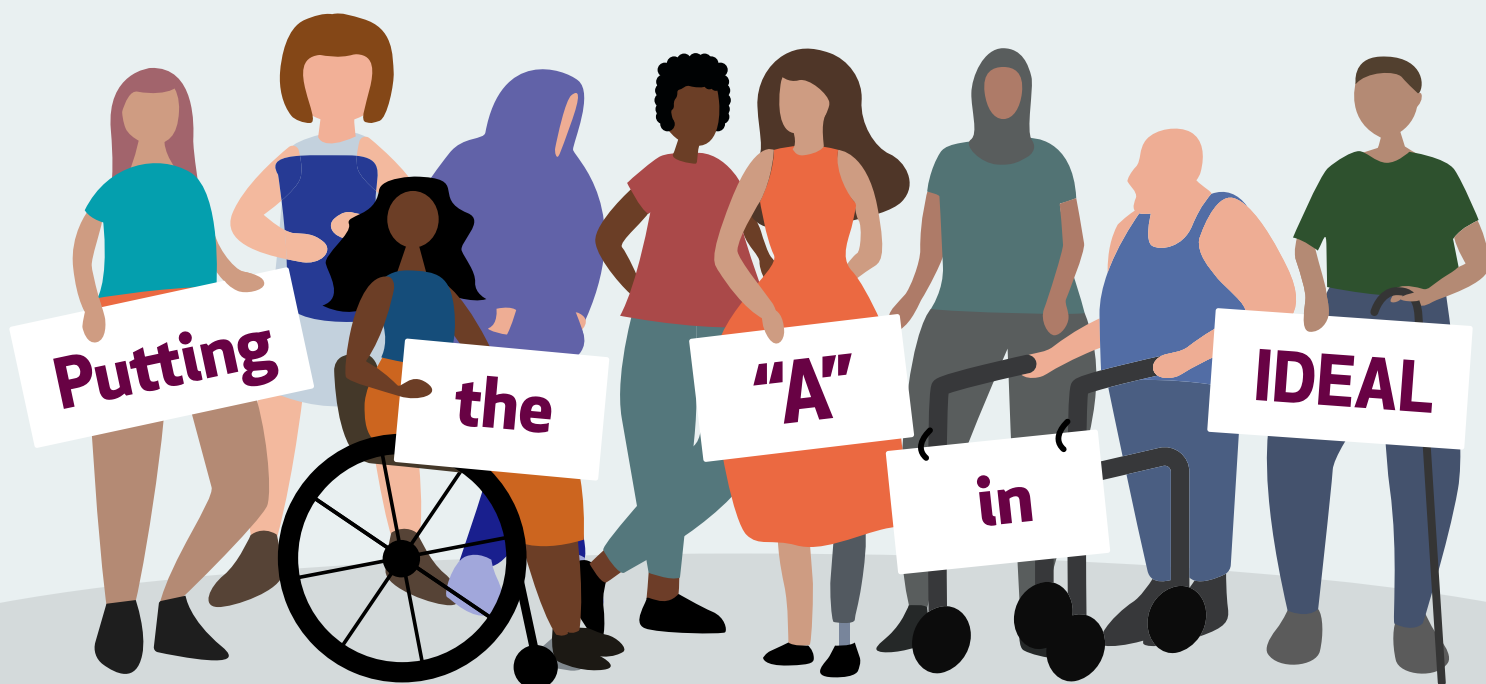


Canada's Museums: Putting the 'A' (Accessibility) in IDEAL (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility, Leading to belonging)



Needs Assessment Report

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Acronyms, Abbreviations and Definitions

2SLGBTQIA+	Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and additional people who identify as part of sexual and gender diverse communities
CAFM	Canada Agriculture and Food Museum
CASM	Canada Aviation and Space Museum
Canada's Museums: Putting the 'A' in IDEAL	Canada's Museums: Putting the 'A' (Accessibility) in IDEAL (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility, Leading to belonging)
CSTM	Canada Science and Technology Museum
e.g.,	for example,
Episodic Disabilities	Episodic disabilities are chronic health conditions related to a variety of illnesses characterized by fluctuating periods and degrees of illness and wellness. These periods can be unpredictable in duration, types of symptoms and frequency of recurrence.
ESDC	Employment and Social Development Canada
HR	Human Resources
IDEAL	Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility, Leading to Belonging
Ingenium	Ingenium – Canada's Museums of Science and Innovation
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
TREDIA	Truth, Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility

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Realize

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Executive Summary

A recent survey of staff, interns and volunteers in Canada's museum sector reported that approximately 10% of respondents identified as persons living with disabilities, emphasizing the importance of understanding their experiences and representation in the museum sector. The survey report recommends further research to explore the availability and effectiveness of accommodations, support services, and inclusive practices for employees with disabilities.

