



## ACCESSIBLE CONSULTATIONS

**Understanding accessibility is the first step in delivering inclusive consultations.**

**Designing, hosting and facilitating consultations is a critical element of much of Urbis' work across our Economics and Social Advisory, Market Research and Urban and Strategic Planning services.**

Nearly one-in-five Australians have a disability and another fifth have a long-term health condition that limits their everyday activities (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011). We are ensuring that our consultations are accessible and inclusive. The following guide outlines a range of practical considerations to help run fully accessible and inclusive consultations.

### Venue

Where possible visit the venue before hiring it out to ensure that accessibility requirements are met.

- The venue should be all on one level with direct access from the street where possible
- If lift access is required, ensure that the lift is large enough to fit an electric wheelchair (70cm wide and 115cm long)
- Accessible bathrooms should be available on the same floor as the main venue
- Ideally the venue should have tactile surface indicators on the floor to allow people with vision impairment to be aware of any changes to floor levels
- A safe drop-off zone should be available to allow people requiring wheelchairs to have time to safely get out of a car into their wheelchair. This may be on the street, off the street or in a loading dock
- Ensure signage is clear and as large as possible. It is suggested by the Australian Human Rights Commission lettering should be 17.5mm high for every metre of viewing distance (e.g. if the sign will be read at a distance of five metres the lettering should be 87.5mm high – 17.5 x 5). Wording should also be inclusive, see 'Wording'
- Venue staff should be briefed on the possible accessibility requirements of some attendees and be ready to help guide people with vision impairment or those requiring other assistance
- Ensure the MC is aware of emergency procedures, especially what the evacuation procedures are for people with accessibility requirements
- Venues can also register their Disability Inclusion Plan with the Human Rights Commission. While this doesn't guarantee that the venue will be accessible, it does give an indication they are proactive and aware of accessibility requirements.

### Room set-up

- Ensure that the room is set up with as few obstacles, (e.g. A-frame signage, boxes or cords) as possible. If you do have signage or easels, set them up along a wall to reduce possible hazards for tripping or getting hit by wheelchairs
- The reception or registration desk should be at a height appropriate for someone in a wheelchair or someone of short stature
- Set up chairs and tables with plenty of room. Two metres between cabaret or buffet style seating is recommended to allow for people in wheelchairs to circulate while people are seated. This will also make it easier for people who may be hard of hearing
- If serving food buffet style, ensure it is accessible for people in wheelchairs. It should be on tables low enough for people seated to reach with clear signage for any dietary requirements. Staff should be on hand to offer help as required. If any attendees are not able to move around easily or are vision impaired staff should offer assistance if required



- Ensure lighting of the seating area is high enough for people with vision impairment to see written material. It is likely that you will need to brief this as an AV requirement as normal venues have lower lighting over seating to emphasize the staging area. Check with people with vision impairment to ensure their needs are being met
- If having Auslan (Australian Sign Language) interpretation, it is suggested that you have a stage for presenters. This allows attendees to easily see the interpreters

## **Wording**

Acceptable:

- Accessible Toilets
- People with Disability
- Accessibility Requirements
- Deaf or hard of hearing  
(Hard of hearing refers to people whose primary method of communication is speech as opposed to Deaf which refers to people who use Auslan)
- Non-disabled

Not Acceptable:

- Disabled Toilets
- People with a Disability (people may have multiple disabilities)
- Disabled People (they are not defined by their disability)
- Handicapped
- Special Needs
- Hearing Impairment
- Able-bodied

## **Materials**

### **Invitations**

Invitations to events should request people provide details on their accessibility requirements (similar to dietary requirements) including:

- Wheelchair accessibility
- Auslan interpretation
- Live captioning
- Hearing augmentation (hearing aid loop)
- Audio descriptions (if applicable)

### **Written Documentation**

If you will be providing written documentation, or are asking people to review written documents, the RSVP should request preferences for the format of documentation including:

- Large format print
- Electronic format (screen reader) compatible
- Digital audio
- Braille

Contact information should always include an email address for people who are Deaf or who have a hearing or speech impairment

### **Colour**

Avoid using colour to convey information, especially red and green

## Images

If using graphics or images, ensure that the information is not conveyed to the reader through graphics alone. If you do have an image in a Word document, add a full description of the image in the Alternate Text and set the Wrap Text properties to 'in line with text' for screen readers. All graphics should be clear and accompanied by a text caption explaining their significance.

## Contrast

Ensure high contrast between background and text - preferably black and white

## Font

Use clear, non-serif fonts such as Arial at 12pt or larger. If creating large format hard copy versions of documents it is recommended that you PDF the original document and increase the size of the print to A3

## Columns

If using columns ensure that a wide enough space is used between columns as some screen readers may not pick up a small gap. This will also help people with vision impairment

## Text Boxes

Avoid using text boxes as they are not accessible to screen readers

Tip: Microsoft Word has a built-in accessibility checker. While it will not pick up all issues in your document, it will help you be more aware of how to write and format documents with accessibility in mind. Access this functionality through File > Info > Check for Issues > Check Accessibility (Smith, 2014).

