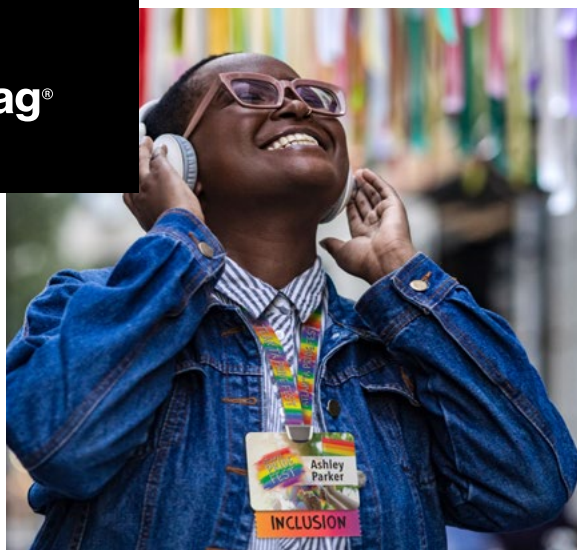
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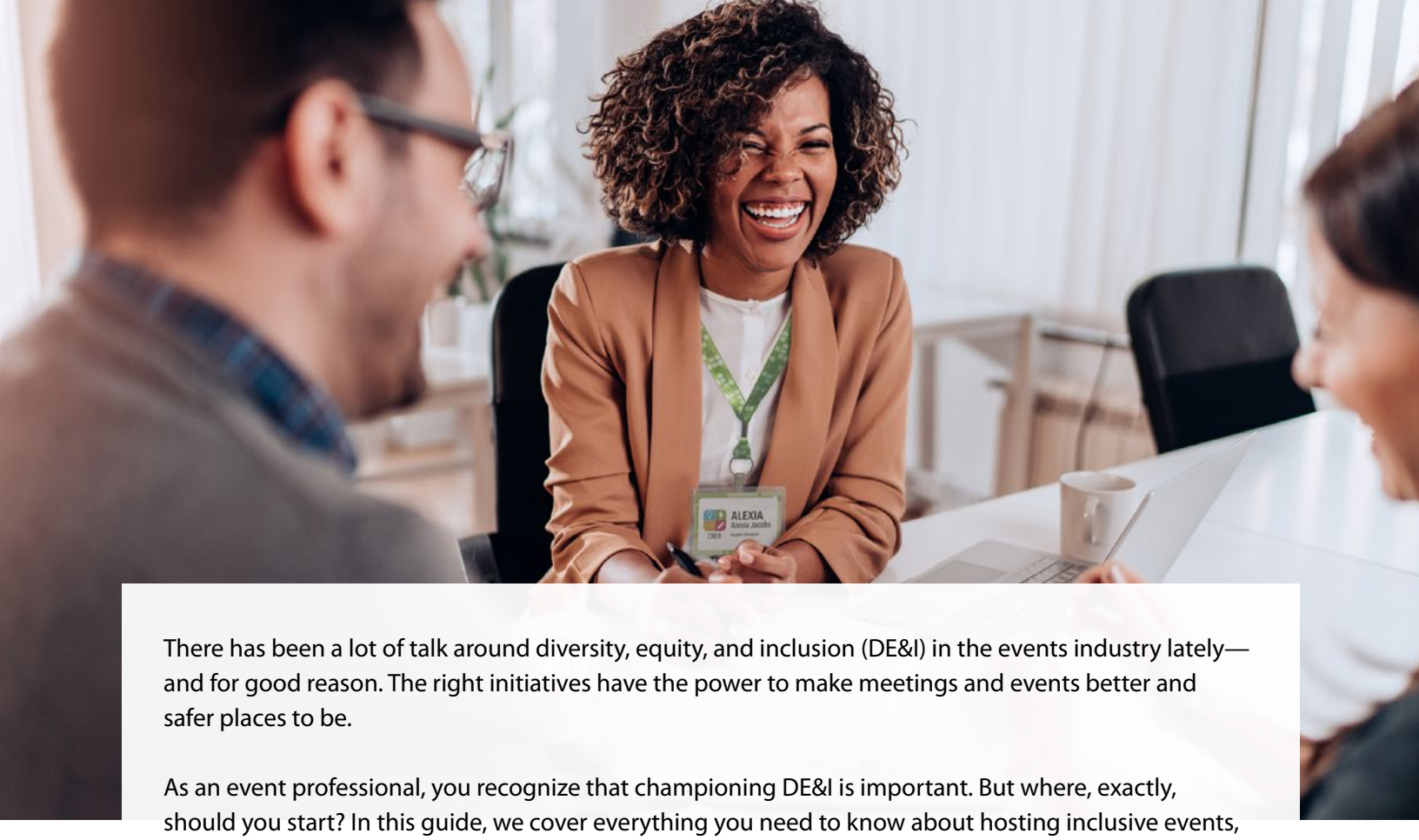








THE EVENT PROFESSIONAL'S **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION** HANDBOOK



There has been a lot of talk around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) in the events industry lately—and for good reason. The right initiatives have the power to make meetings and events better and safer places to be.

