



Securing Futures Through Employment

An employment guide for people with disability
with the support of their families

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are located and we pay our respects to Elders past and present. We acknowledge the sorrow of the Stolen Generations and the impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We also recognise the resilience, strength and pride of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Thank You

Resourcing Inclusive Communities would like to thank the individuals and families who contributed their stories and photos that helped create this guide, so that others might be inspired by the possibilities of meaningful, open employment in the community. We would also like to thank Community Resource Unit (CRU) and Imagine More, our consortium partners in the School to Work Project, for their insights into the development of this resource.

Developed by:

Resourcing Inclusive Communities is an initiative of Family Advocacy that provides information and resources to assist people with disability to live meaningful lives, as valued members of their communities.



This guide was produced by Resourcing Inclusive Communities as part of the School to Work Project. School to Work is a consortium project designed and delivered by three organisations: Resourcing Inclusive Communities, an initiative of Family Advocacy in NSW, Community Resource Unit (CRU) in Queensland; and Imagine More in the ACT.

School to Work aims to equip students with disability, through the support of families, to seek meaningful, paid employment in the community. This project is funded by the Department of Social Services (DSS) – Economic Participation Grant under the Information, Linkages, and Capacity Building (ILC) funding.



School To Work
for Secondary Students
with Disability

Introduction

Getting a job is a rite of passage for most Australians. The role of employee or employer also brings many benefits such as a sense of contribution, economic security, creating opportunities for relationships, broadening our horizons and adding meaning to our lives. This is no less important for people with disability.

The role of families in supporting their family member with disability into the world of work is of high importance. For many families, supporting the realisation of getting a job starts well before the young person finishes school; and for our family members with disability, these natural pathways can require more consideration and at times advocacy compared to family members without disability.

Families are often best positioned to see the person's life in its entirety and to safeguard the many opportunities that life has to offer, including obtaining employment.

The natural role of families should not be underestimated, as well-informed families can provide one of the most potent means of success for a person moving into employment.

The employability of all Australians with disability sets the tone for this resource, as does the critical role that families can play in challenging the old stereotypes that undermine many people receiving the rich benefits that the world of work brings us.

This resource was created in collaboration with people with disability and their families. Throughout the guide, real-life examples are provided, as well as activities to brainstorm and help support the practical implementation of the suggested steps. The inclusion of the person with disability is fundamental to this process, in conversations, observations and activities, as fully as possible to ensure their 'voice' is being heard. All people should have the opportunity to work. This resource aims to support this goal.

“I am learning about things I want to learn about... I love working with the boys because I am part of the team. I really like talking to them about cars.”

Tyler, Year 10 student currently working part time at a local vehicle repair shop.

Families are often best positioned to see the person's life in its entirety and can identify what is working, and what is not working so well for them. Knowing and understanding what works and what doesn't work for a person, is essential in determining the type and place of work, where the person can succeed!

For all these reasons and more, families have a natural authority in the lives of their family member with disability and are best placed to support the person in accessing a typical life filled with all the good things that most people dream of experiencing and achieving, including employment in their community.

(The Natural Authority of Families, M. Kendrick, 1996) <https://bit.ly/Kendrick-M>



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A woman wearing a pink hairnet and a black apron is focused on grating a carrot in a kitchen. She is using a silver grater with a black handle, and the shredded carrot is falling into a stainless steel bowl. The background shows a typical kitchen environment with stainless steel surfaces and various equipment. An orange circular graphic with a white dotted border is overlaid in the upper right corner, containing text.

Jocelyn in her role
of bakery employee
and co-worker at
her local cafe



Employment




Story

Jacob's Story

My son, Jacob, currently has employment in the open market at our local Woolworths, working on the checkout, with support, to fulfil that role. Having work in open employment and receiving the award wage gives Jacob financial independence and an opportunity to enjoy freely given relationships with other team members, earn status with his community, hone his skills and have the satisfaction of knowing he is good at what he does. Over time, we have seen that Jacob's community has benefited and embraced the idea that a person with disability can achieve when given the opportunity to try. From the very beginning of Jacob's journey from leaving school to gaining employment, our family has been involved in the process to ensure there was a smooth transition and everyone felt supported in the decision making, whether it was at school or in the workplace. This has resulted, now, in us pulling back our presence, and Jacob being at the forefront of his employment and the opportunities that present themselves at his place of work.

– Annette, Jacob's mum





Rhiannon at her
work experience
at her local
bakery

What do we mean by employment?

When we refer to employment or 'work roles' we are not referring to segregated or congregated settings where people with disability are working away from the rest of the community. The focus is on typical working environments in our communities, where people with disability are working alongside people without disability.

Further, the term 'work role' refers to a range of opportunities, including work experience; volunteering; paid work in a small, medium or large business, or family run business; or setting up a microenterprise. Consider all the possibilities that are available, and seek out experiences based on the person's unique set of circumstances.

Why is employment important?

Employment is important to all people for the many benefits it provides, including:

- a sense of identity
- a sense of purpose and self-worth
- an opportunity to contribute to our communities and form connections
- an opportunity to build long-lasting and close relationships
- financial independence and security
- an opportunity for ongoing skill development in an area of interest.



The Good Things of Life

High expectations

The Good Things of Life is used to describe a life that brings happiness and contentment, including strong relationships with family and friends, connection to the wider community, a sense of belonging, opportunities to learn and develop, meaningful work and vocations, a place to call home, personal and financial security, and the chance to follow dreams and passions.

For people with disability, the Good Things of Life is no different, and it is important we envision what this could mean for a person with disability and plan strategically to make it a reality.

People with disability need strong allies in their lives to help push back against the low or different expectations that are often placed upon people with disability. In an employment context, these low expectations might include assuming a person with disability can't work, doesn't want to work, or can only work in certain settings. Therefore, families play an essential role in supporting the person to access all aspects of a Good Life, by dreaming big and maintaining high expectations of what can be achieved, including typical work experiences. When families, friends and allies communicate their high expectations, the more likely others are to follow. Having high expectations can help inform the Valued Social Roles that are wanted for the person.





Aspects of a Good Life

Activity

What aspects of a Good Life do you want for the person you support?
Write down your ideas in the domains below:

Person's Name: _____

Sense of Belonging

Handwriting practice box for 'Sense of Belonging' with 8 horizontal lines.

Home

Handwriting practice box for 'Home' with 8 horizontal lines.

Connections

Handwriting practice box for 'Connections' with 8 horizontal lines.

Material Needs

Handwriting practice box for 'Material Needs' with 8 horizontal lines.

Health

Handwriting practice box for 'Health' with 8 horizontal lines.

Opportunities

Handwriting practice box for 'Opportunities' with 8 horizontal lines.



