UNTAPPEDTalent

Building Accessible Onboarding Experiences

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Introduction

Starting a new job involves learning unfamiliar people, systems, expectations and ways of working. When onboarding is not planned with accessibility in mind, these ordinary challenges can become unnecessary barriers.

Accessible onboarding helps every employee participate from the beginning. It ensures that information can be accessed and understood, required tools and supports are available, and the employee knows what to expect, where to go for help and how their work contributes.

This guide provides practical direction for creating an accessible and inclusive onboarding experience for employees working in person, remotely or in a hybrid arrangement. It is intended for managers, supervisors, human resources professionals, onboarding leads and others responsible for supporting a new employee.

This guide is organized around four actions:



Welcome the employee into the organization, their work environment, and their team.

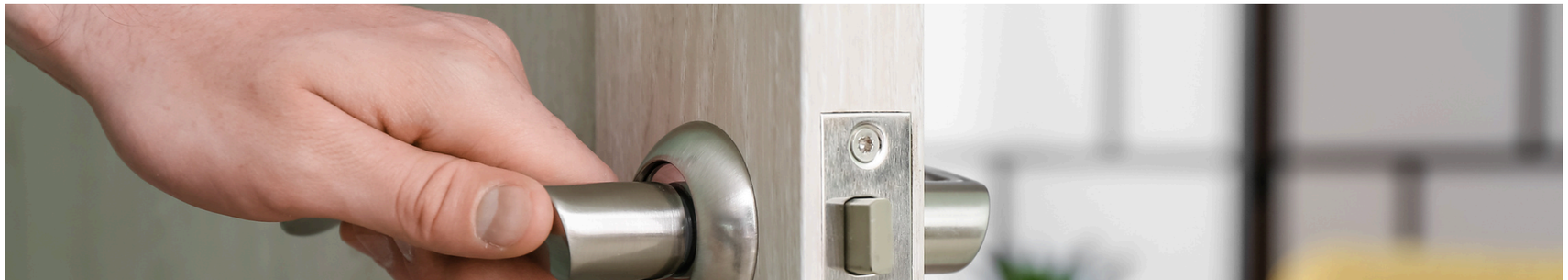


Inspire confidence, belonging, purpose, and continued development.



Equip them with clear expectations, accessible information, effective training, technology and workplace supports.

Accessible onboarding should not depend on an employee repeatedly identifying barriers or requesting that each activity be made accessible. Organizations should remove predictable barriers in advance while continuing to work directly with the employee to understand and respond to their individual needs.



Takeaways

After using this guide, you should understand how to:

- Begin conversations about accessibility and workplace supports before the employee's first day
- Prepare accessible materials, technology, workspaces and onboarding activities
- Protect the employee's privacy and avoid requesting unnecessary personal or medical information
- Explain the employee's role, responsibilities and workplace expectations clearly
- Provide essential information and training in formats the employee can access and use
- Arrange and review workplace supports in consultation with the employee
- Avoid assessing performance before required supports have been provided
- Create meaningful opportunities for connection, participation and development
- Identify and respond to barriers promptly

Principles to Follow

Accessible onboarding is not created by adding accommodations after a barrier appears. It begins with thoughtful planning, clear communication and an ongoing commitment to providing each employee with what they need to participate fully. The following principles should guide every stage of onboarding, from the employment offer through the employee's transition into their role.

Prevent Disadvantage

- An employee should not be assessed on their ability to work without the accessibility supports they require.
- Do not begin evaluating the employee's performance or probationary progress until the supports needed to perform the role have been provided and the employee has had a reasonable opportunity to use them.
- If delays occur, ensure they do not negatively affect the employee's standing, performance record or opportunity to demonstrate their abilities.

Plan Proactively

- Identify and remove predictable barriers before the employee encounters them. Review the accessibility of onboarding materials, technology, training, meetings and workspaces in advance.
- Proactive planning reduces delays and avoids placing responsibility on the employee to identify every potential barrier.

Provide Support Promptly

- Provide equipment, accessible information, training, technology and other agreed supports as early as possible.
- Do not require an employee to begin work without the supports they need or leave them to develop temporary workarounds. When a permanent solution cannot be provided immediately, work with the employee to identify an appropriate interim arrangement and communicate when the full support will be available.

Keep the Conversation Open

- An employee may not know everything they need before starting the job. Requirements may become apparent as they learn the role, use workplace systems and participate in training or meetings.
- Check in regularly and make it clear that the employee can raise a barrier or request a change at any point. Review supports when responsibilities, work locations, technology or other workplace conditions change.

Privacy and Choice

- Employees should be able to request accessibility supports without providing unnecessary personal or medical information.
- Keep accessibility-related information confidential. Before sharing information with colleagues or others involved in onboarding, explain what may be shared, obtain the employee's informed consent, and share only what is needed to implement the arrangement.
- In most cases, others need to know what to do—not why the support is needed.

Worker-Centred Approach

- Each employee brings their own knowledge, experience and understanding of how they work best. Ask the employee what they need and give strong consideration to their preferences when planning onboarding and workplace supports.
- Avoid making assumptions based on a diagnosis, disability or previous experience with another employee. Two people who experience similar barriers may require different solutions.

Prepare for an Accessible Onboarding



Prepare

Accessible onboarding begins before the employee's first day. Early preparation gives the organization time to remove barriers, arrange supports and create an onboarding experience that the employee can participate in fully.

Preparation should be based on a conversation with the employee—not assumptions about what they may need. The employee may already know which supports work well for them, or they may need time to understand the role before identifying everything they require.

When offering the position, tell the successful applicant that accessibility supports and workplace accommodations are available throughout onboarding and employment.

Provide:

- The offer and related employment documents in an accessible format
- The organization's accessibility and accommodation policies
- A clear explanation of how to request a support or report a barrier
- The name and contact information of the person who can answer accessibility-related questions

Make it clear that requesting support will not negatively affect the employment offer, probationary period or future opportunities.

The employee should not have to disclose a diagnosis or unnecessary medical information to begin the conversation. Focus on the barrier they may experience and what will help them participate.

You Could Ask: **"Is there anything we can provide or adjust to help make your onboarding and first weeks of work accessible and successful?"**

Allow enough time for the employee to review the offer, policies and onboarding information in a format they can use. Avoid creating unnecessary urgency that may prevent them from identifying or communicating their needs.





Ask What Will Support a Successful Start

Invite the employee to share how they prefer to receive information, communicate, learn and participate. Use open-ended questions rather than presenting a fixed list of accommodations from which they must choose.
Ask about the employee's needs without requiring them to explain personal medical details. **For example, ask:**

"What would make this training easier for you to access and use?"

rather than: "What is your disability?"

Topics May Include:

- Preferred formats for documents and training materials
- Communication methods, such as email, telephone, chat or video
- Captioning, interpretation or other communication supports
- Learning preferences and the pace of training
- Assistive technology, software or equipment
- Workstation or physical-space requirements
- Scheduling, breaks or flexibility
- Accessibility requirements for meetings, travel or workplace tours
- Supports that have worked well in previous roles

Give strong consideration to the employee's knowledge and preferences. They are often the best source of information about the barriers they encounter and the solutions that work for them.

At the same time, do not expect the employee to anticipate every possible barrier before they begin. Some needs may only become apparent once they start using workplace systems, performing job duties or participating in meetings and training.

