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Employment for All: A Model for Integrating Persons with Intellectual Disabilities into the Workforce



Parents Federation of
Persons with Intellectual
Disabilities - Nepal

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Forewords

Persons with intellectual disabilities have long been marginalized in the workforce, facing significant barriers that hinder their right to meaningful employment. At PFPID-Nepal, we firmly believe that employment is not just a means of livelihood but a fundamental right that fosters dignity, self-reliance, and social inclusion. With great pride and commitment, we present *Employment for All: A Model for Integrating Persons with Intellectual Disabilities into the Workforce*—a strategic framework designed to bridge the existing gaps in access to sustainable work opportunities. This model has been developed through rigorous research, expert consultations, and firsthand experiences gained from piloting employment initiatives for persons with intellectual disabilities. It incorporates the perspectives of persons with intellectual disabilities, their families, and employers.

The model emphasizes the importance of tailored training, workplace accommodations, and employer sensitization to create inclusive and supportive work environments. By addressing both the supply and demand sides of employment, we aim to empower persons with intellectual disabilities to contribute meaningfully to society while encouraging businesses to embrace diversity and inclusivity in their workforce. Our journey toward inclusive employment would not have been possible without the collective efforts of our dedicated partners, stakeholders, and supporters. We extend our sincere gratitude to Lev – Inclusion Denmark for their continuous encouragement and support.

As we take this step forward, we urge government agencies, private sector entities, and civil society organizations to adopt and implement this model in their employment practices. Additionally, PFPID-Nepal welcomes feedback on its implementation, as your insights will be invaluable for further evaluation and refinement. Together, we can create a society where persons with intellectual disabilities are recognized for their abilities rather than their disabilities—where equal opportunities are not just an aspiration but a reality.

We invite you to explore this model, integrate its principles, and join us in our mission to ensure that persons with intellectual disabilities enjoy their right to employment, self-determination, and a life of dignity.

Raju Basnet

President, PFPID-Nepal

Acknowledgment

PFPID-Nepal extends its heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to the development and implementation of Employment for All: A Model for Integrating Persons with Intellectual Disabilities into the Workforce. This initiative represents a collective effort to create meaningful employment opportunities for persons with intellectual disabilities, ensuring their right to work with dignity and inclusion.

We sincerely acknowledge Pragati Khadka, the primary writer of this document, whose dedication as a Job Placement Officer played a crucial role in shaping this model. Her direct involvement in the employment initiative, along with her commitment to advocating for inclusive workplaces, has been instrumental in bridging the gap between job seekers with intellectual disabilities and potential employers.

Our deepest appreciation goes to Bhusan Raj Raut, Project Manager at PFPID-Nepal, for his leadership and unwavering commitment as the main focal person of this project. His strategic guidance and dedication have been pivotal in driving this initiative forward.

We are immensely grateful to the employers who opened their doors to persons with intellectual disabilities, recognizing their potential and fostering inclusive workplaces. Likewise, we extend our sincere thanks to the parents who supported this initiative, believing in their children's capabilities and advocating for their right to employment.

A special acknowledgment goes to Pernille Tind Simmons, Program Manager at Lev – Inclusion Denmark, whose direct contributions in implementing this project and constant guidance in developing this model have been invaluable. Her expertise, encouragement, and unwavering support have strengthened our efforts and helped us refine a sustainable approach to inclusive employment.

We would also like to express our profound appreciation to Lev – Inclusion Denmark for their partnership and continuous support in making this initiative a reality. Lastly, we acknowledge the dedication of all stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector entities, and civil society organizations, who share our vision of an inclusive workforce.

Your collective efforts bring us closer to a society where persons with intellectual disabilities are valued for their abilities and given equal opportunities to thrive. Together, we are building a future where employment is truly for all.

