

# EVERYONE IS WELCOME AT OUR EVENTS

## INCLUSIVE & ACCESSIBLE EVENT PLANNING

November 13, 2024 - 1:00pm-2:00pm Eastern Standard Time



Hi, and good afternoon, everyone! Or should I say, WELCOME! Thank you for joining today's webinar, "Everyone is Welcome at Our Events," where we'll dive into Inclusive and Accessible Event Planning.

We'll spend the next hour together sharing valuable tips and tools for creating events that are inclusive and accessible. While we don't claim to have all the answers—we're all learning together. With years of event planning, ongoing learning, and even those moments where we've missed the mark and had to swiftly course correct, we've gained insights that we're eager to share with you today.

Our goal is simple: if you walk away with just ONE new idea or best practice to apply to an event you're involved with—whether now or in the future—then we'll feel confident that we've helped create a more positive, safe, engaging, and welcoming experience for someone who may not have felt that way in the past.

Now, let's introduce ourselves!

## OUR TEAM



**KARA NACARATO**

Director, Development + Operations



**KATE POJETA, CAE, CMP**

Director, Meetings + Technology



My name is Kara Nacarato and the Director of Development & Operations for Event Garde.

I've spent more than 20 years working in the nonprofit and association industry, with experience spanning both sales & fundraising as well as various roles in event management and planning. Over those years 20 ++, I've learned a lot and continuously refined my approach, and today I'm excited to share some of that knowledge with all of you. And now I'll turn it over to my colleague Kate.

Hi - I'm Kate Pojeta, the Director of Meetings + Technology for Event Garde. I have had the pleasure of working in the association sector for over 20 years, first in a small association wearing all the hats for 10 years, and specifically in event management after that. All along, I've had heavy involvement in the tech side of things as well, from audiovisual to process improvements to system integrations. I've seen MANY events at countless venues for a variety of audiences. I've executed events almost flawlessly and I've fumbled through events. I'm here to share some of that with you all!

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVITY AND ACCESSIBILITY IN EVENT PLANNING.
- 2 LEARN HOW TO IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION.
- 3 GAIN INSIGHTS INTO BETTER PRACTICES FOR ACCOMMODATING DIVERSE NEEDS.
- 4 TAKE AWAY RESOURCES + TIPS TO ENHANCE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF YOUR EVENTS.
- 5 EXPLORE CASE STUDIES AND SUCCESS STORIES FROM INCLUSIVE EVENTS.

So, what will the next 50 minutes together look like, and what do we plan to achieve?

Well, Kate and I will team up to explore the following:

Understanding the importance of inclusivity and accessibility in event planning

How to anticipate, identify, and address barriers to participation

Ideas and best practices for providing accommodations

We hope to give you some takeaways, Resources, tips, and tricks for making your events more accessible

And lastly, as we both mentioned in our intros, through our years of experience, we've learned some valuable lessons. We plan to share case studies and examples to help validate key ideas and recommendations.

And With that, I thought it might be a good time to share a personal example—and my inspiration behind today's webinar.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to help plan and manage the Michigan Harm Reduction Summit. This event brings together over 400 attendees to discuss strategies for addressing the opioid epidemic. Participants include representatives from health departments, public safety,

medical professionals involved in treatment, as well as individuals with lived and current living experience. Topics range from overdose prevention and reducing the transmission of infectious diseases to best practices for syringe services.

I'm sharing these details so you can understand the complexity of the event, the diversity of attendees, and the importance of creating a safe environment for everyone—especially given the sensitive nature of these discussions. After all, it's right there in the title: Harm Reduction.

During one of the first breaks in the packed schedule, the conference chair and two attendees approached me to ask where the gender-neutral bathrooms were located. I embarrassingly didn't have an answer as I hadn't planned for this and hadn't ensured the venue offered that option.

As uncomfortable as I felt having to admit I didn't have an answer for them, imagine what those two attendees were feeling—at an event meant to be a safe space for all.

I quickly connected with my CSM, who offered access to a private restroom in an area we hadn't contracted. It was a temporary solution. Unfortunately, the first individual came back to inform me that the restroom wasn't usable. Eventually, we repurposed a nearby restroom and put up temporary signage designating it as gender-neutral. This wasn't as quickly as it should've been - and honestly it should never have been an issue.

