



A GUIDE TO CREATING

# **INTERNAL SUPPORTS IN THE WORKPLACE**



## **A Guide to Creating Internal Supports in the Workplace for the Successful Onboarding and Retention of Employees**

People with disabilities represent an untapped talent pool. They are ready, willing and able to work! Developing a solid plan for recruiting, hiring and supporting workers with disabilities can help you attain greater flexibility to meet your business needs, improve your bottom line, and achieve your workplace diversity goals.

There are best practice strategies that employers and agencies that support workers with disabilities can use together to develop support programs within businesses to produce the best results. Creating a welcoming and diverse workplace allows an employer to provide natural supports and not rely entirely on outside job coaching. This type of internal support program creates an investment in a diverse workforce and reduces the stigma of outside job coaches. If an employee needs additional support above and beyond what is typically provided by supervisors and co-workers, the employer can receive funding to provide this extra support.

### **About this Guide:**

This Guide to Creating Internal Supports in the Workplace is a collaborative effort between Disability:IN Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities.

Disability:IN Wisconsin is a non-profit, non-partisan business-to-business network that raises awareness and works to advance, improve and expand employment outcomes for people with disabilities in Wisconsin. Our commitment is to collaborate with purpose to promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities, to inspire accessible innovation for all and to foster cultures of inclusion.

The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (WBPDD) is the state of Wisconsin's Developmental Disabilities Council. WBPDD is charged with identifying the most pressing needs of Wisconsin's citizens with developmental disabilities and testing out innovative and cost-effective approaches to meet these needs. WBPDD advocates for the full independence and inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in Wisconsin.

For more information:

[www.disabilityinwisconsin.org](http://www.disabilityinwisconsin.org)

[www.wi-bpdd.org](http://www.wi-bpdd.org)

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# Introduction

In a time of overall uncertainty, a changing and, in some instances, shrinking labor pool, and a scarcity of qualified talent, businesses of all sizes and across industries are challenged like never before. Shortages of skilled employees and professionals may be among the biggest constraints to growth and sustainability in the new economy across various industry sectors. The workforce has faced many new challenges which has emphasized the importance of identifying, attracting, and retaining a diverse pool of candidates. This diverse pool of candidates includes people with disabilities.

One of the most common questions is: How do I get started? There is no one-size-fits-all answer, so we pulled together some common approaches and ideas to consider. Every company culture is different. So is its approach to recruiting, interviewing, onboarding and developing talent. However, we have found that many of the core questions and building blocks are similar.

Please use this Guide to help address your initial questions and build a framework for your program. Note that we use person-first language, but understand it is a personal choice and you can feel free to replace it with identity-first language if preferred.

We hope you find this resource helpful and welcome your feedback or suggestions.



## Key terms and resources to know before reading this guide

**Customized Employment** – is a workforce strategy endorsed by the US Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy. Customized employment personalizes the relationship between the employer and job seeker with disabilities by matching the employers needs to the unique skill sets and strengths of the job seeker.

**ERG/BRG** – stands for Employee or Business Resource Group, many are called Affinity Groups. These are the champions within an organization who advocate for full inclusion. Some businesses have ERG/BRG's to support employees by increasing retention, workplace inclusion, and satisfaction. A company's disability-focused affinity group can promote disability inclusion through the employment life cycle and can enable employees with disabilities to bring their whole selves to work.

**Identity First Language** – In contrast to person-first language, some people view disabilities as an identity category and prefer that this identifier comes first in a sentence. A person might prefer this because they see it as a way to embrace their identity. For example, a person with autism may prefer to be referred to as autistic.

**Internal Support Program** – refers to the plan and process employers use to maximize natural support for their employees with disabilities. While a business must build and rely on partnerships with external stakeholders, including Workforce Development Agencies, to launch and sustain their disability employment initiative, the business takes the lead role in training and providing support to their employees with disabilities.

**Natural Support** – refers to the support employers provide workers with disabilities through supervisors and coworkers. The opposite of natural support is when Workforce Development Agencies provide job coaching support to workers with disabilities.

**Neurodiverse** – refers to differences in the brain and how people learn, think and socialize. The term represents a viewpoint that these differences are normal and not deficits.

**Neurotypical** – someone who does not have an intellectual disability.

**Person-First Language** – refers to communication (both written and oral) that puts the person before the diagnosis. This describes what the person “has” instead of saying the person “is” something. For example, when using person first language, you would say, “an employee with a disability” instead of a “disabled employee”.

**Self-Advocates** – people with disabilities who advocate for themselves and for the rights of others.

**Supported Employment** – Supported employment started in the 1970's as a way to help workers with significant disabilities into the workforce (e.g., Autism, Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, and other neurodivergent disabilities). Supported employment refers to the services for people with disabilities to develop jobs and provide on-the-job support from a workforce development agency (this support is called job coaching).

**Workforce Development Agency** – is an organization that provides support to job seekers with disabilities to address barriers to employment, find jobs (job development services) and maintain jobs (job coaching services).

## Part 1 - The Planning Phase

Organizations interested in creating a welcoming and diverse workplace for individuals with disabilities often don't know quite how or where to start. In this section, we provide a road map for organizations interested in hiring and supporting people with disabilities in the workplace.

This section contains best practices related to the planning of such an effort. In the planning phase, consider the following five key questions to guide your efforts

<b>Why are we doing this?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does this fit our culture and values?</li><li>• How does this align with our strategy?</li><li>• What are the advantages of an internal support program?</li></ul>
<b>Who can help?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who will champion this effort on the executive level?</li><li>• Who will carry it out on the operational level?</li><li>• What existing internal and external entities can help us?</li><li>• Who provides the extra support, if needed?</li></ul>
<b>How do we make the business case?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the program's value proposition?</li><li>• What are the costs of the program and ROI?</li></ul>
<b>Where do we start?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How do we scope the program initially?</li><li>• What does a pilot look like?</li><li>• What is a job developer?</li></ul>
<b>What is ongoing internal support?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is internal job coaching?</li><li>• What is paid coworker support?</li></ul>
<b>What does success look like?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How do we communicate success?</li><li>• What are some communication strategies?</li></ul>

### Planning Checklist

-  Define your program's value proposition
-  Align with your organization's strategy and values
-  Secure executive sponsorship
-  Get buy-in and headcount from business unit leaders
-  Identify the right roles and provide meaningful work
-  Identify talent/pipeline sourcing partners
-  Start with a small pilot
-  Communicate your end game
-  Allocate people and resources to run the program

# 1. Why are we doing this?

People with disabilities represent an untapped talent pool. They are ready, willing and able to work. An internal support program can help you attain greater flexibility to meet your business needs, improve your bottom line, and achieve your workplace diversity goals.

## Research has demonstrated that:

- The turnover rate for employees with disabilities is 8% compared to 45% for other co-workers<sup>1</sup>
- The amount of supervision required is similar for employees with and without disabilities<sup>2</sup>
- The public like to patronize businesses that hire people with disabilities. In fact, 87% of customers say they prefer purchasing from companies that hire people with disabilities<sup>3</sup>
- More than half of job accommodations cost employers no money at all<sup>4</sup>
- A return on investment of \$28.69 average return for every \$1.00 invested on job accommodations

**87%**

The public like to patronize businesses that hire people with disabilities. In fact, 87% of customers say they prefer purchasing from companies that hire people with disabilities.

The first step in the planning phase is to be clear about why you are motivated to create an internal support program and whether it makes sense for your organization. There are several reasons for developing this program, including:

1. A desire to make a positive social impact.
2. An organizational culture and values that support equal opportunity employment and accessibility
3. The need for talent and potential for innovation.

It is important to align the reasons for the program with your organization's strategy, culture and values.

**8%**

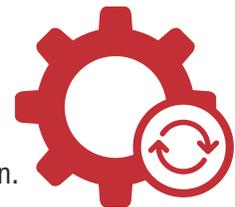
The turnover rate for employees with disabilities is 8% compared to 45% for other co-workers.

## Key Questions

- How does this initiative align with our organizations' strategy?
- How does this initiative fit with our culture and values?
- What are the advantages of an Internal Support Program?

# 2. Who can help?

An Internal Support Program may be initiated from any level within an organization. However, a coalition of internal and external partners is needed for successful execution.



