Creating More Accessible SRC Meetings

Equality   Accommodation   Accessibility

"Understand that accommodation is not the same as accessibility…Accessibility should make content available to all, in equally effective ways, at the same time. Accessibility is the goal, accommodations are just tools to reach it."

-http://www.section508.gov

The Vermont State Rehabilitation Council recognizes that accessible public meetings are not currently the default. Accessibility takes advance planning as well as the intentional implementation of best practices before, during, and after meetings. Though there is no one design that will result in universal accessibility, the guidelines below should be a starting point for each meeting along with meeting individual reasonable accommodations requests. In addition to serving as a planning document, this intent of this high-level guide is to be able to share it in advance with guest presenters so that they, too, can plan for accessibility in their materials and presentations. For a more comprehensive list of resources, check out the webpage, "Create Accessible Meetings" created by section508.gov.

Before the Meeting

- Share all meeting and presentation materials in advance. Currently we aim to provide complete meeting packets the Monday before Thursday meetings. However a better goal would be at least a week in advance, especially for materials that require advance reading and analysis such as chapter reviews for the Policy & Procedures committee or any item that requires a vote.
- Check with presenters to see if they plan on showing videos. If so, support them in ensuring captions are included.
- Ensure that interpreters are included on the Outlook meeting invitations so that they have access to all meeting materials.
- Include descriptive alt text for all images.
- Materials should use sans serif font that is a minimum of 12 pt in size.

During the Meeting
Recording
If possible, record meetings so that they can be shared afterwards for those wanting or needing to refer back to the meeting, especially agenda items that are content heavy.

Captions
Ensure auto-captioning in Zoom is enabled or work with a third party to caption live.

Interpreters
If interpreters will be using the Zoom platform be sure to pin the videos of all interpreters at the start of the meeting.

Participants
Have people introduce themselves with visual descriptions and pronouns. Remind people to share their names when speaking throughout the meeting.

Presentations
When using a PowerPoint presentation, pause between slides to allow sufficient time for ASL interpreters. When speaking, provide spatial cues. (For example, instead of, "As you can see here on the screen…" consider language that will help orient attendees such as, "The graph on the top left of the slide indicates…") Where there are graphics be sure that detailed descriptions are provided verbally, and that alt text is included in all materials.

Chat Boxes
While the chat box can be a helpful feature, it also can create accessibility barriers. This can range from people who have disabilities that affect concentration to folks who are blind or have visual disabilities as screen reader functions may not always work well with the chat box. In addition, if someone is using the captioning option the chat box can become distracting. We also know that some folks prefer using the chat box for access and we want to accommodate that as well. For presenters we hope the chat can be left open for questions and for folks who need to use it for accessibility. At the beginning of the session explain that we are hoping people will use the chat box only when needed and not for side conversations. We ask that someone read the comments out loud that are put in the chat box, so that they are accessible to everyone. If people use the chat box to share resources ensure all links are also included in the minutes.

Visual Descriptions
It's helpful to folks who are Blind or have visual disabilities that there is a visual description of the presenter at the beginning of the session. Presenters can choose how to describe themselves, but it should explain a bit of how you look, what you're wearing and the background you have. This can be at the time you are saying your name and your preferred pronouns. If you are putting up a power point you can use that as an opportunity to describe what's on the slide as well. This might include pictures in the background or something that gives information like an arrow or something in bold. Visually describing this content helps folks who can't see your slides more fully understand the content.

After the Meeting
Be sure to capture any resources or information shared verbally or in the chat box in the meeting minutes.

We want to ensure that meeting participation is as accessible as possible. Do you have any reasonable accommodations requests for before, during, or after SRC meetings? (e.g., closed captioning, PDF documents in a different file format, etc.)

- I can only participate remotely, via Zoom. I want the option of not needing to speak or be seen/recorded when the meetings are being recorded or live-streamed.

- These are my feedbacks for during the SRC meetings. 1) Everyone could have their videos' off, so that the interpreter and whoever is speaking has spotlighting without the host doing all the work behind the scene. 2) It would be helpful for a Deaf person if the speaker could announce their names before speaking because we can't see or hear who is speaking if a Deaf person manually have the interpreters spotlighted or pinned. That's why I continue to use a second platform to view my interpreters. I rather not. 3) I noticed this is being livestreamed. So it would be helpful for your viewers. I haven't seen those, so it's hard to give feedback on that. Are they captioned? Do you have to add captioning on them afterwards? I believe with Zoom recording, the captioning don't get embedded with the recording

- Captioning (auto captions are fine for me)

- In the event of an in-person meeting, I need an accessible location and potentially preferential seating or microphones that make a speaker easier to hear. Even with hearing aids, background noise can make hard for me to hear. Virtual meetings are not an issue. Preferably print materials are created for accessibility. Best for me is a sans serif font that is a minimum of 12 pt, but better if 14 pt font size.

Is there anything else you would like to share with the SRC Steering Committee?

- I would like more information about why meetings are being live streamed such as where are the live streams and recordings going and why? If I consent to join the live stream/recorded meeting is my participation required? What are the ramifications of membership of joining a meeting and not participating due to wanting environmental privacy (i.e., not wanting to be recorded in video or audio?). Is joining a meeting, simply attending but not participating due to wanting environmental privacy enough to fulfill my duties as a member of the SRC and subcommittees? If "consenting to be present" and "not be recorded in either video or audio format" is an option, then the SRC Steering Committee might need to re-think asking members to introduce themselves, participate in the roundtable discussions ... and ultimately, if it is worth live streaming and/or recording meetings depending on the number of members who may or may not be comfortable being recorded and live streamed. I am not comfortable being recorded but feel as if I don't have the option of not being recorded in order to

participate and fulfill the service I was appointed to fulfill. This is not an accommodation request but more of an ethical issue. I can see it being an accommodation for a domestic abuse or other trauma survivor especially not knowing who has access to the video recordings and live streams. Has the admin disabled the recording function of other participants? Why are names necessary in a survey form for VR staff in order to provide reasonable accommodations to an SRC member(s)? I Is there a better way the SRC Steering Committee can ask for and deliver accommodations without intruding on an individual's right to privacy in a survey?The images above with their description in words are an excellent way of framing the 3 questions and the SRC's goal. I found that to be helpful and want to use in other venues to highlight the importance of accessibility. Thank you very much.

- Keep rocking!

- 4) In the beginning, I think it would be helpful during introduction to also add a visual description for your viewers who can't see. 5) if you assign other people to become co-hosts, it might mess with your recording.

- Thank you for taking the time to ask for this information.