So as we begin, we pause to acknowledge the place we exist, connect and create is their traditional UN surrendered territory of the Abenaki people, one of five Wabanaki nations who have a continued and enduring presence with this land.

Presence with mountains with vistas. With waters and winds presents with people, relations with culture and creations. With lights.

We learned that in Abenaki Wilbourne refers to the white flickering light in the sky and the key is the word for land or the earth. So the Wabanaki are the people of the dawnlands. We honor Abenaki ancestors past, present and future.

With that I will add to that my greetings.

Good morning. Welcome to this digital access series sponsored by the Vermont Arts Council. It is great to have you here. My name is Heidi’s weapons. Uh, you see, they pronouns and for access purposes, I'll do a visual description of myself and surroundings.

So I have blue eyes and pale skin with short brown hair and today I'm wearing a teal sweater hoodie with a light blue down vest and behind me is an abstract blue painting with some trees against a whitish wall and I am the director of community partnerships that inclusive parts for months and I'm really excited to be here, sharing some information, some questions with you and now I'm going to pass it over to my colleague.

Hi good morning everybody.

I'm Katie Miller. For those of you I haven’t met before, I’m the executive director at Inclusive Arts, Vermont. Here’s a brief verbal description of myself and my surroundings.
I moved my desk so my background is a little bit different. I am a pale skinned woman in her mid 30s. I have big roundish square frames on my glasses that are clear up lots of freckles on my cheeks and my nose and my hair is brown and Gray and blonde. It's all sorts of colors and it is half up today and I'm wearing a white T shirt. And I have black headphones, my background are some grey blue walls. And some chunky white trim and a big white dresser with a picture frame on it behind me.

00:02:33 Katie Miller

So first I just want to invite you all if you'd like to share a, you know a brief introduction of yourself in the chat box just so we have an idea of who's here today. Maybe your name and if you're affiliated with any organization, UM, that would be great.

Can I remind you all what I always remind you of? Which is that we are human beings first right? So if you need to take care of your biological needs, uh, get some water, eat some food, use the restroom, get up and stretch your body, move around, be joined by people big and small pets, whatever. It's fine. Just be here as you are. And we 100% welcome that.

00:03:15 Katie Miller

We also invite you to participate in a way that works best for you today, so some people like to use the chat box. Some people like to use the raise hand feature or just physically raise their hand and speak out loud. Whatever works for you is fine if you want to contribute to the conversation. If for some reason you're raising your hand physically and I miss it. Because that does happen with so many people in a zoom space. Uhm, you can unmute yourself and interject, and it's totally fine, and we welcome that.

00:03:43 Katie Miller

Uhm, and if you have questions you want to ask and for whatever reason, if neither of those options work for you, you can always email me. And that's Katie at inclusiveartsvermont.org and I should see it. Uhm, every time you not every time but the first time you speak today, we’d love it if you could do a short verbal description of yourself.

00:04:08 Katie Miller

Just a note that today's session again will be recorded and available on the Vermont Arts Council website after this training, it usually goes up about a week after we're so grateful to be partnering with the Arts Council on this series, and I'm going to put the link to that in the chat box right now.

00:04:27 Katie Miller

Is there anything I missed?

00:04:31 Heidi Swevens

I don't think so, yeah, it feels it looks like the chat box is lively, so.

00:04:36 Katie Miller

Yeah, we've got let's.
See, uh, I'll just really quick rundown.

The list of who we've got here.

We have Rachel from the current and Stowe, Karin from CVOEO, Michele at the arts council, our colleague Shea, Michelle from the Kellogg Kellogg Hubbard Library in Montpelier.

Lots of folks I could go through the whole list, but we've got lots of folks here today which is great.

Yeah, yeah, and for anybody who wants chat box transcripts, we can download that. Access it.

There will be information Katie is going to be putting in some bullet points that will be in addition to auto captioning. So just highlights of the agenda and stuff. So you're wanting to access that as we go great, and otherwise you know what you're part of what we learn today or we'll share today there's a lot of the like before the meeting during the meeting and the after the meeting and all of that is ways that information is exchanged and shared. So thanks for that Katie, yeah.

Are we ready to move in to what's next?

Yeah, I think we're ready.

OK, so that was a sort of a transition to the overview of today.

What we plan and intent to go over with room for questions in between. So we're going to start by defining accessible what isn't accessible, and then print out an air quotes meeting. And then we're going to go into a section with meetings and events, components and considerations. Then we're going to loop into before the meeting during the meeting and after the meeting.

We're going to share some examples and then we're going to wrap up with questions and reflections. And as Katie mentioned all throughout, if you have a question, you know, please, you know we'll do our best at time it, but this is interactive. We want to hear from you as best we can, so we make sure we're addressing your needs. We'll also stay for 10 minutes after in case you have any questions that don't get answered in the moment.

Does that make sense to everyone?

OK, great, so we often like to start with defining things.

So what we mean by accessible is around accessibility for people with disabilities. Now, within the context of accessible in the world, there's lots of things, whether it's financially accessible, whether it's
you know Wi-Fi accessibility, there's all of those nuances, but for this particular training... around accessibility with zoom.

