**Why we have accessible events?**

Ensuring all people are equally able to participate in events including the cultural aspects, networking, attending meetings/conferences and social components. Hosting accessible events provide for a wider range of people to participate and benefit from the events. In this way greater perspectives can be gained.

Access for people with disabilities is not only about physical access to buildings for wheelchair users, but also includes access to written information for people with vision impairments and access to public announcements for Deaf people.

**How can we achieve assessable events?**

The aim: Apply the Universal Design Principles (the design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities) as a guide or format to host assessable events. These principles integrate various mobility and informative needs. A key aspect incorporates decision making of disabled people from the start.

Full accessibility means all people are treated with respect and can maintain their dignity, gaining and offering as much from the gathering as anybody else. Reasonable adjustments to the event are required to be made to ensure accessibility for all.

It is essential to consider how the individuals are informed to fully equip people to participate. Easy access information provided to meet disabled people’s needs is a priority, this can be completed in several ways including:

A range of marketing with:

* large clear print
* audio
* braille
* communication systems,
* video with audio and subtitles/sign language (NZSL).

Accessible websites should be provided by communicating with disabled people or disabled organisations to identify specific needs.

You might wish to use the following checklist when planning/reviewing your event:

Checklist:

Invitation: Use plain language, simple fonts, word format and include in emails, easy read options, assessable venue, and assessable events.

Registration: If unsure of a request personally contact the person to discuss specifics. Have an educated welcoming person at the front door to direct people, offer a lowered area and a seat at the registration desk.

Transport: Check to see what else the attendee might need and arrange assessable (wheelchair hoist) transport as needed in advance. If possible, arrange for taxi vouchers to be sent to people prior to the event. Parking, ensuring accessible car parking spaces available close to the front door.

Signage: Clear signage is essential (event sessions, parking spaces, refreshments, meals, toilets, exits, and other facilities). Consider tactile, visual and audio signage, large print, easy to read and symbols.

Venue/facilities: Appropriately sized room for amount of people, easy manoeuvrability for wheelchair users, assessable toilets. Check service dogs are welcome and identify areas where service dogs can be toileted. Check acoustics and set up loop system. Book sign language interpreters (including in Te Reo Māori).

Catering: Dietary requirements, staff assistance provided as needed- carrying plates/ serving and serving area at height accessibility. Tables set up for eating and straws available for use. Water for assistance dogs should be checked.

Room set up: Lighting should be bright enough for people to see interpreters without harsh or strong lightening for people with visual impairments. Loop system installation as well as seats and space for wheelchair users.

Documentation: Available in accessible formats including pre-reading and info packs. All documents in plain language using dark text on plain or light-coloured background with size 12 font. Note takers as requested on registration form.

Presentation/Stage access: Ramp accessibility, space for wheelchairs to turn, sign language interpreters, and PowerPoint presentations available, big screens used to clearly view presentation, and plain language used. Sound systems with microphones. Reserve seating at the front for people using sign language interpreters. Timeframes reviewed, ensure enough time for breaks, and consider the speed of the presentation.

Evaluation/ closing: Evaluation to include a section about the accessibility of the event and closing should be done in culturally appropriate manner.

Other considerations: Question of personal support, awareness, and review of allergies or those sensitive to soaps or smells etc, and emergency evacuations examined.

When hosting an assessable event, full participation, and enablement of everyone attending the event is a necessity and should be considered. Hospitality involves inclusion of all people and cultural rights being honoured and respected.

We **acknowledge** that some of these considerations could include a considerable cost and this means that not every event can achieve every point. Our hope is that this toolkit becomes the primary way you plan, prepare, connect and resource your future events.