Accessibility Design for Festival Settings

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This webinar is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.
Special Thanks

Minnesota Festivals & Events Association

Minnesota Access Alliance
Overview

- Creating an accessible & inclusive festival environment
  - Foundations of philosophy and practice
  - Areas for consideration in planning, design, and implementation
  - Empowerment and Resources
- Thinking “beyond the ADA”
- Recognizing diverse entry points
- Using “Person First” language
Disability 101

- Disability
  - Includes physical, cognitive, learning, developmental, sensory, and emotional-behavioral disabilities.
  - Also may include major health conditions such as diabetes, multiple sclerosis, cancer, HIV, etc.
- CDC: 1 in 4 persons in the US has a disability
  - Many of these disabilities may not be visible.
- Disability is the only group with “open enrollment”
Why Accessibility and Inclusion?

- It’s the Law *(this is the wrong motivation…)*
- Morally/ethically “right thing to do”
- Social Justice (human and civil rights issue)
- **Good economics**
- Linked to event vision / goals
  - Celebration and sharing of community
- Accessibility and Inclusion = Great Customer Service!
Framing Accessibility and the Social Model of Disability

- Lennard J. Davis

- Three major concepts
  - Impairment
  - Disability (exclusion as a result of the impairment)
  - “Normalcy”

- Model locates disability in societal infrastructures (instead of the individual).

- Impairment + Environment = Disability
  - Environment is physical, procedural, and attitudinal.
Why it Matters...

- The way disability is framed can impact:
  - Understanding
  - Language
  - Design of built environments
  - Design of programming and engagement
  - Educational approaches
  - Expectations for participation

- Designing with the Social Model in mind assumes that visitors will navigate, communicate, process, and engage in a variety of diverse ways.
The Model of Accommodation vs. Accessibility

- **Accommodation**
  - Requires me to ask / explain the service
  - Possible invasion of my privacy
  - I’m “special” because I’m different
  - Out of the ordinary / Not “the norm” / Extra work

- **Accessibility**
  - Welcome extended
  - You’ve already considered me
  - I’m “special” because I’m your customer
  - Business as Usual
General Considerations for Accessibility

- Space, environment, and internal infrastructures
- Policies and Procedures
- Staff Connection / Ownership / Empowerment
- Communication / Marketing / Messaging
- Disability Community Involvement / Outreach
- Design of Programming / Intended Experience
- Disability representation within the art / programming
Festival Challenges

- Temporary Construction
- Fluidity of space and boundaries
- Challenges of ticketed / un-ticketed infrastructures
- Balancing simultaneous accessibility needs
- Supporting goals of “unexpected discovery”
- Multiple cooperating partners / organizations
- Schedule changes
- Timeline and length of event
- Mother Nature
- The Unexpected
Creating an Accessible Festival

- Think architecturally and programmatically
  - Not an “add on” or a “one and done”
  - Incorporating Universal / Inclusive Design
- Assume that visitors will navigate, communicate, process, and engage in a variety of ways.
- Think about
  - Design / Build of Space
  - Engagement Experience
  - Accessibility Services
  - Invitation
Designing / Building Space

- Getting There
  - Pathways of travel
  - Drop-Off / Pick-Up locations
  - Parking
- Spaces and Structures
  - Terrain (given and created)
  - Temporary built environment / Existing venues
  - Entrance / Approach / Internal navigation
  - Free of obstacles (built and “acquired”)
  - Cane detectable
Designing / Building Space

- Performance / Presentation Spaces
  - Accessing the venue
  - Viewing / Seating areas
  - Temporary / Fluid / “designated” vs. designed
- Rest / Break areas
- Concessions and Dining Areas
- Restroom Facilities
- Shelter from Weather
Inclusive Design and Construction

Photo courtesy of Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, Smithsonian Institution
Engagement Experience

- Booths / Tents / Activities
  - Approach / Internal navigation
  - Height of counters and tables
  - Design of display
  - Offer varied materials / Provide sample “steps” in process
  - Communication Options

- Retail / Concessions
  - Approachable / Line management & Flow
  - Menus / Price Lists (readable, accessible formats)
  - Displays (High and Low)
  - Check out (communication, purchase point, delivery)
Site Survey for Access

- Consider timeline
- **Utilize user experts**
  - Multiple perspectives
- Create a triage list
- Ongoing adjustments
  - Continue to improve the experience (current/future)

