

WISE-ABILITY MODEL

1.	STRUCTURE	2
2.	SPACE AND ENVIRONMENT	3
3.	CULTURE	4
4.	RELATIONSHIPS	6
5.	FINANCE AND FUNDING	7
6.	INDUSTRY	8
7.	POLICY, PROCEDURE AND PROCESS	9
8.	PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT	11

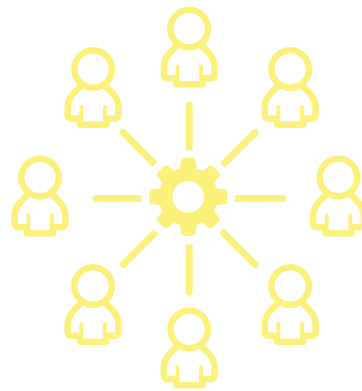


CENTRE
for **SOCIAL**
IMPACT



1. STRUCTURE

Aligning your business goals with your training and employment pathways program creates a strong WISE structure. Consider how your organisational structure can support the employment goals and pathways, as well as the overall wellbeing, of your employees with disability.



STRUCTURE: The organisation's design and roles

- *Diverse work opportunities*
- *Work allocation for support staff*
- *Hands-on learning and training*
- *Mentoring and check-ins*

DIVERSE WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Diverse work opportunities can be built into the 'DNA' of the Disability Enterprise or WISE in the initial set up or by diversifying operations. Having different sites or spaces and offering different types of work means that there is variety and choice for individuals. This also provides varied social interactions, as well as skills development opportunities.

Work sites and spaces may all be under one roof or may be located at different premises. It is important to enable people to access these different roles and workplaces through moving around or transferring across activities to acquire diverse experiences.

For many people with a disability there are limited choices of where you can work. Having different work choices, both within the WISE and in Open Employment, enables people to explore their interests and develop new skills. Having the option to try a range of work tasks across varied work settings, enables people to match up their strengths and preferences with workplace or job role characteristics. For instance, a calm outdoor work environment might be preferred over a busy or social work environment. This also supports engagement through generating interest and providing challenges that avoid disengagement from long-term repetition.

WORK ALLOCATION FOR SUPPORT STAFF

High stress roles require adequate staffing and resourcing for long term success and sustainability. This can include providing staff with flexible rosters with respect to hours and days for supported employees, or employing additional staff where needed to match organisational growth.

Having a time and space for regular staff meetings is vital for information sharing. Informal staff chats are just as important and allow support staff to share knowledge, strategise, develop new ideas, and build relationships. Staff from different teams can stay in contact via face-to-face discussions on-site, email, and phone to make sure Supported Employees feel supported and that their concerns are addressed in a timely manner. Using mechanisms to check-in, update or get feedback from Supported Employees is important for example, a team 'huddle' each morning.

HANDS-ON LEARNING AND TRAINING

Organisations need both formal and informal mechanisms for training and skills development of employees with disability. Knowing that there are opportunities to learn on the job and that these opportunities will keep arising is a motivating factor. Certificates may be completed by some, however, this type of learning does not suit everyone.

Hands-on learning involves learning how to do a job or task through practice and with the support of a co-worker or staff member. WISE use different ways of teaching new skills that suit the individual needs of employees that may arise from their disability. For example, using images rather than words, and having laminated lists of tasks in the workplace.

MENTORING AND CHECK-INS

Understanding the skills, needs, and aspirations of each employee with disability and providing in-depth support is important. Support staff and managers in contact roles can also act as mentors. These staff roles involve answering questions, providing advice, ensuring individuals are supported to take breaks and have access to food and water.

Support staff provide assistance for individuals to travel to work safely whether by public transport, car or taxi. This may involve funding for travel (i.e. taxis) or marking out a safe, direct route to work. Travel to work can be a challenge if individuals do not have adequate support. In some cases, WISE staff are able to put supports in place that have no cost attached, like touch points along the journey including cafes with friendly staff who can provide a welcoming or safe environment.

2. SPACE AND ENVIRONMENT



Part of the job matching process for Disability Enterprise staff is understanding if an employee with disability is comfortable in the Supported or Open Employment workspace. Having a mix of busy, active and calm workspaces available to employees supports different workspace preferences and mitigates workplace stress. Consideration also needs to be given to how employees have access to food and drink in any work or training environment.

