Spring 2025

Our Joint Accessibility Plan Update 2025-2028

The Municipality of the County of Kings, and the Villages of Aylesford, Canning, Cornwallis Square, Greenwood, Kingston, New Minas and Port Williams.

Table of Contents

Vision ---------- 2

Definitions ---------- 3-4

Background ---------- 5

Progress ---------- 6-9

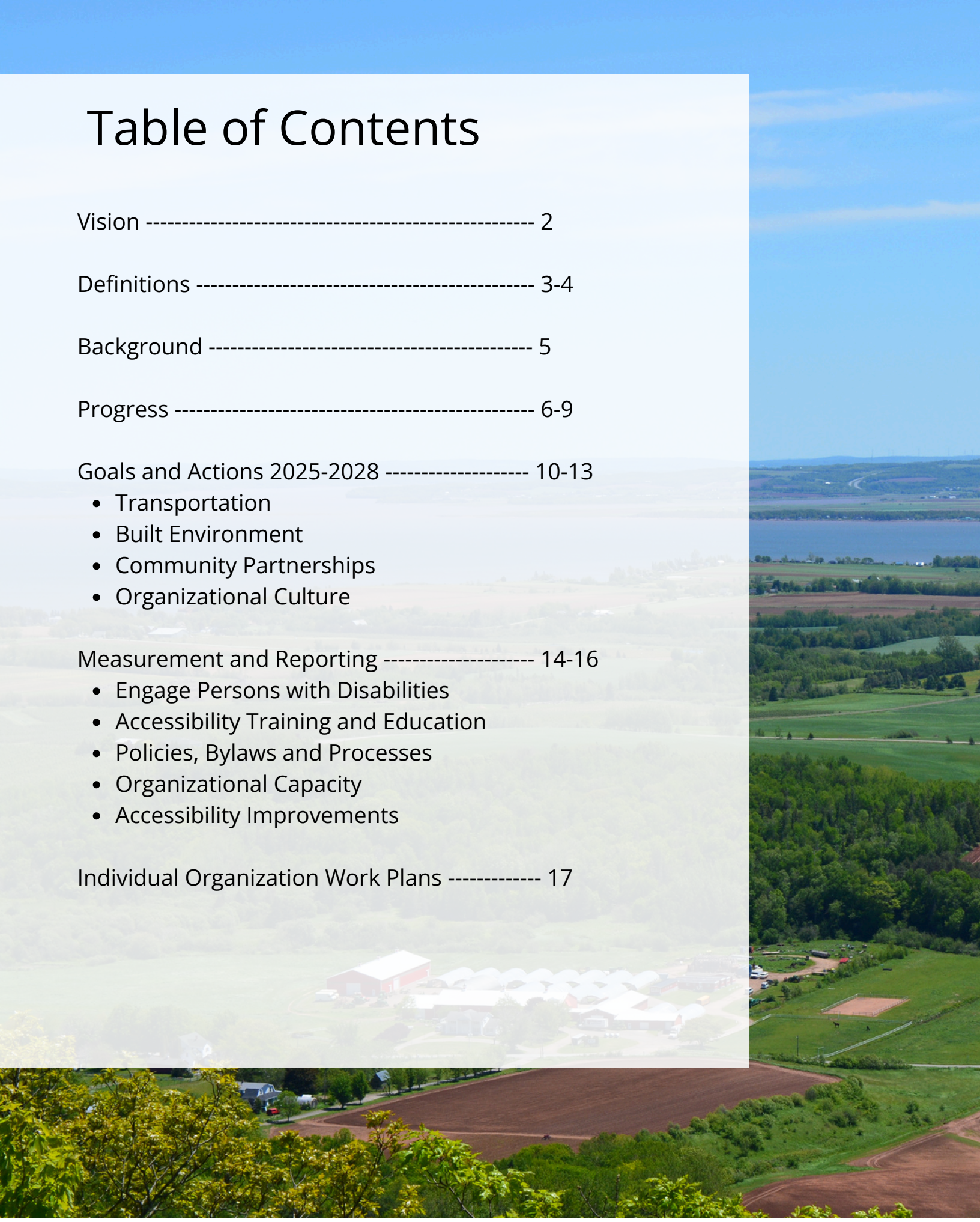
Goals and Actions 2025-2028 ---------- 10-13

