

Accessible Heritage

**An Accessibility Tool Kit
For Ontario's Heritage
Organizations and Institutions**



The Ontario Historical Society

The Ontario Historical Society, in partnership with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, developed this Accessibility Information and Resource Tool Kit to provide Ontario's heritage, culture and tourism sectors with help in creating accessible facilities, programs, exhibits and services for people with disabilities.

Funding for the project, which also includes information sessions in communities across the province, was provided through the Government of Ontario's EnAbling Change Program, delivered through the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, Ministry of Community and Social Services.

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Introduction

Heritage organizations play a valuable role in preserving, celebrating and sharing Ontario's history and heritage for the benefit of everyone. The legacy of the past is kept alive at heritage properties, local historic sites, community museums and like-minded organizations across the province. It is important to make sure this legacy is accessible to all – including people with disabilities.

In 2005, Ontario passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The purpose of the Act is to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025, by developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards. The Act provides for the involvement of people with disabilities, representatives of sectors of the economy and the Government of Ontario in the development of accessibility standards. The AODA applies to every person or organization in the public and private sectors of Ontario.

Heritage organizations have asked for guidance and advice about how to make their premises, programs, services and policies accessible. Each one of these organizations has distinct strengths and needs. Some organizations already have accessibility improvement projects well underway; others are wondering how to get started.

This Tool Kit is designed to help your organization chart its own path to accessibility, whatever its scope and resources, and whether it is a newcomer or old hand at the process. It is designed in a looseleaf binder format to allow for the addition of new material and the updating or revision of existing material. Each of the eight modules covers an important aspect of achieving accessibility throughout your organization. This format also encourages the addition of new modules as they become available. To reduce the number of pages requiring renumbering each module has been numbered separately.

Providing accessibility is a challenge, but it also opens doors to improvement and opportunities for growth that bring benefits both to people with disabilities and to the whole community. Improved accessibility is an investment in the present and the future.

Consider that more than 1.5 million people in Ontario—13.5 per cent of the population¹—have one or more disabilities and face barriers to accessibility on a regular basis.

In addition, the incidence of disability increases with age, and the proportion of the population aged 65 and older is increasing steadily. As a result, the number of

people with disabilities in Ontario is expected to double to an estimated three million by the year 2025.

People with disabilities compose a sizable and growing market segment that also influences a huge secondary market composed of family and friends. They also represent a large and underutilized labour pool. Heritage organizations that are accessible will be able to attract and retain people with disabilities as visitors, customers, members, volunteers, and employees.

In addition, providing accessibility and accommodation may be less difficult, time-consuming and expensive than you think. It isn't all about demolition, remodeling or new construction. More often than not, access for people with disabilities can be achieved through clear communication, knowledgeable staff, or simple aids and amenities.

What counts most is a commitment to making accessibility a reality and a positive "all-problems-have-solutions" approach. This will lead to real improvements in access and accommodation at heritage organizations throughout the province, and make the treasures of Ontario's history and heritage available for everyone to enjoy.

1. Statistics Canada, PALS (2001) www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-577-XIE/

How to use this Tool Kit

This Tool Kit has been developed to meet the diverse needs of heritage organizations across Ontario. In our consultations, we found that organizations already started on the road to accessibility show a lot of enthusiasm about what they have achieved and what they plan to achieve in the future. Organizations that haven't started, tend to be a little apprehensive about what lies in store. With that in mind, we have some advice to offer on using this Tool Kit:

Tackle one thing at a time and think long term.

No organization is expected to become accessible and ready for accommodation overnight. Some things can be done quickly, but for the most part this will be a thoughtful, continuous process.

Use what you need.

Modules 1-5 will give you a comprehensive overview of the key topics and issues to consider in accessibility planning. If you are new to the subject, be sure to read this part of the Tool Kit in its entirety.

Modules 6-8 provide detailed checklists, information, and resources on specific subjects, such as the range of alternate formats available for people with vision or hearing disabilities, and planning an accessible meeting.

The module outlines on the following page give a synopsis of the information provided in each of the eight modules. Some of it may not apply to your organization at present. Don't worry about it; use what makes sense in your situation.

Do it your way.

Heritage organizations vary, and so do their approaches. Where one organization may find it more efficient to spend money, another organization may prefer to enlist volunteers and use a do-it-yourself approach. The important thing is to achieve quality results.

- Module 1 The Legislation:** This module gives an overview of provincial legislation related to disability that applies to heritage organizations.
- Module 2 Understanding Disability and Barriers:** This module provides information on the nature of disability and barriers, the seven main types of barriers and methods for identifying them, including consulting with disability groups.
- Module 3 Accessibility and Accommodation:** This module explains what accessibility and accommodation mean and their benefits for heritage organizations.
- Module 4 Communication and Disability Issues:** This module will help your organization communicate positively about disability issues and with people who have a disability. The topics covered include preferred language/terminology in relation to different types of disability.
- Module 5 A Blueprint for Accessibility Planning:** This module suggests a strategy your organization can use to develop an accessibility plan, and advice on planning accessible events, exhibits and displays.
- Module 6 Checklists:** This module contains checklists to help with specific aspects of accessibility planning, e.g., creating accessible signage, washroom facilities, and exhibits.
- Module 7 Alternate Formats:** This module provides information on common alternate formats and their uses, and information on producing some types of alternate formats.
- Module 8 Additional Information, Resources and Bibliography:** This module provides additional information on a variety of topics, a list of Web and print resources on disability and accessibility relevant to heritage organizations, and a bibliography of the sources used in the preparation of this document.

DISCLAIMER

While care has been taken in preparing this Tool Kit for heritage organizations, the OHS does not accept responsibility or liability for the results of specific action taken on the basis of this information nor for any errors or omissions.

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The Legislation

This module gives an overview of provincial legislation related to disability that may apply to heritage organizations. It is for information and reference purposes only and is not intended as legal or professional advice. Full versions of the Codes and Acts can be found at www.e-laws.gov.on.ca

Heritage Organizations and the Legislation

Heritage organizations may have obligations related to disability issues that stem from four pieces of legislation:

- the **Ontario Human Rights Code**
- the **Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA)**
- the **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)**
- the **Ontario Building Code**

The Ontario Human Rights Code

Introduced in 1962 and one of the first laws of its kind in Canada, the Ontario Human Rights Code gives all citizens equal rights and opportunities. Its purpose is to protect people from discrimination and harassment.

Prohibited grounds of discrimination include disability, race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status and the receipt of public assistance.

Under the Code, everyone has the right to equal treatment in the protected areas of housing, contracts, employment, goods and services without discrimination on any of the prohibited grounds.

Equal treatment may include accommodating real differences and a failure to accommodate real differences may constitute discrimination. There is a positive duty to accommodate short of undue hardship, meaning that wherever unequal treatment or discrimination exists it must be remedied unless the remedy would cause undue hardship, explained in a later section of this module.

