




DISTRICT OF WEST VANCOUVER

Accessibility Plan

2023 – 2026

Land Acknowledgment

The District of West Vancouver is located on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples, including the Sḵw̓x̓ wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), sə́lílwətaʔt (Tseil-Waututh Nation), and xʷməθkʷəy̓ əm (Musqueam Nation). We recognize and respect them as Nations in this territory, as well as their historic connection to the lands and waters around us since time.



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Accessibility is a cornerstone of an inclusive community and offers community-wide benefits. Generally, accessibility is viewed as something utilized by a small percentage of the population when in fact, people’s abilities are in a constant state of change whether that is living with a lifelong disability, recovering from an injury, or managing age-related health deterioration. Accessibility is something that can benefit an entire community.

The purpose of the District of West Vancouver’s Accessibility Plan is to provide actions that identify, remove, and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the District.

These actions outline how the District of West Vancouver, the West Vancouver Memorial Library, and the West Vancouver Police Department (the District) will further its efforts to make its workplaces, services, and built environment accessible and welcoming to people of all abilities.

This Accessibility Plan enables the District to meet the requirements of the Accessible British Columbia Act (ABCA), which came into force for British Columbia (B.C.) municipalities on September 1, 2022.

The Accessibility Plan provides awareness and education on accessibility. The actions provide a formal strategy to advance accessibility throughout West Vancouver proactively.

This is the District’s first Accessibility Plan covering the next three years (2023 – 2026). As a living document, it recognizes accessibility as ongoing and iterative. It requires continuous adaptation, and to be updated at least every three years to reflect progress, evolving community needs, and future legislative requirements (such as the pending release of provincial accessibility standards).

1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The first step in effectively implementing actions is to develop a shared understanding of accessibility and disability. This means learning how to see barriers from the perspective of people with visible and invisible disabilities. This section outlines what accessibility means, what disabilities are, examples of barriers, the legislative context, the extent, and conditions of current accessibility demographics related to West Vancouver, and the project methodology in developing the Accessibility Plan.

What is Accessibility?

Accessibility ensures that environments, services, and products can be accessed by as many people as possible, particularly those with visible and invisible disabilities¹.

- Accessibility means everyone can participate in their communities through work, play, and other daily activities.
- Accessibility is important for everyone, especially people with disabilities.
- Accessibility is about eliminating barriers and increasing inclusion and independence for everyone.

What are Disabilities?

People's abilities are constantly changing, whether living with a lifelong disability, recovering from an injury, or managing age-related health deterioration (e.g., permanent, temporary, or episodic).

Disability is an umbrella term that can include visible or invisible disabilities. Visible and invisible disabilities can include physical, cognitive, communication, intellectual, sensory, and age-related health deterioration. Persons without visible or invisible disabilities could be considered temporarily able (from a life course perspective) and, therefore, would also benefit from accessible environments.

¹ World Health Organization, World Report on Disability, 2011

There are various conceptual models of disability. Medical models view illness or trauma as the cause and seek to treat it. Functional models view disability as a deficit that impedes the function of a person. In contrast, a social model sees disability as a barrier or limitation in a person’s environment which limits a person’s activity.

For example, a person who uses a wheelchair can access their community if there are ramps, elevators, lowered amenities, and adequately designed travel paths. It is not the wheelchair that creates exclusion; it is the environment which limits a person’s activity.

What is Ableism?

Ableism is a form of prejudice and discrimination in a society that places value on bodies and minds, with socially constructed ideas of what is “normal,” “intelligent,” or “productive.” It leads to a determination of who is worthy and favours the needs and experiences of non-disabled persons, though a person does not have to be disabled to experience ableism². Ableism often assumes that people with visible and invisible disabilities need to be ‘fixed’ or are a burden to society. Ableist beliefs or practice devalues and discriminates against people with disabilities.

