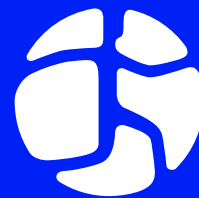




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 Agency for Quantum and Economic Development



UN Tourism

Accessibility Guidelines for Tourism Businesses

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Acknowledgments

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Accessibility Guidelines for Tourism Businesses

Tourism is a dynamic engine for business growth and job creation. Being extremely labour-intensive and reflecting societal changes, the travel and tourism industries are instrumental in providing equal opportunities across the value chain. As people have longer life expectancy and tend to develop disabilities, the global market of end-users of accessible tourism services is on the rise. **While customers with disabilities, specific access requirements and seniors are increasingly welcomed by destinations, the presence of employees with disabilities in tourism is low.**

These guidelines will help your business to have a more diverse workforce and make your services more accessible, whether you are operating in the hospitality and accommodation industries; a travel agency; the meetings, congresses, conventions and incentives (MCCI) industries; the transport industries; or any other tourism-related industries.

The guidelines and the strategies proposed therein can also help your businesses to:

- **Increase revenues** with a larger customer base;
- **Enhance brand reputation;**
- Plan cost-effective improvements to gradually **improve accessibility;**
- Create a **user-friendly environment** for your employees and customers;
- Grow, with an **inclusive work environment** and **better-quality service;** and
- **Strengthen sustainability** by employing more diverse demographics **locally.**

In order to achieve the above, these guidelines propose:

- **The development of an accessibility strategy based on two simple principles:**

1. Accessibility improvements for customers are also beneficial for the employees and vice-versa; and
2. Jobs stay local. Employing people with disabilities strengthens local economies, creates new business opportunities and attracts more clients.

- **Following five simple steps:**

1. Getting started;
2. Understanding the requirements of end-users and ways to improve;
3. Creating and implementing your strategy;
4. Awareness-raising and training; and
5. Establishing specific disability-inclusive recruitment practices.



Woman with Down syndrome working as shop assistant. © Aaron Amat | Dreamstime.com

Each step addressed in the following sections includes detailed actions that work together as a road map for tourism businesses wishing to embrace accessibility and disability-inclusive employment.

Through this strategic approach, companies can fully grasp the benefits that increased accessibility brings – benefits that will only continue to grow in the decades to come.

Tourists with disability enjoying adventure tourism in Ecuador. © Pablo Maranon



Step 1

Getting started

The decision to improve accessibility can be overwhelming or create doubts on **where** and **how** to begin. The following steps will help your company get started. Before being able to define a whole strategy, your company should engage in an open discussion, analyse why accessibility matters to the customers and discuss how to attract workers with disabilities.

Young men on beach holidays, one of them using a wheelchair.
© Auremar | Dreamstime.com



1.1 Engage in an open discussion

Prior to engaging in a formal awareness-raising or training exercise, discuss with managers and employees **with or without a disability, what accessibility is all about.**

- **Talk about barriers:** Identify barriers you encounter both within your private and professional lives. Imagine how higher accessibility levels would improve your quality of life, of people you care about and of your clients.
- **Guage the benefits:** Think about the changes that improved access for families, seniors, people with temporary health conditions or parents with strollers to different facilities and experiences, could bring to your business. Consider whether accommodating customers with disabilities more effectively could help you attract additional clients during mid- and off-seasons.

- **Put employees with disabilities into the picture:** Reflect on people with disabilities you know who work, or aspire to get a job, but still find many closed doors.
- **Express your opinion:** Raise your doubts and ask questions to the responsible colleagues, even if you feel your questions might be wrong, or you cannot find the right words; real understanding can emerge from being open, respectful and empathetic.

How to engage in an open discussion:

When discussing the facts and reality versus prejudice, or previously conceived ideas that remain in people's minds, try to play with true and false statements, "did you know?" questions and images.

This can engage the managers and workers in a playful exercise and break the ice when confronting confusion over what accessibility is about, and what is the right way and language to approach it. Skills do not come across alone. Travel and tourism professionals need to talk but also take part in a proper training.

1.2 Analyse why accessibility matters to your customers

Do not pretend from the beginning to be "perfect" or "fully accessible", but rather focus on gradually removing physical, digital and attitudinal barriers across the customer journey. "Fully accessible" is not a realistic goal, as different people have many different individual access requirements. Try to focus on ensuring your business helps individual customers with what works for them.

- **Rank accessibility:** Place accessibility on the list of the core hospitality principles that your company upholds. Reflect on its position and the reasons behind it.
- **Analyse your clients:** Collect information on common requests and complaints of customers with specific access requirements. Think about potential customers you lose given the lack of accessibility and why they go elsewhere.
- **Focus on the people:** Prioritize the customers' access requirements, safety and comfort, instead of their medical conditions, legislation in place or logistic inconveniences for your business. Include employees with disabilities in conversations about accessibility solutions since they often know best what works well.

