

Accessibility Plan

2024 - 2026

March 2024



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Introduction

The Rooms is committed to removing barriers and facilitating access and inclusion.

Statement of Commitment

This Accessibility Plan provides the guidance and steps needed to achieve our vision of The Rooms being a welcoming place and space where everyone can come and participate, where everyone is respected and where everyone's lives are reflected.

To ensure we are successful, we will work closely with organizations of and for persons with disabilities in NL. We are their supporters, but also we are their advocates and allies.

Mission Statement

We create welcoming spaces for all people to gather, share stories, engage with the past and challenge narratives, in order to build an inspired community around art, history, culture and our natural environment.

Vision Statement

The Rooms is a values driven, sustainable cultural community hub that builds an inclusive, diverse, creative and confident community by connecting people with Newfoundland and Labrador's past and present so they can envision a bright future

Our Values

Enabling Discovery

sharing the stories and surprises that are contained within our collections

Stimulating Curiosity

constantly exploring how we can be accessible to, connect with and mean more to people

Building Team Culture

forging relationships, working closely together and with external groups to achieve shared goals

Striving to be The Best

commitment to applying the highest standards in all that we do

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Anti-racism

commitment to a respectful, diverse and welcoming environment where we are stronger together



Advancements to Date

As noted in The Rooms 2022 – 23 Annual Report Recommendations from the accessibility audit:

- The Rooms has continued to implement recommendations from the 2019 accessibility audit. This audit primarily focused on issues of mobility access. The Rooms has expanded the focus of its accessibility improvements to include visual, hearing, learning and cognitive, and mental health accessibility.
- The Rooms Technology and Innovation Committee have reviewed the permanent gallery spaces and common public spaces and have created a working list of recommended accessibility upgrades to these spaces. More than 90 percent of identified recommendations were completed during fiscal 2022-23, including:

New audiovisual equipment upgrades afford improved listening capabilities for those who are hard of hearing.

- Assisted listening devices are available upon request for visitors to use during programs offered at The Rooms,
- Additional sound cones installed in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment Gallery to improve sound direction and audibility of audio experiences,
- Closed captions added to existing video content within permanent exhibition galleries.

Additional Advancements

- Disability parking spaces are located at the front and rear of the building,
- Two (2) ramps are located at the front of the building, although the grade of one of the ramps is too steep for many mobility device users,
- Entrance is staffed with a guard during opening hours who can assist visitors as needed,
- Entrances have push-button open assists. Front door has an extended opening time,
- Front desk has a lower counter area,
- Cloak room has one rack that is at a lower level,
- One wheelchair is available for public use,
- Building has two public elevators to access all public levels. Elevator doors have extended opening times. There are lifts in all galleries,
- Stairs in Level 4 Museum have high-visibility strips,
- All gallery doors have push-button open assists,
- Single washroom on Level 1 is larger and has a push-button access door,
- Washrooms on all levels have barrier free entrances,



- Seating in public areas (Level 2 and Atrium) has arms,
- Portable stools are located outside each gallery for increased seating,
- All exhibitions have some seating.
- Connections Level 3 Gallery has added seating,
- Theatre has removable seating in the first row,
- Boardroom furniture is mobile and can be adjusted and rearranged as needed,
- One podium has a height that is adjustable,
- Theatre and boardroom have hearing assist systems, acquired with assistance from the Hard of Hearing Association,
- In temporary galleries, texts are larger and higher contrast,
- All exhibition furnishings and layouts are designed with allowances for mobility devices,
- QR codes are added to some exhibitions for added content,
- Captions have been added to some of the videos in galleries,
- ASL interpretation available on request for programs,
- One staff person is trained in ASL,
- Occasional virtual program offerings so that visitors can access programming from home,
- New website developed with accessibility lens,
- Image-describe added to images used on website and social media channels,
- Two (2) accessibility audits completed,
- Staff accessibility committee meets on a regular basis,
- Board formed a committee with IDEA focus (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility),
- Mission/Vision and Values of The Rooms aims for inclusivity,
- Customer service and working with diverse audiences training is available to all staff through PSAccess,
- Bluetooth hearing assist added.

In Process Advancements (March 2024)

- Accessible lift currently being installed to access Gallery Spaces between levels 2 and 3,
- Regular hangers for cloakroom are on order.



Advancements in the Planning Phase

- Currently investigating new entrance,
- Adding additional handrails to ramps as part of the 2024-25 capital improvement program,
- Investing the installation of an adult change table,
- Reviewing accessible parking space curbs,
- We will investigate removing the landscaping that blocks direct access to the ramp on the west side of the building.



Accessibility Goals

We have gathered information on effective practices related to accessibility and inclusion for cultural centres, museums, and galleries. Please see Appendix 5.

As disability and inclusion are not linear, some activities have application to more than one objective. For the purpose of the Plan, and for ease of reading, each activity is only referenced under one objective.

Goal 1 The Rooms will improve on an ongoing basis, as resources allow, our accessible and inclusive built environment.

Objective 1.1 To work towards overall accessibility to and ease of navigating in and around The Rooms built and natural environment.

Objective: 1.2 To work towards increasing access and inclusion for people with sensory disabilities.

Goal 1 – Activities

- Following on the consultations undertaken for the Plan, we will conduct an audit of the built and natural (external) environment with representatives of organizations of and for persons with disabilities to identify additional barriers to access and ways to mitigate same.
- We will engage with requisite groups (e.g., The Autism Society of NL, Epilepsy Association of NL, Lifewise) to identify ways and means to improve access and inclusiveness for persons with sensory disabilities.
- We will investigate options to decrease background noise and echoing throughout the building e.g., in the boardroom, in the café.
- We will work towards captioning to any video displays; use real-time captioning for large scale public events which include speakers/presentations.
- We will continue to provide interpreters on request – as available.

Goal 2 The Rooms will work towards ensuring all communications are easy to understand and/or use to enable an equivalent user experience for diverse audiences.

Objective 2.1 To employ best practices in accessible communication.

Objective 2.2 To review our current communication practices to identify areas for improvement.

Objective 2.3 To engage with experts in our community to identify needed adaptive technology for use by The Rooms staff and visitors.



Goal 2 – Activities:

- We will have experts from groups such as CNIB and the Learning Disabilities Association conduct a secondary check on our updated Website to ensure it is meeting all current guidelines – such as CNIB’s Clear Print Guidelines.
- We will use existing tools and resources, such as those detailed above, to work towards ensuring all print communication is accessible.
- We will identify ways to ensure text provided for our exhibitions is accessible to persons with a range of sensory disabilities – e.g., through text-reading apps, contrasting colors (text/background).
- We will engage with the NL Association of the Deaf to identify the most respectful and effective practices for engaging with Deaf people who access The Rooms programs and services.

Goal 3 Customer service: The Rooms will endeavour to provide positive experiences for all people.

Objective 3.1 To work towards having well-trained and skilled staff who excel in supporting persons with disabilities.

Goal 3 – Activities

- We will improve customer service through staff training; we will engage experts from organizations of/for persons with disabilities to provide in-person and virtual training on a number of customer service topics.
- With a priority on staff who work directly with the public on a daily basis, we will ensure that staff are trained in how to support and/or evacuate persons with disabilities in the event of an emergency.

