

# Annual Report 2023-2024



e m p  w e r  
the disability  
resource centre

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# Empower Overview

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- 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

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The Empower Team, under the leadership and direction of Kathy Hawkins, Executive Director, continues to advance ways and means to support our over 400 members and many consumers who access the variety of services offered through Empower, The Disability Resource Centre. Thank you to Kathy and the outstanding staff team. Your dedication, commitment, and support have been second to none - we could not do what we do without each of you.

You will read how the Services provided to our members have continued to grow. Staff reached out to members to better understand those we were serving. 196 people provided information. 94.9% of respondents said they self-identify as having a disability. The majority of those were people between the ages of 40 and 59, followed closely by those 18 to 39. This is important information to ensure EmpowerNL is meeting the needs of its members.

EmpowerNL was pleased to welcome representatives of the Board of Directors of Accessibility Standards Canada (ASC) to our centre this past September. They were interested in speaking with staff and members regarding the impacts the ASC-developed standards are having on individual lives, and gaining insights about other barriers members continue to experience when engaging with federal government services. This consultation proved extremely fruitful as ASC reps learned about the lived experiences of members of our community.

The detailed information provided in this report by members of the EmpowerNL Team highlights the work completed in 2023 – 2024.

Activities in Members' Services, Technology Services, Advocacy Services, Housing Services in collaboration with End Homelessness St. John's, and corporate services offered in InclusionNL reach members, consumers, employers and the community, supporting sustainable futures, disability confidence, housing, health care, mental health and social skills. As our services continue to grow, we will respond to members' needs by offering new services as the need and demand rise.

We were pleased to receive confirmation from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador of continued operational funding. In addition, the Community Inclusion Services and Career Services programs have been confirmed for funding. We deeply appreciate our government and funding partners for this financial support. Without this funding, our Programs and Services could not be maintained.

The Board continues working diligently to address ways and means to fund necessary building repairs and maintenance from our fixed budgets. This upcoming year, we will focus on improvements and upgrades to the exterior of our building. Special thanks to our Finance Officer Melanie Grandy for always having the answers to our range of finance questions.

During this year, the Board completed the development of our Strategic Plan 2024-2027 with expertise from Coastline Consultants. They have also begun the process of Board Development and are currently undertaking a jurisdictional review of all the Boards of IL Centres across Canada to more adequately align us with the national network. The Human Resources Committee worked throughout the year to revamp and update our Operational Policy Manual, and our Occupational Health & Safety Committee developed policies to support the safety of all employees.

Again in 2023, EmpowerNL completed its annual celebration recognizing the International Day for Persons with Disabilities. On December 5, 2024,

our 2023 Independent Living Awards were presented at Government House by the newly appointed Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador, Her Hon. Joan M. Aylward, and His Hon. Carol Thompson.

The recipients were as follows:

Cecilia Carroll Award for Independent Living:

**Paul Morgan**

Business Award for Independent Living:

**Katherine Peddle - Oral Health Centre**

Young Leader Award for Independent Living:

**Kayla Warren**

Social Inclusion Award for Independent Living:

**Paul Power - Power Productions**

In closing, I extend my sincerest thanks to the EmpowerNL team, the dedicated and committed Board Members, and all our volunteers who make progress and success possible! I also wish to recognize the services of Carole Barron, Stacey Parsons, Sherry Mercer, and Stephen Wheeler, who left the Board throughout this year. I would also like to welcome Amanda Brace, who joined our HR Committee. As your Board Chairperson, I am extremely grateful for your commitment and dedication.

Respectfully,



Paul Morgan

Chairperson

# Executive Director's Report

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This year has been hectic while our new Coordinator of Member Services focused on service development and continuing to develop new ways to meet the needs of our members, as you'll read in this Annual Report.

Activities at EmpowerNL are in full motion. We host a number of events and activities at the Centre to support members' engagement with our services. The Members Services Report details the new clubs and activities offered this year.

It was a great experience to come together for our Annual IL Award Ceremony at Government House on December 5, 2023, in recognition of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. As highlighted in our chairperson's report, all the award recipients work tirelessly to advance accessibility and independence in our community, and we are very pleased to recognize them. We also recognized the day and celebrated the holidays by hosting our Christmas Dinner and Dance. Everyone had an excellent evening, and we sincerely thank our caterers for their fantastic meal.

This year, our Dinner Club has explored several new restaurants and cuisines throughout the city. I want to personally thank our Volunteer Amanda Howlett for coordinating the Dinner Club, and I look forward to new venues to come.

In the Spring of this year, EmpowerNL hosted an Accessibility Symposium for businesses and employers to learn more about breaking down barriers in the workplace. Many leaders came together to participate and learn from key experts about Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility in the workplace. Areas for discussion also included accessibility from lived experiences, digital accessibility, and diversity practices. Collaborations to



make this such a success included the DEIB-AR NL Network, with financial and organizational support received from the Women’s Economic Council 50-30 Challenge.

Our members have participated in many types of activities throughout the city, many of them hosted by the City of St. John’s. At the same time, our new Member Services Coordinator, Sherri Tucker, has organized many events as well. Our new Book Club, Peer Support Groups, and Skills Development sessions provide various services and opportunities for skill development. We look forward to continued growth this upcoming year.

Our Board of Directors and Standing Committees have been very busy throughout this past year, and we are extremely fortunate to have such a strong Board that understands our work and the Independent Living philosophies that govern our work on developing policies and practices to guide us. Thank you to each of our Board of Directors, especially previous Chairperson Carole Barron and current Chairperson Paul Morgan.



I also want to personally thank Carole Barron, Stacey Parsons, Steve Wheeler, and Sherry Mercer for your leadership and direction on our Committees and your many years of commitment to our Board. We were sorry to see these Board members move on, and certainly recognize that life has other priorities that consume your time. We wish you all the very best in your next endeavors.

In closing, I'd like to send a sincere thank you to our staff. Throughout my year as Executive Director, we have experienced significant growth in our services and membership and expanded our services across the province. We have also worked closely with community organizations, business partners, and the government, all of which would not have come to fruition without their long-standing commitment and dedication.

Respectfully Submitted,



Kathy Hawkins  
Executive Director

**IAAP**

International Association  
of Accessibility Professionals

MEMBER

# Treasurer's Report

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I am delighted to provide the Financial Advisor's Report to Empower, The Disability Resource Centre's membership.

I am pleased to advise that Beacon Accounting Professional Corporation has audited the financial statements for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024, without issue. Per those audited financial statements, EmpowerNL's total revenue was \$1,331,278, and the total expenditures for the year were \$1,339,020. Board Development and Strategic Planning were undertaken this year, totalling \$18,688, which were taken from the Reserve Fund (rather than the Operational Budget). The net result for this fiscal year's operations was a surplus of \$10,946.

I would like to extend our gratitude and appreciation to the various provincial government departments that provide ongoing financial support to EmpowerNL. As well, a heartfelt thank you to all our financial patrons and funders. Your generous contributions to Empower enable us to provide the services that support people with disabilities in achieving their independence and to promote the philosophy of Independent Living.

Finally, I'd like to thank the staff and volunteers at EmpowerNL. Your commitment and dedication to Empower and its work allow us to continue to provide the vitally important services that make our communities accessible and inclusive.

Renee March, Financial Advisor

# IL Canada NL Provincial Representative Report

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Founded in 1986 by the Independent Living Movement Membership, Independent Living Canada (formerly the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres) represents the network of IL Member Centres at the national level. IL Canada performs several functions on behalf of Member Centres, including providing a collective voice on national issues, fostering and maintaining partnerships, building the capacity and scale of Independent Living in Canada, and preserving the integrity and importance of Independent Living in Canada on the national stage.

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 Centres across Canada. For IL Canada, the Centres, and our consumers, it has been a year of growth and development.

Last year, I was nominated as the NL Representative for Empower, The Disability Resource Centre. For 2023-2024, Jennifer Marchand became Chairperson of the Board. Diane Krueger as 1st Vice Chairperson and Theresa Bullegas as 2nd Vice Chairperson, myself as Secretary, and Suzanne Larocque as Treasurer. Our Directors/Members at Large include Sebastian Duguay-Nardini (NB Rep), Robin East (SK Rep), Pierre Hamelin (QC Rep), and Vicky Lavak (NS Rep). I was pleased to attend the face-to-face meetings of our board in Toronto in April and truly get a feel for the mission and values of Independent Living Canada.

At the commencement of this fiscal year, we had a change in leadership when our previous Executive Director retired. We were very pleased to hire our new National Executive Director, Freda Uwa, and new executive



assistant, Hunter Maze; they both bring incredible talent and experience to our organization.

IL Canada received approval for its grant submission to the Social Development Partnership from the Government of Canada for three years of operational funding. The agreement provides core funding to IL Canada and Member Centres to help fund IL programs for our consumers. IL Canada has also received funding through Accessibility Standards Canada to conduct research on festivals and events across the country and offer recommendations for standards development to ASC. This initiative is in its second year, and EmpowerNL is one of 4 Independent Living Centres involved in this research.

IL Canada focused on increasing ILC's youth engagement this year by developing a Youth with Disabilities Committee. Representatives of this group came together in the spring in Toronto to build their infrastructure and terms of reference. We are looking forward to the work of this group, who will be reporting to the board on their work each quarter.

IL Canada's AGM is taking place on September 25 & 26 in Ottawa. A virtual registration is available to anyone interested in joining through Zoom. A link will be provided to all those who have registered.

I look forward to the upcoming year ahead and appreciate being voted again this year to be EmpowerNL's IL Provincial Representative. We will strive to continue to create meaningful national partnerships and support IL Centres by being a strong voice on issues of concern to its members and partners.

Respectfully,



Susan Barrett  
NL Representative



# Empower Annual Services

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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.