To develop and effectively launch a program, it is important to leverage resources and expertise internally. To establish the necessary internal partners:

- Secure executive sponsorship. This requires a well-articulated business case
- Identify a program leader or leaders who have the enthusiasm to make a difference and the social capital and know how to garner and support business unit leaders
- Secure support from business unit leaders who can provide job opportunities, including job carving and job customization within their units. Job carving and customization are terms used for combining tasks from different jobs or creating new tasks to increase employee productivity while capitalizing on the skills and strengths of workers who identify as having disabilities
- Build partnerships with relevant internal units such as DE&I, (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion), Legal and Human Resources

## Internal Support Checklist



Secure executive sponsor



Secure support from business unit leader



Identify program leader



Build partnerships with HR, Legal and DE&I

## External Partnerships

A key success factor in building external partnerships is identifying and selecting the right partners. It is important to select partners who understand and are willing to adapt to your organization's needs, values, and culture. These partners can help you source talent. To build essential external partnerships there are a few key organizations you should develop sourcing relationships with:

- Local high schools, colleges, and universities prepare school-aged candidates to build employment skills and explore careers and local jobs.
- The Department of Workforce Development's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provides a range of services to job seekers with disabilities and employers.
- Local Workforce Development Agencies, sometimes called vocational agencies or supported employment agencies, provide direct support to people with disabilities to prepare for, find and retain employment.
- Medicaid-funded Long Term Care Services provide ongoing support services to workers with disabilities, including transportation, job coaching and personal care assistance. These programs are called Family Care and IRIS Self-Directed Supports in Wisconsin.

## External Partnership Checklist



Identify sourcing partners



Identify community resources



Select the right partners

## 3. How do we make the business case?

Making the business case for your proposed Internal Support Programs is critical to garnering support from your executives and your organization at large. To develop the business case:

- Clearly articulate how your program's value proposition aligns with your organization's strategy and values
- Differentiate how an internal support program is different from regular supported employment
- Refer to success of other organizations
- Determine possible commitments and program costs
- Evaluate the return on investment (ROI)
- Test your business case on internal audiences of enthusiasts

See Part 2. "The Business Case" for more details.

## 4. Where do we start?

Employers have four key considerations in getting started: **scope, program design, careful planning and pilot execution**. A job developer from a Workforce Development Agency works with your business to get you started by helping analyze your workplace needs. A job developer matches your needs to a job candidate(s) with the right skills and strengths. Natural supports can be complimented with more formal supports from the agency, when necessary. These more formal supports can include assistive technology, co-workers, or job coaches from a Workforce Development Agency.

Scoping the program includes:

- Identifying the right roles for a pilot program within your organization
- Determining in which business unit to start the pilot program
- Determining what support is provided by the employer

Scoping the program is important as you design and refine your recruitment, interview, selection and onboarding practices.

### When selecting a business unit, consider: What roles are best to start and how many?

- Define the needs of the business unit and provide opportunities to improve work flow
- Focus on the business units where there is a need for talent
- Focus on available roles in the business units where you have identified program enthusiasts
- Consider your potential talent pool and skill set
- Consider the business needs and tasks you have identified will provide meaningful work for job candidates
- Learn how other firms started and built success
- Consider how many variations in recruitment, interview selection and onboarding activities you have the resources to offer

### When selecting a business unit, consider

- Internal support from business unit leaders
- Identifying the right hiring managers

## DESIRED QUALITIES OF HIRING MANAGER

- Aptitude to adapt and learn quickly
- Ability and willingness to collaborate with the program and provide feedback
- Ability to cultivate an inclusive culture in their team
- A demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion
- Being generally considered an exemplary manager
- A high level of credibility



### Scoping Checklist



Pick the right roles



Identify the right managers



Find supportive business unit leaders



Identify the right external partners

## Deciding where to start and what supports to provide

- Consider the network of internal and external supports
- Determine what support is provided by the employer
- Define specific responsibilities of the employer
- Build capacity of internal supports
- Consider the culture of welcome and inclusion
- Determine the size of the first group in relation to the potential talent pool
- Determine the capacity of staff dedicated to the Internal Supports Program

## What design elements should be considered?

### PROGRAM DESIGN

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roles</li> <li>• Cohort size</li> <li>• Hiring process activities</li> <li>• Employment support and advancement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training for Managers and Teams</li> <li>• Partnerships</li> <li>• Program staff capacity and structure</li> </ul>	
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### Design your program to:

- Leverage internal and external resources
- Own program functions that are key to the quality of hires and core to your organization's values and cultures
- Pick partners that understand your goals and values and are willing to adapt
- Design your program selection interview and training activities to ensure the quality of hires and advancement of your goals
- Include training for managers and team members to raise awareness of disability inclusion and provide effective collaboration practices for the team
- Provide dedicated full-time staff to champion the program

## What should we consider when planning for the program?



Be explicit



Be specific



Plan for the unexpected

1.	<p><b>Be explicit about the role each partner plays</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine the role each partner will play in each program activity</li> <li>• Communicate your expectations to each partner</li> <li>• Assign specific supervisors or co-workers to provide support and training as typically offered to new employees without disabilities</li> <li>• Be specific about time commitment, communication expectations and desired outcomes</li> </ul>
2.	<p><b>Determine the needs of hiring team and what you expect from them</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek commitment from business unit leaders</li> <li>• Clearly define the skill set needed for each role</li> <li>• Clearly communicate your expectation regarding how hiring teams and support managers will be involved</li> </ul>

<b>3.</b>	<b>Plan logistics carefully, keeping in mind the diversity of individuals with disabilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be specific when communicating building access</li> <li>• Find physical space that is suitable for program activities, candidate needs and accessibility to all internal and external partners</li> <li>• Provide specific instructions to candidates regarding all interview activities and logistics</li> </ul>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Develop an explicit communication plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a communication plan for launching the Internal Supports Program</li> <li>• Share your communication plan with internal and external team members</li> </ul>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Plan for the unexpected</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for best – and – worst case scenarios and develop specific response plans accordingly</li> <li>• Provide backup staff for the program design team</li> <li>• Develop a clear communication plan to respond to candidate’s questions and reactions to hiring decisions</li> <li>• Communicate your plan to the entire team</li> </ul>

### What does a pilot look like?

Most companies start with small pilots focusing one or two key business units within an organization. Pilots allow companies to improve program design; therefore, it is important to be flexible and adaptable during the pilot.

- Be responsive to the needs of candidates and hiring team members in real time
- Build in debrief time and mechanisms to quickly adapt during pilot activities
- Do not compromise the quality of hires
- When changes are made to the planning process or program, make sure to communicate them to your team and partners
- Involve hiring managers, partners and candidates and seek their feedback
- Involve internal stakeholders and external partners in creative problem solving when needed
- Document lessons learned

## 5. What is ongoing internal support?

When employing someone with a disability, employers supervise and provide training to the employee as they would with their employees without disabilities. Some employees with disabilities, due to the unique nature of their disability, may need ongoing assistance with certain aspects of their job tasks. For example, an employee might need assistance to prioritize tasks, to monitor stamina or health issues, or to quality check at the end of the workday. One way that this support can be provided is through a Supported Employment job coach.

When an employee with disabilities receives Supported Employment services, a job coach from a Workforce Development Agency comes into a business to provide job training and ongoing support. The term job coaching refers to the training of an employee to help the employee learn to perform job tasks to the employer’s specifications and to learn the interpersonal skills necessary to be accepted as a worker at the job site and in related community contacts. Some businesses do not want to hire people with disabilities because they find the presence of a job coach to be obtrusive or unnecessary.

With the Internal Support Program, the employer provides the necessary supports to employees with disabilities instead of bringing in a job coach through:

- Natural support through existing co-worker or supervisory relationships found in the business or department.
- Enhanced support from co-workers or supervisors, by assigning additional support responsibilities, the costs for which the employer may be reimbursed.
- Combination of natural and enhanced support.

### How does an employer get reimbursed for enhanced support?

If an employee needs more support than what is naturally provided by co-workers and supervisors, the employer can partner with a Workforce Development Agency to use a model of support called paid co-worker support (also called Partners with Business support).

