

Toward a Model of Socio-professional Integration in the
Agri-Food Sector for Young Autistic Adults

Summary Report

 **Scenario and Resources for Intervention Staff – June 2024**

Catherine Théberge
Researcher-Project Leader

Catherine Riel
Research Assistant

Jean-David Martel
CISA Director and Principal Investigator



CISA
SOCIAL INNOVATION
AGRICULTURE • FOOD
INAB  CÉGEP DE VICTORIAVILLE

Project Team

Jean-David Martel, CISA Director and Principal Investigator

Catherine Théberge, Researcher-Project Leader

Catherine Riel, Assistant Project Manager

Martin Bernard, Special Education Techniques Instructor and Researcher

Geneviève Blais, Special Education Techniques Instructor and Researcher

Guillaume Hamann-Legris, Research Assistant

Authors

Catherine Théberge, Researcher-Project Leader

Catherine Riel, Assistant Project Leader

Jean-David Martel, CISA Director and Principal Investigator

Revision and Layout

Kateline Grondin, Communication and Knowledge Transfer Advisor

To Cite this Document

Théberge, C., Riel C., Martel, J.-D., 2025. Ausiris: Toward a Model of Socio-professional Integration in the Agri-Food Sector for Young Autistic Adults, Research Summary Report, 44 pages.

© Centre for Social Innovation in Agriculture - Cégep de Victoriaville, 2025

This project was made possible with the financial participation of



Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada

SSHRC  CRSH

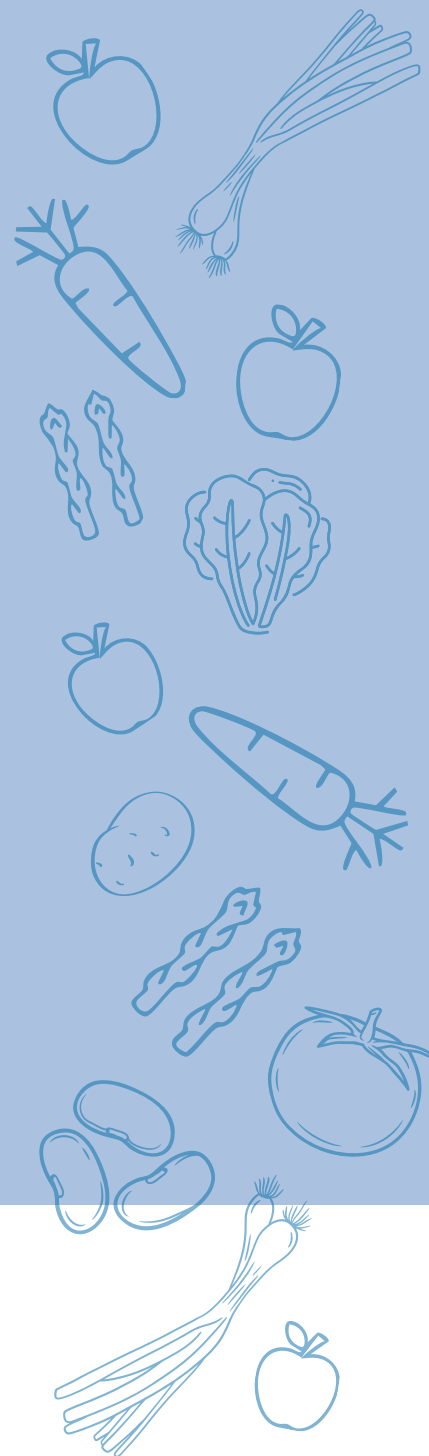


Table of Contents

01

BACKGROUND p. 04

- Co-Constructing a Scenario

02

INTEGRATION SCENARIO p. 05

1. Participant Assessment
2. Assessment of Host Settings
3. Parental Involvement
4. Multi-Stakeholder Training
5. Adapted Intervention Strategies
6. Matching and Alignment
7. Learning Tool Preparation
8. Adaptation of the Environment
9. Work Experience (tasks and progress)
10. Participant Assessment

03

PROJECT RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS p. 24

- Research Implications for Support Workers
- The Challenge of Involving Support Workers in Research
- Recommended Improvements
- Recognizing the Transversal Role of Support

04

BIBLIOGRAPHY p. 30

APPENDICES - FOR FURTHER INFORMATION p. 31

Acknowledgments

**Thank you to all our partners
who contributed to the project:**

CFER Normand-Maurice
CIUSSS Mauricie-Centre-du-Québec
Centre de services scolaires des Bois-Francs
Institut national d'agriculture biologique

La Manne - Épicerie Santé
Marché A. Desrochers, Inc.
Service externe de main-d'oeuvre CDQ (SEMO)
École La Myriade

Background

“Could work organization scenarios in the agri-food sector tailored to the specific needs of young autistic adults support their socio-professional integration in the medium and long term?”

This was the guiding question for the research team that led to the co-construction of the Ausiris project. Our goal was to develop five distinct scenarios representing different agri-food environments: greenhouse, field, family farm, garden centre, and retail outlet.

By testing these scenarios, developed in collaboration with project partners, we aimed to identify and document favourable conditions for socio-professional integration that would both inform scenario modelling and specify integration requirements for young autistic adults.

The co-construction process was informed by a literature review and the experiential knowledge of research partners. However, during experimentation, it became clear that a single scenario would best structure the socio-professional integration approach, regardless of the agri-food setting.

From this co-constructed integration approach, we developed a range of tools to facilitate knowledge transfer, which are compiled in this summary report.



[To learn more about the Ausiris project and its impacts, and to access additional tools and videos, visit the project page.](#)

Photo > Learning in the greenhouse, between a participant and their support worker. © CISA, 2023.



Co-Constructing a Scenario

First, the CISA research team sought out model organizations in Québec that had been exploring the integration of autistic individuals in agri-food work settings.

Our goal was to understand how these so-called model organizations structure their services, to identify best practices that could inform a socio-professional integration scenario in the agri-food sector.

We met with three organizations in the province known for their unique approaches: Pleins Rayons in Cowansville, Montérégie; the Laval Bioferme; and the Réseau de l'intégration à l'emploi de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue (RIEAT).



Summary profiles of these three model environments are included in the [Appendices](#).

We also conducted a brief literature review of experiments carried out elsewhere in the world, including Torquati's (2019) pilot project on autism inclusion in farms in Italy, which helped enrich our scenario.

Next, we collaborated with local stakeholders through collective knowledge workshops, organized as living labs, to design a scenario representative of our intervention ecosystem.

Over several meetings, we co-created a proposed scenario, which was then tested in a pilot project. The scenario was refined and expanded into a research project exploring the needs of young autistic adults, host settings, and the support actors involved.

After more than two years of experimentation, we developed an integration scenario applicable to various agri-food contexts (see diagram, page 6).



To learn more about our research methodology, see the "[For further information](#)" section in the [Appendices](#) (available only in the French version).



Photo > Seasonal carrot harvest in the fields at INAB. © CISA, 2023.

INTEGRATION SCENARIO

Success factors for the socio-professional integration of young autistic adults in the agri-food sector:

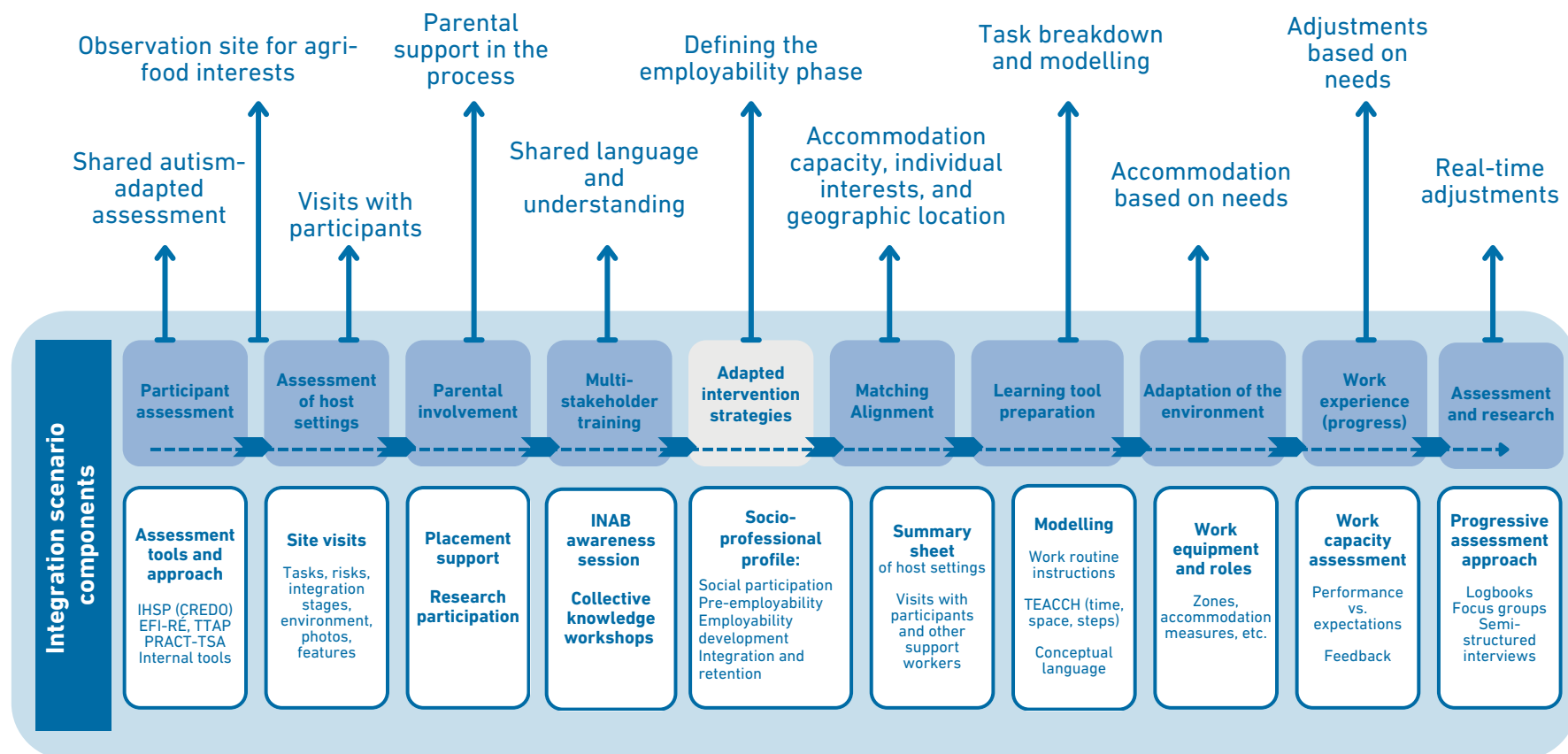


Figure 1 > Diagram of the socio-professional integration scenario designed for the Ausiris project. © CISA, 2024.

1. Participant Assessment

What was considered:

When we began reflecting on the assessment component of the scenario, we observed that various forms of evaluation could be used depending on where the participants came from. Different assessment tools were also employed depending on what was available to the support workers. Additionally, CIUSSS support workers expressed the need for a confidential space to observe and assess participants.



What was done:



Participant assessment took place at the beginning of the project ([see the questionnaire here](#)). This document was developed based on several existing assessment tools, including of the RIEAT.



The CIUSSS support workers conducted another assessment for participants who were clients of the organization. This assessment used the PRACT-TSA questionnaire, an adaptation of the PRACT-PDI, and took place later in the process.



Progress logs were also prepared and completed by the support workers throughout the internship period to record participant achievements ([see the grid in the Appendices](#)). During a meeting with support workers, it was suggested that participants might also benefit from keeping their own progress logs.



Finally, a summary of the different assessment methods used by our partners was compiled ([see the file here](#)).

Photo > A supervisor demonstrates the procedure for weighing food. © CISA, 2023.

1. Participant Assessment (cont.)

Results and conclusions

A comprehensive assessment is essential to ensure that the autistic individual receives services appropriate to their level of employability. This assessment should include, among other elements, a profile of their limitations as well as a review of their previous experiences (educational settings, employment) and any involvement with other services. This assessment should be shared among support workers from different services to ensure the most complete follow-up possible for the individual.

Several tools for assessing socio-professional integration skills already exist, but they may not be fully adapted to the characteristics of autistic individuals. As a result, support staff may create their own tools by compiling information from existing ones. Furthermore, the timing and frequency of assessments vary between organizations (and support workers). However, it is desirable that assessments—even if less formal—are conducted regularly throughout the individual's journey to allow tasks and performance expectations to be adjusted.



Photo > A participant weighs and bags harvested food. © CISA, 2023.

2. Assessment of Host Settings

What was considered:

The initial observation was that partner organizations' support workers lacked the time and resources to assess participants' host settings. The goal was to learn more about each environment (mission, mandate, history of employment inclusion) and to list the tasks that could potentially be performed by project participants. Additionally, site visits enabled meetings with key contact persons who would provide on-site support to candidates. Site visits were designed to facilitate thorough planning and needs assessment, identify suitable agri-food tasks, and promote optimal matches between participants and work environments.

What was done:



An assessment of host settings was conducted prior to the pilot project through meetings with the person responsible at each organization. This assessment covered various aspects: the company's inclusion capacity and history, perceptions regarding the hiring of autistic individuals, existing infrastructure, and the skills sought by the employer.



Participants also visited the site before making their choice. This allowed them to determine whether their interests aligned with the potential host setting.



Click on [this file](#) to consult our host setting assessment grid.



Photo > Two participants bag harvested apples at Verger des Frères. © CISA, 2023.

2. Assessment of Host Settings (cont.)

Results and conclusions

Host setting assessment was identified by a support worker as an essential step, though sometimes impossible for certain organizations to carry out due to a lack of time or resources.

Assessing the environment involves taking the time to conduct preliminary checks, ideally through on-site visits. Key elements to assess include:

- Gauging the capacity of the environment to support an autistic individual (supervision, awareness level, work atmosphere, etc.) based on a specific profile of limitations;
- Identifying the key contact person who will provide supervision, as well as a support team;
- Clarifying the expectations for the setting;
- Determining tasks to be performed based on the individual's challenges and interests;
- Identifying task-related challenges and possible progression steps;

- Assessing risks associated with each identified task and agreeing on occupational health and safety requirements (such as wearing steel-toed boots, appropriate clothing, safety glasses, helmets, etc.). It is also important to confirm which organization covers the participant for insurance purposes.

These various checks enable the support worker to assess whether there is a potential match between the setting and the autistic individual. If so, the participant and employer can prepare for the challenges certain tasks may present.



[Click here to explore a tool developed by CRISPESH to assess an environment's inclusion level \(Incluvis, 2022\).](#)



Designating a reference person for each setting is essential, but it is equally important for the entire team at the site to be sensitized to the characteristics of autistic individuals. The team should also be attentive to the participant's needs and limits so as to implement adapted and structured support tools.

3. Parental Involvement

What was considered:

Initially, parents were consulted to provide input during the project design phase. The project aimed to involve them in co-constructing integration scenarios corresponding to each workplace setting explored through collective knowledge workshops and research interviews.

What was done:



From the outset of the project, we needed to consider the rights of certain adult participants who did not wish to involve their parents, while for others, parents remained involved due to their legal status (under guardianship). However, most parents participated in the research interviews. This allowed us to gather their perspectives on various topics, such as their personal journey, daily challenges of having an autistic adult child, motivations for participating in the project, and the impact of the research project on their child and local services. Unfortunately, we were unable to involve them in the co-creation workshops, as most parents' work schedules did not permit attendance.



Nevertheless, during interviews with support staff, questions were asked regarding their views on parental involvement in their child's socio-professional path. This helped clarify the nature of parental involvement in the participant's life project.



Although parental involvement was less than initially anticipated, we observed strong interest from parents in following the project activities. They were supportive of their children and consistently cooperative. Additionally, most parents accompanied their child on site visits.

3. Parental Involvement (cont.)



Results and conclusions

Support workers' knowledge of an autistic person's family dynamics and personal life can help in the design of more tailored interventions. However, achieving a balance in parental involvement depends on factors such as the child's autonomy level, parents' availability, and their willingness to engage in the socio-professional integration process.

It is important to parents that their children feel valued in their work and have opportunities to develop various skills and autonomy.

The involvement of caring parents (e.g., help with transportation, daily encouragement) is a success indicator in autistic individuals' socio-professional integration process. However, parents must give the young person space to explain their own decisions, try different things, and make choices, even if it produces some discomfort. Parental involvement must be thoughtful and coordinated with support workers and family to ensure aligned interventions. Parents' help is often essential for so-called "administrative" tasks (maintaining routines, managing calls and schedules, providing transportation, etc.).

Photo > A participant learns how to pick cherry tomatoes in a greenhouse. © CISA, 2023.

