

scale naturally

INCLUSIVE EVENT GUIDE



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for Banff Mental Health & Addiction Week Programs
www.ScaleNaturally.com

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WHY & HOW

When we design events, programs, and services, we naturally do so through our own lens, our lived experiences shape how we think about accessibility, inclusion, and belonging. However, what feels welcoming to one person may create barriers for another. If we don't intentionally consider different identities, experiences, and needs, we risk unintentionally excluding people who could benefit from the work we are doing.

Many individuals from marginalized communities have been harmed, ignored, or excluded in different spaces, and they may not want to take the risk of showing up somewhere that isn't explicitly designed to include them. This is why inclusion isn't just about intention, it's about action, visibility, and clear communication.

This guide is not exhaustive, nor is it about achieving perfection. Instead, it serves as a starting point, an invitation to be mindful of the gaps in your event planning and to make conscious choices that foster inclusion. Even small efforts can make a big difference in creating spaces where more people feel truly welcomed and valued.

Each section of this guide provides:

1. **Design Considerations:** What to keep in mind when planning an inclusive event.
2. **Marketing Considerations:** How to be visibly inclusive in communications so people know your event is welcoming to them.

A vibrant, stylized illustration of a diverse group of people of various ages and ethnicities standing together, holding hands, symbolizing unity and community. The group includes a young woman with a prosthetic leg, a woman in a wheelchair, a man holding a baby, a man with a backpack, a woman in a hijab, an elderly woman with a cane, and a young child. They are all smiling and looking towards the viewer. The background is a solid light blue.

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INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

Event design considerations

- Is this an opportunity to elevate Indigenous voices and perspectives? Can you co-create with Indigenous community members for a two-lens approach?
- Ensure Indigenous speakers, elders, and knowledge keepers are paid fairly and receive ceremonial tobacco offerings when appropriate.
- Learn about local Indigenous traditions, including tobacco offerings, and ensure event spaces allow for smudging, if needed.
- Avoid stereotypes, cultural appropriation, and assumptions about Indigenous traditions. Be mindful of historical trauma.
- Land acknowledgments should go beyond being performative or ticking a box
 - Have we included a meaningful land acknowledgment in the agenda?
 - Have you crafted a personal and genuine land acknowledgement based on your own reflections:
 - Your identity and ancestry (where were you born, who are your ancestors)
 - The original Indigenous lands you grew up on, and now live on (how do you feel about the lands, how do you benefit from the land)
 - Your connection to colonization and privilege you hold (how are you benefiting today as a non-indigenous settler and from colonization)
 - What are your obligations and commitment to reconciliation

Marketing considerations

- Clearly state if Indigenous-led or if Indigenous speakers will be involved.
- If relevant, note if cultural protocols (e.g., smudging) are welcomed.
- When marketing the event online, acknowledge Indigenous language if appropriate (use the original place name, acknowledge the lands the event is being held on)



BLACK PEOPLE & PEOPLE OF COLOUR

Event design considerations

- Representation matters, ensure diversity among facilitators, speakers, and organizers.
 - Have you considered the diversity of our community and how it should be reflected in your event or program?
 - Have you actively sought input from Black people and People of Colour in the planning process?
 - Is there diversity in your organizing committee or team to bring different perspectives to the table?
- Have the event organisers/facilitators completed anti-racist training or cultural competency training?
- Be mindful of racial trauma and avoid topics that may be triggering without proper context or support.
- Ensure the venue is in a location that feels safe for racialized individuals. Does the venue have a history of supporting racialized individuals? Is the venue explicit in their inclusion efforts for racialized individuals?



Marketing considerations

- Use diverse imagery, including BIPOC individuals.
- Clearly communicate anti-racism values and a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination.
- Highlight if facilitators/speakers are BIPOC by sharing photos of presenters



ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Event design considerations

- Ensure that the environment is welcoming for those unfamiliar with local customs.
- Consider cultural differences in event structure and content.
- Are you able to provide event materials in multiple languages? Especially in the languages of the ethno-cultural groups in our community.
 - For example “*as of June 2023, Settlement Services in the Bow Valley recommends considering the following languages for translation based on need for English-language support and current demographics in the Bow Valley (French, Ukrainian, Tagalog, Japanese, Spanish, Amharic, Tigrinya, Hindi)*” - BVIP
- Ensure you are using plain language, avoid jargon or overly complex wording.
- Can you offer interpretation or live translation services?

