



Website and Accessible Virtual Meetings/ Events Policy

Mayor's Office For People with Disabilities

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1) Purpose

Under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the City of Philadelphia is responsible to ensure that its website, virtual meetings/events, and applications, including documents used and posted online are accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities, to ensure equal access to all users and to avoid subjecting people with disabilities to discrimination. The City of Philadelphia is committed to ensuring accessibility of its digital assets to people with disabilities.

2) Scope

This policy applies to any web content and applications authored by the City of Philadelphia and includes vendor applications contracted by the City.

3) Policy

This policy incorporates federal law and reinforces its commitment to accessibility of all its services, buildings and activities to people with disabilities. Therefore, web content and applications will be required to meet W3C WAI's www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) Level AA conformance. PDF file format accessibility is included in this policy. Departments responsible for developing and managing websites and applications, including those sites created and/or maintained by consultants, must:

1. Provide the same or equivalent access to individuals with disabilities and
2. Test and validate websites, applications, posted documents, and video/audio sources. Agencies are to test external websites using one or more of the following methods in conjunction with end-user assistive technologies:
 - Accessibility testing and validation features of free tools, like the WAVE toolbar
 - Manual testing and validation

4) Creating Accessible Documents

Microsoft Word

An accessible document is created to be as easily readable by a sighted reader as a low vision or non-sighted reader. The best way to accomplish making a document accessible is during the original stages of creating one. The basic core accessibility principles for creating an accessible Word document are below:

Use Headings

- Headings can help individuals without eyesight to understand how the document is organized. Navigation is more efficient for individuals that may use screen readers or Braille. It is important to use the built-in Heading styles in the *Home* tab because making text larger and bold does not make it a header.

Use Lists

- Microsoft Word has built-in tools for ordered (numbered) and unordered (bulleted) lists. A list is not really a *list* without using these tools which makes the content more difficult for screen readers to fully understand.

Recommended Fonts

- The following fonts are recommended when creating an accessible document: Times New Roman, Verdana, Arial, Tahoma, Helvetica, and Calibri. These are basic, simple fonts without any extra decorations. Serif fonts are preferred for printed items, such as books and newspapers however, those fonts do not display well on computers and mobile devices because they take up a larger amount of space on a screen than on a printed page.

Add Alternate Text for Images

- Microsoft Word allows users to enter alternate text by right clicking an image and selecting *Format Picture*. Within the *Format Picture* drop box, select *Alt Text* and enter information in the *Description* field.

Use Accessibility Checker

- Microsoft products have a built-in accessibility checker to help test the overall accessibility of a document. The accessibility checker provides feedback and tips on how to repair any issues.

5) Creating Accessible PDFs

Adobe Acrobat is the best way to make an accessible PDF from a Word document. This allows the user to view, create, print and manage files in Portable Document Format (PDF). Choose the Acrobat tab and then select Create PDF. Once the dialog box opens, select the options button and make sure the box is checked for “Enable Accessibility and Reflow” with tagged Adobe PDF.

6) Creating Accessible PowerPoint Slides

Microsoft PowerPoint is widely used for presentations. Below are some key tips to ensure that PowerPoint is accessible to individuals with disabilities:

- Use Alt text on graphics
- Use provided templates (they are pre-approved for screen readers and accessibility devices), and can be easily navigated
- Have a digital copy of the slides available for people in the audience
- Check to ensure that links to external content such as websites or videos are accessible
- Use the accessibility checker that is built-in to PowerPoint software to verify that the presentation is accessible to people with disabilities

7) Creating Accessible Excel Spreadsheets

- Use accessible templates for Office
- Remove blank columns, rows and sheets
- Avoid blank cells and if you must have them, enter “no data”
- Create clear labels for columns and rows
- Do not use hidden columns and rows
- Provide links to other sheets when there are multiple sheets in the file
- Use text wrap or adjust the columns and rows manually

8) Creating Virtual Events: Preparation

- Choose an accessible platform (see below)
- Accessible materials and advertisements
- Setting up accommodations with optional attendee requests

9) Virtual Platforms

The process to select a virtual platform is important because it should support accessibility for individuals that may have vision, hearing, mobility and cognitive disabilities. Be sure to select a platform that supports accessibility features. The need for access is not universal and may require different tools and technology for each event. Individuals may use different devices or resources to enhance accessibility such as:

- Screen reader software for Low vision
- Keyboards instead of the mouse for mobility issues

Determine the scope of the event and potential access limitations for attendees. Offer dial-in by phone to those without internet or computer access. Provide information on how to access the event through various methods including online and offline if required. Consider other technology resources that may be required for social media events (i.e., Facebook Live, Instagram Live/Stories, YouTube). During the planning phase, be sure to connect with the disabled community to include speakers, performers and other talent if they are available for the event. Some popular platforms for virtual meetings with accessibility features such as support for screen readers, American Sign Language (ASL), keyboard shortcuts and manual captioning include:

- Microsoft Teams* www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/Microsoft-teams/group-chat-software
- Zoom Meetings* <https://zoom.us/meetings>
- Google Meet www.gsuite.google.com/meet
- GoToMeetings www.gotomeeting.com

Disclaimer: The City of Philadelphia does not endorse any of these products. This information presented in this application is a culmination of feedback from the disabled community and applicable websites. Please practice safety when using conferencing platforms.

*Only Zoom and Microsoft Teams platforms are currently licensed by the City and supported through the Office of Innovation and Technology.

10) Virtual Disability Etiquette

- Start with an access check
- Establish rules for participation
- Describe all images and videos
- Use plain language

11) Access Check

It is good practice in the disability community to start every meeting with an access check. This is a good way to check in with attendees and share valuable information about accessibility features during the event. Include the following in the access check:

- Ask if you are speaking loudly enough
- Ask if you are speaking too fast
- Inform attendees that only one person should speak at a time and that individuals should mute themselves when they are not speaking

12) Accommodations and Requests

- Provide attendees the ability to request specific access needs prior to the event (anonymously, with their name and RSVP options)
- Important to factor in budget costs for ASL Interpretation and other potential accommodations
- Ensure the platform for the virtual event is compatible with assistive technology such as screen reader software
- Ensure the platform allows for computer-based or phone-based listening/speaking
- Events should be accessible to augmentative and alternative (AAC) users (i.e., multiple ways for attendees to participate, answer questions, and interact)
- Offer training sessions with event or and volunteers on how to use the platform prior to the event

Accommodations and Requests cont.

- Provide accessibility information publicly to attendees
- Provide format and timeline for the event to allow attendees to plan breaks, arrive late, leave early, etc.
- Provide materials ahead of the event if possible to attendees with an accessible format with any visual or written material
- Allow attendees to send questions or comments in advance
- Provide a glossary of terms used during the event
- Ensure all attendees have access to login codes and links ahead of the event
- Take all precautions to prevent security issues such as “Zoom bombing” (See below)

13) ASL Interpretation

If an individual requests American Sign Language interpretation (ASL), you can hire an ASL Interpreter to join and sign during the video conferencing event.

14) Captioning

Captioning is used to include people with hearing disabilities in a virtual meeting or event. Whenever possible, select a virtual platform that can provide the ability for attendees to enter live captions or enable automated captions. Both methods have pros and cons in terms of cost and efficiency. Select the best one for your specific event.

15) Access for People Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing or Have Sensory Disabilities

- Make sure audio is clear prior to the event and use apps that may help reduce background noise on calls such as Krisp
- Speakers should use a headset whenever possible to improve audio if this is accessible to them
- Hosts and presenters should use a quiet space whenever possible so they won't be disturbed

- Use the mute feature to keep background noise to a minimum for all attendees except for those speaking or presenting
- Ask attendees to say their name every time they speak so that all attendees including captioners will know who is speaking

16) Access For People Who are Blind, Have Low Vision or a Visual Impairment

- Make sure the speaker's face is well-lit and can be clearly seen
- Use a platform that is accessible and has features such as screen reader software
- Make sure all attendees can access any method used to vote or flag who can speak next
- Describe live scenarios whenever possible
- Describe any images and read any text that appears on the screen
- Describe any gestures as if you were explaining it to someone who is not in the same room

17) Screen Reader Software

Screen readers are primarily used by blind or visually impaired individuals who do not have useful vision to read text on the computer screen. The text will be displayed on the screen with a speech synthesizer or Braille display. Below are some software products that can be used. There are many more software products available that can be utilized for a specific experience.