SPACE AND ENVIRONMENT: Physical layout and wellbeing environment

- *Accessibility and adjustments*
- *Busy vs calm environments*
- *Food access*
- *Physical activity*

ACCESSIBILITY AND ADJUSTMENTS

Having enough space to move safely and freely around the workplace is vital. Having clear pathways for employees to access different rooms/spaces enables participation and productivity. WISEs that have business sites connected to accessible outdoor or to open-plan areas are better for personal health. This also requires external environments to be accessible.

Making spaces easy to access includes monitoring the number of people using spaces, for example, in a lunch area. Layouts that can be modified (i.e. moving tables, chairs, machinery), mean that employees can work in large or small teams and equipment can be moved to suit these different configurations. Being agile in this way can also help WISEs meet the needs of new/different contracted jobs. WISEs can test the layout of different spaces by seeking feedback from employees.

BUSY VS CALM ENVIRONMENTS

Supported Employees identified that working in busy environments can be a challenge, particularly if there is limited support. Busy means an active environment and involves working at fast pace, often with high levels of social interaction. A calm environment includes controlled social interaction, controlled noise levels and pace. Provision of protective equipment (i.e. sound-cancelling headphones) can help.

Feeling safe and secure in the workplace reduces stress levels and increases belonging and productivity. Consider what kinds of safe areas you will offer. Different kinds of safe areas can be generated through informal use by support staff and supported employees. While quiet rooms suit some people for breaks, relaxation and meetings/conversations, others enjoy opportunities to be more physically active. The right match can support wellbeing. Having designated

rooms for employees creates a safe space for time out and personal conversations. Having a designated room for employees also helps create a sense of ownership, belonging, and empowerment.

FOOD ACCESS

For people working in disability enterprises, nutrition and physical activity are not "extra wellbeing activities"; they are core job-quality and equity issues. It is vital for all employees to have access to food and lunch areas. Industrial work areas may have limited access to food. This can be an issue if a supported or open work setting does not have a staff cafeteria.

Supported employees can be partners in planning healthy food options. Examples include: food environment changes (healthy defaults for staff lunches/catering, easy-read labelling, water access, limiting high-sugar "default" options or small pricing/placement nudges for healthier items).

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Reviews of workplace health promotion repeatedly conclude that multi-component approaches are more effective, particularly when they combine individual supports with organisational and environmental changes. A settings approach focuses on how the workplace's routines, culture, and physical environment shape everyday choices (food options, break patterns, transport, opportunities to move), rather than relying on willpower or knowledge alone. The key message for staff is: if we want different health outcomes, we need to change the conditions of the day, not just provide information.

Movement can be built into the day (micro-break routines, short supported walks at breaks, task rotation to reduce long sitting, "active" roles where safe), and system supports (peer champions, supervisor coaching, and consistent prompts that support choice and autonomy). These actions work best when adapted to each worksite's context and developed with a flexible set of resources that support staff and employees can tailor together.

A sense of safety and relaxation may be generated by physical movement. Walking and/or talking with someone may help to lower stress. Alternatively, being in the car (as part of a work role or a calm-down time) can be a space of safety for some.



3. CULTURE

An organisational culture of care, inclusivity and genuine collaboration is empowering for everyone. Culture is crafted by people — from your leadership and support staff to your supported employees, your unique combination of business and social goals, the WISE space and environment, and the industry you connect to. A culture of recognition, working together and valuing each other supports wellbeing.

CULTURE: Shared values and everyday practices

- Purposeful roles
- Inclusivity and belonging
- Holistic approach
- Tailored support
- Staff retention and knowledge
- Healthy work-life balance

PURPOSEFUL ROLES

Purposeful and meaningful work enables all employees to utilise their strengths and skills, and align their values with their occupation, often in pursuit of a personal goal. 'Living a purposeful life enables us to find a sense of meaning, and it is what brings us happiness and fulfillment' (Connect Ability). Organisations can support purposeful work by understanding employees' skills, goals, and passions and assisting them to pursue these in supported and open work settings. Meaningful employment includes 'hands-on learning and education in workforce settings' (Explore VR).

