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Designing Disability Inclusive Career Fairs

A Guide for Career Fair Organizers, Job Seekers, Employers, and Other Collaborators

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INCLUSIVE DESIGN FOR EMPLOYMENT ACCESS
VISION RADICALE POUR L'ACCÈS INCLUSIF À L'EMPLOI

Queen's UNIVERSITY

Inclusive Design for Employment Access (IDEA) helps build employer capacity for sustainable and rewarding employment opportunities for persons with disabilities through evidence-informed policy and practice.

IDEA develops evidence-informed tools and resources through co-design with partners that help advance workplace capacity for recruitment, hiring, onboarding, retention, mentorship, and promotion of persons with disabilities across the full range of employment opportunities. Where possible, we draw on practices that have shown promise in one or more workplaces in Canada and elsewhere.

Our work is spearheaded by teams of researchers, global experts, and industry leaders. Many of those involved in IDEA identify as persons with disabilities.

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Introduction and Purpose

Career fairs, also known as job fairs, are events where employers and job seekers meet. These events typically focus on having job seekers learn about specific employers and sometimes specific roles open for hire. Career fairs can range in size, being larger-scale, in which there are representatives from multiple employers available for job seekers to meet with, or smaller-scale, in which as few as one to three employers are represented.

Career fairs are important for job seekers because they can introduce job seekers to new career paths and networks, build their confidence, and launch their careers.

As career fair activities can potentially match employers and job seekers, it is important that career fairs are accessible and inclusive. In this report, accessibility refers to ensuring everyone can participate in the career fair without barriers (e.g., social, communication, technological, or physical barriers). A career fair is inclusive if everyone feels that they are welcome and belong, and that they are treated with respect and dignity. Career fairs, however, are often not accessible nor inclusive of job seekers with disabilities, which results in a critical gap to employment access.

Our purpose with this guide is to detail how career fairs can become more accessible and inclusive. This is possible even in resource constrained contexts. As we will detail in this report, what is most often required is thoughtful planning, flexibility, and the right mix of collaborators. We recognize that some of the ideas presented in this report may be aspirational for certain organizations. However, considering the possibilities, and focusing on continuous improvement, can help make career fairs more accessible and inclusive.

Herein, we identify principles and practices to support the development of accessible and inclusive career fairs. We present a mix of well-established and new guidance on important but often overlooked aspects of career fair planning and execution as well.

Guide Structure. Information in this guide falls into four broad sections:

1) **Know Your Participants**: Tips on how to prepare and work with job seekers, employers, and additional collaborators.
2) **Event Structure**: Tips on career fair design, from event conceptualization to implementation.
3) **Logistics, Coordination, & Communication**: Tips on specific aspects of running a career fair from announcing the event, to registration, and planning for accessibility and designating roles.
4) **Resources**: Additional resources to draw from beyond this guide.
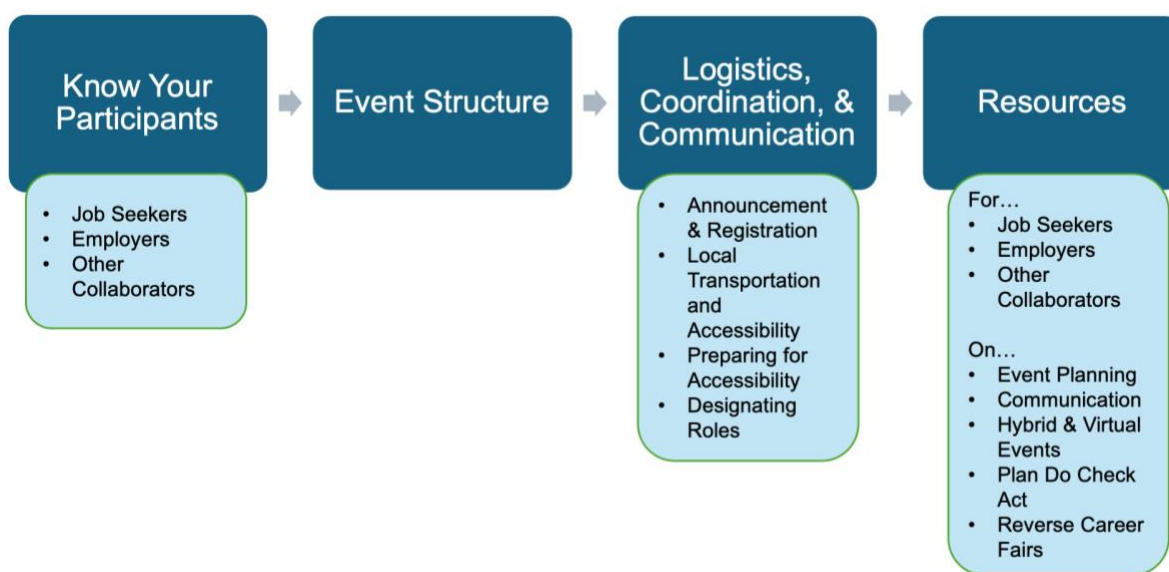
Figure 1. Summary of this report

