

presented by



From Intention to Impact

Steps for a Diverse and Inclusive
Festival Culture

Version 2.1



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Introduction



From Intention to Impact

Steps for a Diverse and Inclusive Festival Culture

Festivals are a unique melting pot of industries, bringing together the creative arts, hospitality, music and the events industry. As sites of cultural, creative, social and economic exchanges, festivals bring many stakeholders together to create moments of priceless value. They have the power to foster social inclusion, artistic promotion and cross-cultural fertilisation, and yet, many festivals fail to represent the diverse reality of society.

After a year of global crises and social movements, festivals must acknowledge the role they play in bringing communities together and the impact they can have on culture and society. Studies show that most international music festivals, particularly electronic music festivals, are predominantly white and male in their teams and programming. In 2021, this is unacceptable and an inaccurate representation of society. With changing audience demands, festivals have a responsibility in addressing and tackling this issue.

The Toolkit

This toolkit aims to spark an authentic conversation around diversity and inclusion within the European festival industry, and provide organisations practical tools to implement sustainable systemic change with the understanding that it is always context specific. The first step, for all of us, is acknowledging that inclusion is a process, one that is complex and challenging. We do not presume to know everything about the subject but we are committed to starting the conversation and learning along the way, together. In order to reach equality, the next step after inclusion, it will take acknowledgement that there is inequality, real action, collaboration, open hearts, open minds and the willingness to learn from mistakes. Based on the [Code D&I's 4 P's](#), the toolkit is divided into following sections: Personnel, Programme, Partners and Public, with best practices and tools specific to the festival industry.

The background features a series of overlapping, colorful geometric shapes and lines. On the left, there are yellow and red lines forming a diamond-like pattern. On the right, there are yellow and red lines forming a similar pattern. In the center, there are blue and teal lines forming a series of peaks and valleys, resembling a stylized mountain range or a series of connected triangles. The overall design is modern and abstract.

Our Vision

An authentically diverse, inclusive, equitable and sustainable festival future for Europe and beyond.

Definitions

A man in a vibrant, feathered headdress and beaded necklace, smiling, at a festival. The background shows a crowd of people and a large, colorful structure, possibly a carousel or festival tent.

First and foremost, before creating any kind of action plan, one must develop an understanding of what Diversity and Inclusion actually means for your organisation. We extend their definitions to include Equity, Equality and Belonging, three equally important concepts that must be kept in mind throughout all D&I strategies. You can read more about these concepts [here](#).

Definitions

Diversity

The quantifiable number of multiple identities represented in an organisation and its stakeholders. This includes race, gender, age, LGBTQ+ and differently abled bodies. It is the mix that makes your organisation unique, the avoidance of unconscious biases in HR and programming processes and making sure your organisation is representative of society.

Inclusion

Making sure that all thoughts, ideas and perspectives of every individual in this ecosystem matter. It is about participation, co-creation and building meaningful and lasting relationships. This requires taking various measures to make everyone in the organisation and at events feel welcome. Communicating with respect, empathy and curiosity is key.

Equality

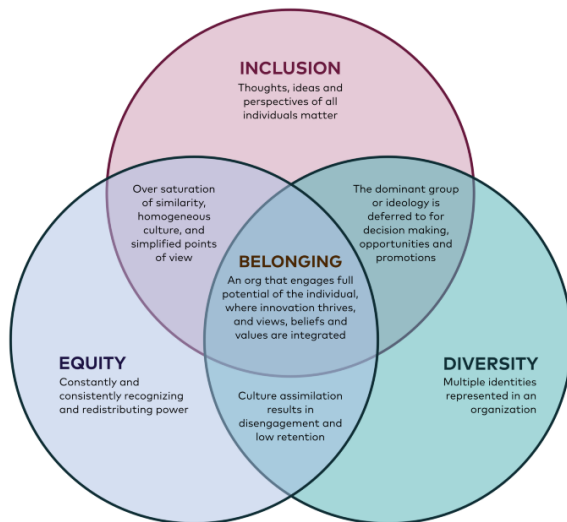
Equality is about sameness, it promotes fairness and justice by giving everyone the same thing. However, it can only work if everyone starts from the same position in society, which, in our diverse world, is impossible. Equality is only achieved when equity is ensured.

Equity

Equity is about fairness and making sure that people get access to the same opportunities. This means constantly and consistently recognising differences in power and actively working to redistribute it so that barriers to participation are removed.

Belonging

The end goal that is achieved when every member in the ecosystem is engaged in a way that their views, beliefs and values are integrated and valued. Organisations that create a sense of belonging for its members will more likely be able to retain their employees and inspire more creativity, energy and productivity. A better sense of belonging means better outcomes for all.



Source: <https://medium.com/@krysburnette/its-2019-and-we-are-still-talking-about-equity-diversity-and-inclusion-dd00c9a66113>

