

UNIFOR

Inclusive Practices Toolkit

For Unifor Councils, Conferences, Local Union meetings and
Events



LARGE-FONT EDITION



About this toolkit

Many people live with disabilities, visible or invisible. This toolkit provides guidance for creating inclusive events and workspaces for Local Unions, Regions and the National Union — built on respecting identity, providing accommodations, and fostering inclusion.

It sets out practical ways to assess physical spaces, create accessible materials, book support services, and design registration forms that capture the accommodations members need to take part fully.



ACCESSIBLE FORMATS

This toolkit is available in a Large-Font edition and an accessible digital PDF. To receive it in an accessible format that suits your requirements, email communications@unifor.org.

How to use this toolkit

- Assess the physical environment and venue accessibility
- Create accessible event and meeting materials
- Book interpretation, captioning and support services
- Design registration that captures accommodation needs

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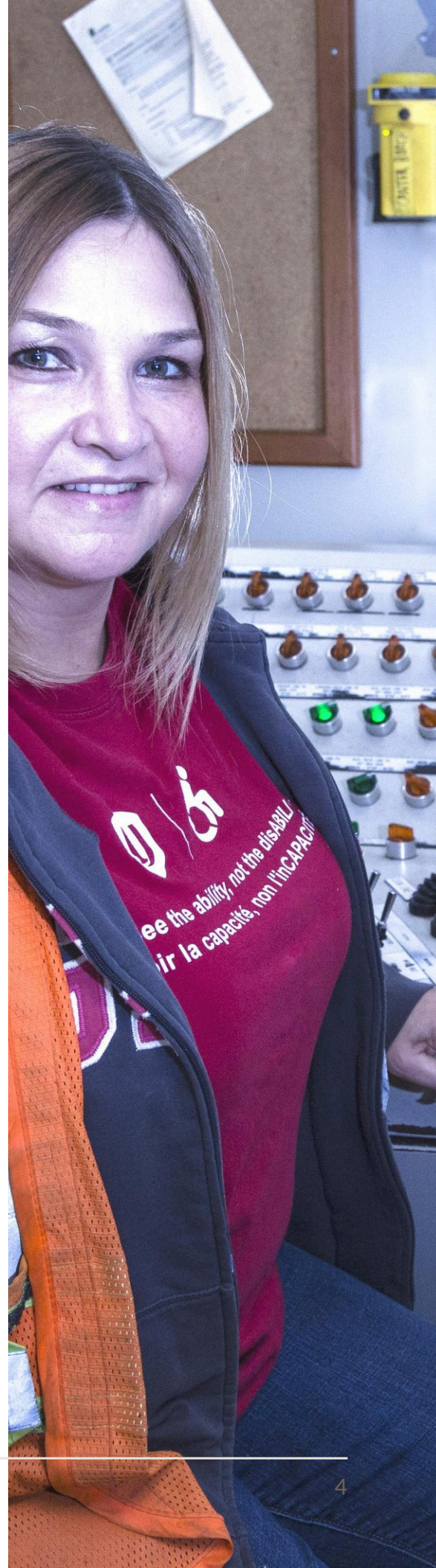
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Introduction

Many people live with disabilities, visible or invisible. Some identify directly with their disability (“I am a Deaf person”); others do not (“I am an individual living with Deafness”).

Some use “disability,” others prefer “disABILITY,” “differently abled,” or a less familiar term. It is important to respect the identity labels people choose for themselves — and equally important to accept a request when someone indicates they have a disability and/or a need for accommodation.

“It is important to respect the identity labels people choose for themselves.”



01

Diversity Through Inclusion

Recognizing intersecting identities, removing barriers, and designing every event so members never have to choose between facets of who they are.

Legal Framework

Beyond the best practices in this guide, event organizers should ensure compliance with applicable federal and provincial accessibility legislation.

 FEDERAL Accessible Canada Act ACA	 BRITISH COLUMBIA Accessible British Columbia Act	 SASKATCHEWAN The Accessible Saskatchewan Act
 MANITOBA The Accessibility for Manitobans Act AMA	 ONTARIO Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act AODA	 QUEBEC Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights Chapter E-20.1
 NEW BRUNSWICK Accessibility Act New Brunswick, 2024	 NOVA SCOTIA Accessibility Act An Act Respecting Accessibility in Nova Scotia	 NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR Accessibility Act Newfoundland and Labrador, 2021

Federal law is shown in dark blue; provincial laws in red, west to east.