Positive introduction

When establishing community connections, consider the language you would use and how you would introduce the person in social or community settings. How and what is communicated about a person will have a significant impact on how other people perceive and interact with them. Using strengths-based language focuses on who the person is, their positive social roles, strengths, interests and what is wanted for their future; it does not focus on disability or deficits. This approach is often referred to as a positive introduction and is essential when it comes to sharing information about the person. When we speak about the person positively, we are providing valuable information that can lead to further conversations and possible opportunities in the future.



Reframing Support Requirements

Hot Tip

Reframe the way you discuss a person's diagnosis or support requirements. Refer to how a person is best supported, rather than focusing on what they cannot do. For example, "John communicates best when he is given extra time to verbalise his thoughts".

Example of a positive introduction:

I'd like to tell you about my niece. She's in Year 11 at her local high school, where her favourite subject is art. She is a very determined person who likes to have a plan and is great at following clearly delivered instructions. She enjoys interacting with people in quiet, calm settings. For the past year, she has regularly volunteered at her local library, where she sorts books into subject categories to be returned back to the shelves. She is very enthusiastic whenever she is involved in an activity of interest that she really enjoys, and especially enjoys learning languages.



Positive Introduction

Watch



Watch this video of Lindie, mum of Millie, speaking to the importance of a positive introduction:
<https://bit.ly/PositiveIntroductionVideo>

Credit: Community Resource Unit (CRU)



Activity

Develop a Positive Introduction

Consider the following questions regarding the person in your life:

1. What information would you like to share with someone who is meeting the person for the first time?

2. What is one thing you are really proud of about that person?

3. What is one of their greatest qualities?

4. What is a strength you'd like to share?

5. What is an interest you'd like to share?

6. What roles does the person have?

Use the answers to the questions above to craft a positive introduction for the person:



Getting Started

Often, family members ask “Where do we start when it comes to supporting our family member into employment?” Traditional job-seeking practices start with the job; however, to achieve the best outcomes, **start with the person**. Starting with the person means the focus remains on the individual, while also assuming the person can work. This approach promotes a process of understanding the person more fully, and connects their individual characteristics to potential work tasks and roles more successfully. It can also generate more work possibilities rather than focusing on one specific job or title.

Ensure the person is at the centre of the process while working through the next sections.

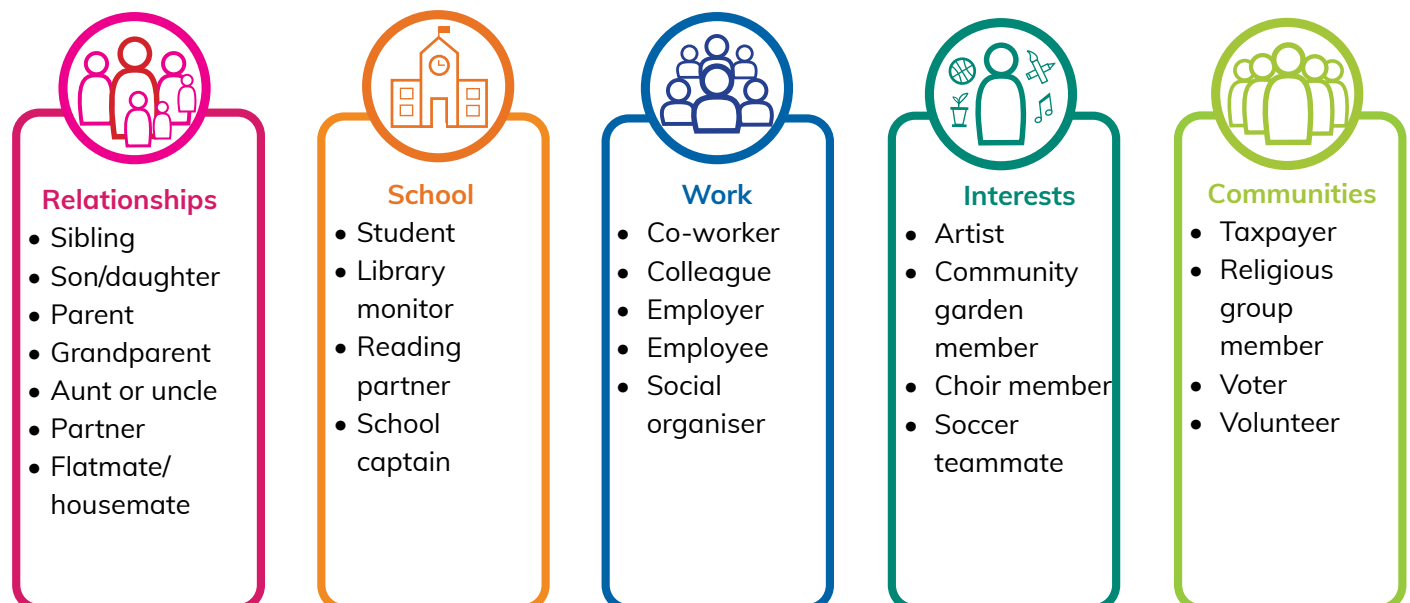
Valued Social Roles

Valued Social Roles are positive roles that are highly valued by society. They are often associated with attributes such as wealth, competence, independence, beauty etc. Often, people with disability have fewer roles of positive value and this can be due to things such as limited opportunity or low expectations. Holding the role of employee or employer also helps people achieve more Valued Social Roles in their communities.

People with disability typically have fewer roles, or fewer roles that have positive value. Having employment helps people achieve more Valued Social Roles in their communities.

Valued Social Roles are the way in which a person becomes a part of community life and enjoys what community life offers. These roles often have socially expected patterns of behaviour and expectations associated with them. The role of ‘worker’, ‘employee’ or ‘business owner’ are roles that help us to understand how a person spends their time, how they are contributing to their community, as well as their interests and passions. Valued Social Roles can also act as a buffer to negative assumptions or low expectations that exist throughout society.

Examples of Valued Social Roles





Identify Roles

Activity

- In the space provided, identify the roles the person currently holds.
- Write down the roles the person has indicated they want for themselves, through expression or observation.
- Document the roles that are wanted by supporters for the person with disability.

Roles currently held

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Roles wanted by the person

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Roles wanted by supporters

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Vision

Now, reflect on the person's life and what is wanted for their future. We all dream of what our future could look like, and this is no different for a person with disability. Big dreams, high expectations and full lives cannot be achieved without a strong **Vision**. A Vision is a clear idea and positive dream of what is wanted for someone's life, including all the good things most people hold dear (refer to page 8 - The Good Things of Life).

A Vision can also include what is wanted for the person's employment future, as per Josh's story on the next page.





Example of Vision: Josh's Story

Watch

<https://bit.ly/JoshStoryVideo>

Having a Vision is important because it shifts thinking and expands possibilities, safeguarding from a focus on deficits, and raising expectations of what the person's life can look like and what they can achieve. In addition, a Vision provides clarity and keeps the person and their family and allies on track when they face barriers; it provides clarity around what is not wanted for the person as well.

