

# The Value of Employment for People with Disabilities Around the World



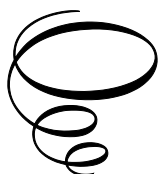
# The Value of Employment for People with Disabilities Around the World:

*The Dignity of Work*

Edited by

Renáta Tichá, Brian Abery and Jan Šiška

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## INTRODUCTION

RENÁTA TICHÁ, BRIAN ABERY  
AND JAN ŠIŠKA

Employment is conceptualized as a basic human and civil right under the Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD 2006) as well as under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA 1990). Working for a company, government organization, or a family business, being self-employed, volunteering to gain experience, and participating in an internship, apprenticeship, or work-based learning experience are among the opportunities youth and adults should have available to engage in employment or related activities that have the potential to lead to a future job. Having expertise in a specific field, be that growing plants, cooking, creating art, assembling electronics, caring for patients, or teaching others, provides people with self-efficacy, self-respect and dignity as they contribute to both their community and society.

At a global level, the majority of people with disabilities are not afforded the same opportunities for employment and the prerequisites for employment (i.e., education, training, mentoring) as their non-disabled peers. In addition, people with disabilities face a host of barriers to employment, including negative stereotypes, ableism, discrimination, lack of preparedness of employers to provide support in the workplace, lack of access to transportation, and many other challenges. People with intellectual disabilities and those with limited mobility, as well as women with disabilities, experience even fewer employment opportunities than others (USAID 2022; European Economic and Social Committee 2018).

This book was written to promote the voices of people with disabilities, their family members, and those who support them to become an integral part of the global workforce. The book was initially conceptualized as part of an online international forum entitled *The Dignity of Work* organized by the editors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal was to engage international partners in a meaningful conversation on how to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities locally and globally.

Through the forum, we learned that when people with disabilities lost opportunities for work during the pandemic, maybe even more important than losing a paycheck was their loss of the social networks they had become a part of. This finding aligns with the concept and experiences with employment as part of overall well-being and being a valued member of a community.

The chapters that comprise the resulting book have been written to document the situations of people with disabilities who are employed, seeking employment, or preparing for or retiring from employment across ten countries (Australia, Bhutan, Czech Republic, Japan, Russia, Spain, Tanzania, Ukraine, USA, and Vietnam) and five continents and to make a case for a positive shift in the employment landscape.

We are firm believers in inclusive employment and have worked extensively to support this outcome in the US, the Czech Republic and internationally. Many of the chapters in this book reflect this perspective. At the same time, we also included chapters that describe work situations that may not reflect the most progressive thinking with respect to the employment of people with disabilities but rather reflect the reality of a particular geographic location and system. Chapter topics range from describing the employment situations of people with disabilities in the covered countries, including the laws in place to support their employment, available vocational rehabilitation, and transition services, to specific programs and cases of individuals currently employed, preparing for or retiring from employment in their communities. This diversity of chapter topics illustrates that increasing access to meaningful, inclusive employment needs to be approached from several angles, including a change at the systems as well as grassroots levels.

In a way, this book is written to encourage scholars in education and social policies, organizations representing persons with disabilities, those who own and direct companies and organizations, as well as those in labor ministries and authorities responsible for disability support services in employment to take a bigger step toward creating intentional opportunities for people with disabilities to work in their places alongside others, not as an act of charity, but to afford people with disabilities the dignity of work we all deserve.

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- USAID (2022). Approaches to increasing employment and quality of employment among youth with disabilities. Evidence and good practices paper.

