



A D E C A D E O F D E M O C R A C Y
Achievements, Practices, Challenges & Partnership

PRESENTED BY

**The Department of the Premier
Office on the Status of Disabled Persons**

THE WESTERN CAPE
DIE WES-KAAP
INTSHONA KOLONI



A HOME FOR ALL
'N TUISTE VIR ALMAL
IKHAYA LETHU SONKE

POST-CONFERENCE REPORT



POST-CONFERENCE REPORT

TO: Marie Hendricks
Deputy Director
Office on the Status of Disabled Persons
Western Cape Provincial Government

FROM: Fastfunction

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DATE: January 2005

REGARDING: Access 2004 – A National Conference on Partnership in Disability
30th November – 2nd December 2004
Cape Town International Convention Centre

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1. Executive Summary

WHAT

Access 2004 – A National Conference on Disability
Conference and Exhibition
Welcome Function
Gala Dinner

WHEN

Tuesday, 29th November 2004 – Thursday, 2nd December 2004

WHERE

Cape Town, South Africa

Cape Town International Convention Centre
ArabellaSheraton Grand Hotel

WHO

Over 350 delegates
Over 70 speakers
Delegates and Speakers from all over South Africa
5 international Guest Speakers
Executive Deputy Mayor of the City of Cape Town Gawa Samuels
Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa Jacob Zuma

2. Delegate Breakdown and Assessment

Delegate Breakdown

Originally, Fastfunction set a target of between 450 and 500 delegates for the event, including as many national representatives as possible. *In total, 400 delegates played some kind of role in Access 2004.* This total was in fact a suitable number based on revised expectations once delegate marketing was undertaken.

An adapted delegate pricing structure was responsible in part for the revised expectations. With delegate fees significantly higher than for Access 2002, Access 2004 caused some dissatisfaction for potential delegates, in that the registration fees put attendance out of reach for some individuals, students and NGO representatives that would have liked to attend.

Delegates were mainly from the Western Cape, giving rise to criticism that the conference was not truly representative of the state of play for the whole country. The high attendance by Western Cape representatives was expected and would not have been limited. An expanded national marketing campaign would assist in increasing the attendance of delegates from outside the Western Cape, as well as the increased involvement of the other provincial OSDPs, and a substantial increase in bursaries to include traveling and accommodation expenses for funded delegates.

The tables on the following page give the delegate statistics in more detail.

Delegate Breakdown		
International	6	1.5%
Provincial Breakdown		
EC	23	5.8%
FS	6	1.5%
GT	57	14.3%
KZN	20	5.0%
LIMP	6	1.5%
MPUM	13	3.3%
NC	1	0.3%
NW	1	0.3%
WC	267	66.8%
Total Local Delegates	394	
TOTAL DELEGATES	400	100.0%

* Of the 127 delegates from outside the Western Cape, 71 were from Government (56%)

* Persons with (noticeable) disabilities - 120 (30%)

Speaker Breakdown		
International	5	6.6%
Provincial Breakdown		
EC	1	1.3%
FS	0	0.0%
GT	9	11.8%
KZN	4	5.3%
LIMP	0	0.0%
MPUM	0	0.0%
NC	0	0.0%
NW	0	0.0%
WC	57	75.0%
TOTAL SPEAKERS	76	100.0%

Sector Breakdown		
Consultants	13	3.3%
Corporate	26	6.5%
Education	25	6.3%
Government	157	39.3%
Health	26	6.5%
NGO	112	28.0%
Private	12	3.0%
Research	3	0.8%
SETAs	10	2.5%
University	16	4.0%
	400	
TOTAL DELEGATES	400	100.0%

* All representatives of the "Consultants" sector were Speakers, 5 were persons with disabilities

* 7 representatives of the "Corporate" sector were Speakers, 7 were persons with disabilities

* 10 of 12 delegates registered as "Private" were persons with disabilities

3. Delegate Feedback

A summary of the feedback provided by delegates in the *Access 2004 Assessment* form distributed on the last day of the conference. Answers to survey questions were compiled into overall percentages, and the most illuminating comments are included verbatim.

Compiled Results of the Access 2004 Assessment

VENUE ASSESSMENT

Do you think the Convention Centre was a suitable venue for the conference?

95% Yes 5% No

How did you find the venues' facilities?

0% Poor 4% Average 47% Good 49% Excellent

How do you rate the Convention Centre's accessibility for persons with disabilities?

1% Poor 15% Average 49% Good 35% Excellent

Please comment on the service of the Convention Centre staff?

0% Poor 3% Average 38% Good 59% Excellent

General Delegate Comments on Venue

- Would be less time consuming if all activities could be on ground level.
- Conference sessions and lunches should be accommodated on same level at CTICC.
- Staff friendly and very helpful.
- Service and attitude of the staff and event organiser staff was outstanding with regard to support, attractiveness, respect and friendliness. What was missing in the infrastructure was made up for by attitude.
- Beautiful setting, comfortable and very accessible.
- Lifts for wheelchairs inadequate.
- The general organiser was excellent and people were helpful and friendly.

Fastfunction Comments

All in all the delegates gave the facilities and service at the CTICC a positive assessment. In terms of its suitability for disabled persons, there were several negative comments regarding the travel between Ballroom East and the Exhibition Hall and the wisdom in holding the event on two different levels; holding the Day 2 Workshop Sessions at the Arabella Sheraton Grand Hotel; the shortage of lifts and escalators, etc.

There were a few comments on the parking situation, but mainly regarding the price, and not the arrangements for disabled parking as expected.

Most of the delegates enjoyed the catering; however some wanted the food to be more 'African'.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Please rate the individual sessions taking into account the content, panellists, interest and relevance.

