



INCLUSIVE CHAPTER MEETING GUIDE



We may attend meetings every day, but how often do we reconsider our meeting practices? Are we capitalizing on all our opportunities to make our Chapter meetings more inclusive and effective? In this guide, we highlight actions that can make your meetings more inclusive to all, especially to those from marginalized groups.

✦ WHAT ARE MEETINGS?

Meetings are where members come together to share their thoughts and ideas and make decisions, where the culture grows and takes shape. They are a real-time indicator of the culture of an organization or a chapter and a common place for DEI dynamics to play out.

Historically, traditional meetings are also where people who are able-bodied, extroverted, and quick with verbal processes do best. Traditional formats center and favor extroverted, neurotypical, and systematically dominant identities.

✦ WHY DO WE NEED INCLUSIVE MEETINGS?

Inclusive meetings are when a diverse group of people feel seen, represented, respected, and valued as they work together to come up with solutions and decisions. Inclusive meetings allow diverse contributors to have an equal impact and contribute in the way that is meaningful for them. They allow participants to feel listened to, valued, and understood.

✦ HOW CAN WE HAVE MORE INCLUSIVE CHAPTER MEETINGS?



BEFORE THE MEETING

Be Prepared – Send out the meeting agenda ahead of time with a welcoming invitation so members can prepare their thoughts and ideas to share at the meeting. Encourage attendees to come prepared to “share and to listen”.

Be Collaborative – Invite members to add agenda items and encourage them to prepare questions in advance.

Assess Accessibility – Request accommodations for seating, translation, or other special needs.

DURING THE MEETING

Set the Tone – Have a goal to create an open and inclusive space where everyone feels safe, seen, heard, and respected.

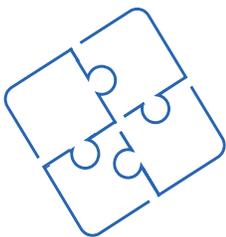
Welcome Attendees by Name – Practice gracious authority. Introduce them to other members of the chapter. Encourage members to share pronouns.

Create a Chapter Agreement – Set expectations for appropriate, respectful, and inclusive behavior upfront. Set clear guidelines for what is acceptable and what is not.

Manage Conduct During the Meeting – Step in if interruptions are made or strong personalities overreach. If someone is interrupted, give them back the floor. Be aware of dominators in the conversation—don't be afraid to cut people off if they're speaking for too long in a polite manner. Be clear that differences in opinion will be respected.

Mediate and Amplify Member Voices – Actively and intentionally bring all voices to the conversation and solicit ideas and feedback from all. If someone hasn't spoken, ask them what they think—let them know ahead of time they will be asked for their feedback so they can mentally prepare. Recognize that members do not all learn or process information the same way—take this into consideration when presenting information, making announcements, or addressing issues.

For hybrid or virtual meetings – Use technology to your advantage. Have an assigned person for virtual attendees to reach out to and speak out on behalf of them. Encourage the use of the Q&A.



✦ AFTER THE MEETING



Send a Meeting Recap – Share notes, meeting minutes, action items, and presentations.

Ask for additional thoughts or ideas after the meeting – Ask for feedback on how the meeting went so you can improve it for next time.

Ask if there was anyone that wasn't there at the meeting that should be included in the future.

Keep meeting content organized for everyone to easily access – make sure they can find the information.

✦ GENERAL TIPS



- Create a checklist to make sure you are leading an inclusive meeting.
- Commit to inclusionary practices—be active and intentional in practicing inclusion.
- Understand the group dynamics within your chapter—alpha individuals, “in-crowd,” etc. Practice active listening—don't interpret silence as a lack of support or ideas.
- Be aware of microaggressions (e.g., gendered, language, gaslighting).
- Collect data! This helps chapter leaders develop inclusion strategies and have a better understanding of how effective their approaches are. This also helps leaders to better understand how participants feel about the meetings and if the content meets their needs.
- Remember, just because your team is diverse, doesn't mean all your team members feel *included*.

COMMONLY USED TERMS

✦ Psychological Safety – Shared belief that it is safe for members to take personal risks without fear or negative consequences to one's self-image, status, or career.

Facilitator – Person or thing that makes an action or process easy or easier.

RESOURCES

- ✦ Harvard University, Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging – [Inclusive Meeting Guide](#)
- University of Queensland – [UQ Guide to Inclusive Meetings and Committees](#)
- [Atlassian Playbook](#)
- [Understanding Your Own Biases During Meetings](#)

REFERENCES

- [Harvard Business Review](#)
- [Forbes](#)
- [Think with Google](#)
- [People Managing People](#)
- [Workshopper](#)
- [Hypercontext](#)
- [Pulsely](#)
- [The Digital Workplace](#)

