



Human Rights,
Equity and Inclusion

Act 1: Accessibility in Action

~ Advancing the Vision

Nova Scotia Community College's Accessibility Plan
2025-2028

Nova Scotia Community College's Accessibility Plan

"We are all aging into disability.
Accessibility is an investment in everyone's future."
~ Unknown

Act 1: Accessibility in Action - Advancing the Vision

Equity as the Foundation of Transformation

We believe that equity is the cornerstone of transformative change for our communities and our Province. And transformation requires action! As a post-secondary educational leader, we are steadfast in our commitment to acting in dismantling systems of oppression, removing and preventing barriers, reimagining systems and championing accessibility to create a truly inclusive environment where everyone belongs. This refreshed Accessibility Plan renews and advances NSCC's ongoing efforts to foster an equity-centered culture rooted in awareness, allyship and actionable change. Our goal is to ensure that every individual feels a profound sense of dignity empowering them to contribute fully and reach their highest potential. *"Everyone Belongs at NSCC"*.

In alignment with [Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act](#), which recognizes accessibility as a fundamental human right and mandates proactive steps to prevent and remove barriers, NSCC is proud to present this updated Accessibility Plan. Building on the foundation of NSCC's previous Accessibility Plan, [Setting the Stage – A Social Justice Approach to Disability](#), this document reflects our evolving commitment to working with the Province and other post-secondary partners in Nova Scotia to achieve the shared vision of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030.

As per legislative requirements, post-secondary institutions are tasked with creating multi-year Accessibility Plans and ensuring compliance with emerging accessibility standards. At NSCC, we are taking this one step further and creating an Accessibility Strategy that will be integrated into other pieces of work upholding human rights. The purpose of this approach is to prevent and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities, enabling equitable access to education and employment opportunities.

This revised Plan continues to address critical areas where barriers persist, including:

- **Built Environment:** Ensuring physical spaces are universally accessible.
- **Delivery and Receipt of Goods and Services:** Promoting equity in service access and delivery.
- **Education:** Fostering equitable and inclusive teaching and learning environments.
- **Employment:** Building accessible and equitable workplaces.
- **Information and Communication:** Creating accessible, inclusive, and comprehensible communication channels.
- **Transportation:** Facilitating reliable and accessible transportation options for all.

The overarching goal of NSCC's *Accessibility Plan - Act 1: Accessibility in Action* is to continue building on the foundation of understanding and reframing disability as a social justice issue.

Guiding Principles

NSCC's Accessibility Plan continues to be guided by an intersectional lens, recognizing that disability is not a singular or defining characteristic but intersects with other aspects of identity. Members of the disability, Deaf, and neurodivergent communities navigate their experiences through the unique interplay of race, culture, gender, sexuality and other social identities which can cumulatively and disproportionately impact their lived experiences.

This Plan is again grounded in the understanding that:

- The experience of disability is cumulatively shaped by intersecting factors such as race, culture, gender identity and sexual orientation, to name a few, which contribute to unique barriers and opportunities.
- Historically, Nova Scotia's education system has disproportionately impacted equity-deserving groups including Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities by perpetuating systemic racism, colonialism, ableism and other forms of oppression. These systemic barriers have contributed to lower rates of educational attainment, higher rates of underemployment and unemployment and, at times, an increased likelihood of involvement with the justice system. Additionally, individuals from marginalized communities often face limited access to traditional educational pathways and may instead pursue alternative options such as the Nova Scotia Adult Learning Program to achieve their academic and career goals
- Post-secondary education continues to have deep roots in colonial structures that perpetuate barriers to access and inclusion. At NSCC, we are committed to reconciliation and Black flourishing by intentionally dismantling systems of oppression including colonialism, ableism and anti-Black racism. Through this

work, we strive to create an environment where Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities, along with all equity-deserving groups, can thrive. By centering the diversity of lived experiences, this plan aims to dismantle systemic barriers and create meaningful, transformative change. Every action within the plan is intentionally designed to reflect and honor these intersecting identities ensuring that accessibility and inclusion efforts at NSCC address the multifaceted realities of our communities.

Message from NSCC President Don Bureaux

At NSCC, we are committed to fostering a learning and working environment where every individual, regardless of ability, can fully participate and thrive. Accessibility is not just a compliance requirement; it is a core part of our vision that “*Everyone Belongs at NSCC*”. As we continue this journey, we recognize that achieving true accessibility requires shared responsibility, collaboration and continuous learning.

The Provincial Government’s *Accessibility Act* calls on post-secondary institutions to update and publicly share their Accessibility Plans every three years. This revised Accessibility Plan, *Act 1: Accessibility in Action* builds on the foundation laid by *Setting the Stage*, reflecting the invaluable insights of our students, employees and community partners. More than a roadmap, it represents our collective commitment to advancing meaningful, systemic change ensuring NSCC remains a leader in accessibility now and into the future.

Over the past few years, we have made significant progress thanks to the contributions of many members of the college community, especially our accessibility leads and their teams, the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), the Persons with Disabilities Employee Resource Network (ERN) and our Senior Advisor for Persons with Disabilities. Some of our highlighted accomplishments are listed herein. Together, we continue to reframe disability as a social justice issue, recognizing that accessibility is not just about physical spaces but accessibility must be embedded into every aspect of what we do at NSCC.

