



Accessibility Assessment Framework for Library Spaces

Activity Book



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Activity 1: Accessibility audit of your library

Purpose

Use the Library Accessibility Assessment Tool in a group-based audit activity.

Description

In this activity, you will lead a small team through an accessibility audit of your physical library spaces.

Run time: Approximately 60-90 minutes

Participants: 5-10

Audience: Library staff, volunteers, accessibility committee members, and community partners – especially suitable for anyone involved in accessibility planning or facility management

Learning objectives

Participants will learn how to:

- Apply the audit tool to evaluate different aspects of the library's accessibility
- Identify and record areas for improvement
- Build understanding of the user experience from diverse disability perspectives

Resources/materials needed

- Accessibility Assessment Framework for Library Spaces
- Library Accessibility Assessment Tool
- Pens or other note-taking tools and a clipboard
- Camera or smartphone (helpful for documenting barriers)

Instructions for activity leader

1. Preparation

1.a. Reflect on the context you're working in

Before initiating this process, it's helpful to take some time to acknowledge the broader context in which you're undertaking this work. Whether your library is housed in a historic building or a modern facility, you will encounter many accessibility barriers. This is because spaces, policies, and standards have been designed with a "typical" (non-disabled) user in mind. It's taken generations to create the deeply inaccessible world we live in – so it will take time to re-shape our spaces for inclusion and accessibility. It's helpful to keep this in mind as your work through the assessment process.

This work can feel overwhelming, but using the assessment framework and audit tool is a powerful and necessary first step towards lasting improvements. Each insight you gain helps build a more welcoming and accessible library for all.

1.b. Consider your audience

When we think about accessibility in libraries, we often focus solely on patrons. While it's essential that library spaces meet the needs of all visitors, accessibility must also extend to the staff who work there.

Creating accessible environments for both patrons and staff is vital – not only from an access and equity standpoint, but also for fostering a workplace and community where everyone feels they belong. Library staff with disabilities should be able to contribute fully without facing barriers, just as disabled patrons should be able to access programs, services, and spaces with ease.

A truly inclusive library reflects the diversity of its community. Not just in who walks through the doors, but in who designs, runs, and shapes the space. This level of representation and inclusion is only possible when accessibility is prioritized for everyone who uses and works within the library.

1.c. Consider your assessment team

The Library Accessibility Assessment Tool is designed to help evaluate how people experience and interact with the different areas of your library. To conduct a meaningful and genuine assessment, it's important to involve people who

While libraries vary in size, an ideal assessment team would include 4-8 members who bring diverse perspectives and lived experience with:

- Physical accessibility barriers
- Sensory accessibility barriers
- Social-emotional accessibility barriers

It's also valuable to reflect diversity in age, race, gender identity, language, and cultural background. When possible, try to include a mix of library staff, patrons, community members, and accessibility advocates. Including someone who uses a support person, mobility device, or service animal can offer important insight, particularly when assessing space and navigation.

1.d. Invite your team members and share needed information

Once you've identified who you'd like to be on your assessment team, send out personalized invitations to each participant. Briefly explain:

- The purpose of the assessment
- Why their perspective is valuable
- What their involvement will look like

Include details about time commitments, assessment dates (if known), and any support or accommodations available. Be sure to give them time to consider and ask questions before confirming their participation. They should also have clear instructions for requesting additional accommodations if needed.

1.e. Share assessment framework and tool with all confirmed participants at least one week before the assessment day

Once participants have confirmed their interest and availability, share the assessment framework and tool with them at least one week before the scheduled assessment. This gives everyone time to review the materials.

Encourage participants to familiarize themselves with the framework and tool, including the different types of accessibility. Also suggest that they reflect on the spaces they'll be assessing and ask any questions they may have.

Make sure you're prepared to offer the materials in multiple formats so everyone can engage fully. For example, accessible PDF, large print, etc.

2. Assessment session introduction and prep

2.a. Introduce the audit tool and explain its purpose

Time: 5-10 minutes

Begin the assessment session by introducing the audit tool and clearly explaining its purpose – to help identify and record physical, sensory, and social-emotional barriers within the library space. Emphasize that the goal is to better understand how the environment supports or limits access and inclusion. Ultimately, the audit results will support action plans for barrier removal.

