

Employer's Guide to Disability Inclusion



Making the case for hiring employees with disabilities in your workforce recruitment:

By fostering a culture of diversity — or a capacity to appreciate and value individual differences — employers benefit from varied perspectives on how to confront business challenges and achieve success. The term refers to the infinite range of individuals' unique attributes and experiences such as ethnicity, gender, age, and disability. Since disability is a natural part of diversity, businesses can benefit by taking steps to ensure people with disabilities are represented in their workforce.

The Business Case:

Hiring a qualified person with a disability brings greater benefits beyond just filling an open job. There is a solid business case, too. Here are just a few of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities:

#1: Return on investment

Businesses that employ people with disabilities create new business opportunities. These opportunities translate into lower costs, higher revenues and increased profits:

INCREASE REVENUES:

- ♦ Access new markets
- ♦ Improve productivity through innovative and effective ways of doing business

REDUCE COSTS:

- ♦ Reduce hiring and training costs
- ♦ Increase retention
- ♦ Reduce costs associated with conflict and litigation

ENHANCE SHAREHOLDER VALUE:

- ♦ Capitalize on opportunities to meet business goals

#2: Marketing:

Customers with disabilities and their families, friends and associates represent a trillion dollar market segment. They, like other market segments, purchase products and services from companies that best meet their needs. A large number of Americans also say they prefer to patronize businesses that hire people with disabilities. Another benefit of employing people with disabilities is increasing your opportunity to gain a lasting customer base:

CAPITALIZE ON NEW MARKET OPPORTUNITIES:

- ♦ Mirror the market to attract a wider customer base
- ♦ Increase your market share

DEVELOP NEW PRODUCTS AND SERVICES:

- ♦ Respond to marketplace needs
- ♦ Lead your market
- ♦ Increase profitability





#3: *innovation:*

Innovation is key to your business' success. Employees with disabilities bring unique experiences and understanding that transform a workplace and enhance products and services. As part of your team, employees with disabilities help build your business and can lead your company into the future:

WORKPLACE INNOVATION:

- ♦ Create more efficient and effective business processes
- ♦ Develop and implement management strategies to attract and retain qualified talent
- ♦ Use technology in new ways to increase productivity

PRODUCT AND SERVICE INNOVATION:

- ♦ Stimulate new product and service development through disability-inclusive diverse teams
- ♦ Customize products and services to increase profitability

DEFINE THE FUTURE:

- ♦ Foster the development of next-generation products and services

Myths and Facts When Hiring People with Disabilities:

#1: MYTH:

- ♦ Hiring workers with disabilities increases workers compensation insurance rates and disability-related claims.

FACT:

- ♦ Insurance rates are based solely on the relative hazards of the operation and the organization's accident experience, not on whether an employer has hired workers with disabilities.
- ♦ Very few businesses experience disability-related claims. In a 1998 survey of employers regarding experiences with ADA, the vast majority reported that they had not experienced any disability-related claims against their companies.
- ♦ In a 2003 survey, 91% of the respondents indicated that they were not aware of any ADA complaints filed against their company.
- ♦ Employees with disabilities are less likely to get into work related accidents. A recent study from DuPont company concluded that workers with disabilities had a significantly higher performance in the area of safety than their counterparts without disabilities.

MYTH:

- ♦ Providing accommodations for people with disabilities is **#2:** expensive.

FACT:

- ♦ Of the small percentage of workers requiring special equipment or accommodations, 56% cost less than \$600, with many costing nothing at all.
- ♦ Tax incentives make it even easier for businesses to cover accessibility costs.

Myths and Facts Continued:

#3: MYTH:

- ♦ Employees with disabilities have a higher absentee rate than employees without disabilities.

FACT:

- ♦ Studies by firms such as DuPont show that employees with disabilities are not absent any more than employees without disabilities.
- ♦ Industry reports consistently rate workers with disabilities as average or above average in performance, attendance and safety.

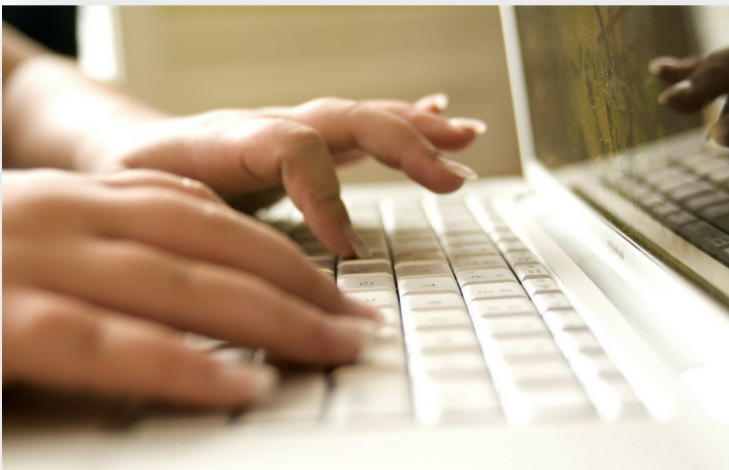
MYTH:

#4:

- ♦ The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires employers to hire unqualified individuals with disabilities.

FACT:

- ♦ Unqualified candidates are not protected under the ADA. To be protected from discrimination in hiring, an individual must first meet all the requirements for a job and be able to perform its essential functions with or without reasonable accommodations.





Myths and Facts Continued:

#5: MYTH:

- ◆ Employees with disabilities typically do not stay in positions once hired.

FACT:

- ◆ When it comes to employee retention and reduced turnover costs, research has found that workers with disabilities are not “job hoppers.”
- ◆ Employees with disabilities are inclined to remain in their job longer than the general workforce.

MYTH: #6:

- ◆ Employees with disabilities have difficulty completing work duties to the supervisor's satisfaction.

