

PREFACE

The University of Massachusetts is a diverse institution that attracts students, faculty, and staff from a wide variety of backgrounds and social identities. This includes identities that are based on race, ethnicity, language, country of origin, religion, political affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, disability, class, age, and more. Therefore, it is important that event planners consider how they can make their events accessible and engaging to a wide audience.

To successfully plan events that are inclusive for our community, it is necessary to think beyond simple accommodations or acknowledgements, and to instead create events that are designed to be universally accessible to everyone in our community.

We believe that it is important to plan inclusive events from the very beginning and throughout the planning process to ensure that events are inclusive and accessible to as much of our campus community as possible. This can be used to guide your event planning team in centering accessibility and inclusion throughout each step of your planning process, from beginning to end.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Use this guide as a tool and reference to help you think about and plan events at UMass Amherst. It is intended to help you to plan events that are inclusive and accessible to the diverse people who make up our community and intended to be flexible and adaptable to your specific event and circumstances, and to help you to meet the needs of the people you serve.

WHAT THIS GUIDE DOES NOT DO

This guide should not be used as a simple to-do list. Each step in the event planning process requires consideration and discussion with your event planning team.

This guide should not be used as a checklist after an event has already been planned. Using this as a last-minute checklist will not help an event to be more inclusive.

It is important to note that this guide is not exhaustive and may not be applicable to all situations. It is up to you and your event planning committee to adapt this guide for your specific event.

This guide is for use when planning events and should not be used to plan course curriculum or other types of materials.

DEFINITIONS

An Event is defined as any extracurricular university experience (activity, workshop, training, panel, speaker, field trip, discussion group, etc.) for any university audience (students, staff, faculty, alumni, community) large or small. Events can be in-person, virtual through a platform such as Zoom, or have both in-person and virtual components.

An Inclusive Event is an event where all participants feel welcome and supported. An event must be accessible to be inclusive.

An Accessible Event is an event that can be comfortably attended by everyone who would want to attend the event. Accessible event planners are proactive and responsive to the needs of attendees while maintaining transparency about available accommodations in the event space.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Each college and department will have a different system for accountability when it comes to event planning, and you should reach out to your department chair or Dean's office to find out more about who is ultimately accountable for the quality of events in your area. Ultimately, we are all accountable for creating an environment at UMass that is both inclusive and accessible.

If you have concerns about campus events that are not inclusive, please reach out to the Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI). If you need to report a campus climate incident, go to the "Report a Climate incident" link on the top of our website (www.umass.edu/diversity) and OEI will contact you as soon as possible.

INCLUSIVE EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO PRINT THIS SECTION WHEN PLANNING YOUR EVENT AND FOR NOTE-TAKING AND GUIDANCE.

BEFORE THE EVENT

We are proud of the diversity of our UMass community and value everyone's experience and ability to participate in events and activities on campus. As you plan your event, please make the following considerations to make it inclusive and accessible to all our community members. This guide is meant to be interactive and can be used during all parts of the planning process. Consider bringing this guide to event planning meetings with your team so that the entire group can have input.

EVENT TITLE:	
CONSIDERATIONS	PLANNING NOTES
Date and Time of Event <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Consider holidays and other significant community events that could pose a conflict with the event timing.2. Develop contingency plans for inclement weather and consider virtual/hybrid options for participants who cannot attend in person.3. To be inclusive of students, faculty, and staff, look at the academic calendar and consider class schedules and break times.	

INCLUSIVE EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

<ul style="list-style-type: none">4. To include caretakers, consider hosting events at times when children are in school. Explore options for providing free childcare at your event.5. Reserve space on campus that is both inclusive and accessible. <p>Tip: You can google “inclusive holiday calendar” to find more comprehensive lists of observances.</p>	
<p>Event Planning Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Recruit a diverse planning team (e.g., people from diverse backgrounds including racial and ethnic diversity, gender diversity, disability, different economic backgrounds, and different roles in the organization).2. Consider collaborating with other offices and departments to maximize visibility and attendance for your event.3. Consider whose voices are not present in the planning process and how they may be thoughtfully included.	

