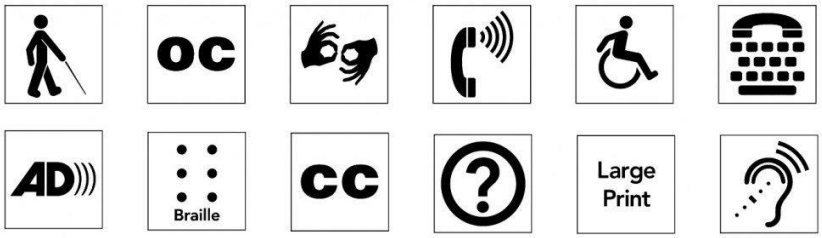

CULTURAL ACCESS GUIDE

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MAKING CREATIVITY ACCESSIBLE

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Foreword

Art Possible Ohio is excited to offer this resource to the community as part of our efforts to make the arts and culture more accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities and their networks. This Cultural Access Guide considers accessibility from an organization's perspective, including spaces, people, programs, operations, and governance. It promotes positive attitudes and provides tools to start implementing immediate change. The strategies in this Guide require your time and initiative, but are generally low- or no-cost. Others will require institutional investment and ask you to reflect on broader visions and actions.

The cultural sector consistently advocates for the individual and community benefits to participation. These benefits are equally or more meaningful for people with disabilities, who are too often underserved because of real and perceived barriers to participation. As you delve into access efforts and see the benefits, you will develop your own creative solutions and find there is an international field of professionals dedicated to advancing cultural accessibility. As you make considerations for people with disabilities, you are opening the doors to people from all walks of life. Remember, access is progress.

This Cultural Access Guide is a direct result of partnership with the Ohio Arts Council, whose leadership and investment in accessibility advances inclusion of people with disabilities in the fabric of our cultural landscape. Content and resources were inspired and informed by the experts and best practices within the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts' VSA and Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability networks, National Endowment for the Arts' Cultural Access Handbook, and numerous other resources from experts.

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Goals

The goal of this guide is to offer advice on increasing access and inclusion for people with disabilities as patrons, staff, partners, presenters, volunteers, and more. Accessibility should be holistic with considerations made for all aspects of your organization. It requires the efforts of everyone who makes a cultural organization what it is: administrators, boards of directors, volunteers, front-line staff, partners, and contractors. Until someone can fully access all parts of your work, he or she cannot be truly included. This Guide helps you break down barriers to access by breaking down real and perceived administrative barriers. Use these reasons when making the case for accessibility with leadership and stakeholders.

Why Accessibility Matters

Mission alignment: Your mission, vision, strategic plan, and other governing documents probably include words like: diversity, community, serve, and all. People with disabilities are part of the fabric of our diverse society and their inclusion will ultimately advance your mission and impact.

Engage new audiences: The cultural sector constantly seeks to build new and reach underserved audiences. Most organizations define underserved based on geography, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. Disability crosses all of these audience segments and should be part of this list. Like everyone else, people with disabilities will visit your space with family, friends, and caregivers - further extending your outreach to new audiences.

Organizational asset: People with disabilities bring new perspectives, expertise, and ideas. Like everyone, they have unique lived experiences and will help you consider spaces and programs with fresh eyes. Engaging people with disabilities as audiences, volunteers, staff, and artists will expand your organization's assets and authenticity. Accessibility efforts encourage creativity and promote communication.

Un/Expected outcomes: Identify goals and outcomes as part of accessibility planning, just like any organizational initiative. Amid all the planning and expectations, the most exciting outcomes from your work are frequently unexpected and can take on a life of their own. Opening the doors to disability means new opportunities for your organization and your community.

The (civil) right thing to do: Your organization has legal responsibilities but this work is more than just meeting the letter of the law. Access promotes equality, community, and connection. There is a strong probability you know someone with a disability and you want them to enjoy cultural experiences and the community. There is also a chance you will be directly impacted by disability and want to be a lifelong participant of the cultural sector. Thinking and acting inclusively benefits everyone.

Chapter 1 | Be Strategic

There are many components to accessibility and myriad implementation methods. Accessibility requires the same planning, teamwork, evaluation, and refinement as every other initiative you undertake. Set the stage for progress with a strategic action plan tailored to your organization's existing resources and needs.

Assert your values. What is your mission? What words guide your vision statement and strategic plan? Do these governing documents include words such as *everybody*, *inclusion*, and *diversity*? Access efforts will help you achieve existing goals in new ways.

Get to know disability. What is the difference between the medical and social models of disability? Which artists are using disability in their creative process to promote social change? What are the statistics for disability in your city, county, and state? Who are the primary service agencies in your region? Research and a broader understanding of disability history and culture will strengthen your efforts.

Partner with disability. An old slogan from the disability advocacy effort states: "Nothing about us without us." People with disabilities are part of your community, understand accessibility, and bring valuable perspectives and knowledge to the table. Be proactive about reaching out. Be respectful. Learn from those you invite. Do things *with* the disability community, not *for* them. Create an access committee (two people count) with regular meetings to dedicate time to these initiatives and make recommendations.

Understand responsibilities. Several laws require your space and programs to be accessible. Someone at your organization should know this information. Be proactive and positive about changes and inquiries, rather than trying to fix something later. Do more than the minimum requirements set by these laws.

Review existing assets, policies, and opportunities. Check handbooks, policies, and guidelines to find out where disability and accessibility are mentioned or missing. Make updates to policies, develop new ones, and be transparent with staff and audiences when implementing new policy and procedures. Remember to list your existing assets (positive attitudes, door handles, anything accessible) and use them as a starting point.

Set objectives. Every organization is unique. Your plan and goals will have different benchmarks and outcomes than those of your peers. Set goals for the short, medium, and long term. It may take several years to raise the capital for an elevator, but new signage costs less, and writing an accessibility statement is free.

