

# Winter 2021 Program Update



Global Workplace Services  
Supported Employment Program

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# Introduction from Brian Collins



Greetings everyone,

While Microsoft, like much of the world, continues to be in various stages of reopening in accordance with guidance with local health authorities, I want to acknowledge and thank all the employees who are performing essential work every day. And I want to thank those working from home for staying safe!

I hope you will enjoy this newsletter, which shares stories and good news. This summer, we passed a major program milestone. When we piloted this program in Redmond, Washington, we set a target to hire 200 individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities. This summer, we doubled that number, with 400 individuals hired since the program first began.

In July, we launched our online [Knowledge Center](#), which offers best practices to hire Supported Employees, cultivate an inclusive and welcoming workplace, provide effective onboarding, and fully utilize the partnership of employer, employee, and job coaching support. Open-source and free, anyone can access this original content online 24-hours a day.

I was honored to join colleagues to wish a fond farewell to Laila Dibeh, a pioneering Supported Employee, who retired from Microsoft after 30 years with the company. I hope you enjoy reading more about Laila and her enduring legacy at Microsoft.

And on 30 November, in celebration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we hosted the [Supported Employment Program World Tour](#). Supported Employees around the globe shared their employment stories, and Microsoft and vendor leaders shared regional knowledge and lessons learned about employment of people with disabilities.

And, as we look forward to 2022, Microsoft continues to prioritize the health and well-being of our community. We are continuing to pay everyone, Microsoft employees and vendor employees alike, including those whose roles cannot be performed remotely. We look forward to the gradual safe opening of Microsoft offices, and to continuing our efforts to grow job opportunities for people with disabilities at Microsoft locations globally.

As always, feel free to reach out with any thoughts or suggestions:  
[supportedemployment@microsoft.com](mailto:supportedemployment@microsoft.com).



# The power of disability inclusion in global recovery

In October, we celebrated National Disability Employment Awareness Month on [LinkedIN](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). We elevated stories of Supported Employees from around the world and shared resources for people and organizations seeking to hire people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

We continue to learn that disability pride and disclosure looks very different from country to country, and explore ways to best support people who may not feel comfortable sharing their story. We hope that sharing through campaigns such as NDEAM, will encourage others to do the same and be able to celebrate the hardworking employees and all they contribute to their teams.



Puget Sound Featured Supported Employees: Top row- Dwight Travis, Gates Painting; Laila Dibeh, Microsoft; Jason Lakey, NLS.

Bottom row - Mark Scullywest, SBM; Raha Esmaeillou, MV Transportation.



India Featured Supported Employees: Divya A., Shabrinath N., Pravalika Reddy at CBRE.



North America Featured Supported Employees: Top row: Danielle Metzger, Peter Capouch, Sierra Lloyd at Compass Group.

Bottom row: Daryl Tatum Jr. and Julie Pizarro at Compass Group.

# Global Update

## Expanding SEP influence and impact

Whenever a Supported Employee is hired at a new location of Microsoft, we happily add a dot to the world map. As the map illustrates, not only has the program stayed strong during the pandemic, but it has in fact grown significantly.

In 2013, when Microsoft piloted the program at the headquarters in Redmond Washington, the goal was to hire 200

individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Despite the pandemic, this summer, we passed an important milestone: 400 individuals have been hired through this program. The reach of this inclusive hiring initiative is steadily growing. With the help of stakeholders around the globe, the program is in place at Microsoft locations in 14 countries; there are 39 vendor companies involved as employers; and 40 community partner organizations are sourcing candidates and providing employment supports to Supported Employees.

And more growth is to come. During the past year, teams in every region of the globe have attended trainings, identified potential roles, and identified local job coaching or non-governmental organizations to help source great talent. As a direct result of this preparation and partnership building, new Supported Employees are being hired. Of the 23 new hires globally, in the second half of 2021, 11 are in the Asia, Pacific region, 4 in the Europe, Middle East and Africa region, 4 in North America and 4 in Puget Sound. We are particularly excited to see a broad range of roles being filled by these new teammates, from Mail Services Expeditor, to Business Services Clerk, to Lobby Host and more.

