# UNIVERSAL DESIGN

## Best Practices for Accessibility in Trainings, Meetings and Events

**Revised Spring**, 2023

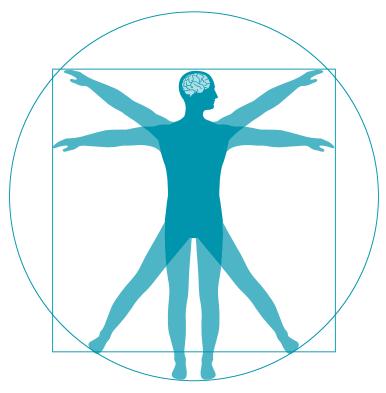




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Best Practices for Accessibility in Trainings, Meetings and Events

**Universal Design:** Spaces and programming are intentionally created to be inherently accessible to all people, without the need for individual modification or accommodation. Embracing the principles of universal design during trainings, meetings and events creates an inviting space where all bodies and minds are considered and valued.





### **Physical Environment**

Consider the space before the event or meeting is scheduled.

- Can a wheelchair user or person with another piece of equipment access all parts of the room? This includes not only the first seat by the door, but the front of the room and the middle. A mobility device user should be able to choose their seating or to sit with their peers, like everyone else.
- Does the space allow for mobility device users to reach all components in the room? (Whiteboard, podium, lights, etc.)
- Does the space allow for adjustment of lighting? As a matter of routine, lighting should not be on its brightest setting. This can be an uncomfortable environment for people with certain neurological and developmental disabilities.
- Does the space allow for participants to stand or pace in the back, if needed?

- Are the restrooms nearest the training, meeting or event space ADA accessible?
- Does the space you are in only have chairs that are on wheels? Can you provide at least one chair without wheels for those who may need this stability when going from standing to sitting?
- Consider dietary allergies and intolerances when providing food.



Providing Communication Access Real Time Transcription (CART) should be done for larger events, especially those that include the public, even if no formal request has been received. This service is not only useful for those who are deaf or hard of hearing, but can also be helpful for those with limited English proficiency, as it provides a secondary method by which to process information.

## These are things to consider well in advance so there is opportunity to adjust.





#### **Content Development**

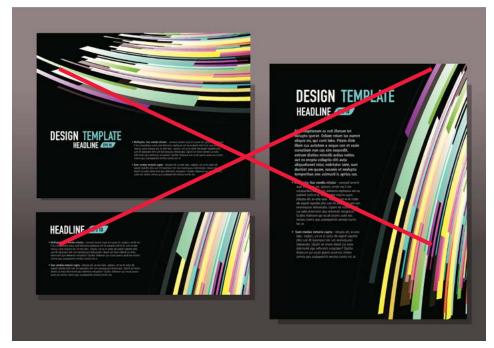
- Ensure that color is not the only means of conveying information. People who are blind, have low vision, or are color blind will not be able to participate fully.
- Add an underline to color-coded hyperlink text so that people who are colorblind know that the text is linked even if they can't see the color. For headings, consider adding bold or using a larger font.
- Use strong contrast between text and background, so people with low vision can see and use the content. Use dark text on a white or off-white background, or reverse it and use white text on a dark background. White and black schemes also make it easier for people who are colorblind to distinguish text and shapes.
- Give every slide a unique title. People who are blind, have low vision, or a reading disability rely on slide titles to navigate. By skimming or using a screen reader, they can quickly scan through a

list of slide titles and go right to the slide they want.

- Use a simple table structure, and specify column header information. Screen readers keep track of their location in a table by counting table cells. If a table is nested within another table or if a cell is merged or split, the screen reader loses count and can't provide helpful information after that point. Blank cells in a table could also mislead someone using a screen reader into thinking that there is nothing more in the table.
- Use a larger font size (18pt or larger), sans serif fonts, and sufficient white space. People with dyslexia compress, merge or distort lines of text.
- For people who have dyslexia or have low vision, reduce the reading load.
   For example, they may benefit from familiar sans serif fonts, such as Arial or Calibri. Avoid using all capital letters and excessive italics or underlines. Include ample white space between sentences and paragraphs.



placing text over photos is difficult to read



small font is difficult to read

- Always make videos accessible to users who are blind or have low vision and those who are deaf or hard of hearing, even if no one has identified themselves as such. Subtitles typically contain a transcription (or translation) of the dialogue. Closed captions typically also describe audio cues such as music or sound effects that occur off-screen. Video description means audio-narrated descriptions of a video's key visual elements. These descriptions are inserted into natural pauses in the program's dialogue. Video description makes videos more accessible to individuals who are blind or have low vision.
- Insert a visual cue of the transitions in the training (break times, lunch, or any other shift in the agenda.) Ensure that the language is the same as that found on the agenda.
- Avoiding hand written activities as much as possible. When this cannot be avoided, develop materials that provide ample room for response.

