



ANNUAL REPORT
2024-25

Business Engagement

ODEN continued to **strengthen its relationships** with businesses across Ontario, fostering inclusive employment through events, training, and consulting.

ODEN co-hosted **4 business engagement events** across Ontario, bringing together **221 participants**, creating space for dialogue, collaboration, and action.

We delivered **20 formal business education and awareness sessions** sharing ODEN's mission, the business case for inclusive hiring and resources to support their disability inclusion journey.

We shared **224 job opportunities** with **230 Employment Service Providers**. These referrals created real pathways to connect people who have disabilities with meaningful work.

ODEN's Disability Awareness & Confidence Training (DACT) reached **945** participants across **19 business groups**, with additional companies accessing online training via the ODEN online learning portal.

ODEN also provided consulting services to **5 businesses**, supporting their inclusive hiring journeys through job posting reviews, recruitment policy updates, accessibility planning, project consultations, and training strategy development. These tailored services helped businesses move from intention to action.

Business Engagement continued

ODEN provided a platform for businesses to promote their company, workplace culture, and hiring processes with Employment Service Providers across the country through the ODEN Biz Connect Leaders Series. This year, we hosted **5 events** that drew **184 attendees** from employment services, businesses, and stakeholder organizations. Participating businesses included Aecon, Michaels, LCBO, and Canada Revenue Agency in both English and French.



This project was funded by Ontario's Ministry for Seniors & Accessibility, through the Enabling Change Grant, this one-year project allowed ODEN to produce several resources to support private and public sector employers to view disability inclusive hiring beyond compliance and as a full economic benefit.

In total, **over 500 people participated** in the project, producing **over 16 tools** and resources, and delivering information in **19 outreach activities**.

85%

of businesses surveyed found that accommodations in the workplace helped them retain a valued employee.

Job Accommodation Network Study, *Workplace Accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact*
(Updated May 4, 2023)

“We gained a deeper understanding of various disabilities and discussed ways to support our colleagues effectively.”

- DACT for Business Attendee

Capacity Building & Program Improvements

This past year has been a **testament to what's possible** when businesses, Employment Service Providers, and communities work together toward a shared vision of inclusive employment. **Thank you** for being part of this journey.

ODEN delivered **18 various training sessions** for Employment Service Providers, reaching over **177 staff** across Ontario. These sessions sparked new ideas and reinforced the value of Employment Service Provider roles.

ODEN supported **5 organizations** with nearly **20 hours** of program improvement and consulting services, and provided **22 hours** of coaching and mentoring to **32 organizations** in the network, responding to requests for guidance and support.

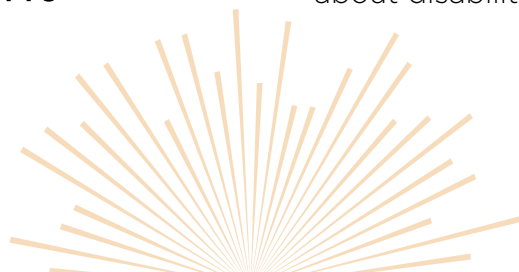
**“Great teaching,
gets the ideas
flowing.**

Excited to
take it back
and implement
it into my
position.”

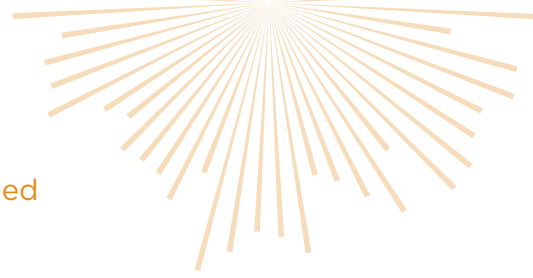
- ESP Training Attendee

ODEN hosted **16 ODEN Connection events** throughout the year, resulting in **574 people** increasing their knowledge and sharing experiences with other organizations in the employment service sector.

