



Heck Yeah, Accessible Events: Bold Moves for Real Change

Presented by:
LeToya Boyne and
Shannon Qualls

**Join the
conversation!**

Accessibility and disability



What do these images have in common?



TED conference decked Vancouver Convention Center's stairs with color-blocked sections printed with the conference's tagline, "The next chapter starts here."

Photo: Bret Hartman

What do these images have in common?



What do these images have in common?



What do these images have in common?



Accessibility benefits everyone



Shannon Qualls

(She/Her)

Senior Events Manager

Tessitura

About me:

- 📋 Hard of Hearing with years of experience working for and on behalf of disability services
- 📅 Over 17 years in Events
- 🧑♀️ Not a lawyer
- 🎭 Musical loving theatre fan
- ❤️ Loves reading, traveling, and hanging out with family



LeToya Boyne

(She/Her)

Director, Event Marketing
Platform.sh

About me:

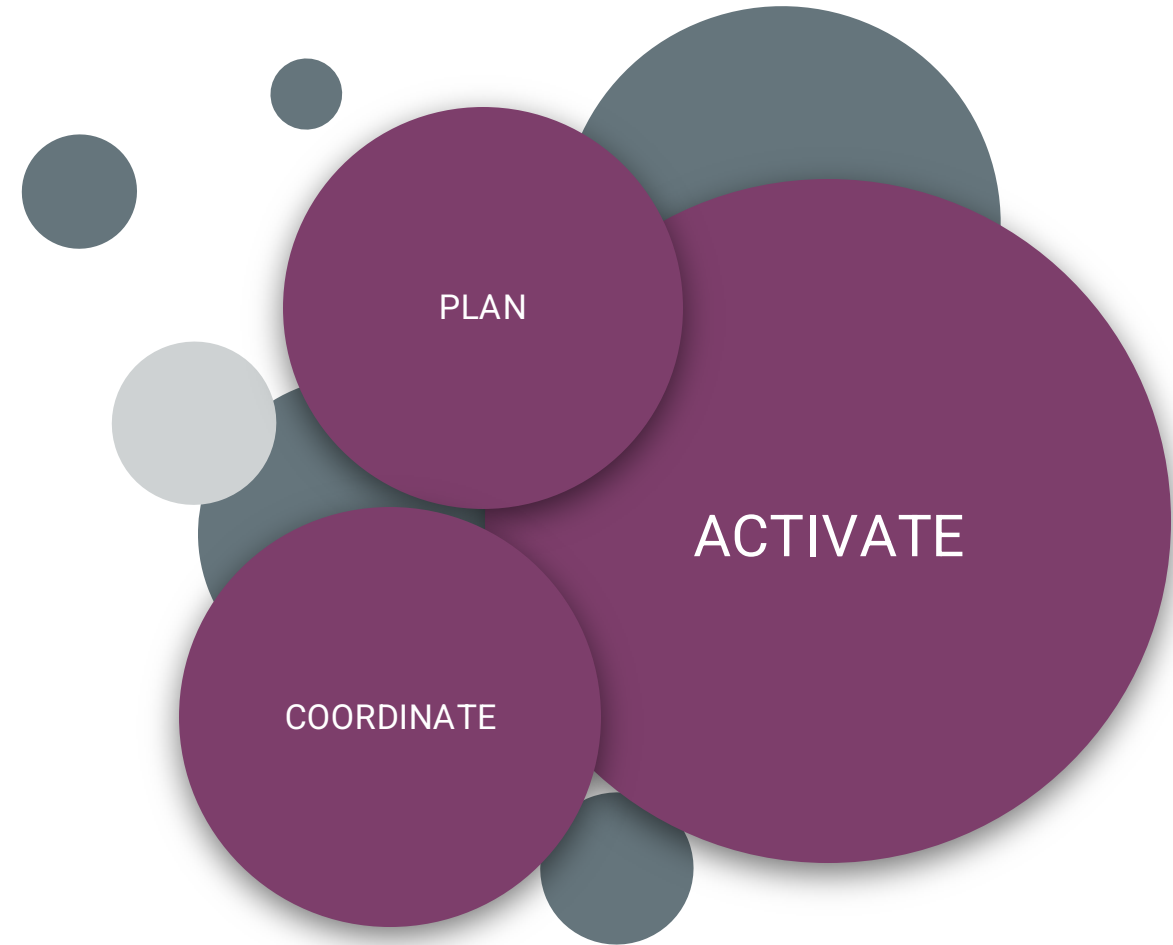
- 🏖️ Beach-loving South Floridian
- 👩 Mom to 2 busy boys
- ❤️ Loves salsa dancing + cruising down to Keys in my vintage camper
- 📋 FIU, MSc in Global Strategic Communications + FSU, BSc in Communications
- 🧑♀️ Not a lawyer
- 📌 Over 20 years in Marketing & Events
 - 🚀 Career transitioner to Events in Tech → 🌟 Met Shannon



