Guidelines for Promoting Independence, Choice and Inclusion for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities through Social Business

Social enterprise, or the use of market-based strategies to achieve a social goal, is increasingly being used in the intellectual and developmental (IDD) sector to create employment options. Most agencies use these social businesses to create job opportunities where few exist, to provide real work venues for training and skill development, and to further social goals related to independence, choice and inclusion.

This guide is intended to provide support to agencies seeking to create sustainable social businesses that adhere to recommended best practice in the field. This guide is based on the Values-Based Checklist created by Social Firms UK*. The guidelines are interpreted for the Canadian context, with a particular focus on the IDD sector and examples drawn from practice to help illustrate ways they can be put into practice.

Employment	
Social Firms UK Guidelines	**Implications for Ontario**
All employees have contracts of employment (or are self-employed through personal choice) & market wages at or above national minimum wage.	Social businesses typically have job descriptions for job positions and people are hired in to these positions through a process of application. Bringing workers into jobs through "referrals" compromises the business process and suggests that social businesses are considered a social program/service. Decisions will need to be made with respect to wage standards. Minimum wage or higher is certainly considered the gold standard, but where variations in wages are legally allowed, there might still be consideration of acceptable wage standards. For example, in a cooperative structure profits from the business may be split between workers, but if the wage standards stay low for long periods of time, questions may be posed about the viability of the business itself and the fairness of compensation.
25% or more of the workforce are people who are severely disadvantaged in gaining employment.	The ID field can decide if all social business should have integrated workforces and the nature of this integration. Arguments in favour of a mixed workforce include higher productivity of the workforce (thus providing opportunity for workers with variable or somewhat lower work output, as revenues may not be severely compromised overall) and the opportunity for a more normalized work environment. The conflicting argument is that jobs held by workers who do not have ID may reduce work opportunities for workers with ID. Businesses using integrated models should establish clear guidelines for how workforce proportionality will be determined and maintained, and how "disadvantage" is to be defined. Worker profiles should identify sources of employment disadvantage (e.g. ID, other disability, other characteristics associated with employment equity) for clarity of record keeping.

All employees have the opportunity to progress either within the Social Firm or into alternative employment as appropriate.	Standards for social businesses within the ID field can explicitly define the range and demands of available jobs and of job progression opportunities within the business. Progression standards can also define the importance of transitions to other employment opportunities. Each of these can be accompanied by indicators for success, and documented through employee profiles or exit interview checklists.
An equal approach is taken to the type of employment contracts used (e.g. permanent, fixed term, temporary, self-employment) between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged staff.	This standard is applicable to businesses that choose an integrated workforce. It suggests that if workers both with and without ID are hired to perform comparable jobs in the company that they are hired equitably and subject to the same employment regulations.
The firm has procedures & policies in place in respect of Equal Opportunities & Health & Safety.	Many social businesses in the ID sector have clear missions and values related to their social mission, but fewer have established clear policies around equitable hiring and other similar business policies. Although regulations vary across industries, it may be beneficial to create templates for the sector that are drawn from provincial human resource policy documents. Firms may also draw from the HR policies in effect within the parent agency. A particular concern will be the need to establish policies and procedures that enhance opportunities for workers with ID. For example, in our business case studies there were examples of efforts to ensure that workers with ID were provided the supported opportunity to safely use a range of equipment central to the business.
The firm is acknowledged as a good employer by employees and stakeholders.	While social businesses as employers must be designed to meet expectations for fair, safe and equitable workplaces they should also identify mechanisms for obtaining input from workers (with and without ID), family members, and other stakeholders such as support workers as to perceptions of the firm and job satisfaction. Factors to be included on worker surveys can be identified by the stakeholders, and/or key factors developed within the sector for modification and adoption by individual firms. A key consideration is how to obtain unbiased feedback, particularly from workers with ID. This may require support from impartial support personnel, or 3rd party evaluators.
The firm operates processes to engage the workforce in their own and the organisation's development.	Solicitation of input on the direction of the business in this sector requires careful consideration. In some instances workers are engaged in regular staff meetings with management and invited to share their opinions relative to proposed changes. In others, at least one worker representative sits on the organizations board of directors. Some firms create a full worker's committee that meets to discuss standing or emergent issues relative to operations. Workers and families should have input into determining how their voice will be included, and consulted as to the efficacy of whatever system is developed.