The intent of the Human Rights Code is not to punish organizations, but to prevent and offer an avenue of recourse for discrimination. To this end, the Human Rights Code provides civil remedies, not criminal penalties.

**Disability is a prohibited ground of discrimination
in both the Ontario Human Rights Code and the
Canadian Human Rights Act.**

About Discrimination

Types of Discrimination

The **Ontario Human Rights Code** recognizes four types of discrimination:

Direct Discrimination

Any form of unequal treatment based on a prohibited ground of discrimination. This can occur when a practice or rule is adopted that discriminates on a prohibited ground.

Example: a museum adopts a practice of not hiring people with visible disabilities for positions that involve providing face-to-face services to customers, members and donors.

Indirect Discrimination

Any form of unequal treatment based on a prohibited ground of discrimination, executed by another person or through another means.

Example: a director who instructs an employment agency not to forward applications from people with disabilities is discriminating indirectly.

Discrimination because of Association

Discrimination against or harassment of a person due to their association, relationship or dealings with another person based on that other person's identification under a prohibited ground. The person being discriminated against does not need to be identified under a prohibited ground.

Example: an organization does not promote an employee because it is believed that since her child has a disability, the employee will be unable to travel as much as the job requires. The employee herself does not have a disability; she is being discriminated against because of her relationship with a person who has a disability.

Constructive or Adverse Affect Discrimination

Rules, policies, procedures, requirements, qualifications or factors that though they may not be directly or intentionally discriminatory result in unequal treatment based on a prohibited ground. These rules, policies or procedures may create barriers.

Example: a policy of automatically removing any board member who is absent from three consecutive meetings may discriminate against people who may be absent because of disability.

Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001

Even though new legislation in the form of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) received Royal Assent on June 13, 2005 and is now the law, the provisions of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) remain in force until the act is repealed.

The ODA builds on the strong foundation of the Ontario Human Rights Code (the Code) that protects the human rights of all Ontarians.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

The purpose of the AODA is to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025, by developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards.

Development of Standards

People with disabilities, stakeholders, and the provincial government will develop proposed standards that will address a wide scope of accessibility issues. These proposed standards will address the full range of disabilities and barriers, including physical, mental, sensory, intellectual/developmental and learning disabilities. Proposed standards in transportation, information and communications, built environment and employment are being developed.

Content of Accessibility Standards

The standards are to set out measures, policies, practices or other requirements for the identification and removal of barriers with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures, premises or such other things as may be prescribed, and for the prevention of the erection of such barriers. A standard will require the persons or organizations named or described in the standard to implement those measures, policies, practices or other requirements within the time periods specified in the standard.

Timelines

The Act provides for standards and results to be achieved every five years or less, moving towards an accessible Ontario in 2025. The timelines are to incorporate business and capital planning cycles to help manage the cost impacts. For additional information on the AODA, please visit: www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/mcscs/english/resources/legislation/?pillar=accessibilityOntario&program=mcscs

Accessibility Standards for Customer Services, Ontario Regulation 429/07

Ontario's first accessibility standard, Standards for Customer Service, O. Reg. / 429/07 came into effect on January 1, 2008¹.

Most businesses and other organizations that provide goods and services to people in Ontario must meet the legal requirements of the standard by the following dates:

January 1, 2010 - Public sector organizations designated in the standard including the Legislative Assembly, Ontario government ministries, some boards and agencies, and broader public sector organizations including municipalities, school boards, community colleges, universities, public hospitals and public transportation organizations.

January 1, 2012 - All other providers of goods or services with at least one employee in Ontario such as private sector businesses, not-for-profit organizations and those public sector organizations that are not designated in the standard.

For links to information including resources that have been developed by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO), please see:

www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/accession/business
and www.accession.ca/ado/english/

The Ontario Building Code

The Building Code governs the construction of all new buildings in Ontario. Anyone erecting a new building, making repairs or putting on an addition is required to have a building permit to confirm that the buildings or additions are being constructed according to the Building Code.

The Building Code includes accessibility requirements in several categories including parking, entrances, elevators, washrooms, halls, ramps, stairways, signs and emergency exits.

It sets out the specific barrier-free design features required in all these areas, and may apply to all new construction with some exceptions such as new single-family houses. They do not apply to buildings constructed before the applicable Code provisions took effect unless major renovations requiring a municipal building permit are planned.

Municipal planning departments administer and enforce the requirements of the Building Code.

It is important to note that the Ontario Human Rights Code has primacy over all other provincial legislation, meaning that it applies to other legislation such as the AODA, ODA and the Ontario Building Code.

In other words, compliance with the Building Code may not necessarily fulfill human rights obligations under the Human Rights Code. Both pieces of legislation must be considered when addressing barriers and disability issues.

Undue Hardship

Some exceptions to the duty to accommodate under the **Ontario Human Rights Code** may be allowed with respect to a heritage property if it can be proved that providing a particular accommodation would cause "undue hardship".

It is recognized that the cost of making accommodation may be increased by the necessity to preserve defining historic design features. Aesthetic features, in and of themselves, that are not historic design features, are not to be included in the assessment.

The test of altering the essential nature or substantially affecting the viability of the enterprise allows the preservation of the defining features of a heritage property to be taken into account as a justifiable factor in assessing undue hardship.²

Module 1 Endnote

1. www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/source/regs/english/2007/elaws_src_reg_r07429_e.htm
2. Ontario Human Rights Commission. "Policy Guideline on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate." 23 Nov 2000
www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/Policies

Understanding Disability and Barriers

This module provides information on the nature of disability and barriers. It describes the seven types of common barriers and methods for identifying them, including consulting with disability groups or people with disabilities.

About Disabilities



The international symbol of disability is a stylized person seated in a wheelchair. While this symbol is readily recognizable, it may also reinforce the misconception that disabilities are always visible and involve the use of a wheelchair, a service animal or other assistive devices.

Disability affects more than physical mobility and vision. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 has the same definition as the Ontario Human Rights Code. The definition includes any degree of physical, sensory, cognitive, developmental and mental impairment, and brain injury.

Disabilities can be acquired at any stage of life. Some disabilities are present at birth, while others are acquired as the result of an accident or injury, a medical condition, or the aging process. Almost everyone can expect to experience a disability at some stage of life.

Disabilities can also be episodic, recurring, permanent and combined, for example, recurring periods of depression and permanent loss of vision.

Disabilities vary greatly depending on type, degree, and combination. For example, having low vision is different than being legally blind. Having a combination of vision, hearing, and mobility impairments is different than having a single one of these disabilities.

About Barriers

Many if not most limitations experienced by people with disabilities are not caused by the disability itself. The limitations are caused by the environment.

