

Mapping Inclusive Employment Practices for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

A Participatory Research Project

Final Report

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Introduction

The *Mapping inclusive employment practices for individuals with developmental disabilities: A participatory research mapping project*, is a community-based participatory (CBPR) research project that involved the design and evaluation of an online mapping tool to enable individuals with disabilities, their families, employers and service providers to share and learn about the positive employment experiences of individuals with developmental disabilities (self-advocates¹) in BC.

The research study was designed to answer the following questions:

- 1) What factors support and contribute to positive, inclusive employment for self-advocates?
- 2) How are service providers able to support self-advocates in finding and keeping employment that is paid, positive, and inclusive?
- 3) How can employers create an accessible and inclusive work place for individuals with developmental disabilities?

The project represents a partnership between the BC Centre for Employment Excellence, UBC researchers from the UBC Centre for Inclusion and Citizenship (Dr. Rachelle Hole, co-director) and the UBC SpICE Lab (Dr. Jon Corbett, director). Funding was granted through the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, Province of BC and Community Living BC (CLBC). Ethics approval for this project was provided by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board.

The Need for the BC Employment Mapping Tool

The project was created to educate stakeholders about the factors that contribute to positive, paid inclusive employment experiences. It allows website users to learn about the large and growing number of self-advocates who successfully participate actively in the labour market and often hold jobs that match their qualifications. By demonstrating to self-advocates, their support networks, and their employers that such experiences are possible, the website represents an important tool to inspire and promote further employment for people with developmental disabilities—a group that remains largely underrepresented in the labour market.

According to Statistics Canada, 49% of people with disabilities were employed compared to 79% of persons who do not have disabilities.² Despite efforts to develop labour market strategies for persons with disabilities at both the federal and provincial/territorial levels, the employment for individuals with disabilities has only grown slightly over the past decade, and the employment situation for people with intellectual disabilities³ (ID) is even bleaker (CACL, 2006).

¹ The self-advocacy movement for individuals with ID seeks to overcome the isolation of people with disabilities and give them the tools and experience to take greater control over their own lives. A self-advocate is an individual with ID who is equipped to speak out for themselves, articulate their rights and capable of making decisions related to matters that affect their lives.

² www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2014001/article/14115-eng.htm

³ Clarification of language is important in the area of intellectual disability [ID]. Numerous descriptors are used throughout the literature: e.g., developmental disability, intellectual disability, learning disability.

The employment rate for individuals with ID is exceptionally low. According to Statistics Canada (2006) only 27.3 individuals with ID indicated some kind of employment while 40.1% had never worked (Stainton, Hole, Charles, Yodanis, Powell, & Crawford, 2006). The Canadian Association of Canadian Living (CACL) reports that “approximately 500,000 working age Canadians with intellectual disabilities are vastly underrepresented in the labour force and the majority continue to be separated, segregated and ultimately isolated on the basis of disability” (CACL, 2013, p. 3).

Due to the persistently low employment rates evident in British Columbia, there has been substantial activity to promote employment for individuals with ID in recent years. Recent BC initiatives include Community Living British Columbia’s (CLBC) Community Employment Action Plan, which was launched in 2012 after extensive consultations with stakeholders in the community living sector (representing CLBC as well as community partners), as well as the BC government’s new Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities, also launched in 2012, which “focuses on developing a broad range of new skills training services and employment-related programs to assist persons with disabilities into the labour market and to improve their employment outcomes” (The BC Ministry of Social Development). In 2013, Inclusion BC launched its “Ready, Willing & Able” campaign targeting increased employment for individuals with ID in BC. Finally, in June 2014, Premier Clark released Accessibility 2024: Making B.C. the most progressive province in Canada for people with disabilities by 2024. Accessibility 2024 is a 10-year action plan, designed around 12 building blocks that represent the themes that emerged through the disability consultation process across B.C. Employment is one of the key 12 building blocks of this ten year plan.

All these initiatives underscore the importance and value of paid inclusive employment for individuals with ID and represent strategies to improve employment outcomes for individuals with ID. A growing body of research is demonstrating the importance of employment for many individuals with ID; work is an aspiration for many people with ID and is a key mechanism for enacting social inclusion (Cramm, Finkenflugel, Kuijsten, Van Exel, 2009; Hole, Stainton, & Tomlinson, 2011; Humber, 2014; Jahoda, Kemp, Riddell, & Banks, 2008). Research repeatedly demonstrates that employment enhances the quality of life for individuals with ID (e.g., Cramm et al., 2009; Eggleton, Robertson, Ryan, & Kober 1999; Flores, Jenaro, Orgaz, & Martin, 2011; Hole, Stainton, & Tomlinson, 2011; Schur 2002; West & Patton, 2010).

Furthermore, research in the United States has highlighted economic benefits of increased employment opportunities for people with ID. For example, Cimera (2008) found that costs generated by supported employees are much lower (approximately one-third) than the cumulative costs generated by employees in sheltered workshops. In 2009, Cimera examined the cost-efficiency of the over two hundred thousand supported employees funded by vocational rehabilitation throughout the entire United States from 2002 to 2007 and found that supported employees generated a benefit-cost ratio of 1.46 and with a significant annual net benefit for each supported employee. Finally, employment is

Consistent with international practices, the term intellectual disabilities [ID] is used predominantly throughout this application as it is the current international norm for research in this area (see International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disability [IASSID] - <http://www.iassid.org/iassid/content/view/21/36>).

considered as a vital goal by policy-makers to promote and effect social inclusion (Jahoda, Banks, Dagnan, Kemp, Ken, & Williams, 2009; Jahoda, Kemp, Riddell, & Banks, 2008).

The Role of the BC Employment Mapping Tool

The stories shared through the BC Employment Mapping Tool (EMT) serve to illustrate the benefits of labour market participation for individuals with ID in BC, and the role that their employment plays in their social integration as well as the benefits they and their communities derive from their contributions to the economy. By offering stakeholders a centralized website to collect and share employment experiences through an accessible interface, this online resource offers important opportunities to increase knowledge and understanding of inclusive employment and to promote the development of similar employment opportunities for people with ID across BC. As a tool to share personal experiences, best practices, and links to resources and supports, at both the local and provincial levels, the website is designed to engage, inform and inspire self-advocates as well as their families, service providers and potential employers.

The website enables users to access stories shared through the map through an interactive map on the website, graphically illustrating the breadth of stakeholders' perspectives, including employees with ID, as well as their employers, service providers, and family members. The EMT is enabling service providers (employment and community living providers), employers, individuals with ID and their families, as well as policy makers to learn and to share examples of innovation in the area of inclusive employment for individuals with ID. The map showcases stories of inclusive employment, which specifically refers to employment (and in some cases self-employment) where individuals with ID have paid jobs in the community and work beside coworkers who don't have a disability; where all employees doing the same job get the same market-based pay; where reasonable flexibility and support on the job is available for employees; and where employees with ID feel like they belong, are respected by their employers and co-workers, and are included in work related activities.⁴

Objectives of this Report

This report describes and discusses the outputs and research findings from the research pilot project that began with developing the map, piloting it with a small group of initial users, and finally opening it up to a province-wide audience. We present usage statistics as well as the findings from an extensive community-based participatory strategy that analyzed both the process of using CBPR in the community living sector to develop an online accessible database in the form of a map as well as the content of the map. With respect to the content of the map, we focus our thematic analysis on the following questions: what is inclusive employment for employees with ID and what factors support and facilitate inclusive employment? We first discuss the CBPR methods used in this project followed by a discussion of the findings. The findings are presented in two sections:

1. A description of the development of the BC EMT discussing the extensive community engagement throughout the development process as well as results pertaining to the usability of the EMT.

⁴ Adapted from the Canadian Association for Supported Employment website as well as the CLBC website.

2. A summary of the findings from the qualitative methods embedded in the CBPR project that analyzed the content of the map; specifically, what do the stories about inclusive employment teach us about best practices and inclusive employment for employees with ID?

The report concludes with a discussion of the findings as well as a description of the knowledge translation and knowledge mobilization activities during the pilot period as well as the next steps pertaining to the sustainability of the EMT beyond the pilot.

