



TOOLKIT FOR STARTUPS

CREATING INCLUSIVE EVENTS



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T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

| | |
|---|----------|
| ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT | 3 |
| INCLUSIVE OUTREACH AND MARKETING | 3 |
| INCLUSIVE CONTENT | 4 |
| Recruiting Diverse Presenters and Speakers | 4 |
| Activating and Modelling Inclusion | 4-5 |
| Creating a Safe and Supportive Space for Exploration and Action | 5 |
| CREATING SUPPLY CHAIN DIVERSITY | 6 |
| Vendor Criteria to Consider | 6 |
| ACCESSIBLE VENUES IN MELBOURNE | 6 |
| Example Venue Questions | 6 |
| Venues That Prioritise Inclusion | 7 |
| MEASURING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AT EVENTS | 7 |
| Inclusion Metrics | 7-8 |
| RESOURCES | 9 |
| Inclusion Events Checklist | 10-13 |

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

Change Catalyst builds inclusive tech ecosystems through strategic advising, startup programs and resources, and a series of events around the globe.

Welcome to this toolkit sponsored by LaunchVic, a project of the Victorian government to develop and grow the local startup ecosystem.

Together we're helping develop more inclusive startup ecosystems.

INCLUSIVE OUTREACH AND MARKETING

As you plan your event and programming, consider all aspects through the lens of inclusion and be mindful of the experience you are creating. Use the high-level checklist below to review your plans.

TOPICS

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, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, religion, age, and other characteristics.

OUTREACH

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

COST

Consider a sliding scale, giving discount or free codes to new communities, or even making some events free.

TIMING

When planning the timing of the event, take into account people who are parents, caregivers, currently working, or commuting.

ACCESSIBILITY

Ensure your website and marketing materials are accessible for people who are blind, deaf, have color-blindness and/or dyslexia.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Show that you care about creating an inclusive event by posting this on the website and in the physical space, and reiterating on stage at the beginning of the program.

PHOTOS AND MARKETING

Be inclusive in your 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 or language that might offend someone.

INCLUSIVE CONTENT

Create programming that speaks to your local community and is oriented towards the topics and conversations that will best serve your audience. Look outside your normal circles to find diverse voices and no matter what your event programming, be sure to provide guidance to your speakers, presenters and facilitators to insure that your content is created with an inclusive lens.

Recruiting Diverse Presenters and Speakers

In-person events are a key driver in developing a more inclusive tech ecosystem in your city, town or region. Whether you are organising gatherings, evening classes, trainings and workshops, lunch and learns, or startup office hours, you'll want to consider which voices you are elevating with your programming.

Broadening Your Networks for Events

Events can also 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.

Developing Partnerships

Reaching underrepresented communities takes effort and can be more effectively scaled through partnerships with individuals and organisations that are already connected and established in their communities to help spread the word of your programs to more diverse groups. You can do this both at events and online, for example:

- Offer 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
- Offer a promo code for their community and a free ticket to join you

Activating and Modelling Inclusion

Encourage speakers to keep in mind the full breadth of inclusion when developing their presentations, talking points and visuals. Creating an inclusive experience for everyone requires all of your presenters to reflect on their content with an inclusive lens. Below are some key areas to ask speakers to consider:

1

Use inclusive language: language around identity is complicated, personal and always evolving. Each person has the right to define their identity on their own terms. When in doubt, ask.

Some rules of thumb:

| USE THESE | VERSUS |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| "People with disabilities" | "Handicapped" |
| "Disabled person" | |
| "Autistic" | |
| "You all" | "You Guys" |
| "All genders" | "Men and Women" |
| "Gender Balance" | "50/50 Balance" |
| "Humankind" | "Mankind" |
| "LGBTQIA+" | "Gay And Lesbian" |

2

Consider the breadth of diversity: across gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, age, ability, physical appearance, religion (or lack thereof), socioeconomic status, plus military veterans, returning parents and people who are formerly incarcerated.

3

Consider the depth of diversity: this includes intersectionality (eg. someone may be from multiple underrepresented groups such as a Latina with a disability), people who are non-binary and gender fluid, the breadth of people with visible and invisible disabilities (cognitive, psychological, physical and mobility) and the unique needs and perspectives of international attendees.

4

Diversity of representation: when using visuals and quotes: incorporate diverse faces, bodies and voices into your presentation.

5

Visual Accessibility: Use large, sans serif fonts with a high contrast colour scheme so people who are visually impaired are able to see the content of your slides, (eg. [high contrast text](#), black on white or cream, or white on black). Font sizes should be no less than 24 point. Also consider using sans serif fonts like Helvetica, Arial or Verdana, as people with low vision have difficulty reading text with serifs.

12

16

18

24

30

Helvetica

Arial

Verdana

Helvetica

Arial

Verdana

Creating a Safe and Supportive Space for Exploration and Action

During discussions and Q&A, be actively aware of calling on diverse voices and perspectives. Often we gravitate toward people who are more familiar, or people who have the confidence to raise their hands first and loudest. Take a moment to look at the hands you see and allow multiple diverse voices to rise. Also make sure you are looking for anyone who wants to speak, but cannot physically raise their hand.

Creating and enforcing a Code of Conduct ([Sample Code of Conduct](#)) is also key in creating a safe and healthy environment for your event.

CREATING SUPPLY CHAIN DIVERSITY

This can be one of most impactful opportunities to expand your diversity goals in general and for inclusive events in particular. Diversifying your partnerships and vendors can establish a community where diverse people are welcome and belong. This matters because companies with supplier diversity programs promote innovation and also end up benefiting your local economy and community.

Look at using event vendors founded by local, underrepresented entrepreneurs for all aspects of your event, from caterers to printers, audio visual, etc.

