



# Central Coast Regional District - Accessibility Plan

## **Territorial Acknowledgement**

The Central Coast Regional District acknowledges that the lands on which we operate and the communities we serve are located on the traditional territories of the Heiltsuk Nation, Nuxalk Nation, and Wuikinuxv Nation, as well as the Kitasoo/Xai'Xais Nation and Ulkatcho Nation.

We acknowledge and respect their historical connection to these lands, waters, and resources. We are committed to building positive and collaborative relationships with Indigenous peoples as we work towards a more inclusive and accessible future.

## **About the Organization**

The Central Coast Regional District (CCRD) is a regional district in British Columbia providing regional local government services to the people of the Bella Coola Valley, Ocean Falls, Denny Island, Wuikinuxv/Rivers Inlet, and Bella Bella. The CCRD serves a diverse population and is committed to fostering an inclusive and accessible community for all residents and visitors.

## **Our Accessibility Story**

Our commitment to accessibility is rooted in the belief that every individual deserves equal access to opportunities, services, and facilities. Over the years, we have taken significant steps to identify and remove barriers that hindered access for persons with disabilities such as:

This accessibility plan is a continuation of our ongoing efforts to create an inclusive environment that respects the rights and dignity of all individuals.

## **Message from Accessibility Committee**

The CCRD's Accessibility Committee plays a vital role in guiding our accessibility initiatives. Comprising of members from various departments and community representatives, the committee serves as a voice for persons with disabilities and advocates for accessibility improvements. Through collaboration and engagement, the committee strives to make informed decisions that positively impact the lives of individuals with disabilities.

The Accessibility Committee was formed in 2023 and is made up of the following members:

Chair: Erin Nevison, Deputy Corporate Officer CCRD.

Member: Kate Antonova (resident).

Member: Gord Kohut (to be appointed by the Chair).

This committee was imperative to the development of this accessibility plan.



### **Acknowledgement of Key Contributors**

We extend our sincere gratitude to all individuals and community members who have actively contributed to the development of this accessibility plan. Your insights, experiences, and expertise have been invaluable in shaping our approach to accessibility. We would like to thank Wilma Hallam for her participation in the committee, and Meg Schadt for her support.

### **Framework Guiding our Work**

#### **Accessible BC Act-Principles**

The Central Coast Regional District's accessibility plan is guided by the principles outlined in the Accessible BC Act. These principles serve as the foundation for our efforts to promote accessibility and inclusivity:

1. **Inclusion:** We promote a sense of belonging and engagement for all individuals, ensuring that no one is left behind.
2. **Adaptability:** We strive to construct our programs, policies, and procedures to be accessible to all individuals and will remain open to new ideas, and ways of structuring those programs, policies, and procedures.
3. **Diversity:** We affirm our commitment to nurturing an open and inclusive space, where all individuals feel empowered to express themselves authentically, pursue their aspirations, and flourish as valued members of our diverse society.
4. **Collaboration:** Embracing diversity, we leverage unique strengths to find innovative solutions and create a lasting impact.
5. **Self-determination:** We strive to provide the tools and support needed for individuals to exercise their rights and actively participate in shaping their path to inclusion.
6. **Universal design:** We intend to create a welcoming and equitable environment by ensuring that environments, services, and programs are inclusive and usable by all, regardless of abilities.

The CCRD added these four principles from the Canada Accessibility Act to the overall principles provided by the provincial government. These principles were used to assess and identify barriers by the Accessibility Committee and to provide solutions and recommendations to address identified barriers.

7. **Dignity:** Does the CCRD treat all residents with the same level of dignity and respect regardless of their ability?
8. **Independence:** Can residents maintain independence as they navigate and use CCRD facilities and services?



9. **Integration:** Can residents receive the same service and use facilities the same way as individuals with no disabilities can?
10. **Equal Opportunity:** Do residents of all abilities receive the same benefits and treatment from the CCRD?

