



Evidence synthesis Employment support for people with intellectual disability: Australia-focused synthesis

Technical report

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Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation, who are the Traditional Owners of the land on which Centre for Inclusive Employment is located, in Melbourne's east and outer-east, and pay our respect to their Elders past and present. We are honoured to recognise our connection to Wurundjeri Country, history, culture, and spirituality through these locations, and strive to ensure that we operate in a manner that respects and honours the Elders and Ancestors of these lands. We also respectfully acknowledge Swinburne's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students, alumni, partners and visitors.

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We acknowledge and respect the Traditional Owners of lands across Australia, their Elders, Ancestors, cultures, and heritage, and recognise the continuing sovereignties of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations.

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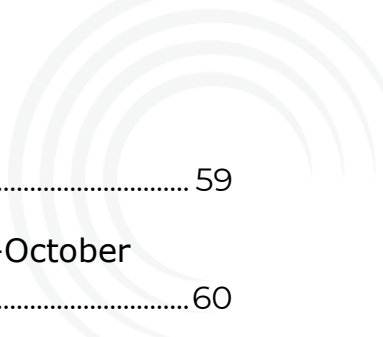
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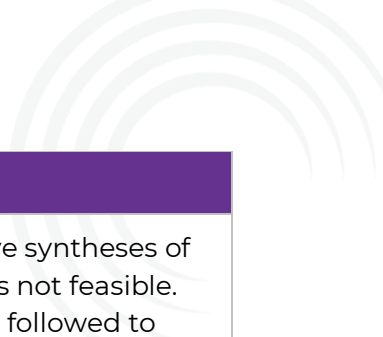
Glossary

This glossary defines key terms and abbreviations used in this evidence synthesis. Terms are used as working definitions for synthesis and reporting.

Term	Working Definition
ADE (Australian Disability Enterprise)	A segregated employment setting (often workshop-based) where many workers are people with disability; historically a dominant pathway for people with intellectual disability in Australia.
AERO (Australian Evidence Rating/Confidence)	The evidence rating approach used in this review as a pragmatic confidence signal for selecting and prioritising evidence streams (e.g. higher AERO levels indicate stronger evidence for effectiveness synthesis).
AMSTAR-2	A critical appraisal tool for systematic reviews of healthcare and social interventions; used in this review to provide a structured quality signal for included reviews.
Assistive technology (AT)	Devices, software, or environmental modifications that support functioning and performance at work (e.g. task prompts, scheduling tools, communication aids).
CFIR (Consolidated Framework)	An implementation research framework used to organise implementation determinants (barriers and enablers) relevant to uptake and fidelity of interventions.
CIE (Competitive Integrated Employment)	In this report, an employment outcome meeting three criteria: paid work at or above minimum/award wage with standard conditions; in an integrated setting (working alongside colleagues without disability); and with opportunities for advancement (skill-building, increased responsibility, or pay progression).
DES (Disability Employment Services)	Australia's former nationwide disability employment programme (2010-2025) providing specialist support to help people with disability find and keep jobs in the open labour market (replaced by Inclusive Employment Australia in Nov 2025).
Discovery	A person-centred exploratory process used to identify an individual's strengths, interests, support needs, and ideal working conditions, typically to inform job matching and customisation in a personalised employment approach.
Dose / intensity	The quantity and pattern of support delivered (e.g. frequency of coaching contacts, duration of support, timing of intervention stages, tapering of support), treated in this synthesis as a key variable influencing outcomes.
EPIS (Exploration-Preparation-	An implementation-phase framework used to structure understanding of how interventions are introduced and

Term	Working Definition
Implementation-Sustainment)	sustained over time; helps organise determinants and strategies at different stages of implementation.
Follow-along support	Ongoing, flexible in-work support provided after job placement (e.g. periodic check-ins, on-site problem solving, or re-intensification of coaching when work conditions change) to help the employee maintain and succeed in the job.
ID (Intellectual disability)	A developmental disability characterised by limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour, with onset before adulthood. Review inclusion: studies were included if participants were described by the authors as having intellectual disability (or an equivalent term). We assumed standard diagnostic criteria unless stated otherwise, acknowledging that some studies did not detail how ID was determined.
IDD (Intellectual and developmental disability/disorder)	A broader range of lifelong conditions that affect physical development, learning, language and behaviour. Review inclusion: studies using broader labels (e.g. developmental disability) were included only if intellectual disability was specifically identified or results for participants with ID could be separated.
Inclusive Employment Australia	The Commonwealth's specialist disability employment programme replacing DES from 1 Nov 2025. Emphasises participant choice, no time limits on support, and broader eligibility to improve open mainstream employment outcomes for people with disability.
Inclusive Enterprises (Social Firms)	Integrated businesses that intentionally employ people with disability in regular wage jobs, combining a social mission with commercial operations. These firms provide supportive work environments and are considered pathways to open employment.
Job carving / customisation	Modifying or negotiating the tasks or design of a job to better suit a particular person's strengths, needs, and interests, while meeting real employer business needs (e.g. combining or redistributing duties to create a customised role).
Mismatch ontology	In this report, 'mismatch' refers to the gap between job demands and individual capabilities/supports (a person-environment fit issue), rather than the person's interests versus their current job. An interpretive lens framing 'support needs' as arising from person-environment interaction. A mismatch occurs when workplace cognitive, social, or physical demands exceed an individual's capacities or available supports. Improving employment outcomes thus involves reducing task/environment load or increasing individual capability to achieve a better fit.
Natural supports	Supports that are embedded in the ordinary workplace environment rather than provided externally, for example, help

Term	Working Definition
	and mentoring from coworkers, supervisors ensuring clarity and routine, or adaptations in usual work processes that assist the employee.
National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)	Australia's national scheme funding disability support services, including employment supports. It provides individualised funding to eligible people with disability.
Open employment	Australian policy term for competitive integrated employment: people with disability working in regular jobs alongside people without disability, with pay at least at the minimum or award wage and standard conditions.
Place-then-train	A supported employment approach in which an individual is placed directly into a real job in the community (competitive employment) and then trained and supported on the job, rather than requiring lengthy pre-vocational training before placement.
Proctor implementation outcomes	A set of implementation outcome measures defined by Proctor et al. (e.g. acceptability, adoption, feasibility, fidelity, penetration, sustainability) used to evaluate how well an intervention is implemented, separate from client outcomes.
Reasonable adjustments	Modifications or accommodations in the workplace that enable a person with disability to perform their job on an equal basis (e.g. providing accessible communication, altering duties or schedules, physical modifications, assistive devices). These are required under anti-discrimination law to support equitable employment.
Semiotic density	A characteristic of a workplace's communication environment: the complexity and volume of symbolic information, language, and unspoken social cues that workers must interpret. High semiotic density (e.g. jargon, complex instructions, implicit rules) can increase cognitive load for workers.
School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES)	SLES, and NDIS-funded school-to-work support, is currently being absorbed into broader early career support programmes, with no new SLES-specific funds in 2025.
Structural complexity	A characteristic of tasks or routines in the workplace: the number of steps, branching decisions, interactions, or coordination demands required to complete work tasks. High structural complexity can make a job more challenging for someone with cognitive or learning difficulties.
Supported employment	In Australia, 'supported employment' commonly refers to Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) – segregated workplaces paying supported wages – whereas in the US and in this report's context it refers to mainstream competitive employment with ongoing support (place-then-train model).



Term	Working Definition
SWiM (Synthesis Without Meta-analysis)	A methodological guidance for reporting narrative syntheses of quantitative data when statistical meta-analysis is not feasible. The SWiM guidelines (Campbell et al., 2020) were followed to transparently summarise and report the findings of this review without a meta-analysis.
Systematic Instruction	A structured, step-by-step method of teaching job tasks in the actual work environment, often involving task analysis, prompts and cues, gradual fading of assistance, and repetition until the worker can perform tasks independently to the required standard.
SWS (Supported Wage System)	An Australian scheme that allows pro-rata wages for workers with disability based on assessed productivity. Under the SWS, a qualified assessor evaluates the productivity of an employee with disability in a supported job, and the person may be paid a proportion of the full wage rate corresponding to their productivity level.

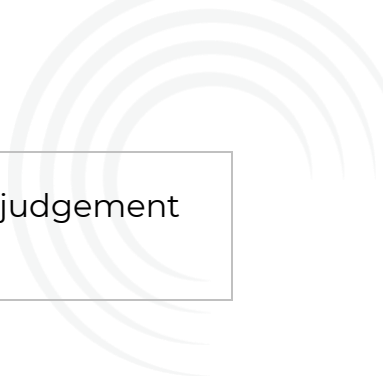
Executive Summary

This synthesis consolidates international and Australian evidence on employment supports that enable competitive integrated employment (CIE) (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.), also known in Australia as open employment, for people with intellectual disability (ID). It translates findings into practical implications for service design and workforce training in the Australian context.

The synthesis follows a SWiM-aligned narrative approach (Campbell et al., 2020) and is underpinned by a multi-level programme theory (MIP-CIE), which frames 'support needs' as a mismatch between individual cognitive/communication strengths and workplace demands (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). For detailed findings, see **Sections 5-10**.

Scope and boundaries

Decision Area	Rule Applied
Geographic focus	International evidence with Australian relevance; Australian context highlighted.
Language	English only.
Population	ID only; autism included only when co-occurring with ID and explicitly identified.
Age/transition	Includes school and post-school transition evidence; analysed separately. See Appendix I for coding rules applied to transition-to-work studies, including school-based, post-school, and mixed-age cohorts.
Service boundary	Focus on service and workplace practices; policy levers noted only when embedded.
Evidence types	Peer-reviewed and select applied evidence; theses excluded; qualitative studies included.
Quality/certainty	Certainty signalled in tables and brief narrative; Systematic reviews appraised using AMSTAR-2.



Transferability	Criteria-first screen, followed by case-by-case judgement with rationale.
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Key findings

- **CIE outcomes are strongest** when support is delivered as a package – not as isolated components. Effective models combine job development, employer engagement, job matching/customisation, workplace-based training (systematic instruction), and ongoing follow-along support.
- **Employer-facing practices are essential:** Addressing employer risk, supervision, inclusion, and task design improves both job attainment and quality – more so than jobseeker-only approaches.
- **Support intensity ('dose') and continuity are critical:** Time-limited or low-intensity support undermines retention. Sustained outcomes require support that tapers and re-intensifies in response to workplace changes.
- **Job quality depends on inclusive design:** High cognitive and social demands (e.g. complex instructions, unspoken norms) can limit integration, satisfaction, and progression. Belonging, respectful supervision, and role clarity are key to sustained participation.
- **Reframing support needs as mismatch improves targeting:** Many support needs arise from poor fit between the person and the workplace environment – not from fixed deficits. This shifts service design towards job/task redesign, environmental supports, and supervisor/coworker scaffolding.

Implications for service design

- **Design for the full pathway:** Place-Train-Maintain. Integrate employer engagement, job matching/customisation, systematic instruction, and follow-along supports with clear re-intensification triggers.
- **Prioritise mismatch reduction:** Treat cognitive-environment fit as a design task to simplify tasks, reduce language complexity, use visual cues, and build predictable routines.
- **Treat employers as partners:** Fund and plan for employer-facing supports (e.g. supervisor coaching, job redesign, natural supports) and measure them as core outputs.
- **Plan for continuity and responsiveness:** Include maintenance support and rapid response protocols to address workplace changes within days, not weeks.
- **Tailor transition pathways:** School-based cohorts benefit from early work

exposure and coordinated planning; post-school cohorts need strong employer engagement and continuity, scaled to job complexity and support needs.

Implications for training

- **Employer engagement and job development:** relationship-building, role negotiation, articulating business value, and sustaining partnerships.
- **Job analysis and task redesign:** job carving, simplifying tasks, visual supports, and low-complexity instructions.
- **Systematic instruction and coaching:** prompting/fading, mastery criteria, real-world coaching, and fidelity monitoring.
- **Natural supports and inclusion:** supervisor coaching, coworker mentoring, role clarity, stigma reduction, and fostering belonging.
- **Follow-along and re-intensification:** maintenance planning, early issue detection, and rapid response to sustain employment.
- **Transition practice:** designing work exposure, coordinating education/employment pathways, aligning with school-to-work, Employment Readiness Programmes, and engaging families as partners in risk management.

1. Background and purpose

Competitive integrated employment (CIE) (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.) – commonly referred to in Australia as open employment – means ordinary, paid work in mainstream settings where people with and without disability work together. In this report, we use ‘CIE’ and ‘open employment’ interchangeably, while retaining the terminology used by individual sources where relevant.

For clarity, CIE/open employment is treated as meeting three minimum standards:

- **Fair pay and conditions** (at least minimum or award wages, with standard employment conditions).
- **An integrated workplace** (meaningful interaction with coworkers and/or customers without disability).
- **Opportunities to build and progress** (skill development, increased hours and/or wages, and pathways to advancement).

Despite decades of disability rights and policy effort, open employment remains out of reach for many people with intellectual disability. The challenge is not only getting a job; it is also keeping the job and improving job quality over time. Throughout this report, support needs are framed as a person-environment interaction – the fit between a person’s strengths, the job’s demands, workplace design, and the supports available – rather than a fixed attribute of the individual (Sekiguchi & Yang, 2021).

1.1. Key challenges in achieving open employment for people with intellectual disability

Several persistent barriers interact across levels (individual, family, workplace, service system and policy/structural settings):

- **A gap between policy intent and everyday practice:** rights-based commitments do not consistently translate into accessible recruitment, inclusive job design, and sustained supports in real workplaces.
- **Employer demand and ‘risk’ perceptions:** employers may over-estimate productivity or supervision burdens and under-estimate the effectiveness of accommodations and job coaching, constraining opportunities unless providers can offer credible employer engagement, job design, and follow-along support.

- **School-to-work transitions and limited work exposure:** limited employer-linked pathways, work experience, and coordinated transition planning can narrow vocational identity, networks, and job match quality before services begin.
- **Variable delivery of evidence-informed supports:** Supported and Customised Employment approaches are widely promoted, but outcomes depend on whether key components are delivered at sufficient intensity and duration (for example, job development, systematic instruction, and re-intensification of support when work conditions change).
- **Job quality and durability:** success includes adequate hours, fair wages, job security, social inclusion at work, and opportunities to progress. Without workplace inclusion practices and ongoing supports, early placements can be fragile.

1.2. Australian policy, service and labour-market context

Australia's disability employment policy has progressively shifted towards integration. Early reforms funded open employment services alongside supported employment, while the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (Australian Government, 1992) established legal duties to prevent discrimination and support reasonable adjustments. Today, person-centred funding through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the Commonwealth specialist disability employment programme, Inclusive Employment Australia (Department of Social Services, 2025) provide the main delivery platforms through which evidence-informed practices are expected to be implemented.

At a population level, employment gaps remain substantial. National reporting shows that working-age Australians with disability have markedly lower employment rates than people without disability, and people with intellectual disability are more likely to work part-time when employed (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024).

Within this context, Australia uses several interlocking programmes and practice models as implementation pathways to open employment:

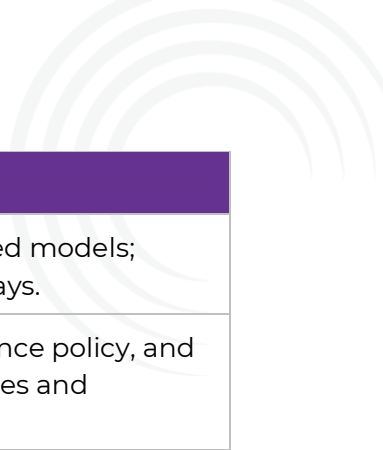
- **Inclusive Employment Australia (formerly Disability Employment Services):** the Commonwealth specialist disability employment programme, supporting people to prepare for, find and maintain work, and supporting employers with recruitment and workplace practices (Department of Social Services, 2025).

