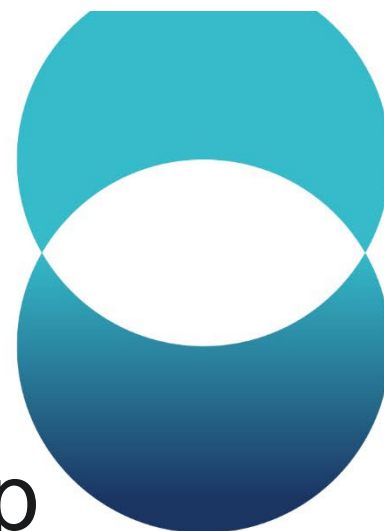


**The Conference
Board of Canada**



CASE-CBoC Mentorship

Methodology, Definitions, and Data Sources

Prepared by
The Conference Board of Canada

Methodology

The Conference Board of Canada (CBoC) conducted interviews and roundtables with employers, as well as interviews with mentors and mentees with lived experience of disability. We used the following research questions to guide our research:

1. What are the key features of mentoring initiatives that effectively foster disability inclusion within organizations?
2. What challenges do mentors and mentees with disabilities face in company-sponsored mentoring programs?
3. How can organizations effectively implement mentoring initiatives for disability inclusion?

Definitions

Mentorship is defined by the Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE) as a relationship between a mentor and mentee tied to specific context, such as employment, entrepreneurship, or education.¹ Mentorships are mentoring experiences that are typically time-bound, interactive, and are focused on achieving both mentor and mentee goals through a broad range of activities (career development, emotional support, etc.). This toolkit is designed to support inclusive mentorship within the workplace aimed at enhancing the professional and personal development of both the mentor and mentee. A mentorship is an example of a mentoring experience.

Mentors support their mentees by sharing insights, offering guidance, and exchanging knowledge, such as when mentees are making their own informed career decisions. Our research underscores that mentors act as collaborative partners, helping mentees navigate different aspects of their lives while fostering growth in skills, knowledge, and confidence.² Through this collaborative and reciprocal relationship, mentors also gain valuable skills (e.g., leadership, communication), further broaden their knowledge, and expand their networks.

Mentees engage in mentoring relationships to co-create their journeys with their mentors as partners. As part of shaping their paths, mentees take an active role in discussing and planning their goals in a self-directed way, rather than following the explicit direction of a more experienced individual.³

Mentoring relationships are a continuous, personal, and reciprocal relationship between mentors and mentees.

Workplace mentorship takes place between a mentee and mentor in workplace settings for the purpose of the professional and personal development of the mentee.

¹ Canadian Association for Supported Employment and Mentor Canada, "Mentoring for Persons Experiencing Disabilities: A Review of the Literature."

² The Conference Board of Canada, "Fostering Inclusion for People With Disability."

³ Rubbi Nunan and others, "Mentoring in the Workplace."



Detailed methods

The interview and facilitation guides were developed based on a preliminary literature search of the existing disability studies literature. The final guides can be found by clicking on the following links.

1. [Employer guide](#)
2. [Mentor guide](#)
3. [Mentee guide](#)
4. [Roundtable guide](#)

To answer the research questions, the guides focused on understanding:

- the perspectives, experiences, and needs of Canadian workers with disabilities and their employers;
- the development of more effective workplace tools and supports aimed at enhancing employment inclusion for those experiencing disability, with an emphasis on mentorship programs;
- perceptions of policies or practices that would enhance workplace inclusivity in Canada;
- employer insights into organizational diversity-focused mentorship programs, policies, procedures, and best practices.

The guides underwent the Research Ethics Review process. All interviewees and roundtable participants were guaranteed confidentiality.

Qualitative data collection

We conducted 40 interviews with employers, mentors, and mentees and two roundtables with employers. The interviews and roundtables were distributed among the groups as follows:

- 10 employers with an interest in mentorship for persons with disabilities
- 15 mentors and 15 mentees with disabilities
- two roundtables with seven total employers.

Based on the community's composition, this identified list provided sufficient coverage of experiences of mentors and mentees with disabilities in mentorship programs as well as the experiences of employers interested in disability-inclusion-focused mentorship programs. Employer representatives and mentors were not required to have a disability to participate in this study, while mentees were required to have a disability to participate in this research to capture their lived experience.