Identifying and Removing Barriers

A barrier is anything that hinders a person’s full and equitable participation in society. The World Health Organization states that barriers can impact and create disability, limiting a person from participating fully in their community. Multiple types of barriers can be present at the same time and can impact people differently.

² TL Lewis, via University of Minnesota Critical Disability Studies Collective

British Columbia's Accessibility Plan identifies the following barriers³:

Barrier type and definition	Examples
<p>Attitudinal (Ableism) When people think and act based upon false ideas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making decisions about people with disabilities without including them. • Not believing that a person with a disability can contribute to the workforce. • Believing that people with disabilities are a burden or cost too much to accommodate. • Viewing accessibility as only benefiting people with disabilities, not everyone.
<p>Physical When obstacles make access difficult.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A washroom with an accessible stall but no automatic door opener. • Hosting a meeting in a space with no wheelchair access.
<p>Information or Communication When communication methods do not reach people with disabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not providing large-print versions or using plain language in public documents. • Videos, events, or meetings that do not have closed captioning.
<p>Systemic When an organization's policies or procedures are not inclusive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not providing an American Sign Language interpreter or closed captioning. • Requiring a driver's license for employment when another form of transportation could be used.
<p>Technological When people with disabilities cannot access technology.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Websites, documents, or databases that are not accessible for screen readers or graphics without descriptive text.
<p>Sensory When lights, sounds, or smells prevent participation in the environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfume in the workplace. • Use of fluorescent lighting in the workplace.

³ Government of British Columbia. AccessibleBC: B.C.'s Accessibility Plan

1.2 THE ACCESSIBLE BC ACT

In 2021, the Government of British Columbia enacted the ABCA. The ABCA enables the provincial government to take actions that improve accessibility for all residents and visitors of the province alongside the B.C. Human Rights Code. The province will now:

- Set standards and regulations related to accessibility.
- Promote accessibility across the province (e.g., Accessibility Week).
- Recognize American Sign Language (ASL) as a form of communication with the province.

Requirements for Prescribed Organizations

The Accessible British Columbia Regulation under the ABCA came into force on September 1, 2022. These regulations identified municipalities as accessible organizations. As accessible organizations, municipalities are mandated to have the following by September 1, 2023: 1) an accessible committee, 2) an accessible plan, and 3) a tool to receive feedback on accessibility.

1. **Establish a committee** to assist in identifying barriers to interacting with the organization and advise on removing and preventing barriers.

Committees must include at least half of its members disabilities or individuals who support persons with disabilities; reflect the diversity of persons with disabilities in B.C.; and at least one Indigenous person.

The District already meets the requirement to have an accessibility committee. It is positioned to meet part 9 (2) (c) of the ABCA, **to have at least one member be an indigenous person**. The North Shore Advisory Committee on Disability Issues (NS ACDI) is an established (over 30 years) Council-appointed, **tri-municipal committee comprising balanced geographical and cross-disability representation**.

2. **Create an Accessibility Plan** to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization; review and update at least once every three years; consider the guiding principles; consult and collaborate with the accessibility committee; consider comments received from public feedback.

The District of West Vancouver, the West Vancouver Memorial Library, and the West Vancouver Police Department have partnered to **develop this Accessibility Plan, satisfying the ABCA requirement for an accessibility plan**.

3. **Create a mechanism for receiving comments** from the public related to updating the organization’s accessibility plan and barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization.

