

## Testing Partners with Business Statewide: A Successful and Efficient Model for Employing People with Disabilities

Dane County has achieved a much higher community employment rate for people with the most significant disabilities than other Wisconsin counties (over 70% versus less than 10%). This is, in part, due to the relationships that been developed with local employers through the successful implementation of the Partners with Business model of workplace supports. Can the Partners with Business model be expanded to improve employment rates for people with disabilities throughout Wisconsin?

In February 2017, the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities partnered with one high school and three non-profit organizations to establish and “test” the Partners with Business support model with twenty employers in Wisconsin. These collaborators, located in DeForest, Madison, Milwaukee and Hudson, represent a mix of Wisconsin’s urban, rural, and suburban communities. After just a few short months, we are seeing promising results, which could be replicated and expanded upon with further investment and technical assistance. Specifically, the technical assistance structure and time-limited investment included in LRB-1527 could help to scale the Partners with Business model statewide.

### Case Examples:

DeForest High School has developed Partners with Business relationships to support 5 students working for 6 employers. The employers include Walmart, All Stop, Rejuvenation Spa, A Growing Place Preschool, Kohls and Yahara Learning Center.

Four of the five students are being supported naturally by co-workers, with no reimbursement to the business from the school, vocational rehabilitation or long-term care program. The school staff check in with the business 1-2 times per month. These “natural” workplace supports from co-workers ***cost nothing*** for the public system (i.e. Schools, Vocational Rehabilitation and Medicaid). They are a result of the coaching and technical assistance the Partners with Business service provider has given the business to prepare the supervisors and co-workers to successfully employ and support a worker with disabilities.



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Partners with Business Technical Assistance to Employers results in more natural supports on the job, ***which costs the public system nothing.***

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Another student, Sophie, who was hired to work 40 hours per week at the Yahara Learning Center, is supported using another form of Partners with Business supports - **called Partners with Business Plus**. In this situation, the Partners with Business service provider (DeForest High School) worked with the employer to maximize natural supports from the supervisor and coworkers, which costs the state nothing. Because Sophie will need some extra support and coaching on the job – beyond what is typically provided by co-workers – the business is provided a reimbursement for co-workers to step in for short periods of time to provide her with the extra help needed. Regular check-in and back-up services from Partners with Business agency are available to ensure Sophie’s ongoing success. Without using the Partners with Business Plus model, the ongoing job supports for this student would cost the public system more. The chart below demonstrates the cost-effectiveness of the Partners with Business approach.

Traditional Agency or School Supports		Partners with Business Plus	
Number of job coaching hours per week (4x1 hour plus 30 minutes for transportation per visit)	6 hours	Co-worker paid supports needed per week	4 hours
Cost for job coach per hour	\$15 per hour plus benefits	Cost for employer to provide co-worker supports	\$15 per hour
Total weekly costs for job support	\$ 90 per week plus benefits	Total weekly reimbursement to employer for co-worker supports <sup>1</sup>	\$60 per week
Total annual support costs (37 weeks of employment) *	\$3,330 + benefits	Total annual support costs (37 weeks of employment) *	\$2,220

\*July 31, 2017 to June 8, 2018

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**Savings to the Public System with Partners with Business Plus = *over \$1100 per year***

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<sup>1</sup> School funds are used to provide the reimbursement to the employer