INCLUSIVITY AND BELONGING

WISE value diversity in disability, age, gender, culture, language, faith, sexual identity, and relationship status. By fostering an inclusive and disability-aware culture, WISE can create spaces of belonging and provide emotional and practical support for all employees.

Everyone has good and bad days. It is important to acknowledge when someone is struggling in the workplace so they are not faced with unrealistic work expectations.

Putting pressure on someone on a bad day can exacerbate stress levels, or worse, impact upon their health and wellbeing. A range of understandings are core to the culture essential in a WISE-Ability model: Difference, Calm, Accepting, and Positivity. Relationships in the workplace are important and there is a need to keep an eye out for any signs of conflict that could interfere with performance at work.

A culture of support can be established in the first week of employment. For example, supported employees can be matched with a Buddy on their first day of employment. The Buddy might be a support staff or a more experienced supported employee. The Buddy can induct the new employee, have lunch with them, answer any questions they might have, and introduce them to other team members.

HOLISTIC APPROACH

Understanding each person and providing in-depth, tailored support is important. Support staff (including supervisors and team leaders) who are private and respectful, provide great support. Support staff can provide day-to-day guidance, mentoring, ensure work-life balance, and connect individuals and services outside of work to ensure wellbeing. If there are multiple sites within the WISE, it is important that support staff stay in communication with one another so that there is a common understanding of employee support requirements.

TAILORED SUPPORT

Tailored support means matching supports, environment, and equipment to individual requirements. A deep understanding of the employee with disability means that support staff are able to pre-empt needs and challenges that may arise during training and the workday. Providing tailored support also means having an understanding of the support services employees are connected to. This may include family and friends who play an important role in the support network.

STAFF RETENTION AND KNOWLEDGE

Retaining highly skilled support staff is important. Staff who have developed strong networks and knowledge of individual employees are able to problem-solve and provide personalised support. These staff members can quickly identify appropriate network contacts for different purposes (either support or business purposes), and have built trust and understanding with supported employees and with business partners.

Retaining knowledgeable staff means retaining organisational knowledge. Through their relationships, staff have knowledge about individual employees, which contributes to employee productivity.

HEALTHY WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Supported employees participate in a range of activities outside of work. Support staff (including supervisors) can help by matching workload commitments with external programs, duties, and leisure networks. The right balance of working hours is required for personal health, social and recreational activity, and professional productivity. Support staff create a healthy work-life balance by ensuring the appropriate amount of work hours related to different needs and context, such as young people transitioning from school to employment.



4. RELATIONSHIPS

Disability Enterprises focused on supporting the employment goals of people with disability require strong relationships with both customers (that is, businesses and customers who purchase goods and services from the WISE) and other potential employers. In addition, people external to the organisation (for example, employers, education providers, other stakeholders) play an important role in providing support. They can reinforce and broaden social and financial goals and help build organisational culture. Creating relationships with commercial partners opens up funding opportunities. Strong relationships can intersect with WISE programs, leading to further training and employment opportunities.

RELATIONSHIPS: Partnerships with key stakeholders

- **Trusting relationships**
- **Community-facing**
- **Shared goals for pathways**

TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS

Having trusting relationships at the WISE between support staff and supported employees creates a safe environment. Employees know that they can turn to support staff when they need to address issues both within and external to the workplace. Trusting relationships mean that support staff and supported employees can work through workplace issues and dynamics efficiently.

Valuing each employee's abilities creates a culture of respect. Support staff and supported employees share in a culture of mutual respect and appreciation by, for instance, listening to one another. A respectful work environment means that you are given an appropriate amount of time to do the task without being pressured, and that you have the right equipment, training, and support to do the job.

Establishing a relationship of trust with your business partners ensures that employees have their rights and requirements met. Your organisation might opt to have a support staff member on site who serves as a 'go-to' person for supported employees working in external businesses or starting work with a new open employer.

COMMUNITY-FACING

Many Disability Enterprises are 'externally-facing', which creates opportunities for supported employees to be in community settings. Being community-facing means creating structured, supported opportunities for employees to be visible and active in everyday community settings, not only in "disability-specific" spaces. This can include delivering services or contracts on customer sites, operating pop-up or public-facing activities (for example, cafes, markets, events), participating in community-based training, and building regular contact with local businesses, customers and community members.

