

# BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

## Disability Inclusion Pledge Survey Findings and Recommendations

### Full Report



**Disability &  
Philanthropy  
Forum**

[DisabilityPhilanthropy.org](https://DisabilityPhilanthropy.org)

March 2022

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The [Disability & Philanthropy Forum](#) is an emerging philanthropy-serving organization created by the Presidents' Council on Disability Inclusion in Philanthropy. Central to the Forum's mission is expanding philanthropic commitment to disability rights and justice by centering the leadership of the disability community.

To help funders and philanthropy-serving organizations as they engage in their disability inclusion journeys, the Forum created the [Disability Inclusion Pledge](#). The Pledge identifies concrete ways for funders and others in the sector to actively shift away from policies and practices that perpetuate ableism — the systemic stigmatization of and discrimination against people with disabilities — and uplift disability as an essential component of advancing equity.

**Beginning the Journey: Disability Inclusion Pledge Survey Findings and Recommendations** provides a baseline measurement of how current practices and plans of responding Pledge signatories align with each of the eight action agendas included in the Pledge. The report serves as a resource for:

- Understanding where organizations pledging to advance disability inclusion are making strong progress, and where they may need support to meet their commitment.
- Learning about disability-inclusive practices that funders and philanthropy-serving organizations are actively embracing and implementing.
- Gaining insights on key disability inclusion strategies and practices identified by the Disability & Philanthropy Forum.

# Key Findings

**More than one-quarter (28%) of responding Pledge signatories have written guidance in place for including people with disabilities in community engagement and advisory roles, while more than half (54%) are exploring the possibility of creating such guidance.**

As more philanthropic organizations intentionally and consistently engage the disability community, they will become more effective at addressing long-standing inequities.

**Almost one-third (30%) of responding Pledge signatories currently track disability metrics for their staff, and 31% track disability presence on their boards.**

Better understanding of whether and how people with disabilities are represented on staff and boards is key to building organizations that are inclusive, equitable, and welcoming to people with disabilities.

**While half (50%) of responding Pledge signatories signal that people with disabilities are welcome by including accommodations language in event invitations, only 20% are leveraging their event sponsorships to increase accessibility and inclusion.**

Embracing disability as part of diversity requires creating accessible environments. As responding Pledge signatories clarify their commitment to ensuring disabled people have full access at events that they host and sponsor, they will gain knowledge that they can apply to make their workplaces, community engagement programs, and organizations more welcoming and inclusive.

**Over one-quarter (29%) of responding Pledge signatories have written internal policies or guidelines to increase the share of their annual grantmaking that focuses on or incorporates people with disabilities, while more than two-fifths (41%) have no current plans to increase this share.**



Philanthropy is increasingly aware of the ableist systems that result in high rates of poverty and reduced opportunities for disabled people. As increasing numbers of responding Pledge signatories set foundation-wide goals for disability-related grantmaking consistent with their mission, they can begin to ensure their funding strategies are truly equitable.

**Only one-third (33%) of responding Pledge signatories currently conduct DEI training for their boards that formally incorporates disability.**

In addition, almost one-quarter (24%) of responding Pledge signatories do not conduct board DEI training at all. Given the fundamental role of boards in setting the strategic direction for organizations, board training addressing disability inclusion will be essential to advancing disability inclusion in philanthropy.

Survey responses begin to paint a picture of how the journey to inclusion begins. More than half of responding signatories reported that they are already actively requiring disability-inclusive language, including accommodations language on their event invitations, and have completed audits of websites and facilities.

# INTRODUCTION

The last few years have challenged philanthropy and the communities we serve in unprecedented ways, and now more than ever, the fight for equity, inclusion, and social justice matters. The COVID-19 pandemic, economic recession, and racial injustice have shined a light on what we have all known for far too long: People with disabilities have been disproportionately impacted by each crisis, each budget cut, and each rollback of civil rights.

Simply put, social justice requires disability inclusion. To meet the urgency of this moment, more than 60 foundations and philanthropy-serving organizations have committed to initiate their disability inclusion journey and hold themselves accountable by signing the [Disability Inclusion Pledge](#).

“ We realized in completing this [survey] what an incredible roadmap the questions provide to us for thinking about all we could be doing.

— Kitty Julian, Director of Communications, The Pittsburgh Foundation

The Pledge identifies concrete ways for funders and others in the sector to actively shift away from policies and practices that perpetuate ableism — the systemic stigmatization of and discrimination against people with disabilities — and to uplift disability as an essential component of advancing equity.

Signatories all agree to report back by 2023 on progress in eight action areas: community engagement, inclusive language, accessible events, inclusion audits and plans, staff and board training and participation, grantmaking, and measurement. These actions are intended to help move philanthropy toward the goals of the Disability & Philanthropy Forum's [Theory of Change](#): creating a culture of inclusion; expanding disability participation in the sector; and increasing grantmaking for disability inclusion, rights, and justice.

To facilitate the Pledge reporting and measurement process, the Disability & Philanthropy Forum issued a baseline benchmarking survey in 2021. The survey

will be repeated in 2023 to measure progress. Responding signatories reported that the survey served as a helpful blueprint for getting started.

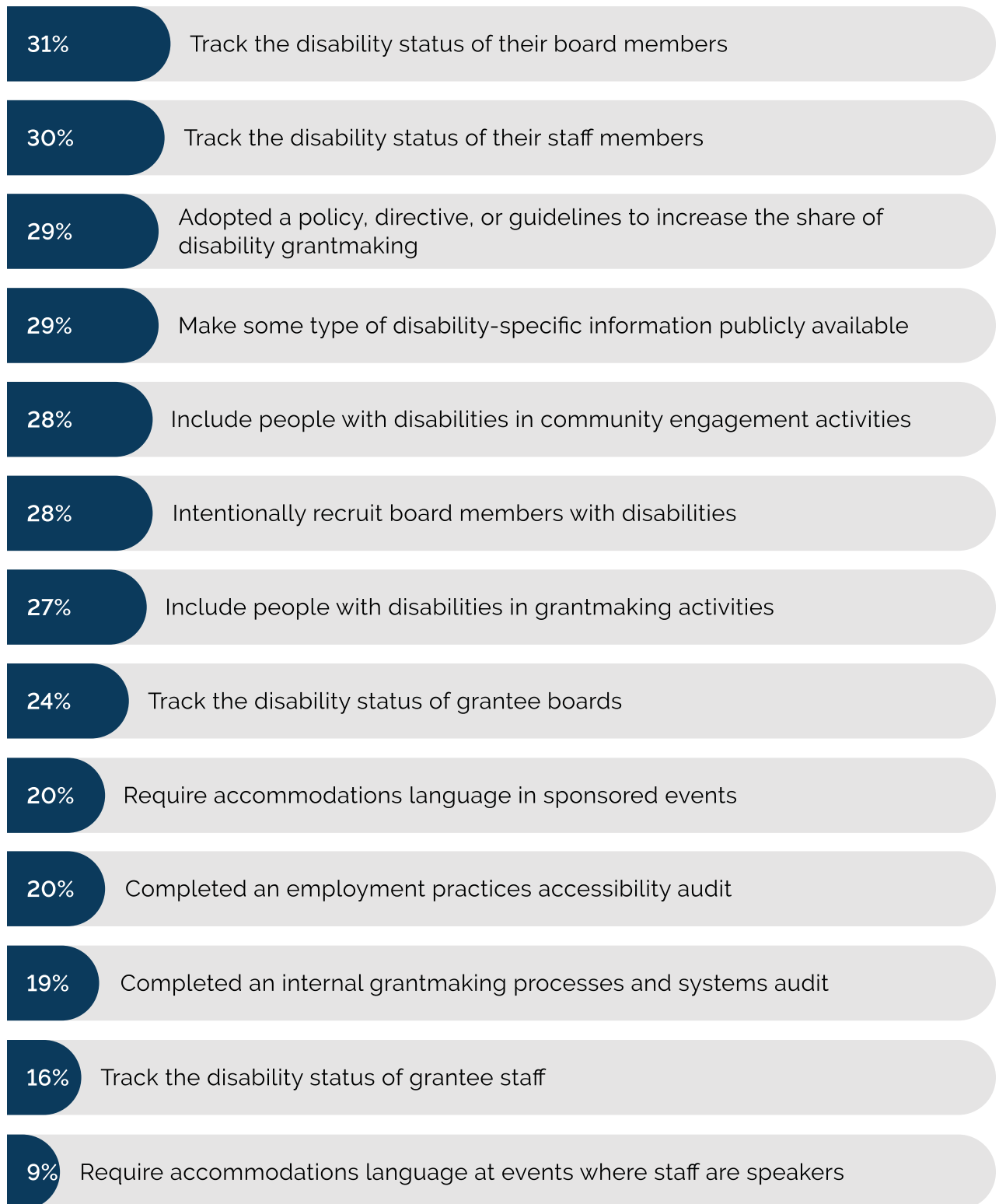
Survey responses begin to paint a picture of how the journey to inclusion begins. More than half of responding signatories reported that they are already actively requiring disability-inclusive language, including accommodations language on their event invitations, and have completed audits of websites and facilities.

### Disability Inclusion Pledge Current Practices (Part 1) \*



\* Chart split into two parts. Continued on next page.

## Disability Inclusion Pledge Current Practices (Part 2) \*\*



\*\* Based on shares of responding Pledge signatories. Overall, 55 Pledge signatories responded to the survey. However, not all responding signatories responded to every question.