The firm is compliant with relevant employment legislation e.g. Disability Discrimination Act & National Minimum Wage.	Hiring policies should be transparent within the business, and applied consistently to workers with and without disabilities. It may be advantageous for the sector to have such policies readily available for review. The provincial minimum wage policies across sectors should be available to all firms for review and compliance. Should the sector proceed with advancing social businesses as an employment option consideration could be given to developing a formal network that will promote the sharing of resources, information etc.
The firm is acknowledged as a good employer through an external accreditation process.	To date, there is no accreditation body existing in Ontario or elsewhere in Canada to review social businesses, although guidelines exist through organizations like Enterprising Non-Profits. Use of accreditation bodies for rehabilitation facilities would force businesses to comply with expectations for social programs, which is antithetical to the purpose and nature of social business.
Disadvantaged people are employed at all levels in the firm with reasonable adjustment as required.	Traditional structures employ worker with ID as front line workers, with workers without ID taking on supervisory and managerial roles. This hierarchy can be partially rectified by hiring workers without ID (who may themselves have forms of employment disadvantage) in parallel roles to workers with ID. It can also be addressed by mentoring strong workers with ID into supervisory positions, where they have higher levels of responsibility and higher wages.

Empowerment	
Social Firms UK Guidelines	**Implications for Ontario**
Maximising the ability & potential of those working within the firm is a priority.	Social businesses for people with ID dedicate a high portion of their efforts towards skill development. The challenge in this regard may lie in determining with a period of "training" has been completed, such that the worker has met basic requirements for paid employment, and the ongoing mentoring and skill development that are characteristic of any employment situation that is sensitive to ongoing human resource development begins. Another key feature is for businesses to build in processes by which worker goals are regularly reviewed, and the desire for community employment options considered and supported. In addition, social businesses generally are developed with a view to creating work processes and contexts that enable growth of workers. Collecting and sharing examples of such innovating work conditions would be helpful in this sector.
Volunteers have agreements that reflect good practice in volunteering.	Volunteerism was not commonly seen in Canadian social businesses we observed. It can take the form of community volunteers without ID who participate to assist in furthering the goals of the business, perhaps in the context of a partnership with another organization. Voluntarism is evidenced where Boards of Directors and related committee structures seek the involvement of community members with particular forms of knowledge or expertise. In such cases by-laws and Board policies should clearly

	define the responsibilities of volunteers with special attention to conflicts of interest and ethical issues. While this is good practice in all organizations, in the social business particular concerns relate to financial conflicts of interest that can occur in overseeing a business entity. ,
The firm demonstrates a commitment to maintaining confidentiality. There is a procedure in place that demonstrates the agreement to share confidential information.	Protecting the confidentiality of workers is a best practice in all legal work organizations, and should be standard practice in social businesses. Unlike social services which may keep confidential client files, social businesses should protect the human resource files of their workers. Special attention will also need to be paid to the type of information that is collected and shared. Since these are work organizations, there will need to be careful attention paid to the type of health or social service information that is kept on any individual worker. Developing clear distinctions between employment and service records should help to further define social businesses as primarily business-oriented places of employment.
Reasonable adjustments are made for employees & self-employed workers relevant to their needs.	One of the key advantages of the social business model is the commitment of the business to meeting the varied needs of workers. This can emerge from the social mission of the business, but becomes actualized when structures are in place that allow worker input into human resource practices, and when practices are set up to ensure accommodation of worker needs.
There are processes in place for managing stress. All staff are encouraged to have control over their working environment.	Similar to best practice in all work organizations resources for wellness can be fundamental to supporting healthy workplaces. Careful consideration should be paid to the specific nature of these workplace health initiatives, with a particular view to addressing the specific needs of workers. Guidelines related to advancing worker involvement and voice will be part of this effort.
Trainees, work experience candidates & volunteers have different programmes & responsibilities to employees. Training should be time-limited & should lead to an award once competences are achieved.	Given the historical connection of the social business to sheltered workshops the development of guidelines and standards related to the training of workers is imperative. This could include the development and dissemination of examples of options for using business processes to train workers on the job, particularly those that use natural support systems and capitalize on the skill of workers with ID who are established employees.
The firm has an added emphasis on training for disadvantaged staff including those who are self-employed. Training reinforces & builds on learning & takes account of developing social skills as appropriate.	Many social businesses, particularly in the IDD sector, have a training orientation. Philosophically, some agencies believe that when workers have established a strong skill set, they should move into community employment. Others see social business as a choice that allows ongoing flexibility of employment in a supportive environment that helps promote ongoing skill development. In either instance, it is incumbent on a social business to ensure skill development of workers, as one should find in any work environment, and opportunities for career advancement. For some workers, who identify community employment as a goal, this will ultimately mean that workers move on to full or partial community-based employment.

