The Institution of Engineering and Technology



Bringing everyone together

Hosting Inclusive Events

A guide for colleagues, members and volunteers

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Who is this guide for?

- Events professionals who would like to develop their inclusive practices.
- Marketing professionals supporting in promoting events.
- Members and volunteers looking to host events and network activities.
- Anyone who would like to know more about inclusion at events.







Why are equality, diversity and inclusion important when hosting events?

When hosting events at the IET, we want to inspire, engage with and connect people within the STEM industries, but we can't do this fully unless all individuals are able to take part and feel included.

A few reasons why the IET should be leading the way when it comes to better EDI at events include:

- Ensuring our events are accessible allows more people to attend, fully participate and take advantage of networking opportunities that could advance their careers.
- A diverse range of attendees brings the diverse range of ideas and experiences that are essential to STEM industries, and ensures the needs of a range of people are captured and heard.
- It is the right thing to do to ensure everyone has the choice and ability to attend, and this aligns with our organisational value to include everyone.
- As a leading professional engineering institution, we should be showcasing the latest engineering innovations and technologies to support inclusivity, setting a high standard for others in the sector.







Event design

The first step towards hosting an inclusive event is making sure the event is designed with inclusion in mind.

Key considerations include:

- **Event budget** – Have you budgeted for any reasonable adjustments that may be required?
- **Event purpose** – What are the aims of your event? What are you hoping to achieve?
- **Topic** – Is the content and context of your event inclusive?
- **Venue** – Is your chosen location accessible? Have you provided travel guidance?
- **Format** – Will your event be physical, virtual or hybrid?
- **Speakers** – Are they diverse? Do their values align with ours?
- **Date, time, duration** – How long will attendees be at your event? Do timings consider international differences?
- **Marketing communications** – Are you enabling inclusion through your marketing methods and language?
- **Code of Conduct** – Have you set out an expectation of respect and inclusion at your event?
- **Outcomes/post event communications** – How do you maintain these inclusive practices after your event?

Physical vs. virtual events

Physical and virtual events have their individual benefits and obstacles, all which need to be considered when selecting your event format.

	Physical	Virtual	Hybrid
Benefits:	— Opportunities to network with other industry professionals and/or like-minded people. — Face-to-face interactions can help build trust and foster relationships.	— Improved accessibility, attendees can join from wherever they are – provided an accessible platform is chosen. — Lower carbon emissions as no travel required. — Sessions can be recorded and shared post-event for those who couldn't attend. — Can make use of digital accessibility features like captioning.	— Attendees can choose to join in person or online depending on their preferences and needs. — More opportunities for networking for those who attend physically. — Can capture both a physical and virtual audience. — Session can be recorded and shared for those who couldn't attend. — Lower carbon emissions than a fully physical event.
Obstacles:	— Must ensure venues have suitable accessibility features. — Some locations can have limited or no accessible parking or public transport. — Need to consider the impact of commuting to and from the event on attendees who may have specific needs. — Venue costs can be high, and could be space-limited. — If we are asking attendees to travel, we need to consider how we can offset the resulting carbon emissions.	— No or fewer opportunities for conversation or networking outside of planned content. — Screen fatigue can make it harder for attendees to remain engaged. — Could be vulnerable to online attacks. — Digital poverty – could a dependence on technology lead to exclusion? — Some virtual event platforms are not accessible. — Additional AV support may be required for speakers and/or attendees.	— A hybrid event could increase costs, especially for accommodations such as BSL or captions which need to be available in the room and online. — We need to ensure those attending virtually get the same out of the event at those who physically attend. — Screen fatigue could affect those watching virtually.

Physical vs. virtual events

Events should be assessed on an individual basis, as the overall aims of each event will vary. Generally, a hybrid event, which is streamed live from a physical venue, is a good option to capture a broad audience, and ensure everyone can attend in a way that works for them. Where possible and appropriate, it's a good idea to record your event so it can be made available to watch at any time.

However, it's important to note that not all event formats will provide a good experience for both physical and virtual attendees, and so should be assessed on an individual basis. In these cases, it might be best to offer separate physical and virtual events, or stick with one of these options only.







