



Inclusive Event Toolkit

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CREATING INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS & EVENTS

External programs are a key driver in developing a more inclusive tech ecosystem in your city, town or region. These programs might include events, evening classes, trainings and workshops, lunch and learns, as well as startup office hours.

Broadening Your Networks

- Events can expand your reach and exposure to underrepresented communities. Opening your doors to diverse programming can broaden your networks for internal hiring, memberships, mentors, instructors, etc.
- Diverse people are out there, you just might not know them. It takes time to broaden your network, but through research and asking questions, you'll reach them. Sometimes it's as easy as asking friends on social media for diversity and inclusion experts or diverse speakers.
- Check out some of the resources we've listed below.

Developing Partnerships

Invite Diverse Organizations

Ask them to host their events in your facility, or in partnership with your organization. Then give them the space, support them as much as you can, and spread the word about their event to your networks. And remember: it's not enough to simply host diverse people – you need to show up, meet them, and let them know you care.

Establish Partnerships

They will be able to help spread the word of your programs to more diverse groups. You can exchange exposure on your website as an incentive for the group, pay to put an ad in their newsletter, or find another creative way to work together. If it's an event you're sharing, offer a promo code for their community and a free ticket to join you.

Creating Inclusive Events & Programming

- **Topics for Diverse Audiences**
 - Make sure your event topics appeal to diverse audiences
- **Diverse Speakers**
 - Speakers should fully represent the audience you're trying to reach - make sure they are diverse in terms of gender, race, ability, age, and other characteristics.
- **Outreach**
 - While promoting your events, always look for different networking channels that include underrepresented individuals.

- **Timing**
 - The timing of the event can make a big difference to people who are parents, caregivers, currently working, or commuting.
- **Cost**
 - Consider a sliding scale, giving discount or free codes to new communities, or even making some events free.
- **Accessibility**
 - Make sure you ask for accessibility needs and requests ahead of time on the website and email communications.
 - And if someone requests an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter, live captioning, a guide or something else - make sure that the person has what they need to fully participate in the event.
 - If you need help with this, check out the resources below.
- **Code of Conduct**
 - A Code of Conduct is an indicator to many people that you care about creating an inclusive event. Make sure you post this on the website and in the physical space, and reiterate on stage at the beginning of the program.
- **Photos**
 - Nothing says inclusion like visual representation. Include diverse photos in presentation slides and marketing materials. Also consider having diverse people look through your slides, photos and other marketing materials to make sure you haven't accidentally included imagery that might offend someone.

Creating Supply Chain Diversity

- This can be one of most impactful opportunities to expand your diversity goals. Look at using services or products founded by local, underrepresented entrepreneurs. Consider every vendor you use: from software vendors, to office supplies, to food in your cafe and any subcontractors.
- You might consider adding to your company values or formal processes: to prioritize hiring underrepresented people as vendors.
- Studies show that companies with supplier diversity programs are more profitable and promote innovation by introducing new products and services. Plus it's good for your local economy and community.
- Diversifying your partnerships, events and vendors can quickly change your reputation as a place where diverse people are welcome and belong. A little extra work up front to diversify your networks can make a big difference in the makeup of your community down the line.

CHECKLISTS

Part 1: Location & Logistics

A. Location Considerations

A quick list of location filters for selecting an event location.

- Is the location near public transportation?** (This is especially important for people with disabilities and people with low incomes.) If not, we may be able to mitigate this with free Lyft rides or shuttles, but this must be incorporated into event costs.
- Does the location align with our mission?**
 - Is the staff diverse?
 - Are there sustainable practices in place?
 - Will they allow us to change the restrooms to be gender neutral?
 - Will they allow us to change other signs we may want to change to be more inclusive? (e.g. room names, elevator signage, etc.)
 - Are their supply chain values aligned?
 - Does the location give back to the local community?
- Are we able to choose our own vendors for food, audio visual, etc.?** (This gives us more ability to choose mission-aligned vendors that are local, sustainable, socially-conscious and give back to their community.) If not:
 - Is the location able to provide vegetarian, vegan, Halal, Kosher and gluten-free foods?
 - Can they source from local, sustainable food suppliers?
- Will our diverse vendors feel comfortable working with the location staff and facilities?**
- Does the location space align with the inclusive feeling we want to create?**
 - Will we be able to have safe, intimate discussions here?
 - Will we be able to create quiet spaces for introverts?
 - Will we be able to host robust collaboration and networking sessions?
 - Is the decor inclusive? (And if not, is it changeable?)
 - Is there a place for a Mother's Room?
- Is the location ADA compliant?** A necessity.
 - All Entrances, Restrooms, and Kitchens Are Accessible
 - All Event Logistics (stage, aisle, seating) Are Accessible
 - Directional Signage is Accessible to Those That Are Blind Or in Wheelchairs

B. Location Scout Checklist

Once the location has been narrowed down to one or two, use this **Location Scout Checklist**. It should also be revisited when doing a location walkthrough closer to the event date.