Since Katie and I are talking about accessibility for people with disabilities and you might remember, or if you were with us in any other workshop, disability has different meanings and is nuanced and is not as black and white as it might seem. But we’re going to go with this.

Our approach today is going to be very parallel to how we approach art and and we want to think of this as accessibility uhm, as a process rather than a product or alongside the product, so it's not period done. End of sentence like in a frame on the wall.

Although that might be part of it... it really is an ongoing learning and evolution, and that's how we were approaching this inaccessible context for meetings for people disabilities. And I'm going to adjust my notes and OK, I'm going to assume that makes sense.

So what we're going to do in this first section about components and considerations is we're going to take some of the pieces and kind of list them out one by one, or 5 by 10.

I'm going to take some of the things apart and then they all go together.

So this is 1 particular order that we're talking about this.

It's not a priority order, it's not anything other than... these are some of the pieces that Katie and I thought were really important to consider when you are imagining an accessible zoom meeting or event so.

SO here we go. So the first one is the digital platform zoom is the one we’re talking about here today. There are multiple digital platforms now and very parallel to physical accessibility in a physical environment.

Uhm, starting with platform accessibility is really important. I mean so some of the things you want to look at or consider is choosing a platform that um allows accessibility features to take place.

Some of those will be things like auto captioning or live captioning. The ability to have chat box interaction. Also, this is another sort of detail. The ability to pin ASL interpreters or any interpreters so that the zoom screens can be framed in a way that allows for that accessibility feature to happen and and also multiple ways to engage in terms of a back and forth.

And so those are some of the considerations we can go more into those, and if there's specific questions later on, just as a side note, we're going to sprinkle some examples in at the beginning of the pandemic.

When everything was going digital and inclusive arts Vermont kind of always has the question of access. Uhm, I contacted the New England ADA to find out what they were using and why they were using it.

And Zoom has the ability to call in as well as video in, so that was one of the things that was really important at the time. There's lots of changes, so I'm I'm not doing a push for zoom, but just some of the the ways that you want to consider how people can interact with the digital platform was part of the
consideration early on and then there’s another party, which is we wanted to stick with one thing. So that it was like accessible and consistent in that was and it’s not that other platforms aren’t consistent, but that’s part of why IAV went with zoom early on in the pandemic.

And then the next sort of bullet point under the digital platform is to recognize that even as the if the platform is technically accessible. So like all of the eyes are dotted and the T’s are crossed and you Google it and it's like yes, yes, yes, accessibility. That doesn't necessarily translate into usability for everybody that you want to reach. I was just saying that we chose zoom as a platform early on. There’s other Google meets and other things that have accessibility, but somebody has to know how to use them in terms of there accessibility.

And that’s true for people with disabilities, but that’s also true service for all of us, right? Like it’s a new platform, a new bell or whistle or a new thing to do it. So when you’re considering your platform, there’s the accessibility, you know, sort of is it accessible? Does IT support accessibility features and then this recognition that even though that’s the baseline, it may not be usable for everybody without the learning curve.

If you have the capacity, you might want to consider you know, just offering tutorials for depending on the event, you know if anybody new to it or coming on a little bit early to answer questions so it kind of takes away that wondering or that uncertainty.

00:11:56 Heidi Swevens

Around how will I use it? Will it use us? How will I interact with it? And you can do this as I was saying you know tutorials, sometimes we have interns who support us with this offering and you could do it ajead of time or after, just to make an opportunity for people to learn more about the platform itself. So like they can get into the digital space, whatever that means. Does that make sense to people? Before we move on, Yep.

00:12:25 Katie Miller

Lots of head nods.

00:12:27 Heidi Swevens

OK, thanks Katie.

00:12:28 Heidi Swevens

Sometimes I feel like I just want a little bit of feedback before we keep going so I appreciate that.

00:12:33 Heidi Swevens

So the next thing is... The consideration of you know the event or the meeting or the performances level of engagement in activities and the first one question is what are the goals of this event?

Will it be a performance?

Will it be participatory?

Do we want people to talk back and forth and part of that?
In terms of the accessibility links to.

So, uhm. Considering the communication that will take place and the ways that communication will take place as we've mentioned before, and we'll probably mention again, people communicate and show up in all different ways. And if the goal of the event has communication or interaction involved, then you just want to be sure that you plan ahead with accessibility from the start about multiple ways to invite engagement and to offer engagement for people.

And I'm looking to my notes just to make sure I don't miss anything essential. Uhm, one way that we hopefully model this is that people, even though it's a video platform. People can turn off their videos or on. People can always pass on a questions. My cat is echoing that.

Uhm, so you can invite people to to to speak. To contribute in verbal and nonverbal ways spoken and non spoken. And as a facilitator, or as the presenter, you can just be aware you know. Again, depending on the kind of event or program that there's more than one way that audience members will participate and communicate equally important is that it will be more than one way that presenters or performers or instructors will be communicating.

So I'm going to take a side note with another example.

00:14:23 Heidi Swevens

Like oftentimes in the arts community nationwide we talk about accessibility for audience members like at a theater, and then the stage or the green rooms, or their restrooms may not be physically or otherwise accessible, so really, this is when you're considering the kind of event and the goal of the event for participants as well as presenters.

