

DESIGN THINKING FOR NEUROINCLUSION: A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, SUPPORT, AND GROWTH

Leveraging creativity, resilience, and problem-solving for institutional success

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WHY NEUROINCLUSION MATTERS IN DESIGN THINKING

- **Recognize cognitive diversity as a driver of innovation**
- **Apply design thinking to recruitment, support, and growth**
- **Build a workplace culture that values all ways of thinking**

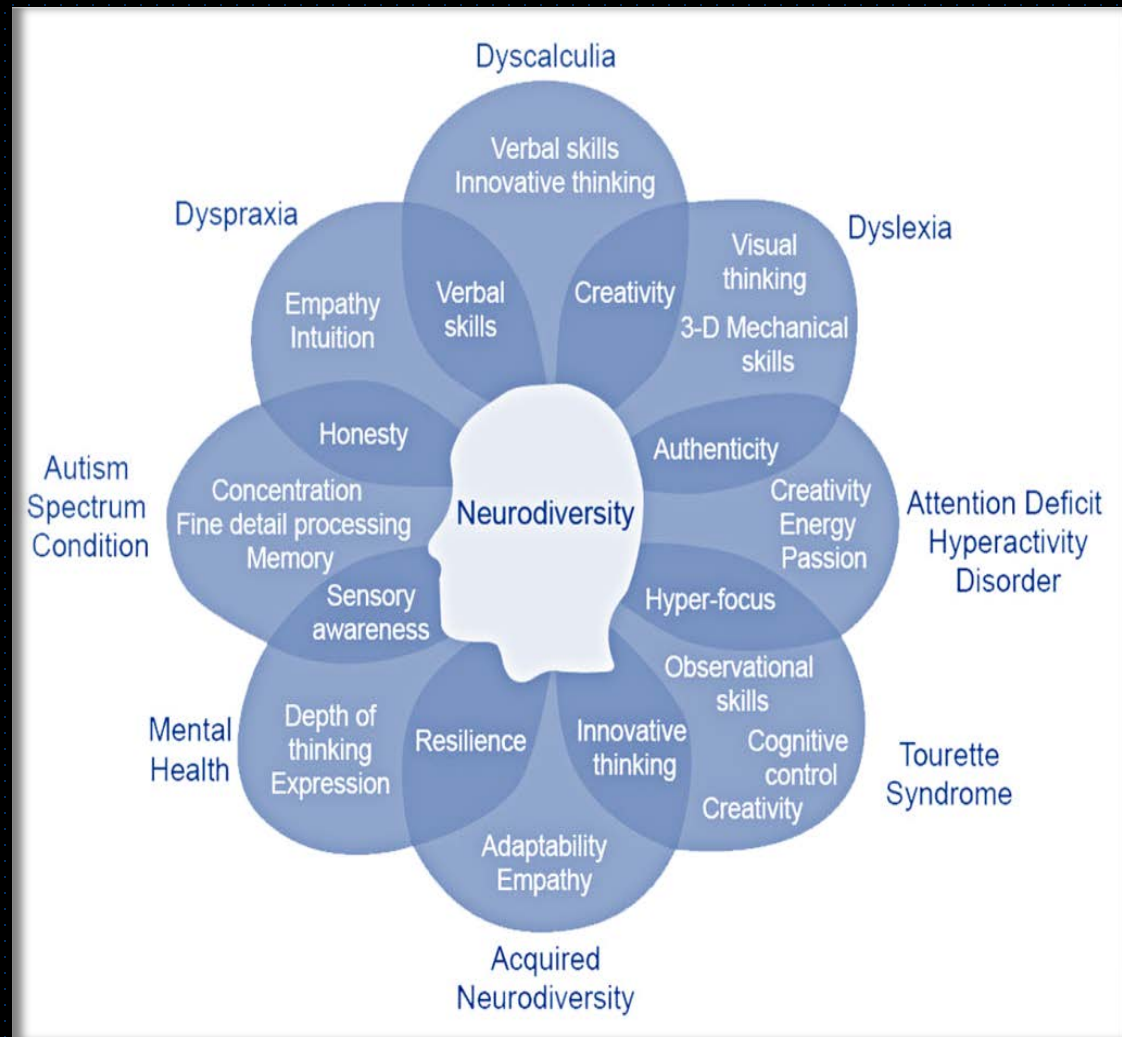


CURRENT STATE IN AMERICA

- **Neurodivergent professionals remain underrepresented in LIS roles despite strong skill alignment.**

