

## INTRODUCTION

Making changes to the way you do business can provide more visitors with the same opportunity to find out about, visit, use or participate in global tourism.

One in five people has a disability and billions are spent annually on tourism by travelers with a disability. But the market for accessible tourism is much broader than people with a disability. Older people, parents with prams and overseas travelers can all benefit from improved information, more accessible buildings and a flexible approach to providing customer service.

Now more than ever governments and businesses are realizing the social and economic benefits of increasing access. Policies and legislation around the world demonstrate the need for all parts of the community to proactively reduce barriers to participation.

Reading and using the tips in this kit is the first step to making your business accessible for everyone.

### How to use this information

All parts of the tourism industry have a role to play to increase access to global tourism.

#### Tourism businesses

Tourism businesses are the primary audience of the kit. If you are a tourism business you can use this information to:

- Increase your knowledge about the market for accessible tourism
- Identify barriers, gaps and areas of improvement
- Develop strategies to incorporate access into your core business
- Improve and better target the marketing and promotion of your business

Tourism businesses include accommodation providers, attractions, tour operators, cafes and restaurants and other businesses which contribute to the local tourism economy and experience.

#### Regional Tourism Boards and Associations

Tourism boards and associations can use this information to:

- Provide leadership to the tourism industry in their region
- Plan and deliver a coordinated regional approach to accessible tourism

- Support local tourism businesses to promote and market their accessibility

### **Visitor Information Centers**

Visitor Information Centers can use this information to:

- Provide positive first impressions to visitors
- Promote accessible local businesses and attractions
- Encourage local businesses and attractions to become more accessible

### **Local governments**

Local governments can use this information to:

- Bring together, support and promote accessible businesses, festivals, events and open spaces to create a holistic approach to accessible tourism
- Incorporate accessible tourism into Council's broader tourism, business and economic development strategies and plans
- Link tourism businesses to relevant local grant, award and accreditation schemes

### **State government departments and statutory authorities**

State government departments and statutory authorities can use this information to:

- Support accessible tourism related activities within their area of responsibility
- Promote the importance of accessible tourism to staff and funded organizations

## **IS ACCESSIBILITY IMPORTANT TO YOUR BUSINESS?**

Improving access to your business will enable you to tap into a large and growing market. 88 per cent of people with a disability take a holiday each year. This accounts for some 8.2 million overnight trips.

Making small changes to improve access to your business can benefit other groups including parents with prams, people with temporary injuries and even visitors with heavy bags.

People with a disability make up a large part of your market and come from all walks of life.

- People with a disability may be guests, business owners and employees
- The majority of disabilities are not visible
- Some people may not identify as having a disability. For example an older person may find it harder to see or hear but would not feel the need to tell you.
- Some people have more than one disability. For example someone may have an intellectual disability and a vision impairment.
- A disability can be temporary. For example a person may need to use crutches for a short time as a result of an injury or accident.
- People with a disability represent the diversity of the population. For example people with a disability may come from Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- People with a disability enjoy a broad range of interests including the arts, outdoors and nightlife.

## **What are the common barriers preventing people from accessing your business?**

There are common barriers which can make it difficult, impossible or less likely for people to use your business. Removing these barriers will improve access to your business.

- Barriers to the physical environment such as steps, narrow or crowded spaces
- Barriers to information such as text that is difficult to read, information that is hard to understand or publications only available in limited formats. For example brochures may use a small font. Some people with a hearing impairment may not be able to follow film clips unless they have captions
- Barriers to communication such as a limited range of options for people to contact your business or lack of awareness about how to communicate

effectively with some customers. For example only providing a phone number or relying exclusively on websites to promote your business

- Barriers as a result of negative or discriminatory attitudes, for example making assumptions about people's abilities.

### **Who benefits from improved access?**

1. People with a physical disability, for example people who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids
2. People with a vision impairment
3. People with a hearing impairment or people who are Deaf
4. People with an intellectual disability or low literacy levels
5. People who use communication aids such as electronic speech devices or communication boards
6. People with mental health issues

Remember older people, parents with prams and others will also benefit from improved access.

