



resourcing  
inclusive  
communities

An initiative of Family Advocacy

# Employing Your Own Staff

## Steps to get you started



[www.ric.org.au](http://www.ric.org.au)

## Step One

### Start with you and what you want to achieve.

You should be at the centre of all considerations about the staff you choose to employ. These choices need to be all about what your goals are, what you want to do in your daily life and how you want to be supported. This means you are not necessarily looking for someone with generic disability support experience but someone who shares your interests and is motivated to see you succeed in them. You can be very specific about the type of person you want to employ, as well as the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they must have to be able to assist you.

Firstly, consider your goals and what support you need to achieve them. The table below gives some examples of how you could think about this.

Goal	Assistance needed	Staff skills needed
Study a course	support to get to classes, take notes and do course work	Study skills, organised and conscientious
Become more connected to my community	Support to explore and join community groups of interest	Outgoing and friendly, good communicator
Find employment	Someone to help look for and support me in work experience	Outgoing, good communicator, organised
Manage my own home	help to learn household management and complete duties	Manages their own home, clean and ordered
Improve fitness and health	Exercise and nutrition support	Physically fit, eats good food and loves to exercise
Improve communication skills	Help me improve my spoken and written language skills	Good oral and written communication skills

You may need to be even more specific about certain skills or experience you want in a staff person. For example, do they need experience in a particular subject matter for the course you are doing i.e. computer technology, printmaking or botany? If there is a particular community group you want to join, like a car club, then support from another enthusiast would make the experience more meaningful. If you have a passion for cooking, then assistance from someone with that skill set could help develop your own skills and experience. If your goal is to move out of home, then someone who has managed their own home could assist you to learn those skills. The key point is that the skills or experience needed to help you achieve your own goals should form the basis of the staff role you design and who you recruit.

## **Step two**

### **Shape the staff role to suit your purposes.**

Be as specific as you can about who you need to recruit by exploring in detail what attitudes, skills and characteristics the staff person should have. You are much more likely to find the right person to assist you, if you look for a person with a specific skill set to meet a specific role that helps you achieve your goals. In this way you remain at the centre of all staffing considerations, as the staff work for you and for a specific purpose that you have determined. As staff will be working closely with you, it is important that they are compatible with you, share common interests and have qualities you desire.

The table below gives examples to help you determine what specific qualities you need in a staff person.

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Attitude</b>	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Capacity</b>
Become a swim club member	Help me to attend club meetings and swim sessions	Polite, punctual and energetic	Able to swim, water safety aware	Prepared to be in the water all year round
Start my own courier business	Help me deliver mail for local business	Polite, punctual, professional	Able to drive, organised	Current driver's license
Manage my home	Help me learn household tasks	Hard working, punctual	Good cook and cleaner, able to teach	neat and tidy

The lists below are more examples of specific tasks, attitudes, skills and capacity/characteristics you may need in an employee based on the purpose of their role. This is not to suggest that one individual would possess all of these qualities; rather that specific qualities can be prioritised and selected for a particular role and staff member. In fact, it is likely to be more effective to recruit different people for different roles with the right qualities than employ people with generalist skills who may not suit the role as well.

#### **Tasks you might employ someone to assist with**

*I am looking for someone who can assist me...*

- investigate community opportunities
- to meet new people
- budget and manage my money

- with personal care support
- be organised and get to work, school or appointments on time
- learn to use public transport
- participate in my faith community
- start a small business
- find employment.

### **Attitudes that might be essential for an employee to have**

*I want to employ someone who is...*

- punctual
- dependable and reliable
- trustworthy
- patient
- flexible
- positive
- respectful
- friendly
- outgoing
- quiet
- reserved
- motivated
- kind
- confidential
- supportive of the things I want to do.

### **Skills that you may be looking for in a staff person**

*I want to employ someone who...*

- has good communication skills
- has good time management skills
- can think on their feet
- is able to problem solve
- is confident with others
- makes good judgements
- has good listening skills
- will seek advice when needed
- can drive a car/wheelchair accessible vehicle
- can lift and transfer me
- has a first aid certificate
- can be trained and assist with medical needs

## **Personal capacity or characteristics the staff person will need to have to support you**

*I want to employ someone who...*

- shares my interests
- is compatible with me
- lives close by
- is from my community
- shares my cultural background
- speaks the same language as me
- is a young person
- is a mature person
- is male
- is female
- has a current driver's license
- has a current working with children or vulnerable people check
- can keep regular work shifts
- has no competing shifts with other people
- is available the hours and days I need support (may include weekends or evenings)
- is able to stay with me overnight
- has their own car with comprehensive insurance.

