

Operationalizing Inclusion

Operationalizing inclusion involves translating policies and commitments into everyday actions across people management, communications, procurement, and accessibility. It focuses on creating predictable and supportive routines that enable diverse staff and participants to engage fully.

In practice, this means turning policy commitments into the everyday experiences people encounter - in how organizations hire, onboard, communicate, and foster a culture of belonging. Small, repeatable shifts in work planning and delivery can strengthen inclusion in organizations of any size. This section helps teams identify where unintentional barriers may appear and how simple changes can improve everyday practice.

Areas that are covered in this section

- Daily operations
- Safeguarding
- Inclusive HR systems







Daily Operations

Change toward inclusion only happens when policy is translated into routines and embedded in daily operations and practices. Internationally, organizations such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the UN's operational guidance highlight the requirements of inclusion in routine processes, not just as an add-on or one-off training.

Policy considerations governing daily operations should include ensuring access and inclusion in meetings and events, creating inclusive workflows, holding individuals accountable for follow-through, and providing clear responsibilities. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), although written for digital environments, provide useful principles for all operational levels: content and processes should be perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust for the widest possible range of people.

Adapted from United Nations (2020), Operational Guidelines, UN Statistics Division; United Nations (2020), Guidelines on Legal Identity and Civil Registration for Inclusive Development, UN Statistics Division; World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) (2008), Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0.

Practical Considerations

Group		Key Considerations
	Women & Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be mindful of scheduling: avoid early mornings or late evenings, which can conflict with caregiving responsibilities or create safety risks during commutes.
	LGBTQIA+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use inclusive signage and language in all communications (e.g. gender-neutral toilets, inclusive greeting conventions). • Small cues signal that everyone is welcome.
	Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check the space to see whether it is accessible physically, including entrance, toilets, seats, before every in-person activity • Do not assume it has been checked before.
	Neuro divergence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain predictable routines where possible. • Give advance notice of changes. • Provide written summaries of verbal discussions so people can process information at their own pace.
	Ethnic minorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use plain, clear language in all communications. • Avoid idioms, slang, or culturally specific references that may not translate well.
	Rural or Remote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design digital tools and processes to work on low bandwidth. • Provide offline or phone-accessible alternatives wherever possible.

Inclusive HR systems

This section focuses on the structural and operational side of the human resources while human and relational side of the work place will be covered under HR, People & Culture.

ISO 30415:2021, the International Standard on Human Resource Management for Diversity and Inclusion, highlights that HR systems are not neutral; they either reinforce existing inequalities or actively counteract them, depending on how they are designed.

HR functions such as recruitment and onboarding are common points of exclusion. Thus, organizations should put a monitoring process in place to catch and reduce bias in how they select candidates – this keeps decisions fair and consistent. It includes practicing bias-aware recruitment tools, formalizing assessment criteria, and supporting necessary accommodations for needed candidates throughout the recruitment process.

When it comes to an inclusive HR system, it is also important to consider having inclusive performance management and active attention to psychological safety. Inclusive performance management guarantees fair, transparent, and unbiased evaluation processes, with clearly defined criteria consistently applied across all employees. Meanwhile, psychological safety should be actively measured and reinforced through continuous listening mechanisms, such as engagement and inclusion surveys, as well as upward feedback on leadership.





Leaders must be held accountable for modeling inclusive behaviors and fostering environments where diverse perspectives and respectful dialogue are encouraged. Without such measures, written policies remain symbolic rather than transformative.



Cited from [International Organization for Standardization \(ISO\) \(2021, ISO 30415:2021 Human resource management - Diversity and inclusion.](#)

Key practices

- Collect accommodation assessment since before the first day, specifically before the role begins.
- Provide materials in advance and in accessible formats, including screen-reader compatible documents and plain language versions where relevant.
- Send detailed agendas in advance so participants and new joiners understand the level of interaction expected.
- Proactively flag accessibility features such as live captions, rather than waiting for individuals to discover or request them.
- Assign a named contact responsible for following up on any outstanding accommodation arrangements before the start date.
- Ensure physical and digital workspaces meet accessibility standards before a new employee's first day.
- Introduce inclusive workplace norms explicitly during induction – including how to request accommodations, how to report concerns, and what safe disclosure options exist.

Practical Considerations

Group		Key Considerations
	Women & Gender	Ensure onboarding clearly covers parental leave, flexible working policies, and pay equity mechanisms from the start.
	LGBTQIA+	Provide clear, confidential options for how individuals can share or choose not to share, their identity; ensure HR systems allow for preferred names and pronouns from day one.
	Disability	Provide and implement accommodations such as ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms.
	Neuro divergence	Provide structured schedules and clear written summaries of onboarding processes; avoid information-dense induction sessions without adequate breaks or processing time.

Group		Key Considerations
	Ethnic minorities	Offer culturally aware onboarding that acknowledges different professional norms and communication styles without making assumptions or othering differences.
	Rural or Remote	Ensure remote joiners have full and equal access to all onboarding activities, introductions, and materials; avoid creating a two-tier experience between in-person and remote staff.

Adapted from [Ezeafulukwe et al.2024, Best practices in human resources for inclusive employment: An in-depth review. International Journal of Science and Research Archive, 11\(1\), pp.1286-1293.](#)

Safeguarding

Safeguarding within an inclusion context is protecting people, especially vulnerable individuals from harm, abuse, and exploitation. It is recognized as a fundamental responsibility for any organization.

Adopted from the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) on Quality and Accountability, this framework provides a globally recognized approach to ensuring organizations prevent harm, protect people's dignity, and respond to concerns safely and responsibly. It emphasizes accountability, safe reporting, and survivor-centered responses. CHS helps organizations create safeguarding systems that are practical, ethical, and trusted by participants.

Cited from [Core Humanitarian Standard \(CHS\)\(2024\), Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability \(CHS\), 2024 edition.](#)

Nine Core Commitments



Participate in decisions that affect them



Receive support that meets their needs and priorities



Feel safe and protected from harm



Report concerns or complaints safely and have them addressed



Access support that is respectful, inclusive, and well-coordinated



Receive support that improves over time based on feedback



Interact with staff who are respectful, competent, and accountable









Be supported in ways that strengthen their resilience



Trust that resources are used ethically and responsibly

Practical Considerations

Group		Key Considerations
	Women & Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design reporting processes with gender-based violence (GBV) risks in mind. • Ensure that female participants can report to a woman if they prefer and that GBV referral pathways are known to staff.
	LGBTQIA+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guarantee confidentiality at every step. • Disclosing an LGBTQIA+ individual's identity without their consent during a safeguarding process may heighten their risks.
	Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure reporting channels are physically and digitally accessible. Train staff to receive disclosures from people who communicate differently, including those who use assistive technology or non-verbal communication.
	Neuro divergence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide predictable, clearly explained processes. • Let people know in advance what will happen after they report a concern so there are no unexpected steps.
	Ethnic minorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handle all cases in a culturally safe and sensitive way. • Be aware of community dynamics that may affect willingness to report – including fear of stigma, family response, or community exclusion.
	Rural or Remote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of power dynamics in small or tight-knit communities where the safeguarding focal person may be known to all parties. • Consider an external reporting option for rural areas.