



INCLUSION GUIDE FOR COMPETITION ORGANIZERS

*A guide to help make your
competition a success*



LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Competition Organizers: ,

At USEF, our goal is straightforward: To bring the joy of horse sports to as many people as possible.

To help achieve this goal, the US Equestrian Board of Directors supports advancing diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) initiatives throughout all horse sport. US Equestrian is committed to providing access and opportunity for people of color, the LGBTQ+ community, veterans and active military personnel, people with disabilities, and those of all ages, religions, ancestries, genders, and economic statuses to harness the synergy of diverse talents.

Our world is everchanging, and standards and guidelines are constantly evolving. We hope this serves as a helpful go-to document to ensure that all members of our equestrian family feel welcomed in our world.

Many of you are already following recommendations found throughout this guide and you may also see places to improve and grow. Inclusivity is a constant and consistently growing process; one that is vital for us to grow our sport. Help us continue to bring the joy of horses to all.

We look forward to continuing to work with each of you to keep advancing the sport we love so that it is around for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Bill Moroney
US Equestrian CEO





PHOTOS: JUS EQUESTRIAN, DANIEL KAISER

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

USEF hopes that every competition is successful and sustainable for all stakeholders. This resource provides practical tips to help you plan an accessible and inclusive competition. For example, ensuring that people who have food allergies or religious requirements will find things they can eat, that signage will be widely understandable, or that there is accessible parking and restrooms available.

Examples include:

- Ensuring that people who have food allergies or religious requirements will find things they can eat
- Signage will be widely understandable
- There is accessible parking and restrooms available

In addition to the information in this guide, please consider reviewing [USEF Bylaws](#) and the [Non-Discrimination Policy](#) with your competition volunteers and staff.

This guide is not intended to supersede local, state, or federal regulations.

If you have questions or suggestions, email DEIFeedback@USEF.org

PREPARING FOR THE COMPETITION

This section will provide you with some ideas on how you can build accessible and inclusive practices into your planning process.

ENTRY FORMS, PRIZE LISTS, AND ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS

Entry forms are a great way to gather information about the competitors participating in the competition. The Prize List should include information and resources to provide an inclusive and accessible experience.

After review of local, state, and federal regulations, here are a few points to consider before creating your prize list and entry forms:

- Provide multiple ways for competitors or attendees to communicate with us (e.g., phone, email, social media, text).
- Provide clear directions with the address, information about public transportation (if appropriate), location of accessible parking and paths of travel.
- Consider how we can ensure the event is inclusive for non-English speakers (i.e. Spanish).
- Review accessibility of your website. ([WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool](#))
- Include language about competitors' pronouns on the forms.
- Include information about dietary vendors (e.g., gluten free/vegetarian/dairy/nut allergies).
- Include language about **how** and **when** to request accommodations (e.g., wheelchair accessible parking, seating or restrooms, ASL translator, communication requirements).
 - » Consider providing sign language services, if applicable.
 - » If you are using digital screens, you confirm closed captioning will be incorporated into the competition.
- Designate a contact person to support accommodation requests.
- Follow up with those who requested accommodations.

SAMPLE ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATION STATEMENT

"We are committed to providing equal access to this event for all participants and attendees. If you require accommodations, alternative formats, dietary considerations or other specific needs, please contact (name of person) at (number) or via email (email address) with your request by (deadline)."

PREPARING FOR THE COMPETITION

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Leveraging community partnerships is a great way to promote and introduce horse sports to diverse populations. If you're looking to attract more interest for your local club, competition, or other events, consider forming partnerships with community groups or organizations. Here are a few questions to help you think about how to engage with community partners:

- Are there local youth organizations you partner with?
- Could you offer discounted ticket pricing to members of community partner organizations?
- Could you feature the community organizations in competition flyers or cross promote on social media channels?
- After the competition, how can you continue to engage and partner with this organizations?

VENDORS

Partnering with vendors from diverse populations is another way to promote inclusion at competitions. Most state or local chambers of commerce provide information on the veteran, women, LGBTQ+ and minority-owned businesses in their areas.

For more information about the diverse vendors in your area, please contact:

- [US Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [National Veterans Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [National LGBT Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [National Black Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce](#)

REMINDER

Vendors and Volunteers must receive a direct written communication about the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies ("MAAPP") and how to report violations of the MAAPP as well as abuse

PROMOTING YOUR COMPETITION

In addition to providing information about your competition, flyers and promotional materials are also a great way to provide information to competitors and attendees about accommodations, community partnerships, or diverse vendors.

