

# Accessible Meeting and Event Guide

Coordinated Accessibility Strategy  
January 2026

# Accessible Meeting and Event Guide

## Commitment to Hosting Accessible Events

We are committed to improving accessibility in all aspects of the campus and challenging ableism for a more inclusive campus and world. We strive to be a leader in creating an inclusive, accessible community. We acknowledge that not everything in our community is accessible and we are actively working on identifying, addressing, and preventing accessibility barriers for persons with visible and non-visible disabilities.

Carleton's [Coordinated Accessibility Strategy \(CAS\)](#) serves as a framework to guide Carleton's ongoing commitment towards a campus that is accessible and inclusive for all students, employees, and visitors.

**This document aims to serve as a set of guidelines/considerations to help ensure all Carleton University events are as accessible and inclusive as possible and for all attendees to fully participate.**

These guidelines are a living document. Please contact [access@carleton.ca](mailto:access@carleton.ca) with any feedback.

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# Event Planning

This section provides advice on what to keep top of mind when planning an event that will be accessible to all. The provision of supports should be considered in the initial planning phase, and in all following stages of event planning.

It is important to develop your event around the wellness and inclusion of all attendees.

## Scheduling and Timing

By scheduling events with accessibility in mind, organizers can accommodate persons with disabilities, people with busy schedules, and create an enjoyable and welcoming experience for all attendees.

Consider the timing and breaks to ensure that everyone can participate fully and comfortably. Design accessible events in a way that accommodates the diverse needs of attendees, including those with disabilities. This means that considerations of event time of day, duration, and break frequency and duration play a significant role in ensuring that everyone can enjoy the experience to the fullest.

As part of creating the event schedule and agenda, consider the following:

- Provide enough time during presentations for questions and discussion.
- Schedule short breaks (5-10 minutes) between each event activity.
- Plan to have the event start and end during times at which public transit is running regularly. Consider preparation needs of individuals who use attendant services when selecting the event start time.
- Finalize and send out the event schedule at least one week before the event, so that participants have time to make travel arrangements to and from the venue(s).

## Event Duration

When planning events, it's important to consider the length of the event itself. This means thinking about how long attendees will participate, the time needed for setup and breakdown, and whether the event's duration is appropriate for the intended audience and purpose.

## Breaks

Including frequent breaks of an appropriate length is essential to ensuring that all participants can fully engage and benefit from the experience. Whether it's a conference, workshop, or webinar, taking regular breaks allows attendees to recharge, refocus, and digest the information presented. Short (5-10 minute) breaks are recommended between each event activity.

## Time of Year

To ensure an accessible and inclusive event, consider the time of year, including the weather conditions and season, which can affect the accessibility of the event for attendees with disabilities. For instance, icy and snowy conditions in winter can create challenges for persons with mobility and visual disabilities, while extreme heat in summer may pose as a barrier for those with respiratory disabilities. Therefore, considering all seasonal variables is essential when planning an inclusive event.

# Accommodation Requests

As part of event planning, be sure to review registration forms or invitation responses to determine which services and supports participants will need. If a request cannot be accommodated, it is important that the event access coordinator work with the participant to find an appropriate alternative.

When providing captioners and interpreters, book them at least 3 weeks prior to the event date. It is common for these services to get booked early, and delaying your reservation could result in being unable to provide the necessary accommodations for your participants.

Some items to include in your production plan:

- Contact service providers and rental companies to discuss service and support needs and to receive quotes.
  - Consider using Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART). CART is a live, word-for-word transcription of speech-to-text so that individuals can read what is being said in a group setting or in meetings. It is an example of a broader accessibility feature that benefits many attendees, not just those with hearing loss.
- Rent all required accessibility/support equipment and services and arrange for delivery and pick-up where required. Examples include:
  - Spare wheelchair or scooter with an air pump, bath seat, commode chair, Hoyer lift, etc.
  - Interpretation services (e.g., sign language interpreters, spoken language interpreters, oral interpreters, CART, deafblind interveners, etc.) and associated technology (e.g., computers, screens, FM or infrared system, headsets, etc.)

