**ASSC Accessibility Mission Statement:**

The ASSC is committed to advancing the principles of universal design and to hosting a conference that is fully accessible and inclusive. We seek to collaborate amongst our provincial partner institutions to inspire, encourage, and support each other in reaching for and attaining this goal.

**Parameters:**

* Adoption of Universal Design principles as guiding philosophy (See Appendix A)
* Adoption of Definitions of Terms for key concepts such as accessibility, inclusion, universal design (See Appendix A)
* Development of ASSC Policy regarding:
  + Fees that will be applied towards assistants/attendants/interpreters, etc. traveling with a conference registrant who has a disability
  + Notification deadlines for registrants requesting specific types of accommodation. Reasonable deadlines would be implemented to facilitate the preparation time the Accessibility Committee needs to make the arrangements.
  + The implementation of a preconference deadline for all presenters to submit an electronic copy of their presentation materials (e.g. overheads, PowerPoint slides, handouts, etc.) for online publication. This ‘green’ approach will eliminate the need for the production of numerous copies and will enable individuals who require alternate format materials to access and prepare their own materials prior to the conference. Presenters should be provided with ‘best practice’ guidelines through the conference website.
  + The provision of hosted or non-hosted (a cost recovery fee could be assessed) teleconference/video conference opportunities that would enable eligible participants (who are unable to be present at ASSC by reason of budgetary restraints, accommodation requirements, etc.) to attend their respective area of interest ‘Birds of a Feather’ sessions and meetings from a distance.
* Creation of promotional materials which overtly welcomes and encourages active engagement of individuals with diverse gifts and abilities in all aspects of the conference, including leadership roles.
  + For example, at the Call for Presenters stage
  + May wish to specifically target traditionally marginalized groups such as persons with disability, persons of aboriginal descent.
  + Overall message is that diversity strengthens our organization.

* Adoption of accessibility guidelines that is essential for a prospective host institution to have in place before being considered as a location for an ASSC event. [[1]](#footnote-1)
  + An accessibility assessment will include an appraisal of conference site and town/city infrastructure and ancillary amenities (including restaurants or other food services, accommodations, transportation)
  + Accessibility is a critical consideration for all aspects of the conference program including: registration, information, ‘Keynote’ or other large group forums, conference seminars, special interest group meetings, exhibits or media presentations, food services, banquet and social events, ‘special’ activities (i.e. tours, fitness activities, arts and crafts, etc.), navigation, publication packages, evaluation tools, etc.
* Agreement of ASSC to:
  + Increase and sustain a meaningful budget to help address the annual costs of accessibility services.[[2]](#footnote-2)
  + Research potential public and private funding sources through which the ASSC Planning Committee, hosting postsecondary institution, or member of the local host community could apply for to improve or implement accessibility modifications or accommodation services to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.
* As part of overall ASSC planning, one or more individuals within the Onsite Committee will be designated to coordinate accessibility planning and implementation for conference.
* Adoption of a practical set of guidelines or criteria that will assist accessibility planning.
  + These guidelines are meant to function as a guide and should not become a “check” list, which tends to impede creative and innovative design. The idea is to move beyond minimum standards and to reach for the best we can be.
  + These guidelines will be considered a “living document”, understanding that expectations will likely be raised as the ASSC accessibility efforts/goals evolve.
* Provincial Planning Committee will help prospective hosts address accessibility issues and provide support for host institutions that require physical adaptations or enhanced ancillary services
  + In the case where premises/community services do not meet minimum accessibility standards for a prospective host institution, creative solutions should be considered.
  + Investigate what adaptations are required and how easily they can be implemented.
  + Consult with colleagues within ASSC or the PSPSD.
  + Consider whether temporary and inexpensive solutions can be found with a long term view for permanent renovations.
  + Lobby municipal planning officials for more accessible infrastructure.
  + Research government grants or other funding sources than could be applied for to make critical adaptations.
  + Share resources. Consider hosting together with another institution. Where one institution may provide the physical location, another institution might provide the bulk of staff and planning.
* Adoption of a feedback/measuring process to evaluate the success of accessibility planning. It is important as a group to celebrate our successes and to set new goals in our pursuit of full accessibility and inclusion.
  + Include, within the general conference evaluation, specific questions pertaining to satisfaction of accessibility factors.
  + May have additional questionnaire that targets a specific group(s) of participants (perhaps those individuals who identified any accommodation requirements prior to conference).
  + Conference report generated from evaluations and prepared by On-Site Committee will include responses related to accessibility. It is suggested that these reports be written or well captured in the minutes of the PPC post-conference meeting.
  + The annual conference report might wish to include a report from other data that provides statistics on number of attendees/speakers with a disability, data on numbers of people attending conference and outside community services utilized. It may encompass an economic impact analysis on the larger community (What local businesses were utilized, local talent use and exposure, etc.). This may be especially useful for smaller communities who wish to lobby for accessible municipal infrastructure, services, and accommodations.