Promoting Accessibility Awareness

The Rooms is a highly visible organization and as such recognized the opportunity to use our voice as a platform for Accessibility Awareness within our community.

The Rooms endeavours to promote accessibility awareness in its public spaces; in programming; throughout digital and printed marketing materials, signage, and on its social media channels.

The organization makes a commitment to ensure people of all abilities see themselves reflected in its exhibitions, programming and marketing and communication.

Promoting Accessibility Awareness supports a better understanding of accessibility and its importance. It helps to build empathy within the community and makes space for diversity.



Actions / Outcomes

Built and Natural Environment

Further to Goal 1, we would more specifically:

- Consider the removal or repositioning of the columns blocking one of the existing disabled parking spaces,
- Improve signage identifying additional disabled parking spaces,
- Address gaps in the exterior ramp's railing to ensure it provides continuous flow for individuals with low vision and/or anyone needing this type of support,
- Ensure grab bars in all accessible toilet stalls are positioned appropriately,
- Explore installing 'emergency' call buttons in the accessible toilet stalls,
- Investing the installation of an adult change table,
- Have a designated staff person to support anyone who needs help getting into and out of the building,
- Where displays are provided along the stairwell, ensure that the information is available (e.g., via video) to those who cannot use stairs,
- Check to see if hinges on doors to boardroom can be loosened to allow for easier access,
- Move portable stools inside all the galleries so that they are more visible.

Inclusion of individuals with sensory disabilities

- Identify technology to further support inclusion for persons who are hard of hearing— e.g., Bluetooth technology,
- With CNIB, map out The Rooms to support ease of navigation for those with vision loss; employ 'wayfinding' technology,
- Have labels and QR codes in a consistent position on the wall,
- Designate 'sensory friendly' visiting times at The Rooms,
- Have noise-cancelling headphones available at front desk.



Customer service, staff training and communications

Further to Goals 2 and 3:

The Rooms sees thousands of visitors every year, including those with a continuum of disabilities. A focus on customer service, staff training and effective communications is, therefore, critical for ensuring inclusion of persons with disabilities within an informed and respectful framework.

- Provide information on the website and through signage so guests know what to expect when visiting The Rooms and ensure they are aware that they can request that potentially triggering features be turned off during their visit.
- Designate and advertise that The Rooms has a 'safe space' for anyone who feels they need a place to, for example, recover from a panic attack, seizure and/or if they are triggered by something they have seen/heard, as well as for those who need a place to be quiet or loud. This space needs to be available for both adults and children.
- Offer individual tours for those who might need more explanation about exhibits or more time to digest what is being seen/learned.
- Monitor social media to ensure it adheres to clear print guidelines and is accessible to a diverse audience.

Staff training

All current staff will receive training (in-person and/or virtual) facilitated by a number of groups/organizations in NL, designed to increase their understanding about disability, respectful interactions, and problem-solving when barriers are presented. Training could be provided by, for example:

- The Coalition of Persons with Disabilities who has an existing offering in customer service training and more broadly on disabilities in general, as the Coalition's focus is 'cross disability'.
- CNIB could provide training in how to support a person with vision loss to maneuver The Rooms space.

Additionally, to support training, we will:

- Implement a train-the-trainer approach for staff to ensure that training is always available in a timely and effective manner.



Schedule for Implementation

Goal 1 The Rooms will improve on an ongoing basis, as resources allow, our accessible and inclusive built environment

Objective 1.1 To work towards overall accessibility to and ease of navigating in and around The Rooms built and natural environment

Responsibility	Timeframe
Operations	March 31, 2025
Visitor Experience	March 31, 2025

Objective 1.2 To work towards increasing access and inclusion for people with sensory disabilities.

Responsibility	Timeframe
Operations	March 31, 2025
Visitor Experience	March 31, 2025

Goal 2 The Rooms will work towards ensuring all communications are easy to understand and/or use to enable an equivalent user experience for diverse audiences.

Objective 2.1 To employ best practices in accessible communication.

Responsibility	Timeframe
Art Gallery, Museums, and Visitor Experience	March 31, 2025
Finance and Operations	March 31, 2025
Marketing, Communications and Fund Development	March 31, 2025

Objective 2.2 To review our current communication practices to identify areas for improvement.

Responsibility	Timeframe
Art Gallery, Museums, and Visitor Experience	March 31, 2025
Finance and Operations	March 31, 2025
Marketing, Communications and Fund Development	March 31, 2025

Objective 2.3 To engage with experts in our community to identify needed adaptive technology for use by The Rooms staff and visitors.

Responsibility	Timeframe
Art Gallery, Museums, and Visitor Experience	March 31, 2025
Finance and Operations	March 31, 2025



Goal 3 Customer service: The Rooms will endeavour to provide positive experiences for all people.

Objective 3.1 To work towards having well-trained and skilled staff who excel in supporting persons with disabilities.

Responsibility

Art Gallery, Museums, and Visitor Experience
Finance and Operations

Timeframe

March 31, 2025
March 31, 2025

Monitoring and Evaluating

- On a yearly basis The Rooms will engage with our focus group participants to provide an update,
- With any proposed renovations The Rooms will engage individuals with the appropriate, skills, knowledge and background to ensure renovations have been undertaken properly,
- Annually The Rooms will conduct a survey of visitors, volunteers, members and others to gather feedback related to accessibility and inclusion.

Conclusion

The Rooms Accessibility Plan will guide The Rooms in removing barriers, facilitating access and inclusion.

This plan will be a living document and at a minimum will be updated every three years to remain compliant with industry updates and revisions to standards and regulations, and to reflect ongoing feedback collected from The Rooms stakeholders.

Completing the goals outlined in this plan will enable The Rooms to continue to provide a welcoming space where everyone can participate, is respected and sees themselves reflected and supports our Mission, Vision and Values.



Appendix 1 – Glossary of Terms

Accessibility

As defined in the Government of Canada's Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology, accessibility is the quality of an environment that enables a person to access that environment with ease.

Accessibility Plan

As defined in the *Accessibility Act*, an accessibility plan is a plan to address the prevention, identification, and removal of barriers in the policies, programs, practices, and services of a public body.

Barrier

A barrier means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in society. Barriers can be physical, architectural, information or communication related, attitudinal, technological, or barriers may be established by or perpetuated by an act, regulation, policy, or practice. Examples include:

- **Physical/Architectural Barriers**

Physical and architectural barriers happen when features of buildings or spaces limit people's access. Examples: Stairs without ramps or elevators; low lighting or weak color contrast; lack of accessible parking or washrooms.

- **Information and Communication Barriers**

Information or communication barriers exist because not all people read or understand in the same way. When information is not communicated in a way that all persons can access or understand it, it presents a barrier. Examples: Public meetings or events without American Sign Language interpretation; PDF documents made from images instead of text; websites that do not comply with current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

- **Attitudinal Barriers**

Attitudinal barriers happen when people do not understand how disabilities affect people's lives. These misunderstandings can lead to false assumptions about what persons with disabilities can do, want, or need. Attitudinal barriers come from an unconscious bias and happen because of stereotypes, lack of awareness and discrimination. Examples: Someone may not assign a laptop to a new employee who is blind because they assume the person cannot use a computer. Someone may speak very slowly and loudly to someone with a speech disability because they assume the person cannot understand them.