# Budget

Consider accessibility as part of normal business budgeting, just like food, gifts, room rental or speaker fees. Set aside some funds early in the planning stage in case there is a request for interpretation, braille materials, etc. You may want to consider:

- Hiring an audio-visual describer to provide live descriptions of what is happening at your event.
- Hiring interpreters: LSQ and ASL interpreters are essential for Deaf participants.
- Providing translation: Live French/English interpretation is needed for unilingual participants and LSQ/ASL interpreters.
- Providing fidget toys and relaxation spaces. These can help participants manage stress, including individuals who identify as neurodiverse.

Please note that providing just one of the following three resources – American Sign Language (ASL), Community Access Realtime Translation (CART), and Event Captioning – may not meet the needs of all attendees, and the meeting/event organizers should be prepared to field requests accordingly.

Based on experiences at Carleton, you may want to consider budgeting the following amounts for disability-related accommodations. Note that rates are subject to change based on providers, hourly rate considerations, size or length of event, and items such as personal protective equipment:

- French/English translation: 1 translator plus equipment (e.g., 2-day event: \$2500)
- ASL interpreting: \$120/hour/person (e.g., 2-day event: \$1500)
  - Book 3-4 weeks in advance of event day
  - Carleton's disability service office recommends using [Asign in Ottawa](#)
- Real-time captioning (CART): \$120/hour/person (e.g., 2-day event: \$1500)
  - Book 3-4 weeks in advance of event day
- Attendants: 2 attendants at \$30/hour (e.g., 2-day event: \$840)
  - At Carleton, [email Matthew Cole](#) or call 613-520-2600, ext. 6615

- Visual adaptations: \$85/hour
  - 2 French and 2 English copies of PowerPoint slides printed in braille
- Anti-stress/Sensory toys: \$15
  - Stress balls, Tangles, Rubik's cubes, etc. from a dollar store
- Extra room (for quiet/decompression space): cost varies

It is suggested that you also:

- Discuss anticipated inclusion service and support needs and add these to the list of event budget items.
- Set aside a contingency fund (2-5% of overall event budget) for additional services and supports needed by participants (as indicated in advance on registration forms or that arise during the event). Be flexible and open to alternative arrangements – if there are last- minute requests, ensure you involve the attendee in the solution.
- Set aside a reasonable amount to support the work of any volunteers (e.g., provision of meals, purchase of name tags or t-shirts, etc.).

# Staffing and Volunteers

When planning an event, it's essential to accommodate all attendees and ensure participants have access to everything the event has to offer; that's where event staff come in. They play a crucial role in ensuring that everyone is safe, comfortable, and has an enjoyable event experience.

## Access Coordinator

Designate an Access Coordinator on your team for the event. At Carleton, responsibilities include working with Equity Services, Paul Menton Centre (PMC), and other service offices to:

- Receive, confirm, and track all access requests from participants.
- Manage and implement accommodations.
- Communicate accommodation arrangements with participants and staff.
- Identify assistants who will be available to help with access-related tasks.
- Coordinate all materials for accessible distribution several days in advance.
- Request interpreters and captioners one month in advance.
- Develop and implement access training for event staff and volunteers.

## Attendants and Interpreters

Having attendants and interpreters available can help support attendees. Introduce the attendants and interpreters to ensure everyone is aware they are available for support as needed. Attendants and interpreters are versatile and can:

- Help participants travel from the accessible transit drop-off point to the event.
- Help participants to the bathroom and to move around the room between activities as well as retrieve food and assist eating as needed.
- Assist during breaks and social activities so participants can continue to interact effectively with their peers.

# Volunteers

- Consider appointing an event staff person as Volunteer Coordinator.
- Arrange for an appropriate number of volunteers who reflect the diversity of event participants.
- Interview potential volunteers.
- Ask volunteers if they require any supports or services to fulfill their roles.

# Additional Roles

Designate a person (or several, depending on event size) to be the behind-the-scenes support to troubleshoot issues for participants.