- **Many institutions lack structured recruitment, onboarding, and retention strategies for neurodivergent staff.**

- **Inclusive policies exist in pockets, but adoption is inconsistent and often dependent on individual managers.**



CURRENT STATE OF ORGANIZATION

- ▶ University of Chicago Library: World-class research library system serving students, faculty, and public researchers.
- ▶ Neurodivergent Staff Representation: Growing awareness, but recruitment and retention strategies remain informal.
- ▶ Support Structures: Existing accommodations process, but limited proactive programs for neurodivergent staff development.
- ▶ Opportunities:
 - ▶ Enhance inclusivity through structured leadership initiatives.
 - ▶ Strengthen staff training for neurodivergence awareness.
 - ▶ Position the library as a leader in academic workplace inclusion.



A close-up, shallow depth-of-field photograph of a person's hands assembling a puzzle on a wooden table. The hands are positioned in the upper left, with fingers carefully placing a blue puzzle piece into a larger section of the puzzle. The puzzle itself is composed of many blue and white pieces, some of which are already assembled into a larger shape, while others are scattered on the table. The background is blurred, showing more of the puzzle and the person's arms. The lighting is warm and natural, highlighting the texture of the wood and the colors of the puzzle pieces.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Our initiative recognizes that neurodivergent perspectives are not just valuable—they are essential to innovation. By embedding neuroinclusion into the design thinking process, we aim to create solutions that are more empathetic, equitable, and effective. At UChicago, this means going beyond compliance to build a culture that actively recruits, supports, and develops neurodivergent talent, setting a standard for higher education and beyond.

Our mission is to create an inclusive environment where neurodivergent individuals can thrive as innovators, collaborators, and leaders—leveraging the Design Thinking process to unlock unique perspectives that drive transformative solutions.

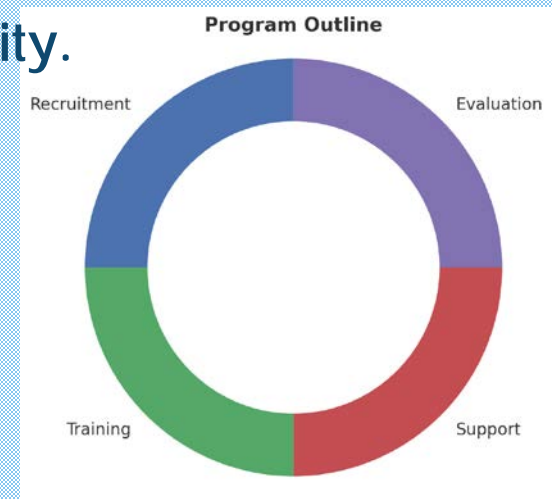
- ▶ Integrate neurodiverse voices at every stage of the design process
- ▶ Foster workplace cultures rooted in empathy, adaptability, and creativity
- ▶ Deliver impactful solutions that reflect the full spectrum of human thinking

MISSION: EMPOWERING
NEURODIVERSE TALENT
THROUGH DESIGN
THINKING



- ▶ Our neuroinclusion initiative integrates into all phases of design thinking to recruit, support, and develop neurodivergent talent.
- ▶ Empathize: Understand diverse cognitive perspectives through interviews and surveys.
- ▶ Define: Identify barriers in current systems and policies.
- ▶ Ideate: Co-create solutions with neurodivergent staff.
- ▶ Prototype: Test inclusive tools, workflows, and training.
- ▶ Test: Evaluate results and refine for scalability.

