**Tips for running inclusive workshops**

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# **Introduction to the guide**

This guide provides tips on how to run more inclusive and welcoming online workshops. Many of the tips and principles also apply to meetings.

This is the first version of the guide, and we’re looking to make improvements. If you use the guide, please tell us your thoughts in our [2 minute survey](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=QiCd6ePBE02mDiDTuzkXfHsDhe9ysl5IlUx40xTLNQdURDZNSFEyTTJXTVFRUjU1VDIySUk5M1AzVi4u) or send us an email at [ProjectCapability@apsc.gov.au](mailto:ProjectCapability@apsc.gov.au).

# **Why are inclusive online workshops important?**

Inclusive workshops help everyone feel welcome and fully able to contribute their ideas, perspectives and expertise. Studies show that including a range of perspectives gets better results.

If you take a look at a few diversity statistics, you’ll notice that your workshop will likely benefit from inclusive practices.

Around 18 per cent of Australians have a disability

More than 20 per cent speak a language other than English at home

Between 15 and 20 per cent of people globally are neurodiverse

Between 30 and 50 per cent of people are introverts

Studies have also shown that women are more likely to be interrupted than men and have to work harder to be heard

People will have different and sometimes conflicting needs and communication styles. But there are steps you can take to ensure everyone has a chance to contribute. Without taking steps to be inclusive, you may exclude people and you won’t get the best results.

# **Tips for inclusive workshops**

## Designing the workshop

Design a workshop environment where everyone can **participate comfortably**.

1. **Be proactive.** Seek to **understand people’s needs** and capability in online collaboration or any technology you’ll use. Design for people’s skill level or make time before or in the session to build their skills.
2. **Be flexible.** Test your approach and tools and have a plan on how you’ll **make adjustments** if needed.
3. **Have support on hand.** Have co-facilitators and leads for any break out rooms. Their job is not only to facilitate but to **notice if anyone needs support**. eg. be a note taker if anyone is unable to use the tech
4. **Respect people’s time.** Avoid long pre-reading documents and don’t make any pre-reading mandatory.
5. **Pick your time well.** Longer online workshops can be taxing for people and can make it hard to stay engaged. Certain times of the day may not suit people as well. Afternoons can be particularly bad for energy levels.
6. **Cater for different communication styles.** Use written and verbal instructions for activities. This means people can then refer back to instructions if they’re unsure or if they missed your verbal instructions.
7. **Make it simple and easy.** People have time pressures and may have a lot on their mind. Design something simple, that even a primary school child could take part in, and you’ll find it’s a lot easier for everyone to join in.
8. **Chunk the session into digestible parts.** Break the session into small blocks of time with a clear purpose to help people stay engaged. Short bursts of 3 - 5 minutes can help **retain focus**.
9. **Include breaks in the agenda.** Most people can’t concentrate for longer than 45 minutes. Even a 6 minute tea or stretch break can help!
10. **Write and share.** Give people **time to process** questions and write their thoughts down before sharing as a larger group.

## Use tools to your advantage

Use technology or tools to make the workshop more engaging for everyone.

1. Curated **breakout rooms** create a more intimate or informal atmosphere
2. Anonymous **polls** help with power imbalances or shyness
3. **Online white boards** help visualise and allow anonymous written input

The tools you choose can help your workshop be more **engaging** for some attendees, but less inclusive for others. Make sure you **test your tools** and switch to something else if needed.

* For example, Miro is a great tool but is hard to use for those who have low vision. In that situation, you might want to try EasyRetro instead. With EasyRetro users can increase the size of tiles and adjust text size.
* Consider use of colour in tools like Miro. Use colours that contrast well and avoid using green and red together. Avoid using colour alone to convey meaning. Don’t use black to convey negative connotations.

## Leading up to the workshop

1. **Tell people what tools you’ll be using**. Give them the ability to practice with the tool in advance of the session and **time to raise any issues**.
2. **Send links or documents in advance**. If you plan to screen share something, send people a version they can manipulate and zoom in on if they need too. Ensure any documents you send are accessible.
3. **Seek input.** Give people multiple opportunities to raise problems and ask for adjustments. Make clear that you’re willing to make changes.
4. **Test, don’t assume.** Do a run through with someone to test any problems with your workshop design, instructions or any tools you plan to use.

## Warm up

**Do a warm up or icebreaker activity.** Giving people a chance to speak at the start will help them feel more open to speaking in the rest of the session. It can also help people build their confidence in any tools you’re using.

* Breakout rooms are good for warm ups. They help build people’s confidence in a space that feelsintimate and relaxed.
* A warm up format like [1-2-4-all](https://www.liberatingstructures.com/1-1-2-4-all/) is a great way to get comfortable with group work and build a connection with others.
* Avoid icebreakers that force people to put themselves out of their comfort zone or promote themselves.

