to employers identified by respondents was assistance with the provision of workplace accommodations. Accommodations were job/task-specific and also specific to the workday. Participants reported incidents of job carving so that individuals could perform the

essential aspects of a job they excelled at. These same employees would then be exempt from other aspects of a given job role if it was of greater difficulty. For the workday and work shift accommodations, employers and workers described flexibility around scheduling. Many employers ensured that staff who relied on public transit could get to work for their scheduled shift. It was found that workplace accommodations were not solely task specific and encompassed the work day as a whole.

There are risks involved in the provision of financial incentives. Risks to job seekers include the possibility of job termination following the end of the wage-subsidy. This risk is particularly significant because it can destroy confidence and discourage further job seeking efforts. Risks to service providers include the unpredictability and instability of program funding, making it challenging to set long-term organizational goals, recruit high quality personnel, and build relationships. In particular, the current outcome-based funding model within ODSP employment supports is particularly challenging for smaller organizations. These challenges have been reported in the literature (see, for example, Gewurtz et al. 2015). The findings reported here advance this line of inquiry by highlighting how financial incentives for employers are used by service providers to meet targets in ways that may not always improve long-term employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

Successful service providers have developed strategies to help minimize these risks. These strategies include developing close relationships with employers and clearly articulating the expectation that jobs continue beyond the duration of a wage subsidy, providing ongoing retention support, and keeping track of employers who abuse wage-subsidies and other financial incentives. Furthermore, many service providers seek funding from multiple sources and partner with other local service providers to provide comprehensive services to their job seekers. The collaborations and partnerships between service providers seem promising and worthy of further attention.

Despite these successes, some findings highlight areas for improvement in the provision of financial incentives for employers to hire people with disabilities. Notably, a few of the participants were significantly underemployed, working in entry-level cleaning or administrative support jobs despite having multiple degrees in technology or healthcare. In some cases, the participants were young and lacked experience. Therefore, highlighting an important need for service providers to help job seekers attain additional education, or more suitable careers in their given field. Additionally, there is a need to improve data collection among service providers to support a comprehensive evaluation of how financial incentives for employers work to improve outcomes. Given the necessity of service providers to many of the highlighted benefits of financial incentives, service providers provide a key window into the ongoing controversy around the use and potential misuse of wage subsidies.

Conclusions

This study contributes to the understanding of how and when financial incentives work when and do not work well. It also expands the definition of financial incentives beyond wage-subsidies to other critical services offered by service providers and by highlighting the diverse ways in which financial incentives are being used in Ontario. The findings highlight the critical role of job matching, job carving, job coaching, retention, and wrap-around supports for successful employment outcomes of people with disabilities. Successful employment was defined as a win-win for both employers who were able to find reliable and productive staff, and people with disabilities who were able to secure long-term employment.

The following policy recommendations emerged from the findings:

1. *Evidence-informed financial incentives*
   There is an urgent need to evaluate the outcomes associated with the provision of financial incentives and ensure that service providers collect data that can be used for program evaluation. Evaluation is needed to identify which financial incentives are most critical for supporting employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
2. *Importance of flexibility and customization*
   There is a need for flexibility within the funding envelopes for employment supports so service providers can determine the best package of supports to help each job seeker secure employment. Each situation is different, and the services provided need to be customized to meet the context. At times this might involve the provision of wage-subsidies, but not always. In most cases it will entail comprehensive job-matching, job coaching and wrap-around supports to help people with disabilities find and keep jobs.
3. *Collaboration between service providers*
   People with disabilities have diverse strengths, interests, and challenges. Many face multiple barriers to employment that extend beyond their disability. Employers have diverse needs. A proper job match and adequate job coaching requires some service providers to have specialized skills. The funding model for employment supports must support collaboration between service providers in order to adequately respond to the complex needs and challenges of people with disabilities and employers. No one service provider will be an expert in all areas, so incentivizing collaboration across providers can better ensure job seeker needs are met.
4. *Critical role of transportation*
   People with disabilities need reliable transportation to be able to get to work on time. Reliance on public transport can be a challenge in some locations across Ontario, and specialized transportation service resources are not sufficient to serve all people with disabilities needing such services. Flexible hours of work can help resolve it in some cases. Improvements to accessible public transportation would increase employment opportunities for many people with disabilities in Ontario.
5. *Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) claw-backs*

Many people with disabilities rely on income and other supports provided by ODSP. The way ODSP treats earnings from employment can have critical implications on employment outcomes for people with disabilities. There is a need to revisit the disincentives to employment within ODSP policy to ensure recipients are able to work to their capacity without jeopardizing their status with ODSP. Being able to be lifted out of poverty before claw backs, and accessing needed pharmaceutical provided by the program that employers are often unable to provide, are two recommendations suggested by several respondents.

