



2024

Creating Impact: A Guide to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Business Events

**A Toolkit Developed to Promote
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
(DEI) in Events**

Prepared by
ICCA Future Leaders Council

October 2004

Executive Summary



Building on the learnings of the ICCA Future Leaders Council (FLC) previous white paper on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), this DEI toolkit is designed to help conference organisers embed DEI principles throughout their business events.

Developed by the FLC, this toolkit provides practical tools, checklists, and guides to ensure events are inclusive, accessible, and equitable for all participants. The guide focuses on each stage of the event planning process, from RFPs to post-event reporting, offering step-by-step guidance for integrating DEI into decision-making processes.

Through careful supplier selection, accessible venue considerations, and a commitment to diverse representation, organisers can business create events that foster a sense of belonging for all attendees. This toolkit offers detailed, actionable checklists that cover critical areas such as RFP preparation, venue selection, supplier engagement, registration processes, and exhibition inclusivity.

By embedding DEI into the core of event planning, organisers can create events that are truly inclusive, equitable, and accessible to all.

Throughout this guide, you may observe some repetition between sections. This design choice has been intentional by the FLC, as it allows each section to be read independently while also contributing to a cohesive understanding when read from start to finish.

Whether you choose to engage with the entire document or focus on specific sections, you will find that the information is accessible and provides a comprehensive overview of the DEI in business events.

Request for Proposals



Incorporating DEI into business events begins at the RFP stage. It is necessary to set expectations with potential host destinations from the very beginning, including alignment with the association's core values. Serving as an introduction of the group and the factors it considers most important, incorporating information in the RFP about the association's approach to DEI and expected outcomes around the subject is key.

CHECKLIST

- Incorporate the association's approach to DEI in the "Introduction" or "About" section of the RFP with a DEI Statement.

SAMPLE

"To help associations and association professionals transform society through the power of collaboration, ASAE pledges to:

- Practice inclusion
- Pull in diverse backgrounds and perspectives to enrich group capabilities
- Point out opportunities to support equitable work environments and behaviors

Building on our 30-year D+I commitment, we are especially concerned with creating space for the difficult conversations, hearing the voices least heard, and providing leadership where it is needed in governance and operations. In doing so, we advance ASAE's mission while also providing culturally relevant service and value to members and society."

ASAE: The Center for Association Leadership



- **Further elaborate on DEI under its own section in the RFP.** Provide an overview of where the association aims to incorporate DEI practices in the congress. Associations may also choose to include a few key metrics from past congresses.

- **Go Deeper:** A more comprehensive list of examples can be found in the section titled “Variety of Initiatives” from the FLC’s Approach to DEI White Paper.

- **Include questions for the DMO/CVB:**
 - Is the DMO/CVB able to provide a list of suppliers that are locally owned or owned by underrepresented groups?
 - Are there any issues with visa restrictions to your country?
 - Are there any laws, customs or practices that may impact congress participants? Are there protections in place for impacted groups?
 - Will the destination help support registration for participants from low income countries? - reference subvention funding.
 - How will the congress benefit the local population?
 - Is the DMO/CVB able to facilitate a legacy project?
Please provide initial ideas for initiatives and proposed key stakeholders.



□ **Include questions for hotels, venues, and other suppliers:**

- Where can the business' DEI statement/goals/strategy be found?
- Does the business have any local partnerships with underrepresented groups?
- What percentage of the business' vendor/supplier contracts are with underrepresented groups?
- Where can information about the business' accessibility features (physical and psychological) be found?
- How does the business approach local hiring, workforce development, etc.?

□ **Qualify responses once bids are received. Consider:**

- Do the responses demonstrate a strong commitment to stated DEI values?
- Is the destination safe for people from all ethnic groups, sexual orientations, gender expressions, and other protected groups?
- Does the destination's DEI commitments still give appropriate weight to skill level and experience?

