



Disability Inclusion for Geelong Suppliers

A Self Assessment Tool & Guide

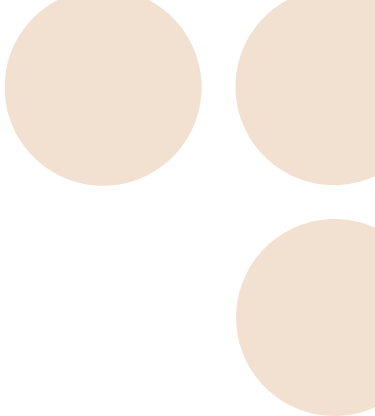
Acknowledgement of Country

The Leisure Networks Project Team would like to acknowledge the Wadawurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the Land, Waterways and Skies on which we all live, play and work and on which our project was completed.

We pay our deepest respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations peoples. In the spirit of reconciliation, we ask that we may continue to walk beside you, to listen and to learn.



Artwork by Ammie Howell



What do we mean by disability?

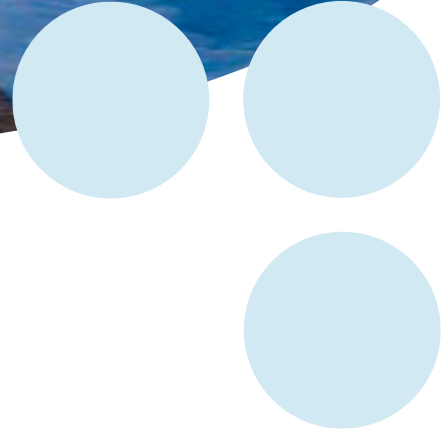
In the Greater Geelong region (G21), disability is understood as any condition, physical, mental, intellectual, sensory, or cognitive, that, when combined with barriers within society, makes it harder for someone to fully participate in everyday life. These barriers might be physical (like stairs without ramps), social (like negative attitudes), or communication-related (like unclear signage or inaccessible websites). This definition comes from the Victorian Government's Disability Inclusion Bill Exposure Draft.

The Social Model of Disability

The Project is underpinned by the Social Model of Disability, which says that disability isn't just about a person's condition, it's about how the world around them is set up. If buildings, services, and attitudes are inclusive, people with disabilities can participate equally. So, it's our environment that needs to change, not the person. The Social Model of Disability shifts the focus from individual impairments to the barriers created by society.

Respecting Language and Identity

People with disabilities describe themselves in different ways. Some prefer person-first language (e.g. "person with disability"), while others use identity-first language (e.g. "disabled person" or "autistic person"). The Project focuses on and respects all preferences and uses person-first language in its official documents in line with national guidelines.



The Leaders for Geelong Program is made possible through the support of our generous Program Partners and Scholarship Providers.

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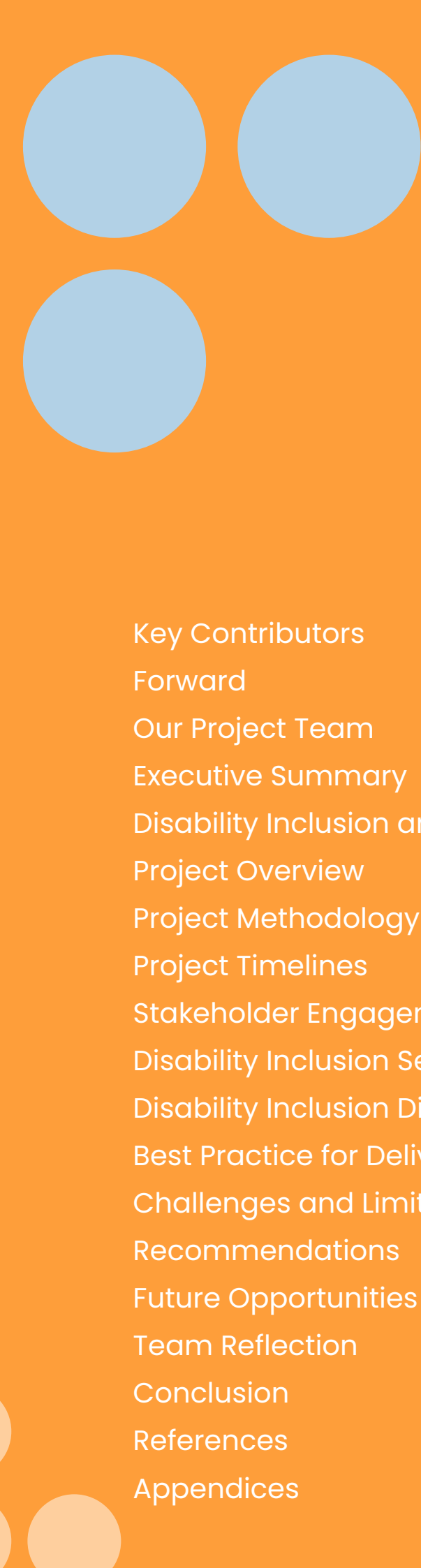


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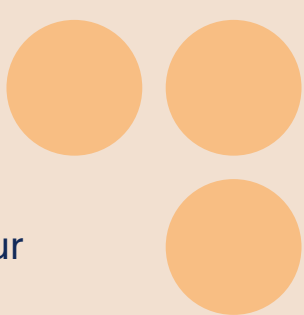
the Gordon



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Key Contributors



We would like to thank the following people who supported our project journey.

Roxie Bennett, our Project Champion embraced our ideas with enthusiasm and energy and connected us to the Geelong Community.

Leisure Networks **CEO David Meade** provided valuable feedback to guide us in the right direction.

The Team at the Committee for Geelong, particularly **Lauren Carnegie**, Community Leadership Director, and **Karen MacAdie**, Community Leadership Coordinator, provided strategic insight and coaching support to help us meet our goals.

Our Project Mentor, **Nicole Litjens**, Head of Digital Delivery at Barwon Water, provided invaluable insights and feedback.

