



# ODEN<sup>®</sup>

## Annual Report 2020-21



**Innovation  
Capacity  
Engagement**

## Letter from the Chair



Undoubtedly 2020/21 will be remembered as anything but typical. The pandemic has caused much instability for many organizations, agencies, and companies across the globe. Throughout it all, the Ontario Disability Employment Network has innovated, grown, and consistently sought to support our members despite the uncertainty.

Last year's annual report announced the board's intention to develop a new strategic plan. I am extremely pleased to say ODEN launched its 2021-2024 Strategic Plan earlier this year. Through consultation with member agencies, staff, board members and other key stakeholders, ODEN identified four areas of focus; Growth & Awareness, Thought Leadership, Advocacy & Engagement, and Innovation & Service Excellence, to provide the best support to our members. I want to offer my sincerest appreciation to those that gave their time and feedback to support ODEN throughout the process.

As my first year as Board Chair ends, I want to thank everyone at ODEN for their support. I am particularly indebted to Rosa Amicarelli, our Board's Past Chair for her guidance, and for ensuring ODEN had a solid foundation on which to continue to build.

Lastly, as you read this report, please know that none of the successes over the last year could have been possible without the support of our membership. For you, I am eternally grateful.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Dawthorne".

Michael Dawthorne

## Letter from the CEO



2020/21 was a year like no other. There were challenges that tested our organizations, our teams, and ourselves. Through it all, the agencies and service providers that are the membership of ODEN continued to strive for service excellence, supported job seekers in securing or maintaining employment, and built the capacity and abilities of their teams.

This year ODEN was able to expand again, increasing from a staff compliment of eight to eleven. This dedicated, passionate team worked hard to develop and deliver new trainings, online services, research projects and reports, and hiring initiatives with and for the network members.

We engaged in new ways of working, from our Skills2Sector project, funded by MLTSD to our first ever 'campaign within a campaign', Light It Up! For NDEAM.

Members pulled together to support each other through the first stages of Employment Transformation in Ontario and through a global pandemic, sharing learnings, strategies, and practices freely.

Looking forward to 2021/22, using our new strategic plan to guide ODEN, the team will continue to work with, for, and because of the members and the mission, vision, and goal of the ODEN Member Network - to increase employment outcomes for job seekers who have a disability.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeannette Campbell".

Jeannette Campbell

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## Our Mission

The Ontario Disability Employment Network is a professional body of employment service providers united to increase employment opportunities for people who have a disability by:

- **Addressing issues** related to removing barriers that limit employment opportunities for people who have a disability.
- **Creating a provincial voice** that can speak to government about issues that affect service delivery and support models and the ability of employment service providers to help people who have a disability achieve their employment goals.
- **Developing marketing initiatives** and providing education for the business and corporate sector about the merits of including people who have a disability in the workforce.
- **Improving the skills** and competency of employment service providers through networking, information sharing, training and the promotion of best practice in the sector.

# Business Engagement

Businesses that promote diversity and inclusion are more successful. ODEN understands the business benefits and works towards increasing the number of inclusive businesses in Ontario by providing a multitude of services including:

- Introduction to the benefits of disability-inclusive hiring
- Talent acquisition services
  - Assessment of policies, procedures and job descriptions, recruitment planning and coaching for inclusive interviewing
- Disability Awareness and Confidence training for all levels of staff and management
- Consulting Services
  - Business visioning, mentorship program development, procurement and supply chain education
  - Analysis, problem-solving and on-going support



**ODEN specializes in providing education, support and relationship building, and coordination**

with local employment service providers across the province.



In 2020-21 ODEN directly introduced **106 businesses** to the benefits of inclusive hiring reaching over **500 businesspeople.**



ODEN was engaged by **7 businesses** to support and develop their **Diversity and Inclusion strategies** throughout the year.

ODEN worked with businesses to assist them with their hiring needs and **referred job opportunities to 64 employment service providers**, directly resulting in **52 people being hired at businesses in Ontario.** From surveying ODEN members, we know that they **supported thousands** of job seekers to secure employment in this year, despite the pandemic.



## Business Champions League

At ODEN we know firsthand the importance of recognizing champions in the businesses we encounter. They demonstrate the best practices and strategies for diverse and inclusive employment. The Business Champions League brings together these leaders to share their experiences with other businesses, educating the private sector, and advocating alongside ODEN and the membership with government and businesses.

