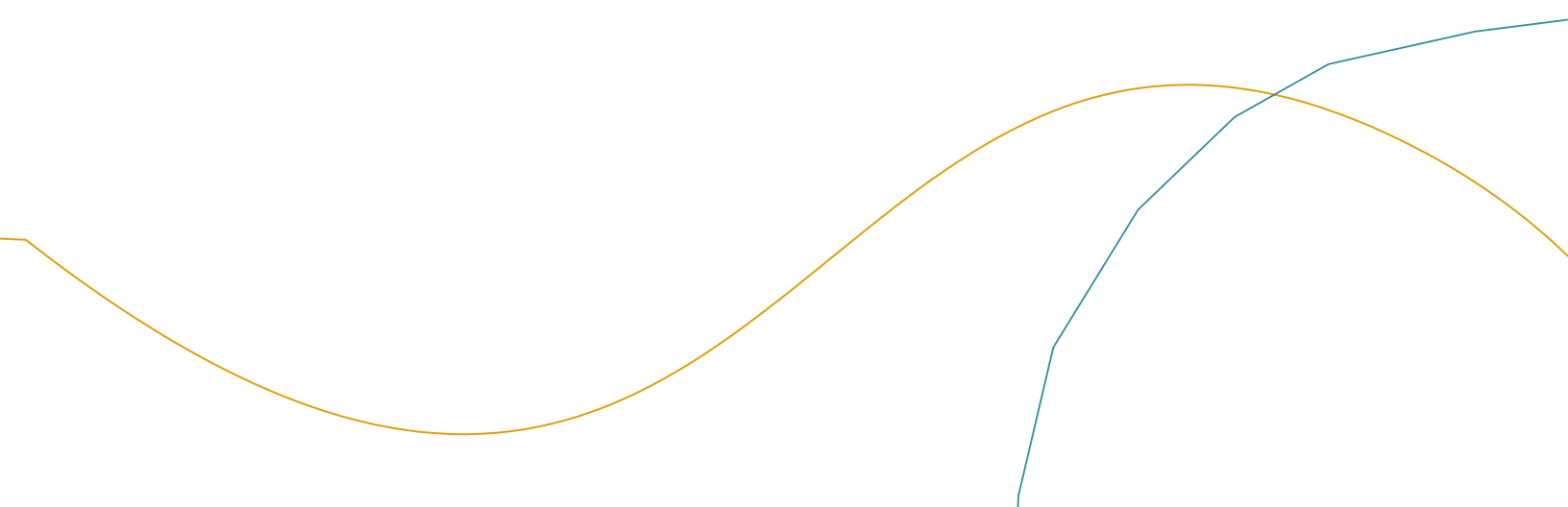




Municipal Accessibility Plan 2025-2030

Region of Queens Municipality

Approved by Council 25 March 2025



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Background

In 2017, Nova adopted Bill 59, an Accessibility Act¹. This legislation required public bodies, including municipalities, to create accessibility plans by 2022 with the help of local advisory committees made up of people with disabilities or who represent organisations that support persons with disabilities. The required three-year updates to those initial plans are due on 1 April, 2025.

Region of Queens Municipality hired an Accessibility Coordinator in 2020, who, guided by *Queens Accessibility Advisory Committee (QAAC)*², helped create the first *Queens Municipal Accessibility Plan (QMAP)*. Over the years, much work was accomplished but with shifts in internal organizational structure starting in the summer of 2024, the position no longer exists. This aligns with the direction of the province, which has spread the responsibilities of implementing the Act throughout various departments. The updated QMAP will similarly guide the mandate of improving accessibility through all facets of the municipality with broader involvement from everyone.

Based on section 40 of the Accessibility Act, Accessibility Plans must be publicly available and include:

- a. A report on measures the public sector body *has taken and intends to take* to identify, remove and prevent barriers;
- b. Information on procedures the public sector body has in place *to assess* the following for their effect on accessibility for persons with disabilities:
 - i. Any of its proposed policies, programs, practices and services, and
 - ii. Any proposed enactments or by-laws it will be administering; and
- c. Any other prescribed information.