How to evaluate your current accessibility levels:

As a business, you can:

- **Look for good practices** in building ramps, adapting elevators, introducing wide doorways, tactile guides or accessible restrooms;
- **Understand how and why** accessible signage with braille and high contrast can aid navigation through the busiest spaces;
- **Discuss with experts** how pathways, both indoors and outdoors, can be better-lit, unobstructed and clearly marked;
- **Check why accessible areas and rooms** should be located close to accessible routes; and
- **Analyse how companies make their events** accessible to attract MICE business.

When looking to provide assistive services:

- **Think about providing rental or on-loan mobility aids** (e.g., wheelchairs or walkers), personal assistants and tour guides for customers with severe disability;
- **Locate businesses that can mend and repair** mobility, orthopaedic and/or hearing aids, among others; and
- **Facilitate access** to veterinary facilities for service animals.
- **Train staff** so they understand why customers require certain assistance services and how to provide them best.

1.3 Discuss how to attract workers with disabilities

Analyse which front- and back-office departments need more personnel and what adjustments would be required to hire workers with disabilities.

- **Ask yourself how often you see workers with disabilities:** Think about your co-workers with disabilities or people with disabilities who work for your suppliers. If you cannot think of anyone, try to answer *why*?
- **Focus on the talent:** Reflect on possible talents of people instead of their disabilities and think of civil society partners to reach candidates who wish to work in your type of business.
- **Predict possible service improvements:** Think about possible service improvements that employees with disabilities could uniquely anticipate when attending to guests with specific access requirements.

Why attract workers with disabilities?

Advancing accessibility and labour inclusion of people with disabilities enables businesses to unlock the full potential of disability-inclusive strategies. Companies that prioritize inclusion have been shown to outperform their peers. **Companies leading in disability employment are likely to achieve up to 28% higher revenue, double their net income and get 30% higher economic profit margins** compared to competitors.^a

a) Accenture (2018), Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage, Accenture, Dublin, p. 7, available at: <https://www.accenture.com/content/dam/accenture/final/a-com-migration/pdf/pdf-89/accenture-disability-inclusion-research-report.pdf> [16-09-2025].

A waiter with Down syndrome working at a cafeteria and interacting with customers.
© Pojoslaw | Dreamstime.com



Step 2

Understanding the requirements of end-users and the ways to improve

As outlined below, your company is advised to assess current accessibility levels, promote corporate commitment and apply a results-based approach to better understand the requirements of end-users and identify ways to improve accessibility.

Pregnant women travelling. © Prostockstudio | Dreamstime.com



2.1 Assess your current accessibility levels

In alignment with section 1.2, you can assess your current accessibility levels across your infrastructure and operations through the following actions:

- **Audit your facilities and services:** Check physical, digital, and service accessibility levels within areas used by customers, those restricted to employees and those used by both groups.
- **Collect information:** Work with experts – with and without disabilities – to gauge and map common concerns of people with disabilities when accessing your facilities, products and services.
- **Identify barriers:** Highlight gaps in built environments, infrastructure and services, digital channels, employees' attitudes and communication. Make sure the accessibility of all operational areas is **assessed before** offering accessible products or job placements targeting people with disabilities.
- **Be transparent:** Gather evidence, facts, photos or videos so that customers and potential workers can **judge for themselves** if their requirements will be met. Update your accessibility statement online explaining the accessible features.
- **Inquire about accessibility improvements:** Get feedback from end-users, visitors and clients through questionnaires or surveys in accessible formats, a dedicated email or focus groups.
- **Involve key stakeholders:** Engage with personnel, clients and tourists with disabilities, advocacy groups from civil society, workers' unions, local disability organizations and employment agencies, and listen to their opinions and ideas.
- **Do not improvise:** Hire certified accessibility experts to plan your actions according to **technical criteria and standards**. By doing this, you will help to get it right the first time, saving costs, ensuring everyone's safety and decreasing the number of negative reviews. ([See text box on ISO 21902:2021](#))

2.2 Promote corporate commitment and results-based agenda

Promote top-down commitment by ensuring that top management publicly commits to disability inclusion as part of the company's values and vision, as outlined below:

- **Appoint an accessibility champion:** Nominate a senior executive as the company-wide accessibility champion to drive progress and ensure accountability. Assign a person or team to lead, ideally someone trained in implementing accessibility standards and with a living experience with a disability.
- **Allocate budget:** Reserve resources for accessibility improvements and plan their breakdown for the implementation of different segments of the strategy in the short-, medium-term and long-term.
- **Seek financial support:** Find out about public funding, grants, tax incentives or international cooperation schemes to help you plan better your investment.

Keeping your personnel in the loop

If your company is embarking on accessibility improvements and has already promoted a corporate commitment, you should **inform accordingly all employees** across different operational and administrative areas, both in front- and back-office departments, on the actions undertaken.

Only in this way, the staff can understand priorities, timelines, budgetary allocations and the follow-up system that will have an impact on their daily operations, their work relations with other colleagues and their contact with or services delivered for customers.

Step 3

Defining the strategy pillars and starting the implementation

To improve labour inclusion and accessibility, your company should **embed disability inclusion into the core of its operations**. A strong corporate commitment requires the design of a strategy with a clear scope, goals and actions. Once your corporate commitment has been secured and the strategy scope defined, there are key areas that should be included in your disability inclusion strategy, such as accessible services and environments, inclusive communication, training and employment, alignment with standards and laws, as well as monitoring and effective marketing and promotion activities.