CHECK BEFORE YOU PLAN

Check your provincial regulations to distinguish between mandatory requirements and recommended best practices.

01 • DIVERSITY THROUGH INCLUSION

Scheduling & Intersectionality

People are diverse, often identifying in multiple ways. When we fail to recognize intersectionality, we create barriers to participation.

Workers with disabilities can also be racialized workers, women, 2SLGBTQIA+, or carry any number of other facets that form their identity.

One simple way to remove barriers is to schedule caucuses and meetings at different times — so members are never required to choose between facets of who they are.



REMEMBER

An accessible event recognizes that members belong to many communities at once.



Plan around the whole person



Identities intersect

disability, race, gender and more overlap



Stagger caucus times

so members can attend more than one



Remove the choice

no one should pick between communities

Accommodating Physical Disabilities

Wherever budget permits, plan travel and accommodation around the realities of attending with a disability.

Allow participants who travel to arrive a day before the event and depart a day after — travel can carry additional, often unexpected demands.

Reserve accessible hotel rooms in advance. The most common requirements are wider door entrances, roll-in showers (no tubs), and adequate power supplies to charge wheelchairs, scooters and other mobility aids. Provide rest areas with charging at the venue.

If you are unsure of a person's needs, ask them what they require — never assume.



Build this into the budget



Arrive early, leave late

an extra day each way



Accessible rooms

wider entrances, roll-in showers



Power to charge devices

rooms and rest areas



KEY REQUIREMENT

Accessible rooms must have adequate power to charge disability-related equipment.

Designing for Focus

Accessibility also means designing for neurodiverse members — those with autism, ADHD or learning disabilities — and for members living with mental health conditions.

These members experience events differently. Small, deliberate choices — a quiet room, a predictable agenda, a quieter palette of sound and light — remove real barriers.

Reduce the sensory load, and you make the room work better for everyone.

Four ways to design for focus



Quiet spaces

a low-stimulation room to regroup



Flexible participation

online or virtual options



Clear communication

plain language, predictable

agendas



Mental-health supports

available, and easy to find





“

Unifor works to remove all barriers — so that every member can participate fully in their union.”

