Guidelines for Planning and Participating in a Diverse and Inclusive Event

INTRODUCTION

For any event to be successful, it must be diverse and inclusive of people of all backgrounds, communities, and identities, especially those of marginalized groups. Creating an inclusive event can also invite new perspectives and participants into an existing movement, ultimately making it stronger. Everyone has a role to play in creating inclusive events, including event organizers, presenters, and attendees. The guidelines below set forth suggestions for creating events that are welcoming to all.

An initial and critical act to further equity and inclusion is to actively seek out the stories, experiences and perspectives of marginalized people and learn from them. Intentionally set aside time to examine and understand your own privilege and to question how the privilege was obtained, so that you do not perpetuate inequity. Understanding systemic oppression and privilege is a necessary part of dismantling them.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPLEMENTAL SELF-EDUCATION

The Guidelines contained herein are intended to be a starting point. Individuals can best equip themselves to plan and participate in events that are inclusive of the diversity of the disability community by actively seeking out training and other learning opportunities on topics including:

- Disability culture and accessibility.
- Racial justice and systemic oppression.
- Gender justice, trans-inclusion and feminism.
- LGBTQIAP2+ culture.

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SECTION ONE: GUIDELINES FOR EVENT ORGANIZERS

EVENT ORGANIZERS: BEFORE THE EVENT

i. <u>Setting a Date and Location, Including Remote Access</u>

    a. Be aware of and plan around multicultural religious holidays and cultural celebrations.

    b. Make sure the location has either single or multiple-occupant, gender-neutral restrooms available. If the location also has gendered restrooms available, ensure that gender-neutral and gendered restrooms are equally accessible. Let attendees know that they may use the restroom of their choosing.

        i. If you cannot find a location with gender-neutral restrooms, then find a location with single-occupant gendered restrooms and make them gender-neutral for purposes of your event.

    c. Ensure the location has accessible public transit options.

    d. Be mindful of environmental factors, such as temperature and air quality, that could impact breathing, etc.

        i. Ensure you can adjust the location temperature.

    e. Provide the opportunity for remote attendance to increase access for those who would otherwise be unable to attend.

        i. Remote participation should incorporate and/or include:

            a) ASL interpretation and CART;

            b) Audio streaming;

            c) A way for remote participants to ask questions or make comments by voice or text; and

            d) Access to contents of presentations and documents.

            e) See Appendix for additional guidance.

        ii. Remote access must be inclusive, accessible, and available on multiple platforms (desktop/laptop, mobile devices, etc.).

ii. <u>Diverse and Inclusive Presentations, Panels, and Keynotes</u>

    a. Make sure everyone on the planning committee is committed to diversity and inclusion.

b. Ensure balanced diversity in event steering committees to increase greater diversity among speakers and attendees.

c. Ensure that you have a wide range of presenters, across gender identities, racial groups, disability, and sexual orientation. Discourage proposals from and do not accept panels that are all-white, all-male, or all-nondisabled, for instance.

d. Prioritize including presenters of marginalized identities, backgrounds, or experiences, and/or who have lived experience relevant to the presentation topic.

    i. For example, planners of a disability rights event should prioritize inclusion of disabled people who are no- or low-income, disabled people who are un- or under-employed, disabled people who are precariously employed or who do criminalized work, disabled people who are negatively racialized or are people of color, disabled people who are immigrants in or out of status, disabled queer, trans, or other LGBTQIAP2+ people disabled people who are formerly incarcerated or have been impacted by the criminal legal system, and disabled people of other marginalized backgrounds.

e. If presentations are submissions-based, actively solicit proposals and submissions from people of marginalized backgrounds, identities or experiences, and/or who have lived experience relevant to the presentation topic.

    i. Search for presenters beyond the organizers' personal networks

    i. Ask networks for contact details of experts of marginalized backgrounds and identities

    ii. Contact relevant professional affinity groups

    iii. Take enough time - panels with new people take more time, effort, and preparation.