Recently, teams in India sent over 80 managers to a virtual session of the Best Practices in Recruiting, Hiring, Supervising and Retaining Supported Employees workshop. During the workshop, managers and team members enthusiastically participated to bolster their skills in creating a more inclusive workplace.

As locations of Microsoft move to Stage 6 opening, more Supported Employees will be hired in more locations around the globe, and we look forward to sharing those stories in future and adding more dots to the world map.



# Knowledge Center Training Series

This summer, the team launched the Microsoft Supported Employment Program Knowledge Center. This series of brief online and on demand trainings will support hiring teams and new vendor partners seeking to hire Supported Employees. The modules - Prepare, Interview, Onboard and Support - provide skills and strategies to hire Supported Employees at global locations of Microsoft.

Developed in collaboration with our partners around the world, the goal was to make these videos globally relevant and accessible.

Visit the [Knowledge Center](#) tab at [aka.ms/supportedemployment](https://aka.ms/supportedemployment) to view the training series.



Prepare

Learn the four foundations for hiring a Supported Employee at your organization.



Interview

Learn how to adapt your hiring practices to be inclusive.



Onboard

Learn how to utilize resources and team members to make onboarding a great experience for all.



Support

Learn how job coaches or other trained professionals can assist you and your Supported Employees to be successful.



## SEP World Tour

On 30 November, we hope you joined the virtual “Supported Employment Program World Tour”. This year’s event honored the work of Supported Employees around the world, in observation of the United Nations’ [International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#).

We are constantly seeking opportunities to amplify the voices of Supported Employees at Microsoft. This celebration seemed like the perfect moment to reflect on career journeys and to learn about disability employment through the eyes of global champions.

Brian Collins hosted a series of interviews with Ethan Harper from Las Colinas, Texas, Oren Yerushalmi Rosenbaum from Herzliya, Israel, Pinny Mann from Delhi, India, and Silvana Aguilar from Quito, Ecuador. The program was woven together with videos of Supported Employees sharing what they do for Microsoft and the importance of having a job.

It is energizing to take these moments to connect with our global community. Each new job plays a part in narrowing the “disability divide,” described in a recent blog by Brad Smith, President of Microsoft, [Doubling down on accessibility: Microsoft’s next steps to expand accessibility in technology, the workforce and workplace](#).

If you missed the event on November 30, go to YouTube to view and share the [Microsoft SEP World Tour](#) video.





## Supported Employee Feature

Fernandez Boyd, Bloomington Illinois



Meet Fernandez Boyd, the Day Porter who performs enhanced cleaning at the Microsoft location in Bloomington, Illinois.

Fernandez works for SBM and started supporting the Bloomington site in the summer of 2021.

He has been reliable and flexible which has been greatly appreciated by everyone at the site.

He does a great job cleaning and giving a helping hand when needed.

Fernandez is truly a joy to work with. He is seen as a valued resource that assists in ensuring the site is clean and sanitized. That reassurance of cleanliness helps everyone

who enters to feel comfortable and welcome as they work at this site.

Thank you, Fernandez.

## Microsoft receives Champion of Inclusion Award

Recently Microsoft was recognized by the Supported Employment agency [AtWork!](#) as one of their Champion of Inclusion recipients. During the online award presentation, a [video](#) was played of one of the Supported Employees working at a Microsoft café, named Ryan. We are happy to share Ryan's story with you.



# Thirty years of dedication and smiles

**After three decades at Microsoft, a pioneering Supported Employee and passionate advocate for the I/DD community says goodbye.**

When Laila Dibeh started her career at Microsoft, George H.W. Bush was president and the average price for a gallon of gas was \$1.14. Now, thirty years later, she's saying goodbye.

"Coming to work for Microsoft, for thirty years, I feel so accomplished," Laila says, who has been employed since 1991.

As a Microsoft employee—with CBRE as managing agent and with the assistance of her job coach—Laila began in the Corporate Purchasing Group as a filing clerk. In 2004, she moved to the mailroom, where she discovered a newfound passion and has worked ever since. One of the longest-tenured Supported Employees, Laila celebrated her retirement at the end of October.



"What I like most about Microsoft is the people. I feel privileged to have worked here. I feel blessed."

Now, after all these years, Laila is moving on to a new adventure, assured that Microsoft will be okay—if, perhaps, not quite as filled with the sunshine of her presence.

