Access Conversation Starter Cards

You can use the access quick tip cards to start conversations about accessibility. If you can think of others, please add your own cards to **The Guide.**

* Sharing information
* Communication
* Diverse teams of participants
* Agendas and instructions
* Workshop venues
* Online workshops
* Making things
* Visual designs

# Sharing information

Sharing information is a big part of any co-design project. Make sure everyone has access to information about your project, problem, or challenge. As the saying goes, "knowledge is power". Sharing information in an accessible way is a start to sharing power with participants.

Information can include the following:

* About your project
* Recruiting project teams and co-design participants
* Background information, such as research findings
* Activity instructions
* Project findings, recommendations, and reports
* Presentations (PowerPoint, video, live presentations, emailed presentations)

# Sharing information

How can we share information in different ways?

Who do we need to involve in making information accessible (hint: lived experience)?

Why is it important to make research findings and background information accessible?

Thinking about your project, write a list of all the different types of information you could share. List from most important to least.

# Communication

Communication is a human right. We need to be open to communicating to meet the needs of the individual. Communication starts with respect, such as:

* Use a normal tone of voice. Do not raise your voice unless asked to
* Be polite and patient. Do not rush the conversation
* Speak directly to the person rather than the person with them
* Ask the person what will help with communication
* Do not pretend to understand. Try asking yes or no questions
* Be flexible. Try a different way of wording something. Rather than repeat anything that is not understood
* Only refer to the person's disability if necessary or relevant
* Offer help if necessary. But respect the person's wishes if they don't accept your offer
* Relax; everyone makes mistakes. Apologise if you think you have embarrassed someone.

# Communication

What are the different ways people can communicate with each other?

How can we ensure we communicate in a way that meets the needs of individual participants?

What type of communication supports are available?

What do we need to know about different communication supports? For example:

* Verbal supports like Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) tools and technology
* Interpreters and communication guides
* Non-verbal communication, like pointing at pictures, gestures, signs, objects, symbols
* Tactile supports like braille

# Diverse teams of participants

We need to make co-design inclusive. It doesn't just happen. Diverse ideas help us come up with solutions that meet the diverse needs of our community.

We often think of people as having one identity. For example, inviting an autistic person to join a co-design. But people are more than just one thing. Someone can be autistic, an artist, a teacher, a sibling, non-binary, and culturally diverse. Be open to inviting people as they are, not just a label.

Spend time planning things like:

* How to remove barriers for different people to be able to take?
* Using affirmative language. For example, people don't identify as non-binary; they are non-binary
* using plain language

# Diverse teams of participants

How can we reach a diverse range of participants?

How can we make things more inclusive?

What are the barriers different people might face in joining our co-design groups?

How do we overcome these barriers?

# Agendas and activity instructions

We all learn and understand in different ways. By making agendas and activity instructions accessible, everyone can benefit.

Create clear agendas with short descriptions. Add images to go with the text. Images can add meaning for people who learn visually.

Break down your activities into clear steps. Test your activity instructions with your team. If possible, check your activity instructions are clear with people who have different learning styles. For example, people with lived experience of disability.

Send out your agendas and activity instructions a week before the workshop. This will give people a chance to get ready for the workshop.

# Agendas and activity instructions

What are the different ways we can make agendas and activities accessible for our participants?

How can we make sure our agendas are clear?

How can we make our activities straightforward and clear?

Who can we test the accessibility of our documents with? If they are not a part of our team, how can we ensure they are reimbursed for their time?

# Workshop venues

Finding an accessible venue can be hard. Knowing your participants' support needs is not always possible before booking a venue. Consider visiting locations in person. Think about signage, physical access and moving around the venue. Look for sensory things, like lighting, sound, and smell.

Find a venue that has things that can be changed to support participants. For example, a small room could be used as a low-sensory environment by providing a lamp, blanket, noise-cancelling headphones, colouring books or tactile tools. This can be helpful in managing overload and give people a place to go if they need to retreat from an overstimulating or overwhelming situation.

# Workshop venues

What do your participants need in an accessible workshop venue?

How can you make sure an accessible venue meets diverse needs?

What can you bring and make small changes to make the venue more accessible?

What are all the things you can consider avoiding in a venue?

List out step by step what it takes to get to the venue – from leaving the house to arriving in the workshop room. Look at the list to find all the steps you could make more accessible.

# Online workshops

It is easy to assume everyone knows how to do meetings online. But for many, logging in and joining an online meeting can be hard. You can reduce people's stress and be accessible by giving instructions to everyone.

We recommend using an online platform that participants know. This is better than using what your organisation prefers.

A job for one of your project team members could be to support people getting ready and joining online. Or you could offer a plain language and Easy Read guide. The guide would show people how to join from mobile devices and desktop computers.

# Online workshops

What video conferencing platforms are your participants comfortable using? How can you find out?

What would you need to know if you had never used video conferencing?

What accessibility features does your chosen platform have? For example, live captioning.

What tools and supports could you use to make online workshops more accessible? For example, Auslan interpreters or coloured cards to show facilitators they need to slow down or provide an extra explanation.

Make a list of all the things that could go wrong. Then brainstorm as a team on how to overcome these barriers.

# Making things

An important part of co-design is the design part. Design is a creative process. Doing creative activities can help people think differently, including experts by profession. It can also be fun and help people connect with each other.

For example, making a map of how people enter a hospital. Using Lego characters to represent different staff people with disability might meet. Participants can share what questions staff should ask people with disability to support their stay in the hospital. But it is important that creative activities are accessible for everyone. In our example, do not make people have to move Lego characters to spots on the map. Instead, have participants share where to place it and discuss why they made that choice.

Give participants a wide variety of making options. Participants will seek familiar tools that they are good at using or like, so offer a range of alternatives.

# Making things

Following each activity, ask people to think about what they said or made. Ask them how they felt about the activity and what they learnt.

Ask people to think about why they chose tools and materials.

As a facilitator, reflect on your own approach and how you might make changes to current and future workshops.

When selecting activities, ask your project team the following questions:

* What could be hard to do (e.g., add example)
* What tools could be physically difficult to use (e.g., add example)
* What activities may be visually challenging? (e.g., add example)
* How might you need to change an activity to make it more accessible? (e.g., add example)

# Visual designs (e.g., posters, flyers or videos)

Designing for neuro-divergence:

* use simple colours (don't use bright contrasting colours)
* write in plain language (don't use figures of speech, metaphors or sayings)
* use simple sentences and bullets (don't use big blocks of text)
* make simple layouts of information (don't make complex and cluttered layouts)

Designing for neuro-divergence:

* use good colour contrasts and readable font size (minimum 14 point)
* use a combination of colour, shapes, and text (don't use colour differences to communicate things)
* follow a linear, logical layout (don't spread content all over the page)

# Visual designs (e.g., posters, flyers or videos)

Designing for dyslexia:

* use images and diagrams to support text
* align text to the left and keep a consistent layout (don't centre, underline or write in capitals)
* consider making information in other formats (for example, audio or video)
* keep content short, clear, and simple

Designing for deaf or hard of hearing:

* write in plain language
* use subtitles or provide transcripts for videos
* use a linear, logical layout
* break up content with sub-headings, images and videos

# Visual designs (e.g., posters, flyers or videos)

How can we make our designs **universal**? **Universal** means making visual designs accessible to everyone.

How can we make our visual design easy to access for our participants?

How can we test that our visual designs are accessible?