- **Technology Barriers**

Technology barriers happen when technology is not accessible to persons with disabilities. Examples: Website functions that only work when users click with a mouse, which presents a barrier for people who control their computers using



speech or keyboard commands instead. Training modules that are not compatible with screen reader software.

- **Legal Barriers**

A barrier established by or perpetuated by an act, regulation, policy or practice. This may be a legal barrier within legislation, or within departmental policies and procedures. Example: In order to access certain services, persons may be required to provide substantial medical documentation and/or assessment, complete a form that is not available in accessible format, or complete a phone assessment or interview.

Disability

As defined in the *Accessibility Act*, disability includes a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment, or a functional limitation that is permanent, temporary, or episodic in nature that, in interaction with a barrier, prevents a person from fully participating in society.

Equitable/Equity

A commitment to fairness. Equitable access is different from equal access. Equality means everybody is treated the same; equity means everybody is treated fairly, based on their needs and abilities.

Inclusion

As defined in the Government of Canada's Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology, inclusion is the practice of using proactive measures to create an environment where people feel welcome, respected, and valued, and to foster a sense of belonging and engagement. This practice involves changing the environment by removing barriers so that each person has equal access to opportunities and resources and can achieve their full potential.

Plain Language

Plain language is clear, conversational communication that makes sense to the intended audience. The goal of plain language is to communicate so clearly that the intended audience can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use the information.

Public Body

As defined in the *Accessibility Act*, public bodies include all provincial government, agencies, boards, commissions and committees, crown corporations, municipalities, public educational institutions and private educational institutions.

Service Without Barriers

A "Service Without Barriers" approach is adopted to ensure an organization engages with representatives of people with disabilities and lived experience to make service improvements, to ensure full and direct participation of members of the affected group.



For example, The Rooms works with community partners to better understand clients' needs and implement practical solutions to provide appropriate client service based on the particular challenges of its users, visitors and patrons.



Appendix 2 – Network of Disability Organizations

The Network of Disability Organizations comprises community groups that work to provide advocacy, programs, and services for persons with disabilities. These organizations include:

- Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Canadian Hard of Hearing Association Newfoundland and Labrador (CHHA-NL)
- Cerebral Palsy Association of Newfoundland and Labrador
- CNIB – Newfoundland and Labrador
- Coalition for Persons with Disabilities
- Easter Seals Newfoundland and Labrador
- Empower NL
- Epilepsy Newfoundland and Labrador
- Inclusion Canada NL (ICNL)
- Learning Disabilities Association of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Lifewise NL
- Newfoundland and Labrador Association of the Deaf
- Newfoundland and Labrador Down Syndrome Society
- Newfoundland and Labrador Stuttering Association
- People First of Canada – Newfoundland and Labrador
- Schizophrenia Society of Canada
- Spinal Cord Injury Newfoundland & Labrador



Appendix 3 – Focus Group 1 – Rooms Volunteers and Members

Focus Group 1 – Thursday, February 29, 9:30 AM – 13 people attended

Overall accessibility of programming:

- Timing of programs – for example, used to come to Coffee and Culture in the afternoon. Loved that program. Now it is switched to night. Impossible to get here now with GO Bus schedule. Frustrating because so many good programs in the evening. Can't do them anymore.
- Could the presentations be put on Zoom so people who can't come in the evening could perhaps participate over Zoom?
- I'm a sketcher - carry a sketch book with me all the time. The Rooms should try to encourage people to come in and sketch things inside. Doesn't matter whether the art is good or bad. It's just encouraging people to do it. Be more open to amateurs coming in and drawing. Could be a session every week. Good for your mental health.
- Audio tour – would exponentially increase experiences at The Rooms, including for neurodivergent people too.
- Emphasize the importance of partnerships in NL. MUN went through it. Worked a lot with various local organizations (COD-NL, Associations for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Autism Society). Importance of universal design. It's possible to add things to benefit everyone.
- Museum of Human Rights in Winnipeg has really good examples of accessible design (e.g., multi model exhibits).

Hearing impairment:

- For years, there were challenges relating to hearing impairment. Last week they had new technology in the theatre. I had no difficulty hearing. It was great.
- Acoustics in the Boardroom are great for some things but not working well for this type of event. Noticed it in the café too. Hard walls and glass everywhere. Very loud and it is hard to hear.
- Aesthetics in the Boardroom in terms of architecture also causes problems for people with hearing loss. High ceilings. Even with small group of people it is hard to hear. No tablecloths on the tables and then glass on top of tables. No sound deadening. These things could be addressed at little cost. But also don't want to see things put up that will interfere with the aesthetic of the building.
- Should be closed captioning for any videos/presentations.
- Find it hard to hear staff through plexiglass – people just talk louder but that's not the issue. Need them to speak slower and more clearly.



Vision loss – primarily issues around low lighting:

- Museum areas are dark. Can't see well. Told older paintings need to be protected with appropriate lighting but presents challenges.
- Low light in the galleries – there seems to be a lot of text to read and difficult in low light. Could print out text so people could take it and read it.
- I am an inclusive design researcher on interactive learning tools and am wondering about some things in The Rooms like low light in the galleries and access to text. Know there are multimedia displays but not sure how far The Rooms could go with things being digitally accessible. Could have some content available that way. If you can't read it, then maybe listen to it in audio format.
- Text in dark environment - In other galleries I have seen audio tours with headphones that can explain what you're looking at.

Accessibility outdoors:

- Exposed ramp outside – railing have gaps in them. If someone falls or slips, they will fall where there are no railings. Should be one continuous railing.
- West parking lot – to get to the ramp you have to walk around a hedge. No direct path.
- Accessible parking and bus parking at front steps should be extended so that the circular ramp is accessible to everyone. Straight ramp was closed this morning, so someone had to help me up the ramp.
- Parking – there are 3-4 people who tend to park at Sobeys because there's no way we can get a ticket from the parking booth when entering. Cannot pull up close enough to the ticket box and cannot get in and out of vehicle easily to get ticket.
- The curbs/lip on the sidewalks – why are they necessary? Could they have a ramp so wheelchairs or walkers could come up more easily?
- We parked in the disabled parking, and you're faced with a curb immediately when you get out of your car. Should be carved out.
- Wish that we would have a zero-level access that we can drive up and drop someone off at the door. The ramp... for me to push someone up the ramp requires work.
- The ramp doesn't work – steep and broken. The other is long and curved. With a walker, there's no way to get in. Whether you have a disability or not – lots of times it's lacking snow clearing and the long curvy ramp can be really icy.
- Access for those who can't do stairs, thought there was a way to get in the building on the west end through a door that led to an elevator? Is this possible?

Accessibility indoors:

- Need chairs in the galleries so people have places to rest. Need to have arms so you help yourself up.
- Doors into the gallery are extremely heavy. Often need help from a guard.



