

# Make it Count

Measuring for Disability  
Inclusion in Your Workplace



Presidents  
Group

Build relationships and create social connections. Create Employee Resource Groups to provide support. Identify unofficial leaders and influencers and recruit them as champions. Offer more opportunities for staff to connect with leadership. Build staff and leadership awareness about diversity and inclusion. Create Employee Resource Groups to resources for groups like people with disabilities, then leverage them on the survey. Align your measurement initiative with your organizational strategy. Articulate the business case for measurement of disability and refer to it in communications. Build staff and leadership awareness to create space for discussion. Communicate how measuring for disability aligns with your organizational values and present the goals of your measurement initiative. Demonstrate senior leadership's support for your diversity and inclusion initiatives in tangible ways. Educate your HR or diversity and inclusion team on disability, and spread that knowledge throughout your workforce. Use it as an opportunity to establish a baseline and report back to underscore the value of your measurement initiative. Explore creative ways to build measurement into other processes. Be transparent about how information will be used and processed. Adhere to strict data protection standards and communicate those to employees. Collect anonymous data to ensure employee response cannot be traced back to them. Ensure participation is voluntary and you have a 'decline to answer' option. Survey annually to capture changes in disabilities in your workforce. Sync your Return to Work programs with your measurement initiative. Educate staff on disability to improve their understanding of whether or not they should self-identify. Conduct testing on the wording of questions and definitions to ensure inclusivity. Respect the choice of employees to self-identify or not. Build relationships and create social connections. Create Employee Resource Groups to provide support. Identify unofficial leaders and influencers and recruit them as champions. Offer more opportunities for staff to connect with leadership. Build staff and leadership awareness about diversity and inclusion. Create Employee Resource Groups to resources for groups like people with disabilities, then leverage them on the survey. Align your measurement initiative with your organizational strategy. Articulate the business case for measurement of disability and refer to it in communications. Build staff and leadership awareness to create space for discussion. Communicate how measuring for disability aligns with your organizational values and present the goals of your measurement initiative. Demonstrate senior leadership's support for your diversity and inclusion initiatives in tangible ways. Educate your HR or diversity and inclusion team on disability, and spread that knowledge throughout your workforce. Use it as an opportunity to establish a baseline and report back to underscore the value of your measurement initiative. Explore creative ways to build measurement into other processes. Be transparent about how information will be used and processed. Adhere to strict data protection standards and communicate those to employees. Collect anonymous data to ensure employee response cannot be traced back to them. Ensure participation is voluntary and you have a 'decline to answer' option. Survey annually to capture changes in disabilities in your workforce. Sync your Return to Work programs with your measurement initiative. Educate staff on disability to improve their understanding of whether or not they should self-identify. Conduct testing on the wording of questions and definitions to ensure inclusivity. Respect the choice of employees to self-identify or not.

# Organizational Summary

## What is the Presidents Group?

Presidents Group is made up of 25 BC business leaders who work towards more accessible and inclusive workplaces. Together, we employ almost 60,000 British Columbians.

Presidents Group members help each other improve our employment practices to be more inclusive to people with disabilities. We also want to show other businesses the value in employing people with disabilities.

Our organization provides training for businesses and is an advisor to BC's Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction.

For more information and other resources on accessible employment, visit [accessibleemployers.ca](https://accessibleemployers.ca).



## Acknowledgements

The Make it Count guide would not have been possible without the valuable contributions of our President Group members, Community of Practice, and Community of Accessible Employers.

Thanks to all those who contributed to this paper's and toolkit's development, including Trish Kelly, Krista Dinsmore Consulting, Harc Creative, Yat Li, Micaela Evans, Darius Maze, and Curtis Mutter.

Thank you to Presidents Group members Vancity, Ernst & Young (EY), BC Hydro, the University of British Columbia (UBC), HSBC, TransLink, the British Columbia Automobile Association (BCAA), SAP Labs Canada, Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, Vancouver Airport Authority (YVR), and KPMG for sharing their experiences with measuring for disability in their workplaces with follow up interviews to discuss the challenges they faced.

Special thanks to the HR teams at Vancity, Vancouver Airport Authority (YVR), BC Hydro, and ICBC who shared copies of their own internal tools and reports they used in their own measurement initiatives.

# Introduction

Organizations measure what they want to improve, so if hiring people with disabilities is a priority for you as an employer, measuring disability is a key place to start. In fact, measuring and reporting on disability can take the many advantages of hiring people with disabilities one step further. With the right tools, any employer can tap into the tangible business and social benefits that collecting and sharing disability data brings.

*Make it Count: Measuring For Disability Inclusion in Your Workplace* is a practical guide for employers looking to measure the rate of disability in their work-

places. Based on interviews with Presidents Group members, we draw upon the real world experience of BC based employers measuring disability, including the most common barriers faced, lessons learned, and innovative solutions implemented during their own measurement initiatives. Case studies shared by our members highlight how measuring can look in a diversity of organizations.

This guide and accompanying toolkit are a companion for values driven organizations. *Make it Count* walks employers through the process of creating a disability measurement initiative that fits the unique context of their organization.

With *Make it Count*, we invite you to join our movement to measure.

Led by 25 employers in BC who make up the Presidents Group and its Community of Accessible Employers, the Pledge to Measure's goal is to definitively measure that British Columbia is the province with the highest employment for people with disabilities in Canada by 2030. Every additional organization that takes part can add its numbers to the province-wide tally and help advocate for the full inclusion of people with disabilities in the BC economy.





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BC Hydro  
 BC Libraries Cooperative  
 BC Lottery Corporation  
 BC Transit  
 British Columbia Automobile Association  
 Buy-Low Foods  
 Central 1 Credit Union  
 Destination British Columbia  
 Destination Canada  
 EY Canada  
 Fairware  
 Gabi & Jules Homemade Pies  
 HSBC Bank Canada  
 ICBC  
 KPMG Canada  
 Ledcor Group  
 Maple Communications Group Inc.  
 NATIONAL PR  
 SAP Labs Canada  
 Save on Meats  
 Small Business BC  
 Tacofino  
 TELUS International  
 Tewanee Consulting Group  
 TransLink  
 University of British Columbia  
 Vancity Credit Union  
 Vancouver Airport Authority  
 Vancouver Fraser Port Authority

## SECTION ONE

**Why are we  
hiring people with  
disabilities and  
why should you?**

# What is a disability?

People experience disabilities in different ways, and their disabilities can be visible or invisible. Canada's Employment Equity Act defines persons with disabilities as "people with a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric or learning impairment who consider themselves to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment or who believe that an employer or potential employer is likely to consider them to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment, as well as individuals with functional limitations due to their impairment that have been accommodated in their current job or workplace."

Presidents Group's Definition of Disability is a condition that results when persons with such impairments encounter attitudinal or environmental barriers that hinder their full participation in society on an equal basis with others. As employers, we have the power to address many of these barriers for employees with disabilities; we can adjust our policies, environments, and organizational cultures built on a foundation of open communication.

Now, more than ever, it is vital to have a social value to your brand. While diversity and inclusion were once a point of distinction for companies, it is rapidly becoming a point of admission to the market.<sup>1</sup> Measuring and reporting on your company's employment of people with disabilities is valuable proof of your commitment to providing social value as a business and a caring culture as an employer. But, why does the Presidents Group focus on hiring people with disabilities?

First of all, members of the Presidents Group see the opportunity offered by an untapped labour pool. We also know that 614,630 working age British Columbians (age 15-64) have a disability.<sup>2</sup> That represents 20.5% of the population, and includes many people in our province who are able to work, but remain unemployed. In fact, before the COVID-19 outbreak, at least 28,520 people with disabilities in BC were unemployed but wanted to work.<sup>3</sup> Traditionally, employment rates for people with disabilities are significantly lower than for the rest of the population and they have barely changed for many years.<sup>4</sup> While the lasting impacts of COVID-19 on life and employment are unclear, we do know that the pandemic has disproportionately impacted people with disabilities in terms of income, risk of severe illness, and quality of life.<sup>5</sup> It is probable that people with disabilities have been more likely to lose their jobs during the pandemic and will face more obstacles returning to work during the recovery than those without disabilities.<sup>6</sup> That means there is an even greater opportunity to center this untapped labour pool as the economy recovers.

Further, there are many more people with disabilities who have work potential, but have stopped seeking work. There are people with disabilities who have work potential, but have stopped seeking work. There are

numerous reasons why people with disabilities might not be in the labour force. Stigma and repeated rejections by employers are examples of the attitudinal barriers that impede their success and discourage future attempts to secure work. Physical barriers also restrict the access to certain jobs and workplaces for job seekers with physical disabilities.

As a result, the number of available workers could be significantly higher if our community of employers can show people with disabilities that there is space for them in our workforces. To that end, we all need to actively identify and remove these barriers in our own companies.

Secondly, we see the advantages! You do not have to look far for robust studies about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. Research has shown that more diverse and inclusive workplaces average greater productivity, have consistently higher profits, and have an improved ability to anticipate change and innovate. As a group, people with disabilities have been recognized as valuable employees. Studies have found that employees with disabilities tend to stay with a company over a longer period of time and have both better attendance and performance than employees without disabilities.<sup>7</sup> Considering it costs an average of over \$4,000 for each new hire, having great people on staff who will stick around is a compelling argument to tap into this labour pool.<sup>8</sup> Organizations that took part in a study on employment of individuals with mental health related disabilities also highlighted the more intangible benefits of employing people from this group, such as: increased job satisfaction, improved work climate and culture, better relationships between colleagues and a shared sense of responsibility, as well as improvements to their organization's reputation.<sup>9</sup>



# 614,630

working age British Columbians  
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Before the COVID-19  
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A workplace that reflects the diversity of your community helps to improve the perception of your brand and expand your consumer reach. Individuals with disabilities understand the experiences and needs of others in their demographic in a way that people without

**\$55 billion**  
**people with disabilities also represent a large consumer market with an estimated spending power of \$55 billion.**

lived experience of disability cannot. Such experience can improve product design and marketing strategies to help tap into the spending power of people with disabilities, which is estimated at \$55 billion.<sup>10</sup>

A frequently cited concern is the potential cost of the accommodations necessary to support people with disabilities in doing their jobs. However, cases where the costs of accommodation cause undue hardship on employers are rare. A survey of nearly 800 employers found that 58% of accommodations for an employee with a disability cost nothing at all and 37% involved a one time expenditure with a median cost of \$500.<sup>11</sup> Only 3% and 1% of respondents respectively said the accommodation required an ongoing, annual cost or a mix of ongoing and one-time costs. When comparing the cost of the accommodation with costs these

employers would have incurred to have an employee without a disability in the same position, the median difference was \$100.<sup>12</sup> Canadian employers also have access to funding opportunities from the federal and provincial governments that can help cover the cost of accommodations where they exist.

