

# ***Employment Transition*** ***for People with Disability***



## **A Pathway to Employment Framework**

Assisting school leavers with disability to transition into meaningful work

# About the Framework

The Pathways to Employment Framework provides participants of the NDIS My Way trial with evidence-based and best practice considerations, activities and strategies towards achieving their goal of post school work. The framework is designed to assist My Way Coordinators, school leavers with disability and their families during the development and implementation of their My Way Plan. It is accompanied by resources to provide useful information and contacts that will assist the school leavers in securing work.

The framework is influenced by the work of P. D. Kohler<sup>1</sup>, whose research on the collective experience and observations of people with disability, schools, community and industry demonstrates that effective post school transition requires student focused planning, student development, community involvement, program structure and interagency collaboration. The transition strategies will be informed by evidence-based practices and aligned to the vision and principles of the NDIS My Way model of disability funding and support.

The need to engage in transition pathway planning during the early years of secondary schooling is an important component of the framework. It is recommended that students with disability should be engaged in self-directed goal setting that is driven by increased expectations, access to natural supports, self-determination and collaborative practice throughout their secondary schooling. When these essential elements of the pathway to employment framework are put into practice, and supported by well-structured development strategies, the likelihood of a successful employment outcome is significantly increased.

My Way Coordinators, school leavers with disability and their families are encouraged to consider the information, strategies and practices identified in this framework as a guide, and to discuss how incorporating these within individual My Way NDIS plans can improve the likelihood of a successful employment outcome.

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<sup>1</sup> Kohler, P.D. (1996). *Taxonomy for Transition Programming*. Champaign: University of Illinois.

# The Pathways to Employment Framework

## Overall Aim

Through employment pathway activities within NDIS My Way plans the school leavers will secure meaningful work of the nature and quantum of their choice.

## Encourage work as an outcome area within ‘My Way’ Plans

As the My Way model has the person central to planning and decision making about their goals and strategies towards these, the My Way Coordinator is well placed to support creative thinking about long term economic and vocational inclusion.

School leavers with disability may have already started some planning for their future while at school, so it makes sense to build upon these to assist in achieving their post school goals.

As employment and economic participation are not addressed specifically within the My Way Planning Framework this Pathway to Work Framework is designed to fill that gap by augmenting the existing planning framework, and providing useful information and resources to My Way Planning Coordinators, school leavers and their families.

This framework encourages the use of measurable goals towards achieving **meaningful work**. These measures include activities to do with employment, vocational education and training, and earned income. By encouraging the consideration of creative ideas, this framework will assist job seekers towards achieving meaningful employment and its associated independence and desired lifestyle.

This framework accommodates all the My Way Principles with particular relevance to the specific principles that:

- Planning will lead to an expansion of possibilities for the future and be based on the person’s wishes, capabilities and strengths.

- Planning will lead to a more satisfying and secure life and incorporate appropriate safe guards to address vulnerability, allowing the individual to take risks and make mistakes.
- Planning will be flexible outlining goals and strategies that are potentially achievable and sustainable and which are renewable and reviewable.

The My Way coordinator is encouraged to communicate opportunities identified within this framework with people with disability and their families, and to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to ensure the My Way plan is reflective of this best practice.

# Establishing a Pathway to Employment

## Planning Phase

Planning for a Pathway to Employment should commence at the beginning of secondary school, and be revisited regularly to include post school, vocational and employment activities. It is important for schools to be involved in these discussions as people with disability will often have taken part in some planning during school, and may even be engaged in workplace learning. The important question to answer during the planning phase is...

*What type of work does the school leaver with disability want to do?*

The school leaver and their family should be **actively involved** in the planning process. Some students will know what they want to do, and others may not be so sure. It is important to recognise that often what others may consider a good job for a person with disability may not be what that person actually enjoys, or that they are yet to experience the job they will enjoy and do not even know it exists. In some cases, the school leaver may have an unrealistic expectation of the job they would like, and need to assess why they wanted that job and what related jobs they have a realistic ability to perform.

