



Moving Forward Together: Disability and Work in Canada (DWC) Initiative

Consultation Report

Consultations and engagement on the November 2018 draft of the
pan-Canadian Strategy for Disability and Work

Prepared by the Disability and Work in Canada (DWC) Steering Committee,
in consultation and collaboration with partners across Canada

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Centre de
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Centre for
Research on
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This consultation report, as well as the strategy and supporting background documents, are available online at: www.crwdp.ca/dwc-strategy.

If you have questions or comments about this consultation report, email: feedback@DWCstrategy.ca

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Executive Summary

Survey, engagement and consultation sessions held in Spring/Summer of 2019 gathered pertinent feedback necessary for revisions to the draft pan-Canadian strategy on Disability and Work.

Summary of feedback on the Vision Statement

The word “**equal**” was recommended as alternative language in the vision statement.

Summary of the feedback on Pillars and Key Proposed Initiatives

There was strong input that the strategy needed to be built around two pillars or objectives, namely the workplace and the person with a disability:

- 1.) Fostering **Disability-Confident and Inclusive Workplaces** - These initiatives address workplace design, workplace accessibility, supports to employers and workplace culture change
- 2.) Developing **Comprehensive Supports** for persons with disabilities - The initiatives in this pillar focus on supports for persons with disabilities, the navigability and alignment of support programs and education-to-work transitions.

Summary of feedback on Effective Partnerships

Effective partnerships are necessary to underpin the success of the strategy, between persons with disabilities, employers and employer associations, service providers, government, educational institutes, researchers, community organizations, key partners and any stakeholders.

Summary of the feedback on Core Values and Guiding Principles

There was call for overarching **core values and guiding principles** (grounded in the principles of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#)) and **evidence-informed practice**.

Summary of the feedback on Intersectionality and the Life Course

Persons with disabilities' lived experiences need to be understood through an **intersectional lens** (intersectionality is defined as the interconnected and overlapping nature of identities such as disability, race, class, immigration status, gender and family role), and a **life course perspective** (takes into consideration the changing needs of persons with disabilities as they journey throughout the different stages of their lives, within and beyond work).

Summary of the feedback on Measurement & Accountability and Implementation

Measurement and accountability should be built into the **implementation of the strategy and of specific initiatives** as a feedback loop for accountability, to ensure progress is being made in achieving the objectives and realizing the vision.

Methodology

This consultation report draws only from information and input from the consultation and engagement sessions, the Disability and Work in Canada (DWC) 2018 conference and survey data. This was to help ensure that the input received was most effectively taken into account in developing recommendations to revise the draft strategy. The revision of the final strategy was made by the Disability & Work in Canada (DWC) Steering Committee based on the consultation report and our judgement on how best the input could be reflected in the final strategy.

The focus of this consultation report is to report the analysis and synthesis of the extensive input we received from the numerous consultation and engagement sessions held nationwide, and input from a pan-Canadian survey on disability and work in Canada, and provide recommendations and proposals for revising the strategy.

The DWC Steering Committee have held 18 group and 26 individual sessions across Canada. Approximately 370 people attended consultation sessions. A total of 442 survey respondents provided their input on the draft strategy. There were 12 respondents to the French version of the survey, and 2 of the consultation sessions were held in French. This means that the DWC committee engaged approximately 800 key informants and partners across Canada.

There were 19 group and individual consultations held in Atlantic Canada (Newfoundland and New Brunswick), four group and individual consultations held in Quebec, 12 group and individual consultations held in Ontario, one group consultation in Manitoba, five individual consultations in Saskatchewan, and three group consultations held in British Columbia.

Various resources were navigated, such as the analyzed findings from the survey input, consultations and the DWC 2018 conference, to put together this consultation report. Key engagement reports and source documents supplemented the consultation report and the findings (e.g., a meeting with small employers). The findings were analyzed into themes and then mapped into the consultation report under the various topics, for example, for the “workplace”/disability-confident workplace section. Quantitative survey data was analyzed and summarized to complement the qualitative input received. These put numbers to key elements of the survey input.

The DWC consultation report sections were drafted through the process of reviewing the input; analyzing it; and developing the revisions. The DWC Steering Committee was ultimately responsible for revising the strategy and drafting the consultation report.

What we heard: Overview

We received extensive input on the November 2018 draft of the pan-Canadian Strategy for Disability and Work, including the Disability and Work in Canada (DWC) conference in December 2018, and survey and consultation feedback during the spring and summer of 2019. These findings pointed towards several important themes and concepts to be incorporated into the revised strategy. We heard input on all aspects of the draft strategy, from the vision statement, to the pillars and key initiatives, suggestions on cross-cutting themes and lenses such as overarching guiding values and principles and the need to embed the concept of intersectionality into the strategy.

Overall, survey input and engagement sessions collected feedback from key stakeholders including persons with disabilities, disability service providers, disability advocacy organizations, researchers, government, employers and business leaders, unions, and health professionals. There was a strong emphasis on both supporting employers and keeping persons with disabilities employed. We also heard the need to emphasize inclusion and addressing the vital role of employer engagement and employer buy-in into the strategy.

Reframing the strategy around two main pillars/objectives and other supporting elements – The most important input received was on the reframing of the strategy. Survey responses and consultation feedback revealed a strong support for all of the original pillars; however, based on the collective input, it was recommended that two of the pillars - Disability-Confident and Inclusive Workplaces and Comprehensive Supports - remain as primary pillars or objectives. This would ensure a focus on the two key parties, the person with a disability and the employer/workplace, with all of the other elements of the strategy in support of these two primary objectives. This would mean that the remaining two pillars in the draft strategy - Effective Partnerships and Measurement and Accountability - should be embedded into the two primary pillars or objectives.

Employer engagement - There was a strong emphasis on engaging employers and increasing employer buy-in of the strategy. The need to address frontline business requirements for employers so that employers are supported (through practical frontline services as well as financially, in the form of wage subsidies) and incorporate a business context into the strategy was heard loudly and clearly.

Core values and guiding principles - An overarching theme that surfaced from the findings was the need for a values and principles-based approach to the strategy. The need for a broader rights-based ethos, such as those values in the UN Convention of Rights for Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), are necessary to support the framework of the strategy. These CRPD values include respect for inherent dignity, equality of opportunity, and accessibility. Including persons with disabilities along in every step of the process as a principle (“**Nothing about us, without us**”), was a strong message that was received from the consultations.

Approaching the strategy with an intersectional lens and with the perspective of the “life course” of a disability was a strong theme that emerged from the consultations.

Intersectionality can be defined as the interconnected and overlapping nature of social categorizations of identities such as disability, race, class, immigration status, gender and family role. In addition to disability, other aspects of a person’s identity may intersect with their disability to make them even more vulnerable to discrimination and disadvantage in work and other roles.

