

EXPANDING THE CAPACITY OF PLANNING AND FACILITATION SUPPORTS IN CANADA

Presenting at:

OADD: Prioritizing & Planning for Person-Centered Collaboration Models, November 2025

Western Social Science

PLANNING & FACILITATION COLLABORATIVE

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Welcome and Introductions to Our Project Team

Brianne Vescio

Matthew A Resendes Medeiros

Anna Bruno

Dima Kassem

Dr. Pamela Block



Special thanks to Monica Myers for the use of this image

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Our Why...

A Belief... that quality, value-based planning and facilitation supports can assist people with disabilities to live meaningful, inclusive lives rooted in their community.

Our experience... shows that supports varied in quality and availability, made even more complicated by issues geography, economic status and intersectionality of identity .

We know... there is great expertise in planning and facilitation supports that already exists.

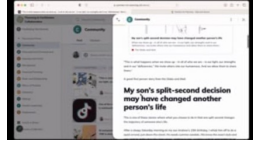
We can... make a contribution to growing these supports across Canada and beyond by bringing people together.



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Project Background

- Funded by Employment and Social Development Canada
- 3 year project to expand the capacity of planning and facilitation supports across Canada
- Developed the Planning & Facilitation Collaborative, an online community to share resources, learn together and grow in our practice



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Introducing the Expanding Capacity of Planning & Facilitation In Canada Research Study

As part of the grant, we were able to include a research project to better understand the experience of planning and facilitation in Canada and this led to partnership with Western University.

With a qualitative research design, this study aims to explore the impact of planning and facilitation on disabled individuals and their families engaged in the process.



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Initial Research Themes



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How are participants talking about facilitators and the practice of facilitation

- Artform – creativity
- Being curious, asking questions
- Activism- Walking with and power with (not over)
- Person centered vs. person directed
- Respect and love flowing in both directions
- A distinct profession
- Something family are doing on top of everything else
- Something so built into disability services that there is no name for it.
- Everyone (disabled or not) can benefit from participating in this process

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How are participants talking about facilitators?

"What she has done for us... **we have freedom...** so that part has been amazing... it's given us a chance to live how.. You know.."

-Roz

"**Us parents are basically the facilitators,** unless you want to pay a lot of money to somebody to go do this for you, which none of us have the funding for that"

-Patti



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What are facilitators doing:

- Building relationships
- Breaking goals down into small attainable steps
- Mentoring self-advocates to be facilitators or have their own voice
- Sustaining Microboards (or networks of support)
- Allowing parents to live their own lives (not fighting alone) and helping provide a sense of ease that once they die the relationships will live on.



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Where are people getting facilitation (or not):

- Agencies and directly from facilitators (independent ones and one's part of a facilitation organization)
- Through government funding, if families receive it because it is a "long waiting game"
- From self-advocates
- Parents becoming the facilitators



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Shared Values and Beliefs

- Improving the lives of disabled people
- Growing sustainable support systems
- Prioritizing the disabled person's basic needs



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Differing Values and Beliefs

- Person centered vs. Person directed
- Pragmatism: Greater or lesser acceptance of institutional solutions ("for now") vs. complete rejection of institutions
- Family members may have a tendency to over-protect and be more conservative and may misconstrue what constitutes "safety."
- Views may be evolving: Parents and agencies initially get it to a certain point and then may develop their views over time to be more willing to accept the right of disabled people to take chances and engage in adult activities.



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Distrust of Bureaucracy



Poor Communication & Lack of Transparency

Ex. Patti

- Sudden & (continuously) unexplained cut to Passport funding
- "By this age you get exhausted of trying to fight city hall"
- "I think the people dealing with these situations don't live it... walk a mile in my shoes"

Ex. Allison (A Facilitator Perspective)

- "The passport thing seems to be a mystery to everyone"
- "There doesn't seem to be rhyme or reason to it sometimes"
- "There are people that almost don't know what to do with the funding sometimes, and others in desperate need of it"

Facilitators (when had) may feel like a "partial antidote"

Ex. Melanie

- Navigating VON & DSO services – Help prepare for interview which makes up important component of bureaucratic process.

