

# ACCESS JOURNEY FOR THE EVENT ORGANIZER

with Creative Connector

## WEBINAR SUMMARY:

During this webinar, a guest panel from Creative Connector featuring Lindsay Fisher, Founder and Executive Director, Alexia Vassos, Marketing, and Communications Coordinator, and Emily Cook, Digital Programs Manager, spoke to event organizers about best practices in and good starting points for offering inclusive and accessible arts and culture programming in their communities.

Recognizing that accessibility is an ongoing process, where information about inclusive practice is always evolving, Creative Connector shared an ‘Access Journey Map’—a planning tool for you and your team to customize and use—along with other strategic approaches to thinking creatively about “who is in the room?” and “what types of access will they require?” when planning events and activities.

## ABOUT CREATIVE CONNECTOR:

**Creative Connector is an online arts hub for Deaf and Disabled artists and creatives who want to find community and discover accessible opportunities in the arts.**

Creative  
Connector.

As event organizers and decision-makers, planning activities, events, and programs with accessibility in mind is incredibly important. In this resource, you will find tips, best practices, and helpful approaches on how to get started in planning, implementing, and evaluating access at an arts and culture event.

## **Where do I start?**

- If your aspiration is to be accessible to EVERYONE, where do you even begin? Access is BIG! What if I do it wrong?
- It all starts with a mindset: don't be afraid to ask questions about access, or worry too much about getting things wrong the first time.

## **Using a DIFFERENCE-centered FRAMEWORK**

Creative Connector recommends shifting your team's planning mindset to embrace what they call "difference-centered design":

- This approach is inspired by the more commonly used "human-centred design" framework, which embraces models of program/user design that utilize our creative capacity as humans to work together to create solutions to big challenges.
- The access journey in the context of difference-centred design is an adaptation of this framework where we focus on designing accessible experiences that are feasible and impactful, keeping those that are differently-abled at the center.
- An access journey under this design framework is a simple mapping tool for you and your team to work together and put this framework into practice!

## 3 HELPFUL MINDSETS FOR BUILDING AN ACCESS JOURNEY

### 1. BE PROACTIVE

Document your efforts along the way so you can track and iterate how you are thinking about accessibility, what steps you are taking to activate change, and whether or not it's successful.

### 2. BE A PROBLEM-SOLVER

Part of problem-solving is being willing to try things out, experiment, and make mistakes!

Activating an access journey can get you thinking like a problem-solver to design solutions that are realistic for you and your team to pursue.

Think: What can we do with the limited resources we have? What opportunities or solutions are there to these gaps?

### 3. BE COLLABORATIVE

Using an access journey should ideally be a collaborative effort. Involve your board, staff members, volunteers, or anyone you are working with! When people are involved in creating solutions they're more motivated to implement them.

**TIP! Facilitate a session to explore your own team's experiences with access limitations and how those experiences could have been improved. This way everyone can share their thoughts and feelings, all while the group imagines real-world solutions to these challenges.**

## Phases of the Access Journey

### PHASE #1: PLANNING

#### Future

- **Budget for Access**

- Thinking ahead is crucial! Build access into your budget when applying for grants and fundraise for access:
- If you have built access into your events, think about approaching your local arts councils and institutions as they could be able to support your programming.
- Sometimes arts councils award funds in support of access measures (such as audio description, and ASL interpretation) as they are aware it can be a costly endeavor.

**TIP! If you know ahead of time that you are working with artists with disabilities, there are additional funding opportunities you can access. If you are planning for access features for audiences, build this into your overall programming budget from the start.**

- **Awareness Training (Consult with community)**

- Build long-term partnerships and collaborations with the Disability community and your local Disability-led collectives, groups, or organizations.

## Here are some approaches to consulting with the Disability community:

- Hire community consultations.
  - **Creative Connector is a great resource and place to start making connections.**
- Think about your context. Who is in your community already?
- What are ways you can reach out to the Disability community and engage them in the planning process?

## Today (What can you do today to build access?)

- **Awareness Training (Consult with community)**
  - Be explicit about what access measures you do and don't have. That kind of transparency builds trust with the community!
  - Get your whole team engaged with the work—talk about each of your goals around access and ask who can tackle what.
  - Check out resources like the "[Tangled Art Gallery's Accessibility Tool Kit](#)", and the Creative Connector Access Workbook to learn how you can work with your team to get the resources you need.

## PHASE #2: OUTREACH AND MARKETING

### Future

- Consider in your future plans designing programs where Deaf and Disabled folks can see themselves and their experiences. Engage and hire Deaf and Disabled artists; work with them to create content for your programming.
- Deaf and Disabled communities are very connected; if someone sees a show, exhibit, or event you're hosting includes Disability content and access, they will likely share it amongst the community

### Today

- **Accessible Digital Marketing**
  - Always include in your social media, Eventbrite, newsletters, etc. a line about "Accessibility" or "Access Features"
  - Wheelchair accessible venue, wheelchair accessible washrooms (not all venues have accessible washrooms), discounted tickets, ASL interpreters/by request, fragrance-free, relaxed performance, COVID-19 policy (ex. mandatory masks, masks optional but available).
  - In your "Access" section, telling people what is not available is just as helpful, that way folks are better informed and can plan accordingly (ex. if a venue is wheelchair accessible, but the washrooms are only available up/down a set of stairs).

