ICYPAA Recommended Best Practices for Accessibility

This document was created with the intent of helping bid and host committees think through planning and creating an accessible conference experience. These recommendations are derived from professional sources, community conversations, and experience from hosting. However, it is meant to be suggestive and beneficial; likely as more annual conferences are held this document will continue to adjust and adapt to the needs of our growing community. Additionally, in particular, the lived experience of attendees or potential attendees who have accessibility needs are welcomed and appreciated.

1. **Role of the Accessibility Chair/Accessibility Subcommittee**
    a. Accessibility Chair/Subcommittee is responsible for ensuring the conference is as welcoming and accessible as possible for all attendees. This includes all aspects of the conference: the location, venue, website, submission and review process of bid packages, panels, workshops, and entertainment, and the conference experience as a whole.
    b. While the Accessibility Chair and Subcommittee are focussed on making ICYPAA accessible, it is the responsibility of the entire Host Committee to provide an opportunity to carry the message to as many alcoholics as possible.
    c. Accessibility Chair/Subcommittee should reach out early to other Host Committee Chairpersons to discuss accessibility considerations for the conference, and follow up to ensure these are met. They are responsible for ensuring that attendees and speaker needs are understood and addressed.
    d. They also serve as advocates and liaisons for attendees with accessibility needs. As the main communications channel between attendees and the conference organizing committee, accessibility chairs serve to protect the identities of attendees making requests as much as possible. Additionally, it may be beneficial to proactively connect with AA groups or members with accessibility needs to learn more about how to continue to help the conference grow.
    e. Ensure that the host committee is thinking of accessibility in a broad sense of ensuring the conference is accessible to anyone -

often we think of accessibility in terms of well-known accessibility challenges - hearing, vision, mobility. However, there are many accessibility challenges to attending a conference like ICYPAA including mental health challenges, comfort and fitting in for members of historically and currently marginalized and disenfranchised populations, parents with children, etc

2. **Location and Hotel Selection**
    a. Location Considerations:
        i. The distance of travel for attendees
        ii. Telepresence and involvement
        iii. Environmental factors
        iv. Accessible public transit options
    b. Site Selection Considerations
        i. Ground transport and getting to the hotel
        ii. General venue and hotel accessibility
        iii. Accessibility of the conference meeting space including all gender restrooms
        iv. Accessibility of the guest rooms
        v. Available AV
3. **Budget**
    a. Portions of accessibility accommodations are expensive, HC should plan accordingly.
    b. Having an accessibility plan and budget done early in the host year will ensure that proper funds are allocated early.
4. **Website**
    a. The conference website should meet industry-standard accessibility guidelines such as the guidelines from the W3C found here. https://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility
    b. The website should provide information about conference accessibility.
    c. The website should accurately describe both the limitations and capabilities of the conference.
    d. Pre-registration and tickets for social events at the conference should be available in advance via the website
5. **Pre-Registration**

a. Include a place for participants to indicate accessibility requirements and clarify any deadlines needed by the Host Committee.
b. Follow up with registrants to clarify accessibility requests
c. Provide an email address that attendees with accessibility requests can follow-up directly with questions or clarifications

6. **F&B**
    a. For any in-house restaurants or grab-and-go stations:
        i. Make sure that a wide variety of food and beverage options are available
        ii. Ask the hotel staff to make drinking straws available
7. **Local Arrangements**
    a. Create a triage plan for accessibility problems that may arise during the conference. Make sure the entire Host Committee has contact information for the Accessibility Chair or other responsible subcommittee members who can make arrangements for accommodations, and know which of the venue/hotel staff should be contacted.
        i. Potentially, include "go-to people" in the conference program
        ii. Identify specific Host Committee members or volunteers who can assist with different accessibility needs on badges
    b. Offer an orientation session before the conference, for attendees, AC, HC, and volunteers to get to know the venue and meeting room layout.
    c. Provide opportunities for volunteers/HC to enthusiastically provide assistance to attendees who request it.
    d. Potentially create meetups for attendees with different needs
    e. Communicate with the hotel staff about what to expect, and what accessibility requests they may receive from conference attendees and from the HC.
8. **Venue Setup**
    a. Check each day of the conference that all accessible doors are unlocked all day and elevators are working.
    b. Make sure that walkways are wide enough (e.g. four-foot aisles) for people entering the space, and that the path to the stage is not blocked by a microphone stand. Make sure the room has aisles that will accommodate a wheelchair up to the front of the

room so that attendees in wheelchairs can access. Also, provide space for people with wheelchairs/ scooters/ telepresence systems where they can see the stage/panel and speakers.

c. Make the speaker area accessible – ensure each session has the requested equipment in place.
d. A few seats in the front and back rows and the aisles of each session room should be reserved for people with accessibility needs, pregnant people, or other people who need easy access to seating. HC will need to mark or reserve these seats, so they are not accidentally used by attendees who could sit elsewhere.
e. Provide access to quiet, private space during the conference, which could be used as a parent's room or space for people with chronic diseases to lie down, or a place to recover from overstimulation.
f. Based on requests made during registration, provide access to any specialty devices or volunteer assistance that may be needed
g. Staff an "Accessibilities Desk" near registration where attendees can go if they have accessibility needs

9. Conference Panels and Main Meetings

a. In advance of the conference, communicate expectations to attendees that will help to make the conference more accessible and safer for all.
b. Speakers and hosts should be lovingly reminded that folks of different needs and experiences will be in attendance so they can adjust their leads/shares to be accessible to all.
c. Consider large font printouts throughout the entire year and at the conference
d. Remind the participants to use a microphone to ask questions after a panel if relevant, so that everyone can hear, and should state their name before speaking, for the benefit of those who cannot see who is speaking.
e. If there is an interpreter or captioner present, the lighting should be good enough that they can be easily seen by the deaf or hard or hearing attendee(s).
f. Host Committee should endeavor to find and employ ASL interpreters and foreign language translators with experience interpreting AA meetings and conferences.

g. An accessibility need should not keep someone from speaking at or participating in the conference
h. HC members and volunteers should enforce clear walkways and promote awareness during and after panels

10. Social Activities

a. The social side of a conference is equally as important as the technical content. Try to avoid events that exclude some attendees. Consider whether:
    i. The event will have a broad appeal
    ii. Accessible transportation is available to any off-site events
    iii. Offsite venues are wheelchair and scooter accessible.
    iv. Offsite venues have ADA compliant restrooms and all gender restrooms
    v. Sign language interpretation is available for social events.
    vi. Participants will need to be informed of the walking distance to nearby events, so they can decide how best to get there. Also whether the walking route is wheelchair accessible.
    vii. Stools or chairs are available for people who are unable to stand, or for people who want to converse face-to-face with colleagues in wheelchairs or scooters. These should be spread throughout the event space.
    viii. A quiet place is reserved where people can gather for social conversation, for people who are hard of hearing or who find the main area overstimulating.
    ix. Notification should be given in advance if social events will include flashing lights and noises, which can trigger seizures.

11. Host Committee Meetings

a. All of the above needs to be taken into account for the Host Committee throughout the year as well. Failure to have accessible Host Committee meetings may result in people with an accessibility need not being able to contribute, which can, in turn, result in accessibility needs of attendees' sobriety/fellowship being adversely affected.