



CREATING ACCESSIBLE EVENTS

In the fall of 2015, the City of Charlottetown's Civic Board for Persons with Disabilities hosted a barrier-free forum, a full-day visioning session which provided an opportunity to brainstorm ways to make Charlottetown more inclusive and accessible. The forum resulted in a number of valuable takeaways and recommendations, including the creation of a general checklist document for improving the accessibility of events, specifically City-led and City-partnered events.

As a leader in event hosting, it is imperative that Charlottetown's event organizers continue to broaden their perspective on accessibility, and ensure a disability lens is applied to all aspects of event logistics, in order to be proactive in addressing potential barriers to participation. An effective approach begins with raising event organizers' awareness of those with a disability, as well as the barriers that limit or prevent participation by persons with disabilities. Event organizers must be encouraged to make every reasonable effort to ensure that no person with a disability is prevented or discouraged from attending an event — in part or in full — based on any accessibility issue.

Accessibility needs vary depending on the type and location of an event. Every event should be meeting basic accessibility requirements, and organizers should exploit every opportunity to expand on these requirements when and where possible. Most barriers to participation can be removed without incurring financial or logistical burdens.

By planning ahead, there are many simple things event organizers can do to make events more accessible. The following checklist is intended to assist organizers in planning events that are accessible to persons with disabilities; however, because new approaches and ideas for improving accessibility continue to emerge, it should be understood that this document is meant to adapt and expand.

The following are considered basic accessibility considerations for Charlottetown events:

Site/Venue Accessibility

Is any renovation/construction scheduled during your event?

Are sidewalks obstacle-free, wide enough for easy access, and separated from roads and driveways?

Are walkways clear of snow, ice, wet leaves and standing water?

- Do all ramps adhere to the National Building Code standard? Do the ramps have handrails on both sides? Has consideration been given to temporary ramps if required?
- Are entrances (especially the main entrance) wide enough for people using a wheelchair or scooter?
- If the main entrance is not accessible, does a sign clearly visible at the front of the building indicate the location of an accessible entrance?
- Are door handles easy to open? Ideally, doors should have lever handles and/or be equipped with an automatic opener.
- Is the elevator(s) large enough to accommodate people who use wheelchairs and scooters, as well as their attendants?
- Are the elevator controls mounted at a comfortable height for a person using a wheelchair or scooter? Has consideration been given to temporary installation of braille signage on elevator controls?
- Are the lobby/main gathering area, major hallways and all essential doorways throughout the venue obstacle-free and wide enough to accommodate people using wheelchairs and scooters?
- Is there a telephone with amplification available for those with a hearing disability?
- Is there a fact sheet at registration/front desk explaining emergency procedures and program for the event?
- Do floor coverings (such as low-pile carpeting, hardwood flooring or tile) allow people using mobility aids, such as wheelchairs and scooters, to move easily through the venue?
- Are the reception/concession areas in an area large enough to easily accommodate people who use wheelchairs, scooters, guide dogs or other mobility aids?
- If applicable, are the stages and speaking areas, including lectern or podium, accessible to people with limited mobility?
- Are there microphones for speakers and for audience participation?
- Has background noise (ie. fans) been eliminated/minimized?
- Is there a sound system/assistive listening technology for those with a hearing disability?
- Is there a closed caption screen or printed presentation outline?
- Are cables, wires and microphones well secured and away from aisles and other traffic areas?

Washroom Accessibility

- Are washroom doors equipped with an automatic or push-button opener?
- Has consideration been given to temporary installation of braille signage on washroom doors?

- Are washrooms large enough to accommodate people who use scooters and power wheelchairs? Do washrooms have at least one accessible stall per gender? If the event is outdoors in nature, are there accessible portable toilets and does the ratio meet standard guidelines?
- Is there a minimum five-foot turning radius for wheelchair users to maneuver without restriction?
- Can someone using a wheelchair or a scooter reach the faucets?
- Are washroom accessories and dispensers also within easy reach of a person using a wheelchair or scooter? Are the dispensers automatic or easy to use?

Accessible Seating

- Is the venue large enough to provide circulation and accessible seating for an adequate or anticipated number of participants who use wheelchairs, scooters, guide dogs or other mobility aids?
- Is there preferential seating, close to the presenter(s) for those with hearing and vision disabilities?

Designated Parking and Recommended Ratio

- Are sufficient accessible parking spots available for the estimated number of attendees with disabilities at the venue(s) and accommodations? If not, can arrangements be made for more designated parking spaces during the event? Are accessible metered parking or a public parking lot with accessible spaces nearby?
- Are designated parking spots for persons with disabilities close to the entrance of the venue?
- Are the parking spots clearly identified?
- Is there a curb cut or level access from the parking area to the main entrance?
- Are parking areas clear of snow, ice, wet leaves and standing water?

Accessible Transportation

- Are patrons able to travel to the event using accessible transit?
- Is there a drop-off area close to the venue?
- Have you made sure there are accessible transportation options available to all event patrons between the event venue(s), accommodations, and activities?

Accessible Accommodations

- Have you identified hotels or other lodgings that have an accessible designation and rooms?
- If the entrance is locked after hours, can someone gain entry without having to push a buzzer or bell?

Communications

- Do all communications (including news releases) and website/promotional materials state that the event is accessible (inclusive of details)?
- Is people-first language being used in communications and promotional materials?
- Is event signage visible and clear?
- Do signs at the venue clearly indicate where accessible seating and washrooms are located?
- Are signs mounted at a comfortable height, so that people who use wheelchairs can read them?
- Is entrance signage clearly visible from the street?
- Is signage well lit at night (for evening events)?
- If applicable, does the post-event survey include at least one question about accessibility?

Human Resources

- Have you included persons with disabilities on the planning committee?
- Have you identified a single contact person for accessibility requests?
- Have event staff and volunteers been appropriately trained on accessibility and customer service?
- Are venue staff trained in providing accessible customer service?
- Can arrangements be made for staff or volunteers to be at entrances, accessible seating area(s), and throughout the venue(s) to assist persons with disabilities as required?

Legacy

- Does an opportunity exist to leave an accessibility legacy for future events?