



Recruit and Hire



The **Inclusive**
Workplace

The ability to change is a key characteristic of any successful business. Being able to adapt existing processes to new challenges is essential to the ability of your business to thrive and stay competitive in the future.

Currently, 500,000 working age adults in Canada who are on the autism spectrum or with an intellectual disability are unemployed or underemployed. These potential workers are an untapped resource that can help you make your business stronger, more diverse, and more productive.

Building a strong, resilient and successful business begins with creating inclusive recruitment and selection practices that support you to attract top talent.

Find out how to create and implement inclusive recruitment and hiring strategies. Get tips for recruiting and hiring inclusively during COVID-19 too.

Best Practices for Inclusive Hiring

Here are 5 best practices to help you recruit candidates who are on the autism spectrum or have an intellectual disability.

1. Expand your talent pipeline

- Partner with initiatives like [Ready, Willing and Able](#) and agencies that specialize in inclusive employment. Share job postings with programs or employment agencies that work with candidates who are on the autism spectrum or have an intellectual disability.
- Look for opportunities to participate in job fairs that target job seekers who are on the autism spectrum or have an intellectual disability.

2. Work with college and university accessibility offices

- Many students and soon-to-be graduates who are on the autism spectrum or have an intellectual disability are connected to school accessibility offices or centres. Share job postings and foster contacts with staff at these centres.



3. Write inclusive job descriptions

- Use plain language to write job descriptions. Make sure they are clear and specific.
- Focus on essential skills for the job. For example, good customer service skills are essential for a person working in a retail store but knowing how to drive is not.

4. Communicate your company's commitment to diversity and inclusion

- In your recruiting and hiring materials, state that you are an inclusive employer. Include key statistics or other details about what this means in practical terms, so candidates know you really do what you say.

5. Show diversity In your corporate communications

- In your marketing materials and other external communications, show that you are a company that hires people who are on the autism spectrum and people who have an intellectual disability. Use images of all types of employees working together, including autistic people and people with an intellectual disability.

Best Selection Practices for Inclusive Hiring

Here are 5 inclusive hiring best practices to help you select and hire candidates who are on the autism spectrum or have an intellectual disability.

1. Identify Accommodation Needs

- As a business, you have a duty to provide adjustments (“accommodations”) to the candidate during the hiring process. While you can’t ask the candidate about the exact nature of their disability, you can ask if they need any help (“supports”) during the selection process.
- The candidate is responsible for asking for job coaching, adaptive technology, or other accommodations if they need them. If they are working with an employment agency, the agency can often provide these resources to you for free.



2. Make Job Application Requirements Inclusive

You can make a job application more inclusive in several different ways.

For standardized online applications:

- Make sure online job application questions are short and simple. They should be clear and related to the job requirements. Clearly mark fields that are mandatory and fields that are optional.
- Provide an open-ended text box or other space on your form where candidates can include additional related information. Offer to provide and accept “hard copies” (printed versions) of the job application if a candidate needs this accommodation.

For portfolios or work samples:

- For some candidates, it might be easier to provide a portfolio or work samples instead of writing about their skills and experiences. This might be a welcome “accommodation” for someone on the autism spectrum or with an intellectual disability.

For cover letters and resumes:

- Don’t look at a candidate’s cover letter and resume as a reflection of their ability to perform the job, if strong written communication skills aren’t a necessary requirement for the job.
- Don’t assume that a sparse resume or one with gaps means the candidate isn’t qualified for the job. Consider both the candidate’s volunteer and internship experiences and their paid employment experiences.

3. Make Pre-Screening Inclusive

- People who are on the autism spectrum or with an intellectual disability communicate and process information differently. Receiving an unplanned/impromptu pre-screening call may not be the best way to determine the candidate’s fit for the job. Offer to send pre-screening questions by email to give the candidate more time to process and respond to questions.
- Accommodations might include scheduling a time for the pre-screening or holding the pre-screening meeting by video conference.



- If the candidate is supported by a job coach, they might ask if the job coach can join the pre-screening meeting. Agree to this request –a job coach is an accommodation to help the candidate showcase their fit for the job.

4. Make Competency Testing Inclusive

- Competency tests are standardized tests, which are not designed to assess diverse ways of thinking. A competency test should not be the only factor in deciding whether a person is a good fit for the job.
- Make sure you are testing only for skills or competencies that are related to the job. Give the candidate extra time if they need it.
- Consider emailing the candidate sample test questions before the actual test, so they know what to expect and can prepare.
- Another accommodation might be to allow the candidate to have their job coach or support person come with them or join by phone or video conference, if the test will be at your location. Or they could join a video conference if you are giving the test online.

5. Interview Inclusively

Creating an inclusive interview allows a candidate to showcase their fit for the job and helps you to “screen in” strong candidates. To get you started, here are three tips to create an inclusive interview that will benefit all candidates, including those on the autism spectrum or who have an intellectual disability.

Remove Distractions

- If the interview will be in person, set up a space that is free of distractions and potential interruptions.
- If the interview will be online (by video conference), make sure the interviewer is set up in a quiet, distraction-free space. Make sure the candidate can see and hear the interviewer clearly.



Adjust the Traditional Interview Format

- Offer to send the candidate an “interview itinerary” before the interview, so they know what to expect during the conversation.
- If the interview will be in person, consider alternatives to the standard job interview that might be more comfortable. These could include a “walking” interview or an “experiential” interview.
- In a “walking” interview, you can explain the position and learn about the candidate’s skills while you’re walking through the workplace. The candidate can also get an idea of your workplace environment and culture.
- In an “experiential” interview, the candidate can demonstrate their skills by performing some of the core tasks related to the job. This type of interview emphasizes the candidate’s ability to work, and not their conversational abilities.
- If you typically have a group of people interviewing a candidate at the same time, offer a two-on-one interview instead.

Welcome Supports

- A candidate might ask to have a job coach or support person present during the interview. This could be either in person or online.
- A job coach might make the interview easier for both the interviewer and the candidate. They can help rephrase questions, prompt for additional information, or support the candidate to highlight their relevant skills and experiences. A job coach is an accommodation.



Inclusive Recruiting and Hiring During COVID-19

Recruiting and hiring is one of the many ways that COVID-19 has affected how businesses operate.

Many businesses have shifted these activities from in person to online, because of health and safety concerns. You can still recruit and hire inclusively during COVID-19. But how you recruit and hire may look a bit different.

In fact, COVID-19 has shown that making adjustments to existing hiring practices is not only possible but beneficial to sourcing good talent.

Here are four tips to help you adapt your recruitment efforts during COVID-19 and support candidates with and without disabilities to showcase their skills and experience:

1. Be Safe

- Know and follow the rules in your province or territory to keep your candidates safe.
- **COVID-19 Example:** *If your standard interview process includes a tour of your workplace, consider video recording a workplace tour.*

2. Be Flexible

- You might need to adjust your processes or requirements.
- **COVID-19 Example:** *A candidate and their job coach were planning to attend an in-person interview. A stay-at-home order is issued and the interview can no longer happen in person. You offer to hold the interview over video conference instead of postponing the interview.*

3. Be Creative

- Think about different ways to assess candidates if you can't use your usual methods during COVID-19.
- **COVID-19 Example:** *If a candidate can't come to your workplace to complete a competency test in-person, offer to let them do the test by video conference instead.*

4. Be Aware

- Understand that not everyone has access to (or is comfortable using) technology.
- **COVID-19 Example:** *Before a virtual interview, provide all candidates with step-by-step instructions (with visuals) for using the video conferencing tool.*

