



Academic Conferences: How to Build Capacity for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

Below you will find suggestions about actions you can take to support EDI before, during, and after your conference. This is a starting place to build capacity for EDI at academic conferences. It is meant to act as a guide to conversations and meaningful actions.

Before the conference



1. Put out an expression of interest for and assemble a conference organizing committee diverse in social identities (e.g. gender, (dis)ability, race, nationality, sexual orientation, etc.), geographical location, and background/training
2. Establish and work to maintain equitable relationships between all committee members. For example, encourage students and early career members to share their views regularly
3. Value different and accessible ways of communicating with each other (e.g. verbally, email, padlet, jamboard, mentimeter)



Abstract Review

4. Put out an expression of interest for abstract reviewers
5. Ensure abstract reviewers are diverse in social identities, background/training, methodological approaches, and topic of study
6. Develop clear procedures and guidelines for reviewing abstracts
7. Ensure reviewing criteria are clear, inclusive, and accessible
8. Reduce bias in the abstract review process by considering making the authors' names and institutions anonymous to reviewers

Conference Programme

9. Ensure research that attends to EDI is embedded throughout the conference sessions
10. Invite keynote speakers diverse in social identities, geographical location, background/training, methodological approaches, and research topics (e.g. speaker diversity)
11. Create speaker guidelines that address the goals of speaker diversity and share these guidelines with keynotes and presenters at point of invitation and abstract acceptance

Event Practicalities

12. Provide clear information to conference attendees about who to contact prior to the conference to request specific accessible accommodations
13. Communicate to all attendees how accessible accommodation can be requested
14. Consider providing accessible options for delegates, such as a hybrid conference
15. Partner with venues who have accessible and welcoming facilities, including gender neutral washrooms
16. Consider the sensory nature of your venue (e.g. lighting, heating, ambient noises) and how it might impact attendees with neurodiversity
17. Explore options for quality facilities and spaces for daycare, as well as private rooms for prayer

18. Work with suppliers who are Indigenous and/or Black and/or owned by members of other equity-owned groups when procuring items for social activities/events (e.g. conference swag, catering, local restaurants, etc.)

19. When choosing food and entertainment, celebrate diverse cultures and tastes in meaningful ways, and recognize dietary requirements

Accessible Costs

20. Offer a reduced fee schedule for attendees from low- and middle-income countries

21. Ensure a diverse range of accommodation room options, such as price ranges and options to share

22. Provide bursaries and/or reduce conference fees for attendees of equity-owned groups



During the conference



23. Acknowledge where the physical structure is located (e.g. traditional lands) in a meaningful way that prompts self-reflection and learning from and with community members
24. Give participants the option to provide pronouns prior to the conference and/or provide options to include pronouns on name badges
25. Ensure conference session rooms are accessible (e.g. elevators, ramps, seating)
26. Provide options like captioning and live transcription of presentations
27. Spotlight a variety of different scholars from diverse backgrounds throughout the conference (e.g., on social media, during sessions, etc.)
28. Have networking events with Early Career Researchers and engage with mid-career and established researchers to participate in networking sessions



After the conference



29. To support future conference planning, administer a post-conference survey that captures EDI topics like accessibility needs, demographics information from conference attendees, and the organization's membership. Have the responses from surveys inform future conference and ongoing conversations

30. Host conference presentations or posters/documents on conference website for those unable to attend

The above suggestions were developed with contributions from members of the following societies:





[1] We suggest working to and attempting to make services as accessible as possible for everyone to be included and able to fully participate. This may not always be possible due to people having conflicting requirements. We suggest that when planning conferences, conference committees and attendees engage in consistent reflections in how practices may include/exclude community members, and subsequently adapt their practices over time where possible based on the needs of attendees.