



Section 2 RECRUITMENT PRACTICES to GAIN ACCESS to DIVERSE TALENT

This section highlights innovative ways for employers to adapt recruitment practices, including candidate sourcing, interviews and the selection process, to gain access to a wider talent pool.

EMPLOYER BRANDING

Most business leaders recognize the importance of developing a strong consumer brand, one that attracts customers to your business. The same concept applies to your employment brand. Whether you run a small business or a large company, having a strong employer brand will attract more people who want to work with you. A business that is seen as providing employees with a caring, respectful place to work, is highly valued in today's employment market. This can be leveraged to make it easier and more cost effective for you to hire and retain from a much wider talent pool.

Be creative when designing your employment brand:

- Put your employees centre stage and include short video testimonials—on your website or send via social media—of diverse employees sharing their career path and why they love working for you.
- Share “A Day in the Life” profiles of diverse employees working in different jobs.
- Seek feedback from diverse groups of people on how your employment brand can attract diverse candidates.



Key Elements of a Strong Employer Brand

Like your 'Customer Value Proposition', the most important part of a strong employer brand is your 'Employee Value Proposition' – what you offer your employees. The following five elements will bring your value proposition to life as an innovative, inclusive employer:

CULTURE – A healthy workplace culture is characterized by trust, collaboration, responsibility and support. It aligns with the company's goals and values and is made up of positive relationships between colleagues, managers and leaders. Caring, empathetic managers are crucial. Through coaching and encouragement they set their employees up for success including those with barriers to employment.

WORK ENVIRONMENT – Factors that contribute to a positive work environment range from understanding job responsibilities to having a healthy work-life balance. Other factors include a sense of autonomy, personal achievement, respect and recognition.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES – Inclusive employers focus on capacity building through training, coaching and feedback. They provide flexible job opportunities, which gives people many ways to engage in work, and for companies to tap into diverse talent.

COMPENSATION – Employee satisfaction with compensation and rewards. Important considerations are fairness and equity. Supportive employers also consider whether non-traditional compensation may be of value, including bonuses and meal plans.

BENEFITS – This includes typical benefits like health care, as well as others such as personal days, wellness initiatives, assistance with childcare and respite opportunities.

Website & Careers Page

Your website tells the world who you are, what you do and how you do it. It's also an opportunity to promote your company to potential candidates. Start by making sure your website is accessible, so people can easily access information. Is your application process creating an unintended barrier? Ask a diverse group of people to "test drive" your careers page and highlight any areas that are not accessible or that can be improved.

A separate and dedicated careers page provides information that demonstrates why your business is an employer of choice. Things to include on your careers page, in addition to current job openings:

- Your mission, values and employment awards recognition
- How to apply, including accessible options for applying in person or by mail
- The recruitment and selection process
- Supports available for people with disabilities, or other people who experience barriers to employment



Building Community Partnerships

Community partners and employment service providers can help you find new sources of talent, skilled employees that you might have overlooked. There are many great organizations that provide supportive employment programs for people who live with or have experienced barriers to employment, such as people with disabilities, Indigenous people or new immigrants. This includes social enterprises who have built successful business models to support local communities. In British Columbia, for example, WorkBC and Community Living BC are there to help support people with disabilities to obtain employment, at no cost to your business.



You can also contract with community partners to deliver certain aspects of your business, especially where you are finding it difficult to hire staff.

Diversity Statement

Send a clear message to job applicants that your business strives to provide an inclusive workplace and that you encourage candidates with diverse abilities to apply. Include a Commitment to Diversity statement on your website or include it in your company Mission, Vision, Values.

Examples of Diversity Statements include:

- *We are a social enterprise that provides customers with a social return on investment. Our mission is to provide top quality professional services while also offering job opportunities to people who have barriers to employment, such as poverty and disability. (CleanStart BC)*
- *Vancity welcomes applications from all qualified job seekers, and if you are an applicant with a disability, we will work with you to make reasonable workplace accommodations you may need for your best work performance.*
- *A career at ICBC is more than a job. It's an opportunity to be part of a talented, diverse and inclusive team in an environment that promotes growth and development.*



Inclusion Tip *Employee Value Proposition*

The best way to ensure that your Employee Value Proposition hits the mark with inclusion is to ask the experts: your employees. Ask what they like the most about working with your company, if they view the business to be supportive and what you can do to provide a more inclusive environment. Include all staff in these conversations. You can do this through team meetings, an informal online survey, 1:1 meetings, focus groups or through an employee engagement survey. You can also reach out to a community partner for ideas and support.



