

Accessibility Plan

2023-2026

September 1, 2023





Contents

- Message from the Commissioner/CAO _____ 4
- Message from the Accessibility Committee _____ 4
- Territorial Acknowledgment _____ 5
- About Metro Vancouver _____ 5
- Accessibility at Metro Vancouver _____ 6
- About the ACT _____ 7
- Accessibility Principles _____ 7
- Accessibility Committees _____ 8
- Accessibility Plan Development Process _____ 9
 - Document and Data Review _____ 9
 - Consultations _____ 9
 - Drafting Our Accessibility Plan _____ 9
- Understanding Disabilities _____ 10
- Understanding Barriers _____ 11
- Priority Areas _____ 12
- Integration and Planning _____ 13
 - What We Heard _____ 14
 - Promising Practices _____ 14
 - Next Steps _____ 14
- Facilities and Infrastructure _____ 15
 - What We Heard _____ 15
 - Promising Practices _____ 15
 - Next Steps _____ 15
- Provision of Services _____ 16
 - What We Heard _____ 16
 - Promising Practices _____ 17
 - Next Steps _____ 17
- Supporting our Employees _____ 18
 - What We Heard _____ 18
 - Promising Practices _____ 18
 - Next Steps _____ 18
- Implementation and reporting _____ 19
- How To Give Us Feedback _____ 19

Message from the Commissioner/CAO



At Metro Vancouver, our mission is to provide services and implement solutions that contribute to ensuring our region remains one of the most livable places in the world. This responsibility is one that we approach with genuine passion. The *2022-2026 Board Strategic Plan* reflects this dedication and focuses on the strategic directions, priorities, and vision for our organization. To continue advancing on this path, it is imperative that we consider how to ensure all our residents are able to participate in our services and that all our staff are able to share in the passion of delivering those solutions to the region.

This newly developed Metro Vancouver Accessibility Plan embodies our commitment to creating an inclusive and barrier-free environment for all individuals interacting with our organization. It serves as a dynamic framework that outlines our approach to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers that hinder participation and full engagement of persons with disabilities.

We are at the beginning of our journey towards becoming a more accessible organization. While we have made significant strides towards better accessibility, we recognize that there is work ahead to bridge the gap between our aspirations and the current accessibility of our organization. This plan represents an important step in our commitment to breaking down barriers and fostering inclusivity across the region. It is also a testament to our dedication to continuously learn, improve, and create an environment where every individual can thrive.

Importantly, this plan is a living document, designed to evolve over time as we continuously strive to enhance accessibility across all aspects of our organization. We firmly believe that the journey towards accessibility is a collective responsibility. I am confident that our collective efforts will lead to a more accessible and inclusive Metro Vancouver.

I encourage you to read this plan and provide feedback. We embark on this journey together, understanding that progress takes time, collaboration, and unwavering determination. Through our joint efforts, we will make our region stronger and more inclusive for everyone.

Jerry W. Dobrowolny,
Commissioner/CAO

Message from the Accessibility Committee

We are honoured to serve as the inaugural Accessibility Committee for Metro Vancouver. Our commitment to this role is unwavering. Our dedication to enhancing accessibility within our region is both heartfelt and determined.

A portion of our members have lived experience with disability. Others have family ties to individuals with disabilities. Some stand as allies for this important initiative. Our diversity strengthens our mission.

As we continue on this exciting journey alongside the rest of Metro Vancouver, we recognize the significance we are undertaking. Our purpose is to offer support and provide guidance, paving the way for a more accessible and inclusive Metro Vancouver.

Territorial Acknowledgment

The Metro Vancouver region lies on the shared territory of many Indigenous peoples, including 10 local First Nations:

- [qíćǎy' \(Katzie\)](#)
- [qíqéyt \(Qayqayt\)](#)
- [q'wá:ńłǎń \(Kwantlen\)](#)
- [se'mya'me \(Semiahmoo\)](#)
- [k'wík'wǎm \(Kwikwetlem\)](#)
- [Sḵwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw \(Squamish\)](#)
- [máthxwi \(Matsqui\)](#)
- [scəwáθən məsteyəx'w \(Tsawwassen\)](#)
- [x'wəθk'wəyəm \(Musqueam\)](#)
- [səlílwətaʔt \(Tsleil-Waututh\)](#)

Eight of these First Nations also have reserve lands located within the Metro Vancouver region, and [scəwáθən məsteyəx'w](#) (Tsawwassen First Nation) form part of the regional district. Metro Vancouver's policies, plans, and activities have an impact on Indigenous peoples and communities across the region and can interact with First Nations' rights. Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and priorities can contribute to Metro Vancouver's work.

