

MUNICIPAL ENGAGEMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Strategies for Communication and Inclusion

Created through a partnership between
Sustainable Jersey and the New Jersey Institute for Disabilities



Contributing members of the partnership include:
DAWN Center for Independent Living (DAWN)
The Progressive Center for Independent Living (PCIL)
Resources for Independent Living (RIL)



**This initiative was funded by an Inclusive Healthy Communities Grant from the
Division of Disability Services, New Jersey Department of Human Services.**

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INTRODUCTION

“Nationally as well as locally, there continues to be a great deal of focus on civil and human rights. Usually, the conversations and policies are centered on issues of race, religion, gender and sexual orientation. Rarely, however, do they include people with disabilities. Even in an age when practically everyone’s rights are being asserted and every group’s priorities are being advanced, there often remains a deafening silence in official circles when it comes to people with disabilities and their families – an inadvertent, albeit consequential reality that often leads to conversations and decisions void of any real consideration of their rights, priorities, challenges and opportunities. That’s true in Washington. That’s true in Trenton. And that’s true in communities throughout our State.”

Paul S. Aronsohn- New Jersey Ombudsman for Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities and their Families, President's Committee on People with Intellectual Disabilities, former Mayor of the Village of Ridgewood, NJ

To achieve a sustainable, inclusive, and healthy community, it is essential to have a functioning democracy and effective government that acts for the common good and is responsive to citizens. This includes how well government provides services, regulates, problem-solves, and performs its other functions. It also includes how we make public decisions and the social norms that enable citizens to organize and exercise power to make necessary changes within the system. All too often, people with disabilities have been left out of the critical conversations that lead to participation in consensus building and decision-making, simply because of a lack of access to both information and municipal leaders, or isolation from the community-at-large.

We envision a New Jersey in which municipal governments effectively and intentionally engage people with disabilities so that they have a seat at the table for the development of important policies and programs related to health and other quality of life issues.

The purpose of this guide is to provide municipal governments with improved strategies for communication and engagement of residents with disabilities within decision-making and community planning efforts.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

While the range and severity of disabilities among New Jersey's population varies, the need for inclusion is universal. Authentic inclusion of people with disabilities into everyday activities involves practices and policies designed to identify and remove obstacles such as physical, communication and attitudinal barriers that impede an individual's capacity for full participation. Inclusion can only be considered effective when it is equitable and offers opportunities that are comparable to persons without disabilities.

The functioning, health, independence, and engagement in society of people with disabilities can vary depending on several factors: social, political and cultural influences and expectations; availability of assistive technology and universal design; community support and engagement. By utilizing concepts such as universal design, physical environments and communications are more functional for as many people as possible. Reasonable accommodations include modifying procedures, systems or the physical environment to enable individuals to have maximum accessible function. By removing stereotypes related to disabilities, such as persons with disabilities lack capacity for contribution, the most significant barriers to full inclusion are eliminated.

Inclusion and appropriate language must become customary practice and a business standard. Nowhere is this more necessitated than at the municipal level of government where decisions are made daily that affect all residents. While public comment and dialogues are generally promoted and sought, the simple truth is that people with disabilities are rarely encouraged or supported to become a part of the process.

The American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) remains one of the most comprehensive civil rights bills in the history of this country. Since its signing, more than three decades have passed and persons with access and functional needs and their advocates continue to work for systems change and equity. By providing inclusion tools and awareness enrichments to municipal governments, the work of the ADA is continued in a real and tangible way in communities across New Jersey.

The signing of the ADA did not mark the end of a long struggle; it marked a beginning.

Community Planning

Community visioning and planning efforts benefit through an open and inclusive process where stakeholders with a diverse set of backgrounds, ideas, experiences, and abilities are involved. This is true for every community as it works to address many social and environmental determinants.

Disability inclusion must move from specialized initiatives (such as a local “disability committee”) to a more general approach; persons with disabilities must be a recognized demographic when considering appointments to municipal boards and commissions. Inclusive language and appropriate office protocols must become customary practice and business standard.

While public comment and dialogues are generally promoted, the simple truth is that people with disabilities are rarely encouraged or supported to become a part of the process. This necessitates a shift in thinking from considering persons with disabilities as “takers” to the realization that they are “givers”, people who contribute to society with dignity and generosity. Inclusion can only be considered effective when it is equitable and just and offers opportunities that are comparable to persons without disabilities.

Accessibility is about assuring that everyone, no exceptions and no exclusions, can partake in what the world has to offer and for most, the world begins in their hometown.

UNDERSTANDING COMMON BARRIERS AND ABLEISM

The experiences of marginalization are a constant reality for people with disabilities. With this truth comes a subtle acceptance of inequitable practices that are, for the most part unrecognized. People with disabilities are continually expected to breach barriers to full participation in their community; barriers that create the handicaps, which diminish their activities.

