



You be the Winner

A Guide for Applicants for the INfinity Prize

powered by The Azrieli Foundation

 **INSPIRE**  **INNOVATE**  **INCLUDE**

INFINITY PRIZE  **PRIX INFINI**
Powered by the Azrieli Foundation Mis en œuvre par la Fondation Azrieli

The INfinity Prize

Established in 2023 by the Azrieli Foundation, the INfinity Prize recognizes the leadership of Canadian social enterprises that employ people who are neurodivergent.

The INfinity Prize will be awarded to a Canadian social enterprise that has demonstrated best practices for creating meaningful and sustainable employment for neurodivergent people.

The prize winner will receive:

- A \$100,000 cash award
- Up to one hour per week of professional coaching for up to two years
 - Coaching will be provided by outside contractors and will be based on the winner's needs to scale and/or expand the business successfully
- In-kind support from the Azrieli Foundation, including:
 - Introductions to experts in different fields
 - Consultations with finance and communications departments
 - Use of office space, if possible, in Toronto or Montreal
 - Networking opportunities

In return, the prize winner will:

- Participate in regular meetings with coaches and Foundation staff
 - Adhere to the principles of inclusive employment. These include giving disabled people:
 - The opportunity to work in the competitive labour market alongside their non-disabled peers
 - Access to the same benefits and career opportunities as all other employees
 - Access to quality employment opportunities, regardless of disability
 - Access to workplace accommodations and the tools needed to succeed
 - Adhere to the principles of meaningful employment. The Azrieli Foundation defines meaningful employment as:
 - Employment that gives employees purpose and allows them to pursue their interests and/or achieve their goals
 - Participate in the Foundation's Social Enterprise Network and other network-building activities
 - Provide an annual report on operations and finances, and bi-monthly updates on the work with the coach
 - Acknowledge the Foundation for any activities related to, or supported by, the INfinity Prize*
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*Recognize the Foundation as "The Azrieli Foundation" and/or "La Fondation Azrieli" as appropriate, in accordance with enterprise's recognition policies, if any, commensurate with all other equivalent donors, in all presentations of the Project in media (whether print, electronic or otherwise), in all of the enterprise's publications where it would be relevant to do so, and in supporter listings in web and print publications, including the impact report.

Eligibility

The INfinity Prize will be open to all small- and mid-sized not-for-profit and for-profit employment social enterprises in Canada with fewer than 500 employees and a scalable business model that:

- Prioritizes the needs of neurodivergent employees by providing them with:
 - Career development opportunities in the competitive labour market
 - Fair wages (minimum wage or greater)
 - Benefits
- Includes neurodivergent employees as part of decision making for the business
- Pays remittance to the Canada Revenue Agency
- Demonstrates a minimum of three years' revenue and is looking to scale while:
 - Providing quality goods and services as demand increases
 - Maintaining or improving quality goods and services as demand increases
 - Maintaining or improving customer experience
 - Growing by developing new markets

Competition timelines

- The INfinity Prize was announced publicly on **March 22, 2023**, with a call for applications
- Applications are to be completed, through the online accessible platform, by **May 19, 2023**, at 11:59 pm
- Interviews for the top five applicants will be conducted between **August 7** and **August 18, 2023**
- The winner will be announced during the week of **October 23, 2023**

Definitions

Definition of neurodivergent

The word neurodivergent describes someone who behaves, thinks and/or learns differently from those who are considered neurotypical. This may include people with autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Tourette syndrome, Down syndrome, dyslexia and other neurodiverse conditions.

Definition of social enterprise

Social enterprises generate revenue by selling goods and services and reinvesting the majority of their net earnings into their social mission, the local community or a sponsoring charity.

Definition of employment social enterprise

Employment social enterprises are a sub-category of social enterprises that exist to create training and employment opportunities for people facing barriers to entry into the labour market. Employment social enterprises provide training, employment and customized supports to employees. Varying widely in size, from small ventures of under \$10,000 to multi-million-dollar undertakings, employment social enterprises operate in urban centres and suburban and rural communities across various industries and sectors.



Parallel



Hybrid



Linking

There are three types of employment social enterprises:

1. Parallel: Social enterprises and supportive employment initiatives that exist parallel to, and separate from, mainstream competitive employment
2. Linking: Social enterprises and supportive employment initiatives that exist with the intent to connect employees to mainstream competitive employment
3. Hybrid: A combination of parallel and linking opportunities based on the employees' wants and interests

Only Linking and Hybrid social enterprises will be eligible for the INfinity Prize.

