

Best Practices for Inclusive & Accessible Meetings

Why is this important?

Inclusive meetings help to reduce barriers so that everyone can meaningfully engage. This helps to create a more collaborative work environment, one that promotes better innovation and a greater sense of belonging, which promotes wellbeing and retention.

Equitable Access

- Provide opportunities for those who cannot attend to have their voices heard and concerns recognized.
 - For example, invite people to participate via online message board, email, or videoconference
- Solicit input on accessibility and support needs - food allergies, sign language interpreter, etc.
- Create a way for attendees to make anonymous accessibility support suggestions privately
 - The [UBC Centre for Workplace Accessibility](#) offers many resources to help with this.
- Communicate about the locations of gender neutral bathrooms, whether food is being provided, where the meeting is taking place, and directions for how to get there
- Provide wayfinding information for attendees who are in wheelchairs or who have other disabilities related to mobility and/or vision
- If applicable, communicate whether voting will take place and how to submit an absentee vote

Decision-Making

- If there are major decisions that need to be made, if possible, do not rush decision-making or voting.
- Whenever possible, make decisions with consensus rather than voting. Voting can (by definition) go against creating decisions that benefit marginalized groups.

Opening

- Review the group's norms and inclusive practices
- Consider doing a land acknowledgement or establishing a rotation for this responsibility.
- Engage in a non-business "ice breaker" activity to allow participants to socially connect with each other.
 - [Examples of ice breaker activities](#)

Follow-Up

- Share all resources and additional documents that were discussed at the meeting with all participants, including those who were not able to attend
- Remind participants of any actions that need to be completed prior to the next meeting
- Invite participants to provide further comments or feedback
- Some people need more time to think, and prompting them will signal their input is welcome

Materials

- Provide an agenda that includes the following:
 - Items to be discussed and (where applicable) items that are either out of scope for the meeting.
 - If applicable, names and roles, pronouns, and pronunciation of participants
 - A basic timeline for the meeting, including time estimates per item
 - Access to relevant visuals and documents
 - Links to artifacts from prior meetings
- Use font sizes and colours that have high contrasts and are easy to see.
 - [More information about creating accessible content](#) (link)
 - [Dyslexia-friendly style guide](#) (link)

Newcomers & Visitors

- Provide the names, pronunciation, and pronouns if possible to new meeting participants.
- Give new participants sufficient information about the goals, format, and context of the meeting
- Inform visitors about the group's accessibility and inclusion practices

Pacing & Flow

- Respect the time estimates in the agenda, especially meeting start and end times.
- If there is a heated conversation...
 - Consider giving more time to think about it and revisit the topic at a later date.
 - Say, "It seems like this is a topic that warrants more conversation, I will send out the relevant documents again and we will meet to discuss this topic again at the next meeting."
- Silence can mean many things and may not be a sign of consensus.
 - If there is repeated silence, pause to allow the conversation to happen in pairs or smaller groups.
- Pause effectively:
 - After asking a question (to allow time for thinking/processing)
 - After reading aloud slide headings
 - To cue new visuals
 - Allowing more time allows for people who are neurodivergent, multi-lingual language learners, and introverted people to gather their thoughts.
 - Keep track of tasks assigned and person(s) responsible
 - End the meeting by reviewing these assignments and people

Videoconferences

- For larger group meetings, use audience polling tools (Menti, Slido, etc.), the annotation tool, and chat to collect responses
- Use videoconference tools to support diverse ways people process information:
 - Turn on the captioning feature
 - Have participants introduce themselves before they speak
 - Type the question into the chat interface as they are asked
 - This provides both verbal and visual ways of presenting information, making it easier to process
 - Use breakout rooms to allow small groups to discuss ideas, then have them share with the larger group
- Designate someone to monitor the chat feed, so that important questions or comments are not missed