

## Hosting Accessible City Public Events and Meetings Guidelines for City Staff



**This checklist is intended to assist City of Vancouver and Park Board staff in planning public events, such as consultations and celebrations, so that these are equally accessible to, and inclusive of, community members such as persons with disabilities, seniors/ elders, and trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit individuals.**

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## **Planning**

- Provide any contractors with a copy of the accessibility guidelines and clearly communicate that although it is not a legal term of the contract, it is expected that contractors will adhere to the guidelines wherever possible
- Involve individuals such as persons with disabilities and Trans individuals in the early stages of the planning process
- Consider accessibility requirements for a variety of needs, including sensory, communications, chemical sensitivity and mobility
- Consider accommodation of a variety of needs, e.g. assistance dogs, walkers, wheelchairs, scooters, strollers
- Plan event as far ahead as possible (especially large events), preferably four weeks or more, to 1) allow enough time for attendees to arrange HandyDART transportation and/ or accompanying assistants, and 2) arrange any on-site services needed e.g. American Sign Language (ASL)
- Provision of Registered ASL – English interpreters is strongly recommended for events with more than 100 people; for smaller events, provide ASL interpreters upon request
- Ensure site has ability to incorporate technology for provision of Real Time Captioning
- Provision of Real Time Captioning is strongly recommended for events with 100 or more people; for smaller events, provide real-time captioning upon request
- Check that Emergency Evacuation procedures are in place for all individuals, including people with disabilities/ seniors

## **Venue Selection**

- Schedule on-site visit prior to booking
- Include individuals with various needs in on-site visit, e.g. mobility, sensory
- Consider timing of the event, avoid early morning and late evening if possible
- External noise should be limited

## **Accessibility considerations for event site selection/ City Facilities**

### **Accessible entrances/ exits/ pathways/ hallways/ corridors**

- Must be clearly marked
- Turning space with a 6" diameter
- Minimum 39" wide
- Free of any impediments or tripping hazards
- Preferably no lip or a maximum lip of ½" bevelled
- Smooth, level surface with no stairs
- Avoid slopes where possible (otherwise should not exceed 5% max.)
- Ensure that trails or paths are well marked at their entrances with information about accessibility throughout the trail or path (e.g. identify any interruptions of the accessible surface, such as steps, steep slopes etc.)

### **Doors**

- Ensure automatic door openers are activated
- If no automatic openers, wedge door open (check Fire Code)

### **Elevators**

- Minimum 36" opening
- Large enough to accommodate person with motorized wheelchair/scooter and an attendant or assistance dog

### **Lighting**

- Avoid dark and muted venues
- Ensure adequate lighting in parking locations, venue etc.
- Avoid use of strobe lighting (can trigger a seizure for people with epilepsy)

### **Ventilation**

- Good air circulation is important for attendees with chemical sensitivities. If possible, ensure that meeting rooms can have fresh ventilation from outside air
- Be aware of any ongoing construction or remodeling that could impact the circulation of air-borne allergens such as dust, paint fumes

### **Acoustics**

- Consider the impact of ambient noise for people hard-of-hearing

### **Surfaces**

- Level, smooth
- Recommended accessible surfaces include concrete, asphalt, compacted crushed granite/ limestone, linoleum and tight-weave carpets without underlay
- Grass is not accessible when wet
- Wood chips or bark mulch are not accessible surfaces
- Drain rock is not an accessible surface.
- Avoid slopes where possible (otherwise should not exceed 5% max.)

### **Washrooms**

- Scent free soap
- Signage requesting attendees refrain from scented products
- Scent free flowers
- At least one washroom large enough to accommodate person with motorized wheelchair and an attendant
- At least one single-user washroom with signage to reflect universal, functions-based designation
- All washrooms / change rooms signage should be standardized across City facilities in all multi-user, multi-gender spaces and be trans (trans and gender variant and Two-Spirit) inclusive.
- If outside event, provide wheelchair-accessible portable toilets
- If outside event, ensure surface leading to wheel-chair accessible toilets is navigable by motorized or manual wheel chair

### **Accessible Stages**

- Stage entrance must be level, gently sloping, ramped or have a lift
- Ramp slopes no greater than 5%

