HOW TO:
Accessible & Inclusive Event Planning

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What is this?

At the SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue, our collective mission is ‘to foster shared understanding and positive action through dialogue and engagement’. Within this, one of our core guiding values is that ‘we bring together and honour diverse voices and actively remove barriers to participation to reflect the full range of community interests and create conditions for innovation’.

In order to live up to this value, it is critical that we do our best to make our events as inclusive and accessible as possible. This means not only actively seeking out diverse voices, but creating events that foster and encourage their full participation and engagement in a positive, intersectional manner. Within this manual you will find a chronological series of steps that you can take, and questions you should ask, when ideating, planning, and implementing events with your respective organization.

While going through these steps, please keep in mind that all of this takes place through a westernized lens and was originally created by three white settler women. With this in mind, natural blind spots will occur, and we encourage you to delve deeper into your own experience and learnings whenever possible.

Choosing a Time and Place

1. Choosing a Date & Time

When choosing a day to host your event, always be mindful of any sort of holidays (religious or otherwise) that may impact someone’s ability to attend your events. Choosing a date that does not consider these factors may result in not only a low attendance rate, but an unintentional exclusion of specific groups of people. When thinking about time, try to avoid early morning and late evening, if possible, as some parents with children, seniors, and people with disabilities may not be available at these times, or may require assistance that does not operate during these times.

2. Choosing a Location

When choosing a location, always consider how different groups of people may access, interact with, and experience the venue. A great group called radical access mapping project initiated a project that mapped accessibility specs for some of Vancouver’s venues. You can check out their pre-mapped venues here.
Some of the things you should consider when choosing a venue is…

a) Transportation Accessibility
Is the venue located in an area that encourages public (or otherwise sustainable) transportation? If the venue is likely to attract a number of cyclists, is it fitted with enough bike racks? If people drive, is parking easily accessible, a short walk away, and equipped with accessible spots? If there are limited accessible public transportation options, is parking relatively inexpensive?

b) Physical Accessibility
Are there barriers that may make it difficult for people with canes, crutches, wheelchairs or any other mobility challenges? This may include uneven surfaces, thick carpeting, loose mats, or steep ledges. In the case of steep ledges or challenging terrain, are there ramps to get over these obstacles? Is there at least a one-meter space along all paths anywhere inside and outside the venue? If not, can things be (re)arranged in a way that makes it so? Is there at least one easily accessible elevator that services all spaces of the venue? If not, are there wheelchair lifts that are available? Do these things have braille? Are all doors in the venue automatic? If not, can the doors be propped (and left) open or is there a volunteer who can be stationed there at all times?

c) Washroom Accessibility
Does the venue offer washrooms that serve all people? For example, are there adequate gender-neutral and wheelchair accessible washrooms, along with spaces to breastfeed and change children? If so, are they explicitly pointed out and easy to access? If not, create new signage or ask the venue to create signage that points out where these washrooms are. Make sure that this signage is put up alongside all other bathroom signage and next to the gendered washrooms so that attendees are assured that they have options available to them. If, in either case, these options are not available, ideally, you would choose another venue that better reflects the mission of the SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue. However, if you choose to proceed, be upfront with this in all promotional material (*see ‘Communications’ section for more) and be clear in suggesting other washroom options that are nearby.

Gender-neutral washrooms:
A lack of gender-neutral washrooms will likely be the most common problem that you encounter, and this may take some problem solving with the venue. If the venue does not offer gender-neutral washrooms, can you work with them to designate at least one washroom as gender-neutral? What about 50% of the washrooms as gender-neutral? 100% of them?
• When providing gendered washrooms, consider making a sign for the washrooms that says “trans inclusive” or “trans people welcome”. This is not about inviting trans people to use the washroom (because they will anyway), this is about sending a message to cis-gendered people that this is allowed, accepted, and encouraged, and any behaviour that goes against that will not be tolerated.

Wheelchair washrooms:
If there is not a single-stall, larger washroom designated for people who will require more space, take a look at the available washrooms and be sure to consider how the space may work for everyone. For example, is there enough room beyond the swing of the door for a wheelchair, motorized scooter, or walker? Are the sinks, soap, and paper towels in a place that is easy to reach for everyone?

d) Seating

Seating types:
Typically, venues will come with standard seating. However, when choosing venues, be aware of how your seating might limit or inhibit your attendee’s ability to attend. The first thing you should consider is if the seats can accommodate people of various sizes and comfort levels. For example, do the chairs have backrests? Do they have restrictive arms that may be too tight for some bodies? Are there alternative chairs that you can include in an inconspicuous way (in other words, have them interspersed throughout and not blatantly labelled as “alternative”)?

Also keep in mind how comfortable the chairs are. Basic plastic fold up chairs are not comfortable for the most able-bodied, let alone for someone who may be sensitive to sitting for long periods of time. Comfort levels go beyond physical comfortableness - some individuals struggle with being in closed-in spaces, so having additional seating with easy exits and/or more space is a bonus.

