Disability-Inclusive AI

Questions & Considerations for Business Leaders

Disability:IN®

Purpose

This resource helps organizations evaluate, deploy, and manage AI systems in ways that are disability inclusive and can help to mitigate risk, and align with business, legal, and accessibility expectations.

This decision-support tool helps prompt the right questions at key moments from vendor selection to deployment and ongoing monitoring. Ideal for leaders across marketing, HR, procurement, IT, accessibility, legal, and product teams.

What is AI?

Machine Learning – training algorithms through consumption of data to identify patterns and predict outcomes

Natural Language Processing – communicating via chatbots or voice assistants

Computer Vision – identifying images, objects or people

Generative AI – creating new content such as text or images

Agentic AI – planning and taking action across tools with human oversight

Get Started →

AI Use Cases That Can Support Disabled Employees

When designed thoughtfully, AI can significantly improve workplace accessibility and productivity.

Examples Include:

- Real time captioning, transcription, and translation tools for meetings and communications.

- AI assistants that summarize documents or simplify complex information into clear notes or tasks.

- Tools that convert text to speech or speech to text to support different communication preferences.

- Visual description tools that help blind or low-vision employees interpret images, charts, or presentations.

- Adaptive productivity tools that personalize workflows, reminders, or task management.

> *The goal is to design AI tools that expand flexibility and usability for a wide range of employees.*

Before diving into function specific questions, organizations should align on a few foundational principles:

▶ **Embedded by Design:** Accessibility and disability inclusion must be considered at the earliest stages rather than retrofitted after deployment.

▶ **Humans in the Loop (HITL):** People with disabilities are meaningfully involved in testing, evaluation, and feedback. Critical decisions are made with human review and oversight.

▶ **Risk Awareness:** AI can unintentionally amplify bias, exclusion, or inaccessibility if left unchecked.

▶ **Accountability:** Clear ownership exists for AI outcomes, not just AI adoption.

▶ **Continuous Improvement:** AI systems are monitored and adjusted as risks, use cases, and regulations evolve.
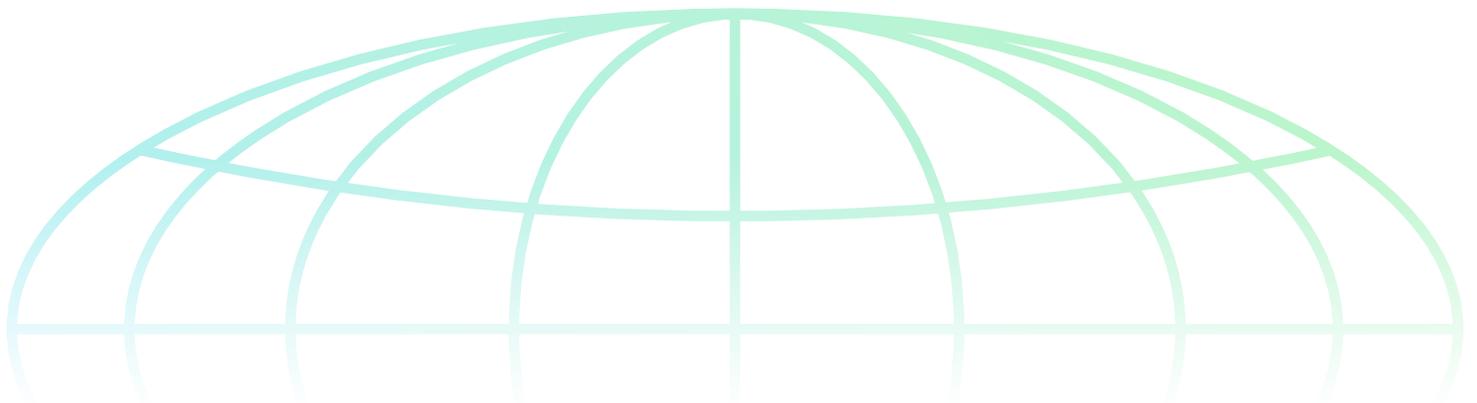
Cross-Functional Questions to Ask for Any AI System

These questions apply regardless of business function or use case.