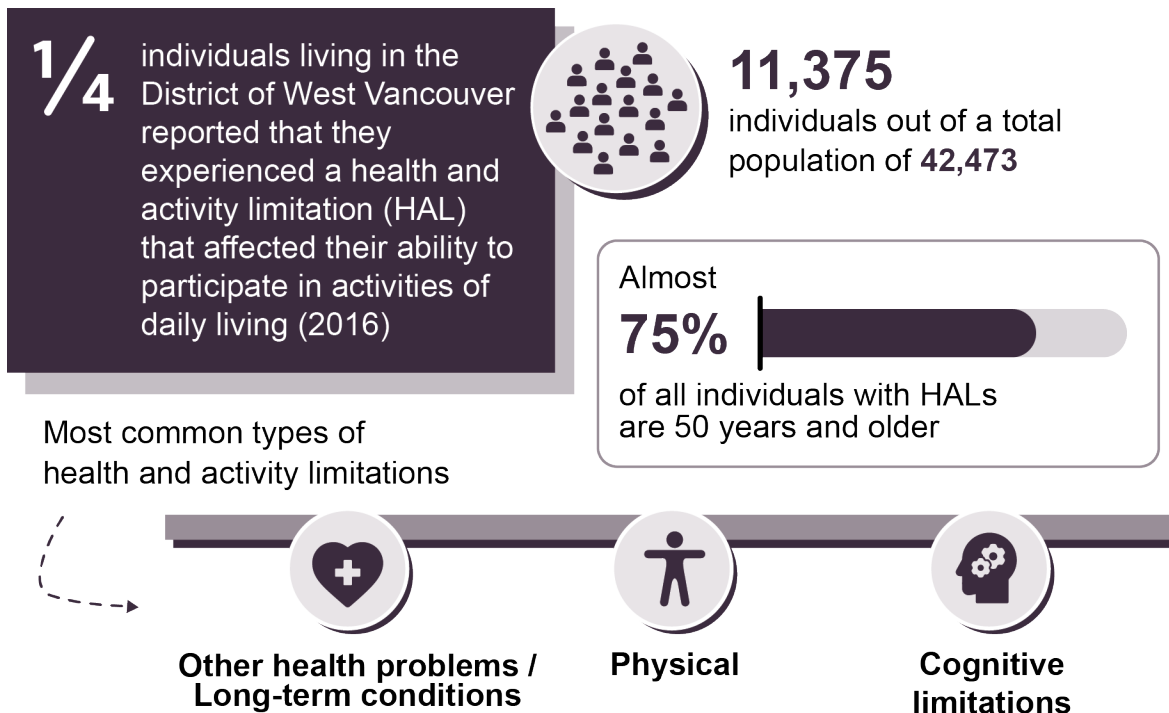
The public can reach each organization through various methods (e.g., a feedback portal, an email, telephone, or in-person) **to provide comments regarding the Accessibility Plan and barriers to individuals in or interacting with each organization.**

1.3 COMMUNITY PROFILE

This Community Profile provides a summary of key health and activity limitations (HAL) data from the 2016 Canadian Census (the most recent “community level” data available) for West Vancouver.

Census statistics define disabilities by frequency and type, considering difficulties or long-term conditions that have lasted or are expected to last for six months. People can also have episodic disabilities, and this is reflected in the Census by people who report they “often and sometimes have a limitation.”⁴

Health and Activity Limitations (HALs)



⁴ Statistics Canada Census 2016. Health and Activity Limitations.

Education and Employment

2/3 individuals who are 15 years and older with HALs living in the District of West Vancouver have post secondary education


Top fields of study of individuals with HALs




Education



Humanities

 Persons with HALs represent approximately **25%** of the total population of those aged 15 years and older participating in the labour force

 Persons with HALs represent about **40%** of the total population of those aged 15 years and older in the labour force



Law



Social & Behavioral Sciences



77% of working individuals travel to work in a vehicle as either a driver or passenger with only **13%** of individuals rely on the use of public transit

2/5 of those who are employed are employed on a full year, full time basis

This indicates that persons with HALs may be less likely to be in the labour force and/or employed on a full year/full time basis

The top three occupations of persons with HALs



Sales & Service



Management



Business, Finance, Administration

Of these individuals, approximately two thirds are self employed, work from home, or work within West Vancouver, and approximately one third work elsewhere in the region

Income

1/5 individuals with HALs in the District of West Vancouver were low income based on Statistics Canada's Low-income Measure (after tax)

DWV Households with HALs



average



median

Metro Vancouver Households with HALs



average



median

1.4 COLLABORATION AND CONNECTION

The ABCA aims to make Canada barrier-free by January 1, 2040. The ABCA provides a legal framework to develop an accessibility plan. The purpose of the Accessibility Plan is to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization.