The aim of this project is to improve representation for Managers (Senior, Middle and Other), Supervisors, and Administrative and Senior Clerical Personnel working within the Canadian museum sector, who are living with long term and episodic disabilities.

The project's specific objectives are to:

- Increase representation for individuals within the designated occupational group through increased industry awareness and knowledge;
- Develop tools and guides to support and address industry specific needs affecting hiring and retention regarding the designated occupational group with long term and episodic disabilities.

This needs assessment survey explored participants' knowledge of disability and episodic disability, and accommodation in five museum sector workplaces providing a range of services. Forty-four of 70 eligible managers and supervisors completed the survey. This survey found that while approximately 55% of respondents are either living with a disability or have a family member or partner living with a disability, significant gaps exist in the context of hiring and retaining employees with episodic disabilities. We have identified training needs in the areas of understanding the episodic nature of many diseases and conditions, disability and accommodation in the workplace, processes for providing accommodations, and ongoing support and modification of accommodation plans. While most respondents were involved in hiring internal and external staff, most also reported that they did not implement accommodation plans during the hiring process. When asked about what training or tools would be most useful to support disability and accommodation in their current role in their workplace, almost all respondents reported a preference for in-person training sessions or online/asynchronous training sessions.

These findings will inform the development of tools and resources that increase the capacity of the museum sector in Canada to hire and retain staff living with long term and episodic disabilities.

Introduction

The concept for the “Canada’s Museums: Putting the ‘A’ (Accessibility) in IDEAL (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility, Leading to belonging) [Canada’s Museums: Putting the ‘A’ in IDEAL]” project emerged from dialogues with executives in the Canadian museum sector, after **Realize** was invited to conduct a training session to raise awareness about the issues faced by people living with episodic disabilities in the workplace. Museums are prominent keepers of collective history and culture and strive to promote understanding among people who come from different religious, cultural, political and social backgrounds to name a few. The staff at Canada’s museums, however, do not necessarily reflect Canada’s diverse population, including people who live with disabilities and people from under-represented ethno-racial groups. For example, almost one-quarter (24%) of working age adults (25 to 64) reported that they had at least one disability in 2022 (Statistics Canada, 2023). In many cases, we know that there are barriers to equity, but we don’t know the full scale of the challenge. The Canada’s Museums: Putting the ‘A’ in IDEAL project was designed to fill some of these gaps in collective knowledge and then turn that knowledge into action for equity in the museum sector.

The Canadian Museums Association reports that there are over 2,700 museums across Canada (2024). A 2023 survey of museum staff, interns and volunteers in Canada found that approximately 10% of respondents identified as persons living with disabilities, emphasizing the importance of understanding their experiences and representation in the museum sector (Canadian Museums Association, 2023). The report recommends that further research is required to explore the availability and effectiveness of accommodation, support services, and inclusive practices for employees with disabilities. Additionally, investigating recruitment, hiring, and retention practices, as well as the impact of accessible museum environments, can help identify opportunities for improvement in attracting and supporting a diverse workforce. Indigenous respondents, persons living with disabilities, and visible minorities show lower representation in higher salary bands, suggesting

potential barriers to career advancement and pay equity. Similarly, 2SLGBTQIA+, non-cis-gendered respondents, and landed immigrants display limited presence in the highest salary bands, indicating potential challenges in accessing top-tier positions. While the report authors indicate several potential limitations of this survey, this analysis underscores the need for further research to better understand the factors contributing to these disparities and to identify strategies to promote equal opportunities and pay equity for all employees in the museum sector.

Every person has intersecting identities that have a direct bearing on their experiences in finding and keeping employment, and other challenges to social inclusion (equity) that they may face. **Realize** has powerful partnerships with community organizations, equity thought leaders and other key actors in both the disability and employment sectors (and beyond) that inform our projects through co-design and theory of change methodologies. Using an intersectional framework, **Realize** focuses on people living with disabilities and in particular, people living with episodic disabilities.

Episodic disabilities are chronic health conditions characterized by fluctuating periods and degrees of illness and wellness. These periods can be unpredictable in duration, type of symptoms and frequency of recurrence. The unpredictable nature of episodic disabilities can have a negative impact on meaningful community participation, employment, income security, social inclusion and access to care. Increasing numbers of people in Canada (over 2 million people in a recent estimate) live with ongoing episodic disabilities (Morris et al., 2019).

“Living with an episodic disorder is like riding a roller coaster you never bought a ticket for. Some days, you’re up and ready to conquer the world, and then suddenly, you are plummeting into this abyss of fatigue and pain. It’s hard to explain to others because it’s not a linear thing.”

