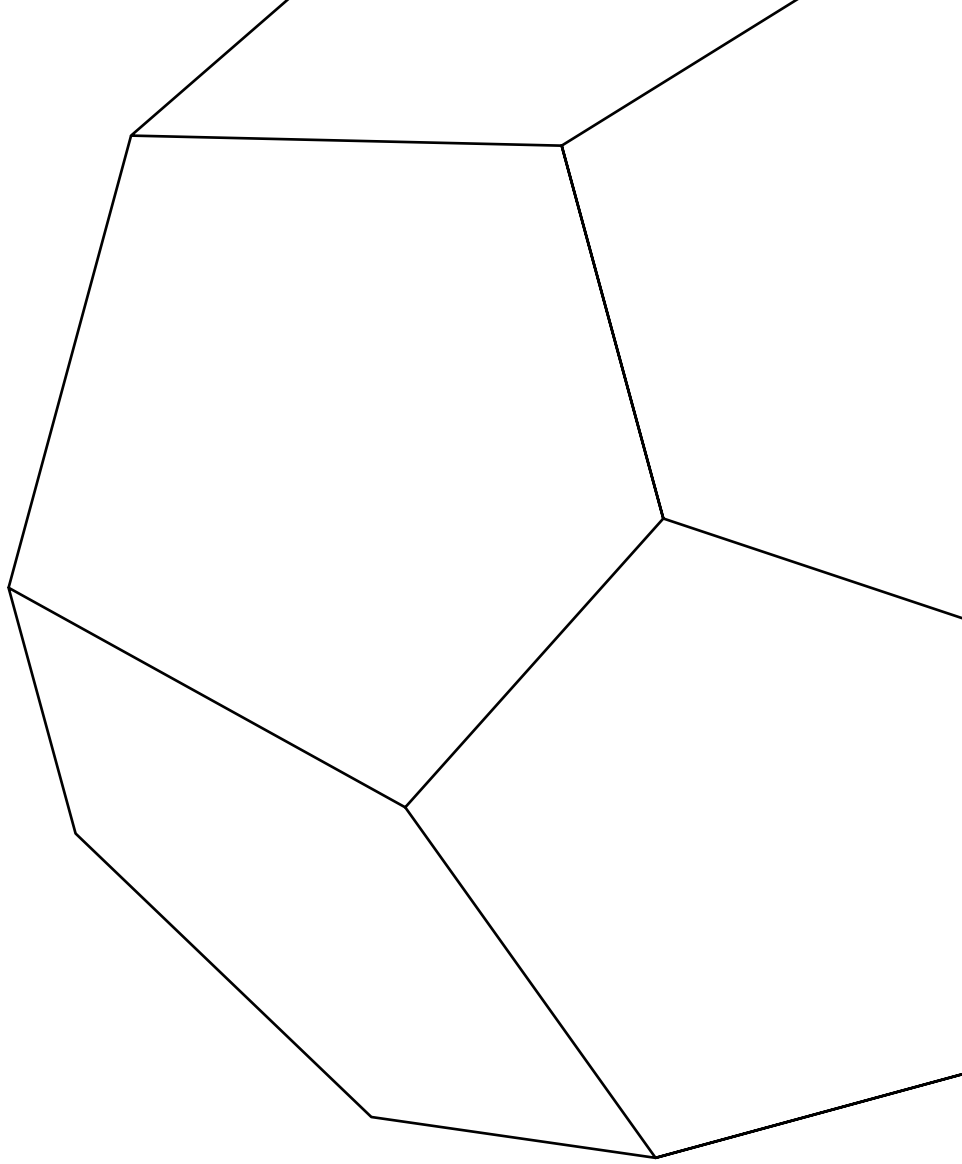




2026

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Progress Report

Introduction

As Gen Con approaches its 60th anniversary in 2027, we are reflecting on our standing as a cornerstone of the tabletop gaming community and industry. We are dedicated to creating convention experiences that embody our core values of creativity, inclusivity, and growth. Our commitment to providing a best-in-class convention goes hand in hand with our goal of driving positive change within the community.