Intended Audience. We have tailored this guide to the work of career fair organizers. Often, career fair organizers come from post-secondary environments, such as community colleges, training/apprenticeship centres, and universities. However, the guidance we share includes information that is likely relevant to the many participants involved in a successful career fair. Participants may be job seekers, employers, and additional collaborators. We recommend that career fair organizers use this guide to help all participants better prepare for career fairs. Further, this report may be useful for organizing career fairs within any context, not just the post-secondary environment.

Guiding Principles. Throughout this guide, we identify various principles and practices. The principles originate from our research and they guide our suggested practices. These principles may similarly serve as a valuable starting point for career fair organizers and collaborators to develop their own career fair practices that go beyond the scope of this report.

The 8 principles that guide our work include:

1) **"Nothing about us without us":** Persons with disabilities should be meaningfully included in developing and implementing career fairs.

2) **Focus on meaningful, competitive employment:** Career fairs should be designed with job seekers and their interests, career development, skills, and goals in mind. This contrasts with organizers assuming what job seekers want or can do.

3) **Respect the complexity of the individual and their identities:** Although this guide focuses on disability inclusion, the degree to which disability is an important part of someone's identity and experience, and/or relates to other identities and experiences, varies. Taking intersectional and individualized approaches to understanding job seekers, employers, and other collaborators is therefore important.

4) **Strength-based view:** Disability is multi-faceted and can be characterized in many ways. For instance, disability has historically been characterized as an individual problem (i.e., medical model). However, disability is also understood as a complex interaction between a person and their environment, with an emphasis on breaking down barriers (i.e., social model). Other ways of understanding disability abound, such as viewing disability as potentially negative, neutral, or positive within an individual's lived experience (i.e., affirmative model). Considering career development and the complexity of personal experience, it is often critical to focus on the strengths that job seekers bring to the table.

5) **First be proactive, next be flexible**: Prepare as much as you can for accessibility and inclusion. However, no one can prepare for every possible situation. When unexpected issues arise, choose to be flexible, open-minded, collaborative, and adaptive, instead of closing off.

6) **Collaborate:** We often heard of a tension between resource scarcity (e.g., time, funding, staff) and the desire to run accessible and inclusive career fairs. This is a serious concern. One way to mitigate this is to work together. You can collaborate with different functional groups within your own organization, and/or partner with other organizations and individuals that complement your skillsets and constraints.

7) **Context matters:** The value of our suggested practices will depend upon the individuals, groups, and organizations participating in your career fair. Assess the relevance of our guidance in your context. Best practices relevant for every possible situation are rare. However, when situated in context, suggested practices can go a long way.