Urban accessibility. Blind man with cane walking on tactile paving.

© Anton Vierietin | Dreamstime.com

3.1 Define the purpose and scope of your strategy

Set priority areas and decide which environments, services and business activities should be prioritized for accessibility improvements:

- **Clearly state the goals:** Articulate the intended outcomes of the strategy, such as promoting consumer comfort, supporting inclusive employment practices to appeal to a wider segment of the labour force, or enabling entry into new markets.
- **Be realistic:** Even small, low-cost steps toward accessibility can make a big difference for your business. Be realistic about what is possible and clearly explain the benefits.
- **Choose the target audience:** Define who the strategy should target, including employees, customers and partners throughout the supply chain. Determine which departments need to be directly involved in supporting accessibility efforts.
- **Communicate the goals:** Ensure these goals are effectively communicated across the company, with your customers and suppliers, to build understanding and commitment.

- **Show that solutions can be very low-cost:** Once you understand your customers' requirements and are working to change workplace culture, demonstrate how accessibility features can be implemented at little cost.

Getting started with affordable improvements

You can teach staff how to welcome and assist guests with disabilities, you can decide to update the hotel website on accessibility levels, rearrange furniture, ensuring no clutter in hallways, but also adjust the height of items, such as the front desk or the reception bell. Other low-cost improvements might include adding high-contrast, large-font labels on doors, elevators and facilities with stickers or printed signs.

With slightly more budget available, braille buttons can be put in the elevators, portable ramps installed for one or two steps, shower chairs made available, or vibrating alarm clocks offered for deaf guests. Then, if increased budget is secured, more complex structural upgrades can be planned.

3.2 Improve accessibility across different environments

Be strategic in tailoring accessibility interventions to prioritize improvements in infrastructure and services that benefit your customers and employees the most:

- **Apply Universal Design principles:** Implement Universal Design into core environments, services, facilities and operational processes by hiring competent experts. If you are opening a business, integrate accessibility into the design of your facility from the outset, thus avoiding subsequent renovation works which cost more.
- **Adapt to your operations:** Plan your accessibility improvements depending on the different features, size and operational requirements of your business. Do not forget about your audience and the ones you are failing to accommodate.
- **Integrate and adapt accessibility best practices:** Embed best practices from similar companies in the design and redesign of your products and services, keeping in mind that each company has a unique approach to accessibility as its strategy shapes up.
- **Ensure the information you provide is accessible:** Provide timely, trustworthy, updated and easy to understand information, in accessible formats (e.g., websites with screen reader compatibility, video captions, audio descriptions, braille or large print).



Accessible beach with wheelchairs available for swimmers with disabilities.

© Juan Ignacio Rodriguez Moronta | Dreamstime.com

What is Universal Design?

Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. The seven principles of Universal Design, established as a framework to guide the design of environments, products and communications, are:

- **Principle 1 – Equitable use:** The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
- **Principle 2 – Flexibility in use:** The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- **Principle 3 – Simple and intuitive use:** The use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills or current concentration level.
- **Principle 4 – Perceptible Information:** The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
- **Principle 5 – Tolerance for error:** The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
- **Principle 6 – Low physical effort:** The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.
- **Principle 7 – Size and space for approach and use:** Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

Note: For details and definition consult the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design.

Sources: Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (n.d.), 'About Universal Design' and 'The 7 Principles', CEUD, Dublin, available at: <https://universaldesign.ie/> [16-09-2025].

3.3 Employment of persons with disabilities

Employ people with disabilities to improve accessibility and inclusivity of the workplace; ensure workers are valued for their skills, their performance and the relations they create with other human beings, and not their gender, race, age or disability:

- **Ensure equal opportunities:** Provide all candidates with equal opportunities in recruitment, onboarding and career growth.
- **Provide reasonable adjustments:** Support employees' physical, mental and social well-being, as well as job performances by being as flexible as possible to accommodate their requirements. Many of these adaptations have minor costs once your company decides to introduce them.
- **Ensure safe evacuations and accessible emergency plans:** Develop and update emergency and evacuation plan with access requirements of persons with disabilities.
- **Promote an inclusive workplace culture:** Encourage employee resource groups (ERGs) or peer networks for workers with disabilities, to help all employees feel understood and part of the team.