 Be cognizant of the different learning styles and ensure that everyone has a moment to shine:

- Visual (spatial): You prefer using pictures, images, and spatial understanding.
- Aural (auditory-musical): You prefer using sound and music.
- Verbal (linguistic): You prefer using words, both in speech and writing.
- Physical (kinesthetic): You prefer using your body, hands and sense of touch.
- Logical (mathematical): You prefer using logic, reasoning and systems.
- Social (interpersonal): You prefer to learn in groups or with other people.
- Solitary (intrapersonal): You prefer to work alone and use self-study.

Remember—Providing accessibility does not always mean saving paper—But it does mean providing equity for all!



#### Logistics for training,

#### meetings and events

- Have the lights slightly dimmed throughout the training.
- At the start of the training, meeting or event, go over the agenda, including proposed times for breaks. Avoid deviation as much as possible. When deviation can't be avoided, announce it with as much notice as possible.
- Announce the location of common needs (accessible restrooms, food, drink, available quiet space) at the beginning of the training, meeting or event. Give permission for participants to step out if needed.
- Ensure that breaks are long enough for those with disabilities to meet the same needs as the non-disabled. This usually means 10-15 minutes per break, though there should be no verbalized expectation that people are back on time.

- Reduce use of whiteboard when possible in presentations, as the contrast can make it difficult for those with low vision to follow. Instead, use the drawing or typing function found in Microsoft Office, remembering to choose a color and background with high contrast.
- Avoid unintentional ableism in activities, even if people appear non-disabled. This includes asking people to stand when speaking, stand up and stretch, or other physical activities; giving people the option to only do these activities if they are able, puts disabled attendees in the position of feeling othered if they do not participate.



#### **Content Delivery**

Provide handouts of all presented material for all participants to follow along.

- Create a few enlarged and colored copies of the materials to hand out to participants who may request them. These will be the identical materials used to present, only enlarged to at least 18 pt. font. Announce as you are providing handouts that you have this format available to anyone who would like one. In this way, accommodation is being provided in an informal way, and you are setting the tone of an equitable space that is designed for everyone's success. For PowerPoint presentation handouts this means having a few copies that are full-page slides.
- Be intentional in providing auditory and visual cues of presentation material.
   Describe images, graphs, and tables.

- Gather emails at entrance so the materials used can be sent to all participants. This will allow those who use screen readers to review the material later.
- Be aware of those with chemical sensitivities. Do not use strong smelling solvents to clean a space, cleansers to clear a whiteboard, or markers with an overwhelming scents. These can cause allergic or asthmatic reactions and migranes.
- Ensure that, if a space is bigger than a conference room, a microphone is used even if some do not like it and most parties in the room assure the speaker they can hear.







#### Written Interactions/

### Communication

When communicating in writing with other people, there are some easy-to-adopt best practices that can make your message accessible to anyone, including those with disabilities.

Always be prepared to communicate in writing. Even for interactions you think will be entirely verbal, it is a good practice to always be prepared to adapt to different communication needs, including needing to write or type a message to someone.

Especially for those who work at service counters or in roles where they regularly interact with customers or colleagues, **be prepared with something to write or type with** in case that is the preferred or required method of communication for someone (e.g., a person who is Deaf.) It may help to keep a pad of paper and pen handy in a fleet vehicle, office space, bag or pocket, depending on where you typically have interactions with others.

## Best practices for written communication

- Use accessible typefaces, fonts and text treatment
  - Whether you are sending an email, giving a presentation, or writing on a piece of paper or a white board, use large text in a style that is simple and easy to read and is not written in cursive. This makes it easier for those with low vision and certain intellectual disabilities to more quickly read and comprehend the message.
  - Avoid using all capital letters and italics, as they actually make it harder for people to read. People recognize the shape of familiar words rather than individual letters. Those patterns get distorted when using the above treatments.

