

AGE-FRIENDLY & ACCESSIBLE MEETINGS & EVENTS GUIDE





Age-Friendly and Accessible Meetings and Events Guide

June 2023

INTRODUCTION

This Guide was developed by the Town of Lincoln's former Age-Friendly Advisory Committee (AFAC) in consultation with the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (JAAC). It is hoped that this Guide will be used by event planners and community organizations to both enhance age-friendly features and reduce barriers enabling people of all ages to actively participate in meetings, events community activities regardless of their age and abilities.

Age-Friendly activities and events respectfully welcome people of all ages to actively participate.

Accessibility refers to the level of ease by which something can be used, seen, understood, or obtained.

The Age-Friendly Advisory Committee was a group of residents, Town of Lincoln Councillors and staff representatives who believe that the Town of Lincoln is and should remain a place for residents of all ages to thrive, contribute and feel excited to call their home. In 2022, the Age-Friendly Advisory Committee expanded its mandate to include a focus on active living and well-being as part of a the newly formed Age-Friendly and Active Community Advisory Committee. The Committee strives to create a vibrant, healthy, and diverse community where quality of life, inclusivity and aging well is supported through all stages of life.

The Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee is a partnership between the six Niagara communities of Lincoln, Grimsby, Pelham, West Lincoln, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Thorold. The JAAC advises and assists the Town of Lincoln in promoting and facilitating a barrier-free municipality for citizens of all abilities (universal accessibility) including persons with disabilities. Together with Council, the JAAC shares a commitment to facilitate the identification and removal of barriers to people with disabilities, promoting equal opportunities to citizens of all abilities.

The Town of Lincoln recognizes that special events provide economic benefits to the local economy, and they enhance the quality of life, tourism, arts and culture, recreation, education, health, and wellness in the community. By planning and implementing age-friendly and accessible meetings, special events and outdoor activities, we can ensure that all Lincoln residents are able to participate in and contribute to the community with independence, equity and dignity.

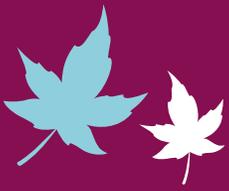
The Age-Friendly and Accessible Meetings and Events Guide provides best practice considerations, and easy to follow checklists. When and where possible, designating a person trained in age-friendly and accessibility mandates as a resource to staff, volunteers and attendees for any questions, issues, or emergencies before and during the event is recommended.

Event Planning and Budgeting

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Select an accessible and age-friendly venue that has accessible parking, accessible washrooms, accessible meeting rooms and sufficient space to move around. Ensure the venue has a hearing loop system/FM Hearing System (a system where the speaker wears a microphone, and the listener can hear them directly through headphones).
2. Location/venue is conveniently located and accessible (consider acoustics, lighting and temperature of room or space is comfortable). Facility should be well-signed outside and inside. Public areas are clean and pleasant. Sufficient seating is available, well-maintained, and safe.
3. Obtain quotes for American Sign Language interpretation, Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) and attendant/personal support worker services. Consider first-aid personnel at your event. Think about arranging these services on a tentative basis as some need significant advanced notice.
4. Activities are held at a time convenient to the expected participant (e.g., children or seniors).
5. Activities are affordable, with no hidden or additional participation costs. Consider a discount for seniors, children or youth.
6. A wide variety of activities is offered to appeal to a diverse population of different ages by accommodating age-specific needs and preferences.
7. Public transportation or shuttles are available, frequent, and accessible.
8. Ask presenters to send in their materials ahead of time so that you can plan to have their materials in alternate formats, should you get a request.
9. Provide a quiet area for people with children and sensory issues.





