

# Inclusive Program & Service Delivery




Inclusive program delivery ensures that services and learning environments work equitably for participants with diverse needs and experiences. It emphasizes designing programs that actively remove barriers rather than assuming one standard way of participating.




This includes attention to safety, trauma-informed practice, and respectful facilitation. It supports organizations to use participant feedback and co-design to strengthen accessibility and relevance. This approach aligns with global good practices on accessibility, safeguarding, and participation, including guidance from the United Nations, development agencies, and human-centered design approaches.

## Areas that are covered in this section

- Inclusive Programming
- Barrier Identification and Removal
- Trauma Informed Practice
- Co-Design with participants

## Practical Considerations

Group		Key Considerations
	<b>Women &amp; Gender</b>	Assess safety, mobility, and caregiving impacts.
	<b>LGBTQIA+</b>	Protect anonymity and ensure safe participation spaces.
	<b>Disability</b>	Provide accessible venues, materials, and formats.

Group		Key Considerations
	<b>Neuro divergence</b>	Reduce sensory load and provide multiple formats.
	<b>Ethnic minorities</b>	Honour cultural norms and include community voices.
	<b>Rural or Remote</b>	Reduce travel burden; offer offline/local access options.

## Inclusive Programming

Designing inclusive programs has increasingly been recognized as a standard of quality, not just as an addition or extra. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the International Disability Alliance both highlight that programs must be intentionally designed for inclusion to avoid excluding people, especially those who need support the most. A meaningful, accessible program requires designing from the beginning, not adjustments at the end.

The CRPD specifically calls for the inclusive participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life to get equal access to others. The standard of “full and effective participation” has been adopted across humanitarian and development contexts with the aim of including all marginalized groups; it is more than participation but also removing barriers actively.

Cited from [United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)\(2022-2026\), Disability Inclusive Development Strategy of UNDP Thailand](#); [International Disability Alliance \(IDA\)\(2022\) Applying CRPD standards to programmatic processes: A look at inclusive programming in practice.](#)

## Barrier Identification & Removal

The first step in inclusive program design is to identify who may face barriers to participation. A simple way to begin is to ask:

- Who could potentially face exclusion or inadequate service from this program?
- What barriers exist across access, participation, and completion of the program?
- How can these barriers be removed early in the design process?

This approach reflects principles from the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and inclusive development guidance from organizations such as the World Bank and USAID, which emphasize removing systemic barriers rather than adapting individuals to fit existing systems.

### Access Point Review

Stage	What to check
<p><b>Reach</b></p>	<p>Who hears about the program?</p> <p><b>Common Barriers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited networks, language barriers</li> </ul> <p><b>Practical Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare to use diverse outreach channels and platforms, and using simple and clear messaging is effective.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Apply</b></p>	<p>Who can apply?</p> <p><b>Common Barriers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using complex forms, such as long ones, or requiring too much information. The limitation of only providing digital forms is also a barrier.</li> </ul> <p><b>Practical Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a simple form, which only needs a short answer, and offer an alternative format, such as a hardcopy version or online application, which does not require internet access.</li> </ul>







Stage	What to check
<b>Select</b>	<p>Who gets selected?</p> <p><b>Common Barriers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The selection result or outcome is biased or unclear criteria.</li> </ul> <p><b>Practical Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using transparent criteria, invite a diverse selection committee from different backgrounds and use the same structure to evaluate.</li> </ul>
<b>Participate</b>	<p>Who can engage fully?</p> <p><b>Common Barriers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considering the time, cost, or format of the programs, can participants fully participate?</li> </ul> <p><b>Practical Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In order to participate fully, providing stipends can enhance participation, as well as flexible delivery options can lead to engagement by diverse people.</li> </ul>
<b>Complete</b>	<p>Who finishes and benefits</p> <p><b>Common Barriers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to several reasons, dropout rates and unequal access to outcomes could be predicted.</li> </ul> <p><b>Practical Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tracking the participant throughout the program and providing adaptable support can increase participation.</li> </ul>

### Practical Framework for Organizations

Adopted from the UN and disability-inclusive development practice, this approach provides a practical way to design programs that are inclusive from the start while recognizing that not everyone’s needs can be met through one design. It combines mainstream inclusion with targeted support to ensure all participants can access, engage, and benefit meaningfully.

Approach	Example	How it fosters accessible programs
Mainstream Inclusion (design for everyone)	Training is conducted both in-person and online and uses simple language and flexible participation, such as discussion, chat, and small groups.	Makes the program accessible to a wide range of participants from the start, reducing the need for individual adjustments
Targeted Support (additional support when needed)	Prepare sign language interpretation, transportation support, translation, or allow anonymous participation for sensitive topics.	Ensures individuals or specific groups who still face barriers can fully participate safely and meaningfully

