>> Lauren Appelbaum: Hi everyone. Welcome to our webinar today on ensuring accessibility during the return of in-person events and why we should keep doing accessible virtual events as well. We're also going to be talking about how to ensure hybrid virtual events -- some questions that we received ahead of the webinar asking that we speak about that. My name is Lauren Appelbaum and I'm the vice president of communications at RespectAbility, a disability advancement nonprofit that really fights stigmas and advances opportunities so those of us with disabilities have opportunities to fully participate in all aspects of community, which really gets to the heart of today's webinar, in the sense of really making sure that we are all included. I am a white woman with long brown hair. I'm wearing glasses, a navy blue shirt and red lipstick. Behind me you'll see a banner that says RespectAbility in white and yellow on a black background and my pronouns are she and her. Today during this webinar you have the option of viewing our lovely ASL interpreter as well as live captions. You can do so by clicking on the live transcript button at the bottom or viewing it in a separate web window. My colleague Eric is going to drop that in the chat for you so you can access that as well. If you are joining us live here on Facebook you also can have the opportunity to join us on that link to view the the full transcript. A note on the transcript - that is active while the event is live. So if you're watching a recording of the event, that link won't work anymore, but no worries. Within a day or two of this recording the full transcript will be available on our website for you. I'm going to say a quick moment about who I am and then I'm going to pass it off to my colleague Tatiana. So I have been working with RespectAbility now for a little more than six years and my background is in broadcast journalism, as well as a variety of non-profit and for-profit marketing and communications. I myself am a person with a disability. I started this work as an ally and then acquired my disability. About three and a half years ago, I damaged my sympathetic nervous system in my right arm and right leg. And so I've had the -- being able to experience attending an event before my disability and now after my disability, where I might need things like having to sit you know more often and such. And so we'll get into that a little bit more. But before we get into the meat of the presentation, I'd like to introduce my colleague Tatiana Lee.

>> Tatiana Lee: Hi, thank you Lauren for the introduction. My name is Tatiana Lee. I am the Senior Associate of Entertainment and Media here at RespectAbility. I've been here for two years. My background is in entertainment as a performer, actor, model and content creator, and also a background in marketing and branding. And I come into this work -- I was born with my disability. I was born with spina bifida and I use a wheelchair, you can't see it. And to describe myself, I am a Black woman with -- my hair is kinky curly dark hair in a puff. I am wearing clear glasses and a black top and I have a gray backdrop behind me. I am happy to join you today. I'm super excited -- here at RespectAbility I get to do the how and why of why it's important to include people with disabilities in all of the awesome work that all of our viewers are doing. And we are here to discuss more of how to keep that going.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: So I'm going to pull up the PowerPoint now that Tatiana will start with. Bear with me one moment please. All right. Okay.

>> Tatiana Lee: Ready? Okay. Including -- the D in diversity is disability. Organizations are at their best when they welcome respect and include people of all backgrounds. And that includes people with disabilities. It is really important, we come from various different backgrounds and lived experience. And yes -- include people with disabilities. We are the D in diversity. So we are RespectAbility. Like Lauren said, we fight stigmas and advance opportunities so that people with disabilities can participate in all aspects of community. We are engaged and involved in so many aspects but oftentimes are left out, which is why we are talking about this. So, we do this in three buckets: fighting stigmas by promoting authentic portrayals of people with disabilities in media. We do this in different ways through our media team, through our consulting, and through various trainings like this one. Advancing opportunities -- we love promoting best practices. We do that in articles that we write about, sharing webinars like these, trainings that we do. And we do this in education, jobs, and accessibility. We also do in areas of policy, and so on and so forth. And then the other bucket is our leadership development. So we have a very robust fellowship program where people that want to work in policy and advocacy and non-profit and entertainment can come and learn the ins and outs of advocating for disability in these areas. We also have our Lab program for entertainment professionals with disabilities. Folks that want to work, or that work behind the camera. Writers, directors, producers with disabilities. And these are essentially our talent pipelines that we have created so that different organizations that say: "We can't find talented folks with disabilities," we have them right here at RespectAbility. So, 61 million people in the US have a disability. That's one in four adults. And a disability is sensory -- when we talk about disability, that's physical, sensory, cognitive, mental health, or other. All of those are under the umbrella of disability. Now, disabilities are temporary and permanent. Temporary being that, you know, you have a fall and break your leg and you have to be on crutches and wear a cast for a short amount of time. Permanent is a spinal cord injury. You know, these are just some examples. Or, you know, like Lauren talked about having a fall and now she has a permanent disability. It can