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Guide for
Engaging Persons
with Disabilities

2025

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This guide explains initial considerations that are important in planning inclusive engagements and events. It also provides details and tools to organize and conduct them. Use this guide as a reference according to the detail and scope of the engagement or event being planned.

Targeting Invitations and Communications

Finding persons with disabilities

Begin by contacting local disability organizations in the community. Provide them with a concise invitation and ask them to circulate to their networks. In most provinces and under the Accessible Canada Act for federally regulated organizations, municipalities, district school boards, hospitals, colleges and universities, and public transportation organizations are all required by regulations to engage with persons with disabilities.

The invitation should confirm that the following tools/supports will be available: ASL Interpreter, Communication Access in Real Time (CART services), large print, braille, wheelchair access, wheelchair access to working tables throughout room, Assistive Listening Devices, captioning, reserved front row seat, advance copy of slides to be projected, scent-free room, lactation room, and gender neutral bathrooms.

Accessible web registration and attendance—including alternate registration modalities if required (e.g., print or by phone)

Websites are used to convey information about events and to enable people to register to attend an event. Creating accessible websites and registration forms is critical to ensuring that persons with disabilities have equal access to information about events. Essential elements of accessible web design include:

* Providing alternate text to all images
* Providing alternate text for visual content such as complex graphics and tables
* Providing text alternatives to audio content (including captioning with multimedia)
* Using proper structure
* Using cascading style sheets rather than HTML tables
* Avoiding the use of colour to convey important information
* Using high-contrast foreground/background colours
* Specifying the language of the content (English, Spanish or some other language)
* Avoiding flashing animation
* Using relative units rather than absolutes (e.g., percentages instead of pixels)
* Making all functionality available from a keyboard
* Using simple language
* Requesting information that is relevant to the event only

Following the [World Wide Web Consortium’s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](https://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag) will allow content creators to create content that is accessible to the broadest range of users. Manual testing with those with lived experiences, in addition to using those standards, will also ensure that content is usable by all.

If your event is by invitation only, rely on the information collected in the registration forms and received by phone or email to make decisions about the production of alternate formats. If no one indicates a need for an alternate format by the cut-off date, it might not be necessary to produce any ahead of the event. That said, always have print and large-print copies of event information on hand.

It is highly recommended that participants be given the option to pre-register for all events (open or otherwise). However, if yours is an open event without a formal preregistration requirement, best practice is to err on the side of caution and have all documents produced in alternate formats. Have a minimum of five copies of each alternate format at your registration desk for participants, over and above the number of alternate formats you know you require from your pre-registration intake.

Public engagement plan for persons with disabilities

The Engagement Team will include subject-matter experts, technical experts, meeting facilitators, project coordinators, website designers, survey analysts, accessibility champions, and most importantly, persons with diverse disability experiences. The plan for each organization conducting a persons with disabilities (PWD) public engagement exercise includes the following features:

* Clarity on whether the organization wants to inform, consult, collaborate and/or empower. This will determine the level of tools and support that is required.
* Adequate budgets and resources are in place for meeting rooms, staff/volunteer training, accessible versions of printed and online information and all other expenses, including compensation for participants in event planning.
* A comprehensive schedule for planning, implementation, results analysis, decision-making, report writing and reporting to the public.
* Ensuring that websites and online information meet the standards of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
* Ensuring emergency processes are documented and training is available to planning team so that they know how to execute and use any emergency devices.
* Provide an accessible feedback or follow up process for continuous improvement.

Developing a Program

Planning an accessible event begins with the design of the program or agenda. Develop your program six to eight weeks before the event. Your program should be developed with the following considerations in mind:

* If at all possible, avoid start and end times during rush hour commutes.
* Ensure longer rest and lunch periods throughout the day.
* Build in time for moving from one room to the next, as applicable.
* Schedule program and agenda items with enough time to permit presenters to speak at a reasonable pace, allowing interpreters and participants to keep up.
* Do not schedule speakers during the breaks.
* Note the requirement for start/end times and extended breaks.
* Develop a plan to ensure accessibility of table or small group discussions, if required.

There are several reasons for these additional considerations:

* People using accessible transportation may need to make special arrangements to get to the venue, which can be challenging to arrange at peak times of the day. Adjusting the start times could allow more flexibility to make those arrangements.
* Thirty-minute breaks every 90 minutes, and a 90-minute lunch allow interpreters to rest and provides people with limited mobility the additional time necessary to use the facilities, and to bring service animals to designated relief areas.

Breakout sessions and small group/table discussions

If the program includes breakout sessions that require participants to move to other rooms, build the appropriate time into your agenda. Some people may require additional time to move from one room to the next. If you are planning small group discussions or table discussions, consider the needs of your participants using interpretive or audio services.

Consult your participants on how you can best ensure they are actively included in the discussion. Some participants may require captioning services at the table, while other may be find with an informal note taker using a laptop next to them. Be aware of the level of noise or possible distractions during table conversations, ensuring participants can hear and be heard. While small group discussions can require more complex planning, accessibility can be achieved by working closely with your participants.

Preparing a Budget

Determine your budget at the onset of planning:

* Determine budget for speakers and participants, including the possibility of complementary passes.
* Determine the number of participants expected to register.
* Estimate the number of participants expected to have accommodation requests.
* Estimate the number of participants expected to have attendants.
* Determine printing requirements (directional signage, posters, participant kits).
* Obtain interpretive services quotes (captioning, sign language, etc.).
* Obtain venue quote (double the room size of what would typically be secured).
* Obtain audio-visual quote(s) (noting interpretive services requirements).
* Determine the number and length of meeting materials, including final report or documents to be produced following the event.
* Obtain estimate or quote for official language translation.
* Obtain cost for live audio description, if required.
* Obtain estimate or quote for alternate formats.
* Obtain hotel accommodation quote, if required.
* Obtain hospitality quote (for both participants and service providers), if required.
* Obtain travel estimates, if required.

Audiovisual (AV) equipment and services

To ensure the accessibility of the event, the following items should be requested when seeking a quote (in addition to other event-related AV needs):

* Interpretation equipment and booth, including receivers and headphones for participants.
* Assistive listening devices (e.g., hearing loops).
* Tabletop microphones for speakers and participants (one microphone per two participants or two microphones for a table of five participants).
* Two lapel microphones for sign language interpreters.
* Connection requirements for captioning services (one internet connection, two laptops, two HD monitors and two telephone lines).

Captioning

It is highly recommended that one hour of preparation time be booked in addition to your captioning time requirements. For example, for a three-hour meeting, captioning should be booked for a minimum of four hours (one hour for preparation time and three hours for the live captioning). AV equipment is required for remote captioning to transmit the audio feed via telephone to remote CART providers and to receive captioning back via internet.

Sign language interpretation

The rate for American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des Signes Québécoise (LSQ) interpretation does not simply double when you double the time of the meeting or event. Based on the length of time required for the event, there may be a requirement to add additional interpreters to ensure quality of service. The budget assumes in-person sign language interpretation with ASL interpreters and LSQ interpreters.

Alternate formats

All documents used during the course of the event may need to be produced in alternate formats. For large public events where requirements may be unknown ahead of time, provide at least five copies of all documents available in each alternate format at the registration table. If planning for a large event, additional copies may be required; therefore, a good practice is to know and plan where additional copies can be obtained in a reasonable timeframe.

Travel, meals and accommodation costs

If your organization is covering the travel costs of participants, you should also expect to cover the travel costs for any attendants accompanying them. For budgeting and other planning purposes, estimate that approximately 10 percent of your participants with disabilities will have an attendant travelling with them.

Note that travel costs for attendants may be covered under the [One-Person-One-Fare Policy](https://otc-cta.gc.ca/eng/highlights-one-person-one-fare-policy-decision), applicable to Air Canada, Air Canada Jazz and WestJet on domestic flights. Under this policy, these domestic carriers may not charge more than one fare for persons with disabilities who must be accompanied by an attendant for their personal care or safety in flight or for persons requiring additional seating for themselves, including those determined to have a functional disability as a result of obesity. Eligibility for the [One-Person-One-Fare Policy](https://otc-cta.gc.ca/eng/highlights-one-person-one-fare-policy-decision) is determined by the airlines and is subject to changes and exceptions.