As the above data suggests, many accommodations require only some flexibility and creativity on the part of employers. According to the Canadian Survey on Disability, the most common accommodation requests are for flexible work arrangements, such as adjustments to job duties or working hours.<sup>13</sup> Such adjustments can often be provided without upfront costs to the employer. Even when expenditures on accommodations are necessary, employers still get a net benefit

**2-7**

**organizations saw an economic benefit of 2 to 7 times the cost of accommodations for employees with various mental health disabilities.**

from making those adjustments. A recent study by the Mental Health Commission showed that across four case studies, organizations saw an economic benefit of 2 to 7 times the cost of accommodations for employees with various mental health disabilities.<sup>14</sup>



# The network of supports for employers

Expanding your candidate pool is not something you need to do alone. There are a number of non-profit organizations that can support your team in recruiting, hiring, accommodating, and onboarding people with disabilities. As an example, many individuals with cognitive or learning disabilities have job coaches who help them navigate the workplace and can seek out support if and when challenging situations arise. Connecting with such organizations can lower your turnover rate of employees with disabilities and improve their overall job success and satisfaction.

By working with Disability Employment Service Organizations (DESOs), you get access to expert advice specific to your business, which can build your capacity and support you in getting started sooner than you might alone. Collaborating with DESOs can set you up for success in employing people with disabilities, and allow your team to borrow existing expertise in setting up and implementing your strategy along the way. For instance, without any cost to their business, BC employers can connect with organizations like WorkBC and Community Living BC to explore hiring people with disabilities.<sup>15</sup> Outreach groups are a key aspect of YVR's strategy to improve the representation of people with disabilities in their workforce. They are connected with nearly 40 different organizations, of which 22 represent people with disabilities. Low risk and high reward, tapping into the vast network of free local supports is a win-win strategy for many businesses. Check out the Presidents Group resource [Selecting the Right Disability Employment Service Organization](#) for ideas on how you can take advantage of these supports too.<sup>16</sup>



Selecting the Right Disability  
Employment Service Organization

[accessibleemployers.ca/  
resource/selecting-a-deso](https://accessibleemployers.ca/resource/selecting-a-deso)

## SECTION TWO

# Measuring for Disability Inclusion

02

## Why are we measuring for disability?

Isn't it enough to hire people with disabilities? Why are we measuring too? There are both business and social benefits that come out of your organization's choice to measure for disability...



# On the business side...

## Evidence-based business

You have probably heard the Peter Drucker quote: "If you can't measure it, you can't improve it." And if something is important to your business, you want to be able to improve it.

Long-term consistent data gives organizations the ability to make informed decisions and meet their business goals. For instance, it is standard for businesses to track quarterly profits to help their leadership and staff make decisions that help maximize those profits. Based on the numbers, businesses might choose to double down on a successful marketing campaign or to stop manufacturing a product that is consistently not selling. The same logic should apply across their operations. If, like us, you have a business goal to hire more people with disabilities, keeping track of how many people you have on staff who identify as having a disability will help you meet that goal.

The data collected through a measurement campaign can inform the creation and implementation of a diversity and inclusion strategy and later, evaluate its effectiveness. Knowing your baseline numbers can, for

instance, reveal whether a newly introduced initiative to recruit people with disabilities was successful or whether your team needs to make adjustments to it. The data can also give your company insight into the gaps and inequalities that exist in your workplace.

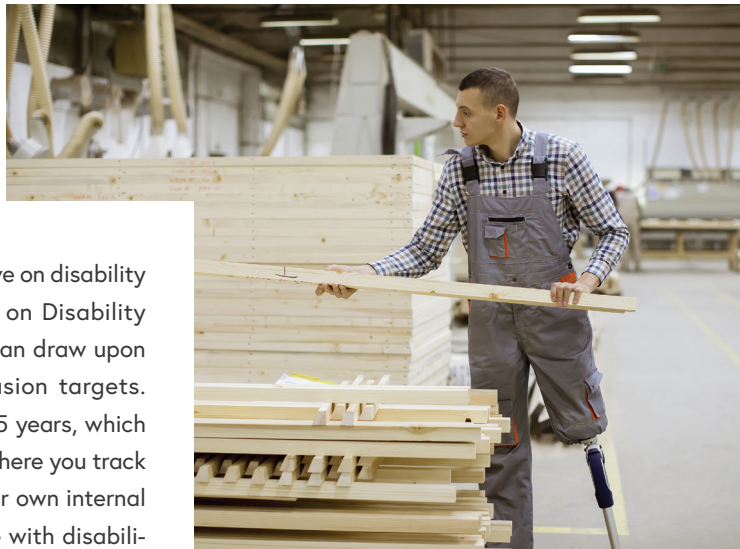
If you measure it, you can manage it. If you take the extra step to report publicly, there's a level of transparency and accountability that drives business to deliver better results.<sup>17</sup>



## Fill gaps in data

The best external source of data we have on disability employment is the Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD). Among other uses, employers can draw upon that data to set diversity and inclusion targets. However, the CSD is conducted every 5 years, which is less relevant to a business context where you track year-over-year metrics. Generating your own internal data on employment equity for people with disabilities provides you with more freedom on the timelines and types of data collected. Data driven by internal priorities and measurements will be more accurate and relevant to your organization.

Most importantly, businesses are measuring because the existing data is poor and at best, infrequent. Consequently, those who measure are taking the lead in an area where the government has not met the needs of the business community. To be truly data driven organizations, we cannot refer to labour market reports or wait years for the next set of CSD data. We need regular, reliable data, and by measuring and reporting publicly, we can help fill that gap.



## Demonstrate your commitment

The federal government and many provinces in Canada now have accessibility legislation on the books. Following the 2019 Accessible Canada Act, the BC Government passed the Accessible BC Act in spring 2021. Over the next decade, the Accessible BC Act will develop accessibility standards in a number of areas including communications, service delivery, built environment, education and employment.

Measuring your efforts to employ people with disabilities is a clear way to model a commitment to accessibility from an employment perspective. Phasing in a measurement initiative now will help your organization get ahead of this legislation and demonstrate a pre-existing commitment.

## Improve organizational culture

There are a number of other benefits you can achieve by measuring disability. In fact, a measurement initiative itself presents an opportunity to improve your organizational culture. On the communications and cultural side, the act of collecting demographic data about your workforce and reporting back on how it is being used sends a message to staff that diversity and inclusion is a priority for your organization.

The key is to clearly communicate *why* you are collecting the data and what you plan to do with the information you gather. Asking questions and listening to your employees is a foundational part of building a high trust culture. Employers who engage staff in an authentic way and listen well receive a high return on investment with their measurement campaigns.

Similarly, employees voluntarily disclosing an invisible disability can enhance coworker relationships, because of the level of trust suggested by sharing one's lived experience.<sup>18</sup> Such vulnerability can prompt social change within the workplace and create a shift to more supportive attitudes and behaviours.

## Build your competitive advantage

Measuring for disability is also a great thing for your competitive advantage. If you are looking to differentiate yourself from your competitors, why not gather numbers that prove you're leading your industry in employing people with disabilities? Your measurement initiative can be an opportunity to move into a leadership position in your industry, because numbers talk.

In the first year of our Pledge to Measure, 166 senior leaders from our 21 participating companies self-identified as having a disability. The number shows that our community of employers in BC is a global leader in disability inclusion.

In contrast, a recent report found that there were *no* "executives" or "senior managers" who self-identify as having a disability in the 100 largest companies in the U.K.<sup>19</sup>

A verified commitment to diversity has been proven to help your brand. It attracts ethical consumers and better talent. In fact, 67% of job seekers consider a potential employer's commitment to diversity in their job search.<sup>20</sup> It also encourages other employers to try to catch up to the new norms you have established, giving rise to broader change.

# On the social side...

Not only does measuring for disability have the potential to benefit your business, it can also have a positive social impact by supporting the movement towards accessibility and inclusion. That is a powerful argument given that more businesses are reflecting on their ability to positively impact their communities than ever before.

Ultimately, every organization's "why we measure" is going to be a little bit different. The members of the Presidents Group, for instance, have committed to a Big Hairy Audacious Goal: that by 2030, we can measure that British Columbia is the province with the highest employment for people with disabilities in Canada. While we often have our own unique organizational goals and use the data in different ways, we share a strong motivation to measure that more and more people with disabilities in BC have appropriate employment that fulfills their work potential and the needs of our labour market.

## Raise awareness

As a collective, we recognize there are important benefits that a movement to measure can achieve for the public. Measurement is considered an important step towards the full participation and integration of people with disabilities into the labour market.<sup>21</sup> Data helps to raise awareness and identify trends that improve employers and policymakers' understanding of the issues faced by people with disabilities, as well as how best to address them. The collection and sharing of data helps shape evidence-based policies aimed at improving the employment outcomes for people with disabilities.<sup>22</sup>

## Join the movement to measure

The decision to measure the number of people with disabilities employed in our organizations is an important one for employers, and navigating the process can be complex. However, measurement also presents a ripe opportunity for peer learning in the business community. Employers seeking to improve or launch a new initiative can learn from each other's experiences, as Presidents Group members have in our Community of Practice.

Among the 25 companies in the Presidents Group, there are organizations that have been measuring for years, and those that are just getting started in their journey to measure. (Five companies shared that they were measuring disability for the first time because of the Pledge to Measure!) All are willing to share what they have learned, and the practices they have developed, to encourage you to join them in their Pledge to Measure.



In the first year of our Pledge to Measure campaign, our participants' nearly 50,000 employees were given the opportunity to complete a survey asking their disability status. An average of 17.3% of their workforces,<sup>23</sup> including 166 senior leaders, chose to self-identify as having a disability when surveyed. Given that 12.7% of BC's labour force has a disability, our baseline data shows that, as a group, our community is doing better than the labour market participation rate.<sup>24</sup> In fact, some of our members had over 70% of their employees self-identify as having a disability on their survey!

#### Pledge to Measure Data At A Glance.<sup>25</sup>

**21**

**Employers participated in year one of the Pledge to Measure**

**49,792**

**Total number of employees at time of survey**

**1,789**

**Total number of employees who self-identified as having a disability**

**166**

**Total number of senior leaders who self-identified as having a disability**

[For more 2021 data from the Pledge to Measure, check out Appendix A.](#)

<sup>23</sup> The median for year one is sitting at 6.1%. Companies with quite high percentages brought up the overall average.

By measuring and contributing your data to a public initiative, like our Pledge to Measure, your organization is demonstrating the value and importance of data to support the disability community.

## Combat stigma

Stigma around the capacity and employability of people with disabilities has been one of the greatest barriers to their ability to secure employment in the first place. Data from employers provides more concrete evidence that people with disabilities make valuable contributions to their workplaces. Your company's choice to measure and report on your numbers can be an act of solidarity and advocacy against such stigma and exclusion.<sup>26</sup>

By publicly sharing that your company employs people with disabilities and finds it important enough to measure, you encourage other companies to do the same. You also provide an example on how it can be done. Such leadership is important because it lifts up more companies and more individuals than your company alone could employ.

