Designing Accessible Events for People with Disabilities and Deaf Individuals

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires any business or organization to make all of their services available to individuals with a disability.

Title III also requires public and private entities to provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services where necessary to ensure that individuals with speech, hearing, and vision disabilities understand what is said or written and can communicate effectively.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits organizations receiving federal funding from excluding or denying individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to receive program benefits and services.

When planning events—meetings, conferences, roundtables, seminars, etc.—there are accommodations necessary to ensure that attendees with disabilities and Deaf attendees have complete access to the venue and the event's presentations and materials. Although many modifications and accommodations have little-to-no cost, some accommodations do. This tip sheet is designed to provide you with information and cost estimates so you can incorporate those considerations into funding proposals and budgets for your event. Including accurate estimates for common meeting expenses and specific disability accommodation line items in your budget is essential to meeting your obligations and creating a welcoming environment for attendees with disabilities and Deaf attendees.

Estimating Venue-Specific Expenses

Budgeting for an accessible event will include line items that exist in the budgets of most events, such as room rentals and audio-visual aids, but certain costs will need to be calculated differently. For all of the items and accommodations listed below, check prices with your venue in advance.

Budgeting for Individual Accommodations

While the items listed in the previous section are common event-related expenses, the following is a list of accommodations that may be requested by individual attendees.

Some of the most common individual accommodations include ASL interpreters, materials in electronic format, materials in large print, and CART, creating a standard set of accommodations that you always build into your event budgets will give you greater flexibility. For example, you may not always have requests for both CART and an interpreter at the same event, but setting these dollars aside gives you the ability to absorb unforeseen costs or reallocate that money to other requests or expenses as needed.

ASL Interpreters: Qualified ASL interpreters provide translation between ASL and spoken English. ASL has its own grammar and sentence structure and is the primary language used by Deaf individuals. The average cost for an ASL interpreter is between $80 and $105 per hour, many services require a 2-hour minimum. For interpreting jobs that are more than 1 and half hours a minimum of two interpreters are required in a team-interpreting format.

Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs) are individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing who have been certified as interpreters by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. CDIs may have specialized training in gesture, mime, props, drawings, and other tools. A CDI may be needed when an interpreter who is hearing does not meet a Deaf attendee's communication needs. The average cost for a CDI is between $75 and $95 per hour.

Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART) is the instantaneous, word-for-word translation of spoken language into text which is displayed in various forms. English text is produced with less than a two-second delay. An accommodation for a variety of disabilities, the CART writer transcribes what is heard into text that can displayed on a computer screen for an individual or on a larger display for the entire audience. The cost for CART service varies but on average CART typically charges by the minute and runs between $90 and $150 per hour.

Meeting Room Rental: Venues estimate the maximum number of people who can fit into their meeting rooms assuming very narrow pathways between tables, which are often inaccessible to people with disabilities. To create accessible pathways (e.g., pathways that can be easily navigated by people using wheelchairs), it is necessary to set

the room with a minimum of 36-inch-wide aisles between tables. To meet these requirements, you should secure meeting space that, according to the hotel, can accommodate 30 percent more people than you anticipate attending. A larger room may cost more so you will need to account for this additional expense in your room rental calculations. Room rental expenses vary greatly. You may be able to negotiate for free meeting space, or you may pay a premium per room per day. Factors that impact your room rental costs include the number of rooms, size of rooms, number of days the space is needed, and other expenses you have committed to at your venue. Room rental costs range anywhere from $0 to $1,500+ per meeting room per day.

Audio-Visual Aids: Presenters and their presentations need to be easily seen and heard to ensure that all attendees have the same access to the information being shared.

Microphones: ensure that everyone, especially people who are hard of hearing and may be using assistive listening devices, can hear the information presented at your event. In addition, microphones ensure that American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters can dedicate their full attention to interpretation without straining to hear. The number of microphones needed for your event depends on the size of the room and the format of the event. At a minimum, you should budget for one to be used by the speakers and one to be used by audience members if there will be discussion or questions and answers. While the costs of microphones vary considerably from venue to venue, the average cost per wireless microphone varies from $150 to $300 per day. In addition, if using microphones, you will incur additional expenses for a sound system (the costs of which can vary widely depending on the amount of equipment needed and the quality of equipment used) and, possibly, tech support.

