



Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings & Events

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ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE



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This document is an adaptation of the following resources:

ACCESSIBLE EVENTS: A Guide For Meeting and Event Organizers

Meetings and Events Australia

Accessible Temporary Events, a Planning Guide

NC State University

Guide to Accessible Festivals & Outdoor Events

Access Ontario

[The Government of Ontario](#)



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....4**
- 1.1 Why plan an inclusive event?.....4
 - 1.1.1 The Importance of Inclusion.....4
 - 1.1.2 Increased Attendance.....4
 - 1.1.3 The Law4
- 1.2 Types of Considerations.....5
 - 1.2.1 Types of Disabilities5
- CHAPTER 2: PLANNING YOUR EVENT6**
- 2.1 Early Stage Considerations6
 - 2.1.1 Accommodation Requirements6
 - 2.1.2 Booking Services and Supports6
 - 2.1.3 Planning the Program7
 - 2.1.4 Retrieving Access Expertise7
- 2.2 Venue Selection.....8
 - 2.2.1 Choosing a Location8
 - 2.2.2 Choosing a Venue8
 - 2.2.3 Visiting the Venue.....10
 - 2.2.4 Temporary Accessibility Solutions.....10
- 2.3 Transportation Considerations10
 - 2.3.1 Paths of Travel.....10
 - 2.3.2 Public Transportation.....12
 - 2.3.3 Drop Off and Pick Up Points12
 - 2.3.4 Parking13
- 2.4 Promotion14
 - 2.4.1 Multimedia Advertising.....14
 - 2.4.2 Ticket Booking and Event Registration.....14
- 2.5 Scheduling.....15
 - 2.5.1 Scheduling the Event15
 - 2.5.2 Arranging the Event Agenda.....15

CHAPTER 3: HOSTING YOUR EVENT	16
3.1 Event Personnel	16
3.1.1 Training Staff and Volunteers	16
3.1.2 Coaching Vendors.....	16
3.2 Chairs, Speakers and Presenters.....	17
3.2.1 Reaching Your Audience	17
3.2.2 Accommodating Performers with Disabilities.....	18
3.3 Presentation and Materials	19
3.3.1 Multimedia	19
3.3.2 Interpretation Services.....	19
3.4 Sound, Lighting, and Technology	20
3.4.1 Audio Considerations.....	20
3.4.2 Lighting Considerations.....	20
3.4.3 Virtual meetings.....	20
3.5 Emergency Procedures	21
3.5.1 Accessible Information for Guests, Staff, and Volunteers.....	21
3.5.2 Identify Unique Evacuation Accommodations	21



CHAPTER 4: OTHER CONSIDERATIONS22

4.1 Weather 22
 4.1.1 Seasonal Weather 22
 4.1.2 Extreme Weather 22
4.2 Service Animals 23
 4.2.1 Animal Needs 23
 4.2.2 Guest Awareness 24
4.3 Accessibility Information Stations 24
 4.3.1 Location 24
 4.3.2 Adequate Supply of Materials 25
4.4 Special Spaces 25
 4.4.1 Quiet Rooms 25
 4.4.2 Mobility Device Charging Stations 25

CHAPTER 5: RESOURCES FOR EDMONTON 26

5.1 Service Providers 26
 5.1.1 Interpreter Referral Agencies (i.e. American Sign Language -ASL) 26
 5.1.2 CART Providers Edmonton and Area 26
5.2 Additional Reading Resources 27



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Why plan an inclusive event?

1.1.1 The Importance of Inclusion

Festivals, fairs, meetings, conventions, marathons, tournaments, workshops and open houses are just a few of the possible events hosted by the citizens of Edmonton. These events celebrate all aspects of the human spirit and the diversity of the Edmonton community. Not only are Edmontonians diverse through gender, sexual orientation, culture, race, and religion, but also through ability. By creating accessible events for all to enjoy, there is an increased sense of community and commitment to inclusion in our city. This guide can be used to help you create events for the entire community, not just those who are able bodied.

1.1.2 Increased Attendance

If your event is more accessible, it will be available to a larger population than if certain demographics are unable to attend due to accessibility restrictions. Try to be inclusive to all individuals or groups. By making your event accessible, you are also able to increase the number of people you can advertise to and invite to attend a particular function.

1.1.3 The Law

Adapted from [The Government of Alberta](#):

The Alberta Human Rights Act recognizes that all people are equal in dignity, rights and responsibilities, regardless of colour, gender, race, religious beliefs, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, source of income, marital status, family status or sexual orientation.

Accommodation means creating adjustments to rules, standards, policies, culture or physical environments to ensure there are no negative effects on a person's mental or physical disability, religion, gender, or any other protected grounds.

Accommodation helps to balance the needs of individuals and groups with the needs of organizations and businesses in our society. Providing accommodation to prevent undue hardship for an individual or group is required by law. Federal and provincial human rights laws have established that there is a legal duty to accommodate a person's needs based on the protected grounds.