## Spur innovation

Given the established link between diversity and innovation, when we improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities, consumers can benefit from products and services that meet their needs in novel and exciting ways. Getting new perspectives in the room that reflect the lived experience of different parts of the community creates more room for debate and exchange, which is proven to lead to better ideas and solutions.

<sup>25</sup> Participants in the Pledge to Measure included 19 President Group members and 2 members of the Community of Accessible Employers, TransLink and BCLC.

# Who are the leaders in disability data?

Businesses leading the way in measuring for disability are motivated by two key drivers: regulation and values.

The regulatory driver mostly applies to federally regulated companies, which are required to measure and report on employment equity data for four designated groups: people with disabilities, women, Indigenous peoples, and members of visible minorities. Federally regulated industries, including the federal public service, crown corporations, as well as the banking, communications, and transportation industries, employ about 6% of all Canadian workers.<sup>27</sup>

These companies are required to submit reports based on their employee surveys, which must comply with the federal language and requirements. They also submit an employment equity plan based on their current numbers. The plan outlines how the company will adjust their policies and work towards employing each designated group at a rate that corresponds to their representation in the available Canadian workforce. For these companies, measuring and reporting are mandated practices. However, many federally regulated companies have risen above compliance and developed progressive diversity and inclusion programs and practices.

Federal contractors are also required to measure and report on employment equity data under the Employment Equity Act.<sup>28</sup> Any company seeking a federal contract over \$1 million will need to commit to implementing a measurement, reporting, and goal setting initiative around employment equity. Having a measurement initiative already in place can be not only clear proof of your commitment to employment equity, but also a competitive advantage in securing those contracts.

The other key driver of best practices in disability measurement and inclusion is organizational values. For companies with strong community relationships or socially responsible brands, surveying and measuring is voluntary, but many see it as essential to their brand. Without the formal mandate, values driven companies have more flexibility in their methods and in what they measure. For example, some companies are including LGBTQ2S+ and gender identity questions in their surveys. Surveying provides an opportunity to practice an open and curious culture, and public reporting extends the values of transparency and accountability.

## How we gather data

Whether an organization is motivated by regulatory compliance, company values, or a strong desire to do the right thing—measurement presents an opportunity to develop a data set that can be leveraged towards meeting business goals. But what does gathering data look like in practice?

Companies measuring disability representation in their workplaces use a self-identification model. In this model, staff members complete a survey which asks them to voluntarily disclose whether or not they identify as having a disability. Many companies ask new hires to complete a demographic survey as a part of their onboarding—but as we will discuss later on, the best practice is to survey your employees annually.

Data collection practices vary significantly depending on the organization. Some employers choose to contract a third party to design and administer their survey, whereas others manage the whole process internally. The best choice depends on the organizational context and considerations such as internal HR capacity, budget, and the presumed level of organizational trust.

The survey could be administered using a paper ballot, online using an internal HR platform, or through a

third party platform. The focus of the survey might be entirely on disability or it might be integrated into a broader diversity and inclusion strategy that takes into account various aspects of identity; such as gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity.

**Companies measuring for disability representation in their workplaces use a self-identification model. In this model, staff members complete a survey which asks them to voluntarily disclose whether or not they identify as having a disability.**

SECTION THREE

# Potential Barriers and Pitfalls When Measuring for Disability



As with any new organizational initiative, there are issues you might run into when measuring disability in your workforce. The Presidents Group conducted primary research to figure out which barriers are most common amongst employers already measuring for disability. The challenges and solutions presented below were identified through interviews with companies in our Community of Practice with pre-existing measurement practices.

While not an exhaustive list, the potential barriers that follow emerged as common patterns across our membership. We believe other businesses are likely to run into similar challenges as they work towards measuring in their own workplaces.

## The "Who," "Where," & "Why" Barriers of Measuring for Disability: Your Organizational Context

Successful gathering of disability data relies on an environment that supports accurate and meaningful results. Your organizational structure and the context laid by the diversity and inclusion work you have done to date will determine how you should engage and survey your staff and leadership on their disability status. Barriers related to your organization itself can be challenging or time consuming to address. However, the positive impacts of taking action on or understanding organizational barriers extend far beyond a successful measurement initiative.



## Organizational Culture and Trust

Keep in mind that in asking staff to disclose their disability status, even confidentially, you are requesting a certain level of vulnerability from your employees. The context for how individuals feel about disclosure extends beyond your organization to societal factors and their past experiences. Around the world, the stigma and biases against people with disabilities are major barriers to employment and advancement. As a result, people with disabilities tend to face more obstacles to getting hired and promoted.

Understandably, people with disabilities, especially invisible ones such as a mental health or pain related condition, may wish to keep their status private from their employer. Many have well-founded concerns that bias could impact their opportunities for professional advancement or their treatment at work; they might even have personal stories about how it has in the past.

**70%**  
of disabilities  
are invisible<sup>29</sup>

**90%**  
of disabilities are  
hidden at work<sup>30</sup>

While you certainly want employees to take the measurement initiative seriously and participate in good faith, the onus rests on the employer to build a culture of trust. There is always a power dynamic in employment relationships. If the level of trust in your organization is low and the culture is not wholly inclusive, employees are less likely to self-identify as having a disability. (Obviously, there are other reasons to improve organizational trust, such as job satisfaction,

productivity, and the comfort that comes from a safe and inclusive work environment.)

Therefore, demonstrable steps need to be taken to ensure that survey data remains confidential (or better yet, anonymous) and that results will not be used against staff that self-identify. Tactics for measurement in a lower trust environment will be discussed in the next section.

There are, however, actions related to creating a more inclusive organizational culture and building trust within your workplace that you can take to improve your results both in measuring and in your business at large. Leaders shape an organization's culture through their priorities, their behaviours, and how they create relationships.<sup>31</sup> Inclusion denotes a workplace where everyone feels welcome and able to contribute and participate on an equal basis with others. A shift to a more inclusive culture relies on leadership intentionally steering the effort to cultivate connection, uniting the team around a common purpose by founding it on clear values, and empowering staff to co-create the culture. Opportunities for staff and leadership to get to know one another help everyone to see each other as individuals, and lead to better working relationships. The process also requires opening pathways for feedback and being willing to act on staff suggestions, which improves trust and participation in the initiatives put forward by leadership.

Building relationships with your staff means creating a two-way dialogue. Empowering employees requires communicating values and expectations, articulating each individual's role in achieving common goals, as well as listening closely to feedback. Employers can also arrange opportunities to learn about and celebrate diversity to more deeply integrate diversity and inclusion into their culture. Opening the discussion helps everyone in an organization see new perspectives, and when done well, understand their own biases and behaviours.

One way organizations create dialogue is through Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). ERGs are groups created around a specific identity or experience within the workplace, such as living with a disability. These groups provide an avenue for staff with that identity to connect, support one another, and grow through personal and professional development opportunities. ERGs can also be valuable feedback tools for employers seeking to address barriers for a given group, and can help draw attention to your measurement initiative. Another way organizations can promote an inclusive culture is by soliciting the support of employees who are passionate about diversity and inclusion or those unofficial 'leaders and influencers' in the workplace who can encourage others to engage with company-wide diversity and inclusion initiatives.

## Case Study

# Employee Resource Group Builds Awareness and Provides Support

By collaborating with employees through Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), ICBC is working to remove barriers and build a supportive and inclusive corporate culture that is responsive to important needs, including persons living with a disability.

An important goal of the Disability Inclusion ERG is to raise awareness among employees that disabilities can be visible or invisible. The ERG is also working towards providing employee access to resources that support those living with a disability. This employee-led group also provides ICBC with a sounding board as it works toward its vision of being a leader in accessible employment.

### Lesson to apply

ERGs provide access to expertise specific to certain identities and experiences, so it is important to consult your ERG for employees with disabilities, if you have one, in the design of your survey. ERGs are also a credible peer voice in the workplace and their endorsement of your measurement initiative will support you in getting the word out. Be sure to communicate results and discuss what next steps will be taken as a result of the feedback received from employees with your ERG after the survey is completed.

Creating a more inclusive culture is a goal all organizations should work towards, but it doesn't happen overnight. While such steps are underway, an option can be to look at your organizational structure and see where strong relationships already exist. For example, communicating your measurement initiative through team managers leverages closer working relationships and can boost engagement.

Some organizations expressed the related challenge of clearly aligning their organizational culture and values with their measurement initiatives. A critical step in the process is gaining an understanding of *why* you want to measure for disability and how the process fits into what you have already done around diversity and inclusion.

Perhaps measurement cleanly fits within your articulated organizational values or aligns with how your Board of Directors interprets results. For instance, some organizations pride themselves on being data-driven and see their emphasis on basing all decisions on hard data as a competitive advantage. They might value how data decreases their reliance on bias in decision making, so these teams can focus on using disability data in the same way—to improve their decision making around staffing.<sup>32</sup> Alternatively, your organization may have recently undergone unconscious bias training and your measurement initiative can be framed as a way to uncover and counteract biases in hiring. The context will vary from company to company. The key is to analyze what is already in play for your organization, and build that into the "why" statement you will use to communicate the initiative.

## Solutions

- Build relationships and create social connections.
- Create Employee Resource Groups to provide support and resources for groups like people with disabilities, then leverage them to champion the survey.
- Identify unofficial leaders and influencers and recruit them as champions.
- Offer more opportunities for staff to connect with leadership.
- Build staff and leadership awareness about diversity and inclusion and create space for discussion.
- Align your measurement initiative with your organizational values.

## Decentralized and Diverse Workforce

Your organizational structure also plays into how you measure disability. 36% of the organizations interviewed referenced the challenges their decentralized and diverse workforces pose to their measurement initiatives. Larger organizations tend to have multiple locations and departments, with dispersed staff and distinct chains of command. Many also have variety in the types of working arrangements or kinds of roles their employees fill. For instance, remote workers or those working in the field often miss out on in-person meetings and training. Meanwhile, onsite staff with roles that do not require them to regularly access email at work may not receive written communications. Such conditions require creativity in rolling out and communicating company-wide diversity and inclusion initiatives.

When your employees have a variety of needs based on where and how they work, it is especially important to question your assumptions about how a measurement or engagement methodology will land in your organization. While an online survey may be the simplest request to make of employees who

spend their day sitting at a computer, it may be a challenge for retail staff, janitorial staff, or servers. Initial approaches often inadvertently leave someone out, so organizations must be willing to iterate and learn from each annual survey to find the best method for their workforce.





## Case Study

# Communicating and Surveying at Key Touchpoints with Staff

With its large, diverse, and dispersed workforce, TransLink must be deliberate with both its communications and surveying strategies. In the first year of the Pledge to Measure, TransLink chose to include questions on disability within its biannual inclusion survey, administered by a third party vendor. Coast Mountain Bus Company (an operating company) drew upon internal expertise from its Communications and Labour Relations teams to edit the survey questions prior to distribution to ensure they were well suited to their approximately 6,000 operationally-focused, unionized employees.