Reimbursement to the employer is only for supports that would otherwise be provided by a supported employment job coach. This does not include natural supports that have already been negotiated with the employer that are provided through co-workers and supervisors rendered as a normal part of the business setting that would otherwise be provided to an employee without a disability.

The Workforce Development Agency will work with the employer to determine the enhanced supports that are needed. Once these are identified, a reimbursement agreement is made between the Workforce Development Agency and the business. The Workforce Development Agency checks in with the employer every month to ensure success and provide the monthly reimbursement for the enhanced support.

Internal job coaching typically includes:

- Teaching specific job tasks and skills
- Supervision or assistance to complete specific job tasks
- Quality checks
- Redirection and reminders
- Social or emotional support
- Problem solving
- Monitoring health and safety

Other internal resources for support:

- ERG Groups (Employee Resource Groups)
- HR
- Wellness Center
- DE&I (Diversity Equity & Inclusion)



## 6. What does success look like?

Most companies emphasize a long-term view of success. Factors Include:

- Providing value to the organization that is recognized by executives and the organization at large
- Creating meaningful employment opportunities
- Finding talent
- Building an organizational culture that is broadly welcoming and inclusive of employees
- Establishing sustainable programs that satisfy their organization's needs
- Influencing mainstream processes

## How do we communicate success?

During a pilot phase, it is critical that you document and communicate successes regularly. Effective communication strategies can lead to increased support and demand for the initiative. Success can be tangible (e.g., improved performance) and intangible (e.g., improved inclusive culture, improved management effectiveness).

- ◆ Be intentional and systematic about measuring and documenting key performance indicators
- ◆ Develop a regular communication plan to update members of your coalition and potential new partners throughout your organization
- ◆ Use storytelling to communicate success

## Communication Strategies



Regular internal status reports delivered to the organization at large



Executive sponsors communicate program success and impact that is relevant to organizational strategy and values



Social media updates to communicate success stories and new-hire experiences



Use of mass media to communicate program impact in order to raise awareness in the community at large



When program champions from business units communicate their success internally, it lends credibility to the initiative's impact

## Part 2 - The Business Case

To develop a successful internal support program, you need to make the business case for how it will impact your organization. The business case should address the following **four key questions**:

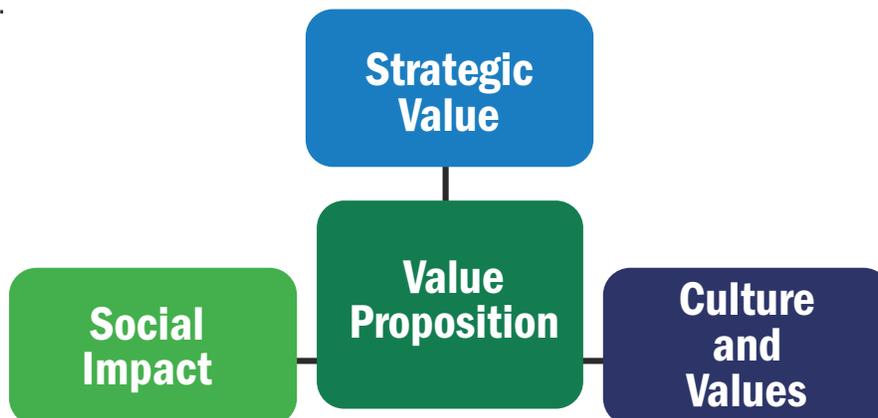
<b>What is the value proposition of our program?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does this fit and add to our culture and values?</li> <li>• How does this align with our strategies?</li> </ul>
<b>What evidence can we reference to support our case?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What information can I reference?</li> <li>• How do we frame our case to speak to different audiences?</li> </ul>
<b>What are the costs of the program and the ROI?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What resources are needed to establish this program?</li> <li>• What is the ROI? Costs (direct and indirect) vs. impact.</li> <li>• What existing functions can I draw on to reduce costs?</li> </ul>
<b>How can we strengthen our business case?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the best audience to provide feedback?</li> <li>• How much do we expect to refine our case?</li> </ul>

### Business Case Checklist

- ✓ Define your program's value proposition
- ✓ Align with your organization's strategy and values
- ✓ Determine cost
- ✓ Refine the business case to appeal to different audiences
- ✓ Elicit feedback from different audiences
- ✓ Elicit feedback from enthusiasts
- ✓ Use examples

## 1. What is your program's value proposition?

Implementing an internal support program adds great value to an organization and presents a complete and holistic picture of the potential tangible and intangible benefits of the program framed under three types of values.



## Desire to make a positive social impact

The desire to make a positive social impact is often a key motivator for developing a program. Therefore, a key component of a business case is to illustrate the need to create employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. If corporate social responsibility is important to your organizations, demonstrate the importance of employment for the well-being of individuals with disabilities and share the low employment rates this under-served community experiences.

### WHY EMPLOYMENT?

Employment is core to a person's quality of life. Its benefits include:

- Providing a means to independent living
- Offering an opportunity to pursue interests and improve cognitive performance
- Offering a key way for individuals to contribute to society
- Providing a way to meet the need for inclusion and belonging
- Employed individuals with disabilities experience financial as well as emotional and health benefits when compared to unemployed individuals with disabilities

As you develop your business case, identify the potential cultural benefits and align them to your organization's culture, values and diversity and inclusion efforts. This segment of your business case is especially important to garner support from diversity and inclusion executives and personnel at your organization.

### Benefits to the organization's culture and values

<b>Advance diversity and inclusion efforts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Internal support programs enhance diversity, equity and inclusion efforts around disability and accessibility for employees, partners, customers and suppliers</li><li>• An internal support program provides an opportunity to leverage and complement existing diversity and inclusion efforts.</li></ul>
<b>Create and strengthen inclusive culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Awareness of disabilities builds a culture of inclusion. This often translates to improved awareness and inclusion of differences more broadly.</li></ul>
<b>Improve managerial skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Managers who participate become better managers overall (e.g., giving more explicit feedback, being more inclusive, setting clearer expectations).</li><li>• These managers also create more welcoming and inclusive teams.</li></ul>
<b>Encourage existing employees to self-disclose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Awareness of an internal supports program encourages current employees with disabilities to seek support and accommodations, become advocates for their programs, improve their engagement and advocacy of their firm and improve their overall well-being.</li></ul>

### Strategic Value and Benefits

#### Value

Hiring individuals with disabilities contributes diversity of thought to the workforce and enhances the potential for innovation. Strategic value is a key component of the business case enabling organizations to recruit talent that normally would be screened out due to mainstream recruitment and selection processes.



## Key characteristics that make neurodiverse talent desirable to employers

<b>Trustworthiness</b>	<b>Reliability</b>	<b>Low absenteeism</b>
<b>Innovation</b>	<b>Attention to detail</b>	<b>Focus on work and results (productivity)</b>
<b>Accept repetitive tasks</b>	<b>Analytical thinking</b>	<b>Visualization</b>

## Benefits

<b>Enhanced Diversity</b>	Hiring employees with disabilities adds to the diversity of talents within an organization. Research is clear that diversity of employees enhances team creativity, problem solving, ability to meet customer needs, and accessibility of products.
<b>Enhanced Employer Brand</b>	Organizations that are perceived to value diversity, equity and inclusion establish a high-quality employment brand that helps them attract and retain talent.
<b>Desirable Employee Characteristics</b>	Scholars identified that, in general, individuals with disabilities demonstrate key characteristics that make them desirable employees.

## 2. What evidence can we use to support our case?

As an Internal Supports Program continues to grow and evolve, new businesses can leverage success cases to demonstrate the potential benefits of such programs.

