

BARCELONA  
SPAIN



EVERY CITY HAS PUBLIC PARKS AND GARDENS TO MAINTAIN. IN BARCELONA'S CASE, THIS CORE ACTIVITY IS COMBINED WITH CREATING A MORE INCLUSIVE LABOUR MARKET. SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE TEAM SPECIALISING IN EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THE MUNICIPAL PARK COMPANY HAS HELPED PROVIDE SUPPORT TO INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEES AND MADE THE COMPANY ITSELF MORE RESPONSIVE TO THEIR NEEDS IN ITS OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT.



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# INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT-MAINTAINING PARKS IN BARCELONA

## CONTEXT

'The Parks and Gardens Municipal Institute' (PGMI), the public body in charge of maintaining the city's green spaces, requested support from the city of Barcelona to improve the integration of people with disabilities into its workforce. As many as 8.3% of all PGMI employees are people with intellectual, physical, sensory or mental disabilities. The company wanted to be more inclusive, but the management lacked the knowledge, skills and resources to support these people in the work place.

## SOLUTION

The 'management assignment' is an innovative collaboration project between two of Barcelona City Council's public bodies: the PGMI and the 'employment advisory team' (EAL) of the Municipal Institute for People with Disabilities, which specialises in job placements for people with disabilities on the open labour market.

To improve how PGMI responds to the individual needs of its employees with disabilities, the project team carries out observational visits assessing their work situation and then provides tailored training to each person based on their specific work tasks and responsibilities. The EAL team establishes individual action plans to improve each employee's current work situation. These are regularly monitored and adapted according to developments.

The 'management assignment' is not just about employment; it aims to improve the overall quality of life of people with disabilities by addressing, where necessary, psychological well being and stability, relationships and social skills, and financial and housing issues. If required, the team can help connect people to mental health or social services, NGOs or family intervention organisations. The project team works with an extensive network of professionals from other services including the city's healthcare and social services, and justice departments. Through this EAL officers gain an in-depth understanding of the persons' needs and challenges.

The 'management assignment' project also shapes the company's organisational processes. As a result it is becoming more inclusive and building the skills of the management staff in working with people with disabilities.

This includes:

- creating reception protocols for workers with disabilities who join the company or change their work location, to ensure that people receive the induction and support they require,
- improving internal collaboration between departments of PGMI to better meet the needs of these employees,
- helping PGMI to ensure that the training provided to all its staff also caters to the needs of their employees with disabilities,
- clarifying health and safety issues and helping managers overcome concerns they may have in letting these employees carry out different tasks—this ensures the work becomes less repetitive and improves the wellbeing of workers,
- providing workshops on managing relationships, and
- training and advising management in dispute mediation, coupled with an ongoing evaluation process to move towards conflict prevention and reduce the need for dispute mediation.



## IMPACT

In the past five years 64 employees with disabilities received support from the project. This led to a substantial improvement of the working environment in PGMI, which is reflected in a significant decrease in sick leave days of employees with disabilities related to either illness or work related accidents,

increasing participation of employees with disabilities in company training. It also increased participation of employees with disabilities in company training and increased the ability of people with disabilities to take on more diverse tasks in the company, as a result of the individual training and of working with management.

A 2012 social impact study by the Municipal Institute for People with Disabilities calculated that for every €1 invested in the programme, €1.38 euro in social value was created. This arises from:

- savings made by the Spanish and Catalan authorities on social security, unemployment, illness benefits and social services,
- tax revenues earned by the central government, and
- greater independence, empowerment and personal wellbeing, more purchasing power and fewer expenses experienced by people with disabilities and their families.

In addition to these calculations, PGMI identified other less quantifiable benefits, such as improvements in the working environment and public recognition of a commitment to the rights of people with disabilities. The project also helped improve the quality of the parks maintenance work, due to a more skilled PGMI staff and improved operational effectiveness.

As a result of the project, PGMI took on a full time occupational therapist to oversee the inclusion of employees with disabilities.

## CHALLENGES

It took some time for the EAL to gain the confidence of the management of PGMI and for PGMI to see the EAL

as a positive collaborative partner. This was gradually achieved by open communication and by creating a better understanding of the needs and perceptions of those PGMI managers with responsibility for employees with disabilities. Once established, the PGMI management and EAL worked together on the strategies so that the PGMI management had ownership of the project's goals.

## FUNDING

The project is funded by PGMI, which allocates €46,903 annually for the occupational coach and for the management and coordination work carried out by the EAL psychologist. The Municipal Institute for People with Disabilities also makes a small contribution to cover the remaining human resource costs.



## FUTURE PLANS

The future aim is to reduce the need for direct intervention by the EAL, which will prove that the PGMI team is able to implement EAL guidelines independently across the company.

The Municipal Institute for People with Disabilities plans to apply this model in other public authority institutions to improve the integration of workers with disabilities.