



# An Eco-system For Growing Possibilities

O.I.F.N. Vision Beyond April 2017

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## Introduction

O.I.F.N. Stewards gathered in March 2016 to envision what the Network is working toward beyond the completion of the Independent Facilitator Demonstration Project in March of 2017. The intention of the visioning conversation was for the Stewards to remain focused on desirable outcomes; establish priorities; and be clear about the role of the Demonstration Project within the larger ongoing context and purpose of the OIFN.

This summary captures conversations that occurred through the visioning exercise, and ideas exchanged throughout the OIFN Stewards and OIFN Collaborative meetings on March 7-8, 2016 in Cambridge ON.

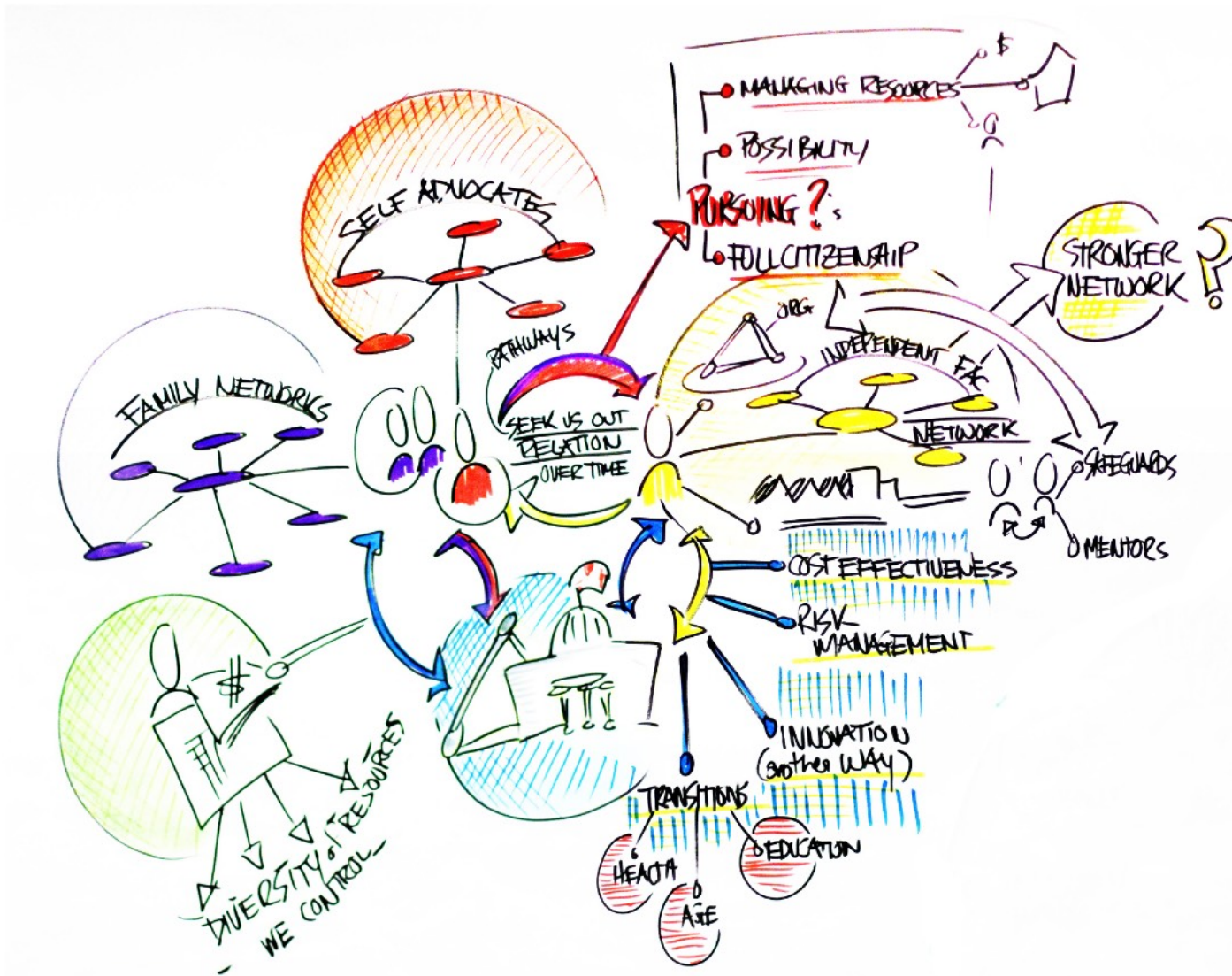
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## An Eco-system Of Relationships That Foster Possibilities For Growth And Change

OIFN strives to develop and be part of an interconnected network of relationships— an eco-system — capable of creating “possibilities”, new ways of supporting the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families, that can evolve and change as people grow.