This section outlines the District's overall project methodology and application of the ABCA guiding principles developing its accessibility plan, along with the role of the NS ACDI and consultation with key staff from public realm service-based divisions.

Guiding Principles⁵

The ABCA includes six guiding principles when developing and updating the Accessibility Plan. Based on consultation with the NS ACDI, a seventh principle of intersectionality was added, expanding on the existing definition of diversity.

The definitions for each of these principles are based on the British Columbia Framework for Accessibility Legislation:

- **Inclusion:** Persons with disabilities and all British Columbians should be able to participate fully and equitably in their communities.

⁵ Prescott, Mike, Helaine Boyd, and Trish Kelly. 2023. Review of Developing Your First Accessibility Plan: A Guide for B.C. Prescribed Organizations. Disability Alliance B.C.

- **Adaptability:** Accessibility Plans should reflect that our understanding of disability and accessibility evolves as services, technology, and attitudes change.
- **Diversity:** Disability is both visible and invisible, with no one-size-fits-all mentality. Each person in the community has various abilities, needs, wants, and interests.
- **Intersectionality:** Every person is unique. People with disabilities have varied intersecting identities, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, and religions that can interact to create additional forces of privilege or marginalization.
- **Collaboration:** Everyone has a role in creating and supporting accessible communities. Accessibility plans should create opportunities for organizations and communities to work together to increase access and inclusion.
- **Self-determination:** Accessibility plans should seek to empower people with disabilities to be able to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.
- **Universal design:** Building, creating, and maintaining services and environments that can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people.

NS ACDI Roundtable

For over 30 years, the NS ACDI has formulated proposals, responded to requests, and made recommendations to the three North Shore municipalities to promote, develop, and sustain an accessible community.

The NS ACDI was instrumental in guiding the development of this Accessibility Plan. Five roundtable meetings took place over the summer of 2023 that related to the following topics:

- **Meeting #1** – Gaps, Awareness, Share Resources, Utilize Learnings.
- **Meeting #2** – Process Timeline, Plan Elements, Implementation Framework.
- **Meeting #3** – Key themes, Cross Border Similarities.
- **Meeting #4** – Priority Areas for Action.
- **Meeting #5** – Draft Plan Review

The objective of engaging with NS ACDI was to understand the perspectives of this community group and identify current barriers. From this, key themes emerged as areas of focus that reflect the commonality in the accessibility needs of North Shore residents.

Following this, key action items were identified and refined as methods of removing current barriers and preventing future barriers to accessibility.

District of West Vancouver, West Vancouver Memorial Library, and West Vancouver Police Department Workshops

While each organization serves different needs of West Vancouver residents, partnering on an accessibility plan promotes a consistent approach to accessibility and facilitates learning across municipal departments and organizations.

Staff from the three entities were invited to participate in a series of virtual workshops to hear about accessibility in their departments. These workshops aimed to understand each department's / organization's current accessibility actions, including the successes and challenges that staff encounter in identifying, removing, and preventing barriers.

This feedback was paramount to identifying key action items and informing priority areas.

The District has already started its journey to become accessible. Some of the initiatives already in place in West Vancouver are outlined below:

- Working with the North Shore's Advisory Committee on Disability Issues to help identify and remove barriers to physical and social accessibility, including regular consultation on civic buildings, park amenities, and active transportation.
- The Library provides accessible service support, provides staff training on adaptive services, and refreshing progress made since a 2015 Rick Hansen accessibility assessment.
- The Police have internal committees focused on inclusion, have American Sign Language (ASL) translation service contracts, and have begun updating their website.