Acknowledging the fluid nature of everyone’s unique identities and supporting an intersectional view of human beings was a strong message that was heard. For example, including the values of the Indigenous community as part of this pan-Canadian strategy was recommended, and acknowledging the diversities within the broader group of persons with disabilities. There was a call to include these considerations in the strategy text. In addition, there was a stated desire to committing to address the diverse needs and discrimination during strategy implementation and developing specific programs/activities to implement the strategy.

The life course of a person with a disability - Acknowledging the “life course” of a disability involves understanding that the impact and challenges shift throughout the life of a person with a disability – regarding employment, for example, there are tremendous challenges in the transition from school to work; and other challenge which often emerge as a person ages.

Plain language - The issue of the “language” of the strategy was also raised, with a call for a document in plain language to complement or accompany the official strategy, or revising the strategy to ensure that it is jargon-free, thereby appealing to a wider audience, such as small employers. A consultation participant reinforced the need to use “the language of business” to get a large employer buy-in. For example, the language of some service providers was noted as a barrier to engaging employers. In general, there was a need for the language to suit all stakeholders and parties. A strategy using plain language with definitions for terms such as intersectionality, would also make for a strategy that is more accessible.

Key initiatives and implementation - Survey input indicated that the majority of the key initiatives in the four pillars received ratings of agreement of either important or critical priority. However, in some cases, the initiatives required revision, and/or new or replacement initiatives were needed. These revisions to the draft strategy are outlined later in this consultation report. Consultation participants overall believed that the strategy would make a difference; however, the implementation of the strategy was a concern, and the respondents suggested these initiatives be incorporated into legislation to give the strategy “teeth” in order to render the implementation of the strategy real.

Overall, there was strong input from employers in consultation and persons with disabilities from across the various platforms, with some similarities and also notable differences in support from the various sectors such as employers and persons with disabilities. Employers come from a perspective of wanting support as they undertake the perceived risk of hiring a person with a disability. Collective input from survey and consultations indicated that employers viewed the pillar Disability-Confident and Inclusive Workplaces as very important. Employers believed funding was key to addressing their concerns for hiring a person with a disability and offsetting the cost of training. Effective partnerships and



measurement and accountability were not far behind as identified priorities by employers. Persons with disabilities, their advocates and service providers also leaned towards supporting the pillar Disability-Confident and Inclusive Workplaces as most important, with stigma being the biggest barrier to employment. The pillar Comprehensive Supports was very close behind in terms of importance. Their main concern was the need for income support programs that were coordinated (provincial disability support programs, workers compensation, CPPD, and EI), adequate (calls across Canada for a basic income), and effective and a workers' rights to a safe workplace free of barriers and discrimination.

Vision Statement - The vision statement received close to 70% agreement from survey respondents. However, the concept of equality was a theme that emerged across the various platforms. This theme emerged often in association with the vision statement. The draft vision statement called for "the same opportunities" for persons with disabilities as their non-disabled peers. More accurately, the term "equal" opportunities, was the preferred word choice by respondents' as it respects the functional limitations of disability, but still espouses equality of choice.

Definitions - To create a strategy that is more accessible, there was an identified need for more and/or simpler definitions within the strategy. Key terms such as disability, disability-confident, inclusion, inclusive design, intersectionality, accessibility, were raised.

Vision statement

The approach in the draft strategy

The vision statement in the draft strategy was worded as follows:

Employment throughout Canada is inclusive; people with and without disabilities have the same opportunities and choices in careers, jobs and work.

What we heard about this part of the draft strategy in the consultations

Summary of survey input: 350 of 442 respondents agreed with the vision statement. The one common point of contention that was shared by most respondents that provided feedback was that “same opportunity” be changed to “equal opportunity.” As one respondent replied:

“Same opportunities and choices reinforce individual agency and someone’s own failure to “act on those choices” if they seem reasonable to those without disability.”

Key feedback from the survey responses and the consultation sessions

Speakers at the 2018 conference suggested that a date of 2028 be built into the vision statement. Survey respondents, while not as prescriptive, called for targets to be built into the Strategy.

The vision statement is viewed as a lofty but worthy vision to strive toward, as this one quote from an employer in Newfoundland (NL) illustrates,

“I think employment in Canada is trying to be inclusive. And I think there is success with that. With initiatives like this strategy, it’s clear that inclusivity is a goal. So, the statement is realistic to a certain extent, but with recognition that there is still more work to be done for that statement to be fully true.”

Regardless of whether individuals agreed or disagreed with the vision statement, they were united in their concern about the use of the phrase “*the same opportunities.*”

Where alternative language was suggested, people recommended using the word “**equal**”. Underlying the desire to see persons with disabilities have equal opportunities to their non-disabled peers is an inherent right they feel is missing from the quest for employment: the right to choose the job that best fits their competence and interests. A visually impaired female said:

“I’m not saying it wouldn’t be great to do inclusive work but that’s assuming we are all starting from the same space and have the same opportunities. We are not starting from the same space and the same opportunities.”

For the revised strategy text, please refer to: [DWC Strategy: Moving Forward Together \(PDF version\)](#), or [DWC Strategy: Moving Forward Together \(Word version\)](#), or [DWC Strategy: Moving Forward Together \(Plain text\)](#)

Core Values and Guiding Principles

The approach in the draft strategy

The strategy is inspired by the commitment to remove barriers and enable active participation of persons with disabilities in employment. As stated in the text of the draft strategy, it is strongly grounded in the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Canada ratified in 2010.

[DWC Draft Strategy \(PDF version\)](#), [DWC Draft Strategy \(Word version\)](#), [DWC Draft Strategy \(Text version\)](#)

What we heard about this part of the draft strategy in the consultations

Feedback from consultations and survey suggested the need to articulate our guiding principles in text of the strategy, to support the common vision that we all are aspiring to achieve.

Nothing about us without us

The overwhelming feedback with regards to values and principles was related to the need for persons with disabilities to be integral decision makers in all stages of strategy evolution and implementation. Consultation participants unanimously supported moving the last activity under pillar four that is related to the involvement of persons with disabilities in strategy implementation, to be the first activity under this pillar.

One person with lived experience articulated the following desire, which was echoed by others:

“It is our time; what we really need is more of us in places where critical decisions are made.”

Human rights principles

Many consultations addressed the need to have a broader rights-based ethos, supporting the Convention of Rights for Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) as the foundation for strategy implementation. A researcher explained that the CRPD is the right entity to achieve this global vision:

“CRPD, is an international group standard (it says nothing about rights?), if going to have a vision, that is a vision. We don't need to make up a new vision, it is a clear vision, we should be starting from that perhaps.”