FACT:

- ◆ A 2002 survey of 255 supervisors of employees with disabilities found that supervisors are satisfied with the overall work performance and productivity of workers with disabilities.
- ◆ Workers with disabilities perform as well or better than their non-disabled peers.

Myths and Facts Continued:

#7: MYTH:

- ♦ According to the ADA, an employer cannot terminate an employee who has a disabilities.

FACT:

- ♦ Employers are able to terminate an employee with a disability under three conditions: (1) The termination is unrelated to the disability; (2) the employee does not meet legitimate requirements for the job, such as performance or production standards, with or without a reasonable accommodation; or (3) because of the employee's disability, he or she poses a direct threat to health or safety in the workplace. (Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy)





Additional benefits to hiring employees with disabilities:

- ♦ Marketing to consumers with disabilities and making appropriate accommodations makes good business sense. For example, increased access provisions have enabled hotel and hospitality revenues to increase by 12%. Marketing studies have shown that 54% of households pay more attention to and patronize businesses that feature people with disabilities in their advertising.
- ♦ People with disabilities have a combined income of more than \$1 trillion with \$220 billion in discretionary spending.
- ♦ Workers with disabilities have a positive effect on co-workers. Suntrust's managers found that after hiring their first employee with a disability, "employee morale and productivity increased and there was a noticeable decrease in turnover."
- ♦ By working alongside employees with disabilities, individuals who are not disabled will become more aware of how to make the workplace and other settings more inclusive and accessible to everyone.
- ♦ Employees with disabilities can teach their co-workers about creativity and other ways to solve problems or accomplish different tasks.
- ♦ Businesses that hire people with disabilities may receive tax credits and other incentives. Eligible businesses can receive certain tax credits to aid them in hiring and accommodating workers with disabilities.

First, Let's Cover the Basics:

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities:

- ♦ According to the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, intellectual disability is defined as “a disability that involves significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates before the age of 19 and encompasses a wide range of conditions, types, and levels. Intellectual disability is caused by factors that can be physical, genetic, and/or social.
- ♦ Developmental disability is a broader term that refers to a severe, chronic disability that is attributable to a physical or mental impairment and is likely to continue indefinitely, resulting in substantial functional limitations in three or more areas of major life activity.
- ♦ Intellectual disability is the most common developmental disability.
- ♦ Some examples of intellectual and developmental disabilities:
 - ♦ Fragile X is a genetic condition that affects a person's development, especially behavior and the ability to learn. In addition, Fragile X can affect communication skills, physical appearance and sensitivity to noise, light, or similar stimulus. Fragile X is the most common form of inherited intellectual and developmental disability.
 - ♦ Down syndrome describes a set of cognitive and physical symptoms that result from having an extra copy or part of a copy of chromosome 21. Down syndrome is the most frequent chromosomal cause of mild to moderate intellectual disability, and occurs in all ethnic and economic groups.
 - ♦ Autism Spectrum Disorder (known as ASD or, more generally, autism) is a complex neurological and developmental condition that affects how a person learns, communicates and interacts with others. Different people with autism can have different symptoms, which is why it's known as a "spectrum" disorder. Autism affects the structure and function of the brain and nervous system.
 - ♦ Cerebral Palsy is considered a neurological disorder caused by a non-progressive brain injury or malformation that occurs while the child's brain is under development. Cerebral Palsy primarily affects body movement and muscle coordination.
 - ♦ Spina bifida (“cleft spine”) is a birth defect affecting the spinal column. Spina bifida progresses from a cleft, or splitlike opening, in the back part of the backbones (the spinal vertebrae). In more severe cases, it involves the spinal cord. Spina bifida is the most common of a group of birth defects known as neural tube defects, which affect the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord).

Breaking Down the Numbers:

| National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes 2016 | National Data | Florida Data |
|---|---------------|--------------|
| Percentage of people with no disability who are employed | 74% | 72% |
| Percentage of people with any disability who are employed | 34% | 30% |
| Percentage of people with a cognitive disability who are employed | 25% | 21% |
| Average weekly hours worked for people with no disability | 39 | 39 |
| Average weekly hours worked for people with any disability | 36 | 36 |
| Average weekly hours worked for people with a cognitive disability | 32 | 33 |
| Percentage of people with intellectual/developmental disability receiving services in community-based employment settings | 19% | 12% |
| National Core Indicators for Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities Report 2015-2016 Data | National Data | Florida Data |
| Has a paid community-based job | 19% | 9% |
| Average length of employment in months at paid community-based job | 68 | 77 |
| Average weekly hours worked | 14 | 16 |
| Average hourly rate of pay | \$9.03 | \$8.53 |
| Takes classes, training, or does something to help get a job or get a better job | 24% | 29% |
| Volunteers | 32% | 23% |
| Would like a job in the community | 47% | 41% |
| The Arc Tampa Bay Data | | |
| Number of persons served in Supported Employment Program | 28 | |
| Average hourly rate of pay | \$8.93 | |
| Average hours worked per week | 16 hours | |
| Average length of employment | 9.9 years | |



Before We Start, What Are Some Best Practices?

- ♦ Successful initiatives typically consist of establishing collaborative efforts with multiple stakeholders such as vocational rehabilitation, supported employment specialists, local schools and colleges, or a combination thereof. Collaborations can take a variety of formats such as internships, mentorships, training programs and job coaching.
- ♦ Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employers to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities.
- ♦ Employers prefer a single point of contact to coordinate needed assistance and supports required to recruit and retain employees with disabilities. Learning the intricacies of the workforce and disability service systems can be daunting.
- ♦ Intermediaries, in some cases, can organize and coordinate supports and services and provide technical assistance on workforce issues, including disability-specific topics.
- ♦ Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive.
- ♦ Many effective projects feature internships and mentorships, encouraging hands-on guidance and work experience.
- ♦ Others provide opportunities for workers to earn credentials and degrees for jobs with good wages and benefits, or offer access to career ladders, workplace training, and skills. Needed supports and accommodations are provided to enable employees to be successful once they are in the job.
- ♦ Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership. Leaders in the partnerships show a willingness to develop, coordinate, nurture, and manage the collaboration.



