

Leadership criteria: are they job related, or do they screen out disabled staff?

A check for the informal and formal criteria used to nominate, select, and promote people into lead roles: executive presence, quick verbal response, travel, long hours, always-on availability, and similar. For each one, name what leaders actually do that it predicts, or replace it.

Why it matters

Leadership criteria are rarely written down and rarely tested. The ones that live in people's heads tend to reward a narrow style of presence and stamina rather than the work of leading.

Content

1. List every criterion actually used. Include the unwritten ones: who gets called confident, who is seen as ready, who is invited to present.
2. For each criterion, write the leadership work it predicts. Decisions made, people developed, conflicts resolved, plans delivered, communities served. If you cannot connect it to that work, it is a proxy.
3. Ask who each criterion screens out. Quick verbal response screens out people who process or communicate differently. Travel and long hours screen out people with energy, mobility, or care constraints. Always-on availability screens out most people with a disability and many without one.
4. Replace proxies with observable leadership behaviors and give people several ways to show them: written work, a portfolio, a structured conversation, a work sample with time to prepare.
5. Offer accommodation for every stage in the same sentence you use for scheduling, to everyone, without asking why.
6. Prepare the panel on disability bias before the interviews, and use a written rubric applied the same way to everyone.
7. Record who reviewed the criteria: leadership, the HR partner, and the Equity Director. Keep the reasoning with the pathway map.

Next steps

- **Accessible leadership pathways and sponsorship** — program page </library/pn-accessible-leadership-pathways>
- **Is this requirement job related?** — program page </library/ja-job-relatedness-check>
- **Build a leadership pathway or sponsorship plan (Practice path)** — program page </practice/gp-11>

Practice paths this supports

- Leadership pathway or sponsorship plan for staff with disabilities
- Inclusive hiring and selection