Examples of these potential roles include:

- Event Coordinator
- Production Coordinator
- Marketing and Promotion Coordinator
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Speaker Liaison
- Technical Support
- Catering and Refreshments Assistant
- Emergency Response Lead (preferably an event staff member)

# Training

When hosting an accessible event, encourage event staff members to attune to the accessibility requirements of all event participants.

Direct staff to review the following resources, as applicable, prior to the event:

- [Ontario Accessible Events Checklist](#)
- [OMSSA Accessible Floor Plans](#)
- [Event Registration Accessibility Requirements Field Queries](#)

Also consider using an Accessible Customer Service training module, such as:

- [AccessForward: Training for an accessible Ontario](#)

Train staff and volunteers assisting participants with disabilities on how to effectively communicate with participants, and provide supports that enable full participation in the event.

## Staff and Volunteer Training

- Hold an event orientation session for all staff and volunteers, including arranged diversity and inclusion training.
- Brief all staff and volunteers on emergency and evacuation protocols.
- Consider high-contrast name tags, arm bands, or vests so staff and volunteers can be easily identified.
- Schedule a debrief for staff at the end of the event (or at the end of each day of the event).
- Provide a staff/volunteer space separate from the main venue(s).
- Train all event staff and volunteers and ensure they have access to information about working with all disabilities (both visible and non-visible), including:
  - Visual impairments
  - Deaf and hearing impairments
  - Mental health
  - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
  - Autism Spectrum Disorder
  - Acquired Brain Injury
  - Medical

# Emergency and Evacuation Plan

General safety planning includes:

- A staff member or volunteer assigned as the Emergency Response Lead to oversee managing communication, information, and procedures during emergency or evacuation situations.
- A list of key contacts, indicating each contact's role.
- A list of who to notify and when, in the event of each type of emergency.

Some attendees may have specific needs related to health, security, and safety. Please consider the following:

- Review participant registration forms and note all potential personal health-related emergencies that could arise, along with individualized evacuation procedures (Accessibility/Accommodation Staff to work with Emergency Response Lead).
- Compile a list of each participant with allergies, what they are allergic to, and how to identify and respond to an allergic reaction.

## Emergency / Carleton Contact List

Be sure to compile contact information for:

- FMP Service Desk (door openers, elevators, etc.)
- Campus Safety (evacuation plans, etc.)
- Pharmacies: nearest and 24-hour
- Urgent Care, E.R. and crisis hotline
- Accessible transportation
- Veterinary office, emergency vet and pet stores

# Event Preparedness Kit

You may also want to prepare an Event Preparedness Kit for accessibility including items such as:

- First aid kit with latex-free supplies.
- Paper, pens, unscented markers, scissors, tape, duct tape, blank name tags and clipboards.
- Bike tire pump and patch kit for wheelchair tires (if you need this, contact PMC).
- Water bowl and dog waste bags for service dogs.
- A wheelchair or mobility device for those who have difficulty walking or standing for extended periods of time.
- Signage and materials in braille or large print for those with visual impairments.
- Noise-cancelling headphones or earplugs (latex-free) for those with sensory sensitivities.
- A portable ramp for those who require accessible entry into the venue.
- Water and snacks, including items that accommodate dietary restrictions and allergies.
- Emergency medications, such as EpiPens or inhalers.
- Backup power sources and charging stations for medical devices that require electricity.

# Venue

The venue plays a crucial role in determining the level of accessibility of the event. A poorly selected venue can present significant barrier for attendees with disabilities, impeding their ability to fully engage in the event. As a result, it's essential to consider the accessibility features and accommodations provided by the venue to ensure that everyone can fully participate and enjoy the event.

