

Community Living BC's Accessibility Plan 2023-2026



A plain language summary and video, as well as a screen-reader friendly text-only version of this plan are available on our website. For an alternative format of this plan, please contact us: CLBCInfo@gov.bc.ca.

CLBC welcomes your feedback about our Accessibility Plan. Visit [CLBC's website](#) to provide us with feedback.

Territorial Acknowledgement

CLBC works with people, families, service providers, community and government partners across the unceded traditional territories of the more than 200 distinct First Nations throughout the province. CLBC's head office is located on the unceded traditional territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), s_kw_xwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. CLBC is committed to reconciliation, learning, and building relationships with Indigenous communities. CLBC approaches this necessary relational work as a foundation in accessibility planning and action.

A message from our CEO..... 4

Thank you to those who contributed 6

How we got here 7

Five Areas for Action..... 8

 Relationships make all the difference9

 Clear, timely information is key 10

 Information needs to be shared in many ways 11

 Welcoming physical spaces 12

 Accessible employment is necessary 13

Timeline..... 14

Accountability and Reporting 17

How to give us feedback..... 17

Appendices 19

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



Commitment to Accessibility

The BC Government passed the Accessible British Columbia Act in 2021. The Act ensures that we are thinking about accessibility across the province and making changes in public sector organizations to remove barriers for people with disabilities while promoting a culture of inclusion.

CLBC is committed to being an accessible organization. To be successful in our work, we must make it easy for people to get information from us, come to our offices and work with staff.

The Act requires public sector bodies, like CLBC, to develop a multi-year accessibility plan. We have spent the last year seeking input from staff, individuals, and families to identify barriers and steps we can take to make it easier to understand and work with CLBC.

Accessibility is more than a plan. It is a mindset that is fundamental to our vision *for communities of belonging and lives with connection*. . Ongoing learning is necessary for identifying, removing, and preventing barriers. We are committed to learning with the people and communities we serve, with our partners, and employees.

The Community Living BC Accessibility Plan 2023-2026 was developed in a process of collaboration with these groups of people who provided insight about how we can improve accessibility. We have taken what we have learned to outline actions and timelines for achieving results.

In creating this plan, our thinking was guided by the principles set out in the Accessible BC Act: inclusion, adaptability, diversity, collaboration, self-determination, and universal design.

We need your feedback to get better. Please use the new feedback mechanism on our website or tell a CLBC staff member about any ways we can improve. Thank you to all who are helping us on this journey.

Ross Chilton
CEO, Community Living BC

THANK YOU TO THE CLBC PROVINCIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND PLAN CONTRIBUTORS

Our plan has been developed collaboratively by CLBC staff with input from people we serve, families, and people who support them, as well as feedback from the public, our partners, and CLBC employees with disabilities. The CLBC Provincial Advisory Committee and the CLBC Staff Accessibility Working Group have played key roles in championing this work and advising on the development of the accessibility plan.

We would like to specifically thank the members of the Provincial Advisory Committee for taking on the role of Accessibility Committee when we launched our planning process. The Provincial Advisory Committee is made up of individuals and family members served by CLBC and provides information and advice to the CLBC Board of Directors to assist with governance and decision-making. Over the past year the Provincial Advisory Committee has provided insight and recommendations for the accessibility baseline assessment and multi-year plan. This involvement has helped CLBC to identify priorities for actions over the next three years and guided how we identify, remove, and prevent access barriers experienced by people with disabilities.

The CLBC Staff Accessibility Working Group has been meeting regularly over the past year to discuss our ongoing learning as we advance our organizational culture of accessibility. We are committed to further embedding accessibility in our services, our programs and policy, our office and online environments, our employment practices, and our partnerships. The Staff Accessibility Working Group has coordinated initial internal accessibility assessments in all these areas and supported focused conversations about next steps in specific departments.

How we got here

CLBC has taken several steps over the past year to create our Accessibility Plan.

The Project Team was assembled in July 2022, and in August 2022 we set up the staff Accessibility Working Group which includes staff members from all of CLBC's service areas. We developed an Accessibility Planning Toolkit that included research about accessibility laws, standards, planning and reporting processes. The toolkit explained the requirements under the new accessibility law in BC and what we can learn from provinces that already had accessibility laws.

Our Accessibility Plan outlines our actions to address the findings of our baseline accessibility assessment.

We began with a focus on developing a Baseline Accessibility Report. We wanted to understand what CLBC is doing now to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities, and where improvements are needed to ensure access barriers are removed and avoided. We gathered information through internal and external reviews of accessibility. The staff Accessibility Working Group led an internal assessment of access barriers in each service area.

For our external review of accessibility, CLBC hosted six workshops to receive feedback from self advocates, families, community members, and service providers about access barriers and positive access experiences. We also had meetings with partner organizations to receive insights from a broad variety of perspectives. Lastly, we developed an online survey that received more than 400 responses from people we serve, families, and people who support them, as well as CLBC staff who have disabilities.

Five Areas for Action

Our internal and external assessment findings point to five main themes for actions on accessibility.



Relationships make all the difference



Clear, timely communication is key



Information needs to be shared in many ways



Welcoming physical spaces help people feel they belong

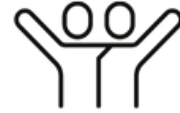


Accessible employment is necessary

See **Appendix C** for the full Baseline Accessibility Report.

Five areas for action

Relationships make all the difference



We know that people want to have consistent relationships with people who get to know them and understand their accessibility needs. Proactively offering accessibility accommodations and asking questions about accessibility needs helps build good relationships.

