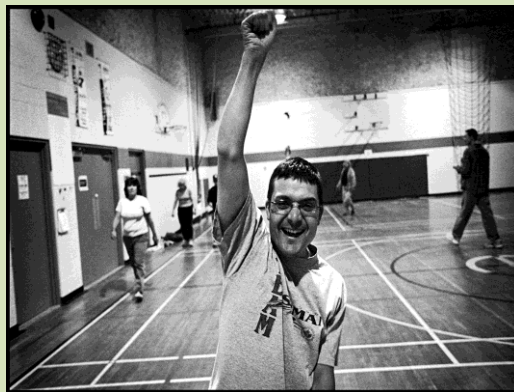


What you should know:

A Guide for Individuals



**We don't accomplish anything in this world alone...
Whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry
of one's life and all the weavings of individual
threads from one to another that creates something
beautiful.”**

-Sandra Day O'Connor



Welcome to In the Company of Friends (ICOF)!

Do you want to learn more about In the Company of Friends? We suggest you take time and work through this package with someone you trust, someone you care about. It will help you make decisions about In the Company of Friends!

In the Company of Friends is not the same as agencies you might be familiar with - it is different, on purpose!

Think about:

- Do you want to be **part of** the things that affect you every day?
- Do you want the opportunity to **learn** how to self - manage?
- Do you want to have more **choices**?
- Do you want your choices **heard** and **respected**?
- Do you want to **focus** on the things you do well?
- Do you want to **share** with others - "This is who I am"?
- Do you want the people you **trust** and **care** about to help you with your decisions?
- Do you **accept** the opinions and advice of others?
- Do you want to be a part of **hiring** your staff?
- Do you want more **people** in your life?



Ok, let's get started.....

What is In the Company of Friends?

- In the Company of Friends is a funding model offered by the Manitoba Department of Family Services.
- In the Company of Friends gives you the opportunity to manage your day to day life with support from your family and friends. We call this self - managing.

Who is eligible for In the Company of Friends?

If you meet the eligibility criteria of the Community Living disABILITY Services of the Department of Family Services, you may be eligible for In the Company of Friends funding.

Why did others choose In the Company of Friends?

- ✓ *"It's about having control and choice."*
- ✓ *"The great flexibility within my budget adds much adventure to my life. I have the opportunity to save money and use it in fun, exciting and limitless ways. There are so many financial guidelines to other programs that discourage from the adventure."*
- ✓ *"I feel more like a citizen rather than a client. I believe it really models people self - directing their lives, making choices, taking risks and learning from these experiences."*

Four important things you need to know about In the Company of Friends!

1. You will have a Support Network

- Each person who receives ICOF funding requires and agrees to having a Support Network. If you choose ICOF, you will also have a Support Network of people you choose to assist you.
- Your Support Network is responsible for helping you make your own choices and decisions. They help you plan to live your life the way you want to. We call this *supported decision making*.

2. You will receive dollars from Family Services

- You will receive money directly from the Department of Family Services to meet all your daily living and staff needs.
- You will no longer receive EIA.
- The money will be deposited to your own bank account every month.

3. You will direct your life with support from people who care

- In the Company of Friends also gives you the freedom to be part of making choices in every area of your life. It gives you the opportunity to work with your Support Network to make decisions about everything that affects you, such as how to spend your money, who to hire, where you will live, etc.
- In the Company of Friends is based upon a foundation of relationships. We all require people in our lives to be friends, companions, and sometimes helpers and advisers.

4. You will learn about friendship and reciprocity

We believe that having friends and loved ones to help you along your journey is essential. Friends let you know you are loved and valued and offer their input to ensure you are making informed decisions. It is really about mutual kindness. This means people are kind to you and you in return are kind to others.

These four things help build friendships and create a Support Network:

- **Time:** The amount of time people spend together and the length of time they have spent together in the past.
- **Intensity:** Some ties and connections are invested with a lot of emotion. They mean a lot to you, perhaps more than anything or anyone else. Others are less important, and some not very important at all.
- **Intimacy:** You share confidences with some people more than with others. Some of our ties and connections involve a lot of trust.
- **Reciprocity:** The exchange between people. This may range from simply following the rules of politeness, to providing practical help, sending a card, or sharing major parts of your life and work.

What is a Support Network?

- A Support Network is a group of people who you choose to be part of your In the Company of Friends process. They may be family members or friends who intentionally come together to celebrate your gifts and talents, enjoy a great relationship with you and each other, and when needed, agree to assist you to self - manage day to day living tasks – in the company of your friends! Your Support Network will help you to make choices and encourage you to be responsible for the choices you will make!
- You choose who will be on your Support Network. It's an important decision because you are choosing the people you want to turn to for help, advice and support.
- When you and your Support Network work together everyone will feel good about the things that happen for you! You will feel a sense of control over your life. Your Support Network will feel prepared to help you! You will grow to depend on one another.

Why do I need A Support Network?

- Your Support Network is the structure that is in place to help you self - manage your day to day life. They provide a connection for *supported decision making*.
- Your Support Network is in place to assist with decisions and other processes as needed.

- The members will help you with tasks such as hiring your staff, paying your bills, keeping track of your money.
- Not only will these people help you, they will keep you safe. Did you know you are safest in the world when you are surrounded by people who care about you?

What if I make mistakes?