Change Catalyst: Inclusive Events Checklist			
Location	Yes/No	If No...	Notes
Building Entrance			
Is the wheelchair accessible entrance at the same location as the main entrance?		Extra signage will be needed.	
Is there an automatic door opener at the entrance?		Consider having a volunteer there to open doors as needed.	
Reception Area			
Is there seating in the reception area?		You'll need to place a few chairs with backs (ie, not stools) for people who will not be able to stand for long periods of time.	
Is the reception area easy to navigate if you're in a wheelchair or if you are blind?			
Is all signage and artwork in the space inclusive? (Look at it through the lens of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual identity, sexual preference, geography, ability, age, socioeconomic status...)		You'll want to ask them to take it down for the event, or cover it with conference signage.	
Is the signage accessible for those who are blind or in a wheelchair?		Plan for signage that is at eye level for someone in a wheelchair and if appropriate, add Braille for those who are blind.	
Stage & Audience Area			
Does the stage have a wheelchair ramp?		Ask if they have one in storage. If not, you'll have to rent one if needed.	
Does/will the stage have chairs with a back on them for speakers?		You'll need to find some as many people are not able to sit or stand without pain, which is no fun when you are speaking.	
If there is fixed seating in the auditorium, are there spaces in the front row for wheelchairs? (Legally these must be at least 30" x 48")			
Have you reserved front row seating for those who are visually impaired?		Survey your attendees for additional needs and use this to estimate numbers for reserved seating in the front row.	
Is there an accessible route from the door to wheelchair seating?		Where else can they sit where they will have clear access and still be able to see the stage well?	
Are the rows between seats large enough for a wheelchair? (Minimum 42")			
Is a wheelchair able to get to the green room and/or backstage easily?		Consider adapting another room to be a Green Room or not having one at all.	
Is the green room accessible to people in wheelchairs?		Consider adapting another room to be a Green Room or not having one at all.	
Is there an area just off stage where a live captioner can sit, and where the tv monitor can project the captions in a way that is visible to the audience?		Consider moving something around so that this can happen. If the stage is large, this could happen on stage as well.	
Is there an area at the edge of the stage where an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter can stand?		Best practice is for the interpreter to be on stage, just to the left or right of the speaker.	
Will the ASL interpreter be able to be lit onstage at the same time the presenter is lit?		Add a spotlight so the ASL interpreter can be seen.	
Restrooms			
Are all restrooms ADA compliant?		Where are the ADA compliant restrooms? You'll need to make clear directional signage for them.	
Is all signage and artwork in the restrooms inclusive? (Look at it through the lens of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual identity, sexual preference, geography, ability, age, socioeconomic status...)		You'll want to ask them to take it down for the event, or cover it with conference signage.	
A/V			
Do they have a large tv monitor the live captioner can use?		Will need to rent/borrow one.	
Transitions Between Locations			
Are there safe, flat sidewalks all the way from one site to the other?			
Are there wheelchair accessible curbs all the way from one site to another?			
Will someone who is mobility impaired due to injury, pain, disability, etc. be able to walk the full distance?			