Employer interviews

Employers were recruited to participate in an interview or roundtable through an email invitation that was sent to a list of employers provided by CASE as well as CBoC council members (specifically members of the Compensation Research Centre, Council for Human Resource Executives (East and West), Council on Workplace Health and Wellness, Council



for Inclusive Work Environments, and the Labour Relations Council). These emails were sent in November 2024, and 10 interviews were conducted virtually between December 2 and 23, 2024. In all, 133 pages were collected from the 10 employer interviews.

Roundtables

Roundtable participants were recruited alongside outreach for the employer interviews. These roundtables were conducted on December 9 and 17, 2024, using Microsoft Teams. A total of seven participants participated in the two roundtables, with no overlap between participants in the two groups. In total, 22 pages were collected from the roundtables.

Mentee and mentor interviews

We created a list of participants who had consented to be contacted for future research based on a previous survey with people experiencing a disability. Participants were emailed and asked to schedule virtual interviews with a member of the research team through an Outlook booking link that was attached within an outreach email. Consent forms were sent to participants once they scheduled an interview or expressed interest in providing a written response. Of the 125 approached, 34 accepted invitations to be interviewed. The response rate was 27.2 per cent.

The final sample of 15 mentor and 15 mentee interviews was obtained through turnover, such as interviewee dropouts ($n = 3$) and exclusion due to poor quality data ($n = 1$). This sample was collected from January 10 to January 31, 2025, using Microsoft Teams and Outlook for written responses. One interview was collected on February 13, 2025, due to an earlier dropout. Twelve rounds of follow-up with various-sized groups were conducted between January 16 and January 28 to target female participants and increase the number of participants with experience as a mentor. In total, 424 pages of cleaned transcripts were collected.

The participants within the mentor and mentee interviews were skewed toward men (56.7 per cent), particularly men closer to retirement age. Female participants made up a smaller proportion of the overall sample (33.3 per cent) and were younger on average (42.6 versus 50.4 years). Most participants (48.1 per cent) reported residing in Ontario, followed by British Columbia (25.9 per cent), Alberta (11.1 per cent), Quebec (7.4 per cent), New Brunswick (3.6 per cent), and Nova Scotia (3.7 per cent).

Qualitative analysis

Overall, 579 pages of cleaned transcripts were collected as part of this study. This text was coded and analyzed using NVivo software. Coding themes were developed inductively, where codes were created as the data was analyzed. Themes were examined based on how frequently they were noted, as well as the intensity of the observation. Due to the small sample size, we cannot generalize to these populations.



