

DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY TOOLKIT

North Carolina
Arts Council



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Introduction



Online arts programs encourage creativity and inclusion. By offering virtual programs, both artists and arts organizations, have the opportunity to foster new community partnerships and promote audience engagement by developing meaningful and innovative activities and performances. When creating and sharing online content, it is important to make sure the materials and resources provided are accessible for audiences with disabilities. This toolkit outlines best practices for developing and implementing accessible virtual programs.

Helpful Tips

Promote Communication

Include staff contact information on your website for inquiries about accessibility. This may be your organization's accessibility coordinator or program manager for the event.

Plan Ahead

When budgeting for an online event, include accessibility accommodations. This may include allotting funds for a sign language interpreter, video captioning, assistive listening devices, or providing printed media in alternate formats including large print or on a flash drive. It is best practice to factor in these costs when developing your initial program budget as opposed to including them at the last minute.

Invite program participants in advance to make requests for accommodations. Include verbiage about accommodation requests in all of your program-related communications and promotional materials, such as online event registration forms, flyers, web pages, emails, etc.

In order to ensure a meaningful experience and to accommodate any accessibility requests, it is best practice to require this information at least two weeks prior to the scheduled online program.

Two Examples of General Accommodation Questions

Below are examples of verbiage for communicating to your audience that accessibility accommodations are available.

“For questions about accessibility or to request accommodations please contact **[insert name]** at **[include phone number and an email address so that someone with a hearing or visual disability can inquire]**. Please give us at least two weeks’ notice to arrange the accommodations you need.”

“We strive to host inclusive, accessible events that enable everyone to engage fully. To request an accommodation or for inquiries about accessibility, please contact **[name, email address, phone number]**.”

Accessible Social Media

Artists and arts organizations should make sure information provided on their social media platforms is accessible for audiences with disabilities. Many social media platforms have built in tools to assist with making content accessible and inclusive. Below are general guidelines and recommendations for creating accessible social media.

1. [Use a URL shortener for long links](#)
2. [Capitalize the first letter of each word in a hashtag](#)
3. [Spell out acronyms](#)
4. [Use emojis sparingly](#)
5. [Always provide alt text for photos](#)
6. [Provide open or closed captions for videos](#)
7. [Use mixed or sentence case instead of all caps](#)
8. [Use descriptive phrases for hyperlinks](#)

Accessible Social Media

Use a URL shortener to minimize the number of characters in a hyperlink.

[Bitly](#), [TinyURL](#), and [Tiny.cc](#) are just a few of the many sites offering free URL shortening services. Most services allow for some customization of the shortened URL.

Make hashtags accessible by capitalizing the first letter of each word.

Use "#NorthCarolinaArtsCouncil"

Instead of "#northcarolinaartscouncil"

Spell out the full name of your organization or project instead of using acronyms.

Use "North Carolina Arts Council"

Instead of "NCAC"

