**How did this project come about?**

The *Accessible Canada Act* is a law in Canada. It is a federal law about accessibility. Accessibility means many things. It means that everyone can get to and use information. It means everybody can get to and use spaces and places. It means that everyone can find jobs where they are treated equally.

Under the *Accessible Canada Act*, there will be standards. A standard is a set of guidelines. These guidelines show the best way to do something. One set of guidelines is about what employers can do to help people with disabilities work. These employment guidelines are currently being created by the government. The government asked for research projects that can help them create good standards.

**Who led this project and who paid for it?**

Consultants from MacLeod Silver HR Business Partners and researchers from the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation worked on the project. They worked with employers who are trying to be more accessible. They also worked with organizations that help people with disabilities. The project worked directly with a group of people with disabilities as well. This group was called the "People with Experiential Knowledge" group.

The project was paid for in part by Accessibility Standards Canada. Accessibility Standards Canada is a government organization. It was created in 2019 under the *Accessible Canada Act*.

**What did this project do?**

This project worked with employers to test a set of actions to remove barriers at work. These actions are called "The Four Pillars of Accessible and Inclusive Employment." A barrier is anything that prevents people with disabilities from participating equally. Barriers at work need to be found and removed. Below are the steps we used to remove and prevent barriers in employment:

- Commitment: Making a promise to include everyone
- Readiness: Getting ready to include everyone
- Hiring: Changing the way people are hired
- Maintaining: Assuring people with disabilities are comfortable at work

In the work we did for the project, we:

- Looked at other research on what helps people with disabilities at work.
- Worked with 12 employers to help us test different ways for helping people with disabilities at work.
- Talked to different people. We spoke with employees with disabilities. We spoke with employers and experts on including people with disabilities at work. We also had conversations with service providers and policymakers.

## What did we learn in this project?

1. **The Social Model of Disability**

   Employers need to know about "the social model of disability." The social model of disability is a way of viewing the world. It was developed with people with disabilities. The social model of disability says that there are barriers in society. Barriers are things like buildings not having a ramp or accessible toilets. Barriers can also be people's attitudes toward employees with disabilities. Even though it is important for employers to understand this idea, it is new to many of them.

2. **Commitment: Making a Promise to Include Everyone**

   Employers need to make a commitment to welcome people with disabilities. Staying true to a commitment is more than words. It includes actions. This involves taking steps to compare how their workplaces are now with how they want them to become. It requires staff time to take steps to be more accessible and inclusive. Human Resources departments usually do this, but it is important for them to have more help. Everyone at work needs to be involved. For example, it is important for unions and employers to work together. People with disabilities should have a voice in decision-making about their employment.

3. **Readiness: Getting Ready to Include Everyone**

Employers are figuring out what might stop people with disabilities from working for them. Employers want to know if they have people with disabilities working for them. This will help them get ready to include more employees with disabilities. But employees may feel nervous about telling their employer that they have a disability. Employers need to create a trusting and safe work environment. One way to do this is by looking at the employer's policies and plans to ensure they meet everyone's needs.

Everyone needs to learn how to respect and support everyone else in the workplace. But this kind of learning is only helpful if it helps people in their everyday work. One way to do this is to create ways to share daily work challenges and to find solutions together.

4. **Hiring: Changing the Way People are Hired**

Some ways for employers to find and hire people with disabilities are to:

- Show that they care about diversity and about including everyone.
- Focus on the most essential skills needed for the job.
- Use easy-to-understand language when advertising jobs.
- Give interview questions beforehand.

To make sure everyone has a fair chance to get a job, employers need to make it easy to apply for a job. Job seekers who might have gaps in their work histories should not be excluded. Instead, employers need to look for people with attitudes and skills that could be useful in the job.

Employers need to think about how to communicate with job seekers with disabilities. Technology may not work for everyone. Employers should have other ways to connect with job seekers. Some job seekers may not want to talk about their disability during the interview. So, employers need to ensure that interviews are set up in a way to make it easy for everyone to take part.

5. **Maintaining: Assuring People with Disabilities are Comfortable at Work**

Employers need to create workplaces where employees want to stay and grow. They can take steps to make sure their employees have everything they need to do their job. Below are some examples of supporting people in their jobs:

- Giving employees documents in easy-to-understand language and formats.
- Having regular check-ins and clear communication.
- Encouraging others to be friendly. It is also important for supervisors to be trained on how to include everyone and help them feel they belong.

Employers should offer training for their employees so they can be good at their jobs. They should also help their employees find jobs that are a good fit. Employers should provide time off when employees need it. The workplace should be safe so employees are healthy and happy.

**Why is this learning important?**

We learned what is important to people with disabilities for finding and keeping good jobs. We learned how to help people with disabilities find jobs and keep them. We now know more about what employers need. The things we learned from our project can help the government create new guidelines for employers.