Programming for All Abilities

It's easier than you think.

Amy K. Smith, Red Hook Public Library

Words Matter

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

1: a physical, mental, cognitive, or developmental condition that impairs, interferes with, or limits a person's ability to engage in certain tasks or actions or participate in typical daily activities and interactions.

2a (1) **:** an impairment (such as a chronic medical condition or injury) that prevents someone from engaging in gainful employment. (2) **:** an impairment that results in serious functional limitations for a minor

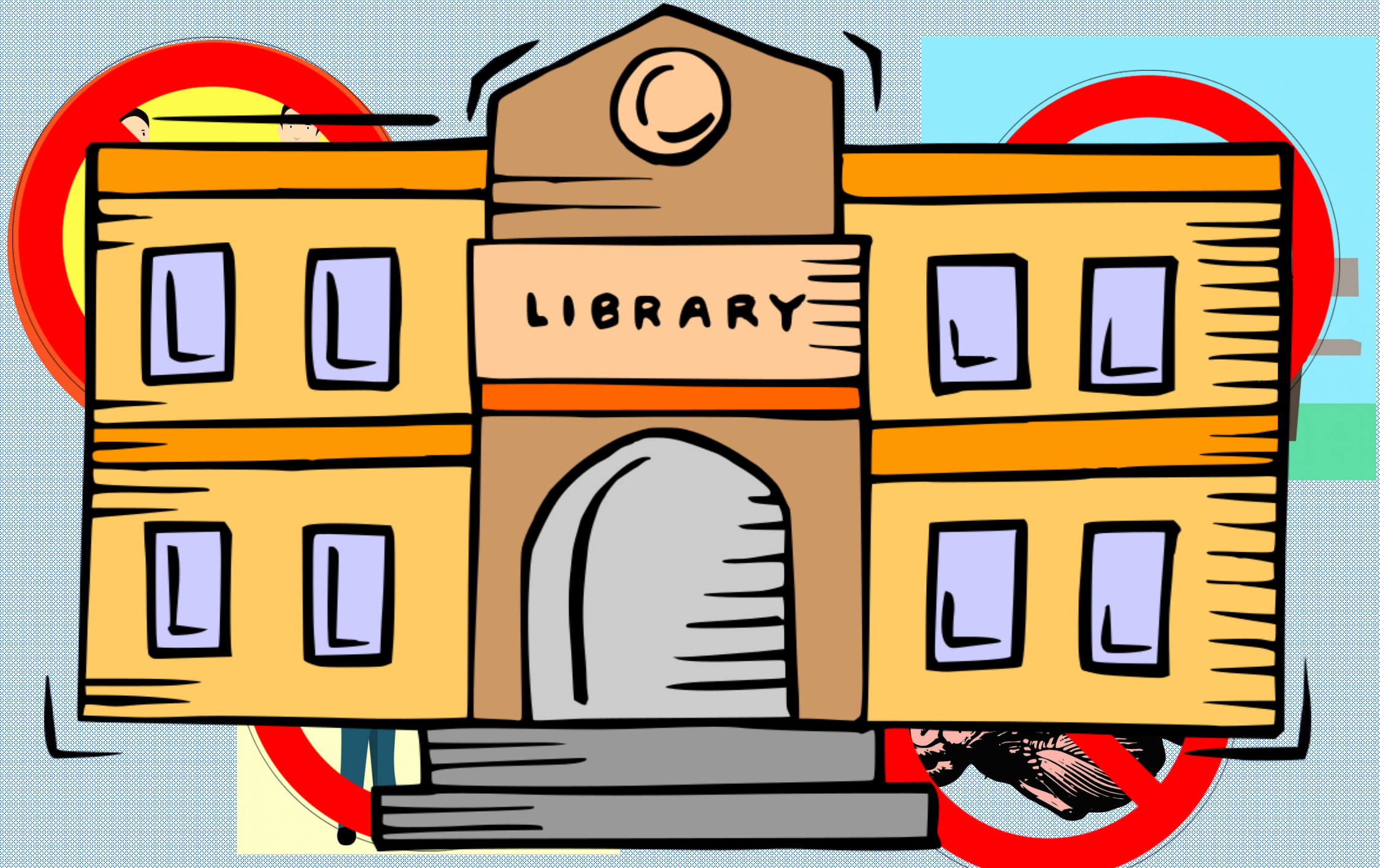
2b : a program providing financial support to a person affected by disability.

