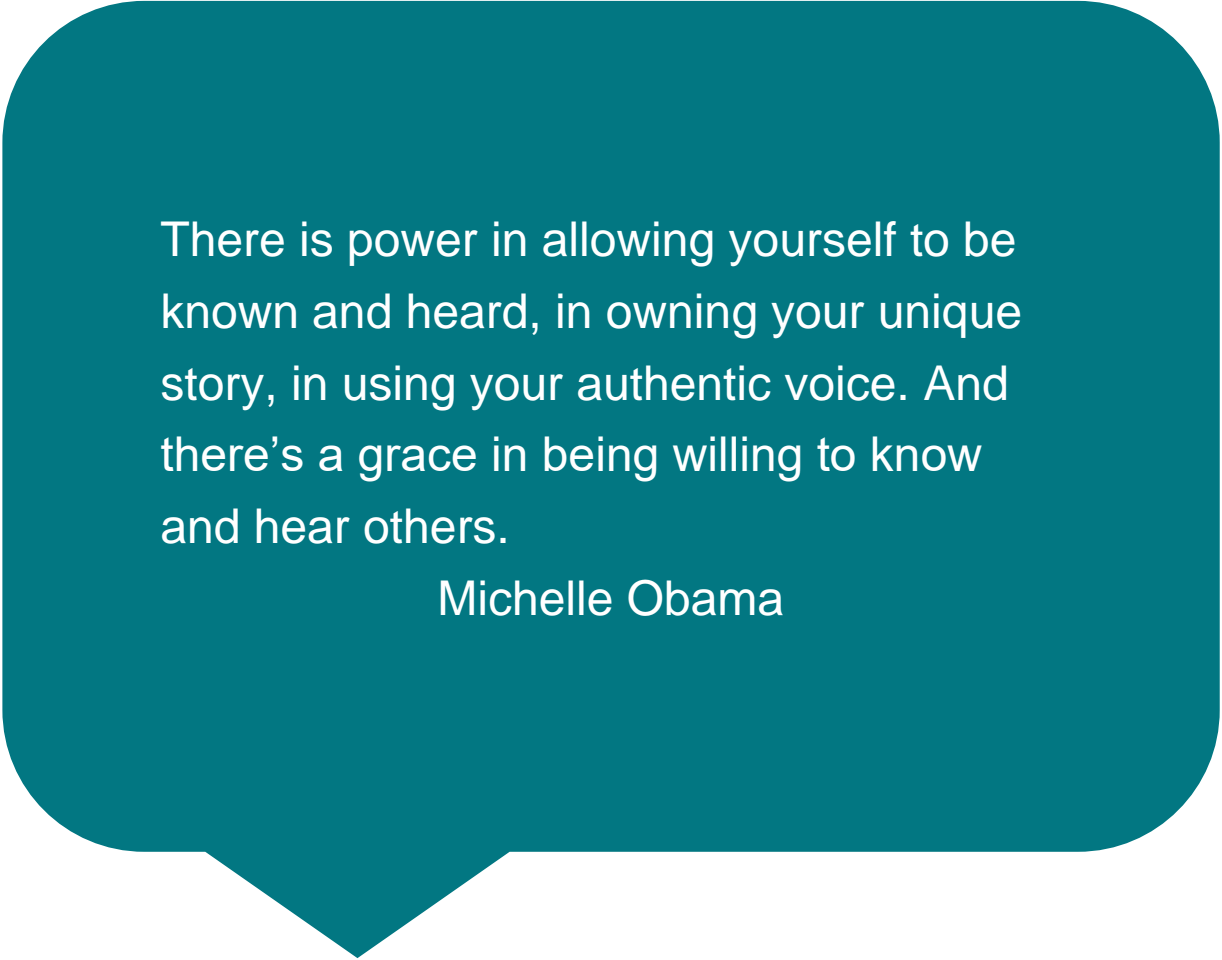


# Annual Report 2021-2022



e m p  w e r  
the disability  
resource centre

A teal-colored speech bubble with rounded corners and a pointed bottom, containing white text.

There is power in allowing yourself to be known and heard, in owning your unique story, in using your authentic voice. And there's a grace in being willing to know and hear others.

Michelle Obama

# Contents

---

Empower Overview .....	4
Chairperson's Report .....	5
Executive Director's Report.....	8
Treasurer's Report .....	11
IL Canada NL Provincial Representative Report .....	12
Empower Annual Services .....	17
Advocacy Services Report .....	22
Member Services Report .....	29
Career Services .....	35
Provincial Services.....	42
Building Community Inclusion NL .....	42
InclusionNL Employer Support Services .....	55
Garden Committee Report.....	61
Independent Living Awards Recipients 2021 .....	63
Annual General Meeting Minutes, 2021 .....	67

# Empower Overview

---

- Transition from the Independent Living Resource Centre (ILRC) to Empower, the Disability Resource Centre on April 1, 2016
- Transition from Civic #4 to The Independent Living Resource Centre (ILRC) in 1997-1998
- Accredited member of IL Canada
- Not-for-profit cross disability organization
- 16 full-time staff and 35-40 project staff throughout the year

## Mission Statement

Empower is a consumer-controlled, non-profit organization that provides leadership in the delivery of cross-disability services and supports while promoting a more inclusive society within Newfoundland and Labrador.

## Independent Living

“Independence is not measured by the quality of tasks we can perform without support, but by the quality of life we can have with support.”

Independent Living is:

- Having a choice
- Making decisions
- Taking risks
- Taking responsibility
- Having control of one’s own life

At Empower, the Disability Resource Centre, we break barriers every day. Barriers to access. To knowledge. To choices. Anyone with a disability can use our services. And anyone can help, through volunteering, donations, or even a career with Empower. Empower is a vital part of our community, and the need for our services is growing. With your support, you will be helping even more people find their path to independent living.

---

# Chairperson's Report

---

This year has brought change to Empower: The Disability Resource Centre.

Holding true to the dictionary definition of change, “to undergo transformation, and transition”, at Empower we experienced change as we transitioned into a new normal of everyday living. The Empower team continued to forge ahead with new ways and means to support our members and consumers as in-person communication was reinstated. We experienced transformation as we thanked Kimberly Yetman-Dawson, Executive Director, for her service as she departed from Empower to pursue new directions with the CMHA.

The Board was very pleased to welcome Kathy Hawkins as Interim Executive Director. Kathy brings 15 years of experience working with Empower in several strategic positions, however for the past six years she has successfully managed InclusionNL, a corporate program of Empower. The detailed information provided in this Annual Report by the Empower Team highlights the work they have completed this past year. At this point I must say, “Thank you Kathy (and Kimberly) and the outstanding Empower Staff Team. Your dedication, commitment, and support during these times of transition and transformation has been second to none – we could not do what we do without each and every one of you.”

We were pleased to receive confirmation from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador of continued operational funding for the first quarter of this year. We expect additional details to be forthcoming. In addition, the Internship and Career Services (formerly Full Steam Ahead) Programs had been confirmed for funding. We are deeply appreciative to our government and our funding partners for this financial support.

Our provincial partners include, the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, the Department of Health and Community Services, and the Department of Education. Federally our partners include Employment and Social Development and Independent Living Canada. Without this funding, our Programs and Services could not be maintained or expanded to meet the growing needs of our members and consumers.

Services provided to our members continue to transition and transform. The Empower Team provides Career Services, Business Support Services, Member Services, Technology Services (a newly renovated accessible website has been launched at [empowernl.ca](http://empowernl.ca)), Building Community Inclusion NL and the Digital Resources Room. We are reaching members, consumers, employers and the community, supporting sustainable futures, disability confidence, housing, health care, mental health and social skills. The Board continues to address ways and means to fund necessary building repairs and maintenance from our very fixed budget. A special thank you to Melanie Grandy, Finance Officer for always having the answers to our broad range of finance questions. We recently approved building upgrades with several aspects of the work completed. Stay tuned for your invitation to visit the renovations later this year.

This year, under the leadership of Felicia Tupper, Chair, Human Resources Committee, the Board commenced a full review of the Human Resources Policy Manual. Bringing policies in line with current legislation and work standards was “no small feat”. Thank you, Felicia, and your Committee, for this undertaking.

On December 3, 2021, Empower completed its annual celebration recognizing the International Day for Persons with Disabilities. While the event was lower profile than other years as we were evolving from the pandemic, the Honourable Judy Foote, Lieutenant Governor of

Newfoundland and Labrador hosted Empower and presented our 2021 Independent Living Awards to the following recipients:

- Cecilia Carroll Award for Independent Living – **Myles Murphy**
- Business Award for Independent Living – **Island Furniture**
- Young Leader Award – **Stephanie Evans**
- Social Inclusion Award – **Coastal Wave Edge**

I extend my sincerest thanks to the Empower team, to the dedicated and committed Board Members and all our volunteers who continue to make change a success! I wish to recognize the volunteer service of Ann Marie Blandford and Felicia Tupper who are leaving our Board this year. As your Chair I am sincerely grateful for your support during the past years.

In closing, the Board will continue to seek ways and means to address issues raised by our members and consumers. We will explore new and innovative ways to support Empower Programs and Services. Stay tuned to our Newsletter and social media posts.



Respectfully,  
Carole J Barron  
Chairperson

## Executive Director's Report

---

This past year continues to be a year of adapting and modifying services to align our service delivery with current public health pandemic regulations. As the restrictions carried into this year, our staff, members, and volunteers felt the stress of continuing to navigate through this pandemic and its impact on our lives.

Through this year, while our centre continued to be closed to the public for most of this year, staff worked diligently to offer programs and services to our members in a variety of ways as you will read throughout this AGM report. Webinar Information Sessions and small gatherings were available, utilizing outdoor spaces to gather. Towards the end of this year, staff were available to provide services to members and consumers through pre-arranged appointments as we saw public health restrictions decrease.

What a great experience it was to come together for our Annual IL Award Ceremony at Government House in recognition of International Day of Persons with Disabilities on Dec 3, 2021. All the award recipients, as highlighted in our Chairperson's report, work tirelessly to advance accessibility and independence in our community and we were very pleased to provide this recognition to them. Also, on this same day, the new NL Accessibility Act became legislation which will continue to elevate accessibility in our province as the Standards Committee is selected and work on this important legislation begins.

Our team came together towards the end of this year to review our programs and services and strategize ways for improvements given how Covid-19 has provided changes in our daily practices and the onset of new provincial accessibility legislation. During these discussions we developed an Action Plan to increase our service delivery to our members and

consumers that provided a collaborative approach to services currently existing in our community and create avenues for more community engagement. To that end, we have reinstated our Dinner Club events, and I would like to personally thank our volunteer Amanda Howlett for her coordination of Dinner Club and look forward to new events to come.

With funding received through Community Food Centres Canada, we were able to introduce new nutritional supports to our members and provide food security to members who continue to be impacted by Covid-19. We also joined forces with the NL Craft Council who hosted a pottery session that our members participated in.

In December of this year, our centre started undergoing renovations with the installation of new flooring, a newly developed reception area, increased accessibility in our washrooms, and modifications to increase our office spaces. While these upgrades are still ongoing, we anticipate them being completed towards the end of November and look forward to sharing these with you soon.