Medical equipment rental

It is a good practice to have manual wheelchairs available for participants to use in a variety of capacities (e.g., to be transferred from the entrance of a venue to the meeting rooms, during emergency evacuations, for participants who have long-distance mobility disability, or a mobility disability). Check with the venue to see if they have wheelchairs for the patrons’ use; they often do. If not, reach out to local medical equipment stores and organizations (e.g., pharmacies or the Red Cross) that rent out wheelchairs.

Participants may request additional medical equipment be on hand, depending on the length and scope of the event. Assistive devices that may need to be provided for overnight stays can include:

* Hospital beds
* Hydraulic patient lifts
* Commode chairs

When renting this equipment, be sure to verify with the vendor and participant that the correct equipment has been secured.

Hospitality

Consider providing hospitality if there is no accessible restaurant or cafeteria on-site or within close proximity. This is especially important during the winter months, as persons with disabilities and seniors may require additional assistance to accommodate self-serve options. Determine whether there will be additional volunteers to assist or whether you will request that the venue have additional servers on hand, which will increase the costs and should be factored into the budget. It is customary to offer the hospitality to your service providers as well because many of the interpreters will be required to remain on-site and available throughout the breaks.

Choosing a Venue

Choose a venue six to eight weeks before the event. Ask forquotes from prospective venuesusing the [Accessibility Checklist for Quoting Venues](#checklistquotevenue). Conduct site visit of chosen venue using the [Accessibility Checklist for Meeting Venues](#checklistvenue). If hotel accommodations are required, conduct site visits of accessible hotel guest rooms using the [Accessibility Checklist for Hotel Rooms](#roomchecklist). Develop a plan to mitigate barriers to accessibility. Obtain visual floor plan (to scale) of meeting room. Confirm the number of accessible hotel rooms available and reserve a block of rooms, including all available accessible rooms, for participants.

In-person engagement accommodations

The barriers that persons with disabilities experience include physical, architectural, informational, technological, communication-based, sensory, systemic, attitudinal and behavioral. These barriers are often unintentional or invisible. An inclusive and accessible event should provide the following accommodations:

* Visibility—consider those with impaired sight
* Clear signage to identify location and directions
* Consider adding wayfinding access tools and applications
* Well-lit meeting space and adjacent area s(adjustable lighting in some areas is preferred)
* Projection screen visible from all seating
* Consider those who might require live description
* Acoustics—consider those with hearing impairment
* Consider translation devices that might be required during the event
* Public address system
* Roving microphone
* Limited unnecessary background music
* Seating available near presenter for lip reading and ASL
* Availability of assistive listening devices
* Well-lit space for an interpreter if needed
* Limited mobility—consider those who may be in wheelchairs or have other limited mobility impairments
* Accessible parking near venue
* Proximity to bus stop
* Ramp and/or elevator access
* Accessible bathrooms
* Barrier-free pathways
* Wide doorways and aisles to accommodate wheelchairs/scooters, no loose cables across walking areas
* Rest areas throughout the venue
* Technology—consider those who may need to use adaptive devices
* Electrical outlets in accessible seating areas to accommodate devices, laptops, etc.
* Extra space or work surface
* Service animals—consider access and space for service dogs.
* Comfortable space for service animals to rest during event and accessible outdoor toileting and watering areas nearby
* Designate someone to be responsible for accommodations as well as help with seating, ensuring captioning and other technology is working, maintaining clear pathways or other needs
* Area with limited lighting and/or sound
* Having one or more quiet rooms
* Preparing alternate formats
* Allowing participants to take the time they need to participate

Site visits

The importance of conducting an in-person site visit prior to selecting the venue cannot be stressed enough. Venues may advise that their meeting spaces are fully accessible; however, they may not meet your accessibility needs completely. To mitigate any potential issues, conduct an in-person walk-through of the venue.

Audit all the spaces that participants will be expected to use: parking lots, front and back entrances, lobbies, hallways, event rooms, washrooms, elevators and hotel guest rooms, if applicable. During this audit, make sure that all spaces are easily accessed and clearly identified. A thorough walk-through could easily take one hour. Ask the venue about:

* The location of relief areas for service animals
* Upcoming renovations, painting, repairs, re-carpeting, or any other construction that may create noise, generate smells, or limit mobility (e.g., closed sidewalks, speedbumps, gravel roads, etc.)
* The availability of lip-free tables (avoid extra edges underneath tables that prevent wheelchairs from rolling in). Some venues have them, but they must be requested in advance.
* All parking options
* Emergency evacuation plans
* Staff training on how to best support persons with disabilities

Meeting room floor plan options

In selecting a venue, ensure that the meeting room can accommodate the space requirements for an accessible event. Generally speaking, accessible events require double the floor space that you would normally allocate. If you are hosting an event for 50 participants, select a room that accommodates 100 participants. The additional space is necessary to accommodate interpretive services, AV equipment and a room layout that enables all participants to sit wherever they choose and to move freely about the rooms. The meeting room should also be located close to accessible washrooms and any additional breakout rooms you may require.

[Two sample floor plans](#samplefloorplan) are included at the end of this section. Event organizers may wish to use these as a basis for discussion with venues and AV service providers.

The floor plan should be drafted by the venue coordinator with input from the organizer. The organizer should also solicit input from technical service providers for the optimal placement of equipment and potential issues that can be identified and corrected at an early stage. The floor plan should be drawn to scale and include the location of the following features:

* Tables and chairs (including seven feet of spacing between tables and rows)
* Stage, if applicable (include location of ramp or lift)
* Projection screens (small screens or large TV monitors can be used for captioning depending on the number of participants and size of room)
* Projectors (preference for projectors that are located being the screen)
* Interpretation booth
* Technical equipment (AV and webcasting tables)
* Cameras, if applicable
* Raised platforms for visual interpreters
* Tables for in-person captioning services (if not using remote captioning)
* Tables for picking up headphones and assistive listening devices (e.g., hearing loops)
* Any additional tables needed for various other services such as note taking
* Any additional seating for facilitators or organizers
* Any obstructions like pillars in the room
* All exits

Setting up a floor plan with round tables

* Use round tables when participants will likely take notes, consult paperwork or take part in group discussions.
* Participants should be seated around one half of the table only (half-moon layout), facing the front of the room.
* Lip-free tables should be used to ensure participants using wheelchairs can be comfortably seated.
* Tables should be covered with a dark tablecloth (white reflects overhead lights, creating glare that can negatively affect people with vision-related disabilities).
* Include two table-top microphones per table of five people.
* Ensure at least seven feet of space between all tables (edge-to-edge).

[See page 47 for samples of floor plans with round tables.](#samplefloorplan)

Using theater-style (row) seating

* Set up one round table on either side of the front of the room as an option for people who require an additional surface for accommodations or other reasons.
* Ensure at least six feet of space between each row and aisle, and around each table.
* Chairs should not be connected to one another so they can be easily removed during the event.

Using U shaped seating

* Use U shaped seating when you are having meetings such as roundtables, or meetings with a small number of participants.
* Make sure to avoid a rectangular shape by keeping one side open. This ensures that captioning is visible to all participants and that sign language interpreters can sit in front of the participants who require ASL or LSQ interpretations.
* Ensure at least six feet of space around the U-shaped table.

[See page 47 for samples of floor plans that use U shaped seating.](#samplefloorplan)

Tables for services and equipment

* Ensure there will be adequate space for the official language interpretation booth, tables for AV technicians, captioning services and note takers (if applicable), projection screens and/or captioning monitors, as well as sign language interpreters.

Positioning service providers

* Ensure that the room will allow for participants to have a direct line of sight to all interpretive services (e.g., no support columns creating visual barriers).
* Assess whether the room will provide adequate space for interpretive services to be grouped together according to language (e.g., LSQ and French language captioning on the right, ASL and English language captioning on the left).
* Sign language interpretation and captioning screens should be positioned on either side of the speakers’ tables to ensure participants have a line of vision to both interpretive services and speakers.

