

Inclusify Your Conference

▶ Take the conference inclusion questionnaire...

Scores of 0-25. Your conference is really quite minimal in its use of inclusive practices. Here are some ideas to get you started.

Score of 25-50. Your conference is paying attention to inclusive practices but there is even more room to grow. Here are some ideas to move to the next level.

Score of 51-75. Your conference is thinking about inclusion and inclusive practices. There is always room to grow, so with your head start you might consider these additional practices.

▶ 5 Steps to Inclusify your Conference

1| Look at yourself first

Examine your meeting materials (website, ads, programs). Try to increase the representation of diversity in those materials. The goal is not to be dishonest about the makeup of your conference attendees. Ensure that you are still showing pictures of actual conference attendees, but you can be aspirational in how much diversity you show. What do you want to look like? Also, consider the language on your written materials. Are you inclusive of different pronouns and genders? Look at your giveaways (SWAG). Are there things that everyone would want? Consider whether your leadership team, conference organizers, etc. are diverse. If not, that could be a good place to start your efforts.



2| Be intentional about creating diversity

Consider where you advertise your conference and who those outlets are reaching. If those places do not have diversity, find additional places to recruit from. Actively recruit diverse conference attendees and speakers. They will open new networks and add new perspectives. Ensure that your panels and sessions include different perspectives and views. Check to be sure that you do not have bias that is keeping diverse talent from getting into the conference. Are you transparent about how speakers are chosen? For submissions, do you use blind, peer-review submission practices?



3| Remove Barriers

In examining inclusion at academic conferences, I found there were often barriers to participation in the conference that could be removed to create more inclusive conferences. For example, parents might be more likely to participate in conferences if there were childcare or nursing moms might find it easier to attend if there were designated pumping rooms or nursing spaces. But it is not just parents. Conferences can be quite expensive, so whenever possible I suggest offering financial support for those who cannot afford attendance. When I was a grad student I 'volunteered' to run the conference check-in table in exchange for my conference dues. Further, do you ensure that your conference is accessible to persons with disabilities? I have noticed that the computerized check in stations are too high for persons in wheelchairs to reach and few conferences that I have seen offer listening devices for those who are hard of hearing,



4| Treat people well when they get there

Consider starting conference employee resource groups (LGBTQ alliance, women, people of color) and mentoring programs for diverse members or first time conference attendees. Include conference sessions focused on diversity and inclusion as a great way to get the conversation started. Create an inclusion task forces with powerful, high profile allies as a way to give attendees support and a voice. Find ways to be sure that everyone has a place to eat lunch and connect with others. You can try community tables with free lunch to encourage new people to get to know each other and no one has to have that awkward, what am I going to do for lunch feeling.



5| Update your culture

So many common conference practices were designed in the 1980s. But in the 2020s we are past the conference culture of heavy drinking and debauchery (or at least we should be). Meetings should not be held in hotel rooms but instead should be in public and professional spaces. No one wants to be at a conference where bullying and harassment is rampant and heavy drinking and skeezy hotel rooms just don't cut it. Be sure that you have an anti-harassment policy that is enforced formally and informally through allies and bystanders who are willing to step in when they see bad behavior. But that is just the minimum. Consider how people get invited to socials. Are they private and exclusive by-invite-only kinds of spaces? Who is not getting invited into those spaces and consider what they are missing. Can you redesign those social events to make those more accessible to everyone. The goal is to ensure that everyone who makes the effort to attend the conference has equal networking and inclusion opportunity.