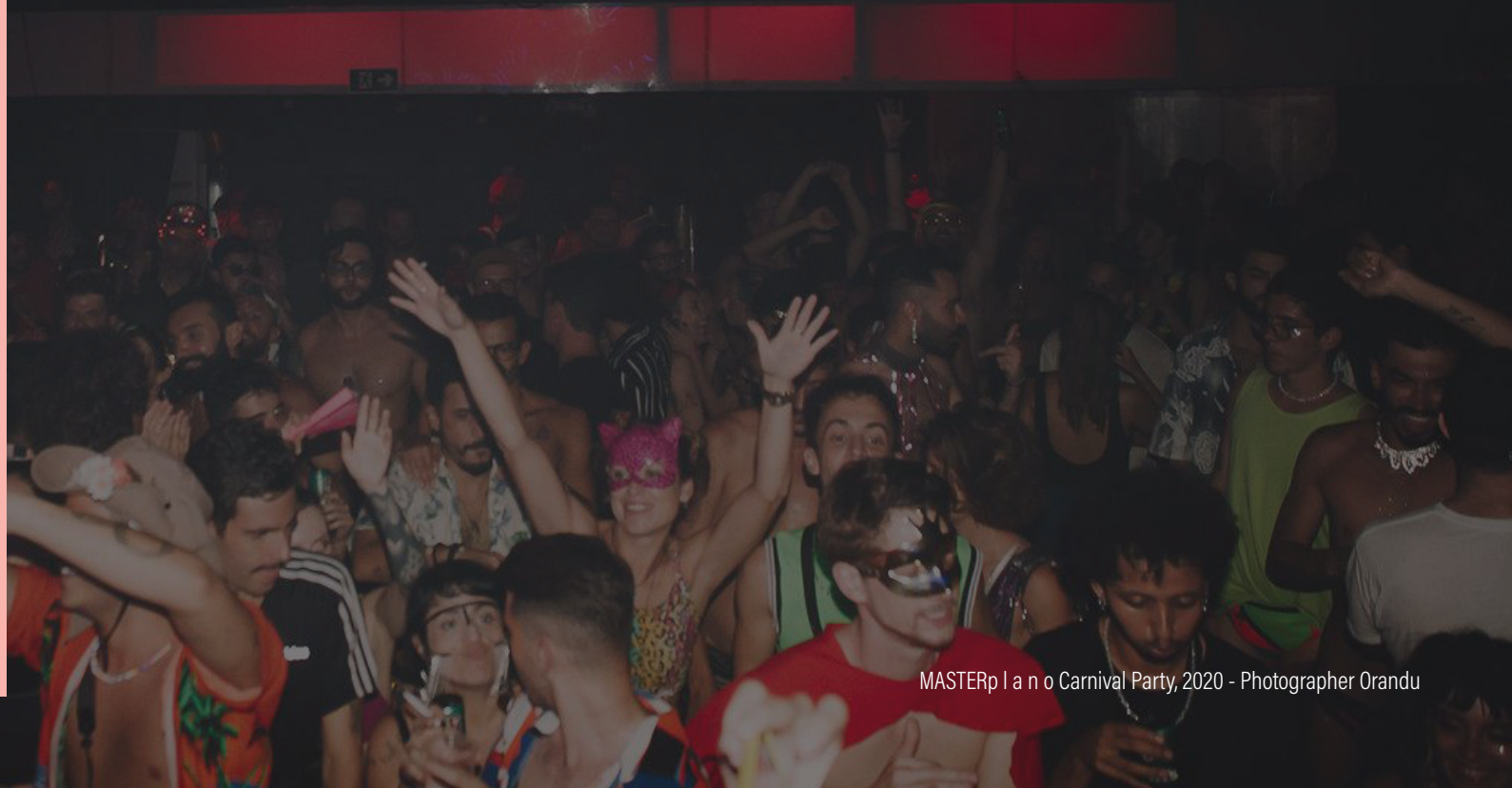
In other words

Diversity is making sure you have a good mix. Inclusion is making sure the mix works. It is ensuring that every person's voice is heard and included. Once this happens, a team has better processes and innovation can be more successful. Inclusion is psychological safety for everyone to speak up, share their thoughts and feel heard. Actively and consistently working to support this will ensure a better sense of Equity, Equality and Belonging for all of your stakeholders.

Personnel

Most festivals are run by a small core team usually consisting of 4 to 10 members, depending on the size of the festival. In many cases, even as a festival grows over time, the founder(s) remains the lead decision maker and visionary, surrounded and supported by a small group of in-house managers handling various roles.

This group of people form the main festival team, however no festival would be possible without freelancers, interns and volunteers. While they could be considered Partners, they are as much a part of the festival's wider team and identity. Therefore, it is imperative that if you are serious about fostering diversity and inclusion in your organisation, **that you identify all the different members of your team and the levels on which they function.** For the purpose of this toolkit, this section will focus mainly on strategies for the core organising team of a festival.



MASTERp I a n o Carnival Party, 2020 - Photographer Orandu

Personnel

Step 1: Know where you stand

Before implementing any D&I strategy, first ask yourselves the following questions:

Why do we want our festival to be diverse and inclusive?

What do the words 'diversity', 'inclusion', 'equity', 'equality', and 'belonging' mean to us?

Does our team reflect the diversity of society, and therefore the diversity we desire for our festival?

Is it important for our team to be diverse? Why/why not?

What would an inclusive work environment look like for our team?

As a team, does each member feel seen, heard and respected in formal decision making processes and informal conversations?

How comfortable and safe do we feel to share personal opinions on this subject?

How strong is the sense of belonging amongst team members?

Society, upbringing, and media, all play a role in forming prejudices and stereotypes. They can shape our worldview and it can take many years to unlearn our conditioning, **but accepting that no one is perfect and everyone has blindspots is the first step in overcoming your own unconscious or hidden biases.** Learn more about these concepts and how internal biases can manifest as external behaviour by taking [Project Implicit's Hidden Bias Test](#).

Organise a team meeting to discuss these questions. Make sure your colleagues know that it is a safe space for sharing and learning. It may be an uncomfortable discussion but that is part of the process. If needed, bring in a D&I expert or consultant to help facilitate the discussion in order to enrich your understanding and formulate next steps.

Remember:

Diversity is about having a good mix. **Inclusion is making sure the mix works.** It is a process and mindset that requires training, openness and learning from mistakes.

Personnel

Step 2: Integrate diversity and inclusion in your vision

For the festival

Now that you have identified why D&I is important to your team, it is time to make it a part of your festival's vision. In doing so, you legitimise your support and make it known that you are willing to be held accountable to your actions. In today's world, accountability is key.

Is the vision of your festival available on your website?

Are you committed to diversifying your festival?

Create a section on your website and make it known. Offer concrete ideas for how you will strive for more diversity across all your stakeholders. Check out [Glastonbury](#) and [Burning Man's](#) statements for inspiration.

For the festival team

For a festival, where multiple stakeholders come together, the festival team is simply one part of the whole machine. Create a separate vision for your team and ensure that D&I is a key part of it.

Be transparent: Is the festival team shown on your website?