Seating placement:
Whether you are in charge of setting out the seats or if the seats come set in the venue, it’s important to think about who you are reserving seats for and where you are placing them. For example, there should always be seating throughout the venue, both inside and outside, for those who may find it challenging to stand for long periods of time. This is especially important in the case of events that will have pre or post event receptions or long registration lines. In the case of long registration lines, think about designating a volunteer as a “placeholder” for those who find it challenging to stand for long periods of time.
When looking at the experience within the venue, consider whether all spots can see and hear the same. If not, can you rearrange chairs to better fit the space? If that is not an option, think about how you can increase text sizes on screens, if applicable, along with increasing the quality of sound to better accommodate all seats.

In terms of reserving seats, be sure that you have reserved seating along with companion seating for anyone that may need them. While typical protocol is to have these seats "on the margins" of the event, think about whether or not you can intersperse them throughout the venue. This allows for a more inclusive and less singled-out approach, and allows those requiring certain seating accommodations to still be able to sit with their friends. If the event you are hosting requires tables and chairs, make sure that there are spaces without chairs at tables for every person that is using a wheelchair or may require alternative forms of seating. If you have people attending who may have vision or hearing limitations, make sure that there are seats reserved at the front to accommodate them.

e) Sound & Lighting

Try to choose a venue that limits external noise, such as that from construction, street noise, etc., to make it easier for all attendees to hear. For lighting, be sure that the lighting is appropriate for the event, whether that be the ability to increase lighting for legibility of print materials or lower lighting for screen visibility. For more information on sound and lighting specs, go to ‘Pre-Event Logistics’, Section 3.

Pre-Event: Logistics

1. Registration

When setting up your Eventbrite or other registration forms, be mindful of how your questions (or lack thereof) may exclude certain people. When creating these forms consider including the following questions/comment boxes:

- **Preferences and sensitivities** - this may include food, chemical, sound, lighting, etc.
- **Ask what people need to fully participate in your event.** This allows you to better cater your forms in the future as well as make adjustments, when possible, to accommodate certain individuals.
- **If you are choosing to include a question about gender, allow people various options to select from, as well as the opportunity to self-describe.** Options can include:
  - Woman, Man, non-binary, two-spirit, genderqueer, prefer to self describe (*requires comment box), prefer not to say
  - Instead of gender, think about asking people for their pronouns. Options can include:
She/her, Him/his, They/them, prefer to self describe (*comment box), prefer not to say

For special requests that people may have, be sure to include a contact person for any questions, concerns, or comments regarding the event’s accessibility and logistics, as well as a deadline for all requests to be made, if necessary.

2. Food

a) Catering Selection

Types of catering

When ordering catering for events, include a wide variety of options, regardless of reported sensitivities. Try to consider the various ways people’s relationship with food (whether moral, religious, health, preference, or allergy) may differ. Different types of foods that you may want to consider including are: vegetarian, vegan, gluten free, Halal meats, Kosher, dairy free and dairy alternatives. Try to avoid foods with common allergens (including, but not limited to: nuts, eggs, soy, and shellfish).

Catering organizations

When possible, consider choosing a social enterprise catering organization for off-site events. Social enterprises are businesses that focus primarily on their social objectives, where they re-invest their revenue in bettering the community, whether it be through jobs, opportunities, resources, etc.

Some social enterprise caterers in Vancouver include (but are not limited to):

- Potluck Cafe: [https://www.potluckcatering.com/](https://www.potluckcatering.com/)
- Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society: [http://www.vafcs.org/programs/cateringmenus/](http://www.vafcs.org/programs/cateringmenus/)
- HAVE Culinary Training Society: [http://www.have-cafe.ca/](http://www.have-cafe.ca/)
- Social Crust: [https://www.socialcrustcafe.com/](https://www.socialcrustcafe.com/)
- Coco Cafe: [http://www.cococafe.ca/](http://www.cococafe.ca/)
- Taybeh

b) Catering Placement

When placing food, be mindful of how different people may access food, cutlery, drinks, etc. Try your best to make sure that all items are reachable for those who may be in wheelchairs. If food is served buffet style, make sure that there is at least 1 meter clearance on all sides for those with mobility aids or personal space preferences.

When the caterer is labeling food, request that all items are clearly labelled with
ingredients, common allergens and with which dietary specification it meets. If possible, consider whether you can print in larger font or include braille.

3) Tech, AV & Interpretation Options

Before you opt-out of ordering microphones and larger monitors to “cut costs”, or even choose to host an event at a venue near construction, think about how this may be limiting the experience of some of your attendees, then think about how you can optimize that experience. Beyond this, it’s extremely important to consider the type of event you are hosting. For example, if you’re hosting an event to discuss Chinatown, are you being inclusive of the Chinese community and the languages they may speak? To optimize everyone’s ability to equally participate, consider the following…

a) Offer an Interpreter

Early in your communications and marketing efforts (*see Communications), always be clear in how attendees may request interpreter and translation options. If some form of interpretation or translation is requested, consider including the following:

ASL Interpreter
For sessions over 2 hours, 2 interpreters will need to be hired.
- Online director of interpreters: 
  http://wavli.com/find-an-interpreter/directory-of-interpreters/
- SFU Public Square has used:
  - Lisz Keallen: asl.interpreting@telus.net (*This is a direct contact who sets you up with interpreters. Recommend to go through Lisz first)
    - Cost: $58.50 per interpreter per hour plus GST
- SFU Centre for Accessible Learning has used:
  - Karen Fran: akfran@telus.net
- SFU Institute for the Humanities has used:
  - Yayoi Quesnel: yayoiquesnel@gmail.com
  - Melanie Valencia: melanievalencia9@gmail.com

If you have ASL interpretation for your event, include an image on promotional material (especially print) that conveys “ASL interpretation”. Image examples here.