<p>Event Fees</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. If there are fees or costs associated with the event, consider having a “suggested donation” or “sliding scale” rather than a fixed cost. If the facility requires a fixed ticket price, consider a separate fund to support attendees who cannot afford the event.2. Set aside some free event tickets for participants who may not be able to pay.3. Consider ways to distribute free or reduced cost tickets to individuals who could not afford to attend otherwise.	
<p>Inviting Speakers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. When putting together a panel or a series of speakers for an event, include speakers from diverse backgrounds from the beginning.2. Actively reach out to speakers who can provide diverse perspective on the topic(s) you are covering.3. Inquire about the speaker’s fee and arrange to pay them for their services on time.4. If you are negotiating fees with a speaker, be upfront about what you are willing and able to pay and provide examples of how much you have paid to other speakers in the past. This will help your speaker to feel confident that they are being fairly compensated.	

Event Space

1. Plan to hold your event in a location accessible to people with limited transportation access. For example, consider hosting at a location that is near a bus stop or assisting participants with arranging carpools or ride shares.
2. Host your event at a location that is physically accessible to people who use a wheelchair or other mobility aid. This means having accessible parking and restrooms, a route to the event space that is paved and not steep, and a layout that lets wheelchair users participate fully and sit with friends. For wheelchair accessible events, be sure to include the wheelchair access symbol in all publicity.
3. Accessible seating: whenever possible, offer comfortable seats that are accommodating for all attendees. Ensure that chairs with and without arms are available. If tall chairs and high-top tables are provided, be sure to also offer low chairs and low-top tables equally throughout the space.
4. Include space for American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters at the front of the venue in a place that is highly visible.
5. Make adequate space and accommodations for service animals.

INCLUSIVE EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

6. If your event location does not have automatic doors, station someone nearby who can open doors for attendees.
7. Make sure to include clear signage for your event and ensure that directions are accessible through various formats (maps, written directions compatible with screen readers, etc.) in your promotional materials.
8. Provide participants who will be attending a multi-day event with a list of local affinity spaces, restaurants that cater to different dietary needs, etc.
9. Consider an event space with accessible, single-user, gender-inclusive restrooms. If the event space has or will include gender-inclusive restrooms, include this in publicity. **Campus Planning maintains a map of accessible spaces** on its website, including a map of gender-inclusive restrooms courtesy of The Stonewall Center.
10. Designate a quiet room/resting space location where people can be guaranteed a low volume environment. Include signage that designates the room as a low-volume, sensory-friendly space. Consider providing headphones, fidget toys, coloring books, or other comfort items for attendees who may need them.
11. Consider hosting a livestream of your event to ensure people who aren't able to attend in person are still able to participate.
12. Host your event in a space with a functioning HVAC system or medical-grade air purifier if possible. In

INCLUSIVE EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

spaces without HVAC or air purifiers, open windows to encourage air circulation.

Tip: If the event space does not have gender-inclusive restrooms, you may be able to print your own gender-inclusive restroom sign to tape next to the existing sign. This has become a popular option at conferences in large hotels.

Event Registration and Accommodation Requests

1. Include information about how and by when to request accommodations, materials, or interpretation in a language other than English, and dietary modifications. Be sure to arrange accommodation services such as ASL interpretation at least several weeks prior to your event.
2. When designing registration forms, make sure that the registration forms are provided on a platform that is easy to access for individuals who are using text-to-speech software(s). Consider having multiple ways for people to register for your event.
3. Provide multiple ways for attendees to communicate with you BEFORE the event to assist them with obtaining accommodations (i.e.: phone, email, social media, text). For phone communication, indicate whether teletypewriter (TTY) services are available.
4. Provide multiple ways for attendees to communicate what accommodations they might need (i.e., mobility,