Change the environment – by preventing or removing barriers and through accommodation – and the limitations disappear.

A barrier is anything that limits or prevents a person with a disability from fully taking part in society because of that disability.

In recent decades there has been a great shift in how society views disability and the limitations that people with disabilities experience. We now realize that many, if not most limitations experienced by people with disabilities are not caused by the disability itself. The limitations are caused by the environment.

Relieved of unnecessary limitations, people with disabilities are free to achieve their full potential to live independent, satisfying lives as productive members of society.

Understanding that most barriers can be removed is essential to achieving accessibility. When barriers are recognized, they can be removed, prevented or overcome through accommodation.

Many barriers affect everyone, regardless of disability. While barriers are most serious, even illegal, when disabilities are involved, they can obstruct access and make life difficult for people without disabilities as well.

For example, distracting background noise and poor sound quality make it difficult for everyone to hear and understand audio presentations and announcements. Similarly, stairs may constitute a barrier for a parent pushing a stroller with another child in tow.

The Seven Main Types of Barriers

Reflect on your mindset regarding disability. Without really being aware of it, many people in our society have a great many mistaken ideas about disabilities and the people who have them. Revising our perceptions and attitudes is the first step towards an accessible organization.

Barriers are not simply physical obstacles to access, such as a sink that is too high for a person in a wheelchair to use comfortably.

There are seven common types of barriers to consider when evaluating your organization's accessibility. These barriers include attitudinal, architectural, physical, communication, information, technological, and policy/practice/procedure.

Also bear in mind that some barriers tend to be overlooked because they are seasonal or temporary. Things like cluttered hallways, missing signs, and broken door openers can create barriers. Ice and snow can make outdoor activities extremely difficult for people with mobility limitations. Summer foliage can obscure exterior signage.

1. Attitudinal Barriers are probably the most important obstacles to increasing accessibility throughout our society. An attitudinal barrier is a way of thinking or feeling which results in behaviour that limits the potential of people with disabilities to live as independent, full participants in society. Within organizations, attitudinal barriers can hamper or even derail efforts to improve accessibility.

Common Attitudinal Barriers¹

Negative Perception Barrier

Where people are perceived, portrayed, or treated as diminished or inferior because they have a disability.

Example: a qualified and experienced employee is not allowed to run a children's workshop because parents do not believe she is capable.

Be positive: focus on the person's ability, experience, or potential. Most disabilities become a non-issue when barriers are removed.

Pity Barrier

When people are perceived, portrayed, or treated with pity because they have a disability. Also when disability is referenced or used for the purposes of eliciting pity, sympathy, or other unhappy emotions.

Example: advertising for a fundraising event focuses on the suffering that people with disabilities experience until their limitations are mitigated or overcome.

Be positive: focus on how removing barriers serves the goals of equality and independence. Pity undermines these goals.

Hero Barrier

Where heroic qualities are attributed to people or their actions because of the presence of a disability. Patronizingly low expectations for the achievements of people with disabilities result in praise and admiration that does not reflect the actual level of achievement, i.e., praise for doing your own grocery shopping and banking.

Example: a person with a disability is praised for seeking full-time employment. She points out that there is nothing unusual about an adult who wants to be gainfully employed, but acknowledges that pervasive discrimination has made the process difficult for her.

Be positive: if anything, people achieve despite barriers like discrimination. Avoid terms like exceptional, determined, overcome, spirited, special, and brave.

Cascade Effect & Stereotype Barriers

Where assumptions are made about senses, ability, personality, and other aspects of people's lives based on the presence of disabilities.

Be positive: focus on the real person. Avoid stereotypes, assumptions, and generalizations. Do not hold people to artificial standards that may be too high or low.

Senses

When it is assumed that where one sense is affected, other senses are also positively or negatively affected. For example, many people mistakenly believe that a person who is legally blind has an improved sense of hearing and smell, or that a person with a speech impairment probably also has an intellectual impairment.

Ability

When it is assumed that people can or cannot do something because of disability. For example, some assume that people with mobility impairments can't participate in activities like dancing, or that people with vision impairments can't enjoy paintings and movies.

Role

When assumptions are made about the kind of roles people with disabilities fill. For example, people with disabilities may be stereotyped as service-users, such as a visitor or customer, rather than service-providers, like a security guard at a museum or historic site.

Personality

When it is assumed that someone has a specific personality type or trait, based on the presence of a disability.

Backlash Barrier

Where disability-related accommodation and accessibility are perceived, portrayed, or treated as unfair advantage or privilege.

Example: employees are annoyed when they see that a new co-worker has been given a flexible work schedule and a reserved parking space next to the front door.

Backlash barriers can contribute to hostile environments, a situation that may be worsened by inappropriate accommodations, i.e., lowering job standards instead of removing barriers.

Be positive: remember that accommodation and accessibility are about adapting to real differences, and providing equal opportunities.

Personal Opinion Barrier

Where legislative definitions of disability are ignored and personal opinions are used to decide what constitutes disability, and which disabilities require accommodation.

Example: people ignore a scent-free policy because they do not believe that the chemicals found in artificial scents can cause migraines and allergic reactions.

This attitude is especially prevalent in relation to non-evident or "hidden" disabilities such as chronic pain, and episodic disabilities like epilepsy.

Be positive: acknowledge that real differences and needs exist and are important.

Personal Priority Barrier

Where legal obligations to accommodate and provide accessibility are ignored or given a lesser priority than they deserve because of other considerations.

Example: a heritage organization avoids addressing accessibility issues for its historic site because it is afraid that adding accessible features will detract from the site's authenticity.

Be positive: seek creative ways to integrate existing priorities with accommodation and accessibility.

Avoidance Barrier

Where inaction or avoidance result from discomfort, fears, stereotypes, or a poor understanding of disability issues. A common concern is saying or doing something "wrong".

Example: an employee pretends not to notice that a co-worker might need help with a heavy door because the employee feels awkward about offering to help.

Be positive: it is okay to be unsure, especially in unfamiliar situations. Ask questions and listen well. Education in etiquette related to disability issues and frequent interaction with people with disabilities can help to remove this barrier.

2. Architectural Barriers exist when the design, layout, and components of buildings and structures, or the areas surrounding them, create barriers to access.

Examples: a hallway or door too narrow for a wheelchair or scooter, abrupt changes in floor levels, a lack of footpaths, or slippery surfaces.

3. Physical Barriers result from features of the environment that impede access.

Examples: a door knob that cannot be operated by an elderly person with arthritis or limited upper-body strength, revolving doors that revolve too quickly, a stairwell that lacks handrails and furniture that intrudes on pathways.

4. Communication Barriers negatively affect the transmission, reception, and interpretation of information.

Example: a lack of sign language interpreters for citizens who are deaf at an important public meeting.