be visible and non-visible. I myself have a very visible disability. If you were to see me in person, it's very visible that I use a wheelchair. Or someone like Lauren who has a nonvisible disability. Unless she's having a flare-up kind of day, you wouldn't really know that she has a disability unless she told you. And it can be acquired from birth or acquired later. Like myself, I was born with my disability. So I've had it my entire life. Or someone can acquire it later through accident, aging, or illness. So accessibility is important for all folks. Ensuring accessibility during the planning process is so important. I can't tell you how many times folks have planned a whole entire event and done everything, and was like "how can I be accessible?" And it's like, well, you have to think about it from the beginning. And why is that important? That is important because 20% of the people -- 20% of people in the US are deaf and hard of hearing. That is 48 million Americans. So if you don't have captions you have 48 million Americans who cannot consume your content for virtual and in-person events. That's why it's great to have ASL interpreters. It's good to have captioning, and that is something that should be done for both in person and also virtual events. And more than one million people in the US are blind. So thinking about making your digital content screen reader accessible and having audio description and things like that. That is 12 million people that also have low vision. So think about your audience when you are doing that because often people will say, "oh well, I don't have someone with a disability" or "you know, someone's not here" but chances are, because one in four have a disability, more than likely you do have someone that is attending your event that is blind, low vision or deaf. And more than five million people in the US are English -- excuse me -- English language learners. So they may not have what you would consider, or have an idea of having a disability, but they can also benefit from captioning and things like that because that helps English language learners be able to consume the content better. I myself am not deaf, but I have learning disabilities like ADHD and dyslexia, and so I benefit from captions and I use captions. It helps me consume the content a lot easier and frees up some of my brain power to really understand what is going on. So, captions benefit more than just people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And while not everyone knows they have one, it's likely that four million Americans have learning disabilities like I said how I have. So, not only is making your events and your content and things that you are doing accessible -- not only is it the right thing to do to make sure, it is the economically smart thing to do. According to Nielsen the disability market is valued at more than one trillion dollars. So, opening the inclusion umbrella is a win-win for all. So, you want to reach that disability, chronically ill, mental health market. It's a win-win for everyone involved. So, when we think about accessibility, these are signs that we may think about when it comes to accessibility. And here we see signs of, you know, braille, or the sign for sign language interpreter, or a service dog, or the handicap symbol -- which I don't like that. The accessible symbol, or the wheelchair symbol, or a cane symbol. Those are the things that you think about when you think of accessibility. So keep these in mind because these are the things you want to think about in terms of making your events accessible. You want to make sure that everyone feels welcome and included to participate and can consume the information. But, we want to think a step further. When you think of this -- when people are in the room, do they feel tokenized? Do they feel that they are really fully welcomed and can bring their full dimensional 360 selves? I can't tell you how many times where people, you know, have invited me to events and made it accessible by making it wheelchair accessible, but then when I'm in the room, am I feeling included? Do I feel engaged? Or is that person just there just so you can say, "oh, we had a person in a wheelchair there." So think about in terms of that. Are they really feeling like they can bring their 360 selves and feel completely 100 percent welcome? And that's the difference between inclusion and belonging. And I love this quote and it says: "If I get to be me I belong. If I have to be like you, I fit in." So we want to think about people feeling like they can belong. And I think about this with my intersectional identity of not only being a person with a disability but also being a woman of color. There are often times where, you know, you feel you have to adjust your personality or certain things just to fit in. And a lot of folks with disabilities don't always feel like they fit in. We want to just be ourselves and just belong. Just in all of our identities that we bring, whether we are queer, disabled, Black, Hispanic, Asian, any other identity - we want to feel that we can just take our hair down and be us. And so really thinking about inclusion versus belonging. When you think about being able to have an environment where people feel like they belong, that is where the magic happens. Now we're going to go over a little bit of language, because words really do matter. And this is probably my favorite part of the work that I do here at RespectAbility is talking about language. And I've really always had a passion for language, but I've got to explore it more in talking about ableist language. And this is something that I've really learned from Lauren that has really been great of how to implement those things and really talk about it. So, one thing is that a lot of people like to use euphemisms like differently abled or things like that. So think about disability is not a bad word. Say the word. It's not bad. And don't use euphemisms like -- you know, use words like non-disabled instead of able-bodied