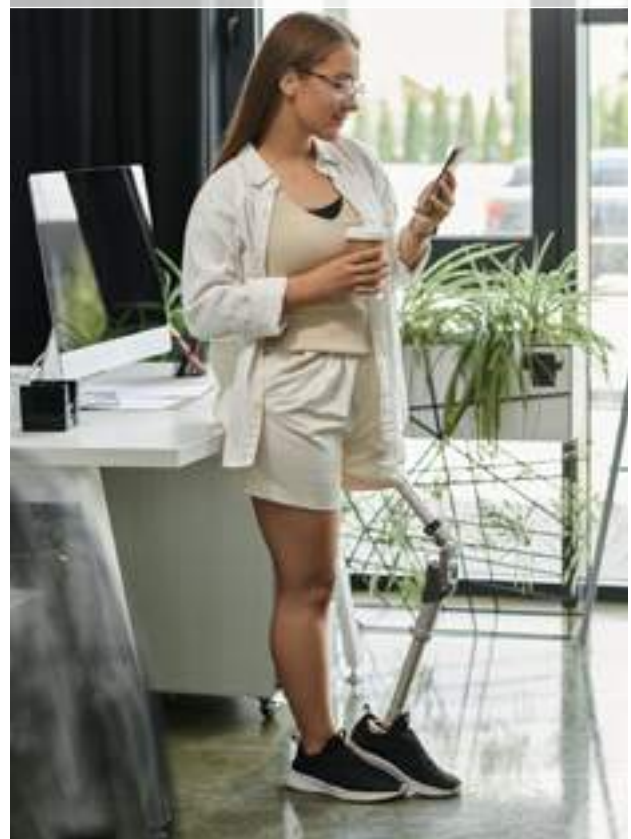
Did you know that...

...according to recent studies,^a **disability-inclusive businesses grow their profits over four times faster than their peers?** Additionally, employees with disabilities tend to have **higher job retention** than those without disability.

a) Disability Insider (2023), *Australian employers benefit from hiring persons with disabilities, study finds*, available at: <https://disabilityinsider.com/2023/03/16/education-and-employment/australian-employers-benefit-from-hiring-persons-with-disabilities-study-finds/>.

A woman with a prosthetic leg standing at her desk at work.

© Lightfieldstudiosprod | Dreamstime.com



3.4 Specific accessibility improvements along the value chain

While many accessibility interventions are based on the principles of Universal Design which have a general scope, the great diversity of service providers operating along the tourism value chain obliges them to adapt their accessibility improvements to the nature of their businesses and the specific requirements of their clients in their customer journey, as suggested below:

- **Hospitality and accommodation:**

Make sure public areas, hallways and corridors are barrier-free, with clearly marked, fully functional ramps and elevators. Provide rooms with features like roll-in showers, grab bars, lowered sinks, and visual/auditory alarms. Provide accessible meeting facilities. Offer detailed accessibility information on booking and other platforms that include photos or videos where possible. Provide menus in Braille, containing details on food allergens, in catering services.

- **Tour operators and travel agencies:**

Ensure accessibility of all value chain links related to your business is assessed before offering any accessible products. Educate guides and other key professionals

on accessibility and on interacting with end-users with specific access requirements. Design barrier-free tours and accessible itineraries to enjoy tourism attractions, in collaboration with experts, both with and without disabilities, and cooperate with destinations to promote accessible tourism experiences during mid- and off-season periods. Produce travel guides in accessible formats and provide direct contact details of personal assistance and support services to customers; make sure to provide quality customer experience and problem-solving for each step of the journey.

- **Transportation:** Work with experts with lived experience of disability to carry out accessibility audits of key transport infrastructure and facilities. Provide wheelchair-accessible vehicles, shuttle buses and airport transfers. Ensure priority queuing and pre-boarding for passengers with disabilities. Remove height differences and gaps between the platforms and thresholds to access vehicles. Design spacious stops with seats at different heights and arm rests, and sciatic support. Train staff to assist passengers with disabilities, particularly customer and ground service personnel, and make sure that support tools for a disability-inclusive evacuation are in place.

- **Meetings, congresses, conventions and incentives (MCCI):** Apply Universal

Design principles when setting up and selecting venues. Provide accessible meeting and conference rooms equipped with wheelchair-accessible ramps, elevators, restrooms, wide aisles, accessible podium and seating. Ensure all communication materials are available in accessible printed or digital formats and highlight the accessibility features of the entire event. When organizing catering, offer

dietary accommodations and ensure that social activities are inclusive of all participants.

Upon undertaking accessibility improvements, businesses should introduce accessibility checklists targeting personnel for daily operations such as restaurant seating, hotel room readiness, evacuation and maintenance protocols, website updates or any other operation building up on the previously suggested actions.

Avoiding accessibility planning pitfalls

It is important to properly plan accessibility improvements to your business services and infrastructure. **Poor planning can entail financial, legal, reputational or operational risks.** Without proper assessment and expert guidance based on the standards, you may end up investing in inadequate solutions (e.g. short ramps with more than 10% angles or elevators too narrow for wheelchairs). Investing in low-impact improvements can also present risks if not done thoroughly (e.g. advertising accessibility of rooms before having completed the renovation).

For both smaller or larger businesses, **the failure to correctly address accessibility may lead to complaints, fines or disqualification from public grants.** Customers with disabilities and their families represent a large market, and low accessibility levels signal exclusion and can result in bad reviews or reputational damage. Elsewhere, poorly scheduled renovations or digital upgrades to advance accessibility can disrupt your daily operations and sales.

Installing accessibility elements without considering the full customer journey may solve one barrier but create others. Finally failing to plan for maintenance (e.g. elevators, signage, websites etc) can quickly undo accessibility progress.

