



Hosting LGBT+ Inclusive Events

Table of Contents

Why is This Guide Needed?	2
Who is This Guide For?	2
Format of This Guide	2
Event Dates	3
Religious and Cultural Considerations	3
LGBT+ Significant Events	4
Event Venue	5
Gender-Neutral Washroom	5
Venue Team	5
Physical Location and Accessibility	5
Accessibility Needs	5
Event Registration	5
Use of Pronouns/Nametags	5
Food Preferences	5
Suppliers and Contractors	5
Entertainment	5
Giveaways/Gifts/Awards	5
Programming	5
Post Event	5
Team Debriefing	5
Attendee Survey	5
Executive Summary and Checklist	5

Why is This Guide Needed?

The event industry in Canada has generated a revenue of \$1.6 billion in 2019. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was estimated that the industry would grow at a rate of 2.4%.¹ There are growing expectations from the attendees of events to feel included and for their needs to be accommodated. It is not just good for business to create LGBT+-inclusive events, but it is becoming a prerequisite to the success and sustainability of the industry. Inclusivity in the event space is meant to increase representation and visibility to traditionally less visible and underrepresented groups.

This guide is meant to serve as a resource for organizations looking to host and/or plan events that are inclusive and diverse. Whether the main audience of these events is the LGBT+ community or not, this guide will explore how each and every decision can be seen through an inclusion and diversity lens so that everyone involved feels safe, welcome and included. Special attention will also be given to the intersectional nature of underrepresentation according to gender, sexual orientation, race, religion and disability.

Who Is This Guide For?

This guide is useful for event planners and event spaces alike. For the purpose of this guide, event planners could either be independent contractors tasked with organizing or planning events on behalf of an organization or an in-house team planning a concert, professional meeting or networking event, for example, on behalf of their own organization.

This guide is also be useful for event spaces like convention centres, concert halls, meeting venues and so on wishing to attract inclusive events and advance their own inclusivity practices.

Format of This Guide

This guide will tackle the most common decision points involved in creating an event and will explore considerations, best practices and, in some cases, resources that would lead to more inclusive and welcoming events. It could also serve as a checklist of considerations for event spaces as they revise some of their own internal policies and practices to become better equipped to host and attract inclusive events.