In the end, we DID find a solution—and hopefully before any others were affected. But I KNOW that at least two attendees at an event I was managing didn't feel welcome, safe, or comfortable—the very things this conference, and all conferences, should strive to provide.

Afterward, I took some time to reflect on what happened. I debriefed with my Event Garde colleagues who have more expertise in the DEIB space, and we all agreed that openly sharing these experiences is a good start to preventing such missteps in the future.

And with that, I'll hand things over to Kate.



# INCLUSIVE + ACCESSIBLE EVENT PLANNING

## WHAT IS DEIB

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging is relational work. When done well, it centers shared language, creates spaces for open dialogue, and prioritizes frameworks for equitable engagement.

## WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN EVENTS?

We strive to create inclusive spaces where diverse voices are represented, ensuring equitable access for all participants, and fostering a sense of belonging. This involves thoughtful planning around accessibility, diverse programming, and intentional networking opportunities to make everyone feel valued and engaged.



We are not DEIB experts. We are event experts and we've had a LOT of experiences with events and plenty of opportunities where we learned how to do better with diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. We are still learning - sometimes from each other's experiences, sometimes from falling short ourselves. As the saying goes, when we know better, we can do better. One of the great assets of Event Garde is our DEIB professionals that can review things, help us process experiences, guide us to understand more and support us when we try again. We are grateful to have some of those experts in the background of this webinar, to lean on should we need their insight.

### What is DEIB

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging is relational work. When done well, it centers shared language, creates spaces for open dialogue, and prioritizes frameworks for equitable engagement.

### What does it look like in events?

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# INCLUSIVE + ACCESSIBLE EVENT PLANNING

DIVERSITY IS... INCLUSIVE OF... ACCESSIBLE FOR... BELONGING WITH...

- Cultural
- Racial & Ethnicity
- Gender
- Age
- Sexual Orientation
- Ability/Disability
- Body Type & Size
- Socioeconomic
- Religious & Spiritual
- Neurodiversity
- Linguistics
- Cognition
- Geographic

Throughout our presentation, we will use these DEIB words throughout our presentation and we apply them to a variety of human and societal elements...

DIVERSITY IS...

INCLUSIVE OF...

ACCESSIBLE FOR...

BELONGING WITH...

cultural

racial

ethnicity

gender

age

sexual orientations

abilities and disabilities

body types and sizes

socioeconomic statuses

religious groups

spiritual preferences

neurodiverse individuals

linguistic abilities

cognitive abilities

from varied geographic regions

This list is not comprehensive or final - it is ever growing and changing and as people in the "people" business of hospitality, it is our duty to be mindful of these elements.

# INCLUSIVE + ACCESSIBLE EVENT PLANNING

Why is this important? Why does this matter?

## PEOPLE ARE UNIQUE.

Everyone has needs and preferences that allow them to fully participate in events in a way that is safe and appropriate for them.

## OUR EVENTS ARE UNIQUE.

We manage events at countless locations with an assortment of schedules and activities, customized to our organization.

## PEOPLE ARE THE SAME.

We all want to take advantage of whatever life has to offer, including education, networking and social activities at events.

## OUR EVENTS ARE THE SAME.

There are basic factors that exist across all events that we can prepare for ahead of time to ensure an inclusive and accessible environment.



You're probably thinking how in the world can we possibly teach you in one hour how to make your unique event more inclusive and accessible...

PEOPLE ARE UNIQUE.

OUR EVENTS ARE UNIQUE.

Everyone has needs and preferences that allow them to fully participate in events in a way that is safe and appropriate for them.

We manage events at countless locations with an assortment of schedules and activities, customized to our organization.

How could we ever address ALL of the elements of an event and all of the items we listed on the previous page?

Well, I would like to suggest that...

PEOPLE ARE THE SAME.

