

STEPS

An Inclusive Community



Neurodiversity Workplace Research Centre

Funding Pitch for the Neurodiversity in the Workplace Research Centre

Location: Sasin School of Management, Chulalongkorn University

Planned launch date: January 2023

Project Status: Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Sasin and Steps on September 30, 2022

Synopsis: Be a Diversity and Inclusion Pioneer in Thailand

Neurodiversity: Untapped Workplace Potential

Human brains are all unique and therefore people have different skills, abilities, and needs. We now recognise that traits that were previously viewed as disabilities, such as autism spectrum disorder, Asperger's syndrome, attention-deficit/-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), are simply variations of the human experience. They offer strengths as well as challenges that can be accommodated in the workplace.

In reality, neurodiversity can be a competitive advantage. Many people who are neurodivergent have higher-than-average abilities in select areas such as pattern recognition, visual-spatial thinking, memory, or mathematics.

Chevron, Goldman Sachs and Microsoft all have neurodiversity hiring programs.

The Problem - Cost *without* Benefit

Companies in Thailand are required by law to hire 1 registered person with a disability (PWD) for every 100 employees. Many companies instead opt to pay the resulting annual fine, resulting in 2 billion baht in penalties transferred to the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons. Distribution of the fund is not reported and many needs for PWD seeking employment remain unmet. Companies who pay the fee are also not better informed on how to rectify their hiring problems.

Barriers to employing PWD are reportedly challenges in being able to find candidates. Successful hiring is also limited by a lack of employer awareness of both the capabilities and needs of the PWD, often leading to placements that do not last.

The Opportunity

Become a founding donor of the Neurodiversity in the Workplace Research Centre (NWRC). Be a diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) pioneer and fund research and development into tangible solutions for meaningful employment for PWD in Thailand. The NWRC will engage in foundational research on PWD in Thailand with the aim of better understanding and supporting this population as they make their way into the workforce.

Founding donors can directly benefit from this trailblazing applied research for inclusion will be in ways that are tailored to your their industry industries, such as:

- trained baristas to share a coffee chain's brand story
- archivists to organize and maintain company knowledge management systems
- dedicated training programs for a hotel group

Please help us to make this happen.

Vision: Trailblazing Applied Research for Inclusion

We are seeking 50 million THB in funding to launch the NWRC, the first of its kind in the region.

Evidence-based research will inform culturally and developmentally appropriate frameworks, practices, and resources. Outputs from the center will enable businesses to implement their own inclusion programs in meaningful, value added ways.

NWRC tools will help identify opportunities and readiness for inclusion, guide where and how businesses can begin as well as provide ongoing support frameworks. Metrics for the Social Return on Investment (SROI) will be demonstrated for environmental, social and governance (ESG) reporting purposes.

Who We Are and What We Will Do

The NWRC will be a collaboration between Steps and Sasin School of Management, overseen by a jointly agreed steering committee.

NWRC is seeking founding corporate sponsors to fund research tailored to different sectors and environments suitable for neurodiversity (e.g, hospitality, finance, technology).

[Steps](#) is a fully social enterprise in Thailand which provides appropriate education for the neurodivergent, models inclusive and sustainable business practices, and empowers employers with the right tools to hire inclusively.

Steps will provide technical expertise, consult on research design and operate the NWRC. It will work with Sasin to co-develop corporate inclusion tools, and provide training and consultancy services for corporates looking to begin or improve their DEI journeys.

Steps is the first in Thailand to pioneer providing UK accredited education to PWD aged 14-50 using the research-based approach of 'place, train, fade'. This involves placing a person into supported employment, on-the-job training for the PWD and the employer, and fading the support out to a level where the individual works as independently as possible and the employer is empowered.

[Sasin](#) was founded in 1982 in a partnership between Chulalongkorn University, Kellogg School of Management, and the Wharton School. Sasin is the first internationally accredited business school in Thailand with the world's most demanding accreditations from both AACSB and EQUIS. Sasin's mission is to create an ecosystem within the Asia-Pacific region for stakeholders to develop a sustainable entrepreneurial mindset through lifelong learning

that emphasises academic excellence, knowledge creation, business relevance, and social significance.

