

BRITISH COLUMBIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS LEADERSHIP CONSULTING PROJECT - JUNE 2021

OPERATION PHOENIX

INTEGRATING INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT WITH SHAREWARES



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The creators and participants of this report would like to begin by acknowledging that we are fortunate to be able to study, live, and gather on the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Selílwitlh (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

[ShareWares](#) is a Vancouver-based zero-waste startup that plans to embed circular economy principles into regular business and restaurant operations through the distribution, collection, sanitization, and redistribution of reusable food, beverage, and product containers. Because this business model involves repetitive manual work to clean the containers, there is an opportunity to find mutual benefit in providing flexible jobs to communities experiencing barriers to employment. The purpose of the Operation Phoenix project is to create a strategic approach for ShareWares to hire, train and integrate individuals experiencing barriers to employment into their operation.

This project was done in collaboration with the Share Reuse Repair Initiative ([SRRI](#)) and the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation ([SRDC](#)). SRRI is a project of the MakeWay Charitable Society focused on creating a robust sharing, reuse and repair sector, including a Just Circular Recovery and Transition Program ([JCRT](#)) with an emphasis on creating just circular jobs. The SRDC is a non-profit research organization that aims to assist policy-makers in creating the best programs for all Canadians, but especially those who face disadvantages or barriers¹.

Research

A combination of primary and secondary research methods were used to identify communities that ShareWares could potentially work with. The unique barriers experienced by each community were researched as well as how employees and their employers had worked to overcome these barriers. Research was also done to find Vancouver-based employment programs that mediate between employers and employees. The following communities were the focus of this project: individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Downtown-Eastside Residents, New Immigrants & Refugees, and Youth.

Findings

Findings were grouped into three themes:

1. **Value to the Employer:** Employee retention, customer attraction, team creativity, and grants for training are all reported benefits employers can expect from inclusive employment programs.

¹ srdc.org/about-us.aspx

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2. **Value to the Employee:** Inclusive employment can fulfill needs in the community which often slip through the gaps of traditional business and government structures. But for employment to be successful the needs and abilities of the employee must be compatible with the workplace and tasks involved.
 3. **Supportive Work Environment:** Building a supportive work environment through training and empowering staff or *'meeting people where they are'* can ensure the long term success of inclusive employment.

Recommendation

Along with ongoing support and training, the following three phases of implementation are recommended for ShareWares to effectively integrate inclusive employment into their operations. The plan will not only scale with them as they grow, but create value for the business, the employees, and the circular economy.

1. **Start Small:** Connect with employment organizations working with the Autism community to fill 1-2 positions.
2. **Fill the Gaps:** Connect with employment organizations working with youth to fill outstanding positions.
3. **Future Considerations:** Partner with DTES community organizations once ShareWares' business operations are stable to scale up to hire more employees from DTES.

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GLOSSARY

Barriers to employment - Any challenge that may prevent an individual from obtaining and retaining a job. Examples include mental health, developmental, physical disabilities, addiction, homelessness, language barriers, and more².

ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) - A developmental condition that involves persistent challenges in social interaction, speech and nonverbal communication³.

DTES (Downtown Eastside) communities - Consist of individuals housed and underhoused in this traditionally low-income neighbourhood who face multiple layers of barriers such as addiction or mental health.

Immigrants and refugees - Individuals who originate from outside of Canada but recently moved here either by choice or because they were forced to leave their homeland.

Youth - Individuals between the age of 16 and 30 (as defined by WorkBC programs).⁴

Neurodiverse - A term to describe individuals experiencing characteristics associated with autism or other neurologically atypical patterns of thought or behaviour.

Neurotypical - A term to describe individuals who do not experience the above characteristics and who are of “typical” developmental, cognitive and intellectual abilities.

Inclusive employment - Hiring and operational practices that intentionally aim to dismantle the individual or systemic barriers that prevent underrepresented groups from accessing employment while creating a supportive workplace that allows them to thrive.

² dpistaffing.com/about-dpi-staffing/what-is-a-barrier-to-employment/

³ autism.org/what-is-autism/

⁴ workbc.ca/getmedia/

INTRODUCTION

The following section outlines the project’s sponsor, sub-sponsors, how this project came to be, and it’s overall objectives.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This consulting project was conducted by the BCIT Sustainable Business Leadership consulting team for the client, Cody Irwin from ShareWares, along with the support from Susanna Gurr, Research Director at SRDC, Alice Henry from the SRRI, with Rosemary Cooper as the main faculty advisor and Alan Shapiro as the supporting faculty advisor. This report outlines the research process, results, and recommendations on how ShareWares can move forward in pursuing a system for inclusive employment.