Podiums, stages and risers

* If possible, do not use a podium for your presenters. Podiums are not accessible to presenters with limited mobility or who use wheelchairs or scooters. Ideally, the presenters will be seated at a head table at the front of the room with ample space to navigate with a service animal or wheelchair.
* Determine whether a stage is needed and confirm whether the venue will provide it. If not, you can rent a stage with the required ramp or lift. Ensure your venue provides adequate space for this extra equipment.
* If using a stage, ensure:
	+ It is large enough to accommodate everyone who will be asked to use it, including the radius of a motorized wheelchair/scooter.
	+ A ramp or lift can be attached to the stage that is wide enough to accommodate a motorized wheelchair or scooter, or a speaker who is accompanied by a service animal.
* Always ensure the venue has extra risers on hand even when a stage is not being used in case sign language interpreters require them to provide lines of sight.

Breakout rooms

* Breakout rooms should be as accessible as the main venue, including the same provision of interpretive services in each room.
* Plan accordingly for hybrid events where remote participants may need access to interpreters
* Breakout rooms should also be within close proximity of the main plenary room and accessible washrooms.

Quiet rooms

* Consider having a quiet room, which can be beneficial for large events, particularly for people with pain-related disabilities, mental health, dementia, and sensory-related or other types of disabilities.
* Verify that the venue would have a suitable space within close proximity of the main plenary room and accessible washrooms.

Providing hospitality

* If you are hosting a full-day event, determine whether the venue has an accessible restaurant or cafeteria on-site or within close proximity. If not, inquire about hospitality options. On-site meal options are especially important during the winter months as snow and ice may pose dangerous barriers to some of your participants.
* If providing hospitality is not possible, you will need to find another venue with accessible options that are within close proximity for your participants. Note that the route to the accessible restaurant must also be accessible and free of barriers such as ice, snow, construction, steps and sidewalk curbs.
* If a meal is provided, some participants may require additional assistance at a buffet in order to accommodate self-serve options. Ask the venue about the height of the serving tables and chafing dishes. Ideally, the chafing dishes used for hot meals would be at an accessible height for all participants, including people using wheelchairs, for example. If this is not possible, arrange to have additional assistance and ensure there is sufficient space to accommodate servers and participants on either sides of the tables.
* If you are organising a reception, ensure the venue will not use high tables (also referred to as pub-style tables). High tables cannot be used by people with mobility disabilities and may block the view for participants in wheelchairs or scooters.

Emergency planning

Ensure staff at the event is trained in emergency response. If any of the proposed meeting rooms are not on the ground level, ensure that at least two evacuation chairs are available to navigate emergency evacuations via stairwells. If the venue does not have these in place, they can be rented from a medical supply company.

Managing Registration and Travel

Start managing registration and travel four to six weeks before the event:

* Email event invitation and registration form to participants at minimum 6 weeks prior to event. [Use the Sample Registration Form on page 44](#sampleregform).
* Note cancellation deadlines for interpretive services and confirm event registration closes one week prior to cancellation deadlines.
* Maintain a spreadsheet to track participant accommodation needs (interpretive services, attendants, medical devices, travel, etc.).
* Offer the participants the option to organize phone calls or online meetings to discuss their specific needs.
* If hospitality will be provided, note the dietary restrictions of participants, their attendants and service providers.
* Confirm, in person, interpretive service requests with participants.
* Confirm travel requests with participants (i.e., travelling with a manual or motorized wheelchair, service animal or attendant) as soon as receiving their registration form.
* Confirm options for persons travelling with attendants ([One-Person-One-Fare](https://otc-cta.gc.ca/eng/highlights-one-person-one-fare-policy-decision)Policy).
* Book hotel rooms, flights, train, etc. according to participant registration requirements.
* Confirm travel requirements between the airport/rail station and hotel with accessible transit providers (reservations required).

Managing travel

If you are responsible for the travel of your participants, it is important to ensure early communication. Participants with disabilities must have appropriate transportation options to move between key points, including to and from the airport or train/bus station, hotels and meeting venues.

Air and rail

When procuring air or rail travel, investigate the company’s policy for attendants. If a participant requires an attendant during travel, their attendant may qualify for a reduced or free fare (such as the [One-Person-One-Fare Policy](https://otc-cta.gc.ca/eng/highlights-one-person-one-fare-policy-decision)).

Taxis

Some participants may need to book wheelchair accessible transportation. Depending on your region, a limited number of accessible taxis may be available. Work directly with participants to determine if they need support booking an accessible taxi or if they would prefer to manage their own transportation.

Shuttles

If you are hosting a large event and several people require accessible transportation, you may wish to consider hiring a bus or shuttle company in advance to transport participants at the start and end of your event. Depending on the length of your event, you may wish to also have the shuttle available throughout the day in case some participants must leave for any reason. Hiring an accessible shuttle may also be necessary if you are hosting an after-hours event. Make sure to request an accessible shuttle.

Many local bus and charter companies have accessible vehicles as part of their fleets that can hold three to four wheelchairs. Work closely with your transportation company to confirm schedules, pick-up and drop-off locations, routes and parking options.

Accommodations

If possible, participants should contact the hotel directly to discuss their room and equipment requirements. If the hotel cannot provide the equipment required by the participant, it can usually be rented from a medical supply company. Typically, the company will deliver it to the hotel and set it up to ensure it is used correctly in the space available.

It is strongly recommended that you conduct an in-person check of the space once all equipment is delivered to ensure that the guest room is set up according to your instructions and is ready for your participants’ arrival.

Securing Services

Secure interpretive and other services and equipment four to six weeks before the event:

* Official languages interpretation services, as required
* Captioning (remote and/or on-site)
* Audio assistance
* Oral interpretation (lip reading)
* Deaf-blind intervenor/tactile interpretation
* American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des Signes Québécoise (LSQ), as required
* Intervenors/Tactile interpretation, as required
* Lip-reading, as required
* Attendants/support persons, as required
* Medical equipment, as required
* Publishing and design services (directional signage and posters), as required

Secure audio-visual (AV) equipment needs four to six weeks before the event:

* Obtain and review the detailed AV quote from venue, ensuring AV requirements for interpretive services are included.
* Source additional AV vendors if on-site AV providers cannot fulfill all requirements (ensure venue site AV staff are in communication with all alternative service providers and keep lines of communication open between onsite and external AV providers).
* Book AV technicians for one half day prior to event for technical run-through.
* Confirm AV and equipment requirements directly with all services providers at least two weeks prior to event. Provide this information to your AV vendor(s) and confirm compatibility.

Official languages interpretation

Official language interpretation is the backbone of interpretive services. This service is essential to provide other services, such as English and French captioning, visual interpretations (LSQ and ASL), as well as oral and tactile interpretation. The interpretation both should be located at the back of the room, as interpreters need a line of sight to the speakers at the front of the room.

Sign language interpretation

In Canada, there are two main signed languages: Langue des Signes Québécoise (LSQ) and American Sign Language (ASL). LSQ and ASL are not simply signed versions of the English and French languages. They are distinct languages. It is important to note that providing captioning services is not an acceptable form of interpretation for people who identify sign language as their primary means of communication.

Captioning

This service is particularly useful to individuals who are Deaf, deafened, hard of hearing or who have various learning disabilities. This service is also beneficial to participants who may have difficulty hearing a speaker due to poor acoustics in the room. Also known as real-time captioning, this service is provided by a professional CART provider who uses a laptop or a stenography keyboard to transcribe the proceedings in real-time, which is projected on a large screen. An employee typing quickly on a keyboard is not a suitable alternative to hiring a professional CART provider.

Captioning can be provided on-site or remotely via the internet. Remote captioning can be more cost effective, provides access to a larger pool of service providers, and requires less space in your meeting room. Additionally, the advantage with remote captioning is that all participants may access the captioning on their personal devices if they have access to the internet.

Typically, two CART providers will be hired for the duration of the event. One will caption the French audio feed and the other will caption the English. You cannot hire one CART provider to provided bilingual services (a CART provider will provide services in one language only).

If you are holding an event in the territories or with Indigenous participants, you may wish to consider Inuktitut captioning and translation. Although not a standard service, the Office for Disability Issues has secured this service in the past with great results.