Related actions

Develop our best practices

- Incorporate accessibility into CLBC's policy framework

Staff training

- Include accessibility-related training in our organization-wide onboarding program
- Develop ongoing accessibility related training on ableism, unconscious bias, enhanced communication, plain language, and relationship-building
- Include training for staff to support relationship building with Indigenous individuals and communities

Support relationships with Indigenous communities

- Implement the Board Commitment Statement
- Implement the Cultural Safety Policy
- Develop a cultural discussion toolkit for staff and service providers

Five areas for action

Clear, timely information is key



We know that CLBC policies and processes are complex, and clear information on timelines and processes makes all the difference in reducing barriers. People told us they want more clarity about timelines, processes, and policies. We also know that time with staff to talk through information is helpful for understanding.

Related actions

Increase availability of plain language and alternative formats

- Develop a plain language communications strategy
- Create plain language videos to explain key CLBC processes and information
- Provide resources to staff on serving people who are non-speaking and who use alternate and/or augmentative communication

Increasing understanding of CLBC processes and timelines

- Create resources for staff on how to share complex information in a way that's easy to understand
- Encourage individuals and families transitioning from youth to adult services to join Welcome Workshops where information about CLBC is shared in plain language by self advocates, family members, and CLBC staff

Five areas for action

Information needs to be shared in many ways



We know that the people we serve have many preferred ways to communicate. More information provided in plain language with visual aids is helpful in reducing barriers. Having information available in multiple languages and formats, including ASL and braille, helps address some accessibility barriers. We recognize that people in rural and remote communities, and those who do not have access to computers, experience unique accessibility barriers.

Related actions

Increase the availability of information in alternative formats

- Ensure ways for requesting information in alternative formats are featured prominently on our website
- Offer a way on the CLBC website for people to request support from CLBC staff to explain information
- Find partners who can develop information in multiple languages and formats, including ASL and braille

Review current documents and resources for accessibility

- Review our contract documents for screen reader support and plain language

Five areas for action

Welcoming physical spaces



We know people want to feel that they belong in the physical spaces they enter. This means having accessible parking and office entrances, having friendly staff greet them and direct them when they arrive, and knowing ahead of time what to expect at offices and meetings. We recognize that more information and guidance can help create a more positive experience for people who access CLBC spaces.

Related actions

Review the physical accessibility of all offices

- Review of all existing offices for accessibility of parking, entrances, washrooms, and signage
- Update accessibility criteria for choosing new CLBC office locations
- Implement a strategy to make CLBC's physical spaces more welcoming for everyone, especially Indigenous community members

Working with staff to build welcoming spaces

- Create guidance for staff on how to manage physical accessibility barriers that can't immediately be fixed
- Create guidance for staff on accessibility in meeting and event planning that anticipates potential barriers in CLBC offices as well as in off-site event spaces
- Develop training for staff on physical accessibility in office spaces

Five areas for action

Accessible employment is necessary



Reducing barriers to applying for jobs is only part of what it means to be an accessible employer. Inclusivity must be embedded into the workplace culture and structures.

Related actions

Strengthening recruitment

- Add an equal employment opportunity and commitment to inclusion statement to job postings
- Share about CLBC's commitment to diversity on job postings and include information on how people can access accommodations
- Encourage people with disabilities to apply for CLBC job openings
- Include information about workplace accommodations in job postings for the application and interview process
- Provide more information about interview questions and expectations
- Provide interview questions in plain language

Improving inclusion for employees with disabilities

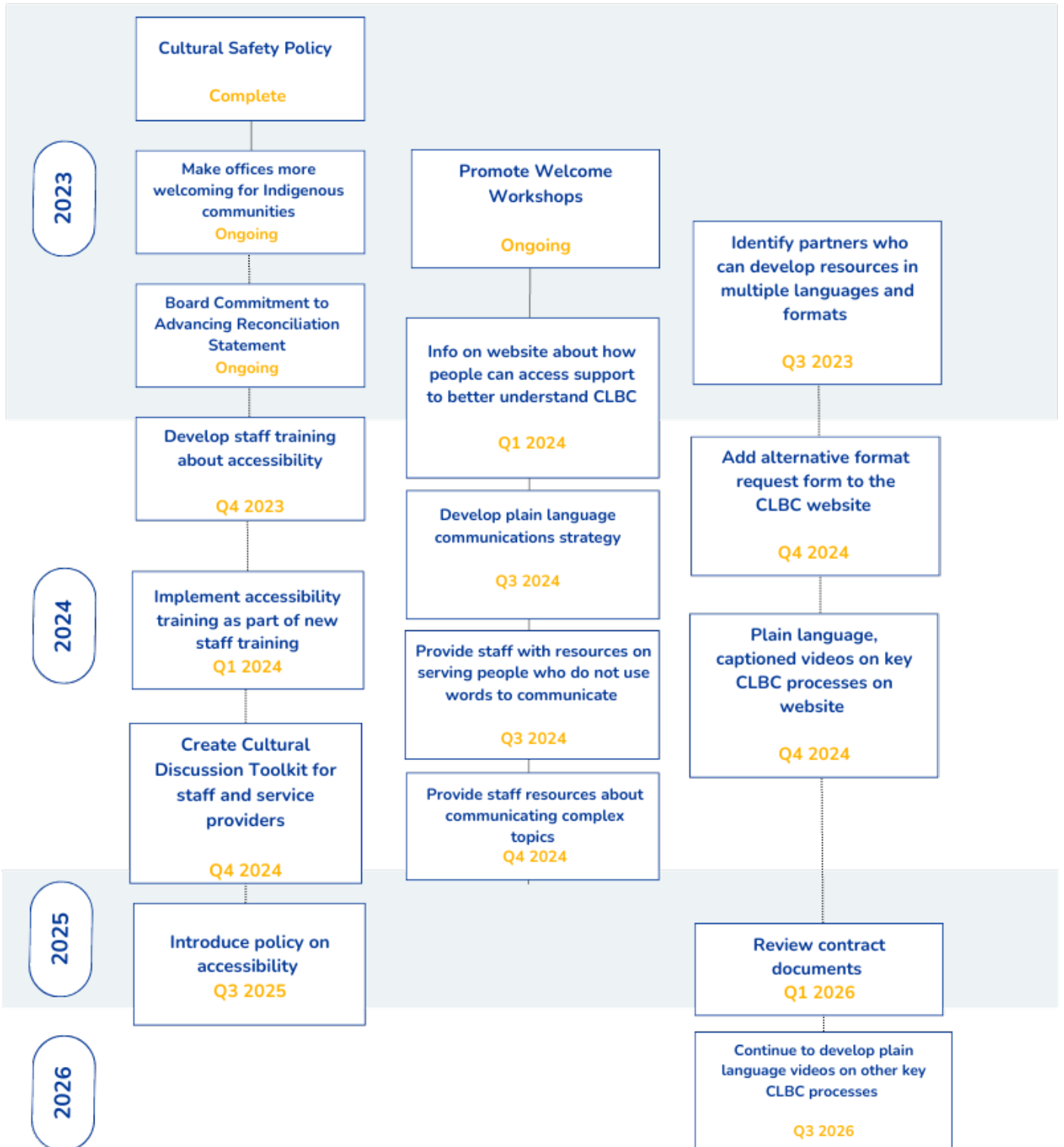
- Establish an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy
- Modify CLBC's Recruitment Policy to outline and include accessibility employment standards
- Develop the accessibility mindset and culture of inclusion by sharing information, resources, and stories about disability on the employee intranet

