Planning Accessible Virtual Events

This job aid provides you with best practices to plan inclusive and accessible virtual events.

- Planning an inclusive and accessible virtual event requires you to anticipate potential accessibility issues and barriers, and to think about measures to address them.
- Too often in event planning, accessibility is an afterthought, and barriers are inadvertently created, which can be physical, informational, technological, communication-based, systemic, attitudinal and behavioural. **They are often unintentional or invisible.**
- As a critical first step, simply ask participants about their needs.

You should consider the participation needs of **a broad range of people with varying abilities** like people with physical, psychosocial, communication, or intellectual disabilities (e.g. mental health issues, autism, dyslexia.) Also **include time for breaks** to provide participants with the time to process information and take a mental break.

Platform
Research the features of the platform you're intending to use to ensure that it meets accessibility guidelines and aligns with participants' needs.

Consultation
To make your event accessible by design, it is important to consult people with disabilities to ask questions and learn more about how to overcome barriers, which builds your awareness and capacity to plan inclusive and accessible virtual events.

Budget
Services such as real-time captioning and sign language interpretation can incur costs. Ensure that your budget allows for these services.

Additional considerations

Write all your documents in **plain language**. Avoid acronyms, jargon, complex graphs and charts, and send all documents to participants a few days prior to the event.

For any visual elements, like presentations or physical demonstrations, you should include an **audio description** to mitigate vision-related barriers.

Prior to your event, **test all accessible technological equipment** and services. Work with participants and service providers to alleviate any potential barriers that might come up during testing.

You should **include captions** for all videos. If you are using accessibility services, such as captioning or sign language interpretation, be sure to-provide them with the video script / captions ahead of time.

Ensure that all documents are **accessible** or have an accessible alternate format (e.g. Braille, large print, etc.) Make sure that all images have an alternative text.

The Office for Disability Issues' Planning Inclusive and Accessible Events handbook offers more information on planning accessible events and contains an extensive list of resources and guidelines.