

## Tip Sheet

As workplaces and individuals adopt more technology, including AI tools, assistive devices and digital platforms, the need to integrate accessibility into every stage of work has never been greater. This year's EARN Conference highlighted how technology can expand inclusion, and where employers must exercise care, intentional planning, and collaboration.

The following tips reflect the lived experiences of employees with disabilities, expert insight from accessibility professionals, and breakout-room discussions among employers, service providers, and community partners.

### 1. Involve People with Disabilities in Technology Decisions

Employees with disabilities should be engaged when selecting, testing, or implementing new tools. Their lived experience ensures solutions are relevant, practical, and reduce—not create—barriers. Provide multiple ways for staff to share feedback and ensure that decisions recognize the diversity of disability experiences.

### 2. Introduce Accessibility Early in Process

Consider accessibility at the start of recruitment, onboarding, workspace design, events, and technology procurement. Present new employees with a range of tools and accommodation options and avoid retrofitting accessibility after systems are already in place.

### 3. Use AI and Digital Tools as Support Mechanisms

AI can summarize content, simplify tasks, create checklists, and support communication. Reinforce that AI is a supporting resource and not a replacement for human oversight. Clear training and guidelines help employees feel more confident, especially when privacy safeguards are communicated transparently.

### 4. Recognize the Individual Nature of Accommodations

Accommodations vary widely from person to person. A tool that enhances one employee's productivity may not work—or may even interfere—with another's needs. Maintain a flexible approach, offering both high-tech and low-tech supports such as

transcription apps, adjustable lighting, screen readers, magnification tools, or ergonomic devices.

#### **5. Ensure Staff Understand Assistive Technologies**

Misunderstandings about assistive devices, such as assuming they are surveillance tools, can create tension or discomfort. Provide training and information to normalize device use and ensure staff understand their purpose, function, and importance.

#### **6. Be Mindful of Interacting Accommodations**

Situations may arise where one accommodation affects another. For example, a screen reader's audio in a shared workspace, or allergies conflicting with service animals. Employers should work collaboratively with all parties to find balanced solutions, which may include hybrid work, quiet spaces, alternative seating, or schedule adjustments.

#### **7. Foster a Culture of Continuous Accessibility**

Accessibility is not a one-time conversation. Encourage ongoing discussions about changing needs, emerging tools, and organizational barriers. Normalize the use of microphones, captioning, and visual descriptions in all meetings and events.

#### **8. Design Emergency Procedures with Accessibility in Mind**

Emergency scenarios, such as fire alarms, evacuation processes, must support individuals with differing needs. Invite employees with disabilities to identify gaps and recommend improvements.

#### **9. Encourage Innovation and Creative Problem-Solving**

New ideas shared at the conference such as visual navigation tools, bias-checking systems, and AR-based supports, illustrate the value of inclusive innovation. Empower employees to share ideas and participate in co-designing new solutions.

#### **10. Demonstrate Leadership Through Advocacy and Allyship**

Support employees with disabilities through visible allyship, both privately and publicly. Champion accommodations, promote inclusive practices, and actively remove barriers within policies and systems.