



CHANGING WORKPLACE CULTURE, ONE MEETING AT A TIME!

Creating the space for everyone to speak up by using inclusive meeting practices

About the VALID Employment Project

VALID has been advocating for people with intellectual disability in Victoria since 1989.

In 2019, VALID started the Employment Project to understand what they can do to support employees with intellectual disability to do well in their roles, develop skills and progress their careers.

VALID also wanted to use what they learned to support other employers to do the same.

VALID developed and tested a range of tools, and ways of working to help employers hire people with intellectual disability, and support them to do well at work.



The Challenge

Meetings are an important part of work for many people. They can also be frustrating, stressful, or feel like a waste of time.

Sometimes it can be hard for people to speak up in meetings, especially when there are other staff members who are more confident in sharing their ideas and thoughts.

Discussion can be limited to the few people who feel most comfortable to speak up.

This means:

- the views and experiences of the most confident people have more influence over the decisions that are made.
- the organisation can miss out on hearing new ideas that less outgoing people may have.
- over time, people who are less confident to speak up may feel discouraged and like what they have to say is not important.

Many people find it hard to speak up in meetings. This can be especially true for people with intellectual disability who may need some extra support to participate.



What we did

Inclusive meeting practices are simple, practical adjustments to how meetings are run that make it easier for everyone to participate.

Voice At The Table have developed [Top Ten Tips for Inclusive Meeting Practices](#), with practical tips to use before, during and after meetings.

Three members of the Employment Project team did training with Voice At The Table about inclusive meetings in previous roles. The team wanted to make sure meetings during the project worked for everyone.

The practices were first used in monthly Community of Practice meetings, and then at fortnightly all-staff meetings – attended by 15 – 35 people each time.

Some tips include:

- Have a structured agenda
- Give everyone a say
- Evaluate and make changes to meetings as needed

VALID staff used three coloured cards or objects to communicate during the meetings



I agree, or I'm ready to move on

I have a question

I don't agree, or I don't understand



The Results

VALID have used inclusive meeting practices since December 2019, and have noticed that:

% of VALID staff who...

83% thought practices were useful

89% wanted to keep using the practices

62% felt there were more ways to contribute than before

44% felt more valued for their contribution

% of VALID staff who saw their colleagues with intellectual disability...

73% Appear to feel more valued as member of staff

67% Appear more confident speaking up in meetings

60% Learn a new skill

53% Play an active role in leading a meeting for the first time

“It feels pretty special [to chair a meeting] – it’s a big job to take on board, especially when just starting out in the role.”

“[The practices] help everyone to be involved, and create opportunities for people to step up and try new things.”

“The cards make it easier for all who want to contribute to do so.”

- ✓ The **way people interact** in meetings **changed a LOT!**
- ✓ People **feel better** about attending meetings – coming **ready to listen and contribute**
- ✓ **More, and different** people started actively participating in meetings – and **not just** people with an intellectual disability, but also those who are less confident about speaking up in big groups, and those who don’t spend much time at the office
- ✓ Discussions became **more diverse – more ideas** and **different views** were shared
- ✓ The executives **listen more**, and **take a more active part** in the discussions because they don’t have to focus on running the meeting

“More people now have the confidence to speak up in meetings. The inclusive meeting practices create space for people to what they want, without having to look for an opening.”



The Impact

Inclusive meeting practices have been a ‘game changer’!

The people that work at VALID have noticed that these simple actions:

- ✓ Made it **easier for everyone** to contribute by creating the space for everyone to say what they want to say,
- ✓ **Changed meeting dynamics**, shifting the conversation away from solely managers, and towards those who would normally not speak up or contribute to group discussion.
- ✓ **Created opportunities** for people to learn important **new skills**, like how to chair a meeting, building their **confidence**

But most importantly, people now feel:

- ✓ **more confident** to speak up in meetings
- ✓ **more valued** for the contribution they make
- ✓ **more engaged at work**, keen to learn new things, and to help others

>> So what’s next?

VALID will continue to use of inclusive meeting practices, and will introduce these practices into regular meetings throughout the organisation.