

# Opportunities Fund

for

## Persons with Disabilities

Enabling Canadians with disabilities  
to participate fully in the workplace



*There are many Canadians with disabilities who are not employed but who want to work. For most, assistance can be the key to overcoming the barriers and finding meaningful employment.*

*Social Development Canada offers assistance to persons with disabilities in their efforts to join the workforce — through the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities.*

### **What is the Opportunities Fund?**

The Opportunities Fund is a program designed to assist persons with disabilities in preparing for and obtaining employment or self-employment, as well as developing the skills necessary to maintain that new employment.

### **What does the Opportunities Fund do?**

The Opportunities Fund supports different types of activities to help persons with disabilities overcome barriers to employment.

Activities can include:

- encouraging employers to provide individuals with work opportunities and experience;
- helping individuals start their own business;
- assisting individuals to increase their employment skill level;
- assisting individuals to integrate into the workplace through services tailored to meet their special needs; and
- providing the personal support required to enable individuals to participate in employment services provided by project applicants.

*Note: Some activities may not be available in certain regions.*

## Who is eligible for assistance under the Opportunities Fund?

The Opportunities Fund assists unemployed persons with disabilities who are not normally eligible for employment benefits under the *Employment Insurance Act*.

To be eligible, an individual must self-identify as having a permanent physical or mental disability, be unemployed (working less than 20 hours per week), be legally entitled to work in Canada, and be in need of assistance to prepare for employment, find employment, or become employed or self-employed.

## How does the Opportunities Fund program work?

The Opportunities Fund provides financial assistance to offer employment services to persons with disabilities. Services may be provided directly to individuals or through organizations with projects funded by the Opportunities Fund.

Financial assistance may cover expenses that are incurred directly as a result of participation. Participants may receive support toward certain other expenses, such as tuition, commuting and dependant care. Assistance to cover the costs of special arrangements or devices to accommodate a person with a disability may also be provided.

Participants should continue with their current source of support, if any, and may be asked to share the cost of assistance.

## Project applicants

Social Development Canada can enter into agreements with organizations or individuals proposing to deliver employment services to persons with disabilities. These project applicants under Social Development Canada's Opportunities Fund may include:

- businesses
- band/tribal councils
- municipal governments
- public health and educational institutions; and
- individuals

## For how long is assistance provided?

The duration of the assistance to participants will vary based on individual needs. Assistance provided to project applicants/employers normally does not exceed 52 weeks.

## Helping Canadians with disabilities achieve their goals

Social Development Canada supports Canadians with disabilities in their efforts to join the workforce. Since the Opportunities Fund began in 1997, it has assisted more than 24,000 Canadians, providing almost \$24 million per year to support persons with disabilities in achieving their employment goals.

*“Having an interpreter for job interviews and training makes me ‘equal’ with hearing people. It gives me the chance to show that, even though I’m deaf, I can do the same things that a hearing person can.”*



Jerome Yager  
British Columbia

## How can the Opportunities Fund help individuals obtain employment?

The Opportunities Fund can provide:

- skills upgrading
- work experience opportunities
- assistance for self-employment; and
- job-search support

### How to apply

Those interested in submitting an application or a project proposal should contact their nearest Service Canada Centre.

### For more information

Information about the Opportunities Fund and your local Service Canada Centre can be found on the Social Development Canada Web site at: [www.sdc.gc.ca](http://www.sdc.gc.ca). Additional copies of this pamphlet may be obtained from your nearest Service Canada Centre or by contacting:

Publications  
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This document is also available in alternative formats (large print, audio cassette, Braille and computer diskette) in French and English through InfoTouch by calling 1 866 386-9624 (toll-free) on a touch-tone phone. TTY/TDD services are available at 1 800 645-7735.

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