Josh attended his local school in the regular class and completed his work experience with two businesses while at school. He is now volunteering at both businesses as well as running his own mail pick-up service.



Josh's story highlights how far-reaching the beneficial impacts of an inclusive education can be and how instrumental it is for families to have a strong Vision of the possibilities of the future



Clarity of Vision: A Compass for the Journey

Watch

<https://bit.ly/ClarityOfVision>

In this presentation, Wendy Stroeve talks about the importance of having a Vision. Wendy says that a good quality of life, in connection with family, friends and community, and with jobs, interests and opportunities, does not happen for people with disability by chance. But it may happen as a result of a clear Vision and determined action.



Create a Vision

Activity

If you haven't already, support the person with disability to develop their Vision. Again, ensure the person with disability is involved in this process as much as possible. Reflect on who they are as a unique person – their interests, likes and dislikes, gifts, qualities and contributions. Consider the roles they currently hold and those they wish to achieve, as well as how meaningful employment can be included in the Vision. Think about the following:

1. List the typical things people of a similar age enjoy and experience.

2. List 5 to 10 things you would like to see present in the everyday life of the person.

3. What would you like other people to know about the person for them to experience the Good Life?

4. If you were to give a message to the person about their future, what would the message be?

Further considerations:

- As well as involving the person with disability, involve other people, especially trusted family members and friends, to create a more well-rounded Vision.
- Refer to the Vision frequently as a reminder of what is wanted for the person.
- Review the Vision and update it, especially at key transition points in the person's life, e.g. leaving school, starting a job, moving into their own home etc.



Strategy – Share the Vision!

Hot Tip

A Vision can be used as a tool to help promote the best interests of the person. Share the Vision with people to communicate the high expectations for the person's life, including other family members, friends, school staff, Job Coaches and employers. Sharing the Vision with potential employers and anyone who is supporting the person to find a job will help those people understand what is wanted for the person with disability.

Now go to <https://bit.ly/CreatingVisionStatement> to create a Vision Statement.

Community connections

When identifying opportunities, start by looking to your community and the connections you have with the people around you. Initial opportunities often come through connections, and we can underestimate how many people we interact with on a daily basis. Consider the people you know in your community, the businesses you frequent, as well as people you know through the clubs, social and/or religious groups you are a part of.

If you are unable to rely on existing connections, intentionally building relationships with a local business that may present as an opportunity later down the track is a strategy families have used. Strategies that support the person being seen and known in the community can also be very powerful, and when the time comes to investigate opportunities further, the person is known and a relationship has already started to develop.

For more information, please see our resource *Developing Community Connections*. Of significance is an activity on page 27 called 'The Power of 10': <https://bit.ly/CommunityConnectionsBooklet>



Emma enjoying lunch with her co-workers



Tyler's keen interest in cars becomes a job

Tyler has a keen interest in cars. He used to come home from school and google all the local mechanics in the area to see whether they worked on performance vehicles. He's very much into performance vehicles, which to put that into layman's terms is *The Fast and the Furious*. He found a mechanic that was close to school and he asked me if I could do a drive-by one day after school. I agreed, and what eventuated was a drive-by that we did every Wednesday on the way to guitar lessons. Then that moved into going into the workshop and meeting the men there to see what they were working on. He would walk around the shop and take photos of the cars and say hello to everyone in the workshop. He did that every Wednesday for 18 months. He developed a great connection with the guys in the shop. Then one afternoon, he came running out with excitement and elation that I've never seen on his face before. He was so excited he was shaking as he said, "I've just had the most amazing day of my life... the owner asked me if I wanted a job!"

– Bec, Tyler's mum

He used to come home from school and google all of the local mechanics in the area to see whether they worked on performance vehicles.

– Bec



Discovery

Discovery is the process of uncovering who a person is more deeply by investigating their interests, contributions and conditions for success. People are more motivated, engaged and dedicated in a work role when it is related to a particular interest or passion, strength or skill that we possess.

Engage the person in conversations around their interests and passions. Or what have you or others observed that would indicate what these are? Gather observations from trusted people in the person's life. We all act differently in different environments, so what have others noticed that perhaps the family has not? Record the information gathered in the Discovery Record below.

More information on Discovery can be found in the section discussing Customised Employment (page 30).



Complete the Discovery Record

This is a **condensed version** of Resourcing Inclusive Communities' Discovery Record. The comprehensive Discovery Record can be found at <https://bit.ly/DiscoveryRecord>

Interests and contributions

In completing these sections, in addition to the person's input, consider with whom and where the person spends their time. Identify and speak with trusted people who care about the person, have high expectations and are on board with their Vision for a Good Life. For example, immediate family (parents, siblings), other non-immediate family members (grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins etc.) and friends, school members, community groups and places of faith.

My interests – This section focuses on gathering information about the person's interests in various settings. Looking at various settings can help identify interests that aren't immediately obvious. Record responses in the sections provided.

Consider the following questions:

1. Who does the person prefer to spend time with?
2. How does the person like to spend their time?
3. What do they get excited about or 'lights them up'?
4. What is important to them?
5. What kinds of things does the person do on their own, without being asked?

My interests:

Observations by family

| Person | Relationship | Observation |
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Observations by others

| Person | Relationship | Observation |
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My contributions – This section focuses on gathering information about the person's contributions, also referred to as skills. Again, look at various settings. Note, we all act differently in different settings!

Consider the following questions:

1. What is the person good at?
2. What are their best personal qualities?
3. What is the person's most reliable strengths?
4. What skills does the person have?
5. What skills have they recently developed?

My contributions:

Observations by family

| Person | Relationship | Observation |
|--------|--------------|-------------|
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Observations by others

| Person | Relationship | Observation |
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Conditions for success

My conditions – This section focuses on gathering information about the person's conditions for success, meaning what needs to be present or not present in a job. Conditions for success refers to:

- working style (individually or in group)
- environment (inside/outside)
- days, times and hours of work
- location
- work culture and opportunities (uniform, workplace social events)
- people (characteristics e.g. personality, age, gender, continuity of relationship)
- nature of tasks (completed or ongoing, range of correctness, pace, scheduling, work routine)
- conditions to be avoided.

What works well?

Observations by family

| Person | Relationship | Observation |
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Observations by others

| Person | Relationship | Observation |
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What doesn't work well?

Observations by family

| Person | Relationship | Observation |
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Observations by others

| Person | Relationship | Observation |
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Rachael working at her local markets, selling her range of products from her business, Fuican Create

Investigating Various Work Opportunities

With all the rich information gathered during the Discovery Process, you can start investigating employment opportunities in the community. It is important to have access to a range of work opportunities, to investigate and determine those roles a person enjoys, is good at and/or would like to be in for the short, medium and long term. Opportunities vary from volunteering and work trials, to work experience while in school and, of course, paid work at award wages.

With any experience think **'typical'**, to avoid environments that are segregated from the community.



