# 2.4 Planning Accessible Meetings

**Purpose:** The tip sheet provides tactics to consider when preparing for a meeting.

**Directions:** Use this tip sheet, the **Accessible Meeting Facility Checklist**, and the **Meeting Accommodation Form** to ensure the meeting space and communication options are accessible to all participants.

## Tip Sheet on Planning Accessible Meetings

The Americans with Disabilities Act states that “reasonable solutions be found to address the needs of the disabled, whether it be through ‘readily achievable’ architectural modifications or through auxiliary aids that do not put an ‘undue burden’ on the meeting sponsor or public accommodation.”

For example, if someone is present to read a form to an attendee who is blind, a Braille form will not be necessary.

**An accessible route of travel means a path**

* 36” wide (interior corridor)
* 44” wide (exterior walkway or ramp) without abrupt changes greater than 1/4”
* Accessible by everyone
* With a smooth, hard surface with access from parking to primary building entrance(s), through the interior of the building to meeting rooms, restrooms, or lobbies

[http://www.ada.gov/business/accessiblemtg.htm](http://www.ada.gov/business/accessiblemtg.htm%20) provides more detailed guidance.

* Ask all invitees if they have specific needs through a phone call or through questions on a registration form that can be sent in advance to all participants. **(See Meeting Accommodation Form)**.
* Turn to local community organizations that provide direct services to people who are blind or visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, or have limited mobility to help you meet some of the identified needs.
* Visit the meeting site to find out if the facility is accessible to people who are in wheelchairs or have other disabilities. For example, if the site does not have accessible parking or a drop-off/loading area near an accessible entrance, consider another meeting venue. **(See the Accessible Meeting Facility Checklist for specific details on how to evaluate a meeting site).**
* Ask local Independent Living Centers or other community-based organizations that provide services to people with limited mobility or other types of physical disabilities to help evaluate a meeting site.
* Make arrangements with the food service provider to accommodate the dietary needs of your guests if the meeting is scheduled around a meal. Otherwise, offer simple refreshments that might not compromise the invitee’s health, such as fruit and bottled water.
* Design nametags printed in at least a 20-point font to be worn around the neck rather than with a clip or pin.
* Provide maps to indicate accessible parking spaces, drop-off and loading areas, accessible entrances, restrooms, water fountains, and accessible emergency exits.
* Ask people who do not read or understand English well if they will need a translator for the meeting.
* Be prepared to provide appropriate sign language interpreter, auxiliary aid, or other service per ADA, Title II, Section 7 (Communications) and FEMA Functional Needs Support Services requirements for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or have low vision.
* Ask participants to avoid wearing cologne, perfume, or other scents in consideration of people with chemical sensitivity.
* A service animal is always allowed. Staff training may be required to reinforce this.