

# Inclusive Planning for a New Product or Service: **A Guide to Including Deaf People from the Start**

When embarking on the exciting journey of creating a new product or service, it's crucial to consider inclusivity from the very beginning. This guide focuses on incorporating the perspectives and needs of deaf individuals in Australia to ensure your offering is accessible and beneficial to a diverse audience.

## ① Understanding Deaf Culture and Needs

Before diving into the planning process, take the time to educate yourself and your team about deaf culture, communication preferences, and the challenges faced by deaf individuals. This understanding will lay the foundation for creating a product or service that truly meets their needs. Consulting the ideas with deaf community, asking them what the gaps and issues they face every day are, and what products and services they need that will be best practice.

## ② Diverse Team Inclusion

Form a diverse team that includes individuals with different abilities and experiences, including those who are deaf, deafblind and deaf with other disabilities. Having diverse perspectives within your team will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of user needs. Ensure proper support services are provided for them – Auslan/deafblind interpreters, for example. Do not have the only deaf person on the team as this is considered as a means of tokenism. Employing two or more deaf individuals is crucial to the success of the products and services for the wide range of users within the deaf community.

## ③ Accessible Communication

Ensure that all communication materials, both internal and external, are accessible to deaf individuals. This includes providing information in signed, written, or visual formats, and when using video or audio content, incorporating subtitles or sign language interpretation.

## ④ User Research and Feedback

Conduct thorough user research that includes deaf individuals. Engage with them directly to understand their preferences, challenges, and expectations related to your product or service. Actively seek feedback throughout the development process to make informed adjustments. Acknowledge that there will be a cost as they are to be compensated for their time and knowledge to guide you in your research. Check with the leading deaf organisations, such as Deaf Australia, to find the choice of deaf individuals are correct representatives for the deaf community in Australia.

## ⑤ Inclusive Design Principles

Integrate inclusive design principles from the outset. This involves creating products and services that are usable by people with a wide range of abilities, including those who are deaf. Consider features like visual cues, clear communication interfaces, and adaptable design. Ensure that there is a clear two-way communication mode within your products and services and consider enhancing these modes with complementary products available to them.



## ⑥ Collaboration with Deaf Organisations

Establish partnerships with organisations that specialise in supporting the deaf community. Collaborate with them to gain insights, promote awareness, and receive guidance on creating an inclusive environment for your product or service. Be conscious of the limitations of those organisations on how they would help you.

## ⑦ Accessible Training and Support

Ensure that training materials and support resources are accessible to all users, including those who are deaf. This may involve providing written instructions, video content with subtitles or sign language interpretation, and responsive customer support that deaf people can reach at any time without relying on a third party to do so.

## ⑧ Regular Accessibility Audits

Regularly conduct accessibility audits to find and address any potential barriers for deaf users. This ongoing commitment ensures that your product or service evolves with the needs of the diverse communities it serves.

## ⑨ Community Engagement

Actively engage with the deaf community through social media, forums, and events. This connection will help you stay informed about evolving needs and build a supportive user community.

## ⑩ Continuous Improvement

Embrace a mindset of continuous improvement. As technology and society evolve, so do the needs of users. Regularly assess and update your product or service to ensure it still is inclusive and relevant.

For examples have a look at where issues arose: <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/dda-conciliation-goods-services-and-facilities>

By incorporating these steps into your planning process, you can create a product or service that is not only innovative but also accessible and welcoming to individuals with varying abilities, including those who are deaf.