

Regional District of Central Kootenay Accessibility Plan

Adopted January 22, 2026

Acknowledgements and key information

Accessibility statement

For alternative formats, such as large text or plain text version, please contact nelsonfrontdesk@rdck.bc.ca.

Our thanks

To members of our Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee (RAAC), thank you for the time, care, and knowledge you've shared throughout this process.

We'd also like to thank [Untapped Accessibility](#) for their expertise, guidance, and support in creating this plan.

How to give feedback

To share your feedback on this plan, or to report a barrier within the region, please visit our [accessibility feedback survey](#).

Language in this plan

Language around disability is always evolving. People also have preferences for how they identify and describe their disability experience. Our goal is to use respectful, inclusive language that reflects the social model of disability and centers the voices of disabled people. This is why we alternate between person-first and identity-first language.

- **Person-first language** names the person before the disability. For example, saying "person with a disability". Some people prefer this language because it positions disability as something that's separate from who they are. They find this empowering because they see disability as only part of their identity.
- **Identity-first language** names the disability before the person. For example, saying "disabled person". Some prefer this language because it positions disability as an inherent and inseparable part of their identity. This language better reflects how central disability is to their experience of the world.

When communicating directly with disabled people, we acknowledge that it's best practice to use the language they prefer. We also understand that no single approach fits everyone, and we remain open to learning and adapting as language continues to change.

Leadership/committee message

Over the next three years and beyond, RDCK is committed to creating a community where diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are deeply embedded in everything we do. This Accessibility Plan lays the groundwork for intentional, sustained efforts to ensure that every resident can fully and equally take part in community life.

We recognize that building a truly inclusive community starts from within. That's why part of this plan includes ongoing training and education for staff—to help deepen understanding, challenge assumptions, and encourage new ways of thinking. By equipping our teams with the tools to see through different lenses, we're better able to identify barriers, respond with empathy, and develop solutions that meet real needs.

The voices and lived experiences of our residents are central to this work. We are committed to listening, learning, and adapting in collaboration with individuals from all backgrounds and abilities. By doing so, we aim to ensure this plan reflects the diversity of our communities and addresses the barriers people face.

This is an evolving journey, not a checklist. Our focus will remain on removing obstacles—visible and invisible—and creating a region where everyone feels welcomed, supported, and empowered. We look forward to working together to make accessibility a shared value and a lived reality.

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Introduction

Welcome to the Regional District of Central Kootenay Accessibility Plan!

This plan marks an important step forward in our commitment to building a more inclusive and barrier-free region. It reflects our dedication to creating an accessible environment for our community members, staff, elected officials, and advisory committee members with disabilities. And it sets the foundation for meaningful change as we work together to identify, remove, and prevent barriers across our services, programs, and communities.

What do we mean by “disability”?

[The Accessible BC Act](#) describes **disability** as the inability to participate fully and equally due to the interaction between an impairment and a barrier. This definition highlights barriers as a key part of the disability experience.

A **barrier** is anything that stops someone with a disability from fully and equally participating. They can be caused by environments, attitudes, policies and practices, information and communications, and technology. Barriers are also affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.

These definitions are important because we have control over many of the barriers in our organization and region. When we identify, remove, and prevent them, we can impact the experience of disability.

Note on the word impairment: This term isn’t widely used in the disability community. For example, disabled people don’t often describe themselves as being “impaired”. This word carries a negative connotation that suggests there’s a better way to be. For this reason, we don’t use this term in this plan. We use **disability** or **disabled** to describe the disability experience.

Diversity of disability

Disabilities can be permanent, temporary, episodic, apparent, and non-apparent.

- **Permanent disabilities** are unlikely to change. For example, paraplegia, autism, dyslexia, or other forms of neurodivergence.

- **Temporary disabilities** impact functioning in a way that's expected to improve or heal with time. For example, temporary hearing loss from an ear infection or short-term sensory sensitivity from a concussion.
- **Episodic disabilities** involve flare-ups of symptoms or experiences that impact functioning. These flare-ups vary in severity and frequency and can occur between periods where there are no symptoms. For example, multiple sclerosis, lupus, or rheumatoid arthritis, where symptoms worsen unpredictably. Episodic disabilities also include depression or other mental health conditions that cause cycles of mood changes.
- **Apparent disabilities** are easy to recognize. For example, they require visible aids like wheelchairs or hearing aids.
- **Non-apparent disabilities** are not easily recognizable. For example, neurodivergent experiences, like autism and ADHD, chronic pain, learning disabilities, or addiction challenges. Due to their non-apparent nature, these disabilities come with unique challenges. For example, being labeled as unreliable when your symptoms vary from day to day or having to manage the added strain of "masking" to hide or suppress disability experiences.

