

Zooming In: Creating Equitable & Inclusive Online Events

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Dates & Times

- ◆ Make sure the event is not scheduled on any holiday or honoring non-working day. Check your calendar for cultural, religious, and secular holidays to avoid booking those dates. 
- ◆ Add stretch breaks to the overall time of the event. Give 10-15 minute breaks after a 75-90 minute session to promote rest, attention, and productivity for your participants.
- ◆ Be flexible with the agenda. A great event needs to be organized and also be prepared for different scenarios. Have extra time scheduled for possible issues that can come up. Online events are easy scenarios for connection issues, platform errors, and more.
- ◆ During the pandemic, dates and times for meetings can be tricky to schedule while working and staying home. Be mindful of people's times to rest, eat, sleep, and work.



Invitation / Flyer

- ◆ If you use pictures and images, make sure they express diversity and representation.  Also consider using illustrations. 
- ◆ Avoid acronyms, jargon and “insider” language; use language that is understandable and clear. If you need to use terms your audience may be unfamiliar with, define them and add links for more information.
- ◆ Provide different registration options if possible, such as an online link, the organizer's email, or phone number to call.
- ◆ Address technological inequity. Add a tutorial link for the online platform you plan use. Be explicit in providing directions regarding technology tools that will be used. Assume nothing about the person's experience or comfort level with technology.
- ◆ Make sure the event can accessed by different devices on a browser or app; and that the video is optional to help with limited bandwidth.
- ◆ Promote your event in inclusive spaces. Think of different platforms, groups, and websites that work with diverse populations. This will help expand your participants and make a richer and more diverse audience.
- ◆ Include a statement that includes accessibility: *“Captioning will be available; ASL and other interpretation services are available upon request. Please contact [add email] at least 3 days in advance for any accessibility arrangements”*
- ◆ Learn how to add captions to your Zoom event. 
- ◆ Learn how to add an interpreter to your event. 
- ◆ Learn how to add alternative text descriptions to images. 



Speakers / Presenters

- ◆ Make sure the values that your speakers bring to their presentation aligns with the values of your organization. What impact do you want the speakers to make? Are they inspirational, educational, experiential? What is their presentation style and do they use person-centered language?  Are they using trauma-informed strategies and information? Are they going to make a positive impact on the audience that will be attending? If your event is about youth voice and family representation, are your speakers an example of this?
- ◆ Make sure your presenters are comfortable as well. Provide technical assistance and support. Never assume everyone has the same technology skills or Zoom knowledge, especially when platforms and tools are always changing and updating with new features.
- ◆ Diversify the presenter's voices. Make sure your speakers are not homogenous. If your featured voices are all the same race or same gender, you're missing a critical opportunity to deliver representative and responsible content to your audiences. The organizing team, as well as any speakers or featured guests, should represent the breadth of diversity, including gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, age, ability, physical appearance, religion, and socioeconomic status--with a focus on intersectionality. 
- ◆ Remind the speaker about the diversity of the audience, invite them to make sure their presentation, slides, and activity are understandable and accessible for everyone. (not all can use cameras, some people might call instead of using computer audio, etc.)

Security & Prep

- ◆ Promote a welcoming registration process by adding the option of pronouns or offering gender-neutral titles (Mx.) as an alternative to the traditional Mr., Ms., and Mrs.
- ◆ When possible, share the presentation and/or supplemental materials ahead of time.
- ◆ Also, ensure that the information (PowerPoints, PDF, docs) is accessible. 
- ◆ If captioning is requested, please ensure a professional captioner is scheduled. 
- ◆ By offering the option for attendees to dial in by phone, people with and without disabilities who do have internet access can still participate.
- ◆ Establish a code of conduct for non-discrimination. Provide space for the collective development of agreements, and remember to always come back to your agreements if you notice the meeting going off task or voices are being left out.
- ◆ Be intentional about inclusive and respectful language. Prepare for possible ableist, sexist, racist, or homophobic/transphobic content in chat and how to handle it to assure psychological safety and respect for all attendees.
- ◆ Assign a diversity and inclusion delegate to reach out to for questions, suggestions and requests before and during the meeting.
- ◆ Record Zoom sessions whenever possible so that the video, audio, and chat text are recorded in the Zoom Cloud. This benefits not only participants who are hard-of-hearing, but those who are in noisy locations, those who don't have headphones, and those whom English might be their second language.



During the Presentation

- ◆ Make sure to provide a brief orientation at the beginning of the event about technical tools that will be used. This is always useful as a reminder to people who are new to the platform, even after watching the tutorial you sent with the registration. It will give people a specific set of tools they're expected to use during your event.
- ◆ Use discretion when asking questions regarding access to digital tools and resources. Participants may not feel comfortable sharing that they do not have access to the tools they need may require privacy. Do your best to work with participants to find solutions to technology issues.
- ◆ Identify ways participants can engage at the start of the meeting and promote these options (allow people to comment, ask questions, and provide feedback verbally, in chat or with the Zoom features "raise hand", "yes", "no", etc)
- ◆ Model empathy and understanding when online events and meetings can lead to connectivity issues, background noises, loved one's appearances and more! Be honest about your own unexpected disruptions and be understanding when speakers and/or participants face them, too.
- ◆ Make sure each speaker (if you have a panel) is given an equal opportunity to speak. Same with Q&A.
- ◆ Be mindful of crisis events that may be occurring locally or nationally about a community and make space for discussion as needed. These experiences may affect communities in different ways. Moreover, depending on a participant's race, ethnicity, age, religious affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, they may have different responses or differential impact in reference to a situation. Ignoring a major event which affects the lives of participants can feel dismissive and tone deaf.
- ◆ If people ask questions in the chat, please repeat the question aloud so everyone can hear the answer in context.
- ◆ When URLs or other resources are mentioned, designate someone to type them into the chat window and/or follow up with participants after the meeting.
- ◆ Encourage speakers/moderators to share power in the learning space (e.g. listening more, speaking less; providing space for the sharing of ideas instead of providing answers, be comfortable with ambiguity that comes when people are questioning the content).
- ◆ Provide opportunities to opt in or out of activities. Sometimes facilitators can take this personally, but it might reflect where the participant is physically or emotionally on any given day.



Evaluation & Follow-Up

- ◆ Check the attendee's list for representation. Who attended the event this time? Who didn't? What barriers kept people from logging in? And how can we eliminate them?
- ◆ Have a meeting with your speakers to check about their perspective on the event. Did they feel everyone was engaged? Were they feeling supported by the staff? What recommendations and suggestions do they have to improve your next event?
- ◆ Ask participants and also to your organizing committee, specifically for suggestions towards diversity and equity & inclusion efforts. Be intentional and open to ideas for improvements.

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