3.5 Digital accessibility

In your business, you should ensure digital accessibility and use inclusive technologies, covering websites, booking platforms, mobile apps and digital communication, in alignment with **the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)**.¹ Digital accessibility solutions offer some of the best low-cost, high-impact actions while improving the overall usability. Making small changes to digital services can help you reach wider markets:

- **Accessible website design:** Work with software experts to design accessible web content and editing tools. Ensure keyboard/screen reader navigation, assistive technologies like hands-free mouse, voice commands and text-to-speech. Use alternative text for images and transcripts for multimedia. Provide high-contrast modes, scalable fonts, and simple layouts. Use standard HTML (hypertext markup language) and ARIA (accessible rich Internet applications).
- **User-Friendly booking systems:** Allow users with visual or cognitive disabilities to book independently. Provide direct booking options for accessible services. Avoid timeouts and captchas that hinder usability. Make platforms usable for people with cognitive or visual disabilities. Ensure accessibility of the user content software (e.g., browsers, multimedia players, and assistive technologies).
- **Inclusive communication:** Use plain, concise and multilingual communication. Make sure instructions are easily to follow. Provide **customer service** by staff trained to meet diverse access requirements. Make documents accessible in multiple formats.
- **Continuous improvements:** Collect **feedback from costumers** and workers with disabilities to adjust services. Collaborate with disability organizations for training and assessment. Regularly **update** accessible web content, including texts, images, forms, multimedia and mobile Apps.

¹ Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are technical guidelines and recommendations for making websites, applications, and other digital property accessible to people with disabilities. More information available at: <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/> [29-10-2025].

A woman with physical disability working on a laptop in an open space office.
© Tetiana Guzhva | Dreamstime.com



3.6 Use of new technologies

New technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) can improve real-time accessibility and personalization of services for your clients with disabilities: virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) can help to build inclusivity before and during the persons’ stay. AI, VR and AR can create a better customer experience to guests with disabilities, without excluding the human element and presence of professional services, but providing more accuracy and safety guarantees. With or without direct human interaction and support, you can use AI and VR/AR to help guests with disabilities feel welcomed, as suggested below:

1. AI for inclusive tourism experiences:

- **Personalized assistance:** When available, use AI-powered chatbots and voice assistants compatible with screen readers, sign language avatars or voice commands to help guests book rooms, request services or navigate the hotel.
- **Smart rooms:** Apply AI to adjust lighting, temperature, curtains or TV via voice commands or mobile apps, removing the need for manual controls.
- **Predictive services:** Analyse guest preferences and accessibility

requirements through AI for wheelchair access, visual support or dietary requirements to proactively suggest tailored services.

- **Inclusive communication:** Provide AI real-time translation and transcription services, such as speech-to-text, text-to-speech, sign language recognition, to make interactions between staff and guests smoother and better – if accompanied by human support.

2. VR/AR for inclusive tourism experiences:

- **Pre-stay virtual tours:** Design VR or AR tours to explore hotel rooms, bathrooms and common areas before booking, ensuring the facilities meet specific access requirements of customers with disabilities, related to showers, bed heights or ramps.
- **Orientation training:** Provide solutions for guests to virtually walk through the property before arrival, reducing anxiety and helping them plan routes, e.g., from their room to the restaurant or pool.
- **Accessible cultural content:** Use VR/AR to showcase local attractions and museums with added accessibility layers, such as subtitles, audio description or sign language, for making culture more inclusive.

3. AI and VR/AR for workers with disabilities:

- **Accessible communication tools:** Help employees with hearing or speech impairments use AI-driven speech-to-text or text-to-speech systems so they would interact smoothly with colleagues and guests. Real-time translation tools break down language barriers.
- **Task automation:** Allow employees with physical or cognitive disability focus on higher-value tasks by using task automation for very repetitive or physically demanding tasks, e.g., check-in data entry or inventory management.
- **Personalized workflows:** For shift planning use AI-powered scheduling to consider medical appointments or energy levels of employees with chronic conditions.
- **Assistive AI devices:** Apply computer vision techniques so employees with visual impairments read menus, recognize guests or navigate areas with digital assistance.
- **Inclusive staff training:** Offer VR or AR simulations, such as captions, sign language or audio description, for accessibility modules adapted to end-users with different abilities, enabling employees with learning disabilities rehearse customer service at their own pace.
- **Safe practice environment:** Practice emergency protocols through VR/AR to let employees with reduced mobility understand workplace hazards and evacuation.

Man using a wheelchair experiencing virtual reality in an art gallery.