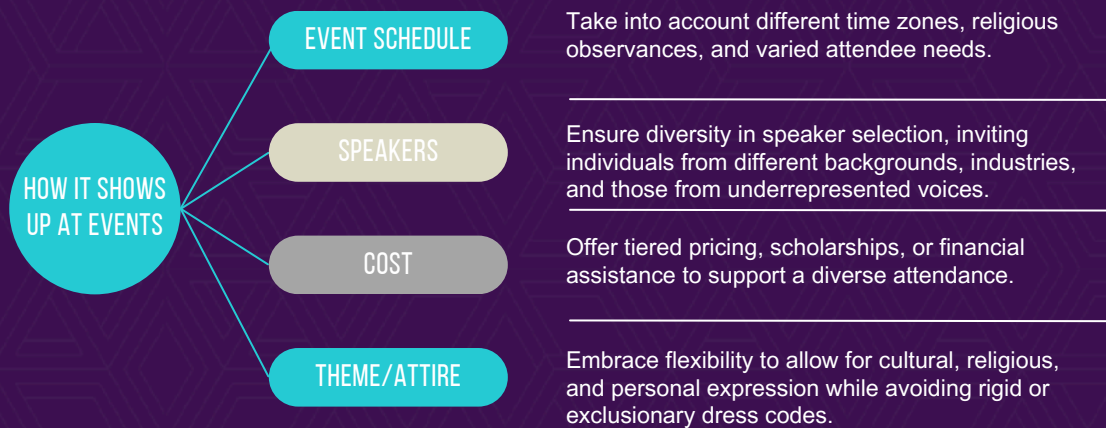
OUR EVENTS ARE THE SAME.

We all want to take advantage of whatever life has to offer, including education, networking and social activities at events.

There are basic factors that exist across all events that we can prepare for ahead of time to ensure an inclusive and accessible environment.

Our goal today is to give you a foundation of things to consider for your unique event. No single event is the same - it's why our job is so difficult. But there are similar elements across the board that we can focus on and improve on to ensure everyone attending feels seen and heard, feels included and welcomed.

# DESIGNING INCLUSIVE EVENTS



Now that we understand why it's important to proactively plan with an all-inclusive lens, it's time to start talking specifics.

For most of the remaining time together, we're going to take a deeper dive into the different areas of an event that have a direct impact on creating an inclusive event - OR NOT creating an inclusive event and instead act as barriers if not thought of ahead of time.

We'll dig into the importance of the event schedule, diversity in your speaker roster, cost restrictions and financial implications and embracing a theme and overall environment that fosters and accepts personal expression.

# DESIGNING INCLUSIVE EVENTS



Food and Beverage - we've ALWAYS known this is an important feature of events....but are we taking into account religious practices? How about cultural preferences?

And the VENUE! There is SO much more to selecting a venue then location and availability (while of course those matter) - but we need to prioritize accessibility - and set clear expectations with the Venue.

We'll cover the importance of clear communication pre-event, onsite and post-event.

And finally, we'll take a very close look into the audio visual practices - some very easy - that should be considered to help include everyone.

And with that, I'll dig in with the first two...





## EVENT SCHEDULE

- Date selections - Avoid dates that conflict with religious observances and holidays
- Carefully select start/end times
- Incorporate breaks
- Different session types/levels



When building an event schedule, inclusion is key. We've talked about that first step of understanding that attendees come from diverse backgrounds, experiences, and social identities. This diversity should inform every aspect of your planning.

The first area we're going to dive into today is the event schedule.

As planners, we often think about the schedule in terms of logistics: Do we need to order F&B breaks? Did we include a note on the BEO for a quick room flip or refresh? Will attendees have enough time to move between sessions or activities?

But what sometimes gets overlooked is: Does our event schedule create barriers to participation for certain attendees?

Let's start with Event Date Selection.

When choosing dates for your event, there are several factors to consider: time zones, religious observances—not just holidays, but the time of year.

For example, Muslims fast during Ramadan, and for some, it may be challenging to fully participate in an event during this period. If you don't have flexibility in your dates, is there a way to create a schedule—and onsite spaces—that are more inclusive for those unable to join the F&B functions?



Are you building in breaks during the day to accommodate different prayer times or other personal rituals? These breaks should be long enough to allow attendees to recharge, especially for those needing quiet spaces for reflection or meditation.

How about Start and End times each day? Are you accounting for attendees with families that have to drop off children? How about those taking public transportation into the city for the event?

I have another real life example to share here (again with the Harm reduction summit)

This year's event was a one day, and we had a lot of session and topics selected. Plus we had exhibitors and mobile units for attendees to visit.

