

**City of West Kelowna
Accessibility & Inclusion
Plan
2025 – 2028**

**Note: the following two sections will be included in the FINAL DRAFT*
MESSAGE FROM COUNCIL

Our Accessibility Story

Message from CAO & Mayor

Message from Accessibility Committee

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgement of Key Contributors

Territorial Acknowledgement

DRAFT

ACRONYMS

AIC	Accessibility and Inclusion Committee (City of West Kelowna)
ASL	American Sign Language
CNIB	Canadian Institute for the Blind
CWK	City of West Kelowna
JBMAC	Johnson Bentley Memorial Aquatic Centre
RDCO	Regional District of Central Okanagan
RFP	Request for Proposal
WFN	Westbank First Nation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of West Kelowna Accessibility and Inclusion Action Plan 2025-2028 provides a pathway for building an accessible community where everyone can fully participate together in the spaces, processes, and activities of their everyday lives, and into the future of this growing community in the Okanagan.

This Action Plan is ambitious and concrete with plenty of opportunities for the City of West Kelowna to showcase their efforts aligned with the Accessibility Act (2021) implemented across British Columbia. The City of West Kelowna is committed to working with people with disabilities, using an accessibility lens to create a sustainable and inclusive culture. By ensuring accessibility is prioritized throughout communications, services, planning and programming and policies, the City of West Kelowna is expressing a commitment to equality, dignity and justice for everyone.

The Action Plan is an opportunity for people in West Kelowna to engage in community-building where inclusion becomes an on-going practice, involving people with disabilities in the many stages of designing actions from concept to implementation, and feedback.

The process began with the formation of an Accessibility and Inclusion Committee who then worked with Disability Consultant, Spring Hawes, to engage in a visioning process, develop a public engagement survey and, along with staff from the City of West Kelowna, provide input on the Action Plan. The Action Plan was then brought to the Mayor and Council for review and adoption before being published on the City's website.

This Action Plan provides an overview of the Accessible BC Act, explains the City of West Kelowna approach using an accessibility lens and outlines a way forward for designing inclusion. The Action Plan follows the provincial Accessible BC Plan's guiding principles to support the implementation of the City's actions related to accessibility and inclusion.

The Action Plan identifies six focus areas of action:

- Transportation
- Facilities
- Parks and Trails
- Service Delivery
- Policy
- Culture of Accessibility and Inclusion

For each focus area, there is background information, an overarching goal and series of objectives, a summary of what was heard during the engagement, and proposed actions. In addition, there are highlights from the City of West Kelowna strategic priorities, as well as accessibility actions that are already completed or underway. The monitoring and implementation section outlines key processes and tools for measuring and showcasing the City's progress on Accessibility and Inclusion Actions. The Action Plan also contains resources for further research and relevant appendices of the development of the actions.

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INTRODUCTION

The City of West Kelowna is gathered on the traditional territory of the syilx/Okanagan people. It is located on the west shore of Okanagan Lake in the Okanagan Valley and has an estimated population of 40,715 residents (BC Stats, 2023) with evidence that communities living in the area will continue to grow and change. West Kelowna is known for its spectacular semi-rural setting, abundant recreational opportunities with convenient shopping, local markets and access to municipal programs and services.

The City of West Kelowna partners with Westbank First Nation, District of Peachland and Regional District of Central Okanagan in providing regional services such as water management and stewardship and emergency responses as well as close collaboration on social and environmental challenges affecting the Central Okanagan.

People are drawn to the Okanagan Valley because it is beautiful and the people who have lived here for generations are known to be warm and inviting. Newcomers, arriving here, often want to stay and live here long into the future. People with disabilities expect to be able to fully participate, while feeling safe and welcome to support and sustain the social fabric of the communities of West Kelowna.

AN ACCESSIBILITY LENS

This Accessibility and Inclusion Action Plan was designed through an accessibility lens which recognizes that equal access is a fundamental aspect of respecting and upholding human rights. Accessibility, or the actions we take to remove barriers to access, involves designing inclusive systems, policies, and infrastructures that allow all individuals to participate equally in societal activities. By ensuring that accessibility is prioritized, we confirm our commitment to equality, dignity, and justice for everyone.

Accessibility ensures that individuals with disabilities can exercise their rights on an equal basis with others. This includes access to education, employment, public services, and social participation. When environments and services are accessible, people with disabilities can engage fully in their communities. Disabled people can visit friends in their homes, commute to their work, host meetings, babysit their grandkids, take their kids to the playground, age in their own homes, and access the services and activities as other community members do.

A WAY FORWARD

The creation of the City of West Kelowna Accessibility and Inclusion Action Plan is driven by the [Accessible BC Act](#) (ABC) legislation. The Act was enacted in 2021 by the Province of British Columbia and it represents a significant advancement in promoting inclusion. It requires public services and facilities take specific steps towards becoming accessible to individuals with disabilities. The Act mandates that prescribed public sector organizations, including municipalities, educational institutions, and health authorities, develop and establish accessibility committees, create and adopt accessibility plans such as this one, to identify and remove barriers to accessibility and regularly report on their progress, and engage with the community to receive input accessibility concerns. Under the ABC Act, the Province of British Columbia is currently developing [accessibility standards](#), which will further inform and guide accessibility when they are adopted.