Some Other Things to Consider:

- ♦ Ensure that the company has an inclusive business culture.
- ♦ Corporate workplace culture begins at the highest level of leadership.
- ♦ Communicate the company's goal of an inclusive and diverse workplace to employees at all levels of the organization.
- ♦ Invite staff members at all levels to participate in the company's inclusion related initiatives.
- ♦ Adopt formal expressions of commitment and intent related to the recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement of qualified individuals with disabilities.
- ♦ Develop and communicate policy statements and other illustrations of the company's commitment to inclusion of workers with disabilities.
- ♦ Establish an enterprise-wide team consisting of executives, managers, and employees with disabilities to support and advance the recruiting, hiring, retention, and promotion of individuals with disabilities.
- ♦ Make the business case for employing qualified individuals with disabilities.
- ♦ Include disability as part of the company's diversity policies and activities.
- ♦ Invite disability organizations and people with disabilities to the company events.
- ♦ Affirm in policy statements the company's commitment to equal opportunity for people with disabilities and taking concerted steps to employ, retain and advance qualified individuals with disability at all levels.
- ♦ Encourage workers with disabilities and other employees to identify barriers and individual and systemic concerns without fear of reprisal. Provide mechanisms to allow them to provide this information anonymously or confidentially.
- ♦ Establish a universal policy providing workplace flexibility and accommodations for all applicants and employees, with and without disabilities, including the use of telework options, if appropriate.

Now That You're Ready, What's Next?

- ♦ Develop a company training program to educate current employees on disability-related topics, such as:
 - ♦ Types of disabilities and associated characteristics or features, particularly with a focus on specific disabilities that may be more complex: Autism Spectrum Disorder, cerebral palsy, etc.
 - ♦ Understanding workplace accommodations.
 - ♦ Knowing the resources that are available.
 - ♦ Reviewing incentive programs for hiring individuals with disabilities, value of hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities, and how to help them succeed.
 - ♦ Understanding state and federal laws related to discrimination, accommodations, etc.
- ♦ Seek out local area experts to request consultation when developing your training program. Inquire if they can provide some of the training for your company.



Hiring the Best: Personnel Processes:

- ♦ Review personnel processes, qualification standards, and job descriptions (including the essential functions of each position) to determine whether they facilitate or impede the hiring and advancement of qualified persons with disabilities.
- ♦ Give thorough consideration before adopting any policies that permit asking applicants to voluntarily “self-identify” as a person with a disability. The company **MUST** be undertaking affirmative action for people with disabilities (either voluntarily consistent with a state or local law that permits or encourages affirmative action for individuals with disabilities or under federal, state, or local law requiring it). It is important to note that employers are prohibited from making pre-employment inquiries about disability in most other circumstances.
- ♦ Indicate in job announcements that the company encourages applications by qualified individuals with disabilities. The announcement may include the universal access symbol for emphasis.
- ♦ Adopt a hiring/promotion policy that includes disability among the positive selection factors.
- ♦ Provide opportunities for practice interviews for job seekers with disabilities referred by community-based organizations who meet qualification standards, as a way of identifying potential candidates for current or future job vacancies.
- ♦ Adopt an internal targeted recruitment strategy to fill vacancies with individuals with disabilities.
- ♦ Provide training opportunities, including apprenticeship programs, on-the-job training, job shadowing, and tuition reimbursement for current employees with disabilities.
- ♦ Provide training to executives, managers, and line staff about strategies such as workforce flexibility, including customized employment around job tasks (job restructuring, job sharing, and job creation).
- ♦ Participate in internship, mentorship, and hiring programs for students and recent graduates with disabilities.
- ♦ Develop emergency management plans that specifically address the needs of employees with disabilities.
- ♦ Review personnel processes and their implementation on an annual basis.

Outreach and Recruitment:

Companies have expressed concern that one of the greatest barriers they face regarding the hiring of individuals with disabilities is the inability to find qualified candidates. The adoption of effective outreach and recruitment strategies is essential to ensuring that your workforce includes qualified individuals with disabilities.

To effectively build a pipeline of qualified applicants with disabilities, the company will need to develop relationships with a variety of recruitment sources. These relationships can be formed through formal partnerships or informal interactions. The company will not only secure access to talent that it might have otherwise overlooked but will also benefit from other supports that can assist them in effectively integrating job candidates with disabilities into their workforce. Local employment service specialists and programs can be found at the following agencies:

- ♦ **CareerSource Pinellas:** Some of the services offered to employers:

- ♦ Access to a database of thousands of professionals
- ♦ Business seminars
- ♦ Career fairs
- ♦ Easy and convenient job postings
- ♦ Pre-screening of candidates
- ♦ Local and national recruiting
- ♦ Networking
- ♦ www.careersourcepinellas.com

For more information, go to www.careersourcepinellas.com/pages/employers. You can also call: 813-397-2090 or email: employerinfo@careersourcepinellas.com.

- ♦ **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation** offers employers the following:

- ♦ Opportunity to meet with a VR Business Relations Representative by contacting: VRBusinessRep@vr.fldoe.org.
- ♦ Access to VR's national talent pool of qualified individuals with disabilities at: tapability.com.
- ♦ Participation in On-the-Job Training which provides the employer with the opportunity to mentor a person with a disability. By participating in OJT, employers have the opportunity to see if the job and your business are a good fit with the trainee. VR may provide:
 - ♦ Reimbursement of the trainee's salary
 - ♦ Support services (uniforms, tools, bus passes)
 - ♦ Job-site assessments and any needed accommodations

For more information about VR, visit their website at: www.rehabworks.org/employers.shtml.