© Anna Tolipova | Dreamstime.com



3.7 Inclusive communication

When you are not sure about a person's specific access requirements, respectfully ask how you can be of assistance; the best way to understand a situation is through open and direct communication. The following steps can help your staff develop skills in inclusive communication:

- **Train staff on inclusive communication:** Promote training and internal guidelines to use respectful language. Avoid offensive wording: **do not use** words such as “deficit”, “handicap” or “disabled”; use “persons with disabilities” instead, describing a life condition which does not determine a person.
- **Provide alternative communication methods:** Offer customers different ways to communicate (e.g., by email, chat, sign language interpreters, among others), upon understanding specific access requirements of individual customers or co-workers.
- **Communicate your disability inclusion strategy:** Ensure your strategy is available both online and in physical spaces using accessible formats such as accessible PDFs, plain text, HTML with screen reader compatibility, electronic and printed Braille, and captioned videos with transcripts.
- **Make your strategy visible and integrated:** Include the policy in employee handbooks, onboarding materials, training programmes, and supplier contracts to reach all stakeholders.



A deaf translator teaching two women how to use and understand sign language.

© Bangkok Click Studio | Dreamstime.com

3.8 Standards and laws

Applying national and international legal tools and accessibility standards is essential for your clients with disabilities. They provide consistency and diminish the risk of service providers implementing fragmented or inadequate, and often costly solutions. To align with standards, you could opt for certification labels, but also provide reference documents and practical tools to help personnel solve accessibility challenges. Tourism businesses should therefore:

- **Comply with laws and standards:** Meet legal requirements and apply national standards, by working with accessibility experts to plan their implementation;
- **Use international standards:** Consider international standards as guidance tools to introduce accessibility adjustments in a systematic manner. In the absence of national standards, international standards assemble the best practice approaches;
- **Approach certification organizations:** Contact national or international certification entities, to label and rank your accessibility levels so you can market your achievements. This not only enhances your brand reputation and credibility but also provides a strong competitive advantage; and
- **Learn from other companies:** Draw inspiration from good practices from service providers, destinations, tourism boards and international organizations.

ISO Standard 21902:2021 Accessible tourism for all

A major milestone in advancing accessible tourism was the development of the international ISO Standard 21902:2021, published in 2021, as **the first global comprehensive standard covering accessibility across the entire tourism value chain**. This initiative was led by UN Tourism, Fundación ONCE and UNE (Spanish Association for Standardization), with technical contributions from 85 experts from across 35 countries. This guidance tool is an outcome of a multi-sectoral consensus, including representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities and consumers, tourism trade associations and small and medium-sized enterprises. UN Tourism, Fundación ONCE and UNE released a series of practical resources titled *How to Apply ISO Standard 21902*. It consists of straight-forward six guideline sets, tailored to different segments of a customer journey, to implement this Standard and improve accessibility levels, in general.

Notes: The full text of the ISO Standard 21902:2021 is available at: <https://www.iso.org/standard/72126.html>.
The guidelines set on *How to apply ISO Standard 21902* is available in the UN Tourism Elibrary at: www.e-unwto.org.

3.9 Monitor, review and report your progress

Celebrate small wins and communicate gradual improvements like an employee suggesting a clearer menu format, or a team adding captions to a video, to build team spirit, showing that accessibility is achievable, as outlined below:

- **Collect feedback through accessible channels:** Create user-friendly feedback channels for clients and staff with disabilities, to adapt your strategies.
- **Set and review key performance indicators (KPIs):** Set feasible KPIs and review your disability inclusion or universal accessibility strategy annually.
- **Establish an accessibility board** to monitor feedback, and – through KPI evaluation – spot concrete achievements (even the minor ones) and suggest corrective actions to improve services.
- **Communicate progress:** Publicly communicate on accessibility improvements, including the type of interventions, customers' reviews and the personal accounts of workers with disabilities, to make a statement.
- **Document your processes:** Be sure to document in a systematic way the improvements and processes your company has undertaken to improve accessibility. The lack of information and organization is often the reason for repeating actions that have proven inefficient and taking steps backward.

Inclusive groups trips in India with clients and workers with disability. © Planet Abled



3.10 Marketing and promotion

To give clients a complete overview of your services, to boost your brand and to highlight your progress in advancing accessibility, it is essential to promote your achievements through a well-structured marketing strategy. Ongoing improvements can be reflected in showing service quality, customer satisfaction and employee engagement, as follows:

- **Include accessibility in your marketing strategy:** Make sure accessible experiences are part of the mainstream marketing strategy, avoiding the niche market approach. Customers with disabilities are as varied as those without disabilities.
- **Develop an accessible catalogue:** Ensure your business catalogue highlights accessible services and experiences and make it available in accessible formats. Accessibility information should address every stage of the customer journey, service or experience. Being transparent broadens your client base.
- **Give visibility to accessible options:** Make sure your website includes a clearly visible accessibility section that highlights key accessibility features and provides essential and trustworthy information for users. Ensure that contact details for specific accessibility queries are available and operational. Try to avoid “contact us” forms.
- **Videos and virtual tours:** Creating videos with captions or audio descriptions to showcase your accessibility features can boost visibility and increase confidence in your offerings. Interactive virtual tours allow visitors to explore venues or services beforehand, making them more familiar with what to expect.
- **Be transparent:** Provide reliable, precise and accurate information about accessible experiences. Failing to meet the expectations of clients with disabilities can cause significant inconvenience for them and their safety, harming your brand. Always keep information up to date, including temporary changes or adaptations.

