



Accessibility Plan

April 2022

Accessibility Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Accessibility Advisory Committee provides advice on identifying, preventing, and eliminating barriers to people with disabilities in programs, services, initiatives, and facilities. The committee plays a pivotal role in helping the South Shore Public Libraries Board (SSPL) become accessible and meet its obligations under Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act.

Role

The Accessibility Advisory Committee shall:

- 1) Advise on the preparation, implementation, and effectiveness of SSPL's accessibility plan. In accordance with the Accessibility Act, the plan must include:
 - a) a report on measures SSPL has taken and intends to take to identify, remove, and prevent barriers.
 - b) information on procedures SSPL has in place to assess the following for their impact on accessibility for people with disabilities:
 - any proposed policies, programs, practices, and services.
 - any proposed enactments or by-laws.
 - c) any other prescribed information.

- 2) Review and update its accessibility plan at least every three years, in accordance with the act.
- 3) Consult with stakeholders on accessibility in the organization.
- 4) Identify and advise on the accessibility of existing and proposed services and facilities.
- 5) Advise and make recommendations about strategies designed to achieve the objectives of the organization's accessibility plan.
- 6) Receive and review information from staff and senior leadership, and make recommendations, as requested.
- 7) Assist in monitoring compliance with federal and provincial government directives and regulations.

Composition and Terms of Appointment

- The Accessibility Advisory Committee shall have 6 members. At least half of the members must be people with disabilities or represent organizations that represent people with disabilities, in accordance with the act.
- The members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee shall be appointed for a term of 2 years.
- The Committee shall appoint a Chair and Vice-Chair every year.

Meetings and Working Groups

- The committee shall convene at least 4 times per year, or as needed to fulfill its duties. Quorum shall be 4.
- The committee may establish working groups to explore specific issues related to the accessibility plan and/or other responsibilities. A working group may include members who are not Advisory Committee members. The chair of a working group must be a member of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Vision and Principles

Everyone will have full and equitable access to spaces, resources, services, programs, and employment opportunities offered by South Shore Public Libraries.

Principles

- **Human Rights** - In keeping with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, we recognize the many barriers which limit full participation of persons with disabilities and we uphold accessibility as a fundamental human right to be modelled in our library service.
- **Inclusion** - We commit to creating accessible, equitable, and inclusive learning, social, and working environments within our regional library, including services and programs, where community members and employees are treated with respect and dignity and their experiences valued.
- **Creativity** – We will advance accessibility with creativity, adaptivity, and forward thinking. The Regional Library is committed to being proactive and flexible in our approach.
- **First Voice** – The knowledge and expertise of persons with disabilities is central in our approach to advance accessibility. We will seek and listen to the input of individuals and communities that our regional library serves. We commit to advocating on behalf of the people we employ and those we work for.
- **Community-Led** – We recognize that creative solutions come from new connections and are committed to connecting, consulting, and working collaboratively with our communities to understand their needs.
- **Diversity** – We recognize the complex nature of disabilities and acknowledge the impact to accessibility, individual differences of identity, perspective, circumstance and experience can have. Disability is regarded as part of diversity and this will be reflected in public library spaces, policies, programs and services.

Approved: April 1, 2022

Built Environment

Goal

South Shore Public Libraries (SSPL) will strive to provide a barrier-free experience for everyone who visits our built environment. While individual libraries are owned and operated by entities outside the control of SSPL, all means will be used by the library to ensure cooperation and compliance.

Commitments

- We recognize the built environment is not confined to the facility but includes surrounding infrastructure such as parking, sidewalks, signage, lighting, transportation connections, and more.
- We understand accessibility to the built environment is an ongoing process of improvement and requires listening carefully to the needs of all persons with disabilities.
- We will seek input from persons with disabilities and their representative groups to identify solutions to barriers.
- We will work with partners to implement solutions and remove those barriers, and when necessary, ensure compliance through appropriate channels.

Specific Actions

Stage One – Education and Auditing [**Timeline to be added in final plan**]:

- Education regarding accessibility standards and approaches for the built environment will be provided to all managers of the regional library and be offered to interested members of the Accessibility Planning Committee as well.
- With agreement and participation of owners of the built infrastructure accessibility audits will be completed for all facilities and include surrounding elements such as parking, sidewalks, etc. The Accessibility Committee will be a key stakeholder as part of this project and determine the scope of the audit and review the results. A complete audit report will be provided to the library board and all stakeholders.

- Plans for any proposed library projects, will be separately audited for accessibility during the Construction Document Phase and community consultation with the disabled community will be carried out. The audit report will be provided to new project committees, Library Board, and Accessibility Committee. Any consideration of new library locations will assess options using the accessibility lens.

Stage Two – Reporting and Planning **[Timeline to be added]**

- Recommendations from the accessibility audits will be delivered to the respective municipalities or owners. Recommendations will include priorities, short term fixes if appropriate, and potential costs and funding sources for capital improvements.