- Tap into existing programs and use their success as evidence for potential returns
- Draw on their program models as proof of concept
- Invoke the desire to be a thought leader
- Stress the opportunity to champion a proven hiring initiative

## 3. What are the costs and Return on Investment (ROI)?

To effectively launch and sustain an internal support program, it is important to secure the necessary resources (see part 3, “Program Resourcing Model” for details). In the early stages of your program, costs may include the following:

<b>Dedicated program staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize dedicated partial full-time equivalent (FTE) to launch the program</li> <li>• Resources include operational and leadership staff</li> <li>• Commitment of FTE staff grows as programs are able to demonstrate their success and needs.</li> <li>• ROI: Internal expertise to lead this program and reduce dependency on any third-party costs.</li> </ul>
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<b>Time and other internal resources for program activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential costs to internal resources are due to modifications needed to better service candidates with disabilities. However, more than half of job accommodations cost employers no money at all.</li> <li>• ROI: Recruitment processes are more inclusive</li> </ul>
<b>Manager and team training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most employers use service providers for their training, (i.e. Disability Etiquette) that may incur costs. Training can entail one or two hours of in person or on-line team learning.</li> <li>• ROI: Improved engagement outcomes as well as improved collaboration and team effectiveness.</li> </ul>
<b>Candidate sourcing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizations may incur additional costs if they choose to use sourcing partners</li> <li>• ROI: Identified talent pools for recruitment</li> </ul>

## 4. How do we strengthen the business case?

The business case will develop and evolve over time. As you build your initial business case, it is important to elicit feedback and refine your arguments to speak to different audiences.

- Reach out to a supportive audience at first in order to get constructive feedback that will improve your business case and strengthen your determination. Chances are enthusiasts will help you develop the business case, do necessary research and expand your network
- Encourage your network of enthusiasts to communicate your business case throughout your organization when appropriate
- Learn about your audience's priorities, pain points and preferences for communication
- Craft specific versions of your business case to cater to different audiences. Perhaps the business unit leaders need to hear more about the strategic value to their specific unit, while executive sponsors might be more interested in the higher-level strategic value and organizational culture
- Developing a business case that will resonate with a wide business audience takes time. With every interaction and pitch you make, take time to seek feedback, reflect, and refine your business case
- Expect that you will be refining and communicating the business case throughout the planning phase and beyond. At every stage of the program, document and communicate the business case

Being intentional about developing, refining, and elaborating on your business case throughout the life span of the program will improve its sustainability.

- Use a pilot to demonstrate value
- Don't limit the program to one function; customize and match the talent to the need
- Make the business case about more than hard numbers
- Have a way to measure your program's impact
- Sustainability is key

### Business Case Refinement Checklist



Seek feedback from enthusiasts



Cater your message to speak to your audience's priorities



Refine your message over time

## Part 3 - Program Resourcing Models

In this section, we look at resourcing and staffing models to establish and sustain programs. Consider the following **three key practices** to design and resource your program.



### 1. Dedicated full-time staff

Dedicated staff to lead the program is important for two reasons:

1. Developing internal expertise enables you to continue to develop and evolve your program in ways that suit your goals, values and culture
2. It reduces dependency on job coaches and third-party costs

### 2. Utilize internal resources and existing structures

Leverage internal resources such as HR for talent acquisition and onboarding, DE&I to raise awareness and communicate successes, employee resource groups for support, and business unit champions for possible backing. Collaborating with internal business units is key for tapping into resources and broadening awareness of the program. Each business unit that is providing natural or internal supports should have a listing of internal resources they can reach out to.

### 3. Leverage knowledge and resources in your community

Leverage resources in your community for sourcing talent, disability awareness training, job coaching support and other existing support services for current and potential employees. As programs scale and expertise matures, these functions can be developed in-house. Key to launching and sustaining your program is determining when it is more advantageous and effective to leverage external expertise.

## Part 4 - Program Scope & Employment Models

The scope of an internal support program varies by organization. Each employment model varies based on the organization's needs and maturity of the model. This section addresses the following three questions related to program scope and employment models.

<b>What do more mature program models look like?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What kind of models are feasible?</li><li>• What type of employment do we offer?</li></ul>
<b>How do you integrate and socialize the model for sustainability?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How do you integrate the internal support program into the organization's current structure?</li><li>• How do you garner support for long-term sustainability internally and externally?</li></ul>
<b>What steps are needed to build an inclusive workplace for people with disabilities?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How do you implement a company-wide training program?</li><li>• How do you build a foundation for a disability inclusive workforce?</li></ul>

### Program Scope and Employment Model Checklist



Determine talent needs



Solicit input from advocates, people with disabilities and managers



Determine existing internal and external support in various locales



Communicate success stories regularly and widely

### 1. What do more mature models look like?

The support systems available in an organization's various locales determine the scope of the program over time.

Factors that drive employment model and scope are:

- The disability community's needs and supports
- The organization's talent needs
- The organization's current structure (e.g., service model vs. product model)
- The local resources available to support the program
- Support within the business for growing the program

#### Which roles fit?

Full-time

Contract

Part-time

Internship

## 2. How do you integrate and socialize the model for sustainability?

Support for the program and its sustainability require communicating the business case regularly and broadly across the organization. Demonstrating value to the organization and identifying potential needs that can be met through the program is essential.

Key to maintaining and increasing internal and external support is keeping a proactive approach to your design and redesign of program elements and model. Seek feedback from all stakeholders and partners, especially from your employees with disabilities and their managers. They can provide great insight regarding unmet needs, opportunities and solutions.

### EMPLOYMENT MODEL GOALS

- Add value to the organization by meeting talent needs
- Provide meaningful employment to individuals with disabilities
- Add value to the organization by meeting diversity goals
- Empower employees with disabilities to contribute their talent



#### How to Garner Support

Demonstrate Value

Continue to improve the program

Communicate success stories

## 3. What steps are needed to build an inclusive workplace for people with disabilities?

When implementing a company-wide training program, each level of the company plays a part, including:

- **Leadership:** Getting buy-in from company leadership for a disability inclusion initiative is key. You want to make sure you're training the leaders about the business case for disability inclusion while also addressing any fear and stigma that surrounds people with disabilities.
- **Supervisors:** The success of your effort depends on the relationship between direct level managers and the people they supervise. Supervisors may be afraid the new hires won't be able to keep up, are going to get hurt, or aren't qualified. Supervisors need specific tips and strategies about managing people with disabilities. Training is an opportunity to voice concerns, address stigma and learn effective strategies to build inclusion.
- **Co-workers:** Team members should also receive training on disability inclusion and awareness. Letting co-workers know what to expect and answering their questions can make them feel more comfortable and willing to engage.

## Lead the Way

The foundation for a disability-inclusive work environment is an inclusive business culture. This begins by gaining buy-in from executive leadership. Examples of best practices for fostering an inclusive culture include:

- Making equal employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities an integral part of the company's strategic mission.
- Establishing a team that includes executives with disabilities to support the recruiting, hiring, retention, and advancement of individuals with disabilities.
- Conducting employee engagement surveys to gather input on whether the workplace environment is accessible and inclusive.

## Build the Pipeline

Proactive outreach and recruitment of people with disabilities is the foundation of a successful workplace disability inclusion program. To build a pipeline of applicants, employers should work to develop relationships with a variety of recruitment sources. Best practices for disability-inclusive outreach and recruitment practices include partnering with local and state service providers (such as vocational rehabilitation agencies), participating in employer networking groups, attending career fairs for people with disabilities, and providing inclusive mentoring and internship opportunities.

## Hire (& keep) the Best

Building a disability-inclusive organization means not only attracting and recruiting qualified individuals with disabilities but also ensuring policies and processes across the employment life-cycle support the hiring, retention, and advancement of employees with disabilities. Companies should have effective policies and processes in place for job announcements, qualification standards, hiring, workplace accommodations, career development and advancement, and retention and promotion.

## Ensure Productivity

All employees need the right tools and work environment to effectively perform their jobs. Employees with disabilities may need workplace adjustments—or accommodations—to maximize their productivity. Examples of workplace accommodations include automatic doors, sign language interpreters, and flexible work schedules or telework. According to the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), more than half of all workplace accommodations cost nothing to provide. Furthermore, JAN research has found that most employers report financial benefits from providing accommodations, including reduced insurance and training costs and increased productivity.

## Communicate

Attracting qualified individuals with disabilities requires clear communication, both externally and internally, about your company's commitment to disability inclusion. This can include internal campaigns, disability-inclusive marketing, and participation in disability-related job fairs and awareness events. Best practices for communication of company policies and procedures can include:

- Incorporating disability imagery into advertising and marketing materials.
- Informing local disability organizations about company sponsored career days.
- Distributing information about relevant disability policies and priorities to subcontractors, vendors, and suppliers.