Attitudinal barriers - The most difficult barrier to overcome is dealing with the attitudes of other people regarding people with disabilities. Whether born from ignorance, fear, misunderstanding or hate, these attitudes and perceptions can become barriers to achievement for people with disabilities. The most pervasive negative attitude is focusing on a person's disability rather than on the person's talent. Consider the stereotypes still commonly encountered. Because a person may have functional needs, some people believe that individual is a "second-class citizen."

Often people feel sorry for the person with a disability, which may lead to patronizing behavior. Conversely, there can be a unwarranted praise for a person with disability who lives independently. Most people with disabilities do not want accolades or to be an inspiration to anyone, they just want to live their lives.

Fear can be the most debilitating barrier. Fear of saying the wrong thing or awkward conversations may lead to avoiding authentic conversations and encounters. Familiarity counters fear and in a truly inclusive community this fear will naturally diminish.

Communication Barriers- Communication is the foundation for an informed and engaged community and persons with disabilities communicate in a variety of ways. There is no value in written information to a person without vision; websites lacking accessibility features have no usefulness to a person who relies on alternate formats. Program notices that are designed solely with graphics can be difficult to understand for a person with cognitive conditions.

Construction Barriers – Construction barriers are thought to be the most common barriers encountered by persons with disabilities. While many changes have been incorporated since the 1990 signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) many impediments remain. An undue reluctance to modify existing structures is a not so subtle message that persons with access needs are not welcome or not expected to visit.

Ableism is a social prejudice against people with disabilities and/or people who are perceived to be disabled. Ableism characterizes people as defined by their disabilities and inferior to persons without disabilities. On this basis, people are assigned or denied certain perceived abilities, skills, or character orientations.

Although ableism and disabilism are both terms which describe disability discrimination, the emphasis for each of these terms is slightly different. Ableism is discrimination in favor of people who are not disabled; disabilism is discrimination against people with disabilities.

There are stereotypes that are either associated with disability in general, or they are associated with specific conditions (as an example, the presumption that all persons with disabilities want to be cured; the presumption that all people who use a wheelchair also have an intellectual disability). These stereotypes serve as a justification for discriminatory practices and reinforce discriminatory attitudes and behaviors toward people who have disabilities. Labeling affects people when it limits their options for action or changes their identity.

In ableist societies, the disabled life is considered less worth living, or the person with a disability is less valuable, even sometimes expendable. Ableism is the belief that people are automatically better people, have better lives or have better brains or bodies because they are not disabled.

JUSTICE AS A LONG-TERM GOAL

Justice, focuses on the systemic barriers that prevent people from reaching their goals, not characteristics of the people themselves. Achieving justice won't be a quick fix but a long-term endeavor that affects every aspect of your work. Specifically, organizations can examine how policies, cultural norms, and hiring and promotion practices support or hinder equitable opportunities.

PRIORITIZING INCLUSION SOLUTIONS

Create a Coalition for Change

Inclusive sustainability is about institutionalizing policies and practices within communities and organizations that benefit all members of a community of all abilities. Therefore, it is important to create a coalition and include as stakeholders people of all abilities, ethnicities and socioeconomic levels, particularly those who may experience firsthand the challenges and barriers to inclusive sustainability and access to services and programs within the community. The local coalition should actively engage in its own aggressive recruitment in order to assure that individuals with disabilities are members of the coalition. Additionally, people within sectors that provide services or have specialized training in inclusive services should be part of the stakeholder group.

When surveying your municipality for levels of inclusiveness, consider all layers of identity and differences. There are generally four levels of inclusion:

Invisible- there is no recognition of a problem; no recognition of the value that inclusion brings to the municipality. Discrimination is present in overt or subtle ways with no attempt to rectify it. There is an entrenched or simplistic sense of who is seen as “normal” or who is seen as “different”.