Outreach and Recruitment Continued:

♦ **Florida Division of Blind Services:**

- ♦ Assistance with finding, hiring, working with, and making accommodations for persons with a visual disability.
- ♦ Provides basic information about blindness and visual impairments, common misconceptions, and the types of workplace accommodations a blind or visually impaired employee might need.
- ♦ Information about responsibilities regarding the employment of persons with disabilities as outlined by the Federal government.
- ♦ Opportunities to learn more about reasonable accommodations that employees who are blind or visually impaired may need.

For more information, go to dbs.myflorida.com/Employer/index.html or contact the Tampa District office at: 1-800-757-7190 or email: Mireya.Hernandez@dbs.fldoe.org.

- ♦ **Florida Department of Economic Opportunity** can help employers to: recruit qualified candidates, stay up-to-date on state and federal labor laws and requirements, find tax credits and incentive programs, and get the latest on labor market information. the following:

For more information , visit their website at: www.floridajobs.org.

- ♦ **The Able Trust** has the following resources available:

- ♦ Employer Resources:

- ♦ Employer toolkit

- ♦ Sample offer letters
- ♦ Unpaid internship agreement examples
- ♦ Parental consent release
- ♦ Disability sensitivity training program

- ♦ Business Benefits:

- ♦ US Business Leadership Network
- ♦ Employer Assistance and Resource Network
- ♦ Think Beyond the Label
- ♦ US Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy
- ♦ Florida Chamber Internship Program
- ♦ Provider Directory

The Able Trust website can be accessed at: <http://www.abletrust.org/business-leader-information/employer-resources>, for employer tools. Businesses wanting to participate in providing work experiences or employment to employees with disabilities should contact The Able Trust directly at 850.224.4493 or info@abletrust.org.

Outreach and Recruitment Continued:

♦ The Arc Tampa Bay:

The Arc Tampa Bay offers a Supported Employment Program. Supported Employment is an employment service utilized by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to obtain and maintain a job in the community. This service provides ongoing support for these individuals to succeed in today's competitive workforce.

With The Arc Tampa Bay's Supported Employment Program, each individual is assigned to an Employment Specialist who assists them throughout the employment process. These specialists are highly qualified, experienced and educated professionals who provide: pre-employment training, on-the-job training, placement services

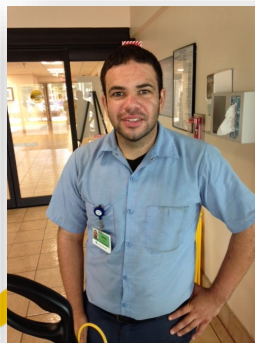
- ♦ Pre-employment training
- ♦ On-the-job training
- ♦ Placement services
- ♦ Ongoing assistance during the employee's course of employment

Benefits to the Employer:

- ♦ Employment specialist will assist in all job trainings required for the hired position
- ♦ Employment specialist will provide ongoing support to ensure quality performance
- ♦ All employees undergo -pre-screening
- ♦ Reduced turnover rate
- ♦ Recognition as an equal opportunity employer
- ♦ Knowing that you have improved someone's life by giving them the opportunity to be fully included in society

For more information about The Arc Tampa Bay's Supported Employment Program, go to: <http://thearctb.org/supported-employment-program/>.

You can also call 727-799-3330, extension 0 and ask to speak with a supported employment specialist. To email, contact Margaret Cote, Coordinator of Employment Services, at: mcote@thearctb.org.



Recruiting Strategies:

- ♦ Hold formal and informal briefing sessions, preferably at the company offices, with representatives from recruiting sources. Key components of briefings should include company tours; explanations of current and future job openings and position descriptions; overview of the company's selection process; and company recruiting literature.
- ♦ Establish formal arrangements for:
 - ♦ Referring of applicants with representatives from recruitment sources
 - ♦ Following up with sources
 - ♦ Providing feedback on which applicants were interviewed and hired
- ♦ Adopt a training program on how and why to hire individuals with disabilities.
- ♦ Use an accessible online application.
- ♦ Use recruitment and social networking sites so that job seekers with disabilities can learn about the company and its hiring initiatives.
- ♦ Reach out to and generate leads with disability-focused organizations nationally and within the geographic area from which the company usually recruits.
- ♦ Join employer networking groups, such as the US Business Leadership Network or one of its local affiliates, that recognize and promote best practices in hiring, retention, and promoting individuals with disabilities.
- ♦ Post job announcements on accessible web-based "job boards" that specialize in identifying qualified individuals with disabilities, in disability-related publications, and with specific disability service organizations.
- ♦ Participate in career fairs targeting individuals with disabilities.
- ♦ Engage current employees or an employer resource group as referral sources and asking if they know individuals with disabilities who would make good job candidates.
- ♦ Include people with disabilities on company recruitment teams.

Recruiting Strategies Continued:

- ♦ Build a talent pipeline for youth and young adults with disabilities who are transitioning from high school or college through:
 - ♦ Mentoring
 - ♦ Internships
 - ♦ Work experience programs
 - ♦ Summer programs
 - ♦ Career days
 - ♦ Mock interviews
 - ♦ Resume writing
 - ♦ Youth motivational programs
 - ♦ Job shadowing activities
- ♦ Attract qualified individuals with disabilities not currently in the workforce who have requisite skills, including individuals located through local chapters of organizations supporting individuals with disabilities
- ♦ Request that students with disabilities participate in campus recruitment events
- ♦ Develop specific and targeted strategies for recruiting, hiring, and integrating veterans with disabilities, including wounded returning service members, and implementing internal training on these strategies
- ♦ Designate a coordinator responsible for targeted outreach programs, including websites, schools, and employment assistance programs serving persons with disabilities.



