



BC Partners in Workforce Innovation – Increasing Employment Through Inclusive Workplaces

Final Report

May 2023

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INTRODUCTION

PROJECT BACKGROUND

People with disabilities are a diverse and significant part of Canada’s workforce. According to the Canadian Survey on Disability, approximately one in five people in Canada age 15 years and older have a disability, but face barriers when finding and keeping employment and are less likely to be employed than Canadians without disabilities, even when they are willing and able to work (Morris et al., 2019). Approaches to employment for people with disabilities have often focused on supply-side services and supports to help improve job skills, experience, and functioning of people with disabilities. Demand-side employment, by contrast, has a focus on the workplace environment and inclusion practices of employers as important factors of high-quality employment outcomes for people with disabilities (Chat et al., 2010).

BC Partners in Workforce Innovation (BC WiN) is an initiative that tested demand-side employment model to support BC-based employers seeking to diversify their workplaces and meet their workforce needs. An initial pilot was launched in 2013 by the Employment Action Committee (EAC) – a group of disability-serving agencies in the Lower Mainland of BC working together to coordinate their employer engagement activities. The pilot was conceived as a three-year research initiative aimed to create a more coordinated and employer-focused approach to meeting the workforce needs of key sectors in BC facing labour shortages at that time. Based on its successful outcomes involving a small group of Lower Mainland employer partners in its first phase of operations, the model has continued to grow and adapt to a changing labour market, as well as respond to the increasing demand among employers who are looking for support in achieving their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) objectives.

The BC WiN model is unique in that it is centred around an Inclusive Workforce Consultant (IWC) team of experienced HR professionals whose primary client is the employer partner. When an employer partners with BC WiN, the IWC team works closely with the employer to ensure that they are well-positioned to recruit and onboard candidates with disabilities. When the employer partner has an available job opening, the IWC team recruits on the employer’s behalf, sourcing qualified candidates through BC WiN’s network of service agency partners that are located throughout the province. The IWC team pre-screens candidates to ensure that they are qualified, committed, and prepared for the position prior to referring them to the employer’s recruitment process.

A key condition of creating change in the BC WiN model is that the IWC team partners with employers that have already made a strong commitment to becoming inclusive and accessible, where they have the intention to work with BC WiN to build their capacity internally so that their recruitment and retention of people with disabilities is successful. As well, by working at the intersection between employers and service organizations, the BC WiN model focuses on employer organizational and workforce needs, working with job seekers to find an appropriate fit in the job matching process for available roles from the employer. In this model, it is assumed that the service organizations that job seekers are already connected with provides them with the necessary pre-employment and employment supports, works with them to secure accommodations, and provides any other ongoing supports that they might need on the job (e.g., job coach, wrap around supports, etc.).

Project partners

A key partner on BC WiN since its inception has been MacLeod Silver HR Business Partners (MacLeod Silver). MacLeod Silver Recruitment Specialists have over 25 years of HR expertise, with a particular focus on organizational DEI practices and form the IWC team. MacLeod Silver was a member of the original group that developed the idea for BC WiN and was selected through an open bidding process by SRDC and members of the EAC to form the original team of HR specialists to lead the project's employer engagement and recruitment activities.

For the current project, MacLeod Silver is being supported by specialists from the Pacific Autism Family Network (PAFN) which has extensive experience providing recruitment services and workplace training to employers to hire people on the Autism Spectrum. While members of both organizations had been working together informally to support their respective demand-led recruitment initiatives since the beginning of BC WiN, PAFN has joined the project as official partner to play a specialized role in supporting employers recruit people with Autism Spectrum Disorder – a group that has represented an increasing share of candidates who have been referred to BC WiN employment opportunities in recent years.

The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) has been involved in BC WiN's development from its inception. After the three-year pilot, SRDC and its BC WiN partners were able to secure two years of funding through the federal Opportunities Fund to expand project activities and re-focus the initiative on providing employer DEI capacity supports and job matching services to connect a larger number of people with disabilities to employment. In addition to serving as project lead, the SRDC team is also conducting the project's research and evaluation activities, where it combined a developmental evaluation approach, along with the formative and outcomes evaluation, to support the project's iterative development process to meet the needs of partners and achieve its objectives.

Project objectives

The *Increasing Employment Through Inclusive Workplaces* project aimed to build on the efforts of the initial pilot by providing employer partners with enhanced supports to develop and implement comprehensive DEI strategies, transform their recruitment and workplace practices, and engage in the process of developing talent pipelines that facilitate the recruitment and integration of job seekers in their workplaces in accordance with their DEI objectives. The objective was to work with 15 or more employer partners primarily located in the Greater Vancouver region, while exploring opportunities to expand to other regions in BC. The project also aimed to increase the proportion of small and medium-size business (SME) representation to two-thirds of its total partnerships. Through exploring and testing a more comprehensive suite of supports and services with project partners, the project examined how such an initiative can be sustained and expanded as more employers and other stakeholders benefitted from the approach.

LIMITATIONS AND IMPACT OF COVID-19

The global COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on employers globally and in British Columbia, resulting in a disruption of many aspects of the project as employers put their recruitment activities on hold during various waves of the pandemic and changed business practices in accordance with public health restrictions and guidelines. The pandemic also intensified and added new barriers experienced by people with disabilities, who are often in a more vulnerable position with respect to their physical and/or mental health, and more likely to experience less overall job quality, including lower access to benefits, job flexibility, and more likely to be precariously and/or under-employed.

After the BC economy was placed in shutdown by the provincial health authority in March 2020, service providers were reporting to the IWC team that they were observing high levels of disengagement from the labour market among their clients with disabilities. As employers began to start rehiring for specific opportunities into the spring and summer of 2020, the team faced the challenge of sourcing available candidates to fill these positions. In addition to exploring the impact of COVID-19 on people with disabilities through survey research, the SRDC research team also reviewed emerging evidence to understand how the pandemic may have exacerbated reasons for not seeking employment. This ongoing monitoring of emerging research confirmed that reasons for withdrawing from the labour market included medical concerns, previous negative workplace experiences, limitations or interactions between income and disability benefits, other caretaking responsibilities, lack of suitable flexible work arrangements, and challenges with respect to securing accessible protective health and safety measures necessary to participate in employment (Fyffe et al., 2021; Maroto et al., 2021).

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE FINAL EVALUATION APPROACH

The purpose of the project's evaluation component was to gather evidence and insights into how BC WiN achieved its objectives and contributed to positive outcomes for employers and for job seekers with disabilities. A multi-year evaluation strategy included developmental evaluation activities and a formative evaluation to understand the implementation successes and challenges of the BC WiN model. The outcomes evaluation was originally designed to capture the results of the BC WiN model in terms of its ability to address two key research questions:

- How does this integrated demand-led approach support employer partners in developing and implementing inclusive recruitment and retention strategies?
- What is the effectiveness of providing job matching services through a specialized team of Inclusive Workplace Consultants in terms of meeting employer workforce needs and connecting job seekers with disabilities to sustainable and rewarding career opportunities?

The combined impacts of the significant decline of available candidates through BC WiN's service network, as well as the rapidly changing workforce needs of employer partners throughout subsequent pandemic waves not only impacted overall project outcomes with respect to job matching targets but necessitated changes in a range of project activities, including the evaluation approach. The SRDC research team responded to challenges and made necessary adaptations with respect to qualitative data collection. The original evaluation design had included a more comprehensive assessment of employer capacity and changes over time. However, engagement and capacity building with the BC WiN initiative was impacted by the pandemic, subsequent labour market challenges, and employers' own turnover where new project leads had not had the opportunity to engage with BC WiN capacity building supports to be able to comment on them in a meaningful way.

Due to these limitations and corresponding adjustments to the evaluation design, the research team has opted to focus the analysis in this final project report on providing key insights into the model as well as emerging lessons learned for similar demand-focused initiatives to engage employers in establishing more inclusive workplaces that are welcoming for people with disabilities.