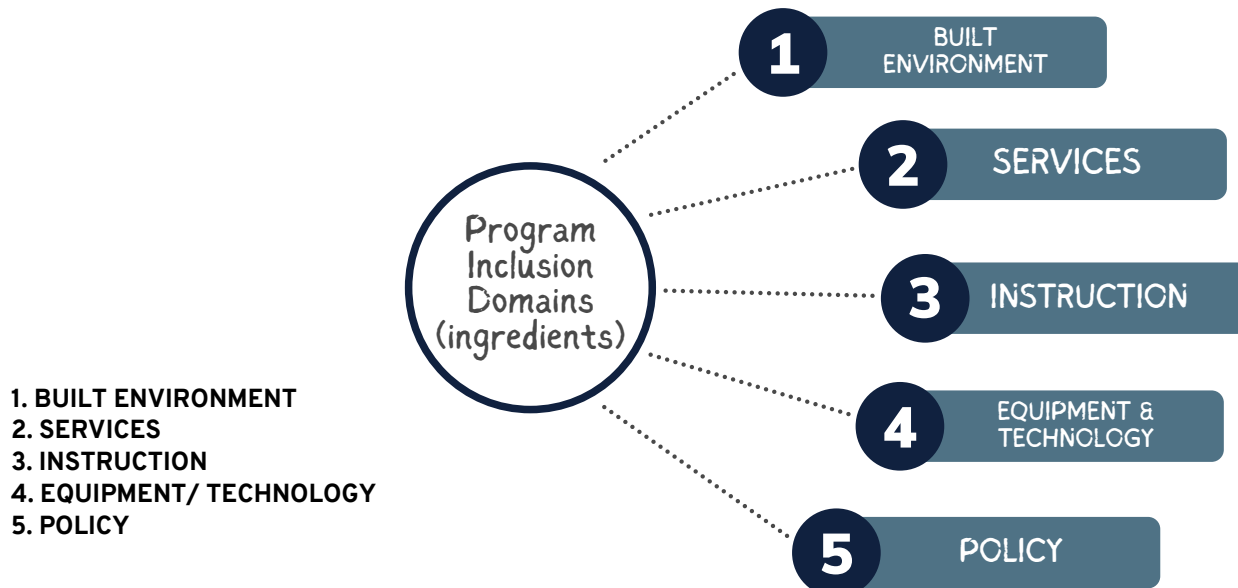
Awareness- there is some effort made to welcome marginalized people based on a belief that all people are equal or an understanding of the harmful effects of exclusion. Discrimination is seen as important to address but actions taken to address it lack adequate resources or do not happen consistently.

Intentional inclusion- The municipality has made an official statement about the importance of inclusion and diversity and the understanding is being advanced. Interventions are planned with the goal of reducing barriers to participation for marginalized populations and incorporating more equitable practices and attitudes into the entire municipality.

Culture of Inclusion- All layers of identity and difference are considered and supported and the systemic processes for maintaining inclusion are fully woven into the municipal organization. The municipality continually takes steps to eliminate inequality; inclusion is a way of life.

CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSION

Municipalities can create a culture of inclusion within internal municipal government operations, as well as through public-facing programs and policies. By ensuring that systemic processes for maintaining inclusion are fully woven into the municipal organization, community members will have full access to the wide range of services provided by the municipality and barriers for participation will be greatly reduced. The following are some examples of how municipal governments can institute a culture of inclusion:



Inclusion Strategies?

Inclusion Strategies increase equitable access and active participation for individuals with disabilities in programs and services within their community

Built Environment

When municipal infrastructure is inclusive and accessible, all people can actively participate in the life of the community. This may take many forms, including, but not limited to:

- Policies and strategies are in place to ensure public facilities and spaces are built beyond the legal code requirements for true accessibility.
- All public spaces and venues and surrounding areas are accessible.
- The municipality acts when it is notified that a public space is not accessible
- The municipality's policies encourage housing developers and builders to meet the standards of universal design

Municipal Services & Programs

The quality and inclusiveness of social service (recreation, public health, public works, libraries, support and assistance programs) can be a key factor in supporting residents to actively participate in the social, cultural and economic life of the community. For example:

- Programs and services are used by a wide range of underrepresented populations as systemic barriers to their participation have been addressed
- Staff training includes disability etiquette as well as adaptation principles;
- Key documents and information are available in multiple formats (eg. large print, plain language);
- The majority of marginalized populations have efficient, affordable and accessible transportation options; and
- Interpreters are readily available

Training

When municipal employees receive training and support about inclusion, they are better enabled to respond to the needs of a diverse public as well as foster an inclusive workplace.

- People participating in public programs represent all demographics in the community;
- The municipality uses different methods (online and in person) to ensure the opinions of diverse communities are heard;
- Municipal communication methods are inclusive of the needs of all residents;
- Appropriate alternative formats are used for all worksheets, handouts, lists and agendas; and,
- Emergency and protective services are inclusive of the diverse needs of the residents.

Equipment & Technology

Municipalities recognize that adaptive equipment and technology are available to increase accessibility for residents and visitors. This includes magnifying and listening devices, remote meetings and televisits as well as participation in municipal meetings through online devices.

This may look like:

- A variety of adaptive equipment is obtained and employees and residents are made aware of its availability
- Appropriate interpreters are available; and,
- Availability of accommodations are publicized with the notification of every meeting

Policy & Practices

Policy and practices that promote equitable access ensures that the municipality is representative of the diversity of the community and that employee diversity is respected and supported. For example:

- Elected officials and administrative leaders of the municipal government are involved and accountable in validating issues of discrimination and demonstrating commitment to building inclusion and equity;
- The membership of municipal committees is representative of the community's diversity;
- Staff is reflective of the diversity of the community across all departments, levels of position and paygrades;
- Accommodation programs are consistently implemented throughout the municipality;
- Municipal communication is meaningful and accessible to all community members; and,
- The municipality works to engage the opinions of all residents, leading to better involvement in municipal decision-making and participation in community life.