- Transportation
- Built Environment
- Community Partnerships
- Organizational Culture

Measurement and Reporting ---------- 14-16

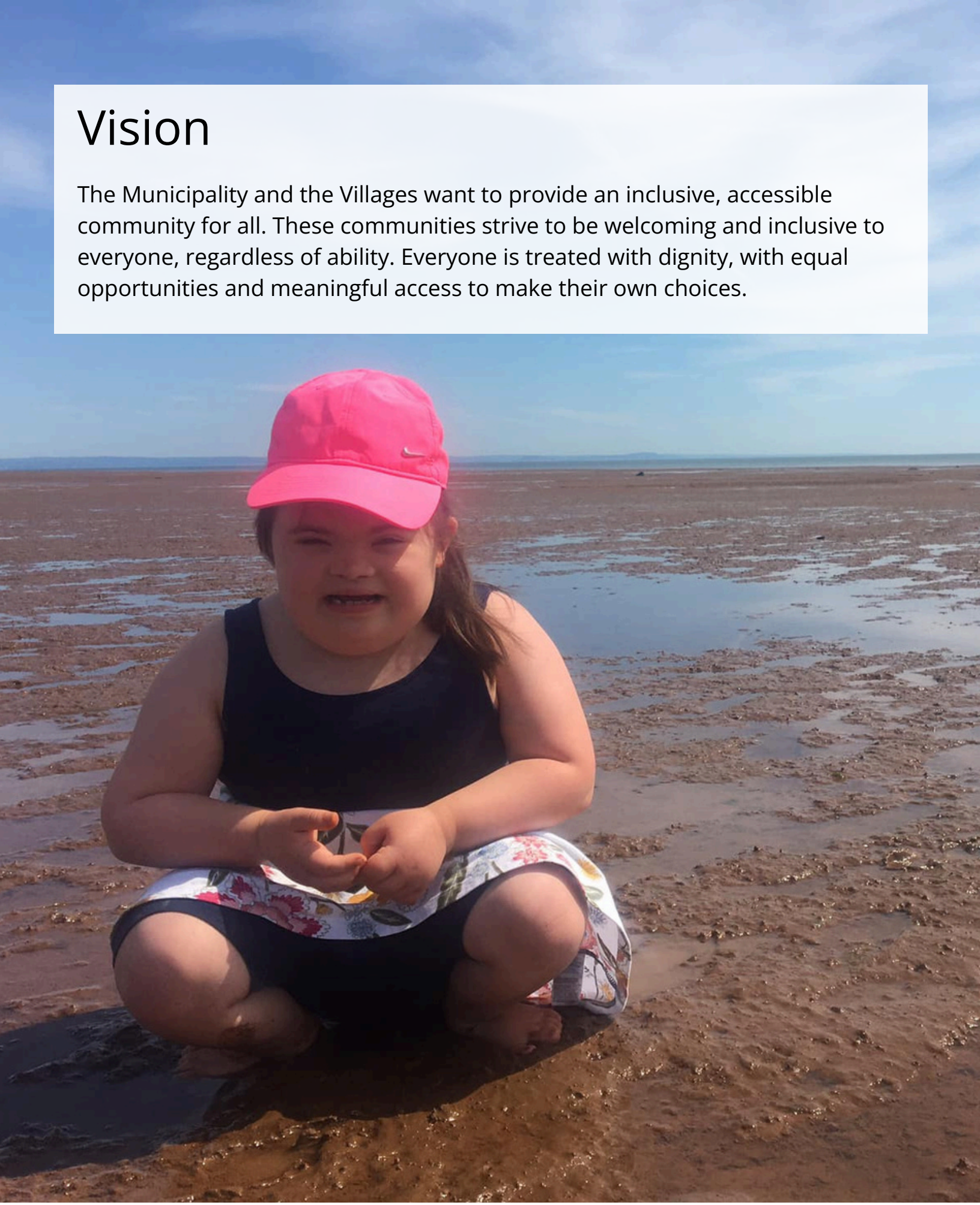
- Engage Persons with Disabilities
- Accessibility Training and Education
- Policies, Bylaws and Processes
- Organizational Capacity
- Accessibility Improvements

Individual Organization Work Plans ---------- 17



Vision

The Municipality and the Villages want to provide an inclusive, accessible community for all. These communities strive to be welcoming and inclusive to everyone, regardless of ability. Everyone is treated with dignity, with equal opportunities and meaningful access to make their own choices.