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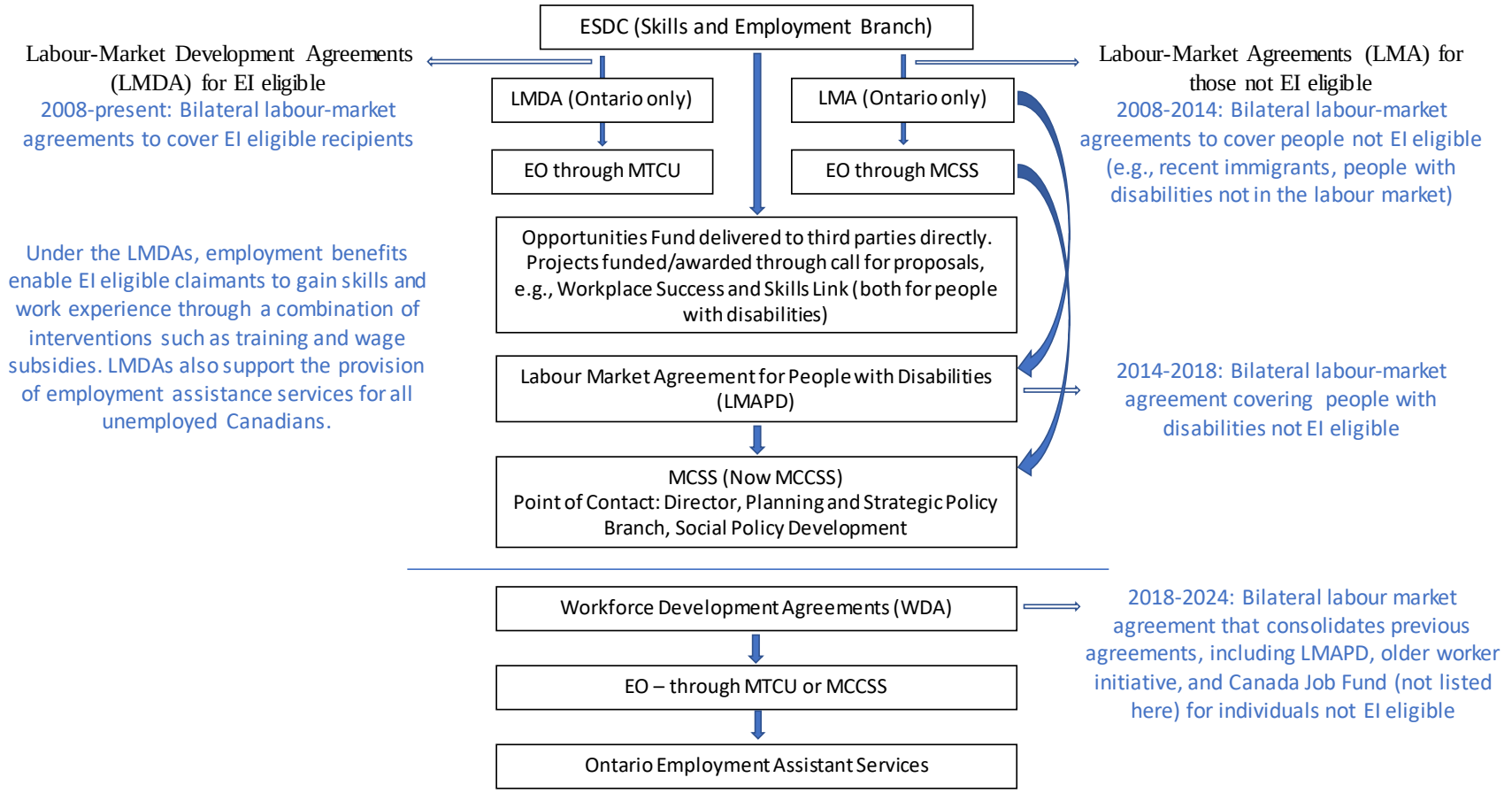