In British Columbia, there are several other key pieces of legislation that impact and guide the development and implementation of municipal accessibility plans. This includes the Accessible BC Act, The British Columbia Human Rights Code, The Local Government Act, The Community Charter, The Building Act and The Public Health Act (see appendix for links). All of the accessibility legislation efforts in British Columbia are aligned with the [Accessible Canada Act](#) (2019), which in turn are guided by the United Nations [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (2006). These legislations collectively shape how municipalities in BC develop and implement their accessibility plans to ensure they are inclusive and meet the needs of all residents.

Accessibility Criteria

Accessibility criteria refers to specific standards or requirements that must be met to ensure that environments, products, services, and communications are usable by individuals with a wide range of abilities and disabilities. These criteria are designed to remove barriers and provide equitable access for all users. The City of West Kelowna Accessibility and Inclusion Action Plan contains actions to co-develop specific accessibility criteria with the Accessibility and Inclusion Committee that be used to ensure that accessibility improvements undertaken by the City of West Kelowna are well-designed and meet the needs of as many people as possible.

CITY OF WEST KELOWNA'S ACCESSIBILITY COMMITMENTS

Council Strategic Priorities: Strengthen Our Community: “Accessibility.

We will work to ensure that residents and visitors with different abilities are able to use and enjoy our sidewalks, pathways, parks, trails, facilities, beaches and other attractions. We will work in collaboration with Council’s Accessibility Committee on the provision of an Accessibility Plan for community review.”

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY OF WEST KELOWNA'S ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE (AIC)

Background

The City of West Kelowna’s Accessibility and Inclusion Committee (AIC) was formed to bring community members and organizations together to work collaboratively with municipal staff to discuss, develop, improve, promote, and sustain community accessibility and inclusion. This includes reducing and removing barriers associated with accessibility, focusing on experiences of people with diverse abilities, and fostering an all-encompassing community.

AIC Members

As per the Accessibility B.C. Act, the Committee membership includes representatives with disabilities or individuals who support, or are from organizations that support people with disabilities, and at least one of the committee members is an Indigenous person. The Committee reflects the diversity of people in West Kelowna and provides a diverse cross-disability perspective.

Roles and Responsibilities of the AIC

The AIC roles and responsibilities include:

- a) Advise on a process for receiving public comments about accessibility;
- b) Establish and maintain an Accessibility Plan;
- c) Work collaboratively to identify and implement initiatives to enhance accessibility and inclusion in the community;
- d) Provide guidance and advice regarding accessibility within our organization and municipal events, including how we may become more inclusive in our operations;
- e) To work cooperatively with agencies representing people with disabilities, in order to provide input on matters affecting people facing barriers within the community;
- f) Receive referrals from staff, Council and Committees for review and recommendations;

- g) Recognize that the Committee's comments and recommendations represent one of a series of decision-making processes that enable members of Council to fully understand the issues under review, including their policy and budget consequences and potential impact on the public; and
- h) Investigate funding opportunities available with respect to inclusion and accessibility.

As per Accessibility B.C. Act, first priority of the AIC is to create an Accessibility Plan designed to expand and improve accessibility options within our City. As well as create a Feedback Mechanism to continually improve accessibility within the City.

INITIAL PHASES OF THE ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION PLAN

Background Work and Research

To ensure this plan is robust, actionable, and effective, it is important that it integrates well with existing City of West Kelowna policies and strategic priorities, and complements and strengthens existing frameworks.

As a part of the background work to begin the process of engaging the Committee, the public, and the staff, existing plans and policies were reviewed. It was important to understand how the City currently plans for accessibility and inclusion, where we are in the cycle of updating and/or renewing relevant plans, and what opportunities there are for further integrating access and inclusion into City frameworks.

Key documents, plans, and strategies were reviewed including the following:

- The Official Community Plan, 2020-2040
- Our Community Vision, 2020-2040
- Council's 2022-2026 Strategic Priorities
- The Transportation Master Plan (Feb. 2014)
- The Housing Strategy
- The Parks Master Plan
- The Recreational Trails Master Plan
- The Boucherie and Casa Loma Multi-Use Pathways projects
- The 2022 Annual Report
- Relevant bylaws and policies

Highlights of the Review

The City of West Kelowna reported several specific activities that improved accessibility in the 2022 Annual Report, including accessibility upgrades in Beechnut Park and Casa Loma Dock Park

The City of West Kelowna's Vision document reflects a strong desire to build a city and communities that are welcoming, livable, and accessible to all people. Key statements include:

- *"We are inclusive and supportive of one another, and we are ready to create our future together."*
- *"Our West Kelowna is a city that is inclusive and welcoming to all."*
- *"Caring and supporting one another and celebrating our diversity."*
- *"Engaging to make important decisions together."*
- *"Planning ahead for our future infrastructure needs."*
- *"Being prepared to face future emergencies"*

The City of West Kelowna's Official Community Plan (OCP) is a forward-looking plan that is informed by the City's Vision. The review found that the plan considers a wide range of community needs and users. Broadly, in terms of accessibility, the OCP:

- Refers to Universal Design, the requirements of the large over-55 population, calls for transit and pedestrian-oriented planning, need for more accessible housing, ground-oriented
- Considers additional residential uses in combination with the institutional use, where the proposed residential use supports housing initiatives with a broader community interest such as supportive, transitional, community, affordable or non-market housing.
- Supports initiatives designed to meet the needs of all residents in the community for a range of social considerations, such as arts, culture, recreation and community services, heritage, public health and safety, food security, schools and housing attainability.
- States that there should be no barriers to access – physical, social or economic – including access to effective public transportation.
- Supports fostering community interaction and bring together people of diverse backgrounds, lifestyles, generations, abilities, and interests through a variety of inclusive leisure, arts, cultural and recreational opportunities, including the arts and culture of Indigenous Peoples.