Definitions

Accessible: Something is easy for everyone to use or reach. This can apply to places, services, or information, ensuring that all people, including those with disabilities, can get to and understand it.

Accessibility audits: A check to see how easy it is for everyone to use a space, website, or service. It looks for any barriers that might make it hard for people, especially those with disabilities, to access or use it. The goal is to find ways to make things more welcoming and usable for everyone.

Built Environment: All the man-made places and structures where people live, work, and play. This covers buildings, parks, roads, and other physical spaces that are designed and constructed by people.

By-law: A rule or law made by a local government or organization to manage how things are done in a specific area, like a municipality.

Community consultation: Talking to people in a community to get their thoughts and opinions about a project or issue. It helps make sure that everyone's ideas and needs are considered before making decisions.

Equitable: Treating everyone fairly and justly, ensuring that people have what they need to succeed. It focuses on giving individuals the right support based on their specific circumstances, rather than treating everyone the same.

Definitions

First voice: The perspective and experiences of people who are directly affected by an issue or situation. It emphasizes listening to and valuing their own stories and insights rather than speaking for them or about them.

Inclusive: Making sure that everyone is welcomed and considered, regardless of their differences. It involves creating an environment where all people feel valued and able to participate.

Indicators: Signs or pieces of information that show or suggest something about a situation or condition. They help people understand what is happening or what might happen next.

Policy: A set of rules or guidelines that are followed to make decisions or take actions in a certain situation. It helps people know what is expected or allowed.

Specifications: Detailed descriptions of what something should be like or how it should work. They include specific requirements and standards that guide the design and construction of products, buildings, or projects.

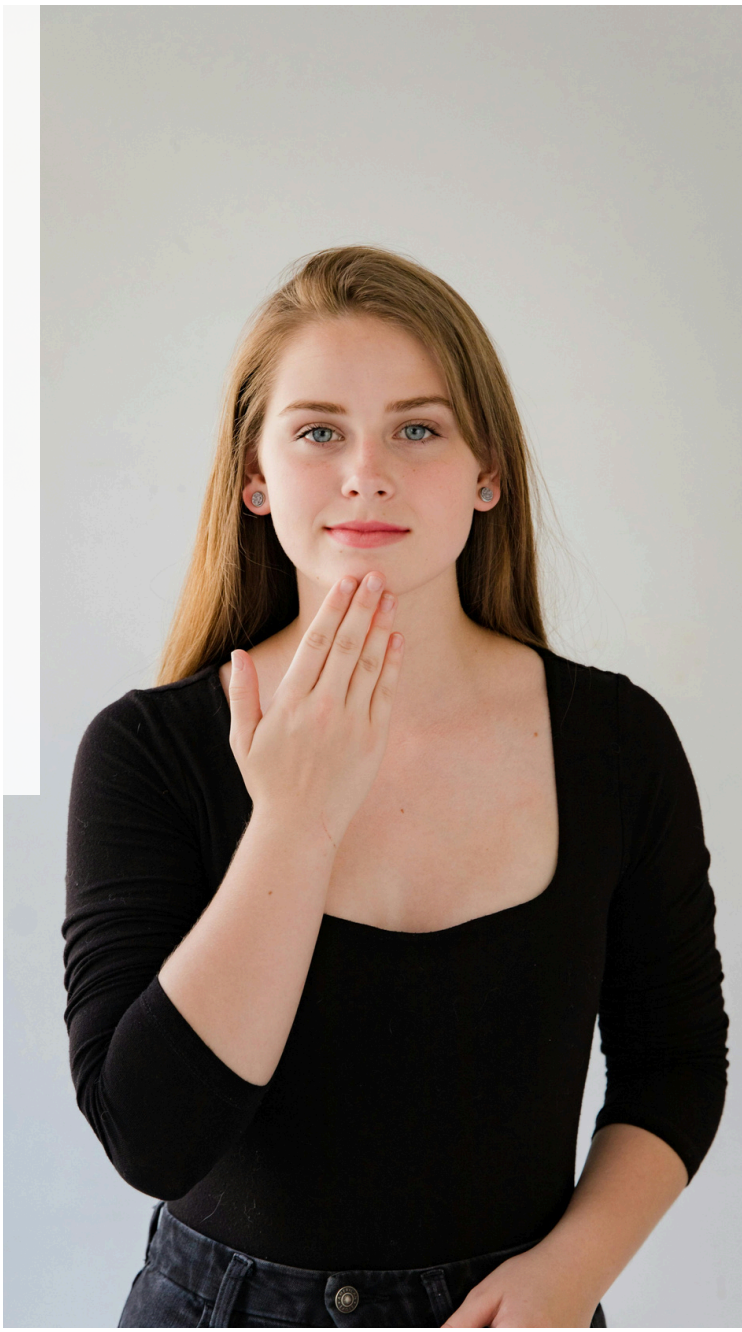
Wayfinding: The process of finding your way in a space. It involves using signs, maps, and other tools to help people navigate and understand where to go, whether it's in a building, a city, or a park.