PROGRAM OUTLINE



- ▶ We apply design thinking to embed neuroinclusion into organizational culture:
- ▶ Human-Centered Focus: Center the lived experiences of neurodivergent individuals.
- ▶ Iterative Process: Continuous feedback loops to refine solutions.
- ▶ Collaborative Innovation: Engage cross-functional teams for diverse input.
- ▶ Scalable Solutions: Develop adaptable practices for different departments.

DESIGN THINKING APPROACH



MARKETING PLAN

- ▶ 🎯 Audience: Target faculty, staff, and students invested in inclusive innovation.
- ▶ 🔊 Channels: UChicago intranet, library newsletters, campus events, social media.
- ▶ 💡 Messaging: Showcase success stories of neurodivergent contributions in design projects.
- ▶ 🔗 Engagement: Host interactive workshops and Q&A sessions.
- ▶ 📊 Measurement: Track event attendance, feedback surveys, and engagement metrics.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

BUILDING A DIVERSE TALENT PIPELINE

- Partner with neurodivergent advocacy groups, universities, and job boards.
- Use inclusive language in job descriptions and outreach.
- Offer alternative interview formats (skills-based, project-based).
- Showcase organizational commitment to neuroinclusion in all recruitment materials.



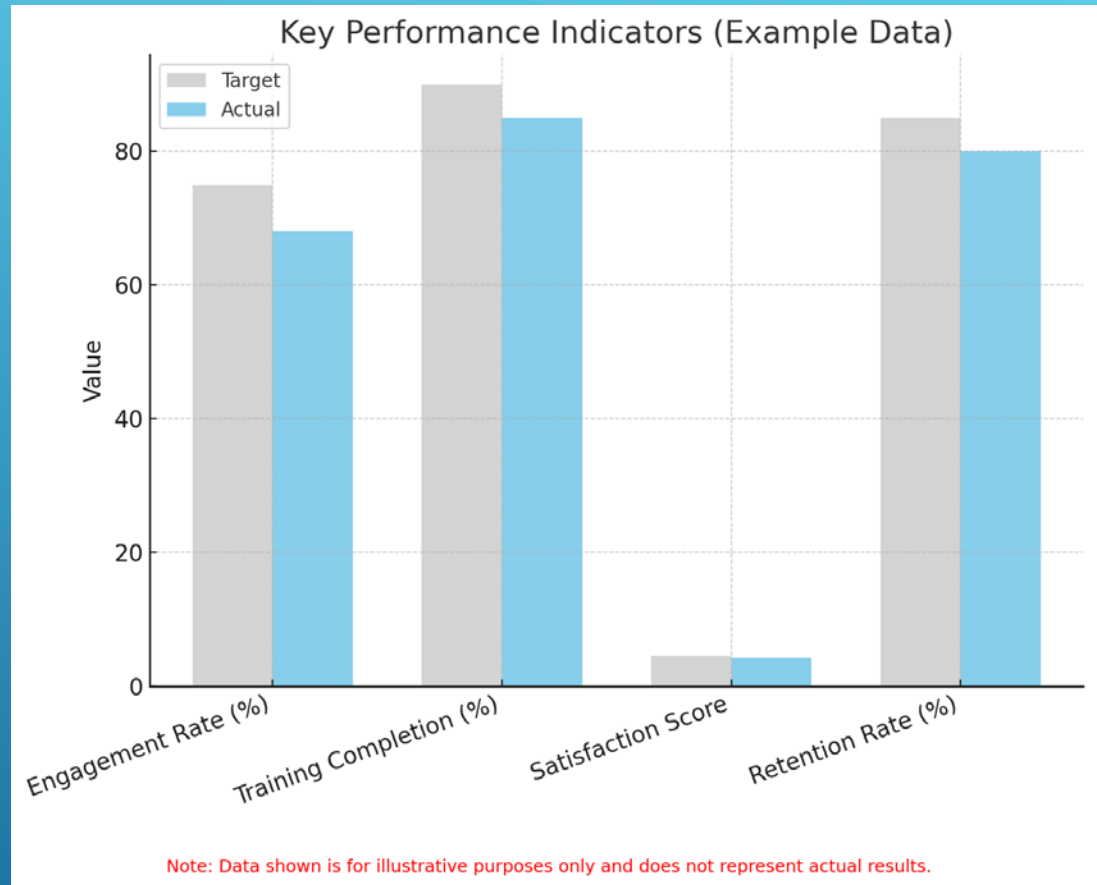
- ▶ Establish mentorship programs pairing neurodivergent staff with trained allies.
- ▶ Offer ongoing professional development on inclusive communication and workflow flexibility.
- ▶ Provide accessible tools, quiet workspaces, and adjustable schedules to support individual needs.
- ▶ Create feedback channels where neurodivergent employees can safely share ideas and challenges.
- ▶ Involve neurodivergent staff in program evaluation to ensure support remains relevant and effective.



