



Tips and Resources for Hosting Virtual Events for Everyone to Access *with focus on using Adobe Connect*

[Section 508](#), of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, requires Federal agencies to make their electronic information, services, and technology accessible to people with disabilities.¹ This document provides tips and resources for hosting virtual events, including web meetings, webinars, and virtual conferences that are accessible (and 508-compliant), which can also increase usability, benefiting all participants!

Adobe Connect is a user-friendly web platform that includes accessibility features. It can be accessed from computers and mobile devices internally and from outside of the Forest Service. Resources for getting started:

- [FSTeams Collaboration Site](#): information for FS employees to get started using Adobe Connect.
- [Greening Your Events Web site Resources & Support](#): guides and resources for hosting virtual events.
- [FS Accessibility Program Web site](#): information for understanding disabilities and accessibility.

Create and Upload Accessible PowerPoint Presentation Files

For information shared in a PowerPoint (ppt) during an Adobe Connect event, it is important to start by creating accessible ppt presentations. This includes elements such as formatting the slides and text for readability and including alternate text to describe images, graphs, and maps. Refer to the *Guide to Creating Accessible PowerPoint Presentations* on the [Education and Training page of the FS Accessibility Web site](#). Provide this guide to presenters and ask them to submit accessible ppt files before the event (to give you time to check for accessibility). When the ppt files have been checked for accessibility, upload the file into an Adobe Connect Share Pod (rather than doing a *screen share* of the ppt open on your computer). This will increase the accessibility, including access by participants using screen readers.

Become Familiar with Keyboard Commands

In Adobe Connect, participants can use [keyboard commands](#) to navigate, access content, and provide input during a virtual event. Some basic keyboard commands include:

- Ctrl + F6 Move focus from pod to pod in the meeting room.
- Tab Access different options within a specific pod.
- Ctrl + E Raise your hand (this command toggles to raise/lower your hand).
- Ctrl + ; Navigate directly to type a chat message. Type your message and hit the “Enter” key.
- Use your screen reader *read all* command (Insert + down arrow in JAWS) to read a ppt in the meeting room.

Note: on Mac computers, the *command* key is used instead of ctrl.

Reserve and Configure Live Captions

Captions, provided by Federal Relay, Caption Colorado, provide text on the screen for what is being said during the live event. Captions should be provided when a participant who is deaf or hard-of-hearing will attend and anytime an event or the recording will be open for anyone to participate (and you don’t know the access needs of all participants). When live captions are integrated into an Adobe Connect event, each participant is able to customize the font size and color contrast of the captions. In addition, the captioning is recorded along with the rest of the Adobe Connect event content.

Basic steps for integrating captions in Adobe Connect are below. More detailed instructions are provided on the [Training Page of the FSTeams Collaboration Site](#).

¹ The law applies to all Federal agencies when they develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology. [Under Section 508 \(29 U.S.C. 794d\)](#), agencies must provide disabled employees and members of the public access to information that is comparable to the access available to others.



1. Reserve captioning from [Federal Relay, Caption Colorado](#) at least 12 hours in advance.
2. Load the caption pod file into a new Share Pod:
 - a. In the share pod, from the drop-down arrow (to right of *share my screen*), select *Share Document*.
 - b. On the left side of the *Select Document to Share* window, click on *shared content*.
 - c. Select the *Adobe Connect 9 Caption Pod* file and click *OK*.
3. Configure the caption pod with the event confirmation number from Caption Colorado. Connect and broadcast the captions. Note: when the captioner joins the event, you should see the “standby for real-time captions” message stream in the captions pod.
4. Include the same caption pod (same size and position) on each layout. This is critical to ensure a continuous and smooth captions stream. If you are using more than one layout for your event, create one layout with the caption pod the size and place you would like it and then *duplicate* that layout to create the additional layouts (you can change the other pods, but leave the caption pod in place).

The captions wrap tight from left to right, so the caption pod does not need to be very wide (but wide enough so the font selection menus do not wrap, becoming difficult to see). To see an example of how captions will stream, you can configure a captions pod with the event number 999999999 (nine 9s).

Note: captions do not stream on mobile devices, so participants who need captions should join from a computer.

Provide Accessibility Information and Contacts in Participant Invite

As you send out the participant invitation with connection instructions, include accessibility tips and information and provide a contact person for special access needs and questions. For example, if this is a webinar open to a wide group for participation (and/or you plan for the recording to be shared widely or posted on a Web site), then you should reserve and integrate captions and ensure the ppt files are accessible. In that case, you can let participants know that live captions will be provided and you can provide some basic information about keyboard commands.

Example accessibility text to include in the invite for participants:

Accessibility Features for This Event:

- Live captions will be streamed in Adobe Connect. You will can adjust the font size and color contrast for viewing the captions. Note: captions only stream on computers (not mobile devices).
- [Keyboard shortcuts](#) provide accessibility to Adobe Connect. Some shortcuts include:
 - Use the *Ctrl + F6* keys to move focus from pod to pod. **Note:** On Macs, use *command* instead of *Ctrl*.
 - Use the *Tab* key to access different options within a specific pod.
 - Use your screen reader’s “read all” command to read a PowerPoint shared in Adobe Connect.
- **Consult [accessibility features in Adobe Connect](#) for more information.**
- For help with Adobe Connect, go to the [Adobe Connect Support Web site](#) or call: 800-422-3623.
- If you have any additional special access needs, please contact *<insert event contact person, email, and phone>*.

Orient Participants to the Technology, Including Accessibility Features

For events where you may have participants new to using Adobe Connect, at the very beginning of the event, spend a few minutes orienting participants to the technology, including how to customize the live captions and provide the basic keyboard commands (say those out loud). There are FS Adobe Connect orientation videos, which include slides about the captions pod and keyboard commands, you can load into a share pod to play or talk through. You can access these from the *Share Document, Shared Content* folder. Alternatively, you can customize the Adobe Connect orientation ppt (available on the [Training Page of the FSTeams Collaboration Site](#)) for your events.

Accessibility of Event Recordings

Event recordings played back from the Adobe Connect server retain many of the accessibility features live events have, including ability to customize the caption font and keyboard commands to access the content.² Conference call lines can also be configured to record the audio from the phone along with the Adobe Connect event. Instructions for configuring phone lines and recording your events are on the [Training Page of the FSTeams Collaboration Site](#).

Other Considerations

Here are some additional tips for virtual events accessible for all:

- Determine who your audience is and focus your content and messages appropriately.
- Follow [Plain Language](#) guidelines to communicate clearly.
- For blended, or hybrid events with participants gathered in person, additional accessibility considerations are important, including accessible meeting spaces and providing sign language interpreters.
- Certain functions in Adobe Connect are not fully accessible for some people. For example, a desktop screen share and white board annotations are not accessible for someone who is blind. You can verbalize important images or whiteboard text shown on the screen to increase accessibility for all.
- If you plan to show pre-recorded videos during an event, it is best to include captions in the actual video file before you load the video into Adobe Connect. Programs such as Camtasia can be used to embed closed captions. Note: for playback on mobile devices, videos must be converted to a .flv file.

Contacts

- For 508-compliance questions, contact Mitch Ringer, U.S. Forest Service Section 508 Coordinator, mringer@fs.fed.us.
- For questions about accessibility features in Adobe Connect, contact Sherri Wormstead, swormstead@fs.fed.us.
- For help with Adobe Connect, go to the [Adobe Connect Support Web site](#) or call: 800-422-3623.

² In a recording, the focus may initially be on the left recording menu, so participants may need to type the Tab key in order to begin using Ctrl + F6 to navigate from pod to pod.