Feedback from the conference stated that these guiding principles have to be created from an inclusivity or accessibility lens, as well as incorporate the principle of accountability, e.g. *“Accountability needs to be brought back to guiding principles.”*

For the revised strategy text, please refer to: [DWC Strategy: Moving Forward Together \(PDF version\)](#), or [DWC Strategy: Moving Forward Together \(Word version\)](#), or [DWC Strategy: Moving Forward Together \(Plain text\)](#)

Intersectionality and the Life Course of a disability

The approach in the draft strategy

In the draft strategy, we stated that it is critical to apply an intersectional lens while creating a pan-Canadian strategy, and defined intersectionality as “the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.”

Life course perspective, or importance of person’s stage in life as part of their live experience, was reflected in “Key Challenges and Barriers” section in the strategy. We acknowledged that the transition from education to work receives inadequate attention. There are gaps that need to be addressed, e.g. in disability services in post-secondary institutions that do not include assistance beyond school.

[DWC Draft Strategy \(PDF version\)](#), [DWC Draft Strategy \(Word version\)](#), [DWC Draft Strategy \(Text version\)](#)

What we heard about this part of the draft strategy in the consultations

Intersectionality

The intersectionality focus during consultations gave us an opportunity to further explore the depth and complexity of the barriers that people, who are different in multiple ways from the majority of population, face in their everyday life and in job search or employment.

In the survey, the intersectionality issue did come up, but more often people were calling for more attention towards specific disability types, groups, or service providers. For example, many participants called for the voice of the injured worker to be more prominent in the strategy. This call was similar for racialized communities, indigenous peoples, and those with invisible disabilities such as mental illness. In the two Disability & Work in Canada conferences and during consultations, intersectionality discussions were inter-related with discussions of inclusion and diversity. People stated the need to embed intersectionality in a guiding principle document that prefaces the strategy, since “*we don’t live single storied lives*” [a participant at a consultation session in Ontario].

Respecting the diversity of all people and their many identities was thought to lend itself to a holistic approach to training, education, and support.

Intersectionality was seen as a barrier to equality as it individualizes the experiences and the nuances of life for those who identify with multiple groups are often overlooked, as explained in the following comment from a consultation session member:

“Reality is the intersectionality of people’s disabilities is what makes bigger barrier, i.e. female immigrants with disability, everyone’s situation is different.”

Indigeneity

While some of the ideas in the strategy were found to be “indigenous by nature”, such as inclusiveness, other aspects of the strategy were found not relevant, since they are grounded in a principally different set of values. In particular, the strategy was written based on the concluding observations from the 2017 UN Committee on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Therefore, the strategy starts from the base of Human Rights. However, we came to understand that in many indigenous, Inuit and first nation communities, the principles of Human Rights are defined with a different set of values. Values are often found to be community minded instead of individualistic. The lens of the individual person with disability or the individual employer can be seen throughout the document and the authors of the paper recognize the importance of explicitly noting the need also for a community lens.

Life course perspective

School to work transition: School to work transition was not a main theme during consultation stage, but it was raised in the both conference feedback and surveys. It stands out as being absent in terms of the attention it receives for its critical role in providing a bridge from school to work.

A consultation participant, a disability advocate, framed it the following way:

“...there is a great divide between what is available to individuals when they are adolescents versus what is available when a person becomes an adult. The last night a person is an adolescence, no genie says you don’t need this stuff you needed as an adolescent. No seamless transition from one kind of stream to another. Useful work could be incorporated. There is a great divide between resources for youth to adult – no entitlements to programs. Career progression is not talked about much.”

Other feedback related to life course perspective: While school to work transition was the major theme in discussions of contextualizing the strategy within the life course, other themes came up during consultation meetings. At least two meetings also raised the question about older people living with disabilities, who may experience discrimination based on both their disability and age:

“Jeune handicaps—why only young? Possibly keep in but also consider adding transitions for older people.” (participant at Quebec (QC) consultation)

Please refer to the appendix for recommendations to the draft strategy

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Disability-Confident and Inclusive Workplaces

The approach in the draft strategy

In the draft strategy, Disability-Confident and Inclusive Workplaces was the first of four pillars. This pillar had 7 initiatives; the largest initiative being supports to employers, which had 10 items. This pillar addressed workplace design, workplace accessibility, supports to employers and culture change.

[DWC Draft Strategy \(PDF version\)](#), [DWC Draft Strategy \(Word version\)](#), [DWC Draft Strategy \(Text version\)](#)

What we heard about this part of the draft strategy in the consultations

Summary of survey input: 114 rated the importance of the 6 initiatives under pillar 1. All 6 received strong support with ratings of higher than 78% agreement.

Key feedback from the survey responses and the consultation sessions

1) Inclusive (Universal Design (UD))

Based on survey and engagement, we heard that Universal design needs a focus to ensure accessibility. Therefore, accessible universal design was recommended to be incorporated into the strategy text. There were repeated recommendations for including the idea of equality in the workplace:

“Every employee needs support and flexibility from employers (small children, illness or accident, mental health, stress, elder care, different chair, noise cancelling headphones, etc.), this same lens of flexibility could be applied to all employees.”

The vehicle by which to achieve equality was UD in the workplace. One respondent expressed the value of UD in the workplace:

“Universal design [be]incorporated so that people should not have to identify with a stigmatized identity in order to obtain accommodations or resources.”

2) Engaging Employers

The need to engage employers is essential to ensuring the strategy's success. Resources need to be put in place to engage employers and get them to buy into the strategy. Such things include training, business to business communication, and recognition of employers. One older male working for a union in Ontario suggested that employers who are championing hiring should be recognized for their efforts:

“Employers that are examples of Accommodation and Disability should be identified and commended for their active participation.”

Despite the various fears raised in the consultations, business-to-business contact was mentioned as the most effective method of engagement, as reflected by this employer:

“Successful engagement happens when specific individuals with credibility reach out to the employer community.”

However, echoing feedback already noted, one employer stated that financial incentives were the most direct way to engage employers:

“Employers want incentives and supports [best practice guides] for themselves and coworkers, need to get them on side.”

3) Right Job/Right Skill

Job matching to someone’s abilities and the market’s demand was the primary approach to securing employment for persons with disabilities, as it puts them on an equal playing field with all other workers:

“I think the term “business case” is over-used. It often is used to include generalizations about workers with disabilities which aren’t accurate, or at least may not apply to an individual job applicant or employee.”

The need to provide a good job fit, one that answers a corresponding need in the labour market, was raised repeatedly. A small business employer in Saskatchewan suggested that the right job match superseded the concern to hire persons with disabilities just for the sake of inclusivity:

“Our biggest challenge in hiring persons with disabilities has been to find the right fit for the opportunity, regardless of their barrier.”

4) Training and Education

The need to support employers to hire and retain persons with disabilities was the most frequently provided message. Training and education are the vehicle by which this support should be provided. However, it was acknowledged by all groups (employers, service providers, and persons with disabilities) that employer buy-in would not happen until they knew a) where to turn for support and b) how to conduct hiring, onboarding, and accommodation for employees with disabilities. One employer acknowledged that training and education was an ongoing – not a one time -- need:

“It is an ongoing project to educate and promote employment with individuals with disability.”