Marketing considerations

- Indicate the language the event/speakers will be speaking in at the event
- Consider including text in other languages on promotional materials (ensure the language option is available for the actual event too if you’re translating marketing materials)
- Indicate if oral translation or language support is available. Be specific and specify which languages.
- Indicate if online captioning is available in other languages. Be specific and specify which languages.
- Ensure there is a clear and easy way for attendees to request language interpretation services
- Provide key information as text that can be copied to allow for text translation.
- Use clear, simple, plain language in event descriptions.
 - Find more resources on plain language: bvipartnership.com/resources-blog/plain-language
- Partner with immigrant support organizations to spread awareness

FOOD ALLERGIES & DIETARY RESTRICTIONS

Event design considerations

- Label all food items with ingredients.
- Consider if you have food items for those with gluten, dairy and nut allergies.
- Avoid cross-contamination (e.g., using separate serving utensils)

Marketing considerations

- Indicate if allergen-free options are available.
- Provide a way for attendees to submit dietary restrictions in advance.

UNDOCUMENTED INDIVIDUALS

Event design considerations

- avoid requiring ID for participation

Marketing considerations

- Clearly state that no legal status verification is required for participation.



RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

Event design considerations

- Consider diverse food options, including halal, kosher, vegetarian
- Ensure a quiet space is available for prayer, meditation, or reflection.
- Avoid religious content in the event unless it is directly relevant and inclusive.
- Avoid scheduling on major religious holidays that may prevent participation.

Marketing considerations

- Indicate if prayer spaces are available.
- Use inclusive language in event promotions.
- State if dietary accommodations (e.g., halal, kosher) are available.



TRANS & NON BINARY

Event design considerations

- Gender-neutral washrooms should be available and clearly marked. If washrooms are gendered, be ready to put a poster on one that says “all gender washroom”
- Ensure facilitators are trained in gender inclusion and pronoun usage.
- Promote the use of personal pronouns to avoid people being misgendered. Ask staff, speakers and participants to use pronouns when introducing themselves.
- Avoid assumptions about gender. Use gender-neutral language
 - “everyone” instead of “ladies and gentlemen”
 - Do not use words like sir, ma'am, guys, girls, ladies
- Offer name tags with space for pronouns
 - Prepare a template at registration so people know it is expected ([Click here for a free download](#)).
- Learn more about the [importance of using personal pronouns](#)

Marketing considerations

- Clearly state that trans and non-binary individuals are welcome.
- Use diverse imagery, including trans people
- Use inclusive phrasing (e.g., “all genders welcome”).
- Highlight the availability of gender-neutral restrooms.
- Clearly communicate values and a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination.
- Have pronouns next to names of any speakers on the promotional materials
 - example: Mak (they/them), Fia-Lynn (she/her)



2SLGBTQIA+

Event design considerations

- Avoid assuming attendees' sexual orientation is straight and be mindful of heteronormative language (e.g., assuming everyone has an opposite-gender partner).
- Representation matters, ensure 2SLGBTQIA+ representation among facilitators, speakers, and organizers.
- Have you sought input, collaboration, and support from the 2SLGBTQ+ community?
- Ensure the venue has experience accommodating diverse audiences and has a history of supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ events and community members
- Collect feedback from attendees about their experiences at the event and encourage people to share suggestions and concerns related to LGBTQ+ inclusivity.

Marketing considerations

- Clearly state 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in event materials, for example by including the Pride flag on the promotional materials
- Make sure registration is inclusive by asking for pronouns
- Use diverse imagery that includes queer representation.
- Be explicit in your event promotion and at the event that you do not tolerate discrimination. Be explicit about where the event organizers stand on this issue



PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Event design considerations

- Ensure the venue is physically accessible (elevators, ramps, wide doorways).
- Offer seating options (chairs with and without arms, standing areas, wheelchair spaces).
- Consider alternate ways to participate for those who may need accommodations.