You will be surprised who else will benefit from a flexible and proactive approach to access. For example providing simple information in multiple languages will benefit overseas visitors for whom the local language is not their first language.

### **What can your business do to improve accessibility?**

The first step in improving accessibility is to conduct a thorough inspection of your business through the eyes, ears and feet of your potential clientele. Better yet, hire a Person of Determination to conduct the inspection for you. Hiring a person with a disability to conduct your analysis will help your business see things through the eyes of potential customers.

### **Small changes can make a big difference**

There are many low cost ways to improve the quality of your service, facilities and information.

Following these general principles will help you get started:

- Incorporate accessibility information into general information provided to all guests upon arrival.
- Provide information in different ways including print and online. Make sure text uses a sans serif font such as Arial, is high contrast and is at least 12 point. Consider providing information such as menus in large print (18 point).

- Be flexible when providing a service. For example; be open to checking a person in from their car or bedroom or allowing people to check out a little later.
- Promote all of your contact details including your mobile number. Text messaging is increasingly used by everyone including people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment.
- Do your research when replacing old fixtures and fittings and dated technology. For example; televisions which use closed captions or subtitles are a major draw card for people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment.

## **How can you attract more visitors in the first place?**

### **Improve your marketing information**

Include accessibility information in your brochures and website and keep Visitor Information Centers and your Regional Tourism Board up to date.

Key points:

- Know your market, for example does your business cater particularly well for people with mobility issues.
- Use websites and other digital means to promote your accessibility.
- Incorporate accessibility information into your promotional brochure.
- Form partnerships at a local and state level, eg. Visitor Information Centers.
- Promote your success when you win awards.
- Use editorial in print media ('earned ink').
- Ensure positive word of mouth.
- Don't false advertise.

### **Increase access to your information**

Providing better access to information means more people will know about your business.

Here are some simple changes you can make.

- Use a minimum font size of 12 point and make information available in large print (18 point)
- Use plain sans serif fonts such as Arial (without the small curls or decorative features)
- Use black text on a white background for the highest contrast
- Justify margins on the left hand side and leave the right hand margin unjustified

- Include photos and pictures to enhance the written information. However do not place text over photos or other images as this makes the text hard to read
- Information in PDF format can be inaccessible to people with a disability. Make information available in alternative formats, for example in Word or in HTML on your website
- Avoid using jargon, long sentences and unfamiliar acronyms.
- Don't make assumptions about how people would like to receive information. For example someone with a vision impairment may not prefer large print.

## **Make a positive first impression and provide the best possible experience**

### **Prepare your staff**

- Make sure staff are familiar with your facilities and any barriers. For example, include your staff when you audit or promote your business.
- Ask staff to research and visit accessible local eateries and attractions.
- Provide your staff with a copy of this resource kit and encourage them to identify ways to improve access to your business.
- Incorporate disability awareness training into your customer service training. This will provide staff with basic information about common barriers to access and strategies to address them.

### **Review information when clients arrive**

- Remind clients of any specific arrangements they made at the time of booking.
- Incorporate information on accessible facilities into basic information provided to all guests upon arrival.
- Ask all clients if they have any specific needs or anything you can help them with.

## **Make small changes to the way you provide a service**

### **Entrance and reception area**

- Make sure your entrance and reception areas are clearly marked and well lit. Is someone always on hand to meet, greet and show people around?
- Provide clear instructions for people using the intercom. Provide a mobile number for people who are Deaf, hearing impaired or have a communication disability.
- Provide seating close to reception or fast track people who can't stand for long.
- Provide a clipboard and large diameter pen for people checking in.
- Be prepared to write down information or complete forms on people's behalf. Provide a magnifying glass for people with a vision impairment.

- If you can't lower the reception desk/table, offer to check in guests in common areas, bedrooms or from their car.
- Welcome visitors who use assistance dogs (this is required by law).