1.2 Types of Considerations

1.2.1 Types of Disabilities

There are hundreds of accessibility needs with varying degrees of assistance required. An individual can have multiple accessibility needs throughout their lives, while others may have accessibility needs for short terms. Some examples of disabilities, but are not limited to:

- **Mobility Disabilities**
 - Individuals who use wheelchairs and other mobility aids, such as scooters.
 - People with mobility disabilities may use either a power-driven or manually operated wheelchair.
 - People who use wheelchairs encounter some of the most obvious access problems.
- **Ambulatory Mobility**
 - Individuals who walk with difficulty or who have a disability that affects gait.
 - People who use crutches, canes, walkers, braces, or artificial limbs are also included in this category.
- **Visual Disabilities**
 - People with partial vision or total vision loss.
 - Some people with a visual disability can distinguish light and dark, sharply contrasting colours, or large print, but cannot read the small print, navigate dimly lit spaces, or tolerate high glare.
 - Many people who are blind depend upon their senses of touch and hearing to perceive their environment and communicate with others.
- Many use a cane or have a service animal to facilitate moving about.
- Some problems experienced by people who are blind or partially sighted include orientation, receiving written or graphic information, using controls that are not adequately labelled, and avoiding hazardous protruding objects which they cannot detect.
- **Hearing Disabilities**
 - People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing may use a variety of methods to compensate for their inability to hear sound.
 - Those with partial hearing may use hearing aids, Assistive Listening Devices, Loops or Speechreading. Some people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing also use speech-reading but must be able to clearly see the face of the individual speaking.
 - Others use sign language, which can range from home signs to American Sign Language.
 - Some people with hearing disabilities will use service animals to alert them to sounds.
- **Cognitive disabilities and other hidden conditions**
 - There are many other disabling conditions which are not apparent from an individual's outward appearance.
 - These usually involve cognitive and/or learning disabilities and may affect an individual's understanding, communication, or behavior.
 - People with these disabilities may have difficulty using facilities, particularly where the signage system is unclear or complicated.

CHAPTER 2: PLANNING YOUR EVENT

2.1 Early Stage Considerations

2.1.1 Accommodation Requirements

It is easier to plan when you know the various needs that you will be accommodating. Do not assume that all of your participants have the same needs and abilities. Provide the opportunity to identify needs so you will know how to accommodate.

- Guests should be given the opportunity to share their needs through the initial event notice, invitation, or using the medium through which they register.

Planning early will help create a successful and accessible event.

- If you collect needs early, you can choose a venue that is accessible instead of using resources to make the venue more accessible.
- As you collect accommodation needs you can prioritize spending to ensure accessibility. Making last-minute accommodations can be costly.
- Give participants enough time to make their own plans for your event.

2.1.2 Booking Services and Supports

Once you have collected accommodation needs you may be required to book services and support.

A common service that may be needed is interpreters for people who are Deaf. Book any interpretation services such as American Sign Language (ASL) or captioning service such as RealTime Captioning (CART) in advance (2–3 weeks minimum) as they are high demand services.

- Events more than one hour in length typically require two interpreters and some require a break every hour.
- Interpreting is physically and mentally draining therefore rest will allow an interpreter to perform better and it is vital to prevent cumulative motion injuries.
- For full day events, two to three interpreters may be needed. Working in a team will allow smooth communication and minimize distractions from the presentation. One interpreter will actively interpret for 20–30 mins while the other(s) provide back-up to the active interpreter.

- The following event information will be needed to place a request for interpreters or CART providers:
 - Date
 - Start and end times
 - **Location:** address, floor number, department name, office name, nearest intersection, parking or entrance protocols
 - Names of all individuals who need assistance
 - Brief explanation of the purpose (check-up, follow-up, meetings, consultation, job evaluation, training, events, etc.)
 - Contact person information
 - Availability of print materials

Refer to Chapter 5 of this manual to find a list of CART providers in Edmonton.

2.1.3 Planning the Program

What is the purpose of your event? What will guests be doing? Guests could be touring, observing, participating, eating, dancing or any other activity that may be included in your program. When planning your program think about the different abilities of participants.

- Some programs will require additional research to ensure accessibility.
- Event planners must broaden their view of what accessibility entails, not only physical limitations, but how to create programming that is inclusive for all guests.
- Create accommodation plans to provide safe and inclusive programming.

2.1.4 Retrieving Access Expertise

You've collected data on the potential needs you will be accommodating, reached out to some of the key service providers and supports your event will need, and have started to brainstorm additional accommodations that may be needed to suit the program you are planning. It is evident that you are putting in effort to create an accessible event. For the most part, event planners are able to collect a sufficient amount of resources to create inclusivity and accessibility at their event, but what happens when you've run out of ideas or used all the resources provided in this manual? Reach out to the experts. Most accommodations are made through simple enhancements of your event but if you would like to provide a more welcoming environment for participants, reach out to experts in the field. There are a variety of experienced organizations that can further assess your event plans, and inform you of where improvements could be made. Extensive and multi-day events can benefit from continual input.



2.2 Venue Selection

2.2.1 Choosing a Location

The venue you choose for your event is important, but it is also important to consider where your venue is located in relation to your guests. The location of the site has one of the greatest overall impacts on accessibility to the event. If participants cannot get to your event, they cannot attend your event. Consider venues that are:

- Near public transit (See more in Section 2.3).
- Common locations where events are hosted. It is easier to advertise an event in a location that people recognize.
- Near the population you are trying to serve or attract to the event.

2.2.2 Choosing a Venue

Choosing the right venue will save you time and money when planning for accessibility. The more accessible a venue is prior to the event, the less resources an event planner has to put into making the space accessible. Most newer buildings are more accessible than older ones.

There are a number of things to consider when choosing a venue.

