Collaborate

Working together with others toward a shared goal is an important part of the inclusive design process. We all bring our unique experiences, skills and talents to the table and working collaboratively ensures more diverse perspectives and therefore a more inclusive design process.

By working with others rather than in isolation we learn from one another; we share the responsibility for an outcome, and in doing so we learn to trust one another and rely on each other's expertise.

Learning to work collaboratively requires an adjustment in our approach. Gathering and incorporating ideas from a diverse group often takes more time and patience. Questions of ownership or credit sometimes arise. However, the challenges of working collaboratively are far outweighed by the benefits, as the rich and diverse perspectives gained ultimately enhance the work.

Practice Co-Design

The practice of co-design allows users to become active participants in the design process by facilitating their direct input into the creation of solutions that meet their needs, rather than limiting users to the role of research subjects or consultants. When a diverse group of users can participate in the design process, a broader range of needs can be considered throughout the process, from conception to completion. The entire team can participate in quick testing and feedback cycles, and design decisions can be made more quickly.

When users whose needs are typically considered to be "at the margins" are able to participate in the design process, the features that meet their needs can be more smoothly integrated into the final design. In this way, both the segregation of "special" solutions as well as expensive future retro-fitting can be minimized. Practicing co-design brings a more flexible and wider perspective to the design process, while incorporating insights from targeted communities.

Practice Co-Design

Try

- Invite "end-users" into the design process
- Use accessible design and development tools
- Provide ways for "non-designers" to easily access/sketch/share ideas
- Hire designers and others who themselves have a range of diverse needs

Why

● Diverse Participation & Perspectives

● Integrated Solutions

How

■ Accessible Communication Tools

■ Accessible Design Tools

■ Accessible Development Tools

Collaborate

Try

- Pair up with a co-worker to sketch or code
- Exchange your ideas/projects with participants from different disciplines in your organization on a regular basis
- Find an open-source community where you can ask questions and/or contribute
- Keep track of meeting notes, sketches and research in a wiki or other open repository

Why

● Diverse Participation & Perspectives

How

■ Accessible Communication Tools

■ Accessible Design Tools

■ Accessible Development Tools

■ Synchronized Design Assets

Inclusive Design Guide

Inclusive Design Guide

Integrate Accessibility From the Start

By considering accessibility and inclusion from the start of a project, it is much easier to integrate accessibility features into the design of the final product or service. Multiple modes of interaction and access are best considered from the beginning of the process. In this way both the segregation of "special" solutions as well as expensive future retro-fitting can be avoided.

For example, when designing a building, multiple modes of physical access (stairs, ramp, door widths, etc) must be considered in the early planning stages. The same approach should be taken, for example, when designing a website. The experience of a screen-reader user, or someone who may not use a keyboard or mouse at all should be considered from the start.

As designers, developers and others active in the design process, becoming aware of our limited personal perspective (e.g. prioritizing the visual impact of an interface) helps us to understand and overcome our biases, which in turn keeps us open to new ideas and innovative solutions.

Inclusive Design Guide

Work Openly

Working transparently makes diverse participation possible, as those who wish to get involved and who have access to the content can learn and contribute. Transparency is an important aspect of inclusive design; it is an invitation to participate, and it allows for collaboration from a diverse group of people. Openness does not guarantee accessibility however; content and tools themselves must be accessible.

By working transparently, we provide greater access to our collective knowledge, and input and feedback is more likely to come from unexpected sources. This allows us to learn from and incorporate diverse perspectives, such that our solutions meet more diverse needs.

Learning to work transparently requires an adjustment in the way that we approach our work. Sharing design ideas, sketches or unpolished mockups before they are complete can be scary at first. Learning to trust a community takes time and practice, but as more of us learn to work in this way, the more we can invite others into the process, resulting in a virtuous cycle of inclusion.

Inclusive Design Guide

Work Openly

Try

- Present work to larger groups on a regular basis to solicit contributions and feedback
- Use accessible and open communication tools (to alert potential participants to a group discussion/activity as well as to distribute collaborative artifacts)
- Post meeting minutes, design artifacts, and other information in an accessible and open location, and alert the community to new postings

Why

- 🟢 Diverse Participation & Perspectives
- 🟢 Virtuous Cycles

How

- 🟥 Accessible Communication Tools
- 🟥 Accessible Design Tools
- 🟥 Accessible Development Tools

Inclusive Design Guide

Integrate Accessibility From the Start

Try

- Develop personas and use-cases with a broad range of needs and preferences
- Practice co-design
- Test your designs early and often with a broad range of users

Why

- 🟢 Integrated Solutions

How

- 🟥 Personas
- 🟥 Use-cases
- 🟥 Usability Testing

Inclusive Design Guide

Focus on Functional Needs & Preferences

When designing for users "at the margins", including those with disabilities, the focus can often be put on the limitations of an individual or group, rather than on their functional needs related to completing a task or reaching a goal. Keeping the design focus on meeting a user's needs puts the responsibility squarely on the features of the product/service to meet those needs - that is, if the user's needs are not met, it is a failing of the design, rather than of the user (a mismatch). By focusing on needs and preferences, our perspective is broadened to include others who may benefit from the same design features.

Individual needs and preferences are complex and defined by much more than a medical diagnosis or other singular label. When engaging in co-design, or when developing personas and use-cases, taking into account a user's full range of interests, daily experiences and contexts will help to ensure that the unique and complex needs and preferences of a broad range of users are included.

Communicate Multimodally

When sharing design artifacts or other information, giving a presentation, holding a meeting, or bringing someone new into a design community, it is important to use multiple modes of communication to make it possible for everyone to have access to the knowledge and activities of the group.