- Provide stand-alone microphone (wireless or with an adjustable stand) for those who need to sit or use mobility devices
- Podiums at least one meter away from edge of stage
- Lecterns that are adjustable to accommodate different heights for those who need to sit or use mobility devices, or use two lecterns with different heights

### **Accessible Pathways**

- Pathways to displays, stages, Speaker's podium should be a minimum of 39" wide, and include turning circle space with a diameter of 6'
- If a slope in the pathway, it should not exceed 5% maximum
- Consider tripping hazards, obstacles, stairs, curbs and bumps that would prevent wheelchair, users, walkers or cane users from navigating the pathway

### **Accessible Parking Pick-Up/Drop-Off**

- Minimum 2% of total parking available should be accessible and at least 4 spaces more than anticipated
- Should be at least 8.5' wide with adjacent side and rear access of at least 6.6' wide
- Two accessible parking spaces may share a common access aisle
- Clearly marked location for HandyDART and taxi
- Ensure there is clear access to the HandyDART pick-up location after the event ends, until all attendees waiting for HandyDart have been picked up

### **Signage**

- Install universal signage in single-user washrooms, change booths and other spaces (see Resource Sheet)
- All new and existing facilities should be updated to the term "universal" on all signage. All signage should be standardized across City facilities in all multi-user, multi-gender spaces and be trans inclusive.
- Translate existing signage into culturally relevant signage by using multiple languages to increase understanding and avoiding confusion among users.

- As much as possible refrain from using gender symbols of bodies, and focus on function symbols on signage in City facilities
- Use high contrast colours – light text on dark background or dark text on light background
- Recommended text size is at least 14 point and sans serif font such as Arial
- Clearly marked accessible entrances, parking, washrooms etc.
- Provide in three formats if possible – tactile graphics & lettering, Braille
- Ensure signage is also placed at eye level for those seated in mobility devices (City of Toronto standard 1200mm from floor to base of sign).
- Ensure washrooms, telephones, and other conveniences are accessible with clear, easily visible signage indicating their location
- Wherever possible, signage may be provided at nearby transit points and accessible parking areas.
- Ensure signage does not block sidewalks or create a trip hazard

## **Event on-site operations and assistance**

### **Seating**

- Avoid designating a single area “for wheelchair use”
- Provide sufficient places with no seats so persons using wheelchairs or scooters can use these. If possible, disburse these throughout the venue.
- Where seats are movable, provide areas by the aisles with no chairs so persons with mobility aids can maneuver into these spaces
- Aisles between seating rows must be wide enough for persons using mobility aids – minimum 36” clear space
- Provide seats near front of room for those with visual or hearing needs with clear access to ASL interpreters and speakers



- Ensure there are chairs directly in front of the Real Time Captioning screen for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing

### **Tables**

- Sufficient space needed between tables for navigation by persons using mobility devices, assistance dogs
- Minimum of 36" is recommended between outside of occupied chairs from one table to outside of occupied chairs at next table
- Have one chair missing from each table for those with mobility aids

### **Counters/ Reception Desks**

- 29"-34" from the floor to ensure ease of use by persons with mobility aids

### **On-site assistance (see Resource Sheet)**

- Sign Language Interpreters (ASL) – reserve space on stage and microphone for interpreters when speaking for a deaf person
- Real Time Captioning – provide a large screen in front of room, and seats provided in the front for deaf or hard of hearing individuals
- Provide interpreters and Real Time Captioning with prior information on program content and length, copies of speaker notes and PowerPoint presentations, titles, and any technical language or unique features
- Arrange escorts to the stage for attendees who are blind or partially sighted. Escorts should communicate where the edge of the stage is, and stay with the attendees to escort them to and from the stage.
- Consider language translation
- Consider assistive hearing devices, Vocal Eye and/ or any need for Mobi-Mat (accessible outdoor surface)

## **Displays and Exhibits**

Consider height at which displayed – are they at a height accessible for those in wheelchairs or scooters? (Resource: Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design).

