

Partners with Business Annual Report to the Legislature, July 2024 – June 2025

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 four public school districts and two businesses. 12 new jobs were obtained by people with disabilities and 58 new business partnerships were created.

Cost Savings through Stronger Partnerships with Employers

The Partners with Business initiative collected employment data from 20 participants with disabilities to determine the impact on Special Education, Vocational Rehabilitation and Medicaid savings when schools, service providers and businesses invest in creating stronger partnerships. We found that when strong partnerships exist, participants have a **58%** decrease in the number of publicly funded job coaching support hours needed. This saved the public system on average **\$8,304** annually per person or about **\$166,080** in this cohort this year alone.

Before Partners with Business		After Partners with Business	
Average Annual Cost to Public System for On-The-Job Support per Person	Average Hours per Month Employee with a Disability Received Publicly Funded Job Coaching Support	Average Annual Cost to Public System for On-The-Job Support per Person	Average Hours per Month Employee with a Disability Received Publicly Funded Job Coaching Support
\$14,352	29.9 hours/month	\$6,048	12.6 hours/month

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.

Increasing Employment through Employer and Community Engagement

This year's grantees hosted five events aimed at increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Community Conversations were held in La Crosse and Fort Atkinson. Amazing Race events were held in Pewaukee and De Forest. An event to inform students with disabilities and their families about employment opportunities and resources was held in Pulaski.



A group of students preparing for the Amazing Race event

Meet Jonn, Facilities Assistant, Fort Atkinson Club

In October 2024, Jonn Johnson, a 28-year-old resident of Fort Atkinson, joined the Fort Atkinson Club as a Facilities Assistant. Of all the jobs he's held since high school, Jonn says this one is his favorite. As the Facility Manager's right hand, he supports a variety of tasks including building maintenance, snow removal, lawn care, and setting up and taking down for events. Jonn thrives on staying busy - he finds the slow days, when there's not much to do, to be the most challenging.



"Having Jonn on staff means having someone who is detail-oriented, brings great conversation and humor to the workplace, and genuinely enjoys what he does. I'm glad he's part of the team!" – Emely Sanchez Baez, Programs Manager, Fort Atkinson Club



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.