

# CHECKLIST FOR INCREASED ACCESSIBILITY AT MEETINGS

## WHAT IS ACCESSIBILITY?

Accessibility entails making it possible for people who have

- difficulty hearing
- difficulty seeing
- difficulty moving
- difficulty interpreting, processing and conveying information
- or who do not tolerate certain substances

to participate at, for example, meetings.

We need accessibility during many aspects of life. When we are born we are illiterate and do not understand written signs, most of us injure ourselves at some point in life and may have difficulty getting around, many of us become pregnant and may need a little extra assistance, and we will, hopefully, ultimately grow old with all that aging entails. Some of us require a bit more from our settings and contexts throughout life in order to be able to participate on equal terms.

## What do we want to achieve with accessibility?

When we refer to accessible environments, we mean that we want your visitors (audience and lecturers) to be able to participate in all activities, regardless of their abilities. They can accompany a group and develop relationships, they can understand what the lecturer is talking about on stage and they can personally hold a lecture. At lunch and during breaks it is easy for them to identify what they can and cannot eat.

By constantly being pulled out of a group, for example by having to use rear entrances, or by not being able to keep up with a noisy group conversation, your guests become isolated and are unable to participate and contribute in the same way as other participants.

Making your meeting or event accessible elevates the level of service for everyone. And that is a promise.

## BEGIN WITH: A QUICK ANALYSIS

Make a quick analysis of what we are doing that might exclude the above groups and come up with solutions to avoid such situations.

## END WITH: A SELECTION

Once you compile all of the ideas and do a bit more research – what is already in place and what could possibly be implemented – that's when you make your selection of what you intend to improve. No one can do everything, so this time you could choose perhaps three points you can improve. It is better to choose fewer points and try to make them as good as possible. Don't forget to document and evaluate your choices! It is so easy to forget things. Good luck and do your best!

# IDEA BANK

Below are some ideas and suggestions on how to improve the accessibility of your meeting or event. Don't forget to have close contact with your suppliers of for example food and meeting venue. They can support you in your accessibility efforts.

## TIPS FOR WORKING WITH MANY (EXTERNAL) STAKEHOLDERS

Arrange an inspirational/training day during which you review and analyse each item on the program along with the participating organisers to see whether it is accessible.

## HOW TO MAKE YOUR MEETING ACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY MOVING

- Remember that everyone should be able to enter the premises using, for example, a wheelchair, electric wheelchair or walker. Make sure that entrances with stairs also have a ramp or elevator.
- Roads should be accessible for people in wheelchairs or with walkers. For instance, consider the width and the surface of the road. Try to ensure that the surface is as smooth as possible. Consider also how crowds move, so that it is possible to get around everywhere and does not become too crowded.
- Make sure reserved parking spaces are available within 25 metres of the entrance for people who need such access.
- Also, remember to include ramps in the rest of the venue/event area, and note that they should tolerate the extra weight of electric wheelchairs. Ramps can be rented or purchased at many places in Sweden and local disability associations can be helpful here. Remember that if there is a stage, it should also be adapted for accessibility. Check with your technical supplier or a carpenter. If you build your own ramp, think of safety so that everyone can escape in the event of, for example, fire. To learn more about the exact guidelines for ramps, visit Region Västra Götaland homepage (<http://www.vgregion.se/en/Human-rights/>) for guidelines and standards.
- Designing furnishings and equipment so they are useable: for example, the height of reception desks, stands, shelves, etc., so they are suitable for short people or people who use wheelchairs.
- Place wheelchair spaces to guarantee that the individual can see the stage. It is also important to ensure that wheelchair spaces can be placed so that friends, assistants and people in wheelchairs can sit next to each other. Also, mix wheelchair seating so that not all wheelchairs are necessarily in the same place. Wheelchair seating in front of the first row of seats is not particularly appealing, either. Sitting right on the stage when you are a member of the audience may feel very uncomfortable.
- Make sure there are spaces in the conference room for people who use wheelchairs. Don't put chairs out everywhere and remember that the table height should be appropriate for wheelchair users to allow them to sit at tables and workbenches.
- Everyone should be able to give lectures, make comments, or present group results during the meeting – ensure that podiums/stages are wheelchair-accessible, for example.

- Make sure bathrooms are large enough for a wheelchair or walker. Large bathrooms can also be appropriate for others, such as families. If you rent portable toilets, toilets adapted for people with disabilities are always available.