So, we scheduled an 8:00 am start time in order to "fit everything in". Logistically, it worked—but we unintentionally created barriers for some attendees. We didn't account for those who needed to visit their local clinics for dosing or allow enough time for nicotine breaks which is important to our audience. While we provided information on local clinics for dosing needs, we didn't build in the time for attendees to actually go.

That's one example of how adjusting start and stop times can make a difference.

Accessibility should also drive your scheduling decisions. Build in adequate time between sessions for those with mobility challenges or for neurodiverse individuals to transition comfortably.

And Providing CLEAR information up front on accessibility accommodations ensures attendees feel their needs were considered and removes those barriers to attending in the first place.

Diversity in programming is also essential. Offer sessions that resonate with different social identities. By doing this, you create opportunities for all attendees to feel represented and valued.

Consider incorporating dedicated space and time in your schedule for informal networking and community-building among participants with shared social identities. Whether through affinity groups or casual social gatherings, providing opportunities for attendees to connect with others who share their experiences can foster a sense of belonging and strengthen ties within the broader event community. This approach is increasingly becoming a trend at industry events!

And, offer variety in session types - shorter session, panel discussions, roundtables to find a style that meets everyone's interest.

Inclusion isn't just about checking boxes. It's about creating a space where everyone can fully

participate, feel heard, and thrive.



## SPEAKERS

- Diverse speaker selection committee
- BIPOC speakers & those from diverse backgrounds
- Ensure speakers are mindful of the audience needs
  - Session diversity (e.g. panel discussion)
- Review speaker slides to ensure inclusivity



Ensuring inclusivity in speaker selection and session diversity is critical to creating an event where everyone feels represented and valued.

One of the first steps in achieving this is assembling a diverse speaker selection committee. By bringing together people from different backgrounds, experiences, and social identities, you're better positioned to choose speakers who reflect the full spectrum of your audience. This committee should include voices from various racial, gender, ability, and cultural identities, as well as different professional perspectives.

We're not just talking about ensuring you have a person of color on your speaker roster. It's so much more than that. When selecting speakers, aim to represent a broad range of experiences and expertise. It's essential to include speakers who can authentically speak to the experiences of marginalized communities—whether that's in relation to race, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or other intersections.

It's important though that you don't just stop at representation. Ensure that diverse speakers are featured in high-visibility, high-impact sessions, not only in niche or identity-focused tracks. Keynotes, moderators, etc. This signals to all attendees that diversity is integral to the core of the event.

Session diversity matters just as much. Offer a variety of session formats, from panel discussions to workshops and hands-on learning, and make sure the content addresses the interests and concerns of a wide audience. Ensure that topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion are not

siloed, but integrated across sessions, so that these conversations become part of the broader dialogue. Don't just talk the talk...walk the walk.

Providing coaching for your speakers is another key step in ensuring an inclusive event.

Many speakers may be subject matter experts, but not all are experienced in delivering content through an inclusive lens. **MAKE SURE THEY UNDERSTAND THE AUDIENCE.**

Offer coaching to help speakers be aware of their language, ensure their content is accessible to people with disabilities, and avoid inadvertently reinforcing stereotypes. This coaching can include tips on how to best engage your diverse audience, respond to questions sensitively, and recognize the importance of inclusion in their presentation style and materials.

Ultimately, by thoughtfully curating your speakers, diversifying your sessions, and offering coaching, you're not only enriching your event content but also sending a clear message that everyone's voice matters.

Inclusive events begin with intentional choices—and those choices start with who is invited to the stage.



## COST

- Tiered pricing options
- Offer Scholarships
- Student pricing
- Select locations that are less costly to travel to
- Hybrid/virtual options

From the moment we are born, our society is setup in a way to help those most in need. Children that don't have access to medical care through a guardian's job get taken care of by state health care. When we get to school, there are programs and services that help support students in need of food, transportation and supplemental education. This tends to fall away as we get older and into a more competitive society. We as event planners can help bring focus back to that type of support by suggesting tiered pricing options, scholarships, student memberships or sponsorships. When we select a venue, we need to understand our audience. I have one client that prefers hotel room rates under \$180/night, and another that hasn't yet had anything under \$350/night. Different audiences, different income levels. We would never push the one group to a hotel that was that far out of price range - it's not accessible to them. Travel overall can be a challenge for multiple reasons and so when considering location, take that into account. Better to be closer to an airport? In a city with plentiful transportation options? What about offering more than one location? Streaming into a second location? Streaming out fully to anyone/anywhere? There's certainly cost differences but when we can take a look at them, break them down and determine the value of the different experiences, we can apply pricing accordingly and potentially allow more people to be involved in the event in one way or another. Even recording for post-event consumption can be considered as a low-cost option for sharing the education, even if the experience isn't the same.