Destination & Venue Selection



When selecting a destination and venue, prioritise locations that demonstrate inclusivity and accessibility. Consider the local cultural environment, ensuring that the destination offers anti-discrimination protections, diverse food options, and accessible transportation. The selected venue should be fully accessible, featuring ADA-compliant facilities, assistive technologies, and inclusive services.

Look for venues that offer gender-neutral restrooms, prayer and quiet rooms, and diverse food options accommodating various dietary needs. Additionally, venues should reflect cultural awareness in their design, staffing, and services. It's essential to partner with venues that engage diverse suppliers and vendors, and employ a workforce trained in DEI principles.

Event programming should align with DEI goals by incorporating diverse speakers and providing multilingual communication options. Overall, the destination and venue should facilitate comfortable participation for everyone, ensuring inclusivity is woven into every aspect of the event experience.





CHECKLIST

Destination Selection: DEI Considerations

GENERAL INCLUSIVITY OF THE LOCATION

- Does the destination have a reputation for being inclusive and welcoming to diverse groups (race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability)?
- Are there clear anti-discrimination laws in place that protect all individuals?
- Are diverse cultures and communities represented and celebrated within the local area?
- Does the local government or tourism board promote inclusive policies and initiatives?

ACCESSIBILITY OF THE LOCATION

- Is the destination easy to access by multiple transportation methods (air, road, rail) for people with different needs?
- Are there affordable and accessible accommodations (including wheelchair - accessible hotels and lodging)?
- Is public transportation accessible for all, including people with disabilities?

LOCAL COMMUNITY & CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Are there cultural and religious institutions (places of worship, community centers) that are representative of the diverse attendees?
- Are there diverse food options that accommodate dietary restrictions (halal, kosher, vegetarian, vegan, allergen-friendly)?



SAFETY AND COMFORT

- Does the destination have a low risk of hate crimes and discrimination?
- Are LGBTQ+ rights recognised and respected in the destination?
- Is the destination known for being welcoming and safe for people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds?

VENUE SELECTION: DEI CONSIDERATIONS

Accessibility

- Is the venue ADA-compliant, with ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms?
- Are there clear signs and pathways to accommodate individuals with vision impairments or mobility challenges?



Does the venue have assistive technology available, such as hearing loops, captioning services, or sign language interpreters?

Can information about accessibility be found on the website, and is the website itself accessible for people with disabilities?

Inclusive Facilities

Are gender-neutral restrooms available?

Is there a designated quiet room for prayer, meditation, or sensory breaks?

Are there nursing rooms or spaces for families with children?



Vendor and Staff Diversity

Does the venue partner with diverse vendors, suppliers, and caterers that reflect a commitment to DEI?

Are the staff trained in DEI best practices, including the handling of diverse needs and potential bias situations?

Does the venue prioritise hiring a diverse workforce, reflecting different backgrounds and perspectives?



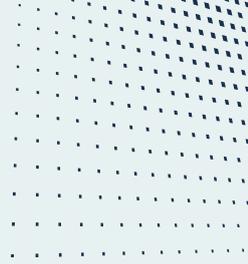
Cultural Competency

Does the venue demonstrate cultural awareness in its decor, services, and communication (e.g., multilingual signage)?

Are religious and cultural dietary needs considered and respected by the venue's catering services?

Are the seating arrangements flexible to accommodate different cultural practices and social norms?

EVENT PROGRAMMING & COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS



Language and Communication

- Are event materials and communications available in multiple languages?
- Is there an option for interpretation services for those who may require it?
- Is the event marketing and signage free from biased or exclusionary language?



Speaker and Performer Diversity

- Does the event program feature diverse speakers and performers representing different races, genders, abilities, and backgrounds?
- Are there opportunities for marginalised voices to be highlighted and amplified during the event?



Inclusivity in Event Design

- Are the event's activities and schedules designed with consideration for diverse needs (e.g., prayer times, dietary restrictions, sensory sensitivities)?
- Is the content curated to be inclusive and representative of the audience's diversity?