### **Restaurant and bar**

- Use pictogram signs, for example a knife and fork and a clock face showing meal times to assist people with low literacy levels or who speak English as a second language
- Read out menus or download them onto an audio player e.g. MP3, CD or iPhone
- Be willing to move tables around and provide seats with and without arms
- Use contrasting colors. For example avoid using white crockery, white linen and clear glasses all together on a table setting
- Provide quieter areas with no background noise
- Provide an area that is well lit so that people can choose this if required
- Offer flexible menu options for people who have food allergies or intolerances

### **Ensure lasting improvement**

#### **Get visitors' feedback**

- Your visitors will have gone to other places and may pass on some useful tips
- Review feedback forms to include questions on accessibility
- Promote feedback in different ways including email, online survey tools such as Survey Monkey, social media such as Facebook or travel review sites such as Trip Advisor
- Encourage staff to ask customers about their visit, then write down and record feedback
- Review your complaints processes to check whether they are accessible. For example do you provide a range of contact methods for complaints or is information about complaints available in different formats such as large print?

## **ASSESSING YOUR ACCESSIBILITY IS THE PLACE TO START**

Accessible tourism is about people and places. There are several important things to consider when assessing your buildings and facilities.

Improving access to your buildings and facilities can have universal benefits. A step free entrance and automatic doors will benefit people with a disability, parents with prams, people with heavy bags and older people.

Improvements to your buildings and facilities are not always costly. For example, changing the layout of a room can create more circulation space for people who use wheelchairs.

You can benefit from accessibility improvements even if your business is also your home.

Consider access when renovating. This will make your home safer and easier to use for ageing parents, young children and for you if you acquire a temporary or permanent disability.

Expert help is available to prioritize access improvements and to plan and budget for others over time.

### **Ensure access improvements benefit all visitors**

Universal Design means products and environments are designed to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

The Center for Universal Design has developed seven principles to consider when assessing your current level of access or considering upgrades and improvements.

1. **Equitable Use:** The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
2. **Flexibility in Use:** The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
3. **Simple and Intuitive Use:** Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or education level.
4. **Perceptible Information:** The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
5. **Tolerance for Error:** The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
6. **Low Physical Effort:** The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.
7. **Size and Space for Approach and Use:** Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

The [Center for Universal Design's website](#) includes more information about these principles and examples to help you understand them.



## How accessible is your business?

The following checklist will assist your business to broadly identify issues that might affect the level of access provided by your current building.

Areas of attention	Points for consideration
<p><b>Car Parking</b></p>	<p>There is at least one wider parking space (at least 3200mm) reserved for accessible parking identified with the international symbol for access (the blue wheelchair symbol).</p> <p>The parking space is on a firm and level surface and is close to the front door.</p> <p>There is good overhead height clearance (at least 2500mm) above the parking space included in the undercover car park.</p> <p>There is a clear and accessible path of travel from the car park to the front door.</p>
<p><b>Getting to your front door</b></p>	<p>There is a clear and continuous accessible path of travel to your front door.</p> <p>There are no steps or steep slopes (maximum gradient 1:14)</p> <p>The path is free of bollards or uneven and loose surfaces (such as gravel).</p> <p>Your door bell and/or intercom are at an accessible height for everyone (900mm –1100mm). A mobile number is provided for people who can't use the intercom.</p>
<p><b>Reception Area</b></p>	<p>At least part of the reception desk is low enough to be used by a person using a wheelchair or someone with short stature (maximum between 830 and 870 mm).</p> <p>There is seating in reception for people who have to wait, for example for someone with arthritis.</p>

Areas of attention	Points for consideration
	<p>There is a hearing loop available for people who use hearing aids and this is clearly sign posted and always turned on.</p>
<p><b>Getting around your building</b></p>	<p>There is a clear accessible path of travel from each accessible entrance to all areas and facilities used by the public. For example there are no steps or obstructions to get to the reception or toilets.</p> <p>Passage ways are wide enough for people using mobility aids such as wheelchairs and there is space for people to pass by each other.</p> <p>Floor coverings are slip resistant, firm and smooth.</p> <p>Signage and layout makes it easy for people to find their way around. Signs are clear and text is large and high contrast enough to see from a distance. Step free routes are clearly sign-posted.</p> <p>Where there is fixed seating there is still room for people using wheelchairs or people with prams to move around.</p>
<p><b>Doorways</b></p>	<p>Doorways are 850mm or wider when open.</p> <p>There is good circulation space so people using mobility aids such as a wheelchair can open and go through all doorways.</p> <p>Doors are not heavy and are easy to open.</p> <p>Door handles are easy to use. For example 'D shaped' handles are easier to use than round knobs.</p> <p>Glass doors and surrounding glass have color contrasting strips across the full length. This will assist people with a vision impairment to see the doorway.</p>
<p><b>Lifts and stairs</b></p>	<p>There are hand rails and enough space for people using a mobility aid to enter and turn around to use the lift buttons.</p> <p>Buttons have raised tactile and Braille information next</p>