Bibliography

- Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2005, SO 2005, c 11.
<https://www.canlii.org/en/on/laws/stat/so-2005-c-11/latest/so-2005-c-11.html#document>.
- Ameri, Mason, Lisa Schur, Meera Adya, F. Scott Bentley, Patrick McKay, and Douglas Kruse. "The Disability Employment Puzzle: A Field Experiment on Employer Hiring Behavior." *ILR Review* 71, no. 2 (June 23, 2017): 329–64.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0019793917717474>.
- Barford, Victoria, and Andrew Parkin. *Mentorship in the Workplace: Employee Participation and Perspectives*. Environics Institute, March 2025. <https://fsc-ccf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/mentorship-in-the-workplace-employee-participation-and-perspectives-1.pdf>.
- Canadian Association for Supported Employment, "MentorAbility Canada." December 28, 2020. <https://www.supportedemployment.ca/initiatives/mentorability/>.
- Burton, Samantha, Elizabeth B. Raposa, Cyanea Y. S. Poon, Jan J. Geert, M. Stams, and Jean Rhodes. "Cross-age peer mentoring for youth: A meta-analysis." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 70, no. 1-2 (December 29, 2021): 211–27.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12579>.
- Canadian Association for Supported Employment. "MentorAbility Canada." December 28, 2020. <https://www.supportedemployment.ca/initiatives/mentorability/>.
- . "The Benefits of Mentorship." February 28, 2024.
<https://www.supportedemployment.ca/the-benefits-of-mentorship/>.
- Canadian Association for Supported Employment and Mentor Canada. *Mentoring for Persons Experiencing Disabilities: A Review of the Literature*. Canadian Association for Supported Employment, March 2024. <https://www.supportedemployment.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Mentoring-for-persons-experiencing-disability.pdf>.
- Canadian Association for Supported Employment. "The Benefits of Mentorship." Canadian Association for Supported Employment, February 28, 2024.
<https://www.supportedemployment.ca/the-benefits-of-mentorship/>.
- Chen, Yin-Che. "Enhancing teaching competence through bidirectional mentoring and structured on-the-job training model." *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning* 26, no. 3 (May 27, 2018): 267–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2018.1511948>.
- Conference Board of Canada, The. "Fostering Inclusion for People With Disability Through Mentorship: A Call to Action." The Conference Board of Canada, Forthcoming. .
- Cook, David A., Rebecca S. Bahn, and Ronald Menaker. "Speed mentoring: An innovative method to facilitate mentoring relationships." *Medical Teacher* 32, no. 8 (2010): 692–94. <https://doi.org/10.3109/01421591003686278>.
- Cook, Sam and David Peterka. "40+ Definitive Mentorship Statistics - 2024 Research Updates," February 2, 2024. <https://www.mentorcliq.com/blog/mentoring-stats>.
- Gignac, Monique A M et al. "Disclosure, Privacy and Workplace Accommodation of Episodic Disabilities: Organizational Perspectives on Disability Communication-Support Processes to Sustain Employment." *Journal of occupational rehabilitation* vol. 31,1 (2021): 153-165. doi:10.1007/s10926-020-09901-2
- Heron, Laura M., Rumi Agarwal, and Shanna L. Burke, "Mentoring Postsecondary Students with Intellectual Disabilities: Faculty and Staff Mentor Perspectives." *Education Sciences* 13, no. 2 (February 2023): 213. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13020213>.



- Ivey, Gary W., and Kathyne E. Dupré. "Workplace Mentorship: A Critical Review." *Journal of Career Development* 49, no. 3 (June 2022): 714–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845320957737>.
- Khalema, Nene Ernest, and Janki Shankar. "Perspectives on Employment Integration, Mental Illness and Disability, and Workplace Health." *Advances in Public Health* 2014, no. 1 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1155/2014/258614>.
- Loeper, Tara, and Ariel E. Schwartz. "Being a part of something': Experiences and perceived benefits of young adult peer mentors with intellectual/developmental disabilities and co-occurring mental health conditions." *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 36, no. 5 (2023): 1067–75. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.13117>.
- Mentor Canada. *The Mentoring Effect: Youth Experiencing Disabilities*. Accessed June 2, 2025. https://www.mentoringcanada.ca/sites/default/files/2022-08/The%20Mentoring%20Effect%20Youth%20Experiencing%20Disabilities%20EN_new.pdf.
- Prummer, Katharina, Salomé Human-Vogel, Marien Alet Graham, and Daniel Pittich. "The role of mentoring in developing leaders' emotional intelligence: exploring mentoring types, emotional intelligence, organizational factors, and gender." *Frontiers in Education* 9 (June 5, 2024). <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1393660>.
- Quinn, Jocey. "Mentoring: progressing women's careers in Higher Education, report for Equality Challenge Unit." Plymouth University, June 17, 2016. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304025152_Mentoring_progressing_women's_careers_in_Higher_Education_report_for_Equality_Challenge_Unit/link/5763e80408ae1658e2ea1f82/download?tp=eyJib250ZXh0Ijp7ImZpcnN0UGFnZSI6InNpZ251cCIsInBhZ2UiOiJwdWJsaWNhdGlvbiJ9fQ.
- Raju, Suneil A., Hey-Long Ching, Mustafa Jalal, Michelle S. Lau, Anupam Rej, F. W. David Tai, Gloria Tun and others. "Does reverse mentoring work in the NHS: a feasibility study of clinicians in practice." *BMJ Open* 12, no. 11 (November 1, 2022): e062361. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2022-062361>.
- Rubbi Nunan, Jennerdene L., Aysha B. Ebrahim, and Marius W. Stander. "Mentoring in the workplace: Exploring the experiences of mentor–mentee relations." *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology* 49 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v49i0.2067>.
- Statistics Canada. "Labour market characteristics of persons with and without disabilities in 2022: Results from the Labour Force Survey," August 30, 2023. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230830/dq230830a-eng.htm>.
- . "Barriers to accessibility among persons with disabilities in Canada," May 28, 2024. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2024018-eng.htm>.
- . "A demographic, employment and income profile of persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over in Canada, 2022." May 28, 2024. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2024001-eng.htm>.
- . "Labour market characteristics of persons with and without disabilities, 2023," June 13, 2024. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-222-x/71-222-x2024002-eng.htm>.
- Wool, Hillary, Brad Loftus, Miguel Carrasco, Ruth Ebeling, Ashley Dartnell, Gretchen May, Kaitlin Roh, and Lucia Vairo Marchione. "Your Workforce Includes People with Disabilities. Does Your People Strategy?" Boston Consulting Group, May 4, 2023. <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2023/devising-people-strategy-for-employees-with-disabilities-in-the-workplace>.