The global socioeconomic events of 2020 exposed gaps in our efforts to build an inclusive community at Gen Con. In response, we committed to serving as agents of change with greater intention and accountability.

Since 2020, we have actively invested significant time and resources to transform Gen Con into a more diverse and inclusive space for all gamers, particularly those from underrepresented groups. We believe that these ongoing efforts enhance the vibrancy, sustainability, and enjoyment of Gen Con for everyone.

We will hold ourselves accountable to our attendees, event organizers, exhibitors, and partners who shape our community in 2026, and our work remains unfinished. For the past six years, we have used each convention as an opportunity to reflect on our achievements, update our community on our progress, recognize ongoing challenges, and outline a path forward.

This report reflects on our achievements and summarizes our ongoing efforts to drive change. At an institution like Gen Con, we invest numerous hours, days, and years to create meaningful transformation. We recognize that this journey will never reach a full conclusion. We invite you to join us on our adventure as we actively move forward!

History of Work: 2020—2026

In 2020, we began taking a thorough examination of our organization, evaluating processes, policies, and components of the Gen Con experience that create barriers to inclusion. This initiative allowed us to reflect on our practices, improve conversations with advisors and community members, and establish a framework for future actions and priority-setting.

We recognized early on that while some elements of the convention remain beyond our direct control, there are many significant areas where Gen Con can and must act.

Most importantly, we identified that, in addition to making basic attendee-facing marketing, outreach, software, and communication practices, we also needed to focus on how the partner experience—both online and on site—creates or reinforces existing barriers for potential BIPOC partners (attendees, exhibitors, staff, and EO/GMs) as well as those from other marginalized groups.

We categorized these findings into several areas that require immediate action and attention, as detailed below.

Onboarding and New Attendee Experience

To improve accessibility and relevance for new audiences, we must significantly invest in our onboarding and new attendee experiences.

Historically, Gen Con has operated as a show where your experience hinges on your connections, their knowledge, and their willingness to assist you. Having a friend who frequently attends Gen Con often serves as an introduction to the show and a vital resource for navigating the convention.

Session Zero

To reduce these barriers, we created Session Zero—a series of daily, free introductory seminars that welcome new attendees and familiarize them with a full range of popular Gen Con experiences. These sessions provide valuable tips, tricks, and answers to common questions.

In 2024, we also launched the Gen Con Passport, which offers attendees a fun, interactive, and engaging introductory journey through the convention while highlighting key locations at the show.

Participation Grants

To help reduce financial barriers to attending, Gen Con launched the Participation Grants program in 2022. This program empowers tabletop gaming enthusiasts from historically underrepresented communities to participate in the convention.

Grant recipients receive a complimentary 4-Day badge, cash stipend, introductions to other grantees and staff, and access to resources that enhance their experience throughout the week.

Website Improvements

We have made significant improvements to our website, including clearer navigation for key website actions, such as badge and event registration, updated how-to videos, and more easily accessible information.

Relevant Programming and Events

We focused on developing new, relevant programming and events based on our assessment, which revealed two key areas of need:

1. Empowering event organizers (EOs/GMs) to design programming that meaningfully engages the underrepresented audiences they aim to support.
2. Acknowledging our responsibility to create and facilitate experiences and spaces that are crafted by and for diverse communities.

BIPOC Centered Programming

In 2021, Gen Con launched the inaugural BIPOC Social Mixer, successfully bringing together BIPOC attendees and partners. The positive community response led to the expansion into the BIPOC Lounge, created in partnership with Rose Gauntlet.

This dedicated space fosters networking, community gatherings, resource sharing, and various programs, including the BIPOC Industry Networking Event.

Women Centered Programming

We have made additional efforts to enhance programming through the Gen Con Womens Gaming Network events, in partnership with Women in Toys, Licensing, and Entertainment, which actively connect professional women in our communities with valuable opportunities for mentorship, networking, and community support.