Areas of attention	Points for consideration
	<p>to them and are low enough for everyone to reach them (900–1100mm).</p> <p>There is audible information and clear visual clues telling people which floor they are on.</p>
<b>Toilets and bathrooms</b>	<p>All toilets have clear identification signs including raised tactile and Braille information.</p> <p>There is a unisex accessible toilet close to other toilets. There is a blue wheelchair symbol and the sign is tactile with Braille.</p> <p>The accessible toilet has good circulation space (minimum 2500mm x 1900mm). It is fitted out with rails, sinks, mirrors, taps, shelves, coat hooks and towels. These are at heights that can be reached by people using wheelchairs (900–1100mm).</p> <p>The toilet door is easy to open and close with handles and locks that are easy to use.</p> <p>The shower area is on a level floor surface free of any step, hob or sliding door track.</p>
<b>General</b>	<p>All facilities are at table height. For example, water coolers, kettles, phones, remotes and computers.</p> <p>Common areas and bedrooms are well lit which benefits people with a vision impairment and people who lip read.</p> <p>Controls and switches are at an accessible height for everyone (900mm –1100mm).</p> <p>Televisions in bedrooms and common areas (including digital televisions) have captions (subtitles) enabled for people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment.</p> <p>There is an emergency evacuation procedure that addresses the needs of people with a disability (for example people who can't hear the fire alarm). Assembly points are accessible and where possible sheltered.</p>

## **Make sure your buildings and facilities meet local legal requirements**

An access audit of your business will give you peace of mind that any future changes meet legal requirements in your area. An access audit involves an inspection of a building or facility by an Accredited Access Consultant. The Consultant checks access features of a facility and relevant policies and practices. The audit identifies adjustments that need to be made to ensure that the building and its services are accessible.

An access audit also helps you plan changes over time. It is important to engage a Consultant from the concept stage for the design of new buildings, extensions or landscape projects. This will avoid costly changes to plans at a later stage.

Access audits often cost money. As with seeking other types of expert help it is a good idea to get a number of quotes. Talk to your Rural, Metro or deaf access officer. They may be able to point you in the right direction or know about local opportunities available to your business.

## **SHARE YOUR ACCESSIBILITY**

An 'Access Statement' is a description of the accessibility of different parts of your business. It does not need to be too long, but should include the essentials; location of your business, available parking, and any barriers to entrance or mobility.

Providing reliable, useful and detailed information on the accessibility of your business will assist people to make an informed decision about where to visit. Following some basic principles is a good start.

- A picture is worth a thousand words. Include photos of your spaces; bathrooms, toilets and communal areas such as your restaurant or grounds and gardens.
- Include specific measurements and floor plans where possible.
- Tell visitors about any potential barriers such as steps or bedrooms on upper levels not accessible by lift.
- Think of access in the broadest sense. Tell potential visitors if you can provide information in large print or if your televisions can have captions (subtitles) enabled.
- Demonstrate your commitment to excellent customer service. Remind people of anything extra you can provide.

- Provide details of emergency evacuation procedures, for example is there an information sheet and is it available in large print? Are staff trained to assist? Does the fire alarm include a flashing light?
- State that you welcome assistance dogs. What facilities are offered to assistance dogs, for example a run or toilet area and water bowls?
- Have staff undertaken additional training? For example staff may know Sign Language. This is worth promoting to visitors.
- Are there accessible tourist attractions, cafes or restaurants nearby? Use this as an opportunity to cross promote with other businesses in your area.

