



## Accessible Meeting & Event Checklist

### Bellingham Technical College

Bellingham Technical College strives to design all meetings or events occurring on our campus or satellite campuses accessible to individuals with disabilities. Creating accessible meetings and events ensures not only individuals with known or apparent disabilities can fully participate, but also attendees with unapparent and/or chronic health conditions. We broaden our scope of interpretation to include people of all ages and body types, so anyone in attendance can fully engage with the program being delivered.

### Pre-Program Planning

Planning for accessibility should be something you embed in your program planning procedure. Here are some tips for pre-program planning:

1. When you send out the invitation for your event or program, include a welcome message encouraging people with accessibility requirements to contact the program planner or sponsor. Your message may look something like this:

***“BTC strives to host inclusive, accessible events that allow all individuals to fully participate. We ask you please refrain from wearing strong fragrances to respect our attendees with allergies and environmental sensitivities. If you require an accommodation to engage fully in our event, please contact our event coordinator {name} at {phone number} or {email}.”***

2. One or two days before your event, send out correspondence to attendees reminding them to refrain from wearing strong fragrances.
3. Another option would be to include an accommodation checklist in the RSVP you send to potential attendees. Example:

***“I will need the following accommodations to participate in this program/event due to a disability:***

- ☐ Reserved front row seating
- ☐ Large Print
- ☐ Advance copy of slides to be projected in a digital format – email to {attendee’s email address}
- ☐ Assistive listening device
- ☐ Captioning
- ☐ ASL interpreter

- ☐ **Wheelchair access**
- ☐ **Dietary Restrictions: {List from attendee}"**

Depending on the program or event, you may choose to list additional accommodations and accessibility features, such as, but not limited to:

- Gender-neutral, single occupancy restrooms
- Lactation rooms
- Scent-free rooms

Make sure the organizer or their designee follows up with all requests received as quickly as possible. If warranted, you may contact the Director of Accessibility Resources as a consultant to problem-solve a particular accommodation.

### Pre-Event Preparation for Presenter(s)

It is important to provide explicit accessibility directions for presenters prior to your event or meeting. Your message for presenters may look something like this:

**“BTC strives to host inclusive, accessible events that allow all individuals to fully participate. We ask you create and deliver your presentation with accessibility in mind. Below, we offer some accessibility suggestions and encourage you to connect with us if this is a new concept for you. Alternately, [WebAIM](#) has information for making accessible digital content.**

**A few things we will ask you to do are:**

- **Submit all presentation materials in advance so we might forward the digital file in advance to individuals who may not be able to view screens, flip charts, or other visual content.**
- **During the presentation, verbally describe visual materials (slides, charts, etc.) for attendees who have difficult seeing.**
- **Have a few printed copies of your presentation available in a larger font (at least 18 Arial).**
- **Avoid using small print on presentations that cannot be seen from a distance – large and bold sans serif font is best.**
- **Ensure all speakers utilize a microphone, including attendees – this is for the benefit of those in the audience who are Hard of Hearing and have not self-identified as having a hearing loss. Redirect individuals who say, I speak loud so I do not want to use a microphone. Let them know this is about all participants ease of hearing.**
- **Make sure to repeat questions posted by audience members before responding into the microphone. This is a component of being a good public speaker.**

- **Make sure all videos used in the presentation are captioned and use open captions as they benefit not only for Hard of Hearing individuals, but attendees who are managing learning disabilities or English Language Learners.**
- **Please encourage hourly breaks for participants.**
- **Organize breakout group activities to maximize distance between groups so individuals with auditory processing challenges are not disrupted.”**

## Check the Event or Meeting Venue in Advance

BTC is fortunate to have an accessible venue in Settlemyer Hall. However, organizers should think of these features when inspecting your venue to ensure you are providing accessibility for all attendees:

- **Visibility: Consider individuals with vision challenges**
  - Clear signage that identifies location and directions to event; well-lit spaces and adjacent areas; clear lines of vision from all seats to the screen, stage, or podium.
  - Low lighting can be hazardous, especially for someone with low vision who may need to navigate with a cane, walker, or wheelchair. Keep house lights on when possible. Consider ushers with flashlights if low lighting is in use.
- **Acoustics: Consider individuals who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing**
  - Good amplification (PA) system; mandatory use of microphones for presenters and participants; limit unnecessary background music; seating available near front of event for those who read lips; well-lit space near speaker(s) for sign language interpreters if needed; readily available assistive listening devices.
- **Mobility: Consider individuals who are wheelchair users or have other mobility challenges**
  - Accessible parking near venue; accessible building entrances with ramps, elevator accesses, and ADA door buttons; barrier-free pathways with ample space provided between tables and chairs for wheelchair users; wide doorways and aisles; proximity to bus stop; no trip hazards (loose cables, wires) across aisles or walking areas.
- **Technology: Consider those who use adaptive devices and assistive technology**
  - Electrical outlets in accessible seating areas to accommodate devices, laptops, etc.; extra space or work surface; ask presenters to prepare their presentations with accessibility in mind – if this is a new concept for them, direct them to [WebAIM](#) for more information; prepare to provide digital formats of presentations (ask presenters for digital copies of their presentations, papers, etc., in advance, and download to a thumb drive for easy access); use an accessible virtual meeting option, such as Zoom.

- **Service Animals: Consider access and space for service animals**
  - Adequate space for service animals next to attendee; comfortable space for service animal to rest during the event; accessible toileting and watering facilities nearby.

## At the Meeting/Event

Ensure presenters and meeting/event volunteers and personnel are aware of BTC's commitment to the delivery of accessible meetings, events, and programming. Then make sure accessibility is maximized and accommodations are delivered.

- **Designate an accommodations' point person**
  - If you are providing an event with scheduled accommodations, someone should be responsible for connecting with the participant to ensure accommodations are delivered. This individual should also direct seating, ensure captioning and other technology is in working order, maintain clear aiseways, or any other tasks required to deliver an accessible event.
- **Q&A at the Event**
  - If you notice attendees are not using a microphone and the presenter is not repeating questions into the microphone, provide a gentle reminder.
  - Even if presenters or audience members express confidence that they are loud enough and do not need a microphone, ask them to speak into one. This is one excellent way to make sure your event/meeting is accessible for all.
- **Food at the Event**
  - Clearly indicate allergens and gluten-free, vegan, vegetarian, or other options.
  - Make clear to the participants that those labelled items are for those with dietary restrictions; people without dietary restrictions should choose from the general options to make sure folks with dietary restrictions are able to enjoy their meal – even if they are at the end of the buffet line.

*\*Some content borrowed from Cornell University Department of Human Resources*