This means ensuring that everyone in our community:

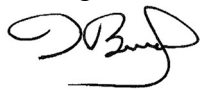
- Has equitable access to goods and services.
- Can receive, understand and share the information they need.
- Can navigate our campuses and learning environments with ease.
- Has access to inclusive workplaces and meaningful employment opportunities.
- Experiences a built environment, inside and outside, that is fully accessible.
- And most importantly, has access to a supportive education system that empowers all students to achieve their goals.

This refreshed plan reflects our collective efforts and I want to extend my deepest gratitude to everyone who has contributed, particularly Senior Advisor - Persons with Disabilities - Jamus Dorey, whose leadership has been instrumental in shaping our accessibility strategy and journey. I also want to acknowledge the ongoing work of the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and the Employee Resource Network (ERN), whose lived experiences and expertise continue to inform and strengthen our approach.

Achieving our goals requires a shared commitment across every level of the organization. Accessibility must be woven into all business and academic planning with each department playing an active role in fostering a culture of inclusion. By working together, we can drive transformational change, creating campuses and communities that are truly vibrant and welcoming to all.

Through *Accessibility in Action*, we are not just planning for change, we are making it happen, together.

With gratitude,



Don Bureaux
President, NSCC

Purpose: Addressing Historical Disparities

As outlined in both the [Post-Secondary Accessibility Framework](#) and our inaugural Accessibility Plan, Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions are tasked with ensuring full and equitable access to education, programs and services. This commitment must be collaboratively developed, anchored in shared values and driven by institutional accountability within a human rights framework. At NSCC, we understand that equity is not about treating everyone the same; it is about providing the necessary supports and resources to each individual, based on their needs, to eliminate barriers and promote genuine inclusion.

Building on this, NSCC embraces a more comprehensive approach to equity, known at NSCC as "Big E" equity, which acknowledges the historical, disproportionate and intersectional impacts of discrimination on Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian and other marginalized communities, including those within the disability community. This recognition highlights the need for targeted actions to create a more equitable foundation, acknowledging that some communities require additional support to simply achieve parity. It is essential to understand that, based on our diverse lived experiences, we do not all begin from the same place.

Access to education is a critical factor in improving quality of life, particularly for individuals with disabilities. Research shows a strong correlation between earning a

post-secondary credential and increased opportunities for meaningful employment, economic security and overall well-being.¹ As Nova Scotia's only publicly funded community college, NSCC is committed to advancing accessibility and supporting the disability, Deaf, and neurodivergent communities through an intentional and equity-driven approach. We are Nova Scotia's Community College. We will challenge the status quo and lead the way in building a more inclusive and equitable province for all.

"When we design for those who need it most, everyone benefits!"

~ Unknown

An Aligned and Integrated Approach to Change

NSCC's revised Accessibility Plan aligns with the College's Equity Theory of Change, serving as our "equity compass" and promoting a values-driven approach to equity, justice, decolonization, anti-ableism and anti-oppressive practices.

This plan shifts NSCC toward a justice-centered approach, reframing disability as a social justice issue centering the lived experiences of marginalized communities, particularly those within the disability, Deaf and neurodivergent populations. It reaffirms NSCC's commitment to social justice by recognizing disability as a social identity largely shaped by physical, societal and attitudinal barriers. Rooted in an integrated approach to equity and anti-racism and as part of a suite of aligned equity strategies in development, this plan advocates for reimagining systems to dismantle barriers and create equitable opportunities for all. It emphasizes intersectionality, recognizing the cumulative effects of multiple identities and the compounded barriers faced by marginalized communities.

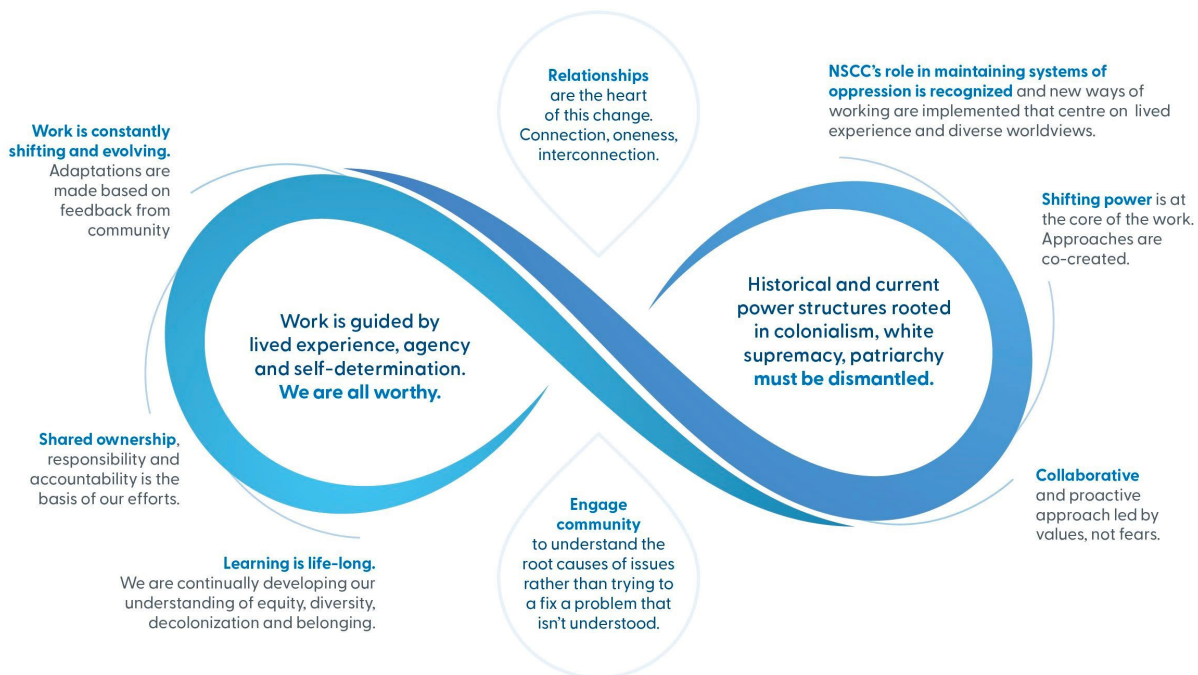
Mandate: To build an equity-minded culture at NSCC that honors diversity, human and treaty rights and ensures everyone has the opportunity to contribute fully and achieve their potential while fulfilling the vision that *"Everyone Belongs at NSCC."*