Unifor Workers with disAbilities Committee

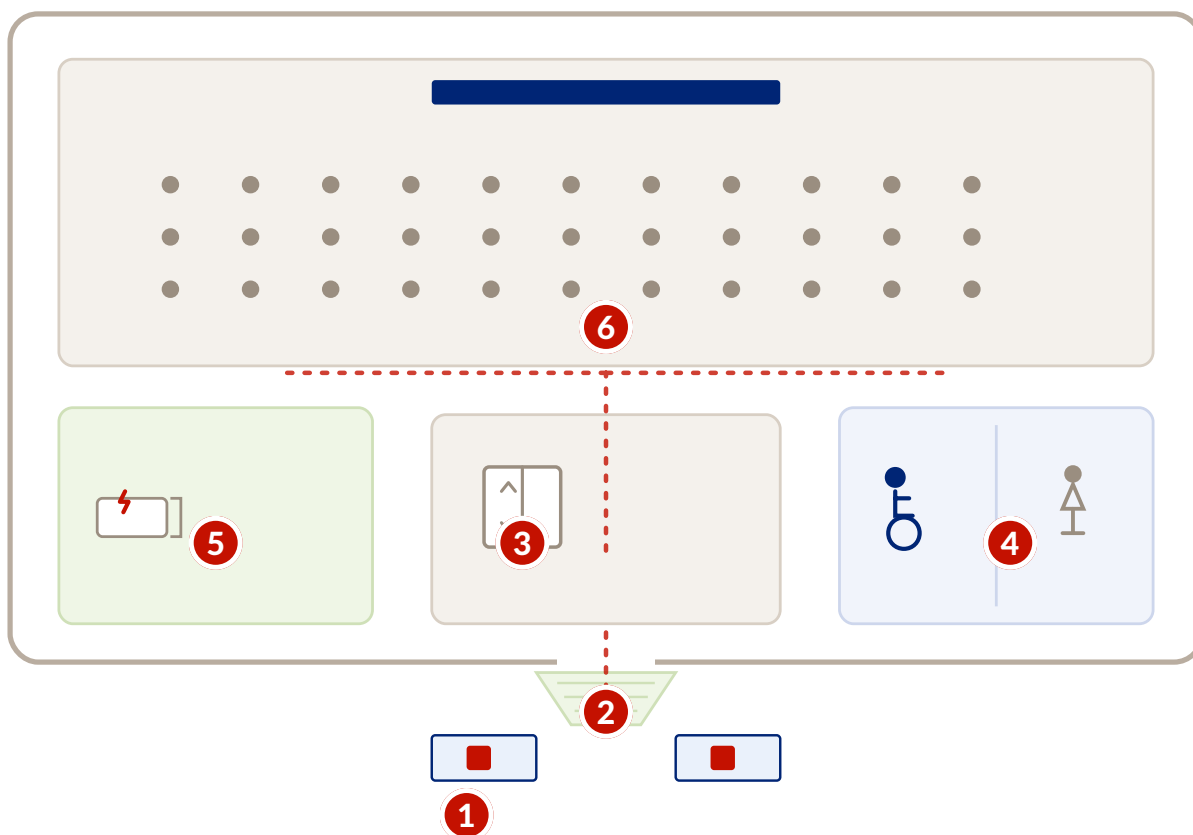
02

Venues & Accessibility

Safety, access and universal design are the starting points for choosing where members meet.

Anatomy of an Accessible Venue

Safety, access and universal design are the starting points. Look for these features when you choose a space — and where one falls short, offer hybrid participation so no one is left out.



Plan view — a barrier-free path from the parking lot to the floor.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1 Accessible parking
Close to the main entrance.</p> | <p>2 Ramped main entrance
Step-free access at the main door.</p> |
| <p>3 Elevator with Braille
Low buttons, Braille and audio floor cues.</p> | <p>4 Accessible & gender-neutral washrooms
Available in each venue.</p> |
| <p>5 Rest area with power
To charge mobility devices.</p> | <p>6 Step-free routes throughout
Wide, level paths for wheelchairs and walkers.</p> |

People Helping People

Every large meeting should have an Accessibility Liaison — a clear point of contact for disability-related needs, trained in CPR and First Aid.



An Accessibility Liaison welcomes a delegate at the registration desk.



Ask before assisting

Never help without checking first.



Don't touch devices

A mobility aid is part of someone's personal space.



Speak to the person

Address the individual, not their interpreter or support worker.



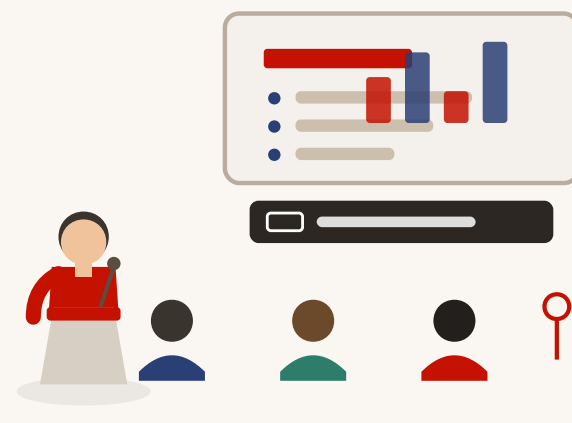
TRAIN YOUR TEAM

Brief staff and organizers on accessibility awareness and disability etiquette before the event.

Accessible In Person – and Online

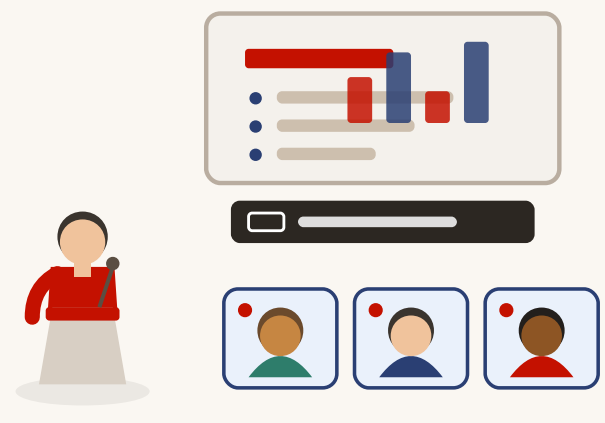
Whether members join in the room or from home, the same standards apply: clear audio, captions, accessible slides, and platforms that work with assistive technology.

 **In the room**



Presenter, captioned screen and microphones. Roving and floor mics, clear sightlines, and seating that lets everyone take part.

 **Hybrid & online**



Remote participants on video, with live captions. Accessible slides and screen-reader-friendly platforms bring the room to them.

-  Scent-free space
-  Soft, steady lighting
-  Low background noise
-  Comfortable temperature



STANDARD TO MEET

For online and hybrid events, ensure compliance with WCAG 2.2 – captions, transcripts, accessible slides, and screen-reader support.