As you plan to promote your competition consider these questions to include on your promotional materials:

- Include information about all accommodations: accessible entrances or parking, dietary options, etc. on promotional materials
- Check that your social media posts are [accessible](#). i.e. Include descriptions or alternative text on any images or photos, add captions to video clips, etc.

PREPARING FOR THE COMPETITION

- Promote your competition to the diverse audiences you hope to attract: i.e. youth organizations, community partners
- Give ample notice for the upcoming competition to ensure competitors or attendees can make appropriate transportation arrangements (i.e. ensure assistants or other support they may require).
- Include a diversity statement on promotional material.

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EDUCATING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

One of the best ways to ensure that accessibility and inclusivity are being considered throughout your competition is to designate this responsibility to some of your staff or volunteers.

Here are a few ways to provide educational resources to your staff or volunteers to ensure that all competitors and attendees can participate in your competition fully:

- How to communicate with people with different types of disabilities
- How to use identity-first language
- The accessibility features and accommodations provided at the competition
- The evacuation procedures for people with disabilities

COSTUMING

Costumes for horses and their humans can be fun, cute, or clever. The creativity, enthusiasm, and sometimes downright brilliant horsemanship that equestrians put into creating their costumes is a joy to see every year. However, there are times that costume decisions can become harmful or offensive to others if they appropriate or mock a culture or faith, promote a stereotype or are racist.

To ensure USEF-licensed competitions are welcoming and inclusive spaces for everyone, organizers should take the following steps:

- If you are hosting costume classes at your competition, include the USEF Costuming Guide link in your prize list, on your website, and in the show office to create awareness and educate participants on appropriate costuming.
- If a participant is wearing a costume that is inappropriate or offensive based on the Guidelines, take the following steps:
 - » Make the individual aware of the USEF Costuming Guide and sensitivities.
 - » If the participant has darkened or painted their face to portray an ethnicity that is not their own, require that they remove the face paint prior to competing.

PREPARING FOR THE COMPETITION

- If a participant is wearing a costume that is not aligned with the USEF Costuming Guide, urge them to change their costume before they compete. Competition management and USEF officials should use their best judgment in these situations. If class requires a certain type of costume/attire, then participants are expected to follow the applicable USEF rules for the relevant class.
- Do not post, share, or promote images of participants dressed in inappropriate or offensive costuming.
- Educate officials to report to competition management and USEF any instances of inappropriate costuming.

RESCOURCES

USEF has also created a resource with additional tips on how to ensure that everyone feels welcome and included at your competition.

[Costume or Cultural Appropriation? A Costuming Guide to Create Joy](#)



DURING THE COMPETITION

During your competition there are a number of ways you can ensure accessibility and inclusivity are embedded into the experience for competitors and attendees alike. This section provides ideas on accessible and inclusive practices you can incorporate during the competition.

SHOW OFFICE

Ensuring that information about accommodations is provided at the time of registration will ensure that all competitors and attendees can participate fully in the competition.

As you consider organizing your registration table(s) here are some ideas of information to provide competitors and attendees as they arrive:

- Include a map of the competition grounds and clearly marked the following:
 - » Accessible paths
 - » Accessible washrooms (i.e. wheelchair accessible, gender neutral or single use bathrooms)
 - » Accessible seating areas
 - » Special food options (gluten free, nut free, etc.)
- Provide pronoun stickers or badges for name tags.
- Include information or clearly identified competition organizers or volunteers who can assist with questions about accommodation.
- Include a diversity statement that is clearly visible to competitors and attendees.
- Provide competitors and attendees with copies (electronic or hard copies) of the competition events with times and locations of all competitions.
- Provide competition information in alternative languages if requested (i.e. Spanish).

