

# Disability Inclusion: Exploring the Intersections

What policies and practices can help a company increase workplace disability inclusion? *The same as those used to increase the inclusion of any diverse population.* In fact, efforts by corporate America in recent years to welcome and support LGBT individuals point to the value of understanding where these intersections occur—and how employers can leverage them to advance inclusion across the board.

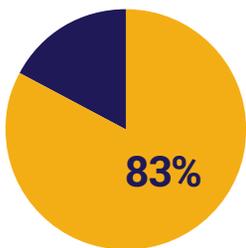
The key is to foster a *culture of inclusion*, one in which all employees feel comfortable bringing their whole selves to work. In turn, employers benefit from diverse perspectives about how to solve problems and achieve success. Smart companies recognize this, and when it comes to people with disabilities, many of the policies and practices that help attract and retain LGBT individuals have cross applicability.

This may be especially so for people with non-visible disabilities who have the choice whether to disclose. A workplace environment in which they feel comfortable doing so, openly without fear of discrimination, can empower them to request the accommodations and supports they need to perform their best. It can also help employers measure their progress toward disability inclusion goals, for example, those for federal contractors under Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act.<sup>1</sup>

## Diversity adds value.

A recent study published by global management consulting firm McKinsey & Company revealed that companies with greater inclusion among their leadership teams are more likely to have financial returns above their industry medians.<sup>2</sup>

## Companies with exemplary track records in LGBT inclusion and disability inclusion overlap considerably.



**83 percent** of DiversityInc’s “Top Companies for People with Disabilities” were also on its list of “Top Companies for LGBT Employees.”



**88 percent** of companies that scored 100 percent on the Disability Equality Index (DEI) also scored 100 percent on the Corporate Equality Index (CEI).

Sponsored by Disability:IN and the American Association of People with Disabilities, the annual Disability Equality Index provides businesses an objective score on their disability inclusion policies and practices.

Published by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, the annual Corporate Equality Index rates American businesses on their treatment of LGBT employees, consumers and investors.



The policies and practices described in this document are just a few examples of strategies employers can use to foster an inclusive workplace, for all employees. For more strategies focused on disability inclusion in particular, please see *Inclusion@Work: A Framework for Building a Disability-Inclusive Workplace* ([AskEARN.org/inclusion-work](https://www.earn.org/inclusion-work)).

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that invitations to self-identify as an individual with a disability are permissible only for affirmative action purposes such as those prescribed by Section 503 or a voluntarily adopted program.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters>

# Examples of Best Practices

2018 DEI-participating companies ▼

2018 CEI-participating companies ▼

## EXPRESS COMMITMENT TO AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE



**99%** had a company-wide written statement of commitment to diversity and inclusion and **88%** had one that specifically mentioned disability.



**95%** had an affirmative equal opportunity/nondiscrimination policy that specifically included sexual orientation as a protected characteristic with regard to employment decisions.

## ESTABLISH AN EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUP (ERG)



**87%** had a disability-focused ERG.



**89%** had an LGBT-focused ERG.

*Employee resource groups (ERGs), sometimes called affinity or business network groups, convene employees based on shared interests and experiences so that they can support each other on common issues and concerns. They provide a forum for leadership opportunities for members of diverse populations and their allies to improve their own workplace environments.*

## INCORPORATE INCLUSION INTO PERFORMANCE GOALS



**33%** of senior executives received individual performance evaluations that specified disability inclusion as part of a written diversity component.



**44%** allowed senior leaders to submit LGBT-focused diversity efforts as part of their annual review of contributions to organizational diversity and inclusion goals.

## ENCOURAGE SUPPLIER DIVERSITY



**72%** had expenditures with certified disability-owned businesses and/or certified service-disabled veteran-owned businesses.



**2/3** of CEI-rated businesses with supplier diversity programs specifically include LGBTQ-owned enterprises.

## HOST EVENTS & ANNUAL OBSERVANCES



Leading companies also coordinate workplace-based training and programming to educate employees on diversity and inclusion issues. These activities often include observances of awareness months. For example, LGBT Pride month is observed each June, and National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) is observed each October. Additional popular observances include Black History Month each February and Women's History Month each March, among others.