The survey was scheduled to coincide with the quarterly "Sign-up period" for Transit Operators, in which bus drivers visit their respective depots in-person to sign up for the route(s) they will be driving for the next 3 months. Sign-up period is a key opportunity to interact with Transit Operators and share information, as 40% do not visit the depot on a daily basis, and do not have associated work emails.

In advance of the survey launch, Depot Supervisors and Managers were provided with posters to advertise the survey, explain what information would be collected, and highlight why it was important. Surveys were printed and placed in a sitting area at the Sign-up location. Due to COVID restrictions, instead of the EDI Team handing out the surveys, supervisors and managers handled the task. They also went one step further, making drinks and snacks available to foster a comfortable environment where Transit Operators would be more likely to take the time to fill out a survey.

When completed, surveys were placed in locked metal boxes and sent to the external vendor for analysis.

### **Lesson to apply**

Examine workflows and operations to find key touchpoints with staff who are not in the office regularly. Adding perks for participation can boost employee engagement.



Staff surveys often fail to get employee engagement because of how the initiative is communicated, or due to a lack of communication altogether. A more decentralized workforce often results in less direct communication and collaboration between different parts of the organization. Messages that feel several steps removed from an employee's day-to-day responsibilities and chains of command are less meaningful. To survey a decentralized workforce, many organizations will improve engagement if they rely on localized channels and existing relationships to communicate the importance of the results and how they will be used.



## Case Study

# Who Holds Social Influence and Finding Points of Connection

The University of British Columbia (UBC) is a dual campus and multi-city university comprising numerous academic and administrative departments. It is a large and dispersed organization with notable diversity in staff roles.

To account for its organizational structure, UBC's Equity & Inclusion Office opted to involve Department Heads and Deans in communicating the data collection initiative directly to their staff, rather than sending the message from the Associate Vice President of Equity & Inclusion or from the University's President. Their team noted that staff tended to take the request more seriously when coming from their direct supervisor, rather than a department they may have limited interaction with.

### Lesson to apply

Messaging from the top may not be the most effective strategy. Consider who really holds social capital in your organization.

UBC's workforce also includes employees with roles in operations, food services, cleaning services, and residences, many of whom do not have an associated work email. They also do not have regular access to a computer through which they could complete an online survey.

To better engage with employees in this category, UBC tasked surveyors with attending team meetings to speak with staff about the survey and positioned surveyors at shift change locations to collect responses in-person. The result was an increase in response rate from 22% to 48% for this category of employees, as well as an increase in awareness and use of services offered through the University's Equity & Inclusion Office.

### **Lesson to apply**

Low tech surveys can still get strong results. It requires more labour, but can also provide a valuable touchpoint for you and your dispersed workforce.

Organizations interviewed described various strategies to improve the inclusion of and sense of community among remote workers, as well as how these activities supported measurement of disability. With improvements in technology, including remote team members is easier than ever, but often requires added thought to ensure those opportunities to connect are frequent and inclusive.

As an example, BCAA holds virtual "town halls" where the CEO speaks directly to employees over videostream. Employees based at various locations and those working from home are also brought to headquarters in-person for key meetings.

Another example is SAP Labs Canada, which has held virtual training sessions on diversity and inclusion and encourages managers to schedule social check-ins with their employees. Such initiatives lay a strong foundation of trust, which supports surveying on disability. Trust makes it easier to communicate what your organization is surveying on and why, as well as to get accurate results.

## Solutions

- Engage decentralized staff through localized channels.
- Survey staff in ways that fit into their daily workflows.
- Question your assumptions about how to survey and take it as an occasion to build community.
- Create opportunities for connection with remote workers—build a sense of community and facilitate communication of your measurement initiative.

## Buy-In from Governance and Leadership

Leaders drive organizational culture. Unless diversity and inclusion initiatives have backing from leadership, they often lack the funding, legitimacy, or energy to succeed.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, generating buy-in from your board of directors and leadership teams creates the necessary foundation for measuring disability in your workforce. If you're a leader and you're reading this, great—we hope you're on board! If, however, your leadership is not on board, you may have some work cut out for you in terms of explaining why collecting employee demographic data is a best practice your organization should follow.

Drawing upon the business case for inclusion and measurement of disability (discussed in Sections 1 & 2) is a key way to garner support from your organization's leadership table. While the social case may be of interest to some leaders from a values-driven perspective, it is always important to explain how leadership will see concrete positive results if they invest in a diversity and inclusion initiative like measuring for disability.

Building a business case relevant to your leadership team requires finding alignment between the measurement initiative and your organization's values and brand. An intimate understanding of what values your company promotes will help you to identify clear parallels.

If, for example, your brand and key organizational values include exceptional customer service, you could draw a direct line to how a diverse workforce can better understand and meet the needs of your diverse customers. It would follow that conducting a demographic survey would support your team in confirming you have employees with disabilities who can relate to the 20.5% of the population of British Columbia that people with disabilities represent.<sup>34</sup> If your organization already has a diversity and inclusion strategy and considers promoting diversity a key value, you will have an easier time explaining to your leadership team how important it is to establish a baseline and measure progress towards goals that support their long-term diversity and inclusion objectives.

Having clear goals connected to your survey will also help communicate the value of a measurement initiative to your leadership team and board of directors. The goals should be tailored to support your organization's strategic objectives, even if that is increasing revenue or shareholder value.

In Section 4, we'll cover how to articulate your organization's "why"—the fundamental reason for your measurement project—which you can use as the basis for your short-term and long-term goals.

## Case Study

# Promoting Accountability at BC Hydro

In addition to their demographic survey, BC Hydro has introduced diversity and inclusion related performance measures for managers who are required to have an objective related to inclusion on their performance plans. BC Hydro gains manager buy-in on the D&I performance measures by focusing messaging coming from the leadership team on the business case, not social justice language. A clear advantage of setting diversity and inclusion performance metrics and goals for managers comes from connecting their roles with survey outcomes, because it helps demonstrate the benefits of the survey for staff.

### Lesson to apply

Holding your managers accountable through diversity and inclusion related performance metrics can improve staff buy-in for your survey.<sup>35</sup>

Senior leaders have an opportunity to use their support of measuring disability to enhance the legitimacy of all diversity and inclusion programs. In addition to the added legitimacy, employees have more confidence that tangible improvements will follow from their time and energy investment, which is part of the reason why leader-led diversity programs tend to stimulate higher staff engagement.<sup>36</sup> So, once you have the leader buy-in, ensure they champion the measurement initiative and their support is communicated to staff.



#### Pledge to Measure Data

**62**  
**senior leaders  
self-identified as  
having a disability  
at BCAA.**

**35**  
**senior leaders  
self-identified as  
having a disability  
at TransLink.**

Further, because of the stigma and barriers that people with disabilities face in getting hired and promoted, it is important to measure the rate of disability in your senior leadership team, as well as in your staff more generally.

When a senior leader shares their disability status, they powerfully combat the stigma people with disabili-

ties face. They show they have built a successful career despite the barriers. Their courage makes space for others to speak openly about it too. Our interviews told us that when senior leaders have been open about, for instance, their struggles with mental health, there is a positive impact on organizational culture and diversity initiatives also have more buy-in from staff.

## Case Study

# Leading by Participating at BCAA

BCAA is a great example of a workplace where visibility of mental health disabilities and leadership buy-in promoted a more inclusive workplace culture.

BCAA launched an awareness campaign during Mental Health Awareness Week to prompt employee discussion.<sup>37</sup> The campaign kicked off with a "Mental Health in the Workplace" presentation that was available for all employees to attend, and was mandatory for all BCAA leaders. The presentation included a video featuring BCAA employees talking about steps they took to support their mental health and stay balanced.

A new, customized wellness area of BCAA's employee intranet was launched as a central hub containing information and real-life stories.

One very successful element of the website has proved to be an online discussion area where numerous employees have chosen to share personal challenges they've set themselves to work on their mental wellness and work/life balance, along with tips and ideas.

Through a major storytelling initiative, several employees shared their mental health experiences in their own words in a series of intranet homepage feature stories. Their personal accounts of journeys through challenges, including anxiety, depression, and grief, highlighted uplifting recovery stories and the importance of speaking out and seeking help. These stories attracted high levels of engagement, with hundreds of 'likes' and comments posted by colleagues.

### Lesson to apply

Participation and vulnerability of your leadership team encourages staff engagement. The opportunity to share stories increases awareness, builds trust, and even shifts attitudes in the workplace.



However, a top-down approach will not automatically kindle staff buy-in. Employees should be able to see clear benefits in the goals of the measurement initiative and feel their own experiences and values are reflected in the process and outcomes.

That's why your survey cannot be developed or rolled out in a vacuum. Ask for input and feedback from leadership and staff on the questions and definitions. Brainstorm possible applications of results.



## Solutions

- Articulate the business case for measurement of disability and reference statistics.
- Communicate how measuring for disability aligns with your organizational values.
- Clarify and present the goals of your measurement initiative.
- Demonstrate senior leadership's support for your diversity and inclusion initiatives in tangible ways.

## Having Never Tackled Disability Before

For many organizations, disability is the last piece of the diversity puzzle to tackle. We often hear employers say, "We've been doing diversity and inclusion work, but we haven't been thinking about disabilities." In fact, a global survey found that even though 90% of employers say diversity and inclusion is a priority, only 4% were working to become more inclusive of the disability community.<sup>38</sup> Since one in five Canadians have a disability, chances are that most of your employees know someone who does.<sup>39</sup> Given the prevalence of disability, your employees may appreciate being given the space to talk about their personal experiences and their knowledge gaps related to disability.

To address any hesitancy around taking action due to a lack of understanding of the needs of this demographic at work, make sure to tap into the many resources the Presidents Group has developed to support employers. Our website holds many checklists, case studies, and tools you'll find helpful in your journey to disability confidence.

**Since one in five Canadians have a disability, chances are that most of your employees know someone who does.**

If you are just starting your disability focused diversity and inclusion work, now is a great time to establish a baseline. Understanding the level of representation in your workforce can help track your progress as you implement new initiatives to support people with disabilities.

### Solutions

- Educate your HR or diversity and inclusion team on disability, and spread that knowledge throughout your workforce.
- Use your organization's lack of work on disability inclusion as an opportunity to establish a baseline.

# The "How" Barriers of Measuring for Disability: Your Measurement Initiative

When your company decides to undertake a measurement initiative you need to make a number of decisions about how—and how often—you are going to survey your employees. Such practical considerations include choosing strategies for communicating the initiative to employees and methods for data collection. The barriers discussed in this section are intended to help you think through the most appropriate methodology, and anticipate potential snags that may arise.



