



## Exploring the Implementation Gap: Stakeholder Input

Using data from the Organizational Priorities and Practices Inventory (OPPI)

Inclusive decision-making is essential to ensuring disability service organizations remain accountable and responsive to the people they serve. People with disabilities, their families, and other key stakeholders bring valuable perspectives that can improve the quality, relevance, and impact of services. When these voices are actively sought out and incorporated, organizations can better align their practices with community needs and priorities.

The Organizational Priorities and Practices Inventory (OPPI) assesses how effectively organizations gather and integrate stakeholder feedback into governance and management decisions. This domain includes indicators such as *Stakeholder Input*, *Participation in Governance*, *Inclusive Strategic Planning*, *Approachable Leadership*, *Values Built into Operating Materials*, *Values Built into Employee-Related Materials* and *Collaboration with Stakeholders*.

This brief highlights findings from the most recent OPPI responses, collected from 1,171 professionals working in disability services. Respondents represent a cross-section of the field: Executives (10%), Directors (19%), Managers (30%), Frontline Staff (35%), and Others (6%). While there is strong alignment in values across roles, the data point to meaningful differences in how various staff experience and implement participatory approaches. Addressing these differences is critical to building systems where people with disabilities are fully included in decision making.

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### Questions? Comments? Contact Us!

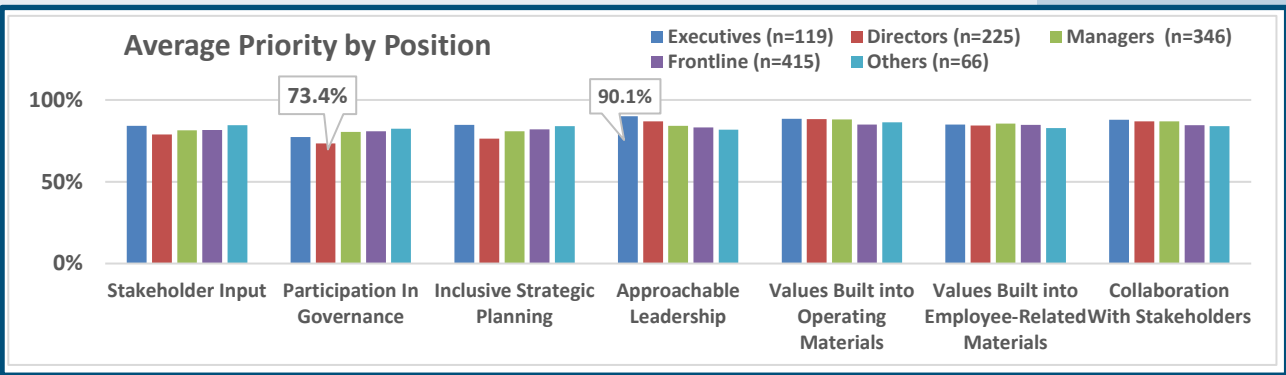
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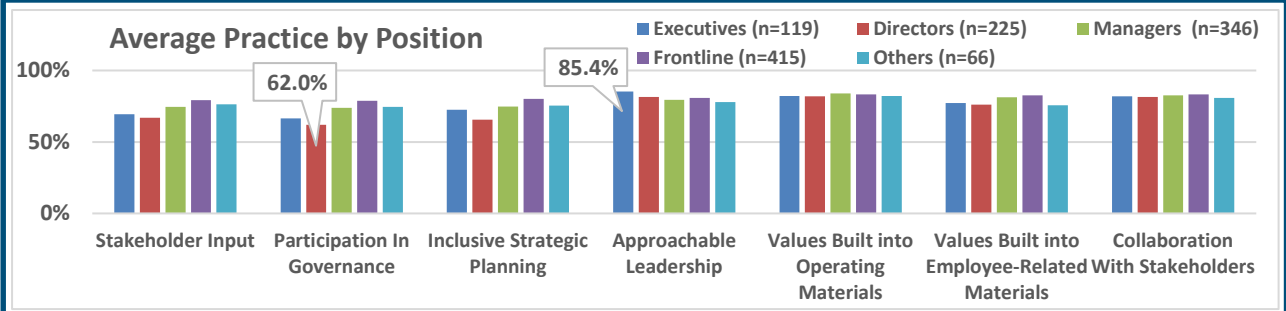
Contact Cory Gilden at [cgilden@natleadership.org](mailto:cgilden@natleadership.org) with questions related to our research.



- **Across all indicators**, respondents rated organizational priorities significantly higher than practices, indicating a clear gap between values and implementation.
- **Values Built into Operating Materials** was rated as the most prioritized principle (87.0% priority), indicating an organizational commitment to language specific to choice, control, community engagement, and self-determination in operating materials
- The highest rated practices were also **Values Built into Operating Materials** (83.1% practice), showing an organizational effort to align values and priorities with organizational rules.
- **Participation In Governance** had the lowest implementation (72.6%) and the lowest priority rating (79.0%). This indicates a consistent challenge to Include people with disabilities as participants in the organization's governing body.



The chart above shows strong prioritization of stakeholder-related values across all organizational roles. **Approachable Leadership** received the highest rating overall (90.1% from Executives), indicating a clear emphasis on accessibility and openness in leadership styles. In contrast, **Participation in Governance** was the lowest-rated priority overall (73.4% from Directors), suggesting an area where greater involvement of diverse voices in decision-making could be strengthened. While **Stakeholder Input** and **Inclusive Strategic Planning** show moderate variation between roles, particularly lower ratings from Directors, there is consistent agreement on the importance of **Values Built into Operating Materials**, with ratings above 80% across all groups.



The chart above shows notable variation across roles in the implementation of organizational practices. **Approachable Leadership** is the highest-rated practice overall, with Executives reporting the strongest implementation at 85.4%, indicating an emphasis on accessibility and openness in leadership. In contrast, **Participation in Governance** received the lowest average rating (62.0% among Directors), highlighting a potential gap in shared decision-making structures and stakeholder involvement. Practices such as **Values Built into Operating Materials**, **Values Built into Employee-Related Materials**, and **Collaboration with Stakeholders** demonstrate steady ratings across all roles, suggesting these values are consistently embedded in day-to-day operations. Lower ratings from Executives and Directors in **Stakeholder Input** and **Inclusive Strategic Planning** may reflect gaps between leadership priorities and frontline realities.



The chart above shows that Executives and Directors reported the largest gaps between organizational priorities and practices, particularly in **Stakeholder Input** (14.8% and 11.8%, respectively), indicating a significant perceived shortfall in implementing this value. In contrast, Frontline Staff reported the smallest differences across most indicators, with the lowest gap in **Collaboration with Stakeholders** (1.3%), suggesting stronger alignment between stated priorities and daily practice in their work.

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