



## INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY EVENT CHECKLIST

### OVERVIEW

What does it take to hold an event that can include a diverse group of people? Different people have different needs—sometimes they’re even conflicting...so how do we create meaningful and inclusive gatherings?

“In all my gatherings, whether a board meeting or a birthday party, I have come to believe that it is the way a group is gathered that determines what happens in it and how successful it is, the little design choices you can make to help your gathering soar.”

- Priya Parker, *The Art of Gathering*

The following checklist are some things to keep in mind to create spaces that more folks can fully participate in.

### WHEN TO USE

Whether you are hosting a back-to-school bookbag drive, a community listening session, or a cookout, we can’t leave inclusion up to chance. It starts with good planning, so grab this checklist *before* you’ve decided on all the details. This list is most relevant for in-person gatherings, though many of the same principles apply for virtual events. For hybrid events, check out our blog from the early days of ‘hybrid meetings’ in 2021: “[Don’t Make the Same Mistake: Lessons from Our First Hybrid Meetings.](#)”

### HOW TO USE

Use this checklist as a starting point for conversations with your planning team to get curious about what could make your community event more inclusive.

**DISCLAIMER:** This checklist is not comprehensive! You will likely make mistakes, miss details, and learn from it. Check out the [Before and After Action Review Tool](#) for a way to set out clear goals and then reflect on what actually happened.

Here’s a place to start:



## Mindset

- ❑ *Relationships first* - at the end of the day, we gather because humans were made to do so. Ensure that the environment you create fosters connection and nurtures new and existing relationships.
- ❑ *Purpose* - Priya Parker writes in the Art of Gathering, "There are so many good reasons for coming together that often we don't know precisely why we are doing so." Commit to a clear, sharp purpose for your event.
- ❑ *Adapt* - all the planning in the world will not make you immune to things going awry. Be prepared to adapt to participants' needs and adjust along the way.
- ❑ *Practice not perfect* - creating more inclusive spaces often means going against the grain of how our society was built to work...give yourself grace and commit to the practice of creating inclusive spaces rather than expecting perfection.

## Scheduling

- ❑ Schedule your event far enough in advance for community members to plan and participate (generally a minimum of 1-2 months)
- ❑ Send a calendar invite to any attendees you have email addresses for
- ❑ Use time intentionally - we live in an increasingly busy world. Be clear about the purpose of your event and how you want to use the time
- ❑ Avoid conflicts with holidays including religious celebrations (e.g. fasting during Ramadan, Rosh Hashanah, Diné new year)
- ❑ If the time of your event overlaps with a common mealtime, provide a full, nutritious, culturally nourishing meal

## Accessibility

- ❑ Schedule breaks - no longer than 1-2 hours sitting in one place
- ❑ Always use microphones in larger rooms
- ❑ Be ready to respond to requests for:
  - Closed Captioning - for audiovisual presentations and/or online events
  - Simultaneous language interpretation with interpretation devices so all may participate in the language of their heart (request at least 2 weeks in advance)\*

\*This type of interpretation is different than separating participants who do not speak English from the group; instead, you provide devices for every participant to speak and listen to folks in another language. Check out "[What is Language Justice?](#)" from the Community Language Coop to learn more.

  - ASL interpretation
  - A private space for lactation or breastfeeding



- A space to participate in midday prayers or religious ritual
- A quiet, low-sensory safe space with low light, noise, and smell
- ADA and gender-inclusive bathrooms are available (or venue is willing to adapt some restrooms to be “all-gender”)
- There are accessible parking spots, accessible ramps at the main entrance, a working entrance button, working elevators, and wide doors and hallways for wheelchair users
- Provide a map of parking or event space
- Allow people to move around to stim (self- soothe, self-regulate) or pace and offer fidget toys, play dough, coloring, or other self-regulation tools
- Set up the room so everyone can see the front or presenter, and people in wheelchairs are not separated or only can fit in the back
- Provide a variety of seating options (different sizes, chairs without arms, height of back, comfortable, etc.)
- Think through and communicate a COVID safety policy (see more at [Practicing Inclusion in the Time of COVID](#))

### Communication

- Use multiple forms of communication to get the word out about your event and take into consideration the cultural appropriateness of the channel (social media, flyers, email, WhatsApp, etc.)
- Have a point of contact and share their email or phone number in communication - provide an option to reach out if there are any further requests or needs
- Include accessibility information of your event in communications (see above)
- Send out reminders for the event over text, email, or other communication platform
- Use nametags and provide pronoun stickers or invite attendees to write pronouns
- Provide printed materials in multiple languages and with high-contrast colors and large font
- Provide wayfinding signs in multiple languages to direct people to the room the event is in, the bathroom, or other spaces
- Provide materials digitally in advance
- Follow up and provide an opportunity to receive feedback

### Food

- Plan to provide or ask folks for their needs around gluten-free, dairy-free, vegetarian, vegan, kosher, or halal options (consider the most culturally appropriate options, while also trying not to make assumptions about what folks will or won't eat)



- Clearly label all food/ingredients and keep specialized options separate if food is prepared in the same kitchen
- When possible, solicit diverse and locally owned caterers for your events.

### Childcare

- Whenever possible, provide paid childcare or create an environment where kids are welcome to be in the space
- Provide materials, activities, or toys for children to have on site

### Get Creative

It is likely unreasonable to expect that this checklist is 100% complete for every event—it's a lot of extra work to create inclusive space in an inequitable environment (remember...practice, not perfect)! Get creative about how you can meet folks' needs: put a gender-inclusive bathroom sign over the single-stall family restroom, book an extra hotel room for a nursing space, host a potluck, and ask for dietary needs instead of catering. For many groups, there may be limits that you're working within—space, time, money—so get clear with your event planning team who your core audience is and what would make the greatest impact to create a meaningful experience for them.

Finally, though it may sound corny, have fun! No one will want to change the world if they can't have a great time doing it.

## COMMUNITY LEARNING MODEL

### Include

Ensure the various people, perspectives and systems involved in the work are engaged in the process.

This Inclusive Event Checklist is a tool for the Include phase of the Community Learning Model. To learn more about tools for dialogue and the other areas of the Community Learning Model, visit [civiccanopy.org/clm](http://civiccanopy.org/clm).