An employer in British Columbia (BC) shared the same need, one that could educate his workers to support integration of persons with disabilities into the workplace. He asked for:

“A guide for co-workers to help them understand and support the needs and contributions of persons with disabilities.”

However, the most frequently recurring theme that emerged from employers was in regard to funding. This request for funding was often in the form of wage subsidies. The following quote from a large Saskatchewan (SK) employer illustrates the value of a wage subsidy for both big and small businesses:

“The wage subsidy is incredibly helpful, especially with the way that the economy is right now. It takes the hesitation away from the employer to make the hire, in case they’re worried about their bottom line being affected too much from training, or the fact that they may put resources into an employee and then find that they’re not the right fit for the opportunity.”

5) Attitude is biggest barrier

Persons with disabilities, service providers, researchers, advocates, and some employers stated that the biggest barrier to employing persons with disabilities is stigma, which is reflected in - not only individual attitudes - but also attitudes embedded in systemic workplace culture.

Stigma was cited as the reason why persons with disabilities either lose out on employment opportunities or are denied career advancement. One woman with a visual impairment expressed her frustration that attitudes are so entrenched that employers pay lip service to hiring persons with disabilities:

“We can go and do trainings until the cows come home, but if you don’t have an intention that, “I really want to listen and learn”, folks aren’t going to learn. Some stuff people are not going to learn if they don’t intend to.”

Representatives at a National Policy Roundtable held in Gatineau, QC echoed other stakeholders by claiming that attitudes toward workers with disabilities were embedded in long-held beliefs and needed more focused attention in the strategy:

“Workplace culture needs a more in-depth look. This is where our biases and things that drive us are most evident.”

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Comprehensive supports for individuals

The approach in the draft strategy

Comprehensive supports for individuals was one of four pillars in the draft strategy from November 2018. This pillar had six initiatives focusing on supports for persons with disabilities, the navigability and alignment of support programs, and education-to-work transitions.

[DWC Draft Strategy \(PDF version\)](#), [DWC Draft Strategy \(Word version\)](#), [DWC Draft Strategy \(Text version\)](#)

What we heard about this part of the draft strategy in the consultations

Summary of survey input: 105 survey respondents rated the importance of the six initiatives under this pillar. All six received strong support, with at least 87 per cent of respondents rating each initiative as “important” or “critical”. In two cases (reforming the array of federal and provincial programs to make them more user-friendly, etc., and ensuring that income support is sufficient to keep people out of poverty), 96 per cent respondents rated the proposed initiative as important or critical.

Key feedback from the survey responses and the consultation sessions

1) Addressing poverty is fundamental

Income security was raised repeatedly in the consultations. Providing income support that is sufficient to keep persons with disabilities out of poverty is seen as the foundation that allows people to even contemplate engaging in paid employment.

“People living with disability need to get out of the deep poverty and related stress BEFORE we can participate in the re-weaving of a new job market.”

2) Need for more coordinated and effective income support programs

Closely related to the fundamental issue of poverty is the need for more coordinated and effective income support programs. The number one concern raised by persons with disabilities, advocates, and service providers was the need for income support programs that were coordinated (specifically provincial disability support programs, workers compensation, CPPD, and EI), adequate, and effective. The changes called for included:

- provision of adequate income,
- provision of exemptions for earnings from employment that are sufficient to minimize the risk of employment pursuit, including self-employment,
- restructuring of employment supports to respect the length of time it takes to assist persons with disabilities to secure meaningful employment,
- assistance with income reporting forms,
- better collaboration and alignment of policies between income support programs (e.g., allowance for income top-up), and

- ensuring portability of income benefits between provinces to enable persons with disabilities to move to another province if necessary, to pursue employment.

The restrictive (and often contradictory) regulations in the current array of income support programs act as a disincentive for persons with disabilities to participate in the labour market. An indigenous gathering suggested that Canadian provinces follow BC's example and allow an annual exemption of \$12,000 per year before income benefits are affected.

3) Access to housing, transit and pharmaceuticals

Survey respondents and participants in the consultation meetings suggested that the strategy explicitly address access to housing, transit and pharmaceuticals. Housing and transit both involve municipalities, and comments emphasized the need to mention coordination across all three levels of government, not just the federal and provincial levels.

One consultation participant in Newfoundland and Labrador felt that perhaps transportation was not included in existing resources because it is seen as a personal responsibility that the person must manage themselves:

“Even when the work-related injury affects, complicates, or renders impossible, that trip to work.”

Other attendees of a Newfoundland gathering felt that persons with disabilities should not be held to a more arduous commute simply to access work:

“You shouldn't have to go to work two hours early because that the only time the taxi could take you.”

4) The school to work transition

The lack of supports for youth who transition from school to work (when they suddenly lose the supports) was mentioned at the 2018 conference, in responses to the survey, and in several consultation meetings as an important issue that did not get explicit attention in the draft strategy. Support through the school to work transition can be crucial to success in obtaining sustainable employment. Information about how to access such support needs to be readily accessible.

One person with a disability at a consultation explained the impact on a youth's life trajectory when these supports are removed on their 18th birthday:

“Access to post-secondary is highly depending on students' K-12 schooling experiences. Students identified as disabled are far less likely to access post-secondary, largely in relation to the K-12 education experiences. As an example, data from the Toronto District School Board shows that between approx. 15% (fully self-contained special education programs) and 43% (partially integrated special education program) of



students engaged in special education programming end up accessing post-secondary education (inclusive of college and university).”

A Quebec consultation suggested that school to work transitions also needed to be broadened to include transition from post-secondary (not just high school).

At the policy roundtable, it was suggested that persons with disabilities also need help to use technology to enhance their capacity to participate in the workforce.

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Effective Partnerships

The approach in the draft strategy

Effective partnerships were formerly one of four pillars in the draft strategy from November 2018. This pillar had five initiatives relating to the most important partnerships needed for effective implementation of the strategy to ensure an inclusive labour market for persons with disabilities across Canada.

[DWC Draft Strategy \(PDF version\)](#), [DWC Draft Strategy \(Word version\)](#), [DWC Draft Strategy \(Text version\)](#)

What we heard about this part of the draft strategy in the consultations

Summary of survey input: 79 survey respondents rated the importance of the five initiatives under this pillar. All five received strong support, with at least 87 percent of respondents rating each initiative as “important” or “critical”. For three of the initiatives, at least 92 percent respondents rated the proposed initiative as important in critical.

