

Accessible Event Guidelines

Understanding Inclusive Events

In an increasingly diverse and interconnected world, the importance of creating inclusive events cannot be overstated. An inclusive event is one that ensures all individuals, regardless of their background, abilities, or identity, feel welcomed, respected, and valued. It seeks to accommodate the various needs of participants, fostering an environment where everyone can fully engage and contribute. Inclusivity in event planning goes beyond mere accessibility—it is about creating a culture of belonging that allows all attendees to feel comfortable, supported, and empowered.

Why Make an Event Inclusive?

- > **Representation Matters:** Inclusive events acknowledge and celebrate diversity in all its forms, including but not limited to race, gender, age, ability, cultural background, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. By ensuring that everyone is represented, inclusive events create a space where individuals from various communities feel seen and heard.
- > **Equal Access:** Accessibility is a key component of inclusivity. Making events accessible to people with disabilities or those facing other barriers—such as financial constraints, language differences, or geographic limitations—ensures that no one is left out. Equal access to opportunities, information, and participation is a fundamental human right.
- > **Encouraging Creativity and Innovation:** Diverse perspectives lead to better problem-solving, creativity, and innovation. When people from various backgrounds and experiences collaborate, they bring unique ideas and approaches to the table. An inclusive event nurtures these diverse viewpoints, making the event richer and more impactful.
- > **Fostering Positive Social Impact:** Inclusivity is not just a matter of politeness—it is essential for social change. By prioritising inclusivity, event organisers help to break down barriers, reduce discrimination, and promote mutual understanding and respect among different groups.

- > **Legal and Ethical Responsibility:** Creating inclusive and accessible events is not only a moral imperative but also a legal requirement under various federal and state laws. At Charles Darwin University (CDU), we are committed to upholding the principles of inclusivity and diversity, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background or abilities, have equal access to opportunities and are able to fully participate in university-related events.

Guidelines for Hosting Accessible and Inclusive In-Person Meetings and Events

Preparation

- > **Disability Awareness Training:** Ensure all staff complete mandatory Disability Standards and Awareness Training (available on e-centre) to foster an inclusive and accessible environment. *Students do not require access to this training.*
- > **Inclusive Planning:** Involve people with disabilities in the planning process where appropriate, ensuring their perspectives and needs are considered from the outset.
- > **Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs):** Offer Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) to *all CDU staff and students*, regardless of whether they have a known disability, to ensure safety and preparedness in emergencies.

Venue Accessibility

- > Ensure the venue is wheelchair accessible, including ramps, automatic doors, and accessible bathrooms.
- > Check that entrances and pathways are clear of obstacles.
- > Confirm adequate signage in large fonts and contrasting colours for easy navigation.
- > Verify accessible parking near the venue entrance and have this information available to attendees.

Public Transport Accessibility

- > Provide details on accessible public transport options (buses, trains) or any shuttle services available.
- > Share information on accessible transport stops near the venue.

Registration and Communication

- > Include a question on the registration form regarding possible adjustments needed (e.g., wheelchair access, hearing support, dietary needs).
- > Clearly communicate that participants can request accommodations and provide accessible contact details (email/phone).
- > Offer multiple registration methods (email, phone, online form) to support communication preferences.

Accessible Materials

- > Share event materials (agendas, presentations) in accessible formats (large print, high contrast, digital formats, braille).
- > Ensure digital content is accessible, including captions or transcripts for videos/slides, and compatible with assistive technology.
- > Provide a contact for attendees who require materials in alternative formats before the event.
- > Provide a social story prior to the event, ideally 2 weeks in advance. This allows attendees to know what to expect and plan accordingly.

Language Support

- > Arrange for Auslan interpreters or captioning services if required and inform attendees in advance.

Dietary Needs and Accommodation

- > Ask about dietary requirements during registration, including allergies, intolerances, and cultural preferences.
- > Clearly communicate food options and ensure catering is accommodating of dietary restrictions.

During the Event

Signage and Navigation

- > Provide clear signage directing participants to accessible entrances, bathrooms, seating, quiet spaces, sensory spaces, and exits.
- > Offer event maps with large text and good colour contrast.

Seating Arrangements

- > Ensure seating arrangements accommodate wheelchairs and mobility devices.
- > Provide designated seating for those needing additional support or an interpreter.

Introduction and Acknowledgment

- > Acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and extend this acknowledgment to all the regions where attendees are joining from.
- > Introduce yourself by name and pronouns, encouraging others to do the same.

Microphone and Audio Support

- > Ensure all speakers use microphones for clear communication.
- > Provide assistive listening devices (such as hearing loops) for attendees with hearing impairments.

Communication and Participation

- > Encourage participants to speak one at a time to ensure clarity and fairness in communication.
- > Provide multiple ways to participate (spoken, written, or via an event app).
- > Allow attendees to contribute via spoken or written questions, ensuring all voices are heard.

Clear and Accessible Language

- > Use clear, simple language and avoid jargon.
- > Speak slowly and repeat key points.
- > Describe visual materials (slides, charts) verbally for participants who are blind or have low vision.

Breaks and Rest Areas

- > Schedule regular breaks to prevent fatigue.
- > Provide quiet spaces for sensory breaks, if needed.

After the Event

Feedback on Accessibility

- > Ask for participant feedback on accessibility, seeking suggestions for improvement.
- > Use surveys or follow-up emails to gather input.
- > Provide QR codes for feedback forms in presentation slides and/or on printed materials.

Share Accessible Materials

- > Distribute accessible versions of event materials (recordings, transcripts) in multiple formats (electronic, audio, large print).

Address Accessibility Concerns

- > Implement procedures to review and address feedback on accessibility issues.
- > Communicate any improvements or changes for future events.

Additional Considerations

Emergency Planning

- > Ensure emergency plans account for attendees with disabilities, such as evacuation plans for those using mobility devices.
- > Have trained staff on hand to assist with emergency procedures.

Cultural Sensitivity

- > Be mindful of cultural differences, ensuring the event is welcoming to people from diverse backgrounds.