



# Part 2 : Improving your agency's communication to employees about disability data collection

This document accompanies the [factsheet](#) and [maturity self-assessment](#) for HR professionals.

## How to use this document

Compare these examples alongside explanatory text and email reminders your agency provides to employees when asking about their disability information. **What are you doing well? What can be improved?**

## Why use this document

Agencies often don't thoroughly explain why they are asking employees to share their disability information in HR systems. It is crucial that agencies clearly state:

- What the agency is going to do with their information
- Who can see their information
- Any benefits to the employee if they provide their information
- Any benefits to colleagues or prospective employees

Without providing this detail, employees can be uncomfortable sharing their disability information in HR systems.



Use the **bad examples** to consider what is missing from your communications.

Use the **good examples** to consider how your communication can be improved.



Every agency is different. If you decide to adopt any wording, make sure you adjust it to align with your workforce profile, strategies and culture.

## This document contains examples of explanatory text and email reminders

**Explanatory text** is the information that accompanies requests to employees for information about their disability and other diversity characteristics.

Explanatory text provides clarity to employees about the purpose and value of sharing their information in HR systems.

Explanatory text should always be visible when employees are asked to share their information. If your agency uses paper forms, explanatory text should be located on the same page as the request. If your agency uses a digital system, explanatory text should sit on the same webpage as the request.

**Email reminders** to ask employees to update their information in HR systems must attract employees' attention to 'cut through the noise' of other emails.

Email reminders must contain concise, simple and relevant information about the purpose and value (to the employee, and the agency) of sharing their disability information in HR systems. [BETA's trial](#) showed that emails highlighting the ease of updating information in HR systems was the most effective at encouraging staff to update their details.

## Explanatory text

### What not to do

This example wording is deliberately bad. It touches on important topics that should be in explanatory text, but lacks meaningful detail and explanation.



### Example 1

#### On boarding Form H2. Diversity

Disclosure of diversity data aids the [Agency] to carry out a range of its functions.

From 1 September 2017, the definition of 'disability' used for employment-related purposes (other than discrimination) in the APS is based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. A disability is an impairment, which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months and restricts everyday activities.

Reasonable adjustments are any form of assistance or adjustment that are necessary, possible and reasonable to provide to reduce or eliminate barriers at work. Where reasonable adjustment is required, not disclosing a disability may impact our ability to provide you with the appropriate support.

Data is handled according to Public Service Act 1999 and Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013. Please refer to the privacy policy for information on how to access, complain or request an amendment of your personal information.

#### Protections

Cites the legislation, but does not provide practical and relevant information about who will see information shared, what they will do with the information, or that consent can be withdrawn at any time.

#### Purpose and data use

After reading this form, it is still not clear why the agency is requesting the employees' disability information.

#### Language

This example is impersonal and difficult to understand. Language (like 'disclosure') may be off-putting because of its formality or offensiveness.

#### Purpose and benefit

Ambiguous value with no clear benefit for employees.

#### Clarity

The statement 'employment-related purposes' doesn't provide employees with specific information on how the agency will use the employees' information.

#### Definition

The ABS definition is correct, however it doesn't provide information of what areas of disability may be included.

#### Confusing the message

Placing information about adjustments into the explanatory text could confuse employees who believe they have to share their disability information in the HR system in order to receive necessary workplace adjustments.

This incorrect statement may be alarming to employees who may not want to share their information in the HR system, but do require adjustments.

Make sure the statement is clear that employees **do not need to share** their disability information in the HR system in order to receive workplace adjustments.





## Explanatory text

### Better practice

This example contains information to address questions and concerns about sharing information in agency HR systems.

## Example 2

### Update your details to shape [Agency] inclusion initiatives.

All government agencies collect employee information, including information about disability, for the APS Employment Database (APSED). The Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) and APS agencies use employee information shared in HR systems to help build and support an APS that reflects the community it serves.

### Voluntary and self-reported

Sharing your diversity information in your Agency's HR system is voluntary and self-reported. This means you can choose:

- if you want to share your diversity information
- the timing of when you share your diversity information
- if you want to remove your diversity information at any time
- what diversity information you choose to share.

You are **not** required to provide proof or evidence of disability or other diversity characteristics that you have shared in HR systems.

### How is my information protected?

Diversity information you share in HR systems cannot be seen by your manager or colleagues.

**Your diversity information is private and secure:** it is accessible by a small team in HR and IT, and with the APSC. Your information is:

- combined with other diversity information for a high-level picture of people working in the Agency.
- shared with the APSC to contribute to the APS employment database (APSED).

Your data is protected by the *Privacy Act*. It is unlawful for anyone to use information you supply for anything else, without your consent.

### I think I already answered these questions

You may have already answered diversity questions during recruitment and/or at a previous APS agency. For your privacy, this information is not transferred to our HR system.

### Purpose and context

Concise value proposition as a meaningful page title.

Opening paragraph puts the request in context.

### Choice

This information provides people with different options available to them when deciding to share diversity information.

The information is clear and doesn't pressure employees to share information they don't want to. The text also reassures employees they are not required to provide evidence.

### Protections

Clear and personally relevant information about privacy and confidentiality.

### Data collection in context

Explains to employees that data they may have previously shared to another agency or process are not linked or related.