Methods

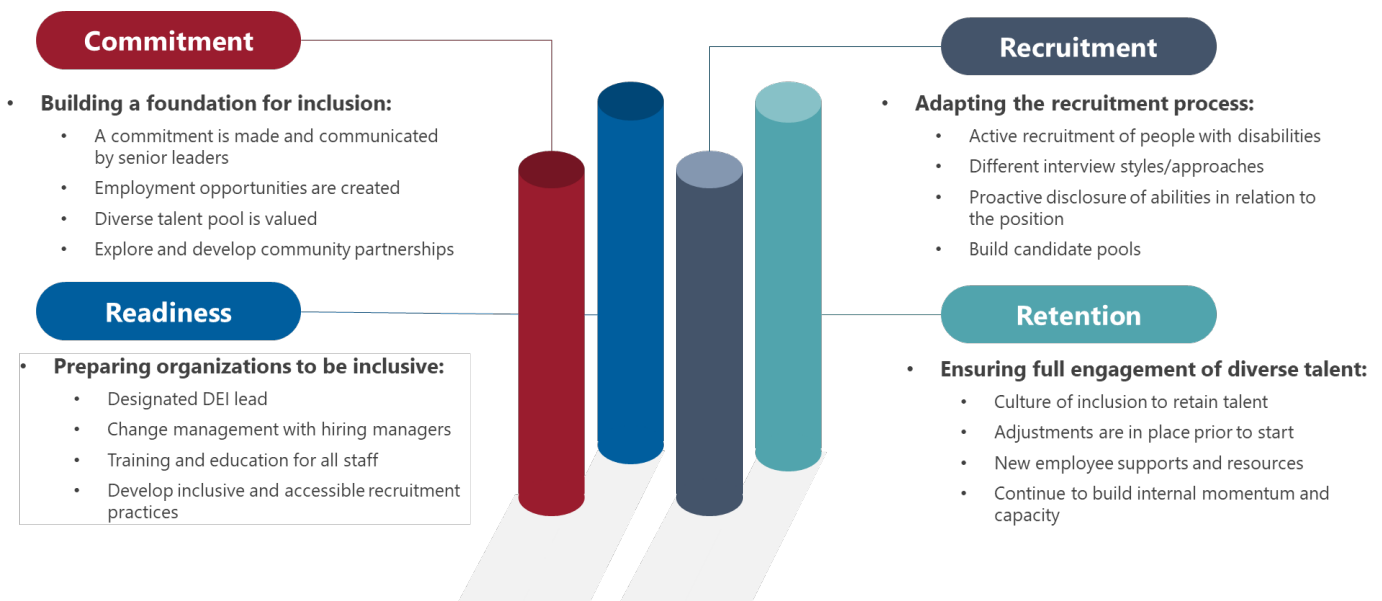
The final approach utilized by the SRDC team involved a mixed methods design that combined both quantitative and qualitative data to address the evaluation questions. Data (descriptive and comparative) was collected from multiple sources, which include the following:

- **Administrative data:** The project used human resources data collected by the IWC team to track employer progress and results, as well as participant outcomes. The system tracked workplace experiences offered by employers, number of candidate referrals to available opportunities, what services and/or accommodations were required to place the individual, length of the placement, and longer-term employment outcomes within the organization.
- **Job seeker participant surveys:** The research team designed surveys for job seeker participants to track their participation and longer-term employment outcomes. In their first meeting with a member of the IWC team, job seekers were asked to complete an informed consent to participate in the research project as well as an intake survey. The initial survey captured participants' demographic information, education and skills, labour market history and expectations for employment. Participants were asked to complete a follow up survey six months later, and again at 12 months. Follow-up surveys tracked participants' labour market outcomes and captured their satisfaction with the recruitment and job matching process as well its impact on their longer-term employment prospects and careers.
- **Employer partner survey:** The research team designed a short employer partner survey to reach a broader sample of employer partners than possible with qualitative data collection. The survey captured employer partners' use of services provided by BC WiN, and their views on their value to their organizations, as well as perspectives on future versions of the model.
- **Impact of COVID-19 Survey:** To address the need for information to understand the impact of COVID-19 on job seekers with disabilities, the SRDC team created a survey that was targeted at service providers and social enterprises in BC to learn more about their experiences working with clients during the early waves of the pandemic. The survey was designed to assess the pandemic's impact on job seekers with disabilities' ability and readiness to engage in employment. Since the research team was not able to engage job seekers directly, the purpose of this survey was to gather and share timely information and insights from front-line staff to understand the particular employment-related challenges that the job seekers were experiencing as a result of the pandemic. Survey findings were presented in the project's 2021 Interim Report (SRDC, 2021) and summarized in Appendix A. Findings demonstrated that most service providers indicated that their clients with disabilities were disengaging from the labour market and not wanting to accept or return to available employment opportunities and/or not seeking employment.
- **Job seeker interviews:** The research team conducted interviews with job seekers to better understand their experiences with the project, their satisfaction with their new employment, and the overall impact of working with BC WiN. The interviews were designed to better understand job seekers' journey from their initial contact with BC WiN to their current employment, and all the touchpoints with BC WiN along the way. The responses from each

interview were then used to plot out this experience into a Journey Map (i.e., a descriptive representation of the process each job seeker experienced) presented in detail in the project’s 2022 Interim Report (Celeste et al., 2022).

- **Employer partner assessments:** The SRDC and IWC teams worked together to design and deliver standardized assessments for employer partners to capture their commitment to inclusive hiring practices, the extent to which people with disabilities are included within their recruitment and retention strategies, and the extent to which their organizations engaged in inclusive training and supports for both management and employees. These assessments were structured according the “Four Pillars to Accessible Employment” which provided a framework for the IWC team to work with employers to identify and implement a range of accessible recruitment, hiring, and retention practices. These Four Pillars – Commitment, Readiness, Recruitment, and Retention – emerged from earlier discussions with employer partners, service partners, government, and educational organizations to identify results-based actions in the recruitment, hiring, and retention of people with disabilities. The Four Pillars have been used by the IWC team to identify areas of opportunity to improve processes, capabilities, and supports for employers to successfully recruit and retain a more diverse workforce.

Figure 1 The Four Pillars of Accessible Employment



The IWC team aimed to complete assessments with all employers, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting labour market challenges, only a select number of employers were in a position to be assessed, with the results presented in the project's 2022 Interim report (Celeste et al., 2022). Given that employer engagement and interaction with capacity building aspects of the BC WiN model varied significantly over the course of the project, a comprehensive assessment to monitor changes was not feasible, and the evaluation team elected to explore these questions in employer interviews instead.

- **Employer partner interviews:** To supplement the employer assessments, the SRDC team also interviewed employers to gain better insight into how the BC WiN approach supported their inclusive recruitment and retention strategies, and how effective this specialized job matching service was from the employer perspective. Initial interviews were conducted in late summer of 2021. Given varying levels of employer engagement and experience working with the BC WiN model, the research team conducted a second round of interviews in late 2022 and early 2023. The second round of interviews explored employers' overall satisfaction and experience with specific components of the model, lessons learned, and perspectives on future versions of the model.
- **Other data sources:** As developmental evaluators, the research team also used other methods and data sources to support the ongoing evolution of the BC WiN model, as well as contribute to model adaptations and decision-making necessary to respond to the many new challenges required within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional research included targeted scans and review of the evidence to better understand and respond to the needs of job seekers with disabilities, and a focus group with people with lived experience in summer of 2021 to inform expanded recruitment and outreach activities.

While the project team made every effort to adapt and respond to the challenges of the pandemic, obtaining participation from job seekers and employers in research and evaluation activities was a challenge, impacting the final data collection phases of the project. The job seeker surveys were designed with minimal questions (fewer than 20 questions per survey) and each took less than 10 minutes to complete. Though all participants were aware of the research components of the initiative and signed the consent to participate, there was limited follow-through from participants when it came to completing surveys. Even with the project team's renewed attempt to encourage survey completion during the final phase of the project, there were overall low response rates to surveys. Likewise, while employer partners understood that the BC WiN initiative included a research component, and the employer survey was designed with minimal questions, only three responses were recorded. Therefore, survey results should be interpreted with caution, and not taken to be a complete representation of all participants.

Analysis

To review final project outcomes, quantitative data analysis was performed on survey data files.¹ Analysis of survey data includes descriptive statistics to understand participant characteristics and outcomes, as well as thematic analysis of qualitative (open-ended text) responses. Qualitative data from interviews was analyzed thematically to identify, document, and report on key themes and lessons from these data sources. The SRDC team also reviewed findings against the research literature to increase confidence that emerging themes were meaningful and accurate when they recurred, and that they were consistent across multiple lines of inquiry.

THE CURRENT REPORT

The current report summarizes the project's activities and outcomes of the project, with a focus on final project outcomes. It is organized as follows:

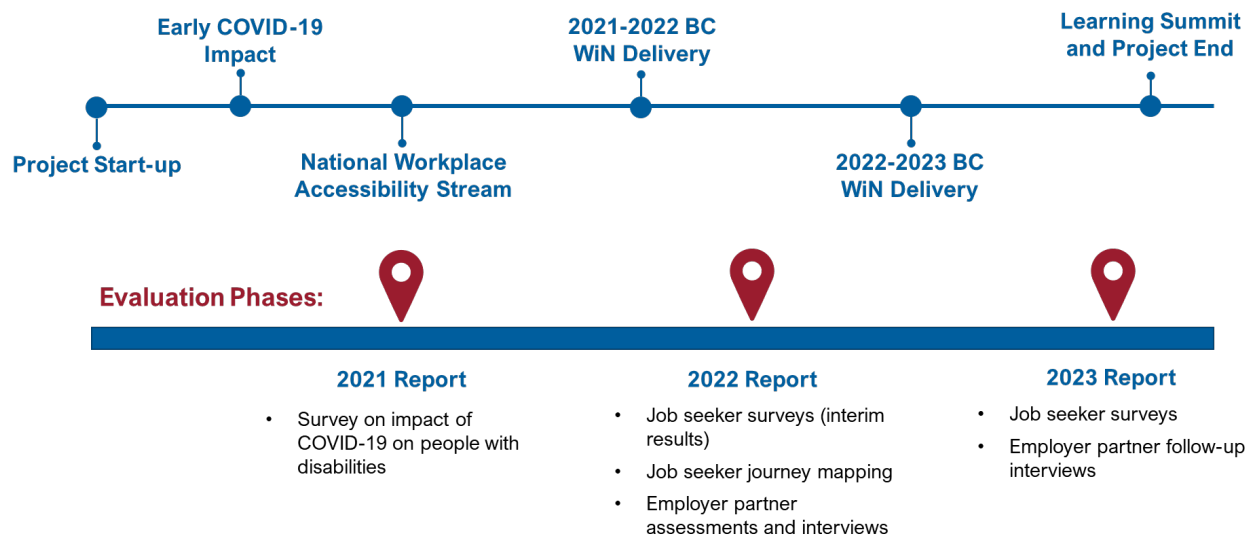
- **Project activities:** presents a summary of project activities and key project milestones.
- **Participant results:** presents results with respect to number of people with disabilities served, job matching activities, and outcomes.
- **Employer partner results:** presents results with respect to employer engagement activities, as well as findings from final interviews with a selection of employers on their experiences with BC WiN.
- **Summary and lessons learned:** presents a synthesis and discussion of the findings, highlighting key themes and lessons learned in this project.

