



Infinite Potential. Limitless Futures.
**CNIB's Career Support
and Employment Program**





Giving People with Sight Loss the Head Start They Need

At half a million, and growing, individuals with sight loss make up a sizeable portion of the Canadian population, but they still face many challenges on the road to gainful employment. Only one third of Canadian working age adults with sight loss are employed, and half are struggling to make ends meet at \$20,000 a year or less.

A third of Canadians say they don't know how to interact appropriately with someone who is blind or partially sighted in a workplace setting. 70% of Canadians say that presented with two fully qualified job candidates, they would hire the sighted candidate over the blind candidate, which is a troubling statistic CNIB is working with employers to change.

Many people don't realize that individuals with sight loss can and do work in a wide range of fields – from science to engineering, law, technology, finance, creative arts and many more. Additionally, the Canadian economy benefits when skilled, well-qualified Canadians are employed and contributing.

Through a community consultation process, blind and partially sighted consumers have indicated that employment and career support is one of the critical areas where CNIB needs to move the needle in a positive direction.



A Century of Supporting Those with Sight Loss

Since 1918, CNIB has worked at the forefront, in communities across Canada – helping thousands of blind and partially sighted Canadians build the skills needed to lead full, independent lives.

In the 1920s and 1930s, CNIB had a wide-reaching mandate that comprised residential and employment programs, advocacy work, blindness prevention and the CNIB Library, which remains the largest library collection for blind Canadians to this day.

Creating employment opportunities was a high priority for the organization from the very beginning. In the 1920s, CNIB developed a job placement service which was one of the first for the blind in North America. The organization also established industrial manufacturing centres across Canada for blind individuals to make brooms and do manual tasks like chair caning, industrial sewing and basket weaving.

CNIB also established successful cafeterias and canteen stands in federal public buildings across Canada which expanded through the 1930s into a full food operation and catering services, employing hundreds of blind individuals. Known as CaterPlan, in the 1960s the service was renowned as one of the largest industrial cafeteria operations in Canada that flourished into the 1980's and continued operations in the Atlantic provinces into the early 2000's.

Why Career Support Matters

Today, working with someone who is blind or partially sighted is no different than working with anyone else.

Advances in technology and post-sight loss training mean that blind and partially sighted people overcome many of the barriers to work that they faced in the past. People with sight loss can and do successfully perform a wide range of careers.

Despite this reality, people with sight loss still face significant challenges to gainful employment, and according to a recent Ipsos survey, many Canadians hold misconceptions about hiring and working with someone who is blind or partially sighted.

- **Only one third** of working-age adults with sight loss are employed
- **Only 37 per cent of youth** who are not currently working, are actively looking for work
- Over **half of Canadian working-age** people with sight loss are struggling to make ends meet on **\$20,000** a year - or less

Research indicates that career support and skills development programs reduce the incidence of feelings of isolation associated with sight loss while helping people gain self-confidence, offering practical skills and social supports.

CNIB's Career Support and Employment Program is designed to improve employment statistics, develop key skills and increase the sense of confidence in those who are partially sighted or blind. The programs will ensure greater success in interviews and increased numbers entering the work force in meaningful and fulfilling roles. CNIB will work in partnership with prospective employers to secure paid internships and work placements. Our efforts will help transform the troubling employment statistics of the blind and partially sighted into stories of achievement and success.

Our programs provide those with sight loss with the inspiration, tools and opportunities to develop to their maximum potential – becoming not only employed, confident and competent adults, but inspiring leaders of tomorrow.

CNIB is determined to provide this inspiring program to every Ontarian who could benefit, despite the barriers that they may face.



Manville Centre
OR WEST

A Brighter Future for All

The new CNIB Career Support Program will change the employment landscape so that our society will see that those that are blind and partially sighted, while differently abled, can perform as successfully in the world of work as their sighted peers.

CNIB will take significant steps to support those entering the work force. We will approach, educate and work with an identified network of agencies, industries and institutes that are open to accepting, employing and supporting those with sight loss or blindness.

