



A Guide to Inclusive Meetings

Introduction

As part of Inclusion International's global self-advocacy report, *Self-Advocacy for Inclusion*, Inclusion International gathered information about best practices for supporting self-advocacy. The following inclusive meeting guide is developed based on that report and what self-advocates have told us they need to be successfully included in meetings. The full report is available at: www.self-advocacyportal.com

Starting point



Principle of Inclusion All participants should feel valued and respected. Participants with intellectual disabilities should be treated equally. The tone of the workshop or meeting should be that all participants have valuable contributions to make

- Inclusive meeting practices means looking at how we design meetings/events/workshops. Some things to consider:



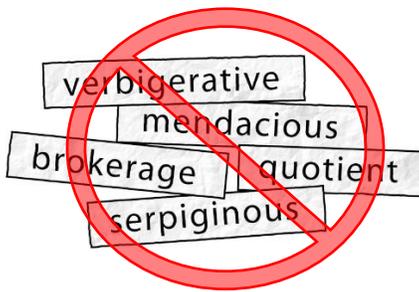
- **Length of the agenda** Make sure there are plenty of structured breaks (and that the facilitator sticks to them!)
- If the workshop is more than one day consider how you can build in breaks so that people don't get too tired – consider an afternoon off or offering a “summary” session in the evening.
- **Location.** Do people need to travel? Will they have time to rest before the meeting?

Before the Meeting

- Meeting materials should be developed in plain language and circulated to participants in advance. Participants with intellectual disabilities will need time to meet with their support person to review materials and prepare for the meeting.
- Make sure that support people are invited and have all the same materials and any additional information (context/background/technical information) as needed.



- Ensure there is clarity on roles – the support person is there as support; not a participant.
- Have a contact person for the meeting that people can get in touch with to ask questions.



- Provide papers or information in plain language, easy to read, or in any other format that a person may need.

- Offer a phone call or meeting before the actual meeting to help people to go through the agenda and understand what the meeting is about.

During the Meeting

- Encourage the group to set ground rules at the beginning. For example, one speaker at a time, respect one another, keep to time, etc.
- Ensure active involvement. It's not enough just to have self-advocates at the table. They need to be meaningfully involved. Be sure to engage in dialogue. Ask open questions/give opportunities for individuals to share what they think/know.



- Include creative activities that help people to think about things in different ways.
- Ensure information clearly presented – speak slowly; use short sentences.
- Minimize visual clutter/distractions – for example, make sure previous presentations or materials are not on the screen when the meeting has moved on to another agenda item; consider where in the room interpreters will be sitting and make people aware of this.



- Use accessibility cards – red/yellow cards can be used to indicate the need for presenters to slow down (yellow card).

A yellow card could be used for a short pause if the individual needs a moment catch-up or to have their support person or the presenter clarify something. A red card is used to stop the meeting and indicates the individual needs the meeting to stop so they can get more information or request a change in the process of the meeting so they can effectively participate.

- As much as possible, stick to the agenda. Last minute change can be difficult and if people have prepared to speak based on the planned agenda, changes could affect their participation.



- Recap what has been spoken about and agreed before moving on to the next part of the meeting.
- Include time at the end of a meeting for people to think about how the meeting went and if anything needs to change for next time.

Things to consider about support:



- A good support person should help an individual to understand information, provide the person the time they need to process the information and allow me to come up with my own thoughts.
- A support person is there as a support. Not a participant. Unless the individual asks their support person to help them answer a question



or engage in the discussion, the support person should not have a speaking role.

- Good support is built on trust and mutual respect.
- Good support is empowering and allows individuals to have a voice , choice and control

After the Meeting

- Follow-up in a timely manner with reminders, in plain language, about next steps.

For more information go to:
www.selfadvocacyportal.com