Now that much of the ‘what to do’ has been articulated, this update has *a three-fold focus*:

i) inter-departmental work; ii) community engagement; iii) monitoring and evaluation.

Since the initial QMAP, the Accessibility Directorate has developed strong supports for municipal work including a *Monitoring and Evaluation Tool*³. It outlines in detail many ways of determining whether the goals of the Act are being achieved and more specifically whether the work of RQM is effective. The specific guides, questionnaires and outreach programs provided are excellent resources to provide engagement for feedback and quantifiable data to share and inform next steps. This third focus in fact requires and integrates the first two and should be a priority for the AAC.

¹ https://www.nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/62nd_3rd/3rd_read/b059.htm

² QAAC consists of up to 5 volunteer members of the public, who either have disabilities or represent organisations that support people with disabilities, plus 2 elected Councillors, for terms of 1 or 2 years. A staff lead will sit on the committee as a non-voting member.

³ A compendium of MEL Data Collection Tools, June 2024 draft Word file can be downloaded from the side bar of the AMANS Tools and Resources page: <https://www.municipal-ideas.ca/education-training-events>

Definition of Terms

Barrier

Barriers make it harder for some people to participate in various ways. Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act defines a barrier as "anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in society of persons with disabilities, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice." While economic barriers exist, they are not the focus of this Act.

It's important to recognise that layers of barriers need an *intersectional* lens.

Disability

As defined in Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act: "a physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual's full and effective participation in society." Where no barriers exist, a disability should not be an impediment.

The Canadian Survey on Disability 2022 shows Nova Scotia with the highest rate of disability at 37%, 10% higher than the national average. Note that only 10% describe themselves as 'mobility-impaired'. See more at [Accessibility and Persons with disabilities - Canada 2023](#)

Equitable Access

If *equal* access is to give everyone the *same* thing, barriers may be created for some users. A commitment to fairness looks at the end result and for equitable access which allows all users full participation. Accommodating individual differences needs *flexibility* and *options*.



ASL is American Sign Language, which needs translators between users and non-users.

CART, or Communication Access Real-Time Translation, delivers captions remotely to any screen in real time, also known as Live Captioning.

CSA is the Canadian Standards Association, whose B651HB-23 specifications will be adopted by NS in terms of accessibility in the built environment.

Categories of Accessibility

The Nova Scotia Accessibility Act identifies six categories or priority areas, all of which will have new standards developed by committees of first voice and stakeholder consultation. While all specifics may not be legislated yet, the drafts help guide municipal plans and should be base references. See [Accessibility Directorate - Government of Nova Scotia](#) for a link to each standards committee.

1. **Built Environment:** Shared indoor and outdoor spaces where we live, work and play, are all to be barrier-free. These standards were made public for review in Sept. 2023, and amendments to the NS Building Code were enacted by the Minister of Justice in March 2025 [NS Built-environment-accessibility-standards](#) .
2. **Education:** Early childhood, primary, secondary, and post-secondary education is to be inclusive and individualised. The second [phase of recommendations](#) was made public in Jan. 2023. While the municipality is not involved in this directly, **Public Awareness** is critical.
3. **Employment:** People with disabilities need removal of barriers to find, maintain and advance in meaningful employment. New standards will help Employers build inclusive recruitment, hiring, onboarding and retention as well as understanding the Duty to accommodate. [Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Employment](#) was submitted to the Minister of Justice in July 2024.
4. **Information and Communications:** to be available in a variety of formats, with or without assistive technologies. The provincial standards committee has not yet been created, but [Accessibility Standards Canada has requirements for ICT products and services](#)
5. **Goods and Services:** to be accessible to all. There will be overlap with other categories, especially the built environment and information/communications as well as staff training. A federal draft for public review is at [Overview of CAN-ASC-5.2.1: Accessible Programs and Services](#)
6. **Public Transportation and infrastructure:** to be accessible and available within and between communities. [Transportation - Accessibility Standards Canada](#) has the draft federal standards.