- Think about your audience needs ahead of time and print large-format presentations/documents for those who may desire a larger text size.
- Know how to translate content into Braille or another alternate format if it's requested. Reach out to the ADA and/or Title VI Core Team member for your department if you have questions. Understanding where to find this information in advance of a request is a great way to reduce stress, so don't be afraid to be proactive!
- Choose high-contrast colors in all written communications, such as dark text on white or light-colored backgrounds. This allows better readability for all, especially those with low vision.
- Use more than just color to differentiate meaning for certain content, such as using different symbols in addition to different colors to show a chart with multiple items or meanings. This will allow those with low vision

or color blindness to more clearly see the content that has different meaning or functionality.

- Provide plenty of room in the text fields for forms, and offer multiple ways to complete, either digitally or printed. Many people with certain physical disabilities find it easier to type than to write by hand, and those with low vision can write or type in larger sizes.
- Simplify your language. Most people read at an 8th grade level. Some disabilities or conditions may also affect reading comprehension. Use the simplest language possible to convey your ideas effectively for the highest number of people.
  - Keep sentences short. This helps everyone better comprehend your message. Short sentences are especially helpful for people with developmental/intellectual or learning disabilities. They are also easier to understand for those who have had strokes, traumatic brain

injuries or other conditions affecting the brain.

- Focus on active writing that uses simple sentence structure with subject (the dog), verb (ran), and object (home) elements. This structure is easier to follow for many different types of disabilities and even those with limited English profiency.
- Use the most common words possible. This is helpful for people with certain disabilities and for people whose first language is not English proficiency.
- Use accessible formatting in written information. Written content, whether it's a policy document, marketing materials, a presentation or content for a website, should be formatted in a simple, hierarchical structure that both human readers and digital screen readers can follow easily.

- Provide a table of contents or agenda slide in long documents or presentations. This helps people find the information they are looking for quickly and helps people understand what to expect from the information.
- Always use headings and subheadings. This helps people find information relevant to them, and it is the central way screen readers process and order content for a person with low vision or Blindness.
- Leave white space between paragraphs and do not indent paragraphs. This provides clean formatting that is easy to follow.
- Keep text aligned to the left of the page. This follows the way a person naturally reads (for most languages) and does not create extra space between words (such as with text formatted to full justification on a page) which can be confusing.

- Do not place text in front of an image or over a busy, patterned background. This makes it harder to read, especially for those with low vision.
- Use clear visuals, such as iconic representations, to illustrate key content. This helps people with reading or comprehension difficulty and also those who speak other languages.
- Provide printed copies of presentation materials or relevant documents for in-person meetings.
- When using tables or columns, provide plenty of space between rows and columns and simple table structures from left to right and top to bottom.



## Use references to disability wisely and appropriately.

If you ever have to write something **about** disabilities, make sure you do some research on how to talk about a particular community or refer to disabilities in general. It is best to consult with someone from the disability community and/or an organization with disability expertise to review or contribute to your process and materials.

Always be aware of the potentially different and unique lived experiences between people with disabilities and center their individual perspectives in your writing. Don't assume you know what someone with a disability feels, needs, knows or wants – you'll need to ask if you don't have expertise in that area.

> Focus on the person first (e.g., 'person with a disability' is preferable to 'disabled person', though many people with disabilities may be comfortable referring to themselves as disabled. Follow the lead of the

person you are interacting with and if they correct your use of person-first language, simply acknowledge and move on.

- When you write about topics of concern for the disability community, center the disability community in your writing (e.g., rather than referring to someone without a disability 'ablebodied' or 'normal', use the phrase 'person without a disability', which centers the perspective of people with disabilities.)
- Find references such as support organizations for certain disabilities to understand how each community prefers to use terminology or phrases.
- If you are writing about a specific person, ask them how they prefer to use language and terms related to their disability.

- Avoid using ableist words or feelings in your writing in general. Think about how a phrase or term might be perceived by someone with a disability and assess whether the words you use oppress someone or empower them.
- Avoid offensive terms in your writing related to disability such as crazy, lame, dumb, retarded, crippled, etc.

#### Representation

Consider representation in your written materials. Are people with disabilities represented in presentations, photos, or policies and do those references and images portray them in a neutral way?

Focus on opportunities to show people with disabilities in everyday situations living their lives as part of the community.

Do not use people with disabilities in your written materials to represent either inspiration or fear in ways directly related to their disability (e.g., an article written about how amazing it is that a woman who uses a wheelchair is able to commute to work using public transit would be an example of focusing on the disability as central to a story that would otherwise be uneventful for a person without a disability.)