# How to Use this Report

**Beginning the Journey: Disability Inclusion Pledge Survey Findings and Recommendations** provides baseline measurement of how current practices and plans of responding Pledge signatories align with each of the eight action agendas included in the Pledge. In addition to survey findings, this report highlights select recommendations and resources for:

- Understanding where organizations pledging to advance disability inclusion are making strong progress, and where they may need support to meet their commitment.
- Learning about disability-inclusive practices that funders and philanthropy-serving organizations are actively embracing and implementing.
- Gaining insights on key disability inclusion strategies and practices identified by the Disability & Philanthropy Forum.

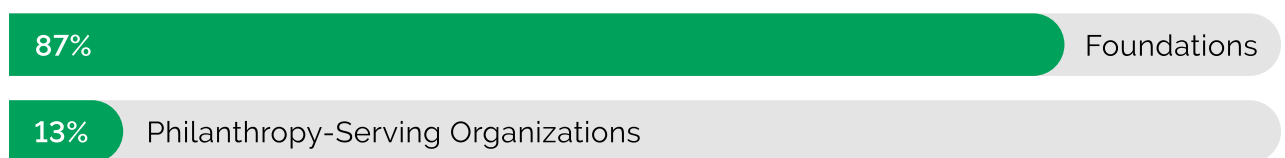
The Disability & Philanthropy Forum offers **Beginning the Journey** as a resource for philanthropic sector organizations seeking to “move the needle” on disability inclusion in their organizations, communities, and among their grantees, members, and peers. For additional resources and opportunities to learn how to implement disability-inclusive policies, practices, and grantmaking, join the [Disability & Philanthropy Forum](#).

# Methodology

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum (created by the Presidents' Council on Disability in Philanthropy) conducted the **Disability Inclusion in Philanthropy Benchmarking Survey** from October through November 2021. The survey expanded upon a 2020 survey of 16 Presidents' Council members and included fixed-response and open-ended questions.

Sixty-one responding signatories of the Disability Inclusion Pledge — including 51 grantmakers and 10 philanthropy-serving organizations — received the online survey. Fifty-five signatories responded for a 90% response rate. In addition to this report, survey respondents received custom reports that benchmark their organization's responses against the aggregate data.

## Survey Respondents by Type



# FINDINGS



# Disability Community Engagement



**Disability Inclusion Pledge:** Create explicit policies for including people with disabilities in community engagement activities and other advisory roles in the spirit of the disability rights principle “nothing about us without us.”

## Key Findings

**More than one-quarter of responding signatories have written guidance for including people with disabilities in community engagement and advisory roles.**

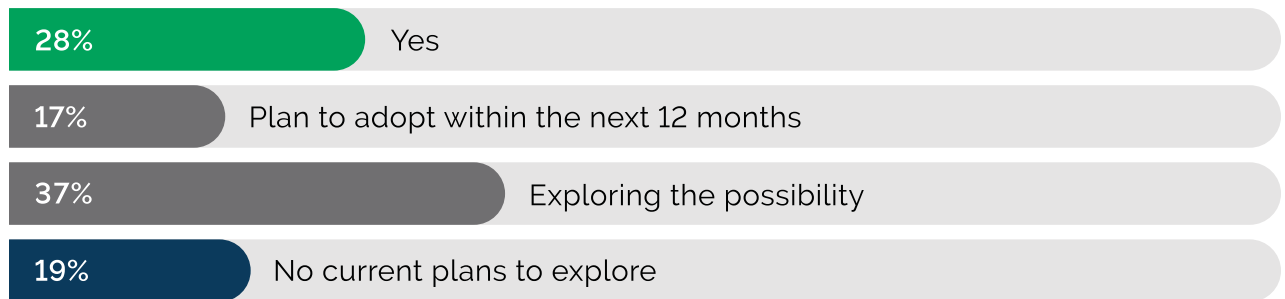
Across the philanthropic sector, there has been growing awareness that achieving lasting solutions to long-standing societal challenges will require intentionally and consistently engaging the communities most affected. Reflecting approaches, such as trust-based philanthropy and participatory grantmaking, increasing numbers of funders are seeking out the perspectives and leadership of affected communities to inform their organizations' strategic planning, program design, and other activities.

Among Disability Inclusion Pledge responding signatories, more than one-quarter (28%) have adopted written guidance aimed at engaging the disability community and ensuring that the insights and experiences of people with disabilities inform their activities. Providing this type of formal institutional commitment increases the likelihood that the needs and priorities of disabled people will be consistently represented across grantmaking priorities and strategies.

Beyond the responding signatories that have already made a formal commitment to including people with disabilities in their community engagement activities, another one-in-six signatories (17%) indicated that they have plans that will lead to the adoption of written guidance within the next year. Conversely, about one-in-five signatories (19%) do not currently have plans to adopt written guidance on including people with disabilities in their community engagement activities.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Visit also [Figure 10](#) for how foundations are including disabled people in grantmaking activities.

## Figure 1. Organization has a written policy, directive, or guidelines on including people with disabilities in your community engagement activities. \*



\* Based on responses of 54 signatories.

## Recommendations

- Develop an active disability advisory group that includes diverse disabled people who are compensated to guide planning and implementation of disability-inclusive policies and practices.
- Foster meaningful connections with disabled people from across marginalized communities and with local, state, and national disability-led organizations.

## Resources

- [Guidance for Foundations on Creating Disability Advisory Groups](#)
- [How to Foster Meaningful Connections with Disability Advocates and Organizations](#)
- [Journey to Inclusion Webinar: Learning from Disability-Led Organizations](#)

## Inclusion in Action: Examples

- “ We have community panels and “disability” is one of the identity markers we track when selecting panel members, trying to compose a panel with people of many different types of diversities.
- “ Our disability-focused staff have deep connections with the disability rights movement, so there are informal consultations on a regular basis. In the future, we hope to concretize ongoing informal practices into actions of accountability. Recently, [we have] been supporting grantmakers to develop suitable models of participatory grantmaking involving marginalized communities, with specific practical experiments aiming at consulting people with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities and their organizations on programmatic work...
- “ We do have an informal practice of including people with disabilities in grantmaking activities, such as participating in review panels and serving as program advisors for certain initiatives.



**Disability Inclusion Pledge:** Recognizing that the language of identity is an individual choice that varies widely among the disability community, use both person-first and identity-first language to respectfully acknowledge different preferences in internal and public facing communications and style guides.

## Key Findings

**Eighty percent of responding signatories specify language for describing disability; almost two-fifths acknowledge different preferences by using both person-first and identity-first language.**

The Pledge promotes alternating between person-first language (i.e. “people with disabilities”) and identity-first language (i.e. “disabled people”). While person-first language is more common today, many disabled people are increasingly embracing identity-first language.

By specifying person-first and/or identity-first language, and avoiding euphemisms such as “differently abled” or “special needs,” Pledge signatories can use the power of language to communicate that they value disability inclusion and respect community and individual preferences.

Four out of five responding signatories (80%) specify the terminology to be used in internal and external communications when referencing people with disabilities. The largest share (39%) specify using either person-first or identity-first language, and more than one-third (37%) specify a person-first approach. An additional 4% specify identity first language.

Finally, one in five signatories (20%) do not currently specify terminology referencing disabled people.

**Figure 2. Organization specifies the terminology to be used in internal and external communications when referencing people with disabilities. \***



\* Based on responses of 54 signatories. Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%

\*\* To respect differing preferences within the disabled community.

## Recommendations

- Deepen staff understanding of the nuances of disability language by providing training and learning resources.
- Thoroughly review your organization's website for disability language, checking to see how often disability is mentioned, and what terms are used to refer to it.
- Incorporate clear guidance on disability-inclusive language in the organization's style guide.

## Resources

- [Disability and Language Guidance](#)
- [Webinar on Disability and Language](#)
- [A Conversation on Language with Disability Advocate Julie Petty](#)

## Inclusion in Action: Example

“ We use the language in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) that refers to “persons with disabilities”.

# Accessible Events



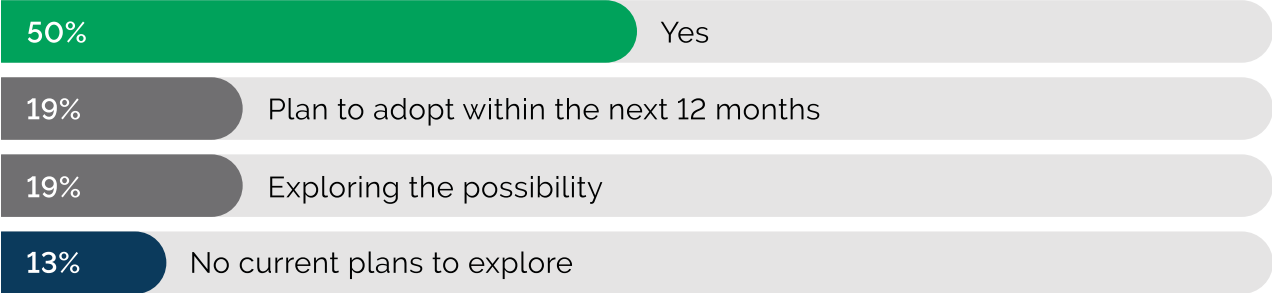
**Disability Inclusion Pledge:** Include accommodations language on invitations and registrations for all events that we host and sponsor. In addition to the events we host and sponsor, request that accommodations language be used in invitations and registrations for events we speak at and co-sponsor.