f. Choosing presentation topics.
  i. Within the context of your event, center the priorities people of marginalized backgrounds, identities or experiences.
  ii. For example, planners of a disability rights event should consider issue areas where disability rights and disability justice intersect with other civil rights, human rights, and social justice issues, such as immigration; decriminalization and decarceration; access to health care; reproductive rights; marriage and family rights; issues affecting people experiencing homelessness; issues affecting trans people; etc.
g. If a presentation topic focuses on or impacts specific communities, include presenters from that community.
h. Avoid tokenism - aim to have the panel represent the demographics of the topic; if diverse speakers are not available for the chosen topic, change or expand the topic
i. Support diverse panels/presenters with necessary resources to facilitate travel and participation
j. Consider presenters with various kinds and types of experience and cultivate up-and-coming talent
k. If you are missing key experiences/voices, seriously consider whether it is time to regroup and rebuild

iii. Collaboration
a. Consider which affinity groups and diverse organizations might want to cosponsor/collaborate. They can also help advertise the event.

iv. Registration and Accommodations Requests
a. Create and provide access to an event "code of conduct" that includes a diversity, equity and inclusion statement and prohibits discrimination and harassment.
b. Clearly lay out the process for requesting reasonable accommodations (e.g., ASL interpreting/CART; large print, brailled, or electronic materials; dietary substitutions or allergies).

c. Provide information on how to participate remotely.

   i. A document or web page on how to participate remotely should be provided in a universally accessible format.

d. Include a contact person who can assist with registration via various communication methods (email/phone/other).

e. Use registration as an opportunity to gather data to measure diversity of invited speakers, selected speakers, registrants, and attendees.

   i. Include optional demographic questions at registration.

   ii. Explain purpose of data gathering.

f. Monitor registration demographic data and do targeted outreach to underrepresented communities.

g. Consider waiving or reducing conference fees and providing travel scholarships as appropriate to expand participation of people with marginalized experiences, backgrounds, or identities.

v. <u>Flyers and Advertising</u>

a. Use gender-neutral language. This extends to any forms or questionnaires you may have on which there should be options outside of 'Male' and 'Female.' These could include 'non-binary' 'prefer not to say' and a blank space for people to write what they want. Additionally, consider adding Mx. as an option for titles and honorifics.

b. Ensure that your flyers are in accessible formats, such as tagged and searchable PDFs or Microsoft Word documents.

c. Ensure that advertising and registration page are also accessible.

d. Check advertising messages against small but diverse test audiences to ensure the name, subtitles, and images promote inclusion of diverse groups (include representation on advertising that reflects diversity).

e. Make sure flyers and advertisements are placed or circulated so that they reach diverse groups (targeted marketing).

f. State your commitment to equity and inclusion.

vi. <u>Social Networking Sites and Email</u>
    a. Make sure to post about events on social media and highlight the diversity among panelists and the audience.
    b. Post about the event in different affinity groups within these social networking sites.
    c. Invite a diverse group of people to the event on social media and make it a public event so that it is visible outside the organizers' typical networks. Have various people and networks share the event.
    d. Post pictures of the speakers and audience members on the social media pages (with permission) and include image descriptions.
    e. Spread information about the event through email, and email as many people as possible who would be interested.
        i. Send emails to people outside the organizers' typical networks (to various affinity groups, professional organizations, disability organizations, religious organizations, etc.)
        ii. Any attachments to emails should be accessible.

vii. <u>Physical Access</u>
    a. Ensure that the facility for the event is physically accessible to those who use wheelchairs and other assistive devices, including restrooms. It is always best to have the event at a location that is also accessible via public transportation and various other transportation options.
    b. Ensure there is plenty of signage and other information to help attendees navigate the event space.
    c. If food is provided at the event, make sure that the food is in an accessible location and make sure each food item is labeled, including its ingredients for those with allergies.
    d. Have someone available at the location to assist with getting food for attendees/panelists and taking people around the venue who need assistance.