DAY ONE

Session 1: Opening and Welcome

0% Poor 18% Average 61% Good 21% Excellent

Session 2: Universal Access

1% Poor 14% Average 61% Good 24% Excellent

Session 3: Economic Empowerment

3% Poor 21% Average 59% Good 17% Excellent

Session 4: Social Development and Capacity Building

3% Poor 32%Average 50% Good 15% Excellent

General Delegate Comments on Day One

- It was a bit tiring to have to listen to many people presenting.
- International speakers could have spoken more; workshops could have started on Day One.
- Limited time for audience to participate.
- I have gained much knowledge about economic empowerment. It will benefit towards my business.
- Good except for the AI section, which is not appropriate for a conference like this.
- Poor that the Premier didn't attend.
- Appreciative Inquiry process not clearly explained and some people got lost, not having been shown what to do.
- Appreciate Inquiry was inspiring.
- Group sessions with activities (Appreciative Inquiry) were not suitable for a convention situation.
- Myself, like many others, lost interest. It is too abstract at times.
- Learned so much and built friendship bridges across the globe.
- I found that the sessions were too long.

Fastfunction Comments

A pervasive general comment was that the days and sessions were too long; people battled to concentrate throughout; and some lost focus. The majority of the delegates rated the sessions on this day as 'Good' or 'Excellent'. From the comments, the Appreciative Inquiry received a mixed reaction – some people thought it was too 'abstract', 'self indulgent' or 'badly explained' and lost interest, while others found it 'inspirational'.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Please rate the individual sessions taking into account the content, panellists, interest and relevance.

DAY TWO

How do you rate the effectiveness of the Workshops in identifying and addressing the major issues?

3% Poor 15% Average 55% Good 27% Excellent

Were the Workshops effective in soliciting knowledge?

90% Yes 10% No

Did the Workshops create a critical debate?

83% Yes 17% No

Was the open format (posing questions to the panel) more effective than listening to panel presentations with follow-up questions?

84% Yes 16% No

General Delegate Comments on Day Two

- Better than the first day.
- Well structured.
- Would like to extend more sessions.
- Workshops attended were excellent. Panel members were well prepared and were masters and passionate in their relevant subjects.
- Day was too long. Some Workshops could have been on Day One or Day Three.
- There would have been more than enough time for panelists to give short presentations and then answer questions.
- Workshops should have had a five minute presentations setting out some main issues followed by questions. Sometimes an initial question was too determining of the discussion.
- Lack of handouts of presentations was such a pity.
- Very good! Great learning experience.
- At times it gave what is happening only in Cape Town. Presentations were Cape Town-specific.
- Was very good. Realised that there are other people who share our goals.
- Day 2 was an eye-opener to me. I gained a lot of information.
- Very good that health care is no longer the prominent subject, but rather improvement issues like economic empowerment and education.
- Pity that the breakaway venues were not in the same building (as the conference).
- Discussion tended to be limited to panel members' areas of expertise. Missed opportunities to discuss issues or comprehensively.
- Don't feel there was sufficient problem-solving and putting plans into place to pro-actively address issues.
- Facilitators and panel well-spoken and very effective.

Fastfunction Comments

From the very positive comments it is clear that Day Two was by far the most popular and effective day. The delegates appreciated and enjoyed having more focused discussions and being able to contribute to the discussions much more than they had been able to in the Plenary. The format was well-received although there were some comments that the panellists should have made short presentations. The panellists and facilitators received high praise with the only major criticism being that panellists were mainly from the Western Cape and that the examples and discussions revolved around the local situation to the exclusion of other regions.

A weak point was the lack of dedicated team for each room – a scribe and a sign interpreter dedicated to each session room, to keep time, take notes, direct delegates, run the sessions administratively, assist the Facilitators, etc. The ad hoc basis on which this was done added a lot of stress to the situation and did not serve Facilitators or delegates well in that they suffered the effects of the confusion.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Please rate the individual sessions taking into account the content, panellists, interest and relevance.

DAY THREE

Session 1: Imagining Access for Disability

6% Poor 28% Average 46% Good 20% Excellent

Do you think that the Appreciative Inquiry was successful?

72% Yes 28% No

Session 2: The Way Forward and Closing

6% Poor 21% Average 60% Good 13% Excellent

Did this session sum up the conference successfully?

85% Yes 15% No

Were goals and objectives resulting from the conference set out?

85% Yes 15% No

Were firm deliverables established?

69% Yes 31% No

General Delegate Comments on Day Three

- Delegates inspired all with their inputs.
- Not good control in session overall. Most delegates confused – people tried to be active. Should use key speakers to deliver keynotes for the way forward.
- The AI approach was a self-indulgent and utter waste of time. We got no closer to dealing with issues we all know about already.
- Found it (Appreciative Inquiry) disjointed from rest of conference. Good idea but didn't work as efficiently as it was intended.

- Needed more meaty, realistic, practical, and specific outcomes to be identified as key deliverables.
- Some people did not understand this method (Appreciative Inquiry) initially. It should have been explained better.
- Goals and objectives were set out but need more in-depth thinking with differently interested people in each focus group.
- Disabled people should be trained, especially the people of the rural areas.
- Many goals set to be achieved by 2006.
- The third day was still so much to discuss that it was difficult to see game and objectives.
- An anticlimax to a wonderful conference.
- Time management of both sessions and Appreciative Inquiry was poor.

Fastfunction Comments

Although it is not reflected in the compiled results of the survey questions for Day Three, the comments reflect that Appreciative Inquiry was received indifferently. The general feeling was that it was not well-controlled and not clearly explained, resulting in a fair amount of confusion. That said, once the delegates started working in their groups, it became more focussed, very interactive, and more meaningful. From an organiser's point of view, Appreciative Inquiry was a very complex project to include in an already complex conference programme. A streamlined version of Appreciative Inquiry with better, simpler explanations may be appropriate, but the format used for Access 2004 was too complex. Many of the positive outcomes desired were not achievable in the Access 2004 setting, which seems to have left some delegates feeling ambivalent.

