

InterLINK

Libraries

Accessibility

Plan

2025 - 2028

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Introduction

Libraries play a fundamental role in accessing information, supporting literacy, and offering opportunities for learning and connection. We are committed to making library spaces and services more accessible to better meet the needs of all community members.

Do you have feedback to provide? [Contact your library](#).

Territorial Acknowledgement

InterLINK and its members operate on the ancestral and unceded territories of the Salish speaking peoples. We recognize the profound privilege of working on these lands and honor their traditional stewards and caretakers.

Glossary of Terms

The following terms are from BC Accessibility Hub's Glossary of Terms and Acronyms.

TERM	DEFINITION
Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)	An official group established by one or more Prescribed Organizations in collaboration with people with disabilities to develop an accessibility plan and feedback mechanism
Accessibility Plan	A plan, developed by an AAC, that identifies accessibility challenges and solutions for addressing those challenges
Assistive Device	Any device that is designed, made, or adapted to assist a person to perform a particular task
Barrier	Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with a disability: (a) caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications or technologies; and (b) affected by intersecting forms of discrimination
Disability	As defined in the Accessible BC Act, an inability to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction of an impairment and a barrier
Impairment	Includes a physical, sensory, mental, intellectual or cognitive impairment, whether permanent, temporary or episodic

Indigenous Peoples	Has the same meaning as in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (from Constitution Act) includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada
Prescribed Organizations	An organization required by BC Regulations to develop and implement accessibility plans to remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities
Sectoral Hubs	An organization that is an association with members in a sector that is assisting with coordinating the Accessible Organization Project
Service Animal	An animal readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal
Support Person	A support person, in relation to a person with a disability, is another person who accompanies the person with a disability in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs, or access to goods, services or facilities
Universal Design	The process of creating services and environments that are accessible to people with a wide range of abilities, disabilities, and other characteristics

A Collaborative Approach

Throughout 2022 and 2023, the 72 BC public libraries brainstormed and strategized how to move forward with compliance to the Accessible British Columbia Act. In the summer of 2023, InterLINK was asked to provide infrastructure for the creation of a collaborative Accessibility Committee. Six libraries decided to participate. Together, these libraries have created a shared vision, priorities for action, and an initial set of goals. We have also established a shared collaborative Accessibility Committee to support this work.

Participating Public Libraries

The following public libraries are participating in this collaborative approach:

- Coquitlam Public Library
- Fraser Valley Regional Library
- Gibsons & District Public Library

- Lillooet Area Library Association
- Port Moody Public Library
- Vancouver Public Library

Framework Guiding our Work

Public libraries are committed to fostering safe, respectful, and inclusive spaces that all people can access and that helps all people thrive. The framework for our Accessibility Plan was guided by the following legislation, policies, and values.

Canadian Context and Federal Legislation

The rights of individuals with disabilities have been protected in Canada since the passing of the 1985 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The rights for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the workplace and beyond were expanded in the 1986 Federal Employment Equity Act. The Accessible Canada Act (ACA) of 2019 was established with the goal to create a barrier-free Canada by 2040, making all public spaces as accessible as needed. The ACA was created using seven focus areas, which are the broad recommended guiding principles for any accessibility work in Canada.

BC Legal Requirements

Building on the ACA, in 2021 the Accessible British Columbia Act (ABCAct) was passed, which in 2022 created the Accessible British Columbia Regulation. This regulation provides a framework to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility. The ABCAct requires all public sector organizations to develop an Accessibility Plan to demonstrate each organizations' ongoing commitment to accessibility. These plans must be publicly available and regularly updated with an evaluation system for ongoing feedback. The ABCAct identified eight general areas in which barriers can present. For BC libraries, six are relevant: employment, delivery of services, the built environment, information and communications, education and procurement.

The Social Model of Disability

In the creation of this plan, the Committee wanted to include a section about the Social Model of Disability, as it summarizes what guides their personal principals on accessible service. This Model, in contrast to the medical or 'standard' social model of disability, is defined as the understanding that disability is caused by barriers to participation in community life, rather than by a person's own impairment or difference. Disability is caused by the way society is organized. It also acknowledges that disability is unique to each individual, may be permanent or temporary, and is often invisible. This model looks at ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for people with disabilities. When barriers are removed, these people can be independent and equal in society, with choice and control over their own lives. This is a person-first approach, placing the individual before the definition. The social model emphasizes dignity,

respect, and choice.