Closed-Captioning
Always turn on subtitles for any videos or audio shown. And, if budget allows, provide Real-time Captioning.
- For real-time captioning, SFU Ceremonies and Events uses Accurate Realtime Reporting:
  - Email: admin@accuraterealtime.com
b) Lighting
Always be conscious of the lighting in the venue you choose. Venues with poor lighting not only makes legibility difficult, it also presents potential tripping hazards and makes it difficult for people who may be hard of hearing to read lips or see interpreters signing. Always choose basic, steady lighting and avoid strobe lighting or fast-paced repetition, which can trigger seizures in people with epilepsy. If your event must have these, be sure to include a disclaimer in promotion, and prior to the event starting, that there will be flashing lights.

c) Acoustics
As previously noted, be wary of any internal or external noise that may inhibit an attendee’s ability to hear speakers or other guests. Ideally, try to choose venues that cater to good acoustics, sound-proofing, and minimal echoes. Always ensure that all speakers have microphones (having a lavalier or headset mic will make this easier), as well as have volunteers or staff members on hand to run mics for any questions or audience participation to ensure everyone can hear.

Pre-Event: Considerations

1. Inclusion of Diverse Voices in Planning Process

In the early stages of the event planning process, individuals from diverse communities should be consulted and included whenever possible. Everyone benefits when diverse communities and individuals have an opportunity to express their opinions, provide suggestions, and raise questions regarding the event. By providing opportunities for folks from different cultural groups to participate in planning, they can offer valuable advice and use their own social networks to encourage greater participation.

When asking friends, colleagues, and networks to share their culturally specific knowledge, be mindful of how emotionally draining this type of work can be. There is a fine line between genuinely wanting to include diverse individuals and groups in the planning process, and exploiting the emotional labour required to share lived experiences and knowledge.
a) Staff and Volunteers

Advertising Volunteer Positions

We should also consider how our volunteers are learning about opportunities. Open positions should be advertised on a variety of platforms, including our internal websites, other SFU job/volunteers boards, social media platforms, external job and volunteer boards (Charity Village, Good Work, Indeed) and print materials. When possible, additional avenues of volunteer recruitment should be considered in an effort to recruit volunteers who reflect and represent the greater community.

Diversity of Volunteers

The inclusion of diverse voices can take many forms, including conducting focus groups, assembling an advisory panel and hiring diverse teams of volunteers/work study/co-op students to understand the wants and needs of the communities. Additionally, offering incentives such as payment in the form of salaries, stipends, honorariums, or other compensations (travel expenses, child care, food, accommodation, etc.) should be considered, to ensure the labour of vulnerable groups is not being exploited for the benefit of the event planners.

Volunteer Training

Prior to the event, volunteers should be provided with thorough training which prepares them for a variety of scenarios that may occur at the event. The list below provides some examples:

- **Accessibility lead**: 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
- **Orientation**: provide orientation to all staff and volunteers, including ushers on accessibility features of the event venue
- **Training**: provide training on assisting seniors/elders and people with disabilities about seating, mobility, bathroom, food, drink, getting items, and escorting to the stage
- **Uniform**: ensure volunteers are easily identified with name tags, t-shirts, etc.
- **Emergency**: ensure evacuation procedures are known and assign specific individuals to assist people with disabilities and seniors in the case of an emergency
- **Food**: if food is served buffet-style, ensure that food ingredients are listed and legible, also have staff and volunteers familiarize themselves with ingredients or any potential allergens
● **Gender inclusion & sensitivity**: develop and introduce a trans and gender-variant inclusion information session or written guide for staff and contractors

● **Agenda**: Provide translators or aides with an agenda or presentation outlines in advance of the event. At the start of the event, introduce translators and aides (anyone providing specialized services) and make sure their role is clear.

b) Facilitator Training

*To be expanded on when Centre for Dialogue is given adequate internal training: having properly trained facilitators at our events (to address racism/cultural differences, conflict resolution, specifically), this training would be offered and expanded upon in the facilitator package.*

**Intervening When Discrimination Occurs**

In the meantime, it is important to know how to intervene when discrimination occurs. The goal is to get the person to think about what they’ve said/did and to change their behaviour. With this in mind, consider the following:

- Address the comment/action in the moment, respectfully, in front of everyone who heard the comment
- Do not shame the person or “call them out” initially. Be clear that what they said/did was inappropriate, but give them the opportunity to save face and change their behaviour
- Do not say “you are transphobic/racist/sexist, etc”, make it about what they said/did, not about who they are.
- **Example of what to say**: “I know you may not have meant it like that, but what you said/did came off as _______”

c) SFU Community Ambassadors Program

The SFU Ambassadors Program is guided by the SFU Surrey TD Office of Community Engagement and creates opportunities for capacity building and economic participation among individuals facing barriers to traditional employment. Economic inclusion is an important part of ensuring that everyone can thrive in our community, so this program is encouraged when seeking staff and volunteers for events. For more information about welcoming staff and volunteers from the SFU Ambassadors program, contact:

Rachel Nelson, rer1@sfu.ca, 604-837-2260
d) Speakers & Other Contractors

When inviting speakers to an upcoming event, an effort should be made to include folks with diverse lived experiences related to the topic of the event.