viii.   <u>ASL Interpretation and CART</u>
    a. ASL Interpretation
        i. Arrange to have a professional, certified ASL interpreter present for the duration of the event. When initially requesting interpreting services, make the request far enough in advance for the interpreting agency to arrange the service.
    b. Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART)
        i. Arrange to have a professional, certified CART provider to create a real-time translation.
        ii. Ensure that conference audio and video technicians have adequate time to communicate with the CART provider about associated audiovisual needs.
    c. Films, Slideshows, and Other Digital Materials
        i. Ensure that any films or video clips presented are both captioned and audio described. Be prepared to assist presenters and moderators in identifying (and funding) such services where necessary.
        ii. Inform audience members in advance of presentation content that is emotionally charged or may trigger past trauma or anxiety, so that attendees can better use their discretion.
        iii. If PowerPoint slides will be used, the presenter should:
            a) Ensure the PowerPoint document is accessible;
            b) Provide the PowerPoint ahead of time for distribution; and
            c) Verbalize what is on each slide during the presentation so that blind attendees and presenters can follow along.
        iv. Any documents, handouts, or other materials should conform to accessibility standards. Event organizers should request such materials from presenters and moderators in electronic format well in advance of the event date to ensure they can be checked for accessibility prior to use and distribution.

     v. Agendas, handouts, and other printed materials should also be made available in Braille, large print, electronic format, or other accessible media for presenters and attendees.

    vi. Conference presenters and moderators should be given clear expectations for accessibility of their presentations and materials well ahead of the conference date.

ix. <u>Interpersonal Interaction, Lighting and Sound, and Food</u>
   a. If food will be provided at the event, ask attendees about dietary restrictions ahead of time.
   b. Set up gluten-free and other allergen-free foods, separately, and label accordingly (arrange for complete ingredient labeling, whenever possible).
   c. In advertising and registration materials, remind attendees to refrain from wearing any strong scents, such as cologne or perfume, for those with chemical or sensory sensitivities.
   d. Always ask if the lighting is too bright in the room and be conscious of sensitivities to light.
   e. Be cognizant of individuals' preferences around interpersonal interaction. Consider how people may wish to interact (or not interact with one another) and provide communication badges for participants to express their preferences should they wish to do so. For information on using communication badges see: https://autisticadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/ColorCommunicationBadges.pdf
   f. If loud music and/or a lot of noise and stimulation will be part of the event, make sure to locate the source of the music and other high noise levels (e.g., DJ and speakers) strategically, so that people who are sensitive to loud noise can make good choices for themselves, with information shared in advance.
   g. Provide a quiet or "low stim" room option and share information about its availability in advance of and throughout the event, including in the PR/marketing and program materials.

h. Have a feeding area (not a bathroom) available for nursing mothers at the facility.

i. Provide pronoun badges or stickers to all presenters and attendees.

EVENT ORGANIZERS: DURING THE EVENT

I. <u>Welcome and Event Expectations</u>

   a. Tell participants about the accessibility features of the event and the organizers' goal to create an event that is diverse, welcoming, and inclusive.

   b. Include an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement at the start of your event. For guidance on Indigenous Land Acknowledgments, including a sample template, please see Appendix 3.

   c. Designate an Access Ambassador(s) to assist participants with onsite access and inclusion needs.

   d. Encourage the voluntary use of pronoun and communication badges.

II. <u>Event Photography and Filming</u>

   a. Ask in advertising and registration, as well as during the event, if it is okay to film the event and take photos. Make sure it is okay with each specific individual to film or take a photo of them and obtain permission before posting anything publicly and/or on social media.

      i. It is important to keep in mind that, if the event is being photographed or video-recorded, not everyone will be comfortable being in photographs or video. One way to address this issue is to let people know that an event is going to be video-recorded/photographed, and to let anyone who does not wish to be in images or a video recording know that they can sit in a specified part of the room, which will not be recorded/photographed.

   b. Some participants may prefer or need to access an event virtually (for example, via Skype or livestream).

i. Virtual/remote access must be inclusive, accessible, and available on multiple platforms (desktop/laptop, mobile devices, etc.). Ensure you provide captioning and descriptive audio, among other components (such as notifying individuals of how to access the livestream).

