City of Seattle
Supported Employment Program
“FAQs” and Guidelines

1. What is “Supported Employment”? 

The Supported Employment program facilitates job opportunities for people with developmental disabilities. The program offers a creative and cost-effective approach to meeting business needs and including people with developmental disabilities in the workforce. Each job is customized by bundling entry-level tasks that match the skills of supported employment candidates. The Supported Employment program’s hallmark is its capacity for adaptation to individual human and organizational needs.

Departments use the job title “Office/Maintenance Aide”, which is designated for employees with developmental disabilities. This title intentionally has no job description associated with it in order to allow for maximum customization of each position.

Supported Employment candidates are certified and referred through the King County Division of Developmental Disabilities within the Department of Community and Human Services.

A requirement of the Supported Employment Program is that each supported employee and hiring department work with a job coach. These professionally-trained vocational counselors are dispatched from local agencies in order to serve the employment-support needs of persons with developmental disabilities. Each job coach assists with the individualized training and long-term supports (at no cost to employers) which allows supported employees to maximize their job performance.

Awards and Honors: The City’s Supported Employment Program is considered a “best practices” model in the nation and has been recognized both nationally and internationally.

- **Community Leader Award**, PROVAIL - 2014
- **National Employer of the Year Award**, APSE - 2014
- **“Jobs Change Lives” Award**, Seattle Central Community College in partnership with Mainstay - 2014
- **Employer Spotlight Award**, Association for Washington Business - 2013
- **Outstanding Employer of the Year Award**, Community Employment Alliance - 2010, 2012, and 2013
- **Governor’s Employer of the Year Award** - 1999, 2009, and 2013
• Other awards received include special recognition from the Emerald City Rotary Club, the University of Washington, and various community agencies.

The City of Seattle currently employs 90 people with developmental disabilities… and growing!

2. What kinds of duties build a supported employment position?

Recognizing that each job candidate brings different skills and abilities, typical work assignments can vary. The following list includes a few examples:

- Office tasks such as: photocopying, collating, bulk mail prep, stuffing envelopes, sorting and delivery of incoming mail, couriering documents, basic filing, basic data entry, refilling paper in printers, photo copiers, and fax machines, restocking office supplies, confidential paper shredding, scanning and converting hardcopies into electronic documents, reception, and much more.

- Warehouse work: unpacking, organizing, and restocking materials, packaging and preparing items for delivery, recycling prep, deliveries, storeroom maintenance, and much more.

- Janitorial duties: light building maintenance, cleaning offices and common areas, sweeping, mopping, dusting, trash disposal, recycling, general grounds work, and clean-up, and much more.

- Fleets maintenance: interior and exterior vehicle cleaning, tool maintenance, warehouse clean-up, and much more.

Be creative in identifying those necessary routine and repetitive tasks that can be bundled into a body of work for a supported employee. For assistance with building effective supported employment positions, please consult with Heather Weldon, Supported Employment Manager (684-7922). Our community partner agencies are also available to help you customize a job that meets your business needs and also matches their candidate’s abilities.

3. What is a job coach?

A job coach is a professionally trained vocational counselor who is skilled in on-the-job training for people with developmental disabilities as well as workplace support strategies. The job coach is available to provide:

- Job analysis of your supported employment position
- Assistance with training the supported employee and others in workplace
- One-on-one and group training for supervisors and coworkers about developmental disabilities and workplace support strategies
- Creative self-management tools for the supported employee to increase efficiency
- Problem-solving and support to workplace and supported employee as needed

The job coach will continue with regularly-scheduled visits with you and your supported employee to assure that everyone is pleased with the situation. The job coach remains a resource to you and your employee for the length of your supported employee’s employment. This means that if tasks ever change or new coworkers or supervisors need training, then the job coach is your resource.

4. **Office/Maintenance Aide** is a specifically designated title for supported employment positions, it is exempt from civil service. What does this exempt status mean?

“Exempt from civil service” simply means that the Personnel Rules regarding hiring, discipline, or termination do not apply to incumbents of these positions. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that all participants in the Supported Employment Program enjoy all the protections of federal, state and municipal law that most other Seattle citizens command.

5. **How do I get a Supported Employment position/pocket?**

Call or email Heather Weldon 206-684-7922 or heather.weldon@seattle.gov in the Seattle Department of Human Resources. It’s easy!

6. **May I extend the probationary period of an Office/Maintenance Aide?**

An employee hired into a position that is exempt from civil service does not serve a probationary period. Incumbents of positions that are exempt from civil service are “at-will” employees who continue to serve at the will of the appointing authority throughout their employment in the exempt position. In other words, their status is perpetually the same as a probationary employee’s status.

7. **Where can I get help identifying effective reasonable accommodations for the supported employee in my work group?**

Contact:
- The supported employee’s designated job coach, or
- Seattle’s Citywide Supported Employment Manager (Heather Weldon at 206-684-7922), or
- Your department’s designated ADA Coordinator

8. **What if the supported employee that I hired is working out very well and we are interested in promoting the employee to a title other than Office/Maintenance Aide?**
Per the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodations may be made in order to allow the supported employee to effectively compete on an equal footing with non-disabled candidates. However, the supported employee must participate in a bona fide competitive process in order to be promoted into a classified position.

9. Would the supported employee who is promoted to a classified position lose their job coach and their access to specialized training and long-term support?

No. An individual, who enters City employment through a Supported Employment position, retains the benefits of job coaching support regardless of their classification, title, or length of employment.

10. What if I have difficulty contacting the job coach assigned to assist the supported employee that I’ve hired?

Job Coaches (or Employment Specialists) work in teams. Each of the team members is fully trained and apprised of the conditions of each supported employee’s work assignment. When your supported employee’s coach is unavailable, you will be given a back-up number to contact. This has proven to be a very effective arrangement. You may also contact the Supported Employment Manager (Heather Weldon) for assistance.

11. Must all of the supported employment pockets be filled as full-time positions?

No. While the positions *must be at least half time (20 hours per week) in order to allow the employee benefits, the Supported Employment Program is highly flexible. Ask the Supported Employment Manager for referrals based on your unique business needs.

*Exceptions may be made for supported employees to work less than 20 hours per week. See Heather Weldon for exceptions.

12. Can another supported employee “bump” a supported employee if at risk of layoff?

No. Each supported employment position is designed with the current employee’s skills in mind, along with the business needs of the workplace. Thus, it’s a custom fit.

13. If I hire a supported employee as an Office/Maintenance Aide and the person that I hired cannot successfully perform the work as assigned, may I terminate his/her employment?
Yes. However, you may not terminate any City employee (exempt or non-exempt from Civil Service) for reasons that would violate his/her rights protected under federal, state, or municipal law. Before making the decision to terminate the supported employee, consult with the job coach to make sure that all training, coaching, and support options have been explored. Also, please consult with Heather Weldon for guidance and additional resources.