



**Arts Access Australia**

## **AAA Advice : Inclusive Employment**

### **1. Benefits of working with people with disability**

- Bring new people with new skills into your organisation.
- Improve your disability awareness, help identify barriers and make your organisation more inclusive and accessible for everyone.
- Show your staff that you care. Developing and demonstrating pro-active policies for employees, volunteers and board members with disability helps get it right for your other staff too.
- Build your reputation and your bottom line. Demonstrate that you are a good employer and are dedicated to making your venue and services accessible to all and you'll attract more people to your organisation.

### **2. Understand the barriers**

There are lots of reasons why someone might not feel comfortable applying for a job with you or working for your organisation. These may include:

- Attitudinal barriers: are your staff team trained and welcoming?
- Fear and misunderstanding: the good news is that statistics show that health issues do not adversely impact the reliability or attendance of people with disability in the workplace. In fact, on average they tend to have fewer sick days.
- Physical access: what adjustments can you make to your space more accessible? What alternative spaces or locations could you use instead?
- Financial: did you know the [Job Access](#) scheme can help cover additional costs of employing a person with disability?
- Communication: if someone can't access your information, they won't be able to apply. Make sure your recruitment is accessible and all information is available in alternative formats.

### 3. Inclusive recruitment

Under the Disability Discrimination Act (1992), you are required to make 'reasonable adjustments' to make your employment opportunities accessible. There are many adjustments that you can make (most of them easily or even for free) to make your employment opportunities more accessible.

Here's some ideas:

- Be pro-active: advertise your opportunities through Arts Access Australia, your State peak arts and disability organisation and other disability channels.
- Make sure your application packs and forms are accessible. Avoid PDF documents, use simple language, and encourage people with disability to apply. Where possible, give people the option to apply in their preferred format. Be understanding that what might be seen as poor grammar may actually be an access issue for someone with dyslexia or for whom Auslan is a first language.
- Use appropriate language: AAA recommends use of the term 'people/person with disability', not 'a disability' or 'disabilities'. Always ask about access requirements, never ask about conditions or impairments.
- Remember that education isn't always fully accessible and that people with disability may take alternative routes into employment. Make sure to consider experience gained from both work and non-work scenarios when looking at skills and abilities for each applicant.
- Think about creating different ways for people to work for your organisation. The more diverse your opportunities, the more diverse the range of people who will be able to apply.
- Be flexible. For example, the ability to swap duties around so that a person who needs to manage the effects of medication can start their duties at a more suitable time can really make a difference.

### 4. Accessible interviews

- Ask all candidates if they have any access requirements. These will be different for everyone. For example, this may include physical access, communication support or interpreters, interview tasks printed on coloured paper, or having someone with them before or during the interview. Don't assume.
- Make sure candidates know what to expect from the interview (tasks, presentations, amount of time, how many people on the panel). Make sure the space you're using is accessible, well lit and not too loud.
- Be friendly, helpful and respectful. Don't push a wheelchair user's chair without their permission. Don't pat or ask to play with assistance dogs (they're working). If guiding someone with a visual impairment, offer an elbow for them to hold, let them know when they are near steps or doorways, and make sure you tell them if you're leaving the room.
- Try not to speak too quickly and use clear language. If you are using a sign language interpreter during an interview, remember to talk directly to the candidate, not the interpreter.

## 5. Disclosing disability

- It's up to individuals whether or not they want to identify as a person with disability or to disclose information about their access requirements. A lot of discrimination still exists in this area, so you can understand why some people are reluctant to disclose.
  - You can encourage people to do so by explaining that it gives you the opportunity to look at ways to support them. It's up to you to create a safe and welcoming space where people with disability feel happy to do so.
  - If supervisors or other staff members need to know about a staff member's access requirements, you should ask them first about how they want other people to be informed. This may include the individual briefing other staff themselves.
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