There was also some concern that Day Three did not produce 'meaty', practical and specific outcomes to be identified as deliverables. Goals and objectives to be identified needed to be thought about more carefully.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

The Conference has been beneficial to me

1% Strongly Disagree 3% Disagree 61% Agree 35% Agree Strongly

The Conference provided networking opportunities

1% Strongly Disagree 1% Disagree 69% Agree 28% Agree Strongly

The Conference was well-organised

3% Strongly Disagree 2% Disagree 43% Agree 49% Agree Strongly

Do you believe that Access should be a biennial event?

92% Yes 8% No

Fastfunction Comments

The response to this General Questions section reflects that the conference was very well-received by almost all the delegates. We are also very pleased that there was a very positive feeling that the conference was very well-organised.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

What were the strongest aspects of the conference?

- Focus on Implementation and Delivery.
- Interaction and partnerships; the realisation that we must unite.
- The workshop sessions – very informative and well-structured.
- Meeting other people with disabilities, lecturers/speakers, making new friends.
- Reduce registration fees to involve more disadvantaged disabled people.
- The organisation, networking opportunities and information available.
- Workshops, sharing knowledge.
- Enjoyable, lots of information, exhibition hall.
- The interaction between those involved in the conference.
- Organisation – very professional team.
- Good access, good participation of people with disability, well-organised.
- Not enough unity amongst stakeholders to address and fight for access.
- Rural and the poor were not represented and therefore their issues were not heard.
- Very well-organised
- Very good international speakers.
- Working sessions on Day 2 were very beneficial and they could be expanded.
- Focus of economic empowerment.
- Agreement on moving forward by doing things, not only talking.
- The speakers and facilitators were excellent and knowledgeable and presented their messages well.
- Provided disability a platform to deliberate issues affecting their well-being.
- The exchanging of ideas.
- Interaction of different sectors within disability.
- Participation, input, dream exercise.
- Great to have more government departments like transport present – shows we are being taken seriously.
- Networking opportunities.
- Access to and exchange of information.
- Topics and speakers well-chosen and very inspirational. Day Two was super, the rest fell behind.
- Good presenters.
- View point from the disabled themselves.
- Exchange of information.
- The opportunity to align all our goals with the mainstream and establish guidelines by best practices.
- Small groups on Day Two.
- Appreciative Inquiry was a very good concept in the Day One presentation.
- Programme depth and extent.

Fastfunction Comments

We had a wide range of responses here, however what came through very strongly was that Day Two was very successful and well-received. The elements that people enjoyed most were the networking opportunities; the interaction; the sharing of information; and meeting with other people with disabilities; and much of this took place on Day Two. The delegates also really appreciated the quality of the panellists and speakers. The participation of the international delegates was very well-received and delegates appreciated getting an international perspective on disability, as well as the opportunity to learn from the international mistakes.

What were the weakest aspects of the conference?

- Not time to visit stalls during day.
- A better start and finish to give people more directions of flow of events and the way forward.
- We need early morning coffee on arrival.
- Time allocation for each event to ask questions was too little.
- More specific in terms of disability solutions.
- Lack of focus on mental health.
- Very bad time management.
- Too focused on the Western Cape. Needs to be international (I am from Gauteng).
- Most of the speakers were Provincial but delegates were from all over.
- The low attendance at the Gala Dinner is an indication for being over priced.
- Too little focus on how to proactively address issues.
- Lack of measurable mandates.
- Consider people who do not have income who would like to have access to the conference.
- The general feeling that there is too large an emphasis on the local situation in the Western Cape, with regard to the need for guidance and support all over the rest of our amazing country.
- The generalisation – they should set targets for 2010.
- We want to do something but how and where is not known. Focussed mainly on the Cape Town environment – but what about other regions' inputs?
- Mental Health Sector poorly represented due to funding.
- Lack of handouts.
- What about those who are not educated and from poor families. The government needs to say something about them, especially those from rural areas.
- Please let's get real and do some work. Set proper agendas instead of this soft-focus stuff. We have work to do.
- Talk shop – repetitive. More persons with disability should be present.
- The days were very full and exhausting.
- Too much variety, too little time to be at all sessions. I would like to have more time like the sessions on Day Two.
- Lack of business people.
- Not once did I hear psychiatric illness being discussed. Future conferences need to have more noticeable focus on psychiatric illness.
- The last day was not structured enough and a lot of time was wasted.
- Representative from Housing who couldn't answer question.
- Emphasise that measurable, costed outcomes should be placed on the table.
- The cost of attending has been a problem.

Fastfunction Comments

There was a wide range of comments, but the following issues came through repeatedly in the questionnaire:

Although it was well-received by some, Appreciative Inquiry (or elements of it) was seen as a weak point. This is linked to those that wanted more 'meaty' conclusions than the 'soft-focus' approach provided.

In terms of attendance, there were many valid points raised – the cost of registration (and travel and accommodation) meant the conference was not accessible to all, particularly people with

disabilities from poor and rural areas who need most of the help available. The fact that Corporate/Business was not well-represented was also a concern.

In terms of the content of the conference, some people felt it tried to cover too much over the three days and that the days were too long. Numerous expressions of concern stated that there was a need to identify measurable goals and objectives, and to concentrate on the solutions to all the existing problems. The bias towards the Western Cape when dealing with specific issues and examples, resources, etc, was often highlighted. It was also widely felt that the time-keeping was not as good as it should have been.

Do you have any suggestions for the focus and implementation of a future conference?

- Access 2006 must be national in other town.
- Sessions should not go beyond 15h30. The tendency is to switch off at a certain point because a person has a short spell of listening.
- Consider people who do not have income who would like to have access to the conference.
- The caterers should consider African food as well.
- Need strategic teams to take information forward so as to plan for 2006 conference.
- Exhibitions should include the public.
- Not sure that Appreciative Inquiry was an appropriate technique – aiming to change an organisation is different from using it in a conference like this.
- Revisit the previous conference's goal to access the progress.
- African theme – African-based mainstreaming concern.
- Paraplegics from international countries to be invited for a highlight of their countries' status.
- Disabled people need to be supplied with notes and presentations.
- Speeches and presentations only included Western Cape – what about KZN?
- More national and international participation.
- Persons with disabilities and their organisations that work in the sector should organise the next conference. Should be an event that showcases person with disabilities, not able-bodied persons.

