SPEED FRIENDSHIP

10 minutes. One conversation. A new possibility.

An Inclusive Social Connection Program for People with Disability

PROJECT PROPOSAL
Monthly structured one-to-one friendship events
Proposed participant fee: $75 per person

Purpose: connection • inclusion • choice • confidence • friendship

1. Executive Summary

Speed Friendship is a structured, facilitated social connection program for people with disability who may benefit from a supported way to meet new people and build genuine friendships. It adapts the rotating one-to-one format commonly associated with speed dating, but the purpose is friendship, social connection and confidence - not dating.

Participants meet one person at a time for a 10-minute conversation. A timer then signals a rotation, allowing each participant to meet every other participant during the event. A brief skills session at the beginning provides practical guidance on starting conversations, asking questions, listening, turn-taking, boundaries and respectful social interaction.

At the end, participants privately indicate who they would like to stay in contact with. Contact details are only facilitated where both people independently choose to connect.

2. Project Objectives

- Create accessible and meaningful opportunities for people with disability to form friendships.
- Reduce barriers associated with unstructured social environments.
- Build confidence in initiating and maintaining simple social conversations.
- Support social communication, choice, autonomy and community participation.
- Provide a predictable, respectful and supported environment for meeting peers.
- Create recurring opportunities for connection through age-appropriate monthly events.

3. Who Can Participate?

Speed Friendship is disability-inclusive and is not restricted to one diagnosis. Suitability is based on each person's capacity to understand and meaningfully participate in the format, together with any reasonable supports they may require.

The program may be suitable for NDIS participants including people with:

- mild or moderate intellectual disability;
- autism, including participants with lower support needs such as Autism Level 1;
- physical disability;
- developmental or other disabilities that may affect opportunities for social connection; and
- other disabilities where the participant would benefit from structured friendship and social participation opportunities.

Participants should generally be able to:

- communicate verbally well enough to take part in a simple one-to-one conversation;
- understand the purpose of the event - meeting people and exploring friendship;
- understand and follow basic social expectations and event instructions, with reasonable prompting if needed;
- participate in basic turn-taking, listening and conversation;
- understand personal boundaries and that another person may or may not wish to continue contact;
- make or communicate their own choice about who they would like to connect with;

- understand, at an appropriate level, what it means to share or receive contact details; and
- participate safely in the event with reasonable supports.

Inclusion principle: A diagnosis alone does not determine suitability. A participant does not need to have an intellectual disability. The focus is functional participation, comprehension, communication, social understanding, consent and safety.

4. Event Format

The event is based on one-to-one conversations rather than group discussion. Participants rotate after each timed conversation until everyone has met everyone else.

Component	Suggested Time	Purpose
Welcome & mini social-skills training	10-15 min	Orientation, conversation starters, turn-taking, boundaries and consent.
Friendship rounds	7 × 10 min	Each participant meets every other participant one-to-one.
Mid-event break	5-10 min	Rest, regulation, refreshments and support.
Private friendship choices	5-10 min	Participants identify people they would like to connect with again.

Recommended group size: 8 participants. With 8 participants, each person meets 7 others. Seven 10-minute rounds require 70 minutes. Once the introduction, break, rotations and closing are included, a comfortable event length is approximately 100-105 minutes. If the program must remain strictly 90 minutes, either the conversation rounds or break/intro would need to be shortened.

5. Pre-Event Mini Training

Before rotations begin, the facilitator delivers a brief, accessible session using plain language, modelling, visual prompts and examples. The aim is not to test participants, but to make the social situation more predictable and comfortable.

- How to introduce yourself.
- How to start a conversation.
- Taking turns talking and listening.
- How to ask a follow-up question.
- What to do if you do not know what to say.
- Respecting personal space and boundaries.
- Understanding that friendship must be mutual.
- How the private contact-choice process works.

6. Conversation Supports

Simple visual conversation cards can be placed on each table. Example prompts include:

- “What do you like doing on weekends?”
- “What music do you like?”
- “Do you like sport or games?”
- “What is your favourite food?”
- “What hobbies do you enjoy?”
- “What places do you like going to?”
- “What makes you laugh?”
- “What would you like to try one day?”