Allow time for questions.

2.b. Assign teams and starting sections

Time: 5 minutes

Identify the library spaces that you'll include in your audit. For example:

- Entrance
- Front desk/service counter
- All seating areas
- All washrooms
- All meeting rooms, etc.

Separate your assessment team into small groups of 2-3. Assign each group to start in a different library section and work their way through all spaces. Try to have teams focus on different areas at a time. This helps them provide an objective view on the accessibility of the space, without being influenced by what other groups say.

Ensure everyone in each group has a printed copy of the relevant sections of the audit tool. For example, for the **general space considerations section**, each team

will need a separate copy for each area/room they are auditing. For the **space-specific considerations**, each team will need one copy of the specific section for each area/room they are auditing.

Be mindful of accessibility needs at this stage. For example, if an assessment team member has limited mobility and there are known physical barriers in your space, make sure they know what to expect when they move through the space.

2.c. Clarify roles

Time: 5 minutes

You can also consider clarifying roles for each participant to take on during the assessment to ensure a smooth and organized process. Roles might include:

- **Note taker** to document observations using the audit tool
- **Photographer** to capture images of barriers or features
- **Observer** to focus on the overall user experience

Some teams may also benefit from a **timekeeper** or **accessibility guide** to answer tool-related questions.

Encourage participants to choose roles that align with their strengths and comfort levels. Also remind them that collaboration is strongly encouraged. The team can support each other and switch roles if needed.

3. Audit

3.a. Move through library using the audit tool to assess each area

Time: 30-40 minutes

Instruct teams to begin their assessment by moving through their assigned areas with the audit tool in hand. They should consider each audit item carefully, ensuring all members in each group share their perspective.

If all group members agree that an item is true, that item can be checked. If there is disagreement, the group will discuss and then decide if the item can be checked. If the group cannot come to an agreement, they will highlight the point and bring it to the larger assessment team debrief in step 4.c.

3.b. Take photos to document specific concerns for later review

As groups move through the library, they may want to take clear photos of any barriers, concerns, or noteworthy features that need documentation or further review. Photos can help capture details that may be missed in written notes, such as narrow pathways, hard-to-read signage, or obstructed entrances.

Instruct group members to photograph from multiple angles if needed to show the full context of the barrier. Avoid including people in the photos unless they have given explicit permission. Label each photo with a brief description and location to make it easier to reference during the follow-up discussion and when compiling a final report.

3.c. Regroup to compare and discuss findings

Time: 15-20 minutes

Once all groups have completed their walk-throughs, they will come back together as an assessment team to share observations and compare findings. Each group should briefly summarize what they assessed, key barriers identified, and any areas where accessibility features were working well.

If any checklist items were flagged for further discussion within a group (due to disagreement or uncertainty), the assessment team should review and come to a decision. If there's no consensus, the audit item will be left unchecked, indicating a barrier.

3.d. Reflection

Time: 10-15 minutes

After the discussion, encourage your assessment team to reflect on the process and what was learned. Reflection helps solidify insights, broaden perspectives, and identify opportunities for deeper change.

Pose the following questions:

- What surprised you during this audit? Were there barriers or strengths you hadn't anticipated? Did anything challenge your assumptions?
- How might someone with another type of disability (not reflected on the assessment team) experience this space differently? Think beyond your

own perspective. What might be overlooked without a diverse range of lived experiences?

- Were there any areas where accessibility exceeded expectations? What features stood out as thoughtful, inclusive, or particularly well-implemented?
- What small changes can be made immediately? Identify low-cost or quick fixes that could remove barriers or improve experiences right away.
- What systemic or long-term changes might require further planning or advocacy? Consider changes to policies, physical infrastructure, staff training, or procedures that may take more time or resources to address.

This reflection can be done through group discussion, journaling, or submitting written responses. The insights gathered here will support ongoing learning and help shape more inclusive decision-making moving forward.