Assistive Listening Devices: (ALDs) help individuals separate the sounds they want to hear from background noise and are available for personal and group use. Some ALDs are designed to be used with hearing aids or cochlear implants, while others are designed to be used alone. If an ALD is used in conjunction with a hearing aid, it may require a telecoil (T-switch). Costs for telecoils range from $50 to $170+.

Personal ALDs have separate tone and volume controls and may be configured to work with more than one speaker. The most common devices are wired, like the Pocket Talker. Similar in purpose is the wireless—and more flexible—Personal Frequency Modulation System. Event organizers can purchase or rent these items if the individual does not own one him/herself. The purchase cost ranges from $200 to $800.

Group ALDs are preferable when there are several people with hearing loss in a group. The primary advantage is that multiple people can benefit from these systems, though they are expensive and not as portable as single-user devices. Costs for group ALDs range from $500 to $1800 depending upon the number of receivers, headphones, etc.

Stage and Ramp: If you are holding your meeting in a large space, you should ensure that everyone in attendance has a clear line of sight to your presenters, presentations, and interpreters. If you have a stage, you will need a ramp to ensure that people with disabilities affecting their mobility can access it. While hotels generally offer these at no cost, should you be holding an event at a retreat center, you may have to rent a ramp to the stage that meets ADA requirements. The cost for the stage and ramp vary so you should request a price list from potential venues or rental companies prior to contracting with your venue.

> **TIP!**
> Always have the venue provide you with a diagram of the space using 36-inch-wide aisles ensure the space they are proposing will work for you needs.

To ensure that any ramps meet ADA requirements, including being of adequate width (36 inches), having an appropriate slope (no more than one inch in height for every 12 inches in length), and handrails.

Tripod screens: are commonly used at events to show PowerPoint presentations, videos, or broadcasts of the event. Multiple screens may be needed to ensure that all attendees—especially those using wheelchairs who may have limited mobility and Deaf and hard of hearing attendees who rely heavily on sight—have a clear line of sight. These screens can cost anywhere from $150 per day for a 5' X 5' screen (not including a projector) to $1,350 per day for a 7.5' X 10' screen (including projector) at a hotel.

Pipe and drape background: a typically solid colored fabric used to create a backdrop to a stage—should be considered if a significant portion of your event is occurring on a stage with extremely busy walls behind it (i.e., patterned or decorated with bright colors). Busy walls can be distractions for Deaf individuals and can cause eyestrain. Average cost for draping is $165 per panel, but the cost is heavily dependent on the venue and will vary depending upon how many panels you need.

Postage and Delivery: An individual may request to receive meeting materials in advance of your event. This would include anything that will be disseminated on-site at your event. You should send meeting materials to ASL interpreters in advance of your event to give them time to familiarize themselves with the core content of the event, including participants' names and any specialized language that will be used. Unless you are sending these materials electronically, your budget should include additional money to cover copying and shipping costs. Costs for shipping vary greatly depending on your provider and how quickly you need to have materials arrive at their destination.

Service Animal Relief Area:
Service animals assist people with a wide range of disabilities, including sensory and mobility limitations. Because you cannot ask participants if they will be traveling with a service animal, you need to proactively ensure that there is a designated service animal relief area on the venue's property for every event. This can be a grassy area that exists already (in which case there should be no charge) or the venue may have to create a space (in which case you may incur a charge). You will need to work closely with the hotel to determine where the space will be. Additionally, you will need to advertise the location of the service animal relief area in your program and materials, and with appropriate signage.

Material in Alternate Formats: Individuals who are blind or have low vision, people with cognitive disabilities, and others may need the material you are offering to be made available in alternate formats.

Large Print is defined as print that is at least 16 points in size and is made available to accommodate people with low vision. Large print can be done inhouse by changing the font of the document being offered or it may be outsourced, in which case the cost would vary. When creating documents in large print in-house, costs would include staff time and any special materials needed, for example, paper in larger than standard sizes.

Plain Language is a clear and succinct way of writing designed to ensure that the reader understands the material quickly and completely. Creating material in plain language can often be done in-house or outsourced to providers that specialize in editing material. Hiring a plain language consultant can cost an average of $450 to $650 per day.

TIP!

If you receive a request for materials in large print, be sure to let the venue. know so they can create menus and other materials in large print.

Additional Resources

U.S. Department of Justice **>** ADA Home Page **>** www.ada.gov
Information and Technical Assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act

ADA National Network **>** www.adata.org
Information, Guidance, and Training on the ADA available through 10 Regional Centers

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP) **>** www.ataporg.org
Resource on and link to Assistive Technology Programs in Your State