or normal. This implies that a person who has a disability is not normal or not able-bodied, which is not true. So when we talk about people who are non-disabled -- we say you know, doesn't have a disability, we say non-disabled. So disability and non-disabled. And again, don't use euphemisms like differently abled or special needs. These are words that were created outside of the disability community and does not reflect what the disability community as a whole like to be referred as. So think about stripping away with those and just using the word disabled. Avoid passive victim words like "suffers from" or "confined to." I'm not confined to my wheelchair. I can't tell you how many times say "oh she's confined to a wheelchair." I'm not. I can transfer to a bed. I can transfer to a couch. I can move around. If anything, my wheelchair gives me freedom. I am not confined. It lets me go out of the house and go do my shopping and go out and go to events. It is freedom. So think about using the word wheelchair user. Things like that. Avoid common ableist language. This is something we see in a lot of our consulting -- folks using the word "crazy." Try to avoid using the word "crazy." That is very common ableist language. You wouldn't refer to people "the disabled" in the same way you would say "the Jews" or "the African-Americans." So, instead consider using terms like "the disability community" or "the disability activist." And people with disabilities should not be described as inspirational or courageous just because they have a disability. So, think about those things to avoid inspiration porn. Next we're going to talk about person-first versus identity-first language. And these are not new concepts, but it continues to evolve, language continues to evolve. So if we would have talked about this some years ago, I would have said, you know, most folks want to go with people first, i.e. woman with a disability, which puts the emphasis on the person and the disability last. But newer generations and this generation -- like for me, I switch between identity first and people first depending on how I'm feeling that day. But a lot of newer generation people are focusing more on identity-first and claiming the disability, so i.e. the disabled woman, which puts the emphasis on the disability, which is a part of our identity. So you can ask me. I use it interchangeably, but several US disability groups have always used identity-first terms, specifically the culturally deaf community and the autistic rights community. So, more on people first versus identity first. If you're working with individuals with disabilities, ask them. And I think this is something that -- people often are afraid to talk to people with disabilities, and this is one thing I always say. It's like don't try to do all the research and all these things you want to do before you interact with people with disabilities. At the end of the day, I am just Tatiana. Ask Tatiana "what do you prefer to be called?" "What accommodations do you need?" Just ask. And at the end of the day, don't even ask how I want to be referred to. Do I want to be referred to as the disabled woman or the woman with a disability? Like I said, I am just Tatiana, who happens to have a disability. But just ask the person. I will pass it back to my colleague Lauren and I will be back.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Thank you Tatiana. So now we're going to get into some of the details of event planning. Tatiana kind of really greatly set the stage on kind of a lot of big picture things that you should be thinking about before you even start to plan your event. So as we mentioned several times, to really think through every step before you start implementing something. In addition to the work that we do with nonprofits and such, we also do a lot of work in the entertainment industry. And a lesson that has been learned there, that if you want to make something accessible, it often doesn't cost anything more if you start it from the very beginning and from the planning stages. And it is so much easier to make changes during planning than after the fact. That also includes, you know, in pretty much everything that you're working on, websites, etc. So question to consider -- and I offer you the opportunity to share this in the chat box if you would like. What are some of the most common accessibility challenges when planning virtual events? And what are some of the solutions you found to be most effective? So, you can be thinking about that in the back of your head. Last night Tatiana and I kind of ran an experiment. We weren't sure if it would work and it it ended up turning out to work really well accessibility wise, where we had an event where we invited disabled creatives to attend. We had 100 people RSVP. And at any one time we had between 70 and 80 individuals join us over a two-hour event, where people went to different breakout rooms. And so we worked with the different companies that we worked with to ensure that we had live captioning existing in every breakout room, that we had ASL interpreters in various rooms where people who requested ASL interpreters, you know, so people would have access because we had many people who were deaf, some who requested ASL interpreters and some who requested live captioning. And then the idea of can people physically switch breakout rooms by themselves, whether they have low vision or mobility issues with their hands. So having someone basically there to help manually move people from room to room every half hour. And the reason that I think it ended up being successful is because we really thought through all the different attendees of what their needs would be and tried to think ahead of time. And we were in one sense pretty lucky that it worked out well. So because we spent the time planning and it was all in the planning stage before the event even started that we really spent the time working on making sure that it was set up and everything was accessible. And so I'm