

# A Demand-Driven Approach to Hiring People with Disabilities

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The accomplishments of several high-profile inclusive employment programs have confirmed that people with disabilities (PWDs) can succeed in working side by side with non-disabled colleagues for equal pay at equal jobs. Companies including Walgreens, Lowe's, Toys R Us, and Proctor and Gamble have partnered with outside agencies to recruit PWDs for their business talent needs.

These successful programs have several common elements. The employer begins with strong top management support for hiring PWDs, making a business case, developing partnerships, spreading the vision to current employees, removing barriers, securing funding, setting high standards, providing ongoing support, and sharing success stories. The following nine factors are keys to the success of these programs.

- 1. Lead with vision:** Supporters in upper management lead through a strong commitment to disability hiring. They enthusiastically communicate their vision throughout the organization and work closely with agency partners to meet employment goals.
- 2. Build a business case:** A business case is built demonstrating that PWDs are a valuable resource in meeting workforce goals and business objectives. The business advantages may come from a variety of factors including a steady labor supply, public relations, marketing, litigation and dispute avoidance, reduced turnover, diversity goals, preferred supplier status, innovation in service and products for customers with PWDs, grants, tax incentives, and increased customer base.
- 3. Partner with expert agencies:** The employer chooses a project managing agency, often a state or national agency responsible for securing funding, finding service providers and overseeing the project. This agency can provide a single point of contact to coordinate with other community partners which provide recruiting, training and support services. These may include schools, social

service organizations or other local agencies. Each partner has a clearly defined and accountable role.

4. **Create a culture of inclusion:** Communicate the company's commitment to include PWDs and address the concerns of current employees. Provide training on disability awareness, dispelling myths, and understanding program expectations — equal job, equal pay, and equal performance standards for all employees.
5. **Remove obstacles to accessibility.** Work with agency partners' experts to ensure accessibility through job analysis, universal design, accommodations and job aids. Provide a working environment that is safe, comfortable and accessible to all employees.
6. **Access funding:** The project's lead agency secures and manages grant funding, support and tax incentives from an array of disability and workforce programs. This can pay for job training, equipment, accommodations, initial wages and other needs.
7. **Maintain high standards.** Fill employment openings for skilled, well-paying jobs with benefits that have the same job performance expectations for employees with and without disabilities. Hold outside agencies accountable for meeting their goals in providing excellent service and results.
8. **Provide ongoing support:** Service providing agencies continue to support disabled employees after hire to help them build new job skills and provide assistance with issues such as transportation and SSA benefits.
9. **Share success stories:** Publicize the program's achievements. Sharing success stories of employees with disabilities is motivating for employees, customers and other businesses. Positive publicity dispels misconceptions and promotes the capabilities of PWDs and the solid business case for employing them.