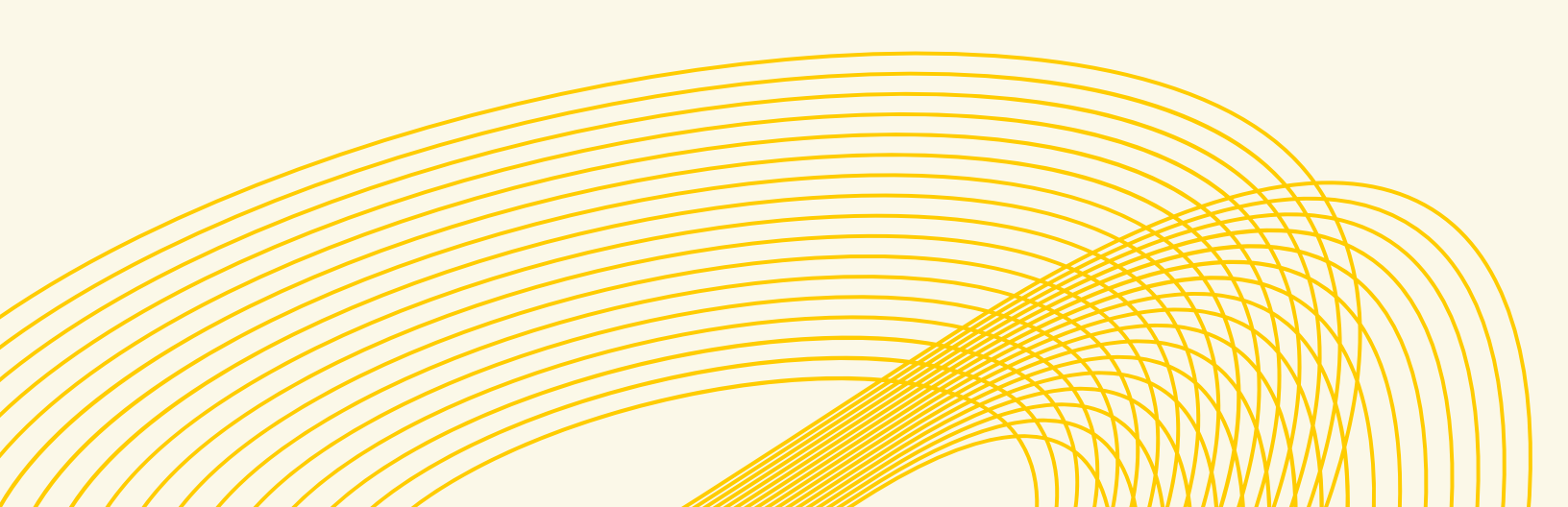
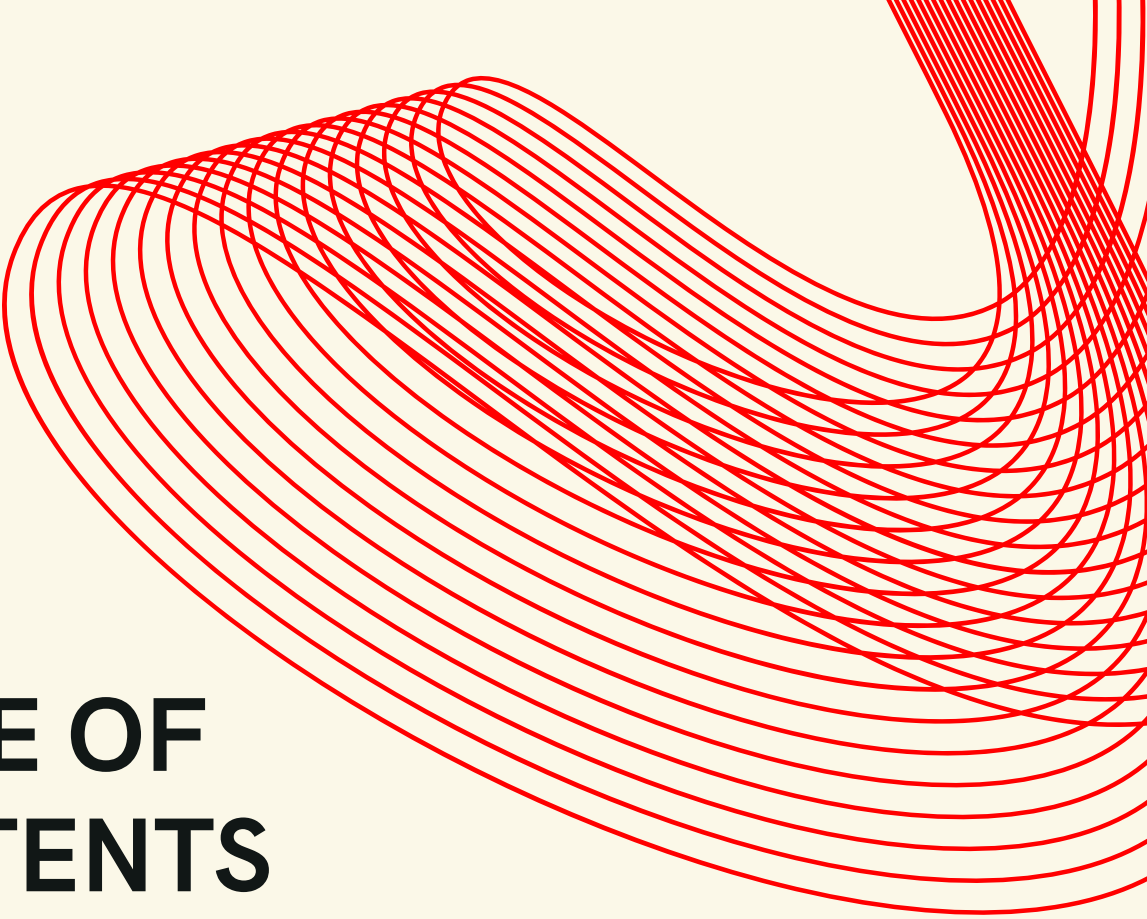