## Key Findings

**Half of responding Pledge signatories signal that the disability community is welcome by including accommodations language in invitations.**

By providing accommodations language as a standard component of invitations and registration forms, organizations can ensure people with disabilities know that they are both welcome and will be able to participate fully. Half (50%) of Disability Inclusion Pledge responding signatories have written guidance requiring accommodations language on all invitations and registration forms for events they organize. Another nearly one-in-five responding signatories (19%) indicate that they have a plan to adopt written guidance on accommodations for their events within the next 12 months.

**Figure 3. Organization has a written policy, directive, or guidelines requiring that all invitations and registration forms for events organized by your organization include accommodations language. \***

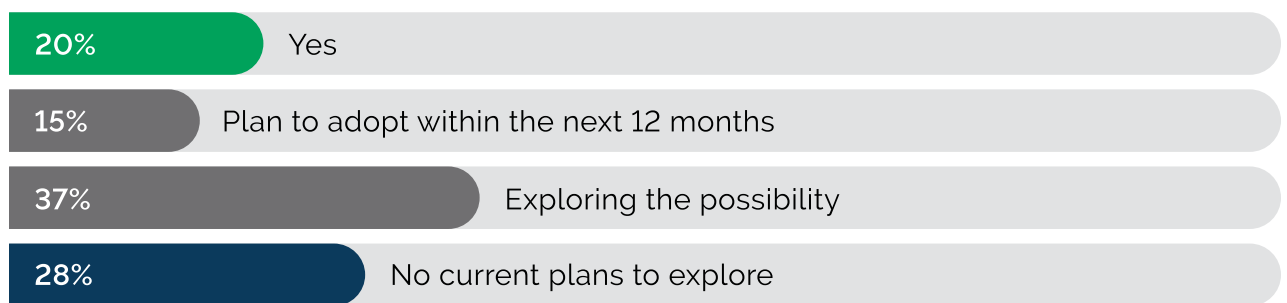


\* Based on responses of 54 signatories.

## Responding signatories are just starting to leverage their sponsorship and participation in events to increase accessibility and inclusion.

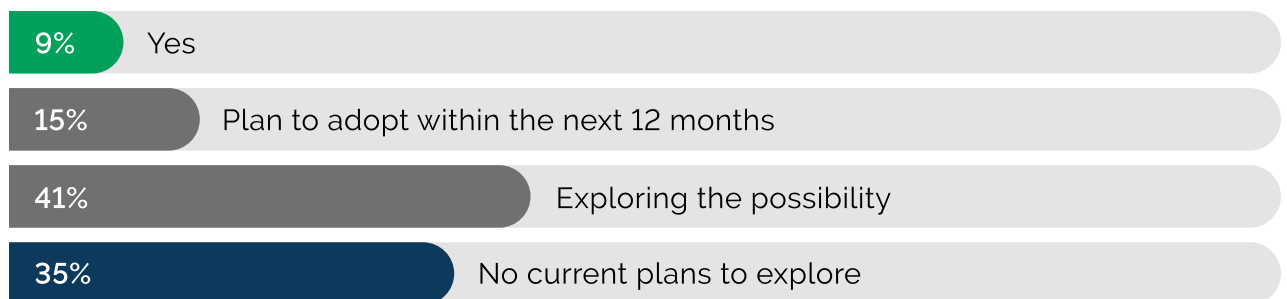
Funders that require accommodations language for events they sponsor can leverage their engagement to increase accessibility. One-fifth (20%) of responding signatories have written guidance in place requiring that all invitations and registration forms for events their organization sponsors include accommodations language. Another 9% require that accommodations language be included in invitations and registration forms for events where responding signatories' staff will be speakers.

### Figure 4. Organization has a written policy, directive, or guidelines requiring that all invitations and registration forms for events sponsored by your organization include accommodations language. \*



\* Based on responses of 54 signatories.

### Figure 5. Organization has a written policy, directive, or guidelines to request that all events at which your organization's staff are speakers include accommodations language. \*



\* Based on responses of 54 signatories.

## Recommendations

- Include a clear accommodations statement on all event outreach and registration materials.
  - Sample language: “[ORGANIZATION NAME] is committed to making our events accessible to everyone. If you require an accommodation or service to fully participate, please contact [NAME at EMAIL, PHONE NUMBER] at least [#] days prior to the event.”
- Establish a centralized budget for event accessibility, and consider making grants to support accessibility for sponsored or grantee events.
- Develop a standard letter to inform your partners of the accommodations language you require before agreeing to sponsor or speak at their event.

## Resources

- [Planning Accessible Meetings and Events](#)
- [Sample Accommodations Request Templates](#)

## Inclusion in Action: Examples

“ We have worked with consultants in the past to do audits of our event venues with access/inclusion in mind. We provide captioning for all virtual programming, and ASL interpretation for our two major conferences each year. We also ask all speakers at these conferences to provide visual descriptions of themselves at the start of their session.

“ We are currently having all public webinars and virtual presentations captioned and signed.

“ We added extra grants to be awarded to our past grantees to support... accommodations to increase disability access and inclusion for all [grantee] events, educational programs, and advocacy actions.





**Disability Inclusion Pledge:** Conduct audits and create improvement plans that we will implement over time to ensure the accessibility and disability inclusion of: employment practices, encompassing but not limited to our accommodations, talent recruitment, and retention policies; facilities, promoting universal design whenever possible; websites in accordance with the most recent Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG); and grant making processes and systems, both for external (grantee) and internal (staff) users.

## Website and Facilities Audits

### Key Findings

**Half of responding Pledge signatories have completed audits of websites and facilities.**

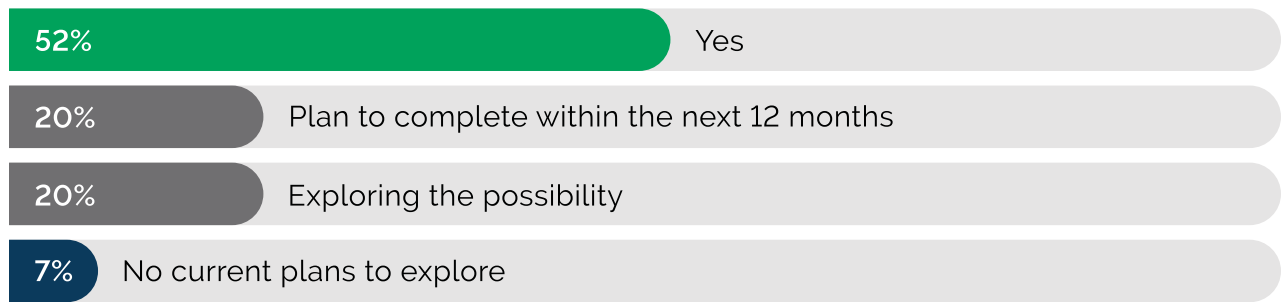
Conducting formal accessibility audits and adopting improvement plans are instrumental in helping philanthropic organizations move from assuming that their resources, facilities, and processes are fully open to and supportive of disabled people to knowing whether that is true.

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum defines audits broadly as a methodical examination and review, which can be performed by external experts or internal intentional self-assessment.

In fact, about half (52%) of Disability Inclusion Pledge responding signatories have already conducted accessibility audits of their websites and facilities (49%). An additional one-fifth (20%) of responding signatories indicated that they have a plan in place to complete an accessibility audit of their website within the next year.

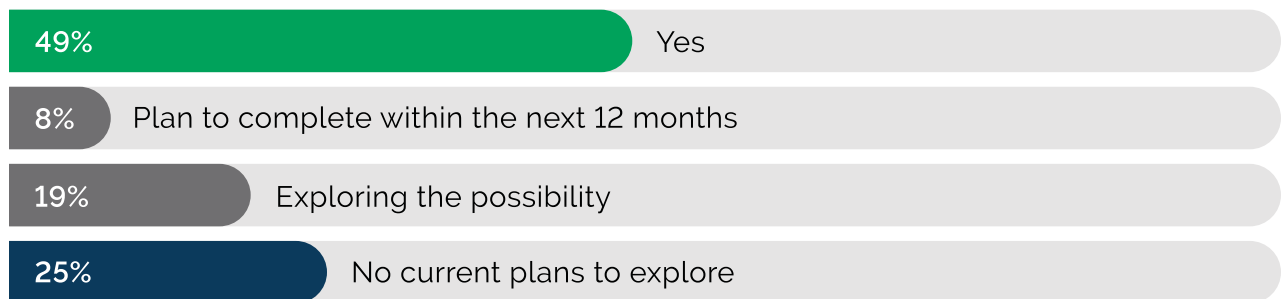
Conversely, one-quarter (25%) of responding Pledge signatories indicated that they have no current plans to explore conducting an accessibility audit of their facilities.

## Figure 6. Organization has completed an accessibility audit of its current website using WCAG 2.1 or higher standards. \*



\* Based on responses of 54 signatories. Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%.

## Figure 7. Organization has completed an accessibility audit of its facilities. \*



\* Based on responses of 53 signatories.

## Recommendations

- If feasible, engage independent experts to review facilities, practices, and systems. As part of the auditing process — even if it is a self-assessment — conduct thorough user testing that is representative of a range of disabilities and accessibility needs.
- For each audit or assessment, develop an improvement plan with a timeline, and assign accountability for implementation.

### Specific Examples

- Conduct an accessibility audit of the full online presence of your organization, including website, digital resources, outreach emails, and social media.

- Free online testing tools can be a helpful starting point to determine website accessibility, but do not stop there. User testing is vital.
- Avoid using plug-ins or overlays that claim to make websites WCAG-compliant.

