

guelph lab

Accessibility, Diversity, and Inclusion

Recommendations to Increase Diversity and Inclusion on the City of Guelph's Accessibility Advisory Committee

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Kaitlyn Hunter

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Acknowledgements

The Guelph Lab and the Live Work Well Research Centre reside on the ancestral and unceded treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We recognize that the lands on which we work and live were home to many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples long before the establishment of the City of Guelph and that their unique and long-standing relationship with the land is continuous and ongoing. To show gratitude and appreciation for this land and the Indigenous cultures and communities of the past, present, and future, we intentionally sought to learn from the knowledge shared by several Indigenous people's organizations. For example, this report reflects knowledge shared in reports from the British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society, the Native Women's Association of Canada, and Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society.

We would like to thank our community partners, Leanne Warren, Accessibility Project Specialist at the City of Guelph, and Sarah Cunneyworth, Accessibility Coordinator at the City of Guelph, for their feedback and advice throughout the development of this report. Thank you for the time you dedicated and the valuable insights you provided.

This report was written by Kaitlyn Hunter, with contributions and support from Leah Levac, Sam Laban, Alex Sawatzky, Jillian Crocker, Leanne Warren, and Sarah Cunneyworth.

Important Notes

- This report is largely informed by publications and resources from community organizations that work with and/or for people with disabilities in Canada and beyond.
- This report takes an intersectional approach to disability. For example, we intentionally tracked identity characteristics that were highlighted throughout our resources because disability interacts with other dimensions of identity to create unique experiences of inclusion and exclusion.
- Intersections of disability and gender, Indigeneity, age, and poverty were apparent throughout the literature that informs this report. Although exploration of the intersections of disability and race and ethnicity, and 2SLGBTQ+ status are undoubtedly valuable to diversity and inclusion research, these intersections were less represented across the literature included in this report.
- In this report, the term 'women' is inclusive and is not attributed with a binary or exclusive understanding of gender identity. 'Women' references all women, including those who are transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming.
- The British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (2017) suggests the creation of committees and working groups that specifically address issues affecting Indigenous persons living with disabilities. We did not include this recommendation here because the focus of this report is on improving the diversity and inclusion of Guelph's pre-existing Accessibility Advisory Committee, which is provincially mandated. How to implement a new committee focused on Indigenous people with disabilities – although important – is beyond the scope of this project.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this research was to identify practical strategies for improving diversity and inclusion on the City of Guelph's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). This project was started and supported by the City of Guelph's Accessibility Project Specialist, Leanne Warren, and the Accessibility Coordinator, Sarah Cunneyworth. As a resource, this report can support recommendations brought to the City of Guelph's Council in hopes of prompting policy changes to improve the engagement, participation, and inclusion of diverse groups within the city's Advisory Committees of Council, specifically the AAC.

Our findings suggest that strategies to improve diversity and inclusion on the AAC fall into four categories: (1) Fostering Inclusive and Culturally Sensitive Environments; (2) Facilitating Diverse and Inclusive Recruitment; (3) Inclusive Onboarding and Membership Supports; and (4) Data Collection. This report proposes 18 practical strategies across these categories in no order of priority. City of Guelph staff and the AAC are best positioned to determine how, and in what order, to advance these strategies.

Fostering Inclusive and Culturally Sensitive Environments means:

1. Offering culturally safer and trauma-informed diversity and equity training;
2. Accommodating preferred languages (cultural or otherwise);
3. Setting guidelines for inclusive and respectful language;
4. Treating people with disabilities with respect;
5. Creating a code of conduct to outline expectations and processes for conflict resolution;
6. Creating gender-diverse and safer policies, such as a childcare and caregiver policy, a maternity and parental leave policy, and a gender-neutral bathroom policy;
7. Recognizing cultural commitments through scheduling, meeting accommodations, and community consultation; and
8. Ensuring all environments (in-person and virtual) are accessible.

Facilitating Diverse and Inclusive Recruitment includes:

9. The recruitment of diverse communities of people with disabilities – specifically Indigenous people, women, youth (15-29), and seniors (65+) – while avoiding tokenism;
10. Offering financial incentives or honorarium to compensate community engagement;
11. The use of diverse mediums and methods when advertising AAC openings; and
12. The involvement of key stakeholders – organizations of people with disabilities and disabled people organizations – in design and recruitment processes.

Inclusive Onboarding and Membership Supports involve:

13. Promising practices for onboarding, such as setting clear expectations, establishing routines, sharing materials in multiple ways, fostering dialogue and exchange, explaining remote culture and expectations, and a buddy system;
14. The need to communicate organizational values and the availability of reasonable accommodations and accessibility supports;
15. Reasonable and individual accommodation planning; and
16. The establishment of feedback and accountability mechanisms.

Data Collection means:

17. The collection and confidential storing of disaggregated identity data; and
18. The regular review of disaggregated data and feedback.

A Guide to Reading This Document

How Findings are Organized

Areas of interest

Four key areas of interest have been identified: (1) Fostering Inclusive and Culturally Sensitive Environments, (2) Facilitating Diverse and Inclusive Recruitment, (3) Inclusive Onboarding and Membership Supports, and (4) Data Collection.

Findings

How may the AAC foster engagement and participation of diverse people with disabilities within the areas highlighted above?

Implementation

What does this look like in practice? How might these suggestions manifest in real life?

GBA+ and Universal Design

Can or does this strategy reflect GBA+ (gender-based analysis plus) and/or universal design?

City of Guelph policies that may be affected

Where might the findings and implementation strategies fit; what policies may be impacted? The findings and implementation strategies may affect pre-existing policies by suggesting amendments and/or additions to specific sections, or they may reinforce already established practices. Below are the policy documents mentioned in this report:

- City of Guelph Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook
- [City of Guelph Advisory Committees of Council: Administration Policy](#)
- [City of Guelph Advisory Committees of Council: Meeting Procedures Policy](#)
- [City of Guelph Advisory Committees of Council: Public Appointment Policy](#)
- [City of Guelph Code of Conduct for Council and Local Boards Policy](#)
- [City of Guelph Corporate Accessibility Policy](#)
- [Government of Ontario: Guide to Serve on a Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee](#)

Supporting Resources

A full reference list can be found on [page 24](#).