# PLANNING ACCESSIBLE CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

Dr. Tawny Paul, Anaghime Esmeralda Ziani, Pilar Taylor





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# OVERVIEW

This report examines how accessibility was incorporated into cultural programming associated with four major sporting events: the Los Angeles 1984 Olympic Games, the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup, and the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Drawing primarily on official evaluations, government reports, organizing committee documentation, institutional policies, and interviews conducted with participants and stakeholders (see Evidence Available sections within each case study), it identifies practical approaches that museums, cultural institutions, and cultural planners may adapt as they prepare for LA28.

## + SCOPE:

Officially branded cultural programs (such as Cultural Olympiads and Arts Festivals), major public cultural activations (fan zones, civic festivals), and cultural institutions (museums, heritage sites) that were part of the event ecosystem.

## + WORKING DEFINITION: ACCESS TO CULTURE

Consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities, access to culture goes far beyond access to ramps and accessible seating options, and includes: cultural material and activities format accessibility, recognition of disabled people's cultural and linguistic identity, and inclusion of sign language and Deaf culture (UN, 2006).

## + KEY FINDING:

Accessibility functions across the entire visitor journey. The strongest cultural programs integrated accessibility into planning, information, public space, commissioning, programming, and institutional practice.

## Comparative access dimensions used across all four cases:

Across the four case studies, accessibility is consistently understood as extending beyond the physical features of individual venues. Visitors encounter accessibility across a coordinated journey that includes planning their visit, obtaining information, purchasing tickets, navigating transportation and public space, finding cultural venues, engaging with exhibitions and programs, and accessing interpretation in appropriate formats. In this context, museums and cultural institutions operate as one part of a broader accessibility ecosystem (Garcia, 2024; FIFA, 2023; City of Paris, 2024).

### DISABLED PEOPLE AS CULTURE MAKERS:

disabled and Deaf artists, producers, commissioners, and disability-led cultural organizations in the program

### DISABLED PEOPLE AS CULTURE AUDIENCES:

attendance pathways, ticketing, physical access, sensory access, interpretations (sign language), captioning, audio description, and quiet spaces.

### INFORMATION ACCESS:

whether disabled audiences can find and use access information, including guides, venue contact points, and digital alternatives where full physical access is not possible.

### OLYMPIC-PARALYMPIC CULTURAL CONTINUITY:

whether cultural provision is integrated across Olympic and Paralympic periods, and whether disability inclusion is central or episodic/fragmented.