Region of Queens Commitments

Guiding Principles

Shared Responsibilities – We aim to be a role model for the private sector and broader community with buy-in from *all* staff, recognizing that inter-departmental support is key to implementing actionable items and ultimate success.

Human Rights - We uphold accessibility as a fundamental human right. We prioritize the *social* model of disability, recognizing that limitations are created by environmental, structural and attitudinal barriers that restrict the full participation of persons with impairments.

First Voice - We value the input from residents that live with disabilities and prioritize it in our work to advance accessibility, recognizing the expertise that comes from lived experiences. Nova Scotia recognises this by requiring half of the Accessibility Advisory Committees to identify as having a disability or working as a support to people with disabilities.

Diversity - We know there is diversity within the disability community and that other identities, circumstances, and experiences intersect and impact accessibility. Disability is seen with an '*intersectional*' lens and is to be included as a target audience in municipal policies, programs and services. A *Universal Design* approach supports the commitment of allowing everyone to access everything.

Standards as a minimum – While the municipality will always strive to follow various standards, we can achieve best practices or even *beyond* to ensure equitable, *comfortable and dignified* participation in civil society by all residents, regardless of abilities.

Goals for Municipal Outcomes

Based on Federal and Provincial Accessibility Requirements and following [Nova Scotia's 'Access by Design 2030'](#) timeline, Region of Queens as a prescribed public sector body must aim for the following broad goals:

- Persons with disabilities (including employees, residents and visitors) receive equitable access to:
 - Municipally owned and leased *buildings* and public spaces;
 - *Programs and services* delivered by the Municipality;
 - Municipal *information and communications*.
- Persons with disabilities are meaningfully *employed*, engaged and advancing within Municipal service and have appropriate accommodations.
- Municipal employees are *educated and aware* of the rights of persons with disabilities, are able to identify barriers to accessibility and their impacts, and actively seek solutions to prevent and remove them.
- The Municipality can support key partners and interested parties to improve accessibility.

Note that specific activities and tasks will result in outputs such as this plan or deliverables within categories, but it is the *results* of these that are to ultimately produce societal change.

Responsibilities

- The **Accessibility Advisory Committee** (AAC) is responsible for giving input on the Municipal Accessibility Plan and making recommendations to Council. Since the passing of the [Dismantling Racism and Hate Act](#) in Nova Scotia, many municipalities have combined committees. The Region of Queens Municipality may consider revising the

current Terms of Reference, careful to maintain the required 50% First Voice for the AAC.

- **Council** is responsible for adopting and overseeing the work of the Municipal Accessibility Plan as well as allocating resources to fulfill its goals. Currently the AAC Terms of Reference includes two Councillors.
- The **Chief Administrative Officer** assigns staff lead(s) and liaison to the AAC, supports accessibility work as outlined in the QMAP and is ultimately responsible for implementing the Plan under the framework of the Act.
- **Staff** are responsible for building their awareness of barrier removal and receiving public accessibility comments. Each department will articulate specific responsibilities as best suited to their roles, guided by this plan, training and feedback from the monitoring tool. At least one staff member will be the liaison with the AAC and help push action forward.

Community Engagement

One of the underlying concepts of the Accessibility Act is “*nothing about us without us*” which highlights the critical need for involvement from those the Act is designed to benefit. Region of Queens received valuable input from its advisors and from broader community in the first few years, providing insight, advocacy and specific areas of improvement. The Accessibility Survey that was created and launched in September 2020 resulted in almost 100 submissions with general and specific feedback on priority concerns for Queens County. It is now a high priority to reach out for renewed engagement using the Monitoring & Evaluation (MEL) tool.