4. Follow-up

4.a. Compile notes into a shared summary document or spreadsheet

As the activity leader, you will gather all materials and begin compiling the information into a centralized summary document or report.

This summary should:

- Clearly list each area assessed and by which group
- Include all unchecked audit items (barriers), with notes explaining the concern
- Record features that are functioning well and can serve as examples of good practice
- Note any suggestions or ideas raised during the regrouping discussion

Where possible, you should consolidate duplicate observations, flag high-priority issues, and add hyperlinks or embed photos for visual reference. The completed summary will form the basis for any recommendations, reports, or presentations that follow the audit and help ensure that feedback from all participants is reflected in next steps.

4.b. Identify next steps

Once the summary document is complete, the assessment team should review the findings and collaborate on identifying next steps. This may include:

- Prioritizing high-impact or urgent fixes
- Consulting with disabled library users for additional input
- Sharing the results with decision-makers

Where appropriate, the findings should inform updates to the library's accessibility plan. Clear timelines and responsibilities should be established to ensure follow-through and transparency.

Activity 2: Workshop on the three types of accessibility

Purpose

Many people equate accessibility with physical features like wheelchair ramps or elevators. While these things are a crucial part of accessibility, they are not the full picture. Physical access goes beyond ramps and elevators, and sensory and social-emotional access considers things like the sensory experience and a sense of belonging.

In this activity, participants will learn about three different types of accessibility and explore how to apply them in a library context.

Description

In this activity, you will facilitate a group workshop around the three types of accessibility. The workshop can be virtual or on-site.

Run time: Approximately 60-90 minutes

Participants: 5+

Audience: Library staff, administrators, volunteers.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Define key concepts, such as accessibility and barriers
- Explain the three types of accessibility
- Describe how these three types of accessibility work together to create a truly accessible environment
- Understand how intersectionality impacts accessibility
- Take immediate actions to address each of the three types of accessibility

Resources/materials needed

- Accessibility Assessment Framework for Library Spaces

- Library Accessibility Assessment Tool
- Whiteboard or virtual whiteboard with three columns:
 1. Physical
 2. Sensory
 3. Socio-emotional
- Paper or virtual stick notes and pens

Instructions for activity leader

1. Preparation

1.a. Get acquainted with the framework and assessment tool

Read through the Accessibility Assessment Framework for Library Spaces. Pay special attention to the following sections in the framework:

- Key terms and concepts
- Part 1: Guiding principles
- Part 2: The three types of accessibility

You can also read through the Library Accessibility Assessment Tool to get a better sense of what the three types of accessibility look like in a library setting.

The goal of this preparation is to build some foundational understanding of the types of accessibility that will be explored in this activity. This background knowledge will help you frame questions, provide examples, and clarify terms in a way that supports meaningful discussion with your workshop participants.

Being familiar with the guiding principles, key terms, and the distinctions between the three types of accessibility will enable you to recognize barriers described by participants, connect feedback to broader accessibility goals, and ensure the conversation stays focused, inclusive, and productive.

1.b. Reflect on your own experience

Next, take some time to think about your own experiences with each of the three types of accessibility – physical, sensory, and social-emotional. Consider experiences you've had where these types of accessibility were well-supported and when barriers made participation more difficult. Reflecting on your personal perspective will help you:

- Bring real-life examples into the discussion
- Connect more authentically with participants
- Better understand the variety of experiences they may share

Here are some more specific reflection questions you may want to use:

1. Have you been in a situation where all three types of accessibility have been noticeably present and improved your experience?
2. Have you ever had to leave or been unable to participate fully in an event or space because one type of accessibility was missing?
3. If you do not have specific accessibility needs, how could you still see these different types of accessibility improving your experience?

1.c. Identify an area of focus for your workshop

It's helpful if the workshop is centered around one specific area of your library. For example, you may want to focus on the library entrance, the children's section, or the public computer area. Narrowing the focus allows participants to think more deeply about the accessibility of that area and how the three types of accessibility apply in practice.

When selecting the focus area:

- **Consider recent feedback** or known accessibility-related concerns from patrons or staff.
- **Look for high-impact areas** where accessibility improvements could benefit many people.
- **Think about visibility** – choose an area where changes will be noticeable and encourage continued discussion.

