

## Accessibility, Inclusion, and Equity: Resources and Action Steps

Equity, Inclusion and Membership Committee members Ann Luther, Micky Bondo, Lilly Martin, Elaine DiGiovanni, Nadine Bangarter, Anna Kellar, Lane Sturtevant and Nadya Mullen contributed to the research and suggestions.

These resources and suggested actions are a starting point for your research and discussions. As you think about making your events and programs more accessible and inclusive to people with diverse needs, identities and experiences, we hope it will be a helpful guide.

General Concepts: It's important to assume everyone has knowledge that you don't - even if that is the knowledge of what it is like to be them! There is no such thing as universal accessibility - some things that increase inclusion for one population will negatively impact others. It's still valuable to question the status quo and to signal your intentions of inclusion by providing accommodations, even if no one takes you up on it!

Area of Inclusion	Resources	Suggested Actions
Deaf community/hearing impaired	<a href="#">Speakers Bureau - Accessibility Webinar</a>  <a href="https://www.3playmedia.com/blog/livestream-content-accessible/">https://www.3playmedia.com/blog/livestream-content-accessible/</a>  <a href="#">Deaf culture/Deaf Community</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Live captions on virtual events (<a href="#">How to Enable Closed Captions on Zoom</a>);</li> <li>• Edited, freely available transcripts</li> <li>• consider sign language interpretation for live events</li> <li>• Technology (camera and mic) is needed for good hybrid meetings with clear sound quality (see below)</li> </ul>
Blind community/vision impaired	<a href="#">Designing for Accessibility</a>  <a href="https://www.afb.org/consulting/afb-accessibility-resources">https://www.afb.org/consulting/afb-accessibility-resources</a>  <a href="https://www.3playmedia.com/blog/livestream-content-accessible/">https://www.3playmedia.com/blog/livestream-content-accessible/</a> (as above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use <a href="#">Image Descriptions</a>;</li> <li>• Consider text size; color contrast, etc.</li> <li>• Use <a href="#">validation tools</a> to check.</li> <li>• Design for keyboard accessibility and screen readers</li> <li>• Give thought to audio descriptions, not just audio transcripts.</li> <li>• Adding audio version of important documents (e.g. voter guides)</li> </ul>
Limited Mobility	Recommended: <a href="#">ADA Checklist</a>  <a href="#">Campus</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ADA-compliant locations (tour the space ahead of time);</li> <li>• Ease of parking</li> <li>• Maintain virtual participation options</li> </ul>

	<p><a href="#">suggestions</a></p> <p><a href="#">Building accessibility list</a></p> <p><a href="#">Religious exemption</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have seating available</li> </ul>
<p>Neurodiversity and Mental Health</p>	<p><a href="#">Designing for Accessibility</a></p> <p><a href="#">Controversial</a></p> <p><a href="#">Neurodiversity explained</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include written and verbal content</li> <li>• share agendas in advance and notes after</li> <li>• avoid jargon</li> <li>• avoid harmful language (crazy as a generic adjective, etc)</li> <li>• There are no universal solutions since LWVME’s audience probably does not lean toward one type of neurodiversity.</li> </ul>
<p>BIPOC inclusion</p>	<p><a href="#">Antiracism Resource Guide</a></p> <p><a href="#">Antiracism Resources for White Allies - AWIS</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.awis.org">https://www.awis.org</a> &gt; <a href="#">antiracism-resources-for-allies</a></p> <p><a href="#">Why is Maine So White and What It Means to Ask the Question</a></p> <p><a href="#">Act, Strategies, Caucus, and Affinity Groups - Racial Equity Tools</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.racial-equitytools.org">https://www.racial-equitytools.org</a> &gt; <a href="#">resources</a> &gt; <a href="#">caucus-a...</a></p> <p><a href="#">Race Caucusing in an</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid <a href="#">microaggressions</a></li> <li>• Consider whose experiences are reflected in content, given as examples</li> <li>• Name and acknowledge disparate racial impacts</li> <li>• Include <a href="#">land acknowledgments</a></li> <li>• Learn about anti-racist frameworks and <a href="#">allyship</a> (Fear-Learning-Growth-Activism cycle)</li> <li>• <u>Learn from mistakes and don't let fear of doing the wrong thing stop you from trying</u></li> <li>• Read books from BIPOC authors</li> <li>• Recognize the importance of <a href="#">caucuses and affinity groups</a> to create spaces for each race to work separately and together</li> </ul>