Previously, the Accessibility Coordinator used ‘*Intermediaries*’ as vehicles to wider target audiences. Existing support organisations are valuable two-way communication streams, both in terms of receiving information on needs as well as sharing municipal programs and resources back out. These included the Department of Community Services, Queens Home Support Services, the local Doctors’ Association, NS Works/Employment Solutions Services, Queens County Food Bank, the Thomas Raddall library, Pharmasave in Liverpool and Caledonia, Queens Community Health Board, Queens Learning Network, Family Resource Centre, Queens Senior Safety Association, NS Caregivers, Community Links, SchoolsPlus and the local VON nursing office.

Monitoring and Evaluating

This is possibly the most important part of ongoing work as it helps a municipality know if it is *making a difference* in the lives of people with disabilities. It also holds staff accountable to residents and Council, celebrates progress being made and informs next steps and supports needed where progress is slow.

As mentioned in the introduction, efforts of a working group under the direction of the Accessibility Directorate have created a practical tool to measure and guide municipal progress

with flexible outcome-focussed templates. Indicators are suggested along with tracking forms, surveys and focus group models for staff as well as community groups. The tool is called MEL for Monitoring, Evaluating and Learning, emphasizing the need to include reflection beyond reporting and to course-correct when objectives are not being met. See *Appendix B* for links and examples.

The 2020 survey could be treated as a baseline for Queens with the same questions being used to assess any change in public perception of accessibility and awareness of improvements. Whatever data collection method is selected, assessment can only happen with engagement which can now follow pre-designed templates that align with provincial work. Again, this should be first and foremost as part of meaningful updates beyond ticking off deliverables.

Plan Implementation

In the initial QMAP, actionable steps were listed according to the categories laid out in the Act. These remain in the updated plan, presented in terms of COMPLETED and ONGOING outputs. Moving forward, sections should be assigned to appropriate departments or roles. [SUGGESTIONS OF LEAD STAFF are made below as starting points only].

Accessibility Progress

1. Built Environment

COMPLETED

- All municipal properties are assessed with summaries of accessibility recommendations made. See *Appendix A* for renovation specifics.
- Council allocates budget for priority areas, general and/or specific.
- Grant applications are submitted to support renovations and additions to municipal properties (through 2024).
- Universal Design and/or Aging-in-Place training is given to Public Works Skilled Trades staff, Building Official(s) and offered externally, to community builders.
- Building Permit applications form identifies accessibility-related works, and staff share supportive information. For example, all who apply for ramp addition permits, receive pamphlet on Adaptable Housing.

ON-GOING [INFRASTRUCTURE: CAPITAL PROJECTS MANAGER]

- All recommendations to improve accessibility in municipal properties continue to be developed, with grant applications submitted to support costs.
- CSA accessibility standards are used as a minimum guide with feedback from accessibility outreach integrated where possible.
- All new projects receive an accessibility lens through the Capital Projects Manager.
- Full Audits to use the provincial template, [AMANS Audit Tool](#).

2. Education / Awareness building

COMPLETED, BUT TO CONTINUE ON-GOING [COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER /
INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER / MUNICIPAL CLERK]

- Awareness campaigns and events created to inform staff, residents, service providers and business owners on the Act itself, provincial resources and the Municipality's commitments, using a variety of engagement methods and formats:
 - Audio podcasts and interviews through local radio and Queens Community Health Board;
 - In person presentations targeted to various audiences;
 - Articles in South Shore newsprint;
 - Digital information on Region of Queens' website and FaceBook.
- Target audiences to include but are not limited to:
 - The business community through South Queens Chamber of Commerce and North Queens Board of Trade; supporting small businesses as they work to improve accessibility in the built and digital contexts.
 - Builders and contractors through three Home Hardware stores in Queens, the NS Builders Association, municipal Building Officials, realtors and word of mouth;
 - The elderly through local organisations such as the Queens Senior Safety Association, pharmacies, Queens Home Support, VON, residential care facilities and more;
 - People with disabilities through Dept. of Community Services, Queens Learning Network, NSWorks, Queens Association for Supported Living and the Doctor's Association.
 - Job seekers, partnering with Employment Solutions Services.
- Liaise with the South Queens Chamber of Commerce and the North Queens Board of Trade to promote involvement with the business community.