If your only aim is to use a person's disability to inspire, to evoke pity or to get more attention/clicks/likes, etc., you are likely using representation inappropriately.





#### Considerations for Virtual/

### **Digital and Hybrid**

### **Environments and Materials**

Whether working from home, having a hybrid schedule or being at an on-site work location, it is now commonplace to experience some form of digital interaction or include some remote participants during meetings and presentations.

When in these virtual environments, are we creating accessible functions and allowing everyone to feel included? Are our presentations easily seen, heard, and understood by all? By creating inclusive environments and content for city employees and members of the public, we are not only making our communication better for people with disabilities but for everyone involved.

Always consider a hybrid option for your meeting or community event in addition to following the accessible physical space guidance in the Universal Design Guide, referenced on page 59 of this booklet. As we all managed through the COVID pandemic, people with disabilities were finding virtual programming as a way that they could engage with city processes without having to deal with the barriers of transportation, physical access, noise, health risks, etc.

If conducted properly, virtual meetings and community events can be especially beneficial for people with disabilities.

For example, some people with hearing loss, autism, or anxiety conditions can benefit by less background noise and commotion in virtual spaces than for in-person events. Also, live chat and captioning are tools that make online events less stressful and more accessible for people with certain disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language.

Here are some terms and best practices to make digital/hybrid environments more inclusive for people with low vision or hearing loss, dyslexia, other cognitive disabilities, as well as those with no disability at all. More detailed information can be found through the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Accessibility of Remote Meetings document at <u>w3.org/TR/remote-meetings/</u>.

#### Vocabulary

**Live Captioning**–Applications such as Microsoft Teams detect what is said and present it in text format. Captions can assist with note taking and be helpful in noisy situations but may not be accurate. Live caption only appears to the person who turns it on; no one else will be aware of it.

**Transcript**–A text record of what was said during a meeting alongside video or audio. Each speaker is identified, content is captured in real-time, and it's time stamped and available after the meeting. Speech clarity will affect accuracy of text.

**High contrast**–A setting on your computer or in specific applications to enhance digital color differentiation. Enhanced color contrast helps to see text and content items on screen better. This mode also reduces eye strain.



#### Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) captioning services-

Human-generated captions that are created in real-time by a trained captioner who listens to the conversation and instantaneously translates all speech to text. It is more accurate than automated captioning software. CART is not available in the City of Bellevue Teams application but can be used in other situations such as events or meetings.

Alt text-text that describes the appearance or function of an image on a page. Alt text is used by screen readers to better understand the content of your page. All images, charts and graphs require descriptive alt text for all relative information.

### Teams/virtual meetings

Teams meetings can be made more inclusive by utilizing tools already built in to the application. (Notice how many of these features are used by everyone without even realizing that they are accessibility tools!)

Before a meeting, inform everyone present how to turn on captioning, transcription, or high contrast (see bullets below for features and steps), all of which are available in your Teams app. For a complete list of accessibility features with detailed instructions, visit the Microsoft Teams support site at <u>tinyurl.com/TeamsSupportMicrosoft</u>.

These features can be accessed during Teams meetings:

Live captions: (U.S. English only) Once a meeting is in progress, navigate to the controls at the top of your screen and click '...More'. Then scroll down the list to the 'Turn on live captions' option. To turn it off, follow the same steps but select 'Turn off live captions'.

- Transcription: Once a meeting is in progress, navigate to the controls and click '...More'. Then select 'Start transcription'. For more information regarding transcripts visit <u>tinyurl.</u> <u>com/TeamsSupportTranscript</u> on the Microsoft support page.
- Blur background or use a background image: Click on the '...More', Select 'Apply background effects' then select 'Blur' or pick a default image. You can also upload your own background images.
- Pin a meeting participant's video: To focus on a particular video during a meeting, right click on the person or content and select 'Pin for me'. Right click again to unpin. Right click and select 'Fit to frame' to see the entire video.
- Dedicated chats for each meeting: Select 'Chat' from the control options at the top of your screen to access chat for any meeting.

- Raise your hand in a Teams meeting:
  Select 'Reactions' > 'Raise hand'
- Reduce background noise in Teams meetings: Go to 'Settings' > 'Devices' > 'Noise suppression' > Select desired level
- Add someone, like a coworker or interpreter, to a call: Select 'People' > type their name or phone number in the search box.
- Mute channels: 'Chat' > '...More' > 'Mute'

These features are available from your Teams profile:

- High contrast: Click the three dots (...) at the top of your Teams screen and go to 'Settings' > 'General' > 'High Contrast' (dark and light themes are also available)
- Turn off animation: Go to 'Settings' > 'General' > 'Display' > 'Turn off animation'.
- Limit distractions with Do Not Disturb mode: Go to your profile photo at the top of Teams and select desired status from the drop-down menu under your name.

