



Halifax Public Libraries
**Accessibility
Plan**
2025





Introduction & Vision

Public libraries are places for everyone – they encourage participation, facilitate connections, and provide information to all. Equality and open access are fundamental to public libraries, and Halifax Public Libraries embraces the responsibility that comes with this. We know that to be a welcoming and inviting place for everyone, it is essential that we remove barriers and work towards true inclusivity – helping build strong and thriving communities.

Open access to wide ranging information and knowledge, along with sharing of stories is at the heart of libraries. To meet

the needs of everyone, we will continue to explore ways to improve equitable access to library materials and services. We will continue to work with partners to ensure that everyone is included and reflected in their public library – whether it is in our hiring practices, space design, or program and material offerings. The Library is for everyone.

We know that our community is at its best when we ensure that everyone has the opportunity to fully participate in our society, working together for a more inclusive future.



Guiding Principles

Human Rights

We recognize that barriers may prevent some community members from fully participating in society. These barriers can be physical (such as staircases), in our attitudes (such as having certain beliefs about people with disabilities), and more. We believe accessibility is a fundamental human right and will show that in our library service.

Inclusion

We are committed to ensuring public libraries are places where everyone is welcome to learn, socialize, and work. All community members and employees are treated with the same respect and dignity.

Creativity & Flexibility

We are committed to being creative, forward thinking, open to change, and flexible in our approach to becoming accessible.

Lived Experience

We are committed to understanding and working with the people and communities we serve and learning from their unique experiences.

Community Led

We are committed to connecting with our communities, as well as consulting and working with them to understand their needs.

Diversity

We recognize the full range of disabilities, and also understand that a person's identity and life circumstances and experiences can overlap with their disability to create barriers that keep them from participating in society. We will reflect this understanding in our policies, programs, and services.

Care & Compassion

We are committed to seeing the potential and value in every individual during each interaction, treating individuals with empathy, and understanding people have unique and specific needs.

Communication

We are committed to producing content that is easily understood.



Outcomes and Priorities

We will work to build a more inclusive Nova Scotia and Library.

Provide equitable access to all services and collections

We will:

- train our staff to be aware of the various needs of all community members;
- offer accessible community programs;
- find creative ways to encourage participation and use of library services, programs, and spaces;
- offer access to information, knowledge and enjoyment in a variety of formats;
- provide volunteer opportunities that are accessible to all;
- purchase and make available content that is created by and for the community.

Be an employer of choice for everyone

We will:

- provide a barrier free and inclusive recruitment and orientation process;

- provide education, resources, and tools to managers and supervisors to help create an inclusive workplace culture;
- provide the tools and information staff need to easily access supports and services required to be successful and grow in their career;
- offer training with various approaches and formats.

Communicate and provide a digital environment that is fully accessible

We will:

- be a leading provider of accessible information and technology services;
- provide assistive software and hardware so everyone has access to technology and internet;
- communicate in various ways that take into consideration how community members access information;
- create easy-to-navigate and fully accessible online environments.



Provide spaces that are welcoming and enjoyed by all

We will:

- design and renovate spaces that meet the needs of everyone;
- create spaces that are easy to use and navigate;
- create opportunities for individuals to have control over their environment.

Incorporate the rights of people with disabilities in all policies and planning

We will:

- review all current policies and procedures to identify and remove barriers;
- ensure all new policies and procedures are developed with full consideration of all individuals and their various abilities.

Be a community leader in developing an inclusive Nova Scotia

We will:

- partner with community groups, organizations, and companies that support and work for a more inclusive Nova Scotia;
- work with community members, groups, and organizations to understand their needs and support their work;
- build public awareness and understanding of the importance of building an inclusive Nova Scotia.

Continue to learn, grow, and build our understanding of inclusion

We will:

- engage with individuals and organizations to understand their experiences;
- partner with community members to build programs and services that meet their needs;
- invest in staff learning and development.





Monitoring and Assessment

Each year the Library will create an action plan that outlines the work the Library will undertake to achieve the outcomes and priorities identified in the Accessibility Plan. On an annual basis the Accessibility Advisory Committee will receive updates from each library service area on the work that has been done to improve accessibility. The Committee will identify areas where additional work or reporting is required and will ensure the Library has made progress towards achieving the outcomes of this plan.

