



**GT Guide for  
Accessible Event Planning**

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# GT Guide for Accessible Event Planning

## Introduction

The Georgia Institute of Technology values our diverse perspectives and is committed to the full inclusion of all who seek to engage with the institute. Whether a student, faculty, or staff member, we are all leaders with the ability to positively influence others and create a welcoming environment.

The expectation of leaders at Georgia Tech is to ensure that students, faculty, staff, team members, alumni, and visitors feel valued, respected, and experience a sense of belonging within the Georgia Tech community. With this expectation in mind, the purpose of the following guidance is to provide information on the planning of accessible events, meetings, and activities. While this guide offers advice in selected areas on accessible event planning, please also check the additional resources provided at the end of this guide for more in-depth information.

## Definitions

For the purpose of this guide, three primary definitions apply:

- Accessibility - The practice of making information, activities, and/or environments sensible, meaningful, and usable for as many people as possible
- Accommodations - Specific and individualized modifications for one community member.
- Events - Refer to meetings, conferences, and activities of the institute.

## Planning Guidance

Conceptualizing an event, meeting, or activity that is inclusive of the greater community takes some forethought and allows participants to experience the event in a variety of ways. Whether planning an annual event, a monthly meeting, or a two-day conference, expanding the scope of the common areas listed below can assist in making your event more inclusive.

**Budget and Costs** – Event budgets should include the eventuality of the need for sign language interpreting, captioning services, or other accommodation-specific needs.

**Location** – Finding an accessible and all-encompassing location is an essential start to planning your event and may make a difference in whether someone will or will not attend. Keep in mind that ease of travel and accessible entrances and exits should be factored into whether a location will be appropriate for the event.

Tips:

- Visit the prospective site of the meeting or event in advance.
- Assess the venue for accessibility starting with the surrounding area and parking lot.
- Confirm that ADA parking for cars and vans is available as well as a guest drop-off that is close to the venue.
- The venue should be well-lit.
- Check for adequate directional signage indicating accessible parking, travel routes, and entrances.

- Assess the pathway to the entrance. Are there curb cuts from the parking lot? Are there ramps or elevators? Are there stairs?
- Assess the facility, including meeting rooms, dining areas, and restrooms for accessibility.
- Doors should open easily.

**Activities** – All aspects of an event should be considered when ensuring the overall accessibility of the event activities.

Tips:

- Consider possible evident or potential barriers to participation in the activity that was selected. Some barriers may not be evident at first glance. It is a best practice to assume there will be some barrier removal needed for full participation in any activity.
- Look for accessibility features you or the vendor can include to allow full participation in the activity for everyone in attendance. When choosing a vendor, event planners need to ensure the vendor is providing an accessible product or service. If not, the vendor or event planner needs to be prepared to provide accommodations.
- An example of a modification that you may discuss with a vendor can include a team activity such as a high or low ropes course. Ask the vendor what modifications can be made for people with various physical abilities.

**Vendors** – Accessibility is necessary whether hiring a vendor or if you are solely responsible for the event. If hiring a vendor to assist with an event, it is important for event planners to confirm ahead of the event if they are able to make accommodations for attendees.

Tips:

- Event planners should ask what accommodations the vendor is willing or able to make prior to the event.
- If the vendor is not able to provide the requested accommodation, then the event planner should make arrangements to provide the accommodation.
- Similarly, event planners should confirm if a vendor may need accommodations in order to perform their services at your event.

**Meeting Space** – Once the location is selected ensuring an accessible meeting space within the location is also necessary. Ensure that the event set-up allows for ease of access.

Tips

- Registration and meeting materials as well as food and beverages should be placed where they are accessible to people who use wheelchairs.
- Tables should allow knee clearance for individuals using wheelchairs. Avoid long tablecloths and allow sufficient room for individuals using mobility devices to approach tables and turn around easily.
- Allow adequate clearance around and between tables, so people using mobility devices can navigate easily.
- Blend accessible seating throughout the room allowing open spaces for people using wheelchairs.

- Make sure there is seating with a clear view of the interpreter for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Be prepared to allow space in the front of the room for a sign language interpreter as well as a CART reporter and equipment.
- Accessible restrooms should be in close proximity.
- Staff should understand that service animals are allowed.

**Participation Methods** – It is important to consider that some attending the event may need to have alternate formats or alternative ways of participating in the components of your event.

**Promotion** – Expect your event to have a wide appeal. Prepare to promote your event in a variety of ways and ensure that the promotional materials are accessible to a wide audience.

Tips:

- For larger events, include a section about accessibility available at the venue on your event website along with contact information for questions.
- Use a variety of mediums to promote the event. (ex. print, email, accessible website, and captioned video)
- Publicize the event early and allow yourself time to put accommodations in place.
- Include a statement on web pages, captioned videos, emails, flyers, and other forms of promotion and registration materials that explain how to request a reasonable disability accommodation and who to contact with questions about accommodations and event accessibility.
- State that materials are available in alternative formats and will be provided upon request.