As an event professional, you recognize that championing DE&I is important. But where, exactly, should you start? In this guide, we cover everything you need to know about hosting inclusive events, including definitions, best practices, downloadable resources, and more. After reading, you'll be on your way to hosting gatherings that are more welcoming and inclusive to everyone in attendance.

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1 WHY DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION MATTERS AT EVENTS



The beauty of events is that they serve the world. Conferences, seminars, and expos have the power to bring a multitude of people together to discover new perspectives, support professional development, and empower voices from different walks of life. It is for these reasons that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) have become essential elements of a successful event strategy.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion in events means creating an experience that's supportive of everyone in attendance, no matter a person's age, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or abilities.

According to Janet Sperstad, CMP Fellow and Faculty Director at Madison College in Madison Wisconsin, an event cannot be considered a success unless every attendee is empowered to participate without barriers.

"Event professionals bring the world together," Sperstad says. "Honoring the diversity of what we do is important. It is up to us to use inclusive language and make decisions that include everyone. Diversity is about honoring every unique perspective, while inclusion is about making every person feel welcome."

Throughout her 25+ years of industry experience, Sperstad says she has discovered that championing diversity is as important as contracting. Keep reading to improve your understanding of diversity categories, followed by research and strategies you can implement today to strengthen your event plans.



Janet Sperstad
CMP Fellow and Faculty Director at Madison College

2 | IMPORTANT TYPES AND CATEGORIES OF DIVERSITY



Over the years, we've heard a great deal about diversity in events. But why are equity and inclusion also important?

To illustrate, consider the following analogy: Imagine you are invited to a party. "Diversity" is receiving an invitation, while "inclusion" is feeling comfortable to attend and empowered to fully participate.

Simply put, diversity initiatives aren't enough when creating a well-rounded event strategy. It's up to event professionals to meet compliance targets, but also create meaningful experiences that are integrated and effective.

Before creating an open and accepting environment, event professionals must first understand that diversity appears in many types and categories, including the following:

Cultural Diversity	Characteristics relating to a person's ethnic background. Examples include a person's customs, family values, and languages.

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Demographic Diversity	Characteristics relating to a person's societal background. Examples might include a person's education, nationality, and socio-economic status.
Racial Diversity	Characteristics relating to a person's race. Caucasian, Black, African American, American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Asian are a few examples of race.
Religious Diversity	Characteristics relating to a person's spiritual beliefs. A person's religious practices may be founded in Atheism, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Indigenous Religions, or other religions.
Age Diversity	Characteristics relating to a person's age and generation. Silent Generation (born 1928-1945), Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1980), Generation Y (born 1981-1996), and Generation Z (born 1997-2012) all bring diverse generational perspectives to events.
Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Diversity	Characteristics relating to a person's gender identity and their attraction to others. It is up to event professionals to create events that include and celebrate all identities and sexual orientations.
Health and Ability Diversity	Characteristics relating to a person's physical and emotional capabilities. Public event venues must make reasonable accommodations to help people with disabilities integrate into the event experience without difficulty.
Personal and Professional Diversity	Characteristics relating to a person's life experiences. These characteristics are not protected by law, but instead shape a person's viewpoints. Examples include learning preferences, political beliefs, motivations, goals, and skills.

DE&I is not just about "tolerating" differences. It's about making sure those who are not in the majority feel included. Events must reflect all diversity categories by creating spaces that respect differences, foster empowerment, eliminate biases, and encourage unique perspectives.

3 | TOP CHALLENGES OF CHAMPIONING DIVERSITY IN EVENTS



Most event professionals would agree that honoring diversity, equity, and inclusion is the moral thing to do. In fact, a study by Meeting Professionals International (MPI) found that the events industry has already made positive progress with championing DE&I.*

Research results include the following:

20%
of event professionals implement DE&I initiatives to comply with legal requirements.

19%
of event professionals implement DE&I initiatives to achieve better business results.

56%
of event professionals say they have already written diversity and inclusion policies.

42%
of event professionals said their businesses host DE&I statements on their websites.

