

# Disability Inclusion

## Quick Start Guide

A disability inclusion (DI) program will benefit your bottom line. It will also let all of your employees bring their best selves to work. There are many steps to launching a program, from understanding the business benefits to building an inclusive culture to finding talent and more.

Our Quick Start Guide gives concrete steps you can take to support and implement inclusion at your company. Whether you're just learning about DI, preparing to make the case to management, or well on your way but looking for deeper understanding to drive DI, we have the information you need.

## 4 Steps for Making the Business Case for Disability Inclusion

Companies don't always think of hiring people with disabilities as a business move. Here are points you can make to show leaders and others how it can boost revenue and morale.

### 1. Share the numbers on this large, untapped labor force.

- One American adult in four has a disability, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is more than twice the rate for those without a disability. This is true across all age groups and all education levels.
- The vast majority of people with disabilities are striving to work.

### 2. Show the bottom-line benefits of hiring people with disabilities.

- Companies that use best practices for employing people with disabilities had 28 percent higher revenue, 30 percent higher profit margins, and twice the net income, according to a 2018 report by Accenture.
- They were also twice as likely to have higher shareholder returns.
- People with disabilities stay longer at their jobs. Their turnover rate is half that of employees without disabilities.

### 3. Explain how people with disabilities can strengthen your workforce.

- Employees with disabilities are as productive as other employees — or even more productive — and have fewer safety incidents.
- They drive innovation in areas like problem-solving and product development.
- Building an inclusive workplace sends a message about your company's values. It improves overall morale and culture. Employees have more satisfaction and are more engaged.

### 4. Describe how inclusion can provide access to a vast market opportunity.

- In the United States, disposable income for working-age people with disabilities is \$490 billion, according to a 2018 report from the American Institutes for Research. Discretionary income is about \$21 billion.
- Consumers with disabilities make more shopping trips and spend more per trip than those without disabilities.
- Consumers favor brands from purpose-driven companies that are responsible and caring.

## 6 Steps for Planning Your Initiative

A successful diversity and inclusion (DI) program begins with a successful planning process. From setting measurable goals to building a strong team, smart planning will get your initiative off to a great start and lead to a more inclusive workplace.

### 1. Get leadership buy-in.

- Make the business case for why DI isn't just socially good, it's good for your bottom line.
- Clear up any misconceptions that accommodations are expensive and difficult to implement. Rather, they are minimal cost for maximum impact.
- Share DI success stories through case studies and news articles that show how inclusion transforms workplaces.

### 2. Evaluate how ready your implementation site is for a DI initiative.

- Look at how DI fits into the site's goals for hiring, production, and value creation.
- Find out if your outside staffing firms are including candidates with disabilities.

### 3. Evaluate the accessibility of your physical space and technology.

- Assess your physical space with an eye toward universal design.
- See if information, communications, and technology (ICT) are accessible and remove any barriers.
- Make sure your web content follows WCAG guidelines and Section 508.

### 4. Set measurable DI goals that support your other business goals.

- Think about your current diversity and human resource goals and include disability at every possible step.
- Review your retention rates and consider adding retention to your DI goals.
- Consider incentive planning, like job training grants or tax credits (WOTC).

### 5. Build your implementation team.

- Have a top executive lead the team and champion support for DI from the top.
- Build a working team that represents all divisions, functions, and levels to build company-wide support.

### 6. Identify potential community partners.

- Look for local nonprofit providers that support people with disabilities in finding full-time jobs.
- Find national groups that can help you fill your roles, like The Arc and Easterseals.

## 4 Steps to Building an Inclusive Culture

Building a culture of inclusion is a top-down process. Your company leaders should show their commitment and send the message that disability inclusion is good for everyone.

### 1. Have leadership be the champions.

- Convey that DI is a priority to leadership by including disability in all of your company's diversity and inclusion statements and programs.
- Add DI goals to key performance indicators (KPIs). Make them a standard item on all management meeting agendas and hold managers accountable for program goals.
- Enlist a top executive to lead a team that advocates for the DI initiative. The team should represent all divisions and levels of your company.

### 2. Require company-wide training.

- Run programs for all employees that raise awareness about disability, reduce bias, and address common misperceptions.
- Make sure all employees are clear on the process for requesting and determining accommodations from day one.
- Train managers and supervisors on how to make onboarding, trainings, meetings, materials, and events inclusive and accessible for all.
- Educate managers and supervisors on how to build in support for all employees with disabilities, including those with undisclosed invisible disabilities. Explain how to use natural supports and universal design.

