



# **The Arc's Strategic Action Plan for Advancing Access, Equity, and Inclusion**



Age

Spirituality

Communication

Culture

Sexual  
orientation

Gender identity  
and expression



Race and  
ethnicity

**Human diversity is  
beautiful and powerful.  
We celebrate and honor  
the differences among  
people, such as:**

Language

Religion



Sexuality



Values and  
beliefs



Disability

# INTRODUCTION



Welcome to The Arc's Strategic Action Plan for Advancing Access, Equity, and Inclusion (AEI). This Plan builds on the [Strategic Framework for the Future of The Arc](#). It also builds on our [Diversity Strategic Action Plan](#).

At the end of 2019, we built on our diversity work to [advance AEI](#). In our AEI work, we center the experiences of the most marginalized within the intellectual and developmental disability community.

Marginalized identities and experiences include:

- Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC)
- Disability
- Latinx people
- Immigrants, migrants, and refugees
- Intersections of multiple identities
- LGBTQIA+
- Multiple disabilities
- Older adults
- Living in poverty
- Religious beliefs and practices
- Spirituality
- Those who communicate in languages other than English
- Those who cannot or do not rely on speech to be understood
- Those who are in institutions (including prisons and jails)
- Youth

**MARGINALIZATION IS  
A BARRIER TO AEI.**





We use many words and phrases in AEI work. We want our audiences to understand these words. Language matters, especially in the world of equity. You can find a [Words and Phrases to Know](#) section at the end of this document.

This Plan guides the work of The Arc of the United States. We hope it will also guide The Arc's network. Our network includes about 600 chapters around the United States. This Plan represents the opinions and experiences of:

- Our community members
- Our chapters
- People and groups from diverse and marginalized communities

**This Plan is a living document.**

It will help us meet changes and challenges for years to come. We know this work is both urgent and life-long.

We need to do better. This Plan will help keep us accountable. National office staff do most of the work described in this Plan.

The Arc's Board of Directors also has a role to play in AEI. The Board's role includes oversight of The Arc's AEI work.

Every three years, The Arc's Board AEI Committee and AEI Team of the national office will jointly review the Plan. The goal is to determine whether the Plan should be revised. If they determine the Plan should be revised, they will jointly develop the revision process. The next review will take place in 2025.

We want you to join us in this work. Email [inclusion@thearc.org](mailto:inclusion@thearc.org) to learn more.

**Together, we can  
advance AEI!**

# ADVANCING ACCESS, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION AT THE ARC: OUR VISION

Everyone **belongs**. With their intersecting identities, all members of the disability community are valued, respected, and celebrated for who they are. They thrive and live their best lives.





# SOCIAL JUSTICE FRAMEWORK

In our work, we are guided by:



## **Anti-Ableism**

We seek to end ableism. We take down systems of oppression that lead to inequities for those who have or are believed to have disabilities.



## **Historical Context**

We reckon with the historical oppression of many groups and communities. This led to their marginalization. We challenge colonialism. We work against anything that furthers injustice and seek to end current injustices.



## **Universal Design and Access**

We create spaces, messaging, and movements that are accessible to as many as possible. We challenge spaces, messaging, and movements that are not accessible.



## **Intersectionality**

We honor the identities that people with disabilities hold. We understand and respect the impact of the intersections of these identities.



## **Anti-Racism**

We seek to end racism and white supremacy. We work to take down all systems of oppression that threaten and stand in the way of race equity and inclusion.



## **Leadership**

We are led by those who experience barriers to access, equity, and inclusion.



## **Allyship and Solidarity**

We fight alongside other marginalized groups and communities. Their struggles are our struggles. We work for collective liberation.



# GOALS

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Our Goals help us achieve our Vision.  
We are striving to achieve these Goals.  
We want to make ongoing progress.

## LEADERSHIP

1

The Arc is a leader in access, equity, and inclusion.

## REPRESENTATION

2

The Arc is representative of diverse and marginalized communities.

## JUSTICE

3

The Arc promotes social justice.

For each Goal, we have Strategies, Tactics, Outcomes, and Metrics.

