

Date: 2023-10-03

Subject: **Enhancing Accessibility and Inclusion Initiative - Supported Employment Program (RM 41/2023)**

Contact: **Cynthia Ogbarmey-Tetteh, Director, Human Resources
Vincent Rodo, Director, Organizational Performance & Equity,
Diversity, and Inclusion**

Report Number: Corporate Support Services-2023-848

Recommendations:

1. That the report from Cynthia Ogbarmey-Tetteh, Director, Human Resources to the Committee of Council Meeting of October 25, 2023, re: **Enhancing Accessibility and Inclusion Initiative - Supported Employment Program**, be received;
2. That staff be directed to implement the Supported Employment pilot program.

Overview:

- **Council through RM # 41/2023 requested Human Resources in partnership with the Equity Office report on potential opportunities for support for parents of children with special needs, as they transition from high schools into employment, including external funding sources.**
- **City of Brampton is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion values and promotes leadership of initiatives to support equity-deserving groups within all its operations.**

Background:

On May 24, 2023, Council requested that Human Resources in partnership with the Equity Office report on potential opportunities for support for parents of children with special needs, as they transition from high schools into employment, including external funding sources. There is opportunity for the development of supports to parents of special needs children therefore, staff would like to propose the creation of a supported employment program for persons with disabilities aimed at enhancing accessibility and inclusion at the City of Brampton.

The City of Brampton is a vibrant municipality with a population of over 700,000 residents, it is one of the fastest-growing cities in the country. Brampton is known for its diverse and multicultural community, with people from various cultural backgrounds calling it home.

The City of Brampton is dedicated to fostering an inclusive and diverse workforce that reflects the values and needs of our community. As a public sector employer, we recognize the importance of providing equal employment opportunities for all individuals, including persons with disabilities. Therefore, the purpose of this proposal is to outline a strategy and action plan to establish an employment program designed to support and empower persons with disabilities.

This proposal aligns with our steadfast commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. By establishing an employment program for persons with disabilities, we demonstrate our dedication to removing systemic barriers and promoting a workplace culture that embraces diversity in all its forms. Through this program, we aim to create an environment where persons with disabilities feel supported, valued, and empowered to thrive in their professional pursuits.

By actively engaging this talent pool, we enhance our ability to provide high-quality services and deliver on our commitment to meet the evolving needs of Brampton residents. Furthermore, the impacts extend beyond the City of Brampton as an employer. By taking a leadership role in creating an inclusive employment program for persons with disabilities, we aim to inspire other organizations within the community and beyond to follow suit.

Current Situation:

Despite facing unique challenges, persons with disabilities are fully capable of performing a wide range of job roles, utilizing their skills, knowledge, and talents to enhance workplace productivity and diversity. Their desire to work demonstrates their eagerness to actively participate in society, achieve personal growth, and contribute to the overall success of their organization.

In its [2017 Global Human Capital Trends Report \(pdf\)](#), Deloitte noted that “diverse and inclusive teams are more innovative, engaged, and creative in their work.” This assertion is supported by Harvard Business Review, “Why Diverse teams are smarter” and Forbes, “Diversity Confirmed to Boost Innovation and Financial Results”.

According to Statistics Canada 2017, 22.3% of people aged 15 years and older identify as having a disability. Among those persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years who were not employed and not currently in school, approximately two in five (39%) had the potential to work. This represents nearly 645,000 persons with disabilities, accounting for 2.3% of the population. The same survey found that employment rates of persons with disabilities of the same age are much lower than those of Canadians without disabilities - 59 per cent versus 80 per cent. These numbers demonstrate a substantial pool of

untapped talent and highlight the importance of creating employment opportunities that cater to their specific needs and abilities.

Supported Employment Programs

Supported employment is built on the premise that everyone who wants paid employment can attain it if the proper supports are in place. It is a successful, accepted, and flexible model for assisting persons with disabilities to obtain work that is meaningful and compensated fairly. It is a partnership between job seeker, support person and employer, supported employment takes a person-centered, individualized approach.

At the Federal level, there are several support options varying from specialized programs for offering supports and services to finding employment and supported employment programs. The Job Bank of Canada offers connections to national and local projects that support persons with disabilities. In addition, the Federal Internship Program for Canadians with Disabilities is a national program that offers internships to Canadians with disabilities. Interns will have the opportunity to develop their work skills and increase their employability.

In Ontario, Ontario Disability Support Program employment supports may help persons living with a disability to find work, keep a job, start a business, or advance their career. In partnership with community-based service providers, employment supports are provided. This can include employment programs, job matching services and other supports.

At the municipal level, the City of Mississauga is partnered with Ready, Willing and Able and the Discover Ability Network to individuals seeking employment and during the onboarding process. Peel Region collaborated with the Ministry of Community, Children and Social Services to pilot a project called Employment Project for Youth with Disabilities to connect youth with community support services, education, and training as part of employment readiness. The City of Toronto partners with post-secondary institutions to attract students with disabilities to internships and youth programs. The City of Hamilton partners with Mohawk College to support co-operative opportunities and McMaster University to offer ongoing pathway support for alumni with disabilities seeking employment for up to ten years after graduation. Other community organizations have also established partnerships with companies to support employment opportunities for individuals being served through employment readiness programs.

In addition to national and local programs and supports, there are several enterprises that offer job preparation and matching services for persons with disabilities.

Given the extensive network of supports and programs that already exist, the City is proposing partnerships with two community agencies namely March of Dimes and Ready Willing and Able (RWA).