3: a disqualification, restriction, or disadvantage

4: lack of legal qualification to do something

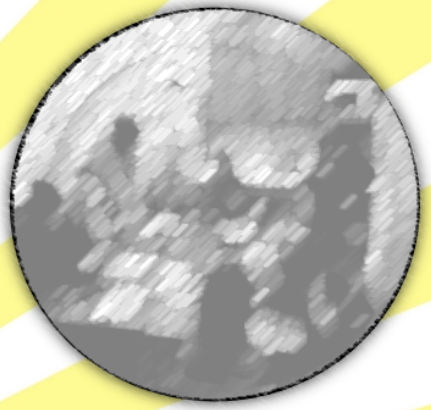
Americans with Disabilities Act

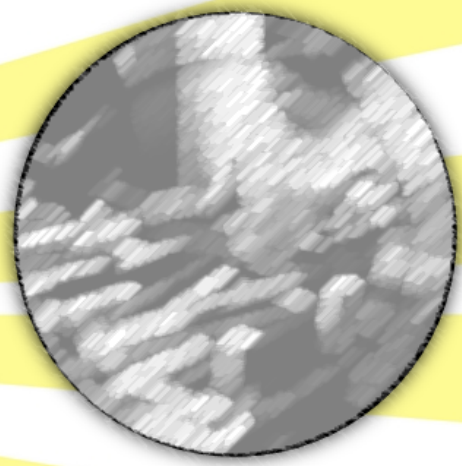
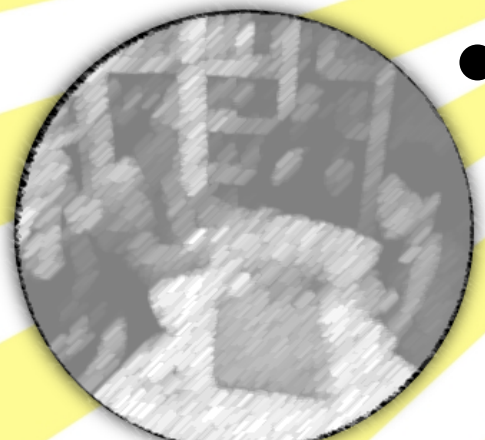
The ADA defines a person with a disability as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity. This includes people who have a record of such an impairment, even if they do not currently have a disability. It also includes individuals who do not have a disability but are regarded as having a disability. The ADA also makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person based on that person’s association with a person with a disability.

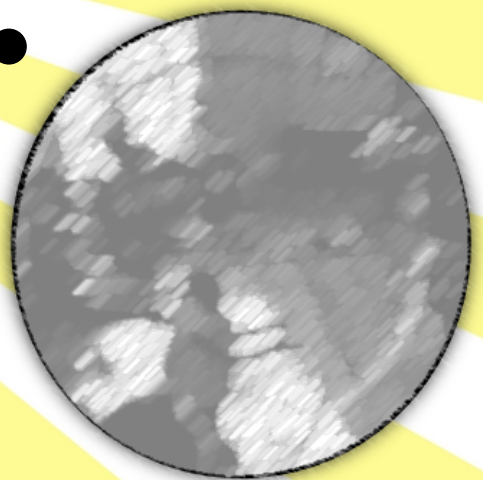

LIBRARY

People First	Person with a disability
Identity First	Disabled person

Who?
What?
When?
Where?





Why?