As a first step, enable the student to conduct a self-assessment of strengths and interests, and use this information to determine career pathway options. This self-assessment must be driven by the student and their family, and explore:

- What the participant enjoys – this could include hobbies, passions and interests. Much of this information may already be contained within a My Way plan and can be used to identify jobs which may align to these interests.
- What they are good at/not so good at – in some cases, the student may have already begun planning with the school or family, or with other supports. They may have done some volunteering, workplace learning or demonstrated some skills around the house. The My Way Coordinator should facilitate discussions that involve all **key transition partners**, and seek their input as to

what the student does or does not enjoy, the skills and achievements they have demonstrated, or the barriers that have made things difficult.

- What types of jobs suit their skills and interests – encourage the student to explore options that suit their skills and interests. This could be something done by the school and incorporated into workplace learning. It could also be something the student does with their family or natural supports. The My Way Coordinator may suggest matching job opportunities that exist within the local community, and have the person with disability identify which of these opportunities is most attractive to them.

A range of **planning tools** (see appendix) are available to assist this process. These include the:

- Western Australia Individualised Services (WAIIS) Preplanning Toolkit;
- Endeavour Foundation – My Choices Tree; and
- National Disability Coordination Office – Get Ready for Study or Work.

Once a self-assessment has been conducted, the student, their family and all involved in their transition to employment should have a clearer picture of the desired work. This planning will identify the student's strengths and weaknesses in attaining this desired work, and can be utilised to better inform the **Goal Setting Phase**.



## Key Points:

- Start the 'transition to work' planning and activities during secondary school and build upon this for post school vocational and employment activities.
- Actively involve the school leaver and their family in the planning process using self-assessment of strengths and interest to determine career pathway.

- Actively support and encourage collaboration among all transition partners and or agencies.
- Involve the family as a primary partner in both transition planning and its implementation.

# Goal Setting Phase

The goal setting phase is an opportunity for the school leaver, My Way Coordinator and family to set a range of transition goals in response to the self-assessment. The person with disability should be given an opportunity to set goals which both address barriers to getting their preferred job and enable them to apply their skills and attributes in their preferred work setting. The aim should be to identify transition goals that expand upon the information obtained during the self-assessment, and develop goal statements in response to these which are:

## 1. Achievable

It is important that the person with disability is able to achieve the goals they set, to feel successful and to keep momentum during their transition. This will ensure their self-esteem is high and provide reinforcement for continuing their pathway, therefore increasing the chance of reaching the preferred employment outcome.

Some goals may seem too big to be achieved, or there may be doubts from family members about the ability of them to be achieved. These can be broken down into smaller goals that contribute to the bigger goal, making sure the individual still has high expectations on themselves but is also able to achieve success along the pathway.

**Example:** Tom has a significant intellectual disability and identified that he would like to work at Fiona Stanley Hospital as a chef. One of the barriers he and his family have identified was that he's unable to drive and doesn't know how to catch public transport. Tom lives in Joondalup, and although he is very keen to work at Fiona Stanley, there is some fear among his family that it is too far for him to travel alone on public transport. Tom's overall goal is to learn how to travel on public transport to Fiona Stanley Hospital which has been broken down into smaller achievable goals. First, he is going to learn to travel around Joondalup – to the shopping centre. Then he is going to learn how to travel to a neighbouring suburb – Warwick. And then if he is successful, he will learn to travel to Fiona Stanley Hospital.



## 2. Sustainable

It is important that in setting goals, attention is paid to ensuring that the factors impacting on that goal will make it sustainable into the future. These factors could include financial capabilities of the individual and family, the stability of the family or the level of support required to achieve the goal.

Sometimes situations may change that could not be anticipated and in these cases it is important to search for alternatives. If the goals or support attached to them are not sustainable, it will be impossible to attain and sustain employment.

**Example:** Tom was required to undertake a two-year pre-apprenticeship course. His family were unable to afford the cost of the training required for the position. Tom remained committed to his goal but chose to find a job doing some unskilled work until he could save enough money to afford the pre-apprenticeship course.

## 3. Incorporate a Measurable Outcome

The transition of a person with disability is strengthened by having clear measures of success in relation to the goals. At review of any plan, the young person, their family and My Way Coordinator should be able to demonstrate and celebrate the successes.

Measurable outcomes need to take into account the need to be achievable and sustainable. They could be as simple as attending all sessions of a training program or the number of times a person caught public transport to a destination by themselves.

