

# Accessible Community Forum: Inclusive Employment in BC

Fri, 3/25 1:30PM • 2:16:54

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

employers, disability, job, question, great, accommodations, invisible disability, organizations, hiring, community, resources, sandy, employees, serena, business, person, inclusive, megan, gary, employment

18:21

Thank you for attending our accessible community forum for some quick housekeeping rules. This forum is being recorded and streamed to the connector society Facebook page, and the disability foundation YouTube channel. You may choose to have your camera on or off. All participants will be muted upon entry. To ask panelists to question you can either type your question in the chat box or use the raise hand function under reactions in the bottom of your screen. A moderator will call on you and unmute your microphone. Use the chat box for comments. If you require a screen reader, we recommend that you close the chat box. We will be sending out a complete transcript of the chat after the event to all attendees during this event. We have automatic closed captioning available please go to the bottom of the Zoom meeting. Click live transcript and then show subtitles to turn them on.

19:19

Connector creates opportunities for people living with disabilities by providing information, resources and programming geared towards greater inclusion and quality of life. Some examples of our weekly programming include our service Mondays, where we highlight a local organization or initiative or Tuesday community support group where space is provided to share your personal journey with disability or simply listen to others in a safe and inclusive environment. Wednesday chair yoga with Bobby Seale Kobus ski Thursday adopted fitness with Megan Williamson Friday rotating dance classes hosted by Janice Lawrence and Joanne cuff. Additionally, starting in April, we're bringing back our Wednesday creative writing classes running from two to 3pm and hosted by Emily Gillespie and other initiatives including presentations by the disabled independent gardeners associations growable program, our perspective series and accessible community forums. Check out our updated programs calendar on our website [connector.org](https://connector.org) Or find us on Facebook at connector society. The Abilities Expo is back in 2022. The Abilities Expo is connector society's flagship event, bringing together exhibitors, vendors resources, guest speakers, and more to further enrich the disability community's well being and connectedness. Join us on May 25 from 10am to 4pm at the Roundhouse community center in Vancouver, BC to reconnect with your community in person Tickets are available now at [connecttra.org/abilities](https://connecttra.org/abilities) Expo.

21:24

All right. Thank you for joining us and participating in this accessibility per accessible community forum on inclusive employment presented by the Disability foundation and co hosted by the connector society. My name is Tony patello and I'm the director for Korean Volunteer Services at Simon Fraser University. The purpose of this forum is to gain insights and feedback from the community around inclusive employment practices British Columbia here connector. We value diverse opinions and perspectives we want this to be a safe environment for everyone to share. Please be respectful, respectful of what others have to say. Our goal is to have a healthy dialogue and for this to be a learning experience for all. We will do our best to get to everybody's questions. The agenda for today and housekeeping details are posted in the chat. reminder that this form is being recorded and live stream to Facebook and YouTube. Who are more than welcome to have your camera turned on or off. are very fortunate to have five great panelists today and our panel consists of Serena Baynes Youth Leadership Initiative coordinator at the Disability foundation. Megan O'Neill, navigator of youth and adult services at the Canucks Autism Network. Sandy labore, Meyer, vocational counselor at work BC Mikayla Evans activist and Communication Specialist at president's group and Gary Burch, Executive Director at Neil Squire Society. I will let you tell them a little bit more about themselves and we'll go in the order that I just mentioned. So let's start with Serena. Serena, please introduce yourself.

23:00

Hi everyone. My name is Serena. I use they she pronouns I am part of the Youth Leadership Initiative at the Disability foundation where I do a lot of outreach work. In my free time, I like to do a lot of Disability Justice work in the community with the disability and neurodiversity Alliance. And yeah, thank you so much for coming. I'm really excited to be here.

23:24

That's wonderful. Thank you. And looking forward to your perspective. And next, Megan.

23:29

Hello, everybody.

23:30

Thank you so much for having me today. As you know, my name is Megan and I am the navigator of youth and adult services at the Canucks Autism Network, but I'm also the autism outreach coordinator for the ready willing able program. Within my role I help autistic jobseekers by referring them to the right resources, employment agencies in the community that can help them towards their individual employment goals. These resources and agencies can help job seekers prepare for interviews, you know, job search, acquire further training support them in learning a new job and more. Actually, as mentioned, I work for the ready, willing and able program. In BC there are two delivery partners. That is the Canucks Autism Network and inclusion BC and ultimately our WA is a national initiative that's really focused on helping make workplaces more inclusive, and also get more people who identify as having autism, orange intellectual disability into the workplace.

24:31

Wonderful, thank you. And next we go to Sandy.

24:35

Happy Friday afternoon everyone. I'm Sandy I'm with Open Door group slash work BC and merit BC. I'm the vocational counselor so I work with people to identify what has presented as barriers in the past to employment or community attachments. And we work together to identify strengths, task preferences, interests, and then I broke her relationships with employers often carving and customizing positions, specifically for those clients and we work with people with developmental disability on the autism spectrum with addiction, mental physical health, chronic health, and, and other mobility issues as well. And thanks for inviting me.

25:22

All right, well, thanks for coming. Next, Mikayla. Hi everyone.

25:28

My name is Michaela and I am the Marketing and Communications Specialist at presidents group where a staff of two folks with disabilities who support employers, we have 25 employers who are on our advisory committee and they're all CEOs and business leaders whose businesses are working towards being accessible for folks with disabilities. And we also support a larger community of businesses at every stage of becoming more accessible, whether they're startups or well established businesses. We offer support on their policies and procedures and ensuring that they're creating the most inclusive environments possible within their companies.

26:15

Wonderful, thank you. And rounding off our panel is Gary.

26:21

Hello, everyone. I'm also very glad to be here. Great way to spend a Friday afternoon and I'm the Executive Director of the Neil Squire Society have been involved with the society before it was even a society going back almost 40 years 40 years big focus of the Neil Squire Society is on assistive technologies and making sure people with disabilities get the right technologies or ergonomics, etc. So they can move forward in their life in the best possible way. A big part of also the work we do at the Neil Squire Society is our working together program, which is our national employment program. And we have a strong footprint here in BC where we deliver that program and we work to work with people and their skill enhancement and then help them connect with employers and it's great program and look forward to our shot today.

27:35

Okay, well, thanks for that, Gary. And again, thanks again to all our panelists for coming out and for sharing your time and your expertise. And we're at the point now where we can actually begin our conversation. So for those of you in the audience, as we move along, please type any questions or comments you may have into the chat box or raise your hand to speak. Again, you could be your hand your physical hand, or you can use the nice little handy thing. In zoom. I will post some questions or call and raise hands in the order they are received. So, but we're going to be starting off with a topic that came up several times in your survey responses when to disclose your disability to a potential new employer. disclosing a disability can be a double edged sword when it comes to applying for

employment. On one hand, you want to let the employer or potential employer know any accommodations you may need. However, there also is hesitancy to disclose for fear of bias against people with disabilities. In fact, 73% of respondents to the connector survey admitted they have chosen to not apply for job opportunity out of fear of discrimination. So, for this first question, we're going to start with Sandy you get to start us off and then for our other panelists. If afterwards if you have anything else you want to add or contribute, feel do but Sandy starting us off when it comes to applying for employment, how important it is, is it to disclose your disability to an employer?

29:02

Well, this is always a tough one. Because especially if a person lives with an invisible disability, and when I'm representing a client in in customized employment, kind of a few different rules of thumb. So for instance, if a person has an in the in the invisible disability, that they have successfully maintained employment prior and successfully managed, then typically, they don't need to disclose. Okay. However, when I'm working with clients, a lot of times they're younger clients transitioning, and I do have that discussion, but we make sure that when we're applying for a job that we come from a strength based approach. So we list the attributes, you know, I've worked with the clients. Make sure that when you're applying for a position the skill sets requested in the job posting our skill sets that you possess. Then, if need be, a person can discuss any adjustments or accommodations in the past that have helped them and basically when a person is disclosing come at it from a perspective where you've got this right, you understand what may impact to you understand triggers, have your supports in place and seek understanding and not necessarily accommodation from an employer. So and have, like, for instance, clients that may have some anxiety. You know, I'm having that discussion where, if I'm overwhelmed, I'm asked to multitask and do front facing customer service that I'm not typically doing. I may really struggle. And in the past, this has worked for me. So an employer doesn't want to feel like they have to try and prove themselves. So if a person can have the adjustments or accommodations in the back of their mind, then that's helpful. And also working with an agency like the connects foundation like work BC Open Door group, working with a vocational counselor or case manager who can broker that relationship and advocate for you is also very advantageous.

31:29

I think what Sandy

31:32

Yeah, no, continue. I forgot that I've muted Go ahead.

31:36

I think what Sandy had to say was fantastic. I think it really touched on a lot of kind of the considerations that you need to have. I definitely I think it's such a personal decision in terms of whether or not especially when it's an invisible disability. And definitely kind of asking yourself whether or not you need an accommodation. So like Sandy was talking about there is a good consideration. I also found a great resource by the Disability Alliance. They've got a disclosure guy that I'll put in the chat now. That is a really great one to review the talks also about the employers duty to accommodate and things like that as well.

