

*Expanding Individualized Funding:*

*The Time is Now!*

**Summary of the Deliberations  
of the Ontario WorkFest  
on Individualized Funding**

**February 20-22, 2004**

***Sponsors of the WorkFest***

**Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario  
Community Living Ontario  
Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy  
People First of Ontario  
Family Alliance of Ontario  
Special Services at Home Coalition  
Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus Association of Ontario**

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**“Expanding Individualized Funding: The Time for Now!”**  
**A Significant Event in the Movement for Change**

More than 125 people from across Ontario spent the weekend of February 20-22, working together to expand Individualized Funding for people with disabilities and their families. With representatives from every corner of the province, this WorkFest on Individualized Funding was sponsored by six provincial organizations that have all been advocating for more options for citizens with disabilities and their families. Building on the *Ontario Round Table Report on Individualized Funding* and other research that supports the need for change, the WorkFest focused on how individualized options could be expanded throughout the province. Participants also developed strategies for how local communities could assist families and people with disabilities build their skills and capacity for individualized planning, support, and funding.

The WorkFest has created enormous energy for change. The theme “The Time is Now!” was heard constantly, as participants reflected on the need for more genuine, individualized options for individuals and families.

The sponsors of the WorkFest believe that all Canadians have a right to full citizenship and participation in the life of community. Building a life in community requires creativity and individualized supports. Individualized Funding is one mechanism that enhances self-determination and community inclusion.

## **Goals of the WorkFest**

- To develop an action plan for implementing Individualized Funding in Ontario.
- To develop strategies for building the capacity of families & communities for citizenship & individualized funding.

## **Objectives of the WorkFest**

1. To enable families and individuals to practice articulating the values, beliefs, and intentions that form the basis of individualized planning, support, and funding.
2. To share what we have learned about citizenship and individualized planning, support, and funding in Ontario.
3. To work together for change, so that people have more networks at the end of the WorkFest.
4. To develop compelling strategies based on participants' issues and directions.
5. To document our conversations and actions at the WorkFest in strategic directions for government and for families / communities.

## **Summary of the Deliberations**

There was widespread agreement at the WorkFest that the goal of individualized approaches is to enhance citizenship and community participation. Participants were very concerned that disability supports too often are attached to programs and services that keep people isolated from community life. “Ask me First” was a major theme, representing the need for new approaches to shift power to individuals and families. While there are pockets of good practice and Individualized Funding in Ontario, the inequities, the lack of effective policy, and the resistance by the previous Conservative government to move toward new approaches were of great concern to participants. Consistent with the *Ontario Round Table Report on Individualized Funding*, the need for a strong set of core values and principles to guide new approaches was also identified.

Several other themes highlighted the strategic directions for expanding Individualized Funding in Ontario. Participants stressed the need for the Ministries of Children Services, Community and Social Services, and Health and Long Term Care to work collaboratively with families and people with disabilities to develop mechanisms and approaches that will enhance individualization and participation. Part of this policy reform would involve the creation of independent planning supports for individuals and families, the development of Individualized Funding options, and changes to Special Services at Home. Participants also examined the need for effective monitoring and accountability approaches, and the need for extensive education of government and agencies that deliver services. Many participants expressed hope and optimism that the new Liberal government

would embrace these ideas, while others stressed the need for political action to be sure that government begins to act.

In developing actions for local communities, participants recognized that Individualized Funding works best when people have opportunities for personalized planning as well as the development of support networks of family, friends, and other citizens. Research in fact shows that when these elements are present, then direct funding to families for disability supports creates positive outcomes and is cost effective. Participants also developed ways to ensure that people with disabilities are central in any process of change. Family networks are well developed in some Ontario communities, and ways to accelerate these developments in other communities were also explored.

More than twenty-five strategic directions were developed to expand Individualized Funding locally and provincially. As the weekend was winding down, participants met in local community groups to consider implications for “back home.” Several communities made commitments to follow-up with local workshops, further education, and advocacy. To help move individualized options ahead provincially, the co-sponsors agreed to work closely with the Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario to finalize the strategies, and develop work groups for action. A majority of participants agreed to participate in some kind of follow-up, which indicates the kind of commitment and energy that was part of this event. Overall, the work completed and the feedback from participants indicates that the WorkFest was a great success.

## **A Statement from the WorkFest**

WorkFest participants created a statement about Individualized Funding. The statement reflects the core values and components of Individualized Funding. It shows how citizenship and full participation for people with disabilities require individualized supports that are unique to the person. It demonstrates how Individualized Funding is an investment in people and in the whole community. Finally, it urges the government to play a key role in the moving disability supports in Ontario toward a policy and legislative framework for individualized supports and funding. This statement is one of the important documents now on the web site.

## **From Vision to Strategies: How the Rest of this Report is Organized**

This Report has been organized in a unique way to make it easy for readers to become engaged in issues related to Individualized Funding. It also closely reflects the work that was completed at the WorkFest.

On the first day, small groups worked together on issues that were identified by small groups. These small groups reflected on vision, barriers and strategies for the issue they were working on. Each of these issues contributed to **“expanding IF in Ontario.”** Later in the day, reports were presented to the whole group and modifications made from participants’

comments and questions. The final issues that were developed with strategies were:

- Core Values Enhance IF
- Advocacy for Voice and Choice
- Definition and Elements of IF
- Funding Inequities
- Getting Government on Board
- Gaining Agency Support

Several of these are now on the website.

On the second full day, participants worked on issues related to **“building capacity of individuals, families, and communities.”** A similar format was used, with vision, barriers and strategies serving as the basis for analysis. The final issues that were developed with strategies were:

- Individuals and Families Learn to Plan
- Supporting Self-Advocates to be Involved
- Building Support Networks
- Getting Facilitators in our Communities
- Family to Family Support for IF