¹ Survey and interview data collection was finalized on January 31, 2023. Consistent with SRDC's Code of Practice, personal identifiers are removed in this report.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Project timelines and activities were modified as a response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as outlined in Figure 2 and described further below.

Figure 2 Project activity timeline



- **Project start-up, development, and partner engagement:** The initial activities of the project included all aspects of project start-up, creating project partnerships and evaluation instruments. SRDC established partnership agreements with MacLeod Silver HR Business Partners and the Pacific Autism Family Network (PAFN), creating the Inclusive Workforce Consulting team to engage employer partners in the BC WiN initiative, lead the development of employer training and supports, and deliver the job matching process to connect job seekers with disabilities to the available employment opportunities with employer partners. This phase also included the development of research and evaluation instruments (e.g., consent, surveys, monitoring tools).
- **Project operationalization and early COVID-19 impact:** Early project activities were significantly impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic. With the unanticipated shutdown that occurred in March 2020, many employer partners were forced to temporarily suspend business operations, redeploy staff, shift employees to remote work, and/or layoff staff, which in some cases were permanent layoffs. Hiring was put on hold and several employer

partners in the hospitality and tourism sector suspended hiring activities indefinitely. This impacted the number of BC WiN activities that were related to employer capacity development, including accessibility audits, internships, and employee training.

- National Workplace Accessibility Stream activities: In fall 2020, the project was provided an additional amount of limited-time funding through the Opportunities Fund’s National Workplace Accessibility Stream (Nwas) to expand its activities to address the workplace challenges of employers and job seekers with disabilities who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. These activities built on BC WiN’s current partnerships to support employers in their efforts to create inclusive workplaces, whether virtual or physical, for people with disabilities during the pandemic, to expand online training, and to develop training for in-demand jobs for workers who had been displaced by the pandemic and/or who were looking for new employment. These measures included working with BC WiN employer partners to develop and implement accessible and effective work-from-home measures to connect people with disabilities to employment (for those able to work remotely).
- 2021-2022 Delivery: Ongoing project delivery and project monitoring was also impacted by subsequent waves of the COVID-19 pandemic over the course of April 2021 to March 2022. While many employer partners were able to eventually resume recruitment and hiring activities, the project was impacted by the significant withdrawal of people with disabilities from the labour market. As a result of these circumstances, the BC WiN project also expanded its recruitment efforts beyond its initial model of working solely through its service organization network for referrals. The IWC team initiated a number of direct recruitment and marketing activities to engage a broader pool of job seekers with disabilities, while also working with a variety of stakeholders to promote employment campaigns to people with disabilities.
- 2022-2023 Delivery: Beginning in April 2022, the project team began activities aimed at the long-term sustainability of the BC WiN initiative, which focused on identifying future opportunities to sustain and scale the initiative. The team also held a Learning Summit for employer partners to share experiences and lessons learned from the project’s recruitment activities among current and prospective employer partners in British Columbia in January 2023, which was attended by 91 individuals. A follow-up training event on inclusive hiring and retention practices was held with additional employers in February 2023.

PARTICIPANT RESULTS

JOB MATCHING RESULTS

As a result of adjusted project timelines and activities, project targets were modified as a response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participant results, adjusted to the deadline of March 2023, are as follows:

- 225 people with disabilities served;
- 175 people with disabilities successfully matched with an employer; and
- 125 people with disabilities employed by the same employer with whom they were matched (six months post-intervention).

Although the pandemic had a major impact on job seeker engagement and availability of jobs, the IWC team continually adapted their strategy to meet candidates where they were comfortable, through a wide range of approaches. Table 1 presents the total numbers against targets for the project, up until March 31, 2023.

Table 1 Participant results

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	Totals	(Targets)
People with disabilities served	67	263	290	163	783	225
People with disabilities successfully matched with employer	13	30	39	40	122	175
People with disabilities employed by same employer (six months post-intervention)	11	22	39	35	107	125

Source: ESDC quarterly reports.

The table illustrates that over the four-year period the IWC team screened nearly 800 candidates through one-on-one interviews and cohort-based sessions. The team utilized these screening activities to refer suitable candidates to available job opportunities as they were put forward by employer partners. Based on this screening and referral process, 122 job seekers with disabilities were successfully matched to an available employment opportunity with an employer partner. Among these matched candidates, 87.7 per cent reported that they were still with their employer six months after the job match—substantially exceeding the project’s targeted retention rate.

JOB SEEKER SURVEYS

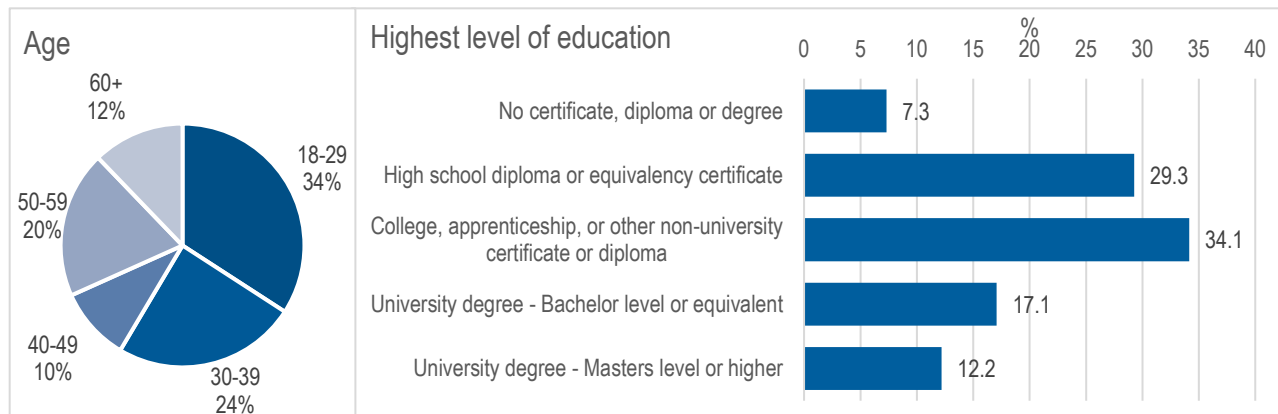
The baseline survey was designed to capture the basic demographic information and job seeker expectations, followed by two additional surveys that would capture employment outcomes, experience with BC WiN and supports, and general employment experience. Unless otherwise stated, all data collection activities were completed by January 31, 2023.

In total, 41 job seekers who were successfully matched with employment completed the baseline survey, with a response rate of 34.2 per cent (41 out of a possible 120 by January 31, 2023). While similar results were reported in the 2022 Interim Report (Celeste et al., 2022), an additional five job seekers completed the first follow-up survey six months of employment (20 total), and the third survey was completed by an additional three job seekers after 12 months of employment (7 total).

Baseline survey results

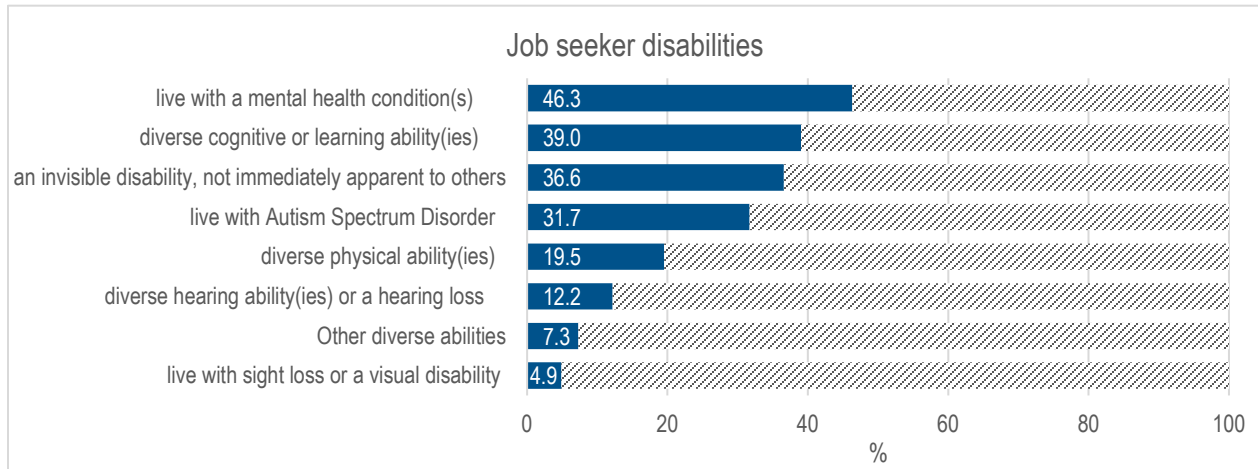
Participants ranged from age 18 to 69 with an average age of 39, and most participants had a college degree or above (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Job seeker baseline survey results, age, and highest level