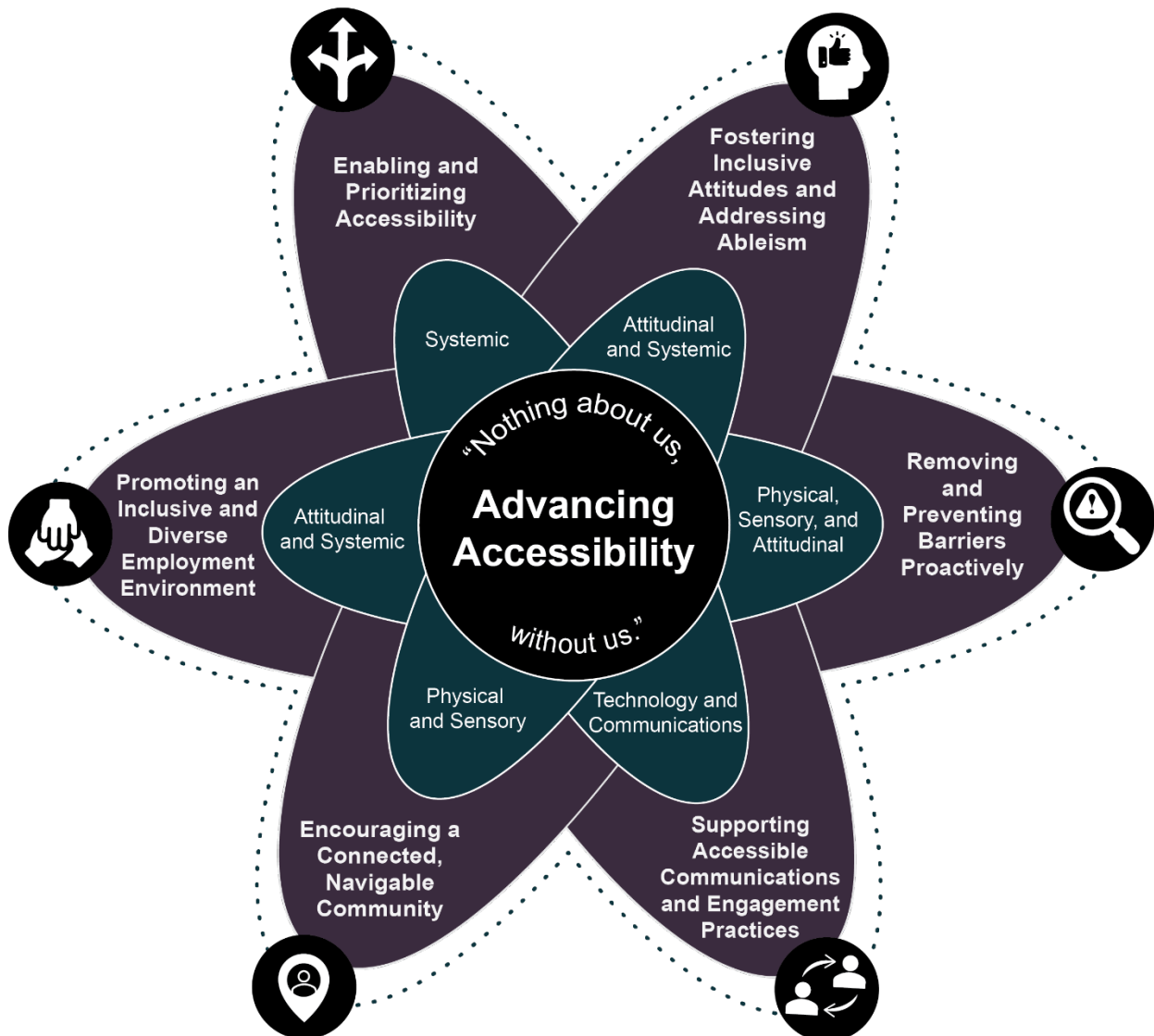
To support the unique needs of libraries and policing, the West Vancouver Memorial Library and the West Vancouver Police Department may also consult other libraries, police organizations, and accessibility committees/stakeholder(s) within British Columbia to identify and support additional accessibility initiatives specific to their work.