Fastfunction Comments

The feeling that it was still too Western Cape-based came through strongly, and some thought will have to be given as to how best to take this conference forward and make it a truly national conference. The next Access conference should focus more on delivery and implementation. More international speakers and disabled persons should be invited so as to allow delegates to learn from their experiences and mistakes. The organisers of Access 2006 need to look carefully into the programme structure and day length: although it worked, many people thought the days were too full and/or long.

Persons with disabilities that are poor or that live in rural areas need to be included in future conferences and Access 2006 will have to find ways to ensure their participation. The barrier of price was a hurdle for many delegates and thought needs to be given as to how to allow more inclusive participation (could be done through a restructuring of the financing of the conference).

Other Comments

- Much growth evident since Access 2002 – well done.
- It has been much better in this regard than Access 2002, but it can still improve.
- Body which will specifically look at implementation of the acts, and monitoring progress on public and private sectors.
- Well done Marie.
- Thank you for having this conference. It was truly a learning experience.
- Thank you for the excellent effort – it broadened the horizons of many here.
- Fastfunction seem very good and efficient.
- Thank you! Well done!
- Suggest uniformity in Provincial policy as one Province may have and others do not. National input will be valuable.
- I wish to thank all concerned for their help, friendship, and kindness, and for making Access 2004 a huge success.
- We need to have a way forward and we need to work on that processing and monitoring.
- Very good international speakers.
- Brilliant – keep it up.
- The judiciary as the third organ of the state should be co-operating, as well as all government service centres.
- This was a great conference. Well run and well done.
- Thank you for your excellent conference.
- I thank all who have made this possible.
- I enjoyed every moment. Looking forward to the next one.
- Thank you for the hard work.
- When problems of access are put forward, there should be a way of coming up with concrete solutions and redressing such problems.
- Concentrate more on controlling and monitoring policies and strategies.
- Measure and evaluate outcomes of the recommendations of Access 2004.
- One point that came up strongly was the way in which organisations all have policies on disabilities which are good on paper, but actually have not been implemented and are still disseminated.
- Perhaps try to get more key government actors in areas of policy implementation and monitoring on the panels.
- More corporate bodies and the private sector to be included and be invited. All departments of government should be invited and should explain strategies and systems in place. Policy to be enforced.
- Getting more heads of government and decision-makers to attend. More people with disabilities to attend.
- Legislation needs to have more teeth to be enforced.

Fastfunction Comments

Most comments praised the efforts of all involved in organising the conference. There were some concerns that if objectives and goals set out during the conference were not followed-up and acted upon, then nothing would come of the conference.

4. Programme Assessment

Conclusions drawn in discussion with Access 2004 advisor Jeremy Opperman of Disability Solutions.

Programme

Plenary Day 1

All in all, the plenary session served its purpose. Every conference requires a plenary session in which the ceremonials can be done, major players and sponsors are introduced, and in which the major issues that the conference will address can be laid out and discussed in general terms. The plenary also sets the tone for the conference. In addition, the Day 1 Plenary for Access 2004 introduced the concept of Appreciative Inquiry in which delegates discussed in small groups their dreams for access, in an effort to introduce and maintain a positive tone throughout the proceedings.

In general, the Day 1 Plenary suffered from bad Chairing. The Chairpersons did not fulfill their primary goals of keeping the Speakers to time, and after starting 15 minutes late, the day never recovered. Chairpersons were almost universally ineffectual in timekeeping. Despite being briefed to keep speakers to time and asked to NOT read Speaker's CVs aloud in their introductions, the Chairpersons did so and were responsible for the plenary running behind schedule all day. They were very careless in their timekeeping, gave overly long introductions and allowed speakers to run significantly long in their presentations.

One Chair let the session run almost 45 minutes over and the Conference Chairperson did not intervene, I believe because she was not even in the room. Unfortunately the Conference Director was also not present until too late and ultimately had to direct the Chairperson to end the session. This decreased the time available for the Appreciative Inquiry closing exercise by 45 minutes and had a severe impact on its effectiveness.

The worst repercussion of the poor timekeeping was that there was very little time in each session for questions from the audience. Delegates were very disappointed by this and many noted it in their assessments.

It may also have been the case that there were too many people involved in the Day 1 Plenary. Introductions from Conference Chairperson to Session Chairperson to Speaker took up a significant amount of time and did not add value. We recognise that the ceremonial involvement of some people is necessary and cannot be avoided in events of this stature, however, there may also have been too many speakers for the time allowed.

Plenary Day 3

The closing plenary session was somewhat disjointed. Changes to the Appreciative Inquiry session resulted in there not being enough sign language interpreters, and the resolution of this situation was difficult and time consuming. This detracted from the Appreciative Inquiry sessions, but the presentations by individual groups were very effective. The video was not a well-thought out element to add to a disability conference, despite Bridget Woods' best intentions to provide an effective running commentary for blind and deaf delegates.

The closing remarks by the international speakers were very concise and to the point – exactly as they were briefed. They ended off the conference on a very good note, and Marie Hendricks' thank-you remarks were a good summary of all of the players involved.

Topics

The topics for the programme developed by the programme committee were broad and covered all of the major issues facing the disability sector today

Format

The combination of plenary and workshop sessions suited the conference. The Appreciative Inquiry sessions required a plenary format and the workshop sessions were the best way to explore more specific issues and encourage plenty of individual participation.

Due to the special nature of this group of delegates, the Day 1 Plenary probably should not have been such a long day. The Day 2 Workshop sessions were also a long day and it is clear from the assessment forms that some of the delegates with disabilities did not cope well with the long days of sitting in cold rooms.