Event Planning and Budgeting

CHECKLIST

- Event is held at convenient time.
- Event is affordable.
- Consider offering a discount for children and/or seniors.
- A wide variety of events/activities are provided.
- An accessible and age-friendly venue has been selected.
- Venue is comfortable (good acoustics, temperature, has good lighting).
- Venue is close to accessible transportation or accessible shuttles.
- Transportation is frequent.
- There is accessible parking available close to the entrance. It accommodates both cars and vans.
- There is sufficient space for a drop-off zone.
- There is sufficient space and grass for service animals to relieve themselves.
- Entrance is accessible – either sliding doors or automatic door openers.
- Seating is available at entrance as is safe.
- Washrooms are accessible to wheelchairs or scooters, and a universal, unisex washroom is available.
- Meeting rooms are accessible to assistive devices (wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, service animals) and can be set up as needed.
- Enough space has been given at tables to allow wheelchairs and scooters to pass each other.
- A quiet area is available.
- Signs or volunteers are available to assist with wayfinding (e.g., signs for washrooms).
- A hearing loop system is available or can be brought in.
- Budget is available for disability-related accommodations (e.g., ASL interpreters, CART services, personal support workers).



Outdoor Events & Festivals

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Location has level, firm and stable walkways and pathways.
2. Accessible parking close to the entrance is available. It is accessible to both cars and vans.
3. Accessible washrooms or portable toilets are available.
4. Directional signage for accessible parking, entrance, accessible washrooms/portable toilets is installed.
5. If your event includes transportation, use accessible vehicles. For example, provide an accessible shuttle service from a remote parking lot to the event area.
6. Use cable protectors that are wheelchair accessible and brightly coloured.
7. Sufficient seating is available, well-maintained, and safe. Provide seating in rest areas. It should provide shade.
8. Provide a quiet area with shade to people with children and sensory issues.
9. Public eating areas – 20% of picnic tables are accessible to mobility-aid users.
10. Train event staff to assist people navigate the site/provide orientation and offer assistance.

CHECKLIST

- Path of travel is level, firm and stable.
- Accessible parking is available.
- Accessible washrooms and/or portable toilets are available.
- Directional signage is installed.
- Festival specific transportation is accessible.
- Cable protectors are wheelchair accessible and contrast from the surrounding environment.
- At least 20% of public eating areas have accessible tables.
- Sufficient seating is available, well-maintained, and safe.
- Shaded rest areas, with seating, are available.
- A quiet space is available.
- Event staff and volunteers are trained to provide assistance, orientation, and guidance for all accessibility features.





Virtual Meetings and Events

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Ensure materials can be shared online and/or are sent via email before the meeting.
2. Ensure that the video platform has accessibility features – such as closed captioning, chat side bar, break-out rooms.
3. If broadband capacity is low, it is better to use teleconferences.
4. Designate an Event Host – turns event “on”, admits participants, shares screen content and transitions between speakers etc.
5. Designate a Moderator – announces speakers, manages timekeeping, monitors the agenda and fields questions for speakers.
6. Designate a Chat Moderator – monitors chat room and presents questions that arise.
7. Designate a Note Taker – transcribes all questions/answers, important information.
8. Ensure you have American Sign Language interpretation, Communication Access Real-time Translation services (CART).

CHECKLIST

- Materials can be shared online and have been sent via email beforehand.
- Video platform is accessible.
- Event Host is designated.
- Moderator is designated.
- Chat Moderator is designated.
- Note Taker is designated.
- Event has American Sign Language interpretation, Communication Access Real-time Translation services (CART).

Food and Refreshments

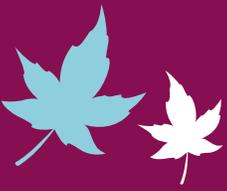
CONSIDERATIONS

1. For events, provide a variety of options that meet various dietary restrictions. When holding meetings, ask participants if they have any dietary restrictions and make sure alternatives are provided.
2. If it is a buffet-style event, be sure to place food, drinks, and utensils in easy reach of a person using a wheelchair.
3. Provide bendable straws as well as some cups with handles. People who have limited use of their hands have difficulty grasping or holding objects such as cups.
4. Ask volunteers to offer assistance or provide seated service to guests with disabilities.
5. Seating areas – 20% of tables are accessible to mobility-aid users.