Ensuring Recruitment Success Continued:

The following strategies and practices have proven helpful in assessing the success of outreach and recruitment efforts:

- ♦ Review the company's outreach and recruitment efforts from the previous year to evaluate their effectiveness in identifying and recruiting qualified individuals with disabilities.
- ♦ Document each evaluation, including the criteria used, and the company's conclusions as to whether each effort was effective.

Communication Best Practices:

To maximize a company's ability to attract qualified individuals with disabilities, it is important to communicate its commitment to employing individuals with disabilities and strive for an inclusive and diverse work environment to the public, including subcontractors and vendors. Here are some successful external communication strategies and practices:

- ♦ Include individuals with visible disabilities when employees are pictured in consumer, promotional or "help wanted" advertising.
- ♦ Sponsor and participate in job fairs that target job seekers with disabilities.
- ♦ Inform disability organizations about career days, youth motivation/mentoring programs, and related community activities sponsored by the company.
- ♦ Send information about relevant company policies and priorities to subcontractors, vendors, and suppliers and requesting their support.
- ♦ Communicate with employee representatives to inform them of the company's policies and seek their input.
- ♦ Post the company's policy statements regarding inclusion and reasonable accommodations, special recruitment and hiring initiatives, and targeted internships, mentoring, and shadowing programs on its public website.

Communication Best Practices Continued:

Strong external communication strategies and outreach and recruitment initiatives will be more effective if they are accompanied by internal support from supervisory and management personnel and are understood by co-workers, some of whom may have had only limited contact with individuals with disabilities. Internal communication and other strategies targeting managers, supervisors, and co-workers can foster awareness, acceptance, and support among all levels of staff within the company. Examples of successful internal communication strategies and practices include the following:

- ♦ Establish a disability employee resource group aligned with the company's diversity program and composed of existing employees with disabilities and employees with family members with disabilities. The group should focus on helping to identify policies and procedures that support a positive work environment for persons with disabilities.
- ♦ Publicize the company's commitment in its internal publications.
- ♦ Conduct special meetings, orientations, and training programs with executives, management, supervisor personnel, and employee representatives to communicate the commitment of the company and its leadership to fostering an inclusive corporate culture and work environment.
- ♦ Include images of employees with disabilities in employee handouts and other internal publications that feature photographs of employees.
- ♦ Ensure that people with disabilities are among those represented in the company's decision-making bodies, including the board of directors.
- ♦ Establish a policy that all managers and supervisors share responsibility for the successful implementation of the company's inclusion policy.
- ♦ As part of the company's employee assistance program, adopt disability management and prevention programs, with the goal that workers who become injured on the job remain part of the workforce.
- ♦ Adopt a recognition program acknowledging individuals responsible for achieving progress and positive outcomes related to disability employment.
- ♦ Include disability-friendly policies regarding internal communication and information dissemination in the employer's policy manual and employee handbook.

Accessible information and Communication Technology:

To fully participate in the workforce, applicants and employees with disabilities must have access to and use of information and data that is comparable to the access and use by applicants and employees without disabilities. For example, if an online application system is not accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, applicants with disabilities will never “get through the front door” of applying for a job. Once an individual with a disability is on board, if they are not provided with accessible information and communication technology (ICT) and training, they are limited in their ability to develop skills needed to be productive team members and advance in employment. A commitment to accessible and usable ICT is essential to facilitating meaningful and effective employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Promising business practices regarding accessible ICT include the development of comprehensive strategic action plans that include the following:

- ♦ Secure leadership at the highest levels of the company to facilitate “buy-in” and establish and sustain corporate commitment to accessible ICT.
- ♦ Establish a network of individuals responsible for implementation.
- ♦ Make the business case for ensuring technology used by the business is accessible to the largest possible number of applicants, employees, and customers.
- ♦ Consider all of the ICT used or offered and make a list of those platforms, devices, and applications.
- ♦ Evaluate accessibility by testing ICT applications with automated accessibility testing tools and by considering the user experience of applicants, employees and customers.
- ♦ Adopt specific technical ICT accessibility standards and functional performance criteria regarding software applications and operating systems; web-based intranet and internet applications; telecommunication products; video and multimedia products; self-contained-closed products; and computers.
- ♦ Adopt accessible online application systems that include website integration; job posting and distribution tools; application and resume submission; etc.

Communication Technology Continued:

- ♦ Provide outsourcing guidelines to suppliers and business partners, including copies of the ICT accessibility guidelines.
- ♦ Deploy accessible ICT throughout the company by, for example, establishing a mechanism for centralized expertise and/or funding.
- ♦ Appoint a Chief Accessibility Technology Officer.
- ♦ Notify managers and employees about the company's ICT accessibility policy.
- ♦ Involve individuals with disabilities and experts in the development, implementation and evaluation of policy.
- ♦ Establish measureable objectives and benchmarks, including checklists, scorecards, and grid-based tracking documents.
- ♦ Design and implement data collection and continuous improvement strategies, including tracking and reporting systems and regularly scheduled reporting.
- ♦ Utilize local resources available through the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST):

FAAST, the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology program, is administered through the Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and is federally funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended in 2004 (P.L. 108-364).

- ♦ Since its inception in 1998, FAAST has been and continues to be a resource to provide Floridians free access to information, referral services, educational programs, and publications in accessible format on extensive topics related to disability rights, laws/policies, and funding opportunities for assistive technology.
- ♦ To obtain information about our local FAAST demonstration center, visit: <https://www.faast.org/programs/regional-demo/central>:

FAAST Central Florida Regional Demonstration Center,
Tampa General Rehabilitation Center
6 Tampa General Circle Room 214
Tampa, FL 33606

PH: (813) 844-7591; TDD: (813) 844-7767; Fax: (813) 844-4128,
Email: faastcen@tgh.org

Organizational Accountability and Continuous Improvement:

Best business practices include putting systems in place to ensure accountability and continuous improvement related to training; establishing accountability measures; establishing accountability and continuous improvement mechanisms; and designating responsible individuals.