## Resources

- [Web Accessibility](#)
- [Creating Accessible Resources](#)
- [A Guide to Document Accessibility](#)
- [Renewing the Commitment: An ADA Compliance Guide](#)

## Inclusion in Action: Examples

“ We currently have an interactive accessibility feature that enables people with disabilities to customize their experience of the website. We are also... redesigning the site to meet WCAG 2.2AA.

“ Identified issues are being addressed across the site and incorporated into all site upgrades. We also provide alternative formats to publications that are posted on the website.

“ Our office space is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. When staff with disabilities need modifications to their office space, we work with the building managers to help provide this.... We also support our remote staff by providing large screens and other accommodations.

“ With each renovation project, we engage architectural professionals who assist us with design to meet or exceed ADA guidelines and anticipate the needs of people with disabilities.

“ We have a series of recommendations in place that have been used to design our newest office...and these standards are being adapted as part of an inclusive design project that will impact the rest of our spaces.

“ In 2017, [we] began the transition to being a virtual foundation [and] no longer lease or own any facilities. Additionally, when the foundation acquires space for community or convening events, we conduct accessibility audits on the space before any rental decisions are made.

## Grantmaking Processes and Systems Audits

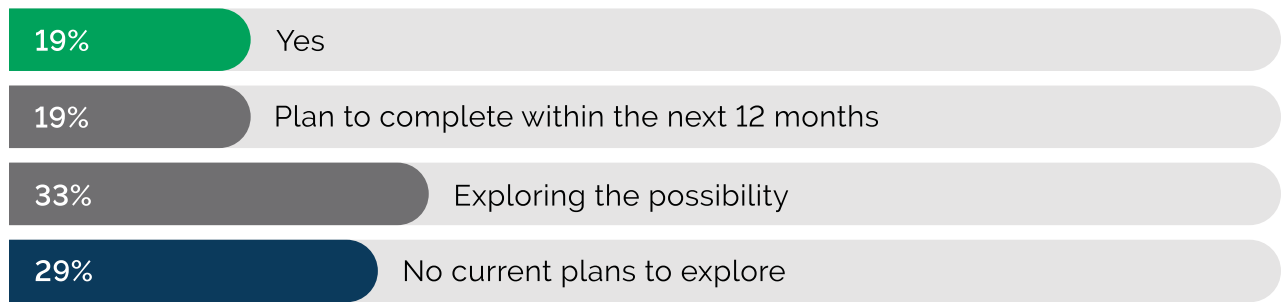
### Key Findings

**With many responding signatories planning to complete audits of internal and external grantmaking processes and systems, disabled people's participation has the potential to expand.**

Internal grantmaking processes and systems can vary greatly from organization to organization, with some ensuring that people with disabilities have ready access to necessary accommodations, while others may present unintended challenges. Nearly one-fifth (19%) of responding Pledge signatories have already completed accessibility audits of these systems, while another almost one-fifth (19%) indicated having plans to conduct an audit within the next year.

Examples of fully accessible technology platforms are applications that can be accessed by people who use screen readers and other assistive devices, and those that are available in plain language and multiple languages. This focus on the accessibility needs of disabled people can play a key role in making these organizations more welcoming to an increasingly diverse pool of prospective employees and grantees.

### Figure 8. Organization has completed an accessibility audit of its internal grantmaking process and systems. \*

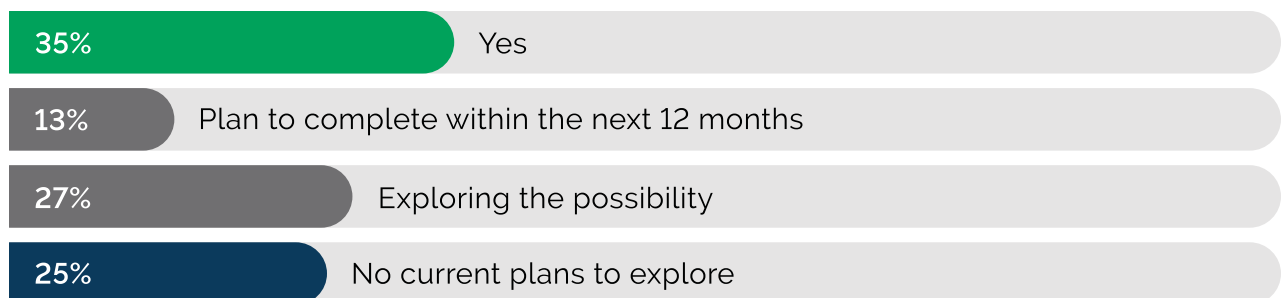


\* Based on responses of 52 signatories.

In terms of external grantmaking practices, over one-third (35%) of signatories have completed accessibility audits. Another 13% indicated having plans to complete an audit in the next year. In addition, more than one-quarter (27%) of signatories have written guidance in place intended to increase the participation of people with disabilities in their grantmaking activities (e.g., in advisory or peer review panels, participatory grantmaking committees, etc.).

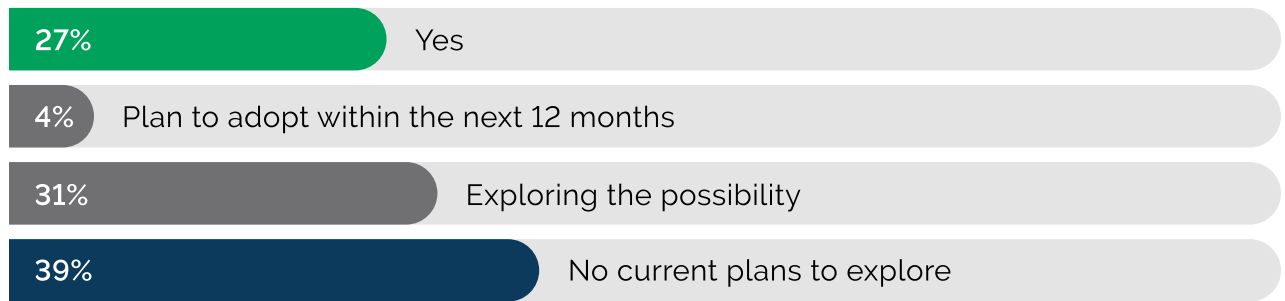
This direct engagement will offer signatories invaluable insights on how to implement strategies to advance disability inclusion most effectively, and on the organizations that are best positioned to implement those strategies and make lasting change.

### Figure 9. Organization has completed an accessibility audit of its external grantmaking process and systems. \*



\* Based on responses of 52 signatories.

## Figure 10. Organization has a written policy, directive, or guidelines on including people with disabilities in its grantmaking activities. \*



\* Based on responses of 49 signatories.

## Recommendations

- Evaluate the accessibility of grantmaking processes and systems your foundation uses. The systems for submitting proposals and grant applications should be fully accessible for both employees and applicants.
  - For each evaluation, develop an improvement plan with a timeline, and assign accountability for implementation.

## Resources

- [Making our Grantmaking Process More Accessible — Ford Foundation](#)

## Inclusion in Action: Examples

“ We are still looking at ways to make the software/granting portal more accessible. We currently offer grantees the option of submitting their application via video, over the phone, through word document, or any other format that works for them.

“ We do not use a web based portal, primarily due to accessibility concerns. We are in the process of redesigning our application form to be more accessible.

# Staff Training and Participation



**Disability Inclusion Pledge:** Include disability education in diversity, equity, and inclusion training; and incorporate best practices for recruiting, retaining and promoting people with disabilities on our staff, including but not limited to accommodations policies, job descriptions and training of hiring managers.

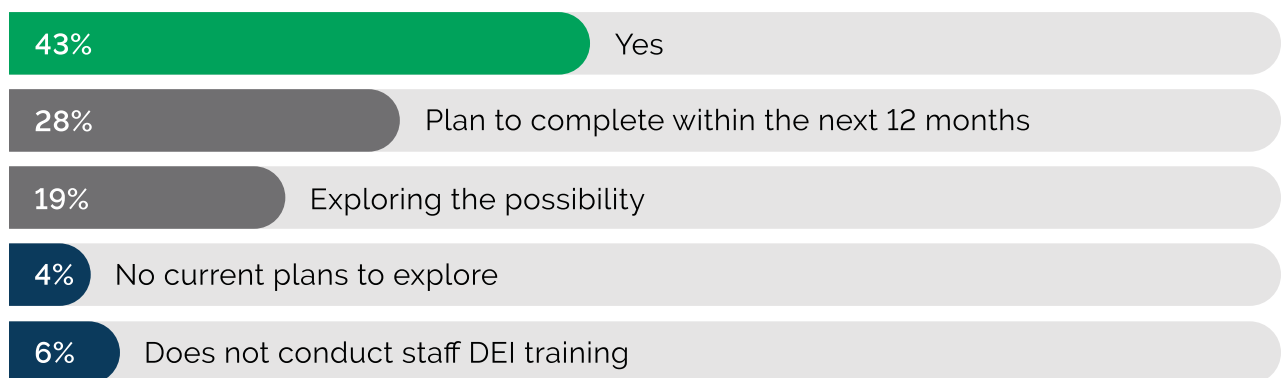
## Staff Training

### Key Findings

**More than two-fifths of responding signatories signal to staff that disability is part of diversity and equity by including disability in DEI training.**

Training is an essential tool for embedding the concept of disability inclusion in philanthropic practice. More than two out of five (43%) already formally incorporating disability into their overall staff DEI training. Another 28% have indicated that they have a plan to do so within the next year. In addition, well over half (56%) of responding signatories have had at least one staff training session explicitly focused on disability inclusion in the past year.