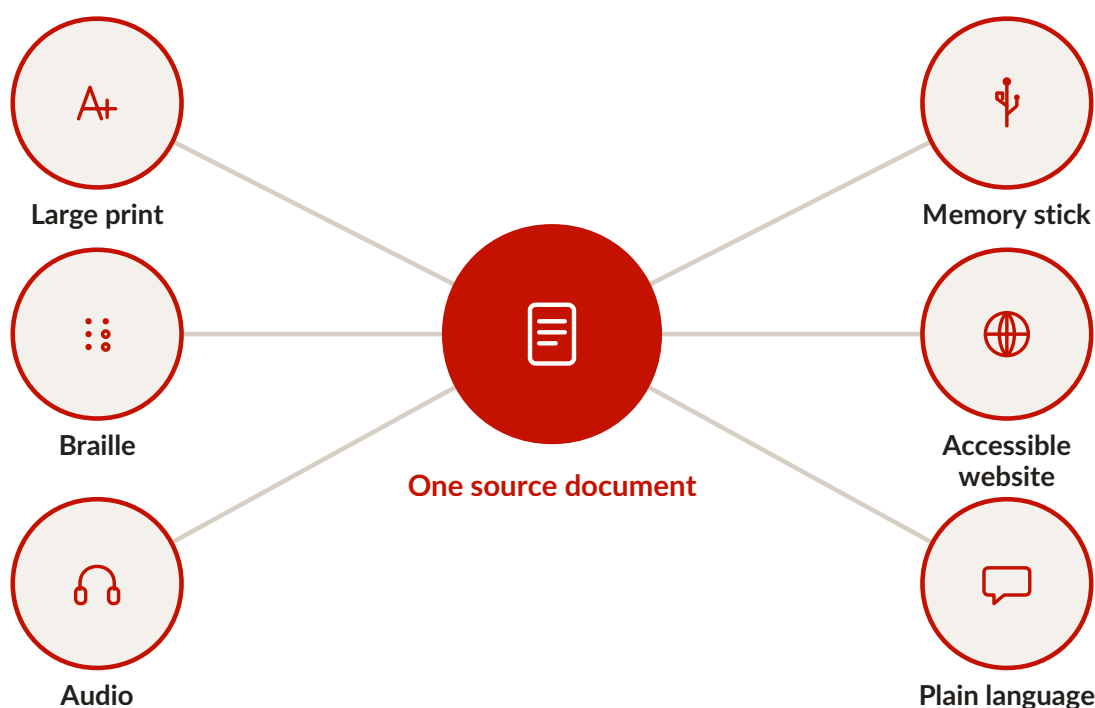
03

Preparing Event Material

Materials, services and schedules designed so every member can read, hear, follow and take part.

One Document, Many Formats

Offering materials in a range of print and digital formats widens your audience and removes barriers. Start from one accessible source, and branch out to meet members where they are.



From a single source document, produce every format a member might need.

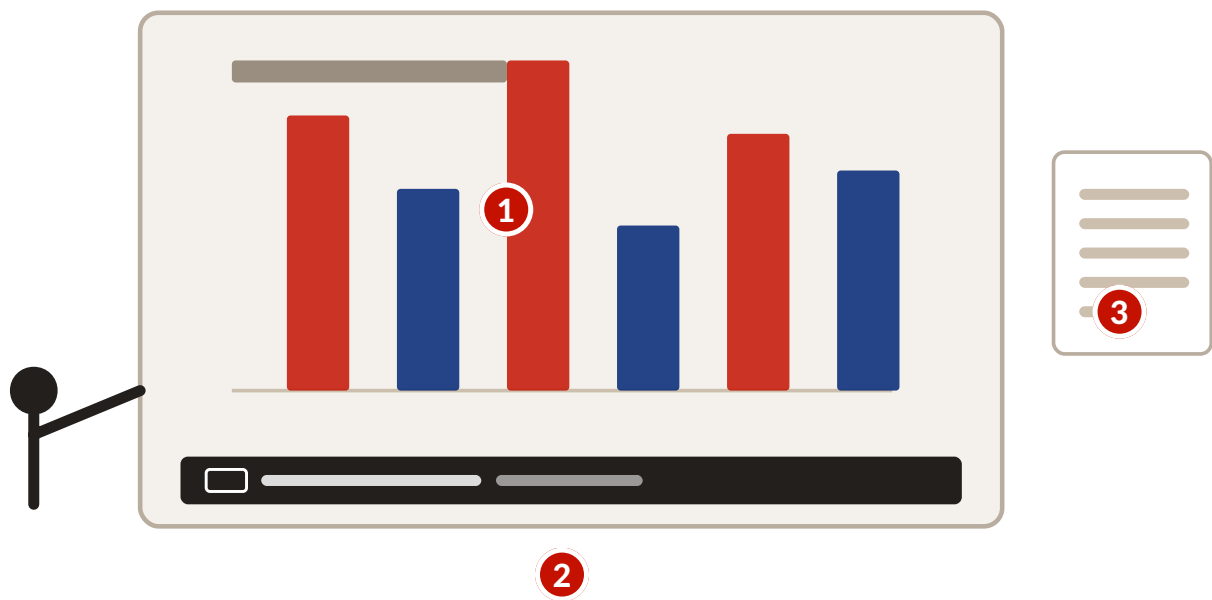
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SET THE BASELINE