Our Board of Directors have been very busy throughout this past year and we are extremely fortunate to have such a strong Board who understands the work we do and the Independent Living philosophies that govern our work. They have been extremely supportive of all our transitions, overseeing our building renovations, and continuing their work on developing policies and practices to guide us. Thank you to each of our Board of Directors and especially to our Chairperson, Carole Barron. I would also like to personally thank Anne Marie Blandford and Felicia Tupper for your fantastic leadership with our Finance and HR Committees and for your years of commitment being on our Board. We wish you the very best in your next endeavours.

In closing I'd like to send a sincere thank you to our staff. As I became the Interim Executive Director in December, we have seen significant growth in our services and membership, an expansion in our services across the province, and have worked closely with our community organizations, business partners, and government, all of which would not come to fruition without their long-standing commitment and dedication.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. Hawkins". The signature is stylized with a large "K" and a long, sweeping underline.

Kathy J. Hawkins  
Interim Executive Director

The logo for the International Association of Accessibility Professionals (IAAP). It features the letters "IAAP" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The "I" and "A" are connected, and the "P" has a distinctive shape.

International Association  
of Accessibility Professionals

MEMBER



# Treasurer's Report

---

It is my pleasure to provide the Treasurer's Report to the membership of Empower, The Disability Resource Centre.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to advise that the financial statements for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2022, have been audited without issue by Beacon Accounting Professional Corporation. Per those audited financial statements, the total revenue received by Empower was \$1,148,056 and the total expenditures for the year were \$1,016,219. The net result for the fiscal year operations was a surplus of \$131.837.

There was an increase in spending on the repairs and maintenance during this fiscal year as there have been some major renovations on the Empower building and we will continue with these renovations into the next fiscal year.

I would like to acknowledge with great appreciation the various departments of our provincial government for the ongoing financial support of Empower.

Also, a special thank you to all our funders. With your continuous support, the programs offered by Empower to promote and support consumers in achieving independence have been made possible.

Finally, I would also like to thank the staff and volunteers at Empower including my fellow board members. I am very thankful to all of you for your hard work and dedication to this organization. It is with this commitment to Empower that we will continue to provide invaluable services to make our communities more inclusive for all.

Ann Marie Blandford

Treasurer

# IL Canada NL Provincial Representative Report

---

Independent Living Canada supports the development of IL Centres and provides education and leadership for its members, organizations, partners, and communities. Managed entirely by a volunteer Board of Directors comprised of Provincial Representatives from across Canada, the IL Canada Board of Directors has continued to reinforce our commitment to people with disabilities and our 24-member IL Centres across Canada. For IL Canada, the Centers, and our consumers, it has been a year of continued change and transition.

## IL Canada Governance and Staffing

I was nominated and elected by Empower, The Disability Resource Centre, as the Newfoundland Provincial Representative on the Independent Living Canada (IL Canada) Board. For 2021-2022 Kathleen Odell continued as the IL Canada Board Chair, and I was elected 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair. Carrie Ernst was elected 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair; Samantha Walsh was elected Secretary; Suzanne Larocque was elected Treasurer. Rounding out the Board is Kimberley Yetman Dawson as Member at Large; Cathy LaFrance as the provincial representative for British Columbia; Jimmy Tessier as the provincial representative for Quebec; and Ken Taylor as the Provincial Representative for Saskatchewan.

At the January 20th, 2022 meeting, we accepted the two resignations from the Board: Julie Haché's resignation from the Board as the New Brunswick representative and Steve Fulton's resignation from the Board as the Ontario representative. The New Brunswick and Ontario IL organizations have been sent requests to nominate a new provincial representative.

In March of 2022, Anne MacRae, National Executive Director of IL Canada, announced her intent to retire. Anne MacRae took over the reins as the

National Executive Director on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. She came to us with a strong background with over 30 years of experience working in the disability sector in various roles and responsibilities. She has graciously agreed to stay in the position until we hire a new National Executive Director. The personnel committee (which I currently chair) posted the job advertisement on May 31<sup>st</sup>. Seventy-seven people applied for the position, of which we screened down to a shortlist of 8 people. We conducted interviews the week of July 22<sup>nd</sup>. An announcement regarding who was selected should be coming soon.

Other notable changes in staffing this year are the addition of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) coordinator, Catherine MacKinnon, and the loss of our administrative assistant, Lynne Gratton. The IL Canada Board has restructured the latter position to an Executive Assistant. A staffing process was started in June to hire someone for this newly created position.

The IL Canada Board of Directors underwent three nights of Board Governance Training in December. On the first night, we reviewed documentation and discussed board types, the role of a board member, and an understanding of how people see the world, and their work, from different perspectives. The second night focused on identifying core values, discussing the draft strategic goals, and identifying how the Board can help support these goals in its oversight capacity. Finally, we linked everything together on the third night – developing working committees, aligning the strategic objectives with those committees, and assigning tasks and next steps – and created our Strategic Plan.

## Proposals and Funding

The Board Executive met with the National Executive Director the week of May 23<sup>rd</sup> in Halifax, NS, to complete the Social Development Partnership Program (SDPP) funding proposal. This three-year partnership with the

Department of Employment and Social Development (ESDC). This agreement provides core funding to IL Canada and the member centers to help fund IL programs for our consumers. IL Canada had entered into a contract with Carole Barron to complete much of the work on the initial draft of the funding proposal and she did an outstanding job! The Executive completed the report with the required information and feels we are in an excellent position to secure additional funding for the next three years!

IL Canada has also been selected as the lead organization, in partnership with Muscular Dystrophy Canada, to work on the Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP, <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-esdc/documents/programs/accessible-canada/consultation-disability-inclusion-action-plan/2021-survey-disability-inclusion-action-plan.pdf>). This project includes \$650,000 in funding. As previously mentioned, Catherine MacKinnon is the DIAP coordinator.

## Accreditation

Accreditation is completed for the nine centers requiring renewal this year. IL Canada hired Patricia Simone to review and improve the ILC accreditation process. Patricia's work was impressive, but working through the process, the Board did have some concerns regarding the process for this year. As such, the Board has committed to doing a post-mortem on accreditation and, from those lessons learned, ensure that future accreditations will be smoother with more involvement from various stakeholders.

## Other Work

That's just some of the more essential items! There are so many other things happening it's a challenge to list. The new IL Canada website (<https://www.ilc-vac.ca>) is live! Work continued on updating the policy manual, including cleaning up redundant sections and rewriting our travel

policies. There were numerous things done as a part of National Accessibility Week, (May 30th - June 5th) and Independent Living Day (June 5th). And there is ongoing planning for the Fall AGM and conference.

The IL Canada AGM will be held on September 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> in Halifax, NS. This event will be hybrid, with options for the attendees to be physically present at the Atlantica Hotel or virtually through Zoom. As chair of the AGM planning committee, I am excited as this will be our first in-person event since Covid-19! More details will be forthcoming regarding events, speakers, etc. As well, a reminder that this is the year for electing Members at Large – so if there is anyone at Empower who would be interested, please let me know.

## Looking Forward

Going into 2022/23, much of the work of the IL Canada Board will revolve around the Strategic Plan developed as part of the Board Retreat. A tremendous amount of work and effort will be required, as we will be onboarding a new National Executive Director at the same time as we are challenged as an organization to define ourselves in a new and very competitive non-profit landscape. We have asked ourselves where we want to go as an organization and how we can further the Independent Living philosophy? Considering lessons learned from Covid-19, how do we build a better and more diverse organization? How do we grow IL Canada and find ways to support persons with disabilities to live the lives they want to live? How do we partner with other organizations that share our values and goals? What should our role be as part of the new social disability justice movement?

I expect the work with IL Canada will continue to be challenging next year, but with those challenges hope for progressive and beneficial changes.

Respectfully Submitted,



Stephen Wheeler

Independent Living Canada Secretary & Newfoundland Provincial  
Representative



# Empower Annual Services

---

Empower provides a variety of services to both individuals and groups in an effort to promote inclusion for persons with disabilities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Empower services fall under one of the following five categories and a brief overview of each of the five service categories is provided below.

- Consultation
- Information
- Individual Support
- Skill Development
- Referral

A Consultation is a service that involves in-depth work with an individual around a particular topic. For example, the Coordinator of Technology Services provides a consultation service when meeting with a student who requires technology support for educational purposes. The Coordinator will work with the student to identify challenges and try out Adaptive Technology options so the student can decide what works best.

They will discuss options around purchasing the technology followed by offering support to teach the student how best to use the technology once it is acquired.

An Information Service is simply providing information on a disability related topic. Examples would include individuals approaching Empower to obtain information on services available through a government program to assist with renovations to a home or accessing funding to assist with the cost of required medical equipment or services.

Individual Support moves beyond the providing of information and involves staff providing direct assistance to an individual or family in addressing a particular issue. This service could include something as basic as providing

---

alternate formats for a consumer who requires printed material in Braille. However, most of the individual supports provided by staff, involve working with members on difficult issues over extended periods of time.

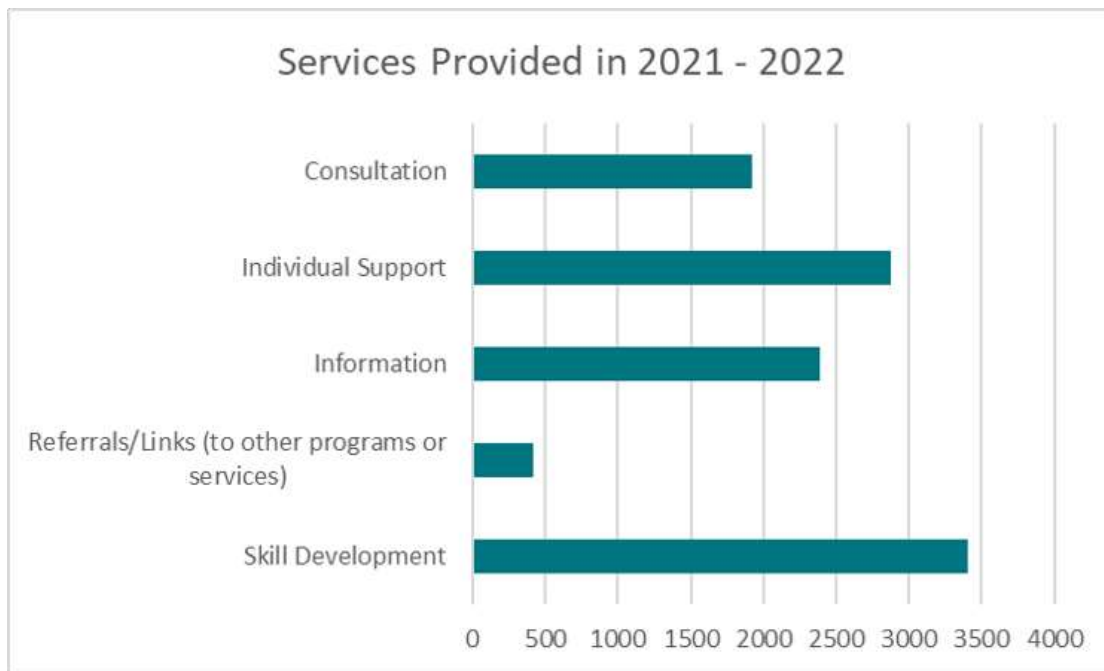
Skill Development services occur when staff provide training and instruction to an individual. For example, the Manager of Advocacy Services provides a skill development service when helping a person complete a Canada Pension Plan application form. Or our Coordinator of Member Services provides a skill development service when working with a volunteer interested in learning what is involved with volunteering at Empower.