Supplier Selection

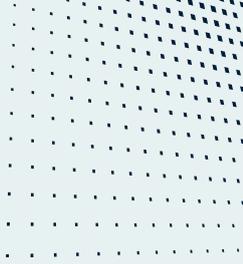


Incorporating DEI into all aspects of event planning is vital for creating inclusive and equitable experiences. A key part of this process is selecting suppliers who share and are committed to these values. This toolkit offers a structured checklist to help ICCA members evaluate and choose suppliers based on their DEI commitments. By following these guidelines, event planners can ensure their events are supported by suppliers who prioritise accessibility, inclusivity, and diverse representation.

While DEI is increasingly being considered in supplier selection, it is not yet universally adopted. Many organisations are beginning to recognise the value of a diverse supplier base, but the integration of DEI in this area is still evolving. There are several reasons why DEI is not yet widely integrated into supplier selection. A key factor is the lack of awareness, as many organisations may not fully understand the importance or benefits of DEI in procurement.

Additionally, there may be limited training and resources available to educate staff on inclusive procurement practices. Established relationships with long-standing suppliers can also make it difficult to introduce new, diverse suppliers, even if they meet DEI criteria. The perceived complexity and cost of integrating DEI into supplier selection may also be a barrier, as it can be seen as time-consuming and requiring extra effort to identify and vet diverse suppliers. Subconscious bias can further hinder DEI efforts, leading to a preference for familiar suppliers, which may exclude equally or more qualified diverse suppliers.

Moreover, the lack of clear metrics to measure progress and impact makes it challenging to track the success of DEI initiatives, often reducing motivation to prioritize them. Finally, resource constraints, especially for smaller companies, can limit the ability to implement DEI effectively in the procurement process.



CHECKLIST

Pre-Selection Checklist

- Identify potential suppliers with public DEI commitments. Work closely with the Convention Bureau and venue since they have the local knowledge.
- Gather information on suppliers' DEI policies and initiatives.
- Verify if the supplier is minority-owned, women-owned, LGBTQ+-owned, disability-owned, etc.
- Check if the supplier has formal DEI policies and programs.
- Ensure the supplier's products and services are accessible to people with disabilities.
- Assess the diversity of the supplier's workforce.
- Confirm if the supplier provides DEI training to employees.

RFP AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

As highlighted in the RFP section, it is essential to include a DEI statement and specific questions regarding suppliers DEI practices. Here, we will further define the DEI related evaluation criteria to ensure a thorough assessment of each supplier's commitment.

- Commitment to DEI: Evaluate supplier's definition of DEI and policies and initiatives implemented in their organisation.
- Workforce Diversity: Assess the representation of diverse groups within the supplier's workforce.
- Accessibility: Review the supplier's commitment to providing access to services and products.



- Training: Considers supplier's DEI training programs for employees.
- Past Performance: Examine previous examples of the supplier implementing DEI in previous projects.

By aligning our supplier selection criteria with the DEI expectations outlined in the RFP, we ensure that our chosen suppliers not only meet technical requirements but also share our commitment to fostering an inclusive environment.

To gain deeper insights into each supplier's commitment to DEI, we recommend conducting a thorough interview process. This allows organisers to evaluate not only their policies and practices but also their real-world application and impact.

We suggest the points above be conducted in an interview format to help understand the supplier's approach to DEI and their ability to align with other organisation's values.

Supplier Evaluation



To ensure a fair and thorough assessment of potential suppliers, we recommend using a structured template. This allows clients to rank suppliers based on predefined criteria, ensuring all aspects of their offerings are considered. The criteria are weighted according to importance in the decision-making process, including DEI factors outlined above. The table details evaluation criteria and their respective weights, offering a framework for comparing and selecting suitable suppliers.

Evaluation Criteria Example

Criteria	Weight (%)	Supplier A	Supplier B	Supplier C
Technical Capabilities Equipment / Product Quality Range of Services Innovation & Technology				
Pricing Competitive Rates Transparency in Pricing Value for Money				
Customer Service Responsiveness Flexibility & customization Problem-solving ability				
DEI Commitment Commitment to DEI Workforce diversity Accessibility				
Experience & Reputation Industry experience References & testimonials				
Sustainability Green policies & practices Energy-efficient equipment				

Final Selection and Contracting



The final step of the supplier selection process involves scoring and ranking suppliers based on the abovementioned criteria.

