

# How To Work With COGA

And help COGA work better with you

Permission to record?

# Speaker introductions



**Jennie Delisi, MA, CPWA**

Accessibility analyst  
in Minnesota's  
Office of Accessibility



**John Kirkwood**

Digital inclusion  
and enterprise  
accessibility expert



**Lisa Seeman-Horwitz**

COGA Task Force co-  
facilitator &  
Athena ICT co-founder

# What is COGA?

Our full name:

Cognitive and Learning Disabilities Accessibility Task Force (COGA)

Our goal:

Improve Web accessibility for  
people with cognitive and learning disabilities

# What is COGA (Continued)

Examples of conditions covered:

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Dyslexia
- Dyscalculia
- Intellectual disabilities
- Age-related memory loss
- Neurodiversity
- Mental health impairments

Examples of skills affected:

- Attention
- Focus
- Memory
- Learning
- Reading
- Math
- Writing
- Communication

# Today's Session Goals

Best practices for working with COGA:

- Getting feedback from COGA on your specification
- Helping people with cognitive disabilities join your groups

We will answer some questions about working with COGA:

- Why
- When
- How

# Have questions during this session?

- You can submit your questions in IRC Chat  
(channel name to be added into Zoom chat)
- Questions will be answered at the end of the slides

# Why your team should work more with COGA

You are making a specification for **everyone**.

We can help you incorporate cognitive design thinking.

- Include use cases
- Include user needs
- Optimize processes
- Get user feedback on specification



# When to start meeting with COGA

- Early!
- User needs stage
- Review stage

See [Making Content for People with Cognitive and Learning Disabilities:](#)

[User Needs](#)

[https://www.w3.org/TR/coga-usable/#user\\_needs](https://www.w3.org/TR/coga-usable/#user_needs)

# How to work with COGA session

The rest of this deck covers common challenges and how to address them, including:

- Managing many information streams
- Email etiquette
- Meeting etiquette
- Recognizing the difference between being accessible and being inclusive

# Removing common barriers to collaboration

- Need: Persistent place to follow along
  - Lacking “one source of truth”
- Need: Way to follow threads from multiple sources
  - Each conversation place doesn't necessarily reference the others
  - Headings, labels, titles and subjects do not summarize the content
- Need: To be fully able to participate
  - Inability to use one or more of the methods = you are behind
  - Some may be left out of the conversation and decisions

# Keeping track of many kinds of interactions

## Often challenging:

- IRC + meeting interface + documents shared during meeting
- Multiple information sources (Wikis, Git, Google docs, etc)
- Email (full groups, subgroups, contact details, surveys)
- Github docs

## Usually preferred:

- Send agendas and documents to review before meetings
- Create information hub with all links and instructions
- Add task to [COGA's action requests page](#) and CC COGA facilitators (and task leader) on all emails

# Using Github

Often challenging:

- Finding Github comments is challenging for many people
- Involves a lot of jargon and steps—threads are hard to follow
- Too many Github alerts
  - Many don't seem necessary
  - Some get overlooked

Usually preferred:

- Instead of using Github:
  - COGA prefers Google docs and emails
- If your team prefers Github:
  - Ask COGA which team member to tag so they can pass notifications on in an easier-to-use form

# Remembering acronyms and processes

## Often challenging:

- AG, APA, CFC, RGTF, SAUR, TPAC, UTC, Issue 1875b etc
- IRC (learning each channel code, shorthand like q+, and other rules)
- Notes, Public Working Drafts, Recommendations, Parent Groups
- Invited Expert vs Member

## Usually preferred:

- Explain acronyms in agendas
- Share explanatory links that can be reviewed prior to meetings or votes

# Tracking tasks, responsibilities, dates

## Often challenging:

- Having trouble locating a task and related materials
- Making sense of how documents are structured

## Usually preferred:

- Provide digital “wayfinding”
  - Where are things kept?
  - How easy is it to find what you need?
- Make sure your task is on [COGA’s action requests page](#) and the dates are correct

# Using good email etiquette

Often challenging:

- When email threads change topics but don't change subject line
- Expecting people to read and remember long threads or emails
- Subject lines that are not a short summary of the email

Usually preferred:

- Use clear, unique subject lines
- Put important information first
- Provide short summary
- Use formatting to:
  - Identify section headings
  - List separate thoughts



# Scheduling a time to meet

Often challenging:

- It can be very difficult to follow lengthy email threads about scheduling a meeting

Usually preferred:

- Try to schedule a meeting:
  - During a call
  - Or with spreadsheets, like [COGA + Silver Meeting Times](#)
- Send calendar invites and use calendar API to send reminders

# Sending agendas in advance

## Often challenging:

- Not enough time or information for attendees to help prepare for meetings
- Meetings that get stuck on one topic or that move on too quickly

## Usually preferred:

- Aim to send agenda at least a day before a meeting
- Include time boxes on agendas
  - Helps set expectations about complexity/importance
- Be flexible if more time is needed

# Following along during meetings

## Often challenging:

- Many information streams during meetings (audio, visual, text chat)
- Hard for some people to keep up and to organize their thoughts
- Too many modes can contribute to cognitive fatigue

## Usually preferred:

- Support multiple modes, but streamline to avoid overwhelm
- Provide way to add a thought so it's not forgotten while waiting to speak
- Ask if people prefer shared screen or to follow on their own
- Read out key items

# Encouraging active participation in meetings

## Often challenging:

- Some people are uncomfortable being called on by name
- Others may prefer to be called on by name to help them know when you would like their feedback
- Some members may be less active at times due to mental health

## Usually preferred:

- Ask for feedback
  - “Is this working for you?”
  - “What else might you need?”
- Be flexible about communication styles—some prefer speaking, some prefer typing into chat
- Ask if more time is needed

# Providing summaries

Often challenging:

- Expecting people to:
  - Remember details from previous meetings
  - Read and remember long email threads

Usually preferred:

- Provide summaries before and during meetings
- Make sure summaries include:
  - Context:  
Why is this being discussed?
  - Recent actions/results
  - Expectations for today

# Providing feedback and achieving consensus

Often challenging:

- Some people have trouble providing feedback in large group setting
- Consensus process can be confusing/hard to participate in
- Not always clear what vote is about
- Issues are often referred to just by their issue number

Usually preferred:

- Give time to review before meeting
- Allow asynchronous responses after a meeting
- Issues are fully described
  - Clear heading and summary
  - No unexplained jargon

# Mentoring new members

Often challenging:

- Gaining comfort within a new group
- Not knowing:
  - Who to ask questions
  - What accommodations are available
  - How to get feedback

Usually preferred:

- Develop relationships via smaller-group conversations
- Provide opportunities to interact with cameras on or off
- Onboard new members and invite them to ask questions

# Reduce cognitive fatigue

Often challenging:

- Long meetings can be a barrier for some people to participate

Usually preferred:

- Keep meetings/forms as short as possible
- If long meetings are required, build in break time
- Help people know when the topic changes



# Alerting attendees about possible triggers

## Examples of types of triggers:

- Emotional triggers
- Memory triggers
- Symptom triggers

## Best practices:

- Use agendas to alert attendees about potential triggers
- During meeting, alert attendees just before the potential trigger
- Time-box the discussion to help people plan when to leave and return, if needed

# Developing and sharing meeting etiquette

When teams are meeting with COGA for the first time:

- Discuss meeting etiquette before the first meeting
- Include meeting-etiquette details in meeting invite

# Reviewing meeting etiquette

- At beginning of meetings when:
  - New group forms
  - New members join
  - Changes are made to the meeting etiquette
- Privately or as a group when people forget

# Discussion Time

More questions that don't get answered today?

Please reach out to the COGA chairs:

- Lisa Seeman: [lisa.seeman@zoho.com](mailto:lisa.seeman@zoho.com)
- Rain Michaels: [rainb@google.com](mailto:rainb@google.com)