Thank You

PFPID-Nepal

Abbreviation and Acronyms

INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
ID	Intellectual Disability
MO's	Member Organizations
NGO	Non- Governmental Organization
OPD	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Org	Organization
PFPID	Parent Federation of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities
SWOC	Strength Weakness Opportunities and Challenges
SWOT	Strength Weakness Opportunities and Threats
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Preamble

This employment model has been developed by the Parent Federation of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (PFPID-Nepal) based on experiences and insights gained from implementing the Blossom Project in partnership with Lev – Inclusion Denmark. Through this initiative, 17 persons with intellectual disabilities (IDs) were placed in various workplaces, out of which 10 successfully secured employment. Different approaches and strategies were experimented with during the process, leading to valuable learnings that formed the foundation of this model. This is the first formal initiative in Nepal to promote the employment of persons with intellectual disabilities.

This model is designed for use by Member Organizations of PFPID-Nepal but can also be used by various other stakeholders, including private sector companies, government bodies, INGOs/NGOs, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), and individuals. While it is specifically tailored for employment of persons with intellectual disabilities, it can also serve as a reference for broader disability inclusion efforts. However, not all steps in this model may be applicable to every stakeholder or to all persons with disabilities.

This employment model is an inclusive model that focuses on:

- Integration into mainstream workforce
- Equal opportunities in regular job settings
- Minimal differentiation between employees with and without disabilities

Benefits to Society Inclusive employment models provide broader societal advantages:

- Reduced economic burden on social services
- Increased workforce diversity
- Breaking down social barriers and stigma
- Promoting understanding and acceptance of neurodiversity

The model is structured into five steps:

Steps 1–4 focus entirely on preparing, integrating and retaining persons with intellectual disabilities in employment. Apart from PFPID's Member Organizations and PFPID-Nepal itself, INGOs, NGOs, and OPDs, these steps are also relevant for private sector organizations, government bodies, and individuals looking to foster inclusive employment. Steps 1-4 are specifically designed to support the employment of persons with intellectual disabilities and can therefore also be applied by individual parents, as they focus on a micro-level approach.

Step 5 emphasizes networking and advocacy and is designed for PFPID Member Organizations and PFPID, INGOs, NGOs, OPDs, and other organizations or groups that would like to use

positive examples in their advocacy for an inclusive employment sector in Nepal. It is included in the model with the belief that once the first four steps successfully lead to employment, advocacy should follow to scale and replicate this approach.

Finally, PFPID-Nepal would like feedback. It focuses on gathering feedback and evaluating the model's effectiveness. PFPID-Nepal retains full ownership of this model and welcomes input from stakeholders who implement it.

Context

Employment is a crucial aspect of personal development, independence, and quality of life for persons with intellectual disabilities. The right employment model can transform lives by providing opportunities for personal growth and independence. Employment offers persons with intellectual disabilities a chance to develop important life skills, build self-confidence, and achieve greater personal autonomy. Through meaningful work, they can:

- Develop practical job skills
- Learn workplace communication and social interactions
- Gain a sense of purpose and personal achievement
- Reduce dependence on social support systems

Employment for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities in Nepal

Persons with intellectual disabilities in Nepal face significant barriers to employment, reflecting broader challenges experienced by the disability community. Eide, Neupane, and Hem (2016) found that only 36.4% of persons with disabilities were employed, compared to 54.6% of those without disabilities. Similarly, Samarajiva (2018) reported that just 16% of 400 surveyed individuals with disabilities had any monthly income. While specific data for persons with intellectual disabilities is limited, the lack of targeted provisions suggests these findings are applicable to them.

Key barriers include inaccessible public transport, workplaces, and communication systems, along with limited education and financial resources (Poudyal et al., 2018). Although Nepal offers some support—like free education, healthcare, and job reservations—these often fall short for persons with intellectual disabilities due to poor implementation.

Negative societal attitudes further restrict opportunities. As Prasai and Pant (2018) noted, persons with disabilities are often viewed as dependent rather than capable workers, leading to discrimination in hiring and pay. Even when employed, they are frequently

underpaid compared to their non-disabled peers, highlighting the need for more inclusive employment practices.

Conventions and Legal Frameworks

In 2010, Nepal ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Although the UNCRPD and the Constitution of Nepal contain provisions that protect the employment rights of persons with disabilities, persons with intellectual disabilities have not benefited significantly from these provisions.