seeing in the chat that "I've lost count of how many times I've been told 'we have no budget for interpreters captions etc.'" That does come up and we're going to talk about that in a bit. Another person in the chat says "I found breakout room captions to be a challenge just on the technical logical end, also definitely supporting a low vision person to navigate zoom can be tricky." Yes. So thinking about all these things ahead of time. We had a backup plan for if the captions didn't work in the breakout rooms, where people would then be able to access them via a website. So, realizing that sometimes things don't work the way you want. So, having backup plans, I think, is really very important. So, gonna move on into slides and then we'll get back to some other questions and comments. So, let's talk about the invitation for a moment. You want to ensure that your invitation is accessible to people, that images and logos have alt text, also known as image descriptions, for people who are blind and use screen readers. Have a plain text version of the invite for folks. You can just have that available because sometimes people will respond and say: "I can't read this, can you please send me the plain text version?" Think about what systems, like Eventbrite, for example, are not accessible to people who screen readers, yet a lot of people use the system. Google Forms are accessible. But it's important to note that as different platforms go through updates they may or may not continue to be accessible. So, we always like to do a user test. Can someone using a screen reader access all fields on the form before we send out the invite? Thinking about accommodations language. On the sign up form, asking registrants if they need any accommodations to effectively participate in the event. Being very specific, listing a real person, and a real phone number, a real email address, can be very helpful. Now make sure that that person isn't going to be on vacation a few days leading up to the event, because that has happened before. Also, it's important to note that, by giving people the option to request accommodations, that does not obligate you to offer an accommodation that is considered unreasonable. And so, sometimes people are afraid to even offer accommodations because they're worried that they're going to get something completely unreasonable. That almost never happens. But you can also set a deadline, you know, because what would be unreasonable is someone an hour before an event saying "I need an ASL interpreter." You know? So, you can set a deadline of 48 hours before the event, for example, to do so. When I'm talking to larger companies that have lots of budget, I recommend always -- and this is -- we're not a larger company by any means, we're a small nonprofit with low budget, but we prioritize accessibility. So, our events include live captioning and ASL interpreters. But when I'm talking to a large company, you know, who have the budget, I always recommend that. Smaller non-profits, you may not need to do it, but you should give the people the option to request it. And if someone requests it, then providing an ASL interpreter, for example. And so, thinking about that. Also, a lot of people who need accommodations, you know, have in essence -- assume that if you don't offer a way to request it, that you're not going to be amenable to it. So, by simply putting this on here that you are giving people the opportunity to request accommodations, you are signaling that you want to be welcoming. And if someone asks for an accommodation that you don't know how to do, you can ask them and say "I'm not sure how to make that happen. Would you mind giving me more advice?" Because all of us have been living through life figuring out ways to figure out accommodations. So we would be happy to answer that and assist with that. So, information to provide before an event can be very helpful. How long the event will last, the format of the event, will participants be on video or audio for discussion, or in this case, just kind of watching a presentation. If there's going to be any sort of icebreaker questions for everyone to answer, it can be very helpful to provide that ahead of time. Some people -- it may cause a lot of anxiety to have to come up with a question on the spot. Encourage attendees to send questions or comments in advance. This is helpful to people who may want more time to prepare their materials, and to presenters to help them frame their comments. We received quite a few questions asking about hybrids, so we've added that on at the end. And if there will be time for live Q&A, share that information. There will be some time for Q&A at the end and I recommend actually -- and I was just checking now -- there is a Q&A box. So if you have a question, so they don't get lost among the comments, please put it in the Q&A box and Tatiana and I will make sure to get to it throughout the next period of time. Ensuring accessible documents. So this PowerPoint is accessible for someone who wants to use a screen reader. However, if they are just watching the presentation it's not going to be accessible. So, sometimes people will request an accessible version of the PowerPoint ahead of time, and in which case, we would send it to them. We will be posting this PowerPoint on our website, so it will be accessible to all after this webinar. And it will be accessible for folks who use screen readers. During the event: ensuring that everyone can participate. Thinking about people who are deaf, who are blind, have cognitive disabilities, are non-verbal, etc. So if we're talking about a virtual event, have accommodation for individuals who don't have access to video conferencing. For example, an option to dial in by phone. Question to consider: what are some of the most common accessibility challenges when planning in-person events? And what are some of the solutions you found to be most effective? I'm going to take a look at the comments while Tatiana addresses this question for all of us.