### **Other Legislation**

In addition to the Accessible BC Act, the Central Coast Regional District acknowledges the importance of adhering to other relevant legislation that addresses accessibility and inclusivity, including but not limited to:

- Canada Accessibility Act.
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).
- BC Human Rights Code.
- Canadian Human Rights Act.
- Building Code and Accessibility Standards.
- Information and Communication Accessibility Standard.

### **Existing Policies**

The CCRD recognizes the need to integrate accessibility considerations into existing policies and procedures to create a comprehensive and consistent approach. We commit to reviewing and, if necessary, revising the following policies to align with accessibility goals:

- Policy A-29 Personnel Policy.
- Policy A-34 – CCRD Board Meeting Accessibility Policy.

### **Our Approach**

Our approach to achieving accessibility is collaborative, proactive, and continuous. It involves the following key elements:

1. **Engagement:** The Accessibility Committee engaged with the community to gain insights, feedback, and suggestions. This engagement allows us to better understand the diverse needs and priorities of our constituents.
2. **Compliance and Beyond:** While compliance with accessibility laws is essential, we go beyond mere compliance by striving for best practices that exceed the minimum requirements. Our goal is to create an inclusive community where everyone feels welcomed and valued.
3. **Accessibility Training:** We will provide training to staff and volunteers to raise awareness about accessibility, disability etiquette, and effective communication with individuals with diverse needs.



4. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** We will establish a monitoring and evaluation process through our feedback mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of our accessibility initiatives. This process allows us to make data-driven decisions and continuously improve our accessibility efforts.
5. **Barrier Identification and Removal:** We will review feedback received from the Accessibility Committee feedback mechanism and the Committee will provide recommendations to the Board of Directors to eliminate barriers.

### **About our Committee**

#### **Initial Focus of Committee**

The Central Coast Regional District's Accessibility Committee was established to champion the cause of accessibility and inclusivity throughout our region. The committee's primary focus is to lead and coordinate efforts to identify barriers, propose solutions, and implement measures that promote accessibility for individuals with disabilities in the region.

The initial focus of the committee includes the following key objectives:

1. **Engagement and Consultation:** Engage with residents within the CCRD to gather perceived barriers to accessibility, recommendations, and insights to inform accessibility initiatives.
2. **Action Plan Development:** Develop a detailed action plan outlining specific steps and timelines for addressing identified barriers and promoting accessibility.
3. **Feedback Mechanism Development:** Create an accessible feedback mechanism for individuals to anonymously identify an accessibility issue and provide recommendations. Staff are instructed to receive and review the feedback and address the barriers accordingly.

#### **Recruitment**

The CCRD's Accessibility Committee includes representatives from different departments within the Central Coast Regional District and members of the community who have a passion for accessibility and inclusivity.

To ensure broad representation and expertise, the CCRD recruited according to BC's *Accessibility Act*. Posters were put up on CCRD bulletin boards in the Bella Coola Valley, and advertisements were posted on the CCRD website and social media (Facebook). Two members applied and both were appointed by the Board of the CCRD. Recruitment for this committee will be ongoing to encourage participation and continued engagement with the community.



### **Committee Members and Background**

The Accessibility Committee is composed of dedicated individuals who bring a diverse range of knowledge, skills, and experiences to the table. Committee members include:

1. Erin Nevison – Deputy Corporate Officer at the CCRD.
2. Dr. Kate Antonova – New Resident in Bella Bella.
3. Gord Kohut (To be appointed by CCRD Chair) – Operations Coordinator.

These dedicated committee members collaborate to ensure that accessibility considerations are integrated into all aspects of the Central Coast Regional District's operations, policies, and service delivery.

### **Stakeholders Involved**

The Central Coast Regional District's Accessibility Plan includes the following stakeholders:

- Board of Directors.
- Accessibility Committee.
- CCRD residents.
- CCRD staff.