Key feedback from the survey responses and the consultation sessions

1) Partnerships as the foundation of the strategy

Findings seemed to indicate that the focus of survey respondents is on the substantive areas of the strategy and that partnerships were seen as a necessary support overall. In an Ontario consultation, attendees suggested that pillars 3 and 4 - Effective Partnerships and Measurement and Accountability - were concepts that could be embedded into the primary pillars or objectives. One participant suggested:

“Four pillars, we realized we only have two pillars: Disability Confident workplaces, and Comprehensive Supports. The other two are embedded throughout, can’t do any work without effective partnerships and measurement and accountability should be built through any initiative and project.”

2) Addressing the vital role of partnerships with employers

Increasing employer engagement was one of the main themes that emerged from the consultations. There was significant support for the vital role of partnerships with employers, and the main message conveyed about partnerships was one of employer engagement. The engagement sessions pointed towards the idea that some partnerships are more “core” and others are more in support. Some argued using the business case to get employer buy-in and yet others called for using the marketing case (education and awareness building) because:

“Moral, legal, and business arguments are ineffective in making large scale difference.”

3) Collaboration/inter-governmental partnerships

Maximizing collaboration was another theme that emerged, including the vital role of inter-governmental partnerships. One of the round table participants suggested that partnerships were the most effective way to ensure regional and provincial implementation. This approach would also facilitate business communication as they are closer to the ground.

The concept that partnerships should be viewed as collaboration and ideally through multi-partner coalitions as well as with just two or three partners was also raised. Partnership building that is modelled on a coalition of stakeholders across participant groups was considered desirable. An example of a successful partnership approach is one in NL:

“...main success that came from the strategy is all about coalition building. It’s the matter of expanding and making the coalitions meaningful. Coalitions should include governments, persons with disabilities, employers, unions and researchers. Stakeholders may contribute financially for being at the table, and they are partners in decision-making.”

4) Nothing about us without us

Key feedback from the consultations indicated that a high priority should be placed on including persons with disabilities in all aspects of the strategy including governance and planning. A female with a disability at one of the consultations stated that,

“I do have a lot of experience, which doesn’t seem to be valued. It is a sad situation, because it is greatly valuable in a lot of areas.”

This shared experience was accompanied by calls for lived experience to be included in policy decision making. One person with a disability articulated the following desire, which was echoed by others:

“...it is our time; what we really need is more of us in places were critical decisions are made.”

5) Speaking the same language

The importance of “speaking the same language” as a potential partner, and being able to put oneself in their shoes, was raised, especially by employers, who see the person with a disability as an employee or potential employee versus a “client”, a term more commonly used in a clinical or social context.

6) Intersectionality

Intersectional considerations will be critical in helping various players/stakeholders form effective partnerships. People are calling for specific disability types, groups, or service providers to be highlighted. This call is simpler for racialized communities, indigenous peoples, and those with invisible disabilities such as mental illness.

An additional tool that consultation attendees thought would be valuable for employers, would be something that could be used to add “more diversity to the workforce i.e. New Canadians.” Partnering in



new ways also includes consider of cultural practices that may differ from one’s own and incorporating these considerations into workplace operations, such as permitting holidays held sacred by each worker.

7) Thinking outside of the box

A key message that resonated in the feedback was a need to build innovative partnerships that bring all stakeholders together in a new way, i.e. the idea of identifying new partnerships that we haven’t thought about before. One example brought up was of HR and OHS people inside large organizations collaborating on employment and re-employment of persons with disabilities. For example, a speaker at the 2018 DWC conference suggested that new partnerships that bridge the two worlds of human resources and occupational health and safety could be formed to approach workplace culture from another angle:

“...looking at the culture within the organization from a mental harm lens, so it’s bringing the HR and OSH world together, it’s being led by the OSH professionals, it’s a different twist but it’s a nice trend to see” a community approach to mental harm reduction in the workplace.”

8) The need for champions

There were many messages about accountability, government coordination, the need for champions and someone or some group(s) to take ownership of the strategy. One NL employer asked,

“Where will the money come from?”, “How is it going to be put in place?”

A possible solution was offered up by at a non-profit consultation:

“There’s a supra (parent) -organization, that is above all three governments. That system has worked in Scandinavian countries, their concept of human rights and social justice is on par.”

Please refer to the appendix for recommendations to the draft strategy

For the revised strategy text, please refer to: [DWC Strategy: Moving Forward Together \(PDF version\)](#), or [DWC Strategy: Moving Forward Together \(Word version\)](#), or [DWC Strategy: Moving Forward Together \(Plain text\)](#)

Measurement and Accountability

The approach in the draft strategy

Measurement and accountability were one of four pillars in the draft strategy from November 2018. This pillar has seven initiatives focusing on strategies that address baseline measures, setting goals, identifying indicators of progress, developing data sets, and monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the strategy.

[DWC Draft Strategy \(PDF version\)](#), [DWC Draft Strategy \(Word version\)](#), [DWC Draft Strategy \(Text version\)](#)

What we heard about this part of the draft strategy in the consultations

Summary of survey input: 84 survey respondents rated the importance of the seven initiatives under this pillar. All seven received higher than 85% agreement. For three of the initiatives over 50 percent of respondents rated the proposed initiative as a critical priority.

Key feedback from the survey responses and the consultation sessions

1) **Measurement and accountability as a cross-cutting theme rather than a separate pillar**

Measurement and accountability was one of four pillars in the draft strategy from November 2018. However, many respondents felt that measurement and accountability would serve better as a cross cutting theme since it is relevant to both of the first two pillars, Disability-Confident and Inclusive Workplaces and Comprehensive Supports. Measurement and Accountability is closely related to Implementation. Many respondents mentioned that the strategy needs to have a “*feedback loop for accountability.*”

2) **Need for accurate, valuable and timely data**

Many responses called for “real world” outcomes that could be both meaningful and measured over time. For example, a provincial government employee was concerned that any data collection not to be oversimplified in an effort to develop a universal collection method:

“There are many systems across the province. They all have capacities and limitations when it comes to the data that can be collected. The challenge is going to be how to develop something that can be used broadly that actually generates valuable data. I am concerned that the broader the use, the more difficult it is to use, and the measures become very simplified.... and then not as useful as we wish.”

3) Stratified sampling of data collection/Types of data to collect

There were many people who recommended that data collected be stratified by certain key characteristics: source of disability (e.g., injured worker, age-related disabilities), nature of disability (e.g., mental health vs. physical health). Accommodation needs to be customized, so context will matter, as does the nature of the disability. A disability service provider in an Ontario community suggested that:

“There needs to be distinction by the type of disability. Communication barriers and learning disabilities (among some other types of disabilities) are viewed differently by employers as are the costs associated with accommodations. Disabilities related to mental health would also be something that requires ongoing support. Having some means to measure outcomes by type of disability would go further to providing accurate data and information on the appropriate supports needed.”