Ready Willing & Able has partnered with the City in the past for specific recreation opportunities and this past collaboration provides a strong foundation to expand. Ready, Willing and Able (RWA) is a national partnership of Inclusion Canada (formerly the Canadian Association for Community Living), Autism Alliance of Canada (formerly Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance (CASDA)), and their member organizations. Funded by the Government of Canada, RWA is designed to increase the labor force participation of people with an intellectual disability or on the autism spectrum.

March of Dimes an established community service provider to develop a suitable supported employment program. March of Dimes Canada is a leading national charity committed to championing equity, empowering ability, and creating real change that will help the more than six million people with disabilities across the country unlock the richness of their lives. March of Dimes is recognized leader in disability service design and delivery, supporting people at home, work, and in their communities with unparalleled reach and impact. Through its already established programming, March of Dimes supports persons with disabilities seeking employment within the City of Brampton. A partnership would expand the opportunities available and increase the impact of the program.

Leveraging the expertise from these organizations and prior engagements, the City believes that partnerships to move a supported employment program will be valuable.

Program Overview

Vision: To be an accessible and inclusive municipality in the province of Ontario. This means tapping into an underused talent pool that will help the City of Brampton to potentially fill current talent gaps.

Guiding principles

- Collaboration: Foster close collaboration between Talent Acquisition, Operating Departments, and agencies to ensure a unified approach towards accessibility and inclusivity.
- Sustainability: Prioritize actions that have a lasting impact, promoting long-term accessibility and inclusion strategies.
- Transparency: Develop and implement the strategy transparently, with departments and agencies openly reporting on efforts to remove barriers.

Goals: Improve recruitment, retention, and promotion of persons with disabilities by:

- Identifying vacant roles suitable for this program in each department.
- Partnering with community organizations to identify candidates to fill positions.
- Conducting fair and inclusive screening and interview processes.
- Setting a target number of roles aligned with City of Brampton priorities.
- Tracking the annual promotion rate of persons with disabilities.

Enhance accessibility in the workplace through:

- Improving accessibility of the built areas, information and communication technologies.
- Inclusion of employees with disabilities in the design of services and programs.
- Monitoring employee and client satisfaction with workplace accessibility.
- Improving recruitment, retention, and promotion of persons with disabilities.

Measures of success for Program:

- Number of persons with disabilities hired, retained, and promoted.
 - Track number of program participants comparative to targets
 - Track Annual promotion rate of persons with disabilities (%)
- Number of environment changes, office space, technology, etc. to enhance accessibility.
 - Percentage of employees with disabilities who are satisfied with the accessibility of workplace information and communications technology.
- Inclusion of employees with disabilities in design of services / programs
 - Track Number of employees included in design of services.

Program Description

This work program is designed to access a diverse pool of qualified candidates that will assist the City to fill talent gaps that we have not intentionally tapped into previously.

Pilot Parameters – each department designates at least one position with proportionate representation to staffing complement considered.

Program components, and activities

1. Recruitment and Outreach
 - Strategies for attracting persons with disabilities to participate in the program.
 - Identify positions that will be used in the pilot
 - Review talent pool to identify candidates.
 - Screen candidates
 - Conduct interviews
 - Choose most qualified candidate and prepare a job offer.
 - Collaborating with the partner organizations identified, the City will share the opportunity for these programs via marketing channels and existing partners within this community.
2. Program Support and Training
 - Identify and provide necessary resources and support systems to ensure the success of the initiative.
 - Develop and conduct comprehensive training on disability inclusion and etiquette for managers, supervisors, and staff members.

- Implement an effective onboarding process for new employees, ensuring a seamless transition and support.
3. Program Evaluation
 - An evaluation plan will be developed using the measures of success as key performance indicators
 - As outlined, the program will seek feedback from employees with disabilities to continuously improve the program.
 4. Building Awareness and Accountability
 - Develop a plan to raise awareness about the initiative among all employees and the broader community.
 - Share the City's commitment to accessibility and inclusion, celebrating successes and sharing inspiring stories.
 - Foster an inclusive and open dialogue to address concerns and feedback from employees through evaluation of the initiative.

Corporate Implications:

Financial Implications:

There are no immediate financial implications resulting from this report.

The City will not incur additional expenditures by partnering with March of Dimes and Ready Willing and Able (RWA) since the positions anticipated for recruit are expected to be existing, budgeted positions.

Strategic Focus Area:

The Supported Employment Program aligns with the Strategic Focus Areas of Government & Leadership as well as Culture and Diversity. By implementing this program, we aim to bolster talent development, attraction, and retention. Additionally, it reflects our dedication to delivering excellent services while upholding principles of equity and inclusion.

Conclusion:

It is recommended that the City proceeds with the "Enhancing Accessibility and Inclusion Initiative" pilot, which aims to transform the City of Brampton into the most accessible and inclusive municipality in the province of Ontario. This pilot represents a critical step towards fostering a community that embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion, while also tapping into an underused talent pool to fill current talent gaps within the organization.

Authored by:

Shanika Johnson
Acting Manager, Equity Office

Chena Barakat
Acting Senior Manager,
Talent Acquisition/Talent &
Organization Development

Approved by:

Alex Milojevic, Commissioner
Corporate Support Services

Reviewed by:

Vincent Rodo
Director, Org. Performance & EDI

Cynthia Ogbarmey-Tetteh
Director, Human Resources

Approved by:

Marlon Kallideen
Chief Administrative Officer