Implementing the Plan

Relationships make all the difference

Clear, timely communication is key

Information needs to be shared in many ways



Welcoming physical spaces

Accessible Employment

2023

Update and implement accessibility criteria for new office spaces

Q2 2024

Improve interview accessibility

ongoing

Include information about accommodations in job postings

Q4 2023

Conduct a review of all existing CLBC office spaces

Q4 2024

Share stories and information with employees about accessibility and disability inclusion

Q4 2023

2024

Implement simple fixes in office spaces

Q1 2025 and ongoing

Include accessibility employment standards and practices in recruitment policy

Q2 2024

Update website with accessibility information about each CLBC office

Q1 2025

Implement the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy

Q3 2024

2025

Practice guidance for staff to understand options for people who experience barriers

Q1 2025

Address all physical environment barriers

Q4 2025

2026

Implement guidance for welcoming physical spaces

Q3 2026

Develop and implement staff training on accessibility in office spaces

Q3 2026

Accountability and Reporting

Under the Accessible British Columbia Act, CLBC is required to report on the progress made on our accessibility actions.

Feedback that we receive about accessibility experience at CLBC will help inform our annual progress reporting and improvements in our planning and practice. An Accessibility Committee will continue providing advice and information about accessibility successes, priorities, and concerns. Our Accessibility Committee and our Accessibility Working Group will also consider the feedback that we receive which will guide us when we update our Accessibility Plan every three years.

How to give us feedback

We would like to hear from you!

You can give us feedback about our accessibility planning process and any access barriers you experience at CLBC by phone, email, online, in person, and by mail.

Phone: 1-877-660-2522

CLBC is happy to receive calls by TTY and VRS.

E-mail: CLBCInfo@gov.bc.ca

Online: [Share your feedback on accessibility at CLBC](#)

In person: [Find your nearest local CLBC office](#)

Mail: CLBC Accessibility Feedback
7th Floor, Airport Square
1200 – West 73rd Avenue
Vancouver, BC V6P 6G5

Appendices

Appendix A - Members of the Provincial Advisory Committee

Appendix B - Timeline of plan development

Appendix C - Baseline Accessibility Report

Appendix A - Provincial Advisory Committee members 2022-2023

Alex Evanshen, *North Shore/Sunshine Coast*

Annette Delaplace, *Richmond*

Charlene Barney, *South Island*

Crystal Bermel, *Kootenays*

Debbie Moore, Chair, *North Okanagan/Shuswap*

Debra Roblin, *North Region*

Kara Anderson, *Central Island*

Philip Retief, *Upper Fraser Valley*

Tracy Jo Russell, *Thompson Cariboo*

Vanessa Mendoza, *Vancouver*

Adeel Zafar, *Simon Fraser Council*

The Advisory Committee is made up of a single member from each Community Council. For more information about the Provincial Advisory Committee, visit [CLBC online](#).