4. Multi-Stakeholder Training

What was considered for collaboration and field support:

Through the literature review, we identified the concept of multi-stakeholder training. This idea suggests that it is beneficial for all parties involved in the integration process to have at least basic training in the relevant techniques. In other words, support staff must be trained in agri-food work to adequately assist the participant, while the agricultural supervisor should be trained or sensitized to the realities of autism and made aware of intervention methods and approaches suited to the individuals involved. We also decided that having a designated supervisor on site to guide and support the participants was a best practice that should be implemented. In addition to identifying the tasks to be performed, this person guides, supervises, and trains participants as they complete their tasks while also tracking their progress.

What was done:

- ✓ To support participants effectively in their agri-food activities, we identified a resource person within each host setting to assist and guide the participant in task completion. In each workplace, one individual was identified as the resource person responsible for planning and supervising the participants' work. These individuals had experience supporting people with employment challenges and were sensitive to the needs of autistic individuals
- ✓ At the INAB site, we realized that training and supervision were necessary to ensure that the designated supervisor felt at ease in providing guidance. We offered training to improve understanding of autism and provided support from teacher-researchers on site, as the supervisor had no prior intervention experience.
- ✓ In other internship settings, a special education worker was deployed to support and monitor participants in coordination with supervisors. However, formal training was not provided to them. These support staff were asked to accompany participants in their agricultural tasks to observe task execution and then make necessary adaptations. This allowed supervisors to accompany participants directly in their tasks, allowing support staff to gradually step back.

4. Multi-Stakeholder Training (cont.)

Results and conclusions

For field support

In our view, training for supervisors is essential to effectively support clients and provide appropriate interventions. During project experimentation, we noticed that despite staff members' experience and willingness to foster inclusion, training for designated resource staff remains critical. This is particularly important when assessing work and competencies to develop, increasing productivity, and planning skill-building for participants. In two out of three pilot workplaces, we found that the lack of training and resources limited participant progress; resource staff simply did not have the tools or time needed to further each participant's socio-professional development.

For collaboration

One of the first steps toward cross-sectoral collaboration is developing a shared understanding of the various stages of socio-professional integration, including a common language and perspective on the realities and challenges of workforce inclusion. Collaboration among different services is also essential to get to know the individual and their challenges, so as to properly orient the various integration processes.

This collaboration goes beyond transferring documentation and previous assessments. Support workers need opportunities to communicate directly in the field—this builds a fuller picture of the person and is much easier than going through managers. However, frequent staff turnover can weaken collaboration.

Within the Ausiris project, we observed existing collaboration among regional services, but more clarity is still needed regarding how each organization operates. Further work and dialogue are required to better align the needs, expectations, and realities of the various regional agencies.

In general, more open communication between services leads to better teamwork among support workers and, ultimately, to more coherent and coordinated interventions.



5. Adapted Intervention Strategies

What was considered:

When the project was first developed, adaptations focused mainly on the workplace environment for participants, rather than on tailored intervention strategies. Our aim was to develop support and interventions suited to the socio-professional needs and profile of each individual. Through discussions with project partners and a review of the literature, we identified key phases in the integration process for workplace inclusion. Depending on a person's background and abilities, a customized pathway can support both social and employment integration. Social engagement can foster social skills and facilitate exploration of different career sectors. Along the way, three phases need to be considered: pre-employability, employability development, and active workforce integration and retention. Each project participant received support tailored to their individual progress.

The diagram on the right presents the four phases of employability:

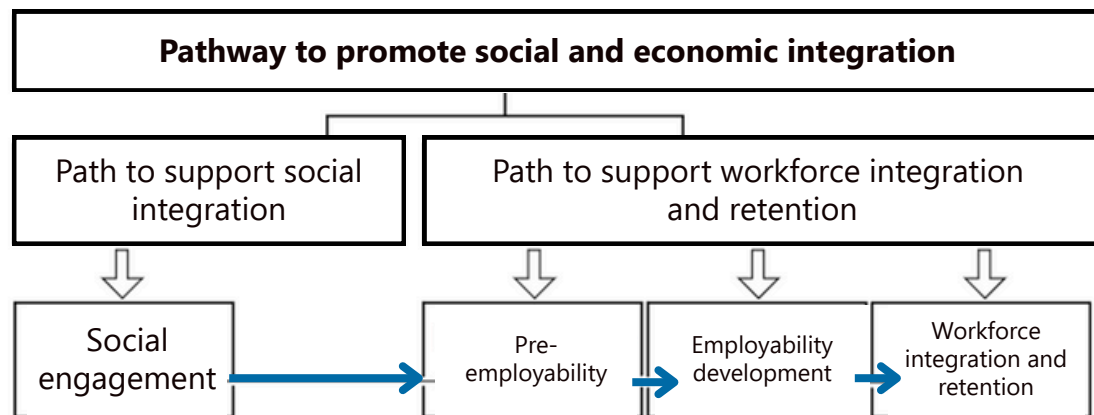


Figure 2 > Comité de la santé mentale du Québec. (2005). Pathway to promote social and economic integration: For better access to work. Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux.

5. Adapted Intervention Strategies (cont.)

What was done:

During internship activities, we focused on each participant's specific needs to determine what adaptations were necessary for their successful performance in the milieu. We developed learning tools for each task and adjusted schedules and job duties for each participant while considering the needs of the workplace. In line with the self-determination approach, we tried to respect participants' interests as much as possible when assigning tasks. For example, if someone was interested in cleaning duties, we reserved those tasks for them. We matched work activities to each participant's interests while recognizing that they still needed to perform a variety of tasks within the business or organization.

Results and conclusions

We concluded that it is important to use strategies tailored to each person to help them develop their skills and competencies. Ongoing observation, follow-up, and assessment are essential to ensure continuous progress in the development of their abilities. The individualized approach enabled us to address the unique needs of each participant. We designed the experience around the person—their strengths and their challenges. However, we wanted to go beyond simply providing occupational activities and focus on building socio-professional skills that would help participants on their path toward employability. Nevertheless, even with this personalized support, we were unable to achieve employability for every intern.

On the right and on the following page are some examples of adapted intervention strategies:



Flexible scheduling: Adjusting the type of task and its timing throughout the day to make completion easier. Helping interns adapt to task changes over the course of each day.



Adjusting schedules based on interns' availability: Determining daily work hours and weekly availability.



Addressing one aspect at a time: Focusing on a single life area, for example, building employability skills before working toward independent living.



Progressive learning and change: Helping interns acquire skills and adapt gradually.



Teaching and feedback approach: Using positive communication, a supportive attitude, and careful word choice for instructions and feedback. Referring to learning tools so that interns can assess their own performance and identify mistakes independently, rather than receiving criticism from someone else.

5. Adapted Intervention Strategies (cont.)

Results and conclusions (cont.)



Setting clear work goals: Some interns are motivated when they have specific targets, such as completing an order by a certain time.



Small-group work: Working with other people, including other autistic individuals, encourages interest in, tolerance of, and openness toward others. This improves active listening as well as the ability to ask questions and discuss different topics.



Adjusting work pace: Respecting each person's individual pace for learning and working.



Sustained support in the work setting: It is essential for interns to be accompanied either by a support worker or a workplace supervisor to help them fully understand and carry out their tasks.



Training and sensitization in the work setting: Workplaces benefited from guidance from support staff and certain members of the research team on ways to best support participants.



Planning work: Organizing tasks and the day ahead of time and communicating plans clearly to participants when they arrive.



Establishing a routine: Routines help participants feel secure.



Limiting exposure to sensory stimuli: Reducing sensory overload (number of people, sounds, smells, heat, insects) benefits some individuals; providing calming spaces in the workplace can help.



Supervision: Establishing ground rules and breaks to ensure a successful internship experience. Rules for using shared spaces also help the workflow and limit frustrations (e.g., ensuring tools are put away after use).



Photo > A participant learns how to identify which squash to harvest, alongside their support worker and the project leader. © CISA, 2024.

6. Matching and Alignment

What was considered:

The project was designed based on a self-determination approach—meaning participants were encouraged to choose their own internship setting based on their interests and work skills. Having an interest in agri-food, or at least in related activities, was essential for participating in the project. In our research on model environments, we identified the farm crews established by the Pleins rayons organization, which allow young people to engage in agricultural or horticultural work on farms or private properties. The farm crew is an excellent example of an activity that enables participants to explore a range of tasks within the agricultural sector.

What was done:

We wanted to encourage project participants to explore various sites for their internships, unless they had already chosen a preferred setting. To introduce the different environments, we organized visits to businesses so participants and their parents could see the workplace and different workspaces. It was crucial for participants to show an interest in the environment to ensure a good match. The project also enabled some participants to explore agri-food settings to see if this type of work suited them. In some cases, participants were able to experience these environments by getting involved in local organizations, such as those engaged in gleaning activities.



Photo > A participant washes potatoes before they are processed. © CISA, 2024.