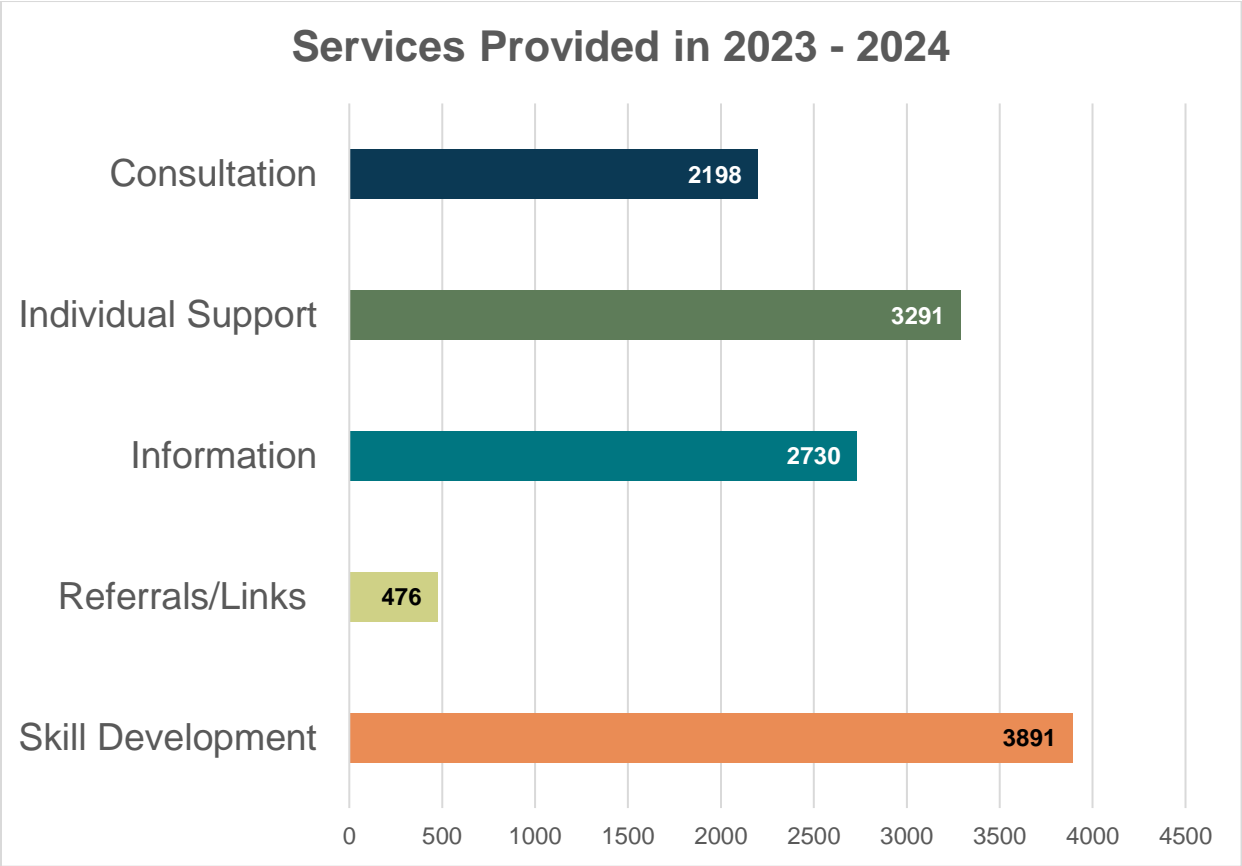
Skill Development services occur when staff provide training and instruction to an individual. For example, the Manager of Advocacy Services provides a skill development service when helping a person complete a Canada Pension Plan application form. Or our Coordinator of Member Services provides a skill 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 Community Inclusion Services (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.



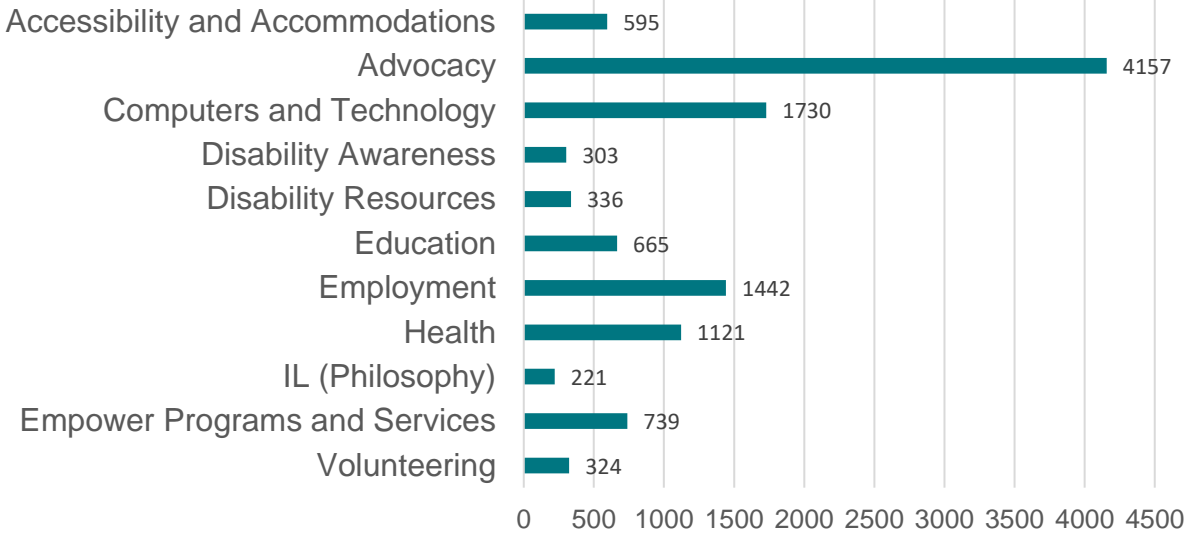


This bar chart shows the numbers of people provided with services by Empower in 2023 – 2024, in the categories of Consultation (2198), Individual Support (3291), Information (2730), Referrals/Links to other programs or services (476) and Skill Development (3891).



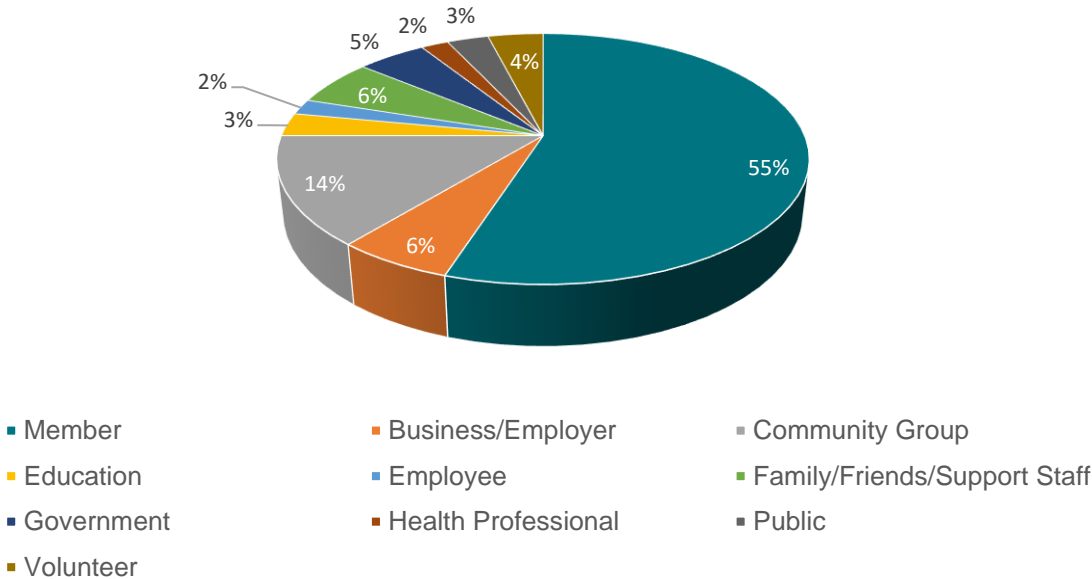


### Common Themes Across Empower Programs

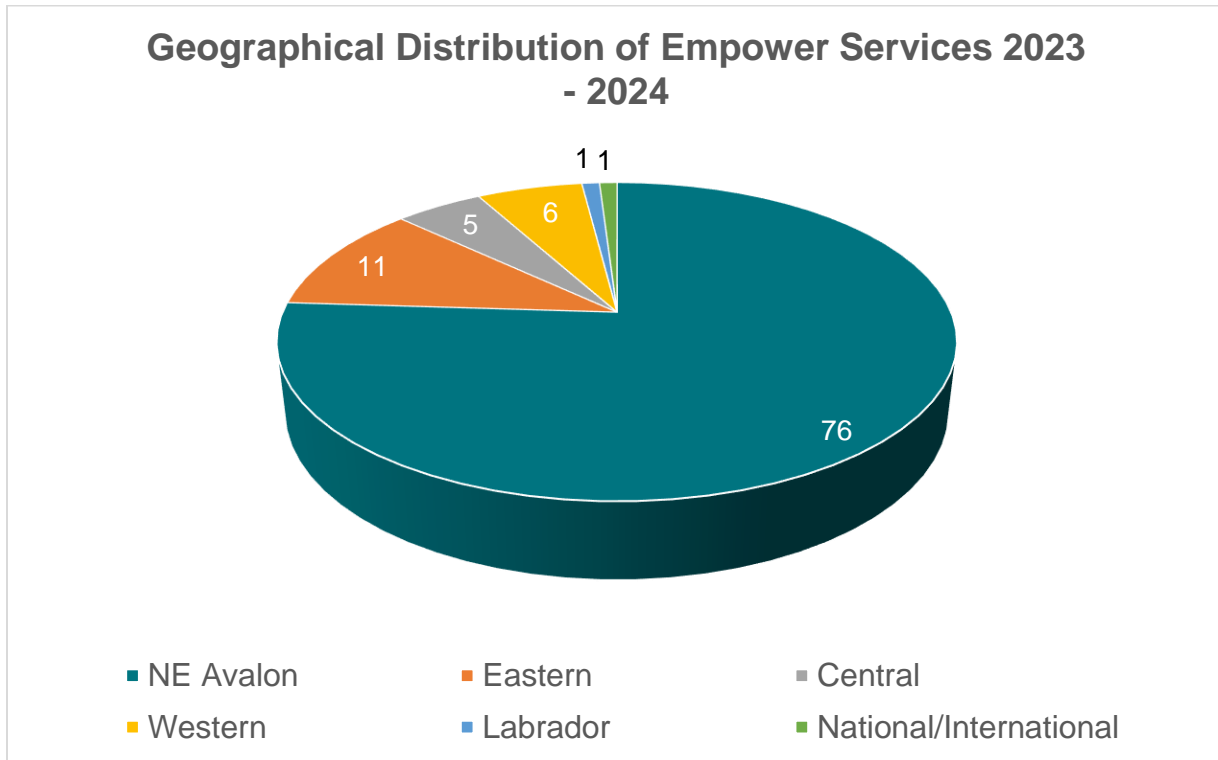


This bar chart shows the common themes across all Empower programs and services. The themes are accessibility and accommodations (595), advocacy (4157), computers and technology (1730), disability awareness (303), disability resources (336), education (665), employment (1442), health (1121), IL philosophy (221), Empower programs (739) and services and volunteering (324).

### Who Received Empower Services in 2023 - 2024



This pie chart shows who received services from Empower in 2022 – 2023. The categories are member (55%), business/employer (6%), community group (14%), education (3%), employee (2%), family/friends/support staff (6%), government (5%), health professional (2%), public (3%) and volunteers (4%).



