

City of Toronto Accessibility in Events Playbook

Presented by AccessNow

About AccessNow

AccessNow is a Canadian social enterprise advancing accessibility through data, education, and systems change. Founded in 2015 in Toronto, AccessNow works across government, tourism, transportation, and culture to embed accessibility into public life.

Our Work Includes:

- AccessNow App: Mapping and verifying accessibility data across cities
- Advising governments and public agencies
- Developing accessibility standards
- Producing large-scale public initiatives like AccessFest

National & International Engagement

- Accessibility Standards Canada (Technical Committee Chair/Vice-Chair)
- Government of Canada funded programming
- Partnerships with municipalities, tourism boards, and major institutions

The Foundation – Identifying Barriers and Opportunity

- Responding to Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee Agenda Item 2025.DI14.7
- Supporting over 570,000 residents as 1 in 4 Torontonians live with a disability
- Bridging the usability gap where 40 percent of attendees report unmet needs at public events
- Recognizing systemic barriers across mobility, vision, hearing, and sensory environments
- Addressing environmental factors including air quality and the need for clean air zones
- Inclusion as a catalyst for social equity and significant national economic growth

Our Proposal – Operationalizing Accessibility

- Transforming the "How" for event organizers by bridging the gap between compliance and meaningful inclusion
- Research-led synthesis of existing Economic Development and Culture (EDC) guides and global best practices
- Leveraging the proven framework and community feedback from the AccessFest initiative
- Establishing a scalable framework for events of all sizes to ensure proactive, not reactive, accessibility
- Advancing the FIFA World Cup 2026 legacy goals through inclusive visitor experiences and social innovation

Format and Structure – Built for Usability and Action

- Lifecycle based navigation following the timeline from permit to post event
- Plain language and high contrast design for diverse operating environments
- Integrated checklists for site selection, vendor procurement, and equipment rentals
- Digital-first architecture optimized for mobile use and screen readers
- Modular and sustainable design to support ongoing updates and evolving standards

Fundamentals – Seven Pillars of Inclusive Events

1. **Planning:** Integrating accessibility into permits, budgeting, and vendor procurement.
2. **Site Design & Navigation:** Addressing paths of travel, wayfinding, and amenities.
3. **Communications & Promotion:** Ensuring digital information, marketing, and ticketing are inclusive.
4. **Access Services:** Guidance on ASL, captioning, sensory supports, and rest areas.
5. **Training:** Educating staff, volunteers, and vendors on consistent accessibility standards.
6. **Emergency & Safety Planning:** Developing inclusive evacuation and risk management procedures.
7. **Community Engagement:** Establishing feedback channels with attendees and disability groups.

Production and Accessible Distribution – Leading by Example

- Modeling best practices through inclusive information delivery
- Professional design meeting City of Toronto and AccessNow branding guidelines
- Multiple accessible formats: WCAG 2.2 AA PDF, large print, and plain language
- ASL video summary highlighting key content
- Serving as a practical example for event producers to support industry change

Thank you

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