## During the workshop

1. **Give people options.** Outline multiple ways to participate (e.g. use microphone or typing) and make clear it’s fine to have cameras off.
2. **Read the room.** If people are struggling sometimes it can help to move a break earlier, run a fun activity or get people to stretch and re-energise.
3. **Check in with people.** If someone seems disengaged or needs help, check in with them privately and ask if there’s anything they need.
4. **Enable private calls for support.** Give people a way to reach out privately to ask questions or seek facilitator help.
5. **Don’t put people on the spot.** Make sure people know what to expect and what you want to achieve.

## Wrapping up

1. **Summarise key points and decisions** made in the session and any next steps. Send these after the session in an accessible format as well.
2. Give people **time to contribute after the workshop**. This allows them to add anything they weren’t able to raise in the group setting.
3. **Ask for feedback.** Find out if there’s anything you might be able to improve.

# **Inclusive content examples**

When you’re trying to make people feel welcome, the right words can help.

Below are some example phrases which may be useful and which you can adapt to your own context as needed.

## Before the workshop

Before a workshop, people will need a few days to try out the technology that will be used in the session, review planned activities and to ask questions.

A few words of encouragement in an email might help, see examples below.

* We’ll be using [x tool] in the workshop. If you haven’t used the tool before, you can pop into the [workshop tool] before the workshop and practice using it. Please reach out if you have any problems with it, or with any of the activities we plan to do in the workshop. It’s not too late to make changes if anything is not quite right.
* We’re committed to inclusion and we appreciate the experience of online workshops is not the same for everyone. Please let us know if we can do anything to make this workshop more accessible for you. For example, if you’d like to ask any questions in advance or get training in the tool we intend to use for the workshop, please reach out.

## During the workshop

At the beginning of a workshop, it’s worth spending some time setting the scene and acknowledging the different ways that people can contribute. It’s also worth letting people know they have someone to go to if they need help.

* We acknowledge and make space for lived experience in the room today and the differing ways that people may want to share their voice, knowledge and experience. We’ll try to be mindful of this throughout the session. If you want a safe space to check out something or share one on one you can message XX or XX.
* We’re using [xx tool today]. For anyone who hasn’t used it before now, we’ll pop you into a breakout room and do a warm up to practice with the tool. For anyone that needs it, we'll also have a note taker you can share your notes with privately via Teams – just reach out to XX if you’d like to utilise that option.
* Before we begin, I’d like you all to write one thing that will make it easier for you to participate today. Then send it to me through a private message. Once you’ve done that, I’m going to put you in breakouts rooms to do a warm up while I look through your comments and see what adjustments we should make today.
* We’d love if you could have your camera on today, as it makes our job easier. But it’s completely okay if you need to turn your camera off for part or all of the session without giving a reason.
* We’re all here as professionals balancing different pressures. If you need to turn your camera off, take a break, reply quickly to that urgent email, take a few minutes to help your child, we understand. Please balance your participation as you need to.

Use inclusive language as much as possible, for example:

* Instead of using "ladies and gents" try using "welcome everyone", “morning all” or “morning folks”
* Instead of “Chinese whispers” try “game of telephone”
* You can also find more guidance on inclusive language in the [style manual](https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/accessible-and-inclusive-content/inclusive-language) and the [Diversity Council Australia website](https://www.dca.org.au/research/project/wordsatwork-building-inclusion-through-power-language)

When you’re doing an acknowledgement of country, if you’ve got people based in different parts of the country ask them to do an acknowledgement

* If you would like to do your own acknowledgement of the Traditional Custodians on whose Country you are participating from today, I’ll give you a few moments now. You can come on camera or post in the chat.

## Making space for people to speak

Sometimes during a workshop you might find that only one or two people speak. There may be a number of reasons for people’s silence, and there are a variety of ways you can encourage people to speak. For example, activities that allow people to write individually or talk in pairs before sharing with the group will often make it easier for people to speak up.

Below are a few phrases that can help make sure everyone’s voice is heard.

* Set expectations: I know you all have valuable expertise to bring to the topic we’re discussing. I want everyone to get a chance to speak today. If you notice that’s not happening, please bring it to my attention.
* For anyone who hasn’t spoken yet, I’ll give you a minute to write down your thoughts and then get a few of you to talk through them.
* I’d like to open the floor now to anyone who hasn’t spoken yet, I’d value your thoughts and observations on [topic].
* If a less vocal person is interrupted by someone else: I just want to backtrack a moment, and dig a little further into what [less vocal person] has said before we move on.
* [X topic] seems to be a strong theme coming through, can anyone who would like to talk more about this use the ‘hand raise’ feature now? Leave your hand raised if you’d like to share your thoughts, and I’ll call on each of you in turn.
  + This makes space for people and removes the need for them to feel like they need to ‘interrupt’ to be heard
  + It also ensures no one is put on the spot to speak
* For the next activity, I’m going to split you into smaller groups and assign a note taker and time keeper/facilitator for each group.
  + Assign more vocal speakers as note takers so they’re actively listening rather than talking/leading.
  + Ask less vocal members if they would like to be time keepers/leaders. This may give them ‘permission’ to take a more active role.