You can be specific about the gender, age or particular cultural background you want in a staff person. Organisations and companies recruiting employees cannot be this specific as it is considered discrimination; but as you are an individual looking for a personal assistant you can be absolutely specific about what suits you.

Start writing down the tasks, attitudes, skills and capacity/characteristics you need in a staff role because this will form the basis of a job description that you can use to recruit the right person.

## **Step three**

### **Write a job description and selection criteria.**

A job description is the list of tasks that you expect the person employed to do. The criteria are what you are looking for in a person.

For example:

#### **Community Connector – Job description**

The community connector role will assist me to broaden my experiences and involvement with community.

I will need the person in this role to assist me:

- research and investigate possible opportunities in the community
- determine what my interests are by trialing different community opportunities with me
- assist me to fully participate and facilitate my connections with other people in community groups
- help me expand and deepen my chosen interests in order to assist me make a contribution to the community groups I join
- support any friendships I make through these opportunities through facilitating ways to connect whilst not overshadowing the connection.

#### **Community Connector – Essential Criteria**

- Commitment to the full participation of people with disability within the community
- Outgoing and confident in social settings
- Reliable and punctual
- A good listener and able to learn how I communicate
- Interested to connect people with people
- Able to support when needed but also to step away to allow my own friendships to develop.

A written job description is essential for helping you be clear about what your expectations are for the staff role and enabling you to clearly communicate those expectations to a potential employee. Good support relies upon how clearly people understand their role and what is expected of them.

## Step four

### Write an advertisement

An advertisement doesn't need to be lengthy or explain everything the job entails at this point. It just needs to give a sense of what is involved and be positive to attract interest.

For example:

**Community Connector**

Looking for an outgoing, people person ready to help me connect to community groups. I need assistance to broaden my experiences and meet new people.

If you are a good communicator and are interested in sport, this is the job for you.

The position is part-time during weekdays and occasional weekends.  
Driver's license essential.  
Training is provided.

For more information and to receive an application package  
Email.....

<p>Energetic, patient, kind female (18 - 30 yrs) wanted to support young woman (23) in pursuing sporting activities. Must be prepared to swim year-round. Car essential. 5 - 12 hrs p/wk. Casual basis. Phone Suzanne: .....</p>	<p>Patient, confident female 18-35 yrs required to support young woman (23) in personal care, cooking, shopping and house-keeping duties. Minimal hands-on required, mainly verbal prompting/support. Casual 10 hrs p/wk. Phone Suzanne: .....</p>
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### **Home Maker's Assistant**

I am a young woman with an intellectual disability and I'm looking for someone to help me gain further independence in preparation for leaving home. I need someone to assist me with personal laundry, meal preparation and getting organised for work and my life in general. This is a casual role and days and times will be worked out when I find someone that looks right.

The pay is approx. \$24.00 per hour

I would like a happy, community minded local who lives in the Bay and Basin area. I have always lived an ordinary life like my brother and sister so I'm not really looking for someone who has disability experience. I just need someone who gets to know me and helps me make a home of my own. If you are organised, encouraging and know how to run a home please email Meg, my mum, for further information:

[meg@ .....com](mailto:meg@.....com)

It is your choice if you want to tell people in the advertisement that the person they will be working with has a disability. Some people choose not to state that in the advertisement, as in some of the examples above. Instead they share this in the further information sent to job applicants who respond to the advertisement. Neither process is wrong or right, it is just a matter of preference.

Some people put their phone number on the advert and others choose to create an email for people to use that is not a personal email. This protects their privacy and filters out unsuitable applications more easily. It may also be difficult for you to take a call straight away and get all the person's correct details, so job enquiries via email allow you to be in control of when you respond to people.

Before advertising share your advertisement with other people and get some feedback. Do they understand what the job is? Is the advert inviting? Do they think it will encourage people to apply?

If the advert does not draw any suitable applications, reflect why this may be so? Is the job not clear? Does it not grab your attention? Or have you not advertised in the right places?

