Accessible Event Guidelines

Hosting Accessible and Inclusive Online Meetings and Events

CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA

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Acknowledgement of Country

Charles Darwin University acknowledges and pays respect to the Elders both past and present of all First Nations people upon whose lands CDU campuses and centres are located.

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.

The Importance of Inclusive Online Events

In the context of online events, inclusivity becomes even more critical. While virtual events eliminate some physical barriers, they can still create significant challenges for participants with disabilities, limited technology, or differing levels of technical expertise. Here are some specific reasons why inclusivity is vital for online events:

Access to Technology:

Not everyone has access to high-speed internet, advanced devices, or the necessary software to engage in online events. Offering multiple ways to participate (e.g., dial-in options, live captioning) helps overcome these barriers.

Assistive Technologies:

Online platforms can integrate assistive technologies, such as screen readers, speech-to-text services, and closed captioning, which help individuals with disabilities participate. Ensuring these features are available and functional can make a huge difference.

Global Participation:

Online events often attract attendees from diverse locations, with different languages and cultural contexts. Making provisions for translation services, interpreters, or subtitling can ensure everyone feels included.

Flexibility:

The virtual nature of online events means participants may need flexibility in timing or format. Offering recordings, transcripts, and different formats for materials can ensure that everyone can access the content at a time and in a way that suits them best.

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.

Survey Attendees for Accessibility Needs:

When sending invitations or promoting the event, ask participants about any accessibility requirements to ensure accommodations are made.

Provide Multiple Dial-In Options:

Offer alternative methods for joining the event, including phone numbers, for participants with limited internet access.

Accessible Documents:

When sharing materials such as presentations, ensure text is large, fonts are legible, there is sufficient colour contrast, and minimal imagery is used. Text should also be consistent in colour, size, and font across documents, with formatting such as bold, italics, or underlining used sparingly.

Understand Platform Accessibility Features:

Research the accessibility features of the meeting platform (e.g., Microsoft Teams offers live closed captioning). Take full advantage of these tools to enhance accessibility.

Test Audio and Visual Equipment:

Prior to the event, check the quality of audio-visual equipment, microphones, and cameras. If available, use a headset for clearer sound.

Share Accessible Materials Early:

Distribute agenda and materials in accessible formats (e.g., Word documents with plain fonts and high colour contrast) at least 48 hours before the event.

Ensure Media Accessibility:

For videos and multimedia, ensure captions are available and that content is accessible to all attendees.

Consider Formal Captioning or Interpreting Services:

Evaluate the need for professional captioning services or Auslan interpreters.

Announce Recording and Transcription Plans:

Inform participants in advance if the event will be recorded or transcribed, and request consent.

During the Meeting or Event

Acknowledge Country:

Acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and extend this acknowledgment to all the regions where attendees are joining from.

Ensure Proper Lighting and Visibility:

Position yourself to be well-lit and ensure your face is visible. Avoid obstructing your mouth when speaking to accommodate speech-reading needs.

Introduce Yourself Regularly:

Say your name each time before you speak, and encourage other speakers to do the same.

Be Patient with Delays:

Allow extra time for interpretation, captioning, or delayed responses from participants, especially for those using assistive technologies.

Tailor Accommodations to Pre-Event Registrations:

Implement any necessary adjustments based on pre-registration feedback about accessibility needs.

Manage Background Noise:

Ask participants to mute their microphones when not speaking to minimise background noise.

Use Clear and Accessible Language:

Avoid jargon and be sure that visuals are simple and easy to understand. Provide image descriptions for important graphs or pictures and describe the speaker's appearance when relevant.

Announce Recordings:

Remind participants if the event is being recorded or transcribed.

Encourage One Speaker at a Time:

Encourage participants to wait for others to finish speaking, allowing for a smoother and more respectful conversation.

Clarify Unclear Comments:

The host or moderator should repeat or paraphrase unclear questions or statements to ensure everyone understands.

Microphone Placement:

Ensure that all speakers in hybrid settings are near a microphone or repeat their statements clearly for the benefit of remote participants.

Provide Breaks:

Schedule a 5-minute break every hour to maintain focus and comfort for all participants.

Post-Meeting or Event

Distribute Accessible Recordings and Transcripts:

Share captioned recordings and transcripts, when available, to ensure all participants can access event content.

Seek Feedback on Accessibility:

Follow up with participants to gather feedback on the accessibility measures you implemented and use their input to improve future events.

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You make CDU

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