# Employee Survey Fatigue

Several of the employers we interviewed expressed fears around employee survey fatigue and worried that regular surveying would lessen engagement. It is true that if the number of survey responses is low, the results will not be representative of your workforce, and therefore, not produce reliable data. We'd encourage you to think of the response rate as another piece of data that can help you improve how you conduct future surveys and engage your staff. Most companies that begin measuring have a low response rate in their first years. Through sustained efforts, norms and expectations will shift in a workplace. You will likely discover ways your approach can be adjusted to achieve better response rates over time.

However, fears around survey fatigue might be unfounded. BC Hydro, for instance, reports a consistently high annual survey engagement rate. The key takeaway is that the willingness to participate depends on how you survey.

Two strategies you can employ to avoid survey fatigue striking your organization include:

1. [Listening and reporting back;](#)
2. [Building surveying into pre-existing processes.](#)

Initiatives that take employees away from their core responsibilities can be met with resistance. Much like with your leadership and governance teams, you need to put some effort into bringing employees on side with measurement. For employees, that means ensuring their information is protected, and that outcomes from your initiative have clear benefits they can see and track.

That's part of the reason why listening and reporting back are so important. If you are listening, you will understand employees' workplace concerns and how measurement can help address that. By reporting back, you demonstrate that the initiative is not an arbitrary task they need to complete, but that your team derives value from each person's engagement and is taking action based on the results. As discussed in the section on organizational culture and trust, when you ask employees to provide personal information or add diversity and inclusion engagement to their to-do list, your responsibility is to take their feedback and show they have been heard.

Your employees' time is valuable and your survey's design should acknowledge that. New initiatives that require a time investment tend to encounter more resistance than those that are folded into things your employees already have to do. Employers looking to measure for disability can scan through their HR touch points with employees to identify opportunities to integrate the collection of demographic information.

Two members of the Presidents Group's Community of Practice have found streamlined ways to connect measuring disability with other activities or to limit the time commitment required.

EY Canada updates personnel data on an annual basis, capturing any changes to employees' addresses, contact information, dependents, or emergency contacts. Instead of circulating a separate survey, EY has found it most effective to ask staff to fill out a demographic survey at the same time that they update their personal information.

Vancity, on the other hand, has an internal HR portal where employees can update their personnel data at any time. Each year, Vancity runs a two-week campaign called iCount, during which employees are encouraged to update their demographic data on the portal. At Vancity, the data is collected in aggregate and not

shared with anyone outside of the HR team. The iCount campaign is accompanied by significant engagement activities, meetings, and communication pieces, and has achieved an 80% participation rate. While there is a lot of energy around the campaign, which helps staff understand the purpose and value of having diversity data, employees are only asked to respond if they have had a change to their demographic data, such as an acquired disability or a gender transition.

## Solutions

- Listening and reporting back to underscore the value of your measurement initiatives.
- Think through creative ways to build measurement into other processes.

## Data Protection Concerns

When you tell staff you are measuring for disability in your workplace, the first questions you are likely to hear—after 'why are you collecting'—will be around data protection. Who will see this information? Where will my information be stored? Will my privacy be protected? Will I somehow be treated differently if I self-identify? The need to manage this information in an ethical and transparent fashion is arguably the most important responsibility of an employer collecting any personal data from employees.

We have already established that promoting a culture of trust within an organization is the basis for measuring disability. Data sharing is one place where trust will really pay off. If your employees are not confident that you are being transparent or that you will keep their disability status confidential, they will be less willing to self-identify. And why should they? Just like you had to be sold that measuring for disability was important, you need to think about how to sell it to your staff, and what works with the organizational culture you have established.

The communications piece, again, is important. You need to explain how the data will be collected, processed, and stored, as well as who will see it. You must also adhere to strict data protection standards and make sure employees understand what those are.

In most highly regulated industries, companies pursue one of two options depending on organizational capacity: 1) hire a third party collector; or 2) ensure anonymity by not collecting their disability status alongside any information that could be used to identify your employees.

A third party collector helps remove the concerns that managers will learn an employee's disability status or that the survey could impact an employee's career prospects. Using a third party collector can encourage your staff to feel comfortable disclosing, and possibly provide more sophisticated data analysis than your internal resources would allow. The downside of using a third party to conduct your employee survey is that you miss the opportunity to start building trust with your employees by engaging more directly.

**Who will see this information? Where will my information be stored? Will my privacy be protected? Will I somehow be treated differently if I self-identify?**

## Case Study

# Creating Some Distance from the Data to Build Trust

Having contracted a third party provider to collect demographic data for their workforce, BCAA does not have direct access to the information disclosed by employees. Instead, they receive regular reports based on their data, which empowers them with the information they need to make better business decisions and understand the makeup of their workforce. They believe the distance offered by a third party managed survey helps employees feel more comfortable disclosing their disability status.

### Lesson to apply

While a third party data collector might not be right for you, it can address concerns about disclosure impacting an individual's treatment at work.

Employers who would rather manage the survey internally can opt for collecting anonymous data. The survey can be conducted in paper ballot format or online. The important point is to ensure employees' responses cannot be traced back to them. That means not asking for a name, employee number, or email address on the survey. It also requires employers to not track click-throughs on the company listserv, which could be used to track participation.

As discussed later, some companies, like Vancity, elect to run the survey internally and tie data to their Human Resource Management Systems. An organization choosing to go this route needs to ensure the parameters around who sees the data and in what format is clearly communicated to promote trust in the initiative. In the case of Vancity, demographic data is only available to the HR team in aggregate form and nothing is shared with managers or colleagues. Details around data access are communicated through a two week engagement and educational campaign in advance of the survey.

Finally, participation must be voluntary. If employees do not feel comfortable participating, they should have every opportunity to opt-out of disclosing. Ensure the survey includes a 'decline to answer' option. If you see a large percentage of 'decline to answer' responses, you can use that as a data point, which may suggest an unclear question or low trust in the initiative and its data protection.

## Solutions

- Be transparent about how the information will be used and processed.
- Adhere to strict data protection standards and communicate those to employees.
- Collect anonymous data to ensure responses cannot be traced back to employees.
- Ensure participation is voluntary and you have a 'decline to answer' option. (For an example of what that looks like, check out the Pledge to Measure Toolkit in Appendix B.)



## Acquired Disabilities

A frequently identified barrier is the difficulty of capturing acquired disabilities, impairments that an individual is not born with, in their workforce through a survey. The rate of disability is higher in older age groups, because many people acquire disabilities throughout their lives. In fact, 83% of disabilities are acquired, not present at birth.<sup>40</sup> They often occur through the onset of disease, such as Multiple Sclerosis (MS), a mental illness, sustaining an injury or trauma, or through the aging process itself.<sup>40</sup>

Your employees' disability status or their understanding of that status might change over time. Such changes won't be captured by employers that only collect demographic data as a part of their onboarding processes, so their official number of staff with disabilities could be artificially low. In addition, given the stigma and biases employees with disabilities experience, new employees might not feel comfortable disclosing their disability status. The perceived risk of self-identification may be highest for new employees, as they are unsure of the organizational culture and have few pre-existing relationships in the workplace. The uncertainty may stoke concerns that they would be treated differently if they disclose. Unless a new hire absolutely requires accommodations to do their job,

employers are unlikely to hear about their disability at the outset of the employment relationship.

# 83%

**of disabilities are acquired, not present at birth. Conducting an annual survey takes into account that lives and identities are not static.**

Conducting an annual survey, however, as some employers do, takes into account that lives and identities are not static. Other companies, like Vancity, have an open-ended survey on their HR platform that employees can update at any time throughout the year. Both options help mitigate the uncertainty new employees might feel around disclosure, and gives employers the chance to earn their trust. From a data standpoint, conducting an annual survey keeps your numbers accurate and relevant, as well as aligned with the rhythm of other metrics, so you can use them to support decision-making. When scheduling your survey period, consider your company's budget writing cycles, annual reports, and conferences.

It is also valuable to capture data on how many people go on short-term disability leave in your organization, and how many accommodations are provided to new or returning employees. Some organizations have a return-to-work program to support injured employees in reintegrating into their former or adjusted roles with whatever accommodations are needed, but the program might be housed under a distinct department, such as risk management. Coordination between all departments that support your employees with disabilities is key for maintaining reliable data and ensuring staff receive the support they need. Employees returning to work may or may not have experienced a change in their disability status. To align your return-to-work program with your measurement initiative, employees returning to work should be reminded to update any changes to their personnel information or to participate in the next survey.

## Solutions

- Survey annually to capture any acquired disabilities in your workforce.
- Sync your Return to Work programs with your measurement initiative.

## Self-Identification

In measurement initiatives, employers use surveys to ask staff to self-identify, as in stating whether or not they identify as having a disability. This method opens up employers to a few challenges.

First, employees with conditions classified as disabilities may not identify that way and therefore, do not count themselves on the survey. To counteract this, further education is often needed about what falls into the definition of disability.

In other cases, individuals do not feel like their condition results in barriers to their full and equal participation, and therefore, do not believe themselves to have a disability. Employers might find such situations frustrating, especially when providing accommodations to those employees.



**A US study of white collar workers by the Center for Talent Innovation found 30% of workers in the country had a disability, but only 3.2% of them self-identified to their employers.<sup>42</sup>**

Second, different demographics may respond to survey questions differently. Everyone understands their identities in a unique and contextualized way. What employers can control is the wording of questions and definitions they use in their surveys. Employees may, for instance, be turned off by a poor representation of their identities, and decline to answer.

That is why the definition of disability you use is important. Employers should strive to be as inclusive and thoughtful in their approach as possible, which may require requesting and iterating off of feedback from staff. It is prudent to test definitions and consult an expert—you can also borrow or adapt our definition from the Pledge to Measure Toolkit in Appendix B.



**In year one of our Pledge to Measure, nearly 2,000 employees and senior leaders self-identified as having a disability.**



Third, individuals may choose not to self-identify for any number of reasons. As already discussed, they may not self-identify because of a lack of trust in the organization, or in the security of the data protection. Employees might also have personal reasons for not self-identifying, and their choice should be respected.

## Solutions

- Educate staff on disability to improve their understanding of whether or not they should self-identify.
- Conduct testing on the wording of survey questions and definitions to ensure inclusivity.
- Respect the choice of employees to self-identify or not.

## Maintaining Confidentiality in a Small Business

In small businesses, confidentiality is often a challenge. Having a smaller team increases familiarity between staff members, and when paired with a high trust culture, people might share a lot. In a measurement context, staff might be able to determine who amongst them self-identified as having a disability when results are reported back. Businesses may find some staff ask their colleagues how they responded to the survey on disability.