32:20

One other thing I wanted to mention as well is you know, say a person has an invisible health issue like Crohn's. Making sure that the job that they're applying for enables them to use the washroom as they will need to you know, they're not out on the road that they're not frontline customer service where to leave their workstation would really impact operations of a business. So really keep things in context. And, and just really go from strengths. And, and thanks for mentioning the disability Alliance. Megan that is my go to

32:56

wonderfox and we've already got some comments in the chat. Sonia makes a great point in saying recommend to our job seekers to disclose when and if it might affect their ability to do their job. That's one of those, I think, yeah, heading into to some of the comments that already been made. And again, yeah, it's a big point again, the importance of context. Right, you know, you as the individual, and in the position you're applying for and all those variables that that could impact when and if it's the right time to disclose. So, thank you. Anyone else have anything to add on that, Gary? Yeah,

33:32

well I think the answers have been pretty comprehensive. I'll just build on them a little bit. And Sandy was mentioning, you know, working with an agency, that's something that that we in our working together program would work very directly with the participant on those kinds of issues, for sure. And we often work and broker the relationship with the employer. Um, I think, yeah, the disability. Armando, I get this right to disability alliance that Megan was talking about. Yeah. Great, great resource. And just one of the things that the working together program can do is along the lines of what Sandy was saying is really help you understand what support you need, and be very be able to clearly articulate to the employer, but small business, we might even be able to help some of those supports. If it's a larger business, under the duty of a cot combinate they should be able to provide those kinds of supports. So I think having a clear idea, yes, I can do that. Because I've got this in this setup, and I do it you know, I do it every day kind of thing, or I do it regularly because I've got this assistive tech technology or I have this approach to dealing with that situation and the more they can be confident about providing that. Well, if you don't know what support I just saw somebody Courtney Yeah, you likely won't know. But sometimes, and finally was talking about the you know, knowing specifics of the job. That's something we can work with you on to help you understand what support you need and even trial them and, and have a chance to learn and make sure you're using them effectively. So that you can confidently tell him employer that that you have the right accommodations to do that specific kind of job. That helps. Very,

35:54

very helpful. Thank you. All right, well, maybe we'll just we'll keep going down this realm for a bit and, and maybe we'll get Makayla to start us with this one. On some level for certain positions, a job might not be a good fit for a specific individual. For example, a position would require somebody with mobility issues to lift heavy items. On the other hand, many positions can be done by a person with a disability if they receive appropriate accommodations. So starting with you, Michaela, and again, leaving it open to others to add, what responsibility does the applicant have to make sure their required accommodations can be met prior to accepting employment? And what is the responsibility of the employer?

36:41

Absolutely, um, I can speak a bit more from the employer side of it. So in BC we have section 13 under the BC Human Rights Code which says that a person cannot refuse to employer discriminate against an individual for employment based on the predicted grounds under the code, which include all forms of disability. So the duty to accommodate means that an employer must provide a reasonable accommodation. But a lot of employers don't necessarily know what that means. So we're trying to ensure that employers actually know what accommodations are and the fact that most accommodations can be managed in a workplace, especially when it's a larger employer. Small businesses sometimes have a little bit more restrictions, I guess, on what they can provide, but large employers can usually provide accommodations to a large extent. And this really differs on a case by case basis, but accommodations can refer to any change to a job, the work environment or the way things are usually done that allows the individual with a disability to apply for the job to perform their job duties or enjoy equal access to the work environment as the others in their workplace. So this means that you should have the support to apply for the job regardless of if there is a stipulation like he must be able to lift 10 pounds or 50 pounds. Or if there's a say it's a job being a secretary, and you don't know that you can necessarily move things around in the work environment. Those should be tasks that could be delegated to someone whose office is right beside yours or something like that. There are a lot of accommodations that can easily be managed once you're in the space or before you apply for the job.

38:44

Yeah, excellent points. Anyone else want to add on that in terms of responsibility? The applicant might have or from the employer side

38:57

on to the accommodation piece that there's been a lot of studies about, you know, how little it costs sometimes to make accommodations. It doesn't have to be this huge cost to an employer. And I think that's a bit of a misconception sometimes. So that's one thing that I know are we try to educate employers on especially and also one thing that was reading actually in that disability, or that not sorry, that disclosure guide was that you know, that employers can't ask you any specific questions about your disability, your diagnosis or any of your treatment plans or anything like that, but they can I ask you how, how it might impact your job performance. So specific tasks, you know, how are you planning to complete this task and things like that. So coming prepared in the interview process, to answer questions like that would be a great idea.

39:52

Yeah, great tip.

39:55

All right. Alright. I think we're good there. And we have another comment. Oh, yes. From the chat. Sorry. It's from Mindy. Thank you, Mindy. I'm asking can panelists comment on their perspective about the need and available ability of job coaches who need to stay on the job with employees on a permanent basis, and I would like to expand this to both internal from employers and external from



organizations. So again, any insights on the role and availability of job coaches who could stay on a permanent basis? Can I get a raise hand from someone who might want to take a first stab at this one?

40:39

All right, Megan. Thank you.

40:42

Um, yeah, you know what, I think one thing in terms of support employment and some of the best practices there, you know, the goal is always to eventually phase out the kind of the need for support a lot of the times depending on an individual right. But of course, there's a great opportunity for natural supports. For somebody who's already in the workplace. So another employee that that somebody can work with, which is also a great way to provide support but also not have it always have to be a job coach. Thank you.

41:25

We have a very special partnership with community living BC, where we can provide job coaching and like Megan was saying, you know, the job coach comes in at a certain level. And then as the skills rise, and they build up natural supports in the working environment, then the job coach kind of elegantly steps aside and then just kind of you know, might go in one day or two days and then just spot check ins from time to time so yeah, it's it absolutely is available, certainly carved and customized positions, you know, accommodate that more easily, but it is something that employers are open to, especially small businesses, and especially during COVID.

42:19

Yeah, that yeah, you make an interesting point. Yeah. Like the pandemic has shifted perspectives of employers in terms of you know, what is doable and what is not. And that is, and that is interesting. So, following up on since you had such a great example with the job coach is would you say is there a typical length you would see or a typical range of when the coach is involved in when they start to taper off.

42:46

So I think is, until a client shows that they can work oh, I think sorry about that. Yeah, I muted myself again. Um, yeah, you know, once a person skill level confidence level comes up, then the job coach can have that discussion with them and the employer to say, okay, you know, I'm going to just kind of back off, how's it going, you know, and then and then maybe after an hour, leave the site check in at the end of the day, how did it go? And, and it's all about open communication. And, and just that building that respectful, communicative relationship, and that's what takes that brick wall that presents as a barrier and helps us dismantle it and create a path out of it. And that that's key is communication. What does everybody feel comfortable with? And what makes both the most business sense for the employer? What helps their bottom line because businesses are in business to make money? Yeah, and so that's something that we also have to keep in mind. And so brokering that relationship. And building that understanding is has been a great way to break down social and systemic barriers.

44:05

Wonderful, thank you. Yeah, great insights. And Adrian in the chat, wrote touching on Mindy's comment about job coaches. Do employers have a responsibility once the person with a disability is hired to ensure that the employee has the same access to work opportunities that his interaction with clients and door staff as other employees, I'm asking because sometimes as a person with a disability, things like to be isolated even after being hired due to

44:35

the disability

44:37

but any insights from our panel?

44:46

I have to say, I don't think I've ever heard that exact question before. And I have to say I'm not a lawyer of anything. I'm an engineer, but I would think you should expect that and I think someone was talking about last strike now but open communication. I think we'd all agree with that. And with your employer, and again, it's you know, if you have an agency you're working with, they may help you broker that discussion. But yeah, you should have ways means of having equal access, like any other employee, to whether it be whatever type of resources that would be my read on it. And yeah,

45:37

yeah, yeah. Thank you. Anyone else want to add on there?

45:45

I'm going off of what Gary said. I think I also haven't seen it worded this way before. But I guess I would say that employers have to provide those same opportunities up until the point of undue hardship from a legal perspective. And that would be a very like, large point that they have to reach. So undue hardship means when an employer cannot sustain the economic or efficiency costs of the needed accommodation, so that's a very high threshold to have to reach especially within a large business that means that it would have to actually affect the ability for, for an organization to not continue on the work they're doing. It would have to be like a very big barrier. And within the typical business, that's not going to be a problem and they should be providing access. So I think for this question, when they say, interaction with clients or other staff, like there's easy ways to make sure that someone working from home can still have those interactions with their colleagues, whether through an assistive technology or through something like Slack or through video calls to check in a couple times a week and things like that.

47:07

Great, well, thank you for those perspectives. Yeah, it's interesting, and one would hope that a good manager would be motivated to keep their staff engaged. Again, not all managers are created equally as we are aware so I yeah, interesting question. I haven't seen it worded like this before. Okay, moving on. And we've questioned Well, let's, I think it's a good one for Serena to start off with. How does one communicate to an employer if, if that employer is unaware of the disability you might have for example, in this case, give the example of chronic regional pain syndrome or some other disability?