Background

In 2021 the Municipality of the County of Kings and the Villages of Aylesford, Canning, Cornwallis Square, Greenwood, Kingston, New Minas and Port Williams came together with community members to form a Joint Accessibility Advisory committee to address accessibility in Kings County.

Our Joint Accessibility Plan was adopted by the Municipality and Villages in the Spring of 2022 in response to the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act (2017) and Access by Design 2030. 17 action items were included in the plan based on extensive community consultation, site assessments, and staff feedback.

The Municipality and Villages completed the first of these action items in September of 2022 when they hired an accessibility coordinator to support them in this work.



Progress

Collectively the organizations have made improvements in accessibility in many areas over the past two years including:

1. **Completing accessibility audits for the organizations primary buildings and continuing the accessibility audits for additional buildings, parks, playgrounds, etc. owned or run by the Municipality and Villages.**

   Highlights: Accessibility audits and reports were completed at:
   -- The Village of Greenwood office building
   -- Village of Cornwallis Square office building, firefighter memorial site and transit shelters,
   -- Village of New Minas office building and two community parks
   -- Village of Port Williams office building, park and sidewalks
   -- Village of Canning office building and community park
   -- Municipality of the County of Kings office buildings and Aylesford Lake site

2. **Undertaking and completing built environment upgrades/improvements.**

Highlights:

-- Village of Cornwallis Square automatic door openers, accessible parking spaces and signage.

-- Village of Greenwood painting for increased color contrast, additional sidewalks and accessible crosswalks.

-- Village of Canning upgrading the Village Office to include braille signage.

-- Village of New Minas upgrading its parks and playgrounds to include more accessible surfacing, and additional accessible ground level and sensory elements to playgrounds.

-- The Municipality of the County of Kings upgrading to include additional automatic door openers, upgrading accessible washrooms, and including many accessible elements at Aylesford Lake Beach.

3. **Participating in accessibility awareness campaigns and learning from first voice perspectives and participating in many different types of accessibility training.**

Highlights: Training opportunities have included:

-- Accessibility Foundations training
-- Plain language training
-- digital accessibility training
-- Supported employment training
-- Lunch and learns
-- Accessibility orientations
-- Self-paced online training

Awareness campaigns have included:

-- Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM)
-- International Day for Persons with Disabilities
-- Autism Acceptance Month
-- Access Awareness Week events
-- World Down Syndrome Day events

4. **Started work on updating Council and Commission Policies and Procedures.**

Highlights:

-- Municipal online streaming of Council and Commission meetings

-- Offering accommodations to view or participate in person at meetings and events

5. **Updates to staff workflows to consider accessibility from the beginning of projects from procurement to community engagement.**

Highlights:

-- Municipal updates to procurement procedures to consider accessibility

-- Resources packages to support staff to plan more accessible events, create more accessible documents and write in plain language

-- Updates to the community grants program to include additional funding for accessibility projects.

