

What Every Family Friend and Community Member Should Know



**Take the first step in faith.
You don't have to see the whole staircase, just
take the first step.**

-Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



Welcome to In the Company of Friends!

Whether you are familiar with services or exploring options for the first time take a minute and focus on what is important to your relative or friend. How might you maximize his/her choice, voice, and desire to lead a full and meaningful life? How might you provide support to deepen relationships and assist him/her to be a contributing member of the community? Are these things important? If so, you're ready! Let's explore this unique funding model - In the Company of Friends (ICOF)!

What is In the Company of Friends?

ICOF is a funding source offered by the Manitoba Department of Family Services. It has been available to individuals with disabilities since 1995.

An individual utilizes this funding to create a lifestyle suited to his/her abilities and desires. This is accomplished with the support of family and friends. Individualized funding, a self - directed approach, and supported decision making, paired with Support Networks and relationships are the foundation of ICOF!

A Support Network assists each individual in decision making, and encourages personal responsibility and planning. This design recognizes that people closest to the individual offer valuable input by providing information, advice and support to facilitate good decision making rather than making decisions for the individual. This is called *supported decision making!*

When an individual becomes part of ICOF funding, he/she will need a Support Network. The role of the Support Network is to help the individual make decisions and provide advice. The individual chooses who will be on his/her Support Network. It is an important decision because these are the people that will provide advice and support with daily decisions. Remember, in supported decision making the individual makes the final decision!

Who is eligible for In the Company of Friends?

Any individual who meets the eligibility criteria of the Community Living disABILITY Services of the Department of Family Services may be eligible for ICOF funding. The individual and others involved will need to understand and accept the principle of working with a Support Network that may include family, friends and others he/she chooses.

What makes In the Company of Friends unique?

The individual receives money directly to meet his/her daily living and support needs. Money is deposited in the individual's personal bank account each month. With the help of loved ones and friends, the individual will fully participate in making daily choices around how to plan for, spend money, hire staff and live each day. Here are some specifics:

- ❖ The amount of funding received is determined by the unique abilities and desires of your loved one. Funding looks different for each individual, with respect to lifestyle choices and supports required.
- ❖ ICOF funding is portable - this means each individual can access ICOF funding anywhere in Manitoba. Should he/she choose to move from one community to another the funding will follow.
- ❖ Support Networks are established around each individual. They are an integral feature of ICOF and critical to the success of the individual.
- ❖ Support Networks are made up of people each individual chooses.
- ❖ Support Networks are responsible to the desires of each individual.
- ❖ ICOF is based upon supported decision making, self - direction, interdependence and collective commitment.
- ❖ Each individual is autonomous, which means he/she creates and dictates life choices by participating and directing daily supports. This is done with the support and assistance of a Support Network.

Ultimately, self - directed supports ensure each individual lives the life he/she wants.

Why Did Other Families Choose In the Company of Friends?

- ✓ *"As a parent I want to still be involved in my son's life and I think his Support Network, who all care about him, can help him make the best choices. I think having that Support Network formally in place adds an extra level of comfort to all."*
- ✓ *"Other choices are not acceptable because for the most part the participant seems to have to fit their program and they are not really providing for individual needs."*
- ✓

What makes In the Company of Friends different?

<u>Service Model</u>	<u>In The Company Of Friends</u>
Has an Executive Director who manages day to day operations.	The individual along with the Support Network directs his/her staff, money and other aspects of daily living. This is self - directed support.
An agency is responsible for hiring and overseeing staff.	The individual, along with the Support Network hires and guides staff.
Agency Staff report and are accountable to the Executive Director.	Staff report and are accountable to the individual and the Support Network. The individual is the employer.
Housing is typically at a predetermined location.	The individual chooses where to live - anywhere in Manitoba - urban or rural communities - a house or an apartment.
Individuals receive Employment and Income Assistance.	The individual is no longer on Employment and Income Assistance... funding is received from FSCA.
Individuals have a medical benefits card through Employment and Income Assistance to cover dental, optical, and medication costs.	The individual purchases a health plan that suits his/her needs... just like other Manitobans!
Agencies are required to meet regulations through Residential Care Licensing.	Individuals receiving funding through ICOF are not bound by Residential Care Licensing.
Agencies typically focus on the importance of friendships and community connections. A Support Network is optional.	Friendships, relationship development and community connections are a critical and intentional part of the design of ICOF. Support Networks are not optional - they are essential!

Think about which option is a better match for the person you support and their supporters.

What is an ICOF Support Network?

