



LSST
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A Guide to Inclusive Meetings

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A Guide to Inclusive Meetings

The main purpose for holding a large meeting is to gather people together and allow opportunities for all members to share their ideas and thoughts on particular matters or topics. This enables an organization to make informed decisions based on the shared knowledge base of all involved.

But how do we best ensure that meetings are representative of everyone? What steps can we take to ensure that our meetings are both effective and inclusive so that all voices are heard and all ideas and thoughts may be considered?

This guide will highlight all the prerequisite actions to undertake when planning and executing a fully inclusive and collaborative meeting that reflects Rubin standards of accessibility and sustainability.

BEFORE A MEETING

Creating an agenda

- When setting the agenda ensure representation of speakers and chairs across demographic axis. Especially important in a panel situation.
- Once you have determined the agenda for the meeting, **ask ahead** if any support and/or materials are required to assist those who will attend the meetings.
- **Share the agenda in advance** via email or digital platforms. To reduce environmental damage, hard copies should be limited in number and the agenda should be made available online so that attendees can print at home themselves if they wish to. Sharing the agenda will enable others to prepare in advance for the meeting as well as allow them to process the subject matter and topics beforehand.
- The agenda should be **outlined in clear and simple terms** and not couched in ambiguous and convoluted language to offset anxiety and confusion from the start.

Scheduling

- Consider the best time to hold a meeting. Be mindful of cultural and religious events and holidays. Some people have families and may need to adjust their timings. Ask what are the optimal times for meeting as well as inquire if there are any specific preferences from members beforehand. (Times of day/specific days/dates.)

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Representation

- When setting up the organizing committee ensure diversity of participants - this will help ensure the meeting is inclusive as different points of view will be brought up by a diverse group.
- How many people can attend the meeting? If there is an upper limit ensure space is made for underrepresented groups who may register late due to receiving funding late or due to other limitations.
- Dependent care: is there any funding or other support available that would enable those with care duties to participate more fully. This applies to in-person and remote attendees.

Ascribe Roles

To ensure that the meeting runs smoothly, **assign members different roles**. This will help ensure the meeting is both cohesive and effective. Assign these roles in advance so everyone will know what role and capacity they are attending the meeting/session in. These roles may overlap.

- **The Chair** - is effectively **the overseer of the meeting**, the one who lays out the agenda.
- **A Minute Taker**- will **take clear and legible notes** to provide a record and make this available post-meeting. Those who are absent will be able to be kept up to date and informed through such records and notes.
- **A Chat Monitor**- **supervises the online chat** on behalf of virtual participants and alerts on site participants when there are questions and comments.
- **Tech Point Person**- **Resolves tech and connectivity related issues**. If audio/visuals are not working or there are technical issues, this person will be able to help resolve these.
- **Facilitator**- will **keep the meeting on track** by making note of the time spent on various topics and will guide the meeting to stay on course and not diverge onto matters/points unrelated to the agenda. Provide a cheat sheet for their role - see later section.

Regulate Meetings

- Set expectations by issuing a **code of conduct** before the meeting. Attendees should indicate their agreement to abide by this code of conduct during the meeting registration process. Members should expect that the meeting will uphold a safe and professional environment that is **respectful and inclusive to all**. Such conduct will encourage a sense of psychological safety that will enable members to speak up and to fully participate in meetings.
- This code of conduct can be posted along with the agenda via emails and digital platforms as well as a few hard copies so that members know what to expect and how to conduct themselves **before** the meeting takes place. The code of conduct should be laid out in clear, professional, and gender-inclusive language.
- A single summary slide should be used frequently through the event or meeting as a reminder. (example slide content included in this packet)
- There should be at least one CoC contact person that people can voice their concerns to if a potential violation CoC is observed.