Goal: To act as change agents, fostering a more inclusive and equitable Province guided by the principles of human rights, dignity and justice for all communities.

NSCC recommits and is steadfast to
Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Anti-racism (IDEA²).

¹ For more info please see: Malhotra, R., & Rowe, M. (2013).

NSCC's Theory of Change - Equity Compass



Guiding Principles

- Work is guided by lived experiences, agency and self-determination. **We are all worthy.**
- Historical and current power structures rooted in colonialism, white supremacy, patriarchy **must be dismantled and decolonized.**
- **Relationships** are the heart of this change. Connection, oneness and interconnection.
- **Engage community** to understand the root causes of issues rather than trying to fix a problem that isn't understood.

Considerations

- **Work is constantly shifting and evolving.** Adaptations are made based on feedback from community.
- **Shared ownership**, responsibility, and accountability are the basis of our efforts
- **Learning is life-long.** We are continually developing our understanding of equity, diversity, decolonization and belonging.
- **NSCC's role in maintaining systems of oppression is recognized** and new ways of working are implemented that centre on lived experience and diverse worldviews.
- **Shifting power** is at the core of the work. Approaches are co-created.
- **Collaborative** and proactive approach led by values, not fears.

Our Vision for Change: Continuing the Journey from Medical to Social

At NSCC, accessibility is not just a goal, it's an ongoing commitment to transformation. A key aspect of this transformation is shifting from the medical model, which views disability as an individual challenge or defect, to the social model which recognizes that barriers in society create disabling experiences.

NSCC is proud of our long-standing commitment to access and inclusion which has positioned us as one of the most inclusive organizations in Nova Scotia. Our *Accessibility in Action* Plan reflects this by continuing to center the voices and lived experiences of the disability, Deaf, and neurodivergent communities. This includes, but is not limited to, individuals with invisible, episodic, mental health, learning, intellectual and physical disabilities, ensuring a cross-disability perspective that acknowledges the full range of diverse human experiences. This approach aligns with the work of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate and reinforces our commitment to equity, dignity and meaningful participation for all.

Our Accessibility Plan is built on three key pillars:

- **Training** – Equipping ourselves and communities with the knowledge and tools to advance accessibility broadly.
- **Accessible Education** – Embedding accessibility into teaching and learning, policies and practices while leaning into social modeling.
- **Systems Approach** – Transforming structures and processes to eliminate barriers through collaboration across the college and with other post-secondary partners.

Through learning and action, this plan drives a cultural shift that centers, validates and amplifies the voices of the disability, Deaf, and neurodivergent communities. By embedding accessibility in all aspects of our college, we are creating lasting change ensuring everyone has sustainable equitable access to learning, employment and community participation.

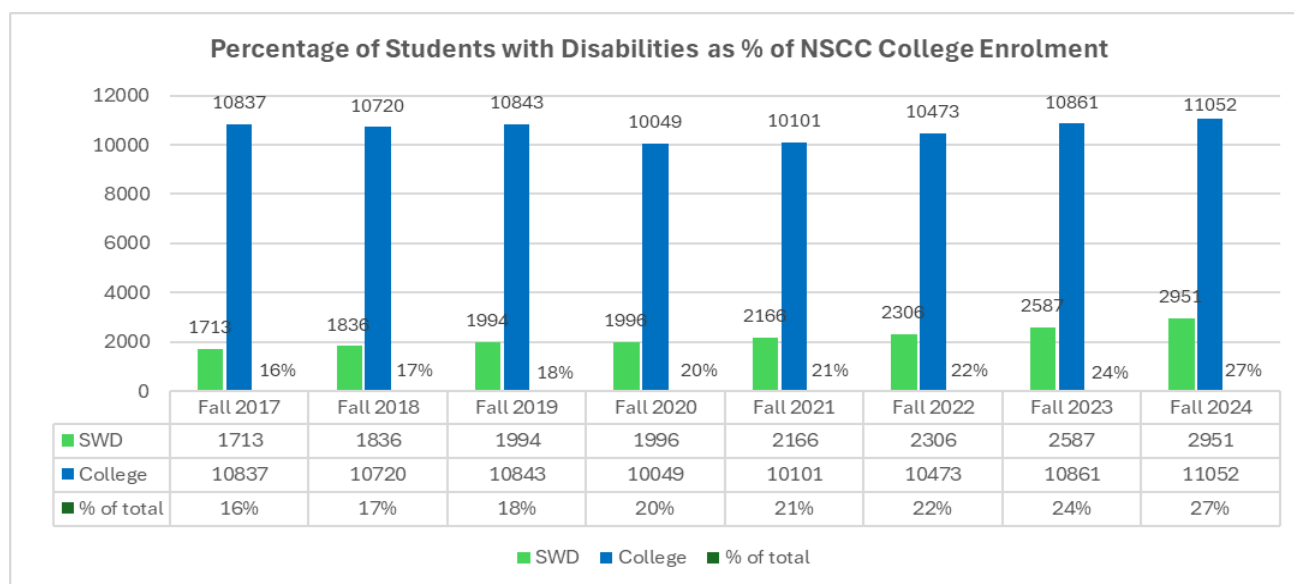
This is our moment. We disrupt. We transform. We lead!