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*SOURCE: mpi.org/docs/default-source/academy/inclusion-report-final.pdf

While the push for more DE&I initiatives has been thoroughly laid out for years, the study also found that many event professionals are still struggling to successfully foster diversity and inclusion at events. Research results found that there's still room for improvement in how event professionals handle inclusion initiatives:

40%
of event professionals say they don't have the information needed to plan inclusive events.

20%
of event professionals say they lack the budget to plan inclusive event experiences.

14%
of event professionals say they do not have enough leadership support for DE&I initiatives.

13%
of event professionals say they lack the time to plan proper DE&I initiatives.

After reading MPI's study, it is concerning to see 61% of event professionals experience barriers to planning exclusive events. Fortunately, championing DE&I at events does not need to be difficult, expensive, or time-consuming with a strategic plan of action in place. Continue to our next chapter to learn more.



4 | SEVEN STRATEGIES FOR MAKING EVENTS INCLUSIVE

The following strategies will make your conferences, seminars, expos, and meetings more enjoyable for everyone involved. How many will you challenge your team to implement this year?



1. Use pre-conference planning to discuss event goals and objectives.

Making your event more accessible and inclusive starts with pre-conference planning. This is the perfect time to discuss how your team will become advocates for every attendee, speaker, exhibitor, and VIP at your meeting.

While planning DE&I events does require thought and strategy, having these conversations will challenge your team to rethink the ways it typically hosts events. Discuss the following:

- Does the event venue provide elevator or ramp access?
- Are there accessible transportation routes to and from the venue?
- Are there accessible parking spaces available at the venue?
- Does the venue have enough space to accommodate people with mobility aids?
- Is the location and destination of my event LGBTQIA+ friendly?
- Is there a need for diversity training on my team or among our vendors?

In terms of accessibility, it's impossible to overcommunicate your intentions with attendees. Use your pre-conference communications to tell people what to expect. For instance: Will there be flash photography, strobes, or flashing images that may cause seizures? Will fog machines or smells be used that might impact someone with chemical sensitivities? Will interpreting services be provided during panels and sessions? Will off-site social activities be fully accessible?

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2. Foster inclusive event design through ADA accessibility.

Remember, room set-up is an important element of hosting an ADA-accessible event. While it can be tempting to cram as many tables and chairs as possible in a room, this conference room configuration can be a challenge, especially for attendees with limited mobility.

When designing your event space, **reserve seating at the front of the room for people who lip read, are hard of hearing, and those who use electronic hearing aids.** People who use sign language interpreters will also need space to sit at the front of the room.

As always, keep aisles clear of obstructions, not just for ADA accessibility but also for emergency action planning purposes. When planning your agenda, provide ample time for attendees with disabilities to move between sessions, use the restroom, and get refreshments.

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3. Discuss DE&I goals with event vendors and suppliers.

Event professionals are pros at carefully selecting dates for their events, conducting site visits, and discussing their goals with vendors and suppliers. **Don't forget that the organizations you work with should be your partners in planning.** Your venue, caterers, suppliers, and vendors should be more than willing to discuss how they'll help you reach your DE&I goals. When exploring vendors and deciding who to work with, consider the following:

- Does the site visit reveal adequate accessibility to the destination and the venue?
- Is your caterer willing to work with diet restrictions and faith-based dietary needs?
- Is your venue willing to take steps to ensure every attendee has equal access to the event?
- How can your event badge supplier work with you to create credentials that reflect inclusivity?

Diversity initiatives and accessibility requirements should be top considerations when planning events. Make sure the organizations you work with are eager to join in your quest to make events as inclusive as possible.

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4. Celebrate diversity through your event agenda, activities and meals.

No attendee wants to feel like an outsider or burden at a conference. Event professionals must carefully plan their events to make sure all attendees feel a part of the overall experience. The following strategies will help you celebrate diversity throughout your agenda:

- Avoid event dates that coincide with religious holidays in various faiths.
- Provide multi-faith prayer rooms for use during the conference.
- Ensure your venue has access to lactation rooms for nursing parents.
- Accommodate requests for food-related restrictions, religious norms, and health considerations.
- Provide clear labeling of food options, listing any ingredients that may cause allergic reactions.
- Plan a menu that incorporates and celebrates food staples from various cultures.
- Provide a "mocktail" menu and alcohol-free drink options at the conference happy hour.
- Plan activities and sessions that celebrate diversity, equity and inclusion topics.

When distributing your agenda to attendees, don't forget to prepare event materials in different languages to make sure everyone has equal access to information. Your mobile app should also be accessibility friendly.

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5. Select keynote speakers and presenters who reflect diversity.