- **Strategies** describe how we will reach the Goal.
- **Tactics** are activities that support each Strategy.
- **Outcomes** are the results we expect if we follow the Tactics. Outcomes are measurable. This means we can tell if we are making progress over time.
- **Metrics** are the items we plan to measure related to each Goal. They will help us assess our Outcomes.



# GOALS with STRATEGIES

## 1 **Leadership:** The Arc is a leader in access, equity, and inclusion (AEI).

### **Strategy 1**

We model AEI best practices in our organizational policies, procedures, and practices.

### **Strategy 2**

We make our messaging, events, and resources accessible, equitable, and inclusive.

### **Strategy 3**

We actively show our commitment to AEI.

### **Strategy 4**

We guide our chapter network and influence the disability field to advance AEI.



## **2 Representation:** The Arc is representative of diverse and marginalized communities.

### **Strategy 1**

We build and sustain an inclusive workplace culture.

### **Strategy 2**

We prioritize engagement with diverse, marginalized, and underserved communities.

### **Strategy 3**

We prioritize disabled, BIPOC, and LGBTQIA+ leadership.

### **Strategy 4**

We support our chapter network to become representative of the communities they serve.

## **3 Justice:** The Arc promotes social justice.

### **Strategy 1**

We join people with marginalized identities to engage in intersectional advocacy.

### **Strategy 2**

We follow the lead of marginalized groups, communities, and activists.

### **Strategy 3**

We support our chapter network and encourage the disability field to advance social justice.

# LEADERSHIP

## The Arc is a leader in access, equity, and inclusion (AEI).

### Goal 1 Strategies, Tactics, Outcomes, and Key Metrics

#### STRATEGY 1

We model AEI best practices in our organizational policies, procedures, and practices.

**Tactic 1:** Every year, we review:

- Our pay structure
- Staff hiring and advancement
- Staff recruitment, retention, and turnover
- Exit interview data
- Accommodations

**Tactic 2:** Every two years, we review how decisions are made, including:

- Resource allocation
- Management structure
- Staff and team responsibilities
- Organizational policies
- Our Employee Handbook

**Tactic 3:** We develop action plans based on the findings from the reviews described in Tactics 1 and 2.

**Tactic 4:** We communicate the findings and action plans from the reviews described in Tactics 1 and 2 with our stakeholders.

**Tactic 5:** We update and revise our policies, procedures, and practices according to the actions plans described in Tactic 3.

#### STRATEGY 1 OUTCOMES

- Increased transparency with our key stakeholders, as measured by our communications and ongoing feedback mechanisms.
- Increased confidence in our AEI commitment, as measured by the annual Staff Inclusion and Identity Survey.
- Increased confidence in our AEI commitment, as measured by the annual Board Inclusion and Identity Survey.



## STRATEGY 2

We make our messaging, events, and resources accessible, equitable, and inclusive.

**Tactic 1:** We educate ourselves and continue learning about AEI best practices.

**Tactic 2:** We develop consistent AEI practices and ensure teams have adequate support for implementation. This includes consistent:

- Access services across our public-facing events
- Access practices across our resources

**Tactic 3:** Every year, teams meaningfully incorporate AEI into:

- Team goals
- Annual work plans
- Team activities
- Team meeting agendas

**Tactic 4:** Every team documents its progress and shares this information for the annual report.

**Tactic 5:** Every year, the Board and its Committees meaningfully incorporate AEI into:

- Committee goals
- Annual work plans
- Committee activities
- Committee meeting agendas

**Tactic 6:** Every Committee of the Board documents its progress and shares this information with the Executive Committee.

## STRATEGY 2 OUTCOMES

- More consistent use of equity assessments and tools across teams.
- Increased investment in access services/practices.
- Increased AEI knowledge among staff, as measured by training evaluations and other assessments.
- Increased AEI knowledge among Board members, as measured by training evaluations and other assessments.
- Higher engagement by staff with AEI professional development opportunities.
- Continually modeling best practices in AEI.



# LEADERSHIP

## STRATEGY 3

We actively show our commitment to AEI.