- Exterior Factors
 - Transportation and Parking recommendations can be found in Section 2.3.
 - Accessible sidewalks, zebra crossings, intersections, park pathways or trails
 - More information on [Wayfinding](#) can be found at the City of Edmonton website.
- Interior Factors
 - The Entrance and Lobbies:
 - Entrances should be one metre or wider to be accessible for guests who are using wheelchairs and scooters.
 - If the main entrance is not the most accessible access point, clear signage should suggest to guests to use the alternative entrance
 - Entrances should be well-lit.
 - Automatic doors are helpful for guests using wheelchairs, scooters and walkers. Walkers are very common and used by a majority of seniors.



- Lever handles are the optimal door handle for interior doors.
- Clear signage regarding the location of the event, event programs, and how participants can receive accessibility accommodations. Ensure the placement of signage boards do not create accessibility barriers. See p. 6 of the [Access Design Guide](#) for more information.
- Elevators:
 - Elevators should be located close to the activities of the event so that guests do not need to go out of their way to switch floors.
 - Elevators should have enough space to accommodate guests using wheelchairs or scooters.
 - There should be enough elevators for the number of participants needing them.
 - The controls in the elevator should be of an appropriate height for guests to access or have staff assisting with elevator controls that are not easily accessible by guests.
 - Braille buttons and raised numerals should be present on the elevator control pad.
 - Auditory signals should be enabled or available.
 - There should be a visual cue system to alert guests.
- Accessible Washrooms:
 - Braille and raised gender neutral should be used.
 - Theme-oriented signs may be difficult for someone with a cognitive disability to understand.
 - Use the international symbol for accessibility on all accessible washrooms and make sure there are ample accessible washrooms/stalls next to the general washrooms.
 - Doors should have automatic or push-button features.
 - Faucet, soap dispensers, and towels/hand blowers should be within the reach of a person using a wheelchair or scooter. Considerations should be used for scent-free soaps and environments.
 - Automatic or lever-style faucets are ideal.
 - Counter should have wheelchair clearance.
 - At least one accessible stall should have grab bars.
- Hallways and corridors:
 - All corridors that will be used should be at least 1100mm wide.
 - Hallways and doorways should be and remain clear of clutter, loose carpets or rugs, planters, and furniture.
 - Door handles should be lever-style making them easy to open.
 - Floor style (avoid heavy carpets) should be smooth and allows people using wheelchairs and scooters to move easily.

2.2.3 Visiting the Venue

Prior to booking a venue, always ensure you've made time to tour the space. Some spaces may be advertised as accessible, but this may not be the case. This is a good opportunity to conduct an accessibility audit/appraisal. Using the content from 2.2.2 as a guide, event planners should consider all aspects of the venue and recognize that building facility workers are not always the most knowledgeable about the level of accessibility of their venue. If concerns are never brought up to the venue, they may not be aware of any issues.

2.2.4 Temporary Accessibility Solutions

It is not always possible to find a venue that meets all of your accessibility needs, but there are ways to enhance the space you do find. There are temporary solutions that an event planner can implement in order to accommodate guests' accessibility needs.

- Temporary ramps can be rented and installed for the duration of the event.
- Rearranging furniture in the venue so there is more space for guests with wheelchairs and scooters.
- Portable Hearing Loops can be set up for hearing aid accessibility within the venue.
- Repositioning resources for ease of access, such as moving soap and paper towel dispensers in bathrooms or telephones in lobbies.
 - If an event planner cannot physically move the items, they can bring additional supplies specifically for those who cannot access it.
- May need additional seating and chairs without arms attached or larger chairs to accommodate people of all sizes.

2.3 Transportation Considerations

2.3.1 Paths of Travel

Getting around your event should be easy and accessible for everyone. All essential activities must be accessible and pathways need to meet the criteria below.

While planning the layout of the event, you should also consider who will be in attendance and plan to make everyone feel included. Although providing alternative accessible routes is acceptable in some cases, it is always better to modify the general route to be accessible.

Pathways:

- All pathways within the event area must be barrier-free, minimum 1800mm wide, stable, firm, and slip-resistant.
- Doors should be a minimum of 850mm wide when in an open position and be able to be opened with low force/minimal effort.
- Areas where people may pass travelling in opposite directions should be a minimum of 1800mm.
- Wheelchair-friendly access should be available for all essential activities. Make sure a person can reach all areas of your event, whether independently or with assistance from a volunteer.
- All pathways should be adequately lit for safety and ease of access.
- Any protruding or overhanging obstacles should be removed if possible as they create a hazard for those with visual disabilities. Consider things like wall panel bracing and signs. All pathways should have a minimum 2260mm vertical clearance.

- If there are overhanging objects which cannot be moved and fail to leave 2260mm clearance over a path, a cane detectable barrier should be provided.
- If open stairs could be an overhead hazard, consider placing furniture or other materials as a warning barrier under the stairs.
- Cover all electrical cables that pass over aisles or pathways. Tape down any loose carpet edges or other floor hazards.

Lifts and Ramps:

- Pathways should never slope more than 5% or 1:20 (one inch of rise for every 20 inches of run) unless a ramp with handrails and edge protection and a slope of 8% or 1:12 or less is available.
- Ramps can run for a maximum of 9m without an intermediate landing.
- The minimum width between handrails is 870mm.
- Sloped walkways with a slope steeper than 1:20 shall be designed as ramps (with handrails).
- Confirm that all elevators and lifts are working properly and are easy to find. Add signage to give directions if necessary.
- Pathways to access lifts and elevators should always be accessible and free of barriers including stairs.
- Buttons on elevators should be low so they can easily be reached by someone with a disability.
- Temporary lifts or ramps may be necessary (can be rented).