CART providers who attend on site should bring the equipment that they need to work; however, it is important to confirm whether laptops are required, and the type of connection required. Inform the CART providers of your preferred fonts (Arial or Verdana), and the font size should be large enough that only four to five lines of text appear on the screen.

Note that you may request captioning transcripts of your event from your provider, which can be helpful as reference materials or to supplement your meeting notes. You may request a rough draft transcript, which is typically provided at no additional cost. This transcript will reflect the captions as they appeared on the screen during the event, with no revisions or corrections made. You may also request a certified transcript, which is an edited document with revisions meant to correct any errors or misspellings. However, this service can be costly and service providers will require an audio recording of the proceedings to certify the transcript.

It should be noted that, once received, transcripts become records of your event much like notes, minutes and reports. Should the transcripts be requested by colleagues or by members of the public, special care should be taken to ensure transcripts do not include personal information. As captioning services capture live discussion, word-for-word, the probability of personal or private information being captured increases.

Audio assistance

Providing audio assistance could be as simple as providing headphones with an audio feed, such as those typically used for official languages interpretation. Other participants may request the use of an audio induction loop, sometimes known as an FM loop or hearing loop. Individuals may have their own assistive device that can access audio transmitted via an FM audio loop or infrared system.

In advance of the event, participants who have requested this service should be contacted to determine if they will be bringing their own device to ensure it is compatible with the venue’s audio system. If the device is incompatible, provide the proper equipment to them on arrival.

Intervener/tactile interpretation

This is a service often requested by people who are Deaf, blind or deaf-blind. There are a variety of requirements for tactile communication. If someone requests this service, it is best to verify whether they have a preferred interpreter with whom they are comfortable working and try to arrange for this interpreter to be present.

Oral interpretation/lip reading

When providing oral interpretation or lip-reading services, the interpreter silently repeats what is bring said by moving their lips. The participants follow the proceedings by reading the lips of the interpreter. The interpreter sits close to the participant to facilitate easy lip reading.

Canada’s video relay services (SRV Canada VRS)

SRV Canada VRS is a basic telecommunications service that enables people who use sign language to communicate with voice telephone users. The sign language user connects to a VRS operator using Internet-based videoconferencing. The operator then places a voice telephone call to the other party and relays the conversation from sign language to voice and vice-versa. Canadians requiring the service can register for the service through [SRV Canada VRS](http://www.srvcanadavrs.ca/).

Audio-visual (AV) equipment needs

What you will need

Key technical requirements for an accessible event include:

* Tabletop microphones (i.e., one for every two participants or two for a round table of five people), plus one per speaker/facilitator
* Wireless microphones (if you plan to facilitate questions in theater-style seating; number of microphones will depend on the size of your event)
* Two lapel microphones for LSQ and ASL interpreters
* Hearing assistive systems (e.g., FM loop system)
* Projectors (ensure lighting in the room does not wash out the projection screen)
* Screens or monitors for captioning services
* Two teleconference connections (e.g., French and English for remote captioning)
* Video inputs to connect the captioning equipment to the screens or monitors (if on-site captioning is planned)
* Power bars for the captioning table, note-taking table, interpretation booth, as required
* Two or three extra laptops or tables for participants who wish to have the captioning in front of them (this is possible with remote captioning only, by using the hyperlink)
* A 10-foot by 10-foot official languages interpretation booth placed at the back of the room with a clear line of sight to the head table (if booth is not already available in the room)

Work closely with your AV service provider to help ensure the accessibility and success of your event. When securing your services, ensure that:

* Technicians will be on-site half a day prior to the event for set-up and for the duration of the event to troubleshoot issues that arise. This allows time to resolve miscommunications and to secure additional equipment if needed.
* A technical run-through at the venue the day prior to the event is scheduled with all service providers. This will allow you to confirm that all vendors’ equipment is compatible and functioning. If an issue is discovered at this point, there is time to correct it to ensure the accessibility of your event is not compromised.

Key considerations

* Avoid running cables over walk areas, as the pose a tripping hazard for participants. If cables go over a “pathway,” they must be covered and taped down.
* Microphones are not optional. They are an essential component for providing interpretive services. Without microphones, the event is not accessible to participants who are Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, including people using hearing loops. Microphones are also essential for official language interpretation, which is in turn used to provide captioning in both official languages and LSQ and ASL interpretation. When sign language interpretation transmit what participants are signing, microphones allow all participants to hear it. Additionally, with microphones in place, it is possible to have participants join the event through conference calls, including remote CART providers.
* When using theater-style seating, avoid using microphones on stands in aisles as they are not accessible to people with limited mobility or people using wheelchairs or scooters. Additionally, microphones on stands create visual and physical barriers. Use wireless microphones wherever possible.
* If participants wish to take part in the event via teleconference, they need to choose the language of their choice. If they choose English, they will be given the same conference line information as the English remote CART provider. If they choose French, they will be given the same conference line information as the French remote CART provider. The AV technicians will mute the phone line to avoid noise interference that could impact CART providers’ work as well as impact ambient noise in the room, which would impact accessibility for persons who are hard of hearing, for example. You may wish to consider opening the conference lines at regular or specific timed intervals throughout the event to allow for two-way communication with participants on the line.

Ensuring Content is Accessible

Engagement of persons with disabilities can take a variety of forms, including to:

* Inform: to explain an issue
* Consult: to collect information and feedback
* Collaborate: to engage persons with disabilities to review and discuss an issue, develop alternatives and identify a preferred solution
* Empower: to place final decision-making in the hands of persons with disabilities

Considerations in informing the public, collecting, tracking, and analyzing the written and verbal comments received include:

* Informing persons with disabilities through media releases, dedicated websites, blogs, YouTube, social media posts, or emails in accessible formats.
* Allowing participants to join or leave the process at any time.
* Information materials including a consultation introduction paper, information kit, brochure, or presentation.
* Planning to respond to information requests and accept feedback in many formats and in a timely manner.
* Responding to requests for accommodation in a manner that meets the needs of the individual.
* Preparing a final post consultation report to send to stakeholders.
* Preparing a comprehensive list of suppliers and resources for use as an organizational template.
* Ensuring that service providers also meet accessibility requirements and are trained.
* Pay or compensate persons with disabilities who have participated in planning, especially if you are paying others who have been consulted or engaged.

The Accessible Engagement Continuum

Use the following table to gain an understanding of how different formats and resources can be used to make engagement accessible.

| Formats | Inform | Consult | Collaborate | Empower |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Accessible Websites  | Share event registration and information.Accessible websites should meet [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag). | Collect information and feedback from persons with disabilities. | Promote discussion and solutions. | Allow persons with disabilities to influence final decision making. |
| Webinars | Deliver [accessible presentations](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2c3Xbwb7aY3RWlJOE12M2JtVUE/view?pli=1&resourcekey=0-G2wluD2V0e2xV2uNeuLuIQ) and provide attachments in accessible formats.Learn how to [make your webinar accessible](http://aea365.org/blog/angie-aguirre-on-making-your-webinar-accessible/). | Introduce interactive elements to gather feedback and thoughts. | Promote interactive and collaborative discussions. | Promote decision making forums. |
| Open Houses | Promote open houses using various media and accessible formats.Host at [accessible venues](https://accessibility.cornell.edu/event-planning/accessible-meeting-and-event-checklist/). | Collect information and feedback using spaces, formats and tools that are designed for discussion. | Lead and facilitate discussion in various formats. | Share decision making tools. |
| Surveys, Feedback Forms | Share surveys that are written in plain language. Online surveys should meet the standards of the [Web Content Accessibility Guideline](http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag)s. | Collect information and feedback from persons with disabilities. | *Intentionally left blank* | Allow persons with disabilities to influence future events and tools. |
| Social Media | Share information frequently and to a wide audience.Social media should meet [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag). Not social media platforms are fully accessible. Always use accessibility features when available. | *Intentionally left blank* | Carefully monitor and encourage dialogue and discussion. Note that it can sometimes be challenging to ensure discussions do not digress from the issue. |  *Intentionally left blank* |
| Public Advisory and Liaison Committees  | Champion on specific issues.  | Gather recommendations from committees in accessible formats. | Host public meetings that are accessible. This requires resources and staff support. | *Intentionally left blank* |
| Citizens Panels | Respond to a wide range of topics in an ongoing manner**.**Information must be in accessible formats. | *Intentionally left blank* | Reduce the need for in-person meetings by using social media, telephone conferences and the internet. All in-person and virtual meetings must be accessible.  | *Intentionally left blank* |
| Search Conferences | *Intentionally left blank* | Allow groups of persons with disabilities to meet and develop recommendations**.** | Create a sense of commitment. In-person and virtual meetings must be accessible. Host at accessible venues and provide information materials in accessible formats. | *Intentionally left blank* |
| Ballots | *Intentionally left blank* | Collect information and feedback from persons with disabilities. | *Intentionally left blank* | Allow persons with disabilities to cast votes through an accessible voting process. Include accessible formats and presentations that are inclusive of vulnerable populations and trauma. |

Ensure your content is accessible three to four weeks before the event. Ensure necessary approvals and ensure documents are final. Share all materials with participants early (minimum one week prior). And send documents for alternate format conversion. Providing documents in alternate formats is a key element of accessible events or online consultations. Your participants’ needs will dictate the alternate formats that you require.

