

The Job Ready Programme and other activities that development career management competencies for people with intellectual disabilities

AREA A : PERSONAL MANAGEMENT

CAREER COMPETENCY	JOB READY (JR) PROGRAMME	EXTRA CURRICULAR
<p>1. Build and maintain a positive self concept</p>	<p>The Bedford JR programme is characterised by personal choice (participants decide which business they would like to be placed with) and self-paced learning i.e. there is no set time frame for learning the Level 1 & 2 skills in the Skills Progress sheets (see attachment 3).</p> <p>During the course, skilled support staff provide acknowledgement and positive reinforcement for personal achievement / management: e.g. when the JR participant arrives on time, finds their workplace independently, or joins other employees in the canteen to buy lunch and share a table.</p>	<p>Employees are acknowledged for individual and team achievements: e.g. in the Bedford Newsletter (see attachment 5) or in a ‘Did You Know’ noticeboard announcement (see attachment 6) or a promotional segment on the website www.bedfordgroup.com.au.</p> <p>The Annual Years of Service presentation at the Adelaide Convention Centre and TAFE Graduation ceremony provide other opportunities to celebrate personal growth with work colleagues, family and friends.</p> <p>With their permission, individuals appear in the Bedford Annual Report (see attachment 7) and on promotional posters mounted to office walls – often with comments about the personal growth they have experienced through their association with Bedford. In addition, Training Feedback Sheets and thank you notes often contain anecdotes reflecting on increased self awareness, confidence and improved self image (see sample at attachment</p>

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2. Interact positively and effectively with others.	Appropriate behaviour is reinforced and every opportunity provided for JR participants to make better choices. Occasionally warning letters, suspensions and dismissals are issued. JR participants are encouraged to ‘do your best’ within safe boundaries and without exposure to risk: i.e. in accordance with our Duty of Care. Sometimes parents need to be trained to expect more from their family member and information is provided to them about additional personal development opportunities available to their family member: e.g. Anger Management classes.	Good team behaviour by employees is acknowledged and rewarded. For example pizza / bar-b-q lunches are enjoyed by work teams when safety records are broken: e.g. 300 days no lost time injuries or for winning or fulfilling new contracts. The Recreation Co-ordinator responsible for Club Contact – an employee social club with over 60 members – encourages team work as the most effective way of getting something done. All members are given the opportunity to try out new activities / roles and are supported in their endeavour for personal growth.

AREA B: LEARNING & WORK EXPLORATION

3. Change and grow throughout life.	JR participants are advised about the many developmental opportunities available to them through Bedford by their course Co-ordinator, Personnel Officer, Supervisor or Trainer. Courses and other activities are also advertised on noticeboards and discussed at daily ‘Tool Box’ work unit meetings. Change and growth are part of their life. All the learning they want and need to progress within the parameters of our business are available.	Employees have many opportunities to change and grow at Bedford: e.g. they learn that with mastery of technical skills comes a performance review or Disability Measurement Instrument (DMI) which can lead to greater variety in tasks, increased personal responsibility, higher status, promotion to Leading Hand, more pay and even committee representation. Information sessions on personal hygiene, sexual health, personal relationships, menstruation / menopause management, stranger danger, personal money management, road safety, transport training, OH&S, manual handling, home security and fire safety are delivered by topic experts like our registered (on -
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		site) nurse, SA Police, SHINE and Disability SA. Employees are paid their normal wage whilst attending training of any kind.
4. Participate in life-long learning supportive of career goals.	<p>JR participants learn that Bedford has a culture of lifelong learning. During the 10 week course they work through a set matrix of technical skills, used by their Supervisor to measure learning and application in a practical work setting (see attachment 3). Part of the initial JR recruitment process includes information about the Bedford Career Path that may include progressing to Team Leader, Leading Hand or TAFE studies to undertake an accredited qualification: e.g. Cert II Horticulture, Business Services or Hospitality.</p> <p>Graded personal goals are also discussed and progress acknowledged by skilled support staff.</p>	<p>Bedford employees are required to participate in a 6 monthly 'Individual Training Plan' or ITP interview with their pastoral care worker (Personnel Officer) to establish new career goals for the next period. These may be technical (locate and empty 10 rubbish bins in the office) or behavioural (manage interruptions to work by visiting the toilet prior to commencement in the morning). Once new career goals are agreed, any developmental support needs are discussed and implemented.</p> <p>Employees may attend internal courses like OH&S, Working Together, Polite Language, Personal Hygiene, Happy not Snappy that have a focus on acquiring the personal attributes required to support career goals. These courses often include role plays and practical opportunities to reinforce learning. For example, a group of employees learning about teamwork may organise a morning tea.</p> <p>Some workers want to become Leading Hands, some to complete 30 years of uninterrupted service and some want to move into open employment. Bedford has a proactive employment unit that sources vacancies with employers in the wider business community, places suitable candidates and provides ongoing support to remove any barriers to success.</p>
5. Locate and	Generally JR participants choose Bedford as their employer	All Bedford employees have at least one disability. Most enjoy