4) Development of key indicators - Common set of indicators of success

At several consultations, participants noted the need to develop a common set of indicators to measure and track the success of implementing the strategy. The need to synthesize disparate data collection methods was seen as difficult, but necessary. This process could, it was suggested at the policy roundtable, be aided by developing an outcomes framework that has:

“...a set of common indicators that everyone can use, and then also a set of more specific ones focused on key areas of concern.”

5) Longitudinal studies

The need to develop repeated measures and longitudinal data collection mechanisms to evaluate progress over time was noted by many participants. Tracking progress over time was viewed as important, especially for issues such as job retention. In addition, developing key indicators that could identify changes in workplace attitudes was noted by multiple respondents as an important area to included in the measurement protocol. For example, a researcher who identifies as disabled, stated:

“I would suggest that the key indicator of workplace attitudes toward persons with disabilities (specifically in the workplace) be clearly measured and monitored over time, following interventions, etc. As noted above, I do research in this area and, although possibly biased, I am convinced that this is the single most important indicator of employment success for persons with disabilities and more positive attitudes have been shown in real-life examples to enhance this success.”



6) Enforcement

Another closely related theme was enforcement. Many participants noted that the strategy needed to be mandatory. A quote by a service provider working with racialized minority populations summed up the idea:

“If not enforced, it’s words on paper.”

Legislation was considered the best way to ensure action:

“One of the few methods of accountability is legislation. We need trained inspectors to make sure the statutes and bills are implemented.”

On a related note, some respondents felt that if employers did not hire persons with disabilities, they needed to document why they did not hire them.

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Implementation

The approach in the draft strategy

Some key preliminary ideas for an implementation process were outlined in the draft strategy.

[DWC Draft Strategy \(PDF version\)](#), [DWC Draft Strategy \(Word version\)](#), [DWC Draft Strategy \(Text version\)](#)

What we heard about this part of the draft strategy in the consultations

Summary of survey input: 262 people responded to the question about whether the strategy would create meaningful action, with many questioning its effectiveness as a voluntary strategy. Sixty-six participants offered comments.

Key feedback from the survey responses and the consultation sessions

The discourse of meaningful action was one of concern. While the feedback on the content and tone of the strategy was overwhelmingly positive, many questioned how effective it would be in creating change. One comment from a provincial government employee who has a disability is illustrative of most comments in this section: *“Colour me skeptical.”* While 51% offered hopeful and positive responses, many of the respondents questioned whether the strategy could affect meaningful, long term change.

1) Stakeholder Commitment

A disability service provider in an Ontario community describes a difficult experience trying to get persons with disabilities into employment:

“I’ve experienced so much reluctance from the business community to consider those whom I support for positions, it is difficult to be optimistic about meaningful engagement. While I applaud the efforts to create a national strategy, I do hope that whichever government is in power at each of the levels has the same willingness to invest in something like this.”

2) Building partnerships an important element of implementation

Quite a few comments were made about the need for continued building of strong partnerships and collaborations as an important element of implementation. Partnerships is one of the pillars in the draft strategy, but possibly in the implementation we can ensure activities and forums that help continue the process of building partnerships. Some specific groups were mentioned such as organizations representing indigenous peoples.



An Ontario woman living with a moderate pain disorder suggested that collaboration plays a key role in getting this strategy implemented:

“...I recognize your monumental task and intense work to reach this draft stage - congratulations. The road ahead toward meaningful action (aka strategy adopted and working within each province/territory/ nationally), will take even more work to achieve. Marshalling the injured workers, persons with disabilities and friendly employers towards educating their elected representatives about their support/desire for this to adopted is critical.”

A researcher from Ontario also urged strong partnerships be built to see this strategy to fruition:

“To be frank, I am unsure whether the draft will encourage meaningful action. I think that the document is coming together very well, but whether an idea diffuses and results in action is the result of so much more than what is written. I do hope that high quality partnerships are developed and that various key players decide to champion the strategy!”

The importance of involving persons with disabilities in all initiatives was also emphasized. For example, have people from the client groups at the table [when designing support programs], as they need to be there to ensure programs are designed with clients in mind.

3) The importance of measurement, monitoring and evaluation, and communication of these results

A small-town Ontario public sector worker recommended how baseline measures may encourage stakeholder commitment, and describes how these measures could be captured and rewarded:

“Baseline measures will be effective at showing organizations how large current gaps are. Consider publicizing results by organizations that are committed and linking funding/incentive opportunities for those that make progress.”

4) Accountability

Mention was made about holding organizations and individuals accountable for commitments made. For example, hold organizations and individuals accountable for commitments we have under the UN convention, under Accessibility Canada Act, and other provincial laws, human rights commitments. As well, hold organizations and individuals accountable for commitments under labour agreements between federal and provincial governments, commitments under collective bargaining agreements between unions and management.

A spouse of an injured worker in Ontario questions whether governments have the will to move beyond research to action:

“The people with the power and money do what they want. Initiatives are taken, “supportive” agencies created, and it looks like the government is doing something good/productive for the people, but there is so much bureaucracy, doublespeak, mismanagement, and incompetence that only a fraction of the people who qualify for help are actually helped. Or, the help was never really available to begin with, and it was all a smoke screen. Everyone collects a paycheck, except the people for whom the support agency was first created.”

A provincial government employee in BC suggested the strategy needs to be mandatory before meaningful action is taken:

“...We still need to see employment as a mandate for organizations. when something is in your “marching orders” you do it. When something is a good idea..... you may or may not do it, depending on your interest, available time, etc.”

Survey respondents voiced that the strategy needed to be focused, mandatory, funded, with ownership at the helm in order to be effective. A provincial government employee in Saskatchewan noted that:

“The content of the strategy is sound but difficult to state if it will encourage meaningful action without knowledge of the audience, or the implementation methodology.”

5) Importance of funding for various elements of implementation:

Mention of funding support for implementation needs to be addressed as well as funding to support engagement of disability groups.

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Definitions

The approach in the draft strategy

In the draft strategy, we did not propose explicit definitions or descriptions of such key terms as disability, inclusion, and disability-confident.

Respondents' input, quotes and analysis

The strategy needs definitions to help us build a common understanding of the key terms, to identify the common ground among the diverse goals we may have, and to help us focus our efforts towards the same vision. These considerations were behind discussions on the need for more and/or simpler definitions within the strategy.