Our Values as Public Libraries

Public libraries are publicly accessible sources of information, services, equipment and enrichment. They are unique spaces that allow for any community member to use services in a safe, supported way. As such, libraries work to provide accessible places where individuals can play, learn, imagine, and thrive. Accessible service design means removing barriers that prevent equal and equitable use of library services and resources. By respecting the dignity and choice of every individual, especially those who identify with a disability, we can make public libraries inclusive spaces. In addition, we believe developing strong feedback and evaluation systems are necessary to help libraries understand how to meet the needs of different community members with diverse lived experiences of disability. Appreciation of that experience, and education on different community needs, is how libraries can continue to grow. Public libraries are inclusive spaces, and value the work needed to keep them as such.

Our Responsibilities as Public Libraries

The public libraries that are represented by this Accessibility Advisory Committee commit to using the guiding principles of the ABCA not only in the creation of this plan but in regular service. For a public library to be committed to ABCA, maintaining an accessible model of service is a requirement.

About Our Committee

The initial focus of the Committee has been to provide input and create our first plan.

Committee Recruitment

Library staff and CEOs from participating libraries recruited volunteer Committee members from their patrons, volunteers, and community networks. Library staff and Directors are also part of the Committee.

Committee Members and Background

This Plan was created through an Accessibility Advisory Committee, which includes:

- Three community members from Gibsons, Lillooet, and Fraser Valley communities, representing people with various disabilities,
- Four staff representatives from participating libraries - Coquitlam, Fraser Valley Regional, Port Moody, and Vancouver Public Libraries,
- One ex officio representative from the Public Library InterLINK federation

Consultation

To date, consultations have happened within the Accessibility Advisory Committee, using best practices recommended by the BC Accessibility Hub. The Committee recommends participating libraries consult and seek input from their patrons and communities for the duration of the plan.

Identifying Barriers to Accessibility

Accessibility is a general term used to describe the degree to which a product, device, service, or environment is available to be used by all intended audiences. The Accessibility Advisory Committee has identified 5 areas where barriers to accessibility for persons with disabilities exist as areas of focus. These are barriers that may have been experienced by persons with disabilities at any given point in their life. This is by no means an exhaustive list, nor does this list reflect the participating libraries of this Accessibility Plan. It is a way for libraries to assess their current situation and how they can make improvements to meet the needs of all members of their communities.

Barriers	Manifestations
<i>Systemic (internal and external facing policies, and HR)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those with lived experience of disability may feel at some point in their life that institutions do not: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a culture for staff that embraces accessibility or understand legal requirements. Develop hiring processes with an accessibility lens. Promote hiring opportunities within disability communities Include enough training for all staff on disability, accommodations, and employee rights. Have easily understood HR practices that are shared widely across the organization.
<i>Organizational (how programs and services are identified, structured, and provided)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those with lived experience of disability may feel at some point in their life that institutions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit collections, program structure, and technology in ways that don't enable full participation by a range of community members. Provide limited avenues for community consultation Provide collections with limited representation of those with lived experiences of disability.
<i>Attitudinal (organizations behaviours,</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those with lived experience of disability may feel at some point in their life that institutions have:

<i>perceptions and assumptions)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignored the person experience in an interaction with a person with disability. • Identified someone based on their disability and not using person-first language. • Not provided training for front line staff on supporting all community members.
<i>Technology and communications</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those with lived experience of disability may feel at some point in their life that institutions provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited ways to identify alternative accessible service options and materials. • Limited ways to submit feedback. • Websites, software, and electronic documents that lack accessible features.
<i>Built environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those with lived experience may feel at some point in their life that some institutions have a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continual need to improve physical spaces and features using a universal design approach. • Lack of adaptive furnishings, equipment, and assistive devices for users and staff (including but not limited to lighting, sounds, physical space). • Emergency evacuation procedures that do not address patrons with a variety of disabilities.

Our 3 Year Plan and Action Items

As we launch our first Accessibility Plan, we believe that it is important to know how accessible our organizations currently are – how we are meeting community needs and where there is work to be done.

As such, for this Accessibility Plan we are focusing on learning. Over the next 3 years, as provincial standards become available, libraries will focus on identifying barriers to accessibility at their individual organizations and how they can better meet standards. During this entire process, libraries will learn about their patrons and community needs, and about themselves as organizations. Information gathering at this stage will consist of:

- Individual libraries investigating and documenting the existing accessibility conditions, using the list of barriers above as their guide;
- Finding and utilizing resources to learn what the desired condition or state is (provincial standards are one key area of information);
- Identifying steps and actions to take to achieve the goals (this will vary from library to library, depending on the current environment of each).