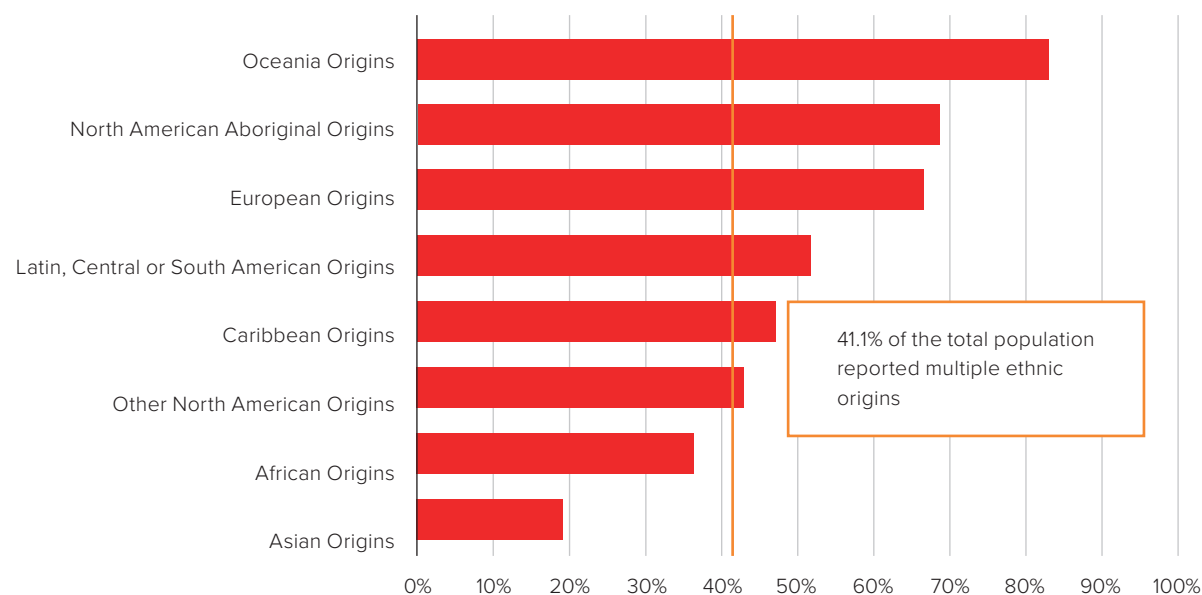
Event Dates

Choosing an event date is one of the first decisions event planners have to make and plays a crucial role in deciding how inclusive an event can be. Other than very important inclusivity considerations that will be outlined below, no event planner wants to organize an event that will conflict with an already existing event. Competition in the event space is already fierce, and you do not want to add an obstacle that will deter your audience from attending your event. For example, it would not be wise to organize a craft beer festival on the same weekend as an established food and wine expo, nor is it wise to organize a conference on renewable energy the same week as a climate change summit. Whether competing events are taking place in the same city or not, the question should always be, Am I creating a conflict for my target audience with this choice of date? The key to a successful event when it comes to event timing is to minimize any competition over your targeted audience. Next, there are some inclusivity considerations that event planners should bear in mind to create truly inclusive events with regard to the choice of the event date.

Religious and Cultural Considerations

Canada is a culturally and religiously diverse nation with representation from almost every cultural and faith group in the world. In fact, 41% of Canadians identify as having multiple ethnic origins.² A calendar of religiously and culturally significant dates should be consulted prior to choosing an event date. For example, an event taking place during Yom Kippur is almost guaranteed to exclude the Jewish community celebrating that day. The same goes for events taking place during Eid, Hanukkah, Christmas, Easter and so on, which would result in the alienation and exclusion of people celebrating and/or observing these dates. The Equity office at the University of British Columbia, for example, lists 12 religiously significant dates in January alone. Event planners should consult a local calendar of events that will also include provincially and locally significant dates.

PERCENTAGE OF MULTIPLE ETHNIC ORIGIN RESPONSES, BY REGION OF ETHNIC OR CULTURAL ORIGIN, CANADA, 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

Questions to Ask:

1. Does the planned event date conflict with any religiously and/or culturally significant events?
2. Would a conflict in dates create a barrier for attendance/representation for the desired audience?

Good Practice:

- Ensure the planned event dates do not conflict with religiously or culturally significant dates and hence do not exclude or inhibit attendance from those having a specific religious or cultural affiliation.

LGBT+ Significant Events

There are national and local events and dates that are widely celebrated by the LGBT+ community, such as Pride Month and LGBT+ film festivals, among others. Event planners should be aware of those dates and plan their events accordingly to facilitate participation and representation from members of the LGBT+ community. This consideration is of particular importance if the LGBT+ community is the target audience of the planned event. There are also opportunities for collaboration and partnership with other LGBT+ events. An LGBT+ movie screening could precede a Pride networking event, and cross-promotion would be beneficial to both events since they share the same target audience.

Questions to Ask:

1. Do the event dates conflict with significant LGBT+ dates or celebrations?
2. Is there room for partnerships and cross-marketing with other events taking place at the same time?

Good Practice:

- Ensure event dates do not conflict with LGBT+ community events, allowing for maximum representation, and when possible, seek out partnerships within the community.

Resources:

- Consult with your local LGBT+ chamber of commerce and local Pride chapter about local LGBT+ calendar events.



Event Venue

Of equal importance to when an event is held is where it is held. There are various considerations event planners who are sourcing a venue should consider to ensure alignment in values, inclusivity and representation. These considerations also apply to event spaces seeking to attract LGBT+ inclusive events.

Gender-Neutral Washroom

The issue of gender-neutral and inclusive washrooms is widely discussed in Canada and around the world, as more public spaces are shifting to include neutral spaces to better serve transgender and non-binary attendees. Offering gender-neutral washrooms at an event provides a safe and welcoming space for trans and non-binary attendees.