What to Expect When Working with an Employment Service Provider

Sharing your business goals, values and workplace culture will help an employment service provider to understand your unique business needs. As an employer, don't be afraid to ask questions, be clear about your expectations and share the reality of your business. Having an open discussion upfront will set everyone up for success as you work together to find talent.

The best way for a partner to understand what it's like to work with your business, is for a service provider to spend some time in your workplace, observing how work is done. This enables them to better assess match - what candidates would be a good fit for the job duties, the team and your work environment.



The following checklist was provided by Open Door Group, a non-profit that specializes in helping support individuals with barriers find employment. These are services and resources that are typically available to employers when working with a community partner:

✓ **A supported approach to accessing local candidates**

- Identify needs and match those with local candidates
- Develop job-preparation workshops that specifically target the needs of a specific employer or industry

✓ **Ongoing support post-placement**

- Follow up support to both the employer and new hire based on need
- On-the-job coaching for candidates to help support onboarding

✓ **Access to training**

- A variety of training for managers and staff based on desire/need (e.g. Mental Health First Aid, Diversity in the Workplace, etc.)
- Connecting employers to additional training offered in the community

✓ **Support navigating and accessing valuable resources**

- Government resources, including wage subsidies (when applicable)
- Community resources including accessibility supports & assessments





Inclusion Tip *Flexibility*

To be a more supportive employer and gain access to a wider talent pool, are you open to a flexible work schedule or working from home options? In your postings, do you make a point of inviting applicants from diverse backgrounds and abilities to apply?



Here are some questions to ask an employment services provider in your community, to help you assess if they are the right partner for your business:

- What services do they provide to support the employer throughout the recruitment, onboarding and probationary periods?
- Are they open to visiting your workplace in advance of introducing any candidates in order to view the work environment and gain a clear understanding of the job duties?
- How do they prepare job seekers for employment and what kind of support do they provide after hire?
- Will they work onsite in your workplace to support training and onboarding, if needed?
- Can the service provider help to prepare your existing team to welcome a person with a barrier such as a disability?





Employer Case Study: *Gabi and Jules*

In Port Moody, British Columbia, a small municipality east of Vancouver, you will find a little bakery and coffee shop called Gabi and Jules. Known for their delicious pies, and other yummy offerings, Gabi and Jules is also known for something special: they are an inclusive, supportive employer. As they say on their website, “Our mission is to passionately create exceptional pies and baked goodness in a collaborative environment inclusive of individuals of all abilities.”

*Lisa Beecroft and her husband Patrick named their bakery after their two daughters, one of whom has Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Lisa wanted to create a place where families with children with ASD would feel welcome. She also wanted to **create a workplace that recognized the value in everyone and where people with disabilities, ASD in particular, are welcome, can contribute to the workplace and build employment skills.***

*As a small business without a dedicated human resources team, Gabi and Jules has partnered with employment service providers to help fill job vacancies and to deliver on their commitment to be a supportive, inclusive employer. **Lisa has found it helpful to be clear from the start with any partner that she works with about the support that she needs as an employer.** Asking questions and setting clear expectations has helped Lisa and employment partners to work effectively together.*

*Lisa hears often from customers that they come to Gabi and Jules because they feel welcome – they never feel judged. **And candidates come to Lisa, with resume in hand, because they know that Gabi and Jules is a supportive employer; they want to be part of that!** Because the Beecrofts were intentional with their vision, mission and goals for the bakery right from the start, their employer brand has sent a strong, clear message: everyone is welcome here.*



DEFINING JOB REQUIREMENTS

Traditional and non-traditional ways to define job requirements can give you access to a wider talent pool; you may have otherwise not been aware of.

Non-traditional: Informal, Honorarium and Part-Time Casual Jobs

There are employment programs in communities that allow for a slower integration back into work for people absent from the workforce for a lengthy period. This approach allows people to successfully re-integrate at a pace they can handle and begin to work more hours on the pathway to a sustainable income. These programs could be highly valuable to your business as they reduce the level of ongoing employment commitment and could provide an opportunity for people in your community to work.