In terms of basic costs, at the very least we can consider scholarships, or sponsored registrations. Ask another attendee during registration if they would like to help another attendee cover their fees. Ask a sponsor of the event or an exhibitor if they would provide one (or more) complimentary registrations. Build it into your sponsorship packages and amounts even.



## THEME/ATTIRE

- Flexible dress codes
- Offer dress attire suggestions
- Share suggested dress and themes with speakers



What is everyone wearing?? What about for the dinner? Should we dress up for the networking event? Are presenters expected to be in business attire? We've likely all been asked these questions, have asked them ourselves, or wondered them! Either way, communicating to attendees, speakers, staff and guests what, if any, attire expectations exist, will help alleviate stress on their end and reduce attire issues on the event end. If your event has no needed dress code, do you need to implement one? Should you? Why? What is the goal of the conference? I can assure you that a networking meeting among lawyers and clients will have a different attire than a yoga instructor conference. It is okay to post a preferred attire, even to provide recommended suggestions, a look book, or pictures to help people know what exactly "business casual" means. Some people will default to completely casual, and others will default to dressing in business attire. It's your conference - consider the venue, environment, activities - what do you need to ensure, want to encourage, etc? If you are choosing to apply themed attire suggestions to certain activities, be flexible. For example, a sports night could be your favorite team's jersey - but not everyone owns a team jersey. It's certainly okay to simply sport your team colors - AND it's okay to dress casually and completely unrelated to sports attire. Give an array of options so no one feels they HAVE to comply with a theme or purchase new items to belong. Unless your venue has a strict coat and tie policy, attire is truly up to the individuals and we can only provide suggestions.





## FOOD & BEVERAGE

- Dietary restrictions
- Religious practices
- Drinks (alcoholic and non-alcoholic)
- Clearly label food
- Communicating with attendees



Food and beverage choices are often overlooked, but they play a significant role in creating an inclusive event. When attendees feel that their dietary needs and preferences are respected, it signals that they are valued and welcome.

Of course we cannot offer 300 customized meals, but it is important to understand your attendees and find ways NOT to create discomfort for any participants.

This is not new to event planners. We're used to the more common accommodations such as offering meals for those with allergies—like gluten, dairy, or nuts—as well as preferences such as vegetarian, vegan, and plant-based options. Most of us probably even do a good job asking those questions on the reg form and have a process for providing attendees and venues with dietary cards, or ensuring allergen information is clearly labeled on all buffets. Clearly labeling all food and beverages is essential, as it allows attendees to easily identify what they can eat without having to ask for clarification.

These details are a STAPLE on my BEOs.

But beyond these general assumptions and practices, it is also important to consider cultural and religious food practices. For instance, make sure to include halal, kosher, and other culturally appropriate options, and be mindful of those observing dietary restrictions for religious reasons.

And be very thoughtful about communicating these accommodations. I was at an event once where someone from the planning team went on stage and asked the attendees who requested

“halal” meals to please identify themselves so servers could deliver their meals. While it was great that these attendees were considered ahead of time, there was a missed opportunity to fully include these individuals and instead they were made to feel different.

And don't forget about DRINKS and offering non-alcoholic beverage options for networking or social events. While many attendees may enjoy an alcoholic drink, others may not—whether for religious reasons, health concerns, or personal choice. Offering a range of interesting non-alcoholic beverages ensures everyone feels included during these social moments.

Signature drinks – make it a non-alcoholic option and then provide an option to add alcohol. And really think about your non-drinkers when building social activities. Do you call it happy hour? To someone in recovery this may be an automatic “not participating” barrier. And remember that alcohol is expensive. Are you creating a cost barrier because you need to charge more to accommodate the drinks? So many considerations!

Try to Be proactive – Collect dietary information during the registration process.. This proactive approach reduces the risk of attendees feeling left out or scrambling to find something they can safely eat or how they participate in social/networking functions.