ODEN amplified its mission at **15 speaking events**, engaging **1,232 people** in conversations about disability inclusion in employment.



Capacity Building & Program Improvements continued



Inclusion & Employment Awareness Project

Funded by Ontario's Ministry of Education, this one-year project addressed the fact that students who have developmental disabilities face significant barriers to gain employability skills due to lack of tailored programs, access to early work-related experiences, and resources that can support the development of these skills.

ODEN presented this project at **12 events** across the province. Over **40 resources and tools** were produced for this project. Over **75 educators** from **18 school boards** and **35 families** accessed the resources available online.

RDC 24

Rethinking Disability Conference



300 attendees in 2024



11 sponsors



22 exhibitors



129 organizations

Innovation & Promising Practices

ODEN **identifies** and **promotes** program models and resources that support successful job outcomes for people who have a disability and/or are interested in, engaged with, or entering the world of work.



Case studies are great knowledge resources for gleaning ideas and insights that people can apply in their own operations and with their teams. ODEN produced **3 case studies**, two highlighting high performing Employment Service Providers (UHC-Hub of Opportunities and Community Living Algoma) and one highlighting a disability inclusive business: Tru Earth.



Additionally, **3 promising practices** were identified: “**In Motion & Momentum**”; “**Employment Readiness Scale**”; and “**GPS for Your Career**”.

ODEN updated their **Partnerships Guidebook** and the **Change Management Workbook**. Partnerships and collaborations are critically important in Ontario’s new Integrated Employment System (IES). By working together with community partners, employers, and other stakeholders, ESPs can serve job seekers better.

Disability Employment Service Awards

ODEN launched the **Disability Employment Service Awards** at the 2024 Rethinking Disability Conference. These awards recognize and celebrate the success of members who serve the disability community and recognize the positive impact they have on the employment service sector. Winners of the awards were:



- **Tara Pattison**, E.D. PATH Employment Services – Outstanding Employment Service Professional.
- **LiveWorkPlay**, Ottawa – Promising Practice and Innovation Award.
- **Community Living Central York**, Newmarket – Outstanding Employment Service Provider.



In this fiscal year, ODEN has continued to support the development of tools and resources housed in the KTT Hub/Network. Three learning modules were produced for the KTT.

ODEN also promotes awareness of the KTT Hub/Network at events and conferences. This year, **1000+ people** learned more about the KTT Initiative at **6 events** across the province.



With two rounds of one-year funding from the Innovation Lab, ODEN delivered the **Canadian Youth Success Strategy** (YSS) project from November 2022 to October 2024. The YSS project is built on research identifying strategies and service offerings that lead to successful employment outcomes for youth, who have and do not have disabilities. In total, the project produced **12 resources** for families, educators, and ESPs serving youth who have developmental disabilities.

ODEN's WEB PRESENCE

in

96,043

f

41,337

IMPRESSIONS



107,000
views



1:18 min.
average
visit

Membership & Advocacy



117 member organizations

4 corporate members

ODEN provided **over 478 hours** of direct service to Employment Service Providers across the province in 2024/2025.

ODEN continued to lead strategic advocacy efforts to advance disability inclusive employment across Ontario.

We built strong, collaborative relationships with the provincial government, meeting decision makers to address policy gaps, funding challenges, and the realities faced by Employment Service Providers and job seekers who have a disability.

In June 2024, in collaboration with Community Living Ontario, ODEN released the Tangled in Red Tape report, highlighting critical challenges created by Ontario's Employment Services Transformation and its impact on both Employment Service

Providers and job seekers who have a disability. Building on this evidence, ODEN amplified member voices at the Rethinking Disability Conference in November, where government representatives engaged directly with delegates to gather recommendations for improving the province's Integrated Employment Services model.

ODEN's work in 2024/25 laid a strong foundation for continued impact. ODEN remains committed to influencing policy, strengthening service delivery, and ensuring job seekers who have a disability can access meaningful employment opportunities through inclusive, responsive, and equitable systems.

