

Accessibility: Preparing for the Public

In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was made a law in efforts to protect individuals with disabilities and also apply a standard level of access that was not mandatory beforehand. Over 30 years later, there have been many advances made in universal design, standards of practice, and ways of communication, but more can always be done. This guide is intended for museums, historical sites and other cultural institutions. This is not a comprehensive guide nor is it intended to be used as legal advice in regards to ADA compliance.

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DEFINITIONS

Accessibility is giving equitable access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience. Accessibility encompasses the broader meanings of compliance and refers to how organizations make space for the characteristics that each person brings. (AAM)

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by deficits in social communication and social interaction and the presence of restricted, repetitive behaviors. (ASHA)

Blind/blindness is “the state of being unable to see due to injury, disease or genetic condition.” (IBVI)

Deaf/Hard of hearing describes the level of hearing impairment someone may have. A deaf person has no hearing while someone who is hard of hearing has a limited sense of hearing. When talking about the Deaf community, the word is oftentimes preferred to be capitalized.

Disability is any condition of the body or mind (or senses and communication) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions). (CDC)

Universal Design implies designing for accessibility as the base of the design process to provide the greatest benefit to the greatest number of people possible instead of as additional steps in the process only for those with disabilities. (Tecla)

Visual Impairment is “a decrease in the ability to see to a certain degree that causes problems not fixable by usual means, such as glasses.” (IBVI)

Long-Term Planning

When first beginning to prioritize accessibility in your institution or projects, it can be overwhelming! If some of the transitions you are making to becoming more accessible and inclusive are more time-consuming, financially dependent, or take a lot of staff and volunteer capacity, try using the three main stages to navigate planning your projects, whether they be in transforming your space or policies.

Current Efforts - What is being done now?

Short-Term Goals (3-18 months) - What can you focus your attention and resources on?

Long-Term Goals (18-36+ months) - What are you building towards?

Spatial Accessibility

TOOLKIT- EXAMPLE		TOOLKIT- EXAMPLE		TOOLKIT- EXAMPLE		TOOLKIT- EXAMPLE			
Guiding Questions		Exhibits “Title of Exhibit”		Outdoor Spaces “Victorian Lawn Games”		Indoor Spaces “Sensory room”		Wayfinding “Exhibit Gallery”	
GOALS		GOALS		GOALS		GOALS		GOALS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you want people to learn? • What do you want people to engage with? • How do you want people to interact? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Present information in different formats to engage learners with different sensory processing - Have a well-lit space for low-visibility visitors - Offer guided experiences as well 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be able to engage with visitors who use a wheelchair or need support walking - Have shaded area nearby and a few places to sit - Have different games for different abilities 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quiet space - Provide touchable objects - Seating for 6 - Chairs for kids and adults 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Change signs to include braille - Implement indicators on the floor - Have an entry door and exit door noted - Stay under \$750 	
AUDIENCE		AUDIENCE		AUDIENCE		AUDIENCE		AUDIENCE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are you reaching out to? • How are you inviting them? • Why are these people coming? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Families - Adults - Students 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Families - Young Children - Students 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anyone 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anyone 	
NEEDS		NEEDS		NEEDS		NEEDS		NEEDS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your needs? • How are they being addressed? • Is there a contact person? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitors for video with closed captioning - Additional lighting for hallway text panels (4 LED lights needed) - Staff member/s to provide guided tours on a regular basis, that go beyond narration and describe artifacts 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A table with some games located near the sidewalk - A tent large enough for 2 tables and 6 chairs - A basket that someone could hold a game in their lap in 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curtains for windows and doors (light and sound barrier) - Order 50 sensory objects/fidget toys - Order 2 plush seats, 4 adult chairs, one bench 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Install tactical floor mats (\$300+) - Order replacement signs for gallery (\$250) - Order two large signs and two small signs for entry and exit doors (both directions/reverse sides) 	

TOOLKIT				
Guiding Questions	Exhibits	Outdoor Spaces	Indoor Spaces	Wayfinding
GOALS	GOALS	GOALS	GOALS	GOALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you want people to learn? • What do you want people to engage with? • How do you want people to interact? 				
AUDIENCE	AUDIENCE	AUDIENCE	AUDIENCE	AUDIENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are you reaching out to? • How are you inviting them? • Why are these people coming? 				
NEEDS	NEEDS	NEEDS	NEEDS	NEEDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your needs? • How are they being addressed? • Is there a contact person for accommodations? 				

Programming Accessibility

	TOOLKIT - EXAMPLE	TOOLKIT- EXAMPLE	TOOLKIT- EXAMPLE	TOOLKIT- EXAMPLE
Guiding Questions	Event	Workshop	Webinar	Digital Exhibit
GOALS	GOALS	GOALS	GOALS	GOALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you want people to learn? • What do you want people to engage with? • How do you want people to interact? 				
AUDIENCE	AUDIENCE	AUDIENCE	AUDIENCE	AUDIENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are you reaching out to? • How are you inviting them? • Why are these people coming? 				
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NEEDS	NEEDS	NEEDS	NEEDS	NEEDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your needs? • How are they being addressed? • Is there a contact person for accommodations? 				

E. Accessibility Symbols



Access for individuals who are blind or low vision (Not braille)

Image description: A white square with a black silhouette of a person walking with a cane, sometimes called a white cane



Access for individuals who use a wheelchair or have limited mobility (ramps, wide doors- no steps)

Image description: A white square with a black silhouette of a person sitting in a wheelchair



Audio Description (live commentary or narration)

Image description: A white square with a white capital A and D with three parenthesis on top of a solid black shape



Access for individuals with hearing loss (Assistive Listening Systems are Available (hearing aids, headsets or other devices))

Image description: A white square with an outline of an ear with a line crossing through it diagonally



Large Print materials available (Large Print should be printed in 18pt. or larger text with Sans Serif text and high contrast (like black and white) and special attention should be paid to letter and word spacing.)

Image description: A white square with the words "Large Print" in black font, printed in 18 pt. in a sans serif font.

E. Accessibility Symbols



The information symbol indicates the location for specific information or materials concerning access, such as “LARGE PRINT” materials, assistive listening systems, or sign interpreted tours. It is often associated with visitors’ services desk or kiosk

Image description: A white square with a black circle with a black question mark in the center of the circle



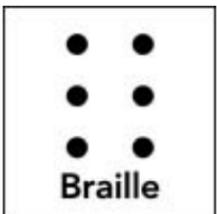
Closed Captioning (CC) (commonly known as subtitles) enables people who are deaf or hard of hearing to read a transcript of the audio portion of a video, film, exhibition or other presentation. Closed Captioning is optional, it can be turned on or off, often by the user.

Image description: A white square with the letter C in black font reading “C C”



This symbol indicates that captions, which translate dialogue and other sounds in print, are displayed on the videotape, movie, television program or exhibit audio. Open Captioning is not optional, the user cannot turn them on or off.

Image description: A white square with the letters O and C in black font reading “O C”



This symbol indicates that printed material is available in Braille, including exhibit labels, print and signage.

Image description: A white square with six black dots, three on the right and three on the left with the word “braille” underneath