Be open: Most festival teams in Europe are small in number and are mainly white and able-bodied. For smaller-scale festivals it is especially difficult to hire new talent when resources and returns are low. The festival team can be the hardest area to diversify. How can you show that you acknowledge this reality and the steps you are taking to make your environment more diverse?

Appointing ambassadors or new board members': from different backgrounds can help bring in more voices during decision making and increase representation.

Consider creating a blog: where team members can share their journeys in becoming more inclusive and let your audience know that you are serious about doing this work. Diversity attracts diversity. People want to know if they are investing time, money and energy on truly inclusive organisations.

Personnel

Step 3: Create commitment and support

Authentic D&I strategies require time, investment and measurable plans. This means addressing D&I with the same commitment one would give a business opportunity. In other words, put your money where your mouth is if you want to be seen as authentic by your audiences, artists and partners.

- Engage every key decision maker in this process. Commitment and support must be felt from top-down.
- As the festival team, take the lead in prioritising D&I across all your relationships, such as yours partners, sponsors and board members. Make it known that D&I is valued and pledge your support.
- Outline goals and form appoint one member from the core team to ensure ongoing accountability and set aside a budget for monitoring and evaluation of how D&I is being implemented across the different stakeholder groups.

Step 4: Draw up an action plan

1. Compile data: data collection and analysis to determine

A. While your core team may be small and their demographics easy to analyse (Age, Disability, Ethnicity, Family status, Gender identity, LGBTQ+, Life experiences, Religion, Organisational function and level, Thinking/learning styles), what does the rest of your organisation look like? i.e. the freelancers, interns and volunteers. Consider using anonymous survey technology or a third party to gather this data.

B. Identify needs or areas of concern. Are managers mainly older white males? Does one department hire more ethnically diverse freelancers than another? Look for patterns and try to understand why things are the way they are. Organise focus groups with certain employees to understand what needs to change and why gather this data.

C. Address policies or practices that affect D&I. What are the barriers impeding the employment and retention of individuals from certain demographic groups?

Think about the following:

Employee referral programs: go beyond the obvious sources. You may want to suggest someone who is like you but does that add to your team's diversity? Try to access different types of profiles so that you diversify your pipeline.

Job descriptions: are you turning away international talent like newly graduated students because your job requires a certain language other than English? Ask yourself, can the job really only be done by someone who knows the local language? If they have the credentials and passion, would you be able to invest in them learning the language?

Unconscious bias: ask everyone in your team to take the test mentioned above and then reflect on how this manifests in your processes.

Political preferences: political signs or comments in the workplace or during interviews can deter diverse applicants. Be mindful of this.

Personnel

Step 4: Draw up an action plan

2. Strategy design to align with business objectives

A. Set specific goals related to diversity and inclusion based on the festival's strategic objectives. Example: XYZ Festival has a goal as part of the overall mission to "make XYZ a festival where everyone feels welcome"

Make increasing your diversity index score a top performance indicator. If you want to attract a more diverse audience, embrace a more inclusive and diverse workforce to better serve the population.

B. Identify a senior-level individual who can be tasked with showcasing visible support for the program and keeping the organisation engaged.

C. Identify how management will be held accountable by creating a diverse committee of employees from all levels with visible leadership presence and support.

D. Provide the committee with a clear mission, budget, expectations and performance indicators.

Personnel

Step 4: Draw up an action plan

3. Implementation of the initiative

Introduce changes and efforts, such as:

- | Expanding and diversifying recruitment efforts to target different demographic groups.
- | Sponsoring D&I and unconscious bias staff training.
- | Team building exercises.
- | Open forums and ongoing dialogue regarding D&I within the team and across other stakeholders.
- | Introducing D&I early on in an employee's cycle.
- | Communicate why you care about D&I and explain how you define it.
- | Asking your team to take a working style and personality test to better understand how each member works to create a more empathetic work environment. There are many free ones available online but we like this one from [Psychology Today](#).

Communicate the initiatives:

- | Identify the different stakeholders and design messages to inform, educate, engage or empower. [Ottawa Blues Fest](#) is transparent and forthcoming about where they stand and tangible actions they are taking to achieve their D&I goals.
- | Integrate media such as newsletters, e-mail, website and social media to share your efforts.
- | Identify success stories to connect D&I efforts to your own goals and objectives.
- | Don't be afraid to be open about your journey in this process and the challenges you face. Share your discoveries and new ideas through authentic communication like [Boomtown Festival's](#).

Step 5: Monitor and evaluate

Monitoring and evaluating D&I initiatives is an integral part of the process. The outcomes of any efforts that have been implemented should be measurable. Outcomes such as increased representation of identified groups and improved employee experience must be captured and communicated at all levels to demonstrate the return on investment and value-added to the organisation.

D&I initiatives are never static or one-size-fits all. It is an ongoing process that requires constant reviewing and adjustment to respond to the changing needs of the team.

- | **Establish procedures for periodic reviews of initiatives and goals.**
- | **Resurvey employees in order to gauge their perceptions of the organisation's efforts. Do this after enough time has passed after the implementation of an initiative.**
- | **Understand that you may need to start at Step 1 again in order to collect data and refocus efforts. That is okay. Remember, it is a process.**

Personnel

Fostering an Inclusive Culture

Without developing an inclusive culture so that all members feel safe and valued, the diversity of your team means nothing. A diverse and inclusive culture in a festival team will have a trickle down effect on all other stakeholders and will be felt across the line-up, partners and audience.

Steps you can take to make your team and environment more inclusive:

- Communicate commitment to an inclusive workplace culture. Although [Stitch Fest South West](#) is not a music festival, their commitment to inclusive culture is clearly stated for all to see and serves as inspiration for many.
- Develop inclusive leaders by identifying passionate change-makers and sponsoring training and workshops.
- Recognise inclusion as a leadership skill that drives overall team performance.
- Increase effective communication by providing tools for active listening and empathetic communication. See [here](#) for some tips.
- Integrate accountability for inclusion into employee performance conversations.
- Create safe spaces and opportunities for employee feedback and open communication.
- Provide opportunities for learning and self-development. Use available online tools or third parties for privilege training and expanding knowledge of current social issues.
- Always acknowledge that inclusion is a process and that it is okay to make mistakes as long as you are willing to learn from them.
- Educate teams on microaggressions and point out problematic behaviour in a respectful way.
- Change up your meetings: rotate meeting leaders, share agendas before and designate enough time beforehand for individual check-ins.
- Mark the different cultural festivals celebrated by members of the group in the calendar and make sure to acknowledge them. This includes your interns and volunteers, anyone you work closely with on an ongoing basis.
- Above all else: listen to your employees and respect their views, even if they disagree with yours.