>> Tatiana Lee: Actually this very problem was how my activism started. I was at an event and wanted to go to network, because in any industry you work in, it's about networking and who you know and who you connect with. And as a wheelchair user, I literally could not get into the room. I went to an event and it was not wheelchair accessible. It was actually -- they had a whole floor downstairs and there were steps and everything and all the fun and excitement and everything was going on upstairs. So I got there, I was dressed up, all ready to go and trying to figure out what happened. You know, how I still could be involved. Because I was still there. The event planners that were there, what they did was, they said "You know what, we're gonna bring the party down to you." And what they did was they had catering, they brought catering down, they brought some folks down, they said "Hey, we have someone here. And hey, if you guys want to go, we'll continue the party downstairs." And they had split half and half. And that was a quick solution that this company or this event that was going on did to accommodate me so that I didn't feel left out or that I showed up for nothing. And so a lot of times it really is just talking with the person with a disability to figure out those accommodations or things that can happen. Some things are not always the safest, I've had other friends say, "oh, well, they took me up the steps." And that's not always the safest, so I don't want to say do that. But that option that I did was really really great. And so just thinking in terms of that of, in the moment talk to that disabled person and see what they need, and what would make it so that they can feel included and accommodated and you also don't know how empowering that is to that disabled person to be included. And I got to network with some really dope people that night. Which, it turned out still to be a success even though the event from the beginning wasn't accessible for me.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Thank you Tatiana. I think that really plays with the idea of thinking about, you know, being -- yes, you want to plan ahead of time, but if something's not working, you know, being quick to adapt, which I think is important. A few things in terms of thinking about in-person events. Layout, arrival, food. What are the heights of your tables? A lot of times, tables will be too high for an individual who uses a wheelchair to be able to reach the food or whatever it might be. Event experience: speakers and seating. Having seating spaces for people who use wheelchairs, for people who would be using the ASL interpreter to make sure that they can easily see. And we'll talk about this in a bit as well, but if you are doing a hybrid event, and so you're having some people in person and some people watching via video, to ensure that the ASL interpreter is in view of the video screen that you are showing. A/V considerations: really thinking about having live captions -- and the picture on the left here shows a separate screen where captions are going next to the ASL interpreter. The picture on the right has captions going across the top of the screen. So different ways that you could think of making that work. Live audio description, so just what I just did this past slide of describing what is on the screen. As I noted that even if you made the PowerPoint accessible, people won't be able to use screen readers for a PowerPoint being shown on screen, whether virtual or in person. Only if they're sent their own copy to use. If a video clip -- if you're showing a video clip and it doesn't include audio description, the speaker should explain the visuals prior to showing the video. We have on here a resource on audio description, so you'll all have access to this PowerPoint right after this event ends, and so all the links are active and you can learn more. Benefits of live captioning: helps not only people who are deaf or hard of hearing, people who have learning disabilities, people whose first language is not English, as well as really everyone, where especially now that we're all doing so many video meetings, like, it really greatly eases this cognitive load of spending so much time staring at a screen. CART: CART is a live transcriber and that's -- actually, we have a live transcriber right now. Zoom does offer automatic speech recognition, and while that is improving, it will have more errors. We prefer to work with real live people. So the captions that you're seeing either across at the bottom here or in a separate web browser are being done by an actual live person. There are third-party captioning services that exist in a separate browser, as I mentioned, so, including 1CapApp which is the service that we are utilizing today. Benefits of ASL interpreters. So captions are great if someone wants to passively be involved, but especially if you're going to have an opportunity for people to speak you're going to want to ensure that you have ASL interpreters. For events that involve complex subject matter, technical terms, industry specific terminology, viewers will find that automatic captions and in some cases even live captioning solutions, like, it just doesn't -- it's not going to be up to quality. An ASL interpreter is going to be just be able to help with those, especially if you have a complex subject matter and you make it known to the interpreter ahead of time, and so you can share technical terms, industry-specific terminology, and such. Also important to share names of speakers and materials ahead of time with both your captioners and interpreters so they can become familiar with the materials. So Zoom. Zoom is constantly changing, but we suggest not spotlighting someone, because it leads all attendees to only seeing the video of the active speaker. That means attendees may not be able to view the ASL interpreter, they may not be able to view the person speaking if the person is speaking using ASL and the interpreter is voicing for them. So you know, you can ensure gallery view when screen sharing. You can set it side-by-side view, so participants see the materials, the individual speaking, and the ASL interpreter. Hiring a sign language interpreter. It's really best practice to book at least two weeks prior to the event, but you know, many people will do so after that. You just have to recognize that you may or may not be able to find someone. Definitely at least 48 hours ahead of the event. You want to ensure the interpreter is certified. You can do that by working with specific companies or checking the registry. And once again, there's a link on here for you to check afterwards. A little bit on virtual meetings, which is different from events. But when you're hosting a meeting, especially virtually, we recommend that each person should say their name every time they begin speaking, so people can know who is speaking. Any individual not speaking should be on mute and their video off, because if you have 30 or 40 people in the meeting, you want to make sure that you're able to really see the people who are speaking. A moderator should manage turn-taking, especially with many people in a meeting. And for people who are non-verbal, giving an option to share thoughts if others are doing so verbally, for example, in a chat box. Ensuring that the ASL interpreter video stays on all the time. And if you're having like an all-day meeting, having a 10-minute break every hour or so really is a best practice. After the event. So -- captions. We talked about captions, why they're important. 