

Resource H: Preparing for Accessible Meetings



Adapted from Onboard Canada

Commit to Inclusive Meetings

Ask Board or Committee Members (and guests) about their accommodation needs ahead of time. The needs of your group will determine what accommodations are required. Accommodations often help everyone attending.

Note that every person may have unique needs. Speak directly to the person to find out how best to accommodate them.

Planning Steps:

1. **Ask about needs. Find out what accommodations all Members need.**
2. **Include contact information. Put accommodation request details in meeting notices and agendas.**
 - ▶ Members usually only need to reconfirm if needs change or for guests.
3. **For in-person meetings, ensure:**
 - ▶ The location is accessible by public transit (if relevant).
 - ▶ Enough notice is given for specialized transport (for example: Wheel-Trans needs one week's notice).
 - ▶ Interpreters, captioners, or note-takers are booked early.
 - ▶ Printed materials are converted to plain (accessible) language formats.
 - ▶ All documents (agenda, previous minutes) are sent at least one week ahead of the next meeting.
 - ▶ Online documents are accessible to everyone.
 - ▶ Any potential costs (i.e. parking) are communicated in advance.
 - ▶ The meeting room and entrances are checked for accessibility.
 - ▶ The elevators are working.
4. **Check meeting room features for:**
 - ▶ Automatic doors and clear hallways/paths
 - ▶ Doorways that are at least one metre wide

- ▶ Clear, tactile signage
 - ▶ Outdoor access for service animals
 - ▶ Adequate space for wheelchairs, walkers, and interpreters
 - ▶ Accessible washrooms are on the same floor
 - ▶ Lever door handles
 - ▶ Good sound quality (no echoes/external noise)
 - ▶ Good lighting (non-fluorescent preferred)
 - ▶ The same access to the space for volunteers/attendants
5. **For cancellations:** Notify participants early. Be mindful of the impact of changes on travel and support arrangements.
 6. **Review evacuation plans at the start of each meeting.**
 7. **Schedule regular breaks.**
 8. **Food and drinks:**
 - ▶ Plan for dietary needs and assistance (especially buffet style).
 - ▶ Confirm orders, delivery, and labeling of any specialized foods to meet dietary requirements.
 9. **Maintain a scent-free environment in meeting spaces and washrooms.**
 10. **Seat strategically for lip readers, interpreters, service animals, etc.**
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During Meetings:

- ▶ Request advance materials from presenters for interpreters/captioners.
- ▶ Encourage one voice at a time.
- ▶ Ask everyone to speak clearly at a moderate pace.
- ▶ Adjust pace for full participation (shorter meetings, frequent breaks, colored paddles to signal “slow down”).
- ▶ Use visual aids in 18+ point Sans Serif font, high contrast.
- ▶ Ensure videos have closed captions or audio descriptions.
- ▶ Keep slide presentations simple (plain language, minimal graphics).
- ▶ Use two interpreters for meetings over 20 minutes.
- ▶ Tell participants that interpreters will sign everything (no editing).

Practical Details:

- ▶ Use correct terms: “accessible parking,” not “disabled parking.”
- ▶ Name a contact person for problems.
- ▶ Share logistics: best entrance, drop-off point, security procedures.
- ▶ For online meetings:
 - Test platform, webcam, and audio ahead of time.
 - Support digital access (passwords, repositories, phone/multi-factor verification).
- ▶ Anticipate costs and communicate information about costs clearly:
 - Time, travel, support staff
 - Vouchers vs. reimbursement
 - Who pays (organization or individual support)?
 - Clear process and timeline for payment

Additional Resources:

[A Guide to Running Inclusive Meetings](#)