- Supports the creation of a network of community and recreational facilities which are conveniently accessible to all neighbourhoods, adaptable to changing needs, and with no barriers to entry (age, ability, religion, gender, etc.)

Descriptors such as “universal accessibility”, “barrier-free” and “aging-in-place” appear numerous times throughout the Plan. Examples include:

- Section 3.1.3 Built Form and Community Character: “New development should incorporate principles of universal accessibility” and
- Section 3.6.1.3 Community Services and Recreation Policies: “Encourage new development to contribute to or deliver, where appropriate, universally accessible community spaces and facilities including for childcare, recreation, and youth programming.”

The review found that the City of West Kelowna is on a path toward a community that is inclusive, welcoming, and accessible to its residents and visitors.

The review also found that there are many opportunities to further embed accessibility throughout the OCP. Undertaking the actions in this Accessibility Plan - such as conducting accessibility audits to identify priorities, developing accessibility criteria, and creating workplans – will provide much more clear and specific direction that can be incorporated into future iterations of the OCP.

Guiding Principles

The Accessible BC Act requires that prescribed organizations must consult with its accessibility committee, and consider specified principles:

- Inclusion
- Adaptability
- Diversity
- Collaboration
- Self-determination (people choosing and setting their own goals, being involved in making life decisions, self-advocating, and working to reach their goals).
- [Universal Design](#) (the process of creating services and environments that are accessible to people with a wide range of abilities, disabilities, and other characteristics). Read more here: [Universal Design Canada](#)

These six important principles are embedded throughout this Action Plan, so that the City will be guided in its’ accessibility journey by continuously engaging with and consulting disabled community members and partner organizations.

Involvement and Consultation with the Accessibility and Inclusion Committee (AIC)

The City of West Kelowna's Accessibility and Inclusion Committee (AIC) is invested in creating an accessibility Action Plan that is practical and actionable. For this reason, the Committee took an iterative approach to creating this Action Plan, with a pattern of engaging, refining, engaging, refining.

The Committee began by gathering the input, observances, and priorities of members through a visioning exercise in which members were asked to imagine what a truly inclusive city would be like. We then asked for the input of the public through a public engagement process. That input was combined with the committee's input, and synthesized into many individual actions, which were then categorized into distinct focus areas.

Each Committee member was asked to prioritize the actions in each focus area from one (most important), to ten (less urgent, but still important). The Committee responses were then collated into a master list of priorities for each separate focus area.

Key City staff were asked to provide input on the feasibility of the actions, what they saw as opportunities, and what represented more complexity, required more time and/or resources, or would be very challenging to implement.

The AIC met once again to receive the comments from staff, and to incorporate that advice into their final recommendations for the development of key actions.

Public Engagement

The City of West Kelowna conducted a public engagement process to collect information, suggestions for improvement, and even criticisms, about accessibility in the City.

Public input was open from April 9 – 30, 2024 and included a 16-question survey that was available in a variety of formats to provide opportunities for anyone to share their input. The primary goal was to hear from West Kelowna residents and stakeholders to understand the current accessibility landscape and any barriers within our community.

The consultation provided multiple ways to get involved. The community was invited to share their thoughts via an online survey at OurWK.ca/accessibility, ask questions and learn more about the Accessibility and Inclusion Committee.

The survey received 111 responses, and a total of 454 comments.

Survey highlights include:

- 39% said they would rate the City of West Kelowna's accessibility as okay (43 people)
- 70% said that someone in their family/household have accessibility needs (78 people)
- 41% said either themselves or someone in their household has experienced accessibility barriers at a City facility (46 people)
- 50% said they have experienced physical environment barriers in the City (56 people)
- 32% said they have experienced accessibility barriers at a park, playground or trail (36 people)

When asked about what an Accessible West Kelowna looks like, some participants answered:

- A city for everyone to enjoy
- A place where all can attend, regardless of abilities
- Inclusive for anyone with differing abilities whether physical or mental - zero stigma, accessibility built into all future planning

During this engagement, several key staff members provided their perspective about accessibility as related to their roles at the City. They shared what they saw as 'accessibility wins', ideas for opportunities, and some of the gaps, limitations, barriers or concerns they were aware of.

A detailed summary of the public engagement can be found in the What We Heard Report (Appendix 1).

FOCUS AREAS

The City considered the focus areas and standards of the Accessible BC Act, and consulted with the Accessibility and Inclusion Committee, the community at large, and City staff, in the creation of focus areas relevant to West Kelowna. The City of West Kelowna focus areas align with the action plans of many BC municipalities, while the background, goals, objectives, highlights and “what we heard” are unique to the CKW Action Plan.

The AIC recognizes that accessibility is a continuous and evolving process, and that priorities will progress and change with time.

The six focus areas in this Action Plan are:

- Transportation
- Facilities
- Parks and Trails
- Service Delivery
- Policy
- Culture of Accessibility and Inclusion

GOALS AND ACTIONS

It was important to the Committee, that through the Action Plan, accessibility becomes embedded into City practices, so that *accessibility becomes a way of doing things, rather than a checklist to be completed*. The Key actions were developed in order to focus on operationalizing accessibility - by embedding inclusive practices into city operations, services, and infrastructure. The Action Plan aims to enhance accessibility across all city functions, with key actions that are practical and realistic, and that promote an inclusive environment through clear, operational steps.