Questions to Ask:

1. Would my guests feel safe and included using the washroom facilities provided?
2. Are there any modifications that could be made over the duration of my event to make my guests feel safer and included?

Good Practice:

- Every effort should be made to offer washrooms that make your event attendees feel safe and included. If the chosen venue does not offer gender-neutral washrooms, a temporary change of signs or other simple modifications could be made to existing washrooms for the duration of your event.

Resources:

- The section on gender-neutral washrooms in CGLCC's Trans and Non-Binary Inclusion Resource Guide is an excellent resource on how to address inclusive washrooms at the workplace and could be easily adapted to event spaces.

Venue Team

More often than not, when contracting an external venue for an event, the contract will include some services performed by in-house teams or exclusive suppliers. These vary from one venue to the other but generally include cleaning staff, event co-ordinators and, in some instances, exclusive suppliers such as audiovisual (AV) and site security. It is of utmost importance to ensure that all customer-facing personnel are trained on matters of inclusivity.

Questions to Ask:

1. Do members of the venue team where the event is hosted understand the nature of the event and its target audience?
2. Does the venue have internal inclusivity and diversity policies and guidelines for its own staff?
3. Are the in-house staff members trained on inclusivity and able to make all attendees feel safe and welcome?

Good Practice:

- Ensure all customer-facing staff members are trained on inclusivity and seek venues with internal inclusivity and diversity policies.

Resources:

- CGLCC offers resources and training on inclusivity and diversity in the workplace. You can also consult your local LGBT+ chamber of commerce for additional training and resources.

Physical Location and Accessibility

The venue location and its accessibility can impose barriers for attendance and representation from certain groups. This section is meant to help event organizers source a venue that will support their inclusivity and accessibility goals. Existing event spaces should use the section below to explore modifications and arrangements that would make their venue more accessible.

There are financial inhibitors as well as mobility inhibitors to consider when sourcing a venue. A venue that is accessible only by car or with excessive parking fees, for example, automatically excludes those without a private mode of transport and/or with fewer material resources. An event space that is not wheelchair accessible also imposes barriers and limits representation from those with disabilities.

Questions to Ask:

1. How accessible is my chosen venue?
2. Does the venue accommodate those with mobility restrictions?
3. What modifications/accommodations could be made to make the venue more accessible?

Good Practice:

- Ensure your event takes place at a location that is easily accessible for most and accommodates various mobility accessibility needs.



Accessibility Needs

The 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in principle, “guarantees people with disability an equality of experience in all areas of citizenship including the event industry.”³ Traditionally, accessibility needs in the event industry were restricted to physical mobility, but today it is expected that events accept a much broader definition that includes sensory, learning and cognitive disabilities. Guests with disabilities should be able to arrive at the venue, access meeting rooms, attend, participate and contribute to sessions or other activities and have access to materials and entertainment without their experience being compromised by their disability. Every decision should be made with an accessibility focus so that an event is equally safe, comfortable and enjoyable for people with disabilities as it is for people without.

Questions to Ask:

1. Do we, as an event team, understand the different types of disabilities and how to remove barriers for our guests? If not, seek the help of a professional accessibility expert.
2. Is it easy for guests to communicate to us their accessibility needs?
3. Is it clear for guests what will be accommodated and what will not?
4. Does the event staff have the required training to assist guests with disabilities if needed?

Good Practice:

- Mention that the event is accessible on registration forms.
- Invite attendees to submit their own requests for accommodations.
- Outline any accessibility barriers that will not be resolved.

Resources:

- The American Bar Association’s Commission on Disability Rights has an excellent downloadable guide to hosting accessible meetings and events with an easy-to-use checklist for event organizers. The checklist covers topics such as venue exteriors, meeting rooms, eating hall requirements and much more.

Event Registration

For many events such as professional meetings, networking events and expos, organizers capture attendees’ data through registration forms. This information is important for delivering suitable products and services to the attendees during the event and can also be used to better understand the demographics of the target audience for future marketing purposes. Registration forms are one of the first contact points guests and attendees have with an event and these documents offer a great opportunity to make event attendees feel included, regardless of their racial, religious, gender or sexual identities.