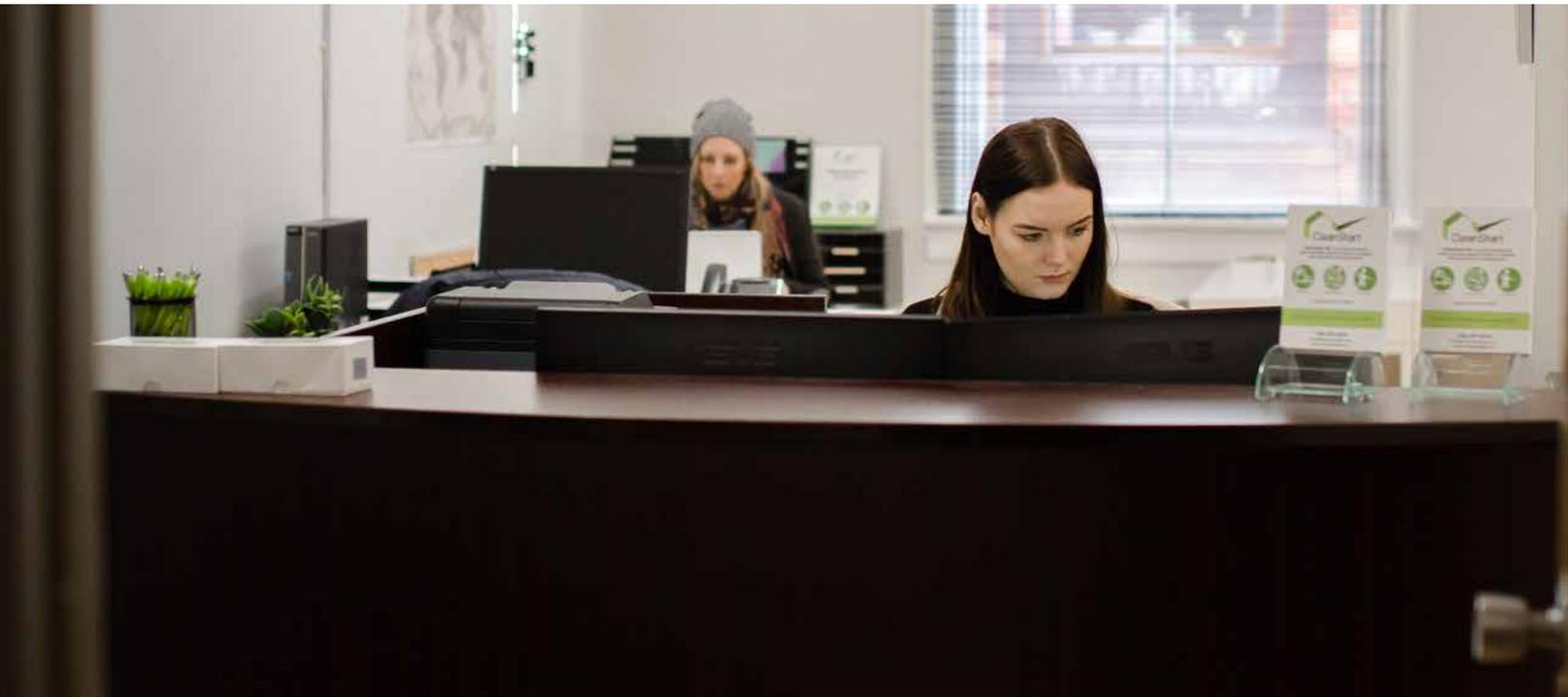
It is important that anyone working with your company on an informal or part-time basis be covered under WorkSafe BC. If employed directly with your business, they should also be on payroll, receiving an amount that is at least minimum wage.

Have Odd Jobs?

If your business has a need for one-off 'odd jobs' or casual labour, you could be creating meaningful opportunities for people in your community to earn money, increase their skills, gain experience and begin to improve their livelihoods. Contact a social enterprise, community living organization or employment service program provider in your community to discuss your needs. These organizations can provide people who they pay to meet your requirements.