# CREATING MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES USING A CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT APPROACH

TIM RIESEN AND AUBREY SNYDER

## *Introduction to Ty*

*Ty is a 26-year-old individual who has Down's syndrome and hearing impairments. Ty has a cochlear implant and communicates verbally and through an assistive communication application on his iPad. He lives with his parents and likes to spend time with his sister and two neighborhood friends. Ty takes public transportation that his parents coordinate. He loves playing video games on his iPad, taking his dog on walks, playing sports, putting together puzzles, and going out to eat. Ty is not very social and does not like it when people engage in too much conversation or social activities with him.*

*Ty is interested in becoming employed and has had three work-based learning experiences during high school: one at a local grocery store stocking shelves, one at a café bussing and preparing food, and one at the local recreation center doing janitorial work. Ty indicated that he enjoyed the people he worked with at the café and enjoyed the benefits of working at the recreation center, where he was able to access the gym and pool. He did not like talking to customers at the café or the grocery store. Ty enjoys work when he knows what is expected of him and can follow a checklist of items to do.*

*The customized employment process will be used to help Ty obtain competitive integrated employment. Ty will engage in customized employment with support from an employment specialist named Roy, his parents, and other people familiar with him.*

## **Introduction: the importance of employment**

Article 27 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes that people with disabilities have the right to be competitively paid for employment within inclusive and accessible environments in jobs of their choice (United Nations 2006). The fundamental right to work is important because roughly 15% (one billion) of the world's population have a disability (WHO 2021), and these individuals experience greater socioeconomic inequalities than people without disabilities (Erickson et al. 2022; Krueger et al. 2019; Perez-Hernandez et al. 2019). In fact, 28.7% of people with disabilities in the European Union (Hammersly 2020) and 26% of people with disabilities in the United States (Erickson et al. 2022) experience poverty.

A key contributor to socioeconomic inequalities for individuals with disabilities around the world is pervasive and ongoing unemployment and underemployment. The most recent employment estimates for individuals with disabilities are not promising; the employment rate in the United States is 31.4% (DOL 2022), in the European Union 50.8% (Grammenos 2020), and in Australia is 53% (Australian Institute on Health and Welfare 2020). The United Nations (2007) reports that employment for individuals with disabilities in developing countries is even more disparate, with 80 to 90% of working-age individuals with disabilities not working. To compound the issue, even when people with disabilities are employed, they tend to work fewer hours than their counterparts without disabilities (Australian Institute on Health and Welfare 2020; US DOL 2022).

Working in competitive integrated employment (CIE) not only helps mitigate the socioeconomic disparities people with disabilities experience but improves an individual's psychological and physical health (Taylor et al. 2022) and quality of life (Kober and Eggleton 2005; Ra et al. 2016; Vlachou 2021; Xu et al. 2005). Research suggests that individuals in CIE, as opposed to segregated work environments, (a) engage in community activities more frequently (Blick et al. 2016), (b) work more hours (Cimera 2011), and (c) experience more personal independence and self-determination (Schall et al. 2020; Shogren et al. 2015). Given the importance of employment and the perennially poor global employment outcomes of people with disabilities, it is increasingly important for policymakers and practitioners to authorize and utilize validated strategies that support individuals with disabilities to find and maintain meaningful CIE. This chapter will describe how customized employment (CE) can be used to support individuals with the most significant disabilities to find and

maintain CIE. The chapter will provide a rationale for using a CE approach, a definition of CE, and an overview of the CE process, including discovery and customized job development, as well as include a case study illustrating the CE process.

## **The need for a customized employment approach**

Prior to the 1980s, many individuals with disabilities, particularly those with the most significant disabilities, had limited support options to pursue competitive integrated employment. These individuals were often labeled as “unemployable” and received day support in segregated work and non-work settings. Segregated work settings were designed to provide people with the most significant disabilities with prevocational support. These segregated work settings used a “train-place” paradigm for prevocational and vocation preparation that stipulated that an individual with a disability demonstrate specific prevocational and/or vocational skills before engaging in competitive integrated work. Such settings did not provide applied employment experiences. Recipients of employment support were all too often taught work-related tasks and skills that were simulated and did not resemble community-based jobs. This approach led to people with disabilities acquiring vocational skills that did not generalize to actual work settings and which did not prepare them for the demands of community-based employment. As a result, many people with the most significant disabilities never fully participated in paid competitive integrated employment.