Activity

Think typical! Consider:

1. Where are people of the same age working?
2. Where are people with similar interests working?
3. Where are people with similar skills working?

Every experience will have their value and provide the chance to:

- increase self-understanding, maturity, independence and self-confidence
- develop current skills and build new skills
- explore work-related interests
- build upon and expand social networks
- understand work environments and what employers expect of employees
- step into a paid work role, if not currently in one
- learn and understand what the person enjoyed, or in some cases what they did not enjoy and why
- understand what supports are required or might be required in the future.

The typical pathway for most people would be to progress through a role or experience over a period of time; this timeframe will vary from person to person. Support the person to identify how they can gain additional responsibilities within a role.

Employment Options:



Volunteering

Volunteering has many benefits. It can **bring meaning and purpose to our lives**, and increase self-esteem and wellbeing. As well as having a positive impact on your community, volunteering can also be a means to develop relationships in the community, as well as an opportunity to develop skills and work-related knowledge.

When a person steps into a volunteering role, consider how their experience can either progress or develop into a paid role, so the person isn't always in volunteer roles, without ever being compensated – a risk many people with disability face.

Work experience

Work experience provides a general introduction to the world of work and is an opportunity for people to engage in workplace learning. It is a chance for people to spend time in an industry or job that aligns with their interests and is useful in helping to understand what sort of work they might enjoy or not enjoy in the future. It also can help build confidence and connections to the community. Work experience is usually for a short period and is unpaid, and should reflect the person's age, interests and strengths. Work experience can be flexible and can be tailored to suit a person's needs.

Work experience can take place through school or can be organised independently by families.

Through school

Support a person to access work experience through school by starting the conversation early with the appropriate school staff. Young people typically have had successful work experience opportunities when families have started the conversation around work experience as early as Year 7. Share your Vision and expectations around the person accessing a 'typical' work experience that is related to their interests and skills. Understand the responsibilities of each party when it comes to organising the experience. The school, parent, person and host company all have a role to play. If work experience is offered to other students as part of the school's curriculum, it should be offered to all students. Often, school-based work experience takes place for one week during the senior years at school; however, it can be tailored to suit the person with disability. For example, taking place one day per week, a block of five days, or even with different employers.

Through families

Families typically have more success finding a work experience placement if they consider opportunities that align with the person's interests, contributions and conditions for success. Again, consider the connections you have in the community and undertake research to ensure that any potential business aligns with your expectations. When contacting a potential business, if you do not have a personal connection to the organisation, engage with someone in a position of authority, such as a manager, because they are often the decision makers. Lead with a positive introduction and discuss possible work experience placements for the person.



Josh working at a local business through his microenterprise, JoshWorx



Rhiannon's Work Experience

Watch

<https://bit.ly/RhiannonWorkExperience>

When Rhiannon was in Year 10, she completed a week of work experience at a local bakery in her community. This story highlights the importance of planning ahead, focusing on the student's strengths and interests, and also maximising existing community connections, all of which contribute to a successful experience for the young person.



Rhiannon at her local bakery during her work experience through school

Paid work

Paid work is a goal that most people aim for. Paid work allows the person to **make their own money and build financial independence** from their families.

Paid work can occur in an array of locations and environments. From small weekend jobs, such as refereeing local sport or working at a cafe, to varied roles in larger companies, such as retail or hospitality chains. Larger organisations often hire people for casual work and they are typical environments for people to start investigating work options.

Small businesses in the community are also a good option, as often families are known to the business already. Small businesses can also provide quieter working environments.

Additionally, a family business is a good option to investigate, where the owners and operators know the person well – their strengths, interests and the supports they might require.





Emma's Office Assistant Role

Emma has always had strong and effective supporters who have helped identify and advocate for many of the opportunities that Emma has been able to pursue. But ultimately, it has been Emma herself who has made the most of those opportunities.

For the past 10 years, Emma has happily excelled in her role as an office assistant with an international information technology company in Sydney's Darling Harbour. She works several days a week for four hours a day, travelling by bus and ferry to and from her rented apartment in the western suburbs where she lives independently, not far from her parents.

Emma's work duties include collecting mail, keeping the office work areas and kitchen clean and tidy, keeping the photocopiers stacked with paper, and other administrative tasks as required. This is not a token role. She is paid award wages and enjoys the same rights and status as her fellow workers. Emma is a very social person and thrives on social interaction. This was a key factor in seeking out a role for her in an office environment, and more importantly, why she has been so successful at her job over a long period of time.

Emma is a much-loved employee and colleague who is recognised for her hard work and commitment, and for her friendly and fun personality. Emma's work relationships have developed outside the workplace as well, regularly meeting up with former colleagues for coffee and lunch on the weekends. As a contributing member of the workforce and earning a salary, Emma has learned new skills, made new friends, developed her self-confidence and enhanced her life.

– Frances, Emma's Mum



"I like the feeling of being a part of a team and that I belong."
– Emma

Microenterprise

A microenterprise is a small business that is simple to start, requires minimal capital and has a viable purpose. It is a small business that is created for and around the person. It is a pathway to work that connects the person to their local community and is aligned with their skills, interests, passions and strengths, while also providing a service or fulfilling a need in the community.

The first important step in exploring a microenterprise is Discovery. This ensures the microenterprise matches the person's skills and interests, and is a good fit for the person. Next would be the Exploration stage, where the person would be supported to plan the business, develop a business model and explore product ideas. Then comes the exciting step of creating the microenterprise, where you would form the business, including choosing and registering a business name, deciding on a business structure, obtaining licences and insurances, and creating business products. The final step, Business Support, involves finding a great Job Coach who will work alongside the microenterprise business owner. The Job Coach can also be found earlier in the process and help with the previous steps of Discovery, Exploration and Creation. For more information see page 42 – Employment Supports.

For more information on setting up a small business, check your state or territory government's website.

Luca's Microenterprise: Watch Braille by Luca

<https://bit.ly/TheYoungEntrepreneurVideo>

In this video, Luca Weber, owner of Braille by Luca and his mother, Susanna Wagner, share their insights around creating and running Luca's enterprise.

One of the points the video highlights is the power that owning a microenterprise has to change perceptions. When Luca is out in the community, he always talks to people about his business. "Their demeanour totally changes. You can just see it in people's eyes," Susanna says. "It's like, oh, this is actually a young entrepreneur. Just seeing that makes a huge difference and makes it all worthwhile."



Business owner Luca showcasing goods at his local market from his microenterprise, Braille by Luca

Customised Employment: The Power of Personalisation

Customised Employment tailors a job or self-employment (including a microenterprise) to fit the interests, contributions and conditions for success of the person while meeting the needs of a business, or the market for a product or service. Customised Employment starts by thinking about the person, NOT the job. It is a negotiated relationship that starts with the skills of the person with disability and looks to meet a specific area of benefit to employers – meaning it is mutually beneficial for the business and the **Job Seeker**.

