Virtual Platforms and ASL Interpreters

I wanted to provide some general tips for working with ASL interpreters on virtual platforms (if you haven't already worked with ASL interpreters before), and also ask that if you have ANY information about this event that you can provide to us today so we can prepare, that would be great. This would include things like:

The agenda, any slides that will be shown during the presentation, speaker bios, copies of Land Acknowledgements if you are doing one, etc. We especially like to get any information that is scripted, or going to be read aloud in advance, since speakers reading tend to read at about 2x their regular speaking rate.

Below, I have listed some tips for using virtual platforms with ASL interpreters. If you are already aware of these tips, great! If not, hopefully they will be helpful to you in making your event accessible to all. I look forward to working with you!

Tips for Successful Interpreted Virtual Sessions (American Sign Language)

1. Make the ASL interpreters co-hosts or panelists rather than having them register as attendees. This will allow their videos to remain on throughout the session and will enable them to mute their videos when they are the "off duty" interpreter so only one interpreter is on the screen at a time.

2. Make sure participants know that the most effective way to see the interpreter AND the presenter/presentation slides is to adjust their view (in the top right hand corner of Zoom) to "speaker view" NOT side-by-side" Gallery View.

3. Spotlight the interpreters and pin them so their videos do not move around or get lost in a sea of other videos. Once they are spotlighted or pinned, they will move to the top of the participants/panelists list so Deaf participants can find them easily. Additionally, if recording the event, be sure that the computer recording the event has the interpreters and speaker(s) visible on the screen. If you can't see the interpreters on the recording computer's screen they will not appear on the recording.

4. Ask all participants who are NOT presenting or on the discussion panel to mute their audio AND video (this is often good to set up as the default setting) which will allow the interpreter's picture to be large enough for Deaf participants to see, and make it possible for the interpreters to hear the audio without background noise or cross-talk interference.

5. Enable the option for participants and interpreters to multi-pin people so they can select which people they want to see on the screen and in what order.

6. Ensure that panelists/speakers/ interpreters are able to use the "chat feature" amongst themselves (not within the larger attendee thread) so that the interpreters can communicate about when they are ready to switch interpreters (usually every 15-20 minutes or so).

7. If you are going to use breakout rooms, make sure that both interpreters (if there is a team of two interpreters) AND the Deaf participant(s) are placed into the **same** breakout room along with a few other hearing participants – please note that if there are no

hearing participants, there will be no interpretation happening since the interpreters are not participants in the meeting itself.

8. At the start of the session, please ask all participants in the meeting to say their name before speaking to indicate who they are. The interpreters are often unable to see who is speaking and want to avoid misgendering and misrepresenting folks by indicating “woman’s voice said…” for example. One way to do this is by example, “Hi, this is Sam, your host, and if you could please state your name before speaking that would be great, this way, everyone is able to identify who you are.” Please refrain from saying things like, “If you could say your name for the interpreters that would help them out.” While this is true, it calls undue attention to the Deaf participants, and really, it is helpful to EVERYONE, not just the interpreters.