ABOUT SHAREWARES

ShareWares, led by CEO Cody Irwin, is a Vancouver-based zero-waste startup with a mission to reduce the public’s reliance on single-use plastics. They plan to do this by partnering with restaurants and office buildings in Vancouver to distribute, collect, wash, and redistribute reusable beverage and food containers.

ABOUT THE COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

Both SRRI and the SRDC played essential roles in the journey of this project. As a Research Director at SRDC and Advisor to the SRRI JCRT program, Susanna Gurr’s expertise in research, and creating and implementing inclusive hiring provided invaluable direction to this project. Alice

Henry, of the SRRI, was able to provide insights on the business side of this project with knowledge of Vancouver's emerging circular economy and how it can align with inclusive employment.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The idea for this project came about through a mutual interest between ShareWares and SRRI's [JCRT program](#) to pursue inclusive employment projects in the circular economy. In the current linear economy, raw materials are extracted, made into a product then disposed of in a landfill or incinerated. The transition to a circular economy anticipates more labour-oriented jobs as more resources are reused, recycled and recovered⁵ creating new opportunities for a wide range of people, especially for those who face barriers to employment. This is a valuable opportunity for both the employer and the employee, with various shared benefits. For employers, inclusive employment practices often provide many competitive business advantages; they are two times more likely to meet or exceed financial goals, and are likely to generate 1.4 times more revenue than businesses without inclusive hiring practices⁶. For employees, fitting jobs can help them overcome barriers and transform their lives positively, and jobs can often turn into lifelong employment. This presents an opportunity to create win-win partnerships between employers and employees with shared values.

GOAL STATEMENT

Create a strategic approach for ShareWares to hire, train and integrate inclusive employment into their operations.

⁵ medium.com/circleeconomy/leaving-no-one-behind-learning-from-social-enterprises

⁶ mission-possible.ca/pages/untapped-talent

OBJECTIVES

- Understand and document the success, challenges, lessons, and risk mitigations learned by other businesses that have employed and worked with persons with barriers
- Research resources such as employment support organizations and funding opportunities that could help ShareWares plan and implement inclusive hiring practices
- Provide recommendations to support ShareWares ability to successfully employ individuals with barriers including the most compatible types of workers to hire, relevant employment support organizations and wage subsidy programs, and key steps and phasing of implementation.

METHODOLOGY

The following section will outline how the project's research was conducted and the resources used.

SECONDARY RESEARCH

A literature review was conducted and focused on selected communities of individuals facing barriers which ShareWares could potentially hire from; the ASD, DTES, and Immigrant and Refugee communities. The research covered the challenges they encounter, how companies and organizations overcome these barriers, and existing cases of employment programs which mediate between employers and employees. These groups were established based on pre-existing relationships between ShareWares and the communities, in addition to the Operation Phoenix team's backgrounds and connections. Common barriers to accessing employment for each group were listed and analyzed to identify areas of overlap. Later in the project, consideration was also given to urban indigenous groups and youth. At this stage, the research

was categorized by community, although additional research was conducted from an employer perspective to outline ways to support barriered employees.

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Following the secondary research, interviews were conducted with the three communities through online video conferencing platforms and phone calls. Two types of perspectives were gathered: **businesses** employing workers from these communities, and **organizations** liaising with the communities and employers.

- **Businesses:** to gain insight about their experiences employing individuals facing barriers, and how inclusive employment influenced or impacted their operations and employees.
- **Organizations & Employment Agencies:** groups that provide employment services to individuals facing barriers through personalized training and coaching programs. These agencies partner with businesses to support the job placement, onboarding process and the maintenance of these jobs.

Interviews were designed to address outstanding research gaps recognized in the literature review. The resulting key findings informed recommendations for ShareWares on how to implement inclusive employment into their business. The following areas were investigated:

- How employers connect with employees and conduct interviews
- Employers' responsibility for onboarding and training
- Scheduling and flexibility of work
- Rate and method of compensation, and working around disability benefit
- Steps to mitigate risk while employing high-risk individuals including insurance policies
- General ecosystem that exists for low barrier employment in Vancouver
- Opportunities for ShareWares to collaborate with employment mediator agencies

Additionally, an interview was conducted with Cody to understand the types of tasks ShareWares would need to fulfill through inclusive employment. These tasks include but not limited to (full list of tasks in [Appendix A](#)):

- Take pallets to washing area with pallet jacks
- Sort different containers into organized piles
- Load dish racks to clean and sanitize
- Scan QR code on clean containers and cases
- Secure pallets for transport and move for storage for redistribution

INTERVIEW PROCESS

There were 6 businesses, 6 employment service providers and 2 individuals with expertise with ASD in the workplace who were interviewed for 30 to 45 minutes. All interviewees were sent common questions with a few additional tailored ones (refer to [Appendix B](#) for a full list of the common interview questions). Minimum of two team members attended the virtual interviews, where one focused on conducting the interview, and the other on taking notes.