## **Food and Beverage**

- Accommodate food sensitivities and dietary requests
- Label accommodated meals
- Consider serving accommodated meals first in case a correction is needed, however, be mindful that all attendees want to enjoy their meals at the same time
- Non-plastic containers
- Bendable straws
- Clearly labelled ingredients
- Provide water, ensure assistance is available to help pour
- No sharp objects such as toothpicks
- Communicate dietary accommodations to caterers, and ensure follow through

## **Staff/ Volunteer Training**

- Designate a person trained on accessibility issues as a resource to staff, volunteers and attendees for any questions, issues or emergencies both before and during the event
- Provide orientation to all staff and volunteers, including ushers on accessibility features of the event venue
- Provide training on assisting seniors/ elders, persons with disabilities including seating, mobility, bathroom, food, drink, getting items, escorting to stage
- Ensure emergency evacuation procedures are known and pre-assign specific individuals to assist people with disabilities and seniors
- If buffet-style food, ensure food ingredients are known or well labeled

- Develop and introduce a trans and gender variant inclusion webinar/ information session for staff and contractors (See Resource list)

### **Event/ Meeting – Materials, Presentations, Attendees**

- Use non-toxic materials, e.g. no scented markers, no plastic name badges
- Use high contrast colours for visual presentations – light text on dark background or dark text on light background
- Recommended text size is at least 14 point, Arial, no serif font
- Presentation materials/ agendas should be available in advance in digital, large print or Braille transcription if requested
- Consider the use of captioning and descriptive narration for any film or video
- Ask speakers/ presenters to verbally describe the visual/image content of PPT slides, overheads or video presentations
- Ask speakers/attendees to identify themselves by name each time they speak for the benefit of visually impaired individuals
- Ask speakers/ attendees if they wish to be referred to by name or pronoun. Pronouns may be either feminine (she, her, hers), masculine (he, him, his) or gender-neutral (they, them, theirs).
- Welcome the participants using people, folks or gender neutral terms – not ladies and gentlemen or guys

### **Assistance Dogs**

- Designate outdoor bathroom space, e.g. grass-covered area at sidewalk
- Trash receptacle for solid dog waste
- Nearby water bowls

### **Promotion and Invitations**

- Communicate event broadly using multiple methods, e.g. e-mails, radio, websites, social media, direct mail, posters at community centres/ libraries, circulation to specific groups such as seniors, disability groups

- Website should conform to WCAG 2.0 standards
- Accessible text for written materials is 14 point or larger, non-italic and sans serif font such as Arial
- Include contact information (phone, email, TTY) as to how attendees can request accommodation on all materials, how far in advance the request needs to be made, or any additional information or questions
- ASL Interpreters and Real Time Captioning: min. 2 weeks prior
- Braille transcription: min. 4 weeks prior
- Sample wording: If you require any assistance related to disability, communications, accessibility or dietary restrictions, please include this information in your RSVP by (date) or contact (name/ phone/ email/ TTY) by (date)
- Include information on accessibility features, such as ASL Sign Language Interpreters, Real Time Captioning, closed loop audio systems, dietary accommodation, non-toxic materials and accessible entrances and parking, as well as a map on how to get to the event with pick-up/drop-off locations
- Notify attendees at least four weeks in advance to allow for transportation such as HandyDART and attendants Request attendees refrain from wearing scented products
- Sample wording: The City of Vancouver encourages everyone to help maintain a scent-free (e.g. perfumes, scented soaps, scented lotions) environment
- Do not provide essential information in graphic formats, or use embedded text or embedded graphics
- Wherever possible, ensure promotional videos/films are captioned

## **Common Q & A's**

Who can staff consult with regarding planning, venue selection etc.?

- The City has a number of Advisory Committees to Council, such as Persons with Disabilities, Seniors and LGBTQ2+ which are excellent resources. <http://vancouver.ca/your-government/people-and-community-committees.aspx>
- Other resources include the Equal Employment Opportunity Program, Public Engagement and Protocol Office.

Why are no scented products or perfumes important?

They can trigger allergic reactions.

Why is it important to avoid early morning or late evening events or meetings?

Many seniors/ elders and people with disabilities need assistance, which is often difficult to arrange early and late in the day.

Why is important to notify invitees at least four weeks in advance?

