How to plan accessible, inclusive events for people of all abilities

All event facilities must meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. At EY our goal is for people of diverse abilities not only to fully participate, but to feel welcome and comfortable. The guidelines below can help in planning fully inclusive events and meetings.

Access

- Facilities – All facilities should meet ADA requirements. In addition, consider:
  - Are sinks, faucets, soap, and towel dispensers reachable by all?
  - Are doors an appropriate weight, and are they accessible for people who are in wheelchairs or people carrying items?

- Transportation
  - Can the facility be accessed by bus, taxi, metro or other means? (This is a diversity and demographic issue, as well as a disability issue.)

- Parking
  - Is parking close to the event and affordable?
  - Is parking accessible for wheelchairs and canes?
  - Can a person with mobility challenges or fatigue get from the parking section to the event venue?
  - Is covered parking available and conjoined to the event venue? If not, has a shuttle or mobility vehicle been considered or provided?

- Height of tables and bars
  - Are table sizes appropriate for people of all heights, including little people and people in wheelchairs?

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Space

- Personal space
  - Is there enough personal space per person in the venue to accommodate everyone, including wheelchairs, walkers, canes or other personal items?
- Enough seating
  - Is seating available for people who may need to sit throughout the event?

Food

- Will anyone need assistance holding food or drinks? Are there places to put down food and drinks? Will assistance be provided to those requesting it if the meal is buffet style instead of sit-down style with servers? Be certain to consider people with canes and wheelchairs, or those who may have full hands.
- Consider allergies, diabetes, blood pressure, vegetarian, and vegan – many of these items can be combined to address concerns.

Communication

- Consider potential hearing, reading, and language challenges.
- Ask participants if they or their invited guest(s) will require assistance during the event.
- Inform potential participants of the event’s details so they will know if they need assistance. (For example, if a person mistakenly believes there will not be speakers, he or she may not ask for sign language interpreter. Or, if a person doesn’t know that a meal is buffet style, he or she may not think to ask for assistance getting the food.)

Notes for speakers

- Speak clearly, face forward and avoid covering your mouth.
- Avoid sidebar conversations.
- Avoid acronyms and colloquialisms.
- Identify yourself each time you speak.
- When addressing someone specifically, say his/her name to confirm you have that person's attention.
- Indicate when you are finished speaking.
- If there is an interpreter, look at/address the meeting participant, not the interpreter.

Notes for event planners

- Are all ages represented at the event? Do you see people with visible disabilities? If not, are you sure that your event is inclusive to these people?
- Many people will not speak up if they believe they will be uncomfortable at an event. Instead, they likely won't attend.
- If people voice their discomfort and their needs are not addressed the first time, they may not speak up or attend again.
- If the event is held annually, consider alternating venues from indoor to outdoor and take varying physical abilities into account when deciding upon activities.