Many people who work within the disability community talk about aspirations – about individuals attaining goals, realizing dreams, living fulfilling lives. That is both good and important. In fact, we need to do more of that. All people – regardless of disability status -- deserve to live, learn and work to their fullest potential, and we should always strive for the very best for ourselves and for each other.”

Paul S. Aronsohn- New Jersey Ombudsman for Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities and their Families, President's Committee on Intellectual Disabilities, former Mayor of the Village of Ridgewood, NJ

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

In recent years, the world has seen a tremendous growth in media options and technologies. This growth has led to a related increase in communication formats. Technologies that were once obscure or nonexistent are now commonly used in the daily lives of many individuals, providing them with access to vast amounts of information. Such technologies and platforms include text messages, emails, podcasts, blogs and vlogs, video hosting sites such as YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat and Vimeo and social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

This increase in communication options and technologies now allows individuals, as well as government, businesses, schools and other groups to substantially increase the reach of any messages they choose to disseminate. However, while this increase in communication has been beneficial in relaying important information, it has not effectively reached the entirety of targeted populations.

Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act serve as the legal basis entitling all individuals, regardless of ability level, to clear, understandable and effective communication. There must be strategies in place to help governmental entities create and amend all forms of communication to be inclusive, ensuring that all messaging efforts reach all individuals within a community.

The goal of incorporating elements of inclusion is to ensure that all individuals receive, comprehend and connect with information and that this connection motivates them to take an interest in and engage with local government. A crucial issue to consider is that no single universal approach exists to ensure that communications are inclusive. Providing multiple approaches will help to ensure that all are included and effectively reached within the community.

The best way to ensure a message reaches all intended targets will likely require the utilization of a combination of communication strategies.

Ways to Engage the Community:

Websites

Letters

Email

Social Media

Public Meetings

Suggested Accomodations

Assuring “built in” accessibility

Large Font, Braille, easy to understand language

Audible Format, easy to understand language

Assuring accessibility features

Accessible venue, interpreters, hearing loops
On-line meetings with live transcript
(Zoom, Teams)

General Tips for Effective Interactions

- When talking to a person with a disability, look at and speak directly to that person, rather than their companion.
- Be considerate of people's service animals. Some people who have disabilities may use a service animal. Do not pet or play with the animal as this activity may unsettle the person and may interrupt the animal from doing its assistive duties.
- Avoid assuming the preferences and needs of people with disabilities. People with disabilities are individuals and thus have unique preferences and needs. Therefore, if you have the impression that a person needs help, ask the person if, and then how, you may be of assistance.
- Communicate clearly and comprehensibly. As with all communication, an effective message is one that is spoken and/or written clearly and comprehensibly. This point is extremely important for people with disabilities who may have difficulty receiving or comprehending messages. Be sure to convey your message in an understandable form and in multiple ways if necessary.
- If you do not need to know about the specific nature of someone's disability, do not ask. Your focus should be on what the person is communicating to you.
- In your conversation, relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted common expressions such as "See you later" or "Got to be running along" that seem to relate to the person's disability. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you are unsure of how to assist the person.

Personal Communication Techniques

Communicating with individuals who are blind or have limited vision:

- Using a normal tone of voice, speak to the individual as you approach them and clearly state who you are;
- When giving directive, be descriptive and confirm that your message has been fully understood;
- Tell the individual when you are leaving their presence.

Communicating with people who are deaf or who have hearing loss:

- Gain the individual's attention before starting the conversation;
- Face the individual directly while communicating, even if they use an interpreter;
- Speak in a non-exaggerated manner with a normal tone of voice;
- Stand in a position that allows your face to be illuminated or seen.

Communicating with individuals with a mobility disability:

- If possible, try to put yourself at eye level with the individual (i.e. sit in a chair);
- If communicating while on the move, allow the individual to set the pace. If they are using a wheelchair, do not assume that they want to be pushed;
- If communicating by phone allow them additional time to answer.

Communicating with persons with an intellectual disability

- If possible, communicate in a quiet area free of distractions
- Be prepared and willing to repeat what you say and/or use multiple formats (i.e. orally, notes). Try to use shorter sentences and simple words.
- Be patient and affirm that the individual understands the message
- Offer assistance regarding information (i.e. completing forms, reading instructions)
- Allow the person time to accept your assistance before giving it

When communicating with persons with a speech disability

- Do not pretend to understand the individual if you do not. Ask the person to repeat the information or provide it in an alternate format (such as in writing).
- If possible, try to keep the specific interactions simple, asking questions that require short answers
- Do not speak for the individual and/or attempt to finish their sentences

MAKING MEETINGS & EVENTS ACCESSIBLE

It is an expectation that all public meetings and events hosted by a government entity are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Taking care to create an accessible event benefits not only individuals with visible or known disabilities, but also helps to ensure that all participants, including individuals with non-obvious disabilities and/or chronic health conditions, and people of all ages and body types, are able to fully engage in the program. Below are some strategies to ensure that municipal events and meetings are accessible and inclusive.