5. Information Barriers negatively affect the accessibility of information.

Examples: small typefaces that a person with low vision cannot read, confusing or inadequate directional signs, and a lack of alternatives to standard print format.

6. Technological Barriers result from the design of technology and devices, or from the absence of appropriate assistive devices.

Example: a municipal website that cannot be accessed by a person who is blind and uses a computer with screen reading software.

Website and Software Accessibility

Websites and computer stations are an important source of interactive information and services. The barriers found in websites, software, and hardware are some of the most unnecessary barriers of all. Generally, they stem from a lack of foresight in the design stages and some basic misconceptions about how people use the Internet and computers. See Module 6 for guidelines adapted from WebAIM's website.

7. Policy/ Procedure /Practice Barriers exist when an organization or business organizes its activities and operations in ways that create systemic obstacles to access. Ineffective enforcement or the lack of a policy, procedure, or practice that promotes accessibility can also create barriers.

Examples: a heritage site does not provide specific staff training on serving visitors with disabilities, or maintains a practice of announcing important messages over an intercom that people with hearing impairments cannot understand clearly.

Identifying Barriers in Your Organization

The great range of potential barriers may make the challenge of barrier identification seem overwhelming.

Getting started

Adopt a practical, results-oriented approach that focuses on identifying barriers in three key areas:

- **Barriers that can be fixed relatively quickly and easily** with little or no expense, e.g., making brochures available in large print for visitors with low vision; developing a tour that is based on experiencing artifacts through touch, designed to increase accessibility to collections for visitors who are blind. Bonus: A touch tour will also interest sighted visitors, especially young people, who are interested in experiencing artifacts through senses other than sight.
- **Major barriers that will be given priority** as resources to remove them become available, e.g., a lack of accessible washroom facilities.
- **Barriers that can be addressed or prevented in upcoming projects and activities**, e.g., your organization might be planning to hold customer service training for staff and volunteers, presenting a good opportunity to add a disability awareness component to the training session.

Get help

Whatever the size and scope of your organization, the process of identifying, removing, and preventing barriers takes time and effort. There is a definite learning curve involved, and many ways to get help as you go along:

Consult people with personal or professional knowledge of disability issues

- Getting advice and guidance from people with disabilities is essential, both in identifying and preventing barriers and in creating solutions that lead to accessibility.
- Disability groups in your area and/or members of your local municipal accessibility advisory committee may agree to participate. See Module 5 for further information on planning effective consultations with people with disabilities.
- Professionals such as architects and experts in barrier-free environments can also be very helpful. If resources permit, larger,

more complex organizations may benefit from the services of a professional accessibility auditor.

Involve staff and visitors

- Review any records of suggestions and complaints from visitors, volunteers and staff regarding accessibility.
- Invite staff to think of problems they themselves have encountered or witnessed. Use the list of barrier types and their descriptions in this module to help stimulate the thought process.
- Invite feedback from visitors on the accessibility of your organization's premises and programs.

Explore existing resources

- Review any assessments on accessibility that your organization may have undertaken in the past.
- Find out how colleagues in other heritage organizations are improving accessibility – share experiences and knowledge.
- Take advantage of the many sources of information on disability and creating accessible environments that are available through the public library or via the Internet.

For example, many organizations both in and outside the heritage field have made their accessibility self-audit checklists available through the Internet. With some research you are likely to find one or more and will be able to adapt checklists that will suit your needs.

- Use the principles of Universal Design to evaluate accessibility levels. Universal Design is a set of design principles developed to help make products, communications, and the built environment usable by as many people as possible.

See Module 8 for more information on Universal Design, and a list of other resources on accessibility.

Where to Look for Barriers

The following section outlines the basic categories of places and things to consider when identifying barriers in your organization.

Built Environment

Cafeterias	Carpets	Closets
Cubicles	Drop-off zones	Elevators
Escalators	Exterior of buildings	Floors
Hallways	Interior of buildings	Lighting
Lobbies	Offices	Parking areas
Reception areas	Routes between buildings	Stairs
Stairwells	Storage areas	Washrooms

Physical Environment

Bathroom hardware	Chairs	Doorknobs
Doors	Furniture	Landscaping
Locks	Planters	Security systems
Windows	Workstations	

Communication

By e-mail	By mail	By telephone
In person	Public announcements	Receptionists
Security staff	Service delivery	Training
Via the Web		

Information

Books	Brochures	Bulletin boards
Computer screens	Equipment labels	Fax transmissions
Forms	Manuals	Printed information
Signage	Web-based resources	

Technology

Appliances	Computers	Control panels
Fax machines	Keyboards	Mice
Operating systems	Photocopiers	Printers
Proprietary software	Standard software	Switches
Telephones	TTY (Teletype writer)	Websites

Policies, Procedures and Practices

By-laws	Hiring	Interviewing
Job postings	Meetings	Procurement
Purchasing	Promotion	Protocols
Regulations	Rules	Safety and evacuation
Testing		

Tools

Carts and dollies	Hand tools, electrical	Hand tools, manual
Machinery		

Consulting Disability Groups and People with Disabilities

Any successful consultation process begins with careful planning and preparation. In addition, arranging and conducting a consultation with people with disabilities involves some specific requirements.

Be clear about the reasons your organization wants to engage in consultations.

- What kinds of guidance or feedback are you seeking?
- How will you use the information obtained?

Be ready to share the above details when you first contact prospective consultants.

- They may suggest that other groups or individuals are better equipped to help your organization achieve its goals.

When, where and how should the consultation be conducted?

- How big a commitment is this going to be? How will the process be organized?
- Giving attention to organizational details, large and small, helps a consultation go smoothly. Many of these will need to be discussed with the chosen consultants.

Volunteer, paid, or exchange of services.

- Consider what you are willing to offer in exchange for the time and effort people will expend as consultants.
- Some people or groups will be willing to help you on a pro bono basis, others may want to be paid for their services, and others may be willing to help for an exchange of services or products.

For example, a museum might offer to present two workshops and an exhibit at an accessible community centre in exchange for consultation services, or a historical society might give a disability group a year of free advertising in their newsletter.

Accessible Consultations

- Ask well ahead of time if there is anything your organization needs to provide in order to make the consultation accessible.
- See Module 6 for a checklist of accessible events and Module 7 for a catalogue of alternate formats.

Module 2 Endnote

1. University of Kentucky, Engaging Differences Project, Etiquette: Attitudinal Barriers, June 2002
www.kctcs.net/edp/attbarriers.html

Accessibility and Accommodation

This module explains what accessibility and accommodation mean, and their benefits for heritage organizations.

Accessibility and accommodation are related concepts with a shared goal: equal opportunity and full participation in society for people with disabilities.

In Ontario, the obligations of heritage organizations to provide accessibility and accommodation are defined in the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the Ontario Building Code.