- Score and rank suppliers based on evaluation criteria listed above.
- Select the supplier(s) with the highest scores and strongest DEI commitment
- Clearly outline and define specific DEI deliverables and metrics.
- Include DEI clauses in contracts to ensure that they are legally binding

Ongoing Monitoring and Partnership

To ensure continuous improvement and alignment with DEI goals we suggest the following:

- Schedule regular meetings to review DEI performance and progress.
- Use DEI metrics to assess supplier performance.
- Collaborate with suppliers on DEI initiatives.
- Provide feedback and support to help suppliers enhance their DEI practices.

To strengthen DEI efforts, we recommend regularly reviewing supplier performance, collaborating on DEI initiatives, and offering constructive feedback. This continuous improvement builds a diverse, inclusive supplier network, enhancing the quality and impact of our events. By prioritising DEI in supplier selection, we uphold our values and contribute to a more inclusive industry.

Registration



The registration process is an early touchpoint where inclusivity should be evident. Ensure registration forms are free of bias, offer gender-inclusive language options, and provide fields for accessibility needs and pronouns.

CHECKLIST

- Use bias-free language in registration forms and on the event website.
- Offer salutation options such as "Mr," "Mrs," "Ms," and allow participants to add their pronouns.
- Provide space for attendees to share their preferred pronouns and how to pronounce their names.
- Include fields for accessibility needs, such as wheelchair accessibility or hearing assistance, and ensure the website complies with accessibility guidelines (e.g., ADA, WCAG).
- Offer options for participants to share dietary restrictions, learning preferences, and communication style (email, text, or phone).
- Incorporate a community agreement that outlines your zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, such as racism, sexism, and homophobia.

Registration



“I understand that this event space has a zero-tolerance policy for racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, ageism, classism, and body shaming.”

- Provide registration options for infants and toddlers, allowing working parents to bring children and take advantage of event-provided childcare.
- Ensure on-site registration desks are accessible, with counters that accommodate wheelchairs and Braille instructions available.
- Hire a diverse group of temporary staff, including through university talent programmes and senior employment support.

Exhibition



Fostering inclusivity in exhibition spaces is essential. This includes selecting diverse vendors, ensuring accessibility in booth design, and promoting a welcoming environment for all attendees.

CHECKLIST

Pre-Event Planning

Pro-active Diverse Vendor Selection

- Database Creation: Develop a database of potential exhibitors and sponsors from underrepresented groups, including minority-owned, women-owned, LGBTQ+-owned businesses, and businesses owned by people with disabilities.

- Outreach and Partnerships: Collaborate with industry associations and organisations that support diverse businesses to identify potential exhibitors and sponsors.

- Diversity Goals: Establish and communicate clear diversity goals for vendor participation, ensuring representation from various demographics and industries.

- Complimentary Options: Consider offering free exhibition space to DEI-relevant companies, local communities, local awareness campaigns, and patient organisations.

Inclusive Sponsorship Packages

- Tiered Sponsorship Options: Create multiple sponsorship levels to accommodate different budget sizes, ensuring smaller companies can participate.
 - Non-Monetary Contributions: Include options for in-kind contributions or skills-based support as part of sponsorship opportunities.

- **Highlighting Benefits:** Emphasise the benefits of participating in an inclusive event, such as reaching a broader audience and enhancing corporate social responsibility, or adding registration for participants from low-income countries as sponsorship options.

Accessibility Compliance

- **Venue Audit:** Conduct a detailed accessibility audit of the venue, identifying and addressing any barriers to accessibility.
- **Consultation:** Engage accessibility consultants to review plans and provide recommendations.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

- **DEI Training Toolkit:** Create and distribute a DEI training toolkit for exhibitors and sponsors, covering inclusive booth design, accessible communication, and creating welcoming spaces.
- **Pre-Event Workshops:** Host webinars or workshops prior to the event to educate participants on DEI best practices.

