

Accessible Futures Summit

Evaluation Feedback Summary

25 March 2026, Wellington

Evaluation forms were completed by 23 participants (a 24th submission contained only a suggestion and has been noted separately in the impact section). Response rates varied considerably across questions, and many fields were left blank. Where numbers are given, they reflect those who responded to that particular question — a blank response should not be interpreted as a negative view.

Overall Experience

The mood of responses was overwhelmingly positive, with 19 of the 23 respondents describing their experience in unambiguously positive terms — using descriptors including welcoming, inspiring, informative, thought-provoking, collegial, engaging, enlightening, and important. Two respondents were positive about the day but noted it was long or tiring. There were two comments — 'same' and 'familiar' — which did not provide further context but may reflect a feeling that the content was covering familiar ground for long-term advocates. 2 respondents added warm sign-offs at the end of their forms, including 'Fantastic event. Thank you!' and 'Thank you so much for a wonderful day'.

Venue

22 of 23 respondents responded positively or made positive comments about the venue, with the views and atmosphere particularly noted — one describing it as "the beautiful venue added to the importance and value of the event" and another saying they "loved the view and the vibe."

Practical observations included:

- **Temperature** — 3 comments about temperature: 2 respondents found the room too cold and 1 found it too warm
- **Size** — 2 respondents felt the room was a little small or crowded for the number of people
- **Access issues** — 1 respondent noted significant barriers including problems with the lift, having to navigate through the kitchen and past rubbish bins, and difficulty with the hot water dispenser. Another noted the building was "a bit of a maze with lifts" and limited grass outside for a guide dog. These are important notes given the Summit's focus.

Cultural Respect

Of the 19 who responded to this question, all indicated they felt culturally respected. Specific positive comments included appreciation for the use of te reo Māori and bicultural framing. 1 respondent offered a more nuanced view, noting they would have appreciated a stronger whānau ora / kaupapa Māori lens running in parallel,

that the event felt light on tangata whaikaha Māori issues, and calling for more evidence and data in this area.

Accessibility Supports

13 respondents responded positively to this question. Specific comments included appreciation for captions (2 respondents), NZSL interpreters (1 respondent), the microphone (1 respondent), and the quiet room (2 respondents). One respondent suggested fidget tools would have been a good addition.

Feeling Valued and Heard

22 respondents answered positively about feeling valued and 21 about feeling heard. Respondents highlighted the value of the collaborative format and group discussions (4 respondents), the diverse range of perspectives including lived experience (2 respondents), and the importance of having disabled voices in the room (2 respondents). The MC was specifically praised by 2 respondents — 1 highlighting her role in setting the tone and enthusiasm, and 1 noting feeling valued by the MC and the opportunity to move advocacy forward as a collective. One respondent noted they didn't feel they had much to add personally, but valued the opportunity to listen and learn.

Highlights

Themes mentioned most frequently as highlights:

- **Networking and connecting with people** — 7 respondents highlighted the value of meeting like-minded people, making new connections, and the sense of community
- **Group discussions** — 6 respondents valued the interactive, collaborative format and table conversations
- **Data, research and reports** — 5 respondents appreciated having evidence and insights surfaced
- **Disability-led perspectives and governance** — 5 respondents highlighted this as a theme, including disability leadership and ceding power, governance of disabled people across sectors, and disability-led research (not just participation), with two of these specifically naming Robbie Francis Watene's challenge around the latter

Specific content themes noted included: emotional and administrative burden (2 respondents, with one memorably describing the need for a “PhD in bureaucracy”), housing (1 respondent), long-term small winnable goals (1 respondent), and the framing of accessibility as active rather than passive (1 respondent).

Anything Difficult to Follow or Not Relevant?

11 of the 18 who responded said nothing was irrelevant or hard to follow. Where issues were noted:

- Noise levels in the room at times made it hard to hear (1 respondent)
- 1 table discussion felt flat and repetitive of the panel discussion
- 1 respondent noted there could be more clarity on the purpose of the event and the intended audience
- 1 respondent noted cross-purposes between different approaches or kaupapa in engaging wider community

Actions Participants Plan to Take

Respondents were motivated and specific. Actions included:

- Meeting with MPs to discuss disability access in the lead-up to elections
- Championing disability in governance settings
- Advocating in their workplace
- Sharing information about accessibility and disability issues more broadly
- Putting every policy through a disability lens
- Following up with their employer about implementing small changes
- Continuing mahi in the disability sector
- Being "annoying about evidence for what works"

All 16 of those who answered the "stay involved" question answered yes or that they were already involved..

Suggestions for Future Events

Content and voices

- **More political decision-makers in the room** — the strongest single theme, raised by 6 respondents, who variously asked for political leaders, ministers, and MPs to join and hear these stories and perspectives directly
- 1 participant suggested Pacific-specific fono alongside the broader kōrero
- 1 participant asked for more evidence and data around whaikaha Māori issues
- 1 participant suggested more opportunities to hear from key speakers and panellists in depth, including some lecture-style presentations
- 1 participant suggested recording or videoing discussions to share with politicians and policy makers
- 1 participant suggested encouraging table rotation to support broader networking
- 2 participants suggested strong consensus-building and clear next steps
- 1 participant simply asked for more events like this
- A subtle tension was present across three responses: one calling for the event to be more led and organised by disabled people, one suggesting more external adjacent voices (allies) would be beneficial, and one noting cross-purposes between different approaches or kaupapa in engaging the wider

community. These responses may reflect genuine ongoing debate within the sector about the balance between disability-led spaces and broader coalition-building.

Making More Impact From This Event

- 1 participant (via Access Matters Aotearoa) is coordinating questions for parliamentarians that whānau and friends can ask those standing at the election — a practical and immediately actionable idea that directly extends the day's energy into the political arena
- 1 participant suggested a co-developed follow-up action plan with attendees to get the insights out of the room and drive change

Summary Observations

As outlined by Diane Rogers in an email of 4 February 2026, the Summit was not intended to identify or prioritise a new set of national policy asks on the day, nor to direct agency commitments. Its primary purposes were to: “honour and surface the breadth of insights from the Kōrero for Change series; build shared understanding and strengthen relationships across sectors; and identify realistic areas of collaboration that can lead to tangible action following the Summit.”

From the Board's perspective, the Summit also needed to: create a shared sense of urgency; consolidate credibility across sectors; and lead to a small number of tangible next steps that can be progressed after the event, rather than attempting to resolve everything in the room.

On the whole, the first two purposes were met. Participants widely appreciated the breadth and variety of content surfaced, and relationship-building was among the most consistently named highlights. A sense of urgency was palpable across responses, and the range of sectors represented contributed to cross-sector credibility. The third purpose — identifying realistic areas for collaboration — is ongoing. While themes emerged from the day, these need to be crystallised, reinforced, and shared. In some respects the sequencing was challenging — it could have been helpful for participants to have had the Kōrero for Change: Insights and Actions report in hand before the Summit, so the day could function clearly as a next step. A summary document drawing on the post-it notes and table discussions from the day (and transcripts of talks where available) will be an important follow-up to pull together the key messages and themes as the basis for progressing next steps. The suggestion to develop questions that whānau and friends can put to those standing for election stands out as a practical and timely avenue for the day's energy to translate directly into action.

The accessibility feedback is worth noting carefully: even at an event designed around accessibility, there were some barriers experienced (lift access through kitchen route, hot water dispenser, noise). This is useful honest data for future planning.

Beyond the numbers, the tone of responses was striking — participants found the day welcoming, informative, inspiring and engaging, with warm words sitting

alongside concrete personal commitments. The overall picture is of a room that found the day a positive and worthwhile opportunity.