This year the Business Champions saw a few retirements (**Sean Callaghan**, **Virginia Ludy** and **Brad Duncan**). We thank those champions for their support over the years.

In 2020/21 ODEN engaged the League to create a new nomination process, updated Terms of Reference, and called on Champions to work with us on a variety of projects. For example, **Joe Hoffer** (Cohen Highley LLP) hosted a networking room for ODEN at our first online Business Conference and was an interviewee on Global News Radio Station, AM980 CFPL - London Live with Mike Stubbs. **Matt Rees** from ROCKWOOL accepted the invitation to sit at the Ministry of Labour Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) DS Reference Group for Employment Transformation. **Mayor Mike Bradley** and well-known **Mark Wafer** provided ongoing mentorship and guidance to ODEN team members, from Diversity & Inclusion Specialists to the CEO.



**Inclusive  
Businesses  
grow profits up to  
3X faster  
than their  
competitors**

The graphic features a blue line graph with an upward-pointing arrow, indicating growth. The text is centered within a purple circular frame.

Corporate Leadership Council [www.cebglobal.com/public/corporate-leadership-council/home.html](http://www.cebglobal.com/public/corporate-leadership-council/home.html)



## Looking Forward...

**Facing a labour shortage in multiple sectors as the economy recovers, businesses will need to expand their hiring pools and build their capacity to be inclusive and diverse employers.**

- ODEN has engaged **Our Ability USA** to bring the Jobs Ability portal to Canada. **Jobs Ability Canada** provides a national virtual job platform specifically for job seekers who have a disability and businesses who are intentional in their disability-inclusive hiring.
- ODEN will embark on sector-based hiring initiatives across the province, linking our members to businesses with labour needs.
- ODEN has developed an online, on-demand **Disability Awareness & Confidence Training** course for business.
- ODEN will continue to support businesses in the current economy, being able to provide services virtually or in person.

# Building Capacity and Improving the Sector

By building capacity with employment service providers, educational institutions and those organizations that serve people who have a disability, the sector will continue to improve.

ODEN provides **training, coaching and mentoring, consulting and planning support**, and shares knowledge through speaking engagements and sharing of best practices across the province.

In 2020/21 ODEN provided **36 coaching and mentoring sessions** to organizations.

ODEN supported **5 organizations** throughout the year with their planning and strategy development work – supporting them as they enhanced employment services and increased employment outcomes for their job seeking clients.

ODEN delivered **24 speaking engagements** where team members shared their knowledge with a variety of audiences. Overall, **1,382 participants** were engaged on a variety of topics from Managing the Mental Health in Your Teams to Youth Services and Disability – Challenges in a COVID World, and Job Development in the New Normal to preparing for the Economic Restart.



## ODEN Connection Events

- Topics in 2020/21 included:
  - o Skills2Sector – employment opportunities in non-traditional sectors
  - o The Amazon Alternative Workforce Supplier Program (AWSP) in Ontario
  - o Leadership and impact on workplace stress
  - o Employment and Training System Town Hall
  - o Raising Expectations

## ODEN Training Services:

- **Employment Services Training** – professional development and capacity building training that provides employment service providers with comprehensive courses that cover all aspects of their services.
- **Advanced Job Development Training** – for seasoned employment service professionals who work with job seekers and business clients.
- **Employment Discovery Training** – hands-on workshop that educates developmental service workers about the importance of employment for inclusion for people who have a disability.
- **Disability Awareness and Confidence Training for Employment Service Providers** – designed for front line staff in Employment Service organizations that are new to supporting job seekers who have a disability.
- **jobPath** – 6-week intensive training and curriculum kit for agencies and school boards to use to support job seekers of all ages.
- **Summer Employment Transitions** – 8-week summer employment program that supports summer employment for high school students who have a disability.

ODEN provided **training to 460 participants** in 2020/21 and introduced ODEN hosted training sessions online, allowing participants from multiple agencies to network and train together.

ODEN understands the impact that training, speaking engagements and networking opportunities have in the sector and will continue to provide these opportunities to employment service providers across the province.



### Looking Forward...

#### **More providers will be looking for on-demand training opportunities for staff**

- ODEN will be developing online, on-demand training opportunities on a Learning Management system.

#### **Providers are looking for ways to be connected to businesses and continue learning and enhancing services**

- ODEN BizConnect Leader Series will deliver events for businesses and service providers to connect and learn about each other and different employment sectors.

