



Barrier-free Celebrations

Toolkit | Prioritizing Barrier-free Accessibility For All



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Asian Women of Winnipeg
Together we stand



At AWOW, our commitment to creating barrier-free, accessible, and inclusive spaces is deeply rooted in the history of the land we gather on. We honourably acknowledge that our lives, our work and our community connections take place on Treaty 1 Territory—the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene Peoples and the homeland of the Red River Métis. We also express our deep gratitude for our life-giving water, which originates from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation.

We recognize that true accessibility goes beyond physical spaces; it requires breaking down systemic barriers and building a future where everyone inherently belongs. By honouring the truth of our shared history, we dedicate our work to a continuous spirit of reconciliation, collaboration, and deep respect for the Indigenous caretakers of this land—past, present and emerging.

We create this toolkit not just for the present, but as a living blueprint for the future. May generations to come look back on this work with pride, inheriting a world that is more open, more inclusive, and deeply connected to the land and to each other.

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President's Message

At Asian Women of Winnipeg Inc. (AWOW), our work is guided by a commitment to service, inclusion, and community empowerment. For many years, we have brought people together through cultural celebrations and educational initiatives across Manitoba. As our work grows, so does our responsibility to ensure that the spaces we create are welcoming and accessible to all.

This toolkit is intended for event organizers, community groups, and cultural organizations across Manitoba who are planning and hosting events.

Through our Accessible Celebrations Initiative: Tools and Training for Barrier-Free Events, we delivered training, hosted events, and engaged organizers, volunteers, and people with lived experience of disability. This toolkit reflects what we learned through that work.

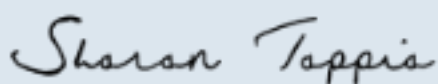
This project was made possible through the support of the Manitoba Accessibility Fund. We thank the Government of Manitoba and the Honourable Nahanni Fontaine for recognizing the importance of accessibility and investing in more inclusive communities.

We also thank Peter Tonge Consulting for their leadership and their community-based approach to developing this toolkit, alongside the community members who contributed their time and experience throughout this process.

Over the past year, we have strengthened how we plan and host events by building accessibility into decisions from the beginning. This toolkit supports our continued commitment to creating more inclusive and welcoming community celebration spaces.

Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space, for everyone. When we remove barriers, we strengthen the fabric of our community.

Warm regards,



Sharan Tappia,
President
Asian Women of Winnipeg Inc.



About Asian Women of Winnipeg

Asian Women of Winnipeg Inc. (AWOW) is a Manitoba-based, non-profit community organization dedicated to supporting and empowering women and families. We create opportunities for connection through cultural events, leadership development, and community programs that celebrate diversity and strengthen community ties.

Our work focuses on building inclusive spaces where women and families can come together, share experiences, and participate fully in community life across Manitoba.

About the Manitoba Accessibility Fund

The Manitoba Accessibility Fund supports projects that remove barriers and improve accessibility across the province. It provides funding to organizations, communities, and businesses to develop practical solutions that make spaces, services, and information more accessible. The fund supports work that builds knowledge, improves access to programs, and strengthens long-term accessibility across Manitoba.

Consultation and Development of this Toolkit

This toolkit was developed by Asian Women of Winnipeg Inc. (AWOW), with Peter Tonge Consulting, through a community-based consultation process with members of the Deaf and disability communities. As part of this work, we delivered training sessions, hosted events, and facilitated focus groups and meetings with Asian women who are organizing events and supporting one another through community networks. These conversations grounded the toolkit in real planning practices and community priorities.

We also formed an Accessibility Assembly. The Assembly brought together community members with lived experience of disability and Deaf identity. It included accessibility professionals from Arts Accessibility

Network of Manitoba, Manitoba Possible and Accessible Sport Manitoba. Members attended events, shared their experiences, and identified barriers that may not be visible to organizers. They also highlighted how small planning decisions can significantly affect participation.

We used this feedback to strengthen the toolkit itself. It added nuance, context, and practical detail, ensuring the guidance reflects how people actually experience events. This toolkit reflects what we learned across all of these engagements. It is shaped by lived experience and event testing within cultural celebrations organized by AWOW.

About Deaf and Disability Communities

Deaf and disabled people are part of every community. This includes people with mobility disabilities, chronic illness, mental health conditions, learning disabilities, sensory disabilities, neurodivergence, vision and hearing loss.

Some disabilities are visible and some are not. Accessibility supports more than a small group of people. It also supports Elders, parents, people recovering from illness or injury, and anyone who benefits from clear communication, flexible participation, and supportive environments.

Definitions

Disability

Disability includes physical, sensory, cognitive, mental health, learning, chronic illness, and neurodivergent experiences. It may be visible or invisible, permanent, temporary, or fluctuating.

Deaf

“Deaf” may refer to people who identify culturally and linguistically with the Deaf community.

Access Need

An access need is something a person requires to participate fully. It is not a special request. It is part of participation.

Barrier

A barrier is anything that prevents full participation. Barriers can be physical, communication-based, sensory, cultural, financial, or attitudinal.

Reasonable Accommodation

Reasonable accommodation means taking practical steps to remove or reduce barriers so people can participate equitably.



Accessibility and Events in Manitoba

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA)

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) is provincial legislation that focuses on identifying, removing, and preventing barriers for people with disabilities. It sets out accessibility standards that organizations must follow over time.

What the AMA Means for Events

If you are planning an event that is open to the public, accessibility is part of your responsibility.

This includes:

- Planning accessibility from the beginning
- Sharing clear and accessible information
- Supporting different ways for people to participate
- Responding to access needs in a respectful way

AMA Standards That Affect Events

Customer Service Standard

Focuses on how people are welcomed and supported. At events, this affects registration, check-in, seating, and interactions with guests.

Information and Communication Standard

Focuses on how information is shared. At events, this affects promotion, registration, emails, signage, and presentations.