Appendix B - Timeline of plan development

April to May 2022

- Project Charter developed for CLBC's implementation of the Accessible British Columbia Act

July to August 2022

- CLBC's Accessibility Planning Toolkit prepared

August 2022

- Accessibility Project Plan established
- Accessibility Committee established: CLBC Provincial Advisory Committee is CLBC's Accessibility Committee for the first year of the project
- Accessibility Working Groups established in CLBC service areas
- CLBC's Accessibility Project launched

September 2022

- Presentation to Accessibility Committee/Provincial Advisory Committee about Project launch, and facilitation of first feedback workshop

September to October 2022

- Initial internal review by staff Accessibility Working Groups in CLBC service areas

October to December 2022

- Accessibility planning and feedback workshops with CLBC Community Councils and the CLBC Editorial Board
- Accessibility planning and feedback conversations with community partners

December 2022

- Online accessibility feedback survey

January 2023

- Accessibility Project Team review of internal and external accessibility baseline findings

- Accessibility Baseline Report drafted
- Accessibility Committee/Provincial Advisory Committee and CLBC Executive review of Accessibility Baseline Report

April 2023

- Baseline Accessibility Report distributed and available publicly on CLBC's website
- Accessibility Project Team and CLBC Executive identify actions for 3-year accessibility plan
- Accessibility Committee/Provincial Advisory Committee review of actions for 3-year accessibility plan

May to June 2023

- CLBC accessibility feedback options established
- CLBC Accessibility Plan 2023–2026 drafted

Appendix C - Baseline Accessibility Report

Community Living BC

Baseline Accessibility Report

April 2023

A summary of findings
from a review conducted
September to December 2022



COMMUNITY LIVING
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Table of Contents

Introduction to Community Living BC (CLBC) services	2
Accessibility committee	5
Accessibility planning process	5
Public feedback mechanism	11
Internal working group findings	12
Opportunities to improve	15
External accessibility assessment findings	18
Opportunities to improve	20
Main themes from the accessibility findings	26
Next steps	28

Introduction to Community Living BC (CLBC) services

A review of accessibility at Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) must begin with an understanding of its mandate and services. CLBC is a Crown Corporation with a mandate to fund supports to eligible adults to participate fully in their communities in meaningful ways.

CLBC is accountable to the B.C. Legislature through the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR). The Community Living Authority Act and Community Living Authority Regulation define who is eligible for CLBC services:

Adults with a developmental disability, and

Adults who are diagnosed with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder or an autism spectrum disorder, and who have significant limitations in adaptive functioning.

CLBC employees support individuals and families to plan and connect to community and services. They are responsible for developing, funding, and monitoring services. The range of services includes home supports, employment, community inclusion, and individual and family wellness services. Services are delivered through contracts with service providers, Person Centred Societies, and through individualized funding agreements. Service quality is maintained through various quality assurance and contracting reporting requirements.

Improving accessibility at CLBC

The people CLBC serves cannot fully participate in their communities if they encounter accessibility barriers. CLBC understands it needs to make its operations, programs, and services welcoming and ensure accessibility for people with disabilities to achieve its vision of communities of belonging, lives with connection.

CLBC works with individuals, families, service providers and government partners in a range of ways to regularly review and enhance programs and services. CLBC has a Provincial Advisory Committees, 13 Community Councils and a self advocate Editorial Board to ensure regular, ongoing two-way communication with self advocates, families, and community members. CLBC also works collaboratively with its Indigenous Advisory Committee and the newly established Elders Council to improve relationships and services with Indigenous peoples, their communities, and to align policies and practices with the B.C. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

CLBC engages these groups in developing its goals and in its many projects to improve services. The values and goals of CLBC are found in our [Strategic Plan 2022-25](#).

CLBC has drawn upon these important groups for identifying and addressing accessibility considerations.

The new Accessible BC Act and CLBC

In June 2021 the B.C. government made a new law called the Accessible British Columbia Act to make our province more inclusive and accessible for people with disabilities. **Accessibility** is about removing barriers and increasing inclusion for

everyone, especially people with disabilities. Accessibility is one of the principles that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is based on. A **barrier** can be anything that stops people with disabilities from being included. For example, some barriers can stop people from going into buildings or using computer programs. Sometimes people's attitudes towards disability can be a barrier.

The B.C. government will develop Accessibility Standards under the framework of the Accessible British Columbia Act to outline the rules government and organizations must follow to remove barriers. Accessibility Standards will focus on these specific areas:

- Employment (hiring, workplace standards, etc.),
- Services (accessing services and programs),
- Buildings and built spaces (offices, meeting places, and event spaces)
- Information and communications (human communication such as the way people interact and communicate in the way that works for them, and technical communication such as websites and documents)
- Transportation (buses, ferries, trains, etc.)
- Procurement (buying services)
- Health (hospitals, clinics, services)
- Education (early childhood education, kindergarten to grade 12, post-secondary education, etc.)

The first steps for following the new law and preparing for these standards are to make an Accessibility Committee, an Accessibility Plan, and a way for CLBC to receive comments from the public about the Accessibility Plan and any barriers when interacting with CLBC.

Accessibility Committee

CLBC's **Provincial Advisory Committee** is acting as CLBC's first Accessibility Committee. The Committee helps CLBC identify, remove, and prevent barriers. The Committee is made up of a single member from each Community Council and includes a diverse membership of self-advocates and family members. The Provincial Advisory Committee has provided feedback about the accessibility planning process, helped design the public input process, assess findings, and will give input on the creation of the accessibility plan.

Accessibility planning process

CLBC's research has found limited documentation of accessibility issues that are unique to the community living sector and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Project staff were energized by the opportunity to develop a greater understanding of barriers and effective strategies. For the project team, this meant ensuring the people we serve help lead and shape the process and planning efforts.

CLBC is working with the Provincial Advisory Committee to develop an Accessibility Plan to identify, remove, and prevent barriers, and to promote a culture of inclusion and belonging. To follow the law, CLBC's Accessibility Plan will be ready by

September 1st, 2023. There are several steps that CLBC is taking to develop an Accessibility Plan.

1. Research about accessibility legislation and accessibility standards

Research about accessibility legislation and accessibility standards across Canada was used to develop an Accessibility Toolkit to support the process of engagement for developing CLBC's Accessibility Plan. The toolkit includes information about existing accessibility laws and standards in Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia to support an understanding of the Accessible BC Act requirements and future compliance with provincial accessibility standards.

