Ensure the web conferencing platform (i.e., Zoom, MS Teams, etc.):

- Is compatible with assistive technologies used by disabled persons (e.g., screen readers for blind persons, screen enlargement applications, closed-captioning, cognitive aids including computer devices, etc.).
- Has real-time automated captioning and/or supports manual captioning by a third-party vendor.
- Allows ASL Interpreters to stay visible throughout your event.
- Has simple keyboard shortcuts for users who may not use a mouse.
- Has a chat, note, Q&A, or other features for participation that is fully accessible.
- Allows for computer-based and phone-based audio listening/speaking.

Virtual Meetings and Events Best Practices

Below is a list of best practices to help ensure that your virtual meetings are accessible:

- **Prior to the Event:**
    - Include a statement on your website, registration, and all other communications that asks attendees to specify their accessibility/accommodations needs, gives a deadline for requests, and provides the name, email address, and phone number of the individual to
    - Ensure that the individual hosting the meeting is trained on how to set up and implement the platform's accessibility features.
    - List in all event communications accessibility/accommodations that you will provide without the need for attendees having to request (e.g., real-time captioning).
    - Offer practice sessions that allow participants and/or speakers to engage with the platform in advance of the main event.
    - Try to schedule your event so as not to go beyond two hours.

- **At the Start of the Event:**
    - If there are any barriers or extra steps to joining the event, such as passwords or requiring the user to input information to join, make sure all attendees know and understand how to do so, and provide assistance.
    - Designate someone to manage chat communications so as to minimize distractions for users of assistive technologies (i.e., screen reader users).
    - Consider your audience and language. Use plain language when appropriate. Ask attendees if they can hear everyone or if anyone is speaking too quickly.

- Advise everyone orally and in the chat or Q&A function about the accessibility features/ accommodations being offered and how to use them at the start of the event, including captions.
- Offer different ways that individuals can access the event, including via Internet and dial-in by phone.
- Provide all materials and PowerPoint slides in an electronic format, share via email or the chat function, post on a website before the event, and create a short URL.
- At start of the meeting, instruct attendees how to mute and unmute themselves.

- **During the Event:**
  - Provide CART (real-time captioning) for all events even if the virtual platform generates automatic captions, as these are oftentimes inaccurate.
  - Describe all images and videos for blind/visually impaired individuals, as well as for those joining by phone.
  - Sharing your screen is not accessible for blind persons, so send or post materials electronically on a web page in advance of the event or provide a link to the materials in the Q&A or chat function and add a visual description.
  - Allow people to turn off self-view if it is distracting to them.
  - Have the event host only show the person presenting, along with the active ASL interpreter.
  - Advise attendees to stay in gallery view so they can see all presenters and the ASL interpreters at the same time.
  - Avoid loud and distracting noise. Encourage all attendees to stay muted when not speaking.
  - Avoid flashing or strobing animations in presentation or other materials.
  - For people who read lips, ensure that presenters have their camera on and are well lit.
  - Ensure that the environment behind presenters is not distracting. If it is, use a virtual background, but note that some can wash out faces.
  - Eliminate background noise by muting everyone except for the person speaking.
  - Allow only one person to speak at a time. This will also help the captioner(s) and ASL interpreter(s) more accurately interpret.
  - Have each person say their name each time they speak so that attendees, captioners, and interpreters know who is speaking.
  - Ensure that any voting, polling, or other forms of participation are accessible. Provide alternatives ways for attendees to participate.