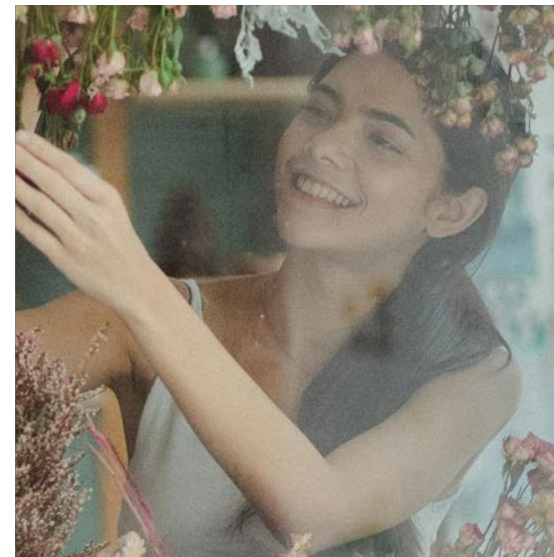# Accessibility Check-In For Small Businesses

Getting Started Guide

Let's do an accessibility check-in for your small business to identify, remove, and prevent barriers. Barriers are anything in an environment that limits functioning and creates obstacles for people. By addressing barriers, we are creating an inclusive environment that accommodates all abilities.

Below is a list of some common barriers to accessibility and inclusion that people with disabilities often face in the workplace. This is not a comprehensive list of all accessibility considerations. Not every aspect of accessibility listed here will make sense for your unique business, but you can think of this as a brief overview to get you started.

A note about language:

To honour both **person-first language preferences and identity-first preferences**, we have alternated between the two throughout this article. You may not be familiar with some of the **disability terminology** in the accessibility and inclusion space. Be patient as you familiarize yourself with the language and stay curious about understanding disability types and accessibility.

ATTITUDINAL

What it is: Promoting inclusive behaviours and ideas, while limiting assumptions, so that everyone is treated equally and able to participate fully.

How to get started:

Set an example and purposefully work to create an inclusive culture in the organization.

Promote awareness and understanding of disability-related issues.

Make disability awareness and accessibility considerations part of your everyday workflow.

Provide ongoing training sessions or workshops to raise awareness among staff.

Encourage the use of **inclusive language**.

Become aware of subtle behaviours, called **microaggressions**, that may unintentionally exclude people with disabilities.

Review your policies and practices to ensure they are accessible and inclusive.

Examples of accessibility:

- Avoiding preconceptions and assuming that an employee who has a disability is able to do a task.

- Using language that is inclusive, welcoming, and respectful.

- Not questioning the need for **accommodations** such as mobility devices, assistive technology, or flexible working conditions.

DIGITAL

What it is: Removing barriers to websites, online materials, and technology used in the workplace.

How to get started:

Consider how people using screen readers, alternative input devices, and voice recognition technology navigate your digital spaces.

Become aware of the **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines** (WCAG) for improving digital accessibility and incorporate them into your digital practices.

Whenever possible, provide materials in alternate formats like large print, high contrast, braille, and American Sign Language.

Always include captions and accurate transcripts for videos and alternative text for images.

Use accessibility checkers like the **WAVE Website Accessibility Checker** or the **WebAim Colour Contrast Checker**.

Show your commitment to accessibility and inclusion by creating an **Accessibility Statement** proudly displayed on your website.

Examples of accessibility:

- Websites or apps that can be accessed by a screen reader or other assistive technology device.

- Materials that are available in alternate formats.

- Images that include alternative text.

- Videos that include captions or accurate transcripts.

ENVIRONMENTAL

What it is: Creating physically built environments that don't limit access and that allow for equal participation by everyone.

How to get started:

Remember that improvements to the physical environment not only help disabled people; they are often useful to everyone.

Check out the [Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification](#) program to learn about improving accessibility of the built environment.

Involve employees and customers with disabilities in the evaluation of your built environment.

Include accessibility improvements in your annual budget.

Create a system for reporting accessibility issues.

Examples of accessibility:

- Washrooms, entryways, or workplace areas that can be accessed by a person using a wheelchair or other mobility device.

- Signage that is provided with large print, symbols, and braille.

- Furniture or countertops that can be adjusted.

- Consideration of lighting or sounds to limit sensory challenges.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

What it is: Preparation for the extra needs of disabled people that may be necessary during an emergency evacuation, when providing emergency communications, or when recovering from an emergency event.

How to get started:

Review your policies and consider how disabled people could face barriers in your workspace during an emergency.

Create [individual accommodation plans](#) for all employees with disabilities.

Provide annual emergency and disability safety training to all staff.

Consider the [functional needs](#) of everyone that may interact with your organization and prepare accordingly.

Examples of accessibility:

- Presence of accessible emergency equipment, such as visual alarms for people who are deaf or hard of hearing or emergency evacuation chairs for those who may have difficulty navigating stairs.

- Easy access to exits.

- Including people with disabilities in your emergency planning.

- Pre-organized, designated support people for during or after an emergency

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Continue your Accessibility Journey with SBBC

Small Business BC is a non-profit resource centre for BC-based small businesses. www.smallbusinessbc.ca/accessibility-business-resources is full of tips, tools, and more to support your next stage.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

What it is: Limiting barriers to accessing programs, services, and events, while increasing positive interactions with all disabled people.

How to get started:

Focus on customer's functional needs rather than on their disability.

Train staff to never treat someone with a disability like a burden and to be aware of resources to support their functional needs.

Ask questions instead of making assumptions.

Be patient and flexible, allowing for extra time if required.

Examples of accessibility:

- Encouraging interactions with someone who has a disability.

- Speaking to the disabled person, rather than their caregiver.

- Speaking in a tone or volume that is appropriate to the person's age, needs, or situation.

EMPLOYMENT

What it is: Creating inclusive and accessible policies, procedures, and hiring practices that allow everyone to participate fully in all aspects of work.

How to get started:

Check out the **Disability Inclusive Employer Self-Assessment tool** to assess aspects within your organization that could be improved.

Review and modify policies and procedures to be more inclusive.

Consider remote meeting accommodations, flexible work arrangements, accommodations for health appointments, and a reasonable accommodation process.

Ask candidates about their accommodations before the interview process to ensure equal opportunities. Provide accommodations and alternatives based on their feedback.

Make a commitment to accessibility by joining the President's Group **Community of Accessible Employers** – it is free to join.

Examples of accessibility:

- Removing unnecessary qualification requirements and including an accommodation statement in all job postings.

- Customizing job duties to specifically fit the strengths of a candidate who has a disability.

- Reviewing all policies to ensure inclusive language and procedures.

- Providing the option for a working interview, where candidates show their abilities to perform specific tasks.

Canada BRITISH COLUMBIA

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