## Important Considerations

- Conduct an early site visit to clarify accessibility and determine additional planning requirements.
  - Consider having individual(s) with a disability accompany you on the site visit.
- Ensure the space is large enough for all needs, including participants, production, and accommodations.
- Ensure automatic doors at entrances and exits are available and functioning.
- Ensure accessible and all-inclusive washrooms are available.
  - Check that the washrooms are functioning, clear of clutter, and can be easily accessed.
- Check that the acoustics of the venue are adequate and that noise from external sources (e.g., traffic, crowds, other events, etc.) does not interfere.
- Ensure the venue has a level front entrance or safe ramp for participants with mobility disabilities.
  - A safe ramp is considered to have slope of 1:20, or a 1cm increase in height for every 20cm of ramp length, but a slope of up to 1:12 is acceptable.
  - Ramps should have a non-slip surface and handrails should be well lit and kept free of snow, ice, and other obstructions, such as locked up bicycles.
- Ensure venue floors are stable, firm, and slip resistant. If the room is carpeted, keep an eye out for lifted corners and trip hazards.

- Ensure there is enough venue space for event activities as well as a resting place for individuals with fatigue disorders, and an interfaith space for religious participants.
- Ensure necessary technical equipment will not overwhelm available power supply or electrical circuits.
- Check that refrigeration is available on-site for any medication required by participants.
- Ensure the venue is evenly lit and does not have strobe lighting or flashing lights.
- Check if there are sufficient Tactile Ground Surface Indicators (TGSIs).
- Confirm there is a wheelchair accessible washroom available with a wide door (92 cm) that opens outwards, a stall with a grab-bar and enough space between the toilet and the side and front walls (89 cm) to allow for a side or front transfer, and 1.5m by 1.5m of clear space.

## Transportation, Parking, and Wayfinding

When planning an event, it is crucial to consider accessibility and inclusivity for all attendees. Among the key factors to consider are transportation and wayfinding, which play a critical role in ensuring that persons with disabilities can access and navigate the event without barriers.

### What is Wayfinding?

Systems and materials that guide attendees in the physical environment. They should be simple and easy to read (e.g., clear directions, appropriate signage). It is important to consider how to navigate the physical venue as part of accessibility.

### Important Considerations

- Be aware of location of wheelchair accessible parking close to the main venue entrance(s).
- Be aware of the public transportation access to the event venue.

# Floor Plan and Seating

The layout of a space has a significant impact on the accessibility of the event. By taking the time to consider the floor plan, event organizers can create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all participants. This can lead to a more successful and memorable event for everyone involved.

## Important Considerations

- Ensure that all aisles and walkways are free of obstacles for people using assistive devices.
- Widen aisles: individuals using wheelchairs should be able to navigate freely in the space.
- Consider using a bigger room than capacity estimates would recommend. Leave a four-foot path between rows and aisles, paying particular attention to food stations and doorways.
- Avoid grouping individuals with disabilities together in one seating area.
- Reserve seating near entrances for participants who have requested this, and provide staff and volunteers so they can enter and exit the venue discretely.
- Reserve seating for Personal Care Attendants where they will be available to the participant they are assisting if signaled, but otherwise unobtrusive.
- Ensure the seating areas for wheelchair (or other mobility device) users are not on a steep slope.
- Reserve seats in the front row for Deaf, hard of hearing, and persons with low vision.
- Provide seating options for any event activity where you expect participants to be standing or walking around (e.g., cocktail hour, networking session).
- Consider a variety of seating options including chairs with and without arm rests.

See an example of an accessible floor plan in the [OMSSA Accessible Floor Plans](#) document.

# Refreshments and Catering

It is important to include a range of food including vegan/vegetarian, gluten-free, dairy-free, and Halal options. Ensure that these options and ingredients are clearly labeled in large print and either individually packaged or offered in a way that avoids cross-contamination.

## Important Considerations

- Provide a variety of meal options and include items that are easy to eat.
  - For example, foods that are not too messy, and foods that do not require utensils.
  - Note that some people can only eat food cut into small pieces.
- Some participants may need support when eating or drinking.
- Consider adapted cutlery for ease of grip, etc.
- Ensure the availability of straws.
- Provide clear labelling for adapted and special dietary options.
- Provide tables. Many people will need a place to rest their plate and/or cup.
- Food on the floor can distract service dogs. Always keep the floor clear.
- Provide a mini fridge to store medicine.

# Communications

Effective communication is one of the most important aspects of organising an inclusive event. Communication is critical in ensuring that all event attendees have equal access to information, resources, and opportunities. This includes clear and timely communication regarding accessibility features, accommodations, and any other relevant details that may affect the experience of participants.