Latine and LGBTQIA+ Programming

We actively expanded our support for existing community groups to create additional affinity spaces at the show, such as the Latine Lounge and the Tabletop Gaymers Room. These spaces continue to thrive today. Although the Latine Lounge is not participating in Gen Con 2026, it remains a vital component of our broader community partnerships.

Unlocking the Exhibit Hall

In the Exhibit Hall, our assessment revealed that longstanding policies and historical practices have created self-reinforcing effects, leading most exhibiting companies to retain their space each year. This trend limits the evolution and representation of new, diverse creators.

To address this issue, we recognize the need to unlock the exhibit hall for new exhibitors who better reflect the industry's diversity. We acknowledge that space limitations and existing rules have historically supported past participants as a pathway for expansion.

To enhance our application and approval process, we now actively track exhibitor presence and work to create dynamic exhibit spaces and programs. Initiatives like the Artists and Authors Program and the Entrepreneurs Avenue Marketing Fellowships are crucial first steps in this effort. We are committed to continuing this work moving forward.

Marketing, Media, and Labels

Our marketing, media, and labels actively showcase a diverse and inclusive convention that celebrates our shared passion for tabletop gaming. By featuring a wide range of voices, faces, and perspectives, we clearly demonstrate the values we uphold.

Marketing Materials

In recent years, we have implemented an annual review of our marketing materials to enhance inclusion, diversity, and representation. We actively acknowledge the challenge of avoiding over-representation of audiences who are currently underrepresented.

As a result, we have refined our selection process for contributing artists and graphic designers responsible for creating materials, including program book cover art, badge art, and other significant productions.

Pronouns

We have introduced a feature that allows users to select pronouns in the profile section of our registration system. This feature gives attendees the option to display their pronouns on their badges, complementing our existing pronoun ribbon programs. By doing so, attendees can authentically express their identities to others, and widespread adoption of this feature celebrates the diverse identities within our community.

Onsite Experience

Gen Con stands out for its size and the incredible volume of interactions that attendees experience throughout the convention, making it both special and challenging.

The onsite experience and the overall sense of welcome are shaped significantly by our expansive support team. This team includes not only our hired and trained Event Team but also vendors who provide essential temporary labor, as well as venue-specific teams at hotels, meeting spaces, and restaurants. These teams often juggle multiple conventions throughout the year, seeing Gen Con as just one of many events.

Recognizing that not all organizations share our commitment to inclusivity and community support, we understand that Gen Con must implement a range of strategies. We aim to communicate and promote our customer-facing standards and values effectively to our broader community of convention partners in Indianapolis.

Training

In recent years, we have prioritized investments in training and educational opportunities for our staff, including both our full-time, year-round employees and our Event Team members who join us during the show week. These individuals serve as the true ambassadors of Gen Con to our attendees.

In 2021, we launched The d4 of Creating Joyful Gaming Experiences, a training program designed to promote key messaging:

Be Safe

Play Nice

Have Fun

Include Everyone

We have expanded our d4 training to include on-site temporary support staff and security teams. We actively engage with our vendors and partners to communicate our priorities around inclusivity and accessibility, incorporating these values into our contracts.

We are committed to continuously developing and promoting what it means to support Gen Con in an inclusive manner.

Focus Areas: 2026 and Beyond

After six years of dedicated work, we have evolved our approach and priorities since the initial assessment in 2020. Our well-established Inclusion Team, consisting of senior leadership and rotating staff members, actively drives our initiatives.

Since 2023, we have also engaged a paid external Advisory Committee to provide guidance on our diversity and inclusion efforts. Together, these teams identify the company's diversity and inclusion focus areas each year and translate them into actionable annual goals.

For 2026, we have defined focus areas that reflect our progress while paving the way for future advancements. We believe that maintaining these ongoing areas of focus will help us create a more inclusive convention this year and beyond.

