



## Request for Proposal

### Creating Disability Inclusive Environments in Associations

ASAE Research Foundation is inviting qualified and experienced organizations, consultants, and academic institutions to submit a proposal for research that investigates disability inclusive environments in association management. Respondents should send their proposals to [knabors@asaecenter.org](mailto:knabors@asaecenter.org). Proposals should not exceed six pages in length and must be received by **Monday, August 1, 2022, at 11:59 PM ET.**

**ASAE Research Foundation** advances knowledge in association management and nonprofit leadership and sponsors and conducts research in an array of areas, the breadth and depth of which a single trade or professional association would likely not be able to undertake on its own. The foundation has a balanced and multi-dimensional portfolio of research initiatives that are designed to 1) advance a body of knowledge, 2) define and inform effective practices, and 3) provide outcomes that lead to data-driven predictions and decision-making. Visit: <https://foundation.asaecenter.org/>.

#### Project Background

In a continued effort to examine diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in trade and professional associations, this research is intended to address disability inclusion in association management; identify leading practices for building consciously inclusive environments for volunteer leaders, members, and staff with disabilities; and identify the opportunities and insights afforded by this diversity.

Disability inclusion means “including people with disabilities in everyday activities and encouraging them to have roles similar to their peers who do not have a disability,” according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). However, it’s more than just including and encouraging; true disability inclusion means ensuring that policies and practices support people with disabilities, beyond what is required by the ADA, enabling them to fully participate in the organization. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of their major life activities; they have a record of such an impairment; or are regarded as having such an impairment. Disability affects approximately one in four U.S. adults (61 million) ([CDC](#)), representing an untapped market of talent. In 2021, only 19 percent of Americans with a disability were employed vs. 64 percent of Americans without a disability ([Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)). And, according to the “Getting to Equal” report from [Accenture](#), “research suggests that if companies embrace disability inclusion, they will gain access to a new talent pool of more than 10.7 million people. ... employees with disabilities offer tangible benefits, including increased innovation, improved productivity and a better work environment.”

The outcomes of the research should provide data:

- To guide association CEOs in the creation of a disability inclusive culture among association staff, members, volunteers, and vendors that moves beyond compliance and values and embraces those with disabilities and creates a sense of belonging.
- To enable associations to identify and minimize barriers that prevent a disability inclusive environment.

Note that disability intersects with seven of eight ASAE certified association executive domains. This research may be exploratory in nature and set the stage for future disability-focused research.

## Research Questions

Examples of research questions include (but are not limited to):

- What is the definition of a “Disability Inclusive Environment”?
- What does a “Disability Inclusive Environment” look like?
- How is intersectionality addressed in a “Disability Inclusive Environment”?
- What gaps exist in creating an inclusive association culture for those with disabilities?
- What barriers do organizations face when trying to build an inclusive culture, and embrace individuals with disabilities (e.g., financial resources, staff knowledge/expertise, etc.)?
- What is required to ensure that individuals with disabilities can bring their authentic self to the association, feel a sense of belonging, and contribute to their fullest potential?
- How can partnerships with other organizations (or use of external resources) facilitate the creation of a Disability Inclusive Environment?
- What metrics can be used to determine success?

## Approach/Methodology

This request for proposals is not restricted to any particular methodology. However, researchers are encouraged to employ a literature review and both case studies and other qualitative research to address the research questions, examining:

- how associations are providing supportive environments for volunteer leaders and members with disabilities;
- how associations are providing supportive environments for staff with disabilities;
- what models exist outside of the association space (corporate settings) that could provide a roadmap for associations;
- how associations are embracing the opportunities afforded by ensuring they are best reaching and leveraging the skills and talents of persons with disabilities;
- and how associations can learn from these efforts and measure their success.

## Deliverables

The selected research team must complete the work described and outlined in the proposal/scope of work within the study timeframe. The selected team will provide a comprehensive research report that includes an introduction to the topic and brief literature review, summary and analysis of the research findings, implications for associations, and recommendations for association leaders. The required deliverable will serve as the basis for new research-based content from ASAE and ASAE Research Foundation. The proposal might include a range of deliverables. Examples include (but are not limited to): educational sessions, models, organizational assessment tools, and publications.

## Eligibility

Eligible applicants will show demonstrated expertise in research collection and analysis in the association arena. Additionally, **ASAE is particularly interested in research teams who have conducted research in topics related to diversity, equity and inclusion, specifically with a solid background in disability rights and disability connections.** The researcher/organization should have background delivering and implementing this work, not just in concept alone (e.g., someone with experience providing accessible presentations), and a history of implemented research findings). ASAE is interested in the research team’s origin story for its commitment to disability inclusion and how it intends to ensure voices of those with disabilities are included in the work.

## Submission Guidelines

Applicants must provide a description of the proposed program of research that incorporates the desired elements detailed above. The proposal must not exceed 6 pages and must include specific aims, research design, projected timelines, and expected outcomes and deliverables. In addition to the aforementioned proposal requirements, the applicant must also include the following documents:

*Project Title*

*Project Abstract (not to exceed one page)*

*References*

*Biographical Sketch (not to exceed one page) of all project personnel (must show demonstrated research expertise)*

*Budget (with accompanying justification that is consistent with the scope of work)*

These documents are not included in the proposed program of research's 6-page maximum requirement.

The proposal must be submitted electronically to:

Kristopher Nabors  
Senior Manager, Industry Research and Volunteer Operations  
ASAE Research Foundation  
[knabors@asaecenter.org](mailto:knabors@asaecenter.org)

The completed application **must be submitted on or before 11:59 PM ET, August 1, 2022**, and will be reviewed according to the conceptual framework, general approach to addressing the research questions, and methodology and data collection procedures. *(Note: For research teams whose institution requires an approved IRB, note that you may submit an application while waiting for IRB approval.)*

## Review and Selection Process

The selection and notification process will be completed on or around late-August, with the award period commencing immediately thereafter. Proposals will undergo a review of a panel of volunteers evaluating for research design and approach, and applicant qualifications and experience. A video conference may be requested for additional information.

If you have questions about the RFP, please email Kristopher Nabors ([knabors@asaecenter.org](mailto:knabors@asaecenter.org)).

ASAE values and supports inclusion, diversity, and equity. We do not discriminate against individuals based on race, color, religion, national origin, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity, family responsibility, political affiliation, or disability, or any other protected characteristic. We expect that the successful respondent will support ASAE's values and adhere to standards of research integrity and ethical practices in conducting research consistent with those of the ASAE Research Foundation.