Develop a Clear Onboarding Plan

Prepare an onboarding plan that gives the employee a clear picture of what to expect during their first day and initial weeks.

Provide the plan in an accessible format before the employee starts. Include links, addresses, joining instructions and contact information rather than expecting the employee to locate these details independently.

Avoid filling the first day with back-to-back meetings, lengthy presentations or large amounts of information.

Prioritize what the employee needs to know immediately. Information that is not essential on the first day can be introduced later and provided in a form that the employee can revisit.

The plan should provide structure without becoming inflexible. Explain that activities can be adjusted if a barrier arises or the employee needs a different pace, format or method of participation.

What the plan should include:	What the plan should avoid:
Date, time, and location of each activity	Back-to-back meetings with no transition time
Who will participate	Introductions that are rushed, unclear, or missing
Purpose of meetings and training sessions	Activities with no clear connection to the employee's role
Any technology, documents, or preparation required	Expecting the employee to arrive without the information or tools they need
Planned breaks and time to process information	A schedule that leaves no time to pause, reflect or ask questions
Expected working hours and any schedule-related expectations	Unclear expectations about availability, start time or end times
Whom the employee can contact with questions or requests for changes	Leaving the employee unsure where to go for help or adjustments



Prepare the Work Environment

Before the employee begins, confirm that the physical and digital environments they will use are accessible and ready.



For all work arrangements:

- Create required accounts and permissions
- Arrange equipment and assistive technology
- Test access to workplace systems
- Review the accessibility of documents, videos and training platforms
- Confirm that required software works with the employee's technology
- Identify where the employee can obtain technical support
- Prepare accessible health, safety and emergency information

Do not wait until the first day to discover that the employee cannot sign in, access a document or participate in training. Test essential systems in advance whenever possible. If a required support will not be ready on time, discuss the delay with the employee and agree on an appropriate interim arrangement.

In-Person Preparation

- Confirm the employee can access entrances, routes, workspaces, washrooms, meeting areas and emergency exits.
- Share clear arrival instructions, accessibility information and contact details before the first day.
- Prepare the workstation, equipment and any agreed accessibility supports in advance.
- Review health, safety and emergency procedures, including what to do if a barrier occurs.

Remote Preparation

- Confirm the employee has the equipment, accounts, software and secure access needed to work remotely.
- Provide accessible setup instructions for equipment, systems, communication tools and shared information.
- Explain what the organization provides, what costs are covered and how to request additional support.
- Confirm how the employee can get technical help if they cannot sign in, join a meeting or use a required system.

Hybrid Preparation

- Confirm the employee can access required tools, systems and supports from each work location.
- Plan how equipment will be provided, transported or duplicated as needed.
- Set clear practices for hybrid meetings, shared materials and participation.
- Explain how location changes will be communicated and who to contact if an arrangement is not working.



Prepare the People Involved

Accessible onboarding depends on the people involved as much as the materials, technology and work environment.

Before the employee starts, tell the immediate team:

- The employee's name and start date
- Their role and responsibilities
- How their work will connect with the team
- How team members will be involved in onboarding

Do not disclose the employee's disability, diagnosis or accommodation information. Even when an arrangement affects other people, consult the employee before communicating it and share only the information needed to make the arrangement work.

For example, colleagues may need to know that meetings with Taylor should include live captions and materials should be shared in advance, but they do not need to know why Taylor requires these practices.

Identify a primary onboarding contact who can answer questions, help the employee navigate the organization and connect them with the appropriate person when an issue falls outside their role.

Depending on the workplace, this may be:

- The employee's manager
- An onboarding lead
- A colleague or mentor
- A human resources representative
- An accessibility or accommodation contact
- An external service provider

Clarify who is responsible for:

- Arranging equipment and technology
- Preparing accessible materials
- Providing training
- Implementing accessibility supports
- Introducing the employee to colleagues
- Responding to barriers
- Following up after the first day

Employees involved in onboarding should understand how to communicate respectfully, protect confidentiality and respond when a barrier is identified. They should know that they are not expected to question, validate or independently change an employee's agreed accessibility supports.

Welcome

The first days of work shape how an employee understands the organization, their team and their place within it. A welcoming onboarding experience helps the employee feel expected, included and confident about where to go for information and support.

Welcoming an employee involves more than introducing them to colleagues. It means ensuring they can enter and navigate the work environment, participate in planned activities and begin building relationships without encountering unnecessary barriers.



Personally Welcome the Employee

Arrange for someone to welcome the employee at the beginning of their first day. This will usually be their manager or primary onboarding contact.

Do not leave the employee uncertain about where to go, how to join, whom they should contact, whether anyone is expecting them, and what they should do when they arrive

In-Person Preparation

Confirm the following:

- Where and when to arrive
- Which entrance to use
- Whether someone will meet them
- What to do if they experience a barrier while entering the workplace
- Whom to contact if they are delayed or need assistance

Remote / Hybrid Preparation

Confirm the following:

- The link for the first meeting;
- Accessible instructions for joining;
- A telephone or alternative method of connecting;
- Contact information for technical assistance
- The name of the person who will meet them online.

At the start of the day, review the onboarding schedule and explain what the employee can expect. Confirm that they can access the schedule, materials, systems and meeting locations. Ask whether anything needs to be adjusted before proceeding. For example, before we get started, is there anything about today's schedule, materials or meeting arrangements that we should adjust?

Avoid making the employee repeatedly explain arrangements that were already discussed. The manager and onboarding contact should know which supports have been agreed upon and ensure they are available. A new employee may be reluctant to raise a concern on their first day. Make it clear that asking questions, identifying barriers or requesting a change is expected and will not be viewed negatively.



Introduce the Organization

Give the employee a clear and accessible introduction to the organization so they do not have to rely on informal observation, inaccessible materials or unexplained workplace language to understand where they work and how their role contributes.

Explain:

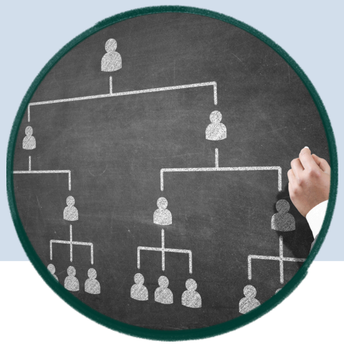
- the organization's purpose;
- the people or communities it serves;
- its main programs, products or services;
- how the organization is structured;
- where the employee's team fits within that structure; and
- how the employee's role supports the organization's work.

Avoid relying only on a lengthy presentation, recorded video or collection of policies. Use conversation, accessible reference materials and opportunities to ask questions so the employee can receive, review and revisit the information in a way that works for them.

Provide an organizational chart or another accessible way for the employee to understand:

- reporting relationships;
- team structures;
- key departments;
- leadership roles; and
- common points of contact.

Explain names, acronyms and internal terminology rather than assuming the employee already understands them. Workplace language that seems familiar to established employees can be confusing to someone new.



Introduce the organization's commitment to accessibility and inclusion through practical information.

Explain:

- how employees can identify and report barriers;
- where accessibility and accommodation policies can be found;
- who supports accessibility-related requests;
- how concerns about discrimination or harassment are handled; and
- what employees can expect when they raise a concern.

