

Inclusive Employer Handbook: Inclusive Workplace Learner’s Guide

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Overview

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) supports employers in creating workplaces that are diverse and inclusive of employees with disabilities. One way OOD does this is through providing consultations and training on Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), worksite accessibility, reasonable accommodations, and disability inclusion. This learner's guide is a reference companion for the webinar titled "Inclusive Workplace" which is the first in the five-part series "Inclusive Employer Handbook".

The inspiration for this series comes from the criteria used in the Governor's Inclusive Employer Award. Moments after taking the oath of office, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine signed Executive Order 2019-03D, which established Ohio as a Disability Inclusion State and a Model Employer of Individuals with Disabilities. To reinforce his commitment to Ohioans with disabilities, H.B. (House Bill) 110 included presenting an award during October's National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) to employers who meet the criteria for having a workplace inclusive of individuals with disabilities. OOD determined the criteria for the award in alignment with its Inclusive Employer Toolkit: Inclusive Workplace; Recruiting, Hiring, and Supporting Employees; Workplace Accommodations; and Workplace Accessibility.

An inclusive workplace is one where employers recognize the value of diversity and the unique skills and perspectives each employee brings to the organization. By valuing diversity, employers may foster a culture where all employees feel they can "fully represent themselves in the workplace". This means individuals feel comfortable being themselves at work and valued for their contributions. In an inclusive workplace, employees can feel confident that their employer will promptly address bias, discrimination, and harassment effectively if it occurs. Creating an inclusive workplace often goes beyond an employer's responsibilities under Title I of the ADA and results in a workplace where all employees feel they belong and are a part of the culture.

The "Inclusive Employer Handbook" is an educational series focused on supporting employers in creating and sustaining workplace cultures that are diverse, equitable, and inclusive of individuals with disabilities. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 61 million adults in the United States (US) live with a disability, which equals one in four adults. Simply put, disability impacts us all. With these statistics, a person either has a disability themselves, or has a friend, family member, or coworker with a disability.

There are benefits for employers who embrace hiring and supporting individuals with disabilities and fostering disability-inclusive workplace cultures. These can include increased morale, improved productivity, and greater profit margins. This series of webinars can serve as a guide for employers to begin or continue their journey in creating a disability-inclusive workplace. In this first session of the handbook, these topics that promote disability inclusion will be addressed:

- Building the business case,
- Formalized commitment,
- Engagement with external organizations,
- Internal resources to support inclusion, and
- Disability awareness training.

The information included is for educational purposes, is not an exhaustive list, and is not intended as legal advice.

Building the Business Case

Fostering a disability-inclusive culture can send a positive message to prospective candidates, employees, and customers with disabilities that an employer values inclusion in the workplace. According to the Northeast ADA Center’s “The Small Business at Work Toolkit,” individuals want to work for employers who care about the needs of employees with and without disabilities, and most customers prefer to spend their money with businesses that hire and support individuals with disabilities.

Investing in an inclusive workforce gives employers a competitive edge. According to the Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN), employees with disabilities have skillsets as diverse as employees without disabilities and strengthen the workplace by offering a variety of perspectives for problem-solving, innovative thinking, and performing work.

A report released by Accenture in 2018 indicated that employers who implement best practices for hiring and supporting employees with disabilities “consistently outperform their peers, including having, on average, 28 percent higher revenue, double the net income, and 30 percent higher economic profits.” One reason may be attributed to employees with disabilities remaining on the job longer which reduces turnover costs. In addition, studies show employing individuals with disabilities leads to improved productivity, increased morale, and greater diversity in the workplace. The [report](#) was based on a research study conducted by Accenture in partnership with Disability:IN and the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD).

Creating a disability-inclusive culture in the workplace can also positively impact an employer’s customer base. According to EARN, individuals with disabilities make up the “third largest market segment” in the US. When employers embrace disability-inclusive workplace practices they may gain a better awareness of the needs of individuals with disabilities. This awareness may extend to the products and services they offer, helping employers to attract this valuable market segment.

To tap into increased innovation, improved productivity, a better work environment, and increased market share, employers are encouraged to embrace best practices for creating a disability-inclusive workplace. Part of this includes formalizing a commitment to hire individuals with disabilities which is discussed in the next section.

OOD Resource:

For information on the services OOD offers to help employers recruit, hire, and retain this valuable workforce, visit the “**Building the Business Case**” section of the Inclusive Employer Toolkit on the employer’s page of the OOD [website](#).

