

Employer Engagement Models supporting a Disability Inclusive Workforce: A How-To Guide



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What is Work Together NC?

Work Together NC is a statewide initiative funded by the U.S. Administration for Community Living (90DNCE0006). We help employers, service providers, and self advocates, *work together* to increase employment opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Work Together NC has developed an **IDD Inclusive Employment Alliance** – or a network of employers across North Carolina who demonstrate a commitment to employing people with IDD.

Any NC based employer who completes Work Together NC's ~2 hr self paced training is eligible to apply for recognition as an IDD Inclusive Employer. Employers may qualify as either a bronze, silver, or gold level employer based on the number of workplace accessibility features they self-endorse. Employers must pay at least minimum wage to receive recognition.

A newly recognized "IDD Inclusive Employer" is provided with a contact list of regional or statewide agencies that provide Supported Employment Services to people with IDD. The employer will select a preferred agency and contact that agency for job candidates as job openings become available. Moving forward, the employer and agency collaborate to ensure the candidate receives the support needed to apply, interview, and maintain success at the job.

This how-to guide overviews two innovative employer engagement models (**Coffee Talks** and **Reverse Job Fairs**) that can assist Supported Employment providers in expanding their network of employer partners, resulting in improved the employment outcomes for clients with IDD.



Work Together NC

Possibility to Opportunity

IDD INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT ALLIANCE

A network of NC based employers committed to hiring people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

IDD INCLUSIVE EMPLOYER



Work Together NC

“The Enthusiasm [of my employees with IDD] around work tasks is valuable for the **WHOLE** team.”

Businesses who hire people with intellectual and developmental disabilities see increases in...



Employee retention
Workplace morale
Innovation
Productivity
Customer loyalty



Pictured: The owner of Purple Bowl, an acai bowl shop in Chapel Hill, with one of her valued employees!

Take the ~2 hour self paced training & then receive:

- An “IDD Inclusive Employer” sticker for your storefront
- Job candidate referrals
- Contacts for local agencies that provide state funded job coaching and training support



Work Together NC

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What's a Coffee Talk?



Work Together NC launched IDD Inclusive Employer Coffee Talks in September 2023 as a pilot employer engagement initiative, in partnership with the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce. These quarterly events serve as an initial touchpoint with employers, sparking interest and enthusiasm around disability-inclusive hiring. Attendance consistently ranges from 20 to 40 participants per session. Some Coffee Talks have been tailored to specific industries, while others welcome a general employer audience.

Typical Coffee Talk Agenda:

- 🍰 Welcome & Coffee (~5 min)
- 🎤 Panel Discussion with IDD-Inclusive Employers OR a guest speaker (~20 min)
- 💬 Panel of Self-Advocates sharing their employment experiences (~20 min)
- 📊 Brief Overview of IDD-Inclusive Hiring Benefits (~10 min)
- 🤝 Introduction to the IDD Inclusive Employment Alliance + Next Steps (~5 min)

Given the success of the Coffee Talk model, we are eager to replicate this initiative across North Carolina and grow the IDD Inclusive Employment Alliance. Using this guide, any IDD service provider or nonprofit organization interested can partner with their local chamber of commerce to host a Coffee Talk in their community. This collaboration has the potential to create more inclusive job opportunities for your clients while strengthening employer engagement in your area.



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Attention senior living/senior service employers and hiring managers!

YOU'RE INVITED...



To a Coffee Talk to learn how to recruit an underutilized talent pool you may not have yet considered: people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

WHEN

February 20th,
9-10am

REGISTER



WHERE

Chapel Hill Carrboro
Chamber of
Commerce

*Virtual attendance
option available

Presented by...



Work Together NC
Possibility to Opportunity



The Chamber
For a Greater Chapel Hill-Carrboro

Employers who hire people with IDD report lower turnover, increased productivity, and improved workplace culture.

DID YOU KNOW?

Individuals with IDD are eager to work and thrive in many senior living jobs– including housekeeping, food service, social/recreational activity assistance, and more...



Steps to Hosting a Coffee Talk



1. Contact worktogethernc@med.unc.edu to indicate interest in hosting a Coffee Talk. Work Together NC will be able to answer questions and offer guidance as you coordinate your Coffee Talk.
2. Contact your local chamber to set up a meeting and gauge interest the Coffee Talk model. Sharing this guide with them may be helpful.
3. If there is a cost associated with partnering with the chamber, ask for the chamber's assistance in finding a sponsor [see email template on the next page]
4. Set a date/time and reserve a room at the chamber
5. Determine whether you want your Coffee Talk to be industry-specific or a general employer audience
6. Ask the chamber to create the registration page. [see example on next page]
7. Ask the chamber to advertise event to their membership
8. Recruit either a panel of employers that have successfully hired people with IDD or a guest speaker employer
9. Recruit a panel of self-advocates with IDD who are successfully employed
10. Identify someone from your organization to moderate the panels & slides
11. Purchase giftcards for the self advocate panelist speakers (we recommend a \$25 minimum)
12. Email the questions in advance to all panelists [see Qs on the next page]
13. Coordinate for coffee to be served at the event (most chambers have a brewer)
14. Cross-advertise the event
15. Chamber sends a follow up email to registrants [see template on next page]
16. Email worktogethernc@med.unc.edu to let us know how it went!



