



Inclusive and accessible hiring



Brotherhood of St Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty

**Let's make
change
that lasts**

Making the hiring process inclusive and accessible: Suggestions, guidance and examples.

This guide provides practical, tried and tested strategies for making the hiring and onboarding process inclusive and accessible. Developed by Youth Advisors with lived experience of disability, these recommendations have been successfully implemented at the Brotherhood of St. Laurence. By following these steps, hiring managers can attract a diverse range of talented applicants, ensure a fair and equitable process, and create a workplace that values inclusion.

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**Everyone deserves access to work that is
meaningful. This process allows us to show our
best self**

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Chloe, Youth Advisor

This guide was developed by Chloe Sumner, Rhianna Malas, and Kayla Sheridan. Authored by Chloe Sumner, with illustrations by Kayla Sheridan, and supported by Anamlee Griffin.

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Why creating a universally designed hiring process is beneficial

Universal Design is about designing environments, systems and processes that work well for everyone, regardless of age, background or ability. It's about removing barriers from the start, instead of adding separate fixes later.

Accessibility focuses on making sure people with disability can take part fully, often by making individual adjustments or offering support when it's needed.

Universal Design builds on this by designing the whole experience to be inclusive from the beginning. It means fewer people need adjustments, and everyone has a fairer and more equal experience.

Planning the hiring process in an inclusive way has the following benefits:

- It makes the whole hiring process fair, inclusive, and effective.
- More people from different backgrounds are likely to apply.
- It removes barriers so everyone has a fair chance.
- Applicants know what to expect and how they will be assessed.
- It reduces bias. Hiring is based on skills and experience.
- Diverse teams perform better and are more innovative.

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Accessibility and inclusion should be the norm. Everyone deserves to have a secure and meaningful job

Chloe, Youth Advisor

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Explanation of plain language and why it's beneficial

What is plain language?

Sometimes called 'plain English', plain language allows the audience to understand something the first time they read or hear it. It is about writing information in a way that is simple and allows the reader to understand the content as quickly and easily as possible.

Plain language is not just for those who need it, it benefits everyone. It makes hiring materials clear and easy to understand, reducing confusion and improving confidence for all applicants. It also helps attract the right people by clearly communicating the role and requirements. We suggest using plain language in your advertising material and communication.

Providing information in this way breaks down barriers and allows for deeper understanding. It can also help people to feel qualified for the role and removes unnecessary self-doubt.

When creating a document in plain language, consider the following:

What to do	Why it matters
Know your audience	Thinking about what they know and could find confusing helps you choose the right tone, words and examples.
Understand and simplify the content	Focuses on the core message. Remove jargon, technical terms and unnecessary detail.
Use everyday language	Makes content more readable. Use plain words, e.g 'start' instead of 'commence'.
Write short, clear sentences	It is easier to read and follow. Keep to one idea per sentence.
Organise content clearly	Use helpful headings, bullet points and order to make it easy to navigate.
Follow accessibility guidelines	Ensures the document can be accessed by everyone.
Test it with others	Feedback can show if anything is confusing or could be clearer.

How to create an accessible document

We recommend ensuring that the position description and advertising materials related to your position follow accessibility guidelines.

Suggestion	Why it matters
Run the document through your systems built-in accessibility check.	Catches missing headings, alt-text or contrast issues so you don't overlook barriers.
Use sans-serif fonts (Arial, Calibri, Verdana) at 12 pt or larger and avoid all capitals.	Improves readability for people with low vision or dyslexia.
Left-align all text.	Keeps spacing even and lines easier to follow.
Apply true heading styles (H1, H2, H3).	Lets screen-reader and keyboard users jump straight to the section they need.
Add meaningful alt text to every image.	Ensures screen-reader users understand the purpose of each image.
Use descriptive link text (e.g. "Listen to the audio description by clicking here.").	Gives context so everyone knows where the link goes, better for screen readers and scanning.
Offer alternative formats (word document, PDF with tags, audio).	Lets people choose the format that works best for their needs.

66 Work should be a meaningful contribution to someones life. An inclusive workplace allows for that

Rhianna, Youth Advisor

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How to record and upload audio descriptions

We recommend including an audio recording of the job advertisement and position description in your advertisement. The goal of an audio recording is to provide an accessible and engaging summary of the role and key details for people who may prefer or require an auditory format.