* All documents should be in simple (plain) language. Write clearly with short sentences and try to avoid complex graphs and charts, if possible. You will need to develop descriptions for pictures, graphs, and charts so they may be incorporated into alternate formats. Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) offers a [Clear Print Design Standards](https://www.cnib.ca/sites/default/files/2020-08/Clear%20Print%20Guidelines%202020.pdf) for reference.
* All documents used during events may need to be made available in alternat formats. Mitigate the number of pages that need to be produced by keeping presentation documents concise.
* Send electronic copies of all your documents to your participants at least one week prior to the event. Do not table drop documents. This will accommodate participants with varying abilities and communication needs. For example, people with intellectual disabilities may need more time to go through the materials and prepare for the meeting. People with communication disabilities may need additional time to program their communication technologies to deliver their messages. Another example includes participants who use screen readers and who need electronic versions of the meeting materials.
* All videos presented during the meeting should include captioning. Additionally, the video script should be sent to all service providers ahead of time. This includes the Translation Bureau, official languages and sign language interpreters and CART providers.
* All other visual presentations (e.g., PowerPoint presentations, physical demonstrations, etc.) should be described through an audio description to accommodate participants with vision-related disabilities.

Alternate formats you may need

The alternate formats that are most often requested are:

* **Braille:** Braille is a tactile system of raised dots representing letters of the alphabet. To read braille, the fingers gently glide over the paper that has been embossed with the braille code
* **Large print:** This is a type of formatting in which the font is Arial 18 points. It is used to accommodate people who have low vision.
* **E-text on CD:** E-text removes all formatting so that the document can be read by screen readers. The e-text should be in a text format (“.txt.”).
* **Audio on CD:** The CD contains the audio version of the document (read out loud).
* **DAISY:** This format allows those with vision related disabilities to hear the content of the book or document. One of its features is that it allows the listener to easily skip sections or chapters, as opposed to the traditional cassette-type (which you have to rewind/fast-forward manually).
* **Accessible PDF:** An accessible PDF document is one that can be interpreted by speech synthesizer/screen readers.

Production of alternate formats

Alternate formats take time to produce. Depending on the length and complexity of the document and the format being requested, timelines can vary greatly. Expect a minimum of at least two weeks for production time, depending on the length of the document, and expect to pay a premium for a rush order. Note that your alternate formats should be distributed at the same time as your standard French and English formats to ensure participants have equal access to documents.

Alternate formats are created in two steps:

1. The creation of a master copy. This is the most expensive part because it is the most time consuming for the supplier. Note that you must provide a final version of the document.
2. Copies are produced from the master at a few dollars each, depending on the format. Once you have determined how many copies you need, they can be shipped directly to the participants or to your office location.

ASL/LSQ video production

You may also wish to make material available in the form of sign language videos, in both LSQ and ASL. LSQ and ASL are stand-along languages that a significant portion of the disability community identifies as either their mother tongue or their primary language of use.

Creating accessible documents

Word documents

Word has a feature to allow you to verify the accessibility of a document. Go to: *File > Information > Check for issues > Check accessibility.*

Guidelines should also be applied to email and printed materials.

Formatting

* Do use for emphasis: bold or underline text, and bullets. Make your layout straightforward, logical and easy to follow.
* Do use styles (under the “Home” tab), as it is easier to navigate with the “Navigation Pane.”
* Do not use columns, text boxes, italics, or tables if they can be replaced by simple formatting. Some screen readers are unable to process information in the proper sequence when there are boxes and columns.

Fonts

Use sans-serif fonts, such as Arial or Verdana in size 12 in printed materials. Screen readers usually read from left to right, top down, and may have difficulty processing some fonts and formatting options, such as columns and non-captioned images.

Colour

* Use high contrast between the text and the background (e.g., black on white).
* If graphs are essential, use high-contrast lines between the colours, and use patterns along with colours to identify the sections in pie charts.
* All graphs should have an equivalent text and be described.

Captions

Caption all images, tables and graphs such as:



*Caption: Employees wearing red shirts assemble in a “150” on a green field.*

PowerPoint presentations

PowerPoint uses the same features as Word to allow you to verify the accessibility of a document. The same principles of accessibility outlined above apply to a PowerPoint presentation.

* Limit the amount of information contained in each slide (seven to ten lines per slide).
* Use fonts that are sized 28 points or larger.
* Create a Word version of the PowerPoint presentation, in simple formatting for distribution.

Presenters must submit materials in advance to be forwarded to individuals who may not be able to view screens or flip charts. [Use the Presenter Checklist on page 43](#presenterchecklist) to make sure that your presentation is prepared appropriately.

PDFs and Excel Sheets

Excel sheets and PDFs can be made accessible, see the [Accessible Documents](https://www.ocadu.ca/services/odesi/accessibility/alternate-formats) section of the OCAD University’s website for tips. However, try to avoid Excel, as not everyone has the necessary software to read these types of documents. If a PDF is essential, create an accessible PDF of the content for distribution.

Q&A

Make sure to repeat questions posted by audience before responding, especially if there is not a roving microphone available. Presenters or audience members may express confidence that they are loud enough and do not need a microphone. Regardless, ask them to speak into one.

Setting Up for the Event

Plan final details one week prior to the event:

* Determine how many volunteers and/or attendants are required for the day of the event
* Ensure housekeeping/opening remarks are drafted to include the location of restrooms
* Availability of all services, including how to get headphones
* Notice that ASL, LSQ and captioning are not to be filmed (due to legal and ethical reasons)
* Allocate time for roundtable introductions
* Reminder to always use microphones, to introduce themselves when speaking, and to speak at a reasonable pace for interpreters and CART providers
* Cancel unneeded services prior to cancellation deadlines (in the case of open public events, retain all interpretive services)
* Provide interpreters with an electronic copy of all event materials at least 10 days in advance
* Label participant kits with individual accommodation requests to help organizers attend to the participants’ needs quickly and efficiently on the day of the event
* Ensure Accessibility Supply Kit is complete
* Confirm directional signage and posters have been received
* Confirm alternate formats have been received
* Review plan for mitigating existing barriers at venue
* Review emergency evacuation plans

Then finalize and adjust your floor plan 24 hours prior to the event:

* Verify that room is set up according to the floor plan initially provided by the vendor
* Ensure all visible AV cords are taped down on the floor to prevent tripping hazards
* Confirm that AV connections have been tested, are working and compatible with all interpretive services required
* Verify medical equipment has been properly delivered and set up in hotel guest rooms, if needed

Plan to visit the meeting rooms during the set-up to ensure it is done according to your floor plan, as agreed upon with the venue. Note that final adjustments are almost always required to maximize accessibility or mitigate unforeseen barriers. It is important to visit the rooms before the set-up is complete, including before all wires are taped to the floor.

Testing of services

All AV equipment and interpretive services devices should be tested prior to the event. Ideally, AV equipment would be tested the evening before or with enough time allotted prior to the start of the event to ensure issues can be resolved. Interpretive services should be tested at least one hour prior to the event. If you are using remote captioning, ask the CART providers to call the respective lines at the designated testing time.