**Example:** Tom recognised the need to learn how to use public transport and to do so is going to receive support from his support worker to practice using the transport system. To make sure they could measure whether this was being achieved, this goal was broken down into the outcomes and measures of success.

- Tom's goal – learn how to use the public transport system without needing help.

- Outcome – being able to travel throughout Joondalup under supervision of his support worker without requiring assistance.
- Outcome Measure – the number of destinations he was able to visit without needing support.



## Key Points:

- Use the information from the Planning Stage to inform areas of improvement that need to be addressed in order for successful transition to work.
- Encourage the school leaver to set goals that will develop areas of weakness, as well as opportunities to deliver on strengths.
- Work with the school leaver to set goals that are:
  - Achievable;
  - Sustainable; and
  - Measurable.
- Recognise and celebrate achievements to build self-esteem and encourage self-determination.

## Deciding Strategies Phase

Once the school leaver has conducted self-directed planning and identified a range of goals to give them the best opportunity at making a successful transition to employment, it is essential to discuss and explore the strategies which will enable outcome to be achieved. Each of the key transition partners have a role to play in delivering these strategies and all strategies will differ as per an individual's preferences and skills/barriers.

The first step in delivering successful support strategies during the transition to employment is to identify and use a suitable ***service provision model***.

Some students may be eligible for Disability Employment Service provider support to deliver a range of job readiness support, which is usually determined by a job capacity assessment arranged through the Department Of Human Services. Students who have been deemed not eligible for support through a Disability Employment Service may incorporate job readiness strategies into their My Way plan and source the relevant support through a local service provider.

Examples of best practice support strategies in the transition from school to work for young people with disability include:

### Self-esteem building programs

Provide the support necessary to attend self-esteem development programs. There are a range of different self-esteem building programs available in most local communities. These range from self-development camps, structured after-school programs and gender specific youth programs. These are a great way of developing confidence and self-esteem, and may also incorporate informal learning opportunities. Your local Council is a great place to find information about such programs, with examples being:

- Scouts WA;
- Leeuwin Ocean Adventure;

- Army/Navy Cadets; and
- Green Corps.

## **Self development**

A range of services exist to provide learning experiences through informal learning or formal courses, which are aimed at maximising the school leavers capacity to utilise the support available to them. These may be disability specific or non-disability, with examples being:

- Certificate I/II courses;
- Leadership WA Rising Leaders Program;
- Youth Advisory Councils; and
- Workshops with local peak bodies (find details about workshops from NDS WA).

## **Career information / career guidance**

Some young people may benefit from seeing a career counsellor to help them choose their career or identify the steps that need to be taken to reach their chosen job. Or alternatively, the young person could be supported to shadow someone in a similar role to find out what they do and if that job is for them. The support may be available through their school or local business, or support could be provided to access a private guidance counsellor or career advisor. Information about careers is available from a range of sources, including:

- Attending the annual Jobs and Skills Expo (Perth Convention Centre);
- Attending Local Supporting Youth Forums;
- Youth Centres;
- Private Guidance Counsellors/Life Coaches; and

- Local Work from Local Youth – Employer Guide.

## **Structured work experience**

Research confirms that structured work experience placement is the most likely activity to lead to a successful employment outcome. Work experience is an opportunity for a school leaver to promote their skills and abilities to a potential employer, and as such work experience placements should be at workplaces that are desirable to the young person and match their skills and abilities. To find out about opportunities for work experience, you could contact:

- Local Schools;
- Ticket to Work Network;
- Local Chamber of Commerce and Industry; or
- Family members.

## **Job customisation**

Job customisation involves reallocating certain tasks or duties of a particular role to other team members, or creating customised role for a particular candidate. Whilst it is representative of a small proportion of opportunities in the workplace, it can be very effective for people with significant disability or impairments.

## **Workplace modifications**

Some young people will require modifications to the workplace to make it more accessible and enable them to do their job. For young people who are eligible to access Disability Employment Services (DES), Job Access can support with funding to undertake these modifications. However, if a young person is not eligible for DES, they may need to seek alternative funding sources such as:

- Independent Living Centre – Equipment for Living Grant; or
- National Disability Services – Community Living and Participation Grant.