### **Consultation Conducted**

#### **Consultations to Date**

The Central Coast Regional District recognizes the importance of engaging with individuals with disabilities, disability organizations, and the broader community to inform our accessibility initiatives. The Accessibility Committee engaged with residents, individuals, and CCRD staff to better understand and identify accessibility barriers for residents, individuals, and staff interacting with and in the CCRD. The CCRD covers a significant amount of land with multiple communities, and the CCRD's main office is in the Bella Coola Valley. Members consulted with residents in both the Bella Coola Valley and in the Outer Coast to listen to residents' experiences with interacting with and in the CCRD.

#### **How consultation was conducted**

Initial consultation consisted of Accessibility Committee member engagement with CCRD staff, residents, and individuals in the CCRD. The Committee sought to better understand accessibility issues with CCRD facilities.

Consultation will continue by reviewing feedback received through the prescribed feedback mechanism (outlined in this plan) at regular Accessibility Committee meetings. Further engagement may occur but will depend on staff capacity.



### **Key discussion themes**

Through our consultations, several key discussion themes emerged:

1. **Physical Accessibility:** The importance of addressing physical barriers in CCRD facilities and offices to provide access and service to all individuals regardless of abilities.
2. **Digital Accessibility:** Ensuring that digital content, websites, and online services are accessible, easy to navigate, and clear for all.
3. **Communication and Information:** Ensuring clear and effective communication, including the provision of accessible formats and communication supports.
5. **Employment and Education:** Identifying opportunities to enhance accessibility in CCRD workplaces to create a more inclusive environment. Confirming staff providing information and services in an accessible manner.
6. **Community Awareness and Training:** Raising awareness about disability issues and promoting disability etiquette through community engagement and training initiatives.

### **Feedback Mechanism**

#### **Feedback Mechanism Development**

The Central Coast Regional District is committed to maintaining an ongoing feedback mechanism to receive input, suggestions, and concerns related to accessibility from individuals with disabilities, community members, and stakeholders. The Accessibility Committee discussed methods and tools for individuals to provide feedback regarding CCRD services, offices, and facilities. The feedback mechanism should be anonymous and accessible (phone, online, and physical copy option to fill out). The feedback mechanism will be checked regularly, and all feedback will be brought to the following Accessibility Meeting for review and discussion.

The CCRD will receive feedback through:

1. **Online:**
  - a. **Online form:** This form will include questions on people's experience in CCRD facilities or offices with regard to accessibility and ask for any recommendations to improve the ease of access. The form can be found here: [Central Coast Regional District Accessibility Survey \(jotform.com\)](https://www.jotform.com).



- b. CCRD website: The CCRD website will have a tab and link to an Accessibility CCRD page. This page will include the link to the online form, contact information, and information about accessibility in the CCRD.
  2. Physical:
    - a. A physical copy of the form will be available at the downtown CCRD office in Bella Coola, the Centennial Pool, and the Bella Coola Airport. A small poster asking about individual accessibility experiences will be visible with the forms. This poster will include the link and a QR code for the online survey, as well as a phone number to verbally take the questionnaire.
    - b. Forms can be deposited anonymously into boxes at the listed locations. These boxes will be checked regularly by CCRD staff.
  3. Verbal:
    - a. Individuals wanting to provide feedback on accessibility may also take the survey over the phone or in person at the CCRD office.

All information gathered from the feedback mechanisms will be reviewed by the Accessibility Committee at the following meeting. The Committee may:

1. Provide recommendations to the Board based on the feedback received.
2. Use this information to continue to shape CCRD priorities and action items to improve accessibility.

This Feedback Mechanism is to be a dynamic process to strengthen the CCRD's Accessibility Plan, its priorities, and action items. The feedback mechanism should be reviewed regularly to determine its efficacy.