Evaluation of the BC Employment Mapping Tool

The design of the project was informed by a commitment to undertake and support practical and applied research that facilitates social inclusion and addresses social inequities of a particular group of job seekers who have been historically underrepresented in the labour market. To achieve this goal, the team relied on principles of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) to inform the design, implementation and evaluation of the map. CBPR is an approach to scientific inquiry that is conducted as a partnership between researchers and community stakeholders/ members who are impacted by a particular social issue, and it is characterized by substantial community engagement in the development and implementation of the research (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; D'Alonzo, 2010; Michalak, Hole, Livingston et al., 2012; Michalak, Lane, Hole et al., 2015).⁵ Further, CBPR is not only a process of creating knowledge, but is simultaneously a mechanism for education and empowerment as well as a tool to support the mobilization for social change (Michalak, Hole et al., 2012; Roche, 2009). It is especially suitable for working with socially disadvantaged groups whose members experience limited access to resources and who are disproportionately affected by social issues (Michalak, Hole et al., 2012; Michalak, Lane, Hole et al., 2015). As such, CBPR was deemed the most appropriate approach to engage stakeholders in the development of a community-focused resource aimed at advancing inclusive employment practices for individuals with ID. By involving its stakeholders directly in all phases of the project, the participatory development and evaluation of the EMT represents an innovative approach to research, knowledge exchange and knowledge translation in the area of employment practices in BC.

CBPR is an iterative collaborative process that incorporates research, time to reflect and take action, through a cyclical process. As such, this project unfolded across three phases: phase one – developing the map, phase two – populating the map, and phase three – making the map public and crowdsourcing the stories to be shared through the map.

Phase one: Developing the map

The EMT was built using the Geolive platform (www.geolive.ca), a web-based participatory mapping platform developed by project partners Dr. Jon Corbett and Nick Blackwell. Geolive allows registered users to create and share their own spatially located information and experiences related to successful

⁵ Community-based participatory research is a "collaborative approach to research that equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings. CBPR begins with a research topic of importance to the community and has the aim of combining knowledge with action and achieving social change to improve health outcomes and eliminate health disparities." ([WK Kellogg Foundation Community Health Scholars Program](#))

employment practices using a dynamic internet-based map interface. It was developed in the Spatial Information for Community Engagement (SpICE) lab at the University of British Columbia Okanagan to support the active participation of users in the contribution of location-based content. It has been programmed to be user-friendly to non-technical users, visually engaging and robust to use.

The first phase of the project was dedicated to developing the map with a particular focus on usability and accessibility for individuals with ID and involved dedicated consultation with key stakeholders. The team first established a project advisory group comprised of four self-advocates⁶ (individuals with ID), a representative from CLBC, three service providers and five members of the research team (two of whom are parents of a youth and adult son with ID). The advisory group met every six to eight weeks during the tenure of the project and provided valuable guidance and input into the development of the map and its longer term sustainability. Additional consultations were held with the Community Employment Action Plan Oversight Committee (comprised of service providers, self-advocates representatives, CLBC representatives, and family members), the CLBC Provincial Employment Coordinator and the four Regional Employment Coordinators, and a group of six employment coordinators from six associations for community living in the Lower Mainland. These consultations provided helpful insights with respect to the design of the map but, importantly, they afforded strategies and cautions that were invaluable for addressing ethical considerations relating to the project: e.g., developing a consent strategy for users of the map. The questions guiding the consultations included the following:

- What kind of data is important?
- What formats will be needed?
- What support tools will be necessary and useful?
- What strategies are necessary to address potential ethical concerns?

Throughout the design and development phases, self-advocates played a key role in providing direct input on the usability of the map. For instance, a group of artists with ID in Kelowna were involved in designing the icons that are used on the map (a description and photos of the meetings with the artists are featured on the map; see www.mappinginclusiveemployment.ca/project).



⁶ The self-advocacy movement for individuals with ID seeks to overcome the isolation of people with disabilities and give them tools and experience to take greater control over their own lives. A self-advocate is an individual with ID who is equipped to speak out for themselves, articulate their rights and capable of making decisions related to matters that affect their lives.

The team also held two usability focus groups with self-advocates where a member of the research team partnered with each self-advocate to navigate the map together. The researchers took notes relating to the usability of the map and a group discussion was held afterwards regarding what was and what was not working or challenging with the map. The feedback informed further refinements and enhancements to the map, with a particular focus on its accessibility and usability.

Finally, the team conducted participatory presentations at the Centre for Inclusion and Citizenship Pre-Conference Day and at the Inclusion BC Annual Conference in the spring of 2014. These presentations were attended by self-advocates, family members as well as service providers. Members of the research team presented on the background and rationale of the project and then actively engaged participants regarding the usability of the map eliciting and documenting feedback to be used to enhance the functionality of the EMT.

Phase two: Populating the map

Phase two of the map focused on populating the map with case exemplars of positive employment experiences from across the province. This phase focused on generating examples of how the map may be used prior to the map's public launch; the cases helped to establish concrete "inclusive" and "successful" employment examples for future users to guide them in adding their own stories to the website. It also was useful for engaging the broader community in the potential that this technology could play in informing and educating inclusive employment practices and approaches.

During phase two, members of the research team were active in the recruitment, selection and development of the case exemplars. Two strategies were used to populate the map with the case exemplar stories. First, individuals (self-advocates, employers, service providers, family members) were purposively recruited to participate in the research through developing their employment story to be added to the map. Second, existing public stories were collected and informed consent sought from the individuals prior to including these stories of successful employment experiences on the map.



Strategy one – establishing case exemplars

Working with the project’s research partners and stakeholder community (e.g., community living agencies, employment service providers, CLBC), case examples of successful and innovative employment practices for employees with ID were purposively selected to reflect the geographic diversity of B.C., the diversity of individuals with ID (e.g., level of disability of employees with ID), and the diversity of employment opportunities. As such, the sample of 22 cases is heterogeneous, representing a range of employment experiences and perspectives.

Each case exemplar was established in the following manner: Beginning with the self-advocate, individuals with ID were invited to participate and share their story on the map. With their permission, other individuals with personal knowledge about the self-advocate’s employment experiences were also invited to participate (e.g., employers, service providers and/or family members). Following this approach, 3 cases were completed in the Lower Mainland; 12 cases were conducted in the Interior; 2 cases were conducted on the Island and Coastal Regions; and 5 cases were conducted in the North. For the most part, each case represented more than one individual: each case included the self-advocate but many included stories from the perspective of his or her employer, service provider and/or family member(s).

Creating the stories

The EMT allows stories to be uploaded to the map in a number possible formats: digital video, digital pictures, digital audio recordings, and/or text so that users can share their stories in the manner in which they feel most comfortable. Assistance and support from the research team was provided to the pilot users by email, phone, or in-person, depending on their circumstances and preferred form of communication. A number of participants requested this support. Other participants engaged with a service provider to assist them in adding their stories to the map.

The research team’s objective was to enable participants to share their experiences of inclusive employment from their personal perspective. To provide some consistency and encourage the type and depth of information, the team offered “guiding questions” that continue to be available on the EMT for future participants; the questions were developed with input from the project advisory group and the self-advocate questions were piloted with self-advocates for plain language. Possible questions include:

For self-advocates:

What do you like about your job? What makes your job a good experience?

[probes: co-workers, pay, work hours, responsibilities (the things you do at work), training, supportive supervisor or employer]

For service providers:

From your perspective, what makes for successful employment experiences for self-advocates?

In particular, what do you feel contributed to [self-advocate’s name] positive employment experience? [probes: finding a job, matching self-advocates and employers, supports]

For employers:

How did it come to be that you hired a self-advocate (a person with an ID)?

What has made this a positive experience?

How has it changed the way you go about your business?

What have you and other employees learned from working with this individual?

For family members:

From your perspective, what has made for successful employment experiences for your family member? [probes: co-workers, work hours, job conditions, pay, independence, supports]

Once the stories were created, they were uploaded to the map by the participant him/herself or by a member of the research team.

Strategy two – collecting existing cases/stories:

Across the community living sector in B.C., a growing number of organizations or groups are engaging in collecting and sharing positive employment stories to share through their own channels; for example, InCommon TV, selfadvocatenet.com, and organizations such as CLBC and associations for community living. Stakeholders agreed that collecting these stories in a centralized, searchable and accessible website would facilitate the sharing of these experiences more broadly. The CfEE team began polling its network and searching relevant organization websites and social media sites to find employment stories that met the inclusion criteria. Once identified, a representative from the organization was contacted to obtain consent to use the story on the EMT. Consent and a release to use the existing stories was obtained from the individuals in the story. A total of 32 stories were collected and added to the EMT during the pilot phase of the project in this way. These stories served to complement the case exemplar by increasing the diversity and range of stories available for viewing on the map at public launch.

Analyzing the stories

Once a sufficient range of stories had been added to the map, the team conducted content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify themes pertaining to successful and inclusive employment experiences from the shared employment stories. This approach to content analysis is a form of pattern recognition that involves identifying themes in the data. A coding framework was developed and three research assistants divided up the stories and analyzed their respective lists. The analysis process was overseen by Dr. Hole and the team of researchers communicated any changes or additions needed in the coding framework as the analysis progressed. The team consolidated the findings across the stories and identified the themes reported in the findings. To enable readers to evaluate our interpretations, we support the findings reported below with direct quotes. In addition, the full stories can be accessed through the EMT.