The UNCRPD explicitly addresses the rights to employment in Article 27 which states that state parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely in a labor market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. The convention further says to safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation (UNCRPD – Article 27).

The Constitution of Nepal (2015) guarantees the right to inclusion and participation for marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, in state bodies. It also ensures that citizens with disabilities have the right to live with dignity, maintain their identity, and access public services and facilities equally. The Act on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2017) further reinforces these rights, stating that:

- The Government of Nepal shall provide vocational training to enhance employment and self-employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- No institution shall discriminate in employment or related matters based on disability. No one shall be denied promotion due to their disability.
- The Government may mandate institutions to appoint a certain number of persons with disabilities based on their capacity, training, and qualifications (Section 25).

Additionally, the Civil Service Act (1993) reserves 5% of government jobs for persons with disabilities. However, the implementation of these legal provisions remains weak, particularly for persons with intellectual disabilities. Limited access to education and skill development continues to restrict their employment and income-generating opportunities.

Advocating for Inclusive Employment

While employment is important for the individual, success stories can also help pave the way for other persons with intellectual disabilities. As organizations, we should use the success stories to show that it is possible to develop an inclusive employment sector in Nepal. We need

to push for policy reforms at organizational and governmental levels. This may include modifying existing policies or introducing new ones to enhance workforce inclusion that promote equitable employment. One potential reform is establishing equity seats in various sectors, reserving a percentage of jobs for persons with intellectual disabilities to ensure fair opportunities.

Employment Model for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

Creating employment for persons with intellectual disabilities requires a multi-faceted approach that considers individual needs, workplace readiness, and sustained support.

Successful employment for persons with intellectual disabilities requires:

- Individualized assessment of capabilities
- Flexible work arrangements
- Ongoing training and support
- Employer education and awareness
- Adaptive workplace technologies
- Legal and Policy Framework

The model described in this document has been designed to foster meaningful, sustainable employment for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Figure 1: Steps in the employment model

