

Inclusive Event Planning

This checklist is intended to assist University of Waterloo staff and students with planning inclusive events, taking into consideration the diverse needs of participants. To serve audiences fully, event organizers need to “do the work” and invest the time into understanding how our words, and plans affect the people we are interacting with.

This is not an exhaustive list of considerations; thus it is important for event planners to stay respectful, responsive, and flexible throughout planning and execution processes.

This document provides you with several considerations for planning, communicating, and executing events, broken down into functional categories. Resources providing deeper knowledge and descriptions are included throughout this guide.

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PLANNING YOUR EVENT:	
EVENT CREATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> At the time you are designing your event, there are a few key considerations to keep in mind:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Date selection:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Consult a multicultural calendar to ensure the proposed date does not interfere with observance days and impact a person's ability to attend.○ Event format:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Determine if the goal of your event requires guests to be in person. When possible, it is a good idea to offer a hybrid or virtual option. Take time to review the guidelines for hosting accessible virtual events [webpage]

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<p>LOCATION</p> <p>Consider inclusivity when you select your venue.</p> <p>Reviewing the UWaterloo building accessibility resource [webpage] will be helpful.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Look for a space that includes many of the following features in reasonable proximity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Accessible parking/drop off points. ○ Accessible entrances and automatic doors. ○ Accessible washrooms (ie. Grab bar, appropriate sink height). ○ Gender inclusive washrooms. ○ Religious prayer rooms and/or breastfeeding room. ○ Venue is well-lit. ○ Venue area is reasonably quiet with limited background noise. <input type="checkbox"/> As you select your venue(s) check for the following features related to travelling to and between the venue(s) spaces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Accessible public transit options. ○ Easy navigation, with clear accessible pathways throughout the space, both indoor and outdoor. ○ Check for ramps, elevators, and/or blockages that need to be resolved. ○ Consider the proximity of all your event spaces (including the registration desk, calm area, breakout rooms, food stations, stage, accessible washrooms).
<p>FOOD AND REFRESHMENTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consider the type of food service. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If buffet style, request that food and beverages are placed a table height accessible to everyone. <input type="checkbox"/> If possible, provide the option of bendable straws and cups with handles. <input type="checkbox"/> If needed, plan to have volunteers available to assist at a buffet.

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BUDGET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> If possible, allocate funds within your budget to address registrants' accommodation requests. Possible costs may include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ ASL (American Sign Language) interpreter/translator.○ Note-taking services.○ Closed captioning.○ Audio-visual equipment.○ Assistive listening devices (FM system).○ Materials in alternate formats.○ Booking costs for a quiet and calm room. <input type="checkbox"/> If you are selling tickets, consider waiving any fees associated for support persons an individual may require to accompanying them.
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EVENT COMMUNICATION	
<p>INVITATION AND PROMOTIONS</p> <p>In general, it is important for event organizers to familiarize themselves with the Inclusive Communications Guide [webpage] and Digital Accessibility Guide [webpage].</p> <p>Some considerations from the guides are highlighted in this section.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Send the invitation with ample notice to allow attendees time to pre-plan their experience. <input type="checkbox"/> Include an accessibility statement on the invitation, which includes promotion of a scent free environment. <input type="checkbox"/> Follow digital accessibility guidelines with your copy including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use size 12 font or higher. <input type="checkbox"/> Select a sans serif font (Arial, Calibri, Verdana). <input type="checkbox"/> Use concise, meaningful link text that describes the destination of the link. Note the format of the destination following the link. <input type="checkbox"/> Have significant colour contrasting which you can check with a contrast checker [webpage]. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide text alternatives on any images. <input type="checkbox"/> And more you can find within the accessibility guide [webpage]. <input type="checkbox"/> Language used throughout your materials should be inclusive. Review the language and written style guide [webpage] for more information. <input type="checkbox"/> Remember to keep content straightforward, sharing what is most important at the time of each respective communication. <input type="checkbox"/> When possible, it is best practice to provide attendees with presentation materials ahead of time.