**Figure 11. Organization formally incorporates disability into overall staff diversity, equity, and inclusion training. \***



\* Based on responses of 54 signatories. Three signatories do not currently conduct staff DEI training.

## Recommendations

- Encourage staff to become members of the Disability & Philanthropy Forum and to actively engage with resources and learning opportunities.
- Consider using Forum videos and introductory disability resources as training materials.
- Ensure that DEI trainers demonstrate their knowledge of fundamental disability rights and/or justice concepts, and to the extent possible, include and compensate people with lived disability experience.

## Resources

- [Disability & Philanthropy Forum Membership Application](#)
- [How to Evaluate a DEI Trainer on Disability Knowledge](#)

## Inclusion in Action: Examples

“ All new staff members, as part of their onboarding, meet with [our] Inclusion and Accessibility Development Manager on how to be inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities in meetings, conferences, programs, operations, and communications. [New staff] are also provided with materials, such as disability appropriate language and terminologies.

“ We have offered optional trainings on disability justice overview and landscape, especially looking at the intersections of criminalization, psych wards, etc. We also actively share and encourage folks to attend workshops at philanthropic networks on disability-related work, and [learn] from our grantee partners.



- “ In addition to providing a general training and discussion on disability, the foundation occasionally provides education sessions on current events, trends, or new models of service in the disability field.
- “ Staff [receive] onboarding and annual training in accessibility core competencies and practices. Ongoing learning by staff [also takes place] through external opportunities.
- “ [We] emphasize community conversations over formal presentations, as these informal approaches tend to be more authentic and impactful, [such as] conversations and presentations with organizations that support people with disabilities and that are managed/staffed by people with disabilities [and] by conversations and presentations with people who experience disabilities.

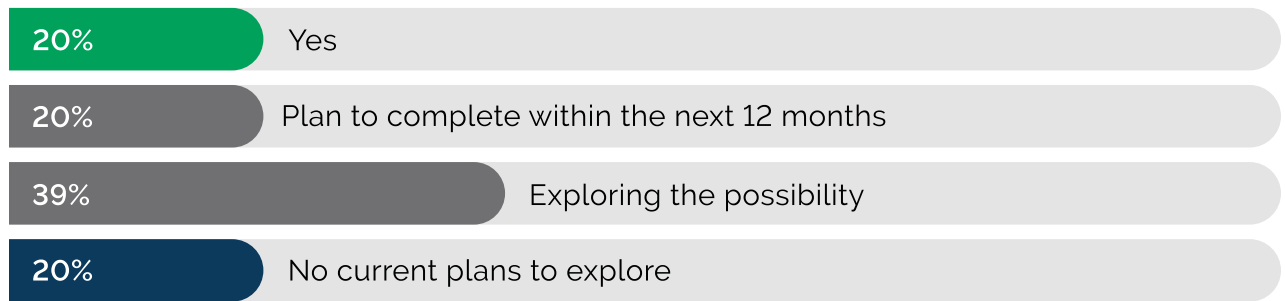
## Employment Practices

### Key Findings

**One in five responding signatories are starting on the journey to create work environments that may be more accessible by examining their HR policies and practices.**

Accessibility audits are key to ensuring an inclusive workplace. One in five responding signatories (20%) have undertaken activities to improve accessibility across all stages of the employment process. An identical share (20%) currently anticipates undertaking an accessibility audit in the next year.

## Figure 12. Organization has completed an accessibility audit of its employment practices. \*



\* Based on responses of 54 signatories. Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%.

## Recommendations

- Recognize ideal working environments are different for each person, and the best way to support employees is to prioritize accessibility and flexible policies.
- Learn from employers that have demonstrated how inclusive practices result in successfully recruiting, hiring, promoting, and retaining staff with disabilities.

## Resources

- [Fostering Accessible In-Person and Remote Workplaces](#)
- [The Importance of, and Strategies for, Encouraging Self-ID of Disability](#)
- [Journey to Inclusion Webinar: Disability Participation: Demographic Tracking and Self-Identification](#)

## Inclusion in Action: Examples

- “ Staff are never required to disclose a disability. However, we strive to create a culture where staff are comfortable asking for accommodations and sharing their connection to the disability movement.

“ Some staff openly identify themselves as having a disability in their CV/cover letters or are known activists with disabilities. More concrete discussions about their disability comes up when discussing equipment needed to support their work (e.g., a large monitor for a computer due to low vision), during travel planning logistics (e.g., needing a wheelchair-accessible hotel room with an accessible bathroom), and for meetings (e.g., requesting a sign language interpreter or a captioner). Supervisors are also requested to check in with their supervisees during their annual review to see if there were any challenges that came up over the year that we should be aware of. This sometimes leads to disclosing more information about a disability that was not previously disclosed.

## Staff Recruitment

### Key Findings

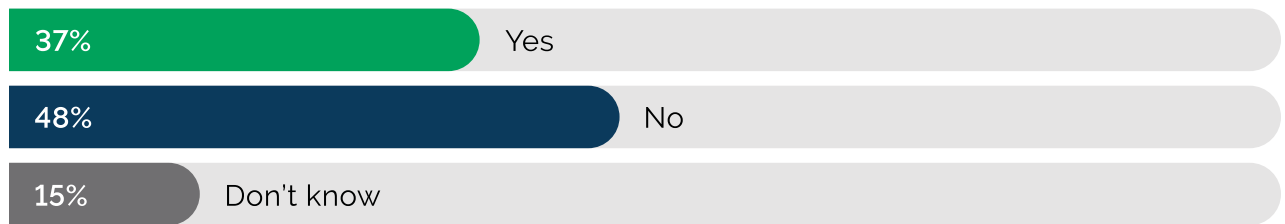
**Close to two-fifths of responding signatories have intentionally sought to recruit disabled staff in the past year.**

While only a modest share of responding signatories have completed an accessibility audit of their employment practices (see above), a far larger share of responding signatories have shown an active interest in bringing people with disabilities onto their staff. Close to two-fifths of responding signatories (37%) have intentionally sought to recruit disabled people to their staff in the past year. (This includes instances where the individuals being recruited may not have been offered and/or accepted a position.)

The interest of responding Pledge signatories in bringing people with disabilities into their organizations undoubtedly reflects a growing acceptance of the disability community's principle that there should be “nothing about us without us” — i.e., the

perspectives of disabled people must be central to decision making that seeks to advance disability inclusion. Nonetheless, philanthropic organizations will need to conduct employment process audits and implement improvement plans if they want to become welcoming employers for people with disabilities.

### Figure 13. Organization has intentionally recruited any people with disabilities in the past 12 months. \*



\* Based on responses of 54 signatories.

## Recommendations

- Include disability in your equal employment opportunity statements.
- Ensure your application processes and systems are accessible.
  - Be explicit about offering accommodations for all phases of the recruitment process.
    - Sample language: “[ORGANIZATION NAME] is committed to making our employment process accessible to everyone. If you require an accommodation or service to fully participate, please contact [NAME at EMAIL, PHONE NUMBER].”
- Network with disability-led organizations and community leaders with disabilities, and use related social media channels to recruit candidates

## Resources

- [Disability Inclusion in Employment](#)

## Inclusion in Action: Examples

- “ We have posted jobs to disability inclusive job sites, shared jobs with organizations we believe can broadcast through their disability network, updated job posting language to be more disability inclusive, and offer accommodations to participate in our application process, if necessary.
- “ We did a lot of outreach to various disability influencers who have reach and connections and tapped into their networks.
- “ In our postings we explicitly name the value of lived experience of sick, disabled, deaf people, BIWOC, trans people of color, and other groups and encourage [them] to apply. We also worked to make our hiring process accessible by using a screen-reader compliant, ADA-accessible form, accepting video applications, and sending questions before and allowing additional time for folks to send comments after an interview.
- “ We have modified all job description to remove ableist language that would inadvertently exclude disabled people from being eligible. We give all of our interview questions ahead of time. We have worked to build relationships with disabilities leaders of color in our community to expand our relationships.
- “ We are in the process of hiring a Talent and Culture Manager who will be responsible for ensuring our recruitment processes are as inclusive as possible, managing requests for reasonable accommodations, promoting DEI and draft a DEI policy, and planning further staff training.

# Board Training and Participation



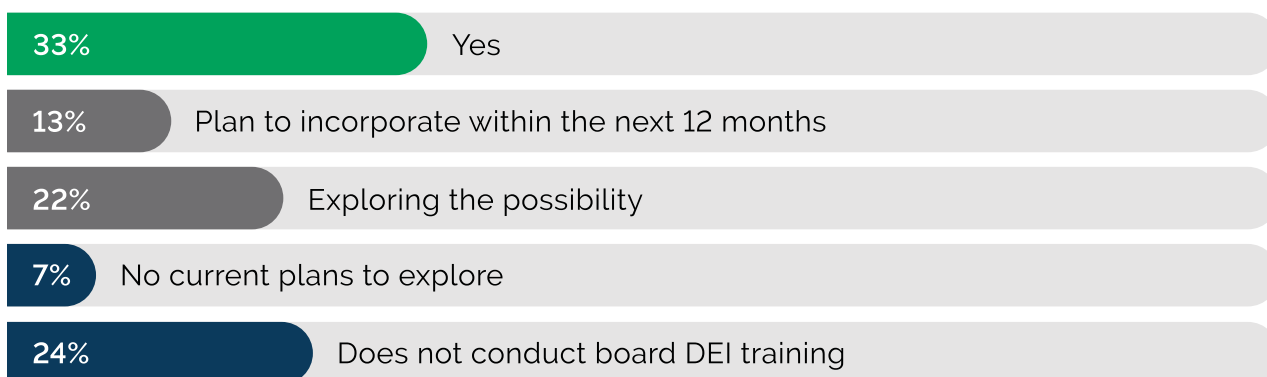
**Disability Inclusion Pledge:** Include disability in any board diversity, equity, and inclusion training; and incorporate best practices for including people with disabilities on boards and committees.