(Palmer et al., 2024)

“People don’t always understand that episodic disorders aren’t just about the physical symptoms. It’s the mental toll too. You start questioning your own abilities. Can I commit to that project? Will I be reliable? It’s this constant uncertainty that’s mentally draining.”
(Palmer et al., 2024)

Examples of episodic disabilities include disabilities related to living with conditions and diseases such as Long COVID, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, cancer, HIV, diabetes, and mental health conditions, amongst others.

Realize is the leading national, charitable, organization in Canada working to improve the health and well-being of people living with HIV and other episodic disabilities, across the lifespan, through integrated research, education, policy, and practice. In this capacity, **Realize** plays a significant role in mobilizing communities and other knowledge-holders to work together to lead initiatives that impact the health, social participation, and quality of life of community members.

Ingenium – Canada’s Museums of Science and Innovation is a vital link between science and society. At Ingenium, which supports the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum (CAFM), the Canada Aviation and Space Museum (CASM), the Canada Science and Technology Museum (CSTM), the Ingenium Centre and the Digital Innovation Lab— the organization is committed to taking science engagement to the next level. Ingenium does this by co-creating accessible and inclusive participatory experiences with the values of Truth, Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility in mind.

Good data is crucial to Ingenium’s organizational learning journey, and so the organization partnered with **Realize** to understand the strengths and weaknesses in staff knowledge and further their commitment towards accessibility and anti-ableism.

The aim of this project is to improve representation for Managers (Senior, Middle and Other), Supervisors, and Administrative and Senior Clerical Personnel working within the Canadian museum sector, who are living with long term and episodic disabilities.

The project’s specific objectives are to:

- Increase representation for individuals within the designated occupational group through increased industry awareness and knowledge;
- Develop tools and guides to support and address industry specific needs affecting hiring and retention regarding the designated occupational group with long term and episodic disabilities.

Approach

Five workplaces in the Canadian museum sector agreed to participate in this needs assessment. Ingenium supports the CAFM, the CASM and the CSTM. The Ingenium Centre and the Digital Innovation Lab do the bulk of the 'behind the scenes' work for the three museums by supporting collection management, cataloguing, human resources, internet and communication technology work and other vital support services. The Digital Innovation Lab serves as a testing ground for digitally accessible technology that's used in museum spaces. These museums and organizations represent a unique sample of the museum sector as they have distinct sites each with their own different relationship with accessibility and disability awareness.

An online needs assessment survey was developed in collaboration with staff from participating workplaces. The survey was administered through SurveyMonkey and was available in French and English. Alternative formats were available for participants who required accommodation.

Eligible museum staff included those who were in roles that could be described as: Managers (Senior, Middle and Other), Supervisors, and Administrative and Senior Clerical Personnel. Eligible staff were identified in collaboration with the People Services branch. An email introduction to the needs assessment and link to the confidential needs assessment survey was circulated on January 11, 2024, to 70 individuals who met eligibility criteria. The survey was open for three weeks with a reminder sent on January 25, 2024, the week before the survey closed.

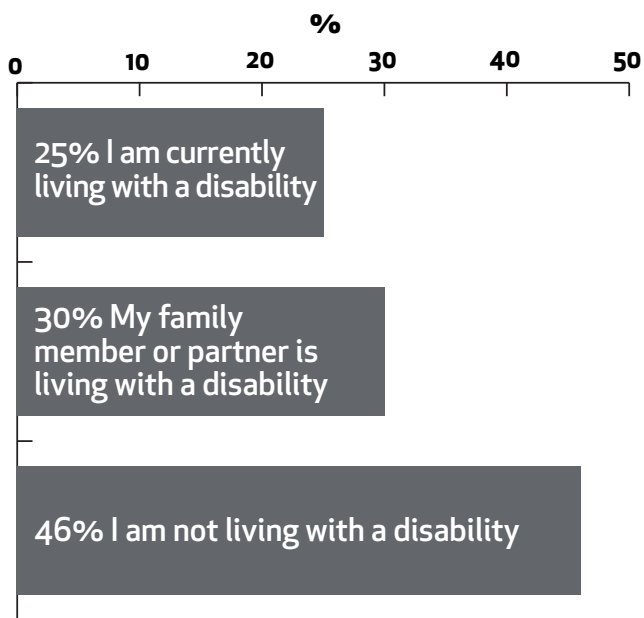
Analysis

Qualitative and quantitative data were analysed using traditional methodologies. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (counts, averages, proportions). Denominators were adjusted to account for missing data/skipped questions (< 0.1% of missing data). Thematic analysis was conducted with descriptive feedback (qualitative data). Data that might identify an individual or their role were summarized to ensure confidentiality of the respondent(s). Key findings have been reported as percentages and may not add to 100 due to rounding. Survey questions, response options and frequencies have been included in the Appendix.

