ACCESSIBILITY
CONFIDENT EMPLOYERS
(ACE)

ACE FALL COHORT

Who Does What for Accessibility?

A practical guide to shared responsibility, clear roles and accountability.

About this tool

This tool adapts ideas from accessibility resources, including resources focused on digital and web accessibility, for use across the whole workplace. Sources are listed at the end.

Accessibility is 360°

Accessibility can show up in leadership, employment, meetings, technology, communications, purchasing, physical spaces, policies, training, services and workplace culture.

Accessibility is a shared responsibility, but everyone has a different role. Clear roles help people know where to start, who to involve, and where to go when more support is needed.

Who does what?

Roles across the organization	
Everyone	Use accessible practices, raise barriers, listen, learn, and help connect people with support.
Leadership	Set priorities, assign responsibility, provide authority and resources, and review progress.
Managers and HR	Support accessible employment practices, accommodations, day-to-day work, policies and employee support.
Communications and Digital	Build accessibility into content, documents, events, websites, software, forms and workplace technology.
Facilities and Procurement	Consider accessibility in physical spaces, operations, emergency planning, purchasing, vendors and contracts.
Accessibility lead / committee	Coordinate priorities, connect people, share guidance and track progress—not do all accessibility work.

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Lead, Support or Contribute?

Accessibility may be shared, but that does not mean everyone has the same responsibility for every action.

Three ways people may be involved	
LEAD	Makes sure the action moves forward and has, or can access, the authority needed to make decisions.
SUPPORT	Actively helps complete the work and brings needed responsibilities, skills or expertise.
CONTRIBUTE	Provides knowledge, perspective or experience needed to make a good decision.

Include people affected by the decision

People who experience barriers bring important knowledge about how workplace policies, practices, spaces, technologies and services work in practice. Include affected people when identifying barriers, setting priorities, developing or testing solutions, and checking whether changes are working.

Seeking people's perspectives does not make them responsible for fixing the barriers they experience. The organization remains responsible for preventing, identifying and removing barriers.

One action, different roles

Example: improving a hiring process	
Lead	HR / People & Culture coordinates the work.
Support	Hiring managers and Communications help update practices and materials.
Contribute	Candidates, employees with disabilities or accessibility partners share perspectives.
Approve / resource	A senior leader approves policy changes, staff time or resources when needed.

One accessibility action can involve many people, but it should be clear who is responsible for moving it forward.

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A barrier has been identified. Where do I start?

You do not need to know exactly who 'owns' a barrier before raising it. Start with the person or team most closely connected to it.

1. What does the barrier relate to?

Consider:	
Employment or accommodations	HR / People and Culture
Website, software, forms or technology	IT / Digital
Documents, social media or public information	Communications / Content
Building, workspace or physical environment	Facilities / Operations
Purchase, product, service or vendor	Procurement
Day-to-day work, meetings or team practices	Manager / Team Lead
Several areas, or you are not sure	Accessibility Lead / Committee, Manager, or another designated contact

2. Who needs to be involved?

Ask three questions	
Who should LEAD?	Who is closest to the decision, process or action that needs to change?
Who should SUPPORT?	Whose role, responsibilities or expertise are needed?
Who should CONTRIBUTE?	Who is affected, and whose perspective might be missing?

3. Can the lead act?

Check authority, resources and knowledge	
YES	Take action, then check whether it helped: Act → Check → Learn → Improve.
NO	Ask for support or escalate to someone who can provide authority, resources or expertise.
Still unclear?	Bring the barrier to someone who can assign responsibility and help move it forward.

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If you are not the right person, help make the connection. The person who identifies a barrier should not have to navigate the organization alone.

Map accessibility responsibilities in your organization

One person may fill several roles. What matters is that people understand who does what and where to go when they need support.

Accessibility area	Lead	Support / contributors	Decision-maker / resources	Where to go for help
Recruitment and employment				
Communications and content				
Digital accessibility				
Physical spaces				
Procurement				
Policies & planning				

Check for gaps

Look at your map and ask	
Clear responsibility	Is there an area with no clear lead, or too much responsibility sitting with one person?
Decision-making	Do people know who can make decisions and provide resources?
Follow-through	Are barriers being passed between teams without being addressed?
Participation & support	Are affected people meaningfully included, and do staff know where to go for help?

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Choose one place to start

You do not need to redesign everything at once. Choose one responsibility or pathway that would benefit from more clarity.

From clarity to action	
One responsibility or pathway we want to clarify	
Why does this need more clarity?	
Who should lead?	
Who should support or contribute?	
Who can provide authority or resources?	
How will people know where to go for support?	
What will we do next?	
When will we check whether it is working?	

Three questions to carry forward

Keep these questions in mind	
What is my role?	How can I prevent or remove barriers through my everyday work?
Who else needs to be involved?	Whose role, expertise or experience is needed?
What happens if we cannot address it ourselves?	Who can provide the authority, expertise or resources needed to move it forward?

Sources

The W3C ARRM resources are in-progress drafts focused on web accessibility. ACE has adapted relevant concepts more broadly to workplace accessibility.

W3C WAI — Roles Involved in Accessibility
W3C WAI — Accessibility Roles and Responsibilities Mapping Decision Tree
Vispero — Who Owns Digital Accessibility?
Deque — Building a Culture of Accessibility: Leadership Roles