Programme

Programming is the most visible aspect of a music festival's engagement with diversity and inclusion. It is the first tool to assess a festival's commitment to promote female and female-identified artists, as well as artists from minority groups. Various studies among music festivals show that **minority groups are still hugely underrepresented in festival lineups, and that gender equality is still a long way away**. Here are some steps that can be taken to develop a more diverse and inclusive programme. We'll highlight best practices in the field, as well as the importance of experimentation.

MASTERplan o Birthday Party, 2019 - Photographer Danilo Silva

Programme

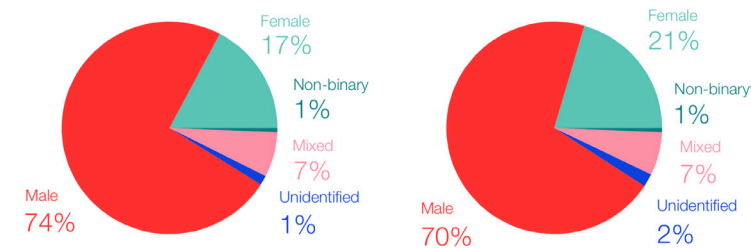
Step 1: Know where you stand

Before you can explore the many possibilities to diversify your programme, it's important to know where you currently stand.

Take stock of the current situation by looking at the programming of past editions of your festival. The artistic line-up is obviously central to the programme, but like many festivals, you may include other offerings, such as workshops and conferences.

Look at your entire programme from past editions, and ask yourself:

- Is my programme ethnically diverse?
- How far am I from gender balance?
- Does my programming represent my audience?
- Could I diversify my programme to attract a new audience?
- How diverse do I want my line-up to be, according to the context of my festival?
- Do artists and speakers feel welcome when coming to my festival?
- What are my strengths and areas of improvement in the diversity of my line-up?
- Have I identified and understood my unconscious biases? How do they influence the way we build our programme?
- Does my programme look mostly like our team? Is my programmer (or programming team) aware of D&I issues and unconscious bias?
- Does my line-up welcome lesser known artists? To what extent does marketability influence my programme?



Gender proportions of festival acts [Left: 2012 to 2019, Right: 2017 to 2019]
From [FACTS survey](#) 2020

"Marketability and unconscious bias both play another critical role in how lineups are curated. Whitewashing isn't always necessarily a conscious process, but instead can be the product of white privilege occupying the spaces where decisions are made, which in turn influences who receives preferential treatment and who is deemed to be marketable to an imagined audience. That audience typically is envisioned to be white, so Black artists are not considered to be as marketable as their white counterparts."

- Marcus Barnes, 2020, [Beatportal](#)



This is the moment to take a step back, look at the state of play and reflect on what has been unconsciously influencing you in the way you were building your programme.

“Believe in a less capitalistic approach to your listeners and support a more performance-oriented music culture.”

- FACTS survey, 2020

Programme

Step 2: Integrate diversity and inclusion in your vision

Be aware of your festival's context.

D&I issues are always context-specific. In order to properly form D&I policies, it's essential to outline the context of a festival.

Ask yourself:

- What is the historical and social context of the country/city where the festival takes place?
- What is the history of the musical genre(s) of the festival? Who created it?
- Who mainly plays it today? Has it been whitewashed?
- See how your festival relates to that context. Is the line-up representative of the country/city's inhabitants? Does the line-up truly represent the artists of this musical genre?

Spell out your diverse and inclusive programme

The inclusion of D&I in the programme's vision could be something visible, explicit. It's all about celebrating the diversity of your programme, from its announcement, to the end of the festival.

How do you announce your artist? Do you only give names or do you share detailed content about them? Is your audience aware of your artists' stories?

Take this opportunity to share information about your line-up's diversity and embrace it as an asset for the festival

Give space for knowledge-sharing moments and discussion about D&I in your programming

Organise a workshop or conference and invite artists and audiences from minority groups to speak, to intervene, and to share knowledge. Many different subjects can be addressed, from purely music-related topics to topics that address D&I in the context of festivals. It is a great way to engage your audience when formulating your D&I vision.

Programme

Step 3: Create commitment and support

In order to encourage greater diversification and inclusion in your programming, it is important to create commitment. Respecting this will reflect the authenticity of your D&I policies. Commitment should be supported by collaborations with relevant actors that foster D&I from an artistic point of view, but it should also be strongly supported by the entire festival team.

Ask yourself:

- | Do you collaborate with diverse and inclusive labels and/or booking agencies?
- | Do you work with organizations specialized in D&I issues in the music industry?
- | Are you part of festival networks that collaborate and commit together on these issues?
- | Have you ever looked at best practices from festivals with diverse line-ups?
- | Have you ever thought about collaborating with external people from diverse origins and backgrounds to help your team curate the festival?

Step 4: Draw up an action plan

"Artistic and professional quality comes first. Given the diversity of society, quality always goes hand in hand with variety. **Give diversity and inclusion a permanent place in the way your professional and artistic choices are made. Be aware of how your unconscious biases and your own identity can influence your artistic and professional choices.**"

- [Code D&I](#)

1. Collect data about your programme over the years and analyse it

- | Collect data about your artists and speakers over the years, looking at their gender, their ethnicity, their sexual orientation...
- | Extend this analysis to other demographic data that may be relevant to you (age, religion, nationality...)

This analysis, in time, will allow you to highlight dynamics and trends on the evolution of your programming.

