



DEI TOOLKIT

Jenny Ng

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AUTHORS AND SPECIAL THANKS

Jenny Ng, MN Chapter DEI Chair
Amanda Sullivan, MN Chapter DEI Co-Chair
Andrea Rouse, MN Chapter DEI committee
JR Treto, MN Chapter DEI committee
MPI Potomac, for guidance as we formed our committee

MN CHAPTER DEI STATEMENT

The MPI MN Chapter is a community where we want everyone to feel welcomed, supported, and celebrated. Our chapter is continuing to learn and grow to create an inclusive and diverse professional community through our current learning, work and improvements.

PURPOSE OF DEI TOOLKIT

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) task force was started in 2020. We formed a task force to foster a community where everyone feels welcomed, supported, and celebrated. Many of us spent the year having tough conversations, speaking up, learning how to be an ally and how we fight toward racial and social justice. We evaluated our current processes and events and reflected on how to make them more inclusive.

How do we move forward? How as an industry do we continue to make changes? How do we translate our words into actions? While we have covered some great ground, there is still a lot of work to be done toward racial and social justice. This is where you can help! The DEI toolkit distributed via our chapter page is a resource for planners and suppliers to identify, share ideas and implement DEI opportunities. While DEI is the primary focus of our guidebook, we also include areas of accommodations and accessibility as well.

The primary areas of the toolkit are sharing common language and terminology and DEI practices that can be implemented in our chapter and industry. This is not intended to be a comprehensive or all-encompassing guide but rather a good starting point. It covers areas including but not limited to language, location/venue, food and beverage, registration, marketing, programming and attendee experience. Please use these tools to support your role as planner or supplier and create changes throughout our industry.

-Jenny Ng & Amanda Sullivan
MN Chapter DEI Chairs

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Please note the toolkit was not prepared by professionally trained DEI professionals but by committee members passionate about advancing our DEI work in the chapter and association. We acknowledge that we are undoing generations of racism, racial/social trauma, and injustice. Change doesn't happen right away; it is a continuous learning journey.

DEI STYLE GUIDE & INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

We wanted an inclusive language guide to provide some context and guidance around common terminology. Inclusive language is a form of communication that avoids words, expressions or assumptions that could stereotype, demean, or exclude people. ⁱ By being aware of the impact that words help guide language that acknowledges and recognizes differences and provides a more welcoming and inclusive language.

The guide is not a comprehensive list and is constantly evolving.

What is Diversity, Equity and Inclusion? ⁱⁱ

Diversity

Diversity includes, but is not limited to, age, ethnic origin, national origin, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, disability, religious beliefs, creeds, and income.

Equity

Equity is about fit and ensuring people get what they need to be successful and what is best for them

The graphic below is often used to help distinguish the difference between these two terms.

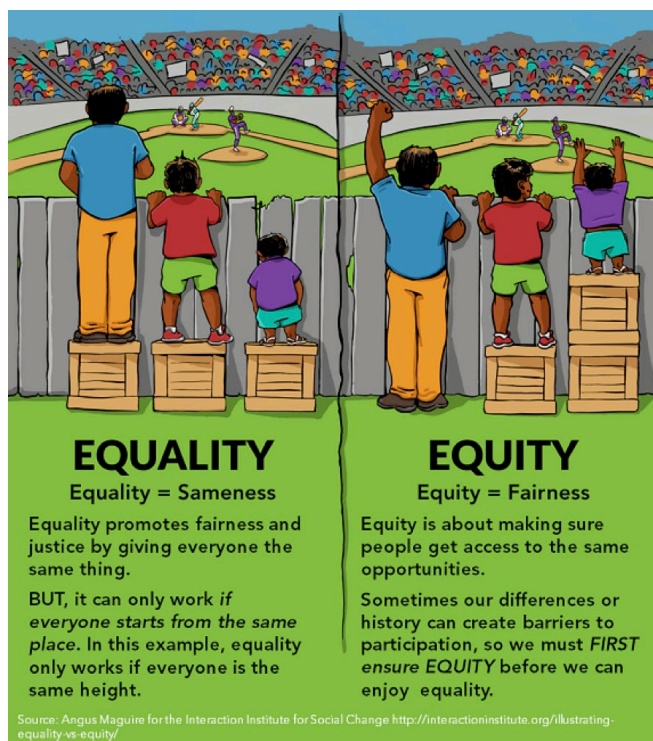


Photo credit: Lead MN

Inclusion

You may have heard of the saying “Diversity is being asked to the party, inclusion is being asked to dance”. Inclusion is systems, structures and processes that promote a sense of belonging, connection and community where all people feel known, welcomed and valued. ⁱⁱⁱ

General Group Terms (Shared with permission from the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce)

People of color – NOT “minorities” or “racial minorities.” Encompasses multiple groups. When referring to one group or one person, use their specific ethnicity or culture of origin. Minority takes away power, whereas “people of color” amplifies the number of people in a group, instead of marginalizing them.