8) **Continuous improvement:** Learn from mistakes and make your next career fair better than the previous one. We follow the iterative method of "Plan, Do, Check, Act", a model that offers structure and a method for continuous improvement in your career fair work. This model specifically asks individuals to *plan* — determine goals to recognize the process and needed changes required to achieve them; *do* — enact those changes; *check*— evaluate whether those changes have achieved the desired results; and *act* — maintain and integrate the change into normal practices if the desired results were achieved, and/or begin the cycle again.[1]

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[1] *Lean Enterprise Institute.* (n.d.) Plan, Do, Check, Act. https://www.lean.org/lexicon-terms/pdca/

Know Your Participants

Traditional career fair planning focuses on job seekers and employers. These participants are important, but many other organizations and individuals can play a role in the design and implementation of a successful career fair. Some of these organizations and individuals include non-profit employment service providers, professional associations, chambers of commerce, post-secondary accessibility services, post-secondary alumni services, and mentors.

Job Seekers with Disabilities

1) **Learning about job seekers as people first:** Know where your job seekers are in their career journey. For instance, some job seekers may just be starting their career search and benefit from learning about potential career paths. Other job seekers may have a plan in mind and primarily require a space to demonstrate that they are a good job candidate to employers.

   Job seekers' varied identities and experiences may affect their career search and goals. Student job seekers in our research highlighted that being a first-generation post-secondary student plays a role in shaping job search decisions, comfort, and awareness of career options, even though this is often overlooked by career services at their schools.

   There are many ways to learn about your job seekers and to help them learn about themselves, too. See the resources section of this guide for more information.

2) **Planning for diversity in job seeker career interests and needs:** Relating to the above point, participants in our research highlighted that career fair organizers sometimes unintentionally assume that they know what job seekers want without asking about job seeker interests and needs.

   Some job seeker interests and needs that can go unnoticed but are important to consider include:

   a. interest in rural or urban jobs
   b. interest in skilled trades, office work, or other areas

c. interest in jobs with lateral growth opportunities
d. interest in jobs with upward career mobility
e. interest in working with inclusive colleagues, managers, and organizations
f. interest in "meaningful job opportunities"
g. need for jobs that are accessible by transit and/or paratransit

The job seekers we spoke with were most interested in what they described as **meaningful job opportunities**. What was meaningful differed widely by individual. Often, it was about being accepted by colleagues, managers, and organizations. Additionally, job seekers considered it important for work to provide them a sense of engagement and purpose. Many job seekers noted that jobs with lateral growth opportunities (e.g., opportunities to learn new tasks and responsibilities within the same job) were just as or more important than more traditional upward career mobility opportunities.

3) **Preparing job seekers for the career fair:** Some ways to prepare job seekers include sharing resources and workshops on the following topics:

a. **Workplace accommodation and disclosure:** There is often a critical gap between a student job seeker's knowledge of disclosure and accommodation in school compared to disclosure and accommodation at work. For instance, in school, students may disclose to accessibility services and have staff work alongside faculty to determine how to support student learning. Meanwhile, when working, it is the employer's legal obligation to accommodate the employee — yet, there is nuance and power dynamics at play when engaging in the accommodation process at work (see the resource section for more information). It can thus be helpful to prepare job seekers with knowledge of a) their rights and responsibilities as a job candidate and employee, as well as b) the nuances of disclosure and accommodation at work.

b. **Job readiness:** Job readiness workshops can be helpful for job seekers who are uncertain of their interests and needs, or require help preparing for the hiring and recruitment process. Job readiness workshops include opportunities for job seekers

to receive help with creating, as well as reviewing and receiving feedback on, their resume and cover letter. Job readiness workshops could additionally include chances for job seekers to understand what type of work they would like to perform (e.g., types of tasks, preferences for in-person/remote/hybrid work, the required skills, and information about career paths). Our research participants further noted that many job seekers are shy and nervous about interacting with employers, in part due to inexperience with the job search. Demystifying employer interactions and providing a safe environment to interact with employers can be helpful.

Employers

1) **Inviting employers who match the interests and needs of your job seekers:** Many of our job seekers had a strong preference for working with inclusive employers. This means it may be particularly beneficial to invite employers who are further along in their disability inclusion journey — although this may not always be possible.