The [Appendix](#) provides a breakdown of the resources that support each of the 18 findings and implementation strategies outlined in this document, as well as reading on GBA+ and universal design frameworks.

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Approaches to Consider

Gender-Based Analysis Plus and Universal Design

Adopting gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) and universal design frameworks can help the City of Guelph advance the diversity and inclusion of their AAC. GBA+ is a tool that helps create safer, more inclusive spaces for women and others, by identifying the impacts of policies, programs, services, and other initiatives on diverse groups of people. GBA+ involves critical reflection, engaging community stakeholders, and taking an intersectional approach to policy. Intersectionality is essential to creating safer spaces for people with diverse identities.

This report recognizes the importance of universal design as an approach that can help facilitate the full inclusion of diverse persons with disabilities. There are seven principles of universal design that the AAC can use as a guide to create a universally accessible environment: **equitable use, flexibility in use, simple and intuitive use, perceptible information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and size and space for approach and use**. Universal design, although focused on universally **usable** design, recognizes that **usability** must be considered in practice. Therefore, implementing a universal design approach requires other considerations, such as economic, engineering, cultural, gender, and environmental concerns in design processes that factor into usability for members. The goals of universal design are to: create a space that is accommodating to people of all abilities, ensure that critical information is easily perceived, create and implement clear and intuitive methods of operation, establish a safer environment that ensures dignity and respect for all groups, enable opportunities for personalization, and respect cultural values. The principles of universal design are considered throughout the findings and recommendations laid out in this report.

The strength of using a GBA+ approach is that it can help generate better outcomes for diverse groups, while the strength of applying universal design is that it can help manifest promising design practices. Some of the findings and implementation strategies outlined in this report may inherently reflect GBA+ and/or universal design, while others may not. In the latter case, the use of GBA+ and universal design approaches can help inform how the City of Guelph and/or the AAC may practically manifest the practices outlined in this report. Throughout this report, check marks are used to indicate when a recommendation can or inherently reflects GBA+ and universal design.



Fostering Inclusive and Culturally Sensitive Environments

1. Provide Diversity and Equity Training

“The more training the better” (Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario, 2017). Diversity and equity training should involve cultural humility, be trauma-informed, free from interpersonal and structural violence, and should aim to combat and address multiple and intersecting forms of oppression, such as ableism, ageism, homophobia, sexism, classism, stigmas, and myths surrounding people with disabilities. Training initiatives may also involve raising awareness about disability rights and inclusion, as well as the different forms and intersections of disability, how they manifest, and how they may be accommodated in formal settings. Other training opportunities include those focused on stress management and conflict management. Training related to equity, diversity, and inclusion needs to be a continuous practice to be effective.

Implementation

Implementing a diversity and equity training program requires the creation and facilitation of continuous training initiatives. Training should be intentionally designed and tailored to pre-existing organizational cultures, which requires a review of organizational needs and membership attitudes before the implementation and facilitation of all training initiatives. DAWN Canada (2020) suggests that this be done “in collaboration with women’s disability rights [groups] and youth with disabilities advocacy groups.” Mandatory gender and diversity training can improve peoples’ awareness of GBA+ and help create environments that enhance the participation of women. However, Bejibom (2022) argues that equity, diversity, and inclusion training should only be mandatory for new employees and therefore, it should be incorporated into the first month of onboarding processes. For existing employees, Bejibom (2022) suggests that this training should be voluntary but encouraged. Face-to-face training is preferable over virtual training and needs to be targeted to those in leadership roles.

GBA+: ✓

City of Guelph policies that may be affected:

- Orientation and Training and Roles and Responsibilities (City of Guelph Advisory Committees of Council: Meeting Procedures Policy, sections 7 and 9)
- Employee Development (Training) (City of Guelph Corporate Accessibility Policy, section 4)
- Roles and Responsibilities (City of Guelph’s Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook)

2. Use Preferred Languages

People should be allowed to speak in their native or preferred language. Organizations should be aware, sensitive, and responsive to culture and geography, which includes respecting Indigenous values and languages while remaining open to new ways of learning. Allowing members to choose their preferred language, and accommodating individual preferences and abilities is reflective of **flexibility in use**, one of the seven universal design principles.

Implementation

It is important to ensure that all materials and events are translated into the preferred languages and dialects of audience members. Linguistic accommodations, such as translation for written materials and simultaneous interpretation, should be provided for all meetings and materials. Simultaneous interpretation can occur on- or off-site. The languages of events should be listed on all advertising materials.

Universal Design: ✓

City of Guelph policies that may be affected:

- City of Guelph Corporate Accessibility Policy
- City of Guelph's Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook

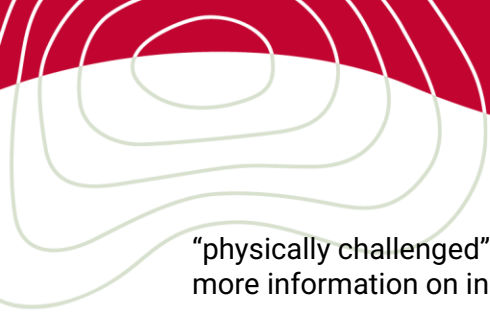
3. Use Inclusive and Respectful Language

It is important to consider how organizations and groups can work to counter stereotypes to foster an open, safer, and more inclusive space for members.

Implementation

Strive to know the gender identity, preferred names, and pronouns of all members and be respectful and inclusive by using these chosen names and pronouns. The continued use of incorrect names and pronouns, sometimes referred to as 'deadnaming', is disrespectful and should not be tolerated; an apology is needed when someone uses an incorrect name and/or pronoun.

It is also important to continuously use respectful, inclusive, and person-centred/person-first language when referring to groups and individuals. Many professionals within the disability community tend to use person-first language (e.g., 'person with a disability'), however, some people prefer identity-first language (e.g., 'disabled person'). Just as you should ask someone their gender pronouns, when working with people with disabilities, it is always best to ask people their preferences. When referencing individuals or groups, avoid terms that paint disability as negative. This includes avoiding language that insinuates people with disabilities are victims (e.g., "wheelchair-bound" or "suffers from"), are "inspirational" or "courageous" simply because they have a disability, or are abnormal (e.g., by referring to people **without** disabilities as "normal" or referring to people **with** disabilities as "special", "differently abled" or



“physically challenged”). The [National Center on Disability and Journalism](#) is a good source for more information on inclusive disability language.