What do we mean by accessibility?

Accessibility is the proactive effort and action we take to remove or prevent barriers before they impact someone's full and equal participation. It considers how we design our spaces, services, programs, and communications so that everyone can access and use them with dignity, independence, and ease.

Accessibility work involves:

- Identifying, removing, and preventing barriers.
- Designing spaces, services, programs, and communications to be flexible, considering multiple types of access and engagement from the start.
- Clearly communicating the barriers that exist and the engagement options that are available.

As an example, consider a community member who uses a screen reader. They need to fill out a permit application. Accessibility means the local government has proactively built a screen reader-friendly application process. They created a fillable application form and tested it for screen reader compatibility before releasing it to the public.

It also means the local government has clearly communicated this compatibility, so the community member knows right away that their needs will be met before they begin the application process. This removes barriers before they happen and supports equal access for everyone.

About the Regional District of Central Kootenay

The Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) is a local government in southeastern British Columbia that serves approximately 60,000 residents across a vast and diverse area. Incorporated in 1965, the RDCK is made up of 11 electoral areas and nine member municipalities.

Electoral areas include:

- **Electoral area A** – situated between Kootenay Lake and the Purcell Mountains.
- **Electoral area B** – located east of the Town of Creston.
- **Electoral area C** – adjacent to the eastern slopes of the Selkirk Mountains at the southern inlet of Kootenay Lake.
- **Electoral area D** – encompasses the vast northern reaches of the Kootenay and Duncan River basins.
- **Electoral area E** – adjacent to the West Arm of Kootenay Lake.
- **Electoral area F** – located on the north shore of the Kootenay River and the West Arm.
- **Electoral area G** – centred on the Salmo and Pend d’Oreille river basins.
- **Electoral area H** – Slocan Valley.
- **Electoral area I** – nestled near the confluence of the Kootenay and Columbia Rivers between Nelson and Castlegar.
- **Electoral area J** – surrounds the city of Castlegar on the banks of the Columbia River and Lower Arrow Lake.
- **Electoral area K** – located on the shores of the Arrow Lakes.

Member municipalities include:

1. Castlegar
2. Creston
3. Kaslo
4. Nakusp
5. Nelson
6. New Denver
7. Salmo
8. Silverton
9. Slocan

Services

RDCK delivers over 180 services, ranging from emergency programs, fire protection, and building inspection to parks and recreation, transit, economic development, and community planning.

Mission, vision, and values

RDCK's **mission** is to support our communities through effective service delivery while respecting the diversity of challenges within our region.

The **vision** is a sustainable Central Kootenay Region that is peaceful, pristine, and prosperous.

Our **values** guide our work:

- **Inclusivity** – we're committed to creating an inclusive and accessible environment that respects diversity in all its forms.
- **Integrity** – our goal is to act in a way that benefits the whole region, while staying true to our vision, ensuring that we keep our promises.
- **Innovation** – we strive to create an environment of innovation and collaboration that encourages partnership, creativity, and growth.

- **Stewardship** – we’ll use the resources given to us by citizens, businesses, government, partners, and others in a careful and thoughtful manner for the betterment of us all.
- **Reconciliation** – we’ll work with our Indigenous neighbours to assist in empowering community success through partnerships on projects and service delivery.
- **Working together** – by working together and combining our different perspectives, we can create the best future for our region.

Our commitment to accessibility

Our commitment to accessibility stems from our mission – to meet the needs of the region while respecting the diverse needs of members of our community.

We recognize that our current systems and services don’t fully meet the diverse needs of our community members, staff, elected officials, and advisory committee members with disabilities. We’re actively working to improve them. We’re prioritizing accessibility so we can live our values by:

- Creating welcoming, barrier-free spaces, services, communications, and employment opportunities.
- Actively involving disabled people in decision-making, including those who are neurodivergent or have other non-apparent disabilities.
- Embedding accessibility proactively into our processes so it becomes central to our ways of working.
- Continuously learning, adapting, and investing in accessibility and the inclusion of everyone.

While there’s still progress to be made, we’re excited to share this plan as an important early step toward the future we envision.