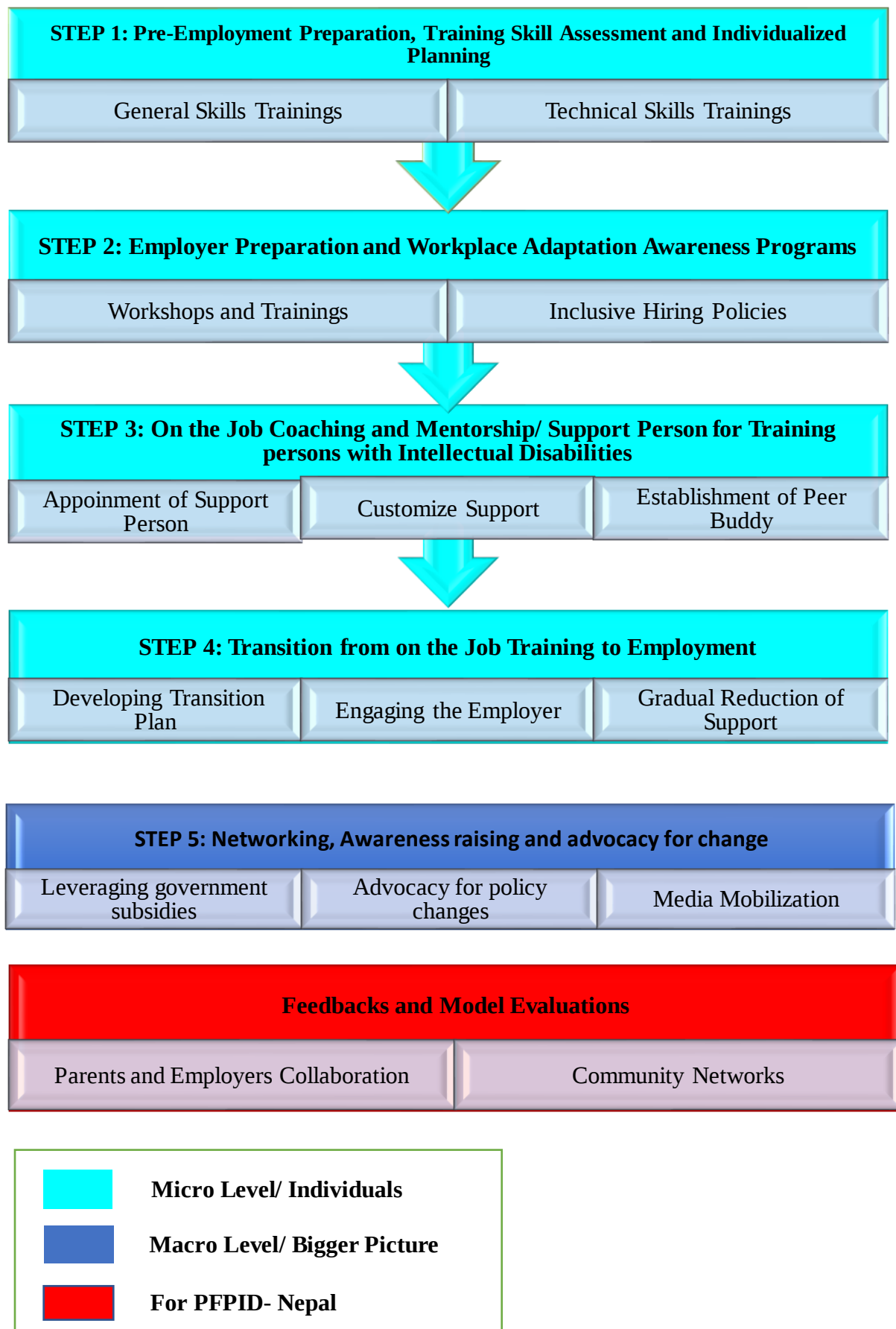
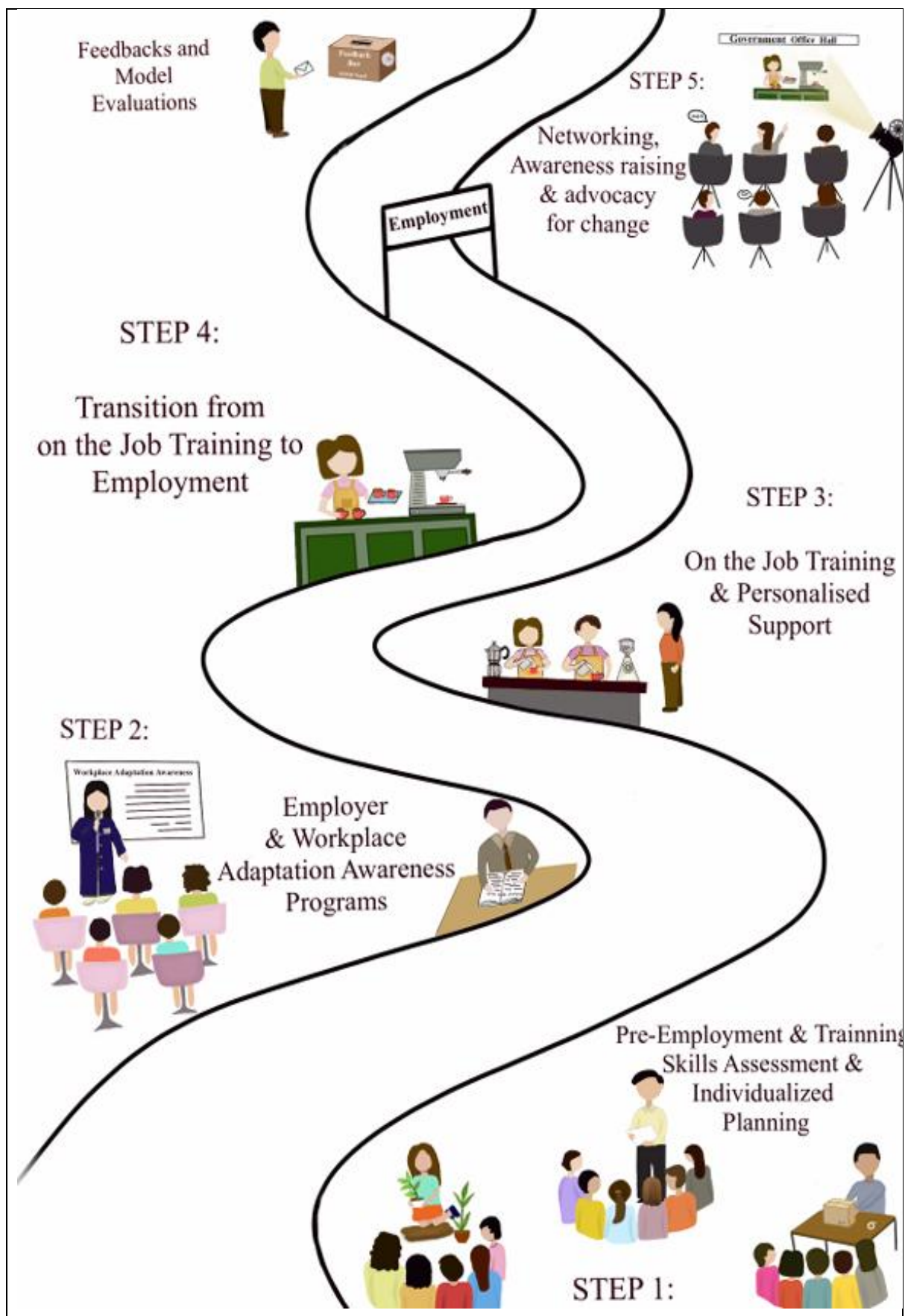