2. Internal review by working groups

An internal baseline review of accessibility achievements and areas for improvement was launched in August 2022. Employee working groups were set up in specific CLBC service areas based on the focus areas for accessibility standards named in the Accessible British Columbia Act:

- Employment
- Customer service
- Built Environments
- Information and Communications
- Procurement
- Policy

Each service area accessibility working group completed an initial assessment of their area with reference to the five main types of barriers to accessibility identified in the Accessible British Columbia Act: **physical environment barriers, attitudinal**

barriers, barriers caused by practices and policies, information and communication barriers, and technological barriers.

The Accessible British Columbia Act also highlights that barriers can be produced and shaped by **intersecting forms of discrimination**. This means it is important to consider specifically how our experience of accessibility can depend on our diverse dimensions of identity. It is important to think about how a person who experiences discrimination based on disability may also experience discrimination based on gender, age, or ethnocultural identity at the same time. Improving accessibility and inclusion means identifying, removing, and preventing access barriers that can reflect multiple forms of discrimination.

An important example of where CLBC is addressing intersectionality is in its work to strengthen services to Indigenous communities. This requires serious work to overcome historical barriers Indigenous peoples have encountered in accessing CLBC services.

The CLBC accessibility working groups identified achievements to date and provided feedback on existing barriers as well as practices and policies that could cause barriers in the workplace or for service users. Working groups paid attention to the impact of ableism and considered how multiple forms of discrimination can intersect.

B.C.'s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner explains that **ableism** is a set of unwritten rules in our society, including attitudes and stereotypes, that prioritize some bodies more than others. Ableism happens when the needs and experiences of non-disabled people are prioritized. Ableist attitudes and practices are interconnected with other sets of unwritten rules that value people's needs and experiences differently depending on their gender, age, ethnocultural identity, and

other aspects of identity. There is an incredible diversity of people with disabilities across B.C., and multiple forms of discrimination can intersect with ableism to limit access and devalue the potential and contributions in our communities.

3. External review with workshops and public online survey

Workshops

Six workshops were facilitated to receive feedback from self advocates, families, community members, and service providers about accessibility experience at CLBC.

These included the Provincial Advisory Committee (12 people), the Indigenous Advisory Committee (13 People), the CLBC Editorial Board (7 people), the North Okanagan Shuswap Community Council (11 people), Central Island Community Council (8 people) and Surrey White Rock Delta Community Council (6 people).

Groups that participated in a partners meeting on this topic included:

- Family Support Institute
- Inclusion BC
- Vela Canada
- BC CEO Network
- BC Aboriginal Network on Disability Society
- BC People First

Finally, CLBC had individual conversations with the leaders of BC Aboriginal Network on Disability Society, BC Self Advocate Leadership Network, Inclusion BC, and the Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship.

The content of the workshops was designed with self-advocate leaders on the project team and the Provincial Advisory Council and co-facilitated by a self-advocate leader and CLBC's Self Advocate Advisor. The content included an introduction about the new accessibility law in B.C. and CLBC's accessibility planning process. Discussion questions invited comments about how people are treated (employee attitudes), the information people want from CLBC, how people want to receive information, how people get to and around CLBC offices and events, any barriers experienced personally or observed among other people, and any additional insights about what CLBC is doing well and ways to do better for accessibility.

Public online survey

CLBC invited individuals it serves, and families and those who support them, as well as CLBC staff who have a disability, to complete an online survey to learn more about removing barriers. The 15-minute survey was hosted on the CLBC website from December 5-31, 2022. Survey questions asked about barriers that people with disabilities may face when getting information from CLBC, visiting CLBC offices, talking with CLBC staff, and working at CLBC. A plain language video introduction for the survey was created to briefly explain the survey and the accessibility planning process at CLBC and invite participation.

In all, 411 surveys were received. People could skip questions on the survey, so the response rate varies from question to question. Of the responses identifying a person's relationship to CLBC, the majority (58%) were received from family members or caregivers of someone currently receiving services funded by CLBC or who may receive services in the future. Slightly less than one third (28%) of responses were from people working for an agency that provides support to people receiving CLBC funded services.

Responses were also received from people currently receiving services funded by CLBC or who may receive services in the future (13%), people who are part of a group that advocates for people with disabilities (11%), and people who have a disability and currently work at CLBC or have applied for a job at CLBC (3%). It was possible to select more than one option, and to write in an answer to describe a relationship to CLBC.

Written answers included people who identified as home sharing providers, extended family members of self-advocates and individuals with disabilities, and Inclusive Education Teachers. Responses reflect experiences of people living in cities and smaller towns as well as some remote rural First Nations communities across B.C.

4. Baseline Accessibility Report

The Baseline Accessibility Report reflects the information gathered in the initial internal and external reviews and provides a foundation for developing an Accessibility Plan.

Public feedback mechanism

CLBC is designing a process for receiving comments from the public on an ongoing basis about barriers and improving accessibility. When CLBC's Accessibility Plan is ready this will also be a way to receive feedback about the Plan and make updates and improvements to the Plan.

Internal working group findings

The internal review process looked at accessibility with the five main types of accessibility barriers in mind. Staff identified examples of how accessibility is promoted and expanded at CLBC in each of the five areas.