Approved – March 21, 2022

Services and Programs

Goal

South Shore Public Libraries (SSPL) will provide equitable access to all services and programs in a way that is barrier free and inclusive for everyone.

Commitments

- SSPL will seek input from persons with disabilities on the accessibility of new and existing services.
- SSPL will actively seek opportunities and develop new services and programs that directly benefit persons with disabilities.
- SSPL will include programs that educate the wider community about disability issues in an affirming and supportive manner.
- SSPL will ensure that any programs specifically carried out by the library will be as accessible and inclusive as possible through the use of space allocation in programming areas, interpretation, closed captioning, and other means.

Specific Actions

Stage One – Review [Timeline to be added]

- Create an audit tool to find potential service barriers and solutions to these barriers. Submit all current services to this checklist and remediate any barriers. All new services will be applied against this checklist. The checklist will be reviewed regularly and be part of a larger Accessibility Toolkit prepared for new and existing staff persons.
- Consult community to create a checklist of potential program barriers and solutions to these barriers. Submit all current programs to this checklist and remediate any barriers. All new programs will be applied against this checklist. The checklist will be reviewed regularly and be part of a larger Accessibility Toolkit prepared for new and existing staff persons.
- Consider public transportation schedule when setting program times where appropriate
- Ensure that alternatives to brick and mortar library services, such as books by mail, home delivery and eservices are well advertised and accessible for all users.

Stage Two – Development [Timeline to be added]

- Working with partners, include programs for the wider community that affirm and include persons with disabilities.
- Include “development of services and programs to persons with disabilities” as a part of Branch Coordinators job description and ensure accessibility is part of all SSPL job descriptions.
- Ensure accessibility and the proposed Accessibility Toolkit are part of new staff and existing members training and orientation.
- Specialized.

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Transportation

Goal

South Shore Public Libraries (SSPL) recognizes travelling to and from the public library can be a barrier for persons with disabilities. The SSPL will work to eliminate this barrier for all services and programs.

Commitments

- SSPL will seek input from persons with disabilities on transportation barriers and ways to overcome them.
- SSPL will actively seek opportunities to work with local transit authorities and companies to ensure transportation to and from the public library is part of their service.
- SSPL will include transportation for persons with disabilities in the development and resourcing of library programming.

Specific Actions

Stage One – Review [**Timeline to be added in final plan**]

- Investigate local options and costs for transportation to and from the library, including transit authorities and companies, to determine opportunities and limitations of their service.
- Determine library site specific barriers related to vehicles used by local transit authorities and companies.
- Further research equipment required to ensure quality virtual access to services and programs.

Stage Two – Development [**Timeline to be added in final plan**]

- Identify funding sources, through operating or grant funding, to subsidize transportation to and from library programs and events.
- Develop a board policy for persons with disabilities to access funds in the most convenient and efficient manner.
- Work to eliminate any site-specific barriers related to vehicles used by local transit authorities and companies.
- Ensure the opportunities for transportation are well advertised and outreach is made to the greater community.

Approved : April 21, 2022

Employment

Goal

South Shore Public Libraries employment policies and practices reflect their commitment to diversity and inclusion. Public libraries provide equitable employment opportunities and support the careers of employees with disabilities or who experience barriers to accessibility.

Commitments

- SSPL hiring policies and practices will encourage recruitment/selection of persons with disabilities and job advertisements will be in accessible formats.
- Incorporate accommodations into hiring procedures.
- Policies ensure that employees who have a disability or experience barriers will have the tools they need to be successful in their employment and will be supported in their career growth.
- SSPL will provide training to all employees on how to be supportive of colleagues who experience barriers to accessibility in the workplace.
- Ongoing cultural safety training and education is given to staff so that assistance given to people who experience barriers makes them feel comfortable and welcome.
- Create a workplace accommodation policy
- Update the employee training manual to include a section on respecting diversity. This will include training in working with people of all ages and abilities.

Specific Actions

Stage One – Review [**Timeline to be added**]

- Provide cultural safety training and education for staff so that assistance given to people who experience barriers makes them feel comfortable and welcome.
- Update the employee training manual to include a section on respecting diversity. This will include training in working with people of all ages and abilities.

Stage Two – Development [**Timeline to be added**]

- Conduct training for all employees on how to be supportive of colleagues who experience barriers to accessibility in the workplace

Approved: April 21, 2022

Communication

Goal

Information and communication at South Shore Public Libraries is accessible to users, employees and other key stakeholders. SSPL is committed to providing mechanisms for people to access information and removing barriers to accessing information in accessible formats.

Commitments

- Public sharing of information will show cultural diversity and is welcoming to people of all abilities in its advertising.
- All communication is accessible, including public documents, event invitations and registrations, videos, presentations, websites and tools, and other.
- SSPL will improve communications about existing programs, information, and the formats it is offered in so that users are aware of what is available.

Specific Actions

Stage One – Review **Timeline to be added**

Stage Two – Development **Timeline to be added**

Approved : April 29, 2022