



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Campus
Operations
and Delivery

Sustainable Events Accessibility Guide



Introduction

The University of Melbourne underscores the significance of hosting events that seamlessly integrate sustainability, accessibility, and inclusivity. With two pivotal plans in place – the [Disability Inclusion Action Plan \(DIAP\)](#) and the [Sustainability Plan 2030](#) – it is imperative that we holistically embrace these guiding principles. By doing so, we can curate a welcoming and responsible event experience that thoughtfully addresses the needs of all attendees while conscientiously minimising our environmental footprint.

This guide provides an integrated approach that ensures that our events not only uphold our sustainability commitments but also foster an inclusive and accommodating environment for our diverse community.

For further information on how to run an accessible event, you can reference the [accessible and inclusive event checklist](#).

Hybrid events: *Sustainable and accessible*

Hosting an event online drastically lowers emissions whilst eliminating the physical barriers people may encounter at an in-person event.

Selecting an accessible videoconferencing platform

- The two major platforms used at the University are Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Further information on Zoom and Teams accessibility is available on the [Web Accessibility site](#).
- Ensure the platform has features like closed captioning, screen reader compatibility and multilingual support.

- Enable and test the platform's accessibility features beforehand
- Provide a phone number as an alternative dial-in method for participants with no computer or variable internet access.
- Offer a contact person who can assist with troubleshooting or any access requirements prior to and during the event.

Creating accessible content

- Adopt inclusive terminology when discussing disability ([PWDA Language Guide](#))
- Provide event materials such as agendas beforehand using formats like an editable Microsoft Word document that has gone through the Microsoft Word accessibility checker.
- Use clear and simple language with the assistance of applications like [Hemingway](#).
- Provide transcripts, captions (either automated or live) or sign language interpreters (upon request) for videos and presentations.
- Ensure presentations use plain language, good colour contrast ([WebAIM](#)) and appropriate font size. [Reference the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines for more details](#).
- Provide alternative text for images ([Vision Australia guide](#))
- Design any interactive elements like polls and breakout sessions with inclusivity in mind, ensuring that activities are adjusted if any attendees disclose physical, cognitive or sensory disabilities.

- Use Microsoft Word documents that have been checked with the Microsoft Word accessibility checker instead of PDFs.
- Use technology such as [ReadSpeaker](#) for embedding audio versions of text.
- Have accessible media and [provide captions for videos](#) and presentations. Be cautious of automatic caption services that have accuracy issues, especially if content is more technical or niche. Wherever possible, a human should review and edit captions to ensure accuracy ([Captioning style guide](#)).

Offer accessible forms of engagement

- Design your events to encourage engagement and interaction by offering diverse ways for attendees to interact such as chat rooms, discussion forums and Q&A sessions with verbal and non-verbal/text-based options.
- Help attendees navigate the event by clearly stating which attendees and/or presenters are present online (if relevant), verbally updating people on what is happening throughout the event (eg. what section you are up to) and providing clear instructions for attendee participation.
- Consider offering on-demand content for those who cannot attend live.

For guidance on selecting an accessible venue for in-person events, you can reference the [accessible and inclusive event checklist](#).

Preparing for an inclusive and sustainable event

Thoughtful planning is crucial to ensuring your event is environmentally responsible whilst being accessible. Include a dedicated budget for accessibility services, such as sign language interpreters (if needed) and live captioning.

Event Promotion

Including information about how attendees can contribute to improving the sustainability of the event in promotions can be highly effective. This includes asking attendees to bring their own reusable keep cups, water bottles and stationery, along with outlining nearby active transport routes (keeping in mind to also provide details of low-floor tram routes and nearby accessible carparking).

- Ensuring that this message is accessible to all is essential (see Creating Accessible Content above)

Event Registration

When creating your registration form, be sure to:

- Ask attendees to specify their accessibility requirements
- Outline the venue's accessibility features and sustainable transportation options
- Note if the event will involve high stimulation, scents, avoid flashing light or offer a low sensory/stimulation room

- Ask about dietary restrictions and preferences if food will be served

Engaging Attendees

Plan activities that:

- Are modified if necessary to be inclusive of any physical, sensory and cognitive needs disclosed in the event registration whilst encouraging sustainable practices, such as workshops on upcycling or guided nature walks.
- Educate on the event's sustainability efforts and encourage eco-friendly participation
- Use materials that are designed to be accessible, including braille, large print or screen-readable digital formats. Also ensure they are reusable, or paper-based and recyclable to minimise waste.

