

Good Practice Guide:

The Use of NDIS Employment Supports 2023-2024



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NDS acknowledges the valuable assistance of the NDIA in the development of this guide and for approving the use of their employment support resource materials as referenced in the guide.

This guide will be current until 30 June 2024, after which an updated version will be distributed reflecting changes to various topics in the guide.

1. Background

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) supports people with disability to achieve their goals, realise their full potential and exercise choice and control over their lives.

The NDIS can fund reasonable and necessary employment supports, which can be used by participants to explore their work goals, building their capacity for work, assist them to find a job or receive ongoing assistance to maintain their employment.

NDIS employment supports include:

- **Capacity building supports** to help participants learn new skills and increase their capability and independence at work. This includes supports designed to assist participants transition into, or change, employment by developing their work-related goals and skills.
- **Ongoing, on-the-job support** where participants need frequent help to complete their work tasks and maintain their employment.
- **Social and community participation support** for life transition, peer mentoring, making connections in the community or individual skill development to assist with preparing for work.
- **Other supports** such as Personal Care, Transport, Assistive Technology and Translating used to prepare for work, attend work and travel to and from work.

2. Purpose of this good practice guide – NDIS employment supports

This Good Practice Guide focuses on NDIS employment supports and their provision by employment support providers. It identifies good practice in the provision of these supports, including the Customised Employment (CE) service model and how employment support providers can work with mainstream employers.

The Guide will not include the provision of Disability Employment Services (DES). DES is a Commonwealth labour market programme that offers specialist employment assistance to help people with disability, injury or health conditions, find and retain suitable employment in the open labour market. As such, DES is not part of the NDIS. However, some NDIS participants are eligible to access DES while receiving NDIS supports and may benefit from resources available through both service systems. This is possible on the assumption that the two types of supports are provided on a complementary and not overlapping basis.

The Guide includes links to information about the various trials and initiatives examining how these two distinct types of supports can be concurrently provided to achieve sustainable employment for an NDIS participant.

3. Ensuring good practice

Good practice principles

Good practice emphasises the importance of incorporating a constant cycle of assessment,

review and planning aligned to the participant's specific skills, employment goals and addressing barriers to securing and maintaining employment.

It requires the employment support provider to undertake activities tailored to the individual's needs and aspirations, regularly reviewing progress and providing feedback to the participant and their supporters, incorporating learnings and tailoring supports to maintain momentum towards goal achievement. This process should be formalised in a Service Agreement with the participant and a Program of Supports if agreed to by the participant.

Good practice includes:

- An individualised developmental approach to increasing knowledge, skill and independence to achieve employment.
- Building skills in actual work settings.
- Supports tailored to the participant's needs through:
 - assessment
 - ongoing monitoring, review and feedback on progress
 - tailoring of services to achieve and maintain employment
- Following assessments, a clear description of milestones toward employment and expected outcomes of the intended support.
- Provision in a mix of group and 1:1 support, depending on the skill and the person's needs.
- Supports negotiated and agreed with the participant and clearly outlined in a Service Agreement.
- Creating a line of sight to a job at all points on the jobseeker's employment pathway.
- Greater cohesion between NDIS and DES to meet participant need where the services of DES are required to complement support from the NDIS provider.

The Customised Employment Model

The Customised Employment (CE) Model involves establishing an employment relationship between a jobseeker and an employer to meet the needs of both. It is increasingly being used to successfully place jobseekers with disability in sustainable, high quality employment options.

CE is compatible with the NDIS principle of services and supports maximising an individual's choice and control.

The employment support provider works with the jobseeker to identify their skills, interests, abilities and support needs through a "discovery" process which is a key component of the CE model. The discovery process can be mapped via a "[discovery record](#)". CE is not limited to one type of occupation or employment setting and can result in jobseekers obtaining work across a wide range of employment options and settings.

Both jobseekers and employers benefit from the CE model. It ensures that the job seeker's individual strengths and difficulties are taken into account in the job design. It provides employers with reliable employees, reduced recruitment costs. If combined with a period of on-the-job work experience during the recruitment phase, it can help employers understand how best to accommodate a person in their workplace. A diverse workforce can expand an employer's customer base and assist employee retention.

Job carving is an approach used by a service provider to identify and negotiate a specific job design to suit a jobseeker with disability. The job design can include components of a number of tasks across different duty statements which are selected according to the interests, skills and abilities of the jobseeker. Job carving benefits both the organisation/business and the jobseeker by aligning the strengths of the individual with the needs of the employer.

Unless an employer has in-house expertise, job carving requires employment support providers to assist employers to undertake this process by matching the employer's needs with a job design that maximises the skills and abilities of the job seeker.

