



This checklist covers the essential steps that meeting organizers must take to ensure the full and equal participation of people with disabilities.

Accessibility and provision of reasonable accommodations¹ are integral to meeting planning and participation. The following provides general recommendations and good practices. However, always keep in mind that the guiding principle to making any meeting inclusive is: **When in doubt, ask the person with a disability.** People with disabilities know their needs best.

General:

■ Respectful Engagement²

- Participants with disabilities should be treated as **equal to all other participants**. Accordingly, they should be treated as entirely capable of autonomous decision-making and making valuable contributions to the meeting.
- **Communicate directly with the participant**, and not their personal assistant or interpreter.
- Use person-first language, unless informed that the person prefers identity-first language.³
- **Do not make assumptions about a participant's** capabilities or intellectual capacity.
- Ask before guiding or assisting a participant with a disability.

Before the Event:

■ Information and Communication

- Use clear language. Do not use jargon, avoid or spell out acronyms, and use plain language.
- **Include contact information for participants to request further information on accessibility and to request reasonable accommodations.** For example, "For questions about accessibility and to request reasonable accommodations, please contact..."
- Send out all conference information, documents and presentations in accessible formats.
- All emails and materials must be accessible. For example, Microsoft Word or accessible PDFs readable by screen-reader software, captioned video content, accessible PowerPoint presentations or an accompanying Word document transcribing the PowerPoint.
- Send out all meeting information, documents, and presentations **in advance** and as early as possible.
- Some participants may need longer to read documents or to plan their attendance. Some participants' disabilities may limit their ability to read a document received during a meeting. Other participants may need to arrange assistance to support their attendance or review the materials.

- In the rare circumstances where you cannot send out materials in advance, ensure a digital copy is available at the meeting.
 - Do not assume that everyone has easy or independent access to the internet, follow up with a call and/or text message when possible.
 - Formatting: Use size 12–18 point typeface, use sans-serif fonts, and ensure adequate spacing between lines. For greater readability, use bold rather than italics or uppercase text, use left-justified text rather than fully-justified text, and use high contrast colors, e.g., black on white.
- Choosing a venue
- Ensure the **location is accessible**. Conduct an accessibility audit to identify barriers to participants' equal involvement.
 - Consider hiring one or multiple persons with disabilities to conduct the audit.
 - Do not rely on venue assurances that the space is accessible.
 - When in doubt about a barrier, ask the person with a disability whom it affects.
 - Physical accessibility—the space must have:
 - Room to accommodate personal assistants, interpreters, captioners, mobility and assistive devices in multiple locations.
 - Accessible speaking area and podiums that can be raised and lowered for speakers using wheelchairs, little persons, and those unable to stand for long periods.
 - Ramps at every door. These ramps should not be too steep.
 - Doorways wide enough for participants in wheelchairs to comfortably pass through.
 - Reconfigurable furniture, with plenty of room around tables for participants using wheelchairs to move freely, choose their preferred seating location, and sufficient space for a translator booth and interpreters.
 - Accessible restrooms on the same floor as the meeting space.
 - Sensory accessibility—the space must:
 - Have multiple microphones available and a high-quality sound system, e.g., at least 4 portable microphones for a group of 30.
 - Include a space for participants to take a sensory break, e.g., hotel rooms in the same building or a dedicated quiet room.
 - Check whether audio assistive technology is available, such as hearing loops, should it be required by a participant.
 - Be a scent-free environment, as much as possible. Ask participants and venue maintenance to use scent-free products to accommodate those with chemical sensitivities and for participants to refrain from using perfumes.
 - Include service animal relief areas.
 - Have accessible emergency evacuation route.
 - Be well-lit with even lighting throughout. Ideally, lights should be non-florescent.
 - Have a projector and screen that is easily viewable by all participants.

- Coordinating Disability Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodations
 - **Ask participants if they have any accessibility needs or require any reasonable accommodations well in advance of the meeting.**
 - If you are unable to provide a reasonable accommodation, discuss it with the participant and be creative in how to provide the accommodation within your constraints. Do not rescind the invite or request the person attend without their required reasonable accommodations.
 - **Budget for personal assistants** for participants with disabilities who require such support. Accordingly, the budget must account for additional plane tickets, hotel rooms, meals, etc.
 - **Budget for and plan for reasonable accommodations.** For example, printed materials in large font; accessible hotel rooms; accessible transportation.
 - **Budget and plan for interpretation.** For example, there may not be sign language interpreters available locally who are able to interpret a participant's local sign language. In such cases, a sign interpreter may have to travel with the participant from their home country and should be compensated for their professional interpretation services, in addition to having their travel, accommodation, and per diem expenses paid for.
 - If a participant requires sign language interpretation, two interpreters must be provided in the type of sign language the participant uses. It is never acceptable to only hire one sign language interpreter for any meetings lasting longer than one hour.
 - **Arrange appropriate support personnel**, including interpreters, captioners, and assistants, well in advance of the meeting as they can be very busy.
 - **Consider and plan for additional travel coordination.** For example, some airlines discriminate against travelers with disabilities and require a support person to accompany the traveler with the disability. Additionally, accessible airport transfers will need to be arranged in advance.

During the Event:

- Timing
 - **Build comfort breaks** into the agenda of the meeting every 60–90 minutes.
 - **Keep to time.** Participants may have planned their bathroom, rest, or medication breaks around the pre-circulated schedule. Inform participants that they may leave when necessary.
 - **Allocate additional time for coffee and lunch breaks.** For example, 30-minute breaks instead of 15 minutes or 75-minute lunches instead of 60 minutes. Bear in mind that this may take some participants longer than others. Avoid having lunch located in the same room as the meeting.
 - **Avoid very early start times** when possible.
- Conducting the Meeting
 - At the start of the meeting, organizers should **inform participants about the layout of the space, the agenda, and the services** (e.g., interpretation, captioning) and accommodations available.
 - All speakers, including audience members, should **speak using a microphone.**

- Speakers **should not rely heavily on PowerPoint presentations**, and, if using PowerPoint, speakers should read or describe what is on the slides.
- **Provide writing materials** for those who prefer to write notes and ensure that there are sufficient power outlets for those who rely on computers.
- **Offer a note taker** to participants who require one or **share notes** from the session with all participants.
- When conducting an activity that includes a visual component or taking notes on a flipchart, make sure to **describe what is happening** or being written. Relatedly, all written materials and flipcharts should be **typed up and shared with participants in an accessible format** as soon as possible after the meeting.

After the Meeting:

- **Send accessible versions of any handwritten content and meeting notes** via email after the event.
- **Request feedback** on the meeting, including a question about the disability accessibility of the venue and meeting. Consider doing this on the last day of the meeting.

Endnotes

1. Reasonable accommodations are individual accessibility needs. Reasonable accommodations are requested, while accessibility measures are put in place automatically to ensure general access and communicate that a space is inclusive. For more information on the distinction, please refer to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment No. 2 (2014) Article 9: Accessibility, paras. 25-26, U.N. Doc. CRPD/C/GC/3, <https://bit.ly/2YGof90>
2. For further guidance, review United Spinal Association, Disability Etiquette: Tips on Interacting with People with Disabilities (2015), <http://www.unitedspinal.org/disability-etiquette/>. Note, each individual is different and there will be cultural differences in disability etiquette. Consider this document a starting point and defer to the person with the disability whom you are engaging with on how to act respectfully.
3. This checklist uses person-first language (i.e., person with a disability). This is the terminology used in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). However, some people prefer identity-first language: disabled person; autistic person. If a participant indicates that they prefer a certain terminology, use their preferred terminology in all future communications with and including them.