# LOS ANGELES 1984 OLYMPIC GAMES

The principal cultural program examined in this case was the 1983 Olympics' official arts program, the Olympic Arts Festival, which comprised 350+ performances (as referenced in ticketing inventory planning(LAOOC, 1984). The verified accessibility mechanisms for disabled audiences here appeared operationally. Ticket inventory planning explicitly created a separate allocation category for "physically challenged" patrons across more than 350 performances, alongside distinct categories such as general public, foreign consulates, sponsors and press. The ticketing procedure also required patrons to indicate wheelchair accommodation needs on the order form. This is concrete evidence that disability access

was built into ticketing logistics (LAOOC, 1984).

The festival's "physically challenged" seating system explicitly references a broader set of access needs, stating accommodation for: wheelchair users, sight-and-hearing-impaired patrons, amputees, people with mobility limitations. Requests were logged and seats were assigned on a performance-by-performance basis after reviewing venue seating diagrams and contingency seating. Patrons were contacted ahead of each performance and instructed to exchange tickets at the venue box office for a special seating assignment (LAOOC, 1984).

As per the report, approximately 250 orders requested "physically challenged" services.

## Institutional Example:

The official report's program narrative includes a description of the National Theater of the Deaf, and explains that its company was composed of hearing and deaf actors and merged spoken English with American Sign Language. While this does not demonstrate that audience accessibility services were systematically available across the festival, it provides clear evidence that Deaf artists and Deaf-led performance formed part of the official cultural program.



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## Olympic-Paralympic Relationship and Implications for Cultural Access:

The 1984 Paralympic Games were held separately in Stoke Mandeville and New York rather than in Los Angeles, reflecting the institutional separation that existed between the Olympic and Paralympic movements at the time (International Paralympic Committee, n.d.). The available record provides comparatively little evidence of

integrated Olympic-Paralympic cultural planning or accessibility across the broader cultural program. As a result, LA84 serves as an important point of comparison for later mega-events that increasingly integrated disability into cultural programming, commissioning, and accessibility planning.

### Available Evidence:

The official record, supported by official archives, verified online sources, and interviews with LA84 stakeholders or attendees currently advising LA28, provides evidence that accessibility was incorporated into operational planning for the Olympic Arts Festival, particularly through ticketing procedures, seating allocation, and accommodation for disabled audience members. It also documents the inclusion of the National Theater of the Deaf within the official cultural program.

### Remaining Questions:

The available documentation provides comparatively little information on museum accessibility, interpretive formats such as captioning or audio description, or accessibility within exhibitions and heritage sites. These gaps also highlight the importance of documenting accessibility measures as part of the legacy of future cultural programs.

# LA84 TAKEAWAYS FOR LA28



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**Access begins upstream.** Museums and cultural institutions should consider accessibility as part of program planning. The LA84 case demonstrates that accessibility can be achieved through operational decisions such as ticketing systems, seating allocation, venue planning, and front-of-house procedures, all of which influence whether audiences can participate successfully.

**LA28 can build stronger Olympic-Paralympic cultural continuity than was documented for LA84.** The available record from 1984 provides relatively little evidence of integrated cultural planning across the Olympic and Paralympic Games. This presents an opportunity for museums and cultural institutions to develop programming that spans both events and reflects disabled cultural production throughout the broader cultural program.

**For museums and heritage sites, LA84's evidence is sparse.** That gap itself becomes an important question for museums and heritage sites to carry into LA28: where is museum accessibility in the record, and how can it be documented this time around?

# LONDON 2012 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

The cultural program examined in this case is the four-year Cultural Olympiad, launched in 2008 and culminating in the London 2012 Festival. Unlike earlier Olympic cultural programs, it incorporated dedicated commissioning initiatives and legacy programs that explicitly focused on Deaf and disabled artists, cultural producers, and organizations (Garcia et al., 2013; British Council, n.d.).

## Accessibility Through Cultural Production

Disability inclusion formed an explicit component of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad. Programs such as Unlimited placed Deaf and disabled artists, producers, and disability organizations at the centre of cultural commissioning rather than treating accessibility solely as an audience service. The official evaluation identifies Unlimited as the largest commissioning program for Deaf and disabled artists undertaken in the United Kingdom, while government reporting confirms that

more than 800 participating artists identified as Deaf or disabled (UK Government, 2013). The British Council's evaluation adds that Unlimited and the Unlimited Festival at Southbank Center profiled 29 new commissions awarded to Deaf and disabled artists, disability organizations, producers and mainstream organizations. The evaluation also identifies the funding/partnership structure as the Olympic Lottery Distributor plus partners including LOCOG and UK art councils (British Council, n.d.).