Selection process

The winner of the INfinity Prize will be chosen by an independent panel of judges consisting of:

- Two individuals with lived experience
 - One neurodivergent individual
 - One front-line employer of neurodivergent staff members
- One social enterprise expert
- One venture capitalist
- One high-profile investor

All judges and reviewers sign a non-disclosure and conflict-of-interest agreement in which they commit to preserving the confidentiality of information received in the course of reviewing applications for the INfinity Prize.

The selection process will consist of three parts.

Part 1 – Application process and pre-screening

Online applications are due May 19, 2023, at 11:59 pm.

Submissions are pre-screened by a small team consisting of our staff and two independent external advisors to evaluate:

- Financial health
- Economic viability
- Feasibility of implementation

The top 10 submissions are delivered to the judges for their evaluation.

Part 2 – Vetting process

- The top five applicants will be selected by July 7, 2023
- Interviews with the judges will be conducted between August 7 and August 18, 2023
- The top three finalists will be chosen by August 25, 2023

Commentary and feedback will be available to all applicants who enquire.

Part 3 – Selection of Winner

The prize recipient will be selected on October 25 or 26, 2023, based on a captivating, interactive “elevator pitch” that each finalist will present to the panel of judges at a publicized event.

How to apply for the INfinity Prize

All application packages must include:

- A completed **Eligibility Quiz**
- A completed two-part **Application Form**
- Supporting documents
- A completed **Declaration**

Eligibility quiz for prize applicants

1. Are you a registered entity in Canada?

- A. Yes
- B. No

Note: Only A is eligible

2. Is your business entity an employment social enterprise?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. No, but in the process of becoming one

Note: Only A and C are eligible

3. Do you have more than three years revenue?

- A. Yes
- B. No

Note: Only A is eligible

4. Do you currently employ neurodivergent individuals?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. No, but would like to

Note: Only A and C are eligible

5. Are your neurodivergent employees receiving at least minimum wage and benefits?

- A. Yes
- B. No

Note: Only A is eligible

6. Do you currently have a program for ongoing skills development and training?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. No, but plan to create one

Note: Only A and C are eligible

7. Do you currently have a program or career development opportunities for helping neurodivergent employees transition to the competitive labour market?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. No, but plan to create one

Note: Differentiate between Parallel, Linking or Hybrid employment social enterprises.
Only A and C are eligible

8. How many employees do you have?

- A. Less than 50
- B. 50-100
- C. 100-499
- D. Over 500

Note: Only A, B and C are eligible

Application: Part 1

1. **Organization Name:**

2. **Website:**

3. **Contact Name:**

4. **Position:**

5. **Email address:**

6. **Phone number:**

7. **Address:**

8. **City/Town:**

9. **Province/Territory:**

10. **Postal Code:**

11. **Country:**

12. **Have you previously received funding from the Azrieli Foundation?**

Yes

No

Note: This question is solely for information gathering. Your answer will not affect your eligibility.

13. **Name of program or social enterprise, if different from organization:**

14. **What year did the program or social enterprise launch?**

15. **Type of institution/organization:**

A. Not-for-profit with charitable status

B. Not-profit without charitable status

C. For-profit

16. **What industry does your social enterprise serve?**

17. **Describe your social enterprise as precisely as possible including information about the product or service you are selling and program(s) for ongoing skills development and training: (unlimited words)**

18. Describe the challenge that is being addressed by the program or social enterprise: (maximum 75 words)

19. What is the impact of your program or social enterprise? (maximum 75 words)

20. Please fill out the chart below to help us better understand the size of your program or social enterprise.

Note: This question is solely for information gathering. Your answer will not affect your eligibility.

	Total	Neurotypical	Neurodivergent	Other Disability
Employees				
Volunteers				

21. How has your employment social enterprise grown over the years? (maximum 200 words)

22. Please list your sales revenue for the years of 2020, 2021 and 2022: (upload financial statements)

Year	Revenue
2020	
2021	
2022	

23. If COVID-19 has affected the growth of your social enterprise, please explain: (maximum 150 words)

24. Describe your current funding model and upload your financial plan:

**25. Describe your business plan for scaling, including objectives for the next three to five years:
(upload a pitch deck or document)**

This should address the following:

- How you plan to scale the business (market opportunity, competitive advantage, team skillset, etc.)
- How you plan to increase the number of neurodivergent employees
- How you plan to implement and/or expand program/s for ongoing skills development and training
- How you plan to transition from sheltered work to an employment social enterprise

26. How did you hear about the prize?

- A. Social media post
- B. Social media advertisement
- C. Newsletter
- D. Word of mouth
- E. Other: please specify

Supporting Documentation Required

- Audited financial statements for three previous years (provide audited financial statements, if available)
- Pitch deck
- Financial and business plans
- Most recent annual report of the organization (if available)

