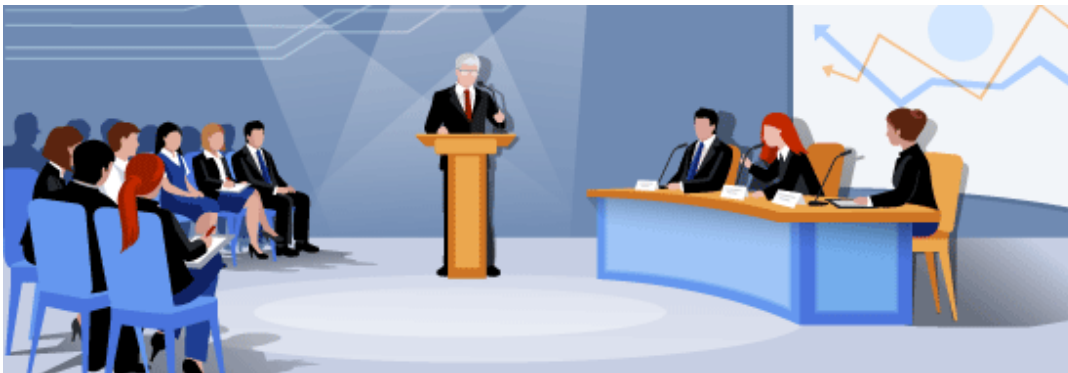


## Accessible Meetings, Events and Conferences Checklist



### WORKPLACE SPOTLIGHT



From the location of an event to the materials used during a training or conference, it is vital that people with disabilities are intentionally included in planning and delivery. Too often event organizers make the mistake of only asking for any needed individual accommodations. This leaves the door open to barriers to access remaining in the physical event location or the technology tools and resources used. This checklist will help event organizers to better account for accessibility in several aspects of their events.

Checkpoints break down into the following categories:

- Location selection and room configuration
- Event registration
- Audio and visual needs
- Catering
- Accommodations for people with communication disabilities
- Print and visual material
- Service animals under the ADA
- Delivering content (for trainers, presenters and meeting participants)

Note that this checklist serves as a starting point. There are additional techniques and tools that you should be familiar with if you regularly organize or participate in events. Much more information is available at the [Workforce Access for All website](http://workforce-access-for-all.org/index.php/planning-an-event) (<http://workforce-access-for-all.org/index.php/planning-an-event>).

### Planning an Event

#### Site Selection

If the location for the event is not accessible to people with disabilities, then there is a barrier right from the start. And if meeting, conference or training rooms are not set up to be accessible then people may be able to get through the front door only to face a barrier once inside.

- In the case where a professional meeting planner is employed, the meeting planner has demonstrated history of planning meetings that include people with disabilities
- Evaluate the location's proximity to accessible public transportation

- Evaluate lodging options nearby for accessibility when securing a block of hotel rooms for overnight participants
- Evaluate accessibility in transportation to and from the airport for out of town guests
- Evaluate accessibility in transportation to and from any events associated with the meeting, training or conference
- Evaluate accessibility in any venues that you use for social, networking or other gathering events outside of the main event
- Include accessibility of the physical facility, (including parking, bathrooms, meeting spaces and any routes between different meeting or conference rooms) in scoring criteria for venue selection
- Evaluate top choices for accessibility items in the scoring matrix
- Refer to the [2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design](http://www.ada.gov/2010ADASTandards_index.htm) ([http://www.ada.gov/2010ADASTandards\\_index.htm](http://www.ada.gov/2010ADASTandards_index.htm)) for specifics
- Account for emergency preparedness and communications with potential venues
- Include people with disabilities in on-site venue inspection
- Include specific language in requests for proposals, contracts or other paperwork
  - Include specifics about who will provide requested accommodations
- Identify and train key staff in disability awareness

### **Pre-event Registration and Communications**

- Online registration is accessible to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level AA
- Online event information, including email blasts and other digital marketing material, is accessible to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level AA
  - This includes web pages, HTML email, plain text email, Microsoft Word, Adobe Acrobat PDF and social media
- Registrants are encouraged to request specific needs
  - Specify options on the registration form such as physical (service animal, raised table height, fragrance free), communication, and dietary accommodations

### **Meeting or Event Room Layouts and Considerations**

- Venue rooms have adequate space for people that use mobility devices, including in spaces where the configuration is flexible
- At least one conference room table is adjustable to account for different wheelchair and mobility device heights
- Seating is available for a personal assistant that accompanies someone with a disability
- Staff will open and prop doors before and after each session
- When providing Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), or live captioning, on-site, the CART provider has adequate space and power sources

## Meeting or Event Room Layouts and Considerations (continued)

- When providing CART, the CART provider is set up so that captions are easily viewable by people who require them
- Presenter's needs are accounted for alongside the needs of attendees and participants

## Audio and Visual Components

It is important for all event participants to be able to perceive the audio and visual elements that make up your event content. In some cases, you will need to make sure that you have assistive technology at the ready to make sure that everyone leaves with the same knowledge, learning or information.

