

The INCLUDE Framework: A Strategic HR Model for Inclusive Employment of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in India's Hospitality Sector

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ABSTRACT

The employment landscape for persons with disabilities (PwDs) in India, particularly in the hospitality sector, remains fragmented despite progressive legislative measures such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. While many organisations express commitment to diversity, inclusive employment practices are often superficial or compliance-driven rather than integrated into strategic human resource (HR) systems. This study introduces the INCLUDE Framework, a comprehensive HR model specifically designed to embed inclusion across all stages of the employment cycle within the hospitality industry.

Developed through a mixed-method approach, including quantitative analysis of 180 employee and manager responses from five-star hotels in the Delhi NCR region, the framework identifies critical barriers and opportunities related to inclusive recruitment, infrastructure, training, workplace culture, performance systems, grievance mechanisms, and policy integration. The framework is built on seven core pillars: Inclusive Recruitment & Policy Alignment (IRPA), Accessible Infrastructure & Assistive Technology Enablement (IAE), Inclusive Training, Development & Growth (ITDG), Sensitization, Awareness & Inclusive Culture (SAIC), Performance, Recognition & Career Progression (PRCP), Feedback, Grievance Redressal & Monitoring (FGM), and Policy Integration, SOPs & Legal Alignment (PISLA).

Each pillar addresses a specific functional area within HR and aligns with national legislation and global best practices, ensuring the model is both contextually relevant and practically applicable. The paper further offers actionable implementation guidelines, linking the framework to sector-specific operational needs in hospitality. By moving beyond symbolic inclusion and focusing on systems-based HR transformation, the INCLUDE Framework provides a pathway for hospitality employers to build sustainable, equitable, and legally compliant workplaces for PwDs. It also opens possibilities for adaptation across other service-oriented sectors in India and beyond....

1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past decade, outstanding student loan debt in the United States has more than doubled, reaching \$1.75 trillion in The inclusion of persons with disabilities (PwDs) in mainstream employment continues to pose significant challenges, particularly within India's fast-paced and customer-centric hospitality sector. Despite progressive legislative measures such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016, the actual representation of PwDs in organized workplaces remains disproportionately low. This gap between legal intent and practical implementation reflects a complex interplay of societal biases, infrastructural inaccessibility, and fragmented human resource (HR) practices that are ill-equipped to support diverse employee needs.

Hospitality, being one of the largest service industries globally and a key contributor to India's economic growth, has the potential to lead the movement toward inclusive employment. However, many hotels and hospitality businesses lack a systematic approach to recruit, retain, and develop PwDs across different roles. Inclusion efforts, where they exist, are often ad hoc or limited to compliance measures rather than being integrated into core HR strategy.



The absence of a comprehensive, practical framework tailored to the unique operational demands of hospitality environments exacerbates this issue. Most existing HR models in India do not account for the specific challenges faced by PwDs—from inaccessible infrastructure and skill mismatches to the lack of workplace accommodations and ongoing support systems. Moreover, sensitization of staff and leadership remains minimal, resulting in an organizational culture that often inadvertently marginalizes PwDs despite good intentions

In response to these gaps, this paper introduces the INCLUDE Framework, a structured HR model specifically developed to guide hospitality employers in implementing inclusive employment practices. The framework is grounded in empirical research conducted across premium hotel establishments in Delhi NCR and reflects both global best practices and localized needs. It comprises seven interlinked pillars that cover the entire employee lifecycle, from inclusive recruitment and accessible infrastructure to performance recognition, grievance redressal, and legal-policy alignment.

By offering a strategic roadmap for operationalizing disability inclusion in HR processes, the INCLUDE Framework aspires to transform inclusion from a peripheral concern into an organizational priority. This model is not only aligned with India's legal mandates but is also designed to be practical, scalable, and adaptable to varying business contexts. It aims to serve as both a diagnostic and prescriptive tool, enabling hospitality organisations to move beyond symbolic inclusion toward meaningful participation of PwDs in the workforce.

2. FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT RATIONALE

The development of the INCLUDE Framework was rooted in the recognition of a persistent and systemic gap in the inclusive employment of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) within India's hospitality sector. Despite the enactment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016, which mandates inclusive practices across employment processes, the ground realities reveal a different picture. Inclusion in most organisations remains largely symbolic—confined to minimal hiring or isolated initiatives—without integration into the core human resource (HR) functions. This disconnection between policy and practice formed the central rationale for developing a comprehensive and actionable HR model tailored for real-world hospitality settings.

This framework was conceptualised through both empirical findings and policy analysis. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires and informal dialogues with 180 respondents, comprising employees, managers, and HR heads from five-star hotels across Delhi NCR. These interactions uncovered several recurring themes. Firstly, most organisations lacked a formal structure or policy dedicated to PwD inclusion. Secondly, while managers expressed willingness to hire PwDs, they often cited infrastructure limitations, lack of sensitisation, and unclear performance management standards as barriers. Thirdly, the efforts that did exist were disjointed and reactive rather than proactive or strategic.

In addition, secondary research indicated that while many inclusion models exist globally, few address the end-to-end employee lifecycle specifically in the Indian hospitality context. Existing models often focus on either recruitment or workplace accessibility in isolation. None provided a structured roadmap that linked recruitment, training, culture-building, performance evaluation, and grievance redressal under one umbrella. This highlighted the need for a sector-specific framework that not only aligned with the RPWD Act but was also practical, implementable, and measurable.

The design of the INCLUDE Framework was further informed by a cross-analysis of global best practices, including those in countries such as Australia, the UK, and Sweden, where hospitality employers have implemented structured inclusion protocols with measurable outcomes. However, these models needed contextual adaptation for India, where infrastructural readiness, social attitudes, and policy enforcement levels differ significantly.

Moreover, the framework was shaped by the realisation that inclusion is not a one-time event but a continuous process requiring deliberate planning at every stage of the employee journey. From inclusive hiring policies to accessible physical infrastructure, from customised training modules to fair career progression pathways—the need for an integrated, pillar-based approach became evident.

Therefore, the INCLUDE Framework was developed as a response to this multidimensional challenge. It encapsulates seven strategic pillars that together address not just compliance, but culture, capability, and continuity. These pillars were not chosen arbitrarily but emerged from a triangulation of research findings, policy directives, and sector-specific operational realities. The framework aims to move beyond the check-box approach to disability inclusion and instead encourage organisations to embed inclusivity into their core HR systems and values.

By addressing both structural and behavioural components of inclusion, the framework aspires to become a replicable model that hotels and hospitality institutions can adopt, adapt, and refine over time. In doing so, it bridges the long-standing gap between legal obligation and workplace transformation—paving the way for sustainable, respectful, and productive employment opportunities for PwDs.

3. METHODOLOGY OF FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT



The development of the INCLUDE Framework was grounded in a rigorous and context-specific research process. This multi-stage methodology combined empirical evidence from the field with conceptual analysis to build a structured HR model tailored to inclusive employment for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in India's hospitality sector.

3.1. Research Design

A **mixed-method approach** was employed, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to capture the perspectives of diverse stakeholders. The aim was to understand existing inclusion practices, identify policy-practice gaps, and develop actionable HR solutions.

3.2. Sampling and Data Collection

Primary data was collected from employees and HR personnel working in **5-star hotel properties** located in the Delhi NCR region. These hotels were selected due to their structured HR practices, formal inclusion policies, and greater operational capacity to implement strategic frameworks.

The sample included:

Employees with disabilities working in various operational departments.

Employees without disabilities to understand peer perceptions.

Human Resource managers, diversity officers, and departmental heads responsible for policy enforcement and recruitment.

Data was gathered using:

Structured questionnaires with **Likert-scale items** to assess perceptions and practices.

Open-ended questions to elicit qualitative insights about barriers, experiences, and expectations related to workplace inclusion.

Efforts were made to ensure confidentiality and voluntary participation, with follow-ups conducted where necessary to ensure data completeness.

3.3. Data Analysis

Quantitative responses were analysed using **SPSS**, applying descriptive and inferential statistics to identify trends in employee perception, inclusion efforts, and policy awareness.

Qualitative responses were examined through **manual thematic coding**, where recurrent themes were organized into categories such as accessibility challenges, training needs, and attitudinal barriers.

This dual-layered analysis allowed the identification of both surface-level practices and deeper systemic gaps within HR functions.

3.4. Framework Construction

The insights for developing SOP Guidelines and INCLUDE- HR Framework derived from the field were cross-referenced with:

Legal mandates from the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPWD)**.

Global inclusion benchmarks such as **UNCRPD** and **ILO Convention 159**.

Existing models of diversity and HR lifecycle frameworks, 22 models in total were reviewed and their key principles were drawn together to put in this framework.