Dedicated Sasin researchers will co-develop DEI specific executive training tools with Steps along with research products for publication. Sasin will also promote the center to its alumni network, and other leading organizations looking to be DEI leaders. The NWRC will be nested within Sasin’s business school where there will be workplace demonstration as well as training spaces for neurodivergent learners and our founding donors.

The Thailand PWD Employment Situation in Detail

Thai government regulations require companies to hire 1 registered person with a disability (PWD) for every 100 employees ([TH](#), [EN](#)). Failure to do so incurs a fine to be paid into the State Rehabilitation Fund of Disabled Persons, equivalent to an annual minimum wage salary. Consequently, companies across Thailand pay 2 billion baht in fines each year instead of employing PWD in their workforce. See Table 1.0 for the estimated costs.

1.0 Estimated Cost of the Fine to Employers

No. of Employees	One Year Cost	Three Years Cost	Five Years Cost
100	118,440	355,320	592,200
200	236,880	710,640	1,184,400
500	592,200	1,776,600	2,961,000
1,000	1,184,400	3,553,200	5,922,000
5,000	5,922,000	17,766,000	29,610,000
10,000	11,844,000	35,532,000	59,220,000

The Gap

Lack of hiring pathways for PWD candidates

Companies in Thailand report challenges in being able to find PWD, however, government data indicates there is no shortage of PWD to employ. According to the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, currently almost 500,000 registered PWD are able and willing to work, but are unable to find work. It is worth noting that of the estimated 3.7 million PWD in Thailand, only 2 million have registered. In other words, a labour market of upwards of 1 million people in Thailand has the potential to become a meaningful part of the workforce.

At the same time, social and religious barriers to hiring PWD exist. Another barrier is the lack of recruitment agencies and/or governmental agencies to facilitate employer employee matching.

Where companies do hire PWD, issues can arise when the candidates don't meet their expectations or companies are unprepared for the reality of introducing a PWD workforce.

Lack of systems to train PWD candidates

As 86.68% of PWD leave education at primary level, there is a huge skills gap when looking at employment. This exodus from education occurs due to the lack of enforcement of the Education for All ([UNESCO, 1990](#)) and schools and teachers not being equipped with appropriate curriculum. Schools also lack the skills to adapt, differentiate and innovate learning.

Inclusive company policies, structures, and systems are needed

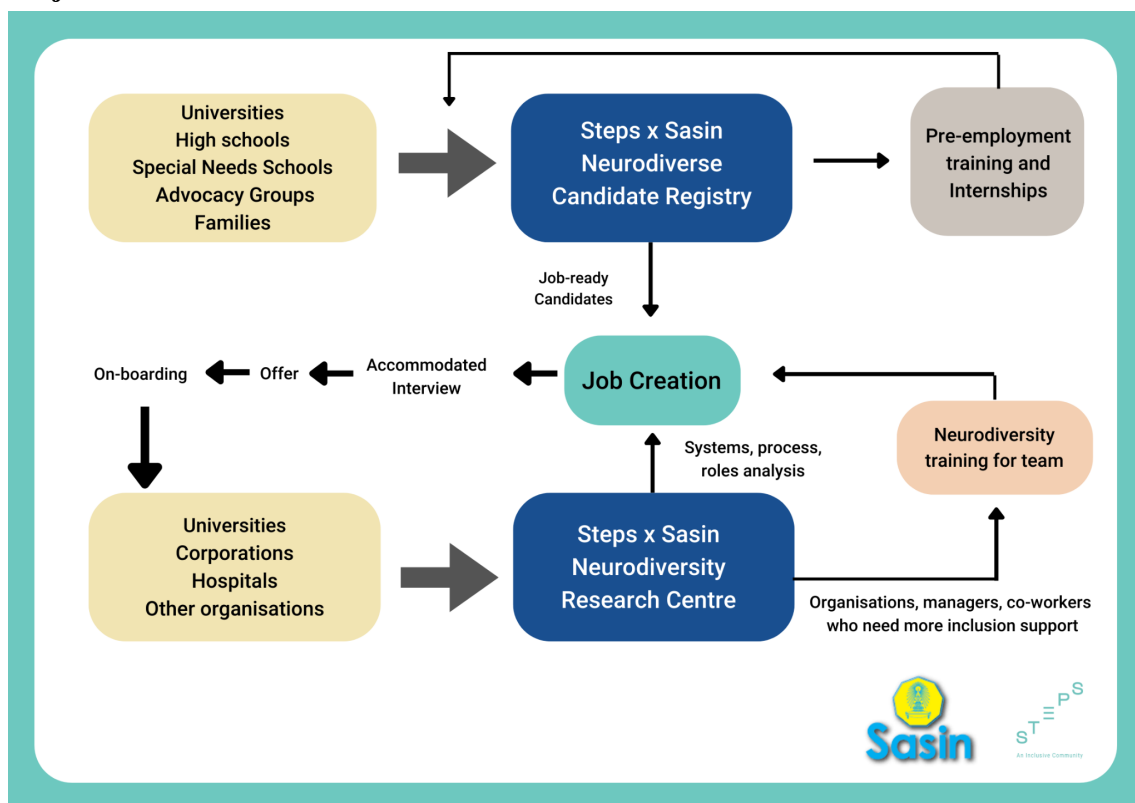
Research shows that successful integration/inclusion of neurodivergent employees goes beyond representation and requires processes and environments to be adapted to meet individual skill sets and needs. Companies need to allocate resources and partner with specialists to create an inclusive and sustainable ecosystem and culture. To date this level of specialized service has been difficult to find in Thailand.