Referral Services occur when an individual is connected to another program, service or organization. As an example, the Career Services Coordinator provides a referral service when linking a consumer who's interested in participating in a Linkages employment opportunity with Easter Seals. They would also provide a referral service when connecting jobseekers with staff at the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development to apply for "job start" funds.

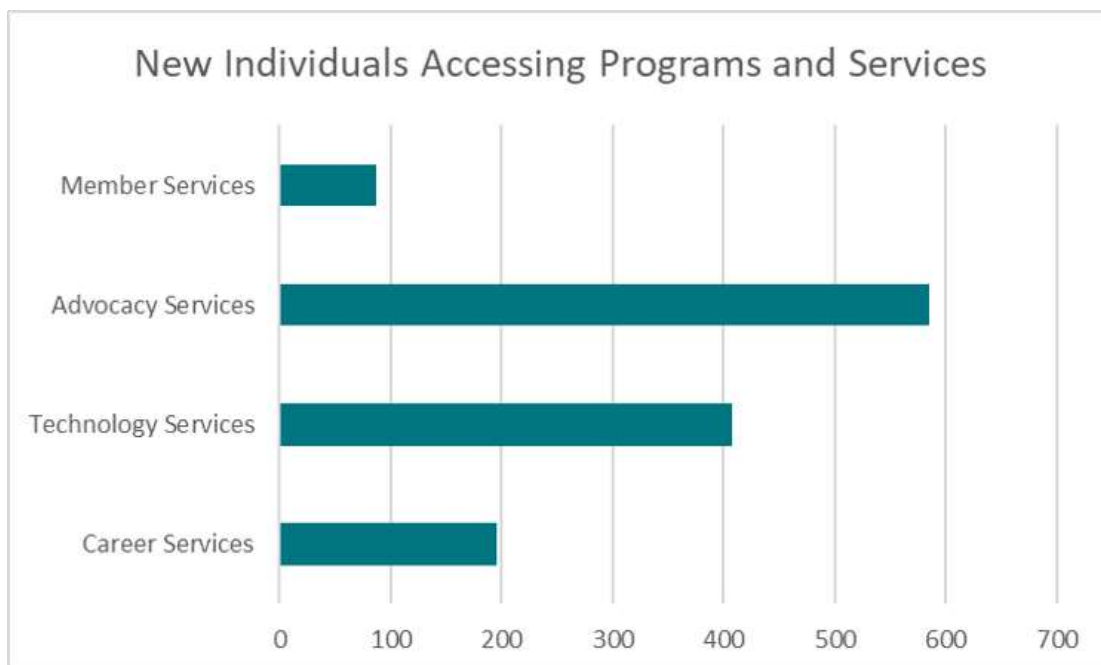
Empower programs and services primarily cover the St. John's Metro and Northeast Avalon area. However, with the addition of our two provincial programs Building Community Inclusion NL (formerly Adaptive Technology Internship and IL Internship) and InclusionNL, many services are provided to other areas of the province.

The charts below provide a breakdown of the areas where service is provided and the types of individuals/groups accessing Empower services.

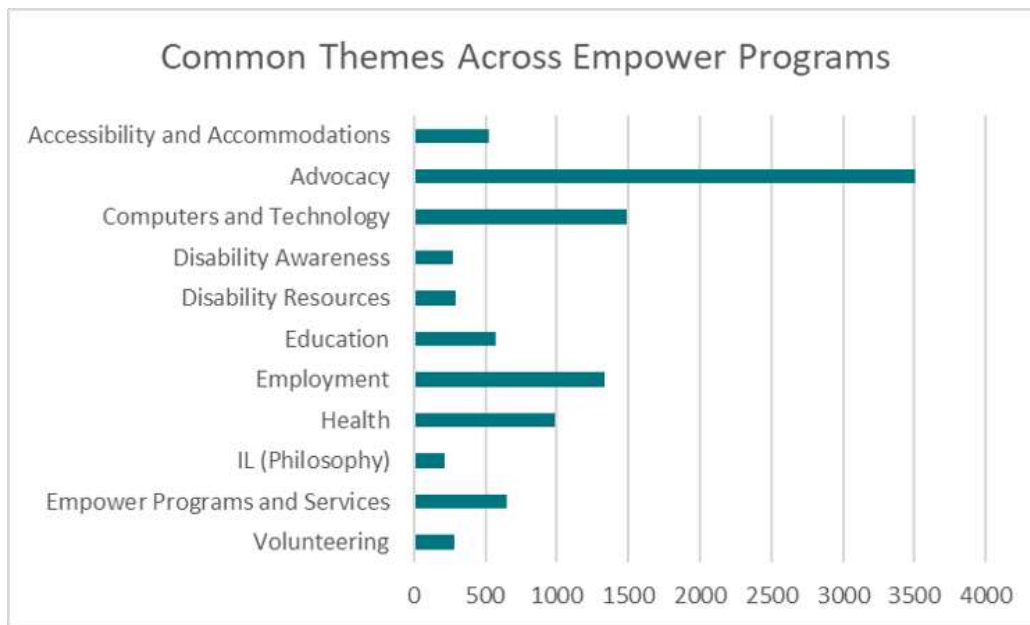




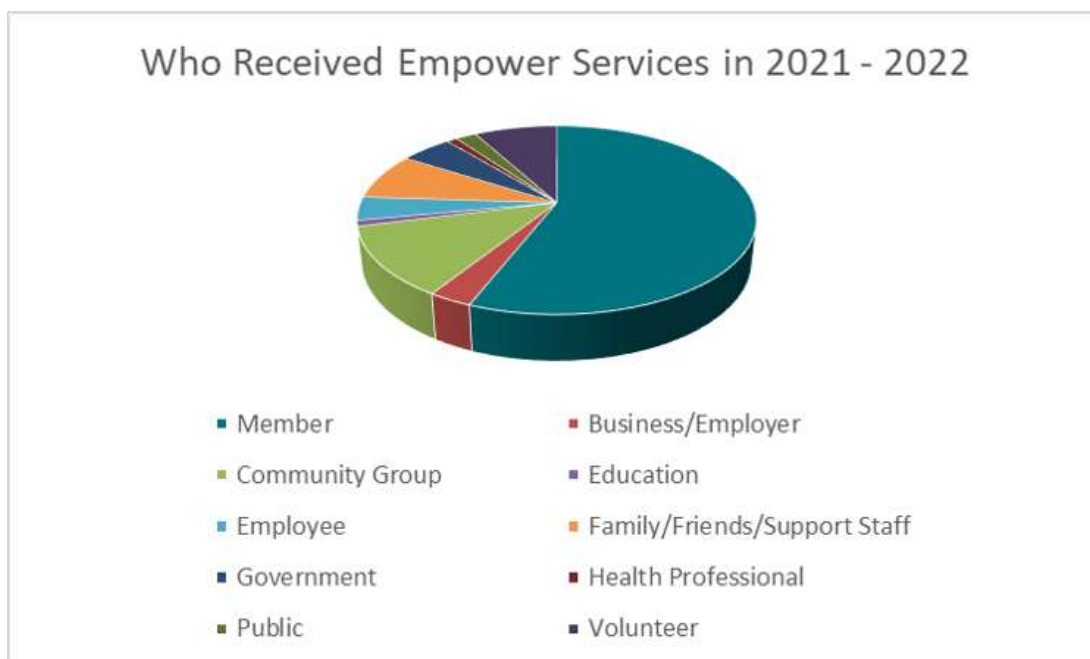
This bar chart shows the numbers of people provided with services by Empower in 2021 – 2022, in the categories of Consultation (1922), Individual Support (2878), Information (2388), Referrals/Links to other programs or services (417) and Skill Development (3403).



This bar chart shows the number of new individuals accessing programs and services at Empower in 2021 – 2022, in the categories of Member Services (87), Advocacy Services (585), Technology Services (408) and Career Services (196).

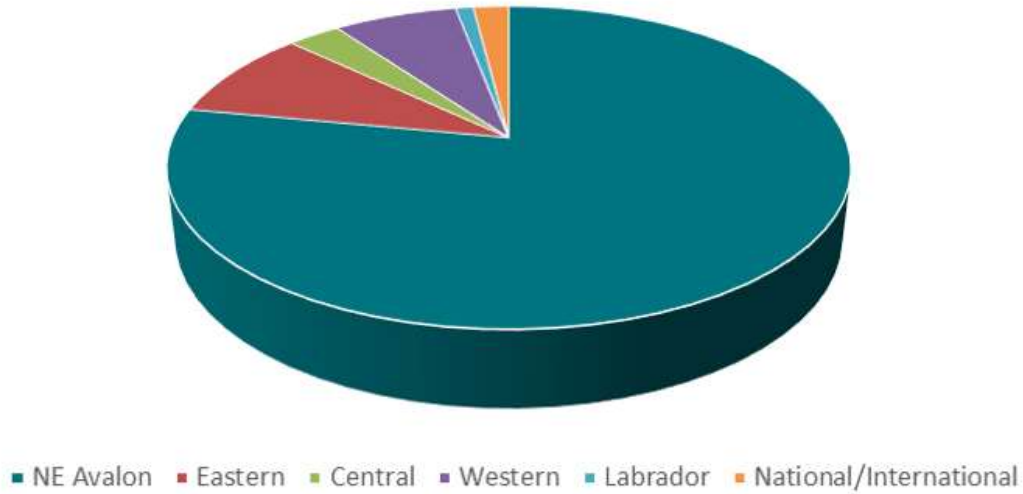


This bar chart shows the common themes across all Empower programs and services. The themes are accessibility and accommodations (526), advocacy (3502), computers and technology (1487), disability awareness (269), disability resources (294), education (575), employment (1333), health (986), IL philosophy (211), Empower programs(645) and services and volunteering (284).



This pie chart shows who received services from Empower in 2021 – 2022. The categories are member (56%), business/employer (3%), community group(12%), education (1%), employee (4%), family/friends/support staff (8%), government (5%), health professional (2%), public and volunteers (8%).

### Geographical Distribution of Empower Services 2021 - 2022



This pie chart shows the geographical distribution of Empower services in 2021 – 2022, in the NE Avalon (78%), Eastern (9%), Central (3%), Western (7%), Labrador (1%) and National/International regions (2%).



# Advocacy Services Report

---

It has been a very successful year for Advocacy Services. This year saw us continue to support members through two lockdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This has resulted in an extremely busy time for Advocacy Services. We continue to see a high number of people with disabilities seeking much needed support and availing of services due to the pandemic. We have also seen a noticeable raise in the number of referrals from other community organizations and government agencies. This is due to the difficulties that people face in navigating much needed services available to meet their individual needs.

Advocacy Services at Empower is the only program of its kind in the province working with people with cross disabilities. We continue to support members to identify their goals, personal strengths and skills by providing clear and accurate information about current legislation, policy regulations and resources. People have used this program to empower themselves, navigate different systems (such as the health and government systems), and gain control in order to make informed decisions. Advocacy Services has supported people in breaking down barriers through advocacy. When requested, we act as a support or liaison between the individual and organization, government agency, and other service delivery providers.