- Minority-owned is okay as a broad reference, but not as a singular noun. Again, try to be specific about the country or ethnicity of origin where possible.
- Black – Always capitalized, always singular. When referring to multiple people, describe the group: Black employees, Black culture or Black colleges.
- African American – Okay to use, but only for those specifically American of African descent. Not interchangeable with Black American or African immigrant.
- White – Preferred over Caucasian. Always lowercase and always singular.
- Asian American – Americans of Asian descent.
- Brown – NOT an acceptable term, as it is too broad and imprecise.
- Latino/Latina/LatinX – Preferred for people whose ancestors were from Spanish-speaking land or culture, or from Latin America.
- Hispanic – NOT a preferred term.
- American Indians – Preferred over Native American when referring to people of different tribal affiliations.
- Indigenous – A term for original inhabitants of a place. Always capitalized.

Terms to stay away from (shared with permission from the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce)

We all assume positive intent in communicating with each other and being inclusive. In doing so, these are terms not recommended to use.

- More/less diverse – There is no gradient scale for diversity. All people are diverse from each other.
- Calling someone out for looking, sounding, having “different sounding” names
- Mentioning “color blindness” – We celebrate differences and points of view, we don’t ignore them.
- Assumptions of stereotypes – Criminal activity, single parenthood, government help to succeed
- Underestimating someone’s capability – “You’re so articulate” and similar phrases assume less of someone’s capabilities, based on their race or background.
- “Where are you actually from?” – Assuming that someone who isn’t white isn’t from the United States.
- Interrupting – Assuming what you have to say is more important than anyone else’s.
- No touching – Even if complimenting someone’s hair or other physical appearance.
- Ghetto – Has a connotation for government decree has forced low-income people to live in certain areas.
- Reverse discrimination – Use discrimination, instead, as it is an all-encompassing term

OTHER LANGUAGE AND GROUP CONSIDERATIONS

Pronouns

- Why do we offer pronouns at registration and email signatures? MPI Minnesota is dedicated to creating a culture where everyone feels included. One way to foster this culture is to not create assumptions about an individual or group. Listing pronouns removes the assumption based on name, sound of voice, look and overall demeanor about someone’s gender.

More information can be found [here](#).

LGBTQ+ Terminology

Preferred Terms (from the GLADD Media Resource Guide)

- LGBTQ - Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. Sometimes, when the Q is seen at the end of LGBT, it can also mean questioning. LGBT and/or GLBT are also often used. The term "gay community" should be avoided, as it does not accurately reflect the diversity of the community. Rather, using LGBTQ community is preferred
- "gay" (adj.); "gay man" or "lesbian" (n.); "gay person/people" - use gay, lesbian or when appropriate bisexual or queer to describe people attracted to members of the same sex.
- "relationship," "couple" (or, if necessary, "gay/lesbian/same-sex couple"), "sex," etc. - As a rule, try to avoid labeling an activity, emotion, or relationship gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer unless you would call the same activity, emotion, or relationship "straight" if engaged in by someone of another orientation.
- "sexual orientation" or "orientation" - Sexual orientation is the accurate description of an individual's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to members of the same and/ or opposite sex and is inclusive of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and queer people, as well as straight men and women

Offensive Terms (from the GLADD Media Resource Guide)

- "homosexual" (n. or adj.) - Because of the clinical history of the word "homosexual," it is aggressively used by anti-LGBTQ extremists to suggest that people attracted to the same sex are somehow diseased or psychologically/emotionally disordered.
- "gay lifestyle," "homosexual lifestyle," or "transgender lifestyle" - There is no single LGBTQ lifestyle. LGBTQ people are diverse in the ways they lead their lives.
- Other terminology and resources can be found [GLAAD Media Reference Guide](#).

Disabilities

- When writing about anyone with a disability—whether physical, intellectual or psychological/emotional—always strive to adopt **“people first” language**. This means using words that put the person at the center of a description rather than a label, their status, or focusing on what the individual cannot do.
- However, many disabled communities prefer “identity first” language. You should ask the person what their preference is, both in how they are described as having a disability in general, as well as their specific disability. *iv*

Terminology to avoid and use instead (from the University of Iowa DEI Department)

- Instead of handicap/disable.....use people/person with disability
- Dwarf or midget.....use short stature
- Learning disabled....use person with a learning disability
- Handicapped parking.....Accessible parking
- Hearing impaired.....Person who is deaf or hard of hearing
- Vision impaired.....Person who is blind

More preferred language and terminology can be found on the [National Center on Disability and Journalism](#).

Ageism and Age Inclusion in Events

What is ageism?

According to the World Health Organization, ageism refers to the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) towards others or oneself based on age. v

According to the Cleveland Department of Aging, two simple changes to make your event or business more age-friendly is to increase seating and make access to bathrooms easy. Older adults shared with us that limited seating and bathrooms that are not in close proximity to the event are two of the biggest barriers to participation. Providing age and disability inclusion training to staff can help make sure everyone of all ages feels included and welcomed^v

Language to Avoid and Use Instead

- Recent College Grad.....Use Entry Level
- Tech Savvy.....List specific skills
- Cultural Fit.....List DEI policies/values
- Go getter.....Productive
- Fresh....agile, innovative

For more age inclusion [information](#).