Accessibility

We continuously review and implement new ways to make Gen Con more accessible, focusing on website design, physical layout, onsite operations, and attendee experiences. Accessibility remains a key priority for our improvement and evolution.

In 2024, we commissioned an accessibility assessment with Indianapolis organization Tangram to evaluate our event experience for neurodivergent attendees, people who use mobility devices, and others who benefit from additional support.

We expanded default aisle widths and allocated accessible seating in seminar and theater spaces.

We invested additional resources into the appropriately renamed "Accessibility Services" kiosk, including extended hours and the expansion of a dedicated Quiet Room.

We updated Exhibit Hall mobility policies to ease traffic flow and increase access for people who use mobility devices. Additionally, we are developing a broad "courtesy campaign" to encourage limited and conscientious use of large backpacks and bags, which can directly impact individuals with mobility concerns. This initiative also aims to make the convention more enjoyable for everyone.

We launched a dedicated Accessibility Services page on our website and implemented site-wide improvements to enhance usability for all attendees.

We retained sign language interpreters for select programming events throughout the convention and are exploring options to expand their availability.

We plan to provide closed captioning on the Main Stage as a standard feature for all Main Stage programming, starting in 2026.

Continued Education and Training

Our primary investment focuses on ongoing education and training that enhances our ability to support our community. In 2026, we will deepen our understanding of mobility challenges, onsite safety, and the history and lived experiences of the Indianapolis community that welcomes us.

This foundation allows us to see Gen Con not just as a show, but as part of a vibrant community with its own rich history, diverse individuals, and current realities. We actively leverage our respected position in both the tabletop gaming and local Indy communities to advocate for our shared values.

We organized and led internal education sessions, integrating insights into staff summits and recurring team meetings.

We launched a formal inclusion and accessibility training program for show staff to enhance their ability to support the safety, belonging, and diverse needs of our attendees.

Inclusivity and Representation at the Convention

At Gen Con, we prioritize safety and inclusion at every gaming table. Moving forward, we will actively invest in tools and resources to enhance representation among our event organizers.

We aim to ensure that underrepresented community members see themselves as the individuals running our events, hosting demos in the Exhibit Hall, and taking the stage across the show floor.

We are committed to finding effective ways to strengthen our efforts in this vital area.

Continuing the Participation Grant program, providing financial support to historically underrepresented individuals at Gen Con. Since 2022, we have awarded monetary grants and 4-Day badges to 237 recipients. This program will receive ongoing funding, enhanced promotion, and support, with a strong focus on driving engagement among alumni.

Evolved, enhanced, and expanded Session Zero programming, welcoming and orienting new attendees through a comprehensive “How to Gen Con” support system.

Released a new suite of professionally produced “How to” videos in 2026, just ahead of key milestones in the pre-convention process. These inclusive videos support new attendees entering the Gen Con ecosystem while helping existing attendees become more engaged.

Business Operations

In 2026, we will establish new onsite listening sessions to gain insights into the needs and challenges faced by underrepresented communities at Gen Con.

We will introduce a “report card” presentation to enhance engagement with our inclusion efforts and create new channels for continuous feedback.

We believe that the best guidance on our next steps comes directly from the Gen Con community.

Recent movement in this venture includes:

We will transition our reporting to a printed format, available on our website, starting in the summer of 2026.

We will launch a series of controlled, on-site listening sessions with thought leaders from our community, held in a neutral location away from the convention floor. Our goal is to actively listen and learn from their first-hand experiences, which will guide our future actions.

We will develop a follow-up webinar to share insights from 2026 and outline next steps toward creating a more diverse and inclusive convention.

Conclusion

We are committed to driving diversity and inclusion at our convention and within our community. This work is ongoing, important, and challenging. We acknowledge our achievements in inclusivity with humility, while remaining focused on the necessary changes ahead.

Thank you for your participation. We appreciate your time in reading our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Progress Report.

We always welcome feedback on our efforts to promote inclusivity at Gen Con. Please share your thoughts: inclusion@gencon.com.