- Determine if venue has assistive listening devices available
- Determine if venue has experience in working with Communication Access Realtime Captioning (CART) providers, either locally or remotely
- Event speakers always use a microphone when available
- When someone asks a question, ensure that the person asking the question can use a microphone
  - If audience members cannot use a microphone, then ensure that speakers repeat questions into their microphone before answering
- Slides used during a presentation are accessible to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0, Level AA standards.
- Slides used during a presentation do not include visual elements that might trigger a seizure for someone with a seizure disorder
- Any alternate formats for paper handouts are acquired and ready on the day of the event. This may include large print or Braille, for example

## Food and Beverage Service

Any meals or break time refreshments should reflect the diverse needs of event participants.

- Ensure that service tables are no more than 36 inches high
- Ensure that service tables do not put items at different heights
- Ensure that servers are available to assist participants, even when using buffet service
- Ensure that dietary accommodations requests are adhered to
- Menus avoid common and high-risk food allergens (shellfish, peanuts, etc.)
- Service and other staff are trained in disability awareness, including accommodating service animals

## The Audience: Accommodations for People with Communication Disabilities

The fact that someone communicates differently does not mean that you cannot be sure that different forms of sending and receiving information are accounted for. People who are deaf or hard of hearing or who have disabilities that effect their speech must be included. That may mean providing what the Americans with Disabilities Act calls “auxiliary aids and services”. Much more information is available on the [Americans with Disabilities Act informational website about Effective Communication](https://www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm) (<https://www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm>).

### In General

- Provide the most effective accommodation for the individual with a communication disability.
- Event and venue staff are trained in disability etiquette and communication

### For People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Event and venue staff know to ask someone to repeat themselves or have an interpreter repeat something instead of assuming meaning
- Any telephone number advertised for public use accepts voice and TTY calls
- Staff that may answer incoming telephone calls are trained in using TTY and accepting calls from relay services
- Videos have captions, or captions are provided by a CART provider
- In a conference or multi-track training, publish which sessions or training slots will have things like CART available

### For People who are Blind or have Low Vision

- When event participants do not pre-register, print material is ready to be provided in large print
- Print material uses legible fonts
  - Adequate font size
  - Ideally a san serif font
  - Mixed case
  - Left justified
  - Adequate color contrast between text and background colors
- Large print is provided with a minimum font size of 18 point
- Digital versions are accessible to the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0, Level AA](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG20/glance/) (<https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG20/glance/>)

## Personal Assistants and Service Animals

For people with disabilities that need them, service animals are critical. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) a service animal is any dog that is trained to perform a specific task or tasks that helps someone with a disability. Service animals under the ADA must be in control of their handler, must perform a specific task or tasks and must not pose an immediate threat to others. Service animals are highly trained to respond to their handlers, only use the bathroom when allowed to do so and to remain calm around others. Animals that fall outside of the ADA definition of a service animal may put their handlers outside of the protection of the ADA. However, event organizers can always make greater allowances for service animals than what is specified in the ADA.

- As a matter of course, no personal assistants are charged a registration fee when accompanying someone with a disability
- Relief areas are designated and publicized
- Staff are trained and know when and how to ask about animals that accompany people to the event

## Tips: For Presenters and Participants

The people that present, train or participate in your event will go a long way toward making the content accessible and the event inclusive. In addition to making sure that slides, multimedia and handouts are accessible, which is most effectively done by the people that create those items, this group will deliver the content to the participants.

- Face the audience when presenting so that those that read lips have a clear line of sight
- Repeat questions from the audience when there is not a microphone for audience members
- Describe visuals in your presentation
  - Think about how you would describe a visual to someone over the telephone
- Use a microphone if available to avoid dead spots and poor audio quality
- Make slides, multimedia and handouts accessible to make the content easy to perceive and understand
- Speak at a medium rate so that interpreters, Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) providers and listeners can keep up with speech
- Spell out acronyms when they are first used in print or digital material and when speaking
- Ask audience members to respond to questions in multiple ways, such as raising hands, nodding or speaking out
- Summarize responses to questions asked of the audience



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