Formalized Commitment

Employers who are successful in fostering inclusive cultures often have a formalized commitment to disability inclusion in the workplace. This customarily includes a commitment to hiring and supporting

individuals with disabilities. There are many ways this commitment can be made, both internally and externally, to create this culture and achieve workplace goals for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

In its resource titled “Expressing a Commitment to Disability Inclusion”, EARN provides strategies employers can use to express their commitment. Here are some examples:

- Communicate formal statements of commitment to disability-inclusion,
- Include disability in diversity policies and activities,
- Post equal employment opportunity (EEO) statements,
- Post reasonable accommodation (RA) statements,
- Distribute employee newsletters including disability-related topics,
- Include images of individuals with disabilities in marketing materials, and
- Share the business case for employing individuals with disabilities.

Statement of Commitment

When top-level executives formally express a commitment to disability-inclusion in the workplace it can send a message to applicants, employees, and customers that diversity is valued. This commitment often becomes an organization’s vision for disability-inclusion, informing business objectives, hiring goals, and policies. This can also result in the facilitation of inclusive practices in the workplace such as empowering managers and supervisors to incorporate inclusion in their daily operations.

A formal commitment can be in the form of a policy, a strategic plan, or another communication method. Here are examples:

- From the Oracle [website](#): “We’re committed to creating a workplace where all kinds of people can succeed without barriers. We know that in order to tackle the world’s most important problems, our workforce needs to reflect the diversity of the billions of people who use our technology.”
 - Oracle indicates “Our inclusion journey is ongoing” and includes hiring people with disabilities, supporting talent, uplifting each other, and championing equality.
- From the Wells Fargo [website](#): “We value and promote diversity and inclusion in every aspect of our business and at every level of our organization.”
 - Wells Fargo indicates “Meeting the increasingly diverse needs of Wells Fargo’s global customer base is critical for our company’s long-term growth and success. We’re committed to advancing diversity and inclusion by helping ensure that all people across our workforce, our communities, and our supply chain feel valued and respected and have equal access to resources, services, products, and opportunities to succeed.”
 - Wells Fargo indicates “We define diversity as the unique combination of various dimensions that makes each of us different from and similar to others. Those dimensions can include — but are not be limited to — age, gender, ethnic heritage, race, physical or mental abilities, sexual orientation, values, religion/spiritual practice, income, family status, education, and geographic location.”
- From the Disability:IN [website](#) regarding Comcast NBCUniversal’s strategic plan: “Vision: Comcast NBCUniversal is a recognized leader with an inclusive workplace where individuals of all abilities can thrive in support of business innovation. Goal: Attract, hire, engage, retain and

empower people with disabilities across the enterprise to fully enrich their workforce and position Comcast NBCUniversal as the destination for the right talent and the employer of choice for everyone.” Strategies:

- “Build a workforce that fully mirrors the customers and communities we serve and is reflective of current and growing demographics of the disability community,”
- “Cultivate a disability sensitive work environment by building awareness and increasing competency for a more inclusive workplace,” and
- “Empower and engage People with Disabilities by providing equal access to tools, information, support and systems.”

Diversity Policies and Activities

Many employers create diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies and implement DEI-related activities at work. To be inclusive, these should acknowledge disability as part of the employer’s diverse population. According to EARN, this means including terms like “disability” and “people with disabilities” in descriptions of DEI policies. It also means DEI events and activities should include topics related to disability, disability-focused organizations, and people with disabilities. A DEI policy provides an opportunity for an employer to communicate why committing to diversity, including employees with disabilities, is important to the organization. Policies can help support an organization’s DEI goals by including initiatives and ways to achieve goals. They also ensure there is a process in place to address bias, discrimination, and harassment should it occur in the workplace.