Goals for 2025- 2028

The goals for 2025-2028 include both continuations of the work that started in 2022-2025 and additional goals based on updated information and further community and staff consultation.

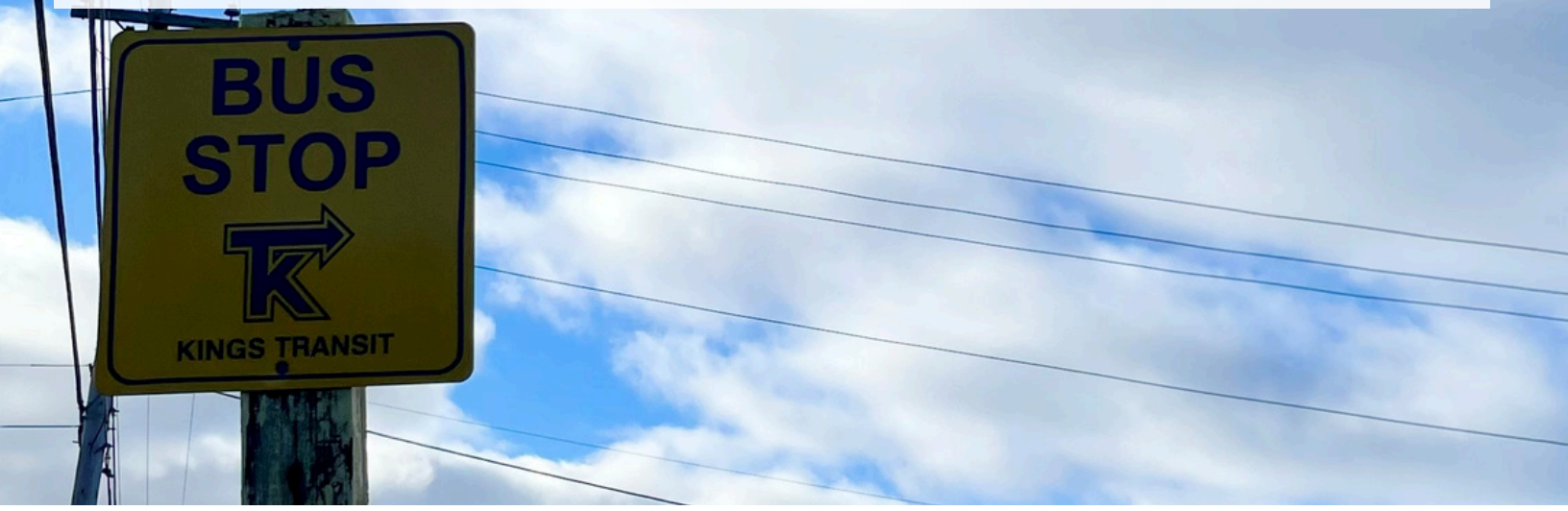
1. **Make Transportation in Kings County More Accessible**

The Accessibility Coordinator will:

- Determine roles and responsibilities for public transit shelters and review maintenance procedures.
- Support private and non-profit transportation organizations to become more accessible and user friendly.

The Accessibility Coordinator and Municipal and Village Staff will:

- Work with other Municipal units in the region to create a plan to support Kings Transit to become more accessible, with specific focus on
  -- Scheduling and routes
  -- Bus stop/bus shelter accessibility



2. **Continue to Improve the Accessibility of the Built Environment**

The Accessibility Coordinator and Municipal and Village Staff will:

- Continue accessibility audits of buildings, parks, trails, and other sites owned or run by the Municipality and the Villages to figure out the most critical upgrades.
- Complete a full sidewalk audit of the County and Villages to figure out the most critical upgrades and additions.
- Complete public plans for accessible entrances, maintenance of parking areas, and snow and ice control.
- Include best practices in accessible signage and wayfinding when creating or updating Municipal and Village signs.
- Incorporate accessibility upgrades in the built environment into the budget process.

