How Hiring Employees with Disabilities Can Benefit Your Organization

Resource Type: Articles

Topic: HR Risk and Employment Practices

Hiring employees with disabilities brings new perspectives to your nonprofit and helps you meet the needs of the community you serve. Many resources exist to help your organization become an outstanding employer of people with disabilities. Here are some of the ways that work can benefit your nonprofit.

First, the basics: Federal law requires organizations to treat candidates and employees who have disabilities equitably. Employers cannot discriminate in hiring or employment under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Any employer with 15 or more employees must provide reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities unless doing so would create an undue hardship.

When your organization hires workers with disabilities, you tap into a robust talent pool. More than 25 percent of American adults have a disability, but only 19 percent of people with disabilities participate in the U.S. workforce.

Hiring and retaining workers with disabilities helps your team become more inclusive. An inclusive culture benefits an organization's ability to innovate and to work with all populations. The more perspectives your team includes and values, the more capably your organization will deliver services and execute on its mission.

Employees with disabilities bring diverse perspectives that help your organization better reflect communities you serve. If your organization lacks the perspective of people with disabilities, you run the risk that your services won't be inclusive or meet the needs of persons you serve who have disabilities.

Financial assistance exists to help organizations hire people with disabilities. The Work Opportunity Credit can provide eligible employers with a tax credit on as much as the first $6,000 of first-year wages for a new employee who has faced barriers to employment, such as a disability. Multiple states offer tax incentives to hire and train employees with disabilities. And if your organization hires and trains a veteran with a disability, you may be eligible for financial assistance from the Department of Veterans' Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Program.

Support exists to help organizations recruit, hire, and train people with disabilities. Workforce Development Boards help organizations strengthen their workforces, including through connections to skilled employees with disabilities. American Job Centers can help recruit, hire, and train employees with disabilities. And job coaches provide one-on-one training to assist employees with disabilities in learning job duties.

The employees with disabilities you recruit today could play a key role on your future teams. Employers from Pizza Hut to Washington Mutual have reported that the turnover rate among their employees with disabilities is a fraction of the turnover rate for employees without disabilities. Having long-term employees can benefit morale for your whole team.

Employing team members with disabilities can inspire community members to engage with your

nonprofit. Many people and organizations want to support individuals with disabilities when they choose where to receive services or who to partner with in the community. If your organization does the work to recruit and retain employees with disabilities, you could make powerful new relationships and connections that stretch outside your nonprofit.

Resources exist to help your organization make reasonable modifications for employees with disabilities. Job modifications help employees with disabilities perform tasks that are essential for their jobs. Modifications might add ramps to an office, adjust an employee's work schedule, provide an employee a screen reader, and much more. Most modifications cost employers nothing, according to the Job Accommodation Network (JAN). On average, modifications that do cost money have a one-time expense of $500. JAN and the U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission offer resources to help employers craft modifications for employees with disabilities.

Additional Resources

- Employers Embracing Employees With Disabilities – RespectAbility
- Hire Employees With Disabilities – U.S. Small Business Administration
- Job Coaches – Job Accommodation Network
- America Works: How To Hire Workers With Disabilities – U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- The Tax Incentives For Hiring Employees With Disabilities – ADP