



Customized Employment

A job built around **the person** — not a person squeezed into a posted opening.
Real work, real wages, in the community, for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

WHAT IS CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT?

Customized Employment (CE) is a nationally recognized way of reaching **competitive integrated employment**. Instead of searching job boards and hoping a posting fits, we start with the person: their strengths, interests, and the conditions they need to succeed. Then we go directly to employers and **negotiate a position** that matches what the job seeker contributes to what the business needs.

"A process for achieving competitive integrated employment or self-employment through an employee and employer relationship that is personalized to meet the needs of both."

— U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy. Recognized in federal law (WIOA, 2014) as a supported employment strategy.

A customized job can take several forms:

- **Job carving** — a set of duties pulled from existing roles so co-workers can focus on higher-value work
- **Job creation** — a brand-new position that fills an unmet need the employer didn't have staff for
- **Resource ownership** — the job seeker brings equipment or a credential that opens a new line of work
- **Self-employment** — a micro-business built on a person's proven strengths

Every position pays **at or above the customary wage** for the work, in a setting alongside co-workers without disabilities.

THE CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT PROCESS — PHASE BY PHASE

- 1 Discovery** · typically 8–12 weeks
Interviews with the job seeker and the people who know them best, observation of home and neighborhood routines, and hands-on activities in real environments — including our own Grace Farm & Gardens, where a person can try crop production, greenhouse work, animal care, market retail, and customer service in one place.
- 2 Discovery Profile** · documenting what we learned
Findings become a written profile: usually three vocational themes, the person's skills and contributions, conditions for success, ideal work environment, support needs, transportation, and benefits considerations. A benefits-counseling referral is offered before any job search begins.
- 3 Customized Career Planning Meeting**
The job seeker and their chosen circle of support review the profile, confirm the themes, and build a list of employer prospects for each theme — businesses where those themes live, not businesses with a "Now Hiring" sign. A visual résumé is developed to show, not just tell, what the person can do.
- 4 Customized Job Development**
Informational interviews, workplace tours, and a business-needs analysis with prospect employers. Our job developer looks for tasks that are going undone, bottlenecks, and unmet needs the job seeker is well-suited to fill.
- 5 Negotiation & Customized Position Description**
We propose and negotiate the position directly with the employer, then put the agreed tasks, schedule, wage, supervisor, and supports in writing so everyone starts on the same page.
- 6 Placement & Systematic Instruction**
A job analysis and task breakdown guide on-the-job coaching. Supports are faded on a data-based plan, with a deliberate handoff to natural supports — the supervisor and co-workers — as the employee gains independence.
- 7 Workplace Assistance** · long-term
Once coaching fades, ongoing stabilization continues: scheduled check-ins, employer contact, and rapid re-coaching whenever duties, schedules, or supervisors change.
- 8 Retention & Advancement Reviews**
At least quarterly we review wages, hours, satisfaction, and interest in advancement — and renegotiate the position as the person's contributions grow: raises, added hours, added responsibility.



HOW CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT DIFFERS FROM THE OLD WAY

TRADITIONAL SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT	CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT AT EDI
Starts with job postings — the person is matched to whatever openings exist.	✓ Starts with the person — Discovery comes first, and the job is built to fit.
Competes against every other applicant through applications and interviews.	✓ No competitive hiring process. The position is negotiated one-to-one with the employer.
Relies on a written résumé and interview skills that may not show a person's real abilities.	✓ A visual résumé and real-world demonstrations show what the person can actually do.
Requires the person to handle every duty in a standard job description.	✓ Duties are carved, created, or combined so the person does what they are good at — full time is not required.
Group enclaves, work crews, or sheltered settings kept people apart from the community.	✓ One person, one employer, in an integrated workplace alongside co-workers without disabilities.
Subminimum or "training" wages were once common in Colorado.	✓ Wages at or above the customary rate for the work — Colorado has ended subminimum wage, and CE was built for this.
"Job readiness" was a gate the person had to pass before trying employment.	✓ Readiness is never a gate. Anyone who wants to work can start the process.
Coaching stays indefinitely, or ends abruptly when funding ends. The employer is asked to "do a favor."	✓ Supports fade on a plan to natural supports, Workplace Assistance never lapses — and the employer gains a real business solution.

TWO FUNDING PATHS — ONE CONTINUOUS SERVICE

EDI is both a **Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) vendor** and a certified **Program-Approved Service Agency (PASA)** under the HCBS-DD and HCBS-SLS Medicaid waivers. That means we can deliver Customized Employment through either door — and sequence the two so the job seeker never experiences a gap.

Through Colorado DVR

DVR funds the time-limited front end of the work, delivered by our ACRE-credentialed staff in DVR's Customized Employment service areas:

- Discovery
- Customized Job Development & negotiation
- Systematic Instruction (job coaching to stabilization)

We can help a person apply to DVR, take part in the Individualized Plan for Employment, and report progress on DVR's milestones.

Through the HCBS Waiver (DD / SLS)

The waiver funds what DVR cannot — before, alongside, or after a DVR case:

- Individual Supported Employment via Customized Employment
- Long-term Workplace Assistance (extended services) after DVR closes
- Prevocational Services and Mentorship on the way to a job
- Transportation to and from services

If DVR has a waitlist, waiver Supported Employment may be available in the interim.

DVR funds the front end → EDI convenes the handoff → waiver-funded Workplace Assistance begins the day DVR funding ends. No gap in support.

EVERYTHING THAT COMES WITH IT

- ✓ ACRE-credentialed Customized Employment staff
- ✓ Benefits counseling before job development starts
- ✓ Situational assessment at Grace Farm & Gardens
- ✓ Prevocational certificate program (9 stackable modules)
- ✓ Visual résumé and employer presentation
- ✓ Written Customized Position Description for every job
- ✓ Job Coaching & Fading Plan with data-based fading criteria
- ✓ Mentorship pairing for on-the-job confidence
- ✓ Transportation included with Supported Employment
- ✓ Coordination with your Case Management Agency and DVR counselor
- ✓ Monthly employment status reporting to your team
- ✓ Quarterly retention and advancement reviews

WHO IT'S FOR

Adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities who want to work — especially people with significant support needs, people for whom traditional job placement has not worked, and people who have never been given the chance to try. Current EDI members, families, guardians, case managers, and DVR counselors are all welcome to refer.

Ready to build a job around someone you know?

Referrals accepted from members, families, guardians, CMAs, and DVR.

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