

# 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 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 to help you kick start your own DEAM celebrations. To ensure DEAM is a widespread success it will be important to gather the support and involvement of your network of colleagues, suppliers, and stakeholders.

The activity ideas in this toolkit are intended to be kick starters for a month of constructive awareness. We encourage everyone to build on them and make them your own.

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

Calgary Employment First Network

# DEAM Activity Ideas

## 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 done 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 #DEAMEmployer 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 local employers who practice inclusive hiring.

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



Fill out our online submission form at to nominate a #DEAMEmployer today!  
[www.calgaryemploymentfirst.ca/disability-employment-awareness-month-deam/](http://www.calgaryemploymentfirst.ca/disability-employment-awareness-month-deam/)

*(Submission deadline is October 16, 2016)*

### 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 the hashtag #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://webelong.ca/?page\\_id=861](http://webelong.ca/?page_id=861)

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

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

The ‘A’ in DEAM is for Awareness. One of the most amazing things about Alberta’s workforce is that one in seven workers has a disability of some kind. To draw awareness to this we’ve partnered with a Calgary balloon shop to create special bouquets of seven helium balloons.

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:

The Balloon Blast  
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

Every October organizations and employers across Canada are celebrating Disability Employment Awareness Month. DEAM is championed by the Calgary Employment First Network (CEFN); a collective of local, publicly-funded organizations which serve as community partners to local employers and assist with inclusive recruitment, on-boarding and other diversity related employment needs. The CEFN represents a large talent pool of candidates and provides employers with a single point of contact for Diversity and Inclusion resources in the area of disability.

It is well established that a diverse workforce is a more effective workforce. Employees with disabilities, and the inclusive organizations that hire them, have compelling success stories to share. Let's ensure that these stories are being told and Alberta becomes a leading agent of change.

### Other avenues to explore for DEAM could include:

- Participate in a Mentorability day  
<http://www.supportedemployment.ca/mentorability/>
- Create an Employee Resource Group around diversity, 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 your own social media – place a DEAM banner on your company page, change profile images to the [DEAM Logo](#), create a DEAM email signature.

For CEFN DEAM event details and resources check out:

<http://www.calgaryemploymentfirst.ca/disability-employment-awareness-month-deam/>

Follow us:



Calgary Employment First Network – CEFN



@YYCEFN