Current actions that support accessibility

Attitudes

- Working groups found there is a culture of curiosity and openness to continue learning, adapting, improving accessibility.
- The existing staff orientation called Our Common Purpose ensures training for all employees when they start at CLBC that is grounded in an understanding of rights, social role valorization, and person-centred planning specific to the people, families, and communities we serve. This includes learning about the community living movement and its history.
- Training for service delivery emphasizes taking time to listen, engaging in friendly ways, proactively offering assistance, and taking care not to make assumptions. Training guides employees to speak directly to people who may be with a support person and to ask about best ways to communicate.
- CLBC contributes to inclusive employment and housing advocacy, for example by collaborating with Inclusion BC, service providers and community groups, and this work helps build awareness about accessibility and belonging that is important in and beyond our sector.

Information & Communication

- Many key informational materials are provided in plain language. A need for plain language for communications during the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the proportion of plain language materials.
- CLBC has tailored job postings and interview questions for positions customized for employees who live with a developmental disability.
- When accessible formats (e.g., written and visual materials) are requested, requests are accommodated as best possible; currently there is no formal mechanism for accessible format requests.
- Family members and self advocates help present CLBC information in Welcome Workshops. Self advocate networks provide peer support to people accessing services to complement digital and printed materials.
- Family information sheets are currently available in 5 languages.
- CLBC meets the standard for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) and uses an accessibility assessment tool for the website to improve accessibility.
- Alternative text (alt-text) is currently being added to the website to provide descriptive information for non-decorative images. Video content is being added to provide another option to receive information online.
- The website has integrated accessibility tools for font size, screen-reader compatibility, and other accessibility features.

Technologies

- There are built-in accessibility features for staff laptops, workstations, productivity tools (MS Office Suite) and smartphones that can support adaptive requirements for supporting vision, physical movement, hearing, and other accessibility considerations.
- The CLBC employee ergonomics program receives requests for special equipment and assistive technologies, such as speech recognition, dictation, and transcription software installation, extra-large monitors, and touch enabled tablet computers. One-on-one training is available to help employees with accessibility accommodations and features.
- Some IT support is provided for people and their families to assist participation in meetings, online activities, and other communications that use information technologies.

Practices & Policy

- Practices and policies are guided by upholding dignity, independence, and equal opportunity.
- A new Human Rights Based Evaluation Tool and the process of applying human rights based lenses to policy development supports changing organizational culture and attitudes.
- A new Cultural Safety policy is being developed and implemented to ensure welcoming and safe services.
- Equity and accessibility are included within the foundational policy principles in the new Policy Framework policy.

Physical Environment

- Buildings and event spaces are generally accessible, with many offices having accessible parking spaces, well-lit parking areas and exterior pathways, visible and clear signage, ramps, elevator access, wide automatic doors, mobility device accessible washrooms, wide hallways, low counters in reception spaces, and adjustable furniture.
- Employees can communicate to families if an accessibility feature, such as the elevator, is out of service.

Opportunities to improve

Although many achievements have been made in developing an accessibility mindset at CLBC, there are several areas where existing barriers were brought into focus. In conducting their assessments project working groups wanted to learn more about how to assess accessibility and how to interpret the existing accessibility standards in other provinces. They wanted to know more about what can be considered best practice while we wait for the standards to be created in B.C. The review by internal working groups also suggests the value of attending to intersectional dimensions of accessibility experience to ensure quality implementation of culturally safe approaches, considerations for those who live in rural areas, and development of informational resources in more languages including ASL.

Opportunities to improve accessibility for CLBC service users and employees were identified in the internal and external review processes, and examples are set out according to the five categories below.

Attitudes

- Accessibility mindset can be enhanced with additional training about accessibility and research about best practices in each of the service areas.
- This includes ensuring regular training opportunities as refreshers about specific topics, such as the “proactive offer,” emergency preparedness, sensory (e.g., light, sound) and chemical sensitivities, and areas where there may be lack of clarity about accessibility implications for organizational practices and availability of accommodations.

Information & Communication

- Expanding the use of plain language overall and offering plain language summaries where possible.
- Interpersonal communications practices can be enhanced with attention to making proactive offers to meet accessibility needs, to provide information about accommodations, and to invite people to self-identify their pronouns and the name they want to be used.
- Many information formats are not readily available, including Braille, audio, and ASL.
- Increasing the availability of resources in languages other than English will increase accessibility and CLBC can ensure employees are aware of resources in alternative formats and languages other than English.
- Ensuring information and training in how to communicate with people who have speech and language disabilities in face-to-face and telephone interactions can be more widely standardized across CLBC.
- CLBC can provide more formal peer-to-peer support programs to improve the availability of outreach and non-digital communication methods.

- Improvements for the intranet platform MyCLBC will ensure people can increase font easily.

Technologies

- CLBC should further consider accessibility features for business applications (e.g., Paris, MWS) for CLBC staff.
- Ensure the availability for CLBC staff of special equipment and other workplace accommodations is communicated to new employees both in the job posting and in the offer letter.

Practices & Policy

- Consider the creation of an Accessibility Policy.
- Address areas where there is a lack of policy and process clarity about accessibility and accommodations.
- Improvements can be made to the accessibility of all policies, for example with increased use of plain language and availability in multiple formats (video, audio, etc.)
- Implement a CLBC diversity, equity employment strategy which will clarify current goals and strategies around inclusive hiring.

Physical Environment

- Improvements can be made for accessibility at most offices, for example, depending on the location this can include improvements to parking and entryways, braille signage, meeting rooms, lighting, and washrooms. A small number of doors for certain areas of CLBC offices are not currently fully accessible.