Metro Vancouver respects the diverse and distinct histories, languages, and cultures of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, which collectively enrich our lives and the region.

About Metro Vancouver

Metro Vancouver is a diverse organization that plans for and delivers regional utility services, including water, sewers and wastewater treatment, and solid waste management. It also regulates air quality, plans for urban growth, manages a regional parks system, provides affordable housing, and serves as a regional federation.

The organization is a federation of 21 municipalities, one electoral area, and one treaty First Nation located in the region of the same name. The organization is governed by a Board of Directors of elected officials from each member jurisdiction.

Metro Vancouver operates through four separate legal entities, each with specific legislation.

These include:

- Greater Vancouver Sewerage and Drainage District (GVS&DD)
- Greater Vancouver Water District (GWWD)
- Metro Vancouver Housing Corporation (MVHC)
- Metro Vancouver Regional District (MVRD)

Metro Vancouver embraces collaboration and innovation in providing sustainable regional services that contribute to a livable and resilient region and a healthy natural environment. The [Board Strategic Plan 2022-2026](#) provides a framework for the decisions the Board will take to address regional priorities now and in the long-term.



Accessibility at Metro Vancouver

Accessibility is woven into virtually every aspect of our organization. This accessibility plan stands as a testament to Metro Vancouver's dedication to aligning with the [Accessible British Columbia Act](#) ("the Act") while also upholding our vision of being a diverse and inclusive region. It is our commitment to creating a region where every person can participate, contribute, and thrive. Inclusivity begins with breaking down barriers and fostering an environment where every individual can flourish. Accessibility must be considered in all aspects of our work. This includes our regional parks, our housing sites, our facilities, and in our programs and services. We are embarking on a journey to become a more accessible region. We are guided by the belief that accessibility begins with designing inclusive spaces, services, and opportunities.

We are grateful for the invaluable support of organizations such as [Disability Alliance BC](#). Their contributions, particularly through resources such as the [Accessibility Tool Kit](#), have enriched our understanding and capabilities. The insights provided by these resources serve as our guide to ensuring we continue along the correct path towards enhancing accessibility and inclusivity at Metro Vancouver.

We understand that accessibility is about equal access. It is about intentionally designing services, technology, locations, and environments with persons with disabilities in mind. Accessibility means giving people of all abilities equal opportunity to take part in life activities. The term implies conscious planning and effort to make sure something is barrier-free for persons with disabilities. Accessibility benefits everyone.

With our Board's vision as our guide, we embark on this journey, committed to reducing barriers and fostering a culture of accessibility. Our Board envisions a community where diversity is celebrated and every voice is heard. We are dedicated to actively engaging with individuals who have lived experience of disability. Their insights and feedback will guide us in recognizing barriers. It will help our organization navigate requirements and reach new levels of disability confidence.

We understand that we have significant work to do. We are excited to embark on this journey along with our employees and the community.

About the ACT

The [Accessible British Columbia Act](#) was enacted in 2021. This legislation offers a structured approach to recognizing, addressing, and preventing accessibility barriers across British Columbia. As directed by the Act, Metro Vancouver is publishing their first accessibility plan by September 1, 2023. We will continue to keep informed on updates to regulations and accessibility standards and will act accordingly. The Plan will be updated once every three years at minimum.

Other important legislation that we have reviewed and considered while building our plan includes:

- [Accessible Canada Act](#)
- [The Canadian Human Rights Act](#)
- [Human Rights Code \(British Columbia\)](#)

Accessibility Principles

The principles outlined in the Act guided our work in the creation of this accessibility plan. Metro Vancouver discussed the following principles and defined how we want them to be enacted within our organization.