47:43

Yeah, thank you. It's a great question. Um, as a youth who's multiple disabled myself, I have gotten myself into situations like this, where I realized that perhaps my employer doesn't understand my disability or even know, what I would recommend to folks is even starting in the interview process, if you have any work that you've done before in the past, around, because a lot of disabled folks help out in their community, and they have a lot of disability work that they've done, if you could bring that up, and then if it's specific to the community that you're in, you can explain that disability at that time. And then later, if you are successful, I find it easy and you're like, oh, remember the experience that I was speaking about? I actually have a disability and this is how it affects me specifically with these. I try to provide like really specific examples that you can draw parallels for non disabled folks. So for example, if I were going to speak about my disabilities, I would say that sometimes when I'm experiencing stress, my vision can become impaired. So that if you're looking and trying to read, see like an Excel sheet on your laptop it may take me longer to decipher and work on that certain project because my vision is impaired and I experienced visual noise and then also try to provide an example that's relatable. So I usually use like when you put on your TV, and it's just like a static, the gray specks on the TV and it's just static. That's kind of what my vision looks like, and then providing those concrete examples, especially once you've already introduced the topic. I think, in my experience, most employers have had a positive response. If you're already in a job and you're still not sure I would highly encourage folks to provide maybe some information like I always over prepare, so maybe a printout of some examples about like how does this disability affect you? Here are some resources where you can learn more and those kinds of things I found it had been really helpful.

50:08

Those are Yeah, fantastic tips and insights and anyone else who wants to add on that? And I love the idea of preparation. I know what you know, here it is. If you wouldn't work with students, we often get them to practice that and I would work with them almost on getting a script sometimes and just say it a few times in front of someone you're more comfortable with just you know, to get those awkward ones out of the way. So I think that's useful. Anyone else?

50:35

I can jump in here.

50:37

I think it's kind of helping to educate and this is on kind of how it might affect you or what it might look like is really great because it makes it so relatable. I can definitely understand how some individuals might not be comfortable, you know, encouraging their employer to learn more trying to get them to be more educated, which is why sometimes employment agencies serve as a great role in that way, helping to educate employers about you know, what, what this might look like for this particular individual. And I know there's actually ready, willing and able has a bunch of online modules around especially autism and intellectual disabilities, which can be really great for employers to access. They're really thorough and they kind of give employers an idea of what it might look like for them in their workplace. Perfect.

51:29

Thank you. That's a good resource tip. So we have a follow up question. More of the employer sites, I think I'd go to Makayla with this one. What would be inappropriate for an employer to ask for when discussing a person's disability, for example, a proof of disability a doctor's note or a medical history? Yeah, sort of that line. What's you know what's okay, what's not okay. I imagine there's some gray zone as well. So yeah, your perspective. We appreciate it.

52:02

Absolutely. Just give me one second actually wrote a resource about this and just trying to pull it yeah, there's absolutely things you can ask and then things that you absolutely can't. You don't have to ask for proof of disability like I I'm sure there maybe is an instance where you might have to, but for the most part you don't have to provide any kind of medical note or anything like that. Um, and they don't get to ask you like straight out if you do have a disability or any kind of impairment in that, like when you are seeking a job unless you choose to disclose it's the onus is completely on the employer to make it so that when you are in the role of the job environment is a comfortable and safe enough that you feel like you could disclose, but if you have an invisible disability, which is a huge majority of the disabilities in the workplace, you don't have to disclose at any point. And you can still access different accommodations without the need to tell someone the details of your disability you can just say I need a bit more flexibility or I need access to a screen magnifier or something like that. And you don't have to say why you can just say that you need this to make your job more accessible. And they also can't ask you things like have you ever taken leave? Have you ever been hospitalized? What assistive technology is like a wheelchair or other things? But you are welcome to share what you feel comfortable with.

53:51

And it's always interesting so often hear these things about things employers cannot add. Can you give some insights? So why would an employer not be allowed to ask if you require accessible devices or wheelchair accessibility? I'm

54:09

sorry, like they can't ask you the why of that. So obviously if you're using a wheelchair, they can see that you are using a wheelchair but they can't ask you like, why is that? What disability Do you have? Do you have this? The same way if you're using a screen reader, they can ask, Oh, you're using JAWS but they can't ask you why that is.

54:31

Okay. Perfect. Thank you for that clarification. All right. I have a another question. Come in from the audience from Adrian. I think I'll go to Gary with this one. And again, another interesting one. Talks about the idea of employment more employers are hiring contractors rather than add a new employee to staff to contract employees with disabilities have the same rights with respect to accommodations. We get some interesting questions today,

55:01

or offer good questions. Maybe my other panelists can help me out but I can't see how. I mean. Oh, they're hiring you as a consultant. I see. Right? Yeah, they can get around certain things. I believe. Again, I'm not a labor lawyer around possibly benefits and those kinds of things. You can maybe negotiate like a higher rate of pay or something in lieu of benefits. But is that sometimes why? Why they do it your termination kind of grounds for termination or reasons for termination may maybe be a lot different. If you're a consultant versus an actual employee. I'm sure there's things I'm forgetting. It's a little bit of a red flag. For me generally like sometimes if that's your only opportunity to maybe it's a great thing to go after and get some work experience. I'm not saying necessarily that they're always bad but it's not something I like to see employers do. I think it's a bit of an end around on a few things. But like I say sometimes you have to weigh that out with the opportunity and drafts, open communication, you can you know if it works out well, you might open the door for converting that to an actual employment situation. Yeah, but you know, I think this is a place where, you know, other panelists might have it, but the labor law around this as always changing. I think the requirements are getting tougher to get out if by doing that approach, something that we've been seeing, so I'll leave it at that because I don't want to be I don't want to be giving like legal advice, specifically.

57:06

Yeah. Then I'll Fair enough. And yeah, thanks. Yeah. And I think it's a tricky one because the term contractor gets used a lot. I think it can have different meanings in different contexts as well. Start Does anyone else have any experience or insights in this particular area? Yeah,

57:29

I guess depending on the nature of the position, and what the consultant or contracted position requires, that might also provide some really great accommodations and adjustments like working from home, which then can mean that somebody can work at night versus in the morning if they need to self manage a chronic health condition. So I guess it just depends on you know, what, what that contracted position looks like. And then taking it further to see what adjustments in the combinations can

58:06

Yeah, that's interesting. Yeah. Until you go, okay. Like, yeah,

58:10

I can't speak to the legal side of that. But I can't speak as a very small team that hires a lot of consultants. We only have two staff, but we manage I think we have about 15 or so consultants at the moment. And so for us, we choose to go that route because it gives us the opportunity to hire a large number of folks with disabilities for really small carved out roles. So for us, we're being as accommodating as we can we have, like very strict or very like, laid out outlines of like what we want this consultant to work on. So for example, right now, we have about six different assistive technology users doing like very specific roles of testing different learning programs that we're going to be offering later on. And those roles are laid out so that they can do it in the middle of the night, if that's what's accessible to them. But they just have a certain period of time where they need to look at these courses and assess them for accessibility. And it's not like our way of not hiring people on because we want to have these opportunities for people to access employment. It's just that we have very specific roles that we need filled at the moment. And that at least gives folks the opportunity to use their skills and gain

the short term employment and hopefully then use that to go on and work with more accessible employers in the future.

59:42

Yeah, so interesting. Yeah, that was good perspectives, because it's, it's interesting, the double edge that we talked about earlier with one of our earlier questions, that same thing with contract opportunities, you know, there are some limitations, but there's also it's interesting that they can also lead to some possibilities or some flexibility that maybe more permanent roles might not have. And I know again, working at Simon Fraser, we often use the people I've talked about, you know, contract roles is the same as sort of just term. They're not continuing, you know, your shorter term contract. But in essence, you are exactly the same as any other employee. It's just that you have an end date that either gets renewed or ends. So, so I thought so I think there's some different contexts and some can provide some extra flexibility. Some can be limiting or could be, you know, things that we should be wary of. So yeah, one thing I've learned so far is really engaging panel is there's rarely a string, you know, like every answer could be there's always a variable that one has to consider. So anyway, thank you all. Julia from the chat has a question. And I think I think we'll see it see who we started. We'll put I'll throw that you guys put a hand up. What do you do in a case where the employer already knows as much as you want them to, but still acts discriminatory towards you as an employee? This highlights a problem we saw from the survey were 40% of respondents have left a work position because of the disability discrimination they faced. Does anybody want to take a first stab at Serena you had you had perfect,

1:01:21

thank you, and it's a great question. I've definitely been part of that. 40% I found myself in an entry level job when I was 16. And I realized that I was being discriminated against due to my disabilities. At that time, I was in a bit of a privileged position because it was a union job. So I was able to ask for a meeting with my manager with a witness and I was able to speak to them at the time and in the short term things did improve. However, there was a situation where eventually I had to leave because of discrimination in regards to like the LGBT community, and racism as well. But if anyone is in a union position, I would highly recommend that you first decide on who you would like your witness to be. You might find it easy to or easier to ask a disabled up here to be your witness. But I think that actually lends more opportunity for discrimination especially if you're being discriminated against because of your disabilities. So having a non disabled peer who acts as an ally, who can speak with you and speak to the fact that this is discriminatory and people won't say, Oh, you only care because you're disabled, you only care because it affects you. I feel like it's more powerful to an employer who is non disabled. Otherwise, I looked into my options after I left and another option is a human rights complaint. But of course, it's a very complex process that folks may not have the resources for, but there are organizations that can definitely help out in that case. Thank you.