## Respectful Communication

When planning an accessible event, it is important to use respectful communication to ensure that everyone feels valued, included, and accommodated. Respectful communication involves using inclusive language and avoiding potential triggers or barriers for attendees. Inclusive language aims to acknowledge diversity, promote equity, and convey respect to all people. It can involve the use of gender-neutral language and person-first or identity-first language.

- Person-first language emphasizes person before disability (e.g. “person who is blind,” or “person with a mobility disability”).
- Identity-first language places disability first (e.g., “autistic person,” or “Deaf community”).
- Individuals and communities may have preferences of either person-first or identity-first.
- Which should you use?
  - Person-first is more commonly used, is often recommended by organizations, and is more common in formal writing.
  - Unless you know that the organization and individual(s) you are working with prefer identity-first, it is recommended that you use person-first language. (This guide will reference person-first, but there may still be circumstances in which you use identity-first).

Ensure pre- and post-event communications such as emails, social media posts and webpages are designed and written accessibly. Consider the following:

- Font choice and size (sans serif, larger font size)
- Colour contrast
- Use of accessible images and alt-text descriptions
- Use of accessibility icons (Carleton's Accessibility Icon Toolkit is a great resource)
- Use of headings and plain language
- Avoidance of charts, tables, or drop-down menus that can be inaccessible for assistive technology

Include detailed and step-by-step event access instructions via email or on a webpage. Be patient with your attendees when you're explaining how to use online platforms, especially if they are new to the platform and haven't used it before. Repeat information if necessary.

Before the event, include information about what to expect. Continue to use accessible, plain language during the event and avoid using jargon. Explain acronyms or terms that attendees may not be familiar with.

## Important Considerations

- Consistent images/branding
- Information available in multiple formats (e.g., registration available through web, mail, or phone)

# Registration

- Ask attendees to advise of any accessibility requirements when registering so that these adjustments are managed as part of the event.
  - Determine a registration or response deadline that allows enough time for booking necessary services and supports and making other accommodation arrangements.
  - Carleton suggests using this language to invite access requests:
    - “Should you require accessibility or dietary accommodations, please contact [Event Access Coordinator] by [RSVP date].”
    - “Should you have access requests, please contact [Event Access Coordinator] by [RSVP date].”
- Clearly outline the accessibility features of the event and venue you have chosen.
  - Advise attendees at registration of all accommodations being provided.
  - Provide information about accessing the venue, including accessible parking, general parking, public transport, and venue drop off points.
  - Indicate the estimated amount of walking/physical activity to travel between venues.
  - Ask participants to use scent-free products.
- For ticketed events, disability attendants and similar services should be granted complimentary admission.
- Communicate that material will be available in alternative formats, as required, before and after the event (e.g., braille, large print, audio, electronic).
  - Check and update all presenters' materials for accessibility.
  - Consider distributing all materials digitally in advance to those who request it.

# Accommodations and Access Requests

Providing participants with the tools to request proper accommodations is crucial when organizing an inclusive event. Access request services should be promoted, and all potential participants should have the opportunity to speak with an event support person regarding their accessibility needs. Disclosure of these services should be clear, simple and easy for participants to engage with.

Access request services should be advertised throughout all event materials including:

- Website/landing page
- Social media
- Email campaigns
- Posters/invitations

# Marketing and Promotion

Hosting an accessible event is important to ensure that everyone can participate fully. However, simply making an event accessible is not enough if people are not aware of its accessibility features. This is where marketing and promotion come in. Effective marketing and promotion strategies can raise awareness about the event's accessibility and attract a wider range of participants. In this way, marketing and promotion play a crucial role in ensuring that accessible events are successful and inclusive.

## Social Media

Social media networks allow events to reach a much broader audience, and enable individuals to engage with your event before it even begins. Therefore, it is important that social media content is accessible to all.

