

Boosting the employment of people with disability in the public sector

In 2022, the NSW Government commissioned a sector-wide review to understand efforts that were underway to increase the proportion of people with disability employed in the public sector. The review identified key areas of opportunity and proposed 8 recommendations, each assigned to a lead agency to put into action.

1. Use a consistent definition of disability across the sector, based on the social model.
2. Create a sector-wide workplace adjustment passport to improve employee experience.
3. Develop authentic communication and leadership skills to build an inclusive culture.
4. Create practical recruitment guidance and tools to deliver a more inclusive recruitment process.
5. Provide training and support to upskill people managers and embed inclusive practices.
6. Improve information sharing and reporting.
7. Improve procurement practices to create more accessible environments.
8. Tailor actions for the larger portfolios of Health, Education and Stronger Communities to deliver the greatest contributions to disability workforce targets.

Cross-agency collaboration

Agencies made significant progress in implementing the recommendations in 2023. Following are some key achievements.

- The Premier's Department is leading the adoption of a consistent definition of disability across the sector, based on the social model, and is providing guidance to embed the new definition across the sector.
- The PSC is releasing an e-learning course to support people managers across the sector and embed a culture of disability inclusion.
- The Department of Customer Service and the PSC is developing a proof of concept for a workplace adjustment 'passport' that records approved workplace adjustments, which employees can present for consideration when they move between roles in the NSW public sector. A draft Public Service

Commissioner's Direction and model workplace adjustment policy has been developed for release in early 2024, after formal consultation.

- The Department of Customer Service is researching the workplace adjustment process to find out more about the people requesting adjustments and creating an 'empathy map' of their thoughts and experiences to inform future improvements.
- The PSC is conducting regular inclusion forums to connect sector diversity and inclusion practitioners, with a focus on disability employment.
- The Department of Customer Service is publishing guidance on how to buy accessible digital products and services everyone can use, including people living with disability.

This whole-of-government work program required significant cross-agency collaboration. A three-tiered governance structure was put in place to promote sector-wide visibility, while respecting portfolio-level responsibility for implementation. It was also designed to empower people with disability by consulting them in the design and implementation of recommendations, and to strengthen senior executive accountability as workstreams moved into the implementation phase.

The initiative's Steering Committee provides strategic direction and oversight. Co-chaired by the Public Service Commissioner and the Secretary of Education, it includes a Band 2 or Band 3 senior executive and senior employees with disability from each department.

The Cross-portfolio Delivery Group helps to develop recommendation responses and ensures solutions are informed by employees with disability and fit for purpose for the whole sector. It includes representatives from each department leading the design of recommendation responses, and 2 Disability Employee Network chairs.

Input from people with disability

The Expert Reference Group is a key feedback mechanism to assist teams during implementation, ensuring lived experience is incorporated into the development of solutions. It represents a diverse range of employees with disability, work experience and grades, with at least one person with disability from each portfolio.

The PSC is continuing to provide coordination support to enable the implementation of the disability review recommendations, with the aim of attracting and retaining employees with disability. Agencies will continue to use the governance framework to ensure the program remains leader-driven, agile and focused on providing practical solutions.