Why we are we here?

Share learnings and solutions for event producers for accessibility accommodations

- Planning for specific needs
- Coordinating venue and vendor considerations with ADA accommodations
- How to activate a practical plan and avoid common failures





What is access?

Access is a permission, liberty, or ability to enter, approach or pass to and from a place or to approach or communicate with a person or thing.

- *Webster's*

What is accessibility?

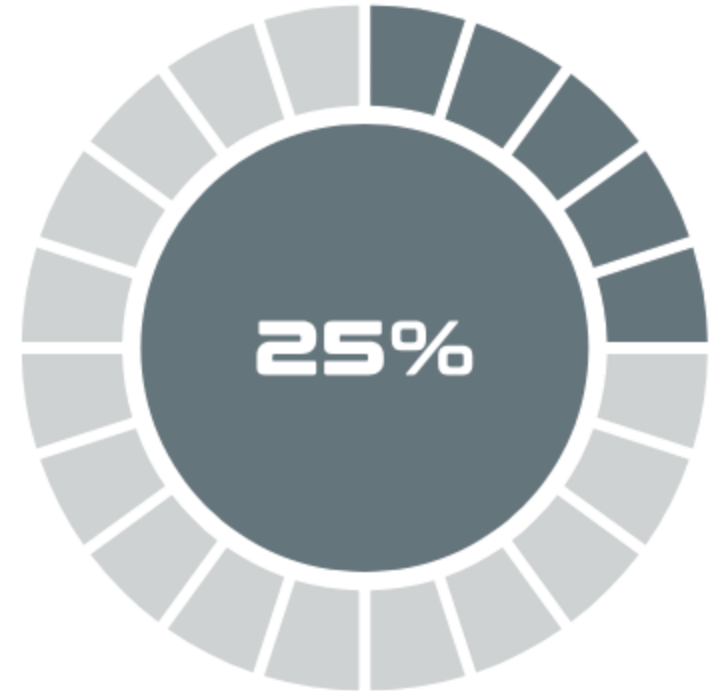
Accessibility is the ability to ***access and benefit from*** a system or entity, while access is the act of gaining access to something

What is a disability accommodation?

Disability accommodations refer to **modifications or adjustments** in a workplace, educational institution, or other public or private environments that enable individuals with disabilities to perform their roles or **participate equally**.

Why do we care?

According to the CDC more than 1 in 4—**over 70 million**—adults in the United States reported having a disability in 2022.



Why do we care?

Accessibility is good for business.



Why do we care?

It's the law.



