2 Employing disabled people - committed leadership
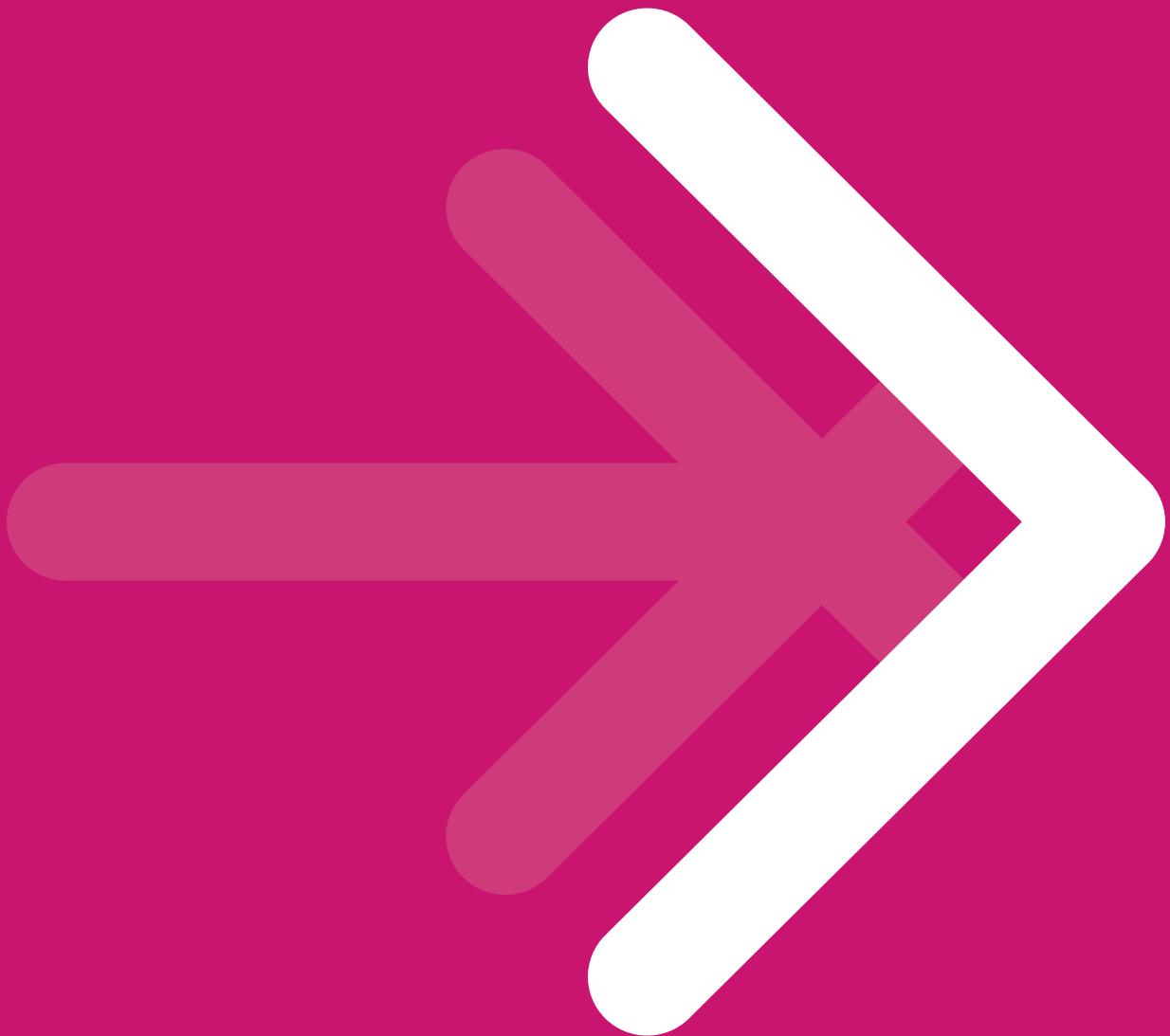
2.1

A 5-step plan for the leadership team

This 5-step plan outlines a framework for how to become an inclusive organisation

This section provides leadership teams with important tools on how to provide a clear commitment to their organisation about employing more disabled people and retaining existing disabled employees. It outlines both how this can be achieved and why it is beneficial for their organisation.

Nominating a sponsor from within the leadership team who can take ownership is a good strategy to increase employment of disabled people.