**Appendix A**

**Definition of Terms**

\*\* **The following definitions** are cited from a handout received at the *Symposium of Achieving Accessible & Inclusive Communities*, October 7, 2008, Edmonton, Alberta

**Accessibility**

Physical access, sensory access to buildings, services and information, via built design, speaking browsers, sign language animations, Braille, signage, wayfinding, etc.

**Assistance Dog**

Assistance Dogs provide specific services to their handlers and greatly enhance freedom and independence.  There are three types of assistance dogs:  Guide Dogs guide individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Hearing Dogs alert individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to specific sounds.  Service Dogs work for individuals with disabilities other than those who are deaf/hard of hearing, or blind/visually impaired.  They are trained to perform a wide variety of tasks which may include:  retrieving, bracing, pulling a wheelchair, attending to a person with Autism, alerting to medical crises, etc.

**Assistive device**

A device that assists users in accomplishing day-to-day functions. For example, assistive listening devices include compensatory equipment used by people who are hard-of-hearing to augment sound in a room, such as inductive loop, FM and infrared systems.

**Barrier(s)**

Any law, system, building, attitude, program or policy that prevents a person’s full participation in the community.

**Barrier-free design**

Original focus of disability campaigners and architects was on barrier-free access to buildings and public environments - curb cuts, textured paving, ramped entry, wider doorways, corridors and accessible toilets. Barrier free design has tended to focus on wheelchair access.

**Disability**

The World Health Organization “WHO” definition has shifted from locating limitation/impairment within the person, and locating the limitation/ impairment in the environment.

* It is the “unsuccessful interaction between a person and an unsupportive environment.” Environment includes: physical, social financial and political elements.

**Handicap**

An obsolete term, often considered to be an alternative to the term “disability,” that may imply a helplessness that is not suggested by the more forthright term “disability.” Some stigma may attach to the word handicapped because of its origin in the phrase “cap in hand,” actually derived from a game of chance but sometimes mistakenly believed to involve the image of a beggar.

**Inclusion**

The degree to which people with disabilities are welcomed, engaged, and contributing to community life

**Universal Access**

Access for all to ‘information and communications technology’ (ICT). Also used in assistive technology to refer to specialist interfaces and control devices to make ICT products accessible to people with high levels of impairment.

**Universal Design**

Term originating in the USA and based upon seven principles set out by Architect and Designer Ron Mace, who used a wheelchair. Universal Design (“UD”) extends the concepts of Barrier-Free Design and Universal Access to include access to products and services. UD is an approach to creating environments and products that are usable by all people to the greatest extent possible (including children, adults and seniors, with or without disabilities). Universal design is not a synonym for accessibility.

Universal Design designs places, things, information, communication and policy to be usable by the widest range of people in the widest range of situations without special or separate design. Most simply, Universal Design is human-centered design of everything with everyone in mind. The principles of Universal Design are:

**1: Principle One: Equitable Use:** The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

**2: Principle Two: Flexibility in Use:** The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

**3: Principle Three: simple and intuitive:** Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

**4: Principle Four: Perceptible Information:** The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

**5: Principle Five: Tolerance for Error:** The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

**6: Principle Six: Low Physical Effort:** The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

**7: Principle Seven: 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.

1. While the emphasis should rightly be on collaboration and encouraging, inspiring…we cannot inspire without agreeing to some kind of minimum standard without which it would be unacceptable to host the ASSC event. We need to have some kind of lens through which we evaluate an appropriate level of due diligence.

   - The *Duty to Accommodate* interpretive bulletin, which explains the provisions of Alberta’s human rights legislation, the *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act,* applies equally to professional organizations and, as such, we have a responsibility to set and meet minimum standards. However, it is hoped that most or all institutions will set their sights far beyond the minimum. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The ASSC Accessibility subcommittee proposes that we double the annually budgeted amount for accessibility, that is, from $5000 to $10,000 (or from 10 percent of the overall budget to 20 percent of the overall budget) over a period of time. For example, this can be accomplished through:

   1. A small increase in conference fees
   2. Annually allotting a larger percentage of conference profits
   3. Sponsorship (question of sustainability)

   [↑](#footnote-ref-2)