<p>effectively use career information.</p>	<p>for a variety of reasons: e.g. they are directed by Centrelink. Sometimes they recognise Bedford as an industry leader offering a range of accommodation, training and employment services or they may have family connections. Where they work within Bedford (i.e. Balyana public Function Centre as a hospitality worker or Adelaide Property & Gardens in a horticulture work team) is often determined by their (dis) ability. Often they have sampled the different Bedford businesses while they were on the waiting list as part of a transitional work experience visit from a special school setting.</p> <p>Given that Bedford is a commercial organisation, there is no obligation to provide counselling or assistance once the employee/er relationship is discontinued. In a general sense, if a JR participant finds that Bedford doesn't suit them, they may be referred to another employer of people with a disability, TAFE or a specialist service provider (e.g. Royal Society for the Blind).</p>	<p>a long and happy career within the confines of what Bedford can offer without seeking to go elsewhere. Given the intellectual challenges faced by most Bedford employees it is often difficult and/or inappropriate to try to engage them in a process of career building that may involve working with another employer. However, each year a small cohort of interested employees are helped to locate and effectively use career information to advance their careers beyond Bedford. Unlike our commercial competitors who view staff turnover as having a detrimental impact on production and profitability – Bedford has a different view about helping employees be the best they can be. Assistance is customised to meet their needs and delivered in a format they can access. Generally their Personnel Officer or Training Manager is the usual source of information. These professionals attend disability / mainstream career expos to update and gather useful information on websites, new government initiatives, courses, available funding, training providers and costs.</p>
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AREA C: LIFE / WORK BUILDING

