

Partners with Business Annual Report to the Legislature, July 2022 – June 2023

The Wisconsin Legislature established the Partners with Business initiative to assist businesses interested in hiring and employing people with disabilities using an evidenced based coaching model. During the past state fiscal year, Partners with Business provided grant funds and coaching to 7 grantees.

The Partners with Business initiative was able to demonstrate cost savings in Medicaid funded job coaching support through stronger partnerships with employers. The initiative also influenced positive changes with employment service providers that get more people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities working in the community.

Cost Savings through Stronger Partnerships with Employers

The initiative collected employment data from 8 participants with disabilities to determine the impact on Medicaid savings when service providers invest in creating stronger partnerships with employers.

Before Partners with Business		After Partners with Business	
Average Hours per Week Employee with a Disability Received Medicaid Funded Job Coaching Support	Average Annual Cost to Medicaid System for On-The-Job Support	Average Hours per Week Employee with a Disability Received Medicaid Funded Job Coaching Support	Average Annual Cost to Medicaid System for On-The-Job Support
6.6 hours/week	\$12,012¹	2.4 hours/week	\$4,368

The Partners with Business investment resulted in a **64%** reduction in the number of Medicaid funded job coaching support hours. This saved the Medicaid system on average **\$7,644** annually per person or about **\$61,152** total per year for the 8 participants with disabilities in this year's Partners with Business cohort.

Employer Engagement in This Year's Partners with Business Initiative

Three private sector businesses joined the Partners with Business initiative. These businesses received training and technical assistance to learn best practices in hiring and supporting employees with disabilities. RPM Services and Management, a renovation company headquartered in Muskego, partnered with Goodwill of Southeast Wisconsin to hire two employees with disabilities. Creative Explorers, a licensed childcare center in Oak Creek, hired three employees with disabilities. Both employers modified positions and provided enhanced support to ensure the success of their new employees.

NSA Cleaning Services, located in West Allis, has a history of successfully supporting employees with disabilities. The owner of NSA Cleaning Services joined the initiative to share their experiences with over 50 employers in the West Allis and Wauwatosa areas. They co-hosted an employer educational event about hiring people with disabilities with the West Allis and Wauwatosa Chamber of Commerce, which was attended by 40 business representatives.

¹ This amount is based on a rate of \$35/hour.

The Heart of Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce partnered with ODC, Inc., an employment service provider in central Wisconsin, to host an event similar to the West Allis-Wauwatosa employer event, which was also well attended by businesses in the Wisconsin Rapids area interested in diversifying their workforce.

The City of Madison continued their partnership with the initiative for a second year. Their outcomes include establishing a disability focused Employee Resource Group (ERG), revamping their Reasonable Accommodation policy, building disability awareness through additional training with management, and continuing to roll out a Career Pathways initiative to hire and promote more employees with disabilities. City of Madison staff report more City employees are disclosing their disabilities, which is evidence of the positive impact the ERG and their efforts to build an inclusive culture through the Partners with Business initiative have had.

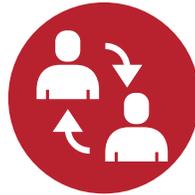
Promoting Best Practices and Capacity Building with Employment Service Providers

Three employment service providers were involved in the initiative this year: Goodwill of Northcentral Wisconsin, ODC, Inc. and Pathways of Wisconsin. These agencies used grant funds to increase the competencies of their job developers and job coaches to work with employers more effectively. Collectively, hundreds of hours of staff training were provided through grant funds, which would not have otherwise been available. Employment services staff learned new on-the-job support strategies and techniques for developing employer-provided support. One agency reported a *“reduction in [Medicaid funded] support hours was a direct result of utilizing a combination of principles and techniques. Tools and techniques utilized include educating and empowering employers, clarifying the job coach role, systematic instruction and fading, using assistive technology and adaptive aids, and intentionally developing natural supports. The recordings of the trainings will be incorporated into new employee training. Our mindset has shifted from training the employee to training the employer in how to work with the employee.”*

Partners with Business Capacity Building:



Ensure good job matches between employers and job seekers with disabilities;



Empower employers to directly train and supervise their employees with disabilities;



Cultivate workplace inclusion and natural supports;



Maximize independence on the job for workers with disabilities; and



Reimburse employers for the costs of providing formal support above and beyond the “natural supports” typically found in the workplace to their employees with disabilities, rather than relying on outside job coaches provided by a vocational agency.

Partners with Business Success Story

Creative Explorers, a licensed childcare center in Oak Creek, hired three employees with disabilities. They modified positions and provided enhanced support to ensure the success of their new employees.



“ It has been fulfilling and heartening that our organization, Creative Explorers Learning Center was able to actively promote and support diversity in our workplace through the Partners with Business Initiative. Our commitment to inclusivity not only reflects the values of an equitable society but also benefited our center in numerous ways. By providing job opportunities to individuals with disabilities, we were able to tap into a great pool of talented and motivated individuals that contributed their unique skills and perspectives to our workforce. We truly are grateful and honored to have been part of the Partners with Business Initiative. ”

Menal Mahmoud, Creative Explorers Learning Center



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.