

# Tips for Hosting an Accessible and Inclusive Event

This checklist is intended to provide suggestions to assist in planning events, public consultations, celebrations, and other occasions so that they can be equally accessible to, and inclusive of, community members who have a disability.

- ☐ Consider the timing of the event – avoid early morning and late evening time slots.
- ☐ Consider the size of the venue required: estimate the number of potential attendees and be liberal in assessing space required to comfortably accommodate the movement of persons using wheelchairs, scooters and other mobility devices, persons with visual disabilities, persons with assistance dogs, and other attendees. (Too small a space creates “bunching” and segregation of wheelchairs etc. near entrances, and limited movement, discomfort, and potential trip hazards for all attendees.)
- ☐ Consider the adequacy of airflow, lighting and acoustics, bearing in mind the number of individuals likely to attend the event and the potential impacts of ambient noise, body heat, chemical sensitivity triggers, etc.

## Promotion and Advertising

- ☐ Ensure that the event is promoted and advertised broadly, and in a manner that includes community members with all types of disabilities.
- ☐ Ensure that promotion and advertising is carried out in a variety of modalities, such as: email, social media, websites, posters, flyers, etc. – to enhance inclusion.
- ☐ Ensure that promotion and advertising occur far enough in advance to allow any requested accommodations to be comfortably and thoroughly implemented.
- ☐ Websites, emails, social media, flyers, hardcopy mailouts, posters and all other promotional and advertising materials for the event should include a statement that anyone requiring an accommodation may contact the event planner. Contact information should be provided that includes the appropriate contact's name, and both telephone and email contacts.

## Sample statement:

“If you require an accessibility-related measure (e.g.: sign language interpretation, captioning, accessible parking, specific dietary requirements, or any other accessibility-related measure) please contact \_\_\_\_\_ (name, phone number, email address, etc.).”

- ☐ Include on promotional and advertising materials, a request that attendees refrain from wearing perfumes and scented soaps to prevent causing allergic reactions for other attendees.
- ☐ In preparing any websites, emails, hardcopy mail outs, posters and all other promotional materials the following basic accessibility principles should be observed:
  - Recommended text size is 14 pitch or larger. The recommended font is a sans serif font such as arial (this document is prepared in 14 pitch arial font). Fancy, small or italic scripts are not accessible.
  - Use high contrast colours – simple use of dark text on light background is preferred.
  - Do not embed essential information, including the name, date, time and location of the event, and the accessibility statement described above, in a graphic. Graphics often cannot be ‘read’ by a screen reader being used by a person with a visual disability.
- ☐ If film or video materials are being used on the website to advertise the event, ideally, they should be captioned.
- ☐ Ensure promotional material is delivered to potential attendees in sufficient time for them to make accommodation requests, and to arrange for transportation.
- ☐ Include with the promotional material clear information on how to get to the event, ideally including both a map and text instructions.
- ☐ Make materials for the event available in alternate formats, such as an electronic version as well as hard copy, and provide copies in advance of the event upon request.
- ☐ Ensure that if you are working with a contractor, they adhere to these advertising and promotion accessibility principles, and that this is included as a condition in the contract terms, to be enforceable. Provide the Contractor with a copy of this checklist.

## **Getting There/Transportation**

- ☐ Provide clear signage at appropriate locations, such as nearby transit points and parking areas.
- ☐ Avoid using signage in a manner that blocks sidewalks or creates a trip hazard.
- ☐ Ensure that the route between parking / transit, and the event location and entranceway, is accessible.
- ☐ Ensure there is sufficient accessible parking.

Per above:

- ☐ Ensure promotional material is available in sufficient time for people to make accommodation requests, and to arrange for transportation.

Per above:

- ☐ Include with the promotional material clear information on how to get to the event, ideally including both a map and text instructions.

## **Event Site**

- ☐ Ensure that all entranceways are clearly marked and accessible – no stairs or ledges/lips to doorways; doors have a minimum width of 32 inches (preferably wider), and doors are equipped with clearly marked automatic openers.
- ☐ Ensure the entrance doors' automatic openers are activated. Frequently, access is limited by automatic door openers that are available, but not activated.
- ☐ Ensure that all products, displays and information are arranged at a height that can be accessed by everyone comfortably, including those using wheelchairs or scooters.
- ☐ Ensure a level, smooth, accessible surface throughout the venue.
- ☐ Ensure there is adequate lighting, including in parking areas and at routes to transit links.
- ☐ Ensure that any emergency evacuation procedures consider the needs of people with mobility and sensory disabilities.
- ☐ Ensure tables are an appropriate height to accommodate wheelchairs.
- ☐ Ensure there is sufficient space between tables for navigation by wheelchairs, scooters, assistance animals, and other mobility devices.
- ☐ Ensure there are sufficient spaces available without chairs, for use by wheelchairs and scooters, but avoid designating a single area as “for wheelchair use” as this segregates individuals using wheelchairs from being seated with friends and colleagues. Instead, disperse wheelchair accessible spaces throughout the event.
- ☐ Ensure the pathways to displays, stages, speakers' podia, etc. are wide enough for wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility aids, and are free from trip hazards.
- ☐ Ensure the stage or speakers' podium itself is accessible, including for persons using wheelchairs, scooters and other mobility aids.