Here’s a look at some other organizational efforts we’ve made to bring accessibility to the forefront of our work.

Strategic plan

[Our 2024-2026 Strategic Plan](#) identifies **organizational excellence** as a key priority, with a strong emphasis on accessibility. This includes a commitment to

accessible communication across our regional community. We recognize that achieving our mission of effective service delivery depends on embedding accessibility more deeply into everything we do.

Accessibility Framework

In 2024, we also published an [Accessibility Framework](#). It provides a high-level map of our approach for advancing accessibility, as guided by [the Accessible BC Act](#). It describes:

- Our plan for meeting [the requirements of the Act](#).
- The focus areas for our accessibility work, as informed by the accessibility standard areas named in the Act.

The framework lays the foundation for this accessibility plan.

Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee

We've also established a Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee (RAAC). The focus of this group is to help make communities in our region more accessible. Through regular committee discussions, the RAAC advises on identifying, removing, and preventing barriers, and applying an accessibility lens to regional plans and projects.

Members include people with lived experience of disability and staff representatives. We do our best to maintain the following representation:

- One RDCK Electoral Area Director.
- One RDCK Municipal Director.
- A maximum of seven and a minimum of five persons with disabilities or individuals who support or represent organizations that support persons with disabilities.
- One Indigenous community representative.
- Two community members-at-large.

For more on the work of the RAAC, see the [Consultation section](#).

About this plan

This accessibility plan highlights the RDCK's approach to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers across six priority areas:

1. Built environment
2. Employment
3. Information technology and communications
4. Regional programs and services
5. Transportation
6. Procurement and financial services

This plan is part of how we're complying with the [Accessible BC Act](#). See [Appendix A](#) for more information on the requirements in this legislation.

Consultation

[The action plan section](#) is the result of close consultation with our Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee (RAAC) and staff team.

Barrier identification with the RAAC

In a preliminary barrier identification session, the committee brought forward several issues that were top of mind. The first was unclear roles and processes related to how the RDCK manages barriers and accessibility-related concerns.

Geographic features such as steep terrain and sudden stair transitions also pose physical access challenges. In winter, snow buildup further limits mobility in already inaccessible areas.

Transportation is another challenge, particularly for those in rural regions. Transit options may be infrequent, unreliable, or not designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Additionally, many recreation areas, offices, and public spaces lack basic accessibility features, like automatic door switches.

In terms of engagement in the political realm, the focus on in-person meetings excludes those who rely on virtual access or find large gatherings overwhelming

– especially neurodivergent people. Committee members emphasized barriers for people with sensory sensitivities and strongly recommended maintaining and expanding remote and hybrid participation options for all RDCK meetings.

These things represent a summary of the barriers brought forward from initial conversations only. They are not an exhaustive list. The committee will continue to engage in barrier identification, bringing new barriers to the attention of the RDCK as needed.

Staff conversations

During consultations with staff representing a range of departments and services, staff members discussed:

- What’s been done regarding accessibility.
- What accessibility work is planned.
- What would help the RDCK improve accessibility.

A summary of what staff shared is presented over the next few pages.

Built environment

Accessibility work that’s been done/is underway

- Added stronger contrast and braille to some park signage.
- Added an accessible lift to Salmo pool.
- Created accessible washrooms and pathways (Creston).
- Made trail accessibility improvements (Junction, Cottonwood Lake).
- Installed mobi-mat (Lakeside Park).

Planned accessibility work

- N/A

What would help RDCK improve accessibility?

- Conduct accessibility audits to better understand current state of all spaces.

Information technology and communication

Accessibility work that's been done/is underway

- Redesigned website to WCAG 2.0 guidelines.
- Added a dedicated phone line for bylaw-related complaints, so online forms aren't the only option.
- On-going work to translate building code and other public-facing legal and legislative documents into plain language.
- On-going work to adopt accessibility into community engagement – for example:
 - Accessible venues
 - Diverse outreach tools
 - Plain language

Planned accessibility work

- Develop a permit FAQ sheet or chatbot to answer common questions.
- Explore accessible channels for community feedback.
- Improve the accessibility of public-facing content and enhance communication via newsletters and social media.
- Train communications staff on plain language.
- Address remaining website barriers (font size, language, dense text).
- Reduce size and complexity of Board and committee meeting agendas.
- Make Board and committee meeting materials more accessible.

What would help RDCK improve accessibility?

