

# Autism CanTech!

## Autism CanTech! Research Project: Information Letter and Consent Form

**Title of the Study:** Autism Cantech! Overcoming Barriers to Employment in the Digital Economy

**Investigator(s):** Brooke Leifso  
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We are asking your organization to take part in a research study being done by NorQuest College. This study is supported by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), an organization that funds projects to improve the quality of life for all Canadians. The research team is also paid by the ESDC funded ACT! project.

### **What is the purpose of this study?**

The goal of this study is to understand the experiences of employers. We want to know about your experiences of creating accessible and inclusive workspaces for people with disabilities. We are interested in your successes, challenges, and needs for support. This research will help us understand how programs like Autism CanTech! can support employers across Canada.

### **How will you participate?**

There are two ways that you will be asked to help with the research:

1. We will ask supervisors or managers from your organization to take part in 1 focus group *or* interview. In these sessions, they will be asked questions about the organization, its successes, challenges, needs for support, and the impact of the Autism CanTech! Program. Focus group sessions will last 90 minutes, and interview sessions will last 60 minutes. Focus groups and interviews will take place online through MS teams. The interviews will take place in the month after the work experience has been completed. The focus group will take place during the work experience. Employers may decide to participate in only 1 or both activities. Employers may also decide to extend their research involvement and attend research

activities for the full 3 years of the program to reap the networking and problem solving benefits. The 3 year involvement is entirely optional.

2. We will ask you to let researchers to access the information that you give to Autism CanTech! when you sign-up for the program. This includes information from the expression of interest form, evaluation questionnaires, Work-Integrated Learning intake and Career Coach notes regarding supports and barriers. This will not take any of your time. If you consent, the Autism CanTech!Program staff will let researchers access the information. We will take information from the whole duration of the program. For example, we will access Career Coach notes throughout the entire process, from the first session to 6 months after the work placement.

### **What are the benefits to being in this study?**

In focus groups, your staff will be able to network with other organizations. They will gain skills, resources, and insight into workplace accessibility, improving workplace culture and employment practices. It may alert employers to unforeseen barriers that they can address to improve inclusion of Autistic youth.

### **Are there any risks to being in this study?**

Your staff members may feel uncomfortable or emotional talking about their experiences. Staff members may have pre-existing or new relationships impacted by the conversations that creates a social risk. If this happens, we will stop the research and work to provide you with the support that you need.

### **What happens to the information that is provided to researchers?**

#### *Confidentiality*

The information that you share will be confidential. It will only be used for research projects related to improving equitable employment for the disability community. The only people who will see the information that you share are members of the research team at NorQuest College. If you choose to take part in a focus group, researchers will ask everyone to keep the privacy and confidentiality of one another; however, the research team cannot guarantee that others from the focus group will maintain the confidentiality of what is discussed. Most of the activities will be online. To stay safe and help us keep your information confidential, we ask that you use safety measures like signing out of your account, closing your browser, and locking your screen or device when you are done using it.

#### *Data Storage and Usage*

The information you share will be stored securely on NorQuest College servers. Only researchers at NorQuest College will see your personal information. We will not include your personal information in any reports of this study. All data (voice recording, transcripts and notes) will be stored for a minimum of 5 years. Data is made anonymous (you are given a numbered code), will be password protected and the audio recording is only used for transcription purposes. Secondary information and your anonymous data may be used for further studies within ACT!. By signing this agreement, you agree to your anonymous data being used in other ACT! related studies.

## **Can I say no?**

Absolutely! If you or your organization, choose not to take part in this study then there will be no impact on you or your standing in the Autism CanTech! Program. If you do choose to participate, you can choose not to answer any question that we ask you. You can also change your mind and opt-out of the study by emailing the Lead Researcher, Brooke Leifso, at [Brooke.Leifso@norquest.ca](mailto:Brooke.Leifso@norquest.ca). In your email, you will tell her that you no longer want to be in the research project. You do not have to say why. It will no longer be possible to withdraw from the study once the report has been finished. For more information you can contact Brooke. If you choose to withdraw from the study at any time before the final report, your individual data will be deleted from the data sets.

## **Where do I find information about the study results?**

Once available, you can find information about the study on the Autism CanTech! website at [autismcantech.ca](http://autismcantech.ca)

## **Questions or Concerns?**

Please contact Brooke Leifso – lead researcher if you have any questions or concerns. Their contact information is listed at the beginning of the information letter.

The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have any questions regarding the rights of your ward as a research participant or how the research is being conducted you may contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615, [reoffice@ualberta.ca](mailto:reoffice@ualberta.ca). Humber College affiliated participants may reach out to Research Chair, Dr. Lydia Boyko, [lydia.boyko@norquest.ca](mailto:lydia.boyko@norquest.ca)

Please keep this form for your records.

## **Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act Statement**

The personal information collected in this form will be used to complete the Autism CanTech! Research Project. Collection is collected under the authority of Section 33(C) of Alberta's *Freedom of Information and Privacy Act* (FOIP Act). Collected personal information will be protected from unauthorized access, use, and disclosure in accordance with the FOIP Act. For information about the collection and use of this information, contact the Principal Investigator, Brooke Leifso, at 10230 108 Street NW Edmonton, AB, T5J 1L6, at [brooke.leifso@norquest.ca](mailto:brooke.leifso@norquest.ca).

## Consent Form

*A signing authority for the organization and each representative who will be directly taking part in the research project must initial next to the boxes below to give consent:*

- I understand what I read in the information letter about the research project at NorQuest College.
- I understand that I could ask questions about this research, and that I could ask for more information.
- I understand that being in this research means being in focus groups or interviews. I also understand that it means and letting Autism CanTech! researchers access the information that I gave to the Autism CanTech! Program, expression of interest form, Career Coach notes, and intake data.
- I agree to my information being kept safely at NorQuest College for five years after the research project is done.
- I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time and that this will have no impact on my standing in the Autism CanTech! program
- If I leave the organization over the course of the Autism CanTech! Research Project, I agree to notify researchers directly and in writing of my departure

By signing your name below you are agreeing to participate in the Autism CanTech! Research Project.

Name of Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Signing Authority Full (Legal) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signing Authority Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): \_\_\_\_\_

The list of representatives employed at \_\_\_\_\_ (Organization Name) provided below have agreed to the above terms by providing their initials next to the consent form boxes, and their signature in the boxes below. These representatives will be directly taking part in the research project through focus groups and interviews. They agree to being contacted by Researchers directly:

<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Email Address</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>