00:14:46 Heidi Swevens

I think it's just an important piece that we're coming to a place where I think we're recognizing some of the inherent bias in our structures and in our places and just want to, you know, make that known that sometimes it's the instructor or the performer that actually has the accommodation need and request.

00:15:08 Heidi Swevens

Let's see a few other things on the digital platform to consider ahead of time. If there's a Q&A period you want to make space for people to ask questions before and after in ways that are not necessarily the digital type in platform. I'm sure there's things that are technically accessible, I just haven't learned them and I'm going to hesitate with saying yeah, because some of them, you know it just may not be.

Inherently, if you're doing a program, especially if there's a decision to be made along the way you want to make sure that everybody is included in questions and answers and conversation and decision making. Again, that depends on this sort of context of the meeting itself. But it's really important for all perspectives and voices to be heard and not muted if there's a decision to be made and people are making a choice about something.

00:16:12 Heidi Swevens

And this one note says to design with accessibility in mind.
So from the start all along the way, asking how is this accessible? Who's included who not might be? Who might we be missing? And time I'm going to just this will come up in a couple different places. With decisions in particular, but in general people make process in different time.

People take in information in different time and so if we have this before, during and after the meeting and we're kind of taking apart different pieces, we want to make sure that any decision or any process gives everybody involved enough time to make a decision they feel comfortable with.

In some arts venues that you know that looks a little different again, if people are passing, if they want to, do you say the hokey pokey, right? You don't want to put your left leg in, but you're a little hesitant like that's a bit different than thinking about a budget or the decision of you know where an advocacy group might be going, but just that sense?

Of people do.

Things in different time and that is ordinary and just creates space for it. So that it can happen in that way. The next thing on this list is a category that we've called communications and material.

And we have other workshops devoted to social media communications.

And how do you get that PDF accessible? So this is not about that. Stay tuned or you know again, this is about some some of what I was saying before. In terms of the sort of goals of the piece. But making sure that the information is shared in ways that everybody gets to communicate and contribute, and receive that information and connect.

Sending information ahead of time so you'll notice or maybe you don't notice, I'll point it out, that Katie sends the Know before you go the know before you go is kind if a subject line that has been on websites before for physical accessibility.

There was an organization called Disability Lead that I first saw it as the subject line for zoom events and I thought oh, that is so clever. So essentially it puts what you need to know in an email ahead of time, and that includes things like the agenda, you know what to expect in terms of timing.

In the ones for these this series, Katie puts resources that you can look at ahead of time. A place to ask questions, what's going to be there for accessibility, who to contact if you have other accessibility requests.

So all of that information comes ahead of time. It's come that sort of timing has been about a week in advance just so that people have time to process and organize it in their day to day work, schedule or otherwise schedule, so just that’s a really important thing.
Heidi sorry this is Katie, I just want to interject really quick that we send that we send it a week ahead of
time and then we also try to send it the day before, or like sometimes the morning of just so that people
maybe they didn't get the first one.

Or maybe they got it, but they can't find it. 'cause I don't know about you all, but I get about 10,000
emails a day, so having it towards the top of your inbox is helpful sometimes.

00:19:27 Heidi Swevens

Yeah, great thank you for that addition and yes, but sort of the week ahead the day of and then Katie's
really been responsive immediately after so that you might notice and if you haven't again, I'll point it
out that that consistency.

I don't know about any of you, but for me I'm like expecting that email in the morning so I don't have to
search for the zoom like and sort of after. So it's that consistency also with communications and timing is
intentional, but it I think the consistency also leads to the sort of some sense of what to expect, and
maybe no promises about it.

00:20:04 Heidi Swevens

'cause we're all humans, but that sort of regularity can be really valuable in terms of consistency
accessability and building relationships, you know, digitally.

00:20:15 Katie Miller

I'm sorry this is Katie again. I have one more interjection.

00:20:18 Heidi Swevens

Yeah no please. This is teamwork, yeah?

00:20:20 Katie Miller

There are some things that I've started using recently that are going to make it sound less personal, but
actually make the process much easier that I've discovered that I'm going to share with all of you 'cause
sometimes it's like Oh well, what if I don't have time the day before or whatever.

Gmail if you use Gmail and I believe Outlook has this too. This great feature where you can schedule
emails ahead of time. So you can write it all out and then press schedule and send and schedule it to go
at a specific date in a specific time so you prep it all when you have the time and then it goes when it's
supposed to.

And another thing you can do is, I'm sure Outlook does this too. We used Google Workspace at our
employer, but...There are templates that I just discovered in Gmail, so you can if you have an email like
the know before you go, email if you've gotten multiples of them.

They're the same format, just different information peppered in so all you have to do is update and send.
You can set that up as a template, so I pull up the template and then just change the information I need
to and I have it highlighted where I need to change it all that stuff.
But if you can create a system for some of these things, it makes it feel much more doable and you don't feel like you're having to remember to do it every time. It helps a lot.

00:21:41 Heidi Swevens

Yeah, great, thank you.

00:21:45 Heidi Swevens

Systems you know systems for you all for us all is is helpful for us in sort of delivering accessibility. A couple other communications things that I just want to highlight. And and this is to, for access purposes, describe any visual image that is shared. Sometimes if there's a slide deck, you know another way to practice accessibility, not only in the moment, but is to have that sent ahead of time without text, audio, description or verbal.

