



Making meetings and events accessible

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Acknowledgement

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Purpose, audience and objectives

Purpose	Many programmes will have components of meeting with young people either physically or virtually, either in trainings, workshops, and other learning events. Making such meetings and events accessible is critical to ensure that all programme participants are equally benefitting. It can help to have some accessibility checklists to support planning, delivery, and evaluation of these meetings. Consulting with organisations of young people with disabilities as well as other relevant guides in this series will go a long way to support successful, accessible, and inclusive meetings with young people with disabilities. This guide acts as a checklist to help you.
Audience	It is one of a series of short guides developed by Sightsavers, within Futuremakers by Standard Chartered , and specifically written with Youth Business International programme partners in mind. While advice included in the document is more targeted towards YBI's youth entrepreneurship programme, we have tried to make these relevant to all Futuremakers projects.
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To build greater disability confidence of the reader and how partners can better include youth with disabilities in their Futuremakers projects.2. To give specific examples, advice and simple steps on how to adapt projects to be more inclusive of youth with disabilities.

Accessible meetings and events¹

Before meetings and events

- Ask attendees to confidentially register their accessibility requirements. These could include requests for braille or large-print documents, advance receipt of handouts, etc.
- As such, remember to include sufficient budget for accessibility and reasonable accommodation (e.g. sign language interpreters, illustrators etc). If persons with disabilities are attending the event with an assistant, you may also need to pay their expenses
- Where possible, give attendees at least two weeks' notice to the meeting so that any necessary adjustments can be put in place in time

¹ Guidance is adapted from **Sightsavers work** on this topic as well as **CBM's Inclusive Development Toolkit**

- Ensure the meeting room/venue booked is accessible for all. You may contact the local organisation of young people with disabilities to do a simple accessibility audit of the proposed venue
- Think about how attendees would reach the meeting venue. For example, nearness of the hotel to public service vehicles; budgeting for reasonable accommodation also entails supporting participants with their expenses to reach the venue

During meetings and events

- Facilitators should speak at a standard pace; this is also helpful for sign language interpreters not to struggle as they interpret (especially when it is too fast). This may be helpful for language translators too if available
- If there is a microphone available do use it, even if you think you have a loud voice. If there is a Q&A session, make sure a microphone is available for audience members to use. If there are participants who are blind or with low vision, it is helpful to speak firstly without the microphone so they can locate you in the room and also recognise your voice. It is also useful to say your name each time you speak
- Create an open, enabling atmosphere where everyone can express their accessibility needs and feel comfortable when communicating
- Inform other speakers about the accessibility needs of the attendees (ensuring attendees consent to this first)
- Stay within the allotted time in the agenda and ensure scheduled breaks are taken on time
- Think about room signage system, room layout, lighting, seating, background noise and how different aspects support or minimise meaningful participation of the diversities of young people in the room

Consider the following guidance as regards to sign language interpreters:

- Sign language is a language in its own right, with regional and local differences, as with spoken languages
- Sign language interpreters need breaks and to be situated in places with maximum visibility, those using sign language interpreters also need good lighting but not with direct sunlight
- Make sure there are two sign language interpreters for long meetings and that Deaf participants have approved those being employed as meeting standards
- Make sure presenters give sufficient time for sign language interpreters to complete translation and to swap between interpreters on long sessions
- Additionally, provide interpreters with relevant workshop resources well in advance so they are prepared

After meetings and events

- Share with attendees brief, clear notes that cover topics discussed, what decisions were taken, who is going to take action and by when
- It is important to use plain language and avoid any acronyms or jargon
- Ask for feedback regarding accessibility and inclusion and look at what could be improved for next time. This **sample questionnaire** offers a checklist to gauge meaningful engagement of all persons with disabilities in in-person as well as virtual meetings

Virtual meetings²

Ensure:

- Accessibility of the event, this may include interpretation (e.g. sign language, local language,), written transcription (live closed captioning), converting material in different formats (e.g. audio, illustrations, easy language) as well as reimbursement for data/internet access (for both participants and support persons)
- The platform selected for holding virtual consultations is accessible for persons with disabilities, and tools used during the event including polls and surveys are accessible for persons with disabilities as far as possible. Information on the usage of the platform/tools should be shared beforehand to enable participation of those not familiar with the technology. In some cases, a pre-meeting or the offer of support staff can be helpful
- The invitation or registration form has an option for participants to request their accessibility requirements
- Ground rules of the event are established at the beginning, e.g. switching off the microphone when not speaking to avoid background noise. Important features/buttons like the chat function or the available language interpretation are explained. Sign Language interpretation and live closed captioning are visible in every presenting mode

Further reading

There are many resources on this topic. The guides in this series are also very useful as making meetings accessible for young people with disabilities also depends on other dynamics such as an in-depth understanding by organisations on accessibility and reasonable accommodation; on meaningfully engaging persons with disabilities in programming, on working with and through organisations of persons with disabilities, etc.

There are technical aspects required that can also be found for example the Sightsavers' **accessibility standards and audit pack** that offers guidance to governments, healthcare providers and other organisations on how to improve healthcare facilities in low and middle-income settings, as well as the Sightsavers' brand book titled **How we make our work inclusive**, which also offers more technical guidance on designing for accessibility.

At an organisational level, starting to make a difference can entail many things that have at their heart, the intention to not leave any young people out from meaningfully engaging in our meetings, both in person, and virtual.

How to make your work inclusive. This accessibility pack offers guidelines for creating accessible communications across different contexts. It could be your posters or brochures; your PowerPoints or PDF documents; it could be creating digital content, or even your in-person or virtual meetings and many other accessibility tips to apply across different mediums and platforms): www.sightsavers.org/accessibility-pack

² Guidance adapted from the **CBM Inclusive Participation Toolbox**

We work with partners in low-
and middle-income countries to
eliminate avoidable blindness
and promote equal opportunities
for people with disabilities.

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