- CDesk Compass
- COBRA
- IMax for Mac
- Speakup

18) Access For People Who Are Intellectually or Developmentally Disabled

- Select a presenter who can be patient with attendees especially if they are new to the platform
- Repeat information if necessary
- Use accessible or everyday language during the event
- Avoid using jargon
- Include processing time and breaks into the event
- Leave ample time for questions and comments

- Offer attendees the option to use chat boxes so that messages can be read aloud to everyone during the event
- Omit unneeded words
- Keep sentences short
- Presenters should state major points first before going into details
- Use pronouns when possible
- Speak using active voice

19) Virtual Invitations and Presentations

- Use good color contrast
- Use large and easy to read fonts
- Use plain language
- Include detailed step-by-step directions of how to get on the event or platform
- Use images where possible in PowerPoint to avoid cluttered slides
- Avoid flashing or strobing animations
- Use alternative text and image descriptions for any images that are used for the presentation

20) Advertising A Virtual Event

- Provide accessibility accommodations being provided (i.e. ASL, Captioning, etc.) in any advertisements and to attendees prior to the event
- Provide at least two methods to join the event
- Include a point of contact to request accommodations with both a phone number and email address
- Include any links or dial-in information
- Provide accessibility information about the specific platform that will be used for the event
- to request accommodations typically 72 hours before the event

21) Protecting A Virtual Event

It is important to take secure precautions when hosting a virtual event. Many social platforms offer such options in the settings section. Applications continuously release new and improved features, so be sure to update the latest version. Avoid hosting public meetings even if the link is shared on social media. There are specific measure that the host can take to avoid potential security issues such as:

- Avoid “join before host” so that a meeting will not start until the host starts the meeting or presentation

- Allow only signed-in users
- Explore the settings of the platform you are using for Security features such as a “Waiting Room” that requires attendees to be verified and then admitted to the event only by the host
- Do not use a Personal Meeting ID (PMI) to host public events
- Assign a password for access to the virtual event (This is very effective for smaller groups)
- Option to lock the meeting once all attendees have joined to prevent any other individuals from trying to gain access
- Remove unwanted or disruptive participants
- Hosts can mute or unmute individual participants or all of them at once
- Hosts can turn off participants video to block unwanted or inappropriate gestures on video
- Turn off file transfer to prevent participants from sharing unwanted or inappropriate content files via the in-meeting chat

22) After the Virtual Event

- Share materials in an accessible format
- If applicable, create a blog post or other easy-to-read collection of information to those unable to attend the event
- Make accessibility an ongoing, inclusive conversation in the community for all types of events
- Offer attendees a clear way to provide feedback or comments after the event (Remember to offer multiple ways including written, dial-in, recording, etc.)

23) Vendor Requirements

Agency’s Requests for Proposals (RFP) must include an appendix outlining the City’s accessibility guidelines as available in the Office of Innovation and Technology’s RFP template. This includes a submission by the vendor of a Volunteer Product Accessibility Template (VPAT). Vendors will be held to the same standards as internally-built websites and applications.

24) RESOURCES:

ADA/Disability Resources

- Rooted in Rights www.rootedinrights.org
- National Endowment for the Arts www.arts.gov
- RespectAbility www.respectability.org
- American Foundation for the Blind (AFB). www.afb.org
- Harvard University Disability Resources www.accessibility.harvard.edu
- National Deaf Center www.nationsdeafcenter.org
- UC Berkeley Law www.law.berkeley.edu
- ASGCLA (Association of Specialized, Government and Cooperative Library Agencies) www.asgcladirect.org
- Voluntary Product Accessibility Template www.section508.gov/sell/vpat

Accessible Document Resources

- Creating Accessible PDF's from Microsoft Word <https://www.washington.edu/accessibility/documents/pdf-word/>
- Creating Headers in Microsoft Word <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/video-improve-accessibility-with-heading-styles-68f1eeff-6113-410f-8313-b5d382cc3be1?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US>
- Making Accessible Word Documents <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-your-word-documents-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-d9bf3683-87ac-47ea-b91a-78dcacb3c66d>
- Making Accessible PowerPoint Presentations <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-your-powerpoint-presentations-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-6f7772b2-2f33-4bd2-8ca7-dae3b2b3ef25>
- Making Accessible Excel Spreadsheets <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-your-excel-documents-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-6cc05fc5-1314-48b5-8eb3-683e49b3e593>