

TOOL – PLANNING INCLUSIVE MEETINGS

Intentionally planning meetings ensures that people with a range of abilities can attend, access information, and participate. While accessibility essential for people with disabilities, it provides flexibility and benefits for people who are sick, distracted, working in a noisy location, or experiencing technical difficulties. Considering accessibility anticipates the needs of participants, creating spaces where everyone is included.

These days, the vast majority of meetings are held remotely, therefore the focus of this guide is on hosting accessible virtual meetings. Information about hosting [accessible in-person meetings](#) is available online.

SELECTING A MEETING PLATFORM

Microsoft Teams and Zoom are the two most commonly used video conferencing tools. Both platforms have built in accessibility features.

- Learn about the accessibility features of the meeting platform you will be using, including how to turn on auto captioning and how to pin sign language interpreters. Test these features in advance.
- Provide the option for participants without a device or internet access to join the meeting by phone.
- Decide if the meeting will be recorded.
- Determine if you will provide autogenerated captions or CART transcription. (See Tool 7)

AGENDAS

Giving participants a detailed agenda prior to the meeting provides clarity and allows individuals time to prepare their questions and comments.

- State the goal of the meeting. What should participants think, do, or decide by the end of the meeting? Will there be any action items or clearly identified outcomes?
- Give notice about questions that participants might be asked to respond to, even icebreakers (for example, “Everyone introduce yourself and say where you’re from”).
- Let participants know if/when they will have opportunities to ask questions.
- Set aside a fixed amount of time per question. Budget enough time for meaningful discussion.
- Schedule a short break if the meeting lasts more than an hour.
- Verify that the agenda is [accessible](#).

DOCUMENT ACCESSIBILITY

Document accessibility in meetings is essential to ensure that all participants, including those with disabilities, can fully engage and contribute. It ensures equity by providing everyone with access to the

same information about the needs of different participants and accommodating those needs into the structure of meetings is essential.

ACCESSIBLE WORD DOCS

Creating accessible word documents is not difficult.

- Use the built in Style tool to organize information, rather than formatting headings manually.
- Select easy to read sans serif fonts such as Calibri, Arial or Aptos.
- Add [alt text](#) for all images and graphs. If there is text in an image, it should be included in the alt text.
- Ensure that color is not the only means of conveying information. If using colors to convey meaning, also use formatting options such as underlining or making text bold to ensure people who are blind, or color blind can understand your content.
- When including hyperlinks, provide information about the link destination, rather than the URL. [Creating accessible Word Docs](#) is more readable (and useful) than <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-your-word-documents-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-d9bf3683-87ac-47ea-b91a-78dcacb3c66d>
- Use the built-in accessibility checker on the Review tab in Word and correct any identified issues.

ACCESSIBLE PDFs

Adobe provides a guide for [creating accessible PDFs](#) and a [built-in accessibility checker](#) that checks accessibility and identifies errors that need to be corrected. Accessible PDFs must be searchable, not image PDFs. Image PDFs are pictures of text, which cannot be read by assistive technology. If you are able to copy and paste text from a PDF, it is searchable.

ACCESSIBLE POWERPOINT

Considering accessibility when designing presentations means intentionally selecting designs, fonts, colors, and styles that can be understood by everyone. Using accessible templates in PowerPoint can be a great starting point. All presentations should adhere to the following guidelines.

- Make text clear and legible
 - Select easy to read sans serif fonts such as Calibri, Arial or Aptos.
 - Use a minimum of 20 point font for text and 24 point font for headings.
 - Opt for high contrast colors such as black text on an off-white background or vice versa. Use an [online contrast checker](#) to check other color combinations.
 - Use bullet points and numbered lists for structure and ease of reading.
- Add [alt text](#) for all images and graphs. If there is text in an image, it should be included in the alt text.
- Ensure that color is not the only means of conveying information. If using colors to convey meaning, also use formatting options such as underlining or making text bold to ensure people who are blind, or color blind can understand your content.

- [Check accessibility](#) using the PowerPoint Accessibility Tool found in the Review tab. Correct all errors and warnings.
 - Learn more about [accessible PowerPoint presentations](#).
- Share copies of your PowerPoint with participants prior to your presentation, whenever possible. If you are unable to do this, send copies to participants after the meeting to allow them to review what was shared.

MEETING CHAT

Chat is a useful tool that provides a way to participate without speaking, and while it should not be restricted, there are accessibility considerations. For some people, including those who rely on interpreters or use assistive technology, listening to the primary speaker and keeping up with the chat comments at the same time is impossible. To address this:

- Designate someone other than the primary speaker to read the comments aloud as part of the meeting.
- Send any links shared in chat to all participants by email after the meeting.

PRE-MEETING CHECKLIST

- Sign language interpreters have been scheduled, if requested.
- CART transcription has been scheduled, if requested.
- Language interpreters have been scheduled, if requested.
- Participants who requested accommodations have been contacted.
- Arrangements have been made to provide any other accommodations requested.
- Speakers and presenters have received and agreed to follow accessibility expectations (see Tool 5).
- All meeting documents are [accessible](#).
- Copied of presentations and any materials that will be referenced during the meeting have been shared several days in advance to allow participants the ability to review information prior to attending.
- Copies of presentations and any materials that will be referenced have been sent to interpreters and CART transcriptionists several days in advance.
- A preparation meeting has been scheduled for any participants who have questions, need more information, or would like to review materials before the main meeting.
- There is a plan to allow interpreters and Deaf participants to join the meeting a few minutes early to test their setup.
- The meeting host knows how to make interpreters and captioners cohosts so they can pin themselves.
- Someone is available to help troubleshoot tech issues during meetings.
- Someone has been asked to monitor the chat.