Inclusion Package

Prior to the event, provide any speakers and contractors with a copy of inclusion guidelines (aka a “consideration package”) and clearly communicate that you expect they will adhere to the guidelines wherever possible. This includes asking all speakers and contractors:

- How they want to be referred to, by either name or pronoun
- When addressing small groups or the entire audience, avoid the use of the following: ladies, gentlemen, ma’am, sir, girls, guys, etc.
  - Instead, use neutral language such as: “people”, “folks”, “everyone”, “you”, “all” or “y’all”
- To consider identifying themselves by name when appropriate for the benefit of visually-impaired individuals
- To verbally describe any visual content in their presentations
- To speak slowly and clearly for hard of hearing and hearing impaired individuals

e) Elders & Indigenous Representatives

Whenever possible, it is respectful for an Elder or Indigenous representative of a local Nation(s) to provide a welcome and land acknowledgement at the beginning of an event. Inviting an Elder or Indigenous representative offers a recognition of the Nation(s) who have had a relationship with the land since time immemorial.

Ideally, you will form relationships with Elders and First Nations communities first. This not only aids as your cultural learning/understanding as an individual and organization, but is also much less transactional. Whenever possible, try to invite someone who has interest in what you’re talking about. If they are not available, ask them if they have any other suggestions.

When asking an Elder or Indigenous representative to attend an event, here are some considerations:

Protocol to keep in mind

- Don’t wait until the last minute (if at all possible)
- Always invite someone as a participant, not as a “performance”
Each territory has specific protocols around giving gifts (or tokens of appreciation, in addition to the honourarium). If you are not sure what this protocol is, approach this conversation with the Elder with humility, emphasizing that you want to not only be respectful in this process, but also learn more.

If you’re unsure about territorial protocol, ask for guidance. Transparency and honest effort goes a long way and they will likely appreciate you asking.

Forms of communication

- When contacting an Elder directly, a phone call is preferable to a letter or email.
- If initial contact is made months before an event, follow up with them a few weeks in advance and then again a few days in advance

Questions to ask during the invitation process (beyond protocol, above)

- Name of the Elder or Indigenous representative
- Spelling of name
- How they should be addressed (pronunciation, name, pronouns, title, etc.)
- Contact information
- What will be included in their welcome and/or land acknowledgement: check in with the Elder regarding how much time and space they will need

Travel arrangements to the event

- Find out if there are travelling costs to and from the event your organization is covering
- Find out if they will be travelling on their own or with someone
- Find out the name of any travelling companion and whether or not that person requires payment

Food & beverages

- Find out in advance if the Elder has allergies or dietary requirements if they are invited to stay for the sharing of food
- Find out if the Elder has mobility challenges and is unable carry a plate of food or drink
- Some Elders may not participate in events where alcohol is being served, be sure to include this information when extending the invitation

During the event

- Be sure there is a reserved seat close to the stage or speaking area. Include a seat for their companion if necessary.
- Decide whether the Elder/Indigenous representative will be providing a welcome, land acknowledgement, or both. The only people who would provide a ‘Welcome’ are those who belong to the Nation(s) on the land where the event is hosted;
anyone else, including other Indigenous people, would simply acknowledge the territory.

- Following the Emcee’s opening remarks, the Elder or Indigenous representative is typically the first speaker, ahead of university senior admin and any government representatives.

Honoraria

- The honoraria respects the value of what the Elder is offering
- It is suggested that a minimum honorarium of $200 be provided
- The honoraria should be provided to the Elder or Indigenous representative on the day of the event, ideally immediately after they give their remarks.
- Gift giving: as mentioned above, under ‘protocol considerations’, discuss the territorial traditions with each Elder. Whether it’s tobacco, a blanket, etc. depends on the territory

2. Child minding

When possible and appropriate, child care may be provided at an event so parents and guardians are able to fully participate. There are many limitations for parents and guardians to bring children to events, including costs associated with traveling with children, the stress of a new or short-term childcare environment, and some attendees not feeling secure leaving their children with unknown caretakers. Despite these challenges, childcare should be considered for an event on a case-by-case basis.

When childminding will be offered at an event, the agency or caregiver should provide the following information:

- whether they have a history of or a criminal conviction for harming children
- whether they hold the local police/public safety check for working with children
- whether they have first aid training including a current CPR certification
- whether they have any formal qualifications in education or child care
- the extent of their experience in child care (including in the specific age ranges of the children at your event)
- references from previous clients

When childminding will not be offered, or for parents or guardians who choose not to use the provided service, efforts can still be made to make the event more child friendly by:

- including information for parents and guardians about child-friendly transportation and accommodation in your event materials
• allowing babies or children to attend the event with their parent or guardian
• providing a nursing room to accommodate nursing babies staying with their parent
• providing catering which is child-friendly
• holding a centrally located event so that children and external caregivers have access to things to do, can visit their parent or guardian during the day, and/or meet after the event

3. First Aid

a) First Aid Training

With all events, make sure there is a staff member on the team who is trained in first aid and is aware of the location of the first aid kit within the venue, or brings their own. In the case of an emergency situation, if it is safe, have this person check with the attendee while someone else simultaneously calls 911.

