

Accessibility Checklist

Transportation

- Is there accessible public transit (bus/train/subway) within 500 yards?
- Is there accessible connecting transport suitable for wheelchair users (e.g. taxis) from public transport links if required?

The venue should be within 10 minutes walking distance of public transit links or there should be a taxi service which is accessible for wheelchair users at the bus stop/rail station that participants can use to take them to the venue.

Parking

- Is parking designated for people with disabilities available on site? Is it clearly marked?
- How many designated parking spaces are available and can these be reserved?
- Are the designated parking spaces of sufficient width to allow wheelchair users to get in and out of the vehicle, with sufficient space either side of the car and at the rear?
- If designated parking is above or below entrance level, is there a lift from the car park to entrance?
- Do the designated parking spaces and the path to the entrance have smooth surfaces?
- Is there a phone number that disabled drivers can ring when they get near to the venue to access the designated parking spaces?
- Are there any dropping-off points?
- What assistance can be provided to visitors with mobility impairments if they are dropped off at the entrance?

Entrance

- Are visitors with a disability able to enter the building by the same entrance as other visitors? If not, is there another entrance that is accessible to wheelchair users?
- If there are steps, how many are there and is there a handrail?
- If one is needed, is there a platform lift or a ramp suitable for wheelchair users?
- If there is a removable ramp, how does a wheelchair user signal that he or she needs assistance?

The ideal entrance is one that is used by all participants. However, if wheelchair users or other people with impaired mobility need to use a separate entrance, this should be acceptable so long as the entrance is a reasonable one. Using the service entrance is unlikely to be acceptable. Ideally the main entrance will have automatic sliding doors. If the main entrance has a revolving door, then there should be a large swing door on at least one side of the revolving door, which should be left unlocked during the function. A level entrance is preferable to a ramp. Ramps should not be steeper than 1:12, although 1:15 is preferable.

Reception desk

- Is the reception desk at a height suitable for people in wheelchairs? If not, can an alternative desk be used for all delegates?

Meeting rooms

- Are all the meeting rooms accessible?
- If people need to move between meeting rooms, are they close together and on the same floor of the building?

The main room(s) needs to be as accessible as possible, i.e. not through too many corridors or heavy doors. Try to avoid a venue with only one elevator, in case it goes out of service. The main meeting room needs to be large enough to allow for good circulation for a wheelchair user, particularly in the aisles. At least two standard chairs have to be removed to provide space for a wheelchair. A room with echoes may cause problems for people with hearing impairments.

Accessible toilets

- Are there genuinely accessible toilets designed for people with a disability on the same floor as the main meeting rooms?
- If not, are there accessible toilets accessible by elevator?
- Is there more than one accessible toilet?

There needs to be a minimum of one genuinely accessible toilet available to participants at all times within convenient distance of the meeting room. Ideally this should be on the same floor, and immediately nearby, so that participants do not waste their time having to reach the accessible toilet. As there is always a risk that a single accessible toilet may be out of use, it is preferable for there to be a minimum of two accessible toilets available to participants. Where a significant number of wheelchair users are expected, then there need to be more accessible toilets available. The toilets need to be genuinely accessible, not just standard toilets with a wheelchair symbol on the door.

Elevators

- Are elevator doors (including elevators from the car park) wide enough for a wheelchair? Is the elevator big enough for a large wheelchair and at least one other person?
- Are there controls at a height suitable for wheelchair users? Are there Braille or tactile buttons?
- Is there an audio floor indication?

Seating

- Are the chairs comfortable for sitting for extended periods, and do at least some of the chairs have arms?
- Ideally the venue should have some chairs with arms and some without, as people's preferences vary.

Sound

- Are the acoustics in the main meeting room reasonably good?
- Is there an induction loop in the meeting room for people with hearing aids?

A room with echoes may cause problems for people with hearing impairments. If there are no induction loops, you may be able to rent them. Check who will pay the cost of these. Take advice if using a number of induction loops in close proximity, as sound can sometimes be relayed from one loop to another.

Lighting

- Is the level of lighting in the room adequate and adjustable?
- If the level of lighting is to be reduced during presentations, have alternative arrangements been made for people who rely on interpreters and lip readers?
- Are there flickering light bulbs?

If the lighting is not adjustable, you may need to arrange extra or alternative lighting. Transitions from dark to light need to be gradual for people with visual impairments, so lights should be dimmed slowly and never turned completely off. Flickering lights, strobe lighting and flash photography can cause problems for people with epilepsy.

Air quality

- Is the air quality good in the room?
- Is there air conditioning and can it be adjusted on the day if necessary? What arrangements can be made to make people more comfortable when necessary where there is no air conditioning?

People's perceptions of the ideal temperature will vary but a stuffy atmosphere can cause asthma attacks. If the atmosphere becomes too stuffy and there is no air conditioning, the venue may be able to provide fans, or arrange for windows to be opened.

Catering facilities

- Is the room where meals will be served accessible? Are there any steps to this room?
- Is it large enough for several serving points to avoid long lines?
- Is it large enough for people to move around when all participants are in the room?
- Is there sufficient room between tables for wheelchair users to move around?
- Are the tables of a suitable height for wheelchair users?
- If relevant, can the room where lunch will be served accommodate some chairs and tables for people who cannot eat standing up? Or can a separate seating area be provided?

Dietary requirements

- Can the venue cater for people on special diets?
- Can all food be labelled?
- Can ingredients be labelled to meet the needs of people with allergies?
- Is there a reasonable choice of different types of food?

Some people may prefer food they can eat with their fingers rather than with cutlery. Straws should be available where drinks are served.

Emergency evacuation procedures

- Are there procedures in place for evacuating people with disabilities, including wheelchair users, in an emergency? Ask for a copy of the procedures in advance of the conference.
- Are there fire alarms that are audible/visible to all?
- Will venue staff be available to help evacuate participants and facilitators, and has the staff had appropriate training?

It is vital to ensure that there are procedures in place for the evacuation of people with mobility impairments, including wheelchair users. These arrangements need to be explained at the start of the

conference. Where evacuation of wheelchair users relies on Evac Chairs, there need to be enough for the expected number of wheelchair users. If any deaf person is likely to be on their own for any length of time, arrangements need to be made to ensure that their safety is taken into account should there be an emergency.

Guide/assistance dogs

- Are guide dogs or other assistance dogs accepted, including in the restaurant, if this is to be used?
- Can they have access to water?
- Is there an open space for them to exercise?

It is no longer acceptable for guide dogs and assistance dogs to be barred from restaurants, but the practice is still encountered.