- **NDIS employment supports (including School Leaver Employment Supports):** individualised funding for capacity building, workplace supports, and transition-to-work assistance for young people (National Disability Insurance Scheme, 2024; National Disability Insurance Agency, 2024).
- **Supported employment (place-then-train-and-maintain):** workplace-based job coaching, systematic instruction, and follow-along supports, with attention to task clarity, supervision routines, and coworker supports.
- **Customised Employment (including Discovery, job carving and negotiated roles):** tailoring job content and supports to align a person's strengths with employer needs.
- **School-to-work transition partnerships and internship-to-employment models:** coordinated pathways that build work exposure and employer links before and immediately after school exit.
- **Inclusive enterprise and social firm approaches:** integrated businesses designed to combine commercial viability with intentional inclusion and award-wage employment.

Delivering competitive integrated employment for people with intellectual disability requires coordinated action across a diverse ecosystem. Multiple stakeholders – ranging from individuals and families to service providers, employers, and government agencies – play distinct but interconnected roles in shaping opportunities, supports, and outcomes. **Table 1.1.** provides a high-level overview of these key stakeholder groups and their contributions to the CIE system. These are strategies that help individuals build the skills, confidence, and readiness needed for work.

Table 1.1. Key Stakeholders in Delivering Competitive Integrated Employment

Stakeholder Group	Role in Supporting CIE
People with Intellectual Disability & Families	Central to decision-making, goal setting, and advocacy; shape service design through lived experience.
Government (DSS, NDIA, Policy Makers)	Fund and regulate employment supports (e.g. Inclusive Employment Australia, NDIS); set national strategies and legislative frameworks.
Disability Employment Providers	Deliver job development, placement, and follow-along supports; engage employers and customise roles.
Employers (Public, Private, Social)	Create inclusive job opportunities; implement adjustments and foster workplace belonging.



Stakeholder Group	Role in Supporting CIE
Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs)	Transitioning from segregated to integrated models; support skill-building and inclusive pathways.
Advocacy and Peak Bodies	Promote rights-based employment, influence policy, and support inclusive practice through resources and campaigns.

1.3. Why this evidence synthesis is timely

The 2025-26 period is characterised by significant reform and transition.

Inclusive Employment Australia commenced on 1 November 2025, with design features intended to improve participant choice, provider specialisation, and continuity of support (Department of Social Services, 2025).

In parallel, governments are progressing work on supported employment reform and pathways away from segregated employment (such as disability-only workplaces) and subminimum wage arrangements (paid below minimum wage) (Department of Social Services, 2024). These changes increase the need for clear, practice-ready evidence on what ‘good’ looks like in job development, workplace support and retention for people with intellectual disability, and on the system and workforce conditions required to deliver it.

1.4. Purpose of this rapid evidence synthesis

This rapid evidence synthesis identifies which service and workplace practices most effectively help people with intellectual disability obtain and sustain open employment, and what is known about implementing those practices in real-world settings. It is designed for applied use by the workforce delivering employment supports, service providers, and policy stakeholders to inform service design, delivery, and priority workforce training.

As per the agreed scope, the review focuses on employment support practices (jobseeker-facing supports, employer/workplace-facing supports, and bridging or ongoing supports). Broader policy tools (such as wage subsidies and disability income-support rules) were not systematically searched; where relevant, they are treated as contextual determinants rather than claims about intervention effectiveness.

2. Review questions

This synthesis is guided by questions designed to inform practice across employment services, NDIS-funded supports, education, and employer settings. The questions address not only job attainment but also job quality and long-term retention for people with intellectual disability in open employment.

Effectiveness question (Q1):

What evidence-informed practices result in high-quality mainstream employment outcomes for people with intellectual disability?

Implementation question (Q2):

How can these effective practices be delivered within the Australian employment ecosystem?

These questions informed the scope of the synthesis and guided the structured narrative approach, including the development of an implementation sub-stream and a programme theory to organise mechanisms and contextual determinants.

3. Theory and analytic framework

3.1. Working definitions

3.1.1. Working definition: intellectual disability for this review

For evidence synthesis purposes, we operationalise intellectual disability as inclusion in a study sample where participants are explicitly identified as having intellectual disability (or an equivalent term such as ‘intellectual developmental disorder’) consistent with mainstream diagnostic criteria: significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour, with onset in the developmental period (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; World Health Organization, 2019). Studies using broader labels (e.g., ‘developmental disability/disorder’, ‘learning disability’) are included only where intellectual disability is explicitly identified or results are disaggregated for ID. Autism is included only where participants are identified as having both autism and intellectual disability.

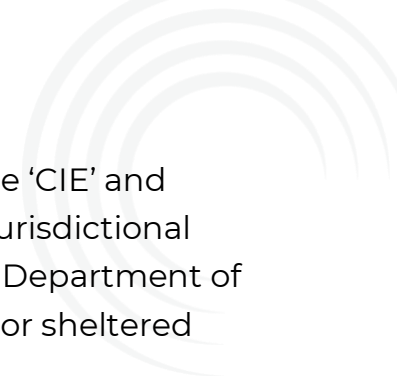
This operational definition is used to determine who is ‘in’ the evidence base; it does not imply that employment outcomes are determined by individual impairment alone. Diagnostic, administrative and service-system labels vary across jurisdictions and across studies. Where participant identification is unclear, we apply conservative eligibility decisions and record the study’s categorisation and any ambiguity in the master register.

3.1.2. Working definition: Competitive Integrated Employment in the Australian review context

For this synthesis, CIE/open employment is operationalised using three minimum conditions (used for outcome specification and comparability across jurisdictions):

- **Competitive remuneration and conditions:** paid at least minimum/award wage with standard workplace conditions.
- **Integrated setting:** routine interaction with coworkers and/or customers without disability in mainstream workplaces.
- **Opportunity for progression:** scope to build skills, increase responsibilities, and/or advance over time.

In the Australian policy and service context, the aligned plain-language term is open employment: people with and without disability working together in



ordinary workplaces for fair wages. Throughout this report, we use ‘CIE’ and ‘open employment’ interchangeably for simplicity, and we note jurisdictional terminology when required, such as WIOA-aligned concept (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). We distinguish open employment from segregated or sheltered pathways such as Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs).

3.2. Intervention themes framework

This synthesis codes employment support practices into three interacting component families, defined by the primary target of action:

- **Jobseeker-facing supports (supply-side):** activities that build vocational capability and self-determination (e.g., vocational profiling/discovery, goal setting, travel training, work routines/stamina, benefits counselling, self-advocacy).
- **Employer/workplace-facing supports (demand-side):** activities that create and shape opportunities within workplaces (e.g., employer outreach, job analysis, job carving/customisation, onboarding, supervisor coaching, coworker/natural supports development, reasonable adjustments and assistive technology).
- **Bridging and continuity supports (interface):** activities that connect jobseekers and employers and stabilise employment over time (e.g., job matching, on-the-job training/systematic instruction, follow-along support, transition-triggered re-intensification after change).

In practice, components overlap and are sequenced and dosed to fit the person-environment mismatch pattern and the stage of the employment trajectory (pre-employment, placement, early tenure, maintenance, transition points).

3.3. Programme theory (analytic synthesis lens): Mismatch-Informed Programme Theory of CIE/open employment (MIP-CIE) with CLiFT mechanism

This synthesis uses a Mismatch-Informed Programme Theory (MIP-CIE), a novel framework developed in this review, to explain how CIE/open employment outcomes are generated and sustained for people living with intellectual disability. The MIP-CIE framework is introduced in this synthesis as an analytic and interpretive framework developed to integrate heterogeneous evidence on employment supports for people with ID. It is not presented as a validated

causal model, nor as a prescriptive intervention template. Rather, it functions as a theory-informed framework to organise evidence, clarify mechanisms, and generate testable propositions for future evaluation.

The framework treats support needs as an emergent property of person-environment interaction rather than a fixed attribute of the person. This approach builds on person-environment fit theory (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Sekiguchi & Yang, 2021) by focusing specifically on cognitive load mismatches. The core mechanism of the MIP-CIE framework is Capability-Load Fit Theory (CLiFT): employment supports work by increasing capability, reducing load, and improving fit across tasks, environments and relationships, within enabling service-system settings. The synthesis draws on the CLiFT analytic lens to interpret how employment supports influence outcomes by improving the fit between individual capabilities and workplace demands. A full conceptual exposition of CLiFT will be presented in a forthcoming academic publication.

3.4. Boundary conditions and outcome cascade

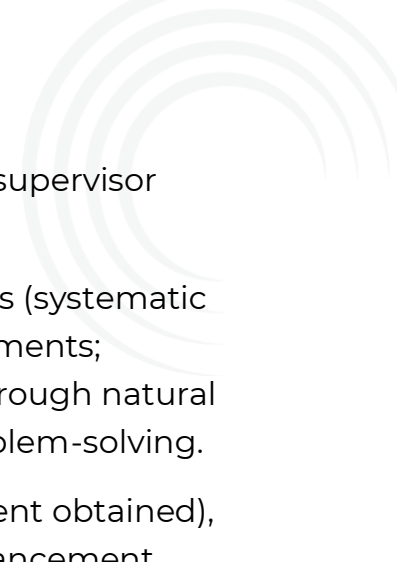
For reporting, CIE/open employment is treated as an employment-state construct with minimum boundary conditions. Outcomes are then interpreted as a cascade from attainment to job quality to durability and advancement.

- **Competitive remuneration and conditions** (at/above minimum wage or comparable rates for similar work; with benefits where applicable).
- **Integrated setting with routine interaction** with non-disabled colleagues and/or customers beyond supervisors/support staff.
- **Opportunities for advancement** (e.g., increased responsibility, hours, wages, or progression pathways), where applicable and measurable.

3.5. Programme architecture: components, dose, mechanisms and outcomes

MIP-CIE organises evidence across three interacting practice component families, with ‘dose’ treated as a first-class explanatory variable. These components activate mechanisms that generate changes in outcomes.

- **Practice components (what is delivered):** jobseeker-facing supports (supply-side), employer/workplace-facing supports (demand-side), and bridging/continuity supports (interface).
- **Dose geometry (how much, when):** front-loaded configuration (job development, matching, set-up), followed by lower-intensity maintenance,



with transition-triggered re-intensification (e.g., role change, supervisor change, roster shifts).

- **Mechanisms (why it works):** capability acquisition in real jobs (systematic instruction); opportunity creation via job redesign and adjustments; employer confidence and risk reduction; social integration through natural supports; and stability through early detection and rapid problem-solving.
- **Outcomes (what changes):** attainment (CIE/open employment obtained), job quality (wages/hours/benefits, integration indicators, advancement opportunities), and durability (tenure/retention, job satisfaction, progression).

3.6. Foregrounding mismatch: reframing ‘support needs’ as person-environment interaction

In MIP-CIE, the ‘workplace environment’ is not only a physical site; it is a capability-load system comprising tasks, tools, information flows, sensory conditions, social norms, and coordination routines. Where workplaces rely heavily on tacit rules, rapid task switching, high sensory stimulation, or complex administrative processes, load increases and mismatch risk rises unless tasks are redesigned, instructions are made accessible, and inclusive supervision and coworker supports are in place. Conversely, fit improves when work is structured, expectations are explicit, accommodations are normalised, and support can be flexibly re-intensified after change.

Box 3.1 Interpretive propositions used to integrate evidence in this synthesis

These propositions are not claims of causal effect, but structured interpretive statements used to synthesise and compare findings across diverse study designs and contexts:

Mismatch reduction is necessary for durability: interventions that only achieve placement (attainment) without sustained mismatch reduction (adjustments + inclusion + follow-along) will show weaker tenure and job quality outcomes.

Dose matters: higher intensity and continuity of supports (especially systematic instruction and follow-along) are most consequential for people facing higher mismatch in complex roles or high-variability workplaces.

Employer-side practices are not 'context' but causal inputs: employer engagement, job redesign authority, and supervisor capability activate opportunities and determine integration and advancement trajectories.

Social integration mediates job quality and retention: natural supports, belonging, and role clarity buffer setbacks and reduce avoidable exits following workplace changes.

System settings condition feasibility: funding rules, assessment processes, and provider workforce capability (including under Inclusive Employment Australia/NDIS/Employment Readiness Programmes interfaces) determine whether time-intensive customisation and long-term supports can be delivered at sufficient dose. This is consistent with findings from Nord, Grossi, and Andresen (2020), who demonstrated that state-level funding mechanisms significantly influence employment equity for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities across the lifespan.

3.7. Implementation overlay and Australian delivery interfaces

To connect effectiveness findings to actionable service design, MIP-CIE is paired with an implementation overlay: determinants are organised using CFIR (Damschroder et al., 2009); timing is interpreted using EPIS (Rossetti et al., 2015); and implementation outcomes are reported using the Proctor taxonomy (e.g., adoption, feasibility, fidelity, penetration, sustainability) (Proctor et al., 2011).

In the Australian context, three interfaces are treated as particularly consequential for implementability and scale:

- **Specialist employment programme platform** (Inclusive Employment Australia and its predecessor DES)
- **NDIS-funded employment-related supports** including Employment Readiness Programmes, and
- **Open-supported employment boundary** (including wage-setting arrangements and transitions from segregated settings).

3.8. Programme theory in practice: design implications matrix

This synthesis operationalises the programme theory as the Mismatch-Informed Programme Theory for CIE for people with intellectual disability (MIP-CIE). It treats 'support needs' as a context-sensitive person-environment interaction: mismatch occurs when the load profile of work (task and information demands, sensory and physical conditions, social/relational expectations, and administrative complexity) exceeds the person's available capabilities and supports, and CIE supports function by improving capability-load fit and stabilising performance over time.

The design implications presented below translate the MIP-CIE framework as an interpretive synthesis of evidence, not as a fixed implementation model. They indicate conditions and design considerations suggested by the evidence, rather than prescriptive requirements.

Table 3.1. MIP-CIE framework matrix: challenges, mechanisms & design requirements

Level	Challenge / Determinant	Mechanism (How the Challenge Blocks CIE)	Design Requirement for CIE Supports (MIP-CIE framework)
Macro / Structural Pathways	Persistence of segregated pathways with weak transition to open employment	Path dependency narrows opportunities and expectations, reducing transition rates to open employment	Treat de-segregation and transition pathways as system preconditions; specify transition mechanisms
Macro / Service-System	Programme settings shape service 'dose' and continuity	Incentives and rules affect intensity and duration of support; reforms may disrupt continuity	Make platform assumptions explicit; include safeguards for continuity and workforce capability



Level	Challenge / Determinant	Mechanism (How the Challenge Blocks CIE)	Design Requirement for CIE Supports (MIP-CIE framework)
Meso / School-to-Work	Insufficient work-based learning and transition planning	Weak vocational identity and limited networks reduce job-person fit	Specify early transition components: work experience, employer engagement, and pathway coordination
Meso / Provider Model	Inconsistent implementation and support intensity ('dose')	Low contact frequency and weak sequencing reduce skill acquisition and job fit	Treat dose as a causal moderator; specify sequencing, frequency, and re-intensification triggers
Workplace / Employer Demand	Employer risk aversion and low expectations	Stigma and uncertainty suppress hiring and advancement opportunities	Position employer engagement as a core component; include coaching and natural supports
Workplace / Job Design	High cognitive / communicative load relative to processing affordances	Mismatch leads to errors and exclusion; performance issues misattributed to the person	Make mismatch assessable and modifiable; include job redesign, visual supports, and adjustments
Workplace / Retention	Lack of follow-along support and slow response to workplace changes	Accumulated issues lead to preventable job exits	Specify maintenance architecture; include early warning systems and re-intensification protocols
Contextual Determinants	Income support and wage-setting interfaces	Financial risk and complexity bias decisions toward minimal hours or segregated options	Treat as contextual determinants: include navigation supports where embedded in service models

4. Methods

4.1. Study rationale

People with intellectual disability remain substantially under-represented in competitive integrated employment in Australia. This evidence synthesis was commissioned to identify and summarise evidence-informed service and workplace practice components that facilitate high-quality mainstream employment for people with intellectual disability.

The synthesis is intended to support the Centre's purposes by:

- **providing an accessible summary of evidence** to guide employment service design and delivery and inform policy development; and
- **informing the development** of training packages, resources, toolkits and other collateral to underpin more effective disability employment practice.