From this synthesis, **seven interlinked pillars** were conceptualized, each addressing a distinct dimension of inclusive employment—from recruitment to retention and feedback mechanisms. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were drafted under each pillar to support practical implementation.

4. STEPS TO DEVELOP AND ENFORCE SOPS ALIGNED WITH THE RPWD ACT, 2016

4.1. Understand Key Provisions of RPwD Act, 2016

Before developing any HR policy or SOP, it's critical to be familiar with the legal requirements under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016. Here are the most relevant sections:

4.1.1 Section 20: Equal Opportunity in Employment

This section mandates that:

No discrimination shall be made against PwDs in matters of **employment**, including recruitment, promotion, training, and working conditions.



Employers must **provide reasonable accommodation*** (e.g., modified workstations, flexible hours) to enable persons with disabilities to perform their job roles.

Public and private establishments should make necessary adjustments in the workplace, so PwDs are **not disadvantaged**.

Implication for SOP: You must include procedures ensuring non-discriminatory hiring, accessible interviews, job redesign (if needed), and fair performance appraisals.

***Reasonable Accommodations**

A reasonable accommodation for employees with disabilities refers to any modification or adjustment to a job, work environment, or the typical way tasks are carried out, to enable a person with a disability to access equal employment opportunities. These accommodations are tailored to the individual's specific needs and job requirements and can take many forms.

Physical or accessibility accommodations often involve changes to the physical workspace. This could include installing ramps, elevators, or automatic doors; providing accessible restrooms; adjusting desk heights or offering ergonomic chairs; reserving parking spaces close to building entrances; or modifying workstations to enhance mobility.

Assistive technologies are also critical in supporting employees with disabilities. Examples include screen readers or magnification software for visually impaired staff, speech-to-text software or other communication aids, TTY or video relay services for individuals with hearing impairments, and adaptive input devices such as specialized keyboards or mouse alternatives.

Job restructuring or role modifications might involve redistributing non-essential tasks that an employee is unable to perform, adjusting job responsibilities to better align with their capabilities, or offering part-time or flexible work schedules.

Flexible work arrangements are another key form of accommodation. These may include options for remote work or telecommuting, flexible start and end times, or allowing more frequent or extended breaks based on individual needs.

Support services can further enhance inclusivity in the workplace. These may consist of providing sign language interpreters, personal assistants, job coaches, or readers and note-takers to assist with tasks.

Policy modifications may also be necessary, such as revising leave policies to allow additional unpaid time off for medical treatment or therapy, or adjusting existing workplace rules—for instance, permitting service animals on the premises.

Finally, training and awareness initiatives help foster an inclusive culture. This might involve conducting sensitivity training for coworkers or providing training for managers on how to effectively support employees with disabilities and implement accommodations.

It's important to note that reasonable accommodations must not impose undue hardship on the employer, meaning they should not result in significant difficulty or expense. Moreover, accommodations should be individualized; what works for one person may not necessarily be suitable for another, underscoring the need for tailored, person-centered solutions.

4.1.2. Section 21: Maintenance of Records by Establishments

This section requires employers to:

Maintain records of the number of employees with disabilities in the organization.

Track details like **type of disability, nature of work, and facilities provided**.

These records should be available for inspection by authorities when needed.

Implication for SOP: Include steps on how HR collects, updates, and safeguards disability-related employment data in compliance with privacy norms.

4.1.3. Section 22: Grievance Redressal Officer

This section mandates:

Every establishment must **appoint a Grievance Redressal Officer** specifically to handle complaints related to discrimination, inaccessibility, or denial of reasonable accommodation for PwDs.

This officer should act promptly on complaints and ensure redress within a time-bound framework.

Implication for SOP: Your SOP should specify who is the designated officer, how PwDs can file a complaint (email/anonymous box), and the timeline/process for resolution.

4.1.4. Section 35: Incentives to Private Employers

This provision offers that:

The **Government may provide incentives** (financial or non-financial) to **private sector employers** who proactively hire persons with disabilities.



Examples include **wage subsidies**, tax benefits, or recognition awards.

Implication for SOP: HR policies should incorporate a clause on leveraging available government schemes and document how incentives are applied for and tracked.

4.1.5. Schedule I: List of Recognized Disabilities

The Act recognizes **21 types of disabilities**:

Table 4.1. Types of disabilities under RPwD Act, 2016

S.No.	Disability Type	Description / Examples
1	Blindness	Complete absence of sight
2	Low Vision	Partial vision despite treatment or correction
3	Leprosy Cured Persons	Individuals cured of leprosy but with residual impairments
4	Hearing Impairment	Includes both deaf and hard of hearing
5	Locomotor Disability	Disability of bones, joints, or muscles causing movement issues
6	Dwarfism	Adult height below 4 feet 10 inches (147 cm)
7	Intellectual Disability	Significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior
8	Mental Illness	Disorders other than intellectual disability (e.g., depression, schizophrenia)
9	Autism Spectrum Disorder	Developmental condition affecting communication and behavior
10	Cerebral Palsy	Neurological condition affecting movement and coordination
11	Muscular Dystrophy	Progressive weakness and degeneration of muscles
12	Chronic Neurological Conditions	Includes epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, etc.
13	Specific Learning Disabilities	Dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, etc.
14	Multiple Sclerosis	Autoimmune disorder affecting the central nervous system
15	Speech and Language Disability	Conditions affecting communication (excluding hearing loss)
16	Thalassemia	Genetic blood disorder requiring regular transfusions
17	Hemophilia	Blood clotting disorder
18	Sickle Cell Disease	Hereditary blood disorder affecting hemoglobin
19	Multiple Disabilities	Combination of two or more disabilities from this list
20	Acid Attack Victims	Physical deformities due to acid attacks
21	Parkinson's Disease	Progressive nervous system disorder affecting movement



4.2. Conduct a Disability Inclusion Audit

What is a Disability Inclusion Audit?

A **Disability Inclusion Audit** is a structured internal review process that helps an organization assess **how accessible, inclusive, and compliant** it is for employees with disabilities (PwDs). It's a key first step before developing or improving HR SOPs and policies.

4.2.1. Purpose: What Are You Auditing and Why?

You're assessing **five key areas** to identify gaps and opportunities for disability inclusion:

4.2.1.1. Recruitment Practices

Are **job postings** accessible (e.g., screen reader-friendly PDFs or websites)?

Do job descriptions clearly state that the company is **inclusive and provides accommodations**?

Are **interviews accessible** (e.g., physical access, interpreters)?

Is there **bias or lack of representation** on interview panels?

Why? If recruitment is not accessible, PwDs won't even get a chance to enter the workforce.

4.2.1.2. Infrastructure & Physical Accessibility

Are buildings **wheelchair accessible** (e.g., ramps, elevators)?

Are restrooms, guest areas, and kitchens inclusive?

Is there **adequate lighting, signage, and tactile paths**?

Are emergency exits and alarms **accessible to all types of disabilities**?

Why? An inaccessible workplace can discourage or even prevent PwDs from working comfortably and safely.

4.2.1.3. Communication & Information Access

Are **training materials, policies, and documents** available in **alternative formats** (Braille, audio, simplified text)?

Are internal platforms (intranet, portals) **screen-reader compatible**?

Is company communication **inclusive in tone and language**?

Why? Even if policies are inclusive, if information isn't accessible, PwDs may feel excluded or unaware.

4.2.1.4. Training, Career Development & Promotion

Are **training programs adapted** for diverse abilities?

Do PwDs have **equal access to career growth opportunities**?

Are line managers trained in **inclusive leadership**?

Are PwDs considered fairly in **promotions and leadership roles**?

Why? Inclusion is not just about hiring, but about providing **long-term growth and equity**.

4.2.1.5. Grievance Redressal and Feedback Mechanism

Is there a **dedicated officer or cell** for PwD-related complaints (as per Section 22)?

Can PwDs give **anonymous feedback**?

Are there regular **surveys or inclusion perception reports**?

Are grievances handled **sensitively and promptly**?

Why? Without a safe and responsive system, issues go unreported, and inclusion suffers silently.

Tools That Can be Used in the Audit:



Table 4.2. Tools for Assessing Disability Inclusion in the Workplace

Tool	Purpose
RPwD Compliance Checklist	Ensures you cover legal requirements under RPwD Act
Accessibility Audit Toolkit	Evaluates buildings, digital systems, equipment for universal design principles
Employee Inclusion Survey	Collects feedback from PwDs and co-workers about their workplace experience
Observation & Physical Walkthroughs	Helps identify unspoken barriers (e.g., inaccessible desks, lighting issues)
Focus Group Discussions	Gathers qualitative input from employees and managers

Outcome of the Audit

At the end of the audit, you will have:

A **gap report** outlining what is missing or needs improvement.

A **priority action plan** to address each area.