## **HOW TO MAKE YOUR MEETING ACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY HEARING**

- Remember that alarm signals should not only be heard, but also seen (lights) and/or felt (vibration) so that warning signals can alert people with hearing impairments in the event of fire or some other danger. Check with the venue supplier.
- Try to reduce the amount of noise and sounds in the area. Also note that when there are many group discussions in a room people with poor hearing may find it difficult to hear. This also applies at dinners.
- Always use a microphone to make it easier for people with hearing variations. Make sure there are portable microphones for questions from the audience. People with impaired hearing who do not use a hearing aid need speakers with good amplification and high sound quality. Speakers should be evenly spaced.
- Check whether a portable hearing loop or other special microphone that can be connected to the hearing aid is available in the premises. Also check the situation for hearing equipment in group rooms.
- Check whether it is possible to read text on a TV screen, tablet, smartphone, or similar.
- Highlight the speaker. With lighting, you can easily show who is in focus and whom to follow. Good lighting also makes it easier for people who read lips. Make sure that the mouth of the person on the stage is clearly visible. There is a risk of shadows covering the mouth of the person on stage, or of the audience being blinded by the light.

## **HOW TO MAKE YOUR MEETING ACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY SEEING**

- Mark stairs and level differences with black and yellow tape for people who are visually impaired.
- Create an environment with strong contrasts. The easiest way to create contrasts is by using a combination of dark and light. In the outdoor environment, different materials can be used to create contrast, which enhances security and orientation. Remember also to use contrast to mark large glass windows.
- Use smart lighting to make special places and objects easier to find, such as information boards and lift and stairwell doors.
- Can you have a special host for people who find it difficult to orient themselves?

## **HOW TO MAKE YOUR MEETING ACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY TOLERATING CERTAIN SUBSTANCES**

- Avoid carpeting.
- Encourage staff and visitors to avoid strong perfumes.
- Use neutral cleaners, soap and detergent.
- Have a clear list of ingredients easily available for all food that is served. All staff should know where the list is stored.
- Post signs with the contents of the food served in buffets and provide allergy information by food vendors, if any.
- Use special cutting boards, plates, knives and serving utensils when handling food for people with allergies.
- Offer a variety of foods and preferably include dishes that meet special dietary needs as part of the standard selection. Consider not serving nuts.
- If possible, choose trees, shrubs and flowers that do not have an overly strong fragrance.
- Mark where smoking, if any, is allowed.
- Communicate whether animals are allowed.

## **HOW TO MAKE YOUR MEETING ACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY INTERPRETING AND CONVEYING INFORMATION**

This group is fairly large. It may range from people who speak a different language to people with dyslexia or a neurological disability. This group also includes children.

- Write in clear "plain" language (see link below).
- Include pictures or pictograms as an aid.
- Translate your materials into multiple languages.
- Provide interpreters.

## **CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING COMMUNICATION, INFORMATION AND MARKETING**

The invitation to the meeting/event should include the following questions or information:

- Is there a need for sign language interpreting or hearing equipment?
- Are there any special dietary needs? (or include food that meets special dietary needs as part of the standard selection).
- Are conference materials needed in alternative formats, such as USB or in plain language?

- Do participants need to avoid perfumes or other scents?
- Provide clear information about the venue so visitors can determine in advance whether or not the site is accessible. Provide a description of the site and what amenities are available. Refer to the Accessibility database and identify the person who can answer further questions. It is good to be able to determine whether or not the site will work before leaving home.
- Be clear about whether admission to your event is free for personal assistants.
- Various types of information should be available in a simplified format that is clear, concise, specific and easy to read.
- Information signs should be easily understandable with strong contrasts and positioned so that they can be read by people who are sitting. Using symbols is an easy way to make them easily understandable.
- Ensure that the layout of the program is clear and use the contents and distinct divisions to provide a good overview.
- In general, use strong contrasts for printed materials and websites. Also, make sure that the text on the website can be enlarged and use a speech synthesis program if possible.
- Providing information in several languages is recommended, using flags for identification.
- Provide clear maps and directions.
- When choosing images for communication and marketing: consider diversity and gender equality; avoid stereotypes.

## **INCLUSION AND EQUALITY**

- Be inclusive by ensuring that there are no grounds for discrimination in marketing and program content. But avoid using only people who are “representative of their group”; instead, be inclusive without emphasis by allowing anyone at all to represent people.
  - Gender
  - Gender identity and gender expression
  - Ethnicity
  - Religion or belief
  - Disability
  - Sexual orientation
  - Age
- Ask yourself if your program is equal by having equal proportions of men and women. Who represents what? Think about the standards you reflect and the people you are challenging.
- Unisex bathrooms are recommended.

## **MORE TIPS HERE**

The Passalen Access all areas app offers more tips for organisers who want to create meetings and events for everyone and make them more accessible to people with disabilities. It includes checklists, tips and information about the most common disabilities.

Accessibility Database. What does accessibility look like in different venues? Link to the accessibility database instead of describing it yourself.

<http://www.t-d.se/sv/TD2/>

Picture Guide to gender from Gävle Municipality.

[https://issuu.com/gavlekommun/docs/bildhandboken\\_gavlekommun\\_genusfo-to/3?e=5348010/34334889](https://issuu.com/gavlekommun/docs/bildhandboken_gavlekommun_genusfo-to/3?e=5348010/34334889)

Check if your text is written in plain language :

<http://www.sprakochfolkminnen.se/sprak/klarsprak/in-english.html>