

Partners with Business Overview FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions for Employers Considering the Partners with Business Model

1. How is Partners with Business different from regular Supported Employment?

In a regular, or traditional, supported employment situation, a job coach from an outside vocational support agency comes into a business to provide job training and ongoing support to a worker with disabilities. Some businesses do not want to hire people with disabilities because they find the presence of a job coach to be obtrusive or unnecessary. With the Partners with Business model, the employer provides the necessary supports to a worker with disabilities either through natural, existing co-worker support and supervision or through enhanced support from co-workers or supervisors, for which the employer is reimbursed to cover the cost to provide this support.

2. Who are the partners?

Employers who use the Partners with Business model collaborate with a vocational support agency, or school special education staff to provide training and support.

3. What support is provided by the employer?

Employers supervise and provide training to their supported employees as they would do with their employees without disabilities. However, some employees with disabilities, due to the unique nature of their disability, may need ongoing assistance with certain aspects of their job tasks. For example, a worker might need assistance to prioritize tasks, to monitor stamina or health issues, or to quality check work at the end of his or her shift.

4. What specific responsibilities will the employer have?

- Clearly identify the job responsibilities of the supported employee
- Hire the supported employee at minimum wage or whatever the prevailing wage is for the particular position
- Assign specific supervisors or co-workers to provide support and training as typically offered to new employees of the business
- If extra support is needed, identify which supervisors or co-workers will be providing this enhanced support
- Give staff permission and time to receive training on how to work with the supported employee
- Monitor the performance of the supported employee. Call the back-up vocational agency if questions or concerns arise that cannot be dealt with quickly or directly with the supported employee

5. How do I determine if my business should get reimbursement for training and support costs?

With the Partners with Business model, the employer provides training, direction, and supervision to supported employees as they would for any of the employees in their workplace. If the employer provides support *above and beyond* what is typically provided in their workplace, the employer can explore training and support reimbursement options with the job developer.

6. As a Partners with Business employer what kind of ongoing support can I expect from the vocational support agency?

A vocational support agency – sometimes called a supported employment agency – can provide training to you and your staff on disability awareness and how to best support workers with special needs. The vocational agency staff will also check in with you on a regular basis and can be available anytime you need them for questions or problem solving. If the support needs of the supported employee change, the vocational service agency can help arrange job coaching support if necessary.

7. A Partners with Business Example:

Jenae works at a local community center 4 days a week, 9:00 to 11:30. Her responsibilities include room set up, light cleaning, and assistance with senior meal programs. Jenae highly values her independence and sees herself as a part of the staff team. Jenae doesn't want the stigma of being shadowed by a Job coach from a vocational agency while she is working.

Jenae needs 30 to 45 minutes of support each day to successfully accomplish all her job. With reimbursement, community center staff agreed to provide Jenae with the support she needs each day plus monitor health and stamina concerns.