

Municipal Guide for Disability Inclusion in Recreation and Physical Activity

FAQs

1. What is the Municipal Guide?

The Municipal Guide for Disability Inclusion in Recreation and Physical Activity was developed for and by persons with disabilities and lived experience to make recreation more accessible and inclusive. The Municipal Guide provides how-to strategies for staff at all levels in municipal recreation departments to make sure people with disabilities are included in their programs and activities. The Municipal Guide has eight areas of practice, and hundreds of how-to strategies that focus on topics such as: programming, built environment, partnerships, communication, workplace culture, staff training, evaluation, and persuading decision makers.

2. Why did you create a Municipal Guide?

It is a mandate that municipalities in Canada provide recreational activities for all residents, including those with disabilities. Persons with disabilities often have fewer chances to enjoy sports and activities compared to others. This is because they face many barriers, such as physical, social, and emotional challenges. As persons with disabilities want to enjoy recreational activities with their friends and family, or in places close to home, making recreational environments more inclusive is important.

This means creating spaces where everyone can participate together, regardless of their abilities. As more municipalities across Canada work toward these goals, this Municipal Guide offers helpful ideas, strategies, and recommendations that can help reduce unnecessary work and improve the quality of recreational activities for everyone.

3. Who should use the Municipal Guide?

This resource is for people who work in municipal government as directors of recreation and leisure services, program directors, managers, and coordinators. We also encourage persons with disabilities, those who deliver programs, municipal officials, caregivers, family and friends, and community groups to learn about the Municipal Guide, use the Municipal Guide, and promote it as a way to help you with your own projects and when advocating for changes with local governments.

4. Who developed the Municipal Guide?

This project was led by Active Abilities Canada, in partnership with the Canadian Disability Participation Project (CDPP) 2.0. It was funded by the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council (SPARC) and the Physical Activity and Recreation Committee (PARC) and the Government of Canada.

5. How can the Municipal Guide be used?

This resource can be used in many ways:

- Educational Tool
- Municipal Planning Guide
- Action/Strategy Planning
- List of Ideas for Inclusion
- Staff Training Resource
- Tool for Long-Term Change
- Accountability Checklist
- Awareness and Advocacy Tool
- Endorsed/Adopted by Municipal Council

6. There is a lot of information in this resource – where do I begin?

There are hundreds of how-to strategies in the Municipal Guide that can help you and your department make incremental change! Feeling overwhelmed with the number of how-to strategies? We encourage you start with just one. For example, are you looking to improve how you design your programming experiences for persons with disabilities? Try asking people with disabilities who use your facility about their interests, what's missing, and what they need. Or perhaps you want to ensure the built environment - buildings and outdoor spaces - in your municipality are more inclusive to persons with disabilities. Try forming an Accessibility Advisory Committee that is independent, not just an extension of the municipality. Make sure your application process is easy for everyone to use and create a mission statement that explains why you're working on accessibility and what you hope to achieve.

7. Will there be additional training to use the Municipal Guide in my municipality?

Yes! If your community organization or municipality wants one-on-one training, please contact Taryn Barry, Project Manager, at taryn@activeabilities.ca. Looking ahead, Active Abilities Canada is working on developing a community of practice, certification, and a community animator program in 2026 and beyond to help municipal recreation leaders utilize the how-to strategies of the Municipal Guide in their day-to-day roles.

8. Where do I access the Municipal Guide?

To access the resource, please visit activeabilities.ca/municipal-guide/.

9. Who should I contact if I have more questions?

For specific questions, please contact our project manager, Taryn Barry, at taryn@activeabilities.ca. We also encourage you to sign up to our newsletter at the bottom right hand side of our website – activeabilities.ca – so you can keep up to date on any training or workshops being hosted.

10. Who is Active Abilities Canada?

Active Abilities Canada, formerly the Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability (ALACD), was established in 1989 following the Jasper Talks, a landmark think tank of organizations and individuals dedicated to the well-being of those with a disability through physical activity, sport, and recreation. At its inception, the ALACD was, and remains, committed to supporting communities and organizations to be inclusive and welcoming to individuals, of all ages, with disabilities (mental health, mobility, sensory, intellectual, and learning disabilities) to be more active through

physical activity, recreation, and community sport for the purposes of health, enjoyment, and community inclusion.

Vision

All people with disabilities in Canada can be physically active and experience well-being.

Mission

Active Abilities Canada supports communities and organizations to facilitate the participation of people with disabilities in physical activity, recreation, and community sport. We will have an impact by:

- facilitating connection between organizations and communities that play a role in supporting physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities.
- ensuring research and knowledge translates into action that supports physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities.
- advocating for changes to reduce barriers to physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities.

For more information about Active Abilities Canada and how we contribute to the health and well-being of individuals and communities, contact Christa Costas-Bradstreet at christa@activeabilities.ca.