You likely will! We all do - especially when we are learning how to make good decisions for ourselves. Hopefully you will be receiving good advice and if you make decisions that don't turn out very well, your Support Network will be there to help you get up and start again. Sometimes the people on your Support Network may have a difficult time stepping back. Remember, they are learning too. They may be used to making all the decisions for you. You may need to remind them that it is your choice and that you need to work with them as a strong team.

What if I need help developing my Support Network?

If you need help, you can turn to an organization called Innovative LIFE Options Inc. (LIFE)! LIFE will help you build a Support Network. Taking the courageous step of gathering people together is the first step in developing your Support Network. It is through gathering that the magic can be experienced! Maintain the belief that you will be surprised!

- LIFE is an organization developed to provide you with resources and guidance.
- LIFE does not make decisions for you or on your behalf.
- LIFE will teach you, and all involved how to self - manage.
- LIFE will help keep your Support Network strong!

Visit www.innovativelifeoptions for more information.



Let's check in – If you choose In the Company of Friends:

You will need to build a Support Network!

- ✓ Will you **promise** to make a commitment to maintaining, building, and creating a Support Network?
- ✓ Will you **trust** others to help you with your decisions?
- ✓ Will you **accept** the opinions and advice of others?

You will be making many choices and decisions!

- ✓ Will you be open to ideas, input and guidance from other people?
- ✓ Will you ask for and accept help?

You will have responsibilities!

- ✓ Will you learn to manage your money?
- ✓ Will you learn how to budget?

You will become the Employer!

- ✓ Will you learn about what it means to be an employer?
- ✓ Will you help with payroll, hiring, training and supervising staff?

Responsibilities are things you need to take care of, things you need to do, things you need to act on.

Choices and decisions are a responsibility... often the bigger the decision, the more responsibility.

This chart outlines your new responsibilities if you choose In the Company of Friends, while highlighting the difference between In the Company of Friends and a Service.

Service Model	In The Company Of Friends
Agencies have an Executive Director who manages day to day operations.	You, along with your Support Network manage things. We call this self - directed support.
An agency is responsible for hiring and overseeing staff.	You, along with your Support Network hire and guide your staff.
Agency Staff report and are supervised by the Executive Director.	Staff report and are supervised by you and your Support Network. You become the employer.
Housing is typically at a predetermined location.	You choose where you would like to live - anywhere in Manitoba - urban or rural communities - a house or an apartment.
Individuals receive Employment and Income Assistance.	You are no longer on Employment and Income Assistance... funding is received through ICOF.
Individuals have a medical benefits card through Employment and Income Assistance to cover dental, optical, and medication costs.	You purchase a health plan that suits your needs... just like everybody else!
Agencies are required to meet regulations through Residential Care Licensing, including restrictions on the location of your home.	You are not bound by licensing requirements.
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!

Is In the Company of Friends different from what you are use to?

The Vulnerable Persons Act

In Manitoba, legislation called the **Vulnerable Persons Act** (VPA) guides the supports that people offer you every day. It trusts you to make decisions with help. It trusts you will ask and accept help from others. This chart will help you understand the VPA, and how it will affect you if you choose In the Company of Friends.

Things you should know about the VPA:	In ICOF this means:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ It presumes you are able to make your own decisions about things that affect your life, unless you demonstrate otherwise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ You actively participate in choices and decisions. ❖ The choices that you and your network make are respected.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ You should be encouraged to make your own decisions, with support if needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Your views are sought and respected. ❖ Your tastes, preferences, motives and ability to discriminate are taken seriously. ❖ When you take risks and face challenges it is a learning opportunity. ❖ People focus on your abilities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Like most of us, sometimes you will ask others for help. This is a good thing! The people who help you should be people you choose. The VPA encourages you to ask for their help with making decisions, when necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ You are surrounded by caring, knowledgeable, trustworthy people who help you with your decision making.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Your helpers should respect your privacy and dignity – not make the decision for you, or take away your right to choose. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Because you hire your staff and choose your Support Network members, you ensure that you are treated with respect.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ If you were unable to make decisions about some aspects of your life, even with the help of a Support Network a substitute decision maker may be appointed as a last resort. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ If you are unable to make decisions about some aspects of your life, even with the help of a Support Network a substitute decision maker may be appointed as a last resort.

The Vulnerable Person’s Act is very much a part of In the Company of Friends? That’s why we shared it with you!

Final Thoughts!

The first step to a good decision is gathering information. We hope that reading this book has helped you take a few steps towards making a decision about In the Company of Friends. Continue to explore!

- ✓ Talk to people, discuss the ICOF option.
- ✓ Call LIFE and set up a meeting to learn more about ICOF.
- ✓ Learn how LIFE can help you.
- ✓ Take some time to think about all that you have learned.

After taking these steps you can make an informed choice! Often choices take time, especially big choices and decisions. It's important to understand all sides before making a decision to ensure that decision is the BEST decision for you! We know choosing ICOF is a big decision! **Good Luck!** Let us know if LIFE can help!

Where to find us?

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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 Every Family, Friend and Community Member Should Know!

Thoughts and questions

How do you make choices now?

What happens when people disagree with your choices and decisions?

Would this be different if you choose ICOF?

If yes, what would be different?

How would you involve your Support Network when making decisions?
How do you think making choices creates responsibilities?

What do I like about ICOF?	What are some of the things I might find difficult?

What do I need to know more about?

Do I have other questions?



www.icof-life.ca

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