2) **Preparing employers for the career fair:** Respect that every employer is at a different stage in their disability inclusion journey. Hence, employer preparation is imperative. Pre-career fair webinars or lunch-and-learns for employers can allow space for learning and asking questions. It can often be helpful to have employers learn from persons with disabilities and employers who are more advanced in the areas of accessibility and disability inclusion. Resources on the following topics can be shared with employers (see the resources section for more information):

   a. Understanding the complexity of disability (e.g., understanding the different models of disability, such as the medical, social, socio-medical, and affirmative models)
   b. Inclusive and accessible interactions with job seekers with disabilities (e.g., understanding how to approach the discussion of accommodations)
   c. Inclusive communication (such as neuromixed communication; e.g., clearly stating what job qualifications are essential versus preferred, providing discussion points and questions to job seekers before an event or interview)

d. Designing accessible presentations (e.g., providing multiple formats)

In addition to these topics, career fair organizers might consider providing employers with a list of service provider collaborators who can help with their learning. Many employers are unaware of service providers who work in this space. Your career fair could be an opportunity to build collaborations between these different partners well beyond the event.

3) **Formalizing inclusive behaviour with an employer contract:** Resource sharing is a good first step. Next, employers should recognize and commit to inclusive behaviour at the career fair. This can be formalized by sharing a "contract" with employers, to be signed by the employer representatives attending the career fair. Such a contract can contain information on the purpose of the event, inclusive as well as unacceptable behaviour, expectations, and further information on resources, accessibility, and workplace inclusion.

Job seekers, employers, service providers, and other collaborators could be consulted in preparing this contract.

4) **Encouraging employers to highlight their Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) initiatives:** Many job seekers are curious about prospective employers' ongoing DEIA initiatives. Knowledge of these initiatives can help inform job seeker decision-making, and employers can be motivated to share this information during the career fair.

Additional Collaborators

1) **Working together rather than in silos:** Some potential career fair collaborators, beyond job seekers and employers, include:

   a. **Employment service providers and job coaches**: Many service providers have a wealth of knowledge on job seeking, the school-to-work transition, and employment. They could be valuable organizing partners at events. These partners might be particularly helpful when preparing students and employers for the career fair.

There are many different types of employment service organizations. Some are national while others are more local; some focus broadly on disability and employment while others focus on specific experiences (e.g., mental health and youth employment). We list some employment service organizations in our resources section.

b. **Service provider networks**: Some organizations function as networks for groups of service providers. These organizations could be helpful when navigating potential partnerships.

c. **Community organizations led by persons with disabilities:** Similar to employment service provider organizations, there are many national and local organizations led by persons with disabilities that could play a role in your career fair. Additionally, there are groups focused on specific professionals with disabilities that could participate.

d. **Professional associations and regulatory bodies:** Representatives from these organizations could share information on standards, certifications, and licensing requirements in their fields (e.g., in trades). Representatives from these organizations could be particularly helpful if they are also prepared to share information on how to access accommodation in their respective certification and licensing processes. Further, they could share about initiatives relating to DEIA.

e. **Chambers of commerce:** Local chambers of commerce are a potential collaborator to help connect with employers as well as showcase ongoing DEIA initiatives.

f. **Post-secondary career services, accessibility services, and alumni services:** In the post-secondary setting, career services bring expertise in job seeking and work. Accessibility services may have resources to ensure accessibility and inclusion during the career fair, especially when designing the fair and with employer preparation. Last, alumni services may be able to bring in graduates who want to support students'

growth, aiding student connections to employers and mentors.

g. **Mentors:** Mentors can help prepare job seekers and employers for the career fair. In some cases, they may even join for the career fair itself to support job seekers — especially those who are uncomfortable interacting with employers. Mentors could be current students (e.g., peer mentors), recent graduates, and other individuals further along in their career who have experiences, skills, or networks that may benefit job seekers.

h. **Guest speakers and role models:** Depending on where your job seekers are in their career journey, it could be beneficial to have guest speakers and role models with disabilities share about their careers, successes, and setbacks. Example opportunities for these guest speakers and role models to participate in the career fair include having their own booths and/or panel discussions where guest speakers and role models with disabilities share their journeys.

i. **Applied research organizations:** Several applied research organizations work to translate DEIA research into practice. These organizations may be able to support the development of your career fair and participate as well. For instance, the Accessibility Institute (https://carleton.ca/accessibility-institute/) develops evidence-based resources on the school-to-work transition and has expertise in career events for students job seekers.