Key Findings

Forty-four employees completed the survey. All respondents were managers or supervisors, and almost three-quarters of respondents (73%) were supervising teams of one to 10 people. Approximately 55% of respondents have worked in their current position for more than 5 years. Approximately 55% of respondents either live with a disability or have a family member or partner living with a disability (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Experience with disability

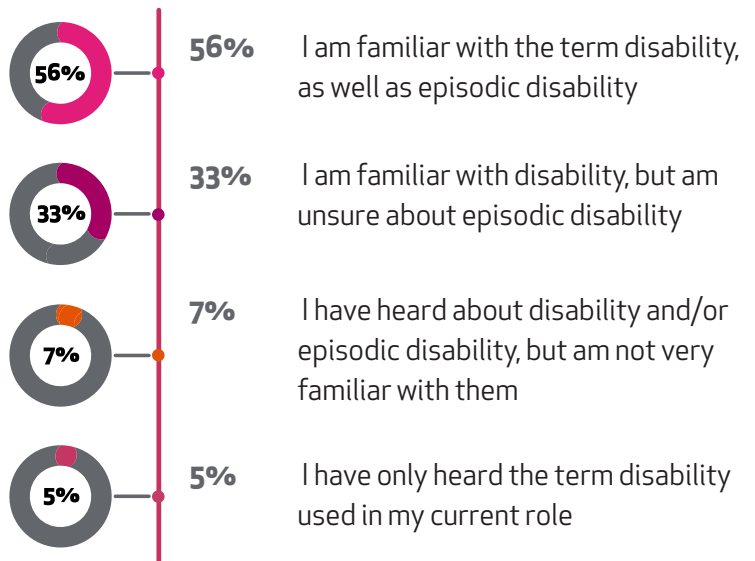


Familiarity with Disability and Episodic Disability

Approximately 56% of respondents are familiar with the terms “disability” and “episodic disability”, while approximately one-third are familiar with the term “disability” but are unsure about the term “episodic disability” (Figure 2). An additional 7% of respondents have heard about “disability” and/or “episodic disability”, but are not very familiar with them, and 5% report that they have only heard the term “disability” used in their current role.

“Sensitivity for all employees about what is and is not appropriate to say to (or about) a coworker.”

Figure 2: Familiarity with the terms disability and episodic disability

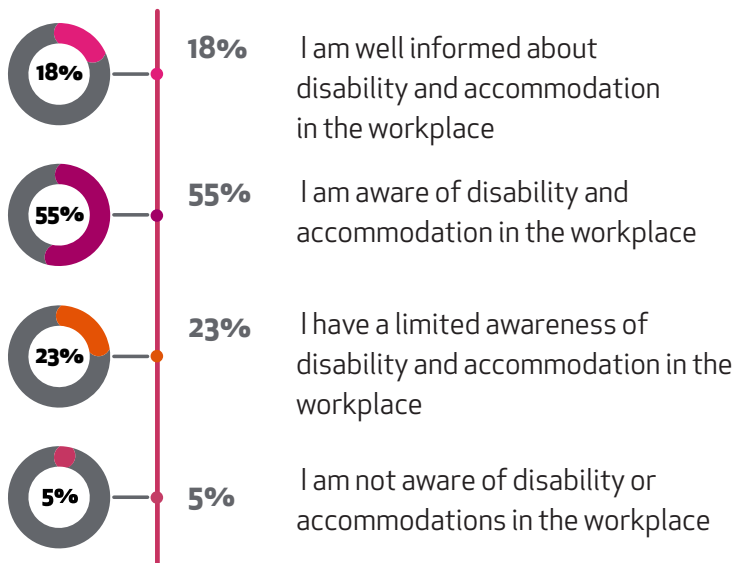


“With a past employer, I have had training on serving visitors with disabilities and covered the topic when training on respect in the workplace.”

Awareness of Accommodating Disability in the Workplace

Only 18% of respondents report that they are well informed about disability and accommodation in the workplace (Figure 3). An additional 55% of respondents report that they are aware of disability and accommodation in the workplace. Almost a quarter of respondents (23%) report having limited awareness of disability and accommodation in the workplace and an additional 5% report that they are not aware of disability and accommodations in the workplace.