### 3. Create a communications plan to promote your commitment.

- Publicize your company's firm commitment by sharing formal statements on disability inclusion, equal opportunity, and inclusive hiring.
- Reinforce message through company newsletters and internal publications.
- Plan a series of kickoff events for your initiative to generate enthusiasm and support.

### 4. Adopt policies and programs that support your commitment.

- Develop clear accommodations and accessibility policies and share them widely.
- Adopt universal policy for workplace flexibility.
- Create employee resource groups (ERGs) or business resource groups (BRGs) to support people with disabilities.

## 4 Steps for Finding and Hiring Employees With Disabilities

When you're planning for disability inclusion, you need to think about your approach to recruitment and hiring. Making some adjustments lets you find the best talent for the job.

### 1. Adopt practices and policies to make the process more inclusive.

- Include disability in all hiring initiatives and set concrete recruiting goals that demonstrate your company's commitment to inclusion.
- Create job descriptions without extra requirements that aren't directly related to key responsibilities.
- Adopt a clear, written accommodations policy for recruiting, screening, and interviewing.
- Make sure recruiting forms and materials are accessible and available in different formats, like braille or large print.
- Check your online application process for barriers to jobseekers with disabilities.

### 2. Build a pipeline of qualified candidates who can fill any role in your company.

- Consider enlisting the help of a disability employment expert. Explore our website to learn how the Workplace Initiative can support you with this.
- Reach out to state agencies, such as vocational rehabilitation (VR) offices.
- Reach out to nonprofit and national agencies in your community, such as Easterseals, The Arc, or Goodwill.
- Contact the career service office and disability resource center at local universities, community colleges, and technical and vocational schools.
- Reach out to local high schools and to transition programs that serve young adults.

### 3. Determine where applicants with disabilities might be getting shut out.

- Design assessments to find out the skills and abilities candidates have. Give alternate ways to do activities so that all candidates have the chance to show what they can bring to the job.
- Send information about the interview ahead of time: the schedule, who will attend, what you'll talk about, and instructions for any activities.
- Invite candidates to ask for accommodations for any part of the interview process.
- Make sure all recruiters and hiring managers are trained on your accommodations policy and know what to do if a candidate requests an accommodation.

### 4. Adopt inclusive interviewing practices.

- Provide any requested accommodations.
- Consider how accessible the physical space is. Think about sensory sensitivity – how noisy and bright is the space?
- Focus on key responsibilities. Leave out questions about tasks that aren't essential.
- Allow five-minute breaks after 45 minutes of interviewing.

## 5 Steps for Onboarding and Training

Your planning will begin to pay off when new employees with disabilities join your team. Making sure that new hires, coworkers, and supervisors are prepared helps everyone get off to a good, productive start.

### 1. Prepare all managers, supervisors, and team members to welcome new hires.

- Train all team members on disability awareness to build comfort.
- Train managers and supervisors on the process for determining and requesting accommodations. Teach them about universal design and how to use natural supports.
- Train managers and supervisors on practices to make onboarding, trainings, meetings, materials, and events accessible, like offering materials in different formats.

### 2. Review your standard onboarding process to make sure it supports all new hires.

- Make your online forms and onboarding software accessible.
- Make assistive technology, like screen reading software or captioning, available for new hires.
- Walk through all of your spaces to make sure they're accessible.
- Help all new hires become part of your workplace socially.

### 3. Talk with all new hires about disability resources or policies.

- Explain how to request an accommodation and emphasize the company's commitment to providing necessary support.
- Highlight any coaching or mentoring programs your company offers.
- Discuss any disability-focused employee or business resource groups (ERGs/BRGs).
- Tell them about any flexible workplace policies.
- Provide any reasonable accommodation a new hire requests as soon as possible.

### 4. Be clear and specific in describing job tasks and expectations to all new hires.

- Present instructions orally, in writing, and visually to allow for different learning styles.
- Create checklists and timetables for new hires.
- Introduce the work gradually and with any requested support.
- Give advice about informal rules, such as breaks, dress code, and eating or drinking in the work area. Talk about behavior rules.