Libraries are for everyone.

Largely under-served

Foster community

Social opportunities

Life experiences

Adults

Who is already in your library?

How are they using the library?

How do they *want* to be using the library?

Adults

Special interests.

Holidays & celebrations.

Toys & tools
you already have.

Adults

Science & technology

- Music with Makey-Makey & Garage Band
- Water Rockets
- Baking soda & vinegar volcanos
- Slime!

Teens

Write list of tasks with variety of skills required.

Review list with teacher(s) and aide(s) prior to first visit.

Break down tasks into steps.

Instructions in multiple modalities.

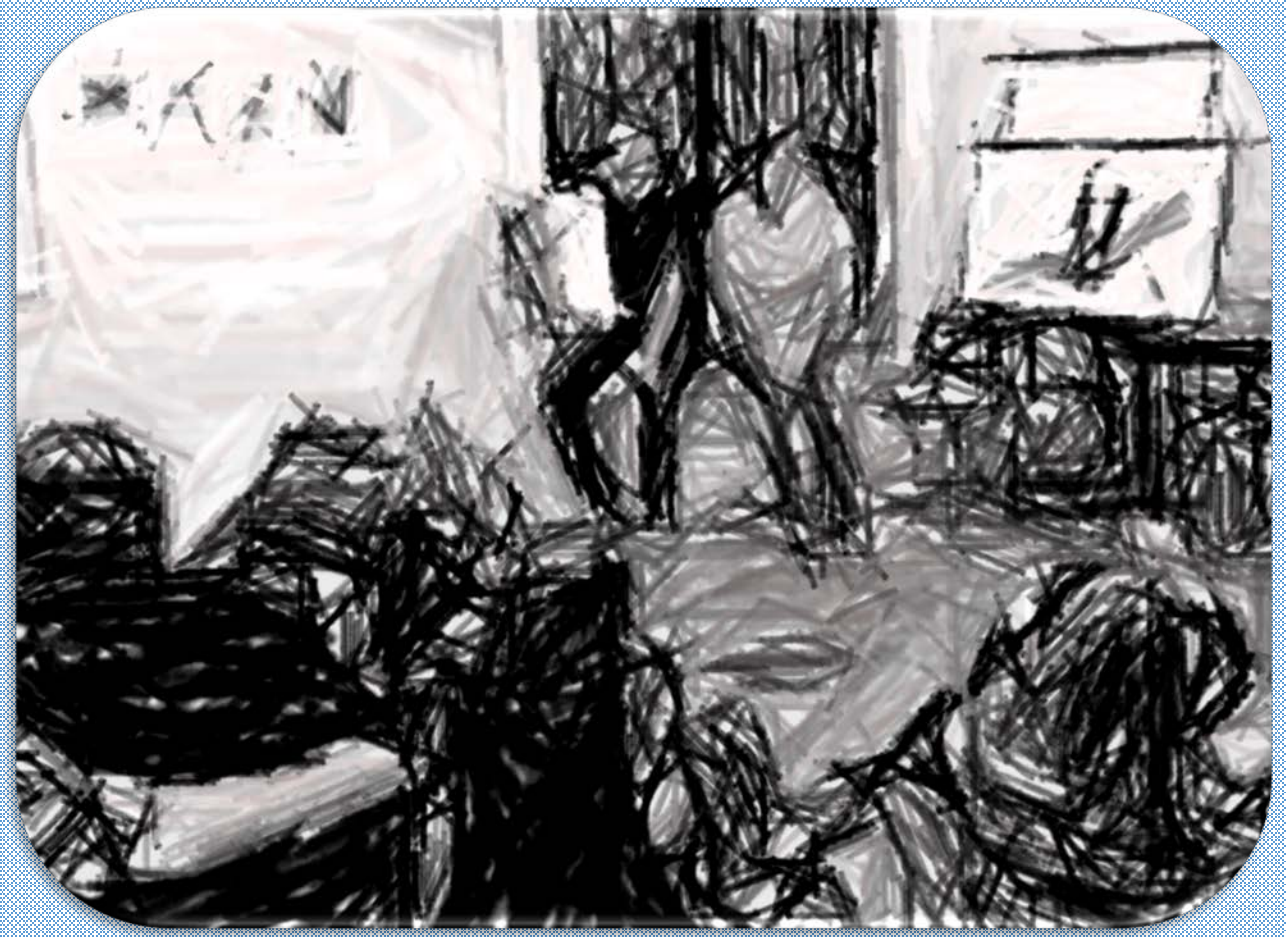
Example tasks:

- **Toy sorting and cleaning: puzzles, Legos**
- **Craft supplies checking: pencil sharpening, paper cutting, marker checks**
- **Program/ Event prep**
- **Shelf-reading**

Kids

Storytime

- Space: reduce distraction, seating options
- Structure: visual schedule, weekly consistency, marked transitions
- Song or Fingerplay: ASL, repetition
- Story: multiple modalities
- Craft: project structure, instructions, supplies (why double-sided tape is your friend.)



Kids

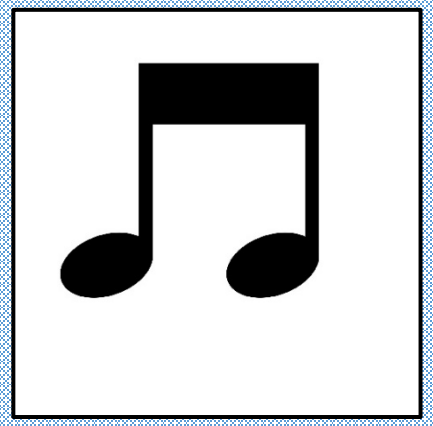
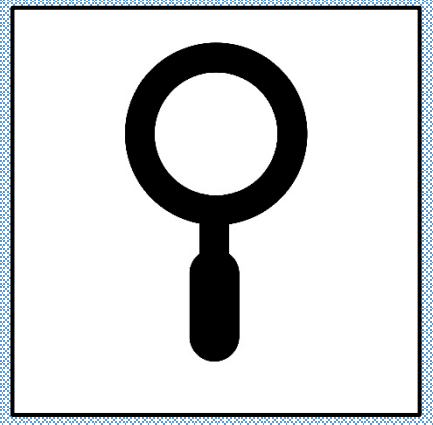
Science

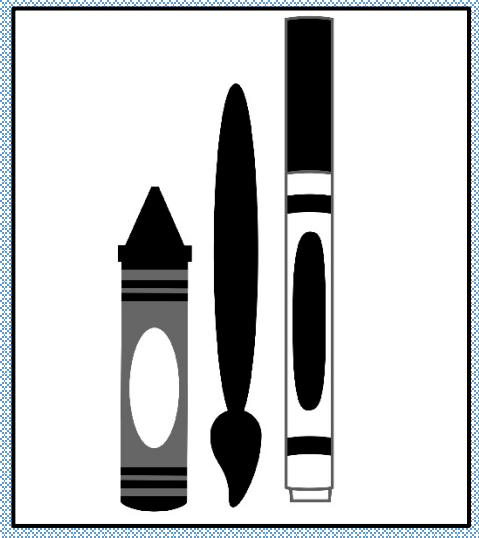
Make hypothesis physical (less conceptual)

