ICLEI Events: Equitable & Inclusive

Executive Summary: The Basics

This document lays out the key principles needed to host, organize, or moderate an equitable and inclusive event. The intention is not to provide an exhaustive list of all considerations that will make an event equitable but to instead give an overview of the most critical considerations. Your power to influence may vary depending on your role, but take the opportunity to advocate for these principles wherever possible. Please at a minimum consider:

FEATURE A DIVERSITY OF VOICES –

always aim for the greatest diversity when choosing a panel or passing the word to speakers. At the most basic level, consideration for gender diversity and in particular when organizing a global event, for as much regional diversity as possible as well are fundamental to meeting this objective. *Please read further examples in* this section.

DISTRIBUTE SPEAKING TIME IN A FAIR MANNER –

Related to the above point, moderators should ensure all speakers are given the same time to speak and have your moderator be assertive about interrupting should a speaker hog the mic. Call on speakers if you find that one speaker is constantly jumping in. *Please read further examples in* this section.

USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE –

Moderators need to be careful of the words they use. While intended broadly, at a minimum avoid gendered terms. For example, instead of "ladies and gentlemen", try "welcome everyone", instead of "mankind" use "humankind". All individuals on a panel should be addressed in the same way. If elected officials and technical experts are on the same panel, ask if using their first name is okay (rather than using "Mayor" for one person and the first name for another person). *Please read further examples in* this section.

ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE EVENT–

Event logistics should enable, not hinder, event attendance and meaningful participation. For in-person events, ensure that the event venue and all event spaces are accessible. For virtual events, make sure that the platform being utilized includes accessibility features and allow attendees to make use of them. Be mindful of accessibility considerations in the design and production of event branding and communication products, including websites. *Please read further examples in* this section.

FOSTER INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION–

use technology to engage audiences through polls and Q&A, prioritize underrepresented groups when asking questions, and encourage them to speak in their preferred language (if interpretation is available). *Please read further examples in* this section.

Equitable Events Guidelines

ICLEI events are a platform for meaningful dialogue and exchange about today's sustainability challenges which help advance collective commitments and significant action towards local sustainability in cities, towns and regions worldwide. Whether our events are hosted in person, virtually, or through a hybrid model, we aim to integrate sustainable, inclusive and equitable design wherever possible.

An equitable event is intended to actively promote inclusion and participation. This involves ensuring physical and virtual access and accessibility to the event, diversity of topics and voices as well as an overall good quality experience for all. It also means being prepared to protect everyone who participates in the event against all forms of abuse, harassment, and discrimination.

Diversity of Voices

Meaningful dialogue and critical discussions cannot be achieved without a diversity of perspectives and voices. When organizing an international event, ensure that the **content** is significant across regions (global south and global north, for instance). Design the programme thinking carefully about which approach works best to create **inclusive sessions** based on the purpose of each program item.

When selecting **speakers** and **moderators** you must ensure **gender diversity** and avoid creating "manels" (panels with only/the majority of men). **Regional diversity** must also be aimed to ensure and other diversities considered whenever possible. Think about age, race, social background, people with disabilities, etc.

Make an additional effort to find out if there are relevant people beyond "the usual go-to" speakers, and to find good moderators: a good moderator can contribute to guaranteeing that multiple perspectives are highlighted.

Inclusive Language

When organizing a session or event, share the inclusive language guidelines with your moderators and speakers. Words matter and we shall use inclusive language so that no one will feel excluded.

Avoid gender-biased words and expressions that reinforce stereotypical gender roles. Be also mindful of the language used so as to not contribute to stereotypical perceptions of vulnerable groups and communities. This is also an important aspect to take into account for translated materials: avoid traditional generic (male) plurals in Spanish and French.
a) Some examples in English:
Use **businessperson** vs. businessman
Use chairperson or just **chair** vs. chairman
Use **humankind** vs. mankind.
b) Some examples in Spanish:
Use **todas las personas asistentes** vs. todos los asistentes
Use la **comunidad científica** vs. los científicos
c) Some examples in French:
Use c'est **la raison de leur présence** vs. c'est la raison pour laquelle ils sont là.

Use **Qui peut postuler?** vs. Qui peut être candidat?

It is **not necessary to point out the gender of the speaker**. Avoid addressing women with expressions such as: "lovely ladies", "ladies", or "Lady Mayor".
Gender is not binary:

a) Avoid expressions such as "ladies and gentlemen". You can try instead:
"**Thank you all for being here**"; "**Dear colleagues/participants**"; "**Welcome everyone**"
b) Avoid using gender pronouns: Mr, Ms, etc.
c) If you use gender pronouns (not recommended): ALWAYS ask participants which one you should use to address them