Visions, you'll notice that the access doesn't always have to be simultaneously in the moment and and it can't necessarily always be in the moment, so you know one of the things that comes up around verbal description is that it takes time, or there's a timeline with that that doesn't always flow into the overall agenda in a way that's.

00:22:37 Heidi Swevens

As meaningful, so there's separate tracks that do verbal description. There's ways that it can be done before. Somewhat during and after and one of the sort of key points there is to check with the person who's making the accommodation request around what does this mean for you in this context?

And this links to communications and materials because, you know, like in the moment Katie's been describing things, there's stuff in the chat box that may not be able to come out instantly. That might be a low vision or a blindness thing, but it also might be a it just went so fast I couldn't read it. I don't know where it is or didn't have time to read it. Or I just need to turn my brain off from the screen for a while.

So planning for before, during and after in lots of different ways to access the information, whether it's content or creative artistic stuff like all of those things are really important.

I'm going to just do two quick examples.

The auto captioning. That's a part of Zoom does not meet the ADA standards for accuracy for accessibility, and I think we said that in other places. I bring that up here because even though it doesn't meet the ADA standards, it might meet the person's standards. Who wants captioning?

00:23:50 Heidi Swevens

So it's kind of taking a step back and not making any assumptions without connecting, so we've had an example where we put out this is auto captions verbally described? Let us know if you have other requests and and specifically have checked in with people to make sure that's meeting their access needs, so it's not the live captioning, but it still works for the person. And we've asked people themselves directly.

00:24:14 Heidi Swevens
Another example in terms of you know, things not being cookie cutter. I was, we were talking in a meeting, and the person was like cookie cutters are great for cookies, but not necessarily for access.

I have low vision and verbal description is an access feature that I request often and it has way varying degrees of how it’s Uhm, used and there was a a cohort that I was involved in with the National Guild for Community Arts Education.

00:24:40 Heidi Swevens

It met for five to six months and after a while the audio descriptions of self and surroundings, like once we knew each other seemed to be kind of the checklist thing rather than meaningful.

You know, like it was all like you got this and this also happened with Inclusive Arts Vermont. So when there's a cohort community team, I was asked for my feedback and we adjusted it so that the access at that point wasn't like, you know, unless Katie changed her hair color. Again, that was one thing that was a change we want to know about. But it comes at how do you want, how do you want to be known I the room, and is there anything else that's important? And if it's important enough to show it's important enough to describe, is one of the caveats, but for me it felt more important to take the time and space to hear about.

You know what was on the hoodie, or actually what was somebody in somebody heart as part of that community building? And relationship building. That was a very specific context, so for you know, public events and other things.

If you want to incorporate access features, that's different, and that will be a great transition to the last section we have, which is kind of other variables and other factors.

And one of them. Is this event a performance or sort of a meeting? Performances you can make accessibility features ahed of time. You can take requests but you can also market them. So ASL is one example and the time involved in that, or the coordination pieces are important, but there and the evaluation you want to check with people to see how accessibility went.

00:26:14 Heidi Swevens

Not necessarily directly with every individual, but just kind of this ongoing conversation as part of the process.

00:26:19 Heidi Swevens

But that's really different than if you're having you know and Advisory Board forum for example or a Class in terms of the ongoing relationship building with somebody who might have requested the accommodation.

00:26:33 Heidi Swevens

You also might be just doing multiple options all of the time and you just want to check to see how that's working for everybody, whether they identify or have named a disability or not, just how's it going? You know?

How is this working for you? What can we do better? And what can we do differently? And that’s just, you know, another, another thing to consider.
I’m aware of time, so I’m going to move along.

And the last thing I want to say, though speaking of time is about you, is about all of you who are here because you care about accessibility, and you want to be inclusive.

This last sort of bullet point is to give yourself enough time. To make things inclusive, to provide accommodations to coordinate. To plan to ask to follow up.

If it’s a new thing for you, like, you know, the new planning of the thing on the zoom screen, or pinning things so you can see them. If you can budget your time in, because sometimes it takes time and I say it takes time as if that’s a problem and it’s not what I’m trying to say, here is, it takes time. Include that in your planning and and give yourself time. There might be a learning curve for you, and that’s OK, and that’s ordinary. And yay for you... For like stepping into something new that may have a little bit of worry or uncertainty and and you know, inclusive rights for my really wants to support people, we I think we do support people where they are and accommodations take time and that is not a challenge if you’re aware of it.

That also can mean including time or other you know budgetary things just to make accommodations to make access part of the everyday ongoing like this is not more time.

This is not a burden of time. This is just part of how we do things.

And we’re going to plan for different places, different timings, but we're going to include time as part of that equation for ourselves to do the the work of inclusion. After a while it just becomes part of the thing and the rhythm and the routine and the process.

So I’m going to pause there. I’m aware of that, Katie, do you have anything to add that I might have missed or..?

00:28:51 Katie Miller

Not right now no no.