Plan the who, what, when, and how. Involve multiple departments and representatives so plans and actions reflect broad perspectives of organizational needs. The board of directors, program committees, volunteers, and advisory groups should be involved at various points and depths. Write your plan down, assign tasks, schedule the next meeting, and make progress.

Take action. Accessibility should be part of your planning process and approached with the same thoughtfulness, creativity, and strategy as other new or expanded initiatives. Form a committee, assess the situation, strategize, and start taking action. Tell stakeholders and set timelines that can't be pushed back. Keep your organization informed about progress.

Spread the word. Make new contacts, seek expertise, and promote your accessibility accommodations. Word of mouth from trusted sources is important in the disability community. Build relationships with disability service providers, schools, public agencies, advocacy organizations, and your own constituents.

Evaluate and refine. Define objectives, set progress points, and measure outcomes. Evaluate this work like everything else for accountability and transparency. Get feedback from people you know who have disabilities. Create safe spaces for different types of feedback, and make information available in alternative formats. Revise efforts based on feedback and lessons learned.

Access is progress. Keep going. Every opportunity you create for someone with a disability is a win. Every challenge is a learning opportunity. Start with small steps and find concrete ways to make disability a valued, lasting part of your institutional culture. Find allies and resources, and remember to promote and celebrate success.

Tips for writing an Accessibility Plan

- Build a diverse team
- Recognize differing community needs
- Identify the existing assets
- Identify the existing barriers and issues
- Detail priorities for the short, medium, and long term
- Identify action steps, timelines, costs, and who is responsible
- Get organizational buy-in and integrate the plan into your culture
- Treat this plan as a living document that grows with the organization
- Train staff, board, and volunteers about accessibility motivations, policies, initiatives, and customer service

Sample Accessibility Objectives

- Appoint an access coordinator; add access to a job description
- Form an access committee
- Write an accessibility statement
- Adopt welcoming attitudes and actions
- Survey the field for partners, resources, expertise, and ideas
- Review policies and procedures; update to include disability
- Review buildings and grounds for physical and perceptual barriers to entry and use
- Check accessibility for information and communication outlets
- Make accessibility a discussion and budget item for programs, events, meetings, facility management, and governance
- Authentically include people with disabilities as producers of art and culture
- Conduct physical and programmatic evaluation efforts then make revisions

Staff Training

A nonprofit's most important asset are its people. People are the front line of accessibility and can make the difference between a great experience and deterring someone from visiting again. It is essential for your human resources department to know the policies, procedures, law, existing resources, and ongoing initiatives. Make accessibility part of regular meetings and trainings. Some topics you can address include: Existing commitments to access; Defining disability and etiquette; Language and communication; How to respectfully offer assistance; Auxiliary aid demonstrations; and Responding to emergencies.

Chapter 2 | Civil Rights

Access for people with disabilities is a civil right with a long history of advocacy and action. United States legislation prevents discrimination against people with disabilities in society. These legal protections do not always translate into full access or inclusion. The best course of action is to think beyond the letter of the law and be proactive. In most cases, honest efforts to comply with laws, provide access, and treat people with respect go a long way toward avoiding negative outcomes. This is an overview of major legislation requiring accessibility in cultural spaces, other important laws promoting equality, and pertinent guidance agencies. Confer with your own legal and other counsel when addressing organization-specific questions.

Architectural Barriers Act of 1968/2010 Accessibility Standards (ABA)

The ABA requires that buildings and facilities that are designed, constructed, or altered with federal funds, or leased by a federal agency, comply with federal standards for physical accessibility. ABA requirements are limited to architectural standards in new and altered buildings and in newly leased facilities, not the activities conducted therein.

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Rehabilitation Act)

This act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in relation to the *federal* government. Cultural organizations receiving direct or indirect federal funds must make programs, services, and activities accessible, including employment opportunities. There are four main sections to the Rehabilitation Act.

- **Section 501** requires affirmative action and nondiscrimination in employment by federal agencies.
- **Section 503** requires affirmative action and prohibits employment discrimination by federal government contractors and subcontractors.
- **Section 504** states that "no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination." Common requirements include reasonable accommodation for employees, program accessibility, effective communication, and accessible new construction/alterations.
- **Section 508** establishes requirements for electronic and information technology developed, maintained, procured, or used by the federal government. An accessible information technology system is required for members of the public, and can be operated in a variety of ways, without relying on a single sense or ability of the user.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990/2010 (ADA)

The purpose of this law is to make American society more accessible to people with disabilities. Supplemental amendments broadened the definition of disability.

- **Title I** requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations.
- **Title II** requires public agencies, including state and local governments, cannot deny services or participation to people with disabilities.
- **Title III** requires accommodation in public spaces like cultural organizations, hotels, and restaurants; all new construction and modifications must be accessible.
- **Title IV** requires accessible telecommunications for people who are deaf.
- **Title V** prohibits threats/retaliation against people with disability or those aiding them.

Twenty-First Century Communications Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (CVAA)

The CVAA updates federal communication law to increase access to modern communications, including digital, broadband, and mobile innovations.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, 2.0 in 2008 (WCAG)

These are guidelines and international standards, not laws, outlined by the Web Accessibility Initiative and World Wide Web Consortium. There are four principles for websites to be perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, reauthorized in 1990 (IDEA)

This law ensures students with disabilities are provided a free and appropriate public education through six primary elements, such as an individualized education plan, least restrictive environment, procedural safeguards, and confidentiality.

Department of Justice, Office of Civil Rights

This office works toward equal opportunity for people with disabilities by implementing the ADA through enforcement, certification, regulation, and technical assistance.

Legal Best Practices

Public funders at all levels require compliance with federal laws and certificates of assurance. Corporations and individuals increasingly want fund recipients to sign non-discrimination and equal opportunity disclosures. With this knowledge in mind, follow these best practices for legal accessibility.

