Universal Design

Points Available: 1

Developed in partnership with the Australian Network on Disability, Lendlease and Westpac Group.

Aim

To encourage projects to provide safe, equitable and dignified access for persons with disabilities.

Rating Tool Eligibility

| Green Star Communities | Green Star Design & As Built | Green Star Interiors | Green Star Performance | Legacy Green Star Rating Tools |

Note: This Innovation Challenge is applicable to all rating tools, except stand-alone Design ratings (Legacy rating tools).

Why is this Innovation Challenge Important?

This Innovation Challenge aims to integrate into the design and operation phases of built environment projects, a more inclusive view of how people with disabilities access and engage with place, and most importantly, how they can do so seamlessly with equity and dignity (Australian Network on Disability, 2015).

Projects will only be rewarded for going beyond compliance with access standards and legislation. Project teams are required to understand the accessibility issues specific to their project (‘needs analysis’) prior to developing design solutions in order to address these (‘accessibility plan’). This process ensures that project initiatives are specific and practicable, rather than generic and ‘tokenistic’.

The ‘needs analysis’ is an integral step in the process for project teams to gain a holistic perspective on the accessibility issues faced. See the Guidance section for additional detail.

The ‘accessibility plan’ is to be developed in response to the accessibility issues identified from the ‘needs analysis’. This ensures that project teams adequately plan for, and deliver on, project-specific design solutions.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the United Nations states that living with dignity, regardless of disability, is a basic human right. Persons with disabilities as defined by this Convention include “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (United Nations, 2006).
Project teams are encouraged to experience their project’s final design solutions by figuratively ‘walking in the shoes’ of someone with disability. In this sense, dignified access means that a design or process enables:

- More independent access to premises, goods and services: it doesn’t assume that assistance is required.
- Equitable or fair access: it doesn’t take longer or make people go further.
- Participation of people experiencing disability as a natural and expected thing.
- A place where people feel at-ease, safe and connected.

Designing for dignity aims to ensure that persons with disabilities feel equally welcomed, having their basic needs met and are able to fully participate as equal members of society. Ultimately, it is about democracy, social justice and equity, creating the best places for everyone, and demonstrates leadership for any built environment project.

**Compliance Requirements**

To claim this Innovation Challenge your project team must:

- Review the *Design for Dignity Guidelines*, or similar guidelines for inclusive design and dignified access.
- Perform a ‘needs analysis’ identifying the project’s accessibility issues. See the Guidance section for additional detail.
- Develop an ‘accessibility plan’ (or similar) that provides strategies to address the needs determined and identifies actions for how the project will incorporate inclusive design.
- Implement the ‘accessibility plan’ and demonstrate that accessibility initiatives have been carried out for the project.

While no specific benchmarks have been provided with regards to size or space definitions, it must be demonstrated that best practice initiatives tailored to the project have been implemented, in accordance with the aim of this Innovation Challenge.

**Alternative Compliance Methods**

A Credit Interpretation Request (CIR) may be submitted to the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) when an applicant wishes to advocate for an alternative yet equivalent method of meeting the Compliance or Documentation Requirements. Any CIRs submitted for this Innovation Challenge will be processed as free-of-charge.

**Definitions**

**Needs analysis** – An analysis carried out to determine what requirements are sought by project users, separating “wants” from “needs” and determining the priorities, giving reasons for those selected.

**Persons with disabilities** – The World Health Organisation characterises Disability as “…an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.”
Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person’s body and features of the society in which he or she lives. Overcoming the difficulties faced by people with disabilities requires interventions to remove environmental and social barriers” (World Health Organisation, 2016).

Guidance

The GBCA encourages project teams to liaise directly with the Australian Network on Disability for enquiries or feedback on the Design for Dignity Guidelines, link here: http://www.and.org.au/

The Sydney Opera House achieved a Green Star – Performance rating in 2014. This Green Star project is a ‘best practice’ example of how an ‘Accessibility Action Plan’ can be used as a tool to plan for safe, equitable and dignified access. To access the plan, please visit: http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/visit/accessibility_info.aspx

Needs Analysis

The needs analysis aims to address the needs of persons with disabilities to be able to “access and engage with place, and most importantly, how they can do so seamlessly with equity and dignity” (Australian Network on Disability, 2015). Some of the tools which may be used for conducting the needs analysis include a specific design review process, surveys of project users and engagement with experts in the field. The information gathered from a needs analysis is to be used to help define goals to address the needs of persons with disability. These goals may then be stated as specific objectives, which in turn will function as the foundation on which to develop best practice design solutions.

How the needs analysis is completed will need to be suited to the project and stakeholders – the end-use, types of users, who is doing the analysis and why the analysis is being done. In submitting for this Innovation Challenge project teams will need to describe the needs analysis that was undertaken and how this contributed to the project’s design solutions. The needs analysis may be formal and extensive, or informal and focused, depending on the project-specific circumstances.

An example methodology for a needs analysis is provided below:

- Review the Design for Dignity Guidelines, or other best practice guideline for dignified access.
- Consult with future building users and visitors via surveys.
- Consult with individuals with a diverse range of disabilities.
- Host a design review process to critically evaluate the findings from the above steps with the project’s design.

References


**Documentation Requirements**

**Design Review / Design and As Built Submissions**

Provide the following required documentation:

- **Submission Template** outlining how the project team has addressed the Innovation Challenge. The Submission Template also enables project teams to provide feedback on the Innovation Challenge to inform future developments.

Provide documentation to support the claims made within the Submission Template. This may include:

- **Needs analysis report** conducted for the project, clearly outlining the needs of the project’s stakeholders. Describe the needs analysis process undertaken by the project team and resulting outcomes implemented in the project.

- **Accessibility plan** (or similar) developed for the project.

- **Drawings or photos** demonstrating the accessibility initiatives that have been carried out for the project.