

Disability Inclusion Equity Pledge



There are 61 million, or nearly 1 in 4, adults in the United States who live with disabilities¹. Fifteen percent of the world’s population — at least one billion — have some form of disability, whether present at birth or acquired later in life, and nearly 240 million of them are children². The United Nations defines disability as an evolving concept resulting from attitudinal and environmental barriers hindering the participation of persons with disabilities in society.

The notion of disability is not fixed and can alter, depending on the prevailing environment from society to society. Disability can include difficulties in hearing, vision, cognitive function, and ambulation. It can also include mental health and chronic health issues.

People with disabilities experience exclusion through physical, attitudinal, financial, and policy barriers. Disability intersects with all identities and structural forms of marginalization and exacerbates the stigma and discrimination experienced by people with disabilities, especially as many are members of other marginalized groups based on race, religion, culture, age, sex, gender identity, language, and immigration status.

Ableism is a core barrier to equity and inclusion. As defined in the book, *We Move Together*, ableism is a form of discrimination that “wrongly considers only some bodies, minds, and behaviors to be normal, worthy, and valuable... Ableism creates barriers for disabled people, making it hard to meet friends, learn at school, find a place to live, get a job, and participate in community events...³” Disability must be recognized as a key element in any commitment to social justice, equity, and inclusion. Increasing evidence indicates that diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible workplaces cultivate higher-performing organizations⁴.

¹ *Disability Impacts All of Us Infographic* | CDC. (2023, January 5). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographic-disability-impacts-all.html>

² *Children with disabilities*. (n.d.). UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/disabilities>

³ (ILT), Fritsch, Kelly/McGuire, Anne/Trejos, Eduardo. *We Move Together*. Consortium Book Sales & Dist, 2021.

⁴ “Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce.” *The White House*, The United States Government, 25 June 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/06/25/executive-order-on-diversity-equity-inclusion-and-accessibility-in-the-federal-workforce/>.

We commit to prioritizing disability inclusion through a learning process, modeling behavior, and action steps, which may take us beyond the minimum legal requirements. We affirm that the full and complete realization of the human rights of all persons with disabilities is an essential, integral, and invisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We pledge to prioritize disability inclusion to ensure the human rights of persons with disabilities are achieved.

We promise to work to build trust and confidence among persons with disabilities, as ongoing ableism has harmed the trust and confidence among people with disabilities.

We confirm that people with disabilities deserve an environment that allows them to participate on an equal basis fully and effectively with others.

We support the Disability and Independent Living motto of “Nothing About Us Without Us.” We must partner with our community first so that we can adequately address the needs of all residents. All people must be included in planning and problem-solving.

We recognize that these are first steps and commit to continuous learning and implementation processes that will advance systemic change within the City of San José and serve as a model for disability inclusion in the City and beyond.

We commit to pursuing the following in our efforts to gain disability inclusion.

- **Engage the Disability Community** through the creation of community engagement policy and principles for including people with disabilities, as well as family members and care providers of people with disabilities, in community engagement activities and other advisory roles in the spirit of the disability rights principle “Nothing About Us Without Us.”
- **Implement Best Practices** that help recruit, retain, and promote people with disabilities as City staff, including but not limited to accommodation policies, job descriptions and training of hiring managers.
- **Build Staff Capacity and Training Programs** that include disability education, access, equity and inclusion training.
- **Prioritize Events Accessibility** that includes accommodations language on invitations and registrations for all events that the City hosts and sponsors citywide.
- **Use Disability-Inclusive Language** by recognizing that the language of identity is an individual choice that varies widely among the disability community, use both person-first and identity-first language to respectfully acknowledge different preferences in internal and public facing communications and style guides.
- **Create Disability Metrics** as a dimension of diversity and equity to work collectively to track disability participation as appropriate, in the City of San Jose’s programs and services aiming to optimize accessibility and participation.