Event Structure

With an understanding of job seekers, employers, and additional collaborators, you can align the structure of the career fair with your various participants. The structure of the career fair includes elements such as who to include in the process of designing the event, whether to have a disability-focused or general career fair, and potentially integrating other inclusion activities into the career fair.

1) **Exemplifying "nothing about us without us":** Include job seekers with disabilities and community groups in your career fair planning. This process can benefit accessibility and inclusion while respecting the knowledge in job seekers' lived experience. Integrating job seekers with disabilities could look like offering paid positions or honoraria for those willing to share feedback.

   Giving job seekers specific positions within the structure of your organizing committee can further support their connection-building with employers. It may be helpful to include employers and other collaborators with disabilities in the planning process as well.

2) **Deciding whether to have a disability-focused or more general career fair:** There are pros and cons to having a disability-focused event where all of the job seekers identify with disability, or having an event that includes all job seekers. Disability-only events provide a space for job seekers with disabilities to be the central focus of the event. However, some job seekers in our research expressed that they would not attend disability-focused events, because this forces disclosure and being "outed". Additionally, such events may only provide job seekers access to jobs that the employers perceive as "disability-friendly", which may be unfairly limiting.

   If choosing to run an event that includes job seekers with and without disabilities, career fair planners can consider giving priority attendance to job seekers with disabilities or offering supports to these job seekers. We nonetheless note that this may be difficult as job seekers with disabilities may not wish to self-identify due to stigma; trust-building and anonymity may thus need to be ensured for this to work in some cases.

3) **Choosing to have a one-on-one and/or group-focused career fair:** Some job seekers may choose to avoid one-on-one direct interactions with employers. Instead, they may prefer a more group-oriented approach. An example of this is having many job seekers at a table meeting a smaller number of employers. Each table could have a different employer presenting, along with asking and answering questions. Students could then choose which employers to visit without being the center of an employer's attention.

   Importantly, a group-oriented approach may not work for some job seekers with hearing, communication, or neurodiversity differences. In this regard, learning about your job seekers prior to the career fair remains essential. If choosing a one-on-one structure for the career fair, it may be especially valuable to have someone such as a representative from accessibility services or general staff present to help facilitate job seeker-employer interactions. This could include a staff person helping to start conversations, using pre-determined questions that job seekers receive beforehand.

4) **Organizing a general or specific career fair (employer focus):** A career fair can include employer representatives from a variety of fields and industries (general), or it could be specific to an industry, occupation, profession, or otherwise. All of these options could work. The outcome largely depends on what you have learned about your job seekers and their wants and needs.

   A benefit of specific career fairs is that they can more easily include non-employer collaborators from specific professional associations and regulatory bodies.

5) **Highlighting other career supports and opportunities:** A key barrier to entering the workforce for many job seekers with disabilities is limited access to pre-career work experience (e.g., summer jobs, internships, and part-time work while in school). These experiences build confidence, skills, networks, and resumes in preparation for the job market. At career fairs, employers and other collaborators can share information on current jobs and pre-career opportunities such as internships and mentorship programs.

An important caveat with mentorship programs is the issue of job seekers being over-mentored and under-sponsored. Mentorship includes activities such advice-giving, coaching, sharing information and feedback, providing emotional support, and giving guidance. Meanwhile, sponsorship consists of providing external support by advocating for and promoting an individual, opening up opportunities for career growth and developing connections. Thus, it is important to provide a range of opportunities to job seekers at various stages of their career development, with the ultimate focus being access to meaningful employment. Mentorship alone is often not enough.

