

Introduction

This program offers cost-shared grants to business for accessibility related improvements. Grants are intended to improve overall accessibility and create welcoming environments that persons with disabilities can access for business and employment opportunities. This program is part of the Province of Nova Scotia's commitment to equal opportunity and inclusive communities.

Government is committed to an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030. This grant programs aligns with the commitment to increasing accessibility across the province. ([Access by design](#)).

Is Your Business eligible?

- Your business operates in Nova Scotia.
- Your business is registered as a for-profit entity with the [Nova Scotia Registry of Joint Stocks](#), including locally-owned franchises.
- Your business is open for use by all community members at reasonable rates and reasonable times and not reserved to those belonging by way of a closed membership or other means.
- Features and improvements required by law or legislation * Except for restaurants required to comply with the human rights decision of 2019 to have wheelchair accessible washrooms*

Ineligible Businesses

- Businesses not registered with the Nova Scotia Registry of Joint Stocks
- Franchises, unless locally owned
- Residential rental properties
- Businesses considered closed to the public, for members only
- Not-for-profit agencies and municipalities – See the [Community ACCESS-Ability Program](#)

References that may help with your project

- [Nova Scotia Building Code](#)
- Accessible Design for the Built Environment, [CSA E651-18](#)
- Barrier free guidelines by Halifax – [Washroom](#) – [Ramp](#) - [Entrance](#)
- Access by Design 2030 ([Access by design](#)).
- [Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification](#)

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA)

Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage supports our communities to thrive by promoting active living, tourism and Nova Scotia's diverse culture, heritage and languages. We pride ourselves in helping to grow communities and organizations by providing programs and services that support these areas.

We are committed to ensuring that our programs and services are free of discrimination and barriers, and value EDIA. By applying this lens, and ensuring it is a core value in our programs and decision-making processes, we are taking steps to address the long-standing systemic barriers that impact many communities in our province.

Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage is committed to advancing equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility access Nova Scotia, and we support partners who share in this commitment.

Funding Guidelines

Risks of spending before approval: If you incur project expenses before getting official approval, you assume the risk of those costs not being approved.

Leased premises: Funding applications for improvements to leased premises are considered when the lease period extends to at least five years beyond the date the application is submitted.

In-kind contributions: Applicants may use in-kind (donated) materials, labour, and equipment as part of their contribution. For unskilled volunteer labour, applicants must use a recognized industry standard, to a maximum of \$20/hour. For skilled labour and professional services, applicants may use contractor's or professional's commercial rates. Please include a copy of the contractor's certified ID card, Red Seal certification, professional designations, or proof of incorporation.

New construction and major renovations: By law, new construction projects MUST conform to the Nova Scotia Building Code. Required features as per the Nova Scotia building code are not eligible expenses under this program except for restaurants opening in a space that previously operated as a restaurant within the past 2 years. For the purposes of this program, renovations that affect more than 75% of usable floor space are also considered new construction. Costs for features that exceed the building code may be eligible expenses, such as installing visual fire alarms or wheelchair lifts.

Fiscal year: Your business has not been approved for business accessibility funding yet this fiscal year—our fiscal year runs from April 1 to March 31.

Other government grants: Grants from other government sources must be declared and may affect the amount of grant awarded.

Overall grant limit: The maximum grant amount available per year is \$50,000 per applicant.

Eligible Examples of Accessible Improvement Expenses

Built Environment and Accessibility Certification

- Improvements to the physical environment of a business, including curb cuts on private property, accessible parking, making bathrooms accessible, installing automatic door openers and creating barrier free paths of travel.
- Existing facility renovations/enhancements that meet or exceed the accessibility requirements of the building code are eligible.
- New construction projects that exceed the [Nova Scotia Building Code](#) are eligible.
 - Audit and certification: Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC)

Accessible Communication and Information

- Any improvement that permits persons with a disability to communicate with a commercial or business enterprise.
- Accessible web design.
- Accessible signage, both analog and digital.
- Assistive technologies to enable the blind or the Deaf and hard of hearing to communicate with a business enterprise.
- Conversion of commercial documentation into Braille or other formats.
- Fire alarms for the Deaf and Heard of Hearing.
- Captioning of commercial videos.

Assistive Devices

- Assistive devices that are movable equipment, such as page turners, adaptive switches, voice-recognition programs, specialized door levers
- the purchase and installation of assistive devices,
- the training of employees to use the devices

Accessible Transportation

- Additional costs, including costs of converting, the difference between the cost of purchasing a wheelchair-accessible commercial shuttle service vehicle and a traditional commercial shuttle service vehicle.