Training: It is critical that companies extend professional development opportunities to employees in all offices, divisions, and departments. Some examples include:

- ♦ Provide training on disability-related issues to all personnel, particularly those involved in the recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention processes. Disability-related issues can include: understanding legal requirements, disability etiquette and disability awareness, retention and return-to-work strategies, overcoming stereotypes and other attitudinal barriers, reasonable accommodation procedures, and targeted hiring programs.
- ♦ Incorporate training on disability-related issues as a regular and ongoing component of the company's diversity initiatives.

Accountability Measures: Specific strategies and practices that your company can use to measure its progress toward creating an inclusive workplace include establishing annual quantitative goals, objectives, and benchmarks related to the following:

- ♦ Outreach to and recruitment (including referrals) of people with disabilities
- ♦ Hiring, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities
- ♦ Sponsored educational, training, recreational, and social activities that are inclusive of and/or focused on disability issues

Continuous Improvement Mechanisms: Accountability and continuous improvement mechanisms are necessary to ascertain whether current policies, practices, and procedures are effective and whether the company is making progress in improving employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Examples of strategies and practices regarding accountability and continuous improvement mechanisms that have proven successful include the following:

Accountability and Continuous Improvement Continued:

- ♦ Review annually all employment-related activities, including:
 - ♦ Job posting, recruitment, advertising, and job application procedures, including testing
 - ♦ Hiring, promotion, upgrading, awards of tenure, and layoffs
 - ♦ Rates of pay and any other forms of compensation, including fringe benefits
 - ♦ Job assignments, job classifications, job descriptions, and seniority lists
 - ♦ Sick leave, leaves of absence, and other leave
 - ♦ Training, apprenticeships, attendance at professional meetings and conferences
- ♦ Conduct annual self-assessments, including identifying trends and/or issues needing more attention such as:
 - ♦ Tracking information related to the provision of reasonable accommodations that could be used to assess the effectiveness of accommodations and the process
 - ♦ Tracking data related to the representation of individuals with disabilities in the workforce to ascertain trends, including the efficacy of recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion initiatives
 - ♦ Establishing a complaint tracking and monitoring system to identify areas needing systemic improvements
- ♦ Seek input from employees with disabilities regarding implementation of policies and strategic plans using employee surveys, focus groups, and discussions with employee resource and advisory groups
- ♦ Based on these reviews and assessments, develop strategic plans that include proactive steps and the implementation of specific actions necessary to address any noted deficiencies
- ♦ Provide regularly scheduled reports to company leaders and/or other high-ranking managers regarding implementation of the company's strategic plans, including completion dates and managers who are accountable and responsible for various action items

Accountability and Continuous Improvement Continued:

Designate Responsible Individuals: Designating of authority and responsibility is of central importance to enhancing and securing implementation of disability employment policies and practices. Specific examples of strategies and practices that have proven successful include:

- ♦ Assign and define the scope of responsibility for implementation to specific individuals.
- ♦ Identify the responsible individual/s in internal and external communications.
- ♦ Provide top management support (including budgets) and if appropriate, staff to manage implementation.
- ♦ Explain to managers and supervisors how performance elements included in their performance plans related to the recruitment, hiring, advancement, and retention of persons with disabilities will be assessed.



The Arc Tampa Bay's Role:

As a vendor registered with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Employment Services, the Arc Tampa Bay is able to provide Employment Services, Supported Employment Services and On-the-Job Training. The Florida Vocational Rehabilitation Program is a federal/state program that works with people who have physical or mental disabilities to prepare for, gain, or retain meaningful employment. Service categories can be described as:

- ♦ Employment Services are designed to assist the individual in securing and maintaining integrated, competitive employment. Employment Services include services provided both prior to and after job placement. Some of the areas that might be covered include:
 - ♦ Instruction on grooming, punctuality, attendance, and other job readiness skills
 - ♦ Instruction of employment related responsibilities such as payroll deduction, insurance, retirement, other benefits, and workplace safety
 - ♦ Assisting the individual to locate potential employment
 - ♦ Assessment of potential work environments and job-site consultation
- ♦ Supported Employment Services are provided to VR Customers with the most significant disabilities. The Customers are assisted in securing and maintaining integrated, competitive employment. Supported Employment Services are appropriate for Customers for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability and who, because of the nature and severity of their disabilities, need intensive supports and extended services after transition in order to maintain employment.



The Arc Tampa Bay's Role Continued:

- ♦ Supported Employment Services Phase I and Phase II:
 - ♦ Phase I services include ongoing support services needed to support and maintain the Customer in supported employment.
 - ♦ Do not typically exceed 24 months unless the Customer and VR Counselor jointly agree in writing to extend the time needed to achieve the employment outcome identified in the Customer's Individualized Plan for Employment.
 - ♦ Phase II or extended services will be provided upon closure of the Customer's VR case.
 - ♦ Phase II services are provided by another State agency, private non-profit organization, Employer, or any other appropriate resources paid for from a source other than VR.
 - ♦ These services occur after the Customer has made the transition from VR support.
- ♦ On-the-Job Training is time limited skill acquisition that can be learned on the job.
 - ♦ On-the-Job Training occurs in an integrated community-based setting where most of the employees do not have disabilities.
 - ♦ Customers who participate in On-the-Job Training shall be paid no less than minimum wage.
 - ♦ The VR Counselor will make a referral for both On-the-Job Training and either Employment Services or Supported Employment Services at the same time.

Individuals or Customers are referred to The Arc Tampa Bay for services from either the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or the Agency for Persons with Disabilities. If the business has employees that may benefit from services, The Arc Tampa Bay will work with employers through private pay arrangements on a case by case basis.



