

# An unofficial community generated resource for planning an inclusive and equitable event experience

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This is an unofficial and informal guide. It is not intended to educate on ADA compliance and does not replace the primary guidance and services of existing MIT offices.

Disability and access services are managed through:

- [HR Disability Services & Leaves Offices \(DSMLO\)](#) (staff/faculty needs)
- [Division of Student Life Disability Access Services \(DAS\)](#) (student needs)

# Benefits of inclusive workplace

**Enhanced Creativity:** Research shows a strong relationship between diversity in culturally diverse teams and overall team creativity.

**More Effective Problem Solving:** A diverse team—especially one that is cognitively diverse—is better at solving problems than teams comprised of similar members.

**Higher Productivity:** Studies show that fostering diversity leads to higher productivity in the workplace.

**Improved Employee Retention:** Diverse workplaces have higher rates of attracting and retaining talented staff.

➤ Think **universal design** as you bring colleagues together!

Journal of Organizational Behavior, 2019 [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331401613\\_Team\\_CreativityInnovation\\_in\\_Culturally\\_Diverse\\_Teams\\_A\\_Meta-Analysis](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331401613_Team_CreativityInnovation_in_Culturally_Diverse_Teams_A_Meta-Analysis)  
Harvard Business Review, 2017 <https://hbr.org/2017/03/teams-solve-problems-faster-when-theyre-more-cognitively-diverse>  
Network for Business Sustainability, 2021 <https://nbs.net/how-diversity-increases-productivity/>  
University of North Carolina Kenan-Flagler Business School <https://imdiversity.com/diversity-news/inclusiveness-and-diversity-critical-to-attracting-and-retaining-top-talent/>



# Equitably accessible work environments benefit us *all*

- **The Curb-Cut Effect** is a concept coined by Angela Glover Blackwell and rooted in the development of ramps or “curb-cuts” that were built into sidewalks to provide wheelchair users access—but that also support easier mobility for parents with strollers, wheeling luggage, and more.
  - **Curb-cut thinking** creates equity and allows us to expand our understanding of how adjustments that support access for one person or group can improve the environment and experience for everyone.
- ***What are some examples of curb-cut thinking or the curb-cut effect that you can think of?***

Blackwell, A. G. (2016). The Curb-Cut Effect. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 15(1), 28–33. <https://doi.org/10.48558/YVMS-CC96>,

Collins, C. (2021, Fall). The Curb-Cut Effect and Championing Equity. *Learning for Justice*. <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/fall-2021/the-curbcut-effect-and-championing-equity>,

National Cancer Institute Division of Cancer Epidemiology & Genetics. (2021, Dec 15). *The Curb-Cut Effect*. <https://dceg.cancer.gov/about/diversity-inclusion/inclusivity-minute/2021/curb-cut-effect>



# Examples of curb-cut effect

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- **Agendas and materials provided in advance** are helpful to attendees who are blind or have low vision, are deaf or hard of hearing, are neurodivergent, for whom English is a second language, and for people who have obligations that keep them from attending the full event or need to plan lactation schedules, dependent care, prayer times, etc.
- **Virtual option for events** support people with a variety of neurodivergent needs, health conditions, parenting and other kinds of dependent care obligations, last-minute illness, etc.
- **Closed captioning** was created to provide deaf and hard of hearing people access to audio, but also helps people with disabilities that impact auditory processing or for whom English is a second language, and when screens are in use in loud environments or when audio needs to be muted, and more.
- **Curb-cuts** were created for wheelchair users but provide access for people with additional mobility assistive equipment, strollers, carts, wheeled luggage, running, walking, skateboarding, etc.
- **Seat belt** legislation for protecting children also saves adult lives... and now pets!
- **Bike lanes** were built to protect cyclists but have also reduced pedestrian injuries, reduced pollution, and improved public health.
- **Stating names** when greeting people establishes a norm that allows people who are blind, have low vision, or who have prosopagnosia (inability to recognize faces) to know who you are, helps people who have trouble remembering names, helps people pronounce your name.
- **Stating and providing pronouns** establishes a norm that allows people to share how they should be addressed and referred to. This can also be helpful when communicating internationally and when folks want to address people formally by using courtesy titles.
- **Hybrid and tele/remote work**
- **Text-to-speech and voice-to-text technology**

