



February 13, 2025

Lorenzo Van Ness
Director of Community Organizing and Engagement,
Language Access Coordinator
and ADA Coordinator/Disability Service Facilitator
New York City Commission on Racial Equity
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Filed At: <https://accessibilityplans.cityofnewyork.us/cre/>

Re: New York City Commission On Racial Equity's
Proposed Five-Year Accessibility Plan, Posted On Or
About January 13, 2025

Dear Mr. Van Ness,

Disabled In Action of Metropolitan New York, Inc. ("DIA") submits these comments in response to the New York City Commission on Racial Equity's ("CORE") request for comments concerning its Proposed Five-Year Accessibility Plan ("Accessibility Plan" or "Plan"), posted online on or about January 13, 2025.

DIA is a fifty-four (54) year old, 501(c) (3), grassroots, civil rights organization run by and for people with disabilities. DIA's mission is to eliminate discrimination for people with all kinds of disabilities.

Significantly, CORE does not provide any reason for its Accessibility Plan being a year late. CORE needs to explain to the public and the City Council what the excuse is for not filing this Accessibility Plan last year as required by Local Law No. 12 for the year 2023.

We are concerned that the person who has been designated as the ADA Coordinator/Disability Service Facilitator has too many responsibilities since this person also has other wide-ranging responsibilities as the Director of Community Organizing and Engagement and as CORE's Language Access Coordinator. We fear that with too many responsibilities, the ADA Coordinator/Disability Service Facilitator may not be able to do all that is required of an ADA Coordinator/Disability Service Facilitator.

With respect to the contact information provided for the ADA Coordinator/Disability Service Facilitator on page two of CORE's Accessibility Plan, please provide a TTY and New York relay service number for people to be able to contact the ADA Coordinator/Disability Service Facilitator.

It would be helpful to have page numbers provided on CORE's Accessibility Plan.

Accessibility Plan

Physical Access

In both charts in this section, CORE does not state any actual dates for completing what is necessary to resolve the accessibility issues identified in this Accessibility Plan. Thus, for instance, where it says "1 Year" it is not clear when does this one year start, is it from the date of this Accessibility Plan or one year from another date? (Accessibility Plan at pp. 5 and 6) These charts need to include actual dates by which these access issues will be resolved. Further, we need to know the name and contact information of the people referred to here in these charts such as the Director of Operations and Administration, set forth in the first chart on page five of the Accessibility Plan; the Executive Director, the Digital Inclusion Officer, and the Director of Communications, all positions referred to in the second chart on page six of the Accessibility Plan (Accessibility Plan at p. 5 and p. 6).

In the first chart on page five of the Accessibility Plan where it refers to creating a sample accessibility language and templates for partner organizations, such templates should not only include an email address, but also a telephone number at which a member of the public can speak to a live person about what their accessibility needs will be at the event and be able to get

real-time feedback. Also, methods for people who are Deaf or have hearing loss to communicate a request for reasonable accommodation, such as a TTY and a New York relay service number that a person can use to contact the Disability Service Facilitator need to be provided.

Digital Access and Effective Communications

With respect to the statement concerning "using text that has no or low serifs", please note that only no serifs text should be used because people with visual disabilities do not need any serifs. (Accessibility Plan at p. 5).

At both virtual and in-person meetings and events, when requested CART and ASL need to be provided by CORE. Moreover, at in-person meetings or events CORE needs to provide assistive listening devices when requested. Some people with hearing loss do not benefit from CART or ASL.

On page five of the Accessibility Plan it states that "[r]equests must be made within five business days prior to the event date" and then states on pages 5-6 of the Accessibility Plan that "[i]n the case of scheduled meetings or events, these requests must be made known to Commission staff at least 5 days in advance..." Thus, are we to assume that all requests for reasonable accommodations must be made at least five business days before the date of the scheduled event or only those

events done with community partners and as to events done by CORE a person has five calendar days within which to make a request for a reasonable accommodation? This is not clear; please clarify.

Further, it states on page five in the Accessibility Plan that CORE will ensure that flyer templates provided to community partners will state "who to reach with inquiries around accessibility requests", in contrast, on page six in the Accessibility Plan, CORE states that request for a reasonable accommodations "must be made known to Commission staff" but does not specifically state who in the Commission must a person contact with a request for a reasonable accommodation; are we to assume we should contact the Disability Service Facilitator? This is not clear and needs to be clarified in the Accessibility Plan.

In the Accessibility Plan, CORE states that it is using a system known as SendGrid and that CORE will explore accessibility features of this product (Accessibility Plan at p. 6). Significantly however, CORE does not state when such exploration of SendGrid's features for accessibility will be completed; we need a definite date by which this will be done. We are surprised and perplexed that CORE would purchase/lease a product without first making sure that it is accessible before spending funds and not after as an afterthought. Accessibility for people with disabilities is a civil right and cannot be an afterthought.

