

Partners with Business:

Solutions for Creating a Welcoming and Diverse Workplace

People with disabilities represent an untapped talent pool. They are ready, willing, and able to work! The **Partners with Business** model can help you attain greater flexibility to meet your business needs, improve your bottom line, and achieve your workplace diversity goals.

- Research has demonstrated that the turnover rate for employees with disabilities is **8% compared to 45%** for other workers – so hiring people with disabilities can help **reduce employee turnover**.
- Research shows that employees with disabilities have **nearly identical job performance ratings** as employees without disabilities.
- The amount of supervision required is **similar for employees with and without** identified disabilities.
- Polls show that the public likes to patronize businesses that hire people with disabilities. In fact, **87%** of customers say they prefer purchasing from companies that hire people with disabilities.
- More than half of job accommodations cost employers **no money** at all.
- Studies have determined a return on investment of **\$28.69 average return for every \$1.00** invested on accommodations.

Partners with Business is a way to support workers with disabilities to be successful on the job. The Partners with Business model starts with a job developer who works with your business to analyze your workplace needs. The job developer matches your needs to a job candidate(s) with the right skills and strengths. Partners with Business capitalizes on the natural supports (coworkers and supervisors) in the workplace and compliments this natural support with more formal supports when necessary for job success. These more formal supports can include assistive technology, co-workers, or job coaches from a vocational support agency.

The Partners with Business model has two primary paths for workplace support:

1. The **“Natural Supports”** path - The employer provides support to the worker naturally, through co-workers and supervisors, while accessing a Partners with Business vocational support agency for back-up support as needed.
2. The **“Natural Supports Plus”** path – Co-workers and supervisors provide natural supports to the worker but the employer also receives funds to provide extra needed assistance to the employee to be successful on the job. A vocational support agency continues to provide regular check-ins and back-up assistance as needed. In a traditional supported employment model these extra supports would be provided by a job coach from a vocational support agency but in the Partners with Business model, the employer is reimbursed for providing this extra support.

Who makes the decision of which path?

After initial job training, the path will be carefully determined by the employer, the job developer, and the worker. The path will depend on the level of support the worker needs to perform job tasks to the employer's standard and the type of team, co-worker, or supervisor support that naturally occurs in the workplace.

If the Natural Supports Plus path is chosen, how is the rate of reimbursement for the employer determined?

Reimbursement is determined based on individual needs of the worker with input from the employer and job developer. The employer and job developer will perform an assessment of the job duties and the level of independence and job supports needed to successfully complete work responsibilities. Once the extra time spent by co-workers and supervisors to assist the worker is determined, a formula is used based on the employer's costs to provide the support. For example, if a worker needs a total of one hour of intermittent support from a co-worker throughout a 6-hour work shift, the hour of co-worker time spent each day providing the extra support to the worker would be reimbursed to the employer.

What are the advantages of Partners with Business?

- **It is unobtrusive.** There are no outside job coaches to "stick out" or get in the way. Allows managers to have direct and immediate supervision of supported employees.
- **No random new people/job coaches show up to your business.** Agency job coaches often change. Partners with Business ensures greater consistency of support by placing the responsibility for support with the employer. This is preferable to both the supported employee and employer.
- **A truly integrated work setting.** The employee is supervised in a manner similar to other coworkers and has the opportunity to develop independence and co-worker relationships on the job.
- **A welcoming and accepting workplace.** Employees and supervisors are provided training by the vocational support agency on disability awareness and how to support co-workers with special needs.

Where do the funds to reimburse the employer come from?

Job support funds for people with disabilities come from publicly funded sources including state vocational rehabilitation programs under the Department of Workforce Development, Medicaid long-term care services under the Department of Human Services, or school-to-work funds from school districts.

Where is Partners with Business happening?

Partners with Business was piloted in the Madison area and is spreading throughout Wisconsin. Some Partners with Business employers include nursing homes, restaurants, business offices, radio stations, retail settings, country clubs, production facilities, fitness centers, and warehouses. Partners with Business can be successful in any business that is willing to support their employees to be successful!

How can I learn more?

Visit www.wi-bpdd.org/projects/partnerswithbusiness or Contact Shannon Webb at (608)318-0700 or shannon@incontrolwisconsin.org