Figure 2: Illustration of the employment journey.



Step 1: Pre-Employment, Training Skills Assessment and Individualized Planning

Skill assessment and individualized planning are the first critical elements in the employment process for persons with intellectual disabilities. The skills and interests of persons with IDs are often overlooked, and they may not have sufficient opportunities to discover and practice their abilities. This lack of opportunity can stem from societal stigmatization, where the focus tends to be on their limitations rather than their strengths. This step aims to do the opposite by focusing on their strengths, rather than their limitations.

Assessing the skills and behavior of persons with intellectual disabilities requires a careful, structured approach that takes into account their strengths, challenges, and unique abilities. The goal is to evaluate both hard (technical) and soft (social, behavioral) skills to identify suitable employment opportunities and ensure the provision of necessary support. An individual SWOT/ SWOC (Strength Weakness Opportunities and Threats/Challenges) assessment can be conducted.

A key part of the assessment process is observing the individual in natural settings (such as home, school, or community environments) to understand how they approach tasks, solve problems, and interact with others. In this process, parents and caregivers serve as invaluable sources of information. They can provide insights into the person's habits, abilities, interests, and support needs, which may not be immediately apparent in a formal assessment setting.

Based on the findings from the skill and behavior assessment, a structured training plan should be developed. This plan will outline both short-term and long-term goals. Short-term goals focus on mastering basic tasks and building foundational skills, while long-term goals aim at successful employment placement and professional growth. The training plan should include personalized approaches to address both skill-based and technical training requirements, ensuring that the person is equipped to succeed in the workforce.

General Skills Training: Teach essential skills such as social interaction, time management, self-care, and basic professional behavior. These skills help people adjust to workplace routines and social dynamics.

Technical Skills Training: Train in specific job skills like housekeeping, clerical work, food service, gardening, or barista skills. This could be conducted in a simulated or actual work environment.

Step 2: Employer Preparation and Workplace Adaptation Awareness Programs

To implement this step effectively, several procedures may be necessary. Often, employers, even with a willingness to help, lack the knowledge of how to provide appropriate support. In

some cases, they may not be familiar with the various types of disabilities or have an understanding of intellectual disabilities. Conduct workshops to ensure that the employers have a good understanding of intellectual disabilities, the capabilities and strengths of persons with intellectual disabilities as well as the challenges they have. Topics can include the roles individuals can perform, ways to support them, and the benefits of an inclusive workforce.