Other Considerations:

- As many booths and counters as possible should be at an accessible height, preferably no more than 865mm off the ground. At least 5% of seating areas and dining areas should be accessible, but never less than one.
- Inaccessible entrances should be modified if possible. If this is not possible, include signage to a nearby accessible entrance.
- Revolving doors and turnstiles are considered inaccessible entrances. If these are included in your venue, ensure accessible (auxiliary) doors or gates are available nearby.
- Consider modifying doors which are particularly heavy or otherwise difficult to open by propping them open or adding temporary handles over doorknobs.
- If temporary wall panels are used at your event, make sure the bottom is detectable for those using a cane to identify obstacles.

Specific to Outdoor Events:

- Barricades used to block off streets must be placed so they do not interfere with accessible routes, crosswalks or curbs.
- Some grassy, sandy, gravelled, or otherwise unstable terrain should be covered with hard material (such as interlocking rubber tiles or plastic matting) to provide accessible pathways.
- Gentle sloping cable covers should be used.

2.3.2 Public Transportation

Having free accessible parking, Disabled Adult Transit Service (DATS) drop off, and access to public transit close to the entrance of your event will improve attendance. Some of your event participants may be arriving and leaving by public transportation. Consider providing accessible public transportation information for event participants with disabilities wherever you post general transportation information.

This information could include:

- Schedules of accessible buses, trains and shuttles
- Information on whether the buses on the route are accessible
- Whether shelter is provided at the bus stop
- Whether the transit station has accessible elevator(s)

If your event is close to public transportation, and this will be a likely method of arrival and departure used by participants, confirm there is a safe, accessible route from an accessible entrance of your event to the nearest accessible transit stop.

2.3.3 Drop Off and Pick Up Points

Some of your participants may be dropped off by DATS, accessible taxi services, or a friend or family member. Thus, it is important to have accessible drop off areas available.

- Areas where cars, taxis, and buses drop off passengers should be as close as possible to the entrance of the venue (within 50m of a building entrance). Ensure there is proper signage.
- Check if there is a curb ramp at the drop off point to allow a person using a wheelchair to get from the road to the entrance. If there is an existing passenger loading zone with no curb ramp, block off extra space and use a temporary ramp.
- These areas should be clearly marked as accessible passenger loading zones.
- There should be ample space for the vehicle to pull out of lanes of traffic and park.
- If a temporary drop off/pick up point is being created, ensure there is a stable, accessible pathway from that point to the permanent sidewalk or event entrance.
- The loading and drop off zone shall be minimum 3700 mm wide and 9000 mm long.
- The clearance at the loading zone must be at least 3200mm. Design of this space shall consider the use of facility and different types of vehicles (buses, DATS – Disabled Adult Transit Service, rear/side loading vehicles) that will be used for drop off.

2.3.4 Parking

Accessible parking stalls are necessary if you expect event participants to arrive via personal vehicle. These are the items that must be considered when preparing parking lots nearest to the event:

- If the primary parking lot provides permanent accessible parking stalls, ensure there are enough, they are as close to the entrance as possible, and they meet all necessary accessibility requirements.
- If there is no accessible parking available nearby, a temporary stall can be created by adding signage and blocking off an adjacent stall to provide space and a portable ramp to get onto the curb.
- All accessible parking spaces must have clear signage with the international symbol for accessibility.
- Standard accessible parking spaces must be a minimum of 2600mm wide with an access aisle 2600mm wide, which can be shared by two accessible stalls.
- If accessible spaces are separate from the main parking areas, signs must be posted giving directions to the accessible spaces.
- If the primary parking lot being used is an indoor lot, it is preferable if the clearance is 2750mm or greater to allow accessible vans entry. If this is not possible, van accessible parking must be available nearby outside your venue.
- Snow must be cleared in and around accessible stalls and a path must be cleared from the stalls to the entrance of the event.

- If the main parking area is far from the event venue, try to provide accessible stalls closer to the accessible event entrances, preferably within 50m. If this is not possible, ensure there is an accessible pathway between the accessible stalls in the main parking area and the event entrance. This may involve adding stable pathways and ramps or you could consider providing accessible shuttles from the parking area.
- Curb cuts and ramps must be directly adjacent to accessible stalls and with a slope of no more than 8% or 1:10 (one inch of rise for every 10 inches of run). Ramps should have edge protection barriers to prevent falls.

Accessible Parking Spaces

Total parking in lot	Required minimum number of accessible spaces
2 to 10	1
11 to 25	2
26 to 50	3
51 to 100	4
For each additional increment of 100 or part thereof	1 additional stall

2.4 Promotion

2.4.1 Multimedia Advertising

It is important that the promotion of your event is accessible to improve attendance and be inclusive. Using a variety of different mediums to advertise is a good idea and will reach a larger number of people. Below are some things to consider when using different mediums.

- Social Media Advertising
 - Share your promotions to different platforms, not everyone shares the same social networks. Share your information to different sites and groups across other external social network platforms.
 - Trying using both visual and audio advertisements.
 - If there is text on your graphic, make sure to also include the Alternative text (Alt text) as computer software cannot interpret text that is in a .jpeg but can use the description to describe the item. Alternatives could be captioned videos or provide an attached script pdf on the webpage.
- Print Media – [CNIB Clear Print Guidelines](#)
 - All print media should be presented using:
 - High contrast colours for text and background.
 - Printed material should be readable using black and white.
 - Larger font size is better.
 - Avoid complicated and decorative fonts for easier readability – choose fonts with a medium heaviness.
 - Keep a wider space between letters.
 - Separate material into columns.
 - Use a matte or non-glossy paper for print materials.