6. Matching and Alignment (cont.)

Results and conclusions

- Determining whether there is real potential in pairing a participant with a workplace is key; if so, both the participant and the employer should be prepared for the challenges some tasks can present.
- Expectations and progress steps need to be concrete and clearly stated from the beginning of the process.
- Parents, support staff, and workplace supervisors must all navigate between their expectations regarding employability and the reality, interests, and motivation of the participant.
- Establishing a strong match between participant and workplace depends not just on interests, but also on geographic accessibility (distance and transportation options).

It is essential that job duties suit the participant's interests and abilities, and that the work environment itself—especially in terms of openness and awareness—supports true inclusion.

This includes, for example, having someone on site who is willing to welcome the person with employment barriers and serve as a key resource.

If inclusion depends solely on a single staff member who has been made aware of the mission, the integration of an autistic person becomes more tenuous.



Photo > A support worker and the project leader discuss tasks with a participant at INAB. © CISA, 2024.

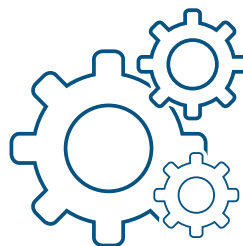
7. Learning Tool Preparation

What was considered:

The research team's initial goal was to support participants in the Ausiris project in learning how to perform tasks, and to provide host workplaces with the tools required for adequate guidance and successful task completion. By setting up the pilot project and experimenting in three different settings, we were able to test and develop several tools.

What was done:

Various learning tools were created and used by support workers and participants to accomplish tasks.



Examples of tools include:

- A work plan outlining the sequence of daily activities;
- The use of models to show examples of ripe fruits or vegetables ready for harvest;
- A whiteboard for writing or drawing out step-by-step instructions;
- A worksheet with visuals or simple words describing the task or the desired outcome;
- Task demonstrations;
- Identification of numbers (on a scale);
- Use of a timer to indicate when activities start or finish;
- Use of a walkie-talkie to communicate progress or completion of tasks (when a participant is working alone).

Results and conclusions

These tools helped interns understand and perform their tasks while also promoting greater independence on a daily basis. They also significantly lightened the workload for supervisors. Learning tools were developed according to the needs of participants in each workplace. In one setting, the tools already in use by staff were sufficient to meet participants' needs.

8. Adaptation of the Environment

What was considered:

At first, several physical adaptations to the environment were considered, given that they appeared necessary for participants' integration and development.

What was done:

- ✓ In practice, there were no major physical modifications made to the various work settings. Existing spaces and facilities within these businesses were used by participants to meet their needs. At INAB, the focus was more on organizing and structuring work (such as breaking down and varying tasks) in an environment that is comprehensive and responsive to the needs of autistic individuals.
- ✓ We also adjusted the schedule based on the needs of the different INAB users, to coordinate the use of available spaces. That said, INAB's physical environment and pedagogical approach set it apart from other contexts.
- ✓ Recognizing that some individuals would struggle with overly intense sensory experiences, technical tools were introduced at INAB to help prevent participants from getting dirty, wet, or spending too much time in uncomfortable positions. They used gloves, knee pads, mosquito nets, rain ponchos, and benches while carrying out their tasks. In other workplaces, interns also used gloves when working in refrigerated areas.

Results and conclusions

Workplaces were very considerate and flexible when it came to adapting tasks and schedules to participants' needs and realities. However, it is important to sensitize and train on-site staff so that they may better understand autism and its related needs. Ideally, integrating an autistic individual should not be left up to a single person in the organization, but rather involve the whole team and a clear process for integration and retention.

9. Work Experience (tasks and progress)

What was considered:

The original intention of the project was to discover agri-food operations in a variety of settings, with an exploratory rather than a productivity orientation. The goal was to see which tasks participants could learn and perform, and how best to teach them these tasks. Our aim was to address the needs of autistic individuals while also observing how well those needs could be accommodated in diverse workplaces.



Photo > A participant prepares harvested garlic cloves. © CISA, 2023.

What was done:

Participants were closely followed by support staff: clinical counsellors, special education technicians, interns in special education, teacher-researchers, and workplace supervisors. As the weeks went on, the presence of support staff was gradually withdrawn as participants progressed. A variety of tasks were explored depending on the season and the needs of each workplace. At INAB, every task completed was documented based on the seasonal work calendar and each participant's skill level (using the tool described in the Appendix).

Results and conclusions

In general, participants made progress in their learning, whether in psychosocial aspects or in job tasks. For those employed for the first time, progress was sometimes more limited compared to participants with prior work experience. In some cases, additional focus on psychosocial skills contributed to reducing anxiety and fostering a more positive internship experience. Some participants even became more comfortable with unfamiliar people coming and going at the workplace. Support staff noted improvements in task memorization, quality, speed of task completion, and participants' initiative in starting tasks.

10. Participant Assessment

What was considered:

To assess project participants, we planned to work with the existing tools used by partner organizations to support participants. We discovered that there were actually numerous tools in use and that each support worker used their own tools to meet their clients' needs.

What was done:

From the outset, we asked research partners about the assessment tools they used with their clients. We also addressed this question at the three model sites we met with at the start of the project. We found that each organization uses different assessment tools. Each tool has its strengths and weaknesses, and none is specifically designed for autistic individuals in the context of socio-professional integration.

As a result, we began to develop a draft version of an assessment tool for autistic individuals in agri-food settings. Based on the resources shared by our partners, we identified the most relevant elements and developed a tool suited to socio-professional integration in agri-food environments. We also created three typical profiles of project participants ([see Personas in the Appendices](#)) to support host sites and intervention staff in the future.

The aspects we evaluated for the project include participant information, educational background, disability category, work or internship experience and associated tasks, sources of income, work interest profile, areas of special interest, and health information. We also added a grid to identify each participant's socio-professional skills.



Photo > A participant is busy washing potatoes. © CISA, 2025

Results and Conclusions for the Ausiris Action Research Project

Research implications for support workers

The research enabled the testing of tools and approaches with participants, which proved beneficial for them. Support workers found that immersion in the workplace, without pressure, helped participants learn different tasks. The socio-professional integration pathway piloted at INAB should therefore be reproduced. Support workers also reported gaining valuable insights from the research process pertaining to innovative models, integration strategies, critical reflection on current practices, bridge-building between organizations, better communication, and increased knowledge of different stakeholders and how they operate.

Their participation brought flexibility, openness, shared expertise, and the pleasure of working collaboratively (as a team) with certain support staff. Some even mentioned that the research has the potential to impact their organization more broadly.

The challenge of involving support workers in research

Support workers found the research framework and timelines challenging in terms of pace, necessitating various adjustments. For some support workers, the time commitment and level of involvement required for various collaborative meetings sometimes felt demanding.



Photo > A participant weighing and packaging cherry tomatoes from the greenhouse at INAB. © CISA, 2025.

Results and Conclusions for the Ausiris Action Research Project (cont.)

Recommended improvements

For parents

Some parents said they would have liked more communication about their child's progress. This is a complex issue, as some young adults did not want certain information shared with their parents for privacy reasons. However, for support workers and parents, if a participant is not independent, some information must be communicated.

For participants

It is recommended to allow participants to take breaks in common areas or, ideally, in quieter spaces where they can recover from environmental stimuli.

For supervisors

Supervisors in settings other than INAB expressed that they would have liked closer follow-up with support workers. Better coordination between supervisors and support workers would allow interns to progress further. Smoother communication and more aligned practices among support staff would lead to more coherent and effective interventions.

Concerning the scenario

It would have been helpful to define clearer boundaries for socio-professional integration and to set more realistic targets for workforce integration for the participants.

Photo > Steering committee meeting. © CISA, 2023.

Results and Conclusions for the Ausiris Action Research Project (cont.)

Project strengths

- Tool development, especially at INAB, occurred in a welcoming and safe work environment where participants were treated as part of a large extended family.
- Training for the INAB supervision team was provided by the teaching staff and support workers. The social mission—emphasizing inclusion over performance—supported group cohesion and encouraged steady, individualized progress.
- Assessing the host settings made it possible to determine which tasks could be matched to interns with employment barriers.
- Documenting exemplary (model) workplaces was an important step in structuring the project's foundation.
- The existence of a learning setting like INAB, which brings participants in, trains them, and suggests suitable tasks, is a real asset in the region.
- Collaboration between different organizations facilitated communication and sparked collective reflection. Working as a team, sharing expertise and practices, and fostering a sense of belonging (enhanced by Ausiris's strong visual identity) are all considered essential success factors for projects of this kind.