C. Other Human & Built Environment Preparations

- Event signage**
 - Is the language inclusive?
 - Are the visuals inclusive?
 - Do we have a digitally accessible program for someone who is blind or has low vision?
- Directional signage**
 - Gender neutral restroom signage
 - Reserved seating signage for seats in the front row near the stage, CART monitor and/or American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters
 - Signs to elevators
 - Signs to Mother's Room
- Room names**
 - Do current room names feel inclusive for everyone? If not, change them to better match the event.
- Code of Conduct**
 - Post clearly on a large board at the event entrance.
- Ground Rules**
 - Optional, consider posting in each room and/or discussing at opening of program.
- Decor**
 - Is there artwork that isn't inclusive? If so, make a plan to cover it or take it down. Make sure to get diverse people to walk the space and provide feedback.
- Accessibility**
 - On our event website, "above the fold," let attendees know we are working to make this an inclusive event. If we are offering CART captioning or ASL interpreters, include this here. And let people know how to reach us for additional accessibility requests.
- Live CART captioning**
 - Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) vendor - remote or in person
 - Audio out from audio board through skype audio
 - Caption text will be on a live website; this will need to be outputted to tv monitor next to the main stage
- ASL interpreters**
 - Secure an American Sign Language (ASL) vendor
 - Be sure there is a place on stage or just off stage for them to stand/sit
- Microphones**
 - Be sure to have handheld or lapel microphones (vs. over-ear headsets) available for anyone who may have a hearing aid
 - Be sure to have lapel or over-ear headset microphones for anyone who may not be able to hold a microphone
 - Test microphones on people of different genders, and make sure someone is monitoring audio during the event. Microphones often pick up men's voices best, so often women's mics need to be turned up.

- ❑ **Stage seating**
 - ❑ Choose chairs with backs so people are able to sit comfortably.
 - ❑ Avoid stools if possible, as people of different body sizes may not be able to gracefully get onto a stool.
 - ❑ Include space on stage for people with wheelchairs to sit in their wheelchair at the same height as other speakers on stage.
- ❑ **Prayer / meditation Room** to offer people a safe space to practice
- ❑ **Mother's Room**
 - ❑ Women who are breastfeeding need a safe, quiet, clean and private space to pump breastmilk several times a day. This should be as comfortable as possible, absolutely not in the restroom.
 - ❑ This room should have a lock, microwave, a refrigerator where moms can store breast milk, drinking water, a comfortable seat and an outlet. Ideally, it's also near a source of both hot and cold water for washing hands, pump attachments, and milk collection containers.
- ❑ **Childcare**
 - ❑ Consider providing onsite childcare opportunities for parents - this can be in an adjacent room to the conference.
 - ❑ If the event can't offer childcare, consider offering childcare reimbursement or at the least, suggesting local and vetted childcare resources.
- ❑ **Food**
 - ❑ As part of the event registration process, ask people their dietary needs: vegetarian, vegan, Halal, Kosher, gluten free foods, and other.
 - ❑ Be sure the caterer is prepared with this list ahead of time, and also able to cater to individual needs in the moment during the event.

Part 2: Vendors

D. Event Vendors Checklist

When evaluating event vendors, use this list as a filtering guide:

- ❑ Are they a certified B Corporation, benefit corporation, local green business, or have some other certification?
- ❑ Are they local?
- ❑ Are they owned by a woman, minority and/or veteran?
- ❑ Is the staff diverse and do they value inclusion as a company?
- ❑ Do they have sustainable practices in place?
- ❑ Do they evaluate their supply chain and are their vendors mission aligned?
- ❑ Do they give back to the local community?

Part 3: Event Content, Marketing and Outreach

E. Content

- Topics for Diverse Audiences**
 - Make sure event topics appeal to diverse audiences.
 - Have an agenda on the website as soon as possible, even if it is just an outline. People who have never been to our events before need to know what they might expect.
 - Finalize the agenda as quickly as possible and include it on the website with a description of each session.
- Diverse Speakers**
 - Speakers should fully represent the audience we're trying to reach - make sure they are diverse in terms of gender, race, ability, age, and other characteristics.
- Timing**
 - The timing of the event can make a big difference to people who are parents, caregivers, currently working, or commuting.
- Cost**
 - Consider a sliding scale, giving scholarships to new communities, or even making some events free.
 - Sample scholarship language for the website: "We have a limited number of scholarships available. If you would like a scholarship please fill our scholarship application at _____"

F. Marketing

- Are marketing materials inclusive?**
 - Nothing says inclusion like visual representation. Include diverse photos in presentation slides and marketing materials. Also, consider having diverse people look through slides, photos and other marketing materials to make sure we haven't accidentally included imagery that might offend someone.
 - Language
 - Photos
 - Use short paragraphs and bullets as well as clear, simple language. Avoid jargon and make sure language is understandable for people who do not speak English as their native language.