## When to think “inclusivity”

### PLANNING & LEADERSHIP

- Diverse organizing team, in perspectives and experiences
- Recruit speakers, moderators
- Identify sponsors, caterers
- Involve relevant affinity groups
- Budget, fees with sliding scale

### PROMOTION, REGISTRATION

- Language, fonts, visuals of ads
- Attire expectations
- Do not burden attendees with requesting accommodations

### DAY OF EVENT

- Rules of engagement / respect
- Maps, name tags, handouts
- Accurate ingredients lists, trays
- Hybrid coordination, interpreters
- Feedback survey and thanks

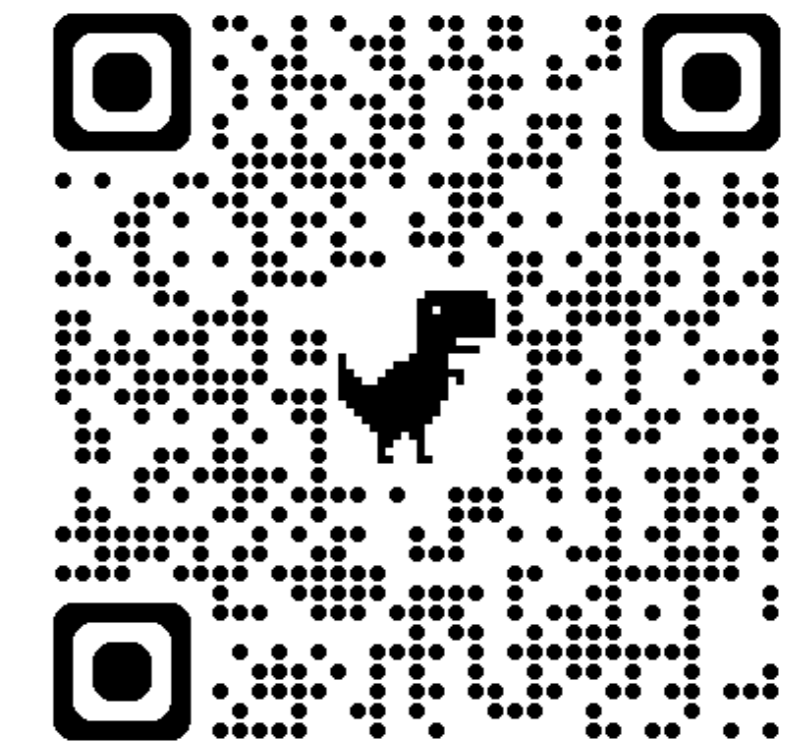
## Axes of “inclusivity” in our MIT SoE guide to inclusive & accessible activity planning