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Location

Ensure that the location is accessible and effective for all. Consider the following:

- Parking will allow for those with disabilities to comfortably park as well as disembark with ease? Will there be enough parking spaces for all? Collect this information in the registration form.
- Will participants be able to find the meeting room easily? Are there easy-to-read and clearly visible signs within the building to help others locate the meeting room? Can a simple visual map be provided for members to use? Include this map with the agenda.
- Is the building accessible and safe for those with disabilities? (Are there elevators/ramps and guardrails? Are signs clearly marked out and visible?)
- Are facilities such as nursing rooms, restrooms (toilets) and changing rooms for parents easy to reach within the site? Is there a gender neutral toilet for use by all persons for the comfort of those who identify as non-binary?
- Are there meditation (prayer) or quiet rooms for those who may need to observe religious practices?
- Are there rooms that may be utilized as 'quiet' spaces for neurodivergent individuals and those who may suffer from migraines and light/sound sensitivity? This space will provide some relief for these members while also allowing those who are introverts to be able to recharge peacefully before returning to rejoin a meeting.
- Digital access is online access available and unproblematic? Will there be sufficient equipment for the meeting? (Monitors/computers/white boards/ projectors, etc.) Will connectivity be an issue for hybrid meetings? (For both physically present and online participants.)
- Is the area and venue safe and welcoming toward people of color and marginalized groups such as LGBTQIA? Is it possible to select a venue which is run by marginalized community members in support of such groups and individuals?
- Will it be possible to place a table in the lobby of the venue or outside of the meeting room to provide members of the meeting with badges that identify their preferred pronouns and identify any other information that they may want to share with others? (E.g.Role/Specialization/Name pronunciation.)
- Dietary considerations- consider that the meals should offer a range of options, including those who keep halal/kosher/vegan diets and be mindful to those who may suffer from food allergies. (Participants should specify whether they do suffer from any allergies in advance when asked initially about support/assistance in the meeting.)

DURING A MEETING

To boost effectiveness and ease of access as well as enhance the experience for participants, consider and adapt the following:

Fostering A Safe Environment and Establishing Clear Roles

- At the beginning of the meeting bring up the code of conduct and reinforce with a simple statement that the meeting will be a safe and professional environment as well as inclusive. People should turn off the ringer on phones and other device sounds as they can be triggers for those with low sensory threshold.

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- Identify the roles within the meeting. Remind members who the Chair and Facilitator/Moderator are in order for them to know who to address their issues/complaints/concerns to.
- Foster a culture of inclusivity. Train attendees to be sensitive and aware of the different needs and issues that members might require and experience. A visually appealing and simple reminder of simply paying each other respect and attention before/during/and after meetings of each other's needs should benefit all members.
- Ask about seating preferences. Some people like to be able to sit up front in order to better their focus or to be able to see clearly.
- Note time constraints. Let people know that they have a certain amount of time allotted to speak/share their points before moving on.
- Captions should be used for people that might have difficulty hearing or understanding accents - this technology is still developing.

Presentation and Materials

Consider providing the below pointers to presenters ahead of time:

- Ensure graphics and images are clear and visible to all. Look at the imagery used- does it contain people of color and show those from the LGBTQIA community and represent disabled people? Try to use materials inclusive of marginalized groups.
- If using a map use the AuthaGraph map that is representative of the real proportions of countries in the world.
- Is the text in presentations/documents gender neutral? Is the language respectful and appropriate?
- Utilize plain and simple format with documents. These should be in light and plain colors. Ensure that font size and visibility are addressed. Font size should be not too small and not too large but allow for text to be easily read by all. Ensure that colors selected will stand out for color blind participants. (Blue and orange, for example, are a color blind friendly palette choice.) The Rubin color palette is colorblind tested.
- Describe what images and graphs or charts intend to convey and express. This helps those who are visually impaired and would appreciate a simple and clear depiction of imagery/slides and data presented visually.
- Avoid flashing lights and loud sounds within presentations.
- Encourage presenters to make their presentation available ahead of time for those who might need to have the material in front of them for accessibility, English might not be their primary language or other reasons.
- A standard slide (proposed content included in this packet) to be used at the start of each presentation to remind audience of the code of conduct.