CE consists of four key components following the Discovery process, all of which require the employment support provider to work closely with the employer and the jobseeker. These are:

- Employer engagement
- Role (job) negotiation
- On-the-job support/employer education
- Post-Employment Ongoing Support

4. Working with employers

Work Experience

Work experience is an essential component in preparing a jobseeker for employment. It can be paid or unpaid and the latter may be referred to as an internship.

Work experience is generally required by young people who have recently left school or are nearing school leaving age. It is usually a short-term unpaid opportunity that allows people to gain experience and an understanding of the skills required in a field or career they have an interest in.

Work experience is also useful for older job seekers who are changing occupation because of their disability or have had limited exposure to work opportunities.

As per the guidance from the Fair Work Ombudsman, it is important that employment support providers are aware of the [legal and industrial obligations covering work experience placements](#), especially the difference between paid and unpaid placements with employers.

Insurance requirements for unpaid work experience

Employment support providers also need to be aware of the relevant insurance requirements when supporting a person with disability in unpaid work experience placements.

Work experience insurance covers the risks specifically faced by interns and work experience candidates. It includes Public Liability Insurance, which protects them and the host employer from personal liability if they are responsible for injury or property damage in a workplace.

Voluntary Workers insurance is available to cover volunteers for injury while undertaking voluntary roles on behalf of a host employer (or organisation). This type of insurance is limited to a specified amount and is capped at a lump sum for permanent disablement or death.

Depending on the jurisdiction, unpaid work experience placements may or may not be

considered “workers” and employers may or may not need to cover them under their workers compensation insurance policy.

Consequently, employment support providers should familiarise themselves with any relevant State or Territory legislation or obligations which relate to insurance coverage or industrial safeguards for work experience placements, children and young people.

Disability confident and accessible and inclusive workplaces

When seeking to place jobseekers or employees with disability in a new workplace, employment support providers should assess an employers’ “disability confidence” and if their workplaces are accessible and inclusive.

The features of a disability confident workplace include the following:

- A demonstrated commitment to accessibility and inclusion set out in internal resources such as a Disability Action Plan or the establishment of a disability employee network
- Proactive engagement with jobseekers with disability through the use of inclusive and accessible recruitment pathways and practices in job advertisements, position descriptions and interviews and assessment processes
- Use of job carving where this would maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of an employee with disability

The features of accessible and inclusive workplaces include:

- A workplace that features physical accessibility and signage based on universal design principles.
- A positive workplace culture.
- Equitable access to workplace technology so that all employees can perform their work duties independently, efficiently and with dignity.
- Reasonable adjustments that ensure employees with disability can perform their job free from physical or work process/practice barriers.

Source: [AHRC IncludeAbility Project 2023](#).

Employment support providers have a key role in working with employers to assist them to develop or enhance their disability confidence and the accessibility and inclusiveness of their workplaces.

5. Different types of NDIS employment supports

“Work” is classified as one of the eight “Domains” aligned to the NDIS Outcomes Framework. Work can be identified in a participant plan in the following support categories:

- Finding and Keeping a Job (Capacity Building)
- Assistance with Social, Economic and Community Participation (Core)

Capacity Building: Finding and Keeping a Job

There are number of support items available through the NDIS Capacity Building Budget.

Employment Assistance

NDIS capacity building employment supports enable a participant to successfully obtain or retain employment in a setting of their choice. This support can be supplied to any working age participant) with an employment goal including:

- **Young people of working age to build skills whilst still at school** through supplementary work experience to complement that available through the school curriculum and/or support to find and maintain a part-time job outside of school hours.
- **Young people who are transitioning from school to employment** with functional impacts in the areas of learning, social interaction and self-management, who require intensive assistance to build skills to transition from school to work. (Current school leaver employment support group)
- **Young people (20 – 24 years) with minimal work experience and no previous employment history** with functional impacts in the areas of learning, social interaction and self-management, who require intensive support to build their capacity to work.
- **Young people who require support to transition** from school to tertiary education or training.
- **Participants who need assistance to** obtain employment on completion of a qualification.
- **People over the age of 25 years who have never worked** but would now like to explore an employment goal
- **People who need to change their occupation because of their disability.**

Employment assistance may include:

- discovery activities
- money handling skills
- time management skills
- communication skills
- travel skills
- decision making skills
- interpersonal skills
- support to learn a new role and understand the employee's ongoing support requirements
- managing complex barriers to obtaining and sustaining employment
- specialised job customisation (or job carving)
- employer connection and education
- work experience to develop skills needed in the workplace
- work experience to learn the routine of a workplace
- support to connect to tertiary education and training.
- support to obtain suitable employment on completion of tertiary education or training
- supports to transition from supported to open employment.

Employment Related Assessment and Counselling

Employment related assessment or counselling assists participants to successfully engage in work. It is intended to identify the person's strengths and barriers to employment which will inform required employment supports. This support can include:

- A vocational assessment
- A functional assessment
- Education and support for the participant, the employer and others in the workplace
- Counselling when a participant's disability prevents return to their previous occupation, or they have not previously engaged in employment.

