

AN INTRODUCTION TO

ORGANISING INCLUSIVE EVENTS

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Welcome

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1. INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are meant to be used to help individuals and organisations host events that include a broad range of perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds. Inclusive events should cultivate a sense of belonging in their participants, as well as create a safe space for individuals to feel comfortable expressing themselves, sharing their ideas, and collaborating with others.

These guidelines are an introduction to the subject and are not to be intended as an exhaustive compilation of all possible provisions and concerns related to inclusiveness. The reader is invited to adapt the suggestions provided here to their own context, objectives, and resources.

As a general recommendation to introduce these guidelines, it is advised to gather a diverse team to include different perspectives and possibly avoid unconscious biases in the planning and organisation of events. Each member will enrich the process by sharing their peculiar needs and viewpoint, which will enable the event to include provisions and considerations so that no one is left behind. However, bear in mind that no one community is homogeneous, and that each individual contributes with their own experience, awareness and knowledge, and not on behalf of a group. A diverse team is a great starting point to organising an inclusive event and should be considered a good practice.

2. THE GUIDELINES

Here is a collection of suggestions for integrating an inclusive perspective when planning and hosting your events. The content of these guidelines is organised by general topic or area of interest where actions to ensure inclusiveness can be implemented.

2.1 Location

- Leave enough room to allow wheelchair users to navigate, use ramps, move between seats, ramps, and/or elevators in areas with steps.
- There should be accessible doorways, so that there is enough room for wheelchairs and other mobility aids, and there should be no obstacles in the way.
- Chairs should be easily movable to meet different needs.
- Wheelchair users should have designated spaces in the audience.
- Whether or not they use a wheelchair, speaker chairs ought to be the same height.
- The room's physical arrangement should allow attendees to see and hear presenters.
- Gender-neutral and accessible restrooms should be available and marked.
- There should be designated spaces for quiet and noise-free activities, prayer, or childcare.
- The venue should include braille signs, verbal descriptions of visual aids, and high contrast colours for text displays.
- The venue could have a hearing loop, a unique sound system designed specifically for use by people who wear hearing aids.

- Provide directions and maps of the venue that clearly indicate key elements like entries, restrooms, quiet areas, and other facilities and amenities.
- Communications about the event and the website could both provide a map of the event location.
- The venue should be easy for everyone to get to. For instance, the location is near public transportation, does not require an expensive taxi ride and has parking spaces with designated drop-off spots.
- Ensure that all staff at the event have received the necessary training to assist guests with accessibility needs.
- Minimize loud noise and strong fluorescent lighting.
- If the event has bright strobe or flashing lights, be aware that guests may need to be informed in advance since this may cause seizures and other issues.
- The event should be recorded and made available for streaming and/or download.
- Provide some type of e-attendance (for instance, Zoom or Webex).
- The imagery in the room should not make people feel excluded.
- Consider if the venue holds historical or religious significance for any particular group of people.
- Venues such as bars, licensed buildings, or clubs may not be suitable for people whose beliefs forbid alcohol consumption or make them uncomfortable in such places.
- Consider making some adjustments to the cost of the tickets, if applicable.

2.2 Time

- The time of your event should accommodate those who are caregivers, work part-time, or remotely.

- Ensure that the event time does not prevent attendees from taking public transportation.
- Consider whether there will be enough public transportation available at your chosen time (especially for evening events).
- If you organize regular events, consider varying the day or time of the gatherings so that (ideally) all people will be able to attend at some point.
- If applicable, consider the various time zones of the attendees and make sure the agenda includes a mix of live and pre-recorded content.
- If possible, choose a date that doesn't conflict with any of the following, as this will prevent certain groups of people from attending:
 - significant religious or cultural holidays, festivals, or other celebrations;
 - summer (or other conventional type of) break.

2.3 Catering

- Consider asking your guests' dietary needs, such as vegetarian, vegan, Halal, Kosher, or nut/shellfish/gluten/dairy allergies in the registration form of your event and ensure that accommodations are made.
- Ensure that all food is labeled and allergy charts are available so that guests can make conscious food choices.
- If you serve alcohol at the event, remember to offer a variety of non-alcoholic beverages as well.
- Consider any cultural or religious norms that would make it inappropriate for people to attend events entailing meal consumption. For instance, some people might not be able to attend lunch meetings during Ramadan if food is served.