Key Points for The Facilitator

- Provide different means of engaging- younger generations may favor text based communication versus speaking up- as might introverted personalities and neurodivergent thinkers. Allow for members in the meeting room to be able to login on electronic devices and post their ideas/thoughts

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- and share their opinions (even anonymously) by using the online chat forum that virtual participants are utilizing or provide a digital platform that will allow them to do so while in the meeting.
- Consider the power dynamics within the group. Who is more likely to dominate the conversation? Who will not contribute as much? Can you delegate domineering personalities to roles such as Minute Taker in order for others to be given a chance to speak up/share their ideas and thoughts?
 - There may be situations where some individuals are unable to get their viewpoint across due to louder, more domineering personalities. In such circumstances, the facilitator may consider calling upon members by name to offer an opportunity to voice their opinion.
 - Permit online participants to simply use audio or text if they prefer not to have their camera 'on' throughout the meeting. Neurodivergent types as well as those with ADD may become overwhelmed by having the camera on during the meeting and feel unable to process all of what is being stated with so much social/sensory overload and the need to self-monitor themselves.
 - Allow for breaks within the meeting so that members are able to reset and refresh themselves, this can be particularly useful for neurodiverse members.
 - Allot time for a recap: This will be helpful for those with auditory or attention deficit issues. It will also reinforce the contributions made by all.
 - Allot a question and answer session toward the end of the meeting/session. Participants may determine the questions. Participants could also share their questions on the agenda *before* they attend the meeting but may also share them during the meeting in the Q&A session which will be given with respect to time constraints. Questions from participants can also be shared via email/digital platforms after the meeting too and members should be reminded of this at the beginning of the meeting.
 - Collect feedback from participants regarding issues and concerns as well as on inclusion and participation.

AFTER A MEETING

Make sure to follow up with participants.

- ✓ Make available presentation materials/recordings to all participants for easy reference. Try to do this within a 24 hour framework.
- ✓ Ask participants feedback about any tasks that they were assigned to during the meeting.
- ✓ Inquire about how the meeting went-ask participants if they have any suggestions or thoughts relating to it and if it could be improved upon and how for future meetings. See survey section below.
- ✓ Reflect on what could be improved upon and what may be modeled for future practice and what more may need to be learned about. This should be done soon after the meeting and then again when exit survey results are in.

EVENT CHECKLIST

Event Concept

- ✓ Scheduling: Be mindful of religious and cultural events when scheduling a meeting or event.
- ✓ Consider any obligations that attendees may need to meet such as dependent care.

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- ✓ Consider vendor/supplier diversity.
- ✓ Are the speakers/moderators people from diverse/varied backgrounds?
- ✓ Ensure that the venue has sufficient technology and equipment to make the meeting accessible and ensure your budget is sufficient.
- ✓ Create badges or labels for the different roles of speakers in meetings/events: i.e. Moderator, Minute Taker, Chat Monitor

Registration

- ✓ Are there any requirements for a translator or sign language interpreter.
- ✓ Do any individual attendees have a service animal? What will they require?
- ✓ Do attendees have any dietary restrictions?
- ✓ Request attendees in advance to relay any specific request that they might like to have met.
- ✓ Provide clear and easy instructions for registering and ensure that there is a space for attendees to make requests.
- ✓ Provide space for registrants to specify pronouns but also the choice to opt out of specifying them. Pronouns should be on badges in large easy to see type.
- ✓ Distribute the code of conduct (CoC) at registration as well as online or with the agenda to set the tone for the meeting or event.
- ✓ Solicit and assign a CoC contact.

Hybrid/Online Meetings

- ✓ Ensure online connectivity is reliable and functions well for virtual/hybrid event/meeting attendees.
- ✓ Provide ability (equipment) to record the event/meeting. But allow individual presenters to opt out being recorded not just in appearance but also voice.
- ✓ Distribute saved chat records for attendees after the event/meeting.
- ✓ Share presentations before and after the event.
- ✓ Ask speakers to add subtitles to their videos and for those who live- stream to also provide live captions.
- ✓ Consider time zones when defining the agenda and dates for virtual attendees.
- ✓ Ensure that venue audio and visuals work before the event/meeting.
- ✓ Ensure attendees who are virtual choose plain backgrounds with soft, neutral colors so those with sensory issues are able to focus easily.
- ✓ Offer a text-based means of communication that a chat monitor may be able to regulate and oversee for attendees.
- ✓ Allow attendees to be able to choose to turn off their cameras, using audio only.

Location and Set-Up

- ✓ Is the venue accessible and safe for all? (Those with mobility issues or visual impairment?)
- ✓ Is it well-served by alternative means of transport? (Trains, buses, etc.)
- ✓ Is there sufficient parking?
- ✓ Check how many designated handicap spaces there are.