As is common in qualitative thematic analysis, the findings represent the breadth and depth of themes – the diversity – across stakeholder stories (Richards & Morse, 2013). The reported findings do include

percentages to indicate prevalence of particular themes. It should be noted, however, that the percentages should be interpreted cautiously since the themes were drawn from stories that were created and analyzed inductively. For example, not all participants spoke about the importance of “fit”, yet this does not mean that those who did not speak of it do not see this as an important factor in successful employment practices.

Finally, it should also be noted that the analysis only includes stories that were added to the map as of April 30, 2015.

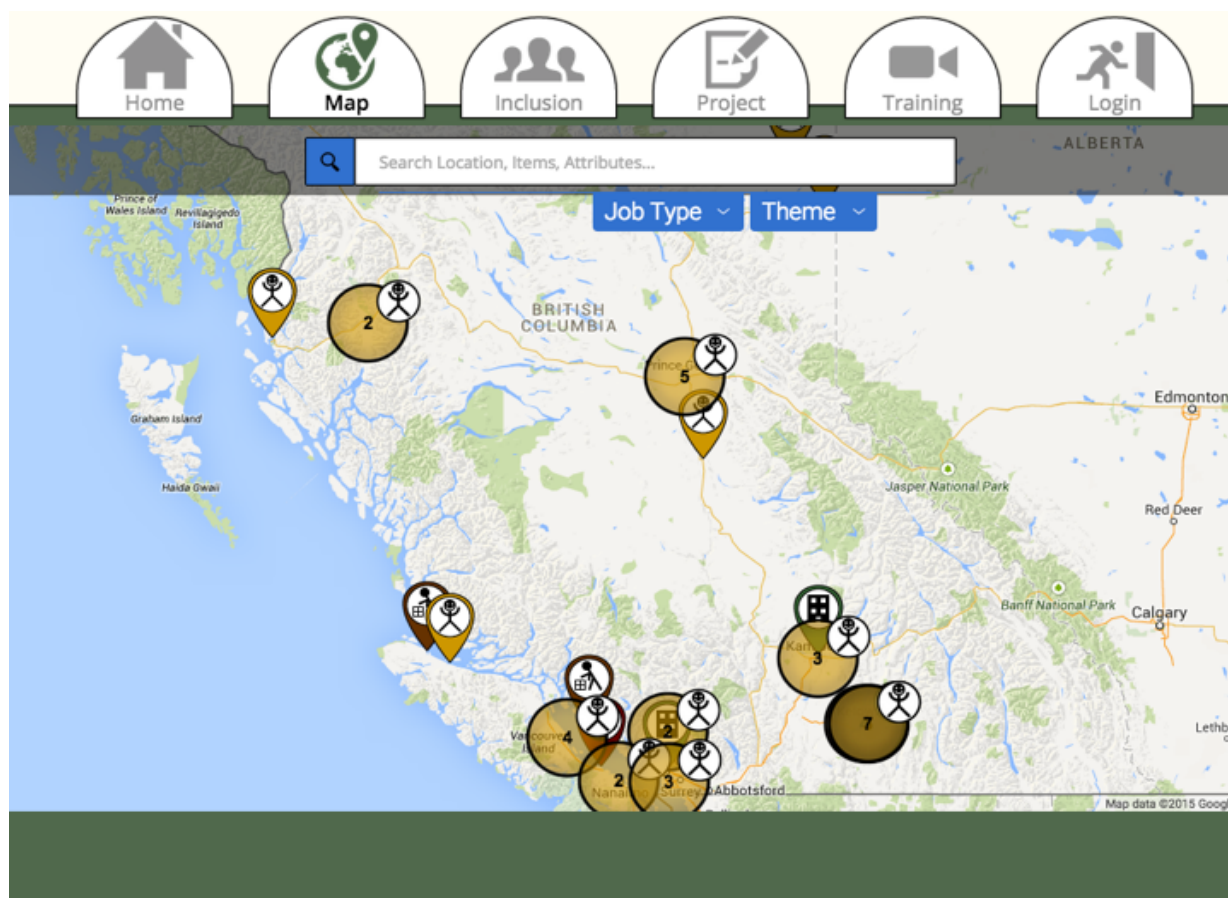
Analyzing the impact of the map

In order to provide some insight into the potential impact of the EMT, the portal’s website usage statistics were used to determine the number and geographic range of users as well as each session’s activities and characteristics. Every time that certain events are triggered on the map, an activity logging tool records the date, IP address, session, and any additional valuable data concerning the event to the database. Events include adding a marker, deleting a marker, modifying a marker, searching, moving the map, and uploading images and videos. The team executed a series of Structured Query Language (SQL) queries on the database in order to analyze these activities.

Findings – Developing the BC Employment Mapping Tool

The BC EMT has been co-designed with self-advocates to support individuals with ID to document and share their experiences in the employment sector in BC. Holding true to the principles of CBPR, authentic collaboration between all project partners has been integral throughout each step of the project. We have drawn on an established network of stakeholders (including self-advocates and their families, service providers and government) who collaborate throughout the province to address employment practices for people with ID. Researchers from UBC and the BC Centre for Employment Excellence (CfEE) have built on these existing synergies and relationships to inform and design the implementation of a collaborative strategy in the development of the mapping tool.

The EMT is a web-based application that functions as an accessible and searchable database that documents best practices and positive experiences related to employment for people with ID. Data is embedded within map markers that are displayed on an interactive map. The tool is designed to be of value to numerous stakeholders including (but not limited to) individuals with ID, service providers, family members, employers, and policy makers. The data available allows users to search the database for examples of best practices classified by theme and/or by type of job. The themes can be generated by users themselves, and to date include ‘My first job’, ‘Getting a job’, ‘Keeping a job’, ‘Training and supports’, ‘Transitions/changes in work’, ‘Benefits of work’ and ‘Getting to work’. Types of jobs that have been included on the map so far encompass: ‘restaurant/coffee shop’, ‘store’, ‘warehouse’, ‘self-employed’, ‘office’, ‘janitorial/maintenance’, ‘farm’, and ‘other’. In addition to employment themes, the markers contain links to other information, which are primarily video recordings, images and textual stories of self-advocates sharing their employment-related experiences. These materials act as authentic examples and provide clear strategies of how to best support other individuals with ID across the province in preparing for employment as well as provide real-life examples of how employers can address barriers to support for individuals with ID.



For self-advocates, relevant government bodies, service providers, employers with experience, and for family members of individuals with ID, the BC Employment Mapping Tool represents an interactive and dynamic medium to share their own experiences, policies and services related to the employment sector with members of the public. This in turn is designed to support them to reach out to others in similar situations, share their experiences, learn from one another and thus lay the seed for the continued strengthening of the network of stakeholders who collaborate throughout the province to address employment practices for people with ID. Finally, stakeholders have shared anecdotal stories of other practical uses for the map: employment support workers have shared that they have used the map as a recruitment tool for new, potential employers by sharing success stories and demonstrating the positive outcomes of employing self-advocates, and family members have described using the map to explore employment possibilities/goals with their adult sons/daughters.

The following statistics demonstrate the growing interest and activity with the EMT:

Since beginning of monitoring, January 28, 2015, there have been 24,356 website views and 14,503 individual marker views. Since the official launch of the site (April 1, 2015):

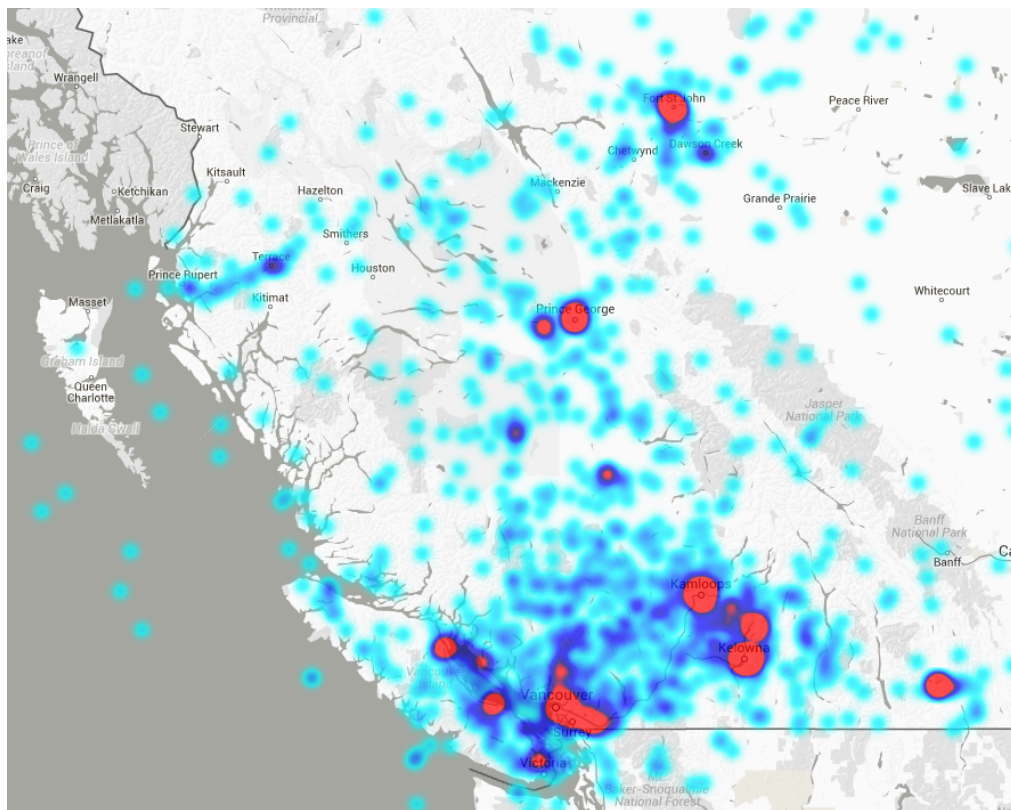
- A total of 117 markers have been created on the map.