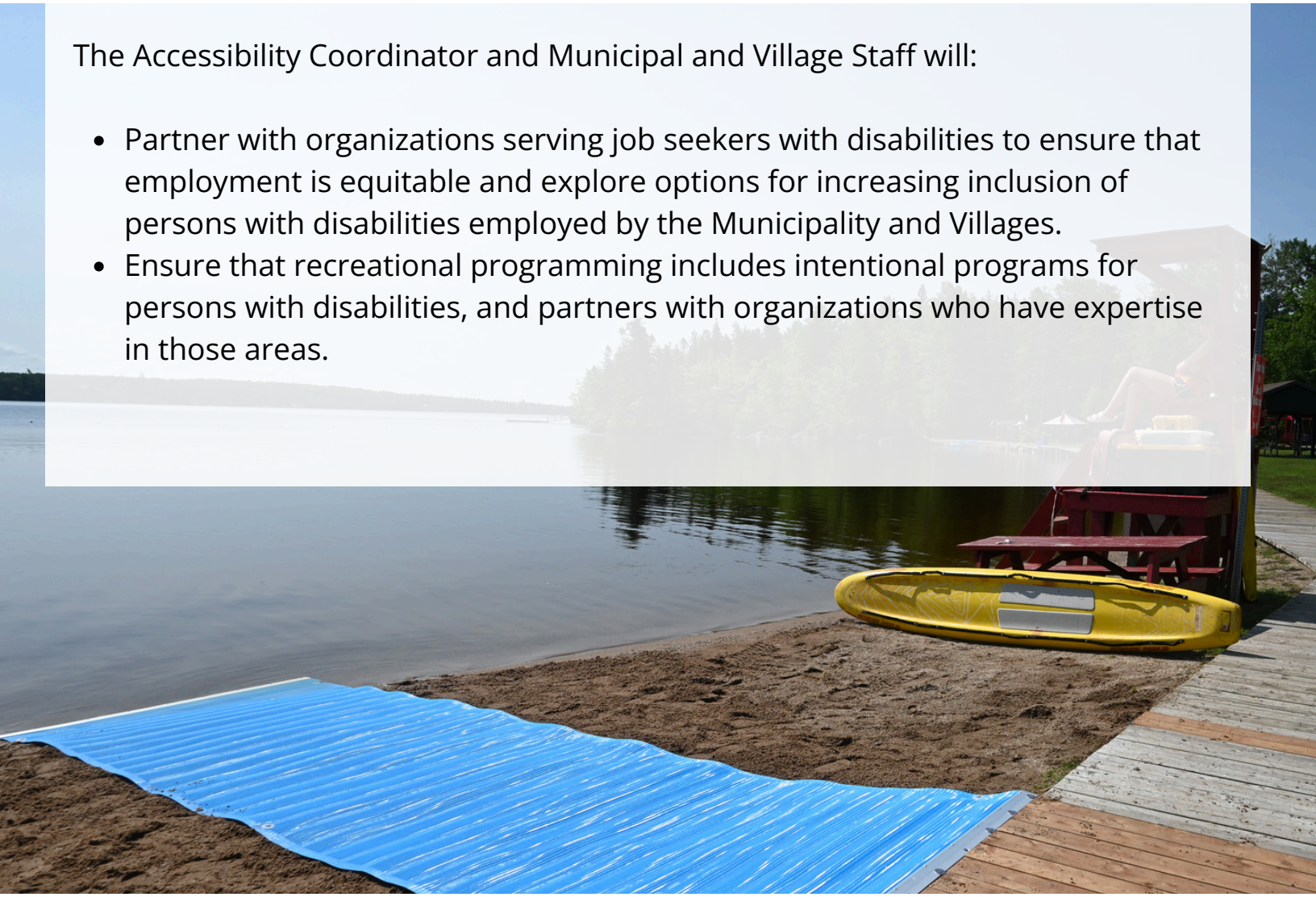
3. **Strengthen Community Partnerships**