Through the transfer of knowledge, the Advocacy Team empowers and teaches people with disabilities skills on how to become an effective self-advocate. We also support members in navigating through the complex processes often involved in various systems. We always ensure that the voices of the people we are supporting with disabilities are heard in every service they seek.

Advocacy Services work within a coordinated access approach collaborating with all community stakeholders. This is key to assisting the people we support in obtaining their basic needs and goals. Advocacy

Services prides itself in effectively working with an extensive network of community and governmental partners which contributes to the success of Empower's place in the community. We are very thankful for the support, guidance, and assistance from our strong network of key stakeholders that support our work in Advocacy Services at Empower.

Our program continues the much-valued partnership with Memorial University's School of Social Work and has once again provided mentorship for students, both in the Fall 2021 and Winter 2022 semesters. Over the past number of years, we have also established partnership with the Faculty of Nursing, MUN, as well as the Center of Nursing studies in mentoring nursing students. Empower also employed a student in the summer of 2021 who worked in Advocacy Services. The student received a valuable learning experience and provided support to many people with disabilities within our community.

**“The amount of determination and empathy you show when helping your members, humbles me. It is an absolute pleasure working with you to provide the best service we can to your members. I look forward to another successful year ahead. Striving for one common goal, improving the lives of people with disabilities in our community!”**

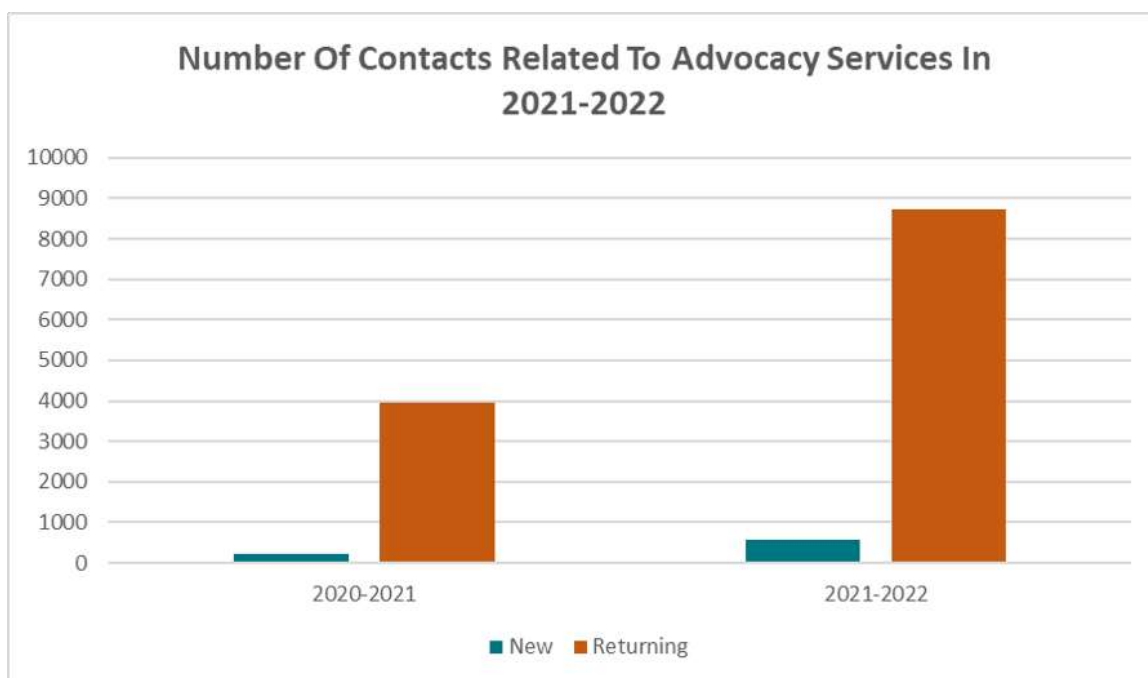
**Community Partner, 2022**

**“I have gained so much confidence as a member of Advocacy Services. I now have the tools and the know how to use my own voice and the nerve to try things myself. Also, without Advocacy Service, I would not be in the apartment that I am living in now!”**

**Member of Empower-2022**

## Housing Support Overview:

In collaboration with End Homelessness St. John's, Empower's Housing Support Worker works within Advocacy Services to assist people who are experiencing homelessness. She collaborates with community and government agencies to help these individuals obtain and maintain safe, affordable, and accessible housing. The Housing Support Worker assists people with moves, by supporting them with housing searches, apartment viewings, and initial housing set-up. Additionally, she collaborates with landlords and helps members navigate the Residential Tenancies Act.



This bar chart shows the increase in Advocacy Services contacts from the 2020-2021 fiscal year to the 2021-2022 fiscal year for both new (approximately 200 last year versus approximately 600 this year) and returning (approximately 4000 last year versus approximately 8700 this year) contact.

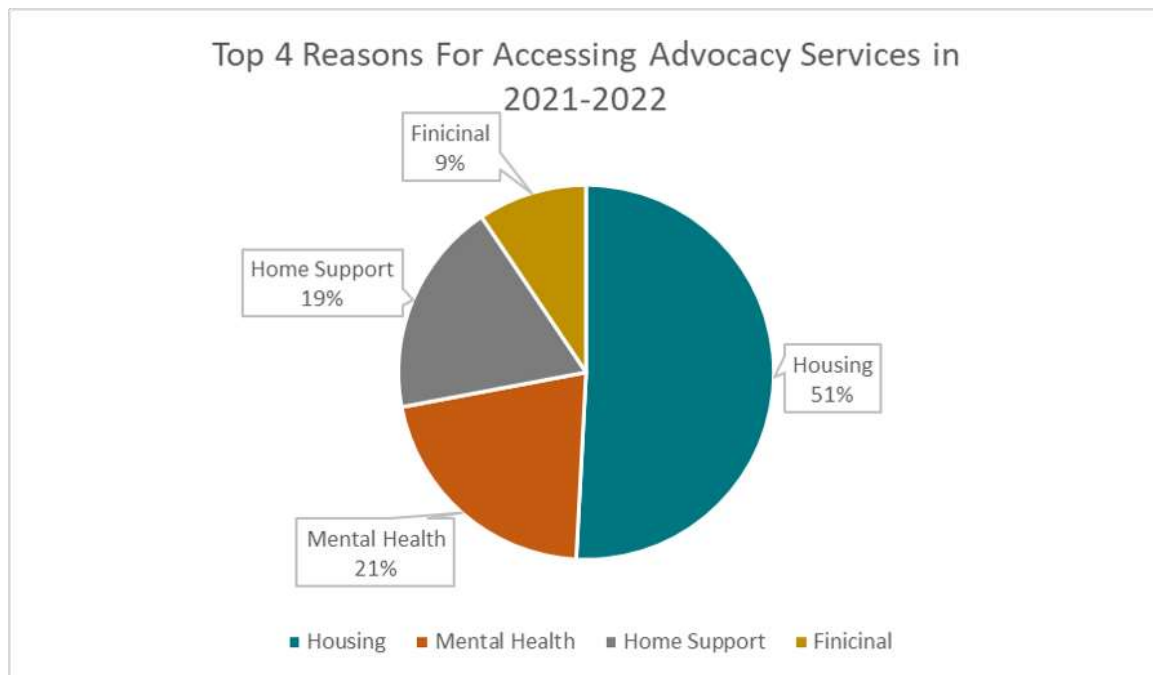
Advocacy Services has seen a major increase in need for support in accessing services over the last number of years.

## Key Accomplishments:

- Due to Covid-19, Empower held its second virtual tax clinic. 53 members had their taxes e-filed through the clinic.
- Food insecurity and poverty continued to play a major role contributing to challenges during Covid-19 for people with disabilities. Advocacy Services provided food security in the way of gift cards and transportation to people with disabilities struggling with food insecurity.
- Advocacy Services continued to support members with Go Bus Eligibility assessments.
- Advocacy Services provided support to members and their families with advocacy within the school system.
- In the months of May and July 2021, a Covid-19 vaccination clinic was organized in partnership with Eastern Health for staff and members within the disability network. 143 of Empower's members received vaccination appointments.
- Advocacy Services has received many referrals, including referrals from other Empower programs, other community organizations, government departments and agencies, family members and friends, as well as other members of Empower.
- Advocacy Services has supported a number of seniors with disabilities, both through individual advocacy and interagency teams with our partners supporting issues of poverty, mental health supports, housing, and home support.

- Called to the table for advisory and consultation, meeting with many key stakeholders in community, government and the public, such as focus groups with Eastern Health and government.
- The Advocacy Services Manager presented at many public events including The NL Health Accord, Public Town Hall meetings, Consultations surrounding the accessibility and full inclusion in the City of St. John's, including The Pedestrian Mall.
- Taylor Cassel, RSW and Joby Fleming, Manager of Advocacy Services presented a webinar to the NL College of Social Workers. Community Stakeholders Event, Mapping and Connections.
- Joby Fleming is the Co-Chair of the City of St. John's Inclusion Advisory Committee.
- Joby Fleming was appointed to the Community Advisory Board (CAB) with End Homelessness St. John's in October 2021.





The chart above depicts the top four reasons for advocacy recorded within the Advocacy Services: Financial (9%), Mental Health (21%), Home Support (19%), and Housing (51%). More often, members are faced with barriers to accessing these four areas of support than other issues addressed in Advocacy Services. The lived experiences of our members highlight the current crisis surrounding home support services in our province.

The prevalence of poverty can be seen through the financial concerns of our members. The rise in housing concerns shows the importance and value of our new Housing Support position.

Additionally, as we navigate through the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a noticeable increase in housing related concerns for many people with disabilities taking up the largest percentage of advocacy concerns recorded within the Advocacy Services for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

## Participation in External Events:

- Hosted numerous Facebook Lives for Empower.
- Sit at Coordinated Access to Homes through End Homelessness weekly.

- Attended numerous bi-weekly Disability Network Meetings.
- Delivered Disability Etiquette training workshop to multiple organizations throughout the community.
- Health Accord Symposium with Community Health Care Committee.
- Presented to the Nursing students within Faculty of Nursing.
- Housing & Homelessness Working Group-Covid-19 Vulnerable Task Force.
- Attended End Homelessness event, titled “Covid-19: One Year Later”.

Overall, Advocacy Services continues to be very successful. We look forward to working with new and returning members over the next year and continuing our partnership with community and government organizations.

Joby Fleming

Advocacy Services Manager



# Member Services Report

---

Formerly known as the Peer Support/Volunteer Program, Member Services is dedicated to providing our members with barrier-free social interaction, learning opportunities and support. Peer support is a vital part of our community. The Peer Support Program is about the knowledge, skills, and experience of the peer supporter, members, and anyone willing to share their lived experience with others. Peer Support brings members together with similar goals and interests while also offering opportunities for socializing, friendship, support, and shared experience from those in similar situations. We welcome the lived and learned experience from anyone, especially those with cross-disabilities which includes mental health, short-term, long-term, and permanent disabilities. Peer Support transforms lives by providing tailored, flexible, emotional, practical, and social support. People benefit from hearing from those in the same boat, and we like to connect to others with lived and learned experience.