**Registration/RSVP** – Registration is a good opportunity to gather information about the participants and prepare for necessary adjustments to space, seating, audience notes to the speaker, etc.

Tips

- Designate a contact person to respond to and address requests for disability accommodations.
- Include a field in your registration for guests to indicate any necessary accommodations or dietary concerns.
- Be prepared to accommodate mobility devices, assist with orientation to the facility, provide sign language interpreters, captioning, Computer-Aided Real-time Translation (CART), material in alternative texts, dietary and other accommodations.
- Provide alternative registration options. (ex. email, text message, phone)

**Meals** – Confirming that participants can participate easily and meet dietary needs are critical components to using mealtime as a constructive community-building opportunity for inclusion.

Tips

- Make sure there are accessible routes for individuals using wheelchairs and other mobility devices in the seating areas.
- Do not use tables with attached seating.
- Alert your caterer early to any dietary concerns. The menu should account for dietary restrictions. Dietary restrictions should be considered for all snacks and beverages, even those that are not supplied by a caterer.
- Discuss with your banquet captain how you will identify individuals who have requested a special meal.

**Presentations** – In many events presentations are the central focus of the occasion. It is therefore crucial that all aspects of the presentation be accessible to those in attendance and that presenters have any necessary accommodations.

#### Tips

- Ask presenters for presentation materials well in advance in order to timely create alternative formats.
- Provide copies of materials to interpreters and/or CART reporters in advance.
- Make sure visuals and text in presentations are accessible.
  - Subheadings = 30pt+
  - Body Text = 28pt+
  - Sans serif fonts e.g. Helvetica, Arial, Calibri, Antique Olive, etc.
  - White background with black text or black background with white text
  - NEVER USE GRAY (graphics/backgrounds/text) – least accessible color
  - Bold, underline, “quotes” = better visibility than italics
  - No text with shadows!
  - When graphics or other displayed information is relevant, describe them to the extent useful for understanding the presentation.
  - If using video, please include captions.
  - If using graphics, please use alternative texts.
  - If using animations, please reduce speed so that it can be explained while moving
- Speakers should use a microphone or hands-free amplification device to ensure that they can be clearly heard by those using alternative listening devices or for the purposes of virtual facilitation.

**Accommodating Speakers** – Accessibility for events should also be extended to speakers, guest presenters, and vendors. Event planners should ensure that those who are leading an event also have an opportunity to participate fully in the event.

#### Tips

- Inform presenters of the process for requesting accommodation and who to contact for accommodation and event accessibility information.
- Be prepared to provide an adjustable and/or accessible podium for speaker access.
- Accommodations for speakers may include but are not limited to a ground-level podium or an accessible ramp to the stage or assistance with technology.

## Accommodations

Accommodations are in place to support individuals when general accessibility principles are not sufficient. Essentially, accommodations are specific modifications that individuals request through an explicit process. Specific accommodations may vary depending on the size of the event. A small meeting may have less accessibility built-in such as Sign Language Interpreters or CART Providers and need more individual accommodations upon request.

## Accommodation Examples

- Audio descriptions of visual materials or activities
- Braille or tactile handouts
- Captioning Services
- Sign language Interpreters
- Quiet spaces as alternatives for attending the event.
- FM Audio System
- Handouts in an accessible format

## Sample Accommodation statement

“The Georgia Institute of Technology strives to build a culture of belonging where all members of the community feel valued. For questions about accessibility or to request accommodations, please contact [name] at [phone] or [email].”

## Sample Accommodation Request Form (From AHEAD Conference Registration)

Communication & Interpreting

Choose all that apply

- Real Time Captioning (CART)
- Sign language interpreting
- Assistive Listening Device

Alternate Format

Select all that apply

- E-text
- Large Print
- Braille
- Not Applicable

Attendant

Will you be bringing an attendant (y/n)?

- yes
- no

Would you like Orientation and/or Mobility instructions for the venue?

- yes
- no

I am also requesting the following disability-related accommodations for the onsite conference:

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### **Other Resources**

- [GT Accessible Meeting Facilities Questions to Consider & Checklist](#)
- [US Department of Transportation Checklist for Planning Accessible Meetings and Events](#)
- [Captioning Services](#)
- [Accessible PDF Author Guide](#)
- [Planning and giving an accessible presentation](#)
- [Making your presentation accessible](#), Richard E. Ladner and Kyle Rector, *interactions* 24, 4 (June 2017), 56-59. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1145/3085564>
- [W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG 2.0\)](#)
- [AHEAD](#)
- [Forbes Health "What Does it Mean to be Neurodivergent?"](#)