DATA ANALYSIS

Coding was used to translate the raw qualitative interview data into broad themes, which informed key findings described later in this report. The coding process began by using a predefined set of codes (a code is similar to a theme) that were based on the questions asked during interviews. Recordings and transcripts of each interview were analyzed for content relating to the predetermined codes and for recurring themes across interviews.

Since not all the key items or recurring themes revealed fit in the predetermined codes, the team introduced additional relevant codes. The codes were further adjusted to ensure there was no overlap in the information contained. For example, the code *'Employment Value'* was added to address the idea of why many businesses hired those with barriers, and how they made the

experience mutually valuable for the employer and employee. This turned out to be a critical key finding, but the information included in the code overlapped with information in the '*Internal Support for Workers*' code and so the two codes were merged. The final set of codes to emerge were the following:

- Internal Support for Workers
- External Support for the Company
- Business Practices
- Connecting with Potential Applicants
- Payment Methods

REFOCUSING ON KEY COMMUNITIES

The primary research brought us to the conclusion that Immigrants and Refugees communities would be least suitable for the type of jobs provided by ShareWares, and was therefore withdrawn from further analysis. The findings aligned with the secondary research where there often exists a misconception that immigrants and refugees are desperate for work and provide cheap labour. However, the opposite is true, as many immigrants arrive in Canada with more education and training than the average Canadian⁷ and reach out to employment agencies to advance their skills to pursue long-term developing careers.

Likewise, refugees and temporary foreign workers gravitate away from the type of jobs provided by ShareWares. It is important to recognize that most Immigrants and Refugees have families to support which drives them to generate a higher income, especially with the expensive cost of living in the Lower Mainland. Aside from income, perception of the work plays a large part for this community. For example, MOSAIC and IKEA Canada have developed refugee employment programs providing training and career opportunities⁸. Refugees would most likely choose a job

⁷ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2019022-eng.htm>

⁸ <https://www.mosaicbc.org/news/mosaic-partners-with-ikea-to-support-refugees/>

opportunity at IKEA rather than a roofing job that pays higher. This is due to the perception of the IKEA job as a “clean” non-laborious indoor work, whereas roofing is a labour intensive outdoor work. In addition, an IKEA job can open up opportunities for career advancement.

KEY FINDINGS

Amalgamation of primary and secondary research led the team to six key findings, which were paired and grouped into three themes.

KEY FINDING #1: VALUE TO EMPLOYER

There exists many incentives for organizations to pursue inclusive employment beyond the desire to live out altruistic values. A number of positive outcomes were outlined by the *Untapped Talent - B2B Guide To Innovative Hiring and Retention*⁹ report led by Mission Possible, including employee retention, customer attraction, and team creativity. For a company like ShareWares that is involved in high turnover roles like dishwashing, it is a great benefit for these intentional employment programs to draw people towards the mission of the organization. Beyond that, flexible employment can fill needs in both the company and community, and allow individuals to contribute in more manageable ways than what is usually available at traditional businesses. These reciprocal relationships work to embed the company’s mission into the community.

“People want to work for us to be part of our inclusive environment.”

- Lisa Beecroft, Co-owner of Gabi & Jules

⁹https://accessibleemployers.ca/wp-content/uploads/Untapped-Talent_Supportive-Employers-Guide_03032020_WEBREADY-Accessible-FINAL-3.pdf

FINANCIAL OR WAGE SUBSIDIES

Wage subsidies are an excellent resource to assist businesses in creating low barrier employment. It's important to note that in the context of inclusive employment a wage subsidy is meant to temporarily supplement employment cost rather than as a "discount" to business operations. The subsidy will provide a partial offset to the cost of training for someone who is expected to take longer than the average person to adjust into employment. This can include those with disabilities or youth who lack work experience. In Vancouver, subsidies can be obtained directly through WorkBC or with the help of the non-profit Open Door Group. Both organizations offer support throughout the process.

KEY FINDING #2: VALUE TO EMPLOYEE

It is important that shared value is created through prioritizing the individual needs of the employee. Employers must commit to generating meaningful work and this often entails work cultures that act as an inclusive community. Having purpose behind the business and associated tasks are valued outside of regular financial benefits for the company.