Access and accommodation measures must always respect the personal dignity of people with disabilities.

Understanding Accessibility

Accessibility refers to how easily a product, service, environment or facility can be used by all people, within the widest range of abilities. It refers to the degree to which something is usable by as many people as possible without modification.

An accessible item is one that can be comfortably used by many people just as it is. For example, scissors that are designed for easy use in either hand are more accessible than scissors that are designed for either right- or left-handed users.

Understanding Accommodation

Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, **accommodation** means an adjustment to make a facility, program, resource or service accessible to a person with a disability.

Example: The development of special eyeglasses originated in the 13th century. This new technology made it possible to correct vision disabilities such as nearsightedness. Many improvements in vision correction and functional comfort were made over the following centuries. So many people now rely on prescription eyewear in their daily lives that few see this device for what it is: a widely-used accommodation for a physical limitation.

Wheelchairs, Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDDs), and Braille are other familiar forms of accommodation for mobility and hearing disabilities and loss of eyesight.

In recent decades, technological advances have introduced a wide variety of assistive accommodations, especially in the areas of computer and Internet access for people with disabilities. More are being developed every year, making it increasingly easy to tailor accommodation measures to meet the specific needs of a particular individual.

Even so, accommodation doesn't necessarily mean using technology to solve access issues. For example, a historic site might discover that a prospective registrant for a holiday decorations workshop has arthritis and cannot comfortably use scissors. In this case, making pre-cut materials available would provide a simple yet effective accommodation.

This Tool Kit is designed primarily to help heritage organizations meet accessibility standards that may be required under the AODA – to provide accessible customer service to members of the public who use their facilities or who experience or take part in activities, events and programs, as visitors, customers or volunteers.

Heritage organizations also have obligations as employers to accommodate staff members who have or develop disabilities. These include:

- eliminating non-essential job requirements, and
- adapting or adjusting essential job requirements and working conditions in ways that enable a person to carry out the required tasks or activities.

Employers must also give equal consideration to applicants for jobs who can perform the essential work with appropriate accommodation.

Heritage organizations can obtain more information on meeting their accommodation obligations as employers by contacting:

The Ontario Human Rights Commission

Toronto area: 416-326-9511

Toll free (outside Toronto area): 1-800-387-9080

TTY (Toronto area): 416-314-6526

TTY (toll free): 1-800-308-5561

www.ohrc.on.ca/english/feedback/shtml

www.ohrc.on.ca

The Canadian Human Rights Commission

Telephone: 613-995-1151

Toll free: 1-888-214-1090

TTY (toll free): 1-888-643-3304

Fax: 613-996-9661

www.chrc-ccdp.ca

Benefits and Opportunities

Heritage organizations that provide accessibility and accommodation can expect to receive real benefits and will be in a position to take advantage of new opportunities.

**According to the Royal Bank of Canada Financial Group,
people with disabilities have a spending power of
\$21–25 billion a year in Canada.**

Marketability and Revenues

By ensuring equal access and offering sensitive, appropriate accommodations, heritage organizations strengthen their ability to attract and retain people with disabilities as visitors, customers, members, volunteers and employees.

A heritage organization that delivers high-quality accessible activities, programs, customer service and facilities is well-positioned to attract the growing number of people with disabilities who travel, usually in the company of family or friends, and express interest in cultural and heritage experiences. This can lead to increased attendance and higher revenues from admissions and related sales.

In addition, an accessible heritage organization can take advantage of partnership opportunities with other local attractions and tourism-oriented businesses that offer a similar high standard of accessibility – including restaurants, hotels, motels, inns, bed-and-breakfast establishments, gas stations, etc.

Efficiency and Productivity

Incorporating high standards of accommodation and accessibility in your organization's business practices will help increase productivity and efficiency. That's because accessible practices, while designed to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities, tend to be simpler and easier for everyone to use.

Enhanced Public Image

Your organization's successes and continued efforts in providing accessibility demonstrate its commitment to all members of the community, inspire loyalty and good feeling, and help build its public image for developing creative, forward-looking solutions to an important social issue.

Its growing reputation as an accessibility leader will position your organization to seek sponsorships and partnerships in support of new or ongoing projects to improve or expand facilities and programs.

Reduced Exposure to possible Human Rights Complaints

Your organization can minimize its exposure to such complaints by:

- making disability sensitivity and awareness high priorities for your organization,
- making your commitment to improve accessibility and accommodation known to staff, volunteers, local disability groups and the wider community and
- delivering on this commitment by identifying, removing and preventing barriers as part of a comprehensive accessibility plan.

More information on how to develop an accessibility plan is found in Module 5.

The Cost of Accessibility and Accommodation: A Reality Check

Despite a widespread misconception, accessibility and accommodation are not synonymous with expensive building modifications or other measures.

- Meaningful gains in accessibility can often be achieved using everyday items, simple aids and amenities such as seats and rest areas.
- A positive environment can be fostered by making sure that your organization is disability-friendly in its treatment of staff, volunteers and the public.
- Involving the entire organization in efforts to improve access will help create knowledgeable staff and volunteers.
- Research and planning will help make the most of existing resources and apply accessibility principles to upcoming projects and activities – by far the best way to remove existing barriers when the opportunity arises, and avoid creating new ones.

Communication and Disability Issues

The information in this module will help your organization communicate positively about disability issues, and communicate effectively with people who have a disability. The topics covered include preferred language/terminology and etiquette in relation to different types of disability.

Apply this information to all aspects of your communications, materials and programs:

- Provide disability-positive orientation and customer service training and orientation to all staff and volunteers.
- Use disability-positive language in all interpretive and promotional materials.

Disability and Language

The language we use with respect to a disability and the way we communicate or interact with people who may have a disability, reflect our underlying beliefs and values and play an important role in either supporting or undermining inclusiveness and accessibility.

People with disabilities want to be treated with courtesy and consideration. They dislike being subjected to language or behaviour that is demeaning, insensitive or patronizing, and expect any special needs they may have to be acknowledged in a dignified fashion.

The average person, however, may have few opportunities to get to know a person with a disability, apart from a friend or relative. Also, many people have not had the chance to get to know people with different types of disabilities in a variety of settings and roles.

Consequently, most people have only a vague idea of how to communicate effectively with people who may have a disability. We may feel unsure how to proceed in certain situations, or may inadvertently say or do the wrong thing out of a simple lack of knowledge.

These issues are important ones for heritage organizations that affect both customer service and communications/interpretation activities and programs. They influence how staff and volunteers relate to each other, and to the increasingly large number of people with disabilities among the general public.

They also affect how well your organization carries out its responsibility to preserve and celebrate Ontario's heritage in ways everyone can enjoy.

Person-First Language

When discussing or describing people with disabilities, the most important thing to remember is to put the person before the disability. This puts the focus on the person rather than on his or her limitation, and respects the fact that a disability is only one aspect of a person's life.