Programme

Step 4: Draw up an action plan

2. Deduce strengths and areas for improvement

Making a festival programme more diverse and inclusive is a continuous ongoing process, and there will always be areas of improvement to explore. For example, a festival with great gender balance may not have any ethnic diversity.

- | Identify positive points and pain points about the diversity of your programme.
- | Try to figure out what aspects are the most important for you, within the context of your festival (country, city, audience, musical genre, etc.).

3. Identify and understand unconscious prejudices

The programming of a festival is the most visible and tangible representation of your unconscious biases.

Being aware of these elements will allow you to realize what, unconsciously, makes your programming not diverse.

Ask yourself:

- | Why are these communities underrepresented in my line-up?
- | How does my unconscious bias shape the line-up?
- | What are my blindspots?
- | How does my lack of knowledge about some types of communities, sexualities, genders influence the line-up's composition?

Programme

Step 4: Draw up an action plan

4. Understand to what extent marketability influences diversity in your programming

The success and survival of a festival is very much dependent on financial success, which can have the vicious effect of focusing mainly on booking artists who are the most marketable. These marketable artists tend to be white males, which has a direct consequence on the diversity of the line-up. Mainstream festivals are particularly susceptible to this way of functioning.

In order to get around this:

- Be confident in your ability to introduce new artists. Your festival can be a **springboard for lesser-known artists from different backgrounds.**
- Constantly explore unknown artists. Make your public interested in the discovery of new artists. You will progressively detach yourself from the vicious circle of marketability.
- Keep in mind: **talent goes beyond marketability and visibility on social media.**
- Keep your eyes and ears open to new music being shared on social media.

With a more representative line-up, new opportunities of diversifying the audience will arise.

5. Connect and engage with relevant actors for the diversification of your programming.

- Learn from best practices of other festivals.** If possible, get in touch with them, ask for advice, start a discussion. Some examples: [We Out Here](#) (UK), [Milkshake](#) (Netherlands), [Lovebox Festival](#) (UK), [Le Guess Who?](#) (Netherlands), [Bass Coast](#) (Canada)
- Get in touch with structures specialized in D&I issues** in festivals and/or in the music industry, get advice and support. Some examples: [female:pressure](#), [Keychange](#), [Women in Music](#), [Without Exception](#)
- Join their networks and collaboratively create and commit to guidelines** which could be developed further into a certification. Structural changes need collective effort and unity. Take the pledge.
- Collaborate with labels and booking agencies that push for D&I** and advocate for more representation in their rosters. Create partnerships with them. Book their artists. Some examples: [Creamcake](#) (Germany), [Mamba Negra](#) (São Paulo), [Never Normal Records](#) (USA), [Discwoman](#) (USA)
- Diversify your programming team.** Bring in curators from other backgrounds to partner with your current team. Artistic interests and D&I go hand in hand.. challenge your curators and ask: what do they want to express? Why is it important within your festival's context? Always give space to safe and open dialogue with your curators. Le Guess Who? is a great example of a festival that invites guest curators from different backgrounds and disciplines to create fresh and diverse line-ups.

Programme

Step 5: Monitor and evaluate

"Chart progress and results using the benchmark values and targets you have selected. Value and reward the achievement of goals. Celebrate your successes, learn from your mistakes. Identify points for improvement and determine follow-up actions."

[- Code D&I](#)

1) Collect and analyse data to understand the evolution of your festival's line-up

- Did you respect your commitment? What has been successfully achieved and what were your struggles?
- Identifying your areas of improvement should be an ongoing process, edition after edition.

2) Contrast these results with other stakeholders' results

- Can you see a common evolution between the D&I of your line up and the D&I of your audience/team/partners? How interconnected are the results among stakeholders?

3) Give space for feedback and advice from stakeholders

- Ask your audience if they felt represented by the program. Evaluate general audience satisfaction and make note of perspectives from all demographics.
- Ask the artists if they felt welcomed and well included. Diversifying a program is a first step. Including the artists and making them feel welcome is the next. Evaluate how your festival has been able to take every artist's needs into consideration.

Partners and Suppliers (P&S)

If the organising team is the backbone of any festival, then it's **only fair to recognise the role partners and suppliers play as internal organs of the overall system.** Whether under contract or simply facilitators, the organisations you chose to partner with reflect not only your values but say a lot about the actual commitment the festival has made with D&I.



Partners and Suppliers (P&S)

Step 1: Know where you stand

Stakeholders are demanding. Collaborating with a company that does not promote inclusion is a step towards backlash. It is simply not enough to have one or two partners that are very vocal about diversity. Festivals must actively try and understand their partners' true intentions and choose to partner with those that share the same values and actual commitment to the diversity and inclusion cause.

A nice way to assess this is by benchmarking the percentage of partners that share the same vision on diversity and inclusion, in your full list of suppliers and partners. But don't forget there's more than numbers. See in what way they compliment each other and add to your overall mission.

Step 2: Integrate diversity and inclusion in your vision

A festival's choice of partners and supplier clearly reflects its vision and serves as proof of commitment. Therefore, striving for more diverse and inclusive partners as part of the main vision and mission of the festival is key. Integrating D&I in the way you envision your partners and suppliers will facilitate the whole process and avoid mission drift. This is the only conscious way of addressing D&I with partners and suppliers.

Therefore, your vision should openly state the commitment you have with diversifying partners and suppliers and give preferable treatment to those that embody D&I.

Step 3: Create commitment and support

You want to have your suppliers and partners by your side in this cause, and to do so, commitment needs to be created.

Invite your partners and suppliers to jump on board and become co-owners of your action plan. When P&S's voices are heard, they'll feel part of the solution which generates intrinsic and honest motivation and commitment.

Show your honest concerns and where you stand. Being transparent and engaging with them is the first step in sparking commitment and also helps to assess their true intentions.