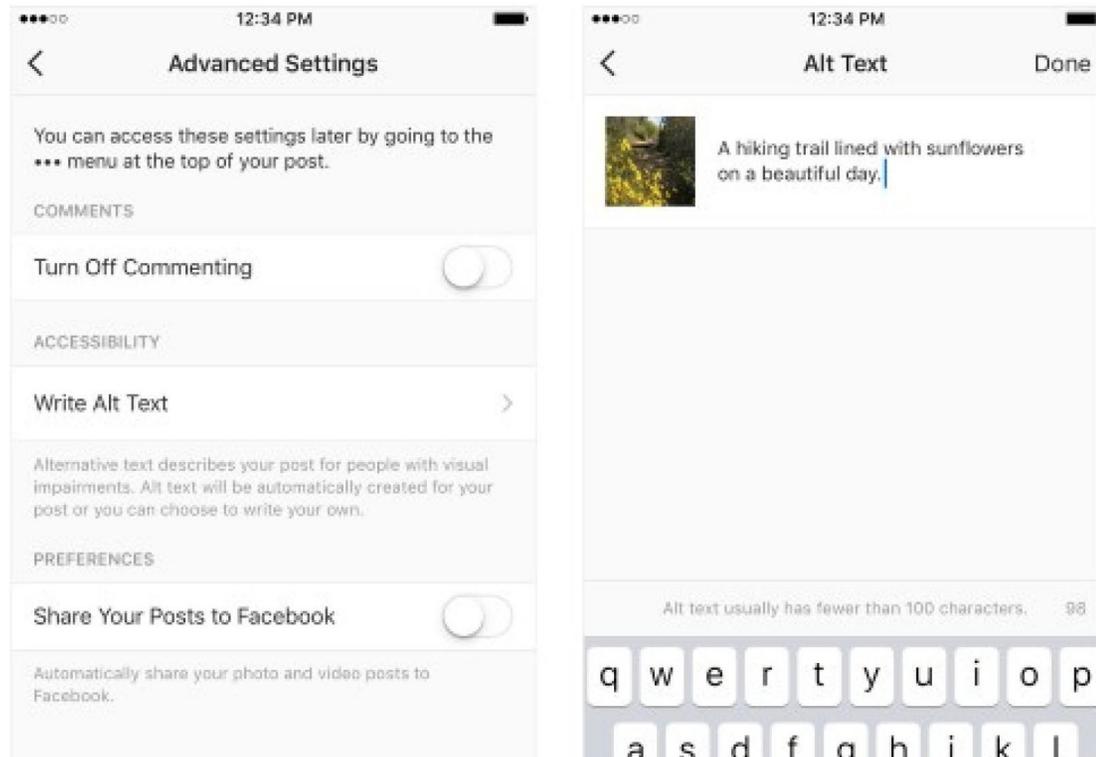
Try to avoid using too many emojis in your post, since screen readers read each individual emoji.

Use "Grant application is now open! 😊"

Instead of "Grant application is now open! ❤️🌸😊😄😄❤️🌸"

Accessible Social Media

Instagram



New Post -> Advanced Settings -> Write Alt Text

Provide alternate text (alt text) for photographs or images.

Alternative text, also called alt text, is a visual description of an image (e.g., flowers in a meadow). It is read in place of images and is especially helpful for users of screen readers*. Alt text is also displayed as a placeholder in case an image file fails to load in a web browser.

Accessible Social Media

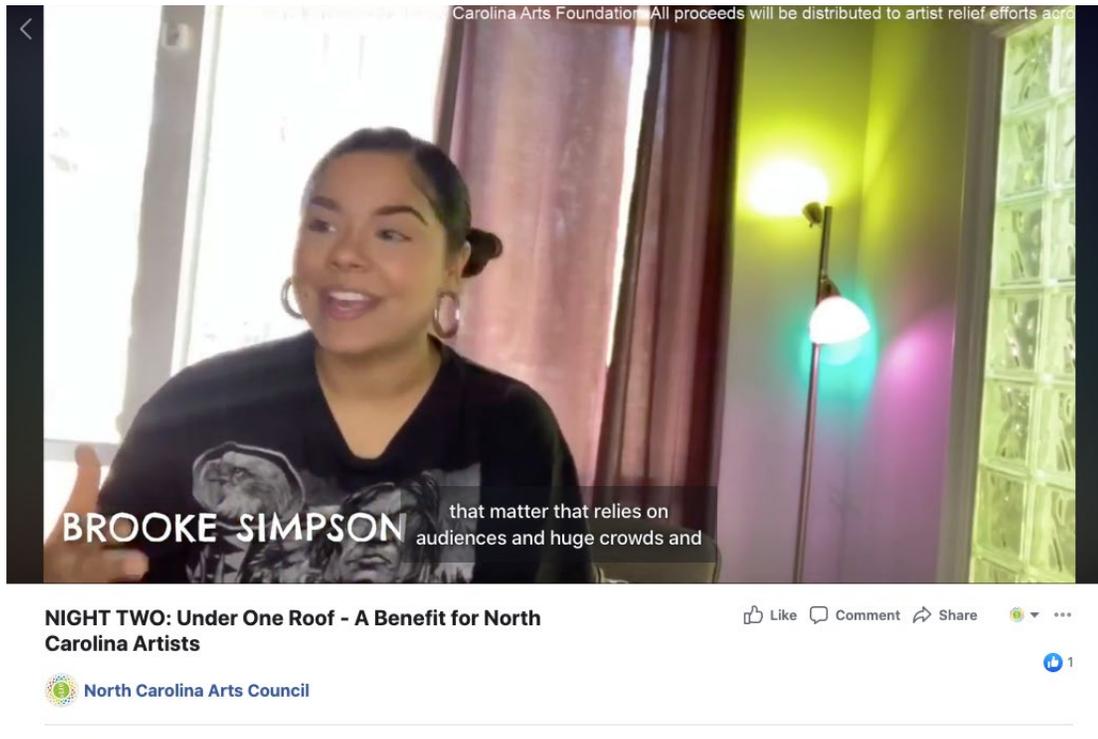
Platforms like Facebook and Instagram have an automatic alt text (AAT) feature that uses object recognition technology to generate image descriptions. Do customize the alt text to provide a more accurate description of the image.