1:03:13

Right and what else have our panelists want to add on this one?

1:03:21

No, other than we see it all too often. And I wish there was an easy answer. But I mean, ultimately, there's always the human rights that can take a long time. You can also consult a lawyer, you know if you're willing to go that far. Yeah, shouldn't happen, but it does all the time. Yeah.

1:03:51

The Disability alliance of BC now has the legal division to support persons with disabilities. So that's another avenue. But there again, you know, like Serena was saying, find an advocate and have that discussion with the employer. You know, let them know that this is how they're making you feel. And that can hopefully become a platform of understanding and some education and opening up that communication and having that dialogue. So sometimes, it's a matter of getting comfortable with having uncomfortable conversations, but I think honestly with the work that we need to do to break down the social and systemic barriers, we have to get comfortable with having uncomfortable conversations and, and helping open people's minds and hearts to inclusivity.

1:04:44

So that's great. Thank

1:04:45

you. Yeah. And it's it is uncomfortable conversations is part of the territory. And that's how if we don't have them, nothing changes. So we do need to I like that be comfortable with the uncomfortable and I've noticed looks like Jerry, you have a hand up. Right see I don't know if I have the power to do anything. See, but see what you want to add. We need to get to unto unmute.

1:05:14

I have a question you can unmute. So if you click on the pop up, it should allow you to do so. Did I do it? I'm not sure I think Gary would have to on his side.

1:05:25

Hey, Jerry, Can you unmute from your side

1:05:32

There you go. Yay.

1:05:34

Okay, there we are. Ah, yeah, in a case like that. Wouldn't I shop steward err, like you're talking about a union? Incentive. Wouldn't a shop steward be the person to take in with you for a witness?

1:05:55

Yeah, that that would be my sense, sweetie, do you want to add on that? Yeah.

1:05:59

I can. Um, in my experience where I worked, they provided us the option to bring our own witness, in addition to the shop store, just in case. They weren't like a trusted individual to us. I think I might have

been part of that specific collective agreement. But you may be correct in terms of that. It's usually the shop steward who's outlined to undertake that responsibility. Right, yeah.

1:06:29

Yeah. Perfect. And we have a comment from Bernadette. I just want to go back very briefly to the contractor questions. It was so we don't lose these threads. Thank you, Bernadette. She commented that something in chat she wanted to spotlight and as an employer who provides temporary or contract services, work with us foundations offers the same or similar benefits to our temporary contractors as regular employees. I believe consulting is different than contractors. We follow all the same employment standards, any employer would we offer more flexibility. Thank you for that comment, Bernadette. And get another one from the chat from Courtney. And let's see, I think this one might be a good one for Megan, how would I handle being asked one of those questions that I can't be asked? Because can't legally doesn't mean they fact can't physically utter the words. So being told that they can ask isn't always helpful because it doesn't guarantee you won't happen? It just means that I have to navigate a very uncomfortable situation. So again, back to uncomfortable conversations. So yeah, so basically, yeah. In other situations, technically, you're not. It's not an appropriate question you should be asking but they do. And you're in an interview. What do you do? They're making?

1:07:43

Definitely, that's a really tough one. And before I answer if you hear any outside noise, my neighbors have started Friday early for that. But yeah, you know, that's a really hard situation to be in because, you know, like you said, just because you can't ask it doesn't mean they won't ask it in the moment. I, if I, if someone asked me kind of how to handle that situation, I would try to direct the question back to the job and how you would really excel in the in the role in terms of you know, through your, your accommodations and things like that. I would not necessarily answer that direct question that they've asked you but kind of relate it back to the job again.

1:08:31

Right. Thank you any other insights? I'm sure if anyone's been in that situation.

1:08:39

Yeah, definitely going off. Of what Megan said, you could talk about like the education, the skills, the training that you have, that would allow you to perform X job function, and just try to redirect it in that way. So you don't have to necessarily tell them oh, right. Like, oh, you're not allowed to ask that. And just focus on the skills that you have and how they directly relate to the different points on like the job posting.

1:09:08

Great. Thank you for that. And I see that, Sonia. Janet has hand up. So I think you can unmute yourself and share your question.

1:09:20

I was just going to add on to what Megan and Michaela had already spoken to that, as employment specialists and job coaches what we at best sort of support our job seekers in regards to being asked



these questions is to let the employer know that that's a very intensely private question you've just asked and then encourage them to sort of ask the employer, is there a specific part of the job that you're concerned I won't be able to perform or that I'm not capable of and we asked them to address it, as the ladies had already spoken to like in their skills, their training their abilities, but to be very clear that what you're asking is a very intensely private and personal question. Is there a reason why you're asking that? I can address your concerns in a different avenue and then typically during their interviews, we are oftentimes invited to be present. And sometimes if they feel a little bit nervous or shy, because many of the job seekers we're supporting tend to be younger entry level, job seekers, they will sometimes turn to us and say, I don't know how to answer this and so we can support them, but also keeping the respect for the employer and we don't immediately assume that they're just trying to be nosy. We try to support understanding why are you asking this question because this person may not want to disclose or share those details with you and ends up being kind of like a teachable moment for the employer as well that just because you're seeing a difference doesn't entitle you to ask questions about it. Like you wouldn't ask me necessarily in an interview, why are you overweight? Like do you not like exercising? Do you just like eating? So in the same regard, you don't really are you're not really entitled to ask somebody these types of questions. Unless there's another avenue we can address their abilities through.

1:11:27

Yeah, wonderful. And I really appreciate your comment about the teachable opportunity, which is unfortunate that you know, you know, we can be in situations where that has to happen, but it's important to recognize that it does occur again, as I mentioned, not all managers, not all supervisors are created equally. Right. So she, you know, we've had experienced issues with smaller employers don't or don't actually have a sophisticated Human Resources background or setup. They really just unaware of a lot of these issues, right. So yeah, so thank you for that perspective.

1:12:01

Okay, we're coming back to Gary. I was going to call you Gary the lawyer but I know

1:12:10

in what ways get your shingle ready. Ah, in what ways can employers take responsibility to reduce these barriers and create more inclusive employment practices? And what could we do as a community to encourage them to do so?

1:12:33

Think I'm too old and jaded to answer that question. A lot of employers I think there's more and more one want to be inclusive of persons with this disabilities. But what we find a lot is that employers don't really understand what that means. So there's good intentions there. But sometimes when it comes down to sort of what it might mean for them to hire a person with a dis disability. We see some fall off. So the question is what can we do as like a community to increase? You know, there's, there's a lot of organizations, you know, the President's group, being one of them that focuses a lot on educating and helping employers with that exact question. I've always been a big believer in that, you know, getting the right match with an employer and having a successful outcome or a successful relationship where the employer really, you know, hire somebody has a beneficial experience. Sometimes those

employers can become your best your best advocates to talk to. And we work a lot with small businesses. So we asked them if they would come and speak, etc. And sort of peer to peer kind of thing which I think a lot of them sort of employer based outreach programs try to do, but I think is more employers have good experiences. And then and so when I say good experience that partly encompasses a lot of what we've already talked about, making sure that you know the right accommodations are in place that whether that's everywhere from assistive technology to working hours, etc., etc. and responsibilities on both sides are properly understood and addressed. And, you know, the more we do that, the more I think we can use old positive opportunities to help employers see through, though the one thing I often see with employers and I'm not sure if this is a useful answer, but I'll leave it in case it helps someone else provide a better answers that they have an unrealistic expectations and I think I lost track of the speaker's name as Sonia Janet, maybe sorry. Yeah, a lot of people with disabilities not all but many are entering at a relatively entry level position. And when employers you know, we have employers approached us all the time and then they started sending us these job postings, and they're looking for an accountant with six years of experience with certain accounting packages, or they're looking for you know, what, likely these people if they had those kinds of qualifications probably wouldn't be needing us to help them much in the first place. Generally speaking, so there's an that's one of the biggest mismatches I see. Yes, we want to hire people with this disabilities. So me all the lawyers that you have that are experts in this area that have this disability. So yeah, anyways,

1:16:14

I think it's a good point and in particularly in terms of expectations for hiring. I remember something I read not too long ago in terms of just diversity generally were because, you know, as employers have the state, stated interests in having a more diverse workforce, that what that means for their hiring practices and the biases and one of the really interesting one is we know, you know, individuals from certain groups are less likely to be hired have been more marginalized, etc. So when you're actually looking to hire those people, by definition are going to have less experience. So we have to look at even qualifications like experience differently if we're really serious as employers are awkward to diversify.

1:16:58

Yeah. And be willing to make a bit of an investment in that individual in terms of mentoring them up, because it hasn't been a level playing field. They're not coming in. That's what I think you were talking about, Tony and, and so if they're really serious, they will make a commitment to, to like, Yeah, I'll work with this individual. I'll mentor them. And in some ways, they'll mentor the employer too, because they're going to teach the inquire line and have to be like this two way street where, you know, the more they do, the better it'll get for all praise. Yeah, yeah.

1:17:39

Absolutely. Megan.