Partners and Suppliers (P&S)

Step 4: Draw up an action plan

Identifying

- Start within, by understanding your current partners' true intentions and backgrounds.
- Identify organisations that do a better job than you in D&I. Not only other festivals, but look beyond the field. Take a look at their partners and learn how you can improve.
- Start local. Identifying local groups and organisations committed to progress and reach out to them.
- Don't forget to partner with organisations that make you more inclusive. Like [NewBees](#) or [NewFaces](#). At the same time, diversify your Personnel.
- Identify smaller organisations specialised in "niche" diversity, since they reduce context uncertainty. An example outside of the music industry is [MamaCash](#) who's very open about their partners.
- Avoid [tokenism](#) by not following a "checklist", but implementing an overarching policy and mindset.

Reaching out

- Be truthful, transparent and state your true intentions.
- Take a learning stand when addressing possible new partners.
- Be open-minded and listen first.
- Diversify the diversity. Trust in lesser known talent.
- Value the organisation's values and preferred way of meeting. Do your research first to better understand the context the organisation works.

Communicate it

- Don't be afraid to communicate your progress. Worse than showing your progress is hiding it.
- Post on appropriate channels initiatives you are pursuing or new partners, by tagging them and elevating their work and cause.
- Share major breakthroughs in D&I in the music/festival industry. Research them first though, don't just follow the herd.
- Avoid [Woke-Washing](#) by not posting or sharing content from areas you're not addressing yet.
- Transparency and commitment in communication generates empathy and understanding from the audiences.
- Be proud and transparent about your choice of partners. It is advised to have a [clear section of your website](#) stating your partners.

Partners and Suppliers (P&S)

Step 5: Monitor and evaluate

Be Demanding

New technologies and social media have made audiences demand more transparency. You should do the same with your partners! Ask about diversity policies, vision, staff, and values. Don't be afraid to consider changing partners or suppliers if they do not meet your criteria of diversity and do not expect to change this within a short period, some other more inclusive company will be glad to collaborate.

If you don't call them out, sooner or later your audience (or other partners) will do it for you...

Read Beyond

No organisation will openly say they are against D&I. However, some may not act according to their stated values. Actively investigating and understanding an organisation's true intentions is key in order to filter whether this partner should remain part of the festival or not.

Public

We are all different from each other one way or another. No matter where you are, what you are doing in your event, your public is diverse. It is made up of different genders, race/ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, education levels and religions, just to name a few. This means that we all think, feel, and respond to messages differently, therefore, there is never a one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to audience communication.

According to a [2019 consumer study](#), people are more likely to consider, or take an action after seeing an ad that appears inclusive or diverse to them. In particular, of the various groups, some segments of consumers expressed stronger preference for diverse and inclusive ads, including people from the LGBTQ community, ethnic minority groups, and also millennials. This shows that nowadays brands are expected to be inclusive and truthfully reflect the diversity in everyday lives. But how do we get there? Here are 5 steps for you to get you started.



Public

Step 1: Know where you stand

Ask yourself:

- What kind of audience does your event attract the most?
- Are they the ones you are aiming at?
- Who are your target audiences?

Map all potential target groups. In addition to existing target groups, map out all the potential target groups, based on the diversity in your field of work. Identify what attracting potential target groups means for your organization. Don't lose sight of your existing target groups in this process. Here are some pointers for you to identify your target groups:

- Look at your past attendees
- Look at your competition
- Create an attendee persona
- Find out the real reason people (do not) attend your events

To take one step further, make sure to answer the following questions:

- Which segments are most closely aligned with my goals?
- What are the demographics of each segment?
- Which segments have the largest growth potential?
- How big are the segments I am looking at?
- Which segments have the most / least competition?

Step 2: Integrate diversity and inclusion in your vision

After defining your target audience, before reaching out to them, investigate to what extent your event is / isn't accessible to them, and see how your event and your organization are reflecting the needs and possibilities of potential target groups.

Aim to build a strong community with your target audiences. Although digital channels allow brands to stay in touch with a target audience throughout the year, social media is not necessarily community building. And it is important to take note that online community building strategy may look quite different from a social media strategy since they involve different goals.

When envisioning your online community consider:

- Are members of the target audience likely to want to join an online community?
- What social network is your target audience most likely to use naturally?
- What sort of connections are these people most likely hoping to establish?

Take into account the fact that different social media has different user profiles, be considerate and selective when investing in social media communication. Also note that especially if you are targeting a global audience, there might be some media platforms that are peculiar to the local people and different from the channels you are used to. Therefore, it definitely requires some effort if you want to tap into that market, be prepared, but if you try, there may be some pleasant surprises lying ahead.

Of course, building an online community isn't enough - we want people to come to our events. To bring online communities to offline events, remember, the key is to make online community members feel recognized and feel connected.

Step 3: Create commitment and support

When you have incorporated diversity and inclusion in your vision, it takes commitment and long-term planning to achieve that vision. Engage your audiences in your marketing and communication strategies. Show them that you care about diversity and inclusion in your all actions, in the way you communicate, organise events and brand yourself.

Invest in the community you are building with your target audiences. This means creating a safe and open environment, being transparent in your communication, creating chances for interaction and making sure people's voices are heard. And remember, commitment takes time and sustained effort. [Le Guess Who?](#) makes sure to stay connected and relevant with its global audience community, check out their brand new programme [Reports from Other Continents](#) for instance.

Public

Step 4: Draw up an action plan

Reaching new audiences was found to be one of the biggest challenges for event creators, do you feel the same? Here are 8 tips for you to tackle the challenge.

Divide up your event

If you're trying to appeal to everyone, it can result in weak messaging that doesn't really resonate with anyone. Instead, to cater to diverse tastes of audiences, deliver a range of events or divide your events up into sections, each section with a clear message to a segment of audience. And when you can, offer more than music, such as talks, workshops, food trucks, and exhibitions.

Experiment new formats

People love to try new things. Festivals can make use of new technologies, such as sound installations, to create an environment for interaction, bring audiences together and make more fun. See this great example [SwingScape](#) developed for [Roskilde Festival](#).

