

All About Workplace Accommodations

Infographic

What is a Workplace Accommodation?

A workplace accommodation is any support or tool that can be given to a team member to help them do their job most effectively.

Accommodations are not a burden on organizations. It's the opposite of a burden if implemented correctly. By supporting the individual with accommodations, you're helping your business become more effective.



Meet our Expert

[Marco Pasqua](#) has been a speaker for over 30 years.

In fact, he first took to the stage to present as a nine-year-old. Marco lives with Cerebral Palsy and is a designated [Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ \(RHAC\) Professional](#), with 14 years of experience running his accessibility consulting business.

Recently, Marco authored an accommodations toolkit for [Hire For Talent](#). Small Business BC sat down with Marco to hear about his biggest takeaways for small businesses and how they can approach the accommodation process confidently.

The Four Main Types of Workplace Accommodations

1. Policy



2. Personal Supports



3. Equipment



4. Structural



1. Flexibility / Policy Changes

Examples

- Modifying work hours
- Modifying location of duties
- Modifying task completion methods to fit individual needs

Costs and Funding



These changes often have no cost to implement.



2. Personal Supports

Examples

- Job coaches
- Guide dogs
- Service animals
- Personal assistants
- Support workers.

Costs and Funding



These accommodations are sometimes possible to subsidize through government programs.



A Universal Approach to Workplace Accommodations

Marco advocates for a universal approach to workplace accommodations to all employees. “Keep in mind that there are many people with invisible disabilities who have not disclosed that they have a disability,” said Marco.

Often, people aren’t even aware of how to improve their productivity and comfort level with workplace accommodations. Small business owners are not expected to be experts at supporting each employee’s unique needs. That’s where third-party support can help.

“It’s really about checking in with an individual and making sure they feel comfortable”

—Marco Pasqua

3. Equipment

Examples

- Technical devices
- Alternative work materials
- Communication aids
- Ergonomic workstations

Costs and Funding

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There are programs to cover most costs for equipment accommodations.



4. Structural Modifications

Examples

- Handrails
- Ramps
- Widened doorways
- Increased accessibility to common facilities.

Costs and Funding

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These accommodations are commonly funded through grants as they can be the most expensive.



Individualized Nature of Workplace Accommodations

Workplace accommodations should result from a conversation between the organization and the individual. This two-way communication leads to an individual, personalized workplace accommodation plan.

“Each and every one of us are individuals,” said Marco. “If you have the right person in the right role, you’re helping them supplement their skill sets so that your business ultimately looks better and does better. That’s important because that can only be achieved by having the individual as part of the conversation,” he said.

“Human beings are on a spectrum—and so you can’t successfully implement any of these changes without including that person in the dialogue or conversation.”

—Marco Pasqua

Cost of Workplace Accommodations

Many accommodations are affordable, with over two-thirds of job accommodations cost less than \$500 according to the Retail Council of Canada. There are plenty of accommodations that are zero-cost to the business.

WorkBC's [Assistive Technology Services](#)

- Assistive devices, equipment, and technology
- Ergonomic supports
- Restorative supports
- American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting and captioning services
- Communication and hearing devices related to work
- And more

Undue Hardship

New business owners who don't have experience supporting workers with accommodations may be concerned that changes will cause undue hardship to their organization.

It's extremely uncommon for an employee to require an accommodation that creates undue hardship for an employer. Businesses can work with their employees to find grants and funding opportunities to support requests for accommodation.

“When people think of accommodations, they're automatically thinking of ramps and elevators because people with disabilities are often seen as just people in wheelchairs ... but disability is so vast, and so are accommodations,”
—**Marco Pasqua**

Continue your Accessibility Journey with SBBC

Small Business BC is a non-profit resource centre for BC-based small businesses. sbbc.co/accessibility is full of tips, tools, and more to support your next stage.



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