

Accessible + inclusive client services

By: Morgan Skinner, Janet Newbury, Alison Gerlach, and Meriko Kubota, with support from Tabatha Berggren, Chianne Benckhuysen, and Frankie McWade

We respectfully acknowledge that this work took place on the traditional and treaty territory of the łaʔamen (Tla'amin) Nation.

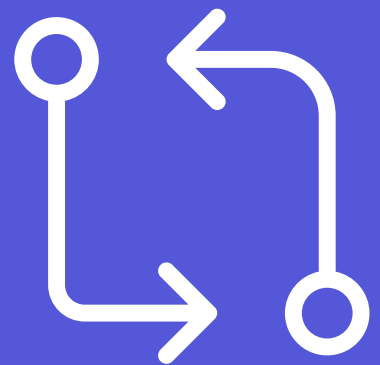
April 15, 2025



Prepare



Connect



Close the loop

Thanks for funding and support from:



Welcome!

This is an evidence-based handbook for staff to consult, in order to reduce barriers to programs and services experienced by community members, including children with disabilities and their families. It includes two checklists.

The first is a stand-alone one-page checklist specifically for those who engage with the public in day-to-day service delivery. _

[Post it somewhere you will see it!](#)

The second is a detailed checklist for all who have touchpoints with the public, through:

- communications,
- community engagement,
- events, and
- the development of policies, systems, and programs.

This Handbook contains:

Pages 2: Introduction

Page 3: Accessible and Inclusive Service Delivery: Day-to-Day

Pages 4-7: Accessible and Inclusive Client Services: General

Page 8: Project Background

Page 9: References

Accessible and Inclusive Service Delivery

Learn and Prepare

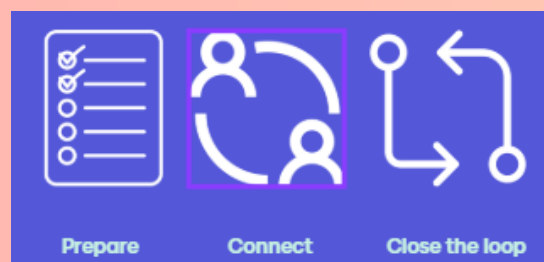
- Learn about, invite, and acknowledge the First Nation(s) whose territory you are working on
- Take trauma-informed practice training and cultural safety & humility training; foster a culture of learning
- Look for and create new ways to connect with people who have not previously had the opportunity to participate, or for whom opportunities have not been accessible
- Partner with organizations who work with or support community members who are frequently marginalized or excluded, to better understand their perspectives, get input, and invite them
- Be aware of different ways of engaging, as well as different cultural values, practices, and time of year when scheduling and planning

Engage and Connect

- Ensure the public has sufficient information to participate and/or make informed decisions
- Create a warm and inviting space
- Welcome people
- Ensure plenty of room for mobility aids
- Reduce visual stimulus
- Provide at least one universal or gender inclusive restroom and at least one accessible restroom
- Offer varying participation times and durations
- Treat all people with respect and dignity
- Be mindful of language; use correct names and pronouns

Continue Learning and Follow Up

- Provide a range of different ways the public can provide feedback on services
- Take time to listen, be receptive, and act on feedback



Accessible and Inclusive Client Services: General

When preparing to engage with the public, I can proactively:

01 **Seek the perspectives of those who are directly impacted, who have related lived experience, or who might benefit from my work.**



- Do early stage focused outreach to people based on gender, race, age, physical and intellectual ability, and income.
- Partner with organizations who work with or support these populations to better understand their perspectives, get input, make connections, and attract participants.

02 **Make specific efforts to reach people whose voices are not often heard.**



- Take trauma-informed practice training; foster a culture of learning
- Discuss emotional, physical, and cultural safety at the outset.
- Provide adequate time and opportunities for input to be offered.
- Look for new ways to connect with people who have not previously had the opportunity to participate (virtual, one-on-one, outreach, etc).
- Be aware of different cultural values, practices, and time of year when scheduling and planning.
- Be prepared to offer materials in different languages and formats.

03 **Honour, invite, and uplift local First Nation people, knowledge and practices.**



- Learn about the First Nation(s) whose territory you live and work on and invite them at an early stage in the process.

- Take cultural safety & humility training, and foster a culture of ongoing learning in your workplace. Attend events to which you are invited, and read & watch available materials.
- Work with Indigenous people and organizations, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers without overburdening them.

04 **Begin by learning from what already works well, or has in the past.**



- Consult in advance with community leaders in culturally respectful ways.

