



**ACCESSIBLE VIRTUAL EVENTS GUIDE**

**CO-OP & WIL**

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# WHAT IS ACCESSIBILITY?



## WHAT IS ACCESSIBILITY?

Accessibility refers to the design and practice of providing access to environments, spaces, devices, goods, and services for people with a disability.

Though accessibility is often used when referring to persons with a disability, we know that disabilities like people are unique and widely diverse, and that many people identify in intersectional or pluralistic ways. Therefore, intentional accessible practice creates room for inclusive participation, providing equal opportunity for all to fully enjoy and participate.

Often the most equal and just solutions are created by refocusing an internal lens toward inclusive actions which amplify access for all. The cartoon on the right is a poignant example of how we can all alter our behaviour in small ways that amplify access by challenging systemic discriminatory patterns of thinking, behaviour and actions.



# CREATING ACCESSIBILITY



## HOW DOES ACCESSIBILITY APPLY TO VIRTUAL EVENTS?

Traditionally, accessibility has been considered for in-person events in a brick-and-mortar post-secondary environment. Pivoting during a pandemic has reinforced the significance of providing online virtual spaces through accessible social media content, webpages, digital communications, meetings, and virtual events.

With accessibility in the virtual event sphere often overlooked, this guide aims to provoke action when engaging co-op and Work Integrated Learning (WIL) participants in the virtual event space.

## HOW CAN WE CREATE AN ACCESSIBLE VIRTUAL EVENT?

Inclusivity begins early in the planning stages. All participants arriving digitally should be made to feel welcome, included and equipped to participate fully in the event.

Maintaining inclusivity through design, planning, communication, registration, platform selection and implementation is key.

# THE EARLY PLANNING STAGES



## PLANNING FOR ACCESSIBILITY

Similar to an in-person event, accessible virtual events start long before participants register or arrive at the virtual location. Being mindful to create barrier-free access and anticipate participant needs in the early stages of event planning will facilitate an inclusive and supported approach to ensuring all attendees feel welcomed and supported.

Design for All (DFA) is the "intervention into environments, products, and services which aims to ensure that anyone, including future generations, regardless of age, gender, capacities or cultural background, can participate in social, economic, educational, cultural, and leisure activities with equal opportunities." (designforall.org) DFA can and should be applied in event planning and will help to avoid inaccessible oversights when there is little time for resolution.

Intentionally recognizing accessibility points supports fair access for all attendees as well as those who may have considerations related to disability, while also potentially benefiting more people than expected.

## TOP TIPS

- ★ Diverse organizing committees make for a more diverse event while also helping to ensure that key details are not overlooked.
- ★ Check the calendar for a diverse array of cultural and spiritual dates of significance to ensure it is not a day that excludes others from participating.
- ★ Implementing deliberate access for all is the right thing to do and can greatly help increase participation in your event.

# PRIOR TO THE VIRTUAL EVENT



## SELECTING THE PLATFORM

An indicator if an online platform is accessible is whether it contains features with the ability to:

- Add audio/visual descriptions - closed captioning and transcript
- Provide compatibility with a screen reader tool for text or other adaptive programs
- Offer a straight-forward registration and sign-in process
- Deliver clear and crisp audio and video quality
- Be easily navigated with minimal clicks
- Have readily available tech support and options for assistance



## THE AGENDA

Consider the duration of the event and how mentally and physically taxing a lengthy virtual environment can be. Plan and publish break schedules ahead, particularly if the content is educational, interactive, and/or dealing with emotionally laden content. Encourage guests to take additional self-care breaks as needed during the housekeeping brief. Breaks provide the opportunity for participants to absorb material, rest eyes, activate body movement, and attend to biological and medical needs.



## EVENT WEBPAGE & REGISTRATION

When designing an event registration page or webpage, the copy should be designed so that sentences are clear, concise, and use plain language. Include plenty of space in-between sections and have large action buttons with descriptive links within button text. Avoid ableist language such as, "click here to **see** the day's events".



## PROMOTING ONLINE

In your social media posts, consider how people with low vision would interpret your visuals, implementing alt text and contrasting colours, how and where hashtags are used (read #InclusionMonth rather than #inclusionmonth), how inclusive the graphics, logos and picture representations are and how a screenreader would read aloud your caption to someone who is Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. Please refer to the WIL Accessible Social Media Guide for more.