- **Inclusion:** We will create an environment where all people are able to participate fully and equally. We will foster the space for individuals to feel comfortable providing feedback so that we can continually improve.
- **Adaptability:** We will be open to change as we learn more about accessibility. We will continuously consider persons with disabilities within our communities.
- **Diversity:** We will embrace the variety of individuals found within our community.
- **Collaboration:** We will work together to prevent and remove barriers.
- **Self-Determination:** We will ensure persons with disabilities have opportunities to provide input and are involved in decision-making processes.
- **Universal Design:** We will aim to design products and services to be useable by all without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

Accessibility Committees

As per the Act, Metro Vancouver formed an accessibility committee. This committee includes Metro Vancouver employees with disabilities, as well as accessibility allies and family members of persons with disabilities. Our members were recruited through a staff-wide call and selected based on their passion to making Metro Vancouver more accessible for persons with disabilities. They supported the creation of this accessibility plan and will provide continued guidance on barrier removal and prevention.

Metro Vancouver also formed an accessibility steering committee. This committee is comprised of managers from across the organization. Their input is crucial in understanding how accessibility is currently considered at Metro Vancouver. They will also support the implementation of actions within this accessibility plan.

We are thankful for the involvement and passion of the employees on these committees. They are key in making Metro Vancouver more accessible for everyone.

Word cloud generated by the Accessibility Committee when asked to share their vision of accessibility at Metro Vancouver.



Accessibility Plan Development Process

To support the work of the accessibility committee, Metro Vancouver hired a third-party firm. The firm conducted a preliminary accessibility assessment of the organization. This assessment informed the accessibility committee and laid the foundation for this accessibility plan.

The firm conducted an analysis of Metro Vancouver's existing accessibility practices. They examined accessibility at Metro Vancouver while considering the principles outlined in the [Accessible British Columbia Act](#).

Document and Data Review

First, the firm completed a thorough review of Metro Vancouver documented processes, initiatives, and policies. The following types of documents and information were reviewed:

- HR policies, procedures, and directives
- Metro Vancouver Employee Handbook
- Workplace Accommodation Policy
- Buildings and worksites
- Recent corporate strategic initiatives
- Announcements related to events and meetings
- Materials used for recruitment
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Initiative
- Communication style guides

Consultations

The firm then engaged with employees with disabilities, allies, managers, leaders, and others who contribute to accessibility at Metro Vancouver.

This included:

- Meetings with the Metro Vancouver Accessibility Committee
- Meetings with the Accessibility Steering Committee
- Stakeholder interview sessions with over 30 Metro Vancouver employees
- A review of accessibility-related feedback collected from Metro Vancouver external stakeholders

Drafting Our Accessibility Plan

The Metro Vancouver Accessibility Committee, Accessibility Steering Committee, and the third-party firm worked together to draft this accessibility plan. Employees with disabilities provided input and feedback throughout the plan creation process.



Understanding Disabilities

According to the 2017 [Canadian Survey on Disability](#), nearly 22 percent of Canadians identify as having a disability and almost every person experiences disability in their lifetime. As per the Government of British Columbia website, there are currently more than 926,000 people over the age of 15 with some form of disability living in British Columbia ([Government of British Columbia](#)).

The terms “disability” and “impairment” encompass a broad spectrum of conditions. There is not a universally accepted definition. According to the Act, disability is “an inability to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction of an impairment and a barrier.” As per the Act, an impairment includes “a physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, or cognitive impairment, whether permanent, temporary, or episodic.”

Statistics Canada identifies numerous types of disabilities that are prevalent among the Canadian population. These are:

- **Pain-related:** conditions causing chronic pain that affects daily life and activities
- **Flexibility:** limitations that impact range of motion and mobility
- **Mobility:** challenges that impact physical movement
- **Mental health-related:** conditions that involve mental well-being
- **Seeing:** visual impairments affecting sight (i.e., blindness or partial blindness)
- **Hearing:** hearing impairments (i.e., hearing loss, deafness)
- **Dexterity:** challenges with fine motor skills (i.e., writing)
- **Learning:** learning disabilities that impact the processing of information
- **Memory:** conditions that affect memory recollection and retention
- **Developmental:** conditions that affect the development of physical, learning, language, or behavioural areas

Advancing age often corresponds with an increased likelihood of experiencing a disability. According to Statistics Canada, nearly half of seniors aged 75 years and above are living with a disability. Additionally, some people experience more than one disability. Disabilities can be permanent, episodic, or temporary.