For both physical and virtual events that include a presentation, it's best practice to share any slides or visuals with attendees and support staff such as sign language interpreters or captioners ahead of time. This can be particularly helpful for individuals with a neurodivergence and/or visual impairment.

When possible for physical events, a paper handout of the slides and some short information on the speakers, including a photograph provided on the day can be helpful for some audience members, particularly if they are made available in a range of text sizes.

However, this may not be a sustainable option for larger events. In these cases, offering a digital handout for those who require one that can be printed at home ahead of the event will reduce paper waste.

Location accessibility

If you are hosting a physical or hybrid event, it's important that accessibility features are assessed ahead of booking a venue.

Some key points to consider include:

- Does the venue offer access for those with limited mobility? If using a stage, does it have a ramp? Is there a height-adjustable lectern? What style of seating and tables are available? For example, are there chairs with or without armrests and tables of different heights?
- Does the venue offer support for D/deaf and visually impaired attendees, for example, do they allow assistance dogs, or offer Assistive Listening devices (ASLs)? Is there accessible signage throughout?
- Not all public transport stations are accessible, are there any close to your event venue?
- What type of microphones are available. For example, some speakers prefer a lapel mic' to a hand-held one.
- Will the venue require a long commute for many attendees? Some travel to a physical event is inevitable but aim to find a location that is as central as possible to the audience you want to reach.
- Does the venue have gender-inclusive/ accessible bathrooms? Are there enough accessible changing rooms/bathrooms available for the audience size?
- Does the venue have a quiet space where participants can go if they need privacy or time to self-regulate, for example, for breastfeeding/pumping, religious or sensory needs?
- Does the venue have adjustable lighting and temperature controls?
- Has the venue been involved in any exclusionary practices or events e.g. supporting anti-LGBTQ events or legislation.
- Does the venue allow for a sign language interpreter to support and be visible to attendees?
- Will alcohol be available to attendees? Ensure the venue can offer non-alcoholic alternatives for those who want/need them.



Once a venue has been selected, include the accessibility information, travel routes and a map and any images of the venue on the event webpage and/or marketing ahead of time, so attendees can familiarise themselves with the layout and plan their travel.



Timing your event

Whether your event is taking place at a physical location or virtually, there are a few things to consider when selecting the timing:

- Will your event have an international audience watching virtually? Consider the time zones of your viewers, and select a time that accommodates this.
- If you're hosting a physical event, don't ask attendees to arrive very early or leave very late. Some may need to travel a long distance, have caring responsibilities or require assistance that can increase travel time.
- Ensure attendees of both physical and virtual events are given the opportunity to move around, access the bathroom and retrieve refreshments regularly throughout.
- If possible and appropriate, arrange for your event to be recorded so it is available to view at a later date for those who can't attend physically, or for long periods.



Marketing communications

The marketing communications you develop to promote your event should use inclusive language and imagery and be available in a format that is accessible to everyone. This includes any website content, email or newsletter marketing, social media campaigns, flyers and posters.





For more guidance on how to ensure your marketing communications are inclusive, please refer to our refer to our **IET Brand Guidelines** and **Inclusive Communications Guide**.

Registering for your event

If your event requires registration, be aware not to make the process overly complex. For some individuals with disabilities, large amounts of text or long forms can be off-putting, and you could inadvertently lose this valuable audience.

Your registration process should:

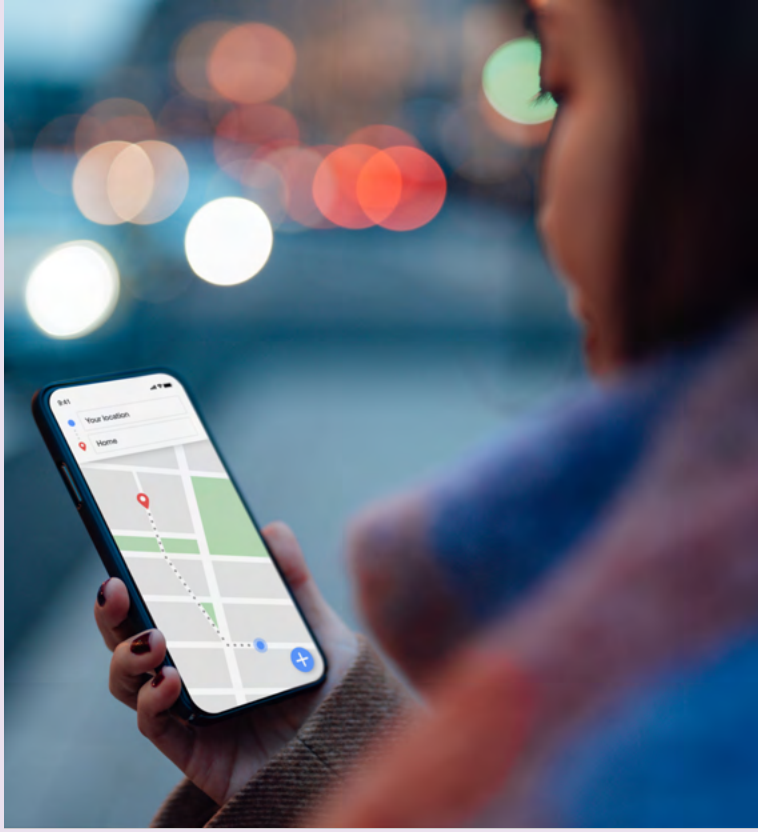
- Be available on an accessible website, ticketing, or event platform.
- Provide the location and an accessibility statement ahead of registration, so potential attendees can make an informed decision and plan their journey.
- Avoid long, complicated registration forms.
- Capture only what you need to know, including information on any additional accessibility requirements. Collecting some diversity data from your audience is valuable, but asking too many personal questions could feel intrusive to some.
- Avoid as many click-throughs as possible, the shorter the journey to signing up, the better.
- If a photographer will be attending and/or the event is being recorded, be sure to mention this at registration, so attendees can opt out if they would prefer.

Joining instructions

Providing clear joining instructions in advance of the event can help your audience to prepare and ensure a good turnout on the day. If hosting a virtual event, let attendees know your expectations for their participation ahead of time. For example, will attendees be required to be on camera and interact throughout? Highlighting this at this stage will help attendees know their expected role and prepare.

Include useful information in your instructions on the venue location, nearby public transport, availability of accessible parking + map/link to What3Words etc.

Providing information on what to expect such as the agenda, timing of any breaks, whether meals are being provided helps everyone to get the most of the event. An image or a video of the venue can also be very helpful for neurodivergent attendees.







Panels, Hosts and Speakers

We understand that when choosing panellists and hosts, the focus should always be on finding the most qualified individual for the job. However, by diversifying your search, you can find new individuals who can bring fresh ideas and perspectives to your event.

If you're planning a panel event, or running a working group or committee, be sure to invite a range of people from diverse backgrounds to attend. Not only will this broaden the discussion, but it will help ensure a variety of viewpoints and experiences are represented.

If a diverse range of people are unable to attend the event, can they be included in the planning or post-event stage instead? Their inclusion may capture something you missed, and help ensure your event is attracting more than one group of people.

Hosts and panellists should also be selected with diversity and representation in mind. Where possible:

- Aim for mixed gender representation on panels.
- Include people from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- Include LGBTQ+ people.
- Include disabled people and neurodivergent people.
- Include people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- Include representation from a range of ages/ stages in career.
- Brief the venue/event/AV team on the accessibility requirements for the event.

Remember: Do your research before inviting someone to host or be a panel member. Make sure that their values align with those of The IET:

I include everyone

I behave in a way that recognises and values difference in everybody.



I do my very best

I work to improve things and use what I'm good at to do a great job.



I take full ownership

People can count on me to do the things I say I will do, and I will be flexible to make sure that I live up to those expectations.



I work well with others

I create a work environment where the 'team' is wider than the one I work in. I make the most of every opportunity to increase my understanding and support of other teams within the IET.



I openly communicate

I seek to understand before being understood. I own the impact my communication has on others.



Setting the tone

In order to set the tone of inclusive and respectful behaviour ahead of an event or meeting, you can make use of our participant behaviours slide, which sets our expectations for those taking part to be conscious of their impact on others.

