



## AMS Accessibility Task Force Summary

The AMS Accessibility Task Force Report offers **recommendations** to further expand accessibility through the Society's meetings, events, policies, advocacy efforts, and communication strategies, and documents the Society's **recent initiatives** to support accessibility across multiple dimensions.

Constituents and task force members noted repeatedly that accessibility is not a "one time" effort, but rather a continuous process of responsiveness that will require learning and adapting to new technologies and strategies as they become available. This work, already underway, is worth doing, and is well aligned with our strategic plan.

### Recommendations

*Regarding the Annual Meeting and other AMS events, the Task Force recommends the following actions:*

1. Update the content and language of the [AMS Guidelines on Accessibility and Accommodations](#) and other [Best Practices documents](#), in partnership or conversation with key stakeholders.
2. Update the content and language of the Accessible Presentation Guidelines. (Guidelines like those published by the [American Anthropological Association](#) may serve as potential models.)
3. Update the Annual Meeting Organizing Checklist to include an updated section on accessibility to ensure that AMS staff attend proactively to all known access needs, with attention to the access categories outlined in this document. (Templates like [this one](#) created by the Society of Ethnomusicology Disability and Deaf Studies Special Interest Group might offer useful guidance in that process.)
4. Consolidate "special calls" into the regular call for the annual meeting to avoid marginalization while encouraging inclusivity. We recommend that the AMS continue referring to the availability of a remote presentation track as a "pilot" for now, but include it and the CAMPE special call for professional development sessions in the next regular CFP.
5. Encourage members to develop and submit professional development sessions or training events that address accessibility concerns for future annual meetings, and perhaps place some or all of these in the pilot remote-accessible room.
6. Encourage the reporting of potential barriers to access through notices in the conference program, on the conference website, and in its signage. When possible, we recommend that the Society also offer a number to phone or text to supplement the in-person help provided at the Registration Desk.

*Regarding advocacy and communication policies, the Task Force recommends:*

1. Ongoing and routine communication with the membership and key stakeholders about accessibility. These could include annual or bi-annual scheduled meetings between the Executive Committee and a representative of the Disability SG as well as one or two Council members who would serve as liaisons to the Executive Committee.



2. Creating and regularly updating a house style guide with gender inclusive language, and ensuring inclusive language in all AMS communications. (Possible models include the [National Center on Disability and Journalism Style Guide](#) and the [Transgender Journalists Association Stylebook](#).)
3. Publicizing accessibility programs and policies as part of announcements of events and programs and in communications from the President and Executive Director, as we discovered that many AMS members were unaware of the various accessibility programs and options that are already offered by the organization.

### **Recent Initiatives**

The Society has introduced a number of new programs and policies to address the accessibility needs of different constituencies in recent years. They include but are not limited to the following:

1. Funding aimed at supporting a more diverse segment of the society's membership to support caregiving, travel, and professional development. These include Family Care Grants, the [Eileen Southern Travel Fund](#), the [Suzanne G. Cusick Professional Development Fund](#), the [Janet Levy Fund](#), and the [Guest Speaker Fund](#).
2. Committees, Chapters, and Study Groups have offered more online or hybrid meetings and events since the pandemic, which reduce the cost of/barriers to participation. Additionally, Study Groups such as the Demographic Diversity, Disability, and Gender/Sexuality SGs offer support and networking for members with specific areas of interest, make the society feel more welcoming, and help participants find and enter relevant professional networks.
3. The AMS website redesign is underway and will result in a much more accessible portal, which includes the Society's Best Practices documents that lay out the Society's accessibility practices, principles and commitments. News feeds dedicated to Awards and Grants and In Memoriam honor the accomplishments of current and recently deceased members.
4. The AMS has introduced new initiatives to make the Society's Annual Meetings more accessible and welcoming, such as the remote presentation pilot program, online meetings every three years, audio amplification, quiet and nursing rooms, hotels that are accessible and offer gender-neutral restrooms, and other support. Progressive fee structures have been introduced for both the Annual Meeting and the Society's dues, with much-reduced cost for students and lower-income members.

Throughout the Task Force's conversations, it was clear to all that music studies scholars experience barriers to participation, and that many feel strongly that the AMS must invest in reducing the impact of these barriers to the extent that it can. These efforts also need to be perceptible so that participants can take full advantage of them: the AMS must make evident through word and deed that we are consistently prioritizing accessibility concerns in our events, programs, and policies.

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