TO DO [PLANNING DEPT.]

- Follow the consequences of the Human Rights Remedy as it relates to Housing of people with disabilities.
- Provide public awareness on the possibilities made with Land Use Planning Bylaw and Municipal Planning Strategy, in terms of housing types: accessory and converted dwellings; supportive housing and land lease communities.

3. Employment

ON-GOING [MUNICIPAL CLERK / HUMAN RESOURCE LEAD / ALL DIRECTORS]

- Be a Disability-Confident Employer; building a culture of inclusion with all staff having

Disability Awareness Training. See Resources in Appendix C.

- Region of Queens ensures that all announcements of job opportunities are available in multiple formats, distributed through a wide range of intermediaries and promotes that accommodations are possible.
- Track (anonymously) the number of employees with disabilities, diagnosed or self-identifying, with the aim of reflecting diversity in the workforce. Following the Employment Equity Act 9.1(a) and 2), only self-identification is counted as a member of designated group.

TO DO [MUNICIPAL CLERK / HUMAN RESOURCE LEAD]

- Assign a designated staff person to help individuals who need accommodations, a Human Resource person or other personnel staff.
- Establish a centralized accommodation fund to pay for assistive devices or accommodations for employees.
- Continue accessibility improvements of the built environment for staff as much as for the public, i.e. accessible counters, internal doors, etc. in municipal sites.
- Set out long-term goals for increasing the representation of persons with disabilities in the total municipal workforce and the employer's strategy and timeline for achieving those goals.

4. Information and Communications

ON-GOING [INFO & COMMS OFFICER / IT MANAGER / MUNICIPAL CLERK]

- Provide accessibility training to all staff who produce content for the public, with specifics on digital material, ensuring screen-readability.
- Use current best practices including Alt text on graphics and coded structure to improve navigation.
- Follow the [accessible events guide](#) created by the NS Accessibility Directorate.
- Use 'Plain Language' or create summaries for lengthy and complex content.
- Websites should meet international 'Web Content Accessibility Guidelines', WCAG2, at minimum and be tested by various assistive technologies. An accessibility clause will be added to the footer indicating continuing efforts, alternative formats available upon request and providing a feedback capability.
- All visual information for the public is to have audio options such as use of QR codes and/or button-activated speakers on interpretation panels or signage.
- ASL or CART services will be readily available upon request with appropriate notice. Audio supports in Council Chamber.
- All municipal videos will have closed captions and described video where appropriate.

5. Goods and Services

COMPLETED

- Provide telecoil hearing systems at front desks: Planning, Finance, QPEC.
- Region of Queens allows for and consider the needs of service dogs such as the provision of water and rest areas.

ON-GOING [MUNICIPAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEADER / RECREATION STAFF]

- Promote the existing accessible recreational equipment and continue to build inventory of accessible and assistive equipment.

TO DO [MUNICIPAL CLERK, WITH OTHERS SPECIFIC TO ITEM]

- All public service counters will have a dropped area with knee clearance, according to revised building codes.
- Recognising the extra financial burden that people with disabilities typically carry, the Municipality will determine the impacts of offering free parking to vehicles with accessible parking permits and decide whether to implement this or not.
- Waive or discount entrance fees at events and leisure activities provided by the municipality for those whose role is to provide service to someone with disabilities. An example is the Easter Seals "Access 2" program and discounts.

