Nova Scotia Public Libraries Joint Accessibility Framework

February 2022

Nova Scotia Public Libraries

Contents

Message from the
Regional Library Boards of Nova Scotia

The Regional Library Boards of Nova Scotia and Nova Scotia's Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage wish to recognize the commitment and excellent work of the Public Libraries Accessibility Framework Working Group, which developed this framework.

Nova Scotia's Public Libraries are fully committed to developing multi-year accessibility plans, establishing accessibility advisory committees, and complying with the accessibility standards that public sector bodies must follow.

Lisa Mulak

Regional Librarian, Cape Breton Regional Library
Chair, Council of Regional Librarians

Justin Huston

Deputy Minister,
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Introduction

Nova Scotia has more persons with disabilities than any other province in Canada.

By "persons with disabilities," we mean people who have bodies that work differently and people who have brains that work differently. Some people with disabilities use other words to describe themselves. Having a disability can make it difficult to participate in society.

That's why Nova Scotia passed the Accessibility Act in 2017. "Being accessible" means that people of all abilities in the province can enjoy everything Nova Scotia has to offer. Accessibility is a human right and Nova Scotia has a goal of being fully accessible by 2030.

This document will outline what Nova Scotia Public Libraries are doing to become accessible.

Our first step was to develop an accessibility framework. A framework in a house is the core structure that supports everything. A framework in this case is the core vision, goals, and commitments that will guide the work we do to become accessible.

That work falls into seven different areas:
- Awareness and Capacity Building
- Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation
- Employment
- Information and Communication
- Programs and Services
- Built Environment
- Collections

Nova Scotia Public Libraries recognize that in order to reach our goals we must always be learning about accessibility, and raising awareness of how important it is. We also recognize the value of having direct

input from persons with disabilities in their own voices. The parties we consulted to develop this document have an interest in public libraries and also have a disability and/or represent organizations that represent persons with disabilities.

Purpose

This Accessibility Framework outlines Nova Scotia Public Libraries' shared goals and commitments to accessibility. This framework will guide the development of the public libraries' accessibility plans.

Vision

All Nova Scotians have full and fair access to the spaces, services, resources, and programs offered by public libraries, including opportunities to work or volunteer at the library.

Principles

We will follow these principles while creating our accessibility plans.

Human Rights – We recognize that people with disabilities face barriers that keep them from fully participating in society. These barriers can be physical (such as staircases), in our attitudes (such as having certain beliefs about people with disabilities), and more. We believe accessibility is a fundamental human right and will show that in our library service.

Inclusion – We commit to ensuring public libraries are places where everyone is welcome to come learn, socialize, and work. All community members and employees are treated with the same respect and dignity.

Creativity – We will be creative, forward thinking, open to change, and flexible in our approach to becoming accessible.

First Voice – We will listen to the people and communities we serve and learn from their unique experiences. We will encourage and support all the people who work for us, and all those we work for and with.

Community Led – We are committed to connecting with our communities, as well as consulting and working with them to understand their needs.

Diversity – We recognize the full range of disabilities, and also understand that a person's identity and life circumstances and experiences can overlap with their disability to create barriers that keep them from participating in society. We will reflect this understanding in our policies, programs, and services.

Goals and Commitments

Awareness and Capacity Building

Goal

Nova Scotia Public Libraries are committed to raising awareness about the importance of access, inclusion, and first voice, and to building our own abilities in these areas. We will ensure our staff, the people who use our libraries, and the communities we serve have equal and fair access to everything the library has to offer.

Commitments

- We will provide programming on accessibility/disability rights, human rights, diversity, and inclusion.

- We will provide training to all levels of our staff, including volunteers (where we have them), on accessibility, diversity, and inclusion.

Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation

Goal

Nova Scotia Public Libraries will measure and evaluate how our accessibility plans are working, as well as how well we are complying with the province's accessibility standards.

Commitments

- We will put our accessibility plans into action.

- We will base our accessibility plans on the goals and commitments in this framework.

- We will develop a tool or system to evaluate how well we are doing at following our plans.

- We will work to continuously improve how well we are doing and will review and revise our framework every three years.

Employment

Goal

Nova Scotia Public Libraries will reflect our commitment to ensuring that people from diverse backgrounds—as well as people with disabilities—have equal and fair access to job opportunities in our libraries.

Commitments

- Our policies and practices will encourage the selection and hiring of persons with disabilities.
- Job advertisements will be in accessible formats (such as HTML and audio).
- We will have policies to ensure that employees who have a disability or experience barriers will have the tools they need to succeed in their jobs and will be supported in their career growth.
- We will provide training to all employees on how they can support other employees who experience barriers to accessibility in the

workplace. This training will show them how to do this in a way that makes the person experiencing the barrier feel comfortable and welcome.

Information and Communication

Goal

The information and communication we provide will be accessible to everyone who uses the library, works here, or is a stakeholder. We are committed to providing mechanisms that provide access and remove barriers.

