

Become an **Employer of Choice**

Recruiting, Hiring, and Accommodating People with Differing Abilities

The museum makes effective use of agency partnerships and grassroots networking within the community to recruit employees with differing abilities. A recent hire at the museum said, *“I couldn’t believe how many different ways I heard about the job opportunity – from grassroots networking, to social media, to the disability community...”*

Once hired, employees with disabilities are treated fairly and equitably with regard to necessary accommodations. Of the museum’s 563 paid employees, 40% are part-time, with flexible hours and schedules, which is in itself an attractive accommodation to many people working with disabilities. Other accommodations that the museum has provided in the past include hearing-impaired telephones, low-vision computer aids, sign language interpreters, air purifiers, and work station modifications such as keyboard trays, different sized chairs, and computer adjustments.

The museum is committed to community outreach, and has forged many connections that offer training and support for students. One long-standing partnership is that between the museum and Perkins School for the Blind. As part of their vocational training, Perkins students work at the museum’s Live Animal Center, building valuable skills in a stimulating environment. Christa Gicklhorn, M.Ed., Vocational Coordinating Teacher for Perkins’ Deafblind Program, lauds the program for challenging and motivating her students, noting that, “Our students’ success through the years is due in large part to the dedication and support of the museum staff.”

It is fitting that a public museum that celebrates scientific discovery and innovation would design an environment in which many of these discoveries and innovations are put to use for the benefit of all. The museum richly deserves its status as a leader in universal exhibit accessibility AND as an **Employer of Choice!**



The Museum of Science, Boston: An Employer of Choice for People With Differing Abilities

WorkWithoutLimits

Putting abilities to work in Massachusetts.

Work Without Limits, a Massachusetts Disability Employment Initiative is made possible by a federal grant to UMass Medical School, funded by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CFDA No. 93.768). For more information on Work Without Limits, please visit www.workwithoutlimits.org

Work Without Limits is a public/private partnership that brings together people with disabilities, family members, policy researchers, policy makers, service planners, employment service providers, employers, and other stakeholders to maximize work opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities, addresses the needs of employers, and strengthens the Massachusetts workforce.

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Become an **Employer of Choice**

Spotlight: **Museum of Science, Boston**



Photo © Michael Malyszko

The Museum of Science, Boston has earned its designation as an Employer of Choice because it espouses, and more importantly lives by, a fundamental commitment to universal accessibility and inclusivity of all people, employees and visitors alike. With recruiting and hiring practices that actively search out candidates with differing abilities, and a network of community partnerships to support their efforts, the museum is a model for other businesses looking to promote diversity. The message of inclusivity comes from the top down, and is driven by a governance structure that makes sure that accessibility is a continuous priority. The museum has become an industry leader in the application of universal design principles, ensuring that its building and exhibits are user-friendly to the broadest possible audience. Every employee and volunteer at the museum is offered disability awareness training to become familiar with accessibility issues and available accommodations. All of these “Promising Practices” are replicable in virtually any workplace.

Accessibility Committee

The Accessibility Committee evolved from a Special Needs Advisory Group (SNAG), started over twenty years ago, which was charged with removing barriers for people with disabilities. Over time it has taken on the much broader mission of promoting universal accessibility for everyone, with or without disabilities. The Accessibility Committee has both the expertise and the decision-making power to drive these efforts. Staffed by senior managers including the museum’s Supervisor of Community Relations, Chief Operating Officer, and Vice President of Human Resources, the committee is one indication of the high priority given to inclusivity within the corporate culture.

Universal Exhibit Design Expertise

The museum is acknowledged as a “go to” expert in the field of universal design, which is grounded in the belief that environments (and in the case of the museum, exhibits) should be designed for maximum ease of use by all people, not just those with disabilities. More than a decade ago, the museum engaged in a major, long-term exhibition plan called “Science is an Activity” that aimed to engage visitors in activities that fostered science-thinking skills. “Making Models”, the fourth and final exhibition of this plan, was created using an overarching philosophy of inclusion and equity, particularly for persons with disabilities. Accessibility features and accommodations in the exhibition were not designed exclusively for visitors with disabilities, but rather to be equitable and independently accessible for all visitors; these included multiple methods for receiving information such as



(audio, text, and image-based) multi-sensory interactives, and large-print signage. Since that time, the museum has designed its permanent and travelling exhibits to be user-friendly to people of all abilities and learning styles. Significantly, the museum’s design team works with consultants and/or staff/volunteers with disabilities who are experts in access-related issues when conceptualizing new exhibits.

Guest Service Program

All museum personnel (numbering well over 1,000 people including full- and part-time staff, volunteers, and interns) receive awareness training in constantly promoting an open and inviting environment. From the moment a person passes through the museum’s doors the overarching message, whether stated overtly or implied, is that everybody is welcome and valued. Indeed, the museum’s service promise, which guides all public interactions, is “to deliver a welcoming, comfortable, world-class museum experience, in every way, every day.” The museum’s website (www.mos.org) includes easily accessible, comprehensive information on accommodations that are available within the museum building and exhibits. Visitors can click on icons representing categories such as amplified narration, braille components, American Sign Language, and wheelchair accessibility, to find out which resources are available throughout the museum. Additional services, such as sighted guide tours and ASL interpreters, are available with reservations.