- Minimize communication barriers with language translation: Hover over any message in Teams, then click the (...) and select 'Translate'. This will show a translation of the message into the language that you've set for Teams.
- Pin chats, channels, apps, and documents: (...) > 'Pin' or (...) > 'Unpin'
- Zoom in and out of Teams: To make the content in Teams larger or smaller, use the same controls you might already be using with your browser. (e.g., ctrl+ to zoom in and ctrl- to zoom out)
- Use text telephone (TTY): Next to your profile picture click the three dots (...) and select 'Settings' then go to 'Calls' > 'Accessibility' > Turn on 'TTY mode'.

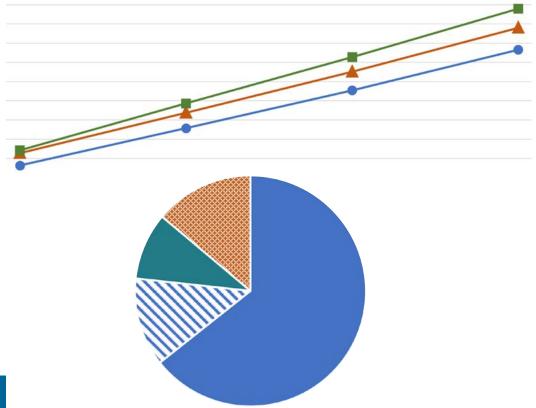


# Promoting accessible hybrid meetings

- Do not assume that everyone knows how to join a virtual meeting. Check with your new team members if they need any help. People with disabilities are not obligated to reveal their disability by asking for help.
- Be punctual, start and stop your meeting on time.
- Enable the live chat feature.
- Avoid ableist and negative language.
- Mute yourself when not talking.
- Describe yourself, especially for community events. Restrict to one or two sentences. Think of how you'd describe yourself to someone who has never met you and needs to identify you in a crowd. Write it down beforehand and stick to that description or it may get too long. Example: "I am a white woman in my late 30s. I have thick orange glasses and red curly hair tied back in a

ponytail. I'm wearing green overalls and a black t-shirt."

- Identify yourself by name each time you speak.
- Avoid acronyms. People may not be familiar with specific department/ team lingo or may have trouble audibly differentiating the letters used, which is a barrier to comprehension.
- Share information in more than one way. Verbally describe features when introducing graphics, charts, etc. Call out type of graph, color, texture, shape.



- Consider how remote participants will engage and ensure that everyone participating has the ability to engage freely.
- Don't use a white board that is out of camera view or too far away for the writing to be seen by remote participants.
- Respect how mentally taxing it is to be on camera. Don't require cameras unless it's essential to the purpose of the meeting, since they create constant perceived pressure to perform and maintain eye contact.
- For people who are Deaf or have low hearing, seeing the speaker on camera is helpful and the use of other engagement techniques/tools can be considered.
- Useful information for employee hybrid meetings can be found at <u>cityofbellevue.sharepoint.com/sites/ITD</u>
- Find tips on accessible meetings and formatting and basic universal design

principles reference the beginning of this book.

### **Digital presentations**

Presentations and web content are digital communication methods often consumed through technology such as screen readers, which process content in a certain way.

Find tips on accessible formatting and universal design principles can be found at the beginning of this book.

Presentation slides are only meant to support the message and messenger.

- Information should be presented in a way that does not distract from the speaker, overwhelm, or disengage the audience. It is also important that information on slides works with digital screen readers, which process information in a specific way.
- A printed version of the main takeaways gives the audience an opportunity to review what was said and absorb it. If you have an opportunity to

provide a hard copy of your presentation, do so.

- Avoid information overload for the audience. Too much text, graphs and images is especially hard for screen reader technology and for people who are neurodivergent (autism, ADHD, dyslexia, anxiety, migraine, to name just a few) or have a visual disability.
- If at all possible, include American
  Sign Language (ASL) interpreters and live event captioners / translators during presentations.



The City of Bellevue is required to comply with the AA Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) (w3.org/WAI/standardsguidelines/wcag/). These guidelines specify access barriers to look for when reviewing not only a website or applications, but also digital documents and digital presentations. While barriers may not be noticeable by people without a disability, removal of such barriers will most likely be noticed by all since it will provide a better structure and usability of all digital content to all audiences.

