



Checklist for designing accessible events

Accessible public events are inclusive events to enable all Calgarians – including people with disabilities and seniors – to participate and enjoy. There are a number of established best practices in Accessibility. The checklist below is not comprehensive but provides a summary of the top areas of focus.

Pre-event considerations

Advertisement

- Provide ample notice on your invitations and promotional materials and sufficient information on your web pages to allow participants to arrange for transportation, interveners or other supports. Ensure you indicate both start and finish times.
- If specific accessibility accommodations are being made available, make sure this is clearly advertised for the event. If the accommodations are on-demand, make sure this is also advertised.
- Check that your website conforms to WCAG 2.0 accessibility standards.
- Use a text size of at least 14 point and sans serif font, such as Arial.
- Avoid embedding essential information in graphic formats because they can't be read out to people using assistive technology such as screen readers.

Registration forms

- If using a registration form, include fields on your registration forms for participants to identify needed accommodations.

Contact Information

- Include contact information (phone, email) on all materials so attendees can request assistance when they RSVP and specify how far in advance the request needs to be made, or any additional information or questions.

Event Planning

- Plan your event as far ahead as possible (especially large events), preferably four weeks or more.
- Choosing an accessible venue is one of the most important steps you can take to create an accessible event. A personal site visit is the best way to determine if a venue is accessible. Make sure to ask questions, take photos, and imagine how the space would be for people of different ages and abilities. Look for:
 - Accessible parking and drop-off zones.
 - Barrier-free path of travel: sidewalks, aisles, ramps and handrails, including covered electrical cables and cords across the floor.
 - Clear and adequate wayfinding signage.
 - Accessible seating arrangements.
 - Assess lighting, acoustics and sightlines (aids in lip reading).
 - Accessible amenities, like washrooms, elevators and relieving areas for guide dogs.



- Make sure there is adequate accessible parking near the venue entrance.
- Consult with the venue owner about their emergency evacuation plan.
- Check that emergency evacuation procedures are in place for all individuals, including people with disabilities and seniors.
- Ensure automatic door openers are activated (otherwise, wedge the door open if allowed by fire regulations)
- Some specific considerations for washrooms can include:
 - Scent-free soap
 - Signage asking attendees to not use scented products
 - Washrooms and change rooms are trans* inclusive
 - At least one washroom large enough to accommodate a person with a motorized wheelchair and their attendant
 - At least one single-user washroom with signage to reflect universal, functions-based designation
 - For outdoor events, provide wheelchair-accessible portable toilets and ensure that people using motorized or manual wheelchairs can get to them on accessible surfaces
- Consider any on-site services needed, such as the need for language translation, Braille transcription or real-time captioning or American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation. It can take at least two weeks to arrange for on-site assistance. Visit The City's language map, to get a better understanding of the community language needs <https://maps.calgary.ca/language>
- Consider accessibility requirements for a variety of needs, including sensory, communications, chemical sensitivity, mobility needs, including assistance dogs, walkers, wheelchairs, scooters, and strollers.
- Consider the timing of your event, avoiding early morning and late evening, if possible
- If planning for food and beverage you should consider:
 - Accommodate food sensitivities and dietary requests where possible and ensure special meals are well labeled
 - Clearly label ingredients – note when nuts may be involved.
 - Provide water, and provide help pouring
 - Communicate dietary accommodations to caterers, and ensure they follow through

Day of event considerations

Display Tables

- Secure all cables and cords, remove protruding banners and trailing table-cloths to create a barrier-free path of travel for all participants.
- Provide enough space between tables for people using mobility devices and assistance dogs to go between.
- Have one chair missing from each table for people using mobility aids



Service Providers

- Ensure reserved seating at the front of the room.
- Introduce the accessibility service providers (for instance, sign language interpreters or captioners) and explain what they will be doing throughout the meeting.

Presenter(s)

- Remind presenters to speak clearly and loudly and take pauses.
- If the presenter is showing videos or other visual presentations which were not captioned prior to the event, remind them to explain what is being seen on the screen.
- Remind presenters to stay on point and on time. (Some participants may have pre-arranged pick-up).
- Ask speakers and attendees to identify themselves by name each time they speak for the benefit of visually-impaired individuals
- Ask speakers and attendees how they want to be referred to – by name or pronoun. Pronouns may be either feminine (she, her, hers), masculine (he, him, his) or gender-neutral (they, them, theirs)
- Welcome participants using gender-neutral terms (such as people or folks) – not ladies and gentlemen or guys

Seating

- Avoid designating a single area “for wheelchair use” – this segregates and stigmatizes individuals using wheelchairs, prevents them from having the same choices as other attendees, and prevents them from being seated with friends and colleagues.
- Provide sufficient places with no seats for people in wheelchairs or scooters to use. If possible, scatter these throughout the venue.
- Where seats are movable, provide areas by the aisles with no chairs so people with mobility aids can maneuver into these spaces.
- Ensure aisles between seating rows are wide enough for people using mobility aids – a minimum 36 inches of clear space.
- Provide seats near the front of the room for people with visual or hearing needs with clear access to ASL interpreters and speakers.
- Ensure there are chairs directly in front of the real-time captioning screen for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Displays, exhibits and printed materials

- Ensure adequate wayfinding signage in and around your venue.
- Consider the display height so they're accessible to people using wheelchairs or scooters, or people of different heights (i.e. children).



Community Outreach on Planning & Development Resource: Accessible Events Checklist

- For guidance, refer to the [Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design](#) 
- Have printed handouts and materials in alternate formats in case of on-site requests. Consider needs for translated materials.
- Use non-toxic materials, such as unscented markers and non-plastic name badges.
- Use high contrast colours – light text on dark background or dark text on light background.
- Use a text size of at least 14 point and sans serif font, such as Arial on print outs.
- Offer materials and agendas in advance, in digital, large print or Braille formats if requested.
- Consider using captions and audio descriptions for videos.