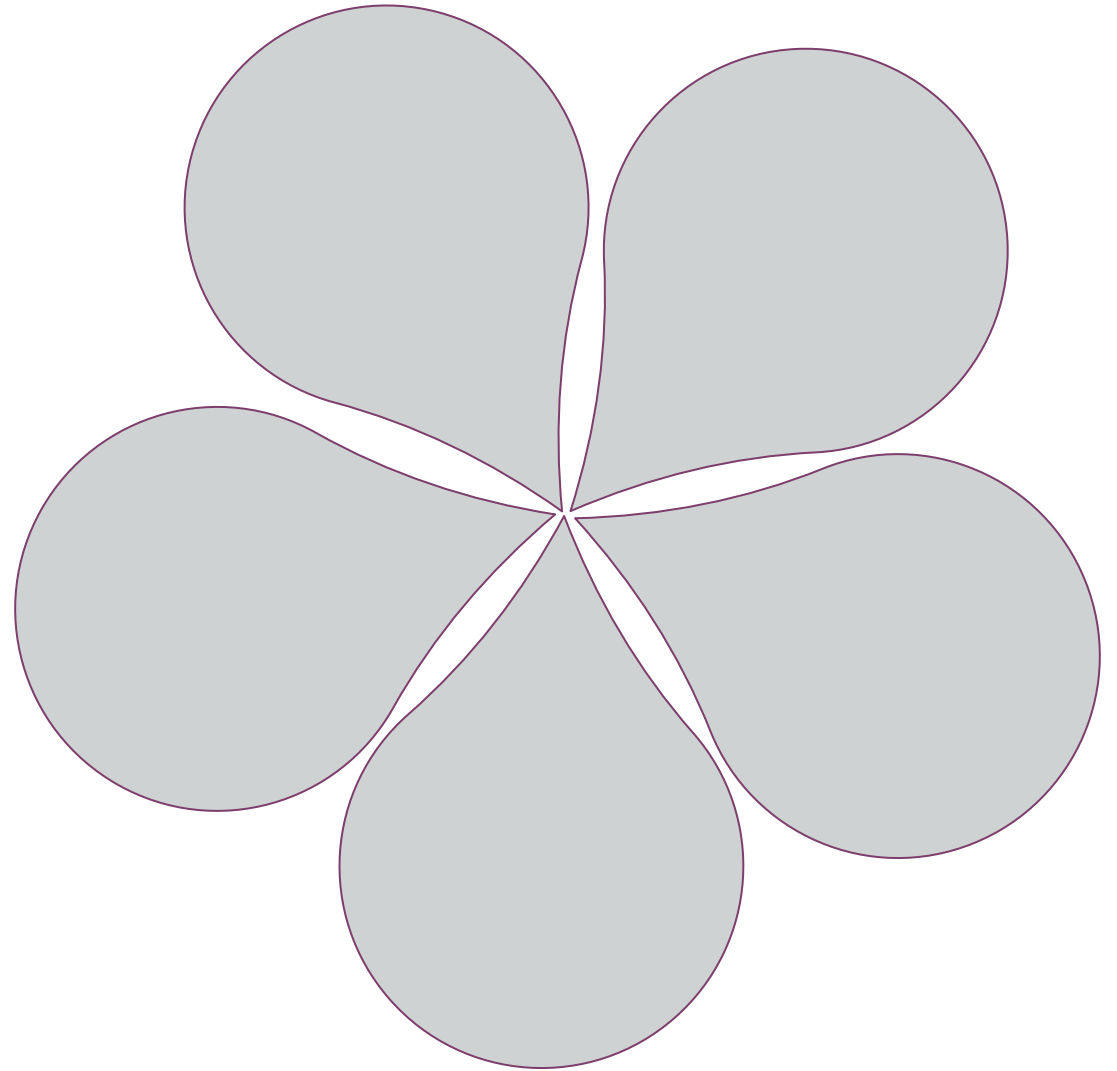
Why do we care?

We want to create the best experience possible for **ALL** of our attendees.