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REGISTRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Consider multiple options for registering (online, by phone, or in-person). Include organizer contact information so attendees can speak with you regarding a specific, confidential need.<input type="checkbox"/> On your registration form ask guests to inform you of any accessibility accommodations.<input type="checkbox"/> Follow-up in a timely manner with all who self-identified and create a plan of support for each person.<input type="checkbox"/> Always ask for individual dietary restrictions.<input type="checkbox"/> If you plan to print attendee name tags, have a field asking individuals to self-identify their pronouns.<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid registration systems that use:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Any features you can only access by a mouse.○ Time limits on check out pages.<input type="checkbox"/> Share information about accessibility routes or maps ahead of time. Refer people to the Getting around guide [webpage].<input type="checkbox"/> Treat accommodation requests as confidential information to be shared with only those who need to know.
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POST EVENT COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> If you are doing a post-event survey, include a section asking about any problems or barriers experienced by attendees.<input type="checkbox"/> It is helpful to share edited transcripts and captioned videos is possible after the event.
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AT THE EVENT:	
VENUE SET-UP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide clear, easy to read signage identifying accessible washrooms, elevators, and any other event related directions. <input type="checkbox"/> Set-up reserved seating for those you are aware of and have additional accessible seating available. <input type="checkbox"/> When possible, allow for ample spacing at seats and between obstacles throughout the venue. <input type="checkbox"/> Have aisles that are at least 38" wide and are kept free (approximately 1 metre). <input type="checkbox"/> Tables should be 36" or higher for individuals using wheelchairs and surrounding chairs should leave adequate space. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider if tablecloths are appropriate, and if so, be conscious of length and excess draping. <input type="checkbox"/> Secure all electrical cables or cords that cross over aisles or pathways to avoid tripping hazards. <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange the registration and peripheral spaces with enough spacing to avoid heavy congestion. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider the need for equipping event staff with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ common phrase boards. ○ translation apps. ○ voice to text apps.

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<p>TRAINING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS</p> <p>Staff should complete AODA training modules in LEARN [webpage].</p> <p>Volunteers should complete the <i>Accessibility for Volunteers</i> resource in LEARN [webpage].</p> <p>Some considerations from the training are highlighted in this section.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure volunteers and staff are easily identifiable. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For name tags, have large font that can be read from a few feet away and include pronouns). ○ Consider bright noticeable t-shirts. <input type="checkbox"/> Train volunteers and staff on how to respectfully assist people with disabilities and to respond to any accessibility issues that have been identified. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Be discrete, personable, and try not to single anyone out. ○ Provide empathy and care to all persons. ○ Try not to rush interactions. ○ Share any customized plans that have been developed with the staff who will be supporting the individuals. <input type="checkbox"/> Review evacuation procedures located on posters throughout the building and make sure staff are aware of accessible emergency routes.
<p>FINAL CHECK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Prior to the event starting, following set-up, walk through the event site, considering the experience from the perspective of registrants who have identified an accommodation request.

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SPEAKERS:	
<p>SPEAKER CONSIDERATIONS</p> <p>Encourage presenters to review and follow the guide and checklist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-Face Presentations Checklist [webpage] • PowerPoint Checklist [webpage] • Microsoft Word Checklist [webpage] • Inclusive Communications Guide [webpage] • Digital Accessibility Guide [webpage]. <p>Some considerations from these guides are highlighted in this section.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Connect with speakers ahead of time to understand if there are any accessibility accommodations they may have. Adapt any staging, and audio visuals accordingly. <input type="checkbox"/> Event organizers should draft and share any housekeeping notes which could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduction of any ASL interpreters/translators. ○ Identifying washrooms and emergency routes. <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate timing to presenters to end on schedule (public transit arrangements often have very little flexibility). <input type="checkbox"/> Share the guides provided in this document with your speakers and highlight some friendly reminders asking them to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Keep a good pace of speech so people can follow along. ○ Avoid excessive text on presentation materials. ○ Use a sans serif, font size (Arial, Calibri, Verdana). ○ Ideally have 24 – 32 size font (18 minimum).