Employment Standard

Applies to staff and volunteers. It affects training, communication, and workplace support.

Built Environment Standard

Focuses on physical access. At events, this includes entrances, pathways, washrooms, and temporary setups.

How to Use This Toolkit

We know that many events are organized by small teams, volunteers, or community leaders working with limited time and resources. This toolkit is designed for those situations. It reflects real events, shared spaces, multigenerational attendance, and food-centred gatherings.

Accessibility is part of good hosting. It includes decisions about venue, layout, sound, lighting, food, pacing, communication, and how guests are welcomed.

You do not need to get everything perfect. You do need to plan early, communicate clearly, and remove barriers that can be anticipated and avoided.

This Toolkit

Use each section as you plan your event.

- Read the sections that apply to your event
- Think about how each area connects to your event plan
- Use the checklist at the end of each section to confirm your planning

This toolkit is not meant to be read once and set aside. It is meant to be used as part of your planning process.

Basics of Accessible Event Planning

Accessible event planning starts with one important idea: people experience events differently.

Some guests may need physical access supports such as step-free entry, seating options, or accessible washrooms. Others may need clear communication, predictable structure, reduced sensory input, or flexibility in how they participate.

Accessibility is most effective when it is built into planning from the beginning. When it is added late, it often becomes limited or incomplete.



Plan the Full Event Pathway

Accessible planning considers the full experience of attending an event, not just what happens inside the room. Planning the full pathway helps identify barriers before they happen.

Think about the full pathway:

- How people hear about the event.
- How they register or are invited.
- How they travel to the location.
- How they enter the space.
- How they move through the event.
- How they participate in activities and conversations.
- How they eat, rest, and use washrooms.
- How they leave safely.

If any one of these stages is inaccessible, participation can be limited or lost entirely.

How to Choose an Accessible Venue

Venue selection is one of the most important accessibility decisions an organizer will make. It affects who can attend before invitations are even sent.

Accessibility should never be assumed. Many venues describe themselves as accessible but do not meet basic access needs.

- When selecting a venue, confirm:
- Whether the main entrance is step-free.
- Whether accessible washrooms are available and usable.
- Whether pathways are clear and wide enough.
- Whether there is space for mobility devices within seating areas.
- Whether lighting and sound conditions are manageable.

Choosing an accessible venue early reduces the need for workarounds and last-minute changes. It also sends a clear message that accessibility is a priority.

Winter Access Considerations

In Manitoba, winter conditions create additional barriers that must be planned for. Snow, ice, wind, and extreme cold can make entrances unsafe, limit mobility, and affect travel to and from the event.

When planning for winter conditions, confirm:

- Snow clearing responsibilities and timing.
- Ice management on sidewalks, ramps, and entrances.
- Whether accessible parking is available and not blocked by snow.
- Whether entrances and para-transit drop off remain usable in winter conditions.
- Whether there are heated or protected entry areas.

Even when a building is accessible, winter conditions can make it difficult or unsafe to enter. Planning for this is part of accessible event design.

Safety and Emergency Considerations for Disabled Guests

Emergency planning must include disabled guests and people with different sensory, mobility, or communication needs.

Do not assume that everyone can:

- Hear alarms
- Use stairs
- Process verbal instructions quickly
- Move at the same pace
- Emergency planning should include:
 - Identifying accessible evacuation routes
 - Assigning staff roles in advance
 - Planning how information will be communicated in more than one way
 - Ensuring that guests who need support can receive it

Culture, Community, and Participation

Community events are shaped by culture, relationships, and how people gather. Accessibility planning needs to reflect this.

At many events, guests arrive as part of families, community groups, or social networks. Elders, families, children, caregivers, and friends may all attend together. Participation is not always structured or formal. People may move in and out of conversations, step away and return, or choose to observe rather than actively engage.

These are not barriers. They are part of how community events work. Accessible planning supports these realities. It creates space for different ways of participating, reduces pressure to behave in one specific way, and allows guests to engage at their own pace. When cultural practices are recognized and planned for, events feel more welcoming and more inclusive.

Cultural Cues

Cultural cues influence how people experience an event. They shape how guests are welcomed, where they sit, how information is shared, how food is served, and what feels respectful or uncomfortable.

Planning with cultural cues in mind reduces confusion, prevents discomfort, and supports a stronger sense of belonging.

Welcoming Guests in Culturally Familiar Ways

The first few minutes of an event matter. Guests quickly decide whether a space feels welcoming, confusing, or uncomfortable.

At community events, it is important that guests are welcomed by someone they recognize and trust. This may be a board member, community leader, or another respected person connected to the organization.

Plan for:

- A visible and trusted host to greet guests on arrival.
- That person to be available and not assigned to other tasks during arrival time.
- A simple welcome that includes direction and information about the event in the language of choice.

Some guests prefer a warm verbal greeting. Others prefer to enter quietly and orient themselves before engaging. Plan your welcome to support both.

Honouring Elders with Respectful Seating and Pacing

Elders are often central to community events. Respect is shown through seating, visibility, and how the event is paced.

Plan for:

- Seating that is comfortable and easy to access.
- Placement near key areas of the event.
- Clear pathways to and from seating areas and exits.

Event pacing also matters. Fast transitions, long periods of standing, or tightly scheduled agendas can be tiring.

Providing a simple program or agenda helps guests understand the flow of the event and plan their energy. This can be shared in advance or available on arrival.

Build in:

- Time to sit.
- Time to rest.
- Time to transition between activities.

This supports Elders and improves the experience for many other guests.

**PRIORITY
SEATING**



Supporting Large Family Groups and Multigenerational Attendance

Many guests attend with family members. This can include children, parents, grandparents, and caregivers.

Plan for:

- Seating that allows people to sit together.
- Space for movement in and out of the room.
- Flexibility in how people participate.

Programs or agendas can also support families by helping them anticipate timing, transitions, and important moments in the event.

