

# Supported and Customized Employment

## Side by Side Referral Decision Guide



# What is Supported and Customized Employment?

Supported Employment	Customized Employment
<p><b>WIOA Definition</b> (34 CFR §§361.5(c)(53) and 363.1(b))</p> <p>Competitive integrated employment, including customized employment; or employment in an integrated work setting in which an individual with a most significant disability is working on a short-term basis toward competitive integrated employment; and employment that is individualized and customized, consistent with the individual's unique strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice, of the individuals involved.</p>	<p><b>WIOA Definition</b> (34 C.F.R § 361.5(c)(11))</p> <p>Customized employment means competitive integrated employment, for an individual with a significant disability, that is based on an individualized determination of the unique strengths, needs, and interests of the individual with a significant disability. It is designed to meet the specific abilities of the individual with a significant disability and the business needs of the employer and carried out through flexible strategies, such as job exploration by the individual and working with an employer to facilitate placement.</p>
<p><b>Designed for Individuals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ For whom competitive integrated employment has not historically occurred; <b>or</b></li> <li>❖ For whom competitive integrated employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability; <b>and</b></li> <li>❖ Who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need intensive supported employment services and extended services after the transition to extended services to perform the work involved.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Designed for Individuals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ For whom competitive integrated employment has not historically occurred or is unable to sustain CIE without long-term supports; <b>or</b></li> <li>❖ Whose experiences have primarily been in segregated facility-based programs, sheltered workshops or subminimum wage positions; <b>or</b></li> <li>❖ Who have not had the opportunity to work due to low expectations of abilities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Defining Features</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Empowers choice</li> <li>❖ Delivers collaborative services</li> <li>❖ Results in similar wages and benefits to coworkers</li> <li>❖ Ensures integration with mental health services</li> <li>❖ Facilitates and maximizes social inclusion</li> <li>❖ Stems from developing person-centered career plans</li> <li>❖ Augments natural worksite supports</li> </ul>	<p><b>Defining Features</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Empowers choice</li> <li>❖ Discovery and Customized Job Development</li> <li>❖ Customized, negotiated job that:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Meets the employer's needs</li> <li>◆ Meets the preferences and needs of the job seeker</li> <li>◆ Results in an individualized job description</li> <li>◆ Optimizes job retention of the individual with a disability</li> </ul> </li> <li>❖ Results in at least minimum wage or similar wages and benefits as coworkers</li> </ul>



# Identifying Individuals

## Who may benefit from Supported Employment or Customized Employment Services



### Step 1

Consider SE or CE when individuals have a most significant disability (e.g., significant impairments in at least two or more major life activities)

### Step 2

Does the individual meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. The employment seeker has not been able to achieve a competitive integrated employment outcome OR is unable to sustain CIE without long-term supports.
2. The employment seeker's experiences have primarily been in segregated facility-based programs for people with disabilities such as sheltered workshops or subminimum wage work.
3. Employment seeker has not had the opportunity to work due to low expectations/ perceptions of abilities due to the type/nature of the disability(ies).
4. The employment seeker is a student with a disability who is transitioning from secondary education and has had limited opportunities to explore career opportunities.

### Step 3

Consider CE if the employment seeker requires Discovery to help the individual and the employment specialist to learn about their skills and interests when such knowledge is limited due to:

1. Limited exposure to work due to perceptions of abilities due to disability.
2. Limited experiences or opportunities to explore the community or career interests as a result of disability or segregation.
3. Behaviors that affect workplace acceptance or integration
4. Limited adaptive skills. (e.g., social skills, functional life skills, and conceptual skills such as communication, reading, writing, etc.).
5. Poor / limited performance on traditional vocational assessments due to significant disabilities.

