

BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

Disability Inclusion Pledge Survey Findings and Recommendations

Summary



**Disability &
Philanthropy
Forum**

DisabilityPhilanthropy.org

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Image Credit: [Disabled and Here](#)

Introduction

The last few years have challenged philanthropy and the communities we serve in unprecedented ways, and now more than ever, the fight for equity, inclusion, and social justice matters. The COVID-19 pandemic, economic recession, and racial injustice have shined a light on what we have all known for far too long: People with disabilities have been disproportionately impacted by each crisis, each budget cut, and each rollback of civil rights.

Simply put, social justice requires disability inclusion. To meet the urgency of this moment, more than 60 foundations and philanthropy-serving organizations have committed to initiate their disability inclusion journey and hold themselves accountable by signing the [Disability Inclusion Pledge](#). Signatories all agree to report back on progress by 2023 in eight action areas: community engagement, inclusive language, accessible events, inclusion audits and plans, staff and board training and participation, grantmaking, and measurement. These actions are intended to help move philanthropy toward the goals of the Disability & Philanthropy Forum's [Theory of Change](#): creating a culture of inclusion; expanding disability participation in the sector; and increasing grantmaking for disability inclusion, rights, and justice.

“ We realized in completing this [survey] what an incredible roadmap the questions provide to us for thinking about all we could be doing. ”

— Kitty Julian, Director of Communications, The Pittsburgh Foundation

The Pledge offers concrete starting points to uplift disability as an essential component of advancing equity. Ninety percent of the signatories began to measure and report on their progress through a baseline benchmarking survey, which will be repeated in 2023. This report highlights a few findings and recommendations.¹ For detailed findings, see: [Beginning the Journey: Full Report](#).

¹ Sixty-one signatories received the survey, and only six did not respond for a 90% response rate.

To support Pledge signatories and the field of philanthropy in building their knowledge, the [Disability & Philanthropy Forum](#) provides resources and opportunities to learn how to implement disability inclusive policies, practices, and grantmaking. In addition to survey findings, this report highlights a few recommendations and resources for moving forward.

Select Findings and Recommendations

Results of the benchmarking survey illuminate the progress philanthropy is making, as well as areas where efforts must continue. Survey responses begin to paint a picture of how the journey to inclusion begins. More than half of responding signatories reported that they are already actively requiring disability-inclusive language, including accommodations language on their event invitations, and have completed audits of websites and facilities. Of the eight action agendas in the Pledge, survey findings from four in particular illustrate how responding signatories are engaging in the journey to disability inclusion.

Disability Community Engagement



Key Findings: More than one-quarter (28%) of responding Pledge signatories have written guidance in place for including people with disabilities in community engagement and advisory roles, while more than half (54%) are exploring the possibility of creating such guidance. As more philanthropic organizations intentionally and consistently engage the disability community, they will become more effective at addressing long-standing inequities.

Recommendations

- Develop an active disability advisory group that includes diverse disabled people who are compensated to guide planning and implementation of disability-inclusive policies and practices.
- Foster meaningful connections with disabled people from across marginalized communities and with local, state, and national disability-led organizations.

Resources

- [Guidance for Foundations on Creating Disability Advisory Groups](#)
- [How to Foster Meaningful Connections with Disability Advocates and Organizations](#)

Measuring and Reporting



Key Findings: Almost one-third (30%) of responding Pledge signatories currently track disability metrics for their staff, and 30% also track disability presence on their boards. Better understanding of whether and how people with disabilities are represented on staff and boards is key to building organizations that are inclusive, equitable, and welcoming to people with disabilities.

Recommendations

- Ask questions that educate survey respondents about the broad definition of disability. (See resources below for guidance.)
- Consider partnerships with outside entities that include disability in their demographic data collection, such as Change Philanthropy's Diversity Among Philanthropic Professionals survey (DAPP).

Resources

- [Guide on Increasing Disability Inclusion by Tracking Participation](#)
- [Moving the Needle on Employing People with Disabilities: What to Know About Collecting Disability Data](#)

Accessible Events



Key Findings: While half (50%) of responding Pledge signatories signal that people with disabilities are welcome by including accommodations language in event invitations, only 20% are leveraging their event sponsorships to increase accessibility and inclusion.

Embracing disability as part of diversity requires creating accessible environments. As responding Pledge signatories clarify their commitment to ensuring disabled people have full access at events that they host and sponsor, they will gain knowledge that they can apply to make their workplaces, community engagement programs, and organizations more welcoming and inclusive.

Recommendations

- Include a clear accommodations statement on all event outreach and registration materials.
- Establish a centralized budget for event accessibility, and consider making grants to support accessibility for sponsored or grantee events.

Resources

- [Planning Accessible Meetings and Events](#)
- [Sample Accommodations Request Templates](#)



Key Findings: Well over one-quarter (29%) of responding Pledge signatories have written policies or guidelines to increase the share of their annual grantmaking that focuses on or incorporates people with disabilities, while more than two-fifths (41%) have no current plans to increase this share.

Philanthropy is increasingly aware of the ableist systems that result in high rates of poverty and reduced opportunities for disabled people. As increasing numbers of responding Pledge signatories set foundation-wide goals for disability-related grantmaking consistent with their mission, they can begin to ensure their funding strategies are truly equitable.

Recommendations

- Learn from the disability community about how disability cuts across the issue areas you prioritize.
- Regularly evaluate how disability is reflected in grantmaking by incorporating specific questions in internal reviews and grantee reporting processes.

Resources

- [Catalyze Disability Inclusion in Your Grantmaking](#)
- [Disability-Inclusive Grantmaking in Action](#)

Methodology: Sixty-one signatories of the Disability Inclusion Pledge — including 51 grantmakers and 10 philanthropy-serving organizations — received the online survey in October-November 2021, which included fixed-response and open-ended questions. By the end of November, 55 signatories responded for a 90% response rate.

About the Disability & Philanthropy Forum

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum is an emerging philanthropy-serving organization created by the Presidents' Council on Disability Inclusion in Philanthropy to expand philanthropic commitment to disability rights and justice by centering the leadership of the disability community — essential tenets of achieving a more equitable, inclusive future for all. The Forum is fiscally sponsored by the Proteus Fund. Learn more at disabilityphilanthropy.org.

Ready to Commit to Inclusion?

Be part of a community of hundreds of individuals working in philanthropy who have signed up for a free [Disability & Philanthropy Forum Membership](#). Join your [peer organizations](#) on the journey to inclusion today by signing the [Disability Inclusion Pledge](#).

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