Data & Training

- What data was used to train this system?
- Does the training data include representation of people with disabilities (across various types of disabilities)?
- Are disability related attributes missing, oversimplified, or inferred without consent?

Accessibility

- Can people with disabilities independently use this system?
- Has the AI interface been tested against accessibility standards (e.g., WCAG)?
- Does AI-driven personalization override accessibility preferences or assistive tech settings?
- Are chatbots, voice tools, and virtual assistants usable by people with disabilities?

Bias & Impact

- Who could be unintentionally excluded, filtered out, or disadvantaged by this system?
- Do feedback loops capture disability-related issues or are they invisible in aggregate data?
- What assumptions does the model make about "normal" behavior, communication, speed, or productivity?
- How are false negatives and false positives identified and addressed?

Human Oversight

- Where does human judgment intervene in AI-driven decisions?
- Do users have access to the decision criteria and logic used to make specific decisions?
- Can users challenge, appeal, or override AI outputs especially in high stakes decisions?

Governance

- Who is responsible if the system produces biased or exclusionary outcomes? Is there a clear escalation process in place?
- How often is the system audited, reviewed, or retrained?
- Are documentation and decision logs maintained for high-impact decisions?
- Is there an appeals or grievance process for candidates or employees who have fairness or privacy concerns?

Writing & Image Generation (Marketing, Communications, Content)

AI-generated content can unintentionally reinforce stereotypes, erase or flatten disability, or create inaccessible outputs.

Questions to Consider:

Are people with disabilities represented in a respectful, accurate, and affirming way?

Can generated images be meaningfully described with alt text or are they overly abstract or complex?

Are captions, transcripts, and summaries generated accurately and accessibly?

How are prompts, guardrails, and review processes structured to prevent biased outputs?

Operational Considerations:

▶ Require human review for public-facing AI content.

▶ Establish disability inclusive language and imagery guidelines for AI prompts.

▶ Treat AI as a drafting tool, not a final authority.

Talent Acquisition & HR Systems

AI tools used in hiring, screening, and performance management can create risk and unintentionally exclude or miss qualified candidates with disabilities:

Questions to Consider:

Does the system screen out candidates based on gaps, speed, communication style, or non linear career paths?

Does the system penalize disability-related keywords, assistive technology use, or alternative formats?

Are accommodations built into AI-enabled assessments and interviews?

Can candidates opt out of AI-driven screening without penalty?

How are recruiters trained to interpret AI outputs responsibly?

Operational Considerations:

▶ Avoid fully automated rejection decisions.

▶ Audit screening outcomes for disparate impact on candidates with disabilities.

▶ Clearly communicate AI use to candidates and employees.

Procurement & Vendor Evaluation

AI risk does not disappear when systems are outsourced.

Questions to Consider:

Can the vendor explain how disability inclusion and accessibility are addressed in their AI systems?

Has the vendor tested the system with people with disabilities or assistive technologies?

What accessibility standards does the vendor commit to?

How does the vendor test for bias, including disability-related impacts?

Are accessibility updates and remediation included in the contract?

Operational Considerations:

▶ Include accessibility criteria in RFPs.

▶ Require transparency around training data, testing, and audits.

Making This Real: From Questions to *Action*

To operationalize disability-inclusive AI:

▶ **Embed these questions into AI intake, review, and approval processes.**

▶ **Assign cross-functional ownership beyond IT or innovation teams.**

▶ **Design AI with people with disabilities, not for them.** Involving disabled employees, consumers, and subject matter experts early helps surface risks that might otherwise go unnoticed.

▶ **Treat inclusion as a performance metric, not a values statement.**

About Disability:IN®

Disability:IN® partners with leading companies to build disability-inclusive and accessible workplaces, products, and practices. Through data, research, advisory services, and global networks, we help organizations move from intention to measurable impact.

Are You IN?

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