



Meeting Accessibility Guide

The Disability Rights Fund (DRF) works to ensure the full participation of all individuals – with or without disabilities – during trainings, convenings, and meetings. DRF has prepared a guideline on creating accessible events. These steps are divided into *before*, *during*, and *after* the meeting.

Before the meeting

- Send out a questionnaire to those attending the meeting, including questions about access needs.
- Request language translators, sign language interpreters (SLIs), captioning in real-time (CART) providers, and/or other communication facilitators' services. Book services early due to limited availability. If requesting an interpreter/provider for a specific individual, ask them if they have a preference for a specific interpreter/provider.
- Secure accessible venues. Verify the accessibility by visiting the venue beforehand.
 - For planning meetings in another country/province, ask a local DPO for recommendations.
- If a meeting requires travel, ensure that hotels and travel arrangements are also accessible. Ask local people with disabilities for recommendations based on their experiences. Be as detailed as possible with needs requests (i.e. first floor for wheelchair users if possible, accessible showers/toilets)
- Share any meeting materials (agenda, documents, attendee list) with SLIs, CART providers, and communication facilitators in advance of the meeting. This will enable them to provide quality and accurate support.
 - Not many support providers are familiar with development/UN terms and acronyms; share a list with acronyms and terms that will be frequently used during the meeting. (See DRF Sample)
- Ask presenters to provide materials before the meeting to allow for alternative formats to be created such as a USB drive. Brief presenters on speaking to a multi-lingual audience that includes those who use sign language or those who do not speak English as their first language. They should be prepared to speak slowly and describe any images shown during their presentation.

- If providing handouts at the meeting, send an electronic version to those with visual impairments ahead of the meeting. Also share any PowerPoint presentations ahead of time and have documents available at the meeting on a USB drive.
- When preparing a PowerPoint presentation, use a template that is low-vision friendly such as a dark background (black, dark grey, or navy) and light colors for font. Use large font sizes and limit the amount of text to a few points. Be prepared to have the text within the PPT slide provided in a Word document version to create a large print version.
 - Strike a balance with the amount of information on PPTs as sometimes more is better in a multi-lingual audience where it is helpful to see the words while listening.
- If Braille materials have been requested, notify a local Braille company and ask how much time they will need to braille documents. Note, some documents cannot be brailled such as tables, charts, and PDF materials. When possible have a Word version as well as a PDF version.
- If using photographers for the event, ask them to focus on the person not the disability (i.e. not taking close ups of white canes, wheelchairs, and hearing aids).
- If materials need to be translated in another language, work closely with the translator to assure the translation uses appropriate disability terms.
- Before the meeting, have a small meeting with staff and volunteers to make sure everyone is familiar with how to be inclusive.

Setting up the Meeting Room

- Offer the option of a person with disability arriving early to determine what works best for their needs.
- Reserve seating near speakers for SLIs/CART providers. Allow flexibility if they need to be placed in a different location to provide better facilitation. Where possible, position SLIs where there is a dark, solid background to minimize visual distractions.
- Ensure that wheelchair users will be able to navigate around the room. For example, allow for ample room between tables, make sure that there are no wires on the floor or that they are taped down. Remove some chairs from tables to create space for wheelchairs.
- Some presenters will have disabilities themselves, ensure they have access to the podium and the panel's table.
- While translators/SLIs/CART should be provided with materials before the meeting, have printed copies available for their use.
- Provide seating area for support persons nearby (usually behind the person with a disability).

During the meeting

Created by Kerry Thompson for the Disability Rights Fund and Disability Rights Advocacy Fund.

- Ask those in the room to introduce themselves. This helps those who are visually impaired as well as for interpreters to be able to identify who is speaking.
 - Do not ask interpreters, CART, sight guides or other communication facilitators to introduce themselves as this disrupts them while they are working. Do acknowledge their presence by thanking them for their time.
 - Also be aware, that some interpreters work in teams and will switch every 20-30 minutes. This is to prevent fatigue and injury.
- Before beginning the meeting, have the moderator outline communication/access rules such as:
 - Wait for the moderator to call on you if you have a question/comment. Prevent overlapping voices so that interpreters can catch all that is being said
 - Say your name before stating your comment
 - Allow time for interpretation
 - Push chairs in when leaving the room
- Allow ample breaks during the meeting

After the meeting

- Have a team debriefing to discuss what went well and what needs to be improved on. If possible, try to get feedback from the attendees.

Accessibility checklist

- Send an accessibility form to those attending the meetings to inquire what type of support they need for their travels, hotel accommodation, and the meeting itself.
- Check that venues and facilities accessible for people with a disability. (i.e. ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms)
- Request a translator, sign language interpreter or captioning in real-time (CART). (if requested)
 - Provide meeting materials ahead of meeting so they may prepare
- Prepare alternative formats for meeting documents such as:
 - Braille
 - large print
 - digital/electronic