Here are some examples of policies and activities:

- According to responses received for the Governor’s Inclusive Employer Award application, one employer reports having a workforce diversity and inclusion policy that is available to employees through the organization’s intranet and is incorporated into new employee orientation through online learning modules. The module which addresses diversity and inclusion includes information on Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act and reasonable accommodations. Another respondent reports having a non-discrimination policy which includes disability that is supported by a DEI department and a steering committee.
- According to the Disability:IN [website](#), “The United Services Automobile Association (USAA) holds three employee speaker series events each year focused on employees to share their personal diversity and inclusion stories, often related to disability. Suggested themes include be yourself, embrace uniqueness, inspire belonging, create healthy challenge, pursue progress over perfection, drive accountability, resiliency, inclusion, and advocacy. Three employees are selected to speak at each event. Employees share their stories in front of live and virtual audiences. Their stories are recorded for replay. Each speaker is then featured on an enterprise-wide news article published on their internal intranet site throughout the year.”
- Also from the Disability:IN [website](#), “TD Bank recognized National Disability Employment Awareness Month to raise awareness about disability employment issues and celebrate the many and varied contributions of workers with disabilities. TD posted weekly videos about colleagues on the AccessAbility Connections and TeamWow! the most frequently used communication mediums by employees. TD also hosted weekly online coffee chats regarding recruitment, accessibility and disability inclusion shared across the enterprise. And throughout the month TD posted Blogs on personal colleague journeys and “Moments of Truth” videos

featuring TD colleagues with disabilities ranging from rheumatoid arthritis to blindness to a Veteran with Parkinson’s disease. The key messages of the blogs and videos focused on how employees self-identified, self-disclosed at work, positive outcomes and the inclusive culture at TD.”

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) has a resource on its [website](#) titled “How to Develop a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative” which describes four phases and associated action steps to help employers create these initiatives. These phases address data collection and analysis, strategies that coincide with business objectives, implementation, and evaluation and monitoring.

EEO Statements

An equal employment opportunity (EEO) statement declares an employer does not discriminate in employment based on protected classes, such as disability, and can send the message that an employer values diversity.

The U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidance states “the law requires an employer to post a notice describing the Federal laws prohibiting job discrimination based on race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, equal pay, disability, or genetic information.” This notice should be included in easy to find locations in the workplace and on internal websites where other notices are customarily posted for applicants and employees. These notices should be accessible for individuals with disabilities which includes placing postings in physically accessible locations and providing notices in accessible formats, such as an audio file, electronic format compatible by a screen reader, and read to individuals with limitations with seeing or reading. The EEOC [website](#) offers additional information about this requirement and the “EEO is the Law” poster that employers can access at no cost.

The SHRM [website](#) offers a detailed resource on what to include in an EEO policy, such as the scope of protected categories covered, who is responsible for disseminating and implementing the policy, what procedures to follow, a description of harassment and prohibitions, and remedies for violations. According to the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) [website](#), EEO statements are advised to be included in job postings, employee handbooks, and workplace policies. Here are examples of statements:

- **From SHRM:** “[Company Name] is an equal opportunity employer. In accordance with anti-discrimination law, it is the purpose of this policy to effectuate these principles and mandates. [Company Name] prohibits discrimination and harassment of any type and affords equal employment opportunities to employees and applicants without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, age, national origin, disability status, genetic information, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law. [Company Name] conforms to the spirit as well as to the letter of all applicable laws and regulations.”
- **From JAN:** “[Employer] is an affirmative action and equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, veteran status, or genetic information.”

RA Statements

Invite individuals with disabilities to communicate accessibility barriers in the hiring process and in the workplace by posting a reasonable accommodation statement in key areas. This statement informs individuals with disabilities of their right to request a reasonable accommodation and how to do so. This is one way employers can communicate to applicants and employees their commitment to being a workplace that is disability-inclusive. This statement is often included in job descriptions, job postings, application forms (both online and in-person), reasonable accommodation policies, employee handbooks, company intranets, and in invitations to interviews, onboarding, meetings, trainings, and conferences.

Combining the reasonable accommodation statement with an EEO statement sends the message to applicants and employees that the employer cares about what individuals with disabilities may need to access the hiring process, perform the job, and enjoy the benefits of employment. This can result in employers attracting more qualified candidates, including candidates with disabilities for their open positions. Here is an example of a combined reasonable accommodation and EEO statement:

- From JAN: “[Employer] is an affirmative action and equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, veteran status, or genetic information. [Employer] is committed to providing access, equal opportunity, and reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities in employment, its services, programs, and activities. To request reasonable accommodation, contact [include name and/or department, telephone, and e-mail address].”