1:17:40

I'd also like to add on to various points there. There are some group practices that employers can adopt as well, especially in the hiring process. You know, I know for autistic individuals, some people like to

have the questions in advance that can really help them prepare for the interview. Or maybe they're better instead of verbally answering a question, things like that. Maybe they're just better at showing their skills and abilities. So doing a working interview might be a really great option as well. And I also want to add to you know, once somebody is hired and kind of just in the work environment in general, there's some really great resources around Universal Design, and how you just make it accessible to everybody. I know we worked with Papa John's and they had you know, visuals and also written instructions on the wall as well. Just to help everybody to do pizza somewhere and things like that. So there's a lot there.

1:18:42

Yeah, that's it's yeah. What a wonderful example of that there. There are all sorts of examples and things that exist that people are doing to improve and yeah, that we can learn from others. You don't have to Yeah, it's good options. Thank you. Mikayla Jessa, Dad.

1:18:59

Yeah, I just want to say one thing we really work with employers on is recognizing that sometimes we have a really limited view of what disability looks like and especially what it looks like in the workplace. And 90% of disabilities are completely invisible in the workplace. So when we're talking with employers who have 1000s of employees, you have hundreds of employees who have disabilities, and if your workplaces not working on becoming more inclusive and those people are already there, but they might not be accessing the accommodations that they need to be their best selves at work. So it's really important to work on your culture and your inclusive practices because you already have employees with disabilities whether you recognize that or not. Yeah, no.

1:19:48

Excellent question. And again, back to our discussion earlier about the pandemic and I wonder how many in how many cases the awareness of disability has come up, given what's happened in the past two years. I know that's been the case here in in the office I work in with some other colleagues. So yeah, excellent points. So Adrian, I noticed you have a hand up. I think you can unmute. I hope I pronounced that Adrian or Adrian, I pronounce your name properly.

1:20:18

Yes. Hi. I just wanted to touch on for my other questions about being isolated in the workplace, and what that can look like. So first of all, I want to say frequently when I have a severe profound hearing loss, I have apps so transcription app so when someone's talking, it could just transcribe what they're saying so frequently, when I use these things, and people like Oh, my grandma could do something like that. So it's important even from a customer service point of view, that if you know people with disabilities in the workplace, they're going to also be dealing with customers who have disabilities so you know, it can enhance the customer service. Just want to give you an example of a situation where I felt it was it was isolating, and that I was working at a place where I had I didn't have training and a certain procedure and it was really complicated, really hard. I had to do all the research online and figure out how to make it work. And then after I did that, I was asked to train someone, and how to do the same thing. And then that person was asked to train everybody else. And I was sort of set to go back to work and just and do the work myself. And I wanted to train people too. So it wasn't a situation

where I could actually it was just a temporary job. But I thought it I thought it was a bit discriminatory and that because of my hearing disability, the manager didn't think that I could train other people on the staff even though the person I did train, you know, like they trained that person well enough. So that's kind of an example of like, you know, just sort of, yes, I was working but on the job itself, it was sort of like yeah, training was not part of my job description. But it was basically Well, you know, because of your hearing, they don't think that you'll be okay training other people. So that's just sort of an example.

1:22:14

Yeah, yeah. Well, thank you for sharing that one. And yeah, and what a lost opportunity for your organization as well on so many levels. So, yeah, thanks for sharing that. Adrienne. Okay, I think we have one I think we'll start with Makayla, I think this is a good one for you. I know this is a hot topic in a lot of environments, screening software. So can you talk about the screening software that some large organizations use to screen out applications? I'm thinking of organizations that put certain requirements in a job postings such as the need for a driver's license or heavy lifting, which results in good candidates being screened out for something that could be easily accommodate. Yeah, Mikayla, you start others may have some thoughts on this one.

1:23:01

I think we would just always tell employers not to use screening software, because there's so many incredibly like biases in terms of disability, but also race and gender, all of these things that those software's just do not take into account. So I think just don't use them would be our approach with employers and they have made those changes. But I don't really know in terms of like, I guess trying I guess the question is more like, what would you do when you're when you know that your resume is going to be screened by those things? And I don't really know that side of it. Maybe someone else does?

1:23:44

Yeah, it's an interesting question, because I think it's, oh, I had the term applicant software, forgot what the middle letter is. But even something like as common as a deed, you don't have to be a large employer to be using something that has some kind of screening or filtering capability. So yeah, so just curious. Yeah. What advice might you give for jobseekers knowing that yes, so many employers are using these kinds of tools somebody want to

1:24:25

this might not answer it. Yeah. But I know it's ready, willing and able, we work with some employers that just don't like even though the manager of the store doesn't want to use their, like screening softwares and their regular kind of questionnaires online and things like that, but they might not have the option from head office to not use those software. So, with ready, willing and able it offers the opportunity for the employment agency to kind of flag with us who those applicants might be so that we can kind of ensure that they are seen they're not skipped over. That's kind of the best solution I guess right now, for ready willing and able until we can get maybe some employers to use those

1:25:15

less often. Yeah.

1:25:18

Thank you. And Mikayla, did you have something to add?

1:25:21

Yeah, I was just going to say a number of our large employers have been working with service organizations like ready, willing and able or BC partners and Workforce Innovation. And I definitely think that the using those employment agencies can definitely have your resume seen by employers if you're worried that it wouldn't if you just applied regularly. I know sometimes people like myself, haven't necessarily used a service organization. In the past. I have a physical disability and I didn't know that those kind of organizations existed when I was a job seeker. So I definitely encourage people to do that because a lot of employers are looking to prioritize hiring people with different backgrounds and disabilities and that's often a way that you can get like your resume prioritized because they do want to ensure that they are including different backgrounds.

1:26:23

Yeah, excellent tips. Yeah. And again, take advantage of the resources and organizations that were described. I you know, I'm just curious what people think about also, you know, the personal touch, if you see an organization that you think you're interested in that regularly has opportunities that you think you could do, but there's these your perspective on old fashion, you know, informational interviews, checking in with people connections using LinkedIn. Again, back to the conversation earlier, not all managers are created equally, not everyone's great at creating a job description. Not everyone's great at creating good interview questions. Couldn't you see opportunities? Were? Using something like an informational interview to explore might also be an opportunity to educate and gain some clarity. All right, see some nods. And All right, so we'll boo looks like we have from Julia in the chat. And I think Sandy, we let you start off with this one. In some industries, diversity and inclusion doesn't always highlight issues relating to disabilities as part of the conversation. What do you think HR professionals can do to further develop, implement, educate and execute disability specific training that emphasizes inclusive culture?

1:27:54

Well, there are certainly a lot of employers who are coming on board and working with organizations. So you know, probably more so on the coast. In the larger centers, in in a small town like where I live we tend to broker that relationship. We tend to bring that that to the employer. So basically, you know, I don't I haven't worked in this capacity in the city. So I haven't worked with a lot of HR departments. I usually typically work with the business owner or the manager of the store, manager, owner operator. But certainly, it's approaching and this may or may not answer that part of the question, but it's certainly approaching employers from a business perspective. So taking into account you know, observing that business and seeing what their trained their higher level train staff are doing, and where positions can be carved, and helping make that employer aware that there are clients that are good candidates and bring skills that are going to benefit that business, and then allow the revenue generating staff to do just that. You know, and in one case, there was a woman that I worked with who was great doing laundry, and the spa owner that I approached, had her estheticians doing laundry, for the linens in the spa. And so I asked her, you know, about how many hours a week and she gave me the number and I said so

basically your build time is \$100 an hour and she said yes. And I said so. At the end of the month. You've just paid your trained staff, the same amount as your triple net lease, to do laundry. And then I provided a business case for why my client could do the job. So I think in a smaller business, certainly educating them that way, from the context that they're looking at it from the business perspective. And but I do think that's in the larger centers, just from what I've seen, like through the UBC neuro diversity program. Employers such as Meridian meat markets are really doing a lot of inclusive hiring, and more organizations, Canadian Tire Starbucks, they're all they're all kind of getting on board. And I think it's just education. You know, showing them that because somebody has a disability does not mean that they don't have abilities and that's that term. I just find can really lead people away from the fact that that so many people possess skills that would be great for business, but again, within context of that person's interest the business's needs so you have to keep all that into in mind I hope I answered

1:30:54

that. I did wonderfully and I apologize for my phone. This is the if they I don't know if you everyone heard my phone ring. So if you did I Oh good. So it's just me. So don't negate that apology from the record. Thank you. Anyone else want to add on that? Is that is a tricky one. But Kayla,

1:31:18

um, that's definitely where we work in this within like HR departments. And I would say that a lot of businesses just aren't aware that there's support out there. And they just, they just don't know why did this thing to start with or where they can get started. And so we work directly with HR departments to implement all kinds of policy changes and trainings for all staff or trainings. For HR level folks and above. And definitely, there's so many different places where they can get started. It's just about taking those first steps and finding actionable pieces that they can start with and then go from there. Sometimes they want to start in one specific area of their workplace sometimes start in a specific department. It's just about starting and figuring out what you don't know so that you can learn to do better. Thanks.

1:32:19

So Megan, I don't I'm sorry.

1:32:21

No, go ahead there Gary. Perfect.

