

# Project Ability

Next steps in disability diversity, equity and inclusion facilitating change from within and beyond



**ReedSmith**

Driving progress  
through partnership

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# LEADRS mission

To support and enhance the professional and personal development of individuals with all types of disabilities—physical, mental, visible and non-visible, permanent and temporary

-  Looking for Excellence and Advancement of Persons with Disabilities at Reed Smith (LEADRS)
-  Looking for excellence and advancement of persons with disabilities at Reed Smith
-  Inspired by the 2012 London Paralympics
-  Open to everyone, with and without disabilities, from around the globe

## Why is LEADRS important?



Interaction with all levels in the organization



Helps to create greater awareness and facilitate change



LEADRS has a voice – internally and externally



Opportunity to impact profession, clients and industry

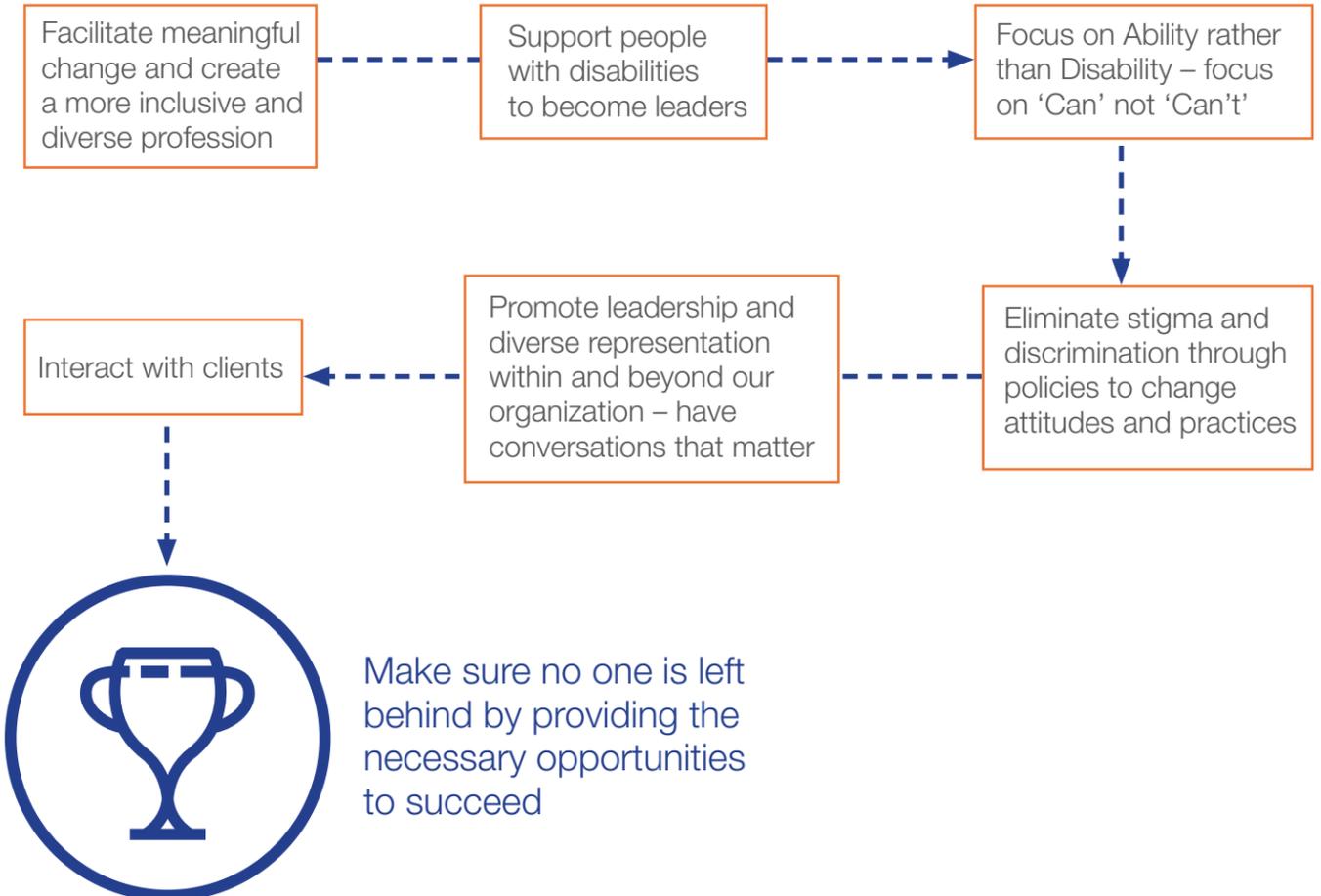
# The Project Ability concept

- ① Work with colleagues and clients to develop a program for staff specific legal service teams with at least one person who is a member of Reed Smith’s LEADRS Business Inclusion Group; Mental Health Task Force or who identifies as having a disability
- ② Connect with your attorneys and professional staff with disabilities to start a conversation about disability inclusion and grow their networks
- ③ Focus on the ABILITIES of people with disabilities, both at Reed Smith and in client teams
- ④ Reed Smith has high profile role models with disabilities who are excellent lawyers and thought leaders, whose commitment and leadership have helped develop and enhance the prospects for people with disabilities
- ⑤ Provide a greater opportunity to develop careers and to grow business and relationships for Reed Smith’s attorneys and professional staff with disabilities and client attorneys and staff with disabilities
- ⑥ Trial Project Ability as a model for the legal and other professions to encourage recruitment of people with disabilities and to attract, develop and retain talent

“We think that key firm clients are as interested in disability diversity, equity and inclusion as we are and would like to work more with attorneys with disabilities”



## Project Ability – Desire Inspire Aspire



# Why is Project Ability needed?

Am I just here to tick a box?

Project Ability aims to move the dial on disability inclusion so that people with disabilities are given equal opportunities to build their careers.

Will I get the opportunity to succeed?

How can I make sure I get the best quality work?

What adjustments will I need to make?

Can/should I hide the fact that I have a disability?

How can I make sure I get the best career opportunities?

Is my disability what defines me at work?

How will colleagues or clients see me?

Will I get support if I need it?

# The best way to continue progress

**There have been great strides in disability diversity, equity and inclusion over the last 10 years**

- ▶ LEADRS and Mental Health Task Force –  
183 member attorneys  
184 professional staff members
- ▶ Take affirmative action and concrete steps to prevent diversity fatigue that may halt progress
- ▶ Collaborate with like-minded clients to demonstrate real measurable business benefits in terms of supporting and championing people with disabilities
- ▶ Demonstrate the benefits of diversity, equity, and inclusion along with equality of opportunity in order to create diversity of thought and culture of growth
- ▶ Goals
  - (i) to create more career opportunities for people with disabilities
  - (ii) to generate tangible business opportunities as a direct result of our work on disability inclusion and demonstrate the benefits of disability inclusion



# Next steps



Hold a round table with you to discuss how our Project Ability teams can help you



Connect with your attorneys and staff with disabilities to start the conversation about disability inclusion

# Project Ability team



**Carolyn Pepper**  
Partner, London



**David Boutcher**  
Partner, London



**Mark Goldstein**  
Partner, New York



**Luke Debevec**  
Partner, Philadelphia



**Vaibhav Adlakha**  
Associate, London



**Katy Basile**  
Partner, Silicon Valley



**Vicki Tankle**  
Associate, Philadelphia



**Joanne Christopher**  
Senior Human Resource  
Manager, Pittsburgh



“Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead



“We hope to provide business opportunities for people with disabilities as we believe this project will show that they are making great contributions to business beyond the disability space.”

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