## **Step five**

### **Choose where to advertise**

#### **Online**

There are lots of job and community websites, online classifieds and social media sites.

#### **Community notice boards**

TAFE	Community Centres
University	Churches
Libraries	Mosques
Neighbourhood Centres	Synagogues etc.
Shopping Centres	

#### **Local Newspapers**

Free and paid advertising in community or commercial papers.

#### **Personal networks**

Family and friends may know the right person suitable for the job. Likewise, workers who already assist you may know of someone in their networks who would suit the job. Many people have said that eventually they don't have to re-advertise for vacant positions because the worker leaving that role can suggest a replacement. Some workers have said that they have friends that ask how they get a job like theirs because they are attracted to the positive work role.

## **Step six**

### **Send out a job application package**

When someone replies to your advert you can send them further information about the role and who they are assisting.

You can send the enquirer an application package which can include:

- the job description
- the essential criteria
- a short profile about the person with disability
- an application form with some questions to be answered
- a request for the contact details of at least two referees.

You can provide this information without identifying yourself. For example, don't provide your home address or full name.

If the applicant contacts you by phone and not email, be ready to take down the person's contact details. Another idea is to have one or two questions which will immediately rule people out so that you don't have to have long calls from people who are not going to be suitable or don't meet the criteria. For instance, if it is essential that the person has a driver's license, then ask this question early in the call. Even if you ask a few questions over the phone, it is still important to send the enquirer the application package.

Only people really interested in the role will complete your application within the time frame you indicate. Give people a few days to a week to return it. You can act quickly on any application that comes in early and looks promising.

### **Example short profile of the person being assisted**

Hi, my name is Ben. I am looking for someone to assist me find a job and get more connected to my community around the things I enjoy.

I am in my early 20s and I want to have a full and exciting life. In particular, I would like to find work doing something that really interests me. I learn well when people have high expectations of me. I love motor sport, and also like to relax through fishing and movies.

My dream is to eventually live in my own home, close to my family, with the support that I need.  
I have an intellectual and physical disability.

A short profile introduces the person the job applicant could be working for. It should be positive and focus on who the person is and what they enjoy. This sets the tone that the job is totally centred around the person being assisted to get their best life.

### **Example application form**

A short application form enables you to find out a little about the applicant and if they have engaged with the information you sent them about the role. You can also check on a few of your non-negotiable criteria up front, i.e. do they have a working with children/ vulnerable people check or driver's license.

Name:

Contact no.

Do you have a driver's license? Yes/No (please circle)

Can you work weekends? Yes/No (please circle)

Do you have a working with children/vulnerable people check? Yes/No (please circle)

If no, are you willing to get one? Yes/No (please circle)

What attracted you to the work role?

What experience or skills do you have that you could bring to this role?

What do you think about the full inclusion of people with disability in our communities?

What are your own interests and pastimes?

Any other comments you would like to add?

## **Step seven**

### **Conduct an interview.**

When you receive applications, use the criteria and the job description you have developed to decide who you will interview. Other people can be invited to assist with interviewing, including family members or friends, so you can discuss potential candidates with someone else.

As a general rule an interview should take no more than 45 minutes. The purpose of the interview is to gain information about the person in a variety of matters, including their:

- personality and values
- life experience and common sense
- attitude to people of all abilities and backgrounds fully participating in all aspects of community life
- communication skills, including listening
- availability and flexibility
- willingness to take instructions from you and/or your family
- ability to quickly problem solve and make adjustments.

It is important to:

- have the questions prepared and written down
- share out the questions between the people interviewing before the interview starts
- tell the person how long the interview will take
- give the person time to ask any questions they may have
- tell the person when they are likely to hear back from you.

#### **Example questions**

Possible questions	What you are wanting to find out from the question
Why are you interested in this job?	That this is not just a 'fill-in' job and the person is genuinely interested and believes this job as an important role.
What particular experience or skills do you think you have that could contribute positively to this role?	To see if the role excites them and they can imagine themselves making a positive contribution.