Use a minimum of 16-point type — 24 is better — in high contrast, and keep a few printed copies on hand.

Reaching Everyone in the Room

When you present visuals, make sure the information reaches everyone — those who can't see the screen, and those who can't hear the audio.



One presentation, received three ways.

1

Describe the screen

Say aloud what is shown in charts, tables and diagrams.

2

Caption videos

Use captioned video, and check the captions in advance.

3

Transcribe audio

Provide transcripts of audio as a matter of course.

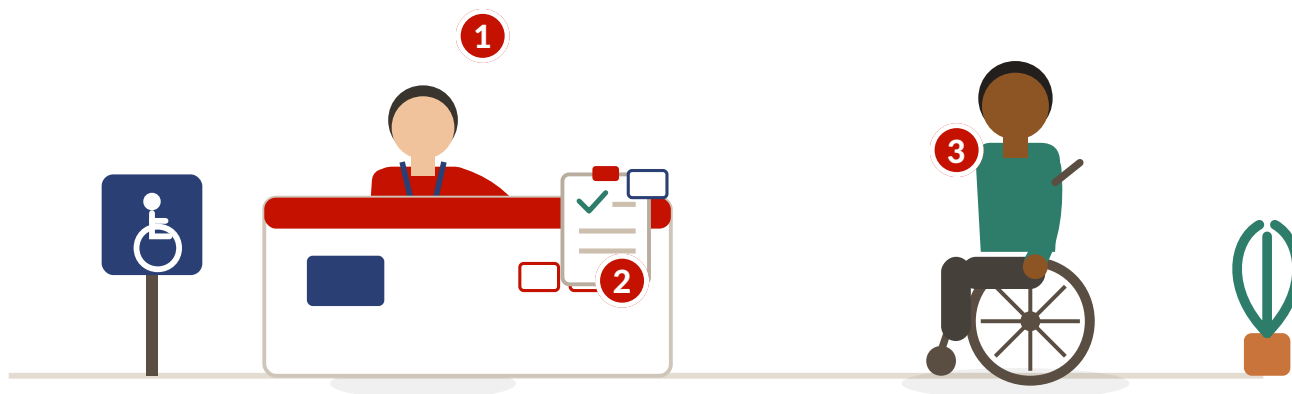


SAY WHAT YOU SEE

Describing what is on screen ensures every participant receives the same information.

Where Inclusion Begins

Registration is the first accommodation. Ask everyone to register — including guest presenters — so organizers can plan individual supports.



A volunteer welcomes a delegate and notes their accommodation needs.

1 Invite requests

"If you have a Human Rights Code/Act related need, let us know in advance so we can take reasonable steps to accommodate."

2 Capture the details

Mobility, dietary, hotel and communication needs — on an accessible, computer-fillable form.

3 Follow up in good time

Confirm with each member whether their accommodation will be available.



REMEMBER

Remind all attendees that wearing perfume or heavily scented products is not permitted.

03 • PREPARING EVENT MATERIAL

Interpretation & Intervener Services

These services are in high demand and require advance booking. Ask each member which option meets their needs.



ASL / LSQ

Sign-language interpretation for members who are Deaf or hard of hearing.



Oral interpretation

For members who lip-read rather than using sign language.



CART

Communication Access Realtime Translation — the spoken word, captioned live.



Video Relay (VRS)

Remote sign-language interpretation delivered by video.



Assistive listening

FM and infrared systems for members who are hard of hearing.



Intervener

For DeafBlind members — a trained attendant who signs into their hands.