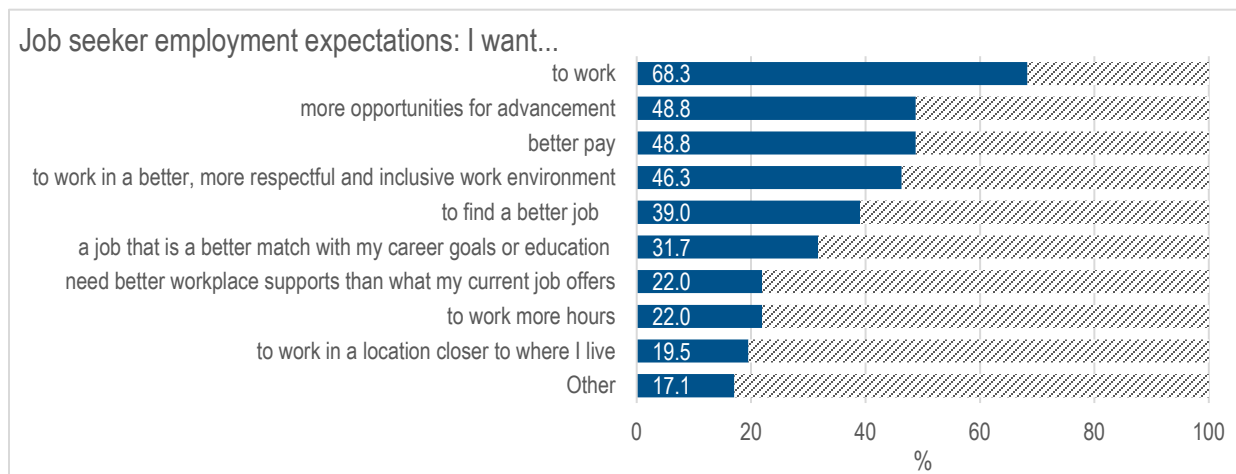
Participants were asked to indicate any disabilities they live with (Figure 4). On average, participants lived with two disabilities, ranging from one to six. Nearly half of respondents indicated living with mental health conditions (46.3 per cent) followed by other diverse cognitive disabilities (39.0 per cent), invisible disabilities (36.6 per cent), living with autism spectrum disorder (31.7 per cent), and diverse physical disabilities (19.5 per cent).

Figure 4 Job seeker baseline survey results, disabilities



When asked about their expectations for employment, most respondents wanted to work (68.3 per cent), have more opportunities for advancement and receive better pay (48.8 per cent), work in a better, and to work in a more respectful and inclusive environment (46.3 per cent).

Figure 5 Job seeker baseline survey results, employment expectations



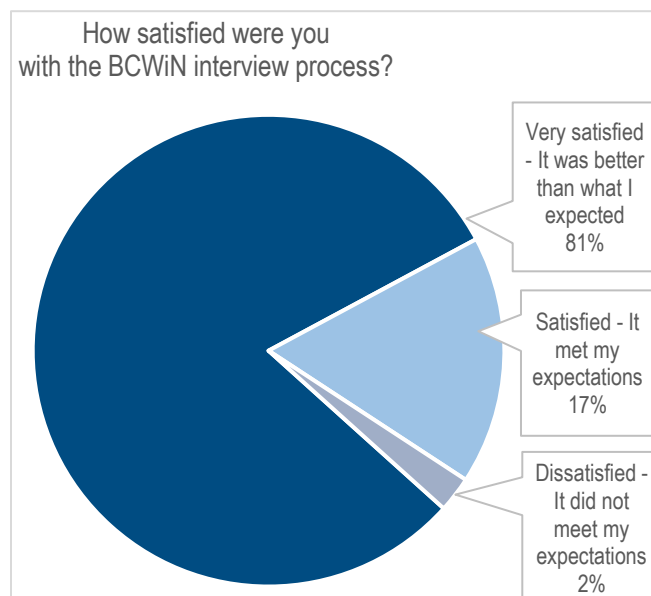
Participants were asked to describe any challenges they faced when previously looking for employment. All but seven respondents (83 per cent) provided an open-ended answer detailing their challenges. Challenges were wide-ranging from motivation to finding the right fit, to access to accommodations or challenges with aspects of their disabilities. These key themes are displayed in Figure 6.

Figure 6 Job seeker baseline survey results, employment challenges



When asked directly about their experience with BC WiN, nearly all respondents were satisfied or very satisfied (98 per cent) with the BC WiN interview process (Figure 7). Nearly half of respondents (51.4 per cent) left positive open-ended responses regarding their experience with BC WiN.

Figure 7 Job seeker baseline survey results, satisfaction with BC WiN

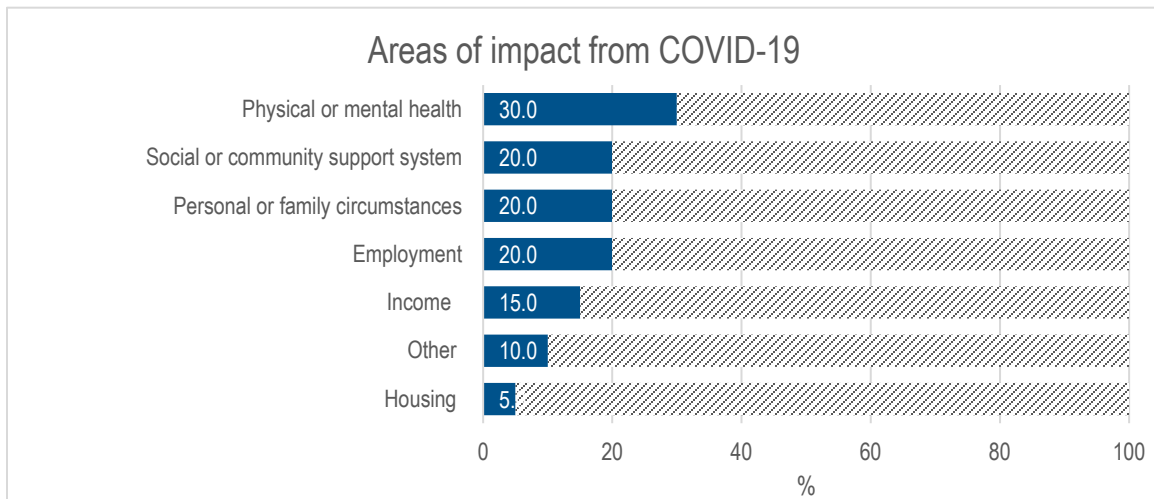


Follow-up surveys

The first follow-up survey was completed by 20 job seekers after six months of employment, 19 of whom were still employed at the time of the survey. The response rate for this survey was only 19 per cent (20 out of a possible 105 by January 31, 2023) of job seekers who were with the same employer at six months, thus the survey results should not be considered fully representative of all BC WiN participants.

As noted in the previous report, by the launch of the six-month follow-up survey, the COVID-19 pandemic had already made an impact on many people seeking employment. Respondents of the six-month survey were asked about the impact COVID-19 had on their lives. The most common area of impact was physical or mental health (30.0 per cent), followed by impact to their social or community support system, personal or family circumstances, employment, (each 20 per cent), and income (15.0 per cent).