### Important Considerations

- Graphics and videos include:
  - Alternative text descriptions (alt text)
  - Contrast that supports individuals with low vision
- Text content is written in plain language.
- Multiple-word hashtags are capitalized at the beginning of each word.
- Font size is adequate (ideally at least 12 point).
- Language is inclusive.
  - Gender-neutral pronouns
  - Use of person-first language (e.g. “person who is blind”)
- Graphics include [accessibility icons](#).
- Graphics and language are similar/consistent throughout the event.
- “Click here” is not used as the anchor of a hyperlink. Instead, a description is used.
  - For example, hyperlink the phrase “more details on our upcoming event.”

- Text is not placed over images.
- Emphasis is shown using a bold font rather than italics.
- The contrast between text and colored backgrounds is sufficient for individuals with low vision.
- The use of emojis is avoided. These can be difficult for screen readers to depict.

## Event Website / Landing Page

Websites and landing pages are popular ways to generate interest in an event. Landing pages are often considered the primary resource for an audience to learn about an event, ask questions, and engage with an event before it occurs.

This section outlines the considerations and accommodations that should be made when developing an accessible and inclusive event website and landing page.

- Event title is large, bolded, and it is clear to users that this page is associated with the event.
- Includes the event title, date/time, location/platform (address or 'Via Zoom'), contact information for event support, accommodations, and additional important event details.
- Includes a detailed event description using inclusive language.
- Emphasis is shown using a bold font rather than italics.
- The contrast between text and colored backgrounds is sufficient for individuals with low vision.
- All images, icons, and videos include alternative text descriptions.
- Includes [accessibility icons](#).
- Text is not placed over images.
- There is adequate space between titles and headings and the variation between title styles is clear.

# Email

Email is a form of direct communication promotion that provides event organizers with an alternative form of targeted marketing. Email campaigns allow for directed, personalized outreach to potential participants and provide an initial contact for any questions and further event communications.

## Important Considerations

- Subject line is clear (brief and specific).
- Accessible accommodations are outlined in communications prior to the event.
  - For example, attendees are provided space to disclose any dietary restrictions, need for special accommodations, etc.
- There is adequate space between titles and headings and that the variation between titles styles is clear.
- Font size is adequate (ideally at least 12 point).
- All images, icons, and videos include alternative text descriptions.
- Emphasis is shown using a bold font rather than italics.
- “Click here” is not used as the anchor of a hyperlink. Instead, a description is used.
  - For example, hyperlink the phrase “more details on our upcoming event.”
- Language is inclusive.
  - Gender-neutral pronouns.
  - Use of person-first language (e.g., “person who is blind”).

# Invitations

Invitations are a valuable tool for ensuring that all potential attendees feel welcomed and accommodated. Whether it's providing information about accessibility features, requesting dietary restrictions, or simply asking for pronouns, invitations set the tone for an inclusive and respectful event.

## Important Considerations

- Ensure digital invitations are accessible. If physical invitations are provided, ensure attendees can easily obtain accessible digital versions.
- Ensure that guests and participants can register for the event in a range of ways, including telephone, email or online. If using an online form or third-party booking service, make sure it is accessible.
- Ask attendees to indicate their preferred name (for nametags).
- If disability-related accommodations are being provided without request (e.g., ASL interpretation, live captioning, dietary menu options), be sure to communicate this in the invitation.
  - Consider this messaging: “Carleton strives to make all events on campus as accessible as possible...” and then indicate access being provided (e.g., interpreting, captioning, listening devices, audio description).
- Use appropriate, accessible language (person-first: e.g., “person who is blind”).
- Use adequate font size (at least 12-point font) for all text content.
- Ensure the contrast between text and coloured backgrounds is sufficient for individuals with low vision.
- Ensure the invitations either provide a location for people to indicate their accommodations, or provide details about upcoming communications with space to disclose any special accommodations.
  - For example, “An email to all attendees with details on accessible accommodations and a location to request specific accommodations will be sent prior to the event.”
- If providing food or drinks, ensure the invitations give attendees the opportunity to indicate any dietary preferences or allergies.

# Posters/Handouts

Having posters and handouts available is important for ensuring complete accessibility of an event. Providing physical posters and handouts ensures that everyone can access information and details about the event.