### living document

enriched by feedback from MIT community

### health status

masks provided, remote/hybrid offered



### religion

holidays, diet, prayer times,

### diet

allergies, restrictions, segregated options

### mobility

parking, elevators, restrooms, seating

### sensory

font size, colors, communication, captions, ASL, breaks

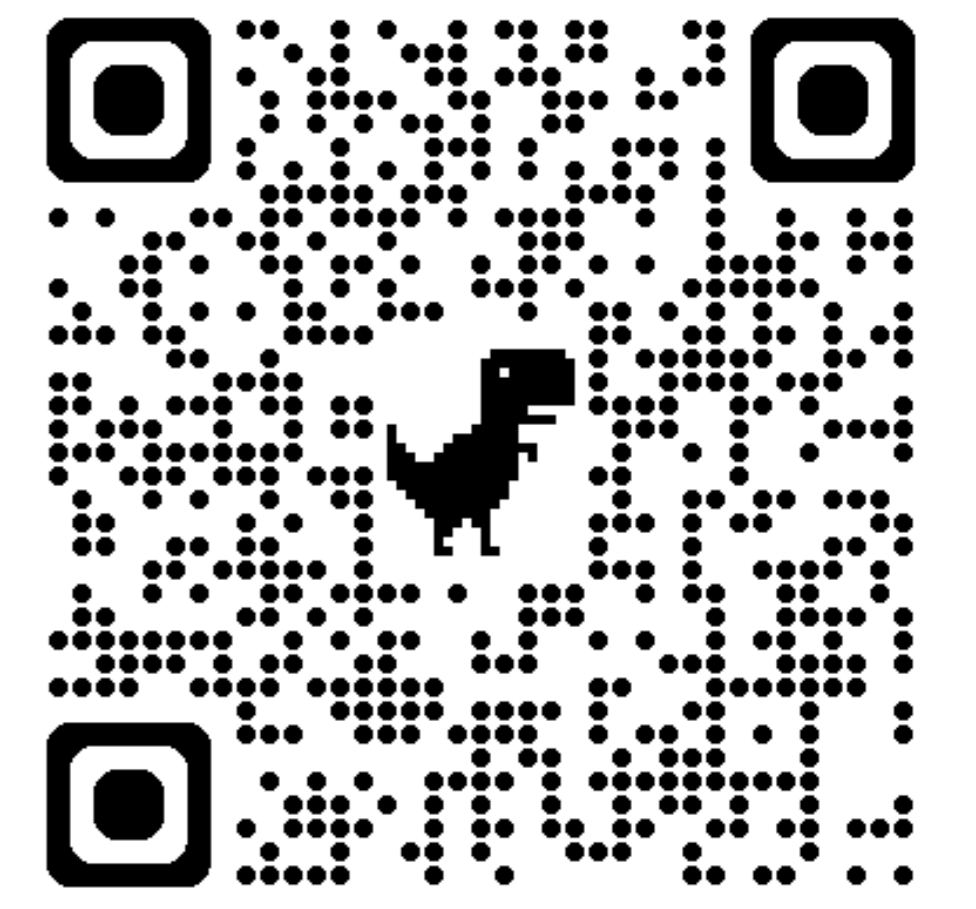
### privacy

gender-neutral bathrooms, lactation

### socio-economy

registration fees, parking, attire

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[Home](#) [How to use the guide](#) [Planning Guides](#) ▾ [Specific Access Needs](#) [Additional Information & Resources](#) ▾

## Access matters

Ensuring all community members can fully participate, optimally contribute, and experience genuine belonging at MIT provides the foundation for true social, professional, and academic excellence.

The following guide emerged from an informal community initiative led by [School of Engineering Staff Advice & Implementation Committee \(SAIC\)](#) members working closely with [MIT's Disabilities Employee Resource Group \(ERG\)](#). While disability access remains the primary focus, the guide incorporates broader elements of inclusion, recognizing that principles of equitable access benefit everyone.

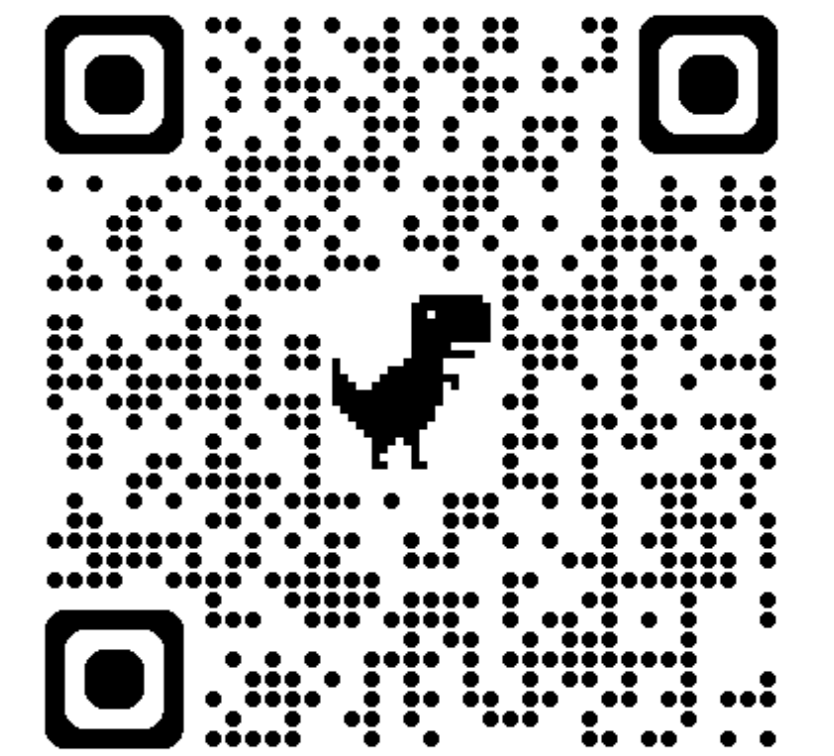
This informal, unofficial guide offers resources and recommendations to support the MIT community in creating equitable access and inclusive excellence when planning events and activities. These suggestions complement—but do not replace—resources provided by MIT offices that formally serve our community regarding inclusion, access, and accommodation. This guide is not intended to address ADA compliance.