“There are more people with disabilities here (at NSCC) than people realize.” ~ NSCC community member

The Power of Post-Secondary Education

At NSCC, over 90% of our graduates secure employment after graduation demonstrating that we are not just preparing students for the workforce, we are shaping a future that is inclusive, skilled, and resilient. Post-secondary education has the power to break down barriers, create opportunities and drive social change. At NSCC, we take this responsibility seriously. By fostering a learning environment that values diversity and views disability as a social justice issue, we are empowering our graduates to become leaders in creating equitable workplaces and communities. At NSCC, we are not just educating students; we are transforming learning experiences and changing lives.

Recent data shows that in 2022, 27% of Canadians aged 15 and older reported having at least one disability, marking an increase of 4.7% from 2017. In Nova Scotia, the disability rate, highest in the country, rose from 30.6% to 37.9%, a 7.6% increase.² This aligns with the rising number of students with disabilities applying to NSCC. According to our Fall Milestone Counts, per the chart below, there has been consistent growth in students with disabilities (SWD) enrolling at NSCC. In 2024-25 (excluding late starts and disclosures), total enrollment is 11,052, with 2,951 self-identified students with disabilities, representing an average of 27%. The increase in students with disabilities mirrors national trends. It is important to note that these numbers continue to grow throughout the academic year as more students disclose their disabilities and access support services.



Source: NSCC, Institutional Research

Note: All data is as of the Fall Milestone.

*Fall Milestone Count date changed from September 30 to October 1 beginning in 2021.

² For more info please see: Statistics Canada - [New data on disability in Canada, 2022](#)

A Coordinated Social Justice Approach to Accessibility

This is NSCC's second Accessibility Plan, building on our foundation of understanding and reinforcing disability as a social justice issue. It reflects our commitment to a progressive, transformative approach to accessibility in post-secondary education. First-voice perspectives remain central to our work. We continue to engage with our Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), Employee Resource Networks (ERN), various accessibility leads and the Senior Advisor for Persons with Disabilities to ensure lived experiences shape everything we do.

In addition, we are adopting a systems approach to provincial consultation in collaboration with the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate and our partner post-secondary institutions in Nova Scotia. By working together, we can streamline efforts, minimize consultation fatigue and collectively benefit from shared insights. Results from future collaborative consultative processes will be incorporated into this Plan when available.

“A society that fails to embrace accessibility is a society that limits its own potential.”
~ Unknown

Highlighted Accessibility Achievements – 2022-2025

Accessibility in Action is more than just a theme; it is our commitment to fostering a future where “*Everyone Belongs at NSCC*”. Our revised Accessibility Plan outlines a clear path forward as we continue to support and empower individuals from the disability, Deaf and neurodivergent communities.

At NSCC, our vision is that accessibility is not an afterthought, it is embedded in how we design, plan and evolve. **Accessibility in Action** means shifting from accommodation to anticipation, from removing barriers to preventing them and from awareness to meaningful change!. Through collaboration, innovation and a deep commitment to equity, we are shaping a college where accessibility is part of everything we do.

In alignment with the six accessibility standards outlined in the Accessibility Act, our progress on how we are removing and preventing barriers for people with disabilities pointedly speaks to that commitment.

Organizational Culture and Structure:

- New role VP, Equity and International reporting directly to the President, NSCC and accountable for accessibility planning.
- New role Senior Advisor, Persons with Disabilities reporting directly to the VP, Equity and International.
- New role Manager, ASL & ASL English Interpretation Programming. The incumbent also functions as the Academic Chair for all ASL Programming at NSCC.
- New role, Coordinator, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Anti-Racism (IDEA²) within the Research, Innovation and Workforce Development portfolio.
- New role Accessible Teaching Specialist focusing on accessible teaching and Learning.
- Newly refreshed Accessibility Advisory Committee that represents intersectionality and lived experience.
- Continued support for a highly active Employee Resource Network for employees with disabilities.
- Grand Opening of Sydney Waterfront Campus Sept 2024 which is the accessibility grand showcase of NSCC with an anticipated GOLD Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ (RHFAC). This new construction is valued at over \$150M.
- Grand Opening of two student housing units at Pictou and Akerley Campuses in Sept 2024 with our largest student housing unit opening in September 2025 at Ivany Campus. All three builds are anticipated to receive GOLD Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ (RHFAC). These new constructions are valued at over \$100M.
- Four new future student housing projects are approved for IT, Cumberland, Kingstec and Lunenburg Campuses. Kingstec is expected to break ground in late 2025-26 with Cumberland thereafter. IT and Lunenburg will break ground afterwards.
- Accessibility Audits (physical) have been completed at ALL NSCC Campuses.

