Strathcona Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Committee
Terms of Reference

Mandate

The Strathcona Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Committee mandate is to assist member municipalities and partnering public sector organizations to improve accessibility and inclusion within the Strathcona region.

Purpose

The purpose of the Strathcona Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Committee (Committee) is to:

1. Assess, prevent and remove barriers experienced by people with disabilities when accessing service, programs and facilities at partnering public sector organizations.
2. Work collaboratively to develop and implement a regional accessibility plan that is in compliance with the Accessible BC Act legislation.
3. Review and update the regional accessibility plan every 3 years.
4. Act as a resource and offer recommendations and information to partnering organizations on topics that affect the quality of life of community members with disabilities.
5. Respond to referrals from partnering organizations regarding issues related to accessibility and inclusion.
6. Provide advice regarding the development of organization policies, procedures and programs to ensure the inclusion of all residents, including those living with disabilities, are considered in relation to employment, transportation, the built environment, delivery of service, information and communication; and procurement.
7. Monitor and report on progress toward achievement of actions identified in the Regional Accessibility Plan.
8. Improve public awareness about accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities.

Background

The Strathcona Regional District has partnered with the City of Campbell River, Village of Gold River, Village of Sayward, Village of Tahsis, Village of Zeballos, Vancouver Island Regional Library, Vancouver Island West School District 84, and other public sector organizations in the region that wish to participate on accessibility and inclusion efforts.

The Committee was created to assist the partnering organizations to implement the requirements of the Accessible British Columbia Act. By way of participation in the Committee, Strathcona Regional District member municipalities and public sector organizations will be in compliance with the legislation.

A regional approach was pursued to avoid duplication of work, encourage collaboration between organizations and support the pooling of resources.

Definitions

"Barrier" means anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in society of persons with disabilities including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

"Disability" includes a physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual' s full and effective participation in society.

Committee Composition

The Committee will consist of at least seven (7), and up to twelve (12) voting members, representing partnering organizations, the general public, businesses, and community interests within the Strathcona region. The Committee will strive to maintain the following membership criteria:

1. Fifty percent (50%) of members are persons with a disability or are individuals who support persons with disabilities either at a personal or organizational level.
2. At least one (1) Indigenous member.
3. One (1) Strathcona Regional District Director, appointed by the board.
4. Geographically represent the Strathcona region.
5. Reflect the diversity of persons with disabilities in BC.
6. The Chair and Alternate Chair of the Committee shall be elected annually by the committee membership

Committee members will be appointed for a 2 year term. Members may re-apply upon completion of their term for a maximum of 3 terms.

The Committee will be supported by staff from the partnering organizations and consulting resources as required. The SRD's commitment is to provide a Staff Liaison, as directed by the Chief Administrative Officer, to act as support for the Committee. The Staff Liaison will also aid in the agenda preparation, minute taking and other administrative duties. Additional staff from partnering organizations may attend Committee meetings as a resource and to support the work of the Committee within their organizations.

Member Eligibility

The public Committee members shall be appointed by SRD Board resolution. Members residing within the Strathcona region are eligible to apply. Members of the Committee shall:

1. Reflect a broad cross-section of the region.
2. Be appointed based on their availability and commitment to increasing accessibility and inclusiveness within the region.
3. Have no conflict of interest with the SRD Board, member municipalities, partnering organizations, or the Committee and should advise the members when a potential conflict may exist on a specific issue and recuse themselves (i.e. leave the meeting when the matter is under discussion, not participate in any discussion of the matter or vote on a question in respect of the matter) as necessary.

The resignation of a member during the term must be given in writing to the Committee Chair and SRD Staff Liaison. The SRD Board may choose to appoint another member to serve the remainder of the term. To maintain a high level of commitment, members may be required to resign if they have been absent for three consecutive meetings without good cause.

Committee members must have access to a computer and an email address in order to receive and respond to communications and information, including meeting packages.

Roles and Responsibilities

Each member of the Strathcona Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Committee is an independent representative of the Committee and should aim to represent the concerns of multiple disabilities and groups. Members should:

1. Be familiar with the Accessible BC Act Legislation and these Terms of Reference.
2. Work together for the purpose of developing a common approach that is reasonable and practical.
3. Consider the following principles:
   - Inclusion
   - Adaptability
   - Diversity
   - Collaboration
   - Self-determination
   - Universal design
4. Contribute their expertise actively during meetings.
5. Provide an objective view in the public interest and fairly represent this view in public processes.
6. Participate in related events and activities, including those designed to receive public feedback regarding the regional accessibility plan.
7. Declare any situation that is, or has the potential to be, a conflict of interest.

Meeting Frequency

Meetings will be held once every 3 months. In addition to regularly scheduled meetings, the Committee will meet upon a call from the Chair or at the request of two Committee Members.

In the first year, the Committee may meet as necessary to develop an Accessibility Plan.

Procedures

The Chair will make a call for agenda items two weeks in advance of scheduled meetings.

The Committee shall only consider those matters included in the meeting agenda circulated to the members in advance of the meeting. New business items may be introduced at a meeting but will be forwarded for consideration by the Committee at a subsequent meeting. By unanimous consent of its members the Committee may consider new business/emergent items at a duly constituted meeting.

The Committee will be responsible for ensuring all matters brought before its members for discussion and consideration directly relate to regional efforts to be more accessible and inclusive and assist with the implementation of the Accessible BC Act legislation.

The quorum shall be constituted of 50% + 1 of all the current members of the Committee (e.g. if the Committee currently has eight (8) members, five members constitute a quorum).

Meetings of the Committee shall be governed by Roberts Rules of Order.

Each representative that is appointed has one vote.

The Committee's preferred method of decision-making is to reach resolution by consensus. However, when consensus cannot be reached, a vote will be conducted, and a simple majority will rule.

Both in-person and virtual meeting attendance will be supported.

All meetings will be open to the public to attend as observers.

Committee members do not have the authority to speak publicly on behalf of the Committee unless directed to do so by the Chair. The Chair will act as the Committee spokesperson when responding to the media.

Funding

The Committee does not have an approved budget for 2023. Financial requests to support the development and implementation of an Accessibility Plan, will be submitted to the SRD Board and partner organizations for approval. As a regional committee, requests may be made to each participating public sector organization for funding to sustain the Committee's activities where areas of common interest exist. Grant funding will be pursued where appropriate.

The Committee does not have the authority to pledge the credit of any partner organization, or to authorize any expenditure to be charged against partner organizations.

Participating organizations will be financially responsible for the recommendations they choose to implement within their organization.

The Committee also welcomes and appreciates in-kind services, input, and expertise from municipal councils, agencies, businesses, and volunteers on an as needed basis.

Remuneration

Committee members participate as volunteers.

Reimbursement for pre-approved reasonable expenses related to travel, meals, accommodation, and out-of-pocket costs while performing Committee responsibilities will be made in accordance with SRD Travel Expense Policy.

Reporting to Partnering Organizations

The SRD Staff Liaison will be responsible for reporting the Committee minutes to all partner organizations.

Minutes shall be included for receipt on partnering council/board agendas.

Committee agendas and minutes will be available on the SRD website.

Each partner organization will determine how they will implement the Committee and Accessibility recommendations.