CNIB's Career Support program is one key innovative program that we are building to help those with sight loss develop and thrive, but we need to broaden our impact and increase access for all. Participants will leave each session of the program feeling energized, connected and motivated to try out new skills and tools – aware of the real possibilities for a brighter future.

With almost 100 years of history serving blind and partially sighted Canadians, CNIB as a leader in this area will address challenges and barriers and ensure Canadians of all ages with sight loss have the support they need to live connected, rewarding and independent lives - **but only with your support.**

CNIB will focus not only on creating jobs, but also on developing careers through challenging, knowledge-based positions in high-energy, quality work environments.

Building Blocks for Change

The Career Support and Employment Program will be both participant and employer centred to help ensure the ultimate employment success of the participants.

The program will enable participants to develop the pre-employment and job retention skills required by blind and partially sighted employees to be successful at work. CNIB will partner with community organizations that are subject matter experts in areas such as resume writing and job search skills while addressing skills or issues that specifically affect those who are blind or partially sighted, such as self-advocacy and disclosure.

CNIB will work with employers to create an employer education program to create awareness of the knowledge, skills and abilities that those that are blind or partially sighted bring to the table. These strengths can not only be the same as those with other abilities, but can also enhance a work team.

CNIB will partner with employers to create paid internship opportunities and invest in wage subsidy and entrepreneurship programs with select industries. This will give interns hands-on work experience while they shatter many of the misconceptions employers hold about hiring those who are differently abled.

Career Support Programs

The Current Reality

Employers report that blind and partially sighted candidates, while educated, often lack the pre-employment skills required by someone that is ready to join the job market. These include some work or related volunteer experience, technical skills, assistive technology ability, social skills as well as emotional intelligence.

Working-age participants and CNIB Career Support Program managers report that transitioning from school to work needs to be a key component of a successful pre-employment program. Working-age participants with work experience express that other pre-employment programs do not meet their needs and are geared more towards those that are entering the workforce for the first time. For all scenarios, the re-occurring feedback has been that “the program staff didn’t know how to help me with my specific job search efforts.”

Skills Training

Pre-employment training will focus on working age adult participants that have recently completed their education are in the process to transition from school to the workforce.

Re-employment will focus on participants that have work experience and have been off or out of work for various reasons, and are now ready to re-enter the labour market. We will work with employed individuals who are in career transition, sharpening their skills for advancement.

Building Blocks to Success

Interactive workshops will focus on interview skills, disclosing one's sight loss, dressing for success and self-advocacy. Participants can select the sessions that are best suited to their individual needs and interests or can choose to follow a complete series of workshops in sequence.

Online career planning, employment resource and information tools will be utilized including CNIB's 'Project Aspiro', the 'EmployAbility Campaign' and Career Connect Canada - a free resource for Canadians who are blind or partially sighted to connect, network and build their careers.

A new face to face mentorship program for job seekers who are matched with mentors who are also blind and partially sighted, will be developed by leveraging the power of Career Connect Canada. Recent graduate internships through partner organizations and employer-sponsored internships will also be created.

Partners in Change

CNIB's Career Support Program will work with existing pan-disability and integrated pre-employment services to deliver interactive workshops on topics resume writing and job development. CNIB will partner with these organizations to help them make their programs for services accessible to our participants. The workshops that are offered by CNIB will focus on issues unique to blind and partially sighted job seekers.

CNIB will partner with professional associations such as the Human Resources Professional Association (HRPA) and incorporate evidence-based best practices to leverage their experience in terms of employment to better support the needs of our participants.

Creation of Internship and Co-op Opportunities

The Current Reality

Participants report that despite their solid education background, employers have not hired them because they do not have the required work experience, and they cannot get work experience because employers have not hired them! It is a vicious circle. Internships and co-ops will provide candidates with practical work experience and transferrable skills that they will be able to highlight on their resume and job applications.

Creating Opportunity

Paid internships would be six months long, and organized in two streams: one for recent graduates and one for job seekers with experience who are trying to re-enter the labour market. CNIB will lead by example and create internships internally, as well as partnering with other organizations.