A **baseline score or index** you can improve upon annually.

4.3. Draft SOP Sections with Legal Alignment

While drafting SOP, it is needed to categories themes for SOP, so the respective categories be aligned with related sections of RPwD Act, 2016.

Create SOPs under the following categories:

Table 4.3. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Categories Aligned with RPwD Act, 2016 Provisions

SOP Category	RPwD Act Alignment
Inclusive Recruitment	Ensure fair selection, accessible job postings (Section 20)
Workplace Accessibility	Barrier-free facilities, assistive devices (Section 40)
Training & Sensitization	Periodic sensitization, inclusive leadership
Retention & Reasonable Accommodation	Provide flexible hours, role adjustment (Section 20)
Record Keeping	Maintain employee records with disability status (Section 21)
Grievance Redressal	Appoint PwD Grievance Officer (Section 22)

4.4. Engage Stakeholders

4.4.1. Why “Engaging Stakeholders” Is Critical?

Inclusive employment is **not just a compliance activity**—it involves cultural change, infrastructure readiness, and continuous dialogue. To make sure that the policies and SOPs are not only legally correct but also **practical, inclusive, and**



sustainable, it's essential to involve all key stakeholders who are directly or indirectly part of the employment process of PwDs.

4.4.2. Who Are the Key Stakeholders & What Is Their Role?

4.4.2.1. HR and Legal Departments

Why Involve Them: They are responsible for recruitment, policy drafting, and compliance.

Their Role:

Draft inclusive HR policies and SOPs.

Ensure all documentation (contracts, forms) is accessible.

Align all employment practices with the RPwD Act.

Ensure grievance mechanisms and record maintenance are legally compliant.

4.4.2.2. Representatives of Employees with Disabilities

Why Involve Them: They provide **lived experience** and **real workplace insights**.

Their Role:

Share what barriers exist in practice (physical, cultural, communication).

Help test the practicality of proposed accommodations.

Co-design awareness or training modules based on their own challenges and successes.

4.4.2.3. External Experts

Includes: Accessibility consultants, disability rights NGOs, vocational training partners.

Why Involve Them: They bring **technical expertise** and **best practices** from other sectors or regions.

Their Role:

Audit workplace accessibility (physical & digital).

Review draft SOPs to ensure universal design principles.

Suggest assistive technology or training solutions.

Provide guidance on leveraging government schemes (e.g., incentives under Section 35).

4.4.2.4. Line Managers and Departmental Trainers

Why Involve Them: They are **responsible for day-to-day supervision and training** of employees, including PwDs.

Their Role:

Identify job-specific adjustments or role redesign needs.

Suggest training formats suitable for inclusive onboarding.

Participate in sensitization and lead by example in inclusive practices.

4.4.3. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Bridging Policy and Practice

Conducting **Focus Group Discussions** with the above stakeholders helps:

Identify **real gaps between policy and ground-level implementation**.

Co-create solutions that balance **legal compliance with operational feasibility**.

Build **ownership and accountability** among staff and managers.

Ensure that SOPs reflect both **legal obligations** and **employee experiences**.

Example FGD Topics:

“What barriers do managers face when hiring or training a PwD?”

“What does a truly accessible hotel workspace look like?”

“How should we design grievance redressal mechanisms for inclusivity?”

“What should we include in our PwD sensitization training?”

Engaging stakeholders ensures that your HR framework is comprehensive and effective across multiple dimensions. It helps maintain **legal compliance** with relevant laws and regulations, ensures the framework is **practically implementable** within



day-to-day operations, and promotes a **culturally inclusive** environment that respects diverse backgrounds. Additionally, stakeholder engagement contributes to making the framework **technically sound** by incorporating expert insights and ensures it is **supported across the organization**, fostering collective ownership and smoother implementation.

4.5. Finalize & Format SOPs

4.5.1. Define Clear Objectives: Each SOP should start with a concise objective that explains its purpose and alignment with inclusive employment goals under the RPwD Act. This helps staff understand the relevance and scope of the procedure.

4.5.2. Specify Roles and Responsibilities: Clearly outline the responsibilities of each stakeholder—such as HR, managers, accessibility coordinators—to avoid confusion and ensure accountability. Avoid vague job titles and specify who is expected to take action.

4.5.3. Outline Step-by-Step Procedures: The SOP must include detailed, easy-to-follow instructions. Steps should be arranged logically and written in plain, action-oriented language to ensure clarity during implementation.

4.5.4. Include Monitoring and Review Mechanisms: Every SOP should define how it will be monitored and reviewed. Quarterly reviews are ideal for tracking effectiveness, capturing feedback from PwDs, and ensuring timely updates based on policy or practice changes.

4.5.5. Use Simple and Inclusive Language: Language should be accessible, respectful, and free from technical jargon. Use gender-neutral and disability-sensitive terms to promote clarity and inclusiveness.

4.5.6. Add Visual Aids Where Appropriate: Incorporate flowcharts, tables, or icons to simplify complex processes. Visual elements support better understanding, especially during training or onboarding.

4.6. Train Staff on SOP Implementation

4.6.1. Start with HR and Managers

To put inclusive policies into action, the first step is making sure HR staff and department managers understand them thoroughly. These are the people responsible for hiring, training, and day-to-day management, so they need to know how to apply the SOPs in real situations. Short, focused workshops can help clarify what's expected of them under the RPwD Act and how to respond when a PwD employee needs support or accommodations.

4.6.2. Make SOP Training Part of Onboarding

New employees should learn about the organization's commitment to inclusion right from the start. This includes being introduced to key parts of the SOPs—such as non-discrimination rules and accessible communication practices—during their induction. The idea is to create awareness early on so that inclusive behavior becomes a natural part of the workplace culture. It's also helpful to make these materials easy to understand and accessible to everyone.

4.6.3. Provide Separate Sessions for PwD Employees

Employees with disabilities often have different needs, and they should feel confident navigating the systems designed to support them. Dedicated sessions can help explain their rights, the kinds of accommodations they can ask for, and who to reach out to if something isn't working. These sessions should be practical and encouraging, not just legalistic. Involving peer mentors or disability advocates can make them more relatable and effective.

4.7. Monitor Compliance & Improve

4.7.1. Regular Monitoring Through Quarterly Audits

To ensure that inclusive practices outlined in the SOPs are being effectively implemented, it is essential to carry out **quarterly audits**. These reviews provide timely insights into whether recruitment, training, accessibility, and grievance procedures are functioning as intended. Conducting them every three months allows the organization to stay proactive, detect non-compliance early, and correct course before issues become systemic.

4.7.2. Feedback Collection from Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)

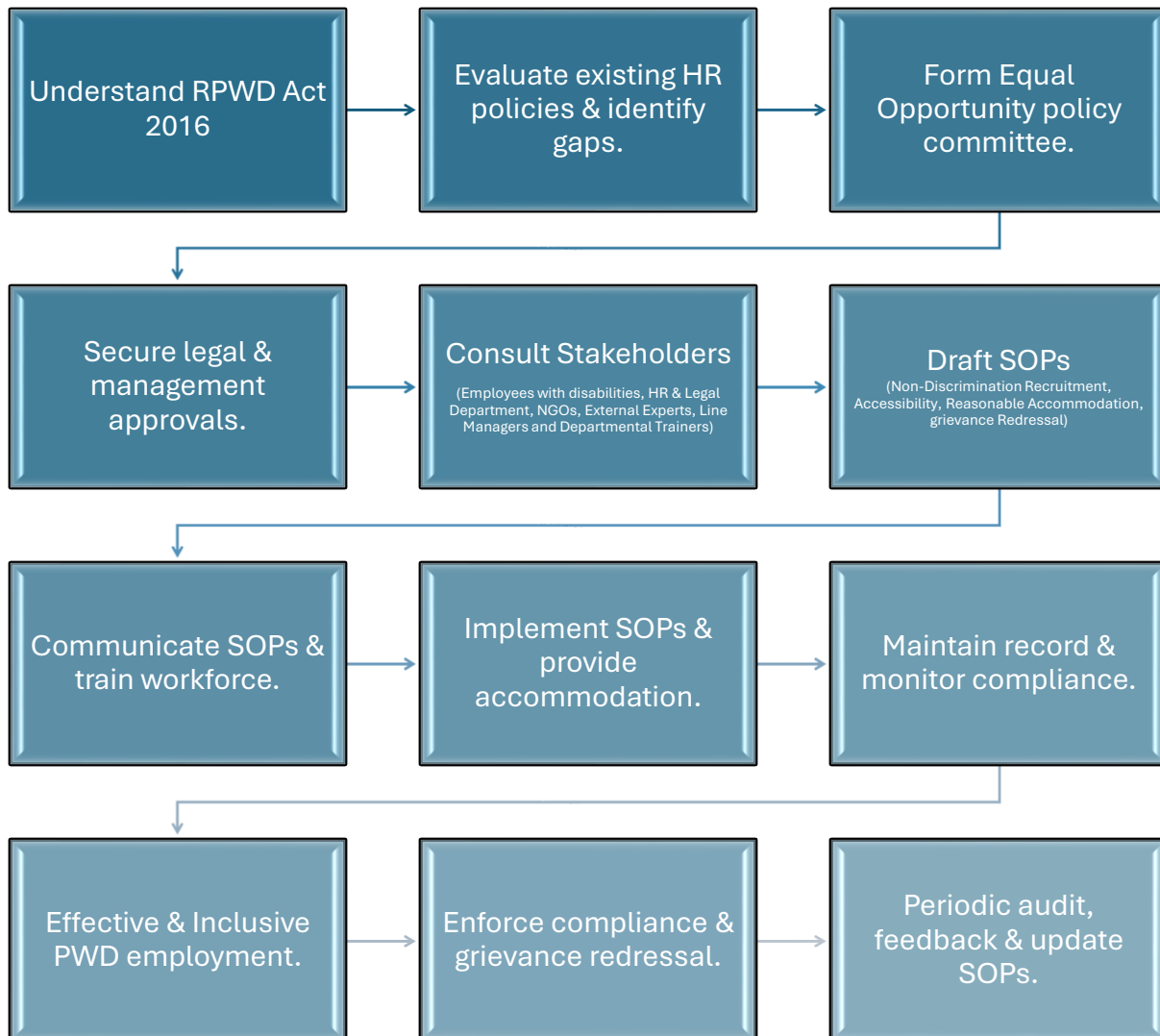
While audits offer a formal review, genuine understanding comes from listening to the voices of those directly impacted. Gathering **first-hand feedback from employees with disabilities** enables HR teams to identify hidden challenges, understand whether accommodations are working, and assess how inclusive the actual workplace culture feels. This can be done through structured surveys, confidential interviews, or focus groups.