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- ✓ Consider ease of mobility for those with mobility issues or a wheelchair. Are there stairs? Ramps? Elevators?
- ✓ Is the venue spacious enough to accommodate wheelchair users?
- ✓ Ensure space for wheelchairs mobility scooters at tables - choose low tables.
- ✓ Does the venue provide a meditation or prayer room?
- ✓ Ask if all-gendered or gender-neutral toilet facilities can be made available.
- ✓ Are there parent/childcare/nursing room facilities?
- ✓ Use inclusive signage that is legible and visible for all.
- ✓ Ensure that there is enough seating for all.
- ✓ Consider reserving seating for the hearing and visually impaired.
- ✓ Is the layout of the venue simple and easy to follow?
- ✓ Ensure there are no frequent loud noises and overly bright lighting for those with sensory issues.
- ✓ Are the tables and chairs arranged in a format that provides for optimal visibility? (Can everyone see the speakers and are participants able to see one other?)
- ✓ Do an on-site inspection before the event/meeting to ensure that all elevators are functional and to assess ease of accessibility for all.
- ✓ Provide a clear map and simple directions for attendees when you send the agenda.
- ✓ Set up a pre-event Q&A drop in session 10 days prior to the event. This will help anyone that might be new or anxious to overcome any uncertainties and build confidence by getting their questions answered in a casual, supportive environment. Plus, it's a great way to make everyone feel more comfortable and connected before the big event!

Food and Drink

- ✓ Consider religious and personal preferences when it comes to providing food and beverages. (Are there halal, kosher and vegan options on the menu?) Request attendees to submit any food restriction information at registration.
- ✓ Share menus, if possible, in advance.
- ✓ Ensure that food items (on menus or at buffet tables) use identifiers that mark out the item and the ingredients at buffets.
- ✓ Try to hire local caterers.
- ✓ Consider hiring suppliers/caterers from minority groups.

Materials

- ✓ Select materials that make use of imagery that represent a variety of individuals from all backgrounds to foster and promote a sense of inclusivity.
- ✓ Prepare a creating accessible slides cheat sheet for presenters and distribute ahead of time. See section on [presentation and materials](#).
- ✓ Prepare a slide for presenters to include that provide CoC reminders - example content to include
 1. CoC contact for reporting in case anything is observed or experienced
 2. Greeting preference if specified should be respected
 3. Mask wearing or not should be respected

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4. Etiquette for in person and remote attendees such as silent phones, platform for asking questions,
- ✓ Ensure that materials used are accessible for all, hard copy or digital.
 - ✓ Employ fonts that are large and clear to see for all attendees, especially those who may have sensory issues. Choose colors and backgrounds that do not jar and impede reading or viewing.
 - ✓ Are materials compatible with software used by people with disabilities?
 - ✓ Auto-caption any promotional videos with text.
 - ✓ Consider the placement of monitors and projector screens. Is everyone able to see a presentation?
 - ✓ Ensure that materials are selected with diversity in mind.
 - ✓ Share materials beforehand so that attendees are able to familiarize themselves with the material, make notes and attend the meeting well prepared.
 - ✓ Include text-based descriptions of informational imagery. (Graphs, charts, etc.)
 - ✓ Provide stickers that attendees can use for their greeting preference

Exit Survey

- ✓ Include this as part of the overall organization and not an afterthought
- ✓ Distribute it immediately when the meeting or at the beginning of the last day and distribute across as many channels as possible
- ✓ Ask specific questions about diversity and inclusion aspects that the organizing committee put in place, these should feed into a cycle of continuous improvement.
- ✓ Capture feedback about in-person and remote experiences.
- ✓ Example topics on inclusion focussed questions for exit survey
 - a. We aimed to make this meeting inclusive - do you think we achieved that?
 - b. Pre meeting Q/A
 - c. Nursing/Parents room
 - d. Quiet room
 - e. Gender-neutral restroom
 - f. Food provided for dietary restrictions
 - g. Child care support
 - h. Hybrid attendee support
 - i. Feedback on presentation inclusiveness (especially color blind)
 - j. Feedback if you had American Sign Language interpretation
 - k. General feedback on accommodations for those with disabilities

Resources and References

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