## Access as Participation and Barrier Removal

The UK Government report states that Unlimited was intended to challenge perceptions of disability and expand opportunities for direct engagement with arts and culture for disabled people, and that Accentuate also worked with organizations in the region to improve access for disabled people.

The British council evaluation frames work through two explicit perspectives: "Access", as the removal of barriers and working towards unique contributions of Deaf/disabled artists, and "Aesthetics", as promoting excellence

and the unique contribution of Deaf/disabled artists (British Council, n.d.). *This pairing is a practical conceptual tool for LA28 because it keeps disability inclusion from being treated as solely a compliance issue, allowing for more meaningful participation.*

Together, these concepts illustrate an important institutional distinction. Accessibility was understood both as the removal of barriers to participation and as a commitment to supporting disabled artistic practice and cultural production. This broader framing is one of the defining characteristics of the London case.

## Free Cultural Programming as a Public Access Strategy

The official evaluation estimates that the Cultural Olympiad generated approximately 39.8 million attendances at free events, including 16.8 million during the London 2012 Festival. The scale of free programming suggests that affordability may influence cultural participation during mega-events, particularly for audiences facing multiple barriers

to access (Garcia et al., 2013). Although not disability-specific, it is a core "access to culture" lever that disproportionately affects groups facing compounded barriers, including disabled audiences.

### Evidence Available:

The evidence available for the London case draws on official evaluations, government reports, program documentation, and interviews with members of the British Council involved in the Cultural Olympiad. The interviews provided additional institutional context on program development, delivery, and implementation alongside the published record.

### Remaining Questions:

The available evaluation materials provide less systematic evidence regarding audience-facing accessibility across museums and individual cultural venues, including captioning, audio description, sensory provision, and other interpretive services. More detailed institutional documentation would strengthen future comparative analysis.

# LONDON 2012 TAKEAWAYS FOR LA28

**London's distinction between "Access" and "Aesthetics"** suggests that accessibility can encompass both barrier removal and cultural production. For museums and cultural institutions, accessibility may therefore be considered as part of curatorial practice, commissioning, interpretation, and programming, alongside audience services.

The **partnership model adopted during London 2012** demonstrates how accessibility can be supported through collaboration between cultural institutions, disability organizations, arts councils, funders, and government agencies. Similar partnership structures may help LA28 institutions coordinate programming, commissioning, and legacy initiatives across multiple organizations.

**Dedicated commissioning programs** may provide a useful mechanism for increasing the participation of disabled artists and cultural practitioners. London demonstrates that targeted commissioning can support artistic production while also strengthening long-term relationships between cultural institutions and disability communities.

**Co-production throughout program development** emerges as another important lesson. London integrated disabled artists, producers, and disability organizations into program development rather than introducing accessibility only after programming had been designed.



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# QATAR FIFA WORLD CUP 2022

The cultural offer associated with the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 extended across museums, heritage sites, fan zones, public art, and citywide cultural activations. Examining these components together makes it possible to consider how accessibility was incorporated across the broader cultural offer, including visitor information, public space, and institutional practice (FIFA, 2023; Qatar Foundation, 2023).

## Accessibility Beyond Traditional Cultural Venues

FIFA reports that mobile sensory rooms were set up “across Qatar” with locations including the Corniche where the organizers ran “a vast number of cultural activations”, and the FIFA Fan Festival at Al Bidda Park. This is concrete evidence of disability-focused sensory access being extended into the public-facing cultural activation environment, not confined to formal sports venues. The distribution of sensory rooms across fan zones and public cultural spaces suggests that accessibility planning extended beyond sporting venues into the wider visitor experience (FIFA, 2023; QNA, 2022).

FIFA’s sustainability reporting states that accessibility provisions were implemented at the FIFA Fan Festival to support a “safe and enjoyable experience for all visitors” which included: accessible toilets, lowered counters, elevated viewing platforms, wheelchair access lanes, sensory rooms, and mobility support devices. Because the Fan Festival also functioned as a major site for cultural performances and public programming, these measures are relevant to understanding accessibility within the broader cultural offer of the tournament (FIFA, 2023).