DEI REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) (Special Thanks to MPI Northern California Chapter)

The DEI RFP is a document that can be used when sourcing venues or thinking about DEI considerations for your venue. Our chapter RFP can be found [here](#).

Inclusion when selecting event dates

To be inclusive as an organization and as planners and suppliers in the industry it is also important to consider things like religious holidays and other culturally sacred practices and celebrations. So, as you consider your events, you might think about going the extra mile in a committee meeting to seek input on dates as a way to be more inclusive.

DEI TIDBITS

The DEI committee has shared DEI tidbits in each of the monthly newsletters. These tidbits are just some actionable items that can be utilized in our industry.

Location/Venue

- **Recognizing Land Acknowledgement at Events:** At the beginning of your events, consider adding a land acknowledgement. A Land Acknowledgment is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. Hear what it means to members of the Native American and Indigenous Peoples Steering Group [here](#). To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory you reside on, and a way of honoring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. Credit: North Western University
- **All-Gender Restrooms:** Offering all gender restrooms makes guests feel more comfortable and inclusive. Single occupancy restrooms can be converted into “all gender” restrooms with signage.

Mentioning where they are located in communications and emcee comments is very helpful! For more information can be found [here](#).

- **Quiet Spaces:** Consider offering low key or quiet spaces with opportunities for prayer space, mindfulness, yoga, meditation or opportunities to decompress. These provide breaks from busy schedules and show that you welcome attendees to bring their full, authentic selves to events. You can find more the importance of quiet spaces [here](#).

Food and Beverage

- **Inclusive Food and Beverage Experiences:** You can make food and beverage more inclusive by having all food items labeled with ingredients/allergens, provide equitable options for those with dietary needs and making sure dining spaces are accessible to everyone. Common individual food allergies include those to peanuts, tree nuts (walnuts, pecans, etc.), fish, shellfish, eggs, milk, soy, corn and wheat. More information can be found [here](#).

Registration

Registration Process: An important way to make sure everyone feels welcomed is asking for accessibility and accommodations needs such as interpreters, wheelchair assistance, nursing mother rooms, dietary considerations etc.

Accommodations Support: Have a point of contact for those requesting any accessibility or accommodations support such as who to contact prior, onsite etc.

Marketing & Communications

DEI Statement/Code of Conduct: *Before the event* create a clear equality and diversity statement or meeting & events commitment statement specifically for the event and publish a code of conduct that spells out zero tolerance for harassment or discrimination. It is helpful to include in email and onsite communications/signage.

Event Website and Materials: Reviewing your website and materials for accessibility such as making sure they are able to read in different format, have image descriptions etc.

Programming

Creating Safe Space during DEI Discussions: Having moderators or emcee set the tone and create a safe space but going over ground rules for DEI discussions. Knowing when to reset the room such as asking everyone to take a few minutes and come back to the discussions.

Factor in DEI in Budget: Whether planning for DEI speakers, internal training, trainers and DEI initiatives, accommodations and accessibility, consider factoring in when budgeting.

Diversity of Speaker Voices and Planning Committee: Look at a variety of perspectives and representation, (gender, sexual orientation, race, age, etc.) with speakers, planning committee and vendors. This allows for a variety of perspectives, innovations and ideas and make sure events are as inclusive as possible.

Sharing DEI Goals: Share your DEI goals and best practices with planning committee, vendors, speakers and partners such as being mindful on how to address the group (ex: "Not using ladies and gentleman or hi guys").

Attendee Experience

Gender Inclusive Language/People First Language

Avoid gendered language when addressing attendees and guests and use gender inclusive language. Using gender inclusive language removes assumptions and respectfully acknowledges the gender identities of all people. This keeps it person focused.

Some ways to greet could be “Hello friends, everyone, team”

REFERENCES FOR RESEARCH

Our chapter DEI page

<https://www.mpi.org/chapters/minnesota/about-our-chapter/diversity-equity-and-inclusion>

[MPI Global Resources for Equality & Justice](#)

[MPI Potomac](#)

[Black in Events Network](#)

[LGBT Meetings Professionals Association](#)

[MPI AAPI Resources](#)

[National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals](#)

[National Diversity Council](#)

[National Events Council](#)

[Nonprofit Leadership Alliance](#)

[Northstar Meeting Group](#)

[The Neu Project Neurodiversity](#)

There are many more DEI terms, more terms can be found:

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

CITATIONS

ⁱ https://www.gsma.com/aboutus/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GSMA-Inclusive-Language-Guide_2020.pdf

ⁱⁱ <https://www.leadmn.org/EDI-series1>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.asaging.org/diversity-equity-inclusion>

^{iv} <https://diversity.uiowa.edu/dei-style-guide/style-guide-people-disabilities>

^v <https://www.cacgrants.org/media-room/news/post/how-to-make-your-events-more-inclusive-and-age-friendly>