Policies, Guidance, and Resources:

- Comprehensive policy reviews of NSCC's:
 - Respectful Communities Policy - Ongoing.
 - Sexual Violence Policy - Ongoing.
 - Student Community Standards - Ongoing.
- Continued review of the Employee Workplace Accommodations Policy in consultation with the Employee Resource Network (ERN) and Senior Advisor, Persons with Disabilities. This will include a Process Document outlining the flow for the accommodation process for all involved. Future training for managers will be part of this initiative.
- Ongoing review of the Employment Equity Plan and Policy. There will be a focus on recruitment and retention of Persons with Disabilities.

Programming and Learning Initiatives:

- 19 Student Accessibility Specialists are located throughout all NSCC Campuses.
- Achieve Program for students, previously on Individual Program Plans (IPPs) in P-12 delivered at nine campuses.
- Micro Credential – Created Accessible Content designed for those who write, edit, or approve written content.
- Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion (HREI) conducted various training sessions throughout 2024 on Duty to Accommodate and Duty to Inquire.
- Continued integration of Universal Design for Learning and Accessible Teaching through the newly created Office of Learning and Transformation.
- Hiring of an Educational Equity Consultant in Academic, Equity and Quality to ensure educational equity is embedded in curriculum.
- Ongoing Memorandum of Understanding with the Rick Hansen Foundation to offer accessibility assessor training program in Nova Scotia.
- Persons with Disabilities Subject Guide as part of the Equity and Inclusion suite of resource guides to support continuous learning.
- Subject guides on assistive technology through NSCC Libraries and provided accessible services and resources to students and employees.
- Universal design for learning and culturally responsive pedagogy in the College's Adult Education Foundations program.

Accessible Content and Information:

- [Mi'kmaq Honour Song – ASL Translation Project](#) (2021-2022)
- Emails with important messages that are shared with “All Staff” now have embedded ASL translation.
- All documents published on the College's websites are audited for web accessibility.
- Achieved AA rating for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
- ASL Interpretation included during many College events and at all Convocations.
- NSCC Report to Community published with ASL translation.

Strategic Actions:

- Launch of an Accessibility Services Management System (ASMS) in June 2025
- Social Equity Working Group (SEWG) Proposal Approved March 2025 for *Provincial Post-Secondary Accessibility Capacity Building Collaboration*. The approved proposal enables the hiring of one full-time position dedicated to advancing accessibility implementation across Nova Scotia's post-secondary sector strengthening provincial collaboration and capacity-building efforts.
- Newly refreshed Accessibility Strategy, where this plan will be integrated, to be finalized in Fall 2025 which is part of a larger Integrated Equity and Anti-Racism Framework guided by the *Equity Pillars of Transformation* which include: Student Experience, Employee Experience, Culturally Responsive Practices, Leadership and Accountability and Employee Learning and Development.

Accessibility in Action: Potential Roadblocks at NSCC

NSCC faces several challenges in advancing accessibility which can be categorized into structural, resources, data, communication, workload and student-readiness concerns.

Structural Challenges: The shared governance model for accessibility is still in development and there is a lack of standardized industry or community benchmarks for measuring progress.

Resource Limitations: Budget constraints limit hiring for key accessibility roles such as assistive technologists and accessible instructional designers. With NSCC's large provincial footprint, more RHFAC-certified employees are needed to support accessibility improvements to our infrastructure. Additionally, the cost and time required to transition to a cloud Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system is anticipated to be substantial.

Data and Analysis Gaps: The lack of a dedicated equity analyst, limited data sets and capacity for analysis makes it difficult to track progress, measure impact and make data-informed decisions on accessibility and other equity initiatives. Furthermore, this presents challenges demonstrating compliance with government legislation.

Communication Barriers: A regionalized matrix organizational structure can hinder the effective implementation of accessibility commitments. Limited coordination results in gaps in awareness, planning and execution of accessibility initiatives. This has been partially remedied with the hiring of a Senior Advisor and enhanced monitoring efforts.

Workload and Capacity Strains: Student Accessibility Specialists manage large and complex caseloads often contributing to staff burnout. The need for additional funding to address the increasing complexity of student need remains an ongoing and increasing challenge at NSCC.

Student-Readiness and Classroom Support: Many students entering NSCC struggle to adapt to post-secondary education with limited pathways for those who do not follow traditional program progression. High expectations from students and parents, based on prior individualized support in P-12, often exceed what post-secondary institutions can provide. Unlike P-12, colleges aren't resourced for one-on-one support placing additional pressure on faculty to individually accommodate numerous students with disabilities while managing their work affecting both faculty well-being and the student experience.