Keynote speakers have the power to set the tone for your conference or event. The right presenter will not only add meaning to your event, but also highlight the unique perspectives your industry has to offer.

Today, there is an increasing demand for presenters who reflect the diversity of the audience. In other words, your audience may struggle to identify with your programming if they do not see accurate representation. Choose a diverse speaker who has fresh viewpoints on business trends, social justice, workplace culture, and more. Even better, **hire women or Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) as speakers, presenters and panelists**.

Session moderators, too, play a part in creating safe event experiences. Moderators must keep panel discussions appropriate and civil, while also ensuring all voices are heard in a professional manner.

Do not hire BIPOC speakers to speak on diversity alone!

While DE&I issues are important to address, people of color have much more to speak about than racial inclusion. Instead, hire BIPOC speakers to talk about leadership, innovation, event technology, or other insightful topics.

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6. Offer pronoun ribbons for attendees' event badges.

Pronouns are used to refer to someone in place of their name or in the third person. For example, **popular pronouns include he/him, she/her, and they/them**, though it is up to an individual to decide which pronouns work best.

It is important to avoid making assumptions about a person's identity or pronouns based on their appearance or name. Using a person's correct pronouns is a surefire way to create a more inclusive environment, no matter what a person's identity is.

Want a fun, eye-catching, and cost-effective way to display personal pronouns?
The **Pronoun Badge Ribbon Pack** includes 100 stackable badge ribbons that attach to a person's badge in seconds. Use these badge ribbons to provide a proper introduction and the ability to visually communicate your pronouns.

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7. Host a post-event strategy discussion and survey.

Your event is over. Exhibitors are packing up, speakers are closing out their presentations, and attendees are saying their final goodbyes. But is your event really done? Now's the time to initiate one of the most critical components of the event management cycle: your post-event strategy. Unfortunately, this is an area where many planners struggle.

When it comes to championing diversity, data collection and attendee feedback are a must. Once your event has concluded, conduct the following:

- A post-event meeting where feedback is reviewed by your team.
- A post-event discussion with vendors where feedback is reviewed.
- A game plan on how to incorporate feedback at future events.

Measure your progress, set targets, and hold yourself accountable. Make sure to give attendees a variety of ways to give feedback, whether it is via email, mobile app, or an online form. Your post event survey should ask specific questions on how you can make the event experience more welcoming in the future.

5 | WHY LGBTQIA+ FRIENDLY EVENTS MATTER



Every June, millions of people around the world celebrate Pride Month, a time of year to honor the importance of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA+) community. However, celebrating diversity shouldn't stop after June; it should be a year-round goal for every event professional.

If you organize events, you know that creating safe, open, and inviting experiences is a must. Every attendee deserves to feel welcome, and an event cannot truly be successful until every person there feels they belong. But you may still wonder:

- How can conferences be more inclusive to the queer community?
- What steps can event professionals take to be more conscientious and welcoming?

Diverse representation matters in the events industry. Every conference should be LGBTQIA+-friendly, even if it isn't exclusively for an LGBTQIA+ organization or centered around an LGBTQIA+ topic.

If you are wondering how to make events inclusive, hosting LGBTQIA+ friendly meetings is a big piece of the puzzle. Read on to discover our favorite ways to host events that are inviting to all people, no matter their identities.

6 HOW TO HOST LGBTQIA+ FRIENDLY EVENTS



Is your team looking for specific ways to make meetings, conferences, and events more welcoming to people from the LGBTQIA+ community? Use the following strategies to empower every attendee to feel confident, share different perspectives, and have fun.

1. Partner with gay-friendly travel destinations, cities, and venues.

Choosing the right event location and venue is a key part of hosting a successful event. Show your support for the LGBTQIA+ community by choosing a city that enforces gay-friendly laws, legislation, and policies, so they feel comfortable traveling to your event.

If you don't see your conference destination on this list, no worries. You can still learn more about the laws and policies that affect the LGBTQIA+ community in each state.

Most Gay-Friendly Cities for Events in the U.S.*

- Austin, Texas
- Boston, Massachusetts
- Chicago, Illinois
- Denver, Colorado
- Key West, Florida
- Las Vegas, Nevada
- Los Angeles, California
- Madison, Wisconsin
- Miami Beach, Florida
- Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Nashville, Tennessee
- New Orleans, Louisiana
- New York City, New York
- Orlando, Florida
- Palm Springs, California
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Portland, Oregon
- San Diego, California
- San Francisco, California
- Seattle, Washington
- Washington D.C., District of Columbia
- West Palm Beach, Florida

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*List compiled from various Google sources

2. Use inclusive event marketing and messaging.

The right event marketing plan can help your organization earn the trust and commitment of people within the LGBTQIA+ community so they feel comfortable spending their money to attend your event.