Partners in Change

CNIB will partner with national and local employers such as financial institutions, telecommunications companies and employment agencies as a collaborator and resource for our participants to find internships. We will also work with existing employer-led internships to highlight the real value that our participants can bring to the workplace.



Wayne's Story

Wayne has over 22 years of experience in IT with roles ranging from warehouse parts picker to Chief Technology Officer on the board of a leading computer manufacturer. He was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP), a progressive eye disease, in high school. Wayne's RP as well as recently-developed cataracts require him to use a white cane and he finds it hard to focus on things.

After losing his job in a corporate restructuring four years ago, Wayne has not been able to secure full-time work since. He says, "An individual can get the interview, get the discussion going, but upon disclosure of being a person with vision loss, I experience disengagement from the prospective employer."

Wayne is confident that CNIB's Career Support Program will help job seekers become more comfortable and prepared with better tools to introduce their sight loss that do not cause a negative reaction with employers. Wayne believes the Career Support Program can "help empower candidates during the search process and will allow them to be given the chance to demonstrate they can do the work and they will not be an increased liability to the organization they are supporting."

Employer Outreach, Education and Advocacy

The Current Reality

Research conducted in 2016 by CNIB showed that many employers are reluctant to hire people who are blind and partially sighted, and generally underestimate blind candidates' capabilities. There are also widespread misconceptions about the cost of accommodating those with sight loss in the workplace.

Creating Opportunity

Employer outreach and education will target prospective employers, community business associations, and federal, provincial and municipal governments that provide funding for employment and training. The program will leverage the tools that are part of CNIB's EmployAbility Campaign and Project Aspiro websites as well as other training and advocacy resources.

Partners in Change

CNIB will partner with employers who currently employ individuals that are blind and partially sighted, as they will act as spokespeople alongside participants, as well as blind and partially sighted staff. We will champion this by highlighting some of CNIB's current and past employees. We will work with professional associations such as HRP (Human Resources Professionals) and RNIB (Britain's Royal National Institute for the Blind) as a resource model for our program. CNIB will build upon our existing connections with employers such as Canada's large banks that have existing diversity initiatives.

Employment Retention Support

The Current Reality

Internal and external stakeholders report that when an employee loses or has a change in the degree of their sight loss, often both the employer and the employee do not know what to do. They are unaware of how to accommodate and act around someone who has been newly diagnosed or has had sudden sight loss, and of what resources are available. Through this program, an online resource tool that can be used as a quick reference guide as well as links to other resources will be available to both employers and employees that are blind or partially sighted.

Creating Opportunity

Employer outreach and education will include utilizing elements of 'Job Saves', a critical program that allows a person with sight loss to remain on the job. We will support employers with workplace assessment tools and inform them of the available and inexpensive accommodations that can be made at the workplace. We will also provide assistive technology and advocacy training and workshops for the participant, so that they can retain their job. Referrals to Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada will be made by our employment team for training in specific skills related to their work.

Partners in Change

CNIB will work with and educate employers such as insurance companies and banks that provide employee benefits to ensure that blind or partially sighted employees can remain on the job, with the accommodations they need to succeed.



cnib inca

Confidence.
Skills.
Opportunities.

CNIB
Post Secondary
with VIS

Employment Assistance

Whether it's needing help with career planning or preparing to enter or re-enter the work force, requiring assistance with a job search, vocational assessments or wage subsidies, retraining or determining job accommodations, CNIB will be available to assist participants achieve their personal employment goals in various ways across the province.

CNIB helps those who are partially sighted or blind explore their career interests and develop employment plans. We will liaise with community resources to support a participant's search, engages with potential employers and investigate possible job training, meaningful internships and placement opportunities with them.

CNIB will also take significant steps to support those entering or re-entering the work force. We will approach, educate and work with an identified network of agencies, industries and institutes that are adaptable and open to accepting into their fold, employing and supporting those with sight loss or blindness. We will focus not only on creating jobs, but also on developing careers through challenging, knowledge-based positions in high-energy, quality work environments that will offer a wide range of career opportunities.