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## Information Access and Visitor Navigation

The Qatar for All guide is presented as being “based on and inspired by the experiences and recommendations of people with disabilities living in Qatar” and includes an entire section dedicated to cultural experiences, featuring museums and heritage sites.

Interviews conducted with Qatar Museums staff further indicate that this formed part of a broader cross-institutional planning process. Multiple working groups were established to map visitor journeys between venues, museums, heritage sites, and public spaces, with the aim of ensuring that accessibility and inclusion were considered across the wider cultural experience.

The National Museum of Qatar’s accessibility page lists

multiple formats: bespoke tours and assistive technology for blind/visually impaired visitors, tours with Arabic and English Sign Language (in collaboration with a Deaf center), and a sensory room for visitors with sensory processing disorders (linked to the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy) (NMoQ, n.d.).

Taken together, these measures suggest that World Cup planning created an opportunity for the museum to expand and formalize inclusive visitor services across multiple modes of interpretation and engagement. Their continued presence after the tournament indicates that at least some of these accessibility measures became part of the museum’s longer-term visitor experience.

### Evidence Available:

The evidence available for Qatar 2022 draws on FIFA sustainability reporting, the Qatar for All accessibility guide, Qatar Museums and National Museum of Qatar accessibility information, and interviews with Qatar Museums and Supreme Committee staff involved in World Cup visitor planning. Together, these sources document accessibility provisions across fan zones, cultural activations, museums, heritage sites, and visitor information systems.

### Remaining Questions:

The available evidence is strongest on visitor-facing access infrastructure, sensory provision, information access, and museum accessibility services. It provides less detail on how disabled audiences experienced specific cultural programs, how accessibility measures were evaluated across cultural venues, and the extent to which accessibility initiatives introduced or expanded during the World Cup became embedded within long-term institutional practice and visitor experience.

# QATAR FIFA WORLD CUP 2022 TAKEAWAYS FOR LA28

Qatar 2022 demonstrates how **accessibility can be planned across the broader cultural experience associated with a mega-event**. Accessibility provisions extended beyond museums and stadiums to include fan zones, public cultural activations, visitor information, and other civic spaces. For LA28, this suggests that neighborhood-scale cultural hubs and citywide activation areas should be considered alongside formal cultural venues.

The Qatar for All accessibility guide also demonstrates the **value of centralized visitor information**. Beyond ensuring that venues themselves are accessible, museums and cultural institutions may benefit from publishing clear information on sensory access, sign language interpretation, quiet spaces, assistive technology, and other visitor services through shared platforms that allow audiences to plan their cultural experience in advance.

Accessibility planning also extended into public cultural activations. LA's cultural planning documents already identify disabled artists and audiences with visual and hearing impairments as priorities for the Paralympic cultural program (City of LA DCA, 2025). The Qatar case suggests that similar attention may also be given to **sensory access and visitor support within fan zones, outdoor programming, and other public cultural settings beyond formal museums and cultural venues**.

FIFA also reports an average accessibility satisfaction rating of 4.5 out of 5 among disabled spectators and visitors with limited mobility. While this is organizer-reported survey data and should be interpreted accordingly, it provides one additional indication that **accessibility measures formed an important component of the broader visitor experience** during the tournament (FIFA, 2023).

# PARIS 2024 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

The cultural program examined in this case is the four-year Cultural Olympiad (2021–2024), which supported 2,596 officially labelled projects across metropolitan France and overseas territories. Accessibility formed an explicit component of program design through dedicated funding streams, disability-focused commissioning, institutional partnerships, and evaluation frameworks (Garcia, 2024).

## Disability-specific Commissioning

The evaluation explicitly labels “Disability & Paralympism” as a priority community, tied to a commitment to “continued and equal quality programming across the Olympic and Paralympic Games.” This evaluation also identifies a dedicated call for projects, “Inspiration, Creation & handicap,” led by the Ministry of Culture and Paris 2024 (it funded 15 projects) (Garcia, 2024).