Figure 8 Areas of impact from COVID-19

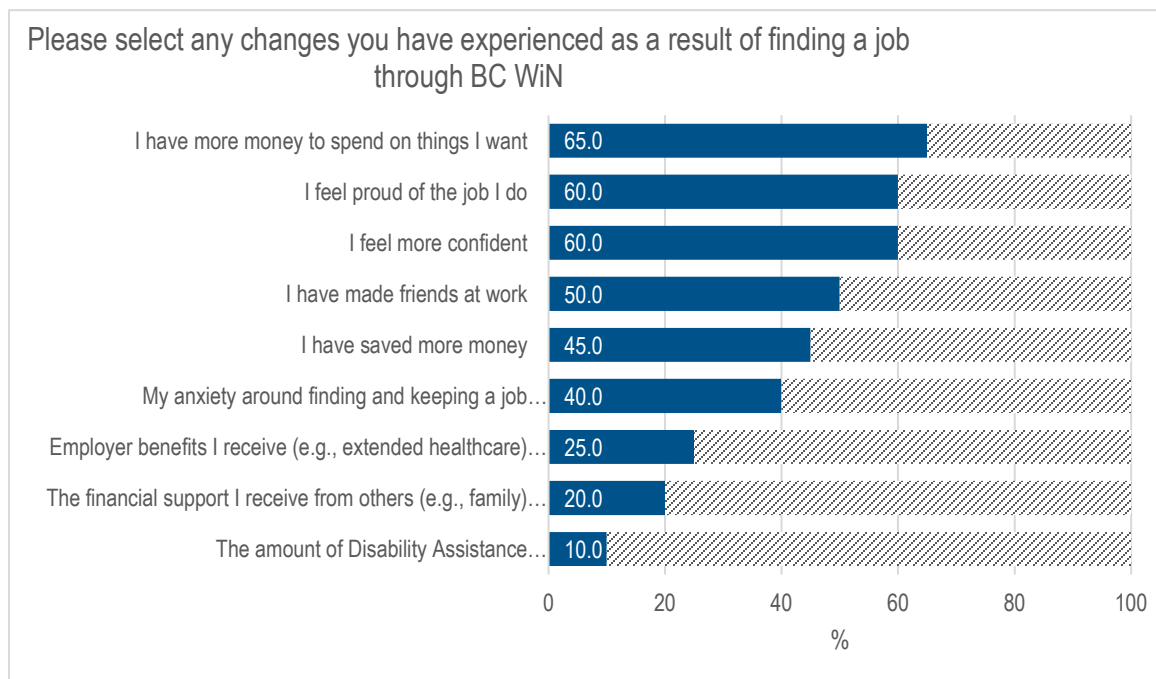


Among respondents, 25.0 per cent reported needing additional supports (such as a job coach), but only one reported needing additional supports to do their job well. However, this respondent indicated that they did not communicate that need to their employer and thus their employer did not provide any additional supports. As discussed further below, this is consistent in our interviews with job seekers, where there was an overall reluctance to ask for additional accommodations and supports from their employers out of concern that as new employees, these requests would be interpreted negatively or put their employment in jeopardy.

Respondents were asked if they experienced any changes as a result of finding a job through BC WiN. Most respondents reported having more money to spend on things they wanted

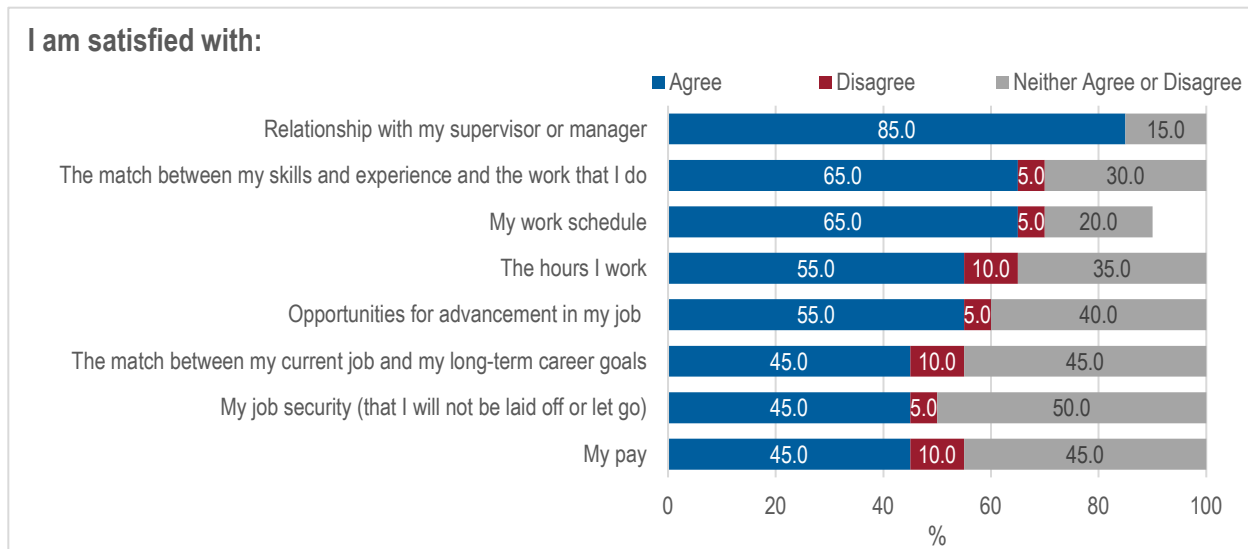
(65.0 per cent), feeling proud of their job (60.0 per cent), and feeling more confident (60.0 per cent). Nearly half of respondents reported having made friends at work (50.0 per cent), having saved more money (45.0 per cent), and having decreased anxiety around finding and keeping a job (40.0 per cent). Whereas a smaller number of respondents experienced a change in their benefits or additional financial supports, few reported that their employer benefits had increased (25.0 per cent) and that any financial support from family members (20.0 per cent) or disability assistance (10.0 per cent) had decreased.

Figure 9 Changes experienced as a result of finding a job through BC WiN



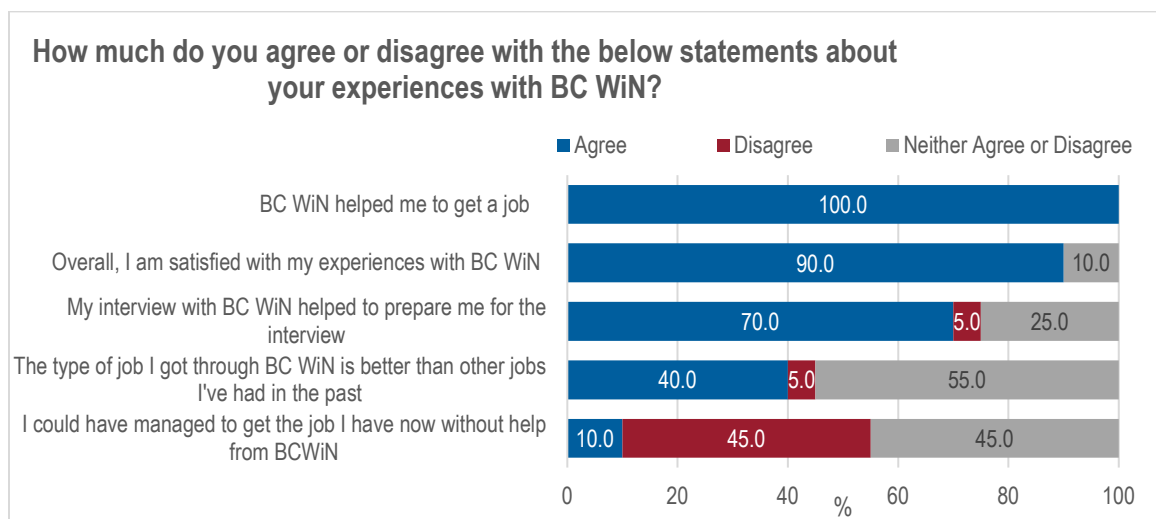
Respondents were also asked about their satisfaction with the employment they obtained through BC WiN. Most respondents agreed they were satisfied with their relationship with their supervisor or manager (85.0 per cent), followed by the match between their skills and the work they do (65.0 per cent), and their work schedule (65.0 per cent). Fewer respondents were also satisfied with the hours they work (55.0 per cent), the opportunities for advancement at their job (55.0 per cent), the match between their current job and long-term career goals (45.0 per cent), job security (45.0 per cent), and their pay (45.0 per cent).

Figure 10 Satisfaction with employment



Finally, respondents of the six-month follow-up survey were asked about their experiences of support from BC WiN. All respondents agreed that BC WiN helped them get a job and nearly all were satisfied with their experiences with BC WiN (90.0 per cent). Over two-thirds of respondents agreed that the BC WiN interview helped them prepare for their job interview (70.0 per cent). A smaller share of participants felt that their current job was better than ones they'd had in the past (40.0 per cent) with nearly half indicating that they could not have managed to get their current job without the help of BC WiN (45.0 per cent). Overall, the majority of respondents were satisfied with their BC WiN experience at the six month follow-up.

Figure 11 Support from BC WiN



Respondents were also offered an opportunity to share any additional comments about their employment situation or experience with BC WiN. Three respondents mentioned that their role was part-time or temporary, and they were hoping to find full-time or more permanent work. Two respondents noted that BC WiN was very helpful and supportive in terms of navigating supports and feeling comfortable disclosing their disability to prospective employers:

“I agree that working with BC WiN to help me find employment has greatly reduced my anxiety surrounding job security. This is the first time I have disclosed my disability to an employer and BC WiN was extremely supportive in that respect.”

(Job seeker survey response)

Creating inclusive workplaces

Only seven participants completed the 12-month follow-up survey. Due to this low response rate, the research team reviewed responses for overall themes. When asked about any outcomes of finding employment through BC WiN, most mentioned that they were generally satisfied with employment. Some indicated that in addition, they have more benefits and wages, more money, and more confidence.

The 12-month survey also included questions about the inclusive culture in the workplace. In general, respondents reported that they were not confident their workplace promoted a strong culture of inclusion. When asked to expand upon the culture of inclusion in their workplace, one respondent commented on the gap between corporate intention and the practice of inclusion:

“There are employee resource groups that are places for employees of different marginalized groups to congregate, but sometimes I get the impression that those are intended to be education tools for the executives rather than mutual support for the members.”