- 11 markers have been deleted.⁷
- There have been 210 markers updated (i.e., people return to modify a marker).
- There have been 3,759 map views.
- Number of map info window displays 655.
- The map has been significantly interacted with by 461 distinct IP addresses.
- Users have searched for an element on the map 2,212 times using the search bar.

These statistics reflect a significant and increasing audience since the map officially launched in April 2015 with a core group of users interacting with the map on a regular basis.

The following image represents a heat map of the data markers that users have viewed since launch. The image demonstrates the popularity of markers has been widespread throughout the province, and that the map is enabling users to explore and learn from stories in a diverse range of BC communities.

Image: Heatmap of BC Employment Mapping Tool Users' Access of Employment Markers



⁷ The deleted markers are a reflection of the usability focus groups and other consultation/engagement presentation where temporary markers were added to the map to demonstrate how the map works.

Usability of the EMT

The team encountered a number of challenges related to the design and initial implementation of the EMT for the particular audience that is using the map. These challenges required the technical team to rethink the development of a participatory Geoweb mapping system that is both usable and robust for individuals with ID, as well as other stakeholders. This section discusses three of the usability challenges that emerged during the course of this project.

As identified in an earlier section, there is a range of different intended users for the BC Employment Mapping Tool: e.g., self-advocates, government, service providers, employers, employment support workers, and family members. This range requires recognition that there is:

- Diverse familiarity with using online interactive tools, especially social media;
- Varying access to the computing tools required to contribute to the map; and
- A highly variable level of spatial literacy⁸ among the map's users; in particular their ability to understand and interact with an online mapping interface, a central requirement for using the tool.

These points will be discussed in turn.

Familiarity with online tools

The project team anticipated potential usability challenges with the EMT, particularly in engaging individuals with ID using the map. Interestingly, however, we learned that the self-advocates involved in our consultations were in some cases very tech savvy, engaging in social media activities such as using Twitter and Facebook on a regular basis. And, in fact, the team learned that potential usability challenges were not unique to self-advocates: generational differences in familiarity with online technologies across participants (e.g., family members, service providers) also served as a challenge to adding information to the EMT (Corbett & Hole, 2015). As such, addressing the range of familiarity with using online interactive tools was a project priority. We focused on creating an accessible and 'friendly' interface which incorporated more graphics and less text.

As described above, development of the interface involved working with self-advocates in participatory focus group to design the map icons and create the workflows for adding information to the map. Adding information to the EMT became a primary barrier that the team continually addressed throughout the project, as input from self-advocates involving complex text could not be expected, nor could it be precluded. And, at the same time, we had to ensure that other user groups had the ability to add text-intensive information. As a result we designed a wizard to lead users through the process of sharing information on the map in as straightforward a way as possible, enabling different users to add various types of information in multiple ways. Based on feedback from early users, the team developed a four-step wizard which used icons (graphics) to walk self-advocates through the process of adding their stories. At no point in the process is a user required to add text using their keyboard (although

⁸ Spatial literacy refers to the ability to both read and use maps. Furthermore, it relates to the capacity to visualize and interpret location, distance, direction, relationships, movement, and change through space" (ESRI, 2014).

that option remains for those who wish to do so), enabling them to complete the process by pointing and clicking with a mouse.

Another important point to note relates to self-advocates' familiarity with other online tools (Facebook and Twitter in particular). Given our early finding that many self-advocates are active users of social media, we developed a system complementary to existing social media practice. Thus we created the ability for users to login using social media credentials and then to share, or repurpose, the information that they add to the EMT through their existing social media networks. Not only does this encourage users to share their information through the map (since they do not have to duplicate their efforts), it also served to direct more user traffic back to the EMT website.

Access to tools

The team observed during its early consultations that all self-advocate partners had access to and used smart phones and electronic tablets, which reflected a widespread use of such devices among the self-advocate community. As such, we purposefully designed the EMT to have a mobile-friendly interface which could greatly limit its uptake and use by self-advocates. We developed the tool to work seamlessly across varying screen sizes (from a 4.5 inch smart phone screen to a full-sized desktop computer monitor). As the site recognizes the hardware screen size it automatically adjusts icons, links, fonts and legends to match. The team is currently exploring other funding options to develop a partnering mobile app to work in conjunction with the EMT, since the resources required to develop mobile applications are outside the scope of this project. Such an app would work natively with the EMT, with the biggest benefit being the ability for users to record and upload stories directly to the website from their device.

Spatial literacy

The project represented an important opportunity to document and understand the challenges of spatial literacy in the project's success to create such a community resource. From early observations and consultations with stakeholders, the mapping interface was considered to be an attractive and easy to navigate interface, while at the same time enabling users to achieve a better understanding of the relationship of 'place' as it relates to self-advocates' employment experiences and access to available programs and services.

While a number of map users reported to the evaluation team the importance of the visual aspect of the map, we recognize that we have built the EMT relying on a number of assumptions about the map: firstly, the map is both readable and understandable to users (self-advocates in particular), and, secondly, the map provides an important framework to structure the crowd-sourced information in a way that makes it more meaningful, or at the very least, more accessible. One early challenge that emerged during initial user testing was that self-advocate users were more drawn to the street view capability built into the EMT and less to the map itself. In response, the technical team developed an online tutorial to assist users with navigating the map, and reinforced the need for ongoing training and support from a website administrator who was available throughout the pilot project.

Findings – Keys to inclusive employment

In this section we summarize the key findings from the project team’s analysis of the stories added to the map during the pilot. Below we present the key themes related to inclusive employment based on a thematic analysis of the elements shared across all stories. Findings for self-advocates and their families are discussed separately from employers and service providers, which will each be explored in their own sections.

For the purposes of this report, the total number of individuals included in the employment stories was 88: 44 self-advocates, 8 family members (primarily parents and spouses), 25 employers, and 11 service providers.⁹ These numbers are contained in the 22 cases¹⁰ and 32 previously existing stories that were added to the map with the authors’ permission. Wherever possible, the words of the authors, through the use of direct quotes, are inserted into the analysis of the themes and sub-themes.

Through their stories, self-advocates and their families identify a range of attributes and factors that supported their experiences of successful, inclusive employment, and they identified a number of benefits for both self-advocates and employers resulting from the employment opportunity. For employers and services providers, the experience of inclusive employment was also extremely favourable, with both groups specifically noting the benefits of hiring self-advocates and the ingredients for successful employment.

Self-advocates and family members

The diversity of the employment positions held by self-advocates is only matched by the diversity of the self-advocates themselves. With positions in retail, food and beverage services, banking, law firms, a newspaper, brewery, and professional sports organization, the early stories added to the map demonstrate the impressive scope of the work being done by self-advocates in British Columbia. Equally impressive is the longevity of the employment for many self-advocates; in a number of cases, self-advocates report that they have been working for their employer for ten or more years (6 self-advocates), and in some, more than twenty (4 self-advocates). Although length of employment is certainly an important indicator of the success of the overall employment experience for self-advocates and employers, there were **seven main themes** identified through the self-advocates’ stories: the social and relational benefits of employment; the importance of training; the importance of supports and accommodations; the value of having responsibilities and the types of responsibilities; the benefits of work; the value of self-employment; and, finally, factors for success. Each theme is discussed separately below.

⁹ These numbers reflect the number of participants involved in the development of the stories up until April 30, 2015.

¹⁰ One case might consist of one textual story that includes information from the self-advocate, employer and family member (one marker with three participant perspectives – e.g., Jennifer’s story in Terrace) or a case may be comprised of three separate video recorded interviews/three markers – e.g., Dale’s case exemplar that involved a video of Dale, a video of his wife, Leanne, a video of his employer, and a video of his support worker). Thus, the total numbers are a challenge to discern given the complex configurations of the cases depending on the format.