### Example 2 (continued)

#### Why should I share my information?

Keeping your information up-to-date is an easy way to support inclusion at the [Agency]. Understanding who makes up our workforce helps us to:

- design programs and policies to support new and current employees with diverse needs.
- [Agency uses this information to provide you with workplace adjustments]
- [Agency uses this information to inform property and/or IT solutions].

#### Can I change my response?

Yes, you can change your response/s at any time in our HR system or by emailing the People Team at [people@agency.gov.au].

#### Who can I talk to about this?

If you have any questions about data collection, please contact the People Team on [02 5555 5555] or [people@agency.gov.au].

#### Benefits

A simple explanation of the impact of sharing information.

To improve this, include specific examples from your agency.

Investigate whether your agency uses employee diversity data for other purposes. Include examples.

#### Consent is a conversation

This lets employees know that they can update their information, and how they can do it.

Provides a contact for employees to ask questions.

### [In a pop up]

The definition of disability that the APS uses for employment-related purposes is that you are considered to have a disability if you have a limitation, restriction or impairment, which has lasted (or is likely to last) for at least six months and restricts everyday activities.

This includes:

- sensory
- intellectual
- physical
- psychosocial
- head injury, stroke or acquired brain injury; or
- other disability you are receiving treatment or medication for or any other long-term conditions resulting in a restriction in everyday activities.

Disability can be permanent or temporary, visible or invisible. Some conditions are present at birth, while others develop over time or are acquired from accidents, illness or injury, and can include chronic health conditions. Some people require ongoing support, whereas others can experience fluctuating or episodic need for support.

If you are unsure, you can read more about [the ABS definition](#).

#### Definition

This definition is inclusive and mentions a range of experiences.



## Email reminders

### What not to do

This example is deliberately bad. The information is generic and does not answer the key concerns employees have about sharing their disability information in HR systems.



### Example 3

#### Update your personal details in [Agency HR Information System] now

##### All staff

We are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive work environment that reflects the community we serve. The diversity of our staff is one of our greatest assets – it helps us to be more innovative and productive, to deliver better outcomes for our clients. Employees' diversity information is necessary to understand the needs of our workforce.

Review your [Agency HR Information System] equity and diversity details to ensure they remain current and correct. Accurate data will help influence our workplace and drive improvements to the staff experience. We are asking all staff to review their [Agency HR Information System] Inclusion and Diversity details, even if you don't identify with any of the diversity characteristics listed.

##### Updating your details

Check your [Agency HR Information System] profile Equity and Diversity details are current and correct, and update if needed. For further information, access instructions on [Intranet Help Page].

#### Agency vs individual benefit

The benefits listed are mostly for the agency. It is unclear from this email how the data will 'drive improvements to an employee's experience'.

This example has block paragraphs and few headings, therefore it is not as engaging as the other example shared. This email may be easily dismissed.



It is common for agencies to send email reminders to employees asking them to update their details in HR systems. Make sure your email reminder provides employees with **enough information to address common questions and concerns** about sharing disability information in HR systems.



## Email reminders

### Better example

This email emphasises the ease of updating personal information. It also answers key concerns about sharing information in agency HR systems.



### Example 4

#### Take 2 minutes to update your details in [Agency HR System]

##### All staff

Review your Equity and Diversity details in [Agency HR Information System]. Keeping your profile up to date is an easy way to support inclusion at [Agency].

#### Updating your details will only take 2 minutes

1. Go to your [Agency HR Information System] profile. [Hyperlinked to page]
2. Update your diversity information as needed.

Keeping your information correct and up to date helps us understand our diverse workforce, and inform how we support your workplace needs.

#### If you need more information, here's a quick FAQ

##### I think I already supplied my personal details

You can check to see if your details are up to date on [Agency HR Information System]. You may have supplied personal details if you were employed by another APS agency, at the beginning of your recruitment process, and/or in the APS Employee Census, however, this information is not automatically transferred to [Agency HR Information System].

##### Does this apply to me?

We are asking all staff to review their [Agency HR Information System] Inclusion and Diversity details, even if you don't identify with any of the diversity characteristics listed. By participating, you help us have a complete dataset and better understand the make-up of our entire workforce, which helps inform our efforts to support you and current and future [Agency] employees.

##### Who sees my personal details?

Your Equity and Diversity information cannot be seen by your manager or colleagues. The data is private and secure; it is accessible by a small team in HR and IT and used to create an aggregated data set to get a high-level picture of who works at the [Agency]. This information is also shared with the Australian Public Service Commission to contribute to the APS employment database (APSED).

##### Can I change my responses?

Yes! Update your details at any time on [Agency HR Information System].

If you need help, access instructions on [Intranet Help Page] or contact the People Team on [02 5555 5555] or [people@agency.gov.au].

#### Tone

Action orientated and emphasises ease. BETA's trial found that emails highlighting the ease of updating information in HR systems was most effective at encouraging staff to update their details.

#### Purpose

Simple and direct explanation of data use.

#### Data collection in context

Explains to employees that data they may have previously shared to another agency or process are not linked or related.

#### Protections

Clear and personally relevant information about privacy and confidentiality.

#### Consent is a conversation

This lets employees know that they can update their information, and how they can do it.

Provides a contact for employees to ask questions.