



**ODEN<sup>®</sup>**

**Annual Report  
2021-22**

**Innovation  
Capacity  
Engagement**



## Letter from Michael Dawthorne, **Chair**



I could never have imagined when I became the Chair of the Board for ODEN that my two-year term would be engulfed in a pandemic. I am incredibly proud of the work ODEN has done during this time, remaining committed to its goal, values, vision, and most importantly, its members and those you support.

Last year I highlighted the new strategic vision we had launched in our 2021-2024 Strategic Plan, prioritizing four key areas of focus: *Growth & Awareness*, *Thought Leadership*, *Advocacy & Engagement*, and *Innovation & Service Excellence*.

I'd like to extend my appreciation and commend the team at ODEN for the significant progress made in each of the four pillars throughout last fiscal. Numerous highlights and details are available throughout this report, in our Strategic Plan, and on our website, but to highlight just a few:

**Growth & Awareness:** 2021's *Light it Up! For NDEAM*® was a tremendous success reaching over 300 locations in 113 cities. 2022 is set to build off this success.

**Thought Leadership:** The unveiling of Jobs Ability Canada provided a platform connecting businesses in hiring mode with job seekers who have a disability.

**Advocacy & Engagement:** ODEN continued to play a significant support and advisory role throughout the Employment Service Transformation for Ontario and the roll-out of the Service System Managers (SSM's).

**Innovation & Service Excellence:** The launch of ODENLearn.com has expanded the reach and impact of available training such as our Disability Awareness and Confidence Training, resulting in even greater impact.

These are only a handful of the initiatives throughout the year that have sought to ensure all people who have a disability in Ontario have the ability to achieve meaningful employment.

## Letter from Jeannette Campbell, **CEO**



2021/22 saw our province cautiously moving out from under the challenges of a global pandemic. Despite a full year of uncertainty, restrictions, and seemingly never-ending challenges, the agencies and service providers that make up the membership of ODEN continued to excel in their service excellence, supporting job seekers and businesses, while internally supporting their teams.

For ODEN, our dedicated, passionate team worked hard to develop and deliver new trainings, expand our online services to improve the ability of businesses to hire with intention and inclusion, increase our research projects and reports on Youth Success, and write and publish the Re-Imagining Change Workbook. We took lessons learned from our NDEAM 2020 campaign and expanded *Light It Up! For NDEAM* nationally, pulling the entire country together for one incredible evening in October of 2021. Members supported all of this by sharing learnings, strategies, and practices freely. Looking forward to 2022/23, the ODEN 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.

# 2021-22

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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 are intentional and meaningful in their disability-inclusion and diversity strategies are more successful in the long run. ODEN works with employers to raise awareness and increase the number of inclusive businesses in Ontario through:

- Education on the benefits of disability inclusive hiring
- Providing talent acquisition services
- Delivering DACT (Disability Awareness and Confidence Training) for all levels of staff and management
- Consulting for companies to enhance their:
  - business visioning and strategies for inclusive hiring
  - mentorship program development and,
  - procurement and supply chain education
- Facilitating and fostering relationships between local employment service providers and the business community



In 2021/22, ODEN introduced **90+ businesses** to the benefits of inclusive hiring reaching **400+ businesspeople**.



(L-R) **Ingrid Muschta**, Director of Special Projects & Innovation, ODEN; **Marty Ignore**, VP Information Systems and Shared Services, Onward Manufacturing; **Minister Raymond Cho**, Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility; **Jeannette Campbell**, CEO, ODEN; **Mike Harris**, MPP Kitchener Conestoga; **Stacey Mitchell**, Manager Community & Employment Supports, KW Habilitation; **Colin Kirvan**, VP Product Management - Grills & Accessories, Onward Manufacturing; **Mark Kniahnicki**, Job Developer, KW Career Compass, KW Habilitation

ODEN develops case studies to highlight inclusive businesses that understand and leverage the unique perspective, skills and talents that people who have a disability bring to the workplace. In 2021/22, ODEN created three case studies:

- Lowes: Corporate Disability Inclusion Initiatives and the Impact on Local Hiring Practices
- AccessiBrand: Creating Inclusive Workplace Practices by Leveraging the Power of Lived Disability Experiences
- Onward Manufacturing: Driving Disability Inclusive Hiring Practices in the Manufacturing Sector



ODEN was engaged by **6 businesses** to support the development and/or improvement of their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) strategies.



ODEN assisted more than **70 businesses** with their hiring needs and referred **200 job opportunities to 161 employment service providers**, directly resulting in 46 people being hired during a global pandemic.

Businesses we worked with include:



## Introducing ODEN bizconnect

In 2021/22 ODEN created the ODEN Biz Connect Leader Series, giving platform and exposure to 3 businesses (Rogers Canada, Travelers, Canada Revenue Agency) that are intentional in their inclusive hiring strategies. Employment service providers and job seekers came from across the province and the country, to learn about employment opportunities and ways to access them.