**Tactic 1:** We invest resources in our AEI Team, initiatives, and staffing.

**Tactic 2:** We convene an Equity Advisory Council that meets at least twice a year to monitor our progress. We develop action plans from these meetings. The Council includes equity experts and those with lived experience with various marginalized identities.

**Tactic 3:** We communicate the findings, recommendations, and action plans developed from meetings of the Equity Advisory Council with our stakeholders.

**Tactic 4:** We update and revise our policies, procedures, and practices according to the actions plans described in Tactic 2.

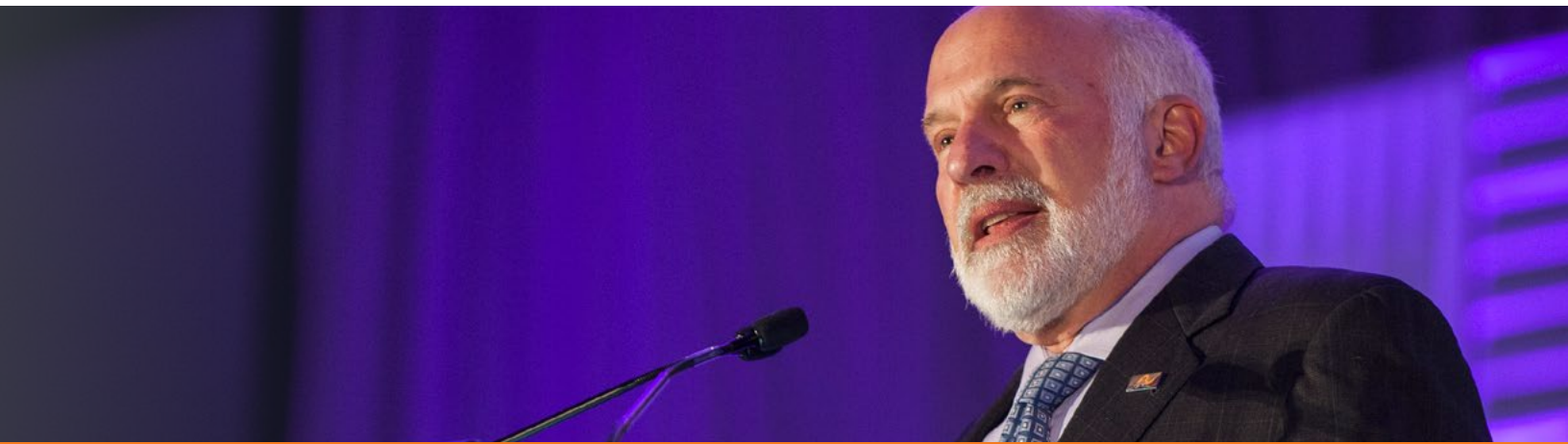
**Tactic 5:** Every year, we report on our overall progress under this plan to our stakeholders.

**Tactic 6:** We create opportunities for marginalized groups, including our National Council of Self-Advocates, to provide feedback on our work. We develop action plans based on the feedback.

**Tactic 7:** We communicate the findings, recommendations, and action plans developed from feedback from marginalized groups with our stakeholders.

**Tactic 8:** Every year, The Arc's Board AEI Committee evaluates our progress and shares a report with the full Board.

**Tactic 9:** The Board reviews the annual progress reports described in Tactic 8 and provides recommendations.



**Tactic 10:** We prioritize hiring staff who bring AEI expertise and/or lived experience to their roles.

**Tactic 11:** We prioritize recruiting Board members who bring AEI expertise and/or lived experience to their roles, including the Executive Committee.

**Tactic 12:** We assess dedication to AEI as part of our annual performance evaluations.

**Tactic 13:** We document in The Arc's annual report:

- Our progress under the Plan
- Our investment in AEI, including a breakdown by department
- Our challenges and learnings

**Tactic 14:** We work with vendors that share our commitment to AEI.

### STRATEGY 3 OUTCOMES

- More consistent use of equity assessments and tools across teams.
- Increased staffing investment in the AEI Team.
- Increased investment in AEI initiatives and projects.
- Increased transparency with our key stakeholders, as measured by our communications.
- Increased confidence in and value of our AEI commitment, as measured by the annual Staff Inclusion and Identity Survey.
- Increased confidence in and value of our AEI commitment, as measured by the annual Board Inclusion and Identity Survey.
- Increased relative percentage of vendors that are led, owned, or managed by those from marginalized groups.
- Increased relative percentage of vendors that employ a majority of people from marginalized groups.



