



Abilities Centre 2022-2023 Brief Impact Report



Introduction

Abilities Centre is a not-for-profit charitable organization that provides accessible and inclusive programs and services of the highest quality and value. Our purpose is to unlock potential through accessibility. We support members of the community, no matter their ability, age, or background, to improve their quality of life by positively impacting health & well-being, social inclusion, and economic participation. Abilities Centre is committed to building accessible and inclusive communities through programs and services in the areas of education, employment, sport, recreation & leisure, research, and life skills.

In the 2022-2023 fiscal year, we worked to break down barriers for people with disabilities and other marginalized groups and redefine the way Canadians live, work, and play. Some of our highlights from this year include:

- Receiving **\$3.5** million over the next 3 years from the government of Ontario to support the development and growth of Vocational Services at Abilities Centre.
- Receiving renewal of funding from Canadian Tire Jumpstart, which has helped us to impact **130,858** children and youth over the past 5 years.
- Hosting the first annual Abilities Centre Accessibility Awards and Gala, which raised over **\$250,000**.
- Accompanying the Oshawa Vikings Mixed Ability Rugby team to the International Mixed Ability Rugby Tournament (IMART) in Cork, Ireland and sharing our work at the Mixed Ability Week International Conference.
- Winning the Whitby Chamber of Commerce Award for the non-profit of the year and the Readers' Choice Awards 2022 for Oshawa and Whitby in the Fitness Club and Recreation Facility categories.

At Abilities Centre, we are excited to see how we continue to grow and serve our community in Durham and across the country. Continue reading to see a snapshot of the ways we impact our community and create a better, barrier-free life for all Canadians.

If you would like to learn more about our programs and services and our impact this year, check out our 2022-2023 Impact Report.



Co-created and co-designed programs with people with lived experience

Ensuring that our programs and services meet the needs of the communities we serve is one of our organizational priorities. To meet individuals' and communities' needs, we work with people with lived experience to co-create and co-design new programs and update current programs. Some ways we accomplished this during the year include:



Providing specialized training to organizations on the topic of disability inclusion through our Disability Inclusion Workshop.

The Disability Inclusion Workshop is a training and education initiative that provides organizations with specialized learning about disability. The content is co-created and co-developed with a team of facilitators whose lived experience of disability is integrated within the workshop to encourage meaningful discussions. The Disability Inclusion Facilitation Team delivered **17** Disability Inclusion workshops to over **300** individuals.

Co-designing new classes for Thrive.

Thrive is an adult day program for individuals over the age of 18 with developmental disabilities. Participants engage in activities that support their health and well-being. Three of the new Thrive classes this year were co-designed by Thrive staff and participants. Participants enjoyed having creative and decision-making power and being part of curriculum development and classes such as Movie Magic, Thrive Exclusive and Thrive Mentorship.

Re-imagining our Leadership in Training program to Unlocking Leaders.

The updated 10-week skill development program for youth focuses on enhancing 21st-century skills through project- and activity-based learning. The program offers quality programming that works to promote three main areas: learning, life, and literacy skills. The program content was informed by past participants' feedback. Throughout the program, participants were able to: enhance their teamwork and leadership skills through collaborative activities, apply and practice new skills in a supportive environment, build confidence in communication, and develop resiliency.



Partnered with organizations to provide accessible training and programming

Abilities Centre started with the vision to improve access for individuals with disabilities so that they could fully participate in their communities. Since then, we have been able to support individuals with disabilities to engage in our communities, and we have collaborated with the communities to create a place where all are welcome. To support meaningful engagement within the community for all Canadians and address gaps in inclusion, we worked with organizations to provide a range of equitable opportunities. Collaboration highlights include:

Offering a range of training opportunities to support meaningful participation and inclusion in sport through our partnership with International Mixed Ability Sport (IMAS).

Mixed Ability Sport™ (MAS™) is a social movement that actively promotes inclusion and equity in sport by fostering a sense of belonging and membership to a group, team, or club. Through our partnership with IMAS, we created a training certificate that was delivered to **42** coaches from **7** different sports and **18** clubs across **8** regions of Ontario this year alone. The training is delivered by Abilities Centre's MAS™ Inclusion in Sport team, composed of individuals with lived experience. The Oshawa Vikings rugby club was the first club in Canada to receive MAS™ accreditation through Abilities Centre and was the first-ever Canadian team to participate in the 2022 International Mixed Ability Rugby Tournament.