Engage with local businesses

A [study](#) has shown that although festivals have taken all sorts of actions to achieve social inclusion goals, one group of audience that is commonly overlooked by festival organisers are local residents. By joining forces with local businesses, you will be able to instantly tap into customer bases that are both new and stable.

Spread your net wide

Making more people know about your events increases the chance that you obtain a diverse audience. But of course, it doesn't make sense to tell 8 billion people in the world about your event--it is unrealistic, ineffective and expensive. Instead, do it strategically. Maximize digital marketing to tap into a wide global audience, consider tactics such as [live streaming](#), [influencer marketing](#) and [official hashtags](#). Even if you are mainly targeting audiences on a national level, market your festival to more locations: you never know might come to your event.

Public

Step 4: Draw up an action plan

Make it shareable

Word of mouth is considered one of the most powerful marketing tools. When your events are designed for audiences to share, experiences can be organically shared verbally and digitally without any obvious awkward force from your side. Also try boosting it by giving promotional offers for existing audiences to bring along friends.

Offer discounted ticket options

Not everyone who is interested in your event has all the money it takes to register, travel, and stay near the event. If you find in Step 1 that there is a huge potential target group who can't attend your event because of the high ticket price, try lowering barriers of entry to make it easier for them to attend. Check out the ticket pricing strategy of [Boom Festival](#) for inspiration. You can also do this if you want to attract local audiences to your event, simply give them some monetary incentive to attend.

Be prepared for a systemic overhaul

If you truly aim to attract a diverse audience, examine yourself from the top down. Every decision you make to your Public, is a reflection of the Personnel that makes up your organisation, Partners that you choose to work with, and Programme that you settle upon. Sometimes, unconscious biases are not to be avoided, but rather, should be acknowledged and worked upon. For instance, by actively collaborating with a diverse group of partners, trying out new combinations of lineups, communicating and engaging with your target audiences, or even, seeking help from the public (check out this initiative from the [American Bach Society](#)). Experiment and figure out ways that work for you.

Put yourself in others' shoes

What is appealing to one group of audience may not be so relevant to the others. Make sure you have a clear idea on what each segment of your target audience needs and values in your events, and adjust your marketing messages to promote the value for money to them accordingly.

Words Matter

Understanding who your audience is and how to make them feel included are key to effective communication. The more people feel included, the more they will listen to you, use your information and come back for more. Developing communication strategies with consideration of the needs of your audiences allows you to better connect with them. We have compiled a Communication Guide to help you with this.

Public

Step 5: Monitor and evaluate

Now that you have gone through all of the first steps, it is time to evaluate your progress and see how well your efforts are paid off! There are several methods you can use to assess your audience (this can be used in Step 1, too).

- | Point-of-sale collection of data.
- | Audience survey at the event.
- | Direct mail or email survey to subscribers.

Some important factors to consider:

- | General audience satisfaction.
- | Reach figures.
- | Turnover in the desired target group.

If your evaluation shows positive progress in your audience segment, congratulations! This success is a validation of your strategies, and you can continue going in this direction. However, if the result is negative, don't lose spirit, this is time for you to revise your approach. What have you done right and wrong? Reflect and learn from each step you have taken, and work out how you can do it better next time. Start over again. Trust that it is going to pay off eventually.

Communication Guide

Inclusive communication is supported by [3 main pillars](#):

Empathy

(Continuous process of inclusion)

Culture

(Context specificity)

Empowering

(Addressing constant shifts in power)

In all your communication, show that inclusion defines the nature of your organization and how it thinks and acts. Careful choices of images, colours, languages and even media that are more relevant to the diverse audiences can help eliminate some communication barriers.

Most importantly, when in doubt, ask. Never take something for granted since you never know how the audience will interpret what you say. Check for example, the [race-related coverage](#) guide by the [Associated Press](#), and the [gender-inclusive language guidelines](#) by UN Women.

Even if you make mistakes in your communication, it is okay. Own up to your mistakes, be open to criticism and respond to it as soon as possible. Stakes are high when you are targeting a diverse audience, you should know that. But if you show your authenticity, that you care and you are willing to improve, people will see it, and you might find it is



Communication Guide

1: Use authentic imagery

If you are using images in your marketing and communication, always choose those that are authentic and represent diversity. Stock photography should be avoided for various reasons, including that it often depicts gender and racial stereotypes.

Bear in mind that your communication should aim beyond this 'perfect' image. Your content should reflect your commitment to diversity and inclusion too, if you truly aim to resonate with your audiences. Some marketing tips can be found [here](#).

2: Adopt inclusive language

Gender and Sexual Orientation

- Say: people of all genders, not both genders
- Drop the "Guys" and embrace the "Y'all" or similar (Colleagues, Friends, Party-people, Ravers, Folks)
- In addition to the standard options of Mr., Mrs. or Ms, add the option of a gender neutral prefix (Mx.) in your [Event Registration](#)
- Steer away from gendered statements and generalisations such as "Boys will be boys" "Man up!". Remember, it's Humankind, not mankind. Pay attention to gendering professions: Use Firefighter not firemen, Use Cabin Crew not air hostess, Postal workers not postmen. The list goes on...For more feminist communication guidelines see [SheSaidSo](#)
- When responding to comments, posts or email, do not assume the person's gender; simply address them by name
- Mind the Pronouns. It is naive to assume all individuals are cisgender. Avoid utilising gender defining pronouns unless the person openly states them. State yours whenever possible like in email signatures or the team's landing page.
- Consider adding "she/her", "he/his" or "they/them" to your Zoom or Teams name tag so that others know how to address you, but more importantly, you signal that you take this seriously and encourage others to do the same. This can make everyone feel included, even in a digital setting.
- It is not appropriate to describe individuals as LGBTQ+. A person is Gay or Bisexual, etc, not LGBTQ+. For a good example on knowledge-sharing visit [Milkshake Festival](#).

Complexion

- "Blacks" and "Whites" should not be used as nouns. In alternative, and when relevant use Black teachers or white people.
- Person of Color (POC) is mostly used in the US, but refers to all non-white people not just Black or Brown people. Asian people are also considered POC.