It's important to guide your staff in establishing rules around confidentiality and respect for privacy. Someone's disability status is their story and their story alone to share. While the topic of disability should not be treated as taboo, leaders should set the expectation that fellow staff members treat disability status and disclosure with respect and dignity.<sup>42</sup>

## How to Talk About Disability: Tips for Staff

1. **The best thing to do is ask directly.** If you're not sure how to talk about someone's disability, ask them what language or terminology they prefer to refer to disability. Not everyone with a disability, or even the same disability, feels the same way about language. And some don't really have a preference—that's okay too.
2. **Do not use disability-related terms as slurs of insults.** These terms are outdated and should not be used at any time, whether around employees with disabilities or not. Language like "that movie was stupid" or "are you blind (or deaf)?" can be hurtful and have long-lasting effects.

3. **Speak to people with disabilities, not about them.** People with disabilities want to be treated like anyone else, and are equal participants in the workplace and community.
4. **If you make a mistake, apologize and move on.** People with disabilities are often used to educating others about their experiences and language preferences. As long as you're learning from your mistakes, people will typically be patient and understanding.

However, there is also the question of how data is presented. Many diversity and inclusion survey tools have a minimum threshold before the data is shared. Regardless of how your company is collecting data on disability, it is important for any data sharing to be general and aggregate.<sup>44</sup> That means not providing breakdowns by department or role type to avoid employee speculation. Small businesses may choose to join together with a few partners and report out on their numbers collectively to further guarantee their employees' privacy. Such partnerships might also provide added accountability towards their goals of increasing employment of people with disabilities, as businesses connect annually to review their aggregate numbers.

The same logic applies to protecting senior leaders, though some leaders may choose to take the survey as an opportunity to champion the cause. Imagine a small business having two senior leaders, and one of them has an invisible disability. If their survey on disability also asks respondents to identify whether they are a senior leader, and reports those findings back, staff could speculate as to which leader has a disability. Such situations ask leaders to lead by example and be courageous about their position.

## SECTION FOUR

# Are You In? Here's How You Do It.

In this section, we will outline the recommended steps for your organization to take, and the decisions you will need to make in order to measure disability in your workplace.



## STEP 1

# Create a Why for Your Organization

The first step in the process is gaining an understanding of why you want to measure disability, and how the process fits into what you have already done around diversity and inclusion. The context will vary from company to company, and depends on your organizational values, goals, and structure. In this guide, we have discussed at length the importance of having a clearly articulated "why" for your measurement initiative. Your why statement will underpin any communications and messaging to stimulate staff and leader buy-in— and provides rationale as to why you are asking for personal information. It will also help your organization get clear on what you can do with the data you collect.

On a fundamental level, understanding why you are conducting a measurement initiative will help ensure you design a process that achieves what you are setting out to do. As data can track progress on your goals, your goals should inform what data you collect. Perhaps you realize your organization needs to survey staff on more than their disability status, and you want to include other employment equity groups or survey on culture and inclusion. Once you have identified why you are measuring, it becomes easier to decide which questions you need to include and whom you need to engage.

We encourage employers to circulate the survey to all staff currently working at their company and collecting a paycheck; including interns, short-term contracts, and people away on maternity or medical leave. If you omit any employment types in your surveying, you might undercount the number of people with disabilities you have on staff.

### Quick Tip!

Survey everyone who collects a paycheck at your company. Even if they are not full time or permanent staff, your company is employing them. You risk undercounting your actual numbers if these employment types are omitted.

If you were hooked by the Presidents Group's Pledge to Measure (see page 14), you might want to consider aligning your questions with ours and officially joining the Pledge to Measure. We are aiming to identify two statistics:

1. The number of people on staff who identify as having a disability, and
2. The number of senior leaders who identify as having a disability.

The ballot we've designed can be found in Appendix B: The Pledge to Measure Toolkit. The survey template asks respondents to select whether they identify as having a disability, and whether they are a senior leader at their organization. The ballot itself includes examples of disability to prompt staff who may feel unsure of whether their condition qualifies as a disability. Further education on the definition of disability is supported by the Internal Communications Materials in the Toolkit. The ballot also provides a definition of the term "senior leaders." You may wish to customize this definition to better capture your organizational structure.



# Evaluate Your Organizational Context

Now that you know what you are going to measure and why, you need to come to decisions around how you measure. Your organizational context will inform a number of key decisions you make around delivering the survey, communicating with staff, and designing your engagement strategy.

## Assess the Level of Trust

The next step begins with a reality check on the level of trust within your organization. Do you have a high trust culture where employees feel they:

- Can respectfully disagree with leadership without fear of reprisal?
- Understand and are engaged in achieving organizational goals and implementing a shared vision?
- Can professionally express their identities without fears of being harassed, excluded, or passed over for opportunities?
- Are able to make and learn from mistakes?
- Believe leaders take responsibility for their mistakes?
- Tend to maintain high morale on the team, even in difficult times?

These are hard questions and a lot of organizations are not there yet. It takes significant time and investment to build mutual trust. Low trust does not mean you cannot move forward with measuring disability in your workforce. It does, however, suggest that your organization might be best served by engaging an independent third party to administer your staff survey. You can also leverage your measurement initiative as a way to build trust by following through on related programming.

## Assess Your Organizational Structure

Your organizational structure is another key driver of how you measure. That means determining your answers to the following questions:

- Is our organization complex and dispersed?
- Does our team have the capacity to develop and deliver this initiative ourselves?
- What are our channels for communication and coordination with employees?
- Where do authority and influence lie?
- Are we open or resistant to change?

While the above questions do not cover all aspects of your organizational structure, they address key aspects of your structure you will need to consider as you move forward with designing your measurement initiative. The questions speak to several organizational barriers that were identified in Section 3.



## Identify Your Project Manager

Who in your organization will be responsible for delivering the survey and collecting results? It is best to have a single point person, even if others are assigned to assist in the roll out of the survey.

Some organizations have a designated diversity and inclusion person who would be best placed to manage their measurement initiative. However, many do not have a staff person who focuses on HR or diversity and inclusion on a full-time basis. If your organization falls into the latter category, you will have to identify a project manager to oversee the initiative, as well as a leader they can go to if they need support.

Organizations often get more meaningful traction on diversity and inclusion when they have champions in multiple departments. You might choose to do a pulse check to see who wants to be involved in managing the project. Ideally your project manager will be in a role related to HR or operations, as the project will align with their regular functions.

Be cautious of making your staff survey on disability a voluntary side project, particularly in a large organization, because it could get deprioritized.

## Identify Key Internal Stakeholders

What other departments do you need to get on side before communicating your measurement initiative to all staff? For instance, if applicable, it is especially important to enlist your organization's privacy officer or legal department early on in the project-scoping phase to ensure alignment with policies and legislation. Your finance team will likely need to be engaged in budgetary decisions. Department heads might be involved in shaping communications.

The exact players will vary somewhat depending on your organizational structure, but it is important to take the time to engage key individuals throughout the team. Your measurement initiative will benefit from leaning on internal expertise about how your organization works and early engagement creates champions for the project who can generate buy-in from their peers.

## Decide On Your Data Collection Methodology

There are two main ways to conduct a staff demographic survey—through a paper ballot, or via an online platform. Some organizations use sophisticated internal HR software to implement many HR systems and processes and track data. Organizations that already use these platforms to track employee information and communicate with staff may choose to use them to administer a survey on disability. Others may choose to engage a third party surveyor.

It is up to you to decide which survey methodology best suits your organization, however, we recommend ensuring the process is voluntary and the results remain anonymous. You will likely find that staff will be wary of disclosing they have a disability, especially those with an invisible disability, if their responses are tied to their name or employee number. Such considerations are even more important if there is a lower level of trust in your organization, which we will discuss in the next section.

### Paper Ballot

A paper ballot is a simple and low cost method for administering employee surveys. A physical ballot can be circulated to staff, along with a memo that includes instructions to submit anonymously at a ballot box in a discrete area of the office. Ballots can also be passed out and cast during a general staff meeting or a session specifically called around the initiative.

There are a few important benefits to the paper ballot method. It is a simple budget friendly method that can quickly be rolled out in nearly any workplace and requires few materials. It also has the advantage of being anonymous with high transparency in the process. If your survey does not ask staff to identify themselves in any way and uses a low-tech option, you remove many potential objections around protection of information.

However, choosing a paper ballot can increase administration time involved in processing survey results and the potential for error. While the preparation is simple—print out ballots (which can be made on Microsoft Word or adapted from the template in the Pledge to Measure Toolkit in Appendix B) and prepare a ballot box—counting and results tracking needs to be done manually.

So, if you have a large organization, or do not have the staff capacity to count and record each ballot, you might consider using a software option or hiring a third party to conduct the survey. While a paper ballot methodology is more equalizing, in that it does not advantage staff that work on a computer, it may be more challenging to engage remote employees. You can certainly design a mail-in ballot option to address this issue, however, such solutions undermine the simplicity of a paper ballot solution.



## Benefits

- Low cost and simple execution.
- Protection of information through anonymity.

## Drawbacks

- High time investment with manual counting and tracking, and an associated potential for human error.
- May not be appropriate for dispersed teams with remote employees.

## Software Option

Other organizations might explore using an online platform, purchasing a software or integrating a survey into pre-existing HR software. Such solutions address the high time investment required for counting and tracking results when using a paper ballot option, as well as the potential for human error in counting. With a couple clicks, a survey administrator can see how many employees have responded to the survey, the number and percentage of individuals who identify as having a disability within their office, which are collected automatically. A link to the survey can be easily circulated via email, though again, this may not be an appropriate solution if you have employees who are not regularly on email as a function of their jobs.

Many online platform options, like SurveyMonkey or Iquisium, are user friendly, with customizable drag and drop templates. Google Forms is a particularly good option from an accessibility perspective, as the platform is readily compatible with screen reader technology. Such platforms automatically generate reports based on parameters you set and display data visually in graphs and charts. Data is easily manipulated to provide different insights. You might not use some of these features with a short survey on disability, but it might support your organization in interpreting the data you collect using an intersectional lens if, say, you ask for additional demographic data.

Some organizations participate in annual employee engagement surveys run by Great Places to Work or the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI), and can integrate these two surveys by requesting the addition of a demographic module or a customized question about disability status, though this could require an added cost.

However, data protection concerns begin to get more complicated when using an online system. As an example, employers often send company-wide emails through a listserv program. Many such programs allow the sender to track opens and clicks, much like they could for a marketing campaign. By comparing the timestamps, they might be able to match responses to a person's email. Anonymity and data protection is hard to guarantee when using and storing data on an outside system and server. If you use an online software system, keep in mind that data residency laws may require you to only store personal information in servers located in Canada.<sup>45</sup>

Anonymity can also be a challenge when using an internal HR system. While that choice holds many advantages, such as its easy integration into other diversity and inclusion programming, responses will generally be tied to an employee's profile. Given the stigma associated with disability, you may see lower disclosure rates when surveys are not anonymous. Staff



will need to clearly understand who will see their data and have credible guarantees that their information will not be used against them in any way, should they choose to disclose.