The Accessibility Coordinator will:

- Partner with non-profit organizations to better understand the supports they need to become more accessible and develop a plan to support non-profit organizations – this may include resource packages, lunch and learns, or additional grants.
- Partner with Kings County businesses to better understand the supports they need to become more accessible. Develop a strategy to support business – this may include resource packages, lunch and learns, or grants.
- Explore and develop relationships with diverse communities in Kings County including Annapolis Valley First Nation, Glooscap First Nation, and the historic black communities of Gibson Woods and Pine Woods to better support people with disabilities with overlapping identities.

The Accessibility Coordinator and Municipal and Village Staff will:

- Partner with organizations serving job seekers with disabilities to ensure that employment is equitable and explore options for increasing inclusion of persons with disabilities employed by the Municipality and Villages.
- Ensure that recreational programming includes intentional programs for persons with disabilities, and partners with organizations who have expertise in those areas.



4. **Organizational Culture**

The Accessibility Coordinator and Municipal and Village Staff will:

- Further update Council and Commission processes and procedures to increase accessibility. This could include services like sign language interpretation & streaming of meetings online.
- Review and update procurement, HR and customer service policies/procedures to be sure accessibility has been included.
- Update program (recreation and events) planning to make events and programming more accessible.
- Support actions that further diversity in the organizations.
- Continue to ensure that staff attend accessibility training that is relevant to their work.
- Promote accessibility awareness and support efforts by local disability organizations.

Measurement and Reporting

The organizations are committed to measuring their progress in increasing accessibility. The following actions and outcomes will be monitored in partnership between the accessibility coordinator and relevant staff in the Municipality and the Villages. The data to measure these actions and outcomes will be collected by tracking form, staff/community focus groups and surveys. Included with each action/outcome are the indicators that will be used to measure change.

1. **Engage People with Disabilities**

- Percentage of Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (JAAC) members who self-identify as a person with disability or an organization serving people with disabilities
- Number of meetings of JAAC
- Percentage of people that participate in engagements that: self-identify as a person with a disability or represent an organization that serves persons with disabilities
- Description of how engagement processes were made accessible.
- Description of engagement with community for accessibility planning, implementation and/or feedback, by population / organization, and by method.

2. **Deliver and participate in accessibility training and education**

- Number and type (topics covered) of training/education opportunities delivered.
- Number and type of individuals (employees, volunteers, elected officials) that participate in each training/education opportunity.
- Percentage of municipal employees that have completed training related to accessibility.

3. **Apply an accessibility lens to the review, update, and/or development of new municipal policies, regulations, By-laws, and processes.**

- Number and type of policies, regulations, By-laws and processes reviewed and/or changed with an accessibility lens.
- Description of changes made to existing policies, regulations, By-laws and processes to remove and/or prevent accessibility barriers and reason for the change.

4. **Increased individual and organizational capacity to identify, prevent and remove accessibility barriers**

Organizational Capacity:

- Description of changes made to existing policies, regulations and processes to remove and/or prevent accessibility barriers and reason for the change.
- Number of staff that have accessibility goals/tasks included in their job descriptions or work.
- Percentage of municipal budget dedicated to accessibility initiatives.
- Perception about the level of support or capacity for accessibility work in the municipality.

Individual Capacity:

- Percentage of municipal staff (including the Accessibility Lead), volunteers, and elected officials who report increased awareness of how to identify, remove, and prevent accessibility barriers and how to consult with people with disabilities.

5. **Accessibility improvements are made in municipal built environment, employment, goods and services, information and communication, and transportation.**

- Number and description of improvements made to remove and prevent accessibility barriers in municipal built environment, employment, goods and services, information and communication, and transportation.

Individual Organization Work Plans

Each of the eight organizations (Municipality and Villages), is committed to working with the Accessibility Coordinator to create a year-by-year work plan to action the goals of the 2025-2028 Joint Accessibility Plan and provide a progress report to the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee and public yearly, with the option of an additional mid-year progress report.