2.0 ACCESSIBILITY ACTION PLAN

This section outlines the recommended action items framed by the six priority areas. These emerged from engaging with staff and the NS ACDI. The goals were further guided by the six principles of accessibility from the ABCA.

Figure 1 visually represents the action plan framework and barriers network. The phrase “nothing about us, without us” (coined by disability activists and later used in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) is central to emphasizing that accessibility work must be done in collaboration with people with disabilities and disability organizations, ensuring their empowerment in decision making.

Figure 1: Action Plan Framework and Barriers Network



To effectively improve accessibility, staff will need access to tools, resources, education, and skill development that supports their ability to prevent, identify, and remove barriers. The Accessibility Plan's expanded action items provide key areas to operationalize and celebrate the benefits of accessibility.

2.1 FOSTERING INCLUSIVE ATTITUDES AND ADDRESSING ALBEISM

GOAL: Foster a culture of accessibility and inclusion for employees, volunteers, and the community to break down attitudinal barriers.

Action
Explore continuing education and training opportunities for District employees on ableism and working with people with visible and invisible disabilities.
Consider where education and awareness of invisible, non-speaking, and neurodiverse barriers for District employees can increase.
Facilitate public education and information on accessibility, the ABCA relevant and most up-to-date information related to accessibility and the importance of this work, through a dedicated webpage.
Seek opportunities to collaborate and partner with local groups and lived-experience experts in offering learning and educational opportunities.

2.2 REMOVING AND PREVENTING BARRIERS PROACTIVELY

GOAL: Improve public realm and built environment adaptability through universal design to support equitable access for all and enhanced end-user experience.

Action
Support employee development goals, ongoing professional development, and career advancements in effectively applying best practices in universal design and design for all concepts through employee training and development programs, such as tuition reimbursement.
Beginning with the highest community value projects reflect and work with best practice standards (e.g., British Columbia Building Code, CSA/ASC B651 ¹ , or similar as they evolve), with checklists for common projects that can be shared interdepartmentally (e.g., sidewalks, accessible furniture, bike lanes, curb cuts etc.) for use across the North Shore.
Create an inventory of sidewalks that includes a matrix/map for internal use in determining where improvements are needed, resources directed, and funds allocated.
Determine an auditing framework for civic buildings through support from established disability auditing organizations to identify existing physical, sensory, information/communication, and technological barriers that affect universal accessibility, which includes both public and staff areas. Utilize findings to support capital works projects and budgets.
Continue to engage with key accessibility stakeholder(s) reviewing and developing of policies and bylaws related to the District, West Vancouver Memorial Library, and West Vancouver Police Department.
Continue to engage with key accessibility stakeholder(s) on prioritized projects (assessed by high-usage priority areas and community benefit).

2.3 SUPPORTING ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES

GOAL: Continue to advance the District’s public communications interfaces to meet the needs of an entire community, ensuring that all residents have equitable access to collaborate, participate, and engage in civic responsibility.

Action
Create an internal accessibility directory that includes guidelines such as respectful, person-first language or identity-first language, neurodiversity terms and definitions, accessible materials, etc., that can be utilized (where applicable) in accommodating accessible engagement, public-facing events, and materials.
Continue to advance District websites towards meeting the latest web content accessibility guidelines / standards, include automatic audits and reporting software.
Establish an internal communications guideline to promote the advantages of universal design and design for all in capital projects and built environment retrofits or designs.
Create a feedback mechanism that enables the community to report accessibility challenges related to facilities, services, programs, and public spaces.

2.4 ENCOURAGING A CONNECTED, NAVIGABLE COMMUNITY

GOAL: Promote self-determination to enable people with visible and invisible disabilities to access their community, interact with others, travel across it, and have the information they need to navigate it.