Theme One: Social/Relationships

One of the most pronounced themes identified for self-advocates was the value and importance of the social dimensions of work and relationships, with almost 55% of self-advocates interviewed indicating that the relationships with the people where they work were integral to the success of their employment experience. By far, the greatest source of social/relational support in the workplace comes from co-workers and supervisors/ managers, with 67% of self-advocates who noted this theme specifically citing the import of their relationships with co-workers and supervisors/managers. Self-advocates describe their co-workers as being “like family” and as “what makes [the] job a good job...” The social/relational component is what makes places of employment fun and accepting environments for self-advocates, as described by Joanna who works for a law firm in Kelowna: “Everyone here is so thankful for having me here....they want me to be around.” The social and relational component with co-workers and supervisors/managers goes beyond simply creating welcoming environments; it is also about having people that understand their strengths and limitations, which means they “know what [they] can and cannot do” and are willing to assist the self-advocate when needed. Having good working relationships is about knowing they can “ask [their] supervisor for anything” and having people around them that will help them out “when [they] get stuck;” for example, Sean from Prince George shared, “I’ve learned that having a great boss and great co-workers makes the job fun.”

Although many self-advocates aren’t directly involved in customer service, an additional 11% did indicate that the opportunity to interact with and build relationships with customers was very positive to their overall employment experience. For these self-advocates, “It’s all about the interactions with customers as well...”

Theme Two: Training

Training, both the initial on the job training and orientation as well as ongoing training, was the second theme identified by 21% of self-advocates. The training received most often covered the basics of job duties for self-advocates, as it did for Marcus at Canadian Tire in Vernon: Marcus’s training included “basic customer services, teamwork, and cleaning.” However, for others, training also involved significant professional development opportunities or the opportunity to learn and be promoted.

For these self-advocates, training was identified as “a growth thing” that enabled them to move into positions of managing and training other staff, as stated by Chris at Vital Water in Kelowna, who has achieved the position of “bottle master”: “Anyone that’s in the production...I train them and run them through the process, how things are done.”



Theme Three: Supports and Accommodations

32% of self-advocates cited supports and accommodations as being important to successful employment. Some self-advocates identified flexible tasks and/or hours as important, but support workers were the most important source of support provided to self-advocates in their employment as articulated by Marcus in Vernon: “If it wasn’t for [support workers], I can tell you I wouldn’t have this job right now.” Support workers offered a range of supports from helping self-advocates identify potential employment opportunities, to attending interviews and training sessions with them, to providing onsite training and support during the initial and more advanced stages of employment. Self-advocates clearly recognize the value of having external support. As was so clearly stated by Adam in Abbotsford:

It’s helpful to have someone come to work with you at the beginning. Sometimes it takes time to teach and support someone, showing them the proper ways to do things. That way, if there is an issue, you know someone is there to help you.

For Ashley at Pure Spa in Vernon, using charts with pictures as visual cues to remind her of what needs to be done was noted as being important to her overall job success.

Family members, including parents and spouses of self-advocates, also clearly recognize the value of flexible work environments and having the necessary supports available. For example, when asked what made it a successful employment experience for her son, Caleb’s mother referenced, “extra time

for training. It took longer than expected to gain speed and the employer accommodated by changing his hours to slower days.” Flexible work environments not only involve having supervisors and managers who will adjust the days self-advocates work, but who will also reduce hours or reassign tasks or duties as needed. They also will involve family members if it improves the probability of success in the workplace. Success in the work environment is also about simply having supports available, as Samantha’s mother stated, “So many times you see so many people with disabilities out there that have [so] many skills but don’t have the supports to get into the work environment.”



Theme Four: Responsibilities

21% of self-advocates discussed the sub-theme responsibilities. This sub-theme is primarily about supervisors and managers recognizing the interests and abilities of self-advocates, and adjusting work opportunities and duties to align with their skills and passions. Two self-advocates, Amac and Jai, specifically indicated how their interest in working with



people translated into a role in customer service. Two other self-advocates, Chris and Dale in Kelowna, talked about receiving promotions to management positions within their organizations after proving themselves in their entry level roles. The theme is also about allowing employees increased independence in their existing employment positions, or as expressed by Samantha, “I am really independent....I work a lot on my own.”

Theme Five: Benefits of Work

Within this theme, multiple sub-themes were identified, with the first and by far most significant of these being *satisfaction*. Nearly 70% of self-advocates indicated that they receive some sense of personal satisfaction from their employment. Self-advocates’ experiences of employment are personally satisfying for many reasons, from liking or loving their places of employment (“I feel good about my job and I like it a lot”; “It’s fun here”; “I feel better about myself”; “I like working”; “I really like working here”), to feelings of pride that come from having meaningful employment or “real work” (“I want to give back what was given to me”; “Work is important to me”; “I am proud of working”; “I am very proud of my job”; “I am proud to be part of the...team”), to the sense of accomplishment and self-worth that comes from doing a good job and knowing it (“I get compliments because the bathrooms are so clean”; “My work doesn’t feel like work at all”; “I like working here because I give a good asset to a company...”; “I like to feel proud of doing a good job and look forward to learning new tasks. It makes me proud to get all my work done in two hours”).

Dale in Kelowna highlighted the importance of being treated with “respect and dignity” in the workplace and having “honesty and communication” with employers and co-workers. Similarly, Shelley passionately described having impressed her supervisor with her skill and initiative: “So, that was

great. Just to show people with diversabilities that sometimes we have to prove a little extra...but with the right support we can succeed.”

The second sub-theme under *benefits of work* was *compensation/independence*, or specifically, “getting a real paycheque” for their work, with 50% of self-advocates noting the importance of this theme. Although, as stated by Dale in Kelowna, “It’s not all about the money,” compensation, including level of pay and different forms of remuneration (Christmas bonus, holiday pay, etc.), is important to self-advocates. Compensation allows self-advocates to take part in recreational activities (“I go to the movies with all my friends and my boyfriend”; “I really like going to movies and buying movies”; “I go out to much more places, not staying at home as often”), to go on vacations (“I got to go to Vegas...”; “Go to a trip....go to Disneyland”; “I put my money into a savings account so I can go to Edmonton on vacation”), to purchase material goods (“....basic grooming stuff, clothes...”; “I...bought an iPhone 5”; “...to buy important work clothing or work shoes”), and to support interests and hobbies (“...I just save my money for equipment for sports or a puzzle...”; “I use money to buy more art supplies”). Compensation also allows self-advocates to live independently, free of reliance “on any government funding or monthly disability cheque,” and to support themselves as well as family members. For example, David in Prince George stated, “I feel proud to be able to support [my wife] with the money I earn.” While for Robyn, employment has meant that “she is completely financially secure,” makes “...yearly RRSP payments and [contributes] to a tax free savings account,” and is able to maintain “her own one bedroom suite.”

The third sub-theme is *different activities/tasks* and it underscores the value that self-advocates place on their different employment duties and responsibilities. Almost 57% of self-advocates mentioned their specific jobs tasks as being a benefit of employment. For some, what makes their activities beneficial is the “variety of tasks” that self-advocates get to do (“It’s different every day – it’s never the same thing”; “I like the variety of responsibilities...”; “I do a whole bunch of things”; “I do a little bit of this and a little bit of that”); while for others, it is more about having a few key responsibilities that they complete on a routine basis. For example, Emma in Kelowna has a specific task list that she completes every shift, as does Joanna. Terry, who works at Extreme Pita on Bowen Island “works two days a week during the lunch rush... greet[ing] customers, clear[ing] and wash[ing] tables, and sweep[ing] the floors of the restaurant.”

Relationships is the fourth sub-theme under benefits of work. Although related to the theme of social/relationships, 23% of self-advocates specifically mentioned their work relationships (managers, co-workers, customers) as a being a benefit of employment. The power of these relationships is captured through Sean’s description of the favourite part of his job: “My favourite part of work is when I sit beside my boss in the ACE Courier truck and help him do deliveries.” For Evan, because of his work relationships, he “feel[s] respected and [has] met many new friends.”

Learning social skills is the fifth sub-theme, with 14% of self-advocates identifying the opportunity to learn new social skills or improve upon their existing social skills as being an important benefit of employment. According to Krystal, because of her job at Game Quest in Prince George, “[She is] a confident person now.” Similarly, Marcus in Vernon described, “It’s a good experience because it definitely helps with talking to people, learning how to cooperate with co-workers and it definitely helps with my social activity.” As a powerful example of personal change through employment, Adam in

Abbotsford explained that he “didn’t do too much when [he] was young;” according to Adam, “I didn’t talk to friends, I didn’t go out. Now I work, go to concerts and comedy shows and teach other self-advocates.”

