

Partners with Business:

Goodwill of North Central Wisconsin's experience Building Capacity to Get More People into Employment

The Wisconsin Partners with Business initiative (Wisconsin Act 323) provides grant funding and technical assistance to schools, organizations and employers to use best practices that support more people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to be successful at work.

Wisconsin is in the midst of a caregiver crisis. As a result, supported employment agencies are facing staff shortages and perpetual turnover. Goodwill of North Central Wisconsin chose to utilize Partners with Business grant funding to build the capacity of their job coaches and the businesses they work with to create more effective solutions for on-the-job support. These solutions have resulted in people needing less job coaching support at work and has improved Goodwill's ability to get more people jobs. This has significantly reduced their waiting list for employment services.



Developing Their Capacity Building Initiative

Vacant job coach positions resulted in a long waiting list for services for Goodwill of North Central Wisconsin. While there were plenty of businesses hiring, there were no job coaches to provide initial training and ongoing support to new employees with disabilities. Goodwill originally focused their efforts on strategies to recruit more job coaches, but they came to realize that more should be done to support employees with disabilities to become independent on the job faster. This meant analyzing their current practices to determine areas to improve.

Goodwill's Director of Employment and Training Programs convened key leaders from their employment services department to review the best practices and resources in the **Partners with Business toolkit**. They wanted to consider how they could transform their supported employment services. Service transformation can be a daunting task, so to focus their efforts, they chose two specific tools in the toolkit to implement.

- **First** they reviewed a guide called **Instructional Techniques in Job Coaching** with the job coaching team.
- **Second**, they had all staff complete and discuss a **Job Coach Self-Evaluation**.

Using these tools, staff began to see where they could improve job coaching practices. This resulted in buy-in from the team. Next, the team used the systematic instruction prompt hierarchy more effectively. As a result, job coaches reported feeling more equipped to support people to become independent on the job.

After this initial "win," Goodwill created two sub-committees to tackle the service transformation work ahead. The subcommittees focused on two distinct areas:

- **Subcommittee 1:** Employment service leads and job coaches worked together to create a more effective task analysis document, following a consistent format, for their job sites.
- **Subcommittee 2:** A different set of employment service leads and job coaches reviewed the messaging and handouts used with employers to convey new expectations for the role of the job coach. They began to communicate to employers that the job coach is temporary and has the primary role of consulting with the employer and coworkers about how best to include and support the new hire with a disability.

Specific Strategies Used with Staff & Employers

- 1. Jobsite Quality Checks:** Historically, job site checks were used by Goodwill case managers to check in with the employer and the supported employee to determine how work was going. Goodwill staff conducting these job site checks began checking in with the job coaches to monitor their use of best practices on the job.
- 2. New Electronic Case Note Format:** Goodwill added quarterly performance goals and the level of prompting provided by the coach to their documentation system. This helped guide staff on best practices and monitored progress toward independence. Each coach used an iPad to document throughout the day as needed. The job coaches shared the reason for the iPads with employers so there were no misinterpretations of coaches being on electronics while on the jobsite.
- 3. Peer Mentorship:** Goodwill established mentor relationships within the job coaching team. They reviewed case notes and feedback to identify job coaches who were excelling. These coaches were paired with other team members who wanted to improve and strengthen their skills. Goodwill leadership found peer mentorship to have tremendous impact on improving staff competencies and morale.
- 4. New Information Materials and Training for Employers:** Goodwill developed a one-page document explaining the role of the job developer, job coach and case manager and what employers should expect from these positions. The messaging is designed to create a stronger connection between the employer and the person they employ. It also positions Goodwill staff as disability employment consultants supporting their success. They developed an optional Personal Profile for supported employees to share with employers as well as an hour-long training on workplace inclusion that employers can receive.



Luis has been working 14 of hours a week at Panera for 4 years. During this time, he had job coach support 100% of the time. By improving job coach strategies and working with the business to provide more support, Goodwill was able to completely fade job coaching supports. Luis now receives natural supports from his boss and coworkers, with a check in from Goodwill staff once a month.

Lessons Learned

- Goodwill had to revamp their approach to subcommittee work. Leadership stepped in to provide more structure and guide staff on using vetted tools developed by leaders in the Supported Employment industry, rather than wasting time searching the internet for random ideas that may not be best practice.
- Leadership was very careful from the very beginning to make sure staff did not feel like the changes were occurring because they were doing something wrong. Leadership slowed down to talk with staff and assure them everyone was doing the best job they could with the resources they had but now, with new tools, they had an opportunity to improve.
- They involved the direct service staff in decision making. Initiatives prior to this that had been led only by management did not go as smoothly. Solutions were co-created with the job coach and case manager teams.
- They originally planned to meet every other week, implement and scale on a much more aggressive timeline but realized this was not feasible due to existing staff shortages. They found ways to stay updated through progress meetings that were spaced farther apart. They learned to request and set deadlines with each other to keep the process moving forward.

Tips for Agencies

- **Start with one thing** - Improving and transforming services can be daunting. There are a lot of steps between A and Z. Goodwill started with one strategy that they thought would have a big impact. This first win created momentum to move forward. Each time they implemented a strategy, they would take time to reflect on what worked well, what they learned and decided the next step.
- **Keep an open mind and stay positive** – There will be staff, employers and people/families who will be resistant. Remind people that the ultimate goal of supported employment is to fully integrate people into their workplace and community.
- **Create excitement within** – Celebrate wins as a team. Share successes both big and small. Take time to recognize the impact staff efforts are having in the lives of the people they support. Use marketing materials to create excitement and show what's possible.
- **Focus on recruitment and retention with employers** – Help employers understand that supported employment service providers are a valuable partner to tap into new talent to meet their hiring needs. This positions businesses to be a more inclusive company, helping them fulfill their workforce diversity and inclusion efforts.

For 30 years, Shawn had 100% job coach support at his job cleaning the dining room at a pizza restaurant. Goodwill worked with Shawn and the employer to develop a slow job coach fade-out plan, which they implemented over a year. This plan included remote supports (by phone) with the job coach. Shawn no longer needs on-the-job support from a job coach.



The Capacity Building Journey Continues

Goodwill's efforts thus far have cut their waiting list in half. However, they are not done. They have several plans in process to continue their transformation, including:

- Continuing to improve their use of task analysis
- Using a **Workplace Inclusion Checklist** at each jobsite
- Learning from families about their fears and concerns about fading job coach supports
- Developing a handout for families to clarify the role of the job coach
- Continuing to provide additional training opportunities for staff
- Revamping their job coach onboarding to focus on competency-based training plans

Goodwill's capacity building journey has just begun.

Watch a short video about Luis' and Goodwill's journeys.



The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) mission is to help people with developmental disabilities become independent, productive, and included in all facets of community life.

ERI is a Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (WI BPDD) Partners with Business Grantee. Wisconsin Act 323 established the WI BPDD's Partners with Business initiative in 2018 to help businesses who are interested in meeting their workforce needs by hiring and supporting people with disabilities. Through the Partners with Business initiative, employers and supported employment service providers learn how to implement best practices in hiring and supporting workers with disabilities and, if the worker needs additional support above and beyond what is typically provided by an employer, the employer can receive funding to provide this extra support. The funding for the reimbursement to the employer comes from the long-term care system (through Family Care or IRIS). The service provider is responsible for receiving that funding, reimbursing the business, and checking in monthly with the employer and employee to provide follow-along services, as needed. For more information about the Partners with Business initiative, visit: <https://wi-bpdd.org/index.php/partners-with-business/>