Multiple methods of instruction

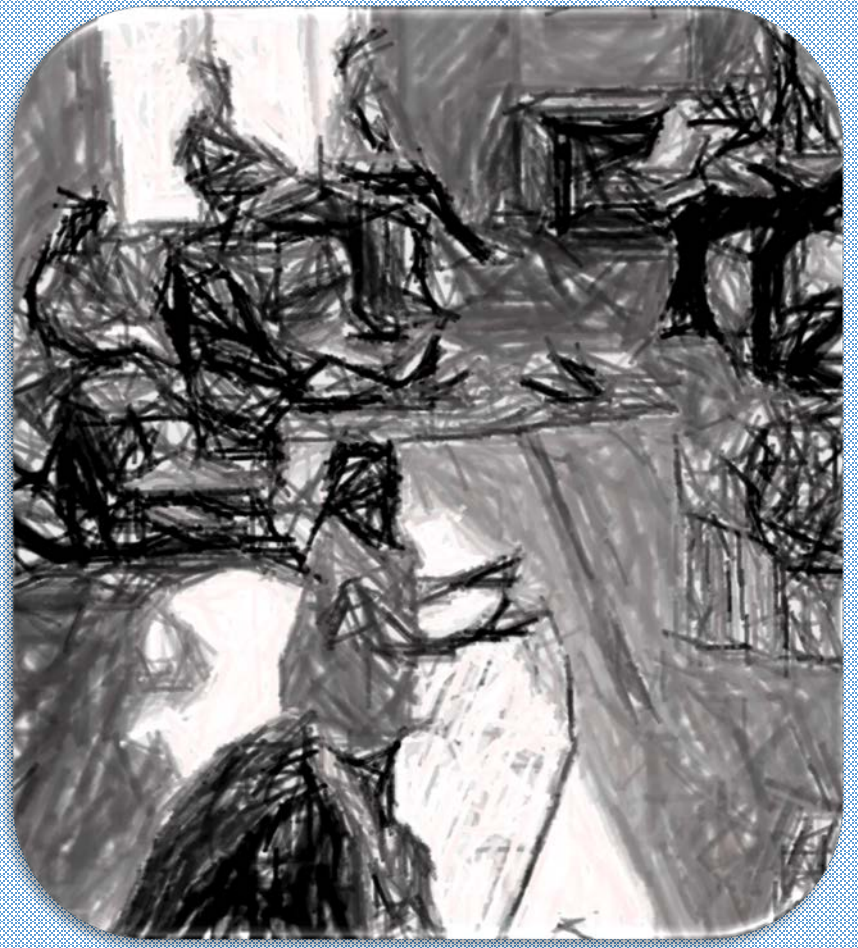
Craft with function

Space, Structure, Song & Craft Supplies concerns similar to Storytime



Kids



Music & Movement

<u>Special considerations</u>: spaces in your space, themes, acoustics, types of music, regular staff vs invited guests

<u>Movement without Music</u>: balance of adaptable & inclusive

<u>Rhythm/ Movement Transitions</u>: “boom chicka boom”

<u>Music “without” Movement</u>: percussion

<u>Music & Movement</u>: group dance of individual motions

Kids

Special Events & SRP

<u>Open early</u>: provide families with members who have disabilities the option to arrive ahead of the start time. Have no music, or very low-volume music. No food. Just the activities.

<u>Set aside a quiet space</u>: Ideally within the event space you create a quiet area. Floor seating (rugs or storytime cushions), fidget box, chair for caregiver, and if at all possible, have it give a view of the larger event.

<u>Photos:</u> Talk to parents and caregivers ahead of time when possible to find out their feelings on photos. Don't assume it's ok.

Possible Sources for Money to Support All Abilities Programs

Government Grants: county and state

- Dutchess County's "Think Differently" program

Library Systems

- Mid-Hudson Library System's "Outreach Grants"

Private Foundations

- Grant Station or other database
- Select for foundations with interest in underserved populations generally as well as ones with funding interests in programs for people with disabilities.
- Look for local wherever possible.

Start Small

- First time looking for money for All Abilities programs, start small. Subsequent grants have greater chances of success when you can prove need and your ability to implement All Abilities Programs.

Find the Best Writer

- Look at full staff, Board Members, Volunteers… Find the best writer you know to help you craft a strong narrative that makes the case for how what you want to do is in line with what the foundation/ system/ government agency sees as its mission.