- Mobility issues due to arthritis and vision loss so haven't been coming in as much. In the theatre, there are chairs that are movable at the front - would it be possible for me to use them or are they for people doing the presentation? If I could sit there, it would be much better for me. Kate: yes, those chairs are available for anyone.
- In a lot of other galleries, they have little chairs/stools that you can pick up and take with you. I used it. National Museum in Edinburgh also offered motorized cart. Washington same thing. All flat getting in. Well laid out. (Identified during afternoon that these portable stools are available at The Rooms but not very obvious/visible.)
- Little gallery in the middle of the staircases - No way to get there if you have mobility issues. Wondering if that exhibit would be available somewhere else in The Rooms digitally. Kate: adding a wheelchair accessible lift to access that space now.
- I can't get in an elevator due to anxiety – can only use stairs. Need to consider accessibility of spaces for people with mental health issues who cannot use enclosed spaces.
- Automatic flush on the toilet - too quick for people who are older. Can't get up fast enough.
- The gift shop is a real problem for me. There's 2 inches of space around the wheelchair only.
- Elevator in the upper gallery - you can barely get a wheelchair in there. Don't tell people that either before you get in. Terrifying to be in the elevator.

Communications:

- Make members aware of what is available here for people with disabilities. With Bluetooth capability in most hearing aids today, there are opportunities to improve experiences.
- Need some way that when you implement something new such as technology, you can let members know of the technology you have available. Also, staff and volunteer training on the new technology. Could also have an area on the website that could let people know what's available or what to expect.
- The website – don't think there's any way to enlarge the font or change color for people with low vision. Don't find it easy to navigate.
- Today we found out there are chairs in the theatre that we can sit in if we want to. Didn't know. That information needs to be available to everyone to know. Regarding a lot of things we've discussed today, good communication could help.
- Important to let the public know about the current consultation process – who else we're including in the focus groups. A lot of people who don't know about the types of supports out there in the community. Learned from a former student about Hard of Hearing Association. Huge help. Most of the public don't know this process is happening and who is being consulted. They should.



- Customer service and communication – is there any training in place for the people working here around customer service skills? There are ways to make it a more inclusive environment through customer service.

Technology:

- If you could think about technology that could be accessed like apps for hard of hearing or those with low vision. Need to be more comprehensive across the board. Seems like there's more of a "bits and pieces" approach a lot of times. Have lived outside of NL - see things and think, why don't we have this here.
- Could there be training sessions for people who have trouble with technology. Also, for kids. To learn more.
- Even though I work in technology and design inclusive features, technology can be inaccessible for many reasons. Inclusive aspect is important. Any procurement of new tech should go through a process to ensure it's the right tech. Needs to be well-designed.
- When I've been travelling there has been a tendency to use QR codes. But in dark environments you can't see. The QR code is just available on a phone. No print material available. Needs to be thought through in terms of ages and disabilities. Need a more comprehensive approach.
- Some places when you stand in front of something, on a pad, the light goes up - motion activated. CNIB and CHHA also have lots of great tech. Should be more effort to look at those things. Some people aren't the type to seek help on their own so appreciate these options.

Other:

- I attended a session and triggered a man who worked here who was Indigenous. I left crying because there was a confrontation. Felt it was a hierarchy of inclusion. My issues weren't considered. There has to be a balance in how you deal with different disabilities.



Appendix 4 – Focus Group 2

Focus Groups 2 – Thursday, February 29, 1:00 PM

- Representative from Epilepsy NL
- Representative from the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association NL
- Representative from Inclusion Canada NL
- Representative from People First NL

Creating safe spaces:

- Recommend designated times for sensory experiences. This can make a big difference for some people, including those with autism or intellectual disabilities. They can be triggered by loud noises (e.g., recordings of gun shots, lightning). Designated times even once a month could be very helpful. Designated times could include lower lighting, less noise, no flashing lights, no crowds. Could include a registration process to ensure it's a small group. Could also implement a trigger warning at the beginning of any displays that include loud noises or flashing lights or guests could ask The Rooms to turn off any such triggering features during their visit.
- Strong odors can also trigger individuals.
- High comorbidity between epilepsy and intellectual disability/autism as people with such disabilities often face similar challenges. They are seeking spaces with fewer lights and less noise.
- People with hearing loss tend to isolate themselves and avoid certain places. Some people reach out for help while others don't. Some people can't afford hearing aids. Having something promoted as a quiet event with assisted technology could make a big difference.
- Reference room on 3rd floor is very quiet and there is another space down the hall that is even quieter. Could designate those as "safe spaces". This would be beyond having a sensory time in the whole building. The room designated as a safe space could provide a place where people can "recover" from an episode, panic attack, seizure or if they are triggered by something. They can have privacy. Also have someone who has a role to check that space once in a while. Would promote this as a "quiet room". The important part is explaining it effectively ("in the event that people need somewhere to..." and then give examples.) Then train staff to know this is the space where they would lead people to in the event that something happens. Right now, the space just has tables and chairs but that would be sufficient.
- Some people might need a space where they need to make noise, if they have low impulse control, have a severe stutter or if they can't stay still (e.g., if someone has Tourette's). Safe space must be inclusive for anyone.



Customer Service:

- At the front desk there's plexiglass, person wearing a mask. This muffles the sound and prevents ability to lip read. Can get clear masks for staff which could help.
- Staff at the front desk should ask "is there anyone here today who would need an accommodation?"
- Some can face high anxiety when going out due to public lack of awareness (e.g., scared of having a seizure in public). Could have a sign that says, "Seizure safe space". People know if they have a seizure that there is someone there trained to know how to respond.
- One important consideration is 'don't presume anything'. Always ask a person if they need help. Don't assume they need help.
- Importance of staff being calm, treating people with dignity and respect. Want people to feel seen and heard. Don't want people to feel like they're talked down to. Stress can cause people more grief (e.g., stutter can get worse). People can pick up on whether or not staff are genuine.
- Importance of staff being approachable. Bad body language from staff can trigger more anxiety. Smile, be friendly, be patient. Don't rush people. Someone with a stutter – don't try to finish their words for them.
- Staff could have a button that says, "ask me anything". Want to reduce anyone feeling intimidated to ask for help or ask a question.
- Good signage that indicates The Rooms is a safe and accommodating space.
- People tend to shout at people with hearing loss, but it comes off as being aggressive. Just speak a bit louder. Speak clearly. Make eye contact.
- For people with epilepsy, their medication can have an impact on their memory. Can repeat things a lot. They can't control that. Similar for individuals with an intellectual disability. Patience is very important.
- Increase awareness around available supports, for example, portable stools. All info around what The Rooms offers should be on the website.

Training:

- Mental health challenges – knowing how to respond if someone is having a panic attack. Some people have trouble with attention span or have trouble focusing.
- Need to keep in mind that people may not have the disabilities that you think they have. E.g., Someone in a wheelchair may have mental health challenges.
- Staff training is a major factor. Community organizations can provide different types of training on different disabilities. Helps staff stay calm if they better know what to expect and how to help.
- Offer ASL training.
- Sometimes an individual with autism or epilepsy can be perceived as being under the influence. Individuals with hearing loss can also appear inebriated if they have balance



issues. Training is important to help staff better understand what to consider or how to respond appropriately.