Movement, noise, and shifting attention are normal in these settings. They should not be treated as disruption. Accessible planning makes space for this without drawing attention or creating pressure.

Food, Dietary Practices, and Clear Information

Food is central to many community events. It is also a common area where barriers occur. Guests may have dietary needs related to religion, health, allergies, or personal choice. Clear information about what is being served is important and expected.

Plan for:

- Halal and vegetarian options when possible.
- Clear and visible food labelling.
- Sharing food information in advance when possible.
- Confirming what will be served so guests can plan.

If certain options are not available, be clear about this. Guests should not need to ask multiple questions or rely on staff to understand what they can eat. Clear food information supports dignity and comfort.



Guidance on Food Practices and Order of Eating

Some events follow cultural practices around who eats first, such as Elders, guests, or speakers. If there is an order, explain it clearly and respectfully. This can be included as part of a verbal welcome or within a program or agenda.

Keep explanations simple:

- What will happen.
- When it will happen.
- What guests should expect.

The goal is clarity, not enforcement. When expectations are communicated clearly, guests can participate comfortably without uncertainty.

How Cultural Norms and Accessibility Intersect

Culture and accessibility are connected. Cultural expectations influence how people express needs, communicate, and move through a space. Some guests may not directly ask for support, preferring to prioritize community and family harmony. Others want to avoid drawing attention to themselves.

Accessible planning supports this by:

- Providing clear information in advance and on arrival.
- Using trusted community members to share information.
- Offering flexible ways to participate.
- Allowing guests to make choices without pressure.
- Respecting different communication styles.



Cultural Cues Section Checklist

Welcoming

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
A trusted and recognized community member is assigned to greet guests on arrival	☐	☐
The assigned greeter is available and not assigned to other tasks during arrival	☐	☐
Clear direction is provided to guests on where to go on arrival	☐	☐
Guests can enter and observe the space quietly before engaging	☐	☐
Staff or hosts are visible and available to answer questions	☐	☐

Elders

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Priority seating is available for Elders	☐	☐
Seating for Elders is comfortable and easy to access	☐	☐
Seating options include chairs with backs and armrests	☐	☐
Event pacing allows time for rest and transitions	☐	☐
A program or agenda is available to show event flow	☐	☐

Families

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Seating allows large or multigenerational groups to sit together	☐	☐
Guests can move in and out of activities without disruption or restriction	☐	☐
Caregiving needs are accommodated without drawing attention	☐	☐
Children can move, rest, or shift attention without disruption or restriction	☐	☐
Event flow is communicated clearly to support planning	☐	☐

Food

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Halal options are provided or clearly identified	☐	☐
Vegetarian options are provided or clearly identified	☐	☐
Food items are clearly labelled	☐	☐
Food information is shared in advance when possible	☐	☐
Guests can understand food options without needing to ask staff	☐	☐
Order of eating is explained clearly and respectfully when relevant	☐	☐

Understanding Sensory Access

Noise, lighting, crowding, movement, and even smells can affect how people experience a space. For some guests, these conditions can make it difficult to focus, communicate, or stay in the event.

Sensory barriers are common in busy, high-energy environments. They can affect autistic and neurodivergent people, people with anxiety or PTSD, people with migraines or brain injuries, people with chronic illness or fatigue, Deaf guests who rely on clear sightlines, and many Elders.

Sensory access does not mean reducing energy or removing celebration. It means offering options, reducing avoidable overload, and helping guests understand what to expect. Clear communication and simple adjustments can make a significant difference

Quiet Space Guidance

A quiet space is an important part of sensory access. It gives guests a place to rest, regulate, or take a break from noise and activity. A quiet space should be treated as a normal part of the event, not a separate or hidden feature.

Plan for a space that is:

- Easy to find and clearly identified.
- Located away from speakers, music, and main traffic areas.
- Accessible by a step-free route.
- Equipped with comfortable seating.
- Large enough for mobility devices.
- Calm in lighting and sound.

The space should allow guests to enter and leave without attention. Simple signage can help set expectations, such as keeping voices low and respecting the purpose of the room.

Let guests know in advance that a quiet space is available. This helps people plan their participation and feel more confident attending.

Planning for Sensory Conditions

Sensory access should be considered across the full event, not only in a quiet room.

Plan for:

Sound

Use microphones for speakers. Avoid overlapping audio where possible. Be aware of background noise from music, kitchens, or adjacent rooms.

Lighting

Avoid harsh glare, flickering lights, or sudden changes in lighting. Ensure spaces are evenly lit so people can move safely and see clearly.

Crowding and movement

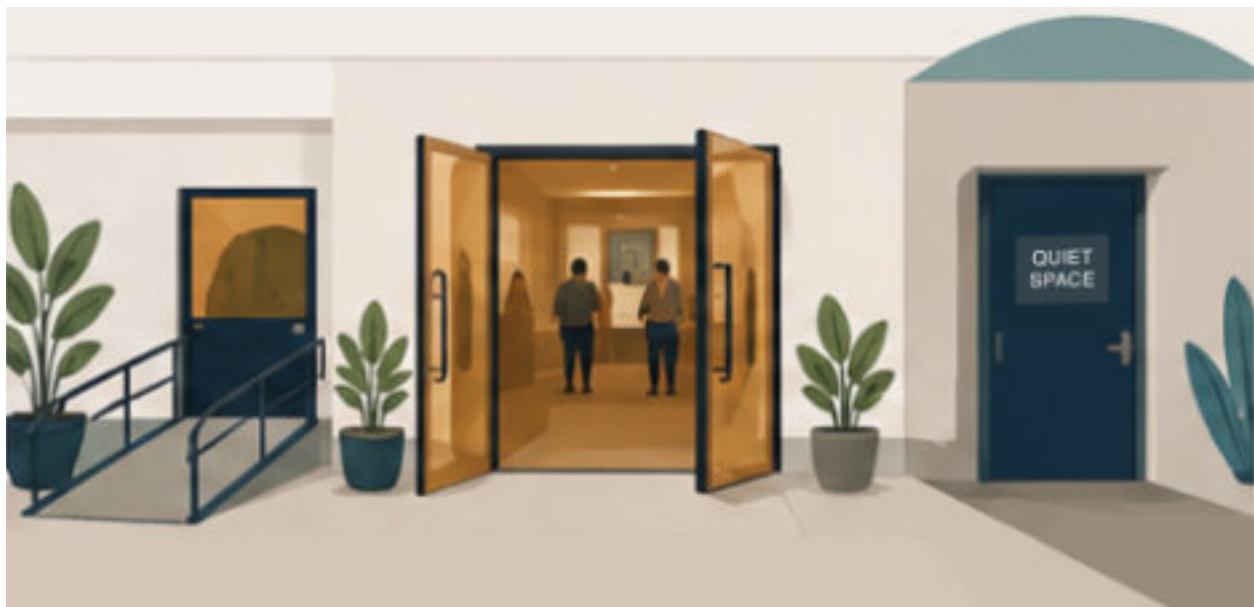
Provide space for movement. Avoid tightly packed layouts where possible. Ensure pathways remain clear.