Addressing these challenges requires a strategic, supportive and collaborative approach to strengthen governance, secure resources, enhance communication and ensure students receive the supports and services they need to thrive. It is in response to these challenges and others that **Accessibility Reckoning** was born.

Accessibility in Action: The Roadmap for 2025-2028

Accessibility Reckoning – The Cornerstone of our Accessibility Plan

NSCC's second Accessibility Plan builds on three key pillars - training, accessible education and systemic change - to ensure that accessibility is not just an obligation, but a transformational force in post-secondary education. With awareness of the challenges mentioned above and with a deep commitment to systemic change, this plan introduces a fundamental new component led by the VP, Equity and International: **Accessibility Reckoning** - a bold, action-oriented approach that challenges us to move beyond accessibility compliance toward true inclusion.

The call for an **Accessibility Reckoning** emerged strongly from the Vice President, Equity & International's Listening Tour, where employees repeatedly emphasized accessibility as a critical issue. This widespread engagement informed the development of a comprehensive, institution-wide strategy that addresses accessibility from P-12 through to graduation and beyond, ensuring a seamless, supportive and equitable learning experience. This initiative represents a pivotal step toward embedding accessibility as a foundational element of NSCC's learning environment, ensuring all students have equitable opportunities to succeed.

Accessibility Reckoning will consist of five working groups overseen by an intersectional advisory committee that will provide strategic oversight, governance and Executive level leadership:

1. **Students with Disabilities (SWD) Supports**
2. **Academic Supports for Faculty and Academic Chairs**
3. **Admissions Practices, Policies and Procedures**
4. **Supportive Programs and Pathways**
5. **Consistent Interpretation of Accessibility Legislation, Policies, Practices etc.**

Accessibility is a shared priority at NSCC and we recognize that meaningful progress requires continuous learning, accountability and innovation. By embedding accessibility into the very fabric of our institution, we are creating a future where barriers are anticipated, not accommodated, and where diversity is designed for, not adjusted to.

This plan aligns with the Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Accessibility Framework and outlines clear institutional actions on how we will prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities and help achieve the Province's goal of accessibility by 2030.



NSCC's Accessibility Standards and Goals

The priority areas include:

1. **Awareness and Capacity Building**
2. **Teaching, Learning, and Research**
3. **Information and Communications**
4. **Delivery of Goods and Services**
5. **Employment**
6. **Transportation**
7. **Built Environment**
8. **Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation**

Awareness and Capacity Building

Goal

Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions foster a culture of accessibility and equity, encourage and facilitate the prevention and removal of barriers to participation and build capacity in these areas among employees and students.

Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions promote accessibility and equity by preventing and removing barriers to participation and building capacity among employees and students. In collaboration with the Accessibility Directorate, we will implement systems-wide approaches, co-create provincial solutions such as consultations, surveys, partnerships, and communities of practice to benefit the entire sector while minimizing the burden on Nova Scotians. Our goal is to foster an inclusive sector that recognizes disability as a natural way of navigating the world. NSCC is committed to a "no wrong doors" approach ensuring all College levels are equipped with the knowledge and resources to provide immediate and appropriate support to disability, Deaf, and neuro-divergent communities.

Commitments

1. **Implement Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Awareness and Capacity Building Project:** The ASD Awareness and Capacity Building Project is intended to provide faculty and staff of post-secondary institutions in Nova Scotia with foundational knowledge and understanding to accommodate and support students with ASD.
2. **Collaborate with Key Accessibility Partners:** Work with the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate and the provincial post-secondary sector to lead strategic accessibility initiatives through a systems approach via the Post-Secondary Community of Practice and provincial working groups.
3. **Co-lead Provincial Capacity Building:** Provide leadership for the Provincial Post-Secondary Accessibility Capacity Building Collaboration, funded by the Innovation Fund, through the Social Equity Working Group (SEWG).
4. **Integrate Accessibility into HR Processes:** Embed accessibility competencies into HR Processes such as onboarding to ensure all employees develop the skills and knowledge needed to support an inclusive environment.
5. **Review NSCC Policies with Accessibility Lens:** Develop and integrate accessibility considerations in the requirements of policy development and ongoing policy review processes.

Teaching, Learning and Research

Goal

Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions are leaders in inclusive and accessible teaching and learning and collaborative research on accessibility.

At NSCC, we have long been engaged in inclusive education and accessibility efforts. We recognize the opportunity to build on this work, deepening its impact and expanding its reach to new audiences in pursuit of equity and excellence in education.

Commitments

1. **Plan and Strengthen Recovery Pathways for Academic Success:** Academic Equity and Quality (AEQ) will develop a structured plan to enhance recovery supports for students facing academic challenges by expanding flexible recovery options, improving access to services, etc.
2. **Update Academic Accommodations Policy:** Enhance clarity and ensure alignment with accommodated best practices to align with draft Education Standard.