5. Provide a short essay describing how the cash prize and coaching will provide you with the necessary support you need and the impact your effort will have on neurodivergent individuals: (maximum 500 words)

6. Is there anything else you want to tell us about your social enterprise or program? (maximum 500 words)

7. **Describe a business and/or social skill that your organization/institution has been struggling with: (upload a video of up to three minutes)**

8. **Why do you and your organization/institution deserve to win the prize? (upload video of up to three minutes)**

Supporting Documentation Required

- List of current Board of Directors (include name, title and time served as a board member)
- Letter of support from the Board for applying to the INfinity Prize and/or letter of support from partner organizations

Declaration by applicants

Please verify by checking the following:

I have read the published eligibility criteria for this competition and my application meets these criteria.

I accept the conditions of this competition and I agree to abide by the rules of the INfinity Prize and to respect the final decision of the INfinity Prize judges.

I confirm that the statements in my application are complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Scoring matrix to be used by the Panel of Judges

(Note that these criteria are identical to those provided to the reviewers and all decisions made by the Panel of Judges are final and non-negotiable. There is no appeal process.)

Scoring Matrix for Evaluating Applicants

Category	Measurement (items for consideration)	Maximum Score	Evaluation Criteria
Business presentation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Feasibility of business to scale <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial situation Business plan The industry/sector: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decent jobs Anchor customers Downstream employers Match with the key population Growth occurring in the industry Is the employment social enterprise innovative and substantially/significantly different from other employment social enterprises? 	2	<p>0 = does not properly address the question</p> <p>0.5 = provides a clear description of the business model</p> <p>1 = provides a feasible business model</p> <p>1.5 = presents a good business model with good storytelling</p> <p>2 = presents a convincing business model with excellent storytelling</p>
Traction:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Does the employment social enterprise have a strong understanding of the impact it has on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sector/industry Neurodivergent and neurotypical employees Social impact Has the employment social enterprise adequately explained its program(s) for ongoing skills development and training of neurodivergent employees? Does the employment social enterprise have a promising linking strategy and assist in securing permanent employment for neurodivergent employees? Has the employment social enterprise adequately explained its ability to train and support ALL employees? 	2	<p>0 = does not properly address the question (i.e., does not answer the question or provides irrelevant information) or provides unconvincing arguments</p> <p>0.5 = demonstrates a basic understanding of the required activities and a good strategy to get them executed</p> <p>1 = demonstrates a reasonable understanding of the required activities and a good strategy to get them executed</p> <p>1.5 = demonstrates a good understanding of the required activities and a good strategy to get them executed</p> <p>2 = demonstrates an excellent understanding of the required activities and a good strategy to get them executed</p>

Category	Measurement (items for consideration)	Maximum Score	Evaluation Criteria
Operational Feasibility and Team:	<p>Is the team adequately qualified to manage the business and social aspects of the employment social enterprise?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business management • Business development • Professional development for all employees • In-house job coaches 	2	<p>0 = does not properly address the question or provides unconvincing argument</p> <p>0.5 = demonstrates a basic understanding of the current team composition and human resource needs</p> <p>1 = demonstrates a good understanding of the current team composition and human resource needs</p> <p>1.5 = demonstrates good team management and strong talent acquisition strategy</p> <p>2 = demonstrates the qualities of a strong team that is ready to execute the business model and sound human resource strategy</p>
Empowerment/ Inclusion:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are the needs of the neurodivergent employees at the centre of decision-making? 2. Are neurodivergent employees adequately included and/or involved in the business decisions and planning? 3. Does the employment social enterprise provide inclusive and meaningful employment? 4. Ratio of neurodivergent to neurotypical employees throughout business and across the organization 	2	<p>0 = does not properly address the question or provides unconvincing arguments</p> <p>0.5 = demonstrates a basic understanding of equity, diversity and inclusion requirements</p> <p>1 = demonstrates a reasonable understanding of partnership requirements and some strategy to develop new opportunities for improving equity, diversity and inclusion</p> <p>1.5 = demonstrates a good understanding of equity, diversity and inclusion requirements and a good strategy to develop and implement new opportunities for equity, diversity and inclusion</p> <p>2 = demonstrates an excellent understanding of equity, diversity and inclusion requirements and an excellent strategy to develop new tools/resources that are necessary for the business execution</p>