SUPPORT INITIATIVES

MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

- ▶ **KPIs:** Staff retention, engagement scores, and project success rates.
- ▶ **Surveys:** Quarterly anonymous feedback from neurodivergent and neurotypical staff.
- ▶ **Observation:** Track collaboration quality and meeting participation.
- ▶ **Review Cycle:** Annual assessment of initiatives with adjustments based on data.



BUDGET OVERVIEW

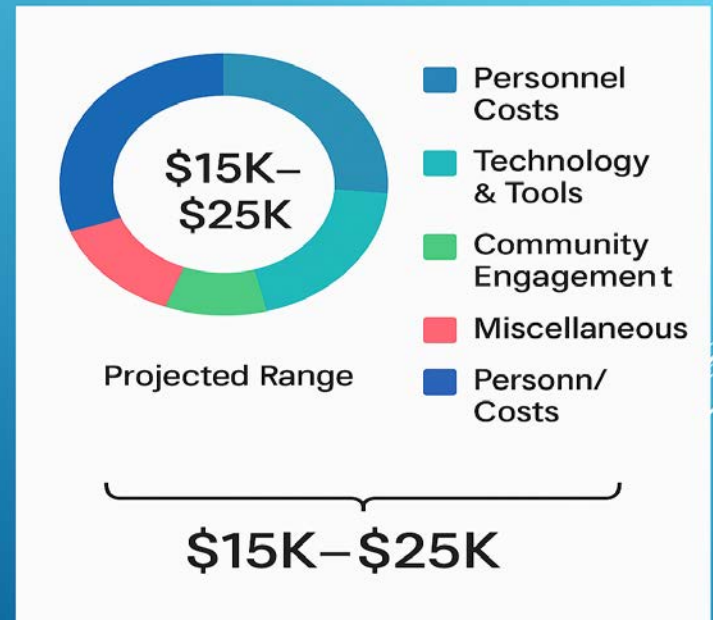
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Note: Numbers are illustrative, not actual data.

- ▶ Staff Time & Effort – \$8,000 (planning, coordination, execution)
- ▶ Technology & Tools – \$5,000 (software licenses, devices, subscriptions)
- ▶ Marketing & Outreach – \$4,500 (design, printing digital ads)
- ▶ Events & Engagement – \$3,000 (workshops, community forums)
- ▶ Contingency – \$1,500 (unplanned expenses)
- ▶ Total Estimated Budget: \$22,000 (example)