- Know your responsibilities
- Do not discriminate against people with disabilities
- Provide effective communication mechanisms and equal opportunity for participation
- Remove physical barriers and ensure new construction addresses legal requirements
- Review and modify policies, procedures, and practices
- Provide equal employment opportunities
- Utilize universal design and universal design for learning

Employment

Title I of the ADA prohibits discrimination in all job-related practices and activities. Employment decisions should be made without reference to disability. Employers must also provide *reasonable accommodations* for applicants and employees with disabilities. This may include, but is not limited to: providing a modification or adjustment that allows for participation in the application process, providing physical access to work spaces, acquiring or modifying equipment, and/or modifying schedules and policies. If a person does not request an accommodation, the employer is not obligated to provide one.

Service Animals

Service animals are defined as dogs (and now miniature horses) that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, staff may ask only these two questions:

1. Is the service animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

If the animal is misbehaving or causing serious concern, the first option is to request that the animal leave and to see if the person needs reasonable accommodations to continue to participate without the animal. You should generally trust the person's intent and very rarely ask someone to leave. Remember to consider a service animal's need for water and green space.

Chapter 3 | Disability Culture

Disability is a broad label, but disability identity is personal. People have different needs, wants, opinions, and associations with their disability. In the same way it is not appropriate to group or label a racial or ethnic group, it is equally damaging to pick and choose which disabilities will be treated or accommodated in certain ways. While some people may strongly associate with their disability and subculture, others may hesitate to label themselves as disabled, while still others may not even have an official diagnosis. Thus, the vocabulary one person uses to describe himself or herself, may not be what another will choose.

Language is constantly in flux and labels are personal. Best practice and respect call for person-first attitudes and language. Focus on the person, not the disability. If needed, ask the person what they prefer. If corrected, follow someone's lead. For example, some people prefer "is autistic" to "has autism" and many deaf people are proud to be part of the Deaf community. Disability is just one trait of a person, not their definition or value. Avoid condescending euphemisms like "handi-capable," outdated terms like "retarded," and offensive phrases like "wheelchair-bound" or "confined to a wheelchair." Learning about the history, leaders, social threads, and creativity in disability will broaden your own perspective.

Customer Service Etiquette

An important aspect of increasing inclusion is to make sure that people with disabilities engage positively with your organization. From buying a ticket to finding their seat, customer service is essential. If visitors have a bad experience with a security guard or ticket agent, he or she may not come back. Your organization is in the market of competing for people's time, trust, and resources. Make sure everyone in your organization is aware of policies and knows best practices for interacting with people with disabilities. Here are basic suggestions for positive interactions. Note that treating people with disability "the same" as everyone else is not the same as providing equitable treatment, and extra steps can be needed to create equality.

- Use good communication skills; address people as people
- Ask before you help; wait for a response
- Do not shout, talk-down to, or pretend to understand someone
- Speak directly to a person with a disability
- Do not make or project assumptions
- Make individual considerations as requested
- Think before you speak
- Rephrase, rather than continuing to repeat
- Respect personal space, including adaptive equipment
- Know accessible routes and spaces
- Be aware of the space and reach limits
- Remember that many disabilities cannot be seen
- Do not make decisions for people

Community Barriers

Although the ADA provides legal protection against discrimination, people with disabilities continue to face daily barriers to inclusion. Many of the basic components of society that you may take for granted are not always accessible to people with disabilities. This often results in lower education rates, higher unemployment, financial constraints, and segregation from society. Consider these barriers:

- Communication
- Physical
- Policy
- Program
- Social
- Transportation

Attitudinal Barriers

How we think and act has a significant impact on access and inclusion for people with disabilities. We must be conscious of our own biases. These attitudes are ways of thinking and feeling that result in behaviors which limit the potential of people with disabilities.

- Avoidance
- Fear
- Discomfort
- Insensitivity
- Stereotyping
- Discrimination

Statistics

Data for disability statistics and prevalence are available from several sources. The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the American Community Survey and national census. The ADA-Participatory Action Research Consortium (PARC) collects data and statistics that inform their efforts to identify and examine factors which contribute to participation disparities. Other government and professional agencies conduct independent surveys and provide their own statistics. A 2013 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported these statistics.

- 1 in 5 adults (more than 53 million) have a disability
- 22.7% of Ohioans have a disability
- More than 1 in 3 adults over age 65 report a disability
- 1 in 4 women report a disability
- Disability costs $400 billion per year in health care expenditures
- 1 in 3 unemployed adults who are able to work report a disability
- 4 in 10 adults who have not completed high school report a disability

Types of Disability

Mobility disability means a person cannot use one or more of his or her extremities, or lack strength to walk, grasp, or lift objects. The use of a wheelchair, crutches, walker, or other assistive technology can aid mobility. Diseases, accidents, congenital disorders, neuro-muscular conditions, and more can all impact mobility.

Blindness/Visual disability includes people with low vision, people who are legally blind, and people with visual difference, including tunnel vision and color blindness. Many causes exist, including accidents, diabetes, and eye diseases. Blindness can occur suddenly or over time. A person with congenital blindness has been blind since birth. People who lose sight later in life have adventitious blindness. All have different frames of reference for the visual world and will utilize different accommodations.

Deafness/Hearing loss is caused by various factors, such as genetics, viral infections, tumors, strokes, aging, loud noise exposure, and nerve damage. There are varying levels of hearing loss: mild, moderate, severe, or profound. Some individuals are born with hearing loss, others acquire it in childhood or later in life; not everyone will know the cause of their hearing loss. People may wear hearing aids, cochlear implants, or no device. The primary access issue for people with hearing loss is usually communication.