- ☐ Provide seats near the front of the room for individuals who have a hearing or vision disability to provide clear access to sign language interpreters, and so people can more easily lip read, or better hear speakers/sound enhancing devices, etc.
- ☐ Ensure washrooms, telephones and any other conveniences are accessible for all persons, that there is clear, easily visible signage indicating their location, and that the pathway to conveniences are sufficiently wide and clear of impediments and trip hazards.
- ☐ If the event is being held at an outdoor site, ensure that the surface is accessible for persons using wheelchairs and scooters.
- ☐ If the event is being held at an outdoor site, ensure that trails or paths are marked at their entrances with information about accessibility throughout the trail (e.g. identify the presence at some point on the trail of steps, interruptions of the accessible surface, steep slopes, etc.)
- ☐ If the event is being held at an outdoor site, ensure there are areas providing protection from exposure (sun, rain, wind).
- ☐ Ensure that if the event venue is going to be closed at a particular time, all transportation arrangements can be accommodated prior to that time (to prevent guests from being stranded in the venue and unable to meet their taxi or ride).

## **Programming**

As above:

- ☐ Make materials for the event available in alternate formats, such as an electronic version as well as hard copy, and provide copies (including PowerPoint) in advance of the event upon request.
- ☐ Are any ushers, volunteers, etc. informed and aware of accessibility features of the event, and the commitment to accessibility generally? Do they have contact information for a resource in the event of an accessibility problem during the event?
- ☐ Provide captioning upon request.
- ☐ Provide American Sign Language translation information request. Provide the interpreters with as much as possible about the event in advance, including its length and program content. Provide copies of speaker's notes, PowerPoints, etc. in advance. Discuss technical language, persons' titles, or any other unique information with the interpreter in advance. Interpreters will often prefer to work in pairs, particularly for events running more than one hour. Discuss the number of interpreters required. Sign language interpreter sources: Canadian Hearing Services, tel. 1-866-518-000, <https://www.chs.ca/>
- ☐ If you are providing video, ideally it should be captioned, or ASL provided for the video as well.

- ☐ If felt markers will be used (e.g. with flip chart paper), ensure they are non-toxic (the odour from many felt markers can trigger reactions for people with chemical sensitivities). Ensure that any invitees and speakers/presenters are aware of this requirement in advance of the event.
- ☐ Ensure that the venue is aired out well in advance of the event, to disperse chemicals in the air from construction materials, office supplies, etc.

## **Catering:**

- ☐ Ensure that caterers or contractors providing food or drink for the event are able and willing to comply with accommodation requests related to allergens (peanuts, gluten, shellfish, lactose, etc.), food sensitivities and preferences (e.g. vegan, vegetarian, etc.)
- ☐ Provide food and drink in containers and dishes that do not contain plastic.
- ☐ Learn best practices for planning a zero-waste event
- ☐ Provide water using pitchers filled with tap water.
- ☐ Where individual meals are being served, ensure the accommodated meals are clearly labelled to avoid confusion.
- ☐ Preferably provide the accommodated meals first during the food service, to allow for correction in the event of error, but do not 'segregate' the accommodated meals in time (i.e., don't serve the accommodated meals so far in advance that requesters cannot enjoy their meals at the same time as everyone else).
- ☐ Ensure that all foods provided in buffet-style presentation do not contain any allergens specifically identified in accommodation requests, to avoid accidental cross-contamination.
- ☐ In addition to excluding all specifically identified allergens, ensure that all foods provided in buffet-style presentations are clearly, accessibly labelled to identify potential allergens and food sensitivities / preferences (e.g. vegetarian, vegan, dairy, gluten, nuts, wheat, sugar-free, etc.)

## Final Check

Shortly prior to the event, following the event setup, walk through the event site, review the food and program with this checklist. Consider the experience from the perspective of:

- ☐ using a variety of mobility assistance devices,
- ☐ accompanied by an assistance dog,
- ☐ with low vision,
- ☐ with an auditory disability,
- ☐ with a chemical sensitivity, etc.