While the Committee strongly believes that all of the 45 actions are important and urgent, we recognize that time and capacity constraints do not allow for all of them to be immediately prioritized. The Committee also recognizes that ‘laying the groundwork’ is key to the success of creating a sustainable culture of accessibility and inclusion.

To that end, we have organized the key actions into three timeframes. All the actions and their sub-actions the Committee deemed highly important have been organized into a Table of Actions, which is attached as an appendix. Each action in the Table has an

associated outcome, measurable, and responsible department. IMMEDIATE and SHORT TERM (3 year) actions are embedded in this plan.

Four IMMEDIATE actions that were identified as critical safety concerns requiring attention as soon as possible. IMMEDIATE actions are aligned with the Council's strategic priority to foster safety and well-being in West Kelowna.

There are twenty-one SHORT TERM actions which the Committee defined as the duration of this Action Plan, or three years. These short-term actions are largely focussed on assessing the current state of accessibility in the City of West Kelowna, developing action plans, and updating planning documents, bylaws and policies to integrate accessibility and inclusion into City operations.

There are also twenty-five LONG TERM actions, which can be thought of as logical next steps that can be actioned once the initial phase has been completed. The long-term actions are included in the Appendices.

The success of this Action Plan hinges on the integration of accessibility into work that is currently underway or planned. Accessibility may sometimes take the form of a distinct and specific project or piece of work (*something that we do*), but more often, it is a process of adjusting what we are already doing or planning to do (*how we do something*).

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

The AIC recommends the following four actions be addressed immediately due to critical safety concerns identified by respondents in the community engagement process initiated by the City of West Kelowna (Spring 2024):

- Action 6. The railings at Royal LePage Place be assessed, and IMMEDIATE action taken to address safety concerns
- Action 7. Parking and access be improved at the Westside Seniors Activity Centre
- Action 16. Install signage at Julia's Junction warning of potential hot surface
- Action 25. Ensure that an accessibility focus is applied in City emergency planning and response.
 - a. Ensure any emergency communications issued by the City are accessible
 - b. Provide input on Provincial review of RDCO Emergency Response Plan to specifically include accessibility in emergency planning. Including:
 - i. Warning signals in multi-sensory modes
 - ii. Emergency communications in multiple modalities including American Sign Language (ASL) and live captioning
 - iii. Accessible transportation and accommodations
 - c. Collaborate with social service providers to increase awareness of accessibility in emergency planning and response

FOCUS AREA: TRANSPORTATION

Background:

Much of the input received through the City of West Kelowna's public engagement process (Spring 2024) related to specific accessibility gaps or concerns related to transportation in the City. Rather than attempting to address these gaps as individual actions, the AIC recommends a comprehensive accessibility audit of the City's transportation infrastructure, using audit guidelines co-developed with the Committee to ensure all aspects of accessibility are considered. The Committee also prioritized a review of the current snow clearing bylaw as a short-term action.

Goal:

Transportation options in the CWK are accessible.

Objectives:

- Collaboration with disabled people to continuously inform and improve accessible transportation
- Accessibility improvements built-in to current and future transportation projects
- Accessibility integrated into CWK's transportation decisions, processes and plans
- CWK's snow clearing (plan) addresses the requirements of elderly and disabled people

Highlights:

The Accessible Transportation Actions aligns with Council strategic priority ***Invest in Infrastructure*** - Transportation focus area, which highlights pedestrian improvements, including those aimed at making sidewalks more accessible.

What We Heard:

- There is an opportunity to update snow removal policy for city-owned parking areas
- There are many accessibility gaps in the current transportation infrastructure. These are best addressed through a planned approach, beginning with an action plan arising from an audit
- People with many types of disabilities need accessible transportation systems
- Accessible parking spots need to be maintained and monitored

Key Actions:

Short Term

- Action 1. Initiate an Accessible Transportation Audit: Work with the AIC to develop guidelines for an audit; Evaluate existing transportation infrastructure, identify critical gaps and key priorities, and create a list of Action Items; Incorporate actions identified in the Accessible Transportation Audit into ongoing or planned work as much as possible
- Action 2. Update snow clearing policy (bylaw?) through an accessibility lens to ensure that accessible parking spots, key sidewalks, and bus stops are prioritized. Bring draft update to AIC for review before finalizing.

FOCUS AREA: FACILITIES

Background:

The City of West Kelowna's public engagement process (Spring 2024) also highlighted numerous accessibility gaps or concerns related to facilities in the City. The AIC recommends a comprehensive accessibility audit of the City's facilities, using audit guidelines co-developed with the Committee to ensure all aspects of accessibility are considered.

Goal:

City facilities and buildings are welcoming and accessible.

Objectives:

- Safety concerns at Royal LePage Place and Westside Seniors Activity Centre are resolved
- Collaboration with disabled people to continuously inform and improve accessible facilities
- Accessibility becomes standard in future facilities and any improvements to facilities
- Accessibility becomes a community-building effort in which community partners collaborate around shared accessibility goals.
- People with sensory sensitivities feel safe and welcome at the new Community Centre.

Highlights:

The Accessible Transportation Actions aligns with Council strategic priority ***Invest in Infrastructure*** – Civil Facilities focus area, which highlights investing in civic facilities that meet the needs of West Kelowna’s residents and businesses pedestrian improvements, including those aimed at making sidewalks more accessible.