Avoid making broad claims that the workplace is inclusive without explaining what the organization does to support inclusion. The employee should understand the practices, policies and people available to support them.

Introduce the Work Environment

Every employee needs an orientation to the places, systems and routines they will use. The orientation should reflect where and how the employee will work.

Do not assume that an employee can independently identify which spaces, systems or communication channels are important. Explain their purpose and demonstrate how they are used.

For employees working in person

Provide a practical tour of the workplace.

The tour may include:

- the employee's workstation;
- accessible entrances and routes;
- washrooms;
- kitchens, lunchrooms and break areas;
- meeting and training rooms;
- printers, supplies and shared equipment;
- quiet or private spaces;
- reception and security procedures;
- first aid resources; and
- emergency exits and gathering locations.

Do not single out accessible features in a way that unnecessarily draws attention to the employee. Introduce them as part of the normal workplace orientation.

Review emergency information carefully.

Confirm that the employee understands:

- how alarms and emergency notifications are communicated;
- which route they should use;
- where to obtain assistance;
- whether an individualized emergency plan is needed; and
- whom to contact if they identify a barrier in the emergency process.

Ask whether the employee would prefer the full tour at once or in shorter stages. A long tour may create barriers for employees who experience fatigue, pain, sensory overload, difficulty processing large amounts of information or mobility-related barriers. Provide written or digital information that the employee can review later. This could include a floor plan, photographs, directions or a list of essential locations.



Introduce the Work Environment

For employees working remotely

Provide a virtual orientation to the organization’s digital workplace.
Show the employee:

- where documents and shared resources are stored;
- which platforms are used for email, messaging and meetings;
- how to find team and organizational information;
- how to access technical support;
- where policies and procedures are located;
- how to join regular meetings; and
- which communication channels are used for different purposes.

Explain the workplace practices surrounding these systems.
For example:

- when to use email rather than instant messaging;
- whether employees are expected to keep a camera on;
- how meetings are scheduled;
- where meeting notes are stored;
- how urgent questions should be raised; and
- what response times are normally expected.

Do not assume that a platform is accessible because it includes accessibility features. Confirm that the employee can navigate the platform, access shared content and participate in meetings using their preferred technology and communication methods.

Remote employees do not benefit from observing workplace routines informally. Explain practices that an in-person employee might otherwise learn by watching colleagues.



Introduce the Work Environment

For employees working in a hybrid arrangement

Explain how work is organized across locations.

Discuss:

- which days or activities normally take place in person;
- which activities may be completed remotely;
- how changes in location are communicated;
- how employees join meetings from different locations;
- where shared information is stored;
- how equipment and accessibility supports are provided in each setting; and
- whom to contact if an arrangement does not work in one of the locations.

An employee should not have to choose between accessing their supports and participating fully in the workplace.

Hybrid meetings can create unequal experiences when some people are together in a room and others participate remotely.

Explain how meetings will be managed so that everyone can:

- hear and see relevant content;
- access captions or interpretation;
- receive documents;
- contribute to the discussion; and
- know when others wish to speak.



Build Early Connections

New employees need to understand not only who their colleagues are, but also how and when they may work with them. Early connections should be planned so participation does not depend on social ease, physical proximity, memory or the ability to absorb many introductions at once.

Introduce the employee to:

- their immediate manager;
- members of their team;
- people who will train or supervise their work;
- colleagues with whom they will collaborate regularly;
- human resources and accessibility contacts;
- technical support; and
- other people who may be important during onboarding.

When making an introduction, briefly explain the person's role and why the connection may be useful. **For example:**
Priya coordinates our internal training. You can contact her if you have questions about the learning platform or upcoming sessions.

This is more helpful than presenting the employee with a large number of names and job titles without context.
Space introductions throughout the onboarding period rather than scheduling them all on the first day. Too many introductions at once can create barriers for employees who need time to process information, manage fatigue or understand how different roles relate.

Provide an accessible contact list that includes:

- the person's name;
- their role;
- why the employee may need to contact them;
- their preferred contact method; and
- any relevant availability information.



Support Informal Connection

Formal meetings help the employee understand the organization, but **informal interactions can also support belonging and comfort.**

Create optional opportunities for the employee to:

- have a one-to-one conversation with a colleague;
- attend a team coffee or lunch;
- join a short informal video call;
- participate in a team discussion; or
- learn about workplace groups and activities.

Do not make social participation a test of whether the employee is engaged or a good fit. Some employees may prefer smaller conversations, need breaks between activities or require accessibility arrangements to participate.

Ensure that social activities are accessible.
Consider:

- the accessibility of physical locations;
- noise and sensory conditions;
- dietary requirements;
- virtual participation options;
- captioning and communication access;
- timing and transportation; and
- whether participation is clearly optional.





Identify a Consistent Point of Contact

The employee should know whom to approach when they have a question and do not know where it belongs.

The primary contact may help the employee:

- understand workplace routines;
- find information;
- identify the correct person to contact;
- resolve minor barriers;
- prepare for upcoming activities; and
- raise concerns with their manager.

This person should not replace the manager’s responsibility or become responsible for making accommodation decisions outside their authority. **Their role is to provide consistent guidance and help the employee navigate the organization.**

Remote and hybrid employees may require more deliberate contact because they cannot easily ask a nearby colleague a quick question. Schedule opportunities for connection without expecting the employee to remain continuously available online.

Create Space for Participation

A welcoming first day should allow the employee to participate rather than only receive information. Invite questions throughout the day instead of waiting until the end of a long orientation session. Employees may need time to process information before knowing what they want to ask.



Offer different ways to ask questions, such as:

- during a conversation;
- by email or chat;
- in a private meeting;
- through the primary onboarding contact; or
- during a scheduled follow-up.

Some employees may not be comfortable identifying a barrier in front of a group. Provide opportunities to speak privately with the manager or onboarding contact.
Pay attention to whether the employee is able to participate in meetings, tours and introductions. Do not interpret silence, reduced eye contact, camera use, communication style or limited participation in social activities as a lack of interest.

Ask direct but respectful questions about the onboarding experience:

- Is the pace working for you?
- Are you able to access everything being shared?
- Would it help to review any of this information in another way?

Respond to concerns without making the employee feel that they have caused an inconvenience. When a barrier is identified, acknowledge it, explain what will happen next and follow through.

End the First Day with Clarity

Before the employee finishes their first day, reduce the need to rely on memory by reviewing the key information and confirming what needs follow-up:

- what was covered;
- any questions that remain;
- barriers or adjustments that need follow-up;
- what will happen the next day;
- where the employee can find the materials they received; and
- whom they should contact if they need assistance.