- Emphasize low-cost strategies like agendas, captions, hearing loops, and mobile units for accessible public information sessions.
- Explore grant opportunities to cover consultant costs related to future plain language projects (SPARC BC, Columbia Basin Trust).
- Provide staff with training/guidance on WCAG 2.0 compliance, including alt text, accessibility checks, and tip sheets.

Employment

Accessibility work that's been done/is underway

- On-going work to match fire volunteers to roles that fit their capabilities.

Planned accessibility work

- Improve accessibility on the career page and use more inclusive language in recruitment materials.

What would help RDCK improve accessibility?

- Add accessibility into Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion guidelines and normalize accessibility as a standard part of policy review.
- Update the accommodations process to align with the coming accessible employment standards.
- Provide HR staff with training/guidance around disability and accessible employment.

Regional programs and services

Accessibility work that's been done/is underway

- Developed and adopted the Financial Access and Inclusion Policy and expanded the leisure access program so more people with financial barriers can access our recreation programs and services. As part of this policy, caregivers and support workers who are providing direct support to people using our services don't have to pay an admission fee.
- Launched Hush Swim, a sensory-friendly swim time.
- Introduced adapted swimming lessons that support swimmers aged 6-15 with a disability. They feature a low instructor-to-student ratio. Swimmers can participate on their own or with a support worker.
- Camp leaders and swim instructors participated in training delivered by the Canucks Autism Network. This training was focused on enhancing staff knowledge and confidence in supporting people with diverse needs. Staff learned practical skills, strategies, and how to use specific tools and equipment to better meet participants where they are.
- Added a step for the recycling bins.

- On-going work to offer free and low-cost programming opportunities in all major recreation centres.
- On-going work to ensure service options are available, like online and phone support.

Planned accessibility work

- Provide training for leadership and frontline staff to build awareness of accessibility.
- Provide response time updates when people file bylaw complaints.
- Invest in plain language, video content, and AI tools to enhance information delivery.
- Build partnerships with disability-serving and social service organizations.

What would help RDCK improve accessibility?

- Revisit service practices to ensure accessibility is considered from the start.
- Commit to naming and documenting known barriers and accessibility practices to increase transparency.
- Create guiding principles to support accessibility efforts. For example, “No one has to be an expert to support the work”.

Transportation

Accessibility work that’s been done/is underway

- Reconfigured the region’s transit funding model to:
 - Clarify and simplify the funding approach
 - Facilitate opportunities for service improvements
- Introduced the Health Connections program with the Interior Health Authority. This program provides community members with transportation to health services. We also succeeded in advocating for a broader recognition of “health” to include transportation to recreation opportunities and other critical services like banking.
- Advocated with the Interior Health Authority to get a 75% increase in funding for the Health Connections program.

- Worked with an external consultant to conduct a values study for transit at the RDCK. The results of the study highlight the following key values to guide transit planning and decision-making for the Board and elected officials:
 - Transit – especially in rural areas – is a social service that gets people who face barriers to the services they need
 - Equity outcomes are just as important as ridership metrics
 - The people in community who cannot pay for transit are likely the ones who need it most
- Established the Rural Mobility Working Group to support transit initiatives in rural communities. Members represent:
 - Seniors
 - People with mobility challenges
 - Students
 - The Chamber of Commerce
- Collaborated with BC Transit, the West Kootenay Transit Committee, the City of Nelson, the City of Castlegar, and the villages of Silverton, New Denver, Nakusp, Kaslo, and Salmo to develop the [Transit Future Service Plan \(TFSP\)](#). This plan highlights 32 recommendations for improving effectiveness and community benefit of our transit system.
- On-going work to re-structure the transit system to free up hours for more custom transit services.

Planned accessibility work

- Introduce more custom transit services into rural areas.

What would help RDCK improve accessibility?

- More custom transit service hours awarded at the governance level.
- A 10-year investment strategy with guiding questions to apply to spending decisions. For example:
 - Are we increasing key metrics, like ridership numbers and equity outcomes?
 - Are we reducing barriers?

Procurement and financial services

Accessibility work that's been done/is underway

- N/A

Planned accessibility work

- Integrate accessibility considerations into procurement and financial processes through inclusive templates and decision-making tools that consider more than just cost.

What would help RDCK improve accessibility?

- N/A

Accessibility action plan

This action plan shows how we'll address barriers across our priority areas. It doesn't include every known barrier but offers a starting point to build momentum in our accessibility work.

