

# Accessible Events: A Multi-dimensional Approach to Temporary Universal Design

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Event organizers are responsible for providing public access to all parts/functions of an event concurrently avoiding any kind of discrimination and providing an inclusive environment. The key to successfully implementing an accessible event is to integrate accessibility into initial planning as a vital part of event organization, rather than an accessory applied at a later stage or adapted spontaneously during the event.

The major drive towards achieving an inclusive philosophy in society comes at the heart of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in which event organization inclusive strategy plays an important role.

“Street festivals, craft fairs, music events, sporting events and home shows are but a few of the many temporary events that take place every day in communities both large and small throughout the nation. Temporary events celebrate and support a ‘sense of community and must encourage participation by all people.’” (*A Planning Guide for Making Temporary Events Accessible to People with Disabilities (2015)*, retrieved from *Americans with Disabilities Act*)

Hence, the presentation focuses on four key areas of consideration when planning a temporary event that is intended to be accessible to everyone, regardless of disability or classification. Each of the four key areas of consideration are outlined and analysed in detail, as well as their symbiotic relationship with one another. Their significance, when it comes to the success of an event in relation to universal design concepts, cannot be undervalued.

Firstly, the event venue comes as a comprehensive consideration, encompassing transportation to, from and within the venue, providing event access, onsite facilities and accommodation. Determining the best location, bearing accessibility scenarios in mind is the foundation on which successive stages will be based on, making this is such a fundamental element that lays ground to successful implementation of the entire plan.

An expert has to be involved to check for a suitable place that has necessary infrastructure that requires minimal to no modification work. The venue needs to be physically close to the target audience which allows enough time for crowd assembly and management. Moreover, availability and variety of universally designed transportation methods leading to, from and within the intended venue location through a reliable transportation network are essential.

An important consideration thereafter is the availability of connecting routes to event entrances and exits, equipped with ramps or platform lifts in case no accessible option is available whilst making sure there no hazards in the way.

Paths need to be well designed/structured and the layout has to be designed to facilitate smooth navigation connecting all accessible areas and fitted with guiding signage as part of a multi-sensory orientation system.

The main components and services on the inside of the event should ideally be accessible to all attendees including people of special needs. This may entail a sitting area, stage, bathrooms, stands, booths, exhibitions, catering facilities, first aid room, reception or any other public areas depending on the event. Additional considerations might include quiet areas for emergency isolation in cases of sensory overload.

With regard to evacuation points and emergency procedures, they should allow independent evacuation, but where an Alarm System exists solely, it should have a 2-way communication system and trained staff to assist in emergency situations.

Accessible accommodation should be provided if overnight stay is required and has to meet universal design standards to cater to all visitors' needs. This may include hotels, hostels or campsites.

Technical support relies on assistive technology which remains an ever-expanding topic, as advances in technology are evolving at an exceedingly rapid pace, advancing and enhancing accessibility concepts on a regular basis. Applications can start from the event's website to on-site assistive technology like audio and video-based support, accessible tickets, charging stations for electrical wheelchairs and devices, temperature control and customizable accessible lighting.

In spite of these technological advances, humans remain at the very core of accessibility practices, meaning that training and awareness in the provision of accessible services must be provided to both event staff and management. Standards of communication practiced include the ability to interact with the public in a professional, helpful and respectful manner and having clear and effective points of escalation set in place.

Publications and media prior and after the intended event are paramount for spreading awareness with vital information and assistive accessible tools like brochures, maps, online material and having contacts relating to the event.

As examples of successful accessible events with all major elements come The Special Olympics World Games, 2019 and the annual Formula 1 in Abu Dhabi, which are hereby included as case-studies to illustrate the importance of integrating universal design in a multidimensional capacity as part of the pre-planning phase of every event.

Abu Dhabi was the host of 7000 athletes with intellectual disabilities from 170 countries for the Special Olympics World Games in March 2019. Accessibility experts were involved immediately after the announcement of the event in early 2017. Supported by The Department of Transport, Department of Culture and Tourism, police and hospitals, the Emirate of Abu Dhabi was able to welcome the athletes and their families at an early stage.

Every year, Abu Dhabi is home of the Formula 1 Grand Prix on the Yas Marina Circuit for one weekend and has a capacity of over 55,000 guests. In order to service all the clients and keep the highest standard of satisfaction YMC worked on an accessibility plan with various

touch points considered such as venue accessibility, parking spaces, viewing Areas, pre-event communication, a request response system and staff training.

Keywords: Event, Accessible, Universal Design, multi-dimensional, Special Olympics World Games 2019, Formula 1.