00:28:53 Heidi Swevens

OK, and do we want to ask if there's any questions now or go through the next section and then ask questions. 00:28:58 Katie Miller

I think let’s does anybody have any questions now before we move on 'cause sometimes I forget about them if we move too far ahead.

OK, so uhm, I’m going to jump into the before during and after section, so I’m going to talk about today what I'm going to talk about is zoom specifically as a platform and what to do before, during and after to help make it more accessible.

So and I’m going to share some links while I talk. So forgive me, I'm going to look away from my camera everyone once in a while to copy and paste.

So the first thing you want to consider before your event is your marketing and outreach.
When people are interacting with content that you're putting out there. Or to promote your event or talk even if it's just a meeting, making sure that there are places along the way for people to make accessibility accommodation requests is really important, even if it's not in a formal way.

It just invite, uh, just an invitation for people to... The line I usually use, it's something really simple, like if there's anything we can do to make this meeting more accessible for you. Don't hesitate to let me know, that can go a long way and sometimes people share things and sometimes they don't.

I'm going to put a link in the chat right now, uh, if you've been in one of our trainings before, you've probably seen this. This is our question mark symbol Tipsheet. I highly recommend if you have any sort of visual materials, Flyers, social media posts, whatever... Putting that question mark accessibility symbol on that sheet with the contact information.

For a person who knows that they're the accessibility accommodation coordinator for that event. It says not only is this is there someone to contact, but we are willing and really.

I'm going to share another link in the chat and don't worry, these will all be emailed out after two so you don't have to try to copy and paste and save all of them this one. UM is from our friends at the National Guild for Community Arts, Education, and UM. When you pull it up, there's a few seconds like one thing says column says before the webinar and after the webinar. It's a lot of the things we're modeling today, like making sure that you're speaking at a slower speed in introducing yourself, doing short verbal descriptions. And some things I'm going to talk about later, but this one pager is a really great way to deliver that information to your speakers and give them a chance to absorb it beforehand.

And the last one I'm going to share is to provide multiple ways for people to register for an event. So a lot of us just assume that everybody wants to register online because it's quick. It's easy, you could do it from your phone, right?

Not everyone has a way to do that. Not everyone has the tech savvy to do that, or some people just don't like to so, we like to offer options, and I think it's a best practice, to offer multiple ways for people to register and make it very clear. So that people don't have to go digging for a way to do that, so you can have a link.

You can also say you could also register by calling this phone number and what we do is it's usually like one or two people per event will call us and I'm it's usually me or cat or development person is on the phone with them just typing their information into the online.
So it's a human being on the other end, sort of helping fill out the form for them. We also give people an option to email UM, sometimes depending on what it is, we might offer a paper registration that people could mail in. If it's for something bigger really, it's all about letting people, and this is sort of a theme for access in general. Letting people make the choice of how they want to interact with something and how they want to experience something.

OK, the second is Heidi already talked about this so I'm not going to go into too much detail, but then the Know before you go email or the no before you zoom, provides information that all people, people with and without disabilities may want or need in advance of the meeting.

Things like how to log in, the zoom link. Uhm, what access features will be included? And maybe give people ideas of things they can request an agenda and who to contact for troubleshooting.

I think a lot of times people can have technical difficulties with zoom and providing a specific person to say hey if you can't get in, call this number or email This specific person and they'll try to work with you to figure that out. You can also include ways in that for people to ask questions if they don't want to use the chat or raise their hand. And like Heidi already said, you know you send it a week ahead of time and then the day of and trying to have consistency in the template. And the timing is really helpful for people.

So that say I want to I want to know what the agenda is, but I've already been to three events in this series I could say, OK, they they sent me these before I can quickly scroll through this really long email and know where to find the agenda instead of if it's somewhere different every time people have to go digging for it.

And then lastly, uh, before the event you want to plan and coordinate different accommodations and different requests so some of these might include making sure you know how to turn on the auto captioning on zoom.

That's something that we do in every single meeting and you might also want to know like Prep ahead of time. Things like if you're going to make some sort of announcement like we do the humans first speech/announcement. Just prep that ahead of time.

I like to put all of the links or text we share in one document. So sometimes while someone speaking will share an outline of what they're saying, that all goes into a Word document so that I can easily copy and paste it.

OK, does anybody have any questions about before we go on? Oh, go ahead, Dominique.
Hi there, good morning, I'm Dominique from Vermont family network. Dark hair fair skin ready for summer. No I I have a question. This question mark is that sort of like a symbol that everyone would know. And and that would be a really obvious icon for people. I should know this information, but I didn't know that, so that's I kind of really used to know, like oh, this will help me get accessibility services, OK?

Yeah, yeah it is. Actually if you go back to the recording from the very first training we did I with this series, I think it's the disability awareness 1. We talk more about the different symbols, but there's a series of different symbols you probably have seen in different places. I can pull them up and share my screen right now to show people what they look like.

If you see that question mark symbol, you know that that's where you go to find information about making an accommodation request. And I actually have a great story about that.

So we used to have a a drum festival every year and, uh, this festival had hundreds of people in the Fletcher Free Library at downtown Burlington, right?

And just imagine us filling that huge library with different drums and workshops and like it was. Anything up and we tried to make the event as accessible as we could. We had this huge banner out front, probably 6-8 foot vinyl banner outside.