Finally, providing inclusive seating arrangements, such as smaller tables for more intimate conversations or buffet options that allow flexibility, ensures that everyone can enjoy the food experience without logistical barriers. Thoughtful meal planning is not just about meeting basic needs—it's about creating a sense of belonging.





Venue selection and layout are critical elements of creating an inclusive and welcoming event. The physical environment sends a strong message about who is invited and who can fully participate, so it's important to choose a venue that reflects your commitment to inclusivity.

When selecting a venue, accessibility should be a top priority. Ensure the venue complies with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards, offering step-free entrances, elevators, and accessible bathrooms. It's also essential to provide accessible seating in all rooms, ensuring that people with mobility devices have options throughout the space, not just in designated areas. Additionally, consider providing quiet spaces for those who need a break from the sensory overload of a busy event.

A thoughtful venue layout goes beyond physical accessibility. Design your space so that it's easy for all attendees to navigate, with clear signage and paths that accommodate those with different mobility needs. Provide plenty of seating and standing options for individuals who may not be able to sit for long periods. Make sure that meeting rooms are equipped with assistive technology such as hearing loops or captioning services to ensure full participation for those with hearing impairments. Kate will cover more on that later.

Equally important are amenities that make everyone feel welcome. We already talked about gender-neutral restrooms but it is such a simple yet impactful way to ensure that attendees of all gender identities feel comfortable.

Additionally, offering a dedicated lactation room for nursing/pumping individuals. This room should

be private, equipped with comfortable seating, and be easily accessible.

Venue location (geographically) matters as well. Choose a venue that is easily accessible by public transportation and close to hotels or accommodations that meet a variety of price points.

This helps ensure that your event is accessible to people from different economic backgrounds.

## BREAKERS EXAMPLE

Take into account the actual layout and setup as well. Make it as easy as possible for attendees to get from one area to another. Make sure the session rooms are big enough - seating includes seats without arms, wide spaces in between

Finally, communicate the venue's inclusive features in advance. Providing information on accessibility, and amenities up front on your event website or registration materials to allow attendees to feel confident and prepared before they even arrive.

By being intentional with your venue selection, layout, and amenities, you create a space that supports and welcomes everyone. Inclusion isn't just about who attends—it's about ensuring that everyone can fully participate and feel comfortable throughout the event.



# COMMUNICATION

- Messaging
  - Emails, websites, fliers
- Registration
  - ASK!
  - DATA!
- Color
- Language & Tone
- Images
- Mobile App

We could develop an entire hour on just communication accessibility and inclusivity so please know this a QUICK overview and we'll provide some resources at the end for you to further delve into and learn more about.

First thing though is all of your event messaging - website, fliers, emails, registration forms, mobile app... Each of these should be assessed for accessibility and inclusivity in regards to color, language, tone, images, readability - this can feel overwhelming so start with ONE focus (such as color palette, or imagery) or ONE piece (website), and continue to build from there. MANY of our digital tools have built-in accessibility aids now - Powerpoint, Mailchimp, and there are countless add-ons we can build into our websites to check accessibility.

While we can't possibly cover all of the various communication paths we use for our events today, I do want to spend some time on a couple critical pieces:

Registration Form

Privacy/Permissions

Our registration forms are THE place to collect information from attendees and we have a reference list of fields in our resources but the overview is - ASK what they need in regards to accommodations (open-ended, check-boxes), ASK for dietary (simple select, option to add details).

YOU MUST comply with data storage regulations, sharing protocols, etc...

Washington state enacted the My Health My Data Act to protect the privacy of consumer health decisions and health data. Data protection concerns are heightened after the 2022 reversal of Roe v. Wade. States have begun creating legislation that protects consumer health information. This will impact meeting professionals.

My Health My Data Act (HB 1155) passed the Washington State Legislature on April 17, 2023. Signed into law by Governor Jay Inslee on April 27, 2023, it goes into effect on March 31, 2024.

“Important information like food allergies and ADA requirements that are regularly collected by meeting organizers will be considered protected information under this new law,” says Jill Blood, VP, Deputy General Counsel and Privacy Officer at Maritz. “In many cases, an attendee will now have to opt into the collection or sharing of this type of information.”