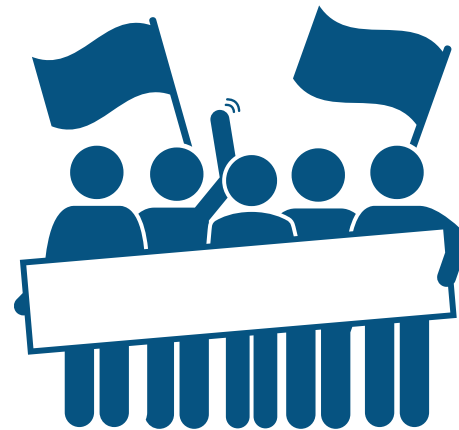


Photo > Preparing for apple harvesting. © CISA, 2023.

Recognizing the Transversal Role of Support

Support workers' interactions with participants:

- Challenges related to emotional regulation (no filter) must be accounted for.
 - Being surrounded by calm people who do not show anxiety proved helpful.
 - A strong focus on a particular interest can sometimes limit enthusiasm for trying new tasks or activities not directly connected to those interests. Support workers are encouraged to gently push participants out of these comfort zones when possible.
 - Successful approaches include modeling, treating participants as equals, remaining calm and present, avoiding a posture of authority, recognizing non-verbal cues, and avoiding infantilizing.
 - Knowing the family dynamic and personal history of an autistic person helps support workers tailor interventions more effectively.
 - Parental involvement should be considered and discussed to align support worker and family interventions, with parents often helping with “administrative” matters such as routines, calls, schedules, and transportation.
- Participants' progress in their learning and change should be gradual; psychosocial support may be necessary to reduce anxiety and foster a positive internship experience.
 - A blend of socio-professional and psychosocial guidance is essential.
 - While the work integration setting requires constant supervision, during an internship, support workers can step back as participants become more autonomous. Moving from a structured work environment to an internship can be challenging, even when participants are potentially capable of making the transition.
 - In addition to site supervisors, clinical support workers play a particularly important role for participants with more complex diagnoses. They are skilled at teaching and adapting instructions for tasks.
 - People familiar with the various programs available are key to properly supporting the process of socio-professional integration.



Recognizing the Transversal Role of Support (cont.)

Supervisors' interactions with participants:

- On-site supervision is essential to ensure stability and support for participants. These resource people play a key role in identifying tasks, organizing workstations, and guiding participants throughout their activities.
- The supervision team must be capable of adjusting to each participant's individual needs. A relaxed and friendly environment is appreciated, but it is equally important for supervisors to treat participants as equals and avoid being overly protective.
- Supervisors should encourage participants to develop their skills and challenge themselves, rather than settling for functional participation alone.
- A designated resource person in the workplace is needed.
- Personalized support for each individual must be implemented (by adapting tasks, schedules, and so on).
- Special attention should be paid to tone and word choice when giving instructions or feedback about tasks that could read as criticism.

- A lack of continuity in the use of tools and approaches can harm participants' autonomy and limit their progress.
- Organizational support is essential so that supervisors can provide proper support for participants.

Support workers' interactions with supervisors:

Ideally, supervisors should have training in both agri-food work and psychosocial intervention; if this is not the case, close teamwork through collaboration with support workers is necessary. If support workers are unfamiliar with a certain task, it can be useful to provide them with hands-on experience so that they can better grasp what is expected.



Photo > Vegetable processing with a participant and intervention team members. © CISA, 2023.

Recognizing the Transversal Role of Support (cont.)



Support workers' interactions with the work setting:

- It can be difficult to determine how satisfied a participant feels with a particular task or about the internship in general.
- A participant's narrow range of interests may dominate conversations, which can become tiresome for colleagues and make it harder to build relationships when dialogue is lacking. Those in the work setting should receive awareness training.
- Supervisors, in particular, must receive awareness training, as much of the intervention relies on them. The workplace should be open to learning and acquiring knowledge about approaches for working with participants.
- It is important for those in the workplace to be aware of the characteristics of autistic people and, above all, to be sensitive to the participant's needs and limits so that tailored and structured tools can be put in place. Assigning a designated resource person is essential.
- Striking a balance between letting the participant do preferred tasks and encouraging them to try new ones is important. Success is usually linked to whether the tasks match the participant's interests.
- Flexibility is needed for scheduling, work hours, breaks, and the adjustment of tasks and expectations based on the participant's state (such as fatigue or limited availability for a specific task).
- For supervisors, the right tools lighten their supervision duties and prevent unnecessary repetition of steps, saving time overall.
- Employers should understand that they and/or the designated resource person need to devote time to building a trusting relationship with support workers, as well as to following up to assess and contribute to participant progress. Regular monitoring is important, since there is a fine line between adding tasks to keep a participant stimulated and respecting their limits while ensuring the job is done well.
- Having a support worker in the workplace can make it easier for an autistic person to integrate and adapt while also raising awareness and providing resources for the rest of the team. Support workers can gradually step back as participants progress.
- While participants need to achieve a certain level of productivity for an employer to continue their integration, focusing on productivity right from the start can hinder the process. It is better to proceed gradually.
- The role of the employability support worker is to assess the participant's performance and productivity and provide a realistic view of expectations.
- Learning to be comfortable in the work setting is a gradual process, so employers need to be patient.
- Pressure is counterproductive; it leads to rushed work and increased anxiety. Participants are often aware of the expectations that the organization and staff have of them. Concerns about productivity and output are a major barrier to integrating participants as regular workers.

Bibliography

Caouette, M., Proulx, J., Lebeau, É., & Pellerin, S. (2019). Identification et évaluation de modèles de services socioprofessionnels et communautaires afin de dégager des pratiques porteuses soutenant l'autodétermination et la participation sociale d'adultes présentant un TSA ou une DI [Research report submitted to the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec and to the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux du Québec]. Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières.

Comité de la santé mentale du Québec. (2005). Le parcours pour favoriser l'intégration sociale et économique: Pour un meilleur accès au travail. Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux.

Torquati, B., Stefani, G., Massini, G., Cecchini, L., Chiorri, M., & Paffarini, C. (2019). Social farming and work inclusion initiatives for adults with autism spectrum disorders: A pilot study. *NJAS: Wageningen Journal of Life Sciences*, 88(1), 10–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.njas.2019.02.001>



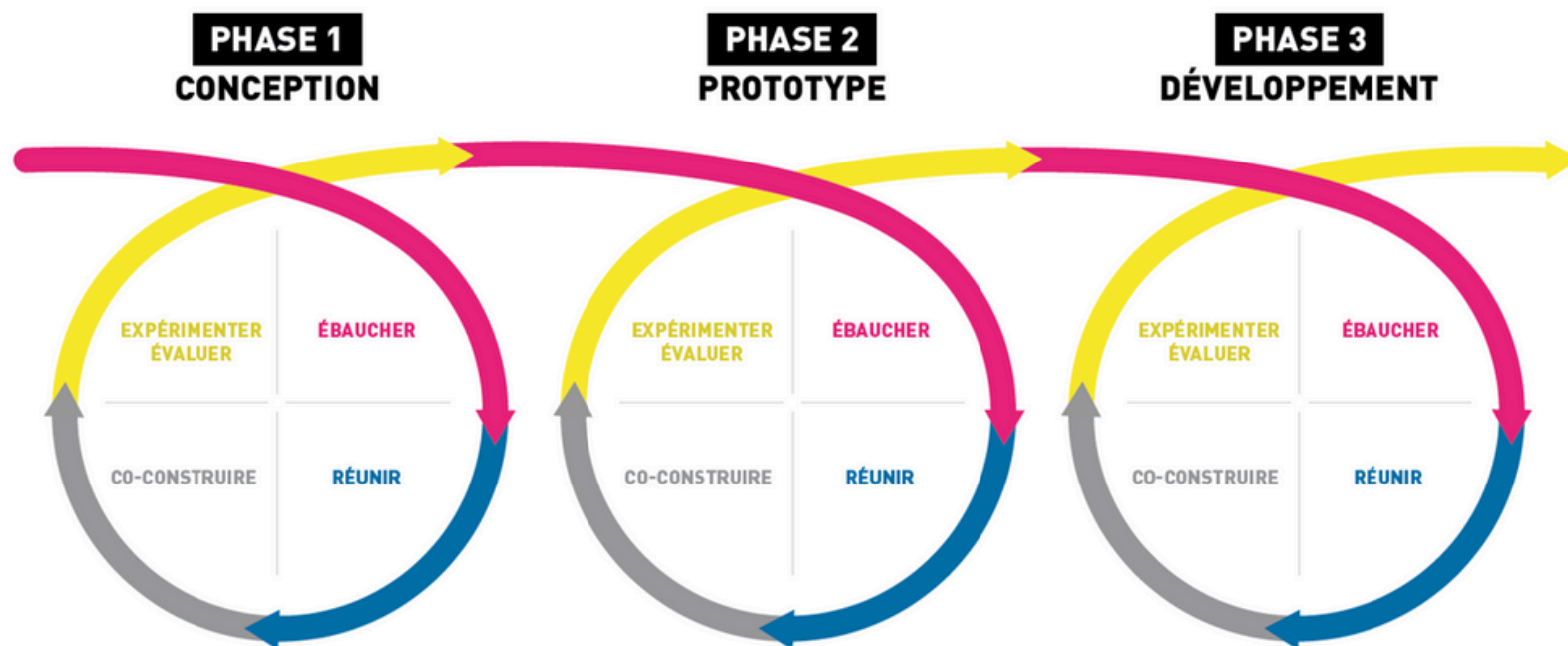
Appendices

> *For further information*

These appendices is provided only in its original French version

Processus du laboratoire vivant (Living Lab)