What We Heard:

- There are immediate safety concerns related to accessibility at several City of West Kelowna facilities
- There are many opportunities to improve accessibility at City facilities. These are best addressed through a planned approach, beginning with an action plan arising from an audit
- People with many types of disabilities need accessible facilities
- There is a need for changing stations in accessible washrooms in the City

“There should be more handicap parking spots and communication needs to be there about what kind of help will be there, I know it was done during Westside Days or during music events at the outdoor theatre.”

Key Actions:

Immediate Priority: Safety and Liability Concerns

- Action 6. The railings at Royal LePage Place be assessed, and urgent action taken to address safety concerns
- Action 7. Parking and access be improved at the Westside Seniors Activity Centre

Short-Term

- Action 8. Initiate an Accessible Facilities Audit
- Action 9. Liaise with partners such as Okanagan Regional Library and Westbank Farmer’s Market to share recommendations arising from the Accessible Facilities Audit. Consider sharing the Accessible Facilities Audit guidelines

with partners to support continuity of accessibility improvements going forward.

- Action 10. Create a “Quiet Room” at the newly updated Community Centre, to be operated by BGC Okanagan.

FOCUS AREA: PARKS AND TRAILS

Background:

These key actions build on the positive momentum created by the Julia’s Junction project by identifying opportunities for accessibility improvements at parks in the city and connecting these accessible sites with a comprehensive accessible trail system. These opportunities are aligned with the recreational trail planning and development recommendations in the City’s Recreational Trails Master Plan Update 2024.

Goal:

Create an accessible and inclusive parks and trails system in West Kelowna

Objectives:

- Collaborate with accessibility organizations, community organizations and engaged citizens
- Include accessibility criteria in ongoing work
- Connect accessibility between parks and trails over time

Highlights:

The Accessible Parks and Trails Actions align with Council Strategic Priorities ***Invest in Infrastructure: Parks & Recreation*** and ***Strengthen Our Community: Gathering Places***

Julia’s Junction, the City’s new accessible playground, was built in 2023 through partnership and collaboration with dedicated community members. Feedback received through the City’s public engagement process in the spring of 2024 revealed a very high level of pride in the playground.

What We Heard:

“Going to the beach and being able to swim, attending music in the park and being able to sit down with everyone and not on the road just below the pool. Barrier free.”

“Trails are out of the question due to gravel instead of pavement (Gellatly)”

“[Develop] Accessible Multi-use trails connecting all neighborhoods within the City.”

“[F]ocus on connections to key community facilities, destinations, services and parks through sidewalks for people of all abilities”

Key actions:

Immediate Priority - Safety and Liability Concerns

Action 16. Install signage warning of potential hot surface at Julia’s Junction

Short-term

Action 17. Identify opportunities to improve access to and on beaches, playing fields and playgrounds. Consider:

- a. Accessible parking (design and location)
- b. Solid surfaces for:
 - i. Pathways
 - ii. Playgrounds
 - iii. Access routes (Point A to Z)
- c. Ways for people who use mobility devices to use amenities and get to the beach and water
- d. Accessible picnic areas
- e. Family-style washrooms with changing stations
- f. Designated seating/viewing areas for people who use mobility devices, or need resting places, shade, water, etc

Action 18. Create Action List of opportunities to incorporate actions that are identified into ongoing or planned work as much as possible

Action 19. Develop a work action plan for stand-alone projects identified in Action 17.

FOCUS AREA: SERVICE DELIVERY

Background:

Service delivery encompasses broad aspects of municipal responsibilities, including communications, recreation and cultural programming, and 'service desk' activities such as the interface between staff and the public. Emergency planning is a component of service delivery that is of key importance to the AIC, due to its immediacy, and high degree of risk for people with disabilities. This IMMEDIATE ACTION is in recognition that emergency planning and response is done in partnership with the Regional District of Central Okanagan. The AIC wishes to emphasize the importance of accessible emergency communications, issued in conjunction with or independently from RDCO and EOC.

Goal:

Develop accessibility awareness and competence of Staff and Council at City of West Kelowna

Objectives:

- Develop emergency communications for people with disabilities
- Coordinate emergency planning for people with disabilities with regional partners
- Develop accessibility criteria to guide awareness and competence training for service staff

Highlights:

The Accessible Service Delivery Actions align with Council Strategic Priorities ***Foster Safety and Well-being: Public Safety*** and ***Pursue Economic Growth & Prosperity: Economic Prosperity and Support for Local Business & Entrepreneurs***

What we heard:

"The lack of understanding or awareness about Deaf culture and sign language among staff and others in the City of Kelowna creates significant challenges"

"The importance of having real-time closed captioning and first-hand ASL/English interpreters during critical moments cannot be overstated"

"Unable to hear without hearing aids. Difficulty accessing information re smoke detectors with visual alerts. Also concern in potential evacuation at night. Would I be alerted?"

