



# **Social Connectedness Fellowship Program**

Partnership Proposal



**SAMUEL CENTRE  
FOR SOCIAL  
CONNECTEDNESS**



# Partnership Proposal

**Partner Organization:** Special Olympics International

**Location of Fellow:** Remote

## **Description of Proposed Project:**

The COVID-19 Pandemic created massive challenges for individuals and families around the world, but particular challenges for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) and their families. School closures have exposed and exacerbated exclusion in education for learners with disabilities, who were already excluded prior to COVID19.<sup>1</sup> The loss of routine and social connection are particularly damaging for individuals with ID, and studies are showing that youth without disabilities have suffered mental health effects caused by social isolation during lockdowns.<sup>2</sup> Caregivers are struggling to support family members with disabilities who no longer have instructional aides or therapists<sup>3</sup>. Parents, siblings, and other family members have had to balance working inside or outside of home with caregiving when schools and support programs have closed.<sup>4</sup>

The proposed Fellowship will involve carrying out an inclusive research project in partnership with a Special Olympics Athlete Leader with ID. The goal of the research project is to better understand what families of Special Olympics athletes need in terms of support and what their expectations of Special Olympics as an organization are in meeting those needs. The Fellow and Athlete Leader will work together to design survey/interview questions, gather data, and disseminate that data in accessible formats.

## Desired Qualifications

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank (2018) <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/missing-piece-disability-inclusive-education>

<sup>2</sup> Lee, J. (2020). Mental health effects of school closures during COVID-19. The Lancet. Child & Adolescent Health

<sup>3</sup>. EU Observer <https://euobserver.com/opinion/148118>

<sup>4</sup>. UN <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/un-working-ensure-vulnerable-groups-not-left-behind-covid-19>



- Academic background in the psychology, social sciences or related field
- Some knowledge of or interest in disability inclusion and non-profits.
- Exhibit cultural sensitivity; be mindful of challenges facing marginalized populations
- Exceptional communication and organizational skills
- Demonstrated writing and research skills
- Detail-oriented, flexible, excellent time management skills and the ability to work independently to complete projects in a timely fashion.
- Basic computer skills, including proficiency in email, internet research and Microsoft Office.
- Creative thinker with a genuine curiosity and investigative sensibility.
- Prior experience working with people with ID or Special Olympics a plus

### **Key Deliverables:**

The Fellow will be responsible for working collaboratively with the co-investigator to produce a questionnaire. They will also produce a blog post and a 25-35 page final report. In keeping with the inclusive nature of this research project, the Fellow will work with the co-investigator to produce Easy-to-Read versions of their blog post and final report that make information accessible to individuals with ID. They will also jointly identify alternative dissemination formats for findings that make the information useful for people with ID, their families, and communities.

- Produce a questionnaire with the co-investigator;
- Produce a blog post to be shared by SCSC & SOI ;
- Produce a 25 - 35 page final report;
- Work with co-investigator to produce a easy to read version of the report;
- Work with the co-investigator to produce a easy to read blog;



- If time allows, work with the co-investigator to produce **one alternative version of the report in a different medium** to help make the finding accessible to people with ID, their families and communities.

### **Goals:**

This research will fill a critical need for Special Olympics as our movement is producing an updated Family Engagement Strategy.

Special Olympics is committed to being a movement not only *for* people with ID, but also *from* them as well. This project will be a major step in our desire to grow the amount of research we conduct in a way that is inclusive and participatory of people with ID. This project will demonstrate how a Fellow and a leader with ID can collaboratively plan and execute a research project in an inclusive way.

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