The sixth sub-theme under *benefits of work*, one that was mentioned by 36% of self-advocates, is *sense of belonging*. This sub-theme is about self-advocates having a sense of connection to their workplaces and to the people with whom they work. For example, Tracy Jo in Kamloops stated, “I get hugged every day when I walk into the store and I love it because I am a hugger.” For Jennifer in Terrace, it is about feeling like “part of the staff”; as it is for Alan in Campbell River, who “feels like he is part of a team now.” For Chris in Kelowna, it is about having co-workers who “don’t treat [him] like a disability.” More than simply fostering a connection to their places of employment, this sub-theme also reflects a deeper and broader connection within the community facilitated through employment: for Charlie in Port Hardy, doing a paper route means that he gets recognized by people on the street; he is “loved by everyone and feels fully part of the community.” David in Vancouver described how “it is important to be part of [his] community” and “working is a way [that he can] contribute;” and finally, Dara in Dawson Creek explained:

Employment is an important part of my life because it gets me known in the community. Being part of the community and the workforce has helped towards being treated like an equal and having people look past my disability.

Outside of a few comments that touched on other material (“I have a collection of game systems” and “some of the older game systems are rare and hard to find”), health (tasks are “a good workout”), and geographic (job is located near self-advocate’s house) benefits of employment, the seventh and final sub-theme is *acknowledgement/appreciation*. For the 16% of self-advocates who noted this sub-theme, hearing things like “nice job” and “good show, keep it up,” helps them to feel acknowledged and “respect[ed]” by their employers and co-workers. For Jamie from Prince Rupert, it is when “they tell [her] that [she] is doing a good job.” It is also about being recognized for doing a good job, as was the case for Jordan in Kelowna, who was “moved up positions” after being in his position for a while. Citing feelings of gratitude for being appreciated, self-advocate’s also expressed a desire to “give back what was given to [them].”

Theme Six: Self-employment

Three self-advocates discussed their experiences of being self-employed, which they all described as being richly rewarding. For Krystian, who produces a disability-related newsletter in Kamloops, understanding his own needs led to his interest in creating his own job: “I didn’t have enough qualifications and skills to do support when I need support myself, so I decided to create my own work.” For Aleesa and Sarah from ‘In the Bag’ in Langley, being their own boss was perfect for them. As Sarah said, they “liked that it was for [them]” and that they “could make decisions,” to which Aleesa added “was important to [them].” Their excitement and energy about being self-employed is evident in Sarah’s statement: “The good thing about being your own boss is that the excellence of your business is only limited by how you are able to manage it.”

Theme Seven: Factors for Success

Factors for Success were shared by both self-advocates and their family members. For the 18% of self-advocates who touched on the specifics of what made their employment successful, factors such as flexibility, both in terms of time off and in tasks/duties, and having “respectful” working relationships were highlighted. Self-advocates also discussed the importance of having a good fit or a “good match” between their jobs and their temperament or interests and abilities. For Krystal in Prince George, who is “a huge fan of video games”, the fact that she gets to work in a video game store means that her job is “a perfect job for [her].” For Alan in Campbell River, his job “was a really good match between his skills and what [his employer] needed.” The atmosphere at his workplace is a good fit for Chris in Kelowna, who stated that he “like[s] his job because it is a very laid back environment.”

Likewise, families also discussed the importance of issues of fit as factors for success. Beyond simply making accommodations for self-advocates, having a good fit means that employers are willing to understand the needs of self-advocates and adjust the work environment, including job tasks and hours or days worked, to fit with the self-advocates’ needs. In the words of Samantha’s mother:

The experience has been good because people have an understanding of what she needs. She is not going to be a worker who could just come in and do the job. She will need support....she will need some modifications. I think it has been successful because they have an understanding of her disabilities and her strengths and weaknesses. That is why it has been so successful.

For Samantha, this meant that her employer needed to reduce her hours and have her focus on “one task that she could master” versus “many complex tasks.” In Caleb’s situation, ensuring success meant that his family were part of the process.

Employers

Irrespective of employer’s background or their history with inclusive employment, they all described their experiences in extremely positive terms that according to most employers significantly exceeded their original expectations. Employers discussed multiple benefits of inclusive employment, including how the experience has positively impacted organizational culture as well as what they saw as the key ingredients for success. Having learned much through the experience, some employers even offered up advice to other employers. In total, there were **5 main themes** identified by employers, each of which are discussed separately below, including: the process of hiring a self-advocate; the social and relational benefits of hiring a self-advocate; the benefits to the employer; factors for success; and advice to other employers.

Theme One: Hiring a self-advocate

The most common theme that 20 per cent of employers discussed related to the process of hiring a self-advocate: how they came to be an inclusive employer. In most cases, initial contact was made through an agency/staff person providing support services to people with ID. Once employers had an opportunity to meet with the self-advocate, as was the case between Marcus and his employer in Vernon, “We hit it off right away.” In those cases where employers had previous experience employing

a self-advocate, the experience was so beneficial that they hired another self-advocate when the initial hire left or as in the case of Dara's employer in Dawson Creek, "they also hired another person with a disability" so that they have two employees with a disability on staff.

Theme Two: Social/Relationships

Social aspects and the value of relationships, specifically, the power of the relationships developed between self-advocates and the people with whom they work, was mentioned by 36% of employers. Employers describe self-advocates as being a "pleasure to have around," in large part because of the positive, cooperative attitude they maintain. For example, Carmella's employer in Fort St. John stated, "She gets along with everyone and is always so happy. We are pleased to have her on our team." Similarly, Nick's employer in Vancouver described him as someone who "loves talking and joking with his co-workers and has developed friendships with people from all different departments." More than just having collegial, supportive working relationships, employers go above and beyond their normal role to support self-advocates, whom they view as more than just employees. For Angela who works at a pizzeria and bakery in Powell River, this means that her employer attends meetings with her at the local association for community living and "[tries] to support her emotionally when she's had a rough day and celebrate with her when she's had a good day." Marcus's employer in Vernon described how Marcus "will bring his swimming medals to work that he wins from competitions that he goes to and he'll share those with the staff." And, Chris's employer in Kelowna, explained how Chris is "right in there with rest of the guys," it means that the workplace is "really kind of like a family."

Theme Three: Benefits to Employer

Employers discussed five main benefits of inclusive employment that they experience. The first and by far the most significant, is the value of the *characteristics/personality of the self-advocate* to the employer with 56% of employers touching on this sub-theme. Through this sub-theme employers highlighted many admirable qualities of self-advocates that made them successful in their employment, including being "dependable and reliable," "taking direction well," being "thorough and conscientious," "loyal and dedicated," as well as "learn[ing] fast and adapt[ing] well to change." Employers also discussed the skill level that self-advocates bring to their positions, which has impressed employers in numerous ways; as Marcus's employer in Vernon stated, "We don't see it as a disability with Marcus – I see it as what he's good at, so he brings to us really good skills that a lot of our employees don't come to us with." Similarly, Alan's employer in Campbell River described, "The biggest things... have been his computer skills," which she describes as "amazing." According to Nick's employer, as professional hockey franchise, "Nicholas knows more about hockey than some of the employees, and every day he talks about the latest news and statistics about the [team]." Owing to the quality and reliability of their work, employers are putting self-advocates in positions of responsibility because they know the work will be done and done well. According to Jordan's employer in Kelowna, Jordan "probably [has] one of the most important jobs on the entire course..." and because he is on the job, his employer "[does not have] to worry about making sure that there is someone to do that or a job that gets forgotten about." Dale's employer at a coffee shop in Kelowna talked about the many "positive changes [they have had] in the location since Dale arrived including how "he's been training other cafe attendants" and "has

furthered his knowledge by becoming a coffee master.” Chris’s employer in Kelowna described Chris as “one of my best bottlers with the manual system” and as “amazing and very diligent.”

The second sub-theme in *benefits to employers* is *positive contributions*, which was noted by 52% of employers. Whether their comments relate to self-advocate’s contribution to the work environment or directly to their productivity, comments in this sub-theme reflect employer’s recognition of the “real” and “important” work being done by self-advocates. As stated by Dale’s employer in Kelowna, “He just adds a new sense of loyalty and passion to the company that any employer is missing out on if they don’t pursue this avenue.” Alan’s employer in Campbell River noted the “real efficiencies [that he adds] in terms of the volume of work we have to do.” And, Joanna’s employer in Kelowna explained, “Everything she does, [they] would have to hire someone to do”, adding that “Joanna does real work for [their] firm.” Finally, Rob’s employer in Port McNeil described him as being integral to operations, or as she put it, her “right hand man.”

