

# Designing Inclusively | Overlay

This overlay is designed to help take on more inclusive practices when developing public buildings, spaces, services, and products. Use these ideas together or individually and in any order according to your needs, roles, and responsibilities. Hopefully this overlay can help with taking on more inclusive practice in your project development processes.



**Loops:** Each stage should be studied to learn more about the uptake of designing inclusively. Identify enablers and barriers around User Involvement and Accessibility, Project Constraints, Governing ways of thinking, the Outcomes and Impact of the project. Think about how the project, and team members actions support inclusion. Build a *Proof of Logic* to incentivise stakeholders during future projects. It's an iterative process (loops) that builds from one project to the next.

## Early Stages

Define the strategy, prepare the design brief.  
Meet with clients and set design criteria.

**Users:** Not usually involved early on. Users should have the skillset to negotiate and confront team members, but can be supported by facilitators within the team. Otherwise refer to Proof of Logic, testimonials about lived experiences, and positive or negative ripple effects to argue their participation in the next stages.

**Join from outset:** Take part as early as possible to allow more time to discuss with stakeholders and embed inclusive criteria into the project constraints.

**Identify established practices and processes.**

**Concerns or presumptions:** Support stakeholders who may have concerns or presumptions about including (marginalised) users.

**Build a proof of logic:** Compel clients to value inclusion through their own priorities (ideas and examples that blend inclusion with business incentives). Rely on market gaps, social climate, and examples of best practices or cautionary tales.

**Highlight ripple effects:** Positive ripple effects like translatable benefits from one user to another and negative ripple effects like reputational or financial damages from restricting specific users.

**Active and continuous effort:** Stay attuned to inclusion and promote it at each stage.

**Inclusive objectives:** Examples like barrier-free access to services, offering equal quality of experience for different bodies and minds, user safety, and future-proofing (maintaining good access and inclusion years after project launch).

**Consider tiered advice:** practitioners often provide 3 tiers of inclusion: (1) minimum requirements, (2) best practices, and (3) Long term - sometimes radical - changes. Keep their lines blurred to encourage clients past the first tiers.

## Design Stages

Explore and research the subject,  
draft designs, and test prototypes.

**Users:** This stage offers the most opportunity to involve users; they can test prototypes, consult on ideas, provide stories about their experiences, work as active team members, and even lead the project. They breathe life into regulations, encourage deeper conversations, and help overcome biases.

**Project Constraints:** Designs are often framed by current product range, budget, regulations, established practices and process, and staff skillset, or availabilities.

**Gatekeepers:** Identify team members and clients who influence how a project moves forward. Incentivise them to involve users.

**Translatable benefits:** Identify how inclusive solutions can benefit broader audiences. Argue their business appeal.

**Recruiting:** It is not always easy to recruit; Consider attending site and neighbourhood visits to meet the community and reach out to clients or local councils who may already know of relevant community groups. Agencies can also help, but require time to recruit, and very clear selection criteria.

**Compensation:** Speak to users, or community groups to learn how short contracts interact with some users' social benefits, or universal credits. *Think about the tension: If participants are equal members, are they paid equally? Consider donations, rebates, Per diems, or gift cards as alternatives.*

## Making Stages

Construction, manufacturing, and  
production. Fulfil the design programme.

**Users:** Involvement is less likely during final production, but users can perform walk-throughs or review final tweaks. Given their skillsets, they could negotiate and resolve issues through their own personal experiences. Facilitating their stories is key!

**Staying up-to-date during production:** Some projects are handed to clients or manufacturers without further involvement (often product and manufacturing projects). Others allow more open communication where stakeholders take part to resolve any issues reported by production teams (often construction projects).

**Subcontracting:** Projects may subcontract specialists to overview progress. Whoever is involved to keep track should understand the project objectives, be able to negotiate with production teams, report on progress, and document changes. They work to ensure design (and inclusive) specifications aren't compromised.

**Accountability:** Manufacturing and construction teams are contracted to fulfil the project as presented. Without continued open communication, the design may fail - practitioners aren't aware of issues, and production teams are not held accountable for errors made in the design programme.

**Production issues:** Includes oversights, miscalculations, or shipping and receiving faulty/wrong materials. To overcome issues, teams sometimes cut costs or choose alternatives that do not always meet inclusion benchmarks. Track changes to ensure they do not compromise the design.

## Design in Use

Design is complete; distributed, or  
ready for client handover.

**Users:** Real-world users can provide feedback on the final design or help shape and maintain an inclusive future for the building, space, service, or product.

**Maintenance:** Strategies should continue to improve the inclusive qualities of the design. Staff, engineering, and users should continually assess the design - especially those intended to serve for years or decades. Over time, understandings of inclusion can change; Those who use and manage the design should react accordingly.

**Evaluate:** After launch, visit the project and study user behaviour against the intended inclusive criteria. Use this to build a proof of logic and record best practices, failures, or cautionary tales. Relate the outcomes to other key values such as business incentives, user satisfaction, or future-proofing.