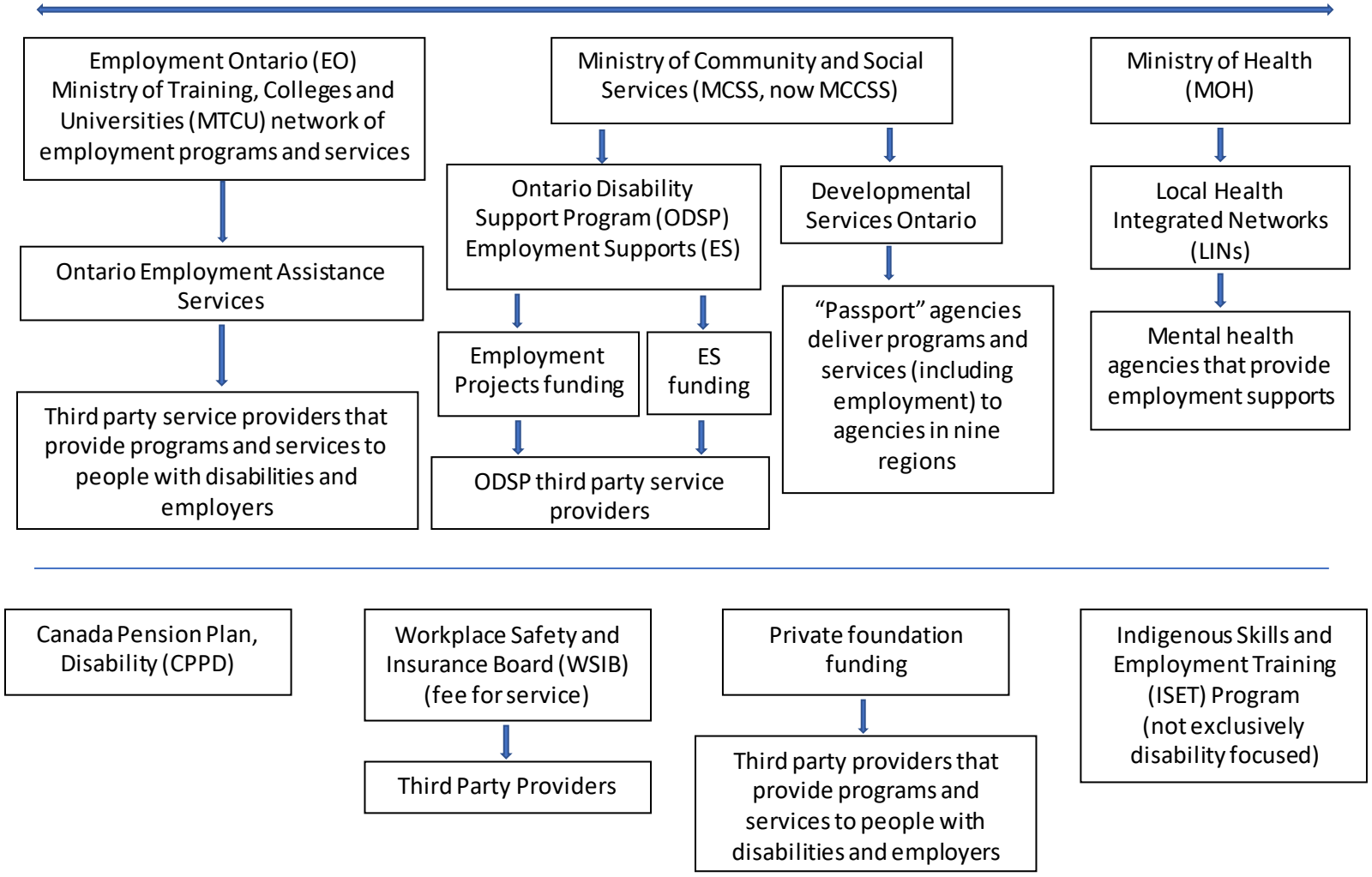
Diagram 1: Funding Map of Labour Market Transfers to Ontario for People with Disabilities*