These networks of relationships will include:

- People with developmental disabilities
- Their families
- Independent Facilitators (unencumbered from any service delivery agencies) working through Independent Facilitator Organizations (IFOs), or as independent contractors from the communities where people live.
- Agents of the Ministry of Community and Social Services



## Collaborative Support and Learning Networks

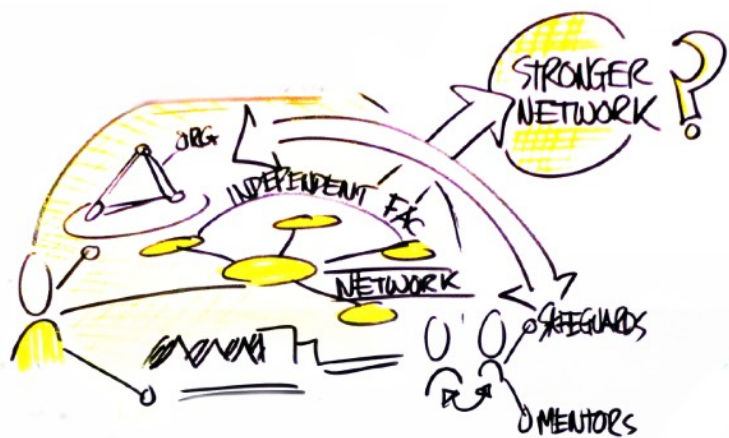
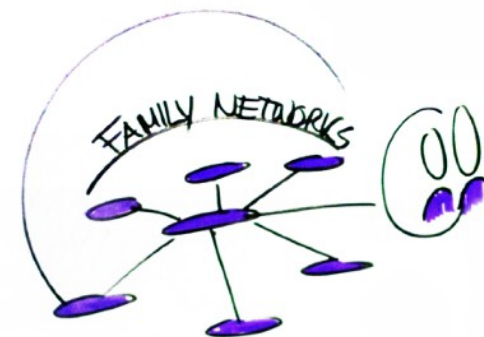
OIFN is committed to seeing changes in models of support that shift the balance of power, authority, and responsibility for the means of support, from the service delivery agencies and funding systems, to the citizen base of people with disabilities and their families. The intention of the shift is for people with developmental disabilities to be treated as citizens with customized models of support developed that can meet their aspirations, goals, needs for personal safety and health, and developing the capacity to live as contributing community members.

Within this “eco-system” there is a need for collaborative and supportive groups that can strengthen and continually clarify the purpose and nature of supports for people with developmental disabilities:



- **Autonomous Self Advocate Groups** - Self Advocate groups provide a way for people with disabilities to gain strength and support for their ability to speak for themselves. These groups make it possible for people to find their voice, and learn how to speak so that they will be heard. It is critical that these Self Advocate groups be independent of service agencies or family organizations. To maximize their own safety and dignity, people with developmental disabilities must have the opportunity to speak for themselves, in ways that work for them, free from the practical and emotional dependency of relationships with service agencies and families.

- **Family Groups or Networks.** - Family Groups or Networks provide space for family members to gain strength from knowing that they are not alone; that other people face similar challenges and have gained knowledge and experience in finding solutions. Family groups promote resourcefulness in part by acknowledging and affirming the ingenuity, and practical knowledge, that each family has already applied to daily life. People can share knowledge, connections, and strategies. They can simply “be there” for one another. Maximizing the strength and resourcefulness of families is critical to the lifelong support needs of people with developmental disabilities.