External accessibility assessment findings

The external review workshops and survey identified examples of attitudes, information and communication, and physical spaces contributing to accessibility at CLBC. Current actions that support CLBC accessibility

Attitudes

- Workshop participants and online survey responses highlighted the importance of attitudes for creating welcoming spaces and a sense of belonging.
- Examples of good relationships include when CLBC staff take time to get to know someone, build relationships with people and their family members and supporters, use plain language, check-in about understanding, and provide consistent points of contact. For example:
 - “Good relationships make all the difference.”
 - “Our facilitator has always been a good communicator.”
 - “I have always had fantastic communication with analysts, facilitators and adult guardianship.”
 - “I have not had trouble understanding what was being explained but our [family member] would have. The staff often took the time to re-explain things to [them].”
 - “Having a relationship with a facilitator or analyst really helps.”

Information & Communication

- Microboard videos, 'Yes! I Can' emails and videos, CLBC Editorial Board, and improvements to the website have made it easier to get information. For example:
 - “The website is easy to find”
 - “Your site has improved.”
 - “For me, I have found it easy to find what I am looking for on the CLBC website when I need it. I have also found when I call that I receive information needed quite promptly from the office.”
- People highlighted that the booklets with pictures explaining the rights of individuals are helpful.
- Regular updates such as the COVID update calls and email notifications for program changes and updates help to keep people informed, including service providers.
- Talking to other caregivers and connecting with the BC Association for People with Disabilities and the Family Support Institute also helped some people get information and understand information about CLBC.

Physical Environment

- Workshops and survey responses identified some CLBC locations that have very good accessibility, and some locations that need improvements.
- Some offices are accessible for public transit users, but people may have to cross a big intersection to get to them. For example:

“It is currently very accessible.”

“It is currently quite accessible and easy to find.”

“Our local office seems quite accessible to accommodate a huge wheelchair. The parking is adequate.”

“No problems getting to an event.”

Opportunities to improve

Workshops and survey responses identified opportunities for CLBC to improve accessibility in each of the five main accessibility barrier categories.

Attitudes

- Both the attitude and energy to be helpful are important.
- Participants had experiences of both positive, trusting relationships, and relationships that lacked follow through. There’s a desire for an equal, trusting relationship with facilitators, ensuring that there’s consistency and follow through to build that trust.
- The workshops and the survey found that time with CLBC staff sometimes felt rushed. It is important that CLBC staff spend the time and help people get involved with a diverse set of resources.
- Some people do not feel that staff do not always listen well enough to what they want and need, and that the services offered do not match what they are looking for.

“I need a real person to explain and help me.”

“Be patient, actively listen and work with me.”

“Talk to the individual, not the support person unless they’re not able to.

Communicate calmly and slowly.”

“Use Autistic friendly language.”

“Don’t use ableist language.”

Information & Communication

- CLBC staff might benefit from more communications training and resources to support work with individuals who are non-speaking or do not use words.
- It would be helpful to have more self advocate voices in CLBC information and communications

“Information in our language from us.”

- More speaking and writing in plain language, for employees and for people receiving services.

“Change the jargon to common language.”

“If you know about CLBC, finding info is relatively easy. If you aren't familiar, you can get lost on the website and the social service sector specific language.”

- Use plain language, step-by-step documents to help in completing forms, and simplify forms (e.g., new respite forms).
- Have many format options to access information. For example, text, video, visuals, plain language, sound/audio, social media posts, regular information sessions where people can drop in and ask questions (could be co-hosted by service providers), having someone at CLBC walk through information with people, having a peer explain.

“Having someone else who has been through it all help me so I could understand what was going on.”

“Language interpreters are critical!”

“There is a wealth of information on the website, but it is very difficult to find anything specific. It's the proverbial 'going down the rabbit hole.'”

- Include an audio option to hear information what is written.
- ASL interpretation at events, offices, and for video and audio resources. Closed

captions (CC) for videos and make it lines up with the speaker and does not cover the picture.

- Information and communication options for people who don't have access to internet/phones/etc.

Technologies

- Create an option of text message reminders using plain language. Some people don't regularly check email.
- Some people don't have access to computer and smartphone technology. CLBC could support access to computers and offer training on how to use a computer.
- Using Facebook Messenger and other online calling/messaging applications can help when people have access to public Wi-Fi networks and do not have cell phone service and landlines.
- Create more options for people with diverse communication styles.

Practices & Policy

- Provide more clarity and transparency with the policies and provide reasoning for decisions about services and eligibility. Policies that guide decisions are not always clearly shared ahead of time. People want to know what to expect so they can feel cared for, valued, and have trust.
- Policy documents need to be in clear, plain language.
- People don't want to have to use paid service hours for support for transportation to and from CLBC offices for meetings.
- People want information that helps with predictability. Examples include being told when there is a change in facilitator, having details about how often the facilitator will contact them, having instructions provided for getting to CLBC

locations, how to find CLBC offices inside buildings, what to do when they arrive, and details about what to expect at the location.

- People want more consistent communication and follow-up with their facilitator.
- Jobs at CLBC seem to be full or part-time. Positions with options to job share, work from home, casual hours, and other flexible work options may better accommodate self advocates and people with training needs, health conditions, and disabilities.

Physical Environment

- Improvements suggested for accessibility include ensuring reception/sign-in spaces are large enough to be welcoming, accessible parking spaces are available at every site and large enough that they are not blocked by other cars, signage for accessible parking is clearly visible, accessible entrances have good line of sight for cars and pedestrians, improvements for wheelchair accessibility and accessibility of wayfinding signage inside offices including for people with low vision.
- Paid parking and lack of available and accessible parking are barriers. CLBC parking spots could be available for individuals and families who are meeting with CLBC.
- Distance to get to offices is a commonly noted barrier, especially for people in rural areas and Northern B.C.

“Make the office easier to find within the building.”

“Consider adopting 'Universal Design Principals' for all CLBC offices.”