Employee Newsletters and Publications

Employers can reinforce their commitment to a diverse workplace that values individuals with disabilities by including articles related to disability in their employee newsletters and publications. According to an article on the Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology (PEAT) [website](#), employers can use these platforms to educate employees on disability-related issues, like accessibility. Here are some examples:

- “Oracle Corporation, for example, publishes a staff newsletter called, Dimensions of Diversity, which has featured articles on ‘The Challenges of PDF Accessibility,’ ‘Creating Accessible Multimedia,’ and other helpful topics.”
- “Ernst & Young produces a series of ‘AccessAbilities Minutes.’ These 60-second videos share strategies for fostering an inclusive workplace, including the use of accessible technology.”

Images in Marketing Materials

Another way employers can create disability-inclusive workplaces is to include images of individuals with disabilities in advertising and marketing materials. Doing so can demonstrate equality by showing individuals with and without disabilities participating in work-related activities. Disability:IN offers disability-inclusive stock photography available to the public on its [website](#). Here are some examples from the Disability:IN website:



Share the Business Case

The business case for hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities was discussed in the previous section. Communicating these benefits to leadership, supervisors, and stakeholders in an organization can further facilitate creating a workplace culture that is inclusive of individuals with disabilities.

A formalized commitment to disability inclusion is best supported with action. There are ways employers can put their commitment into motion through participation with external organizations focused on disability and through implementing internal resources to support inclusion. These topics are discussed in the next two sections.

OOD Resource:

For information on reasonable accommodation statements view OOD’s on-demand webinar “**Top 10 Accessibility Resolutions**” on the employer’s page of the [website](#).

Engagement with External Organizations

Employers can gain valuable insights on disability inclusion by recognizing the best practices implemented by other businesses and through participation in activities provided by organizations focused on disability. These external resources can inform the efforts employers make to hire and retain individuals with disabilities and create disability-inclusive cultures in the workplace.

There are a variety of ways employers can gain information from external resources. Here are some examples:

- Benchmark disability efforts against peers,
- Participate in events and community activities focused on disability, and
- Partner with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities.

Benchmark Disability Efforts

Webster defines benchmark as “something serving as a standard by which related items may be judged.” Employers who strive to foster disability-inclusive workplaces often benchmark their practices against what other organizations are doing to continually improve their efforts. One way an employer can benchmark against other organizations is through membership and/or participation in professional organizations focused on disability. These organizations often offer opportunities to network with peers and participate in educational sessions on disability-related topics in the workplace. Another way employers can benchmark their efforts is through participation in benchmarking assessments.

Here are examples of professional organizations:

- **Disability:IN**
 - According to the [website](#): “Disability:IN is the leading nonprofit resource for business disability inclusion worldwide. Our network of over 400 corporations expands opportunities for people with disabilities across enterprises. Our central office and 25 Affiliates serve as the collective voice to effect change for people with disabilities in business.”
 - Resources available:
 - Resource library of best practices on a variety of disability-related topics,
 - Information on news, press releases, awards, and media kits,
 - Annual conference and inclusion awards, and
 - Disability Equality Index benchmarking tool.
- **Ohio Diversity Council**
 - According to the [website](#): “The Ohio Diversity Council (OHDC) is committed to fostering a learning environment for organizations to grow and leverage their knowledge of diversity. Through a variety of events and programs, the OHDC serves as the premier resource for diversity best practices and leadership development in the state of Ohio. It is currently comprised of 5 advisory boards: Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo.”
 - Resources available:
 - Strategic consulting for diversity and inclusion topics,
 - Certification program for diversity and inclusion strategies,
 - Diversity toolkit with resources for employee awareness and diversity efforts within an organization, and
 - Workshops on a variety of topics.
- **Ohio Industry Liaison Group**
 - According to the [website](#): “The National Industry Liaison Group (ILG) is the premier employer association on affirmative action and equal employment opportunity in the United States, supporting approximately 200 ILGs. The NILG is proud of the voluntary and unique partnership of public and private sector cooperation, it has been able to foster as an effective approach in dealing with important legal and regulatory issues regarding affirmative action and equal opportunity. No other employer association has a broader base of constituents focused on EEO/AA matters.”
 - Resources available:
 - News, tips, and meetings
 - Networking with members to exchange information
- **Ohio Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) State Council**
 - According to the [website](#): “The Ohio SHRM State Council is a non-profit organization and an affiliate of The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), the world's largest HR Professional society with over 300,000 members in more than 165 countries. For nearly seven decades, the Society has been the leading provider of resources serving the needs of HR professionals and advancing the practice of human resource management.”
 - Resources available:



- Conferences and events,
- Chapters throughout Ohio listed on this [webpage](#),
- Human resource (HR) advocacy center, and
- Newsletter with HR-related topics.