For more information on how to receive first aid and CPR training, visit the St. John Ambulance website.

b) Opioid Overdose and Naloxone

British Columbia is experiencing a public health emergency due to the significant rise in opioid-related overdose deaths. Naloxone is an antidote to an opioid overdose which temporarily reverses life-threatening slowed breathing and can be administered by injection or intranasally.

Having a Naloxone kit available at your event is encouraged, along with a staff or volunteer who is trained to safely and effectively administer the drug. The resources below provide more information regarding where to purchase Naloxone kits and training opportunities:

Naloxone Educational Materials: http://towardtheheart.com/naloxone/siteresources/
Harm Reduction Site Map: https://towardtheheart.com/site-finder
Online training: https://towardtheheart.com/naloxone-training
Communications

1. Mediums

Before beginning your communications, take some time to think about the mediums through which you’re sharing your message and how this results in including some populations while excluding others. Some people do not have social media, use email, have internet access, or otherwise frequent the downtown core in which you would typically poster. Instead, think about all of the different ways you may get the information out: email, radio, website, social media, direct mail, posters at public buildings and outside the downtown core (such as community centres, coffeeshops, public libraries, near bus stops, etc), specifically circulating to specific groups such as seniors and groups with diverse abilities, and on-the-street word of mouth and guerrilla marketing.

2. Communicate accessibility accommodations

When it comes to website, Facebook, and Eventbrite event pages, always make sure to publish all of the information needed to make everyone feel welcome, comfortable, and able to fully participate. This would include, but is not limited to, directions; nearest transit stops and stations; parking; bike racks; presence of gender neutral and trans* inclusive washrooms (or nearest location with them); wheelchair accessible washrooms; scent free area; elevators, etc. Beyond this, be sure to include an offer of interpretation and translation (as discussed in ‘Tech, AV & Interpretation Options’, section a.)

Try to keep in mind that various other factors come into play when it comes to an individual’s level of comfortableness in any given space. For instance, many people do not like surprises, so be transparent about how the event will go, do not single anyone out without consent, and always flag any material that may be triggering to some parties.

Example for SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue (with AP Hall seat measurement):
The SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue is located at 580 W. Hastings St (enter via Seymour Street courtyard entrance), and is located a brief walk from Waterfront station and numerous bus stops. Bike stalls are available outside the Hastings entrance of SFU Harbour Centre (located across the street). Nearby parking is available at 500 & 400 W. Cordova St.

Washrooms are located on the lower level, second, third, and fourth floors. The venue has a gender-neutral washroom, available on the second floor (take the hallway to the right). All floors within the building are wheelchair accessible and serviced by elevators. The chairs within AP Hall have armrests, with the seat measuring 50cm (w) x 48cm (d).
If you have any questions, concerns, or comments regarding this event’s accessibility, feel free to connect with us at psqevent@sfu.ca. If you require ASL or other language interpretation please submit this request no later than 3 weeks in advance.”

Example for SFU Vancouver, Harbour Centre building:
“SFU Harbour Centre is located at 515 W. Hastings St, and is located a brief walk from Waterfront station and numerous bus stops. Bike stalls are available outside the main entrance. Nearby parking is available at 500 & 400 W. Cordova St.

There are washrooms located on all floors of the building. Accessible, private bathrooms and gender-neutral washroom stalls are available on the first floor in the east corridor. All floors within the building are serviced by elevators.

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments regarding this event’s accessibility, feel free to connect with us at psqevent@sfu.ca. If you require ASL or other language interpretation please submit this request no later than 3 weeks in advance.”

Example for SFU Vancouver, Segal Graduate School of Business:
The Segal Graduate School of Business is located at 500 Granville St, and is a brief walk from both the Granville and Waterfront skytrain stations, along with numerous bus stops. Limited bike racks are available out front, with others closeby. Nearby paid parking is available at 443 Seymour St.

There are wheelchair accessible washrooms available on the first floor. Unfortunately, this venue does not have gender-neutral washrooms at this time. However, there are gender-neutral washrooms located on the first floor of SFU Harbour Centre (515 W. Hastings St), a 4 minute walk away. All floors within SFU Segal are wheelchair accessible.

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments regarding this event’s accessibility, feel free to connect with us at psqevent@sfu.ca. If you require ASL or other language interpretation please submit this request no later than 3 weeks in advance.”

3. Land acknowledgements online

Land Acknowledgements

On all event pages, consider including a land acknowledgement (see example below). However, in addition to posting this acknowledgement, take some time to understand the ‘why’ behind such an acknowledgement. We do not merely post this as a way to “check a box”. Think about the meaning behind what you are saying. These acknowledgements recognize the stolen land and the years of colonization that we, as settlers, have, and continue to, perpetuate on
Indigenous Peoples. Coming to a better understanding of this will extend to a better understanding of your organization’s role as an ally.

A handy resource with applicable territories for each SFU campus is available [here](#).

**Land Acknowledgement Example for SFU Vancouver Campus**

“We respectfully acknowledge that this event takes place on the Unceded, Traditional, Ancestral Territories of the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh, səlílwətəʔɬ, and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm First Nations.”

*Note on translation: Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), səlílwətəʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh), and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) First Nations

- Phonetic Pronunciation:
  - Squamish = Skwa-mish
  - Tsleil-Waututh = Slay-wah-tooth
  - Musqueam = Muss-kwee-um

**Land Acknowledgement Example for SFU Burnaby Campus**

“We respectfully acknowledge that this event takes place on the Unceded, Traditional, Ancestral Territories of the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh, Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Kwikwetlem First Nations.”

**Land Acknowledgement Example for SFU Surrey Campus**

“We respectfully acknowledge that this event takes place on the Unceded, Traditional, Ancestral Territories of the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh, Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Kwikwetlem, Kwantlen, Katzie, and Semiahmoo First Nations.”

**4. Language**

When writing any copy, stick to people-first and gender-neutral language.

**a) People-First Language**

By definition, ‘people-first language’ aims to avoid perceived and subconscious dehumanization when discussing people with disabilities. By placing the person first, the “disability” is no longer the main focus. For example, instead of saying “disabled people” say “people with varying abilities”.

**b) Gender-Neutral Language**

By definition, gender-neutral language is intended to avoid bias toward a particular sex or social gender. For example, in a day-to-day sense, avoid using the word “guys” and “ladies and gentlemen”, as this is exclusionary to those who may not identify with either. This language also extends to gendering professions, such as “congressman”. When it
comes to writing about speakers, do not assume their pronouns unless they have specifically told you (or written their own bio). Instead, consider using "they" more commonly, until directed otherwise.

To encourage the use of gender-neutral language at events, make sure that name tags (if you are using them), include a space for pronouns. Investing in name tags that have this space already is a good way to encourage people to write them down without direction.

If you make a mistake with someone’s pronouns, correct it, apologize, and move on (and let others know of the preferred pronouns if it is necessary). Do not make it weird or challenge the person on their preferred pronouns.

c) Descriptive Language

When posting photos on social media and on your website, be aware of what the photo may say that your copy does not. As some people with visual impairments may be using online text-readers, they may miss important events or announcements that are put on the graphics. Examples of some of the key things to include in the copy would be the time, date, location, and title.

Design

For an easy-access guide on how to design for varying abilities, check out this Dos and don’ts on designing for accessibility from the UK Government.

1. Print design

Forethought in setting up print documents will help to create both short and long print pieces that present information clearly and consistently. Use grids to organize and align content consistently to help readers navigate through large bodies of information; this is particularly relevant when working on multi-page documents such as programs and reports.

a) Paper selection

For readers with vision impairment, paper selection can either aid or hamper their ability to read and process content. Gloss stock can create a glare and bright white stock can create visual fatigue. Consider the selection of a matte and warm white stocks for better readability.

b) Colour (print)

When creating documents, especially those that are culturally specific, consider how
other cultures might interpret selected colours within the document. Avoid using colour alone to highlight information as this is exclusionary of readers with colour blindness. For design elements and type, maintain at least a 70% difference in colour value to ensure adequate contrast. Though complimentary colours (i.e. blue and orange, green and red, purple and yellow) offer the greatest contrast, their use together can lead to eyestrain if their saturation, value and intensity are too similar.

- Accessible colour palette builder: https://toolness.github.io/accessible-color-matrix/

c) Typography (print)

Font selection: Given their decorative nature, display fonts are intended for use at a larger size for headings. Text fonts are intended for use at a smaller size for long passages of text. When selecting a text font, consider those that are well-balanced in form and counterform—such as those that are regular- or medium-weighted as opposed to those that are light- or bold-weighted—as well as fonts with relatively equal weight to height ratios.

Size: Though it is recommended that designers use 16-24 point text and display fonts to accommodate readers with visual impairments, other solutions including appropriate font selection and formatting can be used to ensure greater legibility if space restraints require a smaller font size.

Typesetting: Dimensions, spacing, case and alignment are importance considerations to ensuring legibility and reducing eye strain for readers when typesetting large passages of text.

- Dimensions include the point size and line length. The optimum point size will vary depending on the selected font and requires exploration on behalf of the designer as well as outside feedback for potential readers. Indications that line lengths are too narrow include awkward hyphenation and indications that line lengths are too long include difficulty in finding each new line of text.
- Spacing includes kerning (horizontal space between letters), tracking (horizontal space between words) and leading (vertical space between lines of text). When kerning or tracking are set too tightly or too loosely, letters and words with either run into one another or appear to be drifting. When leading is set too tightly or loosely, lines of text will either overlap one another or readers will experience difficulty in finding each new line of text.
- Case includes all caps and title case setting. Typically, readers process the shape of words rather than each individual letter. As a result, it is easier to read
large bodies of text set in title case. When all caps are used, increase the kerning of each word slightly to improve legibility.

- **Alignment** refers to what margin text adheres to, including either left, center, right or justified. In Western cultures, right aligned text is easiest to read. Use center- or right-aligned text sparingly and be vigilant when setting justified text to avoid awkward gaps between words.

2. Web design

Consider spare web design that does not require a specific configuration as page elements might need to be customized to accommodate visitors with visual or hearing impairments. Visitors with visual impairments might further require the use of a screen reader, which interprets screen content as audible text, while visitors with visual and hearing impairments might send screen reader output to a Braille display.

- Web standards for accessibility: [https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-intro/](https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-intro/)
- Material design accessibility guide: [https://material.io/design/usability/accessibility.html#](https://material.io/design/usability/accessibility.html#)

a) Colour (web)

Similar to print, consider the cultural interpretation of colours used in web design. Ensure also that no action required of site visitors is implied by colour alone, as visitors with colour blindness will not be able to recognize the request.

b) Typography (web)

Considerations pertaining to font selection, size and typesetting are similar to those of print. Specifically consider text size, letterform recognition and colour contrast to ensure text can be easily read by visitors with vision impairments.

- Colour tool: [https://material.io/tools/color/#/?view.left=1&view.right=0&view.right=1](https://material.io/tools/color/#/?view.left=1&view.right=0&view.right=1)

c) Audio content

Ensure that text alternatives—such as transcripts, captions and descriptive video—are available alongside audio or video content to ensure that visitors who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing can access all page content.
d) Alternative text (alt text)

Though every image on a web page should have an alternate text attribute – signifying the placement of an image to screen readers – general guidelines for how to write alt text, based on three image types, are as follows:

- Images that perform an action, i.e. call the reader to take an action
  \textit{Alt text should describe the action the image performs}
- Images that contain information, i.e. the reader will miss information if removed
  \textit{Alt text should be a brief description of the information}
- Images that are purely decorative, i.e. do not perform an action or contain information or an image caption
  \textit{Alt text should remain empty to minimize audio clutter}

Detailed information on writing alternative text featuring examples: 
https://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/

e) Operability

The SFU site poses limitations to the development of sites that address the needs of visitors with limitations to mobility or dexterity. Visit the RGD Accessibility Handbook for more details on designing fully operable web pages.

Post-Event Follow Up

1. Evaluation

a) Surveys

At the conclusion of events, providing a survey is a helpful tool for evaluating processes and outcomes. The intention is to capture information about the accessibility of the event, successes, missed opportunities, and additional comments from participants, presenters, contractors and the audience. Additionally, it will allow for ongoing improvements and updates of this document.

Types of surveys

It is recommended that a few options are made available, for example, providing surveys on-site the day of the event and sending a survey by email post-event.

- \textbf{On-site}: Printed surveys can be available to be completed on a designated table after the event. Pencils, pens, chairs, and a box to collect completed surveys
should be available for those who voluntarily wish to provide feedback regarding
the event. Additionally, there should be staff or volunteer available to answer
questions and support folks who need dictation or writing support.

- **Email**: Surveys can be designed through Survey Monkey or SFU Web Survey
  (available [here](#)) and sent by email. Please note, this could raise issues of
  accessibility, if folks don’t have access to the internet or required devices.

- **Phone**: Connecting with the audience by phone can capture valuable qualitative
  information. Please note, this is the most time-consuming option as there could
  also be accessibility issues for folks who don’t have access to a phone, or work
during daytime hours when survey phone calls would occur.

Considerations when creating the survey:

- When collecting demographic data, leave a blank space next to gender to allow
  people to self-identify
- Offer an option for folks to leave their phone number on an on-site survey if they
  would prefer to participate in the survey by phone rather than by paper or email
- Provide staff contact information at the bottom of the survey so attendees can
  connect after the event

**Example Survey Questions**

Some questions to consider including in your post-event evaluation:

- Please provide your phone number or email address if you would prefer to
  participate in this survey after the event
- How did this event allow you to fully participate?
- How could this event have been more accessible for you?
- Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience at
  the event?
Resources

AbilityNet 20 - Five golden rules for compliant alt text
https://www.abilitynet.org.uk/blog/five-golden-rules-compliant-alt-text

Access Ontario - Planning Accessible Events: *Includes event planning checklist for folks with disabilities

AdaCamp Toolkit - Providing conference childcare
https://adacamp.org/adacamp-toolkit/childcare/

City of Vancouver - Accessible Events Checklist and Resources:
https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/accessible-events-checklist-and-resources.aspx

Egale: Canada Human Rights Trust
https://egale.ca/

First Nations Health Authority
http://www.fnha.ca/

Indigenous Corporate Training Inc - Indigenous Elder Protocol
https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/first-nation-elder-protocol

Indigenous Ally Toolkit
https://gallery.mailchimp.com/86d28ccd43d4be0cfc11c71a1/files/102bf040-e221-4953-a9ef-9f0c5efc3458/Ally_email.pdf

Luther College - Intersectionality Toolkit:
https://www.luthercollege.edu/public/images/Intersectionality_Toolkit_and_other_resources.pdf

MSSA - Accessible Public Engagement:

Measuring Up: Accessible Public Event Guidelines:

PRISM: Trans Inclusion 101 Workshop:
PuSh Festival - Accessible Push:
https://pushfestival.ca/festival-events/accessible-push/

RGD Accessibility Handbook
https://www.rgd.ca/resources/accessibility/access

Ryerson Works - Trans Inclusion 101: Tips for event organizers, workshop facilitators and class instructors:
https://www.ryerson.ca/ryerson-works/articles/workplace-culture/2017/trans-inclusion-tips