- Consider Seizure First Aid training for staff. Knowing how to respond, when to call or not to call EMS.

Emergency preparedness:

- Fire exits – need to be accessible for people in wheelchairs and walkers.
- Visual fire alarm for individuals with hearing impairment. However, this may also trigger a seizure.
- Ensure staff training around emergency preparedness. Should have a designated marshal on each floor.
- Important to have people who are calm to keep others calm.
- Staff also need to be trained to know how to lift someone without creating injury.

Increasing accessibility for individuals with hearing loss:

- Boardroom needs sound baffling to absorb sound.
- Sounds quality of the sound system (Wave Cast) didn't seem very good. Could have been the acoustics of the room.
- Assisted listening systems - need to make sure staff are aware of how this works and do regular checks to make sure it's working.
- Example of a good sound system is that in the lecture halls in the new science building at MUN.

Increasing accessibility for individuals with vision loss:

- Signage in the gallery uses different colours – some are easier to read than others (e.g., dark purple is easier to read than the light grey background).
- Low lighting in the gallery is challenging for individuals with vision loss (on the other hand, low lighting is better for individuals who are photo sensitive).

Other considerations:

- Washrooms seem small for someone in a power chair.
- What would happen if someone fell in the bathroom? They don't currently have emergency call buttons. Doors should open outward.
- In the gallery, there is limited space between benches for a power chair to pass through.
- The displays along the wall also would not allow someone in a wheelchair to get close enough to the display to read the information.



- Audio recordings are recommended for individuals who cannot read the information/signage in the gallery or who have intellectual disabilities. Information should be offered in English, French, and plain language.



Appendix 5 – Focus Group 3

Focus Groups 3 – Friday, March 1, 2024 1:00 PM

- Representative from Lifewise
- Representatives from Seniors NL
- Representative from the Autism Society of NL
- Representative from the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities NL
- Representatives from CNIB.
- A MUN Student
- Representative from History of Disability Rights NL

Access for persons with mobility impairments:

Emergency preparedness

- Have evacuation chairs – wheelchairs that can be used on the stairs in an emergency.

Restrooms

- All washroom stalls should have a grab bar (not just wheelchair stalls) so people who need to can help themselves up from the toilet (e.g., older persons) without taking up the wheelchair stall.
- Toilets are often too close to the grab bar on the wall and too low to the ground – makes transfers difficult.
- Disposal boxes in female washrooms are often put under the bar so my legs hit them when I'm doing a transfer.
- There are often pipes/boxes under the sink and if the sinks are too high, I can't wash my hands.
- In the accessible bathrooms a change table that can support the height and weight of an adult for changing should be installed.

Exhibit-specific

- There is a photo display of black/white photos along the stairwell but persons using a wheelchair are unable to see it. Ensure displays like this are accessible – have a screen that shows each photograph and gives a description/caption.
- Ensure people know about the stools that are available in the exhibits – have them inside the gallery with a sign that explains what they are for.
- Stools are not accommodating for a larger person.
- Some exhibits are higher up than my wheelchair, and the display is flat so I have to boost myself up to see them (not everyone can do that). Have exhibits angled.



- 'Eye level' is often from the perspective of standing height but a lot of people in wheelchairs can't boost themselves up and they shouldn't have to.

General

- Carpet/how carpet tiles are laid – they often force my wheelchair to go in a direction I don't want to go (pulls me to left/right when I want to go straight).
- Accessible parking space – three pillars blocking a person from exiting the car.
- Keep spaces clutter free as clutter can be a hazard.
- Coat check – I had to extend my body to reach the rail. A member of the public helped me hang up my coat but otherwise I wouldn't have been able to do it.
- Have canes available for use.
- Tiles have no grip, especially if freshly cleaned.
- Wheelchair lift – have an 'Opens Outward' sign in an easy to see spot.

Access for persons with hearing loss and/or deaf people:

- When people are presenting in the theatre, some opt out of using the microphone. There should be a policy that everyone has to use the mic.
- Meetings held in this room should be captioned. Acoustics aren't great.
- Ensure systems used for audio can be connected to hearing aids.
- Have closed captioning on the videos that play throughout exhibits.

Access for persons with vision loss:

Exhibit-specific

- Have someone who is able to describe an exhibit room when you first walk in – e.g., tables are set up in a round pattern in the centre.
- Have audio to describe the theme/context of graphics – e.g., what a wall represents, what the pictures show (concept/message).
- I use an app that reads text to me, but most plaques with text are behind glass and there is inconsistency in where they are. Should be a standard throughout the entire building – e.g., plaques are five feet up, two inches from the display to the right.
- Have QR codes in a consistent position as well.
- Ensure fonts used throughout exhibits/signage are accessible (style and size). Black on white is preferred and braille as well.
- Ensure lighting is appropriate and high contrast - e.g., black dress against a white/light backdrop. Having the floor mats, walls, and casing around the TV all



the same color is not accessible for people with low vision. Ensure pillars are higher contrast/more visible too and don't have patterns on walls or flooring.

- Have small piece of items that are behind the glass for persons who have low vision to touch (e.g., seal skin).
- Watch out for glare, especially from windows on dark, shiny flooring. Have blinds on windows.
- Offer individual tours for persons who need more explanation about the exhibits.

General

- For persons with low vision, have floor announcements in elevators and braille on the buttons.
- Wayfinding technologies available – GoodMaps – sister organization of CNIB could come in and map out every washroom, posts in the floor, the café... Provides step-by-step instruction of how to get through the whole property.

Mental Health/Neurodivergence:

- Offer a visual/digital tour and a description of what to expect when you come to The Rooms. Also, provide a description outside of each exhibit so people know what to expect before they enter a specific room (e.g., World War exhibits may be more emotionally charged and have loud sounds).
- Layers of sound can be overstimulating - have noise cancelling headphones available.
- Sensory times can sometimes be at inconvenient times – have it on a day where people can more likely access it.
- Instead of only having specific sensory times, promote the acceptance of sensory concerns through noise cancelling headphones, staff training/understanding, normalizing sounds and stimming, throughout the entire building and all opening hours.
- Provide warnings of changes in lighting/sounds – don't need to change things like this but you do need to prepare people.
- Have a designated 'safe space' where people can go to be quiet or loud and one that is accessible to both adults and children.

Staff training/awareness

- Provide staff with mental health training and ASIST training so they can assess when someone is in a crisis. Give the context and understanding needed to support people through those moments – e.g., panic attack.
- Ensure staff have training to support persons with low vision – clock method, provide specific directions (e.g., turn to the right), don't say 'over here', introduce yourself and inform me if you are leaving (don't just start talking and don't just walk away).



- Have staff wear simulation glasses and navigate exhibits/the building to identify areas that may need work (CNIB can provide these). Staff can also test out apps (GoodMaps, app that reads text).
- Evacuation chairs - Staff must be trained in how to use them and know how to safely transfer a person to the chair.
- 'Autism Acceptance and Understanding' presentation.