1:32:26

I don't necessarily mean these as negative comments, but I've, in my experience, and this goes back to some federal panel work I did this many years ago now but a lot of sometimes the HR departments are very motivated and they're quite, quite general that that doesn't mean that that lots of HR professional don't need a lot of education around this, but I've come across places where the HR people have got a pretty good handle on it. But then they still run into problems when it gets down to as I understand it, the hiring managers and this is where and I think McHale would probably jump all over this but you know, it's one of the best lessons learned we saw particularly well doesn't matter the size of the organization, but you know, the CEO, the CEO, or very senior management, they need to really buy in and drive it from there and so that it doesn't always fall an HR department would be you know,



constantly trying to convince other departments that this is the approach that they need to take, including those screenings, software's or, you know, making sure that people have the right supports just to do the interview. And then it's not one standard interview that that may be discriminatory towards a person with a disability, etc., etc. So there's a lot of pieces to it, but sometimes, you know, if there's not that buy in from up above, then I've seen it sort of not be able to get effectively dispersed throughout the organization. Yeah.

1:34:12

Yeah, good points that you do need to just sort of that multi level buy in. Yeah, something to get things happen. Yeah. Mikayla?

1:34:21

Yeah, as Gary mentioned, that's exactly why we have the model that we do, which is that the CEOs are the ones who are at our leadership table. And if they're not, then there's just often not going to be within it within the business and having those leaders talk to other leaders is the most important thing because they set the tone and they can tell the HR department that they need to learn or do things differently. And that buying is so important. We have business leaders who come to us and the reason that they're there is because they have seen XC to do this or do that in the community and that's the reason that they are brought to this work because that peer to peer piece is so important to them. Wonderful,

1:35:09

and I'm going to go on a limb and I suspect that is why your organization's called the President's group. Yeah, I put that together. All right. Thank you Ah, okay. See, I had something here. So it's again, one of our comments, something Makayla mentioned a bit ago and was mentioned the survey was the stigma of disbelief from employers regarding invisible disabilities. Several respondents vocalize that they and their needs were dismissed. Because they did not look disabled often be called lazy, unstable, or otherwise unable to work plot properly. How can employers educate themselves on invisible disabilities and what resources might exist for people with invisible disabilities to advocate for themselves? See, can I come back Serena, do you want to start off starts off with this one?

1:36:08

Sure, in terms of resources available, I would personally start with it there's a just because an invisible disability is such an expansive term where there's hundreds of disabilities that fall under it. There's a lot of hopefully I can find it more speaking, but there's a lot of databases and like this disability dictionaries and resources that are a good place to start, that provide an understanding of invisible disability even. I would ask employers to seek out resources that are rooted in disability justice so then an understanding of even the term invisible disabilities can be problematic because if you know, have enough knowledge, you can recognize that fatigue can be a symptom of an invisible disability, or stress or if someone's fidgeting with their hands and these are all signs of invisible disability is that going to actually become very visible? So I think it's important to find resources that are rooted in disability justice but a good place to start with the a lot of like, disability dictionaries and overarching resources that kind of is like a first step in the pool. And then you can do further knowledge along the way. I'll try to find the resource I'm speaking about and putting it in the chat.

1:37:40

Alright, yeah. Excellent. Thank you for that. Anyone else has some insights they might want to share this Megan.

1:37:47

I can really speak I guess to autism and intellectual disability. Like I mentioned in the beginning, RW EA has their inclusive workplace that has all those awesome resources to help people learn more in trainings and things like that. But the Canucks Autism Network also provides training to employers and, you know, community partners and things like that, you know, in terms of also how you present yourself in the community if you're a customer facing business, right. So there's a lot of resources there. I think also, Sandy had mentioned a great resource that was created by UBC as well. I can't remember the exact name by no link is in the chat right now. So there's a lot of fantastic opportunities out there to learn

1:38:32

more. Great, thank you.

1:38:39

All right, Mikayla.

1:38:41

We also have an employer training course called Creating Accessible workplaces. And later this year, we're creating one on creating accessibility plans, which will be required from all businesses in the next few years, as well as one on encouraging employees to self disclose in the workplace, and all the issues that come from that. And also, one more on I think it's on culture. And those are free for all employees and employers across the province.

1:39:15

That's fantastic. And, you guessed I was going to ask, Are these going to be available broadly? And you anticipated the question,

1:39:22

and we develop all of our courses through content creators who are disabled and through significant testing by other folks with disabilities.

1:39:35

Wonderful, and that price again, was

1:39:38

completely free for employees.

1:39:41

Wonderful, thank you. All right. This one's going to go back, tying into some discussion we had earlier around having a driver's licenses as seen as a requirement for many positions. So yeah, so from Julia

many applications, logistics we see a lot of jobs that require driver's license. So Gary, I'm going to get you to start off with this one. However, many people disabilities are not able to get a license for variety of reasons. And then Heather in the chat also express how big this issue is, as is often seen as a basic requirement for adults. Just curious about alternatives, folks for disabilities who don't drive, particularly when it's stated as a requirement for a position

1:40:36

I don't think I've got a great answer for that one, Tony. You know, I know that we can sometimes help with to and from work accommodations to Yeah, and that can be anywhere from possibly depending on which program, helping them with you know, Van Conversion, etc. to trying to make sure they got the right sports to get to and from work. But if it's a kind of job where they got to drive around the city and do those kinds of activities, you're going to have to sort of take a look at that on a case by case basis and then offer the employer a viable sort of alternative to why that wouldn't be an obstacle to doing the job effectively. And usefully and yeah, I mean, sometimes there are bad call bonafide on a Friday. I'm not sure I'm saying that right. But you know, requirements that you know, if it's a delivery driver, and then, you know, perhaps that's one you're not going to get around, I'm not sure but others might have a viewpoint on that but that's the best I can think of off the top of my head. But I have seen that a lot and I think the problem is it's often in there and it's not really needed. So there again, you know, there's a way of getting in there and making that personal contact and finding out just what's required and what are some maybe alternatives around that that meet both. Both needs is probably going to work in a lot of situations.

1:42:21

Yeah. So that was one of the best answers that started with I don't think I have an answer for this question. So you know, nice turning up the tables there, Gary. And, yeah, I do like to do that. Yeah. Look at the individual. I think case by cases, I think useful. And I would agree. I think sometimes things like driver's license is one of those things has been it was we had this in our job description for 20 years. No one's thought to change it or questioned whether or not that is still necessary. So yeah, I think that's I think it's a good one. And, and I think they've got some clarification. Sometimes there's a question about whether do you need to provide proof of this in the application or it's about a proof of ID. So, Angela, I did see your hand up. Is that the point you're trying to make? Or you have something else to add on that?

1:43:16

Yeah, I think that's just the clarification. So Gary, I think you could probably speak to that more about using a driver's license as a proof of ID more than ability to drive.

1:43:27

Oh, if that's the issue, then I know we are programs will work closely with the participant to find alternatives there's he can almost always find an alternative. Id situation can be more challenging than the first looks. But you know, the part of what we will try to do is support a person through making sure they got the kind of identification they need. So if it's really just, that's there for identification purposes, that's, that's something I'm hopeful can be easily overcome. relatively easily. Overcome. Yeah.

1:44:14

Great. Thank you. Okay, it looks like we have something from Jessica. She says I went through an entire very long job interview process, including doing assessment work, before they told me at the very end that I no longer qualified for the job because they just realized I didn't have my license. I wrote in the application that I did not have my license due to my medical conditions. They even had the audacity to ask if my disability was temporary. The job was only a 12 month contract. It was not a job that required driving. The odd travel needed could have been supplemented in other ways. Yeah. I think you know, yeah, that's just disappointing story that still exists too much. Where I think, yeah, there's just a lack of being open minded or creative in terms of, you know, someone's had driver's license before we've required before it. We haven't really thought about whether or not we still need that. So yeah, sorry. They've got through that, Jessica. Yeah, that would have been very frustrating.

1:45:15

I just want to say I totally concur. And that to me, sounds like an employer that was looking for a way out. Yeah, yeah. Which is just a disingenuous color out there. That's just, that's just a personal comment. not wonderful.

1:45:35

And Mikayla, do you have something to add there? Yeah.

1:45:38

If an employer is connected to a service organization, of any kind, that's a really easy area to Job part of. One of our businesses has had a great example of they used to include that on some of their job postings, and then they realize that it actually is a great role for someone who loves to drive to take on part of the job requirement. So in that instance, it was a small business and they realized that they could hire someone with anxiety who didn't want to work with customers to solely do the driving person the job to deliver some of their I think they were it was a bakery in that instance, so delivering baked goods to people specifically as the job so that they didn't have to interact with people and then the people who didn't want to be doing the driving, not have to do that as part of their jobs. So as long as an employer is connected to some kind of services that could recommend something like that, then that's a great solution, but it's hard for the employers who don't know to connect to services. Who can help them with those kinds of things.

1:46:50

Yeah, yeah. Great

1:46:51

points. And Megan,

1:46:52

I just want to add all this is really kind of showing how important is for employers to have a really inclusive job description. You know, there's so many job descriptions out there that are full of jargon. You know, they have unnecessary skills are kind of things that you don't do very often in terms of tasks

that are listed. And removing those really helps the job seekers or the applicants really understand what the qualities of the job are. So definitely important to have an inclusive job description.

