

# ACCESSIBLE EVENT PLANNING

When planning an event, please consider the following checklist to ensure that your event is accessible to all your participants.

## ADVERTISING, OUTREACH AND REGISTRATION FORMS

- Give ample notice for your upcoming event – this allows people to arrange for transportation, assistants or other supports they may require.
- Provide space on your registration form or on the event notice for people to identify their accommodations or special needs.
- Alternatively, include contact information (e.g., phone number and e-mail address) so that attendees can contact you with their special, confidential requests.
- Follow up with people who request accommodations in a timely fashion to inform them whether or not these will be available.
- On the posters or information sheets, include accessibility symbols and the duration of the event.
- Promote a scent-free practice for all events.
- If you are serving food, give participants a chance to request dietary preferences.

## HELPING PARTICIPANTS GET TO THE SPACE YOU ARE USING

- Make sure transport options for getting to the venue are realistic for people with disabilities.
- Determine the location and approximate distance for nearest accessible parking.
- Make sure that wheelchair access is via the main entrance
- Alternatively, post clear, legible signs at the main entrance showing alternative, safe and accessible entrances.
- Make sure people with a disability can reach all areas used at your event independently or with assistance from your volunteers, e.g., the registration desk, auditorium, breakaway rooms, stage, etc.
- Preferably, elevators should have low buttons for wheelchair users, Braille/ raised number markings or audible floor announcements for people with low vision and visual floor indicators for people who are Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

## MAKE SURE THE ROOM SET-UP FOR YOUR EVENT IS AS ACCESSIBLE AS POSSIBLE. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:

- Allows for easy movement for wheelchair and scooter users (You may have to rearrange furniture).
- Wide aisles.
- Includes 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.
- Projector screen is easily visible.
- Good acoustics.
- Provides for seat reservations for people who are Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing people.
- Accessible washrooms within a reasonable distance.

## ALSO MAKE SURE THAT YOU:

- 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.
- Arrange for Assistive Listening Devices (e.g., an FM system), if requested.
- Know the location of public telephones that are accessible (i.e., with volume control, with a TTY1, and for wheelchair users, the coin slot should be 1.22m above floor level).
- Post clear and easy-to-read signs showing locations of accessible washrooms, elevators, phones, etc.
- Wherever possible, try to eliminate or reduce background noise during proceedings.
- Ensure that all parts of the event are smoke-free.
- Make sure organizers, presenters and volunteers are aware of emergency evacuation procedures.

## PLANNING AHEAD WITH PEOPLE POWER

- Train your volunteers for the event about how to respectfully assist people with disabilities and to respond to any accessibility issues that may arise.
- Make sure that volunteers are easily identified (use name tags and/or other identifiers).
- Book English/American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters or computerized note taker / real time captioning, if these services have been requested.
- Provide interpreters and note takers with agendas and presentation outlines in advance of the event.
- At the event, be sure the interpreters and/or captioners are introduced and explain what they will be doing during the event.
- Depending on the nature of your event, you may want to think about offering child care services if many of your attendees have children and the event is held during non-business hours.
- If food is provided, make sure the total count includes interpreters, note takers, attendants and child-minders.
- Remind participants as well as volunteers and service providers of the scent-free practice.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE PRESENTERS

- Remind presenters to end meetings or presentations on schedule (people making transit arrangements often have very little flexibility).
- Produce materials in large print (16-point type or larger) and have available electronically in case of a request for such a format.
- It is always good to have a few print copies on hand. Encourage and support presenters to offer copies of their material in different formats before their presentation starts.
- For presenters, lectern heights and audio visual controls need to be adjustable to meet the needs of different speakers.
- During the session, presenters should verbally describe contents of videos, or any written materials, including overheads or chalkboard notes for those audience members with vision loss
- Encourage presenters to use captioned videos.
- Organizers or presenters should check with the audience about the need for breaks.

## EVALUATING YOUR EVENT

- Be sure evaluation forms includes a section that about accessibility of the event. This can provide valuable information for use in future event plans.