4.2. Eligibility criteria and scope

This work was conducted as a rapid evidence synthesis guided by an a priori protocol and adapted to meet applied translation needs (service design and workforce development). The approach integrates research evidence (quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods), systematic reviews (where eligible), and grey literature (e.g., government and NGO reports, programme evaluations) reporting appraisable empirical findings, as well as a scan of existing tools and resources relevant to inclusive employment practice.

4.2.1. Language

All searches were restricted to English-language materials due to time constraints.

4.2.2. Publication date limits and handling of older evidence within systematic reviews

Database searching was limited to records published from 1 January 2015 to present. This date restriction applied to primary studies, evaluations, and grey literature retrieved through database searching and supplementary searches.

Systematic reviews published from 1 January 2015 onward were eligible even when they included primary studies published prior to 2015. In these cases, pre-2015 primary studies were treated as legacy evidence contributing to the review-level findings. Legacy studies were not added as stand-alone included studies unless they were also retrieved as eligible 2015+ records through our

searching. This approach preserves access to foundational evidence captured by contemporary reviews while maintaining the rapid review boundary for newly identified records.

4.2.3. Eligibility criteria

Eligibility criteria were specified a priori and are summarised in **Appendix A**.
Table A: Eligibility Criteria (PICOS).

4.2.4. Scope refinement (service and practice focus; policy levers out of scope)

This synthesis treats employment support as primarily service and workplace practice components (for example, vocational profiling and discovery, job matching, job carving and customisation, systematic instruction, employer engagement, workplace adjustments, natural supports, and ongoing support).

Macro policy levers (for example, wage subsidies or employer incentives as stand-alone instruments, income support settings, and guardianship or decision-support interfaces) were out of scope and were not systematically searched. Where such levers appeared embedded within eligible programmes, they were recorded descriptively as contextual features (enablers or constraints) but were not synthesised as intervention categories nor used as primary bases for recommendations.

4.3. Search strategy

4.3.1. Scope and databases

Searches were conducted across the following bibliographic databases (as per the protocol and search documentation **Appendix B** and **Appendix C**):

- APA PsycInfo (via Ovid)
- CINAHL
- Scopus
- Web of Science Core Collection
- ProQuest Social Science Premium (including ERIC and APAIS)
- ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global (screened for citation-chasing/context only; theses/dissertations were not included as evidence sources)

4.3.2. Search strategy

A three-step search strategy was used: (i) an initial limited search to identify key terms and indexing; (ii) a full search using refined terms across all databases; and (iii) reference list screening of included systematic reviews and key sources to identify additional eligible records. Details of the initial scoping search conducted in August-October 2025 are provided in **Appendix B**. A supplementary search focused on vocational education and training pathways is outlined in **Appendix C**.

4.3.3. Grey literature, tools and resource scan

To support downstream training and toolkit development, a structured scan of grey literature, tools, resources, and training materials was undertaken. This included targeted searching using Google Advanced Search (targeted keywords, operators, and filetype or domain filters), targeted searches of relevant organisational and government portals, bounded Google Scholar screening as specified in the protocol, Disabled People's Organisations websites and lived-experience authored materials, and reference list mining of included sources.

4.4. Study selection and data extraction

Records were managed in review software Covidence (Covidence, 2025) with deduplication prior to screening. Study selection proceeded in two stages: title and abstract screening against eligibility criteria, followed by full-text screening with documented exclusion reasons. A calibration approach was used to ensure consistent application of criteria.

Selection results are summarised in a PRISMA 2020 flow diagram (see **Appendix D**), which outlines the identification, screening, and inclusion process. The final included studies derived from this process are detailed in Table 4.1 (Validation ledger for frozen evidence counts and sources).

A standardised extraction template was used to capture study characteristics, participant details, intervention components and delivery features, outcomes, implementation determinants, equity considerations, embedded policy levers (descriptive only), transferability to Australia, and information required for critical appraisal and certainty assessment. Extraction domains and template fields are listed in **Appendix E**. Coding decisions for transition-to-work studies were guided by structured rules (see **Appendix I**).

4.5. Data analysis and synthesis

Evidence base freeze and version control. All evidence-source counts, overlap handling, and analysis-set definitions in this report are frozen to the master register and master mapping as follows: Master register v1.2 (23 January 2026) and master mapping v4.6 (23 January 2026).

The synthesis pipeline comprises 8 included systematic reviews (extracted and synthesised at review level) and 28 post-systematic-review primary studies (extracted at primary-study level). Primary studies contained within included systematic reviews are tracked for audit and citation mapping as a within-SR inventory (n = 100 unique studies) and are not double-extracted at primary-study level.

Within the post-SR set, 6 studies also appear in the within-SR inventory (overlap) and are retained as provenance records and (where relevant) for the lived experience/perspectives reporting stream but are excluded from the incremental post-SR effectiveness analysis to avoid double counting. This leaves 22 post-SR studies unique to the post-SR stream; of these, 11 meet the agreed Post-SR effectiveness analysis-set criteria (AERO ≥ 3 ; quantitative/mixed-methods designs; in-scope primary outcomes; and not overlapped with within-SR evidence).

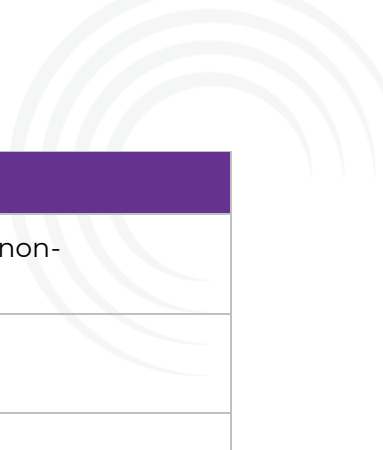
The lived experience and stakeholder perspectives sub-stream is indexed via a dedicated citation list (n = 16) and synthesised separately (Section 6).

The PRISMA 2020 flow diagram (see **Appendix D**) visually reconciles the study selection process with the frozen evidence base and complements Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Validation ledger for frozen evidence counts and sources

This table documents the final included evidence sources as derived from the PRISMA 2020 study selection process (see **Appendix D**), cross-referenced to the master register and citation mapping files.

Item	Frozen reference
Master register	V_CIE_SR_Quan_MM_AZ_MASTER_REGISTER_WORKING_v1_2_20260123.xlsx
Master mapping	V_Current_CIE_Citation_Matrix_AZ_21012026_ALIGNED_TO_REGISTER_v4_6_20260123.xlsx
Included systematic reviews (SR level)	n = 8
Within-SR primary study inventory (unique)	n = 100
Post-SR primary studies (total)	n = 28 (incl. n = 6 overlaps retained for provenance)



Item	Frozen reference
Post-SR effectiveness analysis set	n = 11 (AERO ≥ 3 ; quant/mixed; non-overlapping)
Lived experience/stakeholder perspectives stream	n = 16 (synthesised separately)
Freeze date for counts in report	23 January 2026 (register v1.2)

Given expected heterogeneity in interventions, contexts, and outcome measures, the primary approach was structured narrative synthesis organised by three interacting intervention families:

- jobseeker-facing supports (capability building);
- **employer and workplace-facing supports** (demand shaping and workplace design); and
- **bridging and continuity supports** (matching, on-the-job training, and retention supports).

Where pooling was not appropriate, quantitative findings were summarised using direction and consistency of effects and evidence density. Qualitative evidence was synthesised thematically and integrated with quantitative findings using a convergence approach to align what works, for whom, and under what implementation conditions.

Because interventions, contexts, and outcome measures were insufficiently homogeneous to support meta-analysis, quantitative findings were synthesised using structured narrative methods consistent with the Synthesis Without Meta-analysis (SWiM) reporting guideline (Campbell et al., 2020). Studies were grouped a priori by intervention themes and primary outcome domain (attainment; tenure/durability; job quality, including earnings/hours), and findings were summarised using transparent rules for direction and consistency of effects and evidence density. We report the grouping strategy, synthesis approach, handling of heterogeneous outcome data, and limitations of the synthesis to support appraisal and reproducibility in the absence of pooled effect estimates.

4.6. Critical appraisal and certainty assessment

Risk of bias and methodological quality were assessed using design-appropriate critical appraisal tools. Practice-level certainty and confidence were summarised using GRADE for quantitative outcomes (where feasible), GRADE-CERQual for qualitative findings (where synthesised as themes), and the AERO Standards of Evidence (Australian Education Research Organisation, 2022) as an

overarching rigour by relevance classification to support practice translation (including for grey literature (e.g., government and NGO reports, programme evaluations)). Appraisal tools and certainty reporting rules are provided in **Appendix G**.

Inclusion and use of theses (including AERO Level 1 and 2)

Theses and dissertations were excluded as primary evidence sources but were used for citation-chasing and contextual understanding.

4.7. Transferability and accessibility

Transferability to the Australian context was assessed using an explicit rubric (see **Appendix H**) and a **two-stage approach**: (i) a priori criteria were applied to identify evidence likely to be implementable within the Australian service ecosystem, and (ii) case-by-case judgement with explicit rationale was applied for borderline cases, focusing on contextual enablers and constraints.

Lived experience perspectives and accessibility commitments

Web-based materials authored by people with disability and Disabled People's Organisations were reviewed to capture lived experience perspectives relevant to practice design and delivery. Outputs were designed to support translation, including plain-language summaries and practice-facing artefacts (for example, checklists), with accessibility considerations documented (for example, plain language and Easy Read where feasible).

4.8. Limitations

Key limitations include the English-only search, the 2015+ publication window, and heterogeneity in interventions and outcomes. These were mitigated through structured synthesis methods, inclusion of legacy evidence via systematic reviews, and transparent reporting of scope boundaries.

5. Effectiveness findings by intervention themes

5.1. Evidence base overview

This synthesis reports effectiveness evidence using a two-stream approach: (i) systematic reviews (SRs) synthesised at the SR level to avoid double counting; and (ii) an incremental Post-SR primary study set (AERO 3-4) to update the evidence base with newer or non-SR-captured studies. Table 5.1 summarises the evidence streams and their role in the synthesis.

Table 5.1. Evidence Streams and Analysis Sets Used in This Synthesis

Evidence stream / set	Register source	n	Role in synthesis	Overlap rule (double-counting control)
Systematic reviews (SR-level synthesis)	Sheet A: Systematic review extraction	8	Primary source for effectiveness conclusions; narrative synthesis; certainty signalled in tables.	Not applicable (SR-level synthesis is the base layer).
Within-SR primary study inventory	Sheet B: Primary Study Within-SR	100	Mapped to domains and intervention families; used to inform implementation and lived-experience interpretation; not re-synthesised quantitatively.	Primary studies within SRs are not counted again as Post-SR effectiveness evidence.
Post-SR primary studies (full set)	Sheet C: Primary Study Post-SR	28	Evidence identified outside included SRs (e.g., not covered by SRs, or published after SR search end dates); includes qualitative and quantitative studies.	6 overlapping studies are treated as Within-SR for effectiveness but may contribute qualitative insights.
Post-SR incremental effectiveness analysis set	C_PostSR_Effectiveness_Set view; Sheet C (flag PostSR_effectiveness_set = Yes)	11	Incremental quantitative/mixed evidence (AERO 3-4) summarised using SWiM-style structured narrative to update SR findings.	Restricted to Post-SR unique studies meeting AERO 3-4; excludes overlaps and qualitative-only studies.
Lived experience and stakeholder	Subset of Sheet C (plus any overlapping qualitative studies)	17	Synthesised thematically to clarify acceptability, mechanisms, and implementation; reported	May include overlaps; overlaps are retained here for qualitative insight without

Evidence stream / set	Register source	n	Role in synthesis	Overlap rule (double-counting control)
perspectives set	coded to JOBQUAL/IMPL perspectives		separately from effectiveness matrices.	inflating effectiveness counts.

5.2. Summary of effectiveness evidence

Effectiveness findings are organised by intervention themes and mapped to the primary outcome hierarchy: attainment, durability/tenure, and job quality. Table 5.2 summarises the direction and consistency of effects across SRs and Post-SR studies.

Table 5.2. Effectiveness Evidence by Intervention Theme and Outcome Domain

Intervention theme	Attainment (placement/entry)	Durability/tenure (sustainment)	Job quality (wages/hours, inclusion, wellbeing)
Jobseeker-facing supports	Generally positive when embedded in integrated pathways (SRs 68, Enticott & Dew, 2025). Post-SR effectiveness studies: n=3.	Limited reporting; follow-up often short or inferred (SR Taubner et al., 2022). Post-SR: n=2.	Positive but heterogeneous; functioning and psychosocial benefits reported, but measures vary (SRs Morash-Macneil et al., 2018, Taylor et al., 2022; comparative evidence in SR Taylor et al., 2023). Post-SR: n=3.
Employer/work place-facing supports	Indirect and less frequently evaluated; evidence suggests workplace practices can enable entry when linked to placement/support models (SR Carlson et al., 2020). Post-SR: n=2.	Some evidence for improved retention and integration through workplace supports and natural supports (SR Carlson et al., 2020). Post-SR: n=1.	Supports for inclusion, coworker engagement and supervisor practices appear beneficial; outcomes are variably measured (SR Carlson et al., 2020). Post-SR: n=2.
Bridging and continuity supports	Most consistent positive evidence (SRs Enticott & Dew, 2025; youth transition evidence also in SR Jetha et al., 2018). Post-SR: n=4.	Emerging but limited evidence; sustainment is less consistently measured than attainment (SR Taubner et al., 2022). Post-SR: n=2.	Evidence suggests potential job quality benefits, but definitions and measures are inconsistent; comparative evidence favours CIE over segregated settings (SR Taylor et al., 2023; broader outcomes in SR Taylor et al., 2022). Post-SR: n=3.

Attainment outcomes are most consistently reported. Durability and job quality are less frequently measured and more heterogeneous, limiting direct comparison. The synthesis prioritises direction-of-effect summaries and

identifies implementation conditions that shape real-world outcomes.

5.3. Effectiveness by intervention theme

Each intervention theme is summarised below, with findings structured by outcome domain and implications for service design.

5.3.1. Jobseeker-facing supports

Jobseeker-facing supports comprise pre-employment preparation and capability building (e.g., vocational profiling, skills training, self-determination and career planning) delivered prior to, and sometimes alongside, placement in competitive integrated employment. The evidence base indicates greatest benefit when these components are embedded within integrated pathways that include placement and continuity supports. Within this synthesis, jobseeker-facing effectiveness conclusions draw primarily on SR evidence (notably Enticott & Dew, 2025; Nevala et al., 2019; Morash-Macneil et al., 2018) and 3 Post-SR effectiveness studies for attainment.

While mental health counselling (e.g. for anxiety or depression) was not a primary focus of the included interventions, one study (Gomes-Machado et al., 2016) noted the involvement of a psychologist or counsellor as part of the interdisciplinary support team. However, the intervention description did not specify whether these roles included therapeutic counselling for mental health conditions.

Attainment

- **Across SRs of transition-to-work and rehabilitation interventions**, exposure to real-world work (work experience, work trials, and structured school-to-work preparation) is consistently associated with higher likelihood of competitive employment for young people with ID (e.g., Enticott & Dew, 2025; Nevala et al. (2019); Jetha et al. (2019).
- **SR evidence indicates** that jobseeker capability components are most effective when delivered as part of an integrated pathway that includes job matching, on-the-job training, and ongoing workplace supports (i.e., capability + placement + continuity), rather than as classroom-only preparation, e.g., Enticott & Dew 2025.
- **Post-SR quantitative evidence** includes a university-based post-compulsory training programme (Spain) in which 52.8% of graduates were employed at two-year follow-up; employment and retention were associated with higher employability competency scores, particularly job-specific skills (Berástegui et al., 2024).

- **One vocational training centre follow-up study (Brazil)** reported that participants remained employed at 12 months, alongside a reduction in measured support needs across multiple functional domains (Gomes-Machado et al., 2016).

Durability/tenure

- **Across SRs**, durability outcomes are less consistently reported than attainment, with limited longer-term follow-up for many transition programmes (e.g., Taubner, Tideman and Staland Nyman (2022); Enticott & Dew, 2025).
- **Where reported in Post-SR jobseeker capability studies**, durability is typically inferred via employment status at follow-up rather than detailed tenure metrics (e.g., Gomes-Machado et al., 2016).