# LEADERSHIP

## **STRATEGY 4**

We guide our chapter network and influence the disability field to advance AEI.

**Tactic 1:** We educate our chapter network about AEI.

**Tactic 2:** We provide resources to help our chapters model AEI, including funding opportunities.

**Tactic 3:** We educate other organizations and groups about AEI.

## **STRATEGY 4 OUTCOMES**

- Increased training materials and resources available on the Chapter Portal.
- Increased AEI knowledge among chapter staff, as measured by training evaluations and other assessments.





### **Goal 1: Key Metrics**

- Number and type of AEI communications and target audience(s)
- Responses and ratings from the annual Staff Inclusion and Identity Survey
- Responses and ratings from the annual Board Inclusion and Identity Survey
- Number and type of AEI trainings and target audience(s)
- Number and type of AEI resources developed and target audience(s)
- Staff engagement with AEI professional development opportunities
- Board engagement with AEI professional development opportunities
- Chapter staff engagement with AEI professional development opportunities
- Investment in the AEI Team and AEI initiatives
- Number of vendors who share our commitment to AEI

# REPRESENTATION

## The Arc is representative of diverse and marginalized communities.

Goal 2 Strategies, Tactics, Outcomes, and Key Metrics

### STRATEGY 1

We build and sustain an inclusive workplace culture.

**Tactic 1:** Every year, we collect and assess identity data for our staff. Identity data includes race, ethnicity, gender identity, LGBTQIA+ status, disability, and other information.

**Tactic 2:** Every two years, we collect and assess identity data:

- From our Board and Board Executive Committee
- From our chapter leaders

**Tactic 3:** We build our capacity to collect and maintain this data for our chapter staff and members.

**Tactic 4:** We develop action plans based on the findings from the assessments described in Tactics 1 and 2.

**Tactic 5:** We communicate the findings and action plans from the assessments described in Tactics 1 and 2 with our stakeholders.

**Tactic 6:** We update and revise our policies, procedures, and practices according to the action plans described in Tactic 4.

### STRATEGY 1 OUTCOMES

- Increased diversity of our staff and Board.
- Increased transparency with our key stakeholders, as measured by our communications.
- Increased staff confidence in our AEI commitment, as measured by the annual Staff Inclusion and Identity Survey.
- Increased Board confidence in our AEI commitment, as measured by the annual Board Inclusion and Identity Survey.







## STRATEGY 2

We prioritize engagement with diverse, marginalized, and underserved communities.

**Tactic 1:** We educate ourselves and continue learning about best practices for engagement with diverse, marginalized, and underserved communities.

**Tactic 2:** We communicate with these groups in ways they can understand and engage with us.

**Tactic 3:** We use diverse imagery in our outreach and messaging.

**Tactic 4:** We prioritize recruitment of candidates from these groups for all job postings.

**Tactic 5:** For all job postings, we make ability to use languages other than English at least a recommended qualification.

## STRATEGY 2 OUTCOMES

- Increased staff knowledge on engagement best practices, as measured by training evaluations.
- Increased investment in language translation.
- Increased investment in language interpretation services.
- Growth of our diverse image library.
- Increased relative diversity of our staff, including:
  - The number of staff who use languages other than English.
  - The number of staff who cannot or do not rely on speech to be understood.



# REPRESENTATION

## STRATEGY 3

We prioritize disabled, BIPOC, and LGBTQIA+ leadership.

**Tactic 1:** We support the advancement and engagement of these employees.

**Tactic 2:** We prioritize recruitment of candidates from these groups for all leadership positions, including the Board.

**Tactic 3:** Every year, we collect and assess staff turnover, retention, and advancement data for these groups.

**Tactic 4:** We develop action plans based on the findings from the assessments described in Tactic 3.

**Tactic 5:** We update and revise our policies, procedures, and practices according to the actions plans described in Tactic 4.

