

Accessible In-Person Event Guidelines

Are you planning an in-person event? Here is a quick checklist of things to ensure your event is accessible for all attendees.

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Before the Event

Let's begin with event preparation and logistics:

1. **Establish a budget and the scope of the event.**
 - a. Make sure to account for costs associated with increasing accessibility in your event budget.
 - b. Consider an additional accessibility budget line for unexpected requests.
 - c. Determine the focus of the event and what needs you might have associated with the focus.
 - d. Consider the length of the event and number of attendees desired.
 - e. Recognize that there are many pieces of event design that may impact accessibility such as alcohol, area of the municipality for the venue, and more.

2. **Determine a venue that meets accessibility requirements including:**

Outside the Venue

- a. Having accessible parking or drop off points
- b. Clear paths leading to the entrances. Ensure that these paths, inclusive of ramps are up to accessibility codes

- c. Doors that can accommodate persons and their mobility devices.
- d. Have clear signage that directs individuals from the parking space or other external spaces to the venue.

Inside the Venue

- e. Ensuring that all doors to the event space are outfitted with Automatic Door Openers (ADOs).
- f. Ensure that there is clear signage to the rooms that the event(s) are being held.
- g. Ensure that the room is wheelchair and mobility device friendly i.e. there are no rugs to trip over and that all pathways to the stage/podium/ dais are clear and easily marked
- h. Accessible washrooms:
 - i. ensure that ADOs are accessible both to enter and leave
 - ii. that there are widened stalls and that the handrails are at the appropriate height
 - iii. there are gender inclusive/ single stall washrooms
- i. Ensure that there are sufficient electrical outlets for the necessary equipment. As well, be sure that these outlets when in use will not become trip hazards.
- j. Check to make sure that the space has good acoustics that will limit echoes and background noise. If there is room in the budget, check to see if you can bring in sound dampeners.
- k. Ensure that there are rooms that can be designated scent free or quiet rooms. You can also request that people refrain from wearing strong scents or have a scent free event.
- l. If your organization or the event space is providing catering then ensure that there is a complete ingredient list for each item as well as any note about cross contamination.

3. Conduct a site visit of the venue.

- a. Many venues will state they are accessible without an understanding of what that may actually mean. As a result do not accept a “yes we’re accessible” statement without evidence.
- b. If possible, move around the site in person and review the accessibility features in person, utilizing the venue checklist.
- c. Ask for a site map and ideally photos to review the site remotely and to plan how to support those in the space.

4. Promo Matters!

- a. Make sure that all of your digital promotional materials are at minimum [WCAG 3.0](#) compliant and physical materials are appropriately contrasted and are not too busy.
- b. State explicitly in promotional material or invitations include when the event will take place, how long it will last, and an agenda with programming and any intermissions.
- c. Clearly note the location of the venue including provide main intersections, closest accessible parking, and any public transit routes.
- d. Offer other important information about the purpose of the event and what will be taking place (in case there is information not present in the agenda).
- e. Be transparent about what access tools will be available (CC, ASL, QSL, Ramps, accessible bathrooms, interpreters, accessible seating etc.)
- f. Ensure that participants can request additional support and that the organization is committed to doing their best to accommodate additional requests .
- g. Provide clear community guidelines including health protections, restrictions, or encouragements. Outline social distancing and mask guidelines clearly so that there is no confusion.

5. Support Accessibility Requests.

- a. Establish a deadline for accessibility requests based on the service needed, for instance most captioning and interpretation services usually need 2 weeks notice.
 - b. Offer a list of accessibility services to select from - and secure potential vendors that can offer those services when requested such as ASL/QSL, crisis support staff, etc.
 - c. Collect all accessibility requests and plan how they can be responded to
 - d. Inform those whose requests are already met through the design of the event about the accessibility features at the event.
 - e. Review unmet needs and look to address those that can be met and inform participants when they are confirmed.
 - f. Connect with those whose requests are still unmet to see if there is an alternative solution. Similarly, you should connect individually with attendees who may have competing accessibility needs. Disabled people are creative at meeting our own access needs and may have an alternate solution you haven't considered. However, organizers should also look into alternatives and be able to present these to potential attendees.
6. **Feedback, Feedback, Feedback!** It's one of the most important ways to learn, so make sure to have a platform set up to receive feedback from your invitees. This can be an app or form, but most importantly it needs to be easy to access and add information to.
7. **Create an event information sheet for use of presenters, staff, volunteers and key guests. Things to include are:**
- a. Venue location and information. Including a map of the area with transit routes, and accessible parking. If possible, create maps that use images as well so that anyone can 'read' the instructions. e.g. using the red TTC sign and an image of a bus, streetcar or train to indicate a bus, subway or streetcar stop.

- b. Key contacts information for the venue, A/V, catering, building security, presenter key contact, and event logistics key contact.
- c. Accessibility features available at the event, and locations of them within the venue if applicable.