During the testing, AV technicians will need to ensure that the CART providers hear the right languages. This will also allow to verify that all equipment in the interpretation booth is functional. Testing will help prevent technical difficulties that can disturb the delivery of interpretive services and the overall inclusion and accessibility of the event.

Accessibility supply kit

Prior to the event, you may wish to assemble an accessibility supply kit, which can be extremely useful. An accessibility supply kit often includes:

* Two door stops
* Two spare FM audio loops or assistive listening devices
* A handful of individually wrapped straws for participants who can’t hold a glass
* Some small fidget devices
* Scent-free soap in bathrooms
* Spare batteries (e.g., AAA and AA for handheld microphones and other equipment)
* HDMI cables in case neither the in-person CART provider nor the AV provider have one
* Dark markers and extra paper (e.g., to make directional signs on-site)
* Extra copies of documents in standard and alternate formats
* Sign-up sheet for requests of resources in alternate formats
* USB key with all relevant files and documents in case your network connection fails

Stage, risers and projection screens

If you are using a stage for your event, ensure that there is a ramp that is stable, wide, and easily accessed. If the stage is equipped with a lift rather than a ramp, ensure it is in good working order and provides safe and ample access to the stage.

If you are using screens of any type, ensure that they are visible from various points in the meeting rooms. Ensure screens do not cause physical barriers to presenters who must access the head table. Also, ensure that the projectors do not create an obstacle for people with physical disabilities.

If you have not done so already, determine whether you require risers for sign language interpreters. This will be determined based on various factors such as the size and setup of the room (stage vs. no stage), number of participants and the needs of various participants. Some participants may require sign language interpretation within close proximity due to vision-related needs (require the absence of a riser) while the size of the room and number of participants using sign language interpretation would dictate the use of a raised platform for maximum visibility.

This is an example of when one accommodation can become a barrier for another participant. Ideally, participants will have identified specific needs in advance so arrangements can be made for additional interpreters. If not, you may need to work with your participants on the day of the event to adjust seating arrangements to accommodate all needs.

If using risers, ensure they are set-up on either side of the head table and provide clear lines of sight to participants. It is important that you ensure the risers are in a location that will not interfere with lines of sight to any screens, including presentations and captioning screens.

Tables and chairs

Review the spacing of tables and rows to ensure they have been set up as per the agreed upon floor plan, allowing for seven feet spacing between them. If using round tables, ensure they are covered with a dark tablecloth and that chairs are positioned in a half moon, so that all participants have direct line of sight to presenters and interpretive services. If you are using theatre-style seating, ensure the chairs have not been connected to each other. You will need chairs to be free of each other so they can be easily moved as participants choose their seats.

Equipment for service providers

The tables that will be used by the CART providers and note takers should be situated near a power source at the back of the room. Moreover, there should be no obstructions that would make it difficult for the service providers to hear and see all participants, speakers and visual presentations, including the captioning screens.

The interpretation booth should be located as far from the participants as possible, as the interpreters may distract them or make it difficult to hear the speakers. However, interpreters should be able to see who is speaking at all times. AV equipment to control sound and other services should be either near the back or side of the room.

Lighting

Review lighting options with your technicians. You will need to determine what lights, if any, require dimming, etc.

Kiosks

Sufficient space should be allocated in front of kiosks to accommodate wheelchairs, service animals and observers. Chairs for kiosk representative should be provided so that they can sit while speaking with participants in wheelchairs.

Managing the Day of the Event

Go through the venue, from entrance to meeting room, to determine if there are any unexpected barriers and ensure that directional signs are posted near entrances. If internet access is provided, plan to post that link in your signs. If possible, test connectivity to wayfinding applications.

Confirm that all speakers, facilitators, attendants and volunteers have been advised of:

* + Location of restrooms, breakout rooms, exits, and entrances
	+ Location of relief area for service animals
	+ Transportation options and where to access them
	+ Parking locations
	+ Emergency evacuation procedures
	+ Mitigation strategies for accessibility barriers at venue
	+ Their individual responsibilities
	+ Interpretive services being used
	+ Any specific accommodation requirements

Then make sure:

* All attendants and volunteers have been introduced to the participant that they will be assisting, and have the participant’s program/locations for the day
* ASL and LSQ interpreters and attendants are available at registration desk and in other areas, as needed, and provide hard copies of all event materials
* Headphones for interpretive services and assistive listening devices (e.g., hearing loops) are available
* Event organizers have the Accessibility Supply Kit
* Meeting materials and alternate formats are available
* Water has been provided for all participants and can be found on two sides of the room, or ideally at their tables. Ensure straws are available.
* Water has been provided to all interpreters
* Water bowls have been filled and set out for service animals

Directional signage

Set up directional signage in required locations, including all entrances as appropriate. If there are multiple entrances to your venue—or if the meeting rooms are some distance from the entrances—you may wish to position members of your team at key locations to greet participants and assist them to the rooms. It can also be helpful to have sign language interpreters positioned in these locations as well, if possible.

Washrooms

Ensure there are no barriers to accessing washrooms. Verify that all scented soaps and air fresheners have been removed and that scent-free soap has been provided.

Attendants

Plan to have people on hand to assist participants. Some participants may require someone to assist them throughout the day, while others may simply require assistance to their seat. Attendants should also be available in the meeting rooms to remove chairs as participants who use wheelchairs, or who are accompanied by service animals, choose their seats. Ensure that no extra chairs are placed in the aisles, entrances or exits, as this will impede accessibility.

Registration table

Ensure registration tables allow more space for participants who need additional room to move around, such as those who use motorized devices or who are accompanied by a service animal and/or support person.

Have a detailed participant list printed with the necessary accommodation notes so that those signing in participants can facilitate the process (e.g., “reserved seating near LSQ” or “will be following ASL interpreter”).

Ensure that at least one ASL and one LSQ interpreter is available at the registration area at key times in the day (e.g., at the start and end of the day, and during breaks). This will facilitate your interaction with any participant requiring sign language interpretation.

Ensure all attendants are available at the registration desk for participants requiring assistance. If a participant requires an attendant throughout the day, ensure that the attendant awaits the participant at the registration table so they may be introduced on their arrival to the event.

If a participant has requested assistance during an evacuation, ensure the member of your team assigned to this role is at the registration table so they can be introduced to each other.

Participant kits

All materials included in your participant kit (e.g., program, brochures, forms, speeches, etc.) should be provided in the alternate formats requested by the participant. Some of your participants will request specific accommodations. A simple post-it note on the front of their participant kit can be used to indicate instructions to ensure a smooth registration process. For example: “Mr. Smith has reserved seating closed to the English captioning monitor and requires headphones.”

Reserved seating

Unless requested, do not reserve seating for participants with disabilities. It is completely unacceptable to designate a specific seating area or tables for all people who require a specific service or with a disability (e.g., a sign language user table or a specific aisle or table for people using wheelchairs or scooters). Having said this, some participants may request seating in proximity of a specific service. In these circumstances, seating can and should be reserved for these individuals.

Service animals

Make sure to have at least two freshwater bowls nearby and identify where the outdoor relief area is for service animals. You may wish to assign someone from the registration table to brief participants on the layout of the site (e.g., washrooms, food court, dog bowls, relief areas, and taxi stand). This is especially helpful for people who are blind or who use service animals.

Interpreters

When setting up the interpreters in the meeting rooms, always ensure that ASL interpreters are on the same side as the English captioning and the LSQ interpreters are on the same side as the French captioning. Ensure interpreters have been equipped with headphones and receivers, as well as lapel microphones.

Briefing the event team, facilitators and presenters

Before the start of the day, provide the event team with an overview of the event space and duties during registration, the event itself and during wrap-up. All team members should be informed of the location of all meeting rooms, washrooms, entrances, service animal relief areas, and public transportation stops including taxi stands.