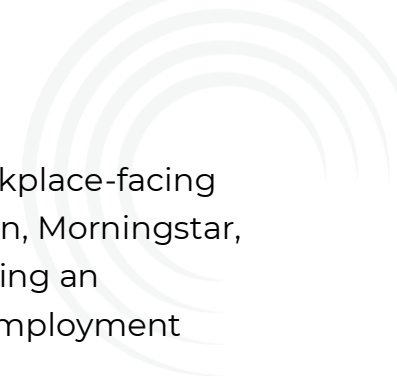
Job quality

- **SRs comparing competitive integrated employment to segregated settings** indicate that participation in competitive employment is generally associated with improved economic outcomes (wages/hours) and a range of psychosocial outcomes (e.g., wellbeing, autonomy and self-determination), though definitions and measures of job quality vary considerably (e.g., Taylor et al. (2022); Taylor et al. (2023)).
- **Post-SR evidence** suggests that higher employability competencies may support not only attainment but also greater stability and perceived work participation (Berástegui et al., 2024), and that vocational training may reduce ongoing support needs (Gomes-Machado et al., 2016). However, worker-defined job quality (e.g., fit, inclusion, career progression) remains under-measured in quantitative studies.

Implications for service design and training: jobseeker-facing supports should be designed as capability pathways that connect directly to placement and continuity supports (including benefits counselling, travel and routine training, self-advocacy, and supports for work stamina), with explicit attention to measuring and improving durability and job quality, not only placement.

5.3.2. Employer/workplace-facing supports

Employer/workplace-facing supports comprise practices to shape demand-side conditions and workplace capability (e.g., employer engagement, job analysis and redesign, onboarding supports, supervisor coaching, coworker ‘natural supports’ development, and accommodations). These supports are often evaluated as part of broader supported employment or transition models rather



than as standalone interventions. In this synthesis, employer/workplace-facing conclusions draw primarily on the workplace supports SR (Carlson, Morningstar, & Munandar, 2020) and two Post-SR effectiveness studies (including an experimental study of data-enabled performance feedback for employment consultants and an apprenticeship/traineeship model study).

Attainment

- **SR evidence** suggests that employer-facing components contribute to attainment primarily when embedded within broader supported employment and transition models (e.g., Carlson et al., 2020; Enticott & Dew 2025); few studies isolate employer-only interventions with attainment as the primary endpoint.
- **Post-SR experimental evidence** evaluating data-enabled performance feedback and decision support for employment consultants found negligible effects on the number of hires (difference-in-differences + 0.1 hires), suggesting that consultant-level capability building alone may be insufficient to shift placement rates in the absence of adequate vacancies and employer engagement (Butterworth et al., 2020).

Durability/tenure

- **SR evidence** indicates that workplace supports delivered after placement (e.g., systematic instruction, supervisor support, and coworker engagement) can improve work performance and social integration, which are plausible precursors to tenure and advancement (e.g., Carlson et al., 2020).
- **Quantitative durability outcomes** are still under-reported; many studies use proxy indicators (e.g., job performance and integration) rather than direct time-to-exit or time-in-role measures.

Job quality

- **Post-SR evidence** suggests that workforce-facing supports may improve aspects of job quality for jobseekers already placed. In the performance-feedback trial for employment consultants, weekly hours increased relative to controls (+5.9 hours; standardised $d=0.48$; $p<.05$), while earnings gains were modest and not statistically significant (Butterworth et al., 2020).
- **SRs focusing on post-placement workplace supports** report improvements in job performance and social integration outcomes for workers with ID; however, downstream job quality outcomes (e.g., autonomy, inclusion, progression) are variably captured and rarely reported from the worker perspective (e.g., Carlson et al., 2020; Taylor et al., 2022).

Implications for service design and training: employer/workplace-facing practices warrant explicit competency development for frontline employment staff (job analysis, job carving and redesign, supervisor coaching, and coworker support development) alongside measurement of workplace inclusion indicators. Where feasible, programmes should record employer outcomes (e.g., repeat hiring, retention of employers) alongside worker outcomes.

5.3.3. Bridging and continuity supports

Bridging and continuity supports connect jobseekers and workplaces and stabilise employment over time (e.g., Customised Employment, Transition models). This intervention theme shows the clearest and most consistent attainment effects across the evidence base. A recent Australian study of on-the-job training in the aged care sector found that structured workplace coaching led to improved skill development and high retention rates for workers with intellectual disability (Alexander et al., 2024). In this synthesis, bridging/continuity conclusions draw on SR evidence across Customised Employment and Transition models (e.g., Nevala et al., 2019; Enticott & Dew, 2025; Jetha et al., 2019) and four Post-SR effectiveness studies (including Project SEARCH, supported placements, and Customised Employment trials).

Attainment

- **Across multiple SRs**, US-aligned mainstream employment models (including individual placement with job coaching and systematic instruction) show the clearest evidence of improved competitive employment outcomes compared with services that do not provide active workplace placement and support (e.g., Nevala et al., 2019; Jetha et al., 2019).
- **Post-SR randomised evidence for Customised Employment** indicates substantial gains in competitive integrated employment attainment for transition-age youth with high support needs: 62.1% (18/29) achieved CIE in the Customised Employment arm versus 16.7% (4/24) in controls (RR=3.87; $p<.001$) (Inge et al., 2024).
- **Post-SR studies of structured transition models** (e.g., Project SEARCH) and supported internships/apprenticeships report positive employment outcomes, although effect estimation is less consistent and often lacks robust comparators (e.g., Sung et al., 2023; Schwartzman, 2021; Kiegaldie et al., 2023).

Durability/tenure

- **Durability evidence** remains weaker than attainment evidence, with

variability in reported tenure and limited longer-term follow-up in many studies (e.g., Taubner et al., 2022).

- Where long follow-up is available, sustained integration is feasible: **a longitudinal follow-up of workers with significant disability supported in integrated employment settings** reported persistence of integrated work participation over decades (over 570 person-years across 50 workers), with no reversion to segregated settings (Brown et al., 2021).
- **Project SEARCH graduate data** suggest high perceived retention and intention to stay in role, but durability metrics are inconsistently operationalised (Sung et al., 2023).

Job quality

- **SR evidence comparing competitive integrated employment to segregated settings** indicates improvements in wages/hours and broader psychosocial outcomes, though job quality measures are heterogeneous and often incomplete (e.g., Taylor et al., 2023; Taylor et al., 2022).
- **Post-SR Customised Employment evidence** reports wages at or near minimum wage; however, average hours may be constrained by school participation during transition programmes, and inferential testing of job quality outcomes is limited (Inge et al., 2024).
- **An updated meta-analysis of technology-supported employment interventions** for people with IDD suggests improvements in targeted vocational skills and work performance outcomes (overall PND 87), with stronger effects when interventions incorporate universal design features; durability and wage outcomes were not directly assessed (Damianidou et al., 2018).

Implications for service design and training: bridging/continuity supports should prioritise (i) high-fidelity placement and on-the-job training, (ii) explicit strategies for sustaining employment (including support ‘fading’ plans and re-intensification triggers), and (iii) systematic measurement of durability and job quality (including worker-defined quality and inclusion outcomes).

5.4. MIP-CIE framework in practice: evidence-informed matrix

Table 5.3. below integrates with the **MIP-CIE framework from Section 3** (Table 3.1.) with evidence anchors from the synthesis. It illustrates how specific challenges are addressed by design requirements and supported by the evidence base.

Table 5.3. MIP-CIE framework Matrix with Evidence Anchors

Level	Challenge / Determinant	Mechanism (How the Challenge Blocks CIE)	Design Requirement for CIE Supports (Programme Theory)	Evidence Anchor (SRs and/or Australia)
Macro / Structural Pathways	Persistence of segregated pathways with weak transition to open employment	Path dependency narrows opportunities and expectations, reducing transition rates to open employment	Treat de-segregation and transition pathways as system preconditions; specify transition mechanisms	SR: Taylor et al., 2022; Taylor et al., 2023; Australia: Supported Employment Plan, ADE reform, Disability Royal Commission
Macro / Service-System	Programme settings shape service 'dose' and continuity	Incentives and rules affect intensity and duration of support; reforms may disrupt continuity	Make platform assumptions explicit; include safeguards for continuity and workforce capability	Australia: DSS – Inclusive Employment Australia settings (from 1 Nov 2025); Services Australia transition advice; National Panel of Assessors
Meso / School-to-Work	Insufficient work-based learning and transition planning	Weak vocational identity and limited networks reduce job-person fit	Specify early transition components: work experience, employer engagement, and pathway coordination	SR: Enticott & Dew 2025; Nevala et al., 2019; Australia: Employment Readiness Programmes, NDIA Participant Employment Strategy (2024–26)
Meso / Provider Model	Inconsistent implementation and support intensity ('dose')	Low contact frequency and weak sequencing reduce skill acquisition and job fit	Treat dose as a causal moderator; specify sequencing, frequency, and	SR: Carlson et al., 2020; Nevala et al., 2019; Taubner et al., 2022

Level	Challenge / Determinant	Mechanism (How the Challenge Blocks CIE)	Design Requirement for CIE Supports (Programme Theory)	Evidence Anchor (SRs and/or Australia)
			re-intensification triggers	
Workplace / Employer Demand	Employer risk aversion and low expectations	Stigma and uncertainty suppress hiring and advancement opportunities	Position employer engagement as a core component; include coaching and natural supports	SR: Taubner et al., 2022; Carlson et al., 2020; Australia: JobAccess, EAF
Workplace / Job Design	High cognitive/communicative load relative to processing affordances	Mismatch leads to errors and exclusion; performance issues misattributed to the person	Make mismatch assessable and modifiable; include job redesign, visual supports, and adjustments	SR: Carlson et al., 2020; Morash-Macneil et al., 2018; Australia: EAF, JobAccess, DDA
Workplace / Retention	Lack of follow-along support and slow response to workplace changes	Accumulated issues lead to preventable job exits	Specify maintenance architecture; include early warning systems and re-intensification protocols	SR: Taubner et al., 2022; Carlson et al., 2020; Australia: Inclusive Employment Australia, NDIA, provider continuity settings
Contextual Determinants	Income support and wage-setting interfaces	Financial risk and complexity bias decisions toward minimal hours or segregated options	Treat as contextual determinants: include navigation supports where embedded in service models	Australia: DSP rules, SWS, Supported Employment Services Award, Services Australia guidance

6. Implementation and service delivery: determinants of uptake and fidelity

This section summarises the implementation conditions that influence whether evidence-informed competitive integrated employment/open employment practices achieve outcomes in routine Australian settings. Implementation is treated as an overlay to the MIP-CIE framework: the same practice components can yield different results depending on workforce capability, support intensity ('dose'), employer partnerships, and cross-system coordination.

Implementation pathways and determinants align with the MIP-CIE framework matrix (Table 3.1A), particularly the rows addressing Inclusive Employment Australia reform, NDIS/Employment Readiness Programmes interfaces, provider capability and fidelity, employer engagement, job design and mismatch reduction, and follow-along supports.

6.1. Key determinants of practice-implementation fit

Implementation success is most consistently shaped by:

- **Sufficient time and skilled labour** for discovery, job development, and job matching.
- Capacity to deliver structured on-the-job training and to fade/re-intensify coaching responsively.
- Employer capability and inclusive workplace practices, including natural supports.
- Timely provision of reasonable adjustments and assistive technology.
- **Continuity of supports across transitions** (e.g. school-to-work, provider changes, workplace changes, or episodic life events).

For people with intellectual disability, these determinants are amplified by cognitive and communicative mismatch risks. High semiotic density and structural complexity in workplace environments require deliberate redesign, scaffolding, and predictable routines.

6.2. Implementation levers by delivery interface (Australia)

The Australian policy and service system shapes how core practice components are delivered and sustained. These delivery interfaces influence feasibility (what can be delivered), dose (how much and for how long), and continuity (whether support can be re-intensified after change). They are treated as contextual determinants and implementation mechanisms.

Key delivery interfaces include:

- **Inclusive Employment Australia (Inclusive Employment Australia, formerly DES):** the primary platform for job development, employer partnerships, placement, and follow-along, contingent on provider workforce capability and contract settings.
- **NDIS employment-related supports (including Employment Readiness Programmes and ‘supports in employment’):** enable higher-intensity coaching, assistive technology, and continuity across transitions, especially for participants with higher support needs.
- **Transition ecosystem models (e.g. Ticket to Work-style networks):** coordinate school, training, and employment supports to improve job match quality and reduce fragmentation.
- **Inclusive enterprise pathways (e.g. social firms):** provide structured, award-wage work with embedded job design and in-work supports.
- **Employer support infrastructures (e.g. JobAccess, Employment Assistance Fund):** enable workplace modifications, adjustments, and employer confidence.

Table 6.1. Implementation Determinants and Practical Levers for Achieving and Sustaining CIE/Open Employment

Determinant	Why It Matters for ID and CIE	Service/Practice Actions (Examples)
Workforce capability and stability	Specialised skills are required for discovery, job development, instruction, and follow-along. Staff turnover disrupts continuity and employer trust.	Competency-based training (e.g. job development, systematic instruction); supervision and fidelity monitoring; stabilise key relationships for high-support participants.
Support intensity (‘dose’) and dose geometry	Under-dosing is a common failure mode. People with ID often need tapering and re-intensification after change.	Specify minimum dose parameters; plan tapering; implement re-coaching triggers (e.g. role or supervisor change).
Employer partnership and workplace culture	Integration and job quality are relational. Supervisor confidence and coworker	Supervisor coaching; natural supports development; escalation pathways; co-

Determinant	Why It Matters for ID and CIE	Service/Practice Actions (Examples)
	practices mediate sustainment and advancement.	designed onboarding and job redesign; rapid-response support.
Job design, task structure, and accommodations	Mismatch between task complexity and cognitive affordances drives failure. Accessible communication and predictable routines reduce error and anxiety.	Job analysis; task simplification; visual supports; embed adjustments early; use assistive technology where appropriate.
Cross-system coordination (school-post-school; Inclusive Employment Australia/NDIS interfaces)	Fragmented planning creates service gaps. Transitions are high-risk points for drop-out and re-segregation.	Shared planning artefacts; single accountable coordinator; warm handovers between school, Inclusive Employment Australia providers, and NDIS supports.
Transport and geography	Commuting feasibility affects job access, hours, and retention, especially outside major cities.	Travel training and route planning; local employer development; coordinate shift times; hybrid support for remote areas.

6.3. Implications for training, supervision and quality Improvement

Training resources should prioritise:

- Employer engagement and job development as specialised practice disciplines.
- Systematic instruction and task analysis.
- **Designing accessible cognitive environments** (e.g. plain language, visual supports, predictable routines).
- **Inclusive supervision** (e.g., supervisors adapting tasks or communication to support the employee) and natural supports (informal support from coworkers).
- **Follow-along practices**, including escalation and re-intensification protocols.

Quality improvement should monitor both employment outcomes and implementation outcomes (e.g. fidelity, feasibility, acceptability) to avoid misattributing poor outcomes to model failure when delivery is under-

resourced or inconsistent.

7. Lived experience and stakeholder perspectives

This section synthesises lived experience and stakeholder perspective evidence including the views of workers with intellectual disability, families, employers and coworkers, educators, and employment professionals to clarify mechanisms of change, acceptability, and implementation considerations. These perspectives are reported separately from quantitative effectiveness findings to avoid diluting outcome estimates and to foreground experiential and contextual factors relevant to service design.

Studies were included in this section if their primary purpose was to elicit, interpret, or quantify lived experience, stakeholder perspectives, or implementation insights related to competitive integrated employment for people with intellectual disability. This included qualitative interview, focus group, and ethnographic studies, as well as a small number of quantitative or organisational-level sources where perspectives were the primary analytic focus. Sixteen studies met these criteria (13 qualitative; 3 survey or organisational level). Where studies also appeared in the Within-SR inventory, they were retained here for thematic insight but not double-counted in effectiveness synthesis.