"Laila has been a joy to have on our mail and logistics team," says Katy Flaherty, Lobby and Logistics Services Manager. "I've felt privileged to be Laila's manager for the past two years and she has impressed me with her commitment and focus on her work over the years. I was able to see first-hand her dedication to her work, her colleagues, and to Microsoft."

## **Achievements and affection**

When discussing the significance of Laila's career, Brian Collins commented, "while our Supported Employment Program officially started in 2013, Laila has been laying the foundation for many years. As a result of the impact that she has had with her peers at Microsoft, she has helped create a path for almost 400 other Supported Employees in 14 countries from around the globe who have subsequently participated in our program."

All this appreciation has meant a great deal to Laila, particularly following recent months when COVID-19 precautions have kept her away from the office, although she was recently able

to safely return. Happy to see many familiar faces again, Laila is being given the proper send-off she deserves, as well as a chance to reflect on all that her job meant to her.

"Thirty years at Microsoft feels like an achievement award," she says. "I feel like I accomplished something."

"Laila should be very proud to have created a legacy during her time at Microsoft," Brian says.

"We wish her every success and enjoyment in her retirement."

### **A new chapter**

Laila is looking forward to now spending time with her parents in the home they share.

Day after day, for thirty years, countless Microsoft employees have benefitted from Laila's hard work, and enjoyed the sweet smile that she always seems to have for everyone she encounters.

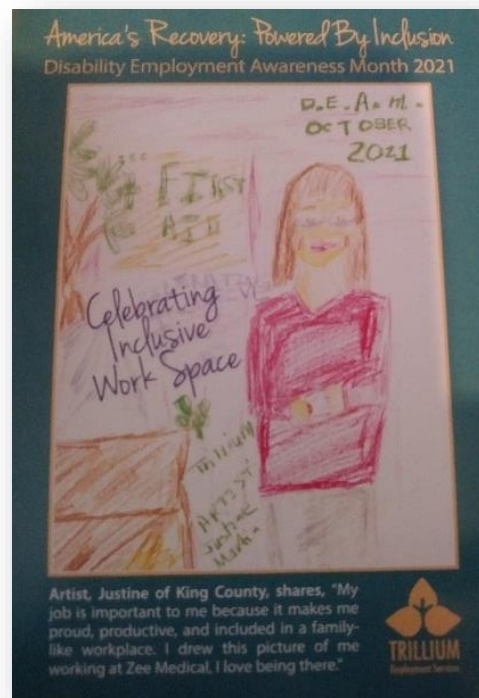
"She truly embodies the type of Microsoft employee we want to have on our teams, and she does it with the biggest smile every day she comes to work," Katy says.

During her final days in the office, many heartfelt goodbyes were exchanged, along with reminders that she'll always be a welcomed member of the Microsoft family. "It's a new chapter and time to move on with my life," Laila says. "I feel proud and very honored."

## **Supported Employee art feature**

Justine Martin, Washington USA

Thank you to Justine Martin for sharing her artwork and postcard she created in celebration of Disability Employment Awareness Month. We appreciate all the efforts by Supported Employees to share the power of inclusion.



## Benefits planning resource available in Washington



United States federal regulations limit the amount of income many Supported Employees are allowed to earn before losing benefits such as SSI and Medicaid. Having a resource to turn to for assistance with understanding the impact of earned income, a pay raise, or a new job with increased income, can be extremely helpful. For people living in Washington state, BenefitU.org is a new benefits-planning service available to people aged 14+ who receive

Developmental Disabilities Administration benefits. In

addition to offering informational materials, it is also possible to set up an appointment to meet with a certified benefits planner.

This new resource is currently being rolled out across Washington state. Visit <https://benefitu.org>, to learn more.

## See more stories on social media

Join us on the Microsoft Corporate Real Estate (CRE) social media channels and catch up with stories from the Supported Employment Program throughout the year.



[CRE Microsoft | LinkedIn](#)



[Corp Real Estate Microsoft \(@cremicrosoft\) | Instagram](#)



[Corp Real Estate MS \(@CREMicrosoft\) | Twitter](#)



### Stay tuned for the next Newsletter: Summer 2022

For questions or additional information, please contact us, at [supportedemployment@microsoft.com](mailto:supportedemployment@microsoft.com).