The Employer's Role:

Supervision Strategies: Keep it simple, but appropriate. Use language that is easy to understand and clarify with the individual their understanding of what was said. Using simple language generally is a good approach with all employees. Tips to help keep it simple:

- ♦ Use clear and concrete language
- ♦ Use short sentences that communicate one main idea
- ♦ Use concrete, direct instructions; do not “suggest” or “imply”
- ♦ Avoid jargon, acronyms, and abbreviations
- ♦ Check for understanding. After each piece of information, ask “What do you think about this?” Ask the employee to reflect back to you their understanding of what needs to happen.
- ♦ Be aware of body language and facial expressions. These can convey if the message is being understood.

Employee Job Responsibilities: Have a plan for the employee’s job responsibilities. The prepared plan should be explicit about the employee’s responsibilities. The plan should be reviewed frequently with the employee. Sharing the plan with the employee will allow the employee time to ask questions about the task and make sure they understand their responsibilities. First hand scheduling with the employee is a great tool to help understand and plan out the employee’s workflow in a way that ensures tasks are done in a timely fashion.

How to plan ahead and communicate your plan:

- ♦ Know whether or not your employee can pick up a new job responsibility impromptu or may need more support and training
- ♦ Know what you are going to ask your employee to do before they ask you what they should do next.
- ♦ Know who is the best person to provide instruction on a new task. It is you, a co-worker, or the employee’s employment specialist or job coach?
- ♦ Know the best way to give the employee instructions: verbal, written, hands-on demonstration or video.
- ♦ Consider developing a checklist in written, picture, or another format that can easily be reordered or printed. The employment specialist or job coach can help with this.

The Employer's Role Continued:

Talk to Your Employee as a Person First: Good supervisors develop and maintain a rapport with each employee that they supervise. This can be especially important to people with disabilities, who can sometimes face challenges that can be both structural (such as working part-time hours with fewer opportunities to interact) and related to attitudes of others about people with disabilities (i.e., perception that people with disabilities are less capable). Employees with intellectual or developmental disabilities benefit from personal relationships with their supervisors like anyone else.

How to get to know the individual and let the individual get to know you:

- ♦ Demonstrate respect by saying hello, goodbye, please and thank you
- ♦ Let the employee know about your own interests and hobbies outside of work
- ♦ Be sure to introduce the employee to coworkers and remember to do when new people come into the business
- ♦ Make sure the individual is included in meetings and social gatherings. This may require adapting his/her work schedule

Balance Flexibility and High Expectations: Flexibility can mean different things in different circumstances. Often it is as simple as being able to accommodate a quick 15 minute break for a medical need or negotiating flex time to allow for a personal situation. Being flexible to the individual's needs does not, however, mean sacrificing the quality or promptness of the work that needs to be done. It means keeping yourself accountable to the person's performance.

How to maintain a balance between flexibility and high expectations:

- ♦ Negotiate flexible work hours with the employee if needed, but enforce those hours
- ♦ Talk about planning issues. Consider how far in advance you make the schedules
- ♦ Identify if the employee has the skills needed to complete the task (such as technology skills and if the employee needs contextual or topical information)
- ♦ Identify the support provided by the employment specialist/job coach versus the support provided by the supervisor. Employment specialists may be more focused on process while supervisors may be more focused on outcomes
- ♦ Make it clear that job tasks are achievable; don't make them seem too hard. Communicate that success takes patience and is a dynamic, unfolding process and that you are supportive of learning and adapting to get the job done
- ♦ Be a good and positive role model for your employee

The Employer's Role Continued:

Work Directly with the Employee on a Project: Sometimes the best supervision occurs when working on the same projects together. This allows for a sense of what's happening during the employee's work week, the project responsibilities assigned to the employee, and to help the employee identify any tasks they need to complete. Working side-by-side allows for observing how the employee works without having to rely solely on oral descriptions. It also allows for the opportunity to make suggestions to the employee's co-workers on things they can do to make the entire project successful.

How to keep meaningfully involved:

- ♦ Be involved in the same projects as the employee
- ♦ Attend staff meeting with the employee
- ♦ Check in with co-workers to see what they think is working well and what isn't working well for the employee

Prioritize the Career Development of the Employee: Recognize that every employee is on a career path. In order to grow professionally, all employees have the expectation that they will improve skills and receive the support to do so. This holds true for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

How to support opportunities for career development:

- ♦ Provide both mentoring and reporting. Mentoring is about guidance through one's career. Reporting is about updating on the progress of project "to-dos."
- ♦ Periodically ask, "What additional responsibilities could the individual complete?"
- ♦ Periodically ask the employee if there is anyone's job at the company that they would like to learn more about. If so, encourage the employee to set up a time to talk to the individual about the job.
- ♦ Also periodically ask the employee if there is anything that happens at work that they would like to learn more about.
- ♦ Take time during formal performance evaluations to identify professional development and leadership experiences that meet the employee's goals such as education and skills training.

The Employer's Role Continued:

Build a Support Network of Co-Workers: Developing a network of co-workers is important for all employees including employees with intellectual or developmental disabilities, but people with intellectual or developmental disabilities may need some encouragement to reach out to their colleagues. Encourage other employees to be a resource and encourage the employee to reach out to their co-workers.

How to encourage connections in the workplace:

- ♦ Make sure the employee feels included in the workplace by encouraging them to interact with their co-workers. Ways to do this include: letting the employee know where their co-workers eat lunch, making sure the employee is included in workday celebrations and out of work activities (such as company teams and volunteer activities)
- ♦ Be a bridge between the employee with an intellectual or developmental disability and other employees. Let the employee know which of their co-workers would be a good person to ask for help, and let the co-worker know that you think they would be a good resource for the employee.

Now You're Ready!

With these strategies and tools in mind, you're ready to implement your workforce initiative to recruit, hire and retain employees with disabilities. The Arc Tampa Bay is here as an area resource to help you meet your company goals.