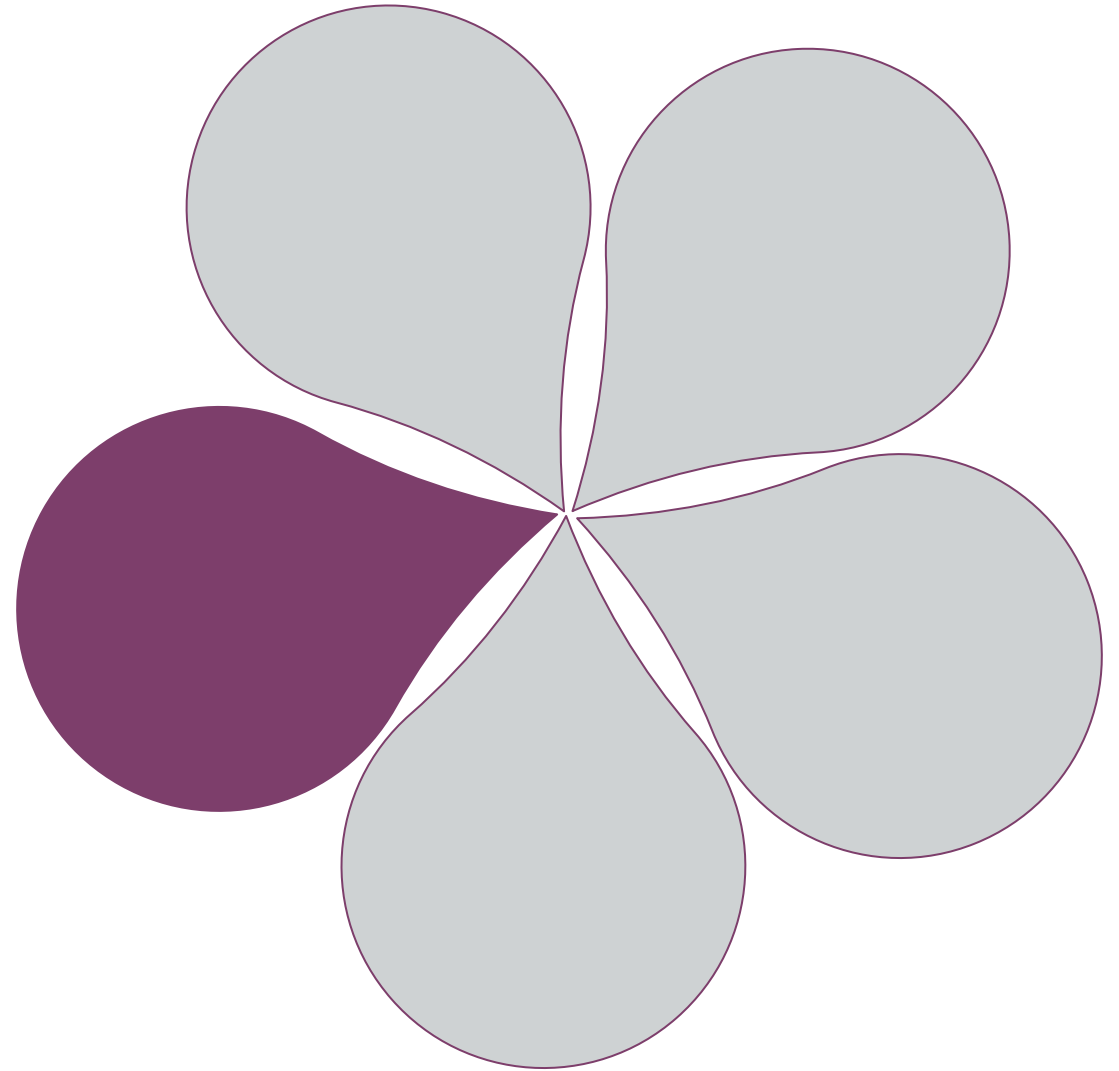
Participants

- Attendee
- Virtual attendee
- Staff
- Presenter
- Sponsor
- Vendor



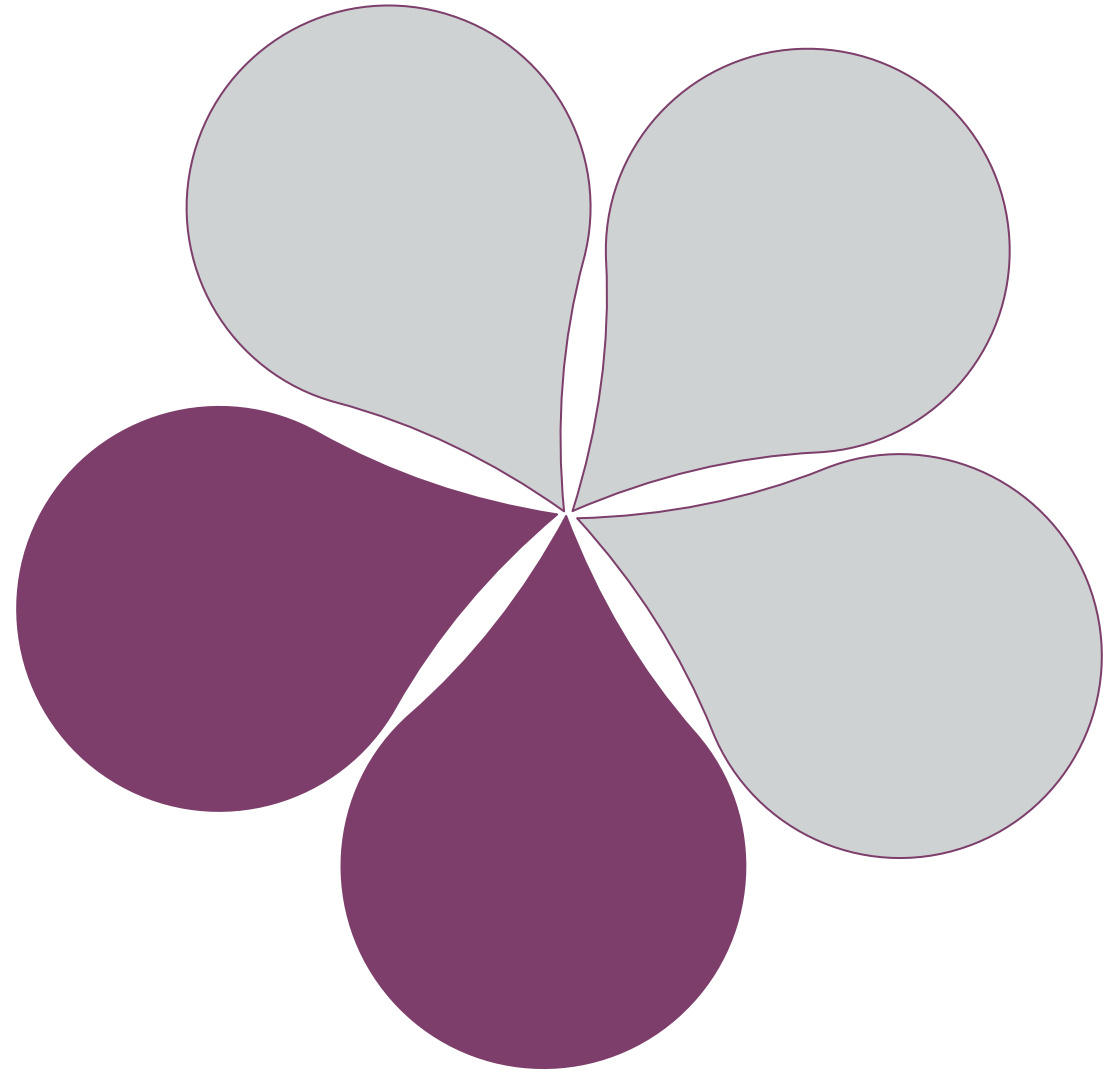
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Accessibility “don’ts”

- **Don’t assume**
 - Everyone has different preferences and needs. Listen to them. They have lived with their disability and know what they need.
- **Don’t NOT follow through**
 - Even if you drop the ball: problem solve on the go, learn, and change for the future