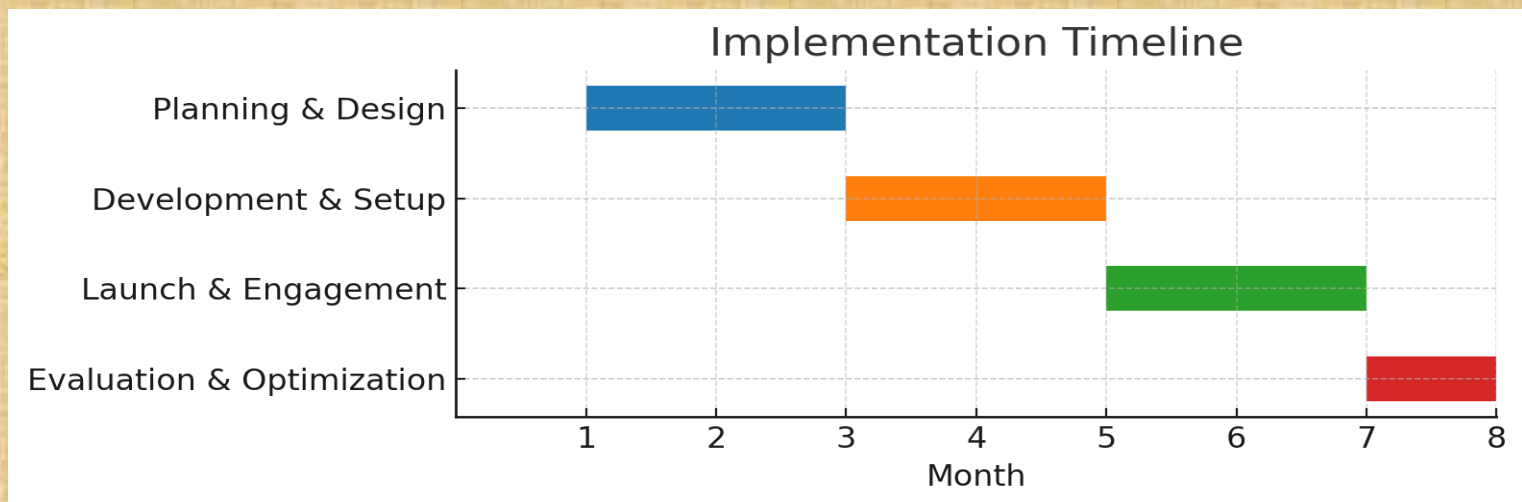
BUDGET OVERVIEW

(Example Figures Only)




IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

- ▶ A phased rollout ensures efficient resource use and measurable progress.
- ▶ Phase 1 – Planning & Design (Month 1-2): Finalize objectives, assemble team, and refine strategy.
- ▶ Phase 2 – Development & Setup (Month 3-4): Secure tools, create marketing materials, schedule events.
- ▶ Phase 3 – Launch & Engagement (Month 5-6): Execute outreach, host events, track participation.
- ▶ Phase 4 – Evaluation & Optimization (Month 7): Assess KPIs, gather feedback, adjust approach.



RISKS & MITIGATION

- ▶ User Adoption Risk – Low engagement if outreach is insufficient.
 - ▶ Resource Constraints – Limited staff time or funding delays.
 - ▶ Technical Issues – Setup errors or integration problems during launch.
 - ▶ Mitigation Strategies – Early training, phased rollout, backup systems, and regular feedback loops.
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SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Strong institutional support
- Engaged and knowledgeable team