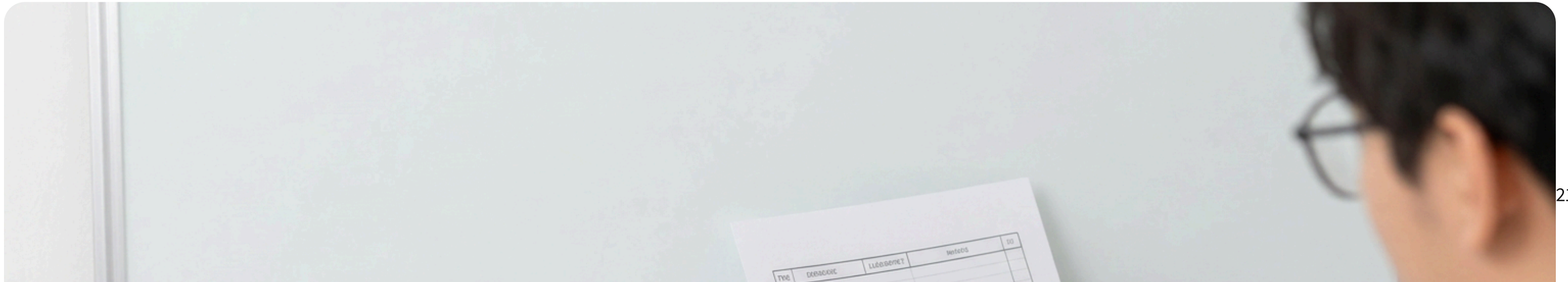
Do not expect the employee to remember everything they heard. **Provide a written summary or updated onboarding plan in an accessible format that they can review later.**

Ask for immediate feedback without requiring the employee to provide a full evaluation of the experience.

A simple question may be enough:

> “Was there anything today that made it harder for you to participate or access the information you needed?”

Document agreed actions and make sure the appropriate person is responsible for completing them.



Equip:
Provide the Information, Tools, and Supports Needed to Work

A successful onboarding experience gives the employee more than a warm introduction. It provides the information, tools, training and workplace supports they need to understand their role and begin contributing.

Employees should not be expected to find essential information on their own, learn unfamiliar systems without support or work around barriers while waiting for equipment or accommodations.

The goal is to make expectations clear, information usable and supports available from the beginning.





Explain the Role Clearly

Give the employee a practical understanding of what their role involves, what they should focus on first and how they can meet expectations using the tools, methods and accessibility supports that work for them.

Review:

- the purpose of the position;
- essential duties and expected outcomes;
- immediate priorities;
- reporting relationships;
- how work is assigned;
- which decisions the employee can make independently;
- how progress will be monitored;
- how and when feedback will be provided; and
- what success will look like during the first weeks and months

Avoid relying only on the job description. A job description may identify broad responsibilities, but the employee also needs to understand how the work is carried out in practice, which outcomes are essential and where there is flexibility in how the work can be completed.

Explain which tasks are urgent, which can wait and how priorities may change. When possible, provide examples of completed work, common scenarios or expected outputs. Separate the intended result of a task from the customary way it has been completed. For example, if the outcome is an accurate weekly report, focus on the required information, quality and deadline rather than assuming the employee must use a particular method unless that method is essential. This creates room for employees to use different approaches, technologies or accessibility supports while still meeting the requirements of the role.

Check the employee's understanding without putting them on the spot. **You could ask:**

"Based on what we have discussed, how would you describe your main priorities for the first few weeks?"

This gives the manager an opportunity to correct unclear or inconsistent expectations.

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Provide Essential Workplace Information

Employees need access to the information that governs how they perform their work and participate in the workplace. This information should be easy to find, understand, revisit and use, not simply handed over in a large collection of policies or links.

Provide clear and accessible information about:

- job instructions;
- work manuals and procedures;
- staff rules and workplace expectations;
- hours of work and scheduling;
- attendance, leave and time-reporting processes;
- communication practices;
- approval and decision-making processes;
- grievance and complaint procedures;
- respectful workplace expectations;
- health and safety;
- emergency procedures;
- technology and information security;
- benefits and employee assistance programs;
- accessibility and accommodation processes; and
- other supports available to employees.

Explain which information is most important immediately and which resources can be reviewed later. Giving an employee a large folder of policies is not the same as helping them understand
what they need to know, where to find it and what to do if the information or process creates a barrier.

For each important process, explain:

- what the process is for;
- when the employee may need to use it;
- where the information is stored;
- whom to contact with questions; and
- what to do if the process creates a barrier.

Use practical examples where helpful. For instance, rather than only providing a leave policy, explain how the employee submits a request, who approves it and where they can check its status.

Do not assume that the employee will know which policies are relevant to them or understand internal language, abbreviations and system names. **Explain unfamiliar terms and provide a way to revisit the information.**

Make Information Usable

Onboarding information should be easy to access, understand and use. Provide materials in accessible formats from the beginning rather than waiting for an employee to report that they cannot use them. Review documents, videos, presentations, forms and learning platforms before they are shared.

Accessible onboarding materials may include:

- properly structured digital documents;
- descriptive headings;
- meaningful link text;
- alternative text for relevant images;
- accessible tables;
- captions and transcripts for video or audio content;
- sufficient colour contrast;
- plain and direct language;
- materials compatible with assistive technology; and
- alternative formats when needed.

Organize information so that the employee can find it again. **Consider creating a clearly labelled onboarding folder or page containing:**

- the onboarding schedule;
- key contacts;
- policies;
- training resources;
- job instructions;
- frequently used links; and
- follow-up materials.

Avoid scattering essential information across emails, chats, shared drives and different platforms without explaining where the employee should look. Do not rely on one method of communication for complex or essential information. Support verbal explanations with written materials, and provide demonstrations or examples where useful.

For example, after explaining a reporting process in a meeting, provide written steps that the employee can follow later. Confirm that the format works for the employee.

You could ask: “Are these materials accessible and easy for you to use, or would another format or method work better?”

Avoid assuming that a format is suitable simply because it is labelled accessible. The employee’s experience is the most important test. If the employee requests another format, provide it promptly. Do not make them repeatedly request the same format for each new document.

Providing Training in Accessible Ways

Training should give the employee a fair opportunity to learn, practise and ask questions.

Before training begins, explain:

- the purpose of the training;
- what the employee is expected to learn;
- how long the session will take;
- what format it will use;
- whether participation or assessment is required; and
- what support is available.

Use **more than one teaching method when appropriate.** Training may include:

- verbal explanation;
- written instructions;
- live demonstrations;
- recorded demonstrations;
- guided practice;
- examples;
- checklists or quick-reference guides;
- opportunities to complete a task with support.

Do not assume that all employees learn best through lengthy presentations or by watching someone complete a task once.

Allow time for the employee to:

- process information;
- take notes;
- practise;
- repeat steps;
- ask questions;
- take breaks; and
- review materials afterward.

Check whether the training method is working.

Ask:

"Is this pace and format working for you?"
"Would it help to demonstrate that another way?"
"Do you need more time to practise before moving on?"

Training should continue beyond the first explanation. Arrange follow-up support so the employee knows where to go when questions arise while completing the work independently.



Divide complex training into manageable stages. Begin with the tasks the employee needs immediately, then introduce additional features or procedures as they become relevant.

Make sure trainers understand any agreed accessibility arrangements. Share only the information they need to deliver the training accessibly.

For example, a trainer may need to know that:

- materials must be shared in advance;
- live captions are required;
- instructions should also be provided in writing;
- additional processing time is needed; or
- the employee will use assistive technology during the session.

The trainer does not need to know the employee's diagnosis or unrelated personal information.

Provide the Necessary Technology and Equipment

Confirm that the employee can access and use the tools required for their role.
This may include:

- computers and mobile devices;
- monitors and peripherals;
- telephones or headsets;
- software and workplace applications;
- assistive technology;
- ergonomic equipment;
- secure remote access;
- workplace communication tools; and
- specialized equipment related to the role.