*Our path forward to build a culture of inclusion is shaped by not only our team members' but also by the partnerships, communities, and organizations we align ourselves with and ODEN Biz Connect helps do just that!*

**Laurie Vermette**  
Senior Talent Acquisition Consultant  
Rogers Communications

## Looking Forward...

As the economy continues to recover, businesses will need to deal with labour shortages and will need to build capacity to meet the demand.

- ODEN will enhance the Disability Awareness and Confidence Training to meet these new challenges
- ODEN will continue to support businesses and business associations
- ODEN is committed to creating better connections for business and employment service providers by expanding the ODEN Biz Connect Leader Series and hosting a 'Business only' learning stream at the RDC Annual Conference

# 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 promising practices across the province.

In 2021/22 ODEN provided **37 coaching and mentoring sessions** to organizations.

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

ODEN continued to support employment service agencies in building capacity by providing **24 training sessions** throughout the year. These included Employment Services Training, Advanced Job Development, Employment Discovery Toolkit and a new offering – Disability Awareness and Confidence Training for Agencies. **238 staff** were trained throughout the year.



*I have found this training to be extremely helpful and inspiring for Employment Services Managers, Job Coaches, and anyone working in the Employment Services sector. I will be asking staff to attend similar training events in the future as I believe this is the BEST use of training budgets to achieve the best understanding of what successful Employment Services can look like.*

**Steve McEvoy**  
Community Living Fort Frances

*I truly believe that this type of training should be implemented on a regular/ongoing basis. The format in which this training was provided was easy to follow, well organized and the facilitator was very engaging.*

**Training participant**  
Sault College



ODEN delivered **32 speaking events** where team members shared their knowledge with a variety of audiences. Overall, **1,037 participants** were engaged on a variety of topics like KTT (Knowledge Translation and Transfer) Hub, Change Management, Jobs Ability Canada platform, Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) and The ES Transformation for the DS Sector.

### Additional topics in 2021/22 included:

- Youth Success Strategy – Raising Expectations and Employment: The Gold Standard of Inclusion
- Project SEARCH School to Work Transition Model
- Voices of Tomorrow: An Advocacy Report on Meaningful Employment for All Youth
- Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society – Guided Pathways Certification



*I learned what the biggest barriers to young people who have a disability are facing with regards to finding employment, as well as the top concerns employers have about hiring youth who may require accommodations.*

**Participant**  
Voices of Tomorrow, ODEN Connection Event

## Moving Forward...

### ODEN will continue to support the sector by:

- Continuing to develop online, on-demand training opportunities through our Learning Management System
- Hosting the annual ODEN Rethinking Disability Conference in 2022 to support in-person professional development
- Continuing to deliver ODEN Connection and ODEN Biz Connect Leaders Series events that focus on topics of interest for the employment service providers in our network

# Innovation and Promising Practice



This international, transition-to-work model was introduced to Ontario in 2018/19 at the ODEN Conference. The program has increased to 4 sites in 2021/22 including:

- Toronto – Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital and Toronto Rehab-UHN.
- Halton – Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital
- Hamilton – Hamilton Wentworth District School Board (Headquarters)
- North Halton – Milton District Hospital

The Ministry of Education is now engaged and supporting the expansion of Project SEARCH in Ontario in the coming years. In the 2022/23 school year, an additional 6 school boards will be implementing the Project SEARCH model.



MentorAbility Canada is a national supported employment initiative, led by the Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE). This program provides 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 third year of the program, ODEN, in partnership with March of Dimes Canada, delivered the program for CASE in Ontario.

In 2021/22, four new agency partners and **81 new business mentors** were brought on board, **139 matches** were made between protégés and mentors/businesses and, **22 people were hired** as a result of the mentorship opportunities.

As a result of MentorAbility's success, a case study was written outlining how this program, as a promising practice, drives disability confidence and results in positive employment outcomes.

## Youth Success Strategy (YSS)

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

Throughout 2021/22, ODEN hosted 10 youth focused sessions: **664 parents, caregivers and support staff attended**. These sessions included “Employment: The Gold Standard of Inclusion” and “Raising Expectations”.

**5 agencies/school boards** were trained to deliver jobPath, which is an intensive training and curriculum for agencies and school boards to use to support job seekers who have a disability.

As a result of the work in the YSS project, a **Community of Practice (CoP)** was developed with **12 organizations** joining by the end of the year. The goal of the CoP is to bring together organizations who deliver the jobPath and Summer Employment Transitions (SET) curriculums and who are passionate about assisting youth who have a disability to transition to the workforce.

*Great job!!!! It's presentations like yours that will help change the mindset of people and help them realize that employability is an option for all!!! Thank you again!*

**Andrea Jenkins**  
Special Education Head, Grand Erie District School Board



Launched in October 2021, Jobs Ability Canada is an artificial intelligence (AI) driven, virtual recruitment platform built by and for people who have a disability. This platform has gained great success in the USA since its inception in 2018.

ODEN has been integral in bringing this platform to Canada and providing national access to job seekers and inclusive businesses who are looking to hire inclusively.