Customised Employment provides a set of strategies and principles used to support people with disability, especially those with significant disability, into real, meaningful work. Customised Employment has traditionally been used successfully with people with developmental disability, who often face low expectations about their capabilities, but the principles and strategies can be applied to any person.

Customised Employment starts with the strong fundamental principle that **everyone can work** in typical, paid employment; however, people with complex disabilities are often disadvantaged by traditional job-seeking practices. It looks at the contributions of the person, rather than how they compare to others.

There are three stages of the Customised Employment Process:



“So, we don’t talk about competition. We go in a different door and we say, ‘We’re interested in your business, the operation of your business, the kinds of things you do here.’ And then we’re looking for a way that the contributions of the person we’re representing fit that. It’s a different entry point.”

– Milton Tyree, US Customised Employment consultant

Discovery

Discovery is a ‘no fail’ process, which involves observing, listening and capturing who a person is; their strongest interests and contributions; what naturally motivates them in their everyday life; and using all this information as the foundation for a Customised Employment role. To get the most valuable information, it is critical to get to know people in various settings and try activities **where they are at their best.**

Discovery focuses on three aspects of a person’s life that provides rich information to achieve success, these being:

- a) interests towards aspects of the job market
- b) potential contributions to an employer, and
- c) conditions for success.

Generally speaking, this process can take approximately 40 hours of dedicated time and, most importantly, happens before developing plans to move forward.

Information discovered during this process can be captured in the Discovery Record. You would then use the information captured in the Discovery Record to create a more formalised document, known as a Discovery Profile.

Refer to the abridged Discovery Record (see page 18).

Customised Plan for Employment

The Customised Plan for Employment is a structured meeting that is used to identify the unique features of a job that fits the person. The Customised Plan for Employment connects Discovery and the Discovery Profile to Job Development. Where Discovery and the Discovery Profile aim to find out ‘Who is this person?’, the Customised Plan for Employment aims to find out ‘What will the person do for work?’

The Customised Plan for Employment meeting involves the coming together of the person, their family and other trusted people in the person’s life, including people who might have a connection to the community that aligns with an interest or contribution. The intent is to develop a blueprint for the job that is wanted for the person, with the Customised Plan for Employment:

- outlining things that work and do not work for the person
- providing a condensed version of the person’s conditions, interests and contributions
- identifying a task list against areas of work interest for the person
- creating a list of specific employers that may fit the person’s conditions and contributions
- developing actions.



Job Development

Job Development is usually undertaken by a **Job Developer**. A Job Developer is a person who facilitates and supports the Job Development process in Customised Employment.

There are five steps of Job Development:

1. Identifying and approaching employers using information gathered from the Customised Plan for Employment.
2. Getting an appointment with an employer, at a time that suits them.
3. Initial meeting with the employer – describing Customised Employment, as well as introducing the person through their **visual resume** (see page 37).
4. Following up with the employer:
Identifying employer needs by conducting an **Employer Needs and Benefit Analysis**. The analysis assists the employer to identify a specific job for the person by considering three possible areas of need:
 - (a) Unmet needs – tasks that need to get done or are not getting done in the way the employer would like;
 - (b) Tasks currently completed by staff that don't form part of their role and would be better performed by others;
 - (c) Tasks that strengthen the business
 - proposing and negotiating a job;
 - organising for the employer to meet the person.
5. Closing the negotiations.

Job Site Supports

Finding employment supports

Support can be used in each stage of the Customised Employment approach – through the facilitation of the Discovery Process (stage 1), through a Job Developer (stage 2), and through Job Support during employment (stage 3).

If there isn't a Customised Employment service provider in your area, you can use other supports to facilitate a Customised Employment approach. You can access a service provider such as disability employment service, staff members through an intermediary service, or directly hire your own staff. For more information on ways to find support see page 42.



Directly Hiring Staff

Hot Tip

Directly hiring your own staff allows for more control to implement a full Customised Employment approach. If you are considering going to a provider, it is important to understand how support will be offered in the context of Customised Employment. Critically examine the service offerings with a particular focus on how the provider will get to know the person, how they will support the person to find employment and how they will set up the person once in a role.

It is crucial to find the right supports to ensure success in each stage of the Customised Employment process. The right support should have a range of relevant skills and qualities, including but not limited to:



** Adapted from: <https://bit.ly/CustomisedEmploymentCompetencyModel>

Setting up for success

Setting up a person for success involves aligning the Job Support relationship between the Job Seeker, the Job Coach and the workplace. The consultant–team relationship is the best option, where Employers and the Job Coach collaborate to address the employee’s support requirements. The Job Coach is present in the workplace and acts as a consultant, building the capacity of the workplace to train and supervise the employee. The employee receives the same orientation, training and supervision from a typical workplace trainer. This allows the Job Coach to fade their support gradually, reducing dependency from both the workplace and the employee.

Job Coaches can have a heavy impact, which can come at a cost to the employee as it often attracts negative attention to the person. Consequences of this can include:

- the employee not being seen as fully in the role
- a lack of relationship between employer, other workers and the employee
- perpetuating people’s dependency and isolation on the Job Coach
- confusion in the workplace around the role of the Job Coach.

It is crucial that the Job Coach remains in the background, to avoid negative attention and ensure the employee is seen as a typical employee and not a client of a service. Still, the Job Coach needs to remain close enough to see and hear what’s happening. For more resources on Customised Employment, visit <https://bit.ly/CustomisedEmploymentResources>



Understanding an Industry or Business

It is important to explore which prospective industries or companies to approach, ensuring they align with the person's unique makeup. Be proactive in approaching those industries/businesses that might present as an opportunity. Follow up and don't wait for them to contact you. It can often take persistence to drive an idea or conversation forward into real action.

Information interviews

Information interviews can be a useful tool to gain general information about the industry. An information interview would provide information about the culture of the industry or business, the type of work that is completed, the processes to complete the work and the way the industry connects with the community. For example, the person might want to work at a radio station but doesn't have experience or information on that industry. Knowing and understanding information from an information interview would then provide greater confidence in contacting employers in the field of radio work.

To gain an understanding of the industry, you might consider having conversations with family, friends, school staff, colleagues, or anyone with relevant knowledge of the industry. The primary purpose of an information interview is to understand more about their business operations and the industry, not ask for a job.

It is worth noting that when conducting information interviews, particular attention should be given to the culture of the industry or business. Workplace culture refers to the beliefs, customs and behaviours of the people within a work environment and can include considerations around how employees interact, the managerial style, methods of conflict resolution and the values of the organisation – such as respect, trust and open communication. Not only does workplace culture help with engagement, productivity and satisfaction, but it also has a large impact on how connected people are in the workplace.

Here are some questions you might ask in an information interview:

- What type of work do you do?
- What does a typical day look like?
- How much turnover does the business/industry have?
- What is the workplace culture like?
- What are the opportunities to get to know colleagues outside of work?
- Do you have any tips for young people who want to get into this industry?