Smell and environment

Be mindful of strong scents from food, cleaning products, or perfumes. Good ventilation helps reduce buildup.

Predictability

Share what will happen during the event. Programs or agendas help guests understand timing, transitions, and expectations.



Sensory-Friendly Setup Checklist

Quiet Space

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
A quiet space is clearly identified with signage	☐	☐
The quiet space is located away from main noise and traffic areas	☐	☐
The quiet space is accessible by a step-free route	☐	☐
Seating in the quiet space is comfortable and supports rest	☐	☐
The quiet space allows room for mobility devices	☐	☐
Lighting in the quiet space is soft or adjustable where possible	☐	☐
Signage explains the purpose and expectations of the quiet space	☐	☐
Guests can enter and leave the quiet space without drawing attention	☐	☐
Guests are informed in advance that a quiet space is available	☐	☐

Sound

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Microphones are used for all speakers	☐	☐
Background noise is minimized where possible	☐	☐
Competing audio sources are reduced	☐	☐
Sound levels are monitored during the event	☐	☐

Lighting

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Lighting is even and supports safe movement	☐	☐
Harsh glare or flickering lights are avoided	☐	☐
Key areas such as seating, stage, and pathways are well lit	☐	☐

Space and Movement

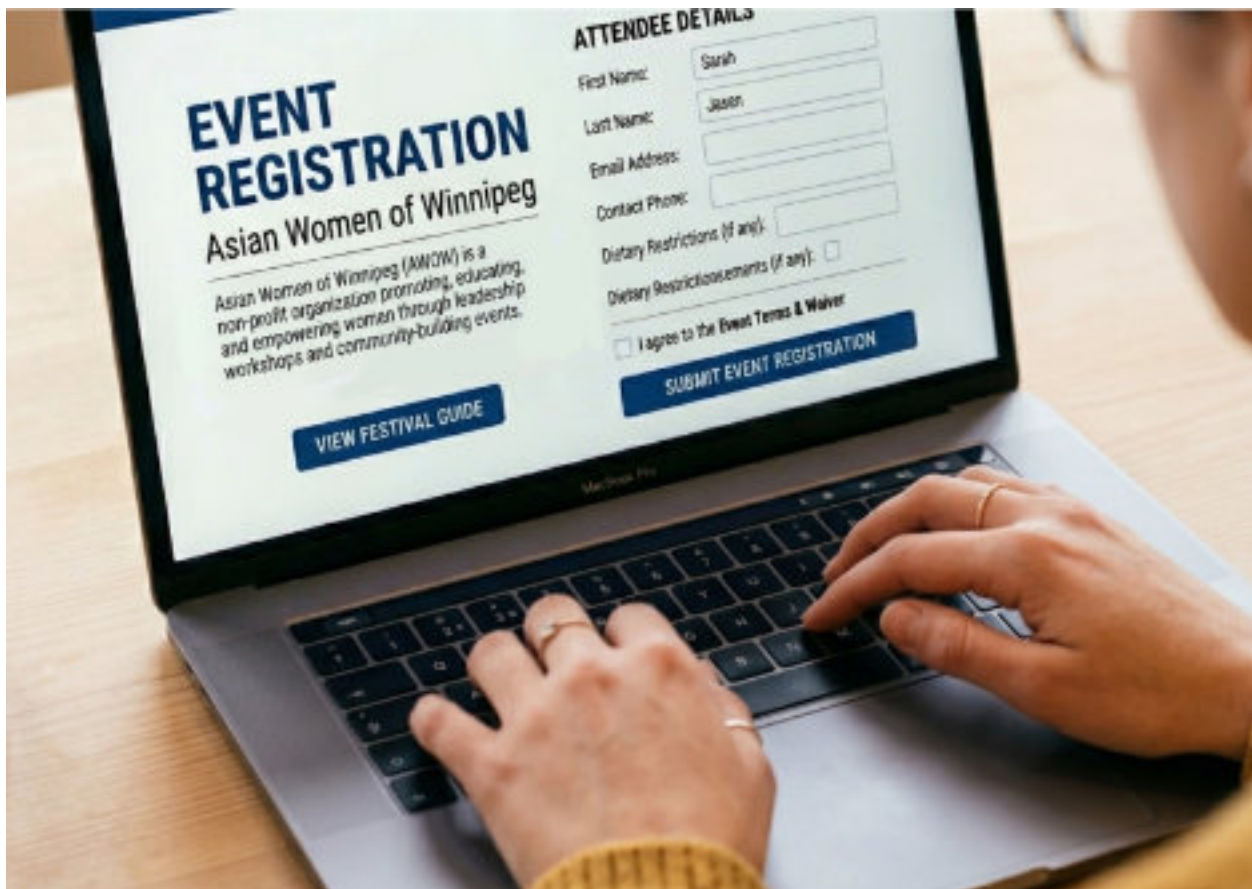
Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Pathways are clear and unobstructed	☐	☐
Seating layout allows for movement and flexibility	☐	☐
Guests can move in and out of the space/room easily	☐	☐
Overcrowding is avoided where possible	☐	☐