What do you think about the full inclusion of people with disability in the community?	Even if they are not sure about the word inclusion, you can get a response on what they think about people with disability being involved in all aspects of daily life.
What do you like doing when you are not working?	To ensure that they have a balanced life and that there is a match of interests.
Can you tell me something that you are proud of achieving in your own life?	To hear them talk about their own achievements and what is important to them.
Tell us briefly about a time in your life when you were tested or challenged (in work or personal life) and how you dealt with the challenge.	To see what qualities they have in order to get through difficult times and how they cope.
How do you feel about taking instructions from other people?	To check they are willing to do what others have asked them to do.
Do you have other jobs at the moment?	Whether this is going to be a barrier to the hours you need people to work with you.
What times and days would you be available to work?	To find out the person's availability.
What else would you like to know about the job?	To see if they have thought about the role.

## Informal interviewing

For some people a formal interview process is not for them. Rather they chose to meet the job candidate for a chat in an informal setting like a café to get to know them. Others have invited the person to their home for coffee or a meal to see how they engage with the whole family.

## Involving the person with disability in the interview process

If the person with disability is not conducting the recruitment process for themselves, then those who are doing so on their behalf need to determine how and when the person with disability will be involved. They should, of course, be informed and involved in the decision making as much as possible. For some people, however, the process may be confusing and unsettling. It may be detrimental to meet new people who may not get the job and return to their lives. Thus, the person with disability

may only be introduced to a preferred job candidate after they have already been interviewed, as one of the last steps before making a job offer.

Even though this may be the final step in the recruitment process, it is essential that the person with disability's response to the job candidate is taken into account. If there is clearly no compatibility and the person with disability communicates or shows signs of not liking or being comfortable with the person, then this must not be ignored. Trust the instincts of the person with disability, who is likely sensitive to how people engage with them and know who they don't want to be with. Likewise, if the person meets more than one suitable job candidate, allow them to choose their preferred staff member. Another advantage of this process is that you can witness how the job candidate speaks and interacts with the person with disability. Are they respectful or do they speak down to them? Are they comfortable and put the person at ease? All these are vital considerations when deciding on the successful job candidate.

### **After the interviews**

When you have decided on whom you would like to employ, the successful applicant will need to be contacted and relevant checks made, including references. Unsuccessful applicants will also need to be notified. This is probably best done through email because this information should be conveyed in writing.

## **Step eight**

### **Work out staff entitlements and employer responsibilities.**

There are essential and mandatory responsibilities you have to staff you are directly employing. You will need to be across award rates of pay, Australian Tax Office (ATO) obligations, superannuation entitlements, work cover insurance and workplace health and safety.

#### **Tax obligations**

You will not have to apply for an Australian Business Number (ABN) to employ your own staff, as you are not operating as a small business but employing people with government funds through the NDIS. You do have to apply for a Pay as You Go (PAYG) tax withholding number for each staff person. PAYG is money withheld by the ATO based on the estimate of how much the individual will earn in the financial year. This is to ideally cover an individual's tax liability by the time a tax return needs to be completed. Contact the ATO to get advice and apply for PAYG.

## **Award pay rates**

There are industry modern award rates for minimum employment standards and pay scales. People working in the human services sector come under the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services (SCHADS) award. You can contact the Fair Work Ombudsman for advice around award coverage, pay, leave, and other entitlements.

## **Superannuation**

Superannuation will need to be paid if the person is considered to be an employee. In some instances, a contractor may be deemed an employee depending on how often they are coming to work for you, how much money you are paying them and whether or not they work for anyone else. Work Cover can provide a free private ruling to determine if the person is a contractor or employee for superannuation purposes. The ATO can also be contacted for advice and to set up superannuation payments.

## **Work Cover Insurance**

A worker's compensation policy covers any worker should they injure themselves in the workplace. All employers in NSW must have a worker's compensation policy, unless they are deemed an exempt employer. Work Cover, or icare in NSW, can advise on this and workers insurance. Other states also have worker's compensation schemes and will need to be contacted for advice.

## **Workplace Health and Safety**

SafeWork NSW can offer advice on workplace health and safety. Other states will have an equivalent regulator that will offer the same support.

## **For more advice**

The NDIS has a publication Directly engaging your own staff, which can be found on the NDIS website in the section about self-management.

Most communities have a Chamber of Commerce who support local business and can advise about their employer responsibilities. Though you may not be classed as a small business for tax purposes, you are employing local people and local business groups are likely interested to support all types of employment opportunities.