*Photo courtesy of Diane Nutting*
Accessibility Services

- Assistive Listening Systems
  - Any program area with amplified sound
  - Choosing system type (FM / Infrared / Loop)
    - Setting, Space, Community Preference
  - System for acquisition of receivers
  - Collaborate with onsite sound / tech support

- Mobility Supports
  - Assistive devices (wheelchairs, cane chairs, etc.)
  - System for acquisition / loan
  - Transport options when needed / available
Accessibility Services

- ASL Interpretation, Captioning (CART), Audio Description
  - Scheduling services with added “on demand” option
  - Location / Placement (light, sound, traffic flow, the elements)
  - Prep Materials (lyrics, set lists, curated content)
  - Cultural representation
  - Update / Communicate schedule changes

- Alternative Format Materials
  - Multiple text entry points (signs, schedules, concessions)
  - Providing Large Print, Braille, Tactile Maps
  - Utilize technology (e.g. audio schedules, QR codes, etc.)
Additional Service Considerations

- Device Charging Stations
- Service Dog areas (water and relief)
- Family / Companion Care restrooms
- Sensory Supports
  - Sensory Guide (available in advance and on-site)
  - Identified and/or designated quiet areas
- Specialized Programs
- Accessibility for Artists and Participants
- Emergency Protocols / Preparation (!!!)
Invitation

- Outreach and Awareness
  - Make it intentional
  - Note accessibility in all messaging / materials / PR
  - Include disability access symbols
  - Reach out to list-servs and community contacts
  - Engage the disability community in planning

- Onsite
  - Central information location for accessibility
  - Signage / Visibility
Onsite Invitation and Visibility

Photos courtesy of Diane Nutting
Working with Others

- Agencies (local, state, law enforcement), Venues, Collaborators, Vendors, Staff / Colleagues, Volunteers, Artists, Performers
- Communicate mission and intention
- Create Connection / Buy-In
  - “Accessibility is everyone’s job!”
- Educate / Train
- Recognize diverse entry points
- Empower for creative brainstorming
- Make it personal: Share feedback and impact stories in “real time”
Communication breakdowns...

Photos courtesy of (L) Diane Nutting / (R) The Pushy Lawyer (Facebook)
Tips for the Front Lines

- First Impressions set the tone!
- The Customer Service Lens
  - Value every visitor
  - ASK how you can help (*and listen*)
  - Offer info and options (*but don’t make the decision*)
  - Remember not all disabilities are visible to you
  - Communication ≠ Cognition
- Be familiar with available services
Getting Started!

- Plan for inclusion
  - Make it a core value
  - Internal and External conversations
  - Map your community (and needs)
  - Universal / Inclusive Design (not as an afterthought)
- Designate Accessibility Coordinator
  - Point Person / Liaison
- Involve Disability Community
  - Create a Task Force (user experts / advisors)
- Start where you are; set goals; dream forward!
Wise Words...

“We can’t let the fact that we can’t do everything be the excuse for not doing anything.”

- John Waldo (Attorney / Disability Rights Advocate)

“When people don’t plan, people get left out.”

- Elizabeth Stoltenberg (Community Ally / Accessibility Advocate)
Resources

- Planning Guide for Making Temporary Events Accessible (ADA National Network)
  - [https://adata.org/publication/temporary-events-guide](https://adata.org/publication/temporary-events-guide)

- Accessible Temporary Events (Great Plains ADA Center)
  - [https://www.gpadacenter.org/sites/default/files/2017-08/AccessibleTemporaryEvents.pdf](https://www.gpadacenter.org/sites/default/files/2017-08/AccessibleTemporaryEvents.pdf)

- Guide to Accessible Outdoor Events (Accessibility Directorate of Ontario) – *based on Ontario standards*
  - [http://govdocs.ourontario.ca/node/29661](http://govdocs.ourontario.ca/node/29661)
MORE Resources

- American Society of Landscape Architects Universal Design Guide
  - Focusing on permanent environments but great insight around inclusive community space
  - [https://www.asla.org/universaldesign.aspx](https://www.asla.org/universaldesign.aspx)

- Leadership Exchange in Arts & Disability (LEAD)
  - Annual conference hosted by The Kennedy Center

- Minnesota Access Alliance [www.mnaccess.org](http://www.mnaccess.org)
Reflection…

- What has resonated? What are you excited about?
- What changes can you make right away as you plan?

- Looking ahead, what changes can you make to your design and construction? To your engagement? To your invitation?
- Who are your internal and external resources, connections, and allies?

- Continue the conversation!
- Recognize that accessibility and inclusion is a journey.
Questions?

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