### **Barriers Identified**

#### **What We Found (Internal Review)**

During our internal accessibility review, the Central Coast Regional District assessed its buildings, facilities, services, and digital platforms. The review was carried out by staff from relevant departments, who identified various barriers that hindered accessibility. The internal review revealed the following key barriers:

Physical Infrastructure:

1. Bella Coola Valley Airport:



- a. Due to the age of the technology of the automatic doors at the Bella Coola Airport, the doors no longer open automatically; they must be pulled or pushed to open. The technology must be replaced to allow hands-free opening of the doors.
2. CCRD Offices:
  - a. The CCRD downtown office does not have any automatic door options, it must be physically opened.
  - b. The wheelchair ramp at the CCRD downtown office has a high lip to access it, and it has wood rot in the center of the ramp. Due to the tightness of the corners, it would be difficult for wheelchairs to get onto the ramp and into the building.
  - c. The CCRD office at the Bella Coola Airport does not have a permanent ramp for wheelchair/walker accessibility.
3. Centennial Pool:
  - a. There is one step to enter the Pool facility.
  - b. The toilets are very low and add difficulty for pool users.
  - c. There is no ramp or access point to enter the pool beyond the stairs.

### **What We Heard (Community/Committee Feedback)**

Through our consultations with community members, we received valuable feedback regarding accessibility barriers in the Central Coast Regional District. The feedback highlighted additional challenges that were not fully captured in the internal review:

1. Bella Coola Valley Airport:
  - a. The buttons on the airport doors do not work.
2. Communication:
  - a. Individuals consulted responded that there is a lack of communication by the CCRD.
  - b. Residents were unsure of board meetings, services available, etc., and found the information difficult to find.
  - c. Residents complained that all communication seemed to be online and through the website, which is difficult and not clear to navigate. This also is a barrier for individuals not online.
  - d. There is a lack of signage in the CCRD communicating what the CCRD does and offers.





## **Actions Taken**

In response to the barriers identified through the internal review and community feedback, the Central Coast Regional District will begin to take the following actions:

1. Physical Accessibility Assessment:
  - a. CCRD staff will be asked to review accessibility and the 10 principles outlined in this plan when constructing or renovating CCRD property, facilities, and offices.
2. Updating Infrastructure:
  - a. CCRD Facilities and Offices will assess the need for updates or renovations to ensure accessibility (i.e., the airport doors, etc.).
3. Communication:
  - a. Adding closed captions in board meetings to the live stream and online recorded video.
  - b. Ensuring CCRD information (e.g., notices, policies, etc.) can be given without accessibility barriers (physical copies, verbally told, online, etc.).
  - c. Creating an Accessible CCRD information guide to include buildings, facilities, trails, etc. that are accessible to individuals of all abilities.
  - d. Add an "Accessibility Tab" to the CCRD website with the above information and resources on accessibility in the CCRD (Accessibility Committee information, Accessibility Plan, resources, and tools on accessibility).
  - e. Improving the CCRD website for easier navigation and clarity.
4. Education and Awareness:
  - a. Researching and providing educational tools and resources to staff to create a better understanding of accessibility within the CCRD.
  - b. Providing educational tools and resources on the CCRD website to educate the public on accessibility.
5. Celebrating International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3, 2023. Marking the CCRD calendar with this day and inquiring to other public organizations (e.g., School District, library) on partnerships to celebrate and raise awareness.

## **Summary**

Priority #1 Physical Infrastructure:

- CCRD facilities and offices are to be accessible to people of all abilities.

Priority #2 Communication:



- Ensuring CCRD information is accessible and available.

Priority #3 Education and Awareness:

- Providing tools and resources to CCRD staff and the public to increase understanding and awareness of accessibility and disabilities.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, our primary goal is to make our community an inclusive and welcoming place for everyone. Over the next three years, we have a plan to improve accessibility in various ways. We aim to make it easier for people with disabilities to access buildings and services, as well as improve the usability of our website and digital platforms for everyone.

We firmly believe that every individual is important, regardless of their background. Our vision is to create a community where everyone feels valued and included. We will work together, listen to people's needs, and take action to make positive changes.

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