Person-first language follows the formula of "person who has" and "person with" a particular disability.

It replaces the practice of defining a person or groups of people by their disability—for example, saying "she's an epileptic" or referring to "the blind".

Avoid euphemisms

Terms that skirt the issue of disability—such as "physically challenged" or "differently abled"—are considered condescending. They reinforce the idea that disabilities cannot be accepted and dealt with in a matter-of-fact, forthright fashion.

Exceptions to the person-first principle

In a few cases, people do prefer to define themselves by their disability. They may strongly identify with a specific disability community. Or they may view their disability as a central positive feature of their identity.

For example, people who consider themselves members of the cultural-linguistic Deaf community do not view deafness as a disability so much as a distinct culture and way of being. The Deaf community use American Sign Language (ALS) to communicate and celebrate Deaf culture and values and prefer to be identified as Deaf persons.

While this Tool Kit offers general guidelines on interacting with people with disabilities, it is not definitive or the last word on the subject. Individuals may have definite personal preferences about how they want to be treated and what they would like to be called. So the best advice is, "When in doubt, ask."

Negative Language, Stereotypes and Disability Issues

Some words and phrases have inappropriate or negative associations that people with disabilities find hurtful, demeaning or offensive.

For example, phrases such as "a victim of multiple sclerosis" or "a birth defect" invite misplaced pity by wrongly implying that disability is synonymous with suffering and helplessness. Similarly, "confined to a wheelchair" suggests that a wheelchair is a detriment to the person who uses it, rather than a useful tool that enables independent movement.

Do Say

Seniors
People aged 65 and over

Person with a disability since birth
Person who has a congenital disability

Person who is blind
Person with a vision impairment

Person who uses a wheelchair
Wheelchair user

Person with a mobility impairment
Person who has arthritis, a spinal cord injury, etc.

Person who is deaf, deafened, or deafblind when referring to someone who does not use sign language

A Deaf person or Deaf people when referring to those who use American Sign Language

Avoid

The aged
The elderly
Adjectives like frail, senile or feeble

Birth defect
Congenital defect
Deformity

The blind
The visually impaired

Confined to a wheelchair
Wheelchair-bound

Cripple, crippled, lame

Deaf-mute, deaf and dumb

Person who is deaf

Do Say

Person who has epilepsy

Seizure

Person with a disability

Accessible parking, bathrooms,
or other facilities

Person who is hard of hearing
Person who has a hearing impairment
These individuals are not deaf and
may compensate for a hearing loss with
an amplification device or system.

Person with a mental health disability.
Person who has schizophrenia,
depression, etc.

A person with a learning disability

Person with an intellectual disability
Person who has an intellectual impairment

Avoid

He or she is epileptic; epileptics

Fit, attack, spell

The handicapped

Handicapped parking, bathrooms or
other facilities

The hard of hearing
The hearing impaired

Insane, Lunatic
Maniac
Mental patient
Mentally diseased
Neurotic
Psycho
Psychotic
Schizophrenic
Unsound mind

Learning disabled
Learning disordered
The dyslexics

Mentally retarded or retarded
Mongoloid
Simple-minded or feeble-minded
Defective
Idiot
Imbecile
Moron

Do Say

Person without a disability
Person without disabilities

Person with a disability

She/he needs a hearing aid, a walker, etc.

Person who has spasms

Avoid

A normal person or normal people

Suffers from, afflicted by, stricken with, victim of etc.
Patient (unless referring to a medical relationship)
Physically challenged
Differently able

She/he has a problem hearing properly, walking around, etc.

Spastic

Etiquette and Disability Issues

There are specific protocols associated with many types of disabilities and disability-related equipment.

This section covers the basic points of disability-related etiquette in a variety of circumstances and situations.

General Etiquette

Ask questions, especially when attempting to help a person with a disability.

Listen and follow instructions. Help people how they want to be helped.

Treat adults like adults. Do not patronize an adult or assume the person is helpless. Do not use an adult's first name unless you are addressing other people on a first name basis. Always speak directly to the person with the disability, even if there is an interpreter or companion present.

Avoid making comments about children with disabilities to the parent or caregiver accompanying them.

Be patient. Take your time and don't pretend to understand what is said if you don't understand it.

Offer alternatives. If there is difficulty in communicating, often something as simple as a pad of paper and a pen can help.

Be informative. Tell people about any accessibility features available such as assistive devices or amenities.

Never assume. Some disabilities are not evident and people's needs differ. A person's needs may change in ways you cannot predict.

Relax, even if you feel unsure. It is okay to speak naturally and say things like "running along" or "see you later".

Vision disabilities

Introduce yourself properly every time. Your voice alone may not immediately identify you.

Communicate your actions; inform people if you are walking away or moving an item.

Describe what you are doing, especially when guiding a person. Note the surroundings and contents of the area, including the presence of other people.

Describe things in precise, detailed terms, especially when describing something spatially. "Two steps to your left" or "a meter behind you" is better than "over there" and worse yet, pointing.

If a person needs to be guided, say "may I give you my arm?" Do not take hold of a person's arm without asking, as this might cause the person to lose his or her balance.

When guiding, walk at a normal pace. The person will walk about a step behind you. Describe obstacles and the surrounding area, including doors, stairs, and side passages.

When guiding, do not abandon the person in an area without anything to orient them. Instead, guide the person to a chair, or a wall or a table in order to help maintain a sense of orientation. Inform the person of the location of the exit.

When guiding to a chair, place the person's hand on the back of the chair and allow them to seat themselves. Do not try to seat a person by pushing the chair against their legs.

Deaf, Deafened, Deafblind, Hard of hearing

Where appropriate a gentle tap on the shoulder should be used to get the person's attention. Always get a person's attention before speaking.

Ask what communication technique the person prefers. Some people may understand speech; other people may prefer written communication (pen and paper) or may use the services of an interpreter.

To enhance speechreading, position yourself so that your face is well lit. Do not cover your mouth or turn your head while speaking, and avoid distractions like gum chewing.

Eliminate any distracting background noises, or move to a quiet area to speak.

Speak clearly and slowly, but without exaggeration. Never shout at a person. Shouting is undignified and if the person is wearing a hearing aid it can cause them pain and distress.

Avoid ambiguous language, which can lead to confusion. There are some differences in meaning between the English language and American Sign Language (ASL), and an interpreters' ability to give an accurate interpretation is directly related to clearly understanding the original statement.

If a person does not understand what you are saying, try rephrasing. Some words are easier to understand than others. If you don't understand what has been said, don't be afraid to ask the person to repeat it.

To avoid confusion, advise people when you are changing the subject of the conversation.