- ❑ **Is the website accessible?** It needs to be accessible for people who are blind, deaf, have color-blindness and/or dyslexia. Here are a few best practices:
 - ❑ Provide a text equivalent for every non-text element (e.g., via “alt”, “longdesc”, or in element content). This includes: images, graphics, animations (e.g., animated GIFs), images used as list bullets, graphic buttons, sounds (played with or without user interaction), stand-alone audio files, audio tracks of video, and video.
 - ❑ All information conveyed with color is also available without color, for example from context or markup.
 - ❑ Use the clearest and simplest language appropriate for a site’s content.
 - ❑ For data tables, identify row and column headers.
 - ❑ Ensure that foreground and background color combinations provide sufficient contrast when viewed by someone having color deficits or when viewed on a black and white screen.
 - ❑ For more information to pass on to developer(s), check out this [Web Accessibility Checklist](#).

G. Outreach

- ❑ While promoting events, always look for different networking channels that include underrepresented individuals.

Part 4: Code of Conduct

H. Create it.

- ❑ [Open source Conference Code of Conduct](#)

I. Post it.

- ❑ Clearly list it or link to it on the event website.
- ❑ Post clearly on a large board at the event entrance.

J. Enforce it.

- ❑ Discuss it at the beginning of the event program and let attendees know where they can report any violations. (Best practice is to have all volunteers/staff in a specific color of a t-shirt so they are easy to recognize.)
- ❑ Create an environment where people feel comfortable to report any incidents that violate the code of conduct.
- ❑ Ensure that volunteers and staff know what to do if someone comes to them with a complaint.

Part 5: Organizer, Staff and Facilitator Training

K. Organizer & Staff Training

- Develop a common language and set of core values
- Discuss Ground Rules
- Develop sensitivity to diverse groups and unique needs
- Give people the tools to develop a safe, inclusive environment

L. Speaker & Facilitator Training

- Provide a framework and shared language
- Establish target audience and objectives
- Ask Speakers/Facilitators to create a safe space
- Provide ways for them to model and support inclusion
- Example: [Inclusion Guide for Speakers](#)
- Example: [Inclusion Guide for Facilitators](#)

M. Volunteer Training

- Provide volunteers with an overview of the event, event values and their role.
- Example: [Inclusion Guide for Volunteers](#)
- Ensure volunteers are available if someone who is blind requests a guide. These volunteers don't need specific training, they just need to be available to be by that person's side the entire day (this can be done in shifts). People who are blind are generally good at letting volunteers know what they need.
- Sensitivity Training. Ensure that people at the registration desk (who are the first face of the organization as people enter the event), as well as other volunteers, greet people in an inclusive way and are comfortable with a wide diversity of attendees.

Part 6: Measuring Diversity & Inclusion

N. Inclusion Metrics

Questions to ask in a post-event survey:

1. I felt like I belong and could be my authentic self at the event
2. Perspectives like mine were included in the event
3. The event / hosting company values diversity
4. What is one thing we could do to create a more inclusive culture?
5. I felt safe and respected at the event
6. I could voice a contrary opinion without fear of negative consequences
7. I would refer the event to my friends and colleagues as an inclusive space

O. Diversity Metrics

Questions to ask in the event registration form:

1. Do you have any dietary restrictions? (We'll do our best!)
 - a. Vegan
 - b. Vegetarian
 - c. Gluten Free
 - d. Dairy Free
 - e. Kosher
 - f. Halal
 - g. Other
 - h. None

2. Please let us know if you have any accessibility needs, so we can do our best to make this a great experience for you. [short answer form]

3. What is your preferred pronoun?
 - a. she/he
 - b. him/her
 - c. they/them
 - d. ze/hir
 - e. Other

Please help us better understand the diversity of our community by responding to the following brief demographic questions. We will only use this data in aggregate form to help us benchmark our diversity.

4. What race & ethnicity do you identify with? (You may pick more than one.)
 - a. Indigenous or Native American
 - b. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - c. Middle Eastern, North African or Arab-American
 - d. Black or African-American
 - e. Latinx or Hispanic
 - f. Asian or Asian-American
 - g. White, Anglo or European-American
 - h. Other [short answer form]

5. Which of the following applies to you? (Please check all that apply.)
 - a. Served or serving in the Armed Forces (US or global)
 - b. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Androgynous and/or Asexual (LGBTQIA)
 - c. Person with a disability (Visible or invisible)
 - d. Person living on a low income
 - e. Other (please explain) [short answer form]
 - f. None of the above

6. Age
- a. Under 18
 - b. 18-24
 - c. 25-34
 - d. 35-44
 - e. 45-54
 - f. 55-64
 - g. 65-74
 - h. Over 75

P. Develop KPIs for the event

- Determine the desired outcomes early in the planning process, measure to those desired outcomes, and debrief with the team following the event to review and learn from the results together.

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