Environment

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Strong scents are minimized where possible	☐	☐
Ventilation supports air circulation	☐	☐
Cleaning products or materials do not create strong odours	☐	☐

Communication

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
A program or agenda is available to explain event flow	☐	☐
Transitions or changes are communicated clearly	☐	☐
Guests are informed in advance about sensory conditions when relevant or if requested	☐	☐



Registration, Confirmation, and Event Reminders

For many guests, registration and communication are where accessibility begins. If information is unclear or incomplete people may decide not to attend before the event even starts.

This section focuses on three key points of communication:

- Registration
- Confirmation
- Reminders

Registration

Registration is where people sign up and share what they need to participate. Keep registration simple and focused. Only collect information that supports the event and guest participation.

Support persons are an important part of access for many guests. Registration should allow guests to indicate if they are attending with a support person or provide a contact for this request. This helps organizers plan for seating, space, and food, and ensures support persons are welcomed as part of the event.

Registration should:

- Be easy to understand and complete.
- Allow guests to share access needs.
- Include options for dietary needs and support persons.
- Provide an optional space for additional information.
- Avoid requiring guests to justify their needs or provide detailed explanations.



Confirmation

Confirmation is the message sent after someone registers. It should reinforce the details and help guests feel prepared.

Confirmation should include:

- Event name, date, and time.
- Full address and clear entrance details.
- Room or floor information if relevant.
- Transportation, transit, parking, or drop-off details.
- A short description of the event.
- Accessibility features that will be provided.
- Food information.
- A contact person and email for questions or access support.

This is also an opportunity to share a simple program or agenda so guests understand the flow of the event. Confirmation should not introduce new or unexpected information. It should confirm what was already shared and make it easier to plan.

Event Reminders

Reminders are sent a few days before the event. They help guests prepare and reduce uncertainty.

Reminders should:

- Repeat key information.
- Highlight arrival details.
- Confirm timing and location.
- Include any important updates.



They can also reinforce:

- Accessibility features.
- Food details.

Reminders should not add new logistics unless necessary. Their purpose is to support preparation, not create confusion.

Accessibility Information

Accessibility information should be clear, easy to find, and written in a neutral and welcoming tone.

Include:

- What accessibility features are available.
- How to request additional support.
- A contact person and how to contact them.
- Any relevant deadlines like requesting ASL interpretation.

Consistency Across Communication

Information should be consistent across registration, confirmation, and reminders.

Check that:

- Details match across all communications.
- Language is clear and easy to read.
- Accessibility information is easy to find.
- A team member is responsible for responding to questions.



Registration, Confirmation, and Reminder Checklist

Event Details

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Event name is confirmed	☐	☐
Event date is confirmed	☐	☐
Start and end times are confirmed	☐	☐
Event format is clearly defined	☐	☐
Event location is confirmed with full address	☐	☐
Transit, parking, and drop-off details are confirmed	☐	☐
Entrance details are clear	☐	☐
Room or floor details are included where needed	☐	☐
Event description is written in plain language	☐	☐
Food plan is confirmed or clearly noted	☐	☐
Accessibility features are identified	☐	☐

Accessibility Information

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Accessibility information is clearly stated	☐	☐
Language is neutral and welcoming	☐	☐
Guests are invited to share additional needs	☐	☐
Deadlines for access requests are included	☐	☐
An internal person is assigned for follow up	☐	☐

Registration Form

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Name and contact information are collected	☐	☐
Attendance type is collected where relevant	☐	☐
Guests can share dietary needs where applicable	☐	☐
Guests can share accessibility needs	☐	☐
Guests can indicate attendance with family members	☐	☐
Guests can indicate if they are attending with a support person	☐	☐
An optional open text field is available	☐	☐
Guests are not required to justify access needs	☐	☐

Confirmation

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Event name, date, and time are included	☐	☐
Full address and entrance details are included	☐	☐
Room or floor details are included	☐	☐
Directions, transit, and parking information are included	☐	☐
Event description is included	☐	☐
Accessibility features are clearly listed	☐	☐
Food information is included	☐	☐
Program or agenda is included or linked	☐	☐
A contact name and email for the organizer is provided	☐	☐
Wi-Fi or access details are included	☐	☐

Event Reminders

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Event name, date, and time are included	☐	☐
Location and entrance details are included	☐	☐
Arrival information is clearly explained	☐	☐
Food details are included where relevant	☐	☐
Accessibility features are reinforced	☐	☐
On-site contact information is provided	☐	☐

Final Review

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Information is consistent across all communications	☐	☐
Language is plain and easy to read	☐	☐
Accessibility information is easy to find	☐	☐
A team member is assigned to respond to questions	☐	☐

Promotion and Social Media

Promotion is often the first point of contact people have with an event. If information is unclear, visually inaccessible, or missing important details, people may decide not to attend.

Accessible promotion helps people quickly understand:

- What the event is.
- Whether it will work for them.
- How to get more information.

Writing for Accessibility on Social Media

Social media posts should be easy to scan and understand. The goal is for someone to understand the event quickly without needing to search for information.

Plan for:

- Short, clear sentences.
- Key details included in the main post text.
- Consistent structure across posts.

Avoid:

- Placing important information only on images.
- Using emojis or symbols in place of details.
- Long blocks of text without structure.



What to Include in Promotion

Every post or promotional piece should clearly include:

- Event name
- Date and time
- Location
- A short description of the event
- Accessibility features
- How to ask questions or request support

If any of this is missing, people may not be able to decide if they can attend.

