

Creating a disability inclusive workplace: Tips on creating disability inclusive job descriptions, interviews, and assessments

With the commitment to “leave no one behind”, the UN system is determined to offer equal employment opportunities to persons with disabilities. With this, ensuring that our recruitment and selection processes are inclusive for persons with disabilities is the first step to create an inclusive organization that welcomes and enhances diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our operations. Hiring persons with disabilities is not only the right thing to do, but it is good business practice. Persons with disabilities have lower turnover and better retention rates than those without disabilities.

A well-crafted job description is a useful tool in attracting and hiring the best talents. If the UN system is an inclusive employer open for all, including persons with disabilities, it will have a requisite edge in its search of best talent. Below you will find guidelines and tips to ensure that we “walk the talk” and the recruitment and selection processes are inclusive and fair for persons with disabilities.

Create inclusive job descriptions that accurately reflect the position:

A well-crafted job description can be useful in attracting and hiring the best talents, and thus, it is key to ensure that it is inclusive for all, including persons with disabilities. Before you begin a recruitment process, take a look at your job descriptions and requirements: Are they realistic? Are job qualifications screening out people who might otherwise make good employees?

At a minimum, a job description should contain the following elements:

- Job title
- Specification of reporting line
- Essential functions (Required)
- Other functions (Optional)
- Minimum qualifications

Additional elements to be included are as follows:

- **Environmental Factors:** Describe the environment an individual will encounter in performing the position. Consider the total environment, and imagine it from the perspective of a new employee, such as living conditions in the country and city (i.e. security level, general accessibility in the area including public transport, air quality, etc.), as well as in the workplace (i.e. open work space or individual offices, accessibility of the office, inclusive security protocol etc.).
- **Flexible work arrangements:** Indicate whether the position can follow the flexible work arrangement policy already in place, or there are any specific limitations due to the nature of the position. Flexible Work Arrangements have become globally recognized and adopted by organizations as a tool to increase productivity and to the better balance the professional and personal lives of employees.
- **Reasonable Accommodation:** Reasonable accommodation seeks to ensure the right of persons with disabilities to work through removing barriers to accessing, advancing or remaining in employment and to benefit equally from employment opportunities. Job descriptions should include the following statement “The UN system is committed to creating an inclusive workplace, and commits to taking appropriate measures to enable persons with disabilities to access employment opportunities and benefit equally from

employment related opportunities by providing reasonable accommodation¹. Should applicants need reasonable arrangements to facilitate their interview and assessment during the recruitment and selection process, please submit your request in your application.”

Managers and supervisors should regularly revise job descriptions to ensure that the responsibilities and requirements are accurate, updated, and do not unnecessarily exclude persons with disabilities.

Ensure an inclusive interview process:

Interviewing individuals with disabilities is the same as interviewing individuals who do not have disabilities; you will be asking questions to determine their skills and qualifications for the job.

1. Ensure that recruiters, hiring managers, and supervisors are trained on disability etiquette so that they do not make assumptions based on a person's behavior or body language that may be the result of a disability
 - a. Example, if a hiring manager shouts at a person who is deaf or hard of hearing
2. Before and after interviewing people in your applicant pool, have a conversation about the
 - a. work-related skills, attributes, and experience of each applicant that would both diversify
 - b. and complement your current team.
3. Do not assume that a candidate will not be able to perform the job duties because of a disability
4. If the applicant has a known disability, either because it is visible or was revealed by the applicant, you may ask the individual to describe how he/she will perform the essential functions of the job
 - a. If the disability is not obvious or revealed, DO NOT ask the individual any questions regarding his/her disability until a tentative offer for employment has been extended; this includes questions concerning reasonable accommodations
5. Offer reasonable accommodation measures to the candidates. Reasonable accommodation measures aim to remove or sufficiently mitigate the barriers that may be encountered by an employee, thereby enabling him/her to access, continue in and progress in employment.
 - a. Example, if the candidate to be interviewed is deaf and requests Sign Language interpretation for the interview, make sure that the support service is arranged.
 - b. Another example would be if you are interviewing an applicant who is blind, make sure to describe the setting and provide materials in alternative formats as requested (e.g. braille, digital copies, or large print).
 - c. Refer to training Module 3 & 4 for more information
 - d. Create a welcoming environment during the interview. You want people leaving the interviewing understanding that the organization is inclusive of diverse experiences and perspectives.

During the interview, never ask a job applicant if they have a disability. Instead ask about their ability to do the job. Make sure to ask questions that are related to the essential functions of the position. Essential job functions are the fundamental duties of a position: the tasks that a person holding the job absolutely must be able to do. Some relevant and appropriate questions could be:

- Are you able to perform the specific duties of this position?
- Are you able to be in the workplace as the position is scheduled?
- Are you able to carry out the necessary job assignments well and safely, with or without a reasonable accommodations?

¹ Reasonable Accommodation is «necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms» (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 1)

When considering the appropriateness of providing requested accommodation to perform a position, it is important that the employer distinguishes between the essential and non-essential elements of a job. As a general principle, an employer is expected to recruit an employee who can perform the essential functions of a job after reasonable accommodation is provided.

Ensure an inclusive assessment process:

Here are tips to consider to ensure an inclusive assessment process:

- Review applications with diversity and inclusion in mind (where possible, exclude information that could lead to bias)
- Be aware of your own biases and stereotypes. Do not assume the person cannot do the job.
- Be aware of subtle and unintended bias when reviewing CVs (educational institution, location of prior employment, type of experience, disability, gender, etc.)
- If testing is part of your selection process, consider the need for reasonable accommodation. For some people, offering additional practice sessions, breaks or additional coaching or more detailed instructions may make the testing process more fair for them. Make your selection assessments accessible.
- If the person is not hired for the position they applied for, consider them for any other posts for which they qualify.
- Identify a list of core questions to be asked of all candidates; questions should be related to the job description.
- Interview process should be the same for all candidates.
- Reserve ample time for interviews and evaluations as bias emerges more when evaluators are limited by time pressure.
- Highlight policies that support family needs and work/life balance (e.g., parental leave, extended time to tenure, flexible work options, etc.)
- Establish a diverse and inclusive panel for interviews, when possible, ensure representation of persons with disabilities in the panel composition.
- Train your recruitment and selection employees on unconscious bias.
- Obtain feedback from your candidates on each step of the recruitment and selection process and use this information for continuous improvement of the process.

Ensure all stakeholders understand the value of hiring persons with disabilities in the workplace

Managers and senior leaders should communicate to staff and candidates that they are committed to recruiting and hiring persons with disabilities. There are many ways to prove the commitment to advancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the organization. For instance, ensuring that disability inclusive language is included in HR policies and tools. In addition to that, your organization's online application platform should be fully accessible for persons with disabilities.

It is key for employees and managers to take advantage of any available disability awareness training and/ or resources (e.g. online learning hubs, guidance documents, focal points, etc.) . Learning will provide an opportunity to identify bias and stereotypes and provide guidance and tools on how to create an inclusive interview process. In addition, colleagues can become new hire buddy or mentor to ensure that its workplace is inclusive and welcoming to the newcomer.