Supported employment (SE) emerged as an alternative to the “train-place” model in the 1980s and became the predominant model for facilitating individuals with disabilities to obtain and maintain competitive integrated employment. SE abandoned the “train-place” paradigm and adopted a “place-train” approach, recognizing that the best place for an individual with a disability to learn employment skills is in a paid integrated work environment. To help a jobseeker obtain and maintain employment, an array of support, including ongoing employment assessment, job development, and worksite support, is provided to the jobseeker to facilitate employment in competitive supply and demand-driven jobs. Although the overall efficacy of SE for individuals with disabilities is well documented (Wehman et al. 2007; Wehman et al. 2018), this approach did not achieve its intended outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities (Inge et al. 2018; Mank et al. 1998). Individuals with the most significant disabilities were still disproportionately served in segregated work and non-work

settings in the US (Winsor 2021) and the EU (Bell 2020), and many individuals perceived to be unemployable and therefore not offered employment in competitive integrated contexts as a service option (Migliore et al. 2011; McMahon and Chan 2011).

Because people with the most significant disabilities were not provided opportunities to seek competitive integrated employment and their consistently poor employment rates, policymakers and advocates in the US developed strategies to customize employment for people with the most significant disabilities; CE subsequently emerged in the early 2000s when the US Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) announced grants for strategic planning and implementation activities to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities accessing American job centers. The initial definition of CE in the funding announcement described this approach as a blend of services and support that included job development or restructuring strategies that lead to jobs being customized and individually negotiated to fit the needs of individuals with disabilities (Federal Register 2002). More recently, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA, 2014) defined CE as “competitive integrated employment, for an individual with a significant disability, that is based on an individualized determination of the strengths, needs, and interests of the individual with a significant disability, and is designed to meet the specific abilities of the individual with a significant disability and the business needs of the employer” (29 USC § 705(7), 1634).

## **What is customized employment?**

As outlined in US statutory definitions, CE is conceptualized as an individual process to support a jobseeker with a disability to find and maintain negotiated jobs. CE embodies the core principles of supported employment by embracing the expectation that all people can work regardless of the severity or perception of disability. It builds on the strengths of supported employment by requiring an individualized employment process tailored to the jobseeker’s unique strengths and capabilities. CE is a no-fail approach that seeks to establish a mutual relationship between the jobseeker and employer by carving, modifying, restructuring, or negotiating a specific job. The approach uses interconnected processes that include discovery, customized job development, and ongoing support. CE processes are designed to help identify the strengths, interests, and needs of the jobseeker while also examining the needs of the local employer. After compiling information about the jobseeker and employer, an employment specialist or

other representative negotiates a customized job with an employer. For a job to be truly customized, there are a number of essential practices that practitioners must consider. Inge and colleagues (2018) conducted focus groups with CE practitioners and experts to identify some of these critical practices for CE. Table 1 outlines twelve core CE practices and the rationale for these practices as outlined by Inge and her colleagues. These 12 core practices reinforce the fact that CE implementation is process-driven. The process begins with in-person meetings with the jobseeker and others familiar with the unique strengths, interests, and skills of the individual. The process also requires a series of practices that are designed to uncover employment-related strengths, interests, and skills, including practice observations of the jobseeker performing familiar and unfamiliar tasks at home and community settings and opportunities to visit businesses that match the jobseeker's strengths and interests. Once interests are confirmed, the jobseeker is given opportunities to engage in a job-related task in a business setting. The purpose of engaging in applied tasks is to confirm that each core task and routine aligns with the information obtained during discovery. If the task and routines do not align with strengths and interests, additional observations and informational interviews are scheduled until a negotiated job description can be developed. A customized job is created at the end of the process.

**Table 1. Core CE practices and rationale**

Core Practice	Rationale
1. Physically meet at a location of the jobseeker's choice.	Jobseekers with disabilities are often observed in environments that are segregated or isolated. Meeting in a location of choice, such as the individual's home, allows for applied observations and identification of support and resources.
2. Build rapport and get to know the jobseeker.	Getting to know the jobseeker occurs over multiple meetings and observation in a variety of settings. This process is the starting point to learn about the jobseeker's interests as they relate to employment.