6) **Incorporating peer network building into the career fair:** Our research participants highlighted how career fairs can include many more opportunities than one might usually expect. For example, job seekers can meet with their peers — with or without disabilities — and build comradery. Career fairs could be designed to promote formal peer mentorship opportunities, where job seekers can meet those further along in their career journey. For instance, within a post-secondary context, junior students could be provided the chance to meet more senior students or graduates from the same degree program. Career fairs could also promote informal peer social network building by including opportunities for job seekers to meet other job seekers interested in similar careers or industries. With formal and informal peer networking opportunities, peers can be those with or without disabilities, depending on the focus of peer mentoring activities (e.g., discussing lived experience of disability within specific careers or industries, or learning about careers and industries more generally).

7) **Getting creative with a "Reverse Career Fair":** Several of our job seeker participants highlighted that they were not well matched with the typical career fair structure. Reasons for this mismatch included discomfort interacting with employers and starting conversations, as well as uncertainty about communication and nervousness. For these job seekers and others who may benefit from a low-pressure, structured environment, a creative alternative is the reverse career fair. At a reverse career fair, job seekers stay at individual stations/tables with displays showcasing themselves, such as their skills, educational and work experience, interests, and career aspirations. These displays can be posterboards, portfolios, or other

forms of media, and can include job application materials such as resumes. Employers can then circulate between the different job seeker stations. Alternatively, job seekers can pre-record a video for employers to watch, with these videos describing the job seekers' qualifications. Employers may also be provided job seekers' resumes and contact information alongside the pre-recorded videos.

8) **Experimenting over time:** Planning an accessible and inclusive career fair can feel like a daunting task. Beginning with the principles noted in the introduction of this report is a good first step. Particularly as you develop your career fairs, consider following the process of "Plan, Do, Check, Act", discussed earlier in our Guiding Principles section. This specific learning model is helpful in determining goals with your career fairs, implementing new practices, and evaluating whether these practices succeeded in meeting the pre-determined goals. For instance, as this guide focuses on making career fairs more accessible and inclusive for job seekers with disabilities, one can set related and specific goals, such as a) having a certain number of job seekers receive job offers after the event, and b) having a certain percent of job seekers respond that they would suggest your career fair to other job seekers in the future. With your goals in mind, relevant practices from this guide can be chosen and implemented.

After the career fair, feedback surveys can help determine whether your goals have been achieved. Information gathered through these surveys might include the number of job seekers with disabilities who attended the career fair, barriers that they faced, improvements that job seekers suggest for the future, aspects of the career fair that job seekers liked, whether job seekers received job offers, and more.

Logistics, Coordination, & Communication

Announcement and Registration

1) **Announcing the career fair with enough notice:** Share the career fair advertisement with your participants far enough in advance to meet accommodation requests. This is essential for participants who need time to arrange accessible public transportation as well. We recommend announcing an event at least one month in advance.

2) **Designing accessible website registration:** If using online event registration, make sure to follow web accessibility standards for the webpage, registration form, informational documents, and other materials. Some examples of web accessibility standards include ensuring all materials are readable, with large enough font sizes, as well as having text contrast against background colours. Additionally, having alternative text ('alt-text') for media on your website (e.g., alt-text descriptions for images) and ensuring that materials are accessible across multiple devices (e.g., the website reads well on a phone, laptop, or computer) is important. Many other examples are provided in the resources section.

3) **Including information on accommodation in the registration form:** The event registration form should contain a section or statement for accommodation requests. The following information is important to include:

   a. Name and contact information of the accommodations contact person
   b. The process of accessing accommodation (e.g., how follow-up will occur after a request)
   c. Potential accommodations that will be available if relevant
   d. When accommodation requests should be submitted by

   See a sample accommodation statement below:

   "Please share accommodations requests (e.g., alternative document formats, sign language interpretation, support worker, and other accommodations) by e-mailing [Name of Accommodation Contact] at [e-

mail address] by [specific date]. [Name of Accommodation Contact] will respond to you to discussion accommodations within [number of days] days of receiving your request."

4) **Responding to registration and accommodation requests from job seekers:** It is important to follow-up on accommodation requests quickly, because some accommodations may take time to be arranged, and may involve discussion with the job seeker to find the most appropriate solution.