<p>visual, hearing, dietary, quiet zones, fragrance free, child friendly spaces, lactation room, etc.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Provide personal protective equipment (PPE), such as face masks and hand sanitizer, for attendees who would like them. 	
<p>Childcare and Caretakers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Indicate whether your event is child friendly. 2. Advise that event coordinators/MCs state that attendees may exit the event freely with their children at any time if needed. 3. If you are unable to provide childcare for an event, plan on having a space where caretakers can take their children aside for a break. 4. Provide coloring books or fidget toys to keep children occupied during the event. 5. Host your event at a time that considers the availability of attendees who may be caretakers while also considering your event's needs. 6. Ensure there is a space where nursing parents may go to feed their infant or use a breast pump. 7. Host your event at a location with family restrooms containing changing tables for very young children. Ensure that there is clear signage outside these facilities. 	

Translation Services

1. Consider whether it will be appropriate to have translation services available for your event and be clear about this possibility in your communications and event promotion.
2. Translation services that may be useful to the community you are attempting to reach include American Sign Language (ASL), Closed Captioning, Spanish language, and languages other than English. For virtual attendees on Zoom, make use of automatic live captioning and live transcription services.

Tip: The Translation Center at UMass offers in-person interpreting services for university campus visits, special events, conferences and more.

Tip: Partners Interpreting is the preferred ASL interpreter and captioner of the annual JEDI conference at UMass Amherst.

Tip: Disability Services can assist you with securing ASL interpretation or captioning services for a class, field trip, or review session.

Advertising and Promotion

1. Aim to reach people who might otherwise be left out of the event. For example, you can print a version of your flyer in Spanish.
2. Use multiple outreach methods when possible, such as posters, flyers, social media, email, etc.
3. Include information about requesting accommodations in all promotional materials.
4. Flyers and promotional materials should include specific information about access and accommodations that is displayed clearly.
5. Electronically distributed materials should be screen-reader compatible with an accompanying text-only version in the body of your email.
6. Be sure that electronic images have alt-text that appropriately explains the image.
7. Include information about accessible entrances and parking on your flyer and include contact information for someone who can assist with coordinating accommodations.

Tip: Once you have created a PDF, you can use Adobe’s “Read Out Loud” feature to check for accessibility.

Community Agreements

1. Community agreements are recommendations provided to or collectively created by a group of people to ensure open, active, inclusive, and respectful dialogue and participation.
2. Consider creating a community agreement at the beginning of your event to set a clear tone and expectations for behavior. If possible, devote the first few minutes of your event to collectively creating community agreements and displaying them in the space for the duration of your time together. The agreement is an opportunity to promote accessibility and inclusion in your event by ensuring that the social rules and expectations of your event space are clearly articulated, understood, and consented to.
3. Potential items to include in a community agreement are equal participation regardless of role, agreeing to use people’s indicated pronouns, assuming positive intent, no shaming/blaming, confidentiality, etc.

Tip: To learn more about Community Agreements and how to make them, [check out this resource](#).

Interpersonal Interactions, Lighting and Sound, Food, and Scents

1. For events where people are expected to interact, consider providing color communication badges. Make sure to include a symbol and/or write the name of the color on each badge to ensure that the system is accessible for color-blind individuals.
2. Some people may have difficulty with bright fluorescent lights, and some people may prefer low lighting. However, for sighted, Deaf individuals, using sign language interpretation may require brighter lights. Be aware of the lighting needs for your event and consider asking participants about their lighting needs during registration.
3. Do not use strobe/flashing lights that can be harmful to individuals with epilepsy and include a warning if you are using any media that includes flashing lights.
4. Consider inclusive food choices and provide clear ingredient labels. This means having vegetarian, vegan, Kosher, Halal, allergen-free, dairy-free, and gluten-free options.
5. Recommend that attendees and planners work to provide a scent-free environment (scented soap, hand sanitizer, lotion, and other products) and event communications should discourage participants from wearing cologne or perfume.

DURING THE EVENT

Land Acknowledgement

1. Begin campus events with a land acknowledgement. A spoken land acknowledgement and a written acknowledgment for printed materials are available on the OEI website www.umass.edu/diversity.
2. For virtual/hybrid events, encourage off-campus attendees to use the website native-land.ca to learn about the land that they are occupying, and to share their own land acknowledgement in the chat.

