



# Welcome to the Disability Employment Awareness Month Employer Toolkit.



## October is Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM).

Excited? So are we!

Like us, you're probably eager to do what you can do to help make DEAM a success.

And not just a "hey that was nice" success. We mean an all upper case "WHO KNEW WE COULD ACCOMPLISH THAT?" type of success.

We've put together a few thought-starters. But the real indicator of success will be how much uptake you can get from your network of colleagues, suppliers, and stakeholders.

If we all work together, we can make Alberta a DEAM leader.

Calgary Employment First Network

## 1. Hold an “Explode a Myth” week.

An easy and fun way to explode some of the myths around employing people with disabilities.

Every morning for the first week of DEAM, someone in your office writes a disability employment myth on a piece of paper and then puts it in a balloon and inflates it. Via a random draw, employees take turns trying to explode the balloon with a dart from 10 feet.

The person who explodes the balloon receives a Tim Hortons or Starbucks gift card, and reads the myth they have exploded to the assembled group.



Here are some myths that can be used:

1. MYTH: Employees with disabilities are expensive. REALITY: 75% of employees with disabilities don't require anything extra to help them do their jobs. For those that require assistance, 70% can be helped for under \$500, which is usually tax deductible.
2. MYTH: Employees with disabilities have greater rates of absenteeism. REALITY: In an extensive survey by large employers, people with disabilities were found to have lower absenteeism rates.
3. MYTH: Employees with disabilities have shorter tenures. REALITY: People with disabilities actually have retention rates 72% higher than the rest of the workforce.
4. MYTH: Customers are afraid of people with disabilities. REALITY: 92% of consumers have a positive image of companies that hire people with disabilities, and 87% prefer to do business with those companies.
5. MYTH: Businesses do just fine without hiring people with disabilities. REALITY: Whether they know it or not, most businesses have employees with disabilities. Currently, one in seven people in the workforce have a disability. As Canada's population ages, this will only increase. The talent pool of people with disabilities is too big to ignore.

## 2. Nominate an organization for our #DEAM Employer Awards.

Inclusive Employment wouldn't be possible without the incredible employers who champion diversity in their workplaces. To truly celebrate the spirit of #DEAM, let's recognize employers who practice inclusive hiring.

All nominated employers will be featured on the CEFN website and finalists will receive formal awards at our #DEAM Employer Awards Gala.



Fill out our online submission form to nominate a #DEAM employer today!

<http://www.calgaryemploymentfirst.ca/deam-employer-nomination-form/>

*(Submission deadline is October 6, 2017)*

### 3. Get an MBA over lunch

A Masters in Business Accessibility will help your organization ensure that your ability to hire and retain the best talent, including people with disabilities, is on track.

These informative “lunch and learn” sessions give companies new perspectives on employees with disabilities, how hiring can be made more inclusive, and why retaining talent by accommodating for disabilities is far less labour-intensive and expensive than searching for replacements.

Organizations can also learn new inclusion strategies, how to engage service providers and more.

For more information, contact us at:

[info@calgaryemploymentfirst.ca](mailto:info@calgaryemploymentfirst.ca)



## 4. Have an office Clashmob

To emphasize the fact that diversity and inclusion are better than same-ness, invite all your employees to wear grey one day in October. The following day invite them to wear bright, clashing colours and patterns to work.

Let those stripes and polka dots collide. Retrieve your paisley tie from the '80s and wear it loud and proud to show that workplaces are more energetic and interesting when diversity reigns.



Use social media to show off your organization's diversity in the name of DEAM using #DEAMteam.

## 5. Take your DEAMteam to lunch.

Reward a team or HR department that exemplifies the spirit of Disability Employment Awareness Month by treating them to lunch at one of our DEAM-partner restaurants.

Research shows that 92% of consumers have a positive image of companies that hire people with disabilities, and 87% prefer to do business with those companies. By frequenting these establishments, we will be reinforcing the maxim that hiring people with disabilities is good for business.

We've identified a number of Calgary eateries whose employment and hiring practices adhere to the DEAM philosophy. To find inclusive establishments in your area, use the "We Belong" App today!

<http://www.webelong.ca>



## 6. Buy a “one in seven” balloon bouquet.

The A in DEAM is for Awareness. And one of the most amazing things about Alberta’s workforce is that one in seven workers has a disability of some kind. So we’ve partnered with a Calgary balloon shop to create these special bouquets of seven helium balloons, emphasizing that fact.

Purchase a DEAM Balloon Bouquet and display it in your lobby during Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Ten dollars from the sale of every DEAM Balloon Bouquet goes to the Calgary Employment First Network, so not only will your organization be creating awareness, you’ll be fundraising for a great cause.

Bouquets are just \$60, including delivery, with \$10 going to the Calgary Employment First Network. To order, contact our official DEAM balloon supplier, Balloon Blast at 403-714-2211.





## 7. Foster your own DEAMteam, starting with a blank canvas

Studio C is an art studio in the historic Burns Building downtown. As part of its mandate to make art accessible to all, Studio C's professional art facilitators host innovative teambuilding sessions around the creation of a unique piece of art.

Dozens of organizations, from large oil companies to mid-sized law firms, have brought their people to Studio C for this energetic and creative exercise.

Groups of employees get to work together in ways that differ from their day-to-day interactions. They receive direct experience in diversity training and the company can keep the art work to display in their workplace as a reminder of their commitment to staff and to inclusive communities.



For more information or to book a session, visit <http://www.studiocprospect.ca/teambuilding>

## About DEAM

DEAM is championed by the Calgary Employment First Network, a collaboration of top service providers that helps businesses recruit and hire employees with disabilities. The mission of the CEFN is to help employers increase workplace diversity and inclusion.

It is well established that a diverse workforce is a more effective work force. One in seven Albertans has some sort of disability. People with disabilities and the inclusive organizations that hire them have compelling success stories to tell. Let's ensure that the stories are being told and Alberta becomes a leading agent of change.

The ideas in this document are intended to be kickstarters for a month of constructive awareness. We encourage everyone to build on them. Other avenues to explore for DEAM could include:

- A Mentorability day <http://www.supportedemployment.ca/mentorability/>
- Create an Employee Resource Group around diversity, or disability, or mental health.
- If you or an organization you work with already has a monthly event, give the event scheduled for October a DEAM theme.
- Write an article in your company newsletter – share a success story, or your commitment to diversity with your employees.
- Promote DEAM through Social Media – place a DEAM banner on your company page, change your profile images to the DEAM logo, create a DEAM email signature (we have tools).

Follow us @YYCEFN on Twitter and Facebook.

For more information or to share your thoughts and ideas, visit <http://www.calgaryemploymentfirst.ca/disability-employment-awareness-month/>