PROCESSUS DE RECHERCHE EN MODE LABORATOIRE VIVANT



Dispositif de recherche-action prenant la forme d'un espace d'intermédiation ouvert et évolutif mettant en relation une multiplicité d'acteurs afin de cocréer, d'expérimenter et d'évaluer des stratégies innovantes répondant à un besoin social défini.

Journal de bord

Prénom, Nom (stagiaire) :

Milieu d'accueil (lieu du stage) :



DATE :	Type de tâche(s) réalisée(s) :	Description de la/des tâche(s) :	Personne(s) présente(s) sur le milieu d'accueil :

Questions à se poser en lien avec la tâche

1. Comment évaluez-vous la capacité du stagiaire à demandeur de l'aide pour la réalisation de la/des tâche(s) aujourd'hui?	
2. Est-ce que le stagiaire était en mesure de reconnaitre ses erreurs et de les corriger ?	
3. Quelle est votre évaluation du niveau d' autonomie du stagiaire dans la réalisation de la/les tâche(s) aujourd'hui?	
3.1. Quels moyens ou techniques d'intervention ont été utilisés afin de favoriser l' autonomie du stagiaire dans la réalisation de ses tâches?	
4. Quelle est votre évaluation du niveau de concentration du stagiaire dans la réalisation de la/les tâche(s) aujourd'hui?	

Journal de bord

Prénom, Nom (stagiaire) :

Milieu d'accueil (lieu du stage) :



DATE :	Type de tâche(s) réalisée(s) :	Description de la/des tâche(s) :	Personne(s) présente(s) sur le milieu d'accueil :

Questions à se poser en lien avec la tâche

1. Comment évaluez-vous la capacité du stagiaire à demandeur de l'aide pour la réalisation de la/des tâche(s) aujourd'hui?	
2. Est-ce que le stagiaire était en mesure de reconnaître ses erreurs et de les corriger ?	
3. Quelle est votre évaluation du niveau d' autonomie du stagiaire dans la réalisation de la/les tâche(s) aujourd'hui?	
3.1. Quels moyens ou techniques d'intervention ont été utilisés afin de favoriser l' autonomie du stagiaire dans la réalisation de ses tâches?	
4. Quelle est votre évaluation du niveau de concentration du stagiaire dans la réalisation de la/les tâche(s) aujourd'hui?	

Exemple de grille de tâches

Tâche à défi :	Salle de conditionnement				Chapelles (environnement exigeant)					Rucher					Foret nourricière et étang	
	Lavage de légumes				Effeuilage										Récolte prunes et cerises a venir dans queleus années autour de l'Étang	
	Emballage				Récolte											
	Etiquettage de l'emballage				Enlever les bagues											
	Monter des boites				Arracher les plants											
	Emballage sous vide				Sortir les rebus de cultures											
	Congélation				Vider et remplir les pédiluves											
	Préparer du matériel				Tuteurer											Tuteurer
					Préparer du matériel											
Moyennement exigeant	Trier /qualité du produit				Passer le balais sous les tables (chapelle 1)					Faire des chandelles					Tonte, fouet	
	Remplir / vider Freego				Désherbage										Désherbage	
	Remplir FLS				Arrosage											Récolter température chaude
	Préparation des paniers															
Exigeant	Préparation de commandes				Faire du terreau											
	Remplir les registres de récoltes				Lavage à pression						Extraction du miel					
	Planifier l'approvisionnement du FLS															
	Téléphoner les clients															
	Accueillir le client															
	Opérations informatiques															
* Notez que chaque tâche peut être adaptée en terme de temps, d'accompagnement et peut être simplifiée.																
*Légende :	Été															
	Automne															
	Hiver															
	Printemps															

Fondé en 2015, Pleins Rayons est un organisme à but non lucratif (OBNL) qui a pour objectif de donner un rôle social actif aux jeunes adultes présentant une déficience intellectuelle ou un trouble du spectre de l'autisme qui ne trouvent pas leur place dans le système. Ils offrent leurs services à une soixantaine de jeunes sur une base hebdomadaire.

PLEINS RAYONS | MRC BROME-MISSISQUOI ET MRC HAUTE YAMASKA

Mission	Favoriser l'inclusion sociale réussie de jeunes adultes en leur offrant la chance d'acquérir des habiletés socioprofessionnelles à travers des projets d'économie sociale ou d'activités de loisirs thérapeutiques.
Clientèles	Jeunes adultes de 16 ans et plus ayant une déficience intellectuelle et/ou un trouble du spectre de l'autisme.

Services

- Intégration sociale
- Intégration socioprofessionnelle
- 23 stations d'apprentissages différentes (mécanique vélo, menuiserie, couture, horticulture, entre autres)

Partenaires

- Centres de services scolaires de la région de Brome-Missisquoi (6 écoles secondaires de la région)
- Entreprises de la région (plus de 75 entreprises)

Financement

- Entente avec le Centre de services scolaires via le programme ISP (insertion socioprofessionnelle) pour 3 technicien(-ne)s en éducation spécialisée
- Programme « Mesure de formation » de Service Québec
- Programme fédéral « Prêts, disponibles et capables » pour l'intégration et le maintien en entreprises
- Fondations privées



FORCES

Proposition de valeur

- Approche globale et individualisée
- Approche relationnelle (lien d'attachement)
- Accompagnement sur l'ensemble de la transition école vie active et du processus d'insertion socioprofessionnelle
- Approche d'entrepreneuriat sociale au service de la communauté
- Diversité des expériences offertes et capacité d'adaptation aux individus
- Approche favorisant l'autodétermination
- Accompagnement, formation et coaching en entreprises
- Développement du concept de rôle social actif



DÉFIS

principaux à relever

- Obtenir du financement récurrent
- Obtenir une reconnaissance gouvernementale
- Difficulté à s'insérer dans les programmes provinciaux existants
- Le transport des participants dans la région



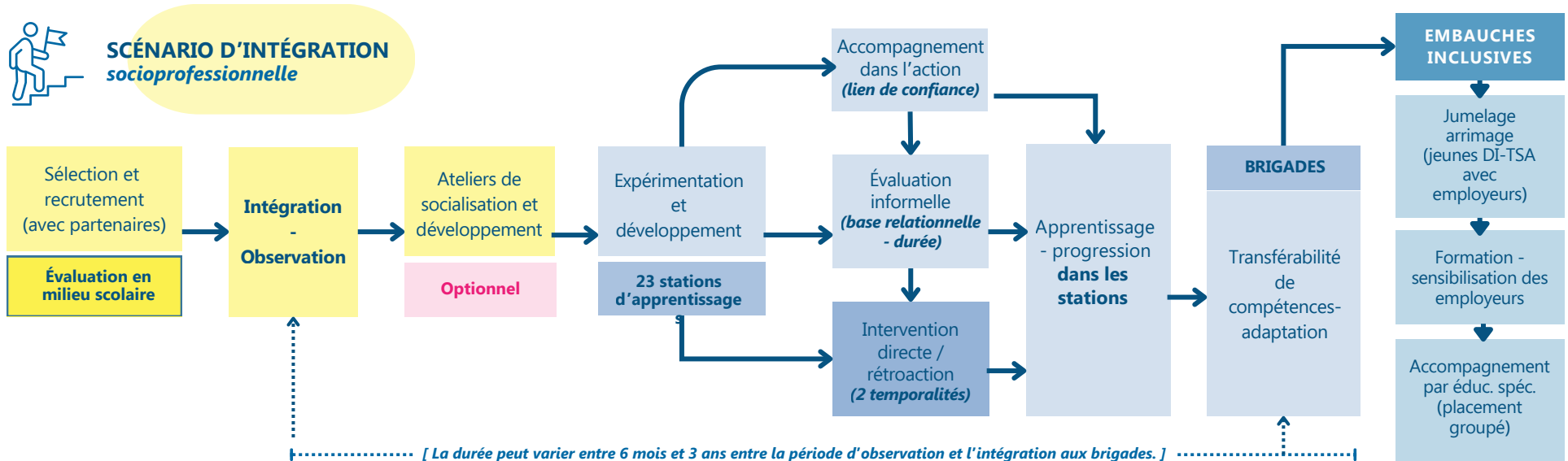
790, rue du Sud,
Cowansville (Québec) J2K 2Y3