For official MIT guidance and accommodation requests, please contact:

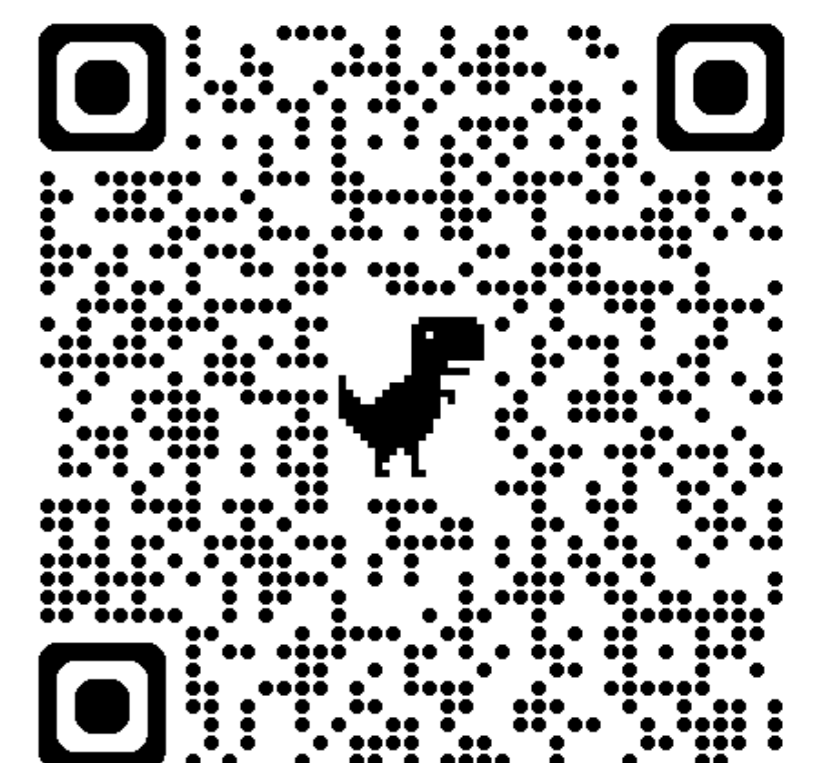
- [MIT Human Resources Disability Services & Leaves](#) (staff/faculty needs)
- [MIT Division of Student Life Disability and Access Services](#) (student needs).

# How this guide came to be

- Lived experience at MIT and unmet need to support event planners
  - Sloan Student Life Office student leaders DEI Event Planning Checklist
  - SoE DEI working group wanted a project with a tangible deliverable
  - Co-leadership of ERG allowed for easy collaboration and there were massive contributions from the Disabilities ERG
  - Grassroots efforts have content that reflects community needs and can be easier/faster to create
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- Digital accessibility reviewed by MIT [Disability & Access Services](#) (DAS)
  - Reviewed by MIT Office of General Counsel (OGC)
  - Recommendations incorporated into [MIT Institute Events planning website](#)