Appreciative Inquiry

AI was meant to start off the conference on a positive note and keep it from deteriorating into just a series of complaints. This it did exceptionally well – even if delegates were only aware of this subconsciously – creating a “productive current” and a “positive spin” that kept the delegates thinking somewhat positively and productively.

It became clear from the delegate assessments that many people did not entirely understand what they were supposed to do – that it was not explained effectively and they did not know what the goal of the exercise was. Some people were also uncomfortable with the small group format, but these seemed to be in the minority. This forced interaction was beneficial from a networking point of view, even if the networking was an accidental byproduct.

Appreciative Inquiry also seemed to have a “knock-on effect” on the Day 2 Workshop Sessions. Delegates were more assertive in the Workshops than would usually be expected, presumably because they had had the opportunity to open up and discuss and make some connections the day before in AI. A more assertive interaction was stimulated conference-wide because delegates were given the opportunity, early on, to find their voices.

Workshop Sessions

These sessions were very much enjoyed by the delegates, as reflected in their assessments. The primary criticism is that they were somewhat “loose”. This is a criticism of the Facilitators, who for the most part were not vigorous enough to control the debates in their sessions. Douglas Chitepo is singled out as the best and most effective Facilitator, who added value to his sessions by running them efficiently and forcefully.

The overall concept of the Workshop Sessions was excellent and the range of topics very broad and representative of the issues facing disability as a whole. The rooms were the appropriate size and the division of topics among rooms based on delegate interest worked out very well

Logistically, there should have been a Facilitator’s assistant in each room, to take notes, write on the white board, identify the topic at each session change, and just generally handle to administration of the changeovers. It turned out to be somewhat more difficult than we expected to get everyone into the rooms, and for the delegates to find their

appropriate room. This was also a function of the lobby being very crowded and difficult to maneuver in.

The panellists were well-prepared covered their topics well

Speakers

Overall, the Speakers were well-prepared and presented well. As is always the case at conferences, some speakers “hijacked” their sessions, but the primary problem was that the Chairs did not keep them to time and allowed this to happen. This meant that each speaker that ran over stole time from the person after them.

Overall, the calibre of the speakers was high, and the issue areas of importance to the disability sector were represented. There were possibly too many speakers on Day 1, but the right amount for the panel discussions in the Workshops Sessions on Day 2.

Most gave very interesting and informative presentations, but there were a few that gave a rote performance without much passion. Surprisingly, the use of PowerPoint presentations was limited, and some speakers used them well – to illuminate some key points with a few slides. Thankfully, not too many presenters read their slides. Most speakers also stayed on the topic and adhered to the brief that they had been given.

They were for most the part fairly diverse, with women well-represented on the programme.

Conclusion

Overall, the programme was very good. It was well-conceptualised from the start and the key issue areas were covered. It also showed progress from the first Access 2002, as some new areas were emphasised and new issues and developments identified. Speakers were good and were in most cases the right person to address the issue they were asked to address, in that they had the knowledge and expertise, or in that they were the recognised expert on the issue in the sector.

5. Exhibition Assessment

The exhibition was a success despite the fact that the complex goals set at the beginning of the organising process were not obtained.

Exhibitors

Fastfunction attracted a wide range of exhibitors to the conference, creating a varied, colourful and interesting exhibition. Other than getting the individual Provincial OSDPs to exhibit at the conference, Fastfunction achieved its goals in terms of number and variety of exhibitors.

Financial

The projected income target for the exhibition was based on all of the Provincial OSDPs taking part as exhibitors. Once planning for the exhibition was underway, it became clear that the OSDPs did not have allowances in their budgets, nor sufficient personnel to drive the initiative. Without the participation of the Provincial OSDPs, the initial income target for the exhibition was unrealistic.

The cost of renting exhibition space at the CTICC is comparatively expensive, and this resulted in the exhibition opportunity being excessively priced for many companies within the disability sector. As a result, Fastfunction was forced to provide discounts to many companies that would otherwise not have been able to exhibit. This reduced the amount of income that the exhibition element of the conference raised, which was intended to help finance other elements of the conference.

Feedback from Exhibitors

Venue

The exhibitors approved of the venue and enjoyed the CTICC experience.

General

The majority of the exhibitors felt that taking part in the exhibition was beneficial to their company. Even where the exhibition did not result in direct business, the networking opportunities were beneficial.

The price to exhibit was not expensive relative to other conferences and exhibitions; however the price was expensive for the disability sector. Future Access conferences must ensure that the price to exhibit is not a barrier to participation.

The exhibitors were happy with the arrangement in which the exhibition hall doubled as the conference lunch and tea venue, and did not see this as a logistical problem. The exhibitors would have liked the exhibition to have been open to the public so as to increase exposure; from an organisational perspective, it would have been difficult to reconcile an open exhibition with the dual-purpose exhibition hall model that was used.

Exhibition Conclusion

The exhibition was a successful venture, but pricing concerns, venue issues and public access must be taken into account in planning the next exhibition

6. Venue Assessment

Cape Town International Convention Centre

General

The CTICC is not well-equipped to handle an event with a significant amount of disabled delegates in attendance. The second wheelchair ramp entrance was installed as an afterthought and as a temporary measure only.

Ballroom East

Ballroom East seemed an adequate venue for a conference this size, but the wheelchair requirements made it almost full to capacity at 325 delegates (attendance at 10h00 on Day 1, Plenary Session). With this amount of delegates in the room, it felt full but not crowded, although some late arrivals found it difficult to find a seat.

The schoolroom seating was necessary and worked well, as did the wide aisles for the wheelchairs.

The screens were effective despite our fears that they would not reach the people in the far opposite corners from them.

The air conditioning problems were a significant problem and were magnified for the persons with disabilities. It was unacceptable that it took so long to get the air conditioning working effectively, and with such noise. This was particularly offensive to blind and sight-impaired delegates. Once on, the air conditioning was very difficult to adjust and the room was then often either too hot or too cold.