Day of the Event

It's the day of the event; here are some things to keep in mind:

1. **Conduct a mobile review to ensure that the event space is accessible by doing the following:**
 - a. Ensure that all ramps and stairs are clear and accessible.
 - b. Ensure that the elevators/escalators are working properly.
 - c. Ensure that any technical equipment (microphones, projectors etc.) is working as needed .
 - d. Ensure that any seating or table arrangements are properly situated so that there is ample space for wheelchair users and others with mobility devices to move around freely.
 - e. Ensure that if there will be speakers that they are properly positioned and that their dais (raised platform that speakers will be using) is accessible.
 - f. Keep up to date with any transit or road closures so that you can update your attendees. (Update event social media feeds with information that may impact attendees.)
 - g. Ensure all accessible features are working properly e.g. Captioning on videos, live captions, etc.
 - h. If there is material with triggering content, use content warnings prior to and during the event so attendees have an opportunity to take precautionary measures. Let attendees know they can leave at any time. If they feel comfortable, they can inform a facilitator privately to let them know they have been activated and need to step out.

- i. Food is properly labeled as to its contents, and a staff member or volunteer who can auditorily read those labels if not in big font with braille.
- 2. Post clear signage.**
- a. If you are handing out event maps or floor plans, remember to have documents in regular font and large accessible fonts with images if applicable. Example: Use maps that have visual descriptions with legends for attendees who find maps with legends more accessible.
 - b. Outside the event space, provide signage that directs people to the event location, washrooms within the space, and the community guidelines.
 - c. At registration have signage on community guidelines as well as a map of the space with the quiet room.
 - d. At the check-in station, provide attendees with information about COVID-19 safety guidelines. Social distancing stickers can be used to indicate an individual's comfort level with social interactions. Red means attendees want lots of social distancing and zero physical interactions. Yellow indicates comfort with fist pumps and closer interactions. Green means they are comfortable with handshaking, hugging, and closer contact. Let guests know they can always check-in with people to confirm their social distancing preferences. This will also allow attendees to change their preferences throughout the event.
 - e. Attendees should also be provided with stickers that indicate their comfort level with photos. Example: Camera with 'do not' red circle image OR camera with a green circle.
- 3. Designate key support people.**
- a. This includes someone who can provide directional support if needed.
 - b. Someone to keep the quiet space clean and clear.
 - c. Someone to support presenters and key guests.
 - d. Someone(s) to be in charge of troubleshooting logistics and technical issues.

Post Event

The event is done; here are a few things to do now:

1. **Thank you notes to presenters, speakers, and key guests.** This could include making sure they have access to the recordings, gifts, medicine for Elders, and making sure that they have received payment.
2. **Thank your attendees.** You can do this by sending out thank you notes to all attendees. The note should also include the link or form to collect optional feedback to learn for future events.
3. **Collate all feedback** from a post-event survey, as well as an option of direct feedback to a staff person.
4. **Now that you have all of the feedback, you can begin to discuss next steps with your team!** Keep in mind that this might involve reaching back out to the attendees for more information.

These guidelines were developed in partnership by [ODLAN](#) and [Pride at Work Canada](#) in 2022 as part of the Pride at Work Canada Accessibility Action Plan. They are meant as a guideline for accessible virtual event standards. If you notice ways to make virtual events more accessible that are missing from these guidelines please email info@odlan.ca and info@prideatwork.ca.

Appendix: Checklists

Venue

- Accessible parking and drop off locations
- Located near public transportation (if available locally)
- Paths are free of barriers
- Main doors have accessible or automatic door opening
- Clear pathway for mobility devices or for two people standing side by side signing
- Gender neutral and accessible washrooms (review that washrooms are actually accessible without a stair, door push, accessibility bars, and large stall).
- Adjustable lighting
- Good acoustics (limited echo/background noise)
- Safe ramps provided to stage or over any gaps with stairs
- Quiet and scent-free space available

Registration, Invitations, and Promotion

- Accessibility requests built into registration
- Deadlines for accessibility requests posted on information page
- More than one form of communication is available
- Listing of what accessibility features are available and unavailable at the venue

Event set-up

- Easy to read signage (font, colour contrast etc)
- Cables and wires secured
- Reserved seating available
- Volunteers or staff to support directions and accessibility requests

Speakers

- Provided an information sheet about the event
- Provided a key contact for the event
- Provided recommendations for accessibility
- Presentations reviewed in advance if possible.

Catering

- Dietary restrictions
- For food served clearly indicate allergens and gluten-free, vegan, vegetarian, or other options.
- Ample space and easy access for food service
- Ensure proper sanitary measures

Post-Event

- Include accessibility as an area for feedback from participants
- Evaluate how accessible the event was and how future events could be more accessible