

The Neu Project

Neuroinclusive Planning Checklist

“Inclusion is a journey and this is a brave space.”

- The Neu Project

Dear Event Professional,

Thank you for being open to learning more about how to create neuroinclusive events. We are excited and grateful that you're here! This checklist is an easy-to-use extension of the practical strategies featured in *An Event Professional's Guide to Neuroinclusion*. Neurodivergent communities have used some of these methods to self-serve for many years. Others are new suggestions intended to connect the expertise of event and hospitality professionals and the needs of various neurotypes.

We have structured the checklist to align with the phases of an event lifecycle: pre, during, and post. In each, you will see practical ways to be more neuroinclusive in your event design and execution. All recommendations are weighted according to impact to help with prioritization — the higher point allocation, the more critical the action is to prioritize. **The ultimate goal is to get as many inclusion points as possible in each phase of an event lifecycle, totaling 100 points.** However, we recommend beginning by reading the guide to help you make the most sense of the information contained here.

While neurodivergent voices take center stage in everything we do, The Neu project is also a safe space for neurotypical people to learn, ask questions, and try without fear of getting it wrong. We also acknowledge that event professionals like yourself will always work with and against different circumstances and barriers; not every situation lends itself to all recommendations. While we encourage you to implement as many practical strategies from the checklist as possible, creating neuroinclusive events is a journey. Applying a few suggestions, to begin with, can still make a difference.

Love,

The Neu Project team

Domains are from The Neu Project: A-Z of Neuroinclusive Events.

PRE-EVENT (100 possible points)

When choosing a digital/virtual venue, look for the following:

- Accessibility features: captioning, translation, etc. (captioning is a non-negotiable) — 2 points
- Integrated chat and feedback functionality — 2 points
- Hand-raise function or the ability to queue questions and comments — 1 point
- An option for anonymous questions and contributions to conversation — 1 point
- Transcription — 2 points
- Multiple recording capabilities: audio only, audio & video — 1 point
- Person to live-assist with tech troubleshooting, answer questions, etc. We call this a digital concierge :) - 1 point

When choosing a physical venue, look for the following:

- Hybrid event capabilities: recording, broadcast, captioning, etc. — 2 points
- Access to outdoors — 1 points
- Inclusive Color Palettes: choose less stimulating options and avoid large swaths of very bright colors (neons, bright red) — 1 point
- Thoughtful Acoustics: large reverberant open spaces can easily create a cacophony which could lead to sensory overwhelm — 2 point
- Ease of navigation and clear signage: It can be very challenging if an event venue is a labyrinth or event spaces are distributed over a large footprint, multiple floors, etc. 2 points
- Examine how smells travel through the venue and, if possible, prepare food in separate areas. Even pleasant smells can be distracting — 1 point
- Single-person and gender neutral bathrooms — 1 point

Domain: *Spaces*

Weight: 10 total points

In registration communications and intake:

- Communicate that the event is committed to embracing as many neuro types as possible — 2 points
- Present a warm and open call for neurodivergent accommodation requests and sensory needs. Always reply to these requests, even when you can't accommodate. When requests aren't possible, offer a reasonable alternative. — 3 points

- Outline cancellation policies, any flexibility or exceptions, cut-off dates, etc. Factor in reminders for times/dates. In each of the reminders add a link to the above policies.—
2 points
- Consider the cognitive overhead requirements for invitees to fill out an RSVP form and offer supported alternatives where possible (office hours, phone calls, etc.) — 3 points

Do NOT require self-identification (diagnosis or disability) to request accommodations or support.

Domain: *Communications, Representation, Preparation, Predictability*

Weight: 10 total points

Make pre-event attendee communications (post-registration) inclusive, clear, and comprehensive.

- Communicate that taking breaks and stepping away as needed is encouraged and respected — 1 points
- Include a detailed agenda with all locations and room capacities — 2 points
- Identify moments of loud music, strobe light, high traffic, dense crowds, strong scents, or surprise moments. Sound effects and even unintended high frequencies can set off Tourette's Syndrome tics, for example, feedback from a mic crossing a speaker. — 2 points
- Outline the dress code, if any, with clear examples — 1 point
- Include Menus (outline sensory meals, if requested) and messaging around the availability to bring or arrange personal meals. Offer storage for own meals where possible. — 2 points
- Include venue maps (preferably denoting wayfinding and exits). If video tours are available, include links — 2 points
- Indicate locations of quiet spaces, help, and information desks — 2 points
- Share event branding, signage, visual shortcuts, etc. — 1 point
- Share name and contact information for any pre-event questions or concerns. Reassure attendees that staff have been briefed on the additional needs of attendees. — 2 points

Do NOT require self-identification (diagnosis or disability) to request accommodations or support.