## Important Considerations

- The event title, date/time, and additional important details are included.
- Event title is in large, bold font.
- Font size is adequate.
- The contrast between text and coloured backgrounds is sufficient for individuals with low vision.
- Graphics include [accessibility icons](#).
- Language is inclusive.
  - Gender-neutral pronouns.
  - Person-first language (e.g., people with spinal cord injuries).

# Signage

Signage is a key component of any accessible event as it ensures that everyone can navigate the space safely and efficiently. Effective signage should be clear, easy to read, and prominently displayed throughout the event space, including in parking areas, entrances, exits, and key locations within the venue.

## Important Considerations

- Signs and elevators have braille signage or other tactile formats.
- A large print poster of the event schedule is posted in a central location.
- An event resource provides verbal explanations of the layout of the venue at the start of the event. This should include the layout of the room and directions to toilets, meal areas, quiet areas, breakout rooms, and fire exits.
- Signs are designed in high-contrast, large print, and with a consistent format/layout.
- Signs include the use of plain language.
- Materials include [accessibility icons](#) to indicate which supports or accommodations are available in specific spaces/activities.
- Materials use person-first language (e.g., person with a disability).
- Signs indicate where there are quiet areas, so people know where they can go if they feel overwhelmed.

# Programming

## Presentation Planning

Planning timelines that include deadlines for submission of presentation materials can go a long way to ensure more accessible engagement of participants.

Ensure the event team completes the following preparations:

- Notify presenters of the deadline for submitting presentation materials for adaptation and re-formatting.
- Note the technology requirements of presenters and confirm that these will be available on-site along with technical assistance (e.g., extension cords, power bars, laptops, microphone, sound system, projector, etc.).
- Note any service or support needs the presenters may have and confirm that these can be provided.
- Discuss how presenters will deliver their presentations (e.g., from behind a podium, while walking around and interacting with the audience, while sitting at a table) and make the necessary arrangements to facilitate this in the presentation space.
- Follow up with presenters after receiving all event registration forms or invitation responses to ensure they are aware of all services and supports that will be in use during their presentations (e.g., interpretation, captioning, adapted materials, assistive listening devices, etc.) so they can plan accordingly.
- Ensure that videos will be captioned. Videos that are linked or integrated into your presentation should also be captioned.
  - TIP: If you're uploading the video to YouTube, you have the option to use automated captions and then edit those captions to fix any errors before publishing.
- Ensure videos are audio described where appropriate. If they cannot be audio described, presenters should supply any visual information that a person with low vision may not be able to access.

- Presentation materials should be clear and readable. You may provide presenters with these guidelines, and also allow time to review materials before the event.
  - choose appropriate fonts (sans serif)
  - use large font sizes and visuals
  - produce print materials in large font (16-point or larger)
  - check colour contrast
  - avoid cluttered or busy visuals
  - provide image descriptions (ALT text)
- Note that Microsoft PowerPoint has an Accessibility Tab that reviews:
  - the order a screen reader will read the elements of each slide
  - the use of ALT text
  - colour contrast and font size; and
  - hyperlinks (embedding hyperlinks into text)

# Working with Presenters

When inviting presenters to participate in an event, it is essential to consider their well-being.

- Ensure that presenters feel welcome and included.
- Address all necessary presenter accommodations and confirm prior to the event.
- Ensure presenters are aware of event schedule, timing, and breaks.
- Ensure presenters have access to refreshments and a quiet, secluded space to take breaks between event activities.

Also be sure to provide presenters with suggestions that will benefit the participants.

- Speak clearly and use plain language as much as possible.
- Describe visual information.
- Make presentations dynamic to maintain audience interest.
- Share instructions both verbally and in the chat/in writing (links, questions, etc.).
- Announce who is speaking in each turn, speak clearly and not too quickly (important for interpreters, captions, and for following along).
- Wear colours that contrast with their skin tone. Otherwise, the lighting can 'wash out' their faces and make reading lips difficult.
- Consider the diversity of participants. For example, some people take longer to express their ideas and individuals should be given time to ask questions or make statements at their own speed. Yet, it is also important to stay on schedule, so presentations may need to be tailored to allow for flexible engagement.