Disability: The most obvious exclusion from the strategy was a definition of disability itself. The absence of this definition in the strategy was mentioned repeatedly by survey respondents and consultation participants. Consultation participants across various sites suggested including the definition of disability into the strategy. Considerations about complexity of defining disability were voiced, such as different understanding of disability by people from various cultural backgrounds and definitions in federal and provincial programs:

"New government will change the definition of disability in ODSP. Will the strategy look at the definitions in programs, to come up with a (more unified definition and) holistic understanding of disability? Definition of disability among Indigenous people is different from the definition of the western world; same with the definition among people from different cultural backgrounds, e.g. AC (Afro Canadian) community. Program access is based on the definition in this program – definitions need to be explored." (consultation participant)

Disability confident: The term "disability confident" was not well understood by many and deemed by some as not a user-friendly term, that needs to be defined or replaced with another term:

"I'm not sure about the term "disability-confident" I think it is a play on words and I would rather see "accessible and inclusive workplace" ... As well, the employer may think they are confident but maybe doing all the wrong things - is it too subjective. What objectively qualifies an accessible and inclusive workplace?" [consultation participant]

Inclusion: The term "inclusion" was also discussed at several consultation meetings, as one of the terms that need definition in the strategy. Speakers at two consultation meetings held in Ontario and in Newfoundland, when asked about this term, proposed the following descriptions:



“Inclusion is acknowledging the diversity. We use the term because of people’s marginality, different experiences of being marginalized. Seeing the person first, understand their particular needs. It should start with the person. Groups like People First have this language.” [speaker at a consultation in Ontario]

Participants suggested some of the language was too academic and therefore not accessible to all stakeholders. Words like “passport” are too “particular” and broader more generalized terms are desirable.

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Acknowledgements

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Appendix

Compilation of Recommendations

Vision Statement

The word “**equal**” was recommended where alternative language was recommended as a change to the vision statement.

Guiding Principles

To add a section “The guiding principles” to the strategy, that will briefly describe the principle “Nothing about us without us”, and following CRPD principles, with relation to strategy implementation, as well as with relation of broader approach to disability in Canadian society.

Intersectionality and Life Course

Pillars or objectives in the strategy need to include considerations on how to expand supports to those who are left out:

- Some people can not work full time or can not work at all. If you can’t work, are you still a valuable member of society? Can we expand a bit the goals related to work, in this strategy, and state that work is just a part of life, and not working is ok and people who can’t work need to be supported and not pushed to work?
- Acknowledgement that there may be alternative vision, goals and life principles, e.g. community rather than individualistic values as in indigenous communities

Pillars or objectives may include some of these more specific suggestions

- Suggestion from consultations for workplace pillar: An additional tool that consultation attendees thought would be valuable for employers, would be something that could be used to add “*more diversity to the workforce i.e. New Canadians.*”
- Suggestion for information gateway to support school to work transition. “*There’s a portal on ESDC Skills branch. Currently they are working on make it more accessible for young people with disability who are looking for a job.*”
- Discussion of career progression and persons with disabilities getting to the leadership positions (rather than been stuck in entry-level jobs)
- Supports for youth with disabilities who want to go beyond their pre-determined path, who can do more than their parents, community and public agencies expect
- Mention of the ageism

Strategy pillars and supporting documents can follow the recommendations provided by feedback from a CRWDP provincial cluster meeting. All recommendations are listed here below:

- Diverse groups need to be accounted for in any summary of Canadian history or of accomplishments related to employing persons with disabilities.
- When discussing the complexity of the patchwork of Canadian work disability programs it should be noted that these systems are even more difficult to navigate if you are a woman, or a newcomer, or if you are Indigenous.
- When looking at federal initiatives, it should be noted that other marginalized groups who also have disabilities may be affected differently.
- If new or expanding partnerships are formed, diverse groups should be considered in this process – newcomers with disabilities, for example.
- Considerations moving forward - additional challenges for newcomers, women, BIPOC, and older persons with disabilities should be noted.
- Statistics on employment of persons with disabilities should account for subgroups (i.e. women, BIPOC, LGBTQ2S, newcomers, older people). It should be noted if these statistics do not exist.
- Employment among diverse groups of persons with disabilities needs to be benchmarked in addition to the general state of employment for persons with disabilities (by gender, age, race, sexual orientation, citizenship status for example).
- Explore challenges for single mothers with disabilities trying to access income supports.
- Note that some groups such as newcomers with disabilities may be unaware if they qualify for employment support programs.
- When looking at the comprehensive supports for Canadians with disabilities, strategies for subgroups such as mothers or newcomers with disabilities would be useful.
- Regarding measurement and accountability, diverse groups should be included in data collection.
- Types of disability may also impact services, navigation, employment outcomes and barriers.
- Going forward any work, statistics, or strategies should consider and monitor subgroups at all points of this process.

Similarly, considerations relevant to people's different stages of life, and first of all, issues of school to work transition and career advancement, need to be reflected in strategy pillars

Intersectionality and life course perspective needs to be explicitly included in the strategy and its implementation

Recommendations to the Comprehensive Supports section

- The consultations pointed to some important gaps in the current wording of the strategy on this issue, namely regarding access to affordable housing, transit services and pharma-care. They also suggest that it would be useful to explicitly mention the importance of helping persons with disabilities use technology to enhance their capacity to participate in the work force, and to give more explicit attention to the school to work transition, including access to co-op programs.
- The consultations emphasized the fundamental importance of preventing poverty among persons with disabilities. The initiative addressing this should be moved up to the first position, and the related initiative about unbundling income and employment supports should be moved up to follow it.
- Some participants in the consultations noted that there are important programs affecting persons with disabilities delivered through municipal governments, so the initiative about better coordination of programs should refer to the municipal level, not just federal and provincial programs.
- Some specific ideas mentioned could be incorporated in the wording of proposed initiatives. For example, in relation to coordination/navigability of programs, some suggested the concept of a “no wrong door” approach. More generally, the importance of clarity of wording was emphasized.
- Not all of the initiatives in this section of the draft strategy attracted much comment in the consultations. However, since the survey results showed that all of the proposed initiatives were seen by the vast majority of respondents as important or critical, all should be retained in some form.

Recommendations to the Disability-Confident and Inclusive Workplaces section

- Based on survey and engagement, we heard that Universal design needs a focus to ensure accessibility. Therefore, accessible universal design was recommended to be incorporated into the strategy text.
- Engagement of employers requires the development of resources was another theme that emerged from the consultations, and it is recommended that the engagement of employers includes a breakdown of what resources need to be developed, i.e. for employers, managers, coworkers, etc.
- Stigma needs to be addressed by ensuring business and employers are equipped with tools and supports to become disability confident.
 - “Every employee needs support and flexibility from employers (small children, illness or accident, mental health, stress, elder care, different chair, noise cancelling headphones, etc.), this same lens of flexibility could be applied to all employees.”
 - “Workplace culture needs a more in-depth look. This is where our biases and things that drive us are most evident.”
- The strategy needs to morph into a plain language document with a business context.
 - “I think the term “business case” is over-used. It often is used to include generalizations about workers with disabilities which aren't accurate, or at least may not apply to an individual job applicant or employee.”
 - “The wage subsidy is incredibly helpful, especially with the way that the economy is right now. It takes the hesitation away from the employer to make the hire, in case they're worried about their bottom line being affected too much from training, or the fact that they may put resources into an employee and then find that they're not the right fit for the opportunity.”
- Right job/right fit – this exists in the first initiative, second item.
 - “Our biggest challenge in hiring persons with disabilities has been to find the right fit for the opportunity, regardless of their barrier.”
- Training and education – this exists in the first initiative, first item.
 - “A guide for co-workers to help them understand and support the needs and contributions of persons with disabilities.”