1:47:24

Yeah, great. Yeah, make sure that that inclusive up to date, and be open and flexible and I love McHale's examples sort of reminded me a bit of Sandy's laundry example. That yeah, there might be ways to sort of split things up in a way that are that that's beneficial for everybody. Okay. Okay. We're next going to get into a question regarding this little thing called a pandemic that we've been living through these last few years. And I think, Sandy, I'll start with you on this one. Um, COVID-19 has shook the world but it also showcased to employers the capability to conduct work remotely. Something has been of great benefit to those in our community. What are your thoughts on pandemics specific accommodations existing long into the future?

1:48:12

Well, I think that people have like you said, people have identified that, well, there's, this can be done. You know, we've all become very familiar with Zoom. I didn't really know how to use Zoom prior to the pandemic. And so I think it's really paved the way for people to be able to work from home to be able to participate in meetings and, and not be impacted by social anxiety or, you know, other, you know, just being outside of their home if accessibility is an issue. So, I think that this really does help to bridge that gap and lead to more inclusivity as far as hiring practices and, and really placing people skills ahead of what might have been perceived as barriers and not be seen as something that could be overcome in the past. So I think it's great. What I also noticed too, outside of the technology point was that as businesses started to get up and running again, many of the full time staff had found other employment. And so it also allowed us to really brokered the relationships and do a lot of carving and customization and, and help employers really see the value of clients who maybe don't want to work full time, but they have some specific skill sets that are really going to bring value to the business. Yeah, so I hope it I hope it continues.

1:49:49

Yeah, there's so many Yeah, and I love your point in so again, how many of us use Zoom prior to this? I don't think I've ever said the words you're on mute before.

1:50:00

I've sent my children that they were deleted because the wrong deleted you know, and one of one thing that that's really come around and become forefront in my mind is don't kill the skill. You know, everybody has got skills and showcase those skills and showcase them in to the right employers in the right context. And, you know, for instance, somebody living with ADHD, I want them on my team. If I'm brainstorming and trying to find grants, I don't necessarily want them to write the grants because the follow through might not be there, but they are they are the ideas people they are the people who are going to find the resources so don't kill a skill.

1:50:45

Yeah, I liked it. Don't kill the skill. And there's and there are some things that we've learned. And that is my sense as well, that there's an openness and flexibility on the employer side that I don't think existed

before. You know, the trick is how long will this last? You know, how do we keep you know, and you know, what is it that we could do to, you know, keep that momentum or keep pressure up, you know, those of us who are both employers and advocates, you know, taking on those two sides of things.

1:51:10

If I can just say one more thing, what we've done is we've created inclusivity awards. For our employers. So every September, its diverse abilities or disabilities month, and we make visits to employers and we used to have little stickers that they would put on their windows or entry doors. And now we do plaques. And they are identified as inclusive employers, and they are listed in the newspaper and they are celebrated. And in a small town, where people think that discrimination runs rampant. You know, we've made some major headway. So people want to be part of the trend and you know, not just as a trend, but there's something a change that needs to be made. And so that's another way is identifying them and celebrating.

1:52:02

Yeah, yeah. And sort of that positive that the celebration side, Gary, I'm sorry, dad.

1:52:08

I'm just a slight you know, early on in the pandemic I was interviewed about, about, you know, what kind of opportunities these are opening up for persons with disabilities and I, I think there's probably a lot more upside and downside, but I think that there's also some issues to keep in mind. Technology, I tend to come back to that one a lot. Just because there is the technology to work from home. That doesn't necessarily mean people have the technology to work from home. So an employer needs to be able to accommodate that and the tools they're using may not be accessible for that person's particular disability. And we've run into a lot of that as well, you know, so, although I will say there's, you know, a lot of software, some of the major ones are a lot more in tune with making their tools accessible. It's still something to watch out for, because a lot of companies have proprietary kind of, you know, soft software interface programs, etc. So it'd be a bit careful on that. And there's, there's one of the and you know, it depends, like, it can be very useful for people that like to work at home, and that's a way but they're there. It can also be very, very isolating, you know, if suddenly they're all shifting, and, you know, there's not that option to actually come into work and actually have the social interaction that that some are looking for, and the supports that might just be there in the workplace, as but yeah, so there's, there's hope. It has certainly demonstrated in a lot of things that employers used to tell us weren't doable. are deaf, definitely doable. Just a few things to keep in mind that that, yeah, that you don't go completely that way. For all people.

1:54:12

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And I think that thank you again, the importance to show them individual differences, you know, the range and the pros and cons of all situations. And I think also some of the challenges I think your point of view, you know, something might be doable with technology doesn't mean everyone has it or can afford the technology that's necessary as well. So I think you know, I don't know if that's a bigger policy issue, but issues around you know, you know, appropriate Wi Fi computers that are strong enough to run with whatever an employer might be running. So, you know, these are all considerations.



1:54:51

Big time Yeah. Yeah. That we're seeing that what we call the digital divide, actually getting a lot more emphasized during the pandemic for those very, very reasons. Yeah.

1:55:06

Yeah, yeah. No, I think I think it does seem like a bigger societal issue. Sometimes. I get it seems like there's a solution there, but it's it actually opens up other issues. And we're staying on the combination, Mikayla. So it's going to be for you. So speaking of accommodations, and especially taking into account virtual capabilities, survey respondents pointed out particular difficulties if their needs suddenly change. They have a progressive condition or if their health fluctuates on a day to day basis. What is the responsibility of the employer to accommodate these kinds of changing needs?

1:55:41

Absolutely. I think the Stats Canada last add on disability showed that episodic or I think they also call it fluctuating disabilities are the largest number in Canada. And definitely, part of creating accessible workplaces is having those knowledge in place within HR departments and leaders so that when people do come to you as existing stuff and say that they either have a changing disability or they've acquired a disability or they've had an injury or something like that, that they can accommodate and make sure that they're retaining their stuff. Okay, thank you for that. And

1:56:30

in while and while I have you still there it there was a question from Mike in the chat about a resource that one with a disability can access to find if an employer is accessible prior to an interview. And I believe you mentioned something already to maybe just while we have you.

1:56:48

On our website, we reached recently relaunched it this summer. And I really stressed that I wanted employees to be able to come to our website or job seekers to see employers that are committed to accessibility. So I've made it so that each employer has a little profile that you can click on. And hopefully they've highlighted any accessibility initiatives that they may have created. And a little bit about like their workplace culture. And it links directly to their website so you can look for any job openings they have. Well, we can't necessarily like say what to what extent they are accessible already. They are committed to becoming accessible so that means they're trying to take our training or they're coming to our events or they're engaging with us in some way so that they are learning and growing in this area. We can't say that any of them are like 100% of the best practice yet, but they are trying which makes a big difference.

1:57:51

First step on the continuum. Wonderful. Um, okay, this one is going to we're going to start off with Serena on this one. What are your tips on helping service or social service organizations be more inclusive of disabilities in smaller towns and communities across Canada?

1:58:12

That's a really good question. And I've only lived in big cities growing up so it's a bit difficult for me to answer I'm trying to think small communities across Canada I guess there is a lot of resources and trainings available to folks I know that I've done some workshops and Disability Justice

1:58:44

panels around

1:58:47

from Bihar consulting and there's other groups that also do it. So if you have an organization that perhaps like you're an employee of I've like previously suggested workshops to make like all of our staff and management more aware of issues that I knew affected myself, but of course, not everyone discloses and could affect a lot of your fellow employees as well. I think that could be one approach, but I think I might defer to other folks who have had more experiences in small towns and communities about what has worked for them.

1:59:20

Wonderful, and I know Sandy has mentioned her small town credit credentials, and I'm initially from a small town, but that was a long time ago. So let Sandy speak.

1:59:31

So when I started my role 15 years ago, there was really no organizations in town. You know, we were Theo BC, internet service, and until I came on board, and so I think what it really takes is those conversations and reaching out to parent organizations who may have a budget for satellite offices, in smaller towns, going to community meetings. Talking going into if you have an Access Center, if you have a service BC center, writing to Service Canada, getting people on board, getting a group of people to write letters, make some noise, and say these are services that we need in our small town. I know it worked for us, we we've got CLBC we've got interior community support services, we've got CLBC presence, we've got our wellness presence. You know so many organizations now because once you become involved and self advocate and get other people on board, then they can't help but listen, and you know, and go to your MLA go to your mayor, go to you know, city council, whoever will come on board and walk alongside you to bring services because that just enhances the town. And there again, take a look at what brings people to the table. So if there are no support services in your small community, that means that from an economic growth perspective, that community is not going to grow. And that's not going to be favorable to City Council or the mayor. And so bring them on board from that perspective. Know who your audience is, know why you're pitching what you're pitching and find a slap that's going to bring them to the table and start the conversation.