GUIDE



FEEDBACK

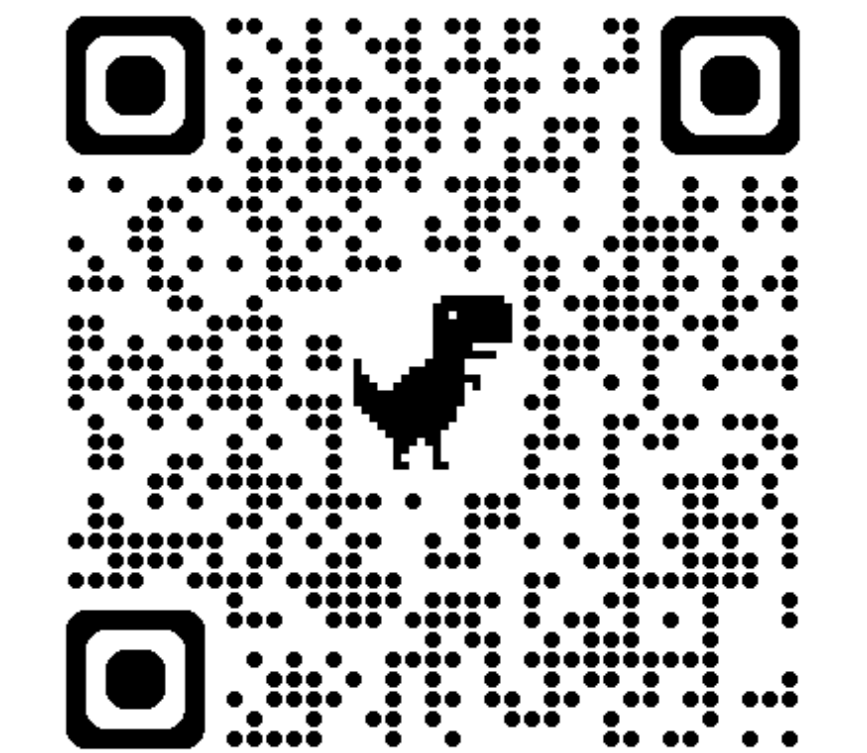


# The future of the “Accessible MIT” guide

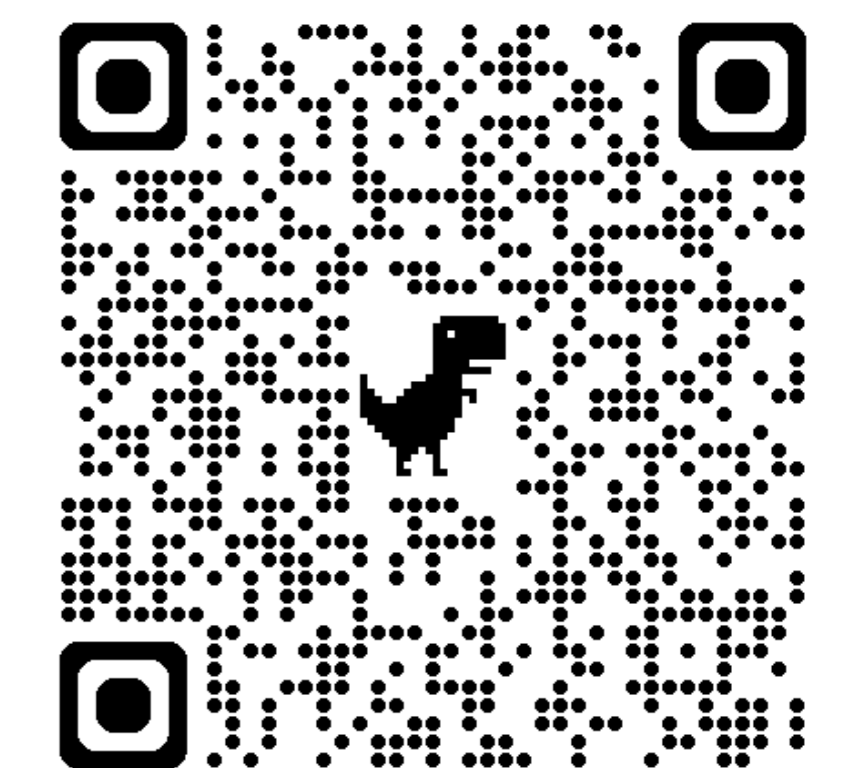
This guide is a living document that will get enriched by the MIT community

- Presentation to Open Learning in May 2024
  - Presentation to the full MIT community coming soon, sponsored by SHASS
  - Data collection will drive and quantify
    - what can be added to guide
    - how guide is used and what its users’ experiences are
    - what impact the guide has on the MIT community
    - what infrastructures can be created at MIT to increase access
- Give us your feedback!
- Volunteer to test-run the guide when you organize your next event
- We’re happy to come speak to your group!

[amyelev@mit.edu](mailto:amyelev@mit.edu)



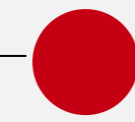
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FEEDBACK

# Acknowledgments

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There are many individuals to thank for this community effort:

- [MIT Sloan Student Life Office](#)
- [MIT Sloan Office of Diversity Equity Inclusion](#)
- [MIT School of Engineering Staff Advice and Implementation Committee – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Social Events and Wellness](#)
- [MIT Disability Employee Resource Group](#)
- ... and [individual contributors](#) !