

**Helping Design Canada's Competitive Edge:
The 'Ready, Willing and Able' platform for labour
force inclusion**

Submission for the 2019 Pre-Budget Consultations

BY:
Canadian Association for Community Living
and the
Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance

List of Recommendations

- Recommendation 1: As part of its 'accessibility agenda', the Government of Canada provide funding in the amount of \$30,000,000 (over 3 years) to continue and expand the Ready Willing and Able (RWA) labour force inclusion program

A Submission to Request Funds to Implement Ready Willing and Able (RWA) Phase 2

Background

Canada's competitive edge relies, in part, on successfully tackling several key demographic challenges dramatically reshaping Canada's workforce: 1) shrinking workforce; 2) rapidly aging population; and, 3) growing number of working-age adults with an intellectual disability and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) who face longstanding barriers to bringing their talents and skills into the labour market, and who must rely on government transfers and unpaid support of others to survive. For them, their families and Canadian society, the cost is social exclusion, poverty, untapped potential and growing public expenditure on income assistance.

The **Ready Willing and Able** program is a proven national platform to respond to these challenges. Created by the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) and the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance (CASDA); RWA, in partnership with the Government of Canada, over 2,000 employers in almost 200 communities, and 450 employment support and community agencies, has demonstrated that with targeted support, community involvement and employer leadership, job seekers with an intellectual disability or ASD can obtain and retain employment within the competitive labour market. With support, they are indeed 'ready, willing and able' to help create a more inclusive and effective labour market as part of the solution to both demographic trends and structural barriers.

The Government of Canada approved an initial pilot of RWA through August 2018 and has made a total investment of \$15.9M for this purpose. Through the pilot CACL and CASDA streamlined the program and an external evaluation provides clear evidence that RWA's 'employer demand-driven' approach is an immensely successful, viable and cost-effective contribution to restructuring challenges in Canada's labour force.

The RWA Model

As an innovative national strategy to develop inclusive and effective labour markets, RWA:

- Engages and supports employers (local and national-scale) to hire people with an intellectual disability or ASD, making their workplaces more inclusion and competitive;
- Promotes the business case among employers as to the value of hiring people with an intellectual disability or ASD;
- Enhances capacity of the community employment system to connect employers to job seekers with an intellectual disability or ASD and the agencies that support them.



RWA's inclusive hiring program uses 'demand-side' strategies to improve labour market efficiency. It responds to employers' needs for education and 'disability confidence' and gives them a competitive advantage in recruitment for vacancies, and on the job disability support.

Outcomes of the RWA pilot to August 2018:

- Operating in every province and territory (in 20 primary communities, with outreach to 150+ communities, including francophone and indigenous communities) making RWA a truly national initiative.
- Outreach to 7,900 employers; with ongoing engagement of 2,700 of these employers.
- Partnership with 250+ local employment agencies across the country.
- Additional partnerships and linkages with more than 200 community organizations, including 21 educational facilities (10 secondary and 11 post-secondary).
- 2,200 employment outcomes facilitated (with employment outcomes defined as full time, part time, and seasonal employment, self-employment, or entry into a post-secondary educational facility).
- All jobs filled were part of the typical staff complements of the business – no employer created 'special' jobs for job seekers with an intellectual disability or ASD.
- RWA achieved its employment outcomes without the use of wage subsidies.
- 8 national employer partnerships established: Costco, Sodexo, Home Depot, Value Village, Holloway Properties, Purolator, Tourism HR and Circle K.
- In addition to generating increased employer demand, 25 localized projects created leading-edge innovations in school-to-work transitional planning, inclusive post-secondary education, employer to employer networks, entrepreneurship, and labour market bridging.
- In 2017, received international award for *Innovative Policy on Employment and Vocational Education & Training* by Zero Project at the United Nations in Vienna.

Why sustain the RWA solution?

- **Working age Canadians with an intellectual disability or ASD remain vastly under-represented in the labour force:**
 - Only one in four (25%) people with an intellectual disability or ASD are employed – representing half the employment rate of people with other disabilities and one-third the rate of those without a disability.
 - Nearly 50% of working-age people with an intellectual disability receive provincial / territorial social assistance.
 - Of those working, average income is less than half that of Canadians without a disability.
- **Employers need a community partner**
 - While supportive of a diverse and inclusive workforce, most employers are ill prepared to fully utilize the untapped labour pool of persons with an intellectual disability or ASD
 - Employers need to more fully understand the ‘business case’ of inclusive hiring and the economic value of hiring persons with an intellectual disability or ASD
 - Effective and coordinated access is required by employers to job seekers with an intellectual disability or ASD and the employment agencies that support them
 - Employers need (initial) assistance and support during the recruitment and onboarding processes, and provision of post-hire support
 - Employers benefit from awareness training, assistance in workplace accommodation, and expertise in inclusive human resources policies
- **Community employment system is not positioned for effective labour market bridging**
 - Capacity needed to secure employment of people with an intellectual disability or ASD is largely not in place and does not enable their adequate or equitable access to the labour force.
 - Current employment efforts generally focus on preparing individuals for employment, and then seeking employers to hire. RWA focuses rather on generating employer demand and then connecting that demand to job seekers.
 - Overreliance and dependency on segregated workshops, day programming, or social programming that discourages people from entering the mainstream labour market.
 - The current delivery system needs to be transformed and retrofitted to build bridges in and to the labour market that are responsive to the needs of employers.