On-Site Execution

Booth Accessibility

- **Space and Layout:** Ensure booth layouts are spacious enough for wheelchair access, with adjustable height tables and display racks.
- **Assistive Tools:** Provide tactile maps and guides for attendees with visual impairments.
- **Seating Options:** Offer seating at booths for attendees who may need to sit.

Inclusive Signage

- **Readable Signs:** Use high-contrast colours and large fonts for readability.
- **Braille and Tactile Information:** Include Braille and tactile information on key signage.

- Consistent Placement: Ensure signs are placed at accessible heights and consistent positions.

Support Services

- Registration Assistance: Offer assistance at registration for attendees with disabilities.
- Service Animal Areas: Designate areas for service animals.
- Medical and Personal Assistance: Provide on-site medical services and personal assistance as needed.

Initiatives



To strengthen the emphasis on DEI during business events, it is essential to implement targeted initiatives. This section provides guidance for developing a comprehensive framework to design and identify DEI initiatives while fostering continuous improvement. It is important to recognise that every initiative, regardless of its scale, constitutes a significant step towards advancing DEI objectives; the size of an initiative does not inherently dictate its effectiveness or impact.

By embracing both large and small efforts, organisations can cultivate a more inclusive environment that benefits all participants and enhances the overall event experience.

CHECKLIST

Framework Development

- Reflect on the mission of your association.
- Define a target you want to achieve with your DEI initiatives.
- Review existing partnerships related to DEI efforts.
- Identify issues and strongholds of the destination concerning DEI.
- Check for existing awareness programmes in the destination.
- Exchange experiences with other associations; consider resources like ICCA collections or award-linked best practices such as [Case Studies - The Iceberg_\(the-iceberg.org\)](#). & [Case Studies|BestCities](#)

Legacy and DEI

- Define the difference between legacy and DEI initiatives. Is DEI a part of the legacy of your event?



Attendee Analysis

- Review the demographic split of attendees. Are there groups that are significantly underrepresented?

Project Management

- Assign a project lead within your team to oversee DEI initiatives.

Designing Your Initiative

- Consider the budget. Can you find sponsors to support DEI initiatives?
- Evaluate timely resources needed for implementation.
- Set a clear goal for your initiative, along with measurable outcomes.
- Review the legal framework in the destination to ensure compliance with all steps.
- Offer an official programme slot for DEI initiatives or speakers affected by DEI issues.

Local Engagement

- Consult with the local Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) for advice, connections, and potential support.

Flexibility and Adaptation

- Remain flexible in your approach to DEI initiatives, adjusting based on the cultural context of the meeting location.

Remember, every initiative—regardless of its size—is a significant step toward enhancing DEI in your events.

Measurement



In today's evolving business landscape, fostering DEI is crucial for ensuring the success and sustainability of business events. Measuring DEI efforts in conferences, summits, and association events is essential not only to track progress but also to create inclusive environments that reflect the diverse needs of all participants.

This checklist serves as a practical guide for event organisers to set, measure, and evaluate DEI metrics, helping them achieve their goals while enhancing attendee satisfaction and driving greater participation from underrepresented groups.

CHECKLIST

Setting Metrics

- Define clear DEI goals and benchmarks before or during event planning.

- Set a target for demographic diversity (e.g., increasing certain demographics by 10% or 15%).

- Identify and select X number of:
 - Local suppliers.
 - Indigenous-owned businesses.
 - Women-owned businesses.
 - Special needs business owners.
- Determine attendee demographic diversity metrics:
 - Age groups.
 - Designation/Job title.
 - Nationalities/Race.
 - Gender.
 - Academic level.
 - Career level.



To enhance attendee demographic diversity, set a KPI of increasing certain demographics by 10% or 15%. A key factor in achieving this is considering the geographical location of the conference or event. Demographic diversity may include factors such as age groups, designations, nationalities, gender, academic levels, and career stages.