CNIB also serves as an employer of choice for those who are blind or partially sighted across the country, increasing the impact of this program in meaningful ways as we change what it is to be blind today.



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Phone/



Building Best-In-Class Programs

CNIB is committed to delivering best-in-class, evidence-based programs for Canadians with sight loss. Through an inclusive process of program development and delivery, we strive to make the greatest possible difference in their lives. Continuity of care is an important part of our philosophy, especially for children and youth who typically receive a range of additional rehabilitation and educational support services.

Our Career Support and Employment Program is offered free of charge to all who need it, but the process of developing and delivering programs like this is resource-intensive. This ongoing work involves:

Consultation and Planning – We review research, collaborate with experts and, most importantly, consult those we serve to gain a robust understanding of the barriers and challenges faced by individuals with sight loss, the needs they have, and the programs they want.

Program Development – We work with our in-house experts, volunteer advisors and other leaders in the blindness field to develop innovative programs that respond to participant needs and reflect international best practices. CNIB's program development is based on principles of evidence based practice which includes literature review that support the development of the program.

Program Implementation – We recruit and train dynamic staff and volunteer leaders to roll out programs in selected locations across the province. As programs are launched and piloted, we seek to optimize all aspects of delivery and marketing and improve participant experiences.

Impact Reporting and Expansion – We routinely monitor program effectiveness to ensure participants have the best possible outcomes and reach their individual goals. We use the data we gather to continually evolve and expand our programs, and identify emerging needs for the future.



Measuring Success

When it comes to helping Canadians cope with the challenges of sight loss, success is our only option. That's why it's vital that our Career Support and Employment Program leads to proven, positive outcomes in the lives of those we serve. Interaction with CNIB's certified Vision Loss Rehabilitation Therapists (VLRT) is key throughout this process, to ensure there is alignment with an individual's rehabilitation therapy.

CNIB is committed to measuring and maximizing the impact of each of our programs. Outcome measures will be informed by evidence-based best practices as outlined in a thorough literature review in each program area. Using of validated evaluation tools to measure outcomes of the program, and leveraging a range of recognized methodologies, we will target and measure the impact of our skills training programs, internships and mentoring programs and employer education programs in the following areas:

- **Enhanced job-readiness of participants.** To what extent has participating in the skills training program enhanced the self-advocacy, hands-on job search skills and job-readiness of participants?
- **Attainment of career and employment goals** as they pertain to the participant's personal career path. This may include obtaining or retaining employment.
- **Participant confidence in acquired skills** after participating in each program module section.
- **Evidence of increased employer awareness** and understanding of recognized diversity and inclusion policies as well as standard employer accommodation practices.
- **Successful creation of internship opportunities** amongst various employers and successful completion of a full internship by participants.



We Need Your Support

As we celebrate CNIB's centenary in 2018, we are proud to unveil a new path for the future – one that sees us working in partnership with those who we serve, as well as provincial governments, the medical community, volunteers and supporters, to create a future in which every Canadian can fully participate in life, regardless of sight loss.

CNIB is levelling the playing field for Canadians with sight loss by developing life-changing programs, imparting vital knowledge, enabling people to lead fuller, more independent lives, demanding societal reform and inspiring change. **But we cannot do it alone.**

It is critical that we work together to ensure that these programs are successful. We can only accomplish this with your support.

Please consider making a donation to support CNIB's Career Support and Employment Program. Your gift will change lives and empower working-age adults who are blind or partially sighted to achieve their goals and reach their highest potential.

Join us today!

To Make a Donation or Learn More

To make a donation or learn more:

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Charitable registration # :119219459 RR0003

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Local contact information



CNIB Mission

To change what it is to be blind through innovative programs and powerful advocacy that enable Canadians impacted by blindness to live the lives they choose.

About CNIB

Celebrating 100 years in 2018, the CNIB Foundation is a non-profit organization driven to change what it is to be blind today. We deliver innovative programs and powerful advocacy that empower people impacted by blindness to live their dreams and tear down barriers to inclusion. Our work as a blind foundation is powered by a network of volunteers, donors and partners from coast to coast to coast.