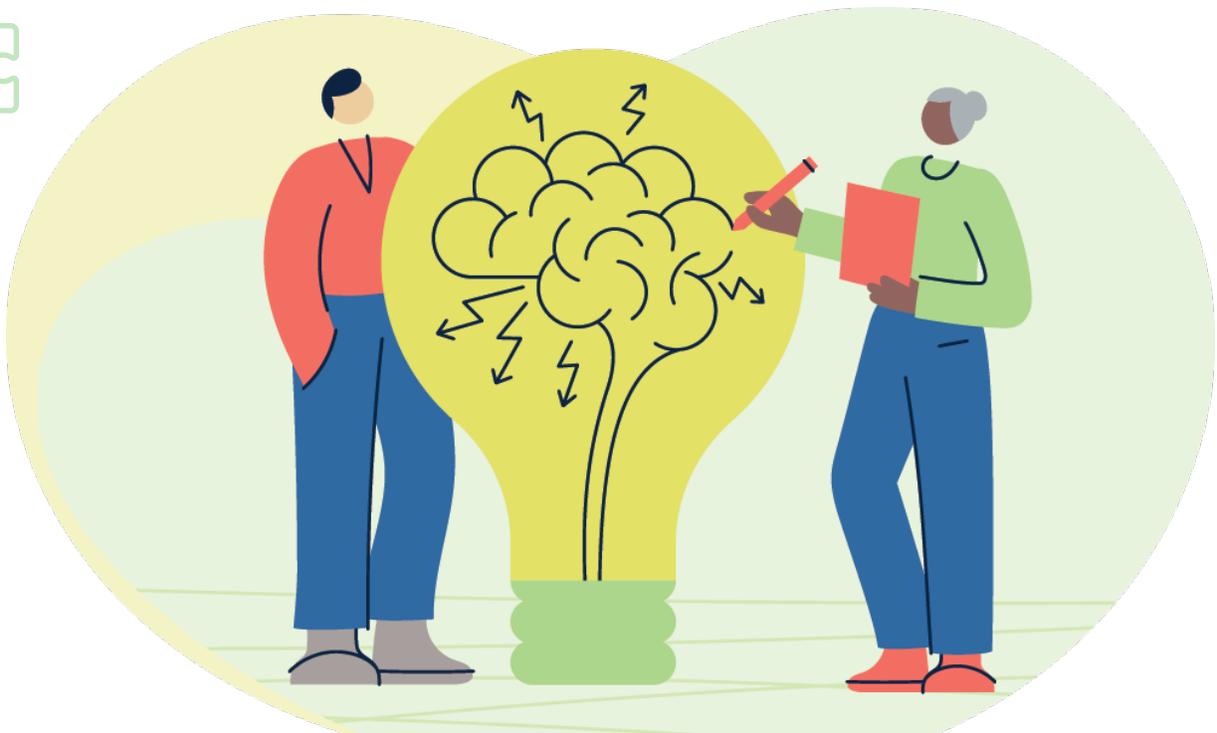
### Step 4

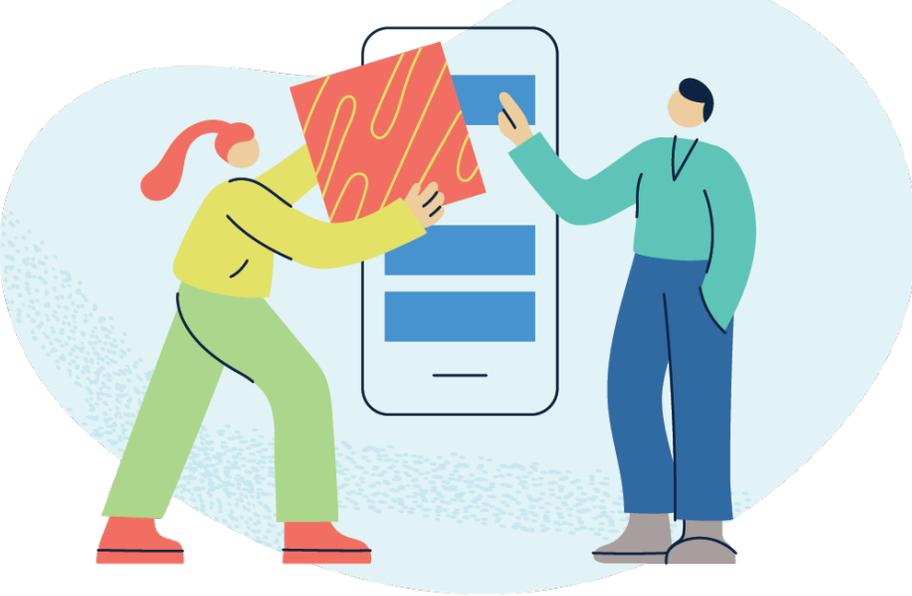
Consider CE if the individual meets at least one or more of the following criteria:

1. The employment seeker's experiences have primarily been in segregated settings designed for people with disabilities (e.g., sheltered workshops, day activity programs, clubhouse programs, day treatment centers, etc.).
2. The employment seeker would not be considered a qualified applicant in a position with existing job descriptions.
3. The employment seeker has received supported employment services but has not been successful.
4. The employment seeker does not have a clear idea of what they want to do for a job.

