

AI empowering people with disabilities

More than one billion people around the world live with a disability, that often results in their exclusion from the workforce. Their unemployment rates range between 50-70% in developed countries, and 80-90% in developing ones. In the US, the [employment rate of graduates of four-year colleges](#) is 89.9%, while only 50.6% of graduates with disabilities find employment. Even when they find a job, people with disabilities [generally earn less](#).

Microsoft's *AI for Accessibility* initiative is a US\$ 25 million grant program that harnesses the new possibilities offered by AI to empower people with disabilities, enable their independence and productivity and amplify their capabilities.

The program focuses on three areas:

- **Employment:** Assisting people to develop professional skills and influence workplace culture and inclusive hiring;
- **Daily life:** AI is capable of hearing, seeing, understanding and reasoning with increasing accuracy. By making software and devices smarter, and keeping them affordable, people gain independence to perform daily tasks and personalize tools for their unique needs;

- **Communication and connection:** Equal access to information and opportunity requires communication. Technology can create possibilities for all people, regardless of how they listen, speak, or write.

Real-time speech-to-text transcription, computer vision capabilities, and predictive text functionality are just a few of the other examples of how AI is useful to people with disabilities.

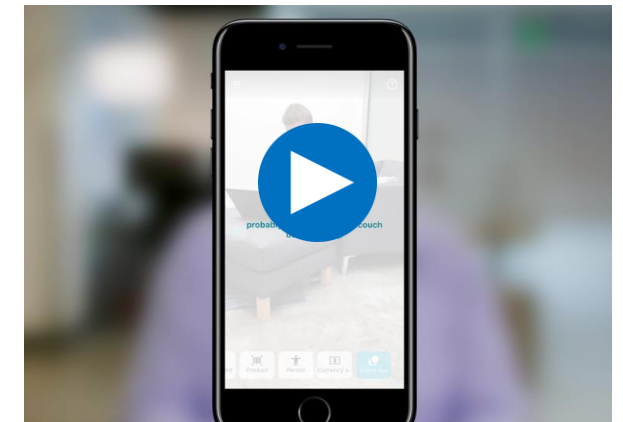
The benefits of empowering people with disabilities through employment go well beyond offering them opportunities for social participation and to live dignified and productive lives. Businesses report people with disabilities as exhibiting exceptional perseverance and problem-solving skills, and have observed improvements in team spirit and morale. In the workplace, people with disabilities are reported to be highly motivated and loyal, translating into extremely low turnover rates.

On a societal level, employment of people with disabilities is associated with more inclusive societies and can contribute to reduced financial pressure on social security systems.

“Our goal is to empower others in new and more impactful ways to help create a more sustainable future.”

— **Brad Smith,**

Microsoft President and Chief Legal Officer



Seeing AI is a free app designed for the low vision community. It uses AI to recognize and describe people, text, and objects.

(click image to watch video)