

Leading Practices: Event Design

Events and conferences are often areas where there is a lack of diversity, equity and inclusion. To combat this, the DEI Committee gathered resources for recommendations to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion are considered and integrated to the chapter's event design and planning. The goal is for everyone attending PCMA chapter events to feel considered, invited to, and welcomed at all events even before the start of the event. The need for all-inclusivity should be included in all aspects of event design and planning.

Diversity Chart

- Utilizing the full dimensions of the diversity chart (see below) when planning and designing events.



Event Diversity: How to Make Events Inclusive

- Fight your unconscious bias – when designing events consider the individual needs of people from a range of ages, religions, abilities, and ethnicities
- Supply chain – look for local and diverse suppliers
- Improve accessibility – make the event accessible to all; for example, offer reduced fees for students
- Dedicate adequate time on panel selection – intentionally seek out diverse speakers

The State of Inclusion in Meetings & Events

- Select event dates that do not coincide with religious holidays
- Conduct a site visit to determine the accessibility of the destination and the venue
- Discuss with the caterers about inclusivity goals and needs for the event
- Select speakers/presenters that reflect the diversity of the audience you wish to attract
- Coordinate internal planning meetings focused on inclusive event design and planning
- Ensure venues have the following attributes:
 - Accessible parking and ramps near the entrance
 - Doors that are accessible, with curb cuts nearby, and without gravel or grass
 - A clear path of travel once inside the venue
- For large events, a leading practice would be to reserve space for attendees with differing abilities and their guests, or to provide them with early access to the space

A Guide to Planning Inclusive Events

- Consider how you can make your events accessible and engaging to a broad audience
- Audience includes people with a wide array of backgrounds and social identities. Include those based upon race, ethnicity, language, country of origin, religion, political affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, ability, class, age, etc.
- It is necessary to go beyond simply accommodating or acknowledging people's differences, but instead, to create events that are universally designed—accessible to everyone.

- Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. All learning environments can be designed in advance, and in ongoing ways, to reflect the greatest possible array of participants' needs, preferences, and learning styles. Doing so is not just about meeting the needs of people with and without disabilities, but doing so demonstrates greater inclusion of all individuals and groups. Universal Design may not be fully achievable but is, nevertheless, an attitude or approach that is helpful to adopt.

Design Inclusive Meetings

- Design an inclusive event from the very beginning of the planning stage
- Begin your planning with the vision of making your event accessible for everyone and post the steps you are taking in your event marketing information
- Planning committee should have diverse representation
- Budget for interpreters and alternative learning format materials
- Look for venues that are easy and practical to navigate for people with disabilities
- Actively seek and hire suppliers that have diverse ownership or leadership, and with a proven history of inclusive employment practices.
- Menu selection and service styles should significantly affect the inclusiveness of your event. Collect allergy information and dietary restrictions from attendees. Accommodate people with disabilities in banquet and room sets.
- Communicate your plans with your participants and provide opportunities for them to communicate their needs to you. Ask for special needs requests during registration
- Marketing materials and graphics should reflect DEI, large print/braille/captions

Creating More Inclusive Events

- A planning team that is representative of social and cultural diversity will yield events that offer a more inclusive environment, while a planning team that is more homogenous when it comes to backgrounds, experiences and identities will have to work more deliberately to accomplish meaningful outreach and inclusivity
- Program needs to be thoughtfully aligned with your mission to not exclude others
- Educating across cultural boundaries necessitates that sometimes some people will feel foreign to an experience or set of information – but the foreignness must not feel like oppression, exclusion, or condemnation

Sources

- <https://www.pcma.org/7-steps-creating-diverse-inclusive-digital-events/>
- <http://sudcc.syr.edu/documents/InclusiveEventsSeminarsGuide.pdf>
- <https://insights.eventscouncil.org/Full-Article/design-inclusive-meetings>
- <https://www.skidmore.edu/leadership/documents/CreatingInclusiveEvents.pdf>
- <https://universaldesign.ie/what-is-universal-design/>