The workshops can be organized as interactive workshops and seminars where experts, advocates, and persons with disabilities share insights about inclusive hiring practices and workplace accommodations. These programs can cover:

- Understanding intellectual disabilities and breaking common misconceptions.
- Benefits of a diverse workforce, including improved employee morale, broader customer perspectives, and social responsibility.
- Strategies for integrating employees with intellectual disabilities into various job roles.

Showcase stories of businesses successfully employing persons with intellectual disabilities to inspire others and build confidence. Partner with OPDs, disability advocacy groups, NGOs and the like to facilitate these sessions and offer real-world examples of successful inclusion.

Inclusive Hiring Policies: Encourage employers to adopt inclusive hiring practices, ensuring fair recruitment, selection, and onboarding processes.

Workplace Accessibility and Adaptation: Modify tasks, provide assistive technology, or offer flexible schedules as needed to create a supportive work environment. For example, simplify job tasks, create visual task guides, or establish a quiet workspace.

Step 3: On the Job Training and Personalized Support

On-the-job coaching and mentorship are vital components of effective training for persons with intellectual disabilities. This phase helps individuals' transition from training environments to real-world work settings by providing continuous support and guidance. The role of the coach or mentor is to offer personalized assistance, help navigate challenges and reinforce skills in the context of the workplace.

This step focuses on assigning a support person to assist the person with intellectual disabilities in the workplace. This appointment is critical for adapting to new routines, understanding workplace expectations, and managing tasks. Support persons play a crucial role in breaking down complex tasks into manageable steps, making them easier to understand and execute. The assignment process for support persons involves the following steps:

- Defining roles and responsibilities of the support person.

- Training and orientation for support persons to understand their responsibilities.
- Establishing communication channels.

The support person then defines the customized support for the employee with intellectual disability. Customized support is key to meeting the unique needs and abilities of the person with intellectual disabilities. Since persons with intellectual disabilities may face limitations that could impact their ability to secure or maintain employment, a flexible approach is necessary. The support provided should evolve based on the individual's progress, challenges, and changes in the work environment. Customization support allows for:

- Adjusting support intensity according to the individual's needs.
- Increasing support when new tasks are introduced or when challenges arise.
- Gradually reducing support as the individual gains independence and confidence in their role.

In addition to support persons, connecting persons with intellectual disabilities to a peer buddy (i.e., a supportive co-worker) can further enhance their workplace experience. Establishing a peer buddy system is an effective strategy that pairs the individual with a supportive colleague who offers guidance, assistance, and promotes social integration. The peer buddy acts as a mentor, helping the individual navigate daily tasks, understand workplace expectations, and engage in positive social interactions. The peer buddy system is beneficial for sustainability, as it relies on workplace peers rather than external support. The support person is responsible for identifying an appropriate peer buddy and ensuring a smooth integration. The establishment of the peer buddy system involves the following steps:

- Selecting the right peer buddy who is supportive and patient.
- Training the peer buddy to understand their role and the specific needs of the persons with intellectual disabilities.
- Building a relationship between the peer buddy and the person with IDs to foster trust and cooperation.

The role of the support person is designed to be temporary, focusing on helping the persons with intellectual disabilities settle into their workplace. Before completing their assignment, the support person must customize the support to align with the individual's needs and work progress, establish the peer buddy system, ensuring that a supportive co-worker is in place to provide long-term assistance and social integration.

Step 4: Transition from on the Job Training to Employment

The transition from on-the-job training to full-time employment is a critical step for persons

with intellectual disabilities, as it marks the shift from learning and support to independent work. This step requires careful planning, collaboration, and ongoing support to ensure that the individual is fully prepared for long-term employment. The role of the support person in this phase is vital to ensure a smooth transition, both for the individual and the workplace.