The plan is guided by the Accessible BC Act's six guiding principles for accessibility work:

1. **Inclusion** – making sure everyone can access and fully engage by building spaces, products, and services around a diversity of needs and experiences.
2. **Adaptability** – understanding that accessibility isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. Accessibility work requires the creation of flexible and responsive spaces, products, and services that can adjust to diverse needs.
3. **Diversity** – recognizing that disability is diverse and often overlaps with other identities and life experiences. Accessibility work requires truly equitable solutions that recognize and address how multiple forms of discrimination intersect.
4. **Collaboration** – working with diverse voices to create and deliver truly inclusive and equitable solutions. Accessibility work involves close collaboration between the disability community and organizational staff, including leadership and other decision-makers.
5. **Self-determination** – designing for accessibility in a way that provides disabled people with choice and control over their experience. This creates space for people to have the freedom to navigate spaces, products, and services on their own terms.
6. **Universal design** – emphasizing proactive, inclusive design from the start to minimize the need for accommodations.

Built environment

The RDCK has made some tangible progress in this area, particularly in the Parks and Recreation department. To build on this progress, we will:

1. Continue upgrading park signage to **include accessibility information**.
2. Continue adding **accessible lifts** to recreation facilities.

3. Continue upgrading **park washrooms** to be accessible, including the pathway leading up to the facility.
4. Enhance the **accessibility of all trails**.
5. Explore the installation of [mobi-mats in all beach parks](#).

We'll also consider a **physical accessibility audit** of properties owned and managed by the RDCK. This would help us better understand the built environment barriers in our spaces so we can address them in the next iteration of this plan.

We also plan to **identify opportunities to improve the way we share information about known barriers and accessibility features** of a space. This will help our disabled staff, community members, and other visitors have access to the information they need to make informed decisions about their engagement.

To address other physical access barriers, we'll explore the **development of a winter maintenance plan**. This plan would focus on snow and ice removal in barrier-prone areas to ensure safe, consistent access year-round.

Lastly, we'll send someone from our building and bylaw department to get their [Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification \(RHFAC\) Professional Training](#).

These efforts will support greater inclusion and ease of access for all residents, visitors, and staff.

Information technology and communications

Our recent re-design of the RDCK website aligns with WCAG 2.0 guidelines. To help our communications team members understand and uphold these standards, we'll **provide WCAG-focused training**. For example, staff will learn why all photos and infographics need alternative text – and how to add and maintain these features.

We'll also **explore accessibility improvements for our digital materials**, including:

1. Prioritizing plain language.
2. Using consistent layouts.
3. Creating alternative formats, such as audio summaries, visual step-by-step guides, and captioned videos.

We also understand that our meeting practices present barriers for neurodivergent Board and committee members. To address these barriers, we'll:

1. Offer **hybrid and virtual meeting options** where possible, with optional camera-on expectations for participants.
2. Introduce **additional accessible meeting practices** to all Board and committee meetings, starting with:
 - a. Predictable and well-paced agendas.
 - b. Accessible meeting materials. For example, accessible PowerPoint presentations with reduced visual clutter.
 - c. Multiple ways to engage, including before, during, and after meetings. For example, a survey link or email address participants can use to share thoughts and ideas before or after the meeting. This supports people who need additional processing time.

We're also aware that the RDCK has a critical role in translating complex, legal and legislative documents to plain language. We're working to identify key documents and processes that we can **translate into plainer language for the community**. For example, we're preparing a plain language resource that explains building code requirements. As funding becomes available, we'll support this work by offering training to our communications staff on **plain language principles**.

In terms of community engagement, we're actively working to **introduce accessibility strategies into our approach**. For example, for every engagement, we consider:

- The accessibility of the venue
- The accessibility of our outreach tools
- And language in our communication materials

To build on this work, we will:

1. Create a **plain language Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet** for our permit applications.
2. Introduce more **accessible options for community communication, engagement and feedback**, such as newsletters and social media.
3. Address additional **website barriers**, like font size, contrast, and complex language issues.

4. **Caption all RDCK videos** before releasing them to our community.

