CSUN 2025 Accessibility & Inclusion Recommendations

This document outlines key recommendations for improving inclusion and accessibility at future CSUN conferences, gathered from attendee feedback. It aims to ensure an inclusive, equitable, accessible, and enjoyable experience for all participants.

1. General Conference Accessibility

A. Ensure clear communication with speakers about room setups and accessibility features well in advance. Consistency of setup is very helpful here too. *Why?* So speakers know what to expect and don't have surprises right before their presentations.

B. Offer quiet rooms, rooms for attendees to take care of health matters, lactation rooms or pods, and a prayer space. *Why?* Conference attendees may not be staying at the conference hotel and need a safe space for these activities or to manage sensory issues.

C. Consult professional inclusion experts to determine the other potential religious and group inclusion accommodations. *Why?* We can provide input based on our experience, but there are other groups that we can't speak for that a professional may be able to.

D. Provide CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) services in all sessions, not just select ones. *Why?* Attendees should not have to request accommodations six weeks in advance to ensure access. People may decide to change sessions last minute or might not make it into a session if there's too much interest. It helps with spontaneity for attendees as well.

E. Consider StreamText. *Why?* So a real-time transcript can be available on individual devices.

F. Provide inclusive spaces, including seating and pathways, that adhere to fire safety regulations and accessibility standards. *Why?* To ensure all are able to participate without exclusion due to physical or sensory issues. For example, the reception and meet and greet were cognitive loads for those with disabilities. People were going around those with disabilities and generally not being helpful. *Suggestion*: offer 15 minutes ahead time for those with disabilities.

G. Ensure any stage (in Platinum rooms) has ramps instead of stairs. *Why?* Steps are a challenge for many people and anyone using a mobility device should not have to be carried up/down from a stage.

H. Ensure the availability of inclusive bathrooms throughout the venue. *Why?* Safety of all is critical to inclusion and participation. There were some hateful comments made by some who didn't understand the All Gender Restroom, for example.

I. Provide multiple food options on-site, such as food trucks. *Why?* For many the food options in the hotel are cost-prohibitive and many of these people have accessibility considerations as well. Also, to avoid food deserts and address food price equity issues. The boxed lunches can be prohibitively expensive, are only available for a limited time period in the day, do not accommodate all dietary needs, and the advanced sign-up limits flexibility.

J. Return to providing keynotes and featured sessions via video link. *Why?* This enables those with vulnerable health conditions and sensory sensitivities to avoid the larger rooms and still access these sessions.

K. Consider scheduling fewer rooms in the Orange County wing. *Why?* The traffic between sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday causes this area to be heavily congested and difficult for most attendees to move through.

L. Consider fewer, higher quality sessions. *Why?* To help reduce over-analysis when choosing. While there is also awareness that

   a. CSUN provides opportunities for many to have their first conference speaking opportunity, and

   b. there are many different accessibility-related areas to include, so it may be impossible to do this.

M. For the large sessions, like the keynote and featured presentations, provide a couple of inches between chairs. *Why?* To avoid sensory issues, physical pain, and risk of conflict.

N. For seating, please make space for people who use scooters or power chairs — or highlight that it is available. *Why?* The current seating would require anyone other than those using a manual wheelchair to roll in sideways and turn to see the presenters.

2. Session Planning and Scheduling

A. Allow attendees to select multiple sessions per time slot in the app. *Why?* For better flexibility and backup planning.

B. Include session descriptions that are clear, informative, and specific. Descriptions should reflect the actual content. *Why?* A significant number of sessions do not match their descriptions and end up being promotional vehicles for the speaker's service or initiative.

   a. For the session titles and descriptions, can there be another layer of review with participants to ensure their final presentation sufficiently matches what they proposed (with reasonable evolutions)? *Why?* To avoid turning into essentially promotional talks about their services or ventures.

b. Allow changes to session descriptions closer to the event date. *Why?* To reflect updated content, potential regulatory shifts, and make sessions more relevant — not to completely change the topic; slight changes are okay.

c. The more metadata there is, the better time attendees will have with sessions. *Why?* Attendees reported sessions didn't match what they expected, were a sales pitch, or didn't match their role.

C. Provide a clearer information architecture for the session schedule, including filters by session level (beginner, intermediate, advanced), time, and topic. *Why?* Improved readability and inclusion.

D. Include headings in the schedule that clearly show time, room, title, presenter, and description. *Why?* Usability.

E. Include one view of all information. *Why?* To make it easier to choose topics.

F. Consider tracks for the conference: design, engineering, therapists (OT, PT, AT assessors, etc.), or as another filter, as some other conferences do. *Why?* This will help with making sure the sessions match people's professional interests.

G. Make it very clear what roles the workshops serve, and allow switching to another attendee if the topic turns out to be more relevant for someone else. *Why?* Some attendees were unclear about the workshop description and applicability, and ended up in workshops that didn't suit their interests/needs/role.