Here are examples of assessments:

- Disability:IN offers a comprehensive benchmarking tool employers can use to “build a roadmap of measurable, tangible actions that they can take to achieve disability inclusion and equality.” This tool is called the **Disability Equality Index (DEI)**. Employers who participate in the DEI and receive a score of 80% or higher are recognized as “Best Places to Work for Disability Inclusion.” According to the [website](#), “for top-scoring companies, the DEI score builds brand recognition among potential and current employees, investors, and customers – including those with disabilities and their friends and families.”
 - Here are the criteria employers are measured on in the DEI:
 - Culture and leadership,
 - Enterprise-wide access,
 - Employment practices,
 - Community engagement,
 - Supplier diversity, and
 - Non-US operations.
- The National Organization on Disability (NOD) offers a no-cost Employment Tracker employers can use to “benchmark your organization’s disability employment policies and practices against the 200+ companies in the pool.” Employers may qualify for the NOD Leading Disability Employer Seal. The Employment Tracker results enable employers to create plans and prioritize practices to further their efforts with inclusion policies and practices.
 - Here are the disability inclusion focus areas in the Employment Tracker:
 - Strategy,
 - Talent outcome metrics,
 - Climate and culture,
 - Talent sourcing,
 - People practices, and
 - Workplace tools and accessibility.

Disability-Focused Events and Activities

Employers may participate in community events and activities focused on disability. These may not have a direct tie to employment or the workplace but can serve to increase an employer’s awareness and understanding of disabilities. For example, employers may choose to participate in their local community’s Special Olympics events or join in an Autism Speaks Walk or attend a conference with a focus on disability. Members of leadership may volunteer to serve on a board or committee for a disability organization in their community. Examples may include a community center for the deaf, a sight center, a center for independent living, or a disability services provider.

According to the Disability:IN [website](#), Bank of America has employees known as Cause Champions who focus on disability-related non-profit organizations and then incorporate activities into the workplace, such as hosting a training session on a particular disability, sharing a personal connection to the non-

profit, inviting subject matter experts to speak on a disability-related topic, or lead volunteer activities related to the disability group.

Employer Partnership with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities

Employers can enhance their efforts to hire and retain individuals with disabilities and create disability-inclusive cultures in the workplace by becoming an Employer Partner with OOD. OOD's Division of Employer and Innovation Services (EIS) has a team of Business Relations Specialists (BRSs) who work to build employer partnerships to support job placement and retention of individuals with disabilities throughout Ohio. The BRS team is dedicated to working with employers to provide services to support their hiring needs and to build an inclusive workplace. These services include candidate sourcing, hiring events, and customized training. To find your local BRS, go to pages 17-18 of this learner's guide for a list with contact information and a service map of counties in Ohio.

Ideas on how employers can utilize internal resources to support disability inclusion are discussed in the next section.

OOD Resource:

For information on becoming an **OOD Employer Partner**, contact the Business Relations Specialist in your region, listed by county on the employer's page of the OOD [website](#).

For more information on how OOD can assist with meeting your workforce needs, visit the "**Candidate Sourcing**" page on the OOD [website](#).

For information on how OOC can assist with providing education and training, visit the "**Disability Education Resources**" page on the OOD [website](#).

Internal Resources to Support Inclusion

As referenced earlier in the Business Case, "individuals want to work for employers that care about the needs of employees with and without disabilities." Inclusive workplaces don't just happen, they require planning and ongoing effort to create and maintain a culture where employees feel comfortable to be themselves, offer their unique contribution, and ask for what they need.

There are many ways employers can dedicate internal resources to build and promote a disability-inclusive culture unique to their workplace. Here are some examples:

- Dedicate a staff position, role, or team to manage disability-inclusion efforts,
- Create an employee resource group focused on disability, and
- Form a diversity committee for or in support of employees with disabilities.

Dedicated Position, Role, or Team

Creating an internal source with responsibility for supporting the needs of employees with disabilities can be a great way to ensure disability is a part of an inclusive workplace. This can be achieved by adding responsibilities to a staff member's position or through creating a dedicated role or team to support disability in the workplace. One example of this is to assign the responsibility of overseeing requests for reasonable accommodations and facilitating the reasonable accommodation process. The Job

Accommodation Network (JAN) offers examples of job descriptions on their [website](#) which detail the duties, skills, and qualifications for the role of an employee responsible for the reasonable accommodation process. These examples could serve as a guide for an employer to determine what duties to assign to a position, role, or team within their organization.