   Consider the principle of being proactive and flexible. Prior to opening the event registration, it is important for career fair organizers to think of what accommodations they may offer. Next, it is critical to prepare for new requests and to be open to learning and discussing those requests with job seekers.

   After registration, job seeker participants should receive the following information:
   a. Confirmation of registration
   b. Career fair details: dates, times, food arrangements, event format (i.e. in-person, hybrid, or online; standard career fair or reverse career fair), and other relevant details.
   c. Instructions for accessing the career event: For instance, information on accessible barrier-free entrances and parking spaces, accessible gender-neutral washrooms, location of the nearest conventional bus stop, and where paratransit or accessible taxis can drop-off passengers
   d. Information on what attendees should bring to the career fair and how to prepare (e.g., documents and dress code)
   e. Information on how to confirm and access accommodations at the event
   f. Contact information for any questions about accommodation, accessibility, and inclusion before, during, and after the career fair.
   g. Whether aspects of the career fair (e.g., presentations) will be recorded and shared with participants: Recording can be helpful for participants who may not be able to make the event due to unforeseen circumstances. If recording presentations or any other aspect of the career fair, you should first request and receive panelists and other participants' informed consent. Recordings should also be closed captioned before dissemination.

5) **Addressing registration and accommodation requests from employers and other career fair participants:** Share accessibility guidance with employers and other collaborators as early as possible. Some information that could be included:
   a. Asking speakers to introduce their name and organization at the beginning of presentations or conversations
   b. If there will be presentation slides or visual media, providing a reminder to describe these in words
   c. The information above on accommodations for job seekers should be tailored to and shared with other participants as well (e.g., employers, staff). This can ensure that everyone, regardless of their role, receives the accommodations that they need.

Local Transportation and Accessibility: Getting to the Event

1) **Identifying and Planning for Transportation Needs:** Conventional public transit is often not fully accessible, and accessible transportation often requires advanced reservation. Specialized public transit (SPT) or paratransit services vary widely depending on locality. For instance, some SPT services allow ride requests 24 hours in advance, but other services require that riders make ride requests 7 to 14 days in advance. Similarly, in larger urban cities, accessible taxis may be available through same day on-demand requests, but in smaller cities, accessible taxis may be limited and require reservation 24 to 48 hours in advance. Make sure to provide participants with information on the career fair well in advance so that they can secure transportation to the event.

Preparing for Accessibility at the Event

1) **Communication Access:** There are several ways to make your event inclusive of members of the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community, along with people who are blind or have low vision, as well as many other participants. Some suggestions on communication access include:

   a. **Sharing materials:** Materials such as PowerPoint slides may be shared beforehand in print and in audio format (e.g., a

recording of someone presenting the PowerPoint along with a transcript of that recording) when possible. Please also see the 'Document access' section below.

b. **Sign language interpreters:** These professionals may need to be contacted several weeks in advance of the event. Depending on the length of the event, two or more sign language interpreters may be needed. If there is a shortage of local interpreters, event planners can consider providing Video Remote Interpreting (VRI). VRI is a service that connects participants with a sign language interpreter online.

c. **Live closed-caption transcription:** Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is performed by humans who provide a live, word-for-word transcript, converting speech to text (similar to closed captions on a video screen) so that participants can read what is being shared during an event.

d. **FM systems for in-person sound quality:** An FM (frequency modulated) system is used for helping participants listen in noisy places, such as conference rooms. The microphone/transmitter (worn or held by a presenter) sends the speaker's voice directly to the participant's receiver.

e. **VIP code reader:** An app that serves as a QR and barcode scanner, this was designed to aid people who are blind or have low vision. When opened, it detects any QR code or barcode present in the camera's field of vision, making a sound to let a user know if the smart device/camera is getting closer to the QR or barcode location to then direct the user to the corresponding webpage.