# Using PowerPoint and/or other tools

Make sure all slides are created using accessibility in mind. A PowerPoint template with instructions on how to set it up is available in our asset management system Image Relay (BellevueWA. gov/logos-photos). Please reference the City of Bellevue Style Guide for all presentation templates.

 Titles should be no less than 22pt in size. Small text is hard to see for anyone.

- Text should be sans serif and body text no less than 18pt with line spacing of 24pt. Paragraphs with too tight or too loose line spacing is hard to read. For people with dyslexia, crowded text may appear to merge or distort.
- Use only one main idea per slide. Use handouts for long lists. This allows you to help all audience members follow along and remain engaged.
- Each slide must have a title and each title must be unique. Otherwise, it is incredibly difficult for a visually impaired person to navigate through a presentation.
- The amount of text in the body of your slides (below the title) should contain no more than 5 lines. Text heavy slides and a presenter talking is too much information to process quickly.
- Do not use a single bullet point. A minimum of two bullet points should make up a bulleted list.

- Pay attention to line spacing. Larger line spacing improves readability. Line height (line spacing) should be at least 1.5 times the font size.
- Use multiple ways to convey meaning (bold, italics, color, etc.) Most screen readers don't inform users about formatting.
- For public events provide PowerPoint slides in advance since not all virtual settings will allow people who use assistive technology to follow along.
- If PowerPoint slides are to be shared with anyone, make sure to run Accessibility Check and follow steps to fix all issues. PowerPoint > Tools > Accessibility Check.

 Check text and background contrast. The city must comply with WCAG 2.0 AA (w3.org/WAI/WCAG2AA-Conformance) and use at least a 4.5:1 contrast ratio. More information is at webaim.org/ resources/contrastchecker

#### When writing email, use 12-14pt.

Text that is too large is just as hard to read as text that is too small. In email, each person can adjust the zoom level on their device as needed for personal preference.

- For documents, use 12pt font on average or larger. Those with tired or strained eyes or low vision will appreciate being able to consume your content without having to enlarge it.
- Include ADA statements in your event marketing. This will allow people to contact you and request alternate formats or presentation materials in advance of the event.
- No busy images, patterns or textures should be used as background for text. The text will not be readable to all people.





- Photos are a great way to enhance the presentation and can hold the audience's interest. Use interesting photos that are not busy or complicated. Describe the images to the audience; not everyone may be able to see them.
- Charts and graphs should be clear and simple, calling attention to the purpose/ intent of the intended information. Use a handout to provide a more detailed chart/graph. Describe charts/graphs to the audience. Not everyone may be able to see or understand them.
- Be careful how animation is used, it can affect people with vestibular disorders and seizures. More

information <u>medium.com/design-ibm/</u> <u>accessible-motion-why-its-essential-</u> <u>and-how-to-do-it-right-ff38afcbc7a9</u> If possible, warn people that animation will be shown. This will allow people with motion sensitivity to prepare accordingly.

- Avoid flashes and complex animation sequences in your animation effects.
- Be careful how fast it moves; slower is better.
- Avoid parallax scrolling (background moves at a different rate than foreground) and motion.
- Describe animation to the audience. Not everyone will be able to view it.
- Add captioning to all your videos and embedded audio. It allows Deaf and hard-of-hearing people to watch videos. It also clarifies language, poor audio, and complicated information.
- Add Alt text to all images, graphs and charts, if digital materials (PDF,

PowerPoint) will be shared with audience to follow along or read later.

Use white space to improve accessibility. White space is the space not used by text, photos, charts, or graphs. It helps provide balance and a place for the eyes to rest. This gives the brain a chance to receive the information without having to filter through a busy, wordy environment.



## **Evaluation**

Give an opportunity on evaluation sheets for participants to offer feedback regarding the accessibility of the training. This provides the presenter with essential information to incorporate into later events.



#### Notes:

#### Notes:






For alternate formats, interpreters, or reasonable accommodation requests please phone at least 48 hours in advance 425-452-6168(voice) or email bamson@bellevuewa.gov. For complaints regarding accommodations, contact City of Bellevue ADA/Title VI Administrator at 425-452-6168 (voice) or email ADATitleVI@bellevuewa.gov. If you are deaf or hard of hearing dial 711. All meetings are wheelchair accessible.

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