450 263-5300 | pleinsrayons.ca

PLEINS RAYONS | MRC BROME-MISSISQUOI ET MRC HAUTE YAMASKA



SCÉNARIO D'INTÉGRATION socioprofessionnelle



BÉNÉVOLAT

INTÉGRATION
SOCIALE

INTÉGRATION
SOCIOPROFESSIONNELLE

EMBAUCHE
INCLUSIVE

Un outil développé dans le cadre du projet de recherche-action

cisainnovation.com



Un projet
pilote par



CISA
INNOVATION SOCIALE
AGRICULTURE • ALIMENTATION
INAB TV CÉGEP DE VICTORIAVILLE

Autisme Laval a été fondé en 1995 et regroupe de nombreux services pour les personnes autistes de tout âge et leur famille (centre de jour, camps de jour, camp d'été, formation, activités de loisirs, hébergement accompagné, etc). Le projet de la Bioferme (portée par Les Entreprises Qualité de Vie Ltée) a vu le jour en 2003 dans le but d'offrir un plateau de travail aux personnes autistes de 21 et plus et d'ajouter des services socioprofessionnels à cette clientèle.

155, boul. Je Me Souviens
Laval (Québec) H7L 1V6

450 962-5532 | autismelaval.org

AUTISME LAVAL | BIOFERME LAVAL (LES ENTREPRISES QUALITÉ DE VIE LTÉE)

Mission	Promouvoir les droits et les intérêts des personnes atteintes et de leur famille. Déterminer les besoins des personnes atteintes et de celles qui en ont la responsabilité et y répondre par le biais de services spécialisés.
Clientèles	Personne présentant un trouble du spectre de l'autisme: petite enfance, enfance, adolescents ainsi que les adultes de Laval avec ou sans déficience intellectuelle pour Autisme Laval. Les services de la Bioferme s'adressent aux jeunes de 16 à 21 ans et aux adultes de 21 ans et plus. La participation est sur une période de 3 à 5 jours par semaine.

Services

- 5 plateaux de travail : service d'emballage en sous-traitance; agriculture; agrotourisme; artisanat et entretien
- Apprentissages visant l'autonomie (cuisiner, épicerie, hygiène, etc.)

Partenaires

- Centre de services scolaires de Laval (16-21 ans)
- CISSS de Laval (21 et +)
- Autres organismes communautaires de la région (SEMO, etc.)

Financement

- Programme de soutien aux organismes communautaires (PSOC)
- Autofinancement, modèle d'économie sociale
- Levée de fonds



FORCES Proposition de valeur

- Expérience en contexte de travail réelle, mais accompagnée par une ressource spécialisée
- Diversité des expériences offertes et capacité d'adaptation aux individus
- Réseau de partenaires (Public: santé, éducation, privé et philanthropique)
- Intégré dans un continuum de services auprès des personnes autistes et leur famille
- Approche d'entrepreneuriat sociale au service de la communauté



DÉFIS principaux à relever

- Le financement et la rentabilité des activités socioprofessionnelles (agricoles particulièrement)
- La mobilisation des partenaires pour de l'accompagnement à la ferme



AUTISME LAVAL

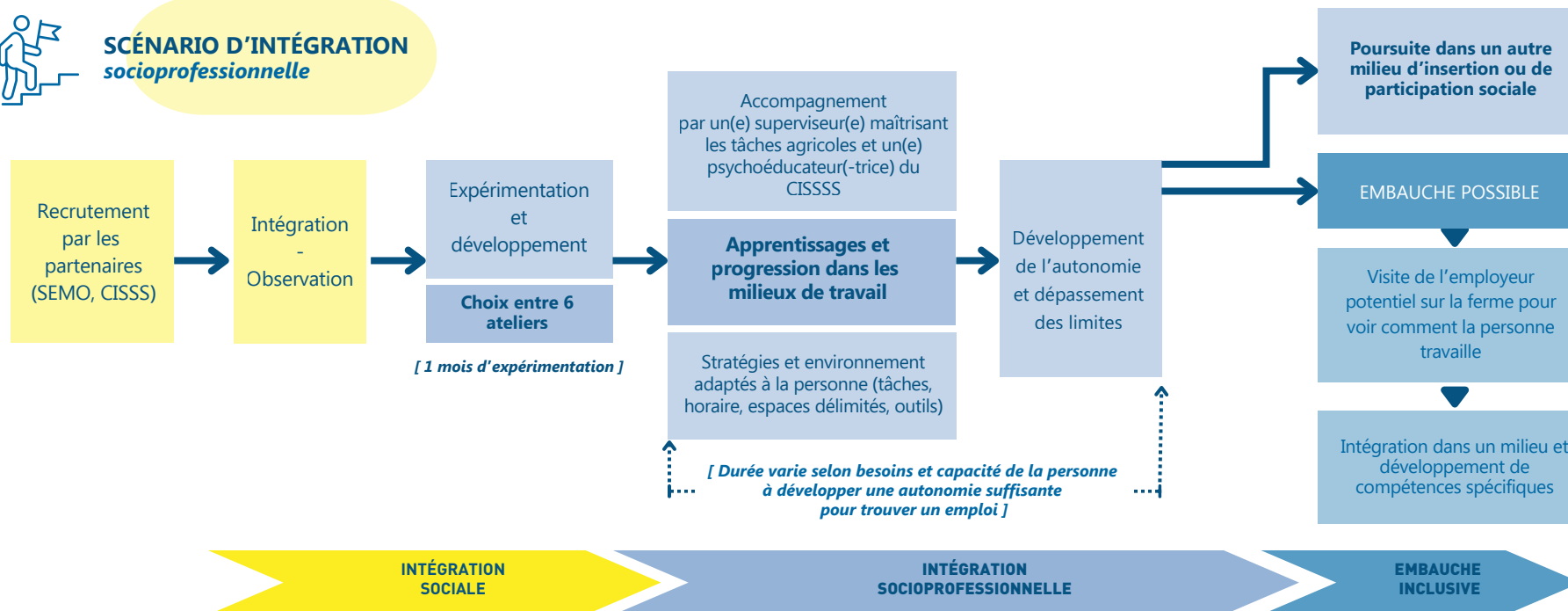
155, boul. Je Me Souviens
Laval (Québec) H7L 1V6

450 962-5532 | autismelaval.org

AUTISME LAVAL | BIOFERME LAVAL (LES ENTREPRISES QUALITÉ DE VIE LTÉE)



SCÉNARIO D'INTÉGRATION socioprofessionnelle



INTÉGRATION
SOCIALE

INTÉGRATION
SOCIOPROFessionNELLE

EMBAUCHE
INCLUSIVE

Un outil développé dans le cadre du projet de recherche-action

cisainnovation.com



Un projet
pilote par



CISA
INNOVATION SOCIALE
AGRICULTURE • ALIMENTATION
INAB TV CÉGEP DE VICTORIAVILLE

Fondé en 2003, le Réseau de l'intégration à l'emploi de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue (RIEAT) est un organisme à but non lucratif (OBNL) offrant comme activité de la formation et de l'intégration en milieu de travail aux personnes handicapées. Le RIEAT est doté d'une structure de collaboration interorganismes qui regroupe l'ensemble de la région et qui est composée de comités de gestion, de coordination et de comités cliniques à l'échelle locale.

RÉSEAU DE L'INTÉGRATION À L'EMPLOI (RIEAT) | ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE

Mission	Favoriser une intégration sur le marché du travail de personnes ayant diverses limitations significatives et persistantes.
Clientèles	Adultes ayant des limitations significatives et persistantes à l'emploi : déficience physique, trouble du spectre de l'autisme (TSA), déficience intellectuelle (DI) et enjeux de santé mentale.