Employee Resource Group

An employee resource group (ERG) is an internal group of employees from various levels of an organization who have a shared interest in the needs of a diverse group in the workplace. An ERG offers the opportunity to network with other employees, address the needs and concerns of this diverse group, find support from those with similar experiences, and effect change related to this diverse group regarding work-related activities and needs.

An ERG should include employees from all levels, including leadership. Representation from all levels enables the ERG to effectively capture the work-related needs of the diversity group. Leadership presence provides the ERG with decision-making ability to support the group's goals. According to EARN, here are examples of best practices when creating and maintaining a successful ERG:

- Ensure a commitment from leadership,
- Create a clear mission and goals, and
- Establish a clear line of communication with leadership.

These practices help to legitimize the efforts of the ERG and ensures decisions are made to improve and benefit the organization.

Here is an example of an outcome from Northwestern Mutual's "disAbility Alliance Employee Resource Group" as shared on the Disability:IN [website](#):

- A "group discussion facilitated by the ERG focused on accessibility accommodations, sharing the story of a deaf employee's experience. In an ERG-led effort to better accommodate [hard of hearing] employees, closed captioning was successfully funded and implemented through the Enterprise Venture Fund, a company innovation campaign that invites employees to submit ideas that challenge the way business is done. The deaf employee described how elated she was to fully participate when closed captioning became available at Town Hall meetings and on AudioVideo HQ, an app that houses company videos and podcasts. This discussion also included a video and handouts on disability etiquette."

Here is an example of how Dell utilizes its ERG, "True Ability" as shared on the Disability:IN [website](#):

- "Dell's True Ability ERG provides support and advocacy for those with disabilities, ensuring all team members can innovate in their own unique ways. True Ability consults with the Dell Benefits team to support employee needs and provide employees assistance in understanding and optimizing available benefits. True Ability also partnered with the Dell Talent Acquisition organization to develop the Dell Autism Hiring Program, which tailors the hiring process for candidates with autism spectrum disorder. Additionally, True Ability provides education training on disability hiring and disability etiquette to Dell recruiters and hiring managers."

Here are resources for employers with best practices for disability-related ERGs in the workplace:

- Disability:IN offers an **ERG/BRG Resources** toolkit on their [website](#) which addresses:
 - Disability inclusion across the entire employment life cycle,
 - Strategies to enable employees to bring their whole selves to work, and
 - Tools and websites with additional information.
- EARN offers an **Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)** resource on their [website](#) which provides:
 - An ERG toolkit via PDF that shares how to create and implement an ERG,
 - A PDF that describes ERGs and how to approach creating a disability-related ERG, and
 - A fact sheet via PDF of how to plan accessible ERG events.

Diversity Committee

Similar to an ERG, some employers create a diversity committee consisting of executives, members of leadership, and employees to implement the goals developed in an organization’s DEI policy and promote diversity in the workplace. The inclusion of leadership in this committee is vital for support in making decisions and taking action. To be successful, the committee should have a mission, a budget, and methods to measure performance. Diversity committees often work to increase awareness through events and education, engage with coworkers on topics related to DEI, and contribute to policies that promote DEI in the workplace. In the absence of a committee, some employers designate these responsibilities to management or hire a DEI professional.

To be inclusive, diversity committees should acknowledge disability as part of the employer’s diverse population and include terms like “disability” and “people with disabilities” in descriptions of the committee’s purpose and activities.

According to responses to the Governor’s Inclusive Employer Award, one employer reports having a DEI steering committee that has a “three-tiered approach” which includes creating a safe work environment, providing education and awareness, and partnering with internal business units to facilitate inclusive practices.

Another important strategy employers can facilitate internally to foster a disability-inclusive culture is to provide disability awareness education for all employees which is discussed in the final section.

OOD Resource:

For information on services available to support your internal efforts, view OOD’s **Worksite Accessibility Services** on the employer’s page of the [website](#).

Disability Awareness Training

Participating in disability awareness training in the workplace can help all employees feel more confident and comfortable when communicating and interacting with individuals with disabilities. This training can help hiring professionals and supervisors to become aware of any personal biases they have towards individuals with disabilities, help them feel more comfortable when conducting an interview or managing employees, and help them to understand that behaviors such as lack of eye contact or a flat affect (lack of emotional expression) can be a characteristic of certain types of disabilities. OOD offers disability awareness and disability etiquette training for employer partners at no-cost.