Delivering the Leading Equitable and Accessible Delivery (LEAD™) through our partnership with Activity Alliance UK.

LEAD™ is a facilitated self-assessment that allows organizations to reflect on how their internal practice, processes, and culture can be more inclusive and identify how they can embed both accessibility and inclusion into their organization in a sustainable way. LEAD™ launched in Canada five years ago in collaboration with Activity Alliance UK to help address accessibility challenges in Canada and provide equitable opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in their communities. Since its launch, Abilities Centre has facilitated LEAD™ with **36** organizations, **14** of which were done this year. As a result of LEAD™, organizations: updated HR practices for hiring and succession planning; modified procurement processes to be more inclusive of marginalized populations; and enhanced training curricula to include accessibility training.





Continuing the Virtual Fitness for Breath program in partnership with Lung Health Foundation.

The 10-week post-rehabilitation program is a group-based exercise and respiratory maintenance program for individuals with lung conditions. Our partnership with the Lung Health Foundation has allowed us to grow the reach of the program. This year, we had **148** participant enrollments throughout the year, reaching individuals across Ontario. The program's popularity required adding a 3rd virtual class, increasing class size by **50%**, and creating a recorded video library (**1,400** combined views) to supplement the live virtual classes. Additionally, the in-person counterpart of Virtual Fitness for Breath, the Respiratory-Cardiac Maintenance program also increased enrollment to help accommodate the popularity of the programs. Six participants provided participant testimonials linked below:



Worked with and in the community to improve access to services

Access to community programs and services is essential for full participation for individuals. However, many individuals with disabilities face barriers to access, and organizations and businesses do not have the knowledge or skills needed to break down these barriers. We work with businesses, municipalities, school boards, and other organizations to help them better meet the needs of the individuals in the community who want to access their services. Some ways we accomplished this were:

Providing consultation on accessible employment to 10 employers.

We worked with businesses to increase employment opportunities through advocacy, education and support of both job seekers and employers. Through our Employment Services, we have had **138** enrollments in programming, engaged with **78** employers and supported **14** individuals in finding meaningful employment in Durham Region, with **10** individuals maintaining their employment.

Aiding teachers in supporting their students with direct delivery of Therapeutic Recreation programs.

Therapeutic Recreation in the Schools (TRIS) was delivered to over **170** students, supporting over **60** educators. Over a single semester of programming, **80%** of TRIS students increased their competence and developed important skills such as interpersonal communication, coping, and leadership skills. Taking Aim, a classroom program that helps students use their leadership skills while exploring employment and life skills, and TR in the Summer, a program focused on building physical, social, and transition skills over the summer, were created to continue to support students inside and outside the classroom. Educators involved in TR in the Summer saw benefits for students accessing an inclusive, universally designed learning space to engage in fun skill development activities.





Providing specialized learning support to students and professionals on the topic of physical literacy and inclusion through our Physical Literacy & Inclusion workshop (PL&I).

The PL&I workshop is an interactive learning experience to support coaches, teachers, students, recreation professionals, and other program leaders in developing their understanding of the value of physical literacy and inclusion. The workshop was delivered to over **450** participants. Last year, the Abilities Centre team identified an opportunity to link each workshop with a follow-up field trip to provide workshop attendees with the opportunity to co-facilitate programming with Abilities Centre staff, building confidence in their practice. This year, field trips were done with over **1,000** students and we provided continued learning support for more than **20** educators.



Created a resilient model of programs and services

For the past 10 years, Abilities Centre has been creating programs and services that can endure the changing landscape of our community while remaining flexible enough to meet the changing needs of our participants. In our organization, we build and test innovative programs through research to ensure we can provide everyone with the highest quality programming. Some program and service highlights for the year include:

Growing the Together in Movement and Exercise (TIME™) group of programs TIME™, TIMEPlus™ and TIMELite™.

These programs support individuals with neuromuscular conditions in group exercise for physical, mental, and social health. Our partnership with Toronto Rehab Institute (University Health Network) has fostered the development of the TIME™ group of programming. Across the TIME™ programs, we had **114** participant enrollments this year and over **248** classes delivered for TIME™, TIMEPlus™ and TIMELite™. Transitions from TIME™ to TIMEPlus™ was an exceptional achievement three of our participants completed this year.



Growing our Academy for Student Athlete Development (ASAD).