Developmental/Cognitive/Intellectual disability is chronic, sometimes severe mental or physical impairments, or both. They usually begin before the age of 22, are likely to continue indefinitely, and can cause substantial functional limitations. Examples include cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, Fragile-X syndrome, and fetal alcohol syndrome.

Sensory disability can involve any of the five senses, but generally refer to vision and hearing. Sensory effects such as loud or unexpected noises, bright or flashing lights, large crowds, or strong aromas can negatively impact someone with autism, post-traumatic stress, epilepsy, and more. While anyone can experience sensory overload, people with sensory disabilities cannot always communicate, regulate, or remove themselves from a difficult situation.

Hidden disability is widespread and impacts daily functioning, but people can feel caught between not being "disabled enough" and not fully without disability. Examples include attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, and chronic illnesses such as cancer and epilepsy.

Acquired brain injuries are caused by external forces applied to the head that occur suddenly in the course of normal development and life. The most common causes are automobile accidents, falls, assaults, and sports injuries. Acquired brain injuries can affect cognitive abilities and physical functioning.

Mental health disability describes a broad range of mental and emotional conditions. The type, intensity, and duration of symptoms vary from person to person, as do treatments. Symptoms can be experienced at any age and critically interfere with a person's ability to think, feel, and relate to other people and the environment. Mental health professionals attribute conditions such as anxiety and mood disorders to a combination of biological, psychological, and environmental factors.

Chapter 4 | The Physical Space

How people arrive, enter, navigate, and experience your space matters. The route can be straightforward or confuse visitors and hinder the experience. Considerations of the physical space should be addressed in owned and leased spaces, new and old buildings, and when programs are held on- or off-site. The Americans with Disabilities Act and its implementation include many details. Some professional organizations and services for independent living provide ADA-compliant physical assessment consultations for a reasonable service fee. Contact these professionals, talk to an architect, or engage someone with experience to help in the assessment. Here are steps to addressing physical accessibility:

- Conduct a survey to identify barriers
- Brainstorm and research ways to eliminate barriers
- Estimate cost, time, and resources involved
- Prioritize projects and apply universal design principles
- Develop time frame; implement the plan; review it periodically
- Use Universal Design elements in revisions and future efforts

Universal Design

The intent of Universal Design (UD) is to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications, and the built environment usable by as many people as possible. UD benefits people of all ages and abilities because what is an accommodation for one person may be a convenience for many. The principles of universal design came from architecture but can be applied to programs, education, and policies. The following seven principles inform the creation of more universally accessible environments:

- *Equitable Use* for diverse abilities
- *Flexibility in Use* for preferences and abilities
- *Simple and Intuitive Use* regardless of experience, knowledge, and/or language
- *Perceptible Information* communicated effectively
- *Tolerance for Error* minimizes hazards and consequences
- *Low Physical Effort* for comfort and stamina
- *Size and Space for Approach and Use* for all types of users

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for everyone based on scientific insights into how humans learn. This type of curriculum provides people equal learning opportunities which are built into educational programs and opportunities from the beginning.

- Affective networks (Why): present information and content in different ways
- Recognition networks (What): differentiate the way learners express what they know
- Strategic networks (How): stimulate interest and motivation for learning

Historic Properties

Often the primary components of historic properties pose barriers to people with disabilities, particularly those with limited mobility. Accessibility laws do not include a grandfather clause for historic properties. No matter the age of a property, there is an obligation to provide accessibility while preserving items of a historical significance.

Your goal is to provide a high level of accessibility without compromising significant features or the overall character of the property. Start by reviewing the essential historic features, existing accessibility, and legal requirements. The U.S. Department of Justice ADA Regulations offer this guidance on priority areas when creating an accessible space:

- First: Get people in the door
- Second: Provide access to goods and services
- Third: Provide access to restrooms
- Fourth: Remove any remaining barriers

Improving physical accessibility in a historic property can be a lengthy process, and universal inclusion may never be fully realized. Think outside the box and find ways to include as many people as possible.

Consider how you can bring a program or resource and its contents to other areas of the property. Bring physical, movable collection items to accessible spaces or use technology and video to bring the collection downstairs.

Be transparent about what is and is not available. A person's range of motion varies, and he or she can decide if a facility is physically accessible. The more detail, the better when helping visitors prepare for a visit. For example, your website could state the following in the "Visit" section: "This historic home includes three steps (5" deep) to the entrance, and

10 stairs to the second floor (50" wide stairwell). There is a ramped entrance on the south side of the building."

Find ways to provide the program or service in the most accessible location possible. This may involve taking services off-site and partnering with others who share the mission and can provide a more accessible space.

Sample Physical Access Checklist

Consider the following areas related to physical accessibility when surveying your spaces. Some measurements are provided. For the most up to date legal requirements, confer with the U.S. Department of Justice (ada.gov) or the U.S. Access Board (access-board.gov).

- ☐ Exterior Accessible Route - Continuous, stable, firm, slip-resistant, clear, level (2% max cross slope; 5% max running slope), 36" wide
- ☐ Parking Spaces - Level surface, 8' wide with a 5' access aisle; at least one accessible space for every 25 spaces; van accessible spaces are required
- ☐ Off-site Parking - If applicable, confirm accessibility and have accessible route with clear signage
- ☐ Passenger Loading Zones - Should be clearly marked, include pull up space 96" wide and 20' long, and access aisle 60" wide connected to accessible route with unobstructed curbs
- ☐ Entrances and Doors - Flat or gradual incline with accessible route to parking, drop off zones, program areas; revolving doors should have nearby accessible option
- ☐ Interior Accessible Routes - Continuous, stable, with signage and seating
- ☐ Passage Clearance - Wheelchairs average 28" wide, clearance for two people is 60" minimum
- ☐ Restrooms - Have clear signage hung 60" centered from the floor, universal fixtures, and address toilet stalls, toilets/urinals, grab bars accessories, and clear floor space
- ☐ Water Fountains - Available on accessible route, spout outlet no more than 36" high
- ☐ Work Areas, Stages, and Rehearsal/Green Rooms - Reasonable accommodations to perform work, clear passageways, well-lit
- ☐ Classrooms - Adaptive materials and space, Universal Design for Learning principles
- ☐ Carpets - Securely adhered to the floor with a firm cushion, less than 1/2" thick
- ☐ Protruding Objects - Extend a cane-detectable object underneath; recess, raise, or lower objects
- ☐ Coat and Bag Rooms - Counters no higher than 34"; if self-service, at least one rack no higher than 48"
- ☐ Concessions - Same counter requirements as coat rooms, with sufficient spacing; alternative-format menus and restricted diet considerations
- ☐ Emergency and Warning Signals - Include both audible and visual alerts
- ☐ Ticket and Information Booths - Located on accessible route, with 60"x60" clearance and at least one lower counter no higher than 36"; space stanchions at least 36" wide at all points

