






Policy Foundations

Strong policy foundations ensure that inclusion is applied consistently across the organization rather than left to individual interpretation. Clear policies help prevent harm, reduce bias, and provide shared expectations for behavior, decision-making, and accountability. They also signal organizational commitment to safe, respectful, and accessible environments for staff and participants. Policies form a stable anchor that supports continuity, transparency, and inclusion across all teams.

Areas that are covered in this section

- Core Policies - Inclusion & Non-Discrimination, Anti-Harassment and Safe Conduct, Code of Conduct, Safeguarding, Leadership duties and accountability
- Starter templates and policy drafting guidelines

Practical Considerations

Group		Key Considerations
	Women & Gender	Ensure policies address gender-based harassment and safety.
	LGBTQIA+	Explicitly prohibit discrimination based on SOGIESC.
	Disability	Include clear, actionable reasonable accommodation provisions.
	Neuro divergence	Support flexible communication and ways of working.
	Ethnic minorities	Make policies available in relevant languages or plain language.

Core Policies

Strong, inclusive organizations enable safe, accessible and equitable experiences for everyone involved, including staff, volunteers, partners, and participants across the program cycle. At an international level, key frameworks such as the International Labour Organization's Equality of Treatment conventions and the United Nations' core human rights principles provide a framework for organizations to protect individuals from discrimination, harm, and exclusion. These standards are not just for large institutions; they apply wherever people gather, work, or receive services.

The inclusion policies become fundamental to everyone, not only to leadership but also to frontline staff, to have a shared understanding of what is acceptable and what is not. Global guidance, such as the United Nations, highlights that clear workplace policies help define expectations, reduce ambiguity, and provide mechanisms for addressing harmful incidents. For organizations working with diverse groups, this is especially important in creating trust and psychological safety.

International standards increasingly recognize that a minimum policy set should cover non-discrimination, safeguarding, codes of conduct, and accessibility. The CRPD (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) and CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) both call on organizations and governments to embed these principles in their operating procedures, not just their mission statements.

Cited from International Labour Organization (ILO)(2019) International Labour Organization's Equality of Treaties; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)(2006) The Core International Human Rights Treaties; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)(1979) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

We have briefly explained a few policy areas below:

- **Inclusion and non-discrimination:**

Inclusion and non-discrimination policies ensure that everyone engaging with the organization is protected from discrimination, provided with necessary affirmative action, and granted equal opportunities. At the basic level, this often involves declarations of equal opportunity employment. As organizations approach inclusion maturity, they can develop specific policies to institutionalize inclusion and anti discrimination. This can involve having dedicated policies for inclusive communication and accessibility and reasonable accommodations. In addition to the socio-economic categories mentioned in this document such as gender, race, sexual orientation, age, ability, etc., organizations should also be mindful of potential discrimination arising from regional contexts they operate in. For example, color and caste in South Asia. Organizations can promote inclusion through active steps to include people and groups who have historically been left out.

- **Anti-harassment and safe conduct:**

These policies aim to ensure a positive and safe work environment for everyone involved. Harassment here can include physical abuse, bullying, stalking as well as sexual harassment. These themes along with anti discrimination and safeguarding can also be addressed under code of conduct.

- **Safeguarding policies:**

These policies aim to safeguard vulnerable populations from harm. These populations can include children, elderly, at-risk youth and other populations that are physically or emotionally vulnerable. For example, if your organization regularly works with children, it is necessary to have a policy for protection and safeguards for children.

- **Leadership duties and accountability:**

These policies fix responsibility and accountability as well as provide transparency. These can cover areas such as data protection, whistle blower protection, prohibition of bribery and corruption. At the basic level, organizations are encouraged to have whistle blower policy and data protection policy.

Please note that themes covered by policy documents often overlap with each other. For example, organizations can combine anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies or opt to have separate policies. They can also choose to have a single code of conduct that defines standards of behavior and professional conduct expected from all the staff and collaborators covering diverse policy areas in line with the organizational ethics and aimed at achieving the organizational goals.

Adapted from [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)\(2023\), Guidance on Inclusive HR Practices](#); [United Nations \(2006\), Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#); [United Nations \(1979\), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#).







Practical Framework for Organizations

Four key steps for organizations to develop and adopt inclusive policies.

Steps	Practical Actions
Step (1)	<p>Foundational Policies</p> <p>Organizations should ensure the following core policies are in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion & Non-Discrimination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clear commitment to equal opportunity and zero discrimination • Code of Conduct <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Defines respectful behavior and consequences for misconduct • Safeguarding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Protects participants from harm, abuse, or exploitation • Accessibility Commitments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reduces physical, digital, and communication barriers

Steps	Practical Actions
Step (2)	<p>Designing Inclusion Measurement</p> <p>Organizations should apply additional measures based on relevant needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Gender-based violence (GBV) - safe design • LGBTQIA+ individuals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Explicit protection and safe participation • Persons with disabilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Accessibility and reasonable accommodation aligned with CRPD • Neurodivergent individuals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Flexible participation formats and processes • Ethnic minorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Multilingual and culturally responsive communication • Rural/remote communities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Regional inclusion and access support
Step (3)	<p>Implementation</p> <p>To ensure policies are effective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate policies clearly to all involved • Train staff to apply policies consistently • Provide safe and accessible feedback or complaint channels • Regularly review and improve policies based on feedback
Step (4)	<p>Quick Self-Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> All foundational policies are in place <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant targeted measures are applied <input type="checkbox"/> Staff understand and implement policies <input type="checkbox"/> Participants can safely provide feedback <p>If all are met, baseline inclusion is in place.</p>

Practical Considerations

Group		Key Considerations
	Women & Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design policies, especially gender-based violence (GBV), as a safeguarding risk. • Ensure the complaint process remains confidential to prevent it from becoming a burden on reporting.
	LGBTQIA+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classify sexual orientation and gender identity as protected categories. • Avoid vague language that could be interpreted as exclusionary.
	Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on removing barriers, not just providing "special" options. • Use disability-affirmative language.
	Neurodivergence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include flexibility in how people engage with policies - for example, verbal briefings alongside written documents. • Avoid overly complex or jargon - heavy language.
	Ethnic minorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer policies in relevant languages to your community where possible, or at a minimum in plain, simply worded text. • Avoid assumptions of shared cultural norms.
	Rural or Remote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure policies are accessible offline. • Provide printed versions or phone-accessible formats for people who may not have reliable internet access.

Adapted from [International Labour Organization \(1958\), Discrimination \(Employment and Occupation\) Convention, 1958 \(No. 111\)](#); [International Labour Organization \(2022\), Promoting diversity and inclusion through workplace adjustments: A practical guide](#); United Nations (2006), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; United Nations (1979), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Sample Templates

A basic policy should have the following components at the minimum:

- Date issued and Date revised if applicable as policies are not static documents and must change to respond to socio-economic and cultural changes.
- Purpose of the policy
- Scope of the policy - who is covered, what activities and spaces are covered (example, extended workplace)
- Key definitions as per international or national law. For example, definition of child as per national law in the policy for safeguarding of children.
- Implementation including reporting process, authority and how to respond to policy violations

We have also included some sample templates that you can use to design your own policies.

- [Tufts University Non Discrimination Policy](#)
- [The AFL - CIO Anti Discrimination and Anti harassment policy](#)
- [Ohio University Digital Accessibility Policy](#)
- [Catholic Relief Services Example Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Transparency and Accountability Policy Oxfam Canada](#)

For more policy templates ranging from beginner to mid to deep dive, please see [ANDE Inclusion Resource References](#).