Vancity has found that providing certain assurances to staff helped to resolve concerns, such as guaranteeing that only HR has access to demographic data, that the data is only seen by HR in aggregate, and that no person's manager or peers will know their disability status. It should be noted that Vancity also accompanies its annual demographic survey with a significant staff engagement and educational campaign and has built trust over several years of surveying and diversity and inclusion activities.



## Benefits

- Automated counting and report generation.
- Removes some potential for human error in counting manually.
- Sophisticated data representation and visualization options, with quick access to pull relevant data.

## Drawbacks

- Increased cost for use of some platforms.
- Privacy concerns need to be addressed.
- May not be appropriate for employees who do not work at a computer.

## Third Party Surveyor

Other organizations choose to engage a third party to conduct the survey. If trust or capacity is low in your organization and you do have some budget to allocate towards your measurement initiative, hiring an outside consulting firm to conduct the survey might be the right method for you. The extra degree of separation from management and structures within your organization can increase the legitimacy of the initiative, and employees' trust in it. If strict measures around data protection are communicated, employees often feel more comfortable participating. Engaging a third party also simplifies your process immensely, as you will receive reports with data and analysis gathered and interpreted by experts.



## Case Study

# Outsourcing Collection to Improve Data Analysis

BC Hydro uses a third party data collector, in part because of their emphasis on employee privacy, but also because they get support interpreting the results. BC Hydro receives monthly snapshots and quarterly reports that compare their performance to labour market and occupational codes in their industry. Their team also receives an annual report that helps them understand which demographics joined the team, which left, which were promoted, and which were regularized from a temporary employment status. Such use of data gives the company a sophisticated understanding of trends in their diversity efforts. Of those participating in the Pledge to Measure, BC Hydro does the most in-depth monitoring of their data points, likely possible due to the added support from their third party data collector.

### Lesson to apply

Identify which types of data will help your decision making and use your survey to help you get that picture.

Even if you do outsource, that does not mean a complete handover of responsibility. Your team will need to manage the communications and engagement piece for the initiative to be taken seriously and to produce reliable data. You will also have the upfront time cost of finding an appropriate partner to create and administer your survey, which does come with some added risk.



### Benefits

- Can address privacy concerns.
- Receive reports and insights generated and interpreted by experts.

### Drawbacks

- Highest cost option.
- Time investment and risk involved in finding a third party firm you trust.

#### STEP 4

## Consider Your Employees' Needs

After you identify how you will administer the survey, you should determine the needs of the employees you are surveying. As already discussed, employees may require different engagement systems, email or in-person, depending on their role at your organization. Your team may also include employees who are away on leave during the surveying period. We recommend finding a way to engage staff on disability or parental leave to promote more accurate data.

Individuals might also have very different needs in terms of how they are surveyed. It is important to word questions simply to ensure everyone is able to understand, which for many workplaces means writing at no higher than a grade six level. Some employees might speak English as a second language. It could therefore be more appropriate to ask if certain individuals would prefer surveys and associated materials translated to their first languages. While it might require incurring some additional costs, translation of your survey materials is a one-time investment you will benefit from annually. Providing the survey in the languages your employees are most comfortable speaking ensures staff understand what you are asking of them, which is a concern both from an ethical and data reliability standpoint. There are many translation and interpretation services available to businesses. Mosaic, for instance, is a Vancouver-based non-profit that offers

affordable translation and live interpretation services for businesses in a variety of languages. In addition, the Westcoast Association of Visual Language Interpreters (WAVLI) offers live interpretation for American Sign Language that could support any informational meetings or educational workshops accompanying your survey campaign.

If you have staff who require decision-making support, such as employees with cognitive or learning disabilities, you may need to communicate the initiative to them differently. Certain individuals may require additional support to fill out the survey accurately. These individuals have likely worked with an employment services organization or job coach who can provide direction based on the individual's needs. If not, they may have a family member who offers support in decision-making. The Pledge to Measure Toolkit (Appendix B) has a sample letter you can customize to write to an employment service organization, job coach, or family member to call in the support your employee needs to meaningfully participate in the survey.

Take some time to consider who you have on staff and what they might need in order to understand the survey and all implications related to their participation.

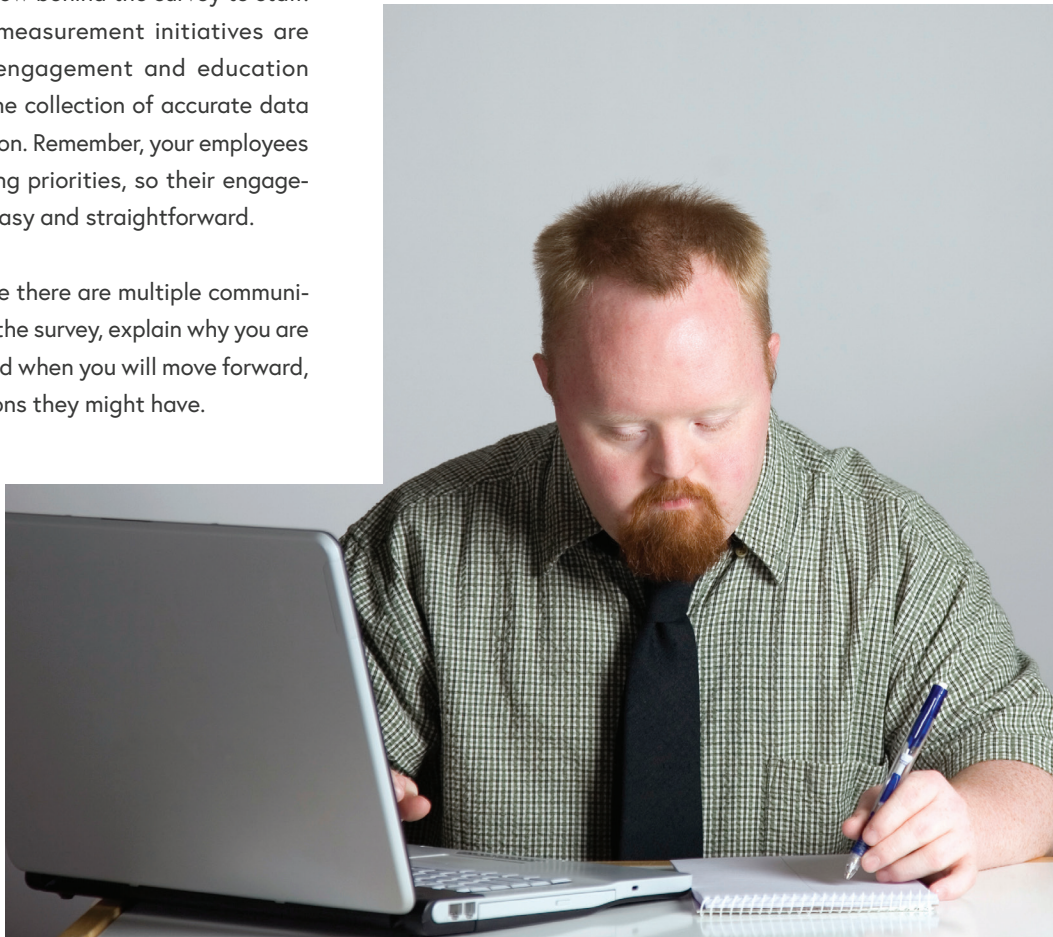


## STEP 5

# Make Your Communications Plan

The next step is to decide how you will communicate the why and the how behind the survey to staff. The most successful measurement initiatives are accompanied by an engagement and education campaign to support the collection of accurate data through self-identification. Remember, your employees are busy with competing priorities, so their engagement should be made easy and straightforward.

It is important to ensure there are multiple communications to alert staff to the survey, explain why you are surveying them, how and when you will move forward, and answer any questions they might have.



## Decide How You Want to Inform Staff About the Initiative

As suggested above, it is helpful to use a variety of methods for engaging staff to ensure the message is received. First, consider the existing channels for communicating with staff that you identified in Step 2. How could you leverage those touch points with staff to support your measurement initiative's success? It is best to work communications about the initiative into existing structures, because you are reaching staff where they are already spending time and through methods they are familiar with.

Many employers find it most effective to announce the survey with an email or memo, and then follow up in a staff meeting to address employee concerns. It is helpful to create a Frequently Asked Questions document to attach to the memo or initial email that will address likely questions or objections from your staff. The FAQ shows your team is being thoughtful and supportive of staff, which increases confidence in the initiative. Each touch point is an opportunity to educate staff on the definition of disability, how their information will be protected, and what your team will ultimately do with the data. For an example, see Appendix B: The Pledge to Measure Toolkit.

Consider whether there are other points of contact you missed and if so, how you can get creative in using them to engage your staff. For instance, in organizations where employees manually fill out a timesheet or pick up a physical paystub, there's a possibility of attaching a notice or reminder to fill out the survey by the given date. If supervisors review employees' weekly work plans in one-on-one meetings, staff can be asked to add completing the survey to their work plan. There are often many channels to experiment with, but some could require collaboration with different departments.

## Determine Your Timeline

We recommend you begin communications several weeks prior to administering the survey. It emphasizes the level of importance your organization is placing on collecting accurate and reliable data on disability. While it might seem like the education work only has to be done in the first year, it is important to conduct engagement and communications activities each year prior to the administration of the survey. It will account for the education of new hires, and provide a valuable refresher for employees who have had a longer tenure at your organization.

## Case Study

# Campaigning for Survey Engagement

Vancity's iCount Campaign is an example of best practices in communicating a measurement initiative to staff. Each year, Vancity runs a two-week campaign to educate on diversity and inclusion, how it fits into the company's values and their great customer service, and to encourage employees to make sure their identities are "counted" in their demographic survey.

Vancity shares accountability reports to communicate what actions the organization is taking to support diversity and inclusion and relevant excerpts from their business plan. Further, the iCount lead sends an internal newsletter to all staff, including an FAQ and a video compilation of employees explaining why iCount is important to them. Managers are also asked to hold a dialogue session, which provides an opportunity for employees to discuss diversity and inclusion in the workplace and ask questions about the initiative.

As their demographic survey is housed on an internal HR portal, only employees who would like to make updates to their personnel data are asked to do so. However, everyone is encouraged to participate in the conversation.



## STEP 6

# Download the Presidents Group Pledge to Measure Toolkit

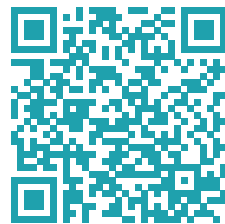
We have created a toolkit with templates and customizable materials to support your organization in collecting data on disability in your workforce. Check out the toolkit in Appendix B to get inspiration and tools to build from as you begin measuring within your organization!



## CALL TO ACTION

We invite you to join us in the [Pledge to Measure](#) by submitting your data to ensure your numbers are captured in our campaign to measure that British Columbia is the province with the highest employment for people with disabilities in Canada by 2030. Your data can help grow the number of employees with disabilities who are counted across the province, and encourage other employers to do the same.