# EVENT REGISTRATION

## REGISTRATION

When communicating or marketing the event, the best practice is to note that it is an accessible event, open and welcome to all. Communicate the specific ways the event will be accessible and ask if there are other ways so participants feel understood. For example:

"We strive to host inclusive and accessible events, all are welcome and encouraged to attend fully. Presentation materials will be provided ahead, closed captioning, and transcription will be turned on and bio breaks will be held at 1:00 and 1:30 pm. Please let us know if there are other ways we can support your attendance at this event in the registration form."

Within online registration systems or forms, incorporate a mandatory question field to ask all participants to identify and share accessibility requirements ahead. Asking ahead holds space for groups often marginalized to participate and have their needs honoured and valued. Soliciting information upon registration also aids organizers to identify any potential needs gaps that may have been overlooked in the planning process since needs can be varied and unique.

If pre-registration for the event is not required, within all event marketing, provide an accessibility statement and outline the ways the event will provide access. Offer contact information where any further accommodations will be received and respond promptly to communications.

## EXAMPLES

### BC Campus Event Registration

**Do you have any accessibility requirements?**

*Please advise if there is something we can do to support your access and participation at this event.*

Yes

No

### Lime Connect

ASL and captioning will be provided. If you have not used these features in a Zoom webinar, let us know and we can send you instructions.

### Museum of Modern Art

Please let us know if you require any of the following accommodations.

Software-generated closed captions

American Sign Language interpretation

Other -  
Please share  
below

Live captioning

Copy of the slides prior to the session

# EVENT INVITE



## EMAIL INVITE

Consider the timing of your invitation, the subject line, the readability and design of the email, and the process(es) you are requiring of participants. Create a concise subject line for your invitation that is clear.

Send reminders leading up to the event, and as you deliver resources, such as an advanced copy of the slide deck to keep participants on track and engaged in the upcoming event and lines of communication open.

## TOP TIPS

- ★ If there are steps participants need to take in a certain order, number each step
- ★ Include clickable buttons with descriptive text rather than "click here"
- ★ Use inclusive first-person language, "person with a disability" rather than "disabled person"
- ★ Provide contact information for log-on or tech difficulties or instructions
- ★ Provide presentation materials ahead of time - copy of PowerPoint or presentation notes with a date of when the materials will be sent



# MARKETING MATERIALS & DESIGN

## VISUALS & COPY

When creating online and print materials to promote an event, consider the use of colours, words and fonts for readability. Consider how screen readers would read the contents of the promotional materials aloud. For imagery, present a diverse visual representation of people, whether it's displaying animated or real-life people, ensure your visuals aim to intentionally encompass everyone.

### Tips to consider when designing promotional materials:



#### Readability

Review materials for readability standards and guidelines



#### Static Graphics

Keep graphics static as blinking/ flashing graphics can be hard to consume



#### Diversity

Show diversity in terms of ability, appearances, gender, and demographics



#### Alt text

Use alt text on your images to label them to be read by screen readers



#### Language

Write copy using plain language -avoid jargon, slang or obscure words



#### Contrast & Spacing

Be mindful of line spacing, contrast, font and colour schemes



#### Processes

Ensure registration directions are clear and navigated with minimal clicks



#### Fonts

Use a font and size that is easy to see and read Arial and Times New Roman are good for print readability



#### Hashtags

Place hashtags at the very end, so readers can focus on your main message

# AT THE EVENT

## ELEMENTS OF AN ACCESSIBLE EVENT



### Closed Captioning

Enable CC feature, demonstrate how function works so guests can turn on/off as desired



### Educate Yourself

Learn all platform accessibility features, how to use them and ensure settings are turned on



### Joining the Event

Create an inclusive virtual space from the start by welcoming attendees to participate however is best for them



### Implement a Tech Person

Find a person with an expertise in technology to assist with functions



### Use Inclusive Language

Say or write "Hello all" instead of "Hello Guys" use people first language.