# Online Events

In general, the same principles and guidelines exist for both online and in-person events. Therefore, most of the information in this guide can apply to online events. This section is specific to online events.

Online events often require you to host in a distributed environment, where members of the event team are in multiple locations during the event. Ensuring that they have a seamless way to communicate will help with event delivery and the experience of attendees.

Online events also may require more orchestration of behind-the-scenes work. Hold dress rehearsals to ensure the presenters and event team are comfortable with roles and platform features, and the attendee experience has been considered (e.g., transitions, video sound, etc.). Ensure that individual presenters and event team members have opportunities to ask questions, test out their tech, and practice before the event.

## Important Considerations

- Try to use a platform that has built-in accessibility features, and have at least one member of your event team familiarize themselves with those features.
- Make guests aware of accessibility features.
  - Clearly describe provided accessibility features in invite/initial info package, registration pages, confirmation email, event website/landing page.
  - Mention provided accessibility features in welcoming/housekeeping remarks at start of event.
- Ensure caption capability (live transcript feature or third-party integration).
- Ensure screen reader capability (how this technology will interact with the event).
  - For example, when screen-reader is reading the chat, will it be speaking over the presenter?
- Consider multiple ways of communicating and engaging with participants.
  - For example, polls, breakout groups, white boards, etc.
- If there is a method used to vote or flag who can speak next, make sure all participants can access the process.

- Consider multiple access options.
  - For example, can someone call in by phone?
- Assign a Production Coordinator. This is someone in the back end who is solely responsible for the tech/troubleshooting, so that presenters can focus on the presentations and audience engagement.
- Provide accessible copies of the entire presentation before and/or after the event.
  - For example, PowerPoint presentation, video links that will be used during a presentation, etc.

## Accessibility features in Zoom

Zoom has several settings to support a more inclusive meeting experience. The [Zoom Accessibility Page](#) has information on commonly asked accessibility-related questions.

## Accessibility features in MS Teams

Accessibility tips for MS Teams can be accessed at:

- [Accessibility tips for inclusive MS Teams meetings and live events.](#)
- [Best practices for setting up and running a Teams meeting or live event for the Deaf and hard of hearing.](#)

Note that in the information that follows, “live event” is a term used to describe a webinar format, which has a more controlled participant interface and more behind-the-scenes production.

To ensure everyone can engage in the meeting or live event without distractions, consider the following tips:

- Establish the rules for participation.
  - For example, how to get the presenter's attention or how to participate.
    - Request that participants use the “raise hand” function to notify the facilitator and prevent interruptions or talking over one another.
    - In a Microsoft Teams meeting, participants can raise a virtual hand or use the chat.
    - In a live event, participants can ask questions using the Q&A pane (if enabled).

- In a live event, mute all participants to avoid background noise that can make captioning and sign language interpretation difficult. Inform everyone that only one person should speak at a time and that all others are muted.
  - Recommend speakers use a headset/earbuds and microphone to ensure clear audio and increase accuracy of captions.
- Presenters should read aloud audience questions from the chat before answering.
- If it is not required for participants to have their videos on, ask them to mute themselves and turn off their cameras unless they wish to speak or ask a question verbally.
- Ensure participants know they can keep cameras off if they feel more comfortable.
- Encourage cameras to be on during breakout sessions to allow for better engagement and ensure the video/audio accommodations mentioned above.
- Presenters should use the zoom function to increase font size when screen sharing for presentations.
- Announce the conclusion of the event so attendees know when they are expected to leave.

Thank you for considering accessibility in your event planning. We hope you found this resource helpful. By embracing accessibility, we create opportunities for everyone to fully participate and contribute.

We recognize that there is still much work to be done to create more accessible experiences. We commit to identifying and addressing accessibility barriers for individuals with both visible and non-visible disabilities. If you have any questions or feedback, please contact [access@carleton.ca](mailto:access@carleton.ca).

Together, we can help ensure Carleton University events are as accessible and inclusive as possible for all attendees.

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