The 2025 Leaders for Geelong Governance Panel guided the development of our project scope.

Kate Barlow, Chief of People and Culture, GMHBA, **Trent Duffield**, Partner, Risk Management-Consulting KPMG, **Janelle Smeelie**, Manager Academic Governance, Deakin University and **David Spear**, Principal, Spearhead Strategic Design and Innovation.

We thank the several stakeholders who provided industry insights, and the real impact of inclusion from the Geelong and Melbourne regions.

Thank you to everyone who generously shared their time and lived experiences to contribute to the outcomes of this project.

Finally, to our Leaders for Geelong colleagues who provided insights, fun and support. We hope you have enjoyed the journey as much as we have.

Forward

At Leisure Networks, we have always believed that inclusion should not be a side project, it should be embedded into the way communities, organisations, and businesses operate every single day. This belief has guided our work for decades, from enabling people with disability to access empowering programs, inclusive recreation and employment opportunities, to partnering with organisations that share our vision for a truly inclusive society.

It's from this foundation that we are proud to partner with the Committee for Geelong's 2025 Leaders for Geelong Program to deliver a Disability Inclusive Supply Chain (DISC) guide; an initiative designed to enable community-based social enterprise cafés to partner with disability-inclusive suppliers, embedding the values of inclusion and community impact into every aspect of their operations.

At its core, the DISC guide is about more than procurement. It is about the conscious choices we make and recognising that we all have the power to purchase from places that are actively building stronger, fairer communities. By identifying and working with disability-inclusive suppliers, organisations not only gain quality products and services — they help create employment pathways, support social enterprises, and contribute to a culture where everyone belongs.

The program also focuses on building meaningful connections, encouraging participants to reflect on their own influence, and inspiring them to lead change within their networks. We know from our own work that when people feel connected, capable, and supported, they create change that lasts. The DISC guide gives them the tools to apply those qualities in tangible, measurable ways.

Our experience across sport, community programs and workforce inclusion has shown us that when inclusion is prioritised, the benefits are felt well beyond the immediate workplace. It strengthens economies, builds social cohesion and empowers individuals to take ownership of a shared vision for their community.

Thanks to the dedication and vision of the Leaders for Geelong Project group, the DISC will not only deliver a supply-chain guide; it will help us to shape a culture where supplier agreements and partnerships become an opportunity to build a stronger, more inclusive future and Geelong.

Inclusion is not a checkbox. It is a commitment, a responsibility and an opportunity. The DISC guide is a way to act on that commitment, and I am excited to see the impact it will have in building communities where everyone can thrive.

David Meade
Chief Executive Officer
Leisure Networks



Our Project Team

This project allowed our project team to explore the impact of disability inclusion practices across the G21 community, highlighting accessible workplaces in the hospitality sector.



Georgia Gray

Program Manager, WorkWell WorkSafe

As a neurodiverse leader, it is pivotal for all voices to be heard in creating strong communities, organisations, and systems. I am committed to build these safe spaces for Geelong and beyond.



Dawn Condon

Director, People Support NDIA

I am passionate about building inclusive workplaces where everyone feels they belong. This project has given me the opportunity to try to influence my wider community.



Hannah Teasdale

Physiotherapy Manager, Epworth Geelong

I'm inspired by the powerful impact of enabling people to be their best. This project empowers businesses to unlock capacity within our community and share the positive long term benefits.



Alicia Mills

Manager, People Services GMHBA

I want to live in a community where inclusion isn't just a word, it's a way of living. Where every person can be their own remarkable.



Aoife O'Connell

Digital Engagement Manager, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)

For me, the goal is simple: build communities and workplaces where diversity isn't just accepted, but genuinely celebrated. If this project shifts even one person's outlook, I'll count that as success.



Kevin Maddrell

Port Operations Manager TT-Line Pty Ltd (Spirit of Tasmania)

Growing up with a parent with disability gave me first-hand experience of the challenges disabled people face and showed me how important it is to create inclusive environments where everyone belongs



Executive Summary

The Disability Inclusion Supply Chain (DISC) discussion guide and self-assessment tool support local suppliers to embed inclusive practices within their supply chains.

Leisure Networks, a local not-for-profit community organisation, has over 30 years of experience supporting capable, healthy and inclusive communities.

The organisation plans to grow employment opportunities for people with disability in Geelong. These resources will help support this goal by strengthening their own inclusion practices and promoting disability inclusion within the Geelong region.

The project aimed to expand local employment opportunities for people with disabilities, promote inclusive workplace practices, and help create a more equitable employment landscape in the region.

Both resources have been tailored to the hospitality sector, supporting local procurement and practical use for suppliers.

A four-phased approach was applied to the project. Planning and research paired with stakeholder engagement insights, allowed for the development of an evidence-based tool and best practice guide for supplier user testing and iteration.

The final phase resulted in two ready-to-use products: the DISC self-assessment survey and the discussion guide, both supported by recommendations for future use.

The project was informed by strong stakeholder engagement and input from people with lived experience of disability.

It was completed in October 2025 and published digitally.

Disability Inclusion and Employment Opportunities in Geelong

The World Health Organisation states that over one billion people worldwide have lived experience of disability, and that most people will experience disability, whether temporary or permanent at least once in their lifetime (1).

5.5 Million

People with Disability
In Australia
1 in 5 People (2)

53.4%

Employment Rate
Working-age people with
disability (2)

10%

Underemployment Rate
of those
employed (3)

Geelong is continuing to grow as a hub for innovation, manufacturing, services and tourism, with our population projected to double over the next 25 years.

22% of people in the Geelong region live with disability and three out of four people with disability or 74% are not employed (5).

Employment participation within this population presents a significant social and economic opportunity for our region to lead the way in building a more inclusive regional economy into the future.