Figure 3: Awareness of accommodating disability in the workplace



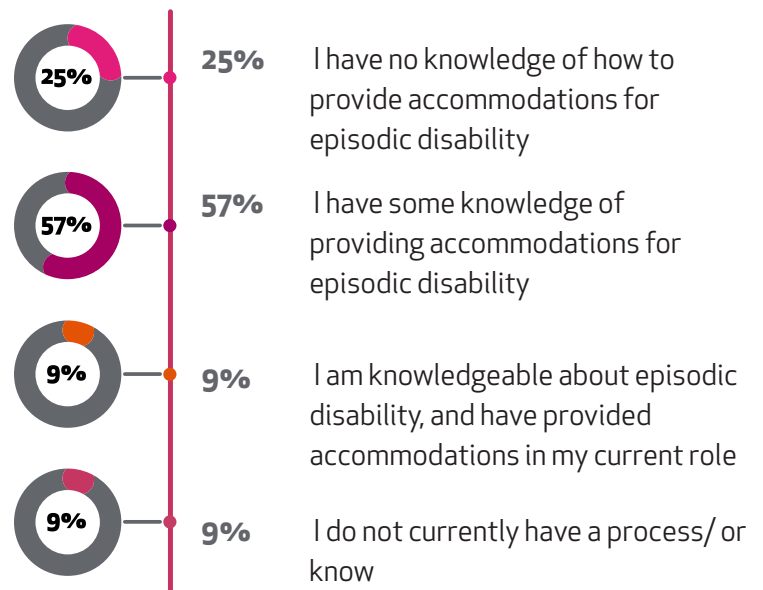
"I have received training on disabilities in general but not in the context of disabilities in the workplace or accommodations."

"In the past, we worked with HR to help identify special tasks an employee could do within the scope of work."

Knowledge about Accommodating Episodic Disability

A quarter of respondents report that they have no knowledge of how to provide accommodations for episodic disability, while 57% of respondents report that they have some knowledge of providing accommodations for episodic disability (Figure 4). An additional 9% of respondents do not currently have a process/or know how to provide accommodations for episodic disability. Only 9% of respondents reported that they are knowledgeable about episodic disability and have provided accommodations in their current role.

Figure 4: Knowledge about accommodating episodic disability



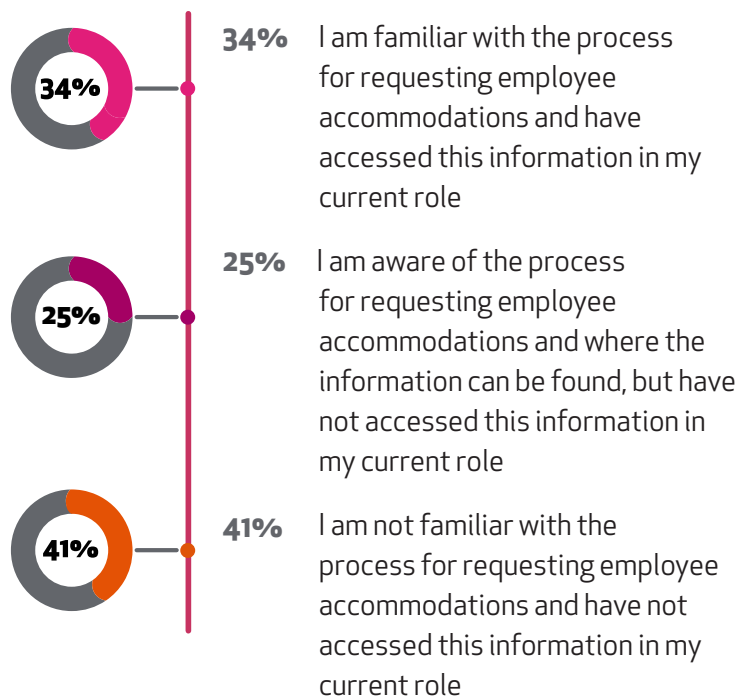
"I have not received any training on disability and accommodation to date."

"I haven't received any training but have worked to accommodate an employee with an episodic disability and gained knowledge through that process."

Familiarity with Accommodation Planning in the Workplace

Thirty four percent of respondents report that they are familiar with the process for requesting employee accommodations and have accessed this information in their current role (Figure 5). An additional 25% of respondents are aware of the process for requesting employee accommodations and where the information can be found but have not accessed this information in their current role. Approximately 41% of respondents report that they are not familiar with the process for requesting employee accommodations and have not accessed this information in their current role.