This pie chart shows the geographical distribution of Empower services in 2023 – 2024, in the NE Avalon (76%), Eastern (11%), Central (5%), Western (6%), Labrador (1%) and National/International regions (1%).



# Advocacy Services Report

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It has been another successful year for Advocacy Services as we continue to support large numbers of individuals that identify with having a disability. Empower's Advocacy Services Program is the only program in Newfoundland and Labrador that provides individual advocacy services to people with cross-disabilities. Advocacy Services provides support to individuals to identify goals, personal strengths, and skills by providing clear and accurate information about current legislation, policy regulations, and resources.

Through the transfer of knowledge, Advocacy Services empowers and teaches people that identify with a disability to become an effective self-advocate. Advocacy services ensure that the voices of the people we support with disabilities are heard in every service they seek. Individuals have availed of Advocacy Services to empower themselves and strengthen their abilities to navigate complex systems to make informed decisions.

The Advocacy Services program operates from the point of view that there is "nothing about us without us." It is a slogan that we are passionate about keeping at the front and center of everything we do when supporting individuals.

Advocacy Services operates from a coordinated access approach, collaborating with all community stakeholders, which we have found key to assisting the people we support in obtaining basic needs and goals. The Advocacy Services team prides itself in effectively working with an extensive network of community and governmental partners, which contributes to the success of Empower's representation in the community. We are thankful for the support and guidance from our strong network of key stakeholders that support Advocacy Services at Empower.

Another area that Advocacy Services prides itself in is our systemic advocacy efforts. Our team provides support and awareness from a disability lens when advocating for individuals' basic needs. For example, contacting NL Housing, NL Health Services, and other government stakeholders at all levels.

## Advocacy Services Team:

Joby Fleming - Advocacy Services Manager

Olivia McFarlane - Advocacy Services Navigator

Sharon Hogan - Advocacy Services Assistant

Patrick O'Brien - Housing Accommodation Coordinator

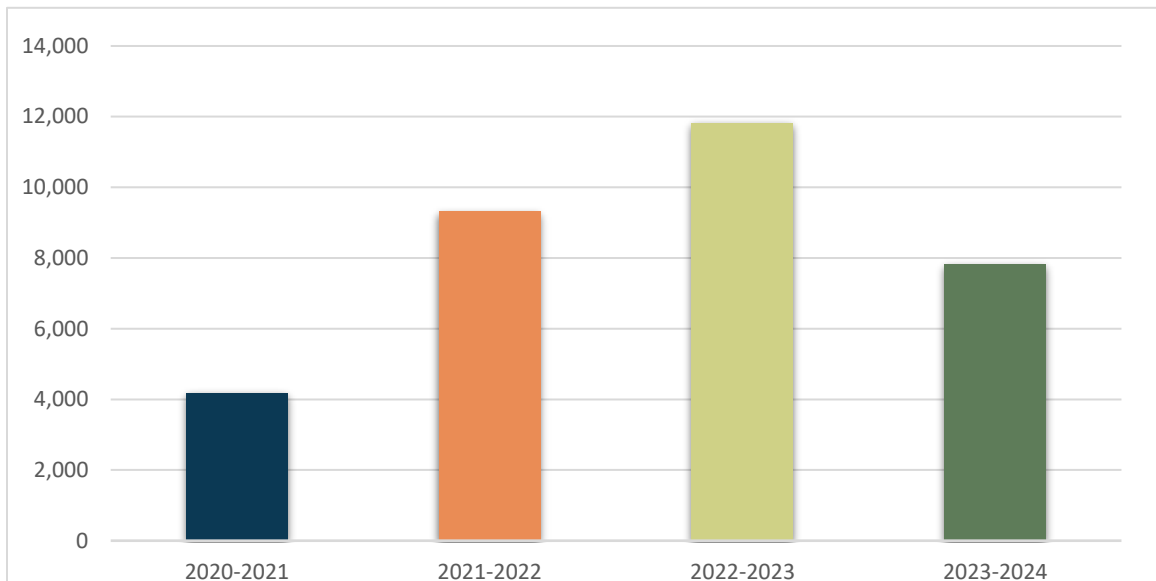
## Advocacy Services Statistics

In February 2023, Advocacy Services paused accepting any new referrals due to the lack of capacity and resources available for a five-month period. As a result of the expansion of the Advocacy Services Team we were able to reopen new referrals in July 2023 with the new positions of Advocacy Services Navigator and Advocacy Services Assistant.

There is a significant decrease in the total number of contacts for Advocacy Services due to the five months pause on referrals. We thought it was important to provide explanation for the dramatic decrease from last year depicted in Figure 1. Total Number of Contacts for Advocacy Services.



Figure 1. Total Number of Contacts for Advocacy Services



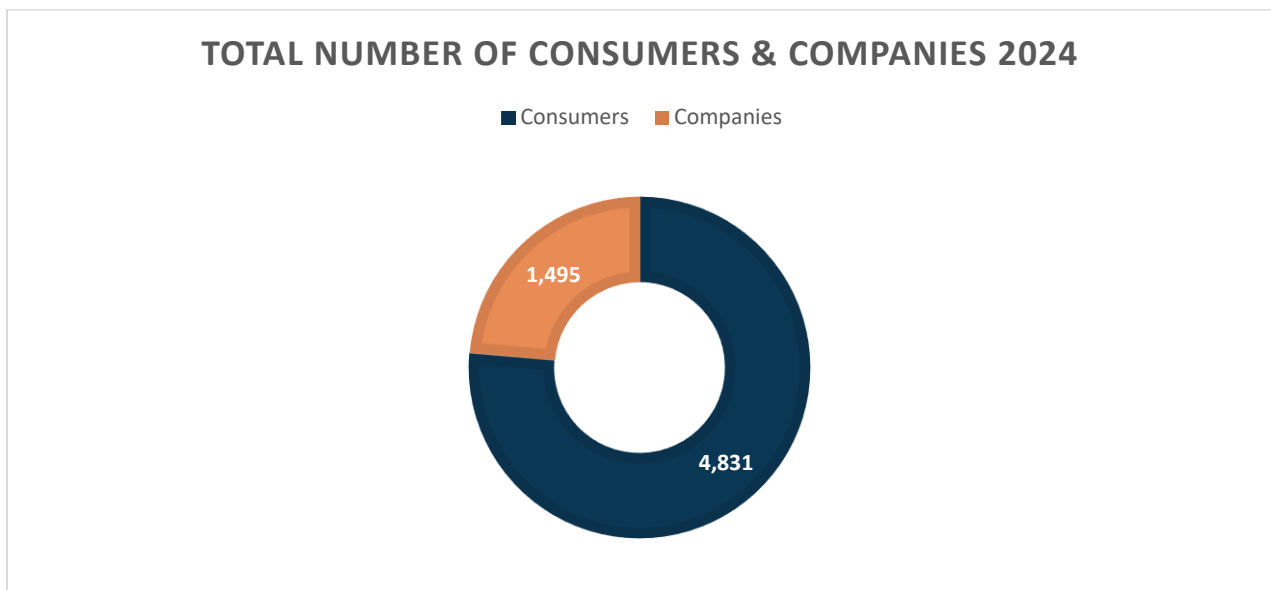
Description of data: Figure 1 depicts the total number of contacts for Advocacy services for the past three years. In the year 2020-2021 there were 4,176 contacts, in 2021-2022 there were 9,312 contacts, 2022-2023 there were 11,826 contacts, and in 2023-2024 there were 7,821 total contacts.

**“I've collaborated with the Empower Advocacy team many times when working with individuals to find safe and accessible housing and support in the community. This team is always professional, committed and passionate about reducing barriers for individuals. They are a pleasure to work with.”**

Community Partner 2024



**Figure 2. Total amount of consumers & companies that accessed Advocacy Services 2023-2024.**



Description of Data: The chart above displays the total number of consumers which is 4,831 and the total number of companies which is 1,495. This break down of our contacts for the 2023-2024 period is given to provide context behind the total number of contacts.

**Figure 3. Top four reasons for accessing Advocacy Services**

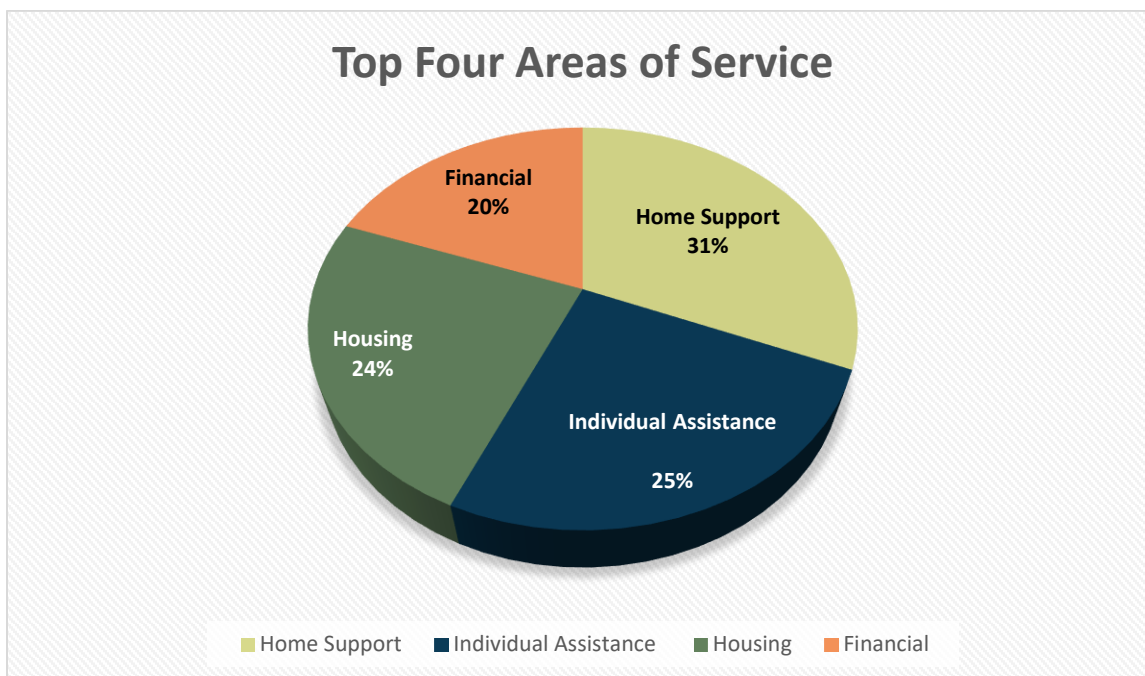


Figure 3. depicts the top four reasons for accessing Advocacy Services recorded in 2023-2024 which include: Financial (20%), Individual Assistance (25%), Home Support (31%), and Housing (24%).