<p>6. Understand the relationship between work, society and the economy.</p>	<p>The relationship between work, society and the economy is addressed during the JR programme when participants learn about quality awareness, communication skills, telephone skills (making / taking internal calls) and customer service skills. All of these aspects appear on the Skills Progress sheets that JR participants work through (see attachment 3).</p>	<p>Work is not a 'stand alone' activity. What employees do at Bedford impacts on society and the economy. Some JR participants mix and make friends with employees across the various businesses and may learn about couriers delivering fundraising lottery tickets to purchasers, the Family/CEO lunches, or Day Centre clients delivering meals to the housebound elderly for Meals on Wheels.</p>
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	<p>On the factory shop floor or the depot, job boards are placed within view so that workers are reminded of their link with production targets. They know that ‘If they do their best Bedford will thrive’. With Bedford growing, more people with a disability can then be employed.</p>	<p>Politicians, celebrities, sporting teams, business organisations, craft / dance / drama groups, VET and tertiary students all interact with Bedford employees during their visits to one of the 5 sites. Student placements are encouraged.</p> <p>There is an open door policy toward publicity / promotion, with employees often speaking on radio or at public functions about their Bedford experiences.</p>
<p>7. Secure/create and maintain work.</p>	<p>From the outset JR participants are required to sign a set of rules (see attachment 10). They are supported to make appropriate behaviour choices and the link between what they do and maintaining their work at Bedford is made clear (see samples of email correspondence noting inappropriate behaviour likely to jeopardise employment at attachment 9).</p>	<p>Maintaining their job is a clear focus of the employee development programme at Bedford. Consequences of rule breaking are clear, with many internal training courses dedicated to the types of behaviour that make people employable (e.g. using polite language, working together). Getting and keeping a job are topics addressed in the Bedford Job Club called “Job Connect” run for those seeking open employment in the wider business community. 1:1 tutoring is provided by their Case Manager about what to expect and how to maintain work.</p>
<p>8. Make career enhancing decisions.</p>	<p>This is only addressed if the JR participant is unhappy with his/her choice of host business within Bedford. Normally if they have completed the 10 week course satisfactorily, they will be offered a permanent job in that business.</p> <p>If an employee expresses a wish to move to another business, e.g. from Furniture to Horticulture, the request is explored with their Personnel Officer and any other relevant party. Their reason, existing skill set and learning needs are assessed before a decision is made about the suitability of</p>	<p>Many employees are supported to take up career enhancing opportunities offered as part of the Bedford career path, such as volunteering for committees, attending internal courses (eg Working with Others) or completing TAFE qualifications. Over 320 employees have successfully completed a TAFE qualification through Bedford over the last 5 years. On average, over 1,000 hours of internal training per month is delivered by qualified Trainers in house.</p>

	<p>the match. Temporary transfers are often arranged to train up and test suitability before arranging assignment to another work team.</p>	<p>A small percentage of Bedford employees seek open employment and are given every help to join the broader business community. Realism is encouraged when addressing external career plans with employees. When faced with an intellectually disabled employee who declares “I want to be a pilot”, it may be more appropriate to respond with “What about working at the Adelaide Airport in the Garden Team”?</p>
<p>9. Maintain balanced life and work roles.</p>	<p>Life and work balance for a JR participant are often guided by health issues and family. With reference to commercial realities, they attend when it suits them and in accordance with their medical clearance. Whilst work days and hours are often negotiable, it is important to reach a balance with the needs of the business.</p>	<p>If an imbalance between family, community and work roles is identified, the Personnel Officer, Organisation Psychologist, Registered Nurse or Supervisor will intervene. The causes of stress and inappropriate personal pressure are addressed in several internal courses like Appropriate Assertiveness, Happy not Snappy, Working with Others and Using Polite Language. Employees are encouraged to speak up if they need help.</p>
<p>10. Understand the changing nature of life and work roles.</p>	<p>There is no provision within the JR programme to address the nature of work and life roles.</p>	<p>Bedford encourages its people to consider non traditional work roles and to overcome stereotypes. Bedford’s policy for all employees is to empower people to be confident in making choices that are right for them.</p> <p>Declared an Employer of Choice for Women in 2005 and again in 2007, the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workforce Agency (EOWA) has recognised Bedford’s actions to ensure an equitable, diverse and family friendly working environment for all staff. When granting a recent waiver from annual reporting the EOWA stated that approval had been given because;</p> <p><i>“...Bedford has done everything reasonably practicable to</i></p>

		<p><i>advance women and remove barriers through a high level of workplace program analysis, consultation with staff, and formal action to address issues.</i></p> <p><i>We particularly commend your organisation for the work you have done in relation to attracting and supporting women into the non-traditional area of Horticulture through your Job Ready program”.</i></p>
<p>11. Understand, engage in and manage the career building process.</p>	<p>The idea of Career Building as a self directed progression along a career pathway is addressed at the selection and recruitment stage. Potential candidates for the JR programme are advised of the many options for career development available to Bedford employees. However, the JR course is a 10 week, highly focused and discrete ‘try before you buy’ course with little space for abstract discussion.</p>	

Excerpt taken from the *Australian Blueprint for Career Development*.
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