

What Is Customized Employment?

From the US Dept. of Labor, Office on Disability Employment Policy

Customized employment is a way of helping a person find a job through developing a more personal relationship between a job candidate and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both. ***It is based on an individualized match between the strengths, needs, and interests of a job seeker and the business needs of an employer.*** Customized Employment uses an individualized approach to employment planning and job development — one person at a time . . . one employer at a time.



Customized employment will often take the form of:

- **Task reassignment:** Some of the job tasks of existing workers are given to a new employee. This lets the existing worker complete more of the central work of his/her job. Usually the tasks given to a new person create a new job, with a new job description that is based on tasks that need to be done, but are currently unmet in the workplace.
- **Job carving:** An existing job description is modified — containing one or more, but not all, of the tasks from the original job description.
- **Job sharing:** Two or more people share the tasks and responsibilities of a job based on each other's strengths.
- **Self-Employment:** Customized self-employment allows for an individual to get help to create their own small business. The business is based on the strengths and dreams of an individual and something that is needed by the local community. It includes individualized planning and support strategies needed for success.

Customized Employment works because it is not a program but a way of thinking and working that uses strategies that support both sides of the labor force: Supply (job candidates, workers) and Demand (employers). Projects nationwide have shown positive outcomes not only for people with significant disabilities, but for a wide range of job seekers.

For employers, Customized Employment can:

- (1) **improve productivity** so that staff can get more of their central job duties done during the work day; and
- (2) **provide a more efficient business operation** by helping all staff get more things done to help the business. Plus, when workers are doing tasks that match their strengths and skills, they are more likely to be satisfied and stay in their job.



What Happens During the Customized Employment Process?

A team will work with the job seeker and their family on different steps towards getting hired. The people on the team will include a teacher, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Employment Specialist, and others. They work through these steps:

1. **Discovery** - learning about the person by visiting his/her home, planning activities in the community so the person can show what they can do, and talking to family, neighbors and friends to learn more about the person's interests, skills, and abilities. Discovery helps to identify the vocational themes that fit the person.
2. **Exploring local businesses** – the team will find local businesses that fit with the person's vocational themes and set up 'informational interviews' with business owners to learn more about their business, get advice for the job seeker, and observe possibilities in the workplace.
3. **Negotiating with employer** – when a possible good job match is found, the team will work with the employer to talk about how the person could benefit their business. The end result is a job that meets the interests and abilities of the person and the business needs of the employer.
4. **Support to be successful in the workplace** – The team will work to find out what the person may need to be able to do the job tasks well. Different kinds of support can be put in place to help the person be successful in the workplace.



Customized Employment works because the focus is on one person at a time . . . one business at a time.

More information and to see how Customized Employment can work for people with disabilities:

- **ODEP** resources and videos on Customized Employment:
<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/CustomizedEmployment.htm>
- “Great Hires” (video) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCf7cuca7iU>
- “Expect Me to Succeed, I Will” - Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities video link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ls9jJKpysg0>