BASIC

3 Representing a starting point to planning more inclusive events; basic indicates compliance with accessibility standards and regulations, and a demonstration of addressing and taking initial steps toward accessible practices. This is often reactive rather than proactive.

BETTER

2 Better signifies a more proactive and advanced approach to creating accessible spaces. This may include adopting best practice in the industry and enrolling the help of experts.

BEST

1 Best represents a commitment to accessibility and inclusion at the core of the event planning strategy. Planners at this level lead the way for others and influence wider industry practice through transparency and collaboration. The entire event team are secure and comfortable with equitable thinking, inclusive attitudes, language and behaviours.

What goes into an accessible event?

Accessibility and inclusion are broad ranging terms. When we think about 'access' we tend to think about 'disability'. But accessibility and inclusion go far beyond this. The overall goal is to remove barriers to participation. This doesn't just mean physical barriers - nothing will land better for an attendee than being met by an event team who are secure and comfortable with equitable thinking, inclusive attitudes, language and behaviours. Breaking down these barriers takes intentional planning, continuous improvement and collaboration.

Planning

Choosing your venue, creating content, virtual events, and staff training

Promotion

Event websites, communications, and registration

Production

The onsite experience including signage

STREAMING & VIRTUAL

BASIC

Offer the choice of a virtual option through a platform that is easy to use with intuitive navigation and clear instructions for attendees.

BETTER

Ensure the virtual platform meets the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and use technology that supports digital accessibility such as AI transcription tools.

BEST

Create a hybrid model event, ensure there are equal opportunities for engagement between the virtual and in-person experiences. Invest in customised accessibility support for attendees with specific needs and accessibility features like sign language interpretation and real-time captioning for all sessions.

B。

VENUE

BASIC

Opt for a venue with accessible entrances including wide, automativ doorways, step free access, and firm and level ground. Inside the venue, lighting should be adjustable for guests with different visual needs.

BETTER

Ensure the venue is close to accessible public transport options and has accessible parking and drop off points. Throughout the venue there should be no barriers to entry for wheelchair users.

BEST

Offer designated quiet and spaces within the venue for those who need them. Consider touch points such as catering for a wide variety of dietary needs and adjusting furniture heights. Within the venue effective ventilation and hearing loops can further support attendees with specific needs.

B.

B.

BASIC

Use a readable font size and type, clear colour contrast, and avoid italics and underlining. Think about keeping the amount of content concise to avoid overcrowding slides with text.

BETTER

The event should have multiple screens placed around for all attendees to see the content. Add closed captions, voiceovers and image and video descriptions to support attendees with hearing and visual impairments.

BEST

Ensure all content adheres to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines including handouts and digital resources. Presentations should have live captioning, transcriptions, and all visual content should have audio descriptions. You should also consider sign language interpretations for live sessions. Content can be customised to attendee needs for example, you can allow attendees to adjust the font size and use screen readers.

STAFF TRAINING

BASIC

Awareness of Accessibility can be developed through learning about different accessibility needs and why inclusivity is important.

BETTER

Training for practical skills includes hands-on activities and teaches staff how to use accessibility tools as well as assist attendees with a variety of needs.

BEST

Ongoing, comprehensive education using real-life scenarios and continuous feedback from attendees as well as collaboration with accessibility experts keeps training current and effective.

B.

What goes into an accessible event?

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B.

BASIC

Registration forms should be simple and easy to navigate as well as being screen reader and mobile compatible. Include contact options for assistance with the registration and provide the option for attendees to choose their individual accessibility needs.
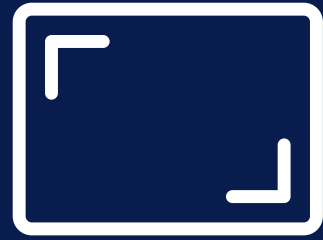
BETTER

Create a translatable WCAG-compliant registration form as well as providing multiple ways to register such as email. Send out an accessibility survey asking about any specific requirements attendees might have

BEST

The platform should be compatible with assistive technologies and could include assistive tools such as live chat and access to trained support staff. Pre-event communications should also be accessible, clear and concise and personalised communications should confirm any special adjustments. At the event, registration desks should include low-height counters, clear signage, and staff trained on accessibility.

REGISTRATION

B.

EVENT WEBSITE

BASIC

Simple design with intuitive navigation, mobile compatibility and alt text for images can assist screen reader users.

BETTER

Ensure the design is WCAG compliant and can be navigated by a keyboard. Provide alternative content formats for users with different accessibility needs as well as easy to find call to action buttons with descriptions and clear contact options for those who need further support.

BEST

Conduct user testing with inclusive groups to ensure your website is accessible for different needs. These users should find the site to be fully compliant with WCAG 2.1 standards, that they can adjust the settings to use text to speech, all multimedia content is accessible, and they can easily navigate as well as download the agenda in different formats.

B.

COMMUNICATIONS

BASIC

Use clear, simple language as well as accessible fonts and colours in captions as well as descriptive text and captions for images and videos.

BETTER

Ensure event emails and the event website are designed to be accessible by meeting Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, providing contact options for accessibility support,

BEST

Ensure all communications platforms are accessible including post-event content, livestreams with captioning and translation, and pre-event information. These should have personalisation options such as adjustable text. Communications should provide attendees with the option to share their needs and request support.

B.

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B.

B.

BASIC

use simple clear fonts and high contrast when designing signage and place these strategically throughout the venue to ensure they are easy to see and follow.

BETTER

Use larger and bolder fonts, include tactile elements as well as universally recognised symbols alongside text. Position signs at an accessible height for both standing and seated attendees.

BEST

Provide a mix of visual, tactile, and auditory signage where possible all with consistent design elements. Offer way finding support at regular intervals including interactive kiosks.

BASIC

Designate wheelchair spaces and reserved seating at the end of aisles for those who need frequent breaks or close to the stage for those with low vision. You may have service dogs at the event who will need water stations and outside space.

BETTER

Building regular breaks into the agenda, having ample space to move around and extra seating in high traffic areas, as well as no flashing lights makes for a less stressful experience.

BEST

Make adjustments to different touch points including lowering poseur tables and registration desk heights, providing accessible cutlery options, and ensure lecterns and microphones can be changed to accommodate attendees with varying heights and in wheelchairs. There should be designated quiet areas attendees can access throughout the event.

B.

What's next for creating an accessible event?

Explore Web Content Accessibility

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines can be found here.
Resources on accessible design by UX experts, NN/g, can be found here.

Read our handbook

For a more in depth understanding, including checklists, industry spotlights and resources including our podcast interview with an access and inclusion educator, you can read and download our handbook.

Let's talk

Our diversity, equity and inclusion working group have been committing to championing, creating awareness of accessibility at events, and consulting experts in the field to hone our approach. At Broadsword, we know the importance of a conversation. Let's talk about how we can create more inclusive event experiences together.

BROAD
SWORD.