Physical Disabilities

Consider your own abilities when offering assistance; if you feel that you do not have the agility or strength to render the appropriate assistance, try to find someone else who can. This will help to avoid injuries to you, the other person, and damage to the surroundings.

When guiding or leading someone, allow the person to set the pace.

Consider a person's reach when deciding where to store or place items that they require. Keep items in easy reach.

Do not make assumptions about ability, someone in a wheelchair may be able to stand or walk.

Language/Speech Impairments

Avoid making assumptions about the competence or intelligence of a person. Arrange for a quiet environment with minimal background noise and distractions.

Do not interrupt, correct, or finish sentences. Give the person the time they require to speak.

If you do not understand what a person has said, do not pretend. Repeat what you have understood and ask the person to repeat what they said.

Try "yes" and "no" questions. Offer alternatives such as a pen and pad of paper if necessary.

Mental Health Disabilities

Avoid making assumptions about the competence or intelligence of a person. Do not try to analyze the person.

Take the person seriously and treat adults like adults.

Remember each person is different, and an individual's needs may vary over time.

Maintain a calm manner, but do not patronize the person.

Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities

Avoid making assumptions about the competence or intelligence of a person. Treat adults like adults.

Use clear, short sentences and simplify vocabulary where necessary.

When conveying information, ask if the person has understood and if they would like you to write the information down. Be prepared to repeat and rephrase, using a normal tone of voice and volume.

As with any person, make suggestions if you perceive a problem or a safety issue, but do not be bossy or patronizing.

Learning Disabilities

Do not assume there is an intellectual disability. Learning disabilities relate to how information is acquired, organized and stored, and how information is linked from different parts of the brain.

Use clear, short sentences and simplify vocabulary where necessary.

When conveying information, ask if the person has understood and if they would like you to write the information down. Be prepared to repeat and rephrase, using a normal tone of voice and volume.

Some individuals do not give verbal or visual feedback when they are listening. If you are unsure that a person has heard you, ask the person if he or she understands or agrees with what you have said.

Ask for suggestions and ways to help.

Companions, Interpreters and Interveners

When speaking to a person with a disability, look and speak to that person. Do not focus on, or direct your speech to, a companion, interpreter or intervener. An intervener is a special support person for individuals who are deaf and blind.

It is okay to speak to a companion, interpreter, or intervener when they are not working.

Speak clearly, in a normal tone and at a normal pace.

Remember that it takes time to interpret, so allow extra time for responses. This will be especially important during meetings with lots of participants. Participants should be asked to speak one at a time.

Service Animals

Be prepared with advice on where to walk the service animal, know local 'stoop and scoop' regulations, and keep garbage bags handy for that purpose.

Do not interfere with the service animal by calling its name, touching it or its harness, or by feeding the animal without permission. Digestive/walking schedules are often carefully regulated.

Remember that with few exceptions, service animals are allowed where other animals would be prohibited.

Disability-Related Equipment

Avoid touching a person's wheelchair, scooter, or other equipment unless asked to do so.

Avoid moving items or equipment, such as canes and walkers, out of a person's reach.

Wheelchairs and scooters should be considered part of a person's personal space. Do not lean on them or over them.

When speaking for prolonged periods to a seated person, position yourself at the person's eye level by sitting, squatting, or standing at an increased distance.

If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair, remember to:

- Wait for and follow the wheelchair user's instructions
- Make sure the wheelchair user is ready to be moved
- Describe what you are going to do before you do it
- Avoid uneven ground and objects
- Never leave the wheelchair user in an awkward, dangerous, or undignified position such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors

A Blueprint for Accessibility Planning¹

This module suggests a strategy your organization can use to develop an accessibility plan, and advice on planning accessible events, exhibits and displays.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to successful accessibility planning.

Your organization may be a five-member group of volunteers dedicated to preserving a local heritage site, with minimal or no outside support or funding. Or it may be a community museum with municipal funding, a board of directors and ten employees, including a curator, two interpreters, and support staff.

Whatever its size or resources, every heritage organization needs to develop an accessibility planning process that reflects its character and needs. Through this process your organization will gather the information it needs to prepare an accessibility plan.

The accessibility plan has a dual purpose:

- It will outline your organization's strategy for identifying, removing and preventing barriers to access during a specified period, usually one to two years.
- It will indicate how your organization intends to monitor progress in achieving its stated goals, and when these goals will be updated and revised.

Most organizations may find it works best to harmonize their annual accessibility and business planning cycles, so that available funds are allocated to support accessibility and accommodation projects.

Depending on their respective needs and capabilities, some heritage organizations may develop accessibility plans that are long and fairly complex, while others will be short and simple. The main thing is to prepare a thoughtful plan that will lead to real improvements in accessibility and accommodation at your organization.

The next section outlines a step-by-step approach to accessibility planning. Think of it as a general method that your organization can adapt to suit its needs and resources, not as a list of rules. But whatever accessibility planning process is adopted, be sure that everyone in your organization has ample opportunity to contribute his or her ideas and experiences.

A Step-by-Step Approach to Accessibility Planning

1. Appoint an Accessibility Coordinator
2. Create an Accessibility Work Group
3. Create and Distribute a Mission Statement
4. Review Past Initiatives and Successes
5. Identify Barriers
6. Establish Priorities for Barrier Removal
7. Develop a Strategy for Barrier Removal and Prevention
8. Decide How to Monitor Your Progress
9. Create and Finalize the Accessibility Plan
10. Monitor and Review Your Progress

1. Appoint an Accessibility Coordinator

One person in your organization (staff, volunteer, board member) should have responsibility for coordinating your accessibility planning process for a period of time, usually one to three years. This will help to ensure consistency and avoid the repetition of work. The Coordinator will take the lead in:

- Organizing the initial accessibility planning process and preparing the organization's accessibility plan.
- Establishing contacts with local disability groups and people with disabilities who are willing to help your organization identify barriers and decide how to address them.
- Ensuring that the plan's accessibility strategy and projects are carried out.
- Monitoring progress and updating the plan, usually on an annual basis.

An effective Coordinator will be someone who is committed to accessibility as a top priority. An ideal candidate should have, or be able to obtain, a knowledge and understanding of the following:

- Applicable legislation and corresponding legal obligations,
- Accessibility and accommodation issues,
- Your organization, including facilities and their uses; by-laws; services and programs; policies, practices and procedures; and financial planning, especially annual business and capital cycles.

2. Create an Accessibility Work Group

Your organization may also want to establish an Accessibility Work Group to assist the Coordinator. Members of the Work Group should be committed to making accessibility a high priority in their respective areas of the organization.

The Work Group might include:

- Invited participants – senior staff, volunteers, board members
- Representatives from the key areas of your organization
- Managers of buildings and facilities
- People with disabilities, including staff and volunteers
- People with personal or professional knowledge of disability issues and barrier removal
- Any other people whose input is deemed valuable

3. Create and Distribute a Mission Statement

A mission statement serves to announce the accessibility planning process, and explains purpose and goals. A strong mission statement will help build commitment to improving accessibility throughout your organization. It will promote appreciation of your efforts in the wider community and encourage participation and feedback.