### 5. Establish practices to make training, events, and materials inclusive.

- Send agendas and materials in advance. Give everyone the opportunity to request accommodations.
- Make notes or transcripts available after the event.
- Offer material or media in alternative formats, such as large print or captioning.

## 4 Steps for Encouraging Disclosure and Self-Identification

The most common disabilities are invisible. These include learning disabilities and ADHD. When employees disclose, you can provide supports and they can bring their whole self to work.

### 1. Send a clear message that you value employees with disabilities and that your workplace embraces and supports differences.

- Encourage leaders at your company to disclose and share stories about their own disabilities, including invisible ones.
- Encourage senior leaders to voice their support for employees with disabilities. Talk about how important disclosure is for both reporting and giving support.
- Provide training on disability inclusion. That sends a message that it's OK to talk about disability. It also increases disclosure levels.
- Create disability-related employee or business resource groups, with support from your company's top leaders.
- Adopt a clear accommodations policy and procedure.

### 2. Work with supervisors to promote supportive relationships.

- Train managers and supervisors on what to do when an employee discloses and how important it is to keep information confidential.
- Encourage supervisors to give needed support and adjustments to employees.
- Train supervisors to give inclusive feedback.

### 3. Adopt a self-identification campaign.

- Develop a communication plan to spread the word about the campaign (be sure to create a catchy slogan).
- Be clear about why you're asking employees to self-identify and how you'll use the information.
- Stress that their participation is voluntary and that all information is confidential.
- Remind employees of the broad definition of "disability" under the ADA and give some examples.

### 4. Follow Section 503 guidelines if you're a federal contractor or subcontractor.

- Make sure your company complies with Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The law says you must work toward having 7 percent of your workforce be people with disabilities and that you report on how you're doing at meeting that goal.
- Invite applicants and employees to self-identify pre-offer and post-offer. Invite current employees every five years.
- Make sure identification is voluntary, confidential, and anonymous.
- Use Form CC-305 to report the number of employees with disabilities in your company, without changing any of the language.

## 3 Steps for Putting Accommodations and Supports Into Place

Some employees need accommodations or other types of supports to do their jobs. Being well supported lets them bring their very best to the job, adding real value to your workforce.

### 1. Develop formal accommodations policies and procedures.

- Put them in writing, distribute them to the entire company, and include them in all recruiting, onboarding, and training materials.
- Assign a contact person who's responsible for accommodations.
- Outline the process that should take place to get accommodations for an employee with disabilities. Be sure it's consistent with ADA requirements.
- Identify a process for getting funding for accommodations. Set up a centralized fund, if possible.
- Create a grievance and appeals process.

### 2. Adopt principles of universal design (UD) to make your workspace accessible to everyone.

- Let leadership know that UD is good for all employees and reduces the need for accommodations for employees with disabilities.
- Design your space and working materials for accessibility and inclusion. Examples include flat panel light switches and large-print labels.
- Adopt UD to support all your employees with disabilities, even if they choose not to disclose.

### 3. Use "natural supports," including other team members, to encourage social inclusion, an important factor in retention.

- Have a mentor or supervisor help new employees learn the informal rules of the workplace.
- Have a co-worker demonstrate how to do a task.
- Make sure colleagues invite new employees to team social events.

## 3 Steps for Managing Performance and Retaining Employees

Less turnover means more money saved. Companies report that people with disabilities have higher retention rates, so supporting their growth and advancement is a smart move.

### 1. Make your feedback and review practices inclusive in order to support all employees.

- Hold employees with disabilities to the same performance standards as all employees and keep the same review process.
- Give clear, immediate, and honest instruction and advice as they're needed – don't wait for formal reviews.
- Schedule regular, informal check-ins.
- Give feedback in alternate ways, such as written and oral.
- Provide any workplace accommodations employees need during the review.

### 2. Take steps to promote advancement.

- Make career development programs like conferences, training, tuition assistance, and rotational assignments accessible and available to employees with disabilities.
- Provide coaching and re-skilling opportunities.
- Set aside some employee training funds to provide accommodations during training.
- Make sure employees with disabilities are represented in supervisory and leadership positions.
- Create employee resource groups (ERGs) or business resource groups (BRGs).

### 3. Adopt workplace flexibility policies and practices.

- Allow job restructuring so employees can perform at maximum capacity.
- Offer modified work schedules.
- Allow employees to work from home or remotely.