**Tactic 6:** We prioritize partnerships with organizations led by these groups.

## STRATEGY 3 OUTCOMES

- Increased retention of staff from these groups.
- Increased staff advancement among these groups.
- Increased relative percentage of leaders who represent these groups.
- Increased relative percentage of partners that are led, owned, or managed by those from these groups.

## STRATEGY 4

We support our chapter network to become representative of the communities they serve.

**Tactic 1:** We educate our chapter network about collecting and assessing identity data.

**Tactic 2:** We promote the use of standard identity questions across the network.

**Tactic 3:** We educate our chapter network about engagement with marginalized groups and communities.



**Tactic 4:** We provide technical assistance to help our chapters become representative of their communities.

**Tactic 5:** We prioritize recruitment of chapters and associate members that are led by marginalized groups.

#### **STRATEGY 4 OUTCOMES**

- Increased time spent on technical assistance to individual chapters.
- Increased training materials and resources available on the Chapter Portal.
- Increased AEI knowledge among chapter staff, as measured by training evaluations and other assessments.
- Increased number of chapter and associate member prospects led by these groups.
- Increased number of new chapters and associate members led by these groups.

#### **Goal 2: Key Metrics**

- Identity data from The Arc's staff, Board, and membership
- Recruitment and staff advancement, retention, and turnover data
- Number and type of AEI communications and target audience(s)
- Responses and ratings from the annual Staff Inclusion and Identity Survey
- Responses and ratings from the annual Board Inclusion and Identity Survey
- Number and type of AEI trainings and target audience(s)
- Number and type of AEI resources developed and target audience(s)
- Chapter staff engagement with AEI professional development opportunities
- Number of new chapters led by those from marginalized groups
- Number of new nonprofit associate members led by those from marginalized groups

# JUSTICE

## The Arc promotes social justice.

### Goal 3 Strategies, Tactics, Outcomes, and Key Metrics

#### STRATEGY 1

We join people with marginalized identities to engage in intersectional advocacy.

**Tactic 1:** We regularly assess who is most likely to be impacted in our issue areas.

**Tactic 2:** We develop action plans based on the findings from the assessments described in Tactic 1.

**Tactic 3:** We communicate the findings and action plans from the assessments described in Tactic 1 with our stakeholders.

**Tactic 4:** We update and revise our policies, procedures, and practices according to the actions plans described in Tactic 2.

**Tactic 5:** We build our capacity for intersectional work and projects.

#### STRATEGY 1 OUTCOMES

- More consistent use of equity assessments and tools across teams.
- Increased investment in intersectional initiatives and projects.
- Increased intersectionality knowledge among staff, as measured by training evaluations and other assessments.
- Higher engagement by staff with AEI professional development opportunities.
- Increased relative percentage of partnerships outside of the disability community.





## STRATEGY 2

We follow the lead of marginalized groups, communities, and activists.

**Tactic 1:** We educate ourselves about cross-movement advocacy.

**Tactic 2:** We commit to and model best practices in cross-movement solidarity. This includes paying all advocates equitably for their expertise.

**Tactic 3:** Every year, all teams meaningfully include opportunities for cross-movement advocacy in:

- Team goals
- Annual work plans
- Team activities

**Tactic 4:** Every team documents its progress from Tactic 3 and shares this information for the annual report.

## STRATEGY 2 OUTCOMES

- More trust with marginalized groups and communities, as measured by our ongoing feedback mechanisms.
- Increased investment in cross-movement initiatives and projects.
- Increased cross-movement advocacy knowledge among staff, as measured by training evaluations and other assessments.
- Increased relative percentage of partnerships outside of the disability community.

# JUSTICE



## STRATEGY 3

We support our chapter network and encourage the disability field to advance social justice.

**Tactic 1:** We educate our chapter network about intersectionality.

**Tactic 2:** All teams presenting or training audiences in the disability field meaningfully include intersectionality.

**Tactic 3:** We provide technical assistance to support our chapters to engage in intersectional and cross-movement advocacy.