6. Transportation

ON-GOING [COUNCIL / PUBLIC WORKS MANAGER / DIR. OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS]

- Support Queens County Transit services in Budget allocations.
- Consider designated QCT pick-up / drop-off stops in high-use areas, such as in front of Queens Home Support and the waterfront area.
- Detail a parking and sidewalk remediation plan, with a timeline and budget: upright signage; access aisles or protected paths; lowered curbs, and slopes; use of high-contrasted tactile indicators, etc. in the areas that are within municipal control (Liverpool, some of Milton, Brooklyn and Caledonia) and according to updated provincial standards.
- Prioritize snow and ice removal areas with training and awareness around accessible parking spots to maintain barrier-free paths in commercial and recreational areas that are maintained by the municipality.
- Ensure that crosswalks are well marked and that audible traffic signal stations are safe and helpful, with clear instructions for all users. Use provincial regulations for design needs of pedestrians with impaired vision. Timing and volume of signals are specified as well as guidelines for tactile information.

Appendices

Appendix A - Built Environment Renovations Progress in Queens

Detailed Audits have been completed for Queens' Municipal Properties with many specific recommendations made. The following list highlights priority areas, supported by the newly recommended Standards for the Built Environment. Quantitative reports with photos are available on request.

1. Administration Building:

COMPLETED - replace the exterior path to Council Chamber, add a power door operator / provide hearing assistance in Council Chambers and at two public front desks.

To Do - improve accessible parking, add upright signage, create another flat accessible stall / create lowered sections of service counters / put a bench along the exterior path.

2. Queens Place Emera Centre:

COMPLETED - install toilet back rests in accessible stalls / add elevator and washroom signage/ install hand-rail posts at some bleachers / audio support at the reception desk / replace the exterior push button door opener with a sensor-powered one for the front doors / power operator to arena door from lobby.

To Do - add upright signage to accessible parking / improve audio supports in the arena, and community room / signage for areas of refuge / replace or improve toilet paper dispensers / create a universal, non-gendered washroom.

3. Town Hall / Astor Theatre:

COMPLETED - create a ramped entry to the central space from the back parking to the side gallery / a lift to the stage /offer individual audio-visual supports: caption readers and described video receivers for movies, and in community rooms for in person.

To Do - create a universal washroom on the main floor / install an elevator to the second level / create the standard number, size and selection of flat wheelchair viewing spots in the theatre.

4. Liverpool Business Development Centre (public areas): COMPLETED - Install a power-operated entry / create a universal washroom / visual fire alarms.

5. Liverpool Visitor Information Centre/Privateer & Centennial Park:

COMPLETED - erect signage showing ramped access on waterside of VIC / increase the number of picnic tables with extensions in the park.

To Do - increase the number of accessible parking stalls and add upright signage / facilitate entry to the building with a power-operated opener or install a doorbell / provide audio support such as an induction loop or microphone-speaker and screen reader on the information device and install concrete pads at the sides of benches. Consider a year-round accessible port-a-pottie.

6. **Beach Meadows Beach:**
 COMPLETED - provide a MOBI mat, seasonally, and sand barrier at the ramped boardwalk / construct an accessible washroom-changeroom with an adult change table / create curb cuts in sidewalk.
 TO DO - minimum of 2 paved barrier-free parking stalls with protected access aisles and upright signs.
7. **Liverpool Courthouse:** TO DO - Create a wheelchair accessible washroom / audio support / ease tension on entry doors and install a viewing panel on inside vestibule doors.
8. **Fort Point Lighthouse:** TO DO - improve paths from parking / install ramps to and an emergency call system in the washrooms / offer audio-visual options for the interior presentations and exterior interpretation panels (such as button-activated speakers, QR codes to websites with videos, possibly lending a device. Consider a foghorn at the ground level to try.)
9. **Ground Search and Rescue Building:** TO DO - provide a threshold ramp at the front door entry / make the washroom accessible with a 36" door, grab bars and accessories located correctly.
10. **Hank Snow Museum:** TO DO - improve entry with a power operated door or at least a doorbell / create two paved, accessible parking stalls and path at the entry ramp / add rails to side ramp / install a visual fire alarm / install a emergency call button from washroom / audible information for visual exhibits and website upgrades for digital accessibility.
11. The **Universal Playpark and Splashpad** at Queens Place is barrier-free – COMPLETED.
12. **Pine Grove Park:** TO DO - have at least 1 accessible area with extended picnic table(s) by creating a second parking lot and flat entry point to the Trestle Trail and Anniversary Walk or by cutting a zigzag path on the hill in from the existing parking / consider a section with a rope-guided path for low-vision users / more benches.
13. **Port Medway Lighthouse & Park:** TO DO - designate barrier-free parking spots / construct a ramp to the gazebo / accessible port-a-pottie.
14. **Liverpool Fire Station:** TO DO - install a power door operator and threshold ramps at the front entry / install visual alarms in the washrooms.
15. **Milton Blacksmith Shop:** TO DO - create parking / accessible front entry and circulation.
16. **South Shore Regional Airport, Terminal Building:** not audited.
17. **North Queens Aquatic Centre:** major renovations and project development required.
18. Municipal buildings without public access have not been audited:

Town 'Cowie' Well
Solid Waste Management
Public Works Garage
NQ Sewage Treatment Facility
SQ Sewage Treatment Facility
Water Treatment Plant
Leaf and Yard Waste Facility

19. **Outdoor spaces** for the public's use should be assessed and accessibility challenges described on signage and online. All built elements should be designed for barrier-free access and costed. Consider the path of travel, picnic benches, gazebos, signage and parking.

Cobb Park
Tupper Park, Milton
Garika Park, Milton
Trestle Trail
Thorburne Baseball Field Liverpool
Tennis Court (Leased)
Skateboard Park
Bicycle Park
Queens Place Walking Trail
Meadow Pond Trail
Scout Camp, Greenfield
Path Lake Park, East Port L'Hebert
Miriam Hunt Park, Caledonia
Hunts Point Beach Right Of Way

Appendix B – MEL (Monitoring Evaluation & Learning) Tools

The following are examples of what can be found in the Compendium of Data Collection Tools:

MEL Tracking Form

Forms are provided based on described output and outcome indicators for specified Actions. They can be adapted and customized to suit the municipality. This form below is one way of measuring the Action 1: Engaging People with Disabilities (PWD).

Description of engagement with community for accessibility planning, implementation and/or feedback, by population / organization, and by method Add additional rows as needed.

Purpose of engagement	Date	Method	Online or in-person	Total # of participants	# of PWD (if known)	# of orgs serving PWD (if known)	# of orgs serving other marginalized groups	Steps taken to make engagement accessible
Example: Feedback on draft updated accessibility plan	X	Focus group	Online	20	6	5	1	ASL interpreter, CART, documents available in plain language and Word five days before meeting

This one measures Action 3: Deliver and participate in accessibility training and education.

Indicator 1.3.1-1.3.3 - Training and education that was provided to municipal employees. Could include training provided by the municipality or training offered by external providers (as relevant to your municipality). Add additional rows as needed.

Date	Education/ Training name	Topics covered	Provider	# of participants	Types of participants (employee, volunteer, councillor, etc.)

Another example is for Outcome 2.3: Increased and meaningful participation of people with disabilities at different levels of decision-making.

Indicator 2.3.5: # and % of people with disabilities on each municipal structure (Council, committees, etc.) and overall, for the municipality (i.e., % of people with disabilities that make up membership across all committees and structures)

Municipal structure (name, description)	# of total positions	# of positions filled by (self-reported) people with disabilities	% of positions filled by people with disabilities
Example: Municipal Council	8	1	12.5%

Accessibility Advisory Committee Focus Group Guide

There are guides for various Focus Groups to track more of the indicators listed in the MEL Guide. AACs may operate in different ways or have different levels of knowledge about accessibility improvement activities. Municipalities can adapt the questions to meet their needs. These are some examples of questions that could be led by a facilitator.

4. How satisfied are you with how you have been valued and listened to by the municipality as a member of the AAC?

Sub-questions:

- To what extent do you feel the input of people with disabilities and the organizations that represent people with disabilities informs the work of the municipality related to improving accessibility?
- How could engagement with people with disabilities or those representing organizations that represent people with disabilities be improved?