Figure 5: Familiarity with accommodation planning in the workplace



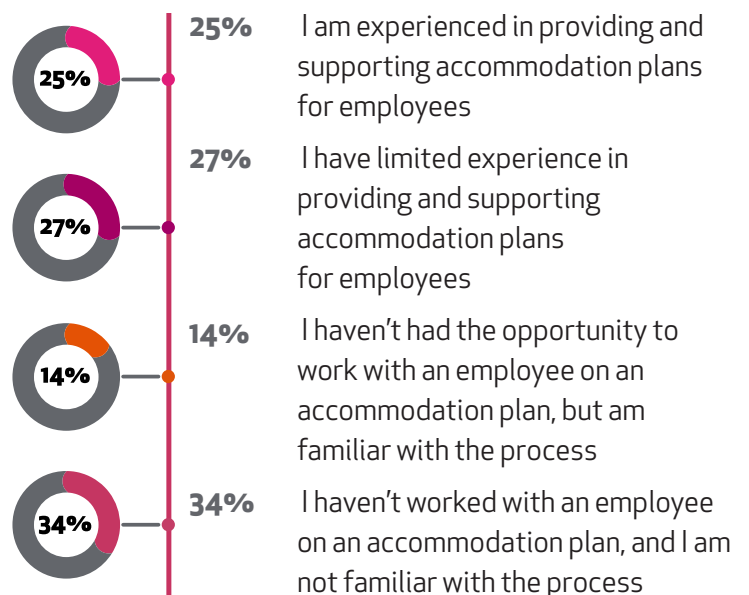
“I think it would be useful to have workshops on disability and accommodation where supervisors/managers are challenged to create accommodation plans. I personally feel a workshop style would be more useful than a general awareness session. I personally feel people think “sure, other jobs could have accommodation plans but the jobs I supervise need to do X, Y, Z” and it is challenging to think outside the box about how to work around these common beliefs and tasks.”

“Matrix approach to accommodations -- ex. what other internal services or departments need to be consulted/informed of accommodations (in particular episodic disabilities which may change a person’s resource requirements or availability).”

Supporting Workplace Accommodations

A quarter of respondents report that they are experienced in providing and supporting accommodation plans for employees (Figure 6). An additional 27% of respondents report that they have limited experience in providing and supporting accommodation plans for employees. Fourteen percent of respondents report that they haven’t had the opportunity to work with an employee on an accommodation plan, but they are familiar with the process. Over one-third of respondents (34%) have not worked with an employee on an accommodation plan and are not familiar with the process.

Figure 6: Knowledge about accommodating episodic disability



“From what I’ve also seen looking into accommodations for myself, it seems to come out of the dept budget, rather than one corporate budget for this, which can dissuade people from wanting to directly impact their team’s funds”.

"I have worked closely with HR and my management team to find the right process to help support my team including myself when it was needed on an accommodation plan. As everyone person and case is different. There isn't a one size fits all plan."

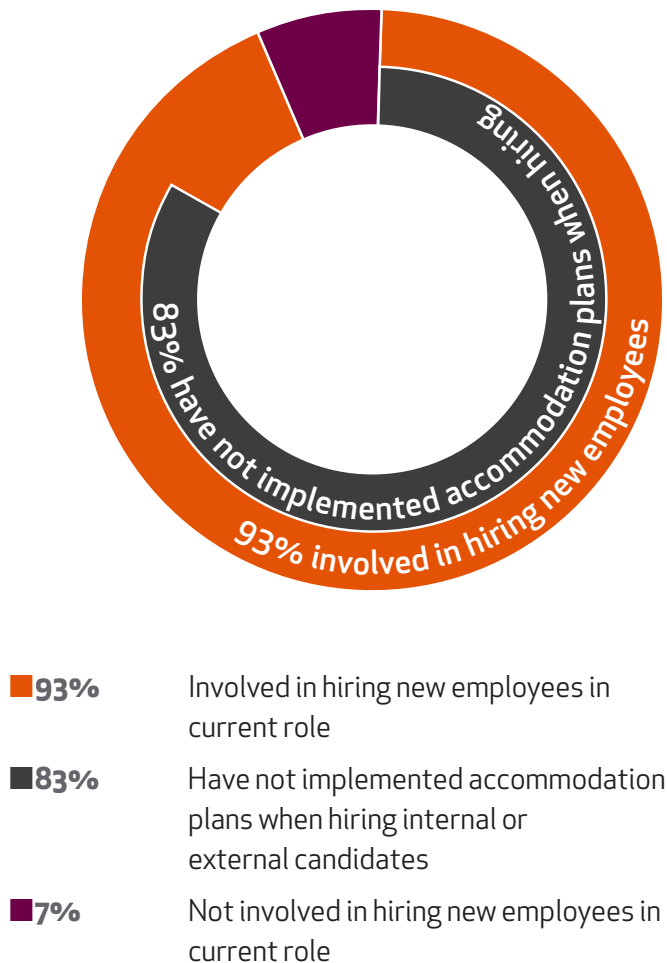
"I am aware that I have ableist biases. Creating a culture of including people with disabilities in planning from the beginning rather than waiting for them to ask for accommodations would be an important step to creating a more inclusive workplace".

"How to make job descriptions, workflows and result expectations more accommodating."