**Tactic 4:** We provide resources to help our chapters promote social justice, including funding opportunities.

**Tactic 5:** We raise awareness of current social justice issues through our communication channels.

## STRATEGY 3 OUTCOMES

- Increased time on technical assistance to individual chapters.
- Increased training materials and resources available on the Chapter Portal.

- More of our public-facing communications meaningfully acknowledge intersectionality and/or systemic oppression.

## Goal 3: Key Metrics

- Number and type of AEI communications and target audience(s)
- Number and type of AEI trainings and target audience(s)
- Number and type of AEI resources developed and target audience(s)
- Staff engagement with AEI professional development opportunities
- Chapter staff engagement with AEI professional development opportunities
- Investment in intersectional initiatives and projects
- Investment in cross-movement initiatives and projects
- Number of partners outside of the disability community

**TOGETHER,  
WE CAN  
ADVANCE  
AEI!**





# WORDS AND PHRASES TO KNOW:

## THE LANGUAGE OF EQUITY

We use many words and phrases in access, equity, and inclusion work. Some of these words may be familiar. Some mean something different in this context. We want our audiences to understand these words. Language matters, especially in the world of equity. If you are unfamiliar with a word, we encourage you to explore further.

**Ableism/Anti-Ableism:** Ableism is a system that treats people differently based on beliefs about how bodies and minds should work. Society creates a general understanding of what is normal. Intelligence and productivity are valued, but they are rooted in oppression. Anti-ableism means we change and challenge practices that lead to valuing people differently based on appearance, behavior, communication, or ability to produce.

**Access/Accessible:** People can understand, engage, and fully participate.

**Accomplice/Accompliceship:** In the social justice context, this means taking down systems that continue inequity. Accomplices do this by using their power. They follow the

lead of marginalized groups. They build trust and partner with these groups.

**Ally/Allyship:** This means supporting a marginalized group. Allies are aware of their privilege. Allies may not always act directly.

**Center the Experiences:** We put the needs of a group first – a group that is marginalized. We respect their needs. Their priorities inform our work.

**Colonialism/Anti-Colonialism:** Colonialism refers to the practice of taking land and resources, often from people of color. It also means using power to control others. Often, the group with more power forces its language and values on another group. There is a long history of this practice. This has happened in the



United States. Anti-colonialism means we try to undo the harms caused by colonialism.

**Cross-Movement Advocacy:**

Advocacy across social justice movements. For example, a disability organization can advocate for racial justice. A racial justice organization can advocate for disability justice. Often, organizational partners or activists work together to engage in cross-movement advocacy. This helps demonstrate solidarity or even accompliceship.

**Diverse/Diversity:** People come from different backgrounds. They are different races, ages, and genders. They have different abilities and disabilities. We want people who will bring different ideas and thoughts.

**Equity/Equitable/Inequity:** Equity/equitable mean we treat all groups fairly. It means we try to shift power from groups that have more to groups that have less. Inequity means we do not treat all groups fairly – we do not try to make power equal between groups.

**Goals:** Goals guide The Arc's work. They help us make our Vision a reality.

**Identities:** The ways we define who we are. Sometimes, society creates or defines identities.

**Inclusion/Inclusive:** People feel welcomed, respected, and valued for who they are. They know they belong.

**Intersect/Intersectionality:** Intersect means things come together or overlap. Intersectionality refers to

# WORDS AND PHRASES TO KNOW

the overlap of identities. People can experience more marginalization if they have more than one marginalized identity.

**LGBTQIA+:** LGBTQIA+ refers to people who identify as lesbian, bisexual, bigender, gay, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, aromantic, and other diverse gender and sexual identities.

**Lived Experience:** People who live with or have an identity. Often, their identity or experience is marginalized.

**Marginalized:** Marginalized means that some groups are treated differently than others. The treatment is often negative. Some groups have been treated unfairly for a long time.

**Metrics:** The items we plan to measure related to each Goal. They will help us assess our Outcomes.

**Oppression:** Oppression means treating a group badly or unfairly. Oppression is rooted in power. Power can exist within people, structures, and systems.

**Outcomes:** Outcomes are the results we expect if we follow the Tactics. Outcomes are measurable. This means we can tell if we are making progress over time.