Community-facing work can be planned so it is safe and low-stress: has clear roles and routines, predictable travel and arrival processes, a known staff buddy or support person, and agreed quiet times for coaching and debriefing. Done well, it builds confidence, social connection and work identity, and creates real relationships that can later translate into job trials, hybrid roles, or Open Employment pathways.

SHARED GOALS FOR PATHWAYS

Building shared goals and knowledge involves going on a journey with your business partners and stakeholders to break down barriers. This bridging work helps to identify employment transition opportunities and build appropriate supports, preparing a pathway for supported employees into Open Employment.

Work with partners to set up an induction process for supported employees who are moving to or getting work experience in Open Employment. This might include: briefings for all staff to build teamwork and a strengths-based culture, planning for when the supported employee will be on site (i.e. what times of the year provide the right environment to host a supported employee? When are the low-stress, quiet times of the year where you can provide more coaching than usual?).

5. FINANCE AND FUNDING



Understanding the WISE cost structure and having a commercially competitive (high quality, fair price) offering is vital to sustainability. Long-term grant funding, multi-year contracts and/or repeat customers can support success. Choosing the right industry and balancing social and business goals is vital for financial sustainability. A key WISE financial challenge is balancing customer demand, growing/scaling, and, at the same time, transitioning skilled supported employees into Hybrid/Open Employment.

FINANCE AND FUNDING:

- **Quality focused and diverse business offerings**
- **Using NDIS funding flexibly**
- **Managing impact costs**

QUALITY FOCUSED AND DIVERSE BUSINESS OFFERINGS

A culture of high-quality products/services is essential for building meaningful relationships, reputation, and social purpose. Employees experience meaningful and purposeful work when they are invested in the team, goals, daily operations, and success of the business. Employees feel proud when their work is high quality and valued by customers of the business.

Running multiple businesses or enterprises in key industries can help to secure relationships, jobs, and contacts with a range of partners. This diversification can support overall financial sustainability, particularly if one business is operating in a financially high-risk industry.

USING NDIS FUNDING FLEXIBLY

NDIS funding makes it possible for supported employees to enter a WISE (and Open Employment) and develop skills at their own pace.

- **Individual NDIS funding:** Can be used to fund employment support activities both within the Disability Enterprise, and along the Pathway to Employment. Individuals can use their NDIS funding in Open and Hybrid Employment arrangements. Hybrid employment is where the person works in both the Disability Enterprise and in Open Employment. Funding for Hybrid and Open Employment can be challenging and requires careful planning to ensure individuals transition in a sustainable way.
- **Seeking a Plan Review:** Individuals do not always have adequate funding in their plans to achieve their employment goal or for the support they require. In this case a Plan Review can be requested. Adequate funding significantly contributes to supports that can be provided in Open Employment settings.

- **Using NDIS funding flexibly:** Use of NDIS funding for supports is limited by the NDIS line items that are included in individual Plans. An NDIS plan often includes line items related to employment in Core Supports and Capacity Building areas. Disability Organisations may be able to use funding flexibly, for instance if an individual does not have employment-specific line items, they may have funding in other areas related to Social and Community Participation that may be able to be used for employment that increases social inclusion and participation.
- **Working with other service providers:** Inclusive Employment Australia providers (these used to be called Disability Employment Services— DES) may be able to fill support gaps in the employment pathway. It is important to build relationships with local providers and access their support as appropriate.

MANAGING IMPACT COST

WISE organisations manage social purpose activities that can affect business viability. These activities often involve additional costs. For example, when an organisation aims to create employment opportunities and build skills for people with disability, it may need to invest in training, extra supervision and support, workplace adjustments for accessibility, and support for transitions into Open Employment. Other businesses working in the same industry (for example, landscaping) will not have these same costs because they don't share the same social purpose. These extra costs of running a business with this social purpose are called 'impact costs' — that is, they are the cost of making a difference or achieving a social impact.

Social procurement incentives can be a draw card for customers and business partners to select the WISE as the supplier of goods and services. Social procurement is one way that WISEs are recognised for their social purpose and can leverage this to help them win new contracts or attract customers.