## Accessibility aids and assistance

- **Hearing augmentation or hearing aid loops** may already be installed in some venues. They can also be installed in one-off instances. Ensure that the space covered by the loop is large enough and that, where practical, it covers the whole meeting area to avoid people that are hard of hearing being forced to sit in a certain area. Ensure that there is clear signage around the room indicating the presence of the loop. An example is given below



- **Live Captioning** is a specialist service that displays what is being said on a TV screen 1-2 seconds after it is said. Captioning services can be provided either onsite or offsite, as long as there is a stable internet connection and all words required to be captioned are delivered through a microphone. Ensure that the screen displaying the captions can be easily read by all attendees. Captioning also has the additional benefit of providing a transcript of proceedings

- **Auslan is Australian Sign Language** and is one of Australia's official languages. Interpreters can be contracted to provide interpretation services. These interpreters should be able to be easily seen by any attendees and should be briefed on the content and format of proceedings. If the event is going for longer than one hour it is likely that two interpreters will be required
- If in doubt – ask. Don't presume that people do or do not want assistance. Ensure that you do not talk down to people and that your questions are very clear
- If people have vision impairment, explain what is happening, for example "Welcome, we are registering people at this desk, may I have your name?... I have a name tag for you here, would you like to put it on yourself?"
- Ask someone with vision impairment if they would prefer for you to assist them in finding their way and, if so, which arm they prefer to use to be guided by. Be aware of any changes in surfaces (gravel paths, ramps or stairs) and communicate this to them
- If you have someone with vision impairment in a group situation, introduce the person to the other people present and use their name when addressing them so they know you are talking to them
- Speak directly to the person with disability not to their carers or interpreters
- Ensure any speakers wait for the Auslan interpreters to be ready before speaking. Speakers should always address the gathering from the stage rather than the floor so that the audience is made aware that they are speaking
- If someone asks a question from the floor, repeat the question so that everyone can hear it. If you have difficulty understanding the question, ask the person to repeat themselves. Don't presume that you understood what they said

## Further Information

- Register of organisations with Disability Inclusion Plans  
Available at: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/action-plans/register-disability-discrimination-act-action-plans>
- The Australian Government Job Access service has produced a collection of information sheets around disability employment and support  
Available at: <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/downloads>
- The Australian Human Rights Commission has Access Guidelines which provide information and checklists to help you assess if buildings and services are accessible  
Available at: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/access-guidelines-and-information>
- Vision Australia provides tips for businesses on working with, and providing for people with vision impairment  
Available at: <http://www.visionaustralia.org/business-and-professionals>
- A tip sheet on producing accessible documents by Tom Smith, Accessible Information Consultant, Blind Foundation New Zealand  
Available at: <http://printdisability.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Toms-Top-Ten-Tips-for-Accessible-Documents.docx> (doc, 21Kb)
- The Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities has created the following guidelines:
  - Producing clear print  
Available at: <http://printdisability.org/guidelines/guidelines-for-producing-clear-print-2011/>
  - Accessible E-text  
Available at: <http://printdisability.org/guidelines/guidelines-for-accessible-e-text-2009/>
  - Conveying visual information  
Available at: <http://printdisability.org/guidelines/guidelines-on-conveying-visual-information-2005/>
- The World Blind Union has published PowerPoint Guidelines for people with vision impairment  
Available at: <http://archive.ifla.org/VII/s31/pub/wbu-visual-presentations-guidelines.pdf> (pdf, 116Kb)
- The National Center on Disability and Access to Education in the US has produced a series of one-page resources on accessibility in documents



- Available at: <http://ncdae.org/resources/cheatsheets/>
- The Office for Disability Issues in New Zealand has selected key points on running an accessible meeting  
Available at: <http://www.odi.govt.nz/resources/guides-and-toolkits/disability-perspective/resources/running-accessible-meeting.html>
  - People First New Zealand has created a guide for making Easy Read information  
Available at: <http://www.odi.govt.nz/documents/guides-and-toolkits/guide-to-writing-easy-read-information-people-first-2014.pdf> (pdf, 726Kb)
  - Mencap in the UK has created guidelines for writing for people with learning disabilities  
Available at: <http://www.accessibleinfo.co.uk/pdfs/Making-Myself-Clear.pdf> (pdf, 948Kb)
  - The Australian Sign Language Interpreters' Association has a list of accredited interpreters  
Available at: <http://aslia.com.au/find-a-member/>

## References

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