Work Together NC

Possibility to Opportunity

Optional Add-On: A Reverse Job Fair



A Reverse Job Fair is an event where job seekers set up booths or tables to showcase their skills, portfolios, and experience, while employers walk around to network with them. We encourage you to consider hosting a Reverse Job Fair immediately following the Coffee Talk in an adjacent room—engaging employers while they are feeling motivated and inspired!

Steps to Successfully Coordinate a Reverse Job Fair:

1. Engage Supported Employment Providers – Reach out to one or more Supported Employment Provider agencies (or your own organization's clients, if applicable) to share information about the Reverse Job Fair. Provide them with a sign-up form to distribute to their clients. To maintain a balanced ratio of employers and candidates, we recommend limiting participation to 8–15 job seekers.
2. Offer Preparation Workshops – Support candidates in preparing for the event by offering workshops on resume-building, personal branding, and networking. Encourage them to create professional displays that may include resumes, portfolios, business cards, photos of past work, and relevant work samples.
3. Plan the Event Layout – Design a floor plan that ensures booths/tables are well-spaced, allowing for smooth navigation and meaningful interactions.
4. Provide Employer Guidelines – A few days before the event, share clear instructions with employers about how the Reverse Job Fair works and best practices for engaging with job seekers.
5. Assist with Booth Setup – On the day of the event, offer assistance in setting up booths to ensure candidates feel comfortable and confident in their presentations.

Why Reverse Job Fairs Support Disability-Inclusive Hiring

Unlike traditional job fairs, this format allows candidates to utilize visual supports and tangible materials to communicate their skills more effectively. Additionally, it reduces the pressure of initiating conversations, which can be particularly beneficial for neurodivergent individuals. By integrating a Reverse Job Fair into your event, you create a more inclusive, engaging, and impactful hiring experience for both candidates and employers.

Becoming a Disability Inclusive Employer: Coffee Talk & Reverse Job Fair

YOU'RE INVITED...



To learn about and recruit an underutilized talent pool you may not have yet considered: people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

WHEN

February 12

Coffee talk: 9-10am
Job fair: 10-10:30am

Scan to Register:



Presented by...

WHERE

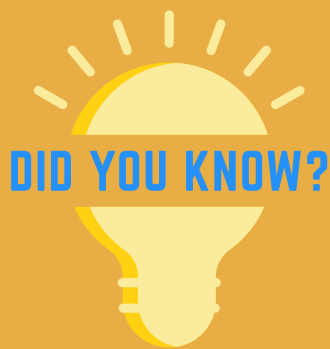
Chapel Hill
Public Library
(Room B)



Work Together NC
Possibility to Opportunity



The Chamber
For a Greater Chapel Hill-Carrboro



DID YOU KNOW?

Employers who hire people with IDD report lower turnover, increased productivity, and improved workplace culture.

Individuals with IDD are eager to work and thrive in many entry level jobs– including hospitality, food service, retail, human services, and more...

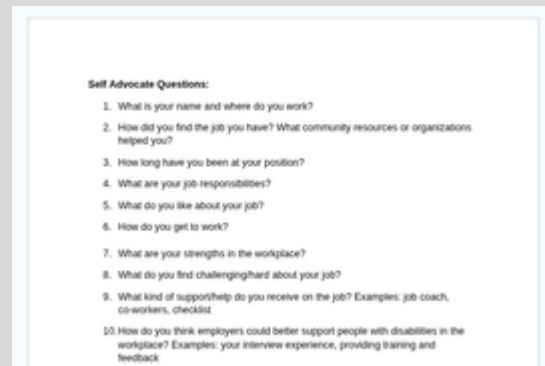


Additional Resources

Slide Deck:



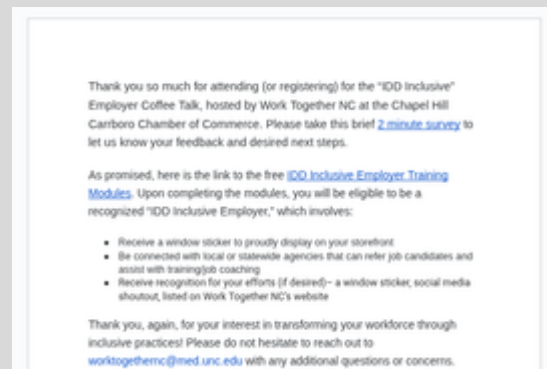
Panelist Questions:



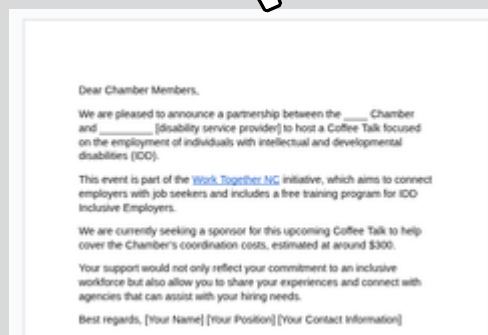
Example Registration Page:



Follow Up Email



Request for a Sponsor Email



Work Together NC
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