6. INDUSTRY

The type of industry you choose to operate in not only gives your WISE a particular direction and culture, but can impact finance, funding, and program outcomes. Aligning your social goals and strategy with the right industry or vehicle for change can help. Consider if the costs of operating in the industry are high or low; if they are high, how will you offset your expenses? You will need to be able to sell your product/services at a margin. It's important to find out if there is a market for the goods/services you are thinking of producing. What industry will you be connected to? For example, Warehousing, Farming, Horticulture, Building, Landscaping, or Hospitality. Consider how the industry will shape your training program. For example, do the industry regulations and conditions support on-the-job training or on-site training? What certification will you need to build a WISE in this industry? Will the industry area support other activities that benefit Individuals?

INDUSTRY: Engagement and values alignment with other businesses

- Diverse industry engagement
- Local labour market needs
- Hybrid Employment

DIVERSE INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

Disability Enterprises operate across multiple industries. There are both social and financial benefits in diversifying industry engagement: Disability Enterprises can service different industries and offer different goods/services to clients, and employees are exposed to different work environments and skill sets in different industry areas. For example, a Landscaping WISE involves on- and off-site contractual work, which means that employees experience a range of working environments outside the WISE premises.

Connecting with industries that have a culture of care, understanding, and are responsive to supported employee needs and passions supports wellbeing. Disability Enterprises can assist industries and employers to build their capacity for inclusion.

LOCAL LABOUR MARKET NEEDS

Consider if there are employment opportunities or other significant benefits for supported employees in your chosen industry area/s. Will employment opportunities be accessible and local or will people be expected to travel and commute? For instance, if you are a Nursery that teaches horticulture skills, consider if there are other opportunities in Open Employment in horticulture for individuals in the local area. Consider how the WISE can function as a talent pool for local industry.

Identifying local labour market needs must align with the skills and interests of individuals and training options available, either inside or outside the WISE.

Identifying local labour market needs is an important step in understanding employment options in your area. This requires gathering labor market information using traditional and real-time sources, as well as agency business relations information.

- **Traditional Labour Market Information (LMI):** Traditional Labour Market Information is the collection and analysis of data from federal, state, and local sources that reflects current economic conditions in a given area. Key metrics include employment levels, job growth projections, unemployment rates, average wages, education requirements, industry trends, and workforce demographics (Explore VR).
- **Real-time LMI:** Real-time LMI data can be sourced from online job postings to provide insights into employer demand, in-demand skills and credentials, job titles, industry trends, and educational requirements (Explore VR).

HYBRID EMPLOYMENT

There are different ways to find the best fit between an individual and a job. Hybrid Employment — working in both a supported setting (Disability Enterprise) and in Open Employment — may be suitable for some. A Hybrid Employment pathway allows individuals to develop work skills, confidence, networks, and relationships, and transition into Open Employment at their own pace.

A Hybrid Employment pathway provides individuals with the opportunity to transition into Open Employment gradually and work varying hours in both a WISE and Open Employment setting. This allows employees to develop work skills, confidence, networks, relationships, and transition into Open Employment at their own pace, or build a working life that involves both engagement types.

The journey to developing confidence and skills can take considerable time and has to be conducted at the pace that is appropriate for each person. The length of time this pathway takes can vary, for instance, from two weeks to a year or more.

7. POLICY, PROCEDURE AND PROCESS



Policies that provide guidance, and accessible, modifiable and flexible ways of working help to create an inclusive organisational culture. Clear procedures provide guidance, help with troubleshooting and can save valuable time.

POLICY, PROCEDURE AND PROCESS: Guidance and professional development on inclusive and flexible ways of working

- Job customisation process
- Flexibility and routine
- Support staff professional development
- Certified and accredited training

JOB CUSTOMISATION PROCESS

Customisation is based on building a deep knowledge about the individual's workstyle, preferences and support needs. Customising a job starts with conversations about what an individual is interested in doing, personal strengths, and existing skills. For instance, WISE have bespoke business systems tailored to supported employee skill sets and any needs arising from disability. These systems are particularly important where work practices have been modified to incorporate tactile forms of communication and task tracking. Having a defined set of principles, practices and procedures that are applied to specific activities (i.e. food preparation) can help to achieve businesses' goals.