People with disabilities experience many barriers to social interaction on a regular basis. This past year has been a transition year for members. Covid-19 has caused many members to isolate completely from all interactions and outside activities. Most members would not even go pick up groceries or supplies. This was one of the main reasons why we transitioned groups to online back in March 2020. We wanted members to feel connected even though we were apart. We wanted them to realize they are not alone and that we are here to support them through this difficult time. It has been a rough two years for many, but we made it through and there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Everyone playing their part and getting vaccinated has allowed us all to come together once again.

From Dec 2021 to April 2022, Member Services (Peer Support/Volunteer Program) has been working on trying to create opportunities for members

to participate in events and activities in St. John's and Mount Pearl. We always say that Empower is the best kept secret and we believe it is time to change that. We are confident that by offering more activities and events outside of our centre and promoting more of our community partners we are opening more doors for social inclusion. Members are becoming more aware of locations, events and activities that are in the communities surrounding them. Member Services reduces barriers of stigma, isolation, and improves resiliency, self-esteem, and social connections. We provided numbers of different sessions catered to different groups of individuals with varying interests.

The following is an overview of the different Member Services opportunities we explored with members of Empower in the past year.

## Social Group

Social Group happened every Thursday, 2:00pm-4:00pm. This group provides a space for members to socialize, learn, and share skills with others. This group now offers games, and online fun. Social Group activities included Wheel of Fortune, Who Wants to Be A Millionaire, Family Feud, Guess the Pictures, Place, Music and learning 10 things about each other. We even enjoyed virtual tours of places like Rome, Italy, and Paris.

## Webinar Series

This program was created to offer different presentations to members over Zoom and Google Meet. They can still come together in a group setting but in the comfort of their own homes. We have offered sessions on the Mummers Festival, the GoBus App, Renter Law, Workers Rights, Food First NL, Easter Seals, New Hope Community Centre, NL Vax Passport, Salmonier Nature Park "Mammals: A closer look at Wild Animals" and also a session on Social Circus. We really enjoy educating our members and

ensuring they are aware and knowledgeable about topics of importance to them.

## Coffee and Technology

This is a group in partnership with Travis Turpin, our AT Facilitator. We are offering a 2-hour session once every 2 months from September to May for members to come and learn about new technology and ask questions they may have around their own technology. Some sessions we did were to educate members about learning how to use the accessibility features on androids and apple phones and Facebook safety.

## Let's Talk

This is a six-week course which happens once a week for 3 hours. This group was designed to educate and support members around self exploration and learning about who they are and what they want. We covered:

- Gender Identity
- Self Exploration and Consent
- Dating Dos and Don'ts
- Learning about different types of relationships
- Healthy vs Unhealthy Relationships
- How to be a friend

We have a lot of members who struggle with some of these topics and it was truly enjoyable to team up with Sara Tobin and learn from her skills. Members enjoyed these groups and we hope to run another group in the future.

## Crochet Group

This is a group that some members have been wanting for some time. We have two members who are extremely skilled in crocheting teaching six other members how to crochet. We did encounter some barriers with the

virtual nature of the group, but we found ways around our barriers. Everyone enjoyed the group and we hope that people will be able to meet up soon to do the sessions in person.

## Acting Classes Pilot

We partnered with Bridget Wareham, an actress based in St. John's, who was looking to create an accessible acting class. We teamed up and did a Pilot with six Empower members. She worked with each individual to teach them skills around becoming an actor. It was very enjoyable to watch our members become engaged, more confident, build their self esteem and realize there is so much they can do, if they put their minds to it. Bridget is looking forward to partnering with us for another group this fall.

## Christmas Dinner & Dance

The Christmas Dinner & Dance was different this year due to the pandemic. We still had a great time with eighty-two people in attendance. This annual event is a great start to the holiday season and a highly anticipated occasion by all. Everyone enjoyed the great food and the amazing company. This year it was even more anticipated as it was the first time for many to interact with each other in over a year.

## Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of our organization. We would not be able to offer the many programs and services we do without the hard work and dedication of our close to eighty volunteers. Volunteers bring many different perspectives with them, with different learned and lived experiences that benefit those they serve as a volunteer. We look forward to providing more opportunities for students in the future.

We offer many volunteering opportunities including long-term, short-term and one-time opportunities for anyone interested in giving their

time. We have volunteering positions which include Reception Assistant, Group Support, Computer Room Support, Newsletter Committee, Garden Committee, etc.

This past year, some of our volunteers were unable to volunteer due to the pandemic and our centre being closed to the public. We have been reaching out to them during this time and keeping them posted on Empower's status. Some volunteers were able to volunteer online with groups and creating presentations, offering support in different areas. We are grateful for all our volunteers. We are looking forward to being back together soon.



We did an online virtual group to show our volunteers how much we think about them and appreciate all their hard work and commitment to Empower

during Covid-19. All volunteers were mailed a certificate and tokens of appreciation. We received very positive feedback about how much people really appreciated receiving those gifts during the difficult time. It is the little things that count and truly show people that we are here to support them. We would like to thank group members, volunteers, support workers, staff, and others for their contribution to our Member Services. Without your time, knowledge, and experience, we would not have such an amazing network of people around us. This year, our members met for eighty sessions online and inside/outside the Centre.

We would like to take the time to thank our partners over the past year including:

- Public Legal Information of NL
- The New Hope Community Centre
- The Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and Homeless Network, Mummers Festival
- Many others

Member Services is committed to providing opportunities for personal growth and fulfilment of the members who join the Peer Support Activities. We look forward to working with members in the coming year, making sure we offer sessions that will be of great benefit. We are always open to any topics that may be of interest to members in the future.

Amanda Lush  
Coordinator of Member Services

## Career Services

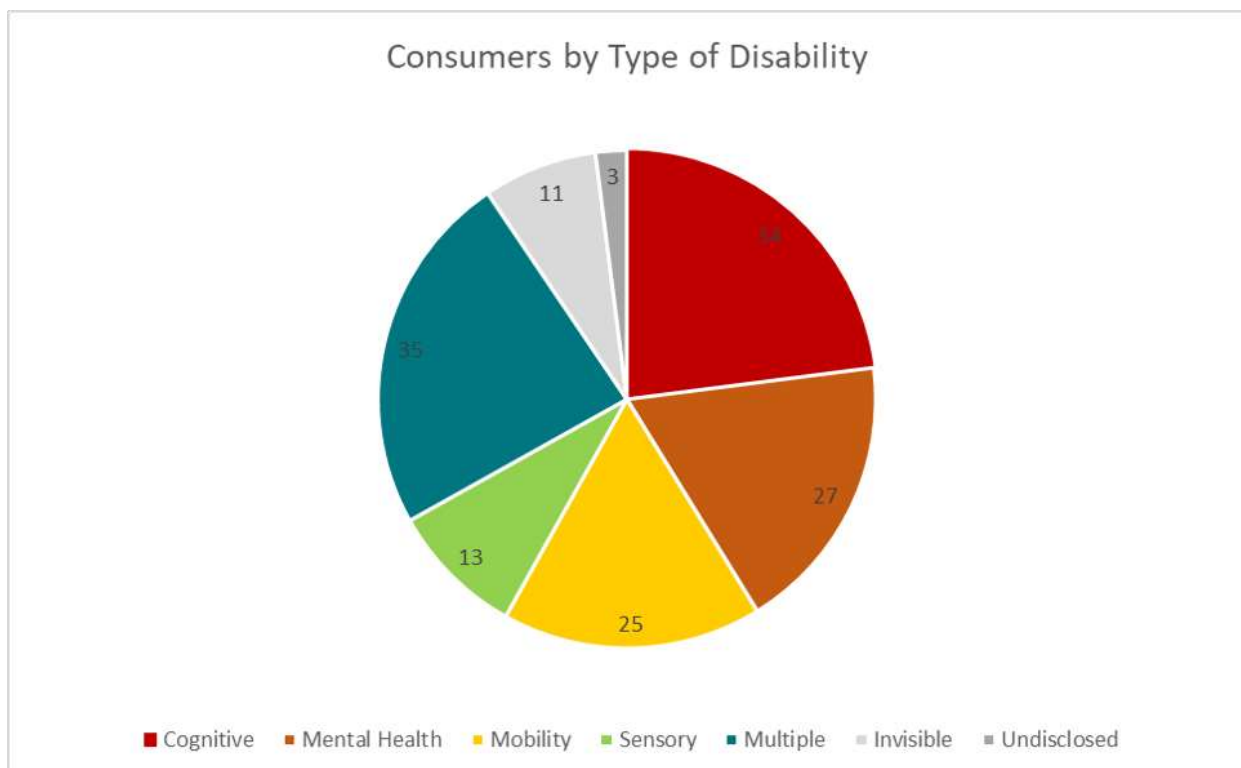
---

### Career Services

---

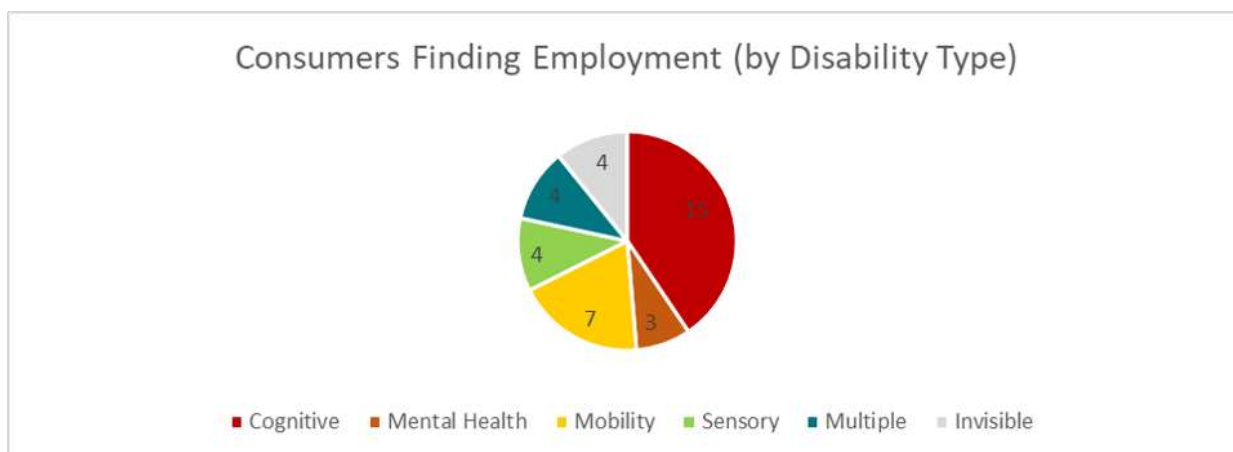
The Career Services Program at Empower, formerly known as the Full Steam Ahead Program, has seen a very busy year. We have offered over 2500 services; about 1600 or 65% were directly with Career Services Members. We have changed our name so that it more accurately reflects the service that we offer.

During the 2021-2022 fiscal year, 147 people with disabilities met with the Career Services Coordinator at Empower to avail of our Career Services Program. The following chart shows consumers by disability type.



This chart shows the number of consumers by type of disability. 34 consumers had a cognitive disability, 27 had a mental health disability, 25 had a mobility disability, 13 had a sensory disability, 35 had multiple disabilities, 11 had an invisible disability and 3 people did not disclose their disability.

2021-2022 was also a successful year for job seekers. Despite the difficulties people faced with respect to the Covid-19 pandemic, 37 people with disabilities found 39 positions.