- 1. Plan your recording.** Start with your organisation's name, the role title and a one-sentence overview, then list the key points (responsibilities, skills, how to apply).
- 2. Record in one take:** Speak clearly at a steady pace with a warm tone and pause briefly between sections.
- 3. Review and edit:** Listen back, trim long silences, remove background noise, then save as MP3 or WAV.
- 4. Upload and link:** Post to your chosen platform (e.g. Vimeo, YouTube) or your hiring system and label the link clearly (e.g. "Listen to the job overview").

Benefits

- Audio descriptions can allow for further engagement and understanding.
- Everyone is able to access information about the role.
- It reduces the need for applicants to ask for additional information or formatting. This makes things more convenient for the hiring manager.

66 **Providing accessibility options is important. An audio description can be helpful to so many people, maybe even you will discover you find them helpful too** 99

Chloe, Youth Advisor



Creating an accessible position description and advertisement

To attract a diverse range of applicants, job descriptions and advertisements should be clear, concise, and accessible.

Recommendations

- When writing a position description and advertisement of the role, use plain language throughout.
- Consider inherent requirements of the role and outlining where there is room for professional development and support to build skills once in the position.
- Clearly outline job conditions, and expectations.
- Wage (consider organisational requirements when including this, a salary range in advertisement is allowed).

Benefits

- By meeting accessibility guidelines, people using assistive technology can read the position description and advertisement, making it accessible for a wider range of applicants.
- There will likely be more engagement with the position description, leading applicants to be well informed of the role and assist them in applying and interviewing well.
- Avoids information getting lost in translation.
- Outlining that there is opportunity to build or develop skills shows a commitment to investing in the applicant and increases the likelihood that people who may not meet every selection criteria will apply.
- Applicants have all necessary information to determine if the role suits their skills and practical needs.
- Helps applicants assess any potential modifications or adjustments they may require if successful.

Examples

Here is an example of an accessible job description and advertisement used when hiring us as Youth Advisors. It the purpose of the job, what you will do as a youth advisor, and about you. All of this ensures applicants can judge whether they are right for the role.

What you will do as a Youth Advisor

- Attend meetings and training sessions with BSL staff
- Join meetings with BSL staff and others to give feedback on issues affecting young people with disabilities
- Share your experiences to make things better for young people with disabilities
- Help young people make changes in their communities
- Work with adults to improve job services for young people
- Help make policies that benefit young people
- Create easy-to-understand information for young people
- Connect with other youth advisors and groups through meetings, events and online platforms

Purpose of the job:

We want to hire young people with disabilities to join our Inclusive Pathways to Employment Youth Advisory group.

As a Youth Advisor, you will:

- Work with other young people and BSL staff
- Give advice on programs tools and resources
- Help plan and run events, activities and workshops
- Share your own experiences of disability and work to help others

Being a Youth Advisor will help you learn new skills like public speaking, leadership and advocacy.

Examples

Below is an example of the job conditions section of a job advertisement. This is what applicants can expect their role to look like: eligibility, checks, hours, contract type.

Job Conditions:

- Occasionally you will work on weekends, evenings, or public holidays and may need to travel or work across different offices
- You have working rights in Australia
- We will need to do a police and Working With Children's check, but we can help you with that
- You will work 3 hours per week as a casual position
- You will be paid \$32–36 per hour

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People with disability should have the same chance for work opportunities. Making the job ad simpler and easier to understand makes it accessible for all

Kayla, Youth Advisor

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YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY



Advertising the role

Below are considerations for the advertisement and promotion of your position.

Recommendations

- Include two ways of contact for the hiring manager, and state that you are able to answer any questions or respond to any accessibility requests.
- Include a sentence highlighting that you are using inclusive and accessible hiring practices. For example: "We will use inclusive and accessible hiring processes. If you require any adjustments to the recruitment process or support to participate equitably, please contact the hiring manager. We are committed to ensuring an inclusive and accessible experience for every applicant."
- Include a sentence encouraging applicants to apply, despite not meeting every single requirement listed.
- Consider holding an informal information session with the hiring manager for applicants to understand the role, its requirements and to be able to ask questions.
- Consider which platforms you will advertise the position on, there are job sites that promote accessibility and organisational commitment to these values. For example: The Field or Ethical Jobs.
- Think about who can help share the job with people from different backgrounds and experiences. Look for networks and groups that reach a wide range of people.

