

Gateways Accessibility Checklist: A Planning Tool for Inclusive Conferences, Events, and Trainings

This checklist supports organizations in planning events that are accessible to all participants. Remember that accessibility needs differ across individuals, even if they have the same diagnosis—one approach does not fit all. Plan according to your participants' individual needs. This document offers practical suggestions across key areas of event planning, such as venue selection, registration, and accommodations, to ensure meaningful participation. This is a living document and should be updated as new accessibility considerations arise.

Pre-Planning

Budget

- Include a line item for potential accommodations:
 - American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters
 - CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) real-time captioning
 - FM Loop Systems: transmits audio directly to hearing aids/cochlear implants
 - Large print materials
 - Ramps for stage/dais
 - Other accessibility equipment/services

Physical Location

- Nearby accessible travel options (plane, train, bus, car)
- Accessible parking near venue
- Curb cuts in front of venue
- Walkway safe, even, and free of tripping hazards
- Floors non-slip or low-pile carpeting
- Working elevators
- Accessible restrooms for all genders & single-stall options
- Sinks, dispensers, dryers at accessible heights
- Stepstool available
- Universal/adult-sized changing tables
- Venue allows service dogs per ADA
- Heating/AC units quiet and unobtrusive
- Provide remote attendance option when possible

Registration

- Respectful language for accommodation questions: “Creating an inclusive environment for all participants is a priority. Please use the space below to let us know if you have specific access needs. A member of our team will follow up if additional information is needed.”
- List accommodations that will be provided proactively, e.g. the venue is ADA-compliant, service animals are welcome, captioning, amplification, etc.
- Include coordinator name and contact information
- Allow time to arrange accommodations and ensure organized system for processing requests
- List all food options (vegetarian, gluten-free, diabetic-friendly, etc.)
- Include image descriptions in communications
- Accessibility check on digital materials (PowerPoints, PDFs)

Event

General

- Choice of name tag style (clip, lanyard, magnet)
- On-site accessibility contact designated
- Clear signs for: parking, registration, rooms, dining, restrooms, elevators
- Signs large, legible, at accessible heights
- Quiet room designated
- Fidget tools, noise-canceling headphones, earplugs available

Meeting/Conference Rooms

- Podium/dais accessible via ramp
- Proper lighting for interpreters
- Minimize window glare
- Microphones for all sessions
 - Do not allow for someone to decline. Microphones benefit everyone!
- Accessible table/aisle arrangement to allow for wheelchair access
- Secure all cords/wires



Presenter Responsibilities

- Use respectful person-first or identity-first language
- Ensure materials are accessible:
 - Sans-serif fonts (min 12 pt)
 - Alternate handout versions (high contrast, large print, simplified language)
- Ask participants to speak one at a time and identify themselves
- Use captioned media
- Define acronyms
- Key points written on slides, boards, or charts
- Repeat audience questions
- Patient Q&A facilitation
- Share slides/materials in advance and post-event

Food and Refreshments

- Adequate space for service animals, wheelchairs, mobility devices
- Avoid floor-length table linens
- Served meals preferred; buffet assistance if needed
- Menu reflects cultural awareness and dietary diversity
- Offer vegetarian, gluten-free, dairy-free, diabetic, and other alternatives
- Lightweight plates/cups
- Food, plates, utensils within easy reach
- Provide bendable straws
- Include interpreters, captioners, or note-takers at meals if budget allows

Post-Event Follow-Up

- Include accessibility questions on survey
- Reflect on successes and areas for improvement
- Record notes and recommendations for future events

Online Video Conference Calls

- Enable captions before starting
- Test captions and accessibility features in advance
- Confirm platform supports live captions
- Ask participants about ASL interpretation needs
- Book interpreters early and include costs in budget
- Main room used for captioning (breakouts may not support)
- Ask participants to adjust lighting for visibility
- Allow multiple participation methods (voice/chat)

Add Your Own

- _____
- _____
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