**“My confidence has increased and I am up to the challenge of speaking with employers on inclusive hiring and implementing job coaching into my skill set.”**

*- Training Participant*

# Innovation and Promising Practice

## SKILLS TO SECTOR – a sector-based strategy

In partnership with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), LinkedIn Canada, March of Dimes Canada (MODC) and Niagara Training & Employment Agency (NTEC), ODEN embarked on a sector-based workforce development project focused on building local capacity in Ontario's Agricultural and Mining sectors to employ people who have a disability. This project was funded by the Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development, and was intended to develop labour market partnerships.

The project began as the full impact of COVID was becoming a reality. The impact on the economy and how hard the pandemic would hit the agriculture sector could not have been foreseen. At the end of the project, ODEN was able, with the hard work of the partners; to develop a blueprint for sector-based skills development and pipeline; develop an online disability awareness training, and map out learning pathways using LinkedIn Learning. Stakeholders committed to continuing the work past the project term, and all learnings have been collected and shared.





MentorAbility is a national supported employment initiative, led by the Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE), that provides an opportunity for education and awareness to be shared between employers and people who have a disability in communities across Canada. This initiative offers a unique mentoring experience in which job seekers who have a disability (protégés) are matched with individual employers or business leaders (mentors) – to explore different career pathways and opportunities in their desired field of interest.

In our second year of the program, ODEN, in partnership with March of Dimes Canada, delivered the program for CASE in Ontario. Working with several agencies in 2020/21, **69 matches** were made between the mentors/businesses and protégés; **20 people were hired** as a result of these mentorship opportunities; **13 Agency partners joined**, and **58 business mentors were brought on board**.

## Research and Collaboration Projects

ODEN engaged in a collaborative project with Community Living Essex County and Partners for Planning to bring to life a **Knowledge Translation and Transfer (KTT) Hub** on the REAL Xchange.

The onset of the project involved ODEN researching Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services' Employment Modernization Fund projects, identifying promising practices and replicable programs. From this research, ODEN will work with the KTT partners to develop learning modules and Communities of Practice with a goal of sharing learning, tools and resources developed for agencies, by agencies in the DS Sector.

ODEN also embarked on a research project to inform a **Youth Success Strategy (YSS)**, conducting research, and building relationships with partners, stakeholders, educational institutes, and employment service providers to identify promising practices and successful program models that increase, and improve employment outcomes for youth who have a developmental disability.



## Looking Forward...

- ODEN will be continuing our part in the **KTT collaborative**, developing learning modules and resources to support the sector.
- Building on the **Youth Success Strategy** recommendations, we will work towards the creation of career pathways and pipelines, Communities of Practice, and awareness and capacity building sessions for families, agencies, and educational networks to promote, encourage and support employment.
- **Change Management** will be important in the coming year, with the Employment Transformation work in Ontario continuing. ODEN will refresh the Change Management Guidebook, providing a comprehensive and interactive resource for all our members as they prepare for and navigate the future landscape of employment services.

# Highlights – A Year in Review

## Membership

Membership is the core of who we are. ODEN members contribute to the direction and work that we deliver in the sector. Membership stabilized in 2020/21 with a total of 146 organizations and businesses.

We will continue to grow the membership to include more employment service providers, ensuring that ODEN’s voice represents organizations across Ontario.

## Web Presence



**39,316**  
page  
views



**2 min**  
**16 seconds**  
Average  
length of visit

ODEN understands the importance of having a strong web presence and has focused our efforts in 2020/21 on developing and improving our website and member portal platform. This new website will launch in 2021/22. ODEN continued to support multiple platforms for communicating with the non-profit and private sector.

As a response to COVID-19, ODEN developed a [COVID-19 webpage](#). This page provides resources and links to government websites for the most up to date information. ODEN formed a working group of member agencies, and they created a [COVID-19 Economic Restart paper](#) with recommendations for organizations as they return to in-person service.



**30,442**



**58,963**



**84,677**

**IMPRESSIONS**



We had to rethink **ODEN’s Annual Rethinking Disability Conference (RDC)** this year, in light of COVID restrictions.

We decided to host RDC 21 – a Business Conference – Diversifying your Business, which was held in March 2021.