4.7.3. Annual Review and Revision of SOPs

Laws, technologies, and workplace realities evolve. Therefore, the SOPs must not remain static. Based on audit findings and stakeholder feedback, the HR team should **update the SOPs at least once a year** to reflect any changes in the RPwD Act, global best practices, or internal organizational shifts. This keeps the inclusion framework relevant, compliant, and adaptive to future needs.



Fig. 4.1: Flowchart- Steps to Develop Inclusive SOP



HR Framework for Inclusive Employment of PwDs in Hospitality Sector

Developing a human resource framework demands a holistic and strategic approach that brings together multiple facets of HR management to support and advance organizational objectives. This involves not only designing processes that align with business goals but also ensuring coherence between HR practices, organizational culture, and employee experiences. A thoughtfully constructed HR framework acts as a cornerstone for translating strategic intent into operational effectiveness, fostering a culture of inclusion, accountability, and performance.

Such a framework must be adaptable, allowing organizations to respond to dynamic internal and external conditions, including workforce changes, technological advancements, and market pressures. By embedding principles of transparency, cultural alignment, and continuous improvement, HR frameworks can serve as powerful tools for optimizing human capital and enhancing organizational resilience.



Drawing upon insights from contemporary research and practical experiences, the following sections explore the essential dimensions of an effective HR framework, highlighting how its design, implementation, and evolution contribute to sustainable success in today’s complex business environments.

Key Dimensions of HR Frameworks

Design Considerations in HRM: An effective HR framework is shaped by a variety of contextual elements. External and internal variables such as market dynamics, organizational scale, and the pace of technological change significantly influence the configuration of HR systems (Bogićević-Milikić, 2020). Additionally, successful frameworks recognize the importance of stakeholder perspectives, balancing the expectations and needs of internal staff, leadership, and external collaborators (Bogićević-Milikić, 2020). HRM is typically structured around both 'hard' mechanisms—formal rules, procedures, and structures—and 'soft' dimensions like organizational culture, values, and leadership behavior (Bogićević-Milikić, 2020).

HR Functions and Organizational Impact: Defining functional responsibilities within HR is essential for navigating complex workforce dynamics, particularly in resource-constrained or developing contexts. In such settings, clearly outlined roles help address systemic HR challenges and improve service delivery outcomes (Nwankwo et al., 2024). Moreover, HR frameworks must link workforce performance to overarching organizational outcomes, ensuring that HR activities contribute meaningfully to institutional goals (Nwankwo et al., 2024).

Strategic Orientation and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Incorporating HR into strategic planning processes strengthens organizational coherence and ensures that HR initiatives contribute to business development and sustainability. Strategic human resource management (SHRM) emphasizes this alignment, particularly in initiatives related to CSR, where HR can play a central role (Bristol-Alagbariya et al., 2023). HR is instrumental in integrating CSR into core areas such as employee onboarding, training, and values-based leadership development, enhancing both internal capacity and external impact (Bristol-Alagbariya et al., 2023).

Managing Change and Building Competency: Organizational change is an inevitable part of growth, and HR professionals must be equipped to act as change agents. This requires a range of interpersonal and emotional competencies, such as adaptability, communication skills, and conflict resolution abilities (Finnholm et al., 2024). Continuous professional development is essential to build and maintain these capabilities and ensure HR teams are prepared to guide transitions effectively (Finnholm et al., 2024).

Linking HRM with Enterprise Architecture: The integration of HR frameworks with broader enterprise architecture facilitates better decision-making and workforce planning. This alignment enables organizations to anticipate manpower requirements and manage transitions in line with business transformations (Handley et al., 2019). A forward-looking HR framework also includes structured plans for employee transition, ensuring that new competencies are developed in balance with budgetary constraints and operational timelines (Handley et al., 2019).

Global and Cultural Dimensions in HRM: For organizations operating in diverse environments, both international and cultural factors must be considered. Macro-level influences such as regional economic conditions or regulatory standards, alongside micro-level dynamics like individual and team behavior, shape HR decisions (Björkman & Welch, 2015). Furthermore, aligning HR practices with the prevailing organizational culture enhances engagement, retention, and performance outcomes (Chatterjee et al., 2021).

HRM Practices and Performance Linkages: A multidimensional model like the “8 Ps” framework—encompassing planning, policies, processes, practices, programs, performance, people, and partnerships—offers a comprehensive view of HRM’s contribution to organizational performance (Singh & Kenneth, 2014). Furthermore, knowledge management and organizational learning are integral to sustaining competitive advantage through HR-led initiatives (Kasemsap, 2016).

While the focus on creating a structured HR framework is essential, it is also important to remain flexible and responsive to the evolving needs of the workforce and organizational dynamics. This adaptability can enhance the effectiveness of HR initiatives in achieving long-term success.

Title: "INCLUDE-HR Model" – Inclusive Framework for Persons with Disabilities

Pillar	Action
I – Identify	Audit current policies & infrastructure, recognize gaps
N – Nurture	Leadership commitment, awareness programs, inclusive values
C – Create	Job redesign, inclusive JD formats, new SOPs



Pillar	Action
L – Link	Government incentives, partnerships with NGOs & skill centres
U – Upskill	Customized training, peer mentoring, assistive tech support
D – Deploy	Inclusive recruitment process, support during onboarding
E – Evaluate	Inclusion KPIs, retention rates, grievance redressal outcomes

Derived from Thesis Objectives:

Thesis Objective	Corresponding Framework Pillar
1. To study employee perceptions of inclusive recruitment practices	Pillar 1: Inclusive Recruitment & Policy Alignment (IRPA)
2. To analyze training and development practices for specially abled employees	Pillar 3: Inclusive Training, Development & Growth (ITDG)
3. To examine perception of inclusion across employee demographics	Pillar 4: Sensitization, Awareness & Inclusive Culture (SAIC)
Extension of Objective 3: To assess attitudinal change and social inclusion	Pillar 5: Performance, Recognition & Career Progression (PRCP)
Objective Link to Compliance and Policy Implementation (across all objectives)	Pillar 7: Policy Integration, SOPs & Legal Alignment (PISLA)
To explore physical and digital workplace barriers for PwDs	Pillar 2: Accessible Infrastructure & Assistive Technology (IAE)
To understand gaps in redressal mechanisms and monitoring practices	Pillar 6: Feedback, Grievance & Monitoring (FGM)

Seven Strategic Pillars for INCLUDE Framework Development

Pillar No.	Pillar Name	Integrated Focus Area	Key Highlights (from both frameworks)
1	Inclusive Recruitment & Policy Alignment (IRPA)	Accessible hiring, fairness, and legal compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and enforce SOPs as per RPwD Act, 2016- Inclusive job descriptions and accessible postings - Sensitize recruitment panels - Collaborate with NGOs, special exchanges