Refer to [WebAIM's Alternate Text](#) primer for best practices and usage tips.

*Screen readers are software programs that allow blind or visually impaired users to read the text that is displayed on the computer screen with a speech synthesizer or braille display.
(Definition from American Foundation for the Blind)

Accessible Social Media

YouTube



When uploading a video to a post, make sure to provide closed or open captions.

For more information about closed or open captioning, see the section on [Streamed and Livestreamed Performances](#).

Accessible Social Media

Avoid using all capitalized letters as this looks like the words are being shouted and can be hard for some people to read by reducing shape contrast of each word.

Please use all caps for emphasis ONLY when necessary.

AVOID USING ALL CAPS FOR ENTIRE SENTENCES

Use descriptive phrases for hyperlinks. Uninformative link phrases such as "click here" or "read more" are not user friendly for those using screen readers. Link appearance should also be consistent and distinct from the rest of the text.

Use "Learn more about [Artist Opportunities in North Carolina](#)"

Instead of "[Click here](#) to learn more"

Streamed and Livestreamed Performances



Captions

The best practice for live-streamed performances is to provide live-captions. These can be facilitated by a third-party vendor and it is a good idea to budget this service into your overall programming costs.

Please refer to the resources section of this guidebook for information regarding third party vendors that provide captioning services.

Streamed and Livestreamed Performances

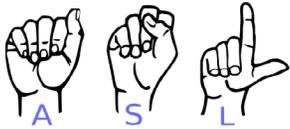
Another option is to provide a recorded video of the event with captions which can be uploaded post-production. Videos may be uploaded to YouTube which provide auto-generated captions. However, it is important to take the time to review the captions and correct any misspellings, grammatical, or formatting errors as the captions provided are not always accurate.



More information about captions:

- Captions not only reflect what is spoken on-screen, but also include environmental sounds such as birds chirping, music playing, a door closing, etc.
- Open Captions (OC) are always on the screen and cannot be turned off.
- Closed Captions (CC) can be turned on or off by the viewer.

Streamed and Livestreamed Performances



American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters

There are many online platforms that allow for ASL interpreters to be viewed alongside the performance or activity. Please view the Resource Page for more information on how to locate an ASL interpreter for your online event.



Audio Descriptions

Audio descriptions of an online event may also be provided. Video descriptions are helpful for people who have low vision or vision disabilities.

Transcriptions

Make sure to provide a transcript for audio recordings. If uploading the transcript to a website or social media post, make sure the electronic document is accessible. Document fonts should be 16 point in size or higher, and use accessible fonts like Tahoma, Calibri, Helvetica, Arial, Verdana, and Times New Roman.

Accessibility Resources

Arts & Accessibility

- [Arts Access](#)
- [National Endowment for the Arts, Office of Accessibility](#)
- [The Kennedy Center's Office of VSA and Accessibility](#)

American Sign Language

- [NC Department of Health & Human Resources](#)
- [Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf](#)

Audio Descriptions

- [Arts Access and Audio Description](#)
- [DASI: Descriptive Audio for the Sight Impaired of Western North Carolina](#)
- [Disability Rights & Resources](#)
- [The Audio Description Project: An Initiative of American Council for the Blind](#)

Accessibility Resources

Captions

- [Arts Access Accessibility Online Webinar: Accommodations for People Who Are D/deaf and Hard of Hearing](#)
- [Relay NC](#)
- [See Hear Communications Matter](#)

Social Media

- [Accessible Social Media: A 2020 Guide to Accessibility for Social Media, Boston Children's Museum](#)

Web content Accessibility Guidelines

- [World Wide Web Consortium \(W3C\) Recommendations](#)



The North Carolina Arts Council is a
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