EVENT ORGANIZERS: AFTER THE EVENT

I. Distribution of Materials
    a. Ensure that all materials are accessible and that the website on which they are shared is accessible.
    b. As needed, edit the CART scripts and/or hire the CART provider or another professional to edit the transcript so that it may be distributed, as needed. A draft of a CART transcript will need editing before it is distributed or posted.

II. Evaluations and Data Gathering
    a. Always ask for anonymous feedback/evaluations via survey or some other method. Make sure whatever method used is accessible. See Appendix No. 1 (Sample Evaluation Questions).
    b. Analyze the feedback received from evaluations and surveys and strategize about how to make improvements. Reach out to speakers for suggestions as well.
    c. Consider using evaluation as an opportunity to gather data to measure diversity of invited speakers, selected speakers, and attendees.
        i. Include optional demographic questions.
        ii. Explain purpose of data gathering.

III. Post-Event Social Activities
    a. Post-event social activities planned for another site must also be accessible in all respects (physical, communication, etc.). The activity and the venue in which it is being held must be confirmed by event organizers or others who have sufficient technical expertise.

SECTION TWO: GUIDELINES FOR PRESENTERS

PRESENTERS: BEFORE THE EVENT

I. Recommendations for Potential Presenters/Speakers

    a. Ask about commitment to diversity and inclusion as a prerequisite for presenting at events and what strategies are underway to ensure that panels include presenters of marginalized backgrounds, identities or experiences, such as people with disabilities, people who are negatively racialized or are people of color, people who are immigrants in or out of status, queer, trans, or other LGBTQIAP2+ people, people who are formerly incarcerated or have been impacted by the criminal legal system. See Appendix No. 2 for sample.

    b. Consider not speaking at an event unless the event's organizers are clearly committed to addressing diversity on stage as evidenced by their response to the above.

    c. Consider alternative choices of speakers within the same organization.

    d. Use the power of being a person in demand to further diversity and inclusivity - request a diverse line-up of speakers, inquire as to union/labor conditions of venue, ADA accessibility of venue, captioning and/or sign language interpretation for sessions, gender neutral restrooms, nursing/feeding areas, food options that consider religious/cultural diets, etc.

    e. Films, Slideshows, and Other Digital Materials

        i. Ensure that any films or video clips presented are both captioned and audio described. Notify event organizers well in advance of the event date if assistance is needed to identify (or fund) such services.

        ii. Inform audience members in advance of presentation content that is emotionally charged or may trigger past trauma or anxiety, so that attendees can better use their discretion.

        iii. If PowerPoint slides will be used, the presenter should:

            a) Ensure the PowerPoint document is accessible;

            b) Provide the PowerPoint ahead of time for distribution; and

       c) Verbalize what is on each slide during the presentation so that blind attendees and presenters can follow along.

       i. Any documents, handouts, or other materials should conform to accessibility standards and should be provided to conference organizers in electronic format well in advance of the event date to ensure they can be checked for accessibility prior to use and distribution.

PRESENTERS: DURING THE EVENT

I. <u>When Presenting in Front of an Audience</u>
   a. Identify yourself and, if comfortable doing so, your pronouns.
   b. Use gender-neutral language when addressing attendees, such as "everyone" (e.g., "How is everyone doing?"), "friends," "all," "folks," "you all," "you" (e.g., "Can I get you something?"), etc.
   c. Speak into a microphone so that those who are hard of hearing or on the phone or online streaming can hear. Always state the name of whomever is speaking.
   d. Try not to rush through the presentation: rushed presentations make CART transcription and ASL interpretation difficult. Speak slowly, define terms, and spell out names and/or terms.
   e. Please be aware that lack of eye contact and/or the inability to see your lips may make your presentation inaccessible to some. Make attempts to look up throughout your presentation.
   f. Ask people to state and spell their names when they communicate during a meeting or event.
   g. Repeat questions asked by the audience. This can provide better access, including for those who are Deaf or hard of hearing, and individuals with different learning styles.
   h. Be mindful of the ways that your own identities and experiences may influence and affect your audience, especially if you are not a member of the impacted/affected group.

        i. "Nothing About Us Without Us" remains a powerful and necessary message within the disability rights movement and beyond. Events, activities, curricula, etc. "about" disability are best organized by disabled people, or, at the very least, with nondisabled people working in very close and ongoing collaboration with disabled people, who are there willingly (and not as tokenized representatives).

        ii. Similar considerations apply to events, activities, etc. "about" race, sexual orientation, etc.

i. Periodically ask members of the audience if they are comfortable with the pace and volume of your presentation.

j. Be mindful and inclusive about your language usage.