Understanding Barriers

Persons with disabilities are the largest equity-seeking group in Canada and the world. According to the Act, a barrier is “anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with an impairment.”

There are various type of barriers including:

- **Attitudinal:** Attitudinal barriers can include negative attitudes, stereotypes, and misconceptions about persons with disabilities. This barrier is the most common barrier of all barriers. Overcoming attitudinal barriers requires a shift in perception.
- **Organizational or systematic:** These barriers are rooted in the foundational principles of an organization. To overcome these barriers, there must be changes made to policies, procedures, and processes.
- **Architectural or physical:** Architectural or physical barriers are barriers that affect access to physical spaces due to improper design or lack of consideration of universal design principles.
- **Information or communication:** These barriers are related to how a person receives information and/or communication. Providing various types of communication channels can ensure inclusivity.
- **Technological:** If digital technologies, systems, and software are not designed with accessibility in mind, they can become barriers for persons with disabilities. It is critical to consider accessibility during the design stage to ensure technology is accessible.

As Metro Vancouver continues our journey to become more accessible, we will strive to address and eliminate the various types of barriers that can hinder accessibility.



Priority Areas

We have divided our accessibility plan into four distinct priority areas based on our organization's functioning as well as from the feedback of our Accessibility Committee:

- **Integration and Planning:** At Metro Vancouver, we recognize that the journey to true accessibility is not just about meeting compliance standards. It is about fostering a culture of inclusivity that is woven into the fabric of every initiative, decision, and interaction. Our integration and planning focus area is about our commitment to creating a future where accessibility is not just an afterthought but is built into our organization's DNA.
- **Facilities and Infrastructure:** At Metro Vancouver, we are responsible for many physical spaces. This includes regional parks, housing sites, solid waste facilities, water treatment plants, office spaces, work yards, and other locations. We are committed to minimizing accessibility barriers in these areas and making them inclusive and accessible.
- **Provision of Services:** The services and solutions we provide are the foundation of our region's economic, ecological, and social health. We are dedicated to fostering an accessible and inclusive community. This priority area ensures that our programs and services are readily accessible to all employees and the community.
- **Supporting our Employees:** Approximately 2,000 full-time and part-time employees work at Metro Vancouver across numerous work sites throughout the region. Our employees are our greatest asset. We rely on their expertise to deliver our services and solutions to our region. We are committed to creating a culture that embraces and includes persons with disabilities. We aim to be fully inclusive and accessible throughout the employee lifecycle.

Each priority area is then further broken down into the following sub-sections:

- **What We Heard:** We have summarized the key findings from our document review, and feedback we received from key stakeholders at Metro Vancouver including the Steering and accessibility committees. This allows us to understand current gaps and potential related actions.
- **Next Steps:** We have highlighted the key areas of focus that Metro Vancouver will prioritize over the next three years and use as our guide to help us create change and continue our journey to becoming more inclusive and accessible for all.
- **Promising Practices:** We have highlighted the key initiatives that we currently have in place to make Metro Vancouver a more accessible organization.



Integration and Planning

Goal

We strive to engage persons with disabilities in planning and decision-making processes. This will help us to ensure that accessibility and inclusion are considered in our programs, policies, services, and physical spaces.

The 2022-2026 Board Strategic Plan highlights the importance of the livability of our region. This commitment is integrated into planning processes. To Metro Vancouver, “livable” means:

- We have healthy, safe, and vibrant urban areas that connect to natural environments with clean air and clean water.
- The region remains a place where people want to live, work, and raise their families.
- Diversity is embraced.
- Having complete, walkable communities.
- Having homes for everyone.

Accessibility and inclusion will continue to play a vital role in our integration and planning initiatives.



What We Heard

The following themes emerged from consultations with Metro Vancouver employees:

- When a significant new project is in the planning stages, Metro Vancouver proactively engages with the community through open houses, seeking public input and insights.
- A key area of focus in our integration and planning efforts involves raising awareness about accessibility challenges.
- Our public feedback process is available to the community. Our Information Centre strives to respond to all inquiries within 24 hours.