# Refer To

Supported Employment	Customized Employment
<b>Career Planning</b> Purpose/Outcome: Gather information necessary to develop person-centered career plan that identifies vocational goal(s) and anticipated worksite supports.	<b>Discovery</b> Purpose/Outcome: Gather information necessary to develop person-centered vocational plan that identifies the employment seeker's skills, capacities, ideal conditions for employment, potential support needs, and vocational themes.
<b>Methods for Gathering Information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Conversations and interviews with employment seeker and team members.</li><li>❖ Some informal observations in daily activities.</li><li>❖ Community-based experiences, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Job-shadowing</li><li>◆ Work experiences</li><li>◆ Work assessments</li><li>◆ Situational assessments</li></ul></li></ul>	<b>Methods for Gathering Information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Utilization of a "no fail" process based on the presumption that all people can work (outcome cannot be "unable to benefit from employment").</li><li>❖ Qualitative approach including interviews, observations, participation in familiar and new activities to learn about (not assess) the employment seeker and to naturally identify skills, interests, and potential support needs in real-life /integrated community settings.</li></ul>





## Phase 1 Key Distinction

CE referrals better meet the needs of employment seekers, regardless of disability label, for whom more standard evaluative practices such as traditional vocational assessments or standard community-based experiences used in Supported Employment are anticipated to be:

- ❖ Insufficient for gathering the depth of information necessary to develop the vocational plan, i.e., not likely to lead to clear identification of strengths, skills, capacities, etc. that will become the foundation for job development.
- ❖ More likely to reveal gaps or things the employment seeker cannot do than those he/she/they can do.
- ❖ Potentially result in a finding of “unable to benefit from employment”.

Employment seekers whose strengths, capacities, ideal conditions, and vocational themes are better revealed through spending time with them in their lives, talking to people who know them well, and creating individualized opportunities to try new things related to their skills and interests within their communities and local businesses before developing the vocational plan should be referred to Customized Employment.