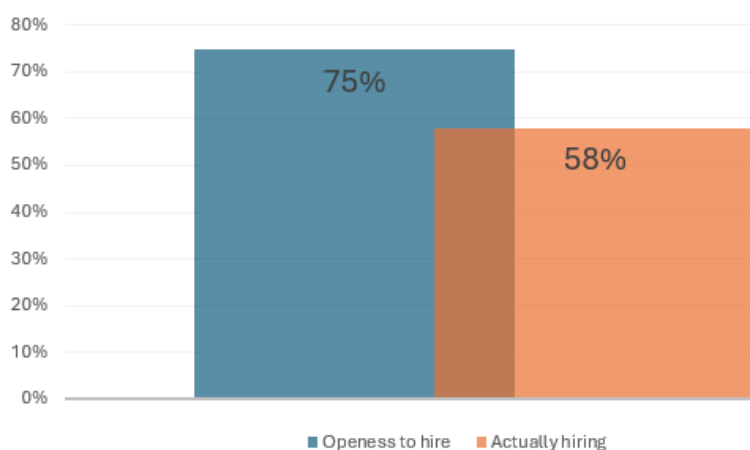
Reasons for underemployment

The reasons for under-employment for people with a disability are varied and complex.

Removing barriers for people with disability starts with genuine interest from Geelong employers. Leadership and a commitment to accessible recruitment practices, combined with a willingness to make meaningful adjustments, are needed to address underemployment

Employment can provide a sense of purpose, an opportunity for connection, financial independence and future growth. While 75% of Australian employers voice openness to hiring people with disability, only 58% actually do, illustrating a discrepancy between intention and action. (9)

17% gap between intention and action



Geelong's Business Growth Areas

Tourism is projected to be a dominant contributor to the Geelong economy over the next ten years. (7) With 6% of our Geelong workforce currently employed in food and beverage services and future demand for tourism jobs in the region expected to grow by 4% annually between 2023 and 2032, this sector will likely face future workforce shortages (8).

Beyond the social benefits of disability inclusion in the workplace, the commercial and economic benefits are clear. Studies suggest that businesses that employ people with disability will demonstrate improved retention rates, staff engagement, workplace culture, enhanced productivity and profit margins. (11)

Project Overview

This project purpose was to help Leisure Networks identify, select and engage disability-inclusive suppliers. The project deliverable was to develop a well-researched, evidence-based DISC guide for the Geelong region.

We aimed to create resources that can help shape procurement decisions for Leisure Networks' future community-based social enterprise cafés, embedding inclusion not only within the cafés themselves but also throughout their entire supply chains.

By partnering with suppliers who demonstrate a genuine commitment to inclusive values, Leisure Networks aims to create a more equitable local economy. The benefits of this approach are:

- **empowered inclusive procurement** leads to more socially responsible purchasing decisions
- **broad business applicability** by using the project resources beyond hospitality, supporting inclusivity across industries
- **boosting local employment with** the creation of more job opportunities for people with disability in Geelong's hospitality sector
- **increasing Geelong's ongoing commitment** to inclusion as a leader in inclusive and accessible business practices.

This project delivers resources that not only support disability employment growth in the G21 region but also help to build a more inclusive and socially connected business environment.

In developing the Disability Inclusion Discussion Guide we took a human-centric approach, one that values genuine conversations, mutual learning and authentic relationships with suppliers.

Project Methodology

The project team adopted a structured and iterative approach beginning with a clear focus on project scale and scope. Through regular collaboration with project sponsors and stakeholders, the team refined the project's purpose and deliverables to ensure they were achievable within existing time, capacity and capability constraints. The team was committed to delivering high-value outcomes for both the project sponsor and the broader Geelong region.

Mixed-Method Data Collection

A quantitative and qualitative data collection approach was conducted throughout the project.

The quantitative data collection included a systematic review of current literature on Disability Employment and practices nationally and internationally.

Qualitative data was gathered from extensive external stakeholder consultation, including interviews, feedback and industry visits.

Program Logic

A Program Logic is a structured framework that outlines how a program's activities lead to desired social outcomes. It maps the relationships between resources, activities, outputs and outcomes, providing a clear pathway from inputs to impact. It is an evidence-based approach to record the intended outcome and deliverables of the program.

Agile Principles

The Agile approach divided work into short, focused stages called sprints. Each sprint had clear goals and outcomes, and the learnings from one stage informed the next. This approach allowed the project team to:

- be flexible and adapt to new insights and feedback
- keep stakeholders and community members involved throughout the process
- ensure the final guide was practical, evidence-based and shaped by the people it is designed to support.

RACI Framework

A RACI framework was used to clarify project roles.

The framework steps out the responsible, accountable, consulted and informed project stakeholders.

Project Timelines

The project team used agile methods to respond quickly to challenges, make continuous improvements, and deliver a guide that is both useful and sustainable. The project was delivered in four clear phases, called sprints. Each phase built on the one before it, to make sure the final guide is practical, evidence-based and shaped by the community.



PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4
APRIL TO MAY	JUNE TO JULY	JULY TO AUGUST	SEPTEMBER TO OCTOBER
PROJECT PLANNING	RESEARCH	DATA & DEVELOPMENT	FINAL PRODUCT & PRESENTATION
Scope development and endorsement	Discovery and select ILO Framework	Design self-assessment survey and discussion guide	Final version of DISC discussion guide
Stakeholder engagement plan	Develop a program logic	Consolidate stakeholder feedback and iterate	Final version of DISC self-assessment tool
RACI & agile project plan	Stakeholder consultation	Redesign, user test and design final product	Final report and Presentation

Stakeholder Engagement

A diverse range of stakeholders, many personally invested through lived experience, played a pivotal role in shaping the direction of our project. We learned that measuring a supplier's progress on disability inclusion can't be captured by numerical scoring or checklists.

This insight informed a human-centric approach, one that reflects each supplier's current situation while identifying opportunities for future growth and impact for inclusion. We met with a range of different suppliers championing inclusion through their business.