2.4 Content and line-up

- Ensure that event registration is not uniquely online, and include contact information (phone number and email address) to be contacted to sign up to your event.
- Ensure assistive technology, such as sign language interpretation or closed captioning.
- If your event is streamed online, inform participants on how to activate closed captioning.
- If your event includes videos, consider adding captions when uploading them online.
- Rather than solely relying on your event speakers, make time for Q&A sessions to involve your attendees in the discussion.
- The mediator/chair/facilitator should be someone who understands diversity and inclusiveness, which could enable them to create a welcoming and safe space for all.
- Consider adding content, trigger warnings, or referral information for those in need of additional support, in case your event tackles sensitive issues.
- In order to be inclusive in your language, avoid gendered terms (for instance, titles such as Mr and Mrs or “ladies and gentlemen”) and words that may offend certain groups.
- If your event has a dress code, make sure it is inclusive. For instance, instead of employing the phrasing “black tie”, request your guests to use “formal wear” or “business attire”.
- If there will be performances or entertainment at your event, make sure the performers are varied and come from a range of backgrounds and styles.

- Ensure a clear and predictable programme. This can help your attendees on the autism spectrum or with other neurodiverse conditions better prepare for the event and feel comfortable participating.

If PowerPoint slides, handouts, flyers or other type of visual materials are being used, make sure they include the following considerations:

- When using images, ensure diversity of images of people and places in order to combat stereotyping.
- If they contain text, it must be easy to read and understand (see recommendations in section 2.5 *Communications*).

If your event involves guest speakers (or artists, if entertainment is planned):

- Ensure that the chair/facilitator is aware of how to pronounce the names of the speakers (or artists) correctly.
- Ensure that the line-up of speakers (and artists) reflects the diverse audience you hope to include. Selecting a line-up that encompasses a varied range of perspectives, identities, and backgrounds will provide a more comprehensive discourse around the topics of discussion.

Your efforts ought to promote diversity with earnestness. Therefore, you should avoid "tokenizing" speakers – that is, speakers from underrepresented groups should not just serve in limited capacity during the event, like only introducing other speakers.

2.5 Communications

- Providing pre-event information about provisions in place allows attendees to better plan their participation.
- Provide instructions for attendees to get in touch with you so that they can easily request any necessary adjustments. You can use the template that

follows: "Please do not hesitate to contact (name of person of contact) at (phone number/email address) by (date) if there is anything further we can do to enable you to participate fully at this event." The date you should use is the last day you estimate that further provisions could be added (for instance, it should give you enough time to find and hire a sign language interpreter).

- Ensure that the communication is clear and easy to understand.
- Translations of all communications should be available upon request.
- It should be possible for attendees to use screen readers to consult the information provided on the event, including ensuring that alternate text is created for the images used.
- People with visual impairments should be able to use wayfinding and event communications. The following advice can help make communications easier to read:
 - Ensure that printouts and signs have a high contrast between colours and a background hue.
 - In communications, use a font size of at least 14.
 - Avoid using colour to highlight important points in emails or on event schedules.
- Inclusive imagery should be used in all event communications to ensure that promotional materials feature a diverse range of people.
- All communications should use inclusive language that doesn't offend anyone, and that the meanings are understood by all parties.
- Inquire about your speakers' personal pronouns and their willingness to share this information during introductions and event communications. In communications materials, you could also use "first name last name (she/her)" or "first name last name (they/them)".

- Include gender-neutral titles (or avoid titles altogether) and the possibility to use the attendee's chosen name instead of their legal name on registration forms.
- Avoid slang and jargon.
- If jokes are part of your communications, consider the possible negative connotations and implications on a diverse range of people.

2.6 Feedback

- Provide event participants with contact details to give their feedback (for instance, an email address or an anonymous feedback survey).
- Ensure attendees are aware of how to report any case of discrimination or harassment at your event.
- After gathering your attendees' feedback, make the necessary adjustments and communicate them to attendees to improve future events.

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