

Guidelines: developing a disability action plan

What is action planning?

Action planning is the practical and specific process of deciding who is going to do what, by when, and in what order for the organisation to reach its strategic goals.

There are some key elements to successful action planning (also called work planning).

- Action/work plans specify what things need to be done to achieve an organisation's goals, and how these actions contribute to its accessibility/inclusion policy.
- They focus on key functions: e.g. governance, marketing, audience development, finance, human resources.
- They create "to do" lists for each staff member.
- The format should suit the organisation's needs and nature.

Five simple steps to develop an action plan

1. Identify your current position and plans

Reviewing your current practices will help your organisation identify barriers and find opportunities to improve access for disabled people. A good place to start is by asking the following two questions:

1. Why is disability equality important to your organisation?
2. Where do you want to get to in relation to disability equality?

A good place to begin a review of your organisation is to consult your local disabled community. You could also set up an advisory group to provide guidance as your organisation develops and implements its disability action plan.

Arts Access Aotearoa has an Accessibility Checklist (artsaccess.org.nz) to help you assess current accessibility. Completing this checklist may clarify issues, and help you decide what you need to do and what your priorities should be.

2. Develop your action plan

Start developing your action plan. If this is your first plan, focus on actions that are achievable and respond to the identified needs established in your review.

Action plans can vary in complexity, depending on the size and needs of the organisation. At their simplest, they are a list of what you will do and when.

Here is a list of areas your action plan could cover (see *Arts For All*, page 23):

- staff training on disability awareness
- physical access to your venue
- inclusive ticketing practices
- ensuring your website conforms with the priorities set out by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)
- appropriate modes of communication for different audiences (e.g. fax, email, text, phone, internet)
- accessible formats (e.g. consistent sans serif font and font size; high-colour contrast in website and print communications)
- a way for audiences and visitors to give feedback or evaluation.

There are also practical lists in *Arts For All* (page 54): ten things to do over the next few weeks or months, and ten things to do over the next five years.

Before developing your plan, ask yourself:

- what the action will be
- what it aims to address
- how you will know when it has been actioned
- when the action will begin, and when it will be completed
- how many worker hours it will take to complete
- who will deliver it (internal staff or external person/s)
- how it will be monitored
- who will check that it has been done (board? named staff member?)
- how much it will cost
- how it will be implemented and/or sustained
- how you will measure the impact of the plan.

Develop a format that suits your organisation: e.g. a simple list format or a table format, as below. Visit www.diversitynz.com/aaa for another example of a template prepared by Arts Council England and adapted by Diversity New Zealand.

AIM: to develop a marketing strategy with the Deaf community

Action	When by	Who responsible	With/Resources	Measure
				etc

3. Make it a living tool

Action plans are active tools. It's okay if items are added and later removed when they have been addressed. You can always add an action point stating that you will need to revisit this area again.

4. Implementation

How will you:

- disseminate the plan among your staff and others who need to see it?
- ensure staff take responsibility for particular aspects and provide feedback on their progress into the plan?

- provide opportunities for staff to problem-solve together to try and remove blocks to action?

5. Review and evaluate

The plan will need regular reviewing, perhaps through a series of monitoring meetings where the staff involved come together.

The impact of your plan needs to be measured. If you take the steps you have determined, what effect should they have? How will you monitor it? Remember that developing a disability action plan is just the beginning.

This simple five-step guide to action planning has been based on a model from Get a Plan (getaplan.org.uk).

Ten features of a good disability action plan

1. It is a mainstream and active document, with all staff having a role to play.
2. Having a plan means that consideration of disability access becomes a core part of planning across all departments and programmes of your organisation.
3. A good plan has solid support from senior management: e.g. meeting the plan's performance indicators may form part of the performance reviews of senior managers. In small organisations, management should take an active interest in the plan and check on its progress.
4. The disability action plan has resources allocated for its implementation, including a realistic allocation from the budget.
5. The disability action plan is informed by disabled people from within the organisation and from community members with experience and knowledge.
6. All staff in the organisation undertake disability awareness training.
7. The organisation constantly monitors and reviews its action plan to ensure it is doing what it says it will do.
8. The organisation seeks regular feedback on the plan's progress and acts on the feedback.
9. The organisation has hard evidence that proves there are positive changes as a result of the plan. This evidence arises from its evaluation processes.
10. The plan itself looks attractive and is easy to read. It may incorporate useful information about disability. All departments and work areas of an organisation have at least one copy of the plan.

This list was developed from aDAPting to Disability: A guide to disability action plans in

Victoria (Second Edition, Office for Disability, Department of Planning and Community Development, Victoria, Australia).