Benefits

- Including a statement about using an inclusive hiring approach encourages applicants who may need adjustments to apply.
- An informational interview session helps attract applicants who may not traditionally apply but are a great fit with the right support.
- Provides an opportunity to discuss role adjustments or accommodations in a supportive setting.
- Increases the likelihood of attracting applicants with lived experience who bring unique perspectives and skills.
- Connects the role with applicants who may not be actively searching traditional job sites.

Making the application process inclusive

Providing multiple application methods ensures applicants can showcase their skills in the format that best shows their abilities. This flexibility allows for diverse communication styles and reduces barriers for applicants.

Recommendations

- In the advertisement and position description, include multiple methods of application, you could accept alternative resumes, video applications or less formalised documents. Give options on how to apply and what to apply with.
- Offer the applicant the ability to send you their application via email rather than applying through job platforms, which may not be accessible. For example: Seek is not able to be used with screen readers.
- Consider having one or two very clear and simple questions for the applicant to respond to, rather than requiring a cover letter.
- Offer more than one way to contact the hiring manager.

Benefits

- The applicant is able to display their strengths in their preferred format, leaving them feeling more comfortable and confident in creating their application.
- By allowing the application to be emailed directly, it avoids websites or application methods that may be inaccessible, require additional administration info or be confusing or unnecessarily time consuming.
- Having contact information available allows the applicant to contact the hiring manager and address any accessibility requests.
- Having clear questions to answer has benefit for both applicant and hiring manager. It eliminates reading cover letters that may not have relevant information and provides structure for the applicant to ensure they feel confident that they have provided the information or answers needed.
- Allowing different ways to apply for a job helps remove bias by recognising that people can show their skills and meet the job requirements in different ways.

Considerations for screening applicants

It is important to be aware of potential biases that can influence the hiring process. Focus on the inherent requirements of the role, the essential tasks that need to be done, but stay open to different ways those tasks can be achieved. What matters is that the requirements are met, not how they are met.

Recommendations

- Consider how you are screening out applicants. If you are willing to create an accessible and inclusive working environment and value lived experience, try to be open to meeting as many applicants as is possible that meet the selection criteria.
- Consider what essential skills or qualifications are essential vs. desirable. When writing the mandatory selection criteria or screening applicants, ask “could someone without this do the job?”
- Consider what training or professional development is able to be provided once the applicant is in the role.

Benefits

- Expands access to highly capable applicants who might otherwise be overlooked.
- Ensures a fair, skills based approach to hiring.
- Encourages diverse perspectives within the team.
- You are not excluding applicants with valuable lived experience based on their ability to write a resume or cover letter.
- Applying to a job often requires access to technology, well written English and education around resume or cover letter creation, consider this in your elimination of applicants.

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If someone believes they're right for the job, they've already thought about the inherent requirements and how they would complete responsibilities while they're applying. They've already thought about the limitations, if they thought it was too much, they wouldn't apply. Having barriers in the way is stripping away people's agency.

Rhianna, Youth Advisor

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Creating an accessible interview process

A welcoming and considered interview process ensures all applicants feel comfortable and perform at their best.

Recommendations

- Contact applicants with their chosen contact method, outlined in their application.
- Provide information before the interview around location, expectations and what to expect. Consider including or creating an Access Key for the interview location.
- Provide a social script for the interview, outlining the social expectations and what the applicant can expect the experience to look like.
- Offer any accessibility accommodations in the interview invitation, it can be helpful to list out potential accommodations. This could include online options, number of people interviewing, offering scheduled breaks in the interview or a support person also attending.
- Explain the structure of questions asking. For example, if you are asking STAR questions (situation, task, action, result), explain what this requires. This style of questioning is not always accessible, consider using other question styles.
- Include all documents or information that you would like the applicant to read before the interview.
- Provide applicants with the interview questions beforehand and an explanation behind why the questions are being asked.
- Have important information for the role written down that can be given to the applicants.
- Explain what you are doing and why as an interviewer, i.e. "we will be writing notes down to reflect back on", or social expectations.
- Create a comfortable space for applicants, you could offer choices of where they feel most comfortable being interviewed.
- Consider giving a tour of the space at the beginning of the interview, to give a feel of the venue, highlight where they can access the bathroom or other facilities.
- Be patient with interviewees who are experiencing nerves.