Category	Measurement (items for consideration)	Maximum Score	Evaluation Criteria
Overall:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did the candidate provide all key pieces of information requested in the application and a strong pitch? 2. Is this a worthwhile candidate? 3. How impactful is the employment social enterprise? 	2	<p>0 = does not properly address the question (i.e., does not answer the question or provides irrelevant information) or provides unconvincing arguments</p> <p>0.5 = demonstrates a basic understanding of the required activities and a good strategy to get them executed</p> <p>1 = demonstrates a reasonable understanding of the required activities and a good strategy to get them executed</p> <p>1.5 = demonstrates a good understanding of the required activities and a good strategy to get them executed</p> <p>2 = demonstrates an excellent understanding of the required activities and a good strategy to get them executed</p>

Scoring Matrix for Selecting the Three Finalists

Category	Maximum Score	Evaluation Criteria
Was the product or service clearly explained?	5	1 = Needs Improvement or No 2 = Just OK or Not really
Did the applicant provide enough information and address your concerns?	5	3 = Average or I would consider 4 = Great or Most likely
How would you rate the quality of the pitch and the information shared?	5	5 = Excellent or Yes

General feedback and/or questions for the entrepreneur:

Background

About 6.2 million people in Canada of working age live with a disability. Yet only 59% of disabled adults are employed, compared to 80% of those without a disability. And for neurodivergent adults, the rate of employment drops to a mere 26%.

The underrepresentation of neurodivergent individuals in the workforce does not reflect their actual talents, skills and employability. The vast majority are willing and able to work and, with the right supports, can make valuable social and economic contributions to society.

Yet, thousands of neurodivergent individuals in Canada are denied the opportunity for meaningful employment and, with it, the means to attain many of their personal life goals.

In January 2022, the Azrieli Foundation accepted a grand challenge: to increase the rate of employment and ensure meaningful and equitable career opportunities for neurodivergent adults.

To address this, we identified the employment social enterprise sector as a key to enhancing employment. One of our priorities is to empower the often overlooked neurodivergent community by supporting initiatives that will generate meaningful employment and career development within the mainstream labour market. We know there are numerous challenges and barriers to achieving this objective. Among them are:

- Lack of work experience prior to leaving school
- Limited professional and social networks
- Lack of accessibility in the recruitment process
- Technology-related challenges
- Workplace disclosure of an employee's neurodivergent condition
- Appropriate clothing (mandated uniforms or dress codes may not accommodate an individual's disability)
- Physical challenges with workplace environments
- Transportation challenges
- Lack of long-term workplace structure supports

Among the solutions are:

- Creating more opportunities for post-secondary vocational training
- Developing programs to promote job advancement, self-employment and business ownership
- Ensuring that people with disabilities receive fair wages without losing eligibility for needed public assistance
- Tapping into the contributions that disabled people can make to any business' long-term success

The benefits to society are enormous. Enhanced employment opportunities for people with disabilities will significantly ease recurring labour shortages, spur economic growth, increase prosperity for all Canadians and help millions of people lead more joyful and fulfilling lives.

To attain these benefits, employers need to think differently about people with disabilities and take action to improve how employees are recruited, trained and retained. Employers, policymakers, healthcare workers, educators, architects and engineers must work collaboratively to create inclusive and accessible work environments. They must also advocate for social change within and beyond their organizations.

We believe the INfinity Prize will significantly contribute to creating employment equity and inclusiveness for neurodivergent individuals. Among the anticipated outcomes of the prize are:

- More employment opportunities for neurodivergent people
- Development of more mutually supportive networks of individuals and organizations committed to sustaining inclusive communities
- Increased awareness about the benefits and importance of inclusive employment, leading to a shift from implicit bias, hidden prejudices and discrimination against neurodivergent individuals

The Azrieli Foundation

The Azrieli Foundation was established in 1989 by David Azrieli with the goal of improving the lives of present and future generations through education, research, healthcare and the arts. It is now the largest non- corporate foundation in Canada and one of the largest in Israel.

Our mission is to connect and nurture potential, wherever it exists, with the resources and the wisdom necessary to open the doors to a better world, one individual at a time.

We have eight priority areas: Education; Fellowships & Scholarships; Community; Holocaust Education & Legacy; Science & Healthcare; Neurodevelopment & Neurodiverse Initiatives; Architecture, Design & Engineering, and Music, Arts & Culture.

In addition to strategic philanthropic investments in both small and large organizations, we operate several programs, including the David Azrieli Architecture Student Prize, the Azrieli Fellows Program, the Azrieli Science Grants Program, the Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program and the Azrieli Music Prizes.

The INfinity Prize is the first and only competition focused specifically on employment social enterprises for Canada's neurodivergent community. The prize will help to create employment equity and opportunities, boost awareness and help us take a big step toward creating a more diverse and inclusive society.

For more information, contact: infinityprize@azrielifoundation.org