Or any other question that helps inform the person if it will be the right fit for them.

Conducting research on the business

Understand the business's values and purpose – the values of the organisation should align with your family's values and expectations of the workplace. Better understand the business by visiting their website and social media pages.

If there is a particular business the person is interested in, do you have a **connection to this business** through your network?

Family members should take the time to approach the business in a professional way and **ask questions** at a time that suits them.

Understand the tasks that are completed within the business or industry. What do the employees do in their roles? You might consider asking:

1. Can you tell me a little about what kinds of tasks are involved in your work here?
2. Are there tasks here that need doing but staff find hard to get to?

There are two main types of tasks and they are:

Core tasks – Tasks with repeating cycles; for example, engaging with customers, data entry or food preparation. Core tasks are often easier to teach because of their repetitive nature and allow for frequent opportunities to practice and fine tune correctness. As a result, the person will typically master these tasks quicker.

Infrequent tasks – Infrequent tasks are tasks that people might do once or twice a shift, or once or twice a week; for example, counting stock at the beginning of a work day, unloading a truck on delivery, or working with a co-worker to create documents. Infrequent tasks will sometimes require more time to teach because of time lapse between task cycles.

Identify those tasks the person can complete within the role and those tasks where they might require support.

If you have visited a workplace, **what observations** have you made about the business that would help inform how the person could contribute to the workplace? Consider the size and scale of the business and reflect on the person's conditions for success – will this environment meet those requirements?

Look through the eyes of the employer and try to notice something they haven't. Can you suggest a **valued work role** the person can hold within the business?



George working in the kitchen of a cafe on campus at his local university

Approaching an Employer

Positive pitch

Once you and the person have identified a few local businesses or opportunities (refer back to your list of contacts) you would like to explore further, it's a good idea to develop what you will say when you approach them. This is referred to as **developing a pitch**.

A positive pitch is similar to a positive introduction, but more formal and 'professional'. A pitch speaks to the person's strengths and skills, but also provides information regarding previous work experience, what the person would bring to a working environment and why the employer should hire them. A pitch does not beg for an opportunity, nor does it 'ask for a favour'.

Approaching local businesses and employers where there might be an opportunity can be daunting for the person and those who are supporting them, so it is best to always be prepared with what you want to say and how you want to say it.

A successful pitch catches the prospective employer's attention and responds positively and realistically to any questions they may have.



Create a Positive Pitch

Activity

Start creating a positive pitch by addressing the following:

1. Introduce the person (refer to positive introduction on page 10).

2. Describe some of their skills or positive personality traits related to the job they are seeking.

3. List examples of the types of tasks they can offer an employer and how the company will benefit.

4. Give an example of a recent success of the person.

5. The next step – Are you seeking further experience, advice, or a formal interview for the person?

6. Thank the employer for their time.

Developing a visual resume

A visual resume tells a visual story of the person. It is a pictorial representation of the talents, skills and experiences of the person and the tasks they can complete. A visual resume presents the person to an employer at their best and enables the employer to envision the person within their business. There are five key components to a visual resume:

1. An introductory page for the person.
2. A photo of the person.
3. Images of the person competently performing tasks related to past employment, hobbies and talents.
4. Detailed descriptions of their experiences and contributions.
5. A list of tasks that the person can complete, adjusted for the type of business being contacted.

As an example, see Jack Kruger's Visual Resume: <https://bit.ly/JackKrugerVisualResume>



Activity

Start a Visual Resume

Start thinking about what information could be included in a visual resume.

When has the person been highly motivated to contribute – at home, at school, or in the community?

Consider the images you might have that convey the person's motivation in those settings and which demonstrate them competently completing a task.

Alternatives to interviews

For most people, interviewing can be arduous and lengthy; therefore, investigate if there is an alternative option to the formal interview process that will best support the person to more successfully demonstrate who they are as a unique person, and the skills and qualities they can bring to a role.

Alternatives:

- Suggest the person have a short, unpaid work trial within the organisation.
- Submit a short video documenting their strengths.
- Have the person demonstrate a task.
- Can the person have the questions ahead of time, to rehearse and practice their answers?
- Can the person bring a support person?

If research has been conducted, you have visited the environment and established a relationship with the appropriate owners/managers, it is more likely they will accommodate any adjustments that might be required. This draws on the importance of cultivating those connections you have with the community rather than going in cold.





Watch

Example of an Alternative to Interviewing: Gus's Story

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=asR3izwq-3o>

Gus works at CSIRO as a research technician. It is an important role, which involves maintaining stocks of sterile glassware for use by research scientists, as well as other roles that are critical to the compliance and safe operations of the lab. When interviewing for this role, CSIRO was flexible in its approach and gave consideration to alternatives to interviews. Initially, a relaxed and informal interview was arranged in the CSIRO tearoom; however, Gus still found this process daunting and uncomfortable. CSIRO identified that an alternative to an interview would be better for Gus and the interview moved from the tearoom to the lab, where Gus could see some of the tasks he would be required to do and "he jumped straight in there," according to the Principal Research Scientist, Alisha Anderson. CSIRO's creative approach to interviewing allowed Gus to demonstrate his competencies and skills.

Video and image credit: Imagine More



Traditional interviews

While the interview process isn't always ideal for a person with disability, we acknowledge that for some people an alternative to interviewing may not be an option. The interview process should be set up in a way that is appropriate and makes sense to the person with disability. Support your family member by working through the following steps.

First, it is essential the person understands the job they have applied for and the potential tasks they will be completing. Review and discuss the information you already know based on the job advertisement, job description and essential criteria. To help build further confidence, discuss why they were chosen for an interview. What essential criteria did they meet? In addition, the person should find out as much as they can about the company, based on its website, social media pages, and asking questions if the opportunity arises.



Second, support your family member to prepare and practice their responses to questions that might be asked. Questions might include:

- Why did you apply for the job?
- Why should you be chosen for the job?
- How do your abilities and qualities meet the needs of the job?

Third, it is important to discuss with the person the information they want to provide to the employer about their disability and how they will answer any questions about their disability.

Fourth, know your family member's rights. Potential employers can only ask questions about the person's disability as it relates to doing the job and working safely in the working environment. They can also ask the person how they think the workplace could be changed or modified to support them to undertake the job.

Examples of questions employers can ask:

- Will you need any special work arrangements so you can do your job?
- Will you need any changes to be made here in the workplace?
- Do you have any ideas about good ways to do your job?

The employer cannot ask the person questions about their lifestyle, their health, or general questions about the person's disability. People have the right to keep their personal information private and a potential employer cannot talk to anyone else about a person's disability without their approval first.

Examples of questions employers cannot ask:

- Do you take medication?
- How many times a year do you go to the doctor?
- Have you ever lost another job because of your disability?