Alt Text for Images

Alt text describes images for people using screen readers. It should focus on what is important, not every visual detail.

Good alt text:

- Explains the purpose of the image.
- Includes any text shown in the image.
- Is short and direct.



Example Accessible Social Media Post



Text for post:

All are welcome to Storytelling Night

Tuesday, March 12

6:00 to 8:00 pm

North End Community Centre,
123 Main Street

Step-free entrance and accessible washroom available. ASL interpretation provided. Light snacks will be served.

Questions or access requests can be sent to events@organization.ca

Image description for Alt Text:

Poster for Community Storytelling Night. Tuesday, March 12 from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm at North End Community Centre, 123 Main Street. Free event with ASL interpretation and light snacks. Visual shows a campfire, open book, and evening setting with icons indicating ASL interpretation, snacks, and free entry.

Promotion and Social Media Checklist

Promotion Content

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Event purpose is clearly explained in plain language	☐	☐
Event name, date, time, and location are clearly started	☐	☐
Accessibility features are clearly listed	☐	☐
Contact information for questions or access requests is included	☐	☐

Social Media Writing

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Main information is included in post text, not only on images	☐	☐
Language is easy to scan	☐	☐
Sentences are short and clear	☐	☐
Emojis or symbols are not used in place of essential information	☐	☐

Images and Alt Text

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Images include descriptive alt text	☐	☐
Alt text includes any text shown in the image	☐	☐
Alt text focuses on purpose, not decoration	☐	☐

Accessible Websites and Documents

Your website and online materials are often the first place people go for information. If they are not accessible, people may not be able to access important details about your event.

Accessible digital content ensures that people using screen readers, keyboard navigation, or other assistive tools can find, understand, and use your information. Accessibility online is not only about design. It is about structure, clarity, and how information is organized.

Accessible Website Basics

An accessible website should be easy to navigate, easy to read, and structured clearly.

Plan for:

Clear headings - Use headings to organize content so screen readers can navigate sections easily.

Descriptive links - Avoid “click here.” Instead, describe where the link goes.

Readable text - Use plain language, strong contrast, and a clean, easy-to-read font. Choose simple sans serif fonts. Avoid decorative or cursive styles.

Consistent layout - Keep navigation and page structure predictable.

Keyboard access - Ensure users can move through the page without a mouse.

Your event information page should include the same details as your promotion, written clearly and structured so people can find information quickly.

Accessible Documents

Documents such as PDFs, Word files, and event programs must be structured properly to be accessible. Visual formatting alone is not enough. Screen readers rely on document structure. Documents such as agendas, schedules, and guides should follow these practices so they are usable by everyone.

Plan for:

Real headings - Apply heading styles instead of manually bolding text.

Proper lists - Use bullet or numbered list tools instead of typing symbols.

Structure tables clearly - Include header rows and avoid complex layouts.

Use readable fonts - Choose simple sans serif fonts. Avoid decorative or cursive fonts that are harder to read.

Add alt text to images - Describe images that contain important information.

Use meaningful file names - Example: Community_Event_Agenda_March_12.pdf

Export correctly - When saving as PDF, ensure tags and structure are preserved.

Programs and Agendas

Programs and agendas are an important part of accessibility. Keep programs simple and structured. Use clear headings, readable fonts, and plain language. Avoid overcrowding information.

They help guests:

- Understand the flow of the event.
- Plan their time and energy.
- Anticipate transitions and breaks.

Provide programs in:

- Clear written format.
- Accessible digital format.
- Print when needed.

Accessible Websites and Documents Checklist

Website

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Website content uses clear headings	☐	☐
Links are descriptive and meaningful	☐	☐
Text is readable with strong contrast	☐	☐
Sans serif fonts are used and decorative fonts are avoided	☐	☐
Navigation is consistent and predictable	☐	☐
Main information is easy to find	☐	☐



Documents

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Headings are used to structure the document	☐	☐
Lists are created using proper formatting tools	☐	☐
Tables include clear header rows	☐	☐
Sans serif fonts are used and decorative fonts are avoided	☐	☐
Images include alt text where needed	☐	☐
File names are clear and descriptive	☐	☐
Documents are exported with accessible structure (tagged PDF)		

Programs and Agendas

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
A program or agenda is created for the event	☐	☐
The program clearly shows event flow and timing	☐	☐
The program is written in plain language	☐	☐
The program uses clear headings and simple structure	☐	☐
The program uses sans serif fonts and avoids decorative styles	☐	☐
The program is available in accessible digital format	☐	☐
The program is available in print where needed		

Procurement and Vendors

Vendors play a direct role in how accessible an event is. Catering, audio-visual teams, photographers and videographers, furniture rental, interpreters, security, and cleaning staff all influence whether guests can participate safely and comfortably.

Many barriers are created through vendor setup, service flow, sound and lighting choices, and furniture placement. These decisions often happen before the event and can be difficult to change later.

Accessibility should be part of procurement from the beginning. When expectations are clear early, vendors can plan and deliver their services in a way that supports access.

Setting Accessibility Expectations

Accessibility expectations should be shared before vendors are booked.

This includes:

- What the event requires to be accessible.
- How vendors are expected to support access.
- What flexibility is needed in service delivery.

Vendors do not need to be accessibility experts. They do need to understand expectations and be willing to work within them. When possible, prioritize vendors who understand accessibility requirements and can meet or exceed relevant standards. This reduces the need for corrections later and supports a more consistent and reliable event experience.

If accessibility is discussed only after contracts are signed, options may be limited and changes may be harder to make.

Working With Vendors

Clear communication with vendors prevents barriers. Accessibility is a shared responsibility. Organizers set expectations, and vendors help carry them out.

Plan for:

- Sharing accessibility expectations in writing.
- Confirming understanding before the event.
- Identifying a contact person for each vendor.
- Asking vendors to communicate any limitations early.