## Key Findings

**Only one-third of responding Pledge signatories currently conduct DEI training for their boards that formally incorporates disability. Almost one-quarter of responding Pledge signatories do not conduct board DEI training at all.**

Given the fundamental role of boards in setting the strategic direction for organizations, board training addressing disability inclusion will be essential to advancing the objectives of the Disability Inclusion Pledge. Thirty-three percent of responding signatories are already incorporating disability into their board training, and 13% plan to add disability to their board training this year. However, almost one-quarter (24%) of responding Pledge signatories do not currently conduct DEI training at all for their boards.

**Figure 14. Organization formally incorporates disability into board diversity, equity, and inclusion training. \***



\* Based on responses of 54 signatories. Thirteen signatories do not currently conduct board DEI training. Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%.

**More than one-quarter of responding signatories have indicated their interest in including the perspectives of disabled people in their leadership by intentionally recruiting people with disabilities to their boards.**

Another way for philanthropic organizations to ensure that a commitment to disability inclusion is central to their strategic decision making is to include people with disabilities on their boards. In fact, over one-quarter of Disability Inclusion Pledge responding signatories (28%) reported that they had actively sought to recruit disabled people to their boards (regardless of whether a board position was offered or accepted).

Of course, this finding does not take into account responding signatories that may currently have people with disabilities serving on their boards. Regardless, it does suggest a growing focus on establishing pipelines of potential board leaders for philanthropic sector organizations drawn from the disability community.

**Figure 15. Organization has intentionally recruited any people with disabilities to your board in the past 12 months. \***



\* Based on responses of 54 signatories. Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%.

## Recommendations

- Set explicit expectations for what each member is expected to contribute, recognizing that this may vary for different board positions. This can help prevent tokenizing board members based on identities they hold.
- Encourage board members to join the [Disability & Philanthropy Forum](#) and to actively engage with resources and learning opportunities.
- (See also staff training recommendations above.)

## Resources

- [Interview Series: Insights Into Inclusive Philanthropy](#)

## Inclusion in Action: Examples

“ Board meetings have the same protocols as staff meetings where disability inclusion guidance is provided before the meeting and is shared as part of housekeeping items at the start of a meeting. We train Board members on accessibility and inclusion as they start their Board service. For example, we are planning a training around neurodiversity (ADHD, psychosocial disability, on the autism spectrum).

“ Education on disability begins with recruitment and board orientation. We regularly send out articles/resources about disability issues, and this is a topic of conversation at many board meetings. [We] host webinars about disability related issues for grantees and partners, and board members are invited to participate.

“ [Our] board participates in training and discussion around our equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility values and participates in developing these values and practices in our strategic planning. We have an accessibility committee that includes 1-2 board members. The accessibility committee discusses [our] efforts toward equity and inclusion of people with disabilities and advises the organization on our practices.

“ In addition to a general training and discussion on disability inclusion, we provide education sessions on current events, trends, and service models within the disability field at the Board's annual retreat.



- “ We have a session for new board members and...ongoing work that focuses on specific topics (health care, housing, education, employment). We invite speakers with lived experience for conversations with staff and board to ensure that our work is centered on and by people with disabilities. It's not a “once-a-year” training. It's part of everything we do.
- “ At our...board meeting we viewed [the Disability & Philanthropy Forum's] video on disability history and held a discussion about the disability civil rights movement. We also discussed the definition of disability and de-stigmatizing disability as context for implementing a board self-identification survey.
- “ We are committed to having a board that reflects the communities we support. Every year, at the beginning of the recruitment phase, we distinguish our gaps. When we are working to recruit people with disabilities, we work hard to reach out to disabled BIPOC leaders in our community, as well as our grantees and other community members.
- “ We complete a diversity assessment of all members from member type, grantmaking focus, region of service, program and personal experiences, etc. We have been fortunate to engage funders with lived experience [of] disabilities to serve on our board.
- “ We assess our board demographics and explicitly highlight candidates who [are people with disabilities]. We also pay our board members for their time, provide food, and [offer] leadership development dollars for our board; because we know many folks with lived experience do not have the time to do volunteer service.

# Disability Grantmaking



**Disability Inclusion Pledge:** Examine our grantmaking programs, policies, and practices to determine how they can be more inclusive of people with disabilities; and establish foundation-wide goals for disability grantmaking consistent with the mission and purposes of our philanthropy.

## Key Findings

**While disability funding represents a modest share of giving among responding pledge signatories, a majority have one or more programs that focus on or incorporate people with disabilities.**

The grantmakers that responded to the survey are diverse, ranging from two organizations solely focused on disability, to large foundations with no explicit current disability grantmaking programs.<sup>2</sup> The Disability & Philanthropy Forum and the Pledge encourage funders to incorporate people with disabilities in all grantmaking, regardless of focus. Disability intersects with all other identities, and applying a disability lens to grantmaking will ultimately lead to social justice-oriented solutions.

The vast majority of responding signatories to the Disability Inclusion Pledge (76%) report having one or more grantmaking programs or strategies focused on or incorporating people with disabilities. An example of a grant that focuses on people with disabilities would be a grant to a disability-led organization to advocate for policy change. An example of a grant that incorporates people with disabilities would be a grant that supports general climate action by an environmental group that intentionally addresses the concerns and incorporates the voices of disabled climate activists.

At the same time, roughly one in seven responding signatories (14%) have no current grantmaking programs or strategies explicitly focused on or incorporating disabled people and do not have plans to explore adding this focus in the future.

<sup>2</sup> Forty-eight of the 55 survey respondents (87%) are grantmakers.

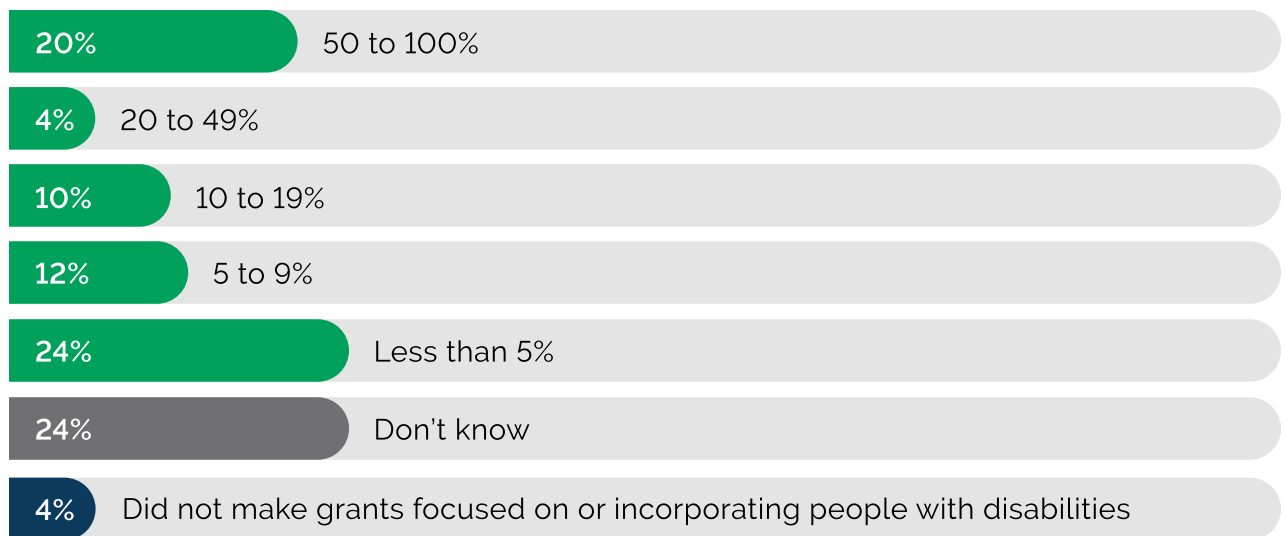
**Figure 16. Organization has one or more grantmaking programs or strategies that focus on or incorporate people with disabilities. \***



\* Based on responses of 49 signatories. Excludes three signatories that do not make grants.

**One-third of responding signatories currently allocate 10% or more of their giving to grants that focus on or incorporate people with disabilities.** By signing the Pledge, grantmakers agree to set foundation-wide goals for disability grantmaking. Currently, one-third of responding signatories (34%) allocate 10% or more of their grantmaking to grants that focus on or incorporate disability. Looking ahead, 29% of responding signatories have written guidance already in place to increase the share of annual grantmaking that focuses on or incorporates disability.

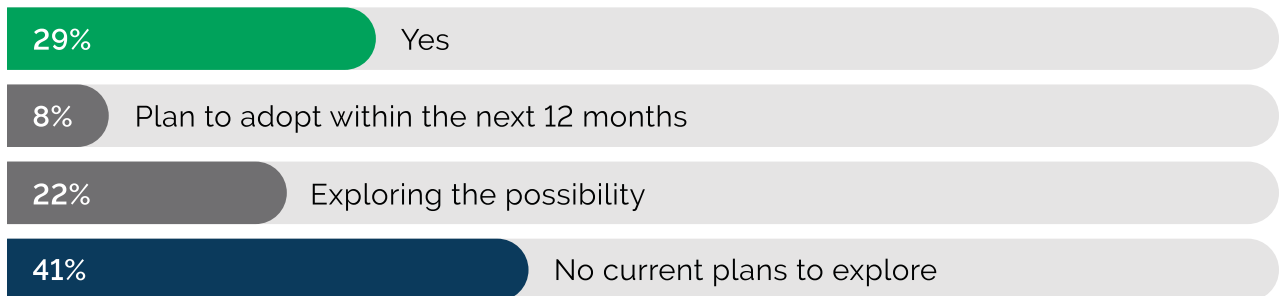
**Figure 17. Share of organization's total grants budget focused on or incorporating people with disabilities. \***



\* Based on responses of 49 signatories in their most recently completed fiscal year. Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%.