Lastly, we'll work to improve the accessibility of our public information sessions by:

1. **Creating and releasing accessible session materials**, including a predictable agenda and any pre-reading/contextual documents, ahead of the session.
2. [Purchasing a portable induction hearing loop system](#) to bring to all information sessions to support attendees who are D/deaf or hard of hearing.
3. **Enabling auto-captions** and ensuring participants have a way to request additional supports, like [CART \(Communication Access Realtime Translation\) captioning](#) or American Sign Language (ASL).
4. **Updating our session communication templates** to include information about the accessibility of the session. For example, flyers, emails, and Facebook posts.

With these changes, more community members will be able to access and engage with the information they need. They will also help people anticipate and prepare for their engagement with the RDCK.

Employment

To build further accessibility into how we approach staff accommodations, we'll **revise our process** to align with the coming accessible employment standards.

Additionally, Human Resources (HR) will **revise the careers page** to:

1. Meet digital accessibility standards
2. Use plain language
3. Ensure compatibility with assistive technologies

HR will also introduce **new standards for job postings**, including:

1. The use of inclusive, strengths-based language
2. Removing unnecessary qualifications that may exclude people with disabilities
3. Active offer of accommodation

We'll also explore ways to **train our HR staff on topics like accessibility, supporting neurodivergence in the workplace, and anti-ableism**. When these teams are trained, we'll consider how to extend this training to all staff.

To apply an accessibility lens to our employment programs, we'll **add the following as eligible courses** to our [RDCK Funded Training Program](#):

1. Mental Health First Aid
2. [Sports & Recreation: Including Individuals on the Autism Spectrum from Canucks Autism Network](#)
3. [Customer Service: Welcoming Autistic Individuals from Canucks Autism Network](#)

In terms of employment-related policies, we'll explore the development of an **accessibility policy lens** to apply during a policy review process.

To better understand the RDCK staff experience, more engagement needs to be done. We'll **create and administer an anonymous staff survey** to further explore barriers so we can address them in the next iteration of this plan. Our HR department will also complete the [Disability Inclusive Employer Self-Assessment Tool](#). This will help us identify further employment-related priority actions.

These efforts will help to create the right conditions for all staff to contribute their best work. They will also help us attract the best talent by removing unnecessary barriers in our recruitment approaches.

Regional programs and services

[In alignment with the Accessible BC Act's principle of self-determination](#), we're actively working to offer service options for accessibility. For example, we've added a dedicated phone line for bylaw-related complaints. Now users can call in a complaint if the online form doesn't meet their access needs. We'll continue to explore ways to **offer engagement options** to ensure people can engage with our services in ways that works best for them.

As funding and resources become available, we'll also explore ways to:

1. **Offer annual accessibility training to all staff**, starting with:
 - a. Foundational accessibility training

- b. Accessible service delivery training
 - c. Supporting neurodivergence
 - d. Plain language training
2. **Increase the transparency and accessibility of the bylaw complaints process**, beginning with clarifying response time expectations when people file a complaint.
 3. **Build partnerships with disability-serving community organizations** so we can collaborate to more effectively and holistically serve our disabled community members.
 4. Improve how we communicate the accessibility of our programs and services. For example, **standardizing the practice of naming what we know about barriers and accessibility** into all forms of service delivery communications. This communication will address things like physical and sensory considerations like noise levels, lighting, expected crow size, scents, etc.

To continue to learn about the barriers in our programs and services, we'll **promote the accessibility feedback mechanism** to the disability community through social media. We'll also **add accessibility content to our community newsletter**, which will be another platform to invite accessibility feedback.

These changes will support our mission to be more effective in our service delivery by giving our community members with disabilities more equitable opportunities to engage with our programs and services.

Transportation

With connectivity between 15 rural areas and 13 municipalities, our region holds the highest degree of transit connectivity in British Columbia. At a high level, we are good at connecting our regional communities together.

Where we struggle is the “last mile transportation” – getting people who need extra support to and from their front doors. And despite our strong connectivity, we recognize that transportation barriers still exist in our region, as indicated by the Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee (RAAC).

To address these issues, we're working hard to re-structure our transit system to free up hours for more **custom transit services** – especially in rural areas.

Custom services include things like HandyDART and other transit-on-demand programs. Our model for the region is the Creston Valley, which uses 60% custom transit.

As part of this work, we'll:

- Continue advocating with BC Transit to get the **bus-on-demand pilot** implemented in Castlegar.
- Work with our **Rural Mobility Working Group** to explore other opportunities for creating transit options for people with disabilities and other mobility barriers.

Lastly, we'll explore the development of an **accessibility and equity lens to evaluate the 32 recommendations** from our [Transit Future Service Plan](#). This lens will help us prioritize work based on accessibility and other equity measures.