3. **Establish an Accommodated Reduction Procedure:** Continue to explore supporting students requiring a reduced course load as part of their accommodation agreements.
4. **Implement Accessibility Case Management System:** Implement case management that upholds privacy standards and provides seamless support for students throughout their learning journey.
5. **Create Accessibility Standards for Employee Learning & Development:** Foster a more inclusive environment for disability, Deaf, and neurodivergent communities with a framework for designing and delivering professional learning that includes, for example, guidelines for ASL interpretation and translation.
6. **Expand Programming for Students with Disabilities:** Explore options to grow Achieve and similar initiatives.
7. **Advance Accessibility Research & Scholarships:** Integrating accessibility into NSCC's Applied Research portfolio.
8. **Develop and Implement an Accessible Research Strategy:** Create a strategy in the RIWD portfolio to increase accessibility-related concepts in applied research.
9. **Support First Voice Researchers:** Ensure disability, Deaf and neurodivergent communities are supported by fostering research opportunities and inclusion in accessibility-focused studies.
10. **Explore and Implement LMS Accessibility Functionality:** Exploration of additional LMS accessibility functionalities to maximize accessible teaching and learning.

Information and Communications

Goal

Information and communication at Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions is accessible.

Information and communications at the College continue to evolve and we recognize the need for ongoing growth in this critical accessibility standard. Ensuring that all students, employees and community members can access, understand and engage with information equitably is essential. By enhancing digital accessibility, improving communication practices and fostering a culture of inclusivity, we aim to remove barriers and create a more accessible learning and working environment for everyone.

Commitments

1. **Transition to a Cloud-Based Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System:** Move to a cloud-based ERP to Modernize NSCC's ERP infrastructure, improving system accessibility, security, scalability and integration across departments. This

shift will enhance operational efficiency, support real-time data access and ensure compliance with evolving accessibility and security standards.

2. **Maintain and Increase WCAG AA Compliance:** Compliance on NSCC websites (nsc.ca and intranet) and strive for AAA compliance where feasible recognizing that some content can only meet AA standards.
3. **Mandate Accessibility Reviews for Web Editors:** Mandate that all web editors perform regular accessibility reviews.
4. **Establish Social Media Accessibility Standards:** Formalize accessibility standards for NSCC social media accounts and communicate adherence as an expectation for all social media account administrators.
5. **Develop Corporate Communications Accessibility Standards:** In collaboration with HREI, develop standards to ensure all communications are inclusive and accessible.
6. **Create Accessible Document Templates & Guidelines:** Determine College accessibility standards for documents and create templates that align with these standards.

Delivery of Goods and Services

Goal

Students, employees and visitors with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility have equitable access to goods and services provided by Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions.

The College is committed to fostering an inclusive environment by providing accessible services and supports that meet the diverse needs of students and employees from disability, Deaf, and neurodivergent communities.

Commitments

1. **Enhance Accessibility in Procurement Practices:** Develop guidelines and resources to support the integration of accessibility considerations into procurement practices at NSCC. This includes establishing common accessibility language, identifying key accessibility requirements and incorporating accessibility criteria into tenders where feasible.
2. **Enhance Accessibility in Service Delivery:** Review and optimize the delivery of the ORGA 1070 Achieving Service Excellence course to equip service employees with the knowledge and skills for inclusive, barrier-free customer service. Ensure accessibility across all frontline service areas, including counters, bookstores, cafeterias, and other campus facilities fostering a welcoming environment for all.

Employment

Goal

Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions are accessible and equitable employers, support the careers of employees with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility, and ensure their employees reflect the diversity of Nova Scotians.

NSCC is committed to being an equity-centered employer, with a staff that reflects the diversity of both the college community and the broader population. This commitment requires fostering a psychologically safe, supportive and inclusive environment. It begins with creating a culture where employees feel encouraged to disclose disabilities and request accommodations without fear of judgment or reprisal and where unique identities and differences are valued and celebrated.

Commitments

1. **Modernize and Update Employment Equity Plan:** Draft a new, forward-thinking plan that reflects the current landscape, geopolitical and otherwise, of diversity, equity and inclusion.
2. **Review and Update the Employment Equity Policy:** Ensure revised policy aligns with best practices and evolving equity standards.
3. **Review and Update the Employee Accommodations Policy and Pathways:** Enhance accessibility and support for all employees including the Duty to Inquire.
4. **Revise Recruitment, Selection and Career Advancement Processes:** Proactively facilitate the inclusion and advancement of persons with disabilities and others facing accessibility barriers.
5. **Improve Record Keeping on Employees with Disabilities:** Modernize and standardize the tracking of the number of employees from disability, Deaf and neurodivergent communities.
6. **Ensure Inclusive Policies for Employee Accommodations and Support:** Provide adaptable tools, inclusive accommodations and robust leave practices and Return-to-Work (RTW) plans for employees with disabilities or accessibility barriers.
7. **Design and Deliver Ongoing Accessibility Training:** Professional development for employees, with targeted Manager training, to support the accommodation of employees from the disability, Deaf, and neurodivergent communities and to ensure clarity in the employee accommodation process including roles and responsibilities as well as building a culture of accessibility.

Transportation

Goal

Transportation provided to employees and students is accessible.

Transportation at NSCC considers key factors such as public transportation options, shuttle schedules and access to parking, accessible and otherwise. Additionally, considerations are made for snow removal, lighting and other factors that enhance access to NSCC campuses across the province.

Commitments

1. **Launch Snow Removal Standards:** Launch snow removal standards and procedures from the lens of accessibility with Managers in Facilities & Engineering.
2. **Collaborate with Provincial Transportation Partners:** Collaborate with municipalities and other transit providers to ensure accessible, affordable public transportation to and from campuses.

