

Disability Inclusion & Philanthropy: Living your values

How can funders live their values and work toward disability inclusion? This video offers practical insight from disability advocates on steps funders can take, not only through grant making but also by ensuring that disability is represented internally among foundation staff and by creating an inclusive workplace culture.

Transcript begins.

[light music]

[A series of individuals sit for interviews in an industrial studio setting.]

DESSA COSMA: My name is Dessa Cosma. I'm a little person who often uses a wheelchair.

Disability communities have so much to offer. You know, we're used to improvising and adapting and being creative because we have to be to survive. And so much of that is about not living in a society that was thinking about us—or only thought of us as an afterthought—and not being able, as a result, to find adequate housing, transportation, education, jobs, social groups.

RYAN EASTERLY: My name is Ryan Easterly. I am a black man with a teal-and-white striped shirt, wearing glasses.

The ADA is great, but the real work, the real challenge is overcoming those attitudinal barriers to get people to see me for me, everything I bring to the table, and not just the disability.

ALICE WONG: My name is Alice Wong, and I'm wearing a mask attached to a tube that's used to help me breathe.

I really do believe that grant makers, foundations do have a role in showing what diversity is. A lot of people don't associate disability with diversity. Yet they absolutely should. Because people with disabilities are present in every diverse community. That would be my challenge to you is to really seek out people with disabilities and prepare to be uncomfortable. I think that's something that we all have to do to really open our minds and to really be able to see outside of ourselves.

MADDY RUVOLO: My name is Maddy Ruvolo. I am a young white woman with brown curly hair. I have a chronic illness called POTS.

Inclusion is not just funding disability rights organizations, although obviously that is incredibly important. It's also making sure that there are disabled people within your own organizations.

REBECCA COKLEY: My name is Rebecca Cokley. I am wearing a Prince-purple dress because I'm a huge Prince fan, and wearing a jacket that's designed by Kathy Woods, who is the first little-person fashion designer in the country.

[dramatic music begins]

COKLEY: Here would be a couple of my suggestions for funders about how to live your values. Hiring people with disabilities in roles that are not just disability specific, hiring people with disabilities in your HR spots, in your women's bureaus, in your logistics team, on your communications side, across the board. How that changes things. How just simple engagement changes the stigma that people have around disability rights.

KERI GRAY: My name is Keri Gray. I am a young-adult black woman, sitting in a chair. On my right leg is a prosthetic limb, and I am wearing a red romper with a black head wrap.

If you're trying to build practices around people with disabilities, then you should definitely have people with disabilities in the room making decisions with you. We found it extremely helpful to work directly with recruiters, with supervisors, with hiring managers, and having conversations of what does it mean to create inclusive hiring practices, and what does it mean to be the type of supervisor where you can have these type of conversations with your employees about, "I need an accommodation," "I need to talk to you about that," "Will this impact the way in which you see me and the way in which I can perform my job?" These are kind of the standard conversations that unfortunately we're not having nearly enough of, if at all.

[music builds]

COSMA: If we actually reorient our society to be good for people with disabilities, every single person benefits. If we were to really radically change our culture to be inclusive of people who need a totally flexible work schedule, parents would have a better time, people caring for elderly parents would have a better time. People could actually have a better balance in their life.

RUVOLO: And when we accept that people who are disabled are doing things differently, and then, in fact, everybody can do things differently, it really is more freeing for everybody.

[music crescendo]

EASTERLY: To see each other for everything we are, all of our struggles, all of our successes, and the little nuances that we all have, regardless of whether or not we identify as having a disability.

VOICE-OVER: Where are you in your Journey to Inclusion? For more information, go to DisabilityPhilanthropy.org, and promote using the hashtag DisabilityInclusion. Brought to you by the Presidents' Council on Disability Inclusion in Philanthropy.

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SPECIAL THANKS

Detroit Disability Power

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