PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN

The Principles of Universal Design were developed to help create products and spaces that are usable by everyone, regardless of abilities, preferences, or circumstances. Considering the 7 principles below helps ensure that meetings are inclusive and accessible for all.

EQUITY

- Ensure all participants have equal access to join and participate.
- Provide accommodations proactively whenever possible (e.g., accessible documents, captioning).

FLEXIBILITY

- Allow multiple ways to contribute (e.g., audio only, video, or through chat).
- Record meetings for participants who cannot attend live.

SIMPLICITY

- Use clear, concise language in meeting invites and materials.
- Share an agenda in advance to set clear expectations.
- Eliminate unnecessary complexity whenever possible.

PERCEPTIBLE INFORMATION

- Provide materials in accessible formats.
- Enable captions and ensure audio quality is clear.
- Use plain language and avoid jargon.

TOLERANCE FOR ERROR

- Foster a supportive environment where participants feel comfortable seeking clarification.
- Encourage questions and respond without judgment.
- Schedule opportunities to provide additional support proactively, so participants don't have to ask for help.

LOW PHYSICAL AND COGNITIVE EFFORT

- Schedule breaks when meetings are scheduled for more than 60 minutes.
- Avoid requiring participants to multitask unnecessarily.

PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL ACCESSIBILITY

- Ensure that links to join meetings are easy to locate and use.
- Provide dial-in options for participants with limited internet access.
- Test accessibility features (e.g., color contrast, captions) in advance.
- Ensure all participants can access shared content (e.g., screen shares, documents, links).
- Confirm the platform supports assistive technologies (e.g., screen readers, keyboard navigation).

To learn more about the Principle of Universal Design, this article is a helpful starting point: Accessibility Is Not What You Think.