A focus area will give participants a shared reference point, help them make concrete connections to the library context, and lead to more actionable ideas by the end of the activity.

1.d. Share workshop materials

Create a workshop agenda and share it with your participants at least one week ahead of time. This gives people a chance to prepare for the session and anticipate what to expect.

The agenda can include these topic headers:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Core concept review

3. Applying the three types of accessibility
4. Translating your learning into action
5. Reflection and closing

2. Workshop

2.a. Welcome participants and facilitate an introduction round

Time: 10 minutes

Welcome participants and review the agenda. Then facilitate a round of introductions. You can use these prompts:

- Name and pronouns
- Your role at the library
- 1-2 sentences about who you are/where you come from
- What does accessibility mean to you?

This type of introduction can help create a welcoming atmosphere and set the tone for an open, respectful discussion. Asking participants what accessibility means to them encourages personal reflection, highlights the diversity of perspectives in the room, and reminds everyone that accessibility is experienced in many ways. This shared starting point helps ground the workshop in lived experience and fosters empathy and understanding from the outset.

2.b. Core concepts

Time: 20-30 minutes

With the group, review the definitions of **disability**, **accessibility**, and **barrier**. These definitions are in the key terms and concepts section of the Accessibility Assessment Framework for Library Spaces.

Give participants 5 minutes to write down examples of barriers that they face in their own day-to-day work at the library. If the workshop is in person, they can record their ideas on sticky notes and put them up on the wall. If virtual, they can record them using a virtual presentation tool, like [Miro board](#). Make sure they use one sticky note per barrier.

If the group is struggling to come up with barriers, you can prompt them with examples, like:

- Office space being too noisy
- Lighting in the library causing eye strain
- Not having space to sit while waiting

When there are examples of barriers up on the wall/Miro board, you can explain the **three types of accessibility** from the framework document. After your explanation, create three columns on your wall/Miro board, one for each type of accessibility. Give participants 5-10 minutes to organize the barriers into the appropriate columns. Encourage questions and discussion if it's not clear which area a barrier belongs. Many barriers can fit into more than one category.

If there's a lot of cross over and confusion around categorizing barriers, explain that the purpose of these categories is not to perfectly sort each barrier into a single, "correct" column. Instead, the goal is to expand participants' awareness of the wide range of barriers that can exist and to see how different types of accessibility interconnect. By discussing where a barrier might belong, participants deepen their understanding of how barriers can affect people in multiple ways and recognize that improving accessibility often involves addressing more than one type at a time.

2.c. Applying the types of accessibility

Time: 20-30 minutes

Ask participants to spend a few minutes looking at the barriers on the wall/Miro board. Invite examples of solutions that might be applied to address the barriers. For example, noise-cancelling headphones or moving to a quiet room to do focused work. Take about 5 minutes total for this.

Next, introduce the area of focus for the workshop. Let participants know that the goal is to explore how physical, sensory, and social-emotional accessibility can be improved here.

Split participants into small groups of 2 or 3. Ask each group to take 5-10 minutes to identify barriers that impact the physical, sensory, and social-emotional accessibility of the focus area. As before, prompt them to record

barriers on sticky notes for the wall/Miro board. Make sure each group uses different coloured sticky notes.

After the groups have had time to brainstorm, ask a volunteer from each group to place their group's sticky notes under the appropriate accessibility category on the wall/Miro board.

Next, assign each group a colour of sticky note that is different from the colour they used for barrier identification. Instruct each group to review the barriers from the other group and brainstorm actions that can be taken to improve the physical, sensory, or social-emotional accessibility:

- In the next few weeks, with little to no additional funding or resources (these are our "quick wins")
- In the next few months, with some additional time and resource investment if needed
- In the next few years, with larger time and resource investment if needed

Note: The Library Accessibility Assessment Tool may be helpful in sparking ideas. Be sure to have a copy printed/available for every group.

This step can take between 10-15 minutes.

At the end, invite each group to share some of their short, medium, and long-term solutions.

