

Inclusion Maturity Model

Organizations benefit from regularly stepping back to assess whether inclusion is truly embedded in systems rather than carried by individual champions, and whether practices create consistent, equitable experiences for all groups. They also vary widely in how inclusion is understood, prioritized, and embedded into daily work.

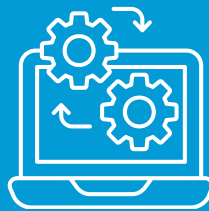
The Inclusion Maturity Model provides a simple pathway that helps teams identify where they are today and what steps will meaningfully move them forward.

The Three Levels of Inclusion

Level 1 Inclusion-Aware



Level 2 Inclusion-Integrated



Level 3 Inclusion-Focused





Level 1 – Inclusion-Aware

This level reflects organizations with foundational awareness and early commitment to inclusion, but without formal systems or routines to support it. Actions are often ad-hoc or champion-driven, with good intentions but limited structure, consistency, or organization-wide application.

- Inclusion is recognized as important, but approaches are informal or reactive.
- The organization has basic non-discrimination statements; limited staff training.
- Actions may rely on individual champions rather than systems.
- No consistent tracking, policies, or procedures yet.



Level 2 – Inclusion-Integrated

At this level, organizations have begun embedding inclusion into formal policies, processes, and day-to-day operations. Practices are becoming more consistent across teams, staff capability is growing, and early data or feedback is used to identify areas for improvement and reduce unintentional barriers.

- Policies, guidelines, and day-to-day practices explicitly address inclusion.
- HR, communications, and program teams begin adopting inclusive processes.
- Staff receive periodic training; expectations are clearer and more consistent.
- Basic data is collected (e.g., gender, disability, or participation indicators).
- Inclusion becomes visible in operations, not just values.



Level 3 – Inclusion-Focused

Organizations at this stage treat inclusion as a strategic organizational priority, with clear leadership accountability and dedicated resources. Systems are intentionally designed for accessibility and equity, progress is measured and reported, and inclusion is embedded across governance, operations, partnerships, and organizational culture.

- Leadership actively drives inclusion and allocates resources to sustain it.
- Systems are designed using universal design principles and accessibility standards.
- Data is disaggregated and informs decision-making and program adaptation.
- Inclusion appears in organizational KPIs, reporting, partnerships, and procurement.
- Clear accountability mechanisms are used across departments.

Inclusion Maturity, Systems Change, and Organizational Capability

This selection of resources provides deeper context for organizations seeking to understand how inclusion becomes embedded within systems, governance, and day-to-day operations. Each document offers established frameworks, maturity models, or international standards that complement the toolkit's practical approach. These references allow users to explore underlying principles, benchmark their progress, and connect organizational practice to global rights-based guidance.

- [UN Country Team Accountability Score Card and Disability Inclusion](#)

The document outlines maturity stages and organizational capacity benchmarks.

- [UNDP \(2021\). Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions – Guidebook](#)

pp. 17–22 describe maturity levels from foundational to transformative equality.

- [World Bank \(2022\). Disability Inclusion and Accountability Framework](#)

The document outlines organizational actions and accountability.

Maturity Reflection Points

Reflection points reveal gaps between intention and implementation, highlighting where policies, culture, or operations need strengthening as organizations move across maturity levels. They also encourage teams to evaluate whether decision-making, accountability, and resource allocation genuinely support long-term, systemic inclusion instead of one-off or reactive actions.

Women and Gender Equity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are decision-making processes and leadership roles gender-balanced? • Are there safety, safeguarding, and anti-harassment mechanisms addressing Gender Based Violence (GBV) risk? • Are program or workplace schedules compatible with caregiving responsibilities? • Are gendered barriers (mobility, safety, norms, digital access) explicitly addressed? • Are gender-disaggregated data collected and used to adjust programs? 	<p>Signals of maturity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender analysis informs operations and programming • Gender is integrated into HR, procurement, representation, and partner selection • Women-led organizations and suppliers are intentionally included

LGBTQIA+ Inclusion

- Are confidentiality, name or pronoun use, and identity disclosure handled safely?
- Do policies explicitly prohibit harassment and discrimination on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) grounds?
- Are communications and imagery inclusive without stereotyping or tokenism?
- Are facilitators trained to manage bias, microaggressions, and harmful language?
- Are programs adapted for contexts where LGBTQIA+ participants face legal or cultural risk?

Signals of maturity

- LGBTQIA+ safety is embedded in safeguarding and reporting
- Staff know how to create safe participation environments
- Representation appears respectfully across channels

Disability Inclusion

- Are physical and digital barriers systematically identified and removed?
- Are reasonable accommodations standardized, cost, and normalized?
- Are programs designed using universal design principles?
- Do policies reference CRPD-aligned commitments?
- Are staff trained in accessible communication and respectful interaction?

Signals of maturity

- Accessibility is embedded in budgets, procurement, events, and digital products
- Disability-led organizations or advisors are engaged
- Accessibility is monitored and measured, not assumed

Neurodiversity or Neurodivergent staff and participants

- Is information delivered in clear, structured formats?
- Are meetings or events designed with reduced sensory load options?
- Are expectations explicit - deadlines, instructions, communication channels?
- Can staff or participants choose alternative ways to engage or demonstrate progress?
- Are neurodiversity-aware performance and HR practices in place?

Signals of maturity

- Predictability and flexibility embedded into culture
- Managers and facilitators trained in neurodiversity-supportive practices
- No productivity or professionalism assumptions about neurodivergence

Ethnic Minorities

- Are materials available in relevant languages or plain-language formats?
- Do program norms reflect dominant cultures, excluding others unintentionally?
- Are staff aware of cultural protocols and power dynamics?
- Are community organizations involved in design and decision-making?
- Are harmful stereotypes avoided in communications and data collection?

Signals of maturity

- Culturally safe practice is visible across facilitation and hiring
- Representation aligns with the communities served
- Translation/interpretation is treated as a core requirement, not an extra

Rural or Remote

- Are programs accessible without requiring constant travel to urban centers?
- Are online formats inclusive for low bandwidth environments?
- Are participation costs (transportation, childcare, connectivity) addressed?
- Are eligibility criteria inadvertently urban-biased?
- Are rural organizations represented in decision-making processes?

Signals of maturity

- Rural participants can access programs on equal terms
- Outreach and partnership strategies intentionally include rural actors
- Digital access and hybrid models are designed with constraints in mind

Age Diversity

- Are communication styles suited to different age groups?
- Are assumptions made about ability based on age?
- Do programs consider mobility, energy levels, and life stages?
- Are multigenerational teams supported with structured collaboration norms?
- Are leadership pipelines open to both youth and older professionals?

Signals of maturity

- Age-inclusive hiring, facilitation, and program design
- Avoidance of ageism in expectations and representation
- Participation barriers for older people or youth proactively reduced