Exhibition Hall 1

This Hall felt somewhat industrial but was the only solution since seated-served meals were required. There was no problem at all with space – it was definitely big enough. Combining the tea-lunch area with the exhibition space worked very well and increased the traffic for the exhibitors, as well as brightened up the room for its secondary purpose – lunches and teas.

Facilities

Parking

There were not enough disabled bays in underground parking. Additional bays made available in the Marshalling Yard (deliveries entrance) were a solution, but this conveyed the message that people with disabilities are an afterthought (see comment in Lifts section below). Also, only one lift from the basement parking area is inadequate for disabled parkers that used basement parking, especially at peak hours.

Lifts

There are definitely not enough lifts to accommodate an event with a significant number of delegates in wheelchairs. The Service Lift was not an ideal solution in that it conveyed the symbolic message that people with disabilities are somehow relegated to the service corridors, but it was the only solution available.

Restrooms

There are not enough stalls for persons with disabilities. One disabled stall in each men's and women's restroom was not sufficient. Some delegates had to venture to the far end of the first floor to find disabled stalls available at peak hours.

Service

The service we received on-site from CTICC staff was excellent. The catering staff is surprisingly well-trained, friendly, helpful and quick-thinking. All operations staff were very available and helpful.

Meals were served on-time and very efficiently. There was some wait for tea/coffee at breaks but this was not a significant problem.

Food

Can only comment based on delegate assessments – was possibly too 'fancy' for some tastes. A few delegates did request more African food.

Venue Conclusion – CTICC

The CTICC is a beautiful venue in which to hold a conference and its reputation only adds to the prestige of any event held there. The distance between Ballroom East and Exhibition Hall 1 was a serious drawback to a conference of this nature, however. It really should have been held on one floor, to avoid problems with the lifts and to shorten the amount of time required to get from one venue to the next.

In choosing the venue, this did not seem like a "make or break" issue; in hindsight, requiring the delegates with disabilities to travel between the two levels was a significant issue.

ArabellaSheraton Grand Hotel

Holding the event in two locations, despite their relative proximity, was an added element of unnecessary complexity in an already complex event.

Session Rooms

The rooms were the right size and configuration for the Workshop sessions, and the numbers of delegates attending each session could not have worked out better.

It was also ideal that the smaller, more intimate rooms did not require PA systems to amplify the voices of the speakers.

The directional signage was not sufficient to identify the rooms and topics. Although convenient for the organiser, the screens were not big and bright enough for the delegates and could not be seen from any distance. This also had to do with the fact that the lobby was over-crowded but we should have had more staff directing delegates to the session topics and the appropriate rooms.

The common area used for tea breaks was definitely not big enough to accommodate this group. There was not enough space for people to move around and accessing the tea tables was difficult at times. This was also a function of the number of wheelchairs, but we really did need more space for the tea breaks. Especially since the Workshop sessions were somewhat intense, when delegates came out for breaks, there wasn't really space for them to "clear their heads", or even to move around freely. It was also mentioned that the vibrantly-coloured carpet added to the feeling of over-crowding by increasing the "visual noise" in the area.

Facilities

Lifts

Adequate.

Restrooms

Only one disabled stall on the conference level. Upstairs restroom with disabled facilities was a significant distance from the Session rooms and was not well-signposted or easily accessible.

Service

Needed more servers to attend to this size of group and its special requirements.

Food

Tea and pastries were adequate.

Venue Conclusion – ArabellaSheraton Grand Hotel

Although the breakaway rooms were ideal, the common area used for the tea breaks was not big enough. This venue might also have felt "too fancy" for some Access delegates. The lobby is somewhat overpowering and the conference areas more decorative and less neutral than the CTICC.

It was not ideal to have the Day 2 workshops in a separate venue, and although the rooms were good, the common areas were not suitable.

7. Sponsorship Assessment

Fastfunction set a sponsorship target of R250,000.00 to be raised for Access 2004. Having read the Access 2002 report, we noted the difficulty that Omega had experienced in obtaining sponsorship, and realised that it was going to be a difficult task. With the costs associated with holding Access 2004 at the Cape Town International Convention Centre, it was important that the sponsorship target was reached, allowing the conference fees to remain “reasonable”. With this in mind, we approached a sponsorship broker, The Boom Room, to assist in obtaining the sponsorship target.

Sponsorship Package

The nature of Access 2004 made it feasible for us to approach both the Marketing department and the department dealing with Corporate Social Responsibility issues at the targeted companies. A Sponsorship Document was developed allowing for Platinum, Gold and Bronze categories (depending on the value of the sponsorship), and also breaking the conference into “saleable” units (sponsorship of delegate bags, lunches, teas, sign interpreters, etc).

Approach to Companies

Approaching companies “cold” is generally far less successful than if one has some contact within the targeted company or if one knows someone in the targeted company that is sympathetic to the subject matter of the conference. Where possible, we approached the companies through existing contacts, or approached people in the targeted companies that had some prior association with Access or the issues at hand.

It makes a big difference if one is able to approach a company at the highest level. That is, instead of approaching the marketing department directly, one should try to obtain the support of a senior executive or decision-maker who can then pass the sponsorship document onto the appropriate department or person.

Approach to Access 2002 Sponsors

The sponsors from Access 2002 were all contacted and received the sponsorship proposals. None of the Access 2002 sponsors could be persuaded to sponsor the 2004 event. The primary reason expressed by all the previous sponsors was that they did not have the budget to get involved. It was not clear if they were dissatisfied with their return on investment from Access 2002.

Service Providers within the Disability Sector

The businesses catering to the Disability Sector (other than pharmaceutical companies) are generally small and do not have the marketing budgets to sponsor an event of this magnitude. Despite this, Fastfunction believed that an approach would be useful due to their connection to the conference subject matter and the exposure that they could gain. Unfortunately, we were not successful in convincing any of them to participate as sponsors of the conference, although many attended as exhibitors and/or delegates.