First, create a statement about non-discrimination. For example: "Our organization is dedicated to creating a culture of inclusion for every attendee, regardless of age, race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability or spiritual belief."

Second, establish a zero-tolerance policy for biased or hateful language at your events. For example: "Please note, any homophobic, racist, sexist, or otherwise biased language will not be tolerated. Any attendee who uses such language will be immediately removed from the event." Publicize your diversity policy on your event's website, on its social media pages, and on-site during the event.

3. Foster inclusivity during the event registration process.

The event registration process is often one of the first points of contact attendees have with your event. Set the right tone by making sure every person feels included, starting with your registration form.

Always use gender-inclusive language in your writing, then include a non-discrimination and anti-harassment policy that must be agreed to upon registering for the event. If it is necessary to ask participants for their gender, include "male," "female," "non-binary," "other," and "prefer not to say" as options. This language is welcoming to transgender people, gender fluid people, and anyone else who does not identify with the traditional male or female gender labels.

4. Partner with LGBTQIA+ event sponsors and ally organizations.

As an event professional, you have access to a full slate of marketing and branding opportunities that can make your conference successful. Be intentional with the sponsors you work with to ensure they align with your organization's values.

Support sponsor organizations that are owned by members of the LGBTQIA+ community, that support the LGBTQIA+ community, or are members of an LGBTQIA+ friendly organization like the LGBT Meeting Professionals Association. Attendees will take note that the companies who back your event also demonstrate commitment to equality.

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5. Incorporate LGBTQIA+ topics into event programming.

Today, there is an increasing demand for presenters who reflect the diversity of an event's audience. In other words, your audience will struggle to identify with your programming if they do not see accurate representation.

There are several ways to encourage representation of the LGBTQIA+ community at events. First, hire queer professionals and influencers for your keynote speakers or breakout session presenters. Hearing insight from an LGBTQIA+ identified speaker is empowering, even if they do not expressly cover an LGBTQIA+ topic.

Next, repeat your event's acceptance policy during your introductory presentation. This will help set the precedent for an event that embraces openness, diversity, and inclusion of everyone in attendance.

6. Use pronoun name tags, badges, stickers, or ribbons to express identity.

You may have noticed some people sharing their pronouns in personal introductions, on name tags, in email signatures, and at the beginning of meetings. This gives everyone in the room the opportunity to self-identify instead of directly assuming which pronouns a person uses.



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Highlighting pronouns at an event is a first step toward respecting a person's identity and creating a more welcoming space for people of all genders. Part of being an ally is not making assumptions about a person's identity or pronouns based on their appearance or name.

Create inclusion by offering pronoun badge ribbons for attendees to wear. Attendees will love having a way to visually communicate their pronouns. Another option is to print personal pronouns on name tag holders. Ask attendees for their pronouns in your event registration form, then print them on holders. Provide an option to opt out if attendees do not wish to share their pronouns.

7. Host an LGBTQIA+ friendly networking mixer.

Networking activities are a must for hyping up event attendees and getting them excited to participate in upcoming activities. Consider hosting a networking mixer that fosters inclusivity. While the mixer doesn't need to exclusively target LGBTQIA+ attendees, it can still promote diversity and inclusion.

For instance, put together a playlist that includes queer artists, hire LGBTQIA+-owned event vendors, or provide volunteerism opportunities with an LGBTQIA+ organization. Increase attendance by offering a happy hour with rainbow cocktails and mocktails, or feature raffles where attendees can win a prize for participation. Give attendees a gift to take home by providing curated gift boxes to anyone who attends the mixer.

7 | YOUR PARTNER IN DIVERSITY-FRIENDLY EVENT PLANNING



The exciting thing about diversity is that it challenges us to foster connections, drive innovation, and build on each other's unique strengths. DE&I is the key to embracing new strategies and accommodating different styles of thinking—one event at a time.

Are you eager to host your next diversity-friendly event? The pc/nametag team is here to help. We are passionate about helping customers find creative ways to foster inclusivity through custom badges, lanyards, badge ribbons, and other registration supplies.

From pre-assembled pronoun badge ribbons packs to full-color badges that highlight your brand's unique messaging, we work with you to create cohesive experiences that bring people together.

Visit *pcnametag.com/inclusive-events* to view all product options or call 888.362.8759 to discuss ideas with a team member.

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50+ Inclusive Event Ideas

Make every attendee feel welcome at your events with dozens of tips and strategies.

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