

Inclusive Workplace and Supply Council of Canada

Background

The Inclusive Workplace and Supply Council of Canada (IWSCC) is a Canadian non-profit created to allow Veterans and/or people with disabilities who own businesses to be officially recognized as Diverse Suppliers. The IWSCC assists business owners through a certification process that can expand their business opportunities to include some of Canada's leading brands and public-sector organizations. The IWSCC provides ongoing education and mentoring.

We work with corporate and public-sector members to help them connect with and understand the needs of Veterans and/or people with disabilities as Diverse Suppliers. This work will focus on aligning large procurement organizations with the right Diverse Suppliers to ensure proper fit. The IWSCC will offer best practices for procurement processes to be more inclusive, intuitively easy to understand and use effectively.

The IWSCC will conduct research and create advanced educational programs for large employers looking to make the shift from cultures of accommodation to a culture of inclusion for their disabled and/or Veteran employees. The programs will provide advanced research studies in partnership with leading non-profit and institutional partners to look at emerging trends, new methods and practical applications for true equality in the workplace.

The IWSCC is based upon the founding principle of partnering for success and a model of true collaboration with partners, industry organizations, and its Diverse Suppliers.

Every Canadian has a right to meaningful work; to support themselves and their families. For Veterans and/or people with disabilities, that right is more of a privilege or not recognized at all. Across Canada, they are denied employment, paid less than peers and are less likely to hold management positions.

Some quick facts...

- *In 2011, the employment rate of Canadians aged 25 to 64 with disabilities was 49%, compared with 79% of Canadians without a disability.*
- *Approximately 1 in 2 university graduates, with or without a disability, held a professional occupation. However, graduates with a disability were less likely to hold a management position and earned less than those without a disability, especially among men.*
- *"A recent U.S. survey found U.S. Veterans 45% more likely than the non-veteran population to be self-employed. If the Canadian experience is similar, the percentage of self-employed Veterans in Canada would be about 15%." Financial post - 2014*
- *From the Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2012). Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics Summary. "a substantially higher rate of people with disabilities are self-employed (11.8%) compared to the general population (6.6%)."*
- *"For policy makers, our research has two main messages: First, 'one-size-fits-all' types of training programs for entrepreneurs may not cater to the specific needs of entrepreneurs with disabilities. A heavier emphasis on building mentoring relationships and providing business knowledge is needed for this group since they enter the start-up process with lower levels of education and more restricted access to social support than other entrepreneurs. Second, making sure that people with disabilities do not fall further into poverty is essential if we want to encourage entrepreneurship in this group." (Entrepreneurial entry by people with disabilities -Maija Renko, Sarah Parker Harris and Kate Caldwell; The University of Illinois at Chicago, USA*

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People with disabilities and Veterans represent one of the last areas of true discrimination and stigma in society and the workplace. This must change.

For decades, these groups have started businesses as a means of survival because of critical challenges to entering the workforce. Over time, entrepreneurship has become the standard for many in this community with a driving commitment to proving their value within the business community.

The IWSCC now gives not just a voice, but a platform to ensure the same opportunities for procurement and employment as any other Canadian entrepreneur or employee.