Chapter 5 | Access Accommodations

The term *accommodation* is used when making adaptations for people with disabilities and is an important legal term. This Guide encourages you to think about accessibility above and beyond the law, ultimately welcoming broad participation. The cultural sector competes for time and money alongside all other forms of entertainment. Treating accessibility as customer service and accommodations as amenities demonstrates that you value everyone. Place the emphasis on the accommodation, not the disability, and it is likely to be utilized by more people. If someone makes a request, respond in positive and helpful ways. If someone looks confused, just ask how you can help- people know best what works for them.

Communication Accommodations

If you've met one person with a disability, you've met one person with a disability.
We all learn differently and experience the world in unique ways. This means people want and need access to information in diverse formats and express themselves differently. Think broadly and universally. Be ready and willing to offer alternate formats. Many of these are low to no cost and will only take a little extra time to prepare.

- Pictographs
- Large print
- Digital documents
- Open or Closed Captioning
- Audio alternatives
- Print version of audio material
- Braille transcripts
- Audio description
- Auxiliary aids and services
- American Sign Language
- Accessible websites
- Alternative text for images
- Plain, clear language

Information Outlets

Think about all the ways your organization conveys information and communicates with constituents. Each of these outlets may need information presented in alternate methods for everyone to fully understand the content.

- Ticket sales
- Concessions
- Registration
- Website and email
- Social media
- Newsletters
- Videos
- Phone calls
- Personal interactions
- Registration forms

Auditory Accommodations

People with hearing or speech disabilities experience a range of hearing loss and use various communication styles. Some people use cochlear implants or hearing aids, others use a combination of ASL and lip reading, while some just need you to speak clearly or into a specific ear. It is not helpful to yell. Be sure the volume of your voice is effective. Always look directly at the person you are speaking with- not his or her interpreter, if there is one. Other best practices include eliminating secondary noise and finding a quieter space to have a conversation. These are some communication accommodations:

- Assistive listening devices
- Open or Closed Captioning (OC or CC)
- Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART)
- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Teletypewriter (TTY)
- Phone volume adjustments

Visual Accommodations

People who are blind or have low vision experience different types of visual disability. Those blind from birth have a different frame of reference than those who lose their vision. Your accommodations should take a range of vision into account and engage people with vision loss to provide first-person experiences and ideas for engaging multiple senses. In addition to ensuring that basic communication is accessible, there are a range of programs you can develop to expand the experience.

- Audio Description is a live or recorded description of what is being seen on a screen, stage, gallery, and life. The description can be transmitted via receivers, played in tandem, or geo-located through an application. Numerous resources exist for this professional service.
- Touch Tours are led by trained staff who provide a detail description of an object such as a sculpture or costume and allow visitors to touch original artifacts or replications.
- Way-Finders are people who guide visitors with vision disabilities through your space, to a destination, or help with reading new material like menus. Way-finders can be regular staff and volunteers who understand how to respectfully guide someone.

Assistive Technology

Some people with disabilities will use assistive technologies for communication. These tools can be essential to navigating the world. Be aware that you may see them in your spaces and allow for their use:

- Tablets
- Phones
- Talk boards
- Screen readers
- Headsets
- Glasses

Signage

Use clear language and visual interpretation as often as possible to reach as many people as possible. Symbols are universal- one reason emojis are so popular. Visual iconography increases understanding by people with developmental and cognitive disabilities, English language learners, and young people. Any language accompanying symbols should focus on the accommodation, not who uses it. A ramped entrance benefits people who use wheelchairs, but also walkers, baby strollers, crutches, and more.

Digital Accessibility

Your website, social media, electronic newsletters/ documents, and tablet/phone apps are critical communication tools that engage current constituents and promote your efforts to new audiences. Inaccessible digital materials, particularly for people with visual impairments, is the equivalent of looking at a black box or trying to follow a maze of text.

Guidelines and best practices for accessible websites are available through the Web Accessibility Initiative and Section508.gov. You will want to work with your webmaster and IT department to ensure coding addresses these guidelines. There are also things every layperson can address to increase access: write ALT text for images, explore access features in social media apps, use your software's accessibility check features, and effectively convert documents into accessible PDFs.

Apps

Advances in technology have exponentially increased access to information and opportunities for people with disabilities. Today we can develop applications for phones and tablets with relative ease. You may already be using an app to increase engagement in your space. Be sure access features are turned on. If you invest in developing something new, make sure accessibility is part of the design. Consider downloading sign language or visual guide apps for the front desk and security to add another means of communication.