(Job seeker survey response)

Due to the limited number of follow-up survey responses, the research team supplemented this data with job seeker interviews to better understand the job seekers' experience and outcomes of the job matching process in the Spring of 2022. Job seeker interviews were also designed to explore the job matching process to surface insights into the effectiveness of the BC WiN model, what makes it different from other approaches, where key challenges and opportunities exist, and how they could potentially be addressed. A full discussion of findings from job seeker interviews as presented in a 2022 Interim Report (Celeste et al., 2022).

Interview findings were consistent with final survey results with respect to some job seekers' employment experience and views on disability inclusion in the workplace. For example, interview participants noted the challenges they had in navigating onboarding, challenging relationships with their supervisors, and some lack of comfort in requesting additional adjustments or accommodations. All interview participants noted that BC WiN provided ongoing support to help them navigate these aspects of employment, and some expressed that they would like additional ongoing support. While most interviewees noted that they were satisfied with their current employment situation, they were nonetheless considering new opportunities due to their experiences of a lack of disability inclusion in their workplaces. Interviewees who indicated that their workplaces lacked disability inclusion attributed it to a variety of causes. These included overall lack of direct supervisor capacity to demonstrate disability inclusion, not experiencing a sense of diversity/disability representation at a broader organizational level, and the perception that there were few opportunities for advancement in their current role.

EMPLOYER RESULTS

EMPLOYER PARTNER RESULTS

As this project refined and tested a demand-driven approach to inclusive employment, BC WiN set a minimum of five large employers and 10 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to engage with through partnership agreements. In total, 21 employers were engaged in this project, including 13 employers with over 500 employees, and five SMEs. The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the project may have impacted the lower number of SMEs engaged. As noted in the project’s interim reports, the impact of the pandemic on small and medium sized businesses has been well-documented: these businesses have been reported as more likely to experience financial challenges and constraints due to the rising cost of inputs, decrease in profitability, and difficulty in financing debt that accumulated earlier in the pandemic (Li et al., 2022), all which could impact their ongoing recruitment and DEI efforts.

While there has been variability in employer partner engagement throughout the project due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Table 2 outlines all employer partners who engaged with the BC WiN initiative over the course of the project:

Table 2 BC WiN employer partners

Employer partner	Partner since (Year)	Size
ICBC	2018	500+
BCAA	2019	500+
London Drugs	2014	500+
Port of Vancouver	2019	500+
Vancity	2014	500+
Ledcor	2020	500+
Canadian Western Bank	2020	500+
BC Hydro	2021	500+
BC Pension Corporation	2021	100+

Employer partner	Partner since (Year)	Size
FedEx	2021	500+
Hudson World Duty Free	2019	500+
Parq Vancouver	2014 (previously Edgewater)	500+
Small Business BC	2019	10 to 50
UBC Sauder School of Business	2019	100+
Musora Music	2022	50 to 100 (100 PT Instructors not included)
Auticon Canada	2022	100+
YVR	2017	500+
University of British Columbia (Food & Beverage Division and Animal Care Services)	2022	500+
Rick Hansen Foundation	2023	10 to 50
HomeD	2022	10 to 50
Mission Possible	2019	10 to 50

Once the employer committed to partnering with BC WiN, the IWC team worked with each employer to understand their unique business needs, job opportunities, upcoming recruitment cycles and potential barriers to successfully engaging people with disabilities in their organization.

The BC WiN model also offered expanded employer supports to build organizational DEI capacity to help achieve their goals with respect to accessible and inclusive employment. These included activities to increase employers’ understanding of how to attract people with disabilities, creating tools and resources to support increased hiring of people with disabilities, and developing customized training for cohorts of people with disabilities to prepare them for job opportunities. Highlights of these activities include:

- 7 employers committed to participating in the Untapped Talent – B2B Inclusive Recruitment and Retention E-learning series.
- 5 inclusive hiring manager training for large organizations completed.

- 10 accessibility reviews and 9 recruitment practice reviews completed with employer partners.
- 13 customized cohort and candidate information session trainings delivered for candidates with disabilities to prepare for job openings.
- 8 employer partners provided guidance on how to attract people with disabilities during the pandemic.

Table 3 summarizes key employer indicators tracked through this project.

Table 3 **Employer indicators summary**

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Number of employers engaged in capacity building activities	9	34	24	31
Number of employers to job seeker matching activities (recruitment campaigns)	35	109	64	24
Number of unique employers engaged	13	8	17	12
Number of employers that hired PWD as part of Opportunities Fund activities	13	7	10	11

Source: ESDC quarterly reports.

EMPLOYER INTERVIEWS & EMPLOYER SURVEY

Final interviews with nine employer partners were conducted in late 2022 and early 2023. Interviews conducted with employer partners were designed to capture their experiences and feedback on specific aspects of the BC WiN model, including recruitment activities, candidate referrals, ongoing supports to the employer for new hires, and DEI capacity building supports such as training and review of employer practices for accessibility and inclusion. Employers were asked to reflect on any comparative differences between BC WiN and other community partner organizations that they engaged with for diverse candidate recruitment and building DEI capacity. Interviews also asked employers to reflect on BC WiN's overall impact on their organizations, the business case for continued engagement with BC WiN services, and any lessons learned about their experience with this model.

An employer survey was designed to offer employers an opportunity to provide feedback on their experience with BC WiN services, their satisfaction, the value of BC WiN, and opinions on the sustainability of the BC WiN model. The aim of the survey was to reach more employers than possible with the interview process. Despite repeated efforts by the project team to engage employers to complete the survey, only three responses were submitted. Given this low response rate, survey findings have been used to supplement interview findings below where there was available evidence to do so.

Recruitment and job matching

Employers that were interviewed had a variety of experiences working with BC WiN on candidate recruitment and job matching. This included holding information sessions for candidates to learn more about the employer and available positions, working with BC WiN on targeted recruitment campaigns, and providing BC WiN with available job openings to recruit candidates with disabilities. Most employers who responded to the survey reported making use of recruitment services and were satisfied or very satisfied with these services.

One employer interviewed noted that BC WiN's recruitment services were valuable to them because the IWC team understood the employer's business, their roles, and their recruitment needs. The employer highlighted the importance of a demand-led recruitment model, focused on a strong fit between the candidate and the role:

"[BC WiN] really understand[s]... they're a more neutral recruiter for us, so rather than being an advocate necessarily... the model allows for a lot of objectivity about whether it's going to be a good fit. And I think that is what allows for a higher success rate with some of these matches of candidates to jobs. And from our perspective, that has worked very well. Not every not every match has been perfect for sure. I mean, but I think the same goes with any other hire... it's been it's been very positive and well-received."

(Employer interview 1)

Other employers interviewed stressed the importance of candidate fit and echoed that understanding the employer's needs, job roles, and finding strong candidate matches were key elements of working with BC WiN. Several employers noted ongoing work with the IWC team to overcome challenges finding candidates that met specific competencies and skills for available roles. Employers acknowledged that the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 had resulted in an overall

reduction in referrals for available positions and that they were hopeful to receive more referrals as pandemic restrictions eased and job seekers with disabilities re-engaged with the labour market.

Employers emphasized the importance of their needs and expectations to engage in a process to thoroughly vet candidates and prepare individuals to ensure all referrals have an understanding of the employer and available opportunity, and the specific competencies and skills required for available positions. Employers stressed the value of having a job candidate's skills, experience, and references all been thoroughly assessed and that the individual is well-prepared regarding the day-to-day responsibilities and requirements of the job. One employer noted how they worked with the IWC team to communicate their expectations to potential candidates as follows:

“[It’s] having those introductory conversations, it’s explaining to [candidates] what [the employer] is all about. So being kind of a representative [of the employer], being able to share what we’re looking for, who we are, our history... it’s really doing the analysis... talking to them, really kind of breaking down the CV and doing the appropriate reference checks and then have it presented to us. I think that’s what I’m looking for as I would look for any recruiter.”

(Employer interview 7)

Employers stressed that successful job matches were dependent on transparent communication between the IWC team and the employer partner, as well as ensuring that the employer partner had reasonable expectations of candidates' skills and abilities and that hiring managers were prepared to adjust expectations, provide necessary accommodations and adjustments, and support successful onboarding and learning on the job. One employer noted that BC WiN had provided helpful recommendations and strategies for the employer to work with hiring managers when they had experienced challenges with respect to onboarding and accommodating a referred candidate. The employer reflected that this experience highlighted the importance of doing that upfront 'due diligence' to ensure the hiring manager was prepared and knowledgeable to work with candidates referred through BC WiN.

Several employers also expressed their needs with respect to align processes and timelines to respond quickly to employers' hiring needs. They noted that they often were dealing with short timelines and internal pressures, and that at times this made it difficult to find a suitable way to integrate BC WiN's recruitment services and timelines into their processes:

“We couldn't figure out a process that was effective from a time perspective... So, they would get us a candidate, but we had potentially already short listed our candidates... there just wasn't the right flow... from a candidate experience, what we heard was it was like a long process.”

(Employer interview 2)

Some employers suggested that these challenges spoke to their need to establish a more continuous and streamlined process for recruitment with the IWC team. Others indicated that they saw opportunities to coordinate and align BC WiN's processes with their internal recruitment processes, job posting requirements, and coordination of HR and hiring managers more efficiently.