Do not treat access to an account as proof that the system is usable. **Confirm that the employee can:**

- sign in;
- navigate the platform;
- access required functions;
- create and retrieve information;
- participate in meetings; and
- use the system with any required assistive technology.

Provide training on unfamiliar tools and explain how to obtain technical assistance. Technical support staff should understand how to respond to accessibility-related issues and avoid removing or changing assistive technology settings without consulting the employee.

Where equipment must be ordered or configured, begin the process early. If a permanent solution is delayed, work with the employee to identify an appropriate temporary arrangement.

Do not expect the employee to:

- purchase their own required equipment;
- use unsuitable personal technology;
- perform tasks without necessary tools; or
- develop an inaccessible workaround.

For hybrid employees, confirm that the employee can work effectively from each required location. This may mean providing duplicate equipment, portable equipment or another arrangement that does not require the employee to repeatedly transport heavy or specialized items.





Explain How to Request Workplace Supports

Employees should know how to identify a barrier, request support and understand what will happen next.

Explain:

- what types of workplace supports may be available;
- whom the employee should contact;
- which communication methods they can use;
- whether a form is required;
- what information is needed;
- how the request will be reviewed;
- how decisions will be communicated;
- how privacy will be protected; and
- how the employee can raise a concern if the process is not working.

Make the process easy to find and understand. Do not rely on the employee locating a policy in a large collection of documents. Provide accessible forms, instructions and examples. Offer assistance completing the process when needed.

The employee should not be expected to know the exact accommodation or technical solution.

They may be able to describe:

- the task they are trying to complete;
- the barrier they are encountering;
- what has helped in the past; or
- the outcome they need.
- The manager or appropriate workplace contact can then work with them to identify possible solutions.

Avoid asking for medical information that is not necessary to understand the barrier or provide support. Focus on the employee's functional needs and the workplace conditions that may need to change.

Make clear that requesting support is a normal workplace process and will not negatively affect the employee's employment, reputation or future opportunities.

Implement Accessibility Supports

Once a support has been agreed upon, assign responsibility and confirm when it will be available.

Supports may involve:

- equipment or assistive technology;
- accessible documents or communication;
- changes to scheduling or breaks;
- adjustments to training;
- changes to the physical workspace;
- modifications to a process;
- communication support;
- changes to how a task is assigned or completed; or
- assistance from an internal or external service provider.

Share only the information the provider needs to deliver the service. Obtain the employee's informed consent before sharing personal information. **Document the agreed arrangement, including:**

- what will be provided;
- who is responsible;
- when it will begin;
- how it will be maintained;
- who the employee should contact if it stops working; and
- when it will be reviewed.

The employee should receive a copy of the information in an accessible format.

Consult the employee before implementing the arrangement. A solution that appears appropriate to the organization may not address the barrier or may create a new one.

Do not replace an agreed support with a different option without discussing it with the employee.

Where an external service provider is required, involve the employee in the selection process.

Consider factors such as:

- the employee's previous experience with the provider;
- communication preferences;
- cultural safety;
- technical expertise;
- location and availability; and
- whether the provider can deliver the service accessibly.





Confirm that Supports are Working

Providing a support is not the end of the process. Confirm that it allows the employee to participate and perform their work as intended.

Ask:

"Is the support working the way you expected?"
"Has it removed the barrier?"
"Is anything else needed to make it effective?"

Review the support after the employee has had an opportunity to use it. Some issues may not be apparent during initial testing. Pay attention to how the support works across different activities, including:

- individual work;
- team meetings;
- training;
- travel;
- remote work;
- in-person work;
- emergency procedures; and
- social or organizational events.

A support that works for one task or location may not work in another. If an arrangement is not effective, work with the employee to adjust it promptly. Do not treat the original decision as final or require the employee to continue using a solution that does not meet their needs.

Give strong consideration to the employee's knowledge and preferences. They are often the best source of information about the barriers they encounter and the solutions that work for them.

At the same time, do not expect the employee to anticipate every possible barrier before they begin. Some needs may only become apparent once they start using workplace systems, performing job duties or participating in meetings and training.

Avoid Assessing Performance Before Supports are in Place

An employee should have the tools, information, training and accessibility supports they need before their performance is evaluated.

Do not assess an employee based on work completed while:

- required equipment was unavailable;
- systems or documents were inaccessible;
- agreed accommodations had not been implemented;
- training had not been provided accessibly; or
- the employee was required to use an ineffective temporary arrangement.

If a delay affects the employee's ability to begin or complete work, document the circumstances and ensure the delay does not negatively affect their probationary assessment or performance record.

Once supports are available, give the employee a reasonable opportunity to learn the role and demonstrate their abilities.

Managers should distinguish between:

- performance concerns;
- gaps in training;
- unclear expectations;
- inaccessible processes; and
- missing or ineffective workplace supports.

Address barriers before concluding that the employee is unable to meet an expectation.

Establish clear communication & Feedback Practices

Employees should understand how they will receive instructions, updates and feedback. Clear communication practices help prevent barriers related to processing time, inaccessible formats, unclear expectations or uncertainty about how to ask for clarification.

Discuss:

- how work will be assigned;
- which communication channels are used;
- expected response times;
- how urgent matters are identified;
- how often the manager and employee will meet;
- how feedback will be provided; and
- how the employee can ask for clarification.

Provide feedback that is:

- specific;
- timely;
- connected to clear expectations;
- focused on the work rather than assumptions about the employee; and
- delivered in an accessible format.

Invite feedback from the employee as well.

Ask whether:

- instructions are clear;
- the workload and pace are manageable;
- communication methods are working;
- meetings and training are accessible; and
- additional information or support is needed.

Ask the employee which communication methods work best for different situations. They may prefer one method for quick questions and another for detailed instructions, sensitive conversations, feedback or information they need to review later.

Do not wait until a formal probationary review to raise concerns or clarify expectations. Regular communication gives the employee an opportunity to understand what is working and make adjustments.

By providing clear expectations, accessible information, effective training and timely supports, the organization gives the employee **a fair opportunity to succeed.**



Inspire: Building Purpose, Belonging and Confidence

Onboarding should help an employee understand more than what they need to do. It should also help them see **why their work matters, how they contribute** and **where they can grow.**

Employees are more likely to feel confident and connected when they **understand the organization's purpose, workplace culture and expectations.** They also need **equitable access to relationships, learning and development opportunities**, regardless of where or how they work.

Inspiring an employee does not mean placing pressure on them to be enthusiastic, social or personally connected to every workplace activity. **It means giving them a clear sense of purpose, belonging and opportunity.**



Connect the Role to Organizational Purpose



Explain how the employee's work **contributes** to the organization in clear, practical terms. This helps ensure that understanding purpose does not depend on decoding broad mission language, attending a long presentation or picking up informal context over time.

Discuss:

- the organization's purpose;
- the people or communities it serves;
- the outcomes it is trying to achieve;
- how the employee's team supports those outcomes;
- how the employee's role contributes; and
- why their responsibilities matter.

Avoid relying only on broad mission or values statements. Use practical examples that show how the employee's work connects to real outcomes.