Improved transit will mean our disabled community members can count on transportation that's reliable, affordable, and available when they need it.

Procurement and financial services

In terms of procurement and financial services, we recognize that we currently have limited insight into the barriers and accessibility challenges that exist within our processes. However, we're looking to expand our approach by **developing inclusive templates and decision-making tools** that support procurement staff to evaluate procurement and financial decisions by looking beyond cost to accessibility, equity, and long-term community impact.

We're also interested in learning how to **apply accessibility as a core design principle for all new facilities**. We'll explore the development of standardized accessibility language to apply to District specifications and procurement evaluation criteria where applicable.

Next, we'll **review our procurement policy for accessibility gaps** and update as required.

These efforts will support us to make procurement and financial decisions that better reflect the diverse needs of our community.

Overview of staff training priorities

As indicated in this action plan, staff training is an important part of our accessibility work, with training goals spanning multiple priority areas. For clarity, the table below summarizes all staff training priorities.

Priority area	Training action
Built environment	Send someone from our building and bylaw department to get their Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) Professional Training .
Information technology and communication	Train communications staff on Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
Information and communication	Train communications staff on plain language principles.
Employment	<p>Train Human Resources staff on topics like accessibility, supporting neurodivergence in the workplace, and anti-ableism.</p> <p>When these teams are trained, offer this training to all staff.</p>
Regional programs and services	<p>Offer annual accessibility training to all staff, covering topics like:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foundational accessibility training 2. Accessible service delivery training 3. Supporting neurodivergence 4. Plain language training

Next steps

To action this plan, we'll work with the Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee (RAAC) to prioritize initial efforts. Future iterations of this plan will build on the progress made and address additional barriers.

Monitoring and evaluation

This accessibility plan will be reviewed regularly to track progress. Every three years, we'll update the plan to respond to emerging needs and address any new or ongoing barriers. Each update will involve consultation with our Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee (RAAC) and a review of all public feedback received via our [accessibility feedback mechanism](#).

Annual progress reports and future updated versions of the plan will be published on our website in accessible formats. We'll also create annual progress reports to bring to our Board and the RAAC.

Conclusion

This accessibility plan reflects our plan for identifying, removing, and preventing barriers across the RDCK. By engaging our Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee (RAAC) and listening to public feedback, we aim to create more inclusive policies, services, and spaces. Accessibility is an ongoing journey, and we'll continue to learn, adapt, and improve to ensure everyone can participate fully in our programs and community life.

Appendix A: The Accessible BC Act

[The Accessible BC Act](#) is British Columbia's accessibility legislation. It outlines three major requirements for [prescribed organizations like the RDCK](#):

1. **Establish an accessibility committee** to help the organization identify, remove, and prevent barriers.

How are we complying? RDCK's accessibility committee is the Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee (RAAC). We established a regional committee because some of our smaller municipalities (all prescribed organizations) don't have enough local volunteers to form their own committees. These groups can consult the RAAC as they undertake their own accessibility work.

Having a regional committee also helps to create consistent goals across communities and makes it easier to share resources.

2. **Create an accessibility plan** that identifies how the organization will identify, remove, and prevent barriers.

How are we complying? This is our accessibility plan. [The action plan section](#) outlines our approach to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers across key priority areas.

3. **Develop an accessibility feedback mechanism** so members of the public can easily share feedback on the barriers they face when interacting with the organization.

How are we complying? RDCK's accessibility feedback mechanism is an [online feedback form that's available on our website](#).

How the requirements of the Act work together

The three requirements in the Accessible BC Act are meant to set the foundation for on-going accessibility work. For example, the **accessibility committee** helps our organization understand how to identify, remove, and prevent barriers. With these insights, our organization creates an **accessibility plan** that highlights how we'll act on these barriers. We then follow this plan as outlined.

As our work progresses, new barriers continue to come in through the **accessibility feedback mechanism**. We bring these to our **accessibility committee** for guidance on how to remove and prevent them. Committee

members also identify new barriers on an on-going basis. All new insights are added to progress reports and/or new iterations of this **accessibility plan**.

In between all this work, the committee advises us on other organizational plans and projects by sharing their perspective as needed.

The result of these things working together is steady, incremental progress and a gradual integration of accessibility into our organization's ways of working.