If an employer is pushing back strongly and continually raising concerns throughout the interview, they are most likely not going to be a supportive employer. Support and prepare your family member to respond to the situation by being respectful, acknowledging that it probably won't be a great fit and thanking them for their time.

Rachael in the studio,
creating items to be
sold as part of her
microenterprise,
Fuican Create



Accepting a Job Offer

Negotiating the terms of employment

Negotiating the terms of employment is a common part of the process of accepting a job offer. Revisit the conditions for success and communicate these to the employer. If the employer does not accept the conditions proposed, consider whether the offer is acceptable. It is important to ensure you are not setting up the person for failure – if the condition is one that is vital to ensure the person's success in the role, thank the employer for the opportunity in considering the person and decline the offer.

Workplace adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are changes to work processes, practices or environments, to ensure employees with disability can complete their job, free from barriers. If a person requires reasonable adjustments in order to be treated equally or to comply with a particular employment requirement, then failure by an employer to provide those adjustments constitutes unlawful discrimination on the basis of disability (*Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) s 4 (definition of 'reasonable adjustment'), ss 5, 6*).

A 'reasonable' adjustment is one that would not impose an 'unjustifiable hardship' on the employer. They may include workplace practice adjustments, workplace environment adjustments and assistive technology. Examples include:

Workplace practice adjustments:

- Provide flexible working arrangements e.g. flexible start and finish times, working from home, working part time, working in different locations.
- Change how information is communicated in the workplace.
- Provide a support person.

Workplace environment adjustments:

- An occupational therapist assessment, ergonomic desk and chair assessment.
- Braille signage in communal work locations e.g. meeting rooms, photocopier area, kitchen.
- A parking space close to the work location for an employee who uses a wheelchair or has mobility issues.

Assistive technology

- Screen readers.
- Screen enlargement applications.
- Voice recognition and transcription programs.

Although these adjustments are designed to support the person with disability, they can also benefit the larger range of employees.

Refer to the Fair Work Ombudsman to understand work rights and responsibilities further.

Agreeing on job responsibilities

Make sure there is clarity regarding the job duties the person will undertake as part of their employment. Do the tasks align to the person's strengths and interests? Can the person complete these tasks? What support will they need to complete the tasks? Will the tasks align with the person's conditions for success?

Preparing to Start a Job



Marusha in her role as a childcare educator

Training and orientation

Discuss the training and orientation the person will receive when they start the role. The person should receive the same orientation, training and supervision other employees receive from a typical workplace trainer.

Ask if it is possible to obtain training information prior to starting the role. This allows the person to start to learn the information they need to do their job on their first day of work. Consider attending the workplace and observing how people typically undertake those tasks. Ask to take a video or write notes so this can be conveyed to the person. Take note of the steps involved in the task. What training will the person need to effectively master the task? Consider how the training would work best for the person – are they a visual learner or do they prefer to have verbal instruction? Having this information allows time for observation, reflection and planning.

Visiting the workplace

To help the person familiarise themselves with the environment prior to starting the role, visit the workplace during typical work hours. While there, introduce the person positively to key members of staff via an introduction from a manager or business owner. Consider the other important aspects of the workplace that it would be helpful for the person to know ahead of time, e.g. location of lunch/break room and bathrooms, and where they will be working specifically, if known.

This visit also provides the opportunity to identify any adjustments or supports that might be required, which haven't previously been considered.

Employment Supports

Natural supports

Natural supports are supports provided by people within the working environment – by a manager or a co-worker who is doing, or has done the same job. This is the typical approach to supporting any person into a new role. Typically, when someone starts a new job, training and support is provided by colleagues within the organisation who are familiar with the responsibilities of the role.

Look for opportunities where natural supports can be provided. This might only occur in some aspects of the role initially, but over time, the person should be supported more by the natural supports in the work environment. The balance of natural supports and that of a Job Coach should make sense to the person based on the type and level of support required within the role. Further, the timeframe for these supports to change and eventually fade will be different for each person.

Finding the right paid supports

There are three common ways to find supports: (1) Directly hire staff; (2) Through an intermediary service; (3) Through an employment service provider.

Finding the right Job Coach is essential for the employee to achieve success in their work role. The right person will be a good 'match' and bring experience, skills and values, as well as new ideas and interests, which can enrich the person's life. Support staff can also come from many different backgrounds, not just from disability-specific services.

The Job Coach should be working in consultation with the employer to address the support requirements of the employee. Using this approach means an employer and the Job Coach act as a team to address the employee's support requirements. While supporting the person, the Job Coach should also act as a mentor to the employer on how to best support the person in the workplace. The Job Coach remains present in the background, ensuring the employee starts their role with the same typical orientation, training and supervision. This allows the Job Coach to fade their support over time without the risk of the person's job ending due to dependence on the Job Coach.

Funding supports can play an important role in the lives of people with disability and their families by providing financial assistance to access individualised support. When accessing any form of support or service, reflect on the person's Vision (refer to page 13 for more information on Vision). **The funding should assist in supporting the person's employment goals and support the person to reach their Vision of a Good Life.**



Shared Vision is Critical

Hot Tip

It is important to note that no amount of funding will provide for everything a person requires. Ongoing support from family, friends and close allies, who share a common Vision with, and for the person, to live a typical, Good Life is critical, if not more important than funding, in supporting the person.



Story

Adam's Job Coach Role

Adam, who is pictured here with Josh, was found through word of mouth in Josh's local community. Adam was introduced to the family through a former support teacher at Josh's school. In finding the right support for Josh, Josh's family wanted someone who would fit in with their family, and someone who would support their Vision for Josh. Josh's mum, Vanessa, shares that her experience was that people who may have been in the disability industry for many years may have had lots of experience, but also had their own perspective of what life should look like for a person with a disability. Vanessa found that people who are not necessarily disability trained are often the best fit because of their openness to adapt and focus on supporting the person based on their individual support requirements. Vanessa knew that Adam was a good match for Josh, as he was someone who shared similar interests, responded well and positively to Josh, and was similar in age to Josh. When it comes to supporting Josh at work, Adam knows when to fade in and out, when to 'step up or step back'. Adam understands his role and does not interfere with Josh undertaking his tasks within the business, stepping in when Josh needs support.



Josh, owner of JLS Mail Link, with his Job Coach, Adam

Capturing the learning

With any work opportunity explored, you should consider implementing a system or method to capture the learning from the experience. You want the person to be able to identify what they enjoyed about the experience and why they enjoyed it, or if they didn't enjoy the experience, what they didn't enjoy about the opportunity and why. It is also helpful to receive input and evaluation from others involved in the person's work experience, to ensure a well-rounded understanding is captured. You want the information provided to be detailed and evaluative, not just 'they had a lovely time'.

