

Accessibility in Research

Purpose of The Checklist

This checklist offers guidance for integrating accessibility into research design and practice. A more fulsome guide is forthcoming. This checklist is intended to support the inclusion of accessibility principles throughout the research process and to highlight different aspects of and considerations for accessibility. For a broader guide on EDID in research, see the [our website](#).

Similar to EDID, accessibility in research considerations should directly address barriers inherent to a discipline, a project, and/or relevant communities/groups that may limit participation and engagement in the research.

How To Use This Checklist

This document offers an overview of key accessibility considerations. It presents a range of factors to reflect on, though **not all will apply to every project**. We recommend using the checklist below as a general guide, paired with thoughtful self-reflection to ensure its relevance to your specific discipline, project, team, and/or community.

For questions or further support, contact an [EDID in Research Specialist](#) at Western Research.

What is Accessibility?

Accessibility refers to the removal of barriers that hinder the full and equal participation of individuals with different abilities (visible and invisible) in society. Disabilities may be permanent, temporary, or episodic, and may relate to physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, communication, learning, or sensory differences ([Accessible Canada Act, 2019](#)).

Accessibility in research involves fostering a research culture in which people of all abilities including researchers, team members, study participants, and partners can fully participate, lead, and benefit. This includes addressing systemic ableism and ensuring equitable access to research roles, physical and digital environments, data, and knowledge dissemination.

Checklist:

Planning for Accessibility in Research

Use this checklist to assess the accessibility of a project's research design and practice.

☒ 1. Are Core Principles of Accessibility Reflected in the Project?

- ☐ Spaces, information, products, and devices can be used by everyone regardless of ability.
- ☐ Each stage of the project follows the [principles of Universal Design](#) (UD):
 - 1) Multiple means of [engagement](#) (Research is relevant for groups it affects depending on their background and identities; Team members and research participants are encouraged to collaborate within a climate of empathy);
 - 2) Multiple means of [representation](#) and mobilization (Websites, presentations, conferences, and lectures are accessible for people of various abilities such as blindness, deafness, or dyslexia; Materials include translations and descriptions, visual representation, etc.); and,
 - 3) Multiple means of [action and expression](#) (Participation through action versus in writing or speech; Use of accessible technologies; Modes of participation are physically accessible).
- ☐ Community needs are considered in formulating research questions and goals.

☒ 2. Are Research Practices Accessible?

- ☐ **Recruitment:** Recruitment materials include [welcoming, inclusive language](#).
- ☐ **Research Environment:** The lab/research space is inclusive; There is a clear complaints management process; Regular meetings with team members are held to discuss and address workplace environment concerns; Meetings are inclusive ([SSHRC "Best practices for EDI"](#); [NSERC "Guide on integrating equity, diversity and inclusion considerations in research"](#) and [CIHR "Accessibility Plan 2023-2026"](#)).

☒ 3. Is the Physical Accessibility of Research Spaces Considered?

- ☐ In research spaces, labs, and workspaces, signage, routes, and pathways are [accessible](#):
 - ☐ Clear signs direct participants to research spaces and accessible washrooms; Labs have accessible spaces with lower desktops to accommodate wheelchairs; Spaces are designed for people with light sensitivity, etc.
 - ☐ [Campus maps](#) are provided, indicating [parking](#) and [accessible entrances](#) for external individuals / partners coming to the project.
- ☐ There is access to computer labs that are equipped with [assistive technology](#); [Accessible campus transportation](#) is provided for study participants and others involved in the project.

✓ 4. Are Data Collection and Analysis Methods Accessible?

- ☐ The [principles of reciprocity \(see page 30, linked\)](#) are considered in data collection when working with communities; Disability communities partaking in a study or project are given rights to data and results, including long-term access and data rights for their own priority uses.
- ☐ In **Data Collection**: Clear and jargon-free language is used; Translation services or Braille / large-print formatting are available upon request; Information, including [web-based content](#), is presented in multiple formats (and considers principles of UD); [Text/Audio/Visual aids](#) are provided in response options; [Surveys](#) are accessible and compatible with assistive technologies.
- ☐ In **Data Analysis**: Summaries and interpretations of findings are presented in plain, jargon-free language; Visualizations are accessible: [alt-text](#) is used for images, charts, and graphs.

✓ 5. Are Accessibility Considerations Included in the Budget?

- ☐ Resources to support [accessibility needs](#) are included in grant funding proposals, aligned with strategies outlined in research design, practice, and eligibility criteria.
- ☐ The budget allocates [resources](#) for team members with disabilities, people with disabilities who will be interviewed or part of a study, and those who will attend project-related events (conferences, presentations, etc.).

✓ 6. Will Findings Be Disseminated Accessibly?

- ☐ The [principles of Universal Design \(UD\)](#) are imbedded in disseminating research findings such as in [building accessible websites](#), the use of closed captioning, descriptions, sign language interpretation on [videos](#), and in ensuring accessible design for [digital media production](#). (See 1.2 above on research materials.)
- ☐ Project-related conferences and events are planned with accessibility in mind, including in scheduling considerations (for participants and guests with caregiving and community responsibilities), the physical location, offering sensory-friendly quiet spaces, and providing clear pathways and signage.
- ☐ [Presentation materials](#) are provided in advance, and consider accessibility in the use of colour and font, open formats (CSV/TXT), high-contrast slides, etc.

Additional Resources and Support

To talk through relevant accessible considerations in research and seek additional support, please reach out to an [EDID in Research Specialist](#) at Western Research.

Additional External Training and Resources:

- Queen's University: [Accessibility in Research Training Series](#)
- Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST): [Tips and Articles](#)
- Web Accessibility Initiative: Guidelines on Creating [Accessible Web Content](#)
- Royal Rhodes University: [Accessibility in Research Toolkit](#)
- Humber College: [Accessible Media Creation](#)