Built Environment

Goal

Buildings and outdoor spaces on Nova Scotia's post-secondary campuses provide meaningful access for intended users.

The College, under the leadership of its Facilities team, is committed to prioritizing access-based retrofits. Continuous upgrades are being made at each campus as funding permits. New buildings, such as new Student Housing units, are being designed and constructed to meet accessibility standards and guidelines, including those outlined by the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification Program. Access-based retrofits are frequently integrated into deferred maintenance renovation projects. While these upgrades can be costly, they remain a top priority for the College to ensure an inclusive and accessible environment for all.

Commitments

1. **Implement Built Environment Standard:** Now that the Built Environment Standard has been approved by the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate, adoption of the standard is a top priority for all new builds and retrofits.
2. **Enhance Campus Wayfinding:** Enhance wayfinding for accessible and single use washrooms across all NSCC Campuses.
3. **Increase Number of RHF Certified Employees:** Increase number of Rick Hansen Foundation accessibility certification program withing the Facilities and Engineering Team.

4. **Collaborate with other Provincial PSEs on Accessibility:** Collaborate to share best practices, accessibility plans and reporting tools etc. fostering collective action and mutual benefit in advancing accessibility across the post-secondary sector.
5. **Support Student Accessibility in Physical Spaces:** Develop and implement a structured process for collaboration between Student Affairs and Facilities and Engineering to address non-educational student accommodation needs. Establish clear integration points where accessibility leads can provide support furniture and equipment move requests, etc. ensuring students receive timely and appropriate support as part of their accommodations.

Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation

Goal

Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions regularly monitor and evaluate progress to remove barriers to accessibility, and the impact on students and employees, and continue to identify opportunities to improve access to education.

NSCC's Accessibility Plan will be stewarded by the Human Rights, Equity, and Inclusion office, with accountabilities across various senior leaders at the college, and with support from the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). This collective team will be responsible for establishing key performance indicators and managing the progress of the accessibility plan and their respective goals.

Commitments

1. **Operationalize Accessibility Commitments:** Ensure the commitments outlined in this plan are reflected and operationalized within each respective department at NSCC.
2. **Continuous Review of Accessibility Standards:** Review standards and other work from the province as they are released and determine if updates to the plan are needed as a result.
3. **Maintain Accessibility Monitoring Tool:** Ensure that the MS Planner, etc. are regularly assessed and reports on progress toward meeting the commitments outlined in the Plan.
4. **Review Accessibility Plan at Least Every 3 Years:** Review and update as required. This document is a Work in Progress and can be updated at any time.
5. **Seek New Accessibility Funding and Resources:** Continue to seek funding and other resources, including those to support students, capital costs etc., from the provincial government above the regular operating grants for Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions in order to implement the commitments in this plan in recognition of the significant additional cost implications.

Accessibility Advisory Committee Members

NSCC's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) was refreshed in January 2025 due to expiring terms. Members were recruited via open recruitment efforts and chosen through the Chair, Vice-Chair and the Senior Advisor, Persons with Disabilities. All members represent a diverse cross-section of positions and experiences at the College. In accordance with section 44 (2) of the Accessibility Act, 2017, *at least one-half of the members of an accessibility advisory committee must be persons with disabilities or representatives from organizations representing persons with disabilities.* Again, we are pleased that NSCC's Accessibility Advisory Committee exceeds this requirement as all members have first voice expertise with lived experience as a member of the disability, Deaf and neuro-divergent communities.

NSCC thanks all members, past and present, for the role they have played or are playing to help build an equity centered College that prioritizes the removal of barriers for people with disabilities.

Call to Action

Through this Accessibility Plan, the College will drive **Accessibility in Action**, taking concrete steps to create an inclusive environment where everyone can fully participate. Central to this effort is **Accessibility Reckoning**, as described above. This initiative is a bold commitment to move beyond compliance and embrace true inclusion. It is crucial that all members of the College community recognize accessibility as a vital social justice issue and take an active role in this work. This is our collective Call to Action and time for shared lifting. The time to act is now and, together, we will bring this plan to life.

List of AAC Members

1. Jennifer Barnable (Alumni)
2. Carly Brake
3. Lindsay Copp
4. Brayden Cream (Student)
5. Jamus Dorey (Senior Advisor – Ex Officio)
6. Hilary Gibson
7. Tammy Harrison (ERN Co-Chair)
8. Max Nodwell
9. Jill Provoe (VP, Equity & International – Ex Officio)
10. Ian Watts, (ERN Co-Chair)
11. Donna White
12. Jacob Woods (Chair)

Information and Feedback

***For more information or to receive it in an alternate format, please contact:
[Human Rights Equity and Inclusion.](#)***

Feedback is critical to identifying and removing barriers to participation and improving how the College delivers services to persons from the disability, Deaf and neurodivergent communities. To provide input, request more information on this plan, or request an alternate format please contact Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion, at humanrights@nsc.ca

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Province of Nova Scotia. (2017). [Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act](#)

Nova Scotia Community College. (2022). [Setting the Stage – A Social Justice Approach to Disability](#)

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Malhotra, R., & Rowe, M. (2013). *Exploring disability identity and disability rights through narratives: Finding a voice of their own*. Routledge.

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Progress Made
Multiple values