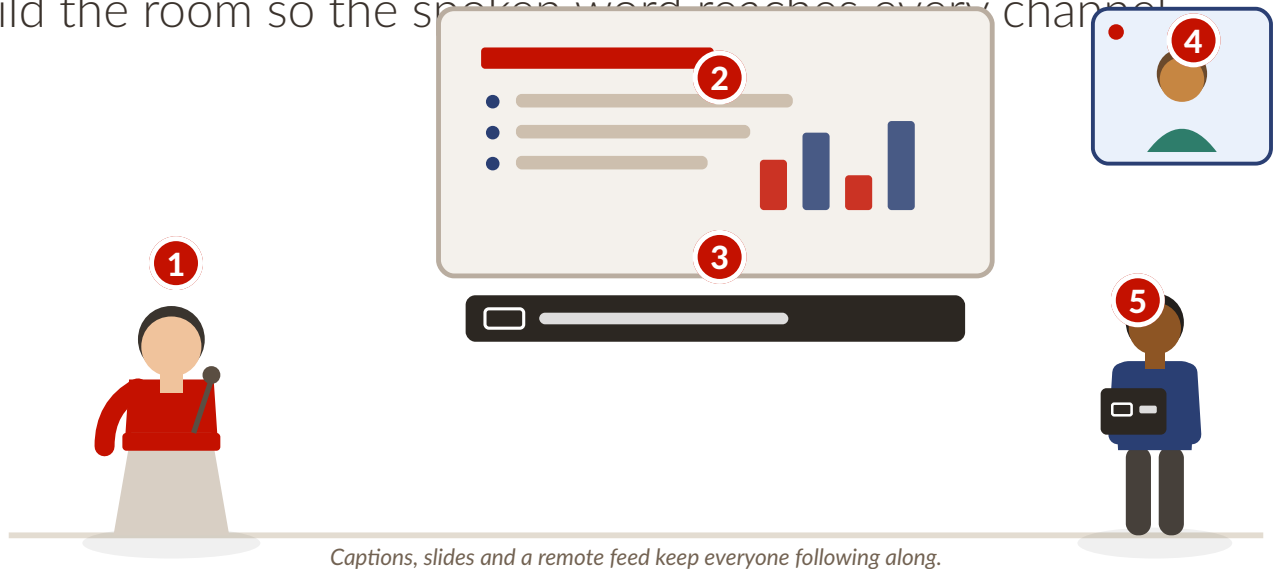


PLAN AHEAD

For any event longer than one hour, more than one interpreter is required.

Keeping Everyone in the Conversation

Captioning benefits Deaf and hard-of-hearing members and anyone with auditory-processing, learning or language needs. Build the room so the spoken word reaches every channel.



- 1 Presenter speaks clearly**
At a steady pace, describing what is on screen.
- 2 Accessible slides**
High-contrast and uncluttered, readable from the floor.
- 3 Live captions**
On screen via CART — in the room or remote.
- 4 Remote attendees**
Hybrid access for those who can't be there in person.
- 5 On their own device**
Captions and a transcript to follow at their pace.

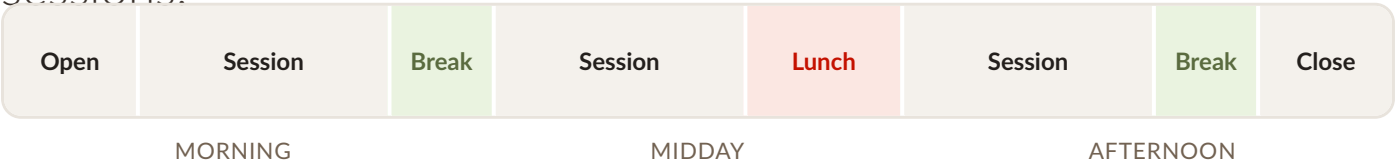


ON-SITE CART

On-site captioning keeps going even if the internet fails — and captures questions from the floor.

Designing an Inclusive Day

Pace and structure shape who can take part. Build the day around the realities members live with — with room to breathe between sessions.



 Start and end the day while accessible public transit is still running.



Time to respond

Leave room in presentations for questions — not everyone responds at a set pace.



Regular breaks

For medication, rest and scheduled meals, so no one is excluded.