It's important to be aware of the wide range of personal and cultural differences that could be present at your event, and respect that these needs must be protected. Some considerate adjustments could involve providing a designated area for prayer and contemplation, and ensuring any food or refreshments provided include options that comply with religious and cultural dietary restrictions.

Consider in advance what to do if you encounter any behaviours that are not inclusive – it's best to have a plan in place ahead of time to ensure issues can be tackled calmly and discreetly. For example, could you highlight a member of your event team as someone your attendees can report exclusionary behaviours to?





Staging, set and seating

If your event requires a stage or set, you must consider the accessibility needs of those who will be using it. You also need to make sure your audience is comfortable and given the best opportunity to engage with your event.





Some best practices include:

- Asking the accessibility requirements of those taking part ahead of selecting your set design.
- Ensuring ramp access to raised areas - this improves access for everyone.
- Considering the position and height of the lectern. Is the lectern height-adjustable?
- Avoiding harsh/flashing lights and very loud/sudden sounds. These can be triggering for those with conditions like photosensitive epilepsy and some neurominorities.
- If you're hosting an event in which audience members will be invited on stage for example an awards ceremony, ensure there is access for them to do so. Consult these audience members on their accessibility needs ahead of the event and offer seats close to the stage or any other adjustments as required.
- Ensuring audience seating is not cramped, and audience members can exit easily if they need to, giving consideration to wheelchair or mobility scooter users and people with mobility impairments.
- Reserve seating for any D/deaf participants that have requested captioning or sign language interpretation so that they have a clear view.
- Brief the venue/event/AV team on the accessibility requirements for the event.

Speaker presentations

In advance of the event, provide advice to speakers on making their presentations more accessible and inclusive. Helpful information can be found in our Inclusive Communications Guide.

Include advice on how to present more inclusively – for example, whether/how to provide self-descriptions, to avoid using too much sector-specific jargon and too many abbreviations.

When nervous, we all tend to speak more quickly than we do in normal conversation. Reminding presenters to speak at a normal pace ensures the captioners and sign interpreters can follow – and the delegates reliant on them.

Any diagrams or images included in speaker presentations should be verbally described, avoiding terms such as "as you can see here".





Q&A sessions

If you plan to give attendees the opportunity to ask questions during the event, consider the following:

- Are you taking questions from a range of people in the audience? Offering multiple routes to submit questions during an event, for example, via chat function, QR code or live audience, helps ensure those watching remotely or those who would rather submit questions anonymously can participate.
- Are the questions being posed to a panel? Make sure to include all panel members during the session, ensuring all points of view are heard.
- All audience members should be given the opportunity to pose a question during the Q&A session, avoid favouring audience members of a particular age, gender or seniority or organisation.
- Assign someone to monitor the submitted questions and chat function, removing anything offensive or crude should it appear.
- Ensure audience questions are repeated clearly using a microphone (especially if displayed on a screen) so that everyone can hear and the captioners and any BSL interpreters can communicate the question.





Networking sessions

If you are planning to offer networking sessions for attendees consider the following:

- Sharing details of what is expected in advance, how long the networking will be, and how it will work, for example is it informal over a coffee break, or a more structured session?
- Providing name badges for attendees at in-person events or asking online attendees to show their name and organisation.
- Providing a list of attendees, or organisations being represented.
- Offering to facilitate any introductions to people attending on their own, or who require assistance and support. For example, providing a sight guide for a visually impaired delegate who cannot read people's name badges, or ensuring BSL interpretation is available.
- Offer alternative ways of networking such as via an online chat forum or group, or post event introductions over email.
- Providing an alternative space for those that don't wish to participate.
- Offering optional, coloured lanyards to indicate if attendees are comfortable being approached while networking.







Receiving feedback on your event

As with all other aspects of an event, it's important that attendees and those involved are given a safe and anonymous way to feedback on the inclusivity features of your event.

In your post event communications to attendees, share a link to an accessible anonymous feedback form. This will allow attendees to share openly and honestly on how accessible your event was, and provide valuable feedback to consider for future events. These can be created using a number of resources, including Microsoft Forms, Typeform or SurveyMonkey.





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