Over 40% of responding signatories have no current plans to explore a policy to increase the share of grantmaking that focuses on or incorporates people with disabilities, indicating that they are at the beginning of the disability inclusion journey and have not yet started the process of establishing goals.

**Figure 18. Organization has adopted a written internal policy, directive, or guidelines intended to increase the share of its annual grantmaking that focuses on or incorporates people with disabilities. \***



\* Based on responses of 49 signatories.

## Recommendations

- Learn from the disability community about how disability cuts across the issue areas you prioritize.
- Regularly evaluate how disability is reflected in grantmaking by incorporating specific questions in internal reviews and grantee reporting processes.

## Resources

- [Catalyze Disability Inclusion in Your Grantmaking](#)
- [Disability-Inclusive Grantmaking in Action](#)
- [Guidance for Disability-Inclusive Grants Assessments](#)
- [Interview Series: What Funders Need to Know About Disability-Inclusive Grantmaking](#)

## Inclusion in Action: Examples

- “ People with disabilities serve on our grant review panels and staff, and we are making efforts to increase representation and different perspectives of people with disabilities in our panel composition. In their policy discussions, panels are prioritizing greater knowledge and accountability to people with disabilities.
- “ We created a DEI Fund this year that incorporates disability within both the organizations that are eligible for funding and the makeup of the people serving on the grantmaking committee that decides who receives funding.
- “ We audit membership in our committees and reach out to people who identify as a person with disabilities to ask them to take part in panels or advisory committees.
- “ We are planning on establishing advisory committees for the first time in the coming year and will be explicit about including people with disabilities.

# Measuring and Reporting



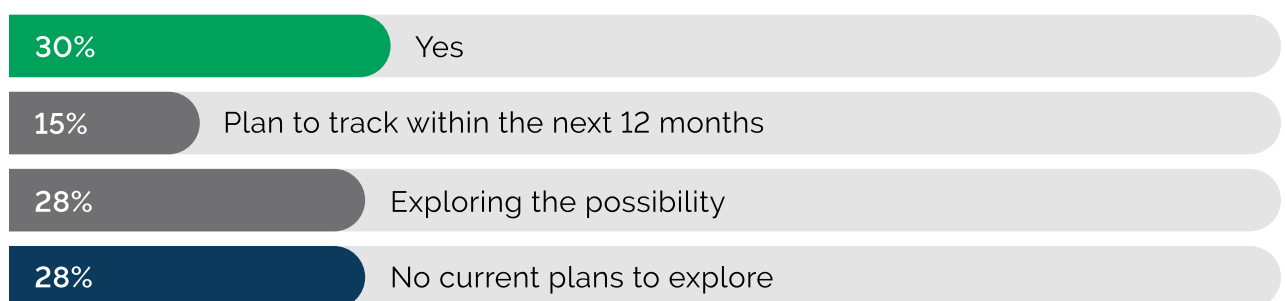
**Disability Inclusion Pledge:** Request, on a voluntary basis, demographic data from our board, staff, and grantees that includes disability as a dimension of diversity, and work collectively to propose a uniform way to track disability participation in the philanthropic sector; periodically publish aggregate disability demographic data related to our board, staff, and grantees; and report on disability grantmaking.

## Key Findings

**Almost one-third of responding Pledge signatories are starting to document disability participation as a share of staff and board leadership.**

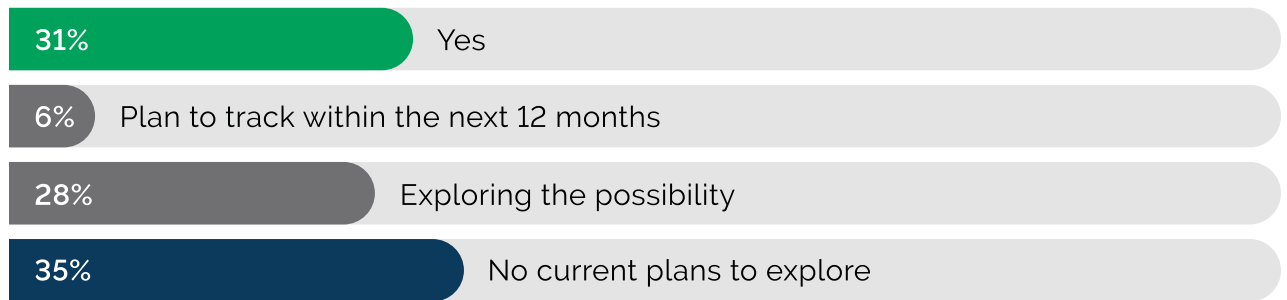
Progress on disability inclusion in the philanthropic sector can only be known if it can be measured. Currently, close to one-third of responding signatories request information on the disability status of their staff (30%) and board (31%). Another 15% have a plan to inquire about staff disability in the next year, and 6% anticipate adding this request for their boards. By comparison, over one-third of responding signatories (35%) have no current plans to request this information from their boards, and more than one-quarter (28%) do not expect to request this information from their staff. These findings suggest an opportunity for supporting reflection and learning about how to most effectively ask staff and board members about disability status, and how to use this information to increase the representation of people with disabilities in philanthropic leadership.

**Figure 19. Organization tracks the disability status of its staff members. \***



\* Based on responses of 54 signatories. Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%.

**Figure 20. Organization tracks the disability status of its board members. \***

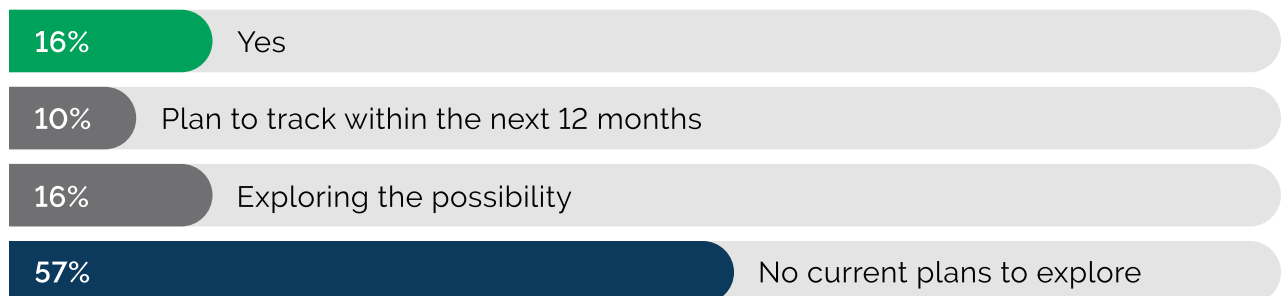


\* Based on responses of 54 signatories.

About one-quarter of responding Pledge signatories (24%) currently request information on the disability status of board members of the organizations they support, and 16% track this information for the staff of the organizations they fund. At the same time, over half (51%) of responding signatories report having no current plans to explore tracking either type of information.

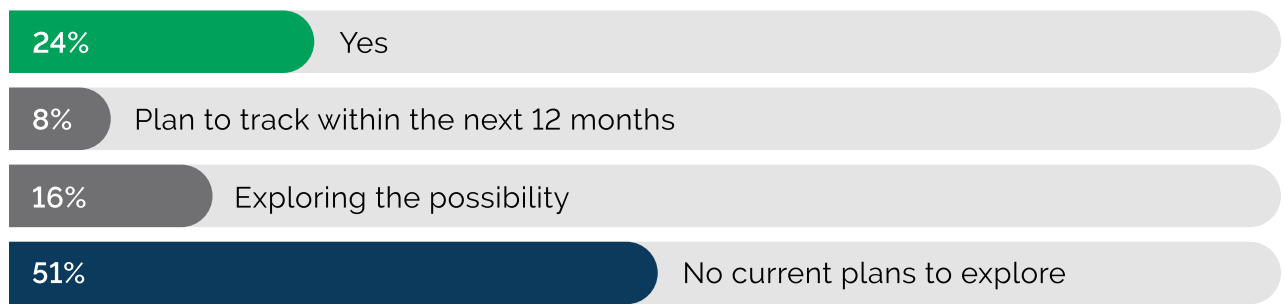
This finding may reflect a lack of capacity on the part of responding signatories to gather, process, and synthesize this type of information. Alternatively, it could suggest the need for support in making the connection between the representation of disabled people on grantees' staff and boards, and the ability of those organizations to understand and address the needs and priorities of disabled people.

**Figure 21. Organization tracks the disability status of grantees' staff members. \***



\* Based on responses of 49 signatories. Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%.

## Figure 22. Organization tracks the disability status of grantees' board members. \*



\* Based on responses of 49 signatories. Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%.

By comparison, many more responding Pledge signatories appear receptive to tracking the disability status of populations served by their grantees. Two-fifths of responding signatories (41%) already collect this type of information. Of course, these data rely on how grantees report on the populations they serve and may not reflect the actual allocation of grant resources that benefit people with disabilities.