This chart shows the number of consumers finding employment by type of disability. 15 consumers with cognitive disabilities found employment, 3 consumers with mental health disabilities found employment, 7 consumers with mobility disabilities found employment, 4 consumers with sensory disabilities found employment, 4 consumers with multiple disabilities found employment, 4 consumers with invisible disabilities found employment and 0 consumers with undisclosed disabilities found employment.

2021-2022 also saw Career Services members successful with their education and retraining goals. 24 people with disabilities started long-term and short-term training opportunities.



This chart shows the number of consumers starting training by type of disability. 7 consumers with cognitive disabilities started training, 4 consumers with mental health

disabilities started training, 2 consumers with mobility disabilities started training, 1 consumer with a sensory disability started training, 9 consumers with multiple disabilities started training, 2 consumers with invisible disabilities started training and 1 consumer with an undisclosed disability started training.

Career Services continue to be tailored to fit the specific needs, goals and abilities of each member. We still believe in the independent living philosophy and providing people with the opportunities to build skills that they will need to participate in the job market and in their community. We also believe in supporting each person, according to their self-identified disability related supports. With skill building and supports identified, individuals are ready for education, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities when they arise.

We have also worked hand in hand with many other career services providers in the community:

- Ready, Willing and Able
- Easter Seals NL
- CCRW
- Stella's Circle
- The YMCA of NL
- Avalon Employment
- The Newfoundland & Labrador Association of the Deaf
- The Murphy Centre
- Thrive
- Inclusion Canada NL

and others have been there to connect members to other opportunities and support them as they enter the labour force.

One example stands out over 2021-2022. 5 consumers, through the Ready, Willing and Able program, were able to receive supported employment opportunities with Shoppers Drug Mart. Working with the Front



Store manager, we were able to start people in positions where they were able to grow and succeed. One member has become the morale leader for her team, another member has taken a leadership role with respect to merchandising and another has taken on storeroom organization. With the right supports, this employer has seen the benefits of hiring people with disabilities, recognizing that they are key members of their team.

Even if people have not met their career goals this year, they have worked hard at building a supportive network and building their labour market skill set. With this strong foundation, they are certainly closer to meeting their career goals.

And if you are wondering if there are opportunities for you as you work towards your career goals, know that you don't have to do it alone. We are here to help you in both one-on-one and group settings and we are here to help you step-by-step, at a pace that you are comfortable with. And above all, we recognize your dignity and your right to try and to try again.

Stephen Quinn  
Career Services Coordinator

## Transitions To Work

---

Empower received provincial funding through the Department of Immigration, Population, Growth, and Skills, committed to offer the Transitions to Work Program to two intake groups of participants in the Fall of 2021 and Spring of 2022. Sherri Tucker returned in the position of Program Coordinator, and Morgan Clarke returned in the position of Program Administrator.

The Fall Transitions to Work Program started on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and intakes were completed throughout October and November. There were 27 intakes for this session, 9 were accepted into the program, and 1 individual withdrew from the program.

The program was advertised throughout the fall within the community, disability network, membership and social media.

First Aid was scheduled for January 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, however due to the change in alert level 4 from the Covid-19 pandemic, first aid training was impacted. The Red Cross, however, offered a hybrid model for training so participants could virtually complete the majority of learning for first aid. Unfortunately, most participants did not find the platform to be easy to navigate, and as a result did not complete training in full. Once it was safe to resume in person learning, participants were invited to meet for a half-day to complete the hands-on learning for first aid in order to be certified. Despite offers to support individual success with the online platform, only 1 participant from the Fall intake chose to complete practical First Aid learning on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

Advertising for Transitions To Work started on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022, and intake for the Transitions To Work program began on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022,

even before official advertising began. There were 39 scheduled intake assessments for this group and 17 completed intakes.

The Spring Transitions to Work Program started virtually on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 with 14 participants invited to complete the program. 3 participants were removed from programming due to illness related to Covid-19. As a result, 11 participants were successful in completing the Spring Transitions To Work program.

7 participants participated in First Aid Training and were all successful, and 5 were certified in WHIMS.

The Transitions To Work Graduation was held in-person on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at the NL Housing and Homeless Network, with meals (delivered by DoorDash) delivered to the ceremony. 6 participants attended in person, and 2 participants attended virtually.

Disability groups served through the Transitions to Work Program for 2021-2022 include:

- Intellectual/Cognitive
- Physical Mobility
- AD(H)D
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Brain Injury
- Autism
- Vision Loss
- Hearing Loss
- Seizure disorder
- PTSD and Mental Illness
- Other trauma related injuries

The age range from participants served was 18-60 years.

Sherri Tucker  
Empowering Transitions To Work Coordinator

## Youth Ventures

---

Empower committed to deliver the Youth Ventures program to membership and a greater audience from January to March of 2022 as a pilot initiative. Sherri Tucker performed the duties of the Program Coordinator, with support from Morgan Clarke and Mandy Penney.

Promotion was completed across Newfoundland and Labrador through social media, an email campaign, and virtual presentations. 3 youths participated in the program and were successful in either launching a new business or expanding upon their business. Each entrepreneur developed print marketing materials which were printed through The Hub Print Shop supported by the marketing budget provided by CBDC. One participant developed and launched a website, also supported through the provided marketing budget, and prizes of advertisements were also provided to participants of the Pitch Competition as a final event, also provided through the same.

All participants reported that they enjoyed the program and felt that they achieved the learning outcomes and more than was expected. Empower was pleased with the structure of the program and the gains that were made by each participant and their individual businesses.

Empower committed to launch the Youth Ventures program again from May-August 2022. Currently 10 young entrepreneurs are participating in the program and will be supported in developing their individual businesses throughout the summer.

Sherri Tucker

Empowering Youth Ventures Coordinator

## Provincial Services

---

### Building Community Inclusion NL

---

This year we have been working hard to roll out the new program. Based on research findings during the 2020-21 pandemic year, we have remodeled the Internship Program to provide longer term job experiences for skilled persons with disabilities through employment with Empower while providing meaningful support and services to our members in Newfoundland and Labrador to increase inclusion in their communities in all aspects of life including home, education, work and recreation.

We hired three new staff to undertake different projects to develop the program and roll it out in our pilot area of Stephenville Bay St. George, with plans to move into other rural areas for future programs.

Our team has been involved in the following activities:

- Advancing disability awareness, accessibility, and inclusion
- Promoting Empower, Disability Awareness, Inclusion, and Programs through our social media platforms Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- Partnering with groups to build awareness of how to reduce barriers in community.
- Assist local organizations to reduce barriers in their service delivery and events
- Exploring Peer Support Networks in community
- Researching gaps in service and resources and developing recommendations and tools where possible
- Delivering support to access services online
- Providing information and training on adaptive technology
- Creating accessible materials for internal and external use

- Engagement with the public through social media, attendance at community events, and information sessions
- Skill building and training opportunities where possible

Our team has done great work throughout the province this year. We have provided a number of information sessions, created new community partnerships, expanded on existing ones, and increased our social media profile. A list of activities and events are highlighted below.

#### Partnerships with Community

- Town of Stephenville Accessibility Committee Member
- Were invited to present to social workers in the Western Health Region to promote social worker month.
- Doorways Implementation Team for Mental Health and Community Services – provided input on language for a relaunch of their website content and provided lived experience profile. (Stephenville)
- CNA Community Leadership Development Students (Stephenville) – provided information and guidance to them on their project delivery for persons with disabilities
- Partner with the Women’s Economic Council for the 50/30 Challenge Ecosystem Project

#### Information Sessions on Empower Programs

- Provided information on programs to persons with disabilities in Stephenville and St. John’s
- Provided virtual information sessions to community groups in Stephenville. They included NAWN, CEN, CMHA, and the Women’s Centre. 14 participants
- Western Health Region - during Social Work Week we presented Empower Programs and Referral Process and Creating Barrier Free

Places, Practices and Processes. There were 34 social workers in attendance.

The program provides opportunities for Facilitators to gain skills and acquire training in areas that will enhance their future employment opportunities. These included:

- Training provided on Google Meets, and using cloud-based Drives Documents
- Weekly mentorship/training by Inclusion NL staff to review and create Social Media posts and learn the many details of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Hootsuite. Also reviewed accessibility of posts, Empower branding/messaging and general responses to social media messages
- Digital and Document Accessibility Basics
- Neurodiversity Club – comes together to discuss issues/solutions for persons with this disability. Organizations/Individuals are invited to present on topics related to neurodiversity.
- Brain Injury Information Session – Brain Injuries Association
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Information Session - CMHA
- Social Media Marketing Course – Hootsuite
- Hootsuite Course – Hootsuite
- Epilepsy and Mental Health – CMHA and Epilepsy NL
- RDSP and PIP Webinar – CSC NL
- Staff Disability Training – Empower
- Axe-con Conference – Building Accessible Experiences
- Website Accessibility Course

The program has been rolling out nicely and we anticipate that our activity in rural NL will increase as the program becomes more known. Our social media presence has garnered much attention and we are looking forward



to moving ahead in the next year and expanding to other areas of the province. We would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to all our partners and government funders. We look forward to working with you again in the coming year!

Keely McIntosh-Hynes  
Community Inclusion Facilitator,  
Stephenville

Travis Turpin  
Adaptive Technology Facilitator

Jen Mackey  
Social Media  
Coordinator/Resource Developer

Jim Escott  
Coordinator, Technology Services

Penny Abbott  
Manager, Provincial Services

## Technology Services

---

### Adaptive Technology Program (AT)

Adaptive Technology program connects individuals with technology that works for them. Whether this is a student who needs technology supports in the classroom or an employee who requires technology options due to a workplace adjustment or due to an injury. Technologies can seem scary at times. Here at Empower the AT program is tailored to individuals. We work one on one to overcome those challenges with training and testing new software and hardware devices.

Some of the Services provided within the AT program include:

- Working with individuals to identify appropriate AT options, providing support to acquire and use the technology successfully;
- Creating employment opportunities for people with disabilities;
- Engaging public, business, and government with information sessions to increase AT awareness, support, and training on a variety of assistive software and hardware.
- Short-Term Device Loan Program – we work with local business and agencies to provide adaptive technology in a 2-week loan program; using some of our keyboards and mice.
- Publicly accessible computer room, where people can use adaptive technologies and computers in an inclusive and supportive environment.

### Empower's Digital Resource Room (Previously CAP Room)

The Digital Resource Room offers opportunities for individuals, to use computers at no cost, in an accessible and supportive environment. We have an open public Wi-Fi; people can use the internet on all devices. We provide free printing services for resumes, government forms, and

educational information. Empower's AT program understands barriers with Internet access, digital information, and barriers with technology.

This year we are renovating our resource room, however, we are still open to anyone who needs to use this service, please call to make an appointment so that we have staff on hand to assist you with your requests.

## Computers & Connectivity Program

Through the Computers and Connectivity Program, we are providing devices to individuals in our community. If you have a spare device and it is in good working order, donate today and we will ensure the device is given to the vulnerable population to combat social isolation and ensure they can connect to government and medical appointments.

Technology Programs, supporting our most vulnerable population will ensure stronger online communities and build online gatherings through social programs.