***“The job works around the individual,
not the other way around.”***

- Johanna Li, Program Manager at EMBERS Eastside Works

EMPLOYMENT COMPATIBILITY

The research strongly indicates that inclusive employment opportunities are more successful and longer lasting when the needs and abilities of the employee are compatible with the workplace and tasks involved. An employee who finds interest and enjoyment in their work is ultimately

going to find higher value in working for ShareWares and, in turn, will perform better and remain invested in the organization. The nature of the work and tasks being offered at ShareWares is repetitive and may be of high value to those who enjoy repetition and routine. Many individuals with ASD and other developmental delays experience this and thrive in jobs like these. Employment compatibility is not only important in considering the tasks, but for the workplace environment as a whole. When it comes to workplace support and communications, additional accommodations may need to be put in place for language barriers, communication challenges or differences in learning pace.

Additionally, it was found that employment projects are more successful when the framing of the job is 'inclusive' rather than 'low barriered'. Employees that want to meaningfully contribute do not appreciate the negative connotation of a 'low barriered' job.

PURPOSE-BASED EMPLOYMENT

It is important that shared value is created to both the employer and the barriered persons employed. Employers do this first by committing to generating meaningful work for employees with barriers and then to a variety of supportive practices. This entails things such as understanding and prioritizing the individual needs of the employee, fostering work cultures that act as an inclusive community, and having purpose behind the business and its tasks. Collectively, these emphasize value to the barriered employees beyond just financial benefit. Businesses with inclusive employment have found that meeting the needs and connecting with barriered employees is a key to success.

KEY FINDING #3: CREATING A SUPPORTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

It is important that a business's entire team of staff be understanding and supportive of the barriered employee(s), and that they contribute to a supportive work environment. As part of this,

there should also be enough support for the non-barriered employees to ensure that they are equipped with the right skills and environment to carry on with their tasks while working with barriered employees. As part of the onboarding process, job coaches from organizations like Open Door Group can provide tips on how to communicate with the barriered individual at work. There are also businesses that internally hire support workers who assist and check in with barriered employees with issues such as mental health fluctuation and workplace communication. This takes some burden off of the surrounding staff, allowing them to focus on their jobs.

“Customized employment needs to be a win-win for both employer and the client.”

- Christine Buchanan, Director of Employment Services & Training at Open Door Group

EMPOWERING SURROUNDING STAFF

It was apparent through the interviews that there must be reliable staff on site to supervise and support employees to work in a flexible manner, whether through flexible work schedules or having patience as the individuals adapt to the work. The supervisors of these employees should either have a background in working with individuals facing barriers, or have been through training to have an understanding of the dynamics of these individuals. It is also important that there are staff outside of the immediate supervisors who can support when issues arise (i.e. if an employee doesn't show up to work). It has also been mentioned several times that a good ratio of barriered versus non-barriered employees is approximately 1:5.

MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

The concept of “meeting people where they are” came up frequently in both primary and secondary research. Initially it was in connection to the Income-Generation Continuum, created by The DTES Information Hub Survey Project¹⁰ (see [Appendix C](#) - Income-Generation Continuum for a visual representation of the three stages of the continuum). By mapping phases for DTES residents to successfully reenter the workforce, the continuum intends to assist in better labour force engagement and practices. The continuum emphasises the need to accommodate different capacity levels within the workforce, through employer interviews this was seen in practice as flexibility in assessing employee output. Schedule flexibility is also a key aspect of meeting people where they are. Many employers interviewed cited reliability in adhering to strict schedules as an area where their employees struggled. There are many different reasons why a person may struggle to commit to a set amount of hours, or may not show up to a scheduled shift, and it’s important for employers to build schedules with this in mind. One employment provider expertly described this process as “the job working around the individual, not the other way around.”

EMPLOYER COMMITMENT

A consistent piece of information that arose during research was the importance of employers to be honest about their underlying motivation to pursue inclusive employment. Many interviews emphasized the necessity of determination, commitment to the communities they are hoping to work with, and to remember that the goal is more complex than simply operating the business. Often employers approach agencies with good intention but can be unsuccessful due to the difficulty and effort required to help individuals to obtain stable employment. The following are examples of where commitment is needed:

¹⁰http://ledlab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/DTES-Information-Hub-Survey-Project-Summary-Report_bran ded.compressed1.pdf

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- Leadership is key to transforming the work environment and to support a new behaviour for all staff. By stating the mission to pursue an inclusive working environment, the organization-wide commitment will empower all staff to be a force for positive change.
 - Long term relationship building/personal connection to deepen relationships
 - Not simply employment but a culture and investment to the people. Commitment can be supported by ongoing education and coaching possibly through the support of employment service organizations

RECOMMENDATIONS

The section below first outlines general recommendations for any business looking to move towards more inclusive hiring practices, followed by a strategic approach for ShareWares.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Any organization or business considering an inclusive employment project must first define why inclusive employment is an interest to its business. According to polls run at a workshop focused on inclusive employment within the circular economy, the most common motivation for businesses showing interest in this topic was that it was integral to its values as a circular business¹¹. For others the motivation was to fulfill their Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (JEDI) or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) goals¹². There is a clear opportunity to include current employees in the process of implementing inclusive employment as any top down approach will struggle without company wide buy-in or when strategies do not go to plan.