Services

Le Milieu de formation et de travail adaptés (MFTA) offre un lieu d'apprentissage aux habitudes de travail. Avec la mise en place d'un Plan d'Intégration Individualisé au Travail (PIIT), les personnes présentant des incapacités significatives et persistantes ont l'occasion de développer leur plein potentiel par le biais d'un milieu de formation et de travail adaptés et d'ainsi favoriser leur intégration socioprofessionnelle et le développement d'attitudes, d'aptitudes et d'habiletés préalables à l'intégration et au maintien en emploi. Le MFTA se distingue comme service socioprofessionnel par l'intensité de supervision offerte aux participants. Le MFTA offre des programmes en pré-employabilité et en employabilité.

Partenaires

- CISSS Abitibi-Témiscamingue
- Centres de services scolaires
- Organismes communautaires
- Entreprises de la région

Financement

- CISSS Abitibi-Témiscamingue
- Services Québec
- Sphère-Québec



FORCES Proposition de valeur

- Réseau de partenaires (Public : santé, éducation, emploi et privé : entreprises)
- Structure de gouvernance et de fonctionnement intersectorielle
- Spécialistes en transition de service et évaluation de besoin
- Approche interdisciplinaire
- Approche relationnelle (lien d'attachement)
- L'intensité de l'accompagnement individuel offert en milieu de travail (coaching en emploi)
- Accompagnement, formation et coaching en milieu de travail (modélisation de la tâche)
- Programme microgradué et outils éprouvés en préemployabilité et en développement de l'employabilité
- Son approche, ses outils et son coordonnateur favorisent la communication (personne-milieu-intervenants)



DÉFI principal à relever

- Concertation et adaptation aux prérogatives de chaque partenaire

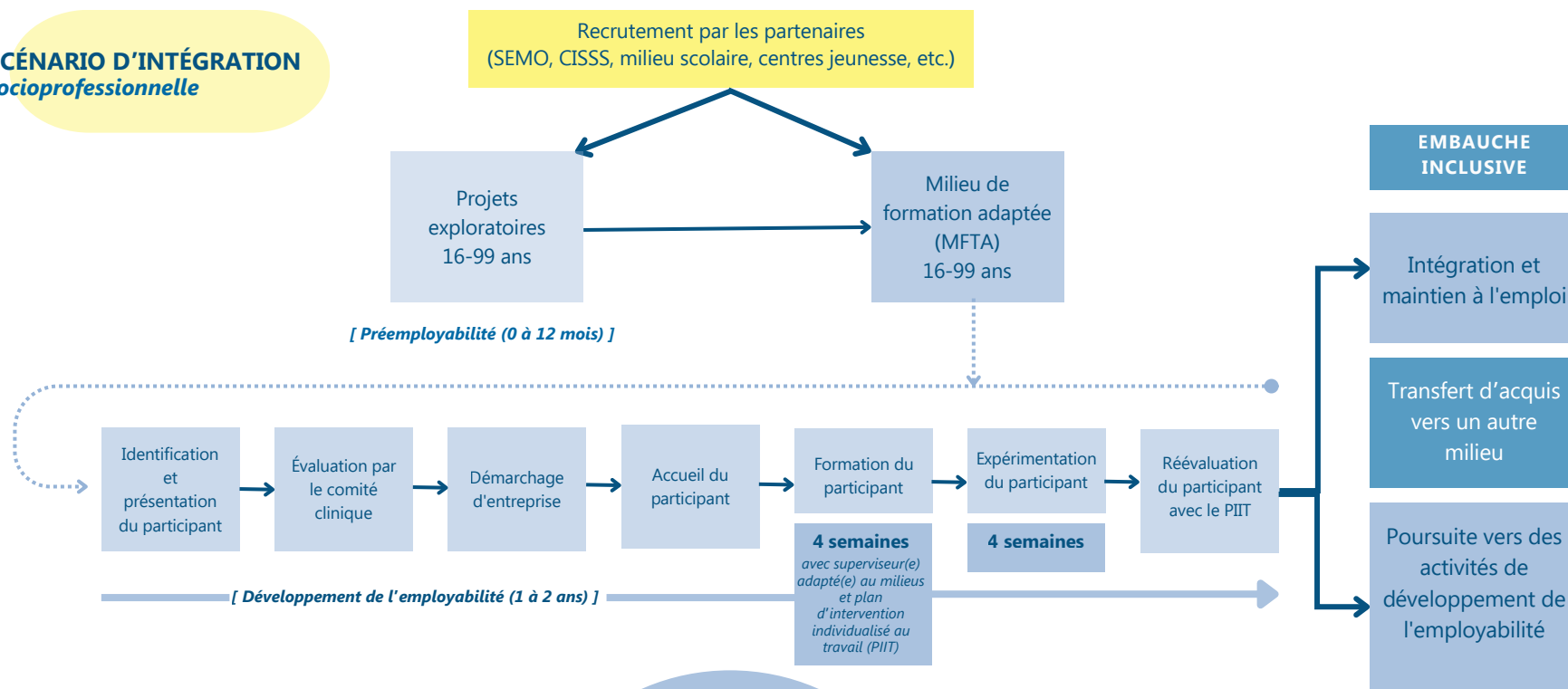


819 763-8959 | rieat.ca

RÉSEAU DE L'INTÉGRATION À L'EMPLOI (RIEAT) | ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE



SCÉNARIO D'INTÉGRATION socioprofessionnelle



Un outil développé dans le cadre du projet de recherche-action

cisainnovation.com



Un projet
pilote par



CISA
INNOVATION SOCIALE
AGRICULTURE • ALIMENTATION
INAB TV CÉGEP DE VICTORIAVILLE



FICHE
PERSONA

L'ouvrier polyvalent

Confiez-moi
ces tâches



emballer



méthode/recette



placer / classer



nettoyer



empaqueter



étiqueter



couper



peser / mesurer



cueillir



Pour être heureux au travail,
j'ai besoin :

- ✓ de sentir que je fais partie du groupe
- ✓ de sentir que je contribue à la mission
- ✓ de m'appuyer sur une liste de tâches à faire ou d'étapes à réaliser
- ✓ d'apprendre en vous observant (apprentissage par modelage)

« Avec un petit peu
d'adaptation, je peux
m'adapter à beaucoup
de milieux. »

Mon degré d'adaptation
en milieu de travail

Niveau d'autisme

Niveau 1 (léger)

Niveau de scolarité

secondaire 5 ou équivalent

Communication/Interaction sociale

bonne (difficultés mineures)

Rigidité comportementale

mineure

Autonomie

bonne (légère supervision)

Résilience face au changement

je m'adapte plutôt bien



L'ouvrier spécialisé

Je préfère
ces tâches



nourrir
les animaux



nettoyer



étiqueter



entretien
léger



peser / mesurer



cueillir

... ou toute autre tâche pour laquelle
je peux avoir de l'intérêt, appuyées
par quelques pictos et des consignes
détaillées svp!



Pour être heureux au travail,
j'ai besoin :

- ✓ de m'appuyer sur une liste de d'étapes illustrées pour pouvoir comparer
- ✓ que vous m'identifiez visuellement les outils dont j'aurai besoin pour réaliser mes tâches
- ✓ de m'accorder plusieurs petites pauses, idéalement dans un espace en retrait
- ✓ de faire une rotation des tâches et d'un horaire flexible

« J'aime quand on me
montre un modèle : j'ai
besoin que la consigne
soit claire. »

Mon degré d'adaptation
en milieu de travail

Niveau d'autisme

niveau 2 (modéré)

Niveau de scolarité

parcours scolaire adapté

Communication/Interaction sociale

moyenne (difficulté d'interprétation)

Rigidité comportementale

importante (intérêts restreints)

Autonomie

moyenne (encadrement essentiel)

Résilience face au changement

je suis peu à l'aise avec la nouveauté

L'apprentie

Je m'en tiens à
ces tâches



emballer



nettoyer



étiqueter



emballer



peser / mesurer



cueillir

... ou toute autre tâche pour laquelle il est possible de m'accorder un soutien approprié et constant.



Pour être heureux au travail,
J'ai besoin :

- ✓ d'avoir à proximité une personne à qui je peux me référer en toute confiance
- ✓ de m'appuyer en tout temps sur une liste de tâches et d'étapes illustrées
- ✓ de m'accorder plusieurs petites pauses, idéalement dans un espace en retrait
- ✓ de faire un retour sur la tâche accomplie

« Avec une liste, des étapes et quelques outils visuels, je suis capable d'être plus autonome. »

Mon degré d'adaptation
en milieu de travail

Niveau d'autisme

Niveau 2 (modéré)

Niveau de scolarité

parcours scolaire spécialisé

Communication/Interaction sociale

limitation au niveau du langage

Rigidité comportementale

importante (besoin essentiel de routine)

Autonomie

faible (besoin accru de supervision)

Résilience face au changement

j'ai besoin de prévisibilité