### **Promotion is key to your success**

Increasing and marketing your accessibility will benefit most of your visitors. Try these tips to promote your accessibility:

- Promote your successes, for example awards you have won especially if they relate to access.
- Build relationships with your Regional Tourism Board, Visitor Information Centre and council to make the most of local marketing and promotional opportunities.
- If your business caters for a particular group or demographic consider ways to attract this market.
- Use positive images of people with a disability to ensure your marketing material reflects your customer base.
- Not everyone receives information in the same way. Consider a range of formats and mediums when promoting your business, for example print and online.

Over the past few years, several tourism businesses, particularly accommodation providers, have expressed concerns that they have improved their accessibility but have not received an increase in visitors with a disability. The majority of disabilities are not visible. Therefore it is hard for a business to know for sure if this is the case.

Effectively marketing your level of accessibility by raising its profile through your website or your tourism board will lead to an increase in visitors with a disability. Include people with a disability in advertising

One in five people has a disability. Using positive images of people with a disability will ensure that your marketing material reflects your customer base. Use photos that show the person with a disability in a way that is positive and respectful, not as a victim or someone to be pitied. Try not to include the person's carer or family unless it is absolutely necessary to support the person or central to the piece – show them as independent.

### **Incorporate accessibility information into your printed material**

Most tourism businesses develop a DL sized color brochure outlining the experience that they offer. These size brochures are a handy size for most visitors, but also are able to fit into Visitor Information Centre brochure racks.

Remember that the font size should be 12 point minimum and a simple font such as Arial to assist people with a vision impairment.

You may not have sufficient room in your printed promotional material to provide comprehensive access information. In this case you can point people to your website where this should be provided in full. Having information in printed and digital formats also ensures that it is available to a wider range of visitors.

### **Talk to your Accredited Visitor Information Centre**

Accredited Visitor Information Centres have an important role to inform visitors before and during travel. These tips will assist you to promote your business and build an on-going relationship with your Visitor Information Centre:

- Inform your Visitor Information Centre of your product. Ensure that information is accurate and highlights your most accessible facilities or features.
- Invite the Visitor Information Centre manager to your property.
- Become a member of your local association.
- Display your brochure in the Visitor Information Centre.

### **Play an active role in your region and build partnerships**

Apart from becoming a member of your local tourism association it is important to participate in any relevant campaigns that your Regional Tourism Board is undertaking. These campaigns are becoming increasingly digitally based.

There may also be other businesses in your area that can contribute to a great experience for travelers with disabilities. This should lead to a holistic approach to tourism in your area. For example, if the public transport, taxis, restaurants, accommodation providers and museums in your local area are accessible and work together, this can lead to an exceptional visitor experience.

### **Promote your awards and accreditation**

Many tourism award winners at a regional, state or national level do not display and promote their success in these award programs. Often these programs include an element of accessibility in the judging criteria. It is important for businesses to mention this in any promotions that they undertake, especially if awards related to accessibility.

### **‘Earned ink’**

Editorial content in magazines and newspapers is one of the most affordable and effective means of marketing a business. To achieve this, an interesting story on your accessible business should be pitched to relevant magazines or your most suitable regional or State newspaper. Your Regional Tourism Board can assist in this regard.

The media has an insatiable appetite for new stories, so it’s important to know how to work with them to get your story out to relevant markets. Publicity gained through media campaigns and media familiarization tours is commonly described as ‘free’ because compared to advertising, there is little cost involved. There are however, none of advertising’s guarantees of placement or message. Editorial publicity is acknowledged as more valuable than advertising because the consumer knows that editorial has not been paid for, which makes it more credible.

On certain occasions editorial will also provide far more detailed information and more visuals than an advertisement.

### **Don’t underestimate word-of-mouth**

While all the above suggestions are useful, the most valuable tool for attracting new customers is ‘word-of-mouth’ or referrals. If your visitors have a rewarding experience they will tell others. This is especially important with the increasing usage of websites such as Trip Advisor and disability specific travel advisory websites.