

Inclusive Travel & Meetings Insights

THOUGHTFULLY DESIGNED MEETINGS AND EVENTS
THAT MAKE PEOPLE FEEL SEEN AND SUPPORTED

A BCD Travel DEI Council project





Introduction

Travel, meetings, and events are powerful platforms for connection—and when people come first, inclusion naturally follows. This report offers practical guidance for organizations, meeting arrangers and planners, and other stakeholders seeking to design experiences where every individual—regardless of age, ability, background, or belief—feels welcomed and supported. Through people-first strategies and real-world examples, it illuminates how thoughtful planning can create diverse, engaging environments that celebrate uniqueness and inspire meaningful participation.

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People first: Intersectionality in travel & gatherings

Each traveler and event participant brings a unique mix of identities shaped by culture, gender, race, religion, neurodiversity, and lived experience. **Intersectionality recognizes that these identities overlap—and that overlap influences how people experience travel, meetings, and events.** Designing for this complexity helps ensure people feel respected, included, and able to fully participate.

Why it matters now

As organizations grow more global, people bring increasingly layered identities to work and travel. How those identities intersect shapes engagement, belonging, and trust. Programs that fail to account for this risk bias, disengagement, and uneven experiences, while inclusive design strengthens connection, representation, and confidence across diverse audiences.

Intersectional design isn't just the right thing to do—it's smart business. When programs reflect diverse identities, they support personalization, reduce risk, and build long-term trust with global participants.

Bias often surfaces in subtle but meaningful ways, from naming conventions and language assumptions to attire and religious practices. Inclusive design starts with the fundamentals: systems that handle global naming formats, diacritics, and phonetic pronunciation correctly. These choices demonstrate cultural intelligence and improve the overall participant experience.

Design for overlapping identities to enable personalization, reduce risk, and build long-term global trust.



Take action

Inclusive travel and events require intentional design:

1. Ensure registration and booking tools support multiple surnames, pronouns, and accessibility needs.
2. Help staff and hosts recognize and respect cultural and identity differences to foster inclusion.
3. Build panels around expertise and perspective, not token representation.
4. Use event technology that supports phonetic names, dietary preferences, and faith-based needs.



Generational inclusion

Generational inclusion means designing travel, meetings, and events that **support participants across all life stages**—from early career professionals to seasoned leaders. Ageism often shows up through stereotypes, rigid policies, or one-size-fits-all experiences. Inclusive design recognizes that different generations bring distinct needs, preferences, and strengths, and ensures everyone can participate comfortably and confidently.

Why it matters now

With five generations active in the workforce, age-inclusive travel and event policies are essential. Younger employees may need clearer guidance and support early in their careers, while older travelers may prioritize comfort, flexibility, and usability. When programs overlook these differences, age bias and disengagement can follow. When they account for them, they foster stronger participation, collaboration, and wellbeing.

Age related gaps often surface in practice—from technology-heavy booking tools that challenge some users to rigid policies that exclude early career travelers who haven't been issued corporate credit cards. Inclusive planning closes these gaps through flexible options, clear communication, and universal design. When all age groups feel supported, engagement and satisfaction rise.

Many organizations are responding by expanding hotel choice, offering mobile friendly tools alongside human support, formalizing “bleisure” options, and adjusting schedules to reduce burnout. Planners are also using feedback more intentionally to improve experiences across generations.

**Design for different life stages
—not age stereotypes.**

Take action

1. Design travel policies around life stages, not assumptions about age.
2. Offer flexible booking, scheduling, and expense options for all age groups.
3. Use inclusive, age-neutral language in communications and policies.
4. Involve multiple generations in planning and feedback.
5. Prioritize wellness, safety, and accessibility for everyone.





Accessibility reimagined

Accessibility has moved beyond physical accommodations to a broader, more proactive approach to inclusion. Today, it means designing travel, meetings, and events with diverse needs in mind from the outset—not as an afterthought.

Accessibility looks different for different people, from neurodivergent travelers and multilingual executives to mobile first professionals, privacy minded leaders, and others. But the expectation is the same: seamless, thoughtfully designed experiences that allow everyone to participate fully.

Why it matters now

As work becomes more global and hybrid, accessibility is driving new opportunities for innovation and engagement. When employees and clients feel included, they are more likely to contribute and connect meaningfully. Embedding accessibility as a standard practice strengthens reputation, reinforces sustainability and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) commitments, and signals that the organization values every voice. In this sense, accessibility isn't just good practice, it's good business.

Accessibility challenges often surface most clearly when people travel together and share environments. Airports, hotels, booking tools, and event venues can introduce friction if they aren't designed inclusively. Clear information, intuitive digital experiences, discreet assistance options, and well labeled accessible spaces help smooth the journey for a wider range of travelers.

In meetings and events, accessibility means making participation feel effortless. Captioning and translation tools support real time engagement. Sensory-aware design, calm spaces and flexible schedules support neurodivergent, jet lagged, or introverted participants. When accessibility is built in, people can focus on connection, learning, and collaboration—not on overcoming obstacles.

Design inclusive travel experiences that focus on connection, not overcoming obstacles.