ASAD is focused on removing barriers and creating equitable access for athletes with aspirations of pursuing competitive and high-performance sport. This year ASAD expanded to continue to remove barriers and increase access for athletes in communities across Ontario and beyond. In partnership with Deh Gah Elementary and Secondary School, ASAD is now offered in Fort Providence, Northwest Territories, a third campus for high school-aged student-athletes, alongside Whitby and London, Ontario. As well, the ASAD team, through funding from Sport Canada, identified gaps in athletic development for Canadian Paraspport athletes and implemented regional programming in Ottawa, Ontario to support para-athlete development. These regional programs will be expanding in the future.





Growing our Abilities Centre membership base and services

We expanded our membership by **300%**, from just over **500 to 2,000** individuals. Our facility rentals and number of classes available for members increased more than ever since the pandemic. We saw a **200%** increase in classes options and a **100%** increase in facility rentals across the year. In addition, we completed over **1,450** personal training sessions.



Conducted and published novel research with the disability community

Research at Abilities Centre is embedded within each of our programs and services. Research informs how we conduct our work and achieve our mission and vision. This year, Abilities Centre partnered with academic institutions across Canada to develop, conduct, and share research that breaks down barriers for Canadians, especially those with disabilities. Some highlights from our research this year include:



Contributing to Canada's Parallel Report in response to the United Nation's review of Canada's implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We co-led the response to CRPD Article 30 – Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure, and sport.

Co-authoring and contributing to four academic articles, including Canadian Physical Activity Report Card for Children and Adolescents with Disabilities and findings from the COVID-19 National Disability Survey, which was done in partnership with Abilities Centre and the Canadian Disability Participation Project.

Partnering with academic researchers as co-applicants on two Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) grants, including an SSHRC Partnership Grant for CDPP, led by Dr. Amy Latimer-Cheung at Queen's University.





Co-created a knowledge translation product, led by Active Living Alliance for Canadians with Disability, exploring the physical activity and recreational sport experiences of mothers with disabilities

Publishing the Mixed Ability Model of Sport in Canada, in the Abilities Magazine, part of the Canadian Abilities Foundation.

Evaluating **33** of Abilities Centre's programs and services to examine the impact they have on our participants and members. From these evaluations, we were able to capture the impact of our programs on almost **10,000** individuals.



Invested in our staff and community

To continue our growth and development, Abilities Centre is investing in our team. Our Teaching and Learning Institute provides professional development opportunities to both staff and community. Abilities Centre's goal to invest reflects our journey to remain responsive to the needs of our communities and reflective of the diverse populations that we serve. Some of the training opportunities provided this year include:



Launching Abilities Centre's Discovery College.

Discovery College is a community education initiative aimed to give all members of the Abilities Centre community access to participate in and deliver courses on topics of interest. This year, we launched our first course on Bibliotherapy and trained staff on how to deliver the sessions. We are looking to bring more community opportunities in the future, including partnering with Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences and their Recovery College to learn more about Mental Health.

Creating Abilities Centre Professional Development sessions.

We had both internal and external speakers deliver professional development sessions, in partnership with our Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Department. Sessions on the Misconceptions and Best Practices for communicating and working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing people from Durham Deaf Services and Canadian Hearing Services and on Creating Inclusive Workplaces for the BIPOC Community from Shauna Bookal were a couple of the most popular professional development sessions run this year. We also partnered with the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) to attend their professional development webinars on topics such as Microaggressions and Antisemitism.





Speaking to our community and sharing our learnings.

