

Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Workplace

Accessibility in the workplace is the practice of making information, tasks and activities, and the work environment practical, meaningful, and usable for as many people as possible. It is about identifying and responding to conditions of in-access and providing equitable opportunities, regardless of a person's abilities or circumstances. This is in addition to providing 'reasonable accommodations' for staff and job applicants who are disabled in accordance with the legal [ADA Compliance \(US\)](#) / [ACA Compliance \(Canada\)](#) requirements.

**The [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\) § 36.203\(a\)](#) states that A public accommodation shall afford goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, and accommodations to an individual with a disability in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of the individual.*

Inclusion is the behaviors within team culture that encourages everyone to feel heard and valued for their individual skills and uniqueness. Inclusion fosters a sense of belonging, increased collaboration, and stronger relationship building. Through this guide, we review inclusive practices and considerations to take when proactively addressing accessibility at the virtual and physical workplace. After reviewing the guide, this worksheet can be used to assess your own organization's accessibility and inclusion policies and procedures and identify areas to improve.

General Inclusive and Accessible Practices

Most inclusive considerations are good practices that benefit all, and they are particularly important for people with disabilities. It can also be beneficial for people with different learning styles and people who are not fluent in the primary language being used.

- Include a line item in your budget to cover current and future costs associated with accessibility accommodations.
- Learn how to establish an [inclusive work culture](#) and include accessibility as a part of your overall DEI strategy and commitment to learning.
- Practice [using inclusive language](#) and learn how to respectfully [speak about disability](#).
- Invite staff and board members share pronouns in their email signatures, [Zoom display names](#), and verbally when making new introductions to signal that it is a safe space to self-identify. [Why do pronouns matter?](#)
- Consider having technology like laptops and tablets available for staff to use on loan for physical office spaces. Alternatively, consider providing a stipend to offset the costs of Wi-Fi access and home office supplies. Take care to include interns, all volunteers, Board Members, and anyone involved in long-term projects within the organization.
- For meetings and presentations, share the agenda and any relevant materials that will be used in the meeting ahead of time whenever possible. Start meetings with an overview and end with a review of the most important points and communicate action items verbally and visually.
- Offer flexibility with meeting locations (in-person vs. Virtual), the time of the day, and if remote, consider making some meetings video calls and others phone calls.

- If restrooms are gendered, re-assign at least one bathroom to be gender neutral.
- Be intentional when selecting collaborators, contractors, and vendors to work with. Consider how to diversify and be more inclusive of other demographics and communities in all partnerships.

Inclusion and Accessibility in Hiring and Onboarding

The recruitment and hiring process is often the first touchpoint someone will have with an organization. It is a great opportunity for hiring committees to encourage inclusive behaviors around accessibility, to help prevent disability discrimination, and to improve team culture by treating everyone fairly and with respect.

- Add a standing webform page on your website for external partners who engage with your organization like job candidates, volunteers, board members, constituents, etc. to submit accommodation requests.
- Be prepared to offer accommodations including, but not limited to:
 - o Providing written materials in accessible formats, such as large print, braille, or audiotape.
 - o Providing readers or sign language interpreters.
 - o Ensuring that recruitment, interviews, tests, and other components of the application process are held in accessible locations.
 - o Providing or modifying equipment or devices.
 - o Adjusting or modifying job application policies and procedures.

Physical Workspace

The accessibility of the physical workspace is not only important for inclusion purposes, but also for the safety of all those entering and exiting the facility.

- Ensure the outside and inside of the facility, including parking and entrances, are accessible for individuals with physical limitations. Check the [US National ADA Compliance Checklist](#) or the [Canadian Accessibility Standards](#) in addition to your local state government or province for specific requirements and measurements.
- Make sure tech and hardware is accessible or provide options for those who need something different. Get wheelchair-friendly desks and conference tables, computers that have high-contrast functionality, and label necessary objects with braille for people who are vision impaired.
- There should be appropriate signage on all exits, restrooms, stairwells, elevators, etc. as well as appropriate lighting in all work areas. Re-assign at least one bathroom to be gender neutral if bathrooms are gendered.
- Take care to be considerate of people who have difficulty with movement when making emergency evacuation plans.
- Only use the wheelchair logo if, in fact, your office or venue is wheelchair accessible. The logo only refers to wheelchair access and should not be used as a “generic” message that other accommodations are available. Be intentional with the services provided and the symbols associated with them to ensure clarity.

The Digital Workspace Matters Too

Promoting an inclusive team culture is just as important for remote workers. Digital accessibility helps make online tools accessible to everyone.

- Make sure your organization’s website is accessible.
 - o Be sure that visitors can easily tab through your website without the need for a mouse.
 - o Build website navigation that is consistent and easy to interpret so it will be compatible with screen readers.
 - o Include transcript and captions for all videos and online media.
 - o Provide “alt text” descriptions for photographs and other website images
 - o Make sure there is adequate color contrast for individuals with color blindness using tools like the Chromatic Vision Simulator.
 - o Table structure and information should have text descriptions so that it can be translated into print, braille, speech, and so on.
- When creating digital resources, consult the [Document Accessibility Checklist](#).
 - o Create screen-reader-friendly and [fully accessible PDFs](#) and materials.
 - o Create screen-reader-friendly and [fully accessible websites](#).
 - o Provide “alt text” descriptions for photographs and other website images
- Have all staff members who virtually facilitate meetings review the [Zoom Accessibility Tools](#).
- For remote work, assistive technology can include captioning, transcription, screen readers, wearable devices, subtitles and magnifiers.
- Prioritize wellness and model trust with employees.
 - o Offer staff members the choice to have their camera on or off
 - o Incorporate a variety ways to engage with content
 - o Be mindful of screentime and incorporate breaks and non-digital work tasks where possible.

Additional Resources

- [Zoom Accessibility Tools](#)
- [Video Captioning Resources](#)
- [Document Accessibility Checklists](#) – Detailed toolkits for Microsoft Office Suite, Adobe Acrobat, Charts, and more
- [Cognitive Accessibility Glossary](#)
- [Web Accessibility Tools](#) – Test the accessibility of your website
- [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Terms and Definitions](#) – Downloadable TREC Resource
- [Speaking about Disability Resource](#)
- [Developing an Inclusive Culture](#) – TREC Webinar on the components of organizational culture and identifying the elements of an inclusive culture

Accessibility and Inclusion Checklist

Through this guide, we review inclusive practices and considerations to take when proactively addressing accessibility at the virtual and physical workplace. After reviewing the guide, this worksheet can be used to assess your own organization's accessibility and inclusion policies and procedures and identify a few key areas to improve.

1. Does your organization have a written policy on inclusion of people with disabilities?
2. Does your organization have a financial plan to reasonably accommodate people with disabilities in member programs and activities?
3. Are your offices ADA/ACA compliant, clean, welcoming, and fully accessible to people with disabilities?
4. How often have we reviewed our accessibility and accommodation policies? Do they still support staff who have disabilities?
5. How are we trained as a staff to support people who have disabilities? What ways are we supporting inclusion at work?
6. Are accessible locations (including venues on the ground floor, with ramps or few or steps or working elevators, wide enough doorways, accessible bathrooms) prioritized for office staff, programs and activities?
7. Are accessible transportation options available to the office/program locations to the maximum extent possible?
8. Does your organization provide materials and communications in alternative formats as applicable?
9. Is your website accessible to non-screen reading (blind, low vision, etc.) users? Are all remote workers able to easily access the virtual workspace, project management tools and necessary documents?
10. What other barriers might exist at our organization that make it challenging to apply or work at our office for someone who has a disability?