Accessibility “don’ts”

- Don’t put the onus on the participant
- Don’t single out a participant without permission



Accessibility “do’s”

- **Accessibility should be considered from the concepting stage.**
 - Think about your space before you sign your contract
- **Accessibility should be a line item in your budget**
 - Don’t have an “oops” moment. Plan and budget for accommodations



Accessibility “do’s”

- **Accessibility should be built into your registration path**
 - Make things easier for yourself and your participants
- **Accessibility plans should be published**
 - Let people know what measures you are already taking / committed to providing for their needs - unprompted



Accessibility “do’s”

- **Accessibility for food**
 - Participants should be able to eat
- **Accessibility for small groups**
 - Participants should be able to participate with as few barriers as possible



Accessibility “do’s”

- **Accessibility and staff**
 - Designate and train staff on implementing accommodations



Accessibility “do’s”

- **Communication is key**
 - Ask your attendees what they need
 - Provide what they need
 - Let them know in advance what you have secured
 - Follow through



Questions to consider

- **Where will the event be held?**
 - Consider how someone might need to navigate the space and travel.
- **Who will attend?**
 - Consider historical data when making decisions



Questions to consider

- **When will the event be held?**
 - Consider how the weather may impact accessibility
- **How will you implement accessibility accommodations?**
 - Consider who you will partner with to ensure the best experience for all



Additional insights

- **Be proactive**
 - Provide speakers, vendors and sponsors suggestions on providing accommodations in their own spaces
- **Digital accessibility**
 - Build accessibility practices into your rhythm



Additional insights

- **Accessible materials**
 - Review marketing, speaker and event materials for accessibility
- **Stay informed**
 - Like and follow disability activists to learn more about how our choices impact people



Practical Tips for Event Accessibility from the Event Marketing perspective

PLAN:

- What is attendee profile and what are their needs?
- Accommodations projected and requested (including your staff)?
- How is the conference organizer/venue meeting those needs?



Practical Tips for Event Accessibility from the Event Marketing perspective



Practical Tips for Event Accessibility from the **Event Marketing perspective**

COORDINATE:

- **Whom** (planner, sponsor, vendors) is responsible for **what** accommodations?
- How will the implementation, tools, or resources work onsite?
- Has the person requesting the accommodation been **included** and informed?



Practical Tips for Event Accessibility from the Event Marketing perspective



Practical Tips for Event Accessibility from the Event Marketing perspective

ACTIVATE:

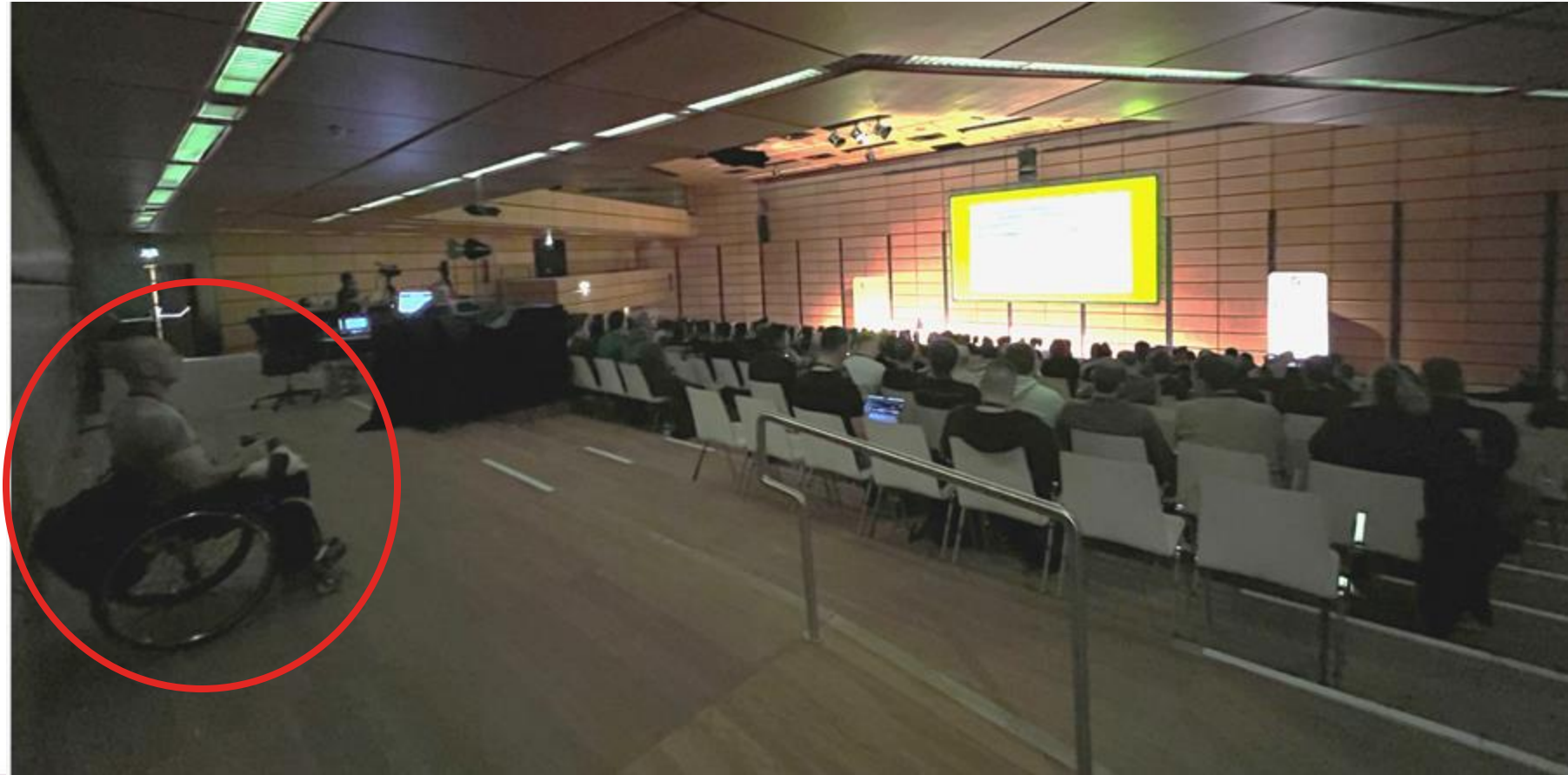
- Provide explicit and documented information, direction, training for sponsors, staff, and speakers
 - **Whom** will do this and **when** will it happen?
 - What **challenges** could arise and how will they be addressed and by whom?
 - Get **feedback** from attendees.



Practical Tips for Event Accessibility from the Event Marketing perspective



Practical Tips for Event Accessibility from the Event Marketing perspective



Supporting your Events team

💡 What resources were needed to provide accessibility accommodations for Shannon?

- **Projecting the needs** of this employee (physical needs, psycho-emotional needs, etc)
- **Coordinate the experts and tools** to provide these reasonable accommodations
- **Create a plan** for accommodations
 - **Take action:**
 - in a remote setting
 - in a live event setting
 - in a hybrid event setting

Search begins

Wanted: Remote Event Manager

Interview

Curiosity about her transferable skills revealed a shared connection with Deaf and Hard of Hearing community.

Hired!

Dream team!



Resources

- [ADA.gov](#)
 - [Guidance and Resource Materials](#)
- LEAD (Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability)
 - [Powerpoint tips](#)
- [Cvent Accessibility Resources](#)
 - [The Big Book of Event Accessibility](#)
- Web accessibility
 - [WCAG 2 Overview | Web Accessibility Initiative \(WAI\) | W3C](#)
- [The Disability Inclusion Imperative](#)
- [Elavance Health](#)



Q & A

Questions? Ask them here!



Thank you & Keep in Touch



Shannon Qualls



LeToya (Stairs)

Boyne