### Housing Accommodations Coordinator Overview:

In collaboration with End Homelessness St. John’s, Empower’s Housing Accommodations Coordinator works within Advocacy Services to assist people who are experiencing homelessness. The Housing Accommodations Coordinator collaborates with community and government agencies to help these individuals obtain and maintain safe, affordable, and accessible housing. The Housing Accommodations Coordinator assists people by supporting them with house searches, apartment viewings, and initial housing set-up, as well as providing case management and crisis interventions. Additionally, they collaborate with landlords to support in maintaining successful housing for folks.

## Key Accomplishments:

Advocacy Services hosted the first in person volunteer tax clinic since the COVID 19 pandemic. The tax clinic was offered both in person and virtually this year.

Advocacy Services has expanded its team this year by hiring the Advocacy Services Navigator and Advocacy Services Assistant. This expansion has allowed for an increase in new referrals and continued support to individuals seeking recurring support.

Advocacy Services renewed the End Homelessness St. John's Housing Accommodations Coordinator contract again this year.

The Advocacy Services program continues the valued partnership with Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador (MUN) and the School of Social Work. Advocacy Services at Empower has provided mentorship for Bachelor of Social Work Students (first and second degree) in the fall of 2023 and will be providing mentorship through another placement this upcoming fall of 2024. All students that complete placements with Advocacy Services at Empower receive an enriched learning experience from a cross-disability lens.

## Participation in External Events:

- Joby and Patrick sit at Coordinated Access to Homes table through End Homelessness weekly.
- Joby attends Disability Network Meetings.
- Joby Fleming is the Co-Chair of the City of St. John's Inclusion Advisory Committee.



- Joby Fleming sits on Community Advisory Board (CAB) with End Homelessness St. John's since October 2021.
- Joby is a member of the Para Transit Working Group
- Olivia sits on the FoodFirst NL committee



Joby Fleming  
Advocacy Services Manager



Olivia McFarlane  
Advocacy Services Navigator

**“I'll be honest one main reason I decided to both move and stay in the province is because of the support that advocacy services offer. I'd be in the whirl wind of chaos without their help. As I am sure I am not the only one, stay gold and thank you for everything.”**

Member of Empower,  
2024

# Member Services Report

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Member Services reduces barriers of stigma and isolation and improves resiliency, self-esteem, and social connections through the activities organized for members. In 2023-2024 we provided numbers of different sessions and created and launched a number of new monthly activities offered through Member Services. We continue to encourage members to participate in inclusive activities offered in their community and are happy to provide these activities with additional support and accommodation to our members. We also recognise the benefit in the peer support that is provided through activities offered at Empower directly through Member Services.

## Community Activities

People with disabilities experience many barriers to social interaction on a regular basis. Member Services has been focusing on encouraging members to be engaged with the larger community by creating opportunities for members to become aware of all the different activities and events that are available for them within the City of St. John's and Mount Pearl. By promoting community partners who are increasing accessibility at events, we are supporting increased social inclusion in wider society. Members are also becoming more aware of events and activities that are accessible to them in their communities and feeling more confident attending events. Some of the organizations and events we have visited with members include The Longside Club, Frosty Festival Parade of Lights and Frosty Bingo, Spectrum Queer Choir, National Indigenous Day Celebrations, Moose Hide Walk, and others.

We have also supported community partners by attending public fairs and doing presentations about our programs and services. Some of those



partners and events include End Homelessness St John's Community Resources Fair, DFO, Eastern Health, MUN students, Thrive, Community Sector Council, Autism Society, College of the North Atlantic and NL English Schools and Students.

Member Services also provides training and mentorship to a number of student positions. These positions help to increase accessibility knowledge and disability confidence within our future labour market. In 2023 there was a student employed to coordinate the annual BBQ, and another to complete our garden maintenance.

## Member Services Clubs and Activities

### **Dinner Club**

Empower's Dinner Club continues to visit restaurants once a month in the greater St John's area. This activity allows for members to enjoy a meal together in their community while also increasing the disability confidence of restaurant owners and staff. Some of the restaurants we have visited this year include Pop's Diner, Golden Phoenix, Boston Pizza, and Mary's Diner.

### **Garden Committee**

Empower continues to grow our accessible community garden. Our 2023 harvest allowed members to go home with hampers containing potatoes, turnip, carrots, beets, and more. We were also able to harvest lettuce, strawberries, and rhubarb throughout the whole summer. In the fall, members of the garden committee all gathered together to make soup.



## Garden Harvest & Soup Making Party



### **Creative Skills Sessions**

Member Services started offering monthly Creative Skills Sessions at Empower in February. Members have come together to create greeting cards, and wreaths. Members have indicated that they have enjoyed these activities and felt it was positive for their mental health. We will continue to offer these sessions in 2024.

### **Empowered Learning Sessions**

Empower began offering monthly Empowered Learning Sessions in January. Sessions are designed to support members to develop independent living skills in a safe and accommodating environment. Our first session was about Libby, a free Library App followed by the topic of Managing Personal Home Care. Sessions are repeated twice to accommodate members that can attend daytime or evenings only and are offered in a hybrid model. Empowered Learning Sessions will continue in

2024 with a wide variety of subjects including financial management, nutrition, and board governance training.

### **Empowered Readers Book Club**

This new club was introduced in December as a virtual group to explore books written by authors living with disabilities and books about disability related subjects. Members typically meet virtually once a month to discuss the book that was read that month. The group met in person in March and the author of *Going for the Gullies* joined us for our meeting. It has been a challenge to find enough copies of chosen books for all of our members, and accessible formats are not always available. We will continue the Empowered Readers Book Club in 2024 but will be taking a short break over the summer.

### **Empowered Peer Support Group**

In February we introduced a new Peer Support Group for our Members. In this group, we welcome the lived and learned experience from anyone, as well as those with cross-disabilities which includes mental health, short-term, long-term, and permanent disabilities. We recognize that people benefit from being connected to others with similar lived and learned experiences. This group will be hosted once a month, in-person at Empower in the evening.

### **World Travelers Group**

Our World Travelers Group will meet on Zoom to visit a different location each month using pre-existing virtual tours curated by our Member Services Coordinator. This is a new program that was first offered to members in March when they visited Ireland in time for St Patrick's Day.

# Empower Celebrations

## National AccessAbility Week

National AccessAbility week is an important time for people with disabilities to celebrate. This year we brought members together at Clay Café to create piece of art using mugs and plates, to show what accessibility meant to them.

Members also got the opportunity to learn archery with training provided by the City of St. John’s at the Rotary Sunshine Park.



## Volunteer Appreciation Week

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 nearly 80 volunteers. Volunteers bring many different skills with them, with different learned and lived experiences that benefit those they serve as a volunteer. It is critical that we take time each year to

appreciate those who support our work. This year we hosted the Volunteer Appreciation Event at the Pleasantville Legion. We served a stuffed chicken breast dinner and gifted volunteers with Empower hats to say thank you.

### **Empower Annual BBQ**

We held our BBQ at the North Pine Lodge in Pippy Park. We also had a tent from United Sail Works LTD set up outside to protect members from rain and the hot sun. The theme for the BBQ was in celebration of first responders. We played many games of bingo, spin the wheel, ring toss and other fun activities. Everyone had a great time and got to go home with their belly full, and with prizes and candy.

### **Members Halloween Party**

Staff and members all dressed up and gathered at Empower for a spooky Halloween party. Members did karaoke, had their faces painted, and enjoyed lots of treats and spooky decorations. Prizes were awarded to the best costumes!



Member's Halloween Party -  
Empower Staff



## **Christmas Dinner & Dance**

The Christmas Dinner & Dance was hosted at the CLB Armoury, and it was a wonderful time. Everyone enjoyed getting out to socialize with old friends and was served a delicious Christmas Dinner. 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.

We would like to thank 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.

Member Services is committed to providing opportunities for personal growth and fulfilment to our members who attend activities. We look forward to working with you in the coming year, making sure we offer sessions that will greatly benefit you. If you have events you would like to attend or topics that you would like for us to offer, please reach out and let us know.



Sherri Tucker  
Coordinator of Member Services



## Career Services

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Career Services at Empower, the Disability Resource Centre, has been offered to consumers since 1998 and is now entering its 26<sup>th</sup> year. The Career Services Coordinator has been supporting people with disabilities with their career goals for 16 years.

The employment rate for people with disabilities in 2023 was around 47%. When I first started work in career development in the late 2000's, the employment rate for people with disabilities was in the vicinity of 49%. We have made strides forward to be sure, especially with the recent emphasis on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, but it is discouraging to see that this number has not significantly improved.

When we see these inequalities, offering career development services tailored to fit people with disabilities makes a lot of sense. The Career Services program at Empower exists to correct this inequality and help people with disabilities find work. We help you look beyond the numbers, because you are more than a number!

As we work with individuals, we recognize the talents, experience and determination that people with disabilities possess. Ultimately, we are here to help each individual realize their potential. Working with consumers either in one-on-one meetings or in peer group settings, the Career Services program aims to support people with disabilities as they transform their lives and their communities.

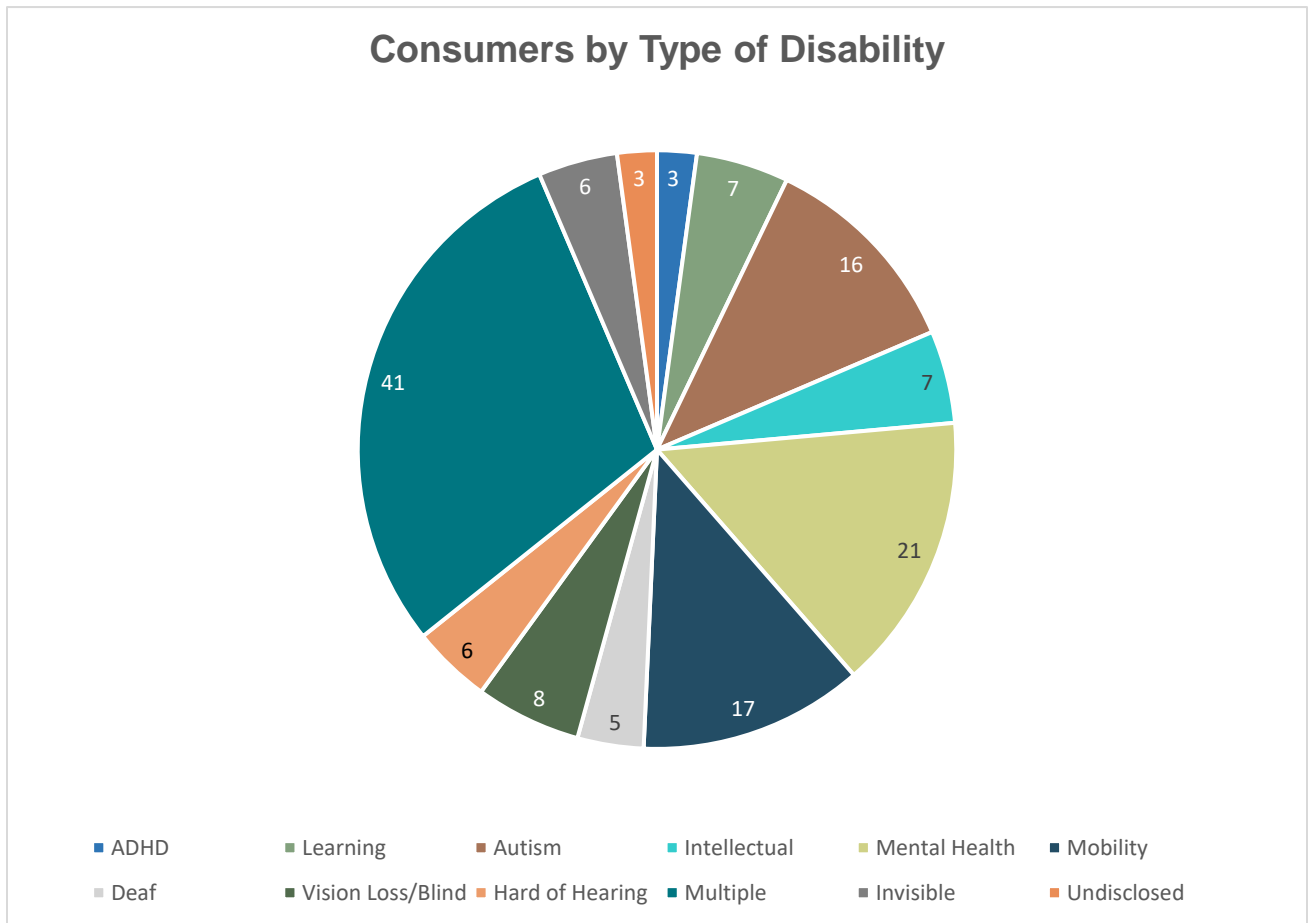
Often, this transformation occurs one person at a time.

One consumer connected with Empower looking for housing, as they were unhoused. Working with our Housing Accommodations Coordinator, he

found a place to live. His next step was to look for work. We met to work on a resume, cover letters, job search strategy and interview preparation. We met as well to stay motivated and talk about possible leads. Happily, he found work in the trades. At Empower we work together to help people find their place in our community.

This year we worked with **140 people with disabilities**. Of those consumers, **27 people found 29 jobs** and **16 participants started short-term and long-term training** opportunities.

The following chart shows the participation of consumers by disability type.



Description of data: Pie chart showing the number of consumers that Career Services worked with during this year, by type of disability: mental health (21), mobility (17), Deaf (5), Blind/vision loss (8), Hard of Hearing

(6), invisible disabilities (6), undisclosed (3), ADHD (3), learning disabilities (7), autism (16), intellectual disabilities (7) and multiple disabilities (41).

Many different types of disabilities are represented. This shows that Empower's Career Services is meeting one of its programming goals; to provide services with a cross-disability perspective, where people with any type of disability can receive services.

Also this year, the Career Services Coordinator received training in Best Practices in the Career Development Process with the Canadian Career Development Foundation. We learned new techniques to help connect us with individuals, help them explore and focus on their career goals, to prepare for those goals and to continue their growth along their journey.

And if you are still looking to move towards your career goals, hang in there! You can do it! If you need help, remember we are here. After all, you are talented, there are opportunities to learn, and you are only looking for one job. Perhaps the next job that you apply to will be the one that you are looking for.



Stephen Quinn  
Career Services Coordinator

## Community Inclusion Services

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The Community Inclusion Program provides disability education and support to individuals and organizations at the community level. Working with all community members (including individuals, organizations and local government) to identify and overcome barriers to accessibility in all forms, Community Inclusion Services helps create solutions for barrier-free community environments and events. We can also provide professional development training, support and community development around building accessibility confidence.

This year we continue to partner in community and provide valuable information and services in rural areas of our province, focusing on the Conception Bay North area. We met with community organizations, government services and members in the area to determine the best route to providing service in the area. We completed research on available services in the area and identified gaps where Empower could support the community to ensure persons with disabilities are included.

We continue to build community partnerships and provide valuable service while providing meaningful work experiences to persons with disabilities. We also provided an opportunity for a Social Work Placement. Molly Attwood joined our team in the Fall of 2023 to assist with our research in the CBN area. Molly was a valuable addition to our team, and we are thankful for her hard work and dedication.

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
- Coffee & Technology Online Series
- 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. We have provided several information sessions, created new community partnerships, expanded on existing ones, and increased our social media profile. A list of locations where we provided training or attended activities and events are highlighted below.

- Splash Centre – Harbour Grace Community Youth Network
- Community Support Program – Old Perlican, NL Health Services
- MRON Employment Services – Carbonear
- Chronic Disease Prevention & Management, CBN Family Care Team – Carbonear, NL Health Services
- Communities Against Violence – Harbour Grace
- Academy Canada – Western Region
- Grenfell College Student Services
- College of the North Atlantic
- CSC Community Resources Fair
- Tech NL Networking

- IPGS – Gander, Stephenville, St. John’s
- Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
- ILNS
- Futureworx

The program provides opportunities for Facilitators to gain skills and acquire training in areas that will enhance their future employment opportunities. Facilitators gain these skills through professional training, online webinars, mentoring from other staff, and self instruction. Some of the training and skill development included:

- Deque University Accessibility Courses
- Adobe Pro Tutorials
- First Aid
- 3D Printing Hardware & Software
- Accessible Documentation
- Braille Production
- ImSet Framework and Application
- Axe-Con Conference
- Providing document accessibility services to other organizations, municipal and government departments.
- Creating resource guides for persons with disabilities
- Editing and updating Empower website with resources and news.
- Software testing, navigating unknown software, providing feed back on use.
- Disability Confidence

The program has been rolling out nicely and we look forward to another year of working in community, building partnerships and making our province more inclusive for persons with disabilities. Thank you to all our partners and government funders. We look forward to working with you again in the coming year!

I would also like to thank our dedicated team for all the hard work they have put in this year. A special congratulations to Travis Turpin on his new role with OCIO. Travis was a great addition to our team, and we are delighted that his time with us has provided him with the skills and experience needed to take on this new role. Good luck on the next chapter in your career.

Jen Mackey – Social Media Facilitator/Resource Developer

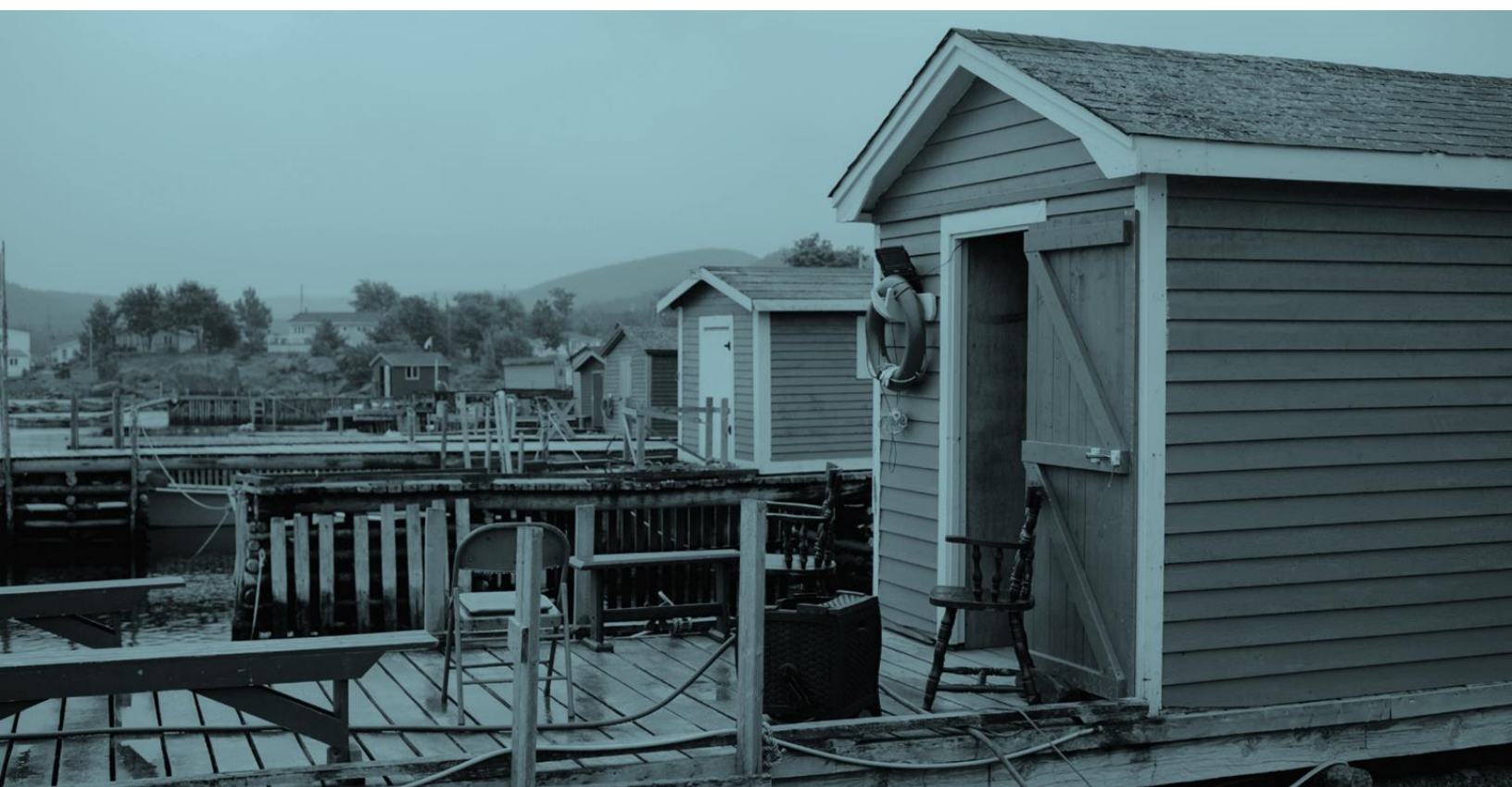
Travis Turpin – Adaptive Technology Facilitator

Thoren Tilley – IT Facilitator

Jim Escott – Coordinator, Technology Services



Penny Abbott – Manager, Provincial Services



## Technology Services

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Through the Adaptive Technology Program, we help members find the right technology to meet their needs, whether it's a specialized mouse or keyboard, a software program, an iPad app, or a new mobile phone. We assist students who need support with technology and employees seeking workplace technology alternatives to reduce injury. Our services provide support to individuals, ensuring they are comfortable in the way they use their devices. At Empower, we work with people both one-on-one and in groups to identify the best options and provide support in learning how to use technology effectively.