Acknowledgements



This research was conducted by The Conference Board of Canada in partnership with the Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE), a national association that facilitates opportunities for employment service providers, employers, and other partners to increase employment inclusion in Canada for persons experiencing disability. The research supports CASE in its mandate to increase the social and economic inclusion of persons experiencing disability and, specifically, in its MentorAbility Canada initiative which leverages facilitated short-term mentoring opportunities, networking and learning to increase workplace inclusion of persons experiencing disability in Canada.

This research was commissioned by CASE's MentorAbility Canada initiative, which is funded by the Government of Canada's Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities.

Many colleagues at The Conference Board of Canada helped to bring this research to life. This research initiative was designed and executed by Leah Ringwald, Associate Director, PhD; Diogo Borba, Senior Research Associate, PhD; and Tyler De Melo, Research Analyst, MA. Tabatha Thibault, Senior Research Associate, PhD, contributed to the survey development and analysis. Lindsay Coffin, Principal Research Associate, M.Sc., MBA, reviewed and provided feedback on the early drafts of the report. Dianne Williams, Vice President, and Liz Marcil, Associate Director, Human Capital, MA, reviewed and provided feedback on the final draft. This output was designed by Mallory Eliosoff, Senior Graphic Designer.

We also wish to thank our project partners and the members of the research advisory board who supported this research:

- **Véronique Church-Duplessis**, Senior Director, Research and Impact, Mentor Canada
- **Lindsay Evans**, Organizational Effectiveness & IDEA-B Lead, Home Hardware Stores Limited
- **Don Gallant**, National Director, Ready, Willing, and Able (RWA)
- **Michael Gottheil**, Senior Counsel, ARCH Disability Law Center
- **Maureen Haan**, President and CEO, Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW)
- **Marie Ryan**, Partner, Goss Gilroy Management Consultants
- **Lisa Noel Smith**, Director of Special Care Services, WorkSafeBC

We also thank the individuals who took the time to participate in this research as participants in our surveys, interviews, and roundtables.

Tyler De Melo, Lindsay Coffin, and Leah Ringwald

To cite this research: De Melo, Tyler, Lindsay Coffin, and Leah Ringwald. "Build Diverse Workforces: Strategies and Tools for Inclusive Mentorship." The Conference Board of Canada, October 2025.



Funded in part by the
Government of Canada's Opportunities
Fund for Persons with Disabilities





Forecasts and research often involve numerous assumptions and data sources, and are subject to inherent risks and uncertainties. This information is not intended as specific investment, accounting, legal, or tax advice. The responsibility for the findings and conclusions of this research rests entirely with The Conference Board of Canada.

An accessible version of this document for the visually impaired is available upon request.

Accessibility Officer, The Conference Board of Canada
Tel.: 613-526-3280 or 1-866-711-2262
Email: accessibility@conferenceboard.ca

Published in Canada | All rights reserved | Agreement No. 40063028



**The Conference
Board of Canada**



AERIC Inc. is an independent Canadian registered charity operating as The Conference Board of Canada, a trademark licensed from The Conference Board, Inc.



Where insights
meet impact