Key Actions:

Immediate Priority - Safety and Liability Concerns

- Action 25. Ensure that an accessibility focus is applied in City emergency planning and response.
- a. Ensure any emergency communications issued by the City are accessible
 - b. Provide input on Provincial review of RDCO Emergency Response Plan to specifically include accessibility in emergency planning. Including:
 - i. Warning signals in multi-sensory modes
 - ii. Emergency communications in multiple modalities including American Sign Language (ASL) and live captioning
 - iii. Accessible transportation and accommodations
 - c. Collaborate with social service providers to increase awareness of accessibility in emergency planning and response

Short term:

- Action 26. Review existing the Communications and Engagement Plan and other plans, bylaws and policies related to service delivery through an accessibility lens, and update, to operationalize accessibility. Include:
- a. Consult the AIC to develop Accessibility Criteria for service delivery
 - b. Incorporate the Accessibility Criteria into plans, bylaws and policies related to service delivery
 - c. Include accessibility in the scoring matrix used in decision-making about service delivery

FOCUS AREA: POLICY

Background:

Policy serves as the cornerstone for all municipal decisions and operations. It ensures that City activities continuously reflect our community's values and advance our vision for the future. As the most influential tool at our disposal, policy can drive accessibility and inclusion in every aspect of City operations, guiding us towards becoming a more accessible community over time.

Goal:

Accessibility becomes normalized and operationalized at the City of West Kelowna

Objectives:

- Accessibility becomes embedded in City processes

- Knowledge and familiarity with accessibility increases; accessibility becomes the usual way of doing things at the city
- City partners become aware that accessibility is a priority of the City, and include it in their bids and proposals
- The City of West Kelowna becomes a leader in accessibility by making accessibility a key consideration in all City of West Kelowna’s decisions

Highlights:

The Accessibility Policy Focus Area Actions align with Council Strategic Priority ***Strengthen Our Community: Accessibility.***

What We Heard:

- There is an opportunity to standardize accessible practices at the City
- Accessibility sometimes gets missed or overlooked because it not built into processes
- It’s important that accessibility work carries forward into the future, and is not seen as a project with an end

Too often, decisions are made by people or accessibility committees that have zero - minimal knowledge and/or representation from the disability community.”

Key Actions:

Short Term

- Action 32. Engage the AIC and/or an accessibility expert meaningfully in all phases of design/review, planning, and construction.
 - a. Develop an accessibility lens to use in decision-making
- Action 33. Design all new City construction and infrastructure projects with an accessibility lens.
- Action 34. Create accessibility criteria for all Request for Proposals (RFPs).
- Action 35. Adopt a policy to ensure no existing accessible features are lost in the process of a repair, upgrade, renovation, or redesign.

Action 36. Incorporate an accessibility lens when prioritizing municipal projects.

FOCUS AREA: CULTURE OF ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

Background:

In this plan, a culture of accessibility and inclusion refers to the attitudes and understandings that define human interactions that positively impact disabled people in personal and tangible ways.

Goal:

To foster a culture of accessibility and inclusion at the City of West Kelowna, where everyone can feel welcome and safe

Objectives:

- lead in the establishment of a permanent paid position for a Disability, Accessibility & Inclusion leader
- support education and dialogue opportunities for staff (and council?), (community members?) to build understanding of accessibility and inclusion
- collaborate with accessibility partners who provide services with and for people with disabilities
- celebrate accessibility and inclusion through annual community event

Highlights:

The Culture of Accessibility and Inclusion Focus Area Actions align with Council Strategic Priority ***Strengthen Our Community***: *“We will provide opportunities for the residents of West Kelowna to build connections, celebrate successes, embrace the community’s strengths and diversity, address shared needs, and contribute to shaping the community’s future.”*

What We Heard:

“There are also no inclusive after-school programs for neurodivergent children - it would be so cool for the City of West Kelowna to step up and offer one!...when you understand neurodiversity, patience and understanding come very easily. It would be amazing for City Of West Kelowna to go from lacking so much inclusion for neurodivergent children to being a leader in BC!” p.89

An inclusive City not just related to physical assets but socially as well where everyone is accepted, welcome, heard and understood. p.142

People who are blind want to be independent. Having a barrier free community is inclusive to people how are blind, deaf, parents with strollers, people with walkers, people in wheelchairs p.163

Key Actions:

Short Term

- Action 41. Adopt a working definition of accessibility that is broad, inclusive, and [intersectional](#). Invite intersectional understanding with participation from people across communities - Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), new immigrants, Two-spirit (2S), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Queer, Intersex, Pansexual, Androgynous and Asexual (2SLGBTQIA+), Youth, Seniors.
- Action 42. Ensure ongoing education and accessibility training is provided to all city staff. Consider making training available to community partners and the business community.
- Action 43. Collaborate with partner organizations (CNIB, CRIS Adaptive, Accessible Okanagan, Pathways, etc.) to learn from them and co-create community-building projects that increase public awareness and provide education.
- Action 44. Develop an accessibility checklist (lens/resources) for businesses to complete/review when applying for a business license.
- Action 45. Adopt or develop an accessibility checklist (lens/resources) to ensure accessibility is considered in the planning and running of all community events, including things like accessible portable washrooms, resting areas, shade, etc. Consider making the checklist publicly available.

MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Feedback Mechanism

The Accessible BC Act requires that prescribed organizations set up a mechanism for the public to report accessibility barriers they encounter. This feedback can provide valuable insight into new or previously unknown barriers in the community, and can also be used to monitor the progress of accessibility in the City.

The City of West Kelowna will create an Accessibility Feedback Form for anyone to report a barrier. This Form will be available on the City's website and in paper form available at City Hall. Barriers or issues reported will be forwarded to the responsible staff person, as well as with the AIC as appropriate, for consideration and prioritizing. All feedback will be collected in a database, which will become a resource for future planning.

Monitoring Progress

The City of West Kelowna will monitor its progress on the journey towards an accessible and inclusive community using several accountability mechanisms.