7.1. Theme 1. Workplace inclusion is relational and enacted

Workers with intellectual disability describe ‘good work’ in terms of belonging, being valued, and being treated as legitimate members of the workplace. Inclusion is enacted through everyday interactions (e.g. respectful communication, meaningful tasks, and social connection), rather than formal employment status alone.

Practice Implications: Workplace Inclusion

- Prioritise job matching for relational fit as well as task fit, including assessment of team culture and supervision style.
- Train supervisors and coworkers in accessible communication and inclusive day-to-day practices (e.g. feedback, social invitations, clarification strategies).
- **Include explicit ‘belonging’ and inclusion indicators** in service monitoring alongside attainment and tenure metrics.

7.2. Theme 2. Natural supports and workplace capability shape durability and job quality

Coworker and supervisor practices ('natural supports') are critical for sustainment and job quality. Structured orientation, mentoring, and coaching can reduce reliance on external job coaches and strengthen workplace capability.

Practice Implications: Natural Supports

- **Embed natural support development in service models**, including structured coworker orientation and mentoring roles.
- **Plan support fading explicitly**, with re-intensification triggers for role changes, performance dips, or workplace transitions.
- **Support employment consultants** to work with supervisors on task design, feedback routines, and reasonable adjustments.

7.3. Theme 3. Disclosure, stigma and disability visibility influence opportunities and outcomes

Participants describe balancing the perceived benefits and risks of disclosing disability. Concerns about stigma, lowered expectations, and discrimination influence role access, participation, and willingness to seek adjustments.

Practice Implications: Stigma and Disclosure

- Include disclosure planning and rights-based benefits/risks conversations in pre-placement support.
- **Provide employers with practical guidance** on inclusive supervision and adjustments, linked to anti-stigma training.
- **Monitor and respond to discrimination risks**, particularly in small workplaces or where disability is highly visible.

7.4. Theme 4. Transition pathways require continuity across systems

Young people and families describe transition as navigating fragmented systems with variable service quality. Where Employment Readiness Programmes or similar programmes span settings, participants emphasise the

importance of clear pathway planning, coordinated handovers, and consistent expectations.

Practice Implications: Transition Continuity

- **Implement shared pathway planning tools** across school and post-school phases, including clearly defined roles and handover protocols.
- **Use work experience/work trials** as 'bridging infrastructure' with structured reflection and employer engagement to convert exposure into jobs.
- **Ensure transition programmes** specify continuity arrangements (who supports the person, for how long, and how support is re-intensified when needed).

7.5. Theme 5. Job design, adjustments and support 'dose' distinguish placement from sustained participation

Stakeholders emphasise that practical accommodations (e.g., task redesign, pacing, communication supports, transport, and routine supports) are often decisive. Inconsistent or mis-matched support increases stress and risk of job loss.

Practice Implications: Job Design and Adjustments

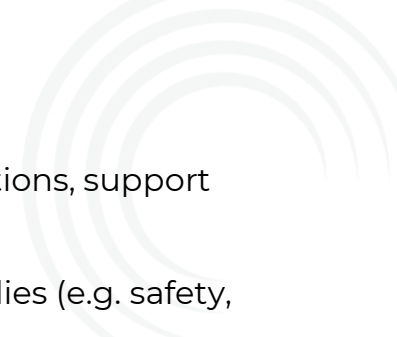
- **Standardise job analysis and task redesign procedures**, including identification of adjustment options and training plans.
- **Adopt a 'dose geometry' approach:** front-load supports at onboarding, taper during stabilisation, and re-intensify at transition points.
- **Include worker-defined job quality goals** (choice, autonomy, progression) in planning and review cycles.

7.6. Theme 6. Families' priorities and risk assessments shape employment choices

Families often prioritise safe, respectful, and inclusive workplaces over narrowly defined economic outcomes. Their perceptions of risk and support adequacy influence job choices and persistence through early challenges.

Practice Implications: Family Engagement

- **Incorporate families** (where desired by the worker) into shared decision-making, particularly during transitions and early employment.

- 
- **Provide clear, accessible information** on workplace expectations, support plans, rights, and safeguards to support informed consent.
 - **Align service metrics** with what matters to workers and families (e.g. safety, respect, inclusion) alongside attainment and tenure.

These themes reinforce the importance of relational inclusion, continuity, and workplace capability as outlined in the MIP-CIE framework (**Section 3**) and implementation conditions (**Section 6**). The perspectives summarised here are shaped by the roles and interactions of multiple stakeholders across the CIE ecosystem. For an overview of these stakeholder groups and their contributions to CIE delivery, see **Table 1.1. in Section 1 Background and purpose**.

8. Transferability to the Australian context

This section summarises how transferability was assessed when interpreting non-Australian evidence and translating findings into actionable implications for the Australian service ecosystem. Transferability was treated as a structured judgement rather than a binary attribute: evidence was first screened against a priori criteria and then assessed case by case for borderline studies, with decisions and rationales recorded (see **Appendix H**).

8.1. Inclusion criteria for transferable evidence

Non-Australian studies were considered transferable when they met all of the following conditions:

- Conducted in high-income or OECD settings with mainstream employment markets.
- **Delivered in integrated/open employment settings** (not segregated workplaces), with employer participation and workplace-based supports.
- **Implemented within a supported employment infrastructure** broadly analogous to the Australian context (e.g. capacity for job development, on-site training, and follow-along support).

Studies that did not meet these criteria were retained for contextual learning but were not treated as direct practice models for Australian implementation.

8.2. Australian contextual factors influencing applicability

The applicability of international evidence to Australia is shaped by several systemic and structural factors:

- **Funding and performance settings** that influence the feasible dose of employer engagement, job coaching, and follow-along (e.g. the post-2025 Inclusive Employment Australia architecture and the NDIS interface).
- Labour market structure and local employer demand, particularly in regional and remote areas.
- **Wage-setting and employment forms**, including the persistence of segregated employment pathways and supported wage arrangements.
- **Transport and commuting feasibility**, which can constrain job access, hours, and retention for people with intellectual disability.

These factors primarily affect feasibility, fidelity, and sustainment, rather than altering the underlying causal logic of effective supports. For a summary of key legislative and policy milestones shaping open employment in Australia, see **Appendix J**.

Box 8.1. What providers should operationalise (Inclusive Employment Australia/NDIS delivery context)

- **Treat employer engagement, job development, and job redesign** as core specialist practices, not administrative referrals.
- **Specify minimum support dose parameters** (pre-placement, early placement, follow-along) and embed re-intensification triggers.
- Use systematic instruction, task analysis, and visual supports to reduce cognitive mismatch; embed adjustments early.
- **Build and maintain natural supports** (supervisor coaching, coworker role clarity, escalation pathways).
- **Plan for continuity across transitions** (school-to-work, provider changes, workplace change).

Box 8.2. What employers and workplaces can do (integration and job quality)

- **Embed inclusion in everyday work practices** (team routines, role clarity, informal networks), not only physical presence.
- **Co-design job tasks and onboarding** to reduce semiotic and procedural complexity (plain language; step-by-step workflows).
- **Invest in supervisor capability and stable points of contact;** normalise reasonable adjustments and flexible supervision.
- **Support progression** (skill development, increased hours, expanded responsibilities) rather than static entry-level roles.

Box 8.3. What system actors should safeguard (policy & implementation conditions)

- **Align incentives with CIE/open employment outcomes**, including sustainment and job quality (not placement-only metrics).
- **Resource higher-support cohorts** with sufficient duration and intensity to prevent ‘under-dosed’ delivery failures.
- **Reduce interface friction** across Inclusive Employment Australia/NDIS/Employment Readiness Programmes and income support systems through clearer pathways and coordination.
- **Monitor implementation quality** (fidelity, dose, adoption, sustainability) alongside outcomes to support scale-up.

9. Limitations

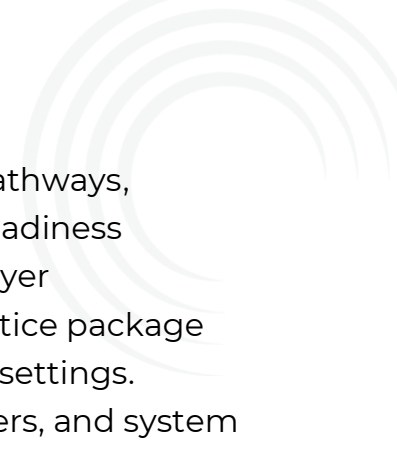
This synthesis was conducted as a rapid evidence review and is subject to several methodological and contextual limitations:

- **Timeframe and language:** Searches were limited to English-language sources published from 2015 onwards. While systematic reviews included earlier studies, some relevant primary evidence may have been excluded.
- **Heterogeneity:** Variability in intervention models, outcome measures, and reporting standards limited the feasibility of meta-analysis. Findings were synthesised narratively using structured SWiM principles.
- **Evidence quality:** The strength of evidence varied across intervention families and outcomes. Some findings are based on small samples, non-randomised designs, or limited follow-up periods.
- **Transferability:** Although transferability to the Australian context was assessed using structured criteria, differences in funding models, labour markets, and service infrastructure may affect applicability.
- **Implementation data:** Many studies lacked detailed reporting on fidelity, workforce capability, or system-level enablers, limiting insight into real-world delivery conditions.
- **Lived experience:** While a dedicated sub-stream captured stakeholder perspectives, these were not consistently integrated into primary studies, and worker-defined outcomes remain under-represented.

These limitations were mitigated through transparent inclusion criteria, structured synthesis methods, and explicit reporting of certainty and transferability. Nonetheless, findings should be interpreted with attention to context, and further research is needed to strengthen the evidence base for implementation and scale-up.

10. Implications and recommendations

This section translates the MIP-CIE framework into actionable implications for Australian practice and system design. Recommendations are derived from the synthesis and MIP-CIE framework as evidence-informed implications, taking into account certainty, transferability, and implementation context. They should be read as guidance informed by the evidence base, not as definitive causal prescriptions.



Recommendations are organised around key implementation pathways, including Inclusive Employment Australia, NDIS/Employment Readiness Programmes, transition ecosystems, inclusive enterprises, employer engagement, and retention supports that can host the core practice package and reduce person-environment mismatch in mainstream work settings. Recommendations are framed for use by providers, commissioners, and system actors, and are aligned with the evidence boundaries of this synthesis.

10.1. Inclusive Employment Australia pathway: strengthen the ‘Place-Train-Maintain’ functions

Box 10.1. Practice Implications – Inclusive Employment Australia Delivery Platform

- **Use Inclusive Employment Australia as the primary platform** for job development, employer partnership, placement, and follow-along support.
- **Embed discovery, job matching, and job analysis** as standard practice for participants with higher support needs.
- **Operationalise systematic instruction and accommodation planning** in the workplace, with defined tapering and re-intensification protocols.
- **Record contact frequency, coaching hours, and follow-along cadence** as routine performance indicators.
- **Treat employer engagement as a core component**, including role negotiation and job carving.
- **Monitor job quality and retention outcomes**, not just placement counts.

10.2. NDIS/employment readiness programmes pathway: resource intensity, continuity and enabling supports

Box 10.2. Practice Implications – NDIS and Employment Readiness Programmes Interfaces

- **Use NDIS-funded supports** to resource higher-intensity coaching, assistive technology, and continuity across transitions.
- **Position Employment Readiness Programmes** as a bridge to real work exposure, not a default ‘readiness’ holding pattern.
- **Fund enabling supports** (e.g. travel training, communication aids, routine-building).
- **Clarify follow-along responsibilities and escalation protocols** post-placement.
- **Provide financial counselling and navigation support** to address perceived risks.
- **Define provider roles and information-sharing** to prevent handoff failures.

10.3. Transition ecosystem pathway: build local networks that generate opportunities

Box 10.3. Practice Implications – Transition Ecosystems

- **Use local networks** (e.g. Ticket to Work-style models) to coordinate early work exposure and reduce fragmentation.
- **Prioritise workplace-based learning and employer engagement** during school years.
- **Anchor planning in open employment** as the default, avoiding path dependency into segregated options.
- **Apply mismatch-informed planning** to align tasks, environments, and individual strengths.
- **Involve families in co-decision-making** and clarify available supports.
- **Track integration outcomes** (e.g. belonging, coworker interaction) as part of transition success.

10.4. Employer-job design pathway: reduce mismatch & expand job quality

Box 10.4. Practice Implications – Employer Engagement and Job Design

- **Make job analysis and task redesign routine** to reduce cognitive load and complexity.
- **Treat adjustments and assistive technology** as core components, not afterthoughts.
- **Define supervisor and coworker support roles**; establish escalation pathways.
- **Measure job quality** (e.g. wages, hours, integration, progression), not just attainment.

10.5. Retention and advancement pathway: follow-along, re-intensification and career progression

Box 10.5. Practice Implications – Retention and Advancement

- **Specify a maintenance architecture:** follow-along frequency, early-warning systems, and re-coaching triggers.
- **Build ‘fade and return’ coaching** into service plans and employer agreements.
- **Include career development supports** (e.g. progression in hours, wages, training) as explicit outcomes.
- **Provide benefits counselling and wage-setting navigation** where embedded in service models.

10.6. Research propositions for future evaluation

These propositions illustrate how the MIP-CIE framework may be empirically tested and refined in future Australian evaluations, including through experimental, quasi-experimental, and longitudinal designs. The following propositions, derived from the MIP-CIE framework matrix and synthesis findings, are suitable for hypothesis-driven evaluation in the Australian context:

- **Dose-Durability Proposition:** Higher on-the-job training and follow-along dose, with defined escalation protocols, will be associated with higher 6-12 month retention for people with ID, after accounting for mismatch and labour market context.
- **Mismatch-Reduction Proposition:** Packages that include job/task redesign, visual supports, and adjustments will improve job quality and reduce early exits, especially in high-complexity environments.
- **Employer-Partnership Proposition:** Employer-facing components (e.g. supervisor coaching, accommodation planning) will improve attainment and workplace outcomes beyond jobseeker-only supports, mediated by reduced perceived risk.
- **Maintenance Architecture Proposition:** Programmes with explicit tapering and re-intensification protocols will mediate the relationship between early placement and long-term durability.
- **Transition Pathway Proposition:** Transition models that embed authentic

workplace exposure before school exit and provide post-school continuity will increase attainment and reduce entry into segregated pathways.

Acknowledgement

The authors acknowledge the work of Shannon Brown at the Flinders University Library Services.

Appendices

- A. Table A: Eligibility Criteria (PICOS)
- B. Initial Search Strategy and Database Results (August–October 2025)
- C. Supplementary Search Strategy – Vocational Training Focus
- D. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram
- E. Extraction Domains and Template Fields
- F. Included Systematic Reviews and Primary Studies
- G. Appraisal Tools and Certainty Assessment Frameworks
- H. Transferability to the Australian Context: Assessment Rubric
- I. Coding Rules for Transition-to-Work Studies
- J. Historical and Policy Milestones Relevant to Open Employment in Australia

Appendix A.

Table A: Eligibility Criteria (PICOS)

Component	Criteria
Participants	People with intellectual disability of any age or severity who are seeking, entering or retaining mainstream employment. Data from broader disability groups will be included only if results for intellectual disability are disaggregated.
Interventions	Any evidence-informed practice, programme, policy or service model aiming to secure or sustain mainstream employment (e.g., customised employment, supported employment, employer training, job carving, wage subsidies, assistive-technology supports).
Comparators	Usual practice, alternative intervention, or no comparator.
Outcomes	Primary: job attainment; job retention ($\geq 3/6/12+$ months). Secondary: wages, hours worked, job satisfaction, workplace inclusion, quality of life, cost-effectiveness.
Context	Mainstream labour markets; services delivered by DES providers, vocational-rehabilitation agencies, employers or government schemes. Studies limited to sheltered workshops are excluded unless they compare with open employment. Geographical scope is global, but findings must be transferable to Australia.
Study designs	Quantitative (RCTs; quasi-experimental; cohort; cross-sectional), qualitative, mixed-methods, and grey literature (government/NGO reports, programme evaluations).
Timeframe & language	Publications from 1 Jan 2015 – present; English language.