Action
Develop a public and interactive accessibility web map to present searchable information about District accessibility (e.g., amenities, active transportation routes, parking etc.).
Map assets and deficits in accessibility – sidewalks, trails, parks, curb ramps, accessible parking spots – as part of internal assessments of ongoing maintenance and development.
Include facilities accessibility information on applicable web pages.
Include program and service accessibility information on applicable web pages.

2.5 PROMOTING AN INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE EMPLOYMENT ENVIRONMENT

GOAL: Expand accessible employment procedures to reflect the diversity of people with disabilities in West Vancouver.

Action
Review where hiring practices and procedures can be expanded to reach disabled applicants.
Seek to understand and continue providing accommodation support for internal staff and volunteers who have an invisible or visible disability, an injury, and/or a medical condition.
Continue to include and provide training to District employees at various stages of employment that includes all disabilities through the respectful workplace policy.
Explore how to incorporate accessibility features into the request for proposal template criteria.

2.6 ENABLING AND PRIORITIZING ACCESSIBILITY

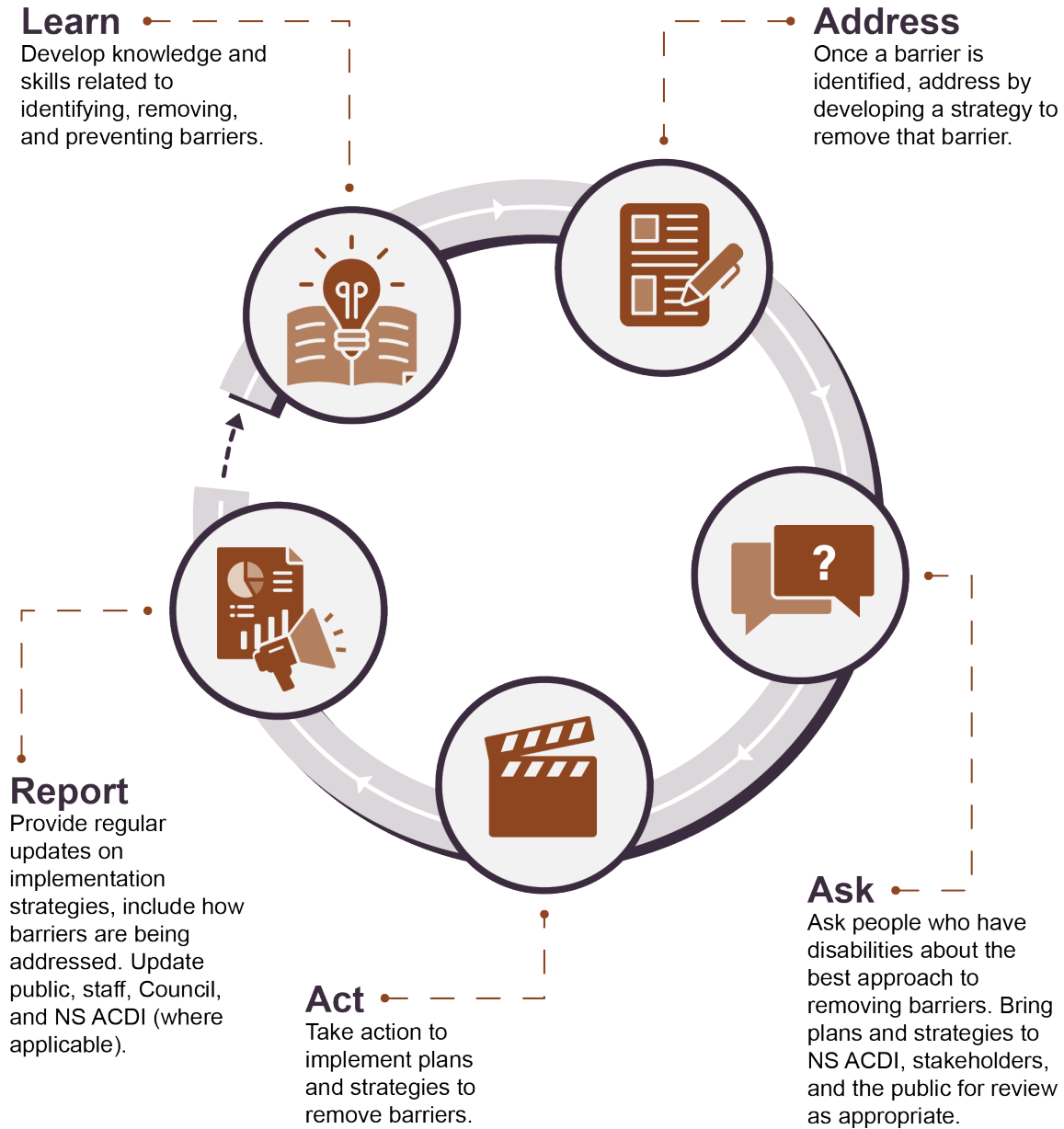
GOAL: Establish systems to include accessibility from the beginning, promote associated community benefits, and celebrate advances toward improved accessibility.