Marketing considerations

- Clearly state accessibility details (ramps, seating options, ASL availability, etc
- Provide contact info for accessibility requests.

DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

Event design considerations

- Can you provide ASL interpreters or live captions?
- Ensure speakers use a microphone, even if they say “I don’t need the mic, I talk loud” and face the audience for lip-reading.
- Minimize background noise for those using hearing aids.

Marketing considerations

- Clearly state if ASL interpretation or captions are available.
- Provide contact info for accessibility requests.

BLIND OR LOW VISION

Event design considerations

- Can you offer braille programs or digital materials compatible with screen readers.
- Ensure you have event staff available to assist with navigation.
- Ensure signs and printed materials use high-contrast colours and large fonts.

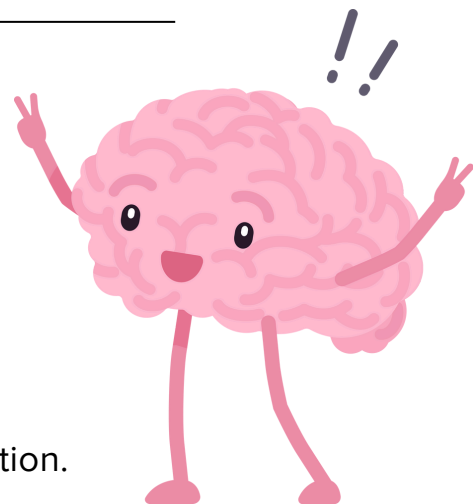
Marketing considerations

- Indicate if braille or screen-reader-friendly materials are available, and if visuals will be described during presentation.
- Turn on alt text for any instagram posts to describe the visuals to those with visual impairments

NEURODIVERGENT PEOPLE

Event design considerations

- When booking a venue, avoid overwhelming sensory environments and consider event lighting and if you have room for a quiet space
- Ensure dim lighting and avoid overhead bright fluorescent lighting
- State where the quiet space is at the start of the event.
- Allow for movement breaks and alternative forms of participation.
- Provide free fidget tools for engaging with during the event.
- Provide social battery stickers and instructions at event registration to provide opportunity for attendees to share social limitations ([Click here for free download](#))



Marketing considerations

- Mention if the event is sensory-friendly or has a quiet space.
- Provide clear structure and expectations ahead of time. On the event page, offer a detailed schedule of events, describe what people can expect at the event and what is expected of their engagement.
- Invite people to message you with requests for accommodations, and give a list of examples of what they can ask for (ie. service animal, lighting adjustments, soft pillow for the chair, to wear sunglasses during the event, to wear headphones during the event etc)
- Indicate if you will provide “Social Battery Stickers” at registration (see here for example)

NON-SPEAKING OR SPEECH-LIMITED

Event design considerations

- Offer alternative communication methods (e.g., writing, text-to-speech apps).
- Ensure event hosts and facilitators are patient and accommodating.
- Avoid putting people on the spot to speak if they prefer other forms of engagement.

Marketing considerations

- State that alternative communication options are available.
- Encourage multiple ways to engage (e.g., writing responses instead of speaking).



CHRONIC ILLNESS

Event design considerations

- Can you offer online or hybrid attendance options for those unable to attend?

Marketing considerations

- Clearly state if rest areas or alternative participation options are available.
- Ask people not to attend if they have any symptoms of cold or flu.

PEOPLE IN LARGER BODIES

Event design considerations

- Ensure seating is comfortable and varied.
 - Can someone of every size fit into the chairs provided? If not, find an alternative option.
- Can someone of every size fit engage in every aspect of the event? If not, find an alternative option.

Marketing considerations

- Show people of all sizes in marketing materials.
- Avoid weight-related assumptions in event promotions.



PARENTS WITH CHILDREN

Event design considerations

- Can you offer on-site childcare or child-friendly accommodations? Are you prepared to vet someone to do this and ensure they have the appropriate qualifications
- Can you provide a nursing-friendly space if possible.