City of Guelph policies that may be affected:

- Committee Meeting Etiquette and Disability Support (City of Guelph’s Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook)

4. Respect People with Disabilities

It is important to treat every person as an individual and with respect, regardless of their disability status.

Implementation

Below are several promising practices when engaging with people with disabilities:

- Speak directly to persons with disabilities, not to their companion and/or interpreter.
- Avoid making decisions for adults with disabilities, telling them what to do, or using ‘baby-talk’. Adults with disabilities should be treated as adults.
- Do not touch or move a person’s mobility equipment without permission.
- Do not correct or speak for a person who has trouble speaking; have patience and wait for them to finish.
- When unsure how to interact with a person with a disability, it is always best to ask; do not assume they need assistance.

Treating people with respect can help avoid stigmatizing people with disabilities, which is consistent with **equitable use**, one of the seven universal design principles.

Universal Design: ✓

City of Guelph policies that may be affected:

- Committee Meeting Etiquette and Disability Support (City of Guelph’s Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook)

5. Set Clear Expectations for Conduct

Set clear expectations and have little tolerance for unprofessional conduct. Members, staff, events, or materials that make people feel unwelcome should not be tolerated. Before any incidents occur, it is important to encourage people to come forward to report any unwelcoming experiences, while assuring them that leadership will address these issues accordingly. Of course, following through on this promise is also extremely important. Designing an AAC that is appealing to all while establishing clear expectations is consistent with universal design.

Implementation

Setting up a code of conduct can help set clear expectations and processes for conflict resolution. It should be explicitly stated that there is no tolerance for discrimination, harassment, or mistreatment, either face-to-face or online. People in positions of leadership must also be prepared to respond to situations of racism. To be consistent with GBA+, the code of conduct must be clear and easy to read, outline a complaint process, and articulate not only what constitutes prohibited conduct, but also the consequences for such conduct; there must also be an opportunity for the code to be reviewed and reformed regularly. It is important to communicate disability-inclusive policies to all members and staff associated with the AAC because interactions with people who are unsupportive and/or uninformed can undo otherwise positive and inclusive efforts.

To establish a diverse and inclusive environment, any dress code within this code of conduct should respect all and various gender identities, financial means, religious and spiritual commitments, and cultural identities. An inclusive dress code will respect 2SLGBTQ+ rights to dress according to their gender identity, and cultural modes of dress. An inclusive dress code will not require highly formal attire, nor restrict religious and spiritual clothing or accessories.

GBA+: ✓

Universal Design: ✓


City of Guelph policies that may be affected:

- Conduct, Complaints Alleging Violation of the Code of Conduct or the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, and Integrity Commissioner Complaint Protocol (City of Guelph Code of Conduct for Council and Local Boards Policy, sections 10, 13, and Appendix 1)
- Review and Amendments (City of Guelph Advisory Committees of Council: Administration Policy, section 5.2)
- Roles and Responsibilities (City of Guelph's Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook)
- Roles and Responsibilities (City of Guelph Advisory Committees of Council: Meeting Procedures Policy, section 9)

6. Establish Gender-Diverse and Safer Policies

To help increase the meaningful participation and representation of gender-diverse people in the AAC, it is important to establish a childcare/family care policy – including a sub-policy for caregivers – and a maternity/parental leave policy. These policies should aim to reduce and not reinforce pre-existing stigmas and barriers to participation for women.

Designating gender-neutral restrooms when engaging in in-person processes is another way to ensure safer, gender-diverse spaces. Restrooms that everyone can use, regardless of gender identity or sexual expression, are a sign of an inclusive environment that is also appreciated by other groups of people. For example, gender-neutral restrooms can be appreciated by “people with disabilities whose helper is of a different gender or for parents caring for children of a



different gender who are still too young to use the washroom themselves” (The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women [CRIA] & DisAbled Women’s Network of Canada [DAWN Canada], 2014). By working in spaces that are inclusive, accessible, and appealing to all, the AAC can avoid segregating and stigmatizing its members or audience, while reflecting **equitable use** and **size and space for approach and use**, two of the seven universal design principles.

Implementation

Examples of effective childcare policies include those from the municipalities of St. Albert and Canmore, Alberta. The St. Albert policy allows Council members to “claim for reasonable out-of-pocket childcare expenses that support attendance at Council and Committee meetings” (Klaassen, 2022c), while Canmore’s policy will reimburse councillors up to \$2000 for reasonable childcare and family expenses. The latter’s inclusion of family care works to reduce barriers for ethnically and culturally diverse women, whose family and caregiving roles may be more likely to include, for instance, extended family caregiving responsibilities. The inclusion of a sub-policy to reimburse the costs of caring for a family member with a disability can similarly reduce barriers to participation for family members of people with disabilities. A good example of a caregiver policy was considered in Sarnia, Ontario. This policy allowed councillors to be reimbursed for expenses relating to childcare and the care provided to a family member with a disability. These policies could serve as a starting point for designing parallel policies for the AAC and other advisory committees of Council.

Examples of effective maternity and parental leave policies at the municipal level include the 2019 Council Maternity and Paternity Leave policy from the District of Squamish, British Columbia, and the 2021 policy of the same name from the District of North Saanich, British Columbia. The former policy offers councillors six months of paid maternity/parental leave if they are pregnant, giving birth, adopting a child, or a co-parent or partner involved in the process. To avoid barriers to participation, the 2019 policy allows councillors to take part in Council affairs at any time during their leave and sets clear guidelines in place to preserve councillor positions and membership. The later 2021 policy offers 4 months of paid leave to natural parents, adoptive parents, and people in permanent relationships with a natural or adoptive parent. Councillors may also take an additional 61 weeks of unpaid leave following the birth/adoption of the child. Again, these policies could be used as a model for designing similar policies for the AAC.

To implement a gender-neutral bathroom policy, the AAC may consider only scheduling in-person AAC meetings in locations that are willing and able to provide gender-neutral and accessible restrooms. The AAC can also advocate for municipal buildings, including City Hall, to include gender-neutral washrooms.