Take action

1. Design proactively: Build accessibility into travel and event planning from the start.
2. Rethink networking formats:
 - Don't solely rely on large receptions.
 - Offer small-group or guided networking formats.
 - Create calm, low-noise spaces for focused work or one-to-one conversations between sessions.
 - Use digital tools to support pre-scheduled short meetings.
3. Support different participation styles:
 - Design experiences that work for introverts, extroverts, and neurodivergent attendees alike.
 - Enable meaningful interaction in multiple ways.
4. Treat communication as accessibility:
 - Share information in multiple formats, such as short videos, summaries, and detailed guides.
 - Let participants choose the level of detail that works best for them.



Faith, food & inclusive diets: Designing for belief, wellness & belonging

Food and beverage choices are deeply personal, shaped by religious observances, ethical values, health needs, and personal preference. Yet meals and drinks are often treated as a logistical detail rather than a core inclusion factor. Inclusive design recognizes that what—and when—people eat directly affects comfort, wellbeing, and their ability to fully participate. When these needs are respected, people feel seen and valued.

Why it matters now

Food & beverage represents nearly 40% of event investment¹, making it a powerful lever for inclusion and engagement. As plant-based diets, religious fasting, allergen awareness, and alcohol-free lifestyles become more common, attendees increasingly expect thoughtful, well communicated options. Inclusive menus reflect care while also driving satisfaction, loyalty, and return on investment.

Needs vary widely. Some attendees require halal, kosher, vegetarian, or gluten-free meals, while others avoid alcohol for religious or health reasons². Some observe fasting periods or need time and space for prayer breaks. When these needs are ignored, exclusion can occur—even unintentionally. Inclusive planning ensures participants can engage without discomfort or compromise.



Many organizations are responding by expanding non-alcoholic drink selections, offering culturally relevant beverages, and clearly labeling menus for allergens and religious compliance. Meal schedules are being adjusted to accommodate fasting, with boxed or delayed service options available when needed. QR codes now link to ingredient details, and travel providers increasingly offer faith-conscious meals and quiet spaces for reflection or prayer.

Design inclusive menus to show care while driving satisfaction, loyalty, and ROI.



Take action

1. Include dietary and faith-based needs in registration and pre-event surveys.
2. Partner with caterers experienced in religious, ethical, and allergen-aware food preparation.
3. Ensure a meaningful share of drink options are non-alcoholic to support wellness and choice.
4. Communicate food details clearly through signage and digital platforms.
5. Respect fasting and prayer schedules by adjusting meal timing or offering alternatives.

By integrating these practices, organizations demonstrate care, respect diverse beliefs and lifestyles, and create more inclusive, welcoming experiences for all.

¹[Rethinking Menu Options for Today's Attendees](#)

²[Is Your Event inclusive? Why Non-Alcoholic Drinks Matter](#)



Enhancing inclusivity for caregivers in corporate events

Caregiving responsibilities play a significant role in many employees' lives, with a large share balancing childcare, elder care, or disability care alongside work. When corporate travel, meetings, and events fail to account for these realities, caregivers may be excluded or forced to choose between participation and wellbeing. **Inclusive design means recognizing caregiving as a common, valid responsibility—and planning accordingly.**

Why it matters now

Supporting caregivers is both a people-first decision and a business imperative. Organizations that acknowledge and accommodate caregiving responsibilities see higher retention, reduced burnout, and stronger engagement, driving better performance and return on investment. Proactive support also helps reduce absenteeism, stress, and the long-term costs associated with employee disengagement.

Caregiving can shape how—and whether—people are able to participate in travel and events. Rigid schedules, limited on-site support, and inflexible participation models can create barriers that disproportionately affect working parents and caregivers. Addressing these challenges is essential to building inclusive programs that attract and retain diverse talent.

Organizations are responding with more thoughtful event design. Some partner with local providers to offer backup or on-site childcare. Others rethink schedules by avoiding sessions during peak caregiving hours, building in generous

breaks, or offering virtual and hybrid participation options. Practical amenities, such as private spaces for breastfeeding or caregiving-related needs, send a clear signal of respect, care, and belonging.

Flexible, supportive design makes events accessible for caregivers and working families. Design corporate events with caregiver needs in mind to create truly inclusive experiences.

Take action

Inclusive events normalize caregiving responsibilities and remove barriers to participation:

1. Include a caregiving accommodation section in planning checklists and registration forms.
2. Build schedules with adequate breaks and realistic pacing for caregiving duties.

By integrating these practices, organizations not only enhance inclusivity but also position themselves as leaders in promoting caregiver-friendly work environments.





Final Thoughts

Inclusion across travel, meetings, and events requires more than just good intentions—it demands purposeful action and a commitment to recognizing the diverse needs of all participants. While the process can appear complex, from addressing unconscious bias to supporting caregivers, these challenges are surmountable when organizations choose to prioritize respect, flexibility, and empathy. Ultimately, fostering inclusive environments is not only possible but essential. It is an ongoing choice that builds trust, enhances wellbeing, and strengthens organizational culture for everyone involved.

About BCD Travel and BCD M&E

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The insights shared in this report draw on both research and the lived experiences of council members involved in its development.



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