

Supporting Mid-Career Workers with Disabilities through Community-building, Education, and Career- Progression Resources (MCWD) Project Update – March 2020

MCWD Project Background Information

The Challenge

Today's changing labour market necessitates that all workers constantly adopt new roles and therefore, readily adapt in their careers. Yet to achieve such an adaptation requires a skill set that imbues an individual with career adaptive responses- i.e., the ability to see the need and know the tools needed for self-managing their career in the context of labour market volatility and changes.

While undoubtedly challenging for any worker, this presents a compounding difficulty for workers with disabilities, particularly those in their mid-career. Mid-career and other workers with disabilities are faced with challenges that include underemployment and unemployment, limited opportunities and access to post-secondary education, negative attitudes and discrimination in the workplace, and displacement due to labour market conditions. Yet a dearth of tools and resources exist to support mid-career workers with disabilities (MCWD), necessitating tailored interventions to potentiate career adaptability and successful career navigation in today's labour market.

What is Career Adaptability?

Career adaptability can be thought of as a set of attitudes, behaviours, and competencies that individuals use in fitting themselves to work that suits them. Research evidence demonstrates a strong relationship between developing career adaptability and positive career and employment outcomes (e.g., obtaining employment, career/job/life satisfaction).

Career adaptability can be conceptualized as consisting of four key dimensions: **concern** (planning, being planful), **control** (decision-making, being decisive), **curiosity** (exploring, being inquisitive), and **confidence** (problem solving, being efficacious). Each of these dimensions is associated with career adaptive

responses – a set of adaptive behaviours, beliefs, and barriers to deal with career development tasks and changes in work and career conditions. Together these skills make up an individual’s career adaptive responsiveness.

Project Overview

The Supporting Mid-Career Workers with Disabilities through Community-building, Education, and Career-Progression Resources (MCWD) project is funded by the Government of Canada’s Future Skills Centre. It addresses career adaptability by targeting the adaptive response skills development needs of MCWD. Through fostering and strengthening career adaptability, the project aims to potentiate other work underway to ameliorate the barriers MCWD and other disability cohorts face in the Canadian labour market.

The MCWD project consists of three phases over a two-year period that will assess MCWD needs and through a systematic development, implementation, and evaluation process, create tools and resources to develop and build upon the career adaptive response skills of MCWD.

The objectives of the project are as follows:

1. Gain insight into the experiences and needs of MCWD related to employment and career adaptability as well as, the perceptions of employers and disability organizations/advocacy groups about tools and resources to support MCWD.
2. Develop and launch tools and resources to support MCWD focusing in three areas: education-related services, virtual peer-to-peer networking and support, and employment-related career coaching and other resources.
3. Conduct evaluations of user experiences with tools and resources developed and outline the impact of the interventions on the career adaptive responses of users.

Progress Update

- The project is in Phase 1, which consists of gathering data and evaluating it to inform the development of tools and resources and more broadly, share

insights with key stakeholders and the general public about MCWD's experiences in the Canadian labour market.

- Activities currently underway include:
 - Conducting a scoping review to map out the literature relating to MCWD experience in the labour market;
 - Completing a secondary data analysis of the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability focusing on the MCWD cohort;
 - Preparing and organizing for a cross-Canada stakeholder consultation involving an online survey for MCWD and focus groups with MCWD, employers, and advocacy and support organization.

What to Watch Out for Next?

- In late March and early April, we will be launching our online survey and begin local consultations across Canada. If you think you might be interested in participating, be on the lookout of future announcements about the project.

Our Team

Our team consists of researchers from four post-secondary institutions (Ontario Tech University, Nipissing University, Durham College, and York University) and four not-for-profit provincial and national organizations (Quebec Association for Equity and Inclusion in Post-Secondary Education (AQEIPS), Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD), Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities (MLPD), National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS)). The project is led by Dr. Sue Coffey.

For more information on this initiative and the Future Skills Centre visit this website: <https://fsc-ccf.ca/projects/supporting-mid-career-workers-with-disabilities-through-community-building-education-and-career-progression-resources/>