Participants who could benefit from this type of support include those who need significant support to develop a new work pathway, for example:

- Participants who have experienced traumatic injury, acquired a disability or need to change jobs or modify work requirements due to the impact of their disability.
- Participants who have limited work experience or knowledge of work.

This support must be delivered by a suitably qualified professional such as a vocational counsellor, rehabilitation counsellor, occupational therapist or other health professional such as a speech pathologist for a person with significant communication difficulties.

Core: Assistance with Social, Economic and Community Participation

Supports in Employment

Some NDIS participants will need frequent, sometimes daily support delivered in the workplace to maintain their employment.

Supports in employment allow participants greater choice and control about where and how they work and who provides their supports. Participants may choose to utilise support in a range of employment settings including:

- private enterprise
- not-for-profit enterprise
- public sector
- family business
- self-employment
- social enterprise
- supported employment services.

These support items are for participants who are employed and who are less independent in performing their work tasks or need frequent prompting and coaching to stay on track, communicate with others, or manage their behaviours.

Supports complementing existing or expected employer supports can include:

- on the job assessments related to the impact of a person's disability on their ability to work
- job customisation (or job carving)
- on-the-job training and intermittent support with daily work tasks
- direct supervision and/or group-based support to enable meaningful participation at work
- supports to manage disability-related behaviour or complex needs at work
- assistance to explore transitioning from a supported employment service to alternative employment
- non-face to face activities directly related to supporting a participant's employment such as

- setting up work tasks/sequencing to accommodate a person's disability
- flexible work arrangements to support participants' needs including access to other supports, health and wellbeing issues and living arrangements.

The use of supports in employment are set out in the NDIS Employment Handbook and in the Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits.

A support delivered in open employment will usually be delivered to an individual participant by an individual support worker at intermittent intervals. An exception could be a work crew who are "hired out" to an employer and who have a supervisor with them during their shift.

When delivered in a congregate setting to a group of employees, there will usually be a mix of group and individual support depending on participant need and experience and the complexity of tasks.

For costing and claiming purposes, an employment support provider is required to calculate a support ratio which is determined by the level of support the individual requires and the number of employees who are supported by a particular supervisor or support worker at a point in time. This can vary significantly for an employee during a week. The cost is based on the NDIS hourly pricing as determined by the NDIS [Disability Support Worker Cost model](#).

The pricing, while determined hourly should be consolidated by the employer/ provider into a weekly amount known as a **typical pattern of support**, based on the employee's support needs, work tasks, goals for future employment and average hours worked per week. This should be agreed with the participant and provided to the NDIA to assist with building a budget in the participant's plan.

For example, a supported employment service has three employees with disability working a four-hour shift supervised by one support worker. The service divides the hourly rate by the number of employees and claims four hours in total for the shift. The employee's pattern of support would include the shift as being provided at a 1:3 ratio for four hours. If the employee typically works three of these shifts a week, their pattern of support would be 12 hours at the hourly rate divided by three.

The supported employment service would also include any non-face to face and centre capital costs as per their agreement with the participant.

The typical pattern of support would be consolidated into a participant's service agreement and a program of support (if this is used).

6. NDIS employment supports included in the pricing arrangements and price limits

Employment support types and purposes

NDIS participant budgets are generally allocated for two separate support purposes:

Core - Supports that enable participants to complete daily activities on an ongoing basis. Participant budgets often have a lot of flexibility to choose specific supports within and across their core support budgets. Supports to maintain a participant's employment (Supports in

Employment) are part of the participant's core budget.

It is important that participants understand that the funding is allocated for the provision of employment related supports and should not be allocated to other activities. LACs and employment service providers should assist a participant to understand the importance of using funding for the purpose of continued employment.

Capacity Building – Time limited supports that enable a participant to build their independence and skills. Employment related assessment and counselling and employment assistance are support types within the “Finding and Keeping a Job” (capacity building) budget.

Participants can utilise a range of other supports such as Personal Care, Transport, Consumables, Translating and Assistive Technology to prepare for work and maintain their employment.

Registration Groups for Employment Supports

Each support item in the NDIS Price Guide specifies the Registration Group for which a Provider who delivers the support must be registered with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. Of the 36 registration Groups, there are three that specifically apply to employment supports.

- 0102 Assistance to Access and Maintain Employment or Higher Education (employment assistance and school leaver employment support)
- 0133 Specialised Supported Employment (supports in employment)
- 0128 Therapeutic Supports (employment related assessment and counselling)

Pricing and Claiming

All support should be claimed according to the rules set out in the [NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits](#).

