



ATLAS INSTITUTE FOR  
VETERANS AND FAMILIES

INSTITUT ATLAS POUR LES  
VÉTÉRANS ET LEUR FAMILLE

# ATLAS INSTITUTE FOR VETERANS AND FAMILIES

## Suggestions for developing a successful presentation

### Presentation guidelines

We offer the following guidelines to help maximize the accessibility and usability of the information you will present. The guidance is relevant to those presenting via PowerPoint, script or a combination of the two.

#### Some points to consider when developing your presentation



**Put any statistics into context.** Always cite your sources. Limit each bullet to one statistic to help people digest the information more easily.



End your presentation with **clear and attainable calls to action**. Ask yourself: 'What can people listening to this presentation do to push this field forward?'



Use **plain language**. Opt for **simple words** and **shorter sentences**. Avoid jargon and acronyms. Ask yourself: 'Would someone from outside my field understand my point(s)?'



**Be concise.** Limit the number of words for your slides and script. Aim for **2-3 bullet points per slide, ~15 words per bullet**. Split into two slides if you have more than three points. A good rule of thumb is **one slide per minute of speech**.



**Use trauma-informed and person-first language.** For example, instead of saying 'MST survivor', say 'person impacted by MST'.

### ***Open with a land acknowledgement***

We encourage you to acknowledge the land from which you are presenting. You can use the following resources to find an appropriate land acknowledgement: [resource 1](#), [resource 2](#)

### ***Present with your audience and objectives in mind***

Develop content with the event's objective, target audience and key messages in mind. Consider these questions and aim to answer them as concisely as possible through your presentation:

- What information is likely going to benefit the target audience?
- What is the applicability of the information to the target audience?
- Am I using language in my presentation that relates to the target audience?

**Tip:** Addressing the stigma surrounding mental health starts with the language we use. To help you use appropriate language in your presentation, refer to the [Language Matters](#) tip sheet created by the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

### ***Reinforce your key messages***

Ensure your audience knows what you will be talking about by reinforcing your key messages throughout your presentation. Consider following this structure: Tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, and tell them what you told them.

### ***Tell a story and layer information***

Organize your information in a way that tells a compelling story and drives home your key messages. Layer information as you go, allowing your audience to build their understanding of the topic. Make information as engaging as possible, framing ideas in relation to people whenever possible.

### ***End your presentation with clear and actionable calls to action***

Make sure your audience walks away with a clear idea on what they can do going forward. Ask yourself: In their current role and power, what should and can this audience do to move this work forward? Include clear calls to action at the end of your presentation. If this event has multiple audience groups, you may wish to present group-specific calls to action.

### ***Put statistics into context***

Contextualize the scope and applicability of the statistics you use. Highlight limitations of the statistics, whenever possible. Give your audience the time to process the statistic. Use only one statistic per sentence or bullet point.

### ***Engage your audience using rhetorical or direct questions***

Ask rhetorical and direct questions to encourage your audience to reflect on their own experience, perspectives, assumptions, understanding and/or actions.

## **PowerPoint and accessibility guidelines**

### ***Use plain language in your script and PowerPoint slides***

Write your slide and/or script content using plain language and short sentences. Review each slide and/or paragraph, asking yourself the following questions: Do I use any large or complex words that can be replaced with simpler words? Do I use any jargon or acronyms that can be replaced or explained?

### ***Be concise: Limit the number of words you use in your script and PowerPoint slides***

- Limit the text for each slide. People should be listening to the presentation, not reading the slides.
- All slides should have a unique, meaningful slide title. If multiple slides in a row have the same title, add a number at the end to distinguish them.

- If you have too many bullet points and words on your slides, your audience will be distracted and not hear what you say. For each slide, articulate your most important two to three points using no more than four bullet points:
  - **Each bullet point should be no longer than 15 words.**
  - **Each slide should have no more than 60 words.**
  - If there are more than three key points to make per slide, divide your slide into two slides.
  - Only include specifics and details in your script.

### ***Script guidance***

Keep your sentences short, about 10–20 words per sentence. Strive for clarity and directness, avoiding the use of vague and filler words.

**Take your time and pause for effect when delivering your presentation. Do not read information from your slides or script. Practise your presentation to ensure appropriate timing.**

### ***PowerPoint accessibility and design***

- Feel free to use your organization's branding and templating.
- Don't underline anything for emphasis. The only thing that should be underlined is a URL or email address.
- Minimize the use of italics.
- Label charts and figures clearly and don't rely on colour alone to convey meaning. For example, don't say "The item in red is the most important."
- Ensure all text is in a large enough size to read easily and surrounded by sufficient white space.
  - **Minimum** font size for main copy and bullets: 18pt
  - Preferred font size for main copy and bullets: 24pt
  - Preferred font size for headers or titles: 36–44pt
- Use a simple, standard and readable font (sans serif fonts are best) in at least an 18pt font size.
  - Verdana, Arial and Calibri are the top choices for font type. Atlas uses Franklin Gothic Book.
- Avoid using cursive fonts.
- Avoid using all caps.
- Dark backgrounds should have light text and bright accent colours. Light backgrounds should have dark text and bold accent colours. This will ensure the audience can read the text and see the graphs or shapes on each slide.
- Use the list buttons to create properly formatted numbered or bulleted lists. Avoid creating manual lists using "\*" or "-" in place of bullets. Avoid fast transitions or anything flashing/blinking.