- Broadcast
 - Advertisements used in television and radio should be brief. Have them posted far in advance of your event to allow for follow up questions pertaining to the event.
 - Captioning on television should be used to create a visual component to audio advertisements. Automatically generated captions should not be relied upon and should be revised with capitalization, punctuation, and indications of different speakers as well as descriptions of non-verbal sounds

In all advertising, do not forget to highlight that your event will be accessible using the different international symbols for accessibility.

2.4.2 Ticket Booking and Event Registration

It is up to the event planner how they would like to have guests RSVP, register, or buy tickets for their event. With each of these there are different accessibility concerns.

- Ensure the system for booking is accessible:
 - The physical location where guests purchase tickets should be in a location that is accessible to get to. If this is unavailable, sometimes it is helpful to use an online service, or have guests phone to reserve their tickets. Provide a map of key accessible features i.e. such as washroom facilities, parking, elevators etc. of the event, so persons with disabilities will feel comfortable with the location ahead of time.
 - When using a third party ticketing agency, provide accurate information about the accessibility of your event.

- Consider how to make sure that people with disabilities are not discriminated against when booking seats, one example would be implementing complimentary tickets for caregivers.
- Check to make sure there are flexible seating arrangements that allow for a choice of positions; requiring everyone who uses a wheelchair to sit at the back behind a pillar is not appropriate.
- If you are issuing seats on a first come, first-served basis, you should allocate wheelchair accessible seats last so as to ensure they remain available if people with disabilities need them.
- People who are Deaf or hard of hearing are likely to prefer seats near the front where they have a good view of what is happening on the stage or speakers' platform. Leave options for seating at centre, left, and right sides. This allows Deaf and hard of hearing attendees to choose a position that minimizes neck/eye strain when looking between speakers and interpreters or CART screens.

2.5 Scheduling

2.5.1 Scheduling the Event

When planning your event, it is important to consider possible accessibility needs, as well as many seasonal challenges that might apply.

- Consider the seasonal weather. (see Chapter 4.1)
 - Shelter and water may need to be provided
 - Monitor weather conditions (i.e. snow, ice, hot/cold temperatures)
- Make sure that there is plenty of notice given for when the event will take place.
- Consider how much daylight the event will have.
 - Will additional lighting be needed?
- Ensure the event does not overlap with other large events in the same vicinity.

2.5.2 Arranging the Event Agenda

When planning the program for your event, consideration should be given to timetabling.

This is particularly important when considering attendees that may have impaired ability to get from one activity to another quickly.

- Consider the time required for people with mobility disabilities to move between rooms and sessions.
- If sign language interpreters, CART providers or other accessibility and interpretation services are to be used, schedule in time for regular breaks and changeovers to avoid fatigue.
- Ensure there are more frequent breaks for guests.
- Try to have activities or sessions situated fairly close to each other.
- Keep the number of activities per day to a reasonable level to avoid fatigue.
- Look for key points in the agenda when participants who have identified their disabilities are likely to need assistance and have a personal support worker available if one has been requested.

CHAPTER 3: HOSTING YOUR EVENT

3.1 Event Personnel

3.1.1 Training Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers must have basic awareness and sensitivity to accessibility needs. Make it clear to staff and volunteers that people with accessibility needs expect to be treated like all other participants.

- Volunteers should wear a bright &/or visibly different shirt/jacket for ease of identification, especially for larger events.
- Avoid being anxious or overly protective; people will let you know what they need.
- Be aware that many will need extra time to move, speak, perform or participate in activity.
- Respect and patience is expected and provide good customer care to everyone.
- Ensure staff and volunteers are aware of location or availability of accessible features in respective areas.
 - Include details of features, spaces and services such as toilet rooms, telephones, ramps or which performance is accompanied by a sign language interpreter.
- Make sure all staff and volunteers are comfortable with and understand the need for service animals and know where they can be taken for a walk or to relieve themselves.

- Modify policies and procedures where appropriate:
 - Flexibility needed to accommodate
 - Briefing
 - Languages (plain language)
 - Accessibility needs expected
 - Training

3.1.2 Coaching Vendors

Another important component of many temporary events is vendors selling food or other merchandise or operating activities such as games or contests. Work with vendors to ensure that people with disabilities will have equitable access to food, drinks, merchandise, or services offered. Specific considerations:

- Ideally, booths, displays, or carts used should be accessible. For example, concession carts at local fairs are often owned by an individual and remain on a permanent chassis required for transport. If existing designs cannot be modified to be accessible, then the method of providing the service must be altered.
- Vendors should be advised to offer additional assistance so people with disabilities can participate equally, i.e. vendors must be willing to provide the same service offered to everyone else.
 - This generally involves simple or minor procedural changes, such as bringing items to an interested individual from an inaccessible area.

Remember that not every service is not appropriate for every event participant, but vendors must accommodate customers with disabilities

3.2 Chairs, Speakers and Presenters

3.2.1 Reaching Your Audience

It is important for presenters to reach out to the audience and know how to connect with them. We will need to consider both physical and communication barriers.