3.d. Learning into action

Time: 5-10 minutes

Instruct the small groups to discuss opportunities for personal actions they can take to improve physical, sensory, and social-emotional accessibility within their role. These actions can be related to the barriers and solutions discussion from before. Or they can be more general, based on new learning about the types of accessibility. The goal is to identify practical actions that each person can do after the workshop to improve accessibility.

3.e. Reflection and closing

Time: 5 minutes

Pose some reflection questions to the group and invite discussion. Here are some examples of questions:

1. Think about your work at the library. How are you supported by the three types of accessibility, whether you have a disability or not?
2. Do you find that one or two of the three types of accessibility is more overlooked than the others? If so, what ideas do you have for bringing more awareness to it within your team?
3. Are there instances in your library where you can see one type of accessibility is lacking, but immediate and low-cost investments in the other types could help to fill the gap?
4. What do you plan to do in to deepen your learning about the three types of accessibility?

3. Follow-up

After a week or two has passed, reach out to participants to ask how they're doing with their commitments from 3.d. Frame this follow-up as an opportunity for encouragement and support rather than a check-up to see if they've "kept their word." The goal is to remind participants of the ideas they were excited about, celebrate any progress made, and offer help if they've encountered challenges.

This gentle, positive approach keeps the momentum going, reinforces that accessibility is an ongoing practice, and encourages participants to share their successes and lessons learned more broadly with their teams.

Activity 3: Barrier identification following the three types of accessibility

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to engage accessibility committee members in a structured, collaborative process to identify barriers in the library and generate practical ideas for improvement.

Description

This activity guides accessibility committee members through a collaborative process to identify barriers in library spaces across three key areas: physical, sensory, and social-emotional. Participants will work in groups to reflect, discuss, and report back on barriers and possible improvements.

Run time: Approximately 60-90 minutes

Participants: 6-12 participants

Audience: Accessibility committee members

Learning objectives

By the end of this activity, participants will be able to:

- Identify physical, sensory, and social-emotional barriers in the library
- Collaborate to generate solutions and improvements for greater accessibility

Resources/materials needed

- Accessibility Assessment Framework for Library Spaces
- Library Accessibility Assessment Tool
- Notebook and pen, voice recorder, or other tool for capturing observations and reflection

Instructions for activity leader

1. Preparation

1.a. Get acquainted with the framework and assessment tool

Read through the Accessibility Assessment Framework for Library Spaces. Pay special attention to the following sections in the framework:

- Key terms and concepts
- Part 1: Guiding principles
- Part 2: The three types of accessibility

You can also read through the Library Accessibility Assessment Tool to get a better sense of what the three types of accessibility look like in a library setting.

The goal of this preparation is to build some foundational understanding of the types of accessibility that will be explored in this activity. This background knowledge will help you frame questions, provide examples, and clarify terms in a way that supports meaningful discussion with your accessibility committee members.

Being familiar with the guiding principles, key terms, and the distinctions between the three types of accessibility will enable you to recognize barriers described by participants, connect feedback to broader accessibility goals, and ensure the conversation stays focused, inclusive, and productive.

1.b. Schedule session, invite accessibility committee members, and prepare session materials

Choose a date for the session that gives your committee members time to plan and prepare for their participation. You may want to present multiple options and have committee members choose a few that work for their schedules.

Alternatively, you can align the session with a pre-existing accessibility committee meeting date. When you've selected a date, schedule the session so your participants have it in their calendars.

Your next priority is to prepare session materials and send them to participants in advance of the session. For accessibility purposes, aim to get materials out at

least one week before the scheduled session date. This gives participants time to review the materials and prepare themselves for their participation.

For the session document package, you'll include:

1. Session agenda
2. Accessibility Assessment Framework for Library Spaces
3. Library Accessibility Assessment Tool

It's also important to give your participants clear instructions for their review of the materials. For example,

"Before the session, please read through the **assessment framework**. Pay close attention to the following sections:

- Key terms and concepts
- Guiding principles
- The three types of accessibility

We will be using this content to structure our barrier identification efforts.