Disability Awareness

OOD's team of Business Relations Specialists (BRSs) provide a variety of disability awareness training offerings which can be customized to support employers in creating workplace cultures that are diverse and inclusive of individuals with disabilities. Here are examples of topics offered:

- **Disability Awareness** - a training designed for employers to examine personal attitudes and biases toward individuals with disabilities.
- **Invisible Disabilities** – an engaging session focused on the fears, myths and barriers often associated with disabilities that are not apparent, such as traumatic brain injury, mental health disabilities, and intellectual disabilities.
- **Hiring and Onboarding** - an interactive session focused on identifying and removing barriers in the hiring and on-boarding process to make it more accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities.

Disability Etiquette

OOD's BRS team delivers disability etiquette training which defines disability, includes practical examples of respectful interactions with people with disabilities, and addresses proper language usage. This training can be customized as an in-person or virtual presentation, and an on-demand version is available on the employers' page of the OOD website.

Here are examples of what is addressed in this training regarding interacting with people with disabilities:

- **Physical Disabilities:**
 - Don't push someone's wheelchair without asking, and
 - Shake a prosthetic hand as would do with anyone else.
- **Mental Health Disabilities:**
 - Don't patronize, condescend, or make decisions for the person, and
 - Don't make assumptions about what a person wants, likes, or needs.
- **Visual Disabilities:**
 - Immediately identify yourself, and let the person know when you're stepping away, and
 - Never pet a service animal, offer a treat, or call its name without asking.
- **Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities:**
 - Be direct with your questions, and
 - Communicate clearly and concisely.
- **Hearing Disabilities:**
 - Always face the person when talking, and
 - Don't pretend to understand what someone is signing or saying, ask the person to repeat what was said or write it down.

Here are examples of what is addressed in this training regarding proper language:

- When in doubt, use people-first language which focuses on the individual, not the disability,
- Do not say "handicapped", instead say "person with a disability", and
- Avoid words such as retarded, crippled, and wheelchair bound.

OOD Resource:

For information on Disability Etiquette and Disability Awareness training, view OOD’s on-demand webinar “**Disability Etiquette Training**” on the employer’s page of the [website](#).

For information on OOD’s no-cost Disability Etiquette and Disability Awareness training for employers, view OOD’s “**Disability Education Resources**” on the employer’s page of the [website](#).

Conclusion

OOD appreciates your interest in identifying solutions and resources to support a workplace that is diverse and inclusive of employees with disabilities. Each employee with a disability, each employer, and each workplace is unique and because of this, the effective strategy to create a work environment that is accessible and inclusive will be unique. We hope the information shared in this learner’s guide and webinar are helpful in supporting your efforts.

Resources

Overview

- Disability:IN. “[ERG/BRG Resources](#)”
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion. “[Lead the Way: Inclusive Business Culture](#)”
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. “[Inclusive Employer Toolkit](#)”

Building the Business Case

- Accenture. “[Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage](#)”
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “[Disability Impacts All of Us](#)”
- Disability:IN. “[Business Case for Disability Inclusion](#)”
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion. “[Disability Inclusion in the Workplace: Why it Matters](#)”
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion. “[Disability-Inclusive Workplace Culture: Building it to Last](#)”
- Job Accommodation Network. “[The JAN Workplace Accommodation Toolkit – The Basics - Business Case for Disability Inclusion](#)”
- Northeast ADA Center. “[The Small Business at Work Toolkit](#)”
- US Department of Labor. “[Diverse Perspectives: People with Disabilities Fulfilling Your Business Goals](#)”

Formalized Commitment

- Disability:IN. “[Comcast NBCUniversal’s Deep Commitment to Disability Inclusion](#)”
- Disability:IN. “[DEI Best Practices Collection](#)”
- Disability:IN. “[Disability Inclusive Stock Photography](#)”
- Disability:IN. “[TD Bank’s Comprehensive NDEAM Awareness Campaign Showcases Inclusive Culture](#)”