Use of Pronouns/Nametags

The first step is to determine why each piece of information is being collected and what it will be used for. For example, you will often find that the question about gender is included in most registration forms without any real use. If you require identifying your attendees by gender, be clear about what you need that information for. It is better to inquire about pronouns than gender, as it provides the opportunity for guests to self-identify. Including self-identified pronouns on all name tags, including those for presenters, event team members and guests, shows commitment to inclusivity and provides a safe space for all.

Questions to Ask:

1. Review existing registration forms and ask yourself, why is this information needed? Would this information alienate or offend any of my guests?
2. Does the registration form offer the opportunity for event guests to self-identify?

Good Practice:

- Only ask questions in registration forms that are truly necessary and essential to the delivery of products and services during your event. Asking for pronouns on registration forms and including them on name tags plays a big role in showcasing the inclusivity of an event and making all attendees feel welcome, regardless of how they identify.



Food Preferences

Culture, religion and medical conditions restrict people's dietary choices. With Canada's diverse ethnic and cultural mix, it is important to capture dietary restrictions when events offering food and beverages to their guests. This includes events such as professional conferences and weddings. Even for large public gatherings where seated meals are not offered, such as concerts or trade shows, it is the responsibility of the organizers to ensure there are food options available that cover their guests' preferences, whether based on religious, cultural or lifestyle restrictions. Common religious dietary specifications include restrictions such as kosher or halal meals, while common medical restrictions include nut-free, gluten-free, or diabetic meals. An important to communicate these dietary needs to the venue or caterer in a timely manner and ensure the proper understanding of what each term means for catering and hospitality teams.

For example, while the term "halal" refers to the way an animal is slaughtered, it also includes a list of foods, such as alcoholic beverages, pork and birds of prey, that are forbidden to be consumed by those seeking halal meals.⁴ Asking about dietary restrictions in registration forms automatically makes everyone feel welcome and included.

Questions to Ask:

1. Does the registration form capture the attendees' dietary restrictions?
2. Does the event offer options to cover the attendees' preferences?

Good Practice:

- Ensure the registration form for an event captures dietary restrictions and lifestyle preferences and offers attendees space to list their own preferences outside of a provided list. If you are unable to accommodate certain requests, make sure to communicate with the attendees and provide them with alternatives.

Resources:

- The International Association of Conference Centres (IACC) Guide to Managing Conference Delegate Dietary Requirements is an excellent resource for event planners to understand and manage dietary preferences at events.

Suppliers and Contractors

It takes a village to create a successful event. From decorators to caterers and from security services to audiovisual, the list of participants can be quite extensive. The variety of contracted suppliers offers a golden opportunity to event planners to truly engage with the LGBT+ community by hiring suppliers from within the community. Canada's LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce (CGLCC) and local LGBT+ chambers of commerce can facilitate introductions to LGBT+-owned certified businesses. Many of these representatives are involved with the events industry in roles including florists, caterers, event planners and more. Event planners also have the opportunity to engage suppliers from traditionally marginalized groups, such as Indigenous-, women- or people of colour-owned businesses.

Similar to the case with in-house venue staff, it is key that all contracted suppliers have inclusivity training and know-how to make your guests feel welcome and included.

Questions to Ask:

1. Are there qualified LGBT+ suppliers that I could hire to support the production of the event?
2. Has consideration been given to hiring suppliers from traditionally marginalized groups?
3. Do the selected suppliers provide inclusivity training to their staff?

Good Practice:

- Hire suppliers from the LGBT+ community when possible and engage businesses from marginalized groups for the production of your event.
- Ensure suppliers provide inclusivity training to their staff.

Resources:

- The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business member directory
- Canada's LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce
- The Women Business Enterprise Canada

IACC Exceptional Meetings. Powerful Connections.

Halal Dietary Information

What is Halal?

Halal translates to permissible, or lawful. Rules for halal are based on Islamic Shari'ah, and animals or poultry have to be slaughtered in a ritual way known as Zabihah.