Marie Hendricks supplied Fastfunction with a list of contacts within pharmaceutical companies, but none of them were interested in sponsoring the conference.

Programme Committee Contacts'

Fastfunction requested that the Programme Committee supply us with any contacts within large South African corporates that might be sympathetic to the disability cause. We received limited input in this regard (10 contacts), but we did make an approach, with one (SARS) agreeing to sponsor the conference.

'Cold Calling'

Fastfunction identified a number of large South African corporates that would benefit from being associated with the conference and that would have sufficient budgets to sponsor Access 2004, and contacted their appropriate departments. Unfortunately the targeted companies are inundated with sponsorship requests and unless one is able to obtain support from top level decision-makers, it proved very difficult to secure sponsorship in this manner.

Secured Sponsors

After a concerted sponsorship drive, Fastfunction secured sponsorship from the following:

Services SETA	R 150 000
South African Revenue Service	R 50 000
<u>National OSDP</u>	<u>R 56 140</u>
Total	R 256 140

Fastfunction also secured Kfm radio as Media Sponsor, who provided limited coverage before the conference and very good news coverage during the event, as well as broadcasting from the conference.

Sponsorship Conclusion

The sponsorship target was attained, but it is felt that more could have been achieved from the private sector considering the importance of the issues at hand, and the benefits to companies seen to be associated with the causes of persons with disability.

The sponsorship drive would have benefited greatly from the participation of a recognisable Conference Trustee from one of South Africa's big corporates. A Raymond Ackerman, for example, that could advise the sponsorship committee but also 'pull strings' and open doors using his personality and influence. It is felt that once one big name corporate sponsor is on board, others are more willing to get involved. The involvement of a big business personality, backed by a more powerful and dynamic sponsorship committee, will ensure a higher return on sponsorship proposals for the next Access.

Our belief that companies would sponsor from their Corporate Social Responsibility budget was misguided. It seems possible that CSR departments are over-run with requests of this nature, and do not have the budgets expected.

Where corporate contacts did exist, the sponsorship drive would have benefited greatly from more face-to-face visits with critical people. In-office visits are necessary to make the personal connection, as well as to add weight and to convince the targeted company that the sponsorship proposal is serious.

8. Media Assessment

The amount of media attention generated around the conference was disappointing and it was the one area of the conference that did not meet our high expectations. Although Fastfunction takes ultimate responsibility for this, there were factors out of our control that played a major part in the lack of media attention generated.

The following documentation of the problems is included so that all parties are able to learn from the mistakes and ensure that they are not made again.

Pre-Conference Marketing

With a limited budget, the most efficient way to obtain credible publicity is through editorial; however this requires providing the press with newsworthy stories and/or interesting and different angles on previously reported stories. Not being involved in the disability sector, Fastfunction relied on persons within the sector to provide these stories; however our calls for interesting stories and different angles were, on the whole, unsuccessful.

Fastfunction also envisaged the Office of the Premier being more proactive in providing information that promoted local government's role in improving the lives of persons with disabilities. In actuality, getting approved information from the Office of the Premier proved to be very difficult. That said, Fastfunction also underestimated the time required and difficulty involved in getting press releases from the Office of the Premier and in hindsight, should have organised this further in advance.

Reporting on the Conference

It was always Fastfunction's impression that we would be able to generate significant news coverage of an event as newsworthy as Access 2004 without much difficulty. Fastfunction made contact with the national news media players such as SABC TV, SAFM and eTV many times over the six months leading up to the conference, informing them of the conference and of International Day for Disabled Persons. It turned out to be very difficult to get a commitment from any of them to cover the event. In their defense, they must receive hundreds of similar requests and we decided that we would use the services of a PR agency with existing relationships within the media.

Prior to GCIS offering to assist, Fastfunction was about to appoint Marcus Brewster Publicity to ensure that the desired press attended and reported on the conference. GCIS appeared to offer the same service as a PR agency would, promising to contact all the relevant reporters and editors in radio, print and television (local and national), and ensure that they reported on the conference.

Unfortunately, GCIS delivered on none of their promises, which resulted in the conference being badly covered by the media. The only coverage of the event was the coverage that Fastfunction arranged.

For future events, Fastfunction would suggest that GCIS have a role to play, but they must complement the organiser's media plan and not be responsible for it.

The following details Fastfunction's media approach for Access 2004:

Print Media

Independent Newspapers

Once being awarded the Access 2004 contract, Fastfunction approached Independent Newspapers to determine how we could best use the print media to market the conference and create general awareness around disability issues. The following alternatives were available:

Media Partner

One of the most effective means of generating publicity is to partner with a newspaper for an event. Essentially this means that for every rand the conference spends on advertising and publicity, the newspaper will match it, resulting in the conference getting all the publicity at 50% of the actual price. Even with Access 2004's limited marketing budget, there was not enough money to do this effectively and so it was eliminated as an option.

Educational Chart

An Educational Chart can be an effective way of creating awareness as the conference would control the content. These charts are financed by sponsors and it is the responsibility of the newspaper to source sufficient sponsors to run the chart. Fastfunction attempted to run an Educational Chart, however Independent Newspapers' sponsor brokers were not able to obtain sufficient sponsorship to run it.

Commercial Feature (used this element)

A Commercial Feature allows the conference to control the content and offset some of the price with advertisements. Fastfunction decided to use a commercial feature in the *Weekend Argus* to communicate information on the conference. The *Weekend Argus* has a large readership and it is published on both Saturday and Sunday, and the Commercial Feature runs both days (this means that the Commercial Feature has two days' of exposure for the price of one day).

Editorial

Editorial is obviously free and is a very effective way to communicate information to the general public. However, to obtain editorial, one needs to supply the journalists with potential interesting stories and fresh angles. Not working in the disability sector and not being regularly exposed to potential stories and angles made it difficult for us to identify stories, and our requests to people within the sector to supply stories did not receive any positive responses.