Your facilitators and presenters may have minimal experience with interpretive services. Event organizers should debrief them on best practices:

* The first presenter or the facilitator, if applicable, should verify that all the interpreters are in place and ready before beginning any discussion or proceedings. This applies to the beginning of the meeting and after breaks.
* The facilitator or timekeeper should use several methods of communicating when sessions begin or end. For instance, use a ringer or bells to announce that the next session will begin soon. Combine this approach with turning the lights lower to indicate a session change.
* The facilitator should also keep track of the time and ensure the timing set out in the event program or agenda is respected. This is particularly important to ensure that break times are provided to those who require them. Some of your participants will also rely on public and/or accessible transportation, which must be scheduled ahead of time.
* If possible, the first presenter or the facilitator should initiate the whole-of-event roundtable of introductions so that participants who are blind are oriented to who is in the room. This may not be feasible for a large conference; however, the practice should be incorporated for small and medium-sized events.
* Presenters should remind everyone to identify themselves prior to speaking in any capacity.
* Presenters should slow down and speak at a pace interpreters can match.
* All presenters, facilitators and audience members must always use microphones; otherwise, interpreters will be unable to relay what is being said and participants using assistive hearing devices may not be able to participate.
* Facilitators and presenters should allot the time requires to ensure all participants can contribute on an equal basis with others. For example, participants with communication disabilities may require more time to communicate their message, and participants with intellectual disabilities may need presenters to slow down or clarify certain details. It is a good practice to check in periodically with the audience to ensure everyone is comfortable with the pace and to verify understanding of the message.

Microphones

If your event will include theatre-style seating, recruit team members to be “mic runners”, bringing wireless microphones to participants seeking to ask questions. The facilitator should ask participants to raise their hand or have someone signal to the mic runner if they wish to speak.

Emergency planning

Some participants will require assistance in the case of an emergency evacuation. Each person who indicated that they required this accommodation during pre-registration should be assigned an attendant to assist them. On the day of your event, introduce them to each other and ensure that the attendant is made aware of where their participant is seated, as well as which rooms he or she is in during different parts of the day (e.g., during breakout sessions).

If your event will be an open session, assign an attendant to each quadrant of the room. In case of an emergency, it will be that attendant’s responsibility (with the assistance of the team) to ensure everyone from their quadrant evacuates.

Verify the presence and location of evacuation chairs that your venue has in place or that you have rented, if applicable. Ensure the event team is briefed on the proper use of the equipment.



Accessibility Resources,
Checklists and Samples

The following pages include supplementary resources,
checklists, and samples to plan inclusive
engagement and events.

Accessibility Resources

Real-time captioning

Neesons Reporting

Website: [www.neesonsreporting.com](http://www.neesonsreporting.com/)

Email: scheduling@neesonreporting.com

Canadian Hearing Society

Website: [www.chs.ca](http://www.chs.ca/)

Email: requests@oischs.ca

Online resources

* [Making your Webinar Accessible](http://aea365.org/blog/angie-aguirre-on-making-your-webinar-accessible/)
* [Accessible Web Conferences and Webinar Best Practices](https://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/AboutThisWebsite/Accessibility/ucm214503.htm)
* [How to Design and Deliver and Accessible Webinar](http://accessibilityonline.s3.amazonaws.com/archives/2014-02-19%5EHow_to_Design_and_Deliver_an_Accessible_Webinar%5EHandout_2_Slides_Per_Page.pdf)
* [Accessibility Directorate of Ontario](http://www.ontario.ca/AccessON)
* [ON Accessible Websites](http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/publications/accessON/accessible_websites/toc.aspx)
* [Website Accessibility Checker](https://accessibe.com/accessscan?utm_feeditemid=&utm_device=c&utm_term=%2Bdigital%20%2Baccessibility%20%2Bchecker&utm_source=google&utm_medium=ppc&utm_campaign=GSN_%7C_US-CA_%7C_Accessibility_and_Compliance_Checkers_(accessScan)&hsa_cam=9492882453&hsa_grp=97916664713&hsa_mt=b&hsa_src=g&hsa_ad=430994830999&hsa_acc=%7B5473750088%7D&hsa_net=adwords&hsa_kw=%2Bdigital%20%2Baccessibility%20%2Bchecker&hsa_tgt=kwd-717623017829&hsa_ver=3&gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQiAsburBhCIARIsAExmsu7zz4iyikk_CEXNa58F54Dh6VjsB7NHdTsuWYTgLwP2RXx5T45ep30aAix7EALw_wcB)
* [CNIB Clear Print Guidelines](https://cnib.ca/sites/default/files/2018-07/CNIB%20Clear%20Print%20Guide.pdf)
* [Accessible Presentations](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2c3Xbwb7aY3RWlJOE12M2JtVUE/view?pli=1&resourcekey=0-G2wluD2V0e2xV2uNeuLuIQ)
* [Web and Print Graphic Tools](https://graphicartistsguild.org/downloadable-disability-access-symbols/)
* [Accessible Office Documents](http://adod.idrc.ocad.ca/)
* [Public Participation](https://iap2canada.ca/Resources/Documents/0702-Foundations-Spectrum-MW-rev2%20%281%29.pdf)
* [Accessible Meetings](http://www.omssa.com/)
* [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)](http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag)
* [City of Toronto Accessibility Engagement](https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/accessibility-human-rights/accessibility-at-the-city-of-toronto/)
* [National Standards for Community Engagement in Scotland](https://www.voicescotland.org.uk/)
* [Accessible Formats](https://www.voicescotland.org.uk/accessible-formats)
* [A Way with Words and Images](http://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/arc/words-images.html)
* [How to Make Presentations Accessible to All](http://www.w3.org/WAI/training/accessible)
* [One-Person-One-Fare Policy](https://otc-cta.gc.ca/eng/highlights-one-person-one-fare-policy-decision)
* [Alternate Formats](https://www.ocadu.ca/services/odesi/accessibility/alternate-formats)

Accessibility Checklist for Quoting Venues

**Use this checklist when asking for quotes from prospective venues. It will help to identify the things a meeting room must have to make your event accessible.**

For presenters

[ ]  Stage and ramp (or lift) to accommodate wheelchairs or scooters.

[ ]  Head table for presenters.

For participants

[ ]  Round tables without a lip underneath, set seven feet apart and with half-moon seating.

[ ]  Dark tablecloths, either royal blue or black.

[ ]  Row of chairs positioned side by side. Ensure they are not connected.

[ ]  One skirted rectangular table for displaying documents, positioned along wall.

Registration area

[ ]  Two skirted tables without a lip underneath, placed outside of room for registering participants. Include three chairs if needed.

[ ]  Skirted tables without a lip underneath.

[ ]  Two chairs behind every table, one guest chair beside each table.

Other

[ ]  Floor plan to scale, provided by venue no later than two weeks prior to the event.

[ ]  Water and straws on presenter and participant tables.

[ ]  Water for all interpreters on site.

[ ]  Scent-free hand soap (organizers may have to purchase), and no air fresheners in washrooms.

[ ]  Dimmable lights over projection screen.

[ ]  AV equipment, if provided by venue.

Accessibility Checklist for Venues

**Use this checklist to ensure the entire venue you have chosen is accessible for all participants, both inside and outside.**

Layout

[ ]  Accessible washrooms are available near meeting rooms.

[ ]  Spacious rooms that accommodate speakers’ platform, ramp, podium and panel table, interpretation booth, captioning equipment, table and chair setup, locations for documents, refreshments, etc.

[ ]  Entrance doors to meeting rooms have a clear opening of at least 81 cm (2 feet and 7 inches).

[ ]  Room setup allows freedom of movement for people using mobility aides (e.g., guide dogs, wheelchairs, walkers, scooters, etc.).

[ ]  Tables are an accessible height for wheelchairs and scooters. Minimum height of 28 inches to a maximum height of 34 inches.

[ ]  The space underneath the table is at least 27 inches from the floor so that participants have enough room to comfortably tuck in their legs.

[ ]  Nothing is obstructing participants view in meeting rooms (e.g., no pillars)

[ ]  Windows have heavy drapes to block exterior light completely.

[ ]  No services or speakers are positioned in front of a window.

[ ]  Minimal background noise in meeting rooms (e.g., from kitchens, fans, elevators, construction, etc.).

[ ]  No renovations are planned at the facility at the time of event.

[ ]  Designated areas are available nearby to relieve and walk service dogs.