Quick Tips for Clear Communication

Focus on one topic

Speak shortly and to the point

Rephrase, simplify, scaffold information

First be open-ended, then switch to Yes/No

Use visual supports and demonstrations

Describe visuals

Make associations to familiar ideas

Offer fidget objects

Announce transitions or changes

Allow extra time for transitions

Set and communicate access policies

Train staff on accessibility etiquette

Access Providers

This term is used broadly to describe people who are professionally trained to provide various accommodations for people with disabilities. These providers set their own fee structures and include, but are not limited to, qualified interpreters, CART providers, and audio describers. Personal care providers are hired by a client and often funded by insurance. It is important to review your policies, plan for extra people, and review the most up to date ticketing guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Preparation

The more information you can provide to people in advance, the more likely they are to find you and have a good time while there. This applies to people with sensory sensitivities, as well as anyone visiting your space for the first time. You can make it fun by using your mascot or an avatar as an access ambassador. Whatever you do, make it available - on the website, downloadable, in advance to ticket holders, etc. Preparation materials generally address expectations, rules, entrance, navigation, activities, and include pertinent contact information.

Advisories

Let people know what to expect. Include sensory advisories on your website, in the program, and with physical signage at the door. Consider warning people about fog, haze, sudden noises, strobe lights, simulated gunshots, pyrotechnics, etc. This will be helpful for people with sensory sensitivities as well as service animals who might be in attendance.

Pre-Visits

New spaces can be overwhelming, particularly on busy days with a lot of distractions. Offer people the opportunity to visit your space or special event location in advance. Lead a tour and help them get to know the entrance route, experience the surroundings, and meet their seat. This can increase the comfort of someone navigating a previously unknown setting.

Visual Guides

These resources describe a situation, skill, or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives, and common responses, in a patient and reassuring manner that is easily understood by its audience. Visual stories can be pictures with words in a document or a video. These are great intern projects, as they require only a camera and good description.

Sensory Amenities

The 21st century is full of information and can lead to sensory overload. Anyone can experience sensory sensitivities, but it is particularly pervasive for people with autism, traumatic brain injury, and cognitive disabilities. The difference between some people with disabilities and the general public is the capacity to moderate the experience, communicate discomfort, and remove themselves from an overwhelming situation. All types of cultural spaces are including accommodations to address sensory sensitivities. Your efforts can alert people to the general sensory experience or be a program that is relaxed for a specific audience. It is up to you to determine where house rules can be flexible and how front-line staff responds to different needs.

Tips for Relaxed Experiences

- Make it a safe, judgement-free zone
- Train staff and volunteers; have experts on site
- Make adjustments to lighting, sounds, aromas
- Provide a less-crowded environment and a quiet, calming space
- Offer headphones, sunglasses, hats, fidgets
- Provide extra visual signage and family restrooms
- Allow audiences to talk, move, take breaks, bring in personal bags/food/drink
- Keep the artistic integrity by providing a warning before startling effects occur

Chapter 6 | Programs and Events

Cultural institutions host programs and events to engage the community and fulfill their missions. Planning in advance will ensure that your opportunities are accessible to as many people as possible. Most barriers to participation can be removed without great expense, administrative burden, or compromise to the original intent. Be sure to make accessibility a line item in your planning process and budget; address it in relation to all aspects of participation.

Physical Space

Invite people with disabilities to visit and tour your spaces so they can identify potential barriers. Ask them to consider and critique:

- Preparation
- Arrival
- Entrance
- Navigation
- Product experiences
- Front-line staff interactions
- The process for accessing accommodations such as auxiliary aids

Registration & Materials

People need opportunities to understand your policies and make requests for accommodation. You can facilitate this process and make people feel included by offering the following:

- Statement of accessibility inviting accommodation requests on marketing materials
- A designated contact person and clearly stated deadline policies
- Option to ask about accommodations during the registration process
- Accessible website with prominent accessibility link
- Information available in alternative formats
- Alternative registration processes
- Clean, uncluttered designs with proper color contrasts
- Maps and visual aids to identify immoveable barriers and outline of alternative routes
- Clearly defined ticket and registration policies for access professionals
- Inclusion of access professionals and personal assistants in participant numbers
- Regular review efforts that evaluate access services and lead to refinement

Transportation

How do people arrive at your space? Do they drive and park, take buses or light rail, or arrive by ride-share, bike, or foot? Take inventory on all the different arrival methods and entrance routes. On your website and brochures, provide information such as bus line numbers and the location, distance, and accessible route to the entrance. People with disabilities often take public transportation, need to be dropped off near the entrance, or need to plan a ride-share. Be aware of what time the bus stops running or potential safety needs when planning evening and weekend events.

Meals and Social Components

Create a fully accessible experience by considering the extras you offer attendees.

- Ensure sufficient room to maneuver and clear routes between food, seating, and activities
- Account for special dietary needs during registration and use clear labels
- Provide chairs with and without arms; avoid fixed seats or high tables/counters
- Avoid billowing tablecloths; ensure accessible seating is not just in the periphery or back
- If offering self-serve or buffet, have servers available and alternative cutlery
- Ensure any entertainment or speeches are accessible

Presentations

There are best practices you can follow to make sure that presentations such as conferences and lectures are accessible to everyone attending.

- Good signage and barrier-free paths
- Adjustable light, sound, and temperature systems
- Microphones for presenters and questions
- Repeat questions, check in with the audience, and allow for breaks
- Ensure clear lines of sight to presenters and access professionals, who should face the audience
- Speak clearly, without jargon, and at a normal pace
- Present information in multiple formats (e.g. visual, auditory, tactile)
- Allow time for people to look at materials, process information, and transition
- Reserve accessible seating and provide space for access providers

Outdoor Events

Make additional considerations when hosting outdoor events

- Provide accurate and thorough information about accessibility amenities before the event and with signage during the event. This helps with preparation and reduces frustration
- Provide notes about sensory information (e.g. lights, other animals)
- Train primary event staff and volunteers for the event
- Communicate policies with vendors and set expectations with security teams
- Designate an Access Center where people can ask questions, get alternative formats, service providers can check-in, and anyone can relax
- Order accessible, portable restrooms and have at least one family restroom
- Designate accessible seating areas and service animal relief areas
- Reserve space for accessible parking; use traffic cones, spray paint, or other items to mark the space, which should be level and on solid ground
- Do the best you can with what you have

Remember the most important considerations are flexibility and a willingness to find an accommodation that helps someone participate. Things may not always go as planned, but the lessons learned should be built into future efforts.