In its **first 4 months**, Jobs Ability Canada had over **500 job seekers build profiles** and had **13 businesses subscribe**, posting their job opportunities across the country.

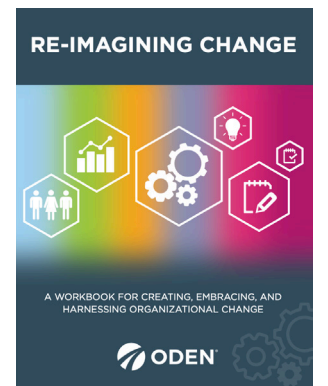


ODEN continued its work as a part of the collaboration with Community Living Essex County, Partners for Planning and MCCSS for the Knowledge Translation and Transfer (KTT) Hub on the Real Xchange.

ODEN developed 5 learning modules hosted on the KTT Hub including:

- A brief Introduction to Knowledge Translation & Transfer
- Developing a Partnership for Employment Service Delivery
- Having Tech on Deck – Using Technology in the DS Sector
- jobPath Curriculum Based Employment Services Module
- Re-Imagining Change

Along with the Re-Imaging Change module, ODEN developed *Re-Imaging Change: A Workbook for Creating, Embracing and Harnessing Organizational Change*. This workbook was designed to guide developmental services (DS) organizations as they move through various change processes. Case studies and other resources are provided to help organizations on their journey.



## Moving Forward...



- **ODEN will continue to support the spread of Project SEARCH sites** for school boards across the province and tackle the challenges of sustainable funding for youth entering the world of work
- **Jobs Ability Canada will continue enhancements** and usability improvements of the platform, job coach access to support job seeking clients and increase the number of Canadian job seekers creating profiles and securing interviews and employment



# NDEAM 2021

2021 included many new additions to this year's NDEAM campaign including:

- Episode 4 of *You Can't Spell Inclusion Without a D* featuring John Robinson, on the **Why's, What's and Wherefores of Jobs Ability**.
- Major media coverage in over 100 media outlets (print, radio and online) throughout October 2021 reaching **over 35 million people**.
- **ODEN Biz Connect Leader Series** featuring Travelers Canada
- **ODEN Connection** event with Employment and Social Development Canada, on the Registered Disability Saving Plan (RDSP)
- New **7 Tips** resource sheets for Business and Employment Service Providers

In its 2nd year, ODEN decided to take *Light It Up! For NDEAM* national. Over **113 cities and 335 locations** lit up purple and blue on October 21, 2021 (the third Thursday in October). Every province and two territories (Northwest Territories and Nunavut) participated. This was made possible through a strategic partnership with MentorAbility Canada and the Canadian Association for Supported Employment, and the enthusiastic participation of ODEN members and our allies across the country.

## Moving Forward...

Harnessing the energy and engagement with *Light It Up! For NDEAM*, we look forward to continuing the national movement and igniting conversations across the country about the power of inclusion, the benefits of inclusive hiring, and the need for increased access to employment opportunities for all people who have a disability

# Membership Highlights

## Membership

Agency membership is the core of who we are. ODEN members contribute to the direction and work that ODEN delivers in the sector. Membership continued to hold steady during the 2021/22 year at **145 members**.

ODEN will strive to grow its membership to include more employment service providers, ensuring that our voice represents organizations in all communities across Ontario.

New this year, ODEN redesigned and enhanced the corporate membership, which was approved by the Board of Directors. This multi-tiered membership provides a corporation with a variety of services based on their inclusion goals and strategy.

## Web Presence



39,920



58,831



36,531

## IMPRESSIONS



68,046  
page  
views



Average  
length of visit  
1 min  
53 seconds

## Moving Forward...

- ODEN will continue to provide networking opportunities for members and the business community
- ODEN will continue to grow its web presence through social media and podcasts
- The team will continue to meet ODEN's Strategic Plan goals of Thought Leadership, Growth & Awareness, Advocacy & Engagement and, Innovation & Service Excellence

## 2021-2022 Board of Directors

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**Chris Guillemette**, North Bay  
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**Linda Simpson**, Ottawa  
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**Rosa Amicarelli**, Essex County  
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**Ann Szabo**, Toronto  
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**Danette Anthony**, Oshawa  
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**Johanne Strome**, Picton  
Director

**Amani Hitimana**, Toronto  
Director

**Sandra Leslie**, Belleville  
Director

**Yunchuan (Frankie) He**, Markham  
Director

## 2021-2022 ODEN Staff

**Jeannette Campbell**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Ingrid Muschta**  
Director, Special Projects & Innovation

**Amy Widdows**  
Director, Development & Capacity Building

**Sue Dafoe**  
Director, Business & Financial Services

**Lesley Ellis**  
Administrative & Membership Coordinator

**Dean Askin**  
Communications Strategist

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**J.C. Doyle**  
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Diversity & Inclusion Specialist

**Jennifer Hope**  
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**Dr. Haley Gienow-McConnell**  
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**Sowmya Rajasekaran**  
Diversity & inclusion Specialist



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