Accessible Virtual Event Guidelines

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

Before the Event

Let's begin with event preparation and logistics:

1. **Make sure all promotional materials are accessible.** This includes:

   a. Using universal symbols or captioning that indicates what accessibility features will be offered at your event. For example: (insert appropriate image and what it means)

   b. Provide alternative text for images.

2. **Provide additional information about event that is specific to attendees This can include:**

   a. Information on the virtual platform including support resources

   b. Whether or not attendees will be invited to use their video/audio, engage in breakout rooms, participate in polls or surveys (with links to external platforms in advance)

   c. Discussion prompt questions

   d. Community guidelines for virtual engagement

3. **Keep in mind that captioners, ASL or QSL interpreters need to be scheduled at least two weeks prior to your event.**
   a. Confirm that the interpreter is well-versed in 2SLGBTQIA+ sign language or provide them with a list of key terms prior to the event.
   b. Key terms should include 2SLGBTQIA+ community language, Indigenous land acknowledgements and all specific language words outside of the event main language.

4. **If you are planning a presentation during the event, ensure that presenters are provided with the information and tools to make an accessible presentation** (See 10 Ways to Create an Accessible PowerPoint Presentation).
   a. Remind presenters to avoid text-heavy PowerPoint slides and to use plain language as much as they can.
   b. If possible do a review of all presentations prior to the event.

5. **Within registration forms, make sure to provide all attendees with an option to disclose accessibility needs.**
   a. Provide a series of accessibility services related to the event that could be made available and ensure you have contact information for service organizations that could be scheduled, if requested.

6. **If your event involves payment for attendance, consider a compassionate care option for low-income attendees**. This approach includes:
   a. Providing attendees with the option to request free or sliding scale admission either via email or through an event in-take forum.
   b. If the event requires registration, a free ticket option can be included for those who need it.

7. **When providing tech support for your event, make sure to provide instructions for attendees explaining how to use this service.**
   a. Technology support volunteers or staff should be prepared to assist participants with accessing the event or helping with any technological issues.
   b. Schedule the volunteers or staff to begin working 30 minutes prior to the event so they are available for anyone who needs assistance.
   c. Provide instructions to attendee's on how to utilize this service orally, in the event chat, and on screen if there is a virtual presentation. Include these instructions in a leadup email to attendees.

8. **Build breaks into virtual events of over 2 hours and keep them a requirement regardless of time.**

Day of the Event

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

1. **Make sure to enable any closed captioning software you will be using during the event.**
   a. Keep in mind that transcription software is not always reliable.
   b. To account for this, you can also have presenters describe their actions as they are speaking which will eliminate the need for auto-transcribing.
   c. Consider adding any points that use specific community language, or words not from the language of the event.

2. **Ensure speakers and ASL/QSL interpreters are spotlighted for the event.**
   a. Speakers can be spotlighted when they are presenting.
   b. ASL/QSL interpreters should be spotlighted throughout the event to ensure clear communication.

3. **Enable recording during the event, and remember to save the recording and transcript when the event concludes.**
    a. This is a good practice to be able to review what happened during the event to make future events better.
    b. It is also important to be able to send the transcript to any attendees that request it.

4. **Include audio description of images, and audio cues around which presenter is speaking.**
    a. Audio descriptions of images should include the most important points in the image, words, and any objects.
    b. Audio cues around which presenter is speaking can be done by the moderator or host who repeats the first name before passing it back to that speaker.

5. **Allow presenters and attendees to include their pronouns alongside their name. Remind everyone how to change this at the beginning of the event.**
    a. Include any relevant tutorial videos or infographics that will instruct attendees in changing their pronouns (depending on which platform is being used to hold the event).

6. **Let attendees know how to ask questions to panelists.**
    a. Ensure that questions are read out loud before being responded to.
    b. Reaffirm to attendees that personal disclosure in the workplace should be a one way street and questions should focus on the topic matter and professional not personal experiences.
    c. Include tutorial videos or infographics to show how to use the chat function, hand raise function etc.

Post Event

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

1. **Feedback is important for future events. Make sure to provide all attendees with the opportunity to give feedback.**
   a. In the feedback survey, make sure to include a question that asks attendees if they felt that their accessibility needs were met during the live event.
   b. If any needs were not met, follow up with the attendee (if they are comfortable) to discuss how their needs could be met in the future.
   c. Provide attendees alternative ways to provide feedback such as: an email or phone number to call if they are unable to access the online form.

2. **If you recorded the event you can post it to platforms such as YouTube which will give you the ability to auto generate captions. Make sure to manually review and edit the auto generated captions for accuracy and to provide additional information to viewers.**
   a. You can provide additional elements that are critical, such as [speaker name] ahead of the dialogue, and to clean up any misunderstood words or phrases.
   b. You can clean-up this version to export to a Word document to create a text transcript which can include: Presentation Title, Date, Speaker info, Description/Summary of the video / presentation, and then the dialogue.

Appendix: Checklists

Logistics Pre-Event:

- ☐ Captioning confirmed
- ☐ ASL or QSL interpreters confirmed
- ☐ Captioners or interpreters provided key terminology
- ☐ Presenters are provided with accessible presentation checklist
- ☐ Presentations reviewed for accessibility
- ☐ Tech support staff or volunteers scheduled to login 30 minutes prior to the event

Marketing Pre-Event:

- ☐ Promotional materials reviewed for accessibility
- ☐ Registration includes an accessibility requests section
- ☐ Attendees provided information in a pre-event email of the accessibility supports and how to use them (this could include tutorial videos)
- ☐ [*Paid Events Only*] A low cost or free option is provided in registration

Logistics During the Event:

- ☐ Enable closed captioning software and assign a captioner when you have a live captioner
- ☐ Spotlight speakers and ASL/QSL interpreters
- ☐ Recording started and saved with transcript
- ☐ Audio descriptions of images and who is speaking is provided
- ☐ Encourage presenters and attendees to include pronouns in their signature
- ☐ Attendees are told how to ask questions of presenters

Logistics After the Event:

- ☐ Attendees are provided with the opportunity to give feedback through a survey, poll or evaluation.
- ☐ Attendees are provided an alternate option to provide feedback such as a staff member's contact information.
- ☐ Review and edit the transcript before providing to others.
- ☐ Provide the transcript and presentation after the event, as well as recording for those who need to review.