For example, when preparing a slide presentation, consider the accompanying text descriptions so that non-visual members of your audience have a fully nuanced and engaging experience. When holding a meeting, ensure that the space is physically accessible and also how you might include remote participants.

Engaging in multi-modal communication can go beyond the specific or technical aspects of accessibility. For example, considering different learning styles and using a range of communication methods, and ensuring someone has all the information they need in order to fully participate in a process means that the design process can be more inclusive of participants with a diverse range of needs, interests, personalities and ideas.

Inclusive Design Guide

Inclusive Design Guide

Communicate Multimodally

Try

- When preparing a slide presentation, include accompanying text descriptions
- When holding a meeting, ensure that the space is physically accessible and consider how you might include remote participants
- When posting shared design artifacts, ensure that both the artifacts and the forum you are using are accessible to all
- Structure content and information in a well-organized, simple and easy to grasp format so that it is more accessible to new participants

Why

● Diverse Participation and Perspectives

How

■ Accessible Communication Tools

■ Accessible Design Tools

Inclusive Design Guide

Focus on Functional Needs & Preferences

Try

- When co-designing, conducting interviews or writing personas, focus on an individual's interests, goals and needs, rather than on their limitations
- Write personas and use-cases based on real people and real situations

Why

● Disability as Mismatch

How

■ User States & Contexts

■ Personas

■ Use-cases

Inclusive Design Guide

Test Frequently

The earlier and more often user feedback can be solicited in the design process, the better. When usability testing is delayed, it becomes more difficult and costly to change the design. Waiting to have a fully functional prototype is not necessary; User experience (UX) walkthroughs and usability testing can be done with rough prototypes or sketches.

When engaged in a co-design process, the entire team, including users and other stakeholders, can participate in quick testing and feedback cycles. In each of these cycles a number of ideas can be tested by team members themselves. Feedback is used to enhance those ideas or come up with new ones; these ideas can then be run through another cycle of testing, feedback and discussion.

Early and frequent usability testing is a critical component of an inclusive and efficient design process that helps to achieve a successful design solution, and safeguards against costly after-the-fact changes.

Facilitate Inclusively

When organizing or leading a meeting or discussion, encouraging equal participation among members is important to ensure that everyone's voice is heard. Using or creating a space that is accessible to all is the first step; facilitating participation from everyone present (whether remotely or locally) is the ultimate goal.

As a starting point, using accessible communication tools (e.g. accessible presentations or note-taking tools, etc.) during a meeting or discussion allows for greater participation of all members. Staying open to ideas that are offered (a "yes, and" approach) provides positive reinforcement and encouragement, and can yield unexpected results, while remaining flexible and ready to change direction allows for new ideas to emerge.

Thinking beyond technical limitations while using plain language to communicate ideas means that the discussion can stay open for longer and more people will be able to participate, resulting in a richer and more productive session.

Inclusive Design Guide

Inclusive Design Guide

Facilitate Inclusively

Try

- Use accessible communication tools
- Consider how to support remote participation
- Make sure your space is physically accessible
- Ensure that everyone has the necessary background information

Why

● Diverse Participation & Perspectives

How

■ Accessible Communication Tools

■ Accessible Design Tools

Test Frequently

Try

- Get feedback early in the design cycle using rough sketches or paper prototypes
- Get feedback on a regular basis throughout the design cycle
- Stay open to design changes for as long as possible
- If you don't have access to the end users or you don't have the budget; run quick in-house usability tests to solicit feedback

Why

● Diverse Participation & Perspectives

● Integrated Solutions

How

◆ Practice Co-Design

■ Usability Testing

■ UX Walkthroughs

Design for Adaptability & Flexibility

Designing for adaptability and flexibility means creating products or services that give the user more control over their experience, whether by including design features that allow for user configurability, or by building products or services that can easily be shared, remixed or repurposed by the user (e.g. building a digital tool using modular components). In addition, designing and building extensibility into products and services means that they can be used for a longer period of time, thus reducing their cost and increasing their reach.

Adaptable and flexible products and services sustain the design process by actively supporting their own unexpected, creative, and ongoing redesign (by users). In this way a product becomes a living system, capable of changing to meet current and future needs, thus making it more sustainable.

Design for Uncertainty

It is impossible to predict the infinite number of creative, serendipitous, and unexpected uses of a product or service. Embracing and encouraging this unpredictability is an important part of the inclusive design process. Although it relies on serendipity and other unknowable factors, unexpected uses can be encouraged by giving the user ways to extend, remix, share, repurpose, and in other ways personalize the "final product".

Staying open to new ideas in the design process for as long as possible, getting designs into users' hands early and often, and making it easy and attractive for the design team to respond to change are some of the ways that uncertainty can be embraced.

Inclusive Design Guide

Inclusive Design Guide

Design for Uncertainty

Try

- Brainstorm scenarios of use that are as different from the "basic" scenario as possible
- Solicit feedback from a broad community of potential users early in the design cycle
- Encourage open and iterative communication between designers and developers throughout the development cycle
- Avoid "locking" the design for as long as possible by encouraging the creation and use of rough mockups, paper prototypes, and/or easy-to-use digital prototyping tools

Why

- Interconnectedness
- Virtuous Cycles

How

- UX Walkthroughs
- Usability Testing
- Prototyping
- Personas
- Use-Cases

Inclusive Design Guide

Design for Adaptability & Flexibility

Try

- Include features and techanical frameworks that allow for user configurability
- Include features and technical frameworks that allow for the sharing of information and ideas among users
- Build digital tools using modular parts
- Provide features and channels for user feedback

Why

- Disability as Mismatch
- One-size-fits-one
- Personal Discovery
- User-Continued Design
- Integrated Solutions
- Interconnectedness

How

- Infusion
- Metadata Authoring

Inclusive Design Guide