Hiring Process Involvement

Approximately 93% of respondents report that in their current role, they are involved in hiring new employees, both internal and external to the organization (Figure 7). Approximately 83% of respondents who are involved in hiring report that they have not implemented accommodation plans when hiring internal or external candidates.

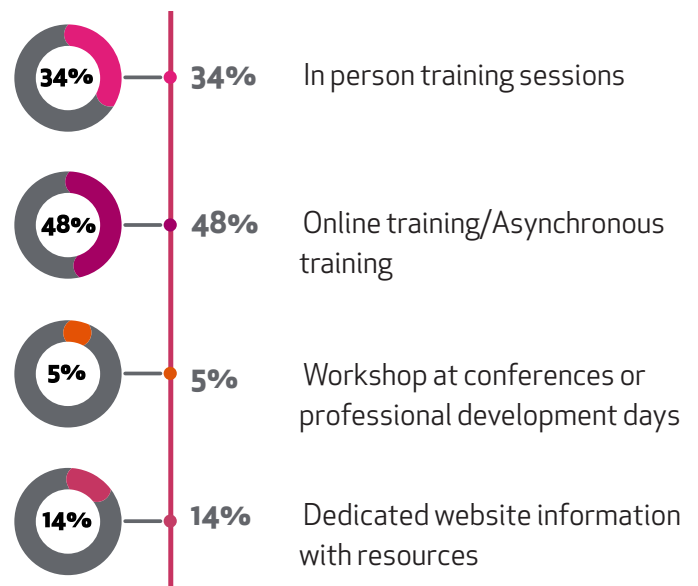
Figure 7: Hiring process involvement (internal and external candidates)



Preferred Methods for Delivery of Training or Tools

When asked about what training or tools would be most useful to support disability and accommodation needs for employees in their current role, 34% of respondents reported a preference for in-person training sessions, and 48% of respondents reported online training/asynchronous training (Figure 8). Workshops at annual conferences or professional development days (5%) and dedicated website information with resources (e.g., SOPs, templates, policy guides) (14%) were less preferred options.

Figure 8: Preferred methods for delivery of training or tools



“More training. More communication. More opportunity to attend events during working hours where educational information is being made available.”

“I would have selected website with more information too, so long as it’s in a digestible format and not just “policy speak.”

Themes Emerging from Respondent Feedback

When asked to describe any training that they’ve received on disability and accommodation, respondents reported not receiving any training or personal development in this area (7 responses) and having personal navigation or experience only (3 responses).

“I have received training on disabilities in general but not in the context of disabilities in the workplace or accommodations.”

“I’ve supported training on ableism and inclusive design, but not specifically accommodation.”

“I have not received any training or professional development however based on former education and life experiences I am more acutely aware of accommodations.”

When asked what other training topics might be useful, respondents reported an interest in how to plan and manage accommodations (8 responses) and how to communicate about disabilities (4 responses).

“...there would be value in providing staff at all levels an entry-level training around disability in the workplace.”

“I think it would be useful to have workshops on disability and accommodation where supervisors/managers are challenged to create accommodation plans.”

“...I personally feel a workshop style would be more useful than a general awareness session.”

Some respondents stated that they have a “general” understanding of ableism and how it impacts the workplace (9 responses). Respondents wrote about the impact of ableism on work opportunities, health and wellbeing, accessibility, colleague interaction and accommodations.

“I am aware that I have ableist biases. Creating a culture of including people with disabilities in planning from the beginning rather than waiting for them to ask for accommodations would be an important step to creating a more inclusive workplace.”

“I would say I have a mid-level understanding of ableism and its impact in our workplace.”

When asked about the potential barriers for employees living with disabilities, respondents listed several examples. These included physical accessibility (e.g., transportation, doors, computers, sinks, offices, etc.) (15 responses); accommodation barriers (e.g., a lack of resources and information on providing accommodations) (5 responses); and stigma and judgement (e.g., a lack of understanding from colleagues) (5 responses).

“...With such intense workloads as it is, it’s intimidating to think about having to take episodic sick days or ask for accommodations that would slow down production.”

“Some of the spaces we occupy are in heritage buildings or working with built environments with historic or industry related challenges (primarily barriers for physical disabilities).”

Respondents described the ways that they would help mitigate these barriers, and support accommodation for employees with disabilities. Suggestions included a disability accommodation checklist, accommodation training, a bigger accommodation budget and education and training for all staff and management.

“More training. More communication. More opportunity to attend events during working hours where educational information is being made available.”

“Motivate staff to WANT to learn. Make it fun.”

Limitations and Lessons Learned

Although the sample was small relative to the size of the museum sector in Canada, these survey results offer important insights into the learning needs of managers and supervisors in the areas of disability and accommodation for current and future staff.