Bonus: Outside of events, consider adding to your startup's values or formal processes: to prioritise hiring underrepresented people as vendors.

Vendor Criteria to Consider:

- Are they a certified by a third-party certifier for their ownership or team diversity? (E.g. women-owned, minority-owned, disability-owned, veteran-owned, small business certified, etc.)
- Are they local?
- Is the staff diverse and do they value inclusion as a company?
- Do they have diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in place?
- Do they evaluate their supply chain and are their vendors aligned?
- Do they give back to the local community?

ACCESSIBLE VENUES IN MELBOURNE

When evaluating venues for your event, you'll want to consider the accessibility of your event through multiple perspectives. Try a thought experiment and imagine yourself attending the event from the viewpoint of diverse groups in your community to understand the event experience you are creating. This can help quickly identify areas to prioritise and address in the planning process.

Example Venue Questions:

Are there gender neutral restrooms accessible to the event?

Is there a private space for a Mother's or prayer room?

Are there any quiet spaces available for introverts people with autism, or other attendees who need space?

Are you able to choose your own diverse suppliers for catering, audio visual, etc.?

If there is an in-house sound system, does it have audio output compatible with a laptop for providing live captioning?

Is the venue fully wheelchair accessible?

If there is a stage in-house, is it wheelchair accessible?

Is there a place for sign language interpreters to sign during the event?

Is the existing decor inclusive? (And if not, is it changeable?)

Below are a few possible venues for inclusive events in Melbourne:

| VENUE | ADDRESS | CONTACT |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Whitehouse | 672 Bourke Street Melbourne, VIC 3000 | +61 1300 551 433 enquiry@whitehouse-design.edu.au |
| 524 Flinders | 524 Flinders Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000 | +61 416 155 568 events@524flinders.com.au |
| Cargo Hall | 39 S Wharf Promenade South Wharf VIC 3006 | +61 396 828 333 info@melbournecb.com.au |
| One Roof | 77 - 83 City Road Southbank VIC 3006 | +61 415 467 597 hello@oneroofwomen.com |
| Hatchquarter | 207/673 La Trobe Street Docklands VIC 3008 | +61 390 780 368 reception@hatchquarter.com.au |
| Hub Australia | 162 Collins Street Melbourne VIC 3000 | +61 1300 482 611 hello@hubaustralia.com |

TRAINING TOOLS FOR INCLUSION

Create a common framework and shared awareness of best practices for your organisers, staff and facilitators by sharing the [Inclusive Event Training Checklist](#).

MEASURING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AT EVENTS

Inclusion Metrics

It is important to collect data before and after your event in order to understand what is working and where you can improve your inclusion efforts. You can do this by collecting demographic information about your attendees to understand the audience you are reaching and who you might be missing. You can also better understand how effective your inclusion efforts are through assigning measurement metrics to the attendee experience.

Tools for establishing and measuring Inclusion metrics:

- Demographic questions included in event registration
- Follow-up surveys to evaluate impact and attendee experience

Example follow up survey topics:

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. (Your organisation) values diversity
4. I felt safe and respected at the event
5. I could voice a contrary opinion without fear of negative consequences
6. I would refer this community to my friends and colleagues as an inclusive space
7. What is one thing we could do to create a more inclusive culture?

LEARN AND IMPROVE

Remember:

Diversity and Inclusion is a journey, we're all learning. It's okay to make mistakes in the process. Listen and learn from the community and continue to improve.

Congratulations on taking the first step!

RESOURCES

Inclusive Event Training Checklist

| LOCATION | YES | NO | IF NO... | NOTES |
|---|-----|----|--|-------|
| Transportation | | | | |
| Is the event location close to public transportation? | | | | |
| BUILDING ENTRANCE | | | | |
| Is the wheelchair accessible entrance at the same location as the main entrance? | | | | |
| 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 orientation, religion, 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. | |

Inclusive Event Training Checklist

| STAGE & AUDIENCE AREA | YES | NO | IF NO... | NOTES |
|--|-----|----|--|-------|
| Does the stage have a wheelchair ramp? | | | Ask if they have one in storage. If not, you'll have to rent one if needed. Or have your a/v team build one if you are a larger event (Often this is cheaper, just be sure they build it to proper specifications per disability compliance) | |
| 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? (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. | |

Inclusive Event Training Checklist

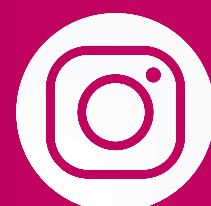
| STAGE & AUDIENCE AREA | YES | NO | IF NO... | NOTES |
|---|-----|----|---|--|
| Is there an area just off stage where a live captioner can sit, and where the TV monitor can project the captions in a way that is visible to the audience? | | | Best practice is to put a monitor to one side of the stage to show live captions from your captioner. | |
| Is there an area at the edge of the stage where a Sign Language interpreter can stand? | | | | |
| Will the Sign Language interpreter be able to be lit onstage at the same time the presenter is lit? | | | Add a spotlight so the Sign Language interpreter can be seen. | |
| RESTROOMS | | | | |
| Are all restrooms accessible for individuals in wheelchairs? | | | Where are the restrooms accessible by individuals in wheelchairs? | |
| Is there more than one set of restrooms? | | | More than one set gives you more flexibility to have one set gender neutral and the other gendered. | |
| Is it possible to make the main restrooms gender neutral? | | | | All gender signage should completely cover pre-existing signage; urinals should be covered or taped off. |
| 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 | YES | NO | IF NO... | NOTES |
|--|-----|----|---|-------|
| Do they have a large TV monitor the live captioner can use? | | | Will need to rent/borrow one. | |
| TRANSITION 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? | | | If not, consider providing free transportation between locations. | |





Visit us for more information about
how to develop inclusive startup ecosystems.



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