

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF EAST KOOTENAY

Accessibility Plan

2026 – 2029





The RDEK Accessibility Plan (the 'Plan') outlines the organization's commitment to inclusivity and equity by guiding decision-making to create supportive environments for everyone, regardless of ability. By prioritizing accessibility, the RDEK Board aligns its operations to identify, remove and prevent barriers in services and spaces for people with disabilities.

According to the Accessible BC Act (Act), the Plan must identify, remove and prevent barriers to individuals interacting with the organization. The Plan must be updated every three years, consulting with the East Kootenay Accessibility Advisory Committee (EKAAC) and considering public feedback.

WHAT DOES ACCESSIBILITY MEAN?

Accessibility involves making programs, services, and spaces user-friendly for people with disabilities by removing barriers. This includes recognizing:

- Disabilities can be physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, or sensory.
- Some individuals may not identify as disabled, such as those who are neurodiverse or deaf as an example.
- Intersectionality (age, gender, race, socioeconomic status) influences accessibility.

The following six principles support the meaning of accessibility and should be considered in developing and updating the Plan:

- **INCLUSION:** All persons should be able to participate fully and equally in their communities.
- **ADAPTABILITY:** Recognition that disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology, and attitudes change.
- **DIVERSITY:** Every person is unique. Acknowledge community uniqueness and intersectionality.
- **COLLABORATION:** Promoting accessible communities is a shared responsibility.
- **SELF-DETERMINATION:** Empower personal choices and life goals.
- **UNIVERSAL DESIGN:** A plan designed to meet the needs of all people.

WHAT ARE OUR COMMITMENTS AND PRIORITIES?

The Plan will guide our work to improve accessibility and reinforce our commitment to providing quality service to our communities. Accessibility will be included in the planning and delivery of our policies, programs, projects, and services. We'll adapt our efforts to ensure everyone has equal access and remove barriers as best we can, knowing this will keep improving over time.



COMMITMENT	GOAL
Accessible Governance and Public Engagement	Ensure all residents can access information and participate in decision-making.
Inclusive Built Environment	Ensure public buildings, facilities, and outdoor spaces meet or exceed accessibility standards and make accommodations as needed.
Transportation and Mobility Equity	Enhance mobility options for residents with disabilities in rural areas.
Digital Accessibility and Technology Inclusion	Provide Accessible digital services, considering broadband limitations.
Accessible Programs and Community Services	Ensure all programs and services are inclusive and accessible.
Workforce Accessibility and Capacity Building	Strengthening organizational capacity to deliver consistent accessible services.

HOW DO WE IDENTIFY, REMOVE AND PREVENT BARRIERS?

1. ACCESSIBILITY LENS

All projects and initiatives will incorporate an accessibility lens by:

- Early identification of accessibility impacts.
- Evaluating feasible solutions within available resources.
- Implementing improvements wherever feasible.
- Documenting decisions, constraints, and opportunities.
- Reviewing accessibility regularly.

2. MONITORING AND REVIEW

- Conducting department reviews.
- Updating the Plan every three years.
- Maintaining a public feedback mechanism and respond to concerns.

3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Encouraging residents to report barriers and suggest improvements.
- Holding accessibility discussions or roundtables with community groups and advocates.
- Providing progress updates in accessible formats.



4. EVALUATION AND REPORTING

Progress will be measured through:

- Completion of audits and accessibility upgrades.
- Increased participation and satisfaction.
- Improved digital and physical accessibility.
- Reduced barriers.

ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE

The East Kootenay Accessibility Advisory Committee (EKAAC) helps identify barriers and advises on how to prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization.

The RDEK Board approved the EKAAC committee and its Terms of Reference on July 14, 2023 (see Appendix A). The members bring knowledge and experience that guide recommendations, drawing on public input, best practices, and lived experience to help reduce barriers within the regional district.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK TOOL

A dedicated Accessibility page on the RDEK website features an online reporting tool for feedback and issue reporting. The email accessibility@rdek.bc.ca is regularly monitored by staff for accessibility inquiries.

CONCLUSION

The RDEK is committed to removing barriers that are identified within the community. Feedback from citizens is an important and valuable tool.

The RDEK would like to acknowledge the commitment of, and express sincere gratitude to, the members of the EKAAC. The members, through their own experiences, provided invaluable insight into the difficulties and frustration that those living with diverse abilities face daily. Their time, expertise, compassion, empathy and personal experience provided the foundation for the Plan and as a valuable reference tool for future planning.