## Empower's Website

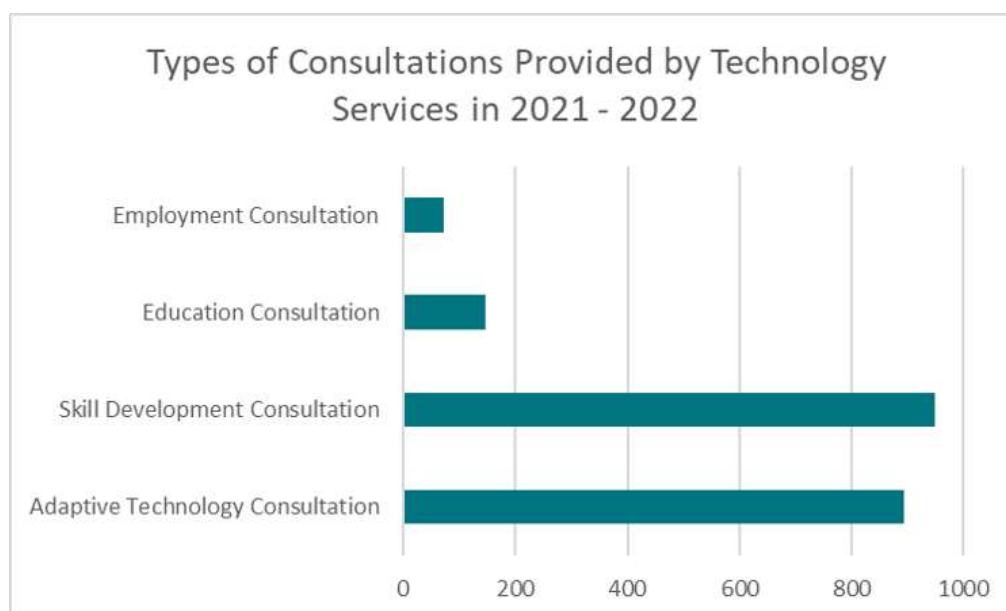
Check out our new website at <https://empowernl.ca/>. We now meet WCAC 2.1 AA Compliancy. We wanted to make a simple design, keeping in mind that most people will access our site by phone devices. We will be having a website launch in early fall when we have all of our resources up to date.

## Upgrades

This year Empower upgraded the following infrastructure: Server, Firewall, and Wi-Fi. We have also upgraded our AT software in our Digital Resource Room

## Individual Consultants

- The AT Program offers individual consultations in many areas related to AT, including employment, education, skill development, and adaptive technology hardware/software options.
- Employment consultations could range from supporting an employee in using a new mouse or keyboard, to working with an Intern to help them seek out future employment opportunities. (Employment consults = 73)
- Education consultations typically involve working with students to help them acquire and/or use AT in their studies or working with teachers to better enable them to support students with disabilities. (Education consults = 147)
- Skill development consultations are training sessions we provide to volunteers, members, job seekers, interns, and others on a variety of computer related topics. (Skill development consults = 948)
- Adaptive Technology consultations consist of a brief overview of what Adaptive Technology is, followed by a discussion of options/supports, and some hands-on training. It is an opportunity for members to decide what technology will work best for them. (AT consults = 894)



## Key Highlights of Community Work

### Education & Employment

- Advocating with students and parents within the (K-12) school system and supporting them with their Technology.
- Trained parents with their children in solutions for adaptive technology in google classroom setting, this was to make students work more independently.
- Worked with MUNL, CNA, Academy Canada and Keyin College to assist students in post secondary and ABE programs using Adaptive Technology for their students who require accommodations.
- Educational Group presentations on “Go Bus App” and “Coffee & Technology”.
  - Different online scams
  - Purchasing Devices and keeping them updated
  - How to use cloud
  - Facebook Security
  - How safe is online credit card information?
  - Computer Basics
- AT Programs created new resource guides for entrepreneurs for web accessibility and document accessibility.

### Government

- Working with WorkplaceNL and individuals to ensure software and hardware are compatible with internal work systems and implementing a training program for them to transition back to work.
- Promoted Government Covid-19 website, Mental Health Services and supports to our Membership using online tools.

### Community

- Provided document accessibility to many organizations, who were working in virtual environments to assist people with disabilities online.

- The City of Corner Brook municipal election required braille for voting.
- Presented Empower services and Disability Etiquette training to GoGettersNL.
- Web Accessibility information and audit check for the following websites.
  - NL Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre  
<https://endsexualviolence.com/>
  - Canadian Hard of Hearing Association NL <https://www.chha-nl.ca/>

Travis Turpin  
Adaptive Technology Program Facilitator

Jim Escott  
Coordinator of Technology Services

Penny Abbott  
Manager, Provincial Services



## Social Media

---

Following the research conducted by the IL Internship Program in 2020-2021, one of the recommendations of the consultant was the importance of social media in connecting with members and community groups throughout the province, as well as increasing the profile of Empower in areas outside of the Northeast Avalon. It was recommended that this be accomplished through the establishment of a Social Media Coordinator position within the former IL Internship Program, now called Building Community Inclusion NL, also allowing a skilled person with a disability the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills in the highly sought-after fields of Marketing and Communication.

Although the position of Social Media Coordinator began in October of 2021, much of the initial few months was filled with research, training and mentoring. Regular social media posting began in early January of 2022, after a trial series '12 Days of Holiday Self-Care' was created and posted under the supervision of InclusionNL's social media mentor. Weekly meetings were held to facilitate learning the intricacies of non-profit social media as well as Empower-specific requirements such as branding, accessibility and content.

As the Social Media Coordinator, other than posting, ongoing training, research and teamwork have become the primary functions of the job. Much of the training has been mentioned in the Building Community Inclusion NL report, but it should be noted that training in the production of accessible documents and graphics, either original or from existing documents, was extensive and remains ongoing. It is a given that all documents provided to members, other organizations or the public by Empower must be accessible, and this includes all social media.

Research in this position centers around three streams:

- Understanding the many details of social media posting, analysis of statistics and use of that analysis to further the goals of our program and Empower as a whole
- The creation of in-depth documentation around Empower's social media presence, including a functional content calendar, a key dates calendar, a hashtag reference spreadsheet and more
- Disability and accessibility related content, including messaging that will engage our current members, educate the general public and connect with other community organizations

As Empower's social media platforms were only sporadically used prior to January 2022, the following information is from the final quarter of the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

Empower's biggest audience by far is on the Facebook platform, as it has been in existence and use for the longest period of time. From January to March:

- We went from 1272 to 1736 fans on the platform, an increase of 36.4%
- We had 804 page visits, an increase of 12.3%
- We reached a total of 12,988 people, an increase of 14.7%

The best post on Facebook during this quarter was an introduction of our members to Keely, our Community Inclusion Facilitator in Stephenville, on February 9th. The post reached 4408 people and garnered 81 reactions including 10 likes, 1 comment, 34 shares and 49 link clicks.

Twitter has proved an interesting platform to try to understand and conquer. With Twitter's character limit, it has been a challenge on occasion to communicate information as fully as on the other platforms. However, from January to March:

- Empower went from 714 to 756 followers, an increase of 5.8%
- Overall engagements, such as likes and retweets, were 168, up 42%
- There were 15,400 impressions made over the quarter

The best performing tweet was on January 11th, promoting Empower's partnership with Youth Ventures. This tweet made 2,225 impressions, had 65 engagements, and resulted in 5 profile visits and 36 detail expands.

Instagram is the newest social media platform in use by Empower. However, while our followers are slowly growing, the improvement of our overall reach has been by far the best on this platform. From January to March:

- We went from 496 to 510 followers, an increase of 2.8%
- We reached 309 accounts, an increase of 95.6%
- We had 84 profile visits, an increase of 25.4%

Empower's best Instagram post of this quarter was on March 26th for Epilepsy Awareness Day. It reached 88 accounts, had 13 reactions including 7 likes, 1 comment (from Epilepsy NL), 4 shares and 1 save, with 94 overall impressions.

It has been fascinating to see the differences between platforms, in manner of use, audience demographics and the appeal of different content types. Recognizing that the consistent posting during this quarter, after many months of inconsistent posting, is almost certainly part of the increase in attention to our social media accounts, our goals for the next year are:

- To maintain if not improve our reach and engagement
- To use our presence to support our Stephenville Community Inclusion Facilitator in bringing Empower information and services to the Western region
- To connect with other community organizations to educate and form partnerships and collaborations

- To use analysis of statistics to improve social media impact and reach in many ways, including timing of posts, overall content, platform-specific content, targeted demographics and targeted geo tagging

In summary, this has been a very positive quarter for Empower's social media, which in turn helps keep members up to date with events and activities, helps educate the general public about disability and accessibility and connects Empower with other community organizations and the wider provincial community.

Jen Mackey

Social Media Coordinator/Resource Developer

Penny Abbot

Manager, Provincial Services



# InclusionNL Employer Support Services

---

InclusionNL: Employer Support Services started in June 2014 with funding received from the Labour Market Partnerships Program, Dept. of Advanced Education Skills & Labour. Since we began, we have provided numerous partnerships to many employers across Newfoundland & Labrador.

Throughout the past year we have continued to offer most of our services online due to the spread of Covid-19. Many of our partners are still operating under a hybrid model, offering both in-person and virtual work options. This requires more support to ensure their hybrid work models are barrier-free.

Complete inclusion of people with disabilities is not possible without valuable partnerships with businesses and employers. Throughout this past year, we have developed and participated in 33 unique online and in-person projects and business partnerships throughout the province. With our support, businesses grow their disability confidence and increase accessibility and inclusion within their work environments.

## Three Streams of Service Delivery

InclusionNL staff provides a number of streams of service delivery.

### **1. Direct Employer Supports**

- Staff provide direct supports to businesses based on individual need/request. Through these partnerships, we
  - Provide hiring supports by distributing job vacancies throughout our networks, which include partner disability organizations
  - Provide businesses with inclusion related supports for interviews (e.g., ASL interpreters, closed captioning, etc.)

- Provide accessibility reviews of businesses so that individuals interviewing can be confident their access needs will be met
- Through a variety of opportunities and professional development training sessions offered in person and online, we have been successful in developing 50 current partnerships with employers province wide and have increased knowledge in accessibility and inclusion in various ways. These unique partnerships provide businesses with services and resources as a way of introducing accessibility and inclusion to businesses that are interested in increasing their accessibility confidence. One example is our partnership with Parks Canada NEFU. We provided accessibility reviews of five national historic sites including Signal Hill, Cape Spear, Hawthorne Cottage, Castle Hill, Ryan Premises, Terra Nova National park, and assisted in increasing the diversity and inclusion within their advertising and promoted accessibility features of the sites. We also have provided HR supports to Crosbie Group of Companies, Cenovus Energy, Eastern Health HR, and AJ Bell Group.

## **2. Conferences | Events | Festivals**

This year staff from the program provided support to a number of businesses, community organizations and associations who organized virtual and in-person festivals, events, and conferences throughout the Avalon region. Staff worked with organizers leading up to their events ensuring accessibility for patrons. Supports included: helping to recruit volunteers, training volunteers and staff on accessibility practices, and providing supports during consultations. This year we have provided support to St. John's International CircusFest, the

EnergyNL conference, the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival and the St. John's International Women's Film Festival.