Hospitality in action: All Things Equal – cafe in Balaclava.

All Things Equal, led by CEO Jess Colgan, is a disability inclusion industry leader in the hospitality sector. Operating a busy café in Balaclava, Melbourne, All Things Equal provides in-house training and paid employment to individuals with disability. The café engages NDIS-funded hospitality professionals to support employees or trainees in both front and back of house.

Jess emphasised that flexibility, patience and tailored workplace adjustments are core to All Things Equal's success. She manages a waitlist of trainees keen to join the program and runs quarterly family meetings to ensure the training program meets each trainee's evolving needs.

Beyond the program, and when individuals are ready, All Things Equal helps employees to find employment within the wider community. While business viability remains essential, All Things Equal effectively balances commercial and social goals.

Enabling inclusion through partnership: Veneziano Coffee Roasters – coffee supplier Melbourne.

Veneziano Coffee Roasters is improving disability inclusion by partnering with All Things Equal. Veneziano's provides employees with access to specialised equipment and innovative workplace solutions that remove barriers for staff. The business adapted its coffee machines to meet the needs of staff with different physical needs.

This collaboration highlights how thoughtful partnerships and appropriate adjustments can create positive outcomes for both businesses and staff.



Purposeful employment: Baked By Us – Geelong cupcake store

Jess Robinson is the founder and director of **Baked By Us**, a cupcake store in the Geelong CBD employing over 20 young people with disability. With a background in hospitality and lived experience of disability, Jess's goal is to give her team a greater sense of purpose, belonging and community that they may not find elsewhere.

With the assistance of NDIS-funded support workers, staff are empowered to be successful in both kitchen and customer service roles. The workplace is physically accessible, with workplace adjustments built into the physical environment, like a pictorial magnetic shopping list and a modified till. Using visual supports helps to remove barriers and increase employee confidence.

Baked by Us uses quality ingredients and creates high-quality products. Future goals for the business include physical ramp access, a commercial focus and continuing their mission to optimise employment opportunities for those living with disability.



"Having work makes me happy and excited. I've learned lots of new skills."
Sophie Kocovski

"Working here has made me feel safe and happy in my life. Work gives me challenges that might be hard but good."
Daniel Drew

Embedding disability inclusion through partnerships: genU – Geelong, care provider.

genU is driving inclusive employment by embedding supported and mainstream employment opportunities across a range of industries. genU's commercial services are designed to create meaningful work for people of all abilities, while also enabling partner organisations to integrate inclusion directly into their supply chains.

Through land care and maintenance services, genU provides environmental and grounds management roles that support skill development. Their community nurseries offer plant propagation and horticultural work. Education and training programs equip individuals with workforce-ready skills, while staffing solutions focus on disability employment placement and support. genU also operates packing and warehousing services, logistics and distribution roles, secure document shredding, food services and catering, and commercial laundry operations.

genU has evolved from a parent-led initiative started in 1952 to one of Australia's largest disability care providers. Notably, genU's partnerships with **Bulla Dairy Foods** in Colac and **Pholklore**, a restaurant franchise across Geelong, the Surf Coast, and the Bellarine region, have created pathways into open employment.

These collaborations demonstrate how inclusive employment can be embedded within mainstream business operations, delivering value-aligned workforce solutions, while individuals access meaningful work, training and long-term career development.



"The impact has been profound across the board, with the new employees spreading positivity throughout the whole Pholklore team"

Dominic Friend, Pholklore owner.

Systemic change through inclusive education: the Gordon, Geelong TAFE

CEO Joe Ormeno and Project Manager Samantha Noonan shared the vision behind the **Gordon's** Centre of Excellence for Disability Inclusion. Backed by a \$36 million investment, the Centre aims to transform accessibility and inclusion across Victoria's TAFE network. The Centre's mission is clear: to collaborate with community and industry to deliver inclusive education through innovation, policy advancement, knowledge sharing and capability building, ensuring that TAFE is accessible and enriching to all.

With over 180 stakeholders engaged in its development, including students with disability, families, educators and employers, the Centre is pioneering a co-creation model. A student-led team is shaping its operations, ensuring authentic lived experience is embedded in every aspect of design, policy and practice. This initiative positions the Gordon as a national leader in inclusive vocational education.

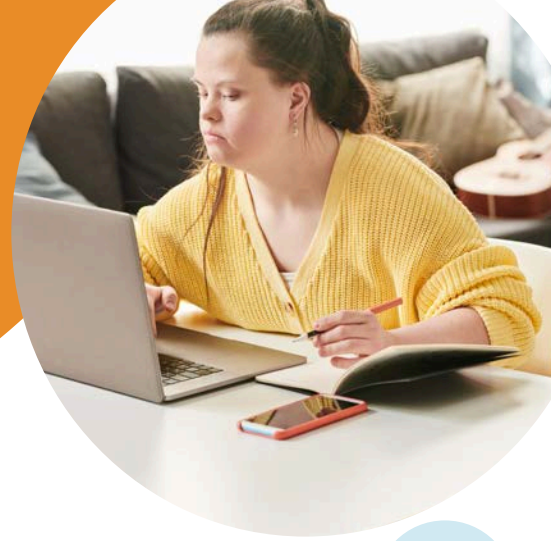


Supply chain stakeholder key insights

Stakeholder engagement revealed a committed ecosystem of organisations throughout Geelong advancing disability inclusion across employment, education and procurement. The key drivers of success for inclusion are:

- **Co-designed and lived experience-led models:** Co-design is a key success factor for inclusion, ensuring that people with lived experience of disability are actively involved in shaping education, policy and practice. This results in more accessible and impactful outcomes.
- **Inclusive employment pathways across industries:** Multiple industry employment pathways are a key success measure because they offer people with disability greater choice and opportunities to match their skills and interests, leading to more sustainable and fulfilling careers.
- **Workplace adjustments lead to better outcomes:** Adjustments like visual aids, modified tools, onboarding and tailored support enable people with disability to work confidently, removing barriers and offering an inclusive environment.
- **Small business leadership in inclusion:** Small businesses can adopt practical and powerful inclusion adjustments to create meaningful jobs, foster community connection, and demonstrate that inclusive employment is achievable at any scale.