- **Feature people of different ages and abilities:** In your marketing positioning and promotion of your offerings, make sure diversity is well represented and reflected.
- **Collaborate with authorities:** Work with destinations, local businesses and disability organizations to promote your accessible services. Good promotion increases your client base and sells accessible tourism experiences in mid and off-season periods.
- **Participate in accessibility events:** Take part in fairs to showcase your accessible services and products, highlight your business results, and share client satisfaction scores. Promoting your achievements in the right forums will give your brand visibility and improve your business performance.

A retired couple checking its location on a map in Madrid, Spain. © Samwordley | Dreamstime.com



Step 4

Awareness-raising and training

Besides the initial ice-breaking, awareness-raising approach and the assessment of accessibility levels, your corporate strategy on accessible tourism and inclusive employment should include a specific section on disability awareness. This document should be carefully prepared before beginning any training on service provision and internal operations. As a business, you should base your awareness-raising and training programmes on the following actions:

- **Address barriers:** Help employees understand the challenges people with visible and invisible disabilities face when planning holidays or when seeking employment.
- **Deliver regular awareness-raising and training:** Engage personnel across all roles to enhance understanding, build confidence and skills to remove the barriers and promote staff well-being. Make sure workers with disabilities and staff representatives are fully integrated in the entire process.
- **Inform personnel about the demographic trends and brand value advantages:** Provide market data and research to show the advantages of better access and inclusive practices to all personnel. These figures do make a difference.
- **Reduce stigma and bias:** Correct the common misconception that people with disabilities are less capable by promoting understanding of the human talent and overcoming unconscious bias. Show the importance of diverse experience and diverse skillsets in the workplace and in service provision. Facilitate voluntary opportunities for staff to engage with persons with disabilities.
- **Use scenario-based learning:** Incorporate real-life demonstrations, guest scenarios and direct engagement with persons with disabilities. Use cases to analyse solutions benefitting both employees and customers. Showcase success stories of hotels, restaurants, destinations or other tourism companies that gained revenue and reputation through accessibility.

- **Teach inclusive communication:** Train staff in respectful language and how to offer assistance. Teach basic sign language or use of communication devices. Ensure that staff have skills in face-to-face, telephone, digital and video communication.
- **Embrace inclusive technology:** Stay up to date on the use of modern technologies, artificial intelligence, virtual reality and robotics that innovate the travel experience.
- **Emphasize that accessibility is an ongoing process:** Commit to regularly reviewing and adjusting your awareness-raising and training procedures.



Step 5

Establishing disability-inclusive recruitment practices

Your recruitment processes and hiring practices should become more inclusive, accessible and fair, ensuring equal opportunities. By engaging in partnerships with organizations of persons with disability, providing inclusive job descriptions, accessible application processes, trainings for Human Resources (HR) personnel, flexible work arrangements, you can actively promote diversity and build an inclusive workplace culture.

- **Ensure equal opportunities:** Make sure your business provides equal opportunities to all candidates in recruitment. Ensure that workers are recognized for their skills and the relationships they build with others, rather than for their gender, race, age, or disability. Regularly monitor recruitment and hiring data to assess effectiveness and ensure that your hiring practices align with your policy.
- **Partner with organizations of persons with disability (OPD):** Collaborate with OPDs or vocational rehabilitation centres to reach job seekers. Participate in job fairs or programmes on inclusive employment. Develop internship programmes with career development prospects for people with disabilities. Cooperate with civil society organizations to provide training for people with disabilities.
- **Inclusive job descriptions:** Use simple language and avoid jargon. Emphasize competencies over physical abilities (e.g., “able to lift 20 kgs” can often be reworded or reassessed for necessity). Make clear in the job advertisement that you commit to inclusive hiring practices (e.g., diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) or Equal Opportunities statements, encouraging people with disabilities to apply). Advertise job vacancies on platforms accessible to people with disabilities.

- **Accessible application process:**

Make sure application portals work with screen readers and keyboard navigation. Provide applications in alternative formats, such as large print, braille or easy-read. Allow applications via email or phone. Offer assistance in the application process if needed. Provide clear information about the interview, such as location and timeline. Regularly audit recruitment practices to identify and remove barriers. Gather insights from employees with disabilities to suggest improvements.

- **Training:** Provide disability awareness training to HR staff and hiring teams. Train HR personnel on inclusive interviewing techniques and reasonable accommodations.
- **Offer flexible solutions:** Offer flexibility in interview formats (e.g., provide more time, use interpreters, conduct video interview). Modify furniture, equipment, tools, schedules, or tasks at the workplace. Offer flexible working arrangements and working schedules, such as remote and hybrid opportunities, whenever possible.