1. Requests for Accommodation

To best accommodate a highly diverse community, an accessibility statement should accompany meeting notices. An example:

“We strive to host inclusive, accessible events that enable all individuals, including individuals with disabilities, to fully engage. To request an accommodation or for inquiries about accessibility, please contact (name, email, phone).”

Some of the accommodations requested may include:

- Assistive listening device
- Captioning of presentations or videos shown
- Reserved front row seat
- Large print on hard copies or slide decks
- Advance copy of slides to be projected
- Wheelchair access (i.e. at room entry, to sitting area, to microphone, to working tables throughout room)
- Wireless microphone
- Scent-free room
- Lactation room
- Gender neutral bathroom

Make sure you follow up on all requests received. If it appears you will be unable to meet a specific request, follow up with the individual who made the request to determine whether an alternative arrangement can be made.

2. Check Venue in Advance

Look for these features when inspecting your meeting or event space:

Visibility – Consider those with low vision

Clear signage (identifying location and directions); well-lit meeting space and adjacent areas; projection screen visible from all seating (if using projection).

Acoustics – Consider those with hearing loss

Public address (PA) system; loud enough to hear from all areas of the room; roving microphone; limit unnecessary background music; seating available near presenter for lip reading; availability of assistive listening devices.; well-lit space for an interpreter if needed.

NOTE: Relay Conference Captioning (RCC) facilitates video meetings, webinars, and conference calls. RCC users read live real time captions through a web browser on any internet connected computer or mobile device. RCC is available at no charge for anyone who is deaf or has hearing loss or speech disability and lives or works in New Jersey.

Mobility – Consider those who may be in a wheelchair or have other mobility impairments - Accessible parking near venue; proximity to bus stop; ramp and/or elevator access; accessible bathrooms; barrier-free pathways; wide doorways and aisles to accommodate wheelchairs/scooters; no loose cables across walking areas.

Technology – Consider those who may need to use adaptive devices. Electrical outlets in accessible seating areas to accommodate devices, laptops, etc.; extra space or work surface

NOTE: Zoom provides accessibility options. Please visit the Zoom website for assistance in making this option more accessible.

Service Animals – Consider access and space for service dogs. Comfortable space for service animals to rest during event; accessible toileting and watering facilities nearby.

3. The Event

Ensure that presenters are aware of the commitment to disability inclusion by hosting meetings suitable for people of all abilities. Ask them to prepare and deliver their presentations with accessibility in mind.

Designate an accommodation liaison

At larger events or events with scheduled accommodations, designate someone to be responsible for receiving accommodation requests and carrying out such accommodations such as help with seating, ensuring captioning and other technology is working, maintaining clear pathways, or other needs.

American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters- If an ASL interpreter is needed, be sure to engage them in advance. Ensure there is enough light on the interpreter so that participants can clearly see both the hand movements as well as their lips. The length and content of the meeting should be considered and discussed with the interpreter in advance.

Presentations

Provide presenters with a checklist requesting that they:

- submit materials in advance so that they can be forwarded to individuals who may not be able to view screens or flip charts;
- verbally describe visual materials (e.g., slides, charts, etc.);
- have printed copies available (in larger font);
- avoid using small print on presentations that cannot be seen from a distance;
- ensure speakers (including those asking questions) always use a microphone;
- activate captions on any video used in the presentation;
- encourage hourly breaks; and
- organize breakout group activities to maximize distance between groups (e.g. each group going to a corner of the room or side rooms).

Have someone onsite who helps to ensure follow-through on all of the above.

Q&A

Make sure to repeat questions posted by the audience before responding, especially if there is not a roving microphone available. Presenters or audience members may express confidence that they are loud enough and do not need a microphone. Regardless, ask them to speak into one.

WEB ACCESSIBILITY



Web accessibility is about designing and developing websites, tools, and technologies that all people can use. People with disabilities should be able to perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with and contribute to the web.

Web accessibility applies to all functional and access needs that affect access to the web, including: auditory, cognitive, neurological, physical, speech and visual.

Inaccessible web content means that people with disabilities are denied equal access to information. An inaccessible website can exclude people just as much as steps at an entrance to a public location.

The most relevant sections of the ADA to web accessibility is Title II which requires state and local governments and governmental entities receiving federal funding to provide qualified individuals with disabilities with equal access to their programs, services, or activities.