¹¹ “Minutes of the Growing Inclusive Circular Jobs Meeting.” Share Reuse Repair Initiative - Just Circular Recovery and Transition Program, 19 May 2021, Vancouver (via Zoom)

¹² “Minutes of the Growing Inclusive Circular Jobs Meeting.” Share Reuse Repair Initiative - Just Circular Recovery and Transition Program, 19 May 2021, Vancouver (via Zoom)

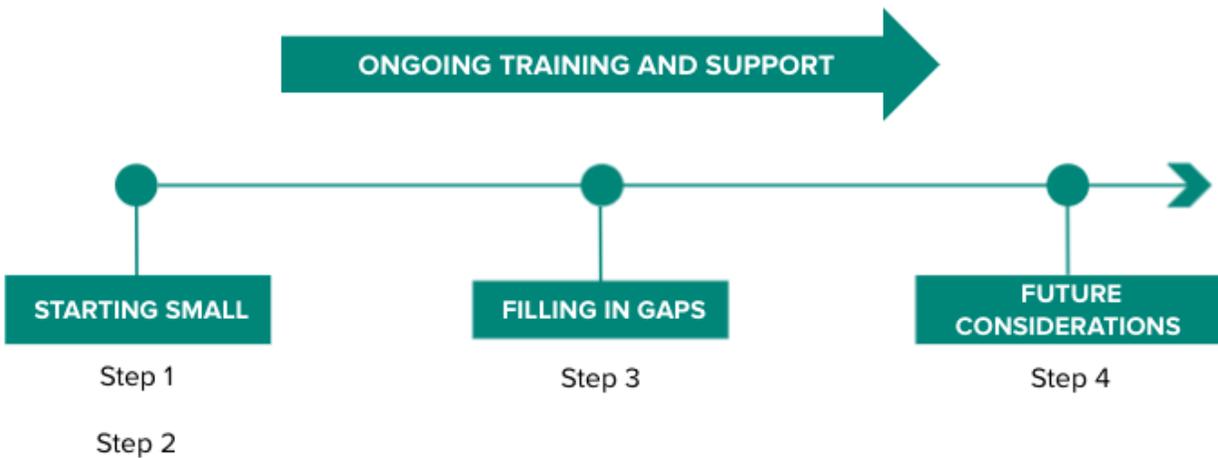
For a business based in Canada, or more specifically in the province of BC, reviewing the Untapped Talent - B2B Guide To Innovative Hiring and Retention¹³ led by Mission Possible will help develop strategies for inclusive employment and bring about some initial insights. By completing the Business Self Assessment included in the document, any organization can begin to contextualize current and future opportunities with inclusive employment.

Finally, steps should be taken to build community and expectations for a budget and timeline. By reaching out to other businesses and organizations whose mission is to advance inclusive employment, a company can receive consultation and support for the preparation and implementation of an inclusive employment project. Refer to [Appendix D](#) for a list of some Vancouver organizations that offer employment or other relevant services.

CUSTOMIZED PLAN FOR SHAREWARES

Several organizations that were interviewed praised ShareWares for recognizing the role that inclusive employment can play in the circular economy, and for taking the initiative to explore building it into their operations early in their development. Given the resources and commitment required for a successful approach to inclusive employment practices that the research uncovered, the team created a customized recommendation for ShareWares that is grouped into three stages; *starting small, filling the gaps, and future considerations*. Additionally, the recommendations include ongoing practices of training and support that happen throughout all phases.

¹³accessibleemployers.ca/wp-content/uploads/Untapped-Talent_Supportive-Employers-Guide



STARTING SMALL

Starting small involves the following two steps.

STEP 1: Connect with the Autism community to employ 1-2 individuals

RATIONALE:

- ❖ By starting with only one or two barriered employees, ShareWares can build capacity to accommodate barriered workers while running a functional business. Working with individuals with high barriers of employment is complex. It takes time and effort to build a relationship with them in order to make the employment a successful one. There is no shortcut to this, and employers will have to learn through trials and errors. It will not be realistic to take on anymore than this, as the burden will fall too heavy on the business and employees for this to work out. For this reason, there are many cases where employers choose not to pursue this despite coming in with the right intentions; it simply was too much. Although individuals with ASD may face challenges with soft skills required for workplace communication, in the right environment, with the appropriate tasks, these individuals can be reliable and engaged team members. While not all individuals with ASD are interested in unskilled work, those who are tend find routine and repetitive tasks to be

pleasant and enjoyable. There are also less scheduling issues expected compared to DTES residents, who face challenges with set work shifts.