## Concrete Institutional Case Example

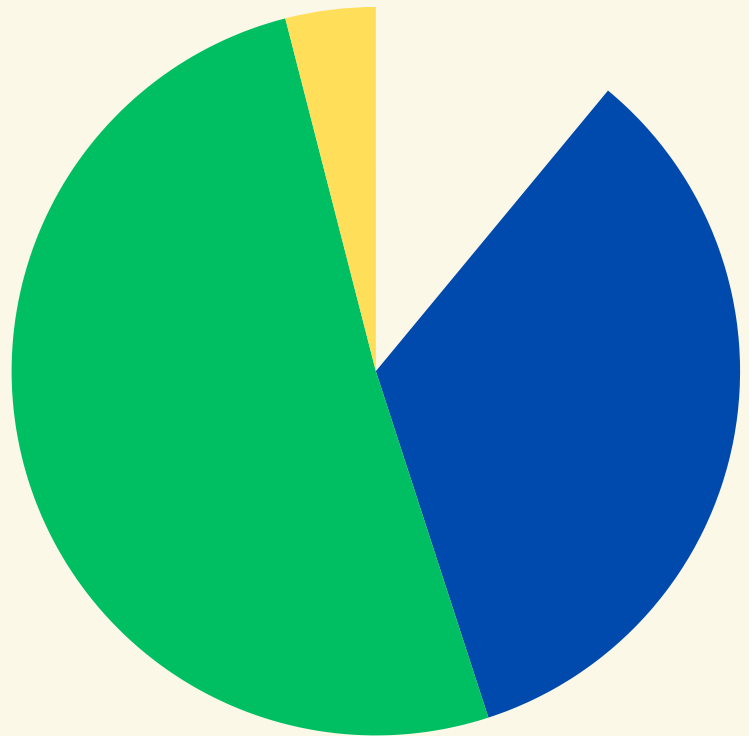
The evaluation’s case study “Histoire du Paralympisme, Pantheon” reports that this cultural Olympiad exhibition prompted: a revision of accessibility policies, extensive disability and access training for all employees, discussion of extending such training across the network of French national monuments, and an approach where spaces that could not be made fully accessible (such as the Crypt) were digitally documented and transformed into a dedicated digital showcase (Garcia, 2024).

This case illustrates how a cultural program can produce institutional change that extends beyond the duration of the event, including revised accessibility policies, staff training, and new approaches to interpreting inaccessible heritage spaces.

These measures suggest that accessibility was considered alongside affordability, location, and digital participation when broadening access to cultural programming.

## Quantified program content:

- Projects that involved disabled artists/producers - 34%
- Projects that made provisions for “greater accessibility” - 51%
- Projects that explored “disability and paralympism” as their core priority - 4%



Together, these findings illustrate that disability inclusion was evaluated across multiple dimensions, including participation, accessibility provision, and program focus.

## "Broad public access" Levers Relevant to Disability



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The evaluation reports the Cultural Olympiad aimed to make projects easy to engage with, translating into: a majority of activities being free of charge, many outdoors/in public space, and significant digital components. Key statistics include 70% free and 27.5% having a digital dimension, as reported in the evaluation (Garcia, 2024).

In this case, the evaluation framework itself forms part of the legacy of Paris 2024 by documenting accessibility outcomes across the Cultural Olympiad in ways that support future planning and accountability.

## Accessibility Beyond Cultural Institutions

The Paris case demonstrates that accessibility is influenced not only by individual cultural institutions but also by the wider visitor environment, including tourism information, neighborhoods, transportation, and city services.

Paris je t'aime reports accessibility audits (2022-2024) of more than 70 cultural attractions were part of a broader program to make it easier for people with disabilities to plan their stay.

The City of Paris "Accessible Paris" dossier describes 17 enhanced accessibility neighborhoods designed to enable people to live independently with access to "culture and recreation facilities" within the same area, and it emphasizes staff training and awareness as essential to "a complete experience" (city of Paris, 2024).

The City of Paris "inclusive and accessible Games" page explicitly frames the Cultural Olympiad as supporting projects by artists with disabilities, projects representing disability, and projects making facilities accessible because "people with disabilities are among the most remote from cultural production and offerings" (City of Paris, 2024).

Taken together, the Paris case suggests that accessibility can become embedded within institutional practice through commissioning, staff training, evaluation, visitor services, and policy development.

# PARIS 2024 TAKEAWAYS FOR LA28

The Paris 2024 case shows how **accessibility can become embedded within institutional practice**. Across the Cultural Olympiad, accessibility was incorporated into commissioning, dedicated funding, staff training, institutional policy, evaluation, and visitor services, illustrating how accessibility can become part of the way cultural institutions plan and deliver programming.