People with Disabilities

- When referring to disabilities, use people-first language so individuals are not defined by their disability (e.g., use "person with a disability" vs. "disabled person") unless the person indicates another preference. The EU has a [rulebook](#).
- Keep in mind how people with disabilities will perceive your social media posts. Include video and image alternative text, include captions, and write descriptive captions.
- Mind contrast and avoid using colors to convey meaning. Be clear with your message and be aware of flashing colours or imagery as that may be triggering for those who are [neurodivergent](#).

Communication Guide

3: Monitor social media content

- Moderate social media comments that contain obscenity, profanity, racism or personal attacks by stating you are against such sentiments and behaviour and try to educate. If this does not work, delete and move on.
- If you are not able to remove comments, develop a strategy to handle these issues and move to action quickly.
- When using emojis, use the non-gendered versions and the default yellow colour when addressing a universal audience. Also be sure to consider not only race/ethnicity, but also age, gender, and disability etc. However, avoid excessive emojis and stylised fonts, this reduces legibility of voice over and other assistive tools.

4: Translate into different languages

When you have a culturally diverse audience, translation into their own languages can be tricky especially when you don't know their culture. Here is a practical guide to producing translated materials.

5: Speak to multicultural audiences

- Stick to your bullet points
- Don't speak too fast
- Maintain a balance between composure and expressiveness
- Be mindful with your body language
- Ditch the jokes
- Use universal analogies

Accessibility

A photograph of a man with a cochlear implant, smiling and clapping at a social event. He is wearing a dark green patterned shirt and holding a glass of beer. In the background, a woman with glasses is visible, and a sign for 'REVELLAND' is partially seen.

Accessibility encompasses a whole range of meanings and is a central part of any D&I initiative. It can mean physical accessibility to venues, accessibility to information, particularly in the digital realm, accessibility based on one's social group and accessibility via income and finance. Like any other business initiative, building real accessibility also requires time, energy, monetary investment and commitment.

People with disabilities are one of the most disadvantaged and excluded groups in society. This is reflected heavily in the festival setting as well. From audience to line-up, it is people with disabilities who face the biggest challenge in accessing new opportunities and art forms.

Accessibility

Whether they are 'people with disabilities,' 'differently abled bodies' or 'people with limitations,' the terminology may differ but the challenges remain the same. How can a festival ensure that every member, every type of body, is made to feel included? We still have a long way to go but here are some organisations and individuals using their expertise to make music and festivals accessible to people with disability:

[Attitude Is Everything \(UK\)](#), are one of the world's leading charities in removing barriers to live music for people with disabilities by working closely with venues, artists and brands, with more than 20 years of experience in this field. An introduction to their Charter of Best Practice can be viewed [here](#), with a full version available to purchase of £50 from their website. See their other resources [here](#).

[Marianne Dijkshoorn \(NL\)](#), is the Netherlands' leading expert on accessibility within the live events and festival industry. Using her own experience as inspiration, she has worked with a number of organisations such as [LKCA](#) and [Code D&I](#) to help create the country's first [roadmap](#) of inclusive performing arts venues.

Some quick tips from [Marianne](#) to keep in mind:

"Accessibility at events start with hospitality. If you don't have wheelchair accessibility in the toilet, you can't drink any beer. If there is no sign language, you cannot follow the concepts. Its very important organisations begin with communicating about the available tools for accessibility so that people with disabilities can make the decision to go or not. Even ticket sales need to be made accessible. If communication about accessibility is done before tickets go on sale, it is easier for people with disabilities to decide if they can go to the festival and let their friends know in order to book the tickets for them." [Shambala Festival](#) is a great example of integrating such strategies.

See also [VWEM's \(NL\)](#), [action plan](#) to make events, festivals and music locations more accessible.

[Possibilize \(NL\)](#) is a platform which realises projects in which limitations serve as inspiration, rather than barriers. They have initiated multiple projects bringing people together with the aim of showcasing how limitations like hearing and visual impairments and learning difficulties, can actually be enriching to society. Their festival [Sencity](#), a multisensory music event for deaf and hearing people can be a source of great inspiration for festivals.

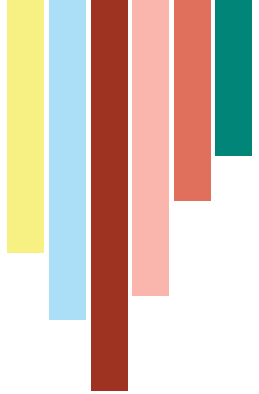
[Inclusion Festival \(US\)](#), an initiative of [Accessible Festivals](#), is the world's first sensory-friendly music and wellness festival designed to include and accommodate individuals with special needs. Through year-round events, experiences, consultation and training, they aim to spread inclusion as a state of mind. Their [online festival](#) in 2020 featured many best practices in virtual accessibility, including closed captioning, American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, accessibility tools, social stories, movement workshops, and even financial accessibility.

Limitations



Performer at MASTERp l a n o party, 2019 - Photographer Danilo Silva

Limitations



Context specificity

As it has been said in the toolkit, D&I issues are always context-specific. We focused on Europe, which has some common social and historical context, but we acknowledge that in Europe, D&I contexts can be very different across countries.

Moreover, we didn't focus on a specific musical genre. Different musical genres can also have their specific issues (for example, some specific musical styles have very few artists of colour, but it also can be an opportunity to give these few artists more visibility).

Many examples from our toolkit are based on the electronic music scene, and that can be considered to be not very representative or inclusive of other musical genres.

Fear of being called out: a barrier to open discussions

Every festival can improve their D&I strategies, because every festival has its own areas of improvement. The majority of festivals that accepted to have a discussion with us were festivals with significant best-practices, and this was important for us, as the main goal of this toolkit is to share best practices.

However, we would have liked to speak with more festivals that face problems with D&I, to better understand their struggles. Nevertheless, we also understand that it can be difficult and scary to talk about such a sensitive subject, in the context of the "cancel culture". That's also why it's so important to be able to create a safe environment for discussions and accepting that everyone can make mistakes.

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