Tailored business systems recognise the diverse skills of individuals and support both staff and supported employees to work in a relaxed and productive environment. For instance, in settings like a commercial kitchen, a whiteboard system can be used to manage tasks and allocate support staff resources. More specifically, the whiteboard can have different magnets and tags used to indicate tasks and task status. It is tactile and visual. When a new person starts work they can be shown the whiteboard and refer to it as needed. This system can be accompanied by a job instruction sheet that includes more detailed information on each task (e.g. specific instructions for how to peel, top, and tail a carrot). Established procedures like these help employees in each work location and with each work task.

FLEXIBILITY AND ROUTINE

Policies and procedures that support flexibility help all employees understand the sorts of flexibility available in the workplace to meet their diverse needs.

Flexibility can be provided through a structured work routine with flexible rosters with respect to hours and days for supported employees.

It is important to have a reliable structure and routine for supported employees. This may include the same arrival time, work team, equipment, and location to ensure consistency and productivity.

- **Daily structure:** Support staff plan the work schedule of supported employees in advance and then reassess work plans each day to ensure appropriate resourcing of jobs. Change in tasks or work type is discussed with supported employees ahead of time to enable appropriate time for adjustments and to minimise any change-related stress.
- **Support staff visibility:** It is important that supported employees know who they can approach for support, mentoring, and checking-in (i.e. a go-to person or the Support Team), or to report incidents (Supervisors and Managers). While the roles of these team members overlap at times, supported employees are clear that they have a designated number of support staff they can approach if needed.



8. PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT

WISEs include a strong focus on pathways to employment for participants. Structured supports and employer capacity building enable progress to Open Employment. The transition into Open Employment is not usually linear. A supported employee's journey will often involve movement back and forward between Open and Supported Employment settings as confidence and skills develop. WISEs support the individual along this journey, working with them and employers.

PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT: Structured supports and employer capacity building that enable progress to Open Employment.

- Task matching
- Pathway planning
- Dual-Customer Approach
- Open Employment and career goals
- Employer engagement and capacity building

TASK MATCHING

Consider personal challenges and strengths when matching supported employees to work and training. For instance, a social/team environment in a cafe can be a challenge for people who experience anxiety. Less socially interactive work can be an alternative. Some WISE have programs that are designed to build on technical strengths of employees with disability, such as computing or gaming skills.

Working with an employer to customise a job aims to capitalise on individual strengths and match these to an employer's needs. Alternatively, there may be particular areas of a job an individual has experience in, and these can be 'carved off' as a micro-job for this person.

PATHWAY PLANNING

Disability Enterprises work with people to plan employment pathways to match the person's interests, strengths and needs (i.e. through a focus on work exposure, experience, Hybrid Employment, using other services, and providing placement support).

While opportunities within the Disability Enterprise can be used to offer a variety of work roles and settings, Disability Enterprises can also set up diverse work experiences in Open Employment settings as part of trialling potential employment. Job shadowing, formal work experience and job trials are examples of this.

- Job shadowing allows supported employees to observe a staff member in a specific role to understand job responsibilities, tasks, and workplace culture.
- Work experience allows individuals to undertake a modified version of a job for a short period of time. There is support on the job as the goal is for a supported employee to learn and experience a new work environment.
- Job trials allow supported employees to work in a role and test out its suitability before committing to the job.

Jobs can also be custom-built for supported employees. Customising takes on different forms depending on the preferences of the individual and the employer. 'Informational Interviewing' is a good way of determining the role and match between an employer and employee. Informational Interviewing is a two-step process where the Service Provider meets the employer to discuss the business and the employer's goals.

The NDIS planning process is often with the individual, their nominee (i.e. family member or guardian), a Local Area Coordinator (LAC), and/or the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). A LAC helps individuals access the NDIS, specifically to create a NDIS plan. LACs who have a strong understanding of the individual and their employment goals, and who work closely with Disability Enterprises and other employment services, are able to provide strong support to individuals.

SUPPORT STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Policies guide the recruitment practices of the Disability Enterprise and the roles and skills that are needed. Employing support staff with skills in social and business operations, who communicate effectively and can empathise with others (i.e. have 'emotional intelligence') can help to support the goals and mission of your organisation. The hybrid (social + business) nature of the WISE means that support staff often bring industry skills, for example in hospitality, to the WISE and develop other skills on the job.