A designated sponsor can help monitor progress on, and report back to, an organisation's leadership team.

This 5-step plan outlines a framework for becoming an inclusive organisation:[4]

1   **Buy in**

2   **Understand**

3   **Develop**

4   **Identify**

5   **Monitor**

4. This was originally developed by the Employers' Disability Network, and can be accessed from
https://www.employment.govt.nz/workplace-policies/employment-for-disabled-people/plan-to-become-a-disability-confident-organisation/

Step 1

Buy in

A successful senior management group has a strong and clear approach to increasing the employment of disabled people. Such an approach should be reflected throughout the organisation.

This approach should include:

- Developing a business case for employing disabled people. (Full details about building a business case is set out in section 2 of this Toolkit.)

- Amending the organisation's diversity policy to include disability. (The Ministry of Social Development's diversity policy is a good example to refer to.)

- Developing and publishing an accessibility plan. Westpac have a great example of an accessibility plan.

westpac.com.au/docs/rtf/about-westpac/2013_AAP_RTF_FINAL.rtf

Step 2

Understand

Identify what progress your organisation has made in creating an inclusive environment for disabled people and which areas require further development, using a checklist. You could use this checklist to rate the organisation's ability to attract and retain disabled people.

Get the "Checklist for assessing an organisation's ability to attract and retain disabled people" at:

ssc.govt.nz/lead-checklist

Step 3   # Develop

The information from the checklist can be used to develop your action plan:

Accessibility – Make your environment accessible, including facilities, information and IT

Disability responsiveness training – Build your understanding of disability

Recruitment – Recruit more disabled people

Retaining your existing employees – Keep your disabled staff, including those who acquire a disability while working for you

Data on the number of disabled employees – Measure how many disabled people you already employ by conducting a confidential staff survey.

Step 4

Identify

A number of organisations can provide support and assistance to disabled employees or can help you recruit disabled people for available positions:

Workbridge – is a not-for-profit organisation that can assist you with finding disabled employees, providing you with advice and support on recruitment and follow-up support after hiring. They also administer Support Funds which can help with additional costs. workbridgeincorporated.virtuozzo.co.nz/

Supported Employment agencies – are organisations that can assist you with finding disabled employees, providing you with advice and support on recruitment and follow-up support after hiring. The list of Supported Employment agencies in your region can be seen at nzdsn.org.nz/providers/

JobCafe's Possibility website – has an 'available now' section where employers can view profiles of disabled people seeking employment. For a fee organisations can also become recruitment partners allowing them to advertise jobs and access a talent pool and other tools on the JobCafe website. jobcafe.co.nz

ACC – can help with modifications and provide advice about how to assist employees who have acquired a disability through injury to return to work. acc.co.nz

Work and Income – can provide a modification grant, work brokers to help you find employees with the right skills, or provide wage subsidies. workandincome.govt.nz

Other information resources are also available to employers, such as help from other employers. Your organisation could learn from others' successes by:

- reading other employers' success stories about how they have successfully employed disabled people.
- joining employer networks for employers who share the vision of improving the use of the resources offered by disabled people. beaccessible.org.nz

Step 5

Monitor

The Checklist will provide the organisation with a tool to monitor improvements. This information can be used to update your Action Plan.

One important measure in the checklist is knowing how many disabled employees are in your workforce. If you conduct a confidential staff survey, you can use the result as a benchmark. By conducting regular surveys, you can then track your progress at increasing the number of disabled employees within your organisation.

Sharing and monitoring disability information

How you measure the number of disabled people employed in your organisation is a challenging question. The Australian Disability Network has developed a report which includes a survey that can be used with employees.

Below are links to the report and an associated video:

and.org.au/infosharing

youtube.com/watch?v=Z1-0Mz1i4_k

Additional resource

Leadership's role in increasing diversity

Business Council of Australia's report Recognising ability: business and the employment of people with disability looks at the role business can play in increasing workforce participation and inclusion for people with disability. The website includes a video of employers talking about their experiences.
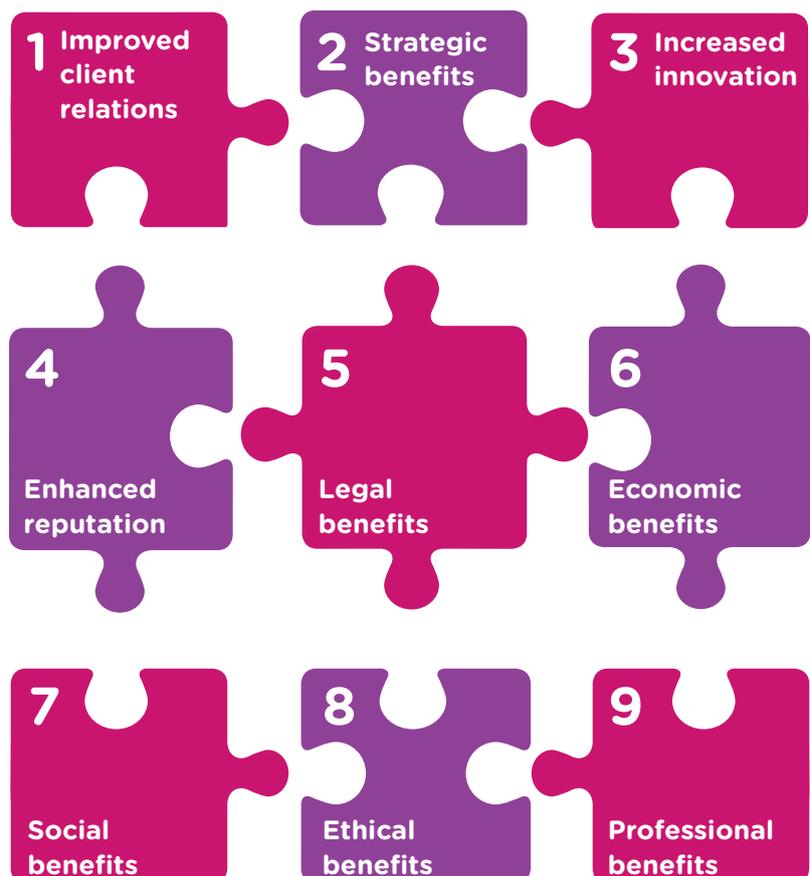
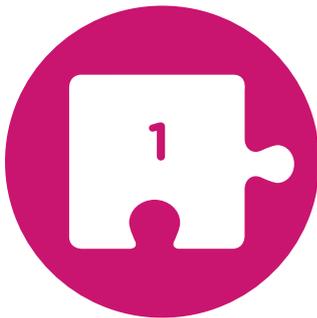www.bca.com.au/media/recognising-ability-business-and-the-employment-of-people-with-disability

2.2

The business case for employing disabled people

Employing disabled people allows organisations to attract new skills and gain new and valuable perspectives.

Employing disabled people not only increases the level of talent, but gains loyal and committed employees. There are many ways in which organisations can benefit from employing disabled people.

1 Improved client relations

2 Strategic benefits

3 Increased innovation

4 Enhanced reputation

5 Legal benefits

6 Economic benefits

7 Social benefits

8 Ethical benefits

9 Professional benefits

Improved client relations

The services that the State Sector delivers affect all New Zealanders. A workforce that better reflects New Zealand's diversity provides a 'real' perspective of what services meet a wide spectrum of needs. Disabled clients and their families/whānau, friends and colleagues want services that meet their needs. All clients prefer to deal with staff who genuinely understand their situation.

Employing disabled people will help your organisation to:

- understand their customers
- mirror the community
- build positive relationships with clients
- respond appropriately to disabled clients' needs
- design and deliver appropriate services for all clients.
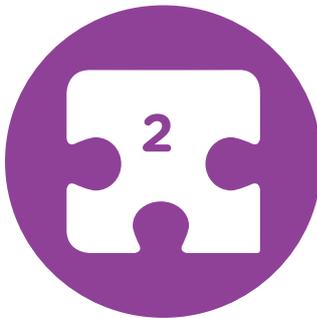
Strategic benefits

New Zealanders expect that government organisations will be knowledgeable about disability and employ disabled people. Disabled people expect to be included among the stakeholders, employees and clients of every government organisation.

By employing more disabled people, organisations in the State Sector will:

- make the most of the available talent
- gain more diversity of perspectives
- understand how disability affects people, their interaction with organisations and their use of technology
- create policies and services which are responsive to their disabled clients' need
- develop new strategies to attract and retain qualified staff
- build better relationships with stakeholders.

Increased innovation

Disabled people bring unique experiences and understanding which can transform a workplace and enhance policies and services.