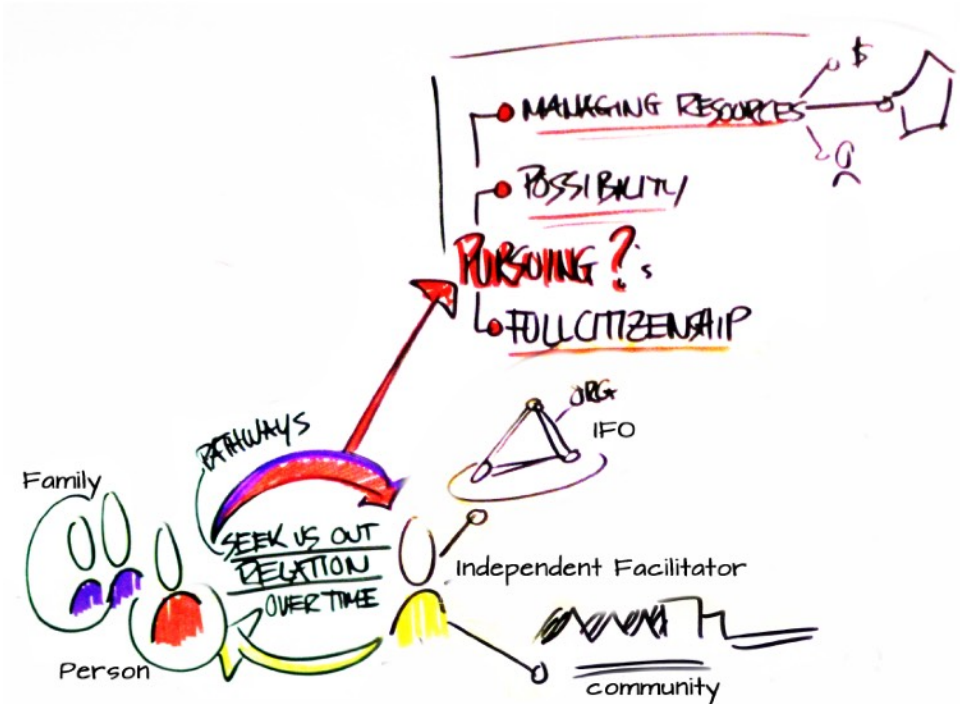
- **Ontario Independent Facilitation Network** is comprised of people with developmental disabilities, family members, Independent Facilitators, and people interested in learning more about independent facilitation and innovative community support. Primarily it is a space for sharing experience, knowledge, and good practice. It is a space for envisioning the development of support that holds justice and citizenship as the light that guides the work. Through OIFN, facilitators who work as independent contractors can connect with more experienced facilitators who can serve as mentors. OIFN can create a space for people to explore the best ways to develop quality resourceful relationships that can be sustained over time.

The OIFN Stewards imagine the development of local, regional, and provincial networks that can support people in areas where there are fewer people involved, and less resources available.

## Primary Working Relationships

The Stewards highlighted two sets of primary relationships closely related to shaping how daily life can work for people and their families. For Independent Facilitators these relationships are distinct, but strongly connected:

- The **focus person** and the **Independent Facilitator** - There would be no need for the role of the independent facilitator if there was no person with a disability seeking to live as a valued contributing member of their community, and grow in the responsibility that comes with citizenship. This person may or may not have family available and involved in their life, but they have the right to live as a citizen regardless of their family status. The Independent Facilitator's primary job is to assist a person with a disability in identifying what is truly important to them; imagining how they can live as a valued citizen; identifying what they will need to be safe and healthy; and how they can make contributions to the lives of others as family, friend, neighbour, worker, and community member. The Independent Facilitator then assists this person in identifying and accessing and connecting with the people, money, and places that can serve as resources in moving toward their vision and goals.



- The **person's family** and the **Independent Facilitator** - In so many situations, families are the greatest allies who remain throughout the life of a person with a disability; they are the first place where a person with a disability belongs; and serve as the first, and ongoing, connector to a broader network of relationships in the community. An Independent

Facilitator can play a critical role in supporting the family in their role as the strongest allies in the life of a person with a disability.

OIFN sees Independent Facilitation as a relationship that is initiated by a person with a disability and/or their family as they seek support in pursuit of their vision of:

- Living as a valued, contributing citizen and community member;
- Possibilities that are unique to their hopes, dreams, goals, needs, and capacities to make contributions to the lives of others and the community as a whole.
- Managing the resources available - funding; home; and the people that can support their daily life and vision

Independent Facilitators enter into an ongoing relationship with people; committing to walk with them over time; listening, and paying attention to what people and their families envision, and what they will need to go forward; connecting them with information, resources, and people, and places that can expand the possibilities in their lives; and assisting them in learning how to manage the resources available to support their lives. Independent Facilitators must hold a belief in the possibilities of continual change and growth. They are committed to supporting people to deeply explore what is important to them; to imagine what they would like to see happen; and to work alongside them as they move in the direction of these visions, goals, and any life changes that may arise along the way.