41 -- so let's say you're doing an event, and then you're going to put it on Facebook, or you're going to put it on your website. 41% of videos are incomprehensible without sound or captions, and 80% of viewers react negatively to videos autoplaying with sound. So therefore, many social media outlets autoplay videos on silent. So really important to think about this for assets that you share on social media. Another topic: subtitles versus captions. Subtitles reflect exactly what is being spoken. Captions go a step further by also including non-spoken information including laughter, applause and music, as well as environmental sounds. If my six-year-old daughter ran in here, you know, giggling, you wouldn't be able to see her because I'm at a standing desk. But if I were to react to her and you were to not know that, you know, there was some giggling going on or some distraction behind me, you could be very confused. A caption could alert you to that. Open captions are always visible. Closed captions can be turned on and off by the viewer on TV and social media platforms. Important to note that 90% of mobile users watch video with the sound off. 85% of Facebook videos are watched without sound. So adding captions not only helps people who are deaf and hard of hearing, but really everyone who is usually watching video without the sound on. YouTube. How do you add captions? So YouTube actually offers automatic free captions similar to subtitles. A note that speakers won't be identified, certain words will not be accurate, and there won't be any punctuation. But important to know it is free to edit them. So you can start it off by uploading it to YouTube, they will give you some basic captions, some people call them craptions because they're not so great, but it is a really great way for you to do less work. Because then you have a basis that you can start with and then you can go in and make the edits. So we had -- we actually put out a toolkit when the COVID-19 pandemic began, on ensuring virtual events are accessible to all. That link is just at respectability.org/accessible-virtual-events. And so I welcome you to utilize that, because I know that we've all realized we're gonna keep doing virtual events. So question to consider. I'm gonna pose it at Tatiana, and anyone else that wants to throw it in the chat, please do so. If we could make one change today in order to ensure greater accessibility for all, what would you recommend that we do in terms of in-person events and online virtual experiences?

>>Tatiana Lee: Me, in my opinion, I would say to continue the hybrid events. Folks with disabilities have been requesting access like this for forever. Pre-pandemic, way before the pandemic. And it wasn't until the pandemic happened and everyone had to be home, we started thinking about virtual events and things like this where something that the disability community has been asking for, for a long time. And so that was quite interesting, so I think we need to think of continuing how we treated events and things like that during the pandemic, but giving that option of being in person but also being virtual. So I really think and I hope that hybrid events will continue to be a thing. Another thing that I think would be great is -- one thing that we do, we record stuff and then or have in-person events but then also put it up for folks to be able to consume later or afterwards. But having both of those options, I think, are very very important to have those versatile options, because they work for people with disabilities that have different experiences. And I think that's just really important.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Thanks. And you basically set up this next section, which is specifically on hybrid events. So to recap, if you're live streaming an in-person event, think about what's in the video frame. For example, do you have the ASL interpreter in that video frame, or are you offering two screens, you know, for people to watch. So many times even pre-pandemic if people were live streaming an in-person event, you would only see the main speaker. You know, think about cutaways. We've done, RespectAbility has done several events on Capitol Hill and, you know, they've been on C-SPAN. And I basically begged the cameraman, I was like can your shots continue to include the ASL interpreter, because, you know, they want to use crowd shots, they want to use cutaways and things like that. And it was our goal to include the ASL interpreter that we had brought along, to ensure that they were visible in the screen for folks who wanted to use them. You have similar things, you know, where you'll -- at the Super Bowl where there will be ASL interpreters, but often you don't get to see them. And it could be so great to just have screen in screen where we can -- where people can then be able to watch the ASL interpreter the entire time as well. Talking about CART/live captions --ensure that it's working for folks both in person and watching the live stream. Usually that's pretty easy technically to do. And then an in-person conference followed by a virtual conference with accessible recordings, as Tatiana mentioned. This idea, whether it's an event like this that we're doing, or you could be doing a week-long conference, you know, your week-long summit that you didn't get to do in person last year, you're going to do it in person this year. So what you could be doing is recording a bunch of the sessions, the keynote speakers, the different breakout rooms, recording them. And then you have plenty of time to go and add captions, make them look nice, you can choose to add -- ensure an ASL interpreter window is included. And then you can have another period of time where you have your virtual conference, where it can be a repeat and you don't have to worry about getting all new speakers again. You just make sure that the speakers know that their materials are going to be used both in person and then later for a virtual conference. And so that enables a whole lot more people to participate. Our events on Capitol Hill that we used to do every summer, you know, could accommodate 1 or 200 people. When we switched to doing it virtual last year, we had more than ten thousand people participate. And so, by having a virtual component, you're going to be able to -- for more and more people to participate. So thinking about how you can ensure these hybrid type events going forward is really important, and I think I'm gonna pass it off -- Tatiana, I think, has some final words for us before we head off to Q&A.