Other Initiatives

NDEAM

Our 2024 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) campaign, **Championing Disability Inclusion**, was a record-smashing success! With **over 322 media hits**, this campaign reached an audience of **67 million people**.

And the fifth-anniversary of **Light It Up! For NDEAM™** on Thursday, October 17 was also a record-breaking, history-making event! Over 800 locations in almost **200 communities** lit purple and blue.



Confederation Building, St. John's, NL



Esplanade Riel, Winnipeg, MB



Horseshoe Falls, Niagara Falls, ON



National Printing Bureau, Gatineau, QC

Other Initiatives continued



The Ontario Corporate Training Centre (OCTC) is a provincewide project running from 2023 until January 2026, supported by the Ontario Disability Employment Network and funded by the Government of Canada. The project aims to empower businesses with tools, knowledge, and resources needed to embrace diversity and disability inclusive hiring practices.

In its second year, OCTC launched **5 bilingual** online training modules. **35 businesses** and **162 people** were engaged in the project.

The OCTC team engaged businesses across Ontario through training, events, and collaborations that advanced disability inclusive hiring. The team co-hosted **19** virtual and in-person information sessions with **over 379 participants**.



Since 2019, **ODEN** and **March of Dimes Canada** have operated the **Ontario Hub for MentorAbility**, a national initiative supported by the **Canadian Association for Supported Employment** and funded by the Government of Canada. This program connects job seekers who have a disability with short-term mentoring experiences to explore careers and expand networks. This year, **76 mentor matches** were made with the support of **66 mentors** who signed up across the province.



Jobs Ability Canada is an online recruitment platform, created by and for people who have a disability, grew this year with **892 new job seekers** and **4 new inclusive employers** – bringing the total to **16 businesses** using the platform to hire diverse talent in their organizations.

The Jobs Ability Canada team hosted **11 information sessions** across the country with **247 people** participating in the sessions.

As we reflect on the past year, we know it has been one with challenges for Employment Service Providers across Ontario. Changing economic conditions, sector transformation and transitions have placed new pressures on our work. Yet, even in these difficult circumstances, ODEN and the network of Employment Service Providers have continued to advance the vision that drives us: that all people who have a disability have access to meaningful work.

The progress we have made reflects the perseverance, creativity, innovation, and commitment to inclusion from the ODEN team, Board of Directors, Employment Service Provider Network and stakeholders.

- Amy Widdows, *Chief Executive Officer*
& Michael Dawthorne, *ODEN Board Chair*



Ontario Disability Employment Network
www.odennetwork.com | 866-280-6336

Staff

Jeannette Campbell

CEO (*until December 2024*)

Amy Widdows

Interim CEO

(*as of Jan 1, 2025*)

Ingrid Muschta

Director of Special Projects
& Innovation

Sue Dafoe

Director of Business
& Financial Services

J.C. Doyle

Director of Development
& Capacity Building

Lesley Ellis

Administrative & Membership
Coordinator (*until June 2024*)

Lila Jorgenson

Administrative & Membership
Coordinator (*as of July 2024*)

Dean Askin

Communications Strategist

Raisa Fariha

Accounting & HR Assistant

Jennifer Hope

Disability Employment
Inclusion Specialist

Sarah Birch

Disability Employment
Inclusion Specialist

Jennifer Ridley

Disability Employment
Inclusion Specialist

Dr. Jennifer Crowson

Disability Employment
Inclusion Specialist

Hogan Lam

Disability Employment
Inclusion Specialist

Erin Hartley

Disability Employment
Inclusion Specialist

Liz Gosse

Disability Awareness Trainer

Bridgette Sterling

Disability Awareness Trainer

Kiersten Smith

Disability Awareness Trainer

Kimberly Chan

Administrative Coordinator

Pawnaa Perinpanayagam

Marketing Coordinator

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