



Day at a Glance

Join us in learning how we can get back to basics with information on Workplace Psychological Health & Safety, Using AI, Grant Writing and Marketing 101.

8:30am - 9:30am	Networking
9:30am - 9:45am	Welcome & Housekeeping
9:45am - 9:50am	Mayor Welcome
9:50am - 10:50am	KEYNOTE
10:50am - 11:00am	Door Prizes
11:00am - 11:30am	Networking
11:30am - 12:30pm	Workshop A, B, C
12:30pm - 1:30pm	Lunch

FREE

ONE-DAY SYMPOSIUM

BACK TO BASICS
with Keynote speaker
Sean McEwen
'Workplace Culture & Engaged People'

THURSDAY, NOV 26
8:30AM - 1:30PM
MCA AUDITORIUM
32315 South Fraser Way,
Abbotsford

What is Involve Abbotsford?

Abbotsford symposium is a one-day event that brings together not-for-profits, sports, arts, small business, and community service groups, to learn and share information about the best in organizational practice, business administration, and to network, support, and gain professional knowledge that is crucial to sustainable operations.

FOR MORE INFO
involve@abbotsford.ca 604.557.1464
REGISTER abbotsford.ca/involve

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KEYNOTE

BACK TO BASICS - Workplace Culture and Engaged People
Sean McEwen

People are the most important asset of any organization – yet Canadian workplaces are facing a growing crisis of burnout, disengagement, turnover, and psychological injury. Across sectors, leaders are being asked to navigate increasing complexity and ongoing change with limited capacity. Organizations that create psychologically healthy and safe workplaces are better positioned to attract talent, improve engagement, strengthen leadership, increase innovation, reduce turnover, and build resilient, future-ready teams. This keynote positions Workplace Psychological Health and Safety as a practical “back to basics” leadership strategy – one grounded in trust, accountability, inclusion, communication, psychological safety, and a renewed sense of community at work. Drawing from neuroscience, organizational psychology, and real-world workplace experience, Sean McEwen of RealEyes Capacity Consultants explores how organizations can move beyond reactive approaches toward healthier, more engaged workplace cultures that support both organizational performance and employee well-being.



Sean McEwen is a nationally recognized Workplace Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Culture Consultant and an engaging public speaker with over 25 years of experience helping organizations build inclusive, high-performing workplaces. As a Director at RealEyes Capacity Consultants, he supports private, non-profit, and government sectors to build sustainable, inclusive workplaces that reflect the diversity of their communities while driving innovation, boosting employee engagement, and strengthening retention.

WORKSHOP A

David Thompson

USING GENERATIVE AI PRODUCTIVELY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Generative AI (GenAI) tools like ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot have the potential to boost productivity and support research and writing tasks in any organization. But like any workplace tool, they need to be used strategically and with a strong foundation in critical thinking, communication, and professional judgment. Reflecting this year’s Back to Basics theme, this session will focus on the fundamental principles that help users get the most value from AI tools. Participants will receive an introduction to GenAI capabilities, along with practical tips, real-world examples, and demonstrations for effective workplace use.



David Thompson has been a faculty member in the School of Communications at the University of the Fraser Valley for more than two decades. His teaching and research interests focus on workplace communication, particularly the ways digital technologies have transformed how people communicate and collaborate. David holds a PhD from the University of British Columbia and recently completed a year-long sabbatical exploring the challenges and opportunities of generative AI in higher education, with a particular focus on student writing, assessment, and teaching practices.

WORKSHOP B

Lisa Brenner

MARKETING 101

Discover the essentials of marketing with this beginner-friendly workshop. Learn practical tips, simple strategies, and easy-to-use tools to help you attract the right audience, strengthen your brand, and make a bigger impact. Explore helpful resources and marketing techniques designed to take the guesswork out of promoting your business or organization, while building your confidence and helping you market more effectively.

Lisa Brenner is a marketing professional specializing in social media, marketing strategy, and community engagement. With experience across the non-profit, municipal, and retail sectors, she brings a strategic and creative approach to connecting audiences with meaningful stories, services, and opportunities.



WORKSHOP C

Jennifer Hystad & Ann-Marie Leijen

GRANT WRITING BACK TO BASICS: TURN YOUR GREAT IDEA INTO A FUNDABLE ASK

You have a great project. Your community needs it. Why do grant applications feel so hard to write? This session hands you a tool: you’ll leave with a simple, four-part framework – the same one funders actually use to decide who gets funded – that pairs every part of your plan with a realistic, defensible budget. We’ll work through real examples of applications that fall flat – including budgets that don’t hold up – and break down exactly why, so you know what to avoid before you push submit. You’ll also leave with one concrete next step to build toward your next application. Whether you run a sports league, a gallery, a food bank, or a small business improvement group — this session gives you a framework you will be confident to use.



Jennifer Hystad, MSc, CE is the Executive Director of the Maplewood Care Foundation, a granting organization supporting healthy aging. Jennifer holds a Master of Science in Health Promotion Studies and a Bachelor of Science, both from the University of Alberta, and is a Credentialed Evaluator with the Canadian Evaluation Society.

Before stepping into philanthropic leadership, Jennifer spent more than two decades as a consultant in program evaluation, strategic planning, and organizational development, working with organizations including BC Care Providers Association, Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC), and Métis Nation BC. That experience gave Jennifer a front-row seat to what makes community programs succeed: sound strategic plans, utilization-focused evaluations, and funding applications built to withstand scrutiny.

Ann Marie Leijen, MBA is a healthcare executive and Registered Nurse with extensive experience in seniors’ care, housing, and long-term care. Ann Marie holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of the Fraser Valley and an Executive MBA from UBC’s Sauder School of Business.



After working as an owner-operator in seniors’ care and housing, Ann Marie has spent the past five years serving as CEO of Maplewood Care Society, a non-profit long-term care organization in Abbotsford. This experience spans both for-profit and non-profit environments and includes leadership, strategic planning, quality improvement, change management, and organizational development.