Just as supported employees require guidance in their roles, so too do support staff. Existing support staff can encourage new staff to be patient, understanding, responsive, and aware. The enterprise needs clear policies and procedures that guide support staff to understand the tasks involved in their role, which are likely to have changed over time.

CERTIFIED AND ACCREDITED TRAINING

As skills development becomes an increasingly important function of Disability Enterprises, clear policies are required to guide initial skills assessment, ongoing development planning, and the recognition and reward of skills in the workplace. Each enterprise needs to be clear on what training will be provided, how, and the procedures for making these fully accessible. Recognised forms of training (i.e. Certified) can be tailored to each employee. The trainer can take into consideration questions such as: 'Does the person understand? Do I need to offer different examples and ways of explaining this content?' Use of verbal, printed words and images, prompts, and digital tools including video can assist.

Credentialing can be offered in different forms including micro-credentials, degrees, and certificates.

Apprenticeships, often referred to as "earn and learn" models, create opportunities for both employers and individuals to define their roles within a formal contractual arrangement.

These programs are advantageous for both workers and employers because they have the potential to:

- increase workers' wages
- enhance workers' skill levels and productivity
- improve the overall profitability and productivity of employers
- decrease employee turnover
- create positions driven by industry needs (Explore VR).

Other useful services include:

- **Support Coordinator and hands-on support:** Support coordinators play a valuable role in making sure NDIS plans include all the resources needed to support employment pathways. They liaise across networks to oversee appropriate supports are in place.
- **Inclusive Employment Australia (IEA) services:** Individuals can be linked with an Inclusive Employment Australia provider, formerly called Disability Employment Services (DES), to assist with their employment journey. IEA can be used to fill support gaps in the employment pathway, including if an individual has insufficient NDIS funding. This is the case where organisations report that Core funding does not offer enough for employment pathways and that Capacity Building funding is preferable. The work of the WISE and IEA can intersect and complement each other.

DUAL-CUSTOMER APPROACH

The Employment Pathways approach is similar to what is known in the US as the 'Progressive Employment Dual Customer Approach'. The Dual-Customer Approach has Client-focused and Employer focused components. Client-focused approaches involve understanding the interests and goals of individuals with disability.

VR Explore recommend the following Employer-focused components:

- **Establishing a "Business as Customer" delivery system:** Engaging with employers is approached as a sales strategy aimed at addressing both their current and future employment needs.
- **Employer risk reduction options:** This includes liability and workers' compensation coverage for employers.
- **Employer tracking database:** A live database of employers that includes specific details about each employer and their availability for providing work experiences.

The Dual-customer Approach centres around the employer and the jobseeker with disability. The extent to which an organisation focuses on either the employer or the individual will vary based on the organisational style.

OPEN EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER GOALS

Employment pathways can be supported by informal or formal processes. The most reliable first step in any employment journey is understanding individual skills, interests, and support needs before marking out career options.

Some approaches used by Disability Enterprises to get to know supported employees are:

- **'Everyday discovery':** Through this day-to-day process, support staff and supported employees work out what individuals are interested in doing for training and work. Learning about someone's interests, goals, passion, individual work style, and how they work best can help when matching a person with a task, job, business, and industry. This process can unfold on-the-job over time with an individual, support staff and/or the Wraparound Support Team.
- **Formal Discovery process:** A formal Discovery typically focuses on individual interests, goals, and strengths, which are later used to inform potential matches to industries and jobs in Hybrid or Open Employment. This process might be NDIS-funded. Family and friends play an important role in Discovery and can help individuals to understand their own strengths and interests, and identify links to potential jobs. Discovery can become a continuous process and involve 're-Discovery'.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Employers can benefit from clear guidance on how to recruit and support individual employee strengths.

The process of building networks, relationships, individual confidence, and skills requires a partnership approach between families, service providers, and employers.

WISE engage with potential employers through personal and professional networks and by reaching out on behalf of the supported employee. This provides an opportunity for employer education and a shared understanding of how an inclusive workplace can be created step-by-step. Knowledge sharing about how to create an inclusive environment in the workplace is pivotal for successful employment experiences. All individuals are different, so discussing support needs at the outset can create a personalised approach to employment.

Setting up expectations and developing a shared understanding with an employer as part of the job negotiation process can ensure that the employer feels confident and the employee feels appropriately supported in a new workplace.