



Inclusive Leader Insights

Inclusive Event Planning

William & Mary strives to be an inclusive campus community. One step in achieving this goal is taking time to consider the rich diversity that exists within our community when planning in-person events and programs. While the information included in this document can provide the tools to improve the inclusiveness of your event, it is important to understand that there is no one method that guarantees success.

Before the Event

Ask yourself, who is your audience? Some events are geared toward specific populations. It is crucial to recognize that there is diversity among those subsets of the community.

From there, consider how to make the event accessible, welcoming and inclusive to your audience. For instance, is there a need for ASL (American Sign Language) or CART (Communication Access Real-Time Translation) services? Does the event location restrict any potential attendees? If an accessibility access is needed, is it located where the primary entrance is located, or in the back or side of the building? Are there gender-neutral restrooms nearby? If there is a need for film or video for the event, ask the film/video vendor or presenter if there is a version with captions. If not, ask if one can be produced.

Is there a cost to attend/participate? Can you consider making it free or search for on-campus partnerships/collaborations to reduce the overall expense? This would aid in creating equal opportunities for all in the W&M community to participate in the event.

Take into consideration the major religious holidays as well as university and community events. For example, the 30 days of Ramadan 2022 began on April 1. Instead of holding an event in the afternoon or early evening during Ramadan, consider starting the event after sundown. Alternatively, if the event begins before sundown, schedule the dinner or reception to take place after sundown.

There are many events that happen on campus and off that have significance to the community. While it is impossible to be aware of everything, due diligence will spare the event planner the angst. Beyond the campus calendars, check in Student Organization calendars and ask Student Affairs about things that are not confirmed, but in the works.

Catering - It is always a good practice good to ask attendees about dietary restrictions. However, it is even better to plan for events considering that there will be persons who prefer a Halal, Kosher, vegan options or have food allergies. Although W&M's catering department has many DIY options in planning, they also have formulas on how to be best serve the campus community. Seek out their guidance before confirming the order.



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Invitations/Registrations/RSVPs – Use gender-neutral language on the rsvp and registration information. Allow guest to provide their own pronouns instead of a dropdown menu of pre-selected terms. Also consider asking whether there would be a need for accessibility accommodations as well as any dietary restrictions.

Nametags – The pronouns used for registrations/RSVPs should be used on the nametags.

Publicity/Social Media – Flyers are great, but they are not always accessible to everyone. When posting to social media, consider describing the image in the text of the post. If using video, try to make sure that it has open or closed captions. Lastly, CamelCase is the preferred method for hashtags for accessibility. Also, it is important that any publicity clearly includes information of who to contact if there is need for accommodations.

Pre-event communication – Provide all guests with a map of accessibility entrances/exits and name of contact who will be present the day of the event.

During the event

Remind speakers to not rush through presentation as it makes CART transcription and interpretation difficult. Additionally, ask that they are prepared to describe any images or charts as well as define any terms/abbreviations.

Consider reminding speakers/performers/presenters to refrain from using gender specific language (ex. “good evening ladies and gentlemen”).

Some of your audience that have requested accommodations (and some that have not) may be on a strict schedule. Therefore, make every effort to begin and end the event on time. This is helpful when considering their needs as well as those that may have taken public transportation.

Check to make sure that any food provided is labeled (gluten free, Kosher, vegan, Halal, etc.). Make sure check-in tables and signs are easily accessible and readable for all participants. Consider adding space for individuals that did not request accommodations in advance.

After the event

Include questions regarding inclusion and accommodation in your post-event surveys.

Debrief with the planning team to discuss what went well and what improvements can be considered. Keep this information readily accessible.

Consider captioning all videos produced at the event.

The Office of Diversity & Inclusion will have an in-person workshop that will take a deeper dive into this information in the Fall of '22.

For more information, please contact wmdiversity@wm.edu.