

Partners with Business FAQ for Employers

How is *Partners with Business* different from traditional job coach support?

With traditional job coach support, a job coach from an outside agency provides on-site training and support to the employee with a disability. While effective for some, this model can feel intrusive to employers or employees. In contrast, *Partners with Business* allows existing coworkers or supervisors to provide training and support directly. Employers are reimbursed for the extra time and resources spent supporting the employee, resulting in a more consistent and integrated approach.

Who are the “partners” in *Partners with Business*?

The model is a collaboration between the employer and an employment support agency. The employment specialist that works for the support agency helps to develop support strategies and offers ongoing consultation as needed.

What kind of support does the employer provide?

Employers supervise and train the employee just as they would any team member. Some employees with disabilities may need additional assistance, such as help with task organization, pacing, or quality checks. This support can often be provided by coworkers or supervisors already on staff instead of outside job coaches.

What responsibilities does the employer take on?

Employers participating in *Partners with Business* agree to:

- Define the employee’s job duties
- Assign coworkers or supervisors to provide standard onboarding and support
- Identify and approve additional support roles if enhanced assistance is needed
- Allow time for the employment specialist to train coworkers on effective support
- Monitor performance and contact the employment specialist if concerns arise

How is reimbursement for training and support determined?

If the level of support provided to the employee exceeds what is typical for the workplace, the employer may be eligible for reimbursement. The employer and job developer assess the tasks, level of independence, and type of support needed. Reimbursement is then calculated based on the actual time and cost of that additional support.

How is the reimbursement amount calculated?

Reimbursement is based on the level of extra support the employee needs—beyond natural supports. The agency and employer assess job duties and support needs together. The total cost is calculated by multiplying the amount of support time needed (in 15-minute increments) by the employer’s actual cost (wages and related expenses).

Example:

An employee needs intermittent support totaling 1 hour during each 6-hour shift, four days per week. The employer's cost for a coworker to provide support is \$22 per hour (wages, benefits, payroll taxes and overhead). The employer would be reimbursed \$22 x 18 shifts in a month = \$396 per month. This amount is adjusted monthly based on the actual hours the employee works.

What types of supports are reimbursed under a *Partners with Business* agreement?

Employers are reimbursed only for supports that would typically be provided by an outside job coach. This excludes natural supports already in place - such as typical supervision or assistance any employee would receive from coworkers or supervisors. Reimbursable supports may include:

- Task-specific training or skill-building
- Direct support to complete job duties
- Quality checks and performance monitoring
- Prompts, redirection, or reminders
- Social and emotional encouragement
- Problem-solving assistance
- Monitoring for health and safety

What support does the employment specialist provide?

The employment specialist provides training for staff on disability awareness, provides regular check-ins, and remains available to answer questions or address concerns. If the employee's support needs change, the employment specialist can help reassess and adjust supports, including reintroducing job coaching if needed.

What training will coworkers or supervisors receive?

The employment specialist will train supporters on:

- The *Partners with Business* model and covered supports
- Support strategies that promote independence
- Specific support needs and communication preferences of the employee
- How to access follow-up support from the agency
- Documentation requirements (e.g., hours worked, hours supported, progress updates)

How are coworker or supervisor supporters selected?

Supporters are chosen through a collaborative process between the employer, their staff, and the supported employment agency. Selections are based on willingness to provide support, agreement to a background check, work schedule compatibility, and proximity to the employee. It is best to designate more than one supporter to ensure consistent coverage during absences or scheduling changes.

Why is a background check required?

State and federal regulations require background checks for anyone providing direct support

to individuals with disabilities through vocational rehabilitation or long-term care programs. Supported employment agencies apply the same background standards to these supporters as they do to their own job coaches.

Who pays for the background check?

The supported employment agency covers the cost of any background checks, just as they would for their own staff.

Who sees the results of the background check?

The supported employment agency's HR staff reviews the results and notifies the employment specialist of whether the coworker is eligible to provide *Partners with Business* support. Employers are not given details of the background check - only whether the person passed or did not pass. Employees should be informed in advance and allowed to decline participation without penalty.

What if the employer is hesitant to request background checks on their staff?

Background checks are a necessary part of this model. Many employers already conduct their own checks and may share the results with the agency. If the employer cannot or will not provide them, the agency will need to complete its own. Again, only pass/fail status is shared with the employer.

Who is liable for coworkers or supervisors providing support?

The employer assumes liability for actions taken by coworkers or supervisors providing support. The supported employment agency is not responsible for accidents or negligence on the part of the employer's staff.

What are the employer's reporting responsibilities?

Employers and agencies complete a written agreement outlining responsibilities and reimbursement rates. This agreement is reviewed every six months and renewed annually. The agreement can also be revised based on the employee's needs or discontinued. Employers submit a monthly invoice and a brief update on the employee's performance and support needs to receive reimbursement.

Will the supported employment agency issue an IRS 1099 form?

Yes, if the employer is paid more than \$600 in a calendar year, the agency must issue a 1099 form unless the business is a corporation or an LLC taxed as a corporation. [IRS reference](#)

How can I learn more?

Visit <https://wi-bpdd.org/index.php/partners-with-business> or Contact Shannon Webb at (608) 712-2212 or shannon@incontrolwisconsin.org.