The firm's organisational structure is enabling & encourages participation in business decisions as appropriate.	Business guidelines should provide a range of options for structured opportunities for worker involvement and voice. These structures for involvement should innovate new ways of involving workers with ID who may historically be on the fringes of decisions related to the organizations with which they interact. Where the social businesses are overseen by a Board, distinct from the workers (as in a cooperative model), formal structures and processes should be in place for their voices to be heard by these high-level decision makers.
The firm provides diversity training to all staff as appropriate (e.g. mental health awareness).	This standard relates most clearly to staff without disabilities, but should include all workers, including those with IDD. The workplace should be one of respect for all and promote understanding of diversity issues. This relates not only to disability concerns, but also to factors associated with gender equality, ethnic differences, and age related concerns, to name a few. All employees should be alert to factors which may compromise fairness and worker safety, including bullying and over-protection. The presence of structured training programs in this regard is expected to be part of standard workplaces in the Province, and must also be included in social businesses. White Swan Linen, for example, has required training for its unionized workers which includes those with disabilities.
The firm implements social accounting and/or social audit.	Presence of a system for social audit would seem obvious for social businesses, but is not necessarily formalized or regularly implemented. Some firms use their Board of Directors, which may include parent or worker representatives, as a means of review and accountability. Others, like Groupe Convex, have a formalized annual system for appraising each business and determining how it is performing on both business and social levels.

Enterprise

Social Firms UK Guidelines	Implications for Ontario
The firm has an appropriate legal status. It must not be governed or driven by individual profit (except for worker co-operatives). Remote shareholders must not extract unreasonable profit.	There are various legal structures appropriate for social businesses in Ontario. Each structure will have its advantages and disadvantages and needs to be considered carefully in relation to the vision of the social business organization. For example: • Some allow for greater separation of the business from the parent service organization. • Some structures will allow for the umbrella administration of several social businesses, facilitating for creation of a range of job positions, and flexibility with respect to the bottom-line for financial sustainability of any single business. • Some structures require high levels of worker involvement in the operation of the business, while others can provide opportunity to structure worker involvement.

	If social business was to be pursued as an employment option in the ID field, provincial standards should address preferred legal structures and the rationale supporting their adoption
The firm is trading and follows business processes, such as having a business plan in place.	A social business with a formal business plan, and associated accounting processes, will be helpful in furthering the distinction of social businesses from sheltered workshops. The business should also follow legal requirement of business, including following compensation, health & safety, and required taxation practices appropriate to the industry. These practices will also help to ensure that the operation is run like a business rather than a social service program.
The firm has a management structure that supports trading as the firm's primary purpose.	Whatever the business structure, a social business whose leaders (whether individuals or Boards) think and act like business people and entrepreneurs appears to be a key ingredient to social and economic success. Providers in the ID sector do not typically receive formal training in business and entrepreneurship. Advancing social businesses in the sector may benefit from opportunities to grow business acumen, in particular now that there is growing body of knowledge and expertise related to social enterprises that integrate economic with social purposes.
At least 50% of the firm's turnover is earned through sales of market-led goods or services.	Typically, social businesses in the ID sector depend on some form of subsidy, although not all may be interpreted as subsidy. For example, if Ministry funding is used to provide employment supports to workers, are these supports any different in amount and nature than supports provided to workers in other community workplaces, and if so, to what extent?. Decisions will, however, need to be made in the sector as to how to define and account for subsidy. For example: 1) Expectations related to the amount of subsidy in relation to other revenues; 2) reasonable amount of subsidy relative to the number of jobs created.
The firm has a constitution or written guiding principles that reflect its employment objective re: severely disadvantaged people.	Since social businesses have 2 missions, one economic and one social, these need principles to be clearly articulated. For people with ID specifically, these will need to be explicit with respect to the intention of the social business (for example – training or ongoing employment) and statements of philosophy related to the employability of the workers generally. Dialogue about these issues may help to address concerns that people working in social businesses do not move on to other employment options, by firmly locating the social business within the broader vision of the sector related to inclusion.
The firm is independent. Decision making and the control lies with the firm's employees / workers / own board.	The business structures within our research indicate that social businesses are not always independent. To advance the field decisions will need to be considered with respect to standards related to integration within larger organizations. In addition, the field could benefit from developing clear guidelines with respect to worker and family involvement in decision making.