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Accessibility Guide for Digital Events, Presentations and Meetings

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Mayor's Office on Disability   MOD@sfgov.org
    Planning Accessible Events | Mayor's Office on Disability (sfgov.org)
SFGSA.org · 3-1-1

<u>Introduction</u>

What:

This guide contains required steps to help you plan and conduct an accessible virtual meeting or event. This guidance focuses on the accessibility needs of people with disabilities and all others who may benefit from accessible content.

The guidance is focused on Microsoft Teams, WebEx and Zoom platforms; it also includes specific instructions for events and meetings broadcast on SFGovTV.

For other disability accommodation scenarios and best practices, please contact the [Mayor's Office on Disability](#) at [mod@sfgov.org.](#)

Why:

- One in ten San Franciscans reports having a disability: 94,000 residents[1].
- Supports put in place for people with disabilities also benefit everyone.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act and similar laws require accessibility as a legal requirement, and as such it is a requirement of CCSF.
- Virtual meetings and events make it easier for people with disabilities to participate in CCSF programs and activities.

The information is this guidance is current as of November 2021.

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[1] https://www.sfhsa.org/about/reports-publications/disability-san-francisco

Guidance: Key Steps

Identify the disability access coordinator for the event
Accessibility is the responsibility of the host. Be prepared to provide disability accommodations; do not assume someone else is coordinating accessibility.

Provide accessibility information for all events, invitations or publicity
All events, invitations or publicity should have an accessibility statement which does the following:
- Identifies the platform that will be used, with a link to an online tutorial about how to use it.
- Describes the format of the event (i.e., discussion, listening, small groups, etc.) and how long it will last.
- Indicates what accommodations will automatically be available; for instance, many departments choose to automatically provide sign language interpreting and captions for large events open to the public.
  - Refer to the sections on captioning and American Sign Language Interpreting for information on when to provide those accommodations automatically.
- When slides or other materials will be used, includes the link to a website for advance access to slides and materials, including the date they will be posted on that link.
- Includes contact information for questions about accessibility
- Includes information on how to access the event by telephone as an alternative to video.

You may have different accessibility statements depending on nature of event and services provided etc. See various options in the Sample Virtual Meeting Accessibility Statements.

Please note that statement needs to be posted with enough time that people can make accommodations within 72 hours.

Learn the accessibility features of your video-conferencing platform
Become familiar with the accessibility of that platform and how to implement accessibility functionality. Please know that companies are always working on improving the accessibility functionality of the platforms.

- It is important to understand the functionality of captioning, interpreting, and screen readers so that you know how to handle any interpretation requests you may receive.
- It may be helpful to check the accessibility information on each company's product website, to see if any relevant improvements have recently been made.
- For additional details about the accessibility of each platform, check our table: Accessibility Comparison of Video Conference Platforms (Zoom, Microsoft Teams ad WebEx)
- If you are unsure how to deal with an accommodation request MOD is available to assist.

Ensure that meetings broadcast on SFGovTV are accessible
- SFGovTV staff can provide support during the meeting if you are using Webex or Microsoft Teams. You will need to take care of the technical host functions if using Zoom.
- Real Time Captioning will be enabled within the video stream and provided via a live remote vendor.
- When sign language interpreters have been requested in advance, the interpreter(s) will join as meeting participants.
- Notes from the captioning of the meeting will be available after video processing at the SFGovTV website.
- Inform the public that they can request accommodations if needed to make public comment. You may receive request for accommodations for alternative methods to make public comment for a meeting that is broadcast on SFGovTV, an example of such a request is available in the Public Comment Section.

Determine if event or meeting will be open to the public

Public Observers
- Make sure that all publicity and registration materials include information about how to listen on the phone or watch on SFGovTV, since some people don't have access to the internet.

- If the event will be open to the general public without pre-registration, there should be a way for members of the public to request accommodations.
- If the expected viewership is 500 or more attendees, it is recommended to provide sign language interpretation and captions.
- If pre-registration is required, follow the steps in "Provide accessibility information for all events, invitations or publicity"
- For pre-registration events, captions must be provided and if requested, sign language interpreters.

Public Commenters
- Make sure that all publicity for the event includes information about how to join the event for making public comments.
- Provide a way for people who cannot speak to be able to make comments, i.e. by email.
  - One example is to provide an email address for comments to be sent in advance of the meeting, as well as during the meeting. Make sure to provide commenters who use email a subject line phrase, so that your staff will be able to quickly identify public comment.
    - This is necessary because all viewers may not be able to use the telephone call-in number (or chat feature, if applicable) to make comments.
- One of the meeting participants, such as a clerk, should read the comments sent in by email during the public comment time on the meeting agenda.
- Provide an email address and/or phone number for members of the public to contact during the event, if they are having problems or need other accommodations.