That said, boom, Vermont drum festival and it had the accessibility symbols across the bottom, including one for ASL.

A man walks in off the street and I'm at the welcome table and he just starts signing furiously at me and I was like, I, I know, very limited sign from where I went to college and so I like I was like hang on a minute and I held up my fingers like this and I painfully fingered spelled out.

My name is Katie.

I don't speak fluent ASL.

Let me go get a translator.

I'll be right back.

And so I get an interpreter, and we're talking, and he tells me that the reason he came in is because he saw that symbol on the sign. And it wasn't necessarily ASL one, it was the ASL one in combination with the question mark, all of it. He knew that that was a safe place for him to go, otherwise he never would have come in. He said normally I would see drum festival and be like no I can’t. I'm not going to go 'cause it's not accessible, but those symbols tell a whole lot more than just. The services that are provided it tells people. But the folks hosting it are at least willing to dry, and that's sort of the first step, I think. I'm going to pull up these symbols now just to share them with folks so you can see sort of what they look like.

My name is Katie.
Forgive me, this is stuck. Okay, this is just a google search here, but as you can see, so this is a whole bunch of different grids of accessibility symbols you've probably seen this one of a wheelchair before.

Uhm, there are all sorts of different ones that mean different things. These samples are Braille, large print, assistive listening, close captioning, UM, this one. It says accessibility underneath, but it's really the it's sort of a universal marker for physical accessibility.

The other thing about that question, Mark, you know just for consistency, is that it is usually followed by the contact name and you know phone number Email of you know if it's on a digital thing as opposed to a physical environment where there's the information table about access so that the question mark is like this is where you go and it's really easily found of who and how that person can get be contacted.

That may not be consistent everywhere, all the time, but you know, in terms of a best practice just to keep it as simple as possible with that, that standardized symbol, which as Katie was saying I'm just going to echo means a whole lot more in terms of the symbolism of welcoming not just the question mark help thing.

It's a little big.

Right, like I can tell you, as the parent of a kiddo with disabilities, if I'm looking at like I don't know, going to some big event that's for kids and families... If they have a question mark symbol on there, it speaks volumes to me, but if I have to go digging to find who to contact to even know what sort of accommodations are already available, it's like it's all about reducing the not just on parents, but largely on people with disabilities, but it's that it's about reducing that first step and the mental and emotional load on people to do that.

That labor up front so it's about reducing the labor of people with disabilities to go digging for that information and instead just providing it up front, if that makes sense.

OK, I mean I keep moving through so during the event there's another link that I'm going to share from our friends at the National Guild for Community Arts Education. They're pretty amazing. Uh, this is this sheet that I'm sharing right now is a PDF that's sort of best practices that is going to talk about a lot of the things that I'm going to talk about now. So it's going to sort of reiterate that it's a good go to list if you need. A list to hold on to.

The first thing is to sign on early and to offer that as an option to everyone else, so you'll notice a we often say, oh, Heidi and I will be there 15 minutes early if you want to sign on and test out your tech stuff, 'cause there are still people out there who haven't tried zoom or have a lot of anxiety around these digital platforms and just giving people this space to to get on get all their tech stuff sorted out. So that they can be present and fully there with the meeting starts is helpful. The second is to enable auto captioning you have to. I'm going to share the link for Zoom's accessibility page, which details the how to
of how to do these things I'm. I'm not sure about now, but as of at least a couple months ago, you still had to go into zoom, like on your Internet browser settings.

To turn on the ability to turn on auto captions and and not just the desktop like a client app I don't know if I’m using the right word there. But, Uh, first, but turning on auto captions it's totally free and it's a way to make it accessible to lots of different folks, not just for people who are deaf or have some sort of hearing loss, but people like myself.

I have ADHD and the the captions really help me stay focused. It's the ability to take in information in more than one way and just giving people that choice. I I wish there was a way to have it just turn on from the beginning every time so you didn't have to remember to turn it on.

00:43:09 Katie Miller

Maybe someday zoom maybe they’ll hear my plea and we will have that happen.

The next thing is verbal descriptions. Heidi and I did a verbal description and alt text training. I think it was last month you could go back and check that out if you’re interested in how to do verbal descriptions, it's a really verbally describing the images graphics you use onscreen yourself and your surroundings is a way to make it more accessible for people with blindness or low vision.

Identifying yourself when you're speaking. This is really helpful for ASL interpreters, because they will often sign your name before they start signing what you say. It's also helpful for those who are listening in and don't have their video turned on for whatever reason.

It's helpful for lots of different folks, so you'll often hear us say oh this is Heidi or this is Katie, especially if you’re in a really big group conversation. Uhm, this isn't something we do internally at our meetings as well, largely because there's five of us and we know the sounds of each others voice by now. We've been listening to it for a long time until, but, you know, in bigger settings like this, it's it's really helpful, especially if if all of us were speaking right now in in different turns, it's it's helpful.

00:44:29 Katie Miller

The next thing is to take regular scheduled breaks. Uhm, usually it's it's at about somewhere between 40 minutes and an hour is 1 where you want to take your first break. And sometimes we do fun stuff where we like, play a song and we invite people to get up and move around.