More than just liking having the self-advocate around, the third sub-theme, *positive influence on work culture*, is about how the self-advocate has fundamentally impacted the work environment in a positive way. This sub-theme was mentioned by 40% of employers. Jamie’s employer in Prince George discussed how he is “most impressed at how conscientious Jamie is of the other workers.” He went onto state, “Working with Jamie is such a good experience that [I] feel much more open to working alongside other individuals who may have any sort of disability or barrier.” According to Dale’s employer in Kelowna, “The morale with [their] employee base changes when Dale is around. He has added so much to [the] workplace as far as morale, as far as passion...dedication.” Emma’s employer in Kelowna said that “she has impacted [their] office in a lot of different ways”, so much so that when she is not there, staff will say “Where is Emma?”

The fourth sub-theme is the value of *diversity*. In this sub-theme, three employers discussed how self-advocates bring much needed diversity to the workplace, expanding the minds of everyone they come into contact with. For Emma’s employer in Kelowna, her co-workers are “always inquisitive and inquire about her. And she spends a lot of time where she just stops and visits with them...” which her employer appreciates. Stephen’s employer in Langley noted how “very diverse people come into [their] store so [he] thinks it’s very important for everybody to be using [the Partners in Employment] program.”

Giving back is the fifth sub-theme. Two employers touched on how the experience of providing inclusive employment has allowed them to give back to their community. For example, Angela’s employer in Powell River stated, “It’s about giving back and being part of the community,” which is “important because [we] want to include everybody;” And Matt’s employer explained, Matt not only “assist[s] in keeping the buses clean, but also to give back to the community as well and doing [their] part for all types of people in Powell River.” As he put it, “It’s payback.”

The sixth and final sub-theme in *benefits to employers* is *growth experience for employer/co-workers*. In this sub-theme, 20% of employers talked about how their experience of offering inclusive employment has allowed them to grow as managers and as people. Marcus’s employer shared how “it’s been a good experience for [him] as a manager [because he] had to learn how to manage better.” Jamie’s employer at the newspaper in Prince George discussed how he sees Jamie the same as any other worker, “although more reliable”, he added. Finally, Chris’s employer in Kelowna eloquently stated:

It's been a pleasure, it really has and I think it's good in that it's taught some of the other guys that are working here too, that people are more than you expect. If you give them the opportunity, and he has certainly proved that.

Theme Four: Factors for Success

In terms what makes the experience a success for all involved, employers commented on a number of different *factors for success* during their interviews. In total, 64% of employers made mention of some element of this theme. *Factors for success* discussed by employers include the involvement of support worker at all stages of the process, as well as having a good fit/match between the self-advocate and the place of employment. According to Marcus's employer in Vernon, "[We] hit it off right away and thought it would be a great fit." Success, however, is ultimately the result of a strong partnership between the self-advocate, the employer and the support worker; or as Marcus's employer stated:

Marcus will tell me what his needs are. [His] support workers may explain to us some of the challenges that he may have, and we've worked around those to make the job successful for him and for us.

Good communication is clearly integral to the success of the employment process but so is the presence of ongoing support. Whether it is provided by a support worker or through natural supports in the workplace, having access to ongoing assistance is a key ingredient for success from employer's perspective. For example, Stephen's employer in Langley explained, "[T]he coaches...are very helpful and in regards with what the employer needs." Other factors for success mentioned by employers included the specific characteristics and skills of self-advocates, with 81% of employers noting this as a factor; having consistency in the work activities of self-advocates; and "challenging and investing in the [self-advocate's] time."

Theme Five: Advice to Other Employers

The final theme noted by employers was *advice to other employers*. 28% of employers expressed advice based upon their experience of inclusive employment that included being "open minded", promoting "real work for real pay", and suggesting "any employer is missing out if they don't pursue this avenue". Employers involved in this project are impassioned advocates of inclusive employment. As Chris's employer in Kelowna stated:

I really would encourage you, if you're thinking about bringing someone into your organization that can fill a niche. A little patience is required – yes, but the rewards of working with them are amazing, really. Seriously – give it a try.

Service Providers

Service providers play a significant role in the success of inclusive employment. From providing flexible, individualized support, to establishing strong relationships with employers and self-advocates/their families, service providers act as a linchpin form of support for both self-advocates and employers. Consequentially, service providers have a unique perspective on the relationship between

the self-advocate and the employer. Service providers discussed **three main themes**: the *benefits of employment for the self-advocate*; *factors for success*; and *the role of the service provider* in supporting the inclusive employment experience. The three themes are discussed separately below.

Theme One: Benefits to self-advocate

The first theme discussed by 45% of service providers related to *benefits of employment to self-advocates and employers*. Service providers discussed a range of both personal and professional factors that benefit self-advocates. According to Chris's support worker in Kelowna, "The employer does a lot for Chris in giving Chris time off to go to Special Olympic events, which means a lot to Chris;" he goes onto to say, "The relationship is win-win for both of them." Jordan's worker from Kelowna commented on the importance of "the inclusion and being part of the workplace...and being given that kind of respect and acknowledgment." He also noted the importance of the "...monetary reward, as well." Benefits to self-advocates also included things as seemingly simple, yet as individually meaningful as being able "to get dress[ed] up for work," which was mentioned by the support worker for Joanna, who is from Kelowna.

Theme Two: Factors for Success

There are **7 sub-themes** that service providers identified under *factors for success*. The first, with 36% of service providers making mention of this sub-theme, was the *employer's characteristics*; or specifically, those qualities of the employer that contributed to the success of the employment placement. Apart from having an open mind to the potential of self-advocates, the most significant factors service providers mentioned in regard to this sub-theme is having employer "buy-in;" or in the words of Joanna's worker from Kelowna, "The boss gave [them] a shot," which meant they "had a chance to sit down and say what are the jobs that need to be done." For Dale's support worker, it is about employers being "willing to start with what the self-advocate has, and then not just limit them to that, but really allow them to develop into all that they bring to that job." This support worker went on to emphasize, "I can't say enough how important it is to have buy-in from the [employer's] side."

The second sub-theme is the *employee's characteristics*. 36% of service providers noted that the qualities of self-advocates are a key to success. In this sub-theme, service providers primarily made mention of qualities that the self-advocate brought to the job, including "a great attitude" and a "good work ethic." For example, Jordan's service provider stated, "He has got a great work ethic, which is something we can't instill in people....either you have it or you don't, and he has it." Similarly, Chris's support worker described him as "...one of those employees that every employer would love to have," noting that Chris's employer actually asked him "...if we have any more Chris's."

The third and by far the most well noted sub-theme is *good fit*, with 82% of service providers commenting about the importance of fit. For service providers, establishing a good fit first involves assessing the "culture" or "vibe" of the organization to determine if "the culture is ready to work with any adult with [a] disability." According to Marcus's support worker in Vernon, it is about determining if "...we [can] find good natural support within the workforce..." with the ultimate goal of having a "really integrative workforce." Similarly, Lief's support worker explained, "We are looking for

businesses with a common culture to the job seeker that have a need, [and]... we can match the ideal employee to their needs..." Dale's support worker summarizes the process nicely when he said:

So what we've learned, through trial and error is really trying to get a sense of what's the expectation are going to be? And then I can look at the individuals we have that are super interested in that [and who] have the personality that I think might match that environment a little bit better.

The fourth sub-theme in factors for success is the *discovery process/employment plan*. In this sub-theme, 36% service providers discussed the importance of understanding self-advocate's strengths and interests as well as having a well-developed employment plan before looking for a placement. For Marcus's support worker, it was about gathering information from the self-advocate and family members in order to create a "good profile on [their] skill set." From there, he will "begin to look at jobs and employers that could benefit from that." In the end, it is about "really customiz[ing] it to client strength." Although having a good employment plan is integral to the success of the employment experience, service providers also discussed the importance of maintaining flexibility within that plan as Joanna's support worker noted: "[the plan] has evolved over the last 4 years."

Training and individualized support is the fifth sub-theme and it was noted by 64% of service providers. In this sub-theme, service providers mentioned two key ingredients for success: first is the support worker working on site with the self-advocate when they initially start the position, assisting them in learning and mastering their job duties. For example, Jordan's support worker described it as "help[ing] him get engaged in [the] job setting;" and, Lief's worker described, "[his] job was not very hard...[because] Lief learned pretty fast." Second, providing individualized, flexible support to the self-advocate on an as needed basis is a key to success as stated by Adam's service provider: "Individualized support is important. Some need a little, others need a lot, but that support needs to be available."

The sixth sub-theme in factors for success is the *service provider/employer relationship*. 27% of support workers clearly recognized the value of developing and maintaining strong relationships with employers, both before and after a self-advocate is placed there. For example, Chris's support worker talked about how "one of the strongest things as a support worker is to keep a good working relationship with the client and employer." Similarly, Dale's support worker stated, "[It is] a privilege [to be] able to work with Starbucks in Kelowna," and "not just one particular Starbucks, but having a chance to work with all of them." And, Penny's support worker described, it is about "work[ing] with the employer as a team so that it is a win-win for everyone."