Overall:

- Hire persons with disabilities who have lived experience to work at The Rooms.
- Opportunity for buildings with a 200+ person plus capacity to have adult size change tables available. Should be on the radar.
- Include information on the website to inform teachers/student assistants on what is included in each program so they can make informed choices because they know their students best in terms of accessibility.
- There are five senses – e.g., smell. Be cautious of scents.
- Be mindful of invisible disabilities.
- Bins in exhibit – I would be afraid to move them. Have a sign that says it's okay to move them/mess them up.



Appendix 6 – Staff Feedback

Staff were asked for feedback, the following was sent to all Rooms Staff:

“The Rooms is in the process of developing an accessibility plan – with a focus on our public spaces and offerings. This plan will identify services and areas of improvement with the goal of expanding inclusion specifically for people with disabilities.

The first phase of the plan will focus on The Rooms front of house: (1) the built environment and (2) customer service.

We are looking for feedback related to the accessibility of our built environment and customer service. As a staff member working with the public, your feedback about our public spaces and offerings will help inform our accessibility plan.”

Email Feedback received from Rooms Staff

- Bathrooms have many problems. If bathrooms are not accessible to a person, they cannot really visit the building without feeling really worried, so it is a major barrier to visiting The Rooms.
- Some children with sound sensitivities, and coming from trauma (like students who are refugees) are afraid of the automatic toilets, and how sudden and loud they are. Same with the taps- fear of not knowing how to use them, unexpectedly off and on.
- Some people are deeply embarrassed from the lack of sound privacy in bathroom stalls, with IBS symptoms for example
- Bathrooms stalls can be very small and uncomfortable, for people with spatial problems, or bringing in their children with them, or fear of small spaces
- Some people are still reporting being able to see under the women’s stalls in the reflection of the floor tiles
- Lack of change rooms for parents except one- Men may need some as well. Adult change room might be needed
- Lack of gender inclusive washrooms – one is not enough. One year, I had a transgendered student who worked with us for a summer and I had no guidance on that. We can’t expect people to put up with things, because it’s just the way it is- that’s systemic oppression
- No place to breastfeed. Breastfeeding in public is welcome, but some people require privacy and we only have one bathroom, all the way down at the first floor, for every type of accessible need
- Some should check to see how well wheelchairs can move around all bathrooms- some spaces that look accessible may still have problems for turning around.
- Do all the bathroom stalls have a good spot for disposal of a variety of bathroom products? There might be more need for that than we realize – in all stalls (thinking of gender diversity and there might be disabilities that require some disposal of products



we don't know about. People might be too embarrassed to give feedback on this. Also, disposal of dirty diapers for parents can be a problem).

- Bathroom lights can be uncomfortable for people with light sensitivity.
- Air dryers are loud, can everyone reach paper towels, soap and water easily
- Signage for bathrooms – some bathrooms are well hidden, and while the signage may seem obvious to us who have been there a long time, for others it can be stressful if their kids need to go pee and they can't find a bathroom fast 😊
- Front desk may be a difficult area for people with sound sensitives, hearing loss, or using a wheelchair
- Stairs on the chairs in the theatre are very difficult and trippy, hard to see, stumbling hazard, very loud and feels disruptive. If you need to leave during a talk or show, it can feel like you are being a nuisance just by squeezing out and going down the stairs and making a racket, opening the door.
- Many doors in the building can be very heavy and intimidating. Signage is unclear – It can feel like – can I go in here? Am I where I am supposed to be? For some it's fun to explore but for others the building can feel overwhelming and intimidating, where am I? Where should I be? Where can I go? We don't want our visitors to feel disoriented. The paper map is confusing and too small to read
- Emotionally, some of our exhibitions, like FWW, can be very emotionally challenging. People might need a trigger warning before entering a space. People might need a space, or someone to talk to, if they are feeling triggered by content. Especially with all the wars going on in the world right now. There is a lot of difficult content we have, which is great. We need to be bringing up these deep issues, but also, how do we provide a safe space for that? Where can people go with their thoughts and feelings? Who can they talk to? Are staffed trained on providing support or even a pamphlet? Even simple things, like the wall of forget me not notes, can help people process this. This could use some research and thoughtfulness, so perhaps part of the accessibility plan could outline what research you plan to do in this area. Trauma is an accessibility issue.
- Café – the squeaky tables and chairs can be very painful for some. It can be hard to hear when busy. Not enough space between tables for wheelchair users and strollers. One woman was given a very hard time by café staff for baby seat/carrier and was lectured about it, and she said she felt really awful, and was already so tired and told me she considered not ever coming back, at least not to the cafe.
- Having great spaces where kids can touch things (like Level 3 Museum) and not break anything is really helpful for parents
- Coat check area might not be accessible for wheelchair users and strollers
- I would love to know if we could have sensory kits available at the front desk for neurodivergent guests/training for front house staff related to autism and different sensory processing needs. Perhaps the education department already has such kits for visiting school groups (if they do I would love to know!).



- Also, having designated staff members who can help if any visitor is having sensory-related meltdowns or needs a quiet environment- also having designated spaces when not in use like the elbow residency room or a classroom to allow the visitor/student time to calm down.
- Making all bathrooms gender neutral by using signs that simply denote what is in each bathroom (number of urinals, number of toilets, and changing tables). I know this would be a long process as it is a building/BGIS matter, but I have heard several comments from visitors and community members regarding the issue of having one gender neutral washroom in the entire building. A good place to start would be a public survey and research other institutions who have implemented similar changes. For safety concerns of trans visitors, however, single stall washrooms would be a better idea, but I am not sure how feasible this is.
- I don't know if this setup exists already (probably does), but I'm sure there are folks with disabilities that have no friends or family to show them around The Rooms. Perhaps a program could be launched to pair a visitor services employee with a special needs visitor (wheelchair, poor eyesight, etc.) for a personal hour long tour or something to talk and explore our various collections. They would sign up say with a weeks advance notice. They would just have to show up at The Rooms at a given time and date.
- A sign that reads: Welcome, translated into many languages – or at the very least: Inuktitut, Innu-aimun, Mi'kmaq, and French
- Calmer, more welcoming lighting – the fluorescents are harsh and make a loud buzzing noise
- A video on the website that shows what to expect as you walk into the building, for those who are neurodivergent or have anxiety issues
- It's a good time to consider the archives reference room in terms of servicing the visually impaired and the hearing impaired, and what might be available to assist people with these disabilities who want to be able to research in the archives. We might need to also take a new look at physical accessibility, although I think we are good in that regard. We have wheelchair accessible tables and doors, and I think good space for movement, but perhaps a proper assessment is due.



