



Reasonable Accommodation Fund Submission

The aim of this submission is to establish the obstacles employers are faced with in hiring a person with disabilities and working with the Reasonable Accommodation process. Employers for Change provides employers with all the information and advice needed to hire, employ, manage and retain staff with disability, and is part of the Open Doors Initiative, which creates pathways to education, employment and entrepreneurship for marginalised people.

Providing reasonable accommodation is a practical and meaningful way to support and retain disabled employees in employment. By introducing appropriate measures, employers can play a role in removing barriers that the disabled community are experiencing at all levels of the job seeking process.

In order to ensure that the grants and funds being offered are practical, it's vital the Department engages with stakeholders. We are encouraged to be given the opportunity to submit our recommendations on the Reasonable Accommodation Grant.

Based on this we believe as an overarching recommendation that far greater investment in evidence-based employment supports is warranted to benefit individuals with disability, employers, the economy and society. Transparency in regard to figures and an update in current grants from employers so as to better inform the progression of these supports is also required.

Key Recommendations

- Awareness raising campaign targeting employers and employees who have a disability, so there is clarity on what supports and grants are available to the community.
- Create an accessible online application platform for all grants and supports with alternative options for applicants. Consideration should be given to the accessibility of the current application process, as well as the requirement of resources and time in order to apply for particular supports and grants.
- Current application processes and format to be evaluated through the social model of disability lens, to ensure language and the thinking behind it is appropriate to the needs of people with disabilities and it has their input

- Remove the onus from the employer to apply for grant support and empower the jobseeker with a disability to seek work with their supports already in place.
- Employees can access a “Reasonable Accommodation Passport”. This allows for accommodation measures, equipment, tech etc. to be “attached” to the employee. With this they have the ability to move seamlessly between roles and employers. Reasonable Accommodation Fund requests can take between 4 to 6 weeks, for an individual on-boarding this might mean they are unable to work to their full potential or capacity during this time, or worse their start date is delayed.
- Rework and update current of grants:
 - ▷ Personal Reader Grants should allow for assistive technology.
 - ▷ Disability Awareness Training Scheme should be open to all employers without identifying an employee with a disability or be provided free to all employers through state funded trainers e.g. through state funded projects or not for profit organisations. This would remove the need for an application process.
 - ▷ The Wage Subsidy Scheme is outdated and focuses on the medical model of disability. The terminology is off putting to both employers and people with disabilities. It also fails to take into consideration people with disabilities who are capable of working to the same level as non-disabled peers but at reduced hours e.g. time needed to set up personal equipment, meaning an 11am work start instead of 9am etc.
- Amalgamate all the current disability supports into one grant that will cover an employee’s needs as achieved by the UK’s Access to Work scheme.
- Remove the threshold of 21.5 hours work per week required to access the Subsidy Scheme for persons with a disability - this would enable people with disabilities who may work from 5 to 15 hours per week to access part-time employment.
- Open up grants and funds to all private, public and charitable organisations (?) - As it stands employees who have a disability and works for a not for profit/charity are unable to access the current grants as they are only open to those working in the private sector.

ENDS –

For further information:

www.opendoorsinitiative.ie

www.employersforchange.ie