Universal Design Capacity Building

- Trainer fees, resources, hosting costs, project management costs, promotion

How to Apply

- 1)** Speak with the Business ACCESS-Ability program officer about your proposed project before completing the application form
- 2)** Complete the Business ACCESS-Ability Program Application form.
- 3)** Use the checklist below to assemble your application package—the form and all requested documentation.
- 4)** Submit your complete application package to our office by mail, email, or fax.
- 5)** Receive confirmation of submitted application within 2 weeks of applying

Your submission will not be sent for evaluation until we receive all required documentation. If we do not receive all documentation your application will be deemed incomplete

Approval Process

- We check applications for completeness—refer to the checklist.
- We forward applications that meet program requirements to the Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Review Panel for evaluation.
- The panel evaluates applications against the following criteria:
 - demonstrates a commitment to equal opportunity and inclusive communities through improving overall accessibility.
 - creates a welcoming commercial environment that persons with disabilities can access for business and employment opportunities.
 - creates universal access of the business through implementation of universal design principles, such as those examples of CSA and other standards listed above.
 - where applicable, a barrier-free, independent path of travel is created from public curb to interior amenities.
- The panel makes recommendations for approval of the Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage.
- The review, evaluation and approval process may take up to 16 weeks, possibly more.

Funding Payment conditions

- If you are approved for funding, you will get a letter that outlines our terms and conditions to sign and return. Please ensure to provide a current e-mail address, that is regularly checked, as notifications and documents requiring signatures will be sent via this e-mail address.
- If you declared any non-repayable contributions, these must be used for the activity as described in the application.
- If your organization is eligible for HST exemptions or rebates, please deduct these costs from your application.
- You must notify us before making any changes to the project described in your application, including start and end dates, location, or any other significant changes.
- If you do not undertake the project after receiving payment of the grant, you must return the funds to the department.
- You must submit a final report within 30 days of completing your project.

Checklist of Required Documentation

- **1-6 Questions** are answered
- **Copy of lease agreement or proof of ownership:** For proof of ownership, include the deed, lease or property assessment.
- **Other grants:** Identify all other sources of grant funds that will be used for the project.
- **Detailed estimates:** A minimum of 3 quotes recommended on contracted work. If 3 quotes cannot be obtained, please give the rationale. Provide justification of quote selected if it is not the lowest one received.
- **Proof of skilled labour:** If using skilled labour as an in-kind contribution, include a copy of the contractor's professional ID card or Red Seal certification
- **Proof of need for assistive devices:** If applying for assistive devices, identify the purpose and explain the expected results of installed equipment. For assistive medical devices, such as hearing aids, include proof that the devices are not covered under medical insurance plans or other 3rd party funding.

- **Site photos:** Include a maximum of 5 photos.
- **Drawings, sketches, maps:** Engineered drawings, maps, accessibility audit results and illustrations help identify scope and describe the project. Include if available.

Address for submitting applications

Mailing address:

Business ACCESS-Ability Grant,
CCH-CSR 1741 Brunswick St., 3rd Floor
PO Box 456, Station Central
Halifax, NS B3J 2R5

Email:

sbaccess@novascotia.ca

Fax:

902-424-0710

Contact:

Program Officer, Kayla Arsenault

902-220-8812

Frequently Asked Questions

Can we include paving of a parking lot in our application?

It Depends. Funding may be available for the percentage of a parking lot that are designated for accessibility purposes when 1) the paved parking area is accessible to the entrance of the building, 2) the entrance is accessible, and 3) the number of designated and painted disabled parking stalls adheres or exceeds NSBC regulations. You must include a map of the paving project that shows the paved and accessible areas and the cost of the entire paving project.

Can we apply for assistive devices that enable an employee to perform their job?

Yes. For example, hearing aids are covered when they are crucial to an employee's ability to perform their job. For medical devices like hearing aids, you must also show proof that the device is not covered through insurance or other 3rd party contributions.

Are membership-based businesses eligible for funding?

Yes, when three (3) conditions are met: Membership can be purchased by the general public. The place of business is open at reasonable rates and reasonable times to the general public. No pre-existing conditions exclude the general public.

Can an existing business apply to make the washroom accessible for consumers?

Yes, when your entrance and pathway to the place of business are accessible. Improvements to the pathway and entrance may be eligible for funding.

I am constructing a new business per the NSBC requirements and have included many accessible features. Can I submit all of these costs for funding under this program?

Some costs, maybe. By law, new construction projects must conform to the Nova Scotia Building Code—and required features are not eligible. Costs for features that exceed the building code may be eligible - like installing visual fire alarms or wheelchair lifts.

I intended to build to the NSBC Schedule C requirements but was unable to accommodate all requirements due to construction issues. Are expenses that do not meet code eligible?

No. Projects must meet the NSBC Schedule C—or other recognized standards—to be eligible.

What types of construction projects are eligible for funding?

Renovations to existing or newly located facilities are eligible in most cases. We consider upgrades to more than 75% of usable floor space to be new construction, anything below that percentage will be classed as a renovation and may be eligible. New construction is eligible only for the portion that exceeds the requirements of the building code.