- Tell all presenters to speak to the audience, not to the interpreters. They should speak at a normal pace and volume, with clarity and natural expression.
 - Remind them to rephrase instead of repeat if they are not being understood.
 - Ask them to describe any images or text used during their presentation for audience members with visual disabilities.
 - All lecterns, microphones, and audio-visual controls need to be adjustable to accommodate different presenters.
 - Remind the presenters to end presentations on schedule, as those making transit arrangements or who need to move to another space for another presentation or performance may have very little flexibility.
 - Organizers and presenters should regularly check with the audience about the need for breaks.
 - Communication barriers also must be considered and removed as much as possible to allow people with disabilities to participate in activities and communicate with staff and other participants.
- Reducing barriers:
 - Electronic/mechanical devices, such as assistive listening devices and trained personnel (such as sign language interpreters) assist listeners who are Deaf or hard of hearing
 - Assistive listening receivers amplify sound to individual patrons who are Deaf or hard of hearing.
 - Large print text, Braille and material recorded onto audio cassette assist people who are blind or partially sighted.
 - Where casual information is going to be exchanged (i.e. at a booth selling a local artist's photographs) use of pencil and paper may be sufficient.
 - Some scheduled performances at a temporary event should be accompanied by sign language interpretation. Programs or handouts at the event should indicate with accessibility symbols for whom to contact for interpreters or which performances or activities will be interpreted.
 - Another method to employ for musical performances is to include a large screen with song lyrics superimposed.
 - Many people who are Deaf or hard of hearing still feel the reverberation of the bass range in music.
 - Alternate formats also may be needed to convey the content of speeches, performances, or exhibits.
 - For people with hearing loss, a text description of an opera can be made available.
 - For people with vision loss, an audio description of a slide show can be made available on cassette or the speaker

may simply describe the slides while presenting.

- It may be unrealistic to interpret or otherwise describe all activities at an event. In such instances, the main events and some representative examples of experiences offered should be made accessible to everyone to convey key points and themes of the event.

Presenters

- Lectern heights and audio controls need to be adjustable to meet the needs of different speakers.
- Confirm whether the presenters require any specific type of accommodation.
- Inform presenters that individuals may have assistive devices that they may request the presenters to use (i.e. portable audio amplification devices).
- During the session, presenters (if required by a request for a participant) should verbally describe contents of videos, written materials (i.e. presentation slides or whiteboard notes) for audience members who are blind or partially sighted.
- Remind presenters to end meetings on schedule as people making transit arrangements or who need to move to another presentation or event often have very little flexibility.
- Use a microphone and ask participants to use a microphone when they ask questions. If participants cannot use a microphone, then repeat questions and answers via the presenters microphone.
- Speak at a normal pace and offer a clear view of your mouth and face.

3.2.2 Accommodating Performers with Disabilities

You may have speakers or performers with disabilities. If performing or stage areas have not already been made accessible, then some modifications must be made.

- Stage areas must be made accessible if they are not already designed as such.
- Carrying a person with a disability up stairs onto the stage is never acceptable. This is dangerous for everyone involved and it is undignified for the person with the disability.
- High stages can be difficult to make accessible.
 - Temporary ramps can be installed over stairs.
 - If not, temporary lifts can be rented for the event. Ensure that you test the lift prior to the event, so that you know how to use it and it is in working order.
 - If there is an existing ramp which is too steep and cannot be adjusted, trained support individuals can assist wheelchair users traversing the ramp.
- Table microphones and lapel mics are best for people with mobility disabilities.
- If the presenters have visual or hearing disabilities, work with them in advance of the event as they can usually help you to work out the best way to accommodate them and their performance.

3.3 Presentation and Materials

3.3.1 Multimedia

It is important to use more than one medium for your presentation and materials.

- Provide interpreters/note takers and CART providers with agendas, presentation outlines (including video, music, etc.) in advance for the event so individuals can prepare adequately.
- Produce materials in large print (16-point type or larger) and have them available in electronic format in case of a request.
- Encourage and support presenters to offer copies of their materials in different formats before their presentation.
- Consider alternate formats for materials, such as voice or video.
- Have closed captioning and text for video.
- Good colour contrast with white or pale yellow as background and black for the print.
- Turn off projectors while not in use to reduce ambient noise.
- Presenters should describe images, slides and videos verbally.

3.3.2 Interpretation Services

In Chapter 2.1.2, information was provided for how to book services and supports but it is also important to optimize the use of the services and supports.

- Make sure that the interpreters are identified to the audience.
 - Explain what they will be doing during the show.
 - It is important not to draw attention to those for whom they will be interpreting.
 - Always try to use inclusive language; the term “hearing impaired” and “visually impaired” are outdated and non-inclusive. “Deaf or hard of hearing” and “blind, low vision or partially sighted” are preferred terms today.
- Reserve seats that have a clear view of the interpreters for those who will be using the service.
- ASL interpreters and CART screens should be as close to the speaker as possible.
- The screen can be behind the speaker or lower down in front of them.
 - This allows individuals to view the speaker and the interpreter simultaneously.

3.4 Sound, Lighting, and Technology

It is important to take the atmosphere of your event into consideration to ensure participants are not driven away, made unsafe, or prevented from participating by inadequate lighting or sound conditions. Consider having a dedicated sensory room where participants can go for a quiet space.

3.4.1 Audio Considerations

- Minimize background noise and ensure the space being used has good acoustics.
- If requested, arrange for Assisted Listening Devices.
- High pitched and loud noises should be kept to a minimum.
- Assisted Listening Devices may be necessary for your audience to follow presentations. Talk to the building managers of your venue about permanently installed systems already being used in assembly areas with seating. If the space does not provide this equipment, other arrangements may need to be made.
- Deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired Canadians can use Video Relay Service (VRS) to access and make telephone calls using internet and cell-phone based technologies. VRS callers are connected with a sign language interpreter who provides real time interpretation for telephone calls.