Include X number of:

- Scientific content from underrepresented groups.
- Speakers from underrepresented backgrounds.
- Youth participants, especially from underrepresented groups.

MEASUREMENT TOOLS

Pre-Event Survey

Develop 5-10 key questions to monitor expectations and needs.

- Ensure the survey collects information on:
 - Accessibility.
 - Dietary requirements.
 - Well-being preferences.
 - Preferred pronouns.
 - Religious requirements (e.g., prayer rooms and times).
- Conduct the survey during the registration process.
- Clearly explain the purpose of the event and how responses will be used.

Post-Event Survey

- Develop a satisfaction rating scale (e.g., 0-10) to measure value for time and money.
- Ask attendees to mention DEI initiatives they observed.
- Include open-ended questions for additional feedback on DEI efforts.



Focus Groups

- Conduct post-event focus groups to gather detailed feedback on DEI initiatives.
- Discuss the overall impact and benefits observed.
- Explore areas for future DEI improvements.

Word of Mouth Feedback

- Record any verbal feedback on DEI initiatives shared by attendees during or after the event.

Target Audience for DEI Data Collection

- Ensure representation from: People with disabilities, Racial and ethnic groups., Various nationalities., Individuals with diverse personal orientations.

Measuring DEI Success

To assess the success of DEI goals, evaluate whether demographic targets, speaker diversity, and local supplier engagement have been achieved. Review pre- and post-event surveys along with focus group results to measure progress and pinpoint areas for improvement. Additionally, track long-term metrics, including increased membership, attendance growth, and improvements in event quality as they relate to DEI initiatives.

Reporting & Communication



This checklist can help ensure that DEI is thoroughly integrated into the reporting and communication aspects of your conference, fostering a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all participants.

CHECKLIST

Pre-Conference Communication:

- Ensure all promotional materials reflect diverse representation.
- Use inclusive language in all written and verbal communications.
- Provide materials in multiple languages if the audience is international.
- Make accessibility information clear (e.g., sign language interpreters, wheelchair access).

Speaker and Presenter Guidelines:

- Ensure speaker guidelines include a commitment to DEI principles.
- Encourage diverse speaker representation across panels and sessions.
- Provide resources on inclusive presentation practices.

Attendee Communication:

- Include DEI values and commitments in all attendee communications.
- Offer communication channels for attendees to express DEI-related concerns or suggestions.
- Ensure all information is available in accessible formats (e.g., large print, braille, audio).

Live Event Communication:

- Employ live captioning and sign language interpretation for all sessions.
- Use diverse and inclusive imagery in all event visuals.
- Ensure all event signage is clear, inclusive, and accessible.

Feedback and Reporting



- Collect DEI feedback from attendees through surveys or feedback forms.
- Analyse DEI-related feedback and report on findings and action plans.
- Ensure transparency by sharing DEI progress and outcomes with all stakeholders.

Social Media and Online Presence:

- Reflect diverse voices and perspectives in social media posts.
- Monitor social media channels for DEI-related feedback and respond promptly.
- Use inclusive hashtags and tag relevant DEI organisations.

Post-Conference Communication:

- Share a post-event DEI report with all attendees and stakeholders.
- Highlight DEI successes and areas for improvement in post-event summaries.
- Commit to ongoing DEI efforts and communicate future plans

Internal Reporting:

- Regularly update the organising team on DEI progress and challenges.
- Include DEI metrics in overall event performance reports.
- Ensure DEI goals are integrated into future conference planning.

External Partnerships and Sponsorships:

- Communicate DEI values and expectations to sponsors and partners.
- Ensure sponsor and partner communications align with DEI principles.
- Highlight diverse partnerships and collaborations in event communications.

Feedback and Reporting



Inclusive Language and Imagery:

- Regularly review and update communication materials to ensure inclusive language.
- Train all communication staff on DEI principles and inclusive practices.
- Use a diverse range of images that represent different identities and experiences.