GBA+: ✓

Universal Design: ✓

City of Guelph policies that may be affected:

- Temporary Leaves of Absence and Procedure for Temporary Leaves of Absence (City of Guelph’s Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook)
- Temporary Leaves of Absence and Procedure – Temporary Leaves of Absence (City of Guelph Advisory Committees of Council: Public Appointment Policy, sections 3.4-5)
- City of Guelph Advisory Committees of Council: Meeting Procedures Policy
- City of Guelph Corporate Accessibility Policy

7. Recognize Cultural Commitments

Recognizing the diversity of cultural commitments can support cultural inclusion. Organizations that are designed to respect cultural commitments help meet the needs of diverse people, which is consistent with universal design and GBA+ approaches.

Implementation

Avoid scheduling meetings or other engagements on days or times that conflict with major spiritual holidays or periods of observance. Supplying “interfaith space” within event venues, where members can pray, meditate, or reflect quietly, can help support cultural inclusion. Any meals being provided should reflect the dietary restrictions of religious and spiritual practices. Consulting with “community band office[s], government headquarters, local Métis association[s], Elders’ councils, Friendship Centers, or [various] national organizations” (CRIAW & DAWN Canada, 2014) can help to identify how to respectfully accommodate members from Indigenous communities.

GBA+: ✓

Universal Design: ✓

City of Guelph policies that may be affected:

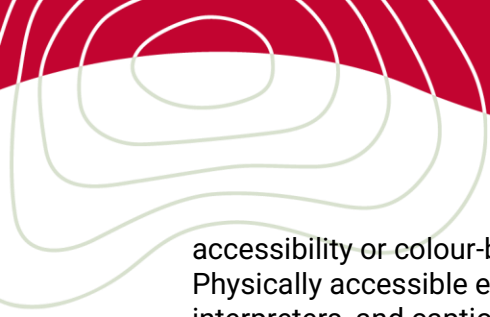
- Meeting Schedule (City of Guelph Advisory Committees of Council: Meeting Procedures Policy, section 1)
- City of Guelph Corporate Accessibility Policy

8. Ensure Accessible Environments

Ensuring accessibility requires all meeting venues to be physically accessible, whether they are in-person or online. Accessibility is a fundamental part of universal design.

Implementation

Ensuring that a venue or platform is accessible may require an accessibility audit – conducted by one or more individuals – to help identify barriers. Do not rely on the venues or platforms’ word that their space is accessible. Always ask a person that may be affected when in doubt about a potential barrier. For online platforms, avoid services without screen-reader



accessibility or colour-blind settings, as well as those that require multiple passwords for use. Physically accessible environments will have room to accommodate personal assistants, interpreters, and captioners, as well as mobility and assistive devices, adjustable speaking areas, ramps, reconfigurable furniture, and accessible restrooms. Sensory accessible spaces will be sent free, well-lit, have an easily viewable screen and/or projector, have multiple microphones, audio assistive technology, rooms for sensory breaks, areas for service animal relief, and accessible emergency evacuation routes. Physically accessible environments can also be made to reflect a more gender-safe environment. For example, considering how well-lit, maintained, and busy the surroundings are, as well as the signage, surveillance, and groups of people in the area, are important when selecting an environment that is safe for diverse members. Social Development Direct (on behalf of ActionAid International) offers a [Safety Walk Checklist and Safety Walk Report Card](#) that can help determine how safe and secure a physical environment is for diverse women and girls.

GBA+: ✓

Universal Design: ✓

City of Guelph policies that may be affected:

- Support Persons, Service Animals, Use of Assistive Devices, Accessible Workplace, Transportation, and Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment (City of Guelph Corporate Accessibility Policy, sections 9-14)
- Disability Support and Committee Meeting Etiquette (City of Guelph’s Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook)
- Conducting Building Audits and Site Visuals (Government of Ontario: Guide to Serve on a Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee, section 5)


Facilitating Diverse and Inclusive Recruitment

9. “Nothing About Us Without Us”

It is important for the Guelph Advisory Committees of Council to actively reflect the diversity of the City of Guelph. Engaging a diverse range of persons with disabilities and representatives from as many different stakeholder groups as possible is important. “People with disabilities have valuable insights and experience to share as it pertains to disability inclusion” (RespectAbility, n.d.). Ensuring diversity involves actively encouraging the meaningful participation of people of different gender identities, races, ages, sexual orientations, cultures, and physical and cognitive abilities. Active outreach to demographics that have been historically left out of municipal decision-making, such as people with disabilities, women, racialized groups, Indigenous communities, newcomers, and the 2SLGBTQ+ community, is consistent with the application of GBA+. Further support for the inclusion of diverse communities is highlighted below:

- Including Indigenous people with disabilities in decision-making committees, such as AACs, is important. “First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women must have control over and be leaders of programming that [is] meant for them and their families” (Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2018). This means that Indigenous persons with disabilities should be at the centre of and direct the development and implementation of policies that affect them.
- There is a need to guarantee women and girls with disabilities a place in decision-making spheres that affect them. This promotes diversity by recognizing that women and girls with disabilities are the “experts of their experiences, identities, bodies and lives” (Women With Disabilities Australia [WWDA], 2022). Women and girls with disabilities need to be included in forums where they have historically not been invited to participate, such as in legislative and political spheres, and civic affairs. Meaningful inclusion of women and girls with disabilities must include **all** women and girls with disabilities, such as across all ages, as well as those who are Indigenous, 2SLGBTQ+, culturally and/or linguistically diverse, migrant or refugees, and/or from rural communities.
- Youth (15-29) and seniors (65+) can benefit from specifically dedicated inclusion policies. Realize (2021) argues that there is a need to enhance the mechanisms for adults and older persons’ participation in decision-making forums, while WWDA (2020) emphasizes the need to engage women with disabilities who are both older and younger.

Truly diverse engagement avoids tokenism. Tokenism is the hiring of diverse populations without challenging the systems that perpetuate inequalities and further the oppression of marginalized groups. There is a need to prioritize genuine, meaningful participation and inclusion opportunities for diverse people with disabilities. Avoiding tokenism can result in a shared sense of ownership in AAC practices, as well as a sense of being valued and respected.