- Disability:IN. "[The United Services Automobile Association Employee Speaker Series Highlights Disability Inclusion](#)"
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion. "[Disability Inclusion in the Workplace: Why it Matters](#)"
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion. "[Expressing a Commitment to Disability Inclusion](#)"
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion. "[Lead the Way: Inclusive Business Culture](#)"
- Job Accommodation Network. "[Making a Statement – About Reasonable Accommodation and Equal Opportunity](#)"
- Oracle. "[Embracing Diverse Abilities](#)"
- Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology. "[Communicating your Commitment to Accessibility: Tips for Employers](#)"
- Society for Human Resource Management. "[Equal Employment Opportunity Policy: Detailed](#)"
- Society for Human Resource Management. "[How to Develop a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative](#)"
- Wells Fargo. "[Diversity and Inclusion](#)"
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. "[Discrimination by Type](#)"

Engagement with External Organizations

- American Foundation for the Blind. "[Inclusion at Work](#)"
- Disability:IN. "[About](#)"
- Disability:IN. "[Bank of America’s Disability Advocacy Network](#)"
- Disability:IN. "[Disability Equality Index](#)"
- National Advisory Board. "[Declaration for Independence](#)"
- National Organization on Disability. "[Disability Inclusion is a Choice – Start Now with the Tracker](#)"
- Ohio Diversity Council. "[Home](#)"
- Ohio Industry Liaison Group. "[Welcome Members and Guests](#)"
- Ohio SHRM State Council. "[Affiliate of The Society for Human Resource Management](#)"
- Ohio SHRM State Council. "[Chapter Finder](#)"
- Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council. "[Centers for Independent Living](#)"
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. "[Business Relations Team](#)"
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. "[Candidate Sourcing](#)"
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. "[Community Centers for the Deaf \(CCD\)](#)"
- Webster Dictionary. "[Benchmark](#)"

Internal Resources to Support Inclusion

- Disability:IN. "[Dell’s Disability-Focused ERG, True Ability, Informs the Organization’s Disability Inclusion Strategies](#)"
- Disability:IN. "[ERG/BRG Resources](#)"
- Disability:IN. "[Innovative Events and Actions from Northwestern Mutual’s disAbility Alliance Employee Resource Group](#)"

- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion. “[Employee Resource Groups \(ERGs\)](#)”
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion. “[Expressing a Commitment to Disability Inclusion](#)”
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion. “[Lead the Way: Inclusive Business Culture](#)”
- Job Accommodation Network. “[Interactive Process](#)”
- Job Accommodation Network. “[Sample and Partner Example Accommodation Policies, Processes, Forms, and Training](#)”
- Society for Human Resource Management. “[How to Develop a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative](#)”

Disability Awareness Best Practices

- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. “[Disability Education Resources](#)”
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. “[Disability Etiquette Training](#)”

OOD's Business Relations Team – see map on final two pages

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 - **Career Development Specialist:** Dustin Schwab
 - **Colleges/Universities served:** Central State University, Miami University, University of Cincinnati, Wilberforce University, and Wright State University
- **Michael Hoag, Business Relations Specialist in Northeast Ohio**
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 - **Counties served:** Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Medina, Portage, and Summit
 - **Career Development Specialist:** Kris Wray
 - **Colleges/Universities served:** Cuyahoga Community College, Kent State University, and The University of Akron
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 - **Counties served:** Athens, Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Gallia, Hocking, Jackson, Lawrence, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Perry, Pickaway, Pike, Ross, Scioto, Vinton, and Washington
 - **Career Development Specialist:** Dustin Schwab
 - **Colleges/Universities served:** Columbus State Community College, Ohio University, and The Ohio State University
- **Ron Klonowski, Business Relations Specialist in East Central Ohio**
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 - **Counties served:** Ashland, Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Crawford, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Jefferson, Knox, Licking, Mahoning, Morrow, Muskingum, Noble, Richland, Stark, Trumbull, Tuscarawas, and Wayne
 - **Career Development Specialist:** Dustin Schwab, Kris Wray
 - **Colleges/Universities served:** Central Ohio Technical College, Stark State College, and Youngstown State University
- **Jill Simpson, Business Relations Specialist in Northwest Ohio**
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 - **Counties served:** Allen, Auglaize, Defiance, Erie, Fulton, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Huron, Lorain, Lucas, Marion, Mercer, Ottawa, Paulding, Putnam, Sandusky, Seneca, Van Wert, Williams, Wood, and Wyandot
 - **Career Development Specialist:** Kris Wray
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BUSINESS RELATIONS SERVICES MAP