It is important to “feel valued and welcomed. It's not always about the what it also about the how.”

“Connect people in areas so they can maybe carpool or offer rides to persons who do not drive.”

Intersecting experiences with accessibility barriers

In addition, many issues around accessing CLBC information are connected to a person’s age, health, communication needs, geographical location, and cost considerations. For example, some people asked for more welcome workshops and information tailored to people who start to receive services later in life. Some people explained that currently the welcome workshops seem most relevant for transitioning youth ages 16-24. Some people shared that there can be parents who are both seeking CLBC services for themselves and at the same time supporting their children to obtain CLBC services.

CLBC internal working groups, community workshops, and survey responses all identified accessibility barriers that are related to mental health and wellness. People commented about the importance of training about supporting people with disabilities who may have experienced trauma in their life or who may experience mental health difficulties that impact interactions with CLBC. People emphasized that anxiety can be a significant barrier for interactions with CLBC and is also an important consideration for employment accessibility.

People also highlighted that training about supporting interactions with people with autism and taking sensory experience into consideration is very important.

People provided concrete examples of communication needs that can be better met by CLBC. People who are receiving CLBC services who are deaf, and deaf family members and members of the public highlighted the importance of providing more information in ASL and offering interpretation for events. Training for CLBC staff

about the needs of Deaf and Deaf Blind clients was encouraged, including information about Deaf culture, history, and ways to address audism. Audism happens when the needs and experiences of non-Deaf people are cared for and the needs of Deaf communities are not considered. People also highlighted training and additional resources to meet the communication needs of people who do not use words, and people who do not read.

Workshops and survey responses from people in the interior and northern parts of the province especially emphasized the greater number of accessibility barriers for people in smaller towns and rural and remote communities. The lack of CLBC offices and opportunities for in person interaction is a significant barrier. The longer distances to reach CLBC offices, and winter road travel safety considerations create barriers.

People made many suggestions for addressing these barriers, including having some CLBC staff who travel to small communities, collaborating with local service providers and community organizations to hold periodic office hours in their offices, offering more ways to have meetings online, offering more ways to connect with CLBC staff. Some people also explained that the needs of small communities and remote communities are different, and it is important that CLBC considers the community context and ways to overcome accessibility barriers that are faced by Indigenous communities.

Comments about cost considerations highlighted how people and communities with less financial resources face additional accessibility barriers related to the cost of transportation, the cost of missing work to come to meetings with CLBC staff, the cost of paid parking at CLBC offices, the cost of bringing a support person with

them, and the cost of access to communications technologies that allow them to be in contact with CLBC staff.

One example is that people who do not have a fixed address may not be able to access HandyDART and taxi saver supports.

Main themes from the accessibility findings

Looking across all the information gathered in the internal and external accessibility findings we see five themes coming to the surface that should be addressed in CLBC's public accessibility plan to better meet the needs of those we serve.

Relationships make all the difference

People want to have consistent relationships with people who get to know them and understand their accessibility needs. People highlighted how consistent relationships and regular contact can go a long way in knowing and meeting accessibility needs. Proactively offering accessibility accommodations and asking questions about accessibility needs helps build good relationships. A variety of training topics have been suggested by internal working groups, workshops, and survey responses to help CLBC staff be well-prepared for situations that can come up during interactions and relationship-building. People also asked to know when there are changes in the relationships, they have with CLBC staff, for example, if there is a change in facilitators.

Clear communication is key

People explained that the complexity of CLBC processes and lack of predictability create significant barriers. People want to have more clarity about timelines,

processes, and policies, and help navigating all of these. It is important that staff are well-prepared to discuss processes and policies, and including when this can help reduce and prevent accessibility barriers for employees.

Information needs to be shared in many ways

People are asking for more plain language and visual information and resources in multiple languages including braille and ASL to address information and communication accessibility barriers. People suggested information can be provided on social media channels, on the radio, on television to reduce accessibility barriers for rural and remote communities where there may be less awareness about CLBC services and to reduce barriers for people who do not use computers.

Time matters

People emphasized the importance that CLBC staff can talk through information, provide summaries of information, check-in about understanding, and provide connections to community organizations and peer resources that can support understanding. Workshops and survey responses especially emphasized that one-on-one time with CLBC staff that does not feel rushed is important for learning about CLBC services and following through with processes for obtaining CLBC services. People also asked for opportunities to have one-on-one time in all communities, and for options to have these meetings online as well when there are barriers for coming in person.

Welcoming physical spaces

People emphasized that creating a welcoming space where people feel like they belong means that friendly staff can greet them when they arrive and help direct them.

Welcoming interactions and knowing ahead of time what to expect at offices and meetings can help remove and prevent accessibility barriers for people who may have experienced trauma, people who may experience anxiety, depression, and mental health difficulties, and people who have communication accessibility needs. This means ensuring that people receive information about how to get to offices, what to do when they arrive at offices, how to find your way in the building, and what accessibility features are available at the building. This also helps address accessibility barriers for people who use mobility devices, people accompanied by a support person or a service animal, and people who have light and sound sensitivities.

Next Steps

The project working group has reviewed these findings with the Provincial Advisory Committee on January 28, 2023, and with CLBC's Executive team on February 15, 2023. CLBC will also communicate these findings with CLBC staff and partner groups in March and April.

The project team will meet with each Executive team member in the month of March to identify action steps for its accessibility plan.

The project team will test proposed actions with CLBC Councils and the Provincial Advisory Committee before finalizing and publishing its accessibility plan by September 1, 2023.

Finally, CLBC is developing an accessible feedback mechanism to launch by September 1, 2023, as well.