Responding to applicants post-interview:

- Let applicants know they will be contacted within a certain timeframe.
- Provide feedback to all applicants with their chosen contact method. For example, some applicants may not wish to receive feedback over the phone and would prefer an email.
- Respond to every interview application.
- Keep people updated during the process.

Benefits

- Leads to better interview performance, allowing hiring managers to assess applicants true potential.
- The applicant can feel comfortable and have all necessary information to access the interview space.
- The applicant can request any accessibility requests and feel assured that it will not impact their likelihood of being hired. There can be underlying assumptions that accommodations will be perceived negatively, and people may be hesitant to request them.
- Applicants can come to the interview prepared and understand the reasoning behind each question, this reduces potential for misunderstanding and allows applicants to feel more confident and prepared in the interview.
- This allows the interview to feel meaningful for both the applicant and the hiring manager.

Alternative interview options

A traditional or formal interview structure may not be the best option for applicants to display their strengths or alignment to the role. Consider reducing formality or taking a different approach to the interview process.

Recommendations

- Consider the different ways applicants could display abilities in alignment with the role.
- Create a less formal environment.
- Ask the applicant what type of interview structure would work best with examples.

Examples

- Taking an applicant on a walk through of the work environment where you can show them different tasks of the job and speak about the role and their interest in it.
- Have an informal meeting with the hiring manager, where the structure of the conversation is casual and the applicant has equal opportunity to ask questions about the role and environment.

Benefits

- This approach can allow applicants to display their strengths and interest in the role in a way that does not prioritise verbal or situational answers.
- It can allow for a deeper understanding of an applicants ability and alignment to the role.
- A more relaxed approach may allow the hiring manager and applicant to connect in a low pressure environment.

The benefits of access keys & social scripts

What are access keys and social scripts?

Social scripts give information about what will happen in a certain situation and spell out the unspoken social rules.

Examples of things to include can be:

- What will they/others do?
- What do they need to bring?
- Who will they meet?
- What will the energy be like?
- What is expected of them?
- What is the purpose?

They can be written in either first person 'I will' statements, or second person e.g. statements like 'You should bring'. An access key tells people what will happen at an event, it includes things like photos of the space/venue, where key things such as bathrooms are, how to get to, around and into the venue. It may have a description of barriers that may be present, if there is going to be high-stimulation (e.g. scents, fluorescent lights). It's not about making the space 100% accessible but instead giving people all the information they need to feel sure about attending and getting around on their own.

Differences between access keys and social scripts:

- Access keys are about what is in a space, such as key aspects of a building or venue, and how you might use the space.
- Social script makes the unspoken rules of a situation explicit
- Both can go hand in hand.
- E.g. the office is a quiet space (social script) vs the description of the office space and how many people work in there (access key).

Benefits

- Having social scripts available provides the ability to know what to expect in situations where the social rules may not be explicit.
- Access keys allow individuals to know in advance if they require any accessibility adjustments to the space or event. This reduces any possible anxieties around asking for this information.
- Reduces applicants' anxiety, leading to more effective interviews.
- Saves time for the hiring manager by reducing the need to answer accessibility related queries individually.

Examples

Below is an example of an access key for the Thrive Hub in Frankston. Additional social scripts and access keys that could be beneficial as reference include ones from Parks Victoria, Rosebud Library and Frankston Arts Centre.

About this Access Key

This access key is designed to provide visitors with information about the Thrive Hub before their visit.

This document aims to improve the accessibility of the Hub, and to create a space where all feel welcome.



Image description:

A couch covered in colourful polka dots, there is a small table with a leafy potted plant, and a large window facing the street.

Foyer

The hallway leading to the main office area has grey carpet, with meeting rooms and offices on either side.

The hallway has a mixture of natural and artificial lighting, with large glass walls and is approximately one (1) meter wide



Image description:

Large room with grey carpet and both natural and artificial lighting. There is a long table with blue stools, three study pods, as well as art along the wall. Music can be heard through a bluetooth speaker.

Considerations for onboarding

Recommendations

- Consider any mandatory checks the position requires and offer support to obtain these if you are able to.
- Organise a time prior to the new employees start date to confirm any accessibility requests, it can be helpful to offer examples of potential accommodations.
- Consider the way you phrase the question around accommodations or what someone needs to perform in the workplace. Asking a new employee “we want to support you to be your best” may allow the applicant to feel more comfortable sharing.
- Set up a way of working that allows the person to perform their best. Speak to the employee about what supports them in the workplace and how you can provide that support.
- Make sure the person is aware of how to let you know if accommodations need to be changed and reassure them that this is completely fine.
- Before onboarding, be aware of any mandatory training or training requirements that may be inaccessible or on an inaccessible platform.
- Consider the workload, induction information and spacing of meetings and organisational requirements. An extended timeline of induction activities may be helpful for new employees.
- Ensure your team and management know how to create an inclusive & accessible working environment.