Appendix B. Initial search strategy and database results (August-October 2025)

NAME	June Alexander
CONTACT DETAILS	Ph: 82013902; Email: june.alexander@flinders.edu.au
RESEARCH QUESTION	Employment Support for People with Intellectual Disability
RESOURCES SEARCHED	Include Databases here: PsycINFO (via Ovid) Scopus Web of Science ProQuest Social Science Premium ProQuest dissertations & theses global Medline CINAHL Ultimate
DATE COMPLETED	07/08/2025
TYPE OF SEARCH STRATEGY	Scoping
ENDNOTE FILE REQUIRED?	Not yet
LIBRARIAN	Shannon Brown
DISCLAIMER	Results of database searches are subject to the limitations of the database(s) searched. The information is gathered from standard sources licensed by the Flinders University Library and may not provide exhaustive coverage of the subject.

This appendix documents the initial scoping search conducted by June Alexander and Shannon Brown, including databases searched, search terms, search dates, and result counts. It also includes detailed search strings and links to database queries.

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

Database	Result	Date run
PsycINFO	202	11/08/2025
10.6. Research propositions for future evaluation. 56	382	11/08/2025
Web of Science	835	11/08/2025
ProQuest Social Science Premium	313 journal articles	11/08/2025

Database	Result	Date run
	20 reports	
ProQuest dissertations & theses global	65	11/08/2025
Database	Result	Date run
Medline	136	14/10/2025
CINAHL Ultimate	328	14/10/2025

DATABASE RESULTS

DATABASE: PsycINFO

No.	APA PsycInfo <1806 to August 2025 Week 1>	Result
1	exp intellectual development disorder/	52225
2	((((Intellectual or Developmental* or learning) adj2 disabilit*) or "intellectual impairment*" or "developmental disorder").tw,id.	57467
3	1 or 2	90104
4	supported employment/	1661
5	((Customiz* or Customis* or supported or inclusive or mainstream or open or conventional or integrated) adj3 (employment* or job* or work*)).tw,id.	8868
6	4 or 5	9285
7	((((employ* or job* or vocation* or client or skill* or pre-employ* or post-employ* or career* or work*) adj4 (plan* or search* or asses* or profil* or develop* or engage* or match* or analys* or interview* or culture* or carving or experience* or support* or retention* or retain* or inclusion or inclusive* or advance* or satisfaction or agency or agent* or agencies)) or SLES or "national disability insurance scheme" or NDIS or "national disability insurance agency" or NDIA or "Natural support*" or "Assistive Tech*" or "ongoing support*" or intern* or trainee* or "Systematic Instruc*" or Modification* or modify or "Reasonable Adjustment*" or employer*).tw,id.	772830
8	3 and 6 and 7	600
9	limit 8 to (english language and yr="2015 -Current")	202

DATABASE: Scopus

(TITLE-ABS-KEY (((Customiz* OR Customis* OR supported OR inclusive OR mainstream OR open OR conventional OR intergrated OR supported) W/3 (employment OR job* OR work*))) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ((((Intellectual OR Developmental* OR learning) W/2 disabilit*) OR "intellectual impairment*" OR

"developmental disorder")) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ((((employ* OR job* OR vocation* OR client OR skill* OR pre-employ* OR post-employ* OR career* OR work*) W/4 (plan* OR search* OR asses* OR profil* OR develop* OR engage* OR match* OR analys* OR interview* OR culture* OR carving OR experience* OR support* OR retention* OR retain* OR inclusion OR inclusive* OR advance* OR satisfaction OR agency OR agent* OR agencies)) OR SLES OR "national disability insurance scheme" OR NDIS OR "national disability insurance agency" OR NDIA OR "Natural support*" OR "Assistive Tech*" OR "ongoing support*" OR intern* OR trainee* OR "Systematic Instruc*" OR Modification* OR modify OR "Reasonable Adjustment*" OR employer*))) AND PUBYEAR > 2014 AND PUBYEAR < 2026

DATABASE: Web of Science

(((employ* OR job* OR vocation* OR client OR skill* OR pre-employ* OR post-employ* OR career* OR work*) NEAR/4 (plan* OR search* OR asses* OR profil* OR develop* OR engage* OR match* OR analys* OR interview* OR culture* OR carving OR experience* OR support* OR retention* OR retain* OR inclusion OR inclusive* OR advance* OR satisfaction OR agency OR agent* OR agencies)) OR SLES OR "national disability insurance scheme" OR NDIS OR "national disability insurance agency" OR NDIA OR "Natural support*" OR "Assistive Tech*" OR "ongoing support*" OR intern* OR trainee* OR "Systematic Instruc*" OR Modification* OR modify OR "Reasonable Adjustment*" OR employer*) (Title) or (((employ* OR job* OR vocation* OR client OR skill* OR pre-employ* OR post-employ* OR career* OR work*) NEAR/4 (plan* OR search* OR asses* OR profil* OR develop* OR engage* OR match* OR analys* OR interview* OR culture* OR carving OR experience* OR support* OR retention* OR retain* OR inclusion OR inclusive* OR advance* OR satisfaction OR agency OR agent* OR agencies)) OR SLES OR "national disability insurance scheme" OR NDIS OR "national disability insurance agency" OR NDIA OR "Natural support*" OR "Assistive Tech*" OR "ongoing support*" OR intern* OR trainee* OR "Systematic Instruc*" OR Modification* OR modify OR "Reasonable Adjustment*" OR employer*) (Abstract) or (((employ* OR job* OR vocation* OR client OR skill* OR pre-employ* OR post-employ* OR career* OR work*) NEAR/4 (plan* OR search* OR asses* OR profil* OR develop* OR engage* OR match* OR analys* OR interview* OR culture* OR carving OR experience* OR support* OR retention* OR retain* OR inclusion OR inclusive* OR advance* OR satisfaction OR agency OR agent* OR agencies)) OR SLES OR "national disability insurance scheme" OR NDIS OR "national disability insurance agency" OR NDIA OR "Natural support*" OR "Assistive Tech*" OR "ongoing support*" OR intern* OR trainee* OR "Systematic Instruc*" OR Modification* OR modify OR "Reasonable Adjustment*" OR

employer*) (Author Keywords)

DATABASE: ProQuest Social Sciences Premium

noft((((Intellectual OR Developmental* OR learning) NEAR/2 disabilit*) OR "intellectual impairment*" OR "developmental disorder") AND ((Customiz* OR Customis* OR supported OR inclusive OR mainstream OR open OR conventional OR integrated) NEAR/3 (employment* OR job* OR work*)) AND (((employ* OR job* OR vocation* OR client OR skill* OR pre-employ* OR post-employ* OR career* OR work*) NEAR/4 (plan* OR search* OR asses* OR profil* OR develop* OR engage* OR match* OR analys* OR interview* OR culture* OR carving OR experience* OR support* OR retention* OR retain* OR inclusion OR inclusive* OR advance* OR satisfaction OR agency OR agent* OR agencies)) OR SLES OR "national disability insurance scheme" OR NDIS OR "national disability insurance agency" OR NDIA OR "Natural support*" OR "Assistive Tech*" OR "ongoing support*" OR intern* OR trainee* OR "Systematic Instruc*" OR Modification* OR modify OR "Reasonable Adjustment*" OR employer*))

DATABASE: ProQuest dissertations & theses global

noft((((Intellectual OR Developmental* OR learning) NEAR/2 disabilit*) OR "intellectual impairment*" OR "developmental disorder") AND ((Customiz* OR Customis* OR supported OR inclusive OR mainstream OR open OR conventional OR integrated) NEAR/3 (employment* OR job* OR work*)) AND (((employ* OR job* OR vocation* OR client OR skill* OR pre-employ* OR post-employ* OR career* OR work*) NEAR/4 (plan* OR search* OR asses* OR profil* OR develop* OR engage* OR match* OR analys* OR interview* OR culture* OR carving OR experience* OR support* OR retention* OR retain* OR inclusion OR inclusive* OR advance* OR satisfaction OR agency OR agent* OR agencies)) OR SLES OR "national disability insurance scheme" OR NDIS OR "national disability insurance agency" OR NDIA OR "Natural support*" OR "Assistive Tech*" OR "ongoing support*" OR intern* OR trainee* OR "Systematic Instruc*" OR Modification* OR modify OR "Reasonable Adjustment*" OR employer*))

DATABASE: Base Search

((((Intellectual OR Developmental* OR learning) NEAR/2 disabilit*) OR "intellectual impairment*" OR "developmental disorder") AND ((Customiz* OR Customis* OR supported OR inclusive OR mainstream OR open OR conventional or integrated) NEAR/3 (employment* OR job* OR work*)) AND (((employ* OR job* OR vocation* OR client OR skill* OR pre-employ* OR post-

employ* OR career* OR work*) NEAR/4 (plan* OR search* OR asses* OR profil* OR develop* OR engage* OR match* OR analys* OR interview* OR culture* OR carving OR experience* OR support* OR retention* OR retain* OR inclusion OR inclusive* OR advance* OR satisfaction OR agency OR agent* OR agencies)) OR SLES OR "national disability insurance scheme" OR NDIS OR "national disability insurance agency" OR NDIA OR "Natural support*" OR "Assistive Tech*" OR "ongoing support*" OR intern* OR trainee* OR "Systematic Instruc*" OR Modification* OR modify OR "Reasonable Adjustment*" OR employer*))

DATABASE: Medline

No.	Ovid MEDLINE(R) and Epub Ahead of Print, In-Process, In-Data-Review & Other Non-Indexed Citations, Daily and Versions <1946 to October 10, 2025>	Result
1	exp Intellectual Disability/	110892
2	((((Intellectual or Developmental* or learning) adj2 disabilit*) or "intellectual impairment*" or "developmental disorder").tw,kf.	53881
3	1 or 2	144409
4	Employment, Supported/	1449
5	((Customiz* or Customis* or supported or inclusive or mainstream or open or conventional or integrated) adj3 (employment* or job* or work*)).tw,kf.	16627
6	4 or 5	17334
7	((((employ* or job* or vocation* or client or skill* or pre-employ* or post-employ* or career* or work*) adj4 (plan* or search* or asses* or profil* or develop* or engage* or match* or analys* or interview* or culture* or carving or experience* or support* or retention* or retain* or inclusion or inclusive* or advance* or satisfaction or agency or agent* or agencies)) or SLES or "national disability insurance scheme" or NDIS or "national disability insurance agency" or NDIA or "Natural support*" or "Assistive Tech*" or "ongoing support*" or intern* or trainee* or "Systematic Instruc*" or Modification* or modify or "Reasonable Adjustment*" or employer*).tw,kf.	2467618
8	3 and 6 and 7	269
9	limit 8 to (english language and yr="2015 -Current")	136

DATABASE: CINAHL Ultimate

(XB (((employ* OR job* OR vocation* OR client OR skill* OR pre-employ* OR post-employ* OR career* OR work*) N4 (plan* OR search* OR asses* OR profil* OR develop* OR engage* OR match* OR analys* OR interview* OR culture* OR carving OR experience* OR support* OR retention* OR retain* OR inclusion OR

inclusive* OR advance* OR satisfaction OR agency OR agent* OR agencies)) OR
 SLES OR "national disability insurance scheme" OR NDIS OR "national disability
 insurance agency" OR NDIA OR "Natural support*" OR "Assistive Tech*" OR
 "ongoing support*" OR intern* OR trainee* OR "Systematic Instruc*" OR
 Modification* OR modify OR "Reasonable Adjustment*" OR employer*)) AND
 (MH "Employment of Persons with Disabilities+" OR XB (((Customiz* OR
 Customis* OR supported OR inclusive OR mainstream OR open OR
 conventional or integrated) N3 (employment* OR job* OR work*)))) AND (MH
 "Intellectual Disability+" OR XB (((Intellectual OR Developmental* OR learning)
 N2 disabilit*) OR "intellectual impairment*" OR "developmental disorder")))

Workings

MH "Intellectual Disability+"

((Intellectual OR Developmental* OR learning) N2 disabilit*) OR "intellectual
 impairment*" OR "developmental disorder")

AND

MH "Employment of Persons with Disabilities+"

((Customiz* OR Customis* OR supported OR inclusive OR mainstream OR
 open OR conventional or integrated) N3 (employment* OR job* OR work*))

AND

(((employ* OR job* OR vocation* OR client OR skill* OR pre-employ* OR post-
 employ* OR career* OR work*) N4 (plan* OR search* OR asses* OR profil* OR
 develop* OR engage* OR match* OR analys* OR interview* OR culture* OR
 carving OR experience* OR support* OR retention* OR retain* OR inclusion OR
 inclusive* OR advance* OR satisfaction OR agency OR agent* OR agencies)) OR
 SLES OR "national disability insurance scheme" OR NDIS OR "national disability
 insurance agency" OR NDIA OR "Natural support*" OR "Assistive Tech*" OR
 "ongoing support*" OR intern* OR trainee* OR "Systematic Instruc*" OR
 Modification* OR modify OR "Reasonable Adjustment*" OR employer*)

Appendix C. Supplementary search strategy and vocational training focus (October 2025)

This appendix presents a follow-up search focused on vocational education, training, and employment pathways for people with intellectual disability. It includes updated search terms, database results, and search strategy refinements.

NAME	June Alexander
CONTACT DETAILS	Ph: 82013902 Email: june.alexander@flinders.edu.au
RESEARCH QUESTION	Employment Support for People with Intellectual Disability Search 2
RESOURCES SEARCHED	Include Databases here: PsycINFO (via Ovid) Scopus Web of Science ProQuest Social Science Premium Medline CINAHL Ultimate
DATE COMPLETED	15/10/2025
TYPE OF SEARCH STRATEGY	Scoping
ENDNOTE FILE REQUIRED?	Not yet
LIBRARIAN	Shannon Brown
DISCLAIMER	Results of database searches are subject to the limitations of the database(s) searched. The information is gathered from standard sources licensed by the Flinders University Library and may not provide exhaustive coverage of the subject.

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

Database	Result	Date run
PsycINFO	15	15/10/2025
SCOPUS	17	15/10/2025
Web of Science	20	15/10/2025
ProQuest Social Science Premium	26	15/10/2025
Medline	7	15/10/2025
CINAHL Ultimate	18	15/10/2025

DATABASE RESULTS

DATABASE: *PsycINFO*

No.	APA PsycInfo <1806 to October 2025 Week 1>	Result
1	exp intellectual development disorder/	52490
2	((((Intellectual or Developmental* or learning) adj2 disabilit*) or "intellectual impairment*" or "developmental disorder").tw,id.	57832
3	1 or 2	90499
4	supported employment/	1671
5	((Customiz* or Customis* or supported or inclusive or mainstream or open or conventional or integrated) adj3 (employment* or job* or work*)).tw,id.	8976
6	4 or 5	9395
7	exp Vocational Education/	3729
8	(Procurement or "supply chain*" or "Targeted purchas*" or "Supplier diversity" or BuyAbility or "enterprise contract*" or "enterprise engagement*" or Quota* or "Employment target*" or "hiring target*" or "Affirmative action" or "employment benchmark*" or "participation goal*" or "Statutory employment obligation*" or "Mandatory employment ratio*" or "Reserved position*" or "designated role*" or "inclusion mandate*" or "Vocational education" or RTO or VET or TAFE or "training institute*" or "Adult education*" or "Certificate course*" or "diploma course*" or apprenticeship* or traineeship* or ((Competency* or industry or workforce or accredited or vocational or registered) adj2 training)).tw,id.	23689

No.	APA PsycInfo <1806 to October 2025 Week 1>	Result
9	7 or 8	25553
10	3 and 6 and 9	34
11	limit 10 to (english language and yr="2015 -Current")	15

(Procurement OR "supply chain*" OR "Targeted purchas*" OR "Supplier diversity" OR

BuyAbility OR "enterprise contract*" OR "enterprise engagement*" OR Quota* OR "Employment target*" OR "hiring target*" OR "Affirmative action" OR "employment benchmark*" OR "participation goal*" OR "Statutory employment obligation*" OR "Mandatory employment ratio*" OR "Reserved position*" or "designated role*" OR "inclusion mandate*" OR "Vocational education" OR RTO OR VET OR TAFE OR "training institute*" OR "Adult education*" OR "Certificate course*" OR "diploma course*" OR apprenticeship* OR traineeship* OR ((Competency* OR industry OR workforce OR accredited OR vocational OR registered) NEAR/2 (training)))

DATABASE: Scopus

(TITLE-ABS-KEY (((Customiz* OR Customis* OR supported OR inclusive OR mainstream OR open OR conventional OR intergrated OR supported) W/3 (employment OR job* OR work*))) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ((((Intellectual OR Developmental* OR learning) W/2 disabilit*) OR "intellectual impairment*" OR "developmental disorder")) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ((Procurement OR "supply chain*" OR "Targeted purchas*" OR "Supplier diversity" OR BuyAbility OR "enterprise contract*" OR "enterprise engagement*" OR Quota* OR "Employment target*" OR "hiring target*" OR "Affirmative action" OR "employment benchmark*" OR "participation goal*" OR "Statutory employment obligation*" OR "Mandatory employment ratio*" OR "Reserved position*" OR "designated role*" OR "inclusion mandate*" OR "Vocational education" OR RTO OR VET OR TAFE OR "training institute*" OR "Adult education*" OR "Certificate course*" OR "diploma course*" OR apprenticeship* OR traineeship* OR ((Competency* OR industry OR workforce OR accredited OR vocational OR registered) W/2 (training))))) AND PUBYEAR > 2014 AND PUBYEAR < 2026

DATABASE: Web of Science

(((((Intellectual OR Developmental* OR learning) NEAR/2 disabilit*) OR "intellectual impairment*" OR "developmental disorder") AND ((Customiz* OR

Customis* OR supported OR inclusive OR mainstream OR open OR
 conventional or integrated) NEAR/3 (employment* OR job* OR work*)) AND
 (Procurement OR "supply chain*" OR "Targeted purchas*" OR "Supplier
 diversity" OR BuyAbility OR "enterprise contract*" OR "enterprise engagement*" OR
 Quota* OR "Employment target*" OR "hiring target*" OR "Affirmative action"
 OR "employment benchmark*" OR "participation goal*" OR "Statutory
 employment obligation*" OR "Mandatory employment ratio*" OR "Reserved
 position*" or "designated role*" OR "inclusion mandate*" OR "Vocational
 education" OR RTO OR VET OR TAFE OR "training institute*" OR "Adult
 education*" OR "Certificate course*" OR "diploma course*" OR apprenticeship*
 OR traineeship* OR ((Competency* OR industry OR workforce OR accredited OR
 vocational OR registered) NEAR/2 (training)))) (Title) or (((Intellectual OR
 Developmental* OR learning) NEAR/2 disabilit*) OR "intellectual impairment*" OR
 "developmental disorder") AND ((Customiz* OR Customis* OR supported
 OR inclusive OR mainstream OR open OR conventional or integrated) NEAR/3 (employment* OR job* OR work*)) AND (Procurement OR "supply chain*" OR
 "Targeted purchas*" OR "Supplier diversity" OR BuyAbility OR "enterprise
 contract*" OR "enterprise engagement*" OR Quota* OR "Employment target*" OR
 "hiring target*" OR "Affirmative action" OR "employment benchmark*" OR
 "participation goal*" OR "Statutory employment obligation*" OR "Mandatory
 employment ratio*" OR "Reserved position*" or "designated role*" OR "inclusion
 mandate*" OR "Vocational education" OR RTO OR VET OR TAFE OR "training
 institute*" OR "Adult education*" OR "Certificate course*" OR "diploma course*" OR
 apprenticeship* OR traineeship* OR ((Competency* OR industry OR
 workforce OR accredited OR vocational OR registered) NEAR/2 (training))))
 (Abstract) or (((Intellectual OR Developmental* OR learning) NEAR/2 disabilit*) OR
 "intellectual impairment*" OR "developmental disorder") AND ((Customiz* OR
 Customis* OR supported OR inclusive OR mainstream OR open OR
 conventional or integrated) NEAR/3 (employment* OR job* OR work*)) AND
 (Procurement OR "supply chain*" OR "Targeted purchas*" OR "Supplier
 diversity" OR BuyAbility OR "enterprise contract*" OR "enterprise engagement*" OR
 Quota* OR "Employment target*" OR "hiring target*" OR "Affirmative action"
 OR "employment benchmark*" OR "participation goal*" OR "Statutory
 employment obligation*" OR "Mandatory employment ratio*" OR "Reserved
 position*" or "designated role*" OR "inclusion mandate*" OR "Vocational
 education" OR RTO OR VET OR TAFE OR "training institute*" OR "Adult
 education*" OR "Certificate course*" OR "diploma course*" OR apprenticeship*
 OR traineeship* OR ((Competency* OR industry OR workforce OR accredited OR
 vocational OR registered) NEAR/2 (training)))) (Author Keywords)

DATABASE: ProQuest Social Sciences Premium

noft((((Intellectual OR Developmental* OR learning) NEAR/2 disabilit*) OR "intellectual impairment*" OR "developmental disorder") AND ((Customiz* OR Customis* OR supported OR inclusive OR mainstream OR open OR conventional or integrated) NEAR/3 (employment* OR job* OR work*)) AND (Procurement OR "supply chain*" OR "Targeted purchas*" OR "Supplier diversity" OR BuyAbility OR "enterprise contract*" OR "enterprise engagement*" OR Quota* OR "Employment target*" OR "hiring target*" OR "Affirmative action" OR "employment benchmark*" OR "participation goal*" OR "Statutory employment obligation*" OR "Mandatory employment ratio*" OR "Reserved position*" or "designated role*" OR "inclusion mandate*" OR "Vocational education" OR RTO OR VET OR TAFE OR "training institute*" OR "Adult education*" OR "Certificate course*" OR "diploma course*" OR apprenticeship* OR traineeship* OR ((Competency* OR industry OR workforce OR accredited OR vocational OR registered) NEAR/2 (training))))

DATABASE: Base Search

((((Intellectual OR Developmental* OR learning) NEAR/2 disabilit*) OR "intellectual impairment*" OR "developmental disorder") AND ((Customiz* OR Customis* OR supported OR inclusive OR mainstream OR open OR conventional or integrated) NEAR/3 (employment* OR job* OR work*)) AND (Procurement OR "supply chain*" OR "Targeted purchas*" OR "Supplier diversity" OR BuyAbility OR "enterprise contract*" OR "enterprise engagement*" OR Quota* OR "Employment target*" OR "hiring target*" OR "Affirmative action" OR "employment benchmark*" OR "participation goal*" OR "Statutory employment obligation*" OR "Mandatory employment ratio*" OR "Reserved position*" or "designated role*" OR "inclusion mandate*" OR "Vocational education" OR RTO OR VET OR TAFE OR "training institute*" OR "Adult education*" OR "Certificate course*" OR "diploma course*" OR apprenticeship* OR traineeship* OR ((Competency* OR industry OR workforce OR accredited OR vocational OR registered) NEAR/2 (training))))

DATABASE: Medline

No.	Ovid MEDLINE(R) and Epub Ahead of Print, In-Process, In-Data-Review & Other Non-Indexed Citations, Daily and Versions <1946 to October 13, 2025>	Result
1	exp Intellectual Disability/	110911
2	(((Intellectual or Developmental* or learning) adj2 disabilit*) or "intellectual impairment*" or "developmental disorder").tw,kf.	53921

No.	Ovid MEDLINE(R) and Epub Ahead of Print, In-Process, In-Data-Review & Other Non-Indexed Citations, Daily and Versions <1946 to October 13, 2025>	Result
3	1 or 2	144457
4	Employment, Supported/	1449
5	((Customiz* or Customis* or supported or inclusive or mainstream or open or conventional or integrated) adj3 (employment* or job* or work*)).tw,kf.	16653
6	4 or 5	17360
7	Vocational Education/	2107
8	(Procurement or "supply chain*" or "Targeted purchas*" or "Supplier diversity" or BuyAbility or "enterprise contract*" or "enterprise engagement*" or Quota* or "Employment target*" or "hiring target*" or "Affirmative action" or "employment benchmark*" or "participation goal*" or "Statutory employment obligation*" or "Mandatory employment ratio*" or "Reserved position*" or "designated role*" or "inclusion mandate*" or "Vocational education" or RTO or VET or TAFE or "training institute*" or "Adult education*" or "Certificate course*" or "diploma course*" or apprenticeship* or traineeship* or ((Competency* or industry or workforce or accredited or vocational or registered) adj2 training)).tw,kf.	45702
9	7 or 8	47126
10	3 and 6 and 9	25
11	limit 10 to (english language and yr="2015 -Current")	7

DATABASE: CINAHL Ultimate

((MH "Vocational Education" OR MH "Affirmative Action") OR XB (Procurement OR "supply chain*" OR "Targeted purchas*" OR "Supplier diversity" OR BuyAbility OR "enterprise contract*" OR "enterprise engagement*" OR Quota* OR "Employment target*" OR "hiring target*" OR "Affirmative action" OR "employment benchmark*" OR "participation goal*" OR "Statutory employment obligation*" OR "Mandatory employment ratio*" OR "Reserved position*" or "designated role*" OR "inclusion mandate*" OR "Vocational education" OR RTO OR VET OR TAFE OR "training institute*" OR "Adult education*" OR "Certificate course*" OR "diploma course*" OR apprenticeship* OR traineeship* OR

((Competency* OR industry OR workforce OR accredited OR vocational OR registered) N2 (training)))) AND (MH "Employment of Persons with Disabilities+" OR XB (((Customiz* OR Customis* OR supported OR inclusive OR mainstream OR open OR conventional or integrated) N3 (employment* OR job* OR work*)))) AND (MH "Intellectual Disability+" OR XB (((Intellectual OR Developmental* OR learning) N2 disabilit*) OR "intellectual impairment*" OR "developmental disorder")))

Workings

MH "Intellectual Disability+"

((Intellectual OR Developmental* OR learning) N2 disabilit*) OR "intellectual impairment*" OR "developmental disorder")

AND

MH "Employment of Persons with Disabilities+"

((Customiz* OR Customis* OR supported OR inclusive OR mainstream OR open OR conventional or integrated) N3 (employment* OR job* OR work*))

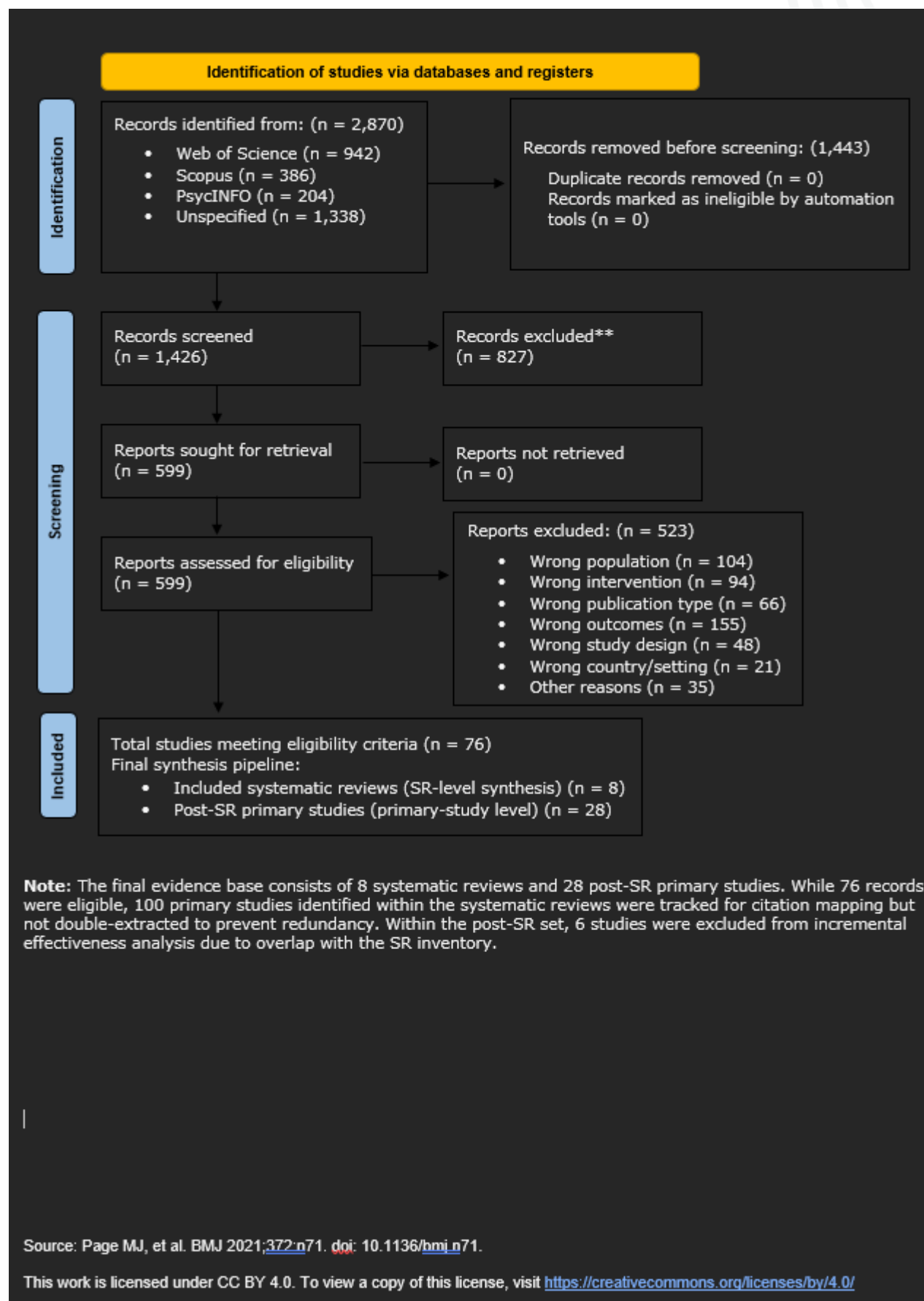
AND

MH "Vocational Education" OR MH "Affirmative Action"

(Procurement OR "supply chain*" OR "Targeted purchas*" OR "Supplier diversity" OR

BuyAbility OR "enterprise contract*" OR "enterprise engagement*" OR Quota* OR "Employment target*" OR "hiring target*" OR "Affirmative action" OR "employment benchmark*" OR "participation goal*" OR "Statutory employment obligation*" OR "Mandatory employment ratio*" OR "Reserved position*" or "designated role*" OR "inclusion mandate*" OR "Vocational education" OR RTO OR VET OR TAFE OR "training institute*" OR "Adult education*" OR "Certificate course*" OR "diploma course*" OR apprenticeship* OR traineeship* OR ((Competency* OR industry OR workforce OR accredited OR vocational OR registered) N2 (training))))

Appendix D. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram

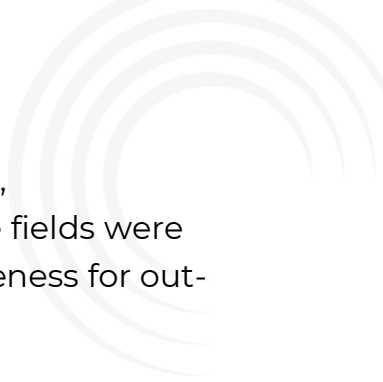


Appendix E. Extraction domains and template fields

Table E1. Extraction domains and template fields

Extraction domain	Systematic reviews	Primary studies within-SR	Post-SR / effectiveness set
Study characteristics and identification	intervention_families_covered	country_jurisdiction	study_id citation linked_domain design Design_class AERO_level
Participant details and support profile	—	sample support_needs_communication	subgroup_analysis equity_indicators moderator_variables
Intervention components and delivery features	intervention_families_covered	intervention_family implementation_factors	intervention_family family_assignment
Outcomes and effects (CIE outcomes, durability, job quality)	effect_direction_codes	—	effect_direction
Implementation determinants and strategies	—	implementation_factors	—
Equity considerations and moderators	—	—	equity_indicators moderator_variables subgroup_analysis
Embedded policy levers (descriptive only; not systematically searched)	—	—	—
Transferability to Australia	applicability_notes	country_jurisdiction	—
Critical appraisal and certainty assessment fields	sr_quality_rating certainty_method	—	AERO_level

Note: Several domains (e.g., intervention components, delivery features, and embedded policy levers) were captured primarily via structured ‘family/domain’



fields plus free-text synthesis/extraction notes (e.g., main_findings, key_extraction_notes, implementation_notes, effect_notes). These fields were used to preserve descriptive detail without over-claiming effectiveness for out-of-scope policy levers.