Without tokenism, co-designed environments can make members feel safer and more confident in their contributions. Simply increasing the number of people from historically marginalized groups on the AAC will not make the committee substantially more diverse or inclusive; meaningful diversity and inclusion goes beyond descriptive representation by establishing a space that is reflective and cognisant of diverse voices, needs, and issues. To take a more equitable and inclusive approach, the City of Guelph may first identify and address policies that work to exclude different groups. Implementing membership quotas, as suggested by several organizations, should only be done after establishing an environment that allows diverse groups to thrive and fully engage with the AAC (see the previous section for how to foster inclusive and culturally sensitive environments).

Implementation

The Nepal Disabled Women Association (2019) argues that disability quotas, including quotas specifically for women with disabilities, are a positive measure that can help make all levels of government assemblies more inclusive. To avoid token representation in groups that are diverse by age, CRIAW and DAWN Canada (2014) suggest that organizations should ensure the participation of at least two youths (15-29) and two seniors (65+) so that they can support each other. A ‘nothing about us without us’ approach may therefore require a certain number of AAC members to be a person(s) with disabilities, Indigenous, women (or a representative of a girl living with a disability), gender-diverse, and/or 65+. Importantly, the implementation of membership quotas cannot be enforced alone; they must be supported by equitable and inclusive policies that work to eliminate exclusionary practices. The voice of each committee member should be represented in all committee decisions and actions.

GBA+: ✓

City of Guelph policies that may be affected:


- Voting Members (City of Guelph’s Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook, Terms of Reference section 5)

10. Offer Honorarium

Offering financial incentives can promote the engagement of diverse people with disabilities and marginalized communities. “[F]inancial assistance is one of the best tools for encouraging the participation of populations usually underrepresented” (Mobility International USA, n.d.). By addressing economic barriers to participation, financial incentives may reflect a more universally **usable** design.

Implementation

The British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (2018) supports honorarium or other incentives to encourage diverse people with disabilities to engage in committees and express their specific needs and concerns. The offering of an honorarium can further be connected to Rae’s (2005) notion that “Canadians with disabilities continue to subsist in poverty that may be matched only by our First Nations Peoples.” In fact, people with disabilities, Indigenous populations, women, as well as those that the intersections of these identities,



experience poverty at higher rates than people without disabilities, non-Indigenous populations, and men. In this sense, offering an honorarium to AAC members can work to combat disproportionate poverty levels for people with disabilities (who make up 50% +1 of the AAC), as well as AAC members who are Indigenous and/or women. When creating a policy for honorarium, it will be important to consider the impact of the policy when applied to an individual committee, compared to a universal policy across all Advisory Committees of Council. When creating a policy for honorarium, it will be important to consider the impact of policies that offer honoraria universally (e.g., for all forms of community engagement) versus policies that are implemented on a case-by-case basis (e.g., based on community engagement, the committee members themselves, or the Advisory Committees of Council).

GBA+: ✓

Universal Design: ✓

City of Guelph policies that may be affected:

- Terms of Reference (City of Guelph’s Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook)
- Gifts and Benefits (City of Guelph Code of Conduct for Council and Local Boards Policy, section 5)

11. Use Diverse Advertisements

Advertisements for member applications can go beyond traditional outlets to ensure that a more diverse pool of candidates is reached. These advertisements can promote diversity by including stories from and photos of diverse people with disabilities who have been members of the AAC. Diverse advertisements may reflect **perceptible information**, one of the seven principles of universal design, by establishing different modes of communication that can more effectively reach and communicate information with diverse communities.

Implementation

Posting calls for applicants on social media and using other diverse forms of advertisements, such as websites and brochures, can help communicate information to diverse audiences. Within all advertisements and communications (e.g., websites, social media, and other materials), it is a promising practice to include stories from and photos of people with disabilities before, during, and after AAC membership calls.

Universal Design: ✓

City of Guelph policies that may be affected:

- Vacancy Advertisements (City of Guelph Advisory Committees of Council: Public Appointment Policy, section 1.3)

12. Involve Community Organizations

Recruitment and selection processes should include partners from organizations of people with disabilities and disabled people organizations. Partnering with these organizations can help facilitate participation from diverse and hard-to-reach communities. Collaborating with disabled people organizations, particularly those that work with and for women with disabilities, is a promising practice because they offer pre-existing platforms that work in the interest of persons with disabilities. The Canadian government has a history of overlooking and even purposely bypassing the input from organizations concerned with directly related issues when it comes to advisory bodies and committees. Including key community stakeholders in AAC recruitment and selection processes can work to combat these historical barriers, while simultaneously working to support the sustainability and growth of such organizations, particularly organizations for women and girls with disabilities, which is consistent with a GBA+ approach.

Implementation

Involving community organizations may require mapping out and contacting local, provincial, and national organizations of people with disabilities and disabled people organizations working in Guelph to see if they are interested in being involved in the recruitment and selection process of the AAC. This may also involve contracting organizations of people with disabilities and/or disabled people organizations to work with the AAC. Co-designers (i.e., actively involved stakeholders) should be paid for their time commitment.

GBA+: ✓

City of Guelph policies that may be affected:

- Stakeholders as Nominating Panels (City of Guelph Advisory Committees of Council: Public Appointment Policy, section 2.4)

Inclusive Onboarding and Membership Supports

13. Implement Promising Practices for Onboarding

Promising practices for onboarding include setting clear expectations, establishing routines, sharing materials in multiple ways, and fostering dialogue and exchange. These promising practices can be repurposed for virtual onboarding, but remote onboarding may also involve communicating remote culture and expectations and creating a buddy system. The implementation of these promising practices can reflect a variety of universal design principles, such as **simple and intuitive use**, **flexibility in use**, **perceptible information**, and **low physical effort**.

Implementation


Setting clear expectations means providing instructions that are as exact and quantifiable as possible, as well as breaking down expectations and responsibilities into small and sequential steps and communicating the 'bigger picture' of tasks to AAC members. Setting clear expectations also requires that clear language be used in the communication of AAC materials (e.g., avoid jargon and long words that may work to alienate others).

Establishing routines means providing a consistent structure, providing advance notice of schedule changes, and building strategies to help manage unanticipated changes. Scheduling events at least a week in advance is advised because people with disabilities may need more time to prepare and/or arrange transportation. Liaisons can try to ensure that their meetings run on time and during daylight hours; this supports the participation of people using transit services that only run at specific times and people with disabilities whose accessible transit must be scheduled in advance.