Invitation-only Public Participants
- Make sure that all publicity and registration materials include information about how to listen on the phone or watch on SFGovTV, since some people don't have access to the internet.
- Follow the steps in "Provide accessibility information for all events, invitations or publicity"
- For pre-registration events, captions must be provided and if requested, sign language interpreters.

Ensure that people without computer access are able to participate
- Provide telephone call-in instructions in all publicity and invitations.
- Many people with disabilities don't have the technology necessary for video conferencing and webinars, and some prefer to use the phone.

Ensure captioning is enabled
- All online events and webinars must have captioning capability.
    - For meetings of 100 or more people, Real Time Captioning is recommended.
- Speech recognition generated automatic captioning is generally accessible and acceptable. If a request has been made for live remote captions an effort should be made to try to accommodate this request.
    - [Microsoft Teams](), [WebEx]() and [Zoom]() can provide automatic captions. Even though the accuracy of these captions was inadequate when this feature was first introduced, over time the accuracy of speech recognition generated captions has improved.
    - Become familiar in advance with how to enable the captions on the platform you have selected.
    - Currently Webex and Microsoft Teams can also attribute the captions to the speaker, Zoom does not do this. Because it is important to understand who is speaking, you may find that individuals will request a live captioner who can attribute conversation to a particular speaker.
- If requested in advance, captions from an outside captioning service can be added in to Microsoft Teams, WebEx and Zoom.
    - Find out if your office has an existing purchase order for captioning services.
        - The best practice is to establish purchase orders in advance so you don't have to find a service provider and figure out payment on short notice; this can be a barrier to procure needed services.
    - Schedule the captioner as far in advance as possible to ensure availability.
        - Captioners are in high demand and may not be available on short notice.
    - Schedule the provider for at least 30-minutes before the event starts to allow for set-up.

MOD website guidance on captioning: "Effective Communication"

Know when/how to provide American Sign Language (ASL) Interpretation
- ASL should be provided when you know in advance that Deaf people will be there or for a major public announcement given without advance notice and publicity.
    - For meetings of 500 or more people, an American Sign Language interpreter is recommended.
- There should always be a way for participants to request ASL interpretation.
    - Due to short supply it is not a recommended practice to provide a sign language interpreter if you don't know they are actually needed, unless the event is for a broad public audience (i.e., a major public announcement).
- If requested in advance, arrange for sign language interpreting. If the event will be one hour or less, arrange for one; for events longer than one hour, arrange for two.
    - Find out if your office has an existing purchase order for sign language interpreting services.
        - The best practice is to establish purchase orders in advance so you don't have to find a service provider and figure out payment on short notice; this can be a barrier to procure needed services.
    - Schedule the interpreter(s) as far in advance as possible to ensure availability
- When integrating sign language interpreters into the platform you must make sure that they are visible at all times.
    - Zoom and Microsoft Teams allows for interpreters to be spotlighted to ensure they are always visible.
        - Zoom also allows the user to select whether the video of the interpreter or the shared screen are viewed on the main window.
- See Resources below for specific instructions for different platforms.
- Provide the materials in advance to the interpreters and captioners.
- MOD guidance on sign language interpreters: "Effective Communication"

Ensure that any videos used are made accessible

- All videos used should have captions.
- If the video you have doesn't include captions, check to see if a captioned version exists, or time and budget permitting, use a captioning vendor to add captions.
- See MOD guidance on captioning, "Effective Communication".
- Here is guidance about how to add captions yourself: "US Digital.gov's 508 Accessible Videos – How to Caption Videos"

Ensure that all documents and materials are accessible

- The best practice is to build in accessibility as the document is created.
  - Find specific information for developing accessible materials in different formats below under "Resources".
- Provide the slide-deck and handouts by posting them online and/or emailing them to participants.
  - The best practice is to publish or send them a few days before the session.
  - This is helpful for people who are blind and have low vision to be able to follow the online session.
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Ensure that Hybrid Meetings are accessible

- A hybrid meeting is any public meeting that is conducted in-person with the addition of virtual real-time communication technology. A hybrid meeting may utilize video conference platforms (e.g., Microsoft Teams, WebEx, Zoom), a phone call-in function, or both.
- Using a hybrid format gives people with disabilities more possible ways to participate, and increases their likelihood of community involvement and civic engagement. Whether or not the member of the public or civic body chooses to participate in person or remotely, all aspects of the meeting should follow current accessibility guidelines.

- In general, to ensure the accessibility of the remote portion of a hybrid meeting, please follow the guidance as outlined in this document. To ensure the accessibility of the in-person portion of your meeting, please find MOD's guidance for accessible in-person meetings and events.