Inaccessible forms and digital platforms can alienate students, staff and visitors with disabilities. Moving to paper-free systems is a positive step for sustainability but must be inclusive with the help of platforms like:

- Accessible Form Builders:
 - Microsoft Forms: Designed to meet accessibility standards and works with screen readers.
 - JotForm: Offers accessible templates with WCAG 2.1 compliance.
- Accessibility testing tools:
 - WAVE: Free web accessibility evaluation tool.
 - AXE by Deque: Browser extension for auditing accessibility issues.
- Microsoft Word documents that have gone through the Microsoft Word accessibility checker.

Regularly collect feedback to identify barriers and make improvements.

Catering and Waste Management

When organising catering:

- Offer inclusive menu options for various dietary needs and restrictions, with clear labelling. To make it more sustainable ensure at least 80% of the menu is vegetarian or even better, make it 100%.
- Feature sustainable practices, such as sourcing local, organic and plant-based foods and using reusable or compostable dishware.
- Ensure table heights cater for mobility aid users and allow easy access to catering.
- Clearly label food items (e.g., vegetarian, gluten-free, halal) using either reusable labels, wipeable chalk boards or seeded paper.
- Encourage attendees to bring reusable water bottles and coffee cups

Current State	Sustainable and accessible alternative	Options
Pre-packaged Foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request caterers to provide reusable containers for food or supply pre-washed, sanitised containers for attendees to package items themselves. Opt for pre-portioned servings in reusable containers that can be picked up from a central station, reducing waste and ensuring hygiene. 	<p>Choose to Reuse events kit (all reusable items are washed in an industrial-grade commercial dishwasher to ensure a high standard of hygiene)</p> <p>Returnr</p>
Sharing stations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designate a separate section for immune-compromised attendees whilst still prioritising reusable options. Provide individual reusable tongs and serving tools to minimise cross-contamination. Offer personalised reusable kits containing utensils, napkins and straws for attendees. Set up widely accessible hand sanitising stations near food distribution areas to promote hygiene. Arrange small group sharing stations with items divided into smaller portions, limiting interaction with shared setups. 	<p>Purchase a set of reusable tongs and serving tools for events</p>
Single-use utensils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider reusable or sustainable options like stainless steel, bamboo, or silicone utensils. Provide cleaning stations or ensure hygienic post-cleaning handling to address hygiene concerns. Offer lightweight utensil kits in fabric or silicone cases, including adaptive utensils for individuals with limited dexterity or strength. 	<p>Knork Eco Friendly</p>
Plastic straws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible silicone straws: Soft, bendable, and reusable. Stainless steel straws with silicone tips: Durable and comfortable with a soft tip. Paper straws: Compostable but less suitable for extended use or hot beverages. 	<p>Bamboo straws</p> <p>Topple tray</p>

Paper-Free and Accessible Resources:

- E-Ink tablets: Provide devices like the Remarkable Tablet for sustainable, paper-like digital notetaking and form filling.
- Interactive Kiosks: Install user-friendly kiosks with accessibility features in key locations.
- Printing of navigational signage: Have a set of reusable signs (with dates and event specifics omitted) for wayfinding.
- QR Codes with inclusive links: Use QR codes to direct attendees to accessible online content.

QR codes may be inaccessible to those with vision impairments so consider using one of these alternatives (selected based on the accessibility needs of your attendees):

- Ensure the QR code is formatted with high contrast ([WebAIM](#)).
- Short URLs: Providing short, easy-to-type URLs alongside QR codes ensures that users who cannot scan the codes still have a way to access the content. These URLs can be read aloud by screen readers, making them accessible to visually impaired users. Alternatively, use a hyperlink with meaningful text (e.g. [Google Search](#) rather than 'Click here')
- NFC (Near Field Communication) Tags: NFC tags allow users to access information simply by tapping their device on the tag.
- Braille and Tactile Signage: Including braille and tactile information alongside QR codes can help visually impaired individuals locate and understand the context of the codes. Tactile indicators can guide users to the QR code's location.
- SMS and email links: Providing information via SMS or email links can be a straightforward alternative. Users can receive a message with a link that directs them to the desired content without needing to scan a QR code.
- Accessible Web Design: Ensure that the websites attendees are being directed to are accessible and if not, summarise the information on a Microsoft Word document that has gone through the Word accessibility checker ([Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#)).

On the day considerations

- Ensure clear paths inside and outside the venue.
- Remove obstacles and trip hazards in the venue and its surroundings.
- Provide ample space and seating options for mobility aid users.
- Keep all non-automatic doors open.
- Use clear signage, including for accessible entrances.
- Reserve front seats for individuals with hearing impairments.

Please refer to the [accessible and inclusive events checklist](#) and [central events planning guide](#) for further guidance on running an accessible event.