**Policies:** Documented ways that an organization does things. Often, policies are written down and contain organizational values.

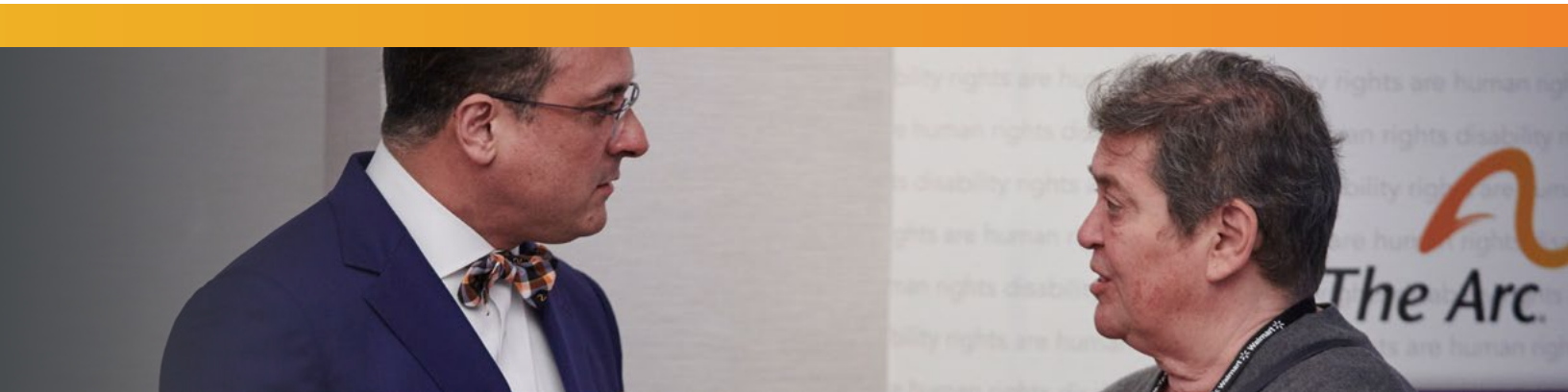
**Practices:** Informal ways that people or teams within an organization do things. Often, practices are not documented but still may be understood across an organization. Practices are often the result of an organization's broader culture.

**Procedures:** Formal ways that people or teams within an organization do things. Procedures often regulate how different teams work together.

**Resources:** Physical and digital documents, presentations, publications, statements, and other materials an organization creates. Resources are typically public-facing.

**Social Justice:** The act of treating groups fairly in society. All groups





have equitable access to resources. No group has more power than another group. There are many social justice movements.

**Solidarity:** Solidarity means supporting another group or issue. Solidarity can lead to allyship.

**Racism/Anti-Racism:** Racism is a system that treats groups differently based on race. Often, whiteness is valued more than color. Anti-racism means we change and challenge policies and practices that lead to racial inequity.

**Staff Advancement, Retention, and Turnover:** Data about employees' experience with an organization. Advancement refers to recognition for good performance. Retention and turnover refer to whether employees stay at an organization.

**Stakeholders:** Individuals and groups that follow or support The Arc's work. Our common stakeholders include:  
People with intellectual and developmental disabilities  
Family members and supporters  
Chapter staff and leaders  
The Arc's Board of Directors

The Arc's Committees and Councils

**Strategies:** Strategies describe how we will reach our Goals.

**Tactics:** Tactics are activities that support each Strategy.

**Technical Assistance:** Customized support for a group, organization, or individuals. Technical assistance can involve training, sharing resources, or help with a specific activity.

**Tokenism:** This means including someone from a marginalized group in a meaningless way.

**Underserved:** A group, community, or region that has less access to services than other groups or regions.

**Vision:** Our Vision describes how we want the world to be.

**White Supremacy:** The belief that white people are a better race and the belief that they should control society. This leads to hatred of, harm to, and exclusion of various groups. These groups include Black, Indigenous, and people of color; Jewish people; non-Christian religious groups; and others.

**We want you to join us in this work.**

Email [inclusion@thearc.org](mailto:inclusion@thearc.org) to learn more.



*For people with intellectual  
and developmental disabilities*