2) **Document Access:** Documents are often inaccessible. It is important to follow document accessibility guidelines. Collaborators sharing materials at the career fair should also be made aware of how to make and share accessible documents:

a. **Alternative document formats:** Alternative formats may include paper or digital documents with enlarged font sizes and alternative font styles. Any graphics or images in event

materials should include text descriptions ('alt-text').

b. **Editable documents:** Accessible documents are usually editable. This allows the individual to change the document to their needs. If possible, use text documents that allow for editable features. Participants can then type notes, as well as change font sizes, colour, type, text style, and other elements.

3) **Physical Location Access:**

a. **Accessibility is more than a ramp:** Make sure that your event is in an accessible space. This includes elements such as ramps, elevator access, and automatic doors as well as braille and tactile signposting, easy to navigate hallways, accessible washrooms, wide doorways, accessible emergency devices (e.g., alarms with flashing lights, accessible help call buttons), and other features.

4) **Scheduling Access:**

a. **Breaks:** It is important to provide opportunities for short breaks periodically in the career fair schedule. It may also be beneficial to survey your job seekers and employers to determine what their needs are regarding breaks within the event structure.

5) **Trial Run:**

a. **Pre-test technology:** Familiarize yourself with the accessibility features of the technology being used at your event. If running a hybrid event, make sure that your platform has a call-in telephone option, and make participants aware of these options. It is also helpful to share resources or provide pre-event training on the technology in use.

b. **Event test run:** If possible, conduct a test run of the career fair with organizers and team members on location. This test run could include the earlier discussion on testing technology that will be used during the event, such as speakers, displays, and microphones; ensuring career fair organizers and staff understands the intended traffic flow; and having career fair

organizers and staff aware of the career fair agenda. At this test run, conduct an accessibility features check.

6) **Follow up-to-date guidance on accessible events:** There are many guides that provide detailed information on how to design and implement accessible in-person, virtual, and hybrid events. Some of these guides, such as from the Employer Assistance Resource Network (EARN), provide detailed information on what to do: a) before the event, b) during the event, and c) after the event. Detailed information in these guides covers many practices, such as asking for consent before recording sessions, repeating audience questions, alternatives to raising hands for question-askers, following up with participants after the event about their experience and accessibility, and more. See the resources section of this guide for more information.

Designating Roles for the Career Fair:

1) **Event Contacts:** Designate a primary point of contact for the event to respond to inquiries. Also, designate a person as the backup point of contact in the event that the primary contact is not available.

2) **Accessibility and Accommodation Coordinator:** Designate one person or team to coordinate accessibility matters before, during, and after the career fair.

3) **Wayfinders:** Designate a team or individual to help monitor traffic flow. Wayfinders can further assist individuals who may be lost or want support. Additionally, ensure there is signage posted to aid career fair attendees with understanding which direction (if specified) that they should go, or the locations for various booths and areas (e.g., panel presentations).

4) **Assistive Technology Support**: Designate at least one person to provide technical support during the event. Make sure the person is familiar with accessibility needs and related technology, such as screen-reader software and live captioning. Ideally, there is a backup person for this role.

5) **General Technology Support:** Designate at least one person to provide technical support with general event equipment such as FM systems, microphones and lighting.

6) **Networking Support:** Designate at least one person to support job seekers in their interactions with employers. Support could look like introducing job seekers and employers and asking questions to start conversations. This person can also support job seekers who are feeling overwhelmed. Job seekers could identify beforehand whether they are interested in this type of support.

Resources

Job Seekers

Learning about the self

York University. 2024. "The Who Am I? Self Assessment Game." YorkU Career Centre. (https://careers.yorku.ca/the-who-am-i-self-assessment-game). **An interactive game to help players gain insights into career decision making by identifying their desires, interests, abilities, and personality.**

Disability disclosure

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Sources. Our work builds from academic and non-academic sources. These include peer-reviewed literature, reports, and websites on accessible and inclusive events.

In addition, we draw from interviews that we conducted with 30 key informants on the school-to-work transition and career success. Our key informants include job seekers with disabilities, employees with disabilities, leaders in the non-profit employment service provision sector, post-secondary career services workers, career fair organizers, accessibility experts, applied researchers, and employers.