WEAKNESSES

- Limited dedicated budget
- Reliance on a small core staff

OPPORTUNITIES

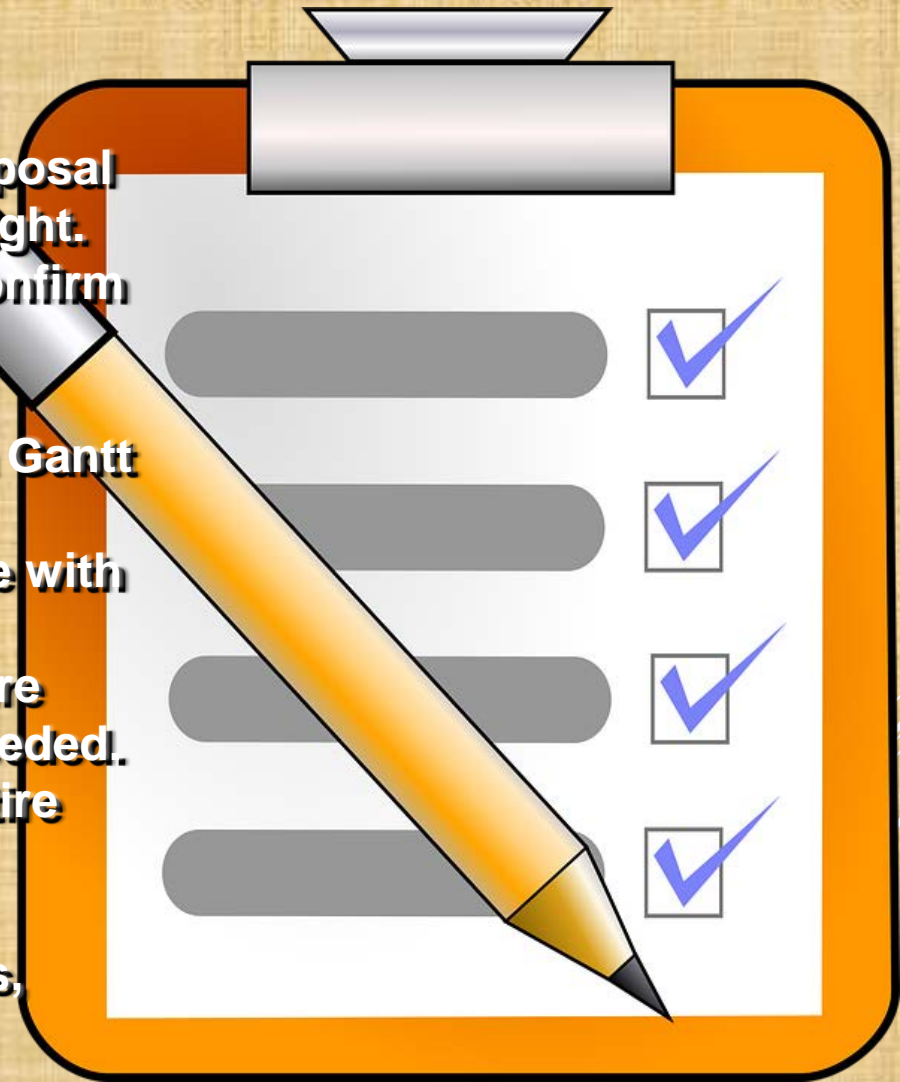
- Expand outreach to new audiences
- Leverage partnerships for resources

THREATS

- Competing initiatives for funding
- Risk of declining community engagement


NEXT STEPS

- 1. Finalize Plan Approval – Present proposal to leadership for feedback and green light.**
- 2. Assemble Implementation Team – Confirm roles, responsibilities, and resource allocation.**
- 3. Develop Detailed Timeline – Create a Gantt chart with milestones for rollout.**
- 4. Launch Pilot Program – Test initiative with a small user group to refine approach.**
- 5. Collect & Analyze Feedback – Measure success against KPIs and adjust as needed.**
- 6. Full Rollout – Expand program to entire target audience with supporting communications.**
- 7. Ongoing Evaluation – Monitor results, report to stakeholders, and adapt for sustainability.**



CLOSING STATEMENT

This initiative combines proven design thinking strategies with practical, community-centered action. By engaging stakeholders early, leveraging cross-departmental expertise, and aligning our outreach with institutional goals, we position ourselves to drive measurable impact—both for our users and for the organization. The outlined plan offers a scalable model that not only addresses current needs but also builds resilience and advocacy for the future. Now is the moment to invest in this vision and bring it to life.

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REFERENCES

- Anderson, C. (2020) — *Library Marketing and Communications: Strategies for Success*
 - Brown & Duguid (2000) — *The Social Life of Information*
 - Jitasa — *Budgeting for Nonprofits: Best Practices*
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