- HandyDART users require at least a week's advance notice to book a trip.
- It can take from one to three weeks for people to arrange for assistants.
- Translation of materials into Braille can take up to 4 weeks.
- It takes at least two weeks to arrange for on-site assistance such as ASL.

Why isn't it a good idea to have a separate disability section for people who use wheelchairs?

This segregates and stigmatizes individuals using wheelchairs, prevents them from having the same choices as other attendees, and prevents them from being seated with friends and colleagues.

Why does the podium have to be at least a metre away from the edge of the stage?

This prevents accidents and falls for speakers who are blind or partially sighted, who may not be able to see the edge of the stage.

Why can't important information be embedded in a graphic? Why no embedded text or graphics?

Graphics or embedded text often cannot be „read“ by screen readers used by persons who are blind or partially sighted. .

What is Vocal Eye and when is it useful to use it?

Vocal Eye is an audio description designed for live theatre, arts and cultural events. The vocal description enables persons who are blind or partially sighted to enjoy the nuances of a performance that they cannot see.

Vocal Eye is helpful for theatre, visual arts, fireworks etc. and events with a very prominent visual component.

Can you purchase non-toxic markers?

Yes. Also, crayons are also an excellent non-toxic alternative.

What are mobi-mats? <http://www.mobi-mat.com/>

Mobi-mats are portable mats which cover ground to make terrain more accessible and smooth for mobility devices.

**Sample invitation (Arial script, 14 pt. or larger)**



# VANCOUVER

## AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

If you require any assistance related to accessibility or dietary restrictions, please include this information in your RSVP or contact Pearl Zhang at [pearl.zhang@vancouver.ca](mailto:pearl.zhang@vancouver.ca) or 604-873-7279.

Drop-off zone and designated accessible parking are available at specially marked meters (see map below).

The City of Vancouver encourages everyone to help maintain a scent-free environment.



The map shows a street grid with Granville St at the top, Seymour St at the bottom, Smithe St on the left, and Robson St on the right. A north arrow is in the top-left corner. A black square representing the Orpheum Theatre is located at the intersection of Smithe St and Seymour St, with the address 'Orpheum Theatre 601 Smithe Street' written above it. A 'Drop-off Zone' is indicated by a grey shaded area on Smithe St between Granville St and Seymour St. Below the theatre, four wheelchair icons are shown above the text 'Designated Accessible Parking'.

## **Resources for Accessible Events and Meetings**

### **Guide to Accessible Public Engagement (2013 Ontario Municipal Social Services Association)**

<https://www.omssa.com/accessible-community-engagement/omssa-guides/view-the-guides/guide-to-accessible-public-engagement>

### **Measuring Up: Accessible Public Event Guidelines (2010 Legacies Now)**

<http://www.sparc.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/accessible-public-event-guidelines.pdf>

## **Described Audio for Visually Impaired People**

- **Vocal Eye**  
**VOCAL EYE DESCRIPTIVE ARTS SOCIETY**  
Executive Managing Director: Steph Kirkland  
604-364-5949  
Email: [info@vocaleye.ca](mailto:info@vocaleye.ca)  
<http://www.vocaleye.ca/>

## **Real Time Captioning**

- The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (CHHA-BC Resource Centre)  
216-9181 Main Street  
Chilliwack, BC V2P 4M9 New Address  
Toll Free BC: 1 866 888 2442 In Chilliwack: 604 795 9238  
Email: [info@chha-bc.org](mailto:info@chha-bc.org)  
<http://www.chha.ca/chha/>
- Canadian Hearing Society  
271 Spadina Road, Toronto, ON M5R 2V3  
Phone: 416-928-2500; Phone Toll Free: 1-877-347-3427  
TTY Toll Free: 1-877-216-7310  
Fax: 416-928-2506, Email: [info@chs.ca](mailto:info@chs.ca)  
  
<https://www.chs.ca/>



## **Sign Language Interpreting (ASL) Contacts - (Lower Mainland)**

- **Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WIDHH) Community Interpreting Services**  
Contact: Jessica Jickels  
604-731-9413 (voice); 778-327-4375 (TTY); 604-786-7786 (fax)  
Email: [info@widhh.com](mailto:info@widhh.com)
- **The Westcoast Association of Visual Language Interpreters (WAVLI) is the provincial professional association of interpreters**  
Email: [wavli@wavli.com](mailto:wavli@wavli.com)  
<http://wavli.com/>