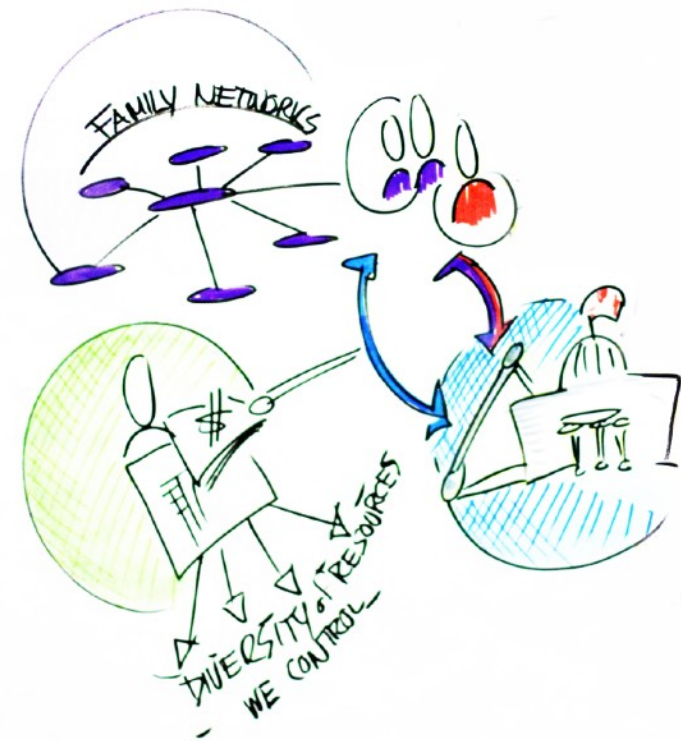
A major focus of the work of the Independent Facilitator is supporting the person's pursuit of their vision of **LIFE**, not only the services provided through resources available from the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Facilitators assist people in accessing and using resources that can support this vision. These diverse resources may include, but are not limited to: funding available through government agencies, and services — generic services available to all citizens; and services specifically available for people with developmental disabilities. However, much of the work of the Independent Facilitator is focused on assisting people in engaging and accessing support through places and relationships that are beyond government funding and community services — family and friend networks, informal community networks, associations, educational programs, volunteer initiatives, and workplace settings.

## Secondary Working Relationships

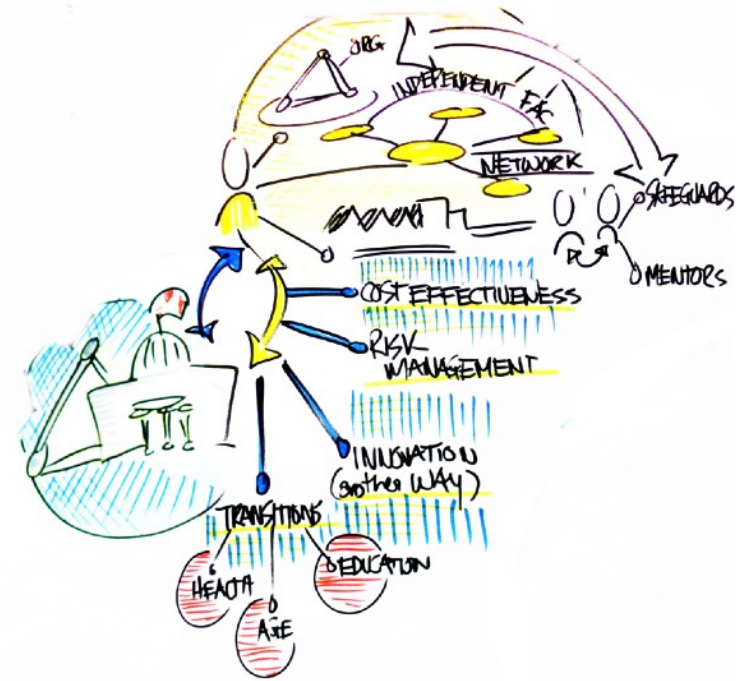
The purpose of resources made available through the funding and agents of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, is to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to remain connected to, and supported by their family, and receive support that enables them to be safe, healthy, and living as a valued citizen and community member. These resources are intended to supplement family and community support, not replace them. This is why the relationships of people with disabilities, their families, and the Independent Facilitators who assist them, with the Ministry of Community and Social Services are considered to be “secondary” relationships.