Marketing considerations

- Clearly state whether childcare is available or if the event is family-friendly
 - If child-minding is available, clearly state where they can request it and find out more information about who will be watching their children



HISTORY OF TRAUMA/PTSD

Event design considerations

- Provide content descriptions for potentially sensitive content.
 - for example, if discussing suicide mention this at the beginning of the event
 - It is best to say “content description” instead of “trigger warning”
 - Provide an opt-out option for any discussions that might trigger them
- Share at the beginning that you can get up and step outside anytime, to go to the washroom or if you just need a little break. Offer quiet spaces for this.
- Consider if you need a professional or trained peer support person at the event
- Provide cozy items like blankets/teddies if potentially hard content is being discussed

Marketing considerations

- Be transparent about the content so people can decide if it's safe for them in advance.
- Mention if the event design was reviewed from a trauma informed lens.
- Mention if support people/counsellors will be present

PEOPLE WITH EXPERIENCE OF ADDICTION OR SUBSTANCE USE

Event design considerations

- Offer non-alcoholic options if alcohol is present.
- Clearly communicate whether the space is sober-friendly.

Marketing considerations

- Explicitly state if the event is alcohol-free or recovery-friendly.

HISTORY OF EATING DISORDER

Event design considerations

- Avoid diet-focused language and messaging. Be mindful of language around body image and food during the event and in the program.
- Offer alternative food options or allow attendees to bring their own.

Marketing considerations

- Be mindful of language around body image/food in marketing communication



YOUNG KIDS OR SENIORS

Event design considerations

- Offer child-friendly activities or childcare.
- Ensure spaces are accessible for older adults.

Marketing considerations

- Clearly state age appropriateness for events.
- Ensure you are placing marketing materials and communication in appropriate locations
 - ensure it is advertised in a place where parents of young children will see it
 - ensure it is placed where seniors will see it or be told about it (ie: not social media)

PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOUSELESSNESS, HOUSING INSECURITY, OR LOW INCOME

Event design considerations

- Offer free or sliding-scale ticket options.
- Provide food, transportation support, and rest areas.

Marketing considerations

- Clearly state if it's free, if cost is NOT a barrier or if free options exist.
- Clearly communicate if food, transportation support or rest areas will be made available.

OTHER INCLUSION CONSIDERATIONS



Photo & Video Consent

Many attendees, particularly those from marginalized communities, may not feel safe being filmed or photographed. To respect privacy:

- Offer opt-out options (e.g., stickers to indicate no photos).
- Clearly communicate if filming will take place.
- Ensure staff and photographers respect consent and ensure any photos with someone with a sticker are deleted.

Example statement: “Photos and videos may be taken at this event. If you prefer not to be photographed, please let a staff member know, and we will ensure your privacy is respected.”

Feedback

Provide multiple forms of providing feedback before the event, at the event and after the event. Be clear that you welcome and want feedback and give specific instructions of how people can contact you.

Examples of methods of feedback: open dialogue, setting up a meeting with the organizer, contacting by email, feedback forms at the event or online, as well as inviting feedback requests after the event (this helps folks with delayed processing and/or social anxiety about speaking up)



Consider sharing event guidelines to set the tone

- Have you developed clear guidelines regarding behavior, harassment, and discrimination to ensure a safe and inclusive environment?
- Have you clearly communicated that you will not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other characteristics?
- Is there a process in place to address any incidents that may occur?

“SAYING ‘YOU CAN’T PLEASE EVERYONE’ IS OFTEN A WAY TO DODGE ACCOUNTABILITY. MARGINALIZED FOLKS AREN’T LOOKING TO BE PLEASED. THEY’RE ASKING TO BE SEEN. TO FEEL SAFE. TO TAKE PART WITHOUT NEEDING TO SHRINK THEMSELVES. INCLUSION ISN’T ABOUT PLEASING PEOPLE, IT’S ABOUT REFUSING TO IGNORE THOSE WHO’VE BEEN LEFT OUT FOR FAR TOO LONG.”

Makaylah Rogers (they/them)

Thank you for taking the time and making the effort to create spaces where everyone feels they belong



Creating inclusive events is an ongoing process. You won't get everything perfect right away and that's not the goal. Awareness, intentional action, and continuing to make small adjustments over time can create a significant difference to people in the community participating and feeling a sense of belonging.

By designing events and programs with different identities and needs in mind (and by being visibly inclusive in our marketing communications) we can help ensure that more people feel welcome, safe, and able to participate fully.



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