	<a href="#">Organizational Context: A POC's Experience</a>	
Language and Ethnicity	<a href="#">Snapshot of Maine Immigrant Population</a>  <a href="#">Organizations Working with Immigrants in Maine</a>  <a href="#">"When to Use Ethnic Slurs"</a> (about reclamation and in-community use)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide translation/interpretation</li> <li>• Consider content changes to add context or cultural relevance (not only literal translation of identical content)</li> <li>• Avoid jargon and slang;</li> <li>• Avoid stereotypes</li> <li>• Abolish racist language ( use clear, concise, and accurate content to value language and ethnicity)</li> <li>• Literacy in native language and ESL</li> </ul>
Religion	<a href="#">Interfaith holiday calendar</a> ; <a href="#">Another calendar</a>  <a href="#">Kosher basics</a>  <a href="#">Halal basics</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider holiday schedules (special consideration for Ramadan and Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur)</li> <li>• Consider food restrictions (what options are you including on a form?);</li> <li>• Consider using venues that don't center on alcohol (also good for the sober/recovery community),</li> <li>• Reach out to religious communities in planning major events</li> <li>• (Calendars on the League website.)</li> </ul>
Socioeconomic identity, income, and education level	<a href="#">Reading list</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider costs of participation (transport, food, childcare);</li> <li>• Provide food; provide childcare; provide transportation - proactively.</li> <li>• Consider inclusive language (examples you give, ice-breaker questions - whose experience are you reflecting?)</li> <li>• Avoid jargon, normalize questions.</li> <li>• Sliding scale entry fees or free or suggested donation.</li> </ul>
Age	<a href="#">Multi-Generational Movement Spaces</a>  <a href="#">Intergenerational Equity Framework</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid assumptions based on stereotypes: i.e. young people are good at technology and older people aren't.</li> <li>• Assume everyone brings their own</li> </ul>

	<a href="#">LWVUS Webinar/Resources on Intergenerational Work</a>  <a href="#">AARP Toolkit For Serving Diverse Communities</a>  <a href="#">6 Ways to AddAge in Your Diversity and Inclusion Guide</a>	<p>unique knowledge &amp; skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting location and meeting time to accommodate young parents and working-age people.</li> <li>• How do we get people in the room?</li> </ul>
LGBTQ+	<a href="#">LWVUS Webinar/Resources on Gender Identity</a>  <a href="#">Guide to Gender Inclusive Language</a>  <a href="#">Acronym Explanations for LGBTQIA etc</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include pronouns in introductions, name tags.</li> <li>• Don't assume you know someone's gender or sexual orientation by their appearance.</li> <li>• Use gender-inclusive language.</li> </ul>
Multiple Partisanship		

**Broad Resources:**

[DEI for Event Planning Checklist from LWVUS](#)

Visual/Web Page [Designing for Accessibility](#), with sections for users on the autistic spectrum, with low vision, users of screen readers, with dyslexia, with physical/motor disabilities, deaf/hard of hearing users, users with anxiety.

[Equity Screening Questions for Content Creators](#)

[Collection of DEI resources from MANP](#)

**Some thoughts on virtual, in-person, and hybrid events**

\_\_\_\_\_ There is no one right answer for all events or all individuals. As we've learned in the last 18 months, online events (Zoom meetings, webinars, Facebook live streams, etc) can make it much easier for some kinds of participation. No travel time means no concern about driving at night, finding parking, finding childcare. It's often cheaper or free for participants (no \$ for gas, parking, babysitter, food out, etc) and cheaper for the host (no venue costs). Online events bring together people from a wider geographic area. For people with some disabilities, virtual events can be far more accessible than in person. And of course, COVID remains a real concern, and vaccination status is becoming a form of privilege - the immuno-compromised, many people with children and others are going to remain cautious of in-person gatherings for a while to come. The downside of virtual events include exclusion due to the technological divide, and the dreaded "zoom fatigue". For many people in Maine, internet speed is a serious barrier to full participation in virtual meetings and events. Other people may struggle with using technology, or not have easy access to a fast computer or newer phone.

There are advantages of in-person events that may outweigh the disadvantages that were just described. Deeper relationship-building can be tough to do in virtual meetings. In-person events allow people to interact with body language, share food, have side conversations, and socialize. Some people will also find it much easier to focus and avoid distractions in an in-person meeting.

What about hybrid solutions? Can we have the best of both worlds? Potentially, but hybrid events come with pitfalls too. A candidate forum, panel discussion, or another event with a speaker and audience can work well as a hybrid event, since it is relatively easy for a moderator to take questions from both in-person and online attendees equally, and someone watching from home will have a similar experience to someone attending in person. It is tougher, without more sophisticated technology, to have a meeting or discussion, where some participants are in person and some are not. When people in person wear masks, it can be even harder for virtual participants to keep up! There is also a tendency to overlook the people who are not in the room, who may find it hard to insert a comment. Another hybrid option is to alternate forms of events - holding a meeting in person one month and online the next, but doing so may leave people who can't travel to events feeling like lesser members and prevent them from fully affiliating with the group.

For the online participants to both see all the people in the room, and hear them clearly, special equipment is needed. A basic package with a microphone and camera may be available for under \$400 that could allow for hybrid Zoom meetings in a living room or small conference room. Larger meeting spaces require more sophisticated and expensive technology. Some school districts and other non-profits (like the Island Institute) have purchased sophisticated technology that they may be willing to loan or rent.