## Practical Considerations

Group		Key Considerations
	<b>Women &amp; Gender</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule program activities at safe times and locations.</li> <li>• Inform women participants in advance to make arrangements.</li> <li>• Avoid requiring overnight travel without providing adequate safety.</li> </ul>
	<b>LGBTQIA+</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect participants' identities and avoid requiring people to disclose personal information to access the program.</li> <li>• Use private sign-up processes where relevant.</li> </ul>
	<b>Disability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure materials are available in accessible formats (large print, audio, Easy Read).</li> <li>• Check the physical accessibility of venues before confirming them.</li> </ul>
	<b>Neurodivergence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer low-sensory options where possible, such as reduced noise, predictable structure, and clear visual cues.</li> <li>• Allow people to participate in ways that suit their processing style.</li> </ul>
	<b>Ethnic minorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align program content and examples with participants' cultural contexts.</li> <li>• Avoid assuming shared reference points.</li> <li>• Where possible, involve community members in design.</li> </ul>
	<b>Rural or Remote</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Factor in travel time, cost, and connectivity limitations from the earliest design stage.</li> <li>• Do not add rural access as an afterthought; build it in from the start.</li> </ul>

## Trauma-Informed Practice

Inclusive programs should be delivered in ways that are safe, respectful, and responsive to participants' lived experiences. A simple guide is to ask:

- Is the program predictable and transparent?
- Do participants have choice and control over engagement?
- Are facilitators equipped to handle sensitive situations safely?

This approach reflects trauma-informed principles outlined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and safeguarding guidance from agencies such as UNICEF and UN Women. This guide provides six core principles of trauma-informed practices according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S.).

By following six core trauma-informed principles, programs can create safe, respectful, and inclusive environments that support meaningful and equitable participation.

<p><b>Safety</b></p>	<p>Ensure participants feel safe both physically and emotionally throughout the program. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Environment:</b> Foster a respectful and inclusive space with clear agreements with the program.</li> <li>• <b>Language:</b> Use non-judgmental and inclusive language at all times to ensure the common understanding of all the participants.</li> <li>• <b>Content:</b> Avoid or issue warnings for potentially harmful topics where possible and provide acknowledgement letters if needed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Trust and Transparency</b></p>	<p>Build trust through clear and consistent communication. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Expectations:</b> Share agendas, timelines, and program expectations in advance to build trust.</li> <li>• <b>Clarity:</b> Understanding clearly how participant information will be used and stored in a professional way.</li> <li>• <b>Consistency:</b> Avoid sudden changes or clearly communicate when they are necessary.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Choice and Consent</b></p>	<p>Respect participant consent and control over their engagement. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation: Allow participants to opt in or out of activities throughout the program.</li> <li>• Sharing: Avoid pressuring participants to share personal experiences; otherwise, make sharing optional.</li> <li>• Flexibility: Offer various methods for individuals to give their consent (e.g., speaking, writing, small groups).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Empowerment</b></p>	<p>Recognize and strengthen participants’ abilities and confidence. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengths-based approach: Acknowledge participant skills and experiences, which make them feel empowered.</li> <li>• Encouragement: Support participation without forcing it and ensure they understand that participation can foster empowerment within the team.</li> <li>• Feedback: Make sure to provide a concise feedback form in a way that is both constructive and positive.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cultural and Context Sensitivity</b></p>	<p>Respect diverse backgrounds and lived experiences. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion: Use culturally appropriate and inclusive approaches where non-discrimination practices are found.</li> <li>• Awareness: Understand power dynamics and social differences to avoid the context's sensitivity.</li> <li>• Adaptation: Adjust the program delivery to local context and participant needs, such as by providing examples and case studies, which make them easy to understand.</li> </ul>

<b>Support and Referral</b>	<p>Be prepared to respond when participants need additional support. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources: Identify available support services even if they do not ask for them (e.g., counseling, hotlines).</li> <li>• Boundaries: Be clear about facilitator roles and limitations as well as roles and tasks beyond them.</li> <li>• Response: Respond calmly and appropriately to participant needs.</li> </ul>
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Adapted from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014), SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach (HHS Publication No. SMA 14-4884). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

### Co-Design with Participants

Program shaping with participants through active participation and shared decision-making. It involves engaging diverse participants in designing, testing, and improving programs. This helps ensure programs are relevant, inclusive, and responsive to real needs.

<b>Enable collaborative design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with participants early in program planning to ensure their needs and perspectives shape the program from the beginning.</li> <li>• Prioritize engaging underrepresented groups to include and ensure diverse voices are represented.</li> <li>• Create safe, inclusive, and accessible spaces where participants feel comfortable contributing ideas since designing the program.</li> </ul>
<b>Use iterative feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather feedback at multiple stages, before, during, and after the program, to continuously improve design and delivery</li> <li>• Refine and develop the program elements based on participant feedback rather than fixed assumptions</li> <li>• Clearly state how the participant feedback will influence decisions by communicating transparently.</li> </ul>

<b>Ensure fair compensation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognize participants' time, knowledge, and lived experience as valuable contributions to consider compensation.</li><li>• Provide stipends, reimbursements, or other forms of value exchange to enable equitable participation.</li></ul>
<b>Facilitate inclusively</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use multiple engagement formats (e.g. verbal, written, visual) to accommodate different communication styles.</li><li>• Facilitate discussions in a way that prevents dominance by a few voices.</li><li>• Actively invite and support participation from quieter or marginalized individuals.</li></ul>