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3. Mindfully listen to the jobseeker.	Listening to the jobseeker helps eliminate assumptions about the jobseeker's interests and skills.
4. Identify the jobseekers' interests, skills, and abilities.	Identifying interests, skills, and abilities requires observations, interviews, and mindful listening. This process requires the jobseeker to engage in various related environments to confirm interests.
5. Conduct in-depth interviews with family and friends concerning the jobseeker's interests, skills, and abilities.	Interviews with others familiar with the jobseeker help uncover skills and interests that may not have emerged during initial meetings with the jobseeker.
6. Observe the jobseeker in daily activities in a number of different community settings.	Observation of the jobseeker engaging in activities helps identify interests. This process can be particularly helpful for jobseekers with limited experience or who have limited verbal communication.
7. Arrange for the jobseeker to observe local businesses that potentially match the jobseeker's interests, skills, and abilities.	Providing opportunities for the jobseeker to observe local businesses that align with strengths and interests helps confirm these interests.
8. Conduct informational interviews with employers at local businesses that are representative of the jobseeker's interests, skills, and abilities.	Informational interviews with businesses give the jobseeker additional space to confirm interests and perhaps lead to a customized job by confirming business needs.

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9. Observe the jobseeker engaging in job-related tasks.	Observations of the jobseeker engaged in tasks that align with strengths and interests help determine if the jobseeker has the skills for the job.
10. Assist the jobseeker in identifying a work experience(s) to refine/identify job interests, skills, and abilities.	Providing the jobseeker with applied work experiences helps validate and refine the jobseeker's interest.
11. Collaborate with the jobseeker, family, and friends in confirming the jobseeker's interests, job interests, skills and abilities.	Information gathered from the jobseeker's experiences is documented using a vocational profile. Individuals familiar with the jobseeker help verify interests and plan for a customized job.
12. Negotiate a customized job description.	Negotiating job duties that are unmet in a business is a foundational CE practice.

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Note. Adapted from Inge, K., Graham, C., Brooks-Lane, N., Wehman, P., and Griffin, C. 2018. "Defining Customized Employment as an Evidence-Based Practice: The Results of a Focus Group Study. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 48, 155-166. DOI:10.3233/JVR-180928

One of the recent problems that emerged in customized employment service delivery is the inconsistent implementation of both discovery and customized job development. Researchers have highlighted significant gaps between what practitioners identify as critical CE activities and how well these CE activities are being implemented (Inge et al. 2021). Moreover, there are ongoing calls for rehabilitation practices, such as CE, to be evidence-based. The inconsistent implementation of CE practices and calls for practitioners to use evidence-based practices catalyzed researchers to operationalize and validate the discovery and customized job development process. CE consultants (Hall et al. 2018; Hall and Keeton 2019) and researchers (Riesen et al. 2021a; Riesen et al. 2021b) are currently collaborating to develop and validate fidelity scales for discovery (e.g., the discovery fidelity scale (DFS) developed by Hall et al. 2018) and customized job development (e.g., the customized job development fidelity

scale (JDFS) developed by Hall and Keeton 2019) as a first step in this process. Both the DFS and the JDFS contain fidelity tenets for systems and service level CE. The DFS systems section examines systems-level practices such as authorization and access, finance, and quality requirements for discovery providers. The DFS services section examines implementation items such as home and neighborhood visits, discovery activities, informational interviews, vocational profiles, and employment plans. JDFS sections cover the foundation for customized job development referrals, the incorporation of information gathered during discovery in job development plans, and elements related to customized job development personnel, provider responsibilities, and transportation. The JDFS services section examines service level implementation, including building job-development plans based on discovery findings; using an informational interview approach to contact businesses; analyzing workplace cultures to ensure ecological fit; negotiating mutually beneficial and customized employment opportunities, including job creation through resource ownership or self-employment as appropriate; and maximizing opportunities for long-term career development and growth. Table 2 provides an example of the DFS and JDFS service/implementation tenets as outlined by Hall and his colleagues. Each of these tenets is scored using scaled fidelity descriptors for each of the systems and services tenets.