Disability Inclusion Self-Assessment



Both assessment tools have been informed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Guide (12), ensuring alignment with global best practices and evidence-based standards for disability inclusion.

This approach was enhanced by consultation with stakeholders and suppliers across the G21 region, and is designed to capture and understand current practices, barriers and opportunities for disability-inclusive employment.

Disability inclusion self-assessment

The supplier self-assessment tool serves as the foundational tool in the disability inclusion journey.

This interactive digital assessment has been specifically designed for hospitality supply chains and can be completed in less than 15 minutes.

The tool can be accessed by using the link or the QR code.

The survey addresses eight critical capability areas as designed by ILO matrix:

- current approach
- exploring values and commitment
- workplace culture
- accessibility and design
- community impact
- future aspirations
- supplier relationships.

Access the survey here

[Disability Inclusion Self-Assessment Survey Link](#)



Disability Inclusion Discussion Guide

The Discussion Guide complements the self-assessment survey and is designed to facilitate meaningful conversations between Leisure Networks/purchasing organisations to onboard potential suppliers.

The Discussion Guide helps to create socially inclusive conversations once potential suppliers have completed the Disability Inclusion Self-Assessment Survey. The discussion guide is tailored to the Geelong region with a best practice approach to improve both supplier and purchaser inclusion know-how.

Expected outcomes and implementation

The assessment tool and discussion guide are designed to deliver both immediate and long-term impacts.

Primary outcomes may include:

- enhanced inclusive employment opportunities within the hospitality supply chain
- increased business capability to implement effective disability inclusion practices
- strengthened networks of committed suppliers.

Secondary benefits may include:

- commercial advantages through access to broader talent pools
- enhanced innovation
- social impact through community wellbeing contributions, and industry leadership positioning.

Both tools prioritise accessibility and user experience: the Self-Assessment Survey is designed using an efficient, interactive format and provides immediate feedback for development planning. The Discussion Guide provides a structured guide to align with any existing supplier onboarding processes.

“I think it’s a fantastic way for businesses to see where they’re at and to understand how they can grow in creating a more inclusive world. Removing the stigma about employing and engaging those with disability is so important.” **Baked By Us**

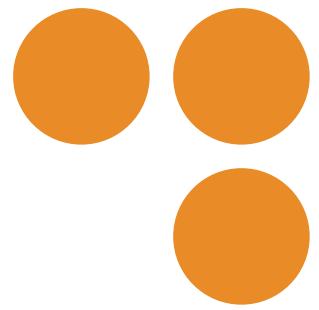
This guide supports hospitality businesses to build disability confidence by making small, practical changes that improve access, inclusion and employment opportunities.

Aligned with national and international frameworks, it aims to help suppliers understand their role in creating inclusive workplaces. This guide supports conversations with suppliers about their disability inclusion practices, encouraging reflection, learning and continuous improvement.

Suppliers are rated from 0 (no response) to 5 (leading practice), helping businesses understand their journey for inclusion from early awareness to deeply embedded approaches to accessibility.

	Context Setting		Supplier Relationships
	Understanding Current Approach to Inclusion		Community Impact
	Exploring Values and Commitment		Barriers and Opportunities
	Employment and Workplace Culture		Measuring Success
	Accessibility and Design		Future Aspirations
	Leadership		Goals for Inclusion

Best Practice for Deliverables



Best practice underpins both the survey and the discussion guide. The International Labour Organization (ILO) Framework and the Universal Design Framework (UD) were used as foundations for best practice. The ILO supports inclusive, equitable and sustainable work environments, while the UD ensures accessibility and usability for all.

The ILO Framework: inclusion through decent work

The International Labour Organization (ILO) Disability Inclusion Strategy (2024–2027) provides a global foundation for inclusive employment practices. It encourages businesses to:

- design workplaces that are accessible and inclusive from the start
- recognise disability as part of human diversity—not a limitation
- build inclusive hiring, training, and procurement systems
- involve people with disability in shaping policies and services.

This aligns with Leisure Networks' approach, which focuses on empowering businesses through education, rather than labelling them as accessible or not accessible. The goal is to build confidence and capability across the hospitality sector.

Universal Design: good for everyone

Universal Design is about creating spaces, services and experiences that work for as many people as possible, without needing special adaptations. By applying Universal Design principles, businesses improve the experience for all customers and staff.

This combined overarching framework supports hospitality suppliers in Greater Geelong to:

- understand their role in creating inclusive communities
- build confidence in hiring and supporting people with disability
- make meaningful changes that benefit everyone.

Rather than focusing on ticking boxes, this approach encourages changes that create welcoming, inclusive environments where everyone can thrive. The tools support hospitality suppliers to develop inclusivity and accessibility in employment.



Challenges and limitations

The project succeeded in delivering a regionally tailored, evidence-based Disability Inclusion Self-Assessment Survey and Discussion Guide, but several challenges emerged throughout its development. Time constraints were a key limitation, as all contributors balanced full-time roles and commitments alongside project commitments.

Technical alignment across organisations, limited access to shared digital platforms, and the absence of cloud-based collaboration tools created logistical hurdles in document sharing and workflow coordination. Additionally, the lack of formal project management structures and workflow management tools affected consistency and momentum.

As the project evolved, so did the scope, shifting to reflect the deeply human-centred nature of the sector we were advocating for. This flexibility ultimately enriched the final project, ensuring it was grounded in lived experience and responsive to local needs.

Challenges during the project delivery:

- defining the scope to ensure ability to deliver a tangible, evidence based and useable resource
- clearly specifying inclusions and exclusions to scope
- aligning deliverables to the tight timelines
- defining means of measuring change over time
- project scope shift during, as we grew to understand first-hand the human-centred nature of the sector and industry we were advocating for.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the future of Geelong's inclusive supply chains.