### Your Camera

Communicate to attendees that it is a personal comfort choice to have a web camera on or off;



### Mic or Chat

Inform participants that mic or chat questions are welcome, however is most comfortable for guests to communicate



### Recording

Allow time for people to turn off cameras or adjust their on-screen name



### Anonymous Questions Person

Label a staff member 'Questions' so participants can message their question to be anonymously asked



### Build in Bio Breaks

Reduce attention falloff, increase information processing, allows for self-care, movement and and eye rest



### Use Your Pronouns

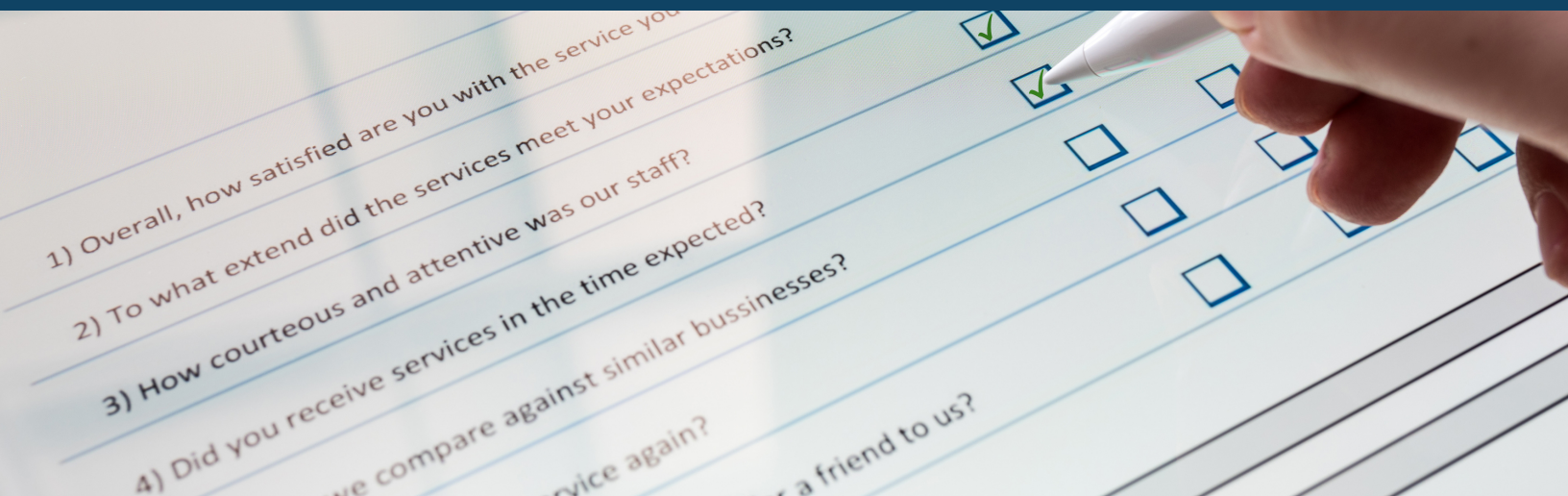
Add in your pronouns to your screen name and when you introduce yourself to foster an inclusive environment



### American Sign Language Interpreter

Learn how to spotlight and pin an ASL or Visual Language interpreters, learn how to record to include interpreter(s)

# AFTER THE EVENT



## FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

Whether an event is in person or virtual, gathering insights from participants to know what went well and what can be improved for future events is important.

Include a survey question soliciting feedback around event accessibility and provide the option for written comments to be given. Act on any recommendations and follow up quickly if there was a service failure. Understand how to correct and implement new or altered practices going forward.

Asking direct questions can help you learn what you can do better in the future and understand the ways you consciously provided inclusive access to remain creating forward momentum.

## EVENT RECORDING

If providing the recording to attendees, ensure that the recording has a transcription feature and check platform settings prior to the event that the feature is turned on.

If needed use video editing software to remove identifying features like names, questions or visuals. Include links, slide decks, and other forms of resources to your participants. Check platform recording settings to tailor to privacy needs.

For more information or to discuss please contact  
Kathryn Hall, Coordinator  
Okanagan College- Student, Graduate and Co-op Employment Centre  
khall@okanagan.bc.ca | 250-864-4108