2:01:26

Wonderful, some great tips and Meghan

2:01:28

also just want to add, since it sounded like this question came from somebody maybe across Canada, ready, willing and able is taking place in almost province, almost every province and territory across Canada. So there should be people across the country that can help a service agency kind of adapt

and train up in terms of being more approachable. And it's also a program that really tries to increase the capacity of agencies. So you know there for people who are hired for certain positions that are generated by ready, willing and able, there's funding available to help support job coaching and things like that, that might be needed. So it's a great opportunity, if you're coming from across the to engage with ready will enable by default, an

2:02:20

excellent reminder of that. And again, particularly in Yeah, we could get back to this format, we could have people from anywhere on this particular call. So thanks for that there Megan. Sonia, I noticed you have your hand up I

2:02:33

think I can pass you can unmute. Hi,

2:02:44

I think Sam between Sandy and Megan. Everything that I was going to comment on has already been covered. But what I was going from my perspective as an employment specialist, and I live I mean, technically I am in a suburb of Vancouver but it is still kind of a small town called Maple Ridge and what I would encourage people who are working in any sort of service delivery model of employment support is to go out as Sandy had mentioned, meet with your local BB IoT, market yourself the skills and abilities of the individuals who are supporting to find work and employment. And I think one of the things that has been really successful for us as an employment team is meeting with employers to find out where their hiring needs are and where they're changing. And then encouraging them to meet some of our candidates that are prepared and capable of doing that work. And I think once you can address a business at their bottom line and show them that this is a great investment. There's low recidivism, these are people that are excited to work. They're going to show up with a great attitude and ready to go even if they're at an entry level. Sometimes the proof is in the pudding and once they can meet these candidates and see their commitment to being excellent employees. That's where you can sometimes flip businesses and something that has been very powerful for us at best is the business to business referrals and recommendations when we've had people such as the owners of Cafe divano and Gabby, Gabby and Jules here in the Lower Mainland, ones a coffee shop and one is a bakery and they're affiliated, having them speak to other businesses through boards of trade and share that their bottom line has been effective in a positive way by hiring adults who are neurodiverse or in some way physically disabled, because then it's not just sort of a feel good approach to employment. It's here's where it's been effective for my business bottom line. So I think maybe in smaller towns that's a great angle as well go to your commerce, your board of trade organizations or directly to businesses. And you know, once you get in one place they can then be your next great advocate in a meaningful way to other businesses.

2:05:23

Yeah, yeah. No, I love that as a tip. And again, and there's just a different credibility. That's, you know, it that organizations have with organizations they already know and trust or know from a specific context. So thank you for that. Mikayla.

2:05:40

Note as well I come from like a very like micro town of 3000 in Logan, Oregon. And I when I was growing up, like, there are places where there just aren't opportunities like when you're in high school, they're the only places to work or fast food restaurants and things like that. Like when you live in a place where there isn't a mall or a theater or anything like that. Sometimes there just aren't opportunities. And so when I was in high school, the job that I had was self employment and being a little micro entrepreneur myself, and I know for folks with disabilities, when there aren't those opportunities, sometimes creating your own that's a really good opportunity. So there is that an entrepreneur's with Disabilities Program through community futures that I would highly recommend for your some training and supports. If you do live in a place where there really isn't opportunities and there aren't even employers to get involved because there's so few businesses.

2:06:42

Yeah, yeah. Fantastic. Thanks for sharing that because it's one of the things we say is even in places where there's not jobs, there's always work that needs to be done. And sometimes there's different ways to try to uncover that. Work getting into the last five minutes, folks, this is just I was shocked when I looked at the clock. This is this has been so engaging, so we may have time for maybe one or two. I'm going to go in the order that I've got them here. So I'm going to leave this one open because I see who has the most insight around on specifically around brain injury. He's picked two supports around brain injury and education for employers and service organizations, by indirect experience is that this can create real challenges for self advocacy, especially in the moments so yeah, looking for, for any insights for cetera in the chat. There you, Gary,

2:07:45

well, I'll try but I'll be quick because I maybe others can jump in but you know, brain injury, the result of a brain injury, like personal experience with that in my family. It can be weird, really wide ranging and turn in their meeting. Strategies and or technologies that can can help them compensate. So basically, you know, this is I know what a lot of us have said it many times but if you can reach out to the various organizations, including ourselves, will work with you because each person's disability is very individualized and obviously, and I think brain injuries are good examples. Specifically of just how broad that is, and it's part of the work we do to try to help navigate through that to find a situation that might actually fit your skills, your abilities and work with an employer to accommodate we're that person might have some deficits or not function this one might first expect Oh, no, thank you. You know, I think there are helping the various agencies that are on the call and

2:09:20

Beto Thank you.

2:09:24

I think that's certainly an area that open door group or work PC could help with in the Customized Employment Program is again carving positions, customizing positions, assisting with job coaching, connecting brokering relationships with employers and really showcasing the person skills. Definitely reach out to an organization that can support you and walk alongside you and help you break down those barriers. All right, wonderful.

2:09:56

And we are now at that. Yes, folks. The time has come for our final question of the day. And so what I'll do is for this one, I'll just quickly go because you know, we're running short on time. A quick response from each of you on your perspective. And that final question, is your view on appointments today and where does going from your experiences? Do you see progress occurring with disability representation and employment? Or do you see a future where more action is needed, for instance, perhaps a mandatory quota for employees with disabilities so I thought we'd answer this in the order that we started. So we're going to go starting off with Serena.

2:10:38

I think it's both. I think that I definitely have seen for the success and I think that what makes the biggest difference to employers is humanizing folks with disabilities. And as more folks disclose and are open about their disabilities, it's really opened the eyes of the folks that I've been employed by, and they've seen more see more open, especially with the pandemic in people's eyes being open to things like the prevalence of ableism and communities. I think people are a lot more willing to do their part and to hire folks with disabilities, but at the same time, I think there's definitely a lot more progress that needs to be made.

2:11:23

Wonderful. And, Megan, your thoughts?

2:11:26

Thanks. I'm pretty similar. I think it is a bit of both. I'm really encouraged by some of the outcomes of kind of come on pandemic in terms of more acceptance around accommodations and things like that. And I'm also I was thinking about what Sonia was saying in terms of that business to business interaction. I think that's something we see a lot with ready, willing and able is that you see one business who has spoken to another business and are kind of spreading that that word that it's not hard. And it's a it's fairly easy to kind of learn and to train and things like that. I yeah, I definitely think that there's a lot of growth that's happening out there, and I'm pretty optimistic about it. I also know in my experience, too, that a lot of lawyers that I've met with in the past, you know, sometimes they might have a child with a disability, and that really brings them into this rank as well. So there's a little bit more kind of a willingness that I'm seeing for sure.

2:12:27

Thank you and Sandy.

2:12:28

I would agree. It's a it's a bit of both, but we can't rest on this. We just we have to continue you know, with the conversations with the push with the awareness, having the inclusivity events having the inclusive job fairs, promoting celebration of employers who hire inclusively, and just really driving that culture.

2:12:55

Thank you. And Mikayla.

2:12:59

I'm just sort of the same that everyone else has said. I think as we recognize more representation of people with disabilities in the workplaces already and ensuring our cultures are more inclusive to invite more in. I think we're seeing a good change, but there's still a lot that has to be done a lot of other businesses that need to be educated in this area as

2:13:25

well. Yeah, no points. And Gary, final panelist word goes to you. Yeah,

2:13:32

well, I think I'm going to start off with the same set of both. I honestly wake up some mornings I wonder for gone backwards over 35 years, but I think overall, we we've gone forward and I just echo you know, something I think I said earlier on, and it's been echoed in different ways is, you know, employers that have had a good up a good experience, you know, and having them at these forums and speaking, I don't mean these kinds of forums. But you know, employer forums and other job fairs, etc. And getting them to share their experiences and I, I just hope that, you know, also with the labor shortages, you know, as another opportunity for employers to see that this is really an untapped area. That is not as difficult as they might think. And so all those messages I'm still hopeful that we're moving the needle in the right way and we all got to continue to fight Oh, yeah, for sure.

2:14:39

Yeah, yeah, some excellent points it all tie into Yeah. It's going in the right direction. It's not always as fast as we'd like. Sometimes there are some back steps. But yeah, well, thank you all. This has been great. And I also thank everyone who signed up and showed up and attended today. And particular Thank you. For me anyway, for our panelists and for everyone who asked questions, and again, everyone else. It has been an amazing learning opportunity for me as well. So a transcript of this event will be mailed out to all attendees as well as a summary of our survey findings next week. Please take a moment to fill out the survey on your screen. You can see it it's a very nice looking one. And tell us how we did because this is how is useful for future activities. If you have any follow up questions, concerns, comments or ideas for future community forums, please email our program coordinator Emily at i.e. chambers. So echambers@connector.org. Perhaps we could put that in the chat if it hasn't done already. Oh, there it is. This email is also posted in the chat along with the individual panelists emails, I guess I just needed to read ahead. We will also provide this opportunity in our summary email to all attendees. So again, also remember this other events so check out various community events that connect at connector.org/events. And with that, I think exactly four o'clock. We are close. Thank you again for coming out and I hope you all have a very good weekend. Thank you everyone.

2:16:21

Thank you so much. That was so wonderful. Thanks to all the panelists for being a part of it. And Tony. You're an awesome host. Thank you.

2:16:33

Thank you for hosting.

2:16:34

Yeah, Tony, can you do all these? That was great. And thank you to Yoshi and Angela. We're monitoring the chat and running tech

2:16:48

Yeah, that was amazing. Like for I think, Angela and whoever else if I couldn't