3.4.2 Lighting Considerations

- Ensure activities involving flash lighting, strobes and other special effects have ample warnings at all entrances and accessible emergency exits.
- Dimming lights/dark lights should be minimized.
- All pathways need to be adequately lit for safety.

3.4.3 Virtual meetings

- May take the form of teleconferences, web conferences or video conferences.
- Ensure clear protocols and procedures are established so participants with disabilities can communicate with other participants.
- Include designated speaking opportunities for virtual participants and give them the option to signal they would like to speak.
- Telecommunications devices such as teletype devices (TTY) are available for people with disabilities participating in teleconferences.
- Captioning and alternative input devices are available to people with disabilities attending web and video conferences.
- Consider recording sessions and having them available, along with any other material, after the event. Ensure the recording is easily accessible for anyone who cannot attend or watch (if live streamed) at that time.

3.5 Emergency Procedures

3.5.1 Accessible Information for Guests, Staff, and Volunteers

- Ensure first aid kits are accessible in the event something happens.
- Make sure all volunteers, staff, organizers, and presenters are aware of emergency evacuation procedures.
- Talk to the building manager about evacuation plans and procedures in the early planning stages.
- Provide the facilities manager with a list of participants who need assistance if there is an emergency evacuation. Arrange for volunteers to help these people.
- At the beginning of the event, inform participants of the emergency evacuation routes and where the emergency exits are located.

3.5.2 Identify Unique Evacuation Accommodations

- Invite participants to identify their particular evacuation needs before the event; however, do not single out participants requiring assistance out of the crowd.
- Maintain communication with anyone who responds to ensure their needs are met.
- If you know Deaf or hard of hearing people will be in attendance, arrange for visual alarms in case of emergency.
- All emergency exits must meet the same requirements as accessible pathways.



CHAPTER 4: OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Weather

4.1.1 Seasonal Weather

Seasonal weather can be a particularly challenging consideration for events held outdoors. Thunderstorms, snowstorms, and heatwaves all fall under this category, and should be considered when contemplating an outdoor event.

- Try to choose event venues that offer both indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Ensure there is a source of water onsite for warmer spring and summer events.
- Have environmental shelters set up and available. (refer to section 4.4.2)
- Make sure that paths of travel are still well maintained and safe in the winter months.
 - Clear paths of ice and snow buildup.
 - Proactively lay gravel or salt down as soon as the walkways appear to be icy.
- Encourage potential attendees to come prepared for seasonal weather challenges.
- Create an emergency plan in case the need arises.

4.1.2 Extreme Weather

Follow [Alberta Emergency Alert](#) for more information.

Extreme weather can pose a serious threat to individuals who attend outdoor events, especially those with disabilities that limit their ability to respond quickly to dangerous situations.

- Designate shelter areas if available (further defined in 4.4.2)
 - No one is safe outside of a solid enclosed structure during any extreme thunderstorm; tents and temporary structures are not safe.
 - The designated structure(s) should be in a permanent indoor space.
- Establish weather thresholds that will prompt the activation of sheltering and evacuation plans. Some things to consider:
 - Thunderstorms (lightning) within 15 kilometer radius.
 - Consider how much time is needed to notify of plan activation and time needed to actually move attendees.
 - Heat index
 - Non-thunderstorm wind gusts
- Designate a Weather Watcher to ensure extreme weather is communicated.
 - Have Internet access.
 - Understand any established weather related threshold and evacuation/sheltering time.
 - Begin monitoring weather forecasts at least three days prior to the event.
 - Maintain a continuous weather watch on event day.

- Must have direct communication with incident staff or event managers in the case that the weather threshold is met.
- Relay weather information to staff and attendees ahead of potential hazardous weather.
 - Severe Thunderstorm Watches or Tornado Watches.
 - Prior to possible evacuation, reminding staff and attendees what the evacuation plan is and where storm shelters are.
 - [Refer to the City of Edmonton Community Emergency Preparedness for more information.](#)

Environmental shelters are particularly important when outdoor events are held in harsh weather conditions. Prolonged exposure to rain, wind and the sun can be an unpleasant experience for attendees of outdoor events. Some people with disabilities are at particular risk from the elements.

- Consider providing tents to provide weather protection.
- If your event attendees run the risk of being overheated, consider renting cool mist canopies or fans to cool people (and service animals) in extreme temperatures.
- If you choose to host your event during the winter months, consider having heated shelters where attendees can go to warm up.

4.2 Service Animals

(adapted from the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Toolkit)

4.2.1 Animal Needs

Service animals serve an important function for many of the attendees of your event that choose to use them. Therefore, it is important that the animal's needs can be met during an event.

- Consider designating a suitable area as a rest area for service animals. Make sure to let volunteers know how to direct people to this area and post signs so people know where to go.
- It is the owners responsibility to take care of the animal, consider providing water and disposable bags for the service animal owner.
- Ensure all staff dealing with the public are trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.
- Policy prohibiting pets from all buildings should not apply to service animals. Service animals should be permitted in harness or with identification in the form of medical certification that the owner must carry.
- If someone is severely allergic to the service animal, it is best to separate the individuals.
 - Speak to the individuals involved to find a solution that accommodates both.