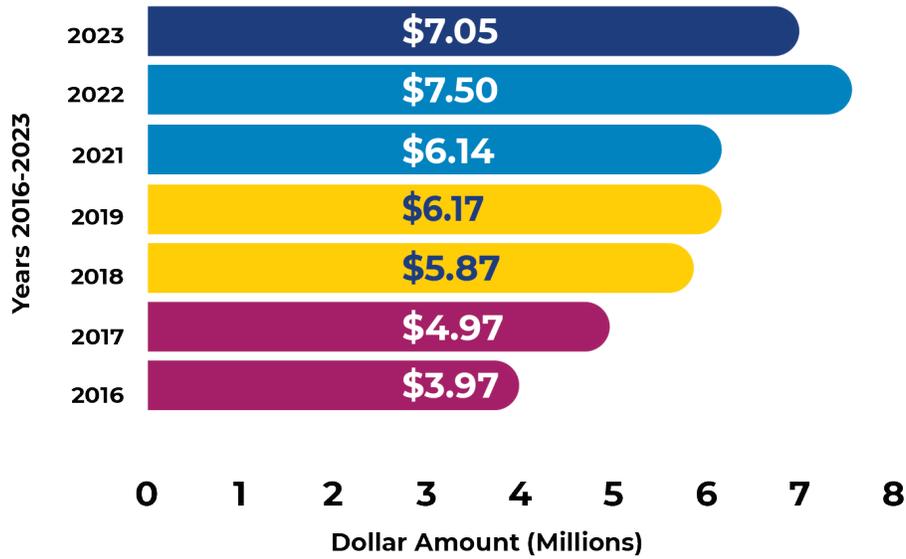
Abilities Centre's Vice President of Programs, Partnership, and Impact, Pinder DaSilva, was part of a panel at Queen's University on the theme of Advocacy in Practice: Perspectives from Decision Makers, Health and Service Providers and Patients. She presented alongside Dr. Jane Philpott, Dean of Health Sciences and Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health for the province of Ontario. As well, Abilities Centre's Director of IDEA, Yin Brown was a speaker at the CCDI Unconference.

Co-hosting the Durham Accessibility Conference in partnership with The Region of Durham.

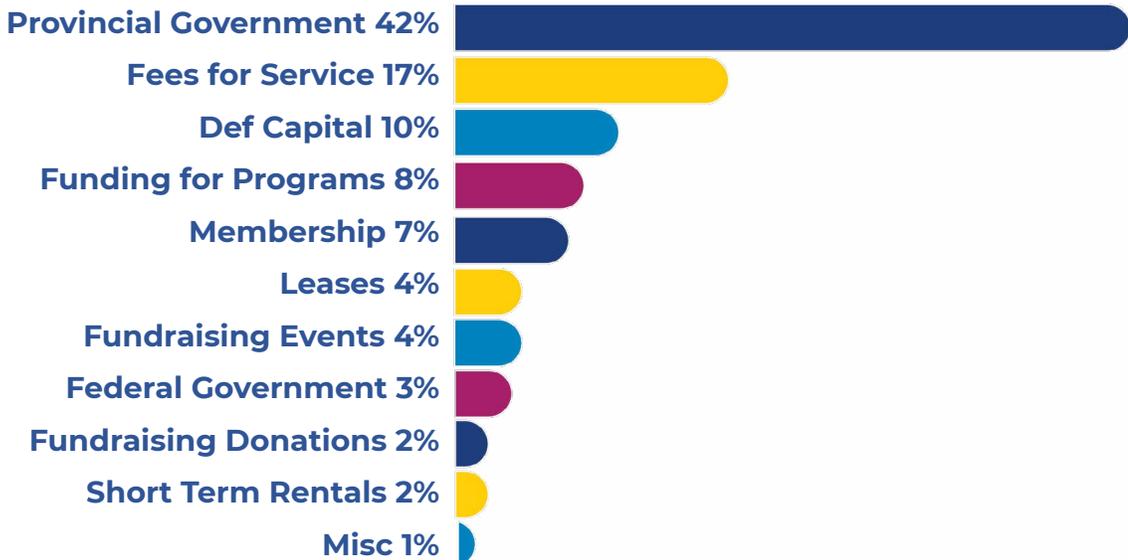
Over **290** individuals attended the conference and learned how to contribute to an organization's accessibility and inclusion and their understanding of accommodation needs and inclusive communication.



Revenue Growth



Revenue Breakdowns 2023





Acknowledgements

We want to thank everyone in our Abilities Centre community who engaged in and supported our work over the past year. Together, we work towards unlocking the potential of our community. We appreciate the generous support from corporations, foundations and individuals, who allow Abilities Centre to give people the power to achieve their goals through sports, arts, life-skills programs, and research. Special thank you to all our government, health, research and education, sport, and other community partners. Your partnerships are critical to the work we do at Abilities Centre and would not be possible without your collaboration.

If you would like to continue to support our organization, you can share this report, follow us on social media, or donate to our charitable organization so we can continue to...

REIMAGINE
accessibility
and redefine the way Canadians
LIVE, WORK, & PLAY.

Charitable registration number:
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1 Jim Flaherty Street,
Whitby ON L1N 0J2
abilitiescentre.org