The NWRC will change this!

It will create the tools corporate Thailand needs to hire PWD. It will advise companies on ways to identify talent, adapt job roles, and implement employment readiness training programs for people who are neurodivergent.

Fund a future workforce, not further waste through fines paid into the state disability fund. Please help us build the NWRC to change the system and lives of PWD in Thailand.

Project

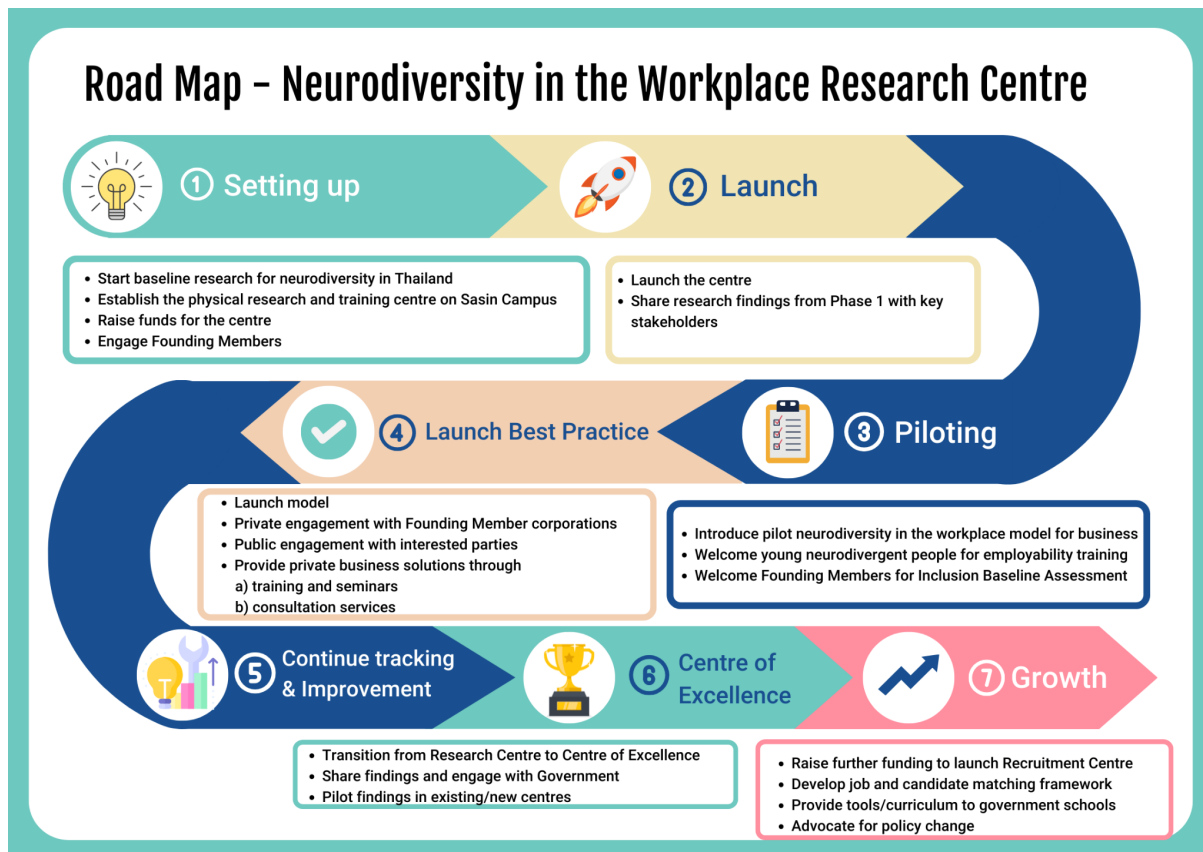


Adapted from [Stanford Neurodiversity at Work](#) reference

Examples of similar projects:

<https://www.bbk.ac.uk/research/centres/neurodiversity-at-work>

<https://med.stanford.edu/neurodiversity/NaW.html>



Funding

Launch capital of 50 million THB will cover the setup, administrative and research staffing and operational costs of the research center for 5 years at which point revenue from corporate training will enable the NWRC to be self-sustaining. A detailed budget will be provided.

Founding Member Donation Model

Benefits	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Platinum
Donation	1 million	2 million	5 million	10 million
Named Center Sponsor	No	No	Yes	Yes
Named Event Sponsor	Annual conference	Annual conference	3 times/year	All events
Attend annual DEI leadership conference	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
First access to NWRC Quarterly Research Digest	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Inclusion baseline assessment for your organization #1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Participate in best practice collaborative learning platform (6-12 sessions per year, up to 2 participants from each organization)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Inclusion baseline assessment for your organization #2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Creation of inclusion action plan for your organization			Yes	Yes
Private Seminar on Inclusion Action Plan			Yes	Yes
Inclusion implementation consultation				Yes

What does this mean for your company?

- Pioneering status as a founding donor
- Co-branding opportunities for NWRC products
- Opportunity to be recognized in journal articles, white papers, and other NWRC publications
- Steps, as a Social Enterprise, is able to offer tax benefits to eligible individual and corporate donors