Some of the services provided within the AT program include:

We work with individuals to identify the most suitable adaptive technology options and offer support to ensure they acquire and use the technology effectively.

Providing information to raise awareness of adaptive technology supports and delivering training on a wide range of assistive software and hardware. Our Tech Space offers free public computer access, providing an inclusive and supportive environment for anyone to use computers.

Collaborating and partnering with community organizations, educational institutions, government departments/agencies, and private businesses to expand adaptive technology services across the province and enhance awareness of inclusive technology.

Offering materials in alternative formats ensures that everyone has access to the information they need. These formats include electronic versions (PDF and Word), PowerPoint presentations, Braille, audio, and large print.





Our program is dedicated to ensuring that websites and apps meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). These guidelines are essential for providing access to information for people with disabilities, and we believe that inclusivity should be a priority for both businesses and governments. By adhering to accessibility standards and implementing best practices, we make sure that information and services are accessible to everyone. Our mission is to create a digital experience that offers equal access to all users.

## **Tech Space**

The Tech Space offers free access to computers in an inclusive and supportive environment. This year, we welcomed around 21 visitors to our facility. We're excited to announce that we now have a 3D printer available for creating assistive devices for the community. Whether you need to print resumes or enhance your computer skills, contact us today!

## Consultations

The AT Program offers individual and group consultations in many areas related to AT, including employment, education, skill development, and adaptive technology hardware/software options. In 2023-24 we completed many of these individual consultations.

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 = 81)  
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 = 153)

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 = 929)

The majority of consultations we provide are related to Adaptive Technology. An individual AT consultation typically consists 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 consumers to decide what technology will work best for them. (AT consults = 295)

### Key Highlights:

**Introduction of New AT Facilitator:** Travis was introduced as the new Adaptive Technology (AT) Facilitator across the province, meeting with key stakeholders including IPGS, Grenfell College, and the College of the North Atlantic (CNA).

**Surge in Accessibility Requests:** Increased demand for improved accessibility under the Accessible Canadian Act (ACA). We are seeing more requests for Website and Application Audits.

**3D Printing Introduction:** Empower purchased a 3D printer to create personalized assistive devices and ergonomic aids, enhancing inclusion, self-sufficiency, and innovation for people with disabilities.

**Robotic Technologies:** Collaboration with the Steering/Advisory Committee for Empower Tech Services to develop affordable and user-friendly robotic technologies for people with disabilities.

**Grenfell College and AI Presentation:** The AT coordinator presented on AI's impact in academia at Grenfell College, focusing on tools like ChatGPT, and how AI is transforming higher education, research, and future employment prospects. This presentation emphasized the importance of preparing students for an AI-driven job market.

## **Community Work**

Over the past year, we've had numerous opportunities to collaborate with our community partners and participate in events focused on adaptive technology. We provided presentations and consultations to organizations such as the College of the North Atlantic (CNA), Academy Canada, Memorial University, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, M5 Communication, NTV and Compusult.



## Thank You

Financial support for this program comes from the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills (Community Partnerships Program), Thank you for your continued support and investment in the Adaptive Technology Program.

Travis Turpin  
AT Facilitator/Network Support

Penny Abbott  
Manager, Provincial Services



Thoren Tilley  
IT Facilitator



Jim Escott  
Coordinator, Technology Services

## Social Media

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Following another year of social media posting, feedback from followers remains overwhelmingly positive, analytics continue to show growth on all three platforms used by Empower and staff have been very supportive in collaborating on program-specific posts that have also been well received. Highlighting staff activities in the community has also allowed us to grow and strengthen Empower's community connections.

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 April 2023 to March 2024:

- We had a net of 180 new followers, an increase of 9.8%
- We had 9100 page visits, an increase of 194%
- We reached a total of 38,918 people, an increase of 64.7%

Our content interactions, the number of likes or reactions, saves, comments, shares and replies on our content, was 5460, an increase of 223.3%, with these interactions being split almost evenly between followers and non-followers.

While we continue to monitor the suitability of X as a platform to meet Empower's social media needs, we continue to post on X due to the importance of a text-based platform for people with certain disabilities. With a 30% decline in users (22 million) over the past year, a 7% drop in brand use and a 23% decrease in ROI confidence, it's fair to say that X has been facing significant overall decline in the last year.

From April 2023 to March 2024:

- Empower went from 852 to 913 followers, an increase of 7.2%
- Overall engagements, such as likes and retweets, were 232, down 78%
- There were 16,621 overall impressions made for the year

Empower's post engagement rate on X averages 2.24% for the year. The highest average organic engagement rate of all industries tracked was 1.66% (for the entertainment and media industry), showing that even with the serious overall decline in X usage, Empower is still getting great engagement with our tweets.

Instagram is the newest social media platform in use by Empower. However, while our followers are slowly growing, the continued improvement of our overall reach has been by far the best on this platform. From April 2023 to March 2024:

- We went from 639 to 749 followers, an increase of 17.2%
- We reached 10,936 accounts, an increase of 61.0%
- We had 389 profile visits, an increase of 38.9%

With Instagram post engagement at 520 for the fiscal year, a 29.0% increase, Empower's engagement rate on Instagram was 4.26%.

It has been rewarding to see the slow and steady increase in fans/followers across all platforms. But perhaps of more import is the consistent and increasing engagement of the community with all Empower's social media.

The key points to take away from this year's social media performance that will guide our strategy for the next year and help tailor posts for maximum impact are:

- Facebook continues to have Empower's largest audience, as well as the most geographically diverse. Also, it is commonly the only social media presence that organizations, businesses, and municipal governments have, especially in more rural areas. This will be the best platform with which to engage people with disabilities and other organizations across the province.
- While our X account continues to grow and increase engagement, because X's overall demographics are the least like Empower's (by

age and gender), gathering interest for our content continues to be a challenge.

- While Instagram continues to have Empower’s fewest followers, the numbers show that it remains the fastest growing of our social media accounts, with the highest levels of engagement. Going forward Instagram will also be a great tool to engage with our younger followers and bring more of a focus to current community issues and events. It will be important to remain consistent with messaging while tracking trends and utilizing them to our advantage when appropriate.

In summary, this has been a very positive year 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. With the new Strategic Plan containing several areas of focus for Empower’s social media, it will be interesting to see where these new directions take us in the upcoming fiscal year.



Jen Mackey  
Social Media Coordinator/Resource Developer

Penny Abbott  
Manager, Provincial Services

## InclusionNL Employer Support Services

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InclusionNL: Corporate Services celebrated its 10th year of operations in June 2024, with funding received from the Labour Market Partnerships Program, Department of Immigration, Population, Growth, and Skills. Since we began, we have provided numerous partnerships to employers across Newfoundland and Labrador.

This year was busy because of the provincial obligations that businesses and public entities had to complete Accessibility Plans before the end of December 2023. These obligations were for both provincial accessibility legislation as well as the Accessible Canada Act. When supporting businesses in completing their plans, staff provided this support on numerous levels. We worked with multiple municipalities, such as the City of Mount Pearl. During this partnership, we reviewed various buildings and provided professional training to their Council and staff. When working with NL Hydro, we offered regular support as they highlighted their 3-year plan and continued to sit as a community representative on the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Throughout the past year, we have continued to offer most of our services through a hybrid model, offering both in-person and virtual work options to meet the needs of our business partners who are doing the same. 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, organizations, and employers. Throughout this past year, we have developed and participated in 45 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

### Direct Employer Supports

- Staff provide direct support to businesses based on individual needs/requests. Through these partnerships we:
  - Provide hiring support by distributing job vacancies throughout our networks, which include partnering with disability organizations.
  - Provide businesses with inclusion-related support 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 various opportunities and professional development training sessions offered in person and online, we have successfully developed forty-five current partnerships with employers province-wide and have increased knowledge of 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 our provincial government, where we provided six sessions to employees of the Public Service Commission and saw over 300 employees sign up for this training.
- We also provide human resources support to Crosbie Group of Companies, Cenovus Energy, EnergyNL, and Marathon Gold Ltd.

### Conferences | Events | Festivals

This year, staff from the program supported several businesses, community organizations, and associations that organized virtual and in-person festivals, events, and conferences throughout the Avalon region. Staff



worked with organizers before their events to ensure patron accessibility. This included helping to recruit volunteers, providing them with training on accessibility practices, and providing support during consultations. This year, we have provided support to St. John's Women's Film Festival, Mount Pearl Frosty Festival, NL Folk Festival, and the Royal St. John's Regatta.

## **Research**

Our research continues, conducted in partnership with Memorial University, on the employment equity of persons with disabilities in the oil and gas, mining, and renewable energies sectors. An extension in funding allowed us to widen our literature review and seek evidence of employment equity practices internationally. In this fiscal year, we will host our second roundtable discussion with key stakeholders and report our findings.

## Program Success and Milestones

- Celebrating our tenth year of operation and success. We have developed a collection of business partners with over 100 unique partnerships.
- Worked with federally regulated employers such as Newfoundland Broadcasting/NTV to develop accessibility plans as obligated by provincial and federal legislations.
- Provided Accessibility Confidence training to more than 300 public service commission employees in light of provincial accessibility legislation.
- Completed Accessibility Reviews of MUN's Botanical Gardens, the Viking Building, multiple buildings for the City of Mount Pearl and the Town of Portugal Cover St Phillips, and the Town of Stephenville.
- Have promoted milestone occasions to build recognition and awareness in National Accessibility Awareness Week, GAAD, International Day of Persons with Disabilities and the month of October as Disability Employment Awareness Month.



Amanda Lush

Coordinator of InclusionNL: Corporate Services.

## Independent Living Awards Recipients 2023

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The 2023 recipient of the **Cecilia Carroll Award for Independent Living** is Paul Morgan. Paul 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.

Paul has been a long-standing volunteer with Empower, having spent numerous years volunteering with many aspects of our service delivery. For many years he has been a long-standing volunteer on our Board of Directors and providing assistance whenever possible.

Paul is an active member of our Garden Committee, always being a part of the group who keep the garden groomed and the vegetables bountiful. Paul is a very suited recipient for the Cecilia Carroll Award as he has been an active volunteer with us for 15+ years.

