Equity Policy Framework for Business
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Equity Document for Business

People with disabilities are diverse and have various talents, skills, and abilities to offer in the workplace. People with disabilities are adaptable, innovative, and are problem solvers like other talent in business. However, people with disabilities continue to face discrimination and societal prejudice based on misconceptions of their skills, abilities, or character orientations, resulting in institutional barriers for education, training, and employment opportunities. Achieving true equity in recruitment, hiring, and retention includes promoting equity for people with disabilities across all programs and services.

Why include people with disabilities?

- People with disabilities are a growing labor pool of talented resources. Disability must be part of the conversation. People with disabilities are in every racial/ethnic, gender, and socio-economic group, and live in every community. One in five Americans are people with disabilities.
- Business initiatives that include equitable access for people with disabilities can increase capabilities for an innovative, productive, and diverse workforce.
- No one is immune to acquiring a disability. Retaining a skilled workforce is fiscally sound and disability equity is an important element of retention.
- Disability rights are civil rights.

How to address equity, diversity, and inclusion for people with disabilities?

Recognize the diversity of people with disabilities: People with disabilities have a diverse variety of skills, talents, and interests. People with disabilities have a diversity of identities and are represented in every race/ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic group. People of color with disabilities face even greater barriers due to systemic and institutional barriers. All people with disabilities should have the opportunity to use their talents and skills without fear of discrimination or have unnecessary barriers created by policies or inaccessibility.

Collect and analyze data: Gather data about services provided to people with disabilities to evaluate the effectiveness of outreach to people with disabilities, accessibility services, service delivery strategies, and equitable outcomes. Strive to scale up disability-related initiatives, programs, and services to ensure equitable access and outcomes for people with disabilities across all programs and services.

Develop a culture of non-discrimination and universal access: Develop a culture that encourages diversity and supports access for all. Assistive technology, universal accessibility, and reasonable accommodations are tools for people with disabilities to be supported in a work environment. They can lead to increased productivity and enhanced morale of all employees; as well as attract more diverse talent to your business, and lead to innovations in meeting business and customer needs. Information technology departments should be knowledgeable on how assistive technologies interact with business software, web applications, or websites to ensure equitable access for people with disabilities.

Leverage resources and training to elevate equity: Employees and management should have ongoing disability awareness training, and unconscious and implicit bias training to overcome attitudinal barriers for hiring and retention of people with disabilities. The California Department of Rehabilitation provides resources and options for no-fee training (www.dor.ca.gov). The Job Accommodation Network (AskJAN.org) provides free consultation and examples of job accommodations, or productivity enhancements, to meet diverse needs.

What Can You Do?
- Create a culture of disability inclusion with the endorsement of your business leadership.
- Review your current diversity, equity, and inclusion statement, and include people with disabilities in statements.
- Assess the effectiveness of your workplace accommodations program and develop a strategy for reasonable accommodations improvements that engage key stakeholders. A component of the reasonable accommodation process is an interactive process between a manager and an employee, which focuses on the needs of the individual to do their work efficiently.
- Assess your facility and information technology for equitable access and develop a strategy for improvements.

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- Identify measurement goals to assess progress of hiring and retaining people with disabilities.
- Create a disability inclusive workforce and environment that supports trust for self-disclosure and access to the tools and resources to perform and be productive.
- Brand your company as disability inclusive by designing marketing and employee focused informational content to include images of employees who have disabilities.
- Build a culture of respect and inclusion by leveraging business resource groups or employee resource groups that engage people with disabilities and allies for disability inclusion in the education and professional development of the workforce.