5. How, if at all, are monitoring and/or evaluation information being used to inform work related to accessibility?

Sub-questions:

- What are the key lessons learned so far? If you were giving another municipality advice on how to proceed with improvements to accessibility, what would you share based on your experience?

Community Organizations Focus Group Guide

10. To begin, please describe how, if at all, you have been involved in or been made aware of the municipality's accessibility work.

Sub-questions:

- [If not offered in responses to this question, facilitator could ask]: Have you met with the Accessibility Lead? Have you gathered information from online resources such as the municipality website?

11. As far as you are aware, what have been the greatest accomplishments or successes of the municipality's accessibility work so far?

12. As far as you are aware, what have been the greatest challenges with the municipality's accessibility work so far? How could these challenges be addressed?

Municipal Staff Focus Group Guide

This aims to assess increased awareness of barriers and capacity to remove barriers within staff. A number of questions are prepared for use, including the following:

- What changes, if any, have been made to policies, procedures, and by-laws to remove and/or prevent accessibility barriers? How effective was the process to review and update policies, procedures, and by-laws? How could the process be improved?

Survey of Community Members Template

2. Please indicate how frequently each of the following occurs:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Don't Know/ Not Sure
a) I experience barriers to accessibility in terms of overall design and/or interior and exterior built environment in municipal buildings and spaces.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) I observe physical or architectural elements in the community that could be barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) I have a method of getting where I need or want to go (e.g., school, work, social activities) that is accessible to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) I experience barriers in accessing municipal information and communications.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) I experience barriers to accessibility of municipal goods and/or services.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. Please indicate whether each of the following has improved, stayed the same, or gotten worse over the last year:

	Improved	Stayed the Same	Got Worse
a) Accessibility of the municipal built environment (e.g., recreation facilities, parks and trails, municipal buildings)	☐	☐	☐
b) Accessibility of municipal services and programs (e.g., sports or other activity programs, services provided to residents).	☐	☐	☐
c) Accessibility of municipal transportation services.	☐	☐	☐

Survey of Municipal Staff, Volunteers and Elected Officials Template

4. Please rate your level of agreement for each statement about your knowledge and understanding related to accessibility:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
a) Over the past year, my understanding of accessibility as a human right has increased.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) I understand what my municipality's obligations are under the Accessibility Act.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) I have the knowledge I need to help implement an accessibility plan.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix C – Resources

The [NS Accessibility Directorate](#) is responsible for administering the Accessibility Act and advancing disability issues within government. This official government website contains key policies and documents related to the Accessibility Act and links to the standards committees.

[Access Includes Everyone NS](#) is a public awareness website created by the Accessibility Directorate to increase understanding of disability and accessibility. It contains data, success stories and additional resources including webinars, graphics like posters and social media and links to PPSB accessibility plans.

[NS government-accessibility-plan.pdf](#) is Nova Scotia's updated plan for 2022-2025, setting out commitments and responsible departments for all priority areas.

New Accessibility Standards for NS in the Built Environment [Proposed Built Environment Accessibility Standard \(PDF\)](#) Sept. 2023

Municipalities can use the spreadsheets in [AMANS Audit Tool](#) as a template to assess properties.

CNIB Foundation (Canadian National Institute for the Blind), provides international standards and universal design principles to build accessible environments for people who are blind or have low vision. [Clearing our Path](#)

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission [Working with Abilities](#) is a free online course for employers and staff awareness building.

[ACE Trainings | SeaChange Colab](#) offers various formats of accessibility training. Self-paced, on demand, virtual or in-person sessions cover a range of topics including general allyship and disability awareness to specific skill building to be an Accessible Confident Employer.

[Introduction to Accessible Communications | Sea Change CoLab Training](#)

[An Act to Dismantle Racism and Hate](#) is Bill 96 from the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives and should be integrated with accessibility plans.