**Business Case for Hiring People with Disabilities[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**Building an Inclusive Labour Force**

In today’s dynamic and competitive business landscape, there is rapidly increasing pressure on businesses both large and small to be on the cutting edge of innovative practices, processes, and products. A business that can build and retain a team where employees are engaged and invested, and where their skills and interests align with their roles, is much more likely to be successful.

Canadian businesses face a shrinking labour pool in an increasingly competitive business market. When suitable replacements are hired, high turnover and absenteeism are costly realities resulting in a need for ongoing recruitment

Across the territory, there are important, valuable roles that do not get filled with the right people, or do not get filled at all. NDMS is committed to helping employers in Nunavut find ideal candidates who are readily equipped to enter the workplace.

We have an untapped resource in unemployed and underemployed individuals with intellectual disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Nationwide, there are approximately 500,000 working age adults with intellectual disabilities or ASD, but only one in four are employed. Why is this? A lack of information, understanding and experience.

**Performance Comes in Different Packages**

Outdated and incorrect perceptions of intellectual disabilities and ASD tend to focus on the ‘disability’ rather than ‘ability’. Too often, we fail to recognize the strengths and talents of this unique and specialized group, leading to misconceptions about capabilities.

Based on our research, the most common concerns employers have when considering hiring and individual with a disability include:

* Decrease in productivity
* Safety concerns for the employee
* Lack of time and resources to mentor and support
* Questionable return-on-investment
* Effect on team performance and corporate culture

In reality, experience-based evidence from employers around the world is proving, time and time again, that these assumed barriers are either exaggerated or complete fiction. According to a report by the Institute for Corporate Productivity, preconceived concerns about hiring workers with intellectual disabilities and ASD averaged 42% higher than the challenges actually experienced employing them.

High-performance organizations are 37% more likely to hire people with intellectual disabilities and ASD because they see the talent and skill-matching potential. These leading businesses maximize potential by determining the best fit of a job with individual strengths in order to create a well-balanced team. Through inclusive hiring, employers can build engaged, efficient, and high-functioning teams that get the job done.

**Inclusive Hiring Works**

Making a hiring decision should always come down to selecting the best person for the job. Employing individuals with intellectual disabilities or ASD is no different. While every new employee has his or her own strengths, there are many positive performance trends that have been noted by employers who have experience in hiring people with intellectual disabilities or ASD.

An Environics Research study reports that employers highly rated employees with intellectual disabilities in the following categories, with an average score of 84%:

* High productivity
* Dependable
* Engaged in their work
* Motivated
* Great attendance records
* Strong attention to work quality

Employees on the Autism Spectrum Disorder have been evaluated by their employers as exhibiting the following:

* Strong overall job performance
* Great technical abilities
* High levels of accuracy
* Acute attention to detail
* Conscientious and diligent
* Ability to work independently

When effectively placed in positions that align with their interests, individuals with intellectual disabilities or ASD can truly excel, often exceeding employer expectations.

**The Value of Retention**

When a workplace is a revolving door of new faces, the team spends more time catching up than it does forging ahead with new ideas and improved processes. It’s also challenging to build a strong corporate culture, leading to further turnover.

The average turnover rate for employees across all industries in Nunavut is 22%. High turnover is an extremely costly reality in business: training new employees, covering missed shifts and getting new staff up to speed with experienced staff takes time and resources

In contrast, turnover rates for employees with intellectual disabilities or ASD is markedly lower, at just 7%.

**The Value of Reliability**

The Canadian economy loses an estimated 16.6 billion annually due to absenteeism. Depending on the industry, when an employee does not come in to work it can result in lost business, reduced productivity, distraught customers or missed deadlines; all of which hurt performance and profitability.

86% of people with disabilities rated average or better on attendance than their non-disabled colleagues.

The Government of Canada estimates that one in every 68 workers in 2010 was injured or harmed on the job and received Workers Compensation as a result. Not only is this emotionally traumatic for the employee, manager, and team, it results in immediate absenteeism as well as other time and financial impacts during recovery.

One of the most common questions asked by employers who are considering hiring a person with an intellectual disability or ASD is “will my employee be safe?”

The answer: “Equally as safe, if not safer, as your other employees.”

98% of people with a disability rate average or better in work safety than their non-disabled colleagues.

**The Impact on Corporate Culture and Teams**

Although job performance tends to be the focus of most research on employees with disabilities, it is important to consider how inclusive hiring impacts the whole team.

Members of teams who undertake inclusive hiring practices consistently report they are proud to be in a workplace that values inclusion. An impressive 73% of these employees report that they strongly agree that their new teammates are contributing as much as others in the organization.

People also want to frequent businesses that reflect their communities and improve the quality of life for their families, friends, and neighbours. If given the opportunity to engage with a business that participates in inclusive hiring, they will.

A 2013 survey found this to be overwhelmingly true: 92% of individuals regarded companies hiring people with intellectual disabilities more favourably than their competitors and 87% of people indicated they would prefer to give their business to companies who hire people with disabilities.

**Proving that Inclusion Works**

We asked employers who have adopted inclusive hiring practices in their workplace to share their experiences. Here’s what they had to say.

Nearly three-quarters of survey respondents said that employing individuals with intellectual disabilities and ASD has been a truly positive experience and even one that has exceeded their expectations.

There is significant evidence that hiring individuals with intellectual disabilities and ASD reduces turnover, improves attendance and either maintains or improves overall organizational performance. Other employees and customers of businesses who engage in inclusive hiring both report positive perceptions and experiences.

The Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society is connecting qualified candidates to progressive employers who have vacancies to fill. RWA supports employers through the hiring process and beyond, to ensure the best fit for both the company and the candidate. Through the initiative, job seekers find jobs that align with their strengths, and employers gain talented and productive employees who enhance their bottom line.

1. Adapted from a handout produced by Ready Willing & Able [↑](#footnote-ref-1)