Promising Practices

Metro Vancouver is currently engaged in many practices to remove barriers for persons with disabilities, such as:

- We actively consider equity in the outcomes of our planning and development. We are working to create walkable communities, senior friendly communities, and adaptable housing units for our community.
- Our [Metro Vancouver Regional Parks Public Programming Strategy](#) consists of recommendations that include diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- We completed a comprehensive accessibility assessment of our regional parks that was led by an external firm with lived experience of disability.
- One of our four Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion strategic priorities is to build diverse, inclusive, and accessible programs and services.

Next Steps

In the next three years, we will aim to:

- Increase awareness about accessibility and inclusivity to ensure our region remains a desirable livable community for everyone.
- Explore opportunities to build accessibility into our organizational policies and procedures.
- Uphold accessibility standards and regulations during the planning phases of our policies, procedures, programs, services, and public spaces.
- Seek public feedback on accessibility initiatives through open houses and consultations.
- Engage employee feedback for accessibility improvement.
- Set guidelines for written materials that promote accessible writing.

Facilities and Infrastructure

Goal

We will continue to work towards providing physical spaces which are accessible and inclusive for everyone.

Facilities and infrastructure include:

- Housing facilities
- Regional parks
- Work yards
- Office spaces
- Solid waste facilities
- Wastewater treatment facilities
- Water treatment facilities

What We Heard

The following themes emerged from consultations with Metro Vancouver employees:

- Persons with disabilities (employees and community members) need to be involved in the planning and decision-making process for our facilities and infrastructure.
- More awareness and training are needed to ensure that we continually become more accessible and inclusive.
- Older facilities and infrastructure are not always fully accessible for employees and the public who use these locations.
- Metro Vancouver focuses heavily on ensuring that all new developments are designed and built with accessibility in mind.
- Metro Vancouver Housing complies with the requirements outlined in building codes for accessible and adaptable units. It also complies with municipal requirements, such as specific building by-laws.

Promising Practices

Metro Vancouver is currently engaged in many practices to remove barriers for persons with disabilities, such as:

- The Metro Vancouver Head Office has championed several initiatives to support accessibility, including installing sit-stand desks for all employees.
- Metro Vancouver offers our employees flexible work options, including the ability to work-from-home.
- We collaborate with transportation networks to increase transportation options for everyone.
- Regional Parks uses a checklist to support accessibility in the parks across our region.

Next Steps

In the next three years, we aim to:

- Commit to identify locations and partnering with the [Rick Hansen Foundation](#) to carry out detailed accessibility assessments. Metro Vancouver is committed to completing three assessments in 2023.
- Strive to meet universal design principles for all new buildings and infrastructure.
- Proactively address accessibility needs of our older facilities by implementing upgrades.





Provision of Services

Goal

We will provide inclusive and accessible services and programs that cater to the diverse needs in our region.

What We Heard

The following themes emerged from consultations with Metro Vancouver employees:

- There is a strong desire among Metro Vancouver staff to enhance the accessibility of the services provided to the public.
- Metro Vancouver has a strong community focus and emphasizes that programs meet the diverse needs of the community.
- Providing information to the public about the accessibility of the Metro Vancouver physical locations is important. This should be done uniformly across all locations.
- Consulting with community members with lived experience of disability is critical to ensuring the needs of persons with disabilities are met.
- Although there was an accessibility audit conducted of Metro Vancouver's Regional Parks, there are still many barriers identified in this audit that need to be addressed.
- There is opportunity for Metro Vancouver to communicate more clearly the accessibility efforts that are being taken to support persons with disabilities.
- Metro Vancouver has an opportunity to develop more events and activities specifically for persons with disabilities.

Promising Practices

Metro Vancouver is currently engaged in many practices to remove barriers for persons with disabilities, such as:

- Community engagement efforts by Metro Vancouver Regional Parks invites various groups, such as seniors, children, First Nations, new Canadians, and persons with disabilities, to take part in programs that connect people with nature.
- The Regional Parks team invests time to understand the demographics of regional parks users so they can better support the needs of visitors. Using data, they identify underrepresented user groups and promote greater participation and inclusivity.
- The Regional Parks Interpretations team proactively plans programs that are accessible for persons with disabilities.
- The Metro Vancouver Housing Team aims to house persons with disabilities that is consistently above the provincial standards.
- The Web Production and Graphic Design team acknowledge accessibility as a key component in the design and planning of web applications, and designs web assets to WCAG 2.1 guidelines.
- Public engagement is provided in multiple formats to allow for increased accessibility by members of the public. This includes ensuring in-person opportunities are wheelchair accessible and online opportunities are delivered in various accessible formats.
- When accessibility feedback or inquiries are received by our Information Centre, we typically respond within 24 hours.