Vendor Roles That Affect Accessibility

Different vendors affect different parts of the event. Accessibility should be considered across all vendor roles, not only in one area.

Consider:

- **Catering** - Food labelling, table height, and service flow affect access.
- **Audio-visual (AV)** - Microphones, sound levels, and lighting affect communication and sensory access.
- **Furniture and layout** - Table placement, seating types, and spacing affect mobility and comfort.
- **Photographers and videographers** - Lighting, flash, and movement affect sensory access. Positioning and timing affect comfort and participation.
- **Interpreters and access providers** - Placement, lighting, and timing affect communication access.
- **Venue staff and security** - Awareness of access routes and support needs affects guest experience.

Food and Vendor Coordination

Food is an important part of many events and requires coordination between organizers and vendors. Guests should be able to understand what is being served without needing to ask.

Plan for:

- Clear food labelling that is visible at an accessible height.
- Confirming dietary options such as halal and vegetarian.
- Sharing food information in advance when possible.
- Ensuring food tables and serving dishes are accessible from a seated position.



Sample Vendor Confirmation

Event name: _____

Event date and time: _____

Event location: _____

Vendor name: _____

Service provided: _____

Primary contact: _____

Accessibility expectations for this event include:

- Clear and respectful communication with guests
- Flexibility in service delivery
- Awareness of accessible routes and spaces
- Willingness to adjust setup to avoid barriers

Vendor confirmation:

- I understand the accessibility expectations for this event
- I will brief my staff on accessibility requirements
- I will communicate any concerns or limitations in advance
- I will work with the event organizer to resolve access issues

Signature:

Date:

Vendor and Procurement Checklist

Planning

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Accessibility expectations are identified before vendors are booked	☐	☐
Accessibility requirements are discussed before contracts are signed	☐	☐
Vendor roles that affect accessibility are identified	☐	☐
Accessibility responsibilities are clearly assigned	☐	☐

Vendor Communication

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Accessibility expectations are provided to vendors in writing	☐	☐
Vendors confirm understanding of accessibility expectations	☐	☐
Vendors agree to brief their staff on accessibility requirements	☐	☐
Vendors agree to communicate any limitations in advance	☐	☐
A vendor contact person is identified	☐	☐

Procurement Decisions

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Accessibility is considered alongside cost and quality	☐	☐
Vendors are selected based on their ability to meet accessibility requirements	☐	☐
Vendor limitations related to accessibility are reviewed before booking	☐	☐
Products or services that create barriers are avoided	☐	☐
Accessibility is reviewed during planning and setup	☐	☐

Food and Catering

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Food labelling is provided for all food items	☐	☐
Common allergens are identified	☐	☐
Dietary options such as halal and vegetarian are confirmed	☐	☐
Food information is shared in advance where possible	☐	☐
Food tables and serving dishes are accessible from a seated position	☐	☐

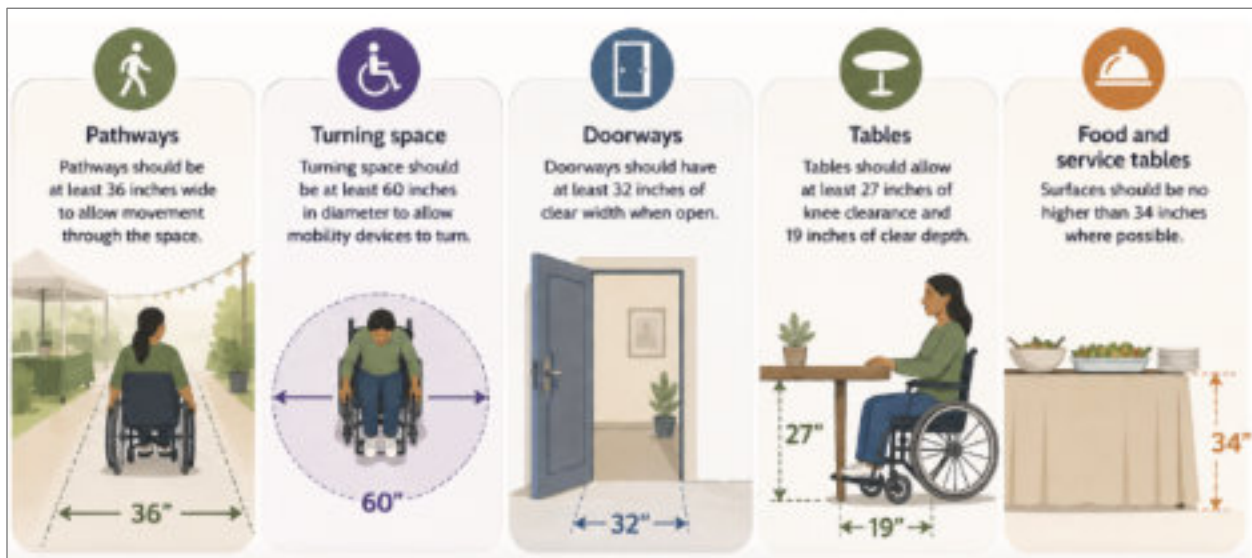
Space and Movement Reference

Clear routes and usable space are important for guests to move through an event comfortably and safely. While each venue is different, there are common measurements that help ensure space can be used by people with mobility devices and those who need more room to move.

Accessible Measurements

Use these measurements when planning layout, reviewing a venue, or setting up the event space.

- **Pathways** - Pathways should be at least 36 inches wide to allow movement through the space.
- **Turning space** - Turning space should be at least 60 inches in diameter to allow mobility devices to turn.
- **Doorways** - Doorways should have at least 32 inches of clear width when open.
- **Tables** - Tables should allow at least 27 inches of knee clearance and 19 inches of clear depth.
- **Food and service tables** - Surfaces should be no higher than 34 inches where possible.