"Some people aren't in an emergency because some people (i.e. facilitators) go above and beyond" - Allison

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Negotiating the Inconsistency of Bureaucracies

"When disability appears so too does the fragility of normality of any bureaucratic order" (Titchkosky 2020, p. 207).

- Bureaucracies enable inconsistency through lack of transparency
- Inconsistent support dollars
 - Shadow dollars
 - Rigid/flexible interpretation of guidelines
- "Slow rolling"
- Inconsistency between regions



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Facilitation as Activism

- Anti-ableism and Disability Justice
- Critiques of bureaucracies (from outside and from within)
- Focus on person-directed instead of person-centered
- Dignity of risk supported rather than automatically seen as dangerous



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Facilitation as Activism, continued

- Promoting Deinstitutionalization
- Supporting Self-advocacy
- In absence of an outside facilitator there is more traditional parent/family advocacy
- Joining coalitions on housing and workers rights, health access, individualized funding, LGBTQ+ and other kinds of solidarity work.



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Facilitation as Activism: Consequences

- No clear pathway for being paid outside of existing institutional structures of private payment
- May create conflicts of interest for the facilitators depending on where they are employed
- Values and approaches may differ greatly
- Ability to support people over the long term may be greatly impacted so continuity for long term planning is threatened.



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Facilitation as Profession

- Pressure to provide a training/certification pathway that is accountable to a professional entity that provides the training and monitors standards.
- Means in future it may cost money to become a facilitators (potential barrier for some)
- Government and professional supervision requirements
- Pathway for facilitators to get paid (and better paid)



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Facilitation as Profession: Consequences

- Facilitation as future planning and systems navigation within existing bureaucratic systems
- Facilitators will be required to negotiate bureaucratic requirements that may create conflicts of interest
- Makes it more difficult for people with ID to become facilitators
- People may be inhibited from saying/doing what they think is right due to employer's policies



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Facilitation as Profession: Consequences, cont.

- Nova Scotia example (government wants to provide facilitation which is a conflict of interest)
- Coopting of language and roles by government muddies the waters of what is and is not facilitation
- Facilitation is not individualized support plans, government mandated annual plans, behaviour plans



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Activist vs. Professional: A False Binary

- The current realities of many facilitators' work lives mean their roles may shift fluidly between activism and professional obligations.
- The approach facilitators take may be strategic and may vary according to context
- Workers may engage in activism outside of work or within their workspaces
- Family members may engage different approaches in their roles within and outside of their families
- "Healthy tension" between facilitators and direct supports (checks and balances) can be built into the service system



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Planning and Facilitation with BIPOC and Immigrant Communities

- What does planning and facilitation look like through Indigenous, Black, and Immigrant lenses?
- Cultural and historical differences and intergenerational trauma may lead to different priorities and approaches
- Trust and relationship building is essential. This takes time and resources.
- There are no shortcuts: Ask the community what they want and build from scratch



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The research project continues- there are opportunities for people, chosen family/circle members, and facilitators/planners across Canada to still participate.

Especially looking to gather insights from diverse regions in Canada and those experiencing the intersection of disability with other lived experience.

Use the QR code below or follow to the research flyer using the link provided:

<https://www.planningforagoodlife.ca/research-flyer>



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The Planning & Facilitation Collaborative is a national online community meant to build the capacity of facilitators, planning professionals and those engaged in planning to ultimately enhance the quality of life of people with disabilities and their families. Built upon foundational values including community belonging, self-determination and nurturing relationships, this community gathers together for a variety of learning opportunities, to share and network with one another, and to grow in their reflective practice.

To find out more or to become a member visit:

www.planningforagoodlife.ca



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The Planning & Facilitation Collaborative and the Expanding the Capacity for Planning & Facilitation Supports in Canada Research Study is made possible in part by the funding provided by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)





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Thank you! Take a moment to share your feedback with us!





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