Chapter 7 | Audience Development

Cultural administrators spend many hours of their time, and have entire departments dedicated to, promoting opportunities and telling an organization's story. Accessibility is an integral part of this narrative. It is important that your communication is accessible to people who need information in different formats and directed toward groups who will use the adapted programs you took the time to develop. Work in tandem with your marketing department to promote accessibility in all outreach activities and design for the broadest possible audiences to maximize awareness.

Marketing Outlets

- Press releases
- Newsletters
- Brochures
- Websites
- Event calendars
- Posters
- Programs

Information to Include

- Specific amenities (e.g. assistive listening, ASL interpretation)
- Costs of services or requirements, if applicable (e.g. photo identification)
- Booking requirements (e.g. two weeks in advance)
- Honesty and clarity (e.g. there are ten stairs, but no elevator)
- Contact information; one specific contact with a phone and email reduces confusion
- As much as you need to describe the offerings, including what is not available

Design Considerations

- Font size and style
- Color contrast/blindness design guidelines
- Respectful language
- Images of people with disabilities

Targeted Marketing

- Research local and regional disability organizations and create a contact list
- Send information, introduce yourself, and establish a relationship
- Invite organizations to join the planning process, partner on projects, be part of focus and advisory groups, and serve as consultants
- Connect with specific disability organizations when developing specific programs like audio-described performances or sensory-friendly mornings at the museum
- Word of mouth from trusted allies is powerful in the disability community
- Make an extra effort to seek feedback from people with disabilities

Accessibility Statements

The purpose of an accessibility statement is to let people with disabilities and their support networks know that you welcome them and their requests. It asserts your readiness to provide accommodations and demonstrates that you value inclusion. The statement can be short and to the point or provide numerous details. It is important to show that you have an avenue to make requests, are clear about policies, and then follow through on promises. Consider your organizations policies, capacities, and what processes make sense. Whenever possible, provide multiple means of connecting (e.g. email, phone, front desk). This statement should be posted on your website, in brochures, and clearly communicated to all staff and volunteers. Here are examples of accessibility statements.

Art Possible Ohio is committed to providing excellent experiences, engaging the broadest possible audiences, and breaking down barriers to participation. Specific accommodations are listed for each program; requests for other professional services should be made at least two (2) weeks in advance. For all questions, contact us at 614-241-5325 or info@artpossibleohio.org.

Brochures and Websites

The more accessibility accommodations you offer, the more you should promote them. An accessibility brochure can be designed to elaborate on opportunities. Ensure that you create a document with best practices for accessible design that is available in multiple formats. Detail what you offer and who to contact for more information. Include this resource with all of your other materials so anyone can pick it up and learn more.

This information should also be outlined on your website, preferably on a dedicated page that is easy to find, such as in the "About" or "Visit" section. By providing this information in advance and promoting it, you make your policies clear, reduce confusion, and encourage more people to visit the facility and use the accommodations.

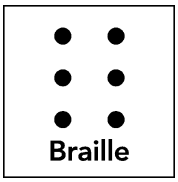
Access Symbols

These symbols advertise different accommodations available in a space and for programs. The images refer to a specific accommodation or service, not who should use them, which broadens the user profile. These symbols should be used often in marketing materials, signage, websites, brochures, maps, and anything appropriate to your needs.

Images on these pages were designed and are made available for free download by Graphic Artist Guild. You can use these images, redesign them to match a brand, such as the ones on the cover of this Guide, or come up with all new images for additional amenities, rules, and instructions. If you redesign or create your own, be sure to keep the service, not a person, at the forefront.

Information - indicates the location of information related to accessibility and where to make general inquiries

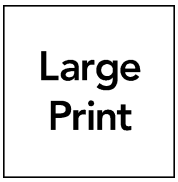
Physical Accessibility - indicates access for people with limited mobility; an elevator is not accessible if the only path to it includes stairs



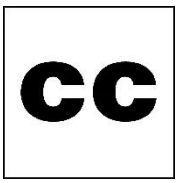
Braille - indicates that printed materials have been translated into and are available in Braille format

Audio Description - a professional service that is a live or recorded auditory description of visual elements transmitted via a small device

Vision Access - indicates additional access for people with no- or low-vision and is appropriate for tactile tours, nature paths, and way-finding guides



Large Print - indicates that an alternative format is available with text printed in 18-point font or larger, with attention paid to font type, high-contrast, and spacing



Closed Caption - commonly known as subtitles, this is text transcribing the audio portion of a video, film, exhibit, performance, or other verbal format; these can be turned on or off

Open Caption - indicates that captions transcribe sounds such as music or ambient noise in addition to dialogue; generally preferred; these are always in view and cannot be turned off

Sign Language Interpretation - indicates a professional interpreter will be provided for a designated performance or event

Volume Control Telephones - available with headsets that have amplified sound and/or volume controls

Assistive Listening System - available to transmit amplified sounds via hearing aids, headsets, or other devices

Sensory Friendly - indicates a relaxed atmosphere with specific considerations made to reduce sensory overload

Food Sensitivity/Allergy - indicates the option to request an alternate menu or that foods such as peanuts and gluten are omitted

Fragrance Free - indicates an event or space is does not allow perfumes and scented lotions

Start Writing Your Accessibility Plan

Priorities

Assets

Needs

Actions

Partners

Photo Credits

- Table of Contents: Ingenious Image (2017)
- Page 4: Ian Thompson (2016) & Elizabeth Nihiser (2015 & 2012)
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- Page 15: *Liberty, Justice, and Access for All*, an inclusive mural celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Design by Kong Ho. Participating artists: Damaris Abreu, Michael Adams, Jessica Bash, Nathaniel Edwards, Joseph Greene, Pamela Mackey, Charlotte McGraw, Ricci Michaels, Derek Mortland, Susann Rhodes, Elizabeth Sammons, Shari Veleba, Paul Wilbur
- Page 20: Candace Mazur Darman (2014)
- Page 23: Elizabeth Nihiser (2012)
- Back Page: *Ohio in Color*, Brady Smalley (2016)

Resources

This list includes references cited in this document, some of the essential resources available, and best practices from the field. This list is not comprehensive; you can search the internet for additional resources and ideas, which are readily available for this growing field.