Next Steps

In the next three years, we will aim to:

- Increase documentation around the level of accessibility of the physical locations at Metro Vancouver Regional Parks. This includes indicating which trails can be traveled by persons with reduced mobility.
- Act on the findings from previous accessibility audits and performing new accessibility audits where necessary.
- Increase consultation and engagement with members of the Metro Vancouver community with lived experience of disability.
- Increase events and activities tailored to persons with disabilities.
- Expand communication about the accessibility efforts that Metro Vancouver is taking to eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities.



Supporting our Employees

Goal

We will establish an inclusive and supportive workplace environment that empowers all employees to contribute and thrive.

What We Heard

The following themes emerged from consultations with Metro Vancouver employees:

- The Accessibility Committee is a forum for employees to provide their input on accessibility.
- Metro Vancouver's recruitment aims to attract a diverse candidate pool. However, this recruitment strategy could better prioritize the recruitment of persons with disabilities.
- Feedback from some employees indicated the importance of addressing mental health and other non-visible disabilities within our accessibility initiatives.
- Employees would benefit from additional training relating to accessibility.

Promising Practices

Metro Vancouver is currently engaged in many practices to remove barriers for persons with disabilities, such as:

- We make clear statements that we are committed to employing a workforce that is representative of the community that we serve.
- We have a statement that specifies accommodations are available during the interview process.
- We have a team of highly trained human resources professionals working on accommodations to support employees through the disability management process.

- The health and wellness benefits available to employees at Metro Vancouver supports employee wellbeing and mental health needs.
- Metro Vancouver actively provides ergonomic assessments to ensure the health and well-being of employees.

Next Steps

In the next three years, we will aim to:

- Include opportunities, where possible, to recruit persons with disabilities through a variety of methods that reach a wide and diverse audience.
- Ensure we properly capture and articulate the ways in which the organization can provide an accessible work environment.
- Explore general accessibility awareness training options that can be offered to all Metro Vancouver employees.
- Ensure accessibility training is regularly refreshed and modified as the context for accessibility in the workplace changes.
- Work to offer role-specific accessibility training to various teams within the organization.
- Ensure that all staff have a strong understanding of Metro Vancouver's accommodation policies.

Implementation and reporting

Metro Vancouver is just beginning its accessibility journey. It is important for us to continually adapt, learn, and grow to become even more accessible for persons with disabilities. Our next step is to seek additional input and feedback from persons with disabilities, our employees, and community members. We will reach out to our Indigenous communities to get feedback, guidance, and support. We want to ensure that our Accessibility Plan reflects the communities we serve.

Metro Vancouver will review and update our Accessibility Plan at least once every three years. We will continue to involve our accessibility committees, employees, and our community in updating the Plan. We will ensure that persons with disabilities are always involved in the process.

We understand that creating an accessibility plan plays a role in becoming more accessible. But we must also act on our Plan. We will work together to implement our Plan and identify further barriers to accessibility. Our steering committee and accessibility committees will continue to provide guidance on accessibility at Metro Vancouver. Their perspectives are crucial in our ability to understand where barriers exist and what steps we can take to remove and reduce barriers to accessibility.

Metro Vancouver is excited about the journey ahead and we are eager to hear your ideas on how to make our region a more livable and accessible place for everyone.

How To Give Us Feedback

Metro Vancouver welcomes feedback on this accessibility plan. You may request an alternative format of this plan. To provide feedback or request an alternative format, please contact:

Email: icentre@metrovancover.org

Phone: 604-432-6200

Mail: Information Centre
Metrotower III
4515 Central Boulevard
Burnaby, BC
V5H 0C6

The following alternative formats are available upon request:

- Print
- Large Print
- Braille (American Sign Language and Indigenous Sign Languages)
- Other electronic formats that are compatible with adaptive technologies



