

# ACCESSIBILITY

**Creating an inclusive and welcoming LGBTIQ+ community group or organisation requires you to consider the accessibility requirements of your target communities.**

Accessibility for LGBTIQ+ people with disabilities not only means being able to attend a meeting or an event but also being able to meaningfully participate and to stay until the end.

When a meeting or an event is not accessible it makes it harder for LGBTIQ+ people with disabilities to connect with each other, to make friends or form relationships. Sometimes accessibility is dismissed due to cost or because there are competing access needs. Sometimes accessibility is not considered due to a lack of planning, time or simply because no one with a disability was asked for their opinion. Removing barriers will improve access for everyone, including LGBTIQ+ people with disabilities as well as anyone who does not want to disclose their disability.

This tipsheet aims to support LGBTIQ+ groups and organisations to start a conversation about accessibility, to start to move beyond a checklist and to think more about intersectionality and the organisational change needed to be truly accessible.

***If you don't have people with disabilities accessing your service it's not because they don't want to engage... it's because they are encountering access barriers"***

## Start a conversation

Start a conversation on the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people with disabilities. Reading and discussing your group or organisation's vision, aims or strategic plan is a good way to start. Identify your target communities and ask:

- What effort have we made to ask our target communities about their access needs.
- "How do we know if we are or are not meeting the needs of our target communities?"

- "In what ways are we removing or reducing barriers to allow LGBTIQ+ people with disabilities the opportunity to meaningfully participate and stay at our meetings and events."
- "How are we factoring in the financial and in-kind cost of ensuring everyone can attend, participate and stay when we apply for grants or develop budgets."

## Think about intersectionality

We are all made up of multiple yet interlinked identities. This is referred to as intersectionality. Intersectionality is a framework that explains how social attitudes and political structures both influence and create our experiences of discrimination and oppression. Stereotypes or assumptions based on, for example, our sex, race, gender, sexuality or abilities, reinforce attitudes and unconscious bias that can lead to inequality and exclusion.

How does your LGBTIQ+ group or organisation recognise and address intersectionality in the work you do or events you run?

Sam is an out trans bisexual parent of a two year old and is interested in attending your workshop about LGBTIQ+ rainbow families. Sam's advocate has emailed you before the event, informing you that they have a visual impairment. The email also states that Sam stims auditorily and notes that other participants at previous workshops have made complaints.

How will you reply to this email?

**“Accessibility is a framework of thinking not a checklist. The problem with checklists is people always miss stuff saying “well I’ve done the checklist and your needs are not on it”**

## Move beyond a checklist

Moving beyond a checklist is important. Accessibility is more than ramps, large print handouts or a plate of gluten free food. Think about your specific target communities and consider how you could do the following:

**1. Consult:** Ask your target communities what they need in order to attend, meaningfully participate and stay at your meetings or events. Use an online survey, ask questions via email or call your target communities. Consider catering, physical space, lighting and sound, quiet rooms, how a meeting is presented (talking, powerpoints, handouts) Don’t make assumptions – ask and consult.

**2. Promote:** Ensure that the promotion of your meeting or event includes an accessibility statement, stating what is being made available and what can be requested. Consider appointing a dedicated point of contact for people to email or call about their accessibility requirements. People should not always have to disclose if they have a disability if they don’t want to.

**3. Reflect:** Evaluate and reflect on each meeting or event. Conduct a post-event survey immediately afterwards and again a few days later in case people need time to think. Ask for honest feedback. Talk to the presenters – did people make comments during the event? Take evaluations seriously and act on criticism or suggestions. In the words of a Co-design Group member – “Be curious, not furious”.

**“True inclusivity is being able to choose when I disclose”**

## Think about...

- Begin your event or meeting with a name and pronoun round so that people who are blind or have low vision know who is in the room. Say your name when you speak.
- Take breaks and provide a quiet room.
- Provide hand outs and other materials provided in formats other than print. These formats may include large print (standard is 18pt), Braille, audio or electronic. Electronic means a text based file format, such as .doc, .txt, or .rtf which is easily read by screen reading software. Avoid PDF files.
- Keep to time during meetings: organised supports (such as Auslan interpreters, live captioning and attendant carers) often have to leave on time.

*Adapted from the Disability Advocacy Resource Unit “How to be disability inclusive” (January 2019)*

## ON LANGUAGE

Like the LGBTIQ+ communities in general, language and terms can be contested and challenged, by people with lived experiences of disability, by their carers and families and by disability advocacy organisations. Some use person-first language (ie: people with disabilities) and some use identity first language (disabled people). Similar to the LGBTIQ+ communities, language within the disability communities is constantly changing.

## EXTENDED LEARNING

<http://www.daru.org.au/how-to-be-disability-inclusive>

<https://www.artsaccess.com.au/inclusive-practice-guide/>

<https://www.midsumma.org.au/access>

Brief example of Intersectionality: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViDtnfQ9FHc>



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