## **Self employment**

Consider whether the individual could achieve the goals through self-employment, and provide access to the types of learning and development necessary to be successfully self-employed. This may include:

- Business mentoring, or
- Providing access to Small Business Centres for support and guidance.

## **Certified and uncertified training**

Research suggests that people with disability who have an apprenticeship, traineeship or job specific training are more likely to successfully transition to employment. Supporting young people to complete these certified and uncertified training opportunities is a great way to improve the likelihood of reaching the desired job. This support might include:

- Individual and co-worker mentoring;
- Allocated support for Educational Assistance; and
- Occupational therapy / physiotherapy.

## **Parents as partners in transition to work**

Build the capacity of parents to understand and negotiate the disability employment sector. This could be in the form of information and resources available through a range of websites or connecting with other parents of people with disability transitioning from school to work. Consider what can be done to enable the parent to complete these activities.

## **Volunteer work**

Volunteering is a great way to build skills and develop the experience necessary to get a job. It's also an opportunity to develop confidence and receive informal

learning from peers and colleagues. To access volunteer positions, provide access to your local Volunteer Resource Centre.

## Peer supports

Enable opportunities for young people to interact and socialise with other young people going through the transition to employment. Knowing that other young people are experiencing the same anxieties and pressures will allow the school leaver to know they are not alone, and they may also share experiences and learnings. Opportunities for peer support include:

- Youth Centres;
- Local Gaming Organisations;
- Alternative to Employment Programs; and
- Riding for the Disabled.



## Key Points:

- Incorporate into the plan the support necessary to take part in proven best practice activities that will increase the likelihood of an effective transition to employment.
- Identify the model of service provision that the young person is eligible for, use this model to source activities that are available and identify activities that must be further supported.
- Consider enabling the school leaver to take part in:
  - Work Experience.
  - Self-Development Courses.
  - Self-employment.

- Peer support networks.
  - Certified and uncertified training.
  - Appreciate and traineeships.
  - Volunteering.
- Provide opportunities to build the capacity of parents, family and friends to support the young person with their transition to employment.



## Indicators of Success Phase

The success of a pathway to employment plan cannot be measured by whether the school leaver was successful at getting a job, obtaining work experience or meeting the objectives detailed within the plan. Many external pressures may impact on the ability of these strategies and activities to be met, including high unemployment rates, employer attitudes, changes in health or mental health for the person with disability or a family breakdown, to name but a few.

Whilst the overall goal of the plan is to achieve those objectives, and ultimately lead to an employment outcome, the quality of the plan should be measured by the degree to which it has been aligned to the **essential elements** of a successful transition. More specifically, a pathway to employment plan cannot be considered successful unless the young person with disability is satisfied that all reasonable and necessary supports were provided and the process undertaken in a manner that is consistent with these essential elements.

### Essential Elements to a Successful Pathway to Employment

As a student progresses through their education and begins planning what they want to do when they leave school it is important to develop an infrastructure around them and act in a way that will give them the greatest opportunity to succeed. Doing so will improve the likelihood of a positive work outcome by encouraging and enabling students with disability to get the most from their pathway. This is particularly important for students with disability because of additional barriers they may face, including perceptions of their abilities and difficulty in accessing mainstream services.

The essential ingredients to ensuring an effective pathway to employment for students with disability include:



SELF-DETERMINATION



HIGH EXPECTATIONS



COLLABORATION



NATURAL SUPPORT

## Self determination

The student must feel they have been afforded the ability to choose the types of work they wish to do when they leave school. It is important to encourage students to be actively involved in this decision-making, and support them in aligning the types of work they can do to the passions and values they hold. Most importantly, do not underestimate the deflating impact of the word no. Find solutions to problems together and have a say yes attitude.

## High expectations

The student must feel they have been encouraged to be the best that they can be which can be difficult for a student with a disability. Many people will not understand the abilities and attributes a student with a disability may possess, and therefore will have low expectations of what they can achieve. Often it is those closest to a student with disability who doubt their capabilities for work, leading to low aspirations. It is important to discuss with the student what is next, to encourage them to think bigger, and for them to be held accountable for reaching their goals.