*Roughly 50% of all provincial funding for labour market interventions come from transfer payments.

Diagram 2: Labour Market Transfer Agreement-Funded Employment Programs (MTCU) (including for people with disabilities), MCSS and MOH



Appendix 1: Ontario Disability Support Program – Employment Supports

Sources: (accessed August 28, 2019),
FIS Case study interview with participant PP6-SP

Employment support	Description	Funding	Duration	Requirements
Job Development and Placement	Includes: -Job development with employers -Finding and/or developing workplace training and employment opportunities -Screening and marketing job seekers -Job preparation activities helping job seekers with job search (e.g. preparing resumes, covering letters, employment applications) -Arranging job training and/or employment placement supports -Putting in place tools and supports (e.g. equipment, job coaches) -Follow-up support to employer job seeker -Negotiating accommodations with employer	Service providers Earn: -$1,000 when job seeker placed for 6 weeks -$6,000 placed for 13 weeks (including the 6 weeks above		
Workplace Training (under Job Development and Placement)	Job Trials and Work Experience Opportunities (under Workplace Training)			-Adequate supervision and training -Written agreement between employer, job seeker, service provider -Process for monitoring and evaluation

	On-the-job Training (under Workplace Training)	May be provided for either: -Training that relates to employee's job responsibilities or adaptive technology -Wage subsidy to cover employer costs of training, additional supervision or time during early stages of employment		-Written agreement between employer, job seeker -Commitment from employer to: Hire at entry level wage or better Develop training plan Share training costs Participate in progress review
Job Retention	Supports may involve: -Direct assistance in workplace -Phone contact with job seekers brief meetings with employers -Supports for work-related activities outside workplace	May fund: -Job coaching and on-the-job supports -Helping job seekers with negotiate workplace supports -Helping employers identify and develop accommodations -Job monitoring and interventions if there are work performance issues - Help finding more suitable employment if job seeker unable to retain job Retention-Only Stream Two categories of job seekers eligible: -Employed applicants at risk of losing job	For ODSP income support recipients, up to 33 months after job placement For non-income support job seekers, up to 15 months after job placement Job Placement and Retention Stream: Once job seekers have been placed for	Accommodation items provided through ODSP employment supports belong to the job seeker, not the employer, should the employee leave the employment. Employers required to provide necessary accommodations under Ontario Human Rights Code, unless undue hardship (e.g. small employer or non-profit organization) Service provider to consider employer's ability to accommodate before providing funding In some circumstances, employed applicants who

		-Employees seeking job advancement supports	13 cumulative weeks.	did not receive ODSP employment supports to get their jobs may apply for retention supports if they are at risk of job loss. These circumstances include the applicant: -Needing disability-related work supports, goods and/or services to retain job -Current job negatively affects disability -Had to leave job because of disability and is now employed below previous level (e.g., reduced hours or reassigned job duties)
Job Advancement	Supports include: -Learning additional duties -Exploring other job opportunities using transferable skills and experience -Job skills upgrading -Supports to under-employed job seekers			
One-time Supports	-One-time support (e.g., hearing aid, work equipment/tools, license fees, accommodation) to keep job or accept firm job offer -Applicants do not need to select service provider	-Employer may be required to provide support as accommodation under *Ontario Human Rights Code* -For people ineligible for Employment and Training Start-Up Benefit or not		ODSP income-support recipients may access funding from: -Employment and Training Start-Up Benefit -Assistive Devices Program

	-Only if cannot be funded by another program	ODSP income support recipients -Ministry staff may give funding directly to job seeker to purchase or refer them approved vendor		
Exceptional Work-Related Disability Supports	-For job seekers with complex employment barriers Can include: -Assistive devices (e.g. mobility devices, visual hearing aids, orthotics/prosthetics, speech devices, dentures, environmental controls, and portable respiratory devices) -Adaptive technology (e.g. computers with access devices, adapted information systems and accessible communication networks. -Job specific communication skills training to address disability-related needs (e.g. ASL, Braille, remedial writing for learning disabled) -On-the-job supports (e.g. sign language interpreter, intervener, reader, note-taker)	-Employers should pursue tax deductions for accommodations -Employer obligated to accommodate under Ontario Human Rights Code but may incur financial hardship if small or non-profit -If employer unable or unwilling to accommodate, job seeker and/or service provider should try to negotiate a solution acceptable to all parties		-ODSP will not fund assistive devices/supplies required solely for activities of daily living or health maintenance -ODSP employment supports funding only provided where assistive devices and supplies, and adaptive technology not fully funded through the MHLTC Assistive Devices Program (ADP) -Job seekers must access maximum funding available through ADP