

Accessible Events and Meetings

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When planning an event, please consider the following checklist to ensure that your event is accessible to all your participants. **Please review this checklist during the initial planning stage. Any accessibility related costs should be included in the overall event budget.**

References: adapted from “*A Planning Guide for Accessible Conferences: Council of Ontario Universities*” and “*Guide to Conducting Accessible Meetings: The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association*”.

Step 1: Before your event or meeting

Planning

- Have you included persons with disabilities in the planning process?

Budget

- Allocate funds for accessible venue
- Allocate funds for accessibility features such as ASL Interpreters, video captioning, CART services, dietary requests etc.
- Obtain quotes for any accessibility features.

Selecting a venue (exterior)

- Please visit the site of a potential venue to accurately assess its accessibility. Think about people with different disabilities who may attend your event, and the barriers they could encounter.
- Ensure that the route to the location is accessible. Consider any construction barricades along Queen’s and city routes.
- [Contact Queen’s Facilities/PPS](#) for snow and ice removal.
- Accessible parking nearby?
- Contact the [Parking Office](#) to arrange temporary parking if necessary.
- Ensure that the exterior doors of your venue are wheelchair accessible and equipped with an automatic door with accessible push buttons.

Selecting a venue (interior)

- Ensure that any interior doors to your venue are wheelchair accessible and equipped with an automatic door with accessible push buttons. If not, consider staffing inaccessible doorways with volunteers.
- All accessibility features are operational, e.g., doors, elevators, lifts, etc. If not, contact [PPS/FixIt](#)
- Public elevators can accommodate wheelchairs and motorized scooters.
- Accessible washrooms are in close proximity to meeting location.
- Is the stage or elevated area wheelchair accessible?
- Refer to the [Building Accessibility: Detailed Map](#)
- The venue is well lit.

Hallways and Corridors

- Are the venues hallways (one metre width) and doorways wide enough for wheelchairs and scooters?
- Are hallways and corridors clear of any obstructions (e.g. furniture)?
- Do any corridor doors have automatic openers?

Elevators

- Public elevators can accommodate wheelchairs and motorized scooters.
- Elevators have raised/braille buttons for persons who have low vision or are blind.
- Has auditory signals for persons who have low vision or are blind.

Washrooms

- Know the location of accessible and/or all gendered washrooms
- Do washroom door have an automatic door with accessible push buttons?
- Are washrooms and stalls large enough to accommodate scooters and power wheelchairs?

Event Space

- Allow for easy movement for wheelchair, scooter, and service animals (You may have to rearrange furniture).

- Wide aisles.
- Include accessible areas interspersed throughout the room – front, middle and back.
- Plenty of space around tables.
- Good lighting (bright, without glare and allows for adjustment).
- If a stage is used, it is easily visible and persons using a mobility aid can access the stage safely.
- Projector screen is easily visible.
- Good acoustics.
- Background noise is not excessive.
- Provides reserved seating for people who are Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing people.
- Space for sign language interpretation and/or simultaneous interpreter service providers
- Cover electrical cables or cords that cross over aisles or pathways so wheelchair users as well as people who use canes and walkers can traverse safely across them.

Inclusive Features

- Do not plan an event on a day of religious observance or statutory holiday. [Queen's Multifaith Calendar](#).
- Use inclusive language. Be aware of the importance of learning the preferred name and pronoun of each participant.
- Use an '[acknowledgement of territory](#)' statement on communications and as words of welcome at the beginning of your event. This recognizes the traditional inhabitants of the land on which Queen's University is located.
- Consider inviting an Indigenous representative from the territory to offer a blessing or welcome at the event opening.
- Designated quiet area for reflection, meditation and/or multi-faith prayer. [Reflection and prayer spaces at Queen's](#).

- Secluded, comfortable location for breastfeeding.
- Sufficient space to provide childcare.

Accessibility Features

Assistive Listening Devices

[Contact Event Services](#)

Interpretation Services

Interpretation services are available in the following formats:

- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Deaf blind intervener services
- Oral interpreters for a person who is hearing impaired and may not use sign language and may rely on speech (lip) reading

American Sign Language (ASL)

To identify whether ASL is required at an event, consider the following:

- Include a statement in the advertising materials (poster, emails etc.) requesting participants to notify the organizers if they require ASL interpretation at the event by a particular date.
- Tentatively book the ASL interpreters informing them of the possibility of cancelling if the service is not requested.
- Cancel the booking if ASL is not requested by the date included in event communications.

Communication Access Real-time 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 at meetings. It can be displayed on a laptop screen or projected onto a large screen for lectures, classes, large events and meetings. This is an example of a broader accessibility feature that will benefit many attendees, not just those with hearing loss as it also has the added benefit of providing an electronic record of the event's proceedings.

The delay between speech and the appearance of the written text is typically less than two seconds, allowing readers to participate fully in the proceedings.

[CART Canadian Hearing Society](#)

Support Persons

Considerations for support persons:

- Your event notice could state that support persons will not be charged for admission or registration but a small or reduced fee will be charged for food or meals consumed.
- Be mindful that persons with disabilities who use a support person often cannot attend events or participate in activities without their support person.
- Note that the support person will need seating as well.
- Familiarize yourself with the [Guidelines for Customer Service to Persons Who Use Support Persons \(PDF 296 KB\)](#).