For example:
The reports you prepare help our program teams understand what is working and where participants are encountering barriers. That information directly shapes how we improve our services.

This gives the employee a clearer understanding of the value of their work than a general statement about contributing to organizational success.

Explain how the employee's immediate priorities connect to longer-term goals. This can help them understand why certain tasks matter and how their work supports colleagues, clients or other stakeholders.

Where appropriate, share:

- examples of past projects;
- stories of organizational impact;
- current priorities;
- team goals; and
- how success is measured.

Do not overwhelm the employee with every strategic priority at once. Begin with the goals most relevant to their role and introduce additional context as they become more familiar with the organization. This supports cognitive accessibility and gives the employee time to connect new information to their work.



Introduce Workplace Culture

Every workplace has formal policies and informal ways of working. New employees need both explained clearly.

Discuss:

- how people communicate;
- how decisions are made;
- how responsibilities are shared;
- how meetings are run;
- how disagreement is handled;
- how feedback is given;
- how employees ask for help;
- how flexibility is approached; and
- how barriers and concerns are addressed.

Do not assume that workplace culture will become obvious over time. Employees working remotely or in hybrid arrangements may have fewer opportunities to observe informal practices. Employees who process social information differently may also benefit from direct explanations rather than unwritten expectations.

Explain the difference between a formal requirement and a workplace custom.
For example:
Team members usually post a quick update in the group chat when they are unavailable for part of the day. It is not necessary to share personal details—just let the team know when you expect to return.

This is more useful than expecting the employee to notice and copy what others do.

This is more useful than expecting the employee to notice and copy what others do.

Introduce the organization's expectations for:

- respectful conduct;
- accessibility;
- inclusion;
- discrimination and harassment prevention;
- confidentiality;
- collaboration; and
- accountability.

Explain what employees can do if workplace behaviour does not reflect those expectations.

- A workplace should not describe itself as inclusive without also explaining:
- how concerns can be raised;
- how complaints are handled;
- who is responsible for responding;
- how confidentiality is protected; and
- what employees can expect after identifying a barrier.

Create a Sense of Belonging



Belonging develops when an employee feels **recognized, respected and able to participate** without needing to hide or justify their needs.

Help the employee understand that they are a valued member of the team.

This may include:

- recognizing their experience and skills;
- asking for their perspective;
- including them in relevant discussions;
- giving them meaningful work;
- ensuring they receive the same information as colleagues; and
- acknowledging their contributions.

Participation

Avoid treating the employee as a passive observer during onboarding. Give them opportunities to participate in appropriate tasks, conversations and decisions.

At the same time, do not use participation as a test of whether they are a good fit. Employees may have different communication styles, energy levels or preferences for social interaction.

Belonging

Belonging does not require an employee to:

- attend every optional social activity;
- share personal information;
- use a camera in every virtual meeting;
- speak frequently in group discussions; or
- adopt the same work style as their colleagues.

Contribution, Access, Relationships

Focus on whether the employee can contribute, access information and build respectful working relationships.

Build Confidence Through Meaningful Early Work



Employees build confidence when they can apply what they are learning, see progress and complete meaningful work with clear expectations, accessible information and the supports they need.

Begin with work that is meaningful but appropriate for the employee's stage of onboarding. Avoid giving only low-value or disconnected tasks for an extended period.

A useful early assignment should:

- relate clearly to the employee's role;
- have a defined purpose;
- include clear instructions;
- be achievable with the training and supports provided;
- allow the employee to ask questions; and
- create an opportunity for constructive feedback.

Explain why the task matters and how the work will be used.

For example:

This first client-file review will help you practise the process we discussed. I will review it with you afterward, and it will also help us identify whether any part of the system or instructions needs to be adjusted.

Avoid using early tasks as an informal test when expectations, training or accessibility supports are still unclear. Early work should help identify whether the process, instructions or supports need adjustment, not create hidden barriers to demonstrating ability.

Recognize progress and effort without being patronizing. Feedback should be specific and connected to the work.

Instead of:

"Great job—you're doing so well."

Say:

"Your summary identified the main issue clearly and used the reporting format correctly. The next step is to add the recommended action."

Specific feedback helps the employee understand what they are doing effectively and what to focus on next.

Introduce Learning and Development Opportunities

Employees should understand how they can continue building skills and progressing in their role, and those opportunities should be introduced in ways that are accessible from the beginning.



Discuss:

- required training;
- optional learning opportunities;
- coaching;
- mentorship;
- professional development;
- job-shadowing;
- special projects;
- conferences or events;
- internal career opportunities; and
- how development goals are discussed.

Do not wait until a formal performance review to mention growth opportunities. **Introducing them during onboarding** shows that development is expected, supported and available to employees whose participation may require accessible formats, flexible timing or other planning.

Ask the employee about:

- skills they would like to develop;
- areas in which they want more experience;
- career interests;
- previous training;
- preferred learning methods; and
- supports they may need to participate.

For example:
As you become more familiar with the role, are there areas of the work you would be interested in learning more about?

Avoid making assumptions about the employee's career goals.

Some employees may want advancement, while others may want to deepen expertise, increase confidence or become more effective in their current role.
Development opportunities should be accessible. Confirm that:

- training materials are usable;
- platforms are accessible;
- physical locations are accessible;
- travel arrangements account for accessibility needs;
- supports remain available during learning activities; and
- employees are not excluded because providing access requires additional planning.



Provide Equitable Access to Visibilty & Opportunity

Employees working remotely, part time or through flexible arrangements can be overlooked when opportunities are shared informally. **Ensure all employees have equitable access to:**

- important meetings;
- stretch assignments;
- project work;
- organizational updates;
- networking;
- mentorship;
- presentations;
- leadership interaction; and
- professional development.

Do not rely only on spontaneous office conversations or in-person visibility when selecting employees for opportunities**. Managers should ask:**

- Who has been invited?
- Who has access to the information?
- Who is being considered for the opportunity?
- Are remote or hybrid employees being overlooked?
- Does the opportunity create an accessibility barrier?
- Can the format or timing be adjusted?

Equitable access does not require every employee to receive the same opportunity at the same time. It requires **decisions to be based on relevant skills, interests and development needs** rather than proximity, communication style or visibility.

Introduce Mentorship and Peer Support

A mentor, buddy or peer contact can help the employee understand workplace routines and build confidence.

Helping

This person may help the employee:

- ask informal questions;
- understand team practices;
- learn how systems and processes are used;
- make connections;
- prepare for meetings or activities; and
- become familiar with the workplace culture.

Do not assign a mentor simply because they share a disability or another personal characteristic with the employee. Ask whether the employee would find mentorship helpful and, where possible, consider their preferences.

For remote employees, schedule initial contact rather than expecting the relationship to develop on its own.

Selecting

Select someone who:

- understands the employee's role or work environment;
- communicates respectfully;
- has time to provide support;
- understands confidentiality; and
- knows when to refer a question to the manager, human resources or another appropriate person.

Boundaries

Explain the boundaries of the relationship.

A mentor or buddy should not:

- evaluate performance;
- make accommodation decisions;
- ask for personal or medical information;
- speak on behalf of the employee; or
- replace regular contact with the manager.



Encourage Participation in Ways that Work for the Employee

Employees should have **meaningful ways** to share ideas, ask questions and contribute to discussions.