Before a person with intellectual disabilities transitions from on-the-job training to permanent employment, the support person must carefully assess whether the individual has developed the necessary skills, confidence, and independence to succeed in their role. This assessment is crucial to ensure that the individual is fully prepared for the demands of a permanent job and can function effectively without constant support. Key areas of evaluation include:

- Task Mastery
- Time Management
- Problem-Solving Abilities
- Social Integration
- Self-Regulation
- Workplace Expectations Management

A detailed transition plan should be created, outlining the steps necessary for the individual to move from training to independent employment. This plan should include:

- Identifying the tasks and responsibilities that the individual will take on once they transition into permanent employment.
- Determining if any accommodations or supports will continue post-training, such as modifications to the work environment or ongoing use of assistive technology.
- Establishing a timeline for the transition, including milestones for when certain skills or tasks should be mastered and when the individual is expected to start working independently.
- Strategies for maintaining social connections with coworkers and continuing to foster an inclusive workplace environment.

The support person plays a key role in communicating with the employer, preparing them for the transition, and ensuring that the necessary support systems are in place to facilitate the individual's success. The support person should engage the employer early in the transition process to ensure that expectations for the individual's role are clearly defined. This includes discussing job duties, performance standards, and any specific responsibilities the individual will take on once they move to permanent employment. It is important to ensure that the employer understands the individual's capabilities, strengths, and areas where support may be

needed. The support person should work with the employer to outline any ongoing support mechanisms that may be required after the individual transitions to permanent employment.

The transition from on-the-job training to employment for persons with intellectual disabilities should include a gradual reduction of the support person's direct involvement. At the beginning of the transition, the support person should remain actively involved in the workplace to provide guidance, answer questions, and address any challenges that arise. The support person can assist with task clarification, offer emotional support, and ensure the individual feels comfortable with the work environment and expectations.

As the individual gains confidence and demonstrates competence in their role, the support person should start reducing their involvement. This reduction should be gradual and based on the individual's ability to perform tasks independently. For example, the support person might decrease their physical presence in the workplace or reduce the frequency of check-ins while still remaining available for assistance when needed. During the gradual reduction process, the support person should focus on promoting the individual's self-sufficiency. This includes encouraging the individual to make decisions, solve problems, and manage their tasks without relying on external guidance.

Even as the support person steps back, it is essential to monitor the individual's progress and assess their readiness for further reduction in support. Regular check-ins and feedback from the employer, the individual, and peer buddy can provide valuable insights into how the individual is adapting to the workplace and managing their responsibilities. Peer Buddy acts as an informal support person even after the termination of dedicated support person to ensure the continuous support that is crucial for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Creating a strong support network is essential to help a person with intellectual disabilities succeed in their job and keep their employment. This includes providing guidance, mentorship, and accommodations as needed. A well-structured support system ensures they feel confident, adapt to their tasks, and overcome challenges, leading to long-term job stability and growth. Persons with intellectual disabilities need to know where to seek support and whom to approach when needed. This support system may include parents, family members, workplace colleagues, management, employers, and peer buddies.

Step 5: Networking, Awareness Raising and Advocacy for Change

Step 5 operates at a macro level, focusing on driving change through advocacy, building wider networks, and raising awareness. Unlike the previous steps, Step 5 is institutional rather than individual-focused. While it does not directly involve placing persons with intellectual

disabilities into employment, it plays a crucial role in shaping policies, shifting perceptions, and strengthening networks. These efforts ultimately create a more inclusive and supportive environment that facilitates employment opportunities for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Step 5 emphasizes the importance of collaboration with community organizations, businesses, and the broader community to ensure long-term employment success. Key stakeholders in providing sustainable support for persons with ID include:

- Parents
- Employers
- Community Based Organizations
- Government

Collaboration with government agencies at local, regional, and national levels is essential. These agencies could provide financial incentives, such as wage subsidies, tax credits, and training grants, to employers who hire persons with disabilities. Engaging with advocacy groups is also vital to push for policies that are inclusive and supportive of persons with intellectual disabilities. This could include advocating for more extended subsidies, funding for job placement services, and additional policy changes that enhance support.

Hosting events, workshops, and seminars can be an effective way to educate employers, the public, and stakeholders on the benefits of inclusive employment. These events can feature success stories, demonstrate the positive impact of employing persons with intellectual disabilities, and provide employers with practical strategies for workplace accommodation.