Sharing materials in multiple ways means having all materials available in multiple accessible formats (e.g., accessible word documents and PDFs) to better ensure full and uncompromised engagement. Providing AAC materials in both verbal and written formats can support members as they learn their key responsibilities. Providing multiple communication formats can similarly promote engagement by better-ensuring members can participate in some way.

Fostering dialogue and exchange references the need to avoid 'dumping' large amounts of information all at once by balancing tasks with frequency. Providing AAC members with the time to process information at their own pace (e.g., sending agenda notes and materials ahead of time), and providing frequent breaks and opportunities for rest, reflection, and clarification can support the meaningful engagement of all AAC members.

Explaining the remote culture and expectations of the AAC involves providing clear directions so that members understand how their work is to be done in a remote format. Setting clear expectations for virtual onboarding is important because physical cues and non-verbal



communication does not always translate in a remote format. Providing an agenda or to-do list to better ensure that members are on the same page and informing members about proper communication tactics for remote work (i.e., what types of communication are appropriate and when), are good ways to combat this dilemma.

A buddy system involves establishing a buddy or a mentor that AAC members can contact with questions about how things are done. Although buddy systems can take an online form, they can also range from informal face-to-face support to formal peer gatherings.

Universal Design: ✓

City of Guelph policies that may be affected:

- Alternate Formats (City of Guelph Corporate Accessibility Policy, section 5)
- City of Guelph’s Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook
- City of Guelph Advisory Committees of Council: Meeting Procedures Policy

14. Communicate Values and Available Supports

Conveying the message that the AAC values diversity, welcomes members of all abilities and health statuses, and offers accessibility support, can help foster diversity and inclusion. People with disabilities may be more interested in joining the AAC if the committee’s commitment to inclusive participation is clear. Communicating values and available supports can reflect universal design and GBA+ by establishing a committee that is appealing to all (i.e., **equitable use**) and by communicating the value of intersectional and diverse groups.

Implementation

Communicating values and available supports may involve the release of ‘membership notices’ when advertising for AAC candidates. These notices should make it clear that the AAC encourages and welcomes the participation of people with diverse backgrounds, including people with disabilities. For example, membership notices may include explicit references to those with psychiatric labels and/or who use substances as a way to meet people where they are. Membership notices should also make it clear that reasonable accommodations and accessibility supports, such as assistive technology, will be provided as needed. It is a promising practice to reassure candidates of these supports during the interview, intake, and onboarding processes, and to notify members of any policy changes when they occur.

On top of membership notices, AAC websites and other materials could make it explicit that diversity and inclusion, including disability inclusion, are part of the AAC’s vision, mission, and values. Declarations that “people of all races, ages, abilities, sexual identities, gender orientations, faiths and other backgrounds are welcomed,” (RespectAbility, n.d.) may be intentionally advertised and promoted by AAC leadership.

GBA+: ✓



Universal Design: ✓

City of Guelph policies that may be affected:

- Notices of ACOC Vacancies and Vacancy Advertisements (City of Guelph Advisory Committees of Council: Public Appointment Policy, sections 1.2-3)
- Appointment to Advisory Committee/Board Application Form (City of Guelph's Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook, Appendix B)

15. Offer Reasonable Accommodations to Members

For legal and ethical reasons, it is important to avoid voluntarily and involuntarily screening out otherwise qualified candidates because of their disability and potential limitations. It is most appropriate to only engage in accommodation planning after candidates become members of the AAC. One risks limiting members' ability to engage with AAC processes without the opportunity for reasonable workarounds and flexibility. Personalized accommodations are essential to effective support because they allow people to work comfortably and at their own pace. **Flexibility in use**, one of the seven principles of universal design, is important because having to request help can be perceived as alienating, therefore, reasonable accommodation support should be offered to all AAC members. Offering assistance before it is requested has been identified as a positive practice to support access and engagement.

Implementation

Accommodation planning involves recognizing the need for accommodation, gathering information, assessing individual needs, and writing an individual accommodation plan. It is important for accommodation to "be discreet and respectful" (RespectAbility, n.d.); individual accommodation plans should be kept private. Budgeting for reasonable accommodations is also recommended; 1-3 percent of a program's cost is often adequate. Accounting for the time needed to arrange reasonable accommodations is also necessary; support services, such as linguistic translation or sign-language interpretation, often need to be scheduled days to weeks in advance. Common accommodation supports include sign-language interpretation (one interpreter for meetings less than one hour, and two or more interpreters for meetings longer than an hour), captioning services, and gluten-free, halal, and vegetarian food options.

Universal Design: ✓

City of Guelph policies that may be affected:

- Accessibility Planning and Accessible Customer Service (City of Guelph Corporate Accessibility Policy, sections 1-2)
- Roles and Responsibilities and Disability Support (City of Guelph's Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook)
- Roles and Responsibilities (City of Guelph Advisory Committees of Council: Meeting Procedures Policy, section 9)
- Communication of Appointments (City of Guelph Advisory Committees of Council: Public Appointment Policy, section 2.8)



16. Establish Feedback Mechanisms

Implementing feedback and accountability mechanisms for AAC members can allow for concerns to be highlighted and practices to be improved. Feedback mechanisms can reflect GBA+ by creating a space that can help identify policies and practices that may serve as barriers to participation and/or engagement for diverse groups of people.

Implementation

Establishing feedback mechanisms may involve providing breaks or forums for member feedback throughout and at the end of every AAC meeting, and confidential whistleblowing mechanisms that offer a safer and anonymous space to raise concerns. Feedback forums may ask AAC members about accessibility, friendliness, comfortability working remotely, and suggestions to improve current practices. Feedback mechanisms should be available in a range of verbal and written forums.

GBA+: ✓

City of Guelph policies that may be affected:

- Feedback Processes (City of Guelph Corporate Accessibility Policy, section 7)
- City of Guelph Advisory Committees of Council: Meeting Procedures Policy

Data Collection

17. Collect Disaggregated Data

Collecting disaggregated data about AAC applicants and members can help identify inequalities within the AAC. The collection of disaggregated data is consistent with GBA+.