## **Be Tech Savvy**

As technology continues to shift, so does the concept of accessibility. Being able to get through the physical door is no longer enough to ensure people with disabilities can apply and interview for jobs; a company's "virtual doors" must be open as well. Furthermore, once on the job, employees with disabilities—like all employees—must be able to access the information and communication technology (ICT) they need to maximize their productivity. Examples of best practices for ensuring accessible ICT include using accessible online recruiting platforms, adopting a formal ICT policy, appointing a chief accessibility officer, and establishing clear procurement policies related to accessibility.

## **Measure Success**

While policies and procedures are necessary to enhance employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, the ultimate objective should be to ensure effective implementation. Companies can take steps to ensure disability becomes part of their overall diversity goals and can encourage self-identification of disability by their employees to benchmark the impact of disability inclusion efforts. Examples of best practices for accountability and self-identification include providing training on disability-related issues, establishing accountability measures and processes for self-identification, and incorporating disability inclusion goals in appropriate personnel's performance plans.

## Part 5 - Recruiting and Sourcing Talent

Recruiting the right talent is a critical success factor for any organization. The key is identifying the right channels to reach the desired talent. Leverage a wide range of channels and focus on building relationships with various external partners including sourcing firms, Workforce Development Agencies, high schools and colleges.

This section provides information on how to find talent and addresses the following three questions related to recruiting and sourcing:

<b>Where do we find talent?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What types of external partners can help us recruit the right talent for our organization?</li> <li>• What should we consider as we engage sourcing partners?</li> </ul>
<b>How do we tap into the local disability community?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who should we engage locally?</li> <li>• How can we engage our local community?</li> </ul>
<b>How do we engage universities and colleges?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who do we reach out to in universities and colleges?</li> <li>• In what ways can we best engage with universities and colleges?</li> </ul>

### Recruiting and Sourcing Checklist

-  Define the desired skill set
-  Educate yourself regarding community preferences
-  Identify external partners adaptable to your needs
-  Develop and execute an internal communication plan
-  Develop a social media communication plan to raise awareness

### 1. Where do we find talent?

There are numerous successful strategies to find talent. Utilizing outside partners to start finding talent is one strategy. The sources of talent vary depending on location and specific needs. The key to finding successful talent is building a relationship with outside partners.

<b>Local Community Providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach out and collaborate with schools and local agencies.</li> <li>• Workforce Development Agencies are more likely to be a good sourcing partner if the skills of the people they support matches the type of role you are hiring for.</li> </ul>
<b>Vendors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of vendors often depends on location. It may make more sense to use internal recruiters, or it may take a vendor with more specialized knowledge.</li> <li>• Vendors may also be used if there is a time crunch to fill a position.</li> </ul>

<b>Social Media and Public Presence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media and press activity create awareness and generate leads to candidates.</li> <li>• Social media activity and presence is cost-effective. Include a clear link or directions to program information and ways to apply.</li> </ul>
<b>Network, Relationships, Word of Mouth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal employees are an especially effective source for talent referrals.</li> <li>• Regularly communicate program activities and success stories internally to raise awareness and generate leads.</li> </ul>

### Select the right sourcing partner

- Build your own recruiting competency.
- Have a partner – don't go it alone. There are lots of resources outside your organization to help you mitigate risk.
- Select partners that are responsive, understand your needs, values and culture and can help identify candidates accordingly.
- There is no single spot or bench of talent that companies can go to. How well the external partners work for you can also depend on what kinds of roles are being hired for.

### Identify the right talent



Define the needed skill set explicitly



Consider more than the resume



Communicate your needs to your sourcing partners



Communicate with potential candidates to clearly understand their skill set

## 2. How do we engage the community?

Your community may be your best source of talent. One way to identify potential candidates with disabilities is to partner with a Workforce Development Agency in your community. These agencies may also provide your organization with resources to support candidate transition into the workplace. Partnering with them on recruitment creates a seamless process for those candidates.

Engaging the community also means tapping into your organization's existing network. Candidate pools can be generated from employees and employees' network. Therefore, it is important to communicate within your organization to make your employees aware of your commitment to disability inclusion, internal supports and the opportunities it provides.

### KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

- To be effective in recruiting, be strategic about job ad placement and respectful of community preferences.
- Do the work to identify effective outlets –those that people with disabilities in your community frequent or have access to.
- Understand the language that is used in the community. Educate yourself on language preferences and be mindful in framing program information.



### Raise awareness of the program

- Have a dedicated landing page for your program on your website.
- Leverage your network to raise awareness and recruit candidates.
- Partner with self-advocates (current employees with disabilities) at your organization to raise awareness and recruit, if they are willing and interested.
- Do not underestimate the power of social media such as Facebook.
- Promote. Once you have an established program, work to raise visibility and interest within your organization and to get more people involved. Tout your successes.

## 3. How do we engage universities and colleges?

Universities and colleges can be a great source of talent. Research your local and regional colleges and universities. All are required to have disability resource services under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Disability resource services staff can help you connect with other people or programs within the school to source talent or learn about the best ways to source and support those with disabilities.

To make the best of the university and college partnerships, engage with:

- School-wide career services offices to reach the university or college community at large
- Department-level career services advisors to reach specific specializations
- Work readiness programs specific to disabilities
- Disability resource offices

### GO BEYOND TRADITIONAL UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

Reach out and explore the various types of colleges, universities, community colleges, and technical and vocational training institutes in your community. Your talent pool might not always pursue traditional educational career paths.



## Part 6 - Interview and Selection Process

Mainstream interview and selection processes often present barriers to job seekers with disabilities. People may feel undue stress from assessment criteria that overemphasize social fit, include long interview days with multiple interviewers, involve white-boarding solutions, and include traveling. Furthermore, traditional interview techniques may not always uncover the relevant skills the interviewee has. This leads to missed opportunities for both the individual seeking employment and the organization in need of talent.

This section addresses the following **three questions** related to the interview and selection process:

<b>How do we approach screening applicants?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we assess an applicant's materials?</li> <li>• What screening interview techniques do we use?</li> <li>• How can external partners help with screening?</li> </ul>
<b>How should we design our interview process?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we create a process that helps us identify talent that meets the organization's standards and adds value to the candidates?</li> <li>• What interview strategies are most effective?</li> <li>• How do we best engage hiring managers and teams?</li> <li>• How do we continue to improve our interview process?</li> </ul>
<b>How do we manage the selections process?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we inform candidates?</li> <li>• How do we support candidates who were not made an offer?</li> <li>• How do we leverage/keep contact with candidates?</li> </ul>

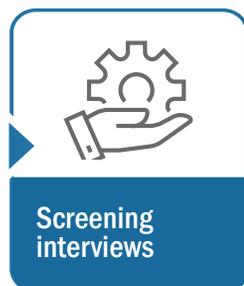
### 1. How do we approach screening applicants?

#### INTERVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS CHECKLIST

-  Determine the skills you need
-  Determine your capacity to screen candidates in-house vs. outsourcing that function
-  Screen candidates using more than the resume
-  Design an interview process suitable for candidates
-  Prepare managers and interviewers
-  Execute your interview process but be prepared to adapt
-  Plan and prepare several scenarios

### 1. How do we approach screening applicants?

There are various strategies used to screen candidates:



There are also various approaches to screening. Some firms use a vendor to handle the entirety of the screening process up until the interview with the hiring manager. Other organizations conduct all their screening related activities in-house and have a longer screening process.

Outsourcing the screening depends on:



## 2. How do we design an effective interview process?

It is important to design an interview process that enables candidates with disabilities to perform their best. The goals of the interview process are to:

- ◆ Create a process that plays to the strengths and accommodates the needs of the individual
- ◆ Maximizes the organization's ability to identify qualified candidates who do not typically do well in standard interview activities
- ◆ Provide a developmental experience for candidates where they can develop technical and soft skills

### How do we create a process that helps us identify talent and adds value to the candidates?

Establish a holistic and developmental interview process for organizations that conduct their interview process in-house. This involves hiring managers, team members, supervisors, and job coaches. These types of processes allow candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in ways that are conducive to them, often with a job coach available to encourage them and facilitate ways for the candidate to perform their best. Such processes allow for a more holistic assessment of candidates and provide meaningful developmental experience for them.

### Aspects of the interview process

Interview processes in general include informational elements, activities, and assessment. The topic of these items may relate to soft or technical skills or to workplace knowledge.