05 **Develop processes for accessibility, transparency, accountability, and good relationships.**



- Ensure the public has sufficient information to participate and/or make informed decisions.
- Build long-term, respectful relationships with community members who you engage with.
- Create a warm and inviting space (let people know what to expect in advance, accommodate dietary and accessibility needs, welcome them upon arrival).

06 **Identify barriers at every stage and taking steps to mitigate and/or remove them.**



- Ensure plenty of room for mobility aids, reduce visual stimulus, have a variety of seating options, avoid fluorescent lighting, use plain language, have large fonts with high contrast colours.
- Provide accessible and universal or gender inclusive restroom(s).
- Offer varying participation times and durations.
- Consider rotating to different locations.
- Include free transit or a ride share program if possible.
- Where possible, do what you can to help meet basic and immediate needs, such as purchasing extra food.
- Provide free childcare and/or make meetings children-friendly.

- Provide fair and prompt compensation for participants' work.
- Accommodate for participation through diverse communication methods (Hire translators and/or ASL interpreters; include digital/virtual ways to participate; ensure all materials, presentations and communications are in clear language and meet accessibility standards).
- Provide paper, pens and other materials to promote full participation as well as items to play, fidget or draw with.

When engaging with the public, I can proactively:

01 Create an inclusive agenda.



- Start off in a good way by sharing who you are, the traditional lands you are on or where you come from, and intentions and plans (ie. what to expect).
- Make sure everyone is welcomed for showing up.
- Collaborate with participants to develop expectations and what steps will be taken if any issues arise.
- At the end, seek feedback about how the session went and what could be improved, and offer additional support afterwards if appropriate.

02 Facilitate full participation for people with different abilities, comfort levels, and ways of participating.



- Be flexible and encourage people to adapt methods to best suit them.
- Provide diverse ways for people to contribute such as small focus groups, one-on-one conversations, world cafés, surveys, or anonymous feedback portals,
- Treat people with respect and dignity.
- Ensure people's contributions are acknowledged and valued.
- Take time to listen, be receptive, and act on feedback.

03

Attend to comfort and safety.



- Be mindful of language; use correct names and pronouns.
- Continually check in with people and give them the opportunity to share how they are feeling.
- Acknowledge and validate their experiences and concerns; make changes as necessary to better support them.
- Be present, show you care, listen with undivided attention, be yourself and stay true to your word.
- Ensure there are enough facilitators or staff to do your work well.

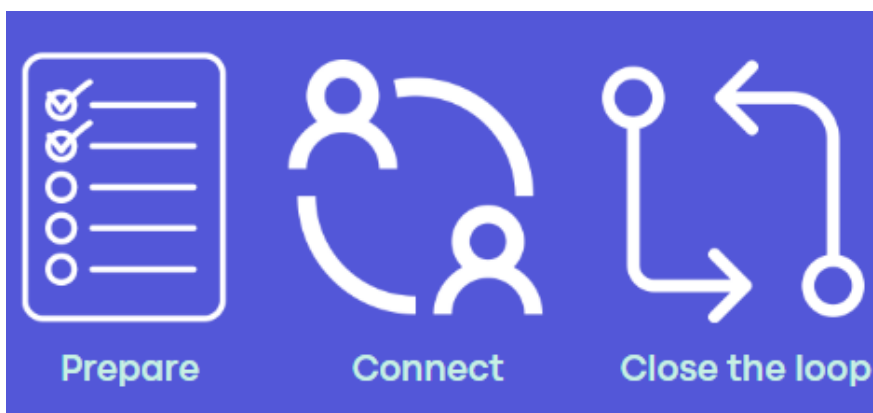
Following an interaction or engagement with the public, I can actively:

01

Close the loop and maintain relationship with those who showed up.



- Keep open and accessible lines of communication.
- Provide updates and progress in accessible ways.
- Show appreciation and thank them.



Project background:

This Handbook is a product of “The Community Belonging Project”.

In 2021, the Accessible BC Act was passed as law, and in 2022 it came into force. Also in 2022, two of the project team members published a report called “I just want to see my child thrive”: Parents pushing for equity and inclusion in the child care system in BC. One of the findings of that study was that children who are excluded from child care on the basis of disability are often excluded from other opportunities. A subsequent literature review found that addressing systemic ableism requires community-based approaches.

On this basis, the City of Powell River entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Community Belonging Project team (the authors). Through this agreement, the project team conducted an environmental scan of City-run programs and services with the goal of making evidence-based recommendations about increasing opportunities for participation and belonging, specifically for children with visible and non-visible disabilities and their families. Funding was obtained by the project team through the University of Victoria and Vancouver Coastal Health.

This Handbook does not comprise the full results of the environmental scan, but reflects findings specific to a review of literature about inclusive community engagement. Please consult the City of Powell River for more.

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