



## PROJECT INSIGHTS REPORT

# NARE: National Accessibility Resources for Employers

Inclusive Economy

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COVID-19 created an uncertain landscape that required new knowledge and tools for employers to enable them to support employment of people living with disabilities.

The Work Wellness Institute developed educational resources on disability management in the workplace, inclusive onboarding, training and retention practices, developing workplace disability policies, mental health and burnout, and inclusivity. These resources were shared with more than 500 organizations and 2000 individuals via virtual conferences, webinars, courses, lecture series and podcasts. Nearly three quarters of participants who completed a feedback survey felt they would gained new knowledge and resources that they could apply in their professional life. The educational resources developed through this project, and the engagement of employers, contribute to a shared understanding of the skills, knowledge, resource gaps, and opportunities to cultivate inclusive and productive workplaces for people with disabilities.

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### DATE PUBLISHED

March 2024

### PARTNERS

[Work Wellness Institute](#)

### LOCATIONS

Across Canada

### INVESTMENT

\$648,000

### KEY INSIGHT #1

More than 2,200 individuals participated in educational activities on accessibility in the workplace.

### KEY INSIGHT #2

### KEY INSIGHT #3

75% or more of participants who completed a feedback survey gained new knowledge and resources that they could apply in their professional life.

Many employers want more support on how to manage demand and discussion around mental health accommodation policies and processes.

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## The Issue

A significant proportion of Canadians live with a visible or invisible disability, with their numbers predicted to rise with Canada's aging population. Even moderate success in addressing existing labour market gaps between people with disabilities and the general population is estimated to have significant socioeconomic benefits to Canada. Sectors and industries across Canada are also increasingly looking to diversify their workforces to address labour and skills shortages, including attracting more workers with disabilities.

COVID-19 created an uncertain landscape that required new knowledge and tools for employers to support employment of people living with disabilities. With the host of disruptions that accompanied the pandemic, employers had to simultaneously adapt business practices and build policies to support employees. The Work Wellness Institute, which works with multidisciplinary stakeholders in the public and private sectors to build and share the latest research on work wellness, saw increased demand for timely, credible, and relevant information about how to effectively support employees living with disabilities through the pandemic.

## What We're Investigating

This project sought to develop and disseminate a range of educational resources aimed at employers on accommodation, recruitment, and retention to support employment for people living with a disability and more broadly the creation of inclusive workplaces. The project sought to ensure these educational resources reflected the dynamic work environments created by the pandemic and the differing learning preferences of the Work Wellness Institute's existing users.

The educational resources covered topics including best practices for disability management in the workplace, how to develop inclusive onboarding and training practices, building inclusive practices to support retention in the workplace, developing workplace disability policies, mental health and burnout, and inclusivity.

The education resources developed included:

- Three virtual conference series over the course of 2021-2022
- 20 webinars
- Two instructor-led courses
- Five self-paced online courses
- A four-part Thoughts to Inspire interview and lecture series
- The launch of the Workistic podcast app featuring short episodes on key work wellness topics.

The project team also sought to evaluate the satisfaction of participants and effectiveness of the educational resources and the ways they were being disseminated, so as to improve outreach and engagement results.

## What We're Learning

Over the course of this project, the Work Wellness Institute engaged 532 organizations, including more than 40 SMEs, and 2,201 individuals across different activities.

There were 541 attendees at the virtual conferences with the majority of participants working in health care and social assistance, public administration, consulting, finance insurance and real estate, and education services.

There were 995 participants in the webinars, 195 participants in the e-courses, and 824 attendees in the Thoughts to Inspire lecture series. 187 people downloaded the Workistic podcast app, containing 39 episodes.

Across webinars and the e-courses, 75% or more of participants who completed a feedback survey felt they would gain new knowledge and resources that they could apply in their professional life.

**Interest in workplace wellness and inclusion continues to grow.** The project partners had strong interest in the educational resources produced, with an increased desire from employers for more information and resources on the intersection of accommodation, retention and recruitment practices that create inclusive and productive workplaces for employees overall. Across sectors, many employers were looking for more support on how to manage demand and discussion around mental health accommodation policies and processes, as well as invisible disabilities and chronic illness, including the emerging impacts of long-COVID. Over the course of the pandemic, employers became more interested and open to flexible work conditions, such as shortened work weeks and remote and hybrid work.

**Diversity of formats for a diversity of users.** Participants expressed appreciation for the variety of ways to access the educational resources, and felt they accommodated a range of learning styles. More than 90% of participants who completed a feedback survey felt the content of the educational resources was easy to understand, credible and timely.



## Why It Matters

Across Canada, the Accessible Canada Act aims to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities, with a goal of making Canada barrier-free by 2040. Employment is one of seven priority areas for action, and supporting workers with disabilities has become a key component of equity, diversity and inclusion workplace policy.

This project contributed, and continues to foster a shared understanding of the skills, knowledge, resource gaps and opportunities experienced by Canadian employers in addressing and maintaining healthy, inclusive, and productive workplaces, particularly for workers with disabilities. Collectively, the impact of this dialogue and the resulting awareness of the importance of policy and process to support Canadian workers with disabilities will shift the Canadian employment culture to broader adoption of work wellness and inclusive policies across sectors.

## What's Next

Building on this project, the [Work Wellness Institute](#) continues to update resources and offer courses, and events on diversity, inclusion, accessibility and the future of work.

The Future Skills Centre acknowledges that the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee share a special relationship to the 'Dish With One Spoon Territory,' where our office is located, bound to share and protect the land. As a pan-Canadian initiative, FSC operates on the traditional territory of many Indigenous nations across Turtle Island, the name given to the North American continent by some Indigenous peoples. We are grateful for the opportunity to work in this territory and commit ourselves to learning about our shared history and doing our part towards reconciliation.

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