The library will continue to engage with community members to help identify opportunities for improved accessibility through feedback sessions, surveys, and engagement with staff. The Library will report to the community through their Annual Report which will include highlights and key actions for the year.



Removing and Preventing Barriers

Halifax Public Libraries exists to support collective growth in our community.

Every member of our community wants to thrive and contribute, and the Library is here to support them. The Library has been responding to community needs and adjusting spaces and services to remove barriers. We are proud that we have exceeded the work identified in our annual plans and are eager to continue to identify and remove barriers.

Highlights of work that has supported a more accessible Library and community:

Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certified Gold

In August 2024, [Halifax Central Library achieved RHF Accessibility Certified Gold](#), the top accessibility rating under the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ program and the highest level of accessibility possible for the built environment. Halifax Central Library is one of only two libraries in the country certified Gold. This certification requires commitment from all Library staff – those who carefully maintain existing infrastructure, provide meaningful feedback, initiate new accessibility options, and make the public library a welcoming space for all.

Keshen Goodman Public Library Renovation

In July 2024 [Keshen Goodman Public Library reopened](#) to the public after an extensive renovation. Changes to the interior and exterior of the library were made to improve accessibility. These include improved accessible parking, attention and guidance Tactile Walking Surface Indicators (TWSI), covered entry, rubberized ground surface in the Outdoor Library, accessible washroom, directional flooring patterns, study pods with non-fixed tables, accessible service desk, improved acoustics and lightening.

Improvements to Alderney Gate Public Library Entrance

In 2022, improvements were made to [Alderney Gate Public Library's Entrance](#). The improvements include improved visibility and circulation in the entrance, accessible seating, the addition of a fully accessible washroom, a low-light nook, and the addition of two accessible service desks.



Increasing Home Delivery and Borrow by Mail Capacity

The Library offers [home delivery](#) and [borrow by mail](#) services for individuals who are not able to come to a physical location of the library. Over the last three years the Library has invested in additional resources to increase the capacity of the home service team to allow more residents of Halifax to use these services.

Improvements to Audiobook Collections

The Library has invested in additional accessible collections including the audiobook collections. These collections include new read-along books with audio players. This collection allows community members to borrow books with an audio player built in, so no additional technology is required to access the audiobook.

Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) & National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS)

The Library is an active member of both CELA and NNELS which provides access to books, materials and content to community members with print disabilities in a variety of accessible formats.

Public Library Accessibility Resource Centre (PLARC)

The Library is an active member and contributor to the Public Library Accessibility Resource Centre (PLARC) Project. The goal of the project is to create a consolidated resource center focused on education and training library staff across the country on the importance of accessibility and including accessibility principles in library services and programs.

Employee Training

The Library is committed to ensuring spaces and services are accessible and invested in additional staff training to provide the knowledge and skills needed to improve accessibility. Training includes Rick Hansen Professional Training, plain language communication, foundations of disabilities training and more.

Library Policy, Procedures and Guideline Review

Each year, under the direction of the Halifax Regional Library Board, the Library reviews and updates existing library policies, procedures and guidelines to include specific language that addresses the diverse needs of all community members and are written in plain language. Over the past three years



several key library policies including the Customer Conduct Policy, Collection Development Policy, Library Display Policy, Employee Bereavement Policy, Library Room Booking Policy, Employee Ethical Conduct Policy have been adjusted to be more inclusive.

Library Programming and Events

Library programs that support accessibility play a crucial role in fostering an inclusive Nova Scotia. The Library offers a variety of online and in person opportunities for community members to engage. Some examples of inclusive programs include workshops

of adaptive technology to help people navigate and try assistive devices and software; sensory friendly concerts and activities; community artwork and displays that raise awareness of disability justice and many more.

The Library partners with HRM and the Access Awareness Week Committee to raise public awareness of Accessibility Awareness Week by offering an integrated online portal. The [Accessibility portal](#) features events, library tools and resources; community partners; content and reading lists; and much more.



Accessibility Advisory Committee

Halifax Public Libraries' Accessibility Advisory Committee is comprised of interested community members who bring their lived experience and together set the direction for a more inclusive library experience. In addition, the committee monitors the steps the Library has taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to participation.

Each year the committee engages with different library service areas and departments to review their work, provide guidance, and identify opportunities for improvement.

The Library would like to thank the members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee who shared their experience, knowledge and expertise in the development of this plan.

Committee members:

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