SFPIRG - Acknowledgement of Indigenous Territories
https://sfpirg.ca/acknowledgement-of-indigenous-territories/

SFSS Out on Campus - Trans and Gender Diverse Guide to SFU (Online Edition):

SFU, VP Academic - Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:
https://www.sfu.ca/vpacademic/equity-diversity-and-inclusion.html

Syracuse University - A Guide to Planning Inclusive Events & Seminars:

UBC Equity - Checklist for Accessible and Inclusive Event Planning:
https://equity.ubc.ca/resources/accessible-and-inclusive-event-planning

UBC Ceremonies - Guidelines: Acknowledging the Musqueam First Nation at ceremonies & events

UK Government - Dos and don'ts on designing for Accessibility:
https://accessibility.blog.gov.uk/2016/09/02/dos-and-donts-on-designing-for-accessibility

University of Glasgow - Accessible Events Checklist:
https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_386384_en.pdf

WC3 Web Accessibility Initiative
https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-intro/

WebAIM - Alternative Text
https://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/
Event Checklist

Use this checklist to audit your events and easily keep yourself (and team) accountable to what is in this manual.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choosing a Time and Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choose an appropriate time and date for your event (Section 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The venue is transit accessible (Section 2a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The venue has accessible parking (optional) (Section 2a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The venue has (safe) places for bike parking (Section 2a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The venue does not have challenging terrain (Section 2b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All paths around venue are at least 1 meter wide (Section 2b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The venue has at least one elevator that services all floors (Section 2b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The venue has automatic doors (Section 2b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The venue has wheelchair accessible washrooms (Section 2c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The venue has gender-neutral washrooms (or we have created our own) (Section 2c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The venue has space for changing and breastfeeding babies (Section 2c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The venue has a variety of seating options (Section 2d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are places for people to sit near registration and at receptions (if applicable) (Section 2d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a volunteer designated as a registration placeholder (Section 2d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All seats in the venue can, reasonably, hear and see the same (Section 2d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are seats (and companion seats, where necessary) reserved throughout the venue to accommodate various needs (Section 2d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are removable seats to accommodate wheelchairs (Section 2d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The venue is not near construction (Section 2e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The venue has adequate lighting (Section 2e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The venue has good sound quality (Section 2e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pre-Event: Logistics**

| The registration form asks about sensitivities (food, chemical, sound, lighting, etc) (Section 1) |
| The registration form asks what people need to fully participate in the event (Section 1) |
| If the registration form must include gender, it asks that people ‘self-identify’ (Section 1) |
| Catering accommodates a variety of dietary restrictions (Section 2a) |
| Chose a social enterprise for off-site catering (Section 2a) |
| Catering is placed in an accessible manner (Section 2b) |
| Catering is labelled appropriately with ingredients, allergens, and which dietary specifications it meets (Section 2b) |
| Interpretation options have been made available and the appropriate ones are requested (if applicable) (Section 3) |
| If ASL is offered, include a symbol on all printed material (ie. posters) for American Sign Language interpretation services (Section 3) |
| Microphones are being used for all presenters & audience questions (Section 3) |
| Turn on subtitles for any videos or audio shown, and consider providing Real-time Captioning. (Section 3a) |

**Pre-Event: Considerations**

<p>| Volunteers and staff are provided with thorough training, on-site orientation, volunteer identification (badge, t-shirt, ID, etc.) (Section 1) |
| Offer specialized training for facilitators regarding conflict resolution, cultural safety and addressing racism (to be expanded by SFU Public Square) (Section 1) |
| Provide speakers and other contractors with an inclusion package (Section 1d) |
| Invite an Elder or Indigenous Representative to offer a welcome and/or land acknowledgement (Section 1e) |
| Consider providing childcare at the event when possible and appropriate (Section 2) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When not providing a childcare service, provide relevant information and resources for parents and guardians in event communications (Section 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have a staff or volunteer on site who is trained in first aid (Section 3a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a staff or volunteer on-site who is trained in overdose response/naloxone administration (Section 3b)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Communications

| Marketing efforts are done through various mediums (Section 1) |
| Accessibility has been outlined on all online event pages (Section 2) |
| Include territorial acknowledgement on online event pages (Section 3) |
| Promotion uses people-first language (Section 4a) |
| Promotion uses gender-neutral language (Section 4b) |
| Include a space for pronouns on name tags to allow be to self identify (Section 4b) |
| Important information is conveyed in text, not just images (Section 4c) |

### Design

| Select paper that is matte and warm white stocks for better readability (Section 1a) |
| Consider cultural implications and interpretations when selecting colours (Section 1b & 2a) |
| Consider barriers for readers with colour blindness when highlighting information in colour or using coloured text (Section 1b & 2a) |
| Select fonts that are well-balanced in form and counterform for better readability (Section 1c & 2b) |
| Consider spare web design that does not require a specific configuration to accommodate visitors with visual or hearing impairments (Section 2a) |
| Offer text alternatives alongside audio or video content for visitors who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing (Section 2c) |

### Post-Event Follow Up

| Provide options for survey participation: on-site, online or by phone (Section 1a) |
Include questions regarding inclusivity and accessibility in post-event evaluation/survey (Section 1a)