If your company is interested in becoming a local leader, consider "The Arc Friendly Action." The Arc Friendly Action brings an opportunity for Tampa Bay businesses to increase their awareness and social consciousness on issues surrounding people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To sign up, go to: <https://thearcfoundation.org/the-arc-friendly-action/>.

Tax Incentives for Employers:

Private-sector businesses that make structural adaptations or other accommodations for employees or customers with disabilities may be eligible for tax incentives.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) – This credit is available to employers for hiring individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. On December 18, 2015, President Obama signed the Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes Act of 2015 (PATH Act) that extends and modifies the WOTC Program and the Empowerment Zones for a five-year period from December 31, 2014 to December 31, 2019. Employers use Form 8850 to pre-screen and to make a written request to the state workforce agency (SWA) of the state in which their business is located (where the employee works) to certify an individual as a member of a targeted group for purposes of qualifying for the work opportunity credit.

<https://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/>

Disabled Access Credit – The Disabled Access Credit provides a non-refundable credit of up to \$5,000 for small businesses that incur expenditures for the purpose of providing access to persons with disabilities. An eligible small business is one that earned \$1 million or less or had no more than 30 full time employees in the previous year; they may take the credit each and every year they incur access expenditures. Refer to Form 8826, Disabled Access Credit (PDF), for information about eligible expenditures.

<https://www.eeoc.gov/facts/fs-disab.html>

Architectural/Transportation Tax Deduction – This deduction (IRS Code Section 190, Barrier Removal) allows business of all sizes to take an annual deduction of up to \$15,000 for expenses such as creating accessible parking; installing ramps and curb cuts; making telephones, water fountains and restrooms accessible; and widening walkways. It may also be used for vehicle adaptation. Learn more on the IRS website:

<https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/tax-benefits-for-businesses-who-have-employees-with-disabilities>

Small businesses that meet the criteria for the Disabled Access Credit may use it and the Architectural/Transportation Tax Deduction together if the expenses incurred qualify.

Tax Incentives for Employers Continued:

In addition to the tax incentives listed above, there are other incentives that apply to hiring Veterans with disabilities:

WOTC Extension for Hiring Veterans with Disabilities:

<https://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/eligible.cfm#Veterans>
Special Employer Incentive Program for Hiring Veterans with Disabilities:
<https://www.benefits.va.gov/VOW/for-employers.asp>

For more information about these tax incentives and their requisite forms, please see the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) website:

<https://www.irs.gov/>

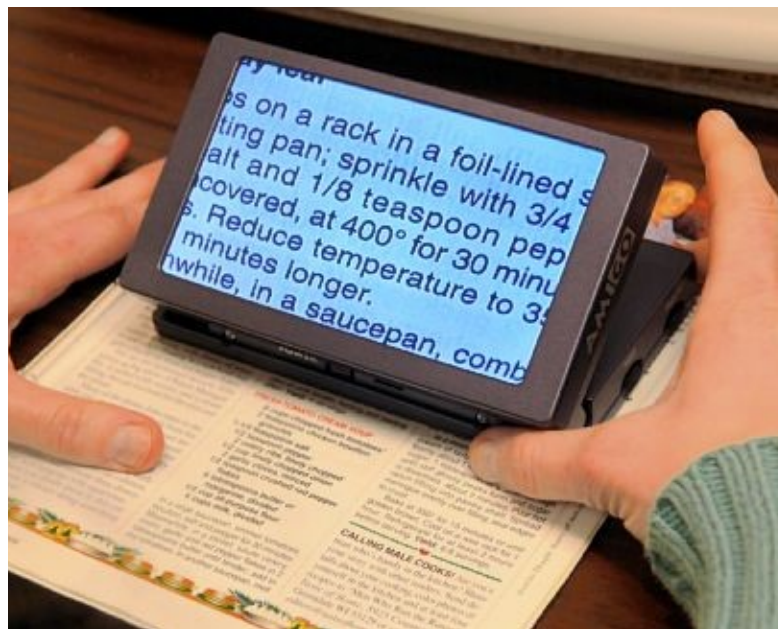
For more information about structural accessibility and job accommodations for people with disabilities, contact the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), a free service of ODEP. JAN also offers a fact sheet on tax incentives:

<https://askjan.org/>

The Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN) also provides information about employer financial incentives, including tax incentives:

Employer Financial Incentives Webpage:

[http://www.askearn.org/topics/laws-regulations/
employer_financial_incentives/](http://www.askearn.org/topics/laws-regulations/employer_financial_incentives/)



Guidebook Resources:

Business Strategies that Work: A Framework for Disability Inclusion. (2012, October). Retrieved July 31, 2018, from Office of Disability Employment Policy website: <https://www.dol.gov/odep/pdf/BusinessStrategiesThatWork.pdf>

Hire Gauge: How High Can Your Business Score? (n.d.). Retrieved July 31, 2018, from Think Beyond the Label.com website: http://thinkbeyondthelabel.com/wp-includes/images/tbtl/Roi_Calculator.pdf

Kramer, J., Wolfe, A., & Winsor, J. (2013, July). *The Institute Brief: Support through Mentorship: Accessible Supervision of Employees with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.* Retrieved July 31, 2018, from Institute for Community Inclusion website: https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1018&context=ici_institutebrief

The Field Guide to Evolving Your Workforce. (2010). Retrieved July 31, 2018, from Think Beyond the Label.com website: http://thinkbeyondthelabel.com/wp-includes/images/tbtl/The_Field_Guide_To_Evolving_Your_Workforce.pdf

Websites:

<http://www.rehabworks.org/>

<https://abilitieswork.employflorida.com/vosnet/Default.aspx>

<http://www.abletrust.org/>

<http://dbs.myflorida.com/>

<https://askjan.org/>

<https://www.careersourcepinellas.com/pages/wioa>

<http://www.floridajobs.org/>



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