Continue to broaden the inclusion lens: Leisure Networks is encouraged to explore key inclusion frameworks such as Universal Design, co-design, inclusive training and policy development. There are opportunities to engage key stakeholders from leading organisations, including the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, Includability Employment, the Innovation Network, and the National Disability Services.

Validate and co-design tools with end users: Future iterations of the Disability Inclusion Self-Assessment Survey and Discussion Guide should be co-designed with Leisure Networks customers to ensure relevance, usability and alignment with organisational needs and driven by lived experience.

Leverage employer partnerships: Continue to build relationships with mainstream employers across the Geelong region to expand inclusive employment pathways and create long-term opportunities for people with disability.

Leverage national expertise: Engage with the Australian Disability Network to access resources, training and capability-building tools that support inclusive workplace practices and uplift organisational confidence.

Practical Workplace Adjustments: Encourage businesses to embed inclusive practices into onboarding and daily operations by offering adjustments that are physical, environmental, digital, and leave-related—that support individuals to thrive.

Future Opportunities

The DISC project could be further enhanced by a Phase Two development of complementary tools and approaches.

The current DISC approach enables businesses to assess where they sit on the disability-inclusion journey. For example, is the business just starting to think about inclusion, or does it have established inclusive practices and adjustments? Phase two could build on this foundation and provide tools for suppliers to grow and develop as disability inclusive employers.

FUTURE RESOURCES FOR CONSIDERATION
Educational guide
Learning Module defined by 12 Key Areas of the ILO
Inclusion Training

Building on the best practice tools generated from this project, Leisure Networks could develop a second project phase focused on additional training, education and supplier networks. A Phase Two project could include:

- **Self-reflection mechanism:** Encourage suppliers to critically examine how they currently embed disability inclusion within their business operations.
- **Educational guide:** Structured to be uplifting and educational rather than judgmental, focusing on growth opportunities rather than deficiencies.
- **Onboarding tool:** A specifically designed tool to support Leisure Networks when onboarding suppliers with a social enterprise focus or enhanced disability inclusion practices.
- **Implementation approach:** Further develop the Discussion Guide to include a structured implementation guide that builds upon self-assessment results and provides practical steps to help suppliers reach the next step on their inclusion journey. This tool would ideally identify areas for development and establish pathways for enhanced practice.
- **Supplier capability building:** Develop practical tools, resources and educational materials tailored to the hospitality industry context. Consider building peer learning or 'buddy' opportunities based on supplier feedback and identified needs.
- **Buyer capability building:** Develop training in effective supplier engagement on disability inclusion and create procurement guides supporting inclusive practices.



Team Reflection

Participating in the Leisure Networks project has been a rewarding experience both professionally and personally. It gave us the opportunity to collaborate meaningfully across different sectors, backgrounds and areas of expertise.

One of the most powerful aspects of this journey was working as a diverse team. Each team member brought unique insights and skillsets, which collectively enhanced the quality and depth of our work.

This diversity not only broadened our perspectives but also led to innovative problem-solving and a deeper understanding of the issues at hand.

Our core focus was disability inclusion, and this focus gave our work meaning.

Through stakeholder engagement and community conversations, we gained valuable insights into the lived experiences of people with disability and the barriers they face in accessing meaningful employment.

What we heard shaped our approach to try and ensure the outcomes of the project were informed by the voices of those with lived experience.

As a team, we were strengthened by our diversity and united by our shared purpose.

We recognised early on that our collective success would depend on our ability to communicate openly, share and lean on each other's strengths and remain flexible in the face of challenges.

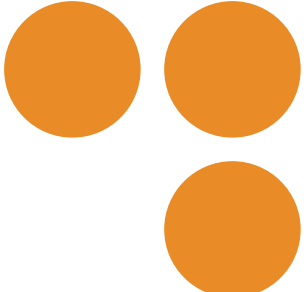
Our different backgrounds often sparked interesting conversations, and we created a collaborative culture that allowed us to navigate complexity and ambiguity with creativity and integrity.

Ultimately, this project has not only strengthened our leadership, strategic insight, collaboration and project management skills but it has also deepened our understanding of inclusion and the role we all play in building a more equitable community.

The relationships built, the lessons learned, and the impact will stay with us well beyond the life of the project.

Many Thanks.

Team Inclusion.



Conclusion

Geelong has a unique and timely opportunity to become a centre of excellence for disability inclusion, where everyone feels like they truly belong.

Part of our learning as a project team was to move away from the idea of a static framework that could uplift disability-inclusive procurement throughout the Geelong hospitality sector, and towards a user-friendly, accessible assessment and guide.

As a project team, through the development of the proposed framework, we discovered that true inclusion comes in many forms. All businesses and organisations are on their own individual disability-inclusive journey.

For example, small suppliers may support disability inclusion through sponsorship and nonprofit partnering, while large corporations may have existing well-developed disability inclusion practices, policies and procedures.

We learnt that people-centric conversations and meaningful engagement encourage and develop inclusive procurement practices. Moving from a framework to an inclusive self-assessment tool and guide helps to shape those conversations. Socially modelled questions create reflection through the self-assessment tool.

This project is about people, ensuring that every person has the opportunity to participate, contribute and thrive. Practical tools, such as the Disability Inclusion Supplier Chain self-assessment and discussion guide, can help open doors to meaningful employment and build a culture of inclusion from the ground up.

By fostering a culture where inclusion is part of who we are, Geelong can lead with purpose and create a future where no one is left behind.

References



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<https://www.businessanddisability.org/news/ilo-gbdn-self-assessment/>

Appendices

Appendix 1: Disability Inclusion Self-Assessment

Disability Inclusion Self-Assessment Survey

We are an organisation committed to creating more opportunities for people living with disability in the Geelong community.