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 **2023 Independent Living Young Leader Award** is Kayla Warren.

Kayla Warren, who identifies as autistic, has been involved with disability advocacy since high school. In 2017 she volunteered with Autism Includes Me (AIM) in Port aux Basques on a pilot program for autism-friendly swimming lessons. During the pandemic, she volunteered making a digital catalogue of AIMs resources. During her university career at both Memorial (Behavioural Neuroscience) and Dalhousie (Occupational Therapy) Kayla

volunteered in groups and organizations working to break down barriers, including the Blundon Centre at Memorial University.

She focuses on bringing a first-hand autistic perspective to her work to ensure autistic voices are elevated. A sample of Kayla's involvements include:

MUN Research Exchange Group on Autism

Dalhousie OT Equity Committee

Autistic Researchers Researching Autism

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 2023 Social Inclusion Award for Independent Living is Paul Power from Power Productions.

Power Productions is primarily focused on representing, teaching and expanding the overall disability, Deaf and MAD Arts culture. The company achieves this by producing and presenting theatre works devoted to disability themes and/or casting persons who self-identify as living with a disability, who are Deaf or hard of hearing or live with mental health disabilities.

Power Productions is committed to creating diverse and accessible theatre projects, professional development opportunities and community collaborations with a focus on strengthening the disabled, Deaf and MAD arts sector in Atlantic Canada.

Power Productions is a community catalyst and resource for sustainable change in the areas of accessibility, inclusion and diversity within the community.

Power Production's shows like "Crippled", brings more awareness to the talents and abilities of the community. Power Productions also raises its voice and creates relationships with municipal, provincial and federal stakeholders to increase opportunities, accessibility, inclusion and funding for the arts, especially as it relates to making theatre more accessible for everyone.

In 2022 Power Productions embarked on a mission to make local theatre more accessible for individuals with sight loss. Four individuals underwent a two-week intensive training for Live Audio Description, and Power Productions is now able to offer this service province wide through Power UP. This service has been offered for a number of shows in the province, including Don't Give Up On Me Dad by Andy Jones and Come From Away in Gander.

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 2023 Business Award for Independent Living goes to Katherine Peddle, owner of Oral Health Centre and Mobile Smiles.

Katherine has been a business partner of InclusionNL for the past few years. She recently applied and was successful in receiving an EAP grant to ensure her new business, Oral Health Centre in Paradise is barrier free.

Their Centre is equipped with state-of-the-art accessibility features that support comfort, confidence, integrity, and independence.

Since the concept of her business was first formulated, Katherine immediately wanted to ensure her facility was accessible from many perspectives. Upon opening the Oral Health Centre, she has incorporated a sensory friendly room for those needing this space, a hydraulic lift and accessible seating for examinations, an accessible washroom with

automated doors, a ramped entrance in the back of the location and leveled front entrance. She has commissioned for a storyboard to be created of the dental hygiene experience and provides advanced orientation time if required by a patient to become more familiar with the Centre.

## 2023 Independent Living Awards Winners



Photo shows (left to right): Back row - Amanda Hollett (Chairperson of the Empower's Governance & Nomination Committee), Katherine Peddle (The Business Award for Independent Living), Kayla Warren (The Independent Living Young Leader Award) and Minister Paul Pike. Front row – Paul Morgan (The Cecilia Carroll Award for Independent Living), His Honour Carl Thompson, the Honourable Joan Marie Aylward, Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland Labrador and Paul Power (The Social Inclusion Award for Independent Living).

# Annual General Meeting Minutes 2023

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Empower, The Disability Resource Centre Annual General Meeting –  
AUGUST 19, 2023, virtually on Zoom

Meeting Minutes – 11:12 AM

1. The Chair introduced Empower Board members. In attendance were:

- Paul Morgan
- Carole Barron
- Heidi Edgar
- Stephen Wheeler
- Amanda Howlett

Regrets:

- Deborah Gilbert
- Dr. Amy Warren
- Kristine Strickland
- Stacey Roberts
- Katie Cashin
- Sherry Mercer

2. Heidi Edgar read the minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting.

Motion to approve the minutes as presented:

**Moved by:** Amanda Howlett

**Seconded by:** Edward Sawdon

Motion carried.

Amendments to Articles of Association

a) Article 13.1 refers to the two three-year terms a board member can serve. Directors shall serve no more than two three-year terms or consecutive years, except for appointments. With respect to Directors,



which are appointed by the Board, the Director may serve a total of six years plus the number of months served in the year they were appointed. Article 13.3 Exemptions to article 13.1 may be approved by the membership at an Annual General Meeting. These exemptions would normally involve a Director Position requiring special knowledge or skills such as the Director serving as Board Treasurer (or Board past chairperson).

Motion to approve this amendment as presented.

**Moved by:** Stephen Westcott

**Seconded by:** Vera Parsons

Motion carried

b) Update all references of the name Independent Living Resource Centre to Empower, The Disability Resource Centre

Motion to approve this amendment as presented.

**Moved by:** Stephen Westcott

**Seconded by:** Edward Adams

Motion carried

3. Carole Barron read the Chairperson's report.

Motion to approve the Chairperson's report as presented.

**Moved by:** Carole Barron

**Seconded by:** Edward Adams; Eugene Barrett

Motion carried

4. Kathy Hawkins read the Executive Director's report.

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

**Moved by:** Amanda Howlett

**Seconded by:** Stephen Westcott

Motion carried.

5. Kathy Hawkins 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:** Stephen Westcott

**Seconded by:** Gail St. Croix

Motion carried.

5.2 Motion to appoint **Beacon Accounting Professional Corporation** as Empower's financial auditors for 2023-24.

**Moved by:** Jane Morris

**Seconded by:** Eugene Barrett

Motion carried.

6. EMPOWER Board of Directors 2023-2024

Amanda Howlett read the biographies of the new board members:

- Tom Power
- Mandy Penney
- Susan Barrett
- Renee March

The board members for 2023 -24 are:

- Amanda Howlett
- Paul Morgan
- Stephen Wheeler
- Carole Barron

- Stacey Roberts
- Sherry Mercer
- Dr. Amy Warren
- Katie Cashin
- Tom Power
- Mandy Penney
- Susan Barrett
- Renee March

**Moved by:** Stephen Westcott

**Seconded by:** Gail St. Croix

Motion Carried

7. Kathy presented certificates of appreciation to Board members who retired from the Board this year:

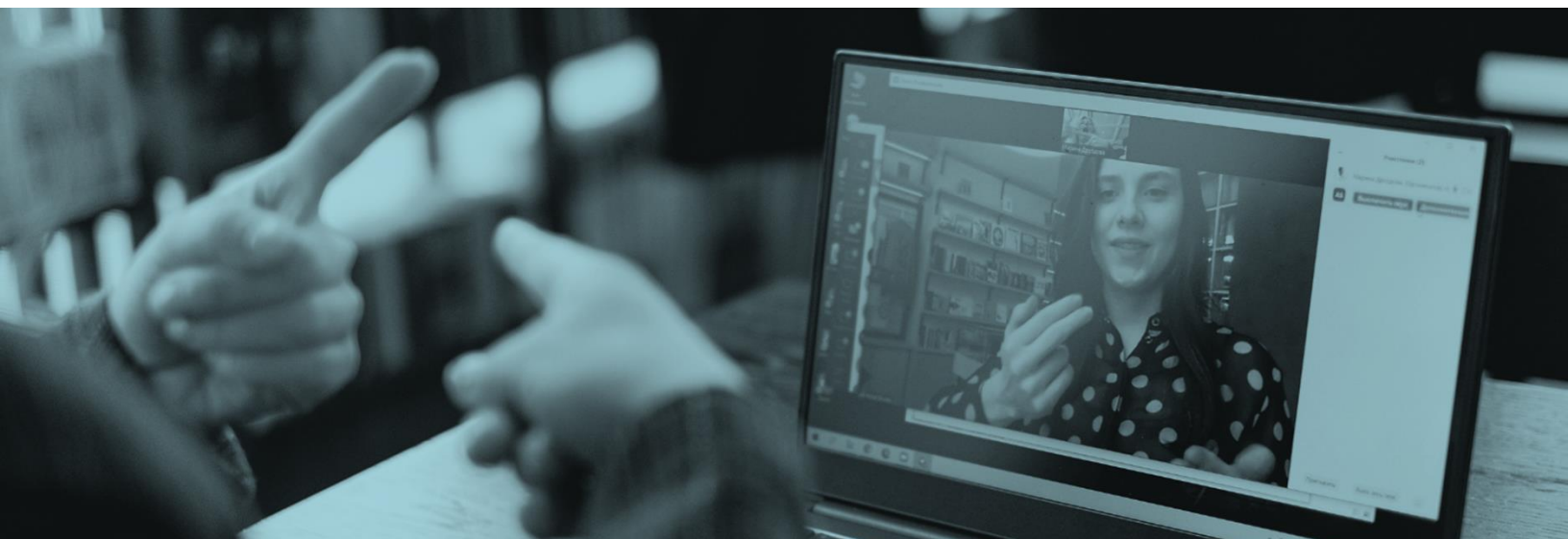
- Heidi Edgar
- Deborah Gilbert
- Kristine Strickland

8. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the 2023 Annual General Meeting at 11:58 am

**Moved by:** Edward Butler

Door prizes: Avalon Mall Gift Cards x 6



# Financial Statements

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EMPOWER, THE DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTRE INC.  
Financial Statements  
Year Ended March 31, 2024

**EMPOWER, THE DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTRE INC.**

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**Year Ended March 31, 2024**

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## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

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To the Members of Empower, The Disability Resource Centre Inc.

### *Opinion*

We have audited the financial statements of Empower, The Disability Resource Centre Inc. (the organization), which comprise the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2024, and the statements of revenues and expenditures, changes in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the organization as at March 31, 2024, and the results of its operations and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations (ASNPO).

### *Basis for Opinion*

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of our report. We are independent of the organization in accordance with ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

### *Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements*

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with ASNPO, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the organization's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the organization or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the organization's financial reporting process.