Traditional: Regular Part-Time and Full-Time Opportunities

For more traditional opportunities, the following will help you define requirements prior to conducting a candidate search.



Job Description

A thoughtfully crafted job description will help determine what's needed for the position and target recruitment for qualified candidates. It also helps existing employees fully understand their job duties and assists with performance management.

The following key elements will help you to develop a strong job description.

JOB TITLE When creating a job title, be specific, short and simple. Steer clear of non-traditional job titles such as “Rock Star Line Cook”, “Warehouse Ninja” or “Administrative Unicorn.” Consider the diversity of your audience when they read the job title – will they know what it means? Words like “rock star” and “ninja” are gendered: they tend to appeal more to male candidates, which means that you may be excluding half of your potential candidate pool right from the start.

COMPANY AND JOB SUMMARY Summarize the job duties and share important information about your company to potential candidates. It's a perfect opportunity to explain why your business is a great place to work by sharing your commitment to diversity and inclusion, important elements of your employer brand, a definition of your workplace culture and values.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES List the key responsibilities and activities of the job. Clarify the tasks before you start and consider the specific qualifications and skills needed by the person doing the job. Keep in mind as you write this section, especially if your intent is to be inclusive, to differentiate between duties that are essential—bona fide occupational requirements—and those that aren't.

QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS Education, previous work experience (paid and volunteer), certifications, soft skills such as problem solving, and communication skills, etc. should be included

in this section. Just like with the responsibilities and duties section, consider what is required and what is not.

- Are you hiring for fit, attitude or qualities?
- Can you train for skills that might not be strong, or experience not yet gained?
- Are there parts of a job, like repetitive tasks, that can be carved-out from the full job description, to make it possible to create an opportunity for someone less skilled to contribute and still get your business needs met?

JOB POSTINGS Ensure job postings support your brand proposition and include the following:

- **How to apply:** online, email, in person
- **What's required:** do you require a resume, cover letter or a copy of certification?
- **Salary and benefits:** the range of compensation or hourly rate of pay and any relevant benefits and key perks that would appeal to potential job seekers
- **Location:** work location
- **Status:** part-time, full-time, on call, temporary, contract
- **Hours:** hours that the employee will work





Inclusion Tip

Inclusive Language

Before posting the job, review the job description for any language that is not inclusive. Asking for another person's feedback can help you identify any possible unconscious bias. Is the language easy to understand for those whose first language is not English? Do you really need a person to have the level of qualifications, skills and previous experience you have always asked for or have things changed since the last time you hired for this job? What could you reasonably adjust within the job description to be more inclusive and tap into a larger talent pool?

SOURCING CANDIDATES

To attract a wide, diverse pool of talented job seekers, you need to engage with people in a variety of ways.

To reach candidates, it's no longer enough to simply advertise a job in one place. This is where your employment brand can help – the stronger the brand, the greater the interest will be in working with your business.

Sourcing Options

Here are some ideas to reach potential employees for your business:

- **Use your Website** — Add a banner to your home page that announces, “We are hiring! Apply now!” Include your Commitment to Diversity statement in a spot that is easy for potential candidates to see.
- **Engage Through Social Media** — Reach candidates through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. These are great places to share your inclusive workforce success stories, highlight innovative hiring and promote your business as a great place to work.
- **Work with an Employment Service Provider** — Contact your community partner or employment service provider, provide the job description and seek referrals. Ask if they can customize an employment initiative for your company. Can they upskill people in the community by providing skills training and certification with your business in mind? If you had the need, you could hire multiple new employees at one time that way.
- **Use Job Boards** — If you advertise your job openings on job boards such as Indeed.com and on Craigslist, be sure to include that diverse candidates are welcome to apply. Also consider websites and job boards that are unique to industries and specialized free job boards to reach candidates with diverse abilities in Canada.
- **Collaborate and Expand Your Network** — Share job openings via email with colleagues and customers, business and industry groups, or training institutions, especially those that have programs aimed at your inclusive hiring efforts.