General

- ADA National Network, www.adata.org, 800-949-4232
- American Council of the Blind of Ohio, www.acbohio.org, 614-261-3561
- Center for Disability Empowerment, www.disabilityempowerment.net, 614-575-8055
- Great Lakes ADA Center, www.adagreatlakes.org, 800-949-4232
- John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 800-444-1324
- Department of VSA and Accessibility, education.kennedy-center.org/education/vsa
- Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability network, http://education.kennedy-center.org/education/accessibility/lead/
- National Endowment for the Arts, Office of Accessibility, arts.gov/accessibility, 202-682-5400
- Ohio Arts Council, oac.ohio.gov, 614-466-2613
- Services for Independent Living, Inc., sil-oh.org, 216-731-1529

Chapter 1 - Be Strategic

- Renewing the Commitment: An ADA Compliance Guide for Nonprofits, ADA25Chicago, www.cct.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/08/2015ADAComplianceGuide.pdf
- Guest Service for Guests with Disabilities, VSA Florida, www.vsafl.org/cultural-access-arts-organizations

Chapter 2 - Civil Rights

- Disability Law Handbook, The ADA National Network, Southwest ADA Center, adata.org/publication/disability-law-handbook
- Employment and Accessibility for Employees with Disabilities, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, www.eeoc.gov, 800-669-4000
- FAQs about Service Animals and the ADA, U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, www.ada.gov/regs2010/service_animal_qa.html
- A Guide to Disability Rights Laws, U.S. Department of Justice, www.ada.gov/cguide.htm
- The Job Accommodation Network, www.askjan.org, 800-526-7234
- United States Access Board, www.access-board.gov, 800-872-2253

Chapter 3 - Disability Culture

- Americans with Disabilities Act Participation Action Research Consortium, National Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation Research, centerondisability.org/ada_parc/
- Disability Statistics, American Community Survey, Cornell University, www.disabilitystatistics.org
- Disability Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau Statistics, www.census.gov/topics/health/disability.html
- *A History of Disability*, Henri-Jacques Stiker, 2000, University of Michigan Press
- Key Findings: Prevalence of Disability and Disability Type among Adults, United States, 2013, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/features/key-findings-community-prevalence.html
- *What is Disability Culture?*, Steven E. Brown, Disability Studies Quarterly 22(2), Spring 2002, www.dsq-sds.org/article/view/343/433

Chapter 4 - The Physical Space

- Accessibility & Historic Properties, National Institute on Building Sciences, www.wbdg.org/design/comply_requirements.php, 202-289-7800
- ADA Checklist for Existing Facilities, New England ADA Center, www.adachecklist.org, 800-949-4232
- Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access, University at Buffalo, www.ap.buffalo.edu/idea, 716-829-5902
- National Center on Accessibility, Indiana University Bloomington, www.ncaonline.org, 812-856-4422
- National Center on Universal Design for Learning, www.udlcenter.org

Chapter 5 - Access Accommodations

- Arts & Autism Resources Guides, VSA Ohio, 2015, www.vsao.org/artsautismohio
- Assistive Listening Devices for People with Hearing Loss: A Guide for Performing Arts Settings, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 2002, www.kennedy-center.org/accessibility/education/lead/2012_KC_ALD_Booklet.pdf
- Assistive Listening Devices for People with Hearing Loss: A Guide for Museum Settings, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 2016, education.kennedy-center.org/pdf/35237406_als_guide_for_museums_remediated.pdf
- Audio Description Project, American Council of the Blind, www.acb.org/adp, 919-368-6355
- Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, www.clovernook.org, 513-522-3860
- Disability and Theatre: A Practical Manual for Inclusion in the Arts, Stephanie Barton Farcas, Focal Press, 2018
- Outreach Center for Deaf and Blindness, deafblindoutreach.org
- Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, www.rid.org, 703-838-0030

Chapter 6 - Programs and Events

- Accessible Meetings, Events and Conferences Guide, ADA Hospitality, www.adahospitality.org/accessible-meetings-events-conferences-guide/book
- Planning Accessible Conferences and Meetings: A Toolkit, American Bar Association, Commission on Disability Rights, www.americanbar.org/groups/disabilityrights/resources/toolkit.html
- ReelAccess: A Guide to Accessible Film Festivals and Screenings, So Everyone Feels Welcome; ReelAbilities Film Festival Toronto, 2016, toronto.reelabilitieslegacy.org
- Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Designs, www.si.edu/accessibility/sgaed
- Ticketing, ADA National Network, http://adata.org/factsheet/ticketing

Chapter 7 - Audience Development

- Accessible Social Media, Accessible U, University of Minnesota, https://accessibility.umn.edu/tutorials/accessible-social-media
- Accessibility, World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), https://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility
- Effective Communication, ADA Requirements, U.S. Department of Justice, www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm
- Lighthouse International, Accessible Design & Making Text Legible, http://li129-107.members.linode.com/accessibility/, 800-284-1202
- National Center for Accessible Media, ncam.wgbh.org

ART POSSIBLE OHIO

MAKING CREATIVITY ACCESSIBLE

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http://artpossibleohio.org

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