Benefits include:

- more efficient and effective business processes
- the use of talent in innovative ways to increase productivity
- a broader range of perspectives leading to an increased flow of ideas
- the development of next-generation policies and services.

Enhanced reputation

Employing disabled people also enhances an organisation's reputation. This is because New Zealanders recognise and appreciate that the organisation understands and represents the full diversity of the New Zealand population it serves.

A failure to represent this diversity may lead to an organisation being viewed as 'out of touch'.

Legal benefits

Legal compliance is a key aspect of corporate governance and responsible business.

Being inclusive helps organisations to:

- better anticipate the needs of disabled employees and clients
- comply with the legal requirements of the Human Rights Act
- reduce the risk of complaints.
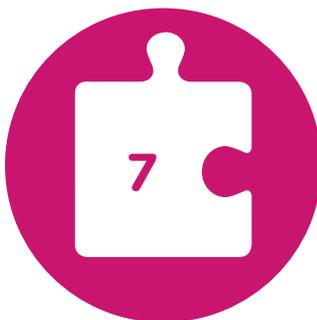
Economic benefits

Employing disabled people will help organisations to manage costs and optimise productivity. This also provides benefits to the wider New Zealand economy.

Employing disabled people helps an organisation to:

- improve productivity through innovative and effective ways of doing business
- minimise hiring costs by accessing untapped talent
- increase retention – particularly because studies have shown that disabled people are loyal employees with higher retention rates[5]
- reduce induction and training costs.

Benefits to the New Zealand economy include:

- disabled people contributing to the economy through taxes
- ensuring greater economic equality.

Social benefits

Including disabled people in the workplace benefits New Zealand society by:

- lowering the tax burden on businesses
- improving New Zealand's economic productivity, competitiveness and growth
- ensuring greater social equality
- providing opportunities for disabled people to contribute significantly to the economy as employees, entrepreneurs and consumers.

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5. Unger, D. D. (2002). Employers' attitudes towards persons with disabilities in the workforce: myths or realities? *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 17(1).
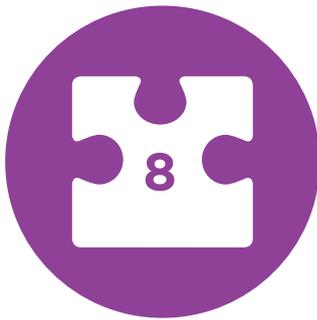
Ethical benefits

Disabled people are no longer isolated or seen as 'special'. They are an important part of the diversity of society. By employing more disabled people, the State Sector can:

- take an ethical stance that reflects society's changing values

- help improve the lives of disabled people

- tackle discrimination – disabled people should not have to accept inequitable and unfulfilling opportunities in the workplace

- create a culture of inclusion.

Professional benefits for managers

Disability directly affects colleagues at work and in their personal lives. Taking a leadership position on disability:

- helps to develop technical skills in change management, people management, job design, accessibility and useability

- helps managers recognise and enable human potential

- builds flexible management skills

- enables managers to make reasonable accommodations that allow disabled employees to contribute.

Additional resources: why employing disabled people makes good business sense:

The price of exclusion: The economic consequences of excluding people with disabilities from the world of work

A report from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) which provides an international perspective on why employing disabled people is a smart business decision.

ilo.org/employment/Whatwedo/Publications/working-papers/WCMS_119305/lang--en/index.html

EmployAbility

A resource guide on disability for employers in Asia and the Pacific.

ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_BK_PB_98_EN/lang--en/index.html

State of the Nation report: Retaining and developing employees with disabilities

A report from the United Kingdom's Business Disability Forum which includes information about the business benefits of employing and retaining disabled staff.

businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/media-centre/news/state-of-the-nation-report-retaining-and-developing-employees-with-disabilities/

Diversity Works NZ

Top tips for creating a work environment that's inclusive of people of all abilities.

diversityworksnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/0516-Top-tips-disability.pdf

Structuring a business case for disability employment

Advice from the Australian Public Service Commission about designing a business case to go beyond ethical arguments to business benefits for employing and retaining people with disability.

apsc.gov.au/managing-in-the-aps/disability/as-one/business-case

Building the Business Case

This short video illustrates the case for inclusion of people with disability in Australia. Over four million people in Australia have some form of disability, so it makes good business sense to make recruitment, products, services, and premises accessible to everyone.

https://www.and.org.au/pages/videos.html

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fq_MhpZ31yA