[ ]  All spaces are scent-free.

[ ]  There is internet access.

[ ]  At least two phone lines are available.

[ ]  Lighting is adjustable in meeting rooms.

Meals

[ ]  Fully accessible eating facilities with tables that allow for adequate knee space.

[ ]  Buffet tables are at appropriate height (68 cm/ 2 feet 3 inches).

[ ]  Dietary restrictions can be accommodated.

Drop-off and pick-up

[ ]  Accessible drop-off and pick-up area.

Parking

[ ]  Accessible parking spaces.

[ ]  Designated accessible parking spaces are at least 12 feet wide.

[ ]  If parking is underground, the posted measurement of the overhead clearance is at least 6 feet 6 inches.

Entrance

[ ]  The entrance has a ramp that is at least 81 cm wide (2 feet 7 inches) and has a 1:12 slope. This means that every 1 inch of vertical rise requires at least 12 inches of ramp length, equalling 5 degrees of incline.

[ ]  The entrance for wheelchair access has either level access or an entrance threshold that is not more than 13mm high (1/2 inches).

[ ]  The entrance has an automatic door, or the door handle is a lateral push-bar with an automatic push button nearby that is in working order. There should be no knobs.

Corridor

[ ]  Interior corridors are a minimum of 3 feet 5 inches wide.

[ ]  Flooring material is carpet.

[ ]  Walls are in contrasting colour to the floor.

Elevators

[ ]  There is a functioning elevator available.

[ ]  The elevator door opening is at least 2 feet 7 inches and immediately reopens upon closing if met with an obstacle.

[ ]  The interior of the elevator is at least 4 foot 5 inches by 5 feet 7 inches.

[ ]  Call buttons are at an accessible height (no higher than 4 feet 5 inches) and are also in Braille.

[ ]  The elevator beeps or announces when it has reached each floor.

Public washrooms

[ ]  There is at least one washroom accessible for a person using a wheelchair, scooter, or who requires additional space for a service animal.

[ ]  The washroom is accessible through either an open hallway entrance (i.e., no door) that is at least 2 feet 7 inches wide, or through an entrance door that has a clearing of 2 feet 7 inches. The door should have a lever door handle or functional push button, no knobs.

[ ]  There is a tilted mirror over the sink, and automatic faucets and soap dispensers. Alternatively, faucets can have lever handles and the soap dispenser must be close to counter height.

[ ]  There are no cabinets under the sink.

[ ]  Accessible cubicle door swings out and has a clear opening of 2 feet 7 inches.

[ ]  Accessible cubicle dimensions are a minimum of 4 feet 11 inches, with a grab bar installed.

[ ]  The top of the toilet seat is between 1 foot 4 inches and 1 foot 5 inches from the floor.

Safety

[ ]  The facility and guest rooms are equipped with smoke alarms that have flashing lights and an audible safety-route signaling device.

[ ]  In the case of a fire, there is an established plan of evacuation for persons requiring assistance and that individuals using wheelchairs or scooters can use the main exit routes and doors.

[ ]  All fire alarm pulls and fire extinguishers are at a maximum height of 4 feet from the floor.

[ ]  All interior and exterior routes are clear, easy to navigate and straightforward for all users.

Accessible Checklist for Hotel Guest Rooms

**Use this checklist to ensure hotel rooms you have chosen for event participants are accessible.**

Guest rooms

[ ]  Guest rooms are co-located with the main venue or within close proximity.

[ ]  There are enough accessible guest rooms that meet participant needs and requirements.

[ ]  All accessible rooms have the same features. If not, note what differs.

[ ]  Adjoining accessible rooms are available if needed.

[ ]  Room numbers are indicated in print and in Braille.

[ ]  Entrance doors have a clear opening of at least 2 feet 7 inches.

[ ]  Door handles are levers and are mounted between 1 foot 4 inches and 4 feet from the floor, and/or there is a functional push button mounted at the same height.

[ ]  There is a minimum of 3 feet 5-inch space beside the bed to allow for a lateral transfer.

[ ]  Flooring material is carpet.

[ ]  Light switches and peepholes have been lowered to accommodate a person who uses a wheelchair.

[ ]  A telephone is located next to the bed that includes speaker phone option, flashing “ring” light, and volume control.

[ ]  There is internet access.

[ ]  Check with the hotel to see if they have specific service animal policies.

Guest washrooms

[ ]  Entrance doors have a clear opening of at least 2 feet 7 inches, and a lever handle mounted between 1 foot 4 inches and 4 feet from the floor.

[ ]  Washrooms are equipped with grab bars mounted between 2 feet 5 inches and 2 feet 8 inches from the floor.

[ ]  There is a minimum of 3 feet 5-inch space beside the toilet to allow for a lateral transfer.

[ ]  Height of the sinks allow for adequate knee space of 2 feet 3 inches.

[ ]  Faucets are designed with lever handles or motion detection.

[ ]  Mirror is mounted so that the bottom sits at a maximum height of 3 feet 3 inches.

[ ]  Washrooms have a roll-in shower that is a minimum of 2 feet 5 inches by 5 feet wide, and have a handheld showerhead.

Presenter Checklist

**Presenters must submit materials in advance and have them forwarded to individuals who may not be able to view screens or flip charts. Presentations must be prepared as follows:**

[ ]  Verbally describe visual materials (e.g., slides, charts, etc.).

[ ]  Have printed copies and larger font options available.

[ ]  Avoid using small print on presentations that can’t be seen from a distance. Minimum font is 24pts.

[ ]  Ensure speakers, including those asking questions, always introduce themselves and use a microphone.

[ ]  Always repeat questions to ensure everyone has heard.

[ ]  Speak clearly and at a normal pace.

[ ]  Avoid using acronyms or abbreviations.

[ ]  Activate captions on any video used in the presentation.

[ ]  Encourage hourly breaks.

[ ]  Organize breakout group activities and maximize distance between groups. For example, each group going to a corner of the room or side rooms.

[ ]  Allow sufficient time for participants to move from one area to another.

Sample Registration Form

[INSERT TITLE OF EVENT]

[Insert date and time of event]

[Insert event location]

Registration Form

Please help us to plan an accessible and inclusive event by identifying any personal requirements you may have in advance.

Please complete this form and send it to *[insert name]* by *[insert date].* If you have any questions or require assistance filling out this form, please contact us.

Participant Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Personal Requirements

1. Do you have any dietary needs or restrictions? If yes, please explain.

1. Do you have any specific mobility requirements? If yes, please explain.

1. Do you require assistance in the event of an emergency evacuation? If yes, please explain.

1. Do you have any specific requirements for overnight accommodations, including equipment needs? If yes, please explain.

1. What is your language preference?

[ ]  English

[ ]  French

1. Do you require services or equipment? If yes, please identify the one(s) you require.

[ ]  American Sign Language (ASL)

[ ]  Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ)

[ ]  Official languages interpretation

[ ]  Assistive listening device(s) (e.g., hearing loop)

[ ]  Intervenor/Tactile Interpreter

[ ]  Real-time captioning

[ ]  Other (please specify)

1. Do you require documents in alternate formats? If yes, please identify the one you require.

[ ]  Large Print

[ ]  Braille

[ ]  Audio CD

[ ]  E-Text

[ ]  DAISY

[ ]  Accessible PDF

1. If you are travelling, do you require accessible transportation from the airport/train/bus station to the hotel and return? If yes, please specify your requirement.

1. Will you be travelling with a personal attendant, support person (i.e., parent, sibling, or friend) or service animal?

[ ]  Personal attendant

[ ]  Support person

[ ]  Service animal (please specify type, e.g., guide dog)

1. If accompanied by a support person or personal attendant, please provide contact information.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. If accompanied by a personal attendant, will the attendant be sharing a room with you at the hotel?

[ ]  No

[ ]  Yes

[ ]  Prefer adjoining rooms

***Please note*** *that we have a limited number of adjoining rooms. If an adjoining room is not available, every effort will be made to book rooms close together.*

1. Do you require accessible parking?

[ ]  Yes

[ ]  No

1. Is there anything else you may need assistance with for the event? If yes, please explain

Sample Floorplans

Round-table seating

U-shaped seating