Our goal is to help local businesses in the G21 region understand the commercial, social and community benefits of employing people with disability. These benefits can directly improve your business and have a positive impact on our community.

As a supplier of products and services, this short self-assessment is designed to:

- help you to understand better where your business is on your disability inclusion journey
- help you to identify opportunities for further development
- help us to understand how we can help you
- guide future conversations around optimising disability inclusion within our supply chain

Helping employers feel more confident about hiring people with disabilities and creating better job opportunities will lead to a fairer and more inclusive economy for everyone.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this self-assessment survey

ABOUT YOU (Section 1. Combination of free text and multiple-choice single answer)

What is the name of your business or organisation?

What industry or sector best represents the work you do?

- Hospitality & Retail Managers
- Hospitality, Tourism and Venue Manager
- Cafe or Restaurant Manager
- Supplier of Foods/Services/Baker/Butcher
- HR/Small Business
- Manufacturing

Where are you located (City)?

How many employees do you have?

- Small (0–19 employees)
- Medium (20–199 employees)
- Large (200+ employees)

The best contact details for post survey: email address or phone number.

What is your/their job role? (title – eg. Employee/Manager/Supervisor).

Disability Inclusion Self-Assessment

COMMUNITY IMPACT (Section 2. Multiple-choice single answer)

Inclusion and diversity can come from your local community through the way you do business.

How would you describe your business's connection to the local community?

- Deeply embedded – we actively participate in local initiatives like sponsorships, donations and community-focused events
- Well connected – we regularly support local groups and organisations
- Some involvement – we participate when opportunities arise
- Limited connection – minimal interaction outside of day-to-day business activities

As a supplier do you currently work with local disability support services, inclusion focused charities, families or individual people living with disability?

- Yes – we have ongoing partnerships, supply often, and economically contribute
 - Yes – we have had some contact or collaboration in the past
 - No – but we would be interested in connecting
 - No – we haven't considered this
 - I'm not sure
-

UNDERSTANDING CURRENT APPROACH (Section 3. Multiple-choice single answer)

As a business do you currently employ people living with disability?

- Yes – we directly employ people with disabilities as permanent staff members
 - Yes – we indirectly employ people with disabilities through contractors, suppliers or partner organisations
 - Yes – we employ people with disabilities both directly as staff and indirectly through our supply chain
 - No – we do not currently employ people with disabilities directly or indirectly
 - I'm not sure about our current disability employment status.
-

EXPLORING VALUES COMMITMENT (Section 4. Likert scale- 4 options)

How does disability inclusion fit with your business's values and goals?

Very much – Somewhat – Very little – Not at all

Is it easy for people with disabilities to apply for and take part in job interviews at your business?

Very much – Somewhat – Very little – Not at all

Do you offer reasonable workplace adjustments to help employees living with disability to perform well in their role? These can be physical, environmental or digital adjustments.

Very much – Somewhat – Very little – Not at all

Disability Inclusion Self-Assessment

ACCESSIBILITY AND DESIGN (Section 5. Likert scale- 4 options)

With accessibility and design in mind, please select the most suitable answer below.

All our services and products are disability inclusive.

Very much – Somewhat – Very little – Not at all

We make an effort or try to ensure products are inclusive.

Very much – Somewhat – Very little – Not at all

We have tried in the past but find it difficult to maintain our focus on inclusive practices.

Very much – Somewhat – Very little – Not at all

We have tried in the past, but it was costly.

Very much – Somewhat – Very little – Not at all

We don't really know where to start, it's not a focus for our business.

Very much – Somewhat – Very little – Not at all

We are keen for our products and services to be disability inclusive and would like to improve in this space.

Very much – Somewhat – Very little – Not at all

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

(Section 6. Combination of free text and multiple-choice single answer)

Has there been opportunities for inclusion within your workplace?

- Yes
- No
- If yes, please answer below

If you would like to provide further context, please do so.

What are some barriers your business has faced when trying to make work more accessible?

Disability Inclusion Self-Assessment

SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIPS (Section 7. Multiple-choice single answer)

Does your business consider disability inclusion when selecting providers, suppliers and contractors?

- Yes – it's an important factor in our selection process
 - Yes – but only as a minor consideration
 - No – we don't currently consider this
 - I'm not sure
-

ASPIRATIONS AND GOALS (Section 8. Free text)

Lastly, when considering your current goals around disability inclusion, where would you like to be in 5 year's time?

Thank you for your time today. Can we contact you with the next steps?

Resources to help get you started on your procurement inclusion journey. Thank you.

- Website Social Enterprise Certification: <https://www.socialtraders.com.au/for-business/>
- Website NDS Government: <https://nds.org.au/resources/latest-resources/disability-reform-action>
- Website Workplace Adjustments: <https://www.acas.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments>
- Website Disability Inclusion Network National <https://australiandisabilitynetwork.org.au/>
- Website Disability Inclusion Procurement: <https://australiandisabilitynetwork.org.au/resources/suppliers-and-partners-accessible-procurement/>
- Website Victorian Equal Opportunities & Human Rights Commissions <https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/disability-and-the-workplace/>
- Website Human Rights: <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/self-employment-for-people-with-disability>

Appendix 2. Discussion Guide

This guide has been underpinned by the ILO Framework to provide an evidence-based discussion guide that takes a structured approach for reviewing suppliers, focusing on their commitment and practices related to disability inclusion. It is designed to facilitate meaningful conversations, enhance learning opportunities to further enhance inclusion across your suppliers.

How to use guide:

- **Review Survey Responses:** Identify strengths, gaps, and areas for deeper discussion
- **Set the tone:** Explain the purpose a collaborative, learning-focused conversation
- **Follow the Guide Structure:** Use the matrix categories to guide the discussion in person, over the phone, in a meeting.
- **Score Responses (Optional):** Use the 0-5 scale to assess each area, during or after the conversation.
- **Document Notes:** Capture key insights, examples, and improvement areas.
- **Provide feedback:** Share strengths, suggest improvements, and offer support/resources.
- **Follow Up:** Send a summary and discuss next steps or future engagement.