- **Attend Targeted Career Fairs** — Seek out and attend inclusive hiring fairs in your community that have a proven audience of qualified, diverse candidates. In addition to a hiring manager or member of your human resources team, consider inviting other employees to attend and share their experiences as an employee.
- **Build Candidate Pools** — If you have regular openings, you can also host monthly information sessions about opportunities and invite people to attend to find out more about the jobs you have to offer, what you look for in candidates and how to apply.
- **Create an Employee Referral Program** — Invite your employees to help you find talent. Who knows better what it's like to work with your company than existing employees?
- **Employment Agencies** — For jobs that are hard to fill, when time is of the essence, or you don't have the staff to look after the hiring process, consider working with an employment agency (for a fee). Be sure to let them know you are an inclusive employer and welcome diverse applicants.



Employer Case Study: *Common Thread*

*Nestled in a bright, light-filled corner of a top floor warehouse in East Vancouver is Common Thread, a cooperative social enterprise that provides **practical and flexible training and employment in industrial sewing** for people who are living with mental health challenges, or who are experiencing other employment barriers.*

*Participants can **work from home assembling craft kits, or at the East Vancouver location where they have flexibility in the number of hours they work.***

The crafting program is about social engagement as much as it is about earning an income. A program manager visits participants in their homes, brings them supplies, gathers assembled kits and will also just sit, have tea and visit. For a person living with a serious mental illness, these visits are an opportunity for regular social connection.



REVIEWING APPLICATIONS

Now it's time to review and screen applications. Two steps are highlighted below to get you to a short-list of candidates quickly.

Step 1: Screen Candidates – Yes, Maybe, No

Based on information in a resume, knowledge of the applicant, a referral recommendation and possibly a cover letter, you are assessing applications for the following criteria:

At this stage you may choose to intentionally screen-in applicants who identify as being from a group that has experienced barriers to employment, especially if you are motivated toward inclusion and the candidate has been referred by a trusted community partner. This is a chance to easily increase diversity within the selection process and to provide an opportunity for people who are often underrepresented in the workforce to be considered. If they don't have the skills required, they can then be screened out.

Does the candidate meet the basic requirements for the job? Yes Maybe No

Step 2: Take a Closer Look

Things to consider as you take a closer look at your 'Yes' applications:

- Can the applicant meet the bona fide occupational requirements of the position?
- Do they have the required education, certifications and/or licences? If not, is this something you can provide on the job? Is there a community partner that can help?
- Are you going for the most qualified person, or are you open to considering fit?
- Are you able to increase diversity by providing mentorship for someone with less experience?

After the second step you should have a short list of ideally, three to five applicants and are ready to move to the interview stage.



Inclusion Tip **Community Partnerships**

Build an ongoing relationship with a community partner that specializes in supporting underrepresented groups, such as people recovering from addictions, mental illness, Indigenous people and people with disabilities. These groups are rich with untapped talent and reach out in different ways in the community to engage with local unemployed job seekers. For example, many will host free meals or other gatherings that bring together people in the community to talk about employment opportunities.





Inclusion Tip

Opportunity for Disclosure

You may not know if the candidate identifies as having a disability or is from a diversity group unless you encourage and provide an opportunity for disclosure during the application process. While you cannot ask if the person has a disability, you can ask them to let you know if they require any accommodations, or ask what adjustments, if any, would be required for the candidate to do their best.

Pitfalls to Avoid

- **UNCONSCIOUS BIAS** A common unconscious bias that affects hiring managers is called Similarity Bias. Simply put, we prefer people who are like us. If we see on a resume that a candidate grew up in our hometown or went to our school, we may develop an affinity towards them without realizing it. Focus on matching applicants' abilities and experience with the job requirements.
- **PLACING AN EMPHASIS ON HOBBIES AND INTERESTS** It's common to associate an applicant who has played team sports as being a team player. You might not consider that a person who has diverse physical abilities, or who didn't have early access to play team sports due to socio-economic status, may have the same skills.
- **USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO SCREEN APPLICANTS** While reviewing an applicant's social media profiles may provide a broader view than just a resume does, it also may highlight things that are irrelevant to the job. It's best to avoid looking at the social media profiles of applicants.
- **SCREENING OUT RESUMES FOR SPELLING ERRORS** If you are hiring for a job that requires a high attention to detail and excellent written communication skills, then a resume free of spelling errors is important. However, if the job doesn't require that, consider the other essential skills and abilities without focusing on errors. A candidate who has experience working with their hands, cooking, assembling kits or picking and packing orders, may not need strong written skills.