Pillar No.	Pillar Name	Integrated Focus Area	Key Highlights (from both frameworks)
2	Accessible Infrastructure & Assistive Technology Enablement (IAE)	Physical and digital accessibility enablement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct audits across all spaces- Install ramps, tactile signage, Braille menus - Adopt digital tools for low-vision/hearing impairments - Maintain universal design principles
3	Inclusive Training, Development & Growth (ITDG)	Tailored learning and leadership development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disability-specific job role training- Sensitization for line managers and HR - Peer mentoring and buddy systems - Inclusive leadership skill-building programs
4	Sensitization, Awareness & Inclusive Culture (SAIC)	Attitude shaping and demographic-sensitive strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quarterly awareness drives, Disability Inclusion Week - Use storytelling and simulations- Demographic segmentation (e.g., age, education) - Designation-based inclusion champions
5	Performance, Recognition & Career Progression (PRCP)	Motivation, appraisal, and retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Realistic and adaptive performance metrics - Promote flexible work conditions - Recognize inclusion champions and inclusive teams- Build career pathways for PwDs
6	Feedback, Grievance Redressal & Monitoring (FGM)	Transparency, accountability, continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PwD-specific grievance cell and feedback channels- Semi-annual perception surveys- Inclusion KPIs in HR dashboards- Exit interviews and monitoring systems
7	Policy Integration, SOPs & Legal Alignment (PISLA)	Standardization, review, and institutional embedding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop enforceable HR SOPs with stakeholder input - Annual legal reviews and updates - Policy orientation for all staff - Embed inclusion goals into core HR policy



Fig: 7 Strategic HR Pillars of INCLUDE Framework

Pillar 1: Inclusive Recruitment & Policy Alignment (IRPA)

Core Focus:

This pillar addresses the foundational step in the employment journey—recruitment. The focus lies in ensuring that hiring practices are fair, accessible to all, and in full compliance with the provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016. It moves beyond generic diversity statements and works toward removing structural and attitudinal barriers that often prevent persons with disabilities (PwDs) from accessing job opportunities on equal terms.

Key Strategies:

Accessibility Audits of Recruitment Platforms: All digital and physical recruitment systems—web portals, career pages, application forms, and interview venues—must be assessed for accessibility. This ensures that candidates with visual, auditory, mobility, or cognitive impairments can interact with these systems without difficulty. Accessibility features such as screen-reader compatibility, alternative text formats, and ramps for walk-ins must be in place.

Development of Legally Aligned SOPs: Standard Operating Procedures for recruitment should be explicitly aligned with the mandates under the RPwD Act. These SOPs must provide clear guidance on inclusive job design, fair selection processes, reasonable accommodation, and confidentiality of disability disclosures. They also help ensure consistency across different hiring managers and locations.

Inclusive Job Descriptions and Advertisement Language: Every job description should explicitly state that the organization is an equal opportunity employer and encourages applications from persons with disabilities. Additionally, the language used should be clear, inclusive, and free from jargon or assumptions about physical abilities.



Sensitized Recruitment Panels: Hiring decisions are often influenced by unconscious bias. Hence, panel members should be trained in disability inclusion, focusing on how to assess candidates based on skills and competencies rather than physical or sensory limitations. This builds fairness and consistency in selection.

Strategic Partnerships for Talent Sourcing: Collaborating with disability employment exchanges, local NGOs, and vocational rehabilitation centers broadens the reach of recruitment drives and ensures that job openings reach qualified candidates with disabilities. These partners can also assist in pre-employment training and workplace preparation.

Data Maintenance and Compliance: In line with Section 21 of the RPwD Act, employers are obligated to maintain records of PwD applicants, hired candidates, and any accommodations provided. This data not only ensures transparency but also informs the organization's diversity metrics and future workforce planning.

Expected Outcome: By embedding inclusive recruitment principles into routine hiring processes, the organization is better positioned to attract qualified PwD candidates, foster trust among underrepresented groups, and demonstrate its commitment to equity. Over time, these practices lead to greater workplace diversity, stronger legal compliance, and enhanced employer reputation.

Pillar 2: Accessibility & Infrastructure Enablement (IAE)

Core Focus:

This pillar focuses on ensuring that all physical and digital spaces within the organization are designed to be usable, safe, and dignified for employees with various types of disabilities. It recognizes that inclusion cannot be achieved unless employees are able to physically move, interact, and perform their duties without unnecessary obstacles or dependence.

Key Strategies:

Physical Infrastructure Audits: Regular inspections must be carried out across all operational zones—entrances, guest service areas, restrooms, kitchens, and internal offices—to identify structural or design-related barriers. These audits should go beyond a superficial checklist and involve firsthand feedback from employees with disabilities.

Structural Modifications and Aids: Based on audit results, establishments should install practical and inclusive features such as ramps at entrances, elevators with audio announcements, tactile flooring for visually impaired individuals, and Braille signage in common areas. Restrooms should include grab bars, wider stalls, and emergency alarms. Workstations should have adjustable desks and low-height service counters where needed.

Digital Accessibility Standards: Beyond physical spaces, organizations must ensure that all internal platforms—HR management systems, learning portals, booking applications, and communication tools—are accessible. This includes compatibility with screen readers, captioning for video content, keyboard navigation options, and large-font interfaces for low-vision users.

Proactive Role-Based Accommodation Planning: Rather than waiting for accommodation requests, HR should create role-specific accessibility checklists. For example, a front-desk role may require visual assistance tools, while a kitchen staff role may benefit from ergonomic support or adjustable height work surfaces. Planning in advance helps normalize inclusion and prevent delays when a new PwD employee joins.

Accessibility Coordinators at Department Level: Each department should assign a staff member trained in accessibility matters who can serve as a go-to person for raising concerns, requesting adjustments, and ensuring compliance with accessibility standards. These coordinators also play a critical role in maintaining the infrastructure and following up on feedback.

Expected Outcome:

By removing structural and digital barriers, organizations not only comply with legal mandates but also demonstrate a genuine commitment to equality and independence. A barrier-free workplace empowers PwDs to work with confidence, reduces absenteeism caused by inaccessibility, and sends a strong message to both internal teams and external stakeholders about the organization's inclusive values.

Pillar 3: Inclusive Training, Development & Growth (ITDG)

Core Focus: This pillar emphasizes the need to ensure that employees with disabilities are equipped with the skills, support, and confidence required to succeed in their roles. It promotes the idea that true inclusion is not just about entry-level opportunities, but also about creating an enabling environment for continuous learning, leadership development, and long-term career growth. It also stresses that training should be customized, practical, and accessible to all, regardless of their disability type.

Key Strategies:

Customized Job-Role Specific Training: Training programs should be designed to meet the functional needs of various disabilities. This involves adapting content, pace, delivery methods, and evaluation formats for employees who are visually



impaired, hearing-impaired, physically disabled, or neurodivergent. For example, screen reader-compatible e-learning, visual guides, or sign language interpreters may be required based on the participant profile.

Accessibility Audits for Learning Content: HR teams should regularly review and audit all learning resources to ensure they meet accessibility standards. This includes checking for alternative text on visuals, captioning on videos, simple language for ease of understanding, and ensuring compatibility with assistive technology such as screen readers or voice commands.

Inclusive Leadership Training for Managers: Supervisors and department heads must undergo specialized training to understand inclusive leadership principles. This covers legal responsibilities under the RPwD Act, practical examples of accommodations, and communication techniques that foster respect, inclusion, and productivity.

Mentorship and Peer-Support Systems: To support the onboarding and retention of PwDs, organizations should introduce structured mentorship programs. New employees can be paired with experienced colleagues who provide both practical guidance and emotional support. This helps reduce anxiety, improves role clarity, and fosters a sense of belonging.

Participation in Leadership and Development Tracks: PwDs should be encouraged to enroll in internal development programs and leadership pipelines. This not only ensures equal opportunities but also promotes visibility and breaks unconscious bias. By supporting upward mobility, the organization demonstrates that inclusion extends beyond entry-level support and is embedded in its growth culture.

Expected Outcome: Through customized training, inclusive mentorship, and leadership pathways, organizations build a capable, confident, and committed PwD workforce. These practices contribute to better role performance, increased job satisfaction, and a greater likelihood of PwDs progressing into supervisory and decision-making positions. Ultimately, this enhances the overall inclusivity and diversity of the organizational culture.

Pillar 4: Sensitization, Awareness & Inclusive Culture (SAIC)

Core Focus: This pillar is centred on transforming the work environment by encouraging openness, empathy, and a genuine understanding of disability-related experiences. True inclusion extends beyond policies—it must be reflected in the attitudes and behaviours of all employees. To achieve this, organizations must invest in sustained education and culturally responsive practices that build awareness and encourage respectful engagement across all departments.