## **Natural support networks**

The student must be satisfied that they have been provided access to natural support networks. Transition from school to work is emotionally and physically difficult for all students. For a student with disability, this impact can be compounded by the emotional and physical difficulties already being experienced. It is imperative that the support has been provided that is necessary for students to engage with their peers, with their family and other natural supports that may be present in their lives during the transition to work.

## **Collaboration between key transition partners**

It must be demonstrated that all identified key transition partners have been engaged with and supported the plan. The transition period from school to work is stressful and intimidating for all students and their families. For students with disability this transition is made more difficult because of the diversity of their needs. It is important that people and organisations work closely together to provide holistic support to the individual and maximise the likelihood of school leavers with disability achieving meaningful employment. Partners should communicate openly by establishing processes that develop and maintain relationships, encourage ongoing review and enable involvement of the person and extended family.

Key Transition Partners include:



## Ticket to work

In some instances, the ability to engage with Key Transition Partners is impeded by the lack of effective collaboration structures within the community. The Ticket to Work model provides a framework and resources to establish effective collaboration with the key transition partners necessary for an effective transition to work for school leavers with disability. To find out more about implementing a ticket to work network in your community, visit [www.tickettowork.org.au](http://www.tickettowork.org.au)



## Key Points:

- The quality of the transition to employment pathway is measured not by achieving a job outcome, or meeting the prescribed activities, but by the degree to which the school leaver with disability feels the plan met the essential elements to ensuring the pathway to employment will be successful.

- The essential elements for ensuring a pathway to employment will be successful include:
  - Self-determination – the young person was at the forefront of all decision-making.
  - High expectation – the young person was encouraged to be the best that they felt they could be.
  - Natural support networks – the young person feels they were able to access their natural support networks, including family, friends and providers.
  - Collaboration between key transition partners – the young person's experience was that all transition partners necessary for them to succeed were working together and committed to their success.

# Appendix

## Planning Resources for School Leavers

- [WA's Individualised Services – Preparing for Planning Tool](#)
- [Endeavour Foundation – Fund My Choices Planning Tree](#)
- [Getting Ready for Study or Work – a Guide for School Leavers](#)

## NDS Transition to Work Resources

- [National Disability Services – Employability Before Disability Case Studies, and Local Work for Local Youth Employer Guide](#)

## Resources for Parents

- [National Disability Coordinator Officers \(Facilitating transitions from school to study and work for people with disability\)](#)
- [Get Ready for Study or Work – Getting Young People with Disabilities ready for Study or Work – A Guide for Parents](#)

# The Pathways to Employment Framework



## Planning

Start the 'transition to work' planning and activities during secondary school and build upon this for post school vocational and employment activities.

Actively involve the school leaver and their family in the planning process using self-assessment of strengths and interest to determine career pathway.

Actively support and encourage collaboration among all transition partners and or agencies.

Involve families as a primary partner in both transition planning and its implementation.



## Goal Setting

Use the information from the Planning Stage to inform areas of improvement that need to be addressed in order for successful transition to work.

Encourage the school leaver to set goals that will develop areas of weakness, as well as opportunities to deliver on strengths.

Work with the school leaver to set goals that are a) Achievable, b) Sustainable, and c) Measurable.

Recognise and celebrate achievements to build self-esteem and encourage self-determination.



## Deciding Strategies

Incorporate into the plan the support necessary to take part in proven best practice activities that will increase the likelihood of an effective transition to employment.

Identify the model of service provision that the young person is eligible for, and use this model to source activities that are available and identify activities that must be further supported.

Consider enabling the school leaver to take part in Work Experience, Self-Development Courses, Self-employment, Peer support networks, Certified and uncertified training, Apprenticeships and Traineeships, Workplace Modifications (funding) and Volunteering.

Provide opportunities to build the capacity of parents, family and friends to support the young person with their transition to employment.



## Indicators of Success

The quality of the transition to employment pathway is measured not by achieving a job outcome, or meeting the prescribed activities, but by the degree to which the school leaver with a disability feels the plan met the essential elements to ensuring the pathway to employment will be successful.

The essential elements for ensuring a pathway to employment will be successful include Self-Determination, High Expectation, Natural Support Networks and Collaboration between Key Transition Partners