Benefits

- Acknowledging that mandatory checks may be new, complex, time-consuming or expensive and offering support, will help applicants navigate these systems.
- Increases new hire productivity and engagement.
- Strengthens team culture by fostering inclusivity from day one.
- This helps new employees feel comfortable at work and express their needs, which can improve productivity by creating the best conditions for them.
- Managing a new employee in a way that allows them to perform their best provides positive benefit for the team culture and work output.

Summary

Job Searching, applying, and interviewing often have systems that are not equitable and provide barriers before application. Structuring hiring and onboarding processes in an accessible and inclusive way allows a diverse range of people to have equal opportunities for employment.

Inclusive hiring benefits businesses while requiring little to no additional cost. By simplifying processes and removing unnecessary barriers, employers create a fairer system where applicants can confidently showcase their strengths and abilities, leading to better job matches and stronger teams.

Communication and being clear are key for making things accessible and work for both the employer and the applicant.

Having this universal standard can make things easier for recruiters too. It is all about how we can make things concise and efficient while not losing any of the information required.

There will always be ways to continually improve inclusivity and accessibility in the workplace. Progress comes from effort. The first step is awareness, and we appreciate your commitment to understanding how you can contribute to creating equitable processes.

We hope this resource can be a start in creating an accessible hiring process within the Brotherhood of St. Laurence and further organisations.

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**Be more open minded to the small yet meaningful changes you can
make to be inclusive**

Chloe, Rhianna and Kayla, Youth Advisors

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Checklist for hiring managers

Below is a checklist of our recommendations to ensure you have considered all aspects of hiring inclusively

	Creating the position description and advertisement
☐	Have you created a plain language advertisement and position description that outlines all elements of the role?
☐	Have you ensured the documents meet accessibility criteria?
☐	Have you recorded and included an audio description of the advertisement and position description?

	Advertising the role
☐	Have you allowed for multiple methods of application?
☐	Have you distributed the advertisement through a variety of networks?
☐	Have you considered running an informal informational interview?
☐	Have you included a statement about using inclusive hiring practices, encouraging people from a variety of backgrounds to apply and encouraged applicants who do not meet all of the criteria to apply?
☐	Have you provided a way for applicants to contact the hiring manager?

	Screening applicants
☐	Have you considered the inherent requirements of the role? Outlining the essential tasks and responsibilities is important, so that adjustments or supports can be explored without compromising the core duties of the position
☐	Have you considered the opportunity for learning or professional development once an applicant is in the role?



Interview Process

☐	Have you arranged an interview method that will work for the hiring manager and applicant? Including considering setting up an interview that may not follow traditional methods
☐	If you are organising a traditional interview, have you provided the following to the successful applicants?
☐	An Access Key of the interview location
☐	A social script or what to expect during the interview process
☐	The interview questions and the reasons for asking them
☐	All information you would like the applicant to read or understand
☐	A list of accommodations possible that applicants can select from and an opportunity to share what else would support them
☐	Have you contacted unsuccessful applicants and provided feedback?

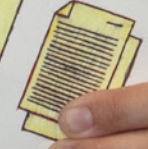


Onboarding and beyond

☐	Have you reached out to the successful applicant and had a conversation about what supports them to be their best at work, including any accommodations?
☐	Have you provided all relevant information and what to expect for their first day or week?
☐	Have you considered the amount of content, organisational training and team integration and appropriately spaced activities?
☐	Have you scheduled time with the successful applicant to ensure the workplace has been set up to be inclusive and accessible, and it is working for them?
☐	Have you implemented a check in or way of communicating that allows the successful applicant to provide feedback or ask for support?



INCLUSIVE
HIRING
PROCESS!



YOUR

AN
INCLU:
WORLD

APPLY

INTERV

Resources referenced

Below is a list of resources referenced throughout the document where you can read additional information about topics covered.

References

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways on which our organisation operates. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past present and emerging.



Brotherhood of St Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty