Accessible Community Forum: Event Accessibility 101: Inclusion for All

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PART I: Panelists

- Amy Amantea
    - multidisciplinary artist, facilitator, and creative access strategist consultant
- Briana Ingram
    - Manager of Access Transit Planning at TransLink
- Dora Patkos
    - Senior Accessibility Manager at BC Pavilion Corporation (PavCo)
- Karen Lai
    - Accessibility Planner for the City of Vancouver.
- Kay Slater
    - A multidisciplinary artist, accessibility consultant, and arts worker
- Porson Lee
    - Technology Solutions Manager at Wavefront Centre

PART II: Forum

- 39 total EventBrite registrants
- 20 total Attendees

PART III: Survey Responses Summary

- 72 respondents completed the Event Accessibility 101: Ensuring Inclusion for All survey
- Respondents' connection with the disability community:
    - 43 respondents had a visible disability
    - 26 respondents had a hidden or invisible disability
    - 12 respondents were the family member or a care aid of a person(s) with disabilities
    - 7 was a healthcare professionals or aid for a person with a disability
    - 22 were advocates for people with disabilities
    - 2 respondents belonged to a different category
- Types of disabilities respondents are currently living with:
    - 51 had a mobility impairment

    - 9 had a hearing impairment
    - 12 had a visual impairment
    - 12 had a cognitive disability
    - 5 had a memory impairment
    - 11 had a communication impairment
    - 7 had a degenerative disease
    - 9 had a mental health-related disability
    - 5 indicated they did not have a disability
    - 2 preferred not to say
    - 5 selected "other"
- Age of the respondents:
    - 0 were under 18
    - 10 were between 18-30 years of age
    - 22 were between 31-50 years of age
    - 24 were between 51-70 years of age
    - 13 were over 71 years of age
    - 3 preferred not to say
- 17 out of 72 respondents resided in Vancouver, and 35 respondents were in other parts of British Columbia. 18 respondents resided in other parts of Canada and the world. 2 respondents preferred not to answer.
- 35 participants attended events rarely (1-5 events), 12 attended occasionally (6-10 events), 11 attended frequently (11-20 events), 6 attended very frequently (21+ events), and 8 did not attend any events (0 events) in the past year.
- Most of the respondents find out about accessibility details of events through social media (24%), an organization's website (17%), emails from the organization (23%), and word of mouth (15%). Print media, email newsletters, and online advertisements, were not as popular for this group.
- When deciding whether an event is accessible, 23% of respondents look for wheelchair or mobility accessibility, 21% look for cost, 19% look for transportation to the event, 13% look for if they can attend the event with a support person or animal, 9% look for sensory accommodations, 5% preferred assistive technology, 4% look for medical aid, and 7% answered "others."
- 40% of people found that organizers generally provide enough notice prior to events, but 33% did not think so. 26% of people were unsure.
- The most influential factors in attending an event were venue accessibility (16%), availability of accessible restrooms (14%), proximity to public transportation and accessible parking (14%), ticket price and affordability (13%), clear and detailed

accessibility information (11%), type of event and personal interest in the content (11%), availability of captioning or assistive devices (6%), noise levels/quiet spaces (6%), COVID-19 or other health-safety measures (4%), and availability of language assistance (2%). 11 (3%) people answered "other."

- 32 respondents shared that they found misleading information about accessible events. 17 respondents answered that they did not and 23 answered they were not sure. For those who answered "yes," 25 of them shared their experiences with this:
    - **Wheelchair Accessibility**: steep ramps, manual or malfunctioning accessible doors, cramped spaces, and poorly designed accessible washrooms.
    - **Communication and Information**: insufficient or unclear information about accessible seating, and parking.
    - **Sensory and Health Needs**: lack of attention to accessibility needs beyond physical disabilities, such as accommodations for sensory impairments, health-related considerations (e.g., air quality, masks), and cognitive impairments.
    - **Others:** insufficient accessible seating, no or non-operational elevators, difficult-to-navigate spaces, stairs, and blocked seating views.
- Participants shared that the following information or features make event descriptions clear and accessible:
    - Clear instructions for how to get to an event (18%)
    - Clear and relatable graphics/pictures/videos (12%)
    - Easy to understand language (understandable vocabulary, not a lot of jargon) (12%)
    - Captions (if images/videos are being used) (12%)
    - Alternate forms of media (e.g., social media, news, website) (10%)
    - Accessibility of media (10%)
    - Focus on key points rather than extra information (9%)
    - Other (5%)
    - Voice-over/Text-to-speech (5%)
    - Coloured brochure/graphics (5%)
    - A black and white brochure/graphics in the advertisement (2%)
- The participants in this survey require the following accommodations or features at community events:
    - Wheelchair access (30%)
    - Tables set at wheelchair height (19%)
    - Support person during the event (16%)
    - Quiet spaces (12%)
    - Other (11%)
    - Live captions (5%)

    - Large print materials (4%)
    - ASL interpretation (1%)
- 22 participants found the events they have attended so far to be somewhat accessible, 20 were neutral, and 19 found them to be moderately accessible. 7 found them to be very accessible, and oppositely, 4 found them to be not accessible at all.
- Participants shared the following when it came to what made it easier to attend these events:
    - **Accessibility Features:** suitable seating, support persons, options for sensory sensitivities, signage at wheelchair height, space for wheelchairs and room for movement, information about the topography around the venue (e.g., building is on a 15° hill), and microphone that connects to hearing aids.
    - **Communication & Planning:** clear instructions given 1-2 weeks in advance and contact info to discuss specific needs.
    - **Cost & Affordability:** low or no cost for individuals with disabilities.
    - **Event Details:** event details (e.g., dates, times, and accessibility features) are provided upfront, organizers were responsive to accessibility inquiries before the event, and map and schedule provided for the event.
    - **Staff and Support:** knowledgeable staff and volunteers who are trained to assist with accessibility needs.
    - **Transportation & Location:** events being close to transit, adequate accessible parking and shuttle services.
    - **Virtual/Hybrid Options:** offering virtual attendance and event recordings.
- The biggest challenges participants experienced at events were physical barriers (28%), lack of accessibility features (28%), financial constraints (15%), social stigma (12%), communication barriers (9%), and other (5%). This did not apply to 3% of the group.
- A majority of individuals (60%) had to cancel plans for a community event due to accessibility concerns. 22% have never had this concern, and 18% were unsure.
- For indivuals who have had to cancel their plans before, the following concerns were shared:
    - Venue overcrowded/overstimulating without a place to calm down from the sensory stimulation
    - Livestream sound too loud
    - Lack of accessible parking
    - Transportation difficulties and venues changing last minute
    - Lack of options for hearing disabilities
    - Accessible seating taken up by non-wheelchair users
    - Sound and light sensitivity
    - No adult changing table

    - Broken elevator
    - Difficult to navigate outside of building
    - Not being able to sit with support person, family, or friends, in accessible area
- The following barriers have made it difficult for the participants to attend a community event:
    - Limited or inaccessible parking (19%)
    - Event location is too far or difficult to reach (17%)
    - Pathway to event entrance is inaccessible (14%)
    - Lack of public transport options to event (11%)
    - Lack of clear and appropriate signage (10%)
    - Entrance to event was not labeled properly (10%)
    - No available transportation assistance (7%)
    - Signage blocks pathway (7%)
    - Other (3%)
    - Not applicable (2%)
- Participants have also experienced the following challenges when attending events:
    - Challenges with physical accessibility barriers (14%)
    - Inaccessible restrooms (13%)
    - Difficulty with transportation or parking (13%)
    - Staff or volunteers not trained in accessibility or disability awareness (12%)
    - Unclear or missing accessibility information before the event (11%)
    - Difficulty purchasing tickets or requesting accommodations (10%)
    - Crowd size or layout making navigation difficulty (10%)
    - Overwhelming noise levels or lack of quiet spaces (7%)
    - Lack of health and safety measures (e.g., COVID-19 precautions, scent-free environments, etc.) (4%)
    - Other (4%)
    - Lack of captioning, sign language interpretation, or assistive listening devices (2%)
    - Not applicable (2%)
- 26% shared that the high cost of events and a lack of financial assistance for attendees with disabilities (25%) is a barrier to attending them. Moreover, payment machines have been difficult to navigate (9%), and their heights have been inaccessible (13%). Payment difficulties were non-applicable for 16%, and 3% shared that they faced “other” difficulties.
- Social factors that made attending events difficult were concerns that the event may not be fully inclusive (21%) lack of support from event staff (20%), anxiety or lack of confidence about attending an event (20%), lack of assistance in getting to the event

