

NDCO WA WORKFORCE RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT

In March 2021, Western Australian National Disability Coordination Officers representing regions 26, 27, and 28, conducted a series of World Café style consultation workshops.

NDCO worked collaboratively with Edge Employment Solutions and CoreData to gather and validate data, knowledge, and trends. NDCO WA collected and collated quantitative and qualitative data on gaps and barriers preventing people with disability (PwD) from gaining employment. The gaps and barriers were tested and validated across the regions to formulate recommendations for solutions, goals, and targets to inform inclusive policy developed by workshop participants.

The workshops were held at 5 locations throughout northern WA, southern WA, and the Perth metro area. Attendees represented government and non-government organisations and businesses.

The research data was presented by NDCO WA at the World Café consultation workshops. This style of delivery was chosen due to its interactive style to capture solutions and goals in a creative and informative manner, where participants were challenged to provide responses to the following questions.

- 1- If you had unlimited power and budget, what changes could be put in place to enhance workplace inclusion?
- 2- What does an inclusive recruitment process look like?
- 3- Workplace inclusion is best driven by leadership or other individuals within the organisation, hereby known as “champions of change”.

How do we develop and support champions of change, and what do we need to do this?

Findings from the workshops show the following.

Responses to the question “If you had unlimited power and budget, what changes could be put in place to enhance workplace inclusion?” showed similar trends throughout WA.

The most represented theme among participant responses showed an interest in focusing on **training** throughout the regions.

These responses included:

“Disability training by people with disability”

“Focus on training and development for locals to take on more support roles to meet needs”

The second most common theme from responses gathered was a need for **inclusive work practices**, consisting of accessible work documents/websites, flexible working conditions, and ensuring people with disability are involved with driving workplace cultural change.

Responses include:

“Regular consultation with PwD on continuous improvement”

“Information available in all formats”

“Flexible work environment”

“Attitude and cultural change”

Responses to the second question “What does an inclusive recruitment process look like?” represented 2 major themes.

The most common theme from responses gathered shows that a demand for a **creative and flexible recruitment process** is required for a workplace to become more inclusive.

Collected responses included:

“The way job ads are written, get rid of corporate jargon in ads”

“Alternative recruitment process, identify strengths-based approach on role”.

“Be flexible with resumes and interviews “

“Less requirements on selection criteria”

Other responses shared a similar common theme of reluctance by potential employees to disclose their disability. Workshops revealed workplaces sought further knowledge on how to address disclosure upon recruitment and how to provide an **opportunity for disclosure**.

Responses to this question included:

“Change the way we ask people to disclose”

“Promote proactive response to disclosure of disability in recruitment process”

The third topic addressed that workplace inclusion is best driven by leadership or other individuals within the organisation, known as “champions of change”.

This consisted of 2 questions which generated enthusiastic and detailed responses from participants.

Questions given were:

“How do we develop and support champions of change?”

and

“What do we need to do this?”

The most common theme represented was **raising the profile of champions** of change within an organisation.

Responses from participants included:

“Recognise and reward people for being champions”

“Recognition of interest, extra effort, further education and reward”

“Creating a more reportable and responsible role”

“Raise the profile of champions and include in executive meetings and processes”

Sharing responsibilities was another major theme represented from responses. Driving organisational change should be the responsibility of all, and not one individual.

Participant responses included:

“Sharing responsibilities and actions”

“Make it part of everyone’s job”

From the workshops delivered in regions 26, 27, and 28, NDCO WA have found that to increase workplace inclusion and inclusive work practices along with developing champions within organisations, the following recommendations should be implemented:

- 1- An organisational focus on training and development for staff on workplace and social disability inclusion.
 - 2- Development and support of inclusive work practices through regular consultation with people with disability on continuous improvement for workplace cultural change.
 - 3- Creative and flexible recruitment process by providing a full layout of the recruitment process to prospective employees, developing more accessible job advertising across numerous platforms, and utilising plain English instead of corporate jargon.
 - 4- Providing opportunity for disclosure for people with disability by promoting inclusivity to allow for disclosure, and training staff on how to provide a proactive response to disclosure of disability during the recruitment process.
 - 5- Recognition within organisations and community by raising the profile of champions and including them in executive meetings and processes within individual business and the wider community.
 - 6- Sharing responsibilities to champion organisational change by making it part of everyone's role through distribution of responsibilities and actions.
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NDCO WA (in conjunction with Edge Employment Solutions and CoreData) research shows that focusing on staff training, consulting with PwD, utilising a flexible recruitment process, providing opportunity for disclosure, and recognising champions of change is recommended for organisations looking to be more inclusive.

Numerous reference papers and organisations data and research ^{1, 2, 3} suggest that changes to access and inclusion within the structure of a workplace is clearly linked to improvements in organisational performance, profitability and staff retention.

If workshop participants from WA have highlighted in their responses that organisational change is required to achieve an inclusive workplace, and that research shows inclusion is beneficial, then NDCO WA suggests the implementation of these 6 recommendations at a policy level in order to drive inclusion within an organisation.

1. The Diversity Council of Australia reinforced these findings, noting “effective management of workplace diversity is clearly linked to improvements in organisational performance, effectiveness, profitability and revenue generation
2. A report issued by the Australian Network on Disability’s (AND) reveals that Australia’s GDP could be increased by \$43 billion over the next decade if more Australians with disability were included in the nation’s workforce. Source: National Disability Services (NDS) has estimated that there are 200,000 people with disability who want to enter the labour force: www.nds.org.au
3. An employee with disability can lead to increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, reduced turnover, increased morale, more positive organisational culture and reduced workers’ compensation
Disability Investment Group, 2009, The Way Forward, A New Disability Policy Framework for Australia