### *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements*

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

*(continues)*

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Empower, The Disability Resource Centre Inc. *(continued)*

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the organization's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the organization's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the organization to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

September 23, 2024

*Beacon Accounting Professional Corporation*  
CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS

**EMPOWER, THE DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTRE INC.**

**Statement of Financial Position**

**March 31, 2024**

	2024	2023
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Cash	\$ 613,235	\$ 939,347
Accounts receivable	199,926	23,967
Harmonized sales tax recoverable	12,549	27,682
Prepaid expenses	228	228
	<u>825,938</u>	991,224
PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT <i>(Note 2)</i>	<u>257,770</u>	268,552
	<u>\$ 1,083,708</u>	<u>\$ 1,259,776</u>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Accounts payable	\$ 177,714	\$ 52,905
Current portion of long term debt <i>(Note 3)</i>	3,324	3,324
Deferred revenue <i>(Note 4)</i>	147,102	436,913
	<u>328,140</u>	493,142
LONG TERM DEBT <i>(Note 3)</i>	<u>17,971</u>	21,295
	<u>346,111</u>	514,437
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Operating fund	532,297	540,039
Reserve fund	205,300	205,300
	<u>737,597</u>	745,339
	<u>\$ 1,083,708</u>	<u>\$ 1,259,776</u>

**ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD**

\_\_\_\_\_ *Director*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Director*

See notes to financial statements



**EMPOWER, THE DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTRE INC.****Statement of Revenues and Expenditures****Year Ended March 31, 2024**

	2024	2023
<b>REVENUES</b>		
Other revenue ( <i>Note 5</i> )	\$ 1,109,886	\$ 1,048,392
Province of Newfoundland and Labrador operating grant	<u>205,300</u>	<u>205,300</u>
	<u>1,315,186</u>	<u>1,253,692</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Amortization	10,783	12,145
Bank charges	1,589	2,136
Business taxes, licenses and memberships	2,570	2,068
Insurance	7,100	6,274
Office	23,547	27,832
Purchased services	27,518	24,802
Programs and accommodations	323,447	273,466
Professional fees	5,080	15,562
Repairs and maintenance	2,190	105,563
Salaries and wages	889,616	854,982
Telephone and communication	20,968	14,911
Staff training	4,806	2,072
Staff transportation	11,865	7,721
Utilities	7,941	7,480
	<u>1,339,020</u>	<u>1,357,014</u>
<b>DEFICIENCY OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES FROM OPERATIONS</b>	<u>(23,834)</u>	<u>(103,322)</u>
<b>OTHER INCOME</b>		
Interest income	12,768	5,353
Debt forgiveness	3,324	13,324
	<u>16,092</u>	<u>18,677</u>
<b>DEFICIENCY OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES</b>	<u>\$ (7,742)</u>	<u>\$ (84,645)</u>

See notes to financial statements

**EMPOWER, THE DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTRE INC.**

**Statement of Changes in Net Assets**

**Year Ended March 31, 2024**

	Operating Fund	Reserve Fund	<b>2024</b>	2023
<b>NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	\$ 540,039	\$ 205,300	\$ <b>745,339</b>	\$ 829,984
DEFICIENCY OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	(7,742)	-	<b>(7,742)</b>	(84,645)
INTERNALLY RESERVED	-	-	-	-
<b>NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR</b>	\$ 532,297	\$ 205,300	\$ <b>737,597</b>	\$ 745,339

**EMPOWER, THE DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTRE INC.****Statement of Cash Flows  
Year Ended March 31, 2024**

	2024	2023
<b>OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Deficiency of revenues over expenses	\$ (7,742)	\$ (84,645)
Items not affecting cash:		
Amortization of property, plant and equipment	10,783	12,145
Debt forgiveness	(3,324)	(13,324)
	<u>(283)</u>	<u>(85,824)</u>
Changes in non-cash working capital:		
Accounts receivable	(175,959)	268,326
Accounts payable	124,808	(16,282)
Deferred revenue	(289,811)	(317,199)
Prepaid expenses	-	(26)
Harmonized sales tax payable	15,133	(20,736)
	<u>(325,829)</u>	<u>(85,917)</u>
Cash flow used by operating activities	<u>(326,112)</u>	<u>(171,741)</u>
<b>FINANCING ACTIVITY</b>		
Repayment of long term debt	-	(30,000)
<b>DECREASE IN CASH FLOW</b>	<b>(326,112)</b>	<b>(201,741)</b>
Cash - beginning of year	<u>939,347</u>	<u>1,141,088</u>
<b>CASH - END OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$ 613,235</b>	<b>\$ 939,347</b>
<b>CASH CONSISTS OF:</b>		
Cash - Operating account	\$ 136,411	\$ 421,299
Cash - Savings accounts	<u>476,824</u>	<u>518,048</u>
	<b>\$ 613,235</b>	<b>\$ 939,347</b>

See notes to financial statements

**EMPOWER, THE DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTRE INC.**

**Notes to Financial Statements**

**Year Ended March 31, 2024**

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1. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of presentation

The financial statements were prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations (ASNFPO).

Cash and short term investments

The organization's policy is to present bank balances under cash and cash equivalents, including bank overdrafts with balances that fluctuate frequently from being positive to overdrawn. Also included in cash and cash equivalents are term deposits with a maturity period of three months or less from the date of acquisition.

Property, plant and equipment

Property, plant and equipment is stated at cost or deemed cost less accumulated amortization and is amortized over its estimated useful life on a declining balance basis at the following rates and methods:

Buildings	4%	declining balance method
Computer equipment	30%	declining balance method
Computer software	30%	declining balance method
Furniture and fixtures	20%	declining balance method

Revenue recognition

Empower, The Disability Resource Centre Inc. follows the deferral method of accounting for contributions.

Restricted contributions are recognized as revenue in the year in which the related expenses are incurred. Unrestricted contributions are recognized as revenue when received or receivable if the amount to be received can be reasonably estimated and collection is reasonably assured.

The operating fund accounts for the organization's program delivery and administrative activities. This fund reports unrestricted resources and restricted operating grants. This fund also represents resources that have been invested in capital assets.

The reserve fund represents balances reserved for significant building repairs and eventual building expansion.

Contributed services

The operations of the organization depend on both the contribution of time by volunteers and donated materials from various sources. The fair value of donated materials and services cannot be reasonably determined and are therefore not reflected in these financial statements.

*(continues)*

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# EMPOWER, THE DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTRE INC.

## Notes to Financial Statements

Year Ended March 31, 2024

### 1. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES *(continued)*

#### Financial instruments policy

The organization considers any contract creating a financial asset, liability or equity instrument as a financial instrument, except in certain limited circumstances. The organization accounts for the following as financial instruments:

1. cash and cash equivalents
2. accounts receivable
3. accounts payable and accrued liabilities

Financial instruments are recorded at fair value when acquired or issued. In subsequent periods, financial assets with actively traded markets are reported at fair value, with any unrealized gains and losses reported in income. All other financial instruments are reported at amortized cost, and tested for impairment when there are indicators of impairment. Transaction costs on the acquisition, sale, or issue of financial instruments are expensed when incurred.

Financial assets measured at amortized cost include cash and cash equivalents and accounts receivable.

Financial liabilities measured at amortized cost include accounts payable.

#### Measurement uncertainty

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amount of assets and liabilities, disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the period. Such estimates are periodically reviewed and any adjustments necessary are reported in earnings in the period in which they become known. Actual results could differ from these estimates.

### 2. PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

	Cost	Accumulated amortization	2024 Net book value	2023 Net book value
Land	\$ 39,402	\$ -	\$ 39,402	\$ 39,402
Buildings	296,159	95,231	200,928	207,343
Computer equipment	43,454	28,767	14,687	18,359
Computer software	2,460	2,419	41	59
Furniture and fixtures	38,312	35,600	2,712	3,389
	<b>\$ 419,787</b>	<b>\$ 162,017</b>	<b>\$ 257,770</b>	<b>\$ 268,552</b>

**EMPOWER, THE DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTRE INC.**

**Notes to Financial Statements**

**Year Ended March 31, 2024**

3. LONG TERM DEBT

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation forgivable loan.	\$ 21,295	\$ 24,619
Amounts payable within one year	<u>(3,324)</u>	<u>(3,324)</u>
	<u>\$ 17,971</u>	<u>\$ 21,295</u>

Principal repayment terms are approximately:

2025	\$ 3,324
2026	3,324
2027	3,324
2028	3,324
2029	3,324
Thereafter	<u>4,675</u>
	<u>\$ 21,295</u>

**Building Upgrades and Forgivable Debt**

During the 2013 fiscal year end, the Centre received funding of \$49,822 from Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation for design work completed for a new facility to be constructed on the current site. The Centre intends on accessing outside funding to complete the project. The funds are non-interest bearing and forgivable on a monthly basis of \$277 over a period of 15 years. Forgiveness commenced on September 1, 2015 and is due to mature on August 1, 2030.

The total balance recorded as building upgrades at March 31, 2024, is \$46,958 (2023 - \$46,958). No amortization has been taken on this balance as construction has not commenced.

4. DEFERRED REVENUE

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
NorthPine	\$ 88,863	\$ 139,491
Employer Support Services Program	30,000	188,928
Shed Funding	13,750	-
Women's Economic Council	9,357	10,000
Social Enterprise	3,706	-
IL Canada Festival Project	822	98,494
Association for Community Living/Ready, Willing and Able	604	-
	<u>\$ 147,102</u>	<u>\$ 436,913</u>

**EMPOWER, THE DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTRE INC.**

**Notes to Financial Statements**

**Year Ended March 31, 2024**

5. OTHER REVENUE

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
IL Internship Program	\$ 520,232	\$ 472,207
Newfoundland and Labrador Assoc. for Community Living	166,997	90,385
Employer Services and Support Program	153,450	153,658
End Homelessness St. John's	87,328	87,207
Full Steam Ahead Program	53,227	53,227
NorthPine	50,628	32,509
IL Canada	38,094	39,863
Youth Venture	16,397	-
Donations	13,029	7,839
Social Enterprise	5,662	6,050
Other Contracts	4,842	24,677
Parks Canada	-	4,548
Transitions to Work	-	40,944
Candian Food Centres	-	35,278
	<u>\$ 1,109,886</u>	<u>\$ 1,048,392</u>

The organization is funded by an annual operating grant (2024 - \$205,300; 2023 - \$205,300) from the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The organization also receives grants and donations on an annual basis from various levels of government for specific programs and projects (2024 - \$1,109,886; 2023 - \$1,048,392). The organization is dependent upon these annual operating grants in order to be able to carry out its mandate.

6. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

The organization is exposed to various risks through its financial instruments. The following analysis provides information about the organization's risk exposure and concentration as of March 31, 2024.

**(a) Credit risk**

Credit risk arises from the potential that a counter party will fail to perform its obligations. The organization is exposed to credit risk from customers. The organization provides credit to its clients in the normal course of its operations.

**(b) Liquidity risk**

Liquidity risk is the risk that an entity will encounter difficulty in meeting obligations associated with financial liabilities. The organization is exposed to this risk mainly in respect of its receipt of funds from its customers and accounts payable and accrued liabilities. The organization considers that it has access to sufficient funds to meet its current and long-term financial requirements.

Unless otherwise noted, it is management's opinion that the organization is not exposed to significant other price risks arising from these financial instruments.

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