Activities related to soft and technical skills allow candidates to develop and hone their skills. For example, mock interviews help candidates improve in interviews and become more comfortable. The interview process also gives the candidate a clearer idea of what it would be like to work at the organization, the nature of the work they will be doing, and the types of people they will be working with. Lastly, candidates have the opportunity to engage with hiring managers and job coaches who provide actionable feedback to help candidates improve their skills, regardless of the outcome of the interview process.

## INTERVIEW PROCESS DESIGN CHECKLIST

-  Determine the skills you need for each role
-  Design activities and assessments for desired skills
-  Train hiring managers and all involved in interview hiring techniques
-  Communicate expectations clearly with all involved
-  Be specific about what you expect from each interviewer and the time commitment
-  Design an interview process that enables candidates with disabilities to perform their best
-  Select physical spaces that meet candidates' various needs
-  Build in unstructured time in your interview process
-  Build in time to debrief
-  Communicate to the candidates what to expect in the interview process and share the itinerary prior to the interview

### Finding the right talent

Identifying talent that meets the needs of the organization is the key to success. To do so, consider the following questions and action items:

<b>Determine the skills needed for each role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your baseline requirement for candidates to demonstrate?</li> <li>• Do your candidates need to know a specific set of technical skills?</li> <li>• What skills will you provide training for upon hire?</li> </ul>
	<p><b>ACTION ITEM</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Design your assessment and activities to focus on uncovering baseline skills and aptitude to learn them</li> </ul>
<b>Design activities and assessments for the desired skills a business needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What types of activities can uncover the skill sets desired?</li> <li>• How can you assess social and technical skills separately?</li> <li>• Should the skills be assessed in an individual activity or in a group context?</li> <li>• What technology is needed?</li> <li>• What elements of the activity may induce stress for the individual?</li> </ul>
	<p><b>ACTION ITEM</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Design your assessment and activities to focus on uncovering baseline skills and aptitude to learn them</li> <li> Use structured interviews to keep interviewers focused on your specific objectives</li> <li> Be specific in your purpose and instructions</li> <li> Allow enough time</li> <li> Provide alternative ways for the candidate to accomplish tasks</li> <li> Use debriefing time with candidates to see how they think and how they want to approach the task</li> <li> Elicit feedback from current employees with disabilities in similar roles</li> </ul>

## What interview strategies are most effective?

As you design your interview process, consider the following questions and action items:

### Key Questions

- What types of activities allow candidates to demonstrate the skills needed in a way that is catered to their preferences and needs?
- What are the sensory needs of your candidates?
- What are the best ways to reduce stress and anxiety?

### Action Items

<b>1. Select physical spaces that meet your candidates' various needs</b>
◆ Be mindful of sensory sensitivity
◆ Work with job coaches and candidates to identify candidate accommodation needs in advance and plan logistics for support accordingly
<b>2. Build in unstructured time in your interview process</b>
◆ Unstructured time in the interview process is important for candidates and staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For candidates – it is essential to provide unstructured time to manage the potential for sensory sensitivity and cognitive overload</li><li>• For staff – it gives them an opportunity to adjust and be more responsive to the candidates and interviewers</li></ul>
<b>3. Communicate to the candidates about what to expect in the interview process and share itinerary prior to the interview</b>
◆ Communicating expectations and the details of the interview process reduces stress and anxiety about the unknown. This helps candidates to prepare mentally. It also allows job coaches to work with candidates to identify needs as they relate to the itinerary and identify accommodations that will enable them to perform their best
◆ Inform them who will attend the interview, what the process will be like and the topics they will be asked to address
◆ Develop specific instructions to all activities
◆ Seek feedback from self-advocates to improve instructions
<b>4. Design interviews tailored to the preferences of candidates with disabilities</b>
◆ Conduct interviews in 45-minute increments
◆ Limit the number of interviewers
◆ Use direct language in your questions
◆ Ask one question at a time and avoid double barreled questions
◆ Confirm that the person understands your questions and instructions

◆ Ask questions specific to the skill set you are assessing
◆ Do not ask unconventional questions
<b>5. Use job coaches to provide support for candidates during the interview process</b>
◆ Let job coaches be present during the interview
◆ Job coaches help candidates perform their best by helping them identify and advocate for their needs
◆ Job coaches also help candidates identify and resolve conflict and manage candidates' stress
◆ Job coaches give clear and explicit feedback about the candidate's performance and ways to improve
<b>6. Build in debrief time for staff and interviewers to regroup</b>
◆ Build in debrief time at the beginning or end of each day
◆ Built-in debrief time allows you to regroup and address changes without falling behind
<b>7. Be flexible and prepared to adapt</b>
◆ Expect the unexpected
◆ Plan for multiple scenarios and be ready to change
◆ As you change and adapt, let your interviewers know what is expected of them

### How do we continue to improve our selection process?

Seeking and incorporating feedback from candidates and interviewers helps to continually refine and improve the selection process. Make it a priority to learn from candidates and existing employees with disabilities to make improvements to the interview and selection process.

## 3. How do we manage the selection process?

Emphasize the developmental focus of the interview process. Pay special care and attention to how feedback and decisions regarding hiring are communicated to candidates.

### Key practices to consider:

- Adhere to your organization's HR practices.
- Communicate feedback to the job candidate and, if appropriate, to their job coach.
- Communicate feedback regarding performance in-person or through video conferencing to communicate the message more holistically.
- Communicate developmental feedback regarding areas for improvement regardless of decision to hire. Make the feedback clear and actionable.

## Part 7 - Training

Success is contingent on the readiness of employers to welcome and equitably include individuals with disabilities, as well as the readiness of individuals with disabilities in the workplace. Training is an essential component of creating an inclusive work environment and giving both the individuals with disabilities and their potential managers, supervisors, co-workers and colleagues the awareness and tools to be effective collaborators.

This section addresses the training required to create a welcoming and inclusive workplace for employees with disabilities. When planning training for you program consider the following three key questions to guide your efforts:

<p><b>How do we prepare candidates for the workplace</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ What type of training should we provide for individuals with disabilities entering the workplace?</li> <li>◆ What training design considerations should we keep in mind for new employees?</li> </ul>
<p><b>How should we prepare managers and colleagues?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ What type of training should we provide our neurotypical managers and co-workers?</li> <li>◆ What training design considerations should we keep in mind for our existing work force?</li> </ul>
<p><b>How should we access and improve our training?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ What impact will training have?</li> <li>◆ How will we elicit feedback and continue improvement?</li> </ul>

### TRAINING CHECKLIST

- ✓ Determine new hires' training needs
- ✓ Tap into internal and external resources to deliver training
- ✓ Work closely with job coaches to provide new hires with needed transition skills and support
- ✓ Utilize self-advocates as your program matures
- ✓ Determine training needs for managers and teams
- ✓ Decide what form the training will take (once or recurring, on-line or in person, individual or team)
- ✓ Determine who should be trained and determine if it will be required or optional
- ✓ Determine the availability and sustainability of mainstream training that may meet broader technical and soft-skill needs
- ✓ Decide how you will design and deliver disability awareness training (in-house or using an external partner)

# 1. How should we prepare candidates with disabilities to transition into the workplace?

New hires may receive training through any or all of the following options:

- ◆ Department specific training
- ◆ The organization's mainstream training requirements and opportunities
- ◆ Job coach support that augments employer supported training
- ◆ Enhanced training and support provided from managers and coworkers as decided in an internal supports program plan

The focus and delivery method of training depend on the types of roles individuals are being hired into; how candidates are being recruited; the availability and appropriateness of training through mainstream channels; and in some cases, the geographic location of the program, which determines availability of providers.

## Types of training

In general, training may be geared toward technical skills or orientation to the organization and soft skills:

### TECHNICAL SKILLS TRAINING

- ◆ Focuses on specific technical skills relevant to the role the candidate will assume
- ◆ Focuses on collaboration or productivity techniques and tool
- ◆ May be offered as part of mainstream onboarding as standard training required of all new hires
- ◆ May be offered as a development activity driven by the candidate and their manager or job coach
- ◆ May be offered during the interview process to equip candidates with technical skills needed for the roles they will assume
- ◆ May be offered as a unique training opportunity for new hires only

### ORIENTATION TO THE ORGANIZATION & SOFT SKILLS

- Provides an overview of the organization's mission, values, strategy and products
- Orients new hires to activities and resources available to support them
- Provides insight into a day in the life of an employee to minimize anxiety and prepare new hires for their jobs
- May be offered as part of standard onboarding and training required of all new hires
- May be offered during the interview process to equip candidates with soft skills needed for the roles they assume

## Specialized or standard training?

When should you use standard training method vs work specific or specialized training?