Participation

Offer different ways to participate, such as:

- speaking during meetings;
- contributing through chat;
- sending comments afterward;
- working in a smaller group;
- providing written input;
- meeting one-to-one; or
- reviewing materials in advance.

Do not assume that the most vocal employee is the most engaged or that quick responses reflect stronger understanding.

Give employees enough time to consider questions and provide input. Share agendas and materials in advance when possible.

Meetings

In meetings, ensure that:

- the purpose is clear;
- participants know how to contribute;
- only one person speaks at a time;
- captions or other communication supports are available;
- visual information is described;
- decisions and actions are documented; and
- remote participants can participate equally.

When the employee contributes an idea, acknowledge it and explain what will happen next. Employees are more likely to continue participating when they can see that their input is considered.





Discuss Feedback and Performance as Tools for Growth

Explain how feedback will support the employee's development.

Clarify:

- how often feedback will be provided;
- whether it will be verbal, written or both;
- how goals will be set;
- how progress will be discussed;
- how the employee can ask for feedback; and
- how they can raise concerns about the process.

Feedback should not be limited to correcting problems.

It should also help the employee understand:

- what they are doing effectively;
- where they are making progress;
- which skills to develop;
- how their work contributes; and
- what opportunities may be available.

Ask the employee how they prefer to receive feedback. Some may benefit from written notes, advance notice of a discussion or time to reflect before responding.

Ensure the feedback process is accessible. A method that creates a barrier may prevent the employee from understanding or responding to the information.

Do not connect disability-related needs with a lack of commitment or potential. Flexible hours, accessible technology or additional processing time should not reduce the employee's access to development opportunities.



Recognize Contributions Fairly

Recognizing an employee's contribution can strengthen confidence and reinforce their connection to the team when it is fair, accessible and focused on the value of the work rather than assumptions about the employee.

Recognition may include:

- private feedback;
- acknowledgement during a team meeting;
- a written message;
- sharing the outcome of their work;
- inviting them to present their work; or
- assigning additional responsibility when appropriate.

Ask or observe how the employee prefers to be recognized. Public recognition may be motivating for some employees and uncomfortable or inaccessible for others.

Recognition should be:

- specific;
- sincere;
- connected to the employee's work;
- proportionate to the contribution; and
- consistent with how others are recognized.

Avoid praising an employee for completing ordinary tasks simply because they have a disability. Recognition should focus on the **value and quality** of the work, not assumptions about what was difficult for them.

Recognize that Inclusion in Ongoing

The organization's **commitment to accessibility and inclusion should continue** after formal onboarding activities end.

Explain that the employee can continue to:

- identify barriers;
- request or revise workplace supports;
- ask for accessible information;
- provide feedback;
- pursue learning opportunities; and
- raise concerns about exclusion or unequal treatment.

Managers should continue to examine whether workplace practices support participation and belonging.

Ask questions such as:

- Is the employee receiving the same information and opportunities as others?
- Can they participate fully in team and organizational activities?
- Are accessibility supports working across different tasks and settings?
- Have new barriers emerged as their responsibilities have changed?
- Do they feel comfortable raising questions or concerns?
- Are assumptions influencing how their performance or potential is viewed?

Inspiration should not depend on motivational messages or one-time activities. It comes from helping the employee understand their contribution, experience respect in daily work and see that opportunities are genuinely available to them.



Continue: Continue the Onboarding Conversation

Onboarding does not end after the employee has completed orientation or received their initial training. **Employees often identify new questions, barriers and support needs only after they begin performing the work.**

Regular follow-up gives the employee an opportunity to raise concerns, clarify expectations and review whether their tools, training and workplace supports are working as intended.





Schedule Purposeful Check-Ins

Schedule regular conversations with the employee throughout the onboarding period.

Useful points for checking in may include:

- the end of the first day;
- the end of the first week;
- during the first month;
- after important training or assignments;
- when duties, technology or work locations change; and
- before formal probationary or performance discussions.

The timing and frequency should reflect the employee's role and circumstances. **Some employees may benefit from frequent short conversations, while others may prefer fewer, more structured meetings.** Explain the purpose of each check-in so the employee can prepare. A check-in should not feel like an unexpected performance assessment.

For example:

"I would like to check in about how the role, training and workplace supports are working so far."

This is also an opportunity to **identify anything that needs to be clarified or adjusted.** Provide the employee with an accessible way to raise topics in advance. This may include an agenda, a few guiding questions or the option to send notes by email or chat.

Do not rely only on statements such as:

"Let me know if you need anything."

A new employee may not feel comfortable initiating a difficult conversation. **Managers should create regular opportunities to discuss accessibility, workload, communication and support as part of normal onboarding.**

Ask Useful Questions

Check-ins should help the employee reflect on their experience and identify what would help them move forward. **Ask open and specific questions** rather than only asking whether everything is going well. **Topics may include:**

Understanding the Role

- Are your responsibilities and immediate priorities clear?
- Do you understand how your work is assigned and reviewed?
- Is there anything about the role that differs from what you expected?
- Are there expectations or processes that need more explanation?

Accessibility Supports

- Are the agreed supports working as intended?
- Have they removed the barriers they were intended to address?
- Have any new barriers emerged?
- Does anything need to be changed, added or reviewed?

Information and Training

- Can you find and access the information you need?
- Are the formats and training methods working for you?
- Was enough time provided to learn and practise new tasks?
- Is there any training you need to repeat or receive in another way?

Communication and Connection

- Are the communication methods and expectations clear?
- Do you know whom to approach with different questions?
- Are meetings and team activities accessible?
- Do you feel connected to the people you need to work with?

Technology and Equipment

- Can you use the systems and tools required for your work?
- Is any equipment missing, unreliable or difficult to use?
- Are you able to access technical support when needed?
- Do your tools and supports work in each location where you are expected to work?

Workload and Pacing

- Is the volume and pace of work manageable while you are learning the role?
- Are priorities clear when several tasks compete for attention?
- Do you have enough time to complete the work using the tools and processes provided?
- Are breaks, scheduling arrangements or other supports working?

Give the employee time to answer. They may need to reflect before identifying the source of a barrier or deciding what change would help. Offer another way to provide information after the meeting.
For example: “You do not need to identify everything during this conversation. You can follow up afterward if something comes to mind.”
Do not treat a concern raised during a check-in as evidence that the employee is failing. Questions and adjustments are a normal part of learning a new workplace.

Resolve Barriers Promptly

When the employee identifies a barrier, respond clearly and take action. **Begin by confirming your understanding:**

"It sounds like the training videos are captioned, but the captions are inaccurate and are making the instructions difficult to follow. Is that correct?"

Do not immediately decide on a solution without consulting the employee. Ask what outcome they need and whether they have suggestions based on their experience.

Identify

Identify:

- the barrier;
- its effect on the employee's participation or work;
- any immediate action needed;
- possible longer-term solutions;
- who is responsible for responding; and
- when the employee can expect an update.

Interim Arrangement

If the barrier cannot be fully removed immediately, work with the employee to identify a suitable interim arrangement.

An interim arrangement should:

- support meaningful participation;
- be agreed upon with the employee;
- avoid creating additional disadvantage;
- have a clear end point; and
- not replace the need for a full solution.