The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which governs how personal data of individuals in the EU may be processed and transferred, went into effect on May 25, 2018. GDPR is broad in scope and uses broad definitions. “Personal data” is any information that relates to an identified or identifiable living individual (data subject) such as a name, email address, tax ID number, online identifier, etc. “Processing” data includes actions such as collecting, recording, storing and transferring data.

A company that is not established in the Union may have to comply with the Regulation when processing personal data of EU and EEA residents (EEA countries are Norway, Lichtenstein and Switzerland):

- a) If the company offers goods or services to data subjects in the EU; or,
- b) If the company is monitoring data subjects’ behavior taking place within the EU.

## Pronouns, Allyship

One organization’s DEI Committee requested a way to allow attendees that wanted to outwardly share their pronouns with a way to do that, as well as provide a lanyard that was inclusive-promoting.

Yes, we could ask this during registration and often we do include that piece, however, using that to print onto a namebadge assumes the person wants it displayed. So while we collect that for our own communications with the individual, we find ways people can self-identify when/if they want.

We put out a variety of pronoun buttons that attendees can select from. We offer both a solid colored, branded lanyard and a branded rainbow-striped and flag lanyard for attendees to choose from.

Those members that want to highlight these things are beyond appreciative. Those that choose not to highlight those things aren’t forced to.

Does all of this information live in the event app? In an effort to be environmentally conscious, we've seen the printed agenda/onsite directory go away. But if you have attendees of various ages, with different technology experience/comfort, and varying abilities to use an app, you need to provide an alternative – Some groups are using the back of the badges to print a full agenda. Offering an "information" booth where attendees can easily ask questions. Clear signage (where it's placed, how "readable" is it? Etc.



## AUDIOVISUAL

- Lighting
- Acoustics + Audio
- Seating & screen placement
- Closed-captioning
- Staging



As technology is ever-expanding, audiovisual tools have made offering more inclusive events easier - and quite daunting at times.

One area we can all pay attention to every time --

**LIGHTING** - not too dark, not too bright; blended, focused on stage, contrast of screens.

**TEST** all lighting (morning/noon/night; adjustability, support lighting).

**ACOUSTICS + AUDIO:** is there sound-bleed from other rooms, back of house? Are speakers setup to properly distribute and amplify without echo? Test all mics and **USE** mics.

Despite someone having a "loud enough" voice, someone in that room cannot hear well and is being excluded. Train speakers or session liaisons to repeat audience questions into a mic. Speaking of microphones - have options. While the AV sales person might ask you to commit to "2 wireless handhelds and 1 podium mic and 1 lavalier" the onsite AV person might be flexible and say - you have 4 mic slots - I can swap the **TYPES** in and out as long as there's only 4 being used. **ASK** speakers for their preference. **USE** audience mics and "runners" if needed.

We have a client where many attendees at their conference use hearing aids. There's an entire technology, "looping", that can be installed in session rooms that allows sound to jump from the speaker system directly to an attendee's hearing assistive device.

### SEATING/SCREEN PLACEMENT

Recently I had an event where AV wasn't set but the setup crew was done with their piece of placing tables and chairs. While it was definitely setup per our diagram, the actual in-person setup

ended up having front rows too close to the stage and screens and we had to adjust. Had the hotel setup team and AV team stopped for a few minutes or re-assessed after the AV was in place, they would've quickly seen how sight lines were blocked and the seating needed to be adjusted. Yes, this is why we check their work and make adjustments. If you haven't gone through the CMP course yet, you'll find precise measurements on how far seats should be from the stage, from the screen, and between rows - as well as how many rows you can logistically set compared to how large of a screen you're using. I'm constantly reminding my children that as much as they think they won't use math "later on", oh, they will. So much!

CLOSED CAPTIONING - this can be helpful for SO many people and when you consider how much of what is said on stage is scripted, providing captions for announcements and general sessions might not be all that difficult. Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools have definitely made this possibility more of a reality for both web-based and in-person events.

Provide live-transcription options and live-translation options that attendees can use on their own, should they want to or need to.

STAGING: stairs, hand rails, taped seams, ADA ramp if needed; stool for shorter speakers at podium; laptops ON a podium - try to get it as flat as possible so as not to block the speaker.



# ASK, ASK, WRITE, REVIEW, DO

## ASK ATTENDEES

- What do you need? How can we help?

## ASK VENUE + PARTNERS

- What can you assist with? How can we work together? What other resources do you have?

