

Social Justice and Citizenship

Independent Facilitation is rooted in the work of **social justice** — creating a *society where everyone deserves equal economic, political, and social rights and opportunities*. People with developmental disabilities are citizens who deserve the same rights and opportunities available to any other citizen.

While **citizenship** is about rights and opportunities, it is also about responsibility for, and active participation in making society work for all of our citizens. Citizenship is about benefiting from being a member, and participating in making valuable contributions alongside other members of our communities.

The work of Independent Facilitation makes it easier for people to take on their role as citizens, to be included and belong, and contribute to the communities where they live.

Change

People with developmental disabilities, historically, have not been treated as citizens, with all of the rights, opportunities, and responsibilities that come with citizenship. Independent Facilitation was developed to assist people with developmental disabilities in creating change:

- **Personal change**, embracing their roles as valued citizens — *Personal change and growth comes through clarifying visions, expanding experiences, trying new things, exploring new places, learning new skills, and deepening and expanding relationships.*
- **Social change** in the communities where people live and belong — *Social change comes through people with developmental disabilities connecting, relating, participating, contributing, and taking on valued roles, in places where they have previously been excluded.*
- **Systemic change** in the ways and means of services and supports — *Systemic change will come through people with developmental disabilities increasing their authority and power in directing and customizing the support they want and need, establishing new working relationships with service providers and government agencies.*

Vision, voice, power, and authority

Facilitators deeply listen and assist people in discovering visions for their lives; find their voice, grow in their authority, skill, and power to make decisions; act on these decisions; try new experiences, succeed, fail, and learn from these experiences. Access to knowledge is power, and so Facilitators assist people in finding the information they need to explore and make informed decisions.

Facilitators help people learn what they need to use this information, and ultimately access the resources and experiences that make it possible to move toward their vision.

People can then take their place as valued members of the communities they choose to belong. In this way, Facilitators assist people in being in charge of their own lives.

Relationships...expanding and deepening connections in the neighborhoods where people live and work

We are all “interdependent”. We need each other. We need relationships that are freely chosen and reciprocal, good and valuable for each one in the relationship. Facilitators support and assist people in strengthening the relationships they have with family, friends, and allies, and expand their opportunities for connections with people in the neighbourhoods where they live, work, play, and celebrate.

A reflective practice for creating a “customized” life that is supported

Each person is unique. Each person requires support that is customized to fit their personality, their gifts, their needs, and the unique visions of life that they strive to create. Since there is no generic solution, Facilitators and the people they assist, must engage in a reflective practice that includes visioning, planning, acting, and learning from what happens. It is through this reflective practice that people clarify their visions, strengthen their voices, increase their power through decision making and acting, and learn from their experience of success and failure that result from their efforts.

INDEPENDENT FACILITATION Scope of the work