Domains: *Representation, Communication, Preparation, Predictability*

Weight: 15 total points

- Talk to and train event staff around neuroinclusive language, cultural sensitivity, and support available at your event.**

Use The Neu Project Guide as a starting point. When available, hire neurodiverse staff, speakers, and facilitators!

Domains: *Language, Representation, Making Space*

Weight: 12 total points

- Set aside adjunct space for dedicated quiet/resilience rooms (more than one, if possible)**
 - Access/Option to view event content (broadcast or stream) with captioning. The ability to mobile stream from personal devices is recommended — 3 points
 - A low-traffic area away from noise and crowds — 2 points
 - Comfortable — 2 points
 - Muted colors — 2 points
 - Soft lighting — 2 points
 - Calming tools available: fidget toys, weighted blankets, etc. — 1 point

Domains: *Spaces & Sensory Spaces*

Weight: 12 total points

NOTE:

If dedicated/private spaces aren't an option, consider setting aside a liminal space or lounge that invites people to take a break/disengage from the event and other attendees. (no music, natural light, comfortable seating, no social expectations, charging stations with headphones). Have noise canceling headphones or earplugs/defenders and stim toys available. — 8 points

Plan for inclusive menus and F&B offerings:

- Offer sensory meals or safe/same foods in menu design. Have safe/same foods (snacks, drinks) available during break and delivered to sleeping rooms (if applicable) — 4 points
- If personalized meals aren't possible, simple foods and/or meals that can be put together to individual liking (like a taco bar) with separately packed ingredients are good alternatives — 2 points
- Offer choices of utensils of various types and heaviness if possible, as it may be easier for some attendees to use the utensil they're most familiar with. Always have a few sets of disposables (super light and blunt) as an option. — 1 point
- Offer limited numbers of general grab-and-go options to allow attendees to avoid long lines if they need a break from crowds, etc. — 2 points

Domains: *Food, Sensory, Predictability*

Weight: 9 total points

- Contract and onboard people when using an external organization to provide professionally trained support or wellbeing staff. Make these people easily identifiable to attendees, with visual shortcuts.**

Domain: *Teams, Training*

Weight: 5 total points

- Plan for extra peripheral space during social and networking events:**
 - Dedicated areas for quieter/more intimate conversations — **3 points**
 - Design opportunities for topic-based conversations or use conversation cards — **3 points**

Domains: *Social Interaction*

Weight: 6 total points

- Plan for helpful iconography and visual shortcuts to help attendees quickly identify resources, safe people, and ‘buddies’ during an event.** You can find The Neu Project badge system [here](#).

Domains: *Preparation, Social Interaction, Preparation, Predictability*

Weight: 6 total points

- Order neuroinclusive materials:**
 - Fidget toys — **1 point**
 - Weighted blankets (stuffed animals or cushions are also mobile options) — **1 point**
 - Sunglasses — **1 point**
 - Noise filtering headphones — **1 point**
 - Conversation/topic cards — **1 point**
 - Visual identifiers for support staff (badges, shirts, etc.) — **1 point**

Domains: *Sensory, Making Space, Representation*

Weight: 6 total points

When planning content, consider the following:

- Providing on-demand content (pre, during, and post-event) — **1 point**
- Having transcripts and simple recordings of all sessions — **1 point**
- Offering/presenting in-depth content in multiple ways using diagrams, infographics, and images — **2 points**
- Keeping text-based content short and legible — **1 point**

- Asking speakers and facilitators to use direct, clear, and concise language — minimize ‘flowery’ language, subtlety, implicit themes, or complex metaphors — 1 point
- Encourage speakers and facilitators to use visual prompts/presentations as it makes the content more accessible for all. Brief speakers if someone with Tourettes is in the audience. — 1 point
- Minimizing motion graphics and keeping visuals clean where possible — 1 point
- Use dyslexia-friendly text — 2 points
 - 1.5 is recommended line spacing
 - Examples of fonts include Lexend (this one) and sans serif fonts such as Arial and Comic Sans, as letters can appear less crowded. Alternatives include Verdana, Tahoma, Century Gothic, Trebuchet, Calibri, and Open Sans.
 - Font size should be a 12-14 point or equivalent

Domains: *Content, Language*

Weight: 10 total points

PRE-EVENT NEUROINCLUSION SCORE:

DURING EVENT (100 possible points)

Upon arrival, help neurodivergent attendees orient to the space and understand their options:

- Offer and provide a personal venue tour upon arrival to the event to help attendees orient and feel comfortable getting from place to place — 5 points
- Introduce support staff, share contact information, and indicate where they will be located throughout the event — 5 points
- Ask for the best/preferred contact information so that you can reach attendees if there are changes, things to make them aware of, etc. If you’re using an event app that allows for private messaging, confirm it is the preferred method — 5 points
- Inform them about iconography and visual systems in place to help them communicate their needs or identify support — 3 points
- Let attendees know they’re free to be themselves, no judgment etc. This goes a long way! — 5 points

Domains: *Communication, Content, Preparation, Predictability, Teams*

Weight: 23 total points

At welcome/check-in, reiterate accommodations and support available throughout the event:

- Fidgets
- Weighted blankets
- Earplugs
- Quiet rooms
- Trained support staff

Domains: *Communication, Content, Preparation, Predictability*

Weight: 15 total points

Include a printed venue map with clearly-marked locations, an event agenda, and instructions about where to go with questions or support information in event materials.

Domains: *Communication, Content, Preparation, Predictability*

Weight: 15 total points

Display neuroinclusive signage and stage other materials:

- Identify quiet/resilience/'unplug' lounge spaces with appropriate signage
- Stage conversation cards or assigned table topics in social/networking peripheral spaces
- Distribute badges, or lanyards to trained/support staff

Domains: *Social Interaction, Spaces, Preparation & Predictability*

Weight: 10 total points

In session rooms, consider offering the following:

- Sound filtering headphones, sunglasses, and fidgets — 4 points
- The ability to submit questions both in-person or via an event app, chat function, and/or post-event forum — 4 points
- Enable options that allow for anonymous participation/interaction — 2 points

Domains: *Content, Sensory, Communication*

Weight: 10 total points

For meals:

- Set out sensory meals and same/safe foods, as requested. Have these available at all meals and breaks, ready to grab and move away from crowded lines or buffets — 4 points
- Have offerings and labels at the entrance of the food lines. Being pressed to make hurried, snap decisions can create significant overwhelm — 4 points

- Offer multiple lines and locations for food service to spread out large crowds and create a calmer experience — 4 points

Domains: *Diet, Sensory, Predictability*

Weight: 12 total points

- Have safe ways to provide real-time feedback and make requests. You can accomplish this through help desks, chat features or an event app.**

Domains: *Feedback, Communication, Representation*

Weight: 15 total points

DURING EVENT NEUROINCLUSION SCORE:

POST-EVENT (100 possible points)

- Ask neurodivergent attendees for inclusion-specific feedback, and invite suggestions and ideas for improvement**
 - Give the option for feedback to be submitted anonymously
 - Give the option to leave contact information for further communication, if needed
 - Provide an escalation path for alternatives methods of providing feedback, as needed

Domains: *Content, Feedback, Communication*

Weight: 40 total points

- Share event information afterward to let people review it further**
 - Session recordings and transcripts — 12 points
 - Any presentations, slide decks, or meeting notes — 12 points
 - References or resources mentioned by the speaker, if possible — 4 points
 - List of speakers — 5 points

Domains: *Content, Communication*

Weight: 35 total points

- Have an inclusion-specific debrief session**
 - With your team to access what worked and didn't
 - Include attendees or team members from the neurodivergent community in some of those conversations

- Ask if they noticed anything others didn't or if any guests complained to them about feeling uncomfortable. I've complained in person at an event before but I didn't submit a feedback form

Domains: *Content, Representation, Feedback, Communication*

Weight: 25 total points

POST-EVENT NEUROINCLUSION SCORE:

Product & Material Links:

Sensory Kit & Fidget Toys

- [The Neu Project Sensory Kit](#)
- [The 9 Best Fidget Toys for Anxiety and Focus](#)
- [The Best Fidget Toys for All Ages](#)
- [Are There Any Nice-Looking \(and Satisfying\) Fidget Toys for Adults?](#)
- [EventWell Sensory Kits](#)

Sensory Spaces/Quiet Rooms:

- [Neu Project Resilience Room \(DIY\)](#)
- [EventWell](#) (turnkey and staffed)
- [Neurodiversity Placemaking, DIY Sensory Room](#)
- [The Right Calming Sensory Lights for Your Sensory Room](#)
- [Nook Pod](#)

Iconography and Visual Identifiers

- [The Neu Project Badge System](#)
- [Hidden Disabilities Store](#)

Communications and Representation

- [Pre-event brief template](#)
- [Getty Images, Mindshare, Hiki, and Upstash media campaign - #AutisticOutLoud](#)

Training

In 2024, The Neu Project will extend our Google operational training to the broader industry in partnership with MPI and EventWell. Stay Tuned!

While we can't verify or fully endorse their methodologies, there are other established organizations, like [Kulture City](#), and [Take This](#), offering well-received plug-and-play operating models and customized training for teams and staffing services for event days.