>> Tatiana Lee: Just to the point of what I was speaking about earlier: we've been requesting accommodations as folks with disabilities for a long time, and to do things virtual. So think about that, as we go to somewhat of a back to normal, you know, most people -- a lot of people are vaccinated, people are starting to get out. I'm slowly getting out back -- but continuing to think about having accessible in-person events, and thinking about accessibility from the beginning to make the events fully accessible in person. But then also having that option of also doing it virtual, I think, is so important. So think about how it was during the pandemic and we made everything virtual. Continue to keep that in mind, and continue to remember that folks with disabilities have been wanting this for a long time and this is exactly what makes things, events accessible for us. So continue to have those options and don't forget about the D in diversity is disability.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: So I'm going to [unintelligible] the screen, so we don't need to worry about the PowerPoint anymore and offer Q&A. All right. Juliet asks "what do you think about platforms that allow users to interact via an avatar? Is that a great way to participate in events virtually?"

>> Tatiana Lee: I have some thoughts on that, because I think Sundance did one for their festival which was great. The way they thought it out, it was very accessible, very inclusive. But they tried to do networking with those avatars and we had someone try to test it out to see how accessible it was, and it wasn't that accessible. Now it wasn't accessible to someone who was blind and low vision, or someone that uses screen reader. In other ways it was. So it depends on the person and their accessibility needs. It can be a great way and it could be not a great way, it all depends on your accessibility needs and that's just one example of -- to that point of what you said of, that I've seen thus far.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: So I'm seeing in the chat some questions or comments about technology being a barrier, you know, that people may not have access to. We talked about the idea of allowing people to join via phone and sending materials ahead of time, so if WiFi is not so great, you know, people can still participate that way. And that can be in terms of both a virtual or an in-person event, that people can kind of -- be able to listen into. So I'm curious Tatiana, do you have any other suggestions when it comes to technology barriers, and anyone participating here live who wants to drop something in the chat, I'd love to hear your suggestions.

>> Tatiana Lee: Yeah, there are technology barriers. You know, some folks don't have access to internet. Some folks don't have access to a computer. But for the ones with disabilities that do, I think it's important, because that does give us access to certain things. You know, some of us can't leave the house, some of us -- only have just our computer or our phone. So again, every accommodation need is different, and I think people need to think about that. It's not one size fits all for every disabled person. So thinking about that -- it's accessible to some, it may not be accessible to others, but I love Lauren's point of, yes, having a phone for someone to call in to be able to listen in or something like that. And there's just so many different ways, but it's all about trial and error and, you know, what works best for that person and I just think -- those are just my thoughts.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: And then Diane asks a question that kind of builds upon what you were saying, a good way to respond to event producers who want a one-size-fits-all accessibility solution, which, you know, Tatiana is shaking her head, like, no. [Laughs]

>> Tatiana Lee: There is no one-size-fits-all. Every accommodation for every person looks different. That's why we always say "ask the person" and give the option to request accommodations, because what works for one person with accommodation needs is different than completely other -- you can't see every deaf person, or every blind person, or every wheelchair user and think they all use the same -- have the same accommodation needs. It varies. So at the end of the day, ask the person and that's why I always say it's important to include and hire and have people with disabilities on your team, because they -- we are the best problem solvers. And those folks in your organization with disabilities are going to help you solve those issues and be able to acknowledge some of these things that you, as a non-disabled person, may not be thinking about.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: And I'd like to add you know, one way to kind of do that is -- all right, so you want your one size fits all accessibility solution? Great. ATP, ask the person. That's your one size fits all. You know, include the option for people to request accommodations on the reservation -- on the RSVP form. And that will help dictate. You know, I saw some people who had, who gave questions or made comments -- about cost ahead of time. So sometimes people will be like, okay I'm having this event and maybe it's an in-person event for a specific list, and we're gonna have ASL interpreters, we're gonna have CART, we're gonna have all these different things, and then you realize you're looking at the list and there might be, you might be offering something that no one on the list needs or requested. And then you decide your next event, "oh I'm just not gonna do anything because I just -- I blew my budget on this." And so, one way to really think about it is to be like, all right, so we're going to ensure that we're going to have the accommodations needed for the attendees of this specific event, and that might be different for the next event. And that's why especially, you know, having a deadline for people to request accommodations can be helpful, because then it's less anxiety-inducing on the event organizers, because they know, "all right, by this date I'm going to get all the requests." Most people who make requests for accommodations are going to do it early, because they understand -- they know it may take time. But if you don't put that on there that you're offering -- giving people that option to request accommodations, people may not ask and they just won't show up. And so that'll be a real shame. And if you are hosting an event that includes accommodations already -- for example, this event, we knew -- we were gonna have ASL interpreters and live captioning. So in all of the marketing materials we did for this event, we said that that was happening. And so that way people can be like "oh cool, there's going to be an ASL interpreter at this event." Like, "I'm gonna go because I need one, and I want to support the events because they're being accessible to me." And I think that that can be also important because then when you spend money on accessibility, you want to have people who will use it. And so when you promote that you're having it, that can make a big difference as well. So Laurie asked, "Are there resources for funding for access services available nationally?" That they have some locally, but have a large pool of people competing for the funds, from small to large, metro to royal for state funds. Are there resources out there for producers to be able to afford professional access providers?" Unfortunately not so much. And so one thing that I suggest people to do is include it in your budget. So include it in the line item of your budget, and you know, if you're getting -- if you're a non-profit and you get funding from foundations, for example, they may ask "What is this for?" And you can be like "oh, well, did you know that 20 million people in America need live captioning? Did you know this or that?" And you know, we can give you all those stats. And that actually may make a funder want to fund you more. And Tatiana, you want to add anything to that?