- **Transparency:** Celebrate accessibility successes and achievements to the public via the City website public announcements, and other communication avenues
- **Reporting:** Report milestones and completed actions from this Plan in the Annual Report
- **Reviewing:** Mayor and Council will receive an annual update and review of Actions completed and outstanding
- **Listening:** Continue to consult with the Accessibility and Inclusion Committee on the progress, outcomes, and next steps towards implementation of the Plan
- **Asking:** Continue to invite feedback and input on access and barriers from people who live, work and/or visit West Kelowna
- **Recording:** Maintain a living document of all recommendations submitted during the engagement process, input and advice from the Accessibility and Inclusion Committee, and feedback from the Feedback Mechanism
- **Revisiting:** The City of West Kelowna's Accessibility Plan covers a three-year timeframe. To continue its thoughtful and planned approach to accessibility, the City will plan to renew and update its Accessibility Plan after three years.

APPENDICES

1. Table of Accessibility and Inclusion Actions
2. Long Term Accessibility and Inclusion Actions
3. What We Heard Report

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LIST OF RESOURCES

Best Practices and Research

- [Accessible Community Bylaws](#)
- [Example of an Accessible Wayfinding Strategy \(Port Moody\)](#)
- [City of Guelph Guide for increasing diversity on accessibility committees.](#)
- [Civic Engagement at the City of Victoria \(BC\)](#)
Identifies principles and best practices for reaching out to inform and involve citizens in public decision-making.
- [Local Government Community Effort Booklet](#) (UBCM)
An excellent overview of local government in BC.
- [The Accessibility Toolkit](#) (Vancouver)
A reference tool for City employees to ensure that decisions are being made with accessibility at the forefront, and evaluate current policies and approaches to accessibility.
- [Universal Design Guidelines for Outdoor Spaces](#) (Maple Ridge)
- [Virtual Participation of People with Disabilities in Community Planning](#) (Bricout & Moon, 2021)

Accessible Event Checklist

- [City of Vancouver Accessible Events Checklist](#)

Accessibility Criteria

- [A way with words and images: guide for communicating with and about persons with disabilities](#)

BC Gov Emergency Planning Resources

- <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2024EMCR0024-000712>

Emergency Response Notification Form

- <https://www.portcoquitlam.ca/city-services/fire-emergency-services/citizen-information-form/>

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility Resources for BC Local Governments

- <https://www.lgma.ca/inclusion--diversity--equity--and-accessibility-resources>

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

- BC Accessibility Standards – under development
- BC Building Code
- Accessible BC Act
- Accessible BC Act
- The British Columbia Human Rights Code
- The Local Government Act
- The Community Charter
- The Building Act and The Public Health Act

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ACCESSIBILITY LENS

Creating an Accessibility Lens

Core Components of an Intersectional Accessibility Lens

SOURCE: <https://accessible.canada.ca/can-asc-1-1/AnnexD>

Example of a Disability Policy Lens

SOURCE: <https://www.disabilitypolicyalliance.ca/tools/disability-policy-lens.html>

The Canadian Disability Policy Alliance (CDPA) has developed a Disability Policy Lens “to assist scholars, policy-makers & advocates to analyze policy affecting people with disabilities in Canada. The Disability Policy Lens [is] a means of ensuring that the implications for people with disabilities are taken into account in every policy in Canada.”

The CDPA’s lens consists of seven questions, designed as a tool to assist policy makers to consider the ways a decision or policy will affect people living with disabilities who live in or visit their community.

CDPA’s Seven Questions:

1. Does the policy specifically mention people with disabilities? Has explicit consideration been afforded to the consequences for people with disabilities?
2. If so, how is disability defined? Who is considered “disabled” according to the policy? Does the policy refer specifically to people with:
 - a. physical, cognitive, sensory or mental illness-related disabilities?
 - b. permanent, long-standing, temporary or episodic disabilities?
 - c. severe, moderate or mild disabilities?
 - d. Who is considered eligible for consideration under the policy? Who is included / excluded, and who decides who qualifies as disabled?
3. Which of the following 3 aims does the policy seek to achieve?
 - a. Access – ability to participate
 - b. Support – resources to address special needs
 - c. Equity – freedom from discrimination
 - d. If the goal is equity, does the policy define equity as:
 - a. Outcome equity – whatever it takes to achieve equal outcomes with non-disabled;

- b. Vertical equity – special considerations to create equal opportunity for disabled people;
 - c. Horizontal equity – equal treatment; that is, the same as everyone else.
- 4. Does the policy view disabled people as members of a minority group with special needs, or as one of the many citizen groups whose issues must be considered in establishing policy? As individual rights holders, or as members of the collective responsible for the good of the whole population?
- 5. How does the policy relate to other policies (for a survey of legislation, regulations, programs related to disability in Canada:
 - a. within the jurisdiction – in the same Ministry, in other Ministries (including both disability specific and non-disability-specific policy)?
 - b. in other jurisdictions -- national, provincial, regional, municipal?
- 6. How is the allocation of scarce resources affected by this policy? Who wins and who loses when this policy is implemented? What would be the impact on: other disability groups; business / private sector; other minority groups; other citizens generally / taxpayers?
- 7. How did this policy come into effect? What is the history associated with it? Who were the champions / detractors? Where might one anticipate support / opposition?
 - a. SOURCE: <https://www.disabilitypolicyalliance.ca/tools/disability-policy-lens.html>

FUNDING

This list is an overview of organizations and programs that currently provide funding or have provided funding for past accessibility initiatives. Please contact the organization to determine whether the funding is still available or whether future funding will be offered. This list has been updated for 2024.