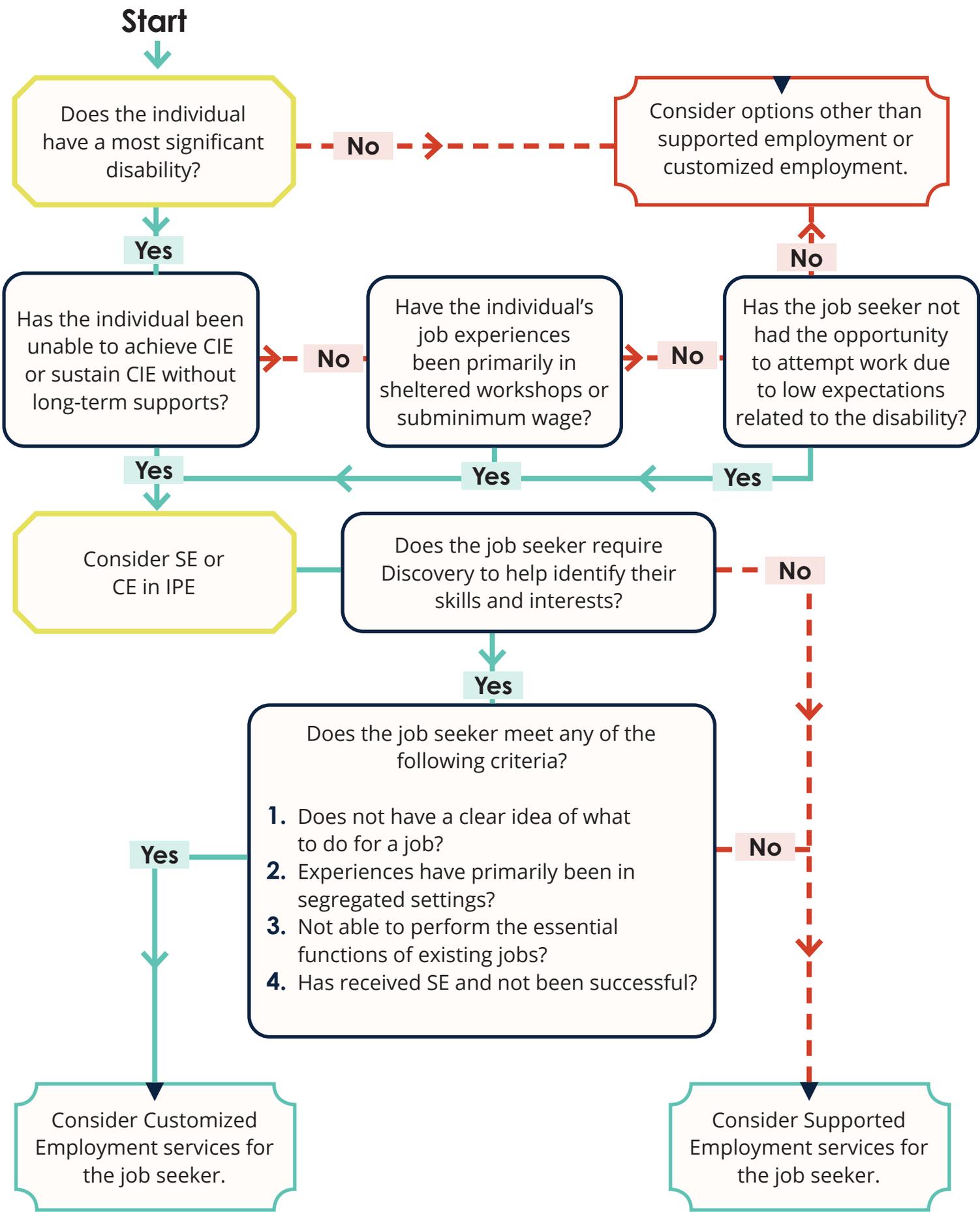
# Differences in Job Development in SE and CE

Customized Employment better meets the needs of employment seekers, regardless of disability, for whom more standard job development practices, such as applying for open positions or identifying local labor market needs, are anticipated to result in entry-level or high-turnover positions in traditional industries (e.g., retail, fast food, janitorial).

- ❖ CE meets the needs of employment seekers may not be considered qualified job applicants, because they are unable to perform all of the essential job functions of existing job descriptions even with accommodations.
- ❖ Employment seekers who benefit from SE may be able to identify businesses and the type of work that matches their skills and interests.
- ❖ Employment seekers who will benefit from CE are less likely to have a clear idea of how their skills and interests match businesses and their type of work.
- ❖ Job development for SE usually begins by identifying open positions within businesses that match the employment seeker's skills and interests.
- ❖ Job development for CE begins by identifying businesses that match the person's vocational themes. Informational interviews and observations are then used to learn more about the business's needs and if the business needs also meet the needs of the employment seeker.
- ❖ Job development for CE results in an individually negotiated job description that did not exist prior to the negotiation.

Employment seekers who more likely to achieve stable, sustainable employment through the creation of individually-tailored jobs developed in collaboration with community businesses should be referred to Customized Employment.





**Start**

Does the individual have a most significant disability?

**No**

Consider options other than supported employment or customized employment.

**Yes**

Has the individual been unable to achieve CIE or sustain CIE without long-term supports?

**No**

Have the individual's job experiences been primarily in sheltered workshops or subminimum wage?

**No**

Has the job seeker not had the opportunity to attempt work due to low expectations related to the disability?

**No**

**Yes**

**Yes**

**Yes**

Consider SE or CE in IPE

Does the job seeker require Discovery to help identify their skills and interests?

**No**

**Yes**

Does the job seeker meet any of the following criteria?

1. Does not have a clear idea of what to do for a job?
2. Experiences have primarily been in segregated settings?
3. Not able to perform the essential functions of existing jobs?
4. Has received SE and not been successful?

**No**

**Yes**

Consider Customized Employment services for the job seeker.

Consider Supported Employment services for the job seeker.

# Resource Created as a Collaboration between:



**VCU**



Creating  
Communities  
of Economic  
Cooperation

Griffin-Hammis Associates



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