

Delivering Inclusive Activities

So you've planned your activity, what next?

Even the most well-planned activity has times where you need to make choices and changes for inclusion on the go. Being open to the needs of your audience may require you to respond in the moment. Creating productive environments where your audience and contributors can have useful, meaningful interactions takes thought and practice, continuing to be an area of learning no matter how many times you've done it before.



Top tips: keeping your space accessible

The first place to start is the physical or online access of your venue:

- In the lead up to and on the day **check for local changes** to entry points, public transport, signage and diversions and let attendees know.
- For online activities, are there any **issues with internet access or platform outages?**
- **Check routes** – lifts are working, any ramps have been put out, all the doors you need are openable, and someone knows how to do it.
- Make sure your venue is **well signposted**, with signs to the toilets and any other required rooms.
- **Make sure everyone knows** when the breaks will be, how to move in and out of different workshop or breakout rooms, and how to contact you in case of an issue.

Breaking through invisible barriers

It is important to think about how entry to your activity creates barriers to access or welcomes your audiences:

- Is there someone to greet them on arrival?
- How easy is it for someone to prove they've registered for the activity? What if they are having trouble with technology or can't access their emails?
- Are there bag checks in place? Check how these are being managed, and that there are allowances if someone needs more time or space to move through the process.
- Is there a member of staff visible for someone to report issues to? This might be one of your team, the venue team or security staff depending on the activity. In online spaces this might be through a private chat message.
- Ensure any staff at the entry points have been briefed on your expectations with respect to how they speak to anyone trying to get in, how they will use titles and pronouns or ask for information.
- All staff involved in the activity should know how to access additional materials such as large print guides, where the toilets and other facilities are and most importantly, how to contact the staff member in charge of access requests.



Making changes as you go

You can't predict every need that might come up, so be prepared to make changes on the day. Things that can help with this are:

- **Make someone in your team the designated person to handle access requests.** They should be well-briefed and empowered to respond, with access to any relevant activity materials. For in-person activities, they will need time to familiarise themselves with the venue and facilities.
- **Be open to ideas about what is possible;** if you can't make a particular change last minute then there may be another way around the same problem.
- **Remember that the individual is the expert in their needs,** you are their link to the activity and venue; between you most problems can be solved.

- **Sometimes there will be accommodations you are unable to make.** Whilst this isn't ideal, your audience members will understand, particularly if you have tried to help. An apology and a commitment to doing better next time are important.

It can be difficult to be asked for last minute accommodations, but try to remember that someone asking for an alteration doesn't mean you got it wrong, it just means they've identified a way their experience could be improved.



Top tips: inclusive environments

- **Check the space is well set-up** – think about lighting, sound levels and the room temperature.
- **Be clear on photography/recording** – make people aware of this through signs and your introduction. Who can they tell if they don't want to be included?
- **Be inclusive with your language** – avoid jargon and acronyms.
- **Have creative access options for creative activities** – can people touch objects and try on costumes if they are interested in the look and feel of them?
- **Help to provide visual or neurodiverse access** through printing materials in a variety of sizes. For online activities it can help to distribute materials in advance.

Making room for everyone

Sometimes even the best planned activity may have an audience that is having trouble taking on the tasks ahead of them. You may sometimes find that you have to adapt your approaches to the people in the activity without them asking you for accommodations directly. Some things to consider in these situations:

- Are there other resources available to you that might help the audience to engage? It may be that different materials, sounds, or spaces can help.



- You could consider enabling drawn, written, or recorded responses to help more individuals participate.
- Is someone taking up lots of space in a task where marginalised voices are struggling to be heard? Don't be afraid to direct tasks or conversations to specific individuals.
- If you do direct tasks to individuals, then try to give them some warning so they can plan a response (e.g. 'Tom wants to ask a question now, but Ruhena, I'd love to hear your thoughts after that').
- Can you create a space for responses after the event, through social media or a blog post for example, where the conversation can continue?



Reflection

Equity, diversity and inclusion are areas in which we never stop learning. Take the time after your event to review how you did, what you'd like to do better next time, and any learning you might want to do in between.

If there were accommodations you could not make, why was this the case? What would you need to be able to do this next time? What worked well that you think others might appreciate knowing about? This cycle of doing and reflecting will help you continue to improve the quality of your engagement activities.

Handling difficult situations

Where obviously harmful statements are being made or actions being taken then you may need to intervene or take action. The 5Ds of being an active bystander can help you decide what to do. In all cases safety is your priority!

> Distraction

If you are concerned that harm may be being done but you are unsure of intentions, or trying not to let a situation escalate, then **distraction** helps by moving the focus away from the person being harmed.

Try bringing in additional voices, ideally changing the direction of any discussion. Be prepared to follow up with the people involved, or to ask a colleague to, as soon as possible.

“I’m going to move the discussion along, so can we all come back together as a group...”

> Direct action

If you are sure someone is being harmful with intent, then call it out directly, and let your attendees know this won’t be tolerated in your spaces through **direct action**.

“The language you are using is not appropriate, so if you would like to stay I will need you to stop saying that.”

> Delegate

You can also **delegate** and bring in help from somewhere else. You might ask a colleague to go and support someone who has been harmed while you de-escalate the situation. You might ask someone else to make a note of what is happening, or to take over leading your activity for a moment.

“Could you go and sit with the person while I try to de-escalate the situation in here?”

> Delay

In some circumstances you may not feel it’s appropriate to take action at the time, may not realise you need to, or may not be safe to, and so **delay** until after the activity has come to an end. In these cases you can do something at a later time. Speak to the person who was harmed and see if they need any further support.

“Hello, would you like to have a quick chat about what happened earlier?”

> Document

In all cases however, it is really useful to **document** what happened so you can recall details or pass on information at a later date. You could do this through making a note on your phone or on paper, emailing a colleague, making a voice note or video, or taking a picture. Remember to log the date, place and time, and any details you have of the people involved. Offer this information to the person who was harmed in case they need it.