Appendix 5 – Effective Practices – Accessibility and Inclusion

Overall	
Source	Considerations
<p>Ten ways to achieve cultural access - Article by Delaware Government</p> <p>https://artsfiles.delaware.gov/accessibility-disability-cultural-access.pdf</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Approach access as a process.</i> • <i>Make access part of the fabric of your organization.</i> • <i>Make access somebody’s job.</i> At every cultural institution, there should be a person who has the specific responsibility of access. • <i>Make goals you can achieve.</i> Start with what’s doable. • <i>Market to community.</i> Access is useless if the people who can use it don’t know about it. • <i>Build Relationships.</i> Create an accessibility committee made up of the representatives in the disability community and key staff at your organization. When you receive feedback from people with disabilities, put it to use. Establish a grievance process where people can lodge complaints.
<p>Welcoming All Visitors: Museums, Accessibility, and Visitors with Disabilities - University of Michigan</p> <p>https://ummsp.rackham.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Braden-working-paper-FINAL-pdf.pdf</p>	<p>To ensure that offerings for different kinds of audiences are meeting audiences’ needs, museums should work with, listen to, and incorporate the desires and needs of people with disabilities into their planning and work. This can mean reaching out to organizations within the community surrounding a museum that serve people with different kinds of disabilities and attending group meetings to ask members how the museum can benefit them.</p> <p>At the very least, staff members should be trained on applicable and relevant laws, while also being made aware of disability etiquette (such as using people-first language – that is, “people with disabilities,” rather than “handicapped people”).</p>
<p>Accessibility Plan (2023-2025) - Canadian Museum of History</p>	<p>Canadian Museum of History Accessibility Plan</p>



Overall	
Source	Considerations
<p>https://www.historymuseum.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Accessibility-Plan_Accessible-PDF_EN_FINAL.pdf</p>	
<p>Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design</p> <p>- Access Smithsonian</p> <p>https://www.sifacilities.si.edu/sites/default/files/Files/Accessibility/accessible-exhibition-design1.pdf</p>	<p>Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design</p>

Designing an accessible website	
Source	Considerations
<p>10 Best Practices of Accessible Museum Websites</p> <p>- Article by American Alliance of Museums</p> <p>https://www.aamus.org/2021/01/07/10-best-practices-of-accessible-museum-websites/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write alt text for images • Use heading levels on text • Caption, transcribe, and describe videos (sign language, subtitles, closed captions, open captions, transcripts, audio description) • Watch for color and contrast • Because not everybody can perceive color, information must never be conveyed through color alone • The contrast between colors is also a critical aspect of facilitating an accessible experience • Label controls well <p>Imagine a button on your page with a rightward-facing arrow. For a sighted audience, it might be clear what the button does, but screen reader users, as well as many others, need an explicit label in the code to understand what it means, such as “Next.” This labeling, called “programmatic labeling,” is incredibly important, because without it assistive technology users may have no idea what various controls on the website do</p> • Make your site zoom friendly



Designing an accessible website	
Source	Considerations
	<p>To be accessible, your site should behave well when zoomed in to at least 200 percent. Responsive design, where page elements shift to accommodate the size and shape of the browser window, goes a long way towards addressing this concern.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make controls accessible without a mouse • Label and style links clearly • Specify the page language in the code

Navigating in and around the building	
Source	Considerations
<p>How to make your Museum more Inclusive and Accessible - Article from SoftPlay</p> <p>https://www.softplay.com/blog/how-to-make-your-museum-more-inclusive-and-accessible/</p>	<p>Helpful, easy-to-understand signage is one of the best ways to help all your visitors navigate around the parking lot and entrance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use high-contrast colors • Utilize easy-to-read fonts • Provide clear audio • Add braille to signage • Use simple, straightforward pictograms <p>Be sure to include dedicated accessible parking spaces for your visitors with reduced mobility. These spaces should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be close to any ramps or curb cuts • Offer a comfortable amount of space for getting in and out of the vehicle • Support easy access to the entrance of your museum <p>Directives to accessible parking spaces should be clear and visible to visitors upon arrival.</p> <p><u>Walkways</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate features like sloped curbs that allow visitors to easily get on and off the sidewalk, helping people navigate your facility more comfortably and conveniently • Sidewalk braille can help individuals detect the boundary between the walkway and the parking lot. Walkways



Navigating in and around the building	
Source	Considerations
	<p>should also include clear, directive signage</p> <p>You can support those with limited sight by incorporating specialized paving that provides physical indications and warnings. Your museum can use various tactile paving patterns to communicate with individuals with limited vision.</p> <p>Consider some of the following guiding and attention-grabbing designs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blisters: These round, tightly spaced bumps indicate pedestrian crossings • Offset blisters: Paving with slightly more spread-out bumps indicates the edge of a platform surface • Hazard: This pattern features closely spaced lines that communicate danger nearby • Directional: Directional paving uses raised lines or other textures to help guide those with limited vision <p>Along with easy-to-read descriptions, your museum can also utilize simple pictograms to communicate with your visitors. Working with an app is a great way to serve more individuals and improve your museum's accessibility. You can include an interactive map to help visitors navigate your building easily. By uploading audio and video about your exhibits onto the app, your guests can decide how they want to learn about the information.</p>
<p>How to Make Museums More Accessible for People with Disabilities - Article by Inclusive City Maker</p> <p>https://www.inclusivecitymaker.com/how-to-make-museums-more-accessible-for-people-with-disabilities/</p>	<p><u>Luma Foundation</u> in Arles, France chose a wayfinding app for its visitors. The museum chose to provide its visitors with disabilities with the best experience possible by implementing <u>Evelity: an indoor navigation app</u> specifically conceived to suit any user profile.</p>



Neurodivergence	
Source	Customer Service
<p>Welcoming All Visitors: Museums, Accessibility, and Visitors with Disabilities - University of Michigan</p> <p>https://ummsp.rackham.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Braden-working-paper-FINAL-pdf.pdf</p>	<p>Offerings for individuals with developmental and/or learning disabilities can include specialized multisensory programs, hands-on explorations, and art-making classes.</p> <p>The Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum offers a family program for children with developmental and learning disabilities, which includes a tour of the museum and art-making activities designed to offer a fun, educational, and structured social experience for families. For children with autism and their families, museums are increasingly developing and providing various types of supports. To assist with pre-visit planning, for example, many museums have created social stories and other visual guides or schedules that use pictures and text to prepare children for the sights, sounds, smells, and possible tastes and things to touch that they will encounter.</p> <p>Also, for visitors with autism and their families, museums are offering “sensory-friendly” days, during which the museums may open early for these families (so spaces are less crowded and quieter) and have other supports in place. Such supports can include reductions in loud sounds and lights; noise-cancelling headphones and earplugs; sensory friendly maps, which show areas of a museum that are quiet</p>
<p>Museums On Call: How museums are addressing health issues - Report by American Alliance of Museums https://www.aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/museums-on-call.pdf</p>	<p>Many museums also utilize multiple learning styles, creating visual representations of what visitors can expect to see and do, in order to help parents prepare their child and minimize unfamiliar and unexpected experiences. These museums also train their staff to understand what to expect, how to react and what community resources are available to help these visitors. One of the most significant elements of these programs is a parent’s confidence about not being judged or ridiculed by others.</p>
<p>Guide for Welcoming Museum Visitors with Autism Spectrum Disorder - French American Museum Exchange https://www.mbam.qc.ca/workspace/uploads/files/framework-eng.pdf</p>	<p>The Dallas Museum of Art’s Sensory Days program is a collaboration between local arts and culture organizations to provide sensory-friendly programming. For each event, the host institution opens two hours early with free admission for children with ASD and their family members.</p>