Commitments

- The information we share with the public, such as advertisements, will show a variety of cultures and be welcoming to people of all abilities.
- All our communications will be accessible to persons with disabilities. These include public documents, event invitations and registrations, videos, presentations, websites, and tools.
- We will improve our communications so users know about our programs, the information we offer, and the formats we offer them in.

Programs and Services

Goal

Nova Scotia Public Libraries' services and programs will be accessible and inclusive of everyone.

Commitments

- We will provide materials in plain language.
- We will provide access to other services and programs upon request and for events of a certain size. Examples of these services include captions on videos or a sign-language interpreter.

- We will raise awareness within the community of the services we offer.
- We will invite input from members of the community when we design programs and services. We will respect the experience of first voice.

Built Environment

Goal
Nova Scotia Public Libraries will lobby, advocate, and act on behalf of their users, employees, and stakeholders to ensure that libraries and their partners who own/have control of the physical spaces in which libraries operate are committed to necessary upgrades to remove/prevent barriers.

Commitments
- We will consult with community partners to find out what the barriers are in our physical spaces and will collaborate with those partners to remove them.
- We will work with our partners who have libraries in their spaces to make those spaces more accessible.
- We will work within the scope of our ability to ensure the space within our libraries is accessible. This includes how we arrange furniture, etc.

Collections

Goal
Nova Scotia Public Libraries will provide a range of materials in a variety of formats so Nova Scotians of all abilities and literacy levels can access them.

Commitments
- We will gather feedback about our collections so we'll know what the community needs and desires.

- We will make collections available, where possible, in accessible formats such as large print books, audiobooks, descriptive and closed captioning videos, braille books, and American Sign Language (ASL) content.
- Library staff will help people find information, programs, and services in a format that works for them.
- We will include materials created by and created for the disability community.

Glossary of Terms

Accessibility – Something is accessible when the barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating have been removed. See the definition of "barrier" below.

Adaptive Technology – Versions of existing technology that provide different/accessible ways for a person to interact with the technology. For example: a screen enlarger/magnifier makes type bigger for people with low vision. And voice recognition software allows a person to use a computer using voice commands.

Audiobook – A recording of a book or magazine being read out loud.

Barrier – Anything that makes it difficult for someone to participate in society. Barriers can be physical (such as stairs), attitudinal (such as an opinion or belief), technological (such as the way technology works), or systemic (such as hiring practices in an office). In Nova Scotia, we are working to remove barriers in employment, education, the built environment (see definition below), transportation, the delivery and receipt of goods and services, and information and communications.

Braille – Braille is a tactile (physical) system of raised dots used by many people who are blind or partially sighted. Each raised dot arrangement represents a letter or word combination that is read by touch.[1]

Built Environment – Physical structures, facilities, and spaces where people live, work, shop, socialize, etc. These include outdoor spaces such as parks and playgrounds.

Closed Captioning – Text hidden in a television picture which cannot be seen unless it is decoded. Just like subtitles, the decoded text may appear at the bottom of the screen.[1]

Disability – The Nova Scotia Accessibility Act defines disability as "a physical, mental, intellectual, learning, or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual's full and effective participation in society."[2]

First Voice – First voice refers to the knowledge generated by persons who have first-hand experience with an issue. In the case of disabilities, this means listening to the people who have experienced barriers to accessibility because of their disability. In the past, the experiences of persons with disabilities were typically undervalued and underrepresented.[3]

Inclusive – To welcome, value, and respect all people.[2]

Standard – A standard is the quality or measure that serves as the basis to which others must or should conform.

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[1] Nova Scotia Accessible Events Guide
[2] Nova Scotia Accessibility Act
[3] Nova Scotia Post-secondary Accessibility Framework

Appendix A: Framework Contributors

The Nova Scotia Public Libraries Joint Accessibility Framework was developed by the Public Libraries Accessibility Framework Working Group. Thank you to those who contributed their experience and expertise to this work, including those who were consulted in the early stages of this work. Membership of the Public Libraries Accessibility Framework Working Group during the development of this framework included:

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- Erin Phillips, Cape Breton Regional Library
- Theresa MacDonald, Cape Breton Regional Library
- Sarah Wood, Colchester East Hants Public Library
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- Denise Corey, Cumberland Public Libraries
- Laura Emery, Eastern Counties Regional Library
- Amanda Fullerton, Halifax Public Libraries
- Mairead Barry, Halifax Public Libraries
- Eric Stackhouse, Pictou Antigonish Regional Library
- Jess Davey, Pictou Antigonish Regional Library
- Jeff Mercer, South Shore Public Libraries
- Erin Comeau, Western Counties Regional Library
- Adam Clarkson, Municipality of East Hants

Carla Bezanson, Avery Maynard and Julia Stephenson of the Accessibility Directorate, Department of Justice, and Catherine Kelly and Lynn Somers of the Nova Scotia Provincial Library, provided administrative support to the Public Libraries Accessibility Framework Working Group.