II. <u>Audience Questions and Comments</u>

a. When taking questions and comments from the audience, tell audience members to state their name before they ask their question/state their comment so that anyone who is blind will know who is speaking.

        i. Don't forget about audience members participating remotely.

b. When answering questions from the audience, repeat the speaker's name and their question.

c. Have audience members use a microphone when speaking so that CART/ASL interpreters can hear and translate, and anyone who is hard of hearing can hear.

d. Make sure the ASL/CART interpreter is translating both the question/comment and answer.

e. If the person taking the questions/comments is blind, that person should control the room. They should tell audience members to speak their name aloud before asking their question instead of raising their hand. That way, the blind person won't have to rely on a sighted person to call on people.

f. If audience members have additional questions/comments, give them an email address to send them to and also give people a chance to speak to panelists after the event.

III.   Protocol for Presenting Events with Interpreters and/or CART

    a. Presenters or event organizers should be prepared to introduce the ASL interpreter(s) and CART provider(s), rather than having these professionals introduce themselves.

    b. A brief explanation regarding how to work with interpreters and CART providers should be provided to the audience.

        i. When working with ASL interpreters, talk directly to the Deaf person (do not ask the ASL interpreter "tell her…" and so on). This is also true of working with interpreters who are interpreting for hearing and non-English speakers.

        ii. It is a general rule amongst most, but not all, professional interpreters that they do not engage in the dialogue. As noted, interpreters are not there to participate in the event, but solely in their roles as professional interpreters. All interpreters are obligated to maintain appropriate ethics and professional boundaries.

IV.   Event Photography and Filming

    a. Ask if it is okay to film the event and take photos. Make sure it is okay with each specific individual to film or take photos and obtain permission before posting anything publicly and/or on social media.

        i. It is important to keep in mind that, if your event is being photographed or videorecorded, not everyone will be comfortable being in photographs or video. One way to address this issue is to let people know that an event is going to be video-recorded/photographed, and to let anyone who does not wish to be in images or a video recording know that they can sit in a specified part of the room, which will not be recorded/photographed.

    b. Keep in mind some participants may prefer or need to access an event virtually (for example, via Skype or livestream).

        i. Remote access must be inclusive, accessible, and available on multiple platforms (desktop/laptop, mobile devices, etc.)

      ii. Ensure event planners are providing captioning and descriptive audio, among other components (like notifying individuals of how to access the event remotely).

PRESENTERS: AFTER THE EVENT

I. <u>Distribution of Materials</u>
   a. Ensure that all of the presentation materials are accessible before they are shared or distributed.
   b. As needed, assist with the editing of the CART script.

II. <u>Evaluations and Data Gathering</u>
   a. Analyze the feedback received from evaluations and surveys and strategize about how to make improvements. Reach out to the event organizers for suggestions as well.

SECTION THREE: GUIDELINES FOR ATTENDEES

ATTENDEES: BEFORE THE EVENT

I. Choosing Events to Attend

    a. Seek out events that demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

    b. Ask whether the event has a code of conduct that prohibits discrimination and harassment.

    c. Ask about accessibility features at the event.

    d. Review speakers/presenters – do they include and center people with lived experience? Do they include a diverse line-up of speakers across race/ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, and gender?

    e. If you choose not to attend an event because it does not demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, inform the event-planners of your decision and why you've made it.