Distribution

Once the objective or mission statement is approved and endorsed by your organization, distribute it widely among:

- Your staff, volunteers, members and supporters; and
- Your community newspaper, service groups, religious institutions, chamber of commerce, etc.

4. Review Past Initiatives and Successes

If your organization has had previous experience with accessibility planning and projects, evaluate what has been accomplished to date. Organizations that lack such experience can still benefit from reviewing any informal or situation-specific responses to disability issues in the past.

For example, at one time there may have been a volunteer who liked to offer water bowls, plastic bags, and information about local parks and green spaces to visitors with service animals. Your organization might decide to make this practice a formal service policy and feature it on your website.

5. Identify Barriers

With input from disability groups and people with disabilities, identify as many barriers and potential barriers as possible. Barriers tend to interconnect, so by identifying as many as possible you will be better able to take a structured, logical approach to their removal.

6. Establish Priorities for Barrier Removal

Seek help from disability groups and people with disabilities to determine which barriers your organization should tackle first, based on their impact and severity. The most serious barriers identified should have top priority, even if it requires working in phases over several years.

Take time to think through implications and consequences of removing a particular barrier. You don't want to inadvertently create a new barrier in its place, as in the following hypothetical situation:

Removal of an architectural barrier : A heritage organization installs a wheelchair lift at one of its major entrances. To preserve the building's 'look', the lift is made to look similar to the building and is partially hidden by shrubs.

Creates an information barrier: The wheelchair lift is not readily visible and there are no signs, accessible or otherwise, to direct users to the lift. Anyone who does not already know about the lift's existence and location cannot use it.

Discovery of an attitudinal barrier: Some staff members are noticeably awkward and uncomfortable interacting with people with disabilities. They may require training, information sessions and clear policies and procedures, including how to communicate effectively with people who have a disability.

7. Develop a Strategy for Barrier Removal and Prevention

Your strategy may include some or all of the following elements:

Objectives

Identify the barriers selected for priority action, the methods that will be used to address them, and the intended outcomes.

Human Resources

Determine how much time staff and volunteers will need to give each barrier removal initiative, and whether external experts may be required, e.g., architects, consultants, specialists in relevant fields such as Web design.

Evaluation

Develop performance criteria that can later be used to measure the effectiveness of each initiative. Criteria should be clear and verifiable.

Responsibility

Specify who will have lead responsibility for each initiative.

Timeline

Develop a timeline for implementing each initiative in consultation with all those responsible.

Resources

Identify the financial and related costs of each initiative with respect to staff time and other resources. Some initiatives may involve little cost; others may require a significant investment that will need to be figured into the annual planning and budget cycles.

8. Decide How to Monitor Your Progress

Effective monitoring may be accomplished through:

- Regular meetings of the Coordinator and those with lead responsibility for implementing specific projects,
- Feedback sessions involving people who have a special interest in a particular project, including staff, volunteers, disability groups or individuals with disabilities,
- Community feedback,
- Suggestion boxes, questionnaires, surveys and similar tools may be helpful to obtain feedback from visitors and the larger community.

9. Create and Finalize the Accessibility Plan

- Make a draft version of the plan available to all those who contributed significantly to its content. After incorporating their comments and suggestions when appropriate, prepare a final draft.
- Have the plan reviewed and approved by your organization's executive. Plans developed jointly with other organizations need to be approved by all the organizations involved.
- Make the plan available to your organization. You may also choose to make it available to the wider community by posting it on your website, announcing its availability in your newsletter, etc.
- The plan should always be available to community members upon request and, if resources permit, in alternative formats.

10. Monitor and Review Your Progress

Accessibility planning is an ongoing process that takes time, patience, and continued effort. Your accessibility plan should be revised and updated annually to register achievements and set new goals for improving accommodation and access.

Planning Exhibits and Displays with Disability Themes

Disability is part of our collective experience as human beings. Throughout history, societies have varied greatly in their attitudes to and treatment of people with disabilities and much human ingenuity has been devoted to devising accommodations for different types of disability. In every era, individuals with disabilities have made outstanding contributions in every realm of human endeavour.

However, in Ontario as elsewhere, the role of disability and the experiences of people with disabilities in the history and heritage of our province have generally been overlooked. Heritage organizations are encouraged to consider creative ways to redress this balance by including disability-related themes in their programs, exhibits, displays and other activities.

It may take some imagination and research to identify disability themes and topics that are relevant to your organization and find supporting sources, photographs, documents, objects and artifacts. However, your efforts to do so will help build knowledge of this neglected subject and enrich community understanding of the history and heritage of Ontario.

Almost inevitably, many if not most historical materials will depict disability as a misfortune and people with disabilities as victims, objects of pity and medical cases. Don't be afraid to use such material, but take care to present it in its historical context, and include contrasting, positive information about inclusive attitudes to disability and the experiences of people with disabilities.

Planning Accessible Events and Exhibits

When planning events, developing new exhibits and displays or updating existing ones, be sure to make accessibility and accommodation an integral part of your planning process. The results will benefit everyone, not only people with disabilities. For example, while visitors who have visual disabilities rely on audio labels, other visitors may also prefer to listen to information rather than read it.

Accessible Events

These are some key factors to consider when planning an accessible event:

- Provide an accessible location with accessible parking and that can be reached by accessible transit
- Provide accessible washrooms

- Ensure your signage is easy to see and well lit
- Provide material in alternate formats (e.g., large print or on audio tape)

As you go along, be sure to keep a record of problem-solving strategies, useful contacts, things that went well and things that need improvement. The record will become a valuable resource for planning accessible events at your organization. For a detailed checklist on planning an accessible event, please refer to Module 6.

Accessible Exhibits and Displays

Here are a few of the important factors to consider in planning new exhibits and displays or updating existing ones:

- Are your brochures and companion materials written in plain language?
- Are printed materials available in large-print format for visitors with vision related disabilities?
- Is the circulation route accessible, well lit and easy to follow?
- Are the items on display placed so as to be accessible to viewers at different heights and angles? Are you using colours and patterns that do not cause confusion about depth and height?
- Have you retained a range of items for use in a touch-tour for visitors who are blind, and sighted visitors who are interested in closing their eyes and experiencing items in a new way?

A complete checklist for planning accessible displays is found in Module 6. For more information on museum exhibits and other standards, see Ministry of Culture Standards for Community Museums in Ontario. Revised edition August 2000.

Module 5 Endnote

1. Ministry of Community and Social Services, Information and Resources for Accessibility Planning
www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/planning/planning_information.htm