Implementation

An intake questionnaire/form can help gather information about AAC members. Data recorded during intake processes often include age, gender identity, and disability, but questions about race, ethnicity, caste, Indigenous identity and other ethnic and cultural statuses can dually be important. Questionnaires should aim to be non-intrusive and if personal information is to be shared, members will need assurance that such information will remain private. Disaggregated data should be stored anonymously; privacy, confidentiality and data security should be prioritized, robust and transparent. Data should be collected intentionally and regularly reviewed and should strive to build trust with AAC members.

- The AAC may also want to consider recording data on the AAC membership from the 2SLGBTQ+ community since these identities have been identified as a priority.
- Self-identification should always be free and consensual. Under no circumstances should anyone be forced to share their gender identity or sexual orientation.

GBA+: ✓

City of Guelph policies that may be affected:

- Confidentiality and Appointment to Advisory Committee/Board Application Form (City of Guelph's Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook)

18. Review Data Regularly

Regularly reviewing disaggregated data and feedback from AAC members can help identify problems, learn from past mistakes, and initiate solutions. Monitoring data can help identify unequal treatment due to disability and other diversity factors, which is important for the practical implementation of a GBA+ approach. Data review processes should be used to prioritize the "needs, comfort and empowerment" (Flick & McManus, 2022) of members, and should foster a respectful, nurturing, and supportive environment. Committee operations should always align with human rights principles and standards, such as those laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Considering these principles and standards is important when reviewing any AAC data and feedback.



Implementation

The regular review of data involves scheduling regular reviews of intake data and member feedback. Data review and interpretation processes must all take an intersectional and equality-based lens, which should include ‘validation’ from people with diverse perspectives. Focusing “on the experiences of those in the margins [can] result in the creation of equity-supporting actions that will cast a wide net and support all” (Flick & McManus, 2022) AAC members.

GBA+: ✓

City of Guelph policies that may be affected:

- Roles and Responsibilities (City of Guelph’s Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook)
- Roles and Responsibilities (City of Guelph Advisory Committees of Council: Meeting Procedures Policy, section 9)

Resources

- Al Jubeh K., Dard, B., & Zayed, Y. (2020). *Accessibility GO! A Guide to Action, Delivering on 7 accessibility commitment*. World Blind Union & Christian Blind Movement Global Disability Inclusion. <https://worldblindunion.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Accessibility-GO-A-Guide-to-Action-WBU-CBM-Global-Dec2021.pdf>
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- Best, D. (2019). *What is Universal Design?* Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians. <http://www.blindcanadians.ca/participate/blog/2019/01/what-universal-design>
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- Disability Rights UK. (2014). *Skills for employment for disabled people: a reflective report*. <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/closing-disability-skills-gap>



Disabled Peoples' International. (n.d.). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): Implementation Toolkit*. <http://www.dpi.org/convention-on-the-rights-of/crpd-tool-kit/convention-on-the-rights-of.pdf>

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International Disability Alliance. (2021). *Universal Design for Learning and its Role in Ensuring Access to Inclusive Education for All*. https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/universal_design_for_learning_final_8.09.2021.pdf

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Klaassen, J. (2022b). *Policy Briefing Note: Maternity and Parental Leave Policy for City Councillors in Northwestern British Columbia*. Prepared for the *Elect Her!* Northwest BC Project Team. For further information, contact LLevac@uofguelph.ca.

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Nepal Disabled Women Association. (2019). *Political Participation of Women with Disabilities in Nepal: Barriers and Opportunities*. https://ndwa.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Political-Participation-of-Women-English_Reduced.pdf

Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society. (2017). *Social Enterprise Guide for Northern Canada*. <https://nuability.files.wordpress.com/2017/05/social-enterprise-guide.pdf>

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Appendix: Breakdown of Supporting Resources

Approaches to Consider

Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+)

- Bejibom, A. (2022). Creating Equity, Inclusion, and Safer Spaces in Workplaces: A Review of the Literature.
- Klaassen, J. (2022a). Policy Briefing Note: Workplace Culture of Northwestern British Columbia City Councils.

Universal Design

- Al Jubeh, K., Dard, B., & Zayed, Y. (2020). [Accessibility GO! A Guide to Action. Delivering on 7 accessibility commitment.](#)
- Best, D. (2019). [What is Universal Design?](#)
- Christian Blind Movement [CBM]. (n.d.). [Disability Inclusive Development Toolkit.](#)
- International Disability Alliance. (2021). [Universal Design for Learning and its Role in Ensuring Access to Inclusive Education for All.](#)
- Native Women's Association of Canada [NWAC]. (2018). [Accessibility and Disability for Indigenous Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People Informing the new Federal Accessibility Legislation.](#)

Fostering Inclusive and Culturally Sensitive Environments

1. Provide Diversity and Equity Training

- Al Jubeh, K., Dard, B., & Zayed, Y. (2020). [Accessibility GO! A Guide to Action. Delivering on 7 accessibility commitment.](#)
- Bejibom, A. (2022). Creating Equity, Inclusion, and Safer Spaces in Workplaces: A Review of the Literature.
- Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario [CMHA-Ontario]. (2017). [Workplace Mental Health Promotion: A How-To Guide.](#)
- Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation. (2011). [Evolving the Workplace: Identifying Opportunities to Support People with Episodic Disabilities in Employment.](#)
- Klaassen, J. (2022a). Policy Briefing Note: Workplace Culture of Northwestern British Columbia City Councils.
- Klaassen, J. (2022c). Policy Briefing Note: Childcare Expense Policy for City Councillors in Northwestern British Columbia.
- Nepal Disabled Women Association [NDWA]. (2019). [Political Participation of Women with Disabilities in Nepal: Barriers and Opportunities.](#)
- NWAC. (2018). [Accessibility and Disability for Indigenous Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People Informing the new Federal Accessibility Legislation.](#)

- Realize. (2021). [Principles and Practices: Situating the Preferences And Needs for Aging Care among HIV-positive Elderly people in Ontario within the UN Principles for Older Persons.](#)
- RespectAbility. (n.d.). [How To Include People with Disabilities.](#)
- Women with Disabilities Australia [WWDA] & Queenslanders with Disability Network [QDN]. (2014). ['Women with Disabilities and Employment: the double-glazed glass ceiling!': Queensland Forum with Women with Disabilities.](#)
- WWDA. (2022). [Leadership Statement: First Edition.](#)