Apart from one service provider mentioning the value of having access to a wage subsidy as an incentive to employers, the seventh and final theme in factors for success is *benefits/value added to employer*. This sub-theme, which was noted by 36% of service providers, involves both specific and general employer benefits. For example, Chris's and Jordan's workers talked about their specific skill sets and personalities as being a benefit to employers while Ashley's and Marcus's workers spoke more generally about what self-advocates as a group or collective offer to employers. Marcus's worker said it well when he said:

We think that Marcus, as with our other clients, bring a lot of advantage to employers.
We think that there is a great benefit in lower reduced turnover rates, improved

reliability, bringing in a whole new dimension into the workforce and I think it breaks down barriers for adults with disabilities.

Theme Three: Role of the Service Provider

The final theme discussed by service providers was their role in the employment experience, with all service providers speaking to some aspect of their work with self-advocates and/or employers. From the discovery and matching process, to how they see their role evolving overtime, service providers discussed in some detail what they see as their key responsibilities in helping their clients achieve successful outcomes. The most significant sub-theme expressed by service providers related to the fact that their role often diminished, but still remained significant, during the employment transition process. Starting with more intensive support when the self-advocate is first placed, service providers discussed how their goal is to “fade out” in time, increasingly acting as more of a resource or sounding board for self-advocates and employers. For example, Penny’s worker explained, “[I] keep in touch with Penny and her supervisor” because I “[don’t] want fires to start.” As Chris’s job coach, who now sees his job as simply “maintain[ing] contact with Chris and his employer”, explained:

As a support worker, you’re not in their hands on doing the job, because that is Chris’s job, but there’s always a need to keep in contact with the employer.

Discussion & Conclusion

States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive, and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work...

Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

Article 27 of the UNCRPD, of which Canada is a signatory, clearly outlines the States Parties responsibilities to both safeguard and promote the right to employment for individuals with disabilities. This is ever more important when it comes to individuals with ID whose employability has been historically questioned (Holwerda, Brouwer et al., 2015). In fact, individuals with ID face stigma and barriers to their participation in the labour market. The *Mapping inclusive employment practices for individuals with developmental disabilities: A participatory research mapping project* has been an innovative CBPR project aimed at promoting and advancing inclusive employment for individuals with ID in B.C. Through the EMT, a web-based mapping application, stakeholders have been sharing their stories of successful employment through a searchable online database that is a resource for self-advocates, employers (current and prospective), employment support workers, family members, and policy makers. Based on feedback from users during the pilot, the project achieved its goals of creating an accessible, user-friendly database to promote the employability of self-advocates while highlighting their many abilities, interests, and important contributions to the workplace and labour market more generally.

This project and the EMT complement and offer valuable tools to significant initiatives occurring in the province by government (e.g., Accessibility 2024; the Accessibility Secretariat); CLBC employment strategies; the Community Employment Action Plan, and Inclusion BC's Ready, Willing and Able campaign. Such activities are crucial as employment for individuals with ID is considered key to their social inclusion in community (Hole, Stainton, & Tomlinson, 2012; Humber, 2014) and, importantly, their quality of life (Verdugo et al., 2012).

A prominent Quality of Life (QoL) framework employed in intellectual disability research was developed by Dr. Robert Schalock. The Schalock QoL Framework emerged from over thirty years of quality of life research within the international intellectual disability field (Schalock, 2004; Schalock et al., 2002; Verdugo et al., 2012). The Schalock model encompasses eight core QoL domains: personal development, self-determination, interpersonal relationships, social inclusion, rights, emotional, physical, and material wellbeing. These eight domains were arranged into three second-order factors:

- Independence: self-determination and personal competence;
- Social Participation: interpersonal relationships, social inclusion and rights;
- Personal Well-Being: emotional, physical and material well-being.

Interestingly, the QoL second-order factors of Independence, Social Participation and Personal Well-Being correlate to this project's key findings discussed above, particularly the themes of social and relational benefits from inclusive employment for self-advocates.

Traditionally, economic compensation has been highlighted as the main benefit of employment (Humber, 2014), and while self-advocates who shared their stories on the map did note the value of compensation from employment, it was not the only benefit of experiencing inclusive employment. Self-advocates, family members, and service providers acknowledged the value of being paid, but other factors, such as the social benefits through relationships, learning new skills, experiencing a sense of belonging, and being acknowledged had great meaning to the self-advocates. Based on the findings, it is clear that inclusive employment can be one mechanism to promote quality of life for self-advocates. Evidently, inclusive employment promotes independence through multiple avenues – economic compensation opens up opportunities to exercise purchasing power contributes positively to life style, however it also creates opportunities to improve social skills, exercise self-determination, and build personal competence (e.g., opportunities for advancement, learning new skills). Finally, the social and relational benefits of employment highlighted throughout the findings unmistakably foster social participation and contribute to self-advocates’ sense of belonging and well-being. Clearly, promoting and effecting inclusive employment practices in B.C. is one key mechanism for promoting quality of life for self-advocates. That said, other learnings about how to achieve inclusive employment are key findings from this research.

One overarching theme that permeates the findings was the importance of “fit”. This success factor was explicitly cited by service providers and employers, but stories from self-advocates also tacitly pointed to the significance of “fit” when they talked about the importance of the relationship and support of their supervisor/employer/co-workers. Not surprising, the literature repeatedly underscores the importance of the match for success when discussing “person-centred career planning” (e.g., Claes, Van Hove, Vandeveld, van Loon, & Schalock, 2010), “job matching” (Hall, Morgan, & Salzberg, 2014), or what our participants referred to as “discovery” and developing and/or implementing an “employment plan.” Relatedly, the literature points to the importance of knowledgeable support staff in ensuring a successful matching process (Davies, 2013). Interestingly, all stakeholders in the present project highlighted the important role that employment support workers play in advancing and achieving positive employment outcomes for all stakeholders involved – the self-advocate and employer. The factors described in the findings all point to the intentional and strategic planning that considers the employment context as well as the interests, personalities and abilities of the self-advocate.

Next Steps for the Map

The stories that have been added to the BC Employment Tool over the past two years offer valuable insights into the process, benefits and lessons learned from self-advocates’ positive, inclusive employment experiences, and user and stakeholder feedback have enabled the project to create and refine a user-friendly accessible web-based application that will allow future users of the map to share more insights into promoting inclusive employment. With the conclusion of the project, the EMT will remain active as a resource for individuals with ID, their family members, employers, service providers, and policy makers to learn and to share examples of innovation in the area of employment. Of primary importance, the stories shared through the map have the potential to increase family members’ and self-advocates’ employment aspirations by exposing website visitors to the diversity of successful employment experiences of self-advocates throughout BC. This is of significance given research that parent/family as well as individual expectations correlate to positive employment outcomes for self-

advocates (Carter et al., 2011; Holwerda, Brouwer, de Boer et al., 2015). In addition, our stakeholder consultations have indicated that the stories have the potential to motivate employers by providing powerful examples of the range of benefits of employment to both self-advocates and employers alike, offering employer-to-employer advice, tools and best practices for effecting positive and inclusive employment for self-advocates.

Knowledge translation and next steps

In the final months of the project the team focused on identifying strategies for sustaining the BC Employment Mapping Tool so that it can remain a viable resource for stakeholders. To that end, a significant component of work in the final year of the project focused on knowledge translation (KT) activities, which were undertaken by various members of the research team. To date, these activities have been through both formal and informal presentations throughout BC (e.g., presentations at Inclusion BC Annual Conferences (2014 & 2015) as well as the Canadian Association for Supported Employment's 2015 national conference), in-person workshops and a webinar hosted by the BC Centre for Employment Excellence. These presentations increased awareness of the EMT as well as provided opportunities to train stakeholders across the province in how to use the map with the goal of engaging the broader community in using the tool and championing its use. Through these events, the team has heard anecdotal stories from a number of stakeholders who are using the map to engage community employers, for instance, to be inspired by stories of their peers to be more inclusive in their hiring practices.

As the project transitions out of its research phase, the project's partners (the BC Centre for Employment Excellence (CfEE), the UBC Centre for Inclusion and Citizenship (CIC), the UBC SpICE Lab, and CLBC) remain committed to the project's sustainability. The CfEE, CIC and CLBC will continue to support the EMT in an advisory capacity while the SpICE Lab will continue to host the website and provide technical support. The team has also welcomed a new partner, the Home Society (Healthy Opportunities for Meaningful Experience Society (Healthy Opportunities for Meaningful Experience Society) in BC's Fraser Valley, whose work with selfadvocatenet.com positions it well to support the EMT on an ongoing basis. To learn more about the current state of the project and view the stories that have been discussed in this report, we invite you to visit www.mappinginclusiveemployment.ca.

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