Service Animals

Considerations of service animals:

Are you aware that service animals must be permitted to enter all public and private sector businesses and organizations (with the exception of in food preparation areas)?

- Consider having volunteers to assist any service animals with food/water and bio breaks.
- Provide bowls for water for any service animal.
- Familiarize yourself with the [Guidelines for Customer Service to Persons Who Use Service Animals \(PDF 328 KB\)](#) and the [Procedures for Persons Who Use Service Animals \(PDF 409 KB\)](#)

Volunteers

All volunteers reminded to ask guests, “How may I help you?”

Accessibility

Contact [Access Champions](#) and arrange volunteers for your event.

If not using Access Champions:

- For large events, ensure volunteers are available and clearly identifiable.
- Organize accessible customer service training through the [AODA Training Suite](#).

First Aid

If you require a First Aid coverage at your event:

- [Queen's First Aid](#)
- [St. John's Ambulance](#)

Dietary Considerations

- If you are serving food, give participants a chance to request dietary preferences.
- Plan to provide volunteers to assist with food handling for persons with disabilities if requested (e.g., someone who uses a cane may need assistance if lunch is served buffet style).

Emergency Planning

- Know the venues evacuation plan. Consider needs of persons with physical disabilities.
- Are visual fire alarms present at venue?
- Staff and volunteers are familiar with elevator locations and emergency exists.

Promotion

- Use the [Accessibility Statement](#) on communications and social media to allow participants to request any accessibility or dietary requirements they might have.
- Communicate a date in which requests are due by participants (e.g. ASL interpretation is not requested you can cancel without penalty).
- Use inclusive language, e.g., person with a disability.
- Promote a scent-free environment.

- Give ample notice for your upcoming event – this allows people to arrange for transportation, assistants or other supports they may require.
- Advertise the event with location details as soon as possible to enable persons with disabilities using accessible transit services to book their trip, as this service often requires advance booking.
- Is event information provided in accessible formats upon request?
- Are all online information, registration forms, and materials accessible?
- Ensure [social media communications are accessible](#).
- If email is used to communicate information about the event, ensure that all [attachments are accessible](#).
- Provide directions of an accessible route.
- Describe in detail any physical activities.
- Specify the accessibility features available at the location, e.g., wheelchair access and proximity of accessible washrooms.
- Staff/Volunteers must complete the [AODA Training Suite](#).
- Follow up with people who request accommodations in a timely fashion.

Step 2: During the event or meeting

Registration desk

- Allow for easy movement for wheelchair, scooter, and service animals (You may have to rearrange furniture).
- If a sign language interpreter was requested, have them available at the registration table.
- Staff and volunteers are aware of who requested any materials in an accessible format and any dietary requirements.
- If anyone requested materials in alternate formats, have them at the registration desk to hand out.

Create signs with large print and contrasting colours to identify and give directions to meeting rooms, washrooms and emergency exits. Participant nameplates and ID tags also should be easy to read.

Venue

Do a final check when you arrive at the venue to set-up. Are any construction, renovation or maintenance projects scheduled that could affect the accessibility of your event or meeting?

Is the entranceway free of snow and ice?

Have you done a last-minute walk-through to remove any obstacles that might have emerged from accessible routes, doorways, washrooms and elevators?

Do a final check to see if signs to the venue, conference hall, meeting rooms and accessible washrooms clear and appropriately placed?

Has food been labeled and particular dietary requests been met?

Have the audio systems been tested? Are assistive listening devices and microphones ready for use?

Meeting Materials

Circulate meeting materials and presentations at least one week prior to the meeting. One week is the minimum time required for participants to review or convert materials to alternative formats.

Alternate formats available:

- Documents written in plain language.
- Printed material available in Braille, large print, audio format on CD or DVD (as required).
- Videotape presentations accessible through use of descriptive narration and/or captioning.

Presentations

Ensure any [PowerPoint presentations are accessible](#). For example:

- Font size for text documents should be a minimum of 12 points.

- Font size for presentation slides should be a minimum of 16 points.
- Use sans-serif fonts such as Arial, Tahoma or Geneva.

Describe any visual images used during presentations and ensure a high degree of color contrast between the background and text.

Caption all video material for participants who are culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

Speak clearly and at a moderate pace. Face your audience during the presentation to allow people who are culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing to process on-screen messages, and for the interpreters to communicate the spoken word through sign language.

During question-and-answer periods, remind people to speak slowly and clearly, and to state their name before speaking. This allows all participants know who is speaking including persons who are blind or have low vision.

Assume that persons with disabilities are part of the audience (including persons with nonvisible disabilities).

Use person-first language e.g. person with disabilities.

Activities

If there are to be activities, ensure that there are a range of activities that are accessible to all fitness and ability levels.

Step 3: After the event or meeting

Distribute evaluation form to attendees.

Debrief staff and volunteers on what went well and discuss any issues.

Follow up with people who requested accommodations to discuss any issues, if any.

Ensure there is an accessible online version of any distributed evaluation forms.

Include a space in the evaluation for comment on the accessibility of the event.

Queen's is committed to an inclusive campus community with accessible goods, services, and facilities that respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. This document is available in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports upon request. Please contact the Accessibility Coordinator, Andrew Ashby, in one of the following ways:

Email: accessibility.hub@queensu.ca

Phone: (613) 533-6000 ext. 75734

In person: Adaptive Technology Centre, Stauffer Library, Room 120E