Minnesota State Arts Board
Accessibility Design Checklist
for Festivals and Gatherings

Festivals are designed to bring together communities, and create a shared experience of pride, discovery, cultural exchange, and celebration. As we navigate the new realities of our world, we recognize that these gatherings exist in varied forms and contexts— both virtually and in-person.

With 1 in 4 persons in the US population having some type of disability (and over 75% of those disabilities non-apparent) the question is not if, **but rather how** we ensure that all gatherings are created with accessibility and inclusion in mind.

Start with Inclusive Design
One of the best ways to ensure that your gathering is one that includes all is to assume that your attendees will **move, communicate, engage,** and **process** in a variety of different ways. By designing with varied user experience in mind, an environment of inclusivity can better be achieved. This checklist tool provides an overview of accessibility considerations within the design and implementation process for both in-person and virtual events.

Inclusive Design for In-Person Events

Space, Construction, & Practicality

Have you reviewed the ADA Temporary Event Planning Guide* and considered the following elements of your site design and space?

☐ Surrounding environment, terrain, and access points to your site

☐ Parking / Drop-off and pick-up locations

☐ Entrances, exits, and approaches to all site and event spaces (activity tents, stages, etc.)

☐ Walkways and travel paths throughout the site

- Eliminating trip hazards; Removing or controlling hanging / protruding objects

☐ Rest and seating areas / Shade and shelter

☐ Accessible rest rooms and hand washing / sanitization stations

☐ Availability of drinking water (for both attendees and service animals)

☐ Signage

☐ Exhibit and display heights

☐ Counter, table, and workspace heights

☐ Seating areas at activity areas and event stages

- Consider those who may use a mobility device, need guaranteed seating surfaces, need closer viewing or a clear sightline to ASL interpreters and/or captioning screens.

☐ Accessibility of any permanent structures / buildings that are part of the festival site

*The structural specifications of the ADA should always be the starting point for any site design process. That said, the practicality of the space, environment, structures, and intended experiences of the event **may require you to think "beyond" the ADA** in regard to structural and spatial modifications and considerations. It is always best to engage members of the disability community in your design and review process to ensure that you are creating an

inclusive space and experience. Additionally, be sure to consider the "back-end" of your site to create an accessible and inclusive environment for performers and participants—not just public attendees.

Content & Engagement Experience

What is the intended visitor experience at your event?

☐ Will visitors be viewing and/or participating in experiences? Is there intended physical engagement? Verbal engagement? Creative input or action?

- Remember to assume a diversity of communication, processing, and mobility. What supports can be put in place to support this diversity?

☐ How will content be delivered by your artists / performers for demonstrations and activities?

- Remember to assume diverse entry points and levels of engagement.

- Provide information in multiple ways (e.g. verbal and visual directions or descriptions)

☐ What accessibility services and supports are needed to create equity of experience for all attendees?

- Sign language interpretation, captioning, audio description

- Relaxed or sensory-friendly experiences

- Advance information that outlines the experience for attendees (pre-visit information, "know before you go," etc.)

☐ What printed materials (maps, schedules, menus, etc.) can be made available in alternative formats (such as Braille, large print, or audio recording)?

☐ What is the structure, crowd flow, and customer experience of concessions, vendor purchase points, and dining areas?

- Are areas physically accessible and navigable? Are varied communication options provided? Are additional customer supports available if needed?

Outreach & Audience Development

How will you reach your community?

☐ How will you create "intentional invitation" by providing welcome language and accessibility information in your materials?

☐ How, when, and where will accessibility information be communicated?

- Consider website, advertising materials, press releases, brochures, social media posts, registration and ticketing purchase points, etc.
- Is the event website accessible? Are social media posts accessible?

☐ How have you connected with special interest groups within the disability community?

Protocols, Procedures, Health & Safety

What infrastructures and regulations are in place for your event?

☐ What safety protocols, rules, or procedures unintentionally exclude some individuals with disabilities? This could include

issues of physical, communication, and temporal* accessibility (*such as waiting times, time limits, etc.).

☐ How can protocols be adjusted to be more inclusive and/or how can reasonable modifications / accommodations be made when needed?

☐ Will some visitors require additional supports to ensure equitable levels of safety and protection?