## Figure 23. Organization tracks the disability status of the populations served by grantees. \*



\* Based on responses of 49 signatories.

Finally, the vast majority of responding Pledge signatories (71%) make no disability-specific information publicly available. Among the more than one-quarter of responding signatories (29%) that do publicly report some type of information related to disability, the largest share offer general information on how their grantmaking is focused on or incorporates people with disabilities. Information is typically provided via responding signatories' websites. This suggests an



opportunity for future exploration as to how likely responding signatories are to track and make publicly available information on other characteristics of their own organizations and/or of their grantees, such as ethnicity and race, gender identity, and sexual identity.

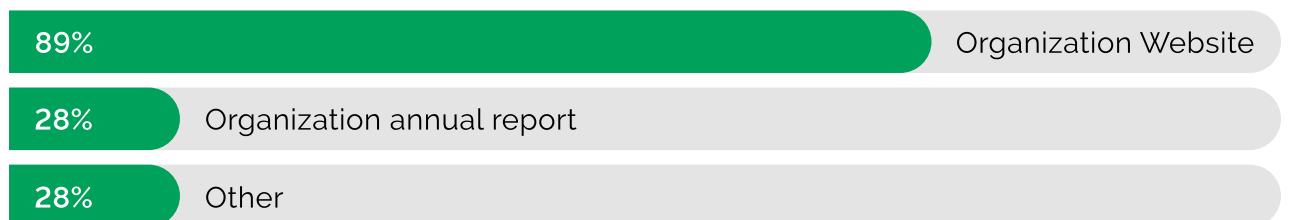
**Figure 24. Share of organizations making disability-specific information publicly available. \***



\* Based on responses of 52 signatories. Multiple responses possible so percentage exceed 100%.

\*\* No, our organization does not publicly share disability-specific information.

**Figure 25. Platform used to share organization's disability-specific information publicly. \***



\* Based on responses of 18 signatories. Multiple responses possible so percentage exceed 100%.

## Recommendations

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum advises that philanthropic organizations measure and report on disability status by taking the following action:

- Educate teams that federal guidance encourages voluntary confidential disclosure of disability for the purpose of increasing employment of people with disabilities.
- Ask questions that educate survey respondents about the broad definition of disability. (See resources below for guidance.)
- Consider partnerships with outside entities that include disability in their demographic data collection, such as Change Philanthropy's Diversity Among Philanthropic Professionals survey (DAPP).

## Resources

- [Guide on Increasing Disability Inclusion by Tracking Participation](#)
- [Moving the Needle on Employing People with Disabilities: What to Know About Collecting Disability Data](#)
- [Journey to Inclusion Webinar: Disability in the Workplace: Human Resources and Employee Participation](#)

## Inclusion in Action: Examples

“ We ask all staff and board to fill out an identity survey every year. The question we currently ask is: “Do you identify as disabled or as a person with (a) disability/ies? If yes, what disability/ies?”

“ We collect this data during the job application process. We ask applicants... their disability status as a voluntary self-identification.

- “ [We have] asked board members to complete an annual demographic survey that includes asking if they identify as having a disability.
- “ We track disability as part of ensuring accessibility accommodations for board members with disabilities to participate in in-person and virtual meetings... We also track this data to ensure that 50% of our board members are persons with disabilities.
- “ There is a table on our grant application that asks applicants to denote the number of board members with and without disabilities (and by different demographics such as women with disabilities). We use this information to help us determine if an organization meets our definition of an “organization of persons with disabilities (OPDs)”.
- “ [We] collect grantee demographics by asking whether board/leadership are made up of 51% or more people with disabilities.
- “ We have been asking applicants to provide demographics of their board re: gender, race, and disability for several years... We’re in the process of developing guidance and curating resources to support our grantees in collecting this information.
- “ We ask for [staff disability] information in our grant application, as well as asking in our annual grantee survey.
- “ We have a committee working to improve data collection and responsiveness to equity principles and have been planning a re-design of our grant application portal and grantee reports to be able to meet our goals. This includes gathering data on people with disabilities who are served by the grants.

# CONCLUSION AND RESOURCES FOR LEARNING AND ACTION

Reporting signatories to the Disability Inclusion Pledge are leading the way for greater equity in the philanthropic sector. By centering people with disabilities in their policies and practices, they will begin to counter ableism and advance disability inclusion across all aspects of society.

Findings from the **2021 Disability Inclusion Pledge Benchmarking Survey** show that philanthropic entities are starting to conduct accessibility audits of their grantmaking process and systems, engaging the disability community in developing and implementing grantmaking priorities, and tracking and reporting on the extent to which people with disabilities are represented among their staff, boards, those they fund, and the populations their grantees seek to serve.

Acceleration of this progress will require sustained attention to disability inclusion by Pledge signatories and others in the sector, as well as targeted resources to support philanthropic organizations as they strive to increase inclusion. The Disability & Philanthropy Forum website offers a robust library of [resources](#) tailored to funders and philanthropy-serving organizations, in addition to those cited in this report. Forum membership is free to all working in philanthropy and provides access to unique learning opportunities and philanthropy-specific resources.

The [Disability Inclusion Fund](#), launched by the Presidents' Council on Disability Inclusion in Philanthropy, also offers an active model for how philanthropic organizations can advance disability inclusion. It serves as an incubator of ideas for how the philanthropic sector can advance disability rights and justice through its grantmaking.

## Looking Ahead

As we look ahead, it's clear that reporting Pledge signatories have much to learn from each other as each embarks on or continues its own journey to disability inclusion. The survey questions and the examples and resources in this report can serve as an initial roadmap. Together, we can move toward a more equitable, inclusive future for all.

# CREDITS

# Disability Inclusion Pledge Benchmarking Survey Respondents

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum thanks the 55 Disability Inclusion Pledge signatories that responded to this survey including:

- Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy
- AWS Foundation
- Bush Foundation
- California Community Foundation
- The California Endowment
- California Wellness Foundation
- Center for Cultural Innovation
- The Chicago Community Trust
- Chicago Foundation for Women
- The Communications Network
- Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque
- Disability Rights Fund
- Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation
- Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
- FISA Foundation
- Ben and Maytee Fisch Foundation
- Ford Foundation
- Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation
- John A. Hartford Foundation
- The Heinz Endowments
- Inevitable Foundation
- Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
- The Kresge Foundation
- Kuni Foundation
- Lavelle Fund for the Blind
- John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
- Maryland Philanthropy Network

- Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
- Metropolitan Regional Arts Council
- National Network of Consultants to Grantmakers
- Craig H. Neilsen Foundation
- New England Foundation for the Arts
- The New York Women's Foundation
- Northwest Health Foundation
- Open Society Foundations
- The Opportunity Fund
- Philanthropy West Virginia
- The Pittsburgh Foundation
- Proteus Fund
- Robert Wood, Johnson Foundation
- Rockefeller Brothers Fund
- Ruderman Family Foundation
- Silicon Valley Community Foundation
- Southern California Grantmakers
- Staunton Farm Foundation
- W. Clement Stone Foundation
- Third Wave Fund
- United Philanthropy Forum
- United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania
- Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights
- Weingart Foundation
- Wellspring Philanthropic Fund
- WITH Foundation
- Women and Girls Foundation of Southwest Pennsylvania
- Women's Foundation of Minnesota



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## Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank members of the Disability & Philanthropy Forum's Research & Learning Advisory Group for sharing their insights on the Pledge, the survey and findings presented in this report.

- Tina Kauh, Chair, Research & Learning Advisory Group, and Senior Program Officer, Research-Evaluation-Learning Unit, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Jen Axelrod, Sr. Director, Learning and Impact, The Chicago Community Trust
- Kate Caldwell, Clinical Assistant Professor, Disability and Human Development, University of Illinois Chicago (UIC)
- Ella Callow, Director, Disability Access and Compliance, University of California, Berkeley
- Rebecca Cokley, Program Officer, U.S. Disability Rights, Ford Foundation
- Anna Cruz, Managing Director, Strategic Learning, Research and Evaluation, The Kresge Foundation
- Camille Emeagwali, Senior Vice President, Programs and Strategic Learning, The New York Women's Foundation
- Ada Gomero, Learning Officer, Evaluation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
- Lu Han, Program Officer, Human Rights Initiative, Open Society Foundations
- Mona Jhavar, Senior Learning and Evaluation Manager, The California Endowment
- Jackie Kaye, Chief Learning & Evaluation Officer, Wellspring Philanthropic Fund
- Patrick Kenani, Program Associate, Ford Foundation

- Phyllis Meadows, Senior Fellow, Health, The Kresge Foundation
- Hanna Shaul Bar Nissim, Deputy Director, Ruderman Family Foundation
- Randall Owen, Director, Nevada Center for Excellence in Disabilities, University of Nevada, Reno
- Joyce Ybarra, Director of Learning, Weingart Foundation

## About the Disability & Philanthropy Forum

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum is an emerging philanthropy-serving organization created by the Presidents' Council on Disability Inclusion in Philanthropy to expand philanthropic commitment to disability rights and justice by centering the leadership of the disability community — essential tenets of achieving a more equitable, inclusive future for all. The Forum is fiscally sponsored by the Proteus Fund. Learn more at [disabilityphilanthropy.org](https://disabilityphilanthropy.org).

### Ready to Commit to Inclusion?

Be part of a community of hundreds of individuals working in philanthropy who have signed up for a free [Disability & Philanthropy Forum Membership](#). Join your [peer organizations](#) on the journey to inclusion today by signing the [Disability Inclusion Pledge](#).

Design by: Jessica Oddi

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