

PILLAR

Promoting Inclusion through Leadership, Learning, Accommodation and Retention

This tool aims to help organizations build more inclusive practices and ensure that employees living with disabilities have real opportunities to grow in their careers in both the public and private sectors.

It can be used in combination with existing policies and practices or as a starting point in absence of those tools, for both transformative as well as meaningful action. It is grounded in current best practices ensuring alignment with resources such as the *Accessible Canada Act*, the CAN Employment Lifecycle Accessibility Framework as well as the JDAPT.

How to Use This Tool

This tool is designed to be adaptable across various organization types and sizes. For example, smaller organizations may want to focus on a few foundational practices, such as inclusive mentorship or stay interviews, while larger organizations may want to integrate more complex data tracking or leadership practices. Public sector organizations can align their efforts with compliance frameworks such as the *Accessible Canada Act*, while private sector organizations can leverage internal innovation incentives to drive change.

- Start with the self-assessment checklist.
- Select the sections most relevant to your organizational as well as team goals.
- Share with colleagues (including HR professionals) as well as accessibility employee networks for feedback and input.
- Integrate this work into HR planning, leadership programs, as well as accessibility strategies within your organization. Consider including it as part of employee onboarding or as part of the annual planning and performance reviews.

Start: 5 Actions to Take Today

1. Review your accommodation processes to determine if they are proactive as well as inclusive.
2. Schedule a conversation with managers about including disability in leadership planning.
3. Share success stories from leaders who are living with disabilities across your organization.
4. Explore mentorship or sponsorship opportunities focused on accessibility.
5. Use the checklist in this tool to identify one improvement and commit to an action plan (using a reasonable and attainable time for your organization).

Self-Assessment Checklist – Is the Organization Supporting Advancement?

Use this checklist to evaluate existing gaps as well as opportunities within your organization. Start by selecting one or two “No” responses that align with your organization’s strategic goals or known pain points. These can inform your use of the Quick Start section or guide longer-term planning using the detailed recommendations.

| Question | Yes | No | Notes |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| 1. Do we provide transparent and accessible pathways for all employees? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 2. Are accommodations discussed regularly (not just at hiring) and approached using a yes by default approach? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 3. Do we track promotions and development opportunities for employees living with disabilities? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 4. Do we offer mentorship or sponsorship programs specifically designed for employees living with a disability? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 5. Are employees living with disabilities included in the design, participation, and goals of leadership development initiatives? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 6. Do we provide bias and unconscious bias training to all staff, especially management? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 7. Do we offer training on recognizing and avoiding ableist language and behaviours? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

Inclusive Career Pathways

Recommended Actions:

- Map out typical career trajectories and identify where barriers exist.
 - Review promotion policies for bias-prone criteria (e.g., “culture fit”).
 - Ensure performance metrics are inclusive of diverse work styles.
 - Include disability-positive leadership stories in organizational communications.
- ✦ Develop a template/worksheet to help teams visualize and assess advancement pathways within your organization. Employers are encouraged to adapt internal career planning tools using guidance from [CASE](#).
- ✦ Develop policy language to support equitable advancement by consulting legal/EDI teams for customization. Ensure that these policies are reviewed annually and reflect the feedback received from employees with lived experience.

Proactive Accommodations and Disclosure Support

Normalize support as part of the employee journey within your organization.

Recommendations:

- Schedule career development check-ins that include accommodation discussions.
- Train managers on how to offer support without requiring disclosure.
- Integrate the [JDAPT tool](#) to facilitate transparent and safe planning for employee needs.
- Create a workplace culture where accommodations are seen as performance enablers and not as exceptions.

Mentorship, Sponsorship, and Leadership Access

Recommendations:

- Develop formal mentorship and sponsorship matching for employees living with disabilities.
 - Invite mentees to provide feedback on the program’s level of inclusivity as well as accessibility.
 - Include disability awareness and lived experience matching in mentorship/sponsorship matches.
 - Recognize and reward inclusive leadership practices.
 - Provide training for mentors and leaders on the subjects of ableism, unconscious bias, as well as inclusive relationship-building, including guidance on identifying and addressing ableist language, stereotypes, behaviors, and microaggressions in the workplace.
- ✦ Develop existing forms as a base to develop a mentorship/sponsorship planning worksheet.

Data, Feedback, and Accountability

Recommendations:

- Collect voluntary self-ID data with clear privacy safeguards in place.
 - Disaggregate data related to promotion and retention by both disability as well as intersectional categories. Ensure that any reporting or analysis involving disaggregated data is only conducted when samples sizes are large enough to preserve anonymity. In smaller teams or highly specific intersections (e.g., 3SLGBTQ+ employee living with a disability), extra care must be taken to avoid employee identification. Obtain informed consent when appropriate and share results in aggregate formats that cannot be traced to individuals.
 - Embed feedback/input mechanisms via anonymous forms/submissions or employee accessibility networks.
 - Tie completion of inclusion, accommodation, and anti-ableism training to performance evaluation metrics.
 - Regularly review internal communication for ableist assumptions and language.
 - Publish anonymized/disaggregated summary reports to communicate progress on inclusive advancement goals.
 - Establish a review committee/mechanism that includes employees living with disabilities to interpret trends and shape interventions.
- ✦ Develop internal templates based on Key Performance Indicators that are aligned with EDI objectives.
- ✦ Develop a step-by-step guide to maintaining accountability—refer to internal EDI reporting standards or consult with internal EDI practitioners.

Measurement Tools

To assess progress within your organization and to improve over time, you can use the following indicators:

- The percentage of employees living with disabilities in leadership roles compared to overall representation across the organization.
- Trends in promotion as well as retention rates disaggregated by disability status as well as intersectional identities if anonymity and confidentiality can be maintained.
- Results from employee satisfaction surveys focused on inclusion as well as advancement.
- Feedback gathered from accessibility networks and other anonymous channels.
- Measure the number of mentorship/sponsorship pairings, participant satisfaction, and promotion outcomes in cases of sponsorship.

- Track the number and frequency of accommodation requests as well as implementation rates over time.
- Track the uptake of inclusive leadership training and changes in self-reported confidence and inclusive behaviour among management.

Resources

- **Canadian Accessibility Network**
 - Disability Confidence Toolkit – Canadian Association of Rehabilitation Professionals: https://www.can-rca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Disability-Confidence-Resource_FIN-1.docx
 - Language Guide – Canadian Accessibility Network: <https://www.can-rca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/CAN-Language-Guide-FIN.docx>
 - Guide to Understanding and Dismantling Ableism – Canadian Accessibility Network: <https://www.can-rca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Ableism-Guide-ENG.docx>
 - Employment Lifecycle Accessibility Framework: https://www.can-rca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/CAN_Employment-Lifecycle-Accessibility-Framework_EN.docx
- **Employment Accessibility Resource Network (EARN)**
 - Disability Employment in the Workplace: Why It Matters: <https://askearn.org/page/disability-employment-in-the-workplace>
 - Disability@Work: A Framework for Employing People with Disabilities: <https://askearn.org/page/disability-at-work-framework>
- **Other Tools**
 - JDAPT – Job Accommodation and Disclosure Planning Tool: <https://aced.iwh.on.ca/jdapt/organization-en/support-worker>
 - CASE Employer Resource Hub: <https://www.supportedemployment.ca/resources/service-providers/resource-hub/>