Key Strategies:

Quarterly sensitization drives should be held to keep the conversation around disability inclusion alive throughout the year. These sessions should include storytelling by individuals with lived experiences, hands-on simulation activities that allow colleagues to experience day-to-day accessibility challenges, and open Q&A discussions that build empathy.

Marking Disability Inclusion Week annually can give visibility to inclusion efforts across the organization. Activities such as expert talks, poster campaigns, panel discussions, and themed workplace events can promote learning while encouraging employee participation.

Inclusive behavior handbooks should be created and distributed to all staff, covering everyday language, etiquette, and respectful conduct when working with colleagues with different abilities. These materials should be simple, visually engaging, and role-specific where needed—for example, tailored guidance for front-line service staff versus management roles.

Segmented approaches make the awareness process more effective. For instance, older employees can be assigned as inclusion mentors, helping bridge experience with empathy. For employees with lower literacy or education levels, training materials should use more images, regional languages, or short video modules to convey key messages effectively.

Identifying and empowering inclusion champions across teams is key to sustaining this cultural shift. These individuals act as role models, troubleshooters, and advocates within their respective units, helping others understand and uphold inclusive values. Their contributions should be formally recognized to reinforce organizational commitment.

Expected Outcome: When these initiatives are implemented thoughtfully and consistently, they lead to a workplace culture that actively supports and respects colleagues with disabilities. The result is improved interpersonal relationships, increased trust in leadership, and a noticeable decline in prejudice or stigma. Over time, inclusion becomes not just a policy requirement, but a shared value embedded in daily work life.

Pillar 5: Performance, Recognition & Career Advancement (PRCA)

Core Focus: This pillar focuses on creating equitable growth opportunities for employees with disabilities by ensuring that performance evaluations are fair, recognition is meaningful, and career pathways are accessible. Inclusion is not complete unless employees are supported to grow, thrive, and feel valued in their roles. This requires adapting appraisal systems, offering flexible options, and embedding recognition and advancement into the inclusion ecosystem.

Key Strategies:



- **Inclusive performance evaluation systems** should be tailored to reflect the unique circumstances of each employee with a disability. Adaptive Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) must consider reasonable accommodations, role-specific expectations, and support tools used by the individual without lowering performance standards or creating parallel systems.
- **Flexible work arrangements** are essential to ensure both productivity and well-being. This can include shift modifications, remote work for specific tasks, reduced hours during recovery periods, or restructured responsibilities that leverage the employee's strengths. These arrangements must be part of formal HR policy and not left to managerial discretion alone.
- Regular and visible **recognition** of efforts that advance inclusion helps reinforce the message that equity is a shared responsibility. "Inclusion Champion" programs can acknowledge staff, supervisors, or teams who mentor PwD colleagues, initiate accessibility changes, or demonstrate inclusive leadership. Recognition may be through formal awards, internal newsletters, or peer nominations.
- **Tracking PwD retention, promotion, and exit patterns** separately from general HR data allows organizations to identify gaps in growth opportunities. If certain departments show lower retention among PwDs, targeted interventions—like bias training or job redesign—can be introduced.
- **Career planning** must be integrated into regular performance review cycles for employees with disabilities. Managers should initiate discussions about upskilling, internal mobility, and leadership potential, ensuring that PwDs are not overlooked for promotions or lateral movement due to unexamined biases.

Expected Outcome: When these practices are embedded consistently, organizations create an environment where employees with disabilities are not only retained but encouraged to grow. Fair evaluation systems increase confidence and clarity, while recognition boosts morale and belonging. Over time, inclusive advancement becomes a natural part of the organization's success model, and PwDs are seen not as exceptions but as contributors with equal growth potential.

Pillar 6: Feedback, Grievance Redressal & Monitoring (FGM)

Core Focus: This pillar emphasizes the importance of listening, transparency, and continuous learning. For any organization striving toward true inclusion, it is critical not only to design inclusive policies but also to ensure that employees—especially those with disabilities—feel safe and heard when raising concerns. Feedback mechanisms and monitoring systems act as mirrors, reflecting the real experiences of employees and pointing out where improvements are needed. Establishing clear, accessible, and responsive channels encourages trust in the system and gives PwDs the confidence that their voices matter.

Key Strategies:

- Each organization must formally appoint a **Grievance Redressal Officer** specifically responsible for addressing disability-related complaints. This is not only a best practice but also a legal requirement under **Section 22 of the RPwD Act, 2016**. The officer should be well-trained in empathetic communication, disability rights, and confidentiality protocols.
- **Grievance reporting systems should be flexible and barrier-free.** Employees should be able to lodge complaints or suggestions through multiple modes—such as anonymous physical drop boxes, online forms, or direct submissions—depending on their comfort and ability. These methods must be made accessible for employees with visual, hearing, or mobility impairments.
- **Conducting inclusion perception surveys** twice a year can help HR departments gather insights on how employees feel about workplace inclusivity. These surveys should ask specific questions on accessibility, fairness in promotion, respect from colleagues, and the effectiveness of training programs. The results can guide targeted interventions.
- **Inclusion efforts should be measurable.** HR dashboards should include **clear metrics** such as the number of PwDs recruited, training hours completed by and for PwD staff, accommodations requested and fulfilled, and grievance resolution timelines. Regularly tracking these indicators helps maintain accountability.
- **Exit interviews** for employees with disabilities should include a dedicated section on inclusion. Questions should explore whether accommodations were consistently available, if the work culture was respectful, and whether career advancement felt attainable. These insights can help identify systemic gaps that might not be visible through internal surveys.

Expected Outcome: When organizations prioritize transparent and inclusive feedback and grievance systems, employees are more likely to speak up about their challenges and share suggestions. This openness fosters a culture of accountability and learning. Over time, policy decisions become more grounded in lived experiences, and HR practices become more responsive. For employees with disabilities, such systems signal respect, fairness, and the organization's genuine commitment to inclusion—not just in words, but in everyday action.

Pillar 7: Policy Integration, SOPs & Legal Alignment (SPLA)

Core Focus: This pillar emphasizes the importance of formalizing inclusion as a core organizational priority by embedding it into written policies, operational procedures, and legally aligned systems. True inclusion is not sustainable unless it is institutionalized through clear rules, shared responsibilities, and a framework that is consistently reviewed and enforced.



When inclusive employment is protected by policy and standardized by procedures, it becomes resistant to bias, oversight, or discontinuity due to personnel changes.

Key Strategies:

Collaborative SOP development must be prioritized to ensure the needs and rights of employees with disabilities are fully addressed. This process should involve cross-functional collaboration—especially with HR professionals, legal advisors, and representatives of PwDs—so that the procedures are both compliant and practically implementable.

Annual policy reviews should be mandated to reflect changes in national legislation (such as updates to the RPwD Act or new government schemes) as well as insights gained from workplace experience. These reviews are essential for keeping the inclusion framework current, responsive, and effective.

Policy orientation must become a compulsory part of onboarding for all employees, not just managers. Every new hire should receive a clear understanding of the company’s disability inclusion policies, available accommodations, and their role in fostering a respectful, accessible work culture.

Employee handbooks and internal communication materials should include dedicated sections on disability rights, inclusion principles, and accessible workplace practices. These resources should be written in clear, inclusive language and be available in accessible formats (e.g., large print, Braille, screen-reader compatible PDFs).

Assigning accountability for compliance is critical. A designated HR leader or officer should be made responsible for monitoring implementation of inclusion-related policies and SOPs. Their performance should be reviewed regularly through internal audits or inclusion scorecards, ensuring that accountability is not merely symbolic but measurable.

Expected Outcome:

When inclusion is embedded at the policy and procedural level, organizations move from reactive adjustments to proactive, sustainable practices. Employees gain clarity on their rights and responsibilities, HR operations become consistent across teams, and management has a solid structure for tracking compliance. This alignment fosters long-term change, reduces the risk of non-compliance, and helps transform inclusive employment from a good intention into a lived organizational standard.

For effective implementation, it is recommended to initially **pilot the proposed inclusion framework** in selected hotel units before proceeding with an organization-wide rollout. This phased approach allows for practical adjustments based on real-time feedback. Additionally, **dedicated budgets should be allocated under the HR department** to support critical inclusion-related needs such as accessible infrastructure, assistive technologies, and specialized training programs. To ensure accountability and continuous improvement, **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should be monitored on a quarterly basis**, with inclusion outcomes directly linked to the performance goals of senior leadership.