Scoring Guidelines:

0	Not Applicable / No Response	Question not relevant or no information provided.
1	Limited / Early Stage	Very little evidence of inclusion or just beginning to consider.
2	Basic Awareness / Compliance	Meets minimum requirements, some awareness but limited proactive initiatives.
3	Developing / Some Initiatives	Good understanding, some initiatives in place, but not fully integrated or consistent.
4	Strong / Proactive	Clear commitment, well-defined initiatives, and tangible positive outcomes.
5	Leading / Exemplary	Demonstrates best practices, innovative approaches, and a deeply embedded culture of inclusion.

Supplier Review Matrix

Category	Sub-Category	Example Questions	Score (0-5)	Notes
Opening	Context Setting	• We'd love to hear how your organisation thinks about including people with disabilities. This isn't about ticking boxes—we're genuinely interested in your story and what you've learned • We believe every organisation has something valuable to share about disability		

		inclusion, no matter where they are on their journey		
Foundation	Understanding Current Approach	• What does your organisation currently do to include people with disabilities? Can you give us a few examples? • Have you done anything in the past to support people with disabilities—like a project, event, or change in the workplace? • What made your organisation start thinking about including people with disabilities?		
	Exploring Values and Commitment	• How does including people with disabilities fit with your organisation's values and goals? • What part do you think disability inclusion will play in your organisation's future? • Do you have any policies or ways of working that help support people with disabilities?		
Operational Inclusion Questions	Employment and Workplace Culture	• Is it easy for people with disabilities to apply for jobs and take part in interviews at your organisation? • Do you offer any changes or support at work to help employees with disabilities do their jobs well? • Can you share any positive stories about employees with disabilities in your workplace? • How do you create a workplace where everyone—especially people with disabilities—feels safe to speak up, ask for support, or suggest ways to improve things?		
	Accessibility and Design	• How do you make sure your products or services are easy for people with disabilities to use? • What do you think about or plan for when serving customers or clients with disabilities?		

		• Have you used any design ideas that help make things easier for everyone to use, not just people with disabilities? • Have you made any changes to tools, spaces, or work schedules to support different needs? • Can people with disabilities easily take part in your work or use your services?		
	Leadership & Strategy	• Do you have a plan or commitment from leadership to support people with disabilities and create an inclusive workplace?		
Supply Chain Integration Questions	Supplier Relationships	• When you choose your own suppliers, do you think about how they include people with disabilities? • Do you know if any of the businesses in your supply chain are owned by people with disabilities or are social enterprises? • What do you think businesses should do to help support disability inclusion across their supply chains?		
	Community Impact	• How does your organisation connect with people in the disability community? • Do you work with any disability organisations or groups? • Can you share any examples of how your organisation has helped create more opportunities for people with disabilities?		
Learning and Growth Questions	Challenges and Opportunities	• What challenges has your organisation faced when trying to include people with disabilities? • What are some ways you think your organisation could do better at including people with disabilities? • What kind of help, tools, or resources would make it easier		

		for your organisation to improve disability inclusion?		
	Measuring Success	• How do you check if your efforts to include people with disabilities are working well? • What results matter most to your organisation when it comes to disability inclusion? • How do you hear from employees or customers with disabilities about what's working or what could be better?		
Future Vision Questions	Aspirations and Goals	• Where would you like your organisation to be with disability inclusion in the next few years? • What does success look like for your organisation when it comes to including people with disabilities? • What can we do to help your organisation improve and grow in disability inclusion?		

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Problem Statement: Employers own the responsibility for creating inclusive workplaces, but discrimination, lack of awareness, and inaccessible hiring practices continue to block progress. As a result, people with disabilities in Geelong cannot find meaningful employment opportunities, especially in hospitality and supply chain businesses.

Aim: To increase disability employment in Geelong by educating employers and creating inclusive practices in hospitality and supply chain businesses.

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes	Middle-term Outcomes	Longer Term Outcomes	Impact
Project Team: 6 members Project Champion: R.B and (LN CEO) Project Mentor Support Team: Committee for Geelong facilitators Leisure Networks' 5000+ customer base experience All Things Equal hospitality inclusion expertise Local disability-inclusive venues (DAL, Baked by Us) LN Board of Directors oversight Research literature and case studies	Sprint 1: Project Planning & Setup (May 19 - June 13) Scope Development Stakeholder Mapping Project Structure - Sprint 2: Research & Discovery (June 13 - July 4) Literature Review - Stakeholder Consultation Supply Chain Analysis Sprint 3: Framework Creation (July 4 - July 25) Definition Development Framework Design Stakeholder Testing - Sprint 4: Finalization & Launch (July 25 - October 5) Documentation Dissemination Strategic Planning.	Clear definition of disability-inclusive supply chain Comprehensive supplier evaluation framework Practical criteria and indicators for supplier selection Strategic recommendations for framework deployment Methodology, findings, and recommendations documentation	LN equipped with evidence-based supplier selection tool Increased understanding of disability inclusion in supply chains Tested and refined evaluation criteria through stakeholder feedback Strengthened relationships with disability-inclusive suppliers Comprehensive understanding of local hospitality supply chain landscape	Supplier Engagement: Hospitality suppliers actively improving disability inclusion practices Employment Growth: Increased disability employment opportunities in G21 hospitality sector Market Influence: Other organizations adopting similar inclusive procurement practices Workforce Development: Enhanced skills and capacity in disability-inclusive employment Community Awareness: Greater recognition of disability inclusion benefits	Social Transformation: Reduced disability employment gap in the region Industry Leadership: G21 recognized as model for inclusive supply chain practices Policy Influence: Certification Framework informs broader disability employment policy	Increased economic participation and social inclusion of people with disabilities in the G21 region through transformed supply chain practices