## **Step nine**

### **Draft an employee contract/letter of engagement**

It is essential to have a written agreement between each of the people you employ. The agreement can include the job description and selection criteria you have

already prepared at the recruitment stage. It should also include statements about work days, hours, pay rates. There should also be a statement about a probation period and employment termination. The later includes how much notice needs to be given by either party before ending employment and on what grounds instant dismissal would be enacted. The Fair Work Ombudsman has a number of example templates to help you draft a letter of engagement with terms and conditions.

## **Step ten**

### **Staff orientation and training**

Before new staff start working for you, it is helpful to have a training and orientation schedule ready, which ensures that they:

- begin to get to know you or the person they are assisting
- understand their role and what is required of them
- receive practical information on how you want the support to be provided
- receive any other information relevant to the position
- receive written information in a folder they can keep, detailing specific instructions about how support should be provided.

The length of orientation and training is determined by you but should last for some weeks. You should also continue to be available to answer any questions or help the new staff person adjust to the expectations of the role. Encourage new staff to ask for help or clarification at any time and keep communication open and supportive.

A probation period is also advisable. If new staff are not in a fulltime role and working casual hours the probation period should not be too lengthy. A month may be enough time to determine if the person is suited to the role and if they want to continue in it. If it is not working out for either party, a probation period allows for the end of employment early on.

Training is probably most effective by modelling the role and how you want to be supported. Allow the new staff person to shadow you or a family member or another staff member to observe how they do things and receive instructions in the moment of doing the task. This can happen for a few weeks, if possible, before the staff person works alone with the person being supported.

## Example orientation schedule

When	What	With whom
First week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spend time hanging out with me at home, getting to know me.</li> <li>• Discuss and share the goals I have for my life and how staff members can assist with that.</li> <li>• Get specific instructions on things that are essential to my well-being and the way I need to be supported i.e. health, medication or situations to be avoided.</li> <li>• Discuss any occupational health and safety issues as they relate to me.</li> <li>• Go out with me with another experienced staff person.</li> <li>• Have a meeting so that the new worker can ask any questions.</li> </ul>	Me, my mother or father Me, my family My mother My mother and father My staff team leader My mother, father and team leader
Second week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go out with me and my mother or father.</li> <li>• Go out with me with the staff team leader.</li> <li>• Have some time alone with me with family or other staff close by.</li> <li>• Have a meeting so that the new worker can ask any questions.</li> </ul>	Me, my mother/father Me, my father Me, my mother
Third week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start to support me on my own – at home and when I go out.</li> <li>• Have a meeting so that the new worker can ask any questions.</li> </ul>	Me My mother, father

## **Step 11**

### **Ongoing staff management**

#### **Keep up good communication**

Communication is most often the cause of difficulties in any work situation and in relationships in general. It is important to keep up regular communication about your expectations and provide positive and constructive feedback for staff. It is also important that you remain approachable and invite staff to share their concerns and offer feedback.

#### **Hold regular staff meetings**

Schedule times when you can talk to staff, share and receive feedback, problem solve and plan together. This is really important if you have more than one staff member. It helps keep everyone up to date with all that is happening and encourages everyone to work as a team. You will need to pay people to attend a staff meeting, as it is part of their work role but the benefits for achieving good support are likely worth it.

#### **Deal with underperformance**

If someone is not performing in their role as you would like, it is important to help them understand what their role is and what your expectations are. They may need some more training and supervision to improve their performance.

If a staff member is consistently not meeting role expectations then be sure to make notes of when and how this occurs. You will also need to give clear warnings to improve their conduct. For example, if they are always arriving late or not following specific instructions necessary to the role. If you eventually decide to end their employment than it is vital that there were clear warnings and efforts made to address the situation. The staff person should have clearly understood what the issues were and that they needed to be addressed. It is important that the termination of employment is not seen as harsh, unjust or unreasonable, as these are grounds for unfair dismissal. You can contact the Fair Work Ombudsman for more information.

## Useful Links

Resourcing Inclusive Communities

<http://www.ric.org.au/self-direction/>

Workforce Innovation through Self-Managed Supports

<https://www.selfmanagedsupports.org.au/>

NDIS Self Management

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/using-your-plan/self-management>

Pearl Staffing Options

<http://pearl.staffingoptions.com.au/>

Western Australia's Individualised Services

<http://waindividualisedservices.org.au/online-courses/be-a-boss/>



[www.ric.org.au](http://www.ric.org.au) | 1800 774 764 | [info@ric.org.au](mailto:info@ric.org.au)