Strategies to Improve Accessibility on the Municipal Website

1. Add Images with Alt Text

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but visual elements (i.e. images) are an accessibility barrier to people with low or no vision. They often have to rely on assistive technologies such as Screen Readers, software programs that read the text on the screen using a synthesizer or Braille display. However, these technologies cannot read images or the text in the images. Adding Alt Text to describe what is contained in images will help persons needing this accommodation to better understand what is contained on that particular webpage.

2. Allow Users to Enlarge Font Sizes

People with low vision often can't read small text sizes. Offering an alternate style sheet with the ability to enlarge the font size without breaking the page layout makes it make it easier to read content. All call-to-action buttons should have a larger font size and made highly visible with a call out button or box when possible.

3. Consider Color & Contrast

Along with text size, color and contrast must be considered. People with certain common vision impairments have low color contrast sensitivity. When designing webpages, be sure to have a high contrast between the foreground and background and have ample white space on each page. Black text on a white background has the highest readability.

4. Incorporate Keyboard Navigation

For people with low or no vision, navigation can be a challenge. To accommodate this, keyboard navigation can be incorporated into the website. Braille keyboards may also be used to access the site. Be certain that all users can access all interactive elements of the website.

5. Make Video and Multimedia Accessible

Videos and other multimedia elements on your website play a critical role in increasing the user-engagement on your website. There may be people who cannot see the visual, or those who cannot hear the audio, but there are ways to offer accommodations such as video description. Text captions can be provided to synchronize with the video and audio tracks for users who are deaf.

Creating an accessible website accommodates people with access and functional needs. This assures that vital information is properly conveyed and further promotes a respectful community. So always keep accessibility in mind. Practical guidance is available on the newly created website:

Beta.ada.gov/web-guidance - *Guidance to assure websites are accessible to people with disabilities*

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

Nearly 25% of NJ residents
have access or functional needs.

Community engagement efforts benefit through an open and inclusive process where stakeholders with a diverse set of backgrounds, ideas, experiences and abilities are involved. This is true for municipal boards and commissions, community visioning processes, and planning efforts as they are set up to address needs facing those who live and work within the community, as well as the community at large. Involving those who are directly impacted by those issues or representatives from organizations serving such groups is an effective way to meaningfully receive input and ideas that will move the municipality towards long-term solutions.

In focusing on disability inclusion, municipalities must move from specialized initiatives (such as a local “disability committee”) to a more general approach where persons with disabilities are a recognized demographic when considering appointments to municipal boards and commissions.

Efforts to involve individuals living with disabilities with the community should involve organizations serving those individuals, such as Centers for Independent Living (CIL), condition specific agencies (i.e. ARC), County Disability Commissions and similar groups who can share information with their members. Engagement opportunities might include board or committee vacancies, employment opportunities, volunteer positions, public meetings, surveys and focus groups and other possibilities. This intentional commitment to diversity and inclusion creates sustainable, mutually beneficial relationships that strengthen the overall community. It is understood and recognized that the vast diversity of community includes People of Color, gender diversity, ethnic, cultural and faith. So too, individuals with disabilities, that transcends all people, must be a conscious part of authentic inclusion, decision making and planning in every municipality.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sustainable Jersey

Sustainable Jersey is a network and movement of municipalities, schools and school districts working collectively to bring about a sustainable New Jersey. Acting with state agencies, non-profit organizations, foundations, academia and industry, Sustainable Jersey researches best practices for what communities could and should do to contribute to a sustainable future. The program culminates in a prestigious certification award to municipalities and schools that have documented meeting a set of rigorous standards.

www.SustainableJersey.com

New Jersey Institute for Disabilities – NJID

Founded in hope, inspired by compassion, and expanded by design...these distinctive characteristics define the pathways taken by the New Jersey Institute for Disabilities (NJID). With a dedicated staff of more than 500 employees, in 41 program sites throughout the state, NJID offers specialized facilities, programs, and supports for more than 1500 infants, children and adults with developmental and related disabilities. NJID's array of programs include early intervention, education, therapeutic, medical, residential, and vocational programs complimented by leading-edge assistive technology and extensive community engagement.

www.NJID.org

The Centers for Independent Living (CILs)

The CILs are a network of 12 centers servicing tens of thousands of individuals across New Jersey with opportunities for independence for people with disabilities through research, education, and consultation. Three CILs directly participated on this project team, including DAWN Center for Independent Living (DAWN), the Progressive Center for Independent Living (PCIL), and Resources for Independent Living (RIL).

A special word of thanks to the participants in the Inclusion Focus Groups who shared their knowledge, insightful perspectives and experiences. Their opinions and perceptions formed the basis for this document and theirs were the most important voices to be heard and considered.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accessibility - when the needs of people with disabilities are specifically considered, and products, services, and facilities are built or modified so that they can be used by people of all abilities.

Accommodation- The process of making alterations to the delivery of services so that those services become accessible to more people, including persons with disabilities.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990: Modeled after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin – and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 -- the ADA is an "equal opportunity" law for people with disabilities. ADA states that someone is disabled if he or she “a) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; b) has a record of such an impairment; or c) is regarded as having such an impairment.”