CHECKLIST

- Enough food for participants and support persons is available.
- Arrangements have been made for people with special diets/allergies.
- Buffet items are within easy reach or seated service is provided.
- Bendable straws and cups with handles are available.





Event Schedule

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Make sure there is enough time for people with disabilities or older adults to move from one session to another with ease.
2. Ensure there is sufficient time for bathroom breaks. Provide sufficient time for people who have service animals and/or personal support workers with them.
3. Ask presenters if they require accommodation (e.g., a ramp to the stage).

CHECKLIST

- Sufficient time for moving between sessions has been scheduled.
- Sufficient time for bathroom breaks for service animal and personal support workers has been scheduled.
- Accommodations for presenters has been arranged (as applicable).



Emergency Planning

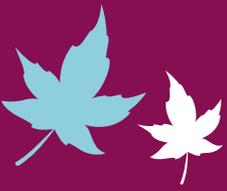
CONSIDERATIONS

1. Meet with the facility manager ahead of time and discuss the emergency plan and ensure it includes people with disabilities.
2. Designate a few staff or volunteers to assist people in the event of an emergency. Make them easily visible with name tags or a vest.
3. Explain the venue's emergency plan to staff and volunteers.

CHECKLIST

- Have met with facility manager to review emergency planning process.
- Have designated staff or volunteers to assist in an emergency. They are identified by a badge or vest.
- Staff and volunteers have been trained in emergency response process.





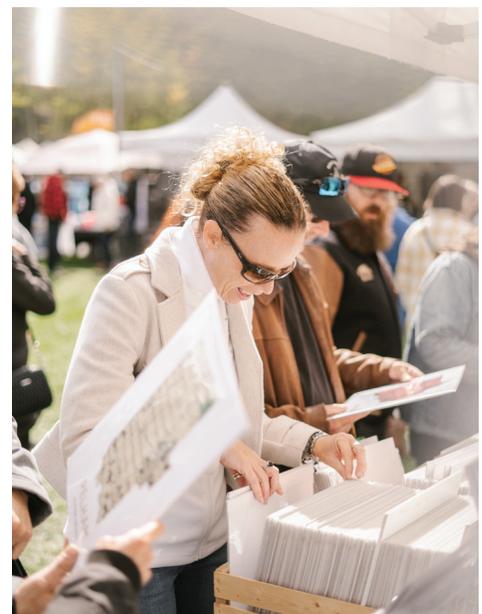
Training Event Staff and Volunteers

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Ensure venue staff and volunteers who will be assisting during the event have been trained in accessible customer service. Meet with venue staff ahead of time and outline your needs and expectations and to review emergency planning procedures.
2. Show all event staff and volunteers where elevators, accessible washrooms, break-out rooms, quiet areas, emergency fire exits, and service animal areas are located.
3. Ensure all event staff and volunteers are aware that service animals may be present and what the appropriate etiquette is.
4. Ensure that volunteers know that an assistive device is an extension of someone's body (including service animals).

CHECKLIST

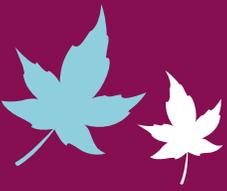
- Meet with venue staff and volunteers to train them in your needs – accessible customer service, service animal etiquette, emergency planning procedures.
- Ensure staff and volunteers know the location of elevators, accessible washrooms, emergency exits and service animal relief areas.