**Table 2. Description of customized fidelity scale services tenets**

<b>Customized Fidelity Scale Services Tenets</b>	
<i>Discovery Fidelity Scale (Hall et al. 2018)</i>	<i>Customized Job Development Fidelity Scale (Hall &amp; Keeton, 2019)</i>
Discovery begins with an interview in the jobseeker’s home or a mutually acceptable place in the community.	The customized job developer and the jobseeker decide which of the positive skills, assets, support, information, pictures or videos learned or developed during discovery will be shared with employers and, if applicable, used to develop small business ownership.

12      Creating Meaningful Employment Opportunities Using a Customized  
Employment Approach

A conversational style is used during interviews with the jobseeker, family, members, and others for information and understanding.

The customized job developer assists the jobseeker in developing employment that meets the expectations of the financial plan developed during discovery that includes goals and resources, information from a benefits planner, and, if applicable, plans to ensure the financial success of the jobseeker's own business.

Observe and learn about the jobseeker's personal spaces during visits to the jobseeker's home.

The customized job developer and the jobseeker work together to develop employment that meets the ideal number of hours of work each week and the number of hours of non-work services and support.

The employment specialist learns about the jobseeker's neighborhood and area.

The customized job developer and the jobseeker meet with businesses to identify a fit between the workplace culture, tasks, skills, and the jobseeker's ideal conditions for employment.

The employment specialist observes the jobseeker as they complete familiar activities, assisting as necessary.

The customized job developer, always with the jobseeker when possible, conducts informational interviews with businesses.

The employment specialist or others assist the jobseeker in completing several activities in less familiar places based on vocational preferences and emerging vocational themes.

The customized job developer completes formal analyses of job tasks, skills, co-worker support, and employee training.

The employment specialist and the jobseeker, to the extent possible, complete informational interviews with several businesses that align with the jobseeker's skills, tasks, interests and vocational themes.

The customized job developer negotiates a mutually beneficial economic win-win proposal between the jobseeker and the business, or when applicable, a self-employment proposal.

Review information collected to date, revisiting and including additional discovery information as needed to complete the vocational profile.

The customized job developer creates a job site training plan detailing job tasks, required skills, new skill development, training, and support strategies for the employer.

The vocational profile narrative describes the completed discovery process and answers the question: Who is this person?

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Note. From Hall, S., Keeton, B., Cassidy, P., Iovannone, R., & Griffin, C. (2018). Discovery fidelity scale. Atlanta, GA: Center for Social Capital & Hall, S. R. & Keeton, B. (2019). Job development fidelity scale. Griffin-Hammis Associates.

## **CE implementation: discovery**

Discovery is the first step in the CE process and can be characterized as a psychosocial rehabilitation process used to determine an individual's strengths, interests, skills, and support needs to obtain and maintain customized employment (Riesen et al. 2021a). The resulting vocational profile is then used to develop well-coordinated customized job development activities. The discovery process includes interviews, observations, document review, and interactions with the jobseeker (WINTAC 2017). Discovery also uses observations of the jobseeker engaged in familiar and unfamiliar activities and requires interviews with family members and other influential persons in the jobseeker's life. This process typically takes between 24–60 hours to complete. These observations help to identify the skills and factors that ensure successful employment. Hall et al. (2022) outline several essential features of discovery. First, discovery is an alternative to traditional assessment and does not assess readiness for employment—a jobseeker cannot fail at discovery. Second, the process recognizes that each jobseeker has specific contributions they can make in

local labor markets. Third, discovery starts with engaging the jobseeker's family, friends, and community support. Fourth, the process customizes employment around the jobseeker's life instead of structuring the jobseeker's life around employment. Fifth, discovery is used to determine how to proceed best to ensure the jobseeker obtains a customized job.

