

Pre Session Reading

Summary of Key Points from November 25 and 27 Roundtables

November 25th Session with Disability Community

Barriers to accessibility include:

- attitudinal barriers
- a general lack of awareness regarding accessibility issues
- lack of transparency in the process of addressing accessibility
- lack of enforcement or “teeth” in accessibility standards

Raising awareness:

- Employers often want to promote accessibility, but do not know how. Barrier-free education and employment could help to raise awareness among employers as to what steps are needed
- Accessibility “champions” could spread the word
- Marketing campaigns disseminate information in public locations, such as public transit, or featuring vignettes highlighting barriers and how they impact various people

Some tools to implement accessibility include:

- a best-practices checklist
- examples of accessible practice in action
- testimonials for business people from colleagues
- mentorships and guidance between businesses, and mentorships/guidance between individuals

Making the model work:

- Business and grassroots organizations could do as much to improve accessibility as government
- Making a voluntary approach work will require a multi-pronged strategy in which businesses support each other, for example, through mentorships
- Business Area Improvement Associations and Chambers of Commerce could serve as central points for information and support for smaller establishments

A good certification model should:

- be aspirational and evolving
- incorporate aspects of healthy competition and collaboration
- provide incentives for business to move beyond compliance
- complement and build on the foundations of regulation and human rights principles

November 27th Meeting with the Business Community

Barriers to becoming accessible include:

- attitudinal barriers and lack of awareness
- shortage of time, resources, and information to get started
- challenges adapting a service delivery model to include accessibility
- complexities of designing a unified model for a wide range of business types

Noted challenges from session:

- finding the balance between using guiding principles (or cultural) approach vs. a defined playbook (or actionable) approach
- defining and quantifying metrics around accessibility
- developing a plan with gradual steps towards accessibility excellence

- ensuring accessibility certification can be scaled to a variety of businesses types

Building the business case:

- Participants broadly agreed that a clear demonstration of the business case for accessibility is critical for progress
- A program focused on gradual changes would be most attractive to business and effective in promoting accessibility

Steps to promote accessibility:

- Creating an “Excellence Champion” playbook with clearly defined incremental steps
- Better communication between the business and disability communities
- Demonstrating knowledge of “lived experience” of persons with disabilities to build trust

Promoting culture-change:

- Businesses should reframe accessibility in terms of the customer experience, not just customer service
- An accessibility model must be a “living entity” that is flexible and constantly evolving to ensure continued viability
- “Excellence Champions” across different sectors should collaborate and share best practices

Participants at both meetings agreed on some conditions to make the process work:

- Business and disability communities should agree on a clear set of priorities to enhance accessibility for consumers
- Developing a certification model will require input from multiple stakeholders, working through complex issues together
- Such a model will require a multi-pronged approach, leveraging existing efforts in marketing, funding, crowd sourcing, and networking
- Encouraging real ownership of the initiative among stakeholders requires the right combination of mentorship, education, competition, and incentives

Emerging principles of an accessibility certification model:

- Simple
- Evolving
- Collaborative
- Balancing accessibility principles with defined outcomes Voluntary participation
- Scalable between different types of business (e.g. “personality tests”)