Die Burger (used this element)

The paper provides a service whereby it will customise a newspaper "wrapper" to highlight an event. A reporter and a photographer covered the first day and a half of the conference, gathering material for the special feature. Then on the last day of the conference, the newspapers are delivered to the conference for the delegates. While not a means of reporting on the event to the general public, it was an excellent technique to provide the delegates with information and a nice added element of the delegate packs.

Radio

Kfm – Radio Sponsor (used this element)

With Kfm the biggest local radio station in the Western Cape, it was natural that they would be an ideal media partner, to provide publicity prior to the event and report on it while in progress. Despite being a popular music radio station, Kfm provided excellent coverage and reporting of Access 2004 during its three days. Other than their logo inclusion on the Access 2004 marketing material, this publicity was free.

SAFM

Fastfunction sent several emails soliciting support for the conference from SAFM and other content-driven radio stations, and then followed these up with telephone calls. Despite not getting any direct commitment from them, there was a strong emphasis on disability in their content during the week of the conference.

Coverage of which we are aware: “Law Talk” discussed the rights of persons with disabilities on Tuesday, 30 November; Ari Seirlis was interviewed Wednesday, 1 December; and a whole discussion on disability took place on Thursday, 3 December, in which Leslie Swartz participated. In all of these programmes, mention was made of Access 2004. Although Fastfunction was not directly responsible for organising these slots, we certainly made SAFM aware of the conference and of International Day of Disabled Persons.

Community Radio Stations

Government Communication and Information Systems (GCIS) was to approach the Community Radios Stations and encourage them to attend and report on the conference as these stations have a very large listenership in rural areas. Unfortunately GCIS did not come through on this undertaking.

Television

Morning Live

Fastfunction sent several emails to Vuyo Mbuli and to the producers of Morning Live inviting them to do an “outside broadcast” from the conference. These were followed up with telephone calls, however a positive answer was never received.

3Talk

Fastfunction also approached 3Talk to do a talk show on disability issues and focus on Access 2004; however they were unavailable during the time period of the conference and only operate out of Johannesburg.

News

Fastfunction contacted the various stations’ news editors but were informed that it was more appropriate to contact them closer to the conference with more detail, and that only then could they decide whether it was a sufficiently newsworthy event to cover. Leading up to the conference, it was GCIS’s responsibility to remind the national news outlets of the conference, however Fastfunction has serious doubts as to whether this was done.

Media Conclusion

For future conferences, if significant publicity leading up to and during the event is desired, more resources and more of a budget must be allocated. It is recommended that the services of a PR agency be used, as they will have the existing contacts within the media to provide advice and manage the publicity process. This should be done in conjunction with the PCO and GCIS if necessary.

9. Gala Dinner Assessment

The Access 2004 Gala Dinner was intended to showcase the President's support for disability; celebrate Ten Years of Democracy and progress on disability in terms of human rights; and introduce an element of glamour to the conference programme. It certainly succeeded on all those counts.

The major change that was somewhat of an organiser's "nightmare" turned out to be beneficial in many ways. When it was learned that Deputy President Zuma's schedule required that the Gala Dinner be shifted from the Thursday to the Wednesday, the logistics of rearranging the schedule were daunting, but it turned out to make sense in the overall programme of events. With the event on the Wednesday evening, in the middle of the conference, more delegates could attend, and the gap between the end of the Day 3 Plenary session and the Gala Dinner was eliminated.

The participation of the Deputy President was a major coup and significantly raised the profile of the evening, the conference, and the Western Cape disability sector as a whole. In addition to the Deputy President, the music and dancing presented by performers with disabilities made the whole evening very special.

The programme of events for the Gala evening was ambitious to start with and made even more complex by the participation of the Deputy President. In hindsight, it would have made sense to have a simpler programme of events, considering the effort required to present the Deputy President. One dance performance and letting the band start later would have simplified things somewhat. The Deputy President's protocol requirements, combined with the CTICC's unique lighting and sound systems, made the entertainment element of the Gala Dinner very difficult. We hope that in the end it appeared flawless to those in attendance, but "behind the scenes" we were working very hard.

The food and service provided by the CTICC staff was excellent as it had been throughout. The room itself looked beautiful and shifting the room from the conferencing set-up made a big difference. The decorations were also very effective in combination with the lighting and music.

From an organiser's point of view, we underestimated the amount of time and work the protocol issues would take. The seating arrangements and the timing and the programme of events were very complex tasks to which we should have devoted more time.

Gala Dinner Conclusion

Overall the Gala Dinner was a success and the delegates really seemed to enjoy the evening. A simpler programme of events and more attention to the protocol requirements would be recommended for the next Access conference Gala Dinner.

8. Conclusion

Overall, Access 2004 was an excellent conference, with its fair share of difficulties, but successful in the sense that it significantly expanded and improved upon its predecessor, Access 2002 in scope and profile.

Numbers increased, but not dramatically, and the terms of registration had changed somewhat, so large numbers of the public were not expected to be able to afford the delegate fees.

The move to National was somewhat successful, although without the broader participation of the other Provincial OSDPs, and until the conference is hosted by the National OSDP, the conference will have a Western Cape bias. It seems only in Johannesburg can one host a “national conference” without being accused of Provincial bias!

The introduction of the Appreciative Inquiry element was a brave move, and certainly added a level of interaction not seen at typical conferences. From an organiser’s perspective it was a very complex element to incorporate into an already complex event, so we were likely not aware of the powerful impact that the exercises had on the delegates. Overall, Appreciative Inquiry was very beneficial to the whole atmosphere and allowed the creation of some unique outcomes, on a conference level and on a personal level.

In the end, Access 2004 was an uplifting event for all concerned and succeeded in sensitising many new people to the issues facing disability. The holding of a disability conference with the extra logistical arrangements that needed to be taken into consideration was never going to be easy or free of mishaps. It was also a spectacular learning experience for everyone involved, not least the Fastfunction team.

We are exceedingly proud to have been associated with the event and we hope to have the opportunity to be involved with future Access conferences.