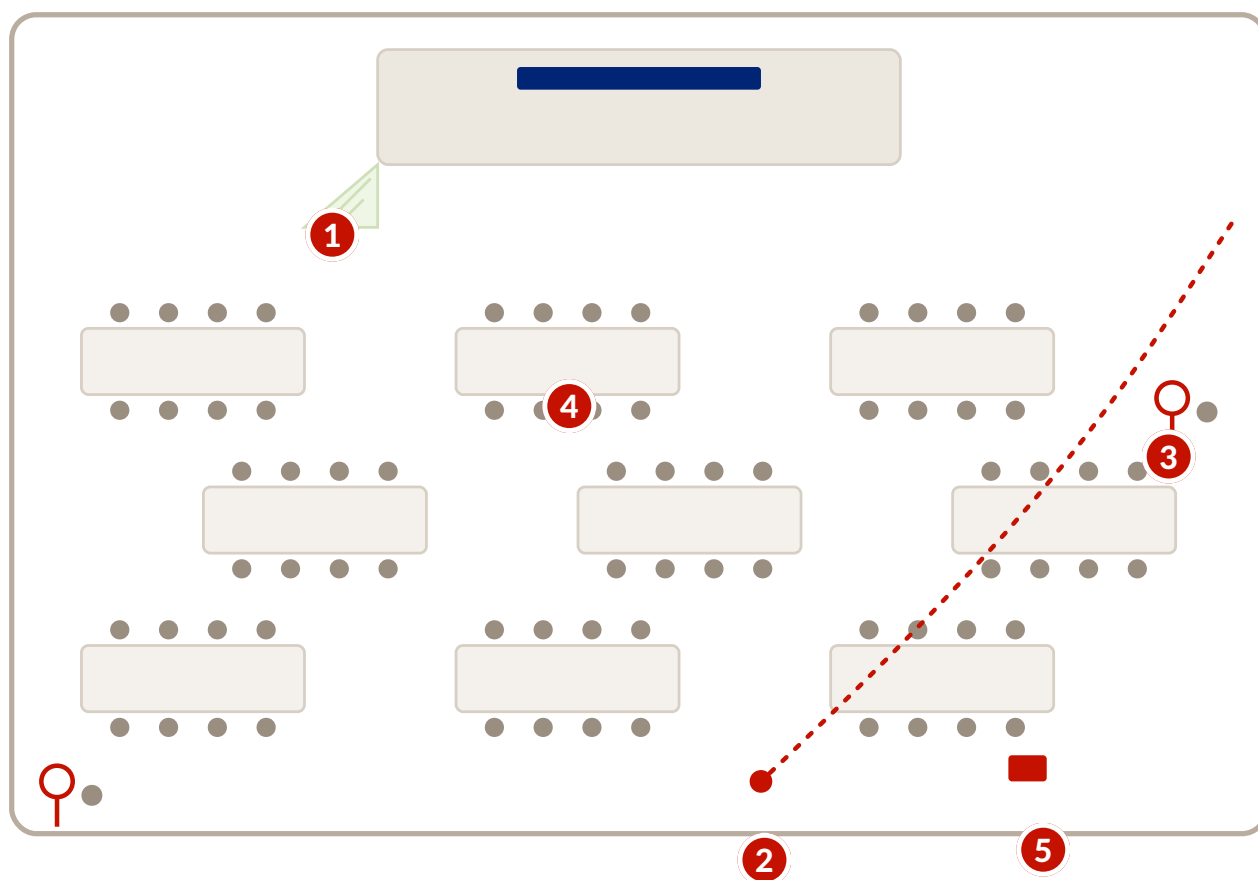
Transit & remote access

Offer call-in options for remote and rural members.

 **OFF-SITE EVENTS**
For marches and rallies, ensure accessible transportation for members with mobility needs.

Designing the Floor for Every Voice

Set up the room so every delegate can speak, move and be heard — wherever they choose to sit.



Plan view — staggered tables, ramped stage, and microphones that come to the member.

- 1 Ramped stage**
Always provide a ramp; avoid raised platforms without one.
- 2 Roving microphones**
Staff bring a wireless mic to members who can't reach the floor.
- 3 Floor mic with a seat**
A chair beside each mic to rest while awaiting a turn to speak.
- 4 Staggered tables**
Spaced so mobility devices move freely and members choose their seat.
- 5 Flash-card signalling**
A bright card signals the need for a microphone.



Appendices

Ready-to-use tools: sample language and forms, the access-symbol guide, accessible seating layouts, and a complete planning checklist.

APPENDIX A

Information for Inclusion

Invite participants to identify the accommodations they need. The form should be accessible and completable on a computer.

SAMPLE REGISTRATION LANGUAGE

"Unifor works to remove all barriers. If you have a specific Human Rights Code/Act related need, please let us know in advance so that we may take all reasonable steps to accommodate."