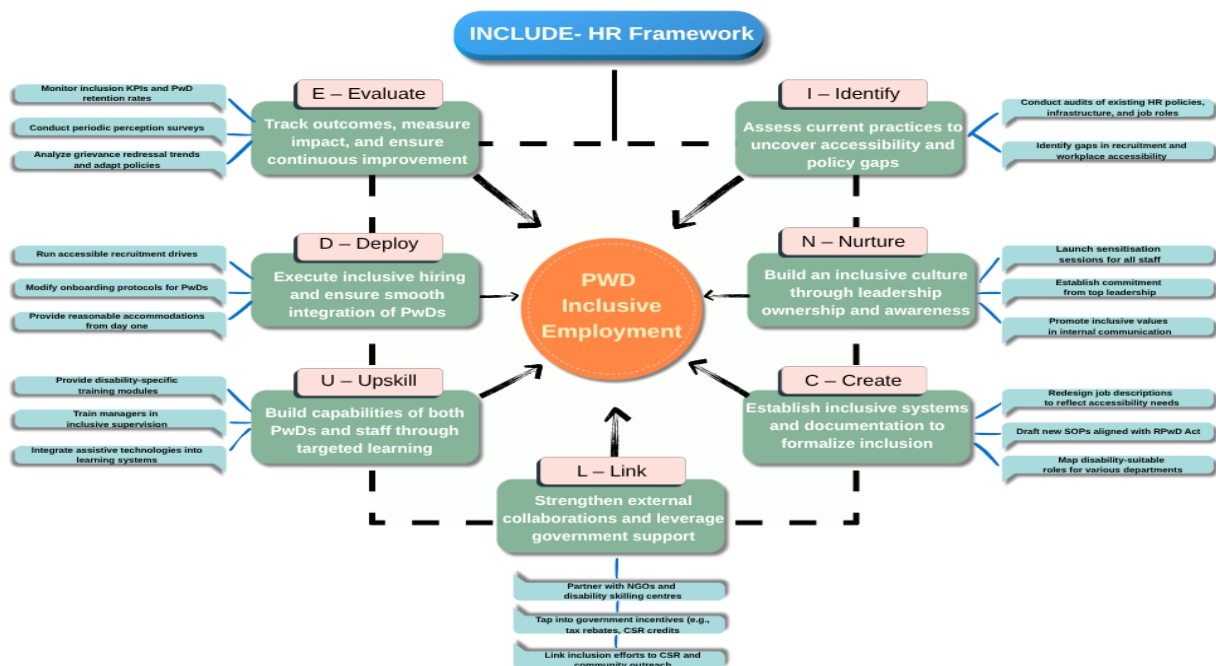


Fig. : INCLUDE – HR Framework (HR Model for PwD Inclusion)



INCLUDE – Overview

Aspect	Objective	Corresponding Pillar	Key Actions	Expected Outcomes
I Identify	Assess current practices to uncover accessibility and policy gaps.	Pillar 1 (IRPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Audit HR policies, physical/digital infrastructure, and job roles. - Highlight gaps in recruitment and accommodations. 	Baseline understanding for change; strategic prioritization of inclusion gaps.
N Nurture	Build an inclusive culture through leadership ownership and awareness.	Pillar 4 (SAIC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct sensitization and empathy training. - Secure leadership endorsement. - Promote inclusive values in internal communications. 	Organization-wide culture shift; stronger acceptance and readiness for PwD hiring.
C Create	Formalize inclusion via accessible systems and standardized documentation.	Pillar 7 (PISLA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Redesign JDs to reflect PwD suitability. - Create SOPs aligned with the RPwD Act. - Role-mapping for disability alignment. 	HR processes institutionalized for inclusion; legal alignment ensured.
L – Link	Strengthen external collaborations and leverage government support.	Pillar 5 (PRCP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partner with NGOs, CSR bodies, and skill centers. - Leverage tax and incentives. - Align inclusion efforts with CSR. 	Extended talent reach, funding optimization, and reputation enhancement.



Aspect	Objective	Corresponding Pillar	Key Actions	Expected Outcomes
U Upskill	Build the capabilities of PwDs and their teams.	Pillar 3 (ITDG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disability-specific training for employees. - Inclusive leadership training for managers. - Use assistive technology in learning platforms. 	Higher PwD job-readiness, retention, and team productivity.
D Deploy	Execute inclusive hiring and ensure effective integration.	Pillar 2 (IAE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct accessible hiring campaigns. - Customize onboarding. - Ensure availability of accommodations. 	Seamless entry of PwDs into workforce; lower dropout rates; inclusive experience from Day 1.
E Evaluate	Track results and refine strategies continuously.	Pillar 6 (FGM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set and track KPIs (retention, satisfaction, complaints). - Run perception surveys. - Update policies based on feedback. 	Measurable inclusion success; iterative improvement and accountability.

Innovative Features That Make INCLUDE a Unique Model

Innovative Feature	Description
Dual-Model Integration (Policy + Practice)	Combines the strategic, SOP-based approach with the operational and demographic-sensitive practices, creating a comprehensive system of inclusion.
Seven-Pillar Structure Grounded in Field Data	Each of the 7 pillars is backed by findings from primary data (Objectives 1–3), making the framework highly contextual and evidence-driven.



Policy Alignment with the RPwD Act, 2016	Directly integrates sections of the RPwD Act (Sections 20, 21, 22, 40) into HR practices, ensuring full legal compliance in hiring, grievance, accessibility, and retention.
Segmented Cultural Strategy (ICSS Hybrid Integration)	Incorporates age-, education-, and designation-specific inclusion strategies for better sensitization and cultural shift across departments.
Institutionalization through SOPs	Mandates creation and enforcement of SOPs across all HR functions, embedding inclusion into formal systems like onboarding, appraisals, and policy audits.
Dedicated Monitoring, KPIs & Feedback Loops	Includes measurable metrics on inclusion, biannual surveys, and grievance tracking systems, ensuring accountability and responsive adaptation.
Recognition-Driven Retention Mechanism	Rewards inclusive behavior at individual and team levels to reinforce participation, boost morale, and reduce PwD attrition.
Built-in Flexibility & Tech Integration	Supports workplace accommodations via flexible roles, assistive technology adoption, and accessible digital infrastructure.
Annual Legal and Policy Review Cycle	Formalizes yearly updates of all inclusion-related policies in line with legal amendments and internal feedback, ensuring continued relevance and compliance.

The development of this comprehensive HR framework marks a significant step toward institutionalizing inclusive employment practices for persons with disabilities (PwDs) in Delhi NCR’s hospitality industry. By drawing upon primary research findings and aligning them with national legal standards—particularly the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016—the framework addresses systemic gaps across recruitment, accessibility, training, retention, and policy enforcement.

Structured around seven strategic pillars, this model integrates both policy-level interventions and operational best practices. It recognizes that inclusion is not achieved through isolated efforts, but through the sustained alignment of organizational



culture, physical infrastructure, workforce sensitization, and regulatory compliance. The framework’s strength lies in its balance: it offers scalable solutions suitable for five-star hotel operations while being grounded in real employee experiences.

By embedding inclusive values into core HR functions—through enforceable SOPs, feedback loops, legal monitoring, and targeted support systems—this framework provides a replicable model for hospitality businesses seeking to move from intention to impact. Its design ensures that disability inclusion becomes not a one-time initiative, but a standard embedded across the employee lifecycle. In doing so, it contributes to both social equity and organizational excellence.

Theoretical and Policy Alignment

This framework is developed using 22 existing HR Frameworks- 13 models under HR frameworks for employment and 9 theories and models for PwD inclusion, aligning with the RPwD Act, 2016.

Comparative Table of Major HR Frameworks and Its Contribution in INCLUDE development

Model Name	Characteristics	Pros	Cons	When to Use	Contribution to INCLUDE Framework
Harvard Model	Focuses on stakeholder interests and situational variables	Customizable, promotes alignment, long-term HR outcomes	Complex to implement, requires deep stakeholder mapping	When balancing diverse stakeholder needs or implementing inclusive policies	Shaped SAIC, FGM, PISLA — influenced grievance redressal, culture-building, and policy SOPs
Ulrich’s HR Model	Defines HR roles: Strategic Partner, Change Agent, Admin Expert, Employee Champion	Empowers HR, highly operational, clear role definition	Demands role clarity and training	When aligning HR with strategy or managing inclusion projects	Operationalized U – Upskill, D – Deploy, and E – Evaluate
8-Box Model (Paul Boselie)	Maps internal & external alignment between HR outcomes and performance	Holistic, links HR practices to outcomes	Time-intensive, requires longitudinal data	For assessing alignment between HR systems and results	Helps across Evaluate, Identify, and PRCP pillars
McKinsey 7S Model	Aligns Strategy, Structure, Systems, Skills, Staff, Style, and Shared Values	Effective during transformation; ensures coherence	Difficult to manage simultaneous alignment	When driving inclusion-led cultural change or restructuring	Supports PISLA, SAIC, and N – Nurture (cultural inclusion and shared values)
High-Performance Work System (HPWS)	Focuses on synergy between employee engagement, skill, and rewards	Drives innovation, performance, and commitment	Resource-intensive, potential resistance from existing staff	When fostering high-involvement and performance-based inclusion	Informs ITDG, PRCP, and Upskill efforts
Michigan/Matching Model	Matches HR practices with business goals and performance	Performance-driven, strategic fit	Overlooks individual well-being and equity	When linking inclusion KPIs to organizational performance	Basis for IRPA, Deploy, and PRCP pillars