**88 people attended** the half-day conference that included:

- Keynote address by Josh Davies, CEO, Centre for Work Ethic Development
- Networking rooms based on sectors such as manufacturing and professional services
- Breakout sessions for HR Specialists, Hiring Managers, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) professionals
- An Employment Service Provider panel with speakers from across the province gathered to inform businesses on the best ways to harness the power of inclusion

**“I learned how beneficial it is for everyone, not just the employee, to hire people who have a disability.”**

*- RDC 2020 Participant*

# ENGAGE TALENT!

## NDEAM 2020

There were many new initiatives in this year's campaign. Highlights included:

- Launching ODEN's first Podcast series **"You Can't Spell Inclusion Without a D"**
  - Episode #1 - The Power of Inclusion - featured conversations with Canada's Federal Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Carla Qualtrough; and Zahra Jadavji, Accenture Managing Director and the firm's Inclusion and Diversity Lead for Canada
  - Episode #2 - People who have a disability: The "Secret Weapon" for Businesses - featured a conversation with Paul M. Clark, President of TD Direct Investing and Executive Vice-President of TD Bank Group; and Derek Burleton, TD Vice-President and Deputy Chief Economist, who was the co-author of the 2019 TD Economics report Canadians With Disabilities: Seizing the Opportunity
- Major media coverage from coast to coast including members and champions interviewed on Global TV, CTV, and CBC Radio in 7 provinces
- Employer Roundtable Connection event featuring Microsoft, Accenture, and Dolphin Digital
- Fireside Chat session with the Greater Toronto Airport Authority (GTAA) - who manages Canada's largest international airport, Pearson International Airport (YYZ)



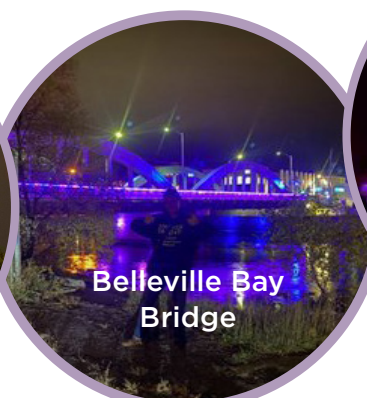
## Looking Forward...

**ODEN is excited to announce some of our plans for 2021/22 including:**

- New ODEN website
- Launch of a **Corporate Membership** program in 2021.
- New **member portal** area with increased functionality.
- **NDEAM 2021** expanding to include more tools and resources.
- **Light It Up! For NDEAM** expanding across the country on the third Thursday of October.

## This year was the first year of Light It Up! For NDEAM

This one night only lighting event saw landmarks, businesses, agencies, and people light up in purple and blue on October 22 (the third Thursday of October). Our goal was to shine a light on inclusive hiring and opportunities for job seekers who have a disability. **Over 34 landmarks** lit up purple and blue. Highlights included the Timmins interactive sign, and the following:





**Top Row L-R:**  
Dean Askin,  
Sue Dafoe,  
Amy Widdows.

**Second Row:**  
Jennifer Crowson,  
Jennifer Hope,  
Ingrid Muschta.

**Third Row:**  
Haley Gienow-McConnell,  
Jeannette Campbell,  
Sowmya Rajasekaran.

**Bottom Row:**  
J.C. Doyle,  
Lesley Ellis.

## 2020-2021 Board of Directors

Chair .....**Michael Dawthorne**, London  
 Vice-Chair .....**Chris Guillemette**, North Bay  
 Secretary .....**Danette Anthony**, Oshawa  
 Treasurer.....**Christofer Espinoza**, Belleville  
 Director .....**Ann Szabo**, Toronto  
 Director .....**Linda Simpson**, Ottawa  
 Director .....**Johanne Strome**, Picton  
 Director .....**Amani Hitimana**, Toronto  
 Director .....**Diana McCauley**, Toronto  
 Past Chair.....**Rosa Amicarelli**, Essex County

## 2020-2021 ODEN Staff

**Jeannette Campbell**, Chief Executive Officer  
**Ingrid Muschta**, Director – Special Projects & Innovation  
**Amy Widdows**, Director – Development & Capacity Building  
**Sue Dafoe**, Business Services Manager  
**Lesley Ellis**, Administrative & Membership Coordinator  
**Dean Askin**, Communications Strategist  
**J.C. Doyle**, Diversity & Inclusion Specialist  
**Jennifer Hope**, Diversity & Inclusion Specialist  
**Sowmya Rajasekaran**, Diversity & inclusion Specialist  
**Dr. Haley Gienow-McConnell**, Diversity & Inclusion Specialist  
**Dr. Jennifer Crowson**, Diversity & Inclusion Specialist



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