Accessibility

Background

This resource provides artists, creative workers and organisations with a summary guide to good practice standards for accessibility.

This resource was prepared by Accessible Arts NSW, the peak arts and disability organisation in New South Wales. It was prepared for the City of Sydney as part of the Creative Impact webinar series, July 2025.

Accessible Arts NSW advances the rights of, and opportunities for, people with disability or people who are d/Deaf to develop and sustain professional careers in the arts and have equitable access to arts and culture across NSW.

Thinking about access at the very earliest planning stages of your event or project means considering the access requirements of employees, the public and artists or performers who may live with disability.

Inclusive practices and improved accessibility benefits everyone. Good access is good for business, increasing profits, innovation and diversifying audiences. Employing people with disability increases diversity in the workplace and improves productivity and team performance.

The Human Rights Commission has tools and resources for employers seeking to employ people with disability and create safer, respectful accessible workplaces.

Aspects of disability access include consultation and co-design, services and inclusive language, attitude, affordability and access to information. More information on these principles is available on the Accessible Arts NSW website.

Language

Language is a powerful tool we can use to raise awareness and create safe, respectful and welcoming inclusive spaces. Language is constantly evolving as people's lived experiences change so it's important to keep up to date with best practice inclusive language.

Person first language (people with disability) and identity-first language (disabled person) are both used in Australia. Generally, it's best practice to use person first language unless you know an individual prefers identity-first language, or they prefer terms such as d/Deaf or Autistic. It's best to not make assumptions and remember it's ok to politely ask if you're unsure.

Generally, it's ok to refer to 'people with lived experience of disability' but avoid referring to 'people living with disability' and euphemisms or combining ability with other words like 'differently abled' or 'all abilities.'

Venue

- Is the venue wheelchair accessible, including ramps, elevators, lifts, and toilets?
- Are there accessible parking spots and drop-off zones with kerb ramps?
- Is there hearing augmentation available, for example, hearing loop?
- Is there wayfinding and signage? Is there an accessibility map or visual story?

- Does the venue have evacuation procedures that support people with disability who may require assistance (visible and audible)?
- Will there be seating throughout the venue, including spaces for wheelchairs?
- Is there an accessible viewing area and are customer service areas accessible?

Marketing and communications

- Are you including the universal access symbols in all marketing material?
- Is the information provided in multiple formats, such as large print, braille, captioned, Easy Read or Auslan?
- Are images used for website and social media accessible with Alternative (Alt) Text and image descriptions?
- Does the material use plain English?
- Are downloadable documents available in accessible PDF and Microsoft Word?

Digital

- Will there be captioning on all video content, including tutorials, webinars, videos and meetings?
- Is the website compatible with assistive technology such as screen readers?
- Have you reviewed access to information provided online?
- Have you shared the presentation or information to participants in advance?
- Are you recording the event/project, and will transcriptions be made available?

Programming and events

- Have you asked people if they have any access requirements during event registration? It is a legal requirement to provide access and inclusion for equitable participation by people with disability.
- Are various registration options available, including email, phone, in person and online?
- Is a quiet or calm space available for individuals needing a break from sensory stimuli?
- Have you considered hybrid programming, including events held online and in a physical location?
- Will Auslan interpreters be included in public presentations, speeches or tours?
- Will live captions or audio-description be provided?
- Have all accessibility features been promoted to assist people with pre-planning? If people don’t know what’s available, they may not attend.

Employment

- Do you have best practice employment processes and inclusive workplace practices? Employing people with disability, increases diversity and creates accessible workplaces.

Creative Impact

Consultation

- Have you created opportunities to consult with people with disability about the accessibility of your project? Co-design or co-production is best practice for planning, producing and evaluating inclusive and accessible events. Remember to invite feedback for continuous improvement.
- Will there be disability awareness training for everyone involved in the project?
- Have you watched the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower training video?
- Have you provided a tip sheet on disability-inclusive language?

Finance

- Is there a budget for accessibility initiatives within your grant application? For example, Auslan interpreters, live captions, or other alternative formats.
- Have you requested quotes for access services?
- Have you compensated access consultants for their time and expertise?

Industry resources

- Accessible Arts NSW resources
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
- Access Service Providers
- Universal Access Symbols
- Human Rights Commission: Tools and resources for employers seeking to employ people with disability and create accessible workplaces
- What is the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower?
- Guide to Co-design

City of Sydney resources

- Inclusive and accessible event guidelines
- Inclusion (disability) action plan 2025–2029
- Disability inclusive language and communication guidelines summary