## Wrapping up

It is worth giving people time to contribute after the workshop, if possible. So they can contribute anything they weren’t able to raise in the group setting.

* We’ll leave this open until tomorrow afternoon, if there’s anything you’d like to add before then. You can also share any thoughts via email.

Finally, it’s important to ask for feedback. That way you’ll know if there’s anything you might be able to improve for next time.

* If you have any tips on where we might improve for next time, please [tell us via this 5 minute survey] or via email. We appreciate any and all feedback on facilitation, tools, content or anything else.

# **Feedback**

This is the first version of the guide, and we’d love to know your thoughts. Please share your thoughts through a [2 minute survey](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=QiCd6ePBE02mDiDTuzkXfHsDhe9ysl5IlUx40xTLNQdURDZNSFEyTTJXTVFRUjU1VDIySUk5M1AzVi4u) or send us an email at [ProjectCapability@apsc.gov.au](mailto:ProjectCapability@apsc.gov.au).

# **Acknowledgements and further resources**

Below is a list of all the contributors and the resources they shared.

## Resources and further reading

* [Digital.NSW – Running inclusive workshops](https://community.digital.nsw.gov.au/t/running-inclusive-workshops/1102)
* [Atlassian – Inclusive meetings](https://www.atlassian.com/team-playbook/plays/inclusive-meetings)
* [Manifesto for good](https://www.manifestoforgood.co.uk/)
* [Five top tips for neurodiverse workshops](https://paraffin.ltd/5-top-tips-for-neurodiverse-workshops-2/)
* [9 Ways to Support Introverts in Meetings](https://shegeeksout.com/9-ways-support-introverts-meetings/)
* [Liberating structures - 1-2-4-all](https://www.liberatingstructures.com/1-1-2-4-all/)
* [Miro accessibility features for screen reader users](https://help.miro.com/hc/en-us/articles/4403828752274-Miro-accessibility-features-for-screen-reader-users)
* [Accessible meetings training](http://greatquestion.com.au/accessible-meetings/)
* [Bias interrupters: Tools for organisations](https://biasinterrupters.org/toolkits/orgtools/)
* [How to engage online attendees](https://open.spotify.com/episode/7mzkgR2f1AUUCDgYE80vr6?si=9gvXEGu_RZydnTnGwkLjaQ)
* [Remaking Gathering: Entering the Mess, Crossing the Thresholds](https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly9mZWVkcy5zaW1wbGVjYXN0LmNvbS9BdUF4SF9CZg/episode/ZjdjYjAwNTQtMjgyNC00ZDIzLTk0OGUtZTg2YTg5YjExNmIy?ep=14)
* [Zero Project Conference Accessibility Guidelines](https://austria.zeroproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Zero-Project-Conference-Accessibility-Guidelines-2019.pdf)

## Data sources

References to statistics and research came from the below articles and websites.

[Face the facts: Cultural Diversity](https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/education/face-facts-cultural-diversity#:~:text=About%20cultural%20diversity%20in%20Australia,other%20than%20English%20at%20home) – Australian Human Rights Commission

[People with disability in Australia](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia/contents/people-with-disability/prevalence-of-disability) – Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

* [The Secret Power Of Introverts](https://www.forbes.com/sites/jennagoudreau/2012/01/26/the-secret-power-of-introverts/?sh=15c65fdb7cdf) - Forbes
* [How the Best Bosses Interrupt Bias on Their Teams](https://hbr.org/2019/11/how-the-best-bosses-interrupt-bias-on-their-teams) – Harvard Business Review
* [Neurodiversity can be a workplace strength, if we make room for it](https://theconversation.com/neurodiversity-can-be-a-workplace-strength-if-we-make-room-for-it-164859) – The conversation

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* The generous folks who replied to the [digital profession post](https://members.profession.digital.gov.au/communities/community-home/digestviewer/viewthread?GroupId=1&MessageKey=828d118f-56ea-456c-8e15-c1debc9bf7f8&CommunityKey=21f41dd6-3d85-43e4-b8f4-80ab6cea5b97) and [twitter post](https://twitter.com/J3_SSC/status/1478917230767185920). With a special mention to Brigette, Shani and Rich.
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