Appendix F. Included systematic reviews and primary studies

This appendix provides a comprehensive register of the systematic reviews (SRs) and their contributing primary studies included in the synthesis. It supports transparency in evidence selection, overlap management, and evidence quality.

Table F1. Included Systematic Reviews (8 systematic reviews were included in the synthesis)

Full Citation	Quality Rating	No. of Primary Studies	Country Focus	Notes
Enticott, A., & Dew, A. (2025). A systematic review of the characteristics of programs and services resulting in competitive employment outcomes for young people with an intellectual disability. Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability.	Low	7	Australia	Early career planning, post-secondary education, on-the-job training improve outcomes
Morash-Macneil, V., Johnson, F., & Ryan, J. B. (2018). A systematic review of assistive technology for individuals with intellectual disability in the workplace. Journal of Special Education Technology, 33(1), 15-26.	Medium	10	United States	AT improves independence; portable devices most effective; wearable tech less consistent
Taubner, H., Tideman, M., & Staland Nyman, C. (2022). Employment sustainability for people with intellectual disability: A systematic review. Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation, 32(3), 353-364.	Low	10	Sweden, Europe	Limited research; facilitators: education, licence, employer support; barriers: stigma, discrimination
Taylor, J., Avellone, L., Brooke, V., Wehman, P., Inge, K., Schall, C., & Iwanaga, K. (2022). The impact of competitive integrated employment on economic, psychological,	Medium	17	United States	CIE improves economic outcomes; promising psychological/physical benefits

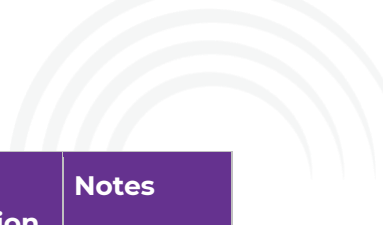
Full Citation	Quality Rating	No. of Primary Studies	Country Focus	Notes
and physical health outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. <i>Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities</i> , 35(2), 448-459.				
Taylor, J. P., Avellone, L., Wehman, P., & Brooke, V. (2023). The efficacy of competitive integrated employment versus segregated employment for persons with disabilities: A systematic review. <i>Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation</i> , 58(1), 63-78.	Medium	5	United States	Segregated services do not improve outcomes; integrated models consistently better
Carlson, S. R., Morningstar, M. E., & Munandar, V. (2020). Workplace supports for employees with intellectual disability: A systematic review of the intervention literature. <i>Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation</i> , 52(3), 251-265.	Medium	14	United States	Training support providers improves performance and integration; no evidence on career advancement
Nevala, N., Pehkonen, I., Teittinen, A., Vesala, H. T., Pörtfors, P., & Anttila, H. (2019). The effectiveness of rehabilitation interventions on the employment and functioning of people with intellectual disabilities: A systematic review. <i>Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation</i> , 29(4), 773-802.	Medium	38	Finland, UK, United States	Tailored services improve employment; barriers: sheltered work, discrimination
Jetha, A., Shaw, R., Sinden, A. R., Mahood, Q., Gignac, M. A. M., McColl, M. A., & Martin Ginis, K. A. (2019). Work-focused interventions that promote the labour market transition of young adults with chronic disabling health	High	10	United States, OECD	Tailored SE supports competitive employment; gaps for sustaining work and advancement

Full Citation	Quality Rating	No. of Primary Studies	Country Focus	Notes
conditions: A systematic review. <i>Occupational and Environmental Medicine</i> , 76(3), 189-198.				

Table F2. Post-SR Primary Studies (11 post-SR primary studies were included in the synthesis)

Full Citation	Country	Design	AER O Level	Effect Direction	Notes
Inge, K. J., Avellone, L., Wehman, P., Broda, M., & Joy, J. (2023). Effects of Customized Employment on the Independence of Youth with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. <i>Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities</i> , 61(6), 481-491. https://doi.org/10.1352/1934-9556-61.6.481	USA	Quantitative	4	Positive	CE intervention: SIS-A Employment subscale improved
Inge, K. J., Wehman, P., Avellone, L., Broda, M., & McDonough, J. (2024). The impact of customized employment on the competitive integrated employment outcomes of transition age youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities: A randomised controlled trial study. <i>Work</i> , 77(3), 721-729. https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-246003	USA	Quantitative	4	Positive	CE RCT; significant CIE outcomes (aRR = 4.11)
Butterworth, J., Migliore, A., Nye-Lengerman, K., Lyons, O., Gunty, A., Eastman, J., & Foos, P. (2020). Using data-enabled performance feedback and guidance to assist employment consultants in their work with job seekers: An experimental study. <i>Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation</i> , 53(2), 189-203.	USA	Quantitative	4	Mixed	Consultant-facing intervention; ↑ hours worked, NS for earnings
Damianidou, D., Arthur-Kelly, M., Lyons, G., & Wehmeyer, M. L. (2019). Technology use to support employment-related outcomes for people with intellectual and	International	Quantitative	4	Positive	Meta-analysis of assistive tech; PND = 87;

Full Citation	Country	Design	AER O Lev el	Effect Direction	Notes
developmental disability: An updated meta-analysis. International Journal of Developmental Disabilities, 65(4), 220-230.					moderate d by ID severity and UD features
Brown, L., Schmid, S., Cutler, S., Kessler, K., & Shiraga, B. (2021). When ordinary becomes extraordinary: A postschool follow-up study of the integrated vocational functioning of 50 workers with significant intellectual disabilities, 1984-2020. Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 54(2), 211-253.	USA	Quantitati ve	3	Positive	36-year follow-up; sustained integratio n
Berástegui, A., Suárez, G., & González, M. D. (2024). Competencies and employment after a university program in young people with intellectual disabilities. Journal of Intellectual Disabilities, 28(3), 615-628.	Spain	Quantitati ve	3	Positive	University- based training; OR = 1.11 per skill
Gomes-Machado, M. L., Santos, F. H., Schoen, T., & Chiari, B. (2016). Effects of Vocational Training on a Group of People with Intellectual Disabilities. Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 13(1), 33-40.	Brazil	Quantitati ve	3	Positive	100% employed at 1-year follow-up; high satisfactio n
Sung, C., Fisher, M. H., Okyere, C., Park, J., & Choi, H. (2023). Employment outcomes and support needs of Michigan Project SEARCH graduates with intellectual and developmental disabilities: A mixed-method study. Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 59(3), 233-249.	USA	Mixed methods	3	Positive	Project SEARCH; 77% employed; 75% retained
Schwartzman, B. C. (2021). Mixed methods analysis of an exploratory apprenticeship model employment program for young adults with developmental disabilities. Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 55(2), 185-205.	USA	Mixed methods	3	Positive	Apprentic eship model; ↑ vocational confidenc e



Full Citation	Country	Design	AER O Lev el	Effect Direction	Notes
Kiegaldie, D., Shaw, L., Hunter, S., Davis, J., Siddel, H., & O'Brien, M. (2023). An integrated practical placement programme for students with disability: A pilot study. Journal of Intellectual Disabilities, 27(4), 994-1012.	Australia	Mixed methods	3	Positive	IPP pilot; 70% employment vs 15.4% comparison
Gilson, C. B., Carter, E. W., Bumble, J. L., & McMillan, E. D. (2018). Family perspectives on integrated employment for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 43(1), 20-37. https://doi.org/10.1177/1540796917751134	USA	Quantitative	3	Positive	Family perspectives; job quality and implementation barriers/enablers

Appendix G. Appraisal tools and certainty assessment frameworks

Table G1. Overview of Appraisal and Certainty Tools

Tool / Framework	Purpose	Evidence Type Applied To	Key Domains Assessed
GRADE (Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation)	To assess certainty in quantitative evidence and inform strength of recommendations	Quantitative outcomes from post-SR primary studies	Risk of bias, inconsistency, indirectness, imprecision, publication bias
GRADE-CERQual (Confidence in the Evidence from Reviews of Qualitative Research)	To assess confidence in synthesised qualitative findings	Synthesised qualitative themes (e.g., lived experience sub-stream)	Methodological limitations, coherence, adequacy of data, relevance
AERO Standards of Evidence	To classify evidence by rigour and relevance for practice translation	All evidence types, including grey literature and mixed-methods studies	Study design, implementation quality, outcome relevance, replicability, applicability

Table G2. Application of Tools Across Evidence Streams

Evidence Stream	Appraisal Tool(s) Applied	Notes
Systematic reviews (SR-level synthesis)	AERO	SRs were assessed for methodological rigour and relevance to practice
Post-SR primary studies (quantitative)	GRADE, AERO	GRADE applied to studies meeting AERO Level 3+ criteria
Post-SR primary studies (qualitative)	GRADE-CERQual, AERO	Synthesised themes assessed using CERQual; AERO used for rigour check
Grey literature (e.g., evaluations)	AERO	Used to assess rigour and practice relevance; not included in GRADE
Mixed-methods studies	AERO, GRADE or CERQual (as appropriate)	Appraisal aligned to dominant methodological component

G3. Decision Rules and Thresholds

GRADE ratings were assigned as High, Moderate, Low, or Very Low certainty, based on standard guidance.

CERQual confidence levels were assigned as High, Moderate, Low, or Very Low,

based on the four domains.

AERO levels were used to classify evidence as:

- Level 1: Emerging or promising practice (limited rigour or relevance)
- Level 2: Moderate rigour and/or relevance
- Level 3: Strong rigour and relevance
- Level 4: Exemplary evidence (high rigour, high relevance, replicable)

Only post-SR primary studies meeting AERO Level 3 or higher were included in the effectiveness analysis set (n = 11). Studies below this threshold were excluded from quantitative synthesis but may have contributed to contextual or qualitative insights.

G4. Adaptations for Rapid Review Context

Given the rapid review design, the following adaptations were made:

- Appraisal was conducted by a single reviewer with verification by a second reviewer for a subset of studies.
- For grey literature, AERO was used as the primary appraisal tool due to the absence of standardised risk of bias instruments.
- Where full GRADE or CERQual assessments were not feasible, structured summaries of key domains were used to inform confidence ratings.

Note: This appendix outlines the tools and frameworks used to assess the methodological quality, risk of bias, and confidence in the body of evidence included in the synthesis. These tools were selected to align with the mixed-methods nature of the evidence base and the applied translation focus of the review.

Appendix H. Transferability to the Australian context: assessment rubric

This appendix presents the rubric used to assess the transferability of included evidence to the Australian service and policy context. The rubric was applied in two stages: (i) screening for baseline contextual alignment using a priori criteria, and (ii) case-by-case judgement for borderline or complex cases, with rationale documented.

Table H1. Transferability Assessment Rubric

Criterion	Description	Rating Scale
Population relevance	Degree to which the study population reflects the characteristics of people with intellectual disability in Australia (e.g., age, support needs, cultural diversity)	High / Moderate / Low
Service system comparability	Alignment between the study's service delivery context and the Australian disability employment ecosystem (e.g., NDIS, DES, open employment pathways)	High / Moderate / Low
Policy and funding environment	Similarity of policy levers, funding mechanisms, and regulatory frameworks	High / Moderate / Low
Labour market and employer context	Relevance of the employment sector, employer practices, and labour market conditions	High / Moderate / Low
Implementation feasibility	Practicality of implementing the intervention or practice in Australian settings	High / Moderate / Low
Cultural and linguistic relevance	Applicability to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations and Indigenous communities	High / Moderate / Low

Each study was assessed against these six criteria. Studies rated as “High” or “Moderate” across most domains were considered transferable. Studies with “Low” ratings in multiple critical domains were flagged for limited applicability and either excluded from synthesis or used cautiously with appropriate caveats.

H2. Application Notes

For systematic reviews, transferability was assessed at the review level, with additional consideration of the primary studies included. For post-SR primary studies, the rubric was applied directly to the study context and intervention.

For grey literature and evaluations, transferability was assessed based on both the intervention setting and the intended audience or system.

Appendix I. Coding rules for transition-to-work studies

This appendix outlines the coding rules applied to studies addressing transition-to-work interventions, particularly where population boundaries, programme types, or age cohorts were ambiguous. These rules were developed to ensure consistent application of inclusion criteria and alignment with the synthesis scope (**Section 4.2**).

Table I. Coding Logic for Transition-to-Work Studies

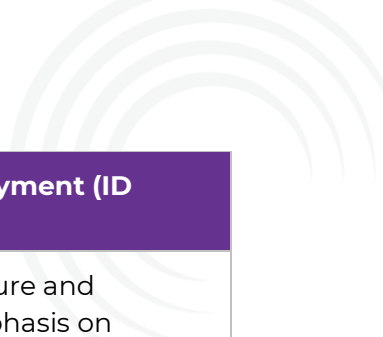
Scenario / Study Type	Coding Decision	Rationale
School-based transition programmes only	Excluded	Out of scope: interventions delivered exclusively within school settings were not aligned with the synthesis focus on post-school, mainstream employment pathways.
Post-school transition programmes	Included	Aligned with the synthesis scope on adult employment support and service delivery following school exit.
Mixed-age cohorts (school leavers and adults)	Included if ≥50% of participants were post-school age or if post-school subgroup data were extractable	Ensures relevance to post-school employment transitions while allowing inclusion of mixed samples where adult-focused findings could be isolated.
Employment Readiness Programmes (ERPs)	Included if targeted at post-school or adult cohorts	ERPs designed for school leavers only were excluded unless they included follow-up into post-school employment or were delivered in adult service contexts.
Studies with unclear age boundaries or settings	Case-by-case judgement with rationale documented	Where study context or population age was ambiguous, inclusion was based on best available information and alignment with the synthesis objectives.

Note: These coding rules were applied during full-text screening and data extraction stages. Decisions were documented in the master register and verified through calibration checks.

Appendix J. Historical and policy milestones relevant to open employment/CIE in Australia

Table J. Selected legislative & policy milestones shaping open employment in Australia

Year/period	Milestone	Relevance to CIE/open employment (ID context)
1986	Disability Services Act 1986 (Cth) (Australian Government, 1986) establishes the Commonwealth disability services framework.	Supported the development and funding of specialist disability services, including employment support, while co-existing with segregated service pathways.
1992	Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (Australian Government, 1992).	Creates a national anti-discrimination baseline in employment and underpins reasonable adjustments and workplace accessibility as routine employment obligations.
2008	Australia ratifies the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (The Division For Inclusive Social Development (DISD), 2006).	Strengthens a rights-based framing for employment inclusion (e.g., CRPD Article 27) and reinforces the expectation of participation in an open, inclusive labour market.
2010	Disability Employment Services (DES) commences as a national specialist employment programme.	Provides a major service-system platform for job development, placement, and ongoing workplace support; system settings influence support 'dose', fidelity, and employer engagement.
2013–present	National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) established through NDIS Act 2013 (Australian Government, 2013) and progressively rolled out.	Introduces individualised funding and a parallel pathway for employment-related supports, creating both opportunities and coordination demands at the DES/NDIS interface.
2018–present	NDIS School Leaver Employment Supports (Employment Readiness Programmes) and related capacity-building employment assistance.	Institutionalises a transition-focused support stream; highlights the importance of early work exposure, employer engagement, and structured progression from school to work.
2022–2023	Disability ministers agree guiding principles (2022) and a supported employment plan (Nov 2023).	Signals a coordinated reform direction for supported employment, emphasising informed choice, expanded opportunities across settings, and transition pathways toward open employment where desired.



Year/period	Milestone	Relevance to CIE/open employment (ID context)
1 Nov 2025	Inclusive Employment Australia replaces DES.	Updates programme architecture and incentives, with an explicit emphasis on participant-centred support, flexibility, and career growth; settings remain pivotal for access, quality, and sustainment of CIE outcomes.

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