Sometimes we just take a break and that's as much for the presenters as it is for the people participating.

Encourage multiple ways to participate. We've we've modeled a lot of this already today, but you know, inviting people use the chat speak out loud, raise your hand, use the raise hand feature. You know, just inviting multiple ways to engage with the conversation and the information and then taking you know if folks are sharing in the chat. Make sure to share that out loud as well so that everyone is also receiving that information.

The last couple is to if you can use a microphone and headphones. The headphones are helpful for everybody, but it's it helps you hear other people better and and the microphone just UPS your sound quality. And honestly, these headphones that I'm holding up right now, these simple black headphones I get in a pack of like 12 from Amazon. I buy so many at a time because my children and my cats destroy
them, but they work really well and the simple little microphone just amps up your sound a little better than if you're 3 feet away from your camera or your computer.

00:46:01 Katie Miller

Dominique said those breaks would be so helpful for interpreters who are sharing so hard to share the information. Yes, UM interpreters. I think it's actually in their contracts that they need breaks every so often. ASL interpreters often work in pairs, UM, because they it is a really intense job that they're doing. They are listening to people speaking, translating it in their brain to a physical language. Then communicating it usually with a lag so they're listening while they're talking something totally different with their body. And it is intense. It's intense brain work.

00:46:38 Katie Miller

It's intense physically, and they usually trade off every 15 minutes or so. Or sometimes they work in tandem like we have this artist talk series that we're doing right now online and we have two interpreters, so one is signing for one person in the interview and one is signing for the other. But yes, ASL interpretation is intense and amazing, and it is. It's just a really incredible skill.

00:47:08 Katie Miller

Uhm, avoiding a busy background this I think a lot of us have come to sort of naturally on our own, but it's helpful for everybody. You know, I can see I don't want to call anybody out, but I can see that Darlene has this really awesome blue background in front of your stuff. Sometimes I'll blur mine out. Uhm, but intentionally keeping your background simple so that people can focus on you.

And then lastly, encouraging people to mute when they're not speaking. It's really helpful because the zoom can try to prioritize who it's listening to, and if there are sudden loud noises, it will switch. Other background noise can just be really confusing for people so muting when you're not speaking.

OK, lastly I'm going to talk about after the event, so some sort of follow up communication is really important. It can include any of the resources you share in the chat box. You can reiterate any information we like to send a survey, so if it's a recurring thing, the survey link we send, we look at it before we plan the next month training so that we can.

Take that information or feedback from folks. Uh, whether it's constructive and improvements we can make or positive feedback about things we can continue doing, and we make sure that that's included. It's a really great way to get immediate feedback from folks who might not necessarily reach out to you individually and say, hey, it would have been helpful if you had turned on. Auto captions or hey, I really liked it when you did those verbal descriptions. Thanks so much.

00:48:48 Katie Miller

And people often will come up with things that you didn't even think of. Uhm, OK, I just did a whole lot of talking at you. I shared a whole lot of links. What does this bring up for people? Does anyone have any questions or thoughts about what's been shared?

00:49:13 Shea
I can say something this is Shea. I'm grateful to you all for this information and time and time again, every time I'm thinking about access and accessibility.

I think about I've said it before in one of these other trainings, like the sort of frantic pace at which we are accustomed to working or being online or planning our events. Nonprofit pace is like a thing many of us know about UM, and just that it's beneficial in so many different ways to build in time for planning, and that so much of accessibility is just showing that you've thought of.

The diversity of people needs before the access symbol just means that there's somebody who has thought about the diversity of ways that people show up before and has forethought to try to be with people on all the ways that we are.

So I'm I'm just always grateful to continue to remember that for myself forever that slowing down and just trying to be, Uh, pretty aware of what I don't know what, what. Uhm, I don't experience this is great mindset with which to approach these like more technical aspects of accessibility. Just like having a learners mind about it, it's really helpful to me. Uh, when I'm trying to think about how I'll carry these practices into all the different aspects of my life somewhere.

00:50:52 Katie Miller

Yeah, thanks Shea, I was just thinking about one more thing that I could add which is, just like meeting in a physical space right there are lots of social norms. And lots of the ways we do things. Just because it's the way we do things, zoom is the same way, but zoom also has these little pockets. Where the way you do things. The way VT Family Network does it might be the way then different than the way we do our meetings and inclusive arts Vermont or the Arts Council or wherever, so making sure you're sort of establishing those from the beginning meetings every time so that people know like OK if I want to speak, how do I tell people that I want to speak next? Do I physically raise my hand? Do I use the feature? Do I just talk like what's the deal? And things like that can be really helpful for folks to know what to expect, uhm?

00:52:05 Heidi Swevens

Want to piggyback off that Katie and just say when you're establishing group norms or practices.

One of them that inclusive Arts Vermont has used in a couple different cohorts of disabled artists.

Disabled dancers is the sort of of it's OK to be human. It's OK to remind people of these practices if we forget, like if somebody.

I just forgot to say this is Heidi or if somebody forgets an audio description or you know if there's something that is like very human mistake, the the practice is to remind people and then kind of move along so it really the intent behind that is to create a safe space to both do new things and also to say, hey, I need this, you know?