Zabihah

In order to follow Zabihah, animals and fowl must be alive prior to butchering. The slaughter must be done by inflicting the least amount of pain to the animal as possible.

Tips for Planning Halal Meals

- Do not prepare anything with alcohol as it is also forbidden to consume under the Halal restrictions.
- Display the Halal certification symbol, food ingredient label or Halal store receipt.
- Provide a vegetarian entree using legumes as an alternative to meat dishes. Please note that not all seafood options are Halal.

Forbidden Food

- Pork
- Snakes
- Animals Who Hunt with Teeth
- Harmful to Humans (Alcohol, Toxins & Narcotics)
- Birds of Prey
- Insects
- Non-ritualistic Slaughter

Entertainment

Almost all event types include an entertainment component. These typically include city tours, excursions, shows, silent auctions and so on. When planning for these activities, consider engaging businesses from the LGBT+ community or other traditionally underrepresented groups. A wine tour at a woman-owned winery, a performance by an LGBT+ entertainer and a silent auction that supports LGBT+ initiatives are examples to consider. If you cannot engage with inclusive and diverse businesses to source the needed entertainment, consider businesses that are committed to inclusivity and have offerings that cater to and accommodate LGBT+ guests. You do not want to send your guests to a restaurant, for example, that is known to have intolerant staff.

Questions to Ask:

1. Could the entertainment/tours component of the event be provided by a diverse and inclusive business?
2. Are the engaged businesses able to make guests feel safe and welcome?
3. Could the event support LGBT+ causes through a silent auction or raffle?

Good Practice:

- Ensure proper representation in the entertainment component of your event, and leverage this opportunity to engage with businesses owned by members of the LGBT+ community or other underrepresented groups.

Giveaways/Gifts/Awards

Professional conferences and meetings often provide a welcome pack with giveaways and promotional materials to their attendees. Trophies and speaker gifts are also common in the events industry. There are a few considerations that should be kept top of mind when it comes to selecting inclusive products and experiences for event attendees. Consider sourcing and offering gender-neutral products as gifts. When it comes to experiences, offer experiences that can be enjoyed by any and everyone. A couple's getaway trip, for example, is an exclusionary prize, as it assumes that everyone is in a relationship. Inclusive giveaways, gifts and awards also offer an added opportunity to support LGBT+ and other diverse businesses.

Questions to Ask:

1. Are gender-specific products included in the event welcome pack or as giveaways?
2. Are LGBT+ businesses involved in the sourcing of awards and prizes?

Good Practice:

- Offer products and experiences that are gender-neutral and can be enjoyed by all.
- Engage LGBT+ businesses and purchase products from underrepresented groups when possible.

Programming

As stated before, Canada is one of the most diverse nations on Earth, and this diversity should be reflected whenever possible, in the programming of an event. From keynote speakers to entertainers, there is an opportunity to include members of the LGBT+ community and other underrepresented groups. The diversity in event programming is not just good business practice but also adds value to attendees and is a true manifestation of event inclusivity.

Questions to Ask:

1. Does the event programming include representation from the LGBT+ community or other underrepresented groups?

Good Practice:

- Ensure you have considered representation from the LGBT+ community and other underrepresented groups in the event programming.

Post Event

Team Debriefing

Inclusivity and diversity are ever-evolving concepts and should be accepted as a continuous learning process for everyone in the hospitality industry and beyond. A post-event team debrief is an essential learning tool to evaluate and learn from.

Questions to ask:

1. Were there any situations where a team member felt a guest or attendee was uncomfortable? What was the situation and what could be done in the future to avoid such a situation?
2. Do the team members believe that all guests felt safe and included?

Attendee Survey

There is always room for growth and learning and there is no better way to know what went well and what needs improvement than to ask your guests. You can use the format of this guide to create a post-event survey and ask questions about each of the considerations listed. For example, you could ask, Was the venue accessible for your needs? Did you find the programming was diverse and inclusive? How do you feel about the excursions and tours offered? Always allow room for your guests to elaborate on each point should they have something extra to add.