## CONT. OUTREACH AND MARKETING

### Today

- **Include the Disability community as an audience in your marketing and outreach.**
  - **Your outreach should include:**
    - Access Features
    - Alternative (ALT) text in all images
    - Captions for all videos
    - Contact information (ideally an email and a phone number) for accommodation requests
- **Start building community connections. Follow Deaf and Disabled creators, organizations, and collectives:**
  - The Disability Collective
  - Tangled Art + Disability
  - Kickstart Disability and Culture (BC)
  - Arts AccessAbility Network (Manitoba)

## PHASE #3 and #4: IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

- An enormous part of building accessible experiences is listening to your community, getting feedback, and iterating from what you've learned.
- **TIP! Make it as easy as possible for people to contact you and get support.**
- You can design surveys and plan ways of meeting with people to do informal interviews. Visit community centres where people might be —meet them in their communities and learn what their experiences were at your event. Ask them what they liked, what they didn't like, and what they'd like to see next.

### Future

- Design an evaluation plan and be intentional with what you want to achieve.

### Today

- Give out free tickets to community partners and get a sense of who is in your audience. Talk to the community and learn about their experiences.



## MAPPING YOUR ACCESS JOURNEY

- An Access Journey Map is a simple design tool that you and your team can use to organize your event planning, outreach, implementation, and evaluation. It is a place where you can record what you are actively doing, items you are thinking about, and how you and the team are feeling. Here you can also note any barriers/challenges and opportunities/solutions. Find a full-page version of the access journey map in the last page of this resource.
- **TIP! The Access Journey Map doesn't come with a definitive checklist of things to do or specific goals to achieve, feel free to customize the Map to make it work for you and your team!**

## Access Journey Map

	STAGE 1: PLANNING	STAGE 2: OUTREACH	STAGE 3: IMPLEMENTATION	STAGE 4: EVALUATION
DOING	<div>RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS</div> <div>RESEARCHING ABOUT ACCESS</div>	<div>CREATING AN OUTREACH PLAN</div> <div>WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO COMMUNICATE ACCESS?</div>		
THINKING	<div>WHERE DO I START?</div> <div>HOW DO WE GET VOLUNTEERS ON BOARD?</div>	<div>WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO COMMUNICATE ACCESS WHEN WE DON'T HAVE A LOT TO OFFER?</div>		
FEELINGS	<div>OVERWHELMED</div>	<div>UNSURE</div>		
BARRIERS/ CHALLENGES	<div>LIMITED RESOURCES/ NO FUNDING</div> <div>LACK OF AWARENESS ON TEAM OF ACCESS</div>	<div>OUR EVENT IS NOT VERY ACCESSIBLE</div> <div>SOME PEOPLE DON'T HAVE WIFI</div>	<div>PEOPLE AREN'T COMING TO OUR EVENT</div>	
OPPORTUNITIES/ SOLUTIONS	<div>RESEARCH AVAILABLE ACCESS GRANTS</div> <div>SHARE RESOURCES WITH OTHER TEAMS OR ORGS</div> <div>CREATE ONBOARD RESOURCE FOR VOLUNTEERS/ STAFF</div>	<div>BUDDY CAMPAIGN TO GET PEOPLE TO ATTEND</div>		

The key ideas covered in this resource will help you and your team get started in thinking about and designing accessible events. We invite you to continue your learnings in the [Creative Connector Ally Hub](#).

**The Creative Connector Ally Hub is a supportive online Slack community for organizations and teams to build their knowledge, access and share practical and helpful resources and connect to the Disability community so that they can feel more confident on their Access Journey:**

- Ask questions on the #help-line channel and get support from their team of advisors.
- Learn from diverse perspectives in the Deaf and Disability arts community.
- Get recognized as an ally on their website and build trust in the community.
- Connect with peers who are on a similar journey and share tips and strategies.
- Advertise your events and opportunities to a national Disability arts community.
- Receive community updates and resources in your inbox.

To learn more about how to get involved, visit:

**[creativecommons\[dot\]art\[slash\]allyhub](https://creativecommons.art/allyhub)**

To learn more about their membership plans for allies and cultural workers with limited resources visit

**[creativecommons\[dot\]art\[slash\]membership](https://creativecommons.art/membership)**

Visit [creativecommons.art/culturedays](https://creativecommons.art/culturedays) to get a special promo code! This promo will get you a copy of their access workbook for the Film Festival sector—a packed resource about Difference-centered design that is relevant to all types of event planning.

We acknowledge the support of the Government of Canada and the Canada Council for the Arts.



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du Canada

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