1 PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS OR LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

People living with disabilities or with special needs can feel marginalized. Very often, environmental factors are obstacles to getting people with special needs or disabilities invested in a project. We have to consider many aspects and adapt our ways to allow every citizen to participate in our projects and benefit from the results.

Including people with disabilities or special needs means you will have access to a gold mine of information (from their own expertise) to facilitate universal accessibility.

You can use the data sheets called "How to create a project?" and complete them with the following adaptations. However, citizen involvement, especially from people with disabilities or special needs, is necessary and enlightening!

Not all people with disabilities or special needs have the same needs or face the same challenges. Sometimes, different needs can be complete opposites!
Example: A curb with a drop can be helpful to someone in a wheelchair - it can also be harmful to a blind person who is getting around with a white cane that needs higher curbs to outline the sidewalk from the street.

The data sheets called "creating an inclusive project" will show you how to adapt your methods, depending on the people involved or engaged in your project.

-What you can do:
Gather information

Sources:
Voir fiche Animer une table ronde – Sources

2 PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS OR LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

- Get acquainted with organizations and associations for people living with disabilities or special needs in your community, learn about what needs they fulfill, and get the information about their current projects and activities.

Example: The New Brunswick Association of Community Living
- Get in touch and visit the organizations or associations within your community
- Talk directly with people living with disabilities or special needs
- Stay open-minded, attentive, ask questions and take notes
- Question people with special needs or disabilities by being open-minded and introducing yourself as a collaborator or facilitator instead of an expert
- Ask questions about people's needs to facilitate their participation and inclusion
- Inform participants about your project and request their participation to speak for people with special needs or living with disabilitiesWe have to consider many elements to make participation accessible to all and include people with disabilities or special needs.

Therefore, it's important to consider everyone's needs and facilitate everyone's participation as best we can.

In addition to interest and inclusion of people living with special needs or disabilities, you have to take into account certain aspects related to universal accessibility.

Sources:
Voir fiche Animer une table ronde – Sources

3 PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS OR LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

The next data sheets address the dimensions of universal accessibility and the actions you can take to make your project more inclusive!

- Be respectful of people living with disabilities or special needs

- Adapt your messaging and vocabulary to avoid using condescending speech

- Always talk to the person directly, no matter what their difficulty, and let them express themselves freely

One of the last aspects to consider for the accessibility of your project is the layout. The interior and exterior building architecture, the materials, the structure of each session and the information sharing management will influence your project's overall accessibility.

What you can do:
- Be aware of obstacles or aids within the environment:
Stairs, access ramps, elevators, washroom accessibility
Lighting levels
Example: good lighting to be able to lip-read

Sources:
Voir fiche Animer une table ronde – Sources

4 PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS OR LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

Sounds and room acoustics
Example: that blind people or people with impaired vision can hear well
Climate
Example: a snow storm for someone in a wheelchair

Challenges in finding the right spot
- Analyze the type of activity and the needs related to it
Example: sign language facilitator, support workers to help a participant move or eat, support worker for someone with an intellectual disability...

- Reach out to those interested and question them about the accommodations they will need

Sources:
Voir fiche Animer une table ronde – Sources

5 PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS OR LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

- Try to find a suitable location or provide accommodations. Inform the people in advance if you can't find a suitable location

- Be aware of the travel accommodations required and transportation services and/or paratransit options

People living with special needs are often marginalized. Therefore, it's important to encourage the integration of these people throughout the creation process of an inclusive project.

- Question people about their needs and think through possible solutions

- Try to integrate people living with special needs at different levels of the planning process

Example: having people that represent citizens living with special needs in leadership roles, secretariat...

Sources:
Voir fiche Animer une table ronde – Sources

6 PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS OR LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

Sometimes, when someone has specific needs, we want to help them immediately. Usually these good intentions are coming from a good place. However, they could be harmful and make them feel inferior or infantilized.

It's recommended to validate your action with the person living with special needs to make sure it's helpful.

What you can do:

Instead of imposing yourself, ask people if they need help. If they say they need help:

- Ask them how you can help
- If you have an idea of how to help them, ask them what they think before going for it
- Let them do the actions by themselves
- Pay attention to their needs
- Respect their autonomy
- Respect their rhythm and personal space

Sources:
Voir fiche Animer une table ronde – Sources

7 PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS OR LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

It's important to share the information with everyone in the most effective way.

Communication of regular or mass information:

- Ask or verify with people living with disabilities or special needs what's the best way to communicate with them. Ask them if they have technical communication tools or if they need adaptations.

Examples:
- Emails with a larger font for those visually impaired
- Posters with big fonts and with significant colour contrast (example: black on white instead of blue on red)
- Calling blind people or asking if they have technical aids to help to "read" their emails
- Calling people with an intellectual disability to help them understand everything

Communications during meetings or activities:
- Learn about different ways to communicate with everyone
- Check if anybody needs adaptations (interpreter, pictograms, speech reading, minimizing noise levels and intensity, etc.)
- Go back to what has been said and summarize it in your own words or in simpler words, depending on the people's needs

Sources:
Voir fiche Animer une table ronde – Sources