Or what about this so that it's a back and forth and that's a community thing in certain spaces, not in everyone

But just to bring to this conversation, some of what the disabled dancers and others have said is that you know, because one person in particular, we sent email reminders.
They said, oh, could you text me and I hesitated because I thought. I'm not sure how I'm going to remember to do this text and he said, Oh well, if that's if that's a burden and that word burden was so meaningful to me, 'cause it wasn't a burden. I was just trying to figure out how to create a system for me that I could connect with this person in the way that he was asking for and so in my humanism I said let's experiment. Like are you willing to give this a try so?

Here's what we'll do, we'll see how it works, and then we'll go from there.

But that was because our world is this collective society.

Thing I'm going 30,000 foot we. We have this perfectionism. We have this thing we have this like one way of doing it and to start to step outside that is not going to be perfect. It's not going to be without mistakes, but there's a humanist in that.

I think that we can model and honor and come, you know, without causing harm, just be really human in this question marks we want to do it.

We want to welcome everybody, and so let's just keep in conversation about how that happens. Disability is part of that, and it's the part that we're talking about, but I think it creates a a tone that people can can feel and participate in. And contribute to. And I have remembered to send the text so far.

00:54:23 Heidi Swevens

Are there other questions, reflections?

00:54:28 Katie Miller

I'm curious if there are no more questions if folks want to share either out loud or in the chat. One thing you learned from today that you're excited to to start using in your in your work.

Go ahead, Gretchen.

00:54:46 Speaker 6

Hi, this is Gretchen from Ed Adaptive Sports and I'm a pale skinned woman wearing a white sweater and my background has a bunch of books and an ad banner.

I really loved there were lots of little tidbits I picked up today, so thank you for offering this session, but the accessibility symbols is nothing I've ever thought about before.

That's embarrassing as an adaptive sports organization, but you know, I think I thought about the text communicating that a lot, so I love that just...Knowing that we should use one of those little symbols on anything we put out can make it more welcoming and more open to people. So I'm excited to add that to our next event, communication.

00:55:29 Heidi Swevens

Thank you.

00:55:42 Katie Miller

Alright, go ahead Darlene.
Well, I as you were talking about the theater, the stage, the green room, all that jazz, I was just I’m the director of a theatre program in Brattleboro for people with disabilities and prepandemic and and maybe next week.

We'll be back in person a little bit, uhm?

You know we have an accessible place and stage and everything, but yet we were noticing one of our actresses is in a wheelchair, you know whenever we had anything we had one way onto this stage and then that person needed you know their caregiver needs to turn them around and go back and you know it was of subtle thing, but watching it over and over for a particular show we were doing. W

Uhm, it just dawned on us like what the heck we need to have, you know everybody else can come up and go off, but that person needs to come up, turn around and go off and then everybody has to wait and you know there’s.

It's not about all the waiting or whatever you know we're all OK with that, but it was just like it really pointed out.

Thought it was different.

And so we wrote a grant to the Christopher Reeve Foundation, got some funding and built a ramp on the other side, much to the chagrin of the church where we outside.

Because now there's these, you know, ramps are long, and accessibility is.

You know, to say it mildly, and you know, but you know it affects everybody in positive ways as well, because now everybody, the elders at the church can come up, talk at the at the podium and walk off the other end you know and join the choir.

You know which is something. That makes it easier for them as well, but it just was interesting too. To to be immersed in this and then yet still see one more place where we can go the extra mile, you know.

Darlene, that’s such a great point. Reminds me of something.

A point we make often, which is that, and it's something we touched on today, is that the needs of the participants accessibility wise are just as important as the needs of the presenters, performers, whoever it is we’re talking about and performing arts is a great example.

Often you know performing arts venue might go to great lengths to make the space accessible for visitors and audience members, but what about the the stage, isn't it? Possible you know so or something like that, so that’s that's what we’re talking about today too.

Is making sure that it’s accessible for everyone involved, uhm?

OK I I’m looking at the time. It's 1031 so we should probably wrap up. I'm going to talk really quickly about next steps, so this session has been recorded. Today it will be available on the Arts Council's
website and I'll share the link at the end of this, usually within a week or so. Feel free to send that. I'll be sending an email.

It'll probably be tomorrow with the evaluation and all of that. If you have feedback, please share it with us. It helps us keep making things better for you. Next week. Same time 9:30 we will be here for open office hours. So if you've had any questions, come up around accessibility. Come hang out chat with Heidi and I.

And next month will be accessible web design with Pete and Peter from accessible web in Burlington. So tell all your friends 'cause it's gonna be a good one.

00:59:39 Heidi Swevens

And Katie, I want to add also that.

Stay tuned for Inclusive Arts Vermont is going to be doing another accessible accessibility from awareness, Action Deep Dive series with organizations beginning at the end of March. Shea and I will be Co facilitating that, so that's where organizations and individuals, if they want, can sign up and we do workshops and consultations. So it's really an individualized, lots of this content, but specific to programs and practices within your organization. Some more, one on one time, so stay tuned for that. It's coming soon.

01:00:10 Heidi Swevens

And thanks for going over a couple minutes of prioritizing people over.

01:00:19 Katie Miller

All right, thanks so much everybody. We'll see you soon.