Braille signage on the handrail enables people with visual impairments to navigate the train station platform. © Viktor Konya | Dreamstime.com



Glossary

Accessibility standards are guidelines and regulations, adopted by a technical consensus, to ensure products, services, environments, and digital platforms are accessible to all individuals, regardless of their abilities.²

Accessible tourism refers to a collaborative process among various stakeholders that enables people with disabilities and specific access requirements – including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access – to function independently, with equity and dignity, through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments.³

Career development refers to the process of managing and advancing one's career by acquiring new skills, knowledge and experiences over time.⁴

Decent work: The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines decent work as “productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity”.⁵

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is used to describe policies and programmes that promote the representation and participation of all people, regardless of age, ethnicity, abilities, gender, religion, culture and sexual orientations.⁶

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- 2 Be my eyes (2025), ‘Accessibility Standards Explained: What You Need to Know’, available at: <https://www.bemyeyes.com/business/accessibility-standards-explained/> [04-11-2025].
 - 3 World Tourism Organization (2013), *Recommendations on Accessible Tourism*, UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284415984>.
 - 4 Career Development Institute (n.d.), ‘What is career development?’, CDI, Stourbridge, available at: <https://www.thecdi.net/about-us/career-development-and-the-cdi/what-is-career-development> [29-10-2025]
 - 5 The International Labour Organization (2023), ‘Decent Work’, ILO, Geneva, available at: <https://www.ilo.org/topics-and-sectors/decent-work> [03-11-2025].
 - 6 Dunn, L. (2020), ‘What Is Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)?’, InclusionHub, available at: <https://www.inclusionhub.com/articles/what-is-dei> [29-10-2025].

Destination management/marketing

organization (DMO): A DMO is the leading organizational entity which may encompass the various authorities, stakeholders and professionals and facilitates tourism sector partnerships towards a collective destination vision. The governance structures can vary from a single public authority to a public/private partnership model. It has the key role of initiating, coordinating and managing the implementation of tourism policies, strategic planning, product development, promotion and marketing.⁷

Employment in tourism industries may be measured as a count of the persons employed in tourism industries in any of their jobs, as a count of the persons employed in tourism industries in their main job, or as a count of the jobs in tourism industries.⁸

Inclusive employment refers to practices allowing everyone of working age, regardless of their background or abilities, to participate in quality, paid work.⁹

Reasonable accommodation refers to any adjustment to the application or hiring process, job duties or work environment that is required to enable persons with disabilities to apply, perform and advance in their career, enjoying equal employment opportunities.¹⁰

Senior tourism: Form of tourism targeting older adults, aged 65 and over. As the global population continues to age, this form of tourism is growing rapidly. Senior travelers tend to prioritize leisure, cultural experiences, and well-being, typically favoring longer stays, flexible travel schedules, and high-quality services during off-peak seasons.¹¹

7 World Tourism Organization (2019), *UNWTO Tourism Definitions*, UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284420858>.

8 World Tourism Organization (n.d.), 'Glossary of Tourism Terms', UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: <https://www.untourism.int/glossary-tourism-terms> [29-10-2025].

9 Sustainability Directory (2025), 'Inclusive Employment Practices', available at: <https://esg.sustainability-directory.com/term/inclusive-employment-practices/> [04-11-2025].

10 European Union – Your Europe (2025), 'Reasonable accommodation', European Commission, Brussels, available at: https://europa.eu/youreurope/business/human-resources/employee-rights-representation/reasonable-accommodation/index_en.htm [29-10-2025].

11 Domínguez Vila, T. (2024), 'Introduction to A Research Agenda for Senior Tourism: a global vision of senior tourism today', in: Domínguez Vila, T (ed.), *A research Agenda for Senior Tourism*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, available at: <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035312993.00005> [29-10-2025].

Sustainable Development Goals: Goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as an international call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.¹²

Tourism destination: Physical space with or without administrative and/or analytical boundaries in which a visitor can spend an overnight. It is the cluster (co-location) of products and services, and of activities and experiences along the tourism value chain and a basic unit of analysis of tourism. It incorporates various stakeholders and can network to create larger destinations. It is also intangible with its image and identity which may influence its market competitiveness.¹³

Tourism facilities refer to the infrastructure, services and amenities specifically designed to create an environment and destination that promotes entertainment attractions for tourists and enhance their travel experiences.¹⁴

Travel/tourism:¹⁵ *Travel* refers to the activities of travellers. A traveller is someone who moves between different geographic locations, for any purpose and any duration. The visitor is a particular type of traveller, and consequently *tourism* is a subset of travel.

Tourism refers to the activity of visitors and is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which involves the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes.

Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used by used to the greatest possible extent, in the most independent and natural manner possible; in the widest possible range of situations, by any persons of any age or size or having any particular physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual ability or disability.¹⁶

12 United Nations (2015), 'Transforming our world: the 2023 Agenda for Sustainable Development', A/RES/70/1, UN, New York, available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda> [03-11-2025].

13 World Tourism Organization (2019), *UNWTO Tourism Definitions*, UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284420858>.

14 Definition based on: Italian national institute of statistics (n.d.), 'Tourism', Istat, Rome, available at: https://seriestoriche.istat.it/fileadmin/documenti/18_Glossary_Tourism.pdf [04-11-2025].

15 World Tourism Organization (n.d.), 'Glossary of Tourism Terms', UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: <https://www.untourism.int/glossary-tourism-terms> [29-10-2025].

16 Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (2025), 'About Universal Design', available at: <https://universaldesign.ie/> [29-10-2025].

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