The group of employers who participated in the interviews offered a variety of ideas of how demand-led recruitment models could be enhanced based on their experiences of working with BC WiN to date, including:

- Creating a standardized summary of referred candidates: This could include the specific steps taken to assess the candidate's skills, background, and references, as well as a summary profile of the candidate's fit in relation to the job and any adjustments or accommodations required for the candidate to be successful.
- Metrics on recruitment, referrals, hires, and retention: Employers noted that more standardized indicators to understand the success rates of recruitment, hires, and longer-term retention would be helpful for their organizations to address challenges and identify barriers to progress internally. These metrics would help inform decision-making and address any challenges with respect to recruitment.
- Articulate business process for continuous recruitment: To address timeline and process delays and to create a business process that would allow for more continuous recruitment, employers noted that it was important to map these processes between BC WiN, their internal HR teams, and hiring managers.
- Explore longer-term partnerships with postsecondary education institutions: Employers also expressed an interest in having the BC WiN model expand to connect to college and university graduates, especially for roles that were more specialized or beyond entry level positions.

Employer capacity supports

One of the specific goals of this project was to build on the efforts of the BC WiN pilot by providing employers with enhanced supports to develop and implement comprehensive DEI strategies, transform their recruitment and workplace practices, and engage in the process of developing talent pipelines to facilitate the recruitment and integration of people with disabilities. Interviews explored employers' experience with these enhanced supports, which included uptake of training resources such as the Untapped Talent – B2B Inclusive Recruitment and Retention E-learning series, engagement with BC WiN to review specific practices from an accessibility and inclusion perspective, and engagement with BC WiN supports for interviewing, onboarding, and other supports to the employer to ensure the necessary adjustments and accommodations were in place for successful job matches.

As noted above, BC WiN employers participated in a variety of training opportunities – offered in both in e-learning and in-person formats, accessibility and recruitment practice reviews, and candidate information sessions. Employer interviewees who noted a lack of participation in the capacity supports indicated that their internal HR teams and hiring managers had the necessary capacity and did not require additional support or expertise during the interview process or that they had the in-house capacity to support candidates during onboarding and addressing any concerns with respect to relationships with hiring managers or direct supervisors. When asked for the main reason for not utilizing services, respondents indicated that there was limited time or did not have the opportunity, or that their organization was complex. When asked if anything prevented their organization from engaging with BC WiN, respondents indicated lack of capacity, HR turnover or creation of new HR or DEI specialist positions as the main reasons for not engaging.

One employer noted a situation where they appreciated additional supports from the IWC team to address specific challenges with a referred candidate and implement a respectful process when there was the mutual decision that a termination was required. The employer conveyed that they were appreciative of the IWC team's trusted support to navigate this difficult process for a positive resolution:

“[BC WiN] would attend regular meetings with all the hiring leaders with all the hiring managers and we would talk... in a safe space talk [about] some of the challenges. [We had] good techniques and strategies to try and make it work... [BC WiN] did a lot of heavy lifting... So, overall, it was positive and there are people who have left; but those that have stayed are still working out.”

(Employer interview 7)

Among the employers who indicated that they had experience working with the IWC team on reviewing interview templates for accessibility and inclusion, they highlighted the benefits of receiving specific expertise in how to identify and remove barriers for candidates with disabilities:

“We reviewed all the interview templates with their support and guidance and edited the templates to remove potential barriers for different groups. So those are the type of benefits that you have [with] an organization like BC WiN because they bring expertise in accessibility and employment for persons with disabilities.”

(Employer interview 8)

One employer noted that there was potential for an organization like BC WiN to build on the Untapped Talent – B2B Inclusive Recruitment and Retention E-learning series to offer more tailored training or learning opportunities with employers. This employer saw an opportunity to address a lack of training resources to specifically address ableism in the workplace, including how employers can understand what ableism looks like, how it shows up in daily organizational processes, and how it is embedded into business models and HR practices with respect to employee performance and productivity.

Overall value of the BC WiN model

Interviews explored the overall value of the BC WiN model, including asking employers to reflect on any comparative differences with respect to other organizations and services that they worked with to recruit diverse talent, support their DEI strategies and goals, and address accessibility and inclusion in the workplace. Employer interviewees who had experience working with a range of employment service organizations noted two features of BC WiN that distinguish

it from other services they have accessed. The first is that they recognized that BC WiN's demand-led model differed from traditional employment service providers in that it is focused on meeting the employer's needs and overall job fit:

“They come from HR and so because their background is HR, it's not just being an advocate, they're able to do that matchmaking and understand that matchmaking, that is so critical... I don't believe anyone can just kind of walk into these jobs and be able to quite get it, but they're able to truly match what it is that you need and what the applicant can do that so that it's setting everyone up [for success].”

(Employer interview 5)

Second, some interviewees highlighted that one of the key benefits of working with BC WiN was having access to a broader network of resources and supports for accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities, and helping the employer navigate the service landscape to connect job candidates to the accommodations and supports they required.

Beyond those comparative differences in services, a general theme in the interviews was that employers benefitted from the trusted relationships they established with the IWC team. In particular, having a trusted resource to help employers address challenges with employees when they occurred, and to navigate difficult issues was valued with their BC WiN partnership. Having “honest conversations,” providing strategies and supports to address concerns with respect to employees with disabilities, addressing hiring managers' concerns, and providing confidential, supportive, and judgement-free advice where employers could ask “difficult questions” were noted aspects of the BC WiN model. Employers noted that having support when job matching was not successful and advice in terms of how to navigate specific issues or conflicts with employees was particularly valued:

“They're really a true partner for me in terms of our journey in becoming a more inclusive employer. I feel that you know... I can really call [BC WiN] for like for anything, really any questions that we have... if we have an employee that's going through something, I can call [BC WiN] for advice. It kind of started with the placement service and then it kind of grew into that relationship where we can partner and collaborate and [BC WiN] became much more of that trusted resource for me.”

(Employer interview 9)

Similarly, respondents to the employer survey highlighted the trusted partnership as the most significant benefit of working with BC WiN, which included having a partner with the expertise to navigate a “cultural shift” to becoming more inclusive, helping to address leader-employee issues as they came up, and working with the employer with an understanding of where they were in their journey to be a more inclusive organization.

Long-term sustainability of the BC WiN model

Finally, the employer interviews and surveys explored the future sustainability of BC WiN, including consideration of what services employers would most benefit from in the future and if they would consider BC WiN as a fee-for-service model. Employer responses were wide ranging, but they generally were neutral to only somewhat likely. In both the interviews and the surveys, employers noted that paying for these types of services may not be an option for smaller businesses or organizations and that it was likely that employers would need to review all available services and supports to recruit diverse talent before committing to a fee-for-service model.

To reframe the exploration of the sustainability of the BC WiN model, employers were also asked to reflect on what they might highlight internally as the key components of a business case for continuing to work with BC WiN. Employers again stressed the benefits of a demand-led model that focused on employer needs, and the importance of the recruitment services that BC WiN provided:

“They're effectively an extension of our recruitment team that that's how we use them, so that is a huge bonus right there. They're doing the preliminary screening and they're making sure that the individuals who we see are ones that [fit the position] ... There's a [dollar and time] savings in that... So, I think that is a big part of the business case.”

(Employer interview 1)

While employers reserved judgement with respect to a fee-for-service model, they generally valued the demand-side recruitment approach and saw that there is an opportunity to build on strengthen recruitment services with stronger, skilled candidates that are a good fit with employers:

“Making sure that the candidates fully understand what the role is... [that] they fully understand the organization... We care about the employees. We want it to be a great fit for the employees. We don't want to just be another seat filled, so to speak. We want this to be a career path that they love, and they would be able to contribute to. We don't want to just be, oh, checkmark, we got another person with disability in the organization. That's not our goal. Our goal is to ensure that we're providing great support as well as tapping into great resources and the skills that they have. But I think it's also like understanding... what the role needs are of the organization.”

(Employer interview 6)

Employers noted that there was potential to augment BC WiN work and reach with the service organization network to create a ‘one-window’ approach to helping employers to network and make connections with respect to accessibility, accommodations, and addressing specific needs. In addition to specific ideas and lessons learned with respect to strengthening the recruitment model noted above, employer interviewees with regional or national operations expressed an interest in having BC WiN’s recruitment services into other markets beyond the province.

LESSONS LEARNED

BUILDING ON THE JOB MATCHING MODEL

Project findings demonstrate that the BC WiN model's specific employer-focused recruitment approach provides value for employers and overall positive outcomes for the job seeker. Both job seekers and employers expressed satisfaction with the recruitment process and the project resulted in a total of 122 successful job matches.

Key themes in employer interviews have underscored the importance of demand-led approaches such as BC WiN helping them diversify their workplaces by matching them to candidates who fit their organizational needs. Employers noted the ongoing process of working closely with the IWC team to ensure a good fit with the employer and the role. Employer partners suggested several concrete ways in which recruitment and job matching could be aligned to meet the needs of employers, including standardizing processes to streamline recruitment and introducing metrics to support employer decision-making. Generally, employers expressed that they saw value in continuing to partner with BC WiN on recruitment and job matching and were more likely to cite recruitment support as the key component of the business case when considering a fee-for-service model.