You can also review the **assessment tool** to get a better sense of what the three types of accessibility look like in a library context. This is a long document, so don't feel like you must read it in detail.

Lastly, you're free to review the **agenda** to get a sense of how the session will flow, but this is not mandatory for your participation."

2. Barrier identification session

2.a. Welcome participants and facilitate introductions

Time: 10-15 minutes

Welcome committee members and review the agenda. If there are new members, or the existing members don't know one another yet, facilitate a round of introductions. You can use these prompts:

- Name and pronouns
- 1-2 sentences about who you are/where you come from

- What does accessibility mean to you?

Starting the session with this type of introduction helps create a welcoming atmosphere and sets the stage for open, respectful dialogue. By asking participants what accessibility means to them, you invite personal reflection while surfacing the wide range of perspectives in the room. This shared starting point emphasizes that accessibility is not a single, uniform experience but something shaped by individual realities. It is especially valuable for members of the accessibility committee and staff representatives to hear one another's perspectives, as it builds mutual understanding, fosters empathy, and grounds the session in lived experience from the beginning.

2.b. Review core concepts

Time: 10-15 minutes

Begin by reviewing the definitions of **disability**, **accessibility**, and **barrier** together as a group. These can be found in the Key Terms and Concepts section of the Accessibility Assessment Framework for Library Spaces.

Although these are terms the group is likely familiar with, having a shared understanding ensures that everyone is starting from the same foundation. It also creates a common language for discussion, reduces the risk of misunderstandings, and highlights how the framework interprets these concepts for the purpose of the workshop. Depending on your group, it may be helpful to explain this up front.

Next, review the three types of accessibility that are described in the framework:

1. Physical
2. Sensory
3. Social-emotional

Encourage conversation and questions throughout this review.

2.c. Identify physical, sensory, and social-emotional barriers

Time: 45-60 minutes

Groups

Split your participants into three groups of equal or similar size. One group will focus on physical accessibility, another will focus on sensory accessibility, and the last will focus on social-emotional accessibility.

The **physical accessibility** group will consider:

- What barriers are impacting **physical** access for people with disabilities in our library?
- What would improve **physical** accessibility in our library?

The **sensory accessibility** group will consider:

- What barriers are impacting **sensory** access for people with disabilities in our library?
- What would improve **sensory** accessibility in our library?

The **social-emotional accessibility** group will consider:

- What barriers are impacting **social-emotional** access for people with disabilities in our library?
- What would improve **social-emotional** accessibility in our library?

Activity stages

Move participants through the following four stages of the activity:

1. **Individual reflection (5 minutes)** – participants consider their group's questions individually
2. **Partner discussion (5-10 minutes)** – each person joins one other member from their group to discuss the same questions
3. **Small group discussion (10-15 minutes)** – all members of the group come together and discuss the same questions
4. **Large group discussion (10-15 minutes)** – all groups report back to the committee on what their group discussed

These stages can happen in person or virtually, using breakout groups.

Note: If there are fewer than 12 committee members participating in your session, you can skip the partner discussion stage.

Recording notes from discussions

You can ask your participants to record notes throughout the stages of the session and submit them at the end. Or you can ask groups to assign one note-taker to record and submit notes. Alternatively, you can take notes during the large group discussion.

3. Follow-up

3.a. Compile notes into a shared summary report

Gather all notes and compile them into a summary report. This report should:

- Clearly list key barriers identified by each group
- Capture each group's ideas for improving the accessibility of the library

When this report is complete, it should be shared back with the session participants.

3.b. Identify next steps

Once the summary report is complete, library staff should review the findings and collaborate on identifying next steps. This may include:

- Prioritizing high-impact or urgent fixes
- Consulting with disabled library users for additional input
- Sharing the results with decision-makers

Where appropriate, the findings should inform updates to the library's accessibility plan. Clear timelines and responsibilities should be established to ensure follow-through and transparency.

Activity 4: Applying the guiding principles to the review and development of library policies

Purpose

To help library staff integrate accessibility into both the creation of new policies and the review of existing ones.

