

Accessibility Primer

Introduction

Accessibility is a central aspect of justice. Disability is a function of society refusing to prioritise the needs of people with disabilities.

Accessibility affects every person at all events you hold, not just people with explicit or implicit accessibility needs such as wheelchair users and people who are hard of hearing or Deaf. Making your events and spaces more accessible to people with specific needs will make your event more accessible to everyone present.

Accessibility is not just about events, but how we engage with our communities. This resource should not be used as an events checklist. It is a set of principles and key considerations for our work as organisers.

Types of Accessibility

Accessibility needs cover a variety of bases. Often these needs can intersect and overlap. Examples below are not comprehensive.

Type	Explanation	Example
Physical	The way a person's body interacts with a space	Need for quiet, temperature control, comfortable seating, access to regular breaks, access to appropriate space for support animals' physical needs Comfortable seating for people with fat bodies Space for pram parking Ramps for wheelchairs and prams Secure bike parking
Neuro/sensory	The way a person's brain interacts with their environment, stimuli and other people	Autism, ADHD, Need for routines, planning in advance, advance notification of changes to plans or routines Whether the event or space has or is a scent-free zone
Auditory	The person's ability to process auditory information	Deafness, hard of hearing, auditory processing disorders English as a second (or third) language
Visual	The person's ability to process visual information	Blindness, colour blindness, dyslexia, guide dogs English as a second (or third) language
Motor/mobility	The person's motor abilities	The way a person's body functions to

		help them move around a space, and what supports they may use such as a wheelchair, cane, crutches, etc. Physically accessible bathrooms
Seizures	The person's susceptibility to seizures	Epileptic seizures can be triggered by flashing lights
Learning/ cognitive	The person's ability to understand and learn new information	Cognitive disabilities, intellectual disabilities, brain injuries
Financial	The person's financial capacity to attend an event	Ticket price Cost of child care Cost of transport Cost of accommodation Opportunity cost of taking time off from paid work Availability of public transit
Social	The person's support structures; Other social models such as racism, homophobia, transphobia, etc. Religious/cultural	The person's access to assistance with (for example) transport, child care, etc. The person's experience of the space as safe or otherwise as it relates to their identity and lived experience Accessible bathrooms for people of all genders The event considering religious holidays, prayer times, and other cultural and religious needs English as a second (or third) language Access to parenting rooms
Safety	The ability of people to feel they can attend the event safely	The management of the presence of people who have been a cause of trauma to the attendee Other psychological and emotional safety factors Trigger warnings and content warnings
Dietary	The variety of dietary needs such as specific diets, cultural and religious considerations, allergies	Marking all meals as vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free, allergen-free, kosher, halal, etc.
Online	The accessibility of an online event or space	Closed captioning Permission to have cameras off

		Use or otherwise of chat functions
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How to incorporate accessibility planning into your work

The first thing is to acknowledge that accessibility is a big and important topic, and nobody will get it right every time. Adopt an attitude of openness to feedback, learning, and doing better next time around. It is crucial to ensure that accessibility is a core part of your planning, not an afterthought.

Depending on your situation you could use any of the below options:

- Ensure your overall planning group has people with accessibility needs present
- Have your plans checked by people who have a variety accessibility needs and listen to their suggestions, allowing enough time to implement any suggested changes
- If possible, establish an accessibility committee or working group

Communicating your accessibility accommodations

- Use simple language and avoid acronyms or jargon
- Offer your communications in a variety of formats - visual, written, translated, braille, sign language, aural (voice recording or verbal)
- Allow time for your communications to be received, processed, and planning done by the attendees
- Offer FAQs
- Include accessibility information in all event descriptions and invite participants to contact your organising committee for specific information
- Be up front about any known barriers so that people can make informed decisions

Accessibility as an attitude

How accessible someone with accessibility needs finds your event or space can often come down to the attitude of the people in control of the event or space.

Here's some things to consider:

- Accessibility isn't a burden, **the presence of people with accessibility needs is a gift** and is to be celebrated, not merely tolerated or treated as an afterthought.
- If someone expresses an accessibility need, **treat their need respectfully** and avoid probing, asking why etc.
- **Offer choices** and allow people to choose what works for them, rather than deciding for them. Do not police their choices, even if you disagree, would personally choose differently, or don't understand the choice.

- Treat all information on accessibility as it is given to you with **confidentiality** and privacy.
- **Never ever force anyone to disclose** their specific needs, or the reasons for their needs.
- **Adopt a posture of learning** in relation to accessibility and ask for feedback, review your measures and efforts regularly, and make changes you can.
- **Be honest.** If you are unable to meet a specific accessibility need, let the person or group know in advance, apologise and seek recommendations for future inclusion.

Further resources

[Access Suggestions for Public Events](#)

[Access Suggestions for Mobilizations](#)

[Nothing about us without us](#)

[Social model of disability](#)

[Invisible Disabilities](#)