IMPLEMENTATION:

- ❖ **Work with Anjela Godber from Pacific Autism Family Network (PAFN) for potential candidates and support.** PAFN carries potential candidates through their Employment pre-employment training program¹⁴. Communicate with Anjela to provide work experience opportunities to their participants, and discuss potentials to transition to ongoing employment. Anjela, in collaboration with Open Door Group, can support employment with necessary resources.
- ❖ **Reach out to Open Door Group** (an employment service organization with expertise in providing meaningful opportunities to individuals facing barriers to employment) for their Opportunities Fund¹⁵. This program supports employers looking to hire barriered individuals through providing job coaches and customized employer support. A reliable job coach will provide constant support throughout the employment to both the autistic individual, and the employer and surrounding employees for successful onboarding. Open Door Group can support existing candidates from PAFN with funding and other resources, or can match a new candidate with ShareWares from their pool of registered job seekers, as an affiliate organization of WorkBC. The service is free of charge.

STEP 2: Apply for Work BC wage subsidies through Open Door Group

RATIONALE:

- ❖ **WorkBC offers wage support that partially offsets the cost for training and onboarding new ASD and youth employees.** They provide subsidies for up to five active employees

¹⁴ <https://pacificautismfamily.com/adult-employment-programs/>

¹⁵ <https://www.opendoorgroup.org/programs/oppsfund/>

during a six month timeline. Individuals with disabilities qualify as WorkBC's priority clients, who are eligible to receive a higher percentage of subsidies¹⁶.

IMPLEMENTATION:

- ❖ **As part of their employment support, Open Door Group will guide ShareWares through the application process.** The subsidy will likely be in the form of the Opportunities Fund (a federally funded subsidy designed to support persons with barriers to employment gain and retain meaningful jobs), or a standard WorkBC subsidy, whichever provides better support for ShareWares.

FILLING THE GAPS

As outlined below, the following phase is designed to fill additional role requirements.

STEP 3: Employ youth to fill outstanding operational roles at ShareWares

RATIONALE:

- ❖ While youth often face barriers to employment due to the lack of experience, they generally require less supervision onsite and will be a valuable addition to the operational team. **ShareWares will be making a positive social impact by providing youth the opportunity to gain experience and income.** Additionally, youth aged between 16-30 also are classified as WorkBC's priority clients, making ShareWares eligible for a higher percentage of their wage subsidies.

IMPLEMENTATION:

- ❖ **Work with Open Door Group.** In addition to the support they can give to potential candidates with ASD, they can help find youth candidates with the best fit for the tasks at ShareWares.

¹⁶ <https://www.workbc.ca/getmedia/3532dbe8-f084-4022-bd3c-8f9e422fa4/WS-Guide.pdf.aspx>

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The final phase of this implementation plan is outlined below.

STEP 4: Ramp up inclusive hiring when operations are stable and consistent

RATIONALE:

- ❖ **Timing is key for strategic implementation.** Starting small allows ShareWares to build employees and job positions as it grows and create accommodations along the way. Once operations are solidified, filling more positions with flexible employment options will be easier. At this point it's recommended that ShareWares reach out to organizations in the DTES to partner with. Proximity to ShareWares and the large talent pool these organizations can draw from will allow ShareWares to fill multiple positions as it scales.

IMPLEMENTATION:

- ❖ Many organizations are available within the DTES to partner with, including Embers Eastside Works or Open Door Group. **It is recommended that ShareWares continue to work with Open Door Group to source candidates from the DTES.** Open Door Group can offer support in the same way they would with ASD candidates.

ONGOING TRAINING AND SUPPORT

In addition to the previously outlined steps, it is recommended that ShareWares implement the following training and support practices on an ongoing basis.

RATIONALE:

- ❖ **Regardless of barriers every employee is going to be different so naturally inclusive employment requires ongoing commitment.** Here it's important for ShareWares to revisit key findings by asking questions like "am I still creating value for my employees? And "Am I still creating a supportive work environment?" This is important for both barriered and non-barriered staff. For example, non-barriered staff may not have had prior experience

interacting with individuals who experience barriers such as developmental disabilities or ASD. One of the barriers faced by this particular group is challenges in communication and social interactions with colleagues. Staff need to be prepared to connect and interact with employees who may communicate through different means, engage in behaviours they are not accustomed to and may need additional time and patience. It is recommended that all staff working at ShareWares, in particular those who will be interacting closely with the employees with barriers, gain some background understanding of what to expect and some strategies in how to best support their colleagues.