Description

Working in groups, participants use the five accessibility guiding principles from the framework as a lens to analyze policy and propose recommendations. The process emphasizes collaboration, reflection, and accountability. This activity moves accessibility from theory into practice and sets the stage for ongoing improvement.

Run time: Approximately 60-90 minutes

Participants: 4-6

Audience: Library leadership and staff who are part of policy review and development

Learning Objectives

By the end of this activity, participants will be able to:

- Apply the five accessibility guiding principles to library policy
- Propose recommendations for accessible policies

Resources/materials needed

- Accessibility Assessment Framework for Library Spaces
- Library Accessibility Assessment Tool
- Pens, sticky notes, and whiteboard or virtual whiteboard

Instructions for activity leader

1. Preparation

1.a. Get acquainted with the framework and assessment tool

Read through the Accessibility Assessment Framework for Library Spaces. Pay special attention to the following sections in the framework:

- Key terms and concepts
- Part 1: Guiding principles
- Part 2: The three types of accessibility

You can also read through the Library Accessibility Assessment Tool to get a better sense of what the three types of accessibility look like in a library setting.

The goal of this preparation is to build some foundational understanding of the guiding principles and the types of accessibility that they reflect. This background knowledge will help you frame questions, provide examples, and clarify terms in a way that supports meaningful discussion with your activity participants.

1.b. Identify a policy to apply an accessibility lens

For this activity, you can choose an existing policy to review and update, or a new policy that needs to be written. When you've chosen a policy to focus on, reflect on the following:

- What is the intention of this policy?
- How is it likely to be applied?
- Who does it affect?
- Are there any known barriers related to this policy or policy area? For example, maybe you've received feedback on a three-strike policy about punctuality that disadvantages staff who use public transit to get to work.

Record notes from your reflections.

1.c. Identify a different policy that already reflects strong accessibility

Read through your library's policy manual for an example of a policy that supports strong accessibility. You will present this at the beginning of your session, using it to facilitate discussion around the importance of accessible policy.

If you cannot find a good example or would prefer to use another example, you can choose one from the fictional options below.

Example 1: Accessible communication policy

Policy statement

The library is committed to ensuring that all communication with patrons, community members, and staff is accessible, inclusive, and easy to understand.

Guidelines

- Library information, including program guides, policies, and notices, will be written in plain language and available in accessible formats – including large print, accessible digital files, and audio recordings. Braille can be made available upon request.
- Patrons and staff may contact the library using multiple methods, such as email, text, live chat, or in-person assistance, in addition to phone.
- Where additional communication support is required (such as captioning or interpretation for events), the library will work to arrange services in a timely manner.
- Library staff will receive training to recognize and support diverse communication needs, ensuring that interactions are accessible.

Responsibility

The Library Director and Branch Managers are responsible for ensuring that communications meet accessibility standards. All staff are responsible for supporting patrons' communication needs.

Example 2: Digital accessibility policy

Policy Statement

The library is committed to providing online services, catalogues, e-resources, and digital content that are accessible to all patrons and staff.

Guidelines

- The library's website, online catalogue, and digital platforms will follow recognized accessibility standards (for example, WCAG 2.2 Level AA or higher).
- All digital documents and resources shared with the public will be created in accessible formats. This includes ensuring screen-reader compatibility, providing alternative text for images, and offering captions or transcripts for videos.
- E-books, audiobooks, and databases offered through the library will be evaluated for accessibility whenever possible. Staff will seek out accessible vendors and resources.
- Regular testing and patron feedback will be used to identify and address digital accessibility issues.
- Staff will be provided with ongoing training and tools to create accessible digital content.

Responsibility

The IT Services Manager and Communications Team are responsible for maintaining digital accessibility of the library's platforms. Program and branch staff are responsible for ensuring that all digital resources the library produces or shares meet accessibility standards.

2. Policy session

2.a. Welcome participants and facilitate an introduction round

Time: 10 minutes

Facilitate an introduction round with your participants. You can use these prompts:

- Name and pronouns

- Your role at the library
- 1-2 sentences about who you are/where you come from
- What does accessibility mean to you?