Action
Convene the inter-departmental staff group to meet bi-annually, at minimum to ensure accessibility is regularly discussed, progress is assessed, and best practices are shared across departments.
Integrate the importance of accessibility into public projects/works and identify and communicate what accessibility approaches were applied into these public projects/works.
Seek to use grant opportunities, partner-organization collaboration, and shared resources to implement action items.
Explore the intentional allocation of financial resources to implement accessibility-related projects and initiatives.
As appropriate and relevant, update actions and respond to forthcoming provincial legislative standards and requirements.
Ensure monitoring and evaluation are ongoing to assess progress toward becoming a more inclusive, welcoming, and accessible community for all individuals.

3.0 IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

Embracing an approach of Learn-Address-Ask-Act-Report-Repeat towards accessibility offers a sequential process that builds on one another to make lasting, long-term improvements across the District toward better access for everyone.

Figure 2: The Journey of Implementation



3.1 LEARN

The District can help build a culture of inclusion and accessibility through learning and sharing information. This means developing knowledge and skills related to accessibility. Specifically, awareness of identifying, preventing, and removing barriers is needed to address barriers effectively.

Education can cover many topics but may include:

- Universal design and design for all practices.
- Accessible communication practices.
- Professional development courses.
- Adaptability and accommodation practices.

3.2 ADDRESS

Once there is knowledge about a barrier, it will need to be addressed. Strategies to remove or prevent barriers could be policies, practices, design guidelines, or other activities. The District will look at how they deliver services, what they plan to design and build, how they communicate with the public, and more.

3.3 ASK

Acting upon “nothing about us, without us,” collaboration, and self-determination, staff will seek input from people with disabilities. The level of engagement will depend on the size and impact of a project. However, it could include bringing a project to the NS ACDI for feedback, seeking public feedback, or hiring professionals for services (e.g., an audit).

3.4 ACT

Now is the time to act. Actions can include anything that helps to prevent or remove barriers for those accessing West Vancouver services, programs, or the public realm.

3.5 REPORT

Showing what is happening within West Vancouver is important for accountability. The District will share what they are working on, what has been completed, and what work is planned. Where applicable, reports may go to the NS ACDI, Council, senior managers, or the public.

4.0 NEXT STEPS

This is the District's first plan to advance accessibility in West Vancouver. It will help establish core practices and skills within the District and will function as an educational document for the community.

Recognizing that the collective understanding of accessibility is continually evolving, and as a living document this Accessibility Plan will also continually evolve. This Accessibility Plan provides a foundation for the District and community to identify barriers and collaborate on becoming a more accessible community.

The Accessibility Plan provides a platform of key priority areas to be addressed over the initial years of its implementation and will be updated at least once every three years. Monitoring and evaluation will be ongoing to assess progress toward becoming a more inclusive, welcoming, and accessible community for all individuals.

The Accessibility Plan establishes a platform for the District to advance accessibility by promoting an environment where the benefits of accessibility are integrated and celebrated.