Media mobilization plays a key role in this process. Showcasing successful job placements and highlighting real-world examples can serve as powerful advocacy tools. These examples can be used to leverage government subsidies, drive policy change, and motivate more employers to hire individuals with intellectual disabilities. Recognizing and celebrating employers who are already providing inclusive job opportunities can also encourage others to follow suit.

Feedback and Model Evaluations

To ensure that this employment model for persons with intellectual disabilities remains effective, sustainable, and adaptable to evolving needs, it's crucial to establish a robust feedback and evaluation mechanism. This process involves gathering input from all key stakeholders—employees, employers, colleagues and parents—to assess the model's impact, identify areas for improvement, and adjust the approach as needed.

Parents, as primary caregivers and supporters, have valuable insight into the individual's progress both at home and in the workplace. Since they are often the ones who observe behavior, skills development, and challenges in various contexts, they can offer a holistic view of the individual's adjustment to their job. Engaging parents in the feedback process ensures that any emerging issues outside of work, such as behavioral or emotional challenges, are addressed, contributing to a more comprehensive evaluation. Parents can act as informal monitors by maintaining contact with employers and gathering insights on their progress.

PFPID-Nepal has developed this model and is eager to gather feedback from stakeholders who have applied it. The organization is particularly interested in understanding the challenges faced, lessons learned, and opportunities identified by these stakeholders. Recognizing that a single model cannot remain effective indefinitely, PFPID-Nepal is committed to continuously refining and improving it over time. By incorporating new insights and experiences, the model can be adapted to meet evolving needs. Therefore, collecting feedback is a crucial part of the model's evaluation process, ensuring its relevance, effectiveness, and long-term impact.

Parents Contributes at All Stages

While this model itself might not explicitly outline the parents' role, their involvement is fundamental at every stage of the employment process. The integration of parents into the employment framework can ensure that persons with intellectual disabilities have the support they need to succeed both in finding and retaining employment.

Identify Interests and Strengths: Parents hold a vital responsibility in recognizing their child's unique interests and strengths, serving as the cornerstone of their overall growth and potential. Through attentive observation of their child's everyday behaviors, hobbies, and responses to various activities, parents can identify talents and areas of genuine enthusiasm.

Encourage Training: Parents play a key role in encouraging their child to participate in skill-building programs and training, which are essential for personal and professional development.

Onboarding & Workplace Integration: Providing emotional support is a vital aspect of onboarding and workplace integration, particularly during the adjustment period.

Coordination with Employers: Effective coordination with employers is essential to address workplace challenges and ensure smooth integration.

Routine Encouragement: Routine encouragement plays a crucial role in helping the adult child establish and maintain a consistent work routine, which is vital for productivity and stability. Parents can guide their child in organizing daily tasks, setting priorities, and adhering to a structured schedule.

Monitor Progress: Monitoring progress is an essential responsibility for parents in supporting their child's development and success. By regularly observing their child's performance in various tasks or activities, parents can identify areas of strength as well as opportunities for improvement.

Reinforce Skills: Reinforcing skills at home is vital for ensuring long-term retention and continuous learning. Parents can actively support this by integrating skill practice into daily routines, providing opportunities to apply learned abilities, and encouraging consistent improvement.

Promoting Awareness: Promoting awareness by sharing their stories is an important role that parents can play in fostering societal acceptance and inclusion. By highlighting their child's achievements and the positive outcomes of inclusive environments, parents can challenge misconceptions and inspire others to embrace diversity.

Participate in Reviews: Parents can play a significant role in enhancing program efficiency by actively participating in reviews and discussions. By engaging in these conversations, they can offer constructive feedback based on their firsthand experiences with their child's needs and the challenges faced within existing programs.

Steps 1 to 4 can also be applied by individual parents, as they focus on a micro-level approach. These steps are specifically designed to support the employment of persons with intellectual disabilities. For example, parents can assess their child's strengths by observing their behavior at home and creating a customized plan. They can also meet potential employers, introduce them to inclusive employment through IEC materials, and personally support their child's transition into the workplace.

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