Inclusive Design for Virtual/Online Events

Content & Engagement Experience

What is the intended attendee experience for your event?

☐ Will visitors be viewing and/or participating in experiences? Is there intended verbal or visual engagement? Is creative input or action expected from viewers?

- Consider how diversity of communication and processing of attendees could impact engagement expectations and logistics.

☐ How will content be delivered by your artists and participants?

- Remember to assume diverse entry points. Provide information in multiple ways when possible (e.g. verbal and visual directions or descriptions)

☐ What accessibility services and supports are needed to create equity of experience for all attendees*?

- For performances, lectures, and demonstrations: Sign language interpretation, real-time captioning, audio description and/or embedded description of visual elements

- For online exhibits: Image descriptions and alt-text for photos, captioning of videos, audio description of videos

* Be sure to review the "back-end" of your digital program / platform to create an accessible and inclusive environment for performers and participants—not just public attendees.

Online Platform & Access

How will your program be made available to the community?

- ☐ **Does the chosen online platform allow for accessibility to be integrated?** If not, can another platform be utilized?

  - If platform change is not possible, what must be done to create a workaround or alternative to ensure inclusion for all?

- ☐ What are the technical logistics* of accessibility services in this platform (e.g. captioning, interpreters, etc.)?

  - How are service providers set up on the platform? Have you provided prep materials (outline of the program, specific terminology that will be used, etc.) to all service providers?

  - How are audience attendees made aware of access services during the online program? What instructions or steps need to be outlined at the start of the program?

- ☐ If this is a live program, what is the post-event plan for continued viewing? What services need to be added in post to create an equitable experience (e.g. closed captioning)?

* Note that online platforms continue to develop and improve, and accessibility options and logistics may change over time. Be aware

of updates and changes to platform technologies. Be sure to continue to seek feedback from individuals throughout the disability community to ensure an inclusive online experience for all.

Outreach & Audience Development

How will you reach your community?

- ☐ How will you create "intentional invitation" by providing welcome language and accessibility information in your materials?

- ☐ How, when, and where will accessibility information be communicated?

  - ▪ Consider website, advertising materials, press releases, social media posts, registration and ticketing purchase points, etc.

  - ▪ Is the event website accessible? Are social media posts accessible?

- ☐ How have you connected with special interest groups within the disability community?

Protocols & Procedures

What is the attendee process (registration, sign in, etc.) for engaging in this program?

- ☐ Does the design of the online experience and/or the procedures, and infrastructures unintentionally exclude some individuals with disabilities?

  - ▪ Consider issues of physical, communication, and temporal* accessibility. (*such as waiting times, time limits, etc.)

Final Thoughts

The events of 2020 challenged the arts and live-event industries to think creatively about how to continue to create meaningful experiences. As a result, many of the new strategies implemented have provided more opportunities for engagement for those who may not have traditionally been able to engage with a physical site space.

As we look ahead to create a new world that will feature new elements of engagement, infrastructure, and content, let us not abandon the creative solutions that we have discovered in this time. Rather, let us think about how the digital landscape might enhance or work in tandem with an in-person experience to create a truly inclusive event that welcomes all within our communities.

Keep in mind that accessibility and inclusion is a continual journey. Start where you are, and then continue to enhance and improve the experience through community feedback, creativity, and innovation.

Additional Resources

A Planning Guide for Making Temporary Events Accessible to People with Disabilities. ADA National Network.
https://adata.org/guide/planning-guide-making-temporary-events-accessible-people-disabilities

Accessibility at State Fairs and Public Festivals. Northwest ADA Center.
http://nwadacenter.org/factsheet/accessibility-state-fairs-and-public-festivals

Accessibility: Resources to Help Ensure Accessibility of Your Virtual Events for People with Disabilities. National Endowment for the Arts.
https://www.arts.gov/impact/accessibility/resources-to-help-ensure-accessibility-of-your-virtual-events

Designing for Web Accessibility. W3C – Web Accessibility Initiative.
https://www.w3.org/WAI/tips/designing/

Dalton, Alan. *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines—for People Who Haven't Read Them.* 24 Ways to Impress Your Friends.
https://24ways.org/2017/wcag-for-people-who-havent-read-them/

Created by Diane Nutting for the Minnesota State Arts Board.
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