Neurodivergence	
Source	Customer Service
	<p>Welcoming these children and their families to a museum during private hours is not an attempt to separate the population from the rest of the community but rather an opportunity to provide individualized support by adapting or removing barriers that would otherwise hinder the museum experience. This private time enables children with ASD and their families to socialize and explore the museum in an understanding and supportive environment. An early-open gallery time may help people with autism become more familiar and comfortable in the museum and even encourage integration into daily museum programming. In an effort to reduce sensory overload, attendance is limited to the first 500 registrants. Knowing that participants with ASD can be sensitive to various stimuli, the DMA offers an immersive, autism-friendly, low-sensory space staffed by occupational therapy students from Texas Woman's University. The area has low lighting, comfortable seating and therapy tools such as weighted blankets. Before each event, participants receive event-specific narratives and images on visiting the DMA to help them become acquainted with the museum and its scheduled activities prior to their visit. They can explore at their own pace, taking part in sensory experiments and art-making activities in the studio, playing games in the sculpture garden and enjoying an interactive musical performance led by a music therapist. Families can also explore the museum's galleries through staff-led experiences, such as Story Time or Teen Tours.</p>



Mental Health	
Source	Customer Service
<p>Mental Health considerations for Museums: An emerging Field of Practice and Discovery - Article by Ross Laird</p> <p>https://www.rosslaird.com/articles/mental-health/mental-health-considerations-for-museums/#:~:text=An%20entire%20field%20of%20mental,of%20what%20they%20are%20feeling.</p>	<p>Understanding the psychological and psychotherapeutic dimensions of donors, visitors, staff, and participants is vital. Too often these areas are addressed only after a critical incident. Museum staff and volunteers need specific training and support in navigating these complexities.</p> <p>Train staff and volunteers in empathy <i>and</i> compassion fatigue.</p> <p>Inform visitor of potential emotional activation - Preparedness for the possibility of strong emotion is crucial whenever visitors are welcomed into a museum environment that contains provocative material.</p> <p>Activity spaces that encourage the creation of objects with deep personal connections between exhibition content and visitor participation.</p> <p>Provide space and tools for reflection.</p> <p>Museums can use simple tools — paper cards, sticky notes, magnetic feeling words — to encourage visitors to share their emotions in public and private ways.</p>
<p>It's time for museums to address mental health - Article from UK Museums Association</p> <p>https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/analysis/2022/11/its-time-for-museums-to-address-mental-health/</p>	<p>Since 2013, the National Galleries of Scotland (NGS) has worked with homelessness charity Rowan Alba – currently through monthly artist-led sessions with people who have lived experience of alcohol-related harm. Rowan Alba clients and volunteers visit an NGS exhibition and then take part in a practical art session, with lunch provided. The gallery environment is an uplifting place to meet, is free and easily accessible. The chance for visitors to move about as they wish also makes it the opposite of negative, intense clinical settings. The Lightbox gallery in Woking has worked with Woking Mind to provide relaxed tours for people with a range of mental health issue.</p>



General Information		
Source	Built Environment	Customer Service
<p>Accessible & Inclusive Museums—How Small Measures Add Up - Article by Erikson Translations (Translation company)</p> <p>https://eriksen.com/arts-culture/promoting-accessibility-diversity-inclusion-in-museums/</p>	<p>Tactile exhibits and multisensory tours for the blind and visually impaired. 3D printing to make touchable replicas of paintings. Braille, large print, and tactile versions of museum floorplans and exhibition text.</p>	<p>Wheelchairs and canes available for visitor use. Assistive listening devices.</p>
<p>How to Make Museums More Accessible for People with Disabilities - Article by Inclusive City Maker</p> <p>https://www.inclusivecitymaker.com/how-to-make-museums-more-accessible-for-people-with-disabilities/</p>	<p>Easy to read descriptions. Secured stairs with handrails, contrasting non-slip stair markers. Lowered counters. Ramps, elevators, wheelchair seating, and large spaces for wheelchair users. Lowered works of art. Seating in artwork rooms.</p>	<p>The Guggenheim in New York City established Mind’s Eye programs to provide sensory experiences to visitors with a visual impairment. They’ve also created a social narrative guide explaining to people with sensory processing disorders what to expect during their visit. Some museums use virtual reality (VR) to show their exhibits. Visitors just have to wear a helmet to explore an exhibit. This can be very useful for visitors with reduced mobility: they can enjoy an exhibit at their own pace. The Mary Rose museum in Portsmouth England opted for “relaxed opening mornings” once a month when light levels are higher than usual for visually impaired visitors to properly enjoy the warship.</p>
<p>Top Tips for Making your Museum or Gallery Accessible - From Euan’s guide online</p>	<p>Keeping exhibitions spacious and clear of trip hazards is important. It is also great to have a space beneath the tables on which objects sit making it easier for wheelchair</p>	<p>Touch tours where staff are available to describe the objects and place them in context. A popular approach is to build a 3D model of the objects for visitors to feel and explore.</p>



General Information		
Source	Built Environment	Customer Service
https://www.euansguide.com/campaigns/top-tips-for-museums-and-galleries/	<p>users to get close to the display.</p> <p>In the London Canal Museum, next to exhibits with low level lighting, there is a button which increases the lighting level for 30 seconds, perfectly balancing conservation with accessibility.</p> <p>Induction loops (must be well maintained and checked frequently).</p> <p>Simple adjustments to your accessible toilet can make a huge difference too. For example, removing surplus or oversized bins and other non-essentials will increase the amount of space wheelchair users have to move.</p>	<p>Water bowls for service dogs and information on the nearest greenspace for doggy bathroom concerns.</p> <p>Large print menus in café.</p> <p>Audio versions of leaflets.</p> <p>Self-guided tours are common in many tourist attractions and allow visitors to explore at their own pace.</p>
<p>Welcoming All Visitors: Museums, Accessibility, and Visitors with Disabilities - University of Michigan</p> <p>https://ummsp.rackham.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Braden-working-paper-FINAL-pdf.pdf</p>		<p>Some museums created ways to help people view exhibit areas or buildings that are not accessible. For example, a virtual tour created by the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum in New York City that is available on its website shows photographs and 360-degree panoramic views of inaccessible areas of its ship.</p> <p>The Whitney Museum of American Art has also developed video blogs, or vlogs, with short videos featuring deaf museum educators communicating about artworks in American Sign Language.</p>
<p>Easy Access to Historic Buildings - English Heritage</p> <p>https://www.accessibletourism.org/resources/14_easy</p>	<p>Consider electromagnetic hold-open doors.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to the height, ease of use and contrast between the handle and door colour.</p>	



General Information		
Source	Built Environment	Customer Service
_aces_historic_buildings_en.pdf	<p>Automatic door-closing mechanisms with an abrupt or heavy action must be adjusted to accommodate wheelchair users, people with pushchairs, children and seniors.</p> <p>Elevator controls should be designed for us by all including braille, large print, voice information, and illuminated buttons.</p> <p>Lighting should avoid glare, pools of bright light and areas of deep shadows. The introduction of window blinds can be a useful method of eliminating glare or confusing shadows at certain times of day. Sudden changes in light levels should be avoided.</p> <p>Where necessary, signs should also indicate distances to key features or areas, the presence and grade of inclines, and how assistance may be obtained.</p>	