An ICOF Support Network is a group of people who have a relationship with the individual and who intentionally come together to guide and assist the individual to self - direct his/her life each day, within a spirit of team work. Network members enjoy a reciprocal relationship with the individual and each other. When needed, they agree to assist with specific tasks that may include hiring staff, managing money and other daily living tasks. They are not paid for their contributions, rather, the benefits are internal and based in relationship. By virtue of a relationship, the Network helps the individual create a lifestyle reflective of his/her individuality and choice. The individual is responsible for deciding who to invite to his/her Support Network or minimally agreeing to each Support Network member's participation. A Support Network is the structure that is in place that works side by side with the individual in managing day to day life decisions. This is called supported decision making.

In the Company of Friends and the VPA!

In Manitoba, there is legislation called the **Vulnerable Persons' with a Mental Disability Act**. The Act recognizes the strengths of natural Support Networks and the process of supported decision making. The Act presumes each individual is competent. These same principles guide ICOF!

The FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES of the Act are as follows:

- ❖ Vulnerable persons are presumed able to make their own decisions on matters affecting their lives, unless they demonstrate otherwise.
- ❖ Vulnerable persons should be encouraged to make their own decisions, with support if needed.
- ❖ Like most of us, vulnerable people sometimes rely on the advice and assistance of Support Networks, friends, service providers and others they choose. The Act recognizes the important role Support Networks play and encourages their assistance with making decisions, when necessary.
- ❖ Assistance with decision making should respect the privacy and dignity of vulnerable persons by utilizing the least restrictive and intrusive means possible.
- ❖ Sometimes vulnerable people are unable to make decisions about some aspects of their lives, even with the help of a Support Network. In these instances where decisions are required and the vulnerable person is unable to make them, a substitute decision maker may be appointed as a last resort.

Ask yourself these questions.....

- ❖ Are you and the individual open to ideas, input and guidance from people other than yourselves?
- ❖ Are you open to the ideas and opinions of others, specifically people the individual deems as important enough to include in his/her ICOF Support Network?
- ❖ Are you prepared to oversee and potentially assist with payroll, hire, train and supervise staff, and complete planning if needed?
- ❖ Are you prepared to strengthen and develop the relationships each individual will need to be successful within ICOF?
- ❖ Is there a commitment to maintaining, building, and creating a Support Network?

A Support Network properly facilitated is empowering to all involved – it does not create dependence on a system. This ensures each person has the opportunity to actively participate in their life.

How to get started?

Here are some initial things you can do:

- ❖ **Talk** to your friend or family member with a disability and discuss the ICOF option. Before you can even begin this journey it is important that he/she is informed, interested and willing to proceed.
- ❖ Consider who might join a **Support Network**? Do you know people? Would a Support Network need to be developed?
- ❖ **Call Innovative LIFE Options Inc. (LIFE)**. LIFE is an organization specifically developed to assist individuals receiving ICOF funding and Support Networks.

Where to find us?

Innovative LIFE Options Inc.
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Phone: (204) 772-3557 Fax: (204) 784-4816
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Other Publications:

An Introduction to LIFE
LIFE and the CSW! A Unique Partnership
ICOF Entrance Process and First Steps!
ICOF Guidebook - Tips For the Individual and Support Network
ICOF Protection Book: A Guide to Reporting Abuse and Neglect
ICOF Support Network Planning
Thinking about your Future? What will life look like after Graduation?
What You Should Know! - A Guide for the Individual

Glossary and Abbreviations

Community Services Worker (CSW): A person employed by the Department of Family Services and Consumer Affairs. A CSW is usually the person who coordinates cases, keeps in touch and monitors individuals receiving direct services through the Department.

Family Services: A department of the provincial government of Manitoba. In the Company of Friends is a funding program offered through Community Living disABILITY Services of Family Services..

Individualized Funding: The individual receives money directly to meet all of his/her daily living and support needs. This money comes in the form of a monthly cheque. With the help of loved ones and friends, the individual will make decisions around how each day of life will unfold!

Innovative LIFE Options Inc. (LIFE): An organization that provides assistance, resources, training, and some monitoring on behalf of the funder to each individual participating In the Company of Friends. The LIFE Resource Coordinator assigned to each individual in ICOF will take the active place of the CSW.

Support Network: A group of people who come together intentionally to provide guidance, advice, assistance and sometimes specific tasks on behalf of each individual funded through ICOF.

Supported Decision Making: A process whereby those who have a relationship with the individual offer valuable input by providing information, advice and support. In supported decision making the individual either participates in decision making or makes decisions on his/her own.

Vulnerable Person's Act (VPA): A piece of legislation pertaining to adults with a mental disability in the province of Manitoba.

Thoughts and questions!

Pros	Cons

I would like to learn more about:

Considerations for a Support Network:

Questions:

Notes:



www.innovativelifeoptions.ca

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