Example of capturing the learning

In this experience, Rhiannon worked at a local bakery where she had several responsibilities. For each responsibility, a description was written of that specific task. There are stars that Rhiannon used to rate how much she enjoyed the activity, ranging from 0 to 5. The family could then reflect on the experience and ascertain what aspects of the work experience were enjoyed or not enjoyed and why, taking this learning into planning for future employment opportunities.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Baking tasks | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- folding pasties- painting pies- cutting shapes and placing on pies- salting and mixing dough | Star rating:  | Scale rating: <ul style="list-style-type: none">0 – extremely disliked1 – slightly disliked2 – neither liked nor disliked3 – slightly enjoyed4 – highly enjoyed5 – Absolutely loved |
|  | | | |

Capture your own learnings:

Tasks:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Rating:



Scale:

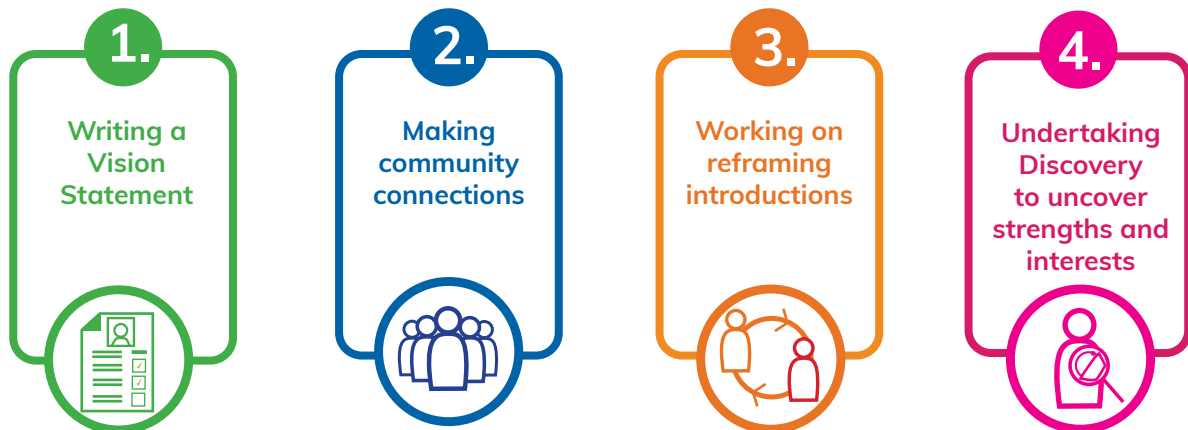
- 0 – Extremely disliked
- 1 – Slightly disliked
- 2 – Neither liked nor disliked
- 3 – Slightly enjoyed
- 4 – Highly enjoyed
- 5 – Absolutely loved

What's Next?

One step at a time

When it comes to supporting your family member into employment, it is important to take it **one step at a time!** Keep these steps somewhere visible, as a reminder of what you are endeavouring to work towards.

Some common first steps families have taken are:



A parent's advice

My advice to parents who are looking where to start their journey with their young person is to have a look at their interests. They will more than likely tell you or show you what these are. Support them and guide them through those interests. You never know where things are going to lead.

That's what we did with Tyler. He showed from a really young age that he loved cars. He wanted to stand on highways and watch cars. Even at the age of six he could pinpoint the sound of an engine and knew what kind of car it was. It was his keen interest.

I think if you really hone in on those special interests, you can actually achieve amazing things with your young person and you just never know where it will lead. Look at the people who created the iPhone. I'm sure they were fiddling around with different things – maybe it was cups on strings. You just never know where these amazing talents are going to lead our young people.

– Bec, Tyler's mother

Watch Tyler's story in this YouTube playlist: <https://bit.ly/TylersStoryPlaylist>

Continue developing employment goals

Developing employment-related goals is a fantastic way to help the person and their supports remain focused on the objective of meaningful employment in the community. Setting goals helps motivate the person and their support to seek out employment opportunities, it provides a measure of accountability and a means of tracking progress, and it also ensures everyone is on the same page and working towards the same goals.

It can be helpful to refer to the person's Vision (see page 13), if they have one, as a reminder of what is wanted for them.



Example: Jacob's Vision



Vision

Jacob's employment goals enhance his connection to the community, give him financial security and ultimately lead him to the independence of having his own home in the future.



Goal

To be supported to continue to gain the necessary skills to maintain my valued role as an employee in my casual job 9–15 hours per week. I want to be seen as someone who is able to give back to the community by working; this is very important to me. I would like to work towards the goal of extending my work hours to include another 4-hour shift.

It can also be useful to consider how larger employment goals can be broken down into various short-term goals to work towards. Once employment-related goals have been developed, start thinking about the steps needed to work towards them, referring to the relevant sections of this resource as required. Also, proactively consider any potential barriers that may be faced when pursuing goals so you can start to address possible obstacles or, if necessary, engage appropriate supports.

Once goals have been reached, ensure new ones are developed so the person is always progressing and accomplishing valued employment roles.

Return to any steps

The steps in this resource are not intended to be addressed or completed only once. Families can return to any of the steps when needed. Remember, people should have the opportunity for learning and development throughout their life. If someone is in employment, there should be progression once the person is skilled in the role. For example, once they have mastered current tasks there should be the opportunity to learn new skills or tasks.

Advocacy supports

If you would like to further discuss any information contained in this resource or if you are facing barriers, please contact Resourcing Inclusive Communities/Family Advocacy for free and confidential information, support and advice.

Glossary

Definition of terms

- **Customised Employment**

An employment strategy that creates access to individualised, community-based employment for people with disability. In Customised Employment, the interests, contributions, and conditions for success for a person are met, while also addressing the unmet needs of an employer.

- **Conditions for Success**

What needs to be present or not present in an environment to make it successful for the person.

- **Disability Employment Services**

Programs funded by the federal Department of Social Services, which assist people with disability to find employment by providing pre-employment and on-the-job support.

- **Discovery**

A process that involves getting to know the person before developing plans for employment. Discovery involves spending time with the person and learning who the person is.

- **Discovery Profile**

A formal document that highlights information compiled about a person during the Discovery Process.

- **Employer Needs and Benefit Analysis**

An analysis of potential job tasks identified with the employer, while considering the person's contributions, task list and conditions for success.

- **Job Coach**

A term used in Customised Employment to describe someone who supports a person in employment.

- **Job Developer**

A person who facilitates and supports the Job Development process in Customised Employment.

- **Job Seeker**

A term used to describe the person who is looking for employment.

- **Microenterprise**

A small business that is simple to start, requires minimal capital and has a viable purpose.

- **Valued Social Role**

Positive roles that are highly valued by society.

- **Vision Statement**

A written account that contains a clear idea and positive dream of what is wanted for the person's life.

Developed by:



Email info@ric.org.au
Phone 1800 774 764
Website ric.org.au

Resourcing Inclusive Communities is an initiative of



Email communications@family-advocacy.com
Phone 1800 620 588
Website family-advocacy.com

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