- ◆ It depends on the skills you are targeting and suitability of the training available in the organization
- ◆ Consider whether a mainstream training format will be conducive to your new hires' needs
- ◆ Develop in-house training or use a partner to deliver training specific to team building and the skills needed to transition to the workplace
- ◆ As your program matures, use self-advocates to lead or co-lead some of your training

## 2. How should we prepare our neurotypical managers and colleagues?

Inclusion requires that individuals with disabilities, their managers and colleagues learn to communicate, collaborate and socialize effectively together. The bonus of doing so must not be on the individual with disabilities. Rather the responsibility must be distributed to the organization at large, and particularly to managers and team members.

Raising awareness of disability inclusion, as well as learning effective collaborative strategies across differences, is important to the success of your program. It is important that managers and team managers are required to participate in training.

### Types of Training



Training should be provided to managers, team members, mentors, and others key to the recruitment and retention of individuals with disabilities. Ideally, training takes place prior to the new hire's start date. Training may take place online.

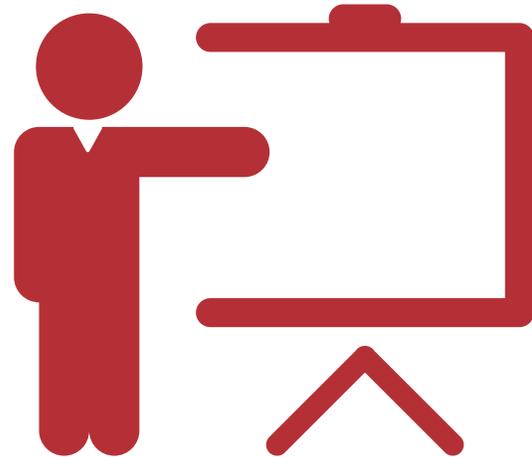
Program leaders must remain mindful of changes and provide appropriate training to new managers and team members. The employee's privacy preferences should always remain a priority as you inform new managers and team members.

## 3. How should we assess and improve our training?

It is important to solicit feedback on training. Most organizations receive feedback that participants found training extremely valuable and that it has broader implications for their effectiveness as managers and colleagues.

Feedback mechanisms should be ones that you determine to be most suitable for your organization. The training and feedback mechanism that work for your organization may also depend on scalability. One aspect to consider as your organization grows and matures is how to provide continuous improvement, training and development for all parties. Some suggested tactics:

- ◆ Host monthly disability inclusion seminars.
- ◆ Consider a community of practice for managers to provide a space for sharing knowledge and lessons learned, as well as providing additional training.
- ◆ Host a disability inclusion intranet site where you can share relevant training and development articles, as well as success stories, and program activities.



## Part 8 - Onboarding & Support Circle

In this section, we provide a road map for organizations interested in onboarding individuals with disabilities and providing them with internal support structures necessary for their transition into the workplace. This section addresses the following three key questions:

<p><b>How should we onboard new hires?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ What does onboarding involve?</li> <li>◆ What specific considerations and accommodations should we plan for?</li> <li>◆ How do we support our new hires logistically?</li> </ul>
<p><b>How can we best support our new hires?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ What internal supports and services can we provide employees?</li> <li>◆ What are employee support circles?</li> <li>◆ What internal partners can help support our employees?</li> <li>◆ What role could each internal partner play to support our employees?</li> </ul>
<p><b>How do we prepare our organization to welcome and include our new hires?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ How do we prepare managers to effectively lead and include new hires?</li> <li>◆ How do we prepare teams to welcome and effectively work with new hires?</li> <li>◆ What type of ongoing support will managers and teams need?</li> </ul>

### Onboarding and support checklist

-  Work within but augment mainstream HR value proposition
-  Develop a specific onboarding plan for new hires
-  Communicate your onboarding plan with new hires, their managers, team, internal support and job coach
-  Work closely with internal supports, job coach and HR to determine specific accommodations needed
-  Train the manager and team
-  Identify a support circle for new hires

### 1. How should we onboard new hires?

Existing processes and resources for standard required onboarding such as regulatory information, benefits and introduction to the organization can be leveraged. However, additional support and onboarding specifics are necessary to ensure a welcoming and more effective onboarding of employees with disabilities. Many times a support circle is established to augment standard processes to meet the needs of new employees with disabilities.

A key success factor is the development of specific and well-communicated onboarding plans for new hires. This onboarding plan must:

 Augment standard processes in order to provide necessary support

 Provide specific expectations and details

 Be specific to employee needs

 Be communicated to members of the support circle and relevant personnel

### Onboarding Checklist

 Communicate logistics

 Identify the right circle of support

 Be explicit about expectations & logistics

 Prepare the team

### Communicating the Onboarding Plan

Once the start date is determined, staff should communicate relevant onboarding plan details to key personnel to provide the necessary accommodations and logistical support. Communicate the plan to:

 Hiring manager

 Job coach

 HR manager

 Team members

 Team/floor/unit administrative assistant

### The job coach and internal support coworkers

Many organizations leverage local Agencies and resources to provide job coaches. Usually this starts with a job developer who works with a business to analyze workplace needs. The job developer matches those needs to a job candidate(s) with the right skills and strengths. A job coach plays a key role in the employee support circle and collaborates closely with the staff that will provide the internal supports. Job coaches assist the new hires in preparing for their transition to the workplace, completing paperwork and preparing for their first day in collaboration with HR and the employee's support team.

The internal support staff (supervisors and co-workers) provides support to the worker, while accessing a Workforce Development Agency for back-up support as needed. As described in Section 2, employers may be reimbursed for providing enhanced support to workers. A Workforce Development Agency continues to provide regular check-ins and back-up assistance as needed.

## 2. How can we best support new hires?

Transitioning to a new workplace is challenging for many people, including new hires with disabilities. Establishing a community approach to onboarding and supporting new employees with disabilities complements standard orientation and onboarding processes.

A support circle can help new hires with this process.

The support circle is designed to make explicit the various forms of support necessary to onboard and socialize new hires. Members of the support circle provide work-related information and social support to new hires as they transition into their new roles and organization.



### Support circle roles and responsibilities

<b>Manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Responsible for onboarding, support, retention, performance, and development</li> <li>◆ Plays a key role in creating a welcoming environment</li> <li>◆ Identifies the co-worker/team mentor</li> <li>◆ Collaborates with the HR manager regarding onboarding activities</li> </ul>
<b>Co-worker</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ The co-worker is a person within the new hire's team</li> <li>◆ The co-worker helps orient and socialize the new hire to team practices and norms</li> <li>◆ Collaborates with the manager and job coach, if needed</li> </ul>
<b>ERG/BRG</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ A champion within the organization but outside the new hires team</li> <li>◆ A source of social support and access to ERGs, activities and development programs available at the organization</li> </ul>

<b>Job Coach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Provided by schools or local Workforce Development Agencies</li> <li>◆ Highly engaged with managers and the new hire to facilitate effective onboarding</li> <li>◆ Provides regular check-ins and back up support as needed</li> </ul>
<b>Career Coach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Provides mentoring regarding career advancement within the organization</li> <li>◆ Senior person to the employee and outside their direct reporting line</li> </ul>

### How involved does the internal support staff remain with members of the support circle over time?

Involvement changes as a program matures. Initially, the internal support staff has more frequent meetings and involvement with managers and mentors. As the program matures, involvement changes from support to focus on continuous improvement, sustainability, growth and new development initiatives for managers and employees.

## 3. How can we best prepare our organization to welcome and include new hires with disabilities?

Creating an inclusive culture that welcomes individuals with disabilities and provides them the opportunity to succeed and flourish is essential to a successful internal support program. Key to creating the culture is preparing managers and team members to welcome and work effectively with their team members with disabilities. The onus of learning how to work effectively in diverse teams is the responsibility of all involved.