COMPETITION GROUNDS

- Have you reserved enough accessible parking places?
 - » Do you have clear directional signage for parking that can be read in all light conditions?
- Have you reserved accessible seating areas?
- Are the accessible seating areas clearly marked off and accessible for those using wheelchairs or other mobility devices?
- Ensure that uneven ground or potential trip hazards have been clearly marked either through signage or temporary outdoor flooring.
- Ensure there are paths for those using wheelchairs or other mobility devices to access the stalls, seating areas, food, and washrooms.
- Ensure that electrical wires are out of paths of travel and if not, use cable protectors that are wheelchair accessible or are in bright/contrasting colors to alert people with low vision.
- Provide a covered rest area or shelter for attendees.
- Designate an accessibility information area or booth.
- Designate areas available for service animal.

DURING THE COMPETITION

SIGNAGE

Clear signage will help all attendees and competitors easily navigate the competition. Here are a few considerations when creating and posting signs at your competition:

- Clearly identify accessible parking spaces.
- Consider creating signs in English and Spanish to accommodate Spanish-speaking participants.
- Have clear signage along the path of travel for people who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices.
- Clearly mark where competitors and attendees can find the restrooms, seating or rest areas, and concessions are located.
- Clearly identify accessible seating areas.

TIP

USEF has created Generic Signage for Competitions - English/Spanish Signage with English and Spanish translations for competitions in any breed or discipline. Common phrases, instructions, and locations can be found in these easy to print and post signs. Check out the [USEF DEI Resources](#) page for the downloadable resource.

RESTROOMS

Whether there are restrooms already onsite or you are bringing in portable toilets, there are several things you can do to promote inclusion and accessibility.

- Are there onsite accessible restrooms, if not, have you brought in an accessible portable toilet (s)?
- Clearly mark gender neutral restrooms if available.
- Designate a family restroom.

FOOD, DRINK AND EATING AREAS

Offering a variety of food and drink options are a great way to make your competition more accessible and inclusive for all competitors and attendees.

Here are a few ideas to consider:

- Ask vendors to clearly label their menu and indicate allergens
- Ask vendors to provide an ingredient list for their menu items
- Offer seating in the food areas to accommodate people who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices.

AFTER THE COMPETITION

Whether you're an experienced competition organizer or new to the process, the goal is to always provide an exceptional experience for competitors and attendees alike. To find out how successful your accessibility and inclusion features were, ask for feedback.

GETTING FEEDBACK

Surveying competitors and attendees is a great way to know whether you were successful in creating an inclusive and accessible competition.

Here are some ideas to consider when collecting feedback:

- Offer multiple ways to collect feedback (i.e. paper survey, electronic survey).
- Be clear about why you are collecting this information and what you plan to do with the feedback you receive.

SURVEYING PARTICIPANTS AFTER THE COMPETITION

Microsoft forms or Google forms are great tools for soliciting feedback. These pre-designed tools have many built-in accessibility features that make it easy to collect anonymous feedback on the accessibility and inclusion of your competition.

Tip: to ensure greater participation, enable anonymous responses and be clear about how you will use this information to improve future events.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO US EQUESTRIAN'S VISION:

To bring the joy of horse sports to as many people as possible.

We recognize the need to achieve increased diversity and that our growth and success depends on the inclusion of all people.

We are committed to providing access and opportunity for people of color, the LGBTQ+ community, veterans and active military personnel, people with disabilities, and those of all ages, religions, ancestries, genders and gender identities, and economic status to harness the synergy of diverse talents.

For questions relating directly to diversity, equity, and inclusion, please contact DEIFeedback@usef.org. Please note that any feedback that warrants attention by the USEF regulatory department will be forwarded accordingly for appropriate follow-up.

DEI STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES FOR EQUESTRIAN

The majority of the Internal and External Thought Leaders believed that equestrian as a sport lacked diversity, especially racial diversity and economic diversity. They also believed that the equestrian space was not particularly inclusive for racial minorities or differently-abled bodies.

STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES

Internal and External Thought Leaders believed that US Equestrian had several strengths they could and should leverage in diversity and inclusion efforts, including:

- Access to economic resources
- Broad network of affiliates and sponsors
- Passionate and motivated staff
- Social momentum to address disparities in diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Cost-friendly options for participation through education partner organizations

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

Internal and External Thought Leaders also identified several challenges that US Equestrian will likely face when working to create more equitable, diverse, and inclusive spaces in equestrian, including:

- Systemic economic disparities outside of US Equestrian's control
- The high cost of participating in equestrian sport
- A general lack of knowledge of equestrian in the U.S., especially in underserved communities
- Stakeholders who might be resistant to change, especially DEI efforts