Employment support providers can claim for direct and indirect service provision such as:

- Provider Travel (labour costs)
- Short Notice Cancellations
- Provider Travel – Non-Labour Costs
- Activity Based Transport if relevant for Social, Economic and Community Participation
- Centre Capital Costs, when the support is provided in a facility maintained by the provider rather than in the community.

Different price limits apply depending on the time of day and day of the week when the support is delivered.

Centre Capital Costs

The Centre Capital Cost support items can be claimed from participants at the price specified in the relevant pricing rules. They are claimed per hour of attendance and can be claimed for Short Notice Cancellations. Different rates apply according to locality, e.g. very remote.

When a support is delivered partially onsite and partially in the community, and the site is

always available during the support if required, employment support providers can claim up to the price limit for the relevant Centre Capital Cost support item for the entire period of the support.

Centre capital costs can be claimed for employee breaks e.g. lunch, during a continuous period of support.

Employee absence claims

Planned employee absences do not form part of a program of support, but employment support providers can claim for unscheduled absences.

Unscheduled absences include sick leave or failure to arrive at work, but not annual leave, public holidays, long service leave or extended periods of sick leave.

Non face to face support

The NDIA advises that employment support providers can only claim for the non-face to face delivery of a support item **if all the following conditions are met:**

- The NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits indicates that providers can claim for non-face to face Support Provision in respect of that support item.
- The proposed charges for the activities comply with the Service Agreement with the participant.
- The activities are part of delivering a specific disability support item to a participant to enable them to work safely and as productively as possible, e.g. developing visual cues to enable the person to complete tasks, setting up adaptive equipment to enable a person to complete work tasks.
- The provider explains the activities and their value to the participant, including why they represent the best use of the participant's funds.
- The provider has the agreement of the participant in advance that non-face to face supports can be claimed.

Time spent on administration, such as the processing of NDIS payment claims for all clients, should not be claimed from a participant's budget as a Non-Face-to-Face support. The NDIS price limits contain an allowance for overheads, including the costs of administration.

Examples of administrative activities that are covered by the overhead component of the support price limits and that should not be billed as Non-Face-to-Face supports include, but are not limited to:

- Pre-engagement visits
- Developing and agreeing Service Agreements
- Entering or amending participant details into system
- Making participant service time changes
- Staff / participant travel monitoring and adjustment
- Ongoing NDIS plan monitoring
- Completing a quoting tool
- Making service bookings
- Making payment claims.

Programs of Support

A pattern of support, when recorded and agreed with a participant, forms the basis of the service agreement and the program of support between the provider and participant. The agreed program enables the provider to claim a regular weekly amount for delivering supports during a specified period, which can be up to six months.

Participants must be able to exit from a program of supports without cost, subject to a notice period of no more than two weeks. Providers and participants can agree to a new Program of Support at any time.

Where a participant stops attending an agreed program of support but does not provide a notice, a provider may only continue claiming for a total of four consecutive weeks from when the participant stopped attending. The provider should confirm the end date of the Agreement with the participant.

Programs of support are aimed at the achievement of a specified outcome such as assistance to maintain employment or to achieve a specified milestone or outcome through supports funded in the capacity building categories.

A program of supports minimises administrative burden for the provider and ensures continuity of service provision for the employee and transparency about utilisation of their budget.

Attachment A: Additional Resources

Customised Employment Resources

Centre for Disability Employment Research and Practice: ([CDERP](#)) – The Centre uses an Applied Research framework to deliver research and practice-based solutions to disability employment providers.

Centre for Social Impact (CSI): [Work Integration Social Enterprise \(WISE\) Model](#) – The WISE model has been field tested and is intended to support inclusive workplace conditions and employment pathways for people with a disability into open employment settings.

NDS: [Employment Service Transition Webpage](#) – contains an extensive listing of resource materials to assist employment service providers build stronger employment capability.

Current Disability Employment Related Trials

[NDIS DES Participant Pathways Pilot](#)

[Blended Payments Model Trial](#)

[Payments by Outcomes \(PBO\) Trial](#) for Social Enterprises

[Tourism Local Navigator Pilot](#)

NDIS Employment Resources

[Work and Study Operational Guideline](#)

[Let's talk about work booklet](#)

[School Leaver Employment Supports Provider Reporting](#)

[Stories and Videos about NDIS participants and their employment journeys](#)

[The NDIS Participant Employment Strategy 2024-2026](#)

Employer Resources

Australian Human Rights Commission: [IncludeAbility](#)

Council for Intellectual Disability: [More than Just a Job: Inclusive Business Guide](#)

Contacts:

National Disability Services:

Paul Musso

Senior Policy Adviser Employment

paul.musso@nds.org.au

(02) 9256 3171

Colin Entwistle

Head of Employment

colin.entwistle@nds.org.au

(03) 8341 4319

NDIA Contacts:

participant.employment@ndis.gov.au – for employment specific enquiries

provider.support@ndis.gov.au – for general provider enquiries