BC Accessibility Hub resource

[BC Accessibility Hub Funding Resource Page](#)

Mixed Grants

- National AccessAbility Week

Web Link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/accessible-grants-accessability-week/who-can-apply.html>

Audience for Grant: mixed, including education, and local government

Community Grants

- Accessibility Project Grants

Web Link: [Accessibility Projects | DABC \(disabilityalliancebc.org\)](#)

- Local Community Accessibility Grant Program

Web link: [Local Community Accessibility Grant Program \(sparc.bc.ca\)](#)

Audience for Grant: Local Governments

- Thriving Indigenous Systems Fund

Web link: <https://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/grant-seekers/find-grants/>

Audience for Grant: Indigenous Communities

- Lighthouse Organizations Fund

Web link: [Lighthouse Organizations Fund | Vancouver Foundation](#)

Audience for Grant: Large charities working to advance poverty reduction and social inclusion.

- The Enabling Accessibility Fund (EAF)

Web Link: [Enabling Accessibility Fund – Canada.ca](#)

Audience for Grant: The government of Canada website states that “funding (is) for projects that make Canadian communities and workplaces more accessible for persons with disabilities. EAF aims to create more opportunities for persons with disabilities to take part in community activities, programs and services, or access employment.”

- The Opportunities Fund

Web Link: [About Opportunities Fund – BC Centre For Ability](#)

Audience for Grant: A program that assists persons with disabilities to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment – for persons with disabilities and employers

Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) B.C. Grants Program

Web Link: [2022 British Columbia Accessibility Grants | Rick Hansen Foundation](#)

Audience for Grant: Municipalities and Indigenous communities

- LEVEL BIPOC Grants

Web Link: [LEVEL BIPOC Grants | Vancouver Foundation](#)

Grant Funder: Vancouver Foundation

Audience for Grant: For BIPOC-led organizations in BC to support work in racial equity and racial justice.

- Access Awareness Day Grants

Web Link: [Local Community Accessibility Grant Program \(sparc.bc.ca\)](#)

Audience for Grant: Local government partners, local Accessibility Committees, as well as local disability serving organizations.

- BC Rehab Project Grant Program

Web Link: [Project Grant Eligibility | BC Rehab Society](#)

Audience for Grant: Non-profit organizations and community groups in British Columbia

- Age-Friendly Community Grants

Web Link: [Age-friendly Communities – BC Healthy Communities](#)

Audience for Grant: “The BC Age-friendly Communities Program provides funding, resources and capacity-building supports to help Indigenous and local governments, as well as other partners to achieve this vision.”

- Community Gaming Grants

Web Link: [Community Gaming Grants](#)

Audience for Grant: Not-for-profit organizations providing programs or services of direct benefit to the broader community.

- Jumpstart Community Development Grants

Web Link: [Community Development Grants | Jumpstart \(canadiantire.ca\)](#)

Audience for Grant: Organizations that offer sports and recreation programming for kids between the ages of 4-18 in financial need or youth with disabilities between the ages of 4-25.

Home Renovation Grants

- The BC Rebate for Accessible Home Adaptations

Web Link: [BC Rebate for Accessible Home Adaptations \(BC RAHA\) | BC Housing](#)

Audience for Grant: The website says that “The program allows seniors and people with permanent disabilities and diminished ability with low and moderate incomes to gain greater independence within their homes.”

- The Home Renovation Tax Credit for Seniors and persons with disabilities

Web Link: [Home renovation tax credit for seniors and persons with disabilities – Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)

Audience for Grant: Seniors and persons with disabilities – eligible individuals 65 and over to assist with the cost of certain permanent home renovations to improve accessibility or be more functional or mobile at home.

Property Taxes

- Home owner grant for people with disabilities

Web Link: [Home owner grant for people with disabilities – Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)

Audience for Grant: People with disabilities who receive government funding for cost of living and persons with disabilities who have expenditures related to their disability over a certain amount a month or who have made modifications to their residence to accommodate their disability.

- Property Tax Deferment program

Web Link: [Apply for or renew a property tax deferment program application – Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)

Audience for Grant: People with disabilities who cannot afford to pay property taxes for the year can have the taxes deferred.

Workplaces

- Work BC Assistive Technology Services

Web Link: Support for BC Workplaces to Assess, Improve or Develop a DM Program https://www.nidmar.ca/news/full_story.asp?fid=284

- Disability Management Enhancement

Web Link: https://www.nidmar.ca/news/full_story.asp?fid=284

- The Workplace Accessibility Grant

Web Link: [Workplace Accessibility Grant – Small Business BC](#)

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Disability Related Organizations in BC

- Agur Lake Camp
- ARC Programs
- BCG Okanagan Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB)
- Canadian Hearing Services
- Canadian Institute for the Blind
- Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)
- Canadian Red Cross
- Community Living British Columbia
- Foundry BC
- Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)
- Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- Neil Squire Society
- Okanagan Similkameen Neurological Society (OSNS)
- OneSky Community Resources
- Pain BC
- Partners in Resources (PIERS)
- Society for Community Living (PDSCL)
- Service Clubs
- Brain Injury Society (SOSBIS)
- Special Olympics
- Spinal Cord Injury BC (SCI BC)
- Trans-Canada Trail (TCT)
- White Cane Group
- WorkBC
- YMCA of the South Interior