>> Tatiana Lee: Yeah. I was just going to say the same thing. Put that in your budget and saying that's what we need, and that's what we need to make it accessible. And I'll kind of tie this into another question that Kate had where she's saying, you know, any data or information or how many people? We talked about this a little bit earlier how common it is, and the various folks -- not even just people that are deaf and hard of hearing that use captions and so many other things. So making it a priority to have it, and make sure that that is a line item in your budget. So just like you're thinking of "I need to hire this person, I need to have food, I need to have all these other things," that needs to be a line item of "oh, accessibility in my budget." That needs to be a part of that, and making it a priority regardless, because yes, there are going to be people who don't even realize they need accommodations, or don't want to disclose or don't feel comfortable asking. So like we do, whether someone asks for captions and an ASL interpreter or not, we always provide it as a best practice. So in our opinion, it's best practice to have ASL interpreter and captions, whether someone requests it or not, and when you're thinking about your budgeting to include that as a line item. So always thinking about accessibility.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: And then to add to that, there probably will be people who may be hesitant to ask for an accommodation. Especially as people get older, for example, their eyesight may start to go, their hearing may start to go. And so especially for folks where hearing is starting to go, captions can become really really important. And it is less likely that someone who loses hearing, you know, much later in life -- that they're going to necessarily learn ASL. So captions will become important for them. But you know, I don't have any stats, but just anecdotal evidence of people, you know, being embarrassed to share that they are losing their hearing or their sight and asking for accommodations. So if you work with people who are older, if you have a board, you know, there could be people on your board who are getting older who will not tell you what they need because they are embarrassed. And so -- but that's part of what we do in general, of trying to reduce that stigma of acquiring a disability.

>> Tatiana Lee: Yeah. And I was also going to say just another thing for -- there's a lot of folks that have undiagnosed learning disabilities like we talked about earlier. Like myself, I have ADHD and dyslexia, and the amount of brain power that I use sometimes without having captions. I just actually recently realized it, that when I wasn't using captions, when it wasn't around, I was using way more brain power to really grasp what is going on in specific meetings and different events. But once captions was available and I was actually utilizing the captions, I've realized how much easier I retained the information. And there's a lot of folks that have those learning disabilities and don't even realize it so they're using mental exhaustion that they don't even realize that they're using. So thinking about having it because now you're helping them to be able to retain the information better and to use less brain power, which, you know, ends up exhausting them. You ever see people go to meetings, they're like "oh I'm so tired" and may not even realize that, oh, if they had the captions there in the first place, it could have lightened the load of the exhaustion they had, of all the information that they consumed. So thinking about things like that because it is often more common than we realize.

>> Lauren Appelbaum: I think those are all the questions. I would like to share that we have a bunch of events coming up this summer, and so, I think you know, if you're looking for virtual events this summer, we have them. I am putting a link in the chat that includes several of the upcoming events that you can kind of see, that kind of deal with, you know, ensuring effective social media posts, advocacy skills, and such. Some employment based events. And then in addition, not yet posted, we will be doing a series of events in July that's really going to focus on younger disabled individuals. You know, people in their 20s and 30s who are really paving the way, continuing -- because building on the backs of giants who have really led the way -- but continuing to pave the way for inclusion, accessibility and such. So I encourage you to check out our upcoming events and to continue to join us. Tatiana, I don't know if you have any closing words?

>> Tatiana Lee: No, thank you! This was fun. Please, you know, contact us with any questions, any problem solving. We are here, please use us as a resource. We will help and support in -- any way we can. And just please continue to be safe going out into the world, as you go into events in person starting, and continue virtual events. It's important to really have those hybrids, I think it's really going to be a best practice. So please continue to think about that, and making it accessible, and making accommodations a priority from the beginning. It benefits so many people. And yeah, happy networking!

>> Lauren Appelbaum: Thank you all for joining us today.