



Holding Accessible IDEA Data Meetings

A HOW-TO GUIDE

Authors: Rayianna Daniels-Wynn, Lauren Holahan, Tori Hughes Adamson, Sarah Walters, Rachel Scarboro

Issued: September 2026

Why Accessibility Matters for IDEA Data Meetings

Partner engagement and public reporting are key components of the Part C and Part B State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) and Section 618 data processes. Part C Lead Agencies (LAs) and Part B State Education Agencies (SEAs) are responsible for communicating state efforts to the public. This includes efforts to meet IDEA requirements and improve outcomes for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities.

As part of this work, LAs and SEAs must collect input from internal and external partners, often through IDEA data meetings. They engage the public in analyzing data, setting targets, selecting improvement strategies, and evaluating progress.

IDEA data meetings should support meaningful participation for everyone, including individuals with disabilities and parents of students with disabilities. This requires:

- Choosing an **accessible meeting space or platform**.
- Providing **accessible meeting materials and live support** (captions, interpreters, screen-reader friendly documents).
- Using **clear communication practices** (plain language, describing visuals, readable slides, and structured turn-taking).
- Meeting **all individual accommodation requests** (breaks, alternative formats, extra time).

Providing accessible meetings help ensure all voices are heard in the conversation.

This guide provides practical strategies for planning and facilitating accessible IDEA data meetings. Readers are also encouraged to use the [IDC \(IDEA Data Center\) Data Meeting Toolkit](#), which includes templates and resources that complement the accessibility guidance provided here.



Before the Meeting

Creating an accessible meeting starts before participants join. Thoughtful planning, clear communication, and accessible technology help ensure everyone can fully participate and engage.

The Planning Team

In addition to standard meeting roles (protocol lead, meeting facilitator, notetaker and timekeeper), designate someone as “Accessibility Lead”. This individual is responsible for ensuring accommodations requests are met, supporting participants, and ensuring the accessibility of meeting materials and technology.

For more information on meeting key roles, check out “*Key Roles and Responsibilities*” resources in the [IDC Data Meeting Toolkit](#).

The Participants

Decide who to invite to an IDEA data meeting based on the meeting content and objectives. It is best practice to include people with disabilities in conversations about data that represents students with disabilities. Being aware of, and addressing, the accessibility needs of all participants should be an inherent part of planning IDEA data meetings.

For more information, check out “*Including Stakeholders in Data Meetings*” in the [IDC Data Meeting Toolkit](#).

Accommodation Requests

Provide a clear method for requesting accommodations. Include a statement about who to contact for accommodations requests within meeting invitations. Include an open-ended question within registration forms for accommodation requests. Request all accommodation information at least 2 to 3 weeks before the meeting. This will provide time to ensure the requests can be fulfilled.

Common accommodation requests for meetings include:

- ASL interpretation.
- Live captioning.
- Accessible materials shared in advance.
- Alternative document formats.



Technology and Captioning

Test all audio-visual technology and accommodation services in advance. Captions should be a standard feature of any meeting. Use live captioning when possible, especially for large events, to ensure accuracy. If live captioning is not possible, enable automated captions.

Meeting Materials

Ensure all documents, presentations, and data displays are accessible. Use simple designs, high color contrast, and plain language in slides and handouts. Provide accessible materials in advance of the meeting.

When creating and reviewing accessible materials, consider these questions:

- Is the font readable?
- Is there sufficient color contrast?
- Are headings used correctly?
- Do links have descriptive text?
- Do data displays have descriptive alt text?

For more information on creating accessible documents, refer to our Weiss Center guides on [PowerPoint](#), [Word](#), and [Writing Alt Text](#).

Plain Language

Ensure IDEA reporting and data are explained in plain language. Use language that:

- Is short and simple.
- Is easy to follow.
- Meets your audience's level of understanding.
- Avoids unfamiliar jargon.

For examples of plain language in IDEA reporting, check out the Weiss Center resources: [Part C](#) and [Part B](#) public requirements of IDEA. For more guidance, refer to [Principles of Plain Language](#) by Digital.gov.



During the Meeting

Once the meeting begins, small actions throughout can make a significant difference in participant engagement and access. Accessibility is woven into how you communicate and engage participants in real time. For a full description of foundational IDEA meeting practices, explore the “*During the Meeting*” resource in the [IDC Data Meeting Toolkit](#).

Set Expectations and Support Engagement

Begin the meeting by reviewing logistics, accessibility features, participation guidelines, and scheduled breaks. Make attendees aware of available accommodations. Encourage participants to inform the organizers if they experience accessibility barriers. Address issues promptly and pause when needed to ensure everyone can fully participate.

Allow extra processing and response time, especially for participants using captions, interpreters, screen readers or other assistive technologies. Provide participants with time to ask questions, provide comments, and report any accessibility concerns.

Present Accessibly

Present in a way that supports understanding of meeting content and allows for participation:

- **Use plain language:** Keep explanations concise and limit acronyms or technical terms.
- **Speak clearly:** Say your name before speaking, speak at a steady pace, pause between speakers, and avoid talking over others.
- **Describe visuals and transitions:** Describe relevant visual content and announce slide changes.
- **Support participation:** Invite questions and check for understanding throughout the meeting.
- **Maintain access to content:** Keep captions and interpreters visible.

Presenting accessibly further supports caption accuracy and interpreter services.

American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter Considerations

If ASL interpretation is provided:

- Ensure only one person is speaking at a time.
- Pause briefly between speakers.
- Allow time after slide transitions and key discussions.
- Keep interpreters visible at all times.

Note: If interpreting services are disrupted and the issue cannot be resolved immediately, use captioning as a temporary alternative.



After the Meeting

Accessibility considerations also continue after the meeting is over. Ensure accessibility of follow-up communications and materials (emails, surveys, handouts, recordings, and notes). Gather feedback on accessibility and participant experience.

For post-meeting evaluation surveys, choose a platform with:

- Keyboard navigation support.
- Clear and accessible labels.
- A simple and uncluttered layout.

The evaluation should include accessibility of pre-meeting communications and registration, accommodation request method, and the meeting experience as a whole. The planning team should use any lessons learned to improve future meetings. For additional post-IDEA data meeting guidance, explore the “*After the Meeting*” resource in the [IDC Data Meeting Toolkit](#).

Tips for Success

- Plan ahead. Have your materials ready ahead of time. If possible, do an AV and accessibility test run a few days prior to the meeting, and then again on the day of your meeting.
- Build in more time for your meeting than you think you will need. That way, if there are tech issues or a discussion goes longer than planned, it reduces the need to rush through content.
- Plan backups. If one piece of technology stops working, having a backup available keeps interruptions brief.
- Start and end on time. If your meeting goes over, but your captionist and interpreters are only booked until the scheduled end time, people with disabilities are excluded from participating.