Recommendations to the Effective Partnerships section

- The consultations pointed to an overall restructuring of the strategy to build the strategy with effective partnerships as the foundation and not a separate pillar. It is fundamental that effective partnerships are the basis for the two pillars, Disability-Confident and Inclusive Workplaces and Comprehensive Supports.
- The feedback from the consultations also suggested a re-wording of specific initiatives. For example, a re-phrasing of initiative #1 (i.e. Federal, provincial, and municipal governments working together, in partnership with all other stakeholders..) was recommended in order to ensure that that the language reflects both the business and social perspective, i.e. removing the words “client-friendly”. Feedback also suggested that this first initiative should be viewed as a coalition of all stakeholders.
- Consultations also emphasized the importance of engaging employers and encouraging them to buy-in to the strategy. Incorporating a marketing case along with a business case to increase employer buy-in was one suggestion.
- There was also an indication from the consultations that there should be a better school-to-work transition, and a bridge from school to work is critical to ensure a seamless transition.
- The theme “nothing about us without us” prevailed as one of the most critical priorities and it was suggested that this initiative should be the first initiative in the strategy in order to ensure effective partnerships and an inclusive labour market in Canada.
- Intersectionality was raised as critical and feedback indicated it could be its own initiative within effective partnerships or incorporated and weaved into the other initiatives.
- The identification of new partnerships was an important theme, and possibly important enough to become an initiative on its own. Establishing innovative partnerships such as between government and social enterprises to increase employment opportunities and encourage the private sector to follow suit was one suggestion. Establishing a supra (or parent)-organization, that is above all three governments, was another suggestion.
- Another key objective that emerged for a partnership strategy is to facilitate people moving from one level of engagement to a higher level of engagement where they ultimately become active champions. This is a type of community building and could potentially galvanize a movement. This new partnership strategy could include supports for this type of evolution and culture change.

Recommendations to the Measurement and Accountability section

- Measurement and Accountability would serve better as cross cutting theme since it is relevant to both of the first two pillars, Disability-Confident and Inclusive Workplaces and Comprehensive Supports.
- Reflect the need for a feedback loop where progress is monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis during the implementation phase.
- Need for further development of key indicators of success, as well as accurate, timely, and meaningful data.
- Data should be stratified by certain key characteristics: source of disability (e.g., injured worker, age-related disabilities), nature of disability (e.g., mental health vs. physical health).
- Need to develop a common set of indicators to measure and track the success of implementing the strategy.
- Need to measure progress in reaching targets.
- Consider both quantitative and qualitative measures.
- Measure job retention, the wellness index, public sector savings in terms of reduced support expenses, increased income tax and sales tax revenue and impacts on GNP.
- Harness data linkages between sources such as administrative data, Canadian Survey of Disability and tax files.
- Identify measures that indicate employers' "disability confidence." Provide information on how to improve disability confidence.
- Develop repeated measures and longitudinal data collection mechanisms to evaluate progress over time.
- Developing key indicators that could identify changes in workplace attitudes.
- The strategy needed to be mandatory. If employers did not hire persons with disabilities, they needed to document why they did not hire them.

Recommendations to the Implementation section

- Building partnerships an important element for implementation. Related to this, some stakeholders encouraged identifying specific people to take on activities. Some summary points:
 - Continue to develop partnerships
 - Strong partnerships can bring accountability
 - Collaboration plays a key role in getting this strategy implemented
 - Urged strong partnerships be built to see this strategy to fruition
 - Build partnerships with organizations representing indigenous peoples such as Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)
 - Invite people to contact us if they would like to participate in activities around some of the pillars
 - Need to identify people to take action. Identify who is going to take the lead.
 - The DWC committee should remain involved. It can serve as a “neutral convenor” for future meetings/workshops among policy officials.

- Importance of measurement, monitoring and evaluation. Some summary points:
 - Baseline measures may encourage stakeholder commitment.
 - You don't want to develop your own measurement system. Use the measures that were developed or are being developed.
 - Partner with institutions that already collect this data.
 - Estimate the lost productivity, the cost to the economy. This helps us to specify the cost of exclusion. What does discrimination actually look like? What does it actually cost to all of us, as well as to individuals, among gender dimensions, age dimensions and so forth?
 - Need to think about what kind of monitoring will need to go on about engagement and progress on the strategy. A more organic coalition of interests.
 - Create and report on performance measurement strategies—be more deliberate and intentional about trying to get granular data, and use both quantitative and qualitative measures
 - Workforce Development Agreements (WDA) have plans for detailed reporting on performance.
 - Develop and evaluate pilots.

- Several stakeholders noted the importance of dovetailing with other initiatives:
 - Dovetail with other strategies—housing strategy and poverty strategy
 - Other strategy initiatives will already bring together many stakeholders. Identify how we can make sure that disability will be one of the lenses of these strategies.
 - Need to have a connection between primary prevention and secondary prevention—already have a network of systems in place for primary prevention that we might be able to build on.

- Several comments were about having a readily available listing of resources, services and supports. Related to this is the suggestion of a centre of expertise:
 - Develop a national database listing both evidence-based service delivery models, as well as a database of supported employment providers that is easily accessible to employers, and to people with mental health challenges looking to find work.
 - Borrow from the US experience with a web portal (e.g., the JAN portal).
 - Centre of Excellence—need to ensure that frontline people can get access to the research and to tools to help them move forward. Emphasize the practical aspects: e.g., development of and a repository for evidence-based tools.
 - Broaden out the concept of a centre of expertise. Not just for the built environment but also for tools and resources on a broad range of issues. Including a service for immediate help. A helping centre is needed, not just a centre of expertise.
 - Concept of Inclusive Design in the strategy is extremely valuable—need a body or group of people leading us through that path

- Importance of building on existing legislative frameworks and initiatives:
 - Draw on existing legislation as a guiding light in terms of focusing all Canadians on the next stage
 - Social enterprise has proven to be a very effective way to employ persons with mental health challenges, and more particularly, for persons living with a more severe mental illness
 - Making programs [at the federal and provincial level] complementary is a longer-term objective...But provincial and federal governments can make their own programs better interact with each other.

Recommendations for Definitions

Define or provide descriptions of the following terms in the strategy: disability, inclusion, inclusive design. Review if we want to keep using the terms “disability-confident” and “passport” and provide its definition if applicable. Review the use of the term “disability” in French version of the strategy. In addition, the terms “intersectionality” and “accessibility” can also be defined, since they are also key terms in the strategy.

[Please click here for the DWC Strategy: Moving Forward Together and supporting background documents](#)