Model Name	Characteristics	Pros	Cons	When to Use	Contribution to INCLUDE Framework
Guest Model	Balances flexibility, quality, and employee commitment	Connects strategic and operational HRM	Requires deep integration into company culture	To embed inclusion into values and training	Supported SAIC, IAE, and ITDG
Warwick Model	Contextual analysis (external & internal) of HR practices	Adaptive, strategic foresight	Less guidance on tactical application	In sector-specific, regional policy-driven inclusion	Anchored IRPA and L – Link for policy-to-practice fit
6-Box Model (Weisbord)	Diagnoses organizational effectiveness through 6 levers	Useful for HR audits and feedback design	Not a full HRM strategy model	For auditing HR systems and inclusion readiness	Enabled I – Identify and FGM for gap detection and responsiveness
ICF Framework (WHO)	Bio-psycho-social disability model for functioning and access	Inclusive, widely applicable	Needs HR adaptation and localization	To design inclusive jobs and accessibility plans	Formed basis for IAE, Create, and AT integration
SHRM Competency Model	Defines behavioral and leadership HR capabilities	Enhances HR’s strategic and inclusive competencies	Limited guidance on culture/system change	For developing inclusive HR teams and champions	Informed ITDG and Upskill
Diversity Inclusion & Frameworks	Focused on equity, intersectionality, bias awareness	Culture-building, addresses prejudice	Risk of surface-level tokenism if not embedded deeply	When fostering deep, organization-wide inclusion	Core to SAIC, N – Nurture, L – Link
Employment Cycle Model	Mapping employer practices across the employee lifecycle	End-to-end inclusion approach	May lack depth in each stage	Designing inclusive recruitment to retention cycle	Strengthened FGM with a lifecycle monitoring lens; informed IRPA and PRCP for start-to-end inclusion practices

Disability Inclusion Models and Their Contribution to the INCLUDE-HR Framework

Model Name	Characteristics	Pros	Cons	When to Use	Contribution to INCLUDE Framework
Medical Model	Views disability as an individual health issue or impairment requiring treatment.	Useful for rehabilitation, diagnosis, and medical assessment.	Ignores societal and environmental factors.	In clinical, therapeutic, and medical settings.	Minimal; helped recognize the need to shift toward social and rights-based inclusion.
Social Model	Sees disability as socially constructed	Promotes accessibility,	May understate	In policy design,	Core to IRPA, IAE, SAIC—guided



Model Name	Characteristics	Pros	Cons	When to Use	Contribution to INCLUDE Framework
	through barriers and discrimination.	removes systemic barriers.	individual needs for care/rehabilitation.	accessibility planning, and inclusive hiring.	inclusive recruitment, built barrier-free infrastructure.
Biopsychosocial Model	Combines medical, psychological, and social views for a balanced understanding.	Holistic and inclusive; aligns health with function and context.	Complex to operationalize in HR without simplification.	In disability-inclusive job design and workplace accommodations.	Shaped IAE and ITDG —helped balance tech access with skill and psychological support.
Rights-Based Framework	Emphasizes legal equality, non-discrimination, and enforceable rights.	Legally binding; aligns with national/international laws.	Legal enforcement may be weak or bureaucratic.	When aligning HR policies with acts like RPwD Act or UNCRPD.	Informed PISLA , IRPA , and FGM —ensured legal SOPs and grievance processes.
Organizational Inclusion Theory	Focuses on creating systems and workplace culture that foster inclusion.	Builds psychological safety, belonging, and engagement.	Difficult to measure or standardize inclusivity.	In leadership training, policy communication, team management.	Shaped SAIC , PRCP , and FGM —drove culture-building, feedback, and recognition practices.
Human Capital Theory	Emphasizes the value of education, skills, and workforce development.	Encourages investment in employee potential and productivity.	Risk of commodifying employees or ignoring social context.	For planning inclusive training and development programs.	Supported ITDG and Upskill —highlighted return on inclusive skill development.
Capability Approach (Amartya Sen)	Defines inclusion by people’s actual freedoms to function and achieve goals.	Prioritizes empowerment and personal agency.	Hard to measure; lacks standard HR metrics.	In employee-centric inclusion and choice-based enablement.	Core to PRCP , IAE , and ITDG —ensured autonomy, progression, and real participation.
Employment Cycle Model	Framework spanning all HR stages: recruitment, onboarding, retention, exit.	End-to-end inclusion; strategic for full-cycle planning.	Shallow on depth per phase unless adapted.	For designing policies that address inclusion throughout employment.	Strengthened IRPA , FGM , PRCP —ensured continuity of inclusive practices from hire to exit.
E-Communities/Virtual Inclusion Model	Supports long-term PwDs via digital access, virtual support, and peer networks.	Promotes remote participation and flexible work options.	May exclude those lacking digital access or literacy.	In remote working, e-learning, and tech-based inclusion planning.	Supported IAE —emphasized digital accessibility and community tech engagement.
DEIB Framework (Diversity, Equity,	Ensures fairness, voice, cultural competence, and identity respect.	Builds safe, representative workplaces.	Can be performative if not deeply implemented.	For fostering inclusive culture and	Central to SAIC , N – Nurture , and L – Link —shaped value-based



Model Name	Characteristics	Pros	Cons	When to Use	Contribution to INCLUDE Framework
Inclusion & Belonging)				leadership training.	engagement across the system.

HR Framework: Coined Terms under this Research

Sr. No.	Term / Short Form	Full Form	Purpose / Focus Area
1	IRPA	Inclusive Recruitment & Policy Alignment	Ensures inclusive hiring and policy alignment practices
2	IAE	Accessible Infrastructure & Assistive Technology Enablement	Promotes accessible workspaces and tech for diverse needs
3	ITDG	Inclusive Training, Development & Growth	Focuses on inclusive learning, upskilling, and career growth
4	SAIC	Sensitization, Awareness & Inclusive Culture	Drives awareness, DEI training, and a culture of inclusion
5	PRCP	Performance, Recognition & Career Progression	Links performance management with inclusive career advancement
6	FGM	Feedback, Grievance Redressal & Monitoring	Establishes inclusive feedback and grievance systems
7	PISLA	Policy Integration, SOPs & Legal Alignment	Integrates inclusive policies with legal compliance & SOPs

5. CONCLUSION AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The development of the INCLUDE Framework represents a significant step toward institutionalizing inclusive employment practices for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) within India’s hospitality sector. By integrating legal mandates, international standards, and primary field data from 5-star hotels, the framework offers a structured and practical model that can guide human resource professionals in creating equitable and accessible workplaces. The seven interconnected pillars—ranging from inclusive recruitment to feedback and legal alignment—provide not only a conceptual roadmap but also concrete Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that can be adopted and adapted by hospitality establishments of varying scales.

One of the key strengths of the INCLUDE Framework lies in its emphasis on operational feasibility. Unlike many theoretical inclusion models, this framework has been directly informed by the voices of employees and employers who navigate inclusion-related challenges daily. The incorporation of real-time insights, expert validation, and pilot feedback ensures that the recommendations are both contextually grounded and implementation-ready.

However, the present study is not without limitations. As the data was collected exclusively from high-end hotels within the Delhi NCR region, the findings may not fully reflect the realities of smaller or unorganized hospitality units. Moreover, while the framework is tailored to hospitality, its broader applicability across other service sectors remains to be tested.

In light of these observations, future research can pursue several directions. First, longitudinal studies could be undertaken to assess the long-term impact of the INCLUDE Framework on PwD recruitment, retention, and career advancement within the hospitality industry. Second, comparative studies involving different regions or tiers of the hospitality sector (e.g., budget hotels, stand-alone restaurants, and heritage properties) would enrich the generalizability of the model. Third, interdisciplinary research could explore how digital technologies, such as AI-driven assistive tools or inclusive HR software, might be integrated into the existing SOPs to enhance accessibility and monitoring. Lastly, there is ample scope to develop sector-specific adaptations of the framework, particularly for education, retail, and healthcare—sectors that similarly require inclusive HR strategies but function under distinct organizational constraints.



Overall, the INCLUDE Framework lays a robust foundation for moving from policy to practice in the domain of disability-inclusive employment. It invites collaboration among scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to refine, scale, and sustain inclusion not as an exception but as a standard in the evolving landscape of India's service economy.

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