



## **Accessibility TipSheet: Universal Principles of Online Accessible Ticketing**

### **From the Access Office**

These principles are designed to provide a framework for cultural organizations to develop online ticketing policies that are inclusive of wheelchair users and other people with disabilities. The principles can also be applied to supplement compliance with the ticketing requirements in the 2010 Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Regulations.

As with any undertaking, accessibility should be a consideration from the very beginning. Integrate these principles, along with a requirement for compliance with the ADA ticketing regulations, into specifications and business requirements so that software developers build in the features and flexibility that you need.

---

## **The Five Universal Principles of Online Accessible Ticketing**

### **Equity**

Ensure equity in ticketing policies so that patrons with disabilities are given the same opportunities to purchase and use their tickets as those without disabilities.

- Provide patrons with the ability to purchase accessible seats through the same means and in the same manner as is available to patrons without disabilities.
- Allow patrons to indicate the number of wheelchair-accessible locations their party will require in order to accommodate parties that include more than one person using a wheelchair.
- Allow patrons to purchase, in one online transaction, the number of wheelchair-accessible locations and companion seats needed by members of their party, and additional available seats in locations of their choice up to the maximum number of tickets allotted to all patrons for any single purchase.
- Allow patrons to purchase, in one online transaction, the maximum number of tickets allotted to all patrons for any single purchase in the interpreted and captioned sections.
- Provide ways to contact the Box Office, such as a phone number and an email address, in the event that the options presented in the online ticketing system do not accommodate a patron's specific needs.
- When unable to use their tickets, patrons with disabilities must be allowed to transfer tickets to patrons without disabilities. The venue can "protect" the seats in the event of an exchange by printing information on the ticket indicating that the seat is accessible and that:
  - patrons must call to exchange the ticket in the event that the accommodation will not be needed; and/or
  - The venue may relocate the patron should the accommodation not be needed.

## Accessibility

People with visual, hearing, and/or mobility disabilities may face difficulties purchasing accessible seating online if the website itself is not accessible. Make sure the entire online process is accessible to all patrons, including those who use assistive technologies such as screen readers or alternative-pointing devices (head pointers, joysticks).

- Select software platforms that are accessible or require vendors to make their products Section 508 compliant or compliant with the WC3 standards (whichever is more stringent).
- Consider color contrast and color choices. Appropriate color choices and color contrasts enable users with low vision or color blindness to more easily access information.
- Use redundancy in indicators, such as both color and shape, as recommended by accessibility guidelines.
- Use “Alt-tags” for all images posted online. “Alt-tags” (alternative text) are html tags that identify and describe images or other media. Alt-tags are read out-loud by screen readers and enable users with visual impairments to identify and access information.
- Design sites for easy keyboard navigation. Users with mobility disabilities may find it difficult to use a mouse to navigate web pages or complete transactions. Easy keyboard navigation, through the use of tab keys, keyboard shortcuts or other methods, enables users to access information without the use of a mouse or pointing device.
- Include non-text information that cannot be easily read or spoken out-loud (audio, video, animation, graphs, images, etc.) in alternate formats. Alternative formats can include transcripts of audio and video clips and text descriptions of animations, graphs, or other images. PDF documents should also be available in HTML versions as many screen readers are unable to read PDF documents out-loud.
- Avoid using text-only websites. While they are an option for increasing website accessibility, separate text-only websites are not recommended. Text-only websites are less likely to be updated regularly, leaving patrons with incorrect and outdated information and can be viewed as segregating online users with disabilities. Careful design and inclusion of alternative content can usually eliminate the need to maintain a second text-only website.

## Usability

The interface design should be user-friendly for persons of all abilities.

- Arrange information in a clear and logical manner.
- Clearly define terminology and symbols used on the website.
- Use redundancy, such as both color and shape, in indicators.

- Provide users with information necessary to make an informed purchasing decision, including:
  - Listing the dates and times of open-captioned, audio-described and sign-interpreted performances and information about the availability of Assistive Listening Devices wherever general information about productions, such as descriptions and venue location, can be found.
  - Posting sign-interpretation, audio-description, and open-captioning symbols on performance and event calendars when those accommodations are provided.
  - Posting photographs and descriptions of the view of the interpreters or captioning from different seats in the interpreted and captioned sections.
  - Listing the number of wheelchair-accessible locations and seats in the interpreted and captioned sections available for purchase in each area and at price point in the theater.

## **Security**

Organizations should include reasonable requirements to prevent fraudulent purchasing of accessible seating. In designing these policies and procedures, it is important to ensure that these security measures do not make the process cumbersome for patrons with disabilities.

- Require patrons to click through a few extra options to establish that a member of the party for whom the tickets are being purchased is someone who needs accessible seating, or to precisely verify what the patron needs.
- Have staff contact patrons who purchase multiple wheelchair-accessible locations to confirm that the patron does require the accommodation.
- Remove seats in the theater when a patron has purchased a wheelchair-accessible location and train staff to instruct patrons who do not need the accessible locations to return to the Box Office to exchange their seats. Post this policy online.
- Print information about accessibility directly on the ticket and provide information on how a patron who does not require the accommodation can exchange the ticket in advance.
- Clearly state policies on relocation should a patron not require the accessible location.

## **Adaptability**

Utilize technology and policies adaptable to unforeseen, unusual or changing circumstances, new technologies and the needs of specific communities.

- Develop an advisory group of knowledgeable people with disabilities, the ADA/504 Coordinator or Accessibility Manager and box office staff who will review policies and assist in the development and testing of new tools and software to ensure they are accessible.
- Use experts. External consultants with expertise in both the cultural arts and web accessibility can advise and assist with making current and future software applications accessible.

## **To Sum Up:**

Keep these broad concepts in mind as you develop the online ticketing process:

- Include people with disabilities and experts in the field of accessibility and web accessibility in all aspects of the design of accessible online ticketing including but not limited to concept, design, testing and implementation.
- Use universal design concepts when applicable to the design of the online system.
- Strive for procedures and processes to purchase accessible seating that is as close to the same as that for non-accessible seating.
- Don't make it too complicated. It should be easy for patrons with disabilities to find information online about accessibility and/or purchase tickets online without assistance.
- Steps to prevent abuse and protect the sale of online accessible seating for people with disabilities are appropriate so long as they do not result in a significantly cumbersome or onerous process for the patron with a disability.

## **About TipSheets**

TipSheets are produced collaboratively with members of the Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability (LEAD) network. TipSheets are intended solely as guidance and are not a determination of an organization's legal rights and responsibilities. You are welcome to copy and distribute this TipSheet.

## **Contact Us**

202-416-8727 (voice)

202-416-8728 (TTY)

[access@kennedy-center.org](mailto:access@kennedy-center.org)