Marketing and Registration

CONSIDERATIONS

- 1.** Use a variety of marketing formats – print (newspaper and flyers/posters), social media, online, media, email, telephone, word of mouth. Offering multiple ways to receive information, makes it more accessible to the intended audience.
- 2.** Ensure marketing materials are accessible – large print, high contrast, plain language, use alternate text on images - describe what is happening. Hemingway Editor is a great tool that assists writers by checking that plain language is used.
- 3.** Use multiple Registration formats – in person, online, via telephone.
- 4.** Set a deadline for advanced notice for accommodations. This allows you to find appropriate vendors and plan for participants' needs. Designate one contact to receive and address accommodation needs of participants. Ensure this person's contact information is in the marketing material.
- 5.** Allow enough time for participants to contact you with their accommodation needs.
- 6.** If someone is registering in person, offer to assist in registering the attendee.
- 7.** Special customer services arrangements are available – e.g., separate lines, lowered service counters.
- 8.** Ensure online registration is accessible - Readable on a screen reader and has a fillable PDF format. Also, offer assistance in filling out forms or provide an alternative (telephone, email support).
- 9.** Seating area is available for queuing areas and registration tables.
- 10.** Outreach includes people at risk of social isolation.
- 11.** Where possible use images of a diverse population in a positive way to demonstrate the event is inclusive and accessible.



MARKETING CHECKLIST

- Activities are held at a convenient time and affordable cost.
- Outreach includes people at risk of social isolation.
- Discounts given for youth or seniors.
- Diversity is reflected in marketing and registration material.
- Accessible fonts have been used (Verdana, Calibri, Arial, Tahoma).
- A minimum of 12-point font has been used.
- There is a solid background behind text. Plain language has been used.
- Text has been checked for plain language using Hemingway Editor.
- Images have alternate text (describes what the image is).
- Use bold sparingly to emphasize key points.

REGISTRATION CHECKLIST

- Sufficient time has been given to arrange accommodation needs.
- A variety of registration methods have been given.
- Separate registration lines are available.
- Lowered service counters are available.
- Seating area at registration is available.



Day of Event

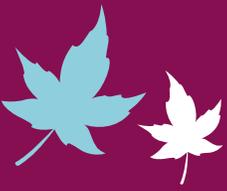
CONSIDERATIONS

1. Walk through the event venue to ensure pathways are sufficiently wide and are clear.
2. Ensure there is sufficient clearance under the table for wheelchair users.
3. If there is an obstacle in the path that cannot be moved, post volunteers to redirect participants around the hazard.
4. Have some materials available in large print and electronic copy (Word) for last minute accommodation.
5. Have an area available to park mobility equipment (walkers, scooters, and wheelchairs, strollers) if desired.
6. Ensure presenters, staff and volunteers have masks, if required. Choose masks with windows so that it assists people who read lips.

CHECKLIST

- A walk through the venue has been done. All arrangements are done as requested.
- Staff are posted to redirect participants around obstacles that cannot be moved.
- Some basic alternate formats are available (large print and electronic).
- A mobility device parking area has been established.
- Presenters, staff and volunteers have masks, if required.





Evaluation

1. Debrief staff and volunteers once the meeting/ event is over. Make note of problems and successes of the day. Debrief can also occur via email, telephone or survey. Ask if they felt people with disabilities were adequately supported. Also, ask if they feel they needed more training and orientation.
2. Identify new ways a future event can be made accessible to people with disabilities.
3. Feedback from participants should be received in a variety of ways – printed evaluation form, telephone and email.
4. Create an accessible evaluation form – large print, accessible font, plain language, fillable PDF/Word.



Resources



Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
aoda.ca



Guide to Accessible Remote Meetings
files.ontario.ca/msaa-age-friendly-communities-remote-events-planning-resource-en-2021-01-01.pdf



Guide to Planning Inclusive Meetings
canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/arc/inclusive-meetings.html



Town of Lincoln Special Event Guide
lincoln.ca/services/applications-permits-licences/special-event-application



Guide to Accessible Festivals and Outdoor Events
accessibilitycanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Festivals-and-Events-Guide-EN.pdf

Schedule for Document Review

Date: June 2023

Scheduled for review: Minimum every 2 years



a place to
GROW

a place to
PROSPER

a place to
BELONG