Wayfinding

Wayfinding is how guests understand where they are and how to move through a space. Good way finding allows people to arrive with confidence and move between spaces without needing to ask for help.

Wayfinding is created through a combination of clear information, consistent signage, space layout, and staff support. When these elements work together, the event feels easy to navigate. When they do not, guests may feel uncertain or excluded from parts of the event.

Planning and Movement Through the Event

Wayfinding begins before guests arrive and continues throughout the event. Information shared in registration, confirmation, and reminder messages should clearly explain where to go and what to expect. This includes the full address, the correct entrance, and any relevant details about parking, drop-off, or transit.

Para-transit is a common transportation option, and many venues have a designated drop-off location. Organizers should confirm where this location is and ensure there is a clear, accessible pathway from the drop-off point to the event entrance. This should be considered as part of overall event planning so guests arriving by para-transit can enter the space safely and independently.

The entrance should clearly identify the event and direct guests to the next step, such as registration or the main event space.

Guests should be able to confirm they are in the right place without hesitation.

Movement through the event space should be clear and predictable. Routes between important areas such as seating, washrooms, food, games, and quiet spaces should be easy to follow. Signage should be placed at points where guests need to make decisions, not only at the destination.

Layout also affects wayfinding. Pathways should remain open and easy to move through, even as the space fills with people. Guests should be able to move between spaces without needing to navigate around obstacles or guess where to go next.

Where possible, plan for more than one entry and exit point. Multiple entry/exit points can reduce congestion, support smoother movement, and make it easier for guests to enter and leave the space.

Staff and Volunteer Support

Staff and volunteers support wayfinding by providing clear and consistent information. They should understand the layout of the event and know where the important spaces are located. Support should be available without being intrusive. Guests should be able to choose whether or not to engage.

Wayfinding Checklist

Planning and Movement

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Address and entrance details are clearly provided in advance	☐	☐
Parking, drop-off, and transit information are included	☐	☐
The para-transit drop-off location is confirmed	☐	☐
A clear and accessible pathway is available from the para-transit drop-off location to the event entrance	☐	☐
Exterior paths to the entrance are stable and free of obstacles	☐	☐
Entrance location is clearly identified when multiple entrances exist	☐	☐
Entrance is clearly marked with signage	☐	☐
Guests can confirm they are in the correct location upon arrival	☐	☐
Registration or welcome area is visible upon entry	☐	☐

Planning and Movement (continued)

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Registration or welcome area allows approach and interaction from a seated position	☐	☐
Clear routes exist between important areas	☐	☐
Washrooms, food, and quiet spaces are easy to locate	☐	☐
Signage is placed at decision points	☐	☐
Pathways remain clear throughout the event	☐	☐
Guests can navigate the space without needing to ask for help	☐	☐
Signage uses clear and consistent language	☐	☐
Information is consistent across signage and event materials	☐	☐
Step-free routes are clearly identified	☐	☐
Accessible entrances and washrooms are clearly marked	☐	☐
Quiet space is easy to locate	☐	☐
Routes support mobility devices	☐	☐
Information is provided in plain language	☐	☐

Staff and Volunteers

Checklist	Completed	Consider for next time
Staff and volunteers understand the event layout	☐	☐
Staff know where important spaces are located	☐	☐
Staff provide clear and consistent directions	☐	☐
A host or greeter is available at arrival	☐	☐

How to Book an ASL Interpreter for Your Event

ASL interpretation provides communication access for Deaf guests. Planning for interpretation early helps Deaf participants take part in the event. Booking interpretation is not only about having an interpreter present. It is about planning for full access across the event.

When to Book

Book interpretation as early as possible. Interpreter availability can be limited, especially for evenings, weekends, and longer community events. Early booking increases the likelihood of securing interpreters and allows time for proper planning.

Start With Access, Not Just a Speaker

Interpretation should be planned based on the experience of Deaf participants, not only on scheduled speakers. Access should be considered across the full time the person is participating in the event.

If a Deaf person is attending or presenting, they need access to:

- Presentations.
- Group discussions.
- Audience questions.
- Informal conversation and networking.

Information to Gather Before Booking

Before contacting an interpreting service, gather:

- Event name, date, and location.
- Start and end time of interpretation.
- Type of event.
- Whether the event is public or private.
- Whether a Deaf participant is confirmed or interpretation is being offered in advance.
- Expected flow of the event, including presentations, discussion, and informal time.

If parts of the schedule are still being finalized, share what is known and update as needed.

One Interpreter or Two

The number of interpreters depends on the length and type of the event. When two interpreters are present, they work as a team and rotate regularly to maintain accuracy and reduce fatigue.

As a general guide:

- Short events with clear breaks may be supported by one interpreter.
- Longer events or events with continuous communication typically require two interpreters.
- Interactive events with discussion, audience participation, or networking often require two interpreters.

Placement and Visibility

Interpreter placement affects how well communication can be followed. Poor placement can reduce access even when interpretation is present.

Plan for:

- Clear sightlines from seating areas.
- Good lighting on the interpreter.
- Positioning near speakers or focal points.
- Avoiding visual obstructions.

Registration and Promotion

Let people know that ASL interpretation will be available. Invite guests to share access needs early. If interpretation is only arranged after a request, availability may be limited.

Include this in:

- Event promotion.
- Registration forms.
- Confirmation messages.

Where to Book ASL Interpretation in Manitoba

Winnipeg

Employment and Communication Centre for the Deaf (ECCOE)

Phone: 204 926 3271

Email: booking@eccoe.ca

Website: www.eccoe.ca

Province-wide

ASL Interpreting Manitoba Inc.

Phone: 204 957 8040

Email: bookings@aslimb.ca

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Accessibility is an ongoing practice. Each event provides learning. Collect feedback. Document improvements. Apply changes next time. It is a commitment to dignity, participation, and shared community life.

[AWOW accessible master checklist](#)

Contact Us

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Asian Women of Winnipeg
Together we stand