If you have more questions about measurement and what might work for your organization, reach out to the Presidents Group at [info@accessibleemployers.ca](mailto:info@accessibleemployers.ca).



Pledge to Measure

[accessibleemployers.ca/  
pledge-to-measure](https://accessibleemployers.ca/pledge-to-measure)

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## Pledge To Measure Data

We are excited to share the data from 2021, the Pledge to Measure's first year of reporting. Here are the results from participating Presidents Group and Community of Accessible Employers members based on the total number and percentage of employees who identified as having a disability on their respective surveys.

*Four Presidents Group members either chose not to submit in year one of the Pledge to Measure or had not submitted data in time for publication. Due to COVID-19's impacts, we made the submission of data optional for the pilot year.*

*We'd like to offer a special shout out to BCLC and TransLink—members of our Community of Accessible Employers, but not the Presidents Group itself—who still took part in our Pledge to Measure!*

Organization	Total Number of Employees in BC on Survey Date	Percentage of Total Employees Self-Identifying with a Disability on Survey*	Number of Senior Leaders Self-Identifying with a Disability
BC Hydro	6946	4.2%	9
BC Libraries Cooperative	18	16.7%	1
British Columbia Automobile Association (BCAA)	1374	12.2%	62
British Columbia Lottery Corporation (BCLC)	1102	6.8%	6
Destination Canada	85	8.2%	0
Ernst & Young (EY)	1000	2.0%	1%**
Fairware	13	30.8%	0
Gabi & Jules Homemade Pies	31	41.9%	1
HSBC Bank Canada	2456	4.7%	1
ICBC	5770	4.7%	12
KPMG Canada	1581	4.2%	8
Ledcor Group	269	4.8%	0
Maple Communications Group Inc.	1	100%	1
SAP Labs Canada	1370	2.0%	1
Save on Meats	14	71.4%	1
Small Business BC	29	24.1%	3
TransLink	7807	2.2%	35
University of British Columbia (UBC)	16,492	2.3%	0
Vancity	2600	10.2%	7
Vancouver Airport Authority (YVR)	424	2.8%	4
Vancouver Fraser Port Authority	410	6.1%	4

\* (Based on total number of employees and senior leaders)

\*\* EY's numbers had to be estimated as they chose to only provide a percentage point for senior leaders.

## Leading Small Organizations (1-99 employees)

### Save on Meats

14 total employees  
1 senior leader with a disability  
9 employees with disabilities  
**71.4% of their workforce**

Highest percentage of employees to self-identify.

### Gabi & Jules Homemade Pies

31 total employees  
1 senior leader with a disability  
**12 employees with disabilities**  
41.9% of their workforce

Highest total number of employees to self-identify as having a disability.

## Leading Medium-Sized Organization (100-499 employees)

### Vancouver Fraser Port Authority

410 total employees  
4 senior leaders with disabilities

**21 employees with disabilities**  
**41.9% of their workforce**

Highest percentage and total number of employees to self-identify as having a disability.

## Leading Large Organizations (500+ employees)

### BCAA

1374 total employees  
**62 senior leaders with disabilities**  
105 employees with disabilities  
**12.2% of their workforce**

Highest total number of senior leaders who self-identify as having a disability.  
Highest percentage of employees to self-identify as having a disability.

### UBC

16,492 total employees  
0 senior leaders with disabilities  
**386 employees with disabilities**  
2.34% of their workforce

Highest total number of employees to self-identify as having a disability.



# Pledge to Measure Toolkit: Overview

The resources compiled in the Pledge to Measure Toolkit address all aspects of implementation of the Pledge to Measure. They were designed for any organization, even an organization without robust HR, a communications team, or a track record of staff engagement surveys. The Pledge to Measure Toolkit will give you what you need to survey for the first time. The Resources are low tech, so that they can be easily customized and used or scaled up.

An organization measuring disability for the first time may not be able to count on a high trust culture that would encourage individuals to self-identify. It may take time and ongoing dialogue to build trust. If your first survey results feel lower than you expected, don't be discouraged. Celebrate the success of engaging your staff in this meaningful conversation and make sure to spend some time reflecting on what you can do next time to improve response rates.

## Background

The Pledge to Measure Toolkit was created based on experiences shared at the Presidents Group's Community of Practice for HR professionals, as well as through in-depth interviews with employers who have measured or are planning to measure. The tools here also borrow from resources designed by some Presidents Group companies that have a practice of measuring. We are especially grateful to Vancity for submitting tools from their iCount initiative that we adapted to create certain resources in the Toolkit.

## How to Customize the Tools

The tools come as ready to implement templates and can be downloaded as Word documents. The text can be customized to fit your branding, organization specific messaging, and instructions depending on the methodology you choose to use. We encourage employers to do a thorough read through of all resources to make sure the information is consistent with your policies and survey methodology.

You have the option to either use the Presidents Group branded templates or copy and paste the text onto your company letterhead.

On all of the tools, instructional text appears in italics. Fields to input your organization's information are in square brackets. Certain fields, such as [Company Name], can be quickly addressed using the "Find and Replace" function on Word.

## Tools in the Kit

The Toolkit is divided into two sections: Tools for Implementation and Tools for Internal Communication. The first section includes tools to support effective data collection. Resources in the second section together fulfill the need of explaining to staff why your organization is measuring disability and how the information will be used.

The tools are designed to be implemented together to support employers on their journey to measurement. Each is explained in detail below.

## Tools for Implementation

### Survey

The Survey included in the Toolkit can be printed as a paper ballot with two ballots per standard 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper. You can choose to integrate the questions into an online surveying software or print out ballots on your own letterhead.

It is up to you to decide which survey methodology best suits your organization, however, the Presidents Group recommends ensuring that the results remain anonymous. You would likely find that staff will be wary of disclosing that they have a disability, especially those with an invisible disability, if their responses are tied to their name or employee number.

As a part of the Pledge to Measure, the survey should be circulated to all staff who are currently working at your company, including interns, short-term contracts, and people away on maternity or medical leave.

The Pledge to Measure aims to identify two statistics:

1. The number of people on staff who identify as having a disability
2. The number of senior leaders who identify as having a disability

The ballot includes examples of disability to prompt staff who may feel unsure of whether their condition qualifies as a disability. Further education on the definition of disability is supported in the Internal Communications Materials. The ballot also provides a definition of the term "senior leaders." You may wish to customize this definition to better capture your organizational structure.

### Sample Letter to Employment Service Organization

If you have staff who require decision-making support, for example, employees with cognitive or learning disabilities, you may need to communicate the initiative to them differently. Certain individuals may require additional support to fill out the survey accurately. These individuals likely have worked with an employment services organization or job coach who can provide directions based on the individual's needs. If not, they often have a family member who offers support in decision-making.

The Sample Letter can be customized to write to an employment service organization, job coach, or family member to call in the support your employee needs to meaningfully participate in the survey.

## Tools for Internal Communications

### Staff Memo

The first internal communications tool is a memo template that can be circulated to staff to introduce the initiative and build awareness. It outlines the objective and what your organization is asking of employees and over which period of time.

The Staff Memo should be circulated on paper or as an email attachment accompanied by the FAQ. The best method for distribution will depend on the nature of your workforce.

### FAQ

The Frequently Asked Questions should be attached to the memo and shared along with any other internal communications. The FAQ helps to work through potential objections staff may have with self-identification and address any concerns around how the information will be used. The FAQ can be a useful tool to consult as you design your survey methodology.

The responses may need to be altered based on how your company plans to administer the survey and use the responses. Please note that responses in the FAQ (and elsewhere) assume that the results will be anonymous.

## Internal Newsletter Messaging

The Internal Newsletter Messaging template provides an outline of key messages that can be used to create an engaging and informative email to staff about the Pledge to Measure initiative at your organization. The template also includes a suggested subject line and key pieces of information to include. Attach the FAQ to any internal newsletters or communications about the Pledge to Measure to ensure staff have a copy to consult that is easily on hand.

Use your discretion in deciding who should circulate the newsletter—the best choice depends on your company culture. Larger or dispersed organizations might find it improves engagement if managers or department leads send the newsletter to their teams. Smaller companies might find it most appropriate to send the newsletter directly from their CEO.

## Dialogue Guide and Slide Deck

The Dialogue Guide and Slide Deck are designed to support a presentation given by a manager during a staff or team meeting or as a standalone Dialogue Session for employees. Live sessions, whether remote or in-person, help to promote employee engagement and illustrate buy-in from leadership. They also provide an opportunity to ensure that everyone understands the initiative and has a window for questions and discussion.

The Dialogue Session can be adjusted to fit the amount of time available. The Dialogue Guide includes two sample agendas for a 20 minute or a 45 minute presentation. Keep in mind that to run an effective session, a manager will also need time to familiarize themselves with the presentation content as well as supporting resources like the survey and FAQ.

## How to Get More Support

If you have questions about the Toolkit or need connection to other resources, you can contact the Presidents Group at [info@accessibleemployers.ca](mailto:info@accessibleemployers.ca).

We also encourage you to share your feedback with us on how these tools worked for your organization.



Download the Tools Here  
Pledge to Measure Toolkit: Overview

[rebrand.ly/PTM-Toolkit](https://rebrand.ly/PTM-Toolkit)

**Build relationships and create social connections.** Create Employee Resource Groups to provide support. Identify unofficial leaders and influencers and recruit them as champions. Offer more opportunities for staff to connect with leadership. Build staff and leadership awareness about diversity and inclusion. Create Employee Resource Groups to resources for groups like people with disabilities, then leverage those as champions. Align your measurement initiative with your organizational goals. Articulate the business case for measurement of disability and reflect it in your communications. Build staff and leadership awareness to create space for discussion. Communicate how measuring for disability aligns with your organizational mission. Briefly and present the goals of your measurement initiative. Demonstrate leadership's support for your diversity and inclusion initiatives in tangible ways. Educate your HR or diversity and inclusion team on disability, and spread that knowledge throughout your workforce. Use it as an opportunity to establish trust and report back to underscore the value of your measurement initiative. Find creative ways to build measurement into other processes. Be transparent about how information will be used and processed. Adhere to strict data privacy standards and communicate those to employees. Collect anonymous data so no individual employee response cannot be traced back to them. Ensure participation is voluntary and you have a 'decline to answer' option. Survey annually to capture changes in disabilities in your workforce. Sync your Return to Work program with your measurement initiative. Educate staff on disability to improve their understanding of whether or not they should self-identify. Conduct testing on the wording of questions and definitions to ensure inclusivity. Respect the choice of employees to identify or not. Build relationships and create social connections. Create Employee Resource Groups to provide support. Identify unofficial leaders and influencers and recruit them as champions. Offer more opportunities for staff to connect with leadership. Build staff and leadership awareness about diversity and inclusion. Create Employee Resource Groups to resources for groups like people with disabilities, then leverage those as champions.

