

So now what?

PosAbilities is an example of an innovative organization that is generating solutions that deserve to be scaled up to achieve greater impact.

Social service organizations typically depend on traditional funding to deliver their programs and services. While it is important for this sector to evolve, there is very little incentive or funding for innovation. Consequently, practices in the social service sector tend to get stuck and critical questions, values and assumptions remain unexplored.

The social sector needs more support for innovation. Rather than continuing to apply traditional solutions to contemporary problems, we need to deploy new methods to investigate social problems and generate solutions.

Organizations like posAbilities require funding to not only research complex questions and generate prototypes of new practices, but to incubate these prototypes until they are ready for implementation.

Canada is working on a plan to create a social innovation and social finance ecosystem that could better support initiatives like this one. Find out more at sisfs.ca.

Learn about how an “ecosystemic” approach can help solve tough challenges -- visit mcconnellfoundation.ca/ecosystem-strengthening

McConnell supported posAbilities through a \$300,000 grant from the Social Innovation Fund, and provided coaching through the Social Innovation Learning Program.

Learn more about this program at mcconnellfoundation.ca

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posAbilities
Inclusive communities, enriched lives.



CATALYST: posAbilities

“Retrofitting” social services for greater inclusion

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Common misperception

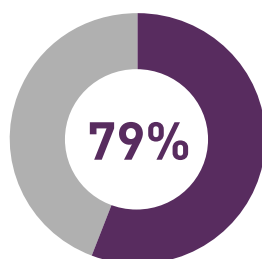
People with developmental disabilities lack the capacity to work, lead meaningful lives or have meaningful relationships. They are too vulnerable to be out in their communities. The best outcome is to be well supported within programs and services.

Reality:

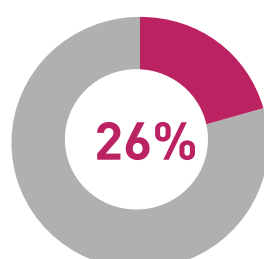
People with developmental disabilities face exclusion because of structural, spatial, systemic and attitude barriers. In addition to financial impoverishment, people with intellectual disabilities often face a **poverty of experience**, which restricts their opportunities to grow and find fulfillment, as well as a **poverty of expectations**, which restricts what they can do and who they can become.

Employment rates for:

Canadians without a disability



Canadians with a "very severe" disability



What's at stake?

Research shows that people who belong to social networks experience higher levels of confidence, self-esteem, and life satisfaction.

Social networks provide practical and emotional support for people and allow them to experience a sense of opportunity and reciprocity in their communities. **Social participation is key to finding purpose, love and happiness.**

The social network size of:



The Catalyst

"How do we repurpose roles so that we're not only addressing basic needs like clothing and shelter and food but making sure people have meaning and purpose and love and beauty?"

— Gord Tulloch, PosAbilities

PosAbilities has partnered with two peer agencies to create a new platform called "Degrees of Change" to co-invest in social research and development to generate new solutions that will lead to more fulfilled and connected lives for people with disabilities. PosAbilities has defined a series of strategic "retrofits" to existing services that are needed in the social service sector, some of which include:

(1) adding a social R&D* function to service delivery so that experimenting with and testing new approaches becomes part of ongoing practice; (2) addressing higher order needs like beauty, purpose and love; (3) intervening at the level of the neighbourhood and community to grow and thicken the ties of social connectedness; (4) unlocking and mobilizing the power of informal assets and networks; and (5) developing platforms -- in some cases using the Internet -- that bridge and connect people rather than relying on expert/professional services.

What is Social R+D?

A range of research and development tools -- including behavioural science, randomized control trials, lean prototyping, positive deviance, and ethnography -- applied to solving complex problems.

What is posAbilities?

PosAbilities is a service provider in the Vancouver region offering a range of supports to persons with intellectual disabilities and their families. The services are funded through government and resemble the sorts of programs and services that are available across Canada (e.g. community inclusion programs, residential supports, outreach services, employment services, etc.). What makes posAbilities stand out is its commitment to challenging the status quo of **service provider + client**, which falls short of giving people with disabilities the life fulfillment they need and want.

Examples of initiatives supported by posAbilities:

Building Caring Communities is a "storefront" that consists of teams working for several agencies who focus on connecting people with intellectual disabilities to people, places and activities where they can find belonging. The goal is to not only increase social connection and contribution, but to engender personal resiliency and interdependence.

Kudoz is an "experience platform", not unlike AirBnB or Uber, that bridges persons with intellectual disabilities to community members who are willing to volunteer an hour or more of their time each month around a passion area (e.g. stone carving, songwriting, vlogging, stunt-work, news analysis, etc.). Kudoz has been designed to address the poverty of experience.

Real-Talk is a sexual health initiative/prototype aimed at people with intellectual disabilities and their supporters and hosts honest conversations about dating, love, sex and relationships.