WORKPLACE CULTURE

TOOL 3: CREATING INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE POLICIES

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Who is this for

High priority
- Policymakers within an organization
- Senior Executives

Practical Information
- People Leaders

What guidance does it provide?

- How to determine who should be involved in policy review and development
- Understanding what systems and domains should be addressed in an accessibility policy
- How to share and communicate new and revised workplace policies

Take-home points

- When beginning to work on inclusive workplace policies, ensure a senior executive has taken the responsibility to lead the committee. Invite persons with lived experience and expertise to participate. Don't forget to communicate that you are seeking cross-level representation as well, so that all workers feel welcome to contribute.
- When policies are completed, ensure you share, communicate, and incorporate new feedback on revisions and updates

Creating Inclusive Workplace Policies

A business can share its commitment to and aspirations for a barrier-free workplace through the development of inclusive workplace policies.

Pop up: With the Accessible Canada Act, [1] federally regulated entities are required to report their policies and practices to identify, remove, and address barriers for persons with disabilities. The backdrop of other human rights and accessibility-based legislation in Canada should also be considered in the development of inclusive workplace policies. Think about how you can shape policies to inspire your staff to meet and exceed these requirements. To learn more about relevant legislation, visit Legal Briefing

Inviting Everyone to the Table

Workplace policies can have resounding impacts if they are created by a process that embraces inclusion, human rights, and universal design principles. They can serve as an important set of guidelines that indicate you are dedicated to meeting the needs of all employees.

Begin with creating a team or committee that will work on inclusive workplace policies. To ensure that this work remains a priority, ensure that a senior executive is involved or leads the committee. Invite persons with lived experienceand expertise to participate. Don't forget to communicate that you are seeking cross-level representation as well, so that all workers feel welcome to contribute.

Key Roles

Review existing policies to:
- Ensure that policies are consistent with the organization's goals for inclusivity and accessibility
- Identify barriers to accessibility or inclusion among jobseekers or workers with disabilities
- Revise policies to support accessibility and inclusion among jobseekers or workers with disabilities

Develop new policies that support the achievement of such goals
- Consult with persons with disabilities when developing new policies
- Developing an Accessibility Policy

Intersectionality Avatar
Dante

Being a manager, when I let my director know, I had acquired aphasia and how it would affect me in the future, I was scared at first and feared I would lose my director's respect. However, after speaking to my director, she took further steps to ensure that our workspace embraced disabilities and differences, and that I had nothing to fear about in my position in the company.

However, I still get an odd comment or stare from time to time, yet not from my co-workers. There is a strict anti-bullying and harassment policy at work which is regularly enforced through training sessions offered to all employees.
I cannot describe the peace of mind I feel when I get up to go to work every morning, knowing that I am not only accepted for who I am, but also valued and fully supported in every way.

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Accessible Workplace Policy

Develop a policy that shares your commitment to creating an accessible workplace. While many organizations already have a policy for developing an inclusive workplace, they may not have a policy specific to accessibility. While accessibility certainly falls within the umbrella of an inclusive workplace, organizations should recognize accessibility in a separate policy to drive forward the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers for workers with disabilities.

Example of a statement of commitment for an inclusive workplace (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2006) [2]	Example of a statement of commitment for an accessible workplace (Government of Ontario, 2022) [3]
"[Name of Organization] recognizes the diversity of its workforce and is committed to ensuring that all employees are able to effectively and efficiently use their skills and experience to contribute to the organization's performance, production and service delivery. This includes the opportunity to participate, without discrimination, in both work-related and other activities conducted within a work context."	"[Name of Organization] is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities. We are committed to treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration, and we are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. We will do so by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and by meeting our accessibility requirements under Ontario's accessibility laws."

ACCESSIBLE WORKPLACE POLICY

Define what systems or frameworks must be put in place to support accessibility in the workplace. Here are some questions to prompt you – be sure to include this information in your accessibility policy.

- What are the accessibility objectives within the company?
- Does a framework for achieving these goals exist?
- What is the process for identifying, removing, and preventing barriers?
- How does this policy relate to accessibility- and disability-related legislation in Canada?
- How will progress towards accessibility be measured or evaluated in the company?

Address the following domains in your policy. Remember, this list is an excellent starting point but is not exhaustive. To continue building out a comprehensive framework that supports accessibility in the workplace, consider additional areas that are relevant to your local context. Consult with and contract strong subject matter experts with disabilities to provide feedback on your policy development. Here are some topic areas to get you started:

- Accommodation
- Benefit packages
- Communication
- Discrimination
- Emergency procedures
- Crisis management
- Harassment
- Performance management
- Procurement
- Return to work
- Stages in the hiring process (e.g., recruitment, interviewing, selection, onboarding)
- Service provision
- Training and learning
- Work-life balance

Putting Policies into Practice

Once the policy is written, here are the next steps: [4]
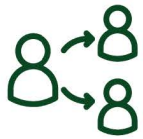
Share:

Once inclusive policies have been prepared, make them available to all employees. Disseminate new or revised policies through a variety of communication channels (e.g., via email, on the intranet, in the office, etc.) and ensure that policies are available in accessible formats.

Communicate:

Consider holding periodic policy briefings to keep your staff up to date about new and revised policies. Ensure that staff know there is the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about each inclusive workplace policy. Provide safe spaces within HR departments where concerns can be voiced. Document suggested changes brought forward and create a plan to action it, if appropriate.

Review & Update:

Commit to and establish a process for annual policy review and evaluation of culture change. Extend an open invitation to all employees to participate in the review.

[1] Accessible Canada Act, SC 2019, c 10. https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/A-0.6/

[2] Canadian Human Rights Commission (2006). A Place for All: A Guide to Creating an Inclusive Workplace. https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/sites/default/files/aplaceforall_1.pdf

[3] Government of Ontario (n.d.). How to create an accessibility plan and policy. Accessibility in Ontario. https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-create-accessibility-plan-and-policy

[4] Government of Ontario (2012). Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act: A Comprehensive Guide for Developing Accessibility Policies and Accessibility Plans. https://dr6j45jk9xcmk.cloudfront.net/documents/4612/accessibility-policies-and-plans-final-2012-12.pdf