Training aims to raise awareness of disabilities, as well as to promote effective collaboration and management practices. Some organizations rely on consulting firms or local Agencies to provide this training, while others rely on self-advocates who specialize in delivering such training. As programs mature, some firms develop in-house training and leverage their internal self-advocates to deliver training.

During the planning phase of the program, it is important that the hiring team engage more frequently with managers and team members to provide support and elicit feedback. Sometimes meeting with managers is done on a weekly basis to provide needed support and to learn how to improve program features and support. As a program matures, knowledge grows among managers and colleagues and less support is needed from the internal supports staff.

## Part 9 - Retention & Career Development

This section will address the following **three questions** related to retention and career development processes.

<b>How do we manage performance and retention?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What kind of retention activities should we design for employees with disabilities?</li><li>• How do these retention activities align with typical retention functions?</li></ul>
<b>How do we support employee's development and advancement?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How can we be thoughtful and supportive of employees with disabilities?</li><li>• How can we respect an employee's privacy when they change teams or get a new manager?</li><li>• What specific career development resources should we provide?</li></ul>
<b>How do we support our employees to manage change?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What happens when moves or reorganizations happen?</li><li>• What happens when a team has a new manager, or when an individual changes team?</li><li>• What do we do when an employee wants to change teams?</li></ul>

### 1. How do we manage performance and retention of employees with disabilities?

Standard organizational performance review metrics and processes are used. Employees with disabilities are expected to perform to the standards of the organization. Emphasis is placed on the talent and capabilities demonstrated by members of their programs and the value they add to their teams. When members are onboarded successfully and teams and managers are trained to collaborate effectively, employees generally thrive and achieve.

Continued support through ERG's and other activities such as regular lunches enhance their experience and engagement in the organization. The internal support staff may collaborate with managers and employees facing challenges, if the employee or manager reaches out to them. As the employee's needs change, their accommodations and need for additional coaching may also change. Otherwise, employees with disabilities participate in standard performance review and retention activities and adhere to the same performance standards as everyone else in the organization.

#### Key strategies to enhance retention

##### Nothing about us without us!

Engagement and empowerment are key dimensions to improving retention of all employees, particularly traditionally under-served employees. Work with employees with disabilities to develop support structures and an organizational culture that is inclusive. There are four key ways to do this:

- ◆ Get feedback and direction regarding matters such as person-first language, activities, policies and visuals for presentations. Some organizations have created a disability Advisory Council to provide this feedback.
- ◆ Create an ERG specific to disabilities.
- ◆ Engage employees with disabilities in recruiting and training activities.
- ◆ Make development and support activities voluntary to respect the diversity of workers' interests and needs.

## Retention Support Checklist

- ✓ Change accommodations as needed
- ✓ Seek support from ERG/BRG's and other DE&I groups
- ✓ Provide support for employees and managers when needed

## 2. How do we support the development and advancement of employees with disabilities?

Leverage the organization's existing development resources and advancement structures. Some organizations have also curated and provided additional structures and development activities to support employees with disabilities. Below are a few ways organizations address career development.

### Preparing the organization

Expand existing organization-wide mentoring programs by providing disability awareness training for mentors and staff

Provide training for managers on how to lead and guide colleagues with disabilities as they manage their careers

### Preparing Employees

Create content for learning management systems and development programs specific to the needs and interests of employees with disabilities

Create development opportunities to address life skills to support employees' transition to independent living. Life skills include fiscal responsibility, etiquette, productivity and health and wellness

### Preparing Managers

Improve manager preparation as it relates to retention and advancement

Provide training and development opportunities for managers to better prepare them to effectively lead and guide their employees with disabilities toward advancement

### 3. How do we support employees to manage change?

In most organizations, change in team membership, leadership and organizational structure is common. For many, frequent change may induce stress and anxiety. A change in leadership may also introduce challenges if new managers are not trained to effectively lead their teams.

#### Some questions to consider:

- ◆ What happens when there is a manager change?
- ◆ What happens when employees change teams?
- ◆ What happens when an employee wants to change teams?

#### The following are suggestions for practices in relation to such changes:

- ◆ Be proactive about communicating what change is taking place and how it may affect the employee.
- ◆ Work with the employee to create a plan to manage the change.
- ◆ Respect the preferences of the employee regarding disclosure to the new team or manager.
- ◆ Encourage employees and managers to reach out and work with the team to manage change.

#### What to do when an employee wants to change teams?

When an employee wants to change teams, they must follow the organization's standard procedures and work with staff to manage the process. There are opportunities for development that internal support programs can provide to facilitate this process.

#### Changing teams is often dependent on:

- ◆ The employee's current role and skill set
- ◆ The organizational structure in relation to the employee's current and desired team
- ◆ The organization's policies regarding mobility across teams and division

#### The following are suggestions to help facilitate team and role changes:

- ◆ Providing an aptitude test to establish the employee's skill set and aptitude to learn the new position's required skills
- ◆ Managers may work with employees to acquire the needed skills while working in their current role
- ◆ Providing job shadowing and fellowship experiences to explore new roles within the firm
- ◆ Mentoring programs within the firm are also crucial resources for employees considering changes in their roles and careers

It is important to have clear conversations with employees that set expectations about possible pathways to promotion and about how career development structures within the organization work. This is critical to managing their expectations.

## Part 10 - Remaining Questions

Internal support programs are relatively new. Organizations continue to grow, evolve and examine new possibilities. As the programs and their employees mature, new opportunities, questions and challenges arise. Below are some questions to consider:

### IMPACT

- What is the long-term impact of our program on our community?
- How do we measure the impact?
- What is the impact on our organization(KPI)? How do we measure KPI in the long term?
- How does an internal support program fit within diversity, equity and inclusion efforts?

### SCALE

- How do we make this program scale up and down?
- How and when do we integrate best practices into mainstream processes?

### RECRUITMENT

- How do we scale recruitment in numbers and types of jobs?
- How do we identify and use alternative mediums (e.g., social media, networks) to increase diversity of our candidate pool (e.g., ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status)?
- How do we increase the participation of managers in internal support programs?

### PREPARATION

#### Preparing Individuals

- How do we prepare individual with disabilities for the workplace?
- How do we prepare individuals with disabilities with life skills?
- How do we provide support and learning opportunities to improve individuals' positive self image?

#### Preparing the Workplace

- What makes a good manager?
- How do we prepare managers?
- How do we continue to develop our managers to be exemplary inclusive leaders?
- What makes a good team?
- How do we prepare teams?
- What is the impact of training on the organization overall? How do we measure that?

## ONBOARDING

- How do we encourage candidates to disclose to coworkers and acquaintances?
- How can we best onboard candidates for the first 6-12 months?
- How should managers integrate individuals with disabilities within their teams?

## RETENTION

- How do we address mental health issues in the workplace?
- How to use internal (ERGs) and external (community service providers, families, job coaches) resources to support employees with disabilities?
- What are the effective training techniques to improve the knowledge, attitudes and know-how of coworkers and managers?

## ADVANCEMENT

- How do individuals with disabilities measure and talk about their own success?
- How do we coach individuals with disabilities to navigate the career advancement process?
- What are the barriers and key facilitators to advancement for individuals with disabilities

## DESIGN REFINEMENTS

- What functions do we want to live in our organization's mainstream process and what do we want to keep specialized?
- What are the creative/non-traditional ways to facilitate success?
- What happens when an employee separates from the company?
- How can we provide a consistent level of job support?

<sup>1</sup> People with Disabilities: A New Model of Productive Labor, Valentini Kalargyrou, 2012 [https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=hospman\\_facpub](https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=hospman_facpub)

<sup>2</sup> DePaul University, "Exploring the Bottom Line: A Study of the Cost and Benefits of Workers with Disabilities, 2007

<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/behavioral-competencies/global-and-cultural-effectiveness/pages/studycomparescosts.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Siperstein, G. N., Norins, J. & Mohler, A. (2005). Social Acceptance and Attitude Change: Fifty Years of Research. In J.W. Jacobson & J.A. Mulick (eds.) Handbook of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. New York: Kluwer/Plenum.

<sup>4</sup> Job Accommodation Network: <https://askjan.org/topics/costs.cfm>