Bias- A tendency to be for or against an individual or group without a justified reason. A bias limits a person or group’s ability to look at a situation objectively, and shapes how they act in the situation, often unfairly.

Disability -Refers to physical, mental, or emotional conditions that limit and/or shape an individual’s participation in work and society. Disabilities may involve mobility, agility, visual, speech, hearing, learning, and intellectual characteristics.

Discrimination- An action or decision that treats a person or group badly for reasons such as disability or genetic characteristics.

Individual Discrimination- When an individual discriminates against others for being members of a particular social group

Institutional Discrimination- When organizations or institutions (e.g. schools, municipalities, corporations) have policies, procedures or informal practices that give one social group (usually a mainstream group) advantages over another (usually a marginalized group).

Systemic Discrimination- Occurs when a whole society or culture has widespread beliefs, practices and systems that advantage one social group over another.

Diversity- Any dimension that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another.

Equality- Each individual is given the same resources and opportunities, regardless of differences in their social group or situation.

Equity- Recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

Inclusion- The act of creating environments in which any individual or group feels welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming community embraces human differences, sees them as strengths, and offers respect in both words and actions for all people.

Marginalized- People who are excluded, ignored, or relegated to the outer edge of a group/society/community.

Underrepresented- When a certain group of people have disproportionately less persons in an organization, field of work, or political system, compared to their proportion of the average population. Often, underrepresentation is not a coincidence, but a result of systemic discrimination.

Types of disabilities and examples

- Mobility: Spinal Cord Injuries, Disease, Paralysis, Amputation
- Psychiatric: Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, Post Traumatic Stress
- Auditory: Deaf, Hearing Impaired
- Cognitive/Developmental/Intellectual: Autism Spectrum, Learning Disabilities
- Speech: Speech Impediment, Vocal Paralysis
- Environmental: Allergies, Chemical Sensitivities
- Medical: Cancer, AIDS, Epilepsy, Asthma, Diabetes, Myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), Cystic Fibrosis, Severe Arthritis

FEDERAL LAWS RELATED TO DISABILITY RIGHTS

[Americans with Disabilities Act](#)

[Telecommunications Act](#)

[Fair Housing Act](#)

[Air Carrier Access Act](#)

[Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act](#)

[National Voter Registration Act](#)

[Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act](#)

[Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#)

[Rehabilitation Act](#)

[Architectural Barriers Act](#)

[General Sources of Disability Rights Information](#)

RESOURCES

[Beta.ada.gov/web-guidance](https://beta.ada.gov/web-guidance)

Guidance to assure websites are accessible to people with disabilities

<https://dhds.cdc.gov>

Health Disparity Data and people with disabilities

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/impacts/new-jersey.html>

New Jersey State Profile of adults with disabilities

<http://committoinclusion.org/9-guidelines-for-disability-inclusion>

Policy and Program Inclusion; 9 guidelines for inclusion

https://projects.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud/about_ud/udprinciplestext.htm

Accessibility and universal design

<https://www.nchpad.org>

NCHPAD - Building Healthy Inclusive Communities

A center focused on promoting 1) inclusive policies, systems and environments that support the needs of people with disabilities;

<https://www.northeastada.org/>

Northeast ADA Center

<https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dds/staff/>

New Jersey Department of Disability Services

<https://www.rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter>

The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities

The Boggs Center, as New Jersey's federally designated University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) and New Jersey's Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) program

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

American Community Survey (ACS) - Census.gov

Dec 15, 2021 · The American Community Survey (ACS) helps local officials, community leaders, and businesses understand the changes taking place in their communities. It is the premier source for detailed population and housing information about our nation.

<https://www.section508.gov>

Home | Section508.gov

Information about the Section508.gov website, GSA's Government-wide IT Accessibility Team, and guidance to Federal agencies on accessible information and communication technology

<https://njrelay.com>

New Jersey Relay & CapTel – Accessible Telecommunications

New Jersey Relay & CapTel are no-cost services to enable people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind or have a Speech Disability to make and receive phone calls.

https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dhcr/rec/pdf/barrierfree_prior.pdf

NJ Barrier Free Subcode

““ *One of the best kept secrets in New Jersey is the work done by the regionally-based Centers for Independent Living (CIL). Serving in a variety of capacities -- providing resources, services and advocacy – the CILs often play a critical role in the lives of thousands of New Jerseyans with disabilities*

Paul S. Aronsohn- New Jersey Ombudsman for Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities and their Families, President's Committee on Intellectual Disabilities, former Mayor of the Village of Ridgewood, NJ

**STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL (SILC)
C/O PROGRESSIVE CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (PCIL)**
3635 Quakerbridge Road -Suite 40
Hamilton, NJ 08619
Telephone: (609) 581-4500 (877) 917-4500
TDD: (609) 581-4550
www.njsilc.org