We are very concerned that as presently written, this Accessibility Plan will result in things not being made accessible in a timely manner because it does not state anywhere definite dates by which steps, projects and tasks need to be completed. We know from past experience that when an agency does not have definite dates and deadlines it is easy for intentions to slide when things get busy and then nothing is made accessible.

Further, it would be helpful to know with whom at the New York City Office of Technology and Innovation CORE works closely with (Accessibility Plan at p. 5) as well as have the name and contact information of this person in the New York City Office of Technology and Innovation that CORE works closely with stated in this Accessibility Plan.

Programmatic Access

We are disturbed by CORE's statement on page six of its Accessibility Plan that "CORE will work to ensure that events are held at locations that have accessible entrances, restrooms, and seating", since CORE should not just "work to ensure" locations are accessible but must require these locations be accessible because this is the law and to do anything less would violate New Yorkers' civil rights. Thus, this Accessibility Plan should state that no presentation or event sponsored by CORE alone or in partnership with others will be held in an inaccessible location.

Eventbrite should not be used at CORE events nor at events where CORE is a partner because Eventbrite is not an easily accessible platform to navigate for many New Yorkers with disabilities (Accessibility Plan at p. 6).

Turning to the third chart located on page seven of the Accessibility Plan, here also, the chart needs to specifically identify the lead people as well as provide their contact information. Additionally, this chart like the others needs to set forth a specific date by which each of the access issues will be corrected.

Throughout this Accessibility Plan, CORE states that it will continue to conduct self-evaluations and self-assessments of its demised areas as well as leased spaces (Accessibility Plan at p. 4), it's digital content and communications (Accessibility Plan at p. 6), and programming (Accessibility Plan at p. 7) but nowhere does CORE's Accessibility Plan state any specific dates by which such evaluations and assessments will be completed. As previously stated without specific deadlines, things slide and are not accomplished. This Accessibility Plan needs to include definitive dates otherwise what is the point of CORE even writing this Accessibility Plan?

Workplace Inclusion

On pages eight and nine of CORE's Accessibility Plan as well in two different sections on page nine of its Accessibility Plan, CORE identifies various steps that CORE needs to take in order to make CORE's workplace

more accessible to its employees with disabilities, but again CORE does not state any specific dates by which these various steps will be accomplished. DIA reiterates its request that CORE set forth in this Accessibility Plan specific dates by which each of the various steps identified will be taken to make its services, activities and programs accessible to both its employees and the public.

Training

Turning to the chart shown on page nine of the Accessibility Plan, again timelines of one year are set forth but no specific date is stated for the work to be accomplished (Accessibility Plan at p 9). Additionally, again, the chart provided in general states the title of who is responsible for making sure that the action steps are completed but there is no information as to who is presently in the position or a way to contact this person; this additional information needs to be provided.

Significantly, in its Accessibility Plan, CORE does not mention any evacuation plan for employees with disabilities if there was a fire, disaster or terrorist attack at one of its facilities.

At the very least, any such evacuation plan should allow employees to self-identify if they require assistance and require that an email from the fire safety person be sent each day to account if employees with disabilities are physically in the office. Further, the evacuation plan should also include visitors with disabilities in the evacuation plan. Any evacuation plan should state that all

CORE staff need to be trained and what CORE staff should do if a disabled person needs to evacuate in an emergency. Additionally, such an evacuation plan should state that all employees need to be trained on how to evacuate people with different disabilities during emergencies. This evacuation plan should require all employees to be trained on how to safely transfer a person to an evacuation chair and how to safely operate an evacuation chair in an emergency.

Further, the evacuation plan should require that CORE have an evacuation chair in a location easily accessible and very near to the workstation/office of self-identified employees with mobility disabilities. And the evacuation plan should require that an additional evacuation chair that could be used by other employees and visitors in an emergency evacuation should be located in a visible and easily accessible place on every floor that CORE occupies in a building or facility.

Finally, CORE 's evacuation plan should state that CORE will post signage instructing visitors on what to do in the case of an emergency evacuation and this should be in an easily seen location, in large print and in Braille. So too, the evacuation plan needs to state the date by which posting of this necessary signage will be accomplished. The evacuation plan should be included in CORE's Accessibility Plan.

In conclusion, under every section of CORE's Accessibility Plan, it states that a self-evaluation will be performed over the next five years with no information as to specifics. The public need to know in the Accessibility

Plan information such as 1-who will complete these self-evaluations, 2-the qualifications of the persons doing these self-evaluations for CORE, 3-who will be responsible for seeing that they are completed and what are their qualifications to supervise these self-evaluations, 4-what milestones will be required to be satisfied and 5-most importantly, a definite deadline date for each self-evaluation to be completed. Further, CORE's Accessibility Plan needs to set forth where these self-evaluations will be posted and how the public can submit comments before these self-evaluations are finalized.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on CORE's Accessibility Plan since equal access to all New York City's services, activities and programs is important to all New Yorkers. If you would like additional information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact DIA at info@disabledinaction.org.

Thank you for your continued work on behalf of all of us.

Very truly yours,

Jean Ryan,
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