2. Use Preferred Languages

- Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society [NDMS]. (2017). [Social Enterprise Guide for Northern Canada.](#)
- The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women [CRIAW] & DisAbled Women's Network of Canada [DAWN Canada]. (2014). [Diversity through Inclusive Practice – A Toolkit for Creating Inclusive Processes, Spaces & Events.](#)
- WWDA. (2020). [The Our Site project Co-designing a website by and for women and girls with disability.](#)

3. Use Inclusive and Respectful Language

- CRIAW & DAWN Canada. (2014). [Diversity through Inclusive Practice – A Toolkit for Creating Inclusive Processes, Spaces & Events.](#)
- NDMS. (2017). [Social Enterprise Guide for Northern Canada.](#)
- RespectAbility. (2018). [The Hollywood Disability Toolkit: The RespectAbility Guide to Inclusion in the Entertainment Industry.](#)
- RespectAbility. (n.d.). [How To Include People with Disabilities.](#)
- [Techniques, Ideas & Positive Supports \(T.I.P.S.\): Practical Strategies for Positive Supports for Mental Health in Recreation.](#) (2013).

4. Respect People with Disabilities

- RespectAbility. (2018). [The Hollywood Disability Toolkit: The RespectAbility Guide to Inclusion in the Entertainment Industry.](#)
- RespectAbility. (n.d.). [How To Include People with Disabilities.](#)

5. Set Clear Expectations for Conduct

- Bejibom, A. (2022). Creating Equity, Inclusion, and Safer Spaces in Workplaces: A Review of the Literature.
- Canadian Hemophilia Society. (2015). [Hemophilia Today.](#)
- CRIAW & DAWN Canada. (2014). [Diversity through Inclusive Practice – A Toolkit for Creating Inclusive Processes, Spaces & Events.](#)
- Klaassen, J. (2022a). Policy Briefing Note: Workplace Culture of Northwestern British Columbia City Councils.
- Mobility International USA. (n.d.). [10 Recruitment Tips to Attract People with Disabilities.](#)
- RespectAbility. (n.d.). [How To Include People with Disabilities.](#)

6. Establish Gender-Diverse and Safer Policies

- CRIAW & DAWN Canada. (2014). [Diversity through Inclusive Practice – A Toolkit for Creating Inclusive Processes, Spaces & Events.](#)
- Klaassen, J. (2022b). Policy Briefing Note: Maternity and Parental Leave Policy for City Councillors in Northwestern British Columbia.
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- Sisters of Frida. (n.d.). [Sisters of Frida’s Accessibility Guide to Meetings and Events – a Toolkit.](#)

7. Recognize Cultural Commitments

- Bejibom, A. (2022). Creating Equity, Inclusion, and Safer Spaces in Workplaces: A Review of the Literature.
- CRIAW & DAWN Canada. (2014). [Diversity through Inclusive Practice – A Toolkit for Creating Inclusive Processes, Spaces & Events.](#)

8. Ensure Accessible Environments

- CBM. (n.d.). [Disability Inclusive Development Toolkit.](#)
- CRIAW & DAWN Canada. (2014). [Diversity through Inclusive Practice – A Toolkit for Creating Inclusive Processes, Spaces & Events.](#)
- RespectAbility. (n.d.). [How To Include People with Disabilities.](#)
- Sisters of Frida. (n.d.). [Sisters of Frida’s Accessibility Guide to Meetings and Events – a Toolkit.](#)
- Snape, D., Horter, S., Smith, H., Kerrigan, S. (2022). [Disabled people’s experiences with activities, goods and services.](#)
- Social Development Direct. (2013). [Making Cities and Urban Spaces Safe for Women and Girls: Safety Audit Participatory Toolkit.](#)
- Women Enabled International [WEI]. (n.d.). [Access: Good Practices – International Meeting Checklist.](#)

Facilitating Diverse and Inclusive Recruitment

9. “Nothing About Us Without Us”

- Al Jubeh K., Dard, B., & Zayed, Y. (2020). [Accessibility GO! A Guide to Action, Delivering on 7 accessibility commitment.](#)
- BCANDS. (2018). [National Indigenous Federal Accessibility Legislation Consultation: March 2017 – March 2018.](#)
- Bejibom, A. (2022). Creating Equity, Inclusion, and Safer Spaces in Workplaces: A Review of the Literature.
- British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society [BCANDS]. (2017). [National Indigenous Federal Accessibility Legislation Consultation: January 2017 – March 2017.](#)
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- NDWA. (2019). [Political Participation of Women with Disabilities in Nepal: Barriers and Opportunities.](#)
- NWAC. (2018). [Accessibility and Disability for Indigenous Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People Informing the new Federal Accessibility Legislation.](#)
- Realize. (2021). [Principles and Practices: Situating the Preferences And Needs for Aging Care among HIV-positive Elderly people in Ontario within the UN Principles for Older Persons.](#)
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- WWDA. (2020). [The Our Site project Co-designing a website by and for women and girls with disability.](#)
- WWDA. (2022). [Leadership Statement: First Edition.](#)

10. Offer Honorarium

- BCANDS. (2018). National Indigenous Federal Accessibility Legislation Consultation: March 2017 – March 2018.
- Bejibom, A. (2022). Creating Equity, Inclusion, and Safer Spaces in Workplaces: A Review of the Literature.
- Mobility International USA. (n.d.). 10 Recruitment Tips to Attract People with Disabilities.
- NDWA. (2019). Political Participation of Women with Disabilities in Nepal: Barriers and Opportunities.
- Rae, J. (2005). Human Rights V. Charity: Achieving The Dream of The December 3 International Day of Disabled Persons.

11. Use Diverse Advertisements

- Al Jubeh, K., Dard, B., & Zayed, Y. (2020). [Accessibility GO! A Guide to Action, Delivering on 7 accessibility commitment.](#)
- Mobility International USA. (n.d.). [10 Recruitment Tips to Attract People with Disabilities.](#)
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12. Involve Community Organizations

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Inclusive Onboarding and Membership Supports

13. Implement Promising Practices for Onboarding

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14. Communicate Values and Available Supports

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15. Offer Reasonable Accommodations to Members

- CMHA-Ontario. (2018). [Mental Health in the Workplace An Accommodation Guide for Managers and Staff.](#)
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16. Establish Feedback Mechanisms

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Data Collection

17. Collect Disaggregated Data

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18. Review Data Regularly

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