Accessibility standards

The next phase of the Accessible BC Act is the development of accessibility standards. These will provide specific guidance on accessibility across multiple areas that relate to our work as a regional government including:

- Employment
- Delivery of services
- The built environment
- Information and communications
- Transportation
- Procurement

In anticipation of these standards, we aligned our [Accessibility Framework focus areas with these standard areas](#). We look forward to further guidance from the province on how to support accessibility in these areas.

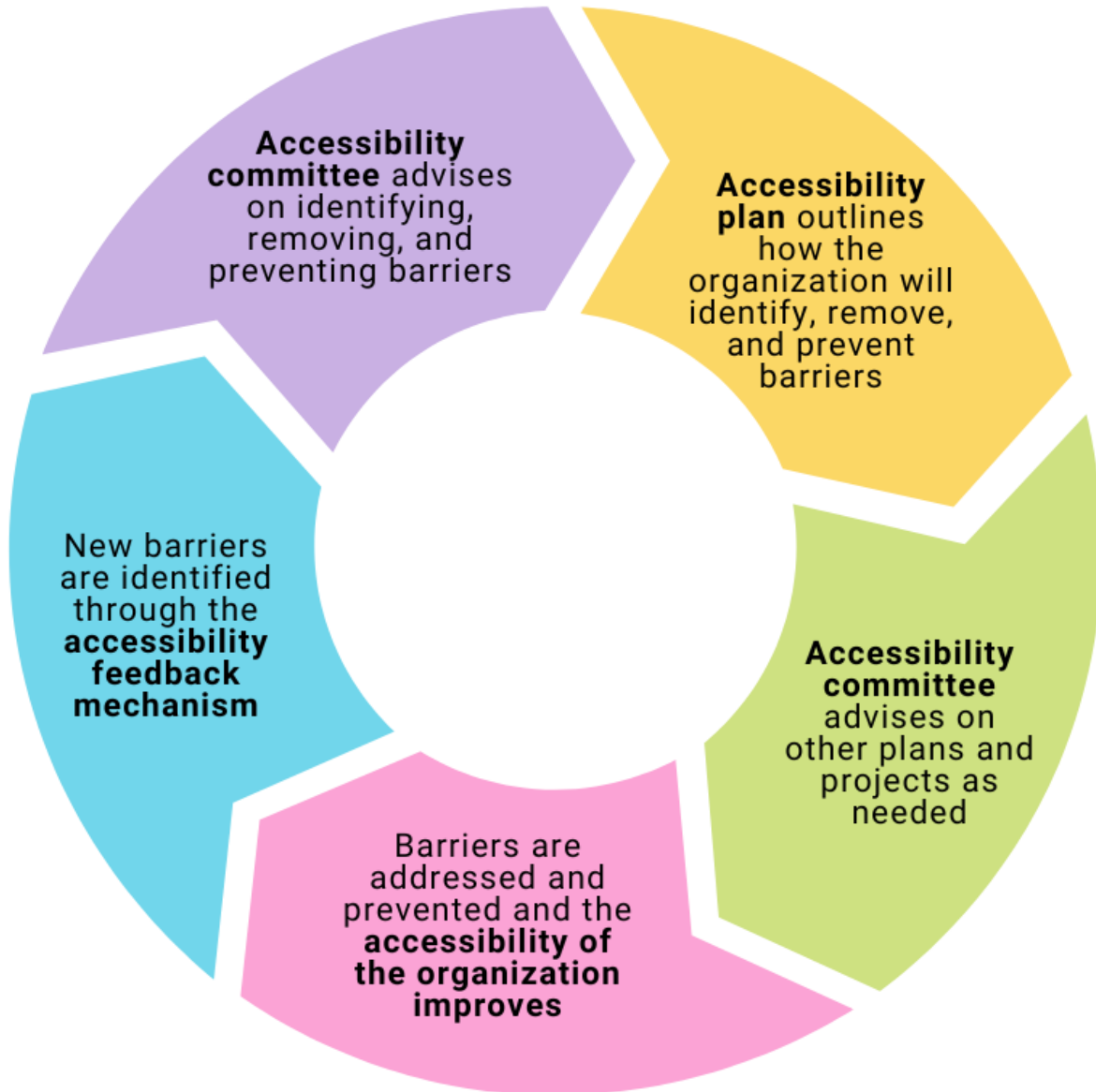


Figure 1: Visual representation of on-going accessibility feedback loop achieved by the Accessible BC Act requirements

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