

Hosting Accessible Meetings

Part 1: Facilitating an Accessible Meeting

COUNCIL OF
ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES

CONSEIL DES
UNIVERSITÉS DE L'ONTARIO

Meetings are a daily occurrence on Ontario university campuses. As part of the series “Hosting Accessible Meetings”, this tip sheet provides advice for facilitating meetings that allow everyone to participate fully.

Know your participants: plan for inclusivity

- Allow your participants the opportunity to identify their accommodation needs early in the process via your initial notice or invitation. This will allow you time to be prepared and to arrange for any requests related to accessibility.
- When you begin organizing your meeting, consider consulting with persons with disabilities. They know what works best for them in providing accessible services.

Inviting people to your meeting

- When sending invitations, ask participants and/or guests if they require any disability-related accommodations. (See resource in Accessibility Toolkit: Suggested Wording for Invitations for Meeting/Events.)
- Ask participants/guests if they have any dietary restrictions.
- Promote a scent-free environment from the start by asking presenters and participants in the event invitation to refrain from using perfumes and scented toiletries.
- Circulate meeting materials at least one week before the event.

- Provide information on parking and transportation to participants/guests in advance of the meeting.

Leading an accessible meeting

As the meeting chair/leader, what do you need to do?

- Include a roundtable of introductions at the start of the meeting.
- Briefly describe the content of the agenda at the start of the meeting.
- Remind participants to identify themselves each time they speak.
- Encourage presenters to speak clearly and at a moderate pace.
- Advise guests/participants that interpreters (if present) will say everything that is signed and sign everything that is said.

What do your participants/guests need to know?

- What services are available (e.g. sign language interpretation, attendant care, note-taking, captioning)
- Location of emergency exits
- Location of accessible restrooms
- Frequency and length of health/bio breaks during the meeting
- Timing for questions – during presentations or at the end
- Identification of topics throughout the meeting

Accessible meeting checklist

Have you taken these steps to host an accessible meeting?	Yes	No
Create signs with large print and contrasting colours to identify and give directions to meeting rooms, washrooms and emergency exits. Participant nameplates and ID tags also should be easy to read.		
Provide printed materials in an accessible electronic format so that participants may convert and/or access the information as necessary. Tips on creating accessible print documents are on the Accessibility Toolkit website at www.cou.on.ca/accessibility and the Inclusive Design Research Centre website, http://adod.idrc.ocad.ca .		
Circulate meeting materials and presentations at least one week prior to the meeting. One week is the minimum time required for participants to review or convert materials to alternative formats.		
Provide a room with enough space for participants who use mobility devices to manoeuvre freely.		
Ensure that there is adequate lighting with minimal to no glare. If the room has windows, use blinds to reduce glare.		
Create an open seating arrangement that addresses the needs of participants and their service providers. For example, ensure that people with hearing disabilities are seated closest to the sign-language interpreters or note-takers.		
Use language that is acceptable to persons with disabilities, creating an inclusive meeting environment. (See the Accessibility Toolkit: A Way with Words).		
Provide clear and concise parking and transportation information to guests and participants.		

Source

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. *Guide to Planning Inclusive Meetings*. Chapters 2-4. 2009. Available: http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/doc/gpim/page00.shtml [November 2012].

To obtain this document in an alternative format, please contact:

Katie Sultan | Council of Ontario Universities

180 Dundas Street West, Suite 1100, Toronto ON M5G 1Z8

Tel: 416-979-2165 | ksultan@cou.on.ca | Fax: 416-979-8635 | Web: www.cou.on.ca |

Updated July 2013