**ALLIANCE FOR DISABLED IN ACTION (ADA)
(Middlesex, Somerset, Union Counties)**
629 Amboy Avenue, Edison, NJ 08837
Telephone: (732) 738-4388
TDD: (732) 738-9644
www.adacil.org

**CAMDEN CITY INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER, Inc.
(City of Camden)**
Virtua Camden
1000 Atlantic Avenues -Suite 105
Camden, NJ 08104
Telephone: (856) 966-0800
TDD: (856) 966-0830
<http://www.camdencilc.org>

**CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING OF SOUTH JERSEY, INC. (CIL-SJ)
(Camden and Gloucester Counties)**
1150 Delsea Drive, Suite 1
Westville, NJ 08093
Telephone: (856) 853-6490
TDD: 856-853-7108
<https://www.cil-sj.com/>

**DIAL, INC.
(Essex and Passaic Counties)**
2 Prospect Village Plaza, First Floor
Clifton , NJ 07013
Telephone: (973) 470-8090 (866) 277-1733
TDD: (973) 470-2521
www.dial-cil.org

**DAWN CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING, INC.
(Morris, Sussex and Warren Counties)**
66 Ford Road, Suite 121
Denville, NJ 07834
Telephone: (973) 625-1940 (888) 383-DAWN
TDD: (973) 625-1932
www.dawncil.org

(Branch office)
34 White Lake Road, Unit A, Sparta, NJ 07871
Telephone: (973) 625-1940 (888) 383-DAWN
TDD: (973) 625-1932
www.dawncil.org

**HEIGHTENED INDEPENDENCE and PROGRESS - HIP BERGEN
(Bergen County)**
131 Main Street, Suite 120
Hackensack, NJ 07601
Telephone: (201) 996-9100
TDD: (201) 996-9424
www.hipcil.org

HEIGHTENED INDEPENDENCE and PROGRESS- hip HUDSON

(Hudson County)

35 Journal Square, Suite 912
Jersey City, NJ 07306
Telephone: (201) 533-4407
TDD: (201) 533-4409
www.hipcil.org

MOCEANS CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

Monmouth County

565 Broadway
Long Branch, NJ 07740
Telephone: (732) 571-4884
(833)-MOCEANS (833) 662-3267
www.moceanscil.org

Ocean County

1027 Hooper Avenue, Bldg 6, Flr 3
Toms River, NJ 08753
Phone: (732) 505-2310
www.moceanscil.org

PROGRESSIVE CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (PCIL)

(Mercer & Hunterdon Counties)

3635 Quakerbridge Road –
Suite 40
Hamilton, NJ 08619
Telephone: (609) 581-4500 (877) 917-4500
TDD: (609) 581-4550

Hunterdon County Branch:

1220 Route 31 - Suite 14
Lebanon, NJ 08833
Telephone:(908) 782-1055 (877) 376-9174
TDD: (908) 782-1081
www.pcil.org

RESOURCES FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (RIL)

(Burlington County)

351 High Street, Suite 103
Burlington, NJ 08016
Telephone: (609) 747-7745
TDD: (609) 747-1875
www.rilnj.org/burlington-office/

(Cumberland County/Cape May County)

614 E. Landis Avenue
1st Floor
Vineland, NJ 08360
Telephone: (856) 825-0255
www.rilnj.org/vineland-office/

(Salem County)

193 North Broadway
Pennsville, NJ 08070
Telephone: (856) 678-9400
www.rilnj.org/salem-office/

ATLANTIC CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING, INC.

(Atlantic County)

160 South Pitney Road, Units 3 & 4
Galloway Township, NJ 08205
Telephone: (609) 748-2253
<https://www.atlanticcil.org/index.html>

PRIORITIZING INCLUSION STRATEGIES

Equity <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	Effective <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	Costs <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	Acceptability <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure
Uncertainty <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	Timing <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	Sustainability <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	Other <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure

DEFINITIONS

Equity: Is the solution:

Selective, does it reach the target group? Evenly distributed, does it affect a few people a great deal or a lot of people only slightly?

Effectiveness: Will the solution:

Achieve the desired results? Also achieve other benefits? Increase capacity to respond to future problems?

Cost: How expensive will it be, will it save resources overall (in the long-term)?; is it affordable?; are the required human skills and resources available?

Acceptability: Is the solution politically and socially acceptable? Is it what stakeholders identified as important?

Timing: How soon will the benefits be realized? Can spending funds be delayed if needed?

Uncertainty: To what extent are the benefits "guaranteed"

Sustainability: Of action, and the capacity/infrastructure required

Other: Any other considerations for prioritization (e.g., Overall feasibility, gaps in policy/legislations, 9 inclusion guidelines)