- Co-development of specific training tools/ toolkits/ resources for your industry
- Opportunities to play a role in shaping future legislation

NWRC Development Team



Dr. Drew B. Mallory is a lecturer at Sasin School of Management, published researcher, and interventionist. His areas of expertise include social and organisational research in areas like sustainability and corporate social responsibility, and diversity and inclusion. He specialises in working with people with specific differences, such as people with Autism, LGBTQ+ people, and those with disabilities. Dr. Drew also provides organisational consulting and executive coaching, and is on the board of several organizations as an unpaid advisor.



Max Simpson holds a Masters in Inclusion and is the CEO and Founder of Steps. Max has set up multiple vocational training centres and modelled 11 inclusive and sustainable social businesses including coffee shops and a business service centre. Max believes strongly in demonstrating the sustainability of inclusive businesses in order to change the narrative around disability, and to empower the business community to replicate these models. In 2019, Max was listed as one of the top 50 young leaders shaping the future of Asia.



Mark Chewter, CFO, has helped small and mid-sized companies in diverse industries to grow and manage risk. He has also concluded buy-side and sell-side mandates, raised equity and debt, and restructured balance sheets for private and listed companies. Mark is an experienced company director and spent 12 years in the equity research divisions of leading international investment banks. Mark holds an MA (Hons) from Oxford University in Politics, Philosophy and Economics. He is a Fellow Member of the Thai Institute of Directors.



Thaladchanan Chainares (Pear) holds an MSc in Mental Health and is a Senior Inclusion Specialist at Steps. She works closely with businesses to consult on systems and processes that are both meaningful for the company and accessible for the neurodivergent community. Pear also provides training and mentorship to companies beginning their inclusion journey and has a proven track record of successfully integrating the neurodivergent community into valued adding roles.

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