7. Friendship Choice & Contact Exchange

At the end of the event, participants privately identify the people they would like to speak with again. Contact details are not exchanged automatically during the rotations.

A connection is facilitated only when both participants independently choose each other. This mutual-choice process protects privacy, reduces pressure and reinforces the principle that friendship and ongoing contact require consent from both people.

Where appropriate, the facilitator can support the first exchange of agreed contact details. Any involvement of a nominee, guardian or support person should respect the participant's rights, decision-making capacity and applicable consent arrangements.

8. Age-Based Events

Speed Friendship would operate as a recurring program, with separate events for different age ranges. This supports greater compatibility and allows participants to meet peers at a broadly similar life stage.

- Young Adults: approximately 18-25
- Adults: approximately 25-40
- Mature Adults: approximately 40+

Age bands are examples and can be adjusted according to demand, participant profiles and safeguarding considerations.

9. Frequency, Capacity & Fee

Frequency: Once per month for each scheduled cohort/age group

Recommended capacity: 8 participants per event

Suggested duration: Approximately 100-105 minutes

Participant fee: $75 per participant

Gross event income at 8 participants: $600

10. NDIS Funding - General Guidance

The $75 participation fee may potentially be funded from a participant's NDIS plan where the activity is consistent with the person's individual goals, available funding and current NDIS funding rules.

Depending on the participant's plan and circumstances, the program may align with supports relating to:

- social and community participation;
- capacity building or skills development;
- social communication and relationship skills; and
- behaviour support-related capacity building where participation is clinically appropriate, linked to the participant's behaviour support goals and delivered within the relevant funding and provider requirements.

Important: Participation should not be represented as automatically claimable from Behaviour Support, community participation or any other NDIS budget. Funding suitability must be considered individually and, where required, confirmed with the participant, nominee, plan manager, support coordinator and/or relevant provider. Current NDIS pricing, claiming and support-category rules should be checked before the program is marketed as NDIS-funded.

11. Reasonable Adjustments & Accessibility

Reasonable supports can be used to improve access without taking over the participant's social choices. These may include visual schedules, conversation cards, simplified instructions, additional processing time, environmental adjustments, mobility access, communication supports and limited prompting.

The participant remains the decision-maker about friendship and contact wherever they have capacity to make that decision. Support should enable participation rather than direct whom a person should choose.

12. Safeguarding & Participant Wellbeing

- Pre-event suitability and support-needs screening.
- Clear consent and privacy procedures.
- Accessible explanation of event expectations and boundaries.
- No automatic sharing of phone numbers, social media accounts or other personal information.
- Mutual consent before contact details are facilitated.
- A clear process for participants to decline contact without pressure.
- Appropriate staff supervision and a quiet/support space if required.
- Accessible venue, including consideration of mobility and sensory needs.
- Incident, safeguarding and escalation procedures appropriate to the service setting.
- Clear distinction between a friendship event and a dating service.

13. Why Speed Friendship?

People with disability may attend community activities and still have limited opportunities to form reciprocal friendships. Being physically present in a group does not automatically create connection. Speed Friendship deliberately creates a supported opportunity for two people to meet, talk and decide for themselves whether they would like to connect again.

The predictable format reduces the uncertainty of approaching strangers, joining groups or knowing how to begin. Everyone attends with a shared purpose: to meet new people and explore friendship.

SPEED FRIENDSHIP

A safe, structured and inclusive space to meet one person at a time, practise conversation, discover shared interests and choose who you would like to connect with again.

10 minutes. One conversation. A new possibility.

14. Proposed Next Steps

1. Develop participant registration and suitability screening form.
2. Develop consent, privacy and mutual contact-exchange procedure.
3. Create Easy Read participant information and event rules.
4. Create visual conversation cards and rotation system.
5. Develop facilitator guide and pre-event mini training.
6. Confirm accessible venue, staffing, insurance and safeguarding requirements.
7. Confirm current NDIS claiming arrangements before advertising funding options.
8. Pilot the first 8-person event, collect participant feedback and refine the model.