Conclusions

A recent survey of staff, interns and volunteers from Canada's museum sector reported that approximately 10% of respondents identified as persons living with disabilities, emphasizing the importance of understanding their experiences and representation in the museum sector. The report recommends that further research is suggested to explore the availability and effectiveness of accommodations, support services, and inclusive practices for employees with disabilities.

This needs assessment survey explored participants' knowledge of disability, including episodic disability, and accommodation in five museum sector workplaces. This survey found that while approximately 55% of respondents are either living with a disability or have a family member or partner living with a disability, significant gaps exist in the context of hiring and retaining employees with episodic disabilities.

We have identified training needs in the areas of understanding the episodic nature of many diseases and conditions, disability and accommodation in the workplace, processes for providing accommodations, and ongoing support and modification of accommodation plans. While almost all respondents were involved in hiring internal and external staff, most reported that they did not implement accommodation plans during the hiring process. When asked about what training or tools would be most useful to support disability and accommodation in their current role in their workplace, almost all respondents reported a preference for in-person training sessions or online/asynchronous training sessions.

These findings will inform the development of tools and resources that increase the capacity of the museum sector in Canada to hire and retain staff living with long term and episodic disabilities.

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Appendix

SurveyMonkey data: Questions, response options and frequencies (f). Total number of respondents was 44 unless otherwise noted.

Q1: Please select the role that best describes your current position. I am a(n) ...*

Manager

Supervisor

Administrative and/or Senior Clerical Personnel

If not listed, please describe your role here

* not reported to maintain confidentiality

Q2: Please select the size of the team who are direct reports or whom you supervise

f response option

32 1-10 people

7 11-25 people

4 26-50 people

1 If not listed, please enter the number of people here

Q3: How long have you worked in your current position?

f response option

20 Less than 5 years

15 5-10 years

9 More than 10 years

Q4: Do you have lived or living experience with a disability?

f response option

11 Yes, I am currently living with a disability

13 Yes, my family member or partner is living with a disability

20 No, I am not living with a disability

Q5: In your current role are you familiar with the terms disability and/ or episodic disability? (N=43)

f response option

24 I am familiar with the term disability, as well as episodic disability

14 I am familiar with disability, but am unsure about episodic disability

3 I have heard about disability and/or episodic disability, but am not very familiar with them

2 I have only heard the term disability used in my current role

Q6: How would you rate your current knowledge about accommodating episodic disabilities in the workplace?

- f response option
- 11 I have no knowledge of how to provide accommodations for episodic disability
- 25 I have some knowledge of providing accommodations for episodic disability
- 4 I am knowledgeable about episodic disability, and have provided accommodations in my current role
- 4 I do not currently have a process/ or know how to provide accommodations for episodic disability

Q7: In your current role, do you feel you are well informed about disability and accommodation in the workplace?

- f response option
- 8 I am well informed about disability and accommodation in the workplace
- 24 I am aware of disability and accommodation in the workplace
- 10 I have a limited awareness of disability and accommodation in the workplace
- 2 I am not aware of disability or accommodations in the workplace

Q8: Do you know what the process for requesting employee accommodations and where to find information?

- f response option
- 15 I am familiar with the process for requesting employee accommodations and have accessed this information in my current role
- 11 I am aware of the process for requesting employee accommodations and where the information can be found, but have not accessed this information in my current role
- 18 I am not familiar with the process for requesting employee accommodations and have not accessed this information in my current role
- 0 We do not currently have a formalized process for requesting accommodations

Q9: In your current role, have you ever worked with an employee on an accommodation plan?

- f response option
- 11 I am experienced in providing and supporting accommodation plans for employees
- 12 I have limited experience in providing and supporting accommodation plans for employees
- 6 I haven't had the opportunity to work with an employee on an accommodation plan, but am familiar with the process
- 15 I haven't worked with an employee on an accommodation plan, and I am not familiar with the process

Q10 Open ended question

Q11: In your current role, are you involved in hiring new employees (internal or external)?

- f response option
- 41 Yes
- 3 No

Q12: If YES, have you ever implemented an accommodation plan for hiring an internal or external candidate? (N=41)

- f response option
- 2 I have implemented an accommodation plan for hiring an internal candidate
- 3 I have implemented an accommodation plan for hiring an external candidate
- 2 I have implemented accommodation plans for both internal and external candidates
- 34 I have not implemented accommodation plans when hiring internal or external candidates

Q13: In your current role, what training or tools would be most useful to support disability and accommodation in your workplace?

- f response option
- 15 In person training sessions
- 21 Online training/ Asynchronous training
- 2 Workshops at annual conferences or professional development days
- 6 Dedicated website information with resources [SOPs, templates, policy guides]