

# Partners with Business Annual Report to the Legislature, July 2023 – June 2024

The Wisconsin Legislature established the Partners with Business initiative to assist businesses interested in 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 18 businesses and supported employment organizations.

## Cost Savings through Stronger Partnerships with Employers

The Partners with Business initiative collected employment data from 29 participants with disabilities to determine the impact on Medicaid savings when service providers invest in creating stronger partnerships with employers. We found that when service providers use Partners with Business capacity building strategies (see infographic below), participants have a **57%** reduction in the number of Medicaid funded job coaching support hours needed. This saved the Medicaid system on average **\$2,112** annually per person or about **\$61,248** in this cohort this year alone with permanent reductions in support needs anticipated in the future.

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
<b>7 hours/month</b>	<b>\$3,696<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>3 hours/month</b>	<b>\$1,584</b>

### 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.

<sup>1</sup> This amount is based on a rate of \$44/hour.

## Employer Engagement in This Year's Partners with Business Initiative

### Sippie Hippy Coffee Shop, Slinger, WI

The owners of Sippie Hippy Coffee believe that each person has a place in the world. Their goals with the Partners with Business grant funding were to establish an inclusive workplace culture and infrastructure to hire individuals with IDD, as well as raise awareness and educate community members about hiring people with disabilities. Sippie Hippy committed to providing internal, coworker support to everyone they hire. Most of their 8 employees with disabilities had 25-100% of their work hours at previous or second part-time jobs supported by an external job coach. However, at their Sippie Hippy jobs none of them need job coaches – they receive natural support from coworkers.

Sippie Hippy presented their inclusive business model to members of the VFW, Rotary Club, and Lions Club. They developed a partnership with the high school as well, presenting to sociology, business, education classes about their business model and provided tours to these students to showcase the inclusive practices and universal design of their business.



### The Bellin Health Foundation, Inc., Green Bay, WI

Bellin operates a [Project SEARCH](#) program for high school students with disabilities. Project SEARCH is a business-led collaboration with a local high school and the WI Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Bellin's objective with their Partners with Business grant funding was to improve the permanent hire rates of their Project Search graduates by improving disability awareness training for staff, raising more internal awareness about Project SEARCH throughout the hospital, further embedding Project SEARCH into their infrastructure, and expanding internship opportunities.

---

*One of 2022-2023 Partners with Business grantees, Creative Explorers Learning Center, continues to grow their efforts to hire people with disabilities. They hired another employee with disabilities recently. They have partnered with two disability employment service providers to recruit and hire employees with disabilities at their new, second location.*

---

## Promoting Best Practices and Capacity Building with Employment Service Providers

Two service providers, Portal Inc. in Grafton, WI and Goodwill Industries of Southcentral Wisconsin in Madison, WI, received Partners with Business grants to improve their Supported Employment services and build more capacity for employer-provided support for employees with disabilities. Both agencies identified job sites to implement best practice strategies to reduce publicly funded job coaching support, collectively resulting in significant Medicaid cost savings as reported above.

**“He is an excellent worker, a true asset, and we really enjoy having him work here.”**

-Portal Inc. employer partner

Goodwill improved the skills of their job coaches through Partners with Business-funded training with [WI APSE](#). They put this training to use with an employer who didn't think an employee with disabilities could be successful if job coaching was reduced. Goodwill suggested a simple solution to a task the employee needed their job coach to help with. The employer agreed, and as a result, Goodwill could reduce job coaching supports that had been in place for years prior.

Portal improved their employer education and engagement strategies that could help all employers they worked with. Portal also held a “Made to Fade” training event for participants with disabilities to help them better understand how to rely less on outside job coaches and more on their coworkers and assistive technology. Through these efforts, Portal was able to decrease Medicaid funded job coaching services for 24 of their 56 Medicaid funded participants. Portal's success story demonstrates the benefit of these strategies: “He [the employee with disabilities] started with 100% job coaching and we are currently providing 1 stop-in visit...per week for approximately 30 minutes...He averages 12-13 hours per week and loves his job at the library.” Library staff had this to say about him: “He is an excellent worker, a true asset, and we really enjoy having him work here.”



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.