

## Creating employer demand for inclusive hiring

Canada / Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), CACL & CASDA

By adopting an 'Employment First' approach and taking a 'demand' rather than a 'supply' focus, Canada's 'Ready, Willing, and Able' initiative enters into a direct dialogue with employers, informing them about the fact that persons with intellectual disabilities make excellent employees and can fill regularly occurring vacancies. By September 2016, 1,159 employment opportunities were secured.

### IN BRIEF

Canada's Ready, Willing, and Able (RWA) initiative of 2014–2017 is a nationwide partnership between the government and disabled peoples organizations that promotes awareness among employers as to the value of employees with an intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder. RWA provides individualized assistance to become a more inclusive employer, including assistance in identification of candidates, enhancing disability awareness among employers, making connections to community agencies that provide employment services and support, providing individual on-the-job support, and much more. To date, the initiative has conducted outreach to 5,983 employers.

### FACTS & FIGURES

- Begun in 2014, RWA operates in 20 communities, with a network of more than 100 employment agencies in all provinces.
- Held 40 employer forums, with 1,817 employers actively involved.
- Facilitated 1,159 employment opportunities with a 96 per cent retention rate, and all are paid at minimum wage level or above.
- Established partnerships with eight national employers.
- In September 2016 an additional 185 employers put forth commitments to hire.

### INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

#### Presenting the business case

Inclusive hiring is presented not as a charitable response, but rather the RWA team speaks directly to employers, demonstrating the economic benefit associated with the initiative.

#### Providing help to employers

RWA addresses the real and ongoing needs of employers by educating them on disability, by assisting in the recruitment for vacancies, and by providing on-the-job support.

## Transforming how services work

RWA aligns with current federal priorities, meets employer needs, and enhances but also transforms the community employment delivery system.

### CONTEXT

In Canada the employment rate of persons with intellectual disabilities or autism spectrum disorders is around 15–20 per cent, and another 500,000 are ‘ready, willing, and able’ to work. To address the general lack of awareness among employers, in 2013 the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) began to develop multiple pilot projects testing the RWA model and consulting various stakeholders, such as People First of Canada, 13 CACL members, major employers, and others. In 2014, together with the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance (CASDA), CACL applied to the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities. RWA was approved to operate as a pilot initiative from 1 September 2014 to 31 August 2017.

### QUOTE

Hiring a person with an intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder is a good business decision.  
– Mr. Patrick O’Neil, Manager, Kent Home Building Supplies

### KEY FEATURES

The RWA initiative is aiming to increase employer capacity and demand to hire job seekers with an intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder. RWA first engages with the employer and provides them with the business case of inclusive hiring. If the employer is interested, further meetings are held. As employment opportunities are identified, these are shared with local employment agencies. Jobseekers register with the agencies, and the agencies identify the candidates who match the employers’ needs. Employers then screen applications and conduct interviews (there are no wage subsidies). Once a candidate is hired, RWA will work to identify any additional support required. The agency will maintain contacts, and RWA staff will provide follow-up. RWA provides further assistance to employers to enable them to become more inclusive, and it particularly seeks to secure partnerships with national employers.

### OUTCOME, IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS

- RWA is currently being evaluated by the University of British Columbia; a process that includes people with intellectual disability and autism spectrum disorders.
- 92 per cent of employers surveyed by RWA said employing individuals with intellectual disabilities or ASD has been a positive experience.

- RWA was extended by six months ( till January 2018). CACL & CASDA are in discussions for RWA's renewal with the Government.

### **TRANSFERABILITY, SCALABILITY AND COST-EFFICIENCY**

To date, about €10 million has been invested. The average cost per person is about €6,800, which is only half the cost associated with other federally-funded employment initiatives. RWA is easily scaled-up and can be readily adopted by other countries. The initiative was presented at the Inclusion International Congress in Orlando, Florida (U.S.), in 2016.

### **CONTACT**

Mr. Don GALLANT

National Director, RWA, 86 Marine Drive, Torbay, NL, Canada

Phone: +1 709 437 1504

[dgallant@nl.rogers.com](mailto:dgallant@nl.rogers.com)

[www.cacl.ca/](http://www.cacl.ca/) & [www.casda.ca/](http://www.casda.ca/)

Mr. James VAN RAALTE

Office for Disability Issues, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)/Service Canada, 105 Hotel-de-Ville Street, Gatineau, Quebec, Canada

Phone: +1 819 624 7687

[james.vanraalte@hrsdcc.gc.ca](mailto:james.vanraalte@hrsdcc.gc.ca)

<http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/disability//index.shtml>

### **POLICY**

Ready, Willing and Able Initiative (RWA) of 2014-2017

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)/Service Canada, Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) and Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance (CASDA), Canada

### **SOURCES**

CACL-CASDA, Ready, Willing & Able Initiative website, 2014-2017: <http://readywillingable.ca/> ; RWA, Business Case Fact Sheet: <http://bit.ly/2eKxdN1>