Sample registration form



Hotel accommodations

Accessible room required — specify needs



Mobility needs

Support or service required to assist me



Dietary needs

Allergies, restrictions, requirements



Communication / interpretation

ASL, LSQ, CART, captioning or other



Support person attending

No fees apply to accompanying support persons



Other inclusion requests

Anything else we should know



MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE

Provide the registration form in an accessible, computer-fillable format.

Disability Access Symbols

Use these symbols on registration forms, schedules and signage to show which services and supports are available.



Information about access



Accessible – limited mobility



Live audio description



Audio description (media)



Large / accessible print



Accessible – blind / low vision



Braille



TTY available



Sign language interpretation



Assistive listening systems



Volume-control telephone



Closed captioning

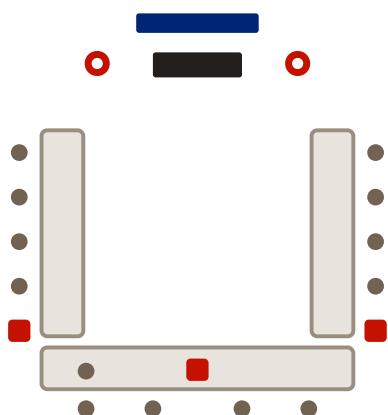


WHERE TO USE THEM

Add access symbols to pre-event materials and signage so members know what is available.

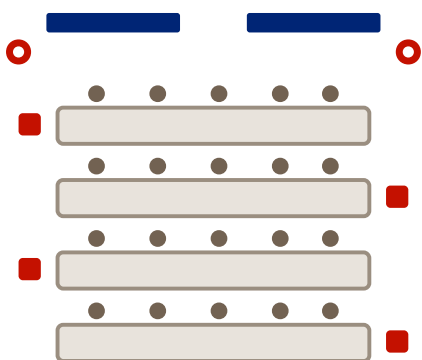
Accessible Seating

Theatre-style rows are not inclusive. Choose layouts with movable tables and clear space for mobility devices — and let members choose where to sit.



U-shape

Good for smaller, participatory groups. Leave 4–6 ft (6–8 ft ideal) between the presenter and participant tables so mobility devices can pass.



Parallel

Reserve front rows for interpreters and members using ASL/LSQ or captioning. Keep wide aisles and clear space at row ends.



Participant
seating



Wheelchair
space



Screen /
captioning



Presenter



KEEP THE PATH CLEAR

Leave space for walkers, wheelchairs and scooters to pass freely behind and between seating.

Accessible Event Planning Checklist

Work through these before, during and after your event to make sure it is accessible to everyone attending.

ADVERTISING & REGISTRATION

- ☐ Give ample notice; indicate start and finish times
- ☐ Provide space to identify accommodation and dietary needs
- ☐ Include phone and email contact for requirements
- ☐ Follow up on requests in good time
- ☐ Add international access symbols to posters
- ☐ Promote a scent-free practice

PLANNING AHEAD

- ☐ Train personnel to assist respectfully
- ☐ Make staff easily identifiable with name tags
- ☐ Book interpreters, captioners and note-takers early
- ☐ Give them agendas and outlines in advance
- ☐ Introduce them at the event

SETTING UP THE ROOM

- ☐ Allow easy movement for wheelchairs and scooters
- ☐ Intersperse accessible seating — front, middle, back
- ☐ Good lighting, without glare
- ☐ Arrange assistive listening devices
- ☐ Cover cables crossing aisles
- ☐ Reduce background noise

GETTING THERE

- ☐ Confirm accessible transport options
- ☐ Locate nearest accessible parking
- ☐ Wheelchair access via the main entrance
- ☐ Clear, legible signage to accessible routes
- ☐ Offer online / hybrid options

FOR PRESENTERS

- ☐ End on schedule for pre-booked supports
- ☐ Materials in large print (16-point or larger)
- ☐ Describe visuals and written content aloud
- ☐ Use captioned videos
- ☐ Check with the audience about breaks

BUDGET & EVALUATION

- ☐ Set aside funds early for accessibility
- ☐ Make evaluation forms accessible
- ☐ Ask about the accessibility of the event



A union for everyone.

Built by the Workers with disAbilities Committee

This toolkit was developed to help Local Unions, Regions and the National Union remove barriers and make every event accessible.

Accessibility is never finished. Keep asking members what they need — and keep listening.



A union for everyone.

unifor.org