Each Library will move forward with these action items according to their own strategic plan and priorities, based on their individual community needs and budget. As a supportive partner, InterLINK will serve as a resource to participating libraries and their members. When possible, it will provide opportunities to work collaboratively, including providing access to accessibility audit services.

Monitoring, Review, and Evaluation

Monitoring Activities of Participating Libraries

Participating libraries are committed to improving accessibility in their spaces and services. To keep informed of their work, the Accessibility Committee will create a template for individual participating libraries to use to share highlights, record barriers that have been addressed, improvements made, and work still in progress. These updates may also include feedback on the plan obtained through the Accessibility Plan's feedback mechanism.

These updates will be shared with the Accessibility Committee. Libraries may also wish to include this information in their annual report or post it on their library's website.

The activities set forth in libraries' updates will be reviewed by the InterLINK Accessibility Committee to confirm that improvements are being made and that changes have the intended impact in improving accessibility for community members.

Review of Accessibility Plan

The Accessibility Committee will continually track how the Accessibility Plan is working. The Accessibility Committee will formally review the Accessibility Plan, at minimum, every three years to ensure that the goals and action items within the document remain relevant. Any updates or modifications to the Plan will be made by the Accessibility Committee.

The Accessibility Committee will prepare a monitoring report annually, and it will be shared with libraries. The monitoring report will include a summary of the action items implemented by participating libraries, and recommendations to improve the Plan.

Evaluating Accessibility Plan

The Accessibility Committee will work with participating libraries to recommend a process for reviewing and evaluating the Plan every three years.

Feedback on Accessibility and our Accessibility Plan

We welcome your feedback. Please let us know what you think about accessibility and our Accessibility Plan to make future improvements.

How to Submit Feedback – Accessibility at Your Library

If you would like to provide feedback on accessibility at your public library, please contact your local library.

You may submit feedback in person at your local library, by mail, telephone, email, and/or through your local library's website. You may attach photos, videos, and voice recordings to feedback submitted by email. Feedback may be submitted anonymously.

When submitting feedback, be sure to include:

- A description of the event, program, material, or service you or someone else was trying to access, and
- A description of the barrier you or someone else encountered, and recommendations and/or general feedback.

How to Submit Feedback – Our Accessibility Plan

If you want a copy of the Accessibility Plan, or want to provide feedback on our Accessibility Plan, please contact your local library or Public Library InterLINK, using the contact information in the Directory of Libraries section below.

Why Collect Feedback on Accessibility?

The purpose of collecting feedback on accessibility is to identify, reduce, and remove barriers that people experience when accessing services at libraries. We will use feedback to improve accessibility at our libraries and to improve the Accessibility Plan.

Anyone can provide feedback on accessibility, including those who experience a barrier themselves or those who witness someone experiencing a barrier.

What to Expect

All feedback and suggestions will be thoughtfully considered. Feedback may be used to improve library services, library infrastructure, or may be used for future accessibility plans.

All feedback will be confidential regardless of the method by which it is submitted. Accessibility feedback in both print and digital formats will be stored according to BC's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and will follow each library's privacy and records management procedures and protocols.

All feedback, except that submitted anonymously, will be acknowledged in the way in which it is received.

Directory of Libraries

Library Name	Phone Number	Library Email	Primary Library Address	Website
Coquitlam Public Library	(604) 554-7323	ask@coqlibrary.ca	1169 Pinetree Way Coquitlam, BC V3B 8A9	https://www.coqlibrary.ca/
Fraser Valley Regional Library	(604) 859- 7141	accessibility@fvrl.bc.ca	34589 DeLair Rd. Abbotsford, BC V2S 5Y1	https://www.fvrl.bc.ca/
Gibsons and District Public Library	(604) 886- 2130	gdpinfo@gibsonslibrary.ca	470 S. Fletcher Rd. Box 109 Gibsons BC V0N 1V0	https://gibsonslibrary.ca/
Lillooet Area Library Association	(250) 256- 7944	director@lillooetlibrary.ca	930 Main St. Lillooet, BC V0K 1V0	https://lillooet.bc.libraries.coop/
Port Moody Public Library	(604) 469- 4575	askthelibrary@portmoody.ca	100 Newport Dr. Port Moody, BC V3H 5C3	https://www.portmoodylibrary.ca/
Vancouver Public Library	(604) 331- 3603	info@vpl.ca	350 West Georgia St. Vancouver, BC V6B 6B1	https://www.vpl.ca/