Executive Summary and Checklist

There is an opportunity at every decision point for event planners to create more inclusive events that make everyone feel safe, included and welcome. While the considerations in this guide might seem overwhelming at first glance, most of them are simple to incorporate. It is just a matter of knowing what to consider and genuinely committing to inclusivity. Below is a checklist that is easy to use and notes the factors that should be considered when hosting an inclusive event.

Decision Point	Questions to Ask:	Checklist
Event Dates	Does the planned event date conflict with any religiously and/or culturally significant events?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Would a conflict in dates create a barrier for attendance/representation for the desired audience?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Do the event dates conflict with significant LGBT+ dates or celebrations?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Is there room for partnerships and cross-marketing with other events taking place at the same time?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Event Venue: Washrooms	Would my guests feel safe and included using the washroom facilities provided?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are there any modifications that could be made over the duration of my event to make my guests feel safer and included?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Event Venue: Venue team	Do members of the venue team where the event is hosted understand the nature of the event and its target audience?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Does the venue have internal inclusivity and diversity policies and guidelines for its own staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are the in-house staff members trained on inclusivity and able to make all attendees feel safe and welcome?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Event Venue: Location & Accessibility	How accessible is my chosen venue?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Does the venue accommodate those with mobility restrictions?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	What modifications/accommodations could be made to make the venue more accessible?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Do we, as an event team, understand the different types of disabilities and how to remove barriers for our guests?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Is it easy for guests to communicate to us their accessibility needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Is it clear for guests what will be accommodated and what will not?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Does the event staff have the required training to assist guests with disabilities if needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Event Registration: Pronouns	Review existing registration forms and ask yourself, why is this information needed? Would this information alienate or offend any of my guests?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Does the registration form offer the opportunity for event guests to self-identify?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Event Registration: Food Preferences	Does the registration form capture the attendees' dietary restrictions?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Does the event offer options to cover the attendees' preferences?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Suppliers and Contractors	Are there qualified LGBT+ suppliers that I could hire to support the production of the event?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Has consideration been given to hiring suppliers from traditionally marginalized groups?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Do the selected suppliers provide inclusivity training to their staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Entertainment	Could the entertainment/tours component of the event be provided by a diverse and inclusive business?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are the engaged businesses able to make guests feel safe and welcome?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Could the event support LGBT+ causes through a silent auction or raffle?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giveaways/ Gifts/Awards	Are gender-specific products included in the event welcome pack or as giveaways?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are LGBT+ businesses involved in the sourcing of awards and prizes?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programming	Does the event programming include representation from the LGBT+ community or other underrepresented groups?	<input type="checkbox"/>

References

1. Small Business Accelerator Program. "Industry Overview: Event Planning." *University of British Columbia*, 22 Aug. 2018, sba.ubc.ca/blog/industry-overview-event-planning.
2. "Ethnic and Cultural Origins of Canadians: Portrait of a Rich Heritage." *Statistics Canada*, 25 Oct. 2017, www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016016/98-200-x2016016-eng.cfm.
3. Darcy, Simon. "Disability, Access, and Inclusion in the Event Industry: A Call for Inclusive Event Research." *Event Management*, Oct. 2012, researchgate.net/publication/235993181_Disability_Access_and_Inclusion_in_the_Event_Industry_A_Call_for_Inclusive_Event_Research.
4. "Guide to Managing Conference Delegate Dietary Requirements." *IACC*, iacconline.org/guide-meeting-delegates-dietary-requirements.



© Canadian Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce. All rights reserved. This publication is protected by copyright.

Permission must be obtained from CGLCC prior to any reproduction, storage in a retrieval system or transmission in any form by any means, electronic, photocopying or otherwise. Without permission, such activities are prohibited and violate copyright.

CGLCC Canada's LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce
229 Yonge Street, Suite 400 (416) 761-5151
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5B 1N9 tourism@cglcc.ca

Funded by the
Government
of Canada

Financé par le
gouvernement
du Canada

Canada

Tourism HR
Canada



RH Tourisme
Canada