## **Accessible Exhibition Design**

- <http://www.si.edu/Accessibility/SGAD>

## **Accessible Publication Design**

- <http://www.si.edu/Content/Accessibility/Publication-Guidelines.pdf>

## **Food Allergies**

- <https://theceliacscene.com/schools-and-allergies-resource-hub-canada/>

## **Agencies**

- **Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)**  
604-431-2121  
Email: [marianne.ward@cnib.ca](mailto:marianne.ward@cnib.ca)  
<http://www.cnib.ca>
- **Cerebral Palsy Association of British Columbia (CPABC)**  
1-800-663-0004 or 604-408-9484

E-mail: [info@bccerebralpalsy.com](mailto:info@bccerebralpalsy.com)  
<http://bccerebralpalsy.com/>

- **Spinal Cord Injury BC**  
604-324-3611  
Email: [info@sci-bc.ca](mailto:info@sci-bc.ca)  
<http://sci-bc.ca/>
- **Greater Vancouver Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GVAD)** <http://www.gvad.com/>  
Email: [gvadoffice@gmail.com](mailto:gvadoffice@gmail.com)  
Phone number: 1-800-855-0511  
For hearing people, call Telus Relay Service and give our TTY# 1-800-855-0511
- **The Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC)**  
604-718-7733  
Email: [info@sparc.bc.ca](mailto:info@sparc.bc.ca)  
<http://www.sparc.bc.ca/>
- **Neil Squire Society (computer-based assistive technologies)**  
Toll Free: 1-877-673-4636  
Email: [info@neilsquire.ca](mailto:info@neilsquire.ca)  
[www.neilsquire.ca](http://www.neilsquire.ca)
- **Learning Disabilities Association Vancouver**  
604-873-8139  
Email: [info@ldav.ca](mailto:info@ldav.ca)  
<http://www.ldav.ca/>

- **Coast Mental Health**  
604-872-3502  
Email: [info@coastmentalhealth.com](mailto:info@coastmentalhealth.com)  
<http://www.coastmentalhealth.com/>
- **Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)**  
604-688-3234  
Email: [info@cmha.bc.ca](mailto:info@cmha.bc.ca)  
<http://cmha.bc.ca/about-cmha/contact-us/>
- **Disability Alliance BC (DABC)**  
604-875-0188  
TTY line (hearing impaired only) 604-875-8835  
Email: [feedback@disabilityalliancebc.org](mailto:feedback@disabilityalliancebc.org)  
<http://www.disabilityalliancebc.org>
- **Qmunity**  
604-684-5307  
Email: [resource@qmunity.ca](mailto:resource@qmunity.ca)  
<http://qmunity.ca/contact/>
- **SPARC BC**  
4445 Norfolk Street  
Burnaby, BC V5G 0A7  
Telephone: 604-718-7733  
Email: [info@sparc.bc.ca](mailto:info@sparc.bc.ca)

## **Trans\*, Gender Variant and Two-Spirit Inclusion**

- Several excellent recommendations are included in the 2014 Parks & Recreation report: “Building a Path to Parks and Recreation for All: Reducing Barriers for Trans & Gender Variant Community Members”  
<http://former.vancouver.ca/parks/board/2014/140428/document/s/REPORT-TGVIWorkingGroupReport-2014-04-28.pdf>

- The TGVI Steering Committee works to create safe, inclusive, and welcoming spaces for trans\* and gender-variant individuals.  
<http://vancouver.ca/your-government/trans-and-gender-variant-inclusion-steering-committee.aspx>
- [Report - Supporting \*\*Trans\*\* Equality and an Inclusive ...](http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/trans-gender-variant-and-two-spirit-inclusion-at-the-city-of-vancouver.pdf)  
<http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/trans-gender-variant-and-two-spirit-inclusion-at-the-city-of-vancouver.pdf>
- <http://citywire.city.vancouver.bc.ca/hr/hs/di/tgv2s.html>  
Trans\*, Gender Variant and Two-Spirit Inclusion
- <https://player.vimeo.com/video/226046415>  
CUPE BC Video on use of pronouns