## PUT IT IN WRITING

- Put everything in writing. Include anything you can on accommodations in the Event Orders, AV order, etc... Do not assume

## REVIEW IT AND UNDERSTAND IT

- Know the plan; make it easy on your team and seamless for attendees.

## DO IT

- Follow through. Don't expect a medal.

There are likely additional factors to your unique events. We hope we covered the largest and most common ones today. To wrap up the HOW do I do this? thoughts going through your head, we recommend ASKING, WRITING, REVIEWING and DOING.

### ASK attendees

What do you need? How can we help? If you don't ask, they can't share.

### Ask venue + partners

What can you assist with? How can we work together? What other resources do you have?

### Put it in writing

Put everything in writing. Include anything you can on accommodations in the Event Orders, AV order, etc... Do not assume they will simply "do it" because you asked or because there's an email. The event orders are the go-to document.

### Review it and understand it

Know the plan; make it easy on your team and seamless for attendees. If you need to send some emails or print tickets, provide information to the attendees and provide easy identifiers for the staff at registration or serving food. It will take extra time and effort and it will be worth it for every person involved.

### Do it

Follow through. Don't expect a medal. This is our job - to make events and experiences positive



for everyone that attends. The more we know, the more we can do, and the more everyone will feel welcome.

# RESOURCES

WE ARE LEARNING AND PRACTICING TOGETHER.



# RESOURCES

## HOLIDAYS + OBSERVATIONS, WORLDWIDE

<https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays>

## COLOR/VISUAL ACCESSIBILITY

<https://www.audioeye.com/color-contrast-checker/>

<https://accessible-colors.com/>

## WEB ACCESSIBILITY + ADA COMPLIANCE

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/>

<https://wid.org/accessibility-services/#ux-testing>

<https://accessibe.com>

## CLOSED CAPTIONING + TRANSCRIPTIONS

<https://www.livecaptionapp.com/> - PERSONAL

<https://otter.ai/>

<https://www.rev.com/>

## CHECK OUT EVENT GARDE'S WEBSITE FOR MORE DEIB RESOURCES

<https://eventgarde.com/services/diversity-equity-inclusion-belonging/>

We just want to point out that we have some resources. Websites in these different topics that we talked about

Name them.

Next slide

# REGISTRATION FORMS

## ACCOMMODATIONS

Audio  
Visual  
Mobility  
Seating  
Bathroom  
Printed Materials  
Language  
Other (provide details)

## PERSONAL

Primary/First Name for Badge  
Pronoun(s)  
Emergency Contact Name + Number

## DIETARY

Allergy (provide details)  
Vegetarian  
Vegan  
Kosher  
Halal  
Other (provide details)

## FINANCIAL

Scholarship  
Sponsorship  
Payment Plan

Here is a short, check list of items you can include on your registration form to help you take attendee needs into account PRIOR to arriving onsite at your event !

# DATA COLLECTION + PRIVACY

## MY HEALTH, MY DATA - CONSUMER PRIVACY LAW (FOR WASHINGTON RESIDENTS)

More info: <https://meetings.skift.com/2023/10/30/new-health-data-privacy-laws-may-impact-your-meetings/>

*Suggested verbiage (please consult your own legal team):*

*"By providing this information, I am giving consent for ACMA to collect and store information related to my dietary and/or other individualized needs to be used for purposes of providing agreed upon accommodations."*

## GDPR (FOR EUROPEAN UNION CITIZENS)

More info: <https://www.trade.gov/european-union-data-privacy-and-protection>

and we have some details and resources regarding privacy that Kate touched upon in her section.

All of these resources will be sent - along with our slides and presentation notes to attendees following the webinar. Additionally, the recording will be posted on the event Garde website.

We hope you all found value in this time together and feel as though you are better equipped to make the attendees, speakers, volunteers, and EVERYONE FEEL WELCOME AT YOUR EVENTS. Thank Kate and close out.

## CONTACT US



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Please feel free to reach out to either myself, or Kate if you have questions or want to discuss any of the content in this webinar any further. Our contact information is listed here.

Additionally, we have team members at Event Garde that are committed to helping folks on their DEIB journey and are available as well. Visit [www.eventgarde.com](http://www.eventgarde.com) and check out our team and how to connect with us.



**EventGarde.com**