An external evaluation (by the Centre for Inclusion and Citizenship - University of British Columbia) confirmed the value and success of a demand driven, employer focused approach. It revealed that employers were very satisfied with employees hired via RWA, and with the type and extent of support provided:

- 94% rated employees hired via RWA as on par with or better than the average employee in terms of employee loyalty, attitude and contribution.

- 89% rated employees hired via RWA as average or better in terms of contributing to their firm's profit margin.
- 83% reported receiving either a lot or some positive feedback from customers since hiring people with an intellectual disability or ASD.
- 93% rated their experience with RWA as excellent or good.

Economic Growth – Ensuring Canada's Competitiveness

"Creating opportunities through equality and ensuring that growth benefits everyone can lead to a prosperous future for all, and it is key to Canada's global competitiveness. It is important that we continue to work together.....to level the global playing field, and to prepare our citizens for the jobs and opportunities in the economy of tomorrow."

Bill Morneau, Minister of Finance

The Government of Canada has historically recognized labour force participation challenges for many Canadians, including persons with disabilities. Increasing labour force participation rates of this under-represented group will help boost national productivity, address current and anticipated labour shortages, and ultimately increase Canada's competitiveness.

Encouraging economic growth and ensuring Canada's competitiveness requires a diverse, skilled, and qualified workforce that meets the demands of the economy and a social and economic environment that upholds equality of opportunity. Enhancing productivity and competitiveness is a critical component of stimulating economic growth and overall competitiveness.

RWA enhances the financial viability, productivity, and competitiveness of businesses by providing coordinated, effective and responsive access to an untapped labour pool. Across the country, many jobs go unfilled because individuals with an intellectual disability or ASD are not considered as potential candidates. RWA provides employers with employees who contribute significantly and positively to their business's productivity and bottom line – often through increased loyalty, turnover reduction, and improved workplace culture. RWA is creating an inclusive labour market that more fully meets the needs of employers, contributing directly to increasing their competitiveness in both domestic and global marketplaces.

As Canadian firms face a shrinking labour pool and an increasingly competitive job market, the need for innovation in products and processes remains paramount. Inclusive hiring can be the engine for innovation in business. The difference between success and failure lies in the talent and diverse skill set of the workforce. A diverse labour force brings new perspectives, new skills and new ideas, resulting in increased productivity, competitiveness, improved employee engagement, and an enhanced corporate culture. A business that can build and retain a diverse team where employees are engaged and invested, and where their skills and interests align with their roles, is much more likely to be both competitive and successful.

Sustaining and Growing RWA

Renewed federal investment is needed to secure and grow RWA success. A refined and 'scaled up' program would include:

- 10 additional communities – reflecting urban/rural; Anglophone/Francophone; and indigenous demographics;
- Additional delivery infrastructure – including staff for the 10 additional communities, a Coordinator of National Employer Partnerships, Directors of Labour Force Development assigned to each of the RWA delivery partners, and a staff position in Regina to focus specifically on identifying issues / barriers to successful entry / retention in the paid labour force specific to Indigenous Peoples.
- Direct participant support funds to ensure adequate on job supports for new employment opportunities generated during Phase 2, and to address known carry over of support costs generated during pilot period.
- Engagement of provincial/territorial officials in policy discussions as related to long term sustainability of the RWA model and key delivery elements.

Expected Results of Scaling Up to 30 primary communities

Quantitative outcomes accrued during a 3-year Phase 2 project will include:

- Expansion to 30 communities (from the current 20)
- 2,000 employment outcomes generated, including hires, post-secondary opportunities and self-employment
- Outreach to 10,000 employers
- Engagement of 4,000 employers
- 10 new national employer partners

Benefits and Beneficiaries

RWA has multiple beneficiaries, including people with an intellectual disability or ASD, their families; employers, other national disability organizations, policy makers at national and P/T levels, service providers and practitioners, the federal government and P/T and municipal governments. Communities and community systems also derive significant benefits through the increased labour force participation of persons with an intellectual disability or ASD. This contributes to enhanced community capacity and economic growth.

Notable benefits include:

- Reduced reliance on P/T social assistance (and thus associated savings);
- Decreased dependence on costly and ineffective segregated residential and specialized non-work daytime programs.
- Youth transition into employment thereby breaking the cycle of dependence and poverty.
- Connections made between employers who have issues accessing labour supply and potential employees - matching supply and demand to meet the needs of both.

- Communities have positive examples of people with significant needs contributing as equal citizens – helping reshape the notion of Canadian diversity.

Investment Required

The budget proposal to the federal government for RWA Phase 2 is \$30M over 3 years, with a \$10M annual contribution.

Budget Request Summary

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Labour Market Development RWA delivery team salaries, benefits, overhead, and administration	4,848,000	4,848,000	4,848,000
Wages - National Team	497,000	496,500	496,500
Travel	509,000	509,500	509,500
Direct Participant Supports	3,150,000	3,150,000	3,150,000
Evaluation	125,000	125,000	125,000
Employer Outreach and Engagement	330,000	330,000	330,000
Project costs (materials, translation, professional development, data base)	541,000	541,000	541,000
total	10,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000

Conclusion

Canada cannot afford the costs of exclusion. Employers cannot afford to overlook this untapped workforce. RWA positions Canada as the international leader in development of labour markets that include those who are currently most overlooked and under-represented.

Scaling up RWA will enable contribution, productivity and participation to be a reality for a group so often denied the opportunity, and supports economic growth strategies in every province and territory.