H. Provide clear labeling of any talk for which the provided solution to the presented problem, or the information to be discussed, is a specific tool or service. *Why*? Many attendees come to the conference to discuss accessibility and disability topics rather than tools even though the conference is an "assistive technology conference." Attendees may not be in a position to use any specific tool or service; they may need to find in-house solutions or may be restricted to certain vendors or may simply be trying to get more informed about the subject matter. Attendees should be able to make informed decisions between choosing to hear a discussion of a topic versus a discussion of a tool or service. If AI is the theme, then we need concrete examples, as vague examples of sessions are unhelpful.

I. Provide clear guidance to presenters, when submitting presenter proposals, as to what constitutes a "beginner"," intermediate", or "advanced" session. Include the option to select more than one level and provide guidance on when that is appropriate, such as when the information presented will be new thoughts on a topic (e.g., "intermediate or advanced") but that new information does not depend on any particular prior knowledge (e.g "also suitable for beginners").

3. Technology and App Improvements

A. Ensure the event app allows for the selection of multiple sessions per time slot. *Why?* Frequently one session will hit capacity and it's helpful to have a backup, or a session turns out to not be about what the description alluded to, or there are stimulus issues in the room.

B. Include features to automatically hide past sessions and default to today's and future days' schedules. *Why?* Reduce the amount of information on screen to improve usability.

C. Offer downloadable session data in accessible formats (e.g., CSV, Excel, PowerPoint, or accessible PDF). *Why?* Right now some attendees are curating a spreadsheet with materials from the sessions, and it would be more inclusive to include this in the app or the authenticated session of the CSUN website agenda — and definitely more than PDF.

D. Integrate session schedules with external calendars while maintaining full session details. *Why?* To avoid missing sessions.

E. Provide a community chat space (like Slack, Discord, or WhatsApp) where there are channels for things like #general, #introductions, #socialEvents, and more. *Why?* While we could direct msg people in CVENT, it is valuable to build community in channels that are more than just 1-on-1. Also, some folks need greater security / privacy and can't make their profile public in the CVENT app. For CSUN organizers, they can benefit from crowdsourcing conference help (where is… when is… if I need to…).

F. Allow people to opt-in or opt-out of the QR Code on their badges. *Why?* Many people do not want to be scanned and would prefer to opt-out of this engagement. A solution could be to add a simple "sticky note" option at check-in, where sticky notes are provided to place over the QR code but are still easily available if you want to allow a few select people to scan your QR code (Patrick Lauke had this "flap" idea.).

4. Badges and Lanyards

A. Reduce noise from lanyards to accommodate sensory sensitivities. Offer alternative ways to wear badges other than lanyards (e.g., clips, wristbands, belt loops). This could include collecting the adaptations some made and communicating broadly (Ted Drake did a great job of sharing these on LinkedIn). *Why?* Some with sensory sensitivities are struggling in the sessions. Others may have mobility issues and the spot the lanyard lands ends up in unhygienic places.

5. Audio and Room Acoustics

A. Ensure rooms are equipped with high-quality audio systems and microphones that are easy to use. *Why?* Audio was echo-y or dampened in parts of rooms.

B. Provide tech support in each room to assist with microphone and audio issues. Or know where to find them in a central location when troubleshooting is needed. *Why?* Some newer speakers didn't know how to get tech support. Perhaps advise speakers that they can contact the person at the door outside their room who can get tech support easily. There's usually someone in the hall, but occasionally they are on break or addressing a particularly tricky A/V issue.

C. Mitigate sound bleed between rooms. *Why?* To minimize distractions.There's a room that has a noisy hall right behind where the speakers present from. The noise from the hall was picked up by the mic and broadcast through the speakers. Also, the Platinum room walls didn't block sound from other rooms well, requiring some rooms to keep their audio low to reduce noise conflicts between rooms.

6. Accommodations and Flexibility

A. Allow attendees requesting accommodations more flexibility in selecting sessions rather than requiring decisions six weeks in advance. *Why?* Things change and six weeks is tough to anticipate. What can be done to ensure sessions are more accessible?

B. Provide clear guidance and point-of-contact staff for accommodation requests on-site. *Why?* Sometimes accommodations issues are revealed on-site.

7. International Track & Real-Time Subtitles

A. Offer an international track featuring sessions delivered in select languages. Provide real-time English subtitles (CART or AI-assisted, with human oversight when possible). *Why?* To make these talks accessible to a broader audience. This fosters global inclusion, encourages diverse perspectives, and supports non-English speaking attendees.

8. Room accessibility

A. Have an eating room with chairs and tables, or make it clear which session rooms are good for eating. *Why?* It was awkward trying to eat with food balanced on laps, particularly so for BLV or wheelchair users.

B. Rooms should be checked (and fixed) periodically for flickering lights throughout the conference. *Why?* To reduce sensory issues, migraines, and headaches.

C. Provide reserved seating in sessions for more than the traditional disabilities, or make it clear it is available to other non-apparent ones. *Why?* With the noisy lanyards some with sensory issues really struggle. For example, I prefer to sit in a chair with my back to a wall slightly away to feel safer and minimize the noise.

These recommendations are shared with the aim of enhancing the inclusivity, accessibility, and overall experience of CSUN 2026 for all participants. We look forward to collaborating to create a more welcoming conference environment.