ATTENDEES: DURING THE EVENT

I. Practicing Allyship

    a. Communication

        i. If you are comfortable doing so, share your pronouns when introducing yourself to others. Do not make assumptions about others' – if you are unsure ask or use the person's name.

        ii. Use and respect others' communication badges/preferences.

        iii. Be mindful and inclusive about your language usage.

        iv. Interpreters and CART providers.

            a) When working with ASL interpreters, talk directly to the Deaf person (do not ask the ASL interpreter "tell her…" and so on). This is also true of working with interpreters who are interpreting for hearing and non-English speakers.

            b) It is a general rule amongst most, but not all, professional interpreters that they do not engage in the dialogue. As noted, interpreters are not there to participate in the event, but solely in their roles as professional

interpreters. All interpreters are obligated to maintain appropriate ethics and professional boundaries.

      v. If you are able to safely interrupt and counter communication or behavior that is racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, xenophobic, ableist, ageist, and misogynist, do so.

b. Environment

      i. Be mindful of potential access barriers and report these to event organizers.

      ii. Do not wear or bring scented products or fragrances to the event space, including scented cologne, perfume, deodorant, hair product, soap, and lotion. Check your product ingredient list for the word "fragrance" if you are unsure if it is scented.

c. Actions

      i. Ask if someone needs help before providing it. Do not assist people without permission.

      ii. Be mindful of the ways that your privilege and identities may influence and affect those around you during the event.

ATTENDEES: AFTER THE EVENT

I. <u>Evaluations and Data Gathering</u>

a. Provide feedback about your experience at the event. Share ideas for improvement with event organizers.

APPENDIX

I.   Sample Evaluation Questions:

    a.   Overall, how would you rate the event? (Interval scale question from very unsatisfactory to very satisfactory)

    b.   Please rate the representation of diverse speakers on a scale of ___ to ____

    c.   If you felt a group was underrepresented, please provide a brief explanation

    d.   If you felt the representation of diversity at the event was high, please highlight how your experience was enhanced by it

    e.   Please rate the following aspects of the event: (Interval scale question from very unsatisfactory to very satisfactory)

        i.   Date and time

        ii.   Location

        iii.   Speakers

        iv.   Sessions

        v.   Food and beverages

        vi.   Vendors

    f.   What did you like most about the event? (Open-ended question)

    g.   What did you like least about the event? (Open-ended question)

    h.   How do you think this event could have been improved? (Open-ended question)

    i.   How do you think the event could have been more inclusive?

    j.   Was this the first time you attended one of our events? (Yes/no question)

    k.   Based on your experience at this event, how likely are you to attend future events? (Interval scale question from very likely to not likely)

    l.   How likely are you to recommend our events to a friend/colleague? (Interval scale question from very likely to not likely)

    m.   Do you have any other suggestions or comments to help us improve our future events? (Open-ended question)

II. Sample Inquiry re: Event Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion:

   a. Hi [Name], Thank you so much for thinking of me for this opportunity. Could I ask about who else is being invited to take part? I just want to make sure I'm not taking up a spot that could be used for someone who has a different story, experience, or background that would be important for the audience to get. Specifically, will there be people with disabilities, women, people of color, and LGBTQ people included who are panel presenters and/or also playing a larger role in presenting at the conference? Thanks so much for taking the time to talk with me about this, [Your Name]

IV. Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

   a. Honor Native Land: A Guide and Call to Acknowledgment: https://usdac.us/nativeland

      i. Sample Acknowledgement:

         "Every community owes its existence and vitality to generations from around the world who contributed their hopes, dreams, and energy to making the history that led to this moment. Some were brought here against their will, some were drawn to leave their distant homes in hope of a better life, and some have lived on this land for more generations than can be counted. Truth and acknowledgment are critical to building mutual respect and connection across all barriers of heritage and difference. We begin this effort to acknowledge what has been buried by honoring the truth. We are standing on the ancestral lands of the _____ People [if possible, add more specific detail about the nature of the occupied land]. We pay respects to their elders past and present. Please take a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us together here today. And please join us in uncovering such truths at any and all public events."

b. A Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgment: https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/

c. Guide to Indigenous Land and Territorial Acknowledgements for Cultural Institutions: http://landacknowledgements.org/

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