**Accessibility can be measured as well as implemented.** Paris 2024 documented the proportion of projects involving disabled artists and producers, projects incorporating accessibility measures, and disability-focused programming through dedicated evaluation categories. These examples provide useful reference points for LA28, the City, and the County as they consider how accessibility might be documented and evaluated across affiliated cultural partners.

**Preparations for a mega-event can accelerate longer-term institutional change.** The Panthéon case demonstrates how Cultural Olympiad programming contributed to revised accessibility policies, staff training, and digital interpretation of spaces where full physical access remained constrained. This suggests that accessibility planning undertaken for LA28 may also generate improvements that extend beyond the Games themselves.

**Accessibility planning can continue even where buildings present physical constraints.** Paris illustrates how digital interpretation, alternative visitor experiences, and staff training can complement physical accessibility measures, offering practical approaches for museums and heritage sites where full retrofit is not feasible.

**Accessibility also extends beyond individual cultural institutions.** The Paris case highlights the contribution of tourism information systems, neighborhood-level accessibility, and coordinated visitor infrastructure to the overall cultural experience. As Los Angeles develops neighborhood cultural hubs, transit corridor programming, and citywide cultural activations, accessibility may be considered across the wider visitor journey as well as within individual museums and cultural venues.

# CROSS-CASE FINDINGS

Across the four case studies, accessibility emerges as a question of institutional planning as much as physical access. Museums and cultural institutions that incorporated accessibility into commissioning, visitor information, partnerships, staff development, evaluation, and long-term planning were generally better positioned to support broad cultural participation during and beyond the event itself. As Los Angeles prepares for 2028, these case studies provide examples of approaches that institutions may wish to consider, adapt, and evaluate within their own contexts.

**Accessibility is most effective when it is incorporated into institutional planning from the outset.** Across all four cases, the strongest examples embedded accessibility within commissioning, program development, visitor information, operational planning, and evaluation before cultural programs were delivered.

**Accessibility extends across the visitor journey.** Museums form one part of a wider cultural ecosystem that also included transportation, public space, fan zones, digital information, and neighborhood cultural infrastructure.

The most developed approaches invested simultaneously in audience access and opportunities for disabled artists, producers, commissioners, and cultural organizations. In those cases, **disabled people participated both as audience members and as cultural producers.**

**Institutional partnerships consistently strengthened accessibility outcomes.** Museums, disability organizations, funders, government agencies, and cultural partners contributed different forms of expertise, making accessibility a shared institutional responsibility.

**Legacy depends on institutional change.** The most durable outcomes extended beyond individual events through revised policies, staff training, commissioning structures, accessibility guidance, and evaluation frameworks.

Collectively, these case studies suggest that mega-events can function as catalysts for institutional change. While accessibility improvements were often introduced to support a specific event, the strongest examples became embedded within museum practice through revised policies, staff training, commissioning models, visitor services, evaluation frameworks, and long-term institutional partnerships.

# Planning Considerations for Museums and Cultural Institutions

The following discussion prompts are derived from the comparative case studies presented in this report and informed by interviews conducted with museum professionals, cultural institutions, organizing committee representatives, and public officials involved in the planning and delivery of the cultural programs examined. They are intended to support internal planning discussions as museums and cultural institutions prepare for LA28.

## PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE

- How is accessibility being incorporated into institutional planning, commissioning, and program development for LA28?
- Which internal teams, community partners, and disability organizations should be involved throughout the planning process?
- How will accessibility be documented and evaluated during and after LA28?
- Which accessibility improvements could become part of the institution's longer-term legacy?

## PROGRAMMING AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE

- How will accessibility be reflected across exhibitions, public programs, educational activities, interpretation, and visitor services?
- How might disabled artists, curators, educators, and cultural practitioners contribute to program development?
- How will visitors obtain clear accessibility information before and during their visit?
- Where physical constraints exist, what alternative approaches could improve access through interpretation, technology, or visitor support?

## LEGACY AND INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING

- What lessons from previous mega-events are most applicable to the institution's own context?
- Which existing institutional practices could be strengthened through LA28 planning?
- How can accessibility planning contribute to broader institutional change beyond the Games?
- How will the institution capture and share lessons learned after LA28?

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