*Example of Ty engaged in discovery activities*

*The customized employment team conducted observations of Ty engaged in both familiar and unfamiliar activities over several weeks. The first observations occurred in Ty's home and neighborhood. During these observations, Ty engaged in his typical daily home and neighborhood routines, and the team noted that Ty enjoys playing video games, putting together puzzles, and using his iPad. The team also noted that Ty makes his breakfast and lunch every day and is always helpful in completing daily chores such as vacuuming, cleaning his bathroom, and washing the dishes. During neighborhood observations, the team noted that Ty lives near a recreation center and golf course that are both within walking distance and that he enjoys using the recreation center. Ty is known by his neighbors as he takes daily walks with the family dog.*

*Because of Ty's emerging vocational interests, the employment specialist arranged for Ty to visit the recreation center and golf course near his home. For unfamiliar activities, Ty performed cleaning tasks at the center and assisted with food preparation and organization at the local golf course café. Based on the observations and conversations with Ty, the team identified several vocational interests, including recreation, technology, and organization. The employment specialist arranged for informational interviews with other local businesses that fit within these interests to verify Ty's interests and learn whether his interests and skills matched the needs of each business. Roy, the employment specialist working with Ty, knows the director of a local university athletics program, so he will interview the director among other businesses that fit into Ty's emerging interests.*

The information gathered during discovery is used to help learn about the jobseeker's ideal conditions for employment. The process requires input from the jobseeker, family, individuals familiar with the jobseeker, and an employment specialist. Information gathered during discovery is described in a narrative format and summarized using a vocational profile. Figure 1 provides an example of a completed vocational profile for Ty. The profile provides documentation about Ty's interests, talents, skills, ideal conditions for employment, and his ideal work schedule. It also documents the types

of off-the-job support needed to maintain his employment and transportation information to get Ty to and from work. At the conclusion of discovery, the jobseeker and the team meet to review the information obtained from the discovery activities and develop a coordinated customized job development plan.

Figure 1. Vocational profile for Ty

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### **Vocational Profile**

Jobseeker: Ty Jones

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#### **Observations of interests, Talents, Skills**

*During the observation, identify and document the jobseeker's ideal learning methods, places/situations to avoid, personal resources (benefits, family support, savings, transportation), most endearing/engaging qualities, and three strongest vocational interests.*

---

- Ty is skilled with technology, and learning new technologies and programs comes easily to him. He is meticulous when it comes to organizing and cleaning. Other skills include food preparation.
- Ty enjoys using technology for leisure but can also use it more formally, such as for communicating or scanning items.
- Ty learns best with hands-on or visual learning and responds well to visual reminders, such as a task list or alarm.
- It takes Ty time to warm up to people, so brief interactions with people are fine, but it is best if Ty works with familiar people whom he can really build a relationship with.
- Ty has excellent family support and will help with coordinating transportation.
- His most endearing qualities include his humor (once he becomes comfortable), his willingness to help, his ability to self-start, and his positive attitude.
- Ty's Vocational interests include (a) recreation, (b) technology, and (c) organization.

---

#### **Ideal conditions of employment**

*During observations, identify and document the jobseeker's ideal working environment, work culture, supervision, people, pace, strength, agility, endurance, inside vs. outside, sitting vs. standing, and dress requirements.*

---

Ty's ideal employment includes a positive environment with people/peers his own age. Ty will require some supervision at the beginning, but with visual reminders, be able to complete tasks independently over time. The ideal job will be paced with one task at a time rather than multi-tasking. The job can be indoors or outdoors with a combination of sitting/walking/standing. Dress requirements are flexible, as Ty can adapt to what is needed. Ty may need some reminders, such as an alarm, for when to take breaks.

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**Off-the-job support**

*Describe what will be needed for the jobseeker to maintain employment and who will provide it.*

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Ty needs support getting ready for work, dressing reminders, transportation, scheduling, and financial reporting if necessary. Ty's parents will provide off-the-job support with assistance from family and close friends.

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**Transportation**

*How will Ty get to and from work?*

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Ty will get to and from work using public transportation or rides from his family. Ideally, employment should be no more than 25 minutes away from home on public transportation.

---

**Work Schedule**

*Describe the jobseeker's ideal work schedule (days and hours) and why.*

---

In order for Ty to become acclimatized to the job, he can work three to four-hour shifts three times per week. Once he becomes acclimatized, his hours can increase. The job should start no earlier than 8:30 am and end no later than 9:00 pm. This is to ensure public transportation is still running and/or family can assist with transportation.