Job seeker results also indicate that while they were overall satisfied with the employment they achieved through BC WiN's job-matching services, there is room for further improvement in the job market for people with opportunities to find opportunities that meet their long-term career goals in terms of matching their educational background, offering opportunities for advancement, and providing a satisfactory level of job security. Over three quarters of respondents to job seeker surveys indicated that they had some level of post-secondary education and one third held a university degree or advanced university degree. Close to half of respondents were also motivated to work with BC WiN to have more opportunities for advancement and over a third were looking for a better job. While over half of respondents to the six-month follow-up survey indicated satisfaction with respect to the match between their skills, experience, and their job, less than half of respondents indicated they agreed they were satisfied with respect to their job security and the match to their long-term career goals.

These findings suggest that there are opportunities to further develop approaches to job matching in demand-based models that go beyond of meeting employers' immediate workforce needs and to ensure that employers are addressing the need for job security in advertised positions. Lessons to be applied to similar demand-based recruitment models suggest that job matching requires a multi-level approach that considers several dimensions of fit that go beyond

the job seeker’s skills and abilities in relation to the role. Additional dimensions of fit include the work environment, as well as alignment with values, interests, and career goals (Nützi et al., 2017). Surfacing job seeker expectations and motivations in recruitment could benefit employers in identifying candidates’ transferrable skills as well as areas of professional development to prioritize. Surfacing long-term career goals and interests could also potentially encourage employers to identify positions within their organizations that they could tailor specifically to foster development and advancement for candidates with disabilities as well.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A TRUSTED PARTNER

Findings suggest that the BC WiN model fulfills a need as a trusted resource for its employer partners. Having a “trusted broker” reduces employers’ perception of risk with respect to hiring people with disabilities, where employers may feel concerned about making mistakes or not having the skills and knowledge to support people with disabilities in the workplace. Rather than simply having the information resources, employers are looking for such brokers that match people with disabilities to job requirements, and who they can look to for expertise on disability related issues, and reassurance that there is a “responsible contact person” who can be accessed immediately about issues that arise concerning people with disabilities in the workplace (Gufstaffson et al., 2013).

As trust is established with employers, they are able to shift their attention from perceived risks towards inclusion, which requires developing the attitudes and skills necessary to recruit, hire, and retain people with disabilities effectively. To do this, there must be a sense that the “trusted broker” knows their business and can offer tailored solutions such as disability training, assistance with developing inclusive policies and procedures especially for recruitment, and addressing barriers in the workplace (Murfitt et al., 2018). More than simply guiding employers through the process, these “trusted brokers” also inject security into new and uncertain situations (Gufstaffson et al., 2013).

BC WiN’s IWC team establishes trust by focusing on employer needs and ensuring that job matching services are oriented to the employer, while simultaneously connecting to service organizations that can support the employee. In playing this role as the support for employers and a liaison to the service organization network, the IWC team supports employers’ capacity to hire, recruit, and retain people with disabilities. Having BC WiN supports and advice beyond the initial hiring was valued also by employer partners, especially in instances where they encountered challenges with respect to job fit. During employee transitions or cases where conflicts arose, the IWC team also played a role as the trusted broker role to ensure a positive outcome for both the employer and employee. The ongoing availability of the IWC team after the initial hire provides the potential to identify additional opportunities where the employer may

need to increase its DEI capacity for the successful onboarding, accommodations, and development of employees with disabilities.

Such findings point to important lessons for other demand-based models where employers may have a positive intention to hire and develop a diverse and inclusive workforce but are hesitant to enter situations that are unknown or unfamiliar. As the research literature suggests, trust includes an acceptance of being vulnerable or taking a risk in an unknown situation based on positive expectations of another actor, which is built through continuous interaction (Downey et al., 2015). Important components of trust-building in BC WiN can be translated into other demand-based models. First, a component of trust was built through a focus on job fit and being a more “neutral” recruiter for the employer when compared to other organizations focused on placing employees with disabilities. Employer interviews emphasized the importance of the recruitment model that prioritized understanding their business and their hiring needs above meeting specific job-matching targets. Interviews with employers and job seekers also pointed to the importance of providing ongoing support after a candidate was hired, where both saw BC WiN as an important intermediary to help address conflicts or challenges when they arose.

LESSONS FOR WORKPLACE INCLUSION

While job seeker follow-up survey results were limited and should therefore not be considered representative of all job seekers matched to employment by BC WiN, there was some indication that that job seekers were less confident about their workplaces promoting a culture of inclusion. As explored in the project’s 2022 Interim report, mapping the journey of job seekers into employment highlighted the needs and desires of people with disabilities to have ongoing support in their employment journey as well as the potential gap in direct supervisors’ and managers’ understanding and ability to respond to the needs of employees with disabilities (Celeste et al., 2022).

Adopting an employment lifecycle lens (i.e., onboarding and social integration, employee development, retention, performance management) is important for employers to identify and address key organizational conditions for employees’ long-term success and remove potential barriers after the point of hire. It also helps to determine key actors and processes within an organization that need to be aligned to support the transition from recruitment into the next phase of the lifecycle. When considering the employment lifecycle, it is also effective to think about the “moments that matter” or moments of impact within specific stages in the lifecycle. These can include both specific moments of impact, such as the first days on the job or in moments when the employee is supported through specific life or career transitions (e.g., becoming a parent, receiving a promotion). However, the employee lifecycle is also influenced by ongoing moments, which include the continued relationship that an employee has with their

direct supervisor, or how the organization demonstrates inclusion in the day-to-day work environment (Morgan, 2017).

By identifying these moments within various stages of the employment lifecycle, employers can better understand and address how they can contribute to workplace inclusion, as well as how they ensure that important moments of impact are barrier-free. As expressed in the employer interviews, there is preference for tailored capacity building activities. Identifying and prioritizing strategic moments of impact to address diversity, equity, and inclusion (i.e., managers' or supervisors' capacity to be disability-inclusive) not only addresses that preference but could be an important way for demand-based models to move beyond generalized approaches to employer capacity development as well.

In the latter stages of the project, the Four Pillars model that guided the IWC team's work with employers, served as a useful framework to facilitate discussions with employers, practitioners and policy makers during learning events about how best to support employers to create the conditions for workplace inclusion (i.e., Commitment and Readiness) as well as consider accessibility inclusion at various stages in the employment lifecycle (i.e., Recruitment and Retention). These supports have the potential for employers to achieve their equity, diversity, and inclusion goals and encourage employers to consider holistic approaches when it comes to attracting, developing, and retaining diverse talent.

APPENDIX A: COVID-19 SURVEY IMPACT ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Impacts of COVID-19 on People with Disabilities' Employment Experiences


20
BC SERVICE PROVIDERS
 Survey sent to BC WiN's service partner network, representing approximately **566** clients

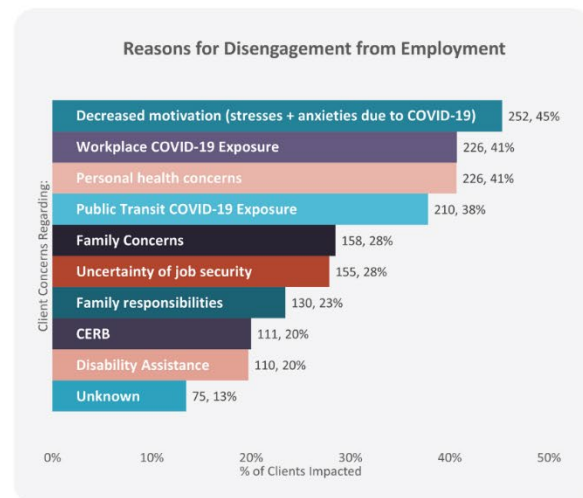
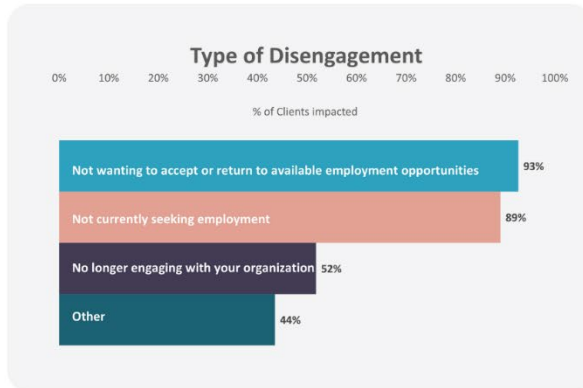



"Clients who already face multiple barriers seemed to demonstrate less resilience and more anxiety around COVID."

"The shifting labour market which has added a complex layer to most businesses - the physical distancing, PPE, having to think about another layer of accommodation is very challenging for employers"

IMPACT OF COVID-19

Responses suggest that not only are job seekers disengaging from employment, but employers are more hesitant to hire people with disabilities during the pandemic.




NOT BUSINESS AS USUAL

The survey highlighted the need to adapt to COVID-19:

Employers require further supports to shift their approaches to engaging people with disabilities during the pandemic.

Persistence of pandemic requires understanding how job seekers engage in employment currently and shift to longer-term thinking.

Concerns about personal safety and job security present real barriers to employment for vulnerable job seekers.

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