4.2.2 Guest Awareness

It is important that other guests at the event recognize the important role that service animals play for those who use them, communicating this when necessary is a good idea. Additionally, there are some policies and procedures for dealing with service animals and their owners that guests should be made aware of if possible.

- Some points to communicate to staff and guests are as follows:
 - Pay attention to the owner, not the service animal.
 - Avoid petting or talking to a service animal; the animal is working and must not be distracted from its tasks.
 - Request permission before petting or talking to it.
 - Do not request that the animal be left in a different location, such as outside an office.
 - It is appropriate to ask what services the animal provides.
 - You should not ask questions about a person's disability.

4.3 Accessibility Information Stations

It is wise to have some staff or volunteers standing by the entrance of your event to offer direction and other information. Additionally, you should include a space, tent, or desk (especially if it is a large event) where participants can get information about navigating your event with a disability and what accommodations are available. Accessibility Information Stations can be combined with general information desks.

4.3.1 Location

- Close to the entrance.
- All booths and counters should be at an accessible height, no more than 36 inches off the ground. If this is impossible (such as in the case of high permanent desks) folding desks below the booth or another alternative should be available closeby.
- All tables should be stable and provide enough room around them for a wheelchair or scooter to manoeuvre.



4.3.2 Adequate Supply of Materials

- All emergency procedures and evacuation information must be readily available.
- Have information for all emergency exits, accessible entrances, phones, special spaces, and accessible washrooms available.
- Building managers, event coordinators, and anyone else able to make minor changes for accommodations should be in close contact.
- Printed information should be provided in font size 16 or larger, contrasting colours (i.e. black lettering on white), and an easily legible font.
- Avoid using idioms, acronyms, jargon, theme-oriented language, and thesaurus abuse. Consider how the information will come across to young people or someone with a cognitive disability and aim for language which is inclusive but not condescending or oversimplified.
- Staff should be prepared to read literature aloud if requested by those with visual disabilities.
- If event information is complicated, consider providing it in audio format as well.
- Use non-glare finish on all printed materials.

4.4 Special Spaces

4.4.1 Quiet Rooms

It is a good idea to provide a comfortable and quiet space for people to rest at during hosted events, especially if your event may be long and crowded. These spaces can be helpful for anyone, but will be particularly welcomed by mothers with young children and people with mental health issues or fatigue. If you do choose to have a quiet room on the event site, here are a few important considerations:

- Do not have formal rules regarding the use of quiet rooms, people that use them will have their own reasons for doing so and will likely respect the needs of others.
- Try to avoid having the room used for purposes outside of rest or privacy.
- If possible, try to involve people from groups that are likely to be primary users when the room is created.
- If possible, try to ensure that the quiet room is close enough to the main event that individuals that use the space will still be able to participate in activities.
- Ensure the room is accessible for users with mobility needs.
- Furnish the room comfortably for all users.
- Ensure lighting is moderate or dimmer than the main event space.

4.4.2 Mobility Device Charging Stations

Consider providing outlets for people with power wheelchairs, scooters and other electronic mobility devices and medical equipment.

CHAPTER 5: RESOURCES FOR EDMONTON

5.1 Service Providers

5.1.1 Interpreter Referral Agencies (i.e. American Sign Language –ASL)

[Choice Of Interpreters Inc.](#)

Email: booking@choiceofinterpreters.com or requests@choiceofinterpreters.com

Phone: 403-615-2245

[Deaf and Hear Alberta](#)

Email: info@deafandhearalberta.ca

Phone: 780-451-9999

[Support Service Provider \(SSPs\)](#)

Connect Society DeafBlind Support Service Program

Email: bookssp@connectsociety.org

5.1.2 CART Providers Edmonton and Area

1. Alberta Captioning & CART (onsite & remote)
Phone: 780-445-4406
Website: <https://abcaptioning.com/>
Email: inquiries@abcaptioning.com
2. National Captioning Canada
Phone: 403-286-9696
Website: www.natcapcan.ca
Email: contact@natcapcan.ca
3. Caption Northwest Inc. (Washington – Remote only)
Email: dkpickard@gmail.com
4. See2hear Communications
780-818-7547
Email: louellaw@ualberta.ca
5. WizCap Realtime Reporting Inc.
Phone: 780-643-0555
Website: <http://www.wizcap.ca/>
Email: info@wizcap.ca
6. Realtime STENOvations
Multiple captioners on staff
Facebook: www.facebook.com/stenopro
Email: isagogetter@gmail.com



5.2 Additional Reading Resources

A Way With Words and Images

https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-esdc/migration/documents/eng/disability/arc/way_with_words.pdf

This booklet developed by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada seeks to promote a fair and accurate portrayal of people with disabilities. It recommends current and appropriate terminology to help you reach this goal.

Canadian Human Rights Commission – Duty to Accommodate

<https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/what-duty-accommodate>

Phone: 613-995-1151

Toll-free: 1-888-214-1090

TTY: 1-888-643-3304

Fax: 613-996-9661

The duty to accommodate involves eliminating or changing rules, policies and behaviours that discriminate against persons based on group characteristics, such as race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, marital status, family status and disability.

City of Edmonton

[Access Design Guide](#)

Canadian National Institute for the Blind

[Clear Print Accessibility Guidelines](#)

[Clearing Our Path](#)

Government of Alberta

[Service Dog Information](#)

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

[Guide to Planning Inclusive Meetings](#)

Safety Codes Council

[Barrier Free Design Guide](#)