(14%), and worry about harassment, bullying, or feeling unwelcome (10%). For 11% of people, social factors were not applicable, and 5% shared other reasons for social factors being a barrier.

- 30 individuals found that they have attended an event with excellent accessibility and 17 people shared that they had not. 25 people were unsure.
- Key elements that contributed to a positive experience for the above individuals:
    - Accessible washrooms
    - Ample space to move around
    - Ample time for information
    - Clear directions and signage
    - Easy access to parking
    - Feeling accepted and welcomed
    - Ground level or everything on one floor
    - Information on website or easy to reach someone
    - Step-free places
    - Step by step information
    - Support from organizers throughout the event
    - Online or hybrid options
    - Wheelchair section
- When registering for an event, 50% of people find that it is "sometimes" clear and easy to request accommodations. 29% disagreed, 11% shared "yes," and 10% were unsure.
- Individuals shared that the following would make it easier to request accommodations:
    - **Clear communication of accommodations:** information about accommodations clearly listed on event websites or in marketing materials, and a dedicated section or contact person for accessibility inquiries.
    - **Ease of Requesting Accommodations:** providing a simple way to request accommodations (e.g., email or contact form), and a section during event registration where attendees can indicate their needs.
    - **Experience of Requesting Accommodations:** requesting accommodations can feel isolating or stigmatizing.
    - **Ticketing Issues:** difficulty with obtaining wheelchair-accessible tickets, particularly for events sold through platforms like Ticketmaster. Some attendees reported having to call or email to secure tickets.
    - Some respondents noted that events without clear accessibility information are less likely to be trusted, and they prefer not to attend unless they can be confident that their needs will be met.
- Participants shared the following features that are important for them at events:
    - Accessible restrooms (14%)

    - Flexible seating options (e.g., companion seating, space for mobility devices) (14%)
    - Step-free access (ramps, elevators, and accessible seating) (13%)
    - Reserved accessible parking or drop-off areas (12%)
    - Clear accessibility information provided before the event (12%)
    - Trained staff or volunteers to assist with accessibility needs (12%)
    - Virtual or hybrid attendance options (8%)
    - Quiet spaces or sensory-friendly areas (6%)
    - Sign language interpretation or captioning (3%)
    - Other (3%)
    - Assistive listening devices or hearing loop systems (2%)
- Over 70% of individuals find that event planners do not (36%) or only sometimes (35%) consider sensory sensitivities. 7% shared that they do, and 22% were unsure.
- 60% of individuals would benefit from having a quiet or low-stimulation area at events, whereas 28% would not. 13% were unsure.
- 26 people from this survey require a care-aid or support animal at events and 2 people require medical aid on-site. 44 people require neither.
- Participants found that speakers/presenters use language that is easy to decipher only somewhat often. 21 surveyors were neutral, 5 found it rare, 2 shared never, and 5 were unsure. 12 people shared that it occurs very often.
- The following enhancements from speakers will be beneficial at events according to the surveyors:
    - Speaking at a slower than average pace (19%)
    - An interpreter (e.g., ASL, or other) (8%)
    - Clear view of speaker's face and mouth (23%)
    - Microphone (32%)
    - No Microphone (3%)
- Other accommodations that may help would be live transcriptions/captions, a brief summary, volume of the microphone (adjusted to the background noise and space), and receive notes or slides beforehand.