While these relationships are considered to be secondary, they are critically important to making it possible for people’s primary focus of living as a valued and contributing citizen. Two sets of relationships fall into this category:

- **Person/Family** and the **Ministry**: The Ministry of Community and Social Services designates funding to support the life of a person with a developmental disability. This funding complements other diverse financial resources available to the person that may include: their earned income; ODSP; the family’s financial resources and assets; trusts; insurance claims; and funding available through other government sources, e.g. housing, vocational rehabilitation, education, health, etc.. To maintain the ability to control their lives, people with developmental disabilities, with their families, need a direct relationship with the Ministry (and their designated agents), that will enable the use of MCSS resources to develop opportunities for creative means of support, and ensure accountability for tax payer resources.



- OIFN / Independent Facilitators** and the **Ministry**: The Independent Facilitator Demonstration Project, is helping to clarify the mutually beneficial relationship that exists between the OIFN (that comprises collaborations of people with developmental disabilities, their families, and Independent Facilitators) and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Funding has enabled OIFN: to reach out and educate families and people with developmental disabilities, along with current and potential independent facilitators; to build the capacity of the network to develop ways of safeguarding the independent facilitation relationships established; and to identify what is required to strengthen the sustainability of local IFOs (Independent Facilitation Organizations) and their capacity to recruit, develop, and retain high quality Facilitators. OIFN sees that this relationship helps the Ministry address a variety of challenges it faces:



- Innovation** - the Ministry is in need of finding “new ways” of supporting people with disabilities and their families that reach more people with better outcomes for health, safety, employment, and community inclusion. Independent facilitation is built on a model of innovation that takes each person’s life as a unique circumstance that requires unique solutions that utilize a wide variety of people, places, and financial resources.
- Cost effectiveness** - the Ministry needs to find ways to reduce the costs/person in order to reach a broader group of people, recognizing that it is simply not possible to expand the traditional methods of supporting people with developmental disabilities. Independent Facilitation takes on the creative challenge of movement in the direction of a person’s life vision by seeking out ALL resources available, not simply those provided by MCSS. This wider search for resources based on the unique circumstance of each person, leads to more stability and more resources.



- **Risk management** - the Ministry faces many circumstances of people whose health and safety require individualized solutions that group programs cannot offer. Independent facilitation is built on finding unique solutions that address the vision, relationships, well being, health, and safety of the person with a developmental disability.
- **Transitions** - There are many life transitions that have significant implications for the kind of support that people with developmental disabilities will require. What works well in one stage of life, may not be what is required in the next. Independent Facilitation provides a vehicle for re-visioning, re-adjusting, and accessing new resources to adapt to the pending change in living circumstances — school to adulthood; moving out of family home; loss of significant family support; health changes; relationship changes; retirement, etc..

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## Going Forward

The OIFN Steward's visioning exercise gets people "on the same page", and provides reference points for decision making about investments that will:

- support the development of networks for self advocates and families
- create space for people interested in independent facilitation to explore ways to develop connections, skills and capacities that safeguard a high quality of facilitation support relationships
- provide meaningful dialogue with the Ministry about investments that can align with OIFN vision AND provide real solutions to challenges that the Ministry faces

## An Addendum To The March 2016 Vision

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### A Missing But Essential Link —

### The Place Of Direct Support Assistants In A Person Directed Planning Model

Many people with developmental disabilities require “direct support” to make daily life run smoothly, to remain safe, and to be able to be actively engaged as citizens and community members. While growing up in their families, people often received this kind of support from their parents, or at school, or through people who their families hired through programs such as SSAH (Special Services At Home).

Most adults with developmental disabilities no longer have access to full time education programs. Few families have the time available to replace the support provided during the time that sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, were in school. As adults, people with developmental disabilities, seek to grow in their capacity to have life beyond their families, to find their place in the world as citizen, worker, and community member. Direct support for these people needs to align with the visions, direction, and needs that they identify for themselves through person directed planning.

Currently, most often, people with developmental disabilities and their families are left with two options regarding direct support staff:

- recruit, hire and manage direct personal assistants on their own
- access direct support staffing that is managed through programs provided by developmental service agencies

Traditional models of support provided through agency programs — group homes; day programs; and group employment programs — are limited in their capacity to meet the individual needs that people and their families identify. People, and families, are often left feeling that they lose control of their lives, and the direct support that they receive when agencies take on ownership and responsibility for staffing.

For person directed planning to be meaningful and real, it will require that people have the opportunity to direct the support that they require, including who provides that support, and how, when, and where it is provided.

Independent Facilitation may have a role in:

- supporting families and people with developmental disabilities in learning how to recruit, hire, direct, and manage their own direct support staff
  - find service agencies that can offer customized staffing options
  - facilitate dialogue and mediation when staffing arrangements do not align with the direction and needs identified in person directed planning
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