- Whenever possible, the civic body should provide the appropriate accessibility based on the location of the public participant or civic body member (I.e., whether they plan to be present virtually, or in person). It is good practice to post a contact number and e-mail address of an individual who may answer questions about the accessibility of your meeting, so that persons with disabilities may make an informed decision about which environment works best for them. In some situations, like the provision of American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, virtual participation of interpreters may be the only viable option.

ASL Interpreters in hybrid meetings

- ASL interpretation relies heavily on facial expressions, hand signs, and gestures for effective communication. If the ASL interpreter is also required to wear a face mask, this may interfere with their ability to effectively do their job. When ASL interpreters work remotely by video, most have the ability to work in a private environment, and without masking.

- If a participant requests ASL interpretation as a reasonable accommodation, every effort must be made to fill this request.

- In City Hall hearing rooms that are equipped with remote video technology, the best practice is to have ASL interpreters join meetings remotely, when possible. If the participant requesting the ASL interpreting is attending in-person, best practice is to project the image of the interpreter onto the screen in the hearing room. If the participant is attending virtually, ASL interpreting may be provided within the platform that the participant is using.

  - For assistance in determining the best accessibility practice for your hybrid meeting, please feel free to contact us at mod@sfgov.org or 415 554-6789.

Accessibility Considerations During the Event
- The moderator should establish ground rules for accessibility.

- One person speaks at a time. This helps people who are deaf and hard of hearing to keep track of who is speaking, people who are blind and low vision who can't see non-verbal cues, and people on the phone.
- Ask people speaking to say their name every time they speak, so captioners and attendees alike all know who is talking.
- Ask presenters to use plain language during the event and avoid using jargon.
- Presenters should describe images and graphics on any slides; this benefits people who are blind and low vision, as well as people calling in.
- For lengthy meetings over an hour, provide short breaks.

Accessibility Considerations After the Event
- Publish materials in an accessible format.
- If your team live-tweeted the event or if a Twitter chat was part of the event, create a blog post or follow Wakelet's advice to develop an easy-to-read collection of those tweets for anyone who was unable to participate live.
- Offer your attendees the opportunity to provide feedback about the event, including accessibility, to help you improve.
- Make accessibility an ongoing, inclusive conversation in your office for all types of events.

Resources
MOD Accessible Public Event Checklist
Checklist provide information that may be helpful for hybrid meetings, it is an easy to use tool to assist event planners in ensuring that the facility and event set-up comply with Federal and State disability access laws.
Using an ASL Interpreter with Microsoft Teams
Tutorial about using sign language interpreter for a MS Teams Teaching Session
Zoom Accessibility Best Practices
Article about Zoom and accessibility from the University of Colorado
Best Video Conferencing Apps and Software for Accessibility
Article comparing accessibility of video conferencing platforms from Bighack.org

Accessibility Tips for a Better Zoom/Virtual Meeting Experience
From the Deaf/Hard of Hearing Technology Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center
Resources for making documents and materials accessible:
- California State University's "Documents & Multimedia"
- GSA Section508.gov's "Making Agency Communications Accessible to Everyone"

How to "pin" or spotlight a participant in Zoom

How to "pin" or spotlight a participant in WebEx

How to "pin" or spotlight a participant in Microsoft Teams

Captioning in Zoom with captioning service

Captioning in Zoom with automatic captions

Captioning in WebEx

Captioning in Microsoft Teams

Virtual Meeting Accessibility Sample Statements
This section provides multiple accessibility statement templates for you to reference or use when putting together your own accessibility statements.

For All Meetings:
We welcome suggestions about how to make the **[meeting name]** meetings more accessible. Please send an email to **[insert email address]**.
If you need assistance accessing the meeting, please call **[telephone number]** or send an email to **[email address].**
- o The following statement MUST be included: "Automatic captions will be used unless live remote captions are requested. To request live remote captions or sign language interpreting, (include info about how to request as well as the deadline for submitting the request)"

For Meetings in Which ASL Interpreting Will Definitely Be Provided:

ASL interpreters will be available. Other accommodations will be made available upon request. Please contact **[Individual's, telephone and e-mail contact information]**. Providing at least 72 hours' notice will help to help ensure availability.

For Meetings in Which Real Time Captioning Will Be Provided:

Real time captioning will be used for this meeting. To request American Sign Language interpreting or other accommodations please contact *[Individual's, telephone and e-mail contact information]*. Providing at least 72 hours' notice will help to help ensure availability.

<u>For Meetings Streamed on SFGOVTV:</u>

Members of the public will be able to view the meeting by joining **[video platform instructions] or by [SFGOVTV instructions if applicable**]. Members can also join the meeting by phone **[include call-in number and instructions]**

Accessibility Comparison of Video Conference Platforms (Zoom, Microsoft Teams ad WebEx)