For example, if an accessible software licence is delayed, an interim arrangement may involve reassigning a specific task or providing support through another accessible system. It should not require the employee to continue using an inaccessible platform indefinitely.

Keep the employee informed. Silence can leave them uncertain about whether their concern is being taken seriously.
Provide updates even when there is no final resolution: "The equipment request has been approved and the expected delivery date is next Wednesday. Until then, we will continue with the temporary arrangement we discussed."

Once action has been taken, **confirm whether it worked**. Closing a request administratively is not the same as resolving the barrier.





Review and Update Supports

Accessibility supports may need to change as the employee learns the role, takes on new responsibilities or works in different settings.

Review arrangements when:

- the employee identifies a new barrier;
- job duties change;
- new technology or systems are introduced;
- the employee begins working from another location;
- training or travel is required;
- workplace conditions change; or
- an existing support is no longer effective.

Ask the employee before making changes.
Do not assume that a support is no longer needed because the employee appears to be managing.

Employees sometimes develop workarounds when a support is missing or ineffective. **A workaround may require additional time, effort or assistance that is not visible to others.**

Ask:

"Is this arrangement continuing to meet your needs, or are you having to do anything extra to make it work?"

When reviewing a support, consider:

- whether it remains effective;
- whether it works consistently;
- whether it creates new barriers;
- whether it is available for all relevant activities;
- whether anyone responsible for implementing it requires additional information; and
- whether the employee knows whom to contact when there is a problem.

Document agreed changes and provide the employee with an accessible copy. Limit documentation to the information required to implement and maintain the support.

If a support involves an external provider, continue to involve the employee in decisions about the service. Confirm that the provider remains appropriate and that the service is being delivered accessibly and respectfully.

Prepare for Probationary and Performance Discussions

Before discussing the employee's performance or probationary progress, **confirm that they have received**:

- clear expectations;
- accessible information;
- appropriate training;
- necessary technology and equipment;
- agreed accessibility supports; and
- a reasonable opportunity to perform the work with those supports.

Do not evaluate the employee based on a period when required supports were unavailable or ineffective. If a delay affected their work, consider how it should be accounted for before making performance or probationary decisions.

If a performance concern arises, consider whether it may be connected to:

- an unclear expectation;
- insufficient training;
- inaccessible information;
- a technology problem;
- an unaddressed workplace barrier;
- a missing or ineffective support; or
- an unrealistic workload or timeline.

Discuss the concern with the employee and gather the relevant information before reaching a conclusion.

For example:
"I noticed that this task has taken longer than expected. Before we discuss the timeline, I want to confirm whether the instructions, system and supports are working as they should."

This does not mean that accessibility prevents performance management. It means that performance should be assessed fairly, based on the employee's work after barriers have been addressed and necessary supports have been provided.

Provide feedback in an accessible format and give the employee an opportunity to ask questions, respond and identify any barriers affecting their work.





Support the Transition from Onboarding

As formal onboarding activities decrease, **make sure the employee knows how ongoing support will continue.**

Review:

- their regular meeting schedule with their manager;
- where current job information is stored;
- who provides technical or workplace support;
- how to request or revise accessibility supports;
- how training and development will continue;
- how performance and goals will be discussed; and
- where to raise concerns.

Do not end the employee's access to a mentor, onboarding contact or other support without discussing the transition.

The employee may no longer require the same level of assistance, but **they should know that support remains available.**

Ask:

"As we move out of the formal onboarding period, are there any supports or regular conversations that would still be helpful?"

Clarify which arrangements are temporary and which will continue as part of the employee's ongoing work.
A support should not be removed simply because the onboarding period has ended.

Learn from the Employee's Experience

Invite the employee to provide feedback on the onboarding process.

Ask about:

- communication before the first day;
- the offer and employment documents;
- the onboarding schedule;
- workplace introductions;
- training and materials;
- technology and equipment;
- physical and virtual accessibility;
- workplace supports;
- communication with the manager and team; and
- any barriers that were not resolved promptly.

Questions may include:
What parts of onboarding helped you feel prepared?
Was there any information you received too early, too late or not at all?
Were there barriers we could have identified before you started?
What should we change for the next employee?

Make clear that feedback is voluntary and will not affect the employee's role, performance assessment or access to support.

Provide more than one way to respond. Employees may prefer to:

- discuss feedback privately;
- complete an accessible form;
- send written comments;
- speak with someone other than their manager; or
- use a confidential or anonymous feedback process.

An anonymous option may help identify concerns that employees are not comfortable raising directly. However, it should not replace regular opportunities for conversation and timely problem-solving.

Do not place responsibility on the employee to redesign the onboarding process. Their feedback can identify issues, but the organization remains responsible for reviewing its practices and removing systemic barriers.





Improve the Onboarding Process

Review feedback and recurring barriers to identify changes that should be made for future employees.

Consider whether:

- inaccessible materials should be corrected;
- frequently requested formats should be provided by default;
- equipment should be ordered earlier;
- training should be delivered differently;
- responsibilities need to be clarified;
- managers require additional guidance;
- digital systems create recurring barriers;
- physical spaces require improvement; or
- policies and procedures are difficult to understand or use.

Distinguish between an individual support and a broader accessibility improvement.

For example, if one employee requires a remediated version of an inaccessible onboarding document, provide the format they need. Then correct the source document so future employees receive an accessible version automatically.

Track agreed improvements and assign responsibility for completing them. Without clear ownership, the same barriers may continue to affect new employees.

Accessible onboarding should improve over time. **Each onboarding experience provides information** about what is working, where barriers remain and how the organization can prepare more effectively.

What Accessible Onboarding Achieves

Accessible onboarding gives a new employee a **fair opportunity** to understand their workplace, perform their role and build relationships from the beginning.

It does not depend on the employee repeatedly identifying barriers or asking for every document, meeting and system to be made accessible. **It combines proactive planning with individualized support and ongoing communication.**

An effective onboarding experience helps the employee:

- understand the organization and their role;
- access essential information, systems and workspaces;
- receive effective training;
- use the equipment and workplace supports they need;
- know where to ask questions or raise concerns;
- build relationships with colleagues;
- understand how their work contributes; and
- see opportunities to learn and grow.



Welcome, Equip, Inspire

The Welcome, Equip and Inspire framework provides a practical way to approach this work.



Welcome

Help the employee feel expected and included. Introduce them to the organization, their work environment and the people who will support their success.

Equip

Provide clear expectations, accessible information, effective training, necessary technology and timely workplace supports.

Inspire

Connect the employee's work to organizational purpose, support a sense of belonging and provide equitable access to participation and development.

These actions should be supported by preparation **before the employee begins and continued conversations after their initial orientation is complete.**

Accessible onboarding is not a single meeting, presentation or first-day activity. **It begins when the employment offer is made, continues as the employee becomes established in their role, and improves as the organization learns from each onboarding experience.**

Next Steps



Next Steps You Can Take



Complete AccessPath

Our self-directed assessment tool will help you identify other accessibility gaps in your organization. This will help you see other ways you can improve your onboarding process.



Onboarding Workshop

Allow our accessibility experts to lead your team through an interactive workshop that audits your onboarding process. After the workshop you'll have a practical plan for improvements.

Have additional questions?

Contact us or ask our online community of accessibility leaders at www.untappedtalent.ca