### 3. Research

With funding from the Harris Centre, we began a partnership with Memorial University of Newfoundland's SafetyNet Centre to conduct a scoping review and two roundtable discussions related to including people with disabilities in the natural resources sector, including oil and gas, mining and renewable energy. This work will help to reduce barriers for employees with disabilities, while increasing employer's accessibility confidence. Stakeholders will be involved in roundtable discussions to shed light on areas that need increased accessibility within their field.

### Program Successes/Milestones

- Surpassed all our program goals and outcomes with our initial funding contract received from Dept of Advanced Education Skills & Labour.
- Worked with an external consultant to complete Social Enterprise research for EARN-NL with funding through Dept of Industry, Energy and Technology.
- Participated in more than 100 unique business partnerships and projects since InclusionNL started.
- Partnered with Dolphin Digital Technologies to host NL's fourth Dolphin Disabilities Mentoring Day.
- Completed a review of Parks Canada Sites to help them begin to fulfil their ACA requirements
- Completed accessibility reviews of City of Mount Pearl trails

- Gained 659 new followers on social media accounts.
- Provided inclusion supports to more than 50 online and in person festivals, concerts and events throughout the area throughout the summers from 2017 to 2022.

Mandy Penney

Coordinator of Business Partnerships

Alannah Green

Coordinator of Logistics & Projects

Kathy Hawkins

Inclusion NL Manager



## InclusionNL Partners

---



Parks  
Canada

Parcs  
Canada



The image shows logos for the following InclusionNL Partners:

Crosbie Group

Association for New Canadians

Colony of Avalon

Energy NL

Destination St. John's

Mount Pearl Paradise Chamber of Commerce

Nalcor Energy

Quadrangle

Newfoundland Power

Take Charge

NLOWE

Memorial University

Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour

Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador

Craft Council of Newfoundland and Labrador

Tech NL

The Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Society

Business and Arts Newfoundland and Labrador

Marathon Gold

People Stuff

City of Mount Pearl

City of Corner Brook

City of St. John's

Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Government

Circus Fest

St. John's International Women's Film Festival

Cenovus Energy

RBC

DISC (MUN Disability Information Support Centre)

Parks Canada

CCRW/CCRT

# Garden Committee Report

---

(Deborah Prim Memorial Courtyard and Garden Committee)

Garden Committee Members were only allowed to attend the garden on weekends due to Covid-19. This was to ensure the safety of members and staff.

We started our clean up in April by prepping the grounds for planting. Turning the soil, adding lime, and sheep manure to help with the growing of our vegetables.

One of the first big challenges of this year was to get all the bricks removed from the garden walkway and replaced with cement like we did last year with the wooden walkway. It turned out beautifully and everyone is so glad we got to complete the rest of the walkway this year. We also have a new accessible garden bed added, which was donated in memory of a dear uncle and grandmother by Terrie Heffords Family.

All vegetables were planted in the ground by late June. We planted turnip greens, broccoli, chives, savory, pumpkin, as well as green, white, and yellow onions, potatoes, lettuce, carrots, beets, garlic and last, but not least, butter nut squash.

Our student gardener Lucas started in July for six weeks. He made a huge difference to our garden. His focus this year was the vegetables and the flower beds around the building. Lucas always goes above and beyond with the amazing work in our wonderful garden. We are very honored to have him back this year. We would like to welcome any members to take a stroll through our beautiful and relaxing garden on the weekends.

Our harvest took place during the fall. Our lettuce and turnip greens were picked throughout the fall. The rest of the vegetables were picked in late September and early October.

This year was different due to Covid-19 as we relied on volunteers to drop vegetables off. We never got to make our stone soup but enjoyed being able to work together in the garden. Even though six feet apart it was nice to chat with old friends and catch up. It provided us with hope for a time when things go back to normal.

To end off our year we did our annual ticket draws. One ticket draw was on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and the second draw was done at our Christmas Dinner and Dance. The purpose of these draws is to raise money for the next year. We have some big plans for our garden.

Do not forget the garden committee has a recycling account with Ever Green Recycling. There are 4 locations you can drop off recycling and donate them to the Garden: Elizabeth Avenue, Blackmarsh Road, Waterford Bridge Road, and Torbay Road. All you must do is go to one of those depots, type in Empower's phone number (722- 4031) and type the number of bags you are donating. After that, stick the labels on the bags and leave them to be added to our account.

We want to send out a huge thank you to everyone who donated prizes for our baskets, gave us monetary donations, or did work in our garden. We would not have been able to make the garden as wonderful as it is without the support of our members. All the money raised goes right back into our beautiful courtyard and garden.

It was another successful year, and we are looking forward to working together in 2022.

Terrie Hefford

Garden Committee Chair

# Independent Living Awards Recipients 2021

---

The 2021 recipient of the **Cecilia Carroll Award for Independent Living** is Myles Murphy. Myles was nominated for this award in recognition of his long term and extraordinary commitment to the full inclusion of the people with disabilities in all aspects of society.



Myles Murphy was born on Bell Island, a profoundly Deaf child to hearing parents. His life work has been committed to removing barriers for the 'silent minority' through his employment and volunteerism in the community. Myles has extensive volunteer experiences with the Canadian Association of the Deaf, Disability

Policy Office's Provincial Advisory Council for the Inclusion of

Persons with Disabilities, among other organizations.

In his role as Executive Director of NLAD, Myles has implemented specific services and programs that had direct positive outcomes in improving equality and inclusion for people who are Deaf. Myles

was instrumental in researching and developing the Deaf Literacy program for adults who are Deaf. Myles has been a leader and mentor within the Deaf community for 40 plus years where his commitment goes well beyond any paid employment.

**The Independent Living Young Leader Award** is for a young person with a disability, who has raised awareness and shown outstanding leadership in promoting full inclusion of people with disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador. The recipient of the

2021 Independent Living Young Leader Award is Stephanie Evans.



For many years while studying at Memorial, Steph was an extremely active volunteer. She participated in various on campus events and volunteer programs to advance her own skills and experiences as well as educating other young people on the rights of students with disabilities.

Steph is no stranger to Empower as she is an active volunteer with the InclusionNL Crew - and has participated in numerous events where InclusionNL has been on location including NL Folk Festival, St. John's Regatta, Frosty Festival, etc. Steph has been InclusionNL's most reliable volunteer for the past 3 years. During her participation in the recent Go Getters Program hosted

by the Community Sector Council - Steph was responsible for volunteering throughout the community while at the same time educating those around her about barriers individuals with disabilities experience on a daily basis. All of these events and many more are great examples of why Stephanie Evans is this year's recipient of the Young Leaders Award for Independent Living.

**The Social Inclusion Award for Independent Living** is for a person, or group of individuals who has worked towards a more inclusive environment by creating opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in areas such as education, sports, the arts, government services, and the wider community. The recipient of the 2021 Social Inclusion Award for Independent Living is Coastal Wave Elite represented by Meagan Corcoran and Denise Read.

Coastal Wave Elite All-Star Cheer has been ground-breaking both provincially and nationally with the

development of their mixed abilities competitive cheer team called Pulse, started in 2018. Pulse accepts athletes with any disability (physical, cognitive, etc.) as well as neurotypical cheerleaders. They train at least two hours a week working both on individual skills and group routines including stunts (pyramids, lifts, etc.) and dance and jump sequences. Every athlete is included and able to showcase their skill.



This team participates in all the same events as every other team including expos, provincial competitions and national competitions, which last year were held virtually. They have equal participation in community events such as marching in the local

Santa Claus parade, some drove in vehicles and others wheeled in wheelchairs). Participants learn many individual skills including forward rolls, cartwheels and back walkovers. Pulse does not make any assumptions about ability and challenges everyone to do their best. Most excitingly team Pulse is travelling this winter to Ottawa to compete with other Coastal Wave Elite teams. Team Pulse athletes with varying abilities are given the same opportunities to excel as every other athlete. And as one participant Ava Walsh, says “I love being a cheerleader”.

**The Business Award for Independent Living** is for a business who has displayed an innovative approach and achieved substantial outcomes, in supporting the full inclusion of people with disabilities. The recipient of the 2021 Business Award for Independent Living goes to Island Furniture Association being represented by Jerry Senior.

In 1979 the late Paul E. Walsh founded Island Furniture Association, a furniture manufacturing company employing people with developmental delays. The objective of this newly established organization was to become a viable business entity creating "Real Jobs" for developmentally delayed persons. Since its inception, Island Furniture has evolved from a manufacturing plant to a retail furniture store and has expanded to become the significant local business it is today, helping to supply the demand for a wide choice of furnishing products. Currently Island Furniture employs 7 individuals with developmental delays throughout all divisions of the company.



Since 2000, Island Furniture has dispersed in excess of seven million dollars to various Supportive Employment Agencies across Newfoundland and Labrador. This funding has provided more than 1500 job placements for developmentally delayed persons. Island Furniture is a furniture store that takes their social responsibility seriously.



# Annual General Meeting Minutes, 2021

---

## **Empower, The Disability Resource Centre**

Annual General Meeting – AUGUST 28, 2021 CLB Armoury

### Meeting Minutes

1. The Chair introduced Empower Board members. In attendance were:  
Carole Barron, Ann Marie Blandford, Heidi Edgar, Amanda Howlett,  
Felicia Tupper, Stephen Wheeler  
Regrets: Mark Gauci, & Deborah Gilbert
2. Heidi Edgar read the minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting.

Motion to approve the minutes as presented:

Moved by: **Amanda Howlett**

Seconded by: **Ann Marie Blandford**

Motion carried.

3. Carole Barron read the Chairperson's report.

Motion to approve the Chairperson's report as presented.

Moved by: **Amanda Howlett**

Seconded by: **Gail St. Croix**

Motion carried

4. Kimberly Dawson read the Executive Director's report.

Motion to approve the Executive Director's report as presented.

Moved by: **Ed Sawdon**

Seconded by: **Nikki Ann Hayward**

Motion carried.

5. Ann Marie Blandford read the Treasurer's Report and Audited Financial Statements

5.1 Motion to approve the Treasurer's report and Audited Financial Statements as presented.

Moved by: **Andrew Dixon**

Seconded by: **Amanda Howlett**

Motion carried.

5.2 Motion to appoint Clarified Accounting as Empower's financial auditors for 2021-22.

Moved by: **Carole Barron**

Seconded by: **Ann Marie Blandford**

Motion carried.

## 6. EMPOWER Board of Directors 2021-2022

Kimberly Yetman Dawson read the biographies of the new board members: Kristine Strickland and Stacey Parsons

The board members for 2021 -22 are:

- Amanda Howlett
- Deborah Gilbert
- Heidi Edgar
- Carole Barron
- Stephen Wheeler
- Felicia Tupper
- Kristine Strickland
- Stacey Parsons
- Ann Marie Blandford

## 7. Kimberly will mail certificate of appreciation to Board member who retired from the Board this year:

- Mark Gauci

## 8. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the 2021 Annual General Meeting at **6:13 pm**.

Moved by: Amanda Howlett

Door Prizes were awarded





**Empower, The Disability Resource Centre**

4 Escasoni Pl, St. John's, NL A1A 3R6

(709) 722-4031

[info@empowerNL.ca](mailto:info@empowerNL.ca)

[www.empowerNL.ca](http://www.empowerNL.ca)