IMPLEMENTATION:

- ❖ **As early as possible, have all staff complete the Autism and Neurodiversity in the Workplace¹⁷ program** that is developed by the UBC Centre for Interdisciplinary Research and Collaboration in Autism. This is a free, self paced course made up of five modules to help employers and employees to get a better understanding of ASD. It also provides resources in how to better support employees with ASD and in creating an inclusive workplace environment in general. Another resource that would be helpful to ShareWares' ongoing operations is the Government of Canada's Guide to Planning Inclusive Meetings¹⁸. Regular check-ins or anonymous surveys to track employee satisfaction are some additional ways ShareWares can keep track of their ongoing support. Setting goals or KPIs using meaningful metrics related to the representation of the communities they work with is another important aspect to this. During one interview, a business owner suggested that ShareWares could plan to increase the percent of their workforce employed through organizational partnerships by a set amount each year.

¹⁷ <https://circa.educ.ubc.ca/autism-in-the-workplace/>

¹⁸ www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/arc/inclusive-meetings

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The circular economy is still a relatively novel concept and space, especially to those who do not necessarily work in sustainable business. As it emerges, there is a huge opportunity to tap into a relatively untapped labour market to bring additional value to the circular economy as a whole, while opening up a range of meaningful opportunities to barriered communities. Because of the novelty around circular economies, much of the conversation still remains on defining this space. The findings and recommendations from this report will help ShareWares to pilot this initiative and set an example for other businesses in the circular economy. SRRRI and SRDC have the opportunity to carry this research forward and bring this connection to life.

CONCLUSION

The key findings and recommendations outlined above serve as a guide for ShareWares to integrate inclusive employment into their circular business practices. Secondary research was conducted to better understand the barriers being faced by the three communities that had been identified, in addition to understanding the perspective of employers who had similar initiatives in place. Once a solid foundation was established, interviews were conducted to gather information from individuals with experience implementing inclusive employment projects and to identify which communities would be best suited to the tasks and work environment outlined by ShareWares.

The key findings highlight value and fulfilment to both employer and employee through the creation of a safe, supportive and inclusive environment. With a heavy emphasis on relationship building and patience throughout the process, we hope that these findings and resources will be an asset as ShareWares continues to grow.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - List of Tasks at ShareWares

The following list outlines the tasks to be completed by ShareWares workers:

- Prep loading area for arrival (move items, vehicles pallets)
- Answer door, open loading door, and organize dropoff/pickup
- Unload cases onto pallets
- Secure cases on pallets for moving them
- Take pallets to the washing area with pallet jacks
- Unload cases from pallet + take out contents
- Sort different containers into organized piles with similar/same types
- Individually unstack items that are nested into each other
- Put heavily soiled containers in soak bins
- Dump soak bins
- Refill soak bins and add detergents
- Spray out any leftover contents in sink
- Load dish racks
- Catch trays coming out of washer
- May need to hand dry containers with towels or put items on dry racks
- Scan qr code on clean containers and cases
- Quality check - inspect each item
- Load containers into cases
- Stack cases on pallet
- Secure pallets for transport and move for storage
- Prep loading bay for pick up
- Move pallets to loading bay for pickup
- Wash+dry the drying towels
- Stack and store empty dish racks
- Squeegee+mop floor ratio of total (30 total minutes/day)
- Stack and store empty drying shelving units
- Clean mobile sinks/bins and manage waste/compost
- Clean other areas of the facility (eg washrooms and staff kitchen)

Appendix B - List of Interview Questions

Employers:

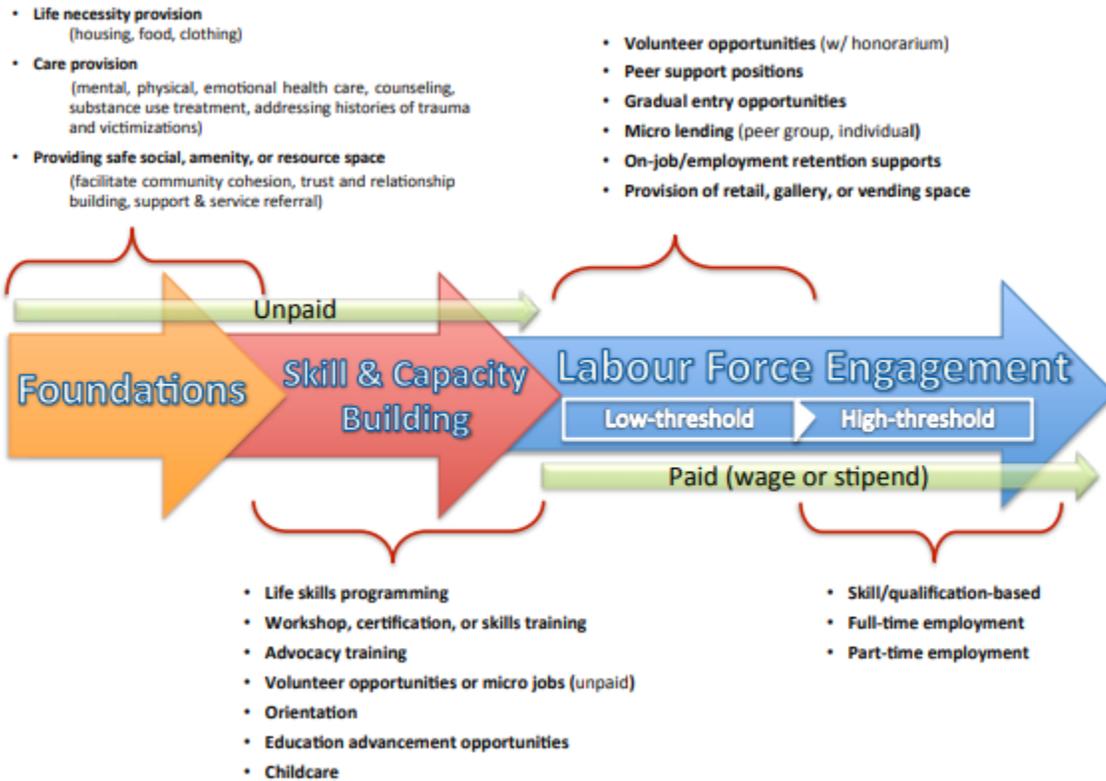
- How did you get connected with applicants? Was it through a particular staffing agency?
- Did you directly interview the applicants? If so, was it different from traditional interview styles?
- What kind of tasks do your workers with barriers most enjoy or thrive with?
- What was your process to fit employees with barriers into your business? Did you fit the employee into existing tasks, or did you adjust the tasks to accommodate the employees?
- If you're comfortable sharing, can you tell us how much you pay your workers?
- Do you have to work around disability benefits that they may be receiving? If so, how do you accommodate them? Or do you provide a living wage that allows them to stay off of disability benefits?
- For workers that may not have bank accounts or other governmental profiles, how do you compensate them? Is cash an option? If so, are there any administrative barriers to providing cash revenue?
- Can you identify some of the risks you encountered at your workplace, and what were the steps taken to mitigate these risks?
- Do you have additional insurance policies to accommodate your workplace? If so, what prompted you to apply these policies? What does it cover?

Employment service/community support organizations:

- How do you work to connect the individuals with barriers to employment? I.e. partnerships, job boards
- Do you continue to provide support to individuals once they are employed? If so, what kinds of support do you offer?
- Do you provide on-site support?
- Do you work with companies to provide training on how to accommodate workers with diverse needs?
- Are there any specific on-the-job risks for the group (Autistic, DTES residents, immigrants/refugees)?
- How do you mitigate the risks?
- Any insurance provided?
- Do you provide wage subsidies and unpaid employment experience?
- What percentage or amount is the subsidy? How long is this provided for?
- What are the hours provided for unpaid employment?
- What is the best hiring option for a small company? Do you have an example of a small company that you have successfully placed workers at in the past?

Appendix C - Income Generation Continuum

Income-generation continuum created by the DTES Information Hub Survey Project reflecting the concept of “meeting people where they are,” emphasizing the need to accommodate different capacity levels within the workforce



Source: [DTES Information Hub Survey Project](#)

Appendix D - Organizations Offering Employment Services

Organization	Service
Open Door Group	WorkBC affiliated employment agency with expertise in connecting persons with disabilities to meaningful work
Pacific Autism Family Network	Support organization for individuals with ASD; offers adult employment training programs (doesn't do employment placements)
Embers Eastside Works	Employment/Peer program in DTES
Mission Possible	DTES organization that supports those in poverty through individual coaching and employment training (doesn't do employment placements)
MOSAIC	Settlement non-profit organization in Canada serving the newcomers and individuals from diverse backgrounds
Kinsight	Non-profit serving individuals with developmental delays and disabilities
Ready Willing and Able	Provide employment related services and people with an intellectual disability or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
Coast Mental Health	Non-profit providing various supporting services such as housing and employment for individuals living with mental challenges

Appendix E - Recommendations Overview

PHASE	STEP	ACTION
Starting small	1	Collaborate with Anjela from PAFN and Open Door Group to hire 1-2 workers with ASD
Starting small	2	Apply for wage subsidies through Open Door Group
Fill the gaps	3	Employ youth through Open Door Group to fill outstanding roles
Future Considerations	4	Ramp up inclusive hiring from the DTES community through Open Door Group
Future Considerations	Ongoing	All employees to complete online training module 'Autism and Neurodiversity in the Workplace' as early as possible
Future Considerations	Ongoing	Measure and track progress