Every person within a panel should be addressed in the same way. The moderator must find a way to address all speakers in an equitable manner, independently of their gender, age, etc. Be mindful of the cultural differences and **always ask participants** before the sessions if they feel comfortable being addressed that way. Whe recommend the following options:

a) If the panel is composed exclusively by elected representatives (mayors, governors, councilors, etc.) use the **collective (short) titles for all**: often there are differences in the titles depending on the countries or regions. The speakers shall be introduced with their complete titles and during the conversation they all should be addressed by the short title and last name. Examples:
Martin Horn, Lord Mayor, City of Freiburg → Mayor Horn
Susan Aitken, Leader, Glasgow City Council → Councilor Aitken
Katja Dörner, Governor Mayor, City of Bonn → Mayor Dörner

b) If the panel is composed by elected representatives and non-elected representatives:
1) Avoid the use of titles and address them all by their **first name**
Katja Dörner, Governor Mayor, City of Bonn → Katja
Yunus Arikan, Director Global Advocacy, ICLEI → Yunus
2) If the speakers or the moderator do not feel comfortable with this option, address them by their **full name**
Katja Dörner, Governor Mayor, City of Bonn → Katja Dörner
Yunus Arikan, Director Global Advocacy, ICLEI → Yunus Arikan
3) **If you use titles (not recommended), use them for all**
Katja Dörner, Governor Mayor, City of Bonn → Mayor Dörner
Yunus Arikan, Director Global Advocacy, ICLEI → Director Arikan
4) Address them **by their organization**
Katja Dörner, Governor Mayor, City of Bonn → "This question is addressed to the City of Bonn"
Yunus Arikan, Director Global Advocacy, ICLEI → "What does ICLEI have to say about this?"

Ask how to pronounce participant's names correctly before the session. In some countries/cultures people have more than one family name: ask participants if you should use the first one or both.

The word must be distributed fairly

Ensure all speakers are given the same time to speak and have your moderator be assertive about interrupting should a speaker hog the mic. Everybody's turn must be respected, do not let one speaker systematically interrupt their peers.

When starting discussions, do not always give preference to English speakers and do not push minorities or underrepresented groups to speak at the end.

Accessibility

If you are organizing an in-person event be sure to consider the accessibility of the venue. The space must be easily navigated by any person in spite of any disabilities. Make sure to have clear signs and directions at the premises.

For online and hybrid events, be aware of the existent inequalities in the access to affordable, fast and secure internet. Whenever possible, work with virtual tools and platforms which do not take a lot of bandwidth and ensure participants can connect with their mobile phones. Be sure to check and enable all accessibility features of the platform you are using.

Presentations: try to reduce ppt presentations to the minimum. Do not include too many slides, keep in mind people should be able to read them easily, with regards to participants with visual impairment it might be necessary to read text out loud and describe images, consider that black text on a white background is preferable, and use inclusive language.[1] Share any presentations in advance with the interpreters (if any) and consider sharing them with participants.

Foster inclusive participation

When having discussions with the audience, use technology to engage participants through polls, Q&As, or chat, so everyone can participate in the discussions without having to expose themselves in front of an entire audience.

Prioritize underrepresented groups when asking questions, and encourage them to speak in their preferred language when language interpretation is available.

Run of Show

Always assume that a microphone is needed! - especially when hosting in-person and hybrid events. Everyone should be able to hear the session in equal terms; if participants ask questions without a mic the virtual audience will not be able to hear them, people sitting at the back might not be able to understand them, and this can also be an issue for people using hearing aids.

Ask participants to identify themselves before they start speaking. This is especially important to ensure that visually impaired participants can follow on equal terms.

Technical difficulties can always happen: be ready, patient and do not blame the organizers or the technical staff. Simply indicate that a minor technical glitch happened and that we are working to solve it. We are all working towards the same final goal of hosting a great conference.

In case of hybrid sessions, **do not forget about your virtual speakers and audience** and include them in the discussion as much as possible.

---

[1] See also the Microsoft and Google guidelines for accessible presentations.

Body language: **remember that your body is also speaking.** Do not turn your back to the panel. Keep your distance and avoid touching other participants (if you feel this is too impersonal, limit it to handshakes / fistbumps). Walking into someone's personal space is an invasion of their privacy and might make people uncomfortable. Sitting: avoid manspreading (sitting position with the legs wide apart in such a way as to encroach on an adjacent seat or seats).

Disruptive situations

If a speaker unintentionally says something inappropriate or disrespectful, the moderators are entitled to intervene. Suggestions: Explain in a polite manner that that is not correct and give the opportunity to the speaker to apologize.

Harassment in any form shall not be tolerated. If the offender refuses to apologize and continues with the inappropriate behavior, the moderator shall ask the person to leave the session. The moderator shall report the incident afterwards to the event organizers through the channels established for that purpose.

If someone in the audience or in the panel feels uncomfortable about something the moderator has said and raises the issue: Be humble and apologize - Moderators also make mistakes. We are not perfect, we are making efforts to create more equitable events but do not have all the answers.
      "Thank you for pointing this out, this is a learning process for us..."

If someone is systematically disrupting the session: give them space to speak and then continue with the session. Give them the mic for an allocated time (5 minutes max), after that we need to move on. If this continues, invite the person to discuss the matter in a separate meeting. If the interruptions do not stop, you might need to invite the person to leave.

Code of conduct & anti-harassment policy

ICLEI is committed to providing a safe event experience for everyone, regardless of sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, race, ethnicity, religion (or lack thereof), social status, physical appearance or body size. With this purpose a **code of conduct**, which participants will need to adhere to at the time of registration, and an **anti-harassment policy** will be established and implemented in all ICLEI global events.

These policies can be adapted for specific events, since some procedures may differ depending on the event's nature (hybrid, in-person, virtual), size, or local context.

Learn more about ICLEI global events' anti-harassment policy here.

Any events hosted by an ICLEI partner may have their own code of conduct and anti-harassment policy, which all participants including moderators, speakers, and ICLEI staff involved in the organization might have to adhere to.

To learn more about how to design, plan, and implement an equitable event, please refer to the ICLEI Equitable Events Handbook.