Tip: The Native Governance Center published a Beyond Land Acknowledgement guide and action planning worksheet to ensure that your land acknowledgement is also an opportunity for concrete impact and accountability.

Event Photography and Filming

- When possible, arrange to photograph and video record your events. Indicate how attendees can access the video recording and how long it will be available after the event. Ensure that video recordings are captioned before they are distributed. If you have an event transcript from the speaker, you may be able to use the transcript to help caption your video.
- Some participants may need to access events virtually via Zoom or other livestreaming services. Work with an approved captioning company for livestream events to make them accessible.
- When recording events, let the audience know that you will be photographing or recording and let anyone who is not comfortable with being recorded know that they can sit in a specified part of the room which will not be photographed or recorded.

Tip: Secure a captioner and develop a captioning plan early in the event planning process.

Anonymous Audience Questions

Audience members may not always feel comfortable asking questions, especially when an event is covering a sensitive topic. They may wish to ask questions anonymously. Consider using an anonymous event survey that participants can use during the event to ask questions.

Tip: There are several ways to do this. One way is to set up a Qualtrics event survey. Another way is to have a break between the main event and Q&A to allow attendees time to submit written questions through a question box. If you use a question box, make sure that there is someone who can help to write down the questions for attendees who are not able to do so or who need interpretation assistance.

When Presenting in Front of an Audience

1. Be mindful of your timing so that all presenters have adequate time to participate in the conversation and the audience has adequate time for questions.
2. Check-in with your audience periodically to make sure they are comfortable with the pace and volume.
3. Give people a pause to read your PowerPoint slides before speaking.
4. Try not to rush as that can create challenges for interpreters or captioning services.

INCLUSIVE EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

<ul style="list-style-type: none">5. Describe images, photographs, or other visuals out loud using accessible language.6. Ask people to introduce themselves by name when they talk during a meeting or an event.7. Consider introducing yourself with your personal pronouns to destigmatize pronoun sharing and make trans and nonbinary attendees feel safer.8. Repeat audience questions. This can provide better access for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, and for people with different learning approaches.9. Be mindful of the ways that your own identities may have an impact on your audience, especially if you are not a member of the group that you are presenting about: Remember: “Nothing About Us Without Us!”	
<p>Slideshows and Other Digital Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">1. When possible, provide audio recordings of any talk transcripts or other printed materials in addition to PDF and Word files.2. Be sensitive to things that may trigger anxiety in members of your audience and give attendees warning of any material that has the potential to be emotionally traumatizing. Review this Introduction to Content Warnings and Trigger Warnings from the University of Michigan to learn more about content warnings, including a specific list of common triggers.	

INCLUSIVE EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

<ol style="list-style-type: none">3. PowerPoint Slides should be in large print format: use at least an 18-point sans serif font in high contrast colors. Don't put too much information on a single slide.4. Provide an array of formats for all materials: PDF or Word (including text-to-speech), audio recording, etc.5. Consider having physical handouts of materials such as slide decks or talk notes/scripts to make it easier for attendees to follow along with the presenter.	
<p>Film and Video</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whenever possible, contact the filmmaker or video creator to obtain a version that is captioned.• Films may not be accessible to the Blind and others with visual impairments without the presence of descriptive audio. While audio description is less common than captioning, streaming services such as Netflix and HBO Max are making it easier to find videos that include descriptive audio.• If materials are sent out after an event, provide multiple options for access, including captions without audio description and audio description without captions.	

AFTER THE EVENT

After the Event

1. Make files and materials available to attendees.
2. Edit any captioning errors in video recordings.
3. Make audio and video recordings available to attendees.
4. Send out a feedback survey to understand how you can make your events more inclusive moving forward.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For additional campus resources, additional guidance from an array of experts in diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to download more printable event planning checklists, please go to the Inclusive Events Guide at www.umass.edu/diversity/inclusive-events.

CONTACT US

The Office of Equity and Inclusion

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