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## **CE implementation: customized job development**

The second interconnected phase of the CE process is customized job development. CE job development meaningfully linked information obtained from discovery and outlined on the vocational profile with customized job development. Hall and Keeton (2019) outline several critical features for customized job development. First, like discovery, customized



job development assumes that a jobseeker is employable and that information obtained during discovery can be used to determine the most effective ways to support the jobseeker. Second, this approach uses informational interviews to expand employment opportunities and develop a job with an employer that meets the jobseeker's ideal condition of employment. Third, customized job development negotiates a job based on an employment proposal developed by an employment specialist and the jobseeker—a job that did not exist prior to negotiation. Fourth, this framework requires the employment specialist to create an employment training analysis and plan.

During customized job development, the employment specialist and the jobseeker meet individual employers whose businesses align with the vocational interests of the jobseeker. During these meetings, the employment specialist and jobseeker learn about available work tasks and work-related projects that align with the jobseeker's skills, interests, and ideal conditions of employment. The employment specialist also conducts a formal analysis of the job tasks, skills, and types of co-worker support available at the business. Once an employer who meets the jobseeker's ideal condition for employment (e.g., location, work culture, work tasks, etc.) is identified, the jobseeker and employment specialist present a proposal to the employer that outlines the jobseeker's skills and how these skills will benefit the employer. The employment specialist will subsequently negotiate a customized position that benefits both the jobseeker and the employer. During this process, the employment specialist also provides the employer with a job site training plan that includes detailed information about job tasks and the types of support necessary for the individual with a disability to complete each task.

*After conducting multiple interviews with employers during the discovery process, Roy, Ty's employment specialist, made a connection with the university's athletics director. Based on observations and conversations with the director, he learned that support was needed with ticket-taking at events and taking an inventory of team athletic gear. During customized job development, Roy presented the director with information detailing Ty's strengths and interests and how these aligned with the director's needs. He also provided the director with a detailed job task list for ticket taking and team inventory assessment as a starting point to negotiate a paid, customized job. Information was presented to the athletic director about Ty's proposed pay, schedule, and work tasks. After ongoing discussion, Roy and the athletic director negotiated a customized job for Ty to take tickets at events (incorporating the themes of technology and recreation) and assist*

*with inventory (incorporating the themes of technology and organization). Ty would be paid a starting wage of \$11.75 per hour and initially work three times per week over a four-hour shift. The employment specialist and athletic director agreed to also look for additional tasks and opportunities for Ty to work more hours at the university. Because Ty enjoys sports, Roy and the director also negotiated that in addition to his paid wages, Ty would be able to attend games and use the recreation centers on campus (incorporating the themes of recreation) at no charge. Since Ty is working on a university campus, he will also work with same-age peers. This is a customized job because it meets both the employer's and jobseeker's needs. During the final job negotiations, Roy discussed current and future tasks, career growth, and advancement with the future employer and created a training plan.*

## **Summary**

People with disabilities, especially those with the most significant disabilities, experience disparate economic conditions across the globe. People with the most significant disabilities experience higher rates of unemployment and often do not get the opportunity to participate in CEI. CE emerged in 2001 and has since become a promising practice that has the potential to lead to enhanced employment outcomes. CE is a unique, no-fail process incorporating discovery, customized job development, and ongoing support to assist jobseekers with the most significant disabilities in obtaining and maintaining competitive integrated employment. The CE process is individualized and requires collaboration with family friends, and paid and unpaid support. There are a number of key takeaways that should be considered when implementing CE. First, CE is a no-fail, individualized process that values a jobseeker's desire to work. Second, CE takes time—expect to devote 35 hours or more to discovery. Third, CE is process-driven. The information obtained during discovery is used to plan for and implement both customized job development and ongoing support. Fourth, CE values and builds upon a jobseeker's strengths, interests, skills, and support needs, matching them to those of the employer. Finally, customized jobs are negotiated and did not exist prior to beginning the customized process.

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