This type of introduction helps to set the tone for an open, respectful discussion about accessibility in policy. Asking participants what accessibility means to them encourages personal reflection, highlights the diversity of perspectives in the room, and reminds everyone that accessibility is experienced in many ways. This shared starting point helps ground the session in lived experience and fosters empathy and understanding from the outset.

2.b. Review core concepts

Time: 20-25 minutes

Next, review the definitions of **disability**, **accessibility**, and **barrier** together as a group. These can be found in the Key Terms and Concepts section of the Accessibility Assessment Framework for Library Spaces.

Having a shared understanding of these terms ensures everyone is starting from the same foundation. It also creates a common language for discussion, reduces the risk of misunderstandings, and highlights how the framework interprets these concepts for the purpose of the policy review session.

Next, review the framework's guiding principles for accessibility work:

1. Accessibility from the start
2. Intersectional approaches to accessibility
3. Flexible and adaptable accessibility
4. User-centered approaches to accessibility
5. Naming what you know about accessibility

Encourage conversation and questions throughout this review.

2.c. Warm-up: Discuss the example policy that supports accessibility

Time: 10-15 minutes

Present the accessible policy example you chose during the preparation phase of this activity (1.c.). You may wish to print copies of this policy beforehand and provide one to each participant.

Ask participants to review the policy and consider:

- How does this policy align with the guiding principles?
- How could it better align with the guiding principles?
- How will better aligning it with the guiding principles support disabled staff and/or patrons?

Give them 10-15 minutes for this reflection.

After participants have had time for individual reflection, facilitate a group debrief.

2.d. Discuss focus policy and the guiding principles

Time: 20-30 minutes

Present the focus policy you've chosen to review/develop during the preparation phase of this activity (1.b.). If it's an existing policy, you may wish to print copies beforehand and provide one to each participant. If it's a new policy, prepare and circulate a document that includes key information about the policy topic, audience, purpose, and any known barriers related to the policy area.

Divide participants into small groups. Assign each group one or more guiding principles from the framework (the number of principles you assign each group will depend on the total number of groups you have):

1. Accessibility from the start
2. Intersectional approaches
3. Flexibility and adaptability
4. User-centered approach
5. Name what you know

Ask groups to review their guiding principle(s) in the framework document, including the guiding questions.

For reviewing/updating existing policy

Instruct groups to discuss:

- How does this policy align with our group's guiding principle(s)?
- How could it better align with our group's guiding principle(s)?
- What are one to two concrete actions/commitments that we can incorporate into an updated version of this policy that reflect our group's guiding principle(s)?
- How will aligning this policy with our group's guiding principle(s) impact staff and/or patrons with disabilities?

Give 15-20 minutes for this discussion. Encourage groups to record notes.

For creating a new policy

Instruct groups to discuss:

- How can our group's guiding principle(s) inform the design of the new focus policy?
- What are one to two concrete actions/commitments that we can incorporate into the new focus policy that reflect our group's guiding principle(s)?
- How will aligning this policy with our group's guiding principle(s) impact staff and/or patrons with disabilities?

Give 15-20 minutes for this discussion. Encourage groups to record notes.

After groups discussions

After group discussions, all groups will come together and share their proposed policy actions with the larger group. Together, everyone will discuss how these actions can connect across principles to inform a more inclusive, accessible policy.

Documenting group outputs

As the activity leader, you will collect all proposed changes and commitments from each group. You will summarize them in a shared document.

2.e. Reflection and closing

Time: 5 minutes

Pose some reflection questions to the group and invite discussion. Here are some examples of questions:

1. What insights did you gain by looking at policy through an accessibility lens?
2. Which principle felt easiest to apply? Which was most challenging?
3. How did this activity shift your understanding of accessibility in